
Reviewed by Rachael Pasierowska (University of Iowa)

Published on H-Slavery (December, 2023)

Commissioned by Andrew J. Kettler (University of South Carolina)

The quotation “Este mal es incurable” (this incurable evil), words of the archbishop of Santiago from 1630, provides the cornerstone of Eugene C. Berger’s new study that explores Spanish attempts at colonial occupation of Chile and the subsequent enslavement—“the evil”—of Indigenous Americans from the end of the sixteenth to the later years of the seventeenth century. Through extensive archival research, Berger weaves together colonial letters, diary extracts, speeches, testimonials, legal records, and laws to great effect to argue how the Mapuche successfully resisted against continued efforts of Spanish colonial enslavement.

The author follows how these Indigenous Americans, initially centered on the Choapa River to the north of Santiago, adapted pre-Columbian societal ways of living as part of their continued battle for freedom during a turbulent period when Spanish colonists and the army pushed relentlessly to subjugate Indigenous persons. The title of Berger’s work places this study from 1598, which marked the first prominent uprising of the Mapuche against the Spanish Crown, a battle known as the “Curalaba,” until a second debilitating earthquake leveled Lima in 1687. This tectonic movement acted as a catalyst for the gradual removal of Spanish efforts to enslave the Mapuche through a sharp change to the economic rapport between Chile and Peru.

Berger takes the reader on a journey from early Mapuche civilizations that were notable for their egalitarian societies, marked by individual kinship communities that seldom came together with the exception of small gatherings where people communed for trade, marriage, and necessary events, such as warfare. A central argument throughout *This Incurable Evil* is the move of Mapuche living from a decentralized to a more centralized form of community and resistance. Beginning with Inka—and later Spanish—attempts to conquer the Mapuche, Berger convincingly demonstrates how this form of living and self-governance was both an advantage and a hindrance in times of resisting conflict and enslavement.
Composed of five chapters, the book follows a chronological approach regarding Mapuche resistance to enslavement beginning with Inka invasions and their later paving the way for a ubiquitous fight for freedom against Spanish attempts at enslavement from the mid-sixteenth century to 1598. Chapter 2 focuses on Spanish raids into Mapuche townships and the increasing presence of enslaved African laborers alongside Indigenous Americans. Berger purports that while the Spanish Crown under the regency of Queen Isabella decreed that Indigenous Americans were “vassals of the Crown and as such were free,” nevertheless, this law was not wholly effective in the protection of Indigenous Americans and their respective enslavement. This law did not apply to Spanish capture of Indigenous Americans in examples where the latter had “attacked or rejected Spanish authority.” Moreover, Indigenous Americans could remain legally enslaved “if they were already in the service of other natives” (p. 40). In such ways, Spanish colonists, with the support of the metropole’s army, circumvented laws to continue the enslavement of Indigenous Americans, notably, the Mapuche.

Chapters 3 through 5 chronicle Mapuche collective acts to resist Spanish enslavement through a cycle of raids and rebellions, one focal point being an uprising in 1655. Berger shows how the Mapuche began to work closer together as centralized units to better strategize against colonists. As larger communities, the Mapuche worked as a combined force that challenged Spanish authority and included the capture of colonists as pawns in warfare. Mapuche resistance became so organized that the Spanish turned to mass exportation of Mapuches, thus calcifying an enforced Mapuche diaspora as far north as Lima. In conclusion, Berger contends that this bilateral system of capture and enslavement among both peoples was only dissolved with a powerful earthquake that terribly shook the city of Lima in 1687. This environmental force, in addition to a successive wheat blight, debilitated Peru’s economy and made the forced enslavement of the Mapuche and other Indigenous Americans from Chile less cost effective. In consequence, wheat prices increased threefold in Chile, which would ultimately become Peru’s “Sicily” that provided “the viceregal capital [Lima] with wheat for much of the eighteenth century” (p. 90).

Berger has an impressive bibliography comprising both primary and secondary sources, many in Spanish, which opens his study to English-speaking scholars, for instance, the works of Carlos Aldunate del Solar, José Toribio, Juan Guillermo Muñoz Correa, and Macarena Sánchez Pérez, among others. The author might have further referenced notable publications, such as Pilar M. Herr’s Contested Nation: The Mapuche, Bandits, and State Formation in Nineteenth-Century Chile (2019) and Florencia E. Mallon’s Courage Tastes of Blood: The Mapuche Community of Nicolás Ailío and the Chilean State, 1906-2001 (2005). Moving beyond such texts, by engaging in conversation with other US slavery scholars, Berger situates his work in a broader comparative Atlantic context. This is especially apparent when he moves into the early stages of Spain’s role in the transatlantic slave trade and the importations of enslaved Africans to Chile. Throughout this study, Berger underlines his familiarity with works of slavery in the United States, drawing on studies by prominent scholars, such as Ira Berlin (Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America [1998]), Edmund S. Morgan (American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia ([1975]), and Peter H. Wood (Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion [1974; repr., 1996]). With reference to the scholarship of Indigenous Americans and the US plantation system, Berger centers on Allan Gallay’s work, The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717 (2003), which shows the importance of enforced Indigenous American labor to the roots of plantation slave societies. Berger further underlines the differ-
ences between the two terms "slave societies" and "societies with slaves," drawing from Berlin's work. It would have been interesting, as Berger moved deeper into his work, to discuss Mapuche examples of Spanish enslavement, to see links to Indigenous American slaveholders of other Indigenous peoples as well as Black and White enslaved persons. Barbara Krauthamer’s *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (2013) provides a strong comparative text in this regard.

*This Incurable Evil* is beautifully illustrated with pictorial images comprising maps, photographs, archaeological finds, sketches, and oil paintings. With such a rich array of visuals, Berger’s work is engaging and offers an excellent repertoire of primary document analyses for students at the undergraduate level. Several maps further the work’s accessibility to those less familiar with Chile’s geography; in particular, one map, “Pueblos Indígenas de Chile,” situates Chile’s Indigenous peoples from the Aymaras in the very north to the Yaganes and Selknam at the country’s southernmost tip (figure I.2, p. 4).

A preliminary question that comes to the fore when reading this book concerns Berger’s detailed time of study. Indeed, it is not until chapter 2 (one-quarter into the book) when the author’s focus turns to the Curalaba uprising of 1598. In so doing, a reader interested in a more holistic analysis of Mapuche resistance to slavery from the period of the Inkas might overlook this work based on the title. Further, Berger is unable to make a stronger argument for earlier acts of Mapuche resistance to Spanish enslavement by limiting the titled scope to 1598. In addition, from a linguistic perspective, Berger might have facilitated access to the work for readers unfamiliar with the Mapuche language by providing translations in the text. While there is a glossary of terms included, predominantly for Spanish vocabulary, there are many examples of words that require additional translation. Finally, some references are incorrectly cited with other sources and with some missing completely.

Berger successfully argues how the unified efforts of first the Mapuche and later other Indigenous American peoples came together to fight and to overthrow the “incurable evil.” The author’s script is clear and accessible to a wide range of readers. Each chapter is well structured and stands alone, making this a suitable text for an undergraduate audience learning about Indigenous slavery and resistance in a geographical area and time period that is both insightful and a fresh contribution to Latin American historiography during said epoch. From a source perspective, readers interested in pursuing their own research in Indigenous Chilean slavery and resistance in the seventeenth century will find a rich repertoire of primary documentation.
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