

TOYPURINA (1761–?)

Few details survive about the life of the tribal medicine woman, Toypurina but she is best remembered for her direct involvement in a planned revolt against Spanish colonial rule. She was a Native woman born into the Kumi.vit tribe of southern California from the area around San Gabriel. Her tribe became known as the Gabrieleno after Spanish contact in the late eighteenth century. At that time Franciscan missionaries founded twenty-one missions from San Diego to Sonoma between 1769 and 1823. Intended to form a chain of defense of the Spanish empire in the north, the missions encroached on the lands of tribal nations, exploited Native labor, and proselytized for their conversion to the Roman Catholic Faith. In an effort to retain their tribal culture, religious practices, and beliefs, some Native people resisted the imposed Spanish assimilation and acculturation. Toypurina emerged as one such individual. After Spanish officials forbade the practice of traditional dances, Native leaders planned a revolt. Angered by this authoritarian decision, Indians, set out to destroy the San Gabriel Mission. Toypurina's support was crucial because of her extraordinary powers as a medicine woman. She was to use her divine influence to specifically immobilize the Catholic priests, while the Native male leaders would eliminate Spanish soldiers. Spaniards discovered the plot punishing all the Native people involved in the incident. Toypurina was exiled from the mission and sent to live further north at the San Carlos mission. She was also pressured to submit to the Catholic Faith.