Pedro Pino
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“Entangling Alliances”

**Governor Pino** would have been in his mid-sixties in 1857. He must have been secure in his belief that the United States would honor his people’s holdings. He had invested more than ten years of negotiations in guaranteeing Zuni land claims. Every indication would have suggested that his people’s land would be safe and his diplomacy would end in success. His people’s friendliness toward the whites would be repaid. But things began to deteriorate toward the end of the 1850s. Whites were moving into the area in greater numbers, although they still did not encroach on Zuni land. And the Navajos were becoming bolder and bolder. Pino continued on, patiently dealing with all the new interlopers.

While numerous newcomers came through Zuni territory in 1857, the most memorable event must have been Edward F. Beale’s road-building effort. Along with the command were seventy-six camels, being tested by the army for use in the deserts of the American Southwest. We have no record of the Zunis’ reactions to the cavalcade, but some Indian villages in the region mistook Beale’s company for a circus.

At Zuni Beale met with Governor Pino and, like those before him, began to negotiate for supplies. Beale was able to obtain seven hundred and fifty pounds of corn for each one of his camels, or twenty-eight and a half tons. It is again evident that the early American explorations of the region would have been much more difficult without the help of the Zunis.

Though the Zunis had sufficient corn to trade to Beale, they were by no means having an easy time during this period. Beale passed on to the Colorado River and returned via Zuni in the
summer of 1858. On that occasion, he reported that “here I bought corn, of which these Indians have plenty, for our mules. They [the Zunis] were all in great trouble, the Navajos having stolen one hundred and fifty of their horses.” Despite the fact the Navajos were raiding the Pueblo, Beale was able to report that fine crops were being grown by the Zuni people, including extensive wheat fields at Pescado, which Beale passed on his way to El Morro.189

American emigrants to California began to try the route which led through Zuni. In July of 1858, one of these groups hoped to follow Beale’s route across what is now Arizona. One of the members of the group commented on the situation at Zuni Pueblo when they passed through, reporting that the Zunis “raise much wheat, corn, beans, pumpkins, melons and stock—so much that they have a surplus to sell to the American Army.”190 The author, John Udell, also said that the Zunis were assisting the government in the war against the Navajos. Obviously Governor Pino was continuing to educate various Americans by explaining the history and present situation at the pueblo. Udell also reported that the Zunis claimed to have a grant for their pueblo which dated from the seventeenth century.

The Udell train didn’t make it across the western desert beyond Zuni. They were attacked by Mohaves and had to limp back to the pueblo, arriving on October 20, “in a starving condition.”191 The Zunis nursed them back to health, providing bread, beans, “fine” pumpkins, and a large room where they could recuperate from their ordeal. Udell remarked on the hospitality of the Zunis and also reported the first evidence of a permanent trader at the pueblo.

Ezra Bucknam was the trader, who was described by Udell as an “American, from the Eastern States, and . . . quite an intelligent man—a trader with these Indians. He acts in the capacity of interpreter for us.”192 Bucknam wrote to the officials at Fort Defiance describing the emigrants’ condition and the efforts of the Zunis to help them recover. Then, apparently at the prompting of Governor Pino, Bucknam reported a problem that the Zunis were facing. He said that “several days ago a Navajo came in here and said his people would in a few days bring in a captive they had taken from here about a month ago on the 6th. Three Navajos
came to the Mountains bordering this valley on the north and made a signal. The captive at the same time they turned loose who came safely home.” Evidently the show of good faith by this group of Navajos did little to influence the hearts of the Zunis, for “nine Pueblos immediately set out and they say they shot one of the Navajos through the belly, but did not get him.”

It is interesting that the Zunis had a completely different attitude toward another Navajo who wished to come and live at the pueblo and evidently wanted to be adopted into the tribe. Bucknam also questioned the authorities, on behalf of Governor Pino, about the possibility of allowing this Navajo to join the tribe. “There is a ranch,” Bucknam wrote, “somewhere to the northwest of here some 25 or 30 miles where several families of Navajos live.” Though the mileage is incorrect, Bucknam is likely referring to Ojo del Oso, or Bear Springs, in the Zuni Mountains, where the Zunis had allowed a small group of Navajos to settle. “One of these Navajos,” Bucknam continued, “has been here several times since the commencement of the war to obtain permission of the pueblo to bring his stock and live here. The Pueblos have asked my advice about it and I advised them not to permit it, as the war is declared against the nation and they cannot contract peace with any part of it without making themselves responsible (will you please give me your views upon this point?).”

Bucknam translated the reply of the commander in charge of the Navajo campaigns, Lieutenant Colonel Dixon Stansbury Miles, for the governor of the Zunis. Pino heard a blunt report from Miles.

You state you have a Navajo settlement near you; get the Zunians to break it up and kill all the warriors. I would like the women saved for I believe now through them only can I obtain peace, and I would like you to instruct the Zunians, I want all the women brought in here as prisoners, not to kill them. That the Zunians and Coyoteros are invited to war on these Navajos, until I say stop—strip them of everything and kill all they catch. Keep them running.

So Pino was told it was not all right for the tribe to accept refugees. The government still had not learned that the Navajos
were not united under any one leader, that there were many groups scattered over an area of northern New Mexico and Arizona under several different heads. The Navajos in question probably had never been at war; otherwise the Zunis would not have allowed them to settle on their land. The Zunis were told to kill all Navajos. But the Zunis’ beliefs would not allow them to follow these orders from the United States, and Governor Pino, as we shall see shortly, was put in a position of defying the government’s orders.

For trader Bucknam, it was “love at first sight” with a woman among the emigrants who were recuperating at the pueblo. Udell reported that on November 1, 1858, he married Mr. Ezra Bucknam to Miss Adaline Daily. Mrs. Bucknam would later cause considerable trouble for Pedro Pino and others at the pueblo, but in the meantime all was bliss. Following the wedding, the emigrant group minus Mrs. Bucknam, after fourteen days in the Zunis’ care, returned toward Albuquerque.

Throughout that year, 1858, the Zunis were allied with the United States in a campaign led by General Miles. Although the Navajos could attack the Pueblo Indians for years on end, and the government would not respond, when the Navajos stole the horse of an officer of the army, a war was likely to start. Apparently the government responded to deprivations by the Navajos against only a select few. Although the grievance in 1858 was certainly a great deal more serious than a stolen horse, reports of the war indicated the government’s attitude toward New Mexico’s Indian population.

The 1858 campaign was precipitated when a Navajo rode into Fort Defiance and shot, in cold blood and for no apparent reason, a young black slave belonging to one of the officers. The army responded. William P. Floyd, a surgeon under Beale who was stationed at Fort Defiance, recorded some terse words about the army in his diary. “Congress,” wrote Floyd,

had better disband the Army, dismiss all Indian agents and let out keeping the Indians quiet by contract. As the Post Office is managed, it would have money and be more efficiently done. The life of no citizen is protected by the Army and the death of none has been avenged by it. The Navajo war, it is true, was caused by an Indian killing a negro, but he belonged to an offi-
cer of the Army and was private property, not a citizen; so much for the army.197

The 1858 campaign began in September, and the principal guide and leader of the Zuni contingent was identified as José. This was likely José Maria, who was called the first war chief of Zuni for many years but whose real title was probably head priest of the bow. José Maria led the troops for some time as Miles’s progress ebbed and flowed. On September 24, 1858, an account by Indian Agent S.M. Yost was published in the Santa Fe Weekly Gazette. Yost’s smug account went as follows:

The principal guide of the troops is a Pueblo Indian from Zuni. It was with some difficulty at first that any one of the Pueblos could be obtained. Finally this one consented. He is a small, erect, well-formed Indian and wears his thick raven hair hanging down to the middle of his back. He now is dressed up in citizen costume, including hat and shoes, and is withal a rather noted personage. In the scout to the Canon de Chelle [sic] one of the prisoners taken was handed over to the Mexicans and the guide to be disposed of. It was agreed that Zuni should be the executioner. The Navajo was soon placed at a short distance off, when Zuni raised his old flint lock fusee to do his duty. Navajo appealed—O don’t kill me, my friend! Zuni very gravely responded—Por que, porque?—why not, why not? This very rational and reasonable question not being satisfactorily answered to Zuni’s notions of the ethics of war, he took deliberate aim, and sent a leaden messenger through Mr. Navajo’s brain, thus ushering his untutored spirit into the blissful regions of the great hunting ground. Zuni was very much delighted with the amusement, and says he will be made a big chief when he returns home.198

Yost’s account deserves some attention. Beginning with his description of José Maria, Yost reveals some of the basic misconceptions and prejudices of the Americans. Yost correctly states that the Zunis did not want to be involved in the alliance and that there was “some difficulty” in getting Maria to join the campaign. Then Yost describes Maria. He reports that Maria was “dressed up in citizen costume.” Had Yost been more informed, he would have said that the citizens of the territory were largely “dressed up in
Zuni costume”—cotton had been grown in the pueblos for centuries. When the command ordered Maria to execute a Navajo, Yost deemed it important to comment on Maria’s “ethics of war.” Finally, Yost displayed all of his prejudice in his description of the Navajo’s death. “Amusement” is Yost’s word, and it aptly describes the flight of fantasy in his rendering of the scene.

In October of 1858, a party of one hundred and sixty Zunis, led by Governor Mariano and four war captains, joined the Miles command, giving as their reason for going to war “to get back their loot and stolen horses.” There are several explanations for the apparent break in Pino’s long term as governor of Zuni. It may have been that Pino was removed from office by the caciques because they did not approve of his policies—the record indicates that Pino consistently took the peaceful option when confronted with diplomatic alternatives. It may have been the consensus among the caciques that war was necessary, and so a more militant leader was made governor. Another possibility is that Pino was ill and unable to do a proper job with the heavy responsibilities of the governor. Or it may have been simply that the U.S. authorities gave an incorrect title to Mariano. It was not uncommon for Pueblo Indian leaders to be called “governors” no matter what their real title was. In fact, the recording of Indian names by whites was so haphazard in those days in the territory that Mariano may also have been José Maria. The latter is the more likely possibility. At any rate, the break in tenure for Pino was brief, and he was back as governor within the year.

There was considerable action during the 1858 campaign, for which the Zunis received both praise and condemnation. About midmonth in October, a party of three hundred Navajos attacked twenty-five soldiers near the mouth of Conyoncito Bonito. The Zunis, who were camped nearby, came to the troop’s assistance and drove the Navajos off, for which they were commended by the authorities. During the engagement, the Navajos had three men killed but escaped with sixty-two army mules. The army had two killed and four wounded, but if the Zunis lost anyone, it was not reported.

During the entire campaign of 1858, the Zunis captured a hundred horses and five head of cattle and killed one Navajo,
while reporting only two wounded among their ranks. The one hundred and sixty Zunis burned the village of Navajo leader Manuelito, where they captured the Navajo ponies. But Miles criticized the Zuni soldiers for not following his orders. The record shows that the Zunis inflicted all the damage on the Navajos during this conflict, and Miles may have been revealing his frustration when he criticized their troops.201

Between twenty and sixty Navajos were killed during the 1858 hostilities. Late in the year, an ill-advised armistice was hastily arranged between the Navajos and the United States, and then another treaty was signed. The negotiations and the treaty were ill conceived and badly executed. Again the Zunis were not even consulted—although they had sent their own men to fight beside the white soldiers. And again the United States, through this treaty, intended to give land which belonged to the Zunis, their allies, to their enemies, the Navajos.202 Though the document was as worthless as the other treaties with the Navajos, the agreement naturally incensed Governor Pino.

In 1859 Beale was again out on a reconnaissance, this time to find a wagon road from Fort Smith to the Colorado. Udell’s company of emigrants joined Beale, making another try to reach California. Several weeks before reaching the Pueblo, Beale sent two wagons ahead to Zuni to obtain corn. Beale anticipated trouble in obtaining the supplies but in fact acquired a sufficient quantity 203—two wagon loads of the Zunis’ “splendid crops of corn.”204

Knowing he would be back through the pueblo, Beale had left some goods with Governor Pino the year before. The Zuni governor greeted Beale as he arrived. Beale reported,

The old governor met me in the town with many compliments and congratulations, and bearing in his arms a box containing my “artificial horizon” [ surveying equipment? or maps?] which I had left with him in passing last winter. He told me the charge had been a great burden on his mind, and he was glad to be rid of the responsibility; rewarding him with several blankets and numerous pieces of calico, I sat down in his house to hear the news.205

Beale’s advice to Governor Pino differed greatly from what Miles had told him the previous year. Beale reported that Pino
“had a long list of grievances. The United States had persuaded him into an alliance with the troops as auxiliaries in the late war with the Navajos; his people had fought with our troops side by side like brothers; the United States had found it convenient to make peace with their enemies, and had left their auxiliaries the prey of their powerful and numerous foes.” Beale responded: “I told him I thought it served him right for meddling in things which did not concern him, and warned him for the future to avoid all entangling alliances.”

Although it was up to Pino to decide the proper political course of action for the pueblo, the government was not making it easy. First, the army went to considerable effort to involve the Zunis in the military campaign, and then a commander of the same army told Pino it had been a mistake for him to allow his people to be implicated. The government would continue to work at cross-purposes at Zuni (and with other tribes) for the next hundred years: giving contradictory advice and orders; encouraging, consciously and unconsciously, divisiveness among members of the community; and making it almost impossible for the tribe to make the correct political decisions.

But Beale praised Governor Pino before he left Zuni. His tribute to Lai-ii-ah-tsai-lu also contradicted his previous criticism about Zuni trade: “I have given this letter to the governor of this Indian Pueblo, it being my third visit and being dealt fairly with by him and his tribe, always willing and ready to trade on reasonable terms, I recommend all Americans to do him justice, and be honorable in their trading with him.”

Almost with the clockwork of the natural seasons, the Navajos attacked Zuni again in the spring. The attack came in March 1859, and perhaps it was this attack that prompted the killing of a Navajo who visited the pueblo the same spring. In August the Zunis reported another raid in which thirteen head of oxen and cows were stolen by Navajos and driven into the Chusca Valley. United States troops were unable to retrieve the cattle. In fact, the army found itself unable to provide the protection for Zuni for which it was obligated. And Zuni itself, by diverting its attentions to provide farm commodities for the troops, was less prepared than it should have been.
The Navajo Indian agent, Alexander Baker, aware that the army was not doing its job, informed Governor Pino that he should kill any Navajos in the area. In a letter to his superior, Baker described his discussions with Pino: “I have given to the Governor of the Zunia Indians written permission to kill all the Navajos that go among them without a written passport from me; first to order them to leave their place; then, if they would not go, to put my request in execution, that will be the best way to protect themselves and their property. The Governor tells me they [the Navajos] never come there that they don’t steal something when they leave.” Baker also reported that Navajo leader Zarcillos Largos was present when Pino was given this license.

The Zunis were evidently still successfully protecting their borders in 1859. During that year, a concerted effort was made to determine the main positions of Navajo occupation. One party, led by Captain O. L. Shepherd, explored the southern area of Zuni territory. After traveling through the area of the Zuni Salt Lake and Rito Quemado, Shepherd concluded his report by stating, “Judging from the absence of signs on the route from the Acoma Mountains to the Pueblo of Zuni, the Navajos do not frequent the region south of the Zuni Mountains, although the climate is warm and the pasturage abundant during the winter months.”

While the Zunis took care of themselves, the army was losing patience with the Navajos. By the end of 1859, the Navajo agent, having tried everything he could think of to force that tribe to comply with its treaty obligations, applied to the military commander to use force against them.

At the pueblo, other problems were receiving the attention of the governor and secular authorities as the year ground to a close. Trader Bucknam and his wife raised a stir over an incident at the store. It was reported that Zunis and Apaches visiting the pueblo to trade for goods would while away the hours drinking and smoking in the trader’s backroom. On January 26, 1859, Ezra Bucknam accused Zunis of “an attempt to outrage the person of Mrs. Bucknam.”

The commander of Fort Defiance acted quickly, hurrying to Zuni and arresting two men. The Zuni prisoners were manacled
and taken over the long road to Fort Defiance. Then an investigation took place. The Navajo agent reported that Adeline Bucknam had apparently stepped outside for a breath of fresh air as the various men smoked and drank in Bucknam’s back room. One of the Zunis stepped out as well and approached her. He placed a hand on her shoulder and said, “Muy bonita mujer” (literally “very pretty woman”).

“This,” the Navajo agent concluded, “seems to be the offense.” Surely Governor Pino must have wondered at the American way of justice. When the New Mexico superintendent of Indian affairs determined that Bucknam was at Zuni illegally, carrying out an illicit business, he decided the penalty should be removal. This much was good, but Bucknam continued to trade with Pueblo Indians. He was allowed to move and open a new store at the Pueblo of Laguna!
“Indian Altar and Ruins of Old Zuni.” This lithograph from a drawing by Baldwin Möllhausen depicts a shrine on top of Dowa Yalanne, near the ruins of the village there used by the Zunis from 1680 to 1692 as a defensive refuge after the Pueblo Revolt. The image accompanied a report by Thomas Ewbank in the *Reports of Explorations and Surveys to Ascertain the Most Practicable and Economical Route for a Railroad, 1853-54*, published by the 33rd Congress, 2d Session (S. Doc. 78) in 1856.

Looking southeast from Zuni Pueblo towards the Zunis’ sacred mesa, Dowa Yalanne, ca. 1879. Photograph by John K. Hillers. National Archives, 106-IN-2384CF.
Half of an 1873 stereoscopic image of the Pueblo of Zuni by Timothy O’Sullivan, when with George M. Wheeler’s Corps of Engineering expedition.

Seated on the left, Patricio Pino (Ba:lawahdiwa); on the right, Pedro Pino (Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu). Photograph taken at Zuni in 1879 by John K. Hillers. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, 2255A.
Patricio Pino (Ba:lawahdiwa), son of Pedro Pino, and governor of Zuni when this photograph was taken (probably 1882) by John K. Hillers. National Anthropological Archives. Smithsonian Institution, 2230A
“Zuni Sacred Spring.” The spring was inundated by a dam built by the United States government in the early twentieth century. This lithograph accompanied a report by Thomas Ewbank in the Reports of Explorations and Surveys to Ascertaining the Most Practicable and Economical Route for a Railroad, 1853–54, published by the 33rd Congress, 2d Session (S. Doc. 78) in 1856.

“Plan of a Zuni Cornfield” by Frank Hamilton Cushing, 1884. Note intricate use of check dams to move water throughout the field. The inset in the upper right illustrates Zuni prayer sticks and the inset at the bottom shows a Zuni praying to consecrate the field. From Cushing, Zuni Breadstuff (New York: Museum of the American Indian, 1920).
A Zuni “waffle garden.” From a stereoscopic photograph taken by Timothy O’Sullivan in 1873. Vegetables such as peppers, onions, and garlic were grown in these carefully tended gardens, watered by hand. Photograph National Archives, 77-WF-41.
“War Chief of Zuni Indians” (possibly José Maria) in 1873. From a stereoscopic photograph by Timothy O’Sullivan. National Archives, 77-WF-44.
A Zuni war-victory dance, as photographed by Timothy O’Sullivan in 1873. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, 02410300.