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**Contact, Religion, and Domination:  
Araucanian and Spanish Interaction During the Contact Period**

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Human colonization and its attendant cultural and political consequences has defined and continues to define the history of the world. The expansion into Africa, Asia, and the Americas by Europeans after AD 1492 drastically changed the lives of millions of people, not only those who became colonized but of the colonizers as well. Culture contact, including the flow of individuals, goods, and ideas into different areas forced many indigenous societies to modify their lifeways, including religious practices, in order to adapt to the incursion of colonizers; and colonizers had to adapt to new environments and peoples who reacted in myriad ways to colonial practices, which included the imposition of Catholicism upon extant belief systems. In North and South America, the vast majority of native groups were unable to successfully resist outsiders, particularly the Spanish, and experienced drastic changes to their belief systems. However, one group that successfully resisted Spanish colonial efforts with limited changes to their religious practices and other cultural patterns are the Araucanians, or Araucanian, of south-central Chile, who fought Spanish colonizers to the point that the Spanish crown demarcated the Bio-Bio river as a frontier between the empire and the Araucanians, something never done elsewhere in the Americas. Impressively, the Araucanians were able to maintain centuries-old religious patterns with little or no change, and may have actually experienced an increase in the amount of religious activity during the war. For the Spanish, their interaction with the Araucanians required a re-evaluation and adjustment of the colonizing methods used elsewhere in the Americas, such as the *reducción* (reservation) system, which was never used in south-central Chile as the Spanish empire never maintained sufficient control over most of the region to move from the *encomienda* (land grant) system to *reducciones*. Additionally, evangelization of the Araucanians by the Spanish relied on singular missionary efforts instead of direct imposition of Catholic dogma, as Araucanian resistance limited the number of churches and cathedrals built in the southern reaches of the country.

In brief, the Araucanians are a sedentary agro-pastoralist ethnic group that first came into contact with Spanish colonizers in central Chile in AD 1535 and live today in isolated settlements and reservations in south-Central Chile and make up the largest indigenous ethnic group in the southern cone of South America. Early chroniclers note that many Araucanians lived in disparate kin groups with no centralized authority, but were generally subject to local or kin group chiefs (*lonkos*) except in times of conflict when war chiefs (*toqui*) would unite disparate local groups together. Others indicate that some Araucanians were more centralized, as numerous *toqui* in some parts of the region came together to form larger *ayllarehue* and *butanmapu* political organizations designed to resist the Spanish. Religiously, the Araucanians rely on *Machi* (shamans) who direct spiritual activities at the *kuel* such as the *awn* funerary rite, as well as the *nguillatun* ceremony, among others. *Machi* are essential actors in the political sphere as well, joining religion and politics together particularly at the *nguillatun* field, where even to this day important political meetings take place at these locations, under the direction of the *Machi*. In contact times it is likely that initial interaction between the Spanish and the Araucanian occurred at *nguillatun*. This religious-political organization led to the agglomeration of individuals and groups around religious sites and aided the Araucanians in resistance against the Spanish.

To date, little research has been done with regards to the religious interaction between the Araucanians and Spanish, particularly how this interaction translates into the archaeological and ethnohistorical records and what this can inform about the cultural contact between the two groups. The proposed project will examine (1) how indigenous and Spanish religious practices and spaces were employed to negotiate political outcomes and (2) this interaction at two neighboring archeological sites in the Puren-Lumaco river valley, designated PU-157 and PU-174, respectively, which contain a Spanish fortified house (which apparently contains a *capilla* or small church as well) and two Araucanian ritual/burial mounds (*kuel*) and an ancient ritual field (*nguillatun* fertility rite). The organization of these two sites is three-tiered: first, the lowest level contains a heavily eroded *kuel*; slightly above the *kuel* is a level that contains the fortified house, stretching out over a flat area approximately 100 meters long; approximately 50 meters above the house at the top of a hill is the second *kuel* and *nguillatun* field. The close

proximity of these specific cultural elements provides an excellent opportunity for understanding how the Araucanian and Spanish interacted on a religious and political level and what affect this had on the history of the area. It is believed that the first *kuel* is oldest and was affected by Spanish incursion and construction of the fortified house. After the house was abandoned/destroyed by the Araucanians, the second *kuel* was built above the remains of the house, perhaps to demonstrate dominance over or syncretism with the Spanish. For the first time in South America, we have the opportunity to document the material and spatial expressions of significant political and religious transformations and/or syncretisms among the Spanish and a local indigenous community.

The investigation of culture contact and colonization has become an important avenue of study in anthropology as a whole. Various theories and ideas have been proposed for understanding this topic, though none deal very well with the area in question as the vast majority of societies in the world were eventually colonized by outside groups, while the Araucanians successfully resisted attempts at outside control. However, this investigation will be guided by the theoretical approach of Dietler (1998) and Alexander (1998) who speak to “cultural entanglement” in the area of cultural contact. Cultural entanglement is described as “interaction with an expanding territorial state...results in [changes] in indigenous patterns...” and is a “long term, gradual, and nondirected process of interaction” between colonizers and indigenous groups with an emphasis on native agency (Alexander 1998:482). For the Spanish-Araucanian interaction, this theory will be modified to include the changes that came about in Spanish actions and activities, as well as the Araucanian modifications in the face of Spanish incursion. Particularly important here are the religious values and beliefs of the Araucanians which structured the nature and outcome of political interaction with the Spanish vis-à-vis negotiated actions in designated sacred spaces.

The proposed project is an initial investigation preparatory to submitting National Science Foundation and Wenner-Gren Foundation dissertation improvement grants and a Fulbright Fellowship in 2006 for doctoral fieldwork to be carried out in 2007. The student investigator will be working under the direction of Dr. Tom Dillehay, the Department of Anthropology, who has carried out substantial ethnohistorical, ethnographic, and archaeological research in Chile over the past thirty years and who is a professor in various Chilean universities.

This project will be carried out in three phases. The first phase will be extensive ethnohistorical research through CSRC resources, the Vanderbilt University library, and through contacts at several libraries in Chile, including the Biblioteca Nacional in Santiago and university libraries in the cities of Temuco, Valdivia, and Concepción. As much information as possible will be gathered from Spanish chroniclers, later Chilean historians, and modern ethnohistorians, ethnographers, and archaeologists with regards to the history of the Puren-Lumaco river valley and the area where the sites are located. This research will indicate who was granted the *encomienda* that is located at PU-157, when this occurred, and when it was abandoned. Also, this research will gather information about the Spanish perspectives on Araucanian religious and political activities in Puren-Lumaco and other areas. Their perceptions of Araucanian religion may indicate why the *encomienda* was placed where it was, interactions at *nguillatun* and other ceremonies, and Spanish treatment of Araucanian ceremonial space. Additionally, the ethnographic research will provide the Araucanian perspective on Spanish arrival and views on Spanish incursion and religion. The second phase, in conjunction with the ethnohistorical research, will be mapping and testing of the two archeological sites. PU-157 will be mapped using a Geonics EM38b conductivity meter, which measures the magnetic resistivity of the soil and can indicate the location of structures, fires, and other subsurface features. Each *kuel* and the *nguillatun* field will have archeological test pits placed in the center to recover charcoal for radiocarbon dating to provide a fixed date for construction, as well as ceramics, tool stone, and other cultural materials that may be present. Excavations will be placed under Dr. Dillehay's exploratory permit from the Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales de Chile. The third phase is analysis of the recovered archeological materials. All of these analyses taken together will

indicate when and by whom each portion of the sites were utilized, what happened temporally, and what this means for the region as a whole, particularly how and where Araucanian religious practice was an essential principal of organization and political resistance. The fieldwork will be carried out by August 2006, and the analysis of the artifacts and cultural materials will be done by September 15, 2006.

## Works Cited

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