

of "flying mission." In the five days they were separated from the main cavalcade, the pair rode over three hundred miles throughout the territory adjoining the main trail. Kino preached and baptized; Manje counted heads for the Crown. Apparently the main body moved faster than they anticipated, because the last day and night out Kino and Manje churned through fifty leagues of desert wash and cholla forest! They caught Leal and Gonzalvo at Búsanic, slept four hours, and then rose early to butcher some livestock, distribute presents, and hold a civil ceremony to appoint justices. No wonder Leal and Gonzalvo were glad to get back to Dolores and rest.

But Kino wasn't in the mood to rest. Something had been bothering him since the trip to the lower Gila. He kept thinking about the simple, precious gift the sturdy Yumans had given him at San Pedro — those blue abalone shells. At the time he had smiled and thanked the natives, but perforce he had to concentrate on his explorations and survival. It was on the return ride when Padre Kino was reminiscing beneath the winter sun that the salty breeze and crashing surf of Baja California thundered in his memory. Those shells were seen by him only once, fifteen years before on the mapping expedition to the "opposite shore" of the Isla de California! Could there be a connection? Possibly, but not probably. On previous trips, especially to the volcanic peak of Santa Clara (Pinacate), he had seen through his telescope that the coast line veered westward, but he suspected a narrow sea passage still led to the northwest separating the mainland from the Californias. That's just the way Kino drew it on his "Teatro" map of 1695. But now doubts were growing on the basis of new evidence.

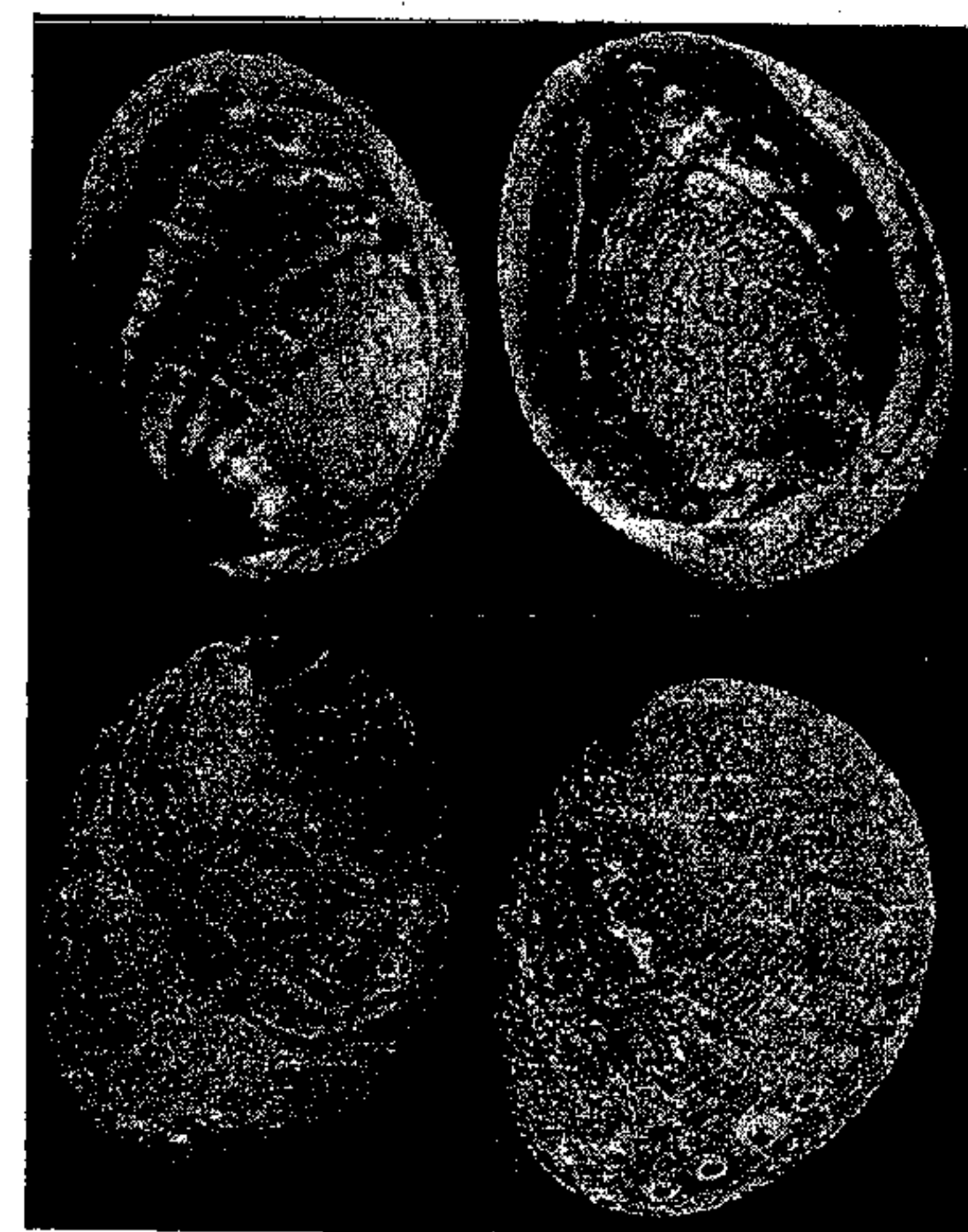
BLUE SHELLS — A BOTHER OR A BOON?

Padre Kino witnessed the turn of the 18th century at Dolores. His work load was heavy and the new California missions under Salvatierra were needing increased assistance. The thrust to the Colorado just meant more work and Dolores was too far away for such involvements as establishing visitas on the Gila and the Colorado. Nor was any new blood being pumped into the Pimería these days. Life was settling into a predictable, hectic routine. That is, until March. While Padre Eusebio was at Remedios, a chieftain from the Gila Pimas arrived with news of the

river peoples and a cross strung with twenty blue shells, a gift from the governor of the Cocomaricopas. The cross was accepted with graciousness, but once again the shells made the Padre uneasy. The unanswered question of their origin nagged at his scientific nature.

A partial solution to the problem of expansion would be to build a mission closer to these new fields of labor, so Padre Kino chose the fertile and extensive ranchería of Bac to become the base for future north-

western entradas. The blue-shell question simmered for a few weeks, and then began to plague him for an answer. With Easter season now over, he set out in late April with ten Indian friends — destination: the Gila pueblos. On the way he would attend to new construction at Remedios and Cocóspera, which was being renovated after its disastrous sacking in 1697. However, news overtook the cavalcade that a contingent of cavalry had ridden into the western desert because of troubles in Soba country.

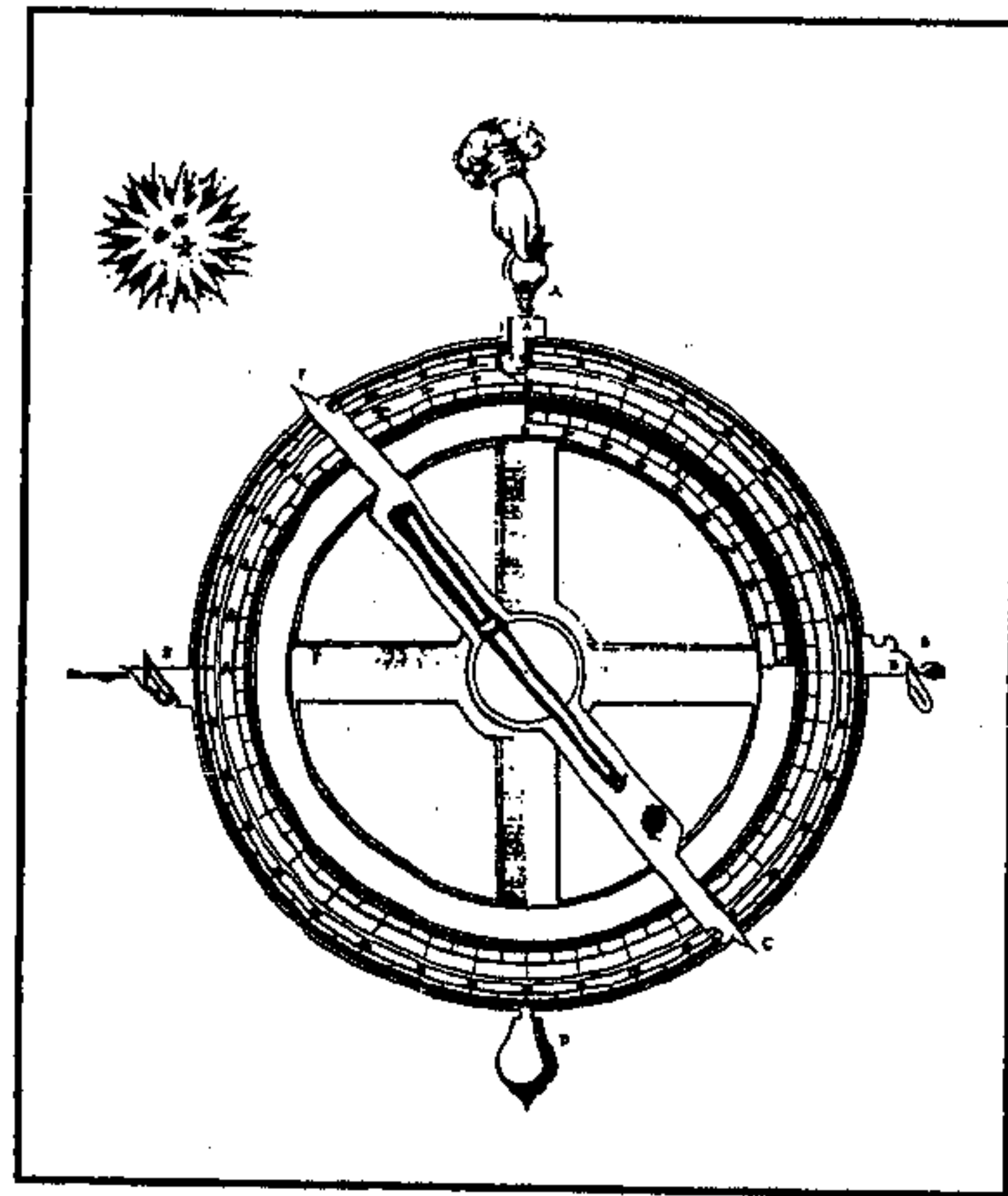


Abalone Shells

Alone and without escort, it seemed to Kino that a change in plan might be more prudent, so he pulled up at San Xavier del Bac. With the question of the shells very much on his mind, he decided to send out inquiries about the origins of the blue shells. Runners went north, west and even east to call the great chiefs to a "Blue Shell Conference" at Bac. In a matter of days the Padre's messages got a response; chiefs and couriers came with the certain information that the blue shells from the Yumans could not have come from the Gulf because the blue-crusted abalone didn't occur in those dense waters. They had been traded hand to hand from the distant Pacific.

While waiting for the replies, Kino devoted his time to instructing the Sobaipuris in the catechism, and, true to his nature, he directed the laying of foundations for a large church. April 28 was the unforgettable day for the beginning of the church that has since transformed itself into an international memorial. As for Padre Kino, it was time to petition Father Visitor Leal for a permanent transfer to Bac which would place

him much closer to the new mission field. He saddled up and rode south toward Dolores with a whole new future on his mind. At dawn on May 3, Kino was preparing to say Mass at San Cayetano de Tumacácori when



Astrolabe

he was handed a letter from Father Campos at San Ignacio. It was an urgent summons for him to intervene in the scheduled execution, May 4, of a prisoner in the custody of the soldiers. Riding until midnight, he rested at Imuris, reaching San Ignacio at sunrise – just in time to celebrate Mass and save a poor Piman from death. Such was Kino's whole life in the saddle – long treks in the desert, rapid rides in the cause of justice and mercy, and tedious journeys bringing food and supply to distant Indian tribes; there

was no casual rest for the Apostle to the Pimas.

No sooner was Kino back at Dolores than word came from Leal that permission was granted for the transfer to Bac – he only needed to wait for a replacement, a replacement that never ever came. With confidence and expectation at that time Kino dispatched seven hundred head of livestock to start the mission farms at Bac, and he set about making plans for an expedition to the Colorado in the early fall. Everyone was enthusiastic about the prospects of the new missions to the northwest with San Xavier del Bac as the central staging area. Letters were sent off to Salvatierra in distant California about his conviction that there had to be a land passage to those new missions – and a note of encouragement for Salvatierra to join in a fall expedition after harvest and before the annual round-up.

TO THE COLORADO — FINALLY

The summer heat had abated; the rains had drenched the desert, and it was opportune to cross the once burning desert. On September 24, 1700, he left Dolores – destination, the juncture of the Gila and the Colorado. This time he took a direct route to reach the big bend of the Gila by

crossing the Papaguería. With ten servants and sixty pack animals he wound his way through Remedios, Síboda, Búsanic, and Tucubavia. By the 30th they had reached Nuestra Señora de Merced del Batqui where Kino split the cavalcade in two, sending the majority of the pack animals and horses westward to San Marcelo de Sonidag (Sonoita) to await his return via the Camino del Diablo. He had learned on earlier trips how to negotiate the difficult, waterless wastes. Striking north-northwest to the famous painted rocks of Gila Bend, Kino arrived at El Tutto where Indian messengers had gathered to greet him and bring news of recent victories over marauding Apaches. By sending more than half his retinue to San Marcelo, he had placed constraints on both his route of return and the time he had left to reach the Colorado. But Kino felt himself to be in the element he loved so much, to be under the open skies and meeting new peoples. Every day down stream meant a night spent talking and instructing friendly new Indians; it was hard on his schedule, but it satisfied his sense of apostolate. He had come to the New World to preach the Gospel and eager ears were listening.

On the 7th of October half his allotted time was exhausted. Teaching and baptizing had taken its toll, and anxiety about a return lurked in the back of his mind. Once again, he had neither reached the Colorado nor seen the headlands of California. So this time Kino climbed a small range of hills to view the land with a long range telescope. There was no sea in sight, just expanses of land cut by the meanders of the two huge rivers. The sight was enough for Kino. He concluded that he had seen the lands of California. And his Indian companions were weary of these explorations and uncomfortable because they had hard work to do in rounding up livestock at their villages. It was time to turn back.

The Pimas were relieved when Kino agreed. But then, in the slanting shadows of the afternoon a band of Yumas caught up with Padre Kino insisting that he come to visit their villages on the river. If he didn't postpone the return, he was certain to offend the sensitive and powerful Yuman people. It was a double dilemma between time and fright. Tossing caution to the winds and letting his customary optimism be his guide, Padre Eusebio smiled at the persistent, tearful Indians and agreed to go to their village on the Colorado. He rose before dawn, celebrated Mass and cantered down river, coming across clusters of Indians who had trav-