



A Frontier Documentary: Sonora and Tucson, 1821-1848

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When Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, citizens and missionaries in the northwestern reaches of the new nation were without the protection of Spanish military forces for the first time. Beset by hostile Apaches and the uncertainties of life in a desert wilderness, these early Mexican families forged a way of life that continues into the present day. This era in the history of southern Arizona and northern Sonora is now recalled in a series of historical documents that offer eyewitness accounts of daily life in the missions and towns of the region.

These documents give a sense of immediacy to the military operations, Indian activities, and missionary work going on in Tucson and the surrounding areas. They also demonstrate that Hispanic families maintained continuity in military and political control on the frontier, and clearly show that the frontier was not beset by anarchy in spite of the change in national government. In the forty chapters of translated documents in this collection, the voices of those who lived in what is now the Arizona-Sonora border region provide firsthand accounts of the people and events that shaped their era. These documents record such events as the arrival of the first Americans, the reconstruction of Tucson's presidio wall, and conflict between Tohono O'odham villagers and Mexicans. All are set against the backdrop of an unrelenting Apache offensive that heightened after the departure of the Spanish military but that was held in check by civilian militias. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction in which historian Kieran McCarty provides background on the documents' context and authorship. Taken together, they offer a fascinating look at this little-known period and provide a unique panorama of southwestern history.



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