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Troubled Negotiations: The Mapuche and the Chilean State (1818-1830)

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This paper explores the complex, dynamic relationship that developed between the Mapuche and Chilean state authorities in the first decades following independence from Spain. The greater part of Mapuche society supported royalist forces during the independence wars, but there were also several leaders who allied themselves with the patriot insurgents and, after the latter's victory, entered into negotiations with the fledgling Chilean republic. This paper investigates the intricacies of these negotiations and, in so doing, draws out some notable continuities between the colonial period and the early independence era. It focuses on the language(s) of negotiation – delving into what Mapuche and Chilean authorities were saying about and to one another – and on the symbolic significance of the *parlamentos* (mass-meetings), in order to demonstrate that Chile could have adopted an alternative model of government to the (centralist) one we know now.

Keywords: Chilean state, Mapuche, negotiations, confrontation, indigenous autonomy, border, *parlamentos*

This article shows how integral the Mapuche were to the process of state building in newly independent Chile. The Mapuche achieved legendary status in the Americas for being one of the only indigenous peoples to defeat the Spanish conquistadors on the battlefield and to remain effectively autonomous throughout the colonial period. (During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Spanish crown signed more than twenty treaties which recognised the Bío-Bío River as the official border between the Kingdom of Chile and Mapuche territory.) The Mapuche were still an autonomous people at the time of the independence wars. The starting point for my article therefore diverges from that of much of the recent scholarship on indigenous peoples' participation in the construction of Latin America's

postcolonial nation-states (e.g. Echeverr, 2011; Guardino, 1996; Mndez, 2005; Walker, 1999). This rich historiography shows us how indigenous groups bargained and compromised with, as well as resisted, the elites who were directing the state-making projects. It encourages us to understand indigenous actions as ‘practical strategic consciousness’ (Echeverr, 2011: 243), rather than ignorance or naivety (a story too frequently accepted by the traditional historiography). Practical strategic consciousness is exactly what we see in the primary material documenting Mapuche actions during the independence wars, as they bartered with both royalist and patriot forces, and during the early republican period, as they interacted with various components of the recently founded state. The difference – of vital importance for comparative analysis – is that the Mapuche (south of the Bo-Bo River) did this not as a colonised sector of society, not as labourers for creole *hacendados* or mine owners, but as an autonomous and prosperous people, with their own recently expanded territory (Klubock, 2014: 14; Mallon, 2011: 283). Consequently, issues such as the payment of Indian head-tax, which were paramount for many indigenous peoples in post-independent Latin America, did not affect the Mapuche in Chile.

The Mapuche were not unique, however. Other ‘unconquered Indians’, who signed treaties with the Spanish, included the Guajiro of Riohacha in New Granada, and the Apache and Comanche in northern Mexico and the south-western United States (see Gutirrez, 2011; O’Hara, 2010; and Hmlnein, 2008). Nor were the Mapuche limited to Chile, for their agricultural activities, trade routes, and military power extended across the Andes into the Argentine plains. These were also home to the Telhuelche and Ranquel peoples, who likewise negotiated with colonial and republican state authorities (Bechis, 2008; Martnez Sarasola, 2010). In line with the present special issue’s aim to study the early nineteenth century in its own terms, it is crucial that we appreciate the language and practice of Chilean-Mapuche relations as part of this broader continental reality. The modern state in Latin America and beyond was under construction; its composition, purpose and mechanisms were still being defined, and diplomatic negotiations with indigenous populations were far from anomalous.

As outlined by Guillaume Boccara (1999), Jorge Pavez (2008), and Cristin Martnez (2010), Mapuche society in the early nineteenth century was highly fragmented. During the colonial period, an increasingly smaller number of *lonkos* (caciques or leaders) took control of increasingly larger geographical areas. In other words, Mapuche society became a more cohesive social unit than it had been before the Spanish conquest, developing an intricate system of alliances between leaders, but within this larger confederation there still existed one hundred or so different groups or factions (Herr, 2014), which acted independently of (and on many occasions in opposition to) one another. Chile was by no means the only state with which this diverse people interacted. Traversing back and forth across the cordillera, Mapuche leaders were in constant dialogue with government authorities in Buenos Aires (and in Mendoza, San Luis and Crdoba). They also conversed with representatives of several European

governments, not least the British and French. This article makes occasional reference to such interactions, but it focuses primarily on Mapuche-Chilean relations.

The greater part of Mapuche society supported the royalists during the wars of independence, but there were several prominent leaders who sided with the rebel patriot forces (Bengoa, 1985; Hux, 1992; Martínez, 2010). Previous literature also tells us of *lonkos* who switched sides during the conflict, or who professed backing both sides at the same time. Not surprisingly, once the military struggle was over (by 1818 in northern and central Chile), the Mapuche dealt with the fledgling republic in equally diverse ways. This article concentrates on Mapuche leaders who decided that the best way to protect their self-interests (i.e. to maintain and indeed possibly extend their local power base and wealth) was to negotiate with the Chilean state. These leaders moved around and between Mapuche and Chilean territory – travelling to different Mapuche communities (to inform about recent *parlamentos* with Chilean officials), to Santiago (to speak with government authorities), to Concepción, Talcahuano, Yumbel and other towns in the Chilean-controlled part of the frontier zone (to participate in *parlamentos*) – and thereby acted as cross-border agents, who simultaneously transgressed and reinforced the border.

Today, Chile is a highly centralised state, which shows perhaps the least regard for indigenous rights in the continent. Its constitution does not recognise the existence of indigenous peoples (only ethnic groups), its ‘multicultural’ legislation is notoriously weak (and constantly contravened by mega-development projects), and scores of Mapuche political activists remain in prison on charges of terrorism despite protests from international human rights organisations. One of the key points that I want to make in the following pages is that this decline towards dispossession and exclusion was not necessarily anticipated in the 1820s. Chilean state building, like the story of colonial encounter that Pekka Hämäläinen tells in *The Comanche Empire*, was a dialectical process ‘rather than a preordained sequence’ of events (Hämäläinen, 2009: 6). During the early independence period, some political leaders imagined a national community that functioned as a shared social space, which included, without assimilating, indigenous cultures (Casanova, 2000; Marimán, 2012; Pinto, 2003). Indeed, Pablo Marimán suggests that there was a legitimate attempt at this time to ‘conceive of multiple governing powers (Coquimbo-Santiago-Concepción-Mapuche territory)’ as if Chile were a ‘confederation of nations’ (Marimán, 2012: 67; unless otherwise stated, all translations from Spanish to English are my own).

This article investigates how that shared social space functioned, paying particular attention to the language that both held it together, and intimated its constraints and limitations. It returns to the debates and disagreements of the Chilean political and military elites, in order to re-centre the federalist project as a significant path that was not taken, and to explain what the federalist project looked like vis-à-vis the Mapuche. It discusses foreign observers’ narrative imaginings of *criollo*-Mapuche relations. It also incorporates as much as possible indigenous Mapuche voices. The first section explores the varied

ways in which Mapuche autonomy was articulated during the first decades of the nineteenth century, and how this related to the concept of the border (between Chilean and Mapuche territory). The second section underscores the continual oscillation between confrontation and collaboration that we find in the primary documentation related to the '*Guerra a muerte*', a guerrilla war waged by royalist outlaw groups in the borderlands of southern Chile with the direct or indirect support of many Mapuche. In the final section, I analyse the *parlamentos* (mass-meetings) that took place between Mapuche leaders and government authorities during the 1810s and 1820s, focusing on the multiple and multi-layered performances that both parties enacted, which in turn give a good sense of the muddled power relations at play in early republican Chile.

Articulating Autonomy: Shifting Visions of Family and Territory

The provisional constitution written soon after Chile secured its independence from Spain in 1818 did not define national territory. (This and all subsequent constitutions are accessible at www.leychile.cl). It divided the Chilean state into three provinces for administrative purposes – Coquimbo, the capital, and Concepción – but did not specify the territorial demarcations of those provinces. Nor did it mention the lands beyond Concepción. Official visions of Chile shifted somewhat with the constitution of 1822, which delineated the 'natural limits' of the nation, and included Araucanía by default, because the limits were Cape Horn in the south, the Atacama Desert in the north, the Andes in the east, and the Pacific Ocean in the west. The constitutions of 1823 and 1828 replicated this imaginary, maintaining the same rather vague natural borders. The latter of the two also increased the number of provinces contained within these borders from three to eight: Coquimbo, Aconcagua, Santiago, Colchagua, Maule, Concepción, Valdivia and Chiloé. Despite the omission of Araucanía and the consequent intimation that there was some kind of lacuna between Concepción and Valdivia, the constitution negated the autonomy of Mapuche territory by proclaiming that the Republic of Chile was 'one and indivisible'.

Not long after the approval of the provisional constitution of 1818, Bernardo O'Higgins, as Supreme Magistrate of the Chilean People, offered to sign a pact of friendship with 'our brothers, the inhabitants of the southern frontier' (*Gaceta Ministerial de Chile*, 13 March 1819). 'We all descend from the same Fathers', he said, 'and the natural resources of our territory, our customs, and our respective needs, induce us to live in ever-lasting harmony and fraternity'. As with the constitutions that followed, O'Higgins imagined a Chilean territory that encompassed Mapuche territory; it became 'our territory', but the notion of brotherhood (i.e. multiple branches of the same family) and internal frontiers allowed for the acceptance of difference and plurality within that territory. O'Higgins addressed the 'Araucanians [...] as Leader of a free and sovereign people, who recognises your independence', and

asserted that this new ‘alliance’ would be ‘presented to the world as proof that our States will remain forever free’. He meant free from the yoke of Spanish colonial rule, for the south of Chile was being ravaged by a guerrilla war, later named the ‘*Guerra a muerte*’ by Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna (1868). In this context, O’Higgins spoke of two separate states but urged their coming together in a political coalition in order to expel the royalist guerrilla forces that were threatening the stability of the new republic.

There was nothing particularly unusual in the fact that O’Higgins sought to gain the goodwill of the Mapuche; declarations such as these proliferated in Latin America during the independence era, as leaders sought to legitimise their fledgling states. It should also be noted that O’Higgins was far less accepting of indigenous autonomy when it came to his proclamations on the sanctity of private property in Chile (Marimán, 2012: 69-70). Nevertheless, it is worth underscoring the significance of the specific use of language here – i.e. that this *criollo* head of state explicitly recognised the Mapuche (or Araucanians) as part of a distinct, independent state – because such language is unthinkable in the neoliberal multicultural Chile of today.

That the 1810s and 1820s constituted an ‘age of proposals’ (Fowler, 1998) is confirmed by the heated debates that took place in Chile’s Constituent Assembly about the new constitution of 1828 and the definition of Chilean nationality and territory to be adopted therein. A number of congressmen affirmed that the terms Araucanian and Chilean were practically interchangeable, and that it was only natural that Araucanian lands and people should constitute part of Chilean nation (see Casanova, 2000:41-42), but there were also those who refuted such claims. Juan de Dios Vial, for example, argued that while the Araucanians were ‘born in the territory of Chile’ they did not ‘correspond to the nation we describe here because they are independent and do not obey our authorities or laws’ (in Casanova, 2000: 39). In this manner, De Dios Vial, like O’Higgins, denied Mapuche territorial autonomy whilst simultaneously acknowledging (although not necessarily celebrating) the reality of their legal and political autonomy. Juan Alvarado was more vehement in his opposition to the integrationist agenda: ‘to say that the [territorial] limits stretch from the Atacama to Cape Horn, thus comprising nations which do not belong [to Chile], is a shocking arrogance and a patent act of usurpation’ (in Marimán, 2012: 86). As Marimán recently remarked, it would be a mistake to ‘judge the political class of this period as one clear-cut whole’ (Marimán, 2012: 83).

In elaborating his argument about more inclusionary visions of a ‘plurinational territory’ (2012: 74), Marimán also draws extensively on the Treaty of Tiahue, which was signed between Chilean military commander Pedro Barnechea and Mapuche cacique Francisco Mariluán on 7 January 1825. According to Article 1, both leaders were convinced of the ‘great advantages of coming together as one family’: as a united front, they could better oppose the ‘enemies of our country’, increase trade and commerce, and bring to an end all the problems afflicting the Republic. Article 2 declared that the

Chilean state extended from the Atacama Desert to the last confines of the province of Chiloé, thereby concealing Mapuche territory as a distinct entity, as the constitution did, and Article 3 agreed that everyone living between these limits would be treated as Chilean citizens. Using similar language to that of O'Higgins in 1819, Article 4 celebrated Mariluán's pledge of 'union and perpetual brotherhood' with Chile, and in Article 5 Mariluán agreed that he and his '*poderdantes*' were henceforth subject to 'the same obligations as Chileans and the laws dictated by the Sovereign Constituent Congress'. Article 13 obliged the 'Government to appoint and employ a commissary and an interpreter' to communicate with Chile's 'new brothers', and Article 14 stated that the commissary would 'travel around the four Butalmapus every two months with a view to propagating liberal ideas of peace and unity'.

No wonder, then, that the Chilean government was able to present the treaty to Congress as the 'capitulations' of Mariluán (Tellez et. al., 2011: 174). In becoming part of the 'Chilean family', Mariluán seemed to sign away a great deal of Mapuche autonomy. Yet Article 14 prompts an alternative reading – along the lines proposed by Marimán – mainly because of its reference to the 'four Butalmapus'. *Butalmapu* (or *fütalmapu*) is a Mapudungun word, first appropriated by colonial authorities in the seventeenth century, meaning 'large lands' or 'large territory' (Boccaro, 1999: 432). As a collective military response to Spanish presence, Mapuche society organised itself around these loose confederacies, which corresponded to different ecological or geographical areas within Mapuche territory; *Lafkenmapu*, for instance, was the land of the Lafkenche-Mapuche people on the coast (Pichinao, 2012: 28). The Treaty of Tapihue thereby hinted at the existence of a distinct territory, and a distinctly Mapuche way of managing such territory. Furthermore, Article 18 stipulated that 'The Governors or Caciques will not permit any Chileans to live on the lands under their control' and Article 19 acknowledged the 'scandalous thefts' that had taken place in the past, and agreed that any thieves 'caught in the act will be punished by the Cacique on whose land [they] commit the crime'. More significantly, Article 19 recognised the Bío Bío River as the 'dividing line' between the state of Chile and 'these new allies'. In contrast to the constitutions of the 1820s, but similarly to treaties signed between the Mapuche and Spanish authorities in the 1600s and 1700s, the Treaty of Tapihue inscribed on paper a border where one sovereignty ended and another began – even if certain state agents (as well as Mapuche leaders, and Mapuche and non-Mapuche merchants), were allowed to cross it.

Taken together, Articles 14, 18 and 19 represent a remarkable admission of indigenous autonomy. Not coincidentally, a growing number of leading political figures in Santiago at the time (namely Ramon Freire, as Supreme Director from 1823, and José Miguel Infante as member of Freire's Superior Court and, later, Senator for Santiago) supported a decentralised political framework as a potential way forward for Chile. Within a year of Tapihue, the Constituent Congress in Santiago had introduced elected assemblies in the provinces and was debating a draft federal constitution. We know now that the federalist project did not prosper. We know that it was defeated at the Battle of Lircay in

1830 and that, under Diego Portales, Chile became a highly centralised state. The important point, however, is that this was not inevitable; it was still possible in the 1820s to imagine the country taking a different shape.

Foreign diplomats living in Chile certainly perceived such possibilities. In one particularly intriguing letter, dated 9 October 1825, British Consul General Christopher Nugent informed his superiors back in London of a trip he had recently made to Concepción (FO 16/3: 124-130). Apparently, a delegation of British agriculturalists had been ‘stigmatised as the first Envoy of the British Colony sent to inspect the Indian country, with the ulterior view of ascertaining how feasible might be the conquest of it by British force’. Such rumours, Nugent warned, had the potential to set ‘the whole race of the Araucanian Indians in array against British interests in South America’. So, he was delighted to report that he had been able ‘to contradict, to two of the chief Caciques of the Indian Tribe assembled in Concepción [...] this shameful and scandalous falsehood’. Nugent had also assured these caciques of his ‘conviction that Great Britain desired no more than an eternal interchange of amity and goodwill with the Araucanians, and that she looked to a mutual benefit to be desired by the exchange of commodities between the two countries’.

Like the British Consul, Mapuche leaders, in their correspondence with Chilean authorities, often spoke of their people and territory as a distinct ‘country’ – or distinct ‘homeland’, or ‘nation’ or ‘state’. To be sure, we need to read their articulations of autonomy with caution; we need to take into account their use of Spanish, their intended audience, and the fact that they were ‘friendly’ Mapuche who had opted to negotiate with the Chilean state. They may have decided to speak in terms that their interlocutors would understand, without necessarily believing in those terms. They may merely have been saying what they thought their audience wanted to hear (or read). Notwithstanding this, the material provides some compelling insights into the vocabulary of Mapuche-Chilean negotiations, not least the variety of terms that Mapuche leaders employed, and the fluency with which they used them.

Around 1823, Venancio Coñuepán – described by British naval officer Richard Longeville Vowell as ‘an obliging old chief, when his warlike propensities are not interfered with’ (1831: 391) – sent a letter to Bernardo O’Higgins, in which he swore ever-lasting loyalty to the then Supreme Director. The ‘Araucanian State’, he said, ‘is well penetrated (*bien penetrado*), a result of the operations led by your deceased father, Don Ambrosio O’Higgins, and by [you] his dear son’. ‘As long as blood courses through my veins and those of the Araucanian people, we will not hesitate to spill it for [you]’, he continued, ‘Do not distress; when you have no other sanctuary you can count on your Araucanians’ (in Pavez, 2008: 170). Coñuepán, a powerful and wealthy cacique from Cholchol, spoke of a separate ‘Araucanian State’ but it had been ‘penetrated’ by Spanish and Chilean authorities and was therefore not entirely foreign or unconnected. He promised, on behalf of this state, to fight to the death for O’Higgins. Coñuepán’s people were O’Higgins’s people, but they remained distinctly Araucanian. Furthermore,

while he had supported the rebel patriot forces from the beginning of the independence wars, and continued to work together with the Chilean government after the fall of O'Higgins, the promise of allegiance here seems to have been to O'Higgins as an individual person – they had studied together at the Colegio de Naturales de Chillán and were, according to Meinrado Hux (1992: 161), good friends – not as representative of the Chilean state. Indeed, Coñuepán clearly sent this letter just before or just after O'Higgins was forced to resign as Supreme Director of that state.

'I need to return to my home country (*mi país natal*), Lumaco, as soon as possible', Ambrosio Pinolevi wrote to the Intendant of Concepción, Juan de Dios Rivera, on 15 September 1825. 'From there', he said, 'I will summon all [those on] my land (*mi tierra*) [...] and invite those communities (*reducciones*) that have not yet embraced the liberal system of the motherland (*madre Patria*), like the Collicanos, Quechereguas, Malleco and even Mariluán, to a meeting, in the same place that my ancestors used to come together' (in Pavez, 2008: 173). Lumaco was where Pinolevi had been born and where he maintained a position of authority. This was the place that anchored him and that belonged to him by ancestral right. Yet he also related to a larger *Madre patria*, which presumably was Chile. As told here, Pinolevi – who was the brother and right hand man of a more renowned 'pro-Chilean' Mapuche leader, Juan Colipí (Pavez, 2008: 68) – had bought into Chile's liberal system, but other Mapuche (including Mariluán, who only eight months previously had signed the Treaty of Tiahue) had not.

Overall, it seems clear that the Mapuche managed to secure a sort of negotiated autonomy during the 1820s. That autonomy was articulated in many different ways: statehood; nationhood; land ownership; the existence of a frontier; the ability to fight; the choice of forming coalitions; the maintenance of separate political authorities and laws; a distinct way of seeing and organising one's territory; and establishing trading agreements with multiple partners. Binding all this together was the conciliatory language of alliance and friendship. In the letters cited above, Mapuche leaders took care not to push their autonomist language too far. In line with Chilean authorities, they spoke of kinship ties (the *hermano* or *compadre* they wrote of in their correspondence could just as easily have been Chilean as Mapuche) but nearly always with a specific political agenda in mind. Despite such overlaps, it is important to stress that while Chilean authorities tended to elide the issue of Mapuche territorial autonomy, Mapuche leaders firmly rooted their actions and identity in a particular and distinctive place. And yet the sphere of influence of the most prominent leaders was certainly not limited to that place, be it a locality like Lumaco or the 'four butalmapus'. As the aforementioned Captain Vowell recounted in his memoirs, Venancio Coñuepán often travelled to Santiago 'on an embassy of his nation'. He frequented the cafés of the capital city and, on one occasion, intervened in a dispute involving a troubadour known as 'La Monona' – a favourite of his, who sang satirical verses, especially about the clergy, and was sent to a house of correction as a result. Despite the protests of local church authorities,

Coñuepán managed to get ‘La Monona’ released (Vowell, 1831: 339-340). The opinions of this Mapuche cacique counted for something even hundreds of miles away from his lands in Cholchol.

War and Peace

From 1819 until 1824, developments in the south were dominated by the conflict between royalist outlaw groups and the newly established Chilean army. In *Guerra a muerte* (1868), Vicuña Mackenna retrospectively blamed the ‘savage Indians’ for stalling Chile’s full independence from Spain, on the basis that they had harboured and sometimes supported the guerrilla forces of Vicente Benavides, Juan Manuel Pico and the Pincheira brothers. A number of Chilean military authorities at the time spoke similarly of the Mapuche. In a letter of 3 March 1819, for example, Ramón Freire (then Intendant of Concepción under O’Higgins) complained that he was running out of patience with ‘the Indians who are attacking us from all sides’. ‘Only if we cross the Bio-Bio and launch a destructive war [against them]’, he argued, was it ‘going to be possible to maintain peace and secure this province from the onslaught of our enemies’. Freire admitted that this might ‘seem like a rash and foolish plan’ to people who were monitoring developments from afar (i.e. politicians in Santiago) but asserted that ‘a good beating’ was ‘the only way to [...] make sure the Indians comply with their duties’ (in Vicuña Mackenna, 1868: 17).

As Freire indicates, there was no consensus among Chile’s political and military leaders as to how best to deal with the Mapuche during this period. Freire promoted a ‘destructive war’ at the same time as O’Higgins spoke of ‘ever-lasting harmony and fraternity’ (Freire wrote this letter only ten days before O’Higgins’s address to ‘our brothers [...] of the southern frontier’). Any effort to achieve ‘harmony and fraternity’ required the republican government to spend money on gifts and *agasajos* (reception parties in honour of visiting Mapuche leaders, banquets laid on for the *parlamentos*), just as Spanish authorities had done during the colonial period. One British traveller in newly independent Chile, William Bennett Stevenson, commented that the government had failed ‘to avail [itself] of the opportunity to conciliate the Indians’ precisely because it did not offer them presents (1825: 65), but Stevenson was contradicted by his compatriot Captain Vowell who met ‘Benancio, a celebrated Araucano chief’ (i.e. Coñuepán) in Talcahuano in the early 1820s. ‘His nation was then at peace with Chile’, Vowell recounted, ‘having lately received presents from that state’. Vowell also, though, underscored the precariousness of the situation: Benancio’s nation, he said, could ‘afterwards make war and ravage all the defenceless farms and villages on the frontiers of Arauco [...] until they obtained a new treaty and a fresh distribution of presents...’ (Vowell, 1831: 389). Military commander of the frontier region, Pedro Barnechea, urged Freire, as Supreme Director, to take seriously this practice. On 2 April 1823, he wrote ‘please do all you can to send me the *agasajos* for the Indians, because – as you well know – we need them now more than ever before. [...] Even if the State spends a couple of

thousand or so [...] this is very little if it succeeds in securing calm and peace in the province and an alliance with the Natives' (Fondo Ministerio de Guerra, Vol. 127, No. 368). Parliamentary documents suggest that the state spent substantially more than 'a couple of thousand'. Congress approved a sum of 20,000 pesos for '*obsequios a los naturales*' in September that same year ('Redactor de las Sesiones del Congreso Soberano', 19 September 1823) and in November 1824 it recommended a budget of 100,000 pesos to cover the costs of a forthcoming *parlamento* ('Redactor de las Sesiones del Congreso Soberano', 17 November 1824).

Mapuche leaders made requests for very specific kinds of gifts in their correspondence with Chilean state authorities. On 5 March 1824, Mariluán added a post-script to his letter to the Intendant of Concepción: 'your friend Mariluan would greatly appreciate you sending him a ribbon-trimmed black hat from Uli, as well as a leather jacket and some tobacco'. He also mentioned that his 'son Caio, who thinks of you as a father (*taituru*), asks you to send him a woollen hat...' (in Pavez, 2008: 171). The paternal role allocated to the Intendant here resonates with an important point that Hämälanein makes about the exchange of gifts between colonial powers and the indigenous Comanche people in North America. This custom of interaction, Hämälanein argues, 'transformed strangers into fictive kinspeople and brought them into the familial circle' (Hämälanein, 2009: 40-41).

Mariluán had sided with royalist forces during the 1810s and early 1820s. As narrated by a French diplomatic report of the 1830s, he had 'for a long time [been] the cause of dread and terror' in southern Chile ('Notice sur les indiens indépendants qui habitent la partie méridionale de chili', 1834, Consulat de France à Santiago du Chili, 616 PO/ 1, No. 35). By April 1823, however, Barnechea could tell Freire that Mariluán had refused to help the guerrilla outlaw Juan Manuel Pico (letter dated 4 April 1823), and in a letter of 16 October that same year Barnechea wrote of the successful alliance he had established with 'our friend Mariluán' (Fondo Ministerio de Guerra, Vol. 127). This Mapuche leader had switched sides, and perhaps the gifts had something to do with that, or were at least evidence of government authorities' efforts to ensure he remained loyal. Whatever the reasons for it, Mariluán's collaboration was a crucial factor in the Chilean state's eventual victory in the '*Guerra a muerte*'. Reporting on the capture and murder of Pico and two other rebel leaders in 1824, *El Liberal* of Santiago acknowledged that 'all of these bandits have been handed over by the Indians' (27 November 1824: 4). The pro-royalist guerrilla forces could not have progressed in their campaign without the support of local Mapuche leaders, but neither could the Chilean army have defeated them if it had not had the help of the Mapuche. The Mapuche were thus the heroes as well as the villains of the story.

Mariluán's rival Coñuepán had supported the patriot forces from the beginning of the independence wars. In one report of 1825, authorities in Concepción described him as 'the most distinguished of the indigenous people, for his limitless devotion to the cause of the country, and for the multitude of services that served as proof of his patriotism throughout the entire bloody revolution'

(Fondo Ministerio Interior, Vol. 15, No. 66, 4 November 1825). In the midst of the worst of the ‘War to the Death’, Freire had called on Coñuepán to take charge of the main square of (recently pacified) Santa Juana. ‘I will provide him with a few soldiers’, Freire wrote to O’Higgins on 18 May 1819, ‘and ask him to put up fifty of his own troops, who’ll be paid the same as our soldiers’. This was, Freire explained, ‘the only way to see if I can nail down these men and hold on to this location; if I left anyone else in charge, they would rebel in an instant’ (in Vicuña Mackenna, 1868: 24-25). Freire, who two months previously had complained of ‘the Indians [...] attacking us from all sides’, felt Coñuepán was a person he could trust and who had the authority to keep his men in line and to fend off such attacks.

In sum, the overriding story of the ‘*Guerra a muerte*’ in the borderlands of southern Chile was not so much a gradual progression from war to peace (although the royalist guerrillas were eventually defeated) as a constant oscillation between war and peace. Individual connections had a key role to play in this volatile space of struggle and encounter, particularly because both Mapuche society and the fledgling republican state were highly fragmented. Freire, under O’Higgins, likely worked with Coñuepán because of the existing alliance between O’Higgins and Coñuepán; Barnechea struck up a friendship with Mariluán, which led to the Treaty of Tapihue, but this treaty proved meaningless in practical terms because the pair fell out soon afterwards. But it was not so much the treaty that mattered, as the making of the treaty.

The *Parlamentos*: Performing Colonial Ritual under a Republican State

The *parlamentos* which led to the treaties of the colonial period were highly institutionalised affairs, celebrated with great pomp and splendour. The General Parliament of Negrete, convened by Governor General Ambrosio O’Higgins in 1793, for example, was attended by 171 Mapuche caciques and 2485 of their *mocetones* (younger men) (Zavala, 2005: 50). Throughout the four days that the meeting lasted sumptuous feasts were provided at great cost to the Royal Treasury; colonial records also detail the long list of presents given to the Mapuche (in Zavala, 2005: 56), as well as the seating arrangements, the format of the preliminary greetings, and the order of the formal discussions. For Jimena Pichinao, the *parlamentos* constituted ‘a concrete example of not just political but also cultural-symbolic mediation and negotiation between members of two [distinct] nations’ (2012: 27). As outlined by Gertrudis Payàs, Manuel Zavala and Mario Samaniego, ‘the origins of this institution or practice can be found in the Mapuche gatherings described in early colonial reports as “juntas”’; the Spanish, they say, ‘simply grafted their own legal and diplomatic practices [...] onto local tradition’. The parliament combined, for instance, the Spanish practice of establishing peace through treaties ‘with the Mapuche tradition of commitment, based on “donation” or gift giving’ (Payàs, Zavala and Samaniego, 2012: 437). These authors contrast the colonial era with the second half of the nineteenth century, when – in the context of

the Chilean state's occupation of Araucanía – *parlamentos* were no longer 'convened in the spirit of negotiation but [instead] to force surrender and territorial despoliation' (Payàs, Zavala and Samaniego, 2012: 443). Their analysis largely misses out the early republican period.

There were two major *parlamentos* in the 1820s: Yumbel in December 1823 and Tapihue in January 1825 (there were also many smaller meetings). The main representative of the Chilean state at both was Pedro Barnechea. To Vicuña Mackenna's mind, this 'Colonel of the Army of the Republic, Commander of the Frontier, and Delegate of the City of Los Angeles' (to quote his full title) merited great praise for his 'burning patriotism' but was a 'crude and ignorant man who barely [knew] how to write his own name' (Vicuña Mackenna, 1868: 179). Francisco Mariluán was the principal representative of the Mapuche, specifically 'Governor of fourteen communities', and came accompanied – according to French naturalist Claudio Gay – by 60 caciques and 230 *mocetones* (Gay, 1848: 179). These parliaments were not of the same scale, then, as those held during the colonial period, and the key protagonists appeared to have less authority: Barnechea was no Ambrosio O'Higgins; Mariluán represented only some of the lineage groupings within Mapuche society.

They were still important events, nevertheless. Mariluán was keen to spread the news of the meetings to other regions of Mapuche territory and government documents suggest that Freire, as Supreme Director, was supposed to attend the *parlamento* of Tapihue ('Redactor de las Sesiones del Soberano Congreso', 17 November 1824: 153) but got called away due to urgent business in Chiloé (Vicuña-Mackenna, 1868: 512). The parliaments of the 1820s took place just north of the Bio-Bio River, which meant that the Chilean republican state, like its colonial predecessor, was the host and therefore obliged to provide copious amounts of food and alcohol, and gifts for its Mapuche guests. These *parlamentos* continued to function, as before, as a flamboyant spectacle of encounter. It is this performative aspect of the institution that interests me here: the collective performance(s) enacted by the Mapuche for the Chileans; the performance(s) enacted by Mapuche leaders for their own constituency; and the performance(s) enacted by Chilean authorities for the Mapuche.

The *Memoirs of General Miller* (1828) provide a vivid description of one 'palaver' between Pehuenche-Mapuche caciques and General José de San Martín, shortly before he crossed the Andes into Chile in 1816. (The point of the meeting was to request authorisation to pass through Pehuenche territory). This British military officer was struck by the demonstrations of Mapuche military prowess, particularly their horsemanship skills: 'When all the tribes had arrived, the warriors of one tribe commenced a sham-fight, during which they kept the horses at full speed, or made them turn on their hind legs, curvet and caper, and prance about in the most extraordinary manner'. 'These martial exercises', Miller said, 'lasted till noon' (having begun at approximately 8am) and 'San Martín's escort of a troop of cavalry and two hundred militia remained formed on the parade the whole time' (Miller,

1828: 91). Undoubtedly, Mapuche leaders wanted to impress upon their hosts that they were a force to be reckoned with.

The *parlamentos* also enabled the Mapuche to display and affirm their cultural difference. In Gay's narrative of Taphue, the day following formal negotiations was dedicated to rejoicing which, for the Mapuche caciques, involved singing 'songs in their own language, while their women, daughters and others present enjoyed their traditional dances, accompanied by military salutes, and the sound of the *kultrún* [Mapuche drum]' (Gay, 1848: 180). During the meetings, Mapuche leaders tended to speak in Mapudungun, even if they were fluent in Spanish. Vowell recalled that Coñuepán's 'eldest son and the caciques [...] barely uttered a word' to their Chilean companions in Talcahuano, and when they did it was through their interpreter (Vowell, 1831: 393). As Marta Bechis explains in her work on frontier relations in Argentina, to make public that one does not understand 'the other' is a way of claiming control, as well as expressing cultural difference (Bechis, 2008: 248). According to Pichinao, the *parlamentos* of the colonial period 'privileged the Mapuche language and discursive tradition' (Pichinao, 2012: 32). The same was true of the 1810s and 1820s. In San Carlos, during the 'exceedingly interesting' and very lengthy debate that followed San Martín's proposals 'each chief in his proper turn declared his sentiments with the utmost tranquillity and without the slightest interruption or impatience from the rest' (Miller, 1828: 94-95).

Travellers' accounts and Mapuche letters indicate that the Mapuche took charge of the organisation of the *parlamentos*, especially the *agasajos* and giving of gifts. In reference to one 'great enterprise' of 1825, Pinolevi warned the Intendant of Concepción that he could not 'do without spending a small sum' and then asked specifically for '12 barrels of wine, 25 mares, 2 lumps of salt, and 8 bushels of chili'. This way, he said, 'my fellow countrymen will know that you know how to discern those who make sacrifices for the greater good' (letter dated 15 September 1825, in Pavez, 2008: 173). The provisions for the *parlamentos* often seemed to matter more than the formal political negotiations. Indeed, in the Mapuche letters that I have consulted the reasons for holding the *parlamentos* are barely mentioned. At the *parlamentos* themselves, at least that of 1816 described by Miller, the 'proper business' was eclipsed by the military spectacle that came before and the exchange of presents that came afterwards. In Miller's account, a whole day was dedicated to gift-giving, and it was 'the most fatiguing of the whole period' for the 'unscrupulous and harassing importunity of the Indian character' meant 'the General was besieged without a respite of a moment' (Miller, 1828: 98). Gifts, like the food supplies demanded by Pinolevi, were a form of tribute – a payment for loyalty, for services rendered, for giving up something valuable (e.g. the right to pass through indigenous territory). They also conferred prestige (see Bechis, 2008: 257). To be sure, Mapuche protagonists could turn this whole enactment on its head: gifts were expected, but they could also be rejected. Vowell observed in Talcahuano that 'it was customary [among the Mapuche] to express the greatest contempt by scornful gestures and grimaces for

any present, however valuable and really pleasing to them, they are offered'. The interpreter explained that this 'was designed to show their independence and to impress strangers with the idea that their nation is wealthy' (Vowell, 1831: 393).

Crucially, the *parlamentos* were as much about the individual performances of prominent Mapuche leaders as they were a performance (of the military prowess, cultural difference, and political agency) of the Mapuche collective. In Talcahuano, the Mapuche caciques 'were all given coloured handkerchiefs, which they tied round their heads', except for Coñuepán and his youngest son, 'both of whom wore decent-looking uniforms and cocked-hats' (Vowell, 1831: 392). The government's gun salute was also an honour aimed directly at Coñuepán (Vowell, 1831: 393). At San Carlos, Mapuche participants took 'their seats according to seniority: the caciques first and then the war captains' (Miller, 1828: 93). The principal cacique Ninconyancu 'was nearly eighty years of age, his hair was snow white and his appearance was venerable in the extreme' (Miller, 1828: 94). Focusing on the colonial period, Boccara has argued that attendance at the *parlamentos* enabled Mapuche leaders to acquire political capital (1999: 449), by 'establishing the legitimacy of their authority' beyond their own communities (Boccara, 1999: 452). He notes the progressive reduction in the number of Mapuche representatives participating in the parliaments, and consequently presents this institution as fundamental to (and illustrative of) the 'crystallisation of power' that took place within Mapuche society over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Boccara, 1999: 455). In some ways, this does not quite tally with the experience of Mariluán at Tapihue, in that he did not come close to representing all four *butalmapus*. However, it is significant that his rival Coñuepán departed for Argentina (albeit on a mission for the Chilean government) in late 1824, when preparations for the *parlamento* with Barnechea were underway. Interestingly, the authority and prestige of these individual leaders were conferred by, and therefore dependent on, the republican state authorities. They received presents, but, more importantly, they assumed government titles left-over from the colonial period. On paper, Coñuepán, Mariluán and Ninconyancu all became 'caciques-gobernadores'.

In this sense, government authorities too were putting on a performance. They acted out their recognition of and respect for Mapuche authority and potency. They played the role of good hosts. They bestowed the gifts that were expected, they provided the necessary food and wine, and they applauded Mapuche military displays. They also honoured their guests with gun salutes: in Talcahuano, Coñuepán received five gun salutes, which 'gave him the greatest satisfaction' (Vowell, 1831: 393); in San Carlos, a gun was fired every six minutes during the martial exercises (Miller, 1828: 91). Simultaneously, however, the republican state was able to assert its own power during and through the *parlamentos*. They had the guns to fire. They had the money to purchase the presents (and by accepting presents, Bechis says, Mapuche recipients acknowledged the giver's authority). At San Carlos, the Mapuche caciques took their seats 'according to seniority' within Mapuche society, but it was San Martín,

together with the Governor of the fort and the interpreter, who sat at the head of the table (Miller, 1828: 93) and thereby assumed the superior position. It was also San Martín who spoke first and explained the purpose of the meeting, as happened with Barnechea at Tapihue. Mapuche participants may have dominated the discussions in terms of time, but it was the republican state authorities who set the agenda for those discussions. They had the first word, and – in a way – they had the last word too. This was certainly the case with the *parlamento* of Tapihue, which was written up and published as the Treaty of Tapihue in Spanish. Re-performed (via the printed text) for a Santiago audience, the *parlamento* of Tapihue became the ‘capitulations’ of Mariluán – and victory for the Chilean state. There is a final twist, however, in that that treaty was barely worth the paper it was written on, given that Barnechea reneged on the pledges and Mariluán then rebelled against him. What happened in San Carlos was more striking still: despite promising not to, the Pehuenche-Mapuche ‘soon told the secret’ that San Martín’s forces were planning to invade Chile by the southern passes, and enabled the Spanish army to prepare itself and fend off the attack (Miller, 1828: 103). The copious amounts of food and wine, and the abundance of gifts, did not guarantee loyalty for long.

Conclusion

The Portalian regime of the 1830s and, indeed, all subsequent Chilean governments, rejected the idea of indigenous autonomy as part of a decentralised political framework. This was not, however, a pre-determined outcome of the 1810s and 1820s. What would have happened if the federalist project had not been defeated during the civil war of 1829-1830, and if – as Florencia Mallon asks – ‘Concepción’s military, commercial and landowning elite had brokered a pacification agreement with the Mapuche that included a form of regional autonomy?’ (Mallon, 2002: 46). The Chilean state-building process, as the Vice-President of the Constituent Assembly put it in January 1829, was a ‘precarious and unsteady path, threatened by passions and uncertainty’ (in British Consul’s report, FO 16/ 8: 103). The Mapuche had a certain amount of leverage in this context, particularly if we compare their situation to indigenous peoples in many other parts of Latin America. The manner in which the so-called ‘friendly’ Mapuche and Chilean authorities spoke to one another (the vocabularies that they used) and the more horizontal way of doing politics that was enshrined in (or performed as part of) the institutional procedures of the *parlamentos* indicate that the unitary nation-state was not, as we often presume, structurally fundamental to republican narratives of modernity.

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