

UDC 316

**THE EVOLUTION OF GENDER WELFARE REGIME AND COLONIAL  
HISTORICAL MEMORY IN LATIN AMERICA**

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The idea of the indivisibility of Spanish and Latin American destinies formed the basis of numerous concepts and doctrines, based upon the unity of history, language and religion. However, the contribution of women in all these dimensions has traditionally been overlooked. Historians tend to focus on the conquistadors, leaders of liberation movements, dictators and revolutionaries, the vast majority of whom were men. Nonetheless, with the growing interest in women's issues, fueled by the

women's rights protests, many started to apply a gender perspective to the research. Still, the tendency to include such discussion only in those fields that focus on family and masculinity in Latin America is present, while the female point of view in the history, politics or economic development of the region is mainly disregarded. Thus, the absence of the feminine factor is an element which has long been shrouded in the silence of history.

With the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Caribbean in 1492 and the subsequent conquest of these lands for more than three centuries, the Spanish Empire expanded to the Caribbean Islands, part of South, most of the Central and North America. Contacts with people that were completely unknown before this voyage towards the "Indies" have since become the subject of much speculation. It marked a period of prosperity on the European side of the ocean, while on the American it heralded the end of "modus vivendi" among indigenous peoples. It must be said that women appear very little in the chronicles and documents of the time, mentioned, as a rule, as wives, mothers or women who are somehow connected with the leading male characters of the history of Europe and America.

Over the past centuries, there have been several prominent female figures who have played a significant role in shaping the course of Latin American history. Few people know Princess Isabel Chimpu Oklo, granddaughter of the last great Inca emperor Atahualpa Tupac Yupanchi. She was the mother of the first and one of the greatest mestizo writers of the time, Inca Garcilazo de la Vega, who was born out of her union with the conquistador, that later abandoned her by marrying a Spanish woman. Princess Isabel told her son the legends of indigenous people and thus, revived the splendor of the Incas' society [1, 7 p.]. Another example is an indigenous woman known as Dona Marina or La Malinche, who served as a guide and interpreter for the conquistador Hernan Cortez and is believed to have played a crucial role in the conquest of Mexico. Or Eva Peron, wife of Argentinian leader Juan Peron, who became a working-class heroine and secured the political backing of Juan Peron [2, 3 p.]. There are many other, not well-known, Latin American women who have become a symbol of change in the region. Among the Spanish leading female figures Teresa Sanchez de Cepeda y Ahumada, mainly called as Teresa of Avila or Teresa de Jesus, occupies a prominent place. She was the Spanish nun, religious leader and ideologist of Spanish Catholicism, also the founder and chief of so-called "Barefoot Carmelites" Order. Teresa of Avila is canonized by the Catholic Church, the 16th century, time of her life and work, is considered the golden period in the history of Spain. It was the dawn of Spanish culture and Spanish religiosity, Catholicism then played a huge role and became the main national ideology. Teresa of Avila left behind a plenty of theological and missionary texts, which played a huge role in the development of Catholicism not only in Spain, but all over the world.

Thus, by drawing a parallel between the history of famous women and one of the unknown, who occasionally appear as a result of archaeological finds, we can determine the scope in which women lived their destiny. The initial phase of development of new territories was accompanied by a particularly ruthless plunder and submission of the native people of Americas. Historians believe that in the first decade of the Spanish invasion, almost a million of the indigenous inhabitants of the Caribbean were senselessly exterminated, killed by imported diseases and brutal forced labor. This was especially unbearable for women, as the Spaniards took Indian women as concubines, they faced with the brutal abuse, persecution and human trafficking. Later on, the choice was either between marriage vows or nuns' vows: therefore, we should not be surprised to find that a significant number of girls, especially the less affluent, took the nun's oaths out of a desire for freedom and will to violate the restrictive social order. Many talented women did not have the voice, the right to take place as an individual in society, so we see these women in the rear of the success of their husbands or sons.

The spread of Catholicism was the official goal of the Spanish conquest of the New World, but Spain certainly sought to make the most of the newly conquered lands. Once the treasures of the local population were depleted, the conquistadors began to develop agricultural farming and needed cheap labor to increase productivity. In her early decrees on the administration of the colonies, Queen Isabella I of Spain demanded that the local population commemorate the crown or its representatives.

The result of these decrees was the creation of the “Encomienda” system. The essence of the system was that the encomenderos (people/person who controlled the lands prescribed by the crown - the encomienda) were endowed with control over all indigenous peoples living in a certain territory, usually in recognition of special services for the crown. Encomendero's power over his people was absolute, he could demand tribute in the form of crops or currency, he could force people to build forts and cities, work in mines or plantations. Moreover, he could sexually exploit women and even sell those who worked for him to other encomenderos [3, 16 p.]. Encomienda's brutality played a significant role in a huge population decline in Latin America.

This historiographic review is intended to show that the presence of Encomienda in the New World was the indicator of reorientation of the colonial social order towards a diffuse organization of authority. In other words, the participation of Spanish and Inca women in the social, cultural, political and religious set up of the Hispanic colonization of the New World is concomitant with the first steps towards the erosion of “patriarchalism” in power relations. It is a presumption that even though the patriarchal organization of colonization has helped to maintain the political and social order, however, in the rural world of colonialism these patriarchal relationships were ambiguous. This can be seen in the problems raised at the different levels of social organization: the formation of lineages; the differences between encomenderos and the authority, real or “civil”; the conflicting interests between the encomenderos and the ecclesiastical authorities; and the lawsuits between the encomenderos and the indigenous population.

Bartolome de las Casas, “Protector of the Indians”, arrived in the New World in 1502 as part of one of the first waves of the Spanish invasion of America. For services to the crown, he was awarded an encomienda. With time, De las Casas was horrified by the outrageous violence that indigenous people faced under the encomienda system, and in 1515 he abandoned his own encomienda and began a campaign to eliminate the system. “The Brief Account of the Destruction of India” is De las Casas’ first-hand account of the abuses he has witnessed, particularly focused on the suffering of women and children, and allusions to the sexual exploitation of indigenous women. The work of Bartolome outraged readers in Spain and prompted the Spanish government to pass the New Laws in 1542. The New Laws were designed to free all indigenous people from the encomienda system within one generation. This was not a definitive end to the exploitation of local people and, mainly, women in the Spanish colonies, but it was an important step in the fight against their oppression [4].

For further understanding of the position of women in the colonization of America, we must take a closer look at the status of women in Spanish society during this period. Thus, we can assess the extent to which they were involved in the American adventure and find out what influence the very perception of women in Spain had on the women of the New World, attitudes towards them, and whether this discovery represents a breach in the traditional status of women in society. The position of women in Spain in the 16th and 17th centuries was determined by several general legal codes that formed the basis of Spanish law during the colonization process. These codes include: the Siete partidas, the decrees of Alcalá, the decrees of Castile and the Leyes de Toro. They contain laws governing the legal status of women. Traditionally, at the time, women were considered fragile people in need of protection that could come either from the family or institutions such as the church. Moreover, women were thought to be physically and mentally weaker than men, in addition, they were deemed less rational than men, more prone to temptation, more emotional and - even if this is not consistent with the rest of the description - more violent than men [5, 34 p.]. During this period in Spain women were under parental care or, having married, under the care of her husband. Unmarried women remained under the protection of their father until the death. Consequently, women could not make any transactions, acquisitions, sales, etc. without the legal permission of a husband or father.

Legislation on expatriates traveling to the New World (emigration) must be placed in the context of a legal system aimed at protecting people. This explains why unaccompanied or unmarried women were initially prohibited from emigrating. Paradoxically, the same desire to provide protection led to

the banning married men from emigrating without family. To get permission to travel to Indies man had to provide legal permission from his wife. However, the couple could not part for more than three years. Anyone who broke this rule risked imprisonment and forced to reunite with their family. To allow a man to stay for more than three years, a wife, still residing in Spain, had to renew her permission:

“I want you to send me a permit for four years; you must do this in the city council, indicating that since I am here (in America) for your interest and for mine, you are giving me your permission and that you want to grant me that permission.” [6]

Although it was not uncommon for couples to maintain transatlantic correspondence, separation was nonetheless an unpleasant prospect for women. Indeed, for many of them it resulted in a complete abandonment in Spain. This may be the reason for the demographic phenomenon, which strongly affected Old Castile in the 17th and 19th centuries, that is, large proportion of “widows” who lived in the city and, to a lesser extent, in the countryside (the number exceeds those of wives of soldiers who left for war). Here we can assume that women left by emigrants for a long time were also considered as “widows” by the authorities. Moreover, there is no doubt that a significant number of men have chosen emigration as a means of escape from married life. Given that America was “free” from many social obligations, especially in the beginning, it was the perfect refuge for men. If the crown decided to intervene in this matter, it was since many women were left abandoned in Spain, while their husbands left “to seek their fortune” in Indies. Furthermore, such separation could in practice lead to simple desertion, as evidenced by the fear expressed by women themselves. A colonizer in Mexico wrote to his wife, whom he left in Castile and had not seen for years:

“You must remember that I came here (to Indies) to make a fortune, it’s more for you than for me...” [7]

Thus, statistics confirm the given. One of the main features of colonization, as noted by many researchers, was the male type of colonization. In total, about 600 thousand Spaniards resettled from Spain to Latin America during the first three centuries of colonization, and up to 80% of those who moved were men. So many conquistadors wished to go in search of overseas treasures that in 1496 itself it became possible to build a whole new city - Santo Domingo, from where the first military expeditions were equipped. As a result, Latin America became a massive melting pot, characterized by the mixed race of the population (Spaniards and indigenous parents produced mestizo offspring). It has been estimated that over 1.86 million Spaniards emigrated to Latin America between 1492 and 1824, with millions more continuing to immigrate since the independence of Latin American countries [8, 131 p.].

In 1809, the first proclamation of independence from Spanish rule took place in Peru. This marked the beginning of the liberation movement from colonial power, which spread to other Spanish possessions in Americas. Thus, in the XVIII century (second half of the 90s) the Spanish crown lost most of its colonies in the region. The decisive blow to the Spanish colonial empire struck in 1810-1826 - the war of independence in Latin America - when Spain lost all its American colonies, except for Cuba and Puerto Rico. Subsequently, the 1898 Spanish-American War resulted in disastrous defeat of Spain, bringing a decisive end to the Spanish colonial era (the US occupied Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico) [9, 23 p.].

It is important to point out, that this process of transition was accompanied by the presence of social and career mobility for people from lower races through gradual “bleaching”, the absence of segregation and obvious discrimination based on race. This gave the impetus for the further development of gender welfare regimes, as it turned out that women of color were not provided with such opportunities for social mobility, despite the expertise that they may possess. Women’s lives and experiences varied by ethnicity, and women of different nationalities faced different types of discrimination. Indigenous and African descent women suffered from “double marginalization” as they are both minorities and women (the acute problem of present days too). The indigenous women communities of the New World did try to preserve much of their traditional customs and values,

however, they performed similar roles and responsibilities shared by women of Spanish descent [10, 6 p.].

In Latin America, the gender roles and social expectations of men and women were largely determined by cultural values and beliefs borrowed from the Spanish conquistadors. The terms “machismo” and “marianismo” describe the set of ideal attributes of men and women that have developed in the region. Machismo is defined as a cult of masculinity in which the ideal man is bold, implacable and sexually aggressive. On the other hand, Marianismo refers to the cult of female moral superiority, which defines the ideal woman as disinterested, submissive, and the one who possess spiritual qualities. Religious activists are widely regarded as the archetype of femininity and are considered as the model to which women should aspire. Furthermore, Machismo and Marianismo not only reflect the expectations of men and women in Latin America, they also serve to reinforce the gender division of labor. Since women are expected to be caring and morally superior to men, they have responsibilities related to the family, upbringing and education of children. Men, by virtue of their perceived strength and assertiveness, are mostly granted with the exclusive power over public sphere (politics, economics, international relations, etc.). In several situations it has been shown that, as a result, wages for women are generally lower than for men, even in those conditions when women do the same work as men. Thus, the influence of Machismo and Marianismo on gender relations and the status of women in Latin America is very significant [11, 4 p].

After nearly two decades of authoritarian regimes in many countries, democracy reached the shores of Latin America in the 1980s. Since then, the region has witnessed a growing process of democratization. This democratic wave became supportive of women's issues, giving them the opportunity to express and assert their own (not their husband's or father's) political preferences. It should be noted that women in Latin America faced the identical problem of no voice and no rights as the Spanish women. In this new democratic scenario, women flourished as empowered voters, grassroots political organizers, and political leaders.

Over the past decade, Latin America has witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number of women in power, of more than 50 percent. In the 19th century, Latin American women launched the movements to obtain the right to vote. In most of the countries their attempts were crowned with success in 1940s and 1950s. Since then, many women have run for political office in Latin America. For example, Isabel Martinez de Peron became Argentina's first female president (first in the Americas) when she was promoted from vice-president to the president of Argentina following the death of her husband Juan Peron. In many other Latin American countries, women have led the way too, including Chile, where Michelle Bachelet served as president from 2006 to 2010; Brazil - Dilma Rousseff was elected as a president in 2011; and Costa Rica, where Laura Chinchilla was the president in 2010. Political activity in Latin America was not limited to political office. Women have taken part in protests, hunger strikes and armed riots, aimed at achieving social and economic justice in the region. Women usually viewed their political activism as an extension of the traditional gender roles. In cases where the political or economic situation in their country threatens the well-being of their families, women often feel obligated to participate in political life. This phenomenon is called “social motherhood”, because women's activity in the public sphere is motivated by their devotion to their families. Social motherhood was shown in South America during the military regimes of the 1970s and 1980s. Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay were ruled by the military regimes that used violent methods against their citizens to achieve social order and economic prosperity. Many people were assassinated, tortured and kidnaped. Thus, women mobilized in large numbers to demand the information about their missing husbands and children from the government [12, 4 p.].

A unique feature of Latin America is the progress made by women in acquiring the skills that enable them to lead. Unlike most other developing regions of the world, where there is a clear gender gap in schooling in favor of boys, in Latin America girls outperform boys in school enrollment at all levels of education. About 60 % of girls attend secondary school and 19 % have a higher education; for boys the percentage is 54 and 17, respectively. The historical gap in primary school attendance in favor of boys was closed by the 1970 cohorts, reflecting a secular trend towards gender equality in

school enrollment. However, there is still no convincing explanation as to why Latin American countries perform well in terms of gender equality in school enrollment compared to other regions. Likely factors include easy access to schools in a highly urbanized regions, which increases the chances of all children to attend school; and cultural preferences that value schooling for both sexes and do not limit the social interaction and physical mobility of girls. Expanding of educational possibilities in the region has increased girls' access to school and has helped to reduce gender inequalities in employment and politics through the direct impact of schooling on work and wages. A recent worldwide study of the impact of educational expansion on the social inequality found that education reduces gender inequality faster than inequality based on race and ethnicity. Nevertheless, reducing the gender gap in education is not always reflected in narrowing such a gap in employment and income, and education does not change attitudes towards racism [13, 3 p.].

Thus, the interpretation of historical events from the women's perspective opens up a deeply challenging and tragic, and more importantly, once unfamiliar horizons. It is indisputable now, what a significant contribution women have made at every stage of historical evolution, even being the main character and the impetus for development and change. Colonialism has treated women harshly and had a great influence on what the gender perception is today. With the advance of democracy in Latin America, many women were able to gain their rights, and achieve an unprecedented number in leadership positions and politics. However, indigenous and afro-descendent women still have the limited opportunities. Virtually all women in Latin America continue to face economic, social, cultural and political barriers, while the benefits that are usually associated with an increase in the number of women in power may or may not be fully realized. Nonetheless, continued feminization of politics is needed to help consolidate and protect the exercise of democracy and gender welfare in Latin America.

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