

The Fort of “San Simón De La Ramada” (Tucumán, 17th-18th Centuries): Documentary Base for its Archaeological Study



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Introduction

The importance of the study of the forts or forts lies in the fact of being able to understand the role they played in the different war conflicts throughout time and space in the current Argentine territory. As we know, the border line made up of forts and reductions, together with the military tactics of attack and defense, led the colonizing communities to a successful end in the wars they faced, with the indigenous people being harmed. This situation would be repeated throughout the Spanish conquest in our territory. Within this context, and to exemplify some of these conflicts, we will focus on the case of the “San Simón de La Ramada” fort, which functioned in Tucumán in the 17th-18th centuries. After the confrontation between the Spanish and the Calchaquí Indians, another conflict will arise, this time with the Mocoví Indians. This conflict would have its origin in the campaign to Chaco carried out in 1673 by Governor Peredo, where “he reduced 1,916 Indians with their families, captured 27 loose pieces and distributed them.” This campaign and its consequences for the indigenous constitute the trigger for the war. Since then, the “Indians do not stop making inroads and depredations.” From that moment on, the successive governors will put all their attention on the war, while the population of San Miguel de Tucumán tried to recover from the boredom produced by the Calchaquí wars and poverty. This new conflict will bring about other problems, inherent to the functioning of said city and the fort itself.

From documentary sources, it was established that the fort was located in the northeastern limits, between Tucumán and Salta (current town of La Ramada, in the municipal department of Burruyacu, distant about 40 km from the current city of San Miguel de Tucumán), and from this the soldiers went out to reconnoiter the enemy “up to the place and river of Alnona thirty

leagues distant from the said fort” or “to go to explore the lands up to the Urueña river thirty leagues from this city [San Miguel] and also “to recognize up to the Zapallar River”. Regarding the date of founding of the fort, based on the documentation analyzed, it must have been carried out between the years 1673 to 1683. During the following years they were also found in the northwest of the Tucumán currently has a series of forts, including those of Colalao, Tolombón and Chagasta in the Choromoro valley. In 1702 the Cabildo was asked to build another fort in that same valley, proceeding then to find the San Esteban de Valbuena fort, as well as the La Palata fort, which must have been in that same valley. Continuing the line of forts, those of Rosario, in Salta, will be found, which had already been founded in the 17th century with neighbors and soldiers from Esteco, and in Jujuy the forts of Ledesma and Pongo.

Regarding the physical appearance of the fort, we know that it was “made of good thick cevil wood with two cubes and a door made of iron bars.” wood and inside a house covered with straw... and a well”, this is the only description we have of the fort. Cebil wood was obtained from these trees that grow in the Sierra de La Ramada and surrounding areas. Regarding the well mentioned, the area is rich in well-used water tables, which facilitates the construction of spring wells, without having the serious problem of lack of water for their operation. This fort played a fundamental role in protecting the city of San Miguel, constantly harassed by the Mocovíes. The fort played a fundamental role in defense in this war, considering that the Spanish cities were not fortified. The fort in general had the essential functions of protecting the border, the cities and advancing on indigenous lands. It also protected the city of Esteco from attacks, until it was abandoned in 1692 due to

gradual impoverishment and the earthquake of September 13 of that same year. The fort had to come to the aid of the Esteco prison, which suffered one of the most persistent attacks throughout this war. It should be noted that forts were also called presidio. Another fundamental reason for the creation of the fort was to protect the Camino del Perú or Camino de las Carretas. The fort was also a strategic post in communication with the forts of the Choromoro Valley, which were urgently turned to (when possible) for help when it was necessary.

The resources that the fort had were not always satisfactory: it periodically suffered from a lack of men, weapons and food. These inconveniences brought about serious difficulties in its proper functioning, such as the one mentioned by the field master Francisco de Luna y Cárdenas who requests that "because it was with few people [the fort] did not go out to recognize where the enemy was located." [mocovís] and that they help him as soon as possible". Or as in the case referred to in another document: "because the way they are, even if the enemy comes, they will not be able to make any resistance and due to lack of supplies it is feasible that they could perish without being able to give notice to this city because the enemy surrounds them as they have done." in other times". Because "because no aid was given to anyone with pay or supplies [the fort could] often be completely destroyed

and unarmed", leading to a strengthening of the Mocoví attacks. However, in its best times, it had an important set of weapons, coming to possess "414 bullets, 13 shotguns, 7 pistols, 21 pounds of gunpowder, 15 lances, 61 horses, 34 mules, 5 swords, 16 harquebuses, 75 horses and around 30 men available". It is worth mentioning that, as Caravaglia already stated, "for most of the time, this war is a defensive war for the target. And a defensive war is fundamentally based on forts and the maintenance of a mobile line of poorly manned borders.

Conclusion

To conclude, based on the data obtained from the documentation and the analysis carried out, we can maintain that the fort of "San Simón de La Ramada" never had functional stability; It was subject to the economic problems that affected the different governorates of Tucumán and always suffered from the neglect of the inhabitants of Tucumán. These were the main causes that can be identified as fundamental in the future of the functional process of the fort. Likewise, this synthesis on said fort serves as a basis for archaeological field work that can shed light on the different materialities and features, allowing their specific identification in space and, with this, generating a necessary framework for the practical understanding of the strong in border wars.



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