



# Private Women, Public Lives: Gender and the Missions of the Californias (Chicana Matters)

*Barbara O. Reyes*

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Through the lives and works of three women in colonial California, Bárbara O. Reyes examines frontier mission social spaces and their relationship to the creation of gendered colonial relations in the Californias. She explores the function of missions and missionaries in establishing hierarchies of power and in defining gendered spaces and roles, and looks at the ways that women challenged, and attempted to modify, the construction of those hierarchies, roles, and spaces.

Reyes studies the criminal inquiry and depositions of Barbara Gandiaga, an Indian woman charged with conspiracy to murder two priests at her mission; the divorce petition of Eulalia Callis, the first lady of colonial California who petitioned for divorce from her adulterous governor-husband; and the *testimonio* of Eulalia Pérez, the head housekeeper at Mission San Gabriel who acquired a position of significant authority and responsibility but whose work has not been properly recognized. These three women's voices seem to reach across time and place, calling for additional, more complex analysis and questions: Could women have agency in the colonial Californias? Did the social structures or colonial processes in place in the frontier setting of New Spain confine or limit them in particular gendered ways? And, were gender dynamics in colonial California explicitly rigid as a result of the imperatives of the goals of colonization?

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