



# Beliefs and Holy Places: A Spiritual Geography of the Pimería Alta

*James Griffith*

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**The region once known as Pimería Alta**—now southern Arizona and northern Sonora—has for more than three centuries been a melting pot for the beliefs of native Tohono O'odham and immigrant Yaquis and those of colonizing Spaniards and Mexicans. One need look no further than the roadside crosses along desert highways or the diversity of local celebrations to sense the richness of this cultural commingling. Folklorist Jim Griffith has lived in the Pimería Alta for more than thirty years, visiting its holy places and attending its fiestas, and has uncovered a background of belief, tradition, and history lying beneath the surface of these cultural expressions. In *Beliefs and Holy Places*, he reveals some of the supernaturally sanctioned relationships that tie people to places within that region, describing the cultural and religious meanings of locations and showing how bonds between people and places have in turn created relationships between places, a spiritual geography undetectable on physical maps. Throughout the book, Griffith shows how culture moves from legend to art to belief to practice, all the while serving as a dynamic link between past and future. Now as the desert gives way to newcomers, Griffith's book offers visitors and residents alike a rare opportunity to share in these rich traditions.

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