A Jesuit Missionary in Eighteenth-Century Sonora

THE FAMILY CORRESPONDENCE OF *Philipp Segesser*

EDITED BY **Raymond H. Thompson**

TRANSLATED BY **Werner S. Zimmt** AND **Robert E. Dahlquist**

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For Molly, the rancher's daughter, who for three score
and more years has been my inspiration

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Preface

THE EXISTENCE OF THE FAMILY archive containing the letters of the Swiss Jesuit missionary Philipp Segesser was first reported in 1886 by a member of the Segesser family, who published a "modernized" German version of the longest letter (von Segesser 1886; Letter 58 in this study). However, Father Segesser's important commentary on mission life in eighteenth-century northwestern Mexico did not come to the attention of researchers of that region until Theodore Treutlein discovered a copy of von Segesser's publication in Bonn, Germany, in 1933 and translated it into English (Treutlein 1945).

In 1965 Gottfried Hotz, who had written a book on the Indian hide paintings that Father Segesser had sent to his younger brother, Ulrich Franz Joseph (Hotz 1960), alerted Bernard L. Fontana, then ethnologist on the staff of the Arizona State Museum, that there were many other letters by Father Segesser in that family archive (Thompson 2011) under the care of Hans Ulrich von Segesser, the great, great, great, great grandson of that younger brother. Hotz obtained permission from von Segesser for the Arizona State Museum to obtain copies of the letters. Microfilm copies were obtained from the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, but many were nearly illegible (Kessell 1970: 53). With the help of Wolfgang Lindig of the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe Universität in Frankfurt am Main and the support of the University of Arizona Foundation, photographic copies were made of the letters in the family archive (now in the Lucerne State Archive [Staatsarchiv Luzern]). Von Segesser graciously supplied photographs of the family portrait paintings. Lindig arranged for the translation of most of the Sonoran letters into modern German, and Daniel Matson of the Arizona State Museum produced a preliminary translation of them into English. Matson carried on an extensive correspondence with Lindig, and Lindig and I conferred regularly on Segesser matters.

In the summer of 1979 my wife and I traveled to France for our daughter Margaret's wedding, which gave us an opportunity to visit von Segesser in Lucerne and thank him for his support of our project. He and his wife welcomed us into their home, a magnificent baroque building completed in 1775 by Father Segesser's younger brother. We saw the Indian hide paintings that Father Segesser sent to that brother, which were the subject of the book by Hotz that had played an important role in the beginning of our project. We were given access to the family archive that contained material dating as far back as 1248, when the Segessers were smiths. We learned that the family name is derived from *seges*, an old German word for a scythe. We were shown the family coat of arms with a scythe and a horseshoe molded into the decorative plaster inside the house (Thompson 2011, fig. 1).

Matson had not translated the letters written from Europe and the Caribbean, so I discussed with Albrecht Classen of the University of Arizona German faculty the possibility of an accelerated program of translation. Although interested in the project, he did not then have the large amount of time required.

In 1997 Heiko Schmuck completed the formidable task of transcribing almost all of the letters from the handwritten script as part of the research for his biography of Father Segesser (Schmuck 1998, 2004). His excellent transcriptions and my retirement in 1997 made it possible to revive the project. A generous grant from the Southwestern Foundation for Education and Historical Preservation to the museum made it possible for Classen to use those transcriptions in a course on the translation of historical German documents (Classen 2012). In 2010 the photographic negatives of the letters in the Arizona State Museum photo archive were digitized, which greatly facilitated the resolution of many problems of transcription and translation.

The completion of this often interrupted, almost fifty-year-old project to present the letters of Father Segesser to both scholars and general readers (Thompson 2011) has been made possible by the expertise, generosity, and goodwill of many people, all of whom deserve much more than the sincere appreciation that accompanies this list: Diana Baijic, Martha Brace, Dale Brenneman, Michael Brescia, Dianne Bret Harte, Nancy Brown, Céline Bühlmann, Tony Burgess, Albrecht Classen, Alan Ferg, Bernard Fontana, Carol Gifford, Mary Graham, Linda Gregonis, Beth Grindell, Diana Hadley, Marlene Helm, Ansgar Hillach, Gottfried Hotz, John Kessell, Catherine Lehman, Margot Lindig, Wolfgang Lindig, Ute Lotz-Heumann, Julie Luchetta, Margaret Luchetta, Sarah Luchetta, Daniel Matson, Gerhard Meyer, Paul

Mirocha, Herbert Nickel, Gabrielle Piña, Charles Polzer, Amy Rule, Heiko Schmuck, Mariana Natalia Schmuck, Hans Ulrich von Segesser, Georgine Speranzo, Molly Thompson, Nadine Vonwyl, Kai Walter, Norman Ware, Jannelle Weakly, Richard Wiedhopf, Joseph Wilder, and David Yetman.

The translations presented in this volume are the work of Werner S. Zimmt and Robert E. Dahlquist. Zimmt, a retired chemist turned anthropologist, has produced an accurate and readable English translation of the sixty-nine letters written in German without sacrificing Father Segesser's style of communicating with his family. Historian Dahlquist, a former Jesuit and longtime student of the Jesuit missions, translated not only the seven letters written in Latin but also the many, often cryptic, phrases and comments in Latin that appear throughout the German letters. These translations are the result of detailed examination of the digitized original text and of the close and cordial collaboration among the three of us. We hope that we have enabled Philipp Segesser to communicate with modern readers in the same intimate and informal style with which he kept in touch with his loving family.

Finally, we are honored that Joseph C. Wilder has included this volume in his eclectic series of Southwest Center Books, which continue to inform and amaze readers about that unique land once known as northwestern New Spain.

—Raymond H. Thompson
January 2013

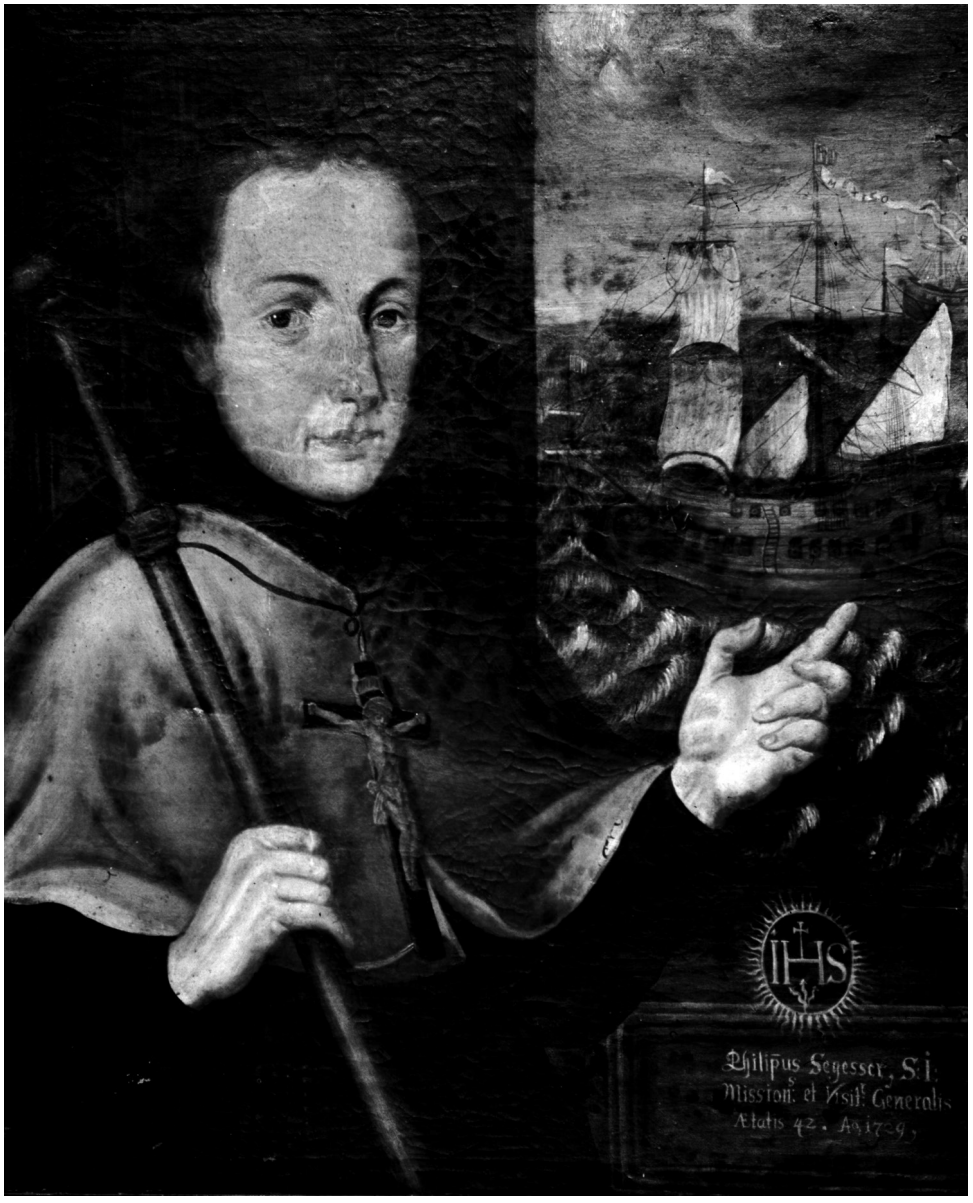

Figure 1. Philipp Anton Segesser, S. J., 1689–1762.
Courtesy of Hans Ulrich von Segesser, Arizona State Museum,
University of Arizona, negative.

The Missionary Career of Philipp Anton Segesser

IN THE VERY LAST YEAR of the seventeenth century, a ten-year-old boy in the city of Lucerne, Switzerland, announced to his parents that he wanted to become a Jesuit missionary saving souls in faraway lands. Inspired by the successes of Saint Francis Xavier (1506–1552) in India during the sixteenth century, Philipp Segesser was steadfast in pursuing this career goal. In 1708, after completing studies in the Jesuit schools of Lucerne, he entered the Jesuit college at Landsberg, Bavaria, as a novice in the Society of Jesus. He attended the Jesuit university at Ingolstadt and was ordained a priest in 1721. After several years of on-the-job training in Altötting, Neuburg an der Donau, and Straubing, he was assigned as a people's missionary at Ellwangen on the front lines of the Catholic Counter-Reformation in southern Germany.

During all his years of training, Philipp Segesser campaigned vigorously for an overseas missionary assignment, petitioning Superior General Michelangelo Tamburini for one in January 1717 and March 1719 (Schmuck 2004: 88–89). In 1726 he was selected to go to the Jesuit missions in Paraguay (Hausberger 1995: 298; Schmuck 2004: 93; Letters 13, 34), but that was not to be, as he sadly reported to his father (Letter 14). Unbeknown to young Philipp, his fate was being decided by events unfolding on the remote northern frontier of New Spain in northwestern Mexico, where Benito Crespo y Monroy was appointed bishop of Durango in 1723.

During a tour of inspection of the huge territory under his jurisdiction in 1726, Bishop Crespo discovered a severe shortage of missionaries in the Pimería Alta on the northern fringe of his diocese. He wrote to King Philip V of Spain on 22 August 1727 urging that three new missionaries be dispatched to northwestern New Spain. The king agreed and ordered Viceroy Juan de Acuña y Manrique to take appropriate action. On 27 April 1730 the viceroy instructed Bishop Crespo to establish three Jesuit missions in the Pimería Alta (Hammond 1929). As a result of this ponderous and long-distance

bureaucratic activity, that ten-year-old boy, now Father Philipp Segesser, was one of the three new Jesuit missionaries Bishop Crespo welcomed to Durango on 19 July 1731.

In May 1729 Father Segesser finally received word of his acceptance for overseas missionary service (Letter 20). He traveled through Munich to Genoa and on to Cádiz in Spain by ship along the Mediterranean coast, suffering terribly from seasickness all the way (Letters 21, 23). He spent more than a year in Spain, learning Spanish, waiting for a ship, and fulfilling the Spanish requirement that foreigners spend about a year being vetted in Spain before being allowed to travel to the New World (Treutlein 1937). He left Puerto de Santa María and the Bahía de Cádiz on 16 November 1730, passed by the Canary Islands, anchored briefly off Santo Domingo, spent three months in Havana, and finally arrived at Veracruz in New Spain on 19 April 1731. After the difficult trip over the mountains to Puebla de los Angeles and Mexico City, he traveled with Father Johann Baptist Gratzhofer and Father Ignaz Xaver Keller north from Tepotzotlán in central Mexico to Durango for the historic meeting with Bishop Crespo.

Although Father Segesser was very busy in Durango collecting material to transport to his mission, he took time out on 1 August, less than two weeks after being welcomed by the bishop, to write to his younger brother Ulrich Franz Joseph, city councilman of Lucerne (Letter 46). He joyfully reported that he was finally realizing his boyhood dream, a dream he had kept alive because once, while he was serving Mass at Ingolstadt, the Virgin Mary nodded twice when he asked her if he would be sent to the Indies (Letter 20). After more than six years of petitions (Letter 11), disappointments (Letters 13, 14), delays (Letters 26, 27, 30, 31, 34, 36, 37), and difficult travels (Letters 21–23, 37, 42), the ten-year-old boy in him could not resist the desire to share with his family the excitement and promise of it all. Thus began his thirty-one-year career as a Jesuit missionary in the Sonoran missions of San Xavier del Bac, San Ignacio de Cabórica, and los Santos Angeles de Guevavi in the Pimería Alta and, after 1734, at San Francisco Borja de Tecoripa and San Miguel de los Ures in the Pimería Baja, where he "served with distinction until his death" (Kessell 1970: 58).

Philipp Anton Segesser von Brunegg (fig. 1) was well prepared for his missionary career by the caring members of his old, patrician, wealthy, close-knit, and devoutly Catholic family (Schmuck 2004; Hausberger 1995). He was born on 1 September 1689 in the prosperous Swiss city of Lucerne. Its prosperity had come from its location on the trade route from Italy

through the Sankt Gotthard Pass to Flanders. It was an important Catholic city with close ties to the Society of Jesus and played a key role in the efforts of the Catholic Church to respond to the Protestant Reformation. The Jesuits established a school in Lucerne to serve students from all the Catholic regions of Switzerland and enjoyed lasting support from the community. The Jesuit schools in Lucerne not only educated many young men but also recruited candidates for the priesthood and for missionary service. Philipp Segesser was one of a dozen Swiss Jesuits who received their early education in those schools.

For many generations, Segesser men had distinguished themselves as public servants in Lucerne. For example, Father Segesser's grandfather, father, brother, and nephew fulfilled their patrician responsibilities as leaders there (Schmuck 2004). Segessers are first recorded in the mid-1200s as smiths, and the family name is derived from an old word for a scythe (*seges*). The Segesser coat of arms, molded into the plaster decoration of the Segesser mansion and displayed on the portraits of Father Segesser's father and uncle, feature a scythe (figs. 2, 5). When he wrote from San Ignacio (Letter 48) to ask his brother to send him scythes, he jokingly referred to them as the weapons of their coat of arms.

Philipp was the third of the seventeen children of *Landvogt* (canton administrator) Heinrich Ludwig II (1662–1728; fig. 2) and noblewoman Anna Catharina Rusconi (1670–1749; fig. 3). Only half of his siblings survived infancy and childhood, a sad statistic of the time. A member of his mother's family, Saint Nikolaus de Rusca (1565–1618), was an Italian martyr. Many members of Father Segesser's family were strong role models for his desired vocation within the church. Several of his aunts and uncles on both sides of the family were nuns or priests (Schmuck 2004: 72–74, 79).

This extensive intermingling of family and church defined the world of Philipp Segesser. He was closely tied to his family and, from the time he left home in 1708 to go to school in Bavaria until his death in Sonora in 1762, he carried on an extensive correspondence with family members. He frequently expressed his humbleness, his love for all his relatives, his devotion to his family, his respect for his parents, and his filial obligations. He often referred to a *Bindband*, a ribbon or other simple token of appreciation given to a newborn or a family member on the occasion of a birthday or a saint's name day, as a symbol of family bonding or solidarity among friends (Mannhardt 1858: 698–99). His use of formal language and honorific titles may appear to diminish the intimacy of his relationships and may seem excessive to modern

readers. However, one only has to recall that, throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, many women in the English-speaking world used mister-plus-surname to address or refer to their husbands.

Father Segesser, again confirming the formality of family relationships, addressed all his early letters to his father. After the death of his father, he wrote some letters to his mother. However, his younger brother, Ulrich Franz Joseph (1698–1767; fig. 4), became the head of the family and the recipient of most of the letters. Ulrich Franz Joseph followed his father's career in public service in Lucerne. He enjoyed great respect in the community and held several important offices, including mayor in 1759. He married Maria Catharina Amrhyn (?–1753) and had thirteen children with her, five of whom joined the church. Their oldest son, Jost Heinrich Ranutius (1728–1788), was Father Segesser's favorite nephew. A younger son, Franz Joseph (1737–1808), became a Jesuit. Father Segesser often inquired about his three younger sisters, Anna Maria Barbara Keller (1692–?), Maria Anna Francisca zur Gilgen (1704–1781), and Maria Elisabeth Schwytzer von Buonas (1707–?). He also regularly sent greetings to his mother's maid, Francisca, who had been his nanny.

Father Segesser was especially close to his father's youngest sister, Maria Lucilla (1671–175?), prioress and later abbess of the convent of Our Lady of Perpetual Help at Sankt Anna am Bruch in Sursee, north of Lucerne. His father's youngest brother, Jost Ranutius II (1669–1745; fig. 5), was canon at Beromünster. Father Segesser's oldest brother, Jost Ranutius III (1688–1740), was a priest at Mellingen, Ruswil, Hochdorf, and ultimately secretary at Beromünster. His oldest sister, Anna Elisabeth (1687–1755), was in a Benedictine cloister at Hermetschwil in Canton Aargau north of Lucerne, and a younger sister, Maria Francisca (1696–?), was in a Cistercian convent at Rathausen near Lucerne. This strong family tradition of serving the church was carried on by a nephew and several nieces and cousins.

There is some evidence that Father Segesser, as a member of a wealthy patrician family that generously supported Jesuit causes, enjoyed a somewhat privileged status. His age may also have been a factor because he was one of the oldest Jesuit missionaries to travel to the New World (Schmuck 2004: 103). He partially recognized at least the possibility of some advantages because of his family when he congratulated his brother on his election as *Ratsrichter* (council notary) in 1729, commenting, "nor will it be bad for me that my brother is so honored" (Letter 18). When he arrived in Cádiz from Genoa, he had letters in which the Spanish king granted him and his colleagues exemption from the lengthy quarantine imposed on all those

arriving in Cádiz (Letter 23). Despite the crowded living conditions for the missionaries waiting in Spain for transportation to the New World, Father Segesser was given private quarters (Letters 24, 26, 37). In Puerto de Santa María he commented that he had separate lodgings because "of the inclinations of our superior toward me" (Letter 37). He was granted an audience at the Spanish Court (Letter 29). In almost all cases he ascribed special treatment to the kindness or friendship of someone. Father Segesser was very status conscious and respectful of authority. He seemed either to have accepted special treatment as normal or to have been completely unaware that it was special.

In addition to his intimate relationship with his large and caring family, Philipp Segesser was fully integrated into the extended brotherhood of the Society of Jesus with its worldwide outreach. The Society was highly organized with a number of administrative officers (superiors) who normally served three-year (renewable) terms. Below the superior general and his staff in Rome, there were provincials in charge of provinces; rectors heading schools, colleges, and regional rectorates; procurators serving as treasurers and business managers; and visitors who were both inspectors and administrators (Polzer 1976). The Jesuits referred to themselves as Ours and proudly reported to the world on the spectacular successes of their far-flung foreign missions.

It was information about such successes in India that had inspired the ten-year-old Philipp to seek a career in overseas missionary activity. He was most attracted to the prospect of serving in the New World where German-speaking Jesuits were presenting the Catholic faith to the natives of Paraguay and New Spain (and on to the Philippines and the Marianas) at the same time that their French colleagues were laboring in a large area of northeastern North America (Parkman 1867). Although he had missed out on the opportunity to go to Paraguay in 1726, by 1731 he found himself on the way to the Pimería Alta to carry on the work begun there by Father Kino half a century earlier.

Eusebius Franciscus (Eusebio Francisco) Kino (1645–1711) was born in the village of Segno near Trent in the Italian Tirol and died in Magdalena, Sonora. He established missions in Baja California, carried out astronomical research and geographic explorations, demonstrated that Baja California is a peninsula and not an island, and founded a chain of missions in the Pimería Alta in present-day northern Sonora and southern Arizona (Bolton 1936; Polzer 1968). Today in Arizona and Sonora, Father

Kino is honored, even revered, as the most important European pioneer in the Pimería Alta (Schmuck 2004: 267). In 1965 Arizona placed a statue of Father Kino in Statuary Hall in the Capitol in Washington. The following year the Mexican National Institute of Anthropology and History (with the help of Arizona State Museum archaeologists) discovered Father Kino's grave in Magdalena and designated it a national monument (Fontana 1998; Polzer 1998). The Jesuits are currently petitioning the Vatican for the beatification of Father Kino.

Father Philipp (Phelipe or Felipe) Segesser mentioned Father Kino as the founder of the northern missions (Letters 48, 49) but provides no detailed information on him. He may have been unaware of Kino's work proving that Baja California was not an island (Letter 62). On the other hand, he may have been influenced by Father Agustín de Campos (1669–1737), a Spanish companion of Father Kino, who could not accept the idea that Baja California was not an island. After Father Segesser was installed by Captain Juan Bautista de Anza at the mission of San Xavier del Bac, he spent some six months with Father Campos at San Ignacio to learn to speak Pima and to become familiar with local customs and procedures (Letters 48, 50). Father Campos, the acknowledged expert on the Pima language among the Jesuit missionaries, took a liking to his younger colleague, whom he called "the ragamuffin native of Lucerne" (Kessell 1970: 33). Father Segesser cared for the aging Campos and was strongly influenced by him. Father Campos was beginning to show signs of understanding the needs of the Pima, which caused his superiors in 1736 to diagnose him with dementia and remove him from San Ignacio, where he had served for forty-two years (Dunne 1941; Brenneman 2014).

Father Segesser recorded his relationship to several of his Jesuit colleagues and mentioned or made reference to others. When possible, they are identified in the notes to the individual letters. Bernd Hausberger (1995) provides biographical details on all the German-speaking Jesuits in New Spain. Father Segesser's closest associate in the New World was another Swiss, Father Johann Anton (Juan Antonio) Balthasar (1697–1763), born eight years after Segesser to another patrician family in Lucerne. His father, Johann Karl Balthasar, was mayor of Lucerne, and his brother, Franz Urs, was a diplomat. He went to school in Italy, where he joined the Society of Jesus. After serving briefly at the Tepehuán mission of San Pablo Balleza in southern Chihuahua (Letter 25), he used his considerable administrative skills in the service of the Mexican province of the Jesuits. He was visitor general of the Northern Missions, the first foreigner (from a land not controlled by Spain) to be

appointed provincial (Schmuck 2004: 175), and, finally, procurator. Father Balthasar began to lose his sight in 1755 and was completely blind by 1758.

Father Segesser had traveled from Spain to New Spain with twenty-six other Jesuits, three of whom became fellow missionaries in Sonora. Father Johann Baptist (Juan Bautista) Gratzhofer (1690–1733; also Grazhoffer), born in Bleiburg, Austria, took his fourth vow in the Society of Jesus in 1728. He was one of the three new missionaries who reported to Bishop Crespo in 1731. After a brief period with Father Luis María Gallardi (1690–1736) at San Pedro y San Pablo de Tubutama to learn Pima and local customs, he was assigned to los Santos Angeles de Guevavi, where he became ill. Ten months later he died there in Father Segesser's arms (Letters 51, 58). Some say he was poisoned by the Pima, but Father Segesser suggested at the time that, since he was already sick when he arrived from Spain, it is more likely that he died of natural causes (Letter 51). However, Father Segesser later adopted the official position that Father Gratzhofer had been poisoned, largely on the word of an Indian sorcerer who confessed to it (Letter 58). It is entirely possible, though, that change of climate, food, and water, plus desert heat, and even possibly valley fever or malaria, were too much for a man already weakened by a prolonged illness.

The other member of the trio welcomed by Bishop Crespo was Father Ignaz Xaver (Ignacio Xavier) Keller (1702–1759). Born and educated in Olmütz in Moravia, he was assigned to the mission of Santa María de Suamca, where he served until his death. He also explored along the Gila River in 1736–1737 but in the following year was prevented by the Apache from reaching Hopi country.

Father Johann Kaspar (Gaspar) Stiger (1695–1762) was born in Kobelwald, Canton Sankt Gallen, in Switzerland, and was educated in the Jesuit schools of Lucerne. He had been a parish priest near Blatten, north of Brig, in Canton Wallis (Letters 38, 65) before joining the Society of Jesus. He traveled north with Bishop Crespo's trio and was assigned as an assistant to Father Joseph Neumann (1648–1732) at the Tarahumara mission of Caríchic in Chihuahua (Letter 52). After Father Neumann's death, Father Stiger was transferred to San Xavier del Bac and, in 1736, to San Ignacio de Cabórica, where he was stationed until he died. It is said that he spoke Pima with such a strong Swiss-German accent that only the Indians at San Ignacio could understand him (Hausberger 1995: 322). This problem may have influenced his decision to invite Father Segesser to preach at the dedication of his new church at San Ignacio (Letter 65). Father Stiger made a famous comment on the Sonoran

Desert when he requested, in a letter of 25 April 1737, that Father Procurator Joseph Herrera send the supplies earlier in the year because "in June the chocolate melts" (Schmuck 2004: 253).

Once Father Segesser and his colleagues had left family and friends to become missionaries in northwestern New Spain, they were confronted with the task of creating a new set of relationships with the native people there. For Father Segesser this meant dealing with two groups of natives, the Pima and the Indians, a distinction he regularly made (Letter 58). He clearly felt a special relationship with the Pima, who made up the native population at all five of the missions where he served and whose language he had learned. Although the colonial literature identifies several subgroups of Pima speakers, Father Segesser differentiated only Upper and Lower Pima and mentioned only the Papago (Tohono O'odham) as a separate group of the Upper Pima (Letter 58). By "Indians" he meant the already converted natives from various groups who assisted the missionaries in many ways and the Indian auxiliary troops attached to the Spanish military.

There were, of course, several other native groups in the region. Father Segesser was familiar with the Yaqui (Yoeme), to the south, where Jesuit missionaries had been active for more than a century. He experienced the full force of the Yaqui Revolt of 1740, the final battles of which were fought near his mission of San Francisco Borja at Tecoripa (Letters 54, 60, 61). Father Segesser observed differences between the Pima and their Opata neighbors and noted the existence of the Cocomaricopa (Marícopa) and Moki (Hopi) in Arizona (Letter 58). Although he cited events at Tepehuán and Tarahumara (Rarámuri) missions, he never mentioned the Tepehuán by name (Letters 25, 52). He referred to unnamed groups in Baja California (Letters 54, 58), but had little to say about them. He had plenty to say, however, about the Seri (Comcáac; Letters 50, 65, 66, 69, 71, 72, 74, 75) and the Apache (Inde; Letters 50, 60–62, 65, 68, 71), seminomadic hunters and gatherers who saw Spanish settlements and missions as a convenient resource to exploit. Father Segesser considered them to be evil allies of Satan (Letter 71). Father Adam Gilg provided valuable information on the Seri at the mission of Santa María de Pópulo (Di Peso and Matson 1965), but none of the Jesuit chroniclers offer much on the Apache other than condemnation of them as intractable enemies.

The Jesuit missionaries also had considerable contact with the Spanish ranchers, miners, merchants, soldiers, and administrators with whom they shared the northwestern frontier of New Spain. Contrary to the romanticized

popular perception of the missionaries, they and their converts did not live in a desert wilderness in splendid isolation from the rest of the world. They were fully integrated, by both policy and reality, into the social, economic, and political life of the Spanish empire (Hausberger 2000; Radding 1997: 66–99; Treutlein 1939). In fact, the Spanish Crown, which funded the Jesuit missions, had the rather unrealistic expectation that within about twenty years the Indians would be not only devout Catholics but also peaceful, productive, law-abiding, and tax-paying citizens.

The civilian population in northwestern New Spain was large enough to attract Franciscans seeking alms for their missions (Letter 58). Because there were few priests to serve the civilians in the huge diocese of Durango, Father Segesser baptized, married, confessed, consoled, and buried a fair number of his civilian neighbors (Letters 53, 54, 58). On the other hand, many of the Spanish ranchers and settlers had tense relations with the Jesuits because they coveted the land controlled by the missions (Letter 71). Although Father Segesser alluded to many of his own interactions with his civilian and military neighbors (Letter 53), he mentioned only a few of them by name. He served as executor of the estate of Governor Juan Antonio de Mendoza, who was killed by the Seri (Letter 76), and he frequently referred to members of the Anza family, on whom he depended for contact with his own family.

The Basque soldier Juan Bautista de Anza (1693–1740; Garate 2003) escorted Fathers Segesser, Keller, and Gratzhofer to their respective missions and helped them get established (Hammond 1929), took the ailing Father Segesser from Guevavi to his own home to be cared for by his wife, Rosa Beceno Nieto (Letters 53, 58), and facilitated Father Segesser's shipping needs through Juan Felipe de Anza (1618–1741), his brother in Cádiz (Letter 48 and many others). As captain of the Presidio de las Fronteras de Sonora established in 1690 near the Opata village of Cuquiárachi, Anza was responsible for the safety of the northern missions. Father Segesser referred to him as "my great benefactor and friend" (Letter 52). Anza was killed by the Apache near Suamca in May 1740 (Letter 60). No mention is made in the letters of the younger Juan Bautista de Anza (1735–1788), born when his father was at Fronteras, who gathered Spanish settlers from Sinaloa and Sonora at the Tubac presidio in Arizona to travel to California to establish San Francisco in 1776.

The Basque military elite in the province of Nueva Viscaya had a special relationship with the Jesuit missionaries, in part because Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), the founder of the Society of Jesus, had been a Basque

soldier. Both Anza and Agustín de Vildósola, another Basque soldier, were praised for their generosity to the Society in the report Father Segesser and his colleagues sent to Bishop Crespo in 1732 (Hammond 1929: 234). Vildósola's successful defense of Tecoripa during the Yaqui Revolt of 1740 (Letter 60) anchored a long-standing friendship with Father Segesser, one that held firm even after Vildósola was removed as governor of Sonora in 1748. Father Segesser may have officiated at the marriage of Vildósola's nephew Gabriel Antonio, who was stationed at Fronteras during 1754–1784, and Gregoria de Anza, the daughter of the elder Juan Bautista de Anza (Schmuck 2004: 181).

The relationship of the Spanish military and civil authorities with Father Segesser was also based on their appreciation of his ability to entice Indians who had defected from his mission back into the fold. He boldly confronted the wayward Indians, exposed the trickery of their nativistic leaders, treated them fairly, promised no punishment for returnees, and welcomed them back to the mission (Letter 58). Military action and punishment were reserved for the instigators of the defection, for he recognized the difference between a defection and an uprising. He reported on at least four such defections at San Xavier, Guevavi, and Tecoripa in an extensive account of the 1737 nativistic movement at Tecoripa (Letters 54, 58, 60). He may well have learned some of these skills during the time he was at San Ignacio learning Pima and local customs from Father Campos, who was renowned for his ability to negotiate with the Pima.

Father Segesser placed great importance on the Anza connection and, in more than a third of the letters written from Sonora, he urged his brother in Lucerne to use it for mailing and shipping. Despite the vagaries of transatlantic communication, he wanted very much to be in regular if not constant contact with his family as he faced the problems, frustrations, disillusionments, and dangers of missionary life. Correspondence with his family gave him the security of permanent membership in it and continuing participation in the caring family environment that he remembered from his youth.

The Segesser family was justly proud of its Jesuit missionary son and intensely interested in his life in faraway and exotic New Spain. Although none of the letters they sent to him have been preserved, his joyous and thankful acknowledgment of those delivered indicate that while in Sonora he received at least fifteen letters from home, usually within one or two years after posting. Chests of tools and seeds that he requested from his family took longer, often four to five years, and in one case fourteen. These delays in

transatlantic communications were not unique to the Spanish empire. In the 1740s, it was not unusual for a letter to take about half a year, sometimes much longer, to make its way across the shorter distance of the north Atlantic from Boston to London. Some of the letters sent in both directions were probably lost in transit. Father Segesser refers to several letters that he sent that are not in the family archive. He was well aware of the uncertainty of the mail system and was constantly seeking more secure ways of staying in contact with his family. He often told his family the same story in several letters in the hope that at least one of them would be safely delivered (Letters 50, 54), for example the defection of his flock in 1737 (Letters 58–61) and the astronomical events of 1736–1737 (Letters 50, 61, 62). The reality of the slow and unpredictable mail service was an impediment to his precise concept of time. For example, when he promised future actions, he added a caveat, "if it has not already happened," without explaining by the time this letter is received (Letters 2, 12, 17, 39, 61). Fortunately, seventy-six of his letters, both originals and copies, were preserved and are now in the Lucerne State Archive (Staatsarchiv Luzern).

The collection of letters saved by his family is unique, for there is no other large body of letters from a Sonoran Jesuit to his family. Hausberger (1995) has compiled a list of almost 1,900 archival documents produced by more than one hundred German-speaking Jesuits in northwestern New Spain, mostly administrative reports, official documents, inventories, and other bureaucratic items. Only 139 of those documents were letters written to family members, and the Segesser letters account for more than half of them. Hausberger lists twenty-six letters by Father Adam Gerstl (1646–1693) to his father that are included in the Welt-Bott compilation (Stöcklein, Probst, and Keller 1728). Next are the fourteen unpublished letters written in Italian by Father Johann Anton Balthasar to his father and brother that are now in the Lucerne State Archive. Droyce Nunis and Beth Schultz-Bischof (1982) have published ten letters that Father Johann Jakob Baegert (1717–1772) wrote in Latin to his brother and mother in Alsace. Ernest Burrus (1966; Dunne and Burrus 1955) has published a few letters written to family members by Father Lambert Hostell (1706–1779) and Father Anton Maria Bentz (1716–1766; also Benz).

Father Segesser's letters have an informal, conversational, almost chatty tone. He wrote in a stream-of-consciousness fashion that imitates the freewheeling nature of conversations among family members or very old friends. He changed his subject abruptly, often never returning to the

original topic. On the other hand, he did not hesitate to slip in an unrelated idea without breaking the rhythm of his discourse (Letters 58, 74). Many of the letters, especially the longer ones, were written over a period of time with frequent interruptions, which may explain some of the abrupt changes in subject matter.

He often wrote in a hurry and never seemed to have the time to review what he had written. His letters were composed with the expectation that the reader would draw upon the huge accumulation of family lore to figure out what he meant (Letter 58), just as would happen during a family conversation around the dinner table. In 1754, when he learned that the mansion being built by his brother in Lucerne was almost done, he wished that he might spend some time there enjoying conversation with his family (Letter 71). He alluded to a fair number of individuals, many of them priests or nuns known to the family, often without naming them or being very specific about them.

The informality of the letters allowed Father Segesser to make sarcastic and humorous comments, even to poke fun at himself. Soon after he began his missionary work, he wrote to his family about the demands of his job by describing himself as a "master builder of new straw-and-mud edifices; gardener, mender, and cook; herder of sheep, goats, and cows; sacristan; and teacher of heathens" (Letter 49). When he complained about the expenses of feeding and housing Spanish authorities, their soldiers, and their Indian auxiliaries without compensation, he compared his mission at Ures to popular taverns in Switzerland (Letters 70, 71). He joked that everyone in the region was heading to Ures to take advantage of his hospitality (Letter 73). He even mocked the motto of the Jesuits when he questioned whether all of it really was "for the greater glory of God" (Letter 74).

The private nature of the letters to his family made it possible for Father Segesser to go even further and offer critical comments. He suggested that the procurators failed to adequately supply the missions on the frontier (Letter 65); that after Father Balthasar became blind his assistants deceived him (Letter 74); that the Spanish Jesuits preferred the comfort of city life and looked down on the missionaries laboring on the frontier (Letter 52); and that the missions would be better protected if Spanish officials paid more attention to their responsibilities than to getting rich (Letter 75). He insisted that if Governor Mendoza had taken his advice against going into the Seri stronghold to negotiate with them, he would not have lost his life (Letter 76). He was unfairly critical of the missionaries who were driven out of the Yaqui area during the Yaqui Revolt for abandoning their missions instead of

staying as he had done at Tecoripa, where the battles that broke the revolt took place (Letter 61).

His letters have an intimacy that sets them apart from the official documents of the time, a record to which he also contributed. His many reports and official letters (Hausberger 1995 lists ninety-four) demonstrate that he was fully capable of producing carefully reasoned and logically constructed documents and that he had mastered Spanish bureaucratese. His letters home were informal and chatty on purpose. They are, therefore, a valuable picture of the Jesuit world in Sonora and an intriguing window into the personality of Philipp Segesser himself.

Bernard Fontana (1991) pointed out in his comments on Letter 58 that Father Segesser wrote "in an almost uncensored manner one would use to tell faraway relatives about life in a strange and distant place." He added that Segesser provided the best description available of the "exhausting routine of daily life in an 18th century Sonoran mission from the point of view of the missionary." In contrast, John Kessell (1970: 52) called the official report that Father Segesser and his colleagues wrote to Bishop Crespo nothing more than "pure propaganda [with] none of the hardship, none of the disillusionment, only the prospects of a harvest of souls."

The informality of the letters reinforces the idea that family and church were the two pillars of Philipp Segesser's existence. His frequent references to the saint's days of family members and his regular promise of prayers and Masses for them served to keep his family and faith intertwined. He also hoped that his friends and relatives would pray for him and requested over and over again that they do so. He petitioned them so often to "give me your prayers, because I need them," that Heiko Schmuck (1998) used that plea as the title of his master's thesis at Johannes Gutenberg-Universität in Mainz.

Father Segesser thought of the silver moon, which regularly appears in the sky over both Sonora and Switzerland, as a symbol of his ties to his family (Letters 47, 49, 55). He hoped that "the ever-returning messenger, the bright moon, will remind them nightly that they should not forget me in their prayers, just as I promise the same" (Letter 52). This intimate relationship between family and faith helps to explain the ardor, zeal, and determination with which he approached his missionary career and the almost fanatical devotion to the saving of souls under the most difficult of conditions.

The annual cycle of religious activities, both at home and in the missions, was anchored by the penance and fasting of Lent, preceded by the feasts and pleasures of Shrovetide, and followed by the Eastertide promise of

everlasting life. He often referred to Lent in his letters to family members, emphasizing its importance in their lives. The Jesuits in northwestern Mexico dramatized the passion, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ with ritual, music, and pageantry that impressed and pleased the Indians, who created a vibrant syncretism of Catholic and native practices. Several modern groups of Native Americans in both the American Southwest and the Mexican Northwest still perform ceremonies during Lent and Easter that were introduced to them by German-speaking Jesuit missionaries.

Father Segesser treasured his memories of Shrovetide (Letter 58), especially the feasts often held at the paternal family home of Schloss Buchen in Wolhusen just west of Lucerne. When he was in Seville, he made Shrovetide cakes for his German colleagues (Letter 32) and Easter eggs for the Spaniards (Letter 34). When Father Segesser learned that the mansion his brother had been building in Lucerne was completed, he wistfully commented on how much he would enjoy sharing a traditional Shrove Tuesday celebration there with his family (Letter 74).

His confidence in the idea that his caring family and omnipotent God would always be there for him was based on his firm belief in the influence of the will of God in all matters. He made frequent use of the phrase "I do not doubt" to reinforce that belief, especially when discussing events with happy outcomes (Letters 5, 6, 18). Yet he even ascribed the ravages of war in central Europe to the "unfathomable judgment of God" (Letter 55). On the other hand, perhaps he occasionally did have doubts and used the "I do not doubt" phrase as a kind of mantra to bolster his convictions. Even if he did not have doubts, he did not hesitate to advise God on how he might best achieve his will. When he was young, he suggested that if God did not want him to be a missionary or was displeased with his service on earth, perhaps the time had come to call him to heaven (Letters 6, 26). When he was sixty-eight, he ended a letter (74) to his brother with a plaintive comment in Latin addressed directly to God: "Alas, I am not allowed to go to You, oh Lord."

When he was adversely affected by floods (Letters 60, 61), defections of his flock (Letters 58, 59), and attacks by Indians (Letter 71), he blamed the "wretched archangel" Satan (Letters 49, 71, 75), although even then the will of God was involved. Toward the very end of his life, Sonora was beset with Indian raids, loss of livestock, destruction of churches, failure of crops, hostility of settlers, defection of Indians, health problems, and political conflicts, documented in a 1760 report that lists 107 "disasters" that Sonora suffered in the mid-eighteenth century (Sheridan 1999: 237–59). However, Father

Segesser persevered, consoling himself with the firm belief, perhaps in resignation, that everything only happens according to the will of God.

However, these powerful spiritual influences could not overcome the fact that managing a mission in northwestern New Spain was a demanding, exhausting, and totally down-to-earth job. The mission may have been a vehicle for religious conversion, instruction, and worship, but it could not function successfully as a religious institution if it were not largely self-sufficient. When a group of Indians was settled around a church to form a mission, a complex economic and social institution was created. The labor of the Indians was needed for the building of churches as well as for the farming and ranching activities that provided the food for the missionary and his staff (Letter 58); for his Indian wards (Letter 53); for the many visitors (Letters 65, 73); for less fortunate and less productive missions such as those in Baja California (Letter 54); and for exchange with miners and other local groups.

The missionary was, in fact, the manager of two large enterprises, one religious, the other secular (Letter 53). He had to supervise the fairly large number of Indian assistants needed to carry out these responsibilities. On the religious side there were *temastianes*, catechists involved in the religious instruction of children, and *fiscales*, officials who took care of the church. On the secular side, there were farm managers who oversaw the Indian workforce and *jueces*, officials who maintained civil order (Polzer 1976: 42–47). Father Segesser described in detail the nature of this burden and its negative impact on his own spiritual life (Letter 58).

This was definitely not the kind of activity the young Philipp Segesser had in mind when he campaigned so eagerly for a missionary assignment, even though the Father Provincial of the Upper German province had tried to warn him by commenting "you know not what you seek" (Letter 58). Father Segesser admitted that one of the reasons for his choice of a religious career was his lack of interest in either business or agriculture (Letter 58). Fortunately, his deeply spiritual outlook was matched by a totally practical view of the world around him.

As soon as he realized that he was responsible for the economic as well as the spiritual success of his mission, he found himself in a somewhat difficult situation. He had arrived in the Pimería Alta with vestments and vessels for his church as well as bedding and chocolate for himself, but not much that would help him manage the secular affairs of his mission. He was not the son of a peasant family accustomed to solving problems with whatever meager resources were available, but rather of a wealthy urban family that

had the best technology of the time at its disposal. He hastily turned, almost in desperation, to his family (Letter 48) with a lengthy, unrealistic list of equipment that would allow him to take advantage of that superior technology. The family responded, but it took six years for that equipment to arrive, and in fairly poor condition (Letter 56).

He also became quite entrepreneurial, asking for a scythe for cutting wild hay and a churn for making butter and cheese, both rare in Sonora and very valuable for barter (Letter 58). He noted that making cheese was an appropriate activity for a Swiss (Letter 48), but he never reported that he was successful in his dairy project. Father Ignaz Pfefferkorn (1725–1795), a Rhinelander, admitted that his own halfhearted attempt to make butter had been a failure (Treutlein 1949: 102). On the other hand, Father Segesser also asked for equipment and recipes for making traditional Swiss cookies and pastries (Letter 48), demonstrating that, like expatriates everywhere, he wanted to bring to his new home some of the familiar features of the life he had left behind.

The long list of needs that Father Segesser submitted to his family suggests that, while he and other missionaries were fully prepared for their zealous goal of saving souls, they were ill prepared for the reality of life in the Sonoran desert. Although they did introduce European crops, animals, practices, and ideas, most of the crops harvested and the technology used to produce them were Native American, not European (Reff 1991: 254–57).

Despite this dependence on local crops, Father Segesser did not fully appreciate the importance of the food value of wild plants. When his Indians slipped away to eat the roots and fruits that he thought of as starvation food (Letters 54, 58, 59, 64), he barely admitted that they may have been seeking the pleasure of some traditional wild food (Letter 53) to supplement the bland mission diet of boiled maize with bits of beef (Letters 53, 54, 58, 59, 64). More importantly, he failed to realize that they might be turning to the resources of the desert to overcome the severe food shortage at the missions caused by the droughts and floods of the 1730s (Brenneman 2014). He recognized and appreciated the obvious and fairly abundant desert food, such as the fruit of the organ pipe cactus (pitahaya) and the prickly-pear cactus (tuna), as well as mesquite bean-pod flour (Letters 53, 58, 64), but seemed less well informed on the other wild food resources of the region (Hodgson 2001).

Father Segesser frequently referred to the importance of an abundant harvest of grain, especially maize, as well as the produce of the gardens and orchards (Letters 50, 53, 58, 62). He listed fruits and vegetables that were

grown (Letters 50, 58), but he gave no details on them. The lists of seeds he requested from his family (Letters 48, 62) may tell us more about the gardens of central Europe of this period than those of the Sonoran missions (Schmuck 1998). In discussing the gardens, he emphasized the difficulty of maintaining the plants that had to be watered by hand with water brought from nearby streams (Letter 58).

He complained in many letters about the loss of livestock to Seri and Apache raiders, but he had little to say about how the livestock contributed to the mission economy other than to mention that sheep were more valued than cattle (Letter 58). Although he noted that beef was consumed (Letter 67), even from wild cattle (Letters 61, 75), he emphasized that the Spaniards ate little beef in either Spain (Letter 34) or Sonora (Letter 58). Because of the problems of preservation, most meat was dried and salted for later use (Treutlein 1949: 100). It was boiled with maize to provide the daily staple for the mission Indians. After the Mass for his deceased mother, he gave a much-appreciated gift of up to a quarter of beef to attendees (Letter 67). Moreover, the missions often supplied the military with cattle to be issued as rations to the soldiers.

Father Segesser made no mention of the value of hides and only a brief reference to tallow (Letter 58), both of which were essential to the mining industry. Barnet Pavao-Zuckerman (2011: 11–20) has found zooarchaeological evidence of rendering to produce tallow at missions in the Pimería Alta. Both hides and tallow, as well as beef and grain, were traded to the mines for silver needed to buy expensive consecrated wax for altar candles, linen cloth to make clothing for the Indians, and tobacco and gifts for the Indians (Letter 58). Richard Henry Dana (1840) reported in *Two Years Before the Mast* that hides and tallow from Mexican ranches and missions in Alta California were being shipped around the Horn to New England well into the nineteenth century. Although many things were made at a mission, Father Segesser mentions only soap, for which the ash of the paloverde tree was preferred, and vinegar, made from mulberries and mescal (Letter 58).

Every mission needed structures, at the very least a church and a residence, not only at the *cabecera* or main mission but also at the *visitas* or dependent communities. The three new missionaries who had been welcomed by Bishop Crespo reported to him that the first order of business at their new missions had been the construction of temporary buildings (Hammond 1929: 228, 232). Father Segesser explained that the houses built in Sonora had walls of sun-dried mud bricks called adobes and flat roofs (Letter 58). He insisted

that his newly built residence at Tecoripa have a sloping roof to better shed the torrential summer rains, a simple practical concept that many a builder in today's Sonoran Desert has yet to embrace. He also had a wall built around the perimeter of the mission compound to provide a first line of defense against attacks by Indians (Letters 66, 72). Because many churches had been destroyed during the Yaqui and Seri hostilities, he designed and built a fortified church and associated buildings at the visita of San José de los Pimas (Letters 64, 65), although he did not specify what innovations were involved.

Practical decisions made on the spot in the field were essential to the efficient management of the frontier missions. The missionaries needed to be able to respond to the many unknown problems created by the ever-changing conditions in northwestern New Spain. However, the rules that governed every aspect of a Jesuit's life greatly reduced the needed flexibility. The rules were designed to help each Jesuit live up to his vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity (Polzer 1976). Such rules probably worked reasonably well for the many Jesuits teaching in the cities of New Spain, but they made life difficult on the frontier.

The first rules for Sonoran Jesuits, written in 1610, were modified and expanded so many times that some rules became contradictory (Polzer 1976: 39–58). The missionaries were expected to maintain good relations with their Spanish neighbors, especially the officials and soldiers. Frontier hospitality required that a drink of chocolate be offered to all guests, but in 1715 Father Procurator Alonso de Arrivillaga noted that the cost of chocolate was the largest expenditure for the missions and ordered moderation and care in the selection of recipients (Polzer 1976: 101). Although Father Segesser complained about the large number of guests (Letters 58, 65, 66, 73) and the cost of the chocolate (and sugar) involved (Letter 58), he never once considered violating the code of hospitality on the frontier as a solution to the problem.

Self-reliant missionaries like Father Segesser recognized these problems, especially when charitable and compassionate behavior made some bending of the rules necessary (Letter 58). When they had to take some independent action, they may have taken refuge in the traditional, perhaps apocryphal, response: *Obedezco, pero no puedo cumplir* (I obey, but cannot comply). After all, Saint Ignatius himself is reputed to have concluded his lengthy and detailed instructions to the India-bound Saint Francis Xavier with, "Of course, if none of this works, you will have to try something else."

For example, Father Segesser had no qualms, other than the need for discretion, about asking his brother for a gun to protect the livestock from predators (Letter 48), even though he knew that a Jesuit was not allowed to have firearms (Polzer 1976: 74, 98). He regularly insisted that his brother should send requested items or gifts from family and friends through Felipe de Anza, not only because Anza was so trustworthy but also to avoid accusations regarding his vow of poverty. The Spanish king provided each mission with three hundred pesos (thalers to Segesser) plus fifty more for travel expenses, but this amount was totally inadequate (Letter 48). The rules allowed a Jesuit to accept additional alms, but under very strict conditions and limits to ensure that the funds received would not provide personal luxuries. When Father Segesser was in Bavaria, he had written to his father to ask for money to pay for activities associated with his first Mass, but did so outside the Jesuit mail system in order to avoid problems with his superior (Letter 3). He wanted also to bypass the Jesuit mail system for the shipment of goods to him in Sonora because he feared that other Jesuits would look upon the items involved, especially religious ones, as common property of the Society and take whatever they wanted (Letters 59, 65, 66, 72). He did, of course, entrust letters to his friend and fellow Lucerner, Father Balthasar, in Mexico City (Letters 59, 61).

Although the exchange of gifts is one traditional way to reinforce family solidarity, Father Segesser was not always able to reciprocate because of his vow of poverty. He often apologized for this problem (Letters 47, 55), especially when he was in training in Bavaria (Letters 1, 2, 5, 6, 12, 14). He did share with his family some holy oil he received at the time of his first Mass (Letter 7). He was pleased when he was in Spain to have access to many rather exotic items to send to Switzerland, such as a parasol from China via the Philippines (Letter 27), religious objects and rings with magical powers (Letter 29), and various substances of supposed medical value (Letter 29). He was especially interested in medicinal items, partly because of his own problems with a delicate stomach and seasickness, and partly because of a desire to provide his family with new and unusual items of supposed curative value (Letter 28) or protection against poison. Years later when in Sonora, he sent his brother the three painted hides that he called curiosities (Letters 74, 75, 76), two of which are now in the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe.

In general, however, the most important thing he sent to his family from faraway lands was information. He was a curious and perceptive observer and was anxious to share his observations with his equally curious family. He sent his mother a list in Spanish of the cargo that had arrived in Puerto

de Santa María from New Spain (Letter 38) along with a translation into German that was really an explanation of the uses of the exotic goods on that list. He wrote Letter 58 in order to satisfy his uncle's oft-mentioned curiosity. He also wanted some information in return. Although he was a long way from Switzerland on the northern frontier of New Spain, he was intensely interested in world affairs, especially events in central Europe (Letters 52–55, 60–65).

His descriptions of activities in Spain and of botanical curiosities such as buckwheat in Tirol (Letter 9) and palm trees in Seville (Letter 34) provide a preview of the keen observational skills that later served him so well when he reported on the land and people of northwestern New Spain (Letter 58). Although his curious nature enabled him to offer insightful observations on the behavior of others, whether in Spain or Sonora, he was unable to understand or relate to the cultural differences he encountered. Despite his fascination with all things Spanish, his delight with the richness of Spanish culture (Letter 25), his amazement at the exuberance of its religious life (Letter 34), and his admiration of the orchards and gardens (Letter 24), he found himself at odds with many Spanish practices (Letters 26, 43, 53). He did not like Spanish cooking (Letters 24, 33), architecture (Letter 43), and social pretensions (Letter 24). He was disdainful of what he perceived to be the laziness and uncleanliness of the Spaniards themselves (Letters 24, 28).

The Jesuit missionaries, Father Segesser included, were trapped in the ethnocentrism of their time. Pope Paul III may have determined that the Native Americans had souls and were worthy of receiving the Christian faith, but it was difficult for many of the Europeans in contact with Indians to understand or accept that concept (Letter 58). Father Segesser compared them to unreasoning cattle (Letter 49). The Jesuit missionaries had a "lack of interest in or a lack of capacity to fathom the viewpoints of the Indians with whom they were working [because they] were steeped in a particular world view to the extent that they were unable to make contact with any other [set of values]" (Spicer 1980, 309). For example, when Father Campos began to demonstrate some cultural sensitivity, his superiors could only understand it as a kind of dementia and failure to abide by his vow of obedience (Brenneman 2014). The Jesuits attempted to bridge this cultural gap by seeing themselves as rational beings working against all odds with unreasoning creatures whose reluctance to comply with the demands of the missionaries was explained as laziness influenced by Satan's unceasing effort to thwart the will of God.

However, when the relatively stable relationships of mission life were disrupted by hard-to-explain problems such as sickness, the whole system of mutual accommodation was threatened. Eighteenth-century Europeans were not only unable to explain many of the health problems they experienced (Letter 34), but they were also still encumbered by some very medieval baggage. They often turned to poison as a major cause of illness, and much effort was devoted to finding possible antidotes, such as the Saint Ignatius beans, bezoar stones, and *goma de Sonora* that Father Segesser sent to his family from Spain (Letter 29). The poisoning was often blamed on witchcraft, an instance in which European beliefs converged with those of the Indians (Polzer 1976: 44–45; Sheridan 2006: 44). Poisoning by witches or sorcerers became a favored explanation for illness even when simpler and more rational reasons were available. It became part of the local lore imparted to new missionaries when they were berthed with veteran missionaries to learn the Pima language.

Even though Father Segesser thought at the time that Father Gratzhofer died at Guevavi of natural causes (Letter 51), he later claimed that his death was caused by poisoning by an Indian sorcerer. When Father Segesser himself became ill at Guevavi, poisoning by an Indian was blamed (Letter 52), even though he admitted that his brother may have been correct in suggesting that the drastic change in climate was perhaps the cause of his illness (Letter 58). Malaria (Kessell 1970: 56) and valley fever may also have been involved. He was impressed by the confession of the Indian culprits (often obtained by the lash) and by the objects removed from him and others (Letter 58). In his own case, he even reluctantly accepted the idea of remote causality, which had long been rejected by the theological philosophy (Letter 52) he had studied so well in Ingolstadt and in which he was called to test students in Puerto de Santa María (Letter 34). At other times, though, that formal training and his keen observational skills overcame his cultural attitudes toward witchcraft. When he visited a hilltop cave with an Indian to see the devil's hideout complete with pieces of the devil's skin, he reported seeing only fragments of the skin of a bird (Letter 58). It is clear that although he strove to be a rational being, he could not escape the idea of poisoning by witchcraft that he had inherited from the Middle Ages.

Father Segesser had difficulty in seeing the health and religious practitioners and hostile political leaders of the Indians as anything but agents of Satan (Letters 49, 75). Despite his zeal for saving souls and converting the heathens, he had no use for apostate and renegade Indians, especially Seri

(Letter 50). He failed to display any Christian charity toward them when he hoped that the Spanish soldiers would eliminate the problem. He expressed theological as well as cultural concerns about the African slaves he saw first in Havana (Letter 43) and later in Mexico (Letter 58).

Despite his belief that the Indians were more like wild cattle than reasoning men, despite the frequent damage to his mission by both Mother Nature and hostile Indians, and despite personal problems of health and mobility, Father Segesser held himself responsible for the physical and spiritual well-being of his flock. He saw himself as a loyal servant of God on earth carrying out the often hard-to-understand mandates of an all-powerful deity. He used that sense of obedience and submission to God's will to help him overcome the many disappointments he experienced.

Father Segesser's belief in the ultimate control of God in all things resonated with the popular eighteenth-century view of the world and the life upon it as an unending continuity powered by repeating cycles of activity. A year was not just a sequence of twelve months but a progression that had a beginning, a middle, and an end and that was replaced by another over and over again (Letters 2, 25). The ever-returning moon served as a symbol of the revolving nature of life (Letters 47, 49, 52, 55). Goethe's use of the cyclical concept of life in many of his poems attests to its enduring popularity, as illustrated by these lines from "Unbegrenzt" ("Unlimited"):

> Das du nicht enden kannst, das macht dich gross, . . .
> Anfang und Ende immerfort dasselbe,
> Und was die Mitte bringt ist offenbar
> Das was zu Ende bleibt und anfangs war.
>
> That you cannot end is what makes you great . . .
> Beginning and end forever are the same;
> And what the middle brings is often
> what remains at the end and was in the beginning.
> (Author's translation)

For many in the eighteenth century, these views provided new and more secular ways of coping with the ever-present mysteries of life, but for Father Segesser they were just further reinforcement of his faith in the continuing presence of the will of God.

His conviction that God's will controls everything was both reinforced and challenged by events surrounding his assignment to the mission of San Xavier del Bac in 1731. He was proud to have been given this remote northern frontier mission named after his favorite saint, but confused by an event that preceded that decision. Months before that assignment was made and while he was still in central Mexico preparing to travel north to a mission not yet identified, a Jesuit whom he did not know gave him a slip of paper with the words: "San Francisco Xavier de el Vac en Pimas de Sonora." This simple act held great symbolic significance for Father Segesser, for it was the life of Saint Francis Xavier that had inspired that ten-year-old boy to want to be a Jesuit missionary. He shared this strange set of circumstances with his brother in a letter from San Xavier in which he enclosed that slip of paper (Letter 49). Although somewhat bewildered by the seeming improbability of it all, he finally accepted it as yet another mysterious example of the constant presence of God's will in his life.

Father Segesser died at the age of seventy-three in Ures on 28 September 1762 and received last rites from his successor, Andreas Michel (1732–?) from Bohemia. His death, five years before the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767, saved him the humiliation, suffering, imprisonment, and death experienced by the deported Jesuits (Dunne 1937). His letters to his family provide details on Jesuit mission life in northwestern New Spain and information on travel and communication in the eighteenth century. More importantly, however, they offer fascinating insights into the otherwise inaccessible mindset of this deeply spiritual and humbly practical Swiss man who spent thirty-one years fulfilling the long-ago dream of that ten-year-old boy, by braving the harsh climate, personal isolation, separation from family, and physical dangers of the Sonoran Desert to bring to its inhabitants the salvation promised by the risen Christ.

About the Translation

FATHER SEGESSER'S FAMILY SAVED SEVENTY-SIX of his letters and copied many of them to share with friends and relatives. All but three of the letters are original documents in Father Segesser's handwriting. Letters 50, 58, and 61 exist only as copies. There are both copies and originals of Letters 19, 23, 34, 42, 46, 55, and 73, and the copies are faithful duplicates of the originals. English translations of the letters written by Father Segesser, forty-one from central and Mediterranean Europe and thirty-five from the New World, are presented here. Most of the letters were written in German but seven were in Latin (Letters 18, 19, 22, 25, 28, 30, 57). The Latin letters often include a sentence or two in German. The German letters contain biblical allusions, aphorisms, comments, and other material in Latin.

Father Segesser was writing during the long period when German speakers were waiting for Konrad Duden to standardize their spelling and regularize their grammar. He wrote in complete sentences with full punctuation, but because paper was scarce and expensive he did not use paragraphs. We have presented the translations in paragraph form to make them more readable. Because his spelling of names of people and places is creatively inconsistent, modern spelling is used. Some place-names are reproduced as he wrote them with the modern version in brackets, which are also used for simple identifications. Most place names are shown on the maps. His own parenthetical statements are shown in parentheses, and the underlined phrases in the translations record his emphasis.

Editorial comments, explanations, identifications, and interpretations are restricted to the notes to the individual letters. Information on German-speaking Jesuits (Hausberger 1995), officials in northwestern New Spain (Barnes, Naylor, and Polzer 1981), saints (Farmer 1992), plants (Hodgson 2001; Turner, Bowers, and Burgess 2005; Vaughan and Geissler 1997; Yetman 2007), trees (Felger, Johnson, and Wilson 2001), animals (Hoffmeister 1986),