Kino and Manje: Explorers of Sonora and Arizona, 1971
Edward J. Burrus
Excerpt from Chapter 2: On To California (1681-1686)

Baja Departure, Kino's Vision and Pirate Threat To Manila Galleon Prevents His Return

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Obviously, the little colony could not live on greater geographical knowledge and on hopes for a brighter future. They had to find more suitable and productive localities, if they were to survive. Neither mineral wealth nor fertile agricultural areas had been discovered. Pearl fishing had been forbidden. Drought had destroyed the incipient crop, grape vines, and fruit trees. The large ships were too slow and unmaneuverable to bring supplies sufficiently often and economically from the mainland. Diseases, especially a vicious form of scurvy, had broken out in both San Bruno and in San Isidro. Because of the uncertainty of the enterprise, the two missionaries could not proceed to baptize any of the natives except those in danger of death. [33]

The discouraging past, the uncertain present, and the unpromising future, all conspired to dismay the bravest soldiers and even Atondo himself. Only Kino pleaded to hold out a little longer or at least to try another locality in the vicinity. He volunteered to explore for an appropriate site. He pleaded that they should not completely abandon the area where he had already instructed so many natives. His plea was in vain. The decision had been made to cross over to the Mexican mainland, replenish the depleted supplies from the Jesuit missions in the Yaqui valley, and then recross the Gulf in order to explore the peninsula farther to the north.

Again, it was only geography which was destined to profit from their voyages along both coasts of the Gulf of California. As they sailed along the beaches north of San Bruno, they encountered even more hostile and forbidding terrain; they did not succeed in locating a single site fit for a mission or a self-supporting settlement. Some in the party even resorted to forbidden pearl fishing; the results were |31| most discouraging - a few puny specimens - surely a futile source of wealth to maintain the California enterprise.

Although probably no one said so, Lower California had been abandoned by early May of 1685. It was not destined to be settled permanently until October, 1697, when Father Juan Maria Salvatierra would sail into the bay of San Dionisio and establish the mission and town of Nuestra Señora de Loreto. [34]

Kino now sailed with Atondo to Matanchel, near Chacala, from which the little fleet had weighed anchor so proudly and confidently more than two years previously. From Matanchel Kino hurried overland to Guadalajara, and there poured out his grief to Bishop Garabito because of the abandonment of Lower California [35]

He was requested by civil and ecclesiastical authorities to draw up a report. In doing so, he did not waste his time blaming Atondo or anyone else. He did review the past, but only to point out what should be corrected; his emphasis, however, was on the future: how the California enterprise could be effectively and successfully re-activated. The report: was his first comprehensive "vision of the future ". During the next quarter of a century he would pen many more such plans, all in the light of new explorations, and each one more progressive, more all-embracing, and more ambitious than the previous one. [36]

When Kino had first come to Mexico in May, 1681, and had been appointed cosmographer and chaplain to the Atondo expedition, his trust and confidence in Spanish officialdom was unquestioned and unlimited. He accepted their geographic notions: Lower California was an island for them, it had to be an island for him. He did not doubt that the way they dealt with the natives was the wisest and most humane. They knew best how to handle and solve the intricate economic problems connected with the missions. They were the experts in exploring unknown lands and in planning new settlements.

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Kino's Lower California experience was a rude awakening. The rest of his life, he would show how completely wrong they were on every point. Lower California was not an island but a peninsula and could be reached overland from the Mexican mainland. Kino's writings and maps during the last decade of his life were dedicated to making this truth known. [37] The Spaniards' senseless massacre of the La Paz and El Tupo natives convinced him that missions and forts, Christian Indians and soldiers, violence and the Gospel, did not mix well. [38] Ranches and farms would raise the economic and social status of the natives and make the missions independent of state aid and control; they would help to win over and hold the Indian population. Smaller and more maneuverable boats, supplemented by a feasible land route, could provision Lower California far better and more economically than the bulky and unwieldy ships engaged in hauling supplies from distant ports. [39] He would make friendly natives his best allies and most effective defenders against hostile intruders. He would even show enemy tribes the advantages of a better and more secure way of living. He would explore more fully and accurately than any of his predecessors; above all, in the areas visited, he would leave devoted friends and allies. [40]

With these facts in mind, let us take a look at his 1685 plan for California. Kino insisted that the inhabitants were intelligent and well disposed towards the Spaniards and the Christian faith. Further inland and northward there were more fertile areas with more abundant rainfall; yes, and more numerous inhabitants. True, a severe drought had seared the crops in the peninsula during the last year there; but this same drought had sorely tried the Mexican mainland, |33| and surely no one thought of abandoning the entire country. Scurvy could be prevented by drinking good water and eating plenty of fresh fruit, both of which could be obtained by settling in areas further to the north. [41]

Expenses were prohibitively high, Kino was informed. "Unnecessary expenses", he countered, " arising from employing too large ships, too many soldiers and officers; use small, fast boats that can cross the Gulf when the weather is good. Win over the natives and a very few soldiers will suffice".[42] As we shall see, Kino will later add several important clauses to his 1685 plan - a clearer and more practical program in which the northwestern Jesuit missions would play a leading role, and colonists would replace costly military garrisons in checking the incursions of hostile Indians.

Copies of Kino's preliminary 1685 plan went to Bishop Garabito, the Mexican Viceroy, Jesuit Superiors, and friends in Europe, in particular to the Duchess of Aveiro with the plea that she intercede with the highest Spanish officials in behalf of California. [43]

Viceroy Paredes was convinced by Kino's report. He ordered the immediate re-activation of the Lower California enterprise. Missionaries and twenty men were to be taken back to San Bruno. [44]

Kino was overjoyed at the favorable decision. He returned to Matanchel from Guadalajara, ready to join the new California expedition. The flotilla was riding at anchor in the harbor when word arrived to warn the heavily-laden Manila Galleon (en route from the Philippines to Acapulco) of the presence of pirate ships. Kino accompanied Atondo on the "Almiranta" as the fleet sailed out of the harbor on |34| November 29, 1685. They found the Spanish Galleon and convoyed her in safety as far as Acapulco. [34]

From here Kino rode over the high sierras to Mexico City, arriving there in mid-January of 1686, With Viceroy Paredes' promise to revive the California enterprise and the successful rescue of the Manila Galleon, Kino's hopes were at their highest.

A few days later, all his bright dreams of returning to Baja California and his Didius suddenly vanished - dispelled by the urgent order of the Spanish monarch to send immediately to {he Madrid treasury half a million pesos. No money was now left for the California enterprise. Of course, officials did not say that it was to be abandoned; they used a softer but no less lethal term - it was merely suspended. [46] ...

On November 26, 1686, Kino set out for the distant north of New Spain.

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Notes

[33] Cf. "Kino Writes to the Duchess", pp. 177, 199.

[34] Abundant details of this historic event are given in my "Píccolo" , pp. 5-7, and especially in Dunne, BRLC, pp. 38-51.

[35] The details are given in "Rim", pp. 213-217.

[36] See the Index of the present volume, s.v. "Plans", by Kino.

[37] Consult infra, especially chapters X, XI , and XVIII.

[38] Cf. the Index, s.v. La Paz and El Tupo.

[39] Kino discusses this topic at considerable length in his letter to the Duchess of Aveiro, written from Mexico City, November 16, 1686; the Spanish text is reproduced in my "Kino escribe a la Duquesa", pp. 315- 326, and in English translation in "Kino Writes to the Duchess", pp. 193-200.

[40] Kino stresses this point in his biography of Saeta as I discuss infra, chapter VII.

[41] Consult the references given supra, note 39.

[42] These ideas are contained in the same letter cited supra, note 39, and were taken over by the Duchess of Aveiro in her "memorandum" to the King. ("Kino escribe a la Duquesa", pp. 346-349, and "Kino Writes to the Duchess", pp. 214-215)

[43] Kino's letter from Guadalajara, Mexico, October 10, 1685, to Bishop Garabito, which contains the missionary's 1685 plan, is preserved in AGI, "Guadalajara" 134. It is discussed in "Rim", pp. 213-217. Kino repeated most of the plan in the letter to the Duchess, cited supra, note 39.

[44] See "Rim", pp. 218·219.

[45] Kino recounted the rescue in two of his letters to the Duchess of Aveiro: July 19, 1686 and November 16, 1686 (texts in "Kino escribe a la Duquesa", pp. 309-326, and "Kino Writes to the Duchess", pp. 189-200).

[46] Cf. "Rim", p. 226.