

INTRODUCTION



This book is about *living, interactive* mounds and other monuments that were built between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries by the Araucanians, or Mapuche, of south-central Chile and that are still in ritual use today by a few indigenous communities (Fig. 1). Mounds, or *kuel* (*cuel*) in the native language, are perceived by people as living kindred who participate in public ceremony, converse with priestly shamans about the well-being and future of the community, and thus have powerful influence over people. The oldest *kuel* are archaeological sites associated with the rise of dynastic late pre-Hispanic patrilineages that rapidly developed into the early historic Araucanian “*estado*,” or polity, referenced by the first Spanish in the region. (In sixteenth-century Spanish, *estado* means an organized political condition and not necessarily the “state” level of society we recognize in the scholarly literature today.) This polity successfully resisted European intrusion longer than any indigenous society in American history until it was finally defeated by the Chilean army in the mid-1890s. The Araucanians were not conquered and influenced by the Spanish the way other Native American groups were. Instead, after initial sporadic contact in the latter half of the sixteenth century, they were outside of the authority of the Spanish and defeated and drove them out of their territory for nearly 300 years from the late 1500s to the late 1800s. In this process, the Araucanians established a formal military frontier and sovereign territory recognized by the Spanish Crown. One of the first and strongest political resistances along the frontier was located in the Purén and Lumaco Valley of south-central Chile, where the oldest and most elaborate mound cultures are found and where this study is primarily situated. The presence of these mounds reflects the relatively high level of social complexity and political power in the valley during the period of study.

The type of complex Araucanian society I refer to in the study area initially consisted of many small and a few large “chiefdom” mound-building communities in late pre-Hispanic times. These communities probably had kin relationships established with many outside settlements, with the confirmation of bonds between them taking place in the form of political alliances, marriage exchanges,

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and regular feasts and ceremonies. The archaeological and early historical records show a wide array of crisscrossing, overlapping, and intersecting distributions of goods, ideas, and peoples – the reflection of individual and community networks over wide regions, transcending differences in environment, economic specialization, and political organization (Dillehay 1976, 1990a). Any forms of social and political differentiation seem to have been weakly to moderately developed, with kin-based rulers; there apparently were no formally sanctioned institutions of power. Later, in times of unrest and social upheaval when sporadic contacts with the Spanish first occurred in the mid-1550s, multilevel settlement hierarchies of dominant centers and subordinate communities emerged. Also developed was the importance of larger and more elaborate public ceremonial architecture, with mound complexes constructed as instruments of social power as well as religious institutions. In this early contact period, new kinds of leaders emerged from large patrilineages that had access to favorable agricultural resources and large kin-related labor for defense against outsiders and for public projects. Further expansion of power was pursued through the manipulation of indigenous community institutions, in the form of the sponsorship of large multilineage feasts and other events, in return for portions of the community labor pool. The ability to extract these tributes was greatly enhanced when embedded in reorganized indigenous concepts of communal ideology, religion, and ancestry worship, many of which were already Andean in principle and some of which were probably adopted and enhanced from the Inka. There is no doubt that Araucanian leaders increased their authority as a result of contact with the Inka and Spanish empires, built on existing Araucanian (and Andean) principles of organization by incorporating some Inka ideas to reorganize larger groups of people, and thus used indigenous forms of power and authority, in new and different ways, to resist outsiders and to further develop their own society.

The role of mounds and other monuments within the formation of the Araucanian polity has meaning with regard to political power and varying forms of traditional leadership and authority, agency and power, identity and memory, sacred landscape and ceremony, institutionalized shamanic spiritualism and healing, rules of intergroup compatriotism, low-intensity warfare, and settlement nucleation and agricultural intensity. Above all, the mounds are related to the establishment of an indigenous anticolonial social order that resisted invasions for more than three years. This new order was founded on indigenous organizational principles and comprised confederated patrilineal groups. These groups employed mounded ceremonial landscapes in selected areas to politically unite a previously decentralized population of dispersed patrilineages and to set the Araucanians on a course toward polity formation, sovereignty, and control of their own destiny. In this book, I attempt to relate the historical trajectory of these developments to the creation and use of mounds and to changes in the spatial arrangements and scale of mound complexes.

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1. General view of the *Rehueñichikuel* mound (black arrow) complex in Butarincón built on the modified hilltop which has been deliberately leveled to form a ritual platform or *ñichi* (white arrows). The flat plaza area around the mound is the present-day *nguillatun* ceremonial field.

Recent anthropological theory has stressed the importance of analyzing the changing organizational transformations in social and political relations as the product of colonialism and of culture contact and interaction between societies. The early colonial history of the Araucanians and their relationship with external societies centers on five basic issues that will reoccur throughout this book.

1. Political and religious organizations: On what basis did the Araucanians form and maintain a new social order and polity that united regional social, religious, and political organizations to resist outsiders (e.g., Allen 1999; Comaroff 1998; Cooper 2005; Smith 2003)?
2. Local spheres of interaction and recruitment: What was the relationship between local populations of stable lineages and lineages displaced by armed conflict? How did lineages employ certain forms of tactical and strategical organization in special settings to increase their power and to achieve higher forms of social order (*sensu* Wolf 1999)?
3. Recruitment and expansion: How did local lineages expand their power through commensal ritual feasting (Dietler 1996) and the recruitment, adoption, and annexation of other groups?
4. Imagined or utopic polity of resistance: How did Araucanian leaders envision and construct a new social order on the basis of traditional and new principles of organization (e.g., Anderson 1983; Cooper 2005; Marin 1984)?

5. Archaeological expressions of these interactions and organizations: What were the material and spatial signatures, especially mound building, of a new order and polity formation?

The anthropological data gathered on the Araucanians are extensive enough to answer these questions and allow us to interpret their polity on its own terms. But the test of any question is in its application. Those presented here should explain the data in a coherent fashion so that a nonspecialist can understand the flow of events and changing formations, while allowing the specialist to test them further against the total body of historical information.

Over the past thirty years, I have carried out archaeological, ethnographical, and ethnohistorical research on these themes, focusing primarily on five issues: (1) tracing the historical development of mound building from its inception in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries and how social complexity initially developed in the study area; (2) examining how the leaders of large patrilineages created new and reorganized traditional institutions by tactically recruiting fragmented lineages and incorporating them into their own groups through ceremonial feasting and by annexation of neighboring groups to expand their base of military and political power; (3) elucidating the symbolic and cultural landscape meaning of Araucanian monuments and ceremonialism and the role of priestly shamans as mediators between the spiritual and living worlds in recent times; (4) studying how the identity and power of the Araucanians were expanded by incorporating elements of the Andean and Inka models of state authority and organizational power; and (5) how Araucanian polity, compatriotism, and territory were formed to resist outsiders. The approach to these themes is through the Purén and Lumaco Valley, which contains more than 300 mounds, several of which comprise large complexes overlooking expansive marshes, or *ciénegas*, and are associated with extensive domestic sites, agricultural systems, and occasionally hilltop defenses. Being the first known mound complexes in the southern Andes and the only place in the Araucania (southern Araucanian populations living between the Bio Bio and Rio Bueno rivers) where mound-related rituals still are practiced, Purén and Lumaco are unique in their anthropology and in their availability to study where a mound-building society developed and spread. This analysis combines the hard data of archaeology, ethnohistory, and ethnography to produce identifiable social, cultural, and demographic patterns and to infer the meaning of these patterns.

This study is unprecedented in the anthropological examination of mound-building societies, because two lengthy ritual narratives between shamans and communally active, living mounds recorded during ethnographic healing ceremonies are linked analytically to the archaeological and textual evidence to provide rich and insightful details of the wider social, ideological, spatial, and historical contexts of mound worship and its meaning to the people who built them. (The

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reader is encouraged to carefully examine the richly textured details of the full narratives in Appendix 1 for insights into the role and meaning of shamanism and of the social interactions between mounds, sacred landscapes, and people. Also revealed is the Andean influence in Araucanian culture.) This analysis reveals how the narratives and the metaphors in rituals performed at sacred places are important performative and oral traditions that give meaning to the past and reveal the social and cosmological principles by which the Araucanians have guided their ways of life and organized themselves to successfully defend themselves against outsiders. My provisional conclusion is that the Araucanian society of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries was a cultural system with social principles and practices that were directed by a deeply embedded cosmological framework. This framework was and still is characterized by historical continuity in the metaphors that support the social institutions and ritual practices that permeated and, in many ways, still permeate all cultural activities and knit the society together (*sensu* Sekaquaptewa and Washburn 2004). I show how many of these same principles and pressures that are expressed metaphorically in the shaman's ritual narratives are also metaphorically, spatially, and materially represented in the archaeological and early written records. The messages that I want to leave with readers are that mounds are human-like, can act in both good and bad ways, and may need placatory rituals to regenerate their gestures of benevolence toward local communities. Mounds also have multiple characters as places of burial, abodes of dead shamans, memorials to ancestry and genealogy, status markers for lineage leaders, loci of ceremony, feasting and political power, and cosmological media. Thus, mounds are socially constructed and inscribed with meaning by people, but, on the other hand, once they are built and engaged in public ritual, they also organize people's responses and patterns of interaction. As one anonymous reviewer of the book remarked, "it is this multivalency that extracts the mounds from their mute archaeology and enables us to see them as the Araucanians do, as essentially alive."

The core of Araucanian cosmology focuses on practices that link the living with their ancestors and deities and that employ past knowledge to guide present and future behavior. (I consider ideology here as an epistemology or concept of the way people know their world. Cosmology organizes this knowledge and teaches it to people through repetitive ceremonial practices.) One way of communicating these practices is through ritual performances participated in by the entire community. Healing rituals at mounds are oral and performative acts that express all of the cosmological principles that have long guided the political actions and religious thoughts of the Araucanians. The consistent continuity in form, function, and meaning of narrative histories and metaphors and of many other cultural patterns permits me, through a direct historical approach that employs archaeology, ethnohistory, and ethnography, to reliably extend our interpretation of the past at least back to the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, depending on

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the specific theme of study. Many of the archaeological patterns express the same or similar metaphorical constructions that have been uncovered in ethnography and ethnohistory, because they convey similar ideas and interpretations that have been shared by past and present communities in the study area for the past few centuries (see Chapters 2 and 3). By first understanding the principles of organization and cosmologies that governed how these communities have lived, a better understanding is attained of how mounds, the spaces between and around them, and other artifacts are the material and spatial correlates of those conceptual principles. I also attempt to recover a past that is the Araucanian ethnographic view of their past as preserved in ritual, oral tradition, public ceremony, and their understandings of the mounded landscapes that surround them.

I have learned that Araucanian mounds cannot be adequately explained by just the conventional and narrowly focused approaches of political economy, culture ecology, landscape anthropology, hermeneutics, phenomenology, and others. As explained in Chapter 2, this study requires a convergence of key aspects of these approaches to derive a historical, material, and cognitive perspective. By presenting a variety of interdisciplinary data and by combining these approaches, this analysis hopefully provides the opportunity to add to the archaeological discourse on different trajectories of social complexity, to bring a different perspective to studies of historical process and meaning, and to contemplate how we think about social power, structure and agency, identity and memory, and interaction and what they meant in crafting polities. The Araucanian case reveals the articulation of ritual, social, and knowledge power as primary variables in the construction and expansion of regional political organization, the role and meaning of religious landscapes in forming and sustaining emergent corporate structures, and the forms of resistance to outside contact that guided the form and organization of new social orders and power relations. I view this case being particularly significant to archaeologists analyzing social organizations characterized by recursive monumental landscapes and artifact styles and by regional polities coalescing to form larger and cooperative (or competitive) geopolitical entities. From a technical perspective, this case also reveals the types of perishable artifacts and ceremonial spaces that may be associated with mounds but rarely preserved in the archaeological record.

Archaeologists have long considered monuments to represent the conspicuous landmarks and registers of past social relations; have recognized many patterns in mounds, *menhirs*, *tumuli*, *cursus*, barrows, and other culturally constructed edifices; and have proposed several different functions and meanings, at the regional and global scales, to explain their recurrence in time and space. Two basic approaches can be identified in the scholarly study of these registers. One focuses on functionalism and structuralism that has generally given emphasis to culture history, political economy, symbolism, and cultural materialism (cf. Bradley 1998; Dillehay 1990a; Knight 1989; Smith 1990; Squier and Davis 1997); the other owes

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a debt to poststructuralism and centers on ideology, symbolism, and meaning (cf. Bradley 2000; Dillehay 1999; Lewis et al. 1998; Scarre 2002a; Thomas 1995; Tilley 1994). These two perspectives are usually set against each other as competing explanations for the same phenomena. In contrast, both are relevant and necessary components of any full explanation or understanding of monuments – they deal with different but equally relevant dimensions of the same phenomena and with different aspects of society in which their material expressions are conspicuously absent or present. In addition, both perspectives have espoused simplistic and sophisticated notions of the archaeological records of mounds, and how we can learn from them, as well as limiting the scope of model-building toward archaeological inference and meaning. However, these oppositions are largely of our own creation, and are not inherent in past human behaviors. Our perpetuation of such contrasts in the archaeological study of mounds guarantees that we will never approach more than a partial understanding of the phenomena we are trying to explain. I thus hope to offer more than a partial understanding of the Araucanian mounds by presenting a holistic and direct historical approach to them and by occasionally relating this understanding to mound-building societies of other periods and in other parts of the world. In this regard, students of past mound builders such as the Adena, Hopewell, Fort Ancient, and Hohokam cultures in the United States, various Formative cultures of Central America and South America, and the Mesolithic and Neolithic cultures of Europe should find this analysis useful for comprehending the specific behavioral frameworks and intricate social interactions that produced polities and sacred landscapes and for relating these practices to physical and symbolic evidence. Archaeologists interested in secondary state formation should be interested in the transformative processes by which the Araucanians were influenced by certain Andean and Inka principles of political and religious organization to develop a more effective and expansive regional polity.

On a global level, archaeologists have attributed an important role in the early development of social and political complexity to public monuments and especially to ceremonial centers (Grove 1981; Milner 2004; Pauketat 2004). While extremely variable in form and scale as well as the range of activities associated with them, these centers are thought to represent the architectural foci of communal practices and interactions, and through these, the production and reproduction of authority structures and social stratification. Several integrative venues have been identified with public monuments, including the regulation of competitive ritual feasting for retainers, the manipulation of religious and exotic symbols, the elaboration of new production techniques, the facilitation of trade and exchange of exotic goods, and the proliferation of other outside interactions (e.g., Brumfiel 1987; Clark and Blake 1994; Helms 1979; Parker 2006; Stanish 2003). Early monuments also are seen as regional nodes of intense interaction engaged in the construction of ever-wider political and ideational landscapes (e.g., Bradley 1998;

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Lane 2001). Archaeologists are learning that the intrinsic features characteristic of diverse local landscapes both informed the settings selected for the construction of monuments and played a role in determining their form and visual appearance. Also realized is that the interpretative experiences past peoples had with different monuments and altered landscapes probably related to the changing meanings and effective relationships derived from them. In short, many different approaches have recently converged to place the study of early monuments within broader regional and intellectual contexts in order to reflect on the changing consciousness of the people who built them. As revealed throughout this book, several of these approaches have influenced my thinking on Araucanian mounds.

Also influencing my approach to the study of form and meaning of the Araucanian mounds is the monumental architecture of various Formative societies in South America. Although distinct in different parts of the continent, the general forms range from small earthen mounds and ritual stone enclosures dating from 7000 to 600 years ago in both the Andes and the eastern tropical lowlands of Amazonia to large U-shaped ceremonial structures dating between 4500 and 500 years ago in Peru. In scale, coastal and highland Peru, southern Ecuador, and northern Bolivia exhibit the largest and earliest monuments (Burger 1992). By 4000 years ago some monumental ceremonial centers on the north coast of Peru had permanent populations while others probably served as periodic pilgrimage centers. Similar but later patterns are observed in the south-central Andes of Bolivia, north Chile, and northwest Argentina. In the eastern lowlands of southeast Brazil and north Uruguay, early mound-building societies characterized by a village lifestyle have been dated as far back as 4000 years ago. Regardless of their time, place, and form, most archaeologists view Formative monuments as built landscapes associated with autonomous, territorial groupings organized on the level of ranked societies (Janusek 2004; Stanish 2003), stratified multicomunity polities, competitive peer-polities, or incipient states (cf. Haas et al. 2005; Shady and Leyva 2002). Although the political, economic, and religious importance of monuments and how they first developed in South America have been studied, little attention has been given to how they were modified and experienced to suit the changing needs of past societies and to how people interacted with them. I hope to shed some light on these themes in this study.

Lastly, in addition to recovering social knowledge and meaning, this book is concerned with situating the history of the Araucanians within a broader project of challenging official written histories about these people. I am critical of existing models of Araucanian history as largely a unilateral process of Spanish contact and colonial state expansion (which never developed because the Araucanians were first colonized by the Chileans, not the Spanish) and of Araucanian social complexity as a corresponding amalgamation of scattered ethnic populations that defended themselves against outside intrusion (see Chapters 1 and 3). In this analysis, the emergence of a regional Araucanian confederacy during the sixteenth

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to eighteenth centuries was not merely a passive indigenous response to changing contexts of power in the present-day territory of Chile but a hyperactive process of building a powerful political community and an indigenous “socially engineered utopic” society (*sensu* Marin 1984; see Chapter 1) that already had begun to organize itself as an expansive, disruptive geopolitical force by the mid-1550s. (In using the term utopic, I do not refer to crisis cults, revitalization movements, or millenarian events, which are associated with indigenous social protests and reactions to outsiders and to radical change in the distribution of wealth, power, and status once Spanish colonial rule had been established in other regions of Latin America [see Bernard 1994; Scott 1985; Stern 1987]. These movements did not take place in south-central Chile before the late 1900s.) This utopic process was rooted in traditional Araucanian and Andean forms of constructing different social hierarchies of religious communities, large agricultural communities, and secular and priestly shamanic powers and of conceptualizing the future place of non-Araucanians in the world. Although this process involved resistance to external realities, the Araucanians showed openness to exotic knowledge and often reached to outsiders, including the Spanish, in search of new insights and conceptual models (see Alvaro 1971; Bengoa 2003; Boccara 1999; Villalobos et al. 1982; Villalobos and Pinto 1985).

Araucanian history thus provided a model not only for resistance and social order among the indigenous peoples of south-central Chile but also a blueprint for encoding and acting on changing geopolitical and interethnic relations along a Spanish frontier. Whereas the official history of the Araucanians (as written by outsiders) often has failed to perceive their geographic and political knowledge through the imposition of Spanish-based cartographies, I hope to counteract some of this bias through exploring the emergence of the Araucanian polity as an active process of producing local histories and creating new cultural and political spaces. Construction of this polity was a contested arena of struggle over regional representations and traditional authenticities, with different ethnic and other groups manifesting their changing identities through continuity and change within historically shaped indigenous political and religious structures, which were constructions materially expressed in the mounded landscapes under study here. That is, the Araucanians were social and cultural actors who endeavored to control their own destiny by altering their ideologies and ways of life to manipulate space and time to build a new “utopic” or imagined social order to both resist outsiders and expand their geopolitical power. This is not to deny the violence and institutionalized effort first by the Inka and later by the Spanish and Chileans to conquer these people, the full impact of historic disruptions on the Araucanians, and the prolonged resistance of the Araucanians to these efforts. (I discuss the impact of Spanish contact and the social, economic, and demographic adjustments made by the Araucanians to it throughout the book [also see Dillehay 1995, 2003]). But through the analysis of local indigenous histories like those in the Purén and

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Lumaco Valley in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this study partly aims to reveal local native strategies for responding to outside contact, for defeating the Spanish, and for creating a *longue durée* of resistance. In this sense, I wish to make it clear that I do not pretend that the history of Purén and Lumaco is also the history of all areas within the Araucania. However, it is an important history that defines much of the early resistance to the Spanish and that addresses the previously neglected indigenous mound cultures of the south Andes.

Given these concerns, I suspect that this book will not be well received by some historians, particularly those purists that believe in the absolute authority of the written word in early texts for interpretation of the early historic period. Since focusing my earlier dissertation research on the archaeological and ethnographic verification/falsification of sixteenth-century documents in Peru, I have had problems with historical studies that minimally consider the results of archaeological and ethnographic research and specifically of the direct historical approach. Each of these subdisciplines has its strengths and weaknesses but the latter can often be reduced by combining as many different approaches as possible to understand a phenomenon and to reduce ambiguity (Dillehay 2003). Unfortunately, this has not always been the case in Araucanian studies. My primary concern with these studies is that many historians of Araucanian society need to more actively problematize their textual sources – that is, treat the texts as problems to be mulled over rather than pristine representations of an antecedent reality to be reconstructed. The good historians have always done this to some degree, but perhaps not with the obsessive energy that characterizes certain varieties of deconstructive postmodernist thinking in the human sciences. To date, most interpretations of the early historic Araucanians have been derived from textualized viewpoints. However, we should be more prepared to admit that what historical actors do not write in their texts is often just as telling as what they do write. The case in point here is the scarcity of early textual evidence on the mound-building practices present in one of the most celebrated and commented areas of the Spanish conquest in Chile – the Purén and Lumaco Valley. In conveying motives, meanings, or even the most straightforward descriptions of this and other areas, the early texts distort (or simply follow their own internal logic) or tell only part of the story, and other important explanatory elements may lie just under the surface of those texts or beyond the barriers of consciousness, perception, or language. One of the implications following this is the fragmentation of causal statements in the texts. So what actors tell us about themselves and about the phenomena they observe in early texts, or what other actors or observers tell us about them, may very well be true, it may not only be true. The intent here is not to single out historians for criticism. As discussed in Chapter 3, archaeology and ethnography also distort data and tell only part of the story, but I believe that the distortions and partial stories told by each discipline can be revealed and the strengths of each can be enhanced by combining various approaches to shed