Father Kino’s “Neat Little House and Church” at Guevavi

Deni J. Seymour

Background and Introduction

Some fifteen years ago Seymour (1997; also see Seymour 1991a, 1991b, 1993a) reported on a Sobaipuri-O’odham habitation site situated near the standing but gradually melting adobe walls of the large San Miguel de Guevavi mission complex that was built in 1751 (Figure 1). It was suggested that this unassuming archaeological locus (AZ EE:9:132, ASM) might be one of the native settlements mentioned by the visiting Spaniards, perhaps even the first one noted by Father Eusebio Kino in 1691. He and Father Visitor Juan María Salvatierra stopped over at the location after native leaders from San Cayetano del Tumacácori and Wa:k (San Xavier del Bac) traveled south to Sáric in Soba territory on the upper Río Altar (now in northern Sonora) to ask for visitation (Burrus 1971:43). Seymour (1997) noted that the native settlement was outside and at some distance from the adobe convento that dominates the high point along the river margin. The site had several native structures, pottery, and other telltale evidence of a native Sobaipuri-O’odham or nonspecific O’odham occupation. The article also called attention to a unique-looking feature that was suggestive of a Spanish-period structure built by or under the direction of Europeans (Seymour 1997:253). It was suggested that the feature might be either the structure built for the missionary or the initial church, as Kino described it, the “neat little church” (Bolton 1948:1:303, 307; Kessell 1970:30, 31).

Historians have wondered what happened to this “neat little church,” as it simply failed to be mentioned shortly after being built and whitewashed. This disinterest was surprising because Kino seemed so pleased at its completion. With reference to a priestly visit to Guevavi in 1732, Kessell (1970:48) noted: “Whether the ruins of San Martín’s little church

Deni J. Seymour, Ph.D., is a Southwest Center research associate. She has studied Sobaipuri archaeology for over two decades.

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Figure 1. Locations of historically referenced settlements along the upper (southern) Santa Cruz River.
stood nearby, a reminder of earlier beginnings, has not been determined.” This “neat little church” disappeared from the historic record and, as Kessell (1970:31, fn. 24) noted, “The site of San Martín’s ‘very neat little church’ has not yet been identified.”

Seymour (2007a) has been conducting excavations at a number of Sobaipuri-O’odham sites along the upper Santa Pedro and Santa Cruz rivers, including at Guevavi. One of the first undertakings was the excavation of this unique feature to ascertain its nature, provide a date for its destruction, and determine why it fell out of use. This article analyzes this one element of this native locus at Guevavi—the “neat little church.” It also demonstrates the ways in which archaeology can be used to address specific questions left unanswered by the documentary record, and how the written and archaeological records can be effectively used together to arrive at an enriched understanding of the past. As Harlan (2007:510) notes, it is fruitful to use “archaeological evidence as a fully equal alternative source of knowledge that can provide a window on aspects of events that are simply not available in the documentary record.” Data obtained from excavation of this “neat little house and church” seem to provide a glimpse into the nature of the archaeological signature of rebellion. While the documentary record describes uprisings against colonial powers and resistance events at other settlements, and the burning of other churches, the silence surrounding this early church destruction may attest to the pervasiveness of the colonial narrative and complicity among religious and military participants in the selective transfer of information beyond the local arena through journal entries, letters, and official correspondence.

**Documentary Evidence of This Site and This Feature**

Kino made note of a “new and very neat little church” that Father San Martín had built in 1701. Shortly thereafter, on November 4, 1701, Kino ordered it whitewashed (Kessell 1970:31). Other references note, “We finished a house and a church, small but neat, and we laid the foundations for a church and a large house” (Bolton 1948:I:303). This translation seems to suggest that two structures were constructed (though this remains ambiguous), but that perhaps only the church was whitewashed. At Sonoita (Los Reyes) and elsewhere, the single structure doubled as house and church (Kessell 1970:136), but at many other settlements distinct structures were constructed for each, so the
issue remains unresolved. No other structure of this type is visible in the vicinity of this native settlement of Guevavi.

These are the first and last references to the “neat little church,” because like the padres to follow, Father San Martín did not stay long at the unhealthy and unwelcoming San Gabriel de Guevavi. He lasted only a few months owing to illness, for “on the evening of November 4 [1701] Kino found the house at Guevavi vacant.” It seems that after San Martín’s premature departure, Guevavi remained without a resident priest, as is indicated in Kino’s writings from 1703, which state that San Gabriel de Guevavi was lacking a father (Kessell 1970:31). When on March 5, 1722, Father Agustín de Campos and Fray Joseph Duran de la Peña rode into Guevavi, there was no mention of any “neat little church” (Kessell 1970:36). Regarding this event and time period Kessell (1970:36) notes, “If Father San Martín’s neat little church had crumbled and the wheatfields were overgrown, if other signs of civilization had faded, still not all was forgotten.” Thus, after San Martín left and Kino died in 1711, Guevavi had no missionary and saw only intermittent visitations from missionaries attending to the southern missions. Guevavi’s native population traveled south to visit the resident priests (Velarde and Campos) in Sonora (Kessell 1970:35).

By 1731 Captain Juan Bautista de Anza came to Guevavi and supervised the building of a small house there (Kessell 1970:43), implying that earlier structures were in disrepair or demolished. “Nearby the natives built for him [Father Grazhoffer, who did not arrive until 1732] a sturdy, well-roofed ramada beneath which he had the altar set in place” (Kessell 1970:51), again indicating that the “small and very neat little church” had long since fallen out of use. It was not until 1751 (Kessell 1970:100) that a new church was completed, its construction bridging the O’odham Revolt. The standing adobe walls that can be seen through shrubby mesquite from a distance today represent this hallowed edifice.

From the historic record it seems, then, that during the period between Kino’s death (1711) and 1732, Guevavi’s residents were visited only infrequently by missionaries from the south. As is suggested by the documentary record, by 1731 and seemingly as early as 1722, the adobe-walled structure constituting the “neat little church” had fallen from use and it was not until 1731 or 1732 that a replacement ramada was constructed for saying mass. Though historians have wondered what happened to this “neat little church,” the documentary record is silent
beyond these few references. Many have wondered if the loudest message is contained in the failure to mention this humble building.

Was It the First Church?

A related issue is whether the “neat little house and church” was the first to be constructed at Guevavi. The implication is that it was the first such building, though the documentary record provides only indirect hints. In the 1690s Manje and Kino consistently mentioned visiting Guevavi, but always traveled on instead of staying for the night there. Neither do these early visitors mention an adobe structure at Guevavi, though they do at neighboring settlements. In the next settlement north or south they stayed in an earth-roofed adobe house, suggesting that until the “neat little church” structure was built in 1701, Guevavi did not even have a place for the missionary to stay (see Crockett 1918:101, 133, 142, 179; Karns 1954:94, 126, 136, 169; Bolton 1948:I:119, 120, 204–5, 233; Burrus 1971:217).

A suggestion to the contrary is provided by the translations and transliterations by Burrus (1971:115, 413) and Bolton (1948:I:204), which suggest an adobe house may have been present as early as 1699. In October 1699, when speaking of three settlements together, Kino commented, “In San Luys, where we counted forty houses, as also in the following posts or rancherías of Guebabi and San Cayetano, they received us with all kindness, with crosses and arches erected in the roads, with earth-roofed adobe houses, which they have prepared for the father whom they hope to receive” (Bolton 1948:I:204). One possibility is that the sentence structure has contributed to confusion regarding the location of adobe houses, when perhaps reference is being made to forty houses at each location or that the visitors were universally received with kindness. It is also possible in this case that the reference to an earth-roofed structure applied to only two of the three settlements, Guevavi being lumped in only for convenience or lack of specificity. One reason to believe that this interpretation might be the case is that, as in March, even after Kino records the preceding information he continues on to the next settlement to spend the night, after only a short stop at Guevavi (Bolton 1948:I:204–5).

The documentary record provides just enough information to cloud the issue of whether or not there was a structure present at this geographic location prior to 1701. Burrus (1971:115, 413) notes that earlier that
year, in March 1699, Kino and Manje rested at Guevavi in an adobe-and-earth house: “y, aviendo tomado un refresco en la casa pared de adobe y terrado que nos tienen hecha” (Burrus 1971:431). There are at least two difficulties with this interpretation that an adobe structure was built at Guevavi by March 1699. After this date Kino and Manje still proceed on to the next settlement before stopping for the evening (Crockett 1918:133; Karns 1954:126; Burrus 1971:247, 413)—that is, after riding fifteen miles to Guevavi they then proceeded another twenty or so miles (see Burrus 1971:247). Also the transliterated (del Castillo 1926:271) and microfilm copies of handwritten versions of Manje’s (1721:155–56) journal entry for this specific visit are consistent with Crockett’s and Karns’ translations indicating the priests simply stopped to rest and then moved on, with no mention of an adobe structure.

I am inclined toward the interpretation that posits the lack of a structure at AZEE:9:132 at this time because had a structure been built in 1699, there would likely be no need to build another in 1701. There does, however, seem to be a discrepancy between handwritten manuscript copies in the particular passage cited, because Crockett and Karns give the date for this visit as March 12, 1699, whereas Burrus (1971:247, 413), noting the discrepancy, has it taking place on March 9. The discrepancy results from the use of different handwritten versions. The microfilm of the handwritten text used for this article, the same one transcribed by del Castillo and translated by Crockett and Karns, is from Manje’s book that was prepared later, whereas Burrus’ transcriptions are from a signed journal (see Burrus 1971:11–12 for a discussion of this). The inconsistency is irresolvable for the time being, but does seem to point to greater accuracy of the earlier version contained in the journal, which lends credence to the notion that an adobe structure was present at Guevavi in 1699.

This raises another important issue that bears on the topic of when and where the first church was built is that during this March visit, Manje described Guevavi as being “situated in a pasture land formed by the river” (Burrus 1971:247, 431). This topographic setting is not descriptive of the location where the ruins of the adobe structure and the native settlement are now situated. This inconsistency suggests that perhaps an adobe structure was present at Guevavi, but that Guevavi was located at the time on the floodplain, in a different setting than the one where the whitewashed structure is located. This explanation of relocation of the settlement would account for why a “new and neat little church” was constructed in 1701 and a new house and ramada were built in 1731
and 1732. The explanation of settlements moving to new settings is consistent with O’odham settlement patterns and has been suggested previously (Seymour 1989, 1997). Earlier Kino-drawn maps do show Guevavi on the west side of the river, and though it is on the east side by 1697 (Burrus 1965:plates VIII and IX), this shift is consistent with the notion that the native settlement of Guevavi moved at least once in the 1690s. Journal entries also suggest a move between late October 1699 and early April 1701. While league distances between San Cayetano del Tumacácori, Guevavi, and San Luis del Bacoancos remain relatively consistent for four trips from 1697 through October 1699, in April 1701 the distance between Bacoancos and Guevavi doubles from six to twelve leagues. This distance discrepancy suggests the settlement moved to the north from its original historically recorded location sometime during this 1699 to 1701 interval (Burrus 1971:217, 251, 276, 349, 379, 403, 431, 449–50, 461, 482, 511, 560; Karns 1954:94, 126, 136, 169).

Whether a house was built in 1699 before the structure(s) in 1701 may never be known, although it does seem likely from Manje’s topographic description and leagues traveled between settlements that Guevavi shifted to its presently known location between 1699 and 1701. This postulated shift in 1701 (or before) is consistent with the date when Guevavi was designated a cabecera, or head mission, for the area (Kessell 1970:22). Efforts to find the earlier site of Guevavi on the west side of the river have been unsuccessful to date, suggesting that either it may have been positioned near Kino Springs and destroyed by subsequent development, or it was in the floodplain. Many possible candidates for an earlier settlement are known on the east side of the river, including several loci within view and walking distance of the locus now being excavated.

A Note about Adobe-Walled Structures

It does seem apparent that throughout the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Arizona historic period, adobe structures were constructed in a fairly consistent manner in the Pimería Alta (Upper Pima area; northern Sonora and southern Arizona). The meager description of the “neat little church” at Guevavi suggests that it was not a normal-sized church, but was smaller than those at other key settlements; was whitewashed; and was made of adobe with a flat earthen roof that rested on wood beams. Repeated mention is made in other native settlements of an “earth-covered adobe chapel” (Burrus 1971:272) or “edificado
una capilla de adove y terrado” (Burrus 1971:508), of a “house of adobe with an earthen roof made by the Indians” (Crockett 1918:178), and an earth-roofed adobe house (Burrus 1971:275, 276) or “adove y terrado” Burrus 1971:510, 511). Apparently, these are descriptions of a rectangular adobe structure with an earthen roof supported by vigas (beams). Further reference is occasionally made to these being “beautifully painted” (Burrus 1971:277) or “ya acavada y pintada, con mucho adorno” (Burrus 1971:513), perhaps being whitewashed as indicated for the church or chapel at Guevavi.

Summary of Expectations

In order to argue that the archaeological structure at Guevavi is the historically referenced “new and very neat little church” several expectations that have been presented in the ethnohistorical record must be met. The feature must exhibit unique architecture that sets it apart from native structures. These architectural characteristics must be similar to those of other known adobe-walled structures constructed as churches and houses for the missionary and must be consistent with historical descriptions of adobe-walled structures from the time. There should be evidence of whitewashing. Chronometric dates must target the Kino period, and artifacts should be appropriate to the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century time frame. It will likely not be possible, however, to discern differences between other structures that may have been built at this time (such as a separate house, if ever found), owing to the imprecision of applicable chronometric dating techniques, and it cannot be known if other structures were similarly whitewashed. Archaeological data relating to this possible “neat little church” are discussed in the following sections in relation to expectations presented by the documentary record.

Archaeological Description

The stone and adobe foundation of the adobe-walled structure in this native locus at Guevavi is rectangular and about 3.5 meters by 5.25 meters (or 12.5 or 13 varas by 19 varas; figures 2 and 3) and is very different from native Sobaipuri-O’odham habitation structures. No entryway is apparent owing to erosion of all but the lower portion of the foundation. The eastern side of the structure is eroded down to a few centimeters
above the floor, and many of the rocks have dispersed as a result. It is assumed that the foundation was continuous around the perimeter of the room, that the threshold was established above the foundation, and that evidence of the entryway in the adobe wall has since eroded away.

The feature was constructed directly on the ground surface, with a rock-and-adobe foundation raised about 25 cm. The foundation and lower walls were constructed of cobbles and pebbles placed in adobe around the perimeter of the feature. A poorly defined 50-cm-diameter depression in the eastern third of the floor is more highly oxidized than the remainder of the floor, suggesting that it was a fire pit. No collar or adobe lining was apparent other than the adobe that had burned and melted onto the floor from the walls and roof. The floor was more highly oxidized on the east side of the balk than the west. Extreme root and rodent disturbance churned the fill and broke the floor. Consequently, thin slabs of pinkish-orange compacted earth, constituting the packed-down but unprepared floor, were found both in the fill and in continuous distributions, though broken, at the floor level itself. Artifacts, burned fill, and structural rocks had been drawn to elevations below the floor by roots and rodents.

Figure 2. Photograph of adobe-walled structure at Guevavi.
The fill was thickest in the western portion of the feature, reaching 35 cm where it was mounded near tree roots (figure 4), whereas on the east end the burned rubble fill was but a few centimeters thick. A layer of burned roof and wall fall was apparent throughout the lower fill, along with dense pockets of ash, burned daub, Whetstone Plain sherds (typical of the Sobaípuri), a few lithic artifacts, *Olivella* shell and clay beads, faunal bones (cow, rodent, small- and medium-sized mammal, bird), and botanical remains (tiny [amaranth?] seeds, corn kernels), along with numerous small triangular projectile points with concave bases—the last clustered in the northwest corner on the floor, in the lower fill, and under wall slump.

In some areas construction debris was dense, compact, and well preserved, whereas in other locations it had been broken and churned as a result of bioturbation. Throughout the roof-and-wall-fall stratum were cobbles, pebbles, and a few boulders that were covered on their undersides with a powdery white substance that was clearly distinct from calcium carbonate buildup (also found at the site). This unusual coating

*Figure 3. Plan of adobe-walled structure at Guevavi.*
is consistent with Kino’s request to whitewash the church and suggests that rocks were embedded in the wall and that those facing the interior and exterior were covered with whitewash (figure 5). Small BB-sized particles of sand and gravel were abundant in the construction debris stratum (some coated with the white substance), suggesting that these were size-selected in preparing the adobe. Similar compositional constituents (minus the whitewash) were found in the fills of native structures at Guevavi and at other earlier Sobaípuri sites as well, suggesting consistency in adobe composition.

The compact burned roof-and-wall-fall stratum was overlain by trash-filled sediment that relates to a later period of use (figure 4). This later trashy fill contained metal items, brown glazeware, porcelain, folded-rim sherds, late (mica-rich) O’odham plainware sherds, and a variety of other materials, all consistent with a post-1770 occupation (as has been documented at Guevavi).

Because of the degree of bioturbation few artifacts could be confidently assigned to a floor provenience. One exception was a cluster of
artifacts along the south central edge of the feature, adjacent to the wall. In a cluster were a flat rock that was ground and covered with a yellow pigment or mineral and three pieces of copper or turquoise. A cut and polished turquoise mosaic was found in the center of the floor, and one of the projectile points in the northwest corner was in floor contact. Many of the items in the roof fall stratum likely originated on the floor and therefore provide information about the use of the structure.

**Date for the Guevavi Adobe-Walled Structure**

As Kessel (1970:48) points out, it is not known what happened to the church built by San Martín and subsequently whitewashed at Kino’s bidding (nor for that matter, what happened to any structure that might have been built earlier). As of 1722 missionaries visited to say mass and baptize neophytes but they make no reference to such structures. Here is another area where the archaeological data can reveal clues not provided in the documentary record.

Because the feature burned, an ideal context is provided for establishing the time frame for its destruction. A luminescence date was derived from a burned piece of daub (adobe) in the lower fill. This daub was
mixed in the same fill with burned artifacts, rocks, and sediment and represents the roof and wall fall from the collapsed adobe structure. The luminescence sample of burned daub returned a date of AD 1656 to 1716 (Oxford #2548), placing it in the appropriate time frame to be the “neat little church” built by the Europeans. No other European structure is expected at this early date because no other structure is mentioned as being built before 1731, when Anza completed a replacement house for the expected missionary (Kessell 1970:43). (The possible exception is the one that may have been built in 1699, though we have suggested based upon a variety of evidence that this phantom structure was built in another location.) Note would have been made had another structure been constructed because of the expenditure involved, the use of military personnel to oversee the construction, and the desire to show that progress was being made on the frontier. Thus, the most reasonable interpretation of the AD 1656 to 1716 date is that it marks the destruction of this whitewashed structure concurrent with Father Kino’s presence in the area or shortly after his death. The destruction of the Kino-period church explains why a church is not referenced by Campos when he and an entourage of native officials visited Guevavi in 1722, six to eleven years after its inferred destruction date. The site continued to be occupied by native residents, and new recruits were brought into Guevavi from the West, ultimately changing the settlement’s ethnic composition. Life went on without “the neat little church,” though it remained a visible mounded feature of the site landscape for the duration of occupation at Guevavi.

**Comparison to Other Historic Sobaípuri Adobe-Walled Structures**

Only two other possible archaeological examples of structures of this adobe-walled, stone-foundation type have been identified in the literature, and both are on Sobaípuri-O’odham sites in the San Pedro River valley. Di Peso (1953) found and excavated an adobe-walled structure at Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam (hereafter, Pitaitutgam, AZ, EE:8:15, ASM; see below) near Fairbank (figure 6). This adobe-walled structure consisted of a 6.25 m by 6.70 m room (interior dimensions) with a single-tier stone footing (mostly cobbles with some pebbles set between) that was laid directly on a sterile stratum, as at Guevavi. The house pit was exca-
vated to 10 cm below the rock footing. “Crude, irregular bricks” that measured approximately 50 cm by 30 cm by 10 cm thick were used in the construction, forming 50 cm-thick walls with a 20 cm-thick mortar gap between them. The corners of the structure were poorly abutted and were filled with small stones and mud (Di Peso 1953:129). This construction anomaly may suggest that an old, dilapidated prehistoric structure was refurbished or that the Sobaípuri were unfamiliar with this building technique and needed to compensate for their error, as implied by Di Peso. On the other hand, in Sobaípuri houses, gravel and small pebbles were routinely incorporated into the interstices between rocks, presumably representing chinking or aggregate to strengthen the adobe. This seems to be a characteristic of Sobaípuri adobe construction.

Recent exposure and examination of the wall of the Pitaitutgam adobe-walled structure indicates a trench was excavated behind (on

![Figure 6. Photograph of west wall in plan view of adobe-walled structure wall cut by trench at Pitaitutgam (DiPeso’s fort).](image)
the outside of) the rock footing, and rocks were incorporated into the adobe, indicating that they are contemporaneous and part of the same building sequence. This construction trench was filled with puddled adobe, with flat-lying rocks added as part of the construction process. The adobe and rock seem to have functioned as a footer for the adobe wall, similar to the construction technique common among the Classic period Hohokam and Salado. This raises the possibility that a prehistoric adobe-walled structure was refurbished for use in the seventeenth century or that the Sobaipuri were actually Hohokam or Saladoan descendants and retained knowledge of this technique into the seventeenth century. The addition of the gravels and pebbles to the adobe at points of juncture seems, however, to be a distinctly Sobaipuri trait.

Like the structure at Guevavi, the floor was hard-packed, had a high clay content, and showed some evidence of burning. Another similarity is that the hearth was indicated by a simple depression in the floor, which measured about 50 cm in diameter, though the hearth at Pitaitutgam was situated closer to (but not in) the corner of the structure. Cow bone, a sheet of mica, Whetstone Plain sherds, and an iron knife blade were found by Di Peso on the floor near the hearth (see Di Peso 1953:plate 43b, 130).

The adobe-walled structure at Pitaitutgam has been shrouded in doubt and confusion because it is widely recognized that Di Peso (1953) mislabeled the site, thinking it was the historically referenced Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea. In drawing a connection between the documentary maps and the archaeological site, he argued that Kino incorrectly plotted the settlement south of the Babocomari River but that it was in fact north of that river, where Pitaitutgam is situated. There are no other drainages in this area that are reasonable substitutes, so in the absence of widespread survey that would have identified other potential candidate sites, his conclusion was perhaps reasonable. There is, however, a large site south of the river, which Seymour found in the mid-1980s and proposed as Kino’s Gaybanipitea, and this site (AZ EE:8:283, ASM) is situated consistent with Kino’s plotting. Earlier historic maps show a “Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam” in the general vicinity of Di Peso’s site and in appropriate relation to the tributary drainage (Burrus 1965:plate IX), and for this reason Seymour (1989, 1990, 1996, 2003a) has argued for this name assignment.

Pitaitutgam disappears off historic Kino-period maps as Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea appears, which indicates that perhaps the Pitaitutgam popu-
lation moved to the new location at Gaybanipitea. The similar number of structures at each of these two sites suggests this hypothetical move took place. Moreover, village drift is a well-documented process among the O’odham (Ezell 1961; Darling et al. 2004; Seymour, 1989, 1990, 1993a, 1997, 2003a, 2007b; Underhill 1939), so such a move would be consistent with O’odham settlement habits. With this map-documented move the new settlement retained the saint’s prefix (Santa Cruz), as was also common, because the prefix was apparently associated with the specific river valley segment in which the settlement was situated.

In order to date the abandonment of the adobe-walled feature at Pitaitutgam and assess the relationship of archaeological evidence to historical maps, tests were conducted in this already-excavated feature. It had not been backfilled, so it was relatively easily to identify small pieces of charred wood impressed into the floor near the hearth and walls. These were protected under a thin layer of water-lain sediment that had washed in from the adjacent backdirt piles that originated from and fully surrounded this adobe-walled structure. This charred material was not unexpected, given that Di Peso (1953:129) indicated that the adobe-walled structure had burned. The modern radiocarbon assay for Di Peso’s adobe-walled structure returned multiple-intercept confidence intervals of Cal \(AD\) 1650 to 1680 (Cal \(BP\) 300 to 260) and Cal \(AD\) 1730 to 1810 (Cal \(BP\) 220 to 140) and Cal \(AD\) 1930 to 1950 (Cal \(BP\) 20 to 0) (Beta-191654).

Multiple intercepts are common for this technique in the historic period and contribute to ambiguity regarding dating of known sites during this era (Seymour 2003b, 2005). Yet, a number of lines of evidence from this site and historic documents can be used to evaluate which confidence interval is most likely appropriate. The appearance of a site in this location relative to the Babocomari River on early Kino-period maps, its disappearance on later maps, and the nature of metal artifacts found within the feature all point to the first intercept (AD 1650 to 1680) as being the accurate intercept. An OSL date on a newly exposed Whetstone Plain sherd from inside one of the nearby excavated native structures (Structure 3) returned a date of AD 1564 to 1624 (Oxford Sample X2075).4

The existing confusion about Di Peso’s site and the adobe-walled feature is compounded by this early date because this adobe structure and the Sobaipuri-O’odham occupation there predate known missionary contact, which in southern Arizona, as noted, was initiated in 1691 by
Kino. This early occurrence of an adobe-walled structure is problematic because these adobe-walled structures are historically recorded as having been built specifically to house missionaries and to serve as places for masses.

Because this presumably European-influenced adobe-walled structure precedes known missionary activity in southern Arizona, its presence must be accounted for. Probably most relevant to this early occurrence is that Jesuits were among the Lower O’odham in Sonora by 1621 (Bolton 1948:I:110, 1960:18) and Franciscans were in New Mexico much earlier. Because of this missionary presence nearby it is not unreasonable to suggest that these natives built the structure at Pitaitutgam before the presence of a missionary in an effort to attract a priest and to signal allegiance or willingness to interact peacefully with the Europeans, an important signal given the violence involved in the Pueblo Revolt and Great Northern Revolt. The far-reaching influence of missionaries already in the field in neighboring areas could explain why Kino was so vigorously welcomed in the north. It is also known that Kino sent out runners with promises of gifts to attract the attention of natives beyond his active area of proselytism (Bolton 1948:I:112; Kessell 1970:21).

Returning to the topic at hand, at Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea, the structure built for the visiting missionary may be represented by the single small rectangular structure on the far western side of the site (Seymour 1989, 1990, 1996, 2003a). Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea (AZ EE:8:283, ASM) was recorded in the 1980s, along with twenty-four other sites on the upper San Pedro between about Fairbank and Benson (Seymour 1989, 1990, 1996, 2003a, 2004). This particular site is inferred to be the genuine Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea (Seymour 1989, 1990, 1996, 2003a). Though the structure has not yet been excavated, its dimensions can be mapped and are shown in figure 7. This rectangular structure at Gaybanipitea measures about 3 m by 5.5 m, much smaller than the Pitaitutgam example, but right in line with the Guevavi adobe. The similarity in structure size between Guevavi and Gaybanipitea should perhaps not be surprising given that the adobes were likely built within a decade of one another, but Pitaitutgam is still an outlier with respect to its unusually large size. Upright flat sandstone slabs have been exposed in the southeast corner of the Gaybanipitea example, providing a look at how the foundation was constructed (figure 8). This adobe-walled structure is the only feature of its type on the site. Though several prehistoric structures, including rectilinear ones, underlie the Sobaípuri-O’odham
occupation, none exhibits the morphological characteristics of this adobe feature or of Guevavi’s “neat little church,” which contributes to the notion that it is the “missionary’s” adobe house. Moreover, the feature does not disrupt the structure arrangement at the site, indicating an effort to integrate it into the community layout.

These adobe-walled features seem to have been consistently placed within each of the three sites (figures 9–11), a circumstance that seems to reflect the different times and circumstances under which they were built. At Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea deflation has exposed the outlines of most of the native structures so site layout is relatively easily mapped. The adobe-walled structure is situated near the west end of the habitation area, is aligned with native structures, and is positioned in the approximate center between two parallel rows of structures. Its placement was seemingly incorporated as part of the site-planning process and does not disrupt the distribution of native structures. The placement of the adobe-walled structure in the formal layout is consistent with the inference that occupation at Gaybanipitea commenced during the missionary period and that the natives welcomed the traveling missionary to their settlement, showing interest through their acts, which included the construction of this adobe-walled structure.

At Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam the feature is much larger but nevertheless is still well integrated into the settlement, fairly well aligned with the native structures. It too is positioned in an open area between two parallel rows of paired structures. The haphazard nature of the layout of some structures on the south and west sides of the site might be expected if the site grew through the gradual addition of structures, perhaps as people later reestablished themselves at Pitaitutgam, a scenario that would be consistent with the dates obtained from this site. The adobe-walled structure and the surrounding structures were constructed and abandoned too early to reflect an effort to comply with the Spanish program of reduction into larger more compact settlements, unless early influence from the south or east was more substantial than has been thought, which is doubtful. Other sites on the San Pedro and Santa Cruz rivers provide evidence that these compact planned settlements and the unique Sobaípuri site layout of parallel house rows preceded European presence and were an indigenous part of the Sobaípuri settlement system, and perhaps these adobe-walled structures were as well (Seymour 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2009a). These compact settlements lend credence to Marcos de Niza’s observations from 1539, wherein he noted that
Figure 7. Plan drawing of adobe-walled structure at Gaybanipitea.
a valley, seemingly the San Pedro (Seymour 2007c, 2009b), was well populated: “all is irrigated; it is like a garden,” with pueblos every mile or so (Hammond and Rey 1940:71–73). The pattern of landscape use described by Marcos de Niza is consistent with the dense distributions of Sobaípuri sites along this portion of the San Pedro River (and not on the upper Santa Cruz), and corresponds well with a field and irrigation system recorded nearby (Seymour 1990, 2003a, 2007c, 2009b).

At Guevavi the adobe-walled structure is situated in the midst of the native structures and on the highest ground. It seems positioned to command a view of the village and is reminiscent of a historical passage Father Och wrote in reference to another mission: “we influenced them to construct their houses in a complete square, one house next to another. Thus, in my mission I could see every doorway in the entire place from my window” (Treutlein 1965:151). At Guevavi, however, several houses that appear to postdate the adobe are arranged haphazardly around it, although excavations are not complete. The preserved

Figure 8. Photograph of corner of foundation of adobe-walled structure at Gaybanipitea.
Figure 9. Placement of adobe-walled structure within Gaybanipitea site layout.
Figure 10. Placement of adobe-walled structure within Pitaitutgam site layout.

Figure 11. Placement of adobe-walled structure within Guevavi site layout.
Guevavi site structure is distinctive, though the house alignments reflect one of the latest (late eighteenth century) phases of occupation, rather than the Kino-period layout. Native structures are very densely packed, indicating a defensive posture. Evidence of rebuilding is abundant, including superimposed house outlines, though only some structures exhibit long-term use and refurbishing. Thus, it is not possible to know how native houses were arranged during the Kino period at Guevavi, but they seem to have been situated in the same general area of the site as some of the latest structures, so the positional relationship between native houses and the adobe-walled structure was probably similar during the Kino period, although structures were likely farther apart.

**Interpretations**

The adobe-and-stone-walled structure at Guevavi fits well with descriptions of adobe houses with flat roofs noted in the documentary record for the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and it is similar in size to one found at Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea that was built around the same time. It is distinct from the native habitation structures constructed by the Sobaípuri and later O’odham groups who occupied Guevavi and other native sites of this period. Its unique character and the chronometric date derived from the buried roof and wall debris indicate that this stone-and-adobe foundation was a structure built during Kino’s time. For these reasons and because it was seemingly whitewashed, it is reasonable to infer that it is the “neat little church” constructed by San Martín. Without such a detailed historic record it would not be possible to suggest that this structure was built during Kino’s time. As Harlan (2007:513) notes, “Historians tend to compress time, while archaeologists are forced to look at longer spans, given the limitations in their data” and though the historian strives to achieve the most precise placements possible (and documentary sources may permit highly precise placement, even to the day, hour and minute) available dating techniques are not precise enough to pinpoint its destruction to an exact year. Still, the documentary record suggests that no comparable structure was again constructed until 1731 and that the ”neat little church” was probably not present in 1722. Thus there is only a fifteen-year period from its construction (1701) to the latest possible date for its destruction (1716). This interval is quite precise from an archaeological standpoint.
The house depression above the burned roof and wall fall contains native and European material culture indicative of a later period, suggesting that household debris accumulated here once the feature fell out of use, as is typical for Southwestern indigenous groups. The height of the mounded adobe and rock rubble indicates that the structure would have been a visible feature within the settlement for decades thereafter, so its disposition would not have gone unnoticed. Using the written record and what has been obtained so far from the archaeological record it is not possible to discern whether this excavated feature is the house or church or whether one structure was built to serve the dual purposes of house and church, although the latter circumstance seems to be the case as no other similar structure is discernable nearby. The translations can be interpreted either way, though only Kino mentions requesting that the church be whitewashed. It is also not possible to determine whether a structure was built to house the missionary in 1699, or even if the native settlement was at this specific location prior to 1701. However, the majority of evidence suggests that the first such structure(s) was built in 1701 at this site (AZ EE:9:132, ASM). Available evidence also suggests that the excavated feature is the “neat little church” referred to by Kino.

The issue of why the structure fell out of use and ceased to be mentioned by visiting priests has yet to be addressed. Historians (such as Kessell), have remarked at the odd fact that the small, neat church was no longer mentioned shortly after it was built and whitewashed. A luminescence date indicates that it burned sometime in or before 1716, explaining why Fathers Campos and Duran did not mention it during their 1722 visit and why in 1732 Father Grazhoffer had a new ramada constructed under which to say mass. There is no specific evidence to suggest the structure had fallen into disrepair, and one would not expect that it would have, given the short time elapsed between its construction and the latest possible year of its destruction. The structure did, however, burn, and the relative abundance of material in the lower fill and floor of the structure suggests that it burned catastrophically, with still-useable tools, minerals, decorative items, and food or seed inside. Some of the useable items included projectile points, which were clustered in the northwest corner. This distribution would be consistent with the points, hafted to arrows, being stored there, but it does not make much sense that a padre would have arrows. Alternatively, their presence very
likely suggests the reason for the burning of the structure, providing evidence of an attack, as is frequently alluded to in the documentary record of this period.

In this case the documentary record establishes a baseline of behavior that can be used to weigh alternative possibilities when interpreting the archaeological record. Attacks by hostile, unconverted natives of a variety of ethnic groups were recurrent at Guevavi and neighboring settlements. Some of these attacks were undertaken by disgruntled O’odham “witches,” medicine men, ousted leaders, and noncompliant contingents, and others by Apache and non-Apachean mobile groups (Kessell 1970:80, 108, 113, 114, 117, 122, 127, 136, 137, 143, 147, 165, 168, 190). One common outcome of these attacks was that churches and missionary houses were ransacked and burned (Kessell 1970:113, 114, 117, 136). Supportive archaeological evidence that Guevavi was the focus of hostile ire is provided by the abundance of burned native structures across Guevavi; though the latest arrays of structures are all that are preserved at this site, their condition does provide a glimpse into the results of such behavior after more than 225 years have elapsed.

The small triangular concave-base arrow points are consistent with either O’odham or Jocome/Jano (Canutillo complex; Seymour 2002, 2008a, 2008b) groups, but they are not typical of southern Apachean groups, nor are they the classic Huachuca (Sobaipuri) point. For these reasons it is inferred that the attackers were likely Jocome/Jano or O’odham (other than Sobaipuri). That the structure seemingly burned catastrophically also supports the notion that it was burned during an attack. The documentary silence suggests that the attackers were O’odham. The rebellious nature to the structure’s catastrophic end would explain why its disposition was not mentioned, because as Kessell (1970:50) points out, Kino did not tend to report on the negative, on things that might indict his O’odham in the eyes of authorities. A fallacy was maintained that the natives were welcoming, and an attack or defiant burning of the church—the symbol of church and crown—would be a disgrace, and would contradict the image that the natives were hospitable, humble, and meek. The importance of this documentary silence is revealed through the archaeological record suggesting that the omission reflected a whitewashing of social tensions and a denial of contradictions and unsolved conflicts (also see McKee et al. 1992).
The importance of this “neat little church” extends beyond the inferences that can be made regarding this specific historical event or the disposition of this specific structure. Both archaeological and historical information about Guevavi and the political climate of the time suggest an unceremonious end for this “neat little church.” These combined data provide a basis for identifying the archaeological signature of processes that have more widespread applicability including resistance as part of the colonization process. Guevavi’s “neat little church” seems to illustrate the ordinary and unremarkable archaeological signature of violence and rebellion, behavior that is known to have occurred but which seems to routinely defy definitive archaeological recognition and interpretation. It is no wonder that the Europeans who were touting a successful conversion and pacification did not mention the highly symbolic attack on this most holy of structures.

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Notes

1. Elsewhere Kessell (1970) and Seymour (1997, 2003a) have discussed the history of European contact at Guevavi so I will not recount this here. I do, however, review existing accounts of the adobe-walled structure built for the missionary, in order to place it in temporal and historical context.

2. Several other features that are presumed to be Sobaipuri adobe-walled structures have been documented on Sobaipuri sites on the San Pedro. These, however, are not widely known and have only been discussed in reports (e.g., Seymour 1990) and depicted on site maps prepared by the author.

3. Di Peso (1953) incorrectly referenced this site as Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea but in doing so suggested that the documentary records, including maps, were wrong. His rejection of documentary data rested on the notion that there were no other candidates for this historically referenced settlement, so Kino had to be wrong. Since then additional survey has been conducted, revealing a number of Sobaipuri sites along the San Pedro, including one that is in the correct geographic location relative to historic texts and maps to qualify as Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea. This site is of the correct time period and has the correct number of structures relative to the documentary record. Di Peso’s site, a multi-component site that dates earlier than Gaybanipitea, seems to be Santa Cruz del Pitaitutm, as referenced on earlier Kino-period maps, and seems to have been abandoned when Gaybanipitea was established. Therefore, there is no reason to continue following Di Peso’s misinterpretation of this site. Kino was not wrong on this account.

4. A complex series of occupations is suggested for this site. A later reoccupation is indicated by Athabascan-looking sherds, one of which was submitted for luminescence dating. This returned a confidence interval of AD 1854 to 1894 (Oxford Sample X2076b). A radiocarbon date from the mescal pit or roasting pit produced a calibrated date of AD 1640 to 1950 (Beta-191653), and a luminescence sample on a burned rock from the same feature produced a date of AD 1916 to 1936, again suggesting a late reuse of the site. A prehistoric occupation is suggested as well by structural features visible on the surface and clearly prehistoric sherds scattered throughout the site.

5. One possible explanation is that the structure was built for European visitors prior to Kino’s time. This is a potentially viable explanation because Kino was told that trade had occurred between the Sobaipuri-O’odham and the New Mexico colonists, presumably sometime after Oñate’s arrival (Bolton 1948:I:257), suggesting an earlier seventeenth-century date for initial contact with this valley and perhaps even with the occupants of this site. Also, military encounters occurred earlier than missionary activity. At least as early as the mid-1680s, for example, Capt. Pacheco Zevallos ventured north into Sobaipuri-O’odham territory, finding dangerous alliances between Sobaipuri-O’odham and mobile groups (Bolton 1960:247; Seymour 2007a). Of course, there were also unauthorized and unrecorded contacts with local natives by Europeans seeking trade opportunities, including exchange in human captives, especially avowed enemies and Nixora. It is also possible that an advance party conveyed information regarding
construction techniques prior to missionary insertion, or that native occupants or visitors transferred knowledge of these techniques from their contact with Europeans farther south or east, before Jesuits arrived on the scene.

6. The earlier-than-expected occurrence of this adobe-walled structure, of course, also begs the question as to whether these types of constructions were initially modeled after prehistoric structures rather than European ones (or whether a prehistoric feature was reused). It is possible that the natives built this structure for an entirely different purpose (such as for trade with the Hopi or Zuni, for housing these visitors, or as a council or rain house), and when Kino visited, he was pleased, thinking it had been constructed for him to rest in. This is not as outrageous an idea as it might sound, given the similar nature of prehistoric structures in this valley that are made with stone foundations and adobe walls. This notion should be seriously considered, because this feature at Pitaitutgam is larger than the other two known Kino-period adobe-walled features and it is square rather than rectangular. These attributes make it similar to prehistoric Classic period structures in the area. Moreover, a number of sites along the San Pedro contain unusual rectangular-looking features that could represent additional examples of this type of feature, suggesting that such structures had a long-standing role among the Sobaípuri.

7. Excavations of this feature are underway and will be reported in future publications.

8. Seymour (1990) has previously commented that Di Peso’s plan of Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam is somewhat incorrect. This assessment is based on a remapping of structural features on this site in the 1980s and again in 2007. Limited excavations confirm the identification of some of these additional alignments as structures. As noted, the range of chronometric dates from this site suggests it was occupied at many different times, perhaps explaining some of the peripherally placed structures.

9. Chapels often doubled as habitations for the priest and also as storage rooms for grains and other items. The hearth, ground stone, minerals, and charred seeds provide an indication that the structure may have been used for habitation and storage, perhaps serving the dual purpose of house and church for the missionary. Alternatively, it may have been taken over by natives for use as a habitation structure once it fell out of use as a church or between visits by the missionary.

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