



BETWEEN MALOCAS AND MALONES

Indigenous resistance through violence as a response to colonial violence in 17-century

Entre Malocas y Malones: resistencia indígena por medio de violencia como respuesta a la violencia colonial en Chile en el siglo XVII

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to reflect on Malocas and Malones as the dynamics of a micro-war in the frontier between the Tolten River and the Chacao Channel. Whereas the Spanish were replicating the old medieval methods used against Moors in their frontier dynamics, indigenous peoples responded out of resentment and wrath. The idea of it was to dissuade them from expanding the frontier and to resist against the endless war before the Great Indigenous Rebellion in 1598. Finally, comparing Malones to Comanches's raids in North America will prove useful to understanding both resistance and colonizing ambitions.

PALABRAS CLAVE

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RESUMEN

El objetivo de este artículo es reflexionar sobre las malocas y los malones como dinámica de una micro-guerra en la frontera entre el río Toltén y el canal Chacao. Mientras que los españoles estaban replicando los viejos métodos medievales utilizados contra los moros en su dinámica fronteriza, los indígenas respondieron con resentimiento e ira. La idea era disuadirlos de expandir la frontera y resistir la guerra interminable antes de la Gran Rebelión Indígena en 1598. Finalmente, comparar Malones con las incursiones de los comanches en América del Norte resultará útil para comprender tanto la resistencia como las ambiciones colonizadoras.

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1. Introduction: periphery, violence and resistance

To understand how periphery, violence and resistance are related during the Colonial times in America, it is necessary to state that, on the one hand, the process of conquering and colonizing lands and the peoples living in them necessarily involved exerting violence on these indigenous tribes. On the other hand, the latter responded with violence both to resist against these attacks and to dissuade the Spanish from expanding their frontier. Notwithstanding this situation, it is not possible to refer to a frontier if no center is previously mentioned. Thus, the frontier where the conquerors and the indigenous peoples meet and fight will, at the same time, be understood as the periphery of the center of the civilization, which, if crossed, shows the way to a world full of anarchy and barbarians.

The aforementioned context involves the fact that conquering, to the eyes of the Spanish, leads to civilizing uncivilized people. In that sense, civilizing will be seen as the exertion of violence on people. Thus, the frontier turns into a complex land in which an array of micro-wars take place between conquerors and their counterparts in a very similar way to what happened in the medieval times in the frontier between The Spanish and Moors. This will inevitably lead to a balance of forces between The Spanish, on the one hand, and Huilliches and Poyas, on the other hand.

The expansion of the frontier is also a socio-political and cultural imposition whose objective is to deny the past as it is considered prehistoric barbarism. This will be done in order to achieve the cherished state of civilization. Based on this, we might dare state that civilization and barbarism are mutually exclusive. But, if we wish to believe that the assumption of non-integration is a myth, what could be said about it? It is impossible to deny that the discourse of non-integration existed. However, the interesting thing is the difference in the places of enunciation of those ones involved in exerting this violence. In colonial times, the colonizer is European, unrelated to the peoples of America. Therefore, colonizing inevitably leads to both fight and mixing, though; the latter also considers the rise of a mixed race. However, our focus here will not be the mixing situation but the fight between colonizers and the colonized and the resistance, on a continuum, that the latter showed against the ones that wanted them subjugated and enslaved from the very beginning when they arrived in American lands. As a counterargument against this colonization in the expansion of the frontier, Zaslow expresses that,

An interesting attempt to apply the frontier hypothesis to the history of Latin America is found in an essay by A. S. Alton, entitled "Latin American Frontiers" (1940). His conclusions were that despite many apparent differences between the situations in Latin America and the United States, a definite basis for comparison did exist. The major differences were that Latin American expansion was mainly into regions where the natives possessed relatively highly-developed civilizations of their own; that the expansion was, in the initial stage, a military one, and throughout, under strict governmental control; and that the native races were absorbed into the new society. As for the social effects of the frontier environment: "Frontier conditions in Latin America, as elsewhere, developed individualism, self-reliance, democracy, initiative, and a willingness to experiment despite closer controls." (1948, p. 164 -165)

Based on the above, it is impossible not to doubt about that metonymy of indigenous settlements since it mainly considered those indigenous civilizations, namely Incas, Mayans and the Aztecs. This viewpoint completely ignores the existence of those indigenous communities in other parts of Latin America that had to resist against colonization. Therefore, while still holding onto the assimilation of those indigenous communities to the hegemonic culture as referred to in the citation above, we cannot avoid wondering the following: Were there other places where that sheer assimilation did not take place and, on the contrary, it was a long process of confrontation between conquerors and native communities? If so, how did that confrontation take place and where did it take place?

Thus, in an attempt to answer both questions, we would like to come up with the following hypothesis: While, apparently, some indigenous civilizations were absorbed by the conquerors in certain places in Latin America, there were other indigenous communities, which were not settled as civilizations. They were located in unknown places like the Frontier Above in the south of Chile, where they refused to being subjugated to any means of colonization, such as acculturation in the form of missions or captivity as a result of malocas.

Therefore, in order to prove our assertion, our main objective in this article will be to reflect on the dynamics of missions and malocas as the exertion of a particular type of violence, by the Spanish, on indigenous peoples in the frontier "above" in the 17th century. Moreover, we will analyze how these peoples, both mentally –rebellions against missions– and physically –in the form of malones–, resist against this colonization by replying to violence with more violence and with the same techniques used by the colonizers.

2. The frontier in the American continent

In the American continent, the concept of frontier was originally embraced and referred to in the context of the expansion of the white civilization in The United States, in the Far West, by Turner (1897). Although his treatment of the concept was very much criticized later due to the hidden violence embedded in it, it still helped

to recognize the identity of the American civilization in opposition to other peoples. The following citation will help us understand the distinction between the US and the rest of the world:

The frontier had a great influence on the political evolution of the United States and on the character of its people. On the political side, it promoted the formation of a composite nationality, freed America from dependence on European trade, forced unification upon the country to settle the problem of the public domain, and assisted the growth of the national government by looking to it for protection and for favourable legislation. It was instrumental in shaping and spreading the democratic philosophy, which derived from frontier life its characteristic stress on individualism and the self-made man, its intolerance of restraint, lax business ethics, and low political morality. (Zaslow, 1948, p. 154)

The words above explain to us that the imposition of a civilization in the world implies, on the one hand, a non-dependency relationship with Colonial Europe, and, on the other hand, showing power to neighboring communities, mainly, as well as to the rest of the world. However, as this process of imposing an identity while expanding the frontier is far from being purely positive, contrary to Turner's hypothesis, Zaslow continues expanding on this issue by stating that,

Such are the essentials of the frontier hypothesis. It has been suspected by many historians as an over-simplification, but it should be noted that Turner, aside from the essay, never claimed that the frontier was the only force in American history and he himself anticipated most of the criticisms that have been levelled by others. Unfortunately, his reputation has rested so largely upon this one essay that he has been criticized, not only on the validity of the picture he drew, but also upon the emphasis he placed (or was alleged to have placed), upon the frontier as the determining influence in American development. (1948, p. 155)

Thus, while acknowledging the limits to this hypothesis, Zaslow also reflects on the fact that it was not up to Turner to give a different viewpoint of the frontier context since that should be the matter of concern of those "others" mentioned in the quotation above. Basically, by raising a historical interpretation of the frontier, other interpretations arising out of different authors' enunciation points might complement the idea of it. Apparently, that blank left by Turner, on purpose or not, helped to set the path to ongoing research and reflection on the frontier complexity. Thus, "even the importance of the frontier as a center of democracy and liberalism has been attacked--critics have pointed out that frontier democracy was restrictive, often intolerant of minorities, and essentially conservative." (Zaslow, 1948, p. 155) This intolerance of minorities definitely helps us identify what those minorities might be and how they reacted to this intolerance, given the fact that minorities are not passive recipients of intolerance whatsoever.

3. The frontier above

The Frontier Above is an interesting concept coined by María Ximena Urbina Carrasco (2009), which refers to the frontier land between the Tolten River and the Chacao Channel, in the South of Chile. In spite of being a southern frontier, this zone is called The Frontier Above mainly because it is a frontier that goes beyond the well-known Mapuche Frontier between The Biobio and Tolten rivers. Apart from that, it is the land where Huilliches lived, i.e. the mapuches from "above" or beyond. At the same, as people go down the south of Chile, contradictorily, the latitude increases. Thus, Urbina was able to rescue, as if it were an oxymoron, this frontier that was above the famous Mapuche one. Also, in this place, after the great indigenous rebellion of 1598, a series of battles in the form of Malocas -led by the Spanish- and Malones -the indigenous response to the former- took place.

4. Resistance in the frontier

4.1. Evangelism and resistance to acculturation

It is interesting to mention that, out of the physically violent frontier context, there were other ways of figuratively inviting indigenous tribes to be part of their conquerors' section. Unlike wars and battles that were aimed at taking captives, there was a subtler way of subjugating them to the Spanish. This was evangelism in the form of missions. However, although this violence was hidden in the form of friendly collaboration between tribes and Jesuit priests trying to educate them on God's commands, the former ended up understanding the underestimation of their own cosmogony and, consequently, responded violently to this symbolic type of violence. In this case, Moreno (2019) gives an account of the many unsuccessful attempts made by Jesuits in the 16th and 17th centuries with a tragic end when, in 1717, the priest Francisco de Elguea was murdered and the mission got completely robbed and burnt around the Nahuelhuapi lake. Also, another interesting point to make here is that the rebellion was not led by the Mapuches. It was led by the Poyas, originally thought of as being more submissive to the conquerors.

Notwithstanding this situation, they were as rebellious as other communities were when it came to facing the eradication of their culture by the processes of acculturation that took place in those missions held in Chile.

4.2. Malocas and malones: their historical antecedent in medieval times and their dynamics in the frontier above

The dynamics between the Spanish and Huilliches in the form of Malocas and Malones in the Frontier Above has an antecedent in Europe, in the Medieval era, particularly in the period known as the Reconquista. In that sense, Mitre reflects on this origin by saying that,

Sánchez Albornoz, in one of his best-known works, insisted on the idea of a world of pioneers as the fundamental characteristic of medieval Hispanic-Christian society. Similarities with the Far West led Gabriel Jackson to present medieval Spain as “miniature wild West”. Advancing in time - and retaking the aforementioned idea of R. Allen Billington - overseas expansion would have been the prolongation of that boundary spirit of a homo hispanus paradigm of “plusultridad”. It was, thus, possible to affirm that the arrival in the Andes, the Amazon or the Mississippi was not a historical chance, but rather the materialization of an eminently medieval quest. (Mitre, 1997, p. 14)

Based on what is stated above, medieval colonization practices are only expanded on in modern times in America. That is why captivity practices, for example, get replicated. Nonetheless, even though the relation between captivity in the conflict of Christians and Muslims and malocas/malones in Chile –or in other parts of Latin America, usually referred to as captivity only– seems to be a direct one, there also seems to be little interest in the topic. To sustain this fact, it is of paramount importance to know that,

in Hispanic America, captivity, while still a widespread phenomenon, did not generate the same interest. This is not the place to elucidate on the subject, although the hypotheses in this regard are of great interest for the comparative study of colonial processes in North and South America. The truth is that, comparatively, very few captive stories were written and published. Sometimes, these stories appear intermingled in the bulky pages of the chronicles as anecdotal material. On most occasions, the testimonies of these unheard travelers did not come to light. They exist in the historical archives of numerous Hispanic cities as stories of captives, which are then forgotten throughout time. Was there no interest in publishing them? The truth is, no. It can be said that in Hispanic America not only was there no interest for captive stories to come to light, but even their importance was attempted to be overlooked. For example, in the north of the continent (the current territory of the United States), Spanish imperial policy during the 16th and 17th centuries tended to silence information from expeditions. The creation and dissemination of geographical and cartographic knowledge that would have been essential for future expeditions was even prohibited. The reason is that English and French rivalry was feared. (Operé, 2001, p. 10-11)

Apparently, Turner’s triumphalist viewpoint of the frontier was, somehow, extrapolated to the frontier dynamics in Latin America, not because of a triumphalist discourse in this case, but due to the censorship involved in ignoring the topic. Regarding this, Operé reflects on it by expressing that,

Censorship was also very rigid, inspecting the political and ideological content of everything that was published in or about the Indies. What value, then, could the declaration of a captive exalting the virtues of the wild and unfaithful Indians have? This is the case of Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán who, in a confrontation in southern Chile against Araucanian or Mapuche Indians, was taken captive (1629). The Indians knew their father who had been governor of the territory and wanted to take revenge on the young twenty-year-old Francisco, due to the grudge held against the Spanish administration. He was saved thanks to the intervention of a Mapuche chieftain, Maulipán, who took him under his protection. He hid him from the siege of the caciques of the mountain range who were willing to sacrifice him. But, protecting him finally facilitated his exchange. (2001, p. 11-12)

Although literary and subjective, there is some evidence of captivity in Chile, then avoiding referring to it is by no means recommended. So, in an attempt to go direct to the nitty gritty of captivity in the eyes of the Spanish –or one whose origin is that of the conquerors–, it would be good to cite an interesting dialogue from *El Cautiverio Feliz*:

And the rest of the afternoon, Quilabebo and I were talking about the past of the Indian with his captive Spanish, well treated and well loved, from which the old man originated telling me the following reasons:

- You see here, Captain, the most captive Spaniards who walk among us and the treatment they have: they eat with us, drink with us, wear what we do wear, and if they work, it is in our company as you will have experienced in your partner and others. I do not want to make you enter that number, because you run in a different way, for who you are, for your being a captain and for your liking, that naturally you take

everyone's will. Why do Spaniards have us as bad people, as they say we are? In the actions and in their dealings, it is recognized that they are worse in natural and cruel conditions, because their captives are treated like dogs (...)

Truly, I didn't stop being ashamed, because everything he said was like that. (Núñez de Pineda, 2003, p. 133)

The exchange above might lead us to believe that, although indigenous communities were able to respond to violence exerted by the Spanish with more violence, through the replication of their conquering techniques, in no way were they able to assimilate the evil in the application of all of them. An example of that could be how they kept captives and how they were or were not integrated to the community where they were forced to live in.

4.3. Correlates of indigenous raids in the taking of captives in North America

Captivity and frontier dynamics certainly go hand in hand. Therefore, as the frontier battles between the Spanish and indigenous tribes in Chile evolved in unexpected ways, considering the fact that the latter were able to replicate the mechanisms of the former, the same took place in North America. Thus, similarities between North America and South are inevitably dealt with. In that sense, Zaslow reflects on the expansion of Turner's frontier hypothesis, beyond the author's purposes, by saying that,

Though Turner himself made no attempt to apply this thesis outside of the United States, others have made the effort to give a frontier interpretation to the history of such countries as Canada, Russia, Latin America, and mediaeval Germany. It is obvious that the frontier thesis may be considered in its entirety only where situations comparable with that of the American frontier exist. (1948, p. 158)

In the particular case of those indigenous tribes, in Chile, who were enduring the practices of malocas -by the Spanish- and ended up assimilating that methodology not only as resistance but also as confrontation, other indigenous tribes in North America did the same in order to face the expansion of the conquerors' frontier. For instance, Hämäläinen (2011) shows how the Comanches were able, at the same time, to expand their power by means of putting into practice the conquerors' raids. This happens due to the fact that, as in the Frontier Above in Chile, this indigenous community is born and developed in a borderland, and not only imitates colonizing dynamics of the conquerors themselves, but appropriates them to such an extent that it ends up being formed as a subjugating force of other peoples. They even made use of denigrating practices such as slavery. However, their motive, unlike the Europeans and their American descendants, was never land possession. They only relied on such practices as a dissuading technique that would guarantee their safety and power in those places where they were continually moving around.

5. Conclusions

Writing about the Frontier Above in Chile opens the path to acknowledging indigenous communities other than the Mapuches. Moreover, going further into their histories shows the complexity of the frontier relations between the Spanish and the various indigenous tribes that existed in the 16th and 17th centuries in Chile. This very same complexity denies the simplicity of the American frontier hypothesis or that one that distinguishes the Latin American case from the North-American one based solely on indigenous civilizations. On the contrary, there is nothing like unity in history as there was nothing like one frontier only in Latin American history. In the same sense, this variety leads us to viewing points that are different from a positive interpretation of frontier expansion since there was a lot of violence in it. Nevertheless, the victims were neither passive recipients of violence nor easily assimilated to or absorbed by the imposed culture. This made them turn from victims into fighters that would resist against the conquerors and respond to them to death while, in doing so, they assimilated their Europeans' colonizing techniques without being absorbed by them, i.e. they were able to make use of them to their own will. That is how Huilliches and Poyas, in the Frontier Above in Chile, and the Comanches as well, in Western North-America, among other indigenous groups, stood in the history of the Americas.

Therefore, the aforementioned context makes us realize that believing that indigenous communities are passive victims of colonization, without taking their complexities as human beings into account, eventually ends up being a fetish in the narration of their struggles throughout history. At the same time, that tradition in narrative regarding indigenous peoples and their histories might lead to an indirect discrimination against them as they get reduced to a common history that denies their particular geographical and cultural aspects, together with their own aspirations among the various groups that, as any other human settlement, might have also got in trouble with one another.

Certainly, the idea of this work is not avoiding the consequences of colonization as imposed on indigenous peoples but to view that from the point of view of locals who can also feel, react and carefully act strategically whenever necessary so as to resist against the context they were enduring. The problem, on the contrary, with denying the human nature of indigenous communities is believing them incapable of having achieved higher

cognitive processes or complex emotional states so as to help them plan counterattacks to try to defeat the Spanish colonizers.

Moreover, a comparative reflection on the situation in the northern part of the Americas and the situation in South America makes us understand that, although indigenous people did not see land as conceptualized territory, their liberty in its use around could have perfectly led to a clash of interests with other neighboring communities. In addition to that, the complexity of human nature that proves clashes among people belonging to the same social or ethnic group does give proof of the problems that may arise among people belonging to distinct groups. Indigenous peoples were not any different from any other human group, not even in the past.

Again, we would like to emphasize the error in generalizing indigenous communities as, we firmly believe, that practice steals their particularities and, thus, takes their dignity from them. Actually, the intended message behind acknowledging various indigenous ethnicities is, apart from rescuing their existence, showing a form of resistance against the hegemony of certain groups over other ones. This is what we think has happened to the Mapuches, who in the historical and popular narrative, have achieved some emphasis over other local ethnicities that have almost fallen into oblivion.

As said before, the previous statements are not meant to neglect the colonization endured by the Mapuches. In fact, the issue has nothing to do with the indigenous group itself but with how history has been told in this respect. Nonetheless, the very Mapuches might be victims in this context too because, while other indigenous tribes have been simply ignored over time, the former have been going through a fetishization process that might have unprecedented consequences in the contemporary times. While there is apparent embracement of the Mapuches in the light of current events, the exacerbation of their existence in both historical and popular narrative, as pointed out before, takes their very existence to the outskirts of social symbolism.

What is it we mean by all this? Either enemy or hero, general canonization of individuals or whole groups, at the end of the day, leads to making their human nature vanish to other people's eyes. While adored by a majority of people in local stories of history books, nowadays indigenous people coexist with mestizos almost all over the country. Thus, of Chileans, for instance, tend to think of them as mere figures of narration, it is finally hard for the former to take the latter seriously in real life. As coexisting with each other might prove everybody wrong in their fetishization of the Mapuches, they might end up avoiding such a social contact. So, what is it which can be done to solve this issue, on the one hand, and prevent this situation from occurring again the near future, on the other hand? Well, the solution seems to be making all ethnic groups be culturally intertwined.

Of course, making everybody be intertwined does not mean making them be fully merged. It only means that it is necessary for all people to understand their common ground and history, not necessarily from a common genetic root, but in terms of their intersubjective relations throughout history. Making all Chileans, for example, grasp the reality of the fact that sharing the same land inevitable shows that all social and cultural groups have at least once -their ancestors included- had intersubjective communication over time. Therefore, forgetting about it all and rescuing the memory of only one ethnic group over other ones, is not only far-fetched from the point of view of logical thinking; it also makes the hegemonic group be a victim of a different type of acculturation as they gain importance only in the symbolic realm of narration.

As a conclusion, respecting indigenous diversity involves recognizing the truth of their existence both in the telling of their histories among people and the normal coexistence with them in real life. At the same time, it implies writing about them as if we were writing about any other human being, i. e. without trying to view them as flawless. Actually, acknowledging their human nature as consisting of feeling, emotions, ambitions and strategic planning without judging those characteristics makes it easier for researchers to write about them without feeling themselves prospective victims of judgement from the community of readers around.

However, the previous scenario does not necessarily show that indigenous resentment or wrath at some point in history should be assimilated to the practices of the Spanish colonizers. Even in those contexts referred to above when the former had less violent captivities than the latter, it is possible to notice that preventing indigenous groups from being generally fetishized is not equal to making them be assimilated to the violence exerted by the colonizers in the American continent. No matter the particular aspects that we would like to make noticeable, it is of paramount importance not to forget the context betwixt a colonized and a colonizer as that situation does not vary.

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