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Sources of Rebellion: Indian Testimony and the Mission San Gabriel Uprising of 1785

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Abstract. This article reinterprets the 1785 Indian rebellion at Mission San Gabriel in Alta California by reexamining the testimony of the Indians accused of leading this uprising. For decades, scholarly and popular discussions of this event have focused on the role of Toyupurina, an Indian woman implicated in the rebellion. This essay, however, clarifies the roles played by Toyupurina, Nicolás José, and others in the rebellion and emphasizes the importance of eyewitness native accounts to early California history. Through a careful use of the mission's birth, marriage, and burial records, this study also uncovers key moments in the lives of the rebels. These two sources—Indian testimony and mission registers—help to suggest the rebellion's diverse origins: the mission Indians' anger at the Spaniards for the suppression of their ceremonies and the frustration among some Gabrielinos that the creation of the mission and the congregation of hundreds of Indians at that one location constituted a threat to existing Gabrielino boundaries of land use and settlement. The article concludes that an understanding of colonial California rests not only upon a study of Indian-Spanish relations but on an examination of the interactions between individuals and among groups of Indians as well.

The Franciscan missions have long exerted a powerful influence upon California's historical identity. Tens of thousands of Indians lived and died in these missions, but until the late 1970s an Indian perspective was largely absent from most accounts of early California. Scholars offered a good reason for this omission: Indians did not have written languages, and since written documents form the core of the historical record, Indian views on Spanish colonization seem to have been lost to historians. For generations, therefore, historians of colonial California have relied almost exclusively on the letters, narratives, and reports of the Franciscans, soldiers,

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and settlers who lived in Spanish and Mexican California. Although these sources describe Spanish settlement and conquest from what can be termed a Spanish perspective, they have nevertheless produced a historiography that is full of debate. For most of the past century, the historiography of early California and its missions has been divided into two opposing camps of scholars: those who portray the Franciscans as saving childlike Indians from savagism and those who depict the missions as brutal labor camps committed to cultural genocide. These divisions intensified in the 1980s when the Catholic Church moved forward with its process of making a saint of Father Junípero Serra, the founding father of the California missions.¹ This polarized historiography has been based on contesting interpretations of the Spaniards' accounts, not on the voices of the California Indians whose experiences are central to that history.²

Historians who have sought to capture an Indian perspective on Spanish colonization have relied upon two sets of sources: the narratives of Indians born in Mexican and American California and the views of Indians alive today. However, none of these sources captures the direct experiences of an Indian who lived in California before the end of Spanish rule in 1821. The first set of sources that describes the mission period is composed of six published accounts by California Indians born in the mid-nineteenth century.³ Only Pablo Tac's narrative, written between 1834 and 1841, comes close to describing the imposition of Spanish authority from the perspective of an eyewitness. But Tac was born in 1822, after the collapse of Spanish authority. And his account was penned in Rome, where one of the Franciscans had taken Tac in 1832 to prepare him for a career as a priest. More than a century after it was written, Tac's narrative was shaped into its current form by editors who prepared it for publication.⁴ The remaining five California Indian narratives were recorded between 1878 and 1922, long after the close of the Spanish period.⁵ Rather than providing first-hand accounts of the Franciscans' administration of the missions during the Spanish period, these narratives reflect the experiences of Indians who lived at the missions in the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, during and after the collapse of Franciscan rule.⁶ In these decades—the Mexican and American postsecularization periods—the Franciscans were stripped of their temporal authority and ultimately replaced by parish priests, and the missions were overseen and plundered by secular authorities.

When taken as a whole, these six native accounts provide more varied and textured descriptions of California Indian languages, material culture, and social structures than any other sources.⁷ But they describe the missions in much the same way as the Franciscans' most severe critics have since the period of first colonization. For example, Julio César, who was born in

1824, dictated his account in 1878: “The treatment given to the Indians at the mission was not at all good. They did not pay us anything, but merely gave us our food and a breechclout and blanket, the last renewed every year, besides flogging [us] for any fault, however slight.”⁸ In the words of Lorenzo Asisara, whose views were recorded in 1879 by Thomas Savage, “The Spanish Padres were very cruel toward the Indians. They abused them very much, they had bad food, bad clothing, and they made them work like slaves.”⁹

A similar view of the missions emerged from a group of contemporary California Indians when Rupert Costo and Jeannette Henry Costo published *The Missions of California: A Legacy of Genocide* in 1987.¹⁰ This publication was an explicit response to the Catholic Church’s campaign to canonize Father Junípero Serra. Rupert Costo, a Cahuilla from Southern California, and Jeannette Henry Costo, an Eastern Cherokee, stated emphatically that today’s descendants of Spanish California’s Indians—not misinformed academics or church historians—offer the best and the truest testimony of the impact of missions on native lifeways. The Costos write forcefully: “Ours was an oral history, an oral literature, a poetry that was spoken, remembered, a true ‘Remembrance of Things Past.’”¹¹ In *A Legacy of Genocide*, individual after individual, tribe after tribe described abominable conditions at the missions: the soldiers and padres held their ancestors captive, forced them to labor, and committed atrocities and physical abuses. The words of Tony Pinto, tribal chairman from the Kumeyaay in San Diego, are representative of the method, tone, and content of the volume: “I am now 73 years old. My grandfather and grandmother told me what happened at the missions. . . . The Indians were slaves. They did all the work, and after a day’s work, the priests locked them up. . . . They fed them actually as little as possible. They beat them and killed them if they were sick, or couldn’t work, or didn’t agree to do certain work.”¹² Because of the voice it gave to contemporary Indians, *A Legacy of Genocide* is a vital statement. These Indian voices reinforce the severest criticisms of the missions: the padres and soldiers were cruel men who dedicated themselves to the ruthless exploitation of Indian labor and the relentless destruction of native culture. However, the volume, despite its claim to present the contemporary Indian view of the missions, does not convey the beliefs of many California Indians who are Catholic and far less critical of the missions than their peers in *A Legacy of Genocide*.

Like the narratives of Indians born in the mid-nineteenth century, the oral traditions presented in the Costos’ volume describe the authoritarian nature of the missions, the harshness of the labor regime, and the pervasive fear of physical oppression. As a group, both sets of native narratives

describe a mission system characterized by rigid boundaries that separated the Indian and Spanish worlds and by confining walls that kept baptized Indians in the mission at all times and unbaptized Indians out at all times. Although they add an Indian perspective to the history of early California, these narratives have essentially served to reinforce a longstanding critique of the missions. The central negative and stereotypical image of the missions, therefore, remains largely unchanged, even though some of the words now come from a previously unheard people. The chorus may be louder and composed of diverse voices, but it nonetheless sings the same refrain.

The views of twentieth-century California Indians and the accounts of previous generations are an important resource, but the testimony of California Indians given during judicial proceedings and written down by Spanish scribes is an extremely valuable and largely untapped source that can help scholars look deeper into the past and discover how other Indians viewed the imposition of Spanish authority in colonial California.¹³ The eyewitness Indian testimony recorded in these criminal investigations does not begin to approach the detailed narratives embedded in the inquisition records so masterfully exploited by the “microhistorians” who have studied early modern Europe.¹⁴ Nor is it as extensive or varied as that found for other areas of New Spain. Nevertheless, Indian testimony, despite its sparseness, provides a glimpse of the motivations and actions of some Indians who grappled with many of the effects of Spanish colonization. And—equally important—research rooted in the mission’s sacramental registers allows scholars to situate those particular Indians within the larger native communities. This testimony and research reinforces the conclusion that Spanish colonization was oppressive, disruptive, and at times cruel, but the recorded words of California Indians also add detail and subtlety to a historiography that too often has relied on stereotypes and simplification. This Indian testimony reveals aspects of Spanish colonization and Indian resistance or accommodation not evident in the Franciscans’ correspondence or in the oral traditions of Indians whose ancestors lived in the missions. Furthermore, it shows that the missions as institutions were more porous than scholars have realized, and it demonstrates that an understanding of California’s colonial period rests not only upon a study of Indian–Spanish relations in the missions but on an examination of the interactions between individuals and among groups of Indians as well. Ultimately, Indian testimony from the colonial period demonstrates that there were multiple Indian perspectives on Spanish colonization and that over time individuals could oscillate between an acceptance and a rejection of the missions.¹⁵

Indian testimony from the Spanish colonial period of Alta Califor-

nia appears in two types of documents. The first source records the infrequent investigations by the military of the living conditions at the missions after highly unusual events, such as rebellions or mass fugitivism. A second source of Indian testimony is the declarations and accounts of Indians who testified in the trials of Indians or Spaniards accused of serious crimes. Despite their status in a Spanish legal system that classified them as “poor and wretched” “minors,”¹⁶ Indians throughout New Spain participated in the Spanish legal system, most commonly as eyewitnesses in criminal investigations, testifying on their own behalf and against Indians and Spaniards accused of crimes.¹⁷ From local presidial commanders to viceregal counselors, Spanish officials consistently viewed this testimony as reliable, and they depended on it when they assigned guilt and determined punishments for Indians and Spaniards alike. Spanish officials could have assigned guilt and meted out punishments without Indian testimony, but this would have been to abdicate their primary responsibilities as representatives of the crown: to discover truth, to dispense justice, and to demonstrate the legitimacy and fairness of the Spanish legal system. After all, throughout the colonial period, Spanish jurists insisted that “The true occupation of the king is to do justice in his kingdom.”¹⁸

The use of Indian testimony from the Spanish colonial period, like the use of more recent oral narratives, raises important evidentiary issues. In nearly all instances, especially in the first years of Spanish colonization, Indian testimony was solicited with the assistance of an interpreter, who was usually a presidial soldier. These frontier interpreters largely were self-taught, and their ability to move back and forth accurately between Spanish and local Indian dialects is uncertain. Furthermore, the men who recorded testimony in California were soldiers whose principal qualification was basic literacy. While these soldiers were aware of their responsibility to record faithfully the testimony they heard, they were not professional scribes. Unlike in central New Spain, scribes in Alta California were merely soldiers or low-ranking officers shouldering added responsibilities. California Indian testimony, therefore, because of the use of interpreters and scribes, comes to us as a highly mediated source. Finally, the possibility of coercion in eliciting Indian testimony may also give rise to debate about the trustworthiness of Indian responses. Spanish force—threatened or actual—underlay virtually all Indian–Spanish relations, and many of the Indians who testified in criminal cases, especially those accused of crimes, suffered confinement and testified while shackled. Judicial torture, however, although considered a legitimate procedural step available to Spanish officials, does not seem to have been used to extract testimony or confes-

sions from Indians in Alta California or elsewhere in the Spanish Borderlands during the late colonial era.¹⁹

To show the interpretive possibilities presented by a careful analysis and contextualization of Indian testimony from the colonial period, this article will reexamine the one case of California Indian testimony that scholars have most consistently cited: the declarations of three men and one woman implicated in a rebellion at Mission San Gabriel in 1785. This study will provide a new reading of this Indian testimony and a reinterpretation of the probable motivations that lay behind the Indian rebellion at Mission San Gabriel in 1785. Finally, it will discuss the assumptions that informed the narrative it intends to displace.

Mission San Gabriel was established close to the banks of the Río Hondo near the southern edge of the San Gabriel Valley in September 1771 as the fourth mission in Alta California.²⁰ The mission remained there for almost five years until May 1775, when it was moved several miles north to its present site. The Franciscans, who often sounded like Southern California's first boosters, wrote about the new location with optimism: "The location is very good. It has an oak grove quite close which is very advantageous for obtaining timber and firewood, and is within sight of a great plain where the soil is not of the best quality for in part it is very sandy and rocky, but with the irrigation ditch which is very serviceable, the land will fructify."²¹ The padres were describing the land of people known as the Kumiwit, who are known today as the Gabrielino or the Tongva. In 1770, the Gabrielino numbered about five thousand, and their territory covered about 1,500 square miles of the Los Angeles Basin. This land included the watersheds of the Los Angeles, San Gabriel, Santa Ana, and Río Hondo rivers, and it stretched west to the islands off present-day Los Angeles. Within that territory were more than fifty independent and competing communities, whose populations ranged from 50 to 150.²²

By 1785, the missionaries had baptized well over 1,200 Indians at Mission San Gabriel and counted 843 Gabrielinos at the mission.²³ In October 1785, some Gabrielinos inside the mission allied with those from as many as eight villages from the surrounding area to attack Mission San Gabriel.²⁴ The corporal of the mission guard had advance warning, and the night of the attack twenty-one Gabrielinos were arrested at the mission without bloodshed. The interrogation of the four Indians whom the Spaniards identified as rebel leaders took place in early January 1786 in the soldiers' quarters at the mission. During the interrogation, the four suspects responded to a list of ten questions prepared ahead of time by Alta California's governor, Pedro Fages. The sergeant of the Santa Barbara presidio, José Ignacio

Olivera, directed the investigation. He was assisted by two of his soldiers, Manuel de Vargas and José María Verdugo. A fourth soldier, José María Pico, served as the interpreter.²⁵

Thomas Workman Temple II, a genealogist and descendant of some of the first Spanish soldiers who served in Alta California, was the first scholar to examine this testimony.²⁶ And in 1958, he published an article about one of these Indians, a woman named Toypurina.²⁷ Today, Temple's article, "Toypurina the Witch and the Indian Uprising at San Gabriel," remains the most influential account of this rebellion. Temple's rendering of the testimony of Toypurina has been quoted and paraphrased in numerous articles and books,²⁸ and his interpretation of her actions in the rebellion and during her trial has spread beyond academia. Largely because of Temple's article, Toypurina has become the symbol of Gabrielino resistance to the missions and an icon of California Indian women's resistance to colonial oppression.²⁹ Toypurina's dramatic story has been publicly and permanently memorialized in a prayer mound developed by a Gabrielino traditionalist and a Chicana artist.³⁰

Temple provided a dramatic and colorful description of the night of 25 October 1785, when, in his words, a band of "painted warriors" from the surrounding villages slipped over the "parapet" into the quadrangle of Mission San Gabriel, their way lit by "a pale sliver of a new moon."³¹

Deceived by an Indian sorceress [Toypurina] into believing that her powerful magic had already accounted for the padres, they came determined to kill the unsuspecting corporal and his soldiers of the guard. . . . Led by a renegade Indian neophyte who knew his way about the deep shadows of the empty court, the well-armed war party slipped on cat feet towards the sleeping quarters of the padres. . . . There, in the center of the bedroom were the prostrate forms of the two Franciscans, laid out for burial—"put into the long sleep"—just as the Indian witch had promised them. . . . Suddenly, the recumbent padres leaped to life [for their lifeless forms had been soldiers lying in wait]; wild shrieks rent the night air. Above this dreadful din there rang out the cry of "SANTIAGO!"—as armed soldiers appeared from nowhere. Scared out of their wits and taken completely by surprise, some ten of the dumbfounded [Indian] warriors, including their leaders, were captured in the wild scramble.³²

In Temple's account of the military's investigation of the attack, Temejasaquichí, an unbaptized leader from a nearby village, identified Toypurina as the prime instigator of the rebellion.³³ "It was that witch Toypurina who tricked me by her sweet words and hidden threats. I'd like to get my

hands around her throat and still her serpent's tongue."³⁴ Temejasaquichí then implicated Nicolás José, a baptized Indian at the mission. "He said you are White Devils, come to sow our lands with salt and make slaves of my people."³⁵ According to Temple, Nicolás José's resentment had been simmering since November 1779, when he had been punished for plotting to kill his own *padrino*, or godfather, "a Baja California neophyte who had made advances to his promised *Gabrielina*."³⁶ Furthermore, Nicolás José "had conspired the death of the hated padres and that of corporal Verdugo because they refused to allow him to put on his . . . ancient tribal dances and other pagan superstitions."³⁷ In Temple's account Nicolás José testified that he had planned the rebellion, contacted Toypurina, and given her beads and other trifles to purchase her influence. According to Temple, Nicolás José testified that Toypurina had led the Indians at the mission to believe that she had killed the padres through her "artful wizardry"; all the rebels would have to do is kill the soldiers.³⁸

In Temple's account, Toypurina, the "star witness," testified last. As she was brought into the interrogation room, she kicked aside a stool the soldiers offered her, choosing to stand face-to-face before her accusers. In what Temple termed her "finest hour," Toypurina proudly took credit for organizing and leading the attack. According to Temple, she defiantly declared her motive: "I hate the padres and all of you, for living here on my native soil, for trespassing upon the land of my forefathers and despoiling our tribal domains. . . . I came [to the mission] to inspire the dirty cowards to fight, and not to quail at the sight of Spanish sticks that spit fire and death, nor [to] retch at the evil smell of gunsmoke—and be done with you white invaders!"³⁹ This is compelling testimony, and it is obvious why Temple's melodramatic and romantic account has been so enduring. Here is the testimony—the "exact words," according to Temple—of an Indian woman who expresses a cry of defiant resistance on behalf of all of her Indian people and voices in Temple's words "the universal lament of the dispossessed."⁴⁰ Yet, there is a problem with Temple's account of the rebellion and investigation and with the veneration of Toypurina that it has generated. The majority of Temple's article consists of fabricated testimony, imagined details, and dramatic exaggerations. There was no "pale sliver of a new moon" that night.⁴¹ There were no soldiers masquerading as dead missionaries. No cries of "SANTIAGO!" pierced the evening calm. In the inquiry, Toypurina did not testify last, kick over a stool, or speak of white invaders, fire-spitting sticks, dirty cowards, or the despoliation of her forefathers' land. And while Nicolás José suggested that some Gabrielinos feared Toypurina because they believed that she had special powers and "with only a wish she could kill them," and Governor Fages noted that the

Indians feared her and her powerful “superstitions,” no Indian or Spaniard in the record ever identified her as a witch or a sorceress or attributed to her the bewitching powers of a serpent.⁴² Most important, Temple incorrectly cast Toypurina as the principal instigator of the rebellion and as the star witness of the trial, turning her into the lead character in a hackneyed morality play in which she plays the familiar part of the doomed but noble savage, whose greatest glory and eloquence emerge only at the moment of total defeat.⁴³

The rebellion’s origins—and the individuals implicated in it—were more complex than those presented in Temple’s melodrama, and what little can be glimpsed of these Indians’ actions before and during the rebellion is suggestive of the complicated cross-currents of loyalties and tensions that characterized Indian life in Spanish California. All four of the suspects questioned, including Toypurina, identified Nicolás José, a thirty-seven-year-old mission Indian—not Toypurina—as the rebellion’s prime instigator. The transcript offers only the briefest indication of why and how he organized the rebellion, but Nicolás José’s own words offer a plausible reason for his disaffection. At the time of the rebellion, Nicolás José, according to his testimony, was upset because neither the Franciscans nor the mission guard would allow him to have his dances or practice what the Spaniards termed “gentile abuses.”⁴⁴ In fact, in 1782, three years before the rebellion, the governor had ordered the soldiers in the mission guard at San Diego to never allow baptized Indians to have dances in their villages; in all likelihood this order was also communicated to the mission guard at San Gabriel and the other missions in Alta California.⁴⁵ In the fall, the season of the rebellion, the Gabrielino held their annual Mourning Ceremony, which “honored the souls of those who had died in the interval since its last performance.” The Gabrielino Mourning Ceremony “was the culmination of a series of death rituals, and through its performance the souls of the deceased achieved release from the earth and entrance into the land of the dead.”⁴⁶ By the end of October 1785, Nicolás José and others at the mission seem to have concluded that the ban on dances was intolerable and that it jeopardized the repose of their dead relatives’ spirits.⁴⁷

For clues as to why it was Nicolás José who instigated the rebellion and not one of the hundreds of other adults at the mission, we must put aside Temple’s unsubstantiated claim that Nicolás José was a jealous husband with a grudge and look beyond the trial record to the mission’s sacramental registers—the birth, marriage, and burial records kept by the Franciscans at each of the missions. Only from these records can we discern the outlines of the life histories of Nicolás José and other Gabrielinos who were baptized at Mission San Gabriel. Nicolás José emerges from the

historical record as one of the first Indians to join Mission San Gabriel and among the most active of the Gabrielino in the administration of Catholic sacraments at the mission. Nicolás José was baptized by Father Pablo Joseph de Mugártegui at Mission San Gabriel on 27 September 1774, at the age of twenty-six, after having been “instructed and catechized” in the Catholic faith.⁴⁸ He was the third adult male baptized at the mission, the third baptism from Sibapet village, and the first Sibapet adult to receive the sacrament. Soon after his baptism, Nicolás José married Agustina María in one of the first marriages at the mission.⁴⁹ On 6 July 1775, their newborn son Cosmé María was born; he was baptized a week later.⁵⁰

The historical record does not reveal whether or not Nicolás José had exercised any sort of religious or political authority in Sibapet, but within a few months of his baptism, he held a position of prominence in the emerging religious and political life of the mission. Nicolás José was one of the first Indians at the mission to serve as a marriage witness, one sign that he enjoyed the confidence of the Franciscans.⁵¹ Furthermore, the identities of the other marriage witnesses with whom the Franciscans teamed Nicolás José suggest that the padres believed that Nicolás José also held authority within his own native community. In 1775, for example, Nicolás José served as a marriage witness with the leader of another nearby village.⁵² And in 1781, when Nicolás José was named padrino for the son of his own padrino, José María Borjino, he became the only Gabrielino at the mission to serve as a godparent for a Baja California Indian child.⁵³ All told, between 1774–85, Nicolás José was a witness at seven marriages and a padrino for thirteen Indians baptized at the mission, suggesting that the Franciscans continued to see him as an integral part of the Catholic community they were building at the mission.⁵⁴

Nearly every detail about Nicolás José’s life that emerges from the mission’s sacramental registers—the comparatively early date of his baptism and marriage, his relatively advanced age when they occurred, and his continual service as godparent and marriage witness—strongly suggests that Nicolás José would have been a prime candidate to serve as a mission official when the system of Indian officials was introduced to Alta California in 1778.⁵⁵ It seems almost certain then that this Nicolás José was the same Nicolás who became the mission’s first *alcalde* in 1778–9 and that he was the *alcalde* Nicolás who aroused the displeasure of the Franciscans by providing, in Father Serra’s words, “women to as many soldiers as asked for them.”⁵⁶ For this behavior, the *alcalde* Nicolás was punished, and this punishment in turn may have caused Nicolás José and other Indians at the mission to plot an earlier unsuccessful rebellion that is mentioned in the trial transcript.⁵⁷

In his testimony during the investigation of the 1785 rebellion, Nicolás José admitted that he had been arrested some years before in a foiled plot, which the governor described as one that intended to kill a Baja California Indian, the padres, and the soldiers. In the wake of that incident, Nicolás José had been pardoned and warned not to cause trouble, but he testified that he “gradually in his heart resolved” to plan an attack.⁵⁸ There is nothing in the historical record to support Temple’s tawdry claim that the Baja California Indian José María Borjino had years earlier infuriated Nicolás José by making unwanted advances toward his bride, Agustina María. Nor for that matter is there any evidence to support Temple’s claim that Nicolás José had tried to kill José María Borjino in a jealous rage. It is clear, however, that Nicolás José was one of at least six other neophytes arrested several years before the 1785 rebellion for his suspected involvement in a plot at the mission against a California Indian, the soldiers, and the padres.⁵⁹

Nicolás José’s positions of authority distinguished him from the tens of thousands of other Indians who lived in the missions. But in many ways—perhaps to a degree that far surpassed in importance the prestige the mission system bestowed upon him as an *alcalde*—Nicolás José’s life, in its seeming incongruities and ambiguities, resembled that of other mission Indians. While he was baptized and a regular participant in the administration of the Catholic sacraments at the mission, Nicolás José remained committed to Gabrielino dances, celebrations, and rituals. While Nicolás José lived at the mission, he remained connected to the unbaptized Gabrielinos and the native villages far beyond Mission San Gabriel. Furthermore, like all Indians in Alta California, Nicolás José was buffeted by the misfortune of the missions. No Indian, no matter how politically or religiously powerful, could escape the diseases that continually undermined the mission community and brought tragedy to individuals and their families.⁶⁰ By 1785, the year of the rebellion, one third of the adults from Nicolás José’s village and one half of the Sibapet children baptized at Mission San Gabriel were dead.⁶¹ And among these dead were members of Nicolás José’s immediate family. His son Cosmé María died at the mission before the age of two.⁶² His wife, who had been baptized alongside him in 1774, was dead by June 1783.⁶³ Within less than a year of her death, Nicolás José remarried, but his second wife, María Candelaria, died eight months later.⁶⁴ If these mounting personal tragedies shook Nicolás José’s faith in Catholicism and the mission system, he must have concealed this growing dissatisfaction from the Franciscans. Nicolás José did not flee the mission, and he participated in its religious life until the rebellion of October 1785. In July 1785 he had married for the third time, and in August he served once again as a marriage witness.⁶⁵

In the midst of his ongoing and outward commitment to his life at Mission San Gabriel, Nicolás José did plan the rebellion, and by now it should be clearer why he, and not one of the hundreds of others at the mission, did so. Nicolás José was not the jealous, vengeful husband of Temple's imagination. Nicolás José—unlike most baptized Indians—was a person of influence, who had garnered the respect of the Franciscans and the Indians at the mission. Six years before the rebellion he had shown that he was not a blind enforcer of the padres' will and that he was willing to challenge their authority even if it meant a flogging. For ten years, Nicolás José had been a part of the mission's religious and political hierarchy. This firsthand knowledge of the mission system may ultimately have served only to alienate Nicolás José from the Spaniards, but it also must have afforded him an understanding of both the strengths and the limits of the Franciscans' program and the soldiers' defenses. When Nicolás José finally realized that he would no longer be able to balance his life between two worlds—no longer be able to participate in the mission while at the same time having recourse to his own dances, customs, and ceremonies—he opted for the latter, and he sought assistance from those inside and outside the mission who were in a position to help him. Nicolás José, therefore, emerges from the historical record as someone whom the microhistorians would consider a “normal exception.”⁶⁶ He was exceptional in that he was one of the few Indians in colonial California who led a rebellion against the mission in which he lived, and therefore, he—unlike most California Indians—left a visible trace in the historical record. But his extraordinariness helps us grasp part of what was almost certainly “normal” about him: the ebb and flow of his commitment to the mission, the shift of his identity back and forth between being a Gabrielino from Sibapet and being an Indian neophyte at the mission, his day-to-day struggle with life and death in the mission, and his ultimately failed attempts to balance his beliefs with those introduced by the Franciscans.

When Nicolás José decided to rebel against the mission that he had helped to create, he contacted Toypurina, a twenty-five-year-old unbaptized woman from the village of Japchivit. Her brother was a village leader, and it seems she was considered “very wise” by the Indians of the area.⁶⁷ Toypurina stated that Nicolás José had given her beads so that she would call a meeting of the unbaptized Gabrielinos of the surrounding area. Thus, it was at Nicolás José's urging that Toypurina contacted other village captains.⁶⁸ Temejasaquichí of Juvit village, at Toypurina's request, then went to the mission (although it is not clear when) to convince the neophytes “not to believe in the Padres but rather only in her.”⁶⁹ In other testimony Aliyivit, captain of the village of Jajamovit (three leagues from the mission),

claimed that he had merely joined the others in the attack “to see if they [the warriors] would be as brave in battle as they said they would be.”⁷⁰

On the night of the attack, the Indians came to the mission armed with bows and arrows. Toypurina came to the mission unarmed but with the intent of encouraging the men to have the will to fight.⁷¹ That same night some of the mission’s lambs and sheep were killed. Nicolás José had ordered that the sheep be taken, which was done with the cooperation of the mission’s shepherds. Aliyivit, unlike the other three suspects, knew nothing of the attack on the livestock, but “a few days before the attack, he and his nephew had killed two cows belonging to a soldier.”⁷² It is not clear exactly how many other Indians were arrested after the rebellion. But, certainly, in addition to the four who testified, seventeen more were arrested, at least six of whom were neophytes. Of these seventeen, five who had been involved in the early plot at the mission were given twenty-five lashes and released. The remaining twelve were given fifteen or twenty lashes and released.⁷³ These punishments were carried out in public so as to serve as a lesson to all, and, according to Governor Fages, the punished Indians were given “the most serious scolding for their ingratitude, making ugly their perverseness, and showing them the deceit with which they allowed themselves to be dominated by the aforementioned woman and the powerlessness of their practices against we who are Catholic.”⁷⁴

As we have seen, Temple not only mischaracterized the role and motivation of Nicolás José in the rebellion, but he embellished and misconstrued Toypurina’s actions and her testimony, thereby clouding our own understanding of her possible motives on that October night in 1785 and our sense of the broader implications of the attack on the mission. Toypurina did not state that she participated in the attack because she hated “the padres and all of you, for living here on my native soil, for trespassing upon the land of my forefathers and despoiling our tribal domains” and that she wanted to “be done with you white invaders!” Rather, according to the soldier who recorded her words, she stated succinctly that “she was angry with the Padres and with all of those of this Mission because we are living here in her land.”⁷⁵ Beyond the inaccuracy of Temple’s translation, there is a crucial interpretive difference between Temple’s account and the scribal record. Temple and later scholars have presented Toypurina’s words as a denunciation of the Franciscans and the soldiers for settling in Gabrielino territory, and that, it seems plausible, is part of what she said. But if we take Toypurina at her recorded word, she was angry not only with the Franciscans but with “all of those of this mission.” She was also angry, it seems possible, with “all of those” Indians who lived at Mission San Gabriel, not just with the padres and the soldiers who resided there. This reading is

supported by the more careful and grammatical writing of Pedro Galindo Navarro, an *asesor* for the Commandant General, who in his summary of the case wrote that Toypurina “was angry with the Padres and the others of the Mission, because they had come to live and establish themselves in her land.”⁷⁶

In the six years before the rebellion, the population of the mission had nearly doubled, increasing from 452 in 1780 to 843 in 1785.⁷⁷ This increase in population coincided with a 50 percent increase of the mission’s agricultural production and a 300 percent increase in its livestock.⁷⁸ In these six years, there were 714 Indians baptized at the mission, 569 gentiles, and 145 mission-born Indians.⁷⁹ The increase in population at Mission San Gabriel, therefore, was the result not of the natural increase of those already at the mission, but rather of the recent relocation of more than 560 Indians from villages further and further from San Gabriel. At the time of the rebellion, only one Indian baptized at the mission was from Japchivit, Toypurina’s village, which may have been several miles northwest of the mission.⁸⁰ Some of the recently baptized Indians were from the coastal communities, which had sent very few Gabrielinos to the mission before 1785. Indians from the villages of Juyabit, Amupubit, Tibajobit, Guayabit, Chaubit, and Pububit appear in the baptism record in the summer of 1785, when these communities had dozens of baptisms and began to increase their presence at the mission. Before 1785, most of the Indians baptized at Mission San Gabriel came from the coastal plain and the inland valleys. Rivalries between villages had long existed in California, and a state of constant conflict seems to have existed between some Gabrielino groups, especially between those on the coast and those in the foothills and mountains.⁸¹ This tension may have been the result of intense competition for food resources. In the fall of 1785, these tensions may have escalated and contributed to the participation of so many unbaptized Gabrielinos in the attack on the mission.

Perhaps now we can see who Toypurina referred to when she said she was angry “with all of those of this mission.” She was probably referring to the hundreds of new Indian recruits at the mission, and in particular those from the coastal villages, not just the two missionaries and the four to six soldiers who protected the padres and guarded the mission. We can see the importance of Toypurina’s words when they are stripped of Temple’s embellishments and examined in the context of the rapid expansion of the mission and the historic tensions between Gabrielino villages. Toypurina’s testimony, therefore, not only underscores the Indian-Spanish tensions that plagued colonial California, but it reflects the Indian-Indian tensions that were exacerbated by Spanish colonization. Tensions between Gabrielino villages did not begin with the establishment of the mission in 1771, nor did

they end with the attack of 1785. The following summer, in August 1786, a soldier at San Gabriel reported that the Indians at the mission had given beads to the Indians from a local village in an attempt to get them to kill the residents of Japchivit, Toypurina's village.⁸²

Scholars of the rebellion have focused most closely on Toypurina and Nicolás José, but there was a third Gabrielino whose important role in the rebellion has not been fully noted. Nicolás José had turned to Toypurina because he believed that she could rally support for the attack among the leaders outside the mission and because many Indians seemed to fear her. But Toypurina in turn contacted Temejasaquichí, the leader of Juvit village, who then visited the mission in an attempt, it seems, to turn the mission Indians against the padres. In his testimony Temejasaquichí asserted that he had no grievance with anyone at the mission and that he had participated in the attack only at the suggestion of Nicolás José and Toypurina. While Temple identified Toypurina as a witch and a sorceress and recent scholars have followed his lead, the Spaniards accused her only of having deceived the Indians into rebelling.⁸³ Rebellion, of course, was a serious crime for the Spaniards, and they were especially alarmed that the baptized Indians at the mission could have allowed themselves to be "deceived" and "dominated" by a woman.⁸⁴ Notably, however, they did not describe her as a witch (a *bruja* or an *hechicera*) but as a "superstitious woman" ("*una muger Gentil supersticiosa*").⁸⁵ Rather, it was Temejasaquichí, not Toypurina, whom the Spaniards came the closest to accusing of witchcraft, for trying "to pervert the Christians with his spells."⁸⁶

On the basis of the Indians' testimony, Governor Fages found Nicolás José and Toypurina guilty of being the principal leaders of the attack. Fages ordered that they be held in shackles, Nicolás José at the San Diego presidio and Toypurina at Mission San Gabriel. Temejasaquichí was found guilty of being an accomplice and of trying to "pervert" the neophytes "with his spells."⁸⁷ Alijivit was found guilty of having been an accomplice in the rebellion and for having earlier killed a soldier's cows.⁸⁸ Both men were to be held at the presidio of San Diego. In January 1786 the governor sent a copy of the trial transcript to the Commandant General of the *Provincias Internas*, who held the responsibility for determining the Indians' punishments. It was not until June 1788—two-and-a-half years later—that Fages received the final sentences. The Commandant General banished Nicolás José from Mission San Gabriel and sentenced him to six years of hard labor in irons at the most distant presidio in the region. Toypurina was to be banished from Mission San Gabriel and sent to the most distant mission. Temejasaquichí and Alijivit, having already spent over two years in jail, were to be given a stern warning and freed.

After the trial and final sentencing, Temejasaquichí and Aliyivit do not appear again in the historical record; neither seems to have been baptized at Mission San Gabriel. In 1790, the last time he was mentioned in the historical record, Nicolás José was serving his sentence at the presidio of San Francisco.⁸⁹ Toypurina appears at numerous other times and places. In March 1787 she was baptized at Mission San Gabriel.⁹⁰ Soon thereafter, she was banished from Mission San Gabriel and transferred to Mission San Carlos Borromeo, located near Monterey in present-day Carmel. Two years after her baptism, she married Manuel Montero, a soldier from Puebla who was stationed in Monterey.⁹¹ In 1790, they were both living in Monterey with their first child, Cesario, who had been born at Mission San Luis Obispo.⁹² She and Montero had a second child, Juana de Dios Montero, who was also born at Mission San Luis Obispo.⁹³ Their third child, María Clementina, was born at mission San Carlos in November 1794.⁹⁴ Toypurina died at Mission San Juan Bautista on 22 May 1799 and was buried the following day.⁹⁵

In what amounted to his final distortion of the historical record in this case, Temple embellished Toypurina's baptism and marriage to Manuel Montero to construct a moralistic coda to his tale. For Temple, Toypurina's baptism signaled a triumph of pious Franciscans over savage Indians and of Catholicism over paganism, and her marriage to the soldier Manuel Montero, and the governor's fictional embrace of the couple, symbolized a wiping away of the ill will and distrust that had existed between soldiers and rebel Indians. Temple praised the generous spirit of the Franciscan Miguel Sánchez who baptized Toypurina, and he imagined that Sánchez had first heard Toypurina's "strange and anguished plea amid the sordid surroundings of her prison cell, just over a year before."⁹⁶ For Temple, the pious and merciful Sánchez had saved Toypurina and "led this sorceress from the darkness, evil, and rebellion of her heathen ways, into the Light of the Knowledge, Love, and Service of God."⁹⁷ In her "pagan soul . . . Where once suspicion, defiance and hatred of the white men had excluded all other sentiment, there now reigned the love of God and of all His creatures, including even the Spaniards."⁹⁸ The historical record, however, does not support such a weighty conclusion. It is silent as to whether or not Toypurina ever appealed directly to Sánchez for religious instruction let alone if she ever did so from a prison cell. Nor does it allow us to glimpse her innermost sentiments. And as for the principals involved—Toypurina and Sánchez—Toypurina's baptism probably seemed much more ambiguous than a clear triumph of Christianity and civilization over paganism and savagery, especially if Toypurina was in shackles at the time. Moreover, the sparseness of detail in Toypurina's baptismal record suggests that

Sánchez did not see her baptism as anything extraordinary and that he had not developed any special bond with her. In recording Toypurina's baptism in the mission's register, Sánchez included the same basic information he used to record the baptisms of the more than 1,300 other Gabrielinos he baptized at the mission between 1775 and 1803. Her record contains only the location and date of baptism and her name, age, sex, and village of origin. By the time Sánchez baptized Toypurina, he had been at Mission San Gabriel for more than a decade and had already baptized more than five hundred Gabrielinos. She was the twenty-ninth Gabrielino Sánchez baptized in March 1787, and his scribbled writing reveals that he baptized her in a group of nine adult Gabrielinos on 8 March 1787.⁹⁹

Temple informs us that on the day that Toypurina married Manuel Montero, "No prouder sponsor came to greet the happy couple that memorable day than the Governor himself—it was still Don Pedro Fages—he who had first known this stately bride as the wildest and most feared creature of the Gabrielinos in that dingy guard room of San Gabriel."¹⁰⁰ Fact provides less of a storybook ending than fiction. Toypurina did indeed marry Manuel Montero in 1789,¹⁰¹ but Governor Fages was not a sponsor of the marriage and there is no reason to assume that he greeted the couple or that they were in fact "happy." For both bride and groom, this marriage was probably an act of expedience. What may initially have bound them together—beyond the indissoluble sacrament of marriage—was the sobering and shared realization that they were both—he by choice, she by force—far and forever removed from the lands and peoples of their births. Toypurina's baptism and marriage could not erase past conflicts or present strains, nor could either sacrament bring peace to colonial California. Tensions between Indian groups and between Indians and Spaniards continued in colonial California as long as diseases unraveled Indian communities, as long as mission communities displaced village communities, and as long as Indians, Franciscans, and soldiers struggled over the persistence of native culture within and beyond the missions.

The testimony of Toypurina and Nicolás José suggests that scholars need to pay more attention to the words of California Indians like those who attacked Mission San Gabriel and those who testified in other criminal proceedings. Indians like Nicolás José and Toypurina came from different villages and pursued different life paths, and both confronted the mission system and Spanish colonization. Yet each found something different to fear in the colonial order. For Nicolás José, the Gabrielino from Sibapet and baptized Indian of the mission, it was the threat the missionaries, soldiers, and disease posed to Gabrielino culture that led to rebellion; while for Toypurina, the unbaptized "wise" woman from Japchivit, it was the

threat the relocated coastal Gabrielinos and other Indians at the expanding mission posed to the native subsistence economy and political order that prompted the attack on the mission.

When examined in its historical context and studied in tandem with mission sacramental registers, the testimony of Toypurina and Nicolás José shows with great effect how a few “normal exceptions” viewed and confronted what were for them the central aspects of Spanish colonization. Their recorded words suggest their resistance to the Spaniards’ repression of their ceremonies and the persistence of intervillage animosities into the mission period. And, when taken as a whole, their testimony helps us incrementally—word by word—reclaim the past from the stock images, sentimental portraits, and polarized arguments that can obscure our understanding of not only Indian–Spanish relations in colonial California but the equally important and determinative relations among the Indians of colonial California.

Notes

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- 1 For an overview of much of this debate and the role of Indian voice in it, see James A. Sandos, “Junípero Serra’s Canonization and the Historical Record,” *American Historical Review* 93 (1988): 1253–69. Recently, scholars have begun to move beyond this polarized history. See especially the work of anthropologists John R. Johnson and Randall Milliken. Russell K. Skowronek suggests that archaeological research may help to bridge these divergent views. Russell K. Skowronek, “Sifting the Evidence: Perceptions of Life at the Ohlone (Costanoan) Missions of Alta California,” *Ethnohistory* 45 (1998): 675–708.
- 2 The notable exception is Sherburne F. Cook’s influential *The Conflict between the California Indian and White Civilization* (Berkeley, CA, 1976), which included extracts of native testimony to bolster his assertion that California Indians were unable to adapt to the environment of the missions. See also Randall Milliken, *A Time of Little Choice: The Disintegration of Tribal Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1769–1810* (Menlo Park, CA, 1995).
- 3 In 1991, Edward D. Castillo, a Cahuilla-Luiseño Mission descendant who teaches anthropology at California State University at Sonoma, compiled these six previously published native accounts in *Native American Perspectives on the Hispanic Colonization of Alta California*, Spanish Borderlands Sourcebook,

- No. 26, David Hurst Thomas, gen. ed. (New York, 1991). See also Edward D. Castillo, "Blood Came from Their Mouths: Tongva and Chumash Responses to the Pandemic of 1801," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 23, no. 3 (1999): 47-61.
- 4 Minna Hewes and Gordon W. Hewes, eds. and trans., "Indian Life and Customs at Mission San Luis Rey: A Record of California Mission Life Written by Pablo Tac, an Indian Neophyte (Rome, ca. 1835)," reprinted in Castillo, ed., *Native American Perspectives*, 35-58. For the original see MSS Film 255, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.
 - 5 The accounts of Julio César and Lorenzo Asisara were written down in the late 1870s by one of Hubert Howe Bancroft's assistants. César's account discusses the period from the 1830s through the 1840s. Asisara's account of the death of Padre Andrés Quintana consists of what his father told him had happened at Mission Santa Cruz in 1812, long before Asisara was born. The final three accounts, those of María Solares, Luisa Ygnacio, and Fernando Librado, come from Indians born between 1835 and 1842. These accounts were prepared by anthropologists for publication in the 1970s and 1980s from extracts of anthropologist J. P. Harrington's notes of interviews he conducted with informants in the 1910s. For a discussion of the birthdates of many of Harrington's informants, see John R. Johnson, "The Trail to Fernando," *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 4 (1982): 132-8; John R. Johnson, "Chumash Social Organization: An Ethnohistoric Perspective," Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara (1988), chap. 8.
 - 6 These accounts have not been presented in their proper ethnohistorical context. See Johnson, "Chumash Social Organization," chap. 8, and John R. Johnson, "Ethnohistoric Reflections of Cruzeño Chumash Society," in *The Origins of a Pacific Coast Chieftdom: The Chumash of the Channel Islands*, ed. J. E. Arnold (Salt Lake City, UT, 2001), 53-70.
 - 7 See especially T. Hudson, T. Blackburn, J. Timbrook, and R. Curletti, eds., *The Eye of the Flute: Chumash Traditional History and Ritual as Told by Fernando Librado Kitsepawit to John P. Harrington* (Santa Barbara, CA, 1977), and T. C. Blackburn, ed., *December's Child: A Book of Chumash Oral Narratives* (Berkeley, CA, 1975).
 - 8 Julio César, "Recollections of My Youth at San Luis Rey Mission," ed. and trans. Nellie Van de Grift Sanchez, reprinted in Castillo, ed., *Native American Perspectives*, 13-15, quote at 15.
 - 9 Lorenzo Asisara, "The Assassination of Padre Andrés Quintana by the Indians of Mission Santa Cruz in 1812: The Narrative of Lorenzo Asisara," ed. and trans. Edward D. Castillo, reprinted in Castillo, ed., *Native American Perspectives*, 3-11, quote at 10.
 - 10 Rupert Costo and Jeannette Henry Costo, eds., *The Missions of California: A Legacy of Genocide* (San Francisco, 1987).
 - 11 Costo and Costo, eds., *A Legacy of Genocide*, 133.
 - 12 Tony Pinto, "All of Us Know about Slavery at the Missions," in Costo and Costo, eds., *A Legacy of Genocide*, 139.
 - 13 For fruitful examples of how historians of Spanish California have used Indian testimony from the colonial period, see Cook, *The Conflict between the California Indian and White Civilization*; James A. Sandos, "Levantamiento!: The 1824 Chumash Uprising Reconsidered," *Southern California Quarterly* 67 (1985):

- 109–33; and Milliken, *A Time of Little Choice*. Scholars of other regions of New Spain have made good use of the Indian testimony in the criminal record. Among the most important studies are William B. Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages* (Stanford, CA, 1979); Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1846* (Stanford, CA, 1991); Steve J. Stern, *The Secret History of Gender: Women, Men, and Power in Late Colonial Mexico* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1995); William B. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Stanford, CA, 1996); and most recently, Kevin Terraciano, “Crime and Culture in Colonial Mexico: The Case of the Mixtec Murder Note,” *Ethnohistory* 45 (1998): 709–45.
- 14 Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore, MD, 1980); Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero, eds., *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe* (Baltimore, MD, 1991); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, CA, 1987).
- 15 In his examinations of the Chumash rebellion of 1824, James A. Sandos used accounts of the rebellion and Indian testimony from the inquiry into its origins to explore the character of the Indian alcalde Andrés, an Indian official who also alternated between cooperation with the missionaries and rebellion against them. See James A. Sandos, “*Levantamiento!* The 1824 Chumash Uprising,” *The Californians: The Magazine of California History* 5 (January/February 1987): 8–20; Sandos, “*Levantamiento!*: The 1824 Chumash Uprising Reconsidered,” 109–33; and James A. Sandos, “Christianization among the Chumash: An Ethnohistoric Perspective,” *American Indian Quarterly* 15 (winter 1991): 65–89.
- 16 Charles R. Cutter, *The Legal Culture of Northern New Spain, 1700–1810* (Albuquerque, NM, 1995), 117; and Charles R. Cutter, *The Protector de Indios in Colonial New Mexico, 1659–1821* (Albuquerque, NM, 1986), 6. The Indians’ status as minors suggested that they were unable to defend themselves and that they would require special protections under the law, much like children of the poor or orphans. Cutter, *Protector de Indios*, 7–9.
- 17 For a full discussion of the legal formalities followed by Spanish officials in northern New Spain, see Cutter, *The Legal Culture of Northern New Spain*. Cutter’s discussion omits Alta California, but my review of trials and investigations that took place in colonial California suggests that soldiers in California conformed to the standard judicial procedures outlined in Cutter.
- 18 Lorenzo Guardiola y Sáez (1785) in Cutter, *The Legal Culture of Northern New Spain*, 31.
- 19 In a review of hundreds of cases from colonial New Mexico and Texas, Charles Cutter did not find one case of torture. Cutter, *The Legal Culture of Northern New Spain*, 123. Similarly, in a review of dozens of cases that took place in Alta California, I did not find any instances of torture.
- 20 Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., “The Building of Mission San Gabriel: 1771–1828,” *The Historical Society of Southern California* 50 (1968): 33–42, esp. 33.
- 21 Fathers Antonio Cruzado and Miguel Sánchez, Annual Report for 1783, quoted in Geiger, “The Building of Mission San Gabriel,” 34.
- 22 William McCawley, *The First Angelinos: The Gabrielino Indians of Los Angeles* (Banning, CA; Menlo Park, CA, 1996), 32–33; Bernice Eastman Johnston, *California’s Gabrielino Indians* (Los Angeles, 1962).

- 23 Zephyrin Engelhardt, O.F.M., *San Gabriel Mission and the Beginnings of Los Angeles* (San Gabriel, CA, 1927), 267, and my database of baptisms, burials, and marriages at Mission San Gabriel. See Mission San Gabriel Baptism Records, 1771–1819, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) microfilm, reel 0002643.
- 24 For the complete trial transcript, see Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) Provincias Internas (PI), vol. 120, exp. 2, 31a–47b. The original transcript only carries numbers on the front of each page. In my citations, recto, or the front of a page, is identified as “a”; verso, or the back of a page, is identified as “b.” For the number of villages involved in the attack, see the testimony of Nicolás José in *ibid.*, 36b.
- 25 José María Pico came to Alta California from Sinaloa as part of the Anza expedition in 1775. When his family joined the expedition in April of that year, his age was recorded as seven. Fifteen years later in the census of 1790, Pico’s age was recorded as twenty-seven. Thus, in the year of the rebellion, Pico was between seventeen and twenty-two years old. See William Marvin Mason, *The Census of 1790: A Demographic History of Spanish California* (Menlo Park, CA, 1998), 33 and 80. Throughout Alta California young boys were often the first Indians to learn Spanish, and they became valuable interpreters in the missions. Similarly, perhaps in a reversal of that role, José María Pico may have acquired a basic facility in the Indian languages of Southern California during his childhood. It is not clear how much familiarity José María Pico had with the Indians at Mission San Gabriel before the trial. (In the late 1770s his father Santiago was assigned to the presidios of San Francisco and San Diego; in 1790 Santiago was living in the Pueblo of Los Angeles.) José María Pico played no recorded role in the administration of the sacraments at Mission San Gabriel in the years before the rebellion. However, between 1792 and 1819 he was a *padrino* for some twenty-two Indian baptisms at the mission, eighteen of which occurred in 1811. He was not a witness at any Indian marriages at the mission, although he was a witness at four marriages between non-Indians at the mission in the early 1800s.
- 26 For a brief description of Temple’s accomplishments, see Monsignor Francis J. Weber, “Thomas Workman Temple II (1905),” *California’s Catholic Heritage* (Los Angeles, 1974), 90–91.
- 27 Thomas Workman Temple II, “Toypurina the Witch and the Indian Uprising at San Gabriel,” *Masterkey* 32, no. 5 (1958): 136–52, reprinted in Castillo, ed., *Native American Perspectives*, 326–42.
- 28 For a recent reiteration of Temple’s version of Toypurina’s testimony, see Cecilia Rasmussen, “Shaman and Freedom-Fighter Led Indians’ Mission Revolt,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 June 2001, sec. B. While recent scholars have offered more sophisticated interpretations of the rebellion than Temple, and some have even consulted the original documentary record, all studies of the Mission San Gabriel rebellion grant Toypurina a role in the rebellion larger than suggested by the documentary record and none recaptures the importance of Nicolás José. See James A. Sandos, “Between Crucifix and Lance,” in *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush*, ed. Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Richard Orsi (Berkeley, CA, 1998), 210; Edward D. Castillo, “The Native Response to the Colonization of Alta California,” in *Columbian Consequences*, vol. 1, *Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands West*, ed. David Hurst

- Thomas (Washington, DC, 1989), 377–94, at 387; Douglas Monroy, *Thrown among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California* (Berkeley, CA, 1990), 40; Daniel Fogel, *Junípero Serra, the Vatican, and Enslavement Theology* (San Francisco, 1988), 138–41; George Harwood Phillips, *Chiefs and Challengers: Indian Resistance and Cooperation in Southern California* (Los Angeles, 1975), 25–26; Robert H. Jackson and Edward D. Castillo, *Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization: The Impact of the Mission System on California Indians* (Albuquerque, NM, 1995), 76–77. See also Lowell John Bean and Charles R. Smith, “Gabrielino,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 8, *California*, ed. Robert F. Heizer (Washington, DC, 1978), 541, 544. In a forthcoming chapter, Maria Lepowsky uses her reading of the trial transcript to place the Mission San Gabriel Indian rebellion in a global context. See Lepowsky, “Cargo Cults, Ritual Violence, and Revitalization,” in *Reassessing Revitalization Movements: Perspectives from North America and the Pacific Islands*, ed. Michael E. Harkin (Lincoln, NB, forthcoming).
- 29 Antonia I. Castañeda, “Engendering the History of Alta California, 1769–1848: Gender, Sexuality, and the Family,” in *Contested Eden*, 237–8; McCawley, *The First Angelinos*, 94, 198–9; Edward D. Castillo, “Gender Status Decline, Resistance, and Accommodation among Female Neophytes in the Missions of California: A San Gabriel Case Study,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 18 (1994): 67–93, at 80–81.
- 30 Castañeda, “Engendering the History of Alta California,” 237–8. This prayer mound was designed by Judy Baca and is situated in the most unlikely and ironic of places, a Metrolink commuter train platform in Baldwin Park, a working-class Latino suburb of Los Angeles. The train platform and the Indian villages it seeks to conjure up seem deeply at odds. The studied anonymity and transience of commuters, the emptiness and silence of the platform at most times of the day and night, the separation of work, family, and home inherent in commuter life, the station’s existence as a place of no inherent value—all seem profoundly antithetical to California Indian villages, places of permanence and deep history, where individuals, families, and lineages were connected and where home, family, and work were often one.
- 31 Temple, “Toypurina the Witch,” 137–8.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 137–9.
- 33 In the trial transcript (AGN PI vol. 120, exp. 2), this name is recorded as Temejasaquichí (33b), Tomasajaquichy (34b), Tomiasajaquichi (37b), and Temasajaquichí (45a). I follow the first spelling found in the trial transcript, Temejasaquichí.
- 34 Temple, “Toypurina the Witch,” 144.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 144.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 141.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 147.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 147.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 148–9.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 According to the U.S. Naval Observatory’s online astronomical calculator, on 25 October 1785, the phase of the moon was “a waning crescent with 41% of the moon’s visible disk illuminated.” On that night, the moon did not rise until

- 12:20 A.M. on the twenty-sixth. See aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/RS_OneDay.html.
- 42 See the testimony of Nicolás José, AGN PI vol. 120, exp. 2, 37a, and the conclusion of Fages, *ibid.*, 38b. The trial and its supporting documents provide conflicting reports on what exactly the Indians who participated in the rebellion expected Toypurina to be able to accomplish. According to a summary of the case by Pedro Fages, the Indians believed that they would arrive at the mission and find the soldiers guarding the mission dead. *Ibid.*, 40a. However, Pedro Galindo Navarro, in his summary of the case for the Commandant General of the Interior Provinces, wrote that the Indians who attacked the mission expected to find the padres already dead. *Ibid.*, 45a. Furthermore, it is not clear from the record whether or not Toypurina's powers would actually kill the soldiers or missionaries or whether or not her powers gave her the ability to know that the soldiers or padres would be killed.
- 43 A reappraisal of the role Toypurina played in the rebellion at Mission San Gabriel, her words and actions during the trial and in its wake, and the way that Spanish officials dealt with her have implications for feminist historians of Alta California. While some scholars may conclude that Toypurina is not quite the icon she has been made into, such a reexamination need not preclude a feminist interpretation of Spanish California or lead to the conclusion that women, especially Indian women, were not at the center of the Spaniards' colonization and settlement of Alta California and Indian responses to them. In the decades since the appearance of Temple's article, historians have uncovered many aspects of the experiences of Indian women in Alta California. Among the most important works are Virginia M. Bouvier, *Women and the Conquest of California, 1542-1840: Codes of Silence* (Tucson, AZ, 2001); Castañeda, "Engendering the History of Alta California," 230-59; Miroslava Chavez, "'Pongo mi demanda': Challenging Patriarchy in Mexican Los Angeles, 1830-1850," in *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West*, ed. Valerie J. Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger (Berkeley, CA, 1999), 272-90; Albert L. Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California* (Albuquerque, NM, 1999); and Gloria Miranda, "Racial and Cultural Dimensions of *Gente de Razón* Status in Spanish and Mexican California," *Southern California Quarterly* 70 (1988): 262-78.
- 44 Testimony of Nicolás José, AGN PI vol. 120, exp. 2, 36a.
- 45 Pedro Fages to José de Zuñiga, 17 October 1782, Monterey. Archives of California (Bancroft Library), C-A 15: 152; José de Zuñiga to Fages, 1782, Archives of California, C-A 2: 77-78.
- 46 McCawley, *The First Angelinos*, 162.
- 47 The rebellion does not seem to have been sparked by a recent epidemic or a sudden rise in mortality in the mission.
- 48 Mission San Gabriel Baptism [hereafter MSG Bap.] 87, 27 September 1774. Mugártegui spent very little time at Mission San Gabriel, and Nicolás José was one of only five Indians he baptized at the mission. Mugártegui accompanied Father Serra back from Mexico City in August 1773, and the two arrived in San Diego in March 1774. Because of illness, Mugártegui remained in San Diego until September, when he was sent north. It was on that journey, which eventually took him to Mission San Antonio, where he remained for most of 1775,

- that he baptized Nicolás José. Mugártegui baptized two other Indians the day he baptized Nicolás José. He also baptized one on 21 May 1787 and another on 27 April 1789, just as he was leaving the colony. For details of this missionary's life, see Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., *Franciscan Missionaries in Hispanic California: A Biographical Dictionary* (San Marino, CA, 1969), 160-1.
- 49 Although the page of the mission's marriage register that records Nicolás José's marriage to Agustina María is lost, the marriage certainly took place before December 1774, and therefore it was one of the first ten marriages at the mission. Most likely it was the sixth marriage at Mission San Gabriel. Agustina María was baptized at the mission alongside Nicolás José. MSG Bap. 88, 27 September 1774.
 - 50 Cosmé María, MSG Bap. 161, 13 July 1775.
 - 51 In December 1774, Nicolás José, along with José María Borjino and Antonio Mathias Planes (the future *fiscal* of the church), served as witnesses in the tenth marriage at the mission. Mission San Gabriel Marriage (hereafter MSG Mar.) 10, 6 December 1774. The marriage record states that Nicolás José was a witness to the prenuptial investigation into the existence of any impediments that could have prevented the marriage; the investigation took place on 20 November 1774.
 - 52 MSG Mar. 25, 20 September 1775; Matheo María, captain of Ajuibit, MSG Bap. 81, 6 June 1774.
 - 53 MSG Bap. 582, 10 April 1781. When the Franciscans came north to Alta California, they brought with them many Indians from Baja California. These Indians, who spoke Spanish and were familiar with the basics of Catholicism, were instrumental in the establishment of the Alta California missions.
 - 54 Nicolás José was a participant in the prenuptial investigations at the following Catholic marriages: MSG Mar. 10, 6 December 1774; MSG Mar. 25, 20 September 1775; MSG Mar. 70, 8 September 1777; MSG Mar. 127, 27 April 1781; MSG Mar. 128, 27 April 1781. He was a witness to the marriage sacrament on the following occasions: MSG Mar. 252, 15 August 1785; MSG Mar. 253, 15 August 1785. Nicolás José was a padrino at the following baptisms: MSG Bap. 102, 12 November 1774; MSG Bap. 582, 10 April 1781; MSG Bap. 588, 23 April 1781; MSG Bap. 589, 23 April 1781; MSG Bap. 590, 23 April 1781; MSG Bap. 591, 23 April 1781; MSG Bap. 592, 23 April 1781; MSG Bap. 596, 26 April 1781; MSG Bap. 597, 26 April 1781; MSG Bap. 598, 26 April 1781; MSG Bap. 759, 30 November 1781; MSG Bap. 948, 14 January 1784; MSG Bap. 949, 14 January 1784.
 - 55 On these officials and the introduction of the system in which they served, see Steven W. Hackel, "The Staff of Leadership: Indian Authority in the Missions of Alta California," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 54 (1997): 347-76.
 - 56 Fray Junípero Serra to Governor Felipe de Neve, Monterey, 7 January 1780, *Writings of Junípero Serra*, ed. and trans., Antonine Tibesar, 4 vols. (Washington, DC, 1955-66), 3: 414-15. The baptism register of Mission San Gabriel records the baptism of only one other Nicolás before January 1780: Nicolás Sánchez, MSG Bap. 178, 8 November 1775, but he is not listed as a padrino or a marriage witness, which suggests that he was not central to the mission hierarchy.
 - 57 The previous rebellion was noted in the questions that the governor drafted for the interrogation of the suspects. Fages, AGN PI vol. 120, exp. 2, 32b. See also *ibid.*, 38a.

- 58 Testimony of Nicolás José, *ibid.*, 36a.
- 59 See *ibid.*, 38a, 42b, 43a, and 44b.
- 60 On disease and mortality in the California missions, see Robert H. Jackson, *Indian Population Decline: The Missions of Northwestern New Spain, 1687-1840* (Albuquerque, NM, 1994); and Cook, *The Conflict between the California Indian and White Civilization*, 1-157.
- 61 I derived this figure through a database of my own creation that links birth and death records for Indians baptized and buried at Mission San Gabriel. At the time of the rebellion some forty-seven Sibapet adults had been baptized, of which sixteen were dead. Of fifty-four Sibapet children baptized before the rebellion, by the time of the rebellion some twenty-seven were deceased.
- 62 Cosmé María, Mission San Gabriel Burial (hereafter MSG Bur.) 22, 28 October 1775, Mission San Gabriel Burial Records, 1774-1855, LDS microfilm, reel 0002646.
- 63 Agustina María, MSG Bur. 247, 5 June 1783; this record clearly identifies Agustina María as the wife of Nicolás José.
- 64 Nicolás José married María Candelaria on 3 February 1784. MSG Mar. 192. María Candelaria was baptized on 2 January 1784. MSG Bap. 953. She died on 23 September 1784. MSG Bur. 323.
- 65 Nicolás José married Ludgarda María on 3 July 1785. MSG Mar. 248. He was a marriage witness at MSG Mar. 252, 15 August 1785, and MSG Mar. 253, 15 August 1785.
- 66 See the introduction to Muir and Ruggiero, eds., *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*, xiv.
- 67 Testimony of Nicolás José, AGN PI vol. 120, exp. 2, 37a. Nicolás José stated: “*que los mas de los que concurrieron fue por miedo que le tenían á la expresada Toypurina, á quien tenían por muy sabia, y que con solo querer los mataria.*” He said that “most of those whom were present [at the attack on the mission] did so out of fear of the aforementioned Toypurina, who they considered very wise, and that with only a wish she could kill them.” Little is known about Toypurina before the rebellion. The mission’s sacramental registers provide some clues to her past. She had been married at Japchivit, her home village (MSG Bap. 1408, 3 March 1787), although the identity of her spouse is not known. At the time of the rebellion, most likely she was pregnant, for she gave birth to a son, Nereo Joaquín, at Mission San Gabriel on 10 May 1786 (MSG Bap. 1326, 12 May 1786), nearly a year before her own baptism. Nereo Joaquín was buried at Mission San Gabriel in August 1787 (MSG Bur. 514, 29 August 1787). Toypurina’s likely confinement after the trial and her status as a rebel may have limited her ability to care for her son. Perhaps one-third to one-half of all Indians born at the missions died before age two.
- 68 Testimony of Toypurina, AGN PI vol. 120, exp. 2, 34b-35a.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 34b and Fages letter, *ibid.*, 37b. She stated: “*que es verdad que ella le mando ál Capitanejo Tomasajaquichy que les viniera á persuadir á los cristianos que no creyeran á los Padres sino solo á ella.*” She said that “it is true that she asked the [village] captain Tomasajaquichy to come persuade the Christians not to believe in the Padres but rather only in her.”
- 70 Testimony of Aliyivit, *ibid.*, 35b.
- 71 Testimony of Toypurina, *ibid.*, 35a.
- 72 Testimony of Aliyivit, *ibid.*, 35b-36a.

- 73 Pedro Fages, San Gabriel, 4 January 1786, *ibid.*, 38a; Pedro Fages, 30 December 1785, *ibid.*, 42b–43a; Pedro Fages, 5 January 1786, San Gabriel, *ibid.*, 44b.
- 74 Pedro Fages, San Gabriel, 4 January 1786, *ibid.*, 38a–38b.
- 75 She stated: “*Estaba enojada con los Padres y con todos los de esta mision porque estamos viviendo aqui en su tierra.*” Testimony of Toypurina, *ibid.*, 34b–35a. (The Spaniards recorded testimony in the third person.)
- 76 Pedro Galindo Navarro, 1 December 1787, Arispe, *ibid.*, 45a. Navarro wrote that Toypurina “*estaba enojada con los Padres y los demas de la Mision, á causa de haberse ido a bivir y establecido en su tierra.*”
- 77 J. N. Bowman, “The Resident Neophytes (Existentes) of the California Missions, 1769–1834,” *Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly* 40 (1950): 138–48.
- 78 In 1780 the mission harvested 1,892 *fanegas* (1 *fanega* = 1.5 bushels) of wheat, barley, corn, beans, peas, lentils, and garbanzos; in 1785 the combined harvest was 2,725 *fanegas*. Engelhardt, *San Gabriel Mission*, 273. In 1780, the mission counted 1,528 head of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, horses, and mules; in 1785 the livestock totaled 4,945 head. Engelhardt, *San Gabriel Mission*, 278.
- 79 These figures were derived from my database of Gabrielinos baptized and buried at the mission and cover the period 1 January 1780 through 25 September 1785, a month before the outbreak of the rebellion. Total baptisms at the mission in that period totaled 746 as there were thirty-two non-Indians baptized at the mission in those years.
- 80 Simphoriana María, MSG Bap. 660, 24 May 1781. There is considerable debate about the exact location of Japchivit. According to Chester King, an authority on the locations of the Indians baptized at Mission San Gabriel, Japchivit was most likely in the mountains to the northwest of the mission. Others, however, are less certain about Japchivit’s location. Neither McCawley’s *The First Angelinos* nor Johnston’s *California’s Gabrielino Indians* locates the village of Japchivit. Hopefully, continuing work with the sacramental records of Mission San Gabriel and Mission San Fernando will shed more light on the location of Japchivit.
- 81 McCawley, *The First Angelinos*, 106–7; Bean and Smith, “Gabrielino,” 546–7.
- 82 José de Zuñiga to Governor Pedro Fages, San Diego, 15 August 1786, Archives of California, C-A 3: 293–4.
- 83 Testimony of Temejasaquichí, AGN PI vol. 120, exp. 2, 34a. He stated: “*que la India Gentila Toypurina lo engaño.*” He said that “the Gentile Indian woman had deceived him.” See also Pedro Fages, San Gabriel, 4 January 1786, *ibid.*, 38a; and Fages, Monterey, 5 December 1785, *ibid.*, 40a.
- 84 Pedro Fages, San Gabriel, 4 January 1786, *ibid.*, 38a.
- 85 See Pedro Fages, Monterey, 5 December 1786, *ibid.*, 40a. On Indian women and witchcraft in New Spain, see Ruth Behar, “Sexual Witchcraft, Colonialism, and Women’s Power: Views from the Mexican Inquisition,” in *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Asunción Lavrin (Lincoln, NB, 1989), 178–206, and Castañeda, “Engendering the History of Alta California,” 255, n. 19.
- 86 There is only one mention of witchcraft, sorcery, or the casting of spells in the trial. In his summary after the investigation of the interrogation of the Indians and the causes of the rebellion, Governor Fages wrote: “*El Indio Gentil llamado Tomiasajaquichi, porque á mas de haver sido complize, se le agrega haver*

venido primero embiado por la expresada Toypurina á pervertir á los Cristianos con su Echiserias sera igualmente asegurado en dicho Presidio.” Pedro Fages, San Gabriel, 4 January 1786, AGN PI vol. 120, exp. 2, 37b. Fages wrote that “the Gentile Indian named Tomiasajaquichi, because in addition to having been an accomplice, they add to him [the charge] of having come [to the mission] first sent by the aforementioned Toypurina to pervert the Christians with his spells[,] will be equally secured in said Presidio.” There are problems with spelling and agreement in this sentence, but vowels that went unstressed were fluid, and consonants such as *s* and *c* could be interchanged. More important, though, the *su* does not agree with *Echiserias*; to be grammatically correct, it would have to be *sus Echiserias* or *su Echiseria*. However, it is clear that the subject of this sentence is *El Yndio* and that the witchcraft is Tomiasajaquichi’s.

- 87 Fages, *ibid.*, 37b.
 88 *Ibid.*, 37b–38a.
 89 See Mason, *The Census of 1790*, 104.
 90 Regina Josepha, MSG Bap. 1408, 8 March 1787. Father Miguel Sánchez gave her the Christian name Regina Josepha, and it is under that name that she subsequently appeared in the missions’ registers. According to Sánchez, at her baptism she was about twenty-seven years old.
 91 For her marriage, see Mission San Carlos Marriage 387, 26 July 1789, Mission San Carlos Marriage Records, 1772–1908, LDS microfilm, reel 0913161.
 92 Mason, *The Census of 1790*, 96. Cesario Antonio Montero, Mission San Luis Obispo Baptism 906, 27 August 1790. I thank John R. Johnson for this information. Temple says that the couple had a total of four children. Temple, “Toypurina the Witch,” 152.
 93 Juana de Dios Montero, Mission San Luis Obispo Baptism 1095, 7 March 1792. I thank John R. Johnson for this information.
 94 Mission San Carlos Baptism 1988, 24 November 1794, Mission San Carlos Baptism Records, 1770–1915, LDS microfilm 0913159.
 95 Mission San Juan Bautista Burial 27, 23 May 1799, Mission San Juan Bautista Burial Records, LDS microfilm 0913311.
 96 Temple, “Toypurina the Witch,” 151.
 97 *Ibid.*, 152.
 98 *Ibid.*, 151.
 99 Regina Josepha, MSG Bap. 1408, 8 March 1787.
 100 Temple, “Toypurina the Witch,” 152.
 101 Mission San Carlos Marriage 387, 26 July 1789.