

CATALOGING THE NATION: EXPLORATIONS AND THE INCORPORATION OF
NORTH PATAGONIA INTO THE CHILEAN NATIONAL ORDERING, 1856-1902

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A Thesis submitted to the faculty of
San Francisco State University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree

Master of Arts

In

History

by

Javier Luis Etchegaray

San Francisco, California

August 2018

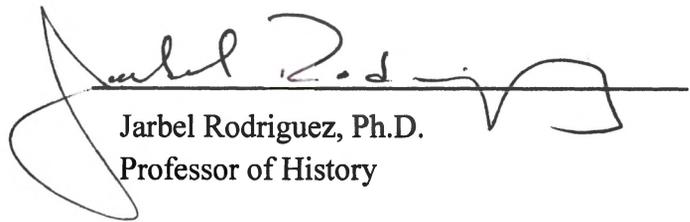
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CATALOGING THE NATION: EXPLORATIONS AND THE INCORPORATION OF
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San Francisco, California
2018

Between 1856 and 1902, agents of the Chilean state carried out the first exploration voyages into Chilean Northern Patagonia in a slow and disjointed attempt to survey these regions which were virtually unknown at the time and where the state had no effective presence. The corpus of explorations carried out during this period, in addition to works written in the capital that commented on these, make up a catalog of the people, land, water, flora, and fauna of North Patagonia at the time. This catalog evidences the relationship that explorers and their reports had to a process of national expansion towards this region during this period. At the same time, it can be seen as the first attempt to incorporate North Patagonia into the Chilean territorial ordering. Finally, this catalog evidences the relationship of science and the institutions of knowledge in Chile at the time to a project of national territorial consolidation. All in all, the catalog of explorations to North Patagonia resulted in the early incorporation of this region into the general idea of the Chilean nation.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.



Chair, Thesis Committee



Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dedicado a mi Padre y mi Madre: sin ellos, nada de esto habría sido posible. Gracias por su apoyo incesante e incondicional a lo largo de los años, gracias por empujarme a ser más y gracias por ser ejemplos de vida. Todo mi amor para los dos.

Para Jimena, Estefanía, Fernanda, Juan y Rafael: ustedes siempre han estado a mi lado y son mi roca. Gracias por inspirarme y siempre darme ejemplos de superación y trabajo duro. Son la mejor compañía que una persona podría tener en esta vida.

Para Lauren: contigo conocí la Patagonia por primera vez y en tu compañía me enamoré de ese lugar tan único. Gracias por acompañarme, creer en mí y siempre apoyarme durante estos últimos casi cinco años.

To all my friends in San Francisco and the Bay Area: you know who you are. You have become my family here and it is with your support and company that I have been able to do this. Thank you for making me feel at home.

To my thesis committee members: Thank you for your time, your comments, your revisions, and above all, thank you for pushing me to finalize this project.

To all the faculty, staff, and fellow students I met and shared a conversation with at San Francisco State University and University of California, Berkeley: thank you for fostering the love of history within me and providing me with insights on this academic field and life in general.

Para Margarita: Tú también eres parte de la familia. Gracias por todo el cariño y las enseñanzas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
Historiography	11
Theoretical Framework.....	17
Sources & Methodology	28
Geographic Introduction	35
What's in a Name?.....	45
Chapter 1: Explorers and Their Relation to the State	49
Chapter 2: The People	81
<i>Chilotes</i> : People of the Sea, People of the Forest.....	86
Indigenous Peoples – Between the Visible and the Invisible	99
Local Knowledge – At the Limits of Scientific Observation	111
Chapter 3: The Waters	121
Going Beyond the Expedition: The Institutionalization of Water-Based Explorations.....	124
Water and the Nation	130
Water and the Economy.....	139

Chapter 4: The Land	151
Land and the Search for Expansion towards the East.....	153
Land and the Construction of a Frontier	161
Land and the Nation.....	174
Chapter 5: Flora and Fauna.....	187
The Flora.....	189
The Fauna	202
Environmental Destruction	207
Conclusion	226
Maps.....	239
Bibliography.....	252

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures	Page
1. Map of Chile between the 41 st and 44 th Latitudes.....	32
2. Map of Chile between the 45 th and 48 th Latitudes.....	33
3. Map of Chile between the 49 th and 52 nd Latitudes.....	34
4. Guillermo Cox's Map of the Region around Lake Nahuel Huapi (1863).....	239
5. Francisco Vidal Gormaz's Map of the Comau Fjord and Vodudahue River (1863).....	240
6. Vidal Gormaz's Map of the Puelo River (1872).....	241
7. Enrique Simpson's Map of Melinka (1872).....	242
8. Enrique Simpson's Map of the Aysén River (1871).....	243
9. Ramón Serrano Montaner's Sketch of the Palena River (1885).....	244
10. Hans Steffen's Map of the Puelo River and its Surroundings (1897).....	245
11. Steffen's Map of the Aysén and Cisnes Rivers (1913).....	246
12. Steffen's Map of the Palena River (1913).....	247
13. Claudio Gay's Map of the Continental Coast of North Patagonia (1854).....	248
14. Steffen's Map of the North Patagonian Region between the 41 st and 48 th Parallels (1913).....	249
15. Pierre Pissis's Map of the North Patagonian Region between the 47 th and 48 th Parallels (1875).....	250
16. Steffen's Map of the North Patagonian Region between the 47 th and 48 th Parallels (1913).....	251

Introduction

“The Western coast of South America, from Magellan’s Strait to Port Valdivia, deserves the attention of missionary societies. Here the natives are living in the most wretched condition that can well be conceived, in one of the finest countries in the world. The arts of civilization, particularly that of agriculture, with a true knowledge of practical religion, would make them a happy and a grateful people; and at the same time open a lucrative trade that would prove beneficial to all parties. This country is claimed by no civilized nation, the Spaniards never having extended their conquests south of the archipelago of Chonos, or Chiloé.”¹

- Benjamin Morell, November 1824

“The solution of the problem can be reduced to these words: COLONIZATION OF THE FRONTIER.

[...] *Strategy, geography, have both signaled the principal locations of future settlements.*

These lands are fertile and they have all the conditions for well-being.

There is an army, there are surveyors. What else is missing, then?”²

- Francisco Bilbao, 1857

Explorers and travelers related to the Chilean state systematically surveyed the waters and lands of Chilean North Patagonia³ between 1856 and 1902. Said explorers and travelers subsequently recorded their explorations and journeys in the form of reports that

¹ Morrell, Benjamin. *A Narrative of Four Voyages to the South Sea, North and South Pacific Ocean, Chinese Sea, Ethiopic and Southern Atlantic Ocean, Indian and Antarctic Ocean. From the Year 1822 to 1831*. New York: J. & J. Harper, 1832, p. 159

² Jalif, Clara. "Tres Artículos De Francisco Bilbao Aparecidos En La Revista Del Nuevo Mundo." *Anuario de Filosofía Argentina y Americana* 16 (1999), pp. 139-140

³ Herein, North Patagonia

were published in academic journals, or in book form, in the capital. There, politicians, writers, and intellectuals read and further commented on the findings contained in these reports. This corpus of writing formed a veritable catalog of the geographic, hydrographic, economic, human, natural, and historical elements of North Patagonia. This was an unprecedented situation in the sense that in 1856, the year that Chilean explorers began systematically exploring said region, North Patagonia was as close to being a *terra nullius*⁴ within the national ordering as could be.⁵ At the beginning of this period, neither the Chilean state nor any other state held effective sovereignty over it, nor did any state ever formally declare possession over it. Additionally, indigenous presence in this region was minimal, nomadic, and limited to specific and marginal sub regions. Chile also had no historical claims over Northern Patagonia seeing as the Spanish Empire never took possession of this region. The state possessed no accurate maps or understanding of the geography and hydrography, there were no permanent settlements in the region, nor were there any institutions of the state in place. A few government dispositions detailing the territorial ordering of the Chilean nation at the time pointed towards the fact that this region fell under a Chilean province or territory. However, these dispositions were deficient in the sense that they conflicted with each other and, based on

⁴ Latin for “nobody’s land”. This international law term derives from the Latin *res nullius* “nobody’s thing” and essentially describes a territory that is not controlled by any state and is thus open to possession or colonization by any state or party that endeavors in such a venture. It is important to note that most claims of *terra nullius* by part of European or Western powers have often ignored the presence of indigenous peoples living in these territories.

⁵ “In this period [late 19th century], Patagonia was one of the few zones in the planet where no nation had established clear sovereignty.” (Velásquez, Héctor. “Una Visión Arqueológica E Histórica De La Presencia Indígena Tardía En Los Valles Cordilleranos De Aisén.” In *Otras Narrativas En Patagonia: Tres Miradas Antropológicas a La Región De Aisén*, edited by 2005. Santiago: Ñire Negro, 2007, p. 73)

different interpretations, North Patagonia could fall under the jurisdiction of three different provinces or territories.⁶ Thus, 1856 is the year when North Patagonia begins to be constructed as a component part of the territorial ordering of the nation by Chilean explorers and agents of the state, and their scientific surveys.

1902 is the end date to this investigation because this is the year that an English arbitral tribunal gave its final sentence regarding the border between Chile and Argentina. Both countries first signed a border treaty in 1856 that broadly defined the limit between both nations as “those which they possessed as such at the time of separation from Spanish domination, in the year 1810.”⁷ As stated previously, Spain never took Patagonia into possession. However, this massive grey area left by the 1856 treaty was not problematic at the time (at least for the northern section of this region) seeing as both nations were far from achieving any sort of possession there. As time passed and both nations began to carry out explorations into Patagonia, the need for a clearer division became patent. In 1881, Argentina and Chile signed a border treaty that stood out because of its simplicity; it included only three articles that alluded to the actual physical

⁶ For information regarding debates around this period regarding the position of North Patagonia within the territorial ordering of the nation, see Gómez García, Agustín. "Dificultades En La Delimitación Austral De Chile." *Revista Chilena de Historia y Geografía* 3, no. 7 (1912), pp. 231-43; Greve, Ernesto. "Informe Sobre La Delimitación Provincial Y Departamental En Llanquihue Y Chiloé." *Revista Chilena de Historia y Geografía* 10, no. 24 (4th Trimester 1916), pp. 429-68; Greve. "Informe Sobre La Delimitación Provincial Y Departamental En Llanquihue Y Chiloé (Conclusión)." *Revista Chilena de Historia y Geografía* 21, no. 25 (1st Trimester 1917), pp. 81-110; Thayer Ojeda, Tomás. "Cuestiones De Geografía Austral De Chile." *Revista Chilena de Historia y Geografía* 25, no. 29 (1st Trimester 1918), pp. 161-218; ⁷ "Tratado de paz, amistad, comercio y navegación. 1855" from *Fuentes documentales y bibliográficas para el estudio de la Historia de Chile* (http://www.historia.uchile.cl/CDA/fh_article/0,1389,SCID%253D15650%2526ISID%253D563%2526PR T%253D15646%2526JNID%253D12,00.html)

boundary between both nations. Article 1, the most important and far reaching of the treaty, began as follows:

The limit between Chile and the Argentine Republic is, from north to south, until the 52nd latitude parallel, the *Cordillera* [Mountain Range] of the Andes. The frontier line will run throughout this extension over the highest peaks of said *Cordilleras* which divide the waters and will pass through the sources that flow down through either side.⁸

The implications of this article will be further explored in the Geographic Introduction of this investigation, but it suffices to say that in North Patagonia, the highest peaks of the Andes Range do not coincide with the watershed divide, something that was only discovered after the signing of this treaty. This led to a double interpretation of the border treaty with Argentina claiming that the border should run through the highest peaks of the Patagonian Andes, and Chile claiming that it should run along the watershed divide (each interpretation gave the respective country more territory.)

The limits conflict that ensued from this double interpretation has been widely studied, and it is not the concern of this investigation.⁹ The treaty, however, ushered an intense period of geographical explorations from both nations in order to prepare for a future border demarcation. Chile and Argentina were not able to come to an agreement on where the border line should lay and in 1893, both countries signed a “clarifying

⁸ Rodríguez, Juan Agustín. *Chile en el Canal Beagle y Mares Australes: Tratado de Paz entre Chile y Argentina*. Santiago: Gráfica Progresión, 1985, p. 53

⁹ Some important works about the limits treaties and conflicts with Argentina include Encina, Francisco. *La cuestión de límites entre Chile y la Argentina desde la Independencia hasta el Tratado de 1881*. Santiago: Editorial Nascimento, 1959; Molinari, Diego Luis. *Orígenes De La Frontera Austral Argentino-Chilena, Patagonia, Islas Malvinas Y Antártida. “La Primera Unión Del Sur*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Devenir, 1961; Baeza, Rafael. "Territorio Y Saber En Disputa. La Controversia Limítrofe Chileno-Argentina Sobre Los Andres." *Asclepio* 68, no. 2 (2016), pp. 152-66.

protocol” that specifically stated that Chile would have full possession of the Pacific coasts of the continent and resign its Atlantic pretensions, and vice versa for Argentina. Even after this, both nations were not able to come to an agreement, and after multiple disagreements between the border commissions of both nations, an additional protocol was signed in 1896. This protocol stipulated that the British crown was to act as an arbiter between both nations in regards to their southern border, and that the delimiting of the border “will be subjected to the ruling of the Government of His British Majesty.”¹⁰ In 1902, both nations’ delegates offered their reports and defended their positions in London. The British Crown, represented by Sir Thomas Holdich, finally ruled that year regarding the border and reached a solution that was somewhere in between the position defended by both nations, and that did not, in any case, stick to the delimitation principles laid out by the 1881 treaty.

In light of these events, 1902 is often treated by Chilean historiography as a sort of inaugural event in the history of North Patagonia. The argument generally follows the premise that only once the region was delimited, was the land then begun to be used rationally, settlers began to arrive, and the state was able to penetrate with its institutions there. Chilean historian Adolfo Ibáñez Santa María, who in 1972 wrote the first academic article regarding North Patagonia, stated that “The 1902 arbitral sentence was the event that marks the origin of civilized life in Western Patagonia.”¹¹ Even recent historiography

¹⁰ Rodríguez. *Chile en el Canal Beagle y Mares Australes*, p. 64

¹¹ Ibáñez Santa María, Adolfo. "La Incorporación De Aisén a La Vida Nacional, 1902-1936." *Historia* 11 (1972-1973), p. 367. Western Patagonia was a name widely used for the region studied in this thesis. In the

reproduces this sort of argument.¹² There is some truth to this: in 1903 the Chilean state awarded the first large-scale land concessions in this region to private individuals and companies, and around that same year, the first Chilean “spontaneous colonists”¹³ began to settle in North Patagonia, arriving from Argentina. The confluence of these two historical phenomena eventually led to the formation of some of the first permanent population centers in this region and the embryonic implantation of state services there. However, it cannot be stated that there was not any sort of Chilean state presence in this region pre-1902, or that the period between 1856 and 1902 corresponds solely to an exploratory period. The catalog of explorations, and the works that commented on them, between 1856 and 1902 reveals a multitude of assessments, representations, debates, historical episodes, and bodies of knowledge that ultimately incorporated this region into the conception of what the Chilean nation was in a territorial, social, cultural, economic, and political sense, throughout the mid-19th century.

Geographic Introduction section of this investigation, the usage of North Patagonia as a name for this region throughout this document is explained.

¹² Boris Araya writes in 2017: “The Chilean State appears only ‘timidly’ and acting through an *a priori* image of this zone, between the resolution of the arbitral Sentence with Argentina (1902) and the creation of the Aisén Territory (1927), later a province (1929), consolidating a discourse constructed in its basis throughout the length of the previous century.” (Araya, Boris. “Los Orígenes De La Construcción Discursiva Del Territorio De Aisén Por Parte Del Estado De Chile (1818-1929).” *Magallania* 45, no. 1 (2017), p. 62

¹³ A name used by Chilean historians to describe Chilean colonists living in the Argentine side of the post-1902 border who began to move into fiscal lands in North Patagonia autonomously, and without any sort of organization or coordination between themselves. Núñez *et. al.* describe this phenomenon in the following manner: “The active presence of Chilean settlers that install themselves in the margins of the Patagonian Mountains driven (or expelled) by the Argentine government in the process of nationalization of the ‘Argentine’ Patagonian lands is worth of consideration. These peasants found in those lands an answer to their improvised nomadism. This spontaneous process gave origin to the series of settlements and towns that in the present day define the limits of the political frontier in the area.” (Núñez, Andrés; Aliste, Enrique & Bello, Álvaro. “Patagonia-Aysén En La Construcción Del Imaginario Geográfico De La Nación.” *Iztapalapa, Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades* 35, no. 76 (January-June 2014), pp. 177-178)

Chile was an expanding nation in many ways at the time.¹⁴ From the mid-19th century on, it underwent a process of territorial expansion and consolidation towards the north and south.¹⁵ Additionally, between 1881 and 1902, Chile and Argentina demarcated their border in North Patagonia with the help and participation of explorers and writers from both nations. Within this process of territorial expansion and consolidation, geographic and hydrographic studies played an important auxiliary role. During this period, the role of science as a way to catalog and understand the world became intimately enmeshed with the institutions of the expanding state. From the third decade of the 19th century on, the Chilean state hired many foreign scientists and geographers to carry out extensive surveys of the Chilean territory and its natural history.¹⁶ As such, the scientific exploration and surveying of the Chilean nation became intimately related to a process of territorial and national expansion and consolidation.

¹⁴ Chilean historian Sergio Villalobos describes the period between 1861-1891 in the following manner: "Once the political organization of the country is obtained, assuring the power of the aristocracy, forming the base for a new culture, and creating the foundation for economic development, a period of extraordinary development in all spheres of national life begins, which can be considered as a stage of expansion. In this sense, the term 'expansion' must not be understood only in the geographic aspect; it must be applied to the most diverse aspects: the notable increase in mining production and economic development, internal colonization and the readjustment of frontiers, the emerging of new social classes, political changes, and the maturity of artistic and literary creation." (Villalobos, Sergio. *Chile Y Su Historia*. Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 2003, p. 251)

¹⁵ Consider that Chile took possession of the Strait of Magellan in 1843. Similarly, German colonization, sponsored by the Chilean state, began in the Valdivia Province in 1846, and afterwards in the Llanquihue Lake region in 1853. Throughout the years 1861-1886, the Chilean government undertook successive military campaigns to occupy indigenous lands between the Bío-Bío River and the northern limit of the Valdivia Province and establish sovereignty there (Occupation of Araucanía, euphemistically called the "Pacification of Araucanía"). Chile also expanded towards the north as a result of the nation's triumph over Peru and Bolivia in the War of the Pacific between 1879 and 1883.

¹⁶ Among these, the most important during the mid-19th century were Frenchmen Claudio Gay and Pierre Joseph Pissis, the Polish-Lithuanian Ignacio Domeyko, and the German Rodolfo Philippi, all of whom the Chilean state commissioned to carry out surveys of the Chilean territory.

Under this lens, explorers' reports from their expeditions to North Patagonia, and writings in the capital commenting on their findings, can be collectively seen as an extensive catalog of the human and natural elements of this region. This regional catalog recorded its hydrography, geography, natural resources, economic potential, people, relationship to Chile and Argentina, and contained assessments about what should be done with the region. This catalog did not exist within a political vacuum. The explorers that recorded it were almost always related to the state and its institutions; the explorations often had the goal of assessing opportunities for the introduction of peoples and enterprises, and the nature and objective of explorations to North Patagonia were often related to the introduction of the Chilean state in these marginal regions. Using Benedict Anderson's seminal *Imagined Communities*, the catalog of explorations to North Patagonia reveals the Chilean "state's style of thinking about its domain."¹⁷ Anderson explains,

The 'warp' of this thinking was a totalizing classificatory grid, which could be applied with endless flexibility to anything under the state's real or contemplated control: peoples, regions, religions, languages, products, monuments, and so forth. The effect of the grid was always to be able to say of anything that it was this, not that; it belonged here, not there. It was bounded, determinate, and therefore – in principle – countable.¹⁸

In this sense, the cataloging of North Patagonia by agents of the Chilean state was the first tentative step of state control and penetration in this region. In it, observing, recording, and collecting became tools at the service of the expanding Chilean state.

¹⁷ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006, p. 184

¹⁸ Ibidem

This catalog contains three overarching themes that run through it, are intertwined, and connect it to the expansion of the Chilean state. First of all, the myriad reports and writings on North Patagonia directly comment on the role of science and the importance of modernization in comparison to the existence of traditional and premodern human populations and activities in this area. Explorers and writers in the capital saw themselves as intimately related to a scientific project in service of the modernization of the nation. In fact, many explorers at the time were related to the institutions of science and knowledge of the nation. The natural contrast to this were the modes of thought and socio-cultural level of local and indigenous populations who had connections to North Patagonia at the time. While explorers, politicians, authors, and intellectuals considered these modes of thought as being backwards and incompatible with a general modernization of the region, explorers depended, at almost every step of the way, on local knowledge in order to “discover” waters and lands that were already known to their guides yet not codified in a Western and positivist manner. Thus, and similarly using the image of a grid like Anderson, the catalog of explorations to North Patagonia, in the words of Gyan Prakash who studied science in relation to the colonial project in India, “constitute[s] a grid, a coherent strategy of power and identity underpinned by an ideology of modernity that is legitimated in the last instance by science.”¹⁹

In second place, this catalog can be seen as a call to action to the Chilean state in terms of penetrating into this region, effectively taking possession of it, and introducing

¹⁹ Prakash, Gyan. *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, p. 3

its institutions there. During the time period analyzed in this investigation, the state and its institutions were almost entirely absent in these regions. The catalog of expeditions and investigations in North Patagonia during the mid-19th century is the first example of these regions being imagined as a component part of the Chilean territory. Using Robert Sack's concept of human territoriality as "the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control peoples, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a general area," explorers and their travel reports acted as direct agents of the assertion of Chilean territoriality in North Patagonia

In third place, this cataloging of North Patagonia represented this region as part of the territorial ordering of the nation, and an important one at that. This is important as North Patagonia had never been explicitly regarded as part of Chile before this time period; its place within the national territory was only implied at times. Explorers and writers at the time visualized this region as holding a great future for the nation, containing many natural resources that could be put to use by the expanding national industry, and being a depository for aspirations of national expansion. Seen this way, explorations and exploration reports are more than mere literary representations of the territory. Susana López studies the travels, writings, and impact of explorers in Argentine Patagonia throughout the 19th century, and explains that

The world of representations does not refer solely – as some structuralist analysis do – to the superstructure, but also has a material basis, with furthermore political

consequences in its action. This is evident in the case of some of our subjects [Patagonian explorers], for whom representing and doing went hand in hand.”²⁰

Through these three ways, explorations, science, and national politics acted in coordination in order to co-opt this region into the territorial ordering of Chile. Mauricio Osorio, writing about the formation of regional identities in North Patagonia, states,

In the 19th century, the perspective of the explorations will change and it will be the paradigm of positivist science which will give the general frame of sense to the reconnaissance of the physical and cultural world. Additionally, the cultural project of the permanent progress of western nations that leads them to study the unknown to subject it to civilization will be another great axis that will influence in the surveying of Patagonia.²¹

Through scientific explorations in the mid-19th century, North Patagonia was not only imagined as a part of the Chilean nation for the first time, but was “prepared” for colonization and economic exploitation in the years after 1902.

Historiography

To this day, historiographical production regarding the Northern Patagonian region is scarce and remains an understudied topic. This represents a contrast with history writing about Chilean Southern Patagonia and Argentine Patagonia, which have received much more attention by scholars and academics. Most works written about North Patagonia, at least until the past 15 years, have stayed at a mostly documentary level, constructing the history of this region through a relatively flat exposition of dates,

²⁰ López, Susana. *Representaciones De La Patagonia: Colonos Científicos Y Políticos (1870-1914)*. La Plata: Ediciones Al Margen, 2003, p. 32

²¹ Osorio, Mauricio. "Aisén Territorio Y Aisén Humanidad. Itinerario De Una Construcción Social De La(S) Identidad(Es) Regional(Es)." In *Otras Narrativas En Patagonia: Tres Miradas Antropológicas a La Región De Aisén*. Santiago: Ñire Negro, 2007, p. 13

decrees, laws, and utilizing uncritical approaches to the political, social, and economical development of this region.²² Only in the 21st century have historians and geographers approached the history of this region through a more critical and analytical lens, which has led to a general reassessment of the historical development of this region. Chilean scholars, with an occasional Argentine author weighing in, have produced most of the history writing on this region. In this sense, scholars have approached North Patagonia in the national period through local history methods almost exclusively, only recently being related to a more general national and regional context (regional in the sense that it includes Argentina; there is no academic work that relates the history of North Patagonia to the larger continental context).

Boris Araya, in a 2017 article, provides a sketch of North Patagonian historiography, centered on the modern-day Aysén Region²³, stating that “historiographical analysis sheds lights on the inexistence of an analytical historical production whose base is the resolution of problems, which is the focus of this work, so that in large part, Aysenian bibliography responds to an historical-factual rescue attempt,

²² A good example of this is Ortega, Hernán & Brüning, Annabella. *Aysén: Panorama Histórico Y Cultural De La XI Región*. Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2004. This book contains very detailed information regarding the historical itinerary of the southern portion of North Patagonia and furthermore includes a very detailed bibliography on the topic; however, it is almost devoid of critical analysis.

²³ The modern-day *XI Región Aysén del General Carlos Ibáñez del Campo* (Aysén of General Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, 11th Region, according to the administrative division of the nation), represents the southern half of the geographical region studied in this investigation and to this day constitutes the economic and administrative center of North Patagonia. This geographical and administrative division will be touched upon in the “Geographical Introduction” section of this investigation. Aysén is often spelled Aisén in Chile, and both spellings are used interchangeably (The same happens with the capital of this region; Coyhaique and Coihaique are used interchangeably). This investigation will use the spelling “Aysén” unless citing an article or book title or reproducing a direct quote.

save for a few exceptions.”²⁴ Within the specific topic of the incorporation of North Patagonia into the Chilean nation, Adolfo Ibáñez’s 1972 article titled “La incorporación de Aisén a la vida nacional, 1902-1936” (*The Incorporation of Aysén to the National Life, 1902-1936*) is perhaps the first scholarly publication that analytically approached this topic. This article focused mostly on the legal dispositions that led to the forming of the modern-day Aysén region, the first local state institutions, and the evolution of land tenure during the first decades. This article describes 1902 in the following manner: “From that moment, life in that region began to develop.”²⁵ Although it refers almost exclusively to the legal incorporation of modern-day Aysén into the nation via laws and decrees, it nonetheless offers a first sketch into the transition of this region from a “non-place” within the national ordering, to a fully incorporated part of the nation.

The 2003 article by the Argentines Pedro Navarro and Gabriela Nacach titled “Entre indios falsificados, novias raptadas, cautivos y traficantes De aguardiente: Guillermo Cox en el norte de la Patagonia, 1862-1863.” (*Between Falsified Indians, Kidnapped Brides and Liquor traffickers: Guillermo Cox in the North of Patagonia, 1862-1863*) offers the first critical reading of a travel report to North Patagonia. In it, Navarro and Nacach analyze Guillermo Cox’s 1863 travel report²⁶ in terms of its literary and representational qualities, but also as a document produced by a Chilean traveler

²⁴ Araya. “Los Orígenes De La Construcción Discursiva Del Territorio De Aisén Por Parte Del Estado De Chile (1818-1929)”, p. 52

²⁵ Ibáñez Santa María. “La Incorporación De Aisén a La Vida Nacional, 1902-1936.”, p. 367

²⁶ All the explorers and expeditions mentioned in this paragraph will receive a fuller introduction in the first chapter of this investigation.

within the context of an expanding state. Carlos Sanhueza, who studies German scholars in Chile and Chilean scholars in Germany in the 19th century, wrote on the linkage between explorer Hans Steffen's studies and reports and the expansion of the Chilean state into North Patagonia in a 2012 article titled "Un saber geográfico en acción. Hans Steffen y el litigio patagónico 1892-1902" (*Geographic Knowledge in Action. Hans Steffen and the Patagonian Litigation, 1892-1902*). More recently, in 2016, Rodrigo Booth and Catalina Valdés published an article titled "De la naturaleza al paisaje: los viajes de Francisco Vidal Gormaz en la colonización visual del sur de Chile en el siglo XIX" (*From Nature to Landscape: The Voyages of Francisco Vidal Gormaz in the Visual Colonization of the South of Chile in the 19th Century*), which deals with the aesthetic representations of landscapes that the reports of explorer Francisco Vidal Gormaz describe, in relation to the project of national expansion. These recent articles offer critical readings of travel reports to Northern Patagonia and are important in reevaluating the position of these explorers, long regarded as mere geographers or hydrographers, and instead insert them within questions about their role in the service of an expanding nation and their use of scientific knowledge as a tool that could be put to use by the state and its institutions.

In 2010, Andrés Núñez and other collaborators published an article titled "Territorialización del aislamiento geográfico: criterio ambiental para una nueva representación territorial en la Región de Aysén" (*Territorialization of Geographic Isolation: Environmental Criteria for a New Territorial Representation in the Aysén*

Region). Since then, this historian-geographer and his collaborators have gone on to publish more than eight articles, and have collaborated on various edited collections, on the role of “geographic imaginaries” in what is the modern-day Aysén region. The culmination of Nuñez’s - and his frequent collaborators such as Enrique Aliste, and Álvaro Bello - work on this topic is a 2017 edited compilation of essays titled “Imaginarios geográficos, prácticas y discursos de frontera: Aysén-Patagonia desde el texto de la nación” (*Geographic Imaginaries, Practices, and Frontier Discourses: Aysén-Patagonia from the Text of the Nation*). Nuñez and his coauthors often use many of the same primary sources that I do and similarly trace the incorporation of North Patagonia into the national territorial ordering. However, their work has a markedly geographic orientation and their approach on Northern Patagonia in the 19th century is centered on the description of how a “geographic imaginary” was created from the center of the nation in order to narrate the modern-day Aysén region as a frontier or “empty” zone, ripe for the purposes of the nation at the time.

Alvaro Bello’s essay in the *Imaginarios geográficos, prácticas y discursos de frontera* collection titled “Exploración, conocimiento geográfico y nación: La ‘creación de la Patagonia Occidental y Aysén a fines del siglo XIX” (*Exploration, Geographic Knowledge and Nation: The ‘Creation’ of Western Patagonia and Aysén at the End of the 19th Century*) deals with a similar time period and geographic extension as this investigation. The difference, however, lies in the broader archival work conducted for the purposes of this investigation and its focus on a broader time period. One of Bello’s

most important objectives is to investigate how “the discourse of geographic exploration imagines ‘empty’ spaces and wild territories” where the nation can subsequently fill in the voids imagined by explorers.²⁷ This investigation does not argue that North Patagonia was exclusively constructed as an empty space. Although this is a discourse that often appears in explorer reports at the time, one thread that runs throughout this whole investigation is the representation of North Patagonia as a place that was imagined to have a marked “Chilean” element, was visited and known by small pockets of people, and already contained embryonic economic operations that the state hoped to rein in. Thus, I argue that the catalog of explorations to North Patagonia is not just a catalog of “emptiness,” but also a catalog of what already existed there, and how this was imagined so that it could service the nation. Additionally, this study seeks to reveal the linkages between individual explorers, the institutions of the state, currents of science in the nation, and the few peoples that roamed around North Patagonia at the time, in a way that is not entirely possible by a geographically-centered study. The works of Núñez and Bello, among other collaborators who engage in a particularly thorough geographic theorization about North Patagonia, are extremely useful in order to flesh out ideas relating to explorers and the project of national territorial expansion. However, a more historically-oriented approach is necessary in order to understand the development, mechanisms, particularities, and limits of this phenomenon.

²⁷ Bello, Álvaro. “Exploración, conocimiento geográfico y nación: La ‘creación’ de la Patagonia Occidental y Aysén a fines del siglo XIX.” in Núñez, Andrés; Aliste, Enrique; Bello, Álvaro; Osorio, Mauricio, ed. *Imaginarios Geográficos, Prácticos Y Discursos De Frontera: Aisén-Patagonia Desde El Texto De La Nación*. Santiago: Impresión Gráfica LOM, 2017, p. 63

Boris Araya similarly studied the incorporation of Northern Patagonia into the Chilean nation in his 2017 article titled “Los orígenes de la construcción discursiva del territorio de Aysén por parte del Estado de Chile (1818-1929)” (*The Origins of the Discursive Construction of the Aysén Territory by the State of Chile (1818-1929)*). This is an extremely useful and thorough article that similarly includes, as stated beforehand, a historiographical assessment on the topic of state penetration in the modern-day Aysén region, and develops interesting concepts regarding explorations and the expansion of the state into Northern Patagonia in the 20th century. The main difference between this article’s argument, and that of this thesis, is that the latter, apart from detailing the sorts of representations and discourses that the catalog of explorations to this regions presents, also shows the limits of said representations and discourses. Thus, if Araya describes a “conception about the (use)lessness of Aysén,” based once again on notions of an empty or deserted territory, this investigation instead portrays the clash of such descriptions carried out by explorers in the face of the itinerant populations that were present in many parts of the region, the dependence of these explorers on local guides, and the desire to incorporate already existing economic operations into the reach of the state.²⁸

Theoretical Framework

A point of departure for this investigation is Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, and his study on the process of nation-building. While the passing of time

²⁸ Araya. "Los Orígenes De La Construcción Discursiva Del Territorio De Aysén Por Parte Del Estado De Chile (1818-1929)", p. 49

has allowed for a fair amount of criticisms to Anderson's model, it is nonetheless crucial in establishing ways to think about travelers, explorers, and science, within the context of nation-building. As stated beforehand, the catalog of explorations that this thesis analyzes can be seen as a sort of "classificatory grid" that was able to define what was part of the nation, what was not, and moreover, was an instrument of control that the state could effectively use. While Anderson uses the figure of the census, map, and museum; it is possible to extend this to the travel report, the scientific article, the table of measurements, the section regarding the grammar of indigenous languages, etc... Thus, these "institutions", as Anderson names them, "profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial [in this case a national, yet barely post-colonial] state imagined its dominion – the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry."²⁹

Thai historian Thongchai Winichakul follows the tradition of Anderson in order to investigate the 'history of *identification* of nationhood' in Thailand.³⁰ Winichakul proposes to study the creation of what he names the "geo-body" of the nation; that is, "the operations of the technology of territoriality which created nationhood spatially. It emphasizes the displacement of spatial knowledge which has in effect produced social institutions and practices that created nationhood."³¹ Going off of the definition of "territoriality" offered by Robert Sack that was described in the previous pages,

²⁹ Anderson. *Imagined Communities*, pp. 163-164

³⁰ Winichakul, Thongchai. *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, p. 16. Italicized text is the author's original here and throughout the rest of this investigation.

³¹ Ibid.

Winichakul's "geo-body" not only talks about space or territory as part of a nation, it is in effect "a man-made territorial definition which creates effects – by classifying, communicating, and enforcement – on people, things, and relationships."³² Thus, while including North Patagonia within a map of Chile, or describing it as a part of the Chilean territory, was a way of inserting the nation in this region, so was the recording of people from Chiloé (citizens of Chile, in effect) and their cultural and economic practices there, as was the comparing of certain geographic features in North Patagonia to places in the center of the country, among other examples. Andrés Núñez's studies, for example, have focused on the conscious production and representation of North Patagonia as a region that could be put to the service of the nation by creating specific discourses about it. While this is true, at the same time, the act of recording flora and fauna in North Patagonia that is found elsewhere in Chile, the positive comparison of the few Chilean colonists living in the eastern frontier zone with settlers living in the Argentine side, and the fact that these explorers were under the service of Chilean institutions every time they carried out a sounding of the waters or a measurement of their position, by themselves constitute acts that inserted the nation within this region and existed before the process of consciously and ideologically creating a specific discourse that could be relayed to statesmen in the capital.

This is not to say that explorer reports, and the writings created in the capital that commented on them, necessarily led to new and groundbreaking material developments

³² Winichakul. *Siam Mapped*:, p. 17

in this region. In fact, the state would have immense difficulties in penetrating and establishing its institutions into North Patagonia well into the first four decades of the 20th century. In this sense, Susana López's study "Representaciones de la Patagonia: Colonos, científicos y políticos" (*Representations of Patagonia: Colonists, Scientists and Politicians (1870-1914)*), which studies how politicians, explorers, and scientists of the Argentine state were involved in the process of the incorporation and domination of Patagonia into that country's national territory, is a fundamental anchor for the present investigation. López introduces the subjects of her study stating that

It must be highlighted that they speak from the State, they are close to political power: militaries, civil servants, scientists, naturalists, or explorers. There is not a clear differentiation of functions. They had an ideological hegemonic role in their proposals for the ordering of the nation and in the way that their representatives controlled the mechanisms that produced knowledge. Thus, we see them found and participate in the National Education Council [this is valid only for Argentina; in the case of Chile, the National Hydrographic Office can be postulated as an equivalent, for example], in the universities, museums, scientific societies, etc. Their ideas had great success in divulging and they supported the legality of oligarchic domination in *scientific* terms.³³

One of the objectives of this thesis is to unravel the threads that connected said explorers to the institutions of the nation and knowledge. They did not represent the territory in a certain way independently and autonomously; they were commissioned by certain institutions to carry this out, published their works in academic journals in Santiago, and were in correspondence with important figures of national life.

³³ López. *Representaciones De La Patagonia: Colonos Científicos Y Políticos (1870-1914)*, p. 33

At the same time, López frames her study in the context of pushing back at official and “heroic” narratives “that allowed to mask exclusions and violence”, adding that “the sacralization of determined past events and of determined life trajectories makes their questioning hard. Official history elaborates legitimizing accounts of those who dominate the present and tries to silence the histories of those that have been dispossessed.”³⁴ True, this investigation is centered on a corpus of reports and writing produced mostly by white males who were associated to, and worked in conjunction with, hegemonic state institutions. However, this investigation has taken care to not elevate the work of a single explorer as “foundational,” has avoided naming any one individual as the “father” of the modern idea of North Patagonia, and does not engage with the concept of a “saga” or “heroic story” of the penetration of modernity and the state in this region. Similarly, and as will be discussed later on, there is an issue of sources at hand seeing as the few pockets of population that had any on-terrain contact with North Patagonia during this period seemed to have left no written records. Thus, this investigation scoured the available archival material in order to make visible the role of marginal peoples and their cultures within the history of North Patagonia as precursors to the contemporary conception of this region.

³⁴ López. *Representaciones De La Patagonia: Colonos Científicos Y Políticos (1870-1914)*, p. 168. Argentine historiography has a much more developed “national myth” regarding the incorporation of Patagonia to the national ordering that is usually centered on the figure of the statesman and explorer Francisco Pacasio Moreno. Consider, for example, the title of Roberto Hosne’s 2011 book “Perito Francisco Moreno: El que pensó la Patagonia” (*Expert Francisco Moreno: He who thought up Patagonia*).

Although my archival research did not find episodes of extreme violence during this time and place that were silenced by official narratives, classic historiography on North Patagonia has indeed silenced certain groups and ways of life that were present throughout the mid-19th century and has introduced a sort of frontier myth about this region that begins in the 20th century. The classic account goes as follows: In 1902, the border between Chile and Argentina became fixed and from that moment on, the Chilean state began giving enormous land grants to private persons and enterprises, often times focused on cattle and sheep ranching, that were thought to be the key to introducing people and rational modes of economic and capitalist exploitation in this region. At the same time, aware of the resolution of the border conflict, Chilean colonists living in Argentina began to spontaneously pour over the border and settle on fiscal lands in North Patagonia. What ensued was a struggle over land tenure between large capitalist enterprises, who often failed to meet the stipulations of their contracts with the government, and isolated pockets of pioneers who stood their ground and tried to defend their way of life in a lawless environment. Thus, North Patagonia is born in the early 20th century with a distinctively “pioneer” mentality and outlook. To this day, there is abundant literature on the “pioneers” of Patagonia which focuses on the social processes that developed in this region starting in 1902.³⁵

³⁵ Take Mateo Martinic’s account of the installation of the Industrial Society of Aysén (SIA in its Spanish acronym) in this region during the early 20th century: “He [Mauricio Braun, an early investor in these lands] knew, furthermore, that he had to choose [his collaborators well] given the colossal task that he had to carry out in a savage and virgin natural medium, of rough climate, and in initial conditions marked by a severe isolation, which was to difficult operations, especially in situations of scarcity or emergencies. Tough-bodied people with a firm spirit, who knew how to fend for themselves in all situations, were

In light of this, Patricia Limerick's work and the "New Western History" she is credited with inaugurating, which was iconoclastic within the context of the United State's western territories, presents a useful way to think of the processes that North Patagonia underwent throughout the mid-19th century. Her shift from focusing on the "process" of frontier, as described by Frederick Jackson Turner, to that of studying a "place" undergoing a reality of conquest has allowed to see the introduction of the U.S. state in its western territories, not as a teleology of "freedom", "individualism" and "manifest destiny", but rather as a legacy of conquest, which is the extremely apt title for her 1987 book. She writes, "Deemphasize the frontier and its supposed end, conceive of the West as a place and not a process, and Western American [in this case Northern Patagonian] history has a new look," where processes of cultural encounter are seen, where cultural and ethnic groups meet, trade, clash, and perish, and where there is an active process of a "contest of cultural dominance."³⁶ Limerick offers four important concepts that summarize her approach in the so-called "New Western History" that are perfectly applicable to Northern Patagonia during this period. She states that the United States West offers a history of continuity (as opposed to a "closing" of the frontier argued

needed. In a few words, authentic pioneers." (Martinic, Mateo. *De La Trapanada Al Aysén: Una Mirada Reflexiva Sobre El Acontecer De La Región Del Aysén Desde La Prehistoria Hasta Nuestros Días*. Santiago: Ediciones Fundación Río Baker, 2014, p. 244). This is not intended to discredit the work of Martinic, the single most prolific writer about the Chilean Patagonian regions, nor to argue that the first colonists, both those who were hired and brought to this region by the companies that received land grants and those who arrived spontaneously, did not suffer extreme hardships and lived comfortable lives, all the contrary. However, it represents the focus that Chilean history writing has given to early 20th century settlers in this region and the sort of silencing it imposed regarding the social realities of the mid-19th century in this region.

³⁶ Limerick, Patricia. *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987, pp. 26-27

by Turner), sheds light on the convergence of different ethnic groups, makes visible a history and legacy of conquest, and at all times points towards the complexity of social and political relations in this time and place.³⁷ Although this investigation does not pretend to draw parallels between the United States' conquest of its western territories, and the initial penetration of the Chilean state in North Patagonia, Limerick's theoretical framework, especially her refocusing on "place" rather than "process," serve as important anchors to this investigation.

With respects to travel literature and exploration reports, Mary Louise Pratt's creative readings of these documents and the parallels she draws between those who produced them, and the institutions of colonial and imperial domination, are undoubtedly crucial for this investigation. Although the scope and sharpness of her analyses of wildly differing travel accounts is hard to summarize in a few words, she argues that travel narratives

gave European reading publics a sense of ownership, entitlement, and familiarity with respect to the distant parts of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in, and colonized [...] They were [...] one of the key instruments that made people 'at home' in Europe feel part of a planetary project; a key instrument, in other words, in creating the 'domestic subject' of empire.³⁸

European can be substituted for Chilean, and planetary can be scaled down to national and much the same applies. She additionally describes how "empires create in the imperial center of power an obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and

³⁷ Limerick. *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000, pp. 18-21

³⁸ Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 3

its others continually to itself. It becomes dependent on its others to know itself. Travel writing, among other institutions, is heavily organized in the service of that need.”³⁹ Ernesto Livon-Grosman similarly offers creative readings about travel and exploration reports to Patagonia during the between the 16th and 19th centuries. In his study, the genre of the travel report “contains, since its first manifestations, a double myth, that of the region as a primitive territory and no-man’s land, and that of the territory as an integral part of the nation.”⁴⁰ Similarly, Livon-Grosman describes the intersections between travel reports and political and institutional power by stating, “Many of these texts are written for the state, be it a military report or a topographic surveying for the establishment of a center for agricultural production. Travel literature oscillates between the personal narrative and institutional obligations.”⁴¹

The works of many other historians and geographers are inevitably echoed in more specific parts of this investigation in regards to thinking of North Patagonia as a space. Walter Mignolo’s study on the colonial invention of an idea of Latin America is useful in order to understand the way that colonial and imperial power can be projected on the geographic concept of a region, and how this phenomenon can be used to justify a European-centered project of modernity. Andrés Núñez, and his group of regular collaborators, apply Mignolo’s concepts to the North Patagonian context in order to argue about the historicity of this region’s standing as a marginal area within the Chilean

³⁹ Pratt. *Imperial Eyes*, p. 4

⁴⁰ Livon-Grosman. *Geografías Imaginarias: El Relato De Viaje Y La Construcción Del Espacio Patagónico*. Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2003, p. 10

⁴¹ Idem, p. 23

nation. Simon Schama's *Landscape and Memory* provided a fantastic and creative example about how to read into descriptions of landscapes and sceneries in order to excavate historical processes, ideas about the formation of memory, and the inscribing of myths into geographic areas. Schama's argument precisely blossoms within his flowery and vibrant writing, and fleshing out his theoretical framework is no easy task; however, he does tell the reader that

Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock. [...] But it should also be acknowledged that once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents; of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery.⁴²

This investigation intends to unpack the modern, post-1902, myth of the North Patagonian region, its landscapes, geography, and hydrography, and travel to a time when a different sort of landscape was described, one that inserted this region within the national ordering for the first time.

In terms of thinking about the production of knowledge about North Patagonia, the role of science, and its relationships and tensions with the projects of nation and modernity, there are some works that were auxiliary to the theoretical framework of this thesis. Gyan Prakash and his *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* gives important clues to think about the role of science and scientific discourse within a colonizing and imperial mission. Few parallels can be drawn between the colonial process that India underwent and the incorporation of North Patagonia into the

⁴² Schama, Simon. *Landscape and Memory*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995, p. 61

Chilean nation, however, his concept of a “colonial [...] reinscription under the authority of science” mirrors what explorer reports studied in this investigation show.⁴³ As will be seen, North Patagonia was a region that was extensively traversed by locals who did not codify their knowledge in writing, depended on oral tradition, and represented premodern modes of thought. Thus, more than “discovering”, explorers were often times reinscribing local knowledge under the sign of science and for the purposes of the nation.

Enriqueta Morillas writes amply and has directed research efforts relating to the analysis of travel literature to Argentine Patagonia. She explains her approach to travel reports in the following manner:

The texts [traveler reports] are elaborated by the continuous contraposition between a search for objectivity and the inevitable subjectivity, the history, and the fiction. Patagonian travelers do not hide their concrete interests nor their ideology, giving an account of the arduous efforts, of the difficulties of the enterprise, and in relating and describing the region, they contributed to outline the cultural identity of these lands that they integrate in the series [of reports]. Detailed observation, memory, and subjectivity interweave within each other in order to provide the physiognomy of the region, in an ample corpus in which constant nuclei can be found.⁴⁴

Morillas directed a compilation of essays regarding this subject titled “Viajeros patagónicos del siglo XIX” (*Patagonian Travelers of the 19th Century*), which contains many interesting ways to theorize and think about Patagonian exploration literature. One of the collaborators in this compilation, Rodrigo Guzmán Conejeros, specifically

⁴³ Prakash. *Another Reason*, p. 7

⁴⁴ Morillas Ventura, Enriqueta. "Textos Inaugurales: Los Relatos De Los Viajeros Patagónicos." *Anclajes* 11-12, no. 11-12 (Nov. 2008): p. 160

addresses the role of science in the conquest, discursive and physical, of Argentine Patagonia. Describing the nexus between these two elements, he declares,

We can state that the discursive construction of Patagonia is also an act of conquest of the territory in that science was the discourse that most appropriately could carry out this legitimizing function, given that scientific ideology, which guided public policies in this historical period, gave it a prevailing role as a discourse that produced truths. Because of this, the analysis of this work [that of scientists who were involved in the military conquest of Eastern Patagonia] gives us the possibility of observing the particularities of the relationship between science and politics that were struck up in the last decades of the 19th century, in that the scientists that produced this corpus [of writing] are recognized as agents of the National State and they assume scientific tasks as a patriotic labor that collaborates with national progress.⁴⁵

This corpus of theorization about science and travel literature in both a Patagonian, and a wider continental and world context, is thus essential in order to flesh out the connections between the catalog of explorations to North Patagonia and questions about the nation, the state, and the power of its institutions.

Sources & Methodology

This investigation looked at the published reports of 21 exploration voyages to North Patagonia between 1856 and 1902 carried out by either Chilean explorers, or foreign explorers specifically hired by the Chilean government. At the same time, this investigation analyzed a multitude of books, scientific articles, works of geography, reports to government authorities, speeches in parliament, government decrees, encyclopedias, traveler reports, and other documents, official or not, written in Santiago

⁴⁵ Guzmán, Rodrigo. "Los viajeros científicos de la Campaña del Desierto: apuntes acerca de la construcción discursiva de la Patagonia." In Morillas Ventura, Enriqueta, ed. *Viajeros Patagónicos Del Siglo Xix*. Córdoba: Alción Editora, 2009, p. 144

and that comment, in one form or another, on North Patagonia during the period studied. This thesis offers a thorough and creative reading of these distinct sources in order to flesh out ideas about how these documents relate to a project of national expansion at the time. Many different themes and ideas that appeared in such a reading include, but are not limited to, the role of science at the time and its relationship to a project of national expansion, the way that the state gathered knowledge about North Patagonia and how it used this information to implant its institutions in this region, and how this corpus of writing in a way “incorporated” North Patagonia into the general idea of the Chilean nation.

This investigation is ordered according to five thematic axes that appear throughout the corpus of writings analyzed: explorers, the people of North Patagonia, the waters of this region, the land, and the flora and fauna. This thematic organization does not preclude the appearance of chronological themes and temporal processes. In fact, certain events, such as the 1881 border treaty and the limits conflict that subsequently ensued, appear as turning points in the region’s scientific exploration. A thematic approach was chosen for a couple of reasons. First, this investigation only spans a period of five decades where North Patagonia was extensively surveyed, commented on, and discussed. However, this corpus of explorations did not necessarily bring about great material changes. The history of North Patagonia well into the 20th century is that of an extremely slow penetration and expansion of the state and the painfully sluggish development of social and economic life there. A chronological approach would have

forcibly applied a change-over-time element that is not always immediately visible during this period. Second, a thematic ordering creatively mirrors the types of writing and classification that explorers themselves carried out. Through this approach, the reader can further get a sense of how many of these explorers touched upon the same themes in similar, or dissimilar, temporal contexts. Finally, a thematic approach shows how the corpus of explorer's reports and writings in the capital about them function in a collective fashion. As individual pieces, they served to further the knowledge about a specific body of water, river, or land. However, taken as a whole, they evidence how, from being a non-place in the territorial ordering of Chile, North Patagonia became incorporated into the general idea of the Chilean nation.

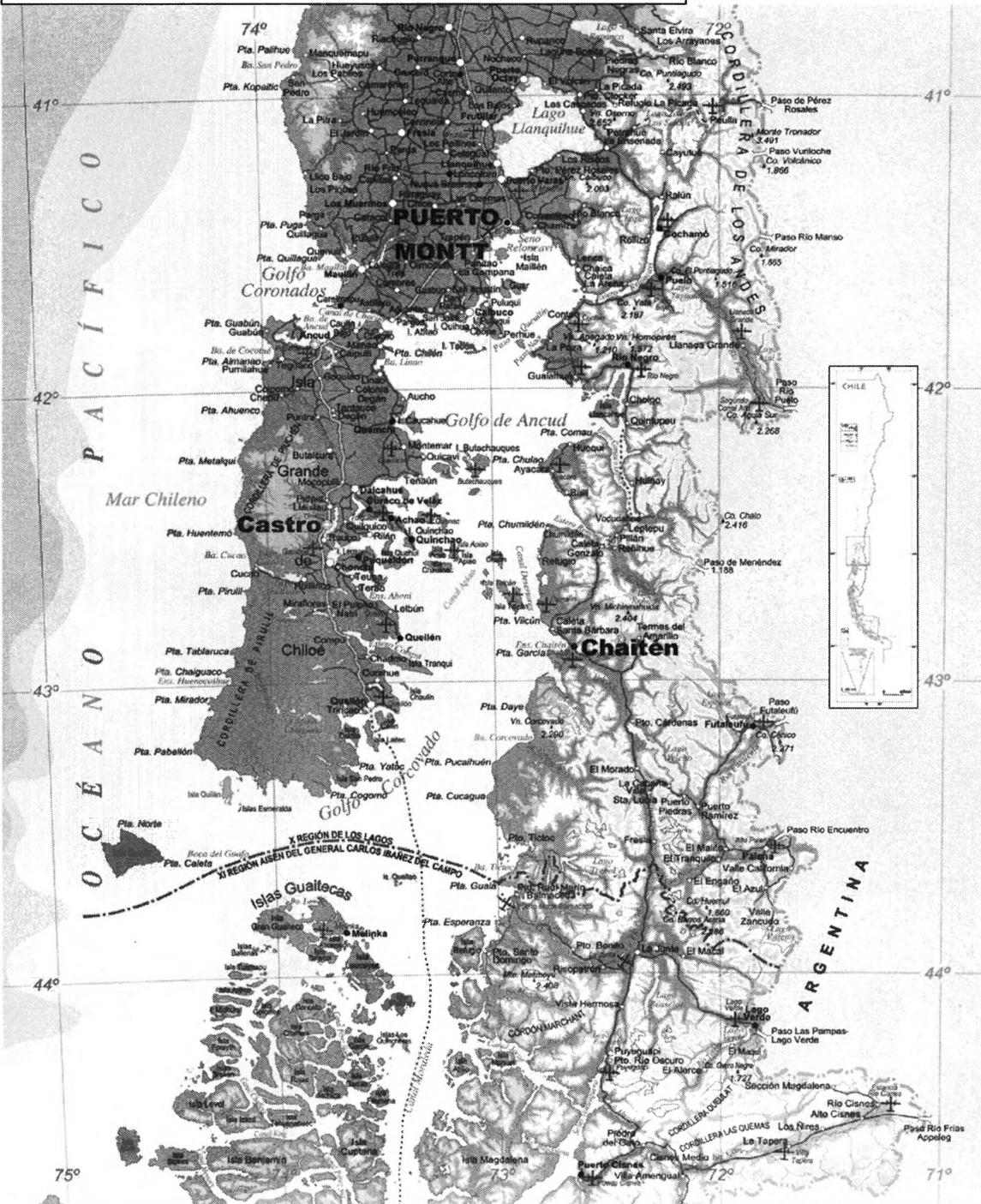
The thematic ordering of this investigation is not intended to confuse the reader and precautions have been taken in order to facilitate the digestion of this thesis. A geographic introduction is included in order to familiarize the reader with the lay of the land (and water) and its particularities, which are essential for both the historical development of this region and the argument of this investigation. Similarly, since this investigation goes back and forth between years, the date of each specific exploration referenced is included in between parenthesis if it has not already been specified in the text. Simon Schama's *Landscape and Memory* became an obligatory reference in regards to effectively organizing this investigation in a thematic manner. A 1995 review of this book by the late James W. Scott described the thematic ordering of this book, and how it allowed for historical and cultural arguments to bloom, stating "For the reader, this leads

to a deeply satisfying understanding of the forces that have played a part in the creation of the past and present landscapes.”⁴⁶ If this investigation can transmit its argument with a fraction of the clarity, brilliance, and aesthetic pleasure as Schama’s book, then it can be said to be successful.

All the primary sources analyzed in this investigation, and a good amount of the secondary literature, is in Spanish and was translated exclusively by the author. I have translated these texts in hopes of reaching a midway point that transmits their message clearly, while at the same time retaining the syntax and “feel” of 19th-century Chilean writing. All italicizing and bolding are the document’s original. The only exceptions to this are when the original text contains words that are highly time or site specific and furthermore serve to illustrate a point. In that case, an annotation in brackets is included and a further explanation is given in the footnotes. The extensive use of footnotes is similarly not intended to confuse readers, but to provide them with further evidence of a statement, to clarify certain concepts, and to provide additional information that will aid in a general study of the North Patagonian region during the mid-19th century.

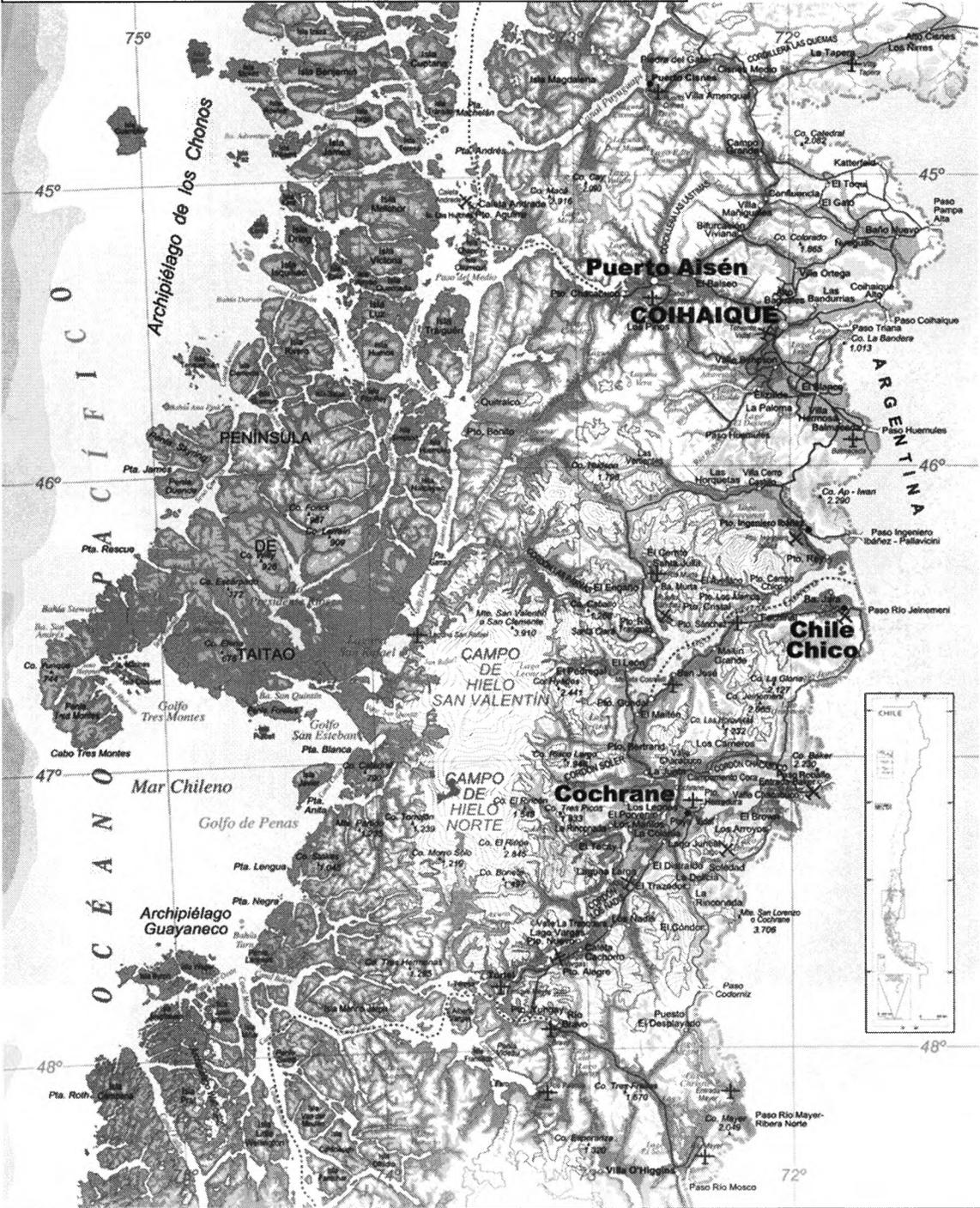
⁴⁶ Scott, James. "Reviewed Work(S): Landscape and Memory by Simon Schama." *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers* 57 (1995): p. 182

Fig. 1 - Map of Chile between the 41st and 44th Latitudes



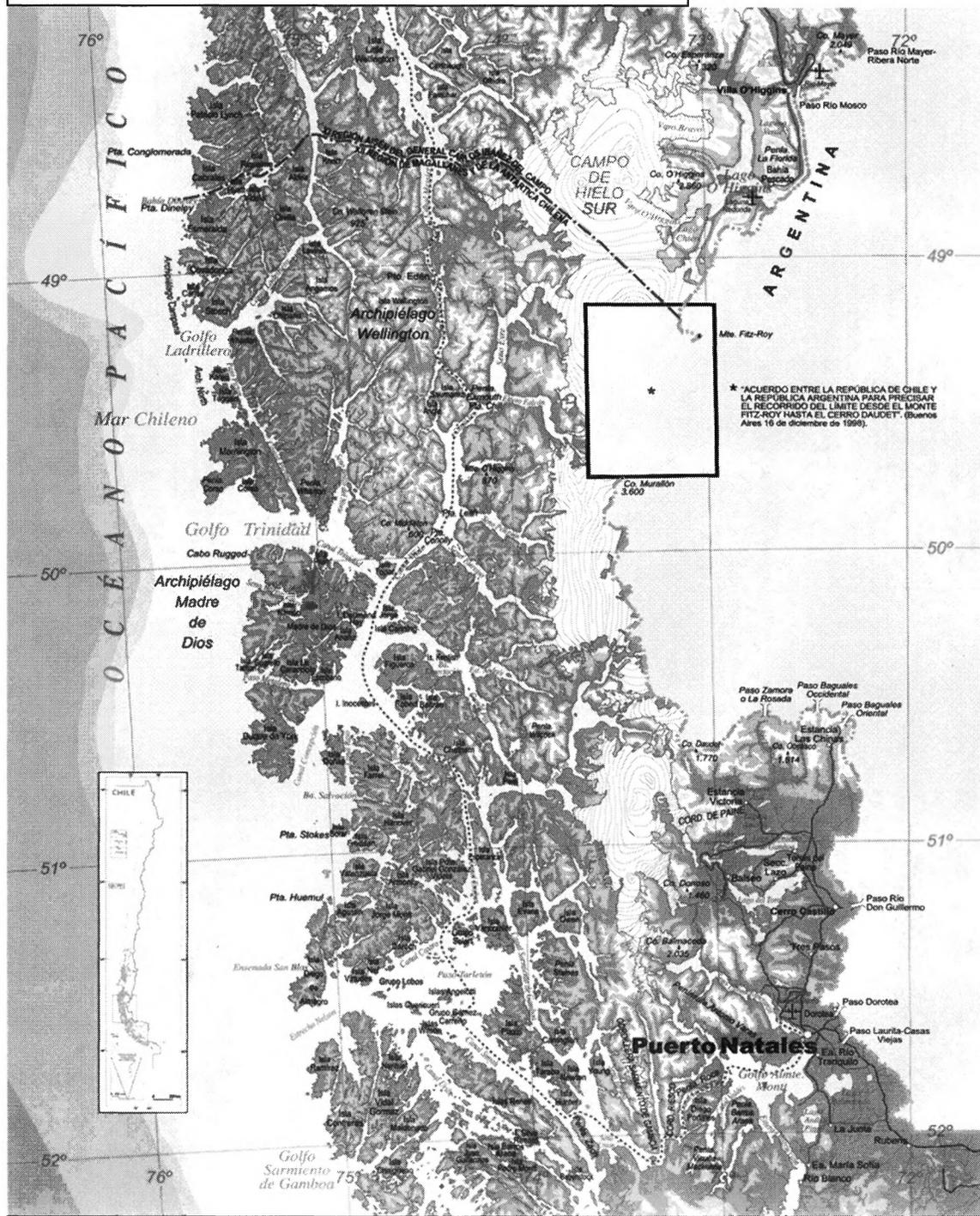
Source: http://ww2.educarchile.cl/UserFiles/P0001/Image/CR_Imagen/Mapas%20IGM/mapas_chile_fisico/41-44_grados.gif

Fig. 2 - Map of Chile between the 45th and 48th Latitudes



Source: http://ww2.educarchile.cl/UserFiles/P0001/Image/CR_Imagen/Mapas%20IGM/mapas_chile_fisico/45-48_grados.gif

Fig. 3 - Map of Chile between the 49th and 52nd Latitudes



Source: http://ww2.educarchile.cl/UserFiles/P0001/Image/CR_Imagen/Mapas%20IGM/mapas_chile_fisico/45-48_grados.gif

Geographic Introduction

Despite the immense variety of climates and geographic features it harbors, Chile maintains a remarkably consistent topography between the 32nd and 41st latitudes. Throughout most of this extension, encompassing more than 1,000kms, the Andes lay to the east; there exists a fertile central valley in the middle; a coastal range to the west of this intermediate depression; and on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, a coastal plain. Here, and everywhere else in the Chilean territory, the Pacific Ocean acts as the western border. Similarly, and as throughout most of the country, the Andes mountains act as the eastern border with Argentina. Although humanity's incessant and persistent movement throughout history has proven that even the most obvious "natural borders" are permeable and nothing but a socio-political construct, the Andes mountains throughout these latitudes have provided an incredibly stable political boundary between Chile and Argentina throughout a greater part of the past 500 years.⁴⁷

South of the 41st latitude, the Chilean territory suffers an intense dismemberment, which stands as evidence of dramatic periods of glaciation in past millennia. Here is

⁴⁷ During the colonial period, the Captaincy General of Chile had the *Corregimiento* of Cuyo (roughly corresponding to the modern day province of Mendoza, Argentina) under its jurisdiction. This is one of the few cases, excluding the Patagonian region, of effective Chilean territorial jurisdiction extending east of the Andes.

The word "political" boundary is carefully used in this sentence because the Andes Mountains are not an impermeable social or cultural border between the colonial and subsequently national polities that Chile and Argentina represent. The Andes represented a zone of cultural contact and exchange between indigenous tribes before and after Spanish arrival. During the independence period, the Andes were a zone of contact and passage for guerrilla bands. Nowadays, they continue to be a connection, rather than a barrier, for Chilean cattle ranchers (*arrieros*) who, to this day, drive their herds to grasslands east of the Andes in the summer and return to Chile for shelter in the winter in a now government-sanctioned and inspected activity.

where the region known as Patagonia begins. Immediately south of the city of Puerto Montt, the central valley sinks into the ocean creating the Reloncaví Sound and the Gulf of Ancud. The Coastal Range also sinks beneath the ocean, rising briefly in the western end of the island of Chiloé, sinking again into the sea, and reappearing to the south as the Chonos and Guaitecas archipelagos. These two archipelagos are formed by thousands of islands and islets that appear as low, rocky outcrops, often times covered by an exuberant forest cover. These isles are separated from one another by a multitude of channels and fjords that extend in both a North-South and East-West direction. Owing to the sinking of the intermediate depression, only a thin and mountainous strip of land, between 100 to 150kms in extension, is left connected to what can be called the “mainland”.

At a glance, this strip of mainland that is connected to the continent appears to be an extension of the Andes Mountains towards the south. However, a more complete inspection of the geography of this region reveals that the Patagonian Andes are notably different from their counterpart north of the 41st parallel. Owing to the effect of immense glaciers and ice fields that covered these lands thousands of years ago, this region is sculpted in a dramatically different fashion. First of all, the Patagonian Andes are remarkably lower than their Northern counterpart; they rarely elevate beyond 2,600 meters above sea level. In second place, and most importantly for this investigation, the Patagonian Andes between the 41st and 47th latitude do not constitute a single and continuous mountain chain. Instead, they are transversally and longitudinally crossed by a multitude of lakes, rivers, and their respective valleys. Unlike in the Andes north of the

41st parallel, these rivers and valleys actually cross the mountain range and thus provide relatively easy passes (if the temperate rainforest is cleared) to the flat grasslands (also known as *pampas*) that extend towards the east into Argentina. In third place, unlike the rest of the Chilean mainland, there is hardly a coastal plain in this region. Instead, the mountain range appears to shoot up out of the ocean giving this entire region an extremely rugged topography.

This particular topographic configuration extends roughly until the 47th parallel. Around this area, two massive ice fields, the largest in the world outside of the Polar Regions, dismember the territory even further. The Northern Patagonian Ice Field, the smaller of the two, occupies an area of roughly 4,200 km² and creates a nearly impassable boundary that separates the valleys south of Lake General Carrera⁴⁸ and west of Lake Cochrane⁴⁹, from the inhospitable lands around the Ofqui Isthmus and the Tres Montes Peninsula. The impressive Southern Patagonian Ice Field, that occupies around 12,000 km², acts as a veritable break within Chilean territory that has proven insurmountable to terrestrial communications up to this day. To the west of the Southern Patagonian Ice Field lays a puzzle of inhospitable islands and a multitude of channels and to its east, Argentine territory. Even today, a person wanting to drive from Santiago to Punta Arenas, located in the Strait of Magellan, must necessarily pass through Argentine territory because of the Southern Patagonian Ice Field; the only other alternative being

⁴⁸ Also called Lake Buenos Aires on the Argentine side of the border. The double-naming of geographic features on either side of the Chile-Argentina border is characteristic of this region and is examined in Chapter 4, footnote 378.

⁴⁹ Called Lake Pueyrredón in the Argentine side of the border.

taking a ferry. The Chilean lands to the south of the Southern Patagonian Ice Field, that is Tierra del Fuego Island, the eastern plains in that region, and the Fuegian Channels, have a different geography, topography, climate, indigenous peoples, social relations, economic structure, and historical itinerary, than the Patagonian lands to the north of the Southern Patagonian Ice Field. Thus, the regions to the south of the 49th parallel do not form part of this study.

The Chilean islands (excluding the Chiloé Archipelago) and continental lands between the 41st and 49th parallels form the setting to this historical investigation. Despite the fact the North Patagonian region constitutes a distinct geographic area, “from many points of view - particularly the orographic, climactic, geographical-botanical, and cultural,” this region escapes easy and simple characterizations.⁵⁰ As stated beforehand, Chilean North Patagonia differs in many ways from Southern Patagonia. The difference between the Chilean North Patagonia and the entirety of Argentine Patagonia, to the east, is even greater. Owing to the rain shadow that the mountains of North Patagonia cast, the eastern section is comprised of mostly “extensive and monotonous plateau-like surfaces,” whilst “in the part that corresponds to Chile, we find the most varied orographic forms.”⁵¹ Some of the defining geographic characteristics of North Patagonia as a whole are: 1) a constant influence of the ocean, whether it be by the “extraordinary dismemberment” that the archipelago region presents, the penetration of the sea in the form of channels and

⁵⁰ Steffen, Hans. *Patagonia Occidental: Las Cordilleras Patagónicas Y Sus Regiones Circundantes*. Vol. 1, Santiago: Ediciones de la Universidad de Chile, 1913, p. 3

⁵¹ Idem, p. 23

fjords well into the continental lands, or the extremely high precipitation which allows for an incredibly thick temperate forest cover to take over;⁵² 2) the “mountainous nature” of this region in the sense that it is crisscrossed, both laterally and longitudinally, by smaller “mountainous blocks” that, as a whole roughly resemble a unified mountain chain but that never become the wall that the Andes to the north provide;⁵³ 3) the lack of large extensions of flat lands except in the eastern foothills of the Patagonian Mountains; 4) the presence of numerous glaciers in the entire region that, apart from being aesthetically notable, have had an incredibly important role in the geologic formation of this region, creating the fjords that cross the archipelago region and the valleys that cut through the mountains; and 5) the “peculiar ordering” of the rivers of this region that cross the mountain chain in many areas and open valleys through them, and whose watersheds can be very irregular in the sense that they are not contained by the mountainous block and often times, the watershed divide between the Pacific and Atlantic ocean is actually found to the east of the Patagonian mountain chain.⁵⁴

The North Patagonian region can be roughly cataloged into three major longitudinal zones. Based off of a three-division scheme postulated by geographer Hans Steffen, but adapted to the historical and social conditions of the region at the time, there

⁵² Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, pp. 21-22

⁵³ “Although in certain stretches, signs for the formation of a regular chain can be observed [...], we cannot always discover with certainty, even in those aforementioned stretches, a *chain* that by its altitude, by its regular course in a north-south direction, by its perennial snows, and as a source of important fluvial channels, can correspond to said scheme.” (Idem, pp. 23-24). From this section and onwards, whenever the concepts Patagonian Mountain Range, Mountain Range, Patagonian Mountains, and all other permutations of these words, are used, they refer to the very general mountainous block that separates the Pacific coasts of North Patagonia and the eastern flatlands of the Argentine Patagonia.

⁵⁴ Idem, p. 34

can be said to exist a region of Archipelagos/Channels, a Coastal/Mountainous strip, and a Transition/Sub-Andean valleys zone.⁵⁵ The archipelago region is comprised of the Chonos and Guaitecas archipelagos and it briefly connects with the continent in the Isthmus of Ofqui, a low-lying and marshy strip of land whose forest cover and soils have been destroyed by the constant actions of glaciers throughout the past millennia. These islands appear as rocky and windswept outcrops that jet out of the sea; there are few beaches and natural harbors here. The islands of the archipelago region have a very thin soil layer and, except for the westernmost ones that are constantly and violently windswept, are mostly covered by an extremely dense vegetation cover comprised mostly of *Nothofagus* forests. This region is one of the rainiest in the world outside of the tropics⁵⁶. A proof of their rugged and inhospitable nature is the fact that, even to this day, there is only one permanent human settlement in this zone, Melinka.⁵⁷

The coastal/mountainous strip of Northern Patagonia has a very similar climate to that of the archipelago zone, albeit somewhat less rainy. This region is where the forest truly takes on an unfathomable thickness and extension. In the words of Steffen, “the

⁵⁵ Mateo Martinic uses this same three-zone division in his very complete book titled “De la Trapananda al Aysén: Una mirada reflexiva sobre el acontecer de la Región del Aysén desde la Prehistoria hasta nuestros días” (*From ‘Trapananda’ to Aysén: A Reflexive Look on the Development of the Aysén Region from Prehistory to Our Days*)

⁵⁶ Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, p. 45

⁵⁷ There are a few more island settlements around this region such as Puerto Aguirre, Puerto Gaviota, and Puerto Gala. However, they are not technically part of either the Chonos or Guaitecas archipelagos and they have a much closer connection to the continental lands than to the archipelagos. Similarly, these insular localities respond to an entirely different historical itinerary than Melinka and are completely outside of the temporal scope of this investigation. Even taking these localities into account, the current total population of the insular region of North Patagonia nowadays barely reaches 5,000 people.

evergreen forest entirely dominates the physiognomy of the landscape.”⁵⁸ The forest in this region is comprised mostly by what is called the Valdivian Temperate Rainforest. Apart from the forest cover, the soil is similarly covered by a multitude of different and extremely thick brushes and bamboos, making any sort of traversing through land an incredibly difficult task. The coast here is extremely irregular, and the mouths of the larger rivers provide the few adequate natural harbors. This strip encompasses most of what is the modern-day Aysén Region and the Palena Province, a subdivision of the Lakes Region which corresponds to the continental part of North Patagonia that sits directly in front of the Chiloé Archipelago.

It is important to highlight the most important waterways of this zone, as they will be the setting for a majority of the expeditions in this region. The reader is encouraged at all times to refer to the maps in order to become familiar with the different areas that will be constantly named throughout this investigation. The following are the most important rivers and bodies of water that relate to the coastal region, in a roughly North-South direction. The very northern limit of Northern Patagonia is Lake Todos Los Santos. The Petrohué River drains the waters of this lake onto the northernmost tip of the Reloncaví Estuary, a large fjord that penetrates deep into the continent. The Reloncaví Estuary connects with the Reloncaví Sound, which in turn, connects to the Gulf of Ancud to the south. The other important river that drains onto the Reloncaví Estuary is the Puelo River, which crosses the Patagonian Mountains. A particularly important affluent of the Puelo

⁵⁸ Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, p. 46

River is the Manso, which forks to the North of the Puelo and similarly has its source to the east of the Mountain chain. South of the Reloncaví Estuary is the Comau Fjord, where the Vodudahue River drains onto.

The next important river to the south is the Yelcho River, whose waters come from the homonymous Yelcho Lake, which in turn, receives the water of the Futaleufú River, yet another Patagonian River whose waters come from east of the Mountain Chain. To the south is the Palena River, which crosses the mountain chain to the east. Next in order is the Cisnes River, which also crosses towards the east. The Cisnes drains onto the Puyuhuapi Channel which connects to the Pacific Ocean by means of a maze of channels. To the south, the Aysén River drains onto the Aysén Fjord. The Aysén River reaches a fork from the perspective of someone going up it towards the east, and it separates in to the Mañihuales and the Simpson Rivers, both of which cross the mountainous chain and extend towards the eastern grasslands. South of the Aysén are a multitude of channels that are interrupted by the Taitao Peninsula and Isthmus of Ofqui, which closes off an uninterrupted north-south navigation of the channels in this region and forces sailors to go onto open sea if they wish to keep on going south. South of this point, the coast becomes even more dismembered and the labyrinth of the Patagonian channels begins in their maximum splendor and confusion. The most important river in this area is the Baker River, the most torrential in Chile, which empties onto the Baker Fjord. This river is fed by Lake General Carrera, the biggest in Chile. Slightly south is the

Pascua River, which drains the waters of the intensely irregular Lake O'Higgins⁵⁹, the deepest in the American continent. This is the southernmost river and lake in the region studied by this investigation; past this point, the massive glaciers of the Southern Patagonian Ice Field spill directly onto the Patagonian channels and effectively mutilate the coastal/mountainous strip. This lengthy and most likely complicated description of the most important rivers of North Patagonia is not intended to confuse readers, but rather to give them a general sense of the most important waterways that will constantly be mentioned throughout this investigation in a North-South direction.

At the eastern foothills of the Patagonian mountains, from the southern edge of Lake Nahuel Huapi up until the 49th parallel, a series of valleys that have a generally southbound direction form in different parts. This ensemble of valleys, which does not follow a straight line but is rather subject to the particularities of the individual mountainous blocks that project from the coast, can be perceived, very loosely, as "a sort of longitudinal valley."⁶⁰ These sub-Andean valleys are noticeably drier than the mountainous section, and they experience colder temperatures; freezes are not uncommon in winter. The vegetation is not as exuberant in this zone and large pastures appear in between clearly defined forests, as opposed to the massive vegetation sprawl that covers the mountainous region. These valleys "are not as unfavorable for human culture [...] as in the mountains and virgin forests of the western zone."⁶¹ However, and

⁵⁹ Lake San Martin in the Argentine side

⁶⁰ Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, p. 50

⁶¹ *Idem*, p. 53

as Steffen states, the extremely isolated situation of these valleys during the period studied in this thesis, “separated from the Atlantic coast by enormous deserted plateaus and the Pacific coasts by a thick virgin jungle and torrential rivers” ensured that the permanent habitation of these valleys started only in the mid-19th century.⁶²

The particular and unforgiving geography, hydrography, and topology of the North Patagonian region is certainly an important element in its historical development. To study its history is to study its geography at all times. While Andrés Núñez describes how “the frontier and peripheral position of the territory of Patagonia-Aysén is not given by its physical isolation [...] nor does it derive from a deficient insertion in the national territory,” remarking on the historical, geographical, and social processes that created a narrative regarding its marginal position within the Chilean nation, this region nonetheless presented great technical difficulties for penetration by part of agents of the Chilean state even after the end of the period studied by this thesis. In 1919, after the five-decade period of explorations analyzed in this investigation concluded and once the first systematic attempts to colonize this region had begun, in both organized and unorganized ways, explorer Hans Steffen described how “we are still very far from a complete and scientifically based knowledge about Western Patagonia. The topography of the region still shows enormous voids; not even the coastline has been determined in an exact manner in all its parts.”⁶³

⁶² Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, p. 53

⁶³ Idem, p. 12

What's in a name?

A reader might have noticed how, already in the introduction to this investigation, many different names for this region have been used. Owing to their late historical incorporation into the national territorial ordering, there existed no consensus on the name of the regions investigated in this thesis until a couple of decades into the 20th century. Claudio Gay, the French geographer hired by the Chilean state to survey the national territory, included the label “Patagonia Occidental” (*Western Patagonia*) in an otherwise featureless map of the continental lands in front of the Chonos archipelago in 1843. In 1859, Vicente Pérez Rosales, an agent of the Chilean state who was in charge of leading German colonization in the Llanquihue territory, described it as the “Continental part” of the Chiloé Province, further separating it into the “Septentrional [northern] region of Western Patagonia” and its insular section.⁶⁴ In 1867, Francisco Astaburuaga in his “Diccionario jeográfico de la República de Chile” (*Geographic Dictionary of the Republic of Chile*), named the continental region in front of the Chonos and Guaitecas archipelagos, including the islands closest to its coasts, as “País de los Chonos o Chonia” (Country of the Chonos⁶⁵ or Chonia).⁶⁶ In 1909, explorer Hans Steffen prefaced his compilation of explorations between 1892 and 1902, stating that “It does not seem

⁶⁴ Pérez Rosales, Vicente. *Ensayo Sobre Chile*. Santiago: Imprenta del Ferrocarril, 1859, p. 273

⁶⁵ The nomadic, canoeing tribe after which its homonymous archipelago is named. This tribe will be further discussed in Chapter 2

⁶⁶ Asta-Buruaga, Francisco. *Diccionario Jeográfico De La República De Chile*. New York: D. Appleton & Co. , 1867, p. 128

convenient to me to replace the term ‘Western Patagonia’ that has already been adopted by modern geographic literature.”⁶⁷

Other names used for this region point towards subdivisions within it. Traditional and modern historiography have both used the name “Continental Chiloé” to refer to the continental lands that face the Archipelago of Chiloé, which roughly correspond to the modern-day Palena Province. Similarly, the name Aysén (first spelled Aisén), which originally referred only to the river, slowly became a stand-in for the southern portion of North Patagonia. When the southern part of Northern Patagonia became a territory, the first precedent of the modern territorial ordering of this region, it was called the Aysén Territory (Nowadays the Aysén Region). Andrés Núñez, who has studied the creation of a national geographic narrative in this region, uses the term “Patagonia-Aysén” to refer to it.

Although Western Patagonia has been the most often used name for this region, it does not capture the specificity of the lands, waters, and islands studied in this thesis. Hans Steffen explains how Western Patagonia represents a fundamental opposition to the flat grasslands of Eastern Patagonia, stating that its southern limit is the Strait of Magellan.⁶⁸ This investigation does not deal with, except for one specific episode in Chapter 4 that is used to highlight Chilean attitudes vis-a-vis Argentina in the Patagonian region in general, lands or waters south of the 49th parallel. Because of this, Western

⁶⁷ Steffen, Hans. *Viajes De Exploración I Estudio En La Patagonia Occidental 1892-1902* Vol. 1, Santiago: Imprenta Cervantes, 1909, p. 8

⁶⁸ Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, pp. 3-4

Patagonia is an inaccurate name for it represents a much broader geographical area than the region studied in this thesis. At the same time, the next most common name for this region, Aysén or Patagonia-Aysén, does not capture the entirety of this region (it only refers to its southern half) and more egregiously, in a historical sense, represents an anachronism in that it retrospectively applies a modern-day label to an area that was not called so until 1927. Similarly, the name Aysén or Patagonia-Aysén projects the lands around the Aysén River and the cities of Puerto Aysén and Coyhaique, the biggest and most central in this area, as a sort of centripetal force for the region, leaving behind its peripheral areas. The historical territories of Continental Chiloé, or the modern-day Palena Province, are just as important for this study as the modern-day lands of the Aysén Region, and it isn't until well after 1902 that Aysén becomes the administrative, economic, and social center of North Patagonia.

Chilean Northern Patagonia is the most adequate name for the historical analysis of this region throughout the mid-19th century; it is specific enough to refer to the areas that were later delimited within the Chilean territory post-1902, the particular geographic configuration specified throughout this section, and its socio-cultural, historical, and economic continuities, as well as being unspecific enough to not emphasize any sub-region as more or less important throughout this investigation, and to highlight the lack of any commonly agreed subdivisions during this period apart from the three-zone division mentioned earlier. North Patagonia also makes sense from the perspective of state penetration and population/colonization. As stated in the introduction, North Patagonia

was the only existing void within the Chilean territory up to the mid-19th century. The Archipelago of Chiloé has an intricate historical development and underwent Spanish colonization beginning in the late 16th century. The region around Lake Llanquihue was almost a decade into the colonization process by the mid-nineteenth century and while the Magallanes territory was occupied only in a very incipient and precarious fashion by 1856, Punta Arenas, its capital, soon became a center of economic and social activity for a large portion of Chilean Southern Patagonia in a way that did not happen in Northern Patagonia throughout the mid-19th century. Thus, North Patagonia fits very nicely as a label for the regions studied in this thesis. This investigation does not propose that the label of North Patagonia should be in the current period; instead, it serves to address its historical development and particularities during the mid-19th century.

Chapter 1: Explorers and their Relation to the State

In 1871, Carlos Juliet, the naturalist on board a government-commissioned exploration to the Reloncaví Estuary, prepared to conclude his recollection of specimens relating to the natural history of the forests that separated Lake Todos los Santos from the northern shores of the aforementioned estuary. Juliet noted that whatever samples and information he recollected during the expedition “do not present anything new for the geologist or mineralogist.”⁶⁹ Despite this, he stated that “not because of this do they lack interest, for they refer to regions that still have not borne the scrutinizing gaze of civilized man.”⁷⁰ Explorers to North Patagonia during the mid-19th century saw themselves as people of science, yet at the same time as inserted within a project of national expansion towards these almost unknown regions. Juliet’s assessment reveals how explorations during this time and place were putting a supposedly dispassionate method of scientific observation to the service of the modernizing Chilean state.

Explorers in Chile during the second half of the 19th century extensively cataloged the people, geography, hydrography, and economic resources of North Patagonia. The reports they produced often contained detailed logs of their location and bearings throughout their expeditions. Similarly, these reports generally recorded a wide array of measurements such as water depths, atmospheric pressure, meteorological observations, descriptions of natural history, soil composition, and geological features. At times, these

⁶⁹ Vidal Gormaz. *Exploracion De La Costa E Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*. Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1871, p. 95

⁷⁰ Ibid.

reports also included ethnographic information that detailed the customs and language of the few people they ran into, as well as the impressions that the human and natural element in these regions left on the explorers. These explorers similarly drew some of the first accurate navigation charts and maps of this region. Thus, their reports evidence a project of systematic ordering and understanding of the many elements, human and natural, that were present in North Patagonia.

Explorer reports also acted as a catalog of the explorers themselves. Explorers and naturalists already held an established space within the scientific community in mid-19th century Chile and the project of a rational ordering of the nation through the different scientific disciplines.⁷¹ In this way, these reports often shed light on explorers' connections to national intellectual life and its institutions. Similarly, explorers often commented on the vision they had of their own projects and expeditions. The scientific orientation that many of these explorers exhibited resulted in a more or less systematic ordering and commenting of their peers and their own work, in a sort of intertextual arrangement of the corpus of travel reports that contained their findings. Thus, apart from shedding light on the natural and human elements in North Patagonia, explorers' travel reports also unravel the connections between scientific observation and the project of national expansion into North Patagonia. Using Susana López's description, explorers to

⁷¹ "Halfway through the 19th century, in the country [Chile], the presence of *sabios* [wise men] from the different scientific disciplines and the host of explorations and other activities that are carried out throughout the length of the territory are already clearly notorious in public life. This means that the national episteme has acquired the status of one more organized community, inserted within the country, and that counts with a guild of specialists dedicated to the tasks that are their own." (Saldivia, Zenobio. *La Ciencia En El Chile Decimonónico*. Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana, 2005, p. 51)

North Patagonia and their reports during this period show an “overlap with political power; in them, to think and to do march together, their texts are explicitly programmatical.”⁷²

In 1856, a German doctor named Francisco Fonck (1830-1912)⁷³, alongside an engineer named Fernando Hess, undertook an exploration voyage to Lake Nahuel Huapi, crossing the Andes Mountains from the Chilean side. In 1857, Fonck and Hess published the results of their voyage in the *Annals of the University of Chile* in the form of a short 11-page report titled “Informe de los señores Francisco Fonck i Fernando Hess sobre la expedición a Nahuelhuapi” (*Report of Mr. Francisco Fonck and Mr. Fernando Hess on the Expedition to Nahuelhuapi*). Most of this article is dedicated to tracing the itinerary of the Fonck expedition in a day-by-day description of their movements and direction. Towards the end, the document assesses the overall navigability of the rivers and lakes of the region, and records the distances of the different sections of the itinerary that the expedition traversed and the altitudes of the geographic features they visited. It is not fortuitous that Fonck and Hess published their report in the *Annals of the University of Chile*. This publication, established in 1844, one year after the founding of the University

⁷² López. *Representaciones De La Patagonia*, p. 22

⁷³ Franz Fonck was his original name. After graduating as in medicine from the University of Berlin in 1852, Fonck moved to Chile in 1854, where he subsequently validated his degree in the University of Chile. After this he was named the doctor of the Llanquihue Colony, a position he carried out with “an almost religious conviction” (Saldivia, *La Ciencia En El Chile Decimonónico*, p. 179) until 1869. He would later hold public positions such as vice-consul of Chile in Berlin, Governor of the Llanquihue Colony, and subsequently representative of the Llanquihue Province in parliament. Fonck published over 100 books and articles, ranging in topics such as the travel reports of Father Menéndez, the descriptions of nature of Alexander von Humboldt, ethnographies of indigenous peoples of Chile, the border dispute with Argentina, and diseases of the eye, amongst others. For biographical information on Fonck, see Saldivia. “Francisco Fonck: Entre la Ciencia y el Servicio Público” in *La Ciencia en el Chile Decimonónico*, pp. 179-185.

of Chile and first published in 1846, is the oldest periodical publication in Spanish in the American continent. It was founded “as a consequence of the necessity of counting with a precedent at the time that allowed for the diffusion of the investigations and own work of the academic activity of the corporation [University of Chile], in general.”⁷⁴ It originally focused on publishing the internal programs, decrees, regulations, and distinguished works of the University, as well as government laws and dispositions regarding general education in the nation.⁷⁵ However, it soon began to publish the works of academics from Chile that were outside of the University of Chile, and the works of foreign intellectuals, becoming a beacon of academic and cultural proliferation for the young republic.

The Fonck expedition was the first time anyone had crossed the Andes Mountains in this sector and left a record of the trip since the Franciscan missionary, Father Francisco Menéndez, had done so in 1794.⁷⁶ By the time Fonck and Hess undertook their expedition, the very location of Lake Nahuel Huapi was in doubt, as well as the possibility of reaching it from the west.⁷⁷ Fonck’s report evidences a high awareness of both the importance of his trip and the time span that separated him from explorations to

⁷⁴ Saldivia, *La Ciencia En El Chile Decimonónico*, p. 103

⁷⁵ “[...] the publication had various objectives. In first place – and something that is particularly emphasized – it concentrated the movement relative to public instruction in the country at all its levels, becoming a transmitter of government and university work, in this matter. On the other hand, it gave an account of the scientific work carried out via the publication of the most qualified memories presented to the University in the year and, finally, it was the official organ for university affairs.” (“Reseña Histórica” in *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, http://web.uchile.cl/vignette/anales/CDA/res_historia/index.html)

⁷⁶ Fonck compiled and published the travel reports of Father Menéndez. See Fonck, Francisco. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a La Cordillera*. Vol. 1, Valparaiso: Comissioned by Carlos Niemeyer, 1896 and Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a Nahuelhuapi*. Vol. 2, Valparaiso: Comissioned by Carlos Niemeyer, 1900

⁷⁷ Fonck, Francisco & Hess, Fernando. "Informe De Los Señores Francisco Fonck I Fernando Hess Sobre La Espedicion a Nahuelhuapi." *Anales de la Universidad de Chile* vol. 15, no. 1 (January, February, March 1857), p. 2.

this region during the colonial period. Upon reaching the shores of Lake Nahuel Huapi, Fonck could hardly hold his excitement in coming across what he described as a “half-rotten piece of oak” that he immediately recognized as a piece of the boat that Father Menéndez had used in more than 60 years ago.⁷⁸ Additionally, he kept a piece of it for himself as “a precious relic” and sent another one to the Ministry of the Interior, which he believed ended up in a museum in Santiago.⁷⁹

Fonck’s writings also develop ideas about his thoughts on the importance of explorers in relation to a nation. He saw explorers, for example, as a vital element for the territorial pretensions of a country. During the period when Chile was litigating with Argentina over the border between both nations in North Patagonia, Fonck stated that “the dominion of a nation should reach, as a general rule, up to where it exercises, or has exercised, its action by means of its travelers, its authorities, its missionaries, its men of commerce.”⁸⁰ As opposed to only thinking of the nation as being bounded by natural features or historical claims to possession, Fonck also believed that explorers and their voyages were equally important to a country’s territorial pretensions. Upon reaching the shores of Lake Nahuel Huapi in 1856, Fonck planted a small Chilean flag on its shores, just like Spanish *conquistadores* had done centuries ago to take possession of a land. He referred to this act as “our taking of possession,” adding that this action “gives me certain authority to reclaim in benefit of Chile what the Argentine authors and travelers, all of

⁷⁸ Fonck & Hess. “Informe De Los Señores Francisco Fonck I Fernando Hess Sobre La Expedición a Nahuelhuapi.”, p. 4

⁷⁹ Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a Nahuelhuapi*. Vol. 2, 1900, pp. 286-287

⁸⁰ Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a La Cordillera*. Vol. 1, 1896, p. xx

them subsequent, have vindicated for their fatherland.”⁸¹ Fonck did not visualize himself as a strictly scientific and dispassionate observer of nature as later explorers would do so. He saw great value in what he described as Alexander von Humboldt’s⁸² method of “aesthetic impressions” that combined observations about “history, biography, geography, hydrography, ethnography, folklore, botanics, zoology, meteorology, and other disciplines” to create a “mosaic” that could be useful to an academic audience, as well as a more general, yet cultured public.⁸³

Francisco Hudson (1826--1859)⁸⁴ was the first agent of the Chilean state to carry out a hydrographic survey in the waters of North Patagonia. In 1857, he surveyed the

⁸¹ Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a Nahuelhuapi*. Vol. 2, 1900, pp. 457-458. Fonck added that the eventual awarding of the Lake Nahuel Huapi region to Argentina “has affected me closer than any person, leaving in my mood a painful memory (pp. 293-294)

⁸² Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) was a Prussian, geographer, and naturalist who travelled extensively throughout Latin America between 1799 and 1804 and is widely regarded as one of the most influential and prolific European traveler-explorers of his time. His way of writing travel reports is regarded as particularly innovative. Mary Louise Pratt describes his writing style in the following way: “The ‘view’ or tableau was the form Humboldt chose for his experiments in what he called ‘the esthetic ode of treating subjects of natural history.’ His were innovative attempts to correct what he saw as the failings of travel writing in his time: on the one hand, a trivializing preoccupation with what he called ‘the merely personal,’ and, on the other, an accumulation of scientific detail that was spiritually and esthetically deadening. Humboldt’s solution in his *Views* was to fuse the specificity of science with the esthetics of the sublime. The vividness of esthetic description, he was convinced, would be complemented and intensified by science’s revelations of the ‘occult forces’ that made Nature work. The result, in the words of one literary historian, ‘introduced into German literature an entirely new type of nature discourse.’” (Pratt. *Imperial Eyes*, p. 118)

⁸³ Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a Nahuelhuapi*. Vol. 2, 1900, pp. xvi-xvii. Fonck described the style of observation that was contemporaneous to him as “the new tendency to *specialize* and focus on mathematically exact observations, dispensing of any accessory contemplation”, adding that “I hold the hope that the “nature scene”, which I have just traced in conformity to these principles in a way antiquated, will be recognized as acceptable even beside works of the modern style.” (p. xvii)

⁸⁴ Hudson was born in Curaco de Vélez, one of the many islands of the Archipelago of Chiloé. He had a short but distinguished career in the Chilean Navy. Early in his career, he participated in explorations around the Strait of Magellan, and in 1856, he participated in an exploration of the River Maullín, one of the first important hydrographic expeditions to a river in the south of Chile. Francisco Hudson became a captain of the Chilean Navy by the time of his tragic death in 1859, when his ship was caught and sunk in a strong storm in the rough waters of Cape Horn. See Ortiz Sepúlveda, Jorge. "Francisco Hudson, Un

Moraleda Channel (which he named after the Spanish explorer José Moraleda who visited those waters at the end of the 18th century) with the objective of determining whether the Taitao Peninsula had a passage to open waters at its southern end, or if it was closed off by land. Like Fonck's report, Hudson similarly published his in the Annals of the University of Chile in 1859 under the title "Reconocimiento hidrográfico del río Maullín i de la península de Taytao" (*Hydrographic Reconnaissance of the River Maullín and the Peninsula of Taitao*). Hudson's report focused almost exclusively on the hydrography of the region. It included a thick description of the many hydrographic and geographic features that served as either dangers to navigation, or as guiding points for a sailor. The report also contained many soundings of the depth of these waters, descriptions of water charts that he drew, lists of natural ports and coves, and assessments of distances and altitudes. Its last two pages were dedicated to congratulating the work carried out by the different people on board his expedition.

Hudson's exploration report begins to evidence the intertextual characteristics of the different writings that Chilean explorers were producing at the time. Hudson, for example, brought Francisco Fonck on board his 1857 exploration as a doctor, stating that "I would be faulting to my duty if I did not make a particular mention of this gentleman. Since I made my first trip to the [Llanquihue] Colony, he manifested his desires to be part of the expedition with no other end than to collect, to say so, the treasures that nature

hides in a country unknown until now by illustrated men.”⁸⁵ Fonck reciprocated this feeling when he wrote the following about Hudson two years later,

I believe that the merit of that very instructed official, on whose own indication the Government sent to carry out that exploration [to the Taitao Peninsula in 1857], has not been appreciated enough, and that it is one of the really important works about Geography that the Chilean Navy has produced.⁸⁶

The two first explorers to the North Patagonian region were already participating in an active cataloging of their thoughts about their explorations, and their peers’. Politicians in Santiago also recognized the importance of Hudson’s explorations. In a speech to Antonio Varas, the Marine Minister at the time, a Minister of Parliament named Domingo Espiñeira stated that “There is for me, in the Hudson project, something that has particularly caught my attention, and that is seeing him so vividly interested in a risky and uncomfortable endeavor, in an age where there appear so many causes to weaken the public spirit of those that follow the career of the sea.”⁸⁷

In 1862, Guillermo Cox (1828-1908)⁸⁸ crossed the mountain pass that Fonck had used to reach Lake Nahuel Huapi, this time with the intention of following the River

⁸⁵ Hudson, Francisco. "Reconocimiento Hidrográfico Del Río Maullin I De La Península I Archipiélago De Taytao." *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, vol. 16, no. 1, p. 1159

⁸⁶ Fonck. "(Sobre La) De Las Inmediaciones De La Colonia Alemana De Puerto Montt." *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, vol. 16 (1859), p. 322

⁸⁷ Espiñeira, Domingo. "Notas relativas al reconocimiento de los canales del golfo de Guayaneco o Guaitecas", *Documentos Parlamentarios: Discursos de Apertura en las Sesiones del Congreso*, p. 648

⁸⁸ Guillermo Cox was the son of an Englishman named Nataniel Cox who participated in the Chilean Independence War (Biedma, Juan. *Crónica histórica del lago Nahuel Huapi*. Buenos Aires: Del Nuevo Extremo, 2003, p. 66). An 1864 article described Cox as “a gentleman born in Chile, but of English parentage (Cox, Guillermo. “A Journey across the Southern Andes of Chile, with the object of opening a New Route across the Continent”. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London*. vol. 8, No. 5 (1863-1864), pp. 160-162). He studied medicine in the University of Chile but dedicated himself, beginning in 1859, to promoting Chilean colonization in the northern sections of Eastern Patagonia. He

Limay, its effluent, all the way to the Atlantic Ocean and thus become the first white person to reach the Atlantic from Chile via a Patagonian River. Indigenous tribes who held control over the sector soon cut Cox's journey short, as they refused to let the explorer pass just as he began to navigate the waters of the Limay River.⁸⁹ In 1863, Guillermo Cox published a book containing his travel report titled "Viaje en las rejiones septentrionales de la Patagonia (1862-1863)" (*Trip to the Northern Regions of Patagonia (1862-1863)*). Cox's book is separated into four sections. The first one introduces the book and provides a brief historical itinerary of the different explorations carried out in this region before him. The second section relates his trip in a day-by-day basis until his capture by indigenous tribes. In a typically Humboldtian fashion, descriptions of geography are often interspersed with Cox's impressions of the territory, descriptions of the scenery, and ethnographic descriptions of the crew that accompanied him and the indigenous peoples that captured him. The third part focuses exclusively on his four back and forth trips from the indigenous lands where he was captured, to Chile, where he successfully rescued each member of his commission. This section includes thick

held the post of vice-consul of Sweden and Norway in the Chilean city of Talcahuano. For more information and analysis on Cox's work, see Huneus, Pablo. *Patagonia Mágica: el viaje del tata Guillermo*. Santiago: Editora Nueva Generación, 1998; Navarro, Pedro & Nacach, Gabriela. "Entre Indios Falsificados, Novias Raptadas, Cautivos Y Traficantes De Aguardiente: Guillermo Cox En El Norte De La Patagonia, 1862-1863." *Cuadernos de Historia* 23 (December 2003), pp. 51-75; Poblete, Pedro. "Viaje en las rejiones septentrionales de la Patagonia 1862-1863, de Guillermo Cox: Los límites móviles o una resignificación de la frontera." *Anales de la Literatura Chilena*, vol. 16, no. 24 (December 2015), pp. 123-136

⁸⁹ At the time, all of Eastern Patagonia was under the control of indigenous tribes that were completely independent from the Argentine Government, who held no jurisdiction south of the Negro River. The campaigns of war and subjugation by part of the Argentine state against the indigenous peoples of Eastern Patagonia would not begin until 1879 and would last until 1885, forming part of what has been euphemistically called "The Conquest of the Desert". See Navarro & Nacach. "Entre Indios Falsificados, Novias Raptadas, Cautivos Y Traficantes De Aguardiente" for an academic assessment of Cox's descriptions of life in Eastern Patagonia during this period.

ethnographic descriptions of indigenous peoples both from regions north and east of North Patagonia. The fourth, and last, section contains detailed and scientific observations about the geography, orography, hydrography, geology, natural history, and language of the indigenous tribes. Cox's book also contains a map of the region (Fig. 4) which is notable for its imprecision outside of the lands he directly traversed.⁹⁰

Cox's report comments on the importance of earlier travelers and explorers to North Patagonia. His expedition inevitably led him to stumble upon the remains of both Father Menéndez's expedition, where he remarked on his standing as an explorer ("the word virtue is not too much, because to come through these paths with the sole objective of evangelizing some poor devils, it was necessary to have more than a burning faith"), as well as Fonck's ("Good doctor! Who only dreams of expeditions").⁹¹ Fonck himself would pay tribute to Cox and his explorations many years later, distinguishing him in the following manner, "we would have to concede him the palm [laurel] within the travelers of Patagonia and give him a distinguished space within the explorers of South America."⁹² Similarly, Cox's report contains clues as to his self-vision of the expedition

⁹⁰ Notice, for example, the featurelessness of the lands that are not directly adjacent to his trajectory and Lake Nahuel Huapi. Similarly, to the south of Lakes Todos los Santos and Nahuel Huapi, he includes a label that states "*situación probable del Camino de Bariloche*" (Probable location of the Bariloche Route). This refers to the Vuriloche pass, which was the route that Jesuit missionaries in the 17th and 18th centuries used to reach Lake Nahuel Huapi and had been long-forgotten by the time Cox visited these lands.

⁹¹ Cox, Guillermo. *Viaje En Las Rejiones Septentrionales De La Patagonia (1862-1863)*. Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1863, p. 56. It is interesting to note how Cox sees a difference between the fundamental outlook of an explorer in Menéndez's time, and the scientific outlook that an explorer in the mid-19th century had: "But, in change, what joy did those simple and faithful hearts not have? Joys that we are deprived of ourselves, sons of a century of skepticism." (Ibid.)

⁹² Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a Nahuelhuapi*. Vol. 2, 1900: p. 297

and his relationship to the expanding Chilean state. Cox described his expedition as being motivated by “perhaps being able to give as a palpable result benefits to commerce and science”, adding that “I undertook the voyage whose relation I now give light to, without more pretension than that of being useful to humanity and my fatherland.”⁹³ He also mentioned that his trip not only had a “scientific and mercantile interest, but also a humanitarian one, as it leads to facilitating the colonization of those regions.”⁹⁴ At the same time, however, Cox was interested in finding a way of uniting the Pacific coasts of Chile to the Atlantic coasts of Eastern Patagonia. Pedro Navarro and Gabriela Nacach describe his trip as “oriented to establishing a permanent bio-oceanic communication route that would make possible the populating and productive exploitation of the Negro River by immigrants.”⁹⁵ It is important to note that Cox, unlike Hudson, was not an agent of a state institution such as the Chilean Navy, nor did he appear to hold, like Fonck, any important position in a regional government at the time. Nonetheless, he had pretensions of surveying the geography of this region as much as he had the objective of advancing Chilean territorial claims east of the Andes Mountains and facilitating the colonization of these lands. Thus, contemporary scholars have referred to his expedition as having “a clear political and economic purpose – colonize the basin of the Negro River via the

⁹³ Cox. *Viaje En Las Rejiones Septentrionales De La Patagonia*, pp. vii-viii

⁹⁴ *Idem*, p. 23

⁹⁵ Navarro & Nacach. “Entre Indios Falsificados, Novias Raptadas, Cautivos Y Traficantes De Aguardiente”, pp. 52-53

south of Chile -, from which the protagonist can be seen as an indirect agent of the interest of the Chilean state in a trans-Andean territory.”⁹⁶

Francisco Vidal Gormaz (1837-1907)⁹⁷ was a young midshipman who had participated in Francisco Hudson’s 1857 expedition through the channels of the Chonos Archipelago. In the years after that initial experience, he rose through the ranks of the Chilean navy and in 1863, he undertook an expedition to the Comau Fjord. Vidal Gormaz went on to publish the details of this expedition in the *Annals of the University of Chile* in 1863 in the form of a 2-page article titled “Descubrimiento hecho por el teniente 2do. de nuestra marina de guerra, don Francisco Vidal Gormaz, de dos grandes boquetes que dan paso a las pampas arjentinas, a la altura del Archipiélago de Chiloé” (*[A] Discovery Made by the Second Lieutenant of our War Navy, don Francisco Vidal Gormaz, of Two Great Passes that Open to the Argentine Pampas, at the Height of the Archipelago of*

⁹⁶ Navarro & Nacach. "Entre Indios Falsificados, Novias Raptadas, Cautivos Y Traficantes De Aguardiente", p. 73

⁹⁷ Francisco Vidal Gormaz has been considered the “Father of Chilean hydrography” by Zenobio Saldivia (Saldivia. “Francisco Vidal Gormaz, Hidrógrafo Olvidado del Chile Decimonónico.” *Revismar*, vol. 6 (2016), p. 35.) Vidal Gormaz was born in Santiago in 1837. At age 15 he was already a cadet in the navy and it was not long before he began to display interest in the systematization of hydrographic explorations and research in Chile. Saldivia identifies this interest in Vidal Gormaz since at least 1855 (Saldivia. *La Ciencia en el Chile Decimonónico*, pp. 74, 133). Vidal Gormaz conducted hydrographic research in the Araucanía, Valdivia, and Chiloé regions, as well as the central coast of Chile. His dedication to systematizing and disseminating hydrographic research led to his naming as the founding director of the Hydrographic Office of the Chilean Navy in 1874, a post he held for 17 years. Not only did Vidal Gormaz systematize and distribute hydrographic knowledge about Chile in Chile through the Hydrographic Yearbook of the Navy, amongst other publications he oversaw; he also disseminated hydrographic information and research about other countries in Chile, and vice-versa. It is during Vidal Gormaz’s period at the head of the Hydrographic Office that the waters of North Patagonia begin to be systematically explored. Vidal Gormaz’s relationship to the institutionalization of hydrographic knowledge will be touched upon in the third chapter of this investigation. For biographical details see: Saldivia. “Francisco Vidal Gormaz, Hidrógrafo Olvidado del Chile Decimonónico.” *Revismar*, vol. 6 (2016); Saldivia. "Entre Los Albores De La Hidrografía Chilena Y El Olvido: El Caso De Francisco Vidal Gormaz." *Diálogos* 20, no. 2 (2016), pp. 48-55.

Chiloé).⁹⁸ This short article mainly describes the impressions that Vidal Gormaz had upon going up the Vodudahue River, and the assessments he made for this region. Vidal Gormaz similarly drew a map of the Comau Fjord and the Vodudahue River (Fig. 5). This map is interesting for two reasons. First, apart from focusing on the geography and hydrography of the region, it also records economic resources there. The denomination *alerzal* (alerce grove) appears three times, and further up the river he labels an area as the *gran alerzal* (great alerce patch). As will be seen in the 5th chapter, the alerce tree was the most important economic product of North Patagonia at this time and its exploitation was seen by explorers as one of the few ways to inject life into this region. Second, Vidal Gormaz labeled the eastern edge of his map as the “*pampas patagónicas*” (Patagonian pampas), something which reflected his desire to find an easy pass towards the east. Chapters 2 and 3 will touch upon how North Patagonia was conceived by Vidal Gormaz as holding the key for the expansion of Chilean territorial pretensions to the east of the Andes.

This exploration is particularly interesting as he carried it out of his own volition and during his summer vacations. Vidal Gormaz explained his motivation in the following manner: “for it [the Comau fjord] being the most unknown part of these latitudes, and for having had beforehand a project about looking for a pass to the *pampas*

⁹⁸ Vidal Gormaz presented an extended version of this report in an 1866 publication titled *Apuntes hidrográficos de la costa de Chile* (Hydrographic notes for the coast of Chile). This article, however, was focused in an entirely technical way as it contains none of the personal assessments he made in his article published in the Annals of the University of Chile, and it mainly described the procedures he undertook to draw a map of the Vodudahue River.

of Patagonia.”⁹⁹ This evidences his project as being both scientifically oriented, and also having a national perspective. Vidal Gormaz concluded his report of the 1863 expedition stating that if the government believed that any other of “these vast regions of our territory deserve particular attention, I would offer myself to explore them in detail, as long as the Supreme Government provides me with the necessary resources.”¹⁰⁰ During the first decade of explorations into Northern Patagonia’s waters, individual explorers did not count with government support to carry out their missions. Thus, explorers during this first period not only evidenced a scientific vocation, but also a strong personal belief in a national project of cataloging, recollection of information, and expansion; a belief strong enough to motivate them to traverse unknown waters out of their own pockets and time.

During the summers of 1870-1871 and 1871-1872¹⁰¹, Vidal Gormaz undertook two expeditions to the waters of the Gulf of Ancud and the Reloncaví Sound and Estuary. He published his reports in two different volumes. In 1871, he published the report of his first expedition in the form of a 168-page book called “Esploración de la costa de Llanquihue i archipiélago de Chiloé practicada por orden del Supremo Gobierno (*Exploration of the Coast of Llanquihue and Archipelago of Chiloé Practiced by Order of the Supreme Government*). In 1872, he published the findings of his second expedition as

⁹⁹ Vidal Gormaz, Francisco. "Descubrimiento Hecho Por El Teniente 2do. De Nuestra Marina De Guerra, Don Francisco Vidal Gormaz, De Dos Grandes Boquetes Que Dan Paso a Las Pampas Argentinas, a La Altura Del Archipiélago De Chiloé." *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, vol. 22 (January-June 1863), p. 670

¹⁰⁰ Idem, p. 671

¹⁰¹ Summers begin on December 21st in the Southern Hemisphere

an article in the Annals of the University of Chile titled “Esploración de la costa de Llanquihue, practicada por orden del Supremo Gobierno por el capitán de corbeta don Francisco Vidal Gormaz” (*Exploration of the Coast of Llanquihue, Practiced by Order of the Supreme Government by Corvette Captain don Francisco Vidal Gormaz*). These expeditions are notable as they are the first that were specifically commissioned by the Chilean Navy and contained detailed instructions regarding the course he had to take, the measurements he had to record, the maps he had to draw, and where he was given specialized instruments to complete his task. Similarly, these were the first expeditions where there was a naturalist on board, Carlos Juliet, whose job it was to collect samples about the natural history of this region. Both of Juliet’s reports featured extensive comments on the geography and natural history of the region and recorded various measurements such as temperature, bearing, and altitude. The extensive and diverse types of information included in Vidal Gormaz’s reports “places him in the list of travelers that follow the trail opened up by Prussian naturalist Alexander von Humboldt,” in the words of two contemporary Chilean scholars.¹⁰²

Apart from surveying the local natural features, the Vidal Gormaz reports also begin to describe more fully the human element, recording the modes of production of the few people involved in economic activities there, their culture and customs, and the timing of the harvest of different agricultural products, for example. Rodrigo Booth and

¹⁰² Booth, Rodrigo; Valdés, Catalina. "De La Naturaleza Al Paisaje: Los Viajes De Francisco Vidal Gormaz En La Colonización Visual Del Sur De Chile En El Siglo XIX." *Anales del Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas "Mario J. Buschiazso"* 46, no. 2 (2016), p. 208

Catalina Valdés identify an “aesthetic representation” in Vidal Gormaz’s reports that, in addition to his intimate relationship to the nation’s institutions at the time, allows the reader to “understand the process of appropriation that the national State exercised over this region.”¹⁰³ Vidal Gormaz also drew a quite rough map of the Puelo River (Fig. 6) which is notable because it erroneously describes this river as being fed by one large and mysterious “Lake Puelo” which was thought to be deep in the mountains. It is interesting that Vidal Gormaz included this lake in his map as he never directly saw it and its existence was only hinted at by two of his pack men who climbed a tree and claimed to see the shores of a massive lake.¹⁰⁴ As will be seen in the second chapter, explorers in North Patagonia at the time necessarily depended on the knowledge of local guides who represented the complete opposite of the sort of scientific cataloging that explorers visualized themselves carrying out. Thus, Vidal Gormaz’s map can be seen as a graphic representation of the limits of scientific surveying in this region at the time.

These two Vidal Gormaz expeditions elevated hydrographic surveys to a more institutional dimension seeing as the government financed and commissioned both, and responded to a specific program that was written out by the government. Another explorer of North Patagonia around the same time period labeled these two expeditions as the first large-scale surveying and mapping of the coastal region of Reloncaví carried out

¹⁰³ Booth & Valdés. "De La Naturaleza Al Paisaje: Los Viajes De Francisco Vidal Gormaz En La Colonización Visual Del Sur De Chile En El Siglo XIX.", p. 200

¹⁰⁴ Vidal Gormaz. "Esploracion De La Costa De Llanquihue, Practicada Por Órden Del Supremo Gobierno Por El Capitan De Corbeta Don Francisco Vidal Gormaz." *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, vol. 41, no. 1 (January-December 1872), p. 275

by the Chilean government.¹⁰⁵ An author in 1901 described the work Vidal Gormaz presented in an 1878 article regarding the Chonos and Guaitecas archipelagos as having

in the present moment the same opportunity [as it did two decades earlier], for his observations are so exact, his data so complete, and his ideas so progressive, that today like yesterday, they are of positive importance, given that the patriotic desires of seeing this very rich portion of the country populated and industrially exploited have still not been realized.¹⁰⁶

Vidal Gormaz entered that same article into an academic competition in September of the previous year, in commemoration of the Chilean Independence, and organized by the Ministry of Public Instruction. The explorer received a gold medal for his article and due to this, Arturo Prat, Chile's most celebrated war hero, wrote to a letter congratulate him for "the warm and deserved [recognition] that the cultured society of Santiago bestowed upon you."¹⁰⁷ A few decades after the first expedition into the waters of North Patagonia, explorers commissioned by the Chilean state and their reports evidenced the close connections between them, Chile's intellectual and state institutions, and a project of national expansion.

Between 1870 and 1874, Captain Enrique Simpson (1835-1901)¹⁰⁸ carried out four exploration voyages in the waters of the Chonos and Guaitecas Archipelagos under

¹⁰⁵ Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*. Vol. 1, Santiago: Ediciones de la Universidad de Chile, 1913, p. 72

¹⁰⁶ Fagalde, Alberto. *Magallanes: El País Del Porvenir*. Vol. 1, Valparaíso: Talleres Tipográficos de la Armada, 1901, p. 310

¹⁰⁷ Vidal Gormaz, Francisco. "Algo Sobre Los Archipiélagos De Guaitecas, Chonos Y Taitao." In *Estudios Geográficos E Históricos De D. Francisco Vidal Gormaz*, edited by Ignacio Silva. Santiago: Imprenta Cervantes, 1878, p.3

¹⁰⁸ Enrique Simpson Baeza was born in 1835 in Valparaíso. There is not much printed biographical information about Enrique Simpson. The Chilean Navy's website contains a short biographic note that highlights his participation in the Spanish-South American War. After this he dedicated himself to carrying out hydrographic expeditions in the waters of Northern and Southern Patagonia. He is also recorded as

the commission of the Chilean Navy. Simpson published the reports of his four expeditions in 1875 in the first volume of the Hydrographic Yearbook of the Navy¹⁰⁹ under the title “Esploraciones hechas por la corbeta Chacabuco al mando del capitán de fragata don Enrique Simpson, en los archipiélagos de Guaitecas, Chonos i Taitao” (*Explorations Undertaken by the Corvette Chacabuco Commanded by Frigate Captain Don Enrique Simpson, in the Guaitecas, Chonos, and Taitao Archipelagos*). What sets his expeditions apart from previous ones was that, apart from carrying four consecutive hydrographic surveys, Simpson was instructed to make assessments about economic and colonization possibilities in this region and to go up a Patagonian river, the Aysén more specifically, in hopes of finding an easy pass towards the eastern *pampas*, which the Chilean government still held territorial pretensions over.¹¹⁰ Simpson’s reports offer a day by day account of his expeditions. Like Vidal Gormaz’s, Simpson’s blended precise and extensive hydrographic observations with personal assessments about the economic

having had a notable participation in the War of the Pacific. Towards the end of his career, he reached the rank of Rear Admiral. Rafael Sagredo described the Simpson expeditions in the following manner: “Within the commissions sent to the southern Pacific by the Chilean Navy, the four voyages to the western coast of Patagonia that Frigate Captain Enrique Simpson realized between 1870 and 1874, were the most systematic and the ones that offer some of the essential characteristics of the hydrographic ambitions developed by the nation throughout the 19th century.” (Sagredo, Rafael. “De La Hidrografía Imperial a La Hidrografía Nacional. Reconocimientos Del Pacífico Sur. Siglos Xviii Y Xix.” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 70, no. 2 (July-December 2013), p. 539). For biographic information, see: “Enrique Simpson Baeza”: <https://www.armada.cl/armada/tradicion-e-historia/biografias/s/enrique-simpson-baeza/2014-01-16/165301.html>

¹⁰⁹ This publication and its sponsoring institution, the Hydrographic Office of the Chilean Navy, will be discussed extensively in the third chapter of this investigation. For now, it suffices to say that the Hydrographic Yearbook was a yearly publication whose objective was to aggregate all the hydrographic explorations carried out by the Chilean navy in a given year, as well as including relevant and interesting expeditions carried out by navies of other nations.

¹¹⁰ Alberto Fagalde, commenting on Simpson’s exploration in 1901, saw in these instructions a “patriotic wish that guided the governors of that time to order the reconnaissance of the austral region, intent that was not continued with the perseverance and high national ends with which that study was started.” (Fagalde. *Magallanes: El País del Porvenir*, vol. 1, p. 222)

potential of these regions and their relation to the nation. At every step of the way, the captain offered assessments about the navigability of the waters of the Patagonian Channels. The Simpson reports extensively feature charts and tables of information such as air pressure, water temperature, bearings, climatology, coordinates, natural history, and even indigenous languages. Simpson also drew several maps of the locations he visited. His map of the coast around Melinka (Fig. 7) feature the transversal and vertically oriented cuts that were so typical of Humboldt's travel reports.¹¹¹ His map of the Aysén River (Fig. 8) is devoid of any information that denotes economic assessments. However, it does label the imaginary "Aysén Pass" which he believed offered an easy pass to the eastern Patagonian *pampas*, something that became a sort of obsession for him and will be fully analyzed in Chapters 3 and 4.

Simpson's reports showed a high awareness of the ground-breaking work he was realizing at the time. Upon reaching the San Rafael Lake and seeing the homonymous glacier that majestically dipped into its waters, he exclaimed "We are, thus, the only living beings that have seen this lagoon."¹¹² He also noted how, for example, his second expedition had surveyed and mapped 246 miles of channels where "before there did not

¹¹¹ Humboldt's diagram of a transversal cut of the Chimborazo volcano, published in 1807, has become famous as a way to describe Humboldt's intellectual project to hierarchically order his descriptions of Latin American nature and relate this to European projects of representation and colonization through the figure of the traveler-explorer. See Schauman, Caroline. "Who Measures the World? Alexander von Humboldt's Chimborazo Climb in the Literary Imagination" in *The German Quarterly*, vol. 82, no. 4 (Fall 2009), pp. 447-468 and Anthony, Patrick. "Vertical Thinking in the Time of Humboldt" published by the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (Berlin State Library), 2016, <http://blog.sbb.berlin/vertical-thinking-in-the-time-of-humboldt/>

¹¹² Simpson, Enrique. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco Al Mando Del Capitán De Fragata Don Enrique Simpson En Los Archipiélagos De Guaitecas, Chonos I Taitao." *Anuario Hidrográfico de la Marina de Chile*, vol. 1 (1875):, p. 95

exist even a sketch.”¹¹³ His voyage up the River Aysén was an unprecedented task at the time. It took him three tries to reach a point where he believed the Andes finally opened up to the sub-Andean valleys that connected to the *pampas* of eastern Patagonia. He described this as,

A feat that until now, nobody has undertaken, and it all the more notable for every step has been a discovery, without any past information with which to guide oneself; for where there do not exist inhabitants, there are neither footprints nor traditions. Upon undertaking the expedition we only knew that the Andes range had limits, and to these we had arrived.¹¹⁴

Subsequent explorers came to realize that he had unwillingly exaggerated the distances he travelled, and thus, did not quite make it to the openings that lead to the subsequently-named Simpson valley. This, however, did not dampen the jovial mood that Simpson described upon completing his third and final expedition up the Aysén. Reflecting on the expedition’s aspect upon returning from the depths of the Patagonian forest, he commented on their “pitiful” aspect, “looking more like beggars than marine soldiers,” adding that their moral was, on the other hand, very high.¹¹⁵

Simpson not only recorded a sense of personal achievement in his report, but he also related his exploration to a project of a national scale. He wrote about his trip up the Aysén, “may the experience gained, thus, not be lost, and that soon our Government take

¹¹³ Simpson. “Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco”, p. 47

¹¹⁴ Idem, p. 59

¹¹⁵ Idem, p. 59, 65. He describes the arrival to the ship after forty days in the Patagonian jungle: “But, in what state did we arrive? We were so tattered, dirty, and disarranged, that it caused us derision to look at ourselves in the mirror.” (Idem, pp. 64–65). About the importance of his voyage he added that “I consider, thus, that us, having crossed more than one hundred miles of mountain with only the resources of a ship, with no beasts of burden nor help of any kind, carrying through a great stretch our supplies and equipment in our back, have carried out an uncommon enterprise; being the result of three years of attempts, that have tested to the end our resolve and constance.” (Idem, p. 59)

advantage of the great advantages that this new route provides, in putting a vast and beautiful region under the effective empire of the laws of our Republic.”¹¹⁶ Simpson also reflected on past explorers’ achievements in his explorations. In an exploration of the Puyuhuapi channel, Simpson believed to have reached the spot where a Jesuit missionary had camped more than one hundred years earlier, in 1766. Simpson wrote that night that “There is something satisfactory in recognizing, in these solitudes, the steps of the soldiers of civilization,” adding that only an explorer like himself, even with the comforts that modern equipment provided him, could understand the suffering and privations that could be experienced in the pursuit of duty in such latitudes.¹¹⁷ A writer commenting on Simpson’s explorations 30 years later saw them as having given useful indications in the geographic and hydrographic sense, as well as in promoting the economic possibilities of this region, indications that “by disgrace were not followed [by the government], losing a precious opportunity to have settled with a smart and industrious colonization, our dominion in territories that today are disputed, that in actuality would be important population centers and powerful sources of national riches.”¹¹⁸

In the summer of 1885, Ramón Serrano Montaner (1848-1936)¹¹⁹, who had served aboard the Simpson expeditions, was commissioned by the Marine Ministry to

¹¹⁶ Simpson. "Exploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco", p. 59

¹¹⁷ Idem, p. 121

¹¹⁸ Fagalde. *Magallanes: El País del Provenir*, p. 227

¹¹⁹ There does not seem to be published work specifically relating to the life of Ramon Serrano. The National Library of Chile, in its website, has a short biographical article on his life. He was born in Melipilla (a town close to Santiago) in 1848. He served as a midshipman during the Simpson expeditions and afterwards participated in the War of the Pacific. During the time that he carried out his expeditions to the Palena River, he held the post of Sub-Director of the Hydrographic Office, working directly under the

explore the Palena River and the Fallos Channel. Serrano's expedition is all the more interesting because the Colonization Ministry specifically commissioned him to survey the mouth and lower valley of the Palena and assess the pros and cons of this location in relation to founding an agricultural colony. The results of the first Serrano expedition were published in the 11th volume of the Hydrographic Yearbook of the Navy, under the title "Reconocimiento del río Buta-Palena i del canal Fallos por el vapor de la República 'Toro'" (*Reconnaissance of the River Buta-Palena and the Fallos channel by the Republic's steam ship 'Toro'*). Serrano's report details the difficulty that the explorer and his team had going up a Patagonian river. Owing to his formation as a hydrographer, Serrano mostly focused on the navigability of the Palena River. He also included an 8-page assessment of the Palena River valley in terms of its economic and colonization potential, and the sorts of actions that he thought the government should carry out in this area. As with most other expedition reports to North Patagonia, Serrano included tables that detailed the temperature, atmospheric pressure, wind direction, and humidity; an index of the Patagonian channels, coves, and islands he explored; and a detailed report of the natural history of the area. Serrano also included a map of the Palena River and its valley that is more accurately described as a sketch (Fig. 9). This sketch only details the itinerary of his expedition and contains no other information such as distances or presence of natural resources.

orders of Francisco Vidal Gormaz. In 1890, he formed part of the Chilean Limits Commission in the background of the process of border delimitation with Argentina. After 27 years of service in the Navy, he retired in 1893, after which he served as a Minister of Parliament for districts in the south of Chile. For biographical information, see "Ramón Serrano Montaner" (https://www.bcn.cl/historiapolitica/resenas_parlamentarias/wiki/Ram%C3%B3n_Serrano_Montaner)

In the summer of 1887, the government commissioned Serrano to return to the Palena, and, in an exceptional chapter of the early history of North Patagonia, it used the two Serrano expeditions as the basis to found an agricultural colony in an island in the mouth of the Palena River in 1889. This was to be the first time that the Chilean government would try to establish a population center under its auspices in North Patagonia. This project turned out to be a complete failure, did not form the basis for any permanent population settlement, and the government would not attempt to directly install a colony in North Patagonia until 100 years later.¹²⁰ There is no known written report of the second Serrano expedition. The little information available of this report comes from the writings of a contemporaneous explorer who mentioned that it was only after Serrano's second expedition up the Palena that the government decided to establish a colony there.¹²¹ Only the report of the expedition's naturalist, Federico Delfin, exists. He published his report in the "Revista del Progreso" (*Magazine of Progress*), a mid-19th century publication, under the title "El Río Palena. Apuntes para su historia natural" (*The Palena River. Notes for its Natural History*). Delfin almost exclusively dedicated the pages of his report to describing the different species of flora and fauna that he ran into while the expedition was going up the Palena

¹²⁰ For documentation on the short-lived Palena colony, see Rosselot, Elias. "Memoria Del Inspector De La Colonia De Palena." edited by Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1893, pp. 167-75; Olivos, Carlos. "Memoria Del Director De La Colonia De Palena." edited by Inspeccion Jeneral de Tierras i Colonización. Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1899, pp. 51-64.; Briones Luco, Ramón. *Glosario De Colonización I Exposición De Las Leyes I Demás Antecedentes Relativos Al Despacho De Colonización, Hasta El 1 De Enero De 1900*. Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1900, pp. 557-568

¹²¹ Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, p. 227

The last important explorer of North Patagonia during this period, the one who has been written about the most, and the one who produced the largest amount of information, reports, and books about the subject, was Hans Steffen (1865-1935).¹²² Between 1892 and 1902, Steffen undertook eight exploration voyages up the major rivers

¹²² Hans Steffen was born in Brandenburg, Germany and earned a doctorate in history and geography in his home country. In 1889, contracted by the Chilean Government, he accepted a post as a docent in History and Geography in the Pedagogic Institute in Chile (A dependent institution of the University of Chile destined to the formation of secondary education teachers). Despite his position as a docent, Hans Steffen always demonstrated interest in carrying out geographic investigations on terrain. Steffen himself stated that his work as a docent "could not be less than an obstacle for the professor in his intentions to practice original geographic investigations and form disciples in this task." (Steffen. *Contribución de los alemanes al estudio de la geografía y geología de Chile durante el primer siglo de la independencia*. Extracted from Carrasco, Germán. *Hans Steffen: Perito, Geógrafo, Explorador, Experto en Límites*. Santiago: Instituto Geográfico Militar, 2002), p. 18). Thus in 1892, after a preliminary excursion to Lake Todos Los Santos, he was commissioned by Diego Barros Arana, the Chilean government's limits expert in the context of the border litigation with Argentina, to carry out a series of expeditions to North Patagonia with the objective of furthering the state's knowledge on the ground that could serve as help for the Chilean delimitation commissions. Steffen would extensively participate in the limits conflict with Argentina. After concluding his first seven expeditions, he would travel to London to serve as a technical consultant for the team that represented Chile in the arbitral tribunal. After 24 years of service for the Chilean government, and at age 48, Steffen would retire citing health reasons that arose from his incessant travelling and exploring. He continued publishing academic works after he retired, publishing more than 40 articles and books in both Spanish and German. He eventually moved back to Europe and spent his last years in Switzerland, where he died at age 72, "apparently single, without descendants, and with a precarious economic situation." (Carrasco. *Hans Steffen*, p. 20). For biographical information, see Carrasco. *Hans Steffen: Perito, Geógrafo, Explorador, Experto en Límites*. For a study of his work and explorations in relation to the Chilean nation, see Sanhueza, Carlos. "Un Saber Geográfico En Acción. Hans Steffen Y El Litigio Patagónico 1892-1902." *Magallania* 40, no. 1 (2012), pp. 21-44; Sanhueza. "El Objetivo Del Instituto Pedagógico No Es El De Formar Geógrafos. Hans Steffen Y La Transferencia Del Saber Geográfico Alemán a Chile. 1893-1907." *Historia* 45, no. 1 (Jan.-Jun. 2012), pp. 171-97; Pozo, José. "Hans Steffen: Maestro, Geógrafo Y Pionero De La Patagonia Occidental." *Universum* 1, no. 20 (2005), pp. 112-23.

of Northern Patagonia and their upper valleys.¹²³ Steffen's expeditions stand out in a variety of ways from all the ones carried out previously. First of all, Steffen was the first that went up a North Patagonian River past the sub-Andean valleys that existed in the eastern foothills of the Patagonian Mountain Range and reached the watershed divide around most of these. Second, Steffen's explorations existed not only under the framework of an accumulation of geographic and hydrographic knowledge in pursuit of science; he was specifically commissioned by the Chilean Limits Expert¹²⁴, Diego Barros Arana, to determine the watershed divide along most of the upper valleys of the great North Patagonian rivers, information that was specifically used to advance the Chilean position during the border conflict with Argentina. Steffen published many of his reports separately as articles in the Annals of the University of Chile. In 1909, he compiled the entirety of his travel reports in a two volume, 950-page collection titled "Viajes de exploracion i estudio en la Patagonia Occidental, 1892-1902" (*Exploration and Research*

¹²³ Steffen's exploration voyages are as follow:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Jan. - Feb. 1893 | - The mountainous region between the Reloncaví Sound and Lake Nahuel Huapi |
| Dec. 1893 - Mar. 1894 | - The Palena River |
| Jan. - Mar. 1895 | - The Puelo River |
| Jan. - Mar. 1896 | - The Manso River, a tributary of the Puelo |
| Dec. 1896 - May 1897 | - The Aysén River |
| Dec. 1897 - Jun. 1898 | - The Cisnes River |
| Dec. 1898 - May 1899 | - The Fjords between the 46° and 48° latitudes, the Baker River, Cochrane Lake, and the Patagonian plateaus between the 48° and 52° latitudes. |
| Mar. 1902 - Jun. 1902 | - Arbitral Inspection of the territories under litigation between Chile and Argentina |

¹²⁴ Limits expert ("*Perito de límites*") was a title bestowed by the Chilean government upon Diego Barros Arana, an important Chilean historian, pedagogue, and dean of the University of Chile at the time, in the context of the border delimitation process between 1881 and 1902. As a limits expert, his job was to formulate the Chilean thesis relating to the border issue, and commission explorations and border delimitation commissions that could help further the Chilean position in opposition to the Argentine thesis, looking towards an eventual British arbitration.

Voyages in Western Patagonia). In 1913, he published his monumental “Patagonia Occidental: Las cordilleras patagónicas y sus regiones circundantes” (*Western Patagonia: The Patagonian Mountains and their Surrounding Regions*), which spanned two volumes and 586 pages and represented the culmination of geographic knowledge about Northern Patagonia at the time.

Steffen saw his work as focused primarily on an objective surveying of the geography and topography of the region. In the beginning of the report of his first expedition, Steffen paraphrased a contemporaneous author and stated,

For this country [Chile], the time has passed in which quick and extensive reconnaissance voyages produced a considerable increase in the volume of our geographic knowledge; and that on the contrary, it would be convenient that from here on, geographers and travelers dedicated their activity to the special investigation and detailed and systematic study of more reduced regions.¹²⁵

To this he added that

our diary does not present those lively relations or entertaining relations that sometimes happen to the traveler and are looked for in works of this nature by some curious readers; we have preferred to give, following our itinerary, a simple topographical description of the regions traversed; inserting information referring to the physical geography and geology of them.¹²⁶

His writing about each river or geographic region he explored always began with an account of the history of previous explorations and writings related to it. Steffen was not a hydrographer; his explorations focused almost exclusively on the geography, topology, orography, and geology of the region. While Steffen certainly saw himself first and

¹²⁵ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, pp. 90-91

¹²⁶ Idem, p. 93

foremost as a geographer, he nonetheless included assessments of the economic possibilities of the regions he traversed, notes about the few people he ran into in his travels, and the region's relationship to the border treaties with Argentina.

Steffen prepared a large number of maps that were the first accurate depictions of the continental lands of North Patagonia. His map of the Puelo River (Fig. 10) stands in contrast to Vidal Gormaz's 1872 map of that same area in terms of the wealth of information that Steffen's includes. Not only is the Puelo River and the Manso, its tributary, drawn accurately, but so are the surrounding mountains. The patches labeled "*Inexplorado*" (Unexplored) stand out as islands in the map, instead of surrounding it, as in Vidal Gormaz's. Similarly, Steffen's map begins to record the few existing population centers, namely those around the Reloncaví Estuary and in the eastern sub-Andean valleys. Steffen's map of the Aysén River (Fig. 11) is much more developed than the Simpson map and not only shows the true course of the river and the exact position of its opening towards the east, but also includes the watershed of the Cisnes, a river that was hitherto entirely unexplored. Steffen's map of the Palena River (Fig. 12) is much more developed than Serrano's, as it includes a scale for distance and similarly follows the river up to the region of the watershed divide, marking the presence of the Argentine-founded "Corcovado" colony there.

Steffen described his expeditions as having the objective of “solving important hydrographic problems and prepare the future limits demarcation.”¹²⁷ However, Steffen’s writings inevitably evidence a partisan character at times; he was, after all, working under the payroll of the Chilean Government.¹²⁸ He was well aware of the political implications of his work as a geographer. The explorer described how Diego Barros Arana’s, the Chilean border expert, interpretation of the 1881 Border Treaty influenced the type of work he would carry out in the North Patagonian region. He stated that, due to Barros Arana’s insistence in precisely demarcating the watershed divide, a “general geographic investigation and a determination of the mountainous topography” in this region was of lesser interest to the Chilean expert.¹²⁹ Steffen added that,

Apart from that, according to the Chilean conception, the problem of the borders was never a ‘strictly geographic problem’, but rather a problem of juridical interpretation of the Treaties and the on-ground application, under any circumstance, of a dominating principle: the continental watershed divide.¹³⁰

Thus, Steffen was as much a geographer and explorer as he was an agent of the Chilean state with a vested interest in proving a geographic thesis that would result to be decisive in the awarding or losing, for the nation, of large swathes of territory in North Patagonia.

At the same time, Steffen extensively commented on the Argentine position during the border conflict, often times going beyond mere geographic remarks. Steffen

¹²⁷ Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. xvi

¹²⁸ “Steffen himself recognized, in a conference dictated in the Geographic society of Leipzig, in what way this limits issue, as well as possessing a political and state right interest, acquired a ‘geographic significance’”(Sanhueza. "Un Saber Geográfico En Acción", p. 22)

¹²⁹ Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. 14

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

quickly came to realize that the border issue would not be solved exclusively through scientific and geographical means; political considerations would gain importance, and he constantly commented on Chile's almost naïve position in many points during the conflict in contrast to the more aggressive Argentine position. Commenting on the Argentine tendency to hastily install small establishments and improvements along the border region that would later be abandoned in order to convince the British arbitration of their effective sovereignty in this region, Steffen wrote that "certain details and personal aspects, consciously or unconsciously play a role in the arbitral decisions."¹³¹ Steffen's memories of the Arbitral Tribunal in London, written towards the end of his life, are even more direct. Steffen remarked on "quite poor" Argentine arguments, their "extremely effective propaganda," the Argentine delegation's "activities of passionate aggression," and went as far as to accuse the Argentine limits expert, Francisco Moreno, of attracting the sympathies of the English arbiters, by describing Chile in "the role of fighter and disturber of the peace."¹³²

All in all, Steffen's legacy was celebrated during his life, and his explorations represent, to this day, a vast wealth of information for both the geography and topography of North Patagonia and a valuable contribution to the Chilean territorial possession in this region. A writer in 1901 described him as "the most prepared explorer and the most tenacious and intelligent that Western Patagonia has had. [...] His maps and reports

¹³¹ Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental: Las Cordilleras Patagónicas Y Sus Regiones Circundantes*. Vol. 2, Santiago: Ediciones de la Universidad de Chile, 1913, p. 440

¹³² Steffen. "Recuerdos del Tribunal Arbitral de Londres." *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, vol. 22-23, no. 3 (Apr. – Sept. 1936), pp. 242-256

denote a scientific spirit and a geographer so loving of the truth and so honest that he already has acquired an honorable place within modern explorers.”¹³³ Thomas Holdich, the British Royal arbiter who made the final decisions regarding the limits issue in 1902, described Steffen as having an “unrivalled” mix of geographic and practical knowledge, working as a “commissarial and transport officer combined whilst in Chilean territory, besides being guide and scientific adviser to the expedition.”¹³⁴ Holdich concluded that “the Chilean Government could have found no more earnest and capable advocate than this distinguished German professor.”¹³⁵ Carlos Sanhueza analyzed Steffen’s legacy within the context of a “scientific transference to political spheres” which “forced Hans Steffen to mobilize an ensemble of knowledge, linking both the requirements of who had contracted him as well as the demands of the geographic sciences of his time.”¹³⁶

These were the principal explorers of North Patagonia during this period. Their work, apart from being valuable *per se* in a scientific aspect, was also key in visualizing the North Patagonian region as part of the Chilean national territory. Their explorations inspired a wealth of literature written in the capital at the time that commented on them, their results, and their importance to the Chilean nation. At the same time, the explorers

¹³³ Fagalde. *Magallanes: El País del Provenir*, p. 254

¹³⁴ Holdich, Thomas. *The Countries of the King’s Award*. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1904: p. 382

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Sanhueza. “Un Saber Geográfico En Acción”, p. 42. Sanhueza adds that “The background of the limits dispute for Patagonia between Chile and Argentina was marked by the assumption that a political division could be constructed over the base of a natural frontier: What divided the Chilean-Argentine Patagonia: the high peaks of the mountains of the sources of its rivers? In this way, although the litigation was an affair of international politics, it had a strong scientific mark. In effect, what it was about was not so much of giving documentary evidence based on history, given that the Patagonian zone remained almost unknown in the colonial period, but instead of proving a geographic thesis.” (Idem, p. 41-42)

themselves were cataloging each other and commenting on each other's importance within the project of national expansion. While the focus of this investigation is in the cataloging that Chilean explorers, travelers, thinkers, and politicians carried out of North Patagonia during the second half of the 19th century, the explorers themselves held an important position in this process as both catalysts and protagonists of the creation of this corpus of knowledge that was being formed and debated about. By observing and selecting objects, subjects, situations, and phenomena for their commenting (or non-commenting), explorers were forming a specific representation of North Patagonia that could be put to the use of the burgeoning Chilean nation. In the words of Paulina Zuñiga and Andrés Núñez, “they were devices of power that deployed a geographic imaginary that projected and reflected the interests and expectations of the political center.”¹³⁷

The work and writings of explorers clearly embody what Zygmunt Bauman names the “power/knowledge syndrome.” Bauman explains that,

This syndrome was a joint product of two novel developments which took place at the beginning of the modern times: the emergence of a new type of state power with resources and will necessary to shape and administer the social system according to a preconceived model of order; and the establishment of a relatively autonomous, self-managing discourse able to generate such a model complete with the practices its implementation required.¹³⁸

In this sense, explorers and their reports represented a form of knowledge that went much beyond a mere “representation” of the land, water, flora, and fauna, as is so often

¹³⁷ Zuñiga, Paulina & Núñez, Andrés. “Dibujando los márgenes de la nación: relatos y discursos de los viajeros-exploradores de Patagonia-Aysén entre los siglos XIX-XX” in Núñez, Andrés; Aliste, Enrique; Bello, Álvaro; Osorio, Mauricio, ed *Imaginario Geográfico, Prácticos Y Discursos De Frontera: Aysén-Patagonia Desde El Texto De La Nación*. Santiago: Impresión Gráfica LOM, 2017, p. 94

¹³⁸ Bauman, Zygmunt. *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals*. Cambridge: Polity Pres, 1987, p. 2

described in contemporary analyses of their work. Whatever the concrete results of their work might have been (it must be remembered that by 1902, state presence in North Patagonia continued to be almost non-existent)¹³⁹, “this enterprise [geographic surveying] was considered of vital importance for the technical and rational administration of the national space.”¹⁴⁰ The following chapters explore the cataloging of the human and non-human elements and how this ordering necessarily related to the project of national expansion into North Patagonia. In reading and understanding this catalog, the relationships of explorers to the institutions of the nation-state cannot be forgotten as they serve to further highlight the sorts of connections that their reports, and works written in the capital that commented on them, had to the project of national expansion and consolidation into North Patagonia.

¹³⁹ “The geography and timing of the Patagonian region played a crucial role in making more complex the interaction between different sets of interests and persons. Contrary to the expectations of Argentina and Chile, the territory was not to become an unproblematic implantation of central national identifications.” (Harambour Ross, Alberto. “Region, Nation, State-Building. On the Configuration of Hegemonic Identities in Patagonia. Argentina and Chile, 1870s-1920s.” In *Regions of Culture - Regions of Identity/Kulturregionen - Identitätsregionen*, edited by Sibylle Baumbach. (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2010), p. 52)

¹⁴⁰ Serge, Margarita. *El Revés De La Nación: Territorios Salvajes, Fronteras Y Tierras De Nadie*. Bogotá: Ediciones Uniandes, 2011, p. 115

Chapter 2: The People

In December of 1871, Francisco Vidal Gormaz carried out a reconnaissance of Puluqui Island, right off the coast of the Main Island of Chiloé, in preparation for the upcoming expedition to the Puelo River. There, Vidal Gormaz observed the habit of the local *chilote*¹⁴¹ people of the *marisqueo* (shellfish recollection). This ancient custom involved waiting for the tide to recede and subsequently recollecting the shellfish that were left exposed by the low tide. This habit provided easy and abundant food to the inhabitants of Puluqui Island yet, for Vidal Gormaz, “this confirmed the idea already rooted in us about the laziness and lack of work habits of the islanders.”¹⁴² Upon hearing from the locals that every year the shellfish was less abundant, Vidal Gormaz stated the following opinion: “The decrease in shellfish is almost worth celebrating; for when it will lack, the pressing necessity of work which will make the islanders diligent will begin.”¹⁴³ The next day, Vidal Gormaz and his crew rested and docked their boats in the local beach. Once again, Vidal Gormaz commented on, and emphasized the alterity of, the locals, and the metaphorical gulf that separated his crew of sailors and scientists from them. He stated

The inhabitants that neighbored the lodging that we occupied made themselves present, attracted by the novelty of the boats or of the commission we had; for they could not understand the objective that the measurement of the beaches and the sounding of the estuaries could have, ‘a thing they had never seen nor heard their elders talk about.’ This circumstance made us note the hygiene of the attendants, odd thing in the other days, especially in the Puluqui Island; for it

¹⁴¹ Demyonym of the inhabitants of the Archipelago of Chiloé

¹⁴² Vidal Gormaz. "Esploracion De La Costa De Llanquihue." (1872), p. 238

¹⁴³ Idem, p. 239

seems that there is not water in this place and that the majority of its inhabitants have prohibited the comb from their homes. Here, ordinarily, everything is expected from providence: the tides provide the food and the rains, personal hygiene.¹⁴⁴

North Patagonia was not a region devoid of human presence during the mid-19th century. Throughout most of the archipelago region and the continental coast, and even in some parts of the interior, explorers saw *chilotes* engaged in seasonal economic activities. Similarly, many explorers saw traces of indigenous peoples or ran into small pockets of them. However, and at almost every point, explorers made sure to comment on the alterity and “backwardness” of these people. The clash between modern (or modernizing) and premodern modes of economic production, thought, transmission of knowledge, and social organization, seemed to permeate almost all interactions between locals and the explorers. Thus, the catalog of explorations to North Patagonia also reveals many attitudes that explorers from the central regions of the nation had about the people living in the margins, and how they could form a part, or not, in the national ordering.

Exploration reports, travelers’ chronicles, and contemporary literature written in the capital, all catalog human presence, traces, and influence in North Patagonia during the mid-19th century. With North Patagonia being a marginal region in Chile, the catalog of human presence and influence there boils down to a few specific groups and types of people. This catalog details, for example, the intimate relationship of the people of the archipelago of Chiloé to that region, acting as precursors to subsequent and more permanent population movements into the region; the presence (or lack thereof) of

¹⁴⁴ Vidal Gormaz. "Esploracion De La Costa De Llanquihue." (1872), pp. 239-240

indigenous peoples in this area and their relationship towards a state that was encroaching upon indigenous lands; and the mechanisms of transmission and importance of local knowledge, and how this contrasted and complemented the project of scientific surveying in the region. This allows for a reassessment of the presence of a human element in North Patagonia towards 1902. Instead of being a region “absolutely deserted” towards the end of the 19th century, as Adolfo Ibáñez argued in 1973, it becomes evident that explorers and writers represented North Patagonia with a scientific and nationalist discourse that “led [...] to make invisible a comprehension of the space from a nomadic perspective and, due to the same, to silence and empty these occupations.”¹⁴⁵ This can be inserted within a national project of representing North Patagonia in a way that highlighted, as Andrés Núñez has argued, “the necessity of counting with unpopulated spaces to justify their incorporation to the nation.”¹⁴⁶

A fundamental thread that runs throughout the descriptions of human presence and activity in North Patagonia is a tension between modern, scientific, analytical, and positivist modes of thought and organization, and premodern, oral-tradition based, uncodified, and marginal modes. Throughout the second half of the 19th century, science was imagined as a tool that could be put to the service of the consolidation and expansion

¹⁴⁵ Ibáñez. "La Incorporación De Aisén a La Vida Nacional, 1902-1936.", p. 260; Núñez, Andrés; Aliste, Enrique; Bello, Álvaro & Molina, Raúl. "Silencios Geográficos En Patagonia-Aysén: Territorio, Nomadismo Y Perspectivas Para Re-Pensar Los Márgenes De La Nación En El Siglo Xix." *Magallania* 44, no. 2 (2016), p. 109

¹⁴⁶ Núñez et. al. "Silencios Geográficos En Patagonia-Aysén", p. 111.

of the young Chilean nation. Zenobio Saldivia described the relationship of positivist science in Chile to the national project as,

Given that at the same time that the task of a diagnosis of the biotic and inorganic universe of the Republic is carried out, an imaginary about the physical and even social body of the nation becomes configured, which facilitates the identification of Chile as a country and articulates the nation-state by virtue of the theoretical, graphic, and statistical material of the differing mediums of diffusion of the time.¹⁴⁷

Despite the fact that many explorers presented this region as fundamentally devoid of human presence and ripe for exploring, surveying, cataloging, and subsequently, colonizing, North Patagonia bore the marks and traces of groups of people who were not yet completely integrated into the modern ordering of the Chilean state. Thus, at every moment, scientific surveying necessarily came into contact with peoples who were described as having premodern, traditional, and even “backwards” ways.

Geographic expeditions became the backdrop to the introduction of the modern state in this region and its imposition over premodern modes of thought and organization. To use Winichakul’s concept, this was the site of a collision between “premodern and modern discourses” where the Chilean state and its agents necessarily had to displace existing discourses with modern ones imposed by the center in order to insert this territory within the ordering of the Chilean nation.¹⁴⁸ Mary Louise Pratt studied travel

¹⁴⁷ Saldivia. "El Positivismo Y Las Ciencias En El Período Finisecular Del Chile Decimonónico." *Araucaria. Revista Iberoamericana de Filosofía, Política y Humanidades* 13, no. 25 (2011), p. 192

¹⁴⁸ “Geography is regarded here as a kind of mediator. It is not a given object ‘out there.’ It is a kind of knowledge, a conceptual abstraction of a supposedly objective reality, a systematic set of signs, a discourse. The strategy of this study is to analyze the premodern and modern discourses and then to detect the moments when the new and the old discourses collided. Those moments were in fact the politico-

writing and its relationship to empire and reached the conclusion that “Ideologically, the vanguard’s task is to reinvent America as backward and neglected, to encode its non-capitalist landscapes and societies as manifestly in need of the rationalized exploitation the Europeans bring.”¹⁴⁹ Thus, rather than being portrayed as a necessarily deserted region, the catalog of explorations of North Patagonia in the 19th century depicts it as populated by premodern and backwards individuals whom the state needed to rein in by the implantation of inspectors, tax collectors, land surveyors and a rational economic organization, for example. This became a testament to the reach and limits of the project of scientifically cataloging Northern Patagonia, and the relationships that emerged between explorers, the subjects they studied, and the expanding Chilean nation.

semiological operations in which the new discourse threatened and displaced the existing one. They occurred whenever the notions of geography, boundary, territorial sovereignty, and margin were in conflict. Those moments could appear in every sort of social activity: diplomatic relations, scientific observations, correspondences, travels, textbooks, warfare, and, of course, surveys and mapmaking. They could take place anywhere from the palace’s study room to the jungle on a remote border. Those moments of collision can be determined by locating the events in which ambiguous meanings about space were signified, since the confronting discourses were playing upon the same field of terminology and practices. The relations between mapping and military force are emphasized here as the mutual operation of knowledge and power in executing the truth of geographical knowledge.” (Winichakul. *Siam Mapped*, p. 18)

¹⁴⁹ Pratt. *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 148-149

Chilotes – People of the Sea, People of the Forest¹⁵⁰

No other human group in North Patagonia during this period was recorded and commented on more amply than the inhabitants of the Archipelago of Chiloé.¹⁵¹ Despite the fact that explorers constantly portrayed North Patagonia as a deserted or uninhabited region, the mark of *chilote* presence was a constant in every exploration voyage.¹⁵² True, their presence in the waters and coasts of North Patagonia responded mostly to century-old patterns of seasonal economic exploitation of lumber, fish, shellfish, and occasionally, mineral, deposits in coastal regions accessible by boat.¹⁵³ These seasonal

¹⁵⁰ Rolando Burgos described their relationship to North Patagonia during the 19th century in the following way “in the southern insular area, the *chilote* imposes himself over the diverse Indian groups and transforms himself in the lord of the islands and channels, in the interior of the southern provinces and in the virgin continental territories of Aysén and Magallanes, the *chilotes* end up sharing and coexisting with colonists from other backgrounds, generally their employers and entrepreneurs. The islanders move behind the steps of the European colonists that, possessing the capital, the ideas, and the entrepreneurial spirit, lack in aptitudes to confront the hostile nature and climate for which the *chilote* resulted to be a skilled and unreplaceable helper.” (Burgos, Rolando. “Chiloé, Foco de Emigraciones” in Vásquez, Isidoro, ed. *Chiloé Y Su Influjo En La Xi Región*, Ii Jornadas Territoriales. Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1988, p. 41)

¹⁵¹ To this day, Chilean history writing about Chiloé is minimal in relation to the importance of this archipelago in its larger regional context. Diego Morales states “The historiographical preoccupation about the historical development of the Archipelago of Chiloé has been scarce, even for the fields that have received a greater study such as its singular cultural features and religious expressions.” (Morales, Diego. “El Negocio De La Madera: Comerciantes Y “Hacheros” De Chiloé, 1850-1875.” 42, no. 2 (2014), p. 41). For a general study of Chiloé and its people around the time that this investigation studies, see Schwarzenberg, Jorge. *Monografía geográfica e histórica del archipiélago de Chiloé*. Santiago: Editorial Nascimento, 1926. For a more recent study on Chiloé, its people, its culture, and general history, see Lagos, Ovidio. *Chiloé, un mundo separado*. Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 2006

¹⁵² Vicente Pérez Rosales described Northern Patagonia in 1857 as a “deserted region” (Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo Sobre Chile*, p. 274). Captain Simpson, in his first trip in 1870, stated, about the lower valley of the Aysén River, “I can, thus, affirm without fear of contradiction, that never has man stepped these solitudes before us.” (Simpson. “Exploraciones hechas por la Corbeta Chacabuco.”, p. 18). Carlos Olivos writes in 1899 that “the coast from Puerto Montt to the south is absolutely uninhabited: neither foreigners nor nationals are interested in establishing in it.” (Olivos. “Memoria del Director de la Colonia del Palena”, p. 64)

¹⁵³ “The territory of Chiloé, in general, presents itself until now as a *giver*, transitory or definitely, of population or *labor*. This must not be considered, by itself, as negative, before analyzing the possible

migrations almost never resulted in the establishing of any permanent settlements in North Patagonia. However, there are scattered pieces of evidence that point towards a few incipient population centers established by *chilotes* in the northernmost margins of the North Patagonian region, more specifically in the coasts of the Reloncaví Sound, and towards the end of the 19th century, in parts of the continental coast directly in front of the Main Island of Chiloé, such as the mouth of the Chaitén and Yelcho Rivers.¹⁵⁴

convenience that this “export” has, as a flexibly territorial-dynamic system of migration to solve socioeconomic problems both in Chiloé itself and in the territories of destination.” (Munizaga, Carlos. “Antropología Cultural” in *Chiloé y su influjo en la XI región*, p. 68). María Ximena Urbina explains this phenomenon in the following way: “*Chilotes* took advantage of the continental mountains since the end of the 16th century, when the demand for Alerce began in Chile and Perú. But that cold and inhospitable forest did not possess that mysterious meaning that the insular mountains had for the island dweller, populated by mythological beings and to which he approached carefully. Also because of this, he became, without any qualms, into the predator of the continent, although he did not colonize it and did not do so for the same reasons that he did not colonize the interior of the Main Island [of Chiloé] and the western coast of the aforementioned, that is, because of the ruggedness and steepness of the lands; because of the inexistence of places favorable for human habitability and agriculture; due to the rougher climate than in the islands; because of the copious rains; because of the solitude of those landscapes; and due to the little disposition of *chilotes* towards the continent. Because of this, there only existed temporary lumber camps while the economic operations lasted. The skirts of the [Patagonian] Mountain Range stayed deserted and without any stable population until the beginning of the 20th century.” (Urbina, María Ximena. “Análisis Histórico-Cultural Del Alerce En La Patagonia Septentrional Occidental, Chiloé, Siglos Xvi Al Xix.” *Magallania* 39, no. 2 (2011), p. 68). This is true only in a general sense, as *chilote* seasonal operations did lead to the formation of very small permanent settlements in specific areas, as seen in the following footnote.

See Morales. “El Negocio De La Madera”; Urbina, María Ximena. “Análisis Histórico-Cultural Del Alerce En La Patagonia Septentrional Occidental.”, for detailed analyses about the prevailing modes of production of the lumber industry in Chiloé during the 19th century. Although these studies refer mostly to the lumber industry, they nonetheless give a sense of the general modes of production that predominated in this archipelago at the time.

¹⁵⁴ Mateo Martinic has described *chilote* presence in North Patagonia up until the beginning of the 20th century in the following manner: “The hunters and fishers of Chiloe must have been the first, authentically pioneers, in the economic exploitation of the future territory of Aysén. But their activity, with all the importance it could have had, was characterized by a periodic coming and going, which did not allow a population settling in a stable and permanent mode. Hence that presence must be taken as an expression of a mere precolonial advance.” (Martinic. *De la Trapananda al Aysén*, p. 203). Steffen describes the process by which seasonal *chilote* activities, mostly lumber operations, could eventually lead to the forming of incipient population centers in the following way: “As starting points for the modern colonization of some parts of the continent, we must first consider Chiloé and the Islands of the Gulf of Reloncaví, especially Huar Island. The *chilotes* – within which we can distinguish various types according to the predominance of the Spanish or indigenous element – carried out from very early on, incursions towards the coasts on dry

Notwithstanding their nomadic patterns, chroniclers and explorers at the time noted their presence and tracks all over the North Patagonian region. Through the cataloging of *chilote* presence, their travels, economic activities, culture, and beliefs, explorers and writers constructed North Patagonia as a region intimately connected to Chiloé, and by extension, to the nation at large. At the same time, *chilote* culture seemed to stand in stark contrast to explorer's scientific mission; their highly idiosyncratic ways and attachment to tradition was a clear mark of difference that separated them from these agents of the state.

One element that has to be taken into account when reading into descriptions of *chilotes* in mid-19th century traveler accounts is the unique place that Chiloé and its society occupies within the national ordering. For many reasons, “from 1826 until the mid-20th century, Chiloé constituted a world apart.”¹⁵⁵ According to Sergio Mansilla Torres, one of the most important *chilote* writers of the 20th century, this is due to a sum

land [continental lands of North Patagonia] that are of very easy access to them, with the intention of exploiting the forests of alerce and cypress, looking for pastures for their cattle, hunting seals, recollecting shellfish and fishing. Just like it occurs in our days, oftentimes, various families would gather in great sailboats, with means of subsistence for various months, establishing themselves during the summer in a hidden corner of some fjord to head on from there to their work in the mountains. These temporal and occasional residences very often gave origin to permanent populations like the ones we observed in the coasts of the Reloncaví fjord, in Ralún, and in the mouth of the Puelo River, where the houses and farms already cover a couple of kilometers inland. Also in the mouth of the Reñihue, in the Chaitén, in the Corcovado, and in the lower course of the Aysén, some *chilote* families have established in a permanent manner. The rest of the coast up until the Última Esperanza channel is unpopulated and is only visited in the summer by lumberjacks, fishermen and seal hunters, coming from the southern part of Chiloé and, in part, Punta Arenas.” (Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, pp. 48-49). Mauricio Osorio explains that “Oral accounts – certainly corroborated by the exploration reports of the period – inform us that *chilotes* initiate an incipient populating of the coastal zone [of the modern-day Aysén Region], subject to the vicissitudes of extractive labors.” (Osorio. "Aysén Territorio Y Aysén Humanidad" In *Otras Narrativas En Patagonia*, p. 14)

¹⁵⁵ Mansilla Torres, Sergio. "Las Islas De Chiloé En El Mundo Global: Poesía, Identidad Y Territorio." *Cahiers de Amériques Latines* 41 (2002), p. 138

of different factors. First, Chiloé, since the founding of its capital Castro in 1567, was always more connected to the Viceroyalty of Perú rather than the Capitaney General of Chile, and depended administratively on the former from 1786 to 1824.¹⁵⁶ Commenting on the different social and political developments in Chiloé during the colonial era in comparison to the rest of Chile, especially the absence of a continuous war between the Spanish and the indigenous tribes and the presence of an important Jesuit element, Mansilla Torres described Chiloé as “one of the most hispanized colonial territories of South America.”¹⁵⁷ Chiloé in fact only submitted to the nascent Chilean nation (who achieved its full independence from Spain in 1818) in 1826, becoming the last Spanish holdout in South America. Second, the physical isolation of Chiloé bred a very different culture than in the rest of Chile. The lack of regular communications, both within the archipelago of Chiloé and with the rest of the mainland,

Stimulated the consolidation of an autarkic subsistence economy and of diverse cultural practices inherited from the colony [...], practices that resulted to be crucial to maintain the social and cultural continuity of the islands, almost entirely at the margin of what happened in the rest of the country.¹⁵⁸

Finally, the natural riches of the earth and land that were available to *chilotes* without the need of any sort of industrial development sentenced this archipelago to a subsistence economy, with emigration towards new lands such as Patagonia being the only form of breaking this productive cycle.¹⁵⁹ The conjuncture of these historical factors “brought as a consequence the almost complete margination of Chiloé from the modernizing

¹⁵⁶ Mansilla Torres. "Las Islas De Chiloé En El Mundo Global: Poesía, Identidad Y Territorio.", p. 138

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

processes of the 19th and 20th centuries.”¹⁶⁰ Thus, although the *chilote* was a Chilean citizen with full rights, he existed on a different plane in the eyes of someone from Santiago, for example. Because of this, travel reports from the 19th century consciously and unconsciously “other” the *chilote*, highlighting his alterity, and introducing him as a marginal element within Chilean society.

Explorers, travelers, and writers during the mid-19th century actively cataloged the characteristics of *chilotes* they saw and met. Physically, they appeared small and malnourished; many reports attributed this to their diet which seemed to consist almost exclusively of *harina tostada* (toasted flour).¹⁶¹ Despite this, reports described them as having great strength and endurance. For example, several writers commented on the fact that *chilotes* would penetrate deep into the thick temperate rainforest completely barefoot,

¹⁶⁰ Mansilla Torres. "Las Islas De Chiloé En El Mundo Global: Poesía, Identidad Y Territorio.", p. 138

¹⁶¹ Toasted Flour forms part of the culinary heritage of the *mapuche* people, indigenous to the south of Chile. It is prepared by toasting different grains and cereals, and then grinding it to a flour-like consistency. The toasted flour is then mixed with water and sugar to make a thick, energy-dense, porridge. Vicente García Huidobro wrote in 1864: “they are seen climbing high hills with nothing more than their axe, opening their way through a thick bamboo forest, working all day in cutting wood and fed solely with toasted flour, and then when one would believe their strength to be extenuated, they come down singing and pacing with a bundle of 25 or more planks [of wood] on their shoulder or with a great piece of alerce to their place of lodging.” (García Huidobro, Carlos. "Viaje a Las Provincias Meridionales De Chile." *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, vol. 25 (July-December 1864), p. 443). Carlos Juliet, the naturalist on board Vidal Gormaz’s expeditions around the Reloncaví Sound and Estuary noted that “it is almost incomprehensible how such human beings can exist, that during 15, 20, or more days, do not eat another thing than a small amount of wheat flour mixed with flaxseed [...] As a result of this awful diet, they are victims of a emaciation whose cause one does not have to guess.” (Vidal Gormaz. *Exploracion De La Costa E Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, p. 90). Guillermo Pendavis, the doctor on board Enrique Simpson’s ship noted how their physical build indicated that they were descendants of the *Chonos* tribe, and how their physiognomy “is not beautiful, nor does it indicate intelligence.” He noted, however, that “For their size, these men are capable of lifting great weights, and can stand many hardships. Their food consists principally of toasted wheat, potatoes, seafood and fish, outside of these articles they know almost no other class of food.” (Simpson. "Exploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco ", p. 107)

or in the best of cases binding leather wraps called *ojotas* to their feet.¹⁶² Regarding this, Guillermo Cox painted the following scene:

It is incredible how these peons bear fatigue; the Turks are men of a proverbial strength, but I believe that they would confess themselves defeated in the presence of our *chilotes*; these would take a handful of toasted flour with water in the morning, would take another handful to strengthen themselves along the path, would fit their *ojotas* of fresh leather and would later begin the march with an agile foot, a cheerful heart, and 75 pounds on their shoulder.¹⁶³

Writers also commented on their psychological character. Carlos García Huidobro named humility, submissiveness, obedience, and hard work as some of their defining features.¹⁶⁴

Carlos Juliet, the naturalist on board the Vidal Gormaz expedition in 1871, noted their “benign character” that “soon attracts the sympathies of the traveler.”¹⁶⁵ Many writings at the time duly noted their fame as travelers and nomads.¹⁶⁶ These positive characteristics

¹⁶² This custom of using less than adequate footwear seemed to not bother the *chilotes* too much. Vidal Gormaz related a passage where: “Halfway through, and when we were passing a tedious dry patch of bamboo, whose sharp tips presented themselves as bayonets, the guides found the footprints or trace of a wild bull, and hastily dropping their packs, asked for permission to catch it. [...] two of our men carrying the same number of leashed mastiffs, launched themselves like a dart through the horrible forest we were walking through. It is not possible to describe the agility and sheer audacity of these peoples to run such a dangerous path with all the celerity of a race.” (Vidal Gormaz. *Exploracion De La Costa E Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, p. 16)

¹⁶³ Cox. *Viaje En Las Rejiones Septentrionales De La Patagonia*, p. 39

¹⁶⁴ García Huidobro. “Viaje a Las Provincias Meridionales De Chile”, p. 443.

¹⁶⁵ Vidal Gormaz. *Exploracion De La Costa de Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, p. 91

¹⁶⁶ Carlos Juliet described this the following way: “they have much attachment to the wandering life, being almost always accompanied by their wife and children. The sea is their element; the strongest storms are not capable of intimidating them, and they are often seen plowing through the foamy waves of the ocean in fragile vessels.” (Ibid.) García Huidobro described *chilote* seafaring culture in the following manner: “Here we have the sailor by inclination, by instinct, by birth and even by destiny.” (García Huidobro. “Viaje a Las Provincias Meridionales De Chile”, p. 443). Vicente Pérez Rosales carried out an excellent characterization of their sailing skills when he stated, “The *chilote* does not have an outstanding build, but is well constituted and possesses a great agility. He is not only the foremost sailor of the Republic, but also of Southern America. Habituated since his most tender infancy to the dangers of the sea, he has, to face them, a cold blood that exceeds the limits of valor and borders on the reckless. Lord Cochrane, one of the most distinguished sailors of his century, had the occasion of having *chilotes* under his command, during the independence war, and has qualified them as one the quickest and most intrepid sailors of the world.” (Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 283). Chilotes were such good sailors, that many of them did not

that explorers mentioned were, coincidentally, all useful for their expeditions and the project of national expansion, and many descriptions of *chilotes* can be simultaneously read as a sort “noble savage” trope. García Huidobro commented that “Despite their ignorance and their way of life, I have never met people as good or honest.”¹⁶⁷ Through their physical resistance, stoic character, and exceptional seafaring skills, *chilotes* became protagonists in the saga of the discovery and incorporation of North Patagonia to the Chilean nation. At the same time, however, they represented a clear counterpart to the explorers, who represented the spirit of modernization that the Chilean nation wanted to expand into the southern regions.

Despite these characteristics, and owing to their marginal character within the Chilean nation and society, reports also described *chilotes* as a highly backwards people. Their habit of causing widespread destruction of the natural environment during their working season is one trait that is common to every single travel report during this period and that will occupy a subsequent section of this investigation.¹⁶⁸ Similarly, many writers described their character as both ignorant and immoral.¹⁶⁹ Simpson, for example, wrote about their pre-capitalist modes of production, based on bare subsistence and dominated

know how to swim. René Peri states that “[The *chilote*] has always been a good sailor to such a point that few know how to swim precisely for their capacity in the art of navigation.” (Peri, René. “Poblamiento y Migración” in *Chiloé Y Su Influjo En La Xi Región*, p. 47). Hans Steffen, during his expedition noted, during an episode where the expedition’s boat capsized, that one of his peons simply held on to the warp that guided the vessel to land, “for not knowing how to swim, as the greater part of our *chilotes*” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. 215)

¹⁶⁷ García Huidobro. “Viaje a Las Provincias Meridionales De Chile”, p. 454

¹⁶⁸ Refer to chapter 5 of this investigation for a detailed analysis of the cataloging of environmental destruction by part of *chilotes* in explorer reports.

¹⁶⁹ García Huidobro related their “state of physical annihilation” as a leading cause of their poor moral state, adding to this, their living “in the most complete ignorance.” (García Huidobro. “Viaje a Las Provincias Meridionales De Chile”, p. 453-454)

by exploitative creditors who pulled the strings of their existence, as the cause of such ills as their laziness or tendency to destroy their natural environment.¹⁷⁰ At times, their backwardness could translate to violence and crime. Felipe Westhoff¹⁷¹, the marine subdelegate of the Guaitecas archipelago, wrote a report to the governor of Chiloé in 1867, noting that the influx of seasonal workers from Chiloé in the summer “has been the occasion of violence, abuse, murders, and other crimes that the local authority has not been able to prevent due to the lack of an armed force to its disposition.”¹⁷² Mary Louise Pratt identifies this sort of discourse in many travel writings in South America throughout the 18th and 19th century, stating that “The failures of Spanish American economic life are diagnosed in this literature not simply as the refusal to work, but also more specifically as

¹⁷⁰ “I well know that the majority of the current entrepreneurs would be opposed to any sort of regulation, as it would run the truly feudal present system in which the [*chilote*] lumberjacks are kept in, to the ground; this being one of the causes of the moral and material prostration of the people of Chiloé.” (Simpson. “Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco”, p. 107). Simpson also noted how their mode of production, centered not on capitalist accumulation, but on working just enough to pay off their debts from the previous year to usurious lenders, only to repeat this the following year, led him to see many idle *chilotes* in their work places, who explained to the captain that “we have already fulfilled [our work obligations]”. (Idem, p. 78)

¹⁷¹ The story of Westhoff is an oddity within the larger saga of the exploration and colonization of Northern Patagonia, but is nonetheless telling of the state of the region by the late 1860’s. Details about Westhoff’s early life are murky; he has often times been described as Russian or Lithuanian, but in reality was a native of Westphalia. Sometime in the mid-19th century, he relocated to South America to work for a company involved in the construction of the Lima-Callao railroad line, the first in the continent. The search for good wood for use in the railroad industry led him to the Guaitecas archipelago where he established a small post in Asunción Island in 1859 that was to serve as a place to store logs and as a launching pad for seasonal wood extraction operations to the various islands of the archipelago and the continental coasts. He named the post Melinka, and this eventually became the first permanently populated place in North Patagonia south of the 42° parallel that there is a written record about. For more information about Westhoff, see Martinic. *De la Trapananda al Aysén*, pp. 206-207; 792-793; Morales, Diego. “El Negocio De La Madera: Comerciantes Y “Hacheros” De Chiloé.”, pp. 44, 56

¹⁷² Westhoff, Felipe. “Memoria Del Subdelegado Marítimo Del Archipiélago De Los Chonos O Guaitecas.” *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, vol. 29, no. 7 (July 1867), p. 450

the failure to rationalize, specialize, and maximize production.”¹⁷³ Thus, following Pratt’s explanation, despite all the positives that were described about premodern populations (think about the endurance of *chilotes* and their exceptional navigation skills), the catalog of *chilote* presence in this region is quick to essentialize this population based off a few condemning statements. “Such, however, is the immense flexibility of this normalizing, homogenizing rhetoric of inequality. It asserts its power over anyone or any place whose lifeways have been organized by principles other than the maximizing, rationalizing mechanisms of industrial production and the manipulations of commodity capitalism,” sentences Pratt.¹⁷⁴

One of the most recurring characterizations of *chilotes* that explorers and writers during this period made is related to their rich cultural repertoire. Even to this day, Chiloé is considered a living depositary of folklore and mythology that stands out in comparison to the rest of the Chilean nation due to its abundance and persistence.¹⁷⁵ Diverse authors such as Cox, García Huidobro, Vidal Gormaz, Simpson, Serrano, and Steffen, all cataloged *chilotes* as an eminently superstitious people.¹⁷⁶ These beliefs often times seemed to compete with the explorers’ belief in empirical and scientific observations.

¹⁷³ Pratt. *Imperial Eyes*, p. 148

¹⁷⁴ *Idem*, p. 150

¹⁷⁵ For more detailed studies about the rich cultural dimension of Chiloé, see Munizaga, Carlos.

“Antropología Cultural” and Dannemann, Manuel. “La Actitud Mítica en Chiloé”, both in *Chiloé Y Su Influjo En La XI Región*; Urbina, Rodolfo. “Notas sobre la religiosidad popular en Chiloé del siglo XIX: lo sagrado y lo profano en las fiestas patronales.” in *Academia Chilena de la Historia, Vida rural en Chile durante el siglo XIX*. Santiago: Academia Chilena de la Historia, 2001, pp. 141–173; Marino, Mauricio & Osorio, Cipriano. *Chiloé, cultura de la madera: Proceso a los brujos de Chiloé*. (Ancud: Imprenta Condor, 1983)

¹⁷⁶ Vidal Gormaz recorded, for example, many of the rituals that *chilote* fishermen had in the setting out and using of their fishing corrals, noting that their intricacy and outdatedness “bordered on the ridiculous.” (Vidal Gormaz. “Esploracion De La Costa De Llanquihue.” (1872), p. 343)

Vidal Gormaz (1872) noted how his *chilote* pack men interpreted the nine different songs of the Chucao (*scelorchilus rubecula*) bird as omens of different kinds, reporting that

the people had more faith in the song of the Chucao than in the indications of the metallic barometer we carried with us; but in the long run they believed to observe that the former and the latter equally acknowledged the weather forecasts, for which in brief time it became a saying among them that 'the Chucao is going hand in hand with the metric system', name with which they baptized the aneroid.¹⁷⁷

Records of these sorts of omens and superstitions can be regarded as a veritable ethnographic catalog compiled by explorers and travelers.¹⁷⁸ At times, the strong belief in myths and superstitions by part of the *chilote* population came into direct conflict with the scientific orientation of the explorers. Serrano Montaner (1885) noted how, upon passing by Quehui Island *en route* to the River Palena,

many assured us, upon knowing the objective of the expedition, that something would happen to us that would impede our reaching the source of the river; and that, in case of reaching it, we would not come back, because it was enchanted; and they would incite the sailors to abandon the ship and not expose themselves to dying in the effort of reaching a place defended by the devil.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Vidal Gormaz. "Esploracion De La Costa De Llanquihue." (1872), p. 283

¹⁷⁸ Cox, for example, wrote a detailed account of the myths and stories that the *chilote* pack men would tell by the fire; stories about forest gnomes, sea sirens, and sorcerers, adding that "if it would have been up to Pedro [the narrator], he would have never finished with his narrations." (Cox. *Viaje En Las Rejiones Septentrionales De La Patagonia*, pp. 57-62). Vidal Gormaz also recorded descriptions and conversations about *camahuetos* (a sort of half-bull, half-mermaid with a prominent horn on its head) and *challancos* (a special mirror that sorcerers would use to cast their spells). (Vidal Gormaz. "Esploracion De La Costa De Llanquihue" (1872), p. 292). Enrique Simpson similarly recorded how *chilotes* would set fire to forests as a way to call for rain (Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas por la Corbeta Chacabuco", pp. 123-124)

¹⁷⁹ Serrano Montaner, Ramón. "Reconocimiento Del Río Buta-Palena I Del Canal Fallos Por El Vapor De La República 'Toro'." *Anuario Hidrográfico de la Marina de Chile*, vol. 11 (1886), p. 107

Eight years later, Hans Steffen (1893) described the persisting difficulty in hiring pack men and rowers in Chiloé for his expedition up the Palena, noting “a veritable fear” amongst people to travel towards that place.¹⁸⁰

Descriptions of *chilotes* exploiting the economic resources of the islands and coasts of North Patagonia undoubtedly occupy the largest amount of space in travel reports and books when describing these people. Although *chilotes* often travelled from their Archipelago in the summer to carry out fishing trips, shellfish recollection, sea lion hunting operations, and even cattle herding, the line of work that undisputedly attracted the largest amount of people was lumber exploitation.¹⁸¹ As will be seen throughout this investigation, *chilote* lumberjacks were sighted and left traces along virtually the entirety of the North Patagonian archipelagos and coasts. Similarly, they appeared to be the first people who ventured a few miles up the main rivers. Simpson (1872) stated that “truly, traces of these [lumberjacks] can be seen everywhere, in the form of burnt forest.”¹⁸² Steffen described the exploitation of lumber as “the principal economic activity of the valleys in the western side [of the Patagonian Mountain Range],” adding that “the *chilotes*

¹⁸⁰ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. 182

¹⁸¹ “But, the *chilote* is not a farmer. Working in the forests of his inexhaustible jungles, is how he provides himself with everything he needs for his support and that of his family.” (Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo Sobre Chile*, p. 277). Vidal Gormaz commented, in 1872, about how he saw children as young as 14, and men as old as 65, participating in arduous lumber extraction operations. Similarly, he saw women participating in lumber extraction operations carrying out the same type of work that men did, sometimes even at a swifter pace than their male counterparts. (Vidal Gormaz. “Exploracion De La Costa De Llanquihue.” (1872), pp. 280, 281-282)

¹⁸² Simpson. “Exploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco”, pp. 69-70

have since centuries past traversed the[se] forests.”¹⁸³ When explorers did not see lumberjacks in person, they often saw the scars and traces of their operations.¹⁸⁴ On other occasions, they spotted them directly.¹⁸⁵ Explorers almost always described their operations as precarious, which was a direct consequence of the low pay they received for their work, the physical demand that this work entailed, and the long distances they had to travel in small boats over rough waters.¹⁸⁶ This way, North Patagonia bore the marks of *chilote* influence not only through its human presence and its cultural sphere, but also through its material dimension.

¹⁸³ Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental* Vol. 1, p. 292. Steffen described “the coasts of Reloncaví, the lower Puelo, etc., as well as the valleys that descend onto the Comau and Reñihue fjords and the Bays of Chaiten and Yelcho or towards the Corcovado and Lower Palena” as well as “all the area of port [Chacabuco, at the mouth of the Aysén River]”, and all the openings and estuaries and openings around the Aysén river, as being centers, both ancient and current, of lumber exploitation by part of *chilote* lumberjacks (Ibid.; Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 401; Steffen. *Viajes De Exploración I Estudio En La Patagonia Occidental 1892-1902*. Vol. 2, Santiago: Imprenta Cervantes, 1909, p. 103).

¹⁸⁴ Steffen saw traces of *chilote* lumberjacks in the Las Hualas Range along the mouth of the Puelo River, stating that this “could be recognized in the paths of old burns in the mountain skirts.” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. 188). Other times, the temporary dwellings that *chilote* lumberjacks built for their seasonal operations stood as a testament to their reach. Serrano noted how eight miles up the Palena River, he and his crew “found a small shack built by the axemen of Chiloé that tend, although rarely, to reach here.” (Serrano Montaner. “Reconocimiento Del Río Buta-Palena I Del Canal Fallos”, p. 112)

¹⁸⁵ Simpson, in his second trip report, provides an archetypical scene of an encounter with *chilote* lumberjacks: “We left the Puelma estuary and camped in the Aau estuary, next to some axe men. These individuals had been here three months already, and had stockpiled a good quantity of wood to pay their debt from last winter. Their only food was potatoes, flour, blood sausage, and seafood, and they lived in a bad shack constructed by themselves.” (Simpson. “Exploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco”, pp. 69).

¹⁸⁶ Simpson vividly describes an encounter with the precarious work conditions that the *chilote* lumberjacks were subject to: “In these days there arrived on board three lumberjacks, in a canoe, who, despite the bad conditions, had left the surroundings of the Pulluche channel in search of resources, for it had been a month since their supplies had exhausted and all this time they had subsisted off of shellfish and gulfweed. The sloop which should have picked them up more than a month ago, had not appeared, and they had seen themselves forced to take this dangerous step. In the same manner, Lieutenant Walker, in the Utarupa channel, had come to the aid of two individuals who found themselves in the same circumstance. This gives a measure of the privations and dangers in which these poor people incur in to earn their subsistence, or better said, satisfy their vices.” (Simpson. “Exploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco”, pp. 78).

Chilote prominence in Northern Patagonia, as depicted in many travel reports and in literature written in the capital about them, served as both a compliment and counterpoint to explorations in this region. On one hand, *chilote* presence turned out to be indispensable at all times; these were the people that served as pack men and guides to these expeditions. Their intimate knowledge of the region, cultivated through centuries of going back and forth from their archipelago to the islands and coasts of the continental region, made them the most authoritative subjects, besides explorers, to talk about it. As has been seen, their skills at sea, their admirable resistance in long inland treks, and even their stories of mythological creatures and sorcerers, served as a valuable support to explorers. At the same time, their belief in superstition, their precapitalist modes of production, and their fundamental opposition to the tenets of science and empiricism that so concerned explorers, served as a stark contrast to the positivist project of cataloging this region. Through the cataloging of *chilote* presence throughout North Patagonia, explorers revealed the position of the people of Chiloé as authentic pioneers in this region. Despite the fact that most of North Patagonia was uninhabited by 1902, it cannot be described it as an empty land: the people of Chiloé had already traversed an important part of its channels, islands, and coasts, leaving traces everywhere of their nomadic and seasonal wanderings. What clearer counterpart could be found to the steam ships of the explorers, equipped with modern scientific tools and well-stocked in supplies, than the fragile and ramshackle boats of the *chilotes* whose sails were made from the very

ponchos and blankets they wore, something that attested to both their poverty and their ingenuity.¹⁸⁷

Indigenous Peoples – Between the Visible and the Invisible

Every indigenous group that originally inhabited the North Patagonian region suffered intense dislocations in their way of life throughout the entirety of the colonial and early national periods so that by the mid-19th century, what remained was a languishing shell of what these cultures had been in the past.¹⁸⁸ Two different groups of indigenous tribes that inhabited North Patagonia existed, *grosso modo*: the land-based tribes that inhabited the eastern *pampas* and occasionally penetrated to the sub-Andean valleys, and the canoeing tribes that nomadically roamed the Patagonian archipelagos and

¹⁸⁷ García Huidobro describes this interesting phenomenon in the following manner: “When they want to head over to the market, they embark in them [their boats], gathering many of themselves in order to complete the weight of the cargo and each contributes with something to make the sail; they place a mast inclined towards the prow, and they set in march in the company of their families, and the material and living goods they possess. During their trajectory they make the sail as a first operation, that consists of all the ponchos, blankets, cloths, etc. that they wear to keep warm, sewing all these diverse pieces with hemp, with any given fibrous herb, or even with long spines. They get to a shelter, undo the sail to wrap up and keep warm, and the next day, when they set sail they return to their first operation.

There is not a more curious thing than seeing from afar one of these vessels: they are distinguished from far away by the different shades of their sails, be it black and white, or red or a striped blanket.” (García Huidobro. “Viaje a Las Provincias Meridionales De Chile”, p. 459)

¹⁸⁸ In order to understand the sorts of dislocations that the canoeing tribes of the insular and archipelago regions suffered in the lead up to the 19th century, see Álvarez, Ricardo. “Reflexiones En Torno a Las Identidades De Las Poblaciones Canoeras, Situadas Entre Los 44 Y 48 De Latitud Sur, Denominadas “Chonos”.” *Anales Instituto Patagonia* 30 (2002), pp. 79-86. For more information on these dislocations in the sub-Andean region, see Velásquez, Héctor. “En Busca De Aportes Documentales Al Conocimiento De La Realidad Socio-Cultural Del Actual Territorio Oriental De Aisén En La Transición Siglo XIX-XX.” *Anales del Instituto de la Patagonia* 30 (2002), pp. 45-64.

To understand the dislocations suffered by the tribes of Eastern Patagonia as a response to 19th century developments, see Moyano, Adrián. *Komütuum: Descolonizar La Historia Mapuche En Patagonia*. Bariloche: Alum Mapu Ediciones, 2013. This work is extremely interesting as it proposes a de-colonizing look at indigenous history in this zone centered upon the indigenous experience, rather than on government documents or traveler reports

channels.¹⁸⁹ The mountainous zone that extended from the coast to the sub-andean valleys appeared to have always been completely uninhabited, owing to the extreme density of the forest cover, which was not conducive to the permanent establishing of human groups, even nomadic ones. Indigenous presence there was limited to a very occasional zone of passage for indigenous tribes.¹⁹⁰ Classic historiography about these indigenous groups has named the canoeing tribes as “Chonos” and the tribes living in the sub-Andean region as “Tehuelches”. However, recent investigations show that these groups of indigenous peoples underwent processes of transculturation that occurred as a cause of, as well as in parallel to, contact with Westerners, so that the use of these names tends to flatten the diversity of subgroups in this region.¹⁹¹ The difficulties of

¹⁸⁹ For general information about the canoeing tribes of Northern Patagonia, refer to Cárdenas, Renato; Montiel Vera, Dante; Grace Hall, Catherine. *Los Chono Y Los Veliche De Chiloé*. Olimpho: Santiago, 1991. For general information on the Tehuelches, the denomination given to most of the indigenous groups that inhabited the sub-Andean valleys, see Bernal, Irma & Sánchez, Mario. *Los Tehuelche, y otros cazadores australes*. Buenos Aires: Galerna, 2007

¹⁹⁰ “The immense arid plains of Eastern Patagonia and the incredibly thick jungles of the mountains have formed equally invincible barriers – with few exception and up until more modern times – for the nomadic Indians as well as the colonists of our time.” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 33)

¹⁹¹ Ricardo Álvarez found at least seven different denominations for the group generally named “Chonos” that ethno-historical data has left behind, stating that the evidence left behind by explorers and travelers “attest to a much more complex cultural reality than that which can be perceived by assuming them as an undifferentiated whole.” (Álvarez. “Reflexiones En Torno a Las Identidades De Las Poblaciones Canoeras”, pp. 79-86.) See his article for discussions on the multiple identities and denomination that the written record has left behind for the canoeing tribes of North Patagonia. In the sub-Andean context, Héctor Velásquez has led the way in describing the varied cultural reality of the indigenous tribes in this region towards the 19th and 20th century. He describes how “The rich documentation resulting from our investigations in these moments clearly reveals that the indigenous peoples present there cannot be grouped in a single and homogenous “Tehuelche” group. In fact, many of them were relative newcomers, as a consequence of displacements from the north, bringing with them elements more proper of the “Araucanian” groups [from the southern regions of Chile].” (Velásquez, Héctor. “Una Visión Arqueológica E Histórica De La Presencia Indígena Tardía En Los Valles Cordilleranos De Aisén.”, p. 74). Velásquez adds, in another article, that “Towards the end of the 19th century, the sociocultural situation in the central Patagonian Andes was extremely complex and escapes any simple ethnic characterization.” (Velásquez. “En Busca De Aportes Documentales Al Conocimiento De La Realidad Socio-Cultural Del Actual Territorio Oriental De Aisén En La Transición Siglo XIX-XX”, p. 48)

understanding the cultural and social differences between groups of indigenous peoples in North Patagonia during this period is accentuated by the fact that written sources do not present enough information to completely understand the panorama of indigenous life.¹⁹² This led historians to refer to North Patagonia by the mid-19th century as a place almost entirely emptied of indigenous presence, in a way avoiding the complexities that indigenous presence during this time and place presents.¹⁹³

The problems in identifying the indigenous populations of this area towards the end of the 19th century are heightened by the fact that most of these had undergone intense processes of miscegenation both with other indigenous tribes and with European-descending populations since the 17th century. Velásquez explains how, in the context of indigenous tribes in the sub-Andean region, “Pressured by the military campaigns of the ‘War of the Desert,’ in the Argentine side, and the ‘Pacification of Araucanía,’ in the Chilean side, or by the process of German colonization in the latter country, many

¹⁹² “A superficial look is enough to recognize the lack of knowledge that exists about the presence of inhabitants previous to colonists in [the modern-day region of] Aysén. The difficulty of obtaining information about this groups is owed, principally, to the lack of accounts and references about sightings, as well as the absence of any other type of indicator of the presence of indigenous peoples in this period [late 19th century, early 20th] in the region. It is probable that the indigenous population of these valleys towards the end of the 19th century was minimal and that groups were able to systematically elude any sort of encounter with ‘white’ populations. Or also, that the majority of colonists were illiterate, so that they did not leave written reports in the case of running into indigenous populations.” (Velásquez. “En Busca De Aportes Documentales Al Conocimiento De La Realidad Socio-Cultural Del Actual Territorio Oriental De Aysén En La Transición Siglo XIX-XX”, p. 46)

¹⁹³ Mateo Martinic writes, in 2014, about the disappearance of indigenous tribes in the eastern limits of North Patagonia “It is not too much, thus, to state that in respects to the eastern zone of the modern-day Aysén Region, this was a deserted territory by the start of the 20th century.” (Martinic. *De la Trapananda al Aysén*, p. 58). On the disappearance of canoeing tribes in the waterways of North Patagonia, he concludes, “As has been seen, upon the conclusion of the 19th century, the geographic scope of the actual Aysén Region was a territory devoid of aboriginal life. The ancient *Chono* ethnic group, present there with their ancestors at least since five millennia past, only left for posterity the singularity of their toponyms.” (Idem, p. 87). Martinic concludes by stating that “Definitely, thus, by the beginning of the 20th century, when outsiders arrived and established permanently, Aysén was a completely deserted territory.” (Ibid.)

individuals adopted fluid and changing identities, assimilating to their Mapuche congeners, despite their carrying of “Christian” last names.”¹⁹⁴ Similarly, Ricardo Álvarez and Rodolfo Urbina described how the general “Chono” group practiced the *maloca*¹⁹⁵ against other canoeing tribes that inhabited the Chiloé Archipelago, something which allowed for miscegenation and transculturation.¹⁹⁶ Similarly, the reduction of culturally distinct canoeing tribes to the Main Island of Chiloé by Jesuit missionaries during the 18th century offered further opportunities for miscegenation.¹⁹⁷ To complicate things even more, it is very hard to make a tough distinction between the categories of *chilote* and indigenous during this period. Within *chilote* society at the time, at one end were the direct descendants of the last Spanish administrators, and at the other were the inhabitants of some of the small islands of the Eastern edge of the Chiloé Archipelago where certain indigenous *Chono* elements seemed to persist in the population.¹⁹⁸ However, the vast majority of the population existed in between this scale and many

¹⁹⁴ Velásquez. "En Busca De Aportes Documentales Al Conocimiento De La Realidad Socio-Cultural Del Actual Territorio Oriental De Aisén En La Transición Siglo XIX-XX", p. 48

¹⁹⁵ The *maloca* (or *malón*) was a tactic used by the indigenous peoples of Chile and Argentina which consisted on short and surprise raids against other indigenous tribes or the Spanish which with the objective of sacking enemy establishments in order to obtain tools, horses (canoes in the case of the canoeing tribes), cattle, food, and above all, prisoners and women. To further add to the narrative of cultural hybridization, it must be noted that the Spanish would also carry out *malocas* against the indigenous tribes with the same objectives.

¹⁹⁶ Urbina, Rodolfo. "Los Chonos En Chiloé: Itinerario Y Aculturación." *Chiloé: Revista de divulgación del centro chilote* 9 (August 1988), pp. 34-36; Álvarez. "Reflexiones En Torno a Las Identidades De Las Poblaciones Canoeras." pp. 83-84; Urbina, Rodolfo. "El Pueblo Chono: De Vagabundo Y Alzado a Cristiano Y Sedentario." In *Orbis Incognitvs. Avisos Y Legados Del Nuevo Mundo*, edited by Fernando Antolín. Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2007, pp. 335-339

¹⁹⁷ Urbina, Rodolfo. "Los Chonos En Chiloé", p. 34-41

¹⁹⁸ Carlos Munizaga describes how “The cultural heterogeneity [of Chiloé] is also a reflection of ethnic differences (differences between ‘naturals’ or ‘indigenous’, and ‘whites’ or people with predominantly Spanish blood). These differences are more notorious in the rural landscapes and in some of the eastern islands of the Chiloé Archipelago.” (Munizaga. “Antropología Cultural” in *Chiloé y su influjo en la XI región*, p. 65)

exhibited “indigenous” traits in the eyes of the explorers.¹⁹⁹ Recent historiography about North Patagonia also acknowledges this phenomenon.²⁰⁰ This allows Andrés Núñez *et al.* to state that “Upon analyzing the names that the occupants of the Guaitecas and Chonos Islands have, it can be established that the populating of the archipelagos during the 19th century, although multiethnic, was preferably indigenous.”²⁰¹ Thus, the cataloging of a certain individual or group as *chilote* or indigenous could respond to implicit judgments and hierarchies established by explorers at the time.

Writers during the second half of the 19th century, both those who went to North Patagonia, and those who wrote from the capital, commented on the apparently empty condition of this region. Many of these writers portrayed the North Patagonian coast and

¹⁹⁹ Vidal Gormaz, in his 1872 exploration, describes the inhabitants of Puluqui Island, northeast of the Main Island of Chiloé as “indigenous just for their characteristic type and their ignorance, as all of them speak Spanish ignoring the *huilliche*, their ancient tongue.” (Vidal Gormaz. “Esploracion De La Costa De Llanquihue.” (1872), pp. 241). Steffen similarly noted the need for “indigenous” guides during his explorations around Lake Nahuel Huapi, “for whose service the *chilote* lumberjacks lend themselves admirably” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. 42)

²⁰⁰ Mauricio Osorio sees indigenous elements persisting in the sea lion hunting activities by part of *chilotes* in the 19th century: “The indigenous peoples, those other disseminated throughout millennia in the same channels and already almost extinct [by the 19th century] for the eyes that explored the riches, give way to a new contingent dedicated to the forest and marine exploitation. These are neo-nomads, who traverse the channels in their boats and install provisional encampments that paradoxically follow the ‘indigenous style’”. (Osorio. “Aisén Territorio Y Aisén Humanidad.” In *Otras Narrativas En Patagonia*, pp. 13-14). Gonzalo Saavedra similarly sees these continuities not only in marine mammal hunting, but also in the lumber industry: “From the local point of view, this [common elements within *chilote* economic activities of the period] makes evident a ‘traditional’ cultural base, which implies recognizing that the ‘models’ of the use of the territory, and, up to a certain point, techno-economic, forged systems of life that were not necessarily mercantilist; for example, some practices that had already been seen within canoeing groups, extinct towards the end of the 18th century. The territorial diaspora of almost all of these activities coincides with that which is normally attributed to the *Chono* sailors, as well as the hunting for skins, the felling of wood, and the recollection of shellfish and fish also constituted the base practices of the material reproduction of these ancestral peoples. [...] In conclusion, if we think in the everyday economic practices, there was, without a doubt, a cultural continuum that transcended the purposes of business. In other terms, *something* of the canoeing style persists, reproduces, is recreated, and reinvented, since the end of the 19th century and beyond.” (Saavedra, Gonzalo. “Las Economías Silenciosas Del Litoral Aisenino.” In *Otras Narrativas En Patagonia*, pp. 42-43)

²⁰¹ Núñez *et al.* “Silencios Geográficos En Patagonia-Aysén”, p. 122

its archipelagos as completely uninhabited. In 1870, Simpson wrote that “it is undoubtable that in another time the entire [Chonos] archipelago was inhabited, but nowadays the indigenous race has disappeared completely.”²⁰² Similarly, various authors described the sub-Andean valleys and eastern *pampas* around the region of the watershed divide as devoid of indigenous. Pablo Stange (1894), an auxiliary who participated in Steffen’s exploration to the Palena River, commented, upon passing the region around Lake Nahuel Huapi, that “Deserted are now these vast *pampas* where, even ten years ago, the *pehuenches* would raise their cattle and hunt the guanaco and the ostrich. The indigenous has had to cede to brute force; a bloody and atrocious war has concluded with these wretches.”²⁰³ Thus, the representation of Northern Patagonia as a land specifically

²⁰² Simpson. "Exploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco ", p. 107. Felipe Westhoff described in 1867 how “In actual times, there is no fixed population in the Chonos archipelago.” (Westhoff. "Memoria Del Subdelegado Marítimo Del Archipiélago De Los Chonos O Guaitecas.", p. 448). Hans Steffen described how indigenous canoeing tribes were still sighted in the channels and coasts of Southern Patagonia, but not its Northern extension: “In the colonial era, Indian tribes wandered these lands [the coastal and insular zones of North Patagonia], whose memory is only conserved today in a handful of geographic names in the Chonos Archipelago and in the coasts of dry land all the way to the channels of the southernmost limit, where, these days the miserable remains of these not always peaceful populations dedicate themselves to the hunting of seals; but north of the Baker channel they have disappeared completely.” (Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, pp. 47-48)

²⁰³ Steffen. "Memoria Jeneral Sobre La Expedición Exploradora Del Río Palena (Continuación)." *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, vol. 88 (November-December 1894), p. 222 Steffen commented on various occasions about the uninhabited character of many of the sub-Andean valleys that lay to the east of the mountainous chain. He wrote, in the introduction to the first volume his *Patagonia Occidental* that: “The Indians of Patagonia which are known to us by the works of Falkner, Musters, Moreno, and others, have now disappeared totally from the eastern zones of our region – only part where they could have figured as inhabitants of Western Patagonia.” (p. 18). Steffen noted how his trip up the Palena River was completely unencumbered by “even the perspective of arriving to an adventurous with bands of Indians,” despite the fact that some people had tried to warn him of this. This, he attributed to the reports of the Serrano expedition and because of this, the expedition “judged unnecessary to bring more arms and munitions than those strictly indispensable.” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, pp. 257, 188). Similarly, he described how, during his exploration of the upper valleys of the Cisnes River, he was unable to find any traces of indigenous presence. (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 246)

devoid of any indigenous presence was a recurring theme in many writings about this region at the time.

However, a closer examination of the different exploration reports and literature of the time begins to alter this view. It appeared that everywhere explorers went, they would stumble upon remains, old and recent, of indigenous presence. Explorers who visited the Chonos and Guaitecas archipelagos seemed constantly to find remains of the ancient *Chono* tribes that traversed those waters in earlier times. Explorers and sailors often times ran into burial sites in these areas. For example, Westhoff (1867) mentioned how, during the clearing of the land in order to establish the port of Melinka, they found at least six mummies “still well conserved in some places,” as well as bones, axes, plates, bowls, and other instruments.²⁰⁴ Similarly, explorers sometimes found remains of recent

²⁰⁴ Westhoff. "Memoria Del Subdelegado Marítimo Del Archipiélago De Los Chonos O Guaitecas.", p. 448. The presence of mummies in the Chonos archipelago is an interesting phenomenon. Simpson noted the *Chono* custom of mummifying their dead and placing them in caves. He wrote: “In this last channel [the Amortajado] there exists a small cove that I have denominated Mummies [cove], for containing in a cliff, about two meters from the water, some small caves where remains of the Indian race of the *Chonos* have been found, of which there are only seen in them these days some bone fragments.” (Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco ", pp. 114). Of these burial sites, Simpson noted how sometimes the bodies would be simply covered by branches, and at times, they were prepared in the form of “mummies conditioned in caskets made of cypress bark in the form of an egg.” (Idem, p. 43). Sometimes, the elaborate nature of the *Chono* burial sites seemed to defy the state of knowledge about this race at the time. Simpson noted how during his fourth expedition, returning to a camping site in the Guaigüenes channel, he saw a shell midden he had seen in a previous trip. He stated about this: “I described that table then [the midden], giving my point of view that it was no other thing than a *Chono* cemetery; with this new visit I have acquired certainty of this, for we found some human bones, very destroyed, that projected from the facade, eroded by the waters. If I would have brought tools I would have carried out an excavation, but unfortunately these were left on board. The fact is very interesting, for before there existed the idea between the sea lion hunters and the few unintelligent peoples that have visited this regions, that the old *Chonos* only buried their dead in caves, conditioned as mummies and wrapped in cypress bark; but there is no doubt that this depended on the circumstances.” (Ibid., p. 129). Simpson also noted how seasonal workers from Chiloé were actively participating in the destruction and desecration of these archaeological sites. He mentions how many of the mummies and their accessories had been extracted by sea lion hunters and sold to museums. (Ibid. 114). He also noted how the destruction of these remains, at

canoeing tribes that seemed to still visit these waters every once in a while. Francisco Nef, exploring the Baker Channel in 1900-1901, stated that even though he did not see any canoes in this region, he nonetheless “could prove that they reach to the mouth of the rivers that pour in the depths of the sound” as he saw their abandoned huts and pieces of huemul²⁰⁵ hides, which “are always seen in the [indigenous] canoes.”²⁰⁶ Just as in the archipelagos, explorers saw remains of indigenous presence in the eastern limits of North Patagonia. These came in the forms of bones and skulls, burnt stretches of forest, and recently abandoned campsites, and led Hans Steffen to believe that “It seems that in ancient times there was no lack of inhabitants in these regions, for during our march we discovered in various points signs of old establishments, perhaps of Indians, that were retreating as modern colonists were advancing.”²⁰⁷

An even more detailed reading of the different travel reports and writings about North Patagonia reveals many encounters that explorers had with indigenous peoples. Although indigenous canoeing tribes had almost completely disappeared from the waters of North Patagonia, there were still pockets of them roaming different zones within this

times, did not even respond to an economic pursuit, stating that: “All the remains and traces of this race [the *chonos*] have almost entirely disappeared, at the hands of the brutal axemen; who have the merit of destroyed all of these they find, these [the *chonos*] being to them, abominable gentiles.” (Idem, p. 43).

²⁰⁵ Known in English as the South Andean Deer, the Huemul is type of deer native to the Patagonian mountain skirts. It features in the Chilean coat of arms alongside the Andean Condor.

²⁰⁶ Nef, Francisco. “Levantamiento del Seno Baker i canales interiores por la cañonera Magallanes, al mando del capitán de fragata señor Francisco Nef.” *Anuario Hidrográfico de la Marina de Chile*, vol. 24 (1903), p. 4. Hans Steffen also saw traces of a camp set up by canoeing tribes in the Julian Estuary, also around the mouth of the Baker River (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 347)

²⁰⁷ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 53. For references to indigenous bones in Steffen’s explorations refer to Idem, Vol.1, p. 257 and also vol. 2, p. 412, 436. For references to burns as evidence of indigenous presence, refer to Idem, Vol.1, p. 391 and vol. 2, pp. 53, 162.

region.²⁰⁸ Simpson (1873), for example, noted that in the Puquitin channel, there lived the Lincoman family, who he described as the only family “who can pretend to the representation of the original *chono* race.”²⁰⁹ The Lincoman family was permanently settled in their spot for the past 40 years, unlike their predecessors, and Simpson described the patriarch, Pedro, as “distrusting, yet honorable in his manners” as well as “baptized; but maintains the primitive instincts of his race”.²¹⁰ Serrano (1885) also ran into canoeing tribes twice during his expedition to the channels to the south of the Baker River. He described the men, women, and children as “all emaciated and miserable”, adding that they bore many scars, “which demonstrates the continuous wars in which they live in.”²¹¹ It is interesting that Serrano noted the following about the second group he found, “Although their aspect was very different, their dressings were the same as those [the first group] that we found in the Cortés Ojea channel.”²¹² This goes on to show that explorers were able to tell the difference between indigenous groups, and that the homogenization of these responded to a conscious choice. Despite the uniqueness of these encounters (it must be remembered that these tribes were considered all but extinct during this period) Serrano paid no attention to them, stating that “time urged me and it

²⁰⁸ Steffen notes how the canoeing tribes had “dwindled to a few remainders represented today by the few families that, according to the latest information, traverse the southern channels in their primitive canoes.” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 347). He also recorded how a few canoeing tribes would traverse the waters around the Baker channel, selling sea lion leather, “their only article of commerce.” (Idem, p. 348)

²⁰⁹ Simpson. “Exploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco”, p. 114

²¹⁰ Ibid. The fact that the Lincoman family was permanently settled and Christianized already points towards a long-duration process of transculturation with the culture of Chiloé that began early in the 18th century. With this in mind, it is hard to truly consider the Lincoman family as a “representation of the original *chono* race”, as Simpson sites. (Urbina, Rodolfo. “El Pueblo Chono”, pp. 342-346)

²¹¹ Serrano Montaner. “Reconocimiento Del Río Buta-Palena I Del Canal Fallos”, pp. 151, 153-154.

²¹² Idem, p. 153

was not possible to lose a single minute in contemplating such uninteresting figures, when I still had not the least idea of the place where the channel I navigated through would take me nor where we would spend the night.”²¹³ The pursuit of both duty and science was too important to take heed to these living relics of a lost age and it seems that Serrano at least was more interested in the physical environment rather than the human one in North Patagonia. Remnants of the old *Chono* tribes that still roamed the archipelagos of Patagonia did not present any sort of future to the expanding Chilean nation; the waters and their resources, in turn, did.

Explorers also occasionally ran in to indigenous peoples in the sub-Andean valleys and among the watershed divide region.²¹⁴ Although Steffen (1897) described some of these tribes as “backwards” in both a “material and spiritual” sense, they were almost always helpful and peaceful, and he noted that “In their treatment with us they showed much composure and courtesy.”²¹⁵ Cox (1863), on the contrary, noted that the *Tehuelche* tribes that lived along Lake Nahuel Huapi had a special animosity towards Chileans, so much that he had to lie and say he was British upon contacting them.²¹⁶ This

²¹³ Serrano Montaner. "Reconocimiento Del Río Buta-Palena I Del Canal Fallos", p. 151

²¹⁴ Hans Steffen recorded running into natives in the Chubut, Corintos, Ñorquinco, Putrachoique, and the Rio Villegas valleys, and around the Senguer River.

²¹⁵ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 162. Steffen also describes an episode where an indigenous tribe lent him and his committee horses so that they could continue their expedition. (Idem, p. 257). Federico Delfin, the naturalist on board the Serrano expeditions, also mentioned an encounter with helpful natives who helped him with geographic indications. (Delfin, Federico. "El Rio Palena. Apuntes Para Su Historia Natural." *Revista del Progreso* (1888), p. 629).

²¹⁶ Cox. *Viaje En Las Rejiones Septentrionales De La Patagonia*, pp. 84-85. Cox's descriptions of the way of life of the Tehuelches deserves a special recognition. The fact that he went back and forth between the Tehuelche camps and Chilean territory almost four times in one season allowed him to have an unusually close contact to them and their culture. Cox, in fact, includes a very detailed appendix describing the mechanics of their grammar and language. (Idem, pp. 242-253)

seemed to change after the wars that the Argentine state waged against the Patagonian natives. When the Serrano expedition (1886) ran into natives in the upper valley of the Palena, it was actually the latter who seemed afraid because “they believed it [the Chilean commission] was the Argentines, who they fear for they had already been flung from their country that was more to the north and closer to the sea.”²¹⁷ It is interesting to note how these natives seemed to exist in a state of limbo within the Argentine body politic. Steffen (1897) described them as living in places where “The authority of the Argentine Government is purely nominal, there being hundreds of kilometers of distance between the nearest post of any commissary,” however, they exhibited typically Argentine characteristics such as drinking “the inevitable mate.”²¹⁸

Steffen also noted how indigenous peoples in the sub-Andean valleys seemed to be more or less permanently established in “*tolderías*” in specific zones.²¹⁹ Steffen mentions *tolderías* located in Arroyo Verde (Upper valley of the Mañihuales River; this encampment is mentioned in his 1897 and 1902 expeditions), around the River Tecka (Upper Valley of the Cisnes River), the River Mayo (Upper Simpson Valley), and in the River Vizcachas (This encampment had been established nearly seven years ago by the time Steffen visited it in 1899), among other places. This reveals a high degree of transculturation and social transformation amongst these tribes, who were entirely

²¹⁷ Delfin “El Rio Palena”, p. 629

²¹⁸ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, pp. 156, 162

²¹⁹ *Toldería* comes from the Spanish word *toldo*, which literally translates to “awning”. *Tolderías* were indigenous encampments. Before the mid-19th century, references to *tolderías* highlighted their nomadic aspect; these encampments would be moved around often. However, by the mid-19th century, the *toldería* had become a more or less permanent encampment.

nomadic before the incipient penetration of the Chilean and Argentine state, and their respective colonists, in these regions. As Velásquez states, “all documental information indicates that, as the occupation [of the sub-Andean valleys] of colonists advances, the indigenous stations in the oriental edge of the Aysenian Mountain Range turn into permanent indigenous establishments,” which further complicates the issue of an easy categorization of indigenous life in this region at the period.²²⁰

Indigenous peoples had not completely disappeared from the North Patagonian region by the turn of the 20th century. True, they only existed in very small pockets, had undergone intense processes of transculturation, miscegenation, and assimilation, and were in a marked state of decadence after centuries of persecution, enslavement, and wars. Under the scientific eye of the explorers of the period, the natives of North Patagonia seemed to be a relic of a premodern past destined to disappear. Ramón Briones Luco, in his 1900 “Glosario de colonización” (*Glossary of Colonization*), described the sort of future that the indigenous peoples of the south of Chile were condemned to. He held hopes that the indigenous peoples of the south could mix with the rest of the population of the nation, so as to “make useful to the development of the country that race that has forgotten even the memory of their glories.”²²¹ However, he stated that that was “utopic [...] a beautiful ideal,” and sentenced that “the degenerate indigenous race is

²²⁰ Velásquez. “En Busca De Aportes Documentales Al Conocimiento De La Realidad Socio-Cultural Del Actual Territorio Oriental De Aisén En La Transición Siglo XIX-XX.” p. 55

²²¹ Briones Luco. *Glosario De Colonización*, p. 19

a hindering element, that opposes a grave difficulty to the colonization of the South.”²²² The conquest of the unexplored and uninhabited regions of North Patagonia, carried out under the spirit of positivism, seemed to leave no space for a languishing peoples. Instead, they seemed to be condemned to being ethnographic footnotes in scientific journals; curiosities that were to remind the reader of times past. In 1901, the traveler Santiago Marín Vicuña, passing through the *pampas* around the Senguer River, came into contact with a Tehuelche tribe and asked their *cacique*, named Canquel, if he could take a photographic portrait of the chief and his family. Marín Vicuña recorded the *cacique*'s answer, in a rare moment of native peoples speaking from their own tongue, who stated “I do not want anyone to photograph my family, because later they will exhibit the photographs in Buenos Aires, as if they were about animals.”²²³ The gulf between both cultures seemed insurmountable at this historical moment.

Local Knowledge – At the Limits of Scientific Observation

Many of the explorers during this period, especially those that penetrated a certain river, channel, or valley for the first time, navigated blind; they had little or no previous references, and most of the maps that they depended on were outdated and/or wrong. At the same time, however, they almost always counted the services of some of the peoples that would roam around these regions, such as *chilote* lumberjacks or indigenous peoples. The earliest explorations only mentioned the presence of locals in their expeditions in the

²²² Briones Luco. *Glosario De Colonización*, p. 314

²²³ Marín Vicuña, Santiago. *A Través De La Patagonia (Páginas Íntimas)*. Santiago: ¿?, 1901, p. 54

form of passing and anonymous references to them as pack men and rowers. However, by the end of this period, explorers such as Steffen would vividly describe the valuable services that local guides lent to them, skillfully navigating these scientific expeditions through waters and paths completely unknown to these agents of the state. Thus, a tension appears in the form of the sort of the scientific surveying that explorers were carrying out over territories they considered unexplored, and the wealth of local knowledge, passed down through mechanisms such as oral tradition that were incompatible with the scientific method, that they inevitably depended on.²²⁴ All explorations during the period necessarily depended on local knowledge as an indispensable tool, something that was in fundamental opposition to the type of surveying that Chilean explorers were trying to carry out in this region at the time.

Almost every expedition carried out in North Patagonia evidenced the need for local guides; the lack of this element could mean the failure of a given expedition.²²⁵ The

²²⁴ Consider the following passage written by Steffen about the state of knowledge about the Los Palos River, close to the mouth of the Aysén River: “Despite the fact that the interior of this region has been very traversed by the lumberjacks of Chiloé, outside of some light reconnaissance from the officers of the *Chacabuco* [Enrique Simpson’s ship] and some measurements of peaks taken by limits commissions, the region is entirely unknown.” (Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 2, pp. 401-402). It is interesting to note how the region is described as both traversed and known to the lumberjacks of Chiloé (possessors of an orally transmitted knowledge) and unknown to the men of science of the nation (which is equated to a general state of unknowing).

See Pierotti, Raymond. *Indigenous Knowledge, Ecology, and Evolutionary Biology*. New York: Routledge, 2011, for a detailed discussion about indigenous and “traditional” modes of knowledge and their relationship and comparability to Western and scientific modes of thought and knowledge accumulation.

²²⁵ Guillermo Cox referred to an 1849 expedition by Benjamín Muñoz Gamero, a Chilean navy officer, who attempted to reach Lake Nahuel Huapi but failed to cross the Andes Mountains, in the following words: “the lack of a guide that knew the land greatly influences, in my view, the lack of success of this voyage.” (Cox. *Viaje En Las Rejiones Septentrionales De La Patagonia*, p. 24). Simpson similarly noted the importance of a local guide in his expedition through the Moraleda channel. Noting that the only available navigation charts were prepared by a Spanish sailor at the end of the 18th century, being nearly 80 years old

sorts of knowledge and skills that *chilote* guides held proved to be indispensable for explorers in North Patagonia. Steffen noted how,

Of course, the novice who for the first time penetrates the mountainous region [around Lake Nahuel Huapi], needs indigenous *baqueanos* [local experts], for whose service the *chilote* lumberjacks that spend all of their lives in these forests lend themselves admirably. They know not only all the forest paths in the surroundings of their work sites, but are also extremely skilled in finding *macheteaduras* [machete marks] in the regions that are unknown to them.²²⁶

Similarly, explorers described the navigation skills of the *chilote* guides as necessary in surmounting the obstacles and rapids of the entirely unexplored Patagonian Rivers.²²⁷

Local guides were not necessarily specialized peoples, at times seasonal workers sufficed to fill this role. Steffen (1897) described how, in one of the openings in the Aysén Channel he was exploring, he ran into a squad of *chilote* lumberjacks, where “we hired

and wildly inaccurate by the time Simpson used them, he stated, “without the local knowledge of a pilot as seasoned as the one we had on board, I would have found myself in the gravest of dangers.” (Simpson. “Exploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco”, p. 6). Hans Steffen, in his report of the expedition to the then almost unknown Baker channel, noted that “A very important point for the success of the enterprise was the hiring of appropriate people for the multiple and complicated tasks of the expedition.” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 284)

²²⁶ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. 42. The word *baqueano* is purposefully left untranslated as it specifically refers to a type of local knowledge that is specialized in finding paths and shortcuts, as well as being able to communicate this and act as a guide. The machete marks (*macheteaduras*) that are referred to are also a specifically *chilote* phenomenon. *Chilote* lumberjacks would often leave small marks in trees with their axes to indicate paths that led to valuable patches of trees hidden within the thick vegetation. This was a technique that was described by travelers and chroniclers since the colonial period.

²²⁷ Vidal Gormaz looked for *chilotes* in the island of Huar for his expedition up the Puelo River, “because the people of Huar are the only ones that know part of the river, being at the same time the famed men for the hand to hand struggle that defy the torrential waters of the mountain rivers” (Vidal Gormaz. “Exploracion De La Costa De Llanquihue.” (1872), pp. 252). About the navigation up the Palena: “The crew of the boat, whose transportation through the great rapids and currents of the lower course of the Palena inspired some caution in us, was composed of the best people, alert and skilled young men from Reloncaví, and we placed it under the command of our pilot and assistant Bernardo Uribe, inhabitant of Ralún, who had previously shown his ability in the navigation of the very torrential rivers filled with the most complicated rapids, such as the Petrohué river, the Cochamó and others of the mountains of Llanquihue.” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. 204). About the navigation up the Aysén, Steffen wrote: “We needed, thus, of all the practice, valor, and skills of our *chilotes* to overcome at every moment the innumerable obstacles of navigation.” (Idem, Vol. 2, p. 114).

one of them to serve us as a pilot in the following day's navigation and we took down some information from them about the topographic details of the surroundings."²²⁸ Local guides also showed an extensive knowledge of the coasts, often times having their own names for rivers and regions that were entirely unknown to agents of the Chilean state. Steffen expressed how "there is probably in this region [the coasts and islands of North Patagonia] a multitude of bays and small coves that only the *chilote* lumberjacks and sea lion hunters have news about."²²⁹ Even the government seemed to rely on *chilote* knowledge for the confection of its instructions to its explorers, as Steffen's instructions for the exploration of the Taitao Peninsula showed. It read: "[...] after which you will undertake the march through the Isthmus of Ofqui, following the path of the *chilote* seal hunters."²³⁰ It becomes clear, thus, that during the entire period of scientific explorations to North Patagonia during the mid-19th century, the knowledge of local guides became a necessary tool. This catalog of local knowledge that explorers recorded, passed down from generation to generation, and transmitted orally, represented a slow and disjointed

²²⁸ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 103. Similarly, Steffen described how, during his stay in Chonchi (a town in the main island of Chiloé), he heard rumors of a squad of *chilotes* that had gone some time ago to the Isthmus of Ofqui looking for gold, adding that "it was thus, of importance to us, to enter in relation with these people and, if it were possible, hire one of them as a guide for the projected excursion to the isthmus." (Idem, pp. 286-287). Enrique Simpson noted a similar situation during his exploration of the Moraleda Channel. Stating how he was favored with good weather and faced with a variety of choices as to his bearing, "wishing to better know the channels and having on board a *chilote* sailor who had earlier traversed them during the sea lion hunt," he was able to take the longer and more difficult trajectory. (Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco", p. 14)

²²⁹ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. 13. Steffen noted, for example, about how the *chilotes* named the Yelcho River, and knew about it before anyone else, how they also had their own name for the Los Palos River, and how the *chilotes* aboard his expedition up the Aysén named the Chaitén volcano for the first time (Idem, p. 291; Idem, vol. 2, pp. 95, 105)

²³⁰ Idem, vol. 2, p. 282. It is interesting to note that the Chilean limits expert, Diego Barros Arana, only approved these instructions, which Steffen had drawn up, after the explorer had been convinced, "by information from trustworthy people in Puerto Montt and Chiloé", that a passage through this region was possible. (Idem, p. 281)

codifying of a corpus of information from a premodern mode of recording, to a scientific mode.²³¹ It stood as the absolute counterpoint to the type of positivist spirit that the explorers held, yet at the same time was precisely something that made the scientific observation, surveying, and recording of North Patagonia possible.

At times, local guides were not simply anonymous lumberjacks or native informants. Explorers' reports specifically mention important guides and pilots by their names, and often times these individuals appear in more than one travel report. These important holders of local knowledge stood in stark contrast to the scientific surveying that explorers were trying to carry out in North Patagonia at the time. If empirical observation was supposed to be impersonal, universal, and easily comprehended by a large audience, the sorts of knowledge these figures held were contained within oral tradition, only available to those who came into contact to them, and was never codified or organized outside of these explorer's reports. Fonck and Cox (1856) both mention one "old man Olavarría," an ancient resident of Puerto Montt who had participated in Father Menendez's 1795 expedition to Lake Nahuel Huapi, as an important source of information for them. He was presumed to be the only living, non-indigenous, person to

²³¹ This mechanism can be stretched back in time before the arrival of explorers and colonists, in a transmission of knowledge from indigenous tribes to the *chilotes*. María Ximena Urbina describes how "All that geography [of North Patagonia] is of indigenous toponyms, which reveals an almost exclusively *chilote* sphere up to the present day, with a predominant indigenous cultural element. Expert both in the seas and in the forests, the *chilote* lumberjack – and the *tejuelero* [Literally translates to shingle-man, a person dedicated to the fabrication of wooden shingles] of the 20th century, that no longer exploits the alerce but instead the *canelo* and other trees [...] – collects the indigenous knowledge of his geographic space and the forest, and exploits the alerce for commerce in the European manner." (Urbina, María Ximena. "Análisis Histórico-Cultural Del Alerce En La Patagonia Septentrional Occidental", p. 67)

know the location of the mountain pass that led to the lake.²³² Simpson named two people as important holders of local knowledge, one Miguel “Mike” Averis, a sea lion hunter from the United States who had settled in the Melinka, and the older Juan Yates, from Ancud and also dedicated to sea lion hunting. These two men were described as having an incomparable knowledge of the area.²³³ Simpson directly compared the general state of geographic and hydrographic knowledge about this area to the knowledge that these old sailors held. For example, Simpson (1871), confirmed that he and his crew “were, thus, the only living beings” that had penetrated to the San Rafael Lake and seen its glacier due to the fact that “Juan Yates, who was the oldest living person in this regions,

²³² The old man Olavarría, who was 14 at the time of his expedition to Nahuel Huapi, served in a preliminary expedition to Lake Nahuel Huapi once again in 1855. This expedition was not able to reach the mountain pass that led to the lake. However, Olavarría, 74 years of age at this point, was described as both a “weak and elder man [who however] carried out his commission satisfactorily” and “well oriented in general” (Fonck. *Viajes de Fray Francisco Menéndez a la Cordillera*. Vol. 1, 1896, p. 46n1). Fonck also made an extremely interesting comment on the nature of local knowledge and its relationship to the more scientific ways of explorers: “We have in this series of stories [of colonial-era expeditions across the Andes], curious examples of the sheer variety with which the traditions transmitted by the mouth of the people comment on these happenings. Despite the little accordance of these versions between themselves and with the facts, they convene in the sharp rejection of the expeditionary, which advocates for their interpretation as traditional memories of the travels of our author [Father Menéndez]. It is true that the historical background that is reflected in them is quite dark.

If it had not been for the survival of one of the companions of Menéndez, its memory [of the expedition] would have been extinguished within the neighbors of Chiloé. It was the old man José Antonio Olavarría of Huelmo, close to Calbuco, that made it revive.” (Fonck. *Viajes de Fray Francisco Menéndez a Nahuelhuapi*. Vol. 2, 1900, pp. 445-446). Cox remarked about the old Olavarría, now over 80 years old at the time of his visit, that “he gave me precious news, almost all of them exact. I have not been able to stop admiring the astonishing memory of the good old man, who sixty years after these events could give me such precise indications.” (Cox. *Viaje En Las Rejiones Septentrionales De La Patagonia*, p. 10)

²³³ According to Simpson, Mike was, for example, the only person that knew about specific points where guano deposits were found along the Taitao Peninsula. (Simpson. “Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco”, p. 5-6). Juan Yates was similarly described as being the oldest and most knowledgeable sailor around, having “frequented the archipelago during 40 years.” (Idem, p. 22). Towards the end of the report of his third expedition, Simpson specifically commended old Yates stating “I must not omit a mention to the pilot *don* Juan Yates, who, with his great experience and local knowledge, many times saved our vessels in very critical circumstances.” (Idem, p. 87)

did not even have an idea of its existence.”²³⁴ More than a decade later, Captain Serrano (1885), *en route* to the Palena River, would stop by Quehui Island to meet old Yates and get navigation information from him. Serrano noted how “paying attention to the formality of the person that was providing me with this information and the interest he has shown for this class of explorations since he served as a pilot on board the *Chacabuco*, I believe that the aforementioned news deserve complete credit.”²³⁵ Steffen (1898), during this exploration voyage to the Cisnes River, similarly recorded having run into Mike, already 80 years old at that point, in the port of Melinka, and stated that “he has the fame of being the best knower of the estuaries and channels in all the Patagonian coast.”²³⁶

Hans Steffen also used local guides extensively throughout all of his expeditions. Moreover, he noted how he used many of the same people from the same towns and hamlets. Steffen (1895) related, for example, how he specifically looked for guides and pack men for his expeditions around the Reloncaví Estuary, because “the lumberjacks of Reloncaví are the most appropriate to serve as peons in the exploration voyages.”²³⁷ Not only were these lumberjacks skillful guides; Steffen purposefully hired many of the same

²³⁴ Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco ", pp. 32, 31.

²³⁵ Serrano Montaner. "Reconocimiento Del Río Buta-Palena I Del Canal Fallos", p. 112. Serrano added, in a different section, that he was pressed for time to complete the entirety of his second commission, which was to explore the Fallos Channel and the Newman Estuary. He desisted from exploring the Newman Estuary and focus on the Fallow Channel due to the following circumstance: “In light of this lack of time I was compelled to desist from the project of the reconnaissance of the aforementioned estuary, a reconnaissance that had lost its importance after the news communicated by *don* Juan Yates.” (Idem, p. 143). The information provided to him by the old man Yates was trustworthy enough, in his opinion, to completely desist from carrying out that specific instruction that was given to him by the government.

²³⁶ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 191

²³⁷ Idem, vol. 1, p. 338

people in multiple expeditions. Thus, during his expedition to the Puelo River, he mentioned that many of his guides had accompanied him to the Palena River the year before. For his expedition up the Aysén, he hired many of the same people that went to the Palena. This sort of recursive and repeating core of guides and pack men also participated in the explorations to the Cisnes and Baker rivers.²³⁸ Similarly, Steffen mentions counting with one Juan Villegas (“A very able pilot and a person of absolute confidence”) in at least five of his trips.²³⁹ The reader can only imagine the sorts of geographic and economic information that Villegas and his crew transmitted to other *chilotes* back home on the eve of the start of large-scale permanent human settling in Northern Patagonia at the beginning of the 20th century. In fact, Steffen (1894) briefly mentioned how old Juan Yates, alongside other colonists from Llanquihue and Chiloé actually moved to the Leones Island, on the mouth of the Palena River, and founded a small private colonial establishment in 1888; a colonial project there is no further information about, however.²⁴⁰ These sorts of transmissions of local knowledge seemed to escape the tentative of ordering that scientific explorers tried to achieve through a systematic surveying of the region.

²³⁸ “According to the experiences of our previous expeditions, this time we also formed the nucleus of our personnel from young lumberjacks from Reloncaví, many of whom had participated already in our voyages in the past years, and we proposed to complete our ranks in the small towns in the south of the island of Chiloé, fatherland of the sea lion hunters and lumberjacks that often visit the austral archipelagos and the neighboring continental coasts.” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, pp. 284-285)

²³⁹ *Idem*, p. 93

²⁴⁰ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. 192

The catalog of human presence in North Patagonia during the second half of the 19th century is extensive. Although it is incorrect to state that there was any significant permanent human presence in the area, explorers seemed to at all times run into crews of seasonal *chilote* workers and their families, small groups of natives roaming around, and the extensive corpus of geographic and hydrographic knowledge that was held by a few experienced people. This seemed to contradict the explorer's view of this region and their own mission. Equipped with scientific tools, on board modern steam ships, and in service of an expanding Chilean state, these explorers encountered the limits of their positivist mission and often times found that premodern modes of knowledge contained more extensive and valuable information about the region than they could objectively measure with their tools.²⁴¹

In 1872, while Vidal Gormaz recovered from a bout of sickness at the mouth of the Puelo River, his midshipman, Juan Rogers, commanded an expedition up the Puelo River accompanied by his *chilote* guides led by one Manuel Tellez. Vidal Gormaz had earlier commented how *chilote* lumberjacks had begun to go up the Puelo River, past the first rapids, only in the last three years or so, always encountering grave difficulties in

²⁴¹ Diego Morales relates the lack of important business actors in the lumber business in this region that were not from the Archipelago of Chiloé and its surroundings to the lack of written and codified information about navigation in this region. He states, "one of the reasons that explains this inhibition of extra-regional actors in the commerce of wood through the channels of the archipelago was related with the precarious nature of the natural charts", adding that "it is difficult to evaluate how his new scientific and systematic knowledge [gathered by explorers during the mid-19th century] of the archipelago, of Guaitecas, and more to the south, in Aysén, had an effect on the movements of those who carried out the movement of lumber through the interior of the region in the final quarter of the 19th century, and that, as is analyzed, was marked by experience and the veteran tradition of the island dwellers to embark in the most remote channels with the understanding 'that all of them know how to use the oar, the rifle, and the ax, and some of them the cannon and the spear'." (Morales. "El Negocio De La Madera", p. 46)

their lumber extracting operations.²⁴² However, Rogers, already a five day's march up the river, all of a sudden found "a completely rotten trunk with signs of being cut many years ago."²⁴³ Upon further investigation, Rogers and his crew concluded that it must have been "cut by *don* Luis Tellez, grandfather of our companion, who now 100 years ago explored this river by land, and that, like the old explorers of these regions, kept the result of his voyage in absolute silence, not wanting to communicate it to his closest relative even in the hour of his death."²⁴⁴ This episode clearly demonstrates the differences in the collecting and transmission of information that existed between *chilotes* and indigenous peoples, and the scientific explorers. For all they knew, most of North Patagonia could have been traversed by locals many years before. However, owing to the locals particular modes of thought and knowledge transmission, there was no way to prove this. Thus, scientific explorers could be simultaneously discovering and re-discovering a certain region, codifying the human element present in it into an empirical catalog, necessarily with the help and support of local oral tradition and knowledge. Andrés Núñez states that "the construction of the Guaitecas and Chonos archipelagos as an empty space was more an extra-local creation, a socio-cultural projection of foreigners or of sailors that visited the intricate geography of channels and islands during short periods."²⁴⁵ The revision of the catalog of human presence in this region seems to confirm this.

²⁴² Vidal Gormaz. "Esploracion De La Costa De Llanquihue." (1872), p. 268

²⁴³ Idem, p. 274

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Núñez et al. "Silencios Geográficos En Patagonia-Aysén", p. 111

Chapter 3: The Waters

In 1856, after having undertaken the difficult crossing of the Andes Mountains, Francisco Fonck and Fernando Hess arrived to a cove on the shores of Lake Nahuel Huapi which they named Puerto Blest. There, they built a rustic canoe by hollowing out a single piece of alerce tree. Before setting off to the uncharted waters of the lake in their primitive vessel, Fonck stated that “It was not without emotion that we planted in the stern of our modest boat, the Chilean flag, which Ms. Jertrudis Maus de Hess, wife of Fernando Hess, respectable matron that outlives him, had contributed to our expedition.”²⁴⁶ Fonck continued:

as German colonists recently settled in Chile, we considered ourselves very favored by the high honor of taking the flag of the nascent Republic through these waters that had known only that of the *Metrópolis* [Referring to Spain; Jesuit missionaries established a small mission in the shores of Nahuel Huapi in the 17th century].²⁴⁷

The image of a small, but proudly waving Chilean flag amongst these unknown waters seemed to reflect the connection that explorers saw with the project of national expansion during the mid-19th century.

Explorations to Northern Patagonia during the mid-19th century had an intimate connection to the waters of that region. In first place, a majority of the explorers were members of the Chilean Navy, or were related to it in some way. Of all the explorations included in this investigation, only Fonck, Cox, and Steffen’s were not conceived as

²⁴⁶ Fonck, Francisco. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a Nahuelhuapi*. Vol. 2, 1900, p. 292

²⁴⁷ Idem

primarily hydrographic expeditions. In second place, even if the explorers and their commissions were not active members of the Chilean navy, the use of waterways such as the Patagonian channels, local rivers, and lakes was an absolute necessity owing to the geographic isolation of the region and total absence of any sort of land routes there. Hans Steffen, the first explorer to comprehensively traverse most of the North Patagonian Region from west to east, did so using the rivers as the only routes available. Finally, during this period, and despite their harsh climate, it was the insular and coastal areas in this region that seemed most appropriate for explorations and surveys; the continental zone and the sub-Andean valleys were still extremely isolated zones and it was not until the last two decades of the 19th century that explorations began in these areas. Thus, the corpus of exploration reports and literature written in the capital during the mid-19th century serve as a catalog of the waters of North Patagonia and the sorts of advantages it offered to the nation.

It is also important to note that most hydrographic expeditions were carried out before 1881, the year that the border treaty was signed between Chile and Argentina.²⁴⁸ Thus, most of the earlier, water-based expeditions, evidence a conception of Chile that projected towards the eastern *pampas* and even to the Atlantic Ocean. As such, the waters of North Patagonia were specifically imagined as offering a sort of passage to the east, an element that could aid in an eastward expansion during a period when the Chilean nation

²⁴⁸ The reader must remember that Hans Steffen's expeditions, despite focusing on the rivers of North Patagonia, was primarily focused on penetrating the sub-Andean valleys to the east and the region around the watershed divide in order to determine the course of the Chile-Argentina border in this area.

was expanding its territory in regions to the north and south. Similarly, there was virtually no institutional presence of the state in these waters at the time; even the first lighthouses in this region would not be built until the first decades of the 20th century. Owing to this, hydrographic explorations were also associated to an expansion of Chilean sovereignty and territorial possession in these waters.

Through the phenomenon of exploring and cataloging, the ill-known waters of North Patagonia were conceived of as a place that could be put to the service of the nation. Knowledge about the waters was cataloged and codified to the point where an official government institution, the National Hydrographic Office, was created with the purpose of rationalizing this corpus of information. The waters of North Patagonia were, at the same time, thought of as elements with which to expand the territorial pretensions of the Chilean nation. Similarly, the waters were imagined and described as a place where a large amount of economic activities could take place, thus helping to aggrandize Chile. Gonzalo Saavedra describes the exploration of the waters and coasts of North Patagonia in the mid-19th century not as primarily centered on this region, but as necessarily related to a modernization and expansion process centered on regions further to the north.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁹ “Towards the second half of the 19th century, the economy of exportation of primary goods in Chile found itself in plain expansion, demanding for this the exuberances of the still pristine national territory. The coasts of [modern-day] Aysén were not the exception and throughout the course of the 20th century, such tendencies became even more evident: economic exploitations were increased and diversified, new extractive modalities were installed, and some mechanisms oriented to the rational use of the resources that the coastal ecosystem offered were institutionalized. Notwithstanding, the process is incomprehensible within the limits of the southern territory, including Chiloé and Patagonia. Effectively, after the successive economic expansion and consequent penetration of the market in the southern coasts, there was a modernizing project, but it was not a project centered or much less thought of for what we now know as Aisén. The objective was always much more north. Initially, it was the connectivity in function of the

Starting from the 1822 constitution, and until 1877, the first chapter of the Chilean constitution laid out the territory of the Chilean nation, remarking that its limit to the west was the Pacific Ocean. During this period, the Pacific Ocean, and the myriad channels and estuaries that crisscrossed the North Patagonian coast, represented less of a limit and more of an element that facilitated expansion and communication.

Going Beyond the Expedition: The Institutionalization of Water-Based Explorations

Explorers traversing the channels and rivers of North Patagonia made use of their privileged position as a way to incite the state to expand its institutional presence in the region, whether it be through the institutional cataloging of hydrographic knowledge, through clamoring for a larger regulatory framework to remedy certain situations, or by urging the state to take a greater interest in this area. At the beginning of the mid-19th century, the waters of North Patagonia were still vastly underexplored. Vicente Pérez Rosales, the agent of the Chilean state who was in charge of organizing the German colonization of the Llanquihue Lake Region, declared in 1859 that

Nothing else can be said about the explorations undertaken in the islands of the west [the Chonos and Guaitecas archipelagos], in the coast and in the interior of the lands of Western Patagonia. The surveying of the former is incomplete; the coasts have been even less explored.²⁵⁰

salt peter exploitations, later, the supplying of resources for consumption in the cities of the continent, and more contemporaneously, the growth of private capitals also located in other latitudes.” (Saavedra. "Las Economías Silenciosas Del Litoral Aisenino.", p. 35)

²⁵⁰ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 257. For another description of the waters of North Patagonia by a writer in Santiago, consider the following quote by Francisco Astaburuaga in his description of the Chonos Archipelago: “The majority [of its islands], to not say all of them, as well as the continental coast and the tortuous passes that separate them are barely explored and what little is known about them focuses on their special [economic] articles.” (Asta-Buruaga. *Diccionario Jeográfico De La República De Chile*, p. 28)

Vidal Gormaz, in 1863, described the coasts to the south of the Melimoyu Volcano as “completely unknown” and Simpson, in 1870, recorded the channels to the south of the Aysén river as being “entirely unknown, and demand the utmost attention, for whatever news we have of them are more than vague.”²⁵¹ The lack of knowledge about the waters in this region served as a catalyst for explorers and commentators alike to urge for an increased institutional presence by part of the state there.

Already at the very beginning of the period of hydrographic expeditions to Northern Patagonia, explorers were calling for a greater institutional role of the state in the codifying of information about the waters. Hudson and Fonck (1857 & 1859, respectively) both commented, early on in this process, about the importance of having good maps and navigation charts for these waters.²⁵² Fonck argued that hydrographic work, such as that carried out by explorers like Hudson, was not being taken seriously by the government and that

If the Map [Hudson’s navigation chart of the Moraleda Channel] is not published, the results of this voyage will be entirely lost. It would be desirable that the Government continue with the exploration of those seas. The works of Moraleda

²⁵¹ Vidal Gormaz. "Descubrimiento Hecho Por El Teniente 2do. De Nuestra Marina De Guerra...", p. 670; Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco", p. 20. In 1857 Hudson justified his exploration course that would take him through the Moraleda Channel arguing that it was an “opportunity to practice the navigation of that part of the Republic, which up to now is the most dangerous.” (Hudson. "Reconocimiento Hidrográfico Del Río Maullin I De La Península I Archipiélago De Taytao.", p. 1153)

²⁵² Hudson stated how “Nowadays, this has become something very important [having an accurate map of the Moraleda channel], with the motive of how frequented this channel is by vessels that cross it every year, from one end to another from the month of September to February, with the objective of taking lumber shipments.” (Hudson. "Reconocimiento Hidrográfico Del Río Maullin I De La Península I Archipiélago De Taytao.", p. 1153). He concluded his travel report to the Taitao Peninsula remarking how “The first steps have been taken so that the Supreme Government, when it esteems so, can proceed to draw charts of this part of Chile [...] especially when it seems that our Marine Corps currently finds itself in the case of carrying out a project of this nature.” (Idem, p. 1158)

and Fitzroy [some of the few explorers to the North Patagonian region before the mid-19th century] have left a great void; and I have always admired that the Government does not employ its Navy to fill it.²⁵³

It seemed that with the passage of time, the government slowly began taking a larger role in the planning and execution of hydrographic explorations in this region. By 1871, the Marine Ministry²⁵⁴ specifically gave Vidal Gormaz instructions to complete in his expeditions, which had started as entirely self-motivated and funded, adding that “The government has agreed that you continue, this summer, the hydrographic work that you have been directing for some time and that were left interrupted towards the end of last summer.”²⁵⁵ For his 1871 expedition, the navy put a steam ship and various scientific instruments to his disposition and instructed the explorer to draw up navigation charts of specific regions in the area. However, the institutionalization of hydrographic expeditions was still in its infancy.

On May 1st, President Federico Errázuriz and Anibal Pinto, the Marine Minister, signed Supreme Decree No. 329 which created the Hydrographic Office of the National Navy, an organism that was to exist under the jurisdiction of the Navy. This institution would represent a fundamental change in direction in the way that hydrographic information would be collected, cataloged, and transmitted in Chile. Furthermore, it ushered a period of intense exploration activity in the waters of Chile. Among other tasks, the Hydrographic office was given the job of “proposing to the Government, according to

²⁵³ Fonck. "Jeologia (Sobre La) De Las Inmediaciones De La Colonia Alemana De Puerto Montt.", p. 322

²⁵⁴ The official name of this institution was the Ministry of War and Marine. Most exploration reports at the time, however, reference it as the “Marine Ministry”

²⁵⁵ Vidal Gormaz. *Exploracion De La Costa E Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, p. 5

a plan, the hydrographic explorations that should be done by Navy ships in the seas and rivers of the Republic,” as well as imparting specific instructions, and overseeing the publication and distribution of navigation charts.²⁵⁶ Similarly, article five of the decree read: “It is a special obligation of the Director of the Office to form the chart of the coast of Chile.”²⁵⁷ Finally, the decree stated that the Office must publish an annual yearbook “in which the official works referring to the National Navy, the news of foreign navies that offer most interest to Chile, the reports or scientific works of the officers of the National Navy, the laws and decrees of general interest corresponding to the navy, and other writings that are ordered to be published by the Marine Ministry.”²⁵⁸ The first director of this Office would be none other than Francisco Vidal Gormaz, who would remain at its head for 17 years.²⁵⁹ Thus, the cataloging of the waters of North Patagonia would no longer be a disorganized and piecemeal enterprise. Instead, it would be a rationalized and centralized undertaking that would directly serve the purposes of the nation.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ *Decreto Supremo No. 329: Crea la Oficina Hidrográfica de la Marina Nacional*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ Vidal Gormaz would also create the “*Navy Magazine*” in 1885 as a way to “complement the possibilities of investigation and diffusion about the technical, meteorological, and biological questions about the maritime territory of Chile.” (Saldivia. *La Ciencia En El Chile Decimonónico*, p. 136)

²⁶⁰ Zenobio Saldivia remarks on the centralist aspect of an institution like the Hydrographic Office. Despite the fact that the Chilean Navy’s traditional home has always been the port of Valparaíso, Saldivia notes that “today it appears curious, for example, to know that in May of 1874, the Hydrographic Office of the Navy, directed by officer Francisco Vidal Gormaz, was installed in Santiago. Said entity had as its objective the confection of updated nautical charts of the Chilean coast. And its mission included, as well, specifying the coastal geographical features, as well as carrying out a solid collection of the country’s hydrographic information. The reader must have in mind, in any way, that, given that the authorities and the existing information for the discipline, were in the metropolis, it made sense that in its beginning, the institution was

The creation of the Hydrographic Office and the publishing of the Hydrographic Yearbook represented a great change in the way in which water-based explorations in North Patagonia were carried out as well as the way they were perceived.²⁶¹ No longer was each exploration considered the individual work of a given explorer; instead, they were now being related to a national project.²⁶² Thus, Francisco Vidal Gormaz introduced the second volume of the Hydrographic Yearbook stating that

These events [the periodic and systematic publishing of hydrographic information], that we purposefully cite here, manifest the spirit of progress, the abandon of the pernicious habits of silencing everything, according to the old

founded in that city.” (Saldivia. *La Ciencia En El Chile Decimonónico*, p. 52). The port of Valparaíso is separated from Santiago by nearly 120 kms.

²⁶¹ “Upon reading the objectives that are indicated in the foundational decree, it is clear that the essential purpose of the journal is to act as an official medium that spread the latest scientific knowledge about the coasts of Chile. This preoccupation mirrors the governing politic of the moment, which alluded to the knowledge of the coasts of the national territory, characterized by a manifest interest both in the northern zone and its inorganic riches, as well as the southern region and its geopolitical potential.” (Idem, p. 134)

²⁶² Consider Vidal Gormaz’s introduction to the fifth volume of the Hydrographic yearbook: “Our Government, having insisted in furthering the hydrography of our country, especially in its austral part, and as such studies will continue for many more years even when it will work incessantly and with abundant elements, we have believed it to be opportune to compile the studies and explorations carried out by the first explorers of the Chilean coasts.

A methodic compilation of all the documents that constitute a solid base for the history of the progress in hydrography, a well discussed and certified compilation, should form, by itself, an abundant source in which our sailors will find copious amounts of information and varied observations to help them in their delicate hydrographic operations.

The writings of the primitive explorers, when they are studied with interest, offer a great wealth of lights; and the suffering that they experimented in the tempestuous southern coasts during their crafty works, present admirable examples of resolve and valuable lessons to those of us who are called to follow them in the task of furthering the progress of the geography of our fatherland.” (Vidal Gormaz.

"Introducción." *Anuario Hidrográfico de la Marina de Chile*, vol. 5 (1879), pp. vi-vii). Rafael Sagredo presents a different vision of this by stating: Rafael Sagredo explains this in the following manner: “The creation of the Hydrographic Office of Chile was the institutional materialization of a reality that, with ups and downs, was developing since 1834, that is the unsystematic, but persistent, exploration of the Chilean coast, that by being partial did not mean it was not effective respecting the places examined and represented cartographically.” (Sagredo. "De La Hidrografía Imperial a La Hidrografía Nacional", p. 538). It is true that the creation of the Hydrographic Office did not mean an increase in the quality of the hydrographic explorations carried out during this time *per se*. However, it is undeniable that the creation of this institution allowed for hydrographic explorations in Chile to 1) be more effectively transmitted within the nation and abroad, 2) become more important for the expanding nation, and 3) become more fully inserted and enmeshed within the academic and intellectual life of the period.

routine damaging universally and to our own progress, which is to put the fleet's personnel and the marine authorities to the position that the country aspires and has the right to demand."²⁶³

Within this new ordering of hydrographic information, the waters of the Chilean part of Patagonia would attain a special importance.²⁶⁴ "Chile, as is known, is essentially maritime," Vidal Gormaz would argue, highlighting the intimate connection between hydrographic explorations, a project of national expansion, and the institutions that were related to this task.²⁶⁵ However, the creation of the Hydrographic Office was merely imagined as the beginning of a more systematic exploration of the waters of the country. Vidal Gormaz would argue in 1879 that the "southern coasts, barely outlined in the

²⁶³ Vidal Gormaz. "Introducción." *Anuario Hidrográfico de la Marina de Chile*, vol. 2 (1876), p. vii

²⁶⁴ In the introduction to the fourth volume of the Hydrographic Yearbook, Vidal Gormaz wrote: "The channels of Patagonia are, for the moment, the ones that claim with most urgency a prompt and painstaking study because they are only known in broad brushstrokes and very little in terms of their details, having been studied only a few ports while there probably exists many other conveniently situated and appropriate to use as anchorage for waiting" (Vidal Gormaz. "Introducción." *Anuario Hidrográfico de la Marina de Chile*, vol. 4 (1878): p. vi). Similarly, he wrote in the introduction to the fourth volume: "Not long ago we looked at the Atacama Desert and even the wild peaks of the Andes with similar disdain; but the progress of geographic studies and scientific investigations that correspond to these, have given once more reason to the Latin aphorism: 'God and nature have done nothing in vain.'

Would it be a mere caprice, and nothing more than a caprice of nature, the inextricable austral archipelagos, their extensive and ancient forests, their abundant fishes, their deep blue glaciers?

The Andes, with their profound depressions, great rivers, their estuaries; are these and other objects without objective? Only an obstinate stubbornness could maintain this; and if today we do not find an immediate application for them, we should look for this to make them useful and beneficial.

Once these premises are accepted, nothing is more logical than to recognize the necessity to encourage the progress of the studies that we have referred to above, and that presenting the beautiful examples of audacity and selflessness for science that the ancient ones give us, let us try to awaken in the modern ones the love of the unknown, of investigation, and study.

Such is the purpose which was induced us and the spirit which moves us to encourage enthusiasm for our austral region." ("Introducción." *Anuario Hidrográfico de la Marina de Chile*, vol. 5 (1879): pp. ix-x). It is interesting to note, for example, that Captain Simpson's report of his four expeditions occupied the first pages of the first volume of the Hydrographic Yearbook.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. Saldivia states, "It is also convenient to observe the close collaboration that occurs between the officer corps of the Chilean Navy and the exponents of the national scientific community, especially the naturalists. This can be concluded upon observing the alternating works that are presented in the *Hydrographic Yearbook* and the topics referring to diagnoses of the exponents of the flora and fauna that civilian scientists would carry out." (Saldivia. *La Ciencia En El Chile Decimonónico*, p. 135)

present, demand that they be studied with care” to achieve economic and national goals, as well as “for the natural desire of improving the knowledge of general geography.”²⁶⁶ It is important to not forget, however, that the Hydrographic Office had lofty goals at a time when there were little resources to carry out its mission. While explorations such as the four Simpson expeditions represented a very important advance in hydrographic knowledge at the time; external events such as the Pacific War (1879-1886) against Peru and Bolivia came to completely paralyze the work of the Hydrographic Office for nearly five years.²⁶⁷ The institutionalization of hydrographic knowledge and the presence of state institutions in the waters of North Patagonia was still very tenuous, but it nonetheless represented an important advance of Chilean sovereignty in the region and the solidifying of a relationship between hydrographic expeditions and the project of national expansion.

Water and the Nation

Explorers and writers alike represented the waters of North Patagonia as providing an important stage for the expansion of the Chilean nation and its sovereignty. Rather than being a limit to national expansion, the waters seemed to facilitate it. In 1864, Carlos García Huidobro stated how “Civilization, social welfare, and national prestige

²⁶⁶ Vidal Gormaz. "Introducción." *Anuario Hidrográfico de la Marina de Chile*, vol. 5 (1879), p. ix

²⁶⁷ “Upon the seventh year of its existence, we must lament, as in the previous, the abnormal state that the Republic’s Navy is going through. A long and continuous war has not allowed the studious personnel to continue in their tasks of peace and progress, seeing themselves obligated to center their attention in the very theater of their labors, over nearly 2,000 miles of enemy coastlines, notwithstanding the meagerness of its elements. (Vidal Gormaz. "Introducción." *Anuario Hidrográfico de la Marina de Chile*, vol. 7 (1881), p. v)

and opulence, are thus conquered in the water; let us enjoy all the advantages that we have in our territory, so that we can reach the glory of the great civilizations.”²⁶⁸ The conquest of the waters of North Patagonia was related not only to a specific project of scientific cataloging, but rather to a general aggrandizement of the Chilean nation, its industries and its population.²⁶⁹ Vidal Gormaz, in an 1878 article explained how

Once cattle ranching is developed in large scale, those desolate regions [The Chonos and Guaitecas Archipelagos] will become in a few years into a source of riches for the country, creating, in consequence, various population centers and various industries that would give it an impulse, such as tanneries, meat salting operations, cooperages, etc... that would occupy the abundant arms that today do not find paid work in the populated province of Chiloé.²⁷⁰

Even the thermal waters that poured from under the rocks in North Patagonia were related to the development of the Chilean nation.²⁷¹

At times, the descriptions of waters in service of the nation became a call to action; they seemed to shake the government out of its indolence and realize the potential it had in its southern coasts. Vidal Gormaz (1878) described how “The archipelagos to the south of Chiloé have been unconsciously looked at with disdain, up to a certain point

²⁶⁸ García Huidobro. "Viaje a Las Provincias Meridionales De Chile", p. 448

²⁶⁹ García Huidobro went as far as to relate sea faring nations to the ideals of freedom, personal strength, illustration, and free will. He stated: “Let us look over the history of human society a little; let us see that the peoples that have marched at the forefront of civilization, the peoples to which humanity owes the goods that alleviate their misery, what peoples were the founders of the first feeling of national freedom, which ones have been the peoples that, although small, have risen imposingly to the face of the world, letting their influx and power be felt to the great nations; and we will note that they are the ones that have founded their power over the mobility of water.” (Idem, p. 444)

²⁷⁰ Vidal Gormaz. "Algo Sobre Los Archipiélagos De Guaitecas, Chonos Y Taitao", p. 11-12

²⁷¹ Carlos Juliet, the naturalist on board the Vidal Gormaz explorations in 1871 and 1872, explained how “All of these thermal sources could be of much interest for medicine [...] they will notable influence in the curation of many diseases. [...] To the present day they are almost unknown; but not much time will pass without them being given the importance they deserve.” (Vidal Gormaz. *Exploracion De La Costa E Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, pp. 118-119)

justifiable if we take into account the information given about them in the past century and in the times of our political emancipation.”²⁷² However, this was no longer an acceptable situation in his eyes. He declared, like a king would sentence a decree, to “Make of these aforementioned archipelagos a department, supply them conveniently, according to their necessities, give them certain guarantees and franchises that facilitate their expansion and development; provide them with means of communications with the north of the Republic.”²⁷³ Here is where the political goal of many of these explorations begins to appear. The islands, channels, and coasts of North Patagonia were conceived as a stage for scientific cataloging. At the same time however, this cataloging was expected to be put to the service of a broader project of national expansion. During 1879 to 1885, the Chilean nation conquered new territories to the north through war. In the south, this was to be done through scientific cataloging. Enrique Espinoza, in his “Jeografía descriptiva de la República de Chile” (*Descriptive Geography of the Republic of Chile*), reported that “These archipelagos [Chonos and Guaitecas] now deserve the attention that corresponds to them for the effects of their colonization and populating. Their channels are navigable in all directions and their islands offer sheltered and safe ports.”²⁷⁴

Not only were the waters of North Patagonia considered the backdrop to a movement of national territorial consolidation, they were also imagined, at least until

²⁷² Vidal Gormaz. "Algo Sobre Los Archipiélagos De Guaitecas, Chonos Y Taitao.", p. 12-13

²⁷³ Idem, p. 13-14

²⁷⁴ Espinoza, Enrique. *Jeografía Descriptiva De La República De Chile Arreglada Según Las Últimas Divisiones Administrativas, Las Más Recientes Exploraciones I En Conformidad Al Censo Jeneral De La República Levantado El 28 De Noviembre De 1895*. 4th ed. Santiago: Imprenta Barcelona, 1897, p. 451

1881, as a theater for Chilean territorial expansion towards the east. During the first half of the period studied in this investigation, before Argentina consolidated its presence and sovereignty in Eastern Patagonia, Chile still held territorial pretensions east of the Andes. This led Vicente Pérez Rosales, for example, to state in 1859 that “The Republic does not have other maritime limits to the east other than its Patagonian coasts, from the mouth of the Negro River to the Strait of Magellan, and to the west, the Pacific Sea, from Cape Horn to the Mejillones parallel.”²⁷⁵ Vidal Gormaz (1863) similarly discussed the mountain passes of North Patagonia, and how “on the same parallel as these passes, one hundred leagues to the east, the magnificent ports that the Valdés Peninsula forms in the Atlantic are situated, whose territory belongs to Chile.”²⁷⁶ While a bi-oceanic Chile is unthinkable nowadays, explorers and writers at the time imagined the exploration and control of the bodies of water of North Patagonia as a way to access the immense *pampas* of Eastern Patagonia and subsequently, the Atlantic coasts.²⁷⁷ Hydrographers conceived

²⁷⁵ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 257. Pérez Rosales talks, in a further part of this same book, of “the exterior aspect of Chile in each one of the two oceans that bathe its coasts”, further exemplifying the belief of a trans-Andean Chile. (Idem, p. 28)

²⁷⁶ Vidal Gormaz. “Descubrimiento Hecho Por El Teniente 2do. De Nuestra Marina De Guerra”, p. 671

²⁷⁷ Even today, occasional arguments that point towards a Chilean projection towards the Atlantic Ocean will appear every now and then. They can be considered as nothing more than stragglers within the intellectual life of the nation. Consider the article “Chile, País Atlántico” (*Chile, Atlantic Country*) written by Counter Admiral Francisco Ghisolfo Araya in the *Revista de Marina*, vol. 100, no. 757 (Nov.- Dec. 1983) as an exponent of this outdated idea. Chile also has the Law No. 18,892 (General Law of Fishing and Aquiculture) which sanctions the concept of a “Presential [of the noun presence] Ocean” which is described as “That part of the high seas, existent for the international community between the limit of our Exclusive Economic Zone and the meridian that, passing through the western edge of the continental platform of Easter Island, prolongs to the parallel of Border Marker #1 which separates Chile and Peru, to the Southern Pole.” This is loosely defined as an interest zone that would hypothetically extend to the Atlantic Ocean, which is however not recognized by any nation. These are but two examples of modern-day “Atlantic thinking” in Chile.

their surveys as a precursor to the taking of possession and expansion of Chilean sovereignty past the Andes Mountains.

Simpson's explorations in North Patagonia were intimately related to this line of thought. The instructions for his first expedition (1870) stated that he should conduct a reconnaissance of the coast, especially around the Aysén River and others that could "offer a pass to Patagonia."²⁷⁸ The instructions to his second expedition (1870-1871) expanded on this, mentioning that "Circumstances allowing, Commander Simpson will proceed in the exploration of the Aysén to the east until it is possible, with the aim of surveying the rivers and lakes that could be taken advantage of for an interoceanic communication."²⁷⁹ This became a sort of obsession for Simpson, and he tried to survey other rivers apart from the Aysén in order to find the pass to the *pampas* that was so dreamt of. During his second voyage (1871), he tried to undertake a small expedition up the Huemules River, a glacial torrent that provides no chance of passage even to the sub-Andean valleys. His rationale for exploring this river was having "news that in the beach there were tracks of large deer noted, whose paths are not seen in any other point in the coast, inferring that these animals have passed through eastern Patagonia, where they abound."²⁸⁰ Not content with this expedition that clearly failed to provide good results, he returned once again to the Aysén River in 1872 to try and find the pass to Eastern Patagonia. "Desperate for not having found to the south a wide enough river that

²⁷⁸ Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco", p. 3

²⁷⁹ Idem, p. 21

²⁸⁰ Idem, p. 26

promised an easy communication to Eastern Patagonia, through the Andes,” Simpson stated, “I resolved to make one new and great attempt through the Aysén.”²⁸¹ He stated that despite the uselessness of the Aysén as a waterway that could communicate to the eastern *pampas*, he was determined to follow it, even if it meant marching through the dense forest that covered its banks, because, in his words, “Until here, thus, all my efforts had been reduced to an easy path by water, of whose non-existence I was already completely persuaded of.”²⁸² The limits treaty of 1881 with Argentina meant that Chile would forever resign any sort of Atlantic pretensions. However, in this initial stage, explorers took advantage of their scientific missions to try and find water ways that could not only serve the nation’s state of knowledge, but physically expand its territory to regions where the Chilean flag had never flown before. These were hydrographic explorations being put directly to the service of the expansion of nation and its institutions.

Apart from representing them as the scenery for the aggrandizement and territorial expansion of the nation, explorers and writers described the waters of North Patagonia in relation, and compared, to other regions of Chile. This way, a reader in the capital, for example, could see in these travel reports a correspondence with regions that were more familiar to that type of audience, and thus imagine North Patagonia as a component part of the nation. At a time when the presence of the Chilean state in these waters was minimal, this was a technique that could be used by explorers to further

²⁸¹ Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco", p. 37

²⁸² Ibid.

highlight the specifically “Chilean” characteristics of a certain body of water and thus include these explorations in a nationwide project of surveying and exploring.²⁸³ At times, explorers directly related certain bodies of water to the nation in general. While Guillermo Cox (1863) sailed through Lake Nahuel Huapi, he was trying to find the river Limay to continue his voyage to the Atlantic. The search for that river that drained the lake was not an easy task due to the complete lack of maps and charts. After an extensive search, Cox narrated how

Finally Soto [One of the *chilote* pack men] arrives, we are attentive to his lips, and when to our question ‘Is it the drainage?’, he answers with a yes, with a strong emphasis, Lenglier [one of Cox’s assistants, a Frenchman], despite his nationality, exclaimed ‘*Viva Chile!*’ [Translates to “long live Chile!,” a typical patriotic exclamation].²⁸⁴

During the same expedition, a native tribe detained Cox and did not allow him to continue his journey down the Limay. The tribe’s *cacique*, as Cox related, “in an angry tone told me if I did not know that I deserved death for having come to his lands with no permission.”²⁸⁵ To this, Cox answered that “the waters through which I had navigated sprung from Chilean snow and belonged to that Government that had given me the necessary permission to traverse them.”²⁸⁶ These sorts of relating of bodies of water whose ownership was disputed at the time, to the Chilean nation, were not coincidental and furthermore, serve as a reflection of Chilean territorial pretensions pre-1881.

²⁸³ Simon Schama describes how “landscapes [in this case we would have to talk about “waterscapes”] can be self-consciously designed to express the virtues of a particular political or social community” (Schama. *Landscape and Memory*, p. 15)

²⁸⁴ Cox. *Viaje En Las Rejiones Septentrionales De La Patagonia*, p. 71

²⁸⁵ *Idem*, p. 85

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

More often, however, explorers related a certain body of water to other better known ones, as a way to insert the newly explored waters of North Patagonia to the traditional conception of the Chilean nation. During his second expedition (1871), Captain Simpson described the Huemules River in the following manner: "The River has two principal mouths that unite two miles in, and from there on, the bed increases to 600 meters wide; and similar to the Mapocho and other rivers to the North, it divides in many arms forming banks and islands of small rocks."²⁸⁷ The Mapocho River is the main body of water that runs through Santiago and is an obligatory reference for any inhabitant of the capital and most inhabitants of the central region of the nation. Vidal Gormaz (1872) similarly compared the Puelo to other major rivers of Chile to stress the difficulties he encountered during its navigation.²⁸⁸ Sometimes, such descriptions of bodies of water achieved almost poetic heights, as Simpson did so upon reaching the San Rafael Lake and its homonymous glacier (1872). In view of the great glacier tongue that flowed into the lake, the captain stated,

Before long I tried to give an impression of this lagoon, I resembled it to a gigantic pantheon with mausoleums in proportion, for the icebergs that detached from the glacier float in all directions and take the most capricious forms and the most varied hues, refracting the light rays; but I omitted to compare the glacier,

²⁸⁷ Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco ", p. 27. In 1886, Captain Serrano similarly compared the Palena River to the Mapocho, stating that "The River [Palena] plunges from the northeast with a notable grade upon simple observation and a speed very superior to the Mapocho in its flood days." (Serrano Montaner. "Reconocimiento Del Río Buta-Palena I Del Canal Fallos", p. 120)

²⁸⁸ "After having navigated many of the rivers of Chile, some of them being the most difficult, such as the Maule, the Toltén, the Calle-Calle in its upper course, the Quinchilca, the Maullín, and others, I am convinced that the Puelo is the most dangerous, the fastest, and, therefore, the hardest to ascend. Each one of its currents is a veritable rapid that involves a serious danger. Failure in such points, if one is able to save oneself from the waters, means falling into an impenetrable forest where the most complete solitude reigns supreme." (Vidal Gormaz. "Esploracion De La Costa De Llanquihue." (1872), pp. 278-279)

which can well be described as identical to the hills of Valparaíso, from the windmills to Playa Ancha [the Westernmost section of Valparaíso], penetrating the water like a pier, made of solid ice, and its surface a sea of crests and cracks, concluding in plunging ravines, which in their western extremity are the same or higher than those that are seen behind the Fiscal Warehouses [of the Port of Valparaíso], and climbing along the mouth of the continental mountains, where it descends from, to a height of 700 meters.²⁸⁹

Valparaíso, apart from being a very well-known city in Chile and another obligatory reference for nationals and tourists alike, is the home of the Chilean navy. Descriptions like these spoke both to the specialized audience of these reports (members of the Chilean navy) and a more general audience of laypersons that were perhaps interested in discovering more about the little known regions of the country.

Most exploration reports, and literature that referred to them, used different techniques to represent the waters of North Patagonia as an important backdrop to the territorial consolidation and expansion of the Chilean nation. During the period before 1881, Chile still had high hopes to expand towards the east. Because of this, there is an abundance of descriptions in this early period of the waters as providing paths for the Chilean nation to expand towards the east. Thus, these exploration voyages, despite their scientific vocation and spirit, nonetheless evidence the fact that they existed within a specific national context. Knowledge was not useful exclusively by itself; it also evidenced a political and national dimension. Thus, the catalog of the waters of North

²⁸⁹ Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco ", p. 133. It is interesting to read this vivid description by Captain Serrano. Earlier in his report, he had lamented that "I wish I possessed the pen of Dumas or the brush of Vernet to make the description! [of the very same San Rafael Lake] There does not exist, in the polar regions, scenes that can compete with this one." (Idem, p. 132-133)

Patagonia served as a way to imagine the North Patagonian region as a specifically Chilean one.

Water and the Economy

Explorers to North Patagonia during the mid-19th century constantly recorded the economic activities they saw being carried out in the waters of this region and also made assessments about the sorts of economic potential that these areas held. Thus, the cataloging of the economic importance of this region further helped to relate it to the rest of the national economy. Explorers and writers in the capital that commented on the former's reports held lofty aspirations for the role that this region would play for the country in the future. The future rationalization and ordering of the economic operations in North Patagonia was a concern for explorers and writers alike. Thus, the sort of economic activities that predominated there, mostly seasonal operations carried out by wandering *chilotes*, were imagined as a mere precursor to more comprehensive, permanent, and organized activities that could take place in the area if the state and its institutions took a greater interest there.

The earliest writings regarding the economic activities in the waters of North Patagonia during this period remark on the specifically *chilote* character of a great part of these. Vicente Pérez Rosales described the Comau Fjord in the following manner in 1859, "This last one [the Comau Fjord] penetrates eleven miles in the interior of the land and is full of small coves and harbors that are very frequented by the *chilotes* who occupy

themselves in the felling of wood in the numerous islands at its mouth.”²⁹⁰ He also commented how, during this time, the Guaitecas Archipelago only saw human presence in the form of seasonal visits by part of *chilote* lumberjacks.²⁹¹ During this early period, explorers noted the marginal character of many of these enterprises they visited. Vidal Gormaz (1872) noted how,

A few sons of the island of Huar are the ones that travel up the Puelo since a few years from now. Other individuals that, enthused by the attractive of the cypress that abounds at the river’s edge, tried to traverse it, having suffered unfortunate disgraces and definitively abandoned their daring enterprise, leaving it as the exclusive dominion of the people of Huar.²⁹²

Vidal Gormaz also noted on the activity of collecting shellfish left in the coast by the receding tides (*marisquear* in Spanish), something that “calls the attention of people not habituated to seeing it, offering at the same time some reflections about the character of the proletarian islanders.”²⁹³ Of these primitive shellfish recollecting operations, the explorer wrote that

The scene was most picturesque; everything was life and movement in this small nomadic town; everywhere one could see men and women crossing, the latter with their baskets on their shoulders and their skirt halfway up their leg recollecting the shellfish of the *cholcheñes* (shellfish deposits that had been formed in the previous days due to the level of the low tides).²⁹⁴

²⁹⁰ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 275

²⁹¹ *Idem*, p. 259

²⁹² Vidal Gormaz. "Esploracion De La Costa De Llanquihue." (1872) p. 261

²⁹³ *Idem*, p. 235

²⁹⁴ *Idem*, p. 290. Vidal Gormaz saw shellfish collection as a show of ingenuity, communal work, and backwardness in Chiloé. He mentioned how this activity involved men, women, their dogs, their chickens and even their pigs, stating that “In such moments of communism in which everyone is sharing the fruits of the prolific beaches, there is no lack of scenes that liven up the monotony of the act of collecting shellfish, such as the fights between the birds while disputing their prey or the struggles between dogs and pigs upon trapping the refuse that the masters tend to abandon. But none is as curious as seeing a pig recollecting

Not all *chilote* industry was as precarious though; some operations were described as being more organized and persistent throughout time. Captain Simpson (1871) noted how the sea bass industry employed many *chilote* hands and seemed to be carried out in a more organized fashion. In Puerto Lagunas, along the Moraleda Channel, he noticed how “The fishermen of the ship collected in one single tide over 1,700 sea bass. This fish is commonly salted and smoked, and has a good demand in Chiloé, especially during Lent. One can also find here many otters (*lutra felina*) whose skin is very appreciated these days to adorn clothes.”²⁹⁵ Thus, the catalog of explorations to North Patagonia recorded the people of Chiloé as being the first employed in economic operations there at the start of the mid-19th century.

Exploration reports painted a picture of the coasts and channels of North Patagonia as home to many different industries despite the lack of any permanent population. Already in 1867, Felipe Westhoff described a burgeoning lumber industry in the archipelagos of North Patagonia. He described how “Nearly one hundred thousand cypress sleepers for the railroads of the north of the Republic have been exported from the [Guaitecas] archipelago last year, similarly, there have been exported to Chiloé

clams for its owner; for the children tend to employ them, like the vintners of France, so that they can dig up the famous truffles.” (Idem, p. 236)

²⁹⁵ Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco ", p. 27. It seems like Puerto Lagunas was an established fishing operation by the time Simpson visited it. The quote in the text is from his first second expedition. In the report of his first expedition, he stated, “Here [in Puerto Lagunas] I found a sloop and a squad of sea lion hunters of Mr. Burr [a businessman from Ancud, in Chiloé], who were occupied in collecting sea lion oil and smoking fish, which, like shellfish, abounds in the vicinity.” (Idem, p. 7). Federico Delfin in 1888 also noticed many *chilote* fishermen along the mouth of the Palena River smoking sea bass. (Delfin "El Rio Palena", p. 71)

various cargos of guano.”²⁹⁶ Gonzalo Saavedra has related Westhoff’s report to the informing of the government of “such abundance of resources that could not be wasted by a state that found itself in the midst of a process of expansion and internal ‘modernization’.”²⁹⁷ Many explorers also reported on improvements made in small industrial operations and the expansion of economic activities into new places along the coastal and archipelago regions of North Patagonia. Vidal Gormaz in 1872 specifically noted how the lumberjacks from the island of Huar were progressively going farther up the Puelo River in the past three years, past its first rapids, to reach the cypress deposits located there.²⁹⁸ Two decades later, Steffen already described how “in numerous points of the coast we also find primitive sawmills as the first advances of industry at the border of the virgin jungle.”²⁹⁹ With the passing of the years, incipient lumber operations appeared to be conquering different parts of the North Patagonian coast.

Explorers similarly noted the presence and increase of fishing and shellfish extraction operations in the waters of North Patagonia. Captain Simpson saw many fish extracting operations in various points along the mouth of the Palena River in 1873. Upon finding some fishermen’s shacks there, he stated “The great number of [fishing] corrals proved to us that it is very frequented and that not only do they [fishermen] make

²⁹⁶ Westhoff. "Memoria Del Subdelegado Marítimo Del Archipiélago De Los Chonos O Guaitecas.", p. 449-450. Noting the marginal character of these industries however, he added about the guano shipments that “This has been carried out mostly in uncovered vessels, or if covered, so badly conditioned that, suffering from the effect of the rains, the guano has arrived wet, almost washed out, and subsequently useless.” (Ibid.)

²⁹⁷ Saavedra. “Las economías silenciosas del litoral aisenino”, p. 36

²⁹⁸ Vidal Gormaz. "Esploracion De La Costa De Llanquihue." (1872), p. 268

²⁹⁹ Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, p. 292

use of the fish, which the innumerable small estuaries provide, as well as the great strawberry patch of the island; in summer it offers a good and abundant harvest.”³⁰⁰ In Puerto Lagunas, Simpson (1871) also noticed the sorts of improvements that these incipient industries were demonstrating. He stated that

Puerto Lagunas has improved notably since last year, because of our voyage. In that time, there only existed a provisional shack that the fishermen inhabited in the summer; since then, Mr. Burr has constructed a wood storage and has formed a permanent establishment for the stockpiling of railroad sleepers.³⁰¹

Not all industries seemed to evidence such a steady growth, however. Simpson discovered a mussel cannery in Puerto Americano during his third trip (1872), noting that its owners “already had thousands of cans ready to send to the markets of the North.”³⁰² The next year, however, Simpson found out that the cannery was having trouble maintaining its operations due to the “universal practice of the *chilotes* to work in the Archipelagos only in the summer months and immediately return to their crops in Chiloé.”³⁰³ Two decades later, Steffen remarked on the increase in fishing extraction operations carried out in the coasts of this region, stating that

There almost does not exist in the long coast between the Gulfs of Ancud and Corcovado a cove, estuary or a tranquil corner between islands, where we do not find the nets of fishermen extended or some ‘corrals’ installed. In many parts we see primitive shacks that have been built as a temporal housing for the fishermen.³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰ Simpson. "Exploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco ", p. 154

³⁰¹ Idem, p. 25

³⁰² Idem, p. 75

³⁰³ Idem, p. 126-127

³⁰⁴ Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, p. 292

Steffen even recorded an ice-extracting operation from the San Rafael Glacier that he visited during his expeditions at the end of the 19th century.³⁰⁵ Thus, and despite its isolation and almost complete lack of development, explorers nonetheless reported on a non-trivial and growing amount of economic enterprises located in the waters of North Patagonia throughout the second half of the 19th century.

Apart from recording the economic activities that were already taking part in the waters of North Patagonia, explorers made assessments on the economic potential that these waters had and directly compared them to a project on a national scale. At times these assessments were lofty and almost unrealistic, perhaps more focused on attracting the attention of agents of the state in Santiago. Here, the reader is able to see a tension between the empirical observations that explorers were carrying out of a given place or industry, and the sorts of narratives that they were trying to develop about their place within a national context. These sorts of assessments contributed to the catalog of observations that depicted this region as existing directly in service of the nation and its institutions.

All explorers including Hudson, the very first, commented on the economic potential of the waters, islands, and coasts of North Patagonia. Some were general and monotonous descriptions (“Wood, as in all the channel, is very abundant, particularly the

³⁰⁵ “At the beginning of the decade of the 80’s of the past century, a small establishment was founded by a firm in Valparaíso in Port Mecas (San Rafael Bay) at the northern entrance of the San Rafael lagoon, to destroy ice from the floating icebergs that would have run aground in the bay or in the river and to bring them to the north. The enterprise very soon after had to liquidate due to the difficulties in the transportation of the ice and for economic considerations.” (Steffen. “El Istmo De Ofqui En La Patagonia Occidental.” *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, vol. 94, no. 22-23 (April-September 1936), pp. 30-31)

cypress, the *mañiu* or *huli-lahual*, and the oak. In terms of the soil, it appeared not very usable outside of some small patches”), while others were more imaginative and directed towards attracting the attention of statesmen in the capital.³⁰⁶ For example, Felipe Westhoff (1867) was very clearly and consciously advertising the Guaitecas Archipelago when he wrote to the Marine Minister arguing that there was most likely gold found in the Archipelago due to the mere fact that it was located in a latitude where, opposite the globe, gold was similarly found.³⁰⁷ Some resources that explorers listed as being abundant in the waters of this region were sea lions, otters, fish of all sorts, shellfish, and even ice.³⁰⁸ At the same time, explorers reported on the extremely abundant wood deposits that existed in the coasts of this region, the good quality of soils in some places, stone (“an article that later will form an important branch of the industry, for the ease with which it can be exploited and for its abundance”), and even on good pasturing grounds for cattle and other domesticated animals.³⁰⁹ Explorers often saw a high

³⁰⁶ Hudson. "Reconocimiento Hidrográfico Del Río Maullin I De La Península I Archipiélago De Taytao.", p. 1154

³⁰⁷ “Apart from these natural products of the vegetable earth, the mineral kingdom, it is presumed, is no less rich, once the business of exploiting it begins to be carried out. In effect, not counting the mineralogical conditions of the entire coast of Chile, from Atacama to Cape Horn, there are special and analogous circumstances in the archipelago that induce the belief that there exist mineral deposits there that nowadays are hidden to human greed by the fertility of the vegetation that covers the soil. The analogy that necessarily must exist between the North and South hemisphere, in the same latitudes, makes us think that there also exist the same geological conditions. In the Urals and in British Columbia in the Northern Hemisphere, as well as in New Zealand, in the Southern Hemisphere, at the same latitude, there are gold deposits found that have been exploited with more or less success.” (Westhoff. "Memoria Del Subdelegado Marítimo Del Archipiélago De Los Chonos O Guaitecas.", p. 447)

³⁰⁸ Westhoff listed many of these resources as abundant in the Guaitecas archipelago, noting at the same time that “The productions of the archipelago are simply the natural ones, as is easy to suppose in a place where there exists no fixed population, nor anything that can truly be called industry, and even those are very distant from even being superficially exploited.” (Idem, pp. 446-447)

³⁰⁹ Vidal Gormaz. "Algo Sobre Los Archipiélagos De Guaitecas, Chonos Y Taitao", p.8. Despite the resources found in the Chonos and Guaitecas archipelagos, and despite the reports of other explorers, Vidal

economic potential for the nation in the waters and coasts of North Patagonia, whatever their level of development was at the time and despite the large amount of obstacles to their economic exploitation. Enrique Espinoza, in 1897, wrote about the archipelagos region that, "In conclusion, these archipelagos have already manifested with practical examples their aptitude or relative importance for the implanting of certain industries."³¹⁰

Often times, however, descriptions of the economic potential of the waters of North Patagonia evidenced a degree of exaggeration which can be related to explorers trying to attract the attention of politicians in the center of the nation. It is in passages like these that the explorers in this region can be directly seen as agents in the project of national expansion and territorial consolidation. Hudson (1857), for example, saw the different kinds of wood he found in the Patagonian channels as both "inexhaustible for many years" as well as "that with time, will contribute to increasing the commerce of this province."³¹¹ Other writers were more imaginative about the sort of future that commerce held for these regions. Westhoff (1867), for his part, estimated that in the Guaitecas Archipelago, there were resources that could sustain anywhere between 200,000 and 300,000 people and the corresponding industries, adding that "only the man's labor, as well as his intelligence, his resources, and his capitals, are missing to make of these abandoned lands, other such foci of production that will create an own life for it and a

Gormaz in 1878 described them as a place where "nothing is done in the present" and as "abandoned in the present". (Vidal Gormaz. "Algo Sobre Los Archipiélagos De Guaitecas, Chonos Y Taitao", pp. 7-8)

³¹⁰ Espinoza. *Jeografía Descriptiva De La República De Chile*. p. 451

³¹¹ Hudson. "Reconocimiento Hidrográfico Del Río Maullin I De La Península I Archipiélago De Taitao.", p. 1157

future.”³¹² Owing to the little information existing in the capital at the time, writers such as Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna took these sorts of statements at face value.³¹³ The truth is that, even to this day, no more than 3,000 people inhabit the Guaitecas archipelago, and imagining such large population in this region was more of a pipe dream (or act of propaganda) than anything else.

While these sorts of tall tales seemed to be a defining feature of many descriptions of the territory, most explorers and writers seemed to have held sincere beliefs about the economic possibilities that existed in these regions, and their relationship to a national project. Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna (1868) described the waters between the Gulf of Penas and the Reloncaví Sound as “in effect, this part of the Patagonian territory seems more accessible to the progresses of civilization.”³¹⁴ Westhoff himself also wrote, in 1871, that “I have the conviction that this locality will acquire, with time, a commercial importance that will rival with other points of the Republic.”³¹⁵ Vidal Gormaz (1878) also showed enthusiasm about the future that the waters of this region held to regional and national commerce, stating that, “Port Low is called to be an anchorage of great interest when the austral archipelagos of Chile take some importance, which must be soon, thanks

³¹² Westhoff. "Memoria Del Subdelegado Marítimo Del Archipiélago De Los Chonos O Guaitecas.", p. 449

³¹³ “However, of these disadvantages that directly contradict the plan that exists in terms of establishing a permanent colony [in the Guaitecas Archipelago], the subdelegate of the Guaitecas, born in a frigid climate and enthusiastic about his residency at the same time (in which he lives as a sort of patriarch, as we have been informed in Chiloé), he is flattering about the future of these islands, capable of maintaining, in his concept, a population of three hundred thousand souls.”(Vicuña Mackenna, Benjamín. *La Patagonia (Estudios Jeográficos I Políticos Dirigidos a Esclarecer La ‘Cuestión-Patagonia,’ Con Motivo De Las Amenazas Recíprocas De Guerra Entre Chile I La República Argentina)*. Santiago: Imprenta del Centro Editorial, 1880, p. 212-213)

³¹⁴ Idem, p. 219

³¹⁵ Westhoff. "Memoria Del Subdelegado Marítimo De Guaitecas." edited by Marine Department, 138-39. Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1871, p. 219

to the industrial mediums that are present there and that further on we will describe.”³¹⁶ A great example of the relating of the economic possibilities of this region to the general aggrandizement of the Chilean nation lies in the debate about the canalization of the Isthmus of Ofqui, a discussion that began towards the end of this initial period of exploitation.³¹⁷ The Isthmus of Ofqui is the only obstacle for an uninterrupted navigation of the Patagonian channels without ever having to go out to open waters, from Puerto Montt to Punta Arenas. As such, Alberto Fagalde (1901) described the canalization of the Isthmus of Ofqui as a task that could bring benefits to the navigation of these waters, to the commerce in them, the industries there, and even bring about colonization and improvements, all of which “demand the immediate opening of this small isthmus that would come to realize a transcendental evolution in the progression of the country.”³¹⁸ Thus, the economic potential of the opening of a canal in his region was at the same time related to the navigational and colonial potential in this area.³¹⁹ Hans Steffen later

³¹⁶ Vidal Gormaz. "Algo Sobre Los Archipiélagos De Guaitecas, Chonos Y Taitao.", p. 6

³¹⁷ For more information about this project, see Martinic. "Apertura Del Istmo De Ofqui: Historia De Una Quimera. Consideraciones Sobre La Vigencia De Sus Razones." *Magallania* 41, no. 2 (2013), pp. 5-50; Steffen. "El Istmo De Ofqui En La Patagonia Occidental.", p. 22-70; Martinic. *De la Trapananda al Aysén*, pp. 474-479; Ferrer, Hernán. "Las expediciones hidrográficas y su importancia para las comunicaciones marítimas." In Vásquez, Isidoro, ed. *Chiloé Y Su Influjo En La Xi Región*, pp. 104-110. The building of a canal through the Isthmus of Ofqui is a project that continues to attract the attention of specialists and laypersons to this day. For recent discussions on this, see Martinic, Ivan. "Ofqui, Quimera de la Patagonia, cumple 110 años" in *El Mercurio*, June 16th, 2014

³¹⁸ Fagalde. *Magallanes: El País del Provenir*, p. 276

³¹⁹ Fagalde states "All the strength that patriotism gives and all the faith in the great future of the austral region, decide us to support the idea of the opening of the false Isthmus of Ofqui, as one of the most real necessities and as one of the most transcendental progresses that the Government of Chile can undertake. One of the greatest satisfactions that our patriotic and progressive aspirations could have, would be that of seeing the government deciding to send a commission to study the realization of this idea, and that soon the blueprints and budgets could be formed to undertake the construction, that we hope, for the future and progress of the country, should not stay as a mere project or not be realized, as so many other ones that hope the energetic and effective action of a progressive government." (Idem, p. 277)

revisited this topic and presented a more nuanced view, arguing that ideas about colonization in this region were completely far-fetched, but that the economic and navigation possibilities that this project entailed could serve as a launching pad for the greater connection between the Magallanes Territory and the rest of the nation.³²⁰

Reports and writings about the waters of North Patagonia recorded both the incipient economic activities that were being carried out there and the sorts of commercial potential that these regions held. Often times, these assessments of economic possibilities were not a mere listing and cataloging of a specific resource; they also included the explorer's personal thoughts on how economic activities in these waters could hold the key for the expansion and consolidation of the Chilean nation to the south. However, more often than not, assessments of economic potential in these regions amounted to almost nothing. As well publicized as these waters could be, they still seemed extremely marginal in relation to the rest of the Chilean nation and required much effort and investment to make productive. Alberto Fagalde lamented this fact in 1901, when referring to the assessments that Captain Simpson made about the waters around the Aysén Channel, stating,

Without a doubt, these studies should have stimulated the persevering action of the Chilean Government to continue total exploration, for they would have served as a basis for the unprecedented and sustained colonization with abundant information and beaming hopes by Captain Simpson, and for the better knowledge of the region that was in dispute with the Argentine Republic; but

³²⁰ "Considering all of these circumstances, it can be explained that opinions about the economic importance of a canal through the Isthmus of Ofqui are divided." (Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 2, p. 501)

instead of this, the Chilean Government once again neglected such an interesting work, which it seemed to not take note of and that did not transcend beyond the few readers of the Hydrographic Yearbook, in whose first volumes the travel reports of the captain and officials of the *Chacabuco* were published. The Argentines probably took better advantage of said studies, for since then they began to carry out their own explorations in Patagonia.³²¹

This goes to show, for example, the limitations and challenges that these explorations seemed to run up against. Noting the indolent attitude of the Chilean Government at almost all times during this period, it is perhaps unsurprising to see such lofty, and at times, unrealistic, expectations presented by the few explorers that visited these waters. At almost all times, the cataloging of present and future economic activities in the waters of this region responded to a project of expansion of national sovereignty into this region.

³²¹ Fagalde. *Magallanes: El País del Porvenir*, p. 7

Chapter 4: The Land

The date was February 2nd, 1894, and Hans Steffen and his expedition had been going up the Palena River for nearly a month. They were very close to reaching the eastern sub-Andean valley in that region, however the inhospitable terrain was making the expedition move with an “exasperating slowness.”³²² According to their instructions, the Steffen expedition had until the 12th of February to reach a spot defined beforehand where Steffen and his men would meet an auxiliary commission that had left from Lake Nahuel Huapi and followed the old indigenous path that went down the eastern sub-Andean valleys. The auxiliary commission would bring horses and supplies so that once united, the expedition could more effectively continue their exploration of the area around the watershed divide. Seeing as time was running out, Steffen asked a couple of his men, led by one Oscar Fischer, to separate from the main group and hurry on up to the meeting point with the auxiliary commission. Fischer and his men effectively met with the auxiliary commission on February 6th, along the banks of a river they baptized the “*Río del Encuentro*” (The River of the Encounter”). All seemed to go well until February 7th, when Oscar Fischer and his men were arrested by an Argentine patrol while Steffen was still catching up. Convinced that the Chilean geographic commission had sinister motives, the Argentine patrol refused to honor their passports and instead escorted them to the nearest Argentine military post in Junín de los Andes, an almost 600 kilometer journey on horseback from where they were. While on the path, Fischer and the rest of the arrested men ran into many people travelling up and down the path, and “According

³²² Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, p. 241

to the rumors” spread by travelers in this area, “our innocent commission was composed of 40 armed men.”³²³ While this was perhaps the most tense moment throughout the entire process of exploring the frontier region between Chile and Argentina in North Patagonia in the context of the border delimitation process that was ongoing as a result of the 1881 treaty, this episode, and especially the rumor spread about the bellicose nature of the Chilean commission, goes on to show how explorers at the time were imagined as having a close and active relationship to the process of national territorial expansion and consolidation.

The continental lands of Patagonia were surveyed and cataloged just as extensively and methodically as the waters of North Patagonia during the mid-19th century. Although the first inland expeditions were also mixed hydrographic commissions, as the 20th century came to a close, explorations began to focus almost exclusively on the land. The epitome of this is Hans Steffen’s cycle of 8 explorations during the last decade of the 19th century. Just like the water, the land was surveyed for its economic possibilities, for the construction of paths, and for conditions regarding colonization. During the first half of the period studied, land-based explorations projected a notion of Chilean sovereignty that extended to the east of the Andes Mountains. However, after the 1881 limits treaty was signed with Argentina, the main preoccupation of terrestrial expeditions became to delimit what and where the border with Argentina was, and thus, avoid territorial encroachment from the east. From representing a passage

³²³ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 298-299

to the vast *pampas* of Eastern Patagonia, the continental lands of North Patagonia became to be discursively constructed as a border that separated Chile from Argentina and prevented the neighboring country from expanding evermore into Chilean territory.

In this way, the land was at almost all times represented as an element that could be put into the service of the Chilean nation. This became all the more evident after the start of the border dispute with Argentina. After this moment, explorers and writers in the capital emphasized that the lands of North Patagonia had to be put to use to not run the risk of losing them to Argentina. The sort of relationship that explorers to North Patagonia towards the end of the 19th century had with the land made it quite evident that these regions were being thought up as serving the nation and its territorial ordering. However, unlike the waters, which presented no real limit to Chilean expansion, the land counted with the presence of Argentina on the other side. This element makes evident why many explorers and writers of the time directly related the lands of Northern Patagonia to projects of national importance, such as the expansion and consolidation of Chilean sovereignty in this region.

Land and the Search for Expansion towards the East

All explorers to Northern Patagonia during this period remarked on the seemingly inhospitable conditions that the continental part of this region offered. The entire area between the coast and the eastern sub-Andean valleys is covered by an incredibly thick forest cover and in order to get to the eastern valleys, explorers had to navigate up

torrential rivers for weeks at a time, being eaten alive by insects and mosquitoes, opening their way through extremely overgrown bamboo patches, and traversing through sinuous mountain valleys that seemed to have no easy ordering (in contrast with the Andes to the north, which exhibit a very consistent orography). At the same time, however, the difficult territory of Northern Patagonia was believed to have, from the onset of the first explorations, easy passes that led to the wide grasslands of Eastern Patagonia. In this way, the classification of land as an obstacle, or not, to reaching Eastern Patagonia, can reveal the kinds of relationship that North Patagonia had to the nation and its territorial pretensions past the Andes.

In 1859, Vicente Pérez Rosales wrote the following about the continental lands that faced Chiloé: “We cannot say anything about the interior of the lands of the province of Chiloé. It has not been visited, because it is literally impossible, without costly preparatory work, to penetrate through the immense virgin jungles that cover the ground.”³²⁴ Similarly, the jungles of this land were described by this author as nearly impossible to conquer without the use of fire.³²⁵ Captain Simpson (1871) also described the difficulty of conducting surveys in the interior of the continent stating, “Explorations by land in this region are so difficult due to the nature of the forest that it is nearly

³²⁴ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 259

³²⁵ “The jungles that cover the eastern [sic] region of Patagonia are so dense and composed of trees that are so close to each other and so closely intertwined, that it is literally impossible to penetrate in them without previous work. [...] The soil is formed of a thick bed of vegetable humus, where the water from the streams and the rains becomes stagnant, blocked by the deposits of leaves and decomposing trunks; and since the thick foliage of the trees impedes the sun and the winds to work on its evaporation, the terrain has a swampy and humid aspect, and appears, upon first inspection, to reject all idea of establishing agricultural work in it. But the difficulties cede almost instantaneously to fire.” (Idem, p. 258)

impossible [to decide on a course].”³²⁶ Similarly, Elías Rosselot (1893), the inspector named by the government for the short-lived Palena Colony, related the sorts of hardships that would often be encountered when trying to advance towards the interior:

Close to the first rapids of the river (some 20 miles from the [Leones] Island), a small hut was constructed with the objective of starting works towards the interior through this point; but, a detailed examination of this place made the primitive idea be scrapped for being a very swampy part as a consequence of the frequent floods of the river, and due to the distance that it has from the interior region that should be explored and occupied.³²⁷

Hans Steffen would often comment on how much the terrain would hinder inland expeditions in Northern Patagonia.³²⁸ All in all, the lands of North Patagonia seemed to always present obstacles to its travelers and explorers.

Other descriptions of the lands of North Patagonia presented it as less of an obstacle to the advance of human activity. Pérez Rosales (1859) commented how he disagreed with an assessment by English captain Parker King that the North Patagonian coasts were uninhabitable. He remarked, “How can it be stated, thus, with such information, that this region is entirely uninhabitable, that there is but a few acres of land

³²⁶ Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco ", p. 28

³²⁷ Rosselot. "Memoria Del Inspector De La Colonia De Palena.", p. 171

³²⁸ “To properly appreciate the topographic results of the expedition, it must be taken into account, outside of the scarcity of instrumental material and the limited time that we disposed of, that the trip and the scientific works in those inhospitable and unpopulated wildernesses, with their hills covered up to the line of perennial snow with an extremely dense layer of vegetation, with its rapid torrents of dangerous transit, and above all, with its almost always cloudy sky, are hampered by difficulties of all kinds and superior to those that, for the same objectives, present in the central and northern regions of the Republic.” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, pp. 92-93); “Advancing through the land path in such defiles presents insuperable difficulties sometimes, as happens in various passages of the narrows of the River Manso, where not even the most skilled man could walk freely on the steep hillsides that channel the riverbed.” (Idem, vol. 2, p. 30); “We traversed these terrains in the midst of a rain that fell almost incessantly, causing us hardships that would be hard to describe in few words. The downpours had transformed all the ground of the mountain into a series of deep quagmires and, even when it didn’t rain, the humidity of the mountain was such that with every strike of the machete, veritable torrent of water fell down from the innumerable tree leaves and reeds.” (Idem, p. 223)

capable of being cultivated in it or that there is not a single place that can be inhabited by civilized man?"³²⁹ Many authors similarly expanded on this and described the lands of North Patagonia as the opposite of an obstacle; as a place that could provide easy passes to the eastern *pampas*. This sort of description is only found in pre-1881 reports and writings, but that nonetheless, is of great help to understanding the way that land expeditions in this region were connected to a national project of expansion. Already in 1856, Fonck described the mountain pass that connected to Lake Nahuelhuapi as barely an obstacle, declaring that "it is clear that it has never offered an obstacle for the propagation of vegetation and the animal kingdom in one or other side of the mountain range."³³⁰ Thus, even in light of the difficult terrain and topography of North Patagonia, this region was also thought to provide some sort of connection to the eastern *pampas* that could eventually facilitate Chilean claims over that region.

One of the facts that drove this line of thought was the apparent disjointed structure of the Andes Mountains in this region. Even in the early period of this investigation, it was becoming apparent that the Andes Mountains did not exist in a single and unified configuration in these lands. Pérez Rosales (1859) stated that reports from *chilote* lumberjacks "leads to believe that the Andes lose, in many parts, the continuity of its peaks in these regions, and that they could be passed by deep valleys without having the necessity of carrying out the slightest ascension all the way to the

³²⁹ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, pp. 260-261

³³⁰ Fonck adds that, "When one descends, thus, to Port Blest [on the shores of Lake Nahuel Huapi], there is almost no difference found between both sides: there is, for example, the same birds in this lagoon as in the Llanquihue and Todos Los Santos ones; the vegetation is also the same." (Fonck & Hess. "Informe De Los Señores Francisco Fonck I Fernando Hess Sobre La Expedicion a Nahuelhuapi.", p.10)

grasslands of the *pampas*.”³³¹ Cox (1863) was similarly informed by people who had a relationship to the lumber industry that the Andes Mountains had passes, around the Nahuel Huapi region, which allowed for a crossing of the range without making an ascent. He specifically added that these passes led to “both the Argentine Provinces as well as the ultramontane part of Chile, known up until now with the name of Eastern Chile or Patagonia.”³³² This is an extremely interesting way to talk of Chile, as it directly asserts a territorial claim to the east of the Andes.³³³ Vidal Gormaz, in his 1863 expedition to the Comau Fjord, echoed a very similar argument to Cox’s. Erroneously believing he had ascended the Vodudahue River almost to the eastern limits of the Andes Mountains, he stated,

From the base of the waterfalls, one can see to the east two great passes that give way to the glades of Patagonia, without the necessity of climbing any hill in all the stretch we traversed and the *pampa*. I tried to pass to it, but seeing as we only had two days of supplies left, we returned to Comao [sic], without having had the satisfaction of achieving my dream, which was to walk a little through the Patagonian *pampas* or eastern Chile.³³⁴

³³¹ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 46. Pérez Rosales expanded on this stating, “The great center of the province [of Chiloé], where wood for construction is cut and that is the continental territory surrounded to the east by the Andes chain, is entirely unknown; because notwithstanding the considerable number of workers that head there in the spring, their reports about this deserted region are very contradictory and do not concur in more than one point which is, that the chain of the Andes loses its continuity in many parts of these latitudes, or at least the line of its peaks experiments such considerable descents there, that it is possible to pass to Eastern Patagonia without carrying out a sensible ascent.” (Idem, pp. 274-275).

³³² Cox. *Viaje En Las Rejiones Septentrionales De La Patagonia*, p. vii

³³³ During this period, descriptions of Chile extending to the east of the Andes Mountains were still common. Pérez Rosales wrote in 1859 that Chile “Is divided, as seen by its configurations, in two perfectly characterized sections; Oriental or Trans-Andean Chile and Occidental or Cisandine Chile.” (Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 23)

³³⁴ Vidal Gormaz. “Descubrimiento Hecho Por El Teniente 2do. De Nuestra Marina De Guerra”, p. 671. Decades later, Hans Steffen would note that Vidal Gormaz made a mistake in identifying the mountain openings he saw as the passes that led to the *pampas*. Steffen wrote: “Vidal manifests in his travel report, that the Oyarzún Pass, as well as another one situated more to the north, would allow an easy path to ‘the Patagonian *pampas*’ and gave this opinion a graphic expression in his map. The error is due, naturally, to a great exaggeration of the distances traversed by the expedition in its voyage through the river and the

During the first decade of explorations into North Patagonian lands, explorers and writers alike conceived the possibility of Chilean territorial pretensions in regions east of the Andes, with the inhospitable terrain acting as a connection between what was called, in different ways, the two different Chiles that were imagined at the time (western and eastern/Atlantic and Pacific, etc...).

Further explorations sought to scientifically prove these rumors and beliefs about easy passes to the east. Vidal Gormaz's instructions for his 1871 voyage specifically mentioned finding "passes that the Andes could offer within these limits [the coasts of the Reloncaví Estuary]."³³⁵ As a conclusion to his travel report, Vidal Gormaz wrote that the Andes Mountains indeed lost all continuity in the region around the Reloncaví Estuary, and that this offered a bright and notable future to the eastern lands, or Patagonia, as he called them.³³⁶ Simpson also expanded on a systematic quest to find the aforementioned passes of North Patagonia. As mentioned earlier, this became a sort of obsession for Simpson. During his first trip up the Aysén river (1870), after many miles of a hard

marches through the forest, a phenomenon that can be observed without exception in all the first exploration voyages through the Patagonian fluvial valleys. Vidal thought – as an observation included in his map demonstrates – that the western ascent towards the Oyarzún Pass was located upon the same meridian of the westernmost point of Lake Nahuel Huapi, 'according to the representation of Dr. A. Peterman in 1860'; therefore, it is evident that he considered the Oyarzún Pass, as well as the Pérez Rosales [pass], as a interoceanic watershed divide, without suspecting that on the other side of the Oyarzún Pass, there extends a mountainous region of a width of almost one degree of latitude that drains onto the western Ocean." (Steffen, *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, p. 226)

³³⁵ Vidal Gormaz. *Esploracion De La Costa de Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, p. 5

³³⁶ "According to what has been explained, the Andes in this point have no connection, forming but an ensemble of dislocated mountains, separated from each other by great depressions that offer easy access and that communicate the eastern slopes with the western, offering, of course, a bond of alliance between both sides of the mountains. More to the south, these irregularities are also notable, offering a great future to the eastern region, or Patagonia, relative to the progress that can be achieved in the archipelagos that skirt our coast. Subsequent studies will illustrate at a later time, the geography of these unknown regions." (Vidal Gormaz. *Esploracion De La Costa de Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, pp. 75-76)

march, he believed to have reached the mountain openings, stating that “It is impossible, Mr. Minister, to paint to Your Honor the illusions that I then formed.”³³⁷ These illusions would quickly dissipate upon finding that he had not, indeed, crossed the Patagonian mountain chain. He similarly believed to have reached very close to the eastern valleys during his second expedition (beginning of 1871), becoming finally convinced that he reached the pass that led to them in his final expedition up the Aysén (end of 1871). Steffen would later prove that Simpson never quite reached this hypothetical pass, owing to a defective measurement of the distances traversed, which in large part had to do with the extremely slow advance through the thick vegetation.³³⁸ Despite this, Simpson’s expeditions proved that the Patagonian Mountain chain was not a continuous block, which convinced him that the mountains of North Patagonia offered an easy pass to eastern Patagonia.

Explorers directly related the empirical observing of relatively easy passes to eastern Patagonia in the mountains of Northern Patagonia to the Chilean nation and its sovereignty in these regions. Simpson concluded the report of his third expedition (1872) stating, “The fertile strip of Eastern Patagonia belongs, thus, more to the Pacific than to the Atlantic, it being more accessible through this side; such that it appears that nature

³³⁷ Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco ", p. 9. He added that “The rain that had chased us all day had ceased upon facing the mouth [of the mountains]; the clouds, still low, blocked the mountains in the interior and I seemed to only the flatlands beyond the mountains in front of me; we had walked 20 miles between immense mountains crowned with perennial snows, finding ourselves almost 30 miles from the Moraleda channel, on whose margins the highest peaks are found; I had before me a wide valley through which the river snaked through; it is not strange, then, that I believed to have already crossed the mountains and found the so desired pass; but the next day all of this dissipated, for upon sunrise we saw that the mountains still continued to the east until where our eyes reached, although smaller than the ones we had left behind and in general, free from snow.” (Ibid.)

³³⁸ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, pp. 83-84

herself prescribes Chilean sovereignty.”³³⁹ Cox (1863) similarly imagined the mountain pass that led to Lake Nahuel Huapi as the ideal place for a crossing of the Andes Mountains of a hypothetical railroad line that would connect the Pacific Ocean with the Atlantic.³⁴⁰ Carlos García Huidobro, writing from the capital in 1864, noted that after his travels to the south of Chile, “I no longer saw our fatherland as the projection of the shadow of the mountains, as it appears in the maps, nor did I saw it as small as we are accustomed to look at it.”³⁴¹ Referring to trans-Andean territorial pretensions that were evident at the time, García Huidobro added that,

“in the south and to the east we have a horizon as extensive as the very ocean in our future, in illustration and in commerce [...] we will not do more than cross a flat ocean [referring to the *pampas*] and put ourselves in contact with her, with the blue empire, and we will exploit that host of riches gathered there for so many years; we will come into possession of the element that we are destined to under all aspects, and with time we will come to make ourselves and our brothers respected from the pretensions of strength.”³⁴²

For both García Huidobro and other explorers to the North Patagonian region, the cataloging of the geography of these lands seemed to be inextricably linked to a project of national expansion to the east. Within this project, explorers would play a crucial task: that of scientifically proving that nature intended this to be so. Despite the fact that the 1881 border treaty ended any and all trans-Andean pretensions for Chile, explorer’s reports and writings in the capital at the time were key in initially supporting these ideas and hopes. García Huidobro (1864) concluded his thoughts on Chilean expansion towards

³³⁹ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 86

³⁴⁰ Cox. *Viaje En Las Rejiones Septentrionales De La Patagonia*, pp. 257-259

³⁴¹ García Huidobro. "Viaje a Las Provincias Meridionales De Chile", p. 440

³⁴² Idem, pp. 440-441

the east stating, “What is missing to carry out this plan? Only encouragement and execution, selflessness and patriotism; because we count with all the elements to reach the highest grade of splendor.”³⁴³ This way, the difficult and unforgiving geography of North Patagonia was reimagined and cataloged, at least before 1881, as an obstacle, but at the same time also as an element that facilitated Chilean expansion to the east.

Land and the Construction of a Frontier

In 1859, Vicente Pérez Rosales argued that “It seems that all modern geographers are pleased in not being in agreement with each other, when it has to do with assigning to the territory of the Republic its true limits.”³⁴⁴ It was not until 1902 that an external British arbitration, the result of more than two decades of litigation, exploration, and debates, settled the border between Chile and Argentina. Thus, throughout the second half of the 19th century, multiple and competing conceptions of how North Patagonia was a frontier³⁴⁵, where this frontier lay, what the frontier meant for the country, and what sorts of relationship it had to “what was on the other side,” at first lands controlled by

³⁴³ García Huidobro. “Viaje a Las Provincias Meridionales De Chile”, p. 441

³⁴⁴ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 21

³⁴⁵ It is important to note that the word “frontier” in Chile references a very specific and stable geographic region. Throughout most of the colonial period, and up until the Chilean nation’s conquest of historically Mapuche territory, starting in the 1860’s, the “Frontier” corresponded to the territories between the Bío-Bío and Toltén Rivers. This territory was the historic heartland of the Mapuche peoples and serves as a classic case of borderlands history. While the Frontier was never a hermetically sealed line, owing to fluctuating and successive periods of war and peace, conflict and commerce, the concept of a frontier in this region seemed to outlive its historical existence. Even in 1900, Ramón Briones Luco would define the Frontier in the following way: “The territory comprehended between the Bío-Bío and the northern limit of the Province of Valdivia comprises the Araucanian frontiers.

This territory is divided in two sections: the High Frontier, which extends between the Andes and the Nahuelbuta Range, and the Lower Frontier, that spans the zone comprised between the Nahuelbuta Range and the sea.” (Briones Luco. *Glosario De Colonización*, p. 292)

indigenous tribes and afterwards by Argentina, existed. Representations of North Patagonia as a frontier zone experienced an evolution throughout time. Before 1881, the frontier was more of a discursive one; what defined the frontier aspect of this region was the lack of knowledge and presence by the Chilean state. However, after 1881, it became very clear that Argentina was on the other side and if initially it was Chile who had pretensions towards the east, now Chile had to contain Argentine expansion towards the west. Thus, the description and cataloging of North Patagonia as a borderland responded directly to national developments at the time.

Pérez Rosales was well aware of the unknown character of North Patagonia; he himself stated that “we are in the most absolute ignorance about the continental regions [to the East of Chiloé].”³⁴⁶ To this author, this region held an air of mystery; it was a zone that was to be conquered by exploration and science and whose veil was to be lifted for progress to make its advance there. He explained this by stating that “in the landslides and in the mysterious mouths of the Patagonian Andes is where the great book of nature is found, whose pages turn by themselves so that the secrets of creation can be read in them.”³⁴⁷ Thus, one way of discursively constructing North Patagonia as a frontier was depicting it as an unknown region that was calling to be discovered and taken advantage of; a frontier for knowledge. Guillermo Cox (1863) espoused similar thoughts on this region. Apart from describing it as a “desert,” a word that became a sort of early trope

³⁴⁶ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 257

³⁴⁷ *Idem*, p. 39

that referred to Patagonia³⁴⁸, he also described North Patagonia as a mysterious place that could hold many secrets and treasure for the nation:

There [in Northern Patagonia] the silent nature, severe and almost unexplored, can hold riches that are only discoverable by a longer and more detailed exploration than the one I have carried out; for this reason, upon describing the impression that the traveler experiments upon traversing those regions with such an enormous workload and so many dangers, I am very far from judging them only useful for the nomadic tribes that inhabit them. The time will come, and perhaps not a remote one, in which what today seems to reject civilized man will become an object of greed. We have in plain view what happens in the Atacama Desert, whose arid mysteries hide so many treasures.³⁴⁹

These sorts of arguments constructed North Patagonia as a discursive frontier, not as a frontier that faced another nation, but as an indeterminate and open space in which to project national sovereignty. One of the most obvious characteristics of this discursive frontier was the lack of knowledge about it and the pioneering aspect of everyone who stepped foot in it.³⁵⁰ Even towards the beginning of the 20th century, this sort of discursive construction of North Patagonia as a frontier for knowledge and action

³⁴⁸ “Representations of Patagonia, and thus of Aysén, in traveler-explorer reports at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, evidence a historical period of a great drive where the notions of this territory as a ‘desert’, ‘periphery’, and ‘interior frontier’ pretended to associate the place as a zone lacking in development, becoming necessary, thus, to completely dominate this space.” (Zúñiga, Paulina & Núñez, Andrés. “Dibujando los márgenes de la nación: relatos y discursos de los viajeros-exploradores de Patagonia-Aysén entre los siglos XIX-XX” in Núñez, Andrés et al., eds. *Imaginario Geográfico, Prácticos Y Discursos De Frontera: Aysén-Patagonia Desde El Texto De La Nación*. Santiago: Impresión Gráfica LOM, 2017

³⁴⁹ Cox. *Viaje En Las Rejiones Septentrionales De La Patagonia*, p. 198

³⁵⁰ Carlos Juliet described his passing through region around the Yate Volcano as “we were perhaps the first men that would go to disturb the calm of its abode.” (Vidal Gormaz. *Exploración De La Costa de Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, p. 107). The French geographer Pierre Joseph Pissis, who was commissioned by the Chilean Government to carry out a geographical survey of Chile between 1848-1868, wrote of North Patagonia in the following way: “Beyond [the 44th degree of latitude], there extends the vast region, still undivided, of Western Patagonia and Chile, that is, the part situated to the west of the Andes Mountains.” (Pissis, Pierre Joseph. *Geografía Física De La República De Chile*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Paris: Geographic Institute of Paris, 1875, p. ix). Similarly, he stated that “The part of the Chilean mountain range that extends from the Osorno volcano to the Strait of Magellan, is still unknown.” (Idem, p. 29)

persisted.³⁵¹ Fagalde (1901) described the persistence of a “knowledge-as-frontier” up until the turn of the 20th century as,

An embarrassment for a civilized country that counts with sufficient resources to commission works of this kind [surveys and explorations], to maintain large territorial extensions in an absolutely savage state, in which there not only does not exist the primitive pastoral industries, but where there is no knowledge about even the most rudimentary geographic accidents.³⁵²

However, with the 1881 border treaty, the frontier would materialize into an actual limit with an “other” nation and peoples.

The 1881 Border Treaty and the subsequent conflict that appeared with Argentina brought about notable changes in the way that explorers and writers alike conceptualized the land. First of all, this treaty meant that Chile would forever resign any sort of pretensions to the flatlands of Eastern Patagonia. Thus, the mountain passes of Northern Patagonia would no longer serve the territorial expansion of the Republic; instead, they would now be imagined as containing Argentine advances in a western direction. In second place, the sorts of geographic expeditions carried out during this time, most notably Hans Steffen’s, were no longer solely interested in a neutral geographic surveying of the region: they specifically related to the furthering of Chilean claims to specific valleys that lay in the disputed zone. Thus, it became less important to study the

³⁵¹ Alberto Fagalde, in 1901, noted that “For the objective of the present book, we will continue to refer to the entire southern region of the continent south of Lake Nahuel Huapi, and south of the Chacao channel in the Patagonian coasts, islands, and adjacent archipelagos, not only for the general ignorance in which this whole region is found under, with the exception of the main island of Chiloé, but because news and observations have tended to it and will continue to tend to it, and to develop these ideas.”(Fagalde. *Magallanes: El País del Provenir*, p. 291). Similarly, Steffen noted how, even by the end of the 19th century, certain sub-Andean valleys, such as the Valle Nuevo were “completely unknown up until our expedition.” (Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 2, p. 157

³⁵² Fagalde. *Magallanes: El País del Provenir*, p. 269

topography of a certain region, whereas something such as finding the watershed divide became of utmost importance due to its relationship to the process of delimitation of national territory.³⁵³ Finally, descriptions of the frontier in relation to Argentina seemed to evidence the limits of science as an unquestionable method for delimiting the border. While Chilean explorers had a near-blind faith in the power of scientific observation and surveying, this ran up against Argentine political maneuvering that proved to be more successful in this territorial tug-of-war. This way, post-1881 explorations, more specifically Hans Steffen's, demonstrate an intimate relationship with the process of defending Chilean claims to territories within the disputed zone. It became important for explorers such as Steffen to determine what lands should fall under Chilean jurisdiction and what sort of "Chilean" characteristics these lands showed. The fact that the border conflict between both countries was not settled until 1902 meant that the way these border lands were represented by explorers as part of the nation or not, turned out to be a contested and evolving process.

One way that Hans Steffen's travel reports evidence the representation of North Patagonian lands, especially those along the disputed zone, as an external frontier is the emphasizing of their necessary and natural connection to Chile. Argentina took the lead in establishing colonial enterprises in many of the sub-Andean valleys along the disputed zone. As early as 1889, settlers arriving from the east began establishing themselves in

³⁵³ The reader must remember that the Chilean position during the border litigation process was fundamentally based on an interpretation of the 1st Article of the 1881 treaty where the watershed divide predominated over the "highest peaks" consideration as the element with which to define the border between both nations.

these frontier zones with the permission of the Argentine Government.³⁵⁴ Despite the fact that in 1889, the Argentine Minister of Foreign Affairs, Estanislao Zeballos, and the Chilean ambassador in Buenos Aires, Guillermo Matta, agreed that no country would carry out acts that would extend either nation's jurisdiction into the disputed zones, it became a widely recorded fact that Argentina was establishing effective possession almost everywhere along the disputed zones of the North Patagonian border as a way to strengthen its territorial claims.³⁵⁵ Chile, perhaps naively, did not protest this too much and did not try to set up colonial establishments itself in the disputed zones. Thus, one of the ways in which Steffen tried to give a "Chilean" character to many of these Argentine colonies that were to the west of the watershed divide, was to remark their dependency on

³⁵⁴ Steffen wrote the following about the first of these colonial enterprises in the disputed zone, which was the Welsh colonization, sponsored supported by the Argentine government, along the 16th of October Valley, which fell within the watershed of the Futaleufú river which in turn drains into the Pacific Ocean: "The Chilean government at the time of the foundation of the Colony, and all the time in general, was contented with the assurance given by Argentina that if the colony truly existed, it would be an establishment of a purely private character, with which the Argentine government had nothing to do." (Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, p. 324)

³⁵⁵ Steffen explained the Chilean reaction to finding out that in 1889, an Anglo-Argentine society was selling shares and title deeds, in Europe, to terrains along the disputed zone, in the following manner: "The Chilean government, by means of its ambassador in Buenos Aires, presented the fact that the terrains offered for sale by the Anglo-Argentine society, according to the Captain Serrano's report, were found to the west of the watershed divide and irrigated by the Palena and other Chilean rivers that go to drain to the Great Ocean, and expressed hopes that Argentina – like Chile was doing – would abstain from exercising any rights to sovereignty in the disputed regions until the definitive demarcation of the border. The conversations that followed between Minister Zeballos and the Chilean Ambassador, Guillermo Matta, led to a mutual declaration of extraordinary importance, with which it was established that 'no action of one or another government that signifies extending its jurisdiction over pieces of the Mountain Range still in dispute, should influence in the least the results of the future limits demarcation.' Furthermore, the Argentine Minister declared in this same opportunity that his government *did not consider it convenient nor respectable that one of the two nations executed beforehand any action that could in any way difficult the realization of the Limits Treaty.* [...] While Chile – perhaps with too much confidence in the justice of its case - strictly adhered to the protocol of 1889 and contemplated the progressive Argentine occupation of the disputed valleys, this country, especially since Francisco Moreno was named limits expert and since it could foresee with security the handing over of the limits dispute to an English Arbitral Examination, consciously prepared a plan tending to present to the Arbitral Judge a policy of positive and effective colonization in the disputed regions." (Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, p. 324-325)

Chile. Steffen (1892), for example, described that the region around Lake Nahuel Huapi, a region that was not under dispute at the time and that was firmly under Argentine possession, as “a sort of Chilean colony.”³⁵⁶ He added that “Despite the dividing wall constituted by the mountains and their difficult passes, its snow and torrential rivers, these regions have maintained much closer ethnographic and economic relations with their Chilean Motherland than with the capitals on the shores of the La Plata [River].”³⁵⁷ During his 1902 inspection trip to the disputed zones, Steffen noticed how colonists from various countries were settling in the upper valleys of the Palena, arriving through the Argentine side. Of these burgeoning colonies, Steffen wrote that “The market for the productions of their farms, as is for all the colonies of this sub-Andean region, is Chile.”³⁵⁸ Writing in 1913, Steffen noted in retrospect how the Cholila Valley, also in the Pacific watershed and awarded ultimately to Argentina, was never truly annexed in an economical sense by that country and that “The Republic of Chile will always continue to be the principal market” for its economic productions.³⁵⁹ Thus, Steffen and other writers represented the frontier region in North Patagonia, despite the fact that Argentina was colonizing most of the sub-Andean valleys and that many were ultimately were awarded to that country, as a region that was inextricably linked to Chile.³⁶⁰ This is a prime

³⁵⁶ Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, p. 137

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, pp. 518-519

³⁵⁹ Idem, p. 327

³⁶⁰ Fonck, in 1900, also commented on the sort of relationship that the colonies in the sub-Andean valleys had to Chile: “Despite Argentina making an effort to build railroads and paths that connect their Atlantic ports with these faraway and rugged regions bather by the Pacific, it will be in vain that the colonist’s products take exit through that side. The Pacific is so close that the importing and exporting of all the goods will have to be carried out forcibly through the Chilean side. As the open sea ports are only a step away, the

example of the politics and Chilean territorial pretensions of the time being reflected in reports detailing explorations to North Patagonia.

Another way that Steffen represented the lands of North Patagonia, especially its eastern edge, as a frontier zone, was highlighting the conflictive presence of Argentina. Whereas these lands had been represented as virtually empty and calling for Chilean possession before 1881, after this period, Argentines appeared as an “other” that was encroaching upon the Chilean nation.³⁶¹ Thus, Steffen’s reports constantly note the presence of Argentines along the frontier region as a disrupting and potentially conflictive element. One of these episodes happened in the upper Palena valley (1894), where Steffen had split his expedition in two to cover more land, giving command to the other half to Oscar Fischer, his assistant. Steffen described the separation of his commission as an absolutely unremarkable event.³⁶² However, as noted above, an Argentine border patrol arrested the group led by Fischer on February 7th, 1894 and forced it to march to the nearest Argentine outpost in Junín de los Andes, nearly 600

Chilean authority, established with almost no other objective than to sustain possession in these coasts, will not be able to contain that current that will constantly try to become independent from her [Argentina] and jump the weak and artificial barrier that separates it from the sea. There is no doubt that these disagreements will also hinder the progress of the inhabitants of both sides.” (Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a Nahuelhuapi*. Vol. 2, 1900: pp. 460-461)

³⁶¹ Steffen, for example, concluded his report of the expedition up the Palena River stating that “It has been proven, as well, that in these valleys, Argentine colonization is established, from years ago, under the protection of the government of that Republic, although according to the text and the spirit of the Limits Treaty of 1881, confirmed once more by the 1893 protocol, all of these territories, *situated to the west of the mountain chain that divides the waters*, should be of Chilean property.” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. 280)

³⁶² “Upon separating, we had thought of all the contingencies to which a lone traveler is exposed to, in the middle of the solitudes of an inhospitable region of impenetrable jungles, far from any human establishment, except for one: the frustration of our plans by the armed intervention of a friendly nation, as a consequence of which we would meet again only after almost two months of separation.” (Idem, p. 236)

kilometers away from the point of their arrest. Fischer described this Argentine act as an assault on Chilean sovereignty, something to which the arresting officer simply replied: “‘according to the experts of his country’, this valley known in Argentina with the name of the ‘Corcovado colony’ was Argentine territory.”³⁶³ Upon reaching Junín de los Andes, the Argentine captain, Mariano Fosbery, confronted Fischer. Fosbery believed that the Chilean commission could perhaps have malicious intentions. Fischer defended himself defending the “purely scientific and inoffensive character of our commission.”³⁶⁴ The expedition was finally let free, but this intervention by Argentine authorities had completely derailed the expedition and marked the end of it.³⁶⁵

Hans Steffen also recorded the conflictive attitude of Argentine citizens and agents of the state upon reaching the colonies in the sub-Andean regions, many of whom were populated by Chilean colonists who had been given authorization by the Argentine government to settle there. Of the Chilean colonists in the Valle Nuevo (1895), he wrote that “They were owners of a flourishing estate and, in their own words, they suffered solely due to the suspicion and bad faith of their Argentine neighbors, upon whom

³⁶³ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. 259

³⁶⁴ *Idem*, p. 300. Fischer recorded captain Fosbery’s response in the following manner: “He answered that he thought very differently about the matter, and that all types of scientific explorations and geographic surveys in the frontier regions of both countries were, in his opinion, completely inadmissible, if they were not carried out with the authorization of the respective governments.” (Ibid.)

³⁶⁵ An Argentine tentative to harass a Chilean expedition was also described by Francisco Fonck in 1900. He claimed that the Argentine government had taken steps to imprison Guillermo Cox and his expedition in 1863. Fonck wrote, “President *don* Manuel Montt [of Chile] took a special interest in the realization of the Cox expedition and extended him a passport. The Argentine Government, on the contrary, looked at it with disdain and ordered, according to subsequent information, that Cox be taken prisoner when he presented himself to the reach of the Argentine authorities. It was, in a way, a happy coincidence that our traveler suffer a shipwreck and escape this way from an act of violence not worthy of the culture of our century.” (Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a Nahuelhuapi*. Vol. 2, 1900: p. 297)

weighed heavily their seeing the best terrains in possession of Chilean colonists.”³⁶⁶ Steffen passed one more time through the Valle Nuevo in his return from the expedition to the River Puelo. There he talked to another Chilean colonist who described how they “are systematically antagonized by the Argentine neighbors, jealous for them having occupied the best terrains in this mountain valley.”³⁶⁷ These sorts of conflicts and hostilities that arose in the frontier regions was a very evident way to represent the Argentines as an aggressive and conflictive “other” that was encroaching upon Chilean territorial pretensions. Thus, by remarking on how these lands were becoming the stage for a clash of national and territorial pretensions, explorers such as Hans Steffen also made value judgements on Argentine attitudes during the border conflict in comparison to Chilean attitudes. While Chilean actions in the disputed zone were described as indolent, naive, and excessively complacent, Argentine actions were described as disloyal, aggressive, and opportunistic. This goes on to show the political engagement of many of these geographers and explorers with issues of national importance. It seemed

³⁶⁶ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 51. Of the Valle Nuevo and other sub-Andean valleys, Steffen noted how they “have been since a few years ago a special attractive for the invasion of colonists from the Argentine side.” (Ibid.)

³⁶⁷ Idem, p. 370. The treatment of Chilean colonists by part of Argentine authorities could fluctuate between hostile and conciliatory. However, Steffen noted that even in situations where the authorities acted in a conciliatory manner, there was a disloyal element. In 1902 he returned to the Valle Nuevo colony where he noticed that the Chilean colonists, a majority in this valley, were “upset by the abuses of the neighboring Argentine border authorities. We were told, however that soon before the arrival of the commission of the Arbitral Delegate, certain agents had traversed the region, to influence the inhabitants in favor of the Argentine cause, telling them, among other things, that they were to be given a league of fields in property, if Argentina triumphed in the arbitral sentence. In this same work of propaganda, a priest apparently participated as well, traversing these territories for the first time.” (Idem, p. 506)

that Steffen saw traces of a conflict between the nations even in the landscapes of some zones in the disputed area.³⁶⁸

Despite these high profile encounters with Argentine hostilities, most interactions that Steffen had with Argentines were entirely peaceful. This, however, did not keep him from commenting on the attitude of agents of the Argentine state. Steffen, apart from cataloging the topography and geography of the disputed sub-Andean valleys, also cataloged Argentine attitudes during the border conflict, often times remarking on their negative aspects. Steffen, for example, was convinced of a systematic Argentine encroachment upon sub-Andean valleys in order to take possession of them, something that was defended by agents of that nation with less than honest arguments, in his opinion. He commented on how

the insecurity regarding the hydrographic connection of two great courses of water in the middle of an ill-known region of the Mountain Range was exploited to create a monstrous orographic chain that seemed very appropriate to justify the political advances by part of Argentina in the region of the precious Andean valleys that were to the east of that hypothetical chain.³⁶⁹

In addition, Steffen recorded actual situations on the ground that seemed to confirm these Argentine attitudes. For example, during his traversing of the upper valleys of the Simpson River in 1902, Steffen noticed a small and remote outpost recently established by one Antonio Steinfeld, which seemed to have been established solely with the

³⁶⁸ “All of the landscape [of the mountain range that represented the watershed divide along the Palena River] presented itself covered by burnt hillside and low bushes, whose yellowish-red color gave it a lugubrious character; and the innumerable fallen trees and charred cypress trunks invited the comparison to an immense battlefield with gigantic cadavers, littered everywhere.” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. 250)

³⁶⁹ *Idem*, p. 289

intention of swaying the British arbitral commission into believing that the Argentines held effective sovereignty over these areas.³⁷⁰ In a more comical situation, Steffen noticed how nearby, right along the zone of the watershed divide in the Simpson River valley, a squad of Argentine workers was setting up a small colonial “post,” which was nothing more than a house and a shack. Upon closer inspection, Steffen described how the workers were setting up a telegraph post which was supposed to connect to the Atlantic coast. Steffen commented how there was not a single establishment in a circumference of hundreds of kilometers that could have used that telegraph station, and he concluded that these improvements “were nothing else than a comedy put on stage at the eleventh hour with the purpose of proving to the Arbitration Delegate, in a dramatic fashion, the exercise of Argentine sovereignty in the disputed region of the upper valley of the Simpson River.”³⁷¹

Although Argentine attempts to convince the Arbitral Judge of their sovereignty over many areas in the disputed regions of North Patagonia seemed to reach comical heights with the telegraph incident, they were effective, as Steffen remarked, because that specific estate was given to Argentina (although the rest of the Upper Simpson valley remained in Chilean hands). These sorts of incidents seemed to “Demonstrate,” in

³⁷⁰ “We found here, in the exact point where we descended to the Goichel valley from the neighboring hill that divided the waters, a post recently established by *don* Antonio Steinfeld, and we saw some cattle in the vicinity. All in all, due to the information we were able to recollect, we got the impression that it was a hurried occupation, carried out in the last minute and not so much by the initiative of Steinfeld, but rather by a higher order, with the objective of being able to exhibit, to the delegate of the Arbitral Tribunal, another case of Argentine colonization in one of the valleys subjected to litigation.” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 259)

³⁷¹ Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 2, p. 441

Steffen's words, "the violent and artificial character of Argentine 'colonization' in Western Patagonia".³⁷² Thus, the contact with the Argentine "other," often times proved to be a disrupting factor that ended up affecting Chilean territorial claims in this region. The scientific pretensions of the Steffen expeditions, bent on proving Chilean claims to the sub-Andean valleys, amounted to little in front of Argentine actions such as setting up colonies, both real and for show, in these regions. Chile ended up being awarded more territory than Argentina as a result of the 1902 arbitration. However, Argentina was ultimately awarded most of the fertile sub-Andean valleys whose value was higher than many of the lands that ended in Chilean hands. The lands of Northern Patagonia, especially those in its eastern edge, provided a valuable example of the national frontier being constructed by explorers in response to their contact with Argentina. While these explorers often represented themselves as merely carrying out a scientific cataloging of these lands, they inevitably commented on the political developments that influenced territorial claims in this region.³⁷³ It seemed that their scientific cataloging had little power to influence the border delimitation process compared to a more aggressive Argentine policy of directly asserting their sovereignty in those regions with no regard to scientific surveys. Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, in 1880, right before the signing of the border treaty, had imagined the delimiting of the border in this region in the following

³⁷² Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 440

³⁷³ Consider how Santiago Marín Vicuña describes the exploration reports of Steffen and his assistants, "This valuable part [the sub-Andean valleys], that is wanting to be snatched from us, is the one that we want to make known to the Chileans and people who are interested by American geography in the following pages, that has induced us to write them alongside a scientific interest, with a patriotic inspiration." (Marín Vicuña. *A Través De La Patagonia*, p. 86)

manner: “by means of an arbitral sentence on the ground by expert surveyors and geographers, without the intervention of kings or courtly advisors and particularly of lawyers.”³⁷⁴ Experience, however, would prove that science would ultimately reach the limit of its action when coming up against the hard truth of political power.

Land and Nation

While the lands of North Patagonia that directly bordered Argentina were described as the scene of the most intense and decisive confrontations with this nation, the rest of the lands of North Patagonia were also represented as the backdrop for a project of national importance at the time. Writers and explorers seemed to comment on the Chilean characteristics of many of the lands of North Patagonia, relating their project of scientific cataloging to a movement of expansion of Chilean sovereignty in these lands. For example, Steffen would remark, during his exploration of the upper valley of the Cisnes River, that

In the character of the landscape that we were traversing, we found a certain similarity with the terrains of the high and rolling hills that characterize many parts of the so-called Coastal Range in the center of Chile. Had it not been for the difference in the representatives of the vegetation, we would have believed to be on top of one of the hills that give their back to the port of Valparaíso.³⁷⁵

Explorers thus related certain regions and lands of North Patagonia to the Chilean nation through a variety of discursive techniques. Explorers, for example, named specific geographic features after Chilean politicians and national figures, related the land to the

³⁷⁴ Vicuña Mackenna. *La Patagonia*, p. xxi

³⁷⁵ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 248

aggrandizement of the nation, gave ideas as to how the nation could utilize these lands and make them productive, and also compared them to Argentina, all in order to portray North Patagonia as a distinctly Chilean region. Thus, geographic and hydrographic expeditions were, once more, being put to the service of national and political goals.

Contemporary explorers would often have to name newly discovered geographic features. Perhaps the most used method was to name a certain feature after a politician or a figure of national importance. Thus, Fonck, in 1856, baptized the pass that led to Lake Nahuel Huapi as the “Vicente Pérez Rosales Pass,” “remembering that it was *don* Vicente Pérez Rosales, who first had the happy idea of taking those lands out of their obscurity and gave impulse to everything that was done later.”³⁷⁶ Fonck would repeat this many more times during his expedition, thus naming Puerto Blest, and the 12 of February Mountain, for example.³⁷⁷ The naming of certain features in honor of other explorers was also a widespread technique. Thus, Francisco Hudson (1857) named the channel that took him to the Taitao Peninsula, the “Moraleda Channel,” in honor of the late-18th century Spanish explorer who explored those waters. Hans Steffen similarly named one of the

³⁷⁶ Fonck & Hess. “Informe De Los Señores Francisco Fonck I Fernando Hess Sobre La Expedicion a Nahuelhuapi.”, p. 8

³⁷⁷ Puerto Blest is a small launching pad for ships in the western edge of Lake Nahuel Huapi. Fonck explains his name choice stating, “We have named it Puerto Blest in honor of the governor [of Llanquihue] *don* Juan Blest who with the particular enthusiasm with which he promoted the expedition, its good results owe to”. (Fonck & Hess. “Informe De Los Señores Francisco Fonck I Fernando Hess Sobre La Expedicion a Nahuelhuapi.”, p. 10) Similarly, Fonck explained his naming of the 12th of February Mountain, close to the shores of Lake Nahuel Huapi, stating “Remembering that this day in which we obtained such good results was the 12th of February, the anniversary of the foundation of Puerto Montt, and of other memorable events in the history of Chile [Foundation of Santiago in 1541, The Battle of Chacabuco in 1817 which effectively ended the Chilean Independence War and sentenced victory for the Independence faction, and the signing of the Chilean Act of Independence in 1818], we called this mountain, the 12th of February Mountain.” (Idem, p. 4)

forks of the Aysén River as the “Simpson River,” in honor of that explorer. Thus, Steffen explained how

The number of denominations of this kind is extraordinary and lately it has increased since the Chilean navy, in its demarcations of the coastal zone, has applied this principle almost exclusively in the denomination of geographic features. In fact, with all of these names we could confection an almost complete repertoire of Chilean political history during the 19th Century.³⁷⁸

Through these sorts of names, the relationship of the land to the nation would be eternally solidified, “eternalize[d] [...] in the topography of the Patagonian mountains,” as Steffen would describe it.³⁷⁹

The land was also directly described as holding the key for a future aggrandizement of the Chilean nation. For example, Vidal Gormaz (1863) wrote about the forests in the upper section of the Vodudahue River in the following fashion,

These forests, that offer such a comfortable pass [to Eastern Patagonia] will, I believe, later influence in the aggrandizement of the Republic, for if a trans-Andean railroad were to be carried out, it would have to be through these regions, in view of the ease that this valley that we have traversed and that leads to the *pampas* presents for such an enterprise.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁸ Steffen, *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 2, pp. 585-586. Steffen also noted on what he called the “double denomination” of many geographic features of Northern Patagonia, so that a certain geographic accident could have different names on either side of the border. Thus, what was the Palena River on the Chilean side, became the Carrileufú on the Argentine Side. The General Carrera Lake is named so on the Chilean side, and is called the Buenos Aires Lake on the other side of the border. Lake Cochrane is named Lake Pueyrredón on the Argentine side. Lake O’Higgins is named Lake San Martin on the Argentine side. Steffen noted “The lack of an agreement between both countries, who sustained a unilateral nationalist tendency, was maintained for some time after the end of the limits dispute, as is revealed in geographic charts.” (Idem, p. 583)

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Vidal Gormaz. “Descubrimiento Hecho Por El Teniente 2do. De Nuestra Marina De Guerra”, p. 671

Fonck, in 1900, remarked on how the southern regions of Patagonia, those around the Strait of Magellan, had undergone rapid progress in the past decades, holding similar hopes for the North Patagonian region. Fonck noted that “Since this zone has progressed so much, we can hold hopes that the valleys on both sides of the Patagonian range [...] will lend themselves for a no less advantageous exploitation and will breathe life into centers of culture that will be able to rival Puerto Montt and Punta Arenas.”³⁸¹ He concluded stating that “The transformation of this immense desert, generally considered from its discovery up until recently, as destined to a perpetual and invincible desolation, in a country subjected to culture is a peaceful conquest worthy of the end of our century.”³⁸² Thus, not only was this territory being explored, discovered, and taken possession of, in name of the nation; it was also imagined as being carried out peacefully and with science replacing the sword. Santiago Marín Vicuña expressed similar ideas in 1901, upon concluding his study of “what this territory [Chilean Patagonia] has been, what it is, and what it can be,” adding that this “is a beautiful and comforting page of our industrial progress and can serve to estimate the future of the regions under litigation, that are of a similar weather and constitution, if not superior.”³⁸³ Steffen similarly described episodes where the lands of North Patagonia, and their resources, could help develop the Chilean nation, albeit not in an economic manner. At the end of his expedition through the southern plateaus of Patagonia (1899), he visited a cave known in the present day as

³⁸¹ Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a Nahuelhuapi*. Vol. 2, 1900, pp. 450-451

³⁸² *Ibid.*

³⁸³ Marín Vicuña. *A Través De La Patagonia*, p. 150

the “Mylodon’s cave,”³⁸⁴ where various well-preserved specimens of this ancient ground sloth were found. After his visit, Steffen noted how

We became convinced of the necessity of interesting the Chilean Government in the exploitation of the paleontological and archaeological treasures that this cave and other neighboring ones situated within the premises under its dominion. The most interesting pieces had already been taken abroad, and the Argentine commission was preparing systematic excavations in the depths of the cave, to enrich the La Plata Museum with the results of their work.³⁸⁵

Thus, the lands of Northern Patagonia, what grew out of them, and what was hidden beneath them, were all related to the future of the nation, usually in positive terms.

Explorers and writers alike compared the lands of North Patagonia to Argentina as a way to comment on the certain “Chilean” characteristics that the region had, or to reclaim the importance of the lands in dispute with Argentina. Steffen, on multiple occasions, compared colonists on the Chilean side of the border to ones on the Argentine side. The colonists on the Argentine side were described as inhabiting ramshackle houses, living in poverty, eating poorly, being lazy, and being unwelcoming to foreigners. Chilean colonists, on the other hand, were very favorably described by this explorer, writing that they lived in well-constructed houses, were hard working, ate well, and were very hospitable to travelers.³⁸⁶ Writers also compared the actions and intentions of the

³⁸⁴ It must be noted that the Mylodon’s cave is actually located within the Southern Patagonian region, close to modern-day Puerto Natales. However, this episode is included within this investigation as it reveals Chilean attitudes towards archaeological material and its relationship to Argentine actions.

³⁸⁵ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 470

³⁸⁶ On his return to Chile from the Upper Valleys of the River Palena (1894), Steffen described the differences that could be seen between Chilean and Argentine colonists. He stated, “We could not but observe the notable difference in living conditions of the colonists that were advancing upon both sides of the Mountains. Although the inhabitant of the *pampa* lives amongst an abundance of cattle, a little bit of milk is only rarely procured in the posts through which the traveler passes. Pots and other utensils to

Argentine state to Chile. Fonck, in 1896, noted how a “specter or sinister ghost” was descending upon the Andes: Argentine pretensions to Pacific Ocean ports. Ignoring Chilean pretensions to the Atlantic that had been very much alive only two decades earlier, Fonck asked himself “What is the cause of the violent agitation that has come over our neighbors beyond the Andes in pretending the domination of the two Oceans, when there is no precedent that justifies it and that no nation in South America possesses?” adding that Argentine pretensions in the Pacific Ocean were “A golden dream, full of aspirations of power and grandeur.”³⁸⁷ Fonck even described Argentina’s position in the border dispute as “hardly compatible with equity and justice, [and would] originate in the future a very harmful state towards the prosperous march of Patagonia and a very large inconvenience for both Republics,” while describing Chile’s position as

prepare food are missing entirely for the Argentine *pampa* dweller: his food is grilled meat, the only variation in his diet being the mate that he sips on at all times of the day. His dwelling is a miserable shack, in construction and hygiene equal to the indigenous people’s tents. However fertile the soil where he lives is, and as favorable as the irrigation conditions are, they never carry out the slightest tentative of improving their conditions, cultivating it. He spends his day on horseback registering his herds or sleeping on the shade of his shack. The odd times that an exception to this rule is found, it is discovered, investigating the case, that the individual in question is Chilean or European.” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, pp. 315-316) Of the Chilean colonists in this same region, he remarked that their posts “present a very different aspect from the miserable *pampa* outposts. The colonist who lives there has his house well-constructed with planks, possessed with a chimney, glass windows and other amenities. A mill built over a stream helps him to grind the wheat that he cultivates in the cleared terrains in part by the hand of nature, but also by the rude force of labor. With a hospitality that contrasts favorably with the stoic indifference of the *pampa* dweller towards the traveler, the Chilean colonist receives one at the entrance of the corral that surrounds his house, serving him a tasty lamb or chicken stew, and all kinds of legumes, which he himself cultivates in his farm, tortillas, and other luxuries that the *pampa* dweller does not even imagine.” (Idem, p. 316). Upon finding the Valle Nuevo colony (1895), Steffen described the following: “The finding of the colony was for us an important event for other reasons; for here we could supply ourselves of fresh supplies, meat primarily, after long weeks of a flavorless diet, consisting exclusively of canned food, jerky and toasted flour. We even procured veritable delicacies such as eggs, cow’s milk and many kinds of legumes, that are often provided to the traveler in any Chilean ranch, but that are missing from the small establishments of the Argentina *pampa*, where the whole *menu* of daily food is reduced to grilled meat and *yerba mate* without any variation.” (Idem, p. 367)

³⁸⁷ Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a La Cordillera*. Vol. 1, 1896, pp. xv-xvi

merely based on natural borders and conducive to peace and prosperity.³⁸⁸ It becomes evident, thus, that explorers and their writings were not only comparing Chile and Argentina in relation to the land and what was happening there, but that this comparison was being carried out with two very different measuring sticks. Here is where these men of science show their national inclinations more openly. Whatever the pros and cons of the Argentine position in the border conflict could be, Chilean writers seemed to only see the negative aspects of this nation's position in the border issue, and consequently, express only positive judgments about Chile in relation to the writings of explorers at the time.

The lands of North Patagonia were also related to the nation through the voicing of opinions and concerns regarding ignorance and apathy in Chile, and how this could, and had, affected national territorial claims in a negative way. Explorers and writers commented on how ignorance and apathy had been important causes for Chile having lost the eastern section of Patagonia, something that would, in a way, illustrate "the immense sacrifice that the loss of this region has imposed on Chile," as Fonck stated.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a Nahuelhuapi*. Vol. 2, 1900, p. 461. Fonck even went as far as to state that Argentina should "give the first example of true civisms and Americanism, spontaneously conceding to Chile, as part as a compensation for the unconditional ceding of Nahuelhuapi [to Argentina], the rights that she believes to have over the disputed territories of Patagonia, fully accepting the line drawn by the Chilean Expert in the peaks of the southern Mountain Range that run through the continental watershed divide.

Let us note, above all, that this concession, however big it may seem, is not so transcendental in reality, because once carried out, coming ahead of the arbitral ruling, is in a certain way an eventual happening, for it would cede to Chile what the Judge would perhaps award to that country. Calculating that there is equal possibilities of each side to be favored, its ceding would count was half of the object in litigation." (Idem, p. 464)

³⁸⁹ Santiago Marín Vicuña wrote in 1901 that "I believe that one of the principal causes of the loss of the boreal Patagonia [east of the Andes, that is] and the threat that we have nowadays of losing its austral

Steffen also added that the tendency of the Chilean state to act only in the last minute in this region had been a cause of the loss of many of the fertile sub-Andean valleys.³⁹⁰ Thus, some authors visualized their writings as serving the nation by informing readers and statesmen alike of the importance of North Patagonia, and this way not expose the Chilean nation to another territorial loss of a large magnitude.³⁹¹ Apart from being merely scientific or geographic works, reports by explorers about North Patagonia actively defended Chilean territorial pretensions in this region and commented about ways to avoid losing even more land in this region.

The last way in which explorers and writers related the lands of North Patagonia to a national dimension was through giving their opinion and proposals as to what the nation should be doing in those lands. Since these were some of the few peoples who had any regular contact with Santiago that had firsthand knowledge about the region, they also felt qualified to give their opinion regarding ways of making the land productive.

section, is the complete lack of knowledge that our men of government have regarding its importance and value and this is why I do not lose the hope, and I believe that I am making a service with this, of bringing my notes together some day and making them public. [...] This idea, so deeply rooted, of the null value of Patagonia, spread by wise men that never visited these regions, made us look down on it and later abandon our rights [over it] and only today, somewhat late already, do we know that Patagonia is as rich as the best territories". (Marín Vicuña. *A Través De La Patagonia*, p. 7). Afterwards, he would add that "Having already lost this part of Patagonia, our government still has the means to convert it into a tributary of ours, commercially speaking." (Idem, p. 61)

³⁹⁰ "Unfortunately, the influent circles of Chile, during the discussions around the possession of those sub-Andean valleys, gave scant importance to the problem of the annexation of the disputed zone to the populated centers of the south of Chile and only in the eleventh hour was there an attempt to confront the expansionist pretensions that the Argentines knew to carry out with the means at their reach." (Steffen, *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, pp. 215-216)

³⁹¹ Marín Vicuña introduces his book stating, "The present work is created without any other wish than to illustrate to the Chileans the value and importance of the litigating regions in Patagonia, to the south of Mount Tronador and especially those contained between Lakes Cochrane and San Martín. [...] These pages hold, above all, the truth and that is why we hold hopes that they be useful to the popularization of our cause in the limits litigation with the Argentine Republic, which should have its outcome in the Arbitral Tribunal in London." (Marín Vicuña. *A Través De La Patagonia*, p. 3)

Captain Simpson, for example, proposed at least two ways for Chile to take effective possession of the eastern Patagonian *pampas*. Simpson concluded the travel report of this third expedition (1872) proposing the government to found a penal colony in the lower Aysén valley and use penal labor to build a path that led to the east, something Simpson described as “very easy.”³⁹² Simpson further explained how the penal colony could also serve as an outpost that could recollect climactic information and data regarding the nature and resources of this region. All of this was to conclude with the posterior founding of an industrial colony, which would have a very advantageous and central location, in his opinion. Simpson later proposed, in the report for his fourth expedition (1873), that Chile should take effective possession of Eastern Patagonia by drawing a border line along the 70th parallel of longitude, between the Santa Cruz and Negro Rivers, and found a military fort along the southern banks of the Santa Cruz River. This military outpost was to later connect to the aforementioned penal colony he had proposed in 1872 and, Simpson argued, if one more outpost, preferably a commercial one, were to be founded along the shores of Lake Nahuel Huapi, then “the cordon would be complete and there would be other such centers from which civilization could be rapidly spread to the savage tribes that traverse that region in these days.”³⁹³ In 1901, Alberto Fagalde concluded his book that dealt with the southern regions of Chile by urging the government to shake off its indolence and begin to make these regions productive. With remarkable clarity, Fagalde stated that

³⁹² Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco ", p. 86

³⁹³ Idem, p. 147

It is understood at first sight, without making any effort, that such a considerable extension of unknown and unexplored territories in large part, cannot be moderately tended to by three or four officials, and that the stagnation of that immense and rich zone will continue for many years, as long as it is not subdivided administratively and is put under the responsibility of active and intelligent public servants that, understanding that to populate is to govern, and that population is richness, will influence by all means at their disposition so that the Powers of the nation lend to said territory the contingent of its laws and dispositions of ample protection, that can be summarized in one [word]: **Colonize.**³⁹⁴

Only a year later, the Chilean government would begin to give large land concessions to private companies in North Patagonia in the first systematic attempt to populate these lands and make them productive. Despite the fact that Simpson's indications were not taken into account, and despite the fact that nearly five decades would pass before the state attempted to sponsor new colonization enterprises in North Patagonia, explorers and writers throughout the mid-19th century nonetheless cataloged the land, relating it to the nation, and proposed ways for the government to take advantage of these lands.

Explorers and writers did not exclusively propose that the government take advantage of North Patagonia via the founding of colonies. Already in this period, many authors were seeing the touristic potential of North Patagonia. This is fascinating because it was not until almost 100 years later, at the end of the 1980's and 1990's that North Patagonia began to be imagined as a gigantic natural reserve with enormous tourist potential.³⁹⁵ Many explorers and writers commented on the scenic beauty of North

³⁹⁴ Fagalde. *Magallanes: El País del Provenir*, p. 309-310. The bolding is included in the original text.

³⁹⁵ For analyses on the historical construction of a conservationist and tourist-oriented discourse concerning Chilean Patagonia, see Álvarez, Gabriela. "El Lugar De Los Parques Nacionales En La Representación De Una Patagonia Turística, Discusión Y Habilitación Del Paisaje Patagónico Durante El Siglo Xx." *Magallania* 42, no. 1 (2014), pp. 53-76; Ferrer, Daniel. "El Conocimiento Geográfico De La Patagonia

Patagonia at the time.³⁹⁶ In many assessments that were frankly ahead of their time (Chile's first national park was not created until 1926), explorers and writers on North Patagonia remarked on the touristic potential of this region as one of its many resources. In a period when the vegetation cover of North Patagonia was considered a grave obstacle for regional development, some authors saw ways for the nation to benefit from it. Francisco Fonck often imagined the mountain range around Lake Nahuel Huapi as transformed into a touristic attraction.³⁹⁷ He described Lake Todos Los Santos in the following manner, "We have there a grandiose and enchanting scene, that will not stop to fascinate future tourists and alpinists that will head on over to this new scenery that does not cede in magnificence to the most celebrated regions of the world."³⁹⁸ Fonck subsequently related the "peaceful conquering" of North Patagonia to tourism as well,

Interior Y La Construcción De La Imagen De Torres Del Paine Como Patrimonio Natural a Conservar." *Estudios Geográficos* 70, no. 266 (January-June 2009): 125-54.

³⁹⁶ Guillermo Cox wrote that "If Chateaubriand would have known this region, I do not doubt that he would have considered it as a more worthy backdrop for his melancholic René, that the expanses of North America where he made this twin of Werther dream." (Cox. *Viaje En Las Rejiones Septentrionales De La Patagonia*, p. 38). Fonck described the following: "The Southern Mountain Range can rival, under this point of view, the Swiss Alps, that also abound in lakes. As the element of the lakes is the one that perhaps offers more attractions in the physiognomy of the landscapes of the high mountain, the landscapes of the Southern Mountain Range are perhaps the most beautiful and imposing that can be presented to the enthusiast of the *alpine sport*: the stupendous peaks covered almost to their base with snow, the immense and light blue glaciers, the silent emerald colored lakes, and the whole scene surrounded by dark and virgin forests form an ensemble filled with magnificence and originality." (Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a Nahuelhuapi*. Vol. 2, 1900, p. 452). Alberto Fagalde similarly described a landscape in North Patagonia in the following manner, "The future resort establishment of Vuriloche is located in a very picturesque site. The vigorous jungle, the wild volcanic hillside, the torrential River Blanco, the deafening sounds of the mountain gather beauties and contrasts superior to any praising." (Fagalde. *Magallanes: El País del Provenir*, p. 258)

³⁹⁷ Fagalde similarly expressed hopes for the touristic development of North Patagonia around this specific area. He wrote in 1901 his vision where "tourists will frequently ascend the [Tronador] Mountain [...] and will be rudely impressed by a landscape of snowy peaks that prolongs until losing sight of it in an extensive horizon. They will contemplate the glaciers from p close that, upon slipping through the flanks of the Tronador, produce those deafening and frequent noises, similar to thunder, hat has given the mountain its name." (Ibid.)

³⁹⁸ Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a Nahuelhuapi*. Vol. 2, 1900, p. 229

expressing hopes that penetration by the Chilean state and its institutions in this land “be not only fruitful for its [North Patagonia’s] material advance and for the progress of science, but that it also attract a current of tourists and travelers that pay, alongside us, worship to the wonders of nature.”³⁹⁹ These “veritable Alps of South America” seemed to offer a bright future to North Patagonia, especially its northern margins.⁴⁰⁰ When Hans Steffen wrote his monumental, two volume, *Patagonia Occidental* in 1913, he already noted how the “incomparable natural beauty and picturesque variety of the landscape” around Lake Todos Los Santos was beginning to attract tourists and services for them, such as hotels.⁴⁰¹ Despite the fact that the fulfillment of any sort of large-scale touristic potential in North Patagonia would have to wait until the last two decades of the 20th century, it is interesting to read embryonic thoughts on this matter, and how tourism was related to national possession and the advancing of Chilean sovereignty in this region.

³⁹⁹ Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a Nahuelhuapi*. Vol. 2, 1900, p. 453

⁴⁰⁰ Fonck’s extended quote reads, “I wish to exhort the reading of this legendary story to the illustrated public of Chile and Argentina and above all to the youth of these burgeoning countries, so that they are inspired to become familiar with this grandiose nature and so that they come to admire from up close its picturesque scenery of lakes and estuaries of highly varied forms, of volcanoes and snowy peaks of the most bizarre forms, blue glaciers, of mighty rivers of green waters with their falls and rapids, and of cascades that slide graciously from the heights from within the evergreen forests that serve as a frame to this imposing scene. No region in the Globe offers alpine lakes as numerous and picturesque as Chile and Patagonia from the 39th degree to the south.

I confer a great importance to having our youth dedicate themselves to this most noble type of ‘sport’, that will open in them the horizons of a healthy and elevated realism, giving their mind and body the freshness and expansion typical of the Age of Spring and will invigorate them for the active period of their life.

I do not doubt that our travelers will find in the future in these points with tourists hailing from overseas and attracted by these scenes, that will rival with the regions most famous for their beautiful landscapes such as Switzerland, Tyrol, and Norway. (Idem, p. xviii)

⁴⁰¹ Steffen. *Patagonia Occidental*, vol. 1, p. 102

The explorers of North Patagonia, and the writers that commented on their expeditions, meticulously and systematically cataloged the land, its characteristics, and its outlook within a local and national context. Through this, they indirectly and directly associated the lands of North Patagonia to a project of national expansion. The very cataloging and systematizing of a corpus of knowledge about North Patagonia throughout the mid-19th century ultimately allowed the state to begin to establish its institutions there during the first two decades of the 20th century. Upon a closer inspection of the ways that explorers scientifically cataloged North Patagonia, it becomes clear that they were more than observers, geographers, and surveyors. At all times, explorers were either looking for possibilities to expand the reach of the nation into Northern Patagonia and beyond, were discursively constructing certain regions as Chilean, and were taking part in the border conflict with Argentina in direct and indirect ways. Similarly, authors in the capital used the information recollected by explorers in order to discuss these lands within a national context. Thus, the cataloging of the lands of North Patagonia proved to be essential to “create” this region as an important component part of the nation.

Chapter 5: Flora & Fauna

On January 19th, 1872, Francisco Vidal Gormaz and his crew were going up the Puelo River in an attempt to reach its source. An intense storm that had been ongoing for the past two days was beating down on the expedition and it showed no signs of ending. Sheltered in his tent during the night, Vidal Gormaz wrote how

As night fell, a storm blew from the north. Every blow of it announced itself to us by a noise like that of a thunder whose echoes came to us reverberating through the gullies, until the moaning of the neighboring jungle confused us with its lamentations, immediately overwhelming us with the most funereal chords imaginable. The falling of ancient trees, the continuous cracking of the foliage, the rhythmical thunder of the avalanches falling from the perpetual ice, and the whistling of the wind, formed the liveliest ensemble of destruction that the elements are capable of.⁴⁰²

Just a year earlier, on the 11th of February of 1871, Vidal Gormaz found himself conducting a reconnaissance along the northern shores of the Reloncaví Estuary. Vidal Gormaz noted that these desolate lands evidenced cattle tracks. Cattle raising in these latitudes was a very primitive affair and the animals were left on their own for extended periods of times; Vidal Gormaz noted that “cowboys visit the pastures every year or two, and many times every four or six, thus justifying how unlucrative ranching on the shores of the Reloncaví Estuary is.”⁴⁰³ Just transporting these animals to their pastures was almost as expensive as the animal itself. Because of this, cattle in this part of North Patagonia were for all intents and purposes, feral. Vidal Gormaz wrote that “The nature of the terrain in which the animals live and the rarity that is for them the sight of men,

⁴⁰² Vidal Gormaz. “*Exploracion De La Costa De Llanquihue.*”, 1872, p. 52

⁴⁰³ Vidal Gormaz. *Exploracion De La Costa de Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, p. 26

makes them untamed and frightening, above all, those that are raised at the shores of the Cayutué and Todos Los Santos Lakes.”⁴⁰⁴ The flora and fauna of North Patagonia was an element that was closely studied and commented on by explorers in the mid-19th century. Just as the lands and the waters, the animals and vegetation of this region inspired a sense of alterity and strangeness in the explorers. At the same time, explorers imagined ways of taming the flora and fauna of the region and putting it to the use of the nation. The catalog of the flora and fauna of North Patagonia provided explorers with an element they could use to discuss the social, cultural, economic, and political conditions of the region, and associate them to the expanding Chilean nation.

Explorers in North Patagonia during the mid-19th century included the flora and fauna as a part of the regional catalog. This cataloging was mostly done in a utilitarian fashion; the existing flora and fauna of the region was, like so many other Patagonian elements, imagined as a resource to be put in use of the nation and its economy. Assessments of this sort are interesting because post-1902, North Patagonia would be primarily imagined as a space for the insertion of cattle and sheep ranching where massive burns were expected to clear the land. The cataloging of the flora and fauna of North Patagonia reveals the intimate connection of these elements to the economic and national possibilities of this land. Similarly, this catalog evidences the sorts of attitudes and discourses that existed relative to nature and its exploitation at the time. The environmental destruction of North Patagonia was well- documented and commented on

⁴⁰⁴ Vidal Gormaz. *Exploracion De La Costa de Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, p. 26

by explorers and writers alike. However, unlike most modern-day discourses about environmental destruction, what drove authors was not a conservationist spirit. Instead, it seemed that what concerned writers and explorers was that environmental destruction implied an irrational and unorganized exploitation of natural resources. Thus, writers commented on the fact that huge pockets of trees and animals were being destroyed as collateral damage in the exploiting of a few valuable species. Fernando Torrejón describes the 19th century in North Patagonia as “marked by high levels of foreign [as in extra-regional, not from another country] environmental destruction, centered principally in the economic-mercantile exploitation of biological species.”⁴⁰⁵ Explorer’s and traveler’s writings evidence the premodern modes of economic exploitation that existed in North Patagonia at the time and how the arrival of the state and its institutions was imagined to usher a period of rational, modern, and capitalist exploitation of the natural resources of there.

The Flora

The flora, just like the land and the water, was related to other better known regions of the Chilean nation. Guillermo Cox included a table in his travel report (1863) that compared the species of trees and plants found in Patagonia to those found in other parts of the nation. Highlighting the alterity of this region, his findings confirmed “The general rule that the vegetation of both sides of the Mountain range is very different” than

⁴⁰⁵ Torrejón, Fernando; Bizama, Gustavo; Araneda, Alberto; Aguayo, Mauricio; Bertrand Sébastien & Urrutia, Roberto. "Descifrando La Historia Ambiental De Los Archipiélagos De Aysén, Chile: El Influjó Colonial Y La Exploración Económica-Mercantil. Republicana (Siglos Xvi-Xix)." *Magallania* 41, no. 1 (2013), p. 49

that of other parts of Chile.”⁴⁰⁶ More commonly, however, explorers would comment on how a specific species of plant or tree was also found in the northern regions of the country. Thus, Serrano Montaner (1885) described the strawberries he found in the bank of the Palena as reaching “the same size as the one that is cultivated in Santiago, and very sweet and aromatic.”⁴⁰⁷ He similarly described the fuchsia he found in this same area as “frequent from Coquimbo to Chiloé,” a territorial extension that contains the vast majority of the Chilean population.⁴⁰⁸ Carlos Juliet, the naturalist on board Vidal Gormaz’s 1871 expedition commented that the *Canelo* (Winter’s Bark) he found in the hillsides of the Yate volcano was “well distributed in all of the Republic.”⁴⁰⁹ However, he did not share Cox’s assessment that the fauna of Northern Patagonia was more similar than not to that of the central regions. Juliet described that, with the botanical section of his report, “anyone can form an idea, if not very exact, at least somewhat complete, of the vegetation that covers Reloncaví and the neighboring regions, not finding there more than a few plants that are common to the whole Republic.”⁴¹⁰ He nonetheless expressed hopes that the fauna of this area could be successfully introduced in the central regions of the republic in order to “advantageously replace these European plants introduced a short time ago and that in the present day figure in all parts without offering the slightest benefit.”⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁶ Cox. *Viaje En Las Rejiones Septentrionales De La Patagonia*, p. 234

⁴⁰⁷ Serrano Montaner. "Reconocimiento Del Río Buta-Palena I Del Canal Fallos", p. 179

⁴⁰⁸ *Idem*, p. 185

⁴⁰⁹ Vidal Gormaz. *Exploracion De La Costa E Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, p. 100

⁴¹⁰ *Idem*, p. 167

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

Apart from bearing relation to other types of species in Chile, explorers recorded the flora of North Patagonia as giving clues about the cultural aspects of the few peoples who were present in this region, mainly *chilotes*. Expedition reports recorded the many native names that *chilotes* had for the different plants of North Patagonia. Federico Delfín (1886) recorded how the maqui berry was thus the *gueldon* in Chiloé, the *coriaria ruscifolia* was the *deu*, the *luzuriaga radicans* was the *quelineja*, and the *cissus striata* vine was called the *voqui* by *chilotes*. Delfín similarly noted the many uses that *chilotes* had for these different plants and flowers. The *quelineja* was used to make ropes and brooms, noting that “an industry has been able to be established out of its roots.”⁴¹² The *deu*’s poisonous secretions were used as rat poison, the *huinque* was used to make purgatives, the *gueldon* was used as a homemade medicine (“for the same uses that it is used in the central and northern provinces”), the *ciruelillo* tree was used to fabricate furniture, and the *voqui* vine was used in place of ropes, among other descriptions.⁴¹³ The *chilote*’s intimate relation to the local flora was such that *chilote* lumberjacks would measure distances in terms of wooden plank lengths.⁴¹⁴ Thus, the cataloging of the flora of North Patagonia inevitably meant a recording of the cultural dimension and practices associated to it, further revealing the close relationship that people from Chiloé had to this region.

⁴¹² Delfín "El Rio Palena", p. 629

⁴¹³ Idem, p. 75, 151, 152, 221, 370

⁴¹⁴ Vidal Gormaz. *Esploracion De La Costa E Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, pp. 23-24

The undisputed kings of the North Patagonian forest at the time, and up to the present, and the two trees that explorers paid the most attention to, were the Alerce (*Fitzroya cupressoides*) and the Guaitecas Cypress (*Pilgerodendron uviferum*).⁴¹⁵ These two trees represented both the most economically valuable types of wood at the time and the most heavily exploited. The alerce was by far the most valuable and coveted tree in

⁴¹⁵ The Alerce (also called Larch in English; Lahuán in Mapudungun) is a conifer that is native to the temperate rainforests of the south of Chile, and in a lesser degree, Argentina. The Alerce is the largest tree in South America, being able to reach more than 60 meters in height, and up to 5 meters in diameter. It is an extremely slow growing tree, at a rate of about 1mm/year. It is also a millenary tree; one live specimen of Alerce was recorded in 1993 as being over 3,600 years old, which makes it the second oldest verified living tree species. The alerce grows in both low and high lands, up to around 1500 meters above sea level. The alerce often grows mixed with other trees, in patches that are called *alerazales*. The wood of the alerce tree is very valuable as it is nearly incorruptible; it is very resistant to water and gives the impression of never rotting. The wood of the alerce was used amply since the pre-conquest period for making boats and canoes. Similarly, its bark was used to caulk boats. In the colonial period, it began to be used to make shingles, planks for houses, and posts. The alerce has long been an important economic resource in the northern areas of North Patagonia and Chiloé. The logging of the alerce began to increase substantially throughout the 19th century and became indiscriminate throughout the 20th century. The extension of alerce forests throughout the south of Chile is nowadays but a shadow of what it once was. In 1977, it was declared a "Natural Monument" and its logging was made illegal in Chile. For general information about the Alerce, see Lara, Antonio. "Alerces: Gigantes milenarios del bosque chileno." In *La tragedia del bosque chileno* edited by Ariadna Hoffmann. Santiago: Ocho Libros Editores, 1988. For analyses on the economic history of the alerce industry within the Chilean context, see Urbina, María Ximena. "Análisis Histórico-Cultural Del Alerce En La Patagonia Septentrional Occidental, Chiloé, Siglos XVI al XIX.;" Torrejón, Fernando; Cisternas, Marco; Alvial, Ingrid & Torres, Laura. "Consecuencias De La Tala Maderera Colonial En Los Bosques De Alerce De Chiloé, Sur De Chile (Siglos Xvi-Xix)." *Magallania* 39, no. 2 (2011), pp. 75-95.

The Guaitecas Cypress is the southernmost-growing conifer in the world; the majority of its specimens are found in the lowland coastal regions of Chilean Northern and Southern Patagonia. It grows in very humid and poorly drained soils. It reaches up to 15-18 meters in height, and around 30-50 cms in diameter. The oldest cypress trees are around 750 years old. It is a relative of the alerce, and similarly to it, the cypress is an extremely resistant wood. Its sturdiness and resistance to the rain and elements made it an ideal wood for constructions, boat making, and railroad sleepers in the 19th century. The cypress's resistance to fire meant that, in order to reach it, lumberjacks would often set entire forests ablaze and return to collect the standing cypress. The extraction and commercialization of the cypress became a very important economic activity in the archipelagos of Chiloé, Chonos, and Guaitecas in the 19th century. The industrial extraction of this tree decimated its numbers, just like the alerce. It is a protected species in Chile since 1980. For general information about the Guaitecas Cypress, see Serra, María Teresa. "Austrocedrus chilensis y Pilgerodendron uviferum (Cupressaceae): Los Cipreses de Chile." *Chagual* 12, no. 12 (Dec. 2014), pp. 18-29. For analyses on the economic history of the cypress industry within the Chilean context, see Torrejón, Fernando et al. "Descifrando la historia ambiental de los archipiélagos de Aysén, Chile"; Pastrían, Ignacio & Berrios, Gloria. *Guaitecas, paso al sur*. Santiago: Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, 2009

North Patagonia. Pérez Rosales (1859) introduced it stating that “In the ordering of precious woods, the Alerce surely occupies the first place.”⁴¹⁶ Fonck (1896) similarly introduced it as an “Extremely precious tree, that is of such vital importance for Chiloé and Llanquihue.”⁴¹⁷ García Huidobro (1864) spent nearly two pages describing his feelings upon seeing the alerce, contemplating its “elegant form, with all its vigor” and its “colossal height.”⁴¹⁸ Similarly, Vidal Gormaz (1871) cataloged it as “the giant of the forests of the south.”⁴¹⁹ Its economic importance within the context of the North Patagonian region was undisputed. Already in 1859, Pérez Rosales mentioned its importance by stating that “the alerce constitutes the principal enterprise of the province of Chiloé.”⁴²⁰ María Ximena Urbina studies the economic history of the alerce, and describes that, during the 19th century, “the economic exploitation of the [alerce] forests for new and increasing demands was the principal human activity in the western valleys of Patagonia, from the gulf of Reloncaví to the lower valley of the Palena River.”⁴²¹ The alerce’s wood was so valuable in the region, and its exploitation had been carried out for so many years, that it led authors such as Fonck (1896) to comment on its seemingly unending nature.⁴²²

⁴¹⁶ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 178

⁴¹⁷ Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a La Cordillera*. Vol. 1, 1896, p. 19n1

⁴¹⁸ García Huidobro. "Viaje a Las Provincias Meridionales De Chile", p. 440

⁴¹⁹ Vidal Gormaz. *Exploracion De La Costa de Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, p. 65

⁴²⁰ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 178

⁴²¹ Urbina, María Ximena. "Análisis Histórico-Cultural Del Alerce En La Patagonia Septentrional Occidental, Chiloé, Siglos XVI al XIX.", p. 62

⁴²² “This duration of the alerce [exploitation], give us the idea that its forests are almost inexhaustible and that they can be compared, as it is often done, to a *mine* whose riches never exhaust.” (Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a La Cordillera*. Vol. 1, 1896: p. 20n1). The alerce was, in fact, compared to a

During his 1871 expedition, Vidal Gormaz related that, during a heavy rainstorm, “I occupied myself in organizing some information about the most noble of the woods that are worked in the Reloncaví Estuary, which is the alerce,” adding that “it is the top export of the provinces of Chiloé and Llanquihue; wood, in brief, which is very used in the arts.”⁴²³ Explorers, apart from recording the aspect and location of the alerce pockets, also recorded social, economic, and cultural aspects of its production. In first place, explorers noted the different techniques what were used to work the alerce. Carlos Juliet (1871) called the alerce “the tree that feeds Chiloé and Llanquihue,” furthermore adding that this industry occupied thousands of seasonal workers in the summer who fashioned planks out of the tree.⁴²⁴ The sort of specialization that *chilote* lumberjacks attained in the working of the alerce wood was such that Vidal Gormaz noted how they had at least 12 different denominations for the alerce tree in its different states, each one referring to the condition of the wood and its economic potential.⁴²⁵ Urbina analyzes the cultural aspects of the alerce industry between the 16th and 19th centuries to talk about a veritable “culture

mine at times: “In calm weather, they [*chilotes*] head on to the mountain or cross the gulf to find an alerce *mine*; here they give themselves to the most arduous and difficult labor, work that requires a great muscular force” (García Huidobro. “Viaje a Las Provincias Meridionales De Chile”, p. 443)

⁴²³ Vidal Gormaz. *Exploracion De La Costa de Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, p. 65

⁴²⁴ Idem, p. 108

⁴²⁵ Idem, p. 67. Vidal Gormaz wrote, “The *chilote* lumberjack distinguished the alerce by different names, according to its nature, state, etc. names from ordinary *veliche* [*chilote* indigenous dialect]. The pruned one they call *cude-cude*; the splintered or missing its top, *cude*; the dry tree, *cude petriu*; the young ones, *palos verdes*; the old ones that are damaged somewhere, *concañ*; those cut through the middle, be it by the winds or by being damaged, *muchung*; the uprooted ones, *regañato*; that which by being cut has a sharp splinter hanging from its trunk, is denominated *ala*; the tree that grows at an angle over the horizon for some local reason, is called *huñoi*; that with an irregular, coarse, and deformed trunk, *pollera quechu*; when two trees grow unite being one smaller than its companion, *peñeñg* and when the plant forms two legs or trunks being one tree, *chanhuai*. These variations, although they do not distinguish the wood that can be extracted from the trees, help the lumberjacks to appreciate the degree of utility that is to be hoped from them.” (Ibid.)

of wood” that is one way of highlighting the strong, and at times indistinguishable, indigenous element within *chilote* culture which was analyzed in chapter 2 and that made it a hybrid one.⁴²⁶ While explorers noted such cultural and social aspects of the alerce industry, describing for example what alerce deposits were visited by inhabitants of specific islands, they also cataloged the modes of production of this industry.

Various explorers and writers noted the feudal character of the alerce industry. Simpson described the sort of labor relations that this work entailed. He explained how every town in Chiloé had its own lender who would extend a line of credit, in goods, to lumberjacks in the winter. Simpson (1871) noted that these goods, necessary for the lumberjacks’ subsistence during the winter months, were extended to them “at an exorbitant price.”⁴²⁷ After having “placed them into a certain limit of debt; come spring, they [creditors] force them to go out and work in the archipelago as payment for their debt, at an inadequate price.”⁴²⁸ Not content with this, Simpson noted how the creditors would additionally supply liquor and food to the lumberjacks during the work season, in addition to forcing them to pay for their own transport to and from the work sites,

⁴²⁶ “The 19th century was the century of the *hachero* [axe man], of the *tablero* [plank man], of the alerce *tejuelas* [shingles], of the *guaitequero* [denomination of lumberjacks that specifically roamed around the Guaitecas Archipelago], of the *cipresero* [cypress lumberjack], as well as the century of the pillaging of the forest cover of the island of Chiloé and the adjacent continental and insular territories. All of this vegetable world was the axe man’s dominion, and just like in the colonial centuries, during the 19th, *veliche* [indigenous] last names predominated within these specialists of the forest, sons of the *culture of the wood*, or the *culture of the alerce*, whose trade was also denominated *tablero* [plank men]. All indigenous people were a *tablero*, that is, when they had to fell wood, they knew how to do it” (Urbina, María Ximena, “Análisis Histórico-Cultural Del Alerce En La Patagonia Septentrional Occidental.”, p. 67)

⁴²⁷ Simpson. “Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco”, p. 47

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

plunging them deeper into debt.⁴²⁹ Additionally, due to the fixed prices of wood, the danger present in overloading their boats, and the fact that they were often paid in kind, there existed absolutely no incentive to work beyond the mere level of subsistence.⁴³⁰ After having finished their work, Simpson observed how “the crews abandon all work as soon as they calculate having fulfilled [their obligations], and they spend the rest of their time in the most complete laziness.”⁴³¹ As if this was not enough, in addition to the hard working conditions, there was the chance that the sloop scheduled to pick them up from their work sites would not pass, and due to this, as already noted in Chapter 2, their lives could run serious danger.⁴³² Simpson voiced his opinion noting that “this state of things cannot be more demoralizing, and the habits acquired do not have a possible remedy without a radical altering of the system of exploitation.”⁴³³ Vidal Gormaz similarly noted this mode of production, stating that this “makes of the lumberjack an eternal debtor of

⁴²⁹ Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco", p. 78. Simpson also noted how this created a situation of practical enslavement for the lumberjacks, in his own words, seeing as “almost every *chilote* is a landowner and cannot escape a judicial suit. (Idem, p. 47). Rolando Burgos confirms this noting how, in 1859, one of nine inhabitants of Chiloé were landowners, “which represented the highest percentage in the country.” (Burgos, Rolando. “Chiloé, Foco de Emigraciones” in *Chiloé y su Influjo en la XI Región*, p. 41)

⁴³⁰ “Even if they worked more trees, they would not obtain any further remuneration than liquor, tobacco, or clothes at an exorbitant price, for they rarely see money, and furthermore, they would run the danger that the sloop could not carry them [extra wood], in which case they would lose the fruits of their labor.” (Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco", p. 78)

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² “Sometimes, as is natural, the sloops are delayed and the axemen remain some time with no more resources than shellfish and gulfweed. In the case that the sloop is lost [sunk], which tends to happen, as only the employer knows the location of his people, these can run the danger of starving to death, for not everywhere is shellfish found, and in this case, their only means of salvation is the canoe or *bongo*.” (Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco", p. 78)

⁴³³ Ibid.

his employer or creditor,” also noting that “this has been the ruin of the lumberjack since the Spanish domination that introduced this kind of business.”⁴³⁴

Recent scholars, however, have analyzed the modes of production of the lumber industry in 19th century Chiloé in order to reassess some of the phenomena regarding the modes of production described by explorers at the time. These damning assessments about the modes of production of the *chilote* lumber industry could very well have been driven by a disdain for pre-capitalist modes, and a wish to see capitalist modes implemented in these regions. Diego Morales studies the use of debt as a way to secure and sustain a reliable workforce in view of the expansion of lumber cutting operations in the late 19th century, a phenomenon that also appeared in other branches of industry in other regions of Chile.⁴³⁵ At the same time, Morales describes the lumber industry as an economic activity typical of a “frontier area.” In this sense, he describes how the extraction of wood and its commercialization towards the north were two distinct operations dominated by two different sets of people and commercial agents. Due to this, the lumber industry at the time evidenced “the much decreased participation of extra-regional investors in the cutting of wood,” remaining a very localized operation

⁴³⁴ Vidal Gormaz. *Exploracion De La Costa de Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, p. 73

⁴³⁵ Morales describes his research on the use of debt in the lumber industry in Chiloé at the time as able to “open a crucial perspective in the commercialization of timber carried out during the 19th century in Chile because they [Morales’s sources] imply the use of indebtedment as a formula to recruit workers and a means with which an expansion to the margins of extractive operations in the mountains of the east and Guaitecas was sought after. A traditional mechanism of retention and supplying of workers that was also used in other equally frontier-like economic contexts in the 19th century, but studied in the present with greater rigor, as in the markets of copper and silver mining in the *Norte Chico* or “Traditional” [North of Chile]. In effect, María Angélica Illanes approached in detail the role played by debt and the “enablers” [small businessmen] of the placer miners of the region of Atacama, considering that it transformed into a master key with which regional mercantile capital became able to control the economic flows of the region.” (Morales. “El Negocio De La Madera”, p. 54)

throughout the 19th century.⁴³⁶ Mary Louise Pratt reads into similar descriptions of indigenous and premodern modes of production in European travel literature and identifies a “language of the civilizing mission, with which North Europeans produce other peoples (for themselves) as ‘natives’, reductive, incomplete beings suffering from the inability to have become what Europeans already are, or to have made themselves into what Europeans intend them to be.”⁴³⁷ The specific attention that explorers gave to the premodern modes of production present in this industry contrasted notably with their pretensions to make of North Patagonia a place for organized and capitalist economic exploitation. Depending on the angle that explorers would present, the alerce industry could simultaneously be the ruin or the salvation of the region and its people.

The cypress industry was also cataloged by explorers to North Patagonia, albeit on a smaller scale than the alerce one. Pérez Rosales described cypress wood as “of the most useful kind, both for great constructions as well as for carpentry; so it is paid almost

⁴³⁶ Morales. “El Negocio De La Madera”, p. 45. Morales adds, “*Chilote* wood has been an especially attractive topic for study, because it presupposed a first nexus of the region with the national economy during the 19th century after the market in the north and center of the country consolidated and expanded. But beyond than this commercial nexus, there has still been an insufficient advance in examining the participation of local actors in the wood business, primordial objective of this investigation that argues that they were who concentrated the tasks of exploitation of forests and were able to satisfy part of the extra-regional demand existing between 1850-1875. In this time, the businessmen situated in Ancud acted as intermediaries in the face of extra-regional agents, but they did not dominate the lumber exploitation, as this was preferably undertaken by the owners of the boats that were distributed in the interior of the archipelago of Chiloé. These men of lumber organized the expeditions of lumberjacks and the ensemble of traffic between the mountains of the East, the Guaitecas, and the Main Island [of Chiloé], *in situ*, as well as the recruiting of the peasant population, hired from the towns and hamlets through a system of forced debt consistent with the advancing of food (wheat, salt, liquor) in exchange for the compromise of working seasonally in the woodcutting operations.” (Idem, p. 42)

⁴³⁷ Pratt. *Imperial Eyes*, p. 149

as expensively as alerce wood.”⁴³⁸ The working conditions of the cypress industry can be deduced to have been just as bad as the alerce industry. Vidal Gormaz noted how, in the Puelo River, cypress was always found in “the alerce zone and always mixed with them,” adding to this that it was “incredible that people risked their lives in such a manner and so frequently, as happens in this river, or the miserable pay of a [cypress] lumberjack.”⁴³⁹ Cypress also played an important role in the burgeoning and expanding economy of this region. Felipe Westhoff, in 1867, saw how people from Chiloé had begun to export cypress from the Guaitecas archipelago some years ago to make up for the deficit in agricultural production in the island.⁴⁴⁰ Pérez Rosales (1859) cataloged the southern portion of the province of Chiloé (referring to the Guaitecas and Chonos archipelagos) as having “a natural and inexhaustible lumber deposit in these beautiful virgin cypress jungles.”⁴⁴¹ Nearly three decades later, Serrano (1885) recorded the cypress tree as being one of the most valuable types of tree, stating that “as it has not been as exploited as in the Guaitecas, it is found in considerable quantity.”⁴⁴² The importance of this tree was such, that recent historiography contends that “testimonial evidence allows us to estimate that towards 1870, the exploitation of the cypress was the principal productive activity carried out in the archipelagos of Aysén.”⁴⁴³ Thus, these two crown jewels of the North Patagonian forest were given a special place within the catalog of the fauna of North

⁴³⁸ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 177

⁴³⁹ Vidal Gormaz. “*Esploracion De La Costa De Llanquihue*.” (1872), pp. 281, 276

⁴⁴⁰ Westhoff. “*Memoria Del Subdelegado Marítimo Del Archipiélago De Los Chonos O Guaitecas*.”, p. 447

⁴⁴¹ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 178

⁴⁴² Serrano Montaner. “*Reconocimiento Del Río Buta-Palena I Del Canal Fallos*”, p. 163

⁴⁴³ Torrejón, et al. “*Descifrando la historia ambiental de los archipiélagos de Aysén, Chile*”, p. 46

Patagonia. This is due to the high economic value they had and their relationship to one of the few industries at the time that mobilized a significant number of hands.

Explorers and writers directly associated the forests of Patagonia to the overall national economy and progress. They were regarded as places that contained some of the keys to shake North Patagonia from its stupor and incorporate it into the productive network of the nation. Already in 1857, Francisco Hudson considered the forests in the Chonos and Guaitecas Archipelagos as containing woods that “by my judgment will be inexhaustible for many years [...] and that with time will contribute to augmenting the commerce of this province.”⁴⁴⁴ Felipe Westhoff (1871) similarly described having the conviction that the Guaitecas Archipelagos “will acquire with time a commercial importance that will rival in progress with the other parts of the Republic,” stating that he justified this sentiment due to the riches that the forests of this region possessed, which in his opinion were larger than those of anywhere else in the Chiloé Archipelago.⁴⁴⁵ In 1886, Serrano wrote about the forests of the lower valley of the Palena River as “In terms of riches [...] notably superior to that of the Islands of Chiloé and Guaitecas,” noting that there was not any significant exploitation of forests there yet due to the lack of any important quantities of shellfish, the principal food of the lumberjacks there.⁴⁴⁶ Steffen (1894) even noted small deposits of cypress in the upper valleys of the Palena River, stating that this was the southern limit of its extension and that it gave those valleys

⁴⁴⁴ Hudson. "Reconocimiento Hidrográfico Del Río Maullin I De La Península I Archipiélago De Taytao.", p. 1157

⁴⁴⁵ Westhoff. "Memoria Del Subdelegado Marítimo De Guaitecas." (1871), p. 219

⁴⁴⁶ Serrano Montaner. "Reconocimiento Del Río Buta-Palena I Del Canal Fallos", p. 129

“riches that are in no way insignificant.”⁴⁴⁷ The cataloging of wood as being one of the principal riches of this region can be related to the fact that the lumber industry was one of the few economic activities that mobilized any significant number of hands in North Patagonia. At a time before any large land grants were given to land speculators, and before the introduction of large cattle and sheep ranching operations, lumber extraction was recorded as being the largest industry in North Patagonia in terms of production and people mobilized.

Recent historiography has emphasized the connection of the alerce and cypress industries to the national context. Urbina directly relates the increase in the demand and exploitation of these trees to developments in the central zones of the nation, such as the construction of telegraph poles and railroad lines.⁴⁴⁸ Similarly, she notes how the main source of fiscal income in the province of Chiloé during the 19th century was the taxing of alerce planks in kind, which were later loaded onto ships and sent to ports in the central regions of the country.⁴⁴⁹ Torrejón *et. al.* also relate the expansion of cypress extraction in the mid-19th century to the expansion of railway lines both in the north of Chile and Perú.⁴⁵⁰ Diego Morales recently studied the modes of production of the lumber

⁴⁴⁷ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 519

⁴⁴⁸ “In the 19th century, the exploitation of the alerce acquired a greater importance because the provincial economy was upheld by this product. It reached its highest point since the railroad demanded sleepers and telegraph poles, being the former of cypress and the latter, normally, of alerce, as well as the fabrication of boats for businessmen who were builders of Chilean ports.” (Idem, p. 65)

⁴⁴⁹ Urbina, María Ximena, “Análisis Histórico-Cultural Del Alerce En La Patagonia Septentrional Occidental.”, p. 65

⁴⁵⁰ “In effect, the economic potential of those ancient conifer [cypress] forests increased in an evident way in the decade of 1860, due to the high demand for [railway] sleepers that the development of railroads in

industry in Chiloé and specifically noted that “the exploitation and exportation of wood [from Chiloé] during the 19th century was the first thrust that economically connected the *chilote* region with the rest of the country.”⁴⁵¹ In light of this, the recording and cataloging of the flora of the North Patagonian region can be seen as related to the utilitarian goal of connecting these regions to the national center via the lumber industry. Although Morales states that “it is hard to evaluate how this new scientific and systematic knowledge of the archipelago [of Chiloé], of Guaitecas, and more towards the south, in Aysén, affected the movement of those who carried out the moving of wood through the interior of the region in the last quarter of the 19th century,” it is hard to not imagine how this new information had at least a minimal effect on the businessmen who were shipping North Patagonian wood from the stockpiling centers in Chiloé to the center of the nation.⁴⁵² Seen through this lens, the lumber industry was one way that explorers visualized an incipient connection between the central regions of Chile and North Patagonia.

The Fauna

Explorers and writers in the capital similarly recorded the fauna of North Patagonia. The cataloging of the animal life was decidedly less thorough and systematic in comparison to the flora. However, similar themes appear. In first place, the fauna was compared to that of the central regions of the country. In second place, the economic

Peru and the north of Chile generated, towards where they were principally exported.” (Torrejón, et al. “Descifrando la historia ambiental de los archipiélagos de Aysén, Chile”. p. 45)

⁴⁵¹ Morales. “El Negocio De La Madera”, p. 43

⁴⁵² Idem, p. 46

potential of the exploitation of the fauna in this region for commercial purposes was highlighted. In this way, the animal life in North Patagonia was, just like the flora, directly related to a project of national possession of these regions via economic exploitation.

Some explorers described the difference between the fauna in North Patagonia and that of the rest of the nation. Simpson, during his third expedition to the waters of North Patagonia (1872), was often in search for the elusive Huemul [South Andean Deer in English]. In the aptly named Huemules River, Simpson found and killed many of these animals, noting that “this is the only part of the coast where these animals are found, and there was even no news of their existence around here, the Chilean Museum possessing only one specimen.”⁴⁵³ Thirty years later, Francisco Nef (1900) would shoot and carefully skin a Huemul along the Baker Fjord, noting that it was specifically going to be sent to the Museum of Valparaíso. Nef discussed his belief that Diego Barros Arana’s comments that the Huemul should not belong in the national coat of arms was unjust, stating that “Being our fauna quite poor, the choice of heraldic animals was almost mandatory [...] I believe that if our fauna were richer, the Huemul still would have been chosen in view of its elegance and agility.”⁴⁵⁴ The explorer even commented that they celebrated the national Independence Day, the 18th of September, with Huemul meat, something that changed the monotony of their diet until that point. Vidal Gormaz also commented on the alterity of the fauna in North Patagonia. When exploring the Petrohué

⁴⁵³ Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco", p. 72

⁴⁵⁴ Nef. "Levantamiento Del Seno Baker I Canales Interiores Por La Cañonera Magallanes", pp. 11-12

River (1871), he noticed that “we saw some partridges different to those that are found in the central provinces,” adding that “Everything here seemed different to the Reloncaví.”⁴⁵⁵ Federico Delfín (1886) also noticed the unique aspect of the fauna in this region when he saw the “Chloderm Childreni de Gay” beetle⁴⁵⁶, pointing to its exceptional nature by stating that this insect “is not only the most beautiful in Chile but also one of the most beautiful in the world.”⁴⁵⁷

Explorers also cataloged the relation of the fauna to the people that traversed the solitary regions of North Patagonia, *chilotes* mainly. For example, during his expedition up the Palena River, Serrano (1885) noticed that despite the fact that many *chilotes* would venture to this remote corner to fish Jack Mackerels, they, nonetheless “believe, as happens in almost all of Chile, that the meat of the Jack Mackerel is harmful and even poisonous, which makes them disdain it.”⁴⁵⁸ Carlos Juliet (1871) explained that the abundance of seafood and shellfish in the North Patagonian channels allowed *chilotes* to embark on long voyages without much preparations, adding that “these animals constitute over there the daily food of the poor.”⁴⁵⁹ Guillermo Cox (1863) noted a curious incident after one of his *chilote* aides hunted an otter. While the group was busy cooking the otter, Cox noted how

⁴⁵⁵ Vidal Gormaz. *Exploracion De La Costa de Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, p. 38

⁴⁵⁶ This is an error by the author. The actual name of the beetle is *Cheloderus childrenii* Gray. It is possible that Delfín was referring to Claudio Gay, the French naturalist that was hired by the Chilean government to carry out various surveys of the Chilean territory between 1830 and 1841.

⁴⁵⁷ Delfín “El Rio Palena”, p. 625

⁴⁵⁸ Serrano Montaner. “Reconocimiento Del Río Buta-Palena I Del Canal Fallos”, p. 180

⁴⁵⁹ Vidal Gormaz. *Exploracion De La Costa de Llanquihue I Archipiélago De Chiloé*, 1871, p. 157

Meanwhile, a very heated discussion between our men was beginning to decide if the otter was a *nutria* [otter] or a *hullín* [southern river otter]. The *huillín* has the tail bare like a mouse's, and the *nutria*'s has hair. About this matter many good things were said, that I am sorry to not remember, and even though they do not clarify the science [the classification of the animals specie], they at least revel the sharp spirit of my *chilotes*. As time was scarce, it was necessary to interrupt their nonsense and get on our way.⁴⁶⁰

This very interesting passage reveals the sorts of attitudes that explorers had towards *chilotes* and their modes of thought. Despite the fact that they could identify different species based on taxonomic observations, Cox nonetheless discarded their knowledge for being unscientific and did not seem to take it seriously enough to record the sorts of arguments that the *chilotes* presented. Despite explorers depending on *chilote* knowledge for their own scientific cataloging of North Patagonia, this information was almost always described as being unscientific, based on tradition, and thus evidencing a backwards element.

As with the trees of North Patagonia, the animal life in this region was presented as being high in economic potential and as a possible source of riches. Already in 1867, Westhoff described the Guaitecas archipelago as being “as rich in animals as in birds.”⁴⁶¹ Carlos Olivos wrote in 1899 how in the mouth of the Palena River, “ducks, *caigueñes* [geese], *caes* [no known scientific name for this animal], *quetros* [a type of duck], etc, abound, all having exquisite meat, so that they could also be the object of the canning industry.”⁴⁶² However, it was the marine fauna that most drew the attention of the

⁴⁶⁰ Cox. *Viaje En Las Rejiones Septentrionales De La Patagonia*, p. 47

⁴⁶¹ Westhoff. "Memoria Del Subdelegado Marítimo Del Archipiélago De Los Chonos O Guaitecas.", p. 448

⁴⁶² Olivos. "Memoria Del Director De La Colonia De Palena.", p. 57

explorers. Olivos similarly noted the abundance of sea lions and otters along the mouth of the Palena.⁴⁶³ Pérez Rosales (1859) mentioned specific quantities of oil that could be extracted from sea lions and other similar creatures, noting that it was widely used in Chile for tanning and lighting.⁴⁶⁴ Whales seemed to be very rare in these waters, as Rosales noted that they were terribly hunted in the first decades of the 19th century. As for shellfish, Olivos held high hopes for this industry, stating that “the installation in Palena of a shellfish drying and canning factory, would be, evidently, a secure for a rapid fortune for the industrialist that invests his capital in such a lucrative business.”⁴⁶⁵ Olivos even noted how the government began to make contacts with one Englishman named Smith in order to introduce Salmon into the rivers of North Patagonia, stating that “it can be implanted profitably in Palena and perhaps in a way that could not be done so in any other part of the Chilean territory.”⁴⁶⁶ Many of the animals of North Patagonia, were directly described in terms of their productive and economic potential. This goes back, once again, to the fact that one of the main ways that writers and explorers had of advertising the potential that the North Patagonian region had to the nation was by noting its economic potential. By this time, the waters, the land, the flora, and the fauna of North Patagonia were all surveyed in a more or less systematic manner and all of these “scientific” observations concluded that this region had a vast economic potential.

⁴⁶³ Olivos. "Memoria Del Director De La Colonia De Palena.", p. 57

⁴⁶⁴ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, pp. 124-125

⁴⁶⁵ Olivos. "Memoria Del Director De La Colonia De Palena.", p. 56. It is interesting to note that two decades earlier, Simpson discovered a shellfish cannery in the Patagonian channels and noted that it was failing due to the lack of a stable workforce to tend to it.

⁴⁶⁶ *Idem*, p. 57

Environmental Destruction

One aspect about the flora and fauna that almost all explorers and writers commented on, was the level of environmental destruction that was ongoing in the waters and lands of North Patagonia. The trees and marine animals that were considered so valuable by the explorers were also subjected to an extremely destructive cycle of destruction by fishermen and lumberjacks. Similarly, the precarious economic modes of production in this area led to tremendously wasteful and destructive practices that destroyed large amounts of forests and species in order to extract only a few specimens. While the economic activities carried out throughout the North Patagonian region varied little between colonial and republican times, the widespread environmental destruction associated to commercial activities in this region appears to be a distinctly 19th-century phenomenon.⁴⁶⁷ Already in 1859, Vicente Pérez Rosales bluntly stated that “In Chile forests are not taken care of, they are destroyed; it is true that the necessity to look after

⁴⁶⁷ About this phenomenon in relation to the archipelagos region: “The early and rudimentary introduction of cattle to the Aysenian archipelagos constituted the first environmental intervention derived from the Spanish colonization of Chiloé, although its repercussion over the natural landscape seems to not have been significant in comparison to what would happen in the 19th century, when mercantile economic exploitation would cause an evident degradation in the insular ecosystems. Then, an intensive hunting of pinnipeds [marine mammals] was initiated in demand of oil and skins, ravaging the populations of these marine mammals. Also, halfway through that century, the lumber potential of the practically virgin forests that existed in those archipelagos would develop a great importance, with the exploitation of the precious Guaitecas Cypress being intensified, a process during which ecologically devastating processes of extraction were employed.” (Torrejón, et al. “Descifrando La Historia Ambiental De Los Archipiélagos De Aysén, Chile”, p. 30). About this phenomenon in relation to the alerce: “it is possible to conclude that the degradation of the *chilote alerzales* [alerce groves] happened at a later stage, already in times of the republic, and not during the Colony as has been traditionally considered. [...] the exponential increase in the production of planks that occurred during the first century of the Republic, based on indiscriminate felling, appears to have annihilated the most accessible *alerzales* and degraded many of the forests located in higher and steeper sectors.” (Torrejón, et al. “Consecuencias De La Tala Maderera Colonial En Los Bosques De Alerce De Chiloé”, p. 92)

their conservation has still not been felt.”⁴⁶⁸ One recurring theme when commenting on this level of environmental damage that was being carried out in Patagonia was precisely the wastefulness and disorganization of it. Contrary to modern discourses on environmental conservation, explorers did not necessarily consider the destruction of large amounts of native species as harmful *per se*. What explorers and writers often criticized was the fact that all this destruction was being carried out due to premodern and unorganized extraction techniques. Thus, the cataloging of environmental destruction in North Patagonia at the time can be related to the desire of the Chilean state to penetrate these regions in order to modernize them and implement rational modes of economic extraction there. In this way, explorers can once again be seen as agents of a national state that was seeking to implant its institutions in this region and extend its sovereignty there.

Although the forests of North Patagonia in the archipelago, coastal, interior and sub-Andean forests all presented the marks of extensive destruction, there was a fundamental difference between the way this was described in the archipelago and coastal zones, and in the interior and sub-Andean regions. In the insular and coastal zones, the destruction of forests can be attributed to over logging by *chilote* lumberjacks and the

⁴⁶⁸ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 460

primitive methods they used.⁴⁶⁹ Simpson describes the use of fire by part of *chilote* lumberjacks during their work in the following manner,

It is shameful to see the wastefulness with which this source of wealth that constitutes the future of the province is exploited with. For every tree that is used at least ten are destroyed, without counting seedlings, and this is no exaggeration. To open their way through the hills and clear the cypress groves of bamboos, etc., the lumberjacks set it on fire. The bigger trees, although scorched, remain standing, and from these the most useful for railroad sleepers are selected, disregarding those that because of their small dimensions or other circumstances, do not fill the requisites and in this way they burn entire isles. We, in the different expeditions, observed more than two hundred miles of forests destroyed this way, and this is a small part of the whole.⁴⁷⁰

It cannot be overstated how often explorers mentioned this wholesale and reckless destruction of forests in the archipelago and coastal region by the use of fire.⁴⁷¹ Simpson

⁴⁶⁹ “The nefarious scenario of environmental degradation, that the lumber business was generating, could be explained through the interrelation of technical, biogeographical, and certainly economic variables. On one hand, the limited technological rudiments possessed by the *chilote* lumberjacks were faced with a tangled undergrowth that made it very hard for them, nearly impossible, to access the desired conifers; on the other hand, the wood cutting and elaboration season was relatively brief, limited to the more benign months of spring and summer, the lumberjacks having to travel to sectors of extraction from different points of Chiloé and fulfill in those months, the high quotas of extraction assigned to them, obtaining, even so, meager profits. In that context, the fastest and most practical thing was to burn. [...]” (Torrejón, *et al.* “Descifrando La Historia Ambiental De Los Archipiélagos De Aysén, Chile”, p. 46)

⁴⁷⁰ Simpson. “Exploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco”, pp. 45-46

⁴⁷¹ Felipe Westhoff, in 1871, noticed how “In the many islands of this archipelago, all covered with woods, only positive riches that these lands present for now, I have had to deplore the almost complete destruction of many of them, caused by the fires that the thousands of axemen that work in the cutting of cypress carry out.” (Westhoff. “Memoria Del Subdelegado Marítimo De Guaitecas.”, 1871, p. 138). Simpson commented how the Guaitecas Archipelago was visited in the summer by “more than 200 lesser vessels and 3,000 men, which in general work with no system of oversight whatsoever, often destroying the rest of the forest to make use of the cypress, and getting to the point of destroying entire islands.” (Simpson. “Exploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco”, p. 19). Simpson similarly noted how in the Chonos Archipelago, “The mountain being extremely dense, the axemen take advantage of these droughts to set it on fire and in this manner make way through it until the cypress groves; but at the same time they destroy an immense quantity of new cypress and it does not sprout again in burned places.” (Idem, p. 42). Simpson’s reports describe in many parts how the islands and hillsides of North Patagonia bore the marks of very large and recent burns (see idem, pp. 35, 70). Twenty years later, Hans Steffen would once again run into massive fires caused by *chilote* lumberjacks: “In these days, the expedition was constantly disturbed by dense masses of smoke that filled the [Aysén] valley, until they eventually hampered the surveying work. There was no doubt that the origin of these clouds of smoke was in the fires that are often produced in the

noted that he felt “indignation” upon seeing the hillsides of Traiguen Island bearing the scars of recent burns. He stated that “Interrogating some axemen, that were around there, they denied having them been the delinquents, as they well know the wickedness [of their actions].”⁴⁷² As a result of this widespread burning and destroying of forests, explorers at the time already noticed the diminishing numbers of valuable woods such as the cypress and alerce.⁴⁷³ Simpson, in 1871, noticed that in the archipelagos, “Good cypress, although still abundant, is becoming of harder access every day due to the wholesale destruction that happens every year.”⁴⁷⁴ Steffen, in the last decade of the 19th century, recorded how “the extensive forests that used to cover these islands [Guaitecas] without interruption, have been in large part destroyed by the unscrupulous lumberjacks that every year carried out veritable campaigns of destruction in them.”⁴⁷⁵ Contemporary Chilean scholars have noted that the exploitation of the forests of North Patagonia to a level that was outright destructive and damaging in the long-term, was a specifically 19th century phenomenon that can be traced to the increase in the demand for wood from the central regions.⁴⁷⁶

mountain, with or without intention, by the *chilote* lumberjacks in the valleys that neighbor the mouth of the Aisén River.” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 120)

⁴⁷² Simpson. “Exploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco”, pp. 129-130

⁴⁷³ Urbina notes the following on the progressive disappearance of the alerce forest: “the reason for the disappearance of the forest was in the intense cutting, but also in that, to clear lands already under exploitation, with the purpose of, either transiting through them or creating arable pastures, the forest was set on fire, also burning the alerce saplings.” (Urbina, María Ximena. “Análisis Histórico-Cultural Del Alerce En La Patagonia Septentrional Occidental.”, p. 62)

⁴⁷⁴ Idem, p. 42

⁴⁷⁵ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 97

⁴⁷⁶ “In contrast to the colonial scenario, the main variable that determined the main impact on *chilote alerzales* [alerce groves] during the Republic was the notorious increase in the demand for alerce wood, reflected in the production and exporting of nearly one million planks a year [by 1870]; a scenario that

As stated earlier, what bothered explorers the most was the wastefulness of the use of fire to access tree groves and the lack of government regulation on the matter, not the act of burning itself. Thus, Pérez Rosales (1859) stated that

Unfortunately, they [the axemen of Chiloé] are happy with making planks and boards [...]. The quantity of wood that is cut down this way is enormous and it cannot be seen without sorrow how a beautiful tree that could provide a magnificent ship's mast is felled and cut to pieces to reduce it in weak pieces of wood that are sold in the commerce.⁴⁷⁷

Felipe Westhoff (1867) similarly noted this upon stating,

This same quantity of peons [the 2,000-3,000 seasonal workers that visited the Guaitecas Archipelago every year], without restraint, without God nor law, it can be said, and without anything that impedes them to carry out their caprices or misdeeds, burn the forests wherever they please and make unusable this way a great quantity of wood that could be well conserved within them, or be exported.⁴⁷⁸

Captain Simpson explained how the opposite of this wholesale destruction could be a more rational and organized system of forest exploitation. Noting that the destruction of the forests and cutting down of precious trees was not the problem itself, he stated (1870) that "This and other disturbances, are hard to repress, and could only be avoided with the exploitation of the islands in a systematic mode by some large company or gathering of present-day businessmen."⁴⁷⁹ Thus, this denouncement of the environmental destruction in this region responded less to a proto-conservationist spirit and more to a wish of seeing

implied the use of the method of indiscriminate logging that did not differentiate between the size of the specimens cut down. Without a doubt, the profitability of the lumber activity generated a huge pressure over the resource, rapidly degrading it." (Torrejón, et al. "Consecuencias De La Tala Maderera Colonial En Los Bosques De Alerce De Chiloé.", p. 92)

⁴⁷⁷ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 177

⁴⁷⁸ Westhoff. "Memoria Del Subdelegado Marítimo Del Archipiélago De Los Chonos O Guaitecas.", p. 450

⁴⁷⁹ Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco", p. 19

a more organized and rational economic life in this region. Recently, Diego Morales studied the lumber business in Chiloé during the 19th century and noted that the reckless destruction of forests during this time,

Made patent the lack of administrative control of the central and southern territories of the Main Island [of Chiloé], an issue even more pressing in distant areas foreign to the territories that would have been controlled by the colonial authorities in the archipelago [i.e. The Chonos and Guaitecas archipelagos and the continental mainland].⁴⁸⁰

The North Patagonian region presented itself to these explorers in a utilitarian manner, and the cataloging of the destruction of the environment in this area was, as will be seen later, seen as a way to call for the penetration of the state and its institutions in this region.

Hans Steffen also noted the widespread destruction of the forests in the sub-Andean region. Owing to the enormous forests that covered the entirety of the mountainous region, the magnitude of the fires that engulfed large parts of this region was much larger than the fires that destroyed many of the islands in the archipelago region. Steffen stated that “There is no doubt that there have been in certain intervals, enormous fires probably originated by the Indians or the first white colonists that invaded the eastern sub-Andean region, causing a successive and more or less radical destruction of the jungles in all the transition zone from Nahuelhuapi to the strait of Magellan.”⁴⁸¹ In 1886, the second Serrano expedition encountered a large burn in the upper Palena valley

⁴⁸⁰ Morales. “El Negocio De La Madera.”, p. 44

⁴⁸¹ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 384. Steffen includes a footnote after this sentence which illustrates how every traveler that reached the sub-Andean region, both from the western and eastern sides, since 1786, noticed large burns. (Ibid., n6)

in 1885. The naturalist, Federico Delfín, expressed how the *chilote* pack men thought it was recent, within the past 2 or 3 years, noting however that “We made many reflections respecting this, but all of them, despite being the offspring of more or less well founded information, were far from being the expression of the truth.”⁴⁸² He eventually learned that those large burns were at least 15 years old, originated by indigenous tribes, and were not only circumscribed to the Palena valley, but rather “having their origin in Lake Nahuelhuapi [and] had extended even farther south than what we saw.”⁴⁸³ Steffen saw evidence of very large fires throughout most of the sub-Andean valleys, often times commenting on the “lugubrious character” they left upon these areas.⁴⁸⁴ The explorer, for example, named a part of the upper valley of the Manso River, the “Valley of the Smokes,” due to the quantity of fires and masses of smoke he saw there, commenting that “It was there where, in ten or twelve points, dense columns of smoke were rising.”⁴⁸⁵ While going up the Puelo River, Steffen confessed that “it is hard to imagine the enormous extension of the sea of fire that has absorbed all of the high and low

⁴⁸² Delfín “El Rio Palena”, p. 376. Hans Steffen noticed this exact same burn during his expedition up the Palena River in 1894, noticing that “Here, we observed for the first time, the jungles destroyed by a very ancient burn, of which Mr. Delfín already speaks of in his travel report, and that was perhaps originated by the Indians, some 20 to 25 years ago” (Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. 249)

⁴⁸³ Delfín “El Rio Palena”, p. 376.

⁴⁸⁴ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. 250. Thus, in the Upper Palena, Steffen states how, “The caravan descended with much effort down to the stream, where it arrived half-choked by the ash and soot from the charred vegetation.” (Ibid). In this same valley he wrote that “We approached the mountains, whose peaks were hidden within the smoke of two immense mountain fires.” (Idem, p. 299). In the Manso River, he noted how “all of the mountain had been devoured by the fires whose continued activity was made known to us by the dense columns of smoke in the surroundings of our hill.” (Idem, p. 394). There, he also noticed how “the entire oriental valley seemed enveloped in a thick column of smoke that rose to an extraordinary height and in ways very similar to the cloud thrown by a volcano in the middle of an eruption.” (Idem, p. 398)

⁴⁸⁵ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 1, p. 389

mountainside in the depression of the valley of the Puelo.”⁴⁸⁶ Noting the impact that this could have on the region in the future, he commented that “true treasures of such precious wood are seen destroyed.”⁴⁸⁷ This was one of the few comments made by Steffen about the economic impact of the fires in the sub-Andean region.

It seems that, due to the lack of any significant populations or commercial operations in the sub-Andean valleys, the fires in this region, larger and more widespread than those that were seen in the archipelago and coastal regions, were not as concerning to explorers and authorities as the latter. As will be seen subsequently, the few regulations and legal dispositions about this topic seemed to focus more on the environmental destruction that was ongoing in the coastal and archipelago regions. In contrast to the negative impact of fires described by explorers in those regions. Steffen actually stated that, in the sub-Andean region “forest fires have been of importance as precursors for colonization and human establishment, for which these zones offer advantageous conditions, above all in comparison to the mountainous and humid coastal zone, where elements adverse to the invasion of human culture predominate.”⁴⁸⁸ Decades later, during the colonization of the eastern valleys of North Patagonia, fire would be used indiscriminately to clear massive land tracts for cattle ranching. The enormous environmental destruction cause by this was thought of as being an unfortunate yet necessary consequence of opening up the land. Steffen’s observations thus set an

⁴⁸⁶ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 34

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁸ *Idem*, vol. 1, p. 32

important precedent to this, proving that the clearing of massive amounts of forest in the sub-Andean region was a well-established phenomenon in the mid-century leading up to the beginning of widespread colonization in the modern-day Aysén Region, and not unique to the 20th century.

Explorers amply noted and cataloged the massive destruction of marine life in the coastal and archipelago zones as well. By the time that Francisco Hudson set off on the first systematic exploration of the waters of North Patagonia (1857), United States, English, and French whalers had already decimated that animal's populations in the Patagonian channels.⁴⁸⁹ During the period studied in this thesis, the indiscriminate destruction of sea lions, elephant seals, and seals, and their subsequent disappearance from the waters of North Patagonia, was widely recorded.⁴⁹⁰ Pérez Rosales wrote, in 1859, that,

Sea lions, that where in other times very distributed through all the points of the coast, have been persecuted with such fierceness by the fishermen from the north, that they have sought refuge in the most solitary corners of the austral regions, where they are still killed in the thousands. This race will be extinguished very

⁴⁸⁹ In the decade of 1840, the Chilean government expressed concerns due to the action of foreign whaling ships in Chilean seas. See Harris, Gilbert. "Documentos Inéditos Para La Historia De Magallanes: Dos Documentos Inéditos Sobre Prevenciones Estatales Frente Al Asentamiento Frecuente De Tripulantes De Balleneras Norteamericanas Y Francesas En La Zona De Chiloé, 1843 Y 1846." *Magallania* 41, no. 1 (2013), pp. 283-86.

⁴⁹⁰ Captain Simpson described how "Elephant Point takes its current name from the circumstance of having been frequented in past times by a race of enormous marine seals, which was later exterminated by the sea lion hunters, without finding a single specimen to date. [...] There was also another race of seals, greater than common sea lions, but smaller than the elephants; they were denominated leopards for being painted in black spots. These have also disappeared. If ordinary seals would not have been as numerous, these would have also suffered the same fate, and in reality, they are becoming more and scarcer every year. (Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco", pp. 29). Serrano noticed that the fur seal (*Arctophoca australis australis*) had also disappeared in this region. (Serrano Montaner. "Reconocimiento Del Río Buta-Palena I Del Canal Fallos", p. 105)

soon in the south, as it has been in the north, if some protecting laws do not come to their aid.⁴⁹¹

Many explorers during the period studied in this investigation saw very few numbers of marine animals in the waters of North Patagonia, if at all.⁴⁹² As with the forests, the destruction of marine life was considered especially egregious due to the unorganized and reckless nature of it. Explorers and writers noticed how sea lion hunters would savagely descend upon herds of these animals and kill as many possible specimens without any foresight to keep females and pups alive for the following seasons. Simpson would note the recklessness of this method in the following manner:

The fatal [terrible] habit of attacking the sea lion breeding grounds during birthing season and killing all the pups, has been the principal cause of this [disappearance of these animals]. In this time it is extremely easy to kill the parents, and as an old hunter expressed to me: 'why spare the pups when, alone, they will die without their mothers?' The same individual told me that in one season he had killed over 3,000 pups.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹¹ Pérez Rosales. *Ensayo sobre Chile*, p. 123-124

⁴⁹² Serrano stated that "During the whole time that the *Toro* [name of the steam ship used in his expedition] traversed these places, it was not possible for us to see more than two or three specimens." (Serrano Montaner. "Reconocimiento Del Río Buta-Palena I Del Canal Fallos", p. 163). Despite the intense and reckless destruction of marine mammals in the waters of Northern Patagonia during the 19th century, their numbers have rebounded and, in the present day, most species described in explorer's reports are of least concern in terms of conservation. Torrejón et. al. have noticed how the inhospitable geography of this region might have contributed to this: "Although during the course of the 19th century, entire sea lion colonies were exterminated by intensive hunting, environmental and ecological factors contributed to preserving a critical biomass of pinnipeds. The isolation and geographic difficulties of the hunting zone, with its labyrinths of islands, channels, and fjords, in addition to the relative abundance and dispersion of *O. flavescens* and *A. australis*, seem to have attenuated the effects of hunting, offering a natural refuge to remote colonies of these mammals, that, after the decrease in demand of the aforementioned subproducts, allowed the recovery of some species, favoring the repopulation of the coastal, archipelago, and continental zones of Aysén." (Torrejón, et. al. "Descifrando la historia ambiental de los archipiélagos de Aysén, Chile", p. 43)

⁴⁹³ Simpson. "Exploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco", p. 29. Serrano similarly noted the hunting of marine creatures as having "neither a method nor a tax." (Serrano Montaner. "Reconocimiento Del Río Buta-Palena I Del Canal Fallos", p. 105)

It is apparent that the hunting of sea lions presented a disorganization and lack of planning that was egregious to explorers who witnessed it.

Westhoff (1867) noted how the same lumberjacks that visited the Guaitecas Archipelago in the summers

Have no problem in throwing themselves into the fishing of sea lions, without having either knowledge of this task, nor the implements necessarily to carry it out; so that, without benefitting at all from this enterprise, they do not manage anything apart from scaring the sea lions and making their fishing harder for those who formally dedicate themselves to it.⁴⁹⁴

As with the destruction of forests, it was not the act *per se* which seemed to bother explorers and drive them to call for larger state intervention and regulation in this marginal industry, but rather the recklessness and disorganization that it presented. This disorganization and recklessness was incompatible with the expansion of the modern state into North Patagonia because it presupposed a lack of tax revenue for the state, it served mostly regional rather than national interests, and went against government regulations. Carlos Olivos mentioned how, in 1899 when a disposition regulating the hunting of marine animals that will be discussed in the following paragraphs was in place, these hunts in North Patagonia were carried out with a “really exaggerated brutality,” that “even so, could be tolerable, if it did not directly contravene the superior

⁴⁹⁴ Westhoff. "Memoria Del Subdelegado Marítimo Del Archipiélago De Los Chonos O Guaitecas.", p. 450. María Ximena Urbina explains how “Wood cutting was carried out in conjunction with other economic activities such as gold mining or the hunting of the sea lion, and was the start of the economic exploitation and colonization of the modern-day Aysén region, always seen as a quarry of inexhaustible resources.” (Urbina, María Ximena. "Análisis Histórico-Cultural Del Alerce En La Patagonia Septentrional Occidental, Chiloé.", p. 66)

dispositions that rule over the matter.”⁴⁹⁵ Mary Louise Pratt studied travel reports to Latin America from the mid and late 19th century and described the sorts of economic and civilizing discourses that appeared in descriptions of the environment and indigenous peoples. She characterizes this in the following manner,

In direct contrast with Humboldt, unexploited nature tends to be seen in this literature as troubling or ugly, its very primalness a sign of the failure of human enterprise. Neglect became the touchstone of a negative esthetic that legitimated European interventionism.⁴⁹⁶

In this sense, the backwardness of the modes of economic production in North Patagonia could be used as a justification for the introduction of the Chilean state in these regions. The state was not only expanding, but it was also modernizing, and the premodern economic techniques that prevailed in North Patagonia seemed incompatible with the introduction of this region into a modern Chile.

Many explorers and writers used the pages of their reports or books to call for a greater presence and regulation by part of the state in North Patagonia in regards to environmental destruction. Explorers related the introduction of the institutions of the state and its regulations to the organization of economic operations in this region and the prevention of the wholesale destruction of forests and herds of animals. Pratt describes how “the failure to rationalize, specialize, and maximize production” was a constant preoccupation of capitalist-minded travelers and explorers of the late 19th century.⁴⁹⁷ The lack of rational and effective methods of economic exploitation seemed to call for the

⁴⁹⁵ Olivos. "Memoria Del Director De La Colonia De Palena.", p. 57

⁴⁹⁶ Pratt. *Imperial Eyes*, p. 146

⁴⁹⁷ Idem, p. 148

introduction of the modern Chilean state as an organizing and civilizing agent, revealing a nationalist dimension implicit in these assessments. This was no easy task; up until the end of the timeline analyzed in this investigation, the only permanently inhabited places in North Patagonia that are recorded were Melinka, in the Guaitecas Archipelago, and a couple of small hamlets in the shores of the Reloncaví Estuary. None of these places had any sort of government services. For all intents and purposes, all calls for state penetration in these regions were unprecedented actions. The geography and isolation of this region similarly made it a daunting task to even begin to think about effective regulation. In 1871, Westhoff included a section in his report to the Marine Minister titled “Convenient measures to avoid the destruction of the mountains.” Here he argued that “The lack of a special regulation for forests or a State law with this objective, perhaps in no other part of the Republic, is of more imperious necessity as in this faraway region.”⁴⁹⁸ For Westhoff, the biggest consequences of the large burns that lumberjacks would carry out in the Guaitecas Archipelago would be felt by the Treasury and by businessmen that speculated on the lumber industry.⁴⁹⁹

Simpson (1871) identified the lack of any sort of regulations that organized the economic life of this region, and more importantly, the absence of any sort of taxes or fees for cutting down fiscal forests, as the real problem. Simpson proposed to award concessions and permits for a certain amount of years to businessmen or companies in order to begin to organize economic activities in North Patagonia. Similarly, he proposed

⁴⁹⁸ Westhoff. "Memoria Del Subdelegado Marítimo De Guaitecas." (1871), p. 138

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

laws that proscribed the reckless burning of forests. Describing his belief regarding how the exploitation of the forests under a capitalist mode of production could solve the current problems in this region, he stated that “Personal interest and competition will handle the compliance of these laws.”⁵⁰⁰ He considered that apart from organizing economic activities in these lands, “the establishing of permanent societies would also have the advantage of settling a fixed population in the archipelago.”⁵⁰¹ Simpson thus calculated that a five cent tax on railroad sleepers would provide significant revenues to the negligible provincial treasury, in addition to whatever tax could be levied on guano, fish, and sea lion byproducts. This is a particularly interesting passage in Simpson’s report because three decades later, the state would award massive land grants to private investors throughout the continental regions of North Patagonia in an attempt to rationalize the land tenure and economic exploitation, and expand colonization attempts in these regions. While there is no evidence that Simpson’s proposal was the basis for the government to award land concessions at the beginning of the 20th century, it is nonetheless interesting to see how the implantation of capitalist modes of production was seen as necessary in the conquest and modernization of these lands and waters. It begins to become evident that the destruction of natural resources in North Patagonia was not described by these writers in terms of a conservationist spirit. Instead, it was the lack of any sort of tax revenue for the state, the low productivity, and the primitive methods used, that concerned the explorers. In an age of science, modernity, and expansion of the

⁵⁰⁰ Simpson. "Esploraciones Hechas Por La Corbeta Chacabuco", pp. 45-47

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

state, these sorts of episodes seemed incompatible with the direction that Chile was heading in.

Ramón Briones Luco's 1900 "Glossary of Colonization" includes an entry for the different laws and dispositions that were enacted regarding forests in Chile during the mid-19th century. Thus, in July of 1872, a law was enacted to regulate the cutting of forests and set punishments and fine for the indiscriminate destruction of forests. The passage in this law regarding the use of fire is supremely interesting and deserves to be reproduced in full length,

Art. 1: It is prohibited in all the Republic, both in estates belonging to the State as well as those belonging to private persons:

[...]

4. The clearing of forests by means of fire from the northern limit of the Republic to the Bío-Bío.

In the provinces situated to the south of this river, clearing by fire can be done with the previous permission of the Governor, who will concede it when it deals solely with preparing lands for agriculture, notwithstanding the prohibitions established in the three previous parts, and demanding the convenient guarantees to avoid further destruction than that which is pretended and any damage to third parties.⁵⁰²

In 1896, this disposition regarding fires would be expanded, adding that the use of fire in fiscal forests was prohibited in all regions of the country.⁵⁰³ In addition, Briones Luco includes a legal disposition that was enacted specifically for the Llanquihue and Chiloé Regions regarding the cutting of the alerce tree in 1859. This disposition was written as a

⁵⁰² Briones Luco. *Glosario De Colonización*, pp. 82-83

⁵⁰³ *Idem*, p. 85

transitory one while a wider law regarding forests was enacted. The 1859 disposition stated that alerces were being cut down mostly in forests of fiscal property and that they formed the most important economic activity in those regions. The alerce disposition essentially set minimum sizes for the planks that could be cut for alerces and said nothing of fire.⁵⁰⁴ Upon further inspection of the legal disposition, the minimum size for alerce planks that the disposition decrees is essentially the minimum size for railroad sleepers. At a time when the state was expanding the railroad system, it can be theorized that the state itself wanted to make the forests of North Patagonia useful for its own purposes. The relationship of these forests to the expansion of the nation can be further understood upon noting this curiosity.

The state also passed a regulation that organized and sanctioned the hunting of marine mammals. In 1892, a regulation regarding the hunting of marine wildlife ordered that, first of all, only Chilean citizens and Chilean ships could take part in the hunting of these animals. As stated earlier, the presence of English, French, and United States whalers in the waters of Patagonia in the early 19th century had been a source of preoccupation for state authorities. The disposition also set specific months when the hunting of these animals was prohibited, specified the different fees and deposits that hunters had to pay, and prohibited the hunting of females and pups. The law similarly decreed the prohibition of hunting these animals in Patagonian Waters from 1892 to

⁵⁰⁴ Briones Luco. *Glosario De Colonización*, p. 87

1897.⁵⁰⁵ It is evident at this point that reports about the environmental destruction of Patagonia were directed at making this industry more organized and productive for the Chilean state. The dispositions regarding marine animals and forests intended to a) create incipient streams of revenue for the state in North Patagonia, b) limit the amount and type of operations in order to ensure the continuity of these economic enterprises, and c) give the state a larger participation in these areas and their economic activities. The effectiveness of these dispositions was put in question by a few explorers and writers. In 1898, Steffen noted that “currently, of the seals, only the ordinary sea wolf of ‘sea lion’ (*otaria jubata*) is found, that is hunted by *chilotes* in the most savage and disorganized way, despite prohibitive decrees of the Supreme Government.”⁵⁰⁶ Similarly, Carlos Olivos denounced that the indiscriminate hunting of these animals was “carried out with knowledge and complicity of the maritime authorities of Chiloé and Guaitécas, interested in the business,” adding that the local authorities “far from looking out for the public interests that are entrusted to them, are concerned on the contrary of evading the superior dispositions and personally benefitting” by dealing with the hunters themselves, often times exchanging spirits (he describes the quality of these spirits as “more of a poison than a drink”) for their products.⁵⁰⁷

It seems that the distance from the national center and the isolation of this region put a limit to how much the state could exercise its jurisdiction over North Patagonia.

⁵⁰⁵ Briones Luco. *Glosario De Colonización*, pp. 593-595

⁵⁰⁶ Steffen. *Viajes de Exploración i Estudio en la Patagonia Occidental*, Vol. 2, p. 296

⁵⁰⁷ Olivos. "Memoria Del Director De La Colonia De Palena.", p. 58

Despite the fact that explorers made a very complete catalog of the people, land, water, economic activities, culture, flora, and fauna, of these regions, it still appeared to be at the very margin, if not beyond, of the nation and its laws. The government was interested in the organized and systematic exploitation of the economic resources of this region as a way to establish its presence there, but there was little it could do to control what was going on in the ground. However, there is a sole voice in these reports and writings that begins to echo the very beginnings of a conservationist approach to North Patagonian flora and fauna, emphasizing the natural beauty and pristine ecology of this region as a resource in and of itself. Francisco Fonck, in 1896, concluded his exposition on the alerce tree by stating,

I will allow myself, to conclude this interesting topic, to adventure a proposition whose objective is to avoid the complete extinction of this wonder of Chiloé [the alerce] and allow our grandchildren to not be deprived of the pleasure of contemplating the giant trees of the southern hemisphere. It consists in imitating the example of the government of the United States, that has declared certain forests and districts inviolable, such as; the Yosemite and Yellowstone valleys, to conserve them in a virginal state, and it has destined the necessary quantities for its protection. If an analogous measure is not taken, the alerce will disappear in a not far away time in the territory of Chile.⁵⁰⁸

This is an impressive foreshadowing of the extensive network of national parks and reserves that was created in North Patagonia in the late 1970's and 1980s and was recently expanded in February of 2018 by more than 4.5 million hectares in the form of 8 new national parks. All in all, the catalog of flora and fauna, and its destruction, was intimately related to a project of nation expansion and control over these lands. The state,

⁵⁰⁸ Fonck. *Viajes De Fray Francisco Menendez a La Cordillera*. Vol. 1, 1896, p. 23

during this time, had a vested interest in making this region productive under a capitalist mode of production, and explorers became the agents of the state that assessed the economic possibilities of these lands and waters, while their travel reports became the tools to relay this information to the central provinces.

Conclusion

After the border conflict came to an end in 1902, the Chilean state quickly began to make improvements in many of the areas that explorers traversed throughout the mid-19th century. A 1907 technical report informed about the construction of paths along the courses of the rivers Cochamó, Yelcho, Aysén, Mañihuales, Puelo and Manso, which often included bridges, ferries, docks, cuts through large rocks, and houses to store material and shelter the crews of workers assigned to these tasks.⁵⁰⁹ Said report described a newly-built trans-Andean path that followed the Cochamó river and noted that there “began to be established already a certain traffic to Puerto Montt, from the Nuevo and 16th of October Valleys.”⁵¹⁰ At the same time, by virtue of decrees, the Ministry of Colonization began to award land grants to private individuals and the companies they formed. Thus, the state gave huge land grants in concession in places such as Lake Todos Los Santos, the valleys of the Cochamó, Manso, Puelo, Vodudahue, Yelcho, Futaleufú, Palena, Cisnes, Coyhaique, Ñirehuao, Mañihuales, Aysén, and Huemules Rivers, and even such desolate spots like the Taitao and Tres Montes Peninsulas. Usually the conditions for these concessions involved the introduction of a certain amount of capital in the form of improvements, such as the construction of paths and docks, and obligations to introduce colonists. The deficiencies and inadequate surveying of the area during this period meant that there existed no clarity about where the limits of a given concession

⁵⁰⁹ Risopatrón, Luis. *La Línea De Frontera Con La República Argentina Entre Las Latitudes 35 I 46s*. Santiago: Imprenta Universitaria, 1907, p. 32-34

⁵¹⁰ *Idem*, p. 33

lay, what its true extension was, and if it overlapped with other concessions. Mateo Martinic estimates that by 1903, the state gave anywhere between 4.5 and 9 million hectares in concession in North Patagonia.⁵¹¹

Similarly, apart from a lack of basic knowledge about the lands given in concession and their extension, there was an element of wishful thinking, or fantasy, within this phenomenon. The aforementioned technical report notes that in 1901, one Juan Tornero and his partners were awarded a concession that spanned 10 degrees of latitude, an extension of more than 1,000kms, of the North Patagonian coast, where they had an obligation to introduce at least 1,000 families of foreign colonists.⁵¹² Martinic notes how, in total, “concession firms committed to establishing no less than 1,500 families of colonists; establish eight navigation services and build a railroad line.”⁵¹³ The total area of these concessions spanned almost the entirety of the North Patagonian region. While some had relative success and survived at least a couple of years, such as those awarded in the Aysén and Baker River valleys, most amounted to absolutely nothing and were soon terminated or sold off. Introducing people and animals into these regions turned out to be an extremely expensive and arduous task; the lack of regular communications with populated areas was a serious problem, and geographic knowledge about the area was still insufficient.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹¹ Martinic. *De La Trapanada Al Aysén*, p. 224

⁵¹² Risopatrón. *La Línea De Frontera Con La República Argentina Entre Las Latitudes 35 I 46s*, p. 125

⁵¹³ Martinic. *De La Trapanada Al Aysén*, p. 224

⁵¹⁴ For an idea of the adverse conditions that these concessions ran up against during this period, see Idem, pp. 217-308

By 1902, a lot had changed yet, on the ground, much stayed the same. Sir Thomas Holdich, the British arbiter in the border dispute, decreed in 1902 that after the King's Award,

Chile now possesses an almost unlimited space of forest country bordering the Pacific. The value of it is distinctly problematical, for we do not exactly know what these forests contain, and for the most part the upper valleys of the Pacific streams which promise the best timber are also the most remote and the most inaccessible.⁵¹⁵

While Chile now knew exactly what parts of North Patagonia belonged to it and had certainty about the large amounts of resources found in the lands and waters there, it was also painfully obvious that large-scale colonization and economic extraction would take decades to develop. In this sense, the catalog of explorations to North Patagonia gives an idea of the incorporation of this region into the idea of the national territory, evidences the primitive penetration of the state in these lands and waters, and showcases the sorts of political and institutional dimensions that science could attain at the time. However, seeing this period as a story of “progress” or “conquest of the frontier” is anticlimactic, at the least, and misleading at most. As much as this investigation speaks of incorporations, discoveries, rediscoveries, assessments, and cataloging, the post-1902 period is purposefully avoided in order to avoid teleological arguments about the “ultimate” or “big-picture” results of the cataloging of North Patagonia during the mid-19th century. The process of exploring and cataloging would continue well into the 20th century and to

⁵¹⁵ Holdich, Thomas. *The Countries of the King's Award*. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1904, p. 408

this day, North Patagonia is a region that suffers from isolation as a result of the highly centralized nature of Chile.

The catalog of North Patagonia gives proof of the institutional reach of science and its political dimension in the mid-19th century. Most of the explorers studied in this period had a connection, in one way or another, to the institutions of Chilean political, military, or academic life. On March 19th 1856, Manuel Mancilla, the mayor of Puerto Montt at the time, presented the travel report of Francisco Fonck to the Minister of the Interior in the following manner: "This discovery, of great interest for science, could at the same time serve as a basis for opening an easy and advantageous communication with the lands of Patagonia, increasing thus the importance and resources of this colony [Puerto Montt] and of the country in general."⁵¹⁶ In this sense, and related to the proliferation of positivism among intellectual circles in Chile during the 19th century, science was imagined as a tool that could help the Chilean state expand, develop, and introduce itself into marginal regions.⁵¹⁷ Thus, the acts of recording, mapping, surveying, and organizing information recollected in North Patagonia that was later sent to the capital to be inserted within a national network of intellectual life, were far from being neutral and dispassionate tasks. The scientific cataloging of North Patagonia allowed the state to understand this region and exercise sovereignty over it in the sense that it could draw up legal dispositions regarding economic extraction and resource control, it could

⁵¹⁶ Mancilla, Manuel. "Num. Vi." edited by Ministry of the Interior. Santiago: Imprenta Ferrocarril, 1856, p. 491

⁵¹⁷ Saldivia, Zenobio. "El Positivismo Y Las Ciencias En El Período Finisecular Del Chile Decimonónico.", pp. 182-93.

construct arguments with which to defend Chilean territorial pretensions in this region, and it could form the basis for the concession of land grants and installation of colonies. At the same time however, scientific discourses silenced the sorts of interactions with local and traditional modes of knowledge that these explorations depended on. This thesis highlights the importance of local knowledge, not as an object of investigation, but as an active participant of the scientific study. Michael Robinson asserts that recent historiography on explorations

While acknowledging the asymmetries of exploration as a practice, has emphasized the importance of local peoples – sailors, surgeon-barbers, Creole collectors, diasporic Arabs and Africans – at every level of expeditionary science: from field activities such as reconnaissance, observation, collection, to the production of scientific knowledge by means such as writing, illustration, and distribution. If London, Paris, and Madrid operated as hubs of scientific calculation, they were centers shaped by the spokes of the world around them.⁵¹⁸

While this investigation has a markedly nation-oriented approach, it nonetheless constitutes a first approach into decentering the narrative about explorations to Northern Patagonia during the mid-19th century by fleshing out the connections between the practice of science and the institutions and politics of the state, questioning the limits of scientific surveying, and rescuing the importance of local knowledge for explorations throughout the entirety of this period.

In line with this, explorations to North Patagonia during the mid-19th century reveal *chilote* influence in this region in a variety of ways. Of the few human activities

⁵¹⁸ Robinson, Michael. "Science and Exploration." In *Reinterpreting Exploration: The West in the World*, edited by Dane Kennedy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 33.

present in North Patagonia, economic, social, or cultural, the majority fell within the sphere of the Chiloé Archipelago and its inhabitants. However, this is a phenomenon that has been mostly silenced by historians' focus on the post-1902 period and the activity of cattle and sheep raising concessions, and colonists that spontaneously poured into North Patagonia from the Argentine side of the border. Andrés Núñez and his collaborators, employing a geography-oriented approach, state that

Thus, a geographic imaginary matured that has come to consider that the memory/history of Patagonia-Aysén begins in the 20th century with the concession and delimitations of fixed and static territories to cattle companies and where an eventual indigenous nomadism is only a marginal precedent.⁵¹⁹

True, explorers at times represented the lands of North Patagonia as empty or deserted as a means to argue for the introduction of the state in this region and its incorporation to the nation. At the same time, however, it appears that *chilote* influence in this region was specifically silenced due to its premodern character, incompatible, in the eyes of the central government, with the expansion of the state and the consolidation of a rational and capitalist economic mode of production. Pratt identifies this phenomenon in travel writing throughout the whole American continent in the 19th century. She argues that travel reports during this period evidence how,

Subsistence lifeways, non-monetary exchange systems, and self-sustaining regional economies are anathema to expansive capitalism. It seeks to destroy them wherever it finds them. The bottom line in the discourse of the capitalist vanguard was clear: America must be transformed into a scene of industry and efficiency; its colonial population must be transformed from an indolent, undifferentiated,

⁵¹⁹ Núñez et. al. "Silencios geográficos en Patagonia-Aysén", p. 107

uncleanly mass lacking appetite, hierarchy, taste, and cash, into wage labor and a market for metropolitan consumer goods.⁵²⁰

This way, the Archipelago of Chiloé and its people occupy an extremely interesting space within the Chilean national order in the mid-19th century, acting as proto-colonists and providing labor not only in North Patagonia, but also in other areas of the south of Chile such as the Magallanes territory and the occupied indigenous lands in the Araucanía region, while at the same time conserving cultural and social habits and activities that placed them at the margins of the modernizing Chilean state, not quite Chilean nor indigenous. Although this thesis is not about the Chiloé Archipelago and its people, future investigations on early Chilean presence in North Patagonia will necessarily have to further engage this topic when analyzing the incorporation of this region into the nation, and its subsequent populating.

The catalog of explorations to North Patagonia also evidences the first tentative steps of state penetration in this region. Although the only true government post in this entire area was that of the “marine sub-delegate of the Guaitecas Islands,” first held by Felipe Westhoff in 1866, the penetration of the state in this region was not limited to creating positions or assigning certain areas in the map to a given commune or province. Explorers themselves acted as agents of the state in the sense that their findings were remitted directly to the political and academic institutions in Santiago. At the same time, many of these explorers actively participated as partial observers and commentators of the limits conflict with Argentina. In 1902, for example, 72-year old Francisco Fonck

⁵²⁰ Pratt. *Imperial Eyes*, p. 151-152

published a book called “Exámen crítico de la obra del Señor Perito arjentino Francisco P. Moreno” (*Critical Examination to the work of the Argentine Limits Expert Señor Francisco P. Moreno*), which he described as a “contribution to the defense of Chile in the grave limits question with Argentina.”⁵²¹ These explorations were also commissioned, and more importantly financed, by government entities and institutions. Daniel Baugh writes about British explorations to the Pacific Ocean and states “it is one thing to say that an explorer’s motives were purely scientific and professional and quite another to say that the motives underlying the decision to finance his voyages were equally of the same character.”⁵²² Germán Carrasco, who wrote about Hans Steffen’s explorations, included a previously unpublished letter from the explorer to the Chilean Limits Expert, Diego Barros Arana, in a 2002 book. The letter essentially informed Barros Arana that Steffen had run into the Argentine limits commission and their designated Limits Expert, Francisco Moreno, during their exploration of the Aysén River. Steffen stated that

In an interview that I had with said gentleman [Moreno], he communicated to me some information about the plan of operations that the Argentine commissions should carry out in the present season; and since they are ignored until now by you, and they refer to regions previously explored by commissions that I had the honor of directing, I believe that you will be interested in some news about this.⁵²³

Hans Steffen went on to describe the planned itinerary of the Argentine commission, the personnel it had, the sorts of instruments it carried, and mentioned that it had hired a local

⁵²¹ Fonck. *Exámen Crítico De La Obra Del Señor Perito Arjentino Francisco P. Moreno*. Valparaíso: Imprenta Gillet, 1902, p. vii

⁵²² Baugh, Daniel. "Seapower and Science: The Motives for Pacific Exploration." In *Background to Discovery: Pacific Exploration from Dampier to Cook*, edited by Derek Howse. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, p. 4.

⁵²³ Carrasco. *Hans Steffen*, p. 83

guide. Steffen concluded by telling Barros Arana that if he were to have any new instructions for him in light of this fresh information, he should send them via telegraph. This was hardly spy work, however, it reveals the intimate relationship that explorers and their commissions had to the state. Through the work of these explorers, the state was able to, for example, draw up laws and decrees regarding environmental destruction and more effectively defend its position in the limits conflict with Argentina. Thus, it is hard to not see the incipient penetration of the state in these regions through its cataloging, even if it did not mean the concrete implantation of its institutions there by 1902.

Perhaps the most immediate and noticeable effect of the cataloging of North Patagonia was the incorporation of this region into the general concept of the Chilean nation. Before 1856 there was only an implicit understanding that the lands between the Llanquihue colony and the Magallanes territory, both Chilean regions, should, by extension, be Chilean. By 1902 this was a certainty. Moreover, by 1902, the border of this region with Argentina was defined, and the most important features of its coasts had been explored. Compare, for example, the sparseness of Claudio Gay's 1854 map of the North Patagonian Coast (Fig. 13) with Hans Steffen's map of the North Patagonian region in 1913 (Fig. 14). The difference is even more dramatic between the section of Pierre Pissis's 1875 map (Fig. 15) that highlights the coast and lands between the 47th and 48th latitudes, and Hans Steffen's 1913 map (Fig. 16) that plots the same region. Although Steffen's still contains the words "Inexplorado" (*Unexplored*), it is nonetheless incomparably more useful and informational. Thongchai Winichakul describes the

appearance of the first “bounded” map of Siam, where its frontier with Burma was delimited for the first time (coincidentally with the help of Britain), in the following manner, “Practically and symbolically, Siam had its first geo-body and representation made, filled, and shaped, at least in part, by Western powers. [...] Mapping created a new Siam – a new entity whose geo-body had never existed before.”⁵²⁴ Much the same can be said about North Patagonia within the context of the Chilean territorial ordering. However, the act of mapping was not the only action that inserted North Patagonia within the national ordering. In order to insert North Patagonia into Chile, and as Winichakul argues, modern geography had to displace local knowledge, the indigenous and local populations had to be recorded as either inexistent, languishing, or backwards enough to “deserve” the march of progress, its natural resources had to be surveyed and assessed in terms of their use to the nation, and politicians and explorers in the service of the expanding Chilean nation had to defend tenuous claims to possession against another expanding national power (Argentina) in the face of a mediation by an imperial power (Great Britain). Thus, science, nation, economy, and politics converged in order to fill in the void that existed in the Chilean territorial ordering in 1856 with a specifically Chilean element.

This investigation leaves plenty of space for further questions and inquiries regarding North Patagonia before the 1902 arbitral sentence. My work has tried to sketch out ways to move from a Turnerian “frontier” conceptualization about North Patagonia

⁵²⁴ Winichakul. *Siam Mapped*, pp. 128-130

into something that Mary Louise Pratt has called “The contact zone” between “colonizers and colonized, or travelers and ‘travelees’.”⁵²⁵ However, further archival work needs to be conducted in order to refocus North Patagonia from a passive receptacle for exploration voyages into a more dynamic zone of cultural and social encounters. The influence of local knowledge and guides in these expedition voyages needs further archival work in order to decenter and decolonize (or denationalize) the exploration (or confirmation) of the geography and hydrography of Northern Patagonia. Dane Kennedy introduces his book *Reinterpreting Exploration* stating that at times, “the ‘native’ could actually become the ‘explorer’, thereby destabilizing the very categories that sustained exploration as a European endeavor.”⁵²⁶ Vicente Pérez Rosales tells the story of Pichi-Juan, a “drunken native, known both as a guide of the most hidden forest trails as well as a genealogist, to testify about which of his ancestors the lands that the Valdivians used to acquire by theft belonged to.”⁵²⁷ Pichi-Juan was Pérez Rosales’s local guide who showed him around the Llanquihue Lake region in 1850 during preparatory explorations in views of the insertion of German colonists in that region. Rosales paid Pichi-Juan the sum of 30 pesos to set fire to an extension of almost 2,000 sq kms, a conflagration that burned without control for nearly 3 months and was visible more than 200 kms away, so that the German colonists could have a lands that “were flat and of the best quality.”⁵²⁸ Could more work with the present sources and future archival work not insert Juan Yates,

⁵²⁵ Pratt. *Imperial Eyes*, p. 7

⁵²⁶ Kennedy. *Reinterpreting Exploration*, p. 12

⁵²⁷ Pérez Rosales. *Recuerdos Del Pasado (1814-1860)*. Santiago: Zig-Zag, 1930, p. 356

⁵²⁸ Idem, p. 359-360

Miguel Mike, Juan Villegas, and the countless other anonymous *chilote* guides and lumberjacks who often oriented scientific explorations and set fire to the forests of North Patagonia, into the history of the colonization of this region?

The expansion of Chile throughout the mid-19th century provides an interesting example of nation-building and the different processes by which this can be achieved. The incorporation of North Patagonia into the national order, as opposed to other regions in Chile, was carried out without military force and involved territories and waters with minimal human presence and was marked by an important lack of geographic and hydrographic knowledge, even by the turn of the 20th century. Explorers and their local guides were important subjects in this process, and the reports written about their expeditions became the tools that circulated geographic and hydrographic knowledge about these lands to the center of the nation. This circulation of knowledge evidences how supposedly neutral and scientific surveys could be put to use by the institutions of the state and the national government. Throughout this process, explorers and their reports did not merely represent North Patagonia in a literary manner, their material productions (reports, publications, books, maps, tables of measurements, pamphlets, letters, etc...) were of importance for a host of phenomena with political, economic, and social repercussions. Throughout the period, the state used this knowledge to defend and advance Chilean territorial pretensions, both before and during the border conflict. Similarly, this knowledge undoubtedly helped shape the economic future of the region; the displacement of local economic productions linked to regional actors from the Chiloé

archipelago by large cattle and sheep ranching concessions directly responds to the type of capitalist mode of economic production that the modernizing Chilean state was looking for. At the same time, knowledge about North Patagonia recollected and published throughout the mid-19th century undoubtedly contributed, directly or indirectly, to the arrival of “spontaneous colonists” crossing over from Argentina in the early 20th century. The catalog of knowledge about North Patagonia also helps an observer in the 21st century understand the role of local population groups throughout this process, highlighting the importance of local knowledge for scientific expeditions, and the presence of groups of people throughout this region whose historical itinerary was overshadowed by post-1902 developments. All in all, the catalog of explorations to North Patagonia in the mid-19th century sits at the crossroads between science, politics, and nation, and provides an interesting and necessary account of how that region, in a span of 50 years, became to be constructed as a specifically Chilean one.

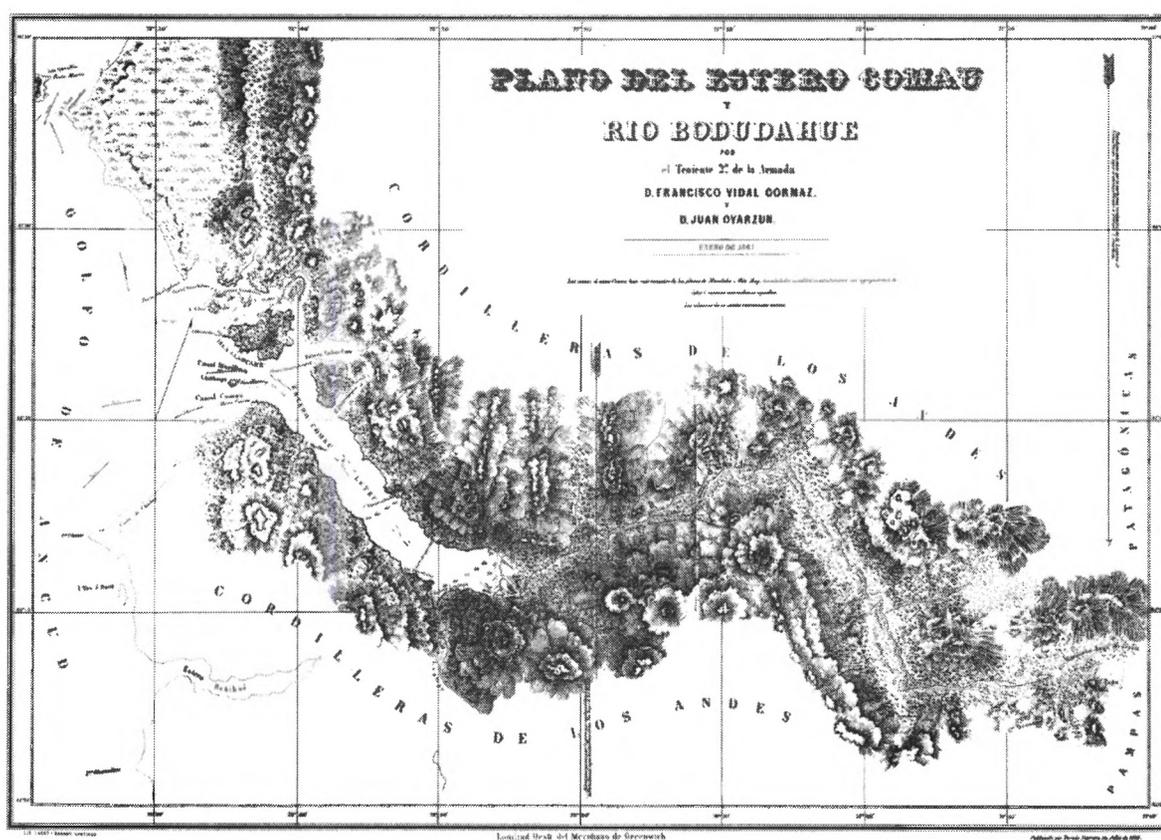
Maps

Fig. 4 – Guillermo Cox's Map of the Region around Lake Nahuel Huapi (1863)



Source: Cox, Guillermo. *Viaje En Las Rejiones Septentrionales De La Patagonia (1862-1863)*. Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1863

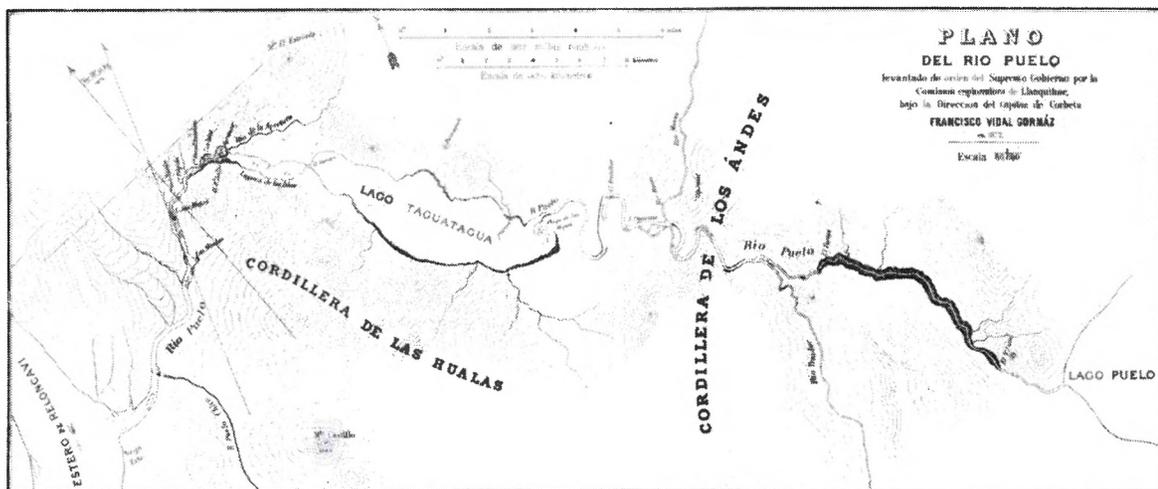
**Fig. 5 – Francisco Vidal Gormaz’s Map of the Comau Fjord and Vodudahue River
(1863)**



Source: Vidal Gormaz, Francisco.

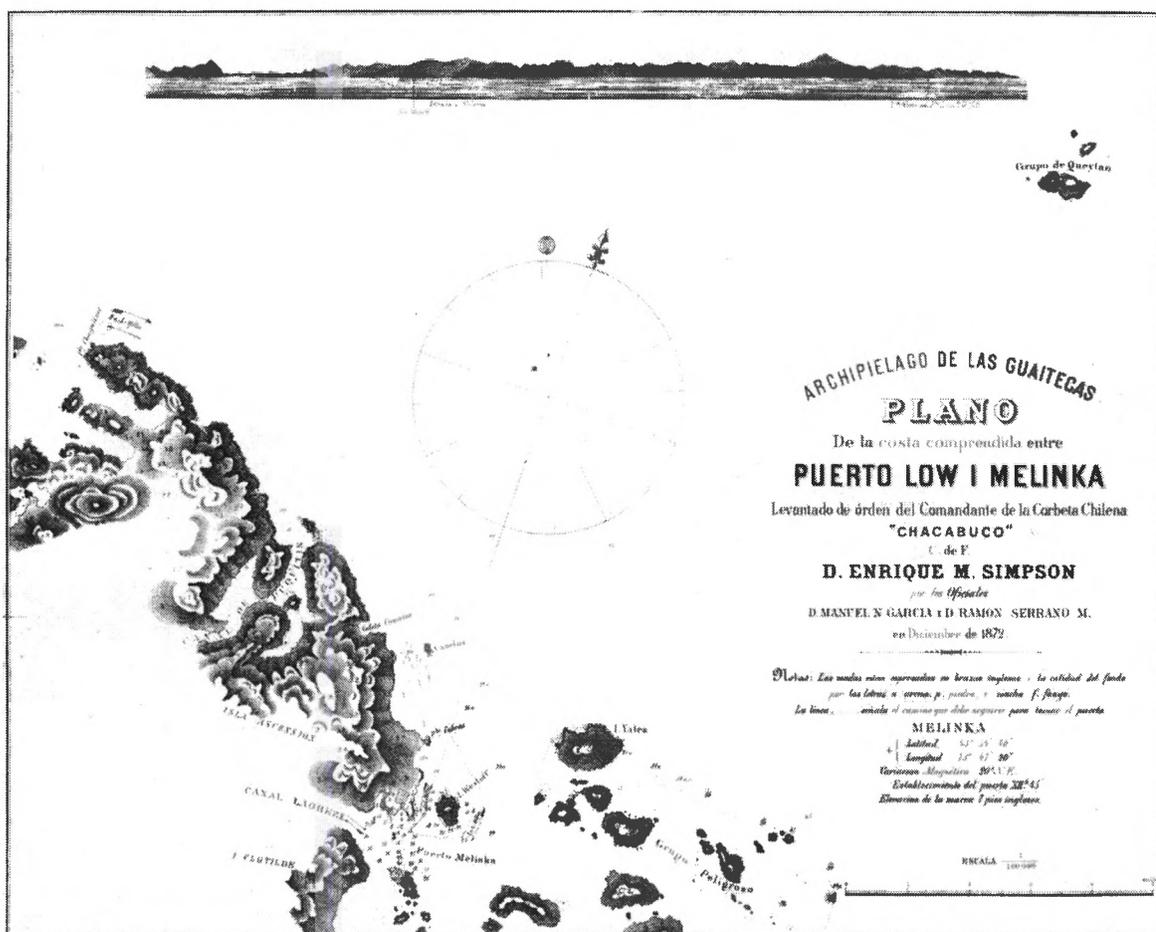
Plano del Estero Comau y Rio Bodudahue por el Teniente 2º de la Armada D. Francisco Vidal Gormaz. Biblioteca Nacional, Sala Medina, Mapoteca, B18. Santiago, 1863

Fig. 6 – Vidal Gormaz’s Map of the Puelo River (1872)



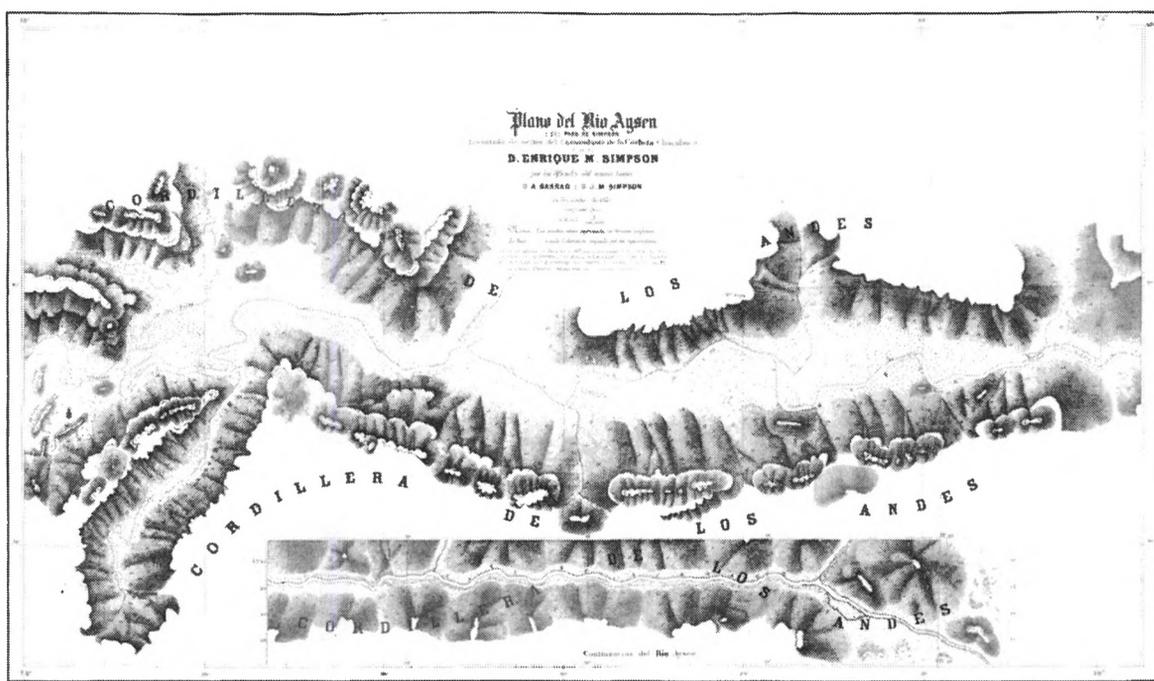
Source: Vidal Gormaz, Francisco. *Exploración Del Seno De Reloncaví, Lago De Llanquihue I Río Puelo. Practicada Por Orden Del Supremo Gobierno Bajo La Dirección De Don Francisco Vidal Gormaz, Capitán Graduado De Corbeta*. Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1872.

Fig. 7 – Enrique Simpson’s Map of Melinka (1872)



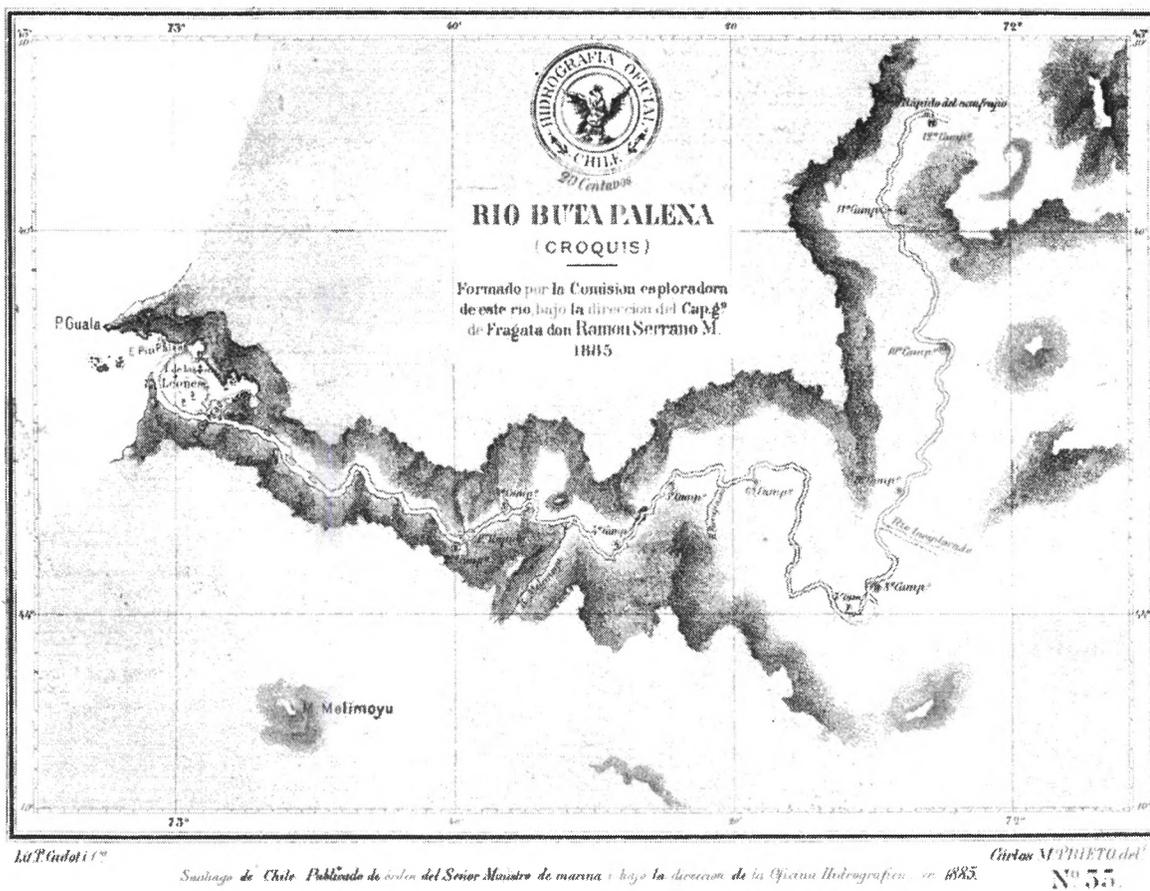
Source: García, Manuel & Serrano Montaner, Ramón. “Plano levantado en diciembre de 1872 por el teniente segundo Manuel N. García y el guardia marina Ramón Serrano Montaner de la corbeta “Chacabuco”, bajo las órdenes del capitán de fragata Enrique Manuel Simpson Baeza el cual ilustra las costas, islas e islotes entre los puertos Low y Melinka”. *Memoria que el ministro de estado en el departamento de Marina presenta al Congreso Nacional de 1873*. Edited by Marine Department. Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1873

Fig. 8 – Enrique Simpson’s Map of the Aysén River (1871)



Source: Garrao, Agustín & Simpson, Juan M. “Plano del río Aysen y del paso Simpson levantado por los tenientes segundos Agustín Garrao y Juan M. Simpson en diciembre de 1871, por órdenes del capitán de fragata Enrique Manuel Simpson Baeza, comandante de la corbeta “Chacabuco”, conforme a las instrucciones impartidas por el ministro de Marina Aníbal Pinto Garmendia, siendo publicado en 1872.” *Memoria que el ministro de estado en el departamento de Marina presenta al Congreso Nacional de 1872.* edited by Marine Department. Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1872

Fig. 9 – Ramón Serrano Montaner's Sketch of the Palena River (1885)



Source: Serrano Montaner, Ramón. "Reconocimiento Del Río Buta-Palena I Del Canal Fallos Por El Vapor De La República 'Toro'." *Anuario Hidrográfico de la Marina de Chile*, vol. 11 (1886), p. 202

Fig. 10 – Hans Steffen’s Map of the Puelo River and its Surroundings (1897)



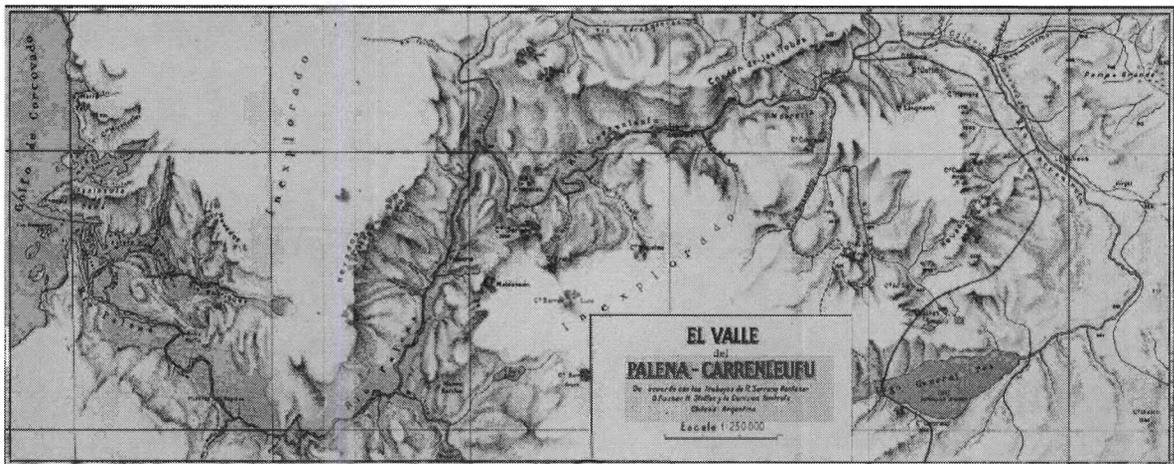
Source: Steffen, Hans. *Patagonia Occidental: Las Cordilleras Patagónicas Y Sus Regiones Circundantes*. Vol. 2, Santiago: Ediciones de la Universidad de Chile, 1913.

Fig. 11 – Hans Steffen’s Map of the Aysén and Cisnes Rivers (1913)



Source: Steffen, Hans. *Patagonia Occidental: Las Cordilleras Patagónicas Y Sus Regiones Circundantes*. Vol. 1, Santiago: Ediciones de la Universidad de Chile, 1913.

Fig. 12 – Hans Steffen’s Map of the Palena River (1913)



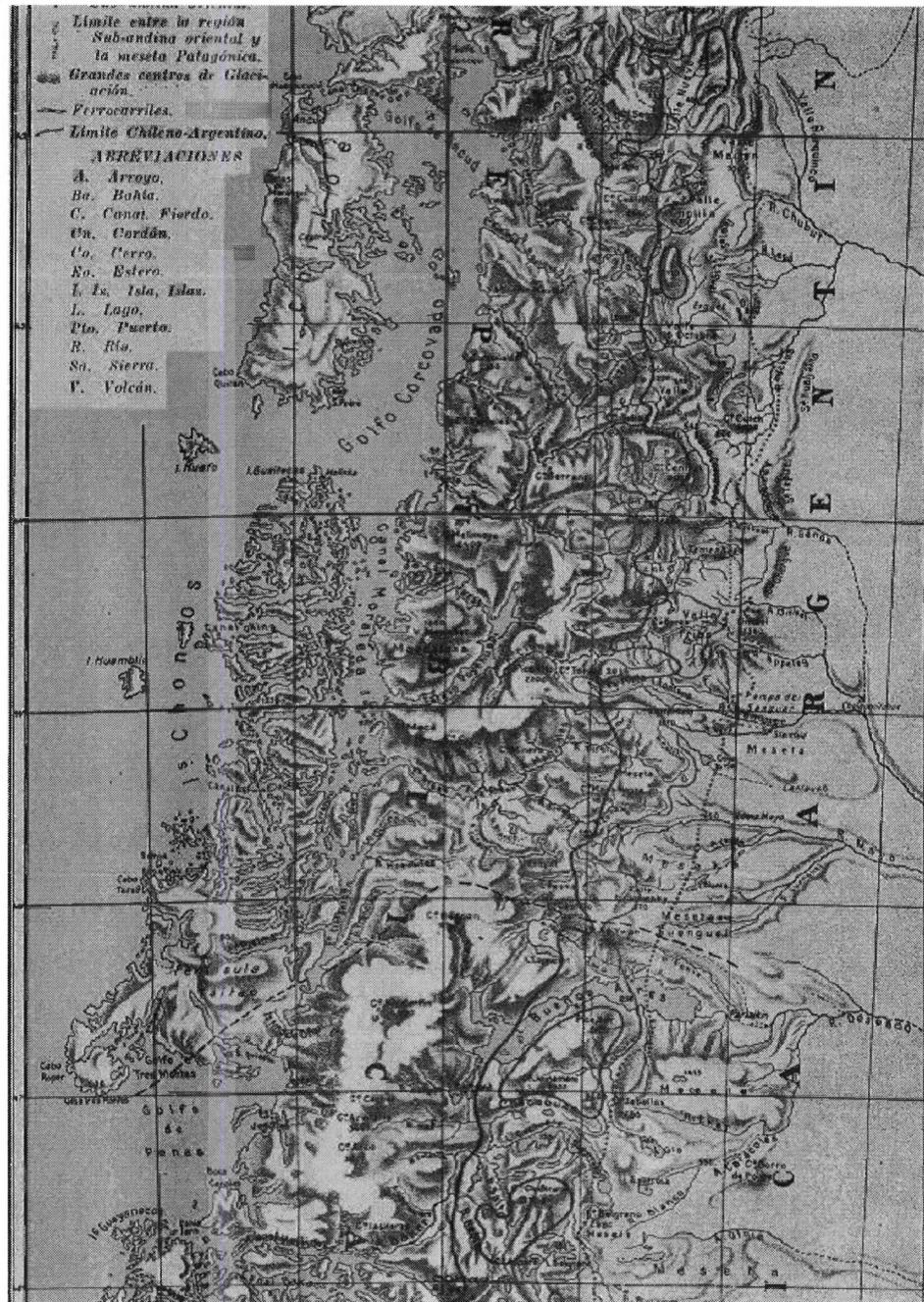
Source: Steffen, Hans. *Patagonia Occidental: Las Cordilleras Patagónicas Y Sus Regiones Circundantes*. Vol. 2, Santiago: Ediciones de la Universidad de Chile, 1913.

Fig. 13 – Claudio Gay's Map of the Continental Coast of North Patagonia (1854)



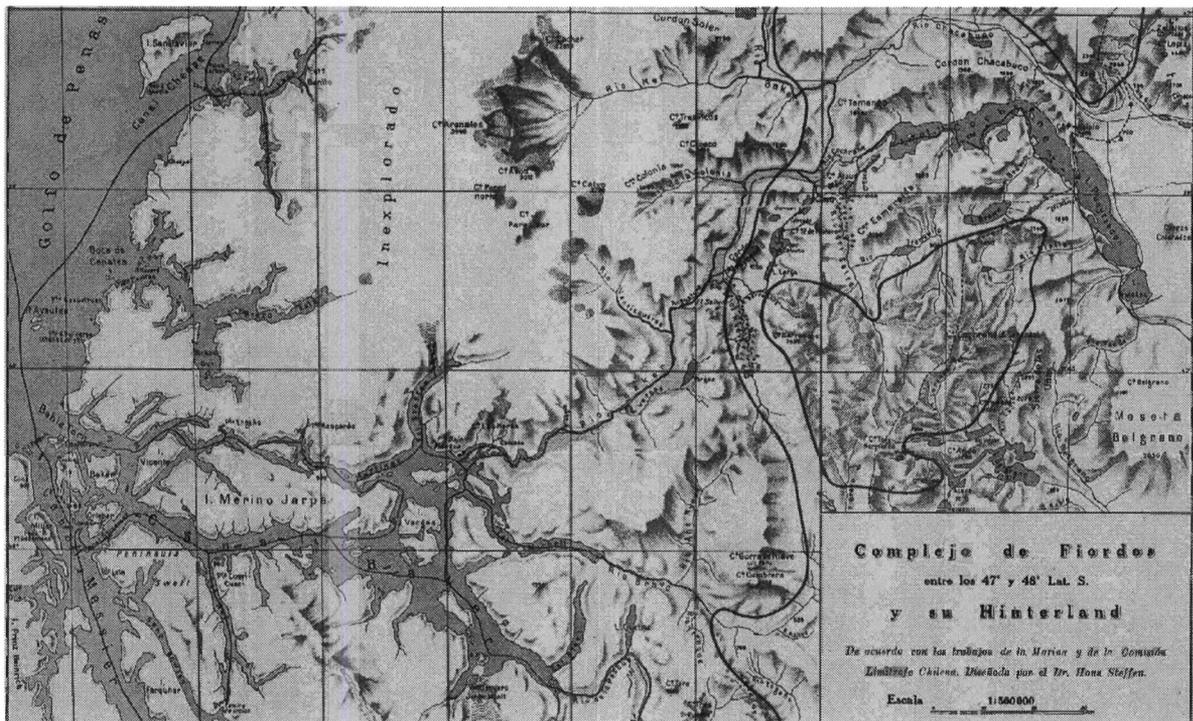
Gay, Claudio. *Atlas De La Historia Física Y Política De Chile*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Paris: Imprenta de E. Thunot y Cia., 1854.

Fig. 14 – Hans Steffen’s Map of the North Patagonian Region between the 41st and 48th Parallels (1913)



Source: Steffen, Hans. *Patagonia Occidental: Las Cordilleras Patagónicas Y Sus Regiones Circundantes*. Vol. 2, Santiago: Ediciones de la Universidad de Chile, 1913.

Fig. 16 – Hans Steffen’s Map of the North Patagonian Region between the 47th and 48th Parallels (1913)



Source: Steffen, Hans. *Patagonia Occidental: Las Cordilleras Patagónicas Y Sus Regiones Circundantes*. Vol. 1, Santiago: Ediciones de la Universidad de Chile, 1913.

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