



The Pueblo Indian Revolt of 1696 and the Franciscan Missions in New Mexico

J. Manuel Espinosa

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The Franciscan letters and related documents, translated into English and published here for the first time, describe in detail the Pueblo Indian revolt of 1696 in New Mexico and the destruction of the Franciscan missions. The events are related by the missionaries themselves as they lived side by side with their Indian charges. The suppression of the revolt by the Spaniards, and the reestablishment of the missions, was a turning point in the history of the Southwest.

The New Mexican colony had been founded and settled in 1598 and had endured until 1680, when an earlier Pueblo Indian revolt had forced the Spaniards to retreat south to El Paso. In 1692, Governor Diego de Vargas led a military expedition into New Mexico that met virtually no resistance, convincing him that he could return and reconquer and resettle the region for Spain. In 1693, after a bloody battle at Santa Fe, the Spanish colony was reestablished in the midst of the concentration of Indian pueblos along the upper Rio Grande. It was then that hostile Pueblo Indian leaders, recalling their victory in 1680, secretly plotted the revolt that took place in 1696.

J. Manuel Espinosa has written a superb introduction placing the Pueblo Indian revolt of 1696 in historical perspective and presenting the important events recorded in the documents that constitute the major part of the book. The letters and writs, by mission friars and Spanish military authorities, reveal the agonizing decisions that the colony of priests, soldiers, and farmers faced in meeting the challenge of undaunted Indian leaders. The documents also contain information on the pueblos and Indian life not found in any other source.

This book presents a remarkable view, from the Spaniards' perspective, of the clash of cultures in the pueblos, as well as insights into the causes and results of the Pueblo revolt. The documents contribute greatly to our knowledge of events in northern New Spain that proved very significant in the development of the region. No other work deals in such detail with this period in New Mexico history or provides such broad documentary coverage.

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