

The Sacred Way: The Pilgrimage Route of Saint Sebastian (Yumbel, Chile)¹

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Abstract

Routes can be understood not only in their spatial dimension but also have to be considered as a *temporal way*. Spatiotemporal links and dimensions run deep into the sense of place, and have often been used as a way to understand cosmogony. The way therefore becomes a sacred achievement, in a journey of initiation, as a pilgrim. This article will focus on the rediscovery of a historic route along the river Bio-Bío thanks to the traces of a present Catholic pilgrimage's devotion to Saint Sebastian but also based on an older Mapuche tradition. The temporal link related to the date of the 20th January is the common fact that permits us to prove the adaptation of both cultural traditions and the present rebuilding of the old route. The pilgrimage route of Saint Sebastian in Yumbel (Chile) is an example of the survival of a sacred way in an historic frontier land over time. This case allows us to underline the importance of routes as key elements for a spatial embodiment of vernacular understandings. Sacred ways become the invisible markers of cosmogonies.

Keywords: Sacred way, pilgrimage route, embodiment, Chile

1. The Sacred Way

The Sacred Way has to be understood with its spatial but also its temporal dimension as a place and a reference for itself. The *communitas* consecrates the way into a timeless and sacred legacy (Eade & Sallnow, 2000). Following and walking along the physical route introduces us then to a symbolic transcendence that sacralises the way, as an icon (Coleman & Eade, 2004).

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The experience lived along the road make us part of the pilgrimage (Coleman, 2004). The route is the threshold by which this initiation might be achieved, as *liminality* (Morinis, 1992). The aims of the paper are theoretical and practical. In a theoretical approach, we are going to show on the one hand, how ways must be understood as places in its spatial and temporal dimensions (*odology*). On the other hand, we are going to deep into the way, understood as an embodiment that persists through time thanks to an inherited transmission of *geosophy* (Creswell, 2013). All those concepts will bring us the background (*odology+geosophy= odosophy*) that will permit us to rediscover the Saint Sebastian trail in Southern Chile. In a practical approach, the elements of a local *geosophy* will permit us to relive the old track along the Bio Bio's River. The ethnographic field work and historical study will focus on the importance of the 20th January, as a legacy that has resisted through time and give us now the key for the recovery of the spatial dimension of the trail. This study is original because it employs embodiment theory as a methodology to rediscover the body part of a traditional lived pilgrimage, in a top-bottom process, and then can be considered for other cases.

1.1 Odology: Road Studies

The study of ways has a long tradition in odology (Claval, 2001). The growth of thematic interests within the study of ways stemmed from a more physical understanding of the ground covered and its form (Fonseca, 2005). However, this has also led towards its symbolic dimension, not only as an articulator of territories (Vidal de la Blache, 1921), but also as one of collective identities and symbolic representations (Bruhnes, 1947). Despite their general lack of recognition, studies of odology have a long history since Davis' contribution in the early 20th century (Davis, 2003). While the initial focus of studies of the ways was from a more physical dimension in order to establish an understanding of territories through an articulator, they have also drifted from their symbolic dimension (Di Méo, 1998). Ways are also considered articulators of ideology and of the symbolic representation of territories (Bonnemaison, 1999 A and B), "...Rather, odology was to be about the human shaping of roads and the ways that roads have shaped humans..." (John Brinckerhoff Jackson 1994). The significance given to the way takes on a much greater relevance in the case of major sacred routes (Lay, 1992). It seems fairly logical that the relationship between both dimensions of the way goes hand in hand with the territory, such as in the execution of a radio-centric network of routes from a centralized ideology.

However, the establishment of a bridge between both dimensions of the way has allowed for the recent salvaging of two ideas; on the one hand, they mark the continued existence and adaptation of physical footprintson the territory. On the other hand, they indicate the footprints´ dynamic nature in the adaptation of the symbolic uses given to one way throughout time.

Firstly, the footprints´ persistence is noteworthy. Far from falling into certain environmental or functional determinisms, we could consider that their use ultimately generates a tradition and a legacy which remain beyond time. Collective memories will therefore adapt in order to give new uses and interpretations for the adequacy of these ways“...More than just canvases for cultural expression as Jackson saw them, roads are also ideological symbols themselves (...) George Henderson most clearly acknowledges this ideological approach to landscape studies ...”.<http://502.doinghistory.com/the-ideology-of-odology/>

This vision brings us closer to a second instance, which is the interest in the study of ways, understood in their ideological dimension as dynamic adaptations which resist the passage of time. In this sense, the footprint resists the passage of time thanks to the trace left on its inhabitants. They take charge of preserving this footprint far beyond its use (Lois, 2003). From this perspective, the way distances itself from Davis´ first vision, instead focusing itself on its dimension as a point of reference, as a symbol of a collective identity which flows throughout time. Despite having developed in different periods of time, neither dimension of studies of odology holds back from reflecting two very closely related dimensions with regards to the way. Just like the territory, the way bears witness to the profound relationship between Human and his environment, based on his interpretations and continued uses in an intersection between the dimensions of space and time. It may be worth highlighting that the way has a temporal, and therefore greater symbolic than spatial, dimension, whilst in the case of the territory, we notice the opposite to be true, favouring the spatial dimension over the temporal. The linearity of the way surely plays on its close relationship with the temporal dimension; however the more obvious feature of its physical footprint in the space prevents it from having to justify its existence. Meanwhile, the timeless aspects of the territory required a stronger insistence on physical models, such as geographical landmarks, in order to secure their reality.

We therefore notice paradoxes of the ways and of the territories, which come to be closely intertwined. The ways are the features of the territory like the strokes of a brush on a canvas (Zeller, 2011). The perpetuity of the physical footprint of the ways has allowed for the forging of the symbology of territories, establishing themselves as vernacular cosmologies or imposed as a result of political logics. Territories and ways are inextricably linked and make up the scenery, from their cultural vision. The cultural scenery is precisely this dialectic of space and time, of Man in his environment, throughout time and as a model for his existence, which is then transformed into art (Cosgrove, 1988). The ways establish the boundaries of the physical territory and reflect the structures of imagined territories. Saint Augustine's image of the metaphor of the city of God on Earth is a good example to illustrate this mirror between the territory constructed by Man and that which is symbolically represented in the heavenly mirror of a long tradition in specific cultures and time periods.

1.2 Geosophy: The Rearrangement of a Path

The rediscovery of Saint Sebastian's Way based on the physical element of the BíoBío trail and the celebration of the pilgrimage journey around the 20th of January, and the figure of Saint Sebastian of Yumbel, support each other in the use of Creswell's "embodiment" concept. Reconsidering the forms or bodies of the physical trail on the one hand, and the perceptions and ways of life of the pilgrims on the other, allows the rescue of the joint vision of Saint Sebastian's Way (Lewis, 2000). In this case, this philosophical approximation is materialised in a methodological instrument of empiric research (Merleau-Ponty, 1968).

The places thus take on their own relevance, by closing in associated, collective or shared ways of thinking (Bourdieu, 1990). In this specific case, the dispersed physical testimonial traces of the trail and of the pilgrimage journeys make sense, thanks to the shared date of the 20th of January (Anderson, 2004) and allow a re-composition of an explicative structured organisation from the anti-structure into the re-composition of a local cosmogony (fig). This final diagram sums up the explanatory thread that runs through some of the landscape and collective practices which turned blurry with the passage of time and explicative processes; these are subject to various cultural triggers, between the recuperation of mapuche knowledge and the processes of Western and Catholic acculturation.

The plural approximation from the place allows for the simple re-composition of elements, as part of a holistic perspective over all the fragments, where processes of adaptation, acculturation, loans, hybridisation and fusions co-exist without any problems. Far from being an imposing structure, the same explanatory cosmogony from the found-again Way of Saint Sebastian responds to a vision from cultural pluralities, as a clarifying explanatory synthesis (Coleman, 2004). The rediscovery of Saint Sebastian's Way can be understood as an abstract explanatory device, whilst also as a fundamental articulating feature for the future development of the trail's physical and sacred restoration (Morinis, 1992). From the subjectivities, beliefs and real testimonies of the old physical trail, its dynamic as an explanatory argument allows for a re-reading and a recuperation of that which is conceptual to that which is concrete (Scriven, 2014), from a contextual approximation which is expressed in subsequent cosmogony (Maddrell A, della Dora V, 2013).

1.3 Odosophy

Critical geosophy transforms itself beyond a theoretical-philosophical context, in terrain which allows the shaping of new methodological instruments from an approximation which, furthermore, has no reason to exclude the traditional visions of ethnographic work on structural visions. The study of trails (odos) and the approximation of a place as an explanation of thought (geosophy) leads us to coin the concept of Odosophy as a philosophical way of thinking, which stems from the specific feature of the trail. Its sacred dimension, in its material, spiritual and existential succinctness, gives it a role as a guide in the explanatory design in cosmogonies. The trail is a fundamental physical pattern in a territory and marks the place from the homes of its inhabitants.

Odosophy becomes a specialised way of thinking which stems from the trail, but also suggests itself as a complex methodological instrument; it comes from an approximation allowing for the reconciliation of the anti-structure (Eade & Sallnow 2000), considering the body from a bottom-uppoint of view (inductive), with a structuralised vision when considering the trail as an explanatory axis of cosmogony, from an up-bottom point of view (deductive). The methodological dialectic between both visions serves as feedback and as a triangular validation, with an empirical bias (Wylie, 2005).

In the specific case of Saint Sebastian's Way, the disconnected features of the community, such as the practice of pilgrimage, the figure of Saint Sebastian, and the 20th of January, along with the ever-present physical element of the BíoBío, it has been possible to re-compose the setting for Saint Sebastian's Way, stemming from a holistic vision. Based on the ensuing evidence, it has been possible to re-compose the physical motive which has been silenced and taken apart, as a consequence of the collective imposition of the psyche related to borders; as such, it became a dividing consequence as of the 19th century, in the build-up to the Chilean State. Associated thinking has allowed us to see physical evidence, which therefore reinforces a communal thought which has lived on through time thanks to its adaptations, through the footsteps of various cultures, of mapuche culture to Christianity, and up to the long-lastingness of the current tradition of pilgrimage. This recovery has allowed us to shed light on other still valid representations, which then re-define some of the practices which still exist, such as the pilgrimage to Yumbel (Deleuze, 2003). The *communitas* and liminality associated with the trail bring on the one hand evidence for the recovery of a lost cosmogony in Saint Sebastian's Way, whilst on the other, they are validated again, with material evidence of the old BíoBío trail's remains, from historical written testimonies and archaeological remains (stones, forts, etc).

2 Saint Sebastian Pilgrimage

Saint Sebastian's Way is a new name, created to reflect the link between the historic trail, parallel to the axis of the basin of the river Bío-Bío (the second most important river in Chile); this is associated with the pilgrimage around the 20th of January, devoted to Saint Sebastian in Yumbel. This is not the exact translation of the Spanish concept of *Camino de San Sebastián*, as Ruben Lois has discussed related to Camino de Santiago (Lois, 2013), but the concept of *Way* is still close, thanks to its multiple meanings in English. The construction of the sacred way establishes itself from a relationship between the waterway (previously the earth), with its association with time, its temporal dimension (around the 20th of January), and its previous Catholic religious syncretism, with the feast day of Saint Sebastian, celebrated in Yumbel and along the way (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: The Rediscovery of Saint Sebastian way Thanks to the Spatial Dimension of the Bio Bio's Trail and the Temporal Dimension of the 20th January Pilgrimage Journey

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|---|--|
| Rediscovery of Saint Sebastian Way (Sacred way) | Bío-Bío's Trail (Spatial dimension) |
| | 20 th of January Journey (Time dimension) |

Source: elaborated by the author

The reconstruction of elements of time and space will allow for the reconstruction of Saint Sebastian's Way. For a long time, it was overshadowed by colonization, mainly because of the river Bío-Bío's connotations as an historic limitation in the Chilean psyche. The establishment of the border colonial times between the Spanish North of the Bío-Bío and the Mapuche people in the South (Villalobos, 1982), generated a melting pot dynamic which re-adapted and re-interpreted the previous East-West trans-Andean communication route (*Dirección Obras Públicas, 1924*). In this case study we will see exactly how the association of dimensions separated conceptually from space and time will allow for a merging of the forgotten way. Thus, we can understand an entire territory and regional history in its entirety again. The case of the Bío-Bío also shows the long-lastingness of the footprints, beyond the transformation of their use and form, and in this specific case, from the way to the border (Obregón, 2008). Moreover, the consecration of the way is evident in the Bío-Bío from a trans-cultural perspective: specific cultures were reconsidering the continuity of the footprint, giving continuity to a regional model independently from its uneven roots.

In this sense, the colonizers from other lands adapted to the territory by adopting the elements which made up the territory, such as the river Bío-Bío. In this sense, it comes as no surprise that the name of the river has come to designate the process of regionalization in Chile to the eighth region. The place name and its model not only survived, but were also consecrated (Berdolulay, 1988). The association of the way with a patron saint such as Saint Sebastian not only alludes to the journey's end, but also in turn becomes the pilgrim's protector on the way.

In the specific case of this way, he will be associated with protecting the pilgrims, as well as with smugglers at the rough Andean mountain chain pass. In this second aspect, the image of Saint Sebastian takes on iconography usually associated in Catholic iconography with Saint Christopher, the patron saint of travellers. This adaptation fits a process of adaption associated with the 20th of January (the end of the Southern Hemisphere's summer in the mountains), a key date in the Mapuche, and particularly in the Pehuenche, calendar; from a spatial point of view, it indicates the deadlines for the end of the Andean summer and the harvest of *piñon* nuts (native to South American *Araucaria* trees). It also indicates the start of cattle's descent towards wintering grounds, in valleys where the first snowfall arrives from the Andean mountain passes (Torrejón, 2001).

2.1 The Bío-Bío Trail

The Bío-Bío trail is a component of the river Bío-Bío's waterway. It is the second longest river in Chile, measuring 380 km in length, with a flow of nearly 900 m³/s and a mouth width measuring almost 3 km (Fig. 2). Without having ever been a navigable river, it has been used as a means of communication throughout history (Torrejón, 2004). Along it, we can find some of the first historical settlements, such as those of the Mapuche and Pehuenche peoples (Dillehay, 2007).

Figure 2: Map Showing the Location of the Region and the River Bío-Bío in Chile



Source: <http://descubrebiobio.cl/como-llegar-turismo.html>

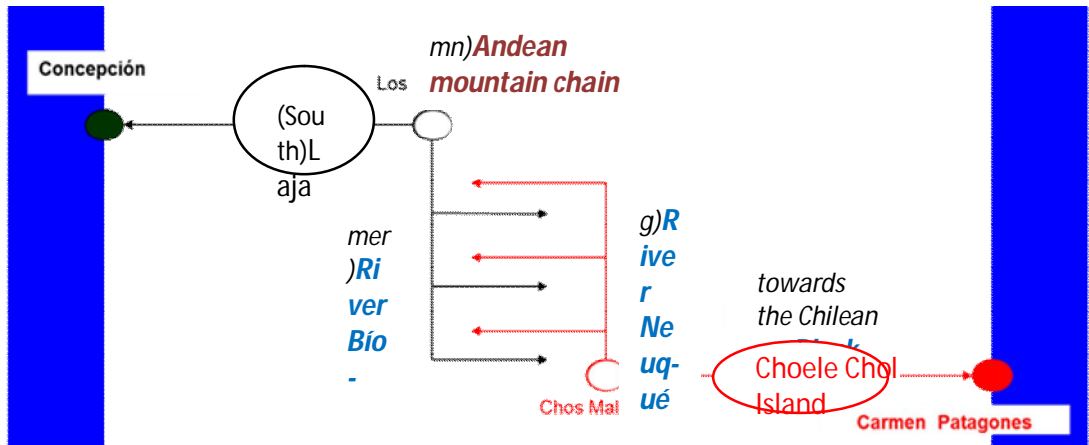
Hence, their organizations into clans were based around the rivers and their tributaries. The first horse ways would be traced in parallel with the river and its tributaries as far back as colonial times, since 16th century. From then on, this means of communication has been used well into the 20th century, when it began to lapse into disuse, alongside new axes of communication.

The Bío-Bío trail gradually lapsed into oblivion because of two principal reasons. On the one hand, the structure of Chile on North-South axes meant that East-West communication paths were shunned. On the other hand, in the specific case of the Bío-Bío, the representation of the river as a symbol of the historic border in Chile was overshadowed by the idea of a North/South dividing line over an East/West communication dividing line (Volle, 1996).

The river Bío-Bío was a territory of frontiers and exchange during colonial times under the Chilean republican system. The vision of a dividing line between villages gradually took root, leading the region's exchange and strong multiculturalism to lapse into oblivion. The river Bío-Bío not only represented an important inter-oceanic link between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans (Capellà, 2003); it was portrayed as highly important in travel accounts of governors from Concepción to Buenos Aires, crossing the Andean mountain chain, using ways that had previously been used by the Mapuche and Pehuenche peoples (Cruz, 1835). The Bío-Bío Way therefore represents a rich and well-nourished network of ways in the river Bío-Bío's basin sloping towards the Pacific. This network goes hand in hand with the network of ways linked to the basins of the river Neuquén and the Black River, sloping towards the Atlantic (Fig. 3).

Medium elevation Andean mountain passes allowed for an almost permanent connection, meaning that in a first instance, exchanges of diverse economies from both sides of the Andean mountain chain and summer pastures at high altitude (reaching their peak in the 18th century) flourished. The same can be said of the boundary between Argentina and Chile, with a boom in smuggling (running from the 19th century to the present day) (Silla, 2003). The way allowed for the exchange of head of livestock, whilst at the same time taking advantage of the water resources and pastures along the way, and included fluvial islands such as Choele Choel and Laja Island (Orellana, 1992). On both sides of the Andean mountain chain, fairs and its respective peoples, such as ChosMalal, Neuquén, Chillán or Los Ángeles, the Andean mountain chain was understood as a territory suitable for the Pehuenche people. Picking *piñones*, the seasonal migration of livestock and trade across the Andean mountain pass, as well as a sense of isolation, allowed for this people's resistance with its own clear identity in the face of the growing process of colonization up to the present day.

Figure 3: Diagram Showing the Inter-Oceanic ways between the Pacific and the Atlantic



Source: elaborated by the author.

The channel of communication of the Bío-Bío was still used as development axis for railways in the 19th century, and the distancing of the axis has become apparent in the last 50 years. At the present time, the importance of the Bío-Bío has been reconsidered as a central axis of the territory, also taking into consideration the rich plural identity and *mestiza* (mixed heritage) in this area as a cultural and historical frontier. Local redesigning projects for the river banks in certain adjoining areas such as Concepción, Chiguayante or San Pedro are good examples; as well as considering the river Bío-Bío as a referential element, these adjoining areas point towards recognition of the Bío-Bío trail. In this instance, the way reflects the interaction between the material dimension of the footprint as the region's axis, whilst at the same time symbolizing the axis of the collective representation. It is this representation which gives the region its name.

2.2 20th January Pilgrimage: a Journey

The 20th of January reflects the dimension of time of the way and the pilgrimage. As we see in the present day, this day is associated with the pilgrimage, undertaken every year in Yumbel, for the festivities in honour of Saint Sebastian.

It is considered the second large pilgrimage in Chile with among a million pilgrims between the 20th January and the 20th march (in the called *20 chico*), after the pilgrimage of *La Virgen de la Tirana* in Northern Chile. Most of the pilgrims belong to the same Bio Bio's region or neighbouring areas like Araucanía, Maule and the province of Neuquén in Argentina. The naming of Saint Sebastian is linked to the legend of an image found and which supposedly stayed secured to its current location.

The origin of devotion to Saint Sebastian dates back to the 16th century, during the evangelization process of the region. The image of Saint Sebastian was brought by father Francisco Ruiz of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy. He was the first missionary parish priest of the San Bartolomé settlement in Chillán, and brought the image during Marshal Martín Ruiz de Gamboa's expedition. The story goes that when the city of Chillán was founded in 1580, an image of Saint Sebastian, brought from Spain and made of cedar wood, was placed in its church. This very picture is the one which is worshipped until today in the Sanctuary of Yumbel. The image remained there until 1655 when the Mapuche people rose up and destroyed the city. The Jesuit father Nicolás Mascardí was one of few survivors, and fled with the statue, hiding it in the area surrounding Yumbel's fort (in Rere), where the parish priest was stationed for 7 years. Once Chillán was re-built, Spanish soldiers wanted to take its patron saint away. However, according to legend, the saint did not allow "even two pairs of oxen" to move his image. Ecclesiastical deliberation settled in favour of leaving the image in Yumbel, where he has remained up until the present day, after demonstrations of strong devotion and associated miracles. It is said that when the image helps you in your demands, you have to then come back each year since there, to thank the Saint because if you forget to do it, the Saint revenges against the pilgrim.

Devotion to Saint Sebastian has spread from Yumbel towards other territories of the region and all the way along the Bío-Bío, even reaching beyond successive migrations to the other side of the Andes, with the building of oratories: in Neuquén, or even close to Coihaique, in Aysén. In the present day, it has become one of most important pilgrimages on a national level, because of both its boasting almost a million visitors for the feast of the patron saint of Yumbel, and its expansion into other territories. It is also worth mentioning that it is one of the few devotions which is not based on worshipping Mary, unlike the majority of principal American pilgrimages (like *La Virgen de la Tirana* or *Santa Teresa de Los Andes*, in Chile)

Subsequently, the date is closely associated with the 20th of January. In fact, the naming of Saint Sebastian fits an adaptation of a previous celebration, according to the Mapuche calendar, as we will see later on. On the one hand, testimonies have reached us about the nature of the pilgrimage and the initiation of the way for the Pehuenche and Mapuche people, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, when they crossed the Andes towards the Argentinian *pampas* (Capellà, 2004), almost as an initiation rite (Bello, 1999). On the other hand, the fact that the celebration of Saint Sebastian bears the characteristic feature of being celebrated both on the 20th of January and the so-called “20 Chico” (or “Small 20”, the 20th of March), clearly marks one of the 8 periods within the Mapuche calendar. The significance of the 20th of January is not only important within Mapuche cosmology, but also has a functional relevance: it represents the period of summer fairs, just before the start of the closing of Andean peaks (marking the end of summer in the Southern Hemisphere) (Zavala, 2000).

2.3 Saint Sebastian’s Sacred Way

Saint Sebastian’s Way appears to be the establishment of a name created in the present article, which dates back to a tradition largely concealed under the cover of the association with the river Bío-Bío, along with the historic frontier. The construction of a national Chilean mindset, together with Christianization, undid two elements which had been linked to time. The association of both pieces of evidence allows for an understanding of Saint Sebastian’s Way in its entirety, as a sacred way in all its fullness. The interrelation of the dimensions of time and space as common patterns, reveal a sacred dimension when they cross, as is attested in the Mapuche oral tradition and testimonies of the pilgrimage journey (*nampullkafé*).

This case study is a good example of the reconstruction of something extremely important, thanks to the footprints of space (Bío-Bío) and time (20th of January) which have endured. It is the best evidence of the timeless and sacred nature of the territory as a footprint which allows for the treasuring of the symbolic legacy and cosmology of its inhabitants (Stoddard, 1997). On the one hand, the temporary footprints have allowed for the guarantee of spatiality, and in a similar vein the material spatial testimony has enabled the backing up of the temporary legacy.

On the other hand, the way of time and space has allowed for the establishment of a guide for a symbolic and sacred construction, in the same way that the Mapuche world view has allowed us to give new meaning to the particular territory. All these elements (of time/space, material/symbolic) weave interrelations which produce the way in all its fullness. In this case, when we talk about Saint Sebastian's Way, we are alluding to this full way, as a fixed and timeless legacy. Despite the possibility of lapsing into oblivion in key moments, elements of the territory's universality and sacred nature can be found within its memory (Nora, 1993).

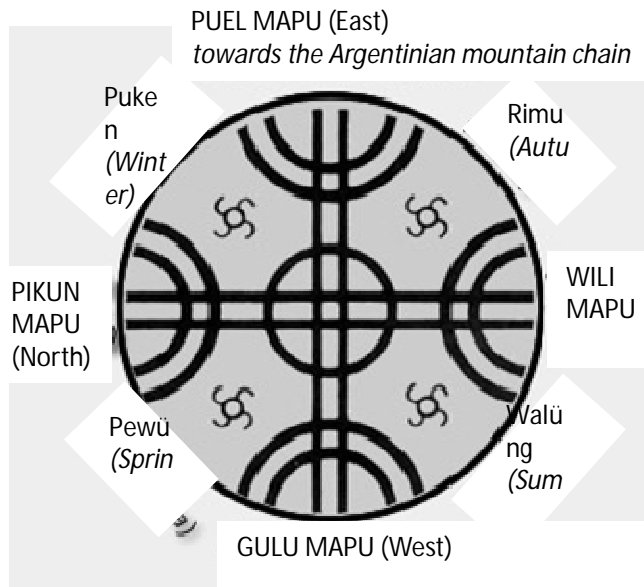
3 Sacred Cosmogonist Reference

There are many cultures which have taken the guiding thread of the annual and cosmic cycle as a mirror upon which they might explain the genesis and expansion of life, and of the identity of the group. Without going any further, a parallel between the natural annual cycle and the stages in the life of Christ has been established in the Catholic Church; it is a symbiosis which does nothing but reaffirm an explanation of the world and of our presence as an organic and anthropomorphic court. Despite not governing the Southern Hemisphere, we must understand that birth (Christmas) is linked to the beginning of the astronomic start of the year (the winter solstice in the Northern Hemisphere). Meanwhile, the resurrection (Easter) is linked to the equinox of spring in the Northern Hemisphere, Saint John (baptism) with the Northern Hemisphere's summer solstice and autumn, with the twilight of life. This simile of a link between the annual cycle, with that of day (day/night) and that of life (birth, growth and death), has been adopted by various cultures, including the Mapuche.

3.1 Vernacular Cosmology Beyond Syncretism Adaptation

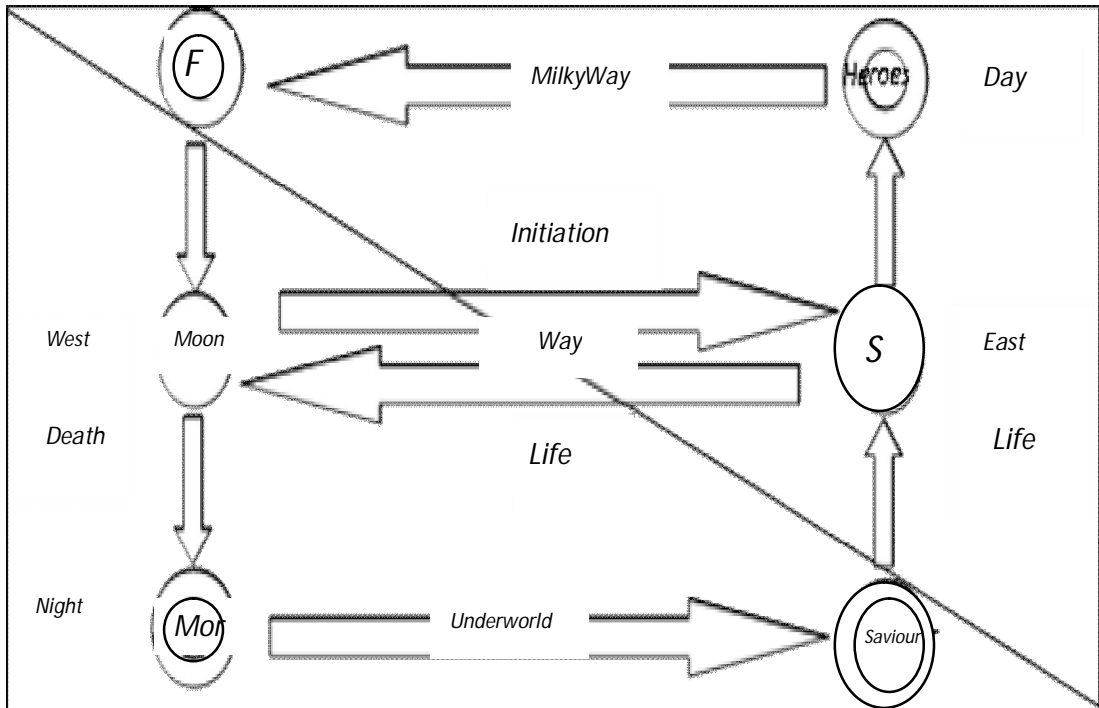
The figure of Saint Sebastian has revealed itself to be a syncretised adaptation of a previous Mapuche cosmology. Through Catholicism, this adaptation has allowed for the maintaining of a sacred date, and thus a legacy of religiosity and devotion surrounding a way. In Kultrún tradition or on the ceremonial Mapuche drum, we find the synthesis of this worldview, reflecting the calendar and basis of religious thought in symbology. Furthermore, the dimension of sound on the drum links to the representation with concrete forms, encouraging the sacralisation of the rite (Fig. 4).

Figure 4: The Mapuche world view Represented in the Kultrún



Source: <http://pueblosoriginarios.com/sur/patagonia/mapuche/kultrun.html>

To understand better, the Mapuche world view is articulated from a Southern Hemisphere perspective of the world, in an annual cycle which rotates around a solar astronomical calendar like the Western (Gregorian) calendar. However, it rotates simultaneously alongside the lunar calendar, in a monthly articulation, excepting cultural differences in a system which is similar to that of other peoples (such as the Celts in the Western World, or the Egyptian calendar, to name but a few). The cardinal points not only represent the spatial orientations, but are also associated with the temporal axes of the annual cycle. Thus, solstices and equinoxes coincide with axes of space. The East, linked to the rising sun and with the birth of the day and of the year, resembles spring, and the rest of the seasons and cardinal points will follow suit, as they appear in the painted sacred forms on the Kultrún (Caniqueo, 2005).

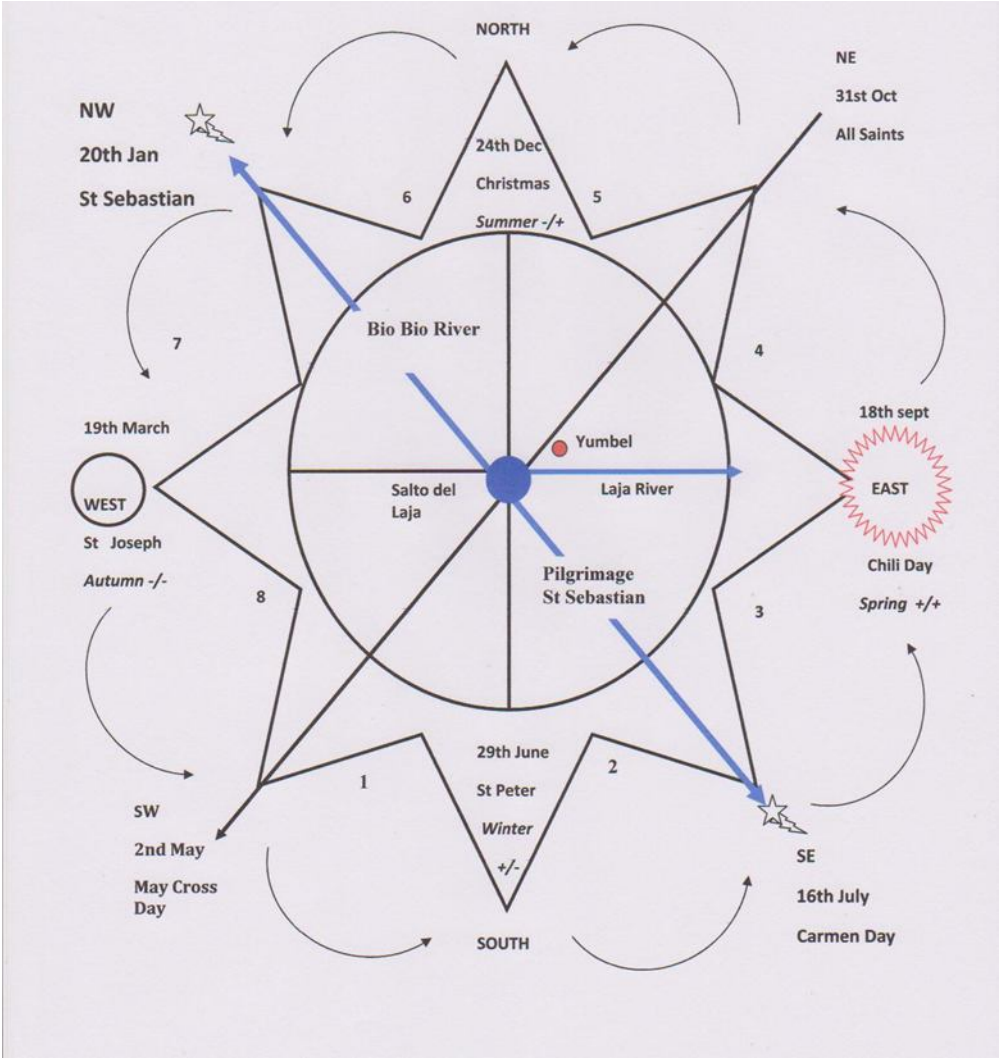
Figure 5: The Role of the way in the Worldview

Source: elaborated by the author.

This projection of time has been reflected in concrete spatial or symbolic forms, which serve as imaginary axes upon which vernacular territorialities are configured (Claval, 2001). The interrelation of time and space allows for an explanation of each particular worldview, although very often they are come from the guide of the sky. The stars, constellations and cosmic phenomena have been understood as signals of reference which project the great orientations onto Earth, reclaiming the tradition of many originally nomadic peoples. The ways are therefore conceived as establishing axes, which would mark the symbolic reflection of the great cosmic axes through space and time. They are guides traced and/or starting from the symbolisation of certain natural elements marking the reflection of the constellations on Earth (Fig. 5). However, the stars continue to be used directly by shepherds as guides in the mountains, or even by sailors in high seas (Dillehay, 2007).

From a Mapuche perspective, the *lebu* (rivers) make up the spatial and organisational axes. Because of its importance, in legend the Bío-Bío was perceived as the reflection of the great celestial river, in a close parallel with the Milky Way; both have sometimes been called the same in Mapundungun: Big River (Butalebu).

Figure 6: Reconstruction of the Mapuche world view from the Bío-Bío Way



Source: elaborated by author.

The general orientation of the Bío-Bío from NW to SE expresses an axis of the calendar of enormous transcendence; it can easily be seen from the sky, coinciding with the 20th of January and the 24th of July. These dates are associated with the phenomena of meteor showers, in both summer and winter. Both dates represent not only the cardinal direction, but also an axis of time of the yearly calendar. In turn, the shooting star showers represent the symbolic doors to the year which establish a bridge to link the celestial and earthly worlds, giving the way a cyclic dimension (Coña, 1984). (Bengoa, 2007). The axis of the Bío-Bío is the concretion of a NW-SE orientation, but it also determines an axis of time between the 20th of January and the 24th of July for the spatial concretion of the astronomical calendar. Both dates, easily recognisable due to their showers of shooting stars allow us to establish the beginning and end of the annual Mapuche cycle from a vision where opposite forces should complement and balance each other (Fig. 6).

In a Western extrapolation, the commonly used division in the Mapuche calendar splits the year depending on: the axis of the summer and winter solstices (20th of January and 21st of June respectively), and on the opposing axis of spring and autumn equinoxes (21st of September and 21st of March respectively), within the context of warmer latitudes with clearly marked seasons. However in this vision, the days are shorter in one part of the year and are longer in the other. This generates an unstable vision which differs from that of the latent balance of each of these forces or energies belonging to Mapuche culture. As a result, the division about the axis of both dates of star showers divides the cycle into a largely negative but growing step in one part of the year. However in the other half of the year, it is largely positive, although it also includes a period of declining days. This ambivalence is the same that is reflected in the Mapuche calendar, in its complementarities to the solar cycle in an astronomical sense, and of the use of the moon in months and actions of life. It is reflected even in the case of the ambivalence of day shared between the solar day and the lunar night. As a consequence, the Mapuche year is shared over 12 months of 28 lunar days, and a thirteenth month of a week to complete the time difference with the solar system. The territorial concretion of the calendar applies to the Bío-Bío across the following worldview. The general axes of time start from the rising sun (East), which will associate itself with the Andean mountain chain and where volcanoes can be seen as sacred points of connection with the spheres of the superior world.

This place will be considered as the destination of heroes, and the search towards the East will be seen as an introspective spiritual pilgrimage and entrance to a superior and positive sphere (spring, according to the calendar). These elements allow us to understand the importance of the journey to the East in the Nampülkafe. This will then be adapted in Catholic tradition, in the Bío-Bío, with the pilgrimage of Saint Sebastian between the 20th of January and the 20th of March (Coña, 1984). The Pehuenche people become a noble people, because of their guarding of the mountain chain and the entrance to superior worlds. On the other hand, the setting sun (West), reflected in the ocean, will be associated with the gates to the entrance of the underworld and of the dead. The Lafken people will be responsible for keeping watch over these negative worlds, associated with autumn, or the sunset of the year and of life. It is unsurprising that islands such as Mocha were to become a sacred cemetery, where many human skeletons can be found today. This equinoctial axis (East-West/Spring-Autumn) with regards to the solstices' axis (North-South/Summer-Winter), starts the year in quarters, upsetting the balance from a forces or energies point of view, and from there the relevance of the intermediate axes to these quarters. The year is therefore divided into 8 parts (a magic number for the Mapuche people) when the calendar alternates the NW-SE axis (20th of January – 16th of July) and NE-SW (2nd of May – 31st of October). The annual cycle divided into 8 parts reiterates the astronomical Mapuche symbol, which is the 8-pointed star, symbolizing Venus as an explicative axis of the celestial dome and of the genesis of the world, according to the Mapuche.

The importance of the NW-SE axis is linked to the two aforementioned dates for the star showers, but it also traces the length of the Bío-Bío as a reflection on Earth of the celestial river, or the Milky Way. This easily recognisable axis in space, in the sky and in the calendar, allows for the search of a more hidden and secret axis in the calendar which would be the NE-SW axis. This would mark the starting and finishing dates of the annual cycle, with the beginning of life in the NE (in spring, on the 31st of October) and the beginning of death in the SW (in autumn, on the 2nd of May). We have associated the dates of the calendar with dates which have been reclaimed from the Gregorian Western calendar, despite the fact that their function upon changing hemispheres is the opposite. If we again follow the calendar of public holidays in Chile, we can see how these 8 dates of the Mapuche calendar (marking the annual cycle), live on under a Catholic syncretised veneer.

We find proof of these 8 dates in the feast of Saint Sebastian, which is celebrated in Yumbel on the 20th of January and the 20th of March. This does no more than mark one of the 8 periods of the Mapuche calendar, linked to the harvest and trade periods of the year, before the arrival of autumn and the cutting off of the routes to the mountain chain. In this sense, even the Chilean Independence Day celebrations on the 18th of September reclaim this ancestral tradition, going far beyond the coincidence of controversial historic republican dates (Hevilla, 2001).

3.2 More than a Case...

Whilst always attempting to shorten the distances, this division of the year in a vernacular reconstruction of the territory shaped itself alongside other cultures; for example, Western culture, in the Northern Hemisphere, Christianised pagan festivals which centred around solar and lunar calendars, and pre-Christian festivals such as Celtic ones (Lesta & Pedrero, 2007). In this sense, the Way of Santiago de Compostela, in the Northern Hemisphere, is a Christianisation of an axis which is equivalent to that of the Bío-Bío. The axes and ways acquire an essential relevance, not only for the understanding of territories and their cultures from a functional and representational point of view, but also as axes of the annual calendar. Tracing these axes represents a reaffirmation of the annual cycle of time, and a union of different spheres of the earthly world, and of representations of other heavenly and underground spheres.

In the specific case of the calendar, which is particularly visible in the Bío-Bío, the year begins around the 2nd of May, as a Western celebration which has lived on unlike in Europe. This is due to the deep-rooted nature of a Mapuche celebration which in fact celebrates the opposite element to the Northern Hemisphere. The 2nd of May in Europe was the celebration of the beginning of spring in that hemisphere, but it ended up in the Southern Hemisphere, using some rites associated with the feast of the start of autumn and the world of the dead (which in the Northern Hemisphere takes place on the 31st of October/1st November and the festival of worshipping the dead). In contrast, the 31st of October in the Southern Hemisphere is a festival of joy, marking the beginning of spring.

Within the regional territory, there are other milestones in addition to the Bío-Bío which mark some of the cardinal points of the calendar, as would be the positive magical nature of some of the volcanoes situated on the Andean mountain chain; for example, the Callaqui, or the Nipples of the Bío-Bío, as an entrance into darkness, in the mouth of the Bío-Bío. In this reconstruction of a regional worldview, the central point of the calendar would be another place considered as magical, such as the Laja waterfall; the Catholic Church converted it into the pilgrimage centre of Yumbel, and agreed that the dedication to Saint Sebastian should be around the 20th of January. This very same converted etymology of certain place names (such as Yumbel, or the translation of Río Claro, the Clear River) could obey a deep magical significance, alluding to the Milky Way or the path of initiation towards enlightenment and knowledge (Orellana, 1992). While the demonstration of each element has yet to be carried out, we do see how all the pieces of the territory bear a logical explanation, thanks to the main explicative axis of the Way of Saint Sebastian.

The Way of Saint Sebastian in its meaning of life ran from the Andean mountains to the Pacific Coast. However, the pilgrimage and nature of initiation rightly force it to run in the opposite direction, from the Andes to the East, just as the Mapuche did as part of an individual search.

4 Conclusion

The case study of the Way of Saint Sebastian illustrates how a footprint (in this case, ways) in a territory are a key element in understanding and representing the territory, not only from its dimension of space, but also from a spiritual dimension. As we have seen, the way represents the pattern which allows for the definition of the representation of a worldview, where spaces of life, physical patterns of the natural environment and the symbolic representations of the groups who live in it, harmoniously intertwine. This occurs not only within the dimension of space, but also within an annual temporal and astronomical cycle. The union of elements takes part in the construction of a close referential link between the group and the place. The way is the mark which makes the place, thus giving the space significance. In this case study we have seen how the crossing of various footprints, a space, and a date, have allowed for reconstructing the logic of a territory. On the one hand, the physical mark of the way (in this case, along the Bío-Bío river), became a pattern for specific human groups, despite the evolution of their functions in time.

On the other hand, the survival of a date such as the 10th of January, which is associated with a religious practice adapted to the passage of time and beliefs from Mapuche to Catholic cultures, has allowed for the transmitting of a legacy of something sacred. By associating both elements, we can recreate a worldview in all its dimensions; this allows for a modern-day understanding of not only a past territory, but also the reason for its current state of being, without forgetting that it defines the directions to follow in the future. The guiding thread is fixed because of the pattern associated with the way; the belief of some inhabitants who have known how to link the passage of time with their love for their land, in a spirit of constant overcoming.

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