

BECOMING *CHOLGUEROS*

An archaeology of the 18th-20th centuries in the Chonos archipelago
of Western Patagonia (Chile)

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the archaeological record of occupations associated with the extraction of coastal resources during the late 18th to early 20th centuries in the Chonos Archipelago (43°50'-46°50' S, Patagonia, South America). The characteristics of its occupation by Creole/European groups known as *Cholgueros* have not yet been archeologically addressed. *Cholgueros* occupations originated intensely over short periods of time and specialised in the extraction of primary coastal resources for the canned food industry. They are composed of large accumulations of unfragmented, uncompacted, and nonstratigraphic shells of a small number of species of mollusks of commercial value, such as *Mytilus*. Intertidal management areas are also recorded on these sites, such as stone corrals and boatyard or rock clearance areas to prevent boats from hitting intertidal stones. Due to the reduced time scale of formation of these sites they are sensitive to frequent coastal geomorphological changes and therefore sedimentary witnesses to regional coastal dynamics. The analysis of the *Cholgueros* sites' evidence broadens our knowledge on coastal use in history, thus allowing us to understand the long timescale of human occupation of the area.

KEYWORDS: Western Patagonian channels; shell middens; historical archaeology; 18th-20th centuries; *Cholgueros* sites

Introduction

Archeological research conducted in the Chonos Archipelago has focused on the study of its settlement by marine hunter-gatherer groups from the Middle Holocene (4250 BCE) to European contact in the 18th century CE (Reyes, 2020; Reyes et al, 2015, 2019; Reyes, Méndez, and San Román, 2019). The earliest anthropogenic deposit recorded in the Chonos Archipelago corresponds to GUA-010 Terraza, an open-air site that yielded a 5370±30 BP age (4250 BCE; Reyes, Méndez, and San Román, 2019; Reyes, San Román, and Morello, 2016); virtually all recorded occupations do not exceed 1650 BCE (Reyes et al. 2015; Reyes, Méndez, and San Román 2019). Evidence associated with earlier occupations indicates strong marine and coastal specialisation by the canoe groups that occupied the territory, evidenced by the technological and site characteristics of archeological sites and isotopic

results for faunal and human remains (Reyes et al, 2018, 2019; Reyes, San Román, and Morello, 2016).

In the 16th century, encounters between marine hunter-gatherer groups ethnographically known as *Chonos* and European groups were recorded (Cooper, 1946; De Goicueta, 1879 [1557-1558]; Urbina, 2017). Thus, from the 16th to the 18th centuries, this archipelago was the focus of military explorations and evangelising missions that aimed to increase the sphere of Spanish domination and to expand maritime commercial routes (Byron, 1901 [1746]; García, 1889 [1766]; Urbina, 2017). As a consequence of processes of occupation and management of the coastal space by European groups, the *Chonos* people were impacted by the introduction of new diseases, forced relocations and slavery practices (Empeaire, 1963; Urbina, Reyes, and Belmar, 2020). By the late 18th century no encounters were recorded in chronicles (Cooper, 1946; FitzRoy, 1839; Moraleda, 1888 [1786]; Simpson, 1875). The available information regarding subsequent occupation of the area by Creole/European groups is mainly recorded in historical documents and archives, as there are no studies regarding the material culture of these groups despite their extensive environmental impact on the coastal area as a result of a variety of extractive economic activities.

In the early 19th century, various scientific and naval expeditions described the natural resources of the region (Darwin, 1845; FitzRoy, 1839; Simpson, 1875). Thus, the *Chonos* archipelago begun to be included on the global economic map based on the exploitation of sea lion colonies and whales for the harvesting and sale of hides, oil and fat (Martinic, 2004, 2005; Mayorga, 2016, 2020; Quiroz, 2015; Torrejón et al, 2013). Finally, during the late 19th and 20th centuries the economic activities carried out in the region also included the acquisition of lumber, hides and seafood for canned food industry (Martinic, 2005; Morales, 2014; Saavedra, 2001). These extractive activities were carried out by a floating population hailing mainly from the Chiloé Archipelago (located to the north of the *Chonos* Archipelago, Figure 1), composed of lumberjacks, furriers, hunters and fishermen who traded their products on the national and international market (Marín, 2014; Martinic, 2004, 2005; Núñez et al, 2016). The sites associated with the aforementioned activities are locally known as *Cholgueros* or *Puertos Cholgueros* (Curry, 1991; Legoupil et al, 2007; Martinic, 2005; Reyes, 2020; Reyes et al, 2015) and correspond mainly to large shell middens formed by the accumulation of malacological fauna as a result of seasonal and recurrent occupations by these groups. There is no previous study of their material culture (Reyes, 2020), although it is informative of a little-known historical process, and also shows high temporal resolution signs that are sensitive to frequent coastal geomorphological changes in the area. Furthermore, the analysis of the *Cholgueros* sites' evidence broadens our knowledge on coastal use through history, not only at a local scale, but also in relation to coastal processes taking place in adjacent areas during industrial times (Alvarez et al, 2019). This report presents the material evidence of 31 historical archeological sites in the *Chonos* archipelago, which are discussed in relation to the available evidence and the broader regional context.

Geographic settings

The *Chonos* archipelago (Figure 1) is located between 43°50' S and 46°50' S in the northern portion of the Patagonian channels at the southernmost part of South America. It is composed of a set of more than 150 islands covering an area of approximately 54,000 km², measuring nearly 360 km in length north-south and 150 km east-west. It is part of a complex network of passages, fjords and islands that dominate the landscape of the

Patagonian channels and that extend for more than 1600 km (41°30'–55°60'S) from the Reloncaví Sound to Cape Horn (Davies et al, 2020; Empeaire, 1963). The main agents shaping this territory were quaternary glacier action (Davies et al, 2020), active plate tectonics and major faults responsible for earthquakes and tsunamis that permanently modified the coasts (Lomnitz, 1970; Plafker and Savage, 1970; Reyes et al, 2018).

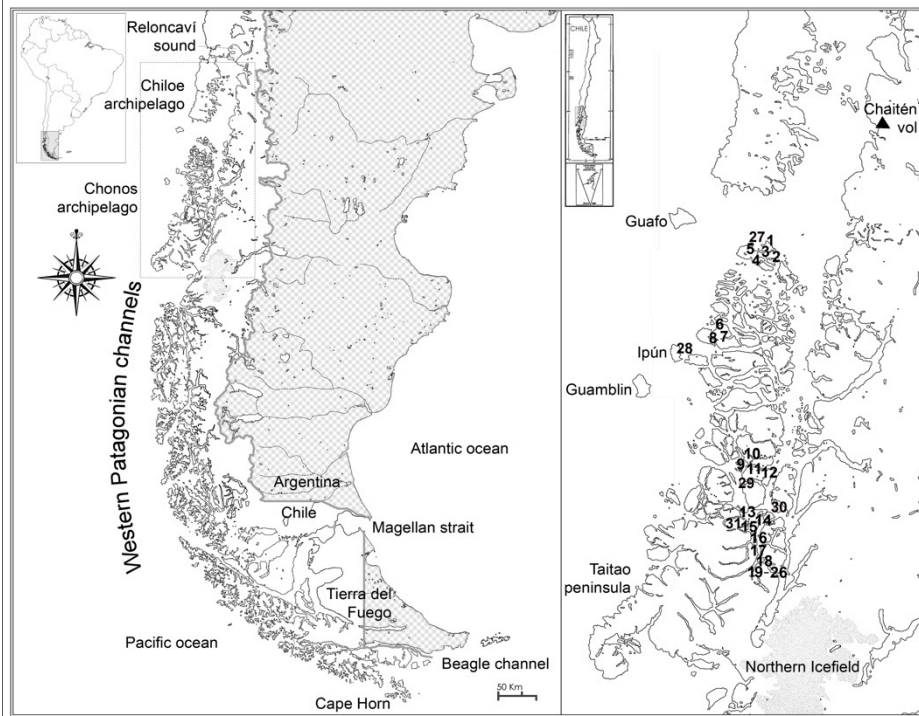


Figure 1a – map of Patagonia and 1b – map with locations of sites mentioned in the text.
Note: (1) Puquitrín 1; (2) Puquitrín 2; (3) Puquitrín 3; (4) Canal Cuervo 1; (5) Canal Cuervo 2; (6) Isla Level 1; (7) Isla Izaza 1; (8) Isla Izaza 2; (9) Isla Caniglia; (10) Canal Cuche 2; (11) Canal Darwin 1; (12) Canal Darwin 3; (13) Isla Stewart 1; (14) Isla Stewart 2; (15) Isla Stewart 3; (16) Isla Goñi 3; (17) Isla Goñi 4; (18) Isla San José 1; (19-26) Peninsula Taitao 1-2-3-4-6-7-8 and Estero Puelma 1; (27) Isla Marta 1; (28) Isla Ipún; (29) Canal Vicuña 3; (30) Isla Acua; (31) Isla Canquenes 2.

The climate is of an oceanic type, influenced by western winds that cause precipitation in excess of 3,000 mm per year (Garreaud et al, 2009). The average annual temperature is approximately 10 °C. The vegetation, dominated by altitudinal and latitudinal gradients, is classified as dense evergreen forest dominated by *Nothofagus*, *Weinmannia* and conifers inside the fjords; temperate *Pilgerodendron* and *Astelia* conifers on the coast between 43°30' and 45°S; and *Donatia* and *Oreobolus* coastal peatland between 45° and 51°S (Luebert and Plissock 2006). Available paleoenvironmental information suggests that this phytogeographic distribution did not change substantially during the Holocene, except for minor fluctuations in the location of the forest/steppe margin further east (de Porrás et al, 2012, 2014). The marine fauna is diverse and represented by 18 species of cetaceans, 2 species of pinnipeds, 2 species of seals, 2 species of mustelids, 22 species of mollusks (bivalves and gastropods), crustaceans and echinoderms, 29 species of fish and other invertebrates and 46 species of birds (Irirarte, 2008; Navarro and Pequeno, 1979; Osorio

and Reid, 2004; Vuilleumier, 1985). By contrast, terrestrial resources, all of them riparian aquatic ones, are nearly nonexistent on the islands. Recorded in the area are rodents such as the nutria (*Myocastor coypus*) and mustelids such as the southern river otter (*Lontra provocax*) and marine otter (*Lontra felina*) (Iriarte 2008). Recorded on the continental coast are 2 species of deer of small and medium size: the pudu (*Pudu puda*) and south Andean deer (*Hippocamelus bisulcus*), respectively. Also occasionally reported is the presence of puma (*Puma concolor*).

Materials and methods

The archeological record corresponds to 31 sites of historical occupations identified in a series of coastal surveys carried out between 2006 and 2015 (Reyes, 2020; Reyes et al, 2015; Reyes, Méndez, and San Román, 2019). The sites were georeferenced to obtain data concerning altitude, distance from the current coastline and occupied surface. The latter was defined for each site based on the dispersion perimeter of surface materials and associated structures, including those in the intertidal area. In the case of the structures and material record, their main characteristics were recorded in terms of the types and materials used. Finally, cases with some type of *recycling* or *lateral cycling* were recorded (sensu Schiffer, 1990; Skibo and Schiffer, 2001). No material evidence was collected. At each site, archeological visibility was evaluated in relation to the percentage of forest cover, discriminating between high (0 - 30%), medium (31 - 60%), low (61 - 90%) and null (91 - 100%), and the main agents disturbing the archeological record. In the case of shell middens, borehole tests was carried out to define their dimensions, evaluate their thickness and characterise the species represented, as well as to confirm or rule out the presence of archeological occupations prior to historical times, at the underlying levels. As for the chronology of the sites, in 5 of the 31 sites radiocarbon dates were available (Reyes, Méndez, and San Román, 2019). In the other cases, the occupation lapse of the sites was inferred with consideration of regional historical studies regarding the years in which the extractive activity was carried out, in conjunction with the characteristics of the materials recovered at each site. Finally, site functionality was inferred based on the associated features and artifacts, the characteristics of the anthropic sediments, the intervention carried out in the surrounding area and the structures implemented in the intertidal zone.

Results

Location and site visibility

The 31 historical sites considered in this report are located within the coastal island landscape, distributed over 13 different islands (N=23) and on a continental peninsula (N=8) (Table 1, Figure 2). The sites are located mainly within the forest, partially logged by various encampment activities carried out in the immediate environment and above the intertidal zone, adjacent to a littoral strip characterised by small pebble beaches and sand interspersed with rocky promontories. Based on the current coastline, they are located at a distance varying from 1 to 50 metres. With respect to their altitude, the sites are located between -0.6 m to 8 m above the current sea level, in areas with coastal slopes ranging from 20° to 40°. Due to the high rainfall and abundant plant coverage, high visibility sites account for only 13% (N=4), while most are medium visibility (67%, N=21) and low and zero visibility sites correspond to 20% of the total set (N=6). Among the disturbance agents of this type of record are anthropic disturbance and that caused by vegetation, mainly tree roots, and erosion due to the tides given the coastal location.

Reyes and Nuevo-Delaunay: Becoming Cholgueros

Location (island)	Cholgueros sites	Altitude (masl)	Distance from current coastline (m)	Slope	Visibility	Disturbance agents
Gran Guaiteca	Puquitín 1-3	1-2	5-20	20°-40°	Z-M	R, V
Gran Guaiteca	Canal Cuervo 1-2	1-3	1	20°-40°	Z-M	R, V
Marta	Isla Marta 1	2	50	20°	H	R, V
Ipún	Isla Ipún	2	30	20°	M	R, V
Level	Isla Level 1	0	3	40°	M	R, V, TE
Izaza	Isla Izaza 1-2	(-0.3)-(-0.6)	0	10°-30°	M	R, V, TE
Caniglia	Isla Caniglia	2	3	20°	L	R, V
Victoria	Canal Cucho 2	3	5	20°	H	R, V
Luz	Canal Darwin 1&3	1-3	5	20°-30°	M	R, V, TE
Luz	Canal Vicuña	2	5	20°	M	R, V, TE
Acuao	Isla Acuao 1	3	1	30°	M	R, V, TE
Canquenes	Isla Canquenes 2	2	2	20°	M	R, V
Stewart	Isla Stewart 1-3	1-3	2-5	20°-30°	L-H	R, V, TE
Goñi	Isla Goñi 3-4	1	2	40°	M	R, V, TE
San José	Isla San José 1	2	2	40°	Z	R, V
Taitao Peninsula	Península Taitao 1-8	0-8	0-40	10°-40°	L-H	R, V, TE
Taitao Peninsula	Estero Puelma 1	1	2	20°	M	R, V

References: Visibility (high, 0 - 30% vegetation cover; medium, 31 - 60% vegetation cover; low, 61 - 90% vegetation cover; and zero, 91-100% vegetation cover); disturbance agents (R = roots; V = vegetation; TE = tidal erosion).

Table 1 - Location and position of the *Cholgueros* sites.

The location of the *Cholgueros* sites, adjacent to the immediate coastal strip, is similar to that of the archeological shell middens of the area (Reyes, 2020), which made it possible to calibrate the impact of changes in marine levels on sites with less than 300 years of formation. Thus, it was found that of the 31 *Cholgueros* sites recorded, 13 show erosion and exposure of their profiles due to tidal action as a result of the sinking of the land by tectonics (Reyes et al, 2018, Table 1).



Figures 2a and 2b - *Cholgueros* sites: a) Canal Darwin, b) Isla Izaza (Omar Reyes 2010, 2015).

Material record

The material record of the *Cholgueros* sites is composed mainly of large accumulations of shells, this being their defining characteristic, although they also reflect a diverse archeological record composed of various associated materials and structures. The area occupied by the different settlements varies from 50 to 3200 m² (Table 2). In all cases, the presence of shell middens was recorded, with thicknesses ranging from 20 to 500 cm. In 100% of the shell middens, the genus *Mytilus* predominates; being represented the ribbed mussel (*Aulacomya ater*), choro mussel (*Choromytilus chorus*) and Chilean mussel (*Mytilus edulis chilensis*). Additionally, although very infrequently, the inclusion of other species was recorded such as Chilean abalone (*Concholepas concholepas*), giant barnacle (*Austromegabalanus psittacus*), clams (*Protothaca thaca*) and urchins (*Loxechinus albus*).

In 18 of the 31 sites structures and/or equipment were recorded, while intertidal zone interventions were recorded at 4 of the 31 sites (Figure 3). The different spatial interventions recorded above the intertidal zone include the presence of firepits, mainly delimited by stones (N=14); wooden posts for mooring boats (N=5); wooden paths within the forest (N=1); and residential structures, most of which have only wooden pillars preserved (N=13). With regard to interventions in the intertidal zone, this was recorded at only 4 of the 31 sites recorded. Three intertidal management structures (locally known as fishing pens) and 2 boat slips were recorded. Regarding the fishing corrals, the Península de Taitao 1 site presented a semicircular fishing corral approximately 10 m long in an east-west direction and 1 to 1.5 m wide, consisting of large and medium blocks of pebbles and rocks from the intertidal zone. A second, smaller fishing pen was later recorded at the same site, 6 m long east-west and 50 cm in width, on average, at 1 m.a.s.l. Both corrals are located on the bed of a small stream that allows the tide to enter. They are covered by mosses and their disuse is notable. The Península de Taitao 2 site also presented an elliptical fishing corral of approximately 18 m in length running east-west.



Figures 3a-3d - Wood structures at *Cholgueros* sites (Omar Reyes 2010, 2012, 2013, 2013).

Reyes and Nuevo-Delaunay: Becoming Cholqueros

Site	Area (m ²)	Thickness (cm)	Species	Intertidal interventions	Surface interventions	Materials	Vegetation interventions
Puquitrín 1-3	200-900	20-100	<i>Myt</i>	---	S,WHS(N=2),Wp	M,P,Gb	L&C,Pc,At
Canal Cuervo 1-2	80-200	100	<i>Myt</i>	---	S	R,S,Sp,M,Pb,C	L&C
Isla Marta 1	300	20	<i>Myt</i>	---	S,WHS,Wp	M,Gb,P R,S,Rw	L&C,At
Isla Ipún	50	20	<i>Myt</i>	---	S,Wp	M,Gb,P R,S,Rw	L&C
Isla Level 1	100	100	<i>Myt,Pt,Va,Cc,Fn,L</i> <i>a</i>	---	---	---	---
Isla Izaza 1-2	200-240	100	<i>Myt</i>	---	S,Wp	---	---
Isla Caniglia	70	60	<i>Myt</i>	---	---	---	L&C
Canal Cucho 2	120	70	<i>Myt</i>	---	S,WHS	Rw	L&C
Canal Darwin 1&3	50-450	50-80	<i>Myt</i>	---	---	P,M,Ws,L(3 net weights),G	L&C
Canal Vicuña 3	200	100	<i>Myt</i>	---	S,WHS,Wp	M,Gb,P,R,S Rw	L&C
Isla Acua 1	200	100	<i>Myt</i>	---	S,WHS,Wp	M,Gb,P R,S,Rw	L&C
Isla Canques 2	200	100	<i>Myt</i>	---	S,WHS,Wp	M,Gb,P R,S,Rw	L&C,At,G
Isla Stewart 1-3	50-1000	30-500	<i>Myt</i>	Bd	Wp,S	R,S,Wm,C,Ws	---
Isla Goñi 3-4	100	100-200	<i>MytChRM</i>	---	S,WHS,Wp	---	L&C
Isla San José 1	400	200	<i>MytChRM</i>	---	---	---	---
Península Taitao 1-8	200-3200	50-500	<i>MytChRM</i>	Fp(N=2),Bd,Bf	S,Wp, lp(30 m)	Wm,Rw	L&C
Estero Puelma 1	300	50	<i>MytChRM</i>	---	S	Wb	L&C, At

¹ References: **Species** *Myt* (*Mytilus*), *MytChRM* (*Mytilus* -Chilean mussel and ribbed mussel-), *Protothaca thca* (*Pt*), *Venus antiqua* (*Va*), *Concholepas concholepas* (*Cc*), *Fissurella nigra* (*Fn*), *Loxechinus albus* (*La*); **Intertidal interventions** Fishing pens (Fp), Boat dock (Bd), Burned firewood (Bf); **Surface interventions** Stove (S), Wooden housing structure (WHS), Wooden palisade (Wp), lane path (lp); **Materials** Metals (M), Plastics (P), Glass bottles (Gb), Rods (R), Stakes (S), Stove pipe (Sp), Plastic bottles (Pb), Cement (C), Recent waste (Rw), Lithics (L), Glass (G), Wood -mooring- (Wm), Cot (C), Wood -stakes- (Ws), Whiskey bottle (Wb); **Vegetation interventions** Logging and clearing (L&C), Plots for cultivating (Pc), Apple trees (At), Grapevine (G)

Table 2. Main characteristics of The *Cholqueros* sites.

Some of the sites (N=13) show discarded materials such as metal shards, plastics, glass fragments, wooden stakes and other objects, although very infrequently (Table 2, Figure 4). Finally, 19 of the 31 sites show intervention of the surrounding vegetation, mainly logging and clearing activities to remove abundant vegetation for camping and cultivating seasonal fruit and vegetable species for consumption. The presence of apple trees (*Malus domestica*) was identified at 3 sites, and plots for growing potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) was identified at one site.

Site functionality

The *Cholqueros* sites are mainly defined by the presence of large monocomponent shell mounds of the genus *Mytilus* obtained through the intensive and selective gathering of this resource for the canning industry. Considering their ephemeral nature and the lack of occupations with permanent structures or with a perspective of long-term permanence, it is inferred that these settlements originated from seasonal, though possibly repeated, visits. The prospect of seasonal return to the sites is inferred based on the presence of other associated activities, such as basic horticulture of apple trees and potatoes, and most likely hunting and passive fishing structures to support fishermen and gatherers engaged in extractive activity. As for the occupation time lapses of the sites, 7 radiocarbon dates (Reyes, Méndez, and San Román. 2019) were available for 5 sites (Isla Level 1; Isla Izaza 1, 2; Isla Caniglia and Canal Darwin 1), ranging from 1688 to 1949 CE. The remaining 26 sites' occupation lapse was inferred considering regional historical studies regarding the years in which the extractive activity was carried out in the area, between the late 18th to mid-20th centuries (Martinic 2004, 2005; Saavedra 2001).



Figures 4a-4d - Figure 4. Materials recovered at *Cholgueros* sites, different types of stoves at (A) Canal Cuervo 1; (C) Puquitín 3; (D) Isla Stewart 3. Fragmented whisky glass bottle at (B) Estero Puelma 1. (Omar Reyes 2014, 2013, 2012, 2012).

Discussion and final remarks

The Chonos Archipelago was incorporated into the global economic sphere in the late 19th century, supplying the market with raw materials such as hides, lumber and seafood, among others (Martinic, 2005). The production of these raw materials was carried out by a floating population, mainly from the Chiloé Archipelago (north of our study area), composed of lumberjacks, furriers, hunters and fishermen who sold their products to be traded on the national and international market (Marín, 2014; Martinic, 2004, 2005; Mayorga, 2016, 2020; Morales, 2014; Núñez et al, 2016; Torrejón et al, 2013). The extraction of *Mytilus* for the canned food industry was carried out from seasonal camps located along the coastal strip. The spaces associated with this activity are locally known as *Cholgueros* or *Puertos Cholgueros* (Curry, 1991; Legoupil et al, 2007; Martinic, 2005; Reyes, 2020; Reyes et al, 2015) and correspond mainly to large shell middens formed by the accumulation of malacological fauna as a result of seasonal and recurrent occupations. This extractive activity is archaeologically visible through a characteristic material record scattered throughout the coastal strip and not previously addressed in archeology.

Archaeological research in the area has focused mainly on the study of settlement and occupation by local indigenous groups from the Middle Holocene to the 18th century (Reyes, 2020; Reyes et al, 2015; Reyes, Méndez, and San Román, 2019; Reyes, San Román, and Morello, 2016). There are notable differences between the archeological shell middens

of the Middle and Late Holocene and the historical shell middens of *Cholgueros* sites (Figure 5). The former exhibit a diversity of malacological, marine and terrestrial fauna in their deposits due primarily to subsistence, inhumations and lithic activities (Reyes et al, 2015; Reyes, San Román, and Morello, 2016), and their formation over thousands of years makes it possible to observe different occupation events (Stein, 1986, 1992).



Figures 5a, 5b - Stratigraphic differences between Late Holocene and *Cholgueros* sites (Omar Reyes 2015, 2007).

The *Cholgueros* sites' evidence discussed in this article originated between the 18th to early/middle 20th centuries. It is composed of a small number of species of mollusks, mainly those of commercial value for the canned food industry, such as *Mytilus*. These form large accumulations of unfragmented, uncompacted, and nonstratigraphic shells originating over very short periods of time and on a large spatial scale (Stein, 1992; Stein, Deo and Phillips, 2003). On the surface, it is possible to observe rubble-filled firepits and areas of discarded material among or beneath the thick plant cover. In some cases, interventions of the immediate environment can be observed, such as logging and clearing vegetation for camping activities and seasonal crops, as well as fruit trees and wooden paths to transport boats between bodies of water as "portage" sites (Borrero, 1997). Intertidal management areas are also recorded, such as fishing pens and boatyard or rock clearance areas to prevent boats from hitting intertidal stones (Reyes, 2020).

At the local scale, there were no previous studies of the material evidence of these sites beyond their location (Reyes, 2020). Thus, their archaeological study is preliminary but highly informative of a little-known material record associated to an important historical process, including the first material testimony of informal and semi-industrial activities on the Chonos Archipelago. At a regional scale on adjacent coastal areas, the use of traditional fishing weirs over time have been discussed in relation to similar industrial processes including the onset and decline of intense extractivism (Alvarez et al, 2019). Finally, at a broader regional scale and globally, other types of structures located in the coastal intertidal zone, have been extensively studied (e.g., Álvarez et al, 2008; Caldwell, et al, 2012;

Ceci, 1984; Gandois, Torres and Quesnel, 2019; Smith 2011; Vázquez and Zangrando, 2017; Wickler, 2016).

Cholgueros sites' evidence is also crucial in taphonomic terms. Many *Cholgueros* sites are located on top of archeological shell middens, coinciding in terms of selected variables - such as sheltered bays and proximity to fresh water - with the location of Middle and Late Holocene sites (e.g., Curry, 1991; Legoupil et al, 2007; Reyes, 2020). Thus, Middle and Late Holocene sites are frequently disturbed by up to 5 m thick accumulations of shells discarded by *Cholgueros* activities and/or contemporary fishing refuse. On the other hand, *Cholgueros* sites are high temporal resolution signs, sensitive to frequent coastal geomorphological changes in the area and, therefore, sedimentary witnesses to regional coastal dynamics (Reyes, 2020; Reyes et al, 2018; Reyes, San Román and Morello, 2016). This temporal microscale also makes it possible to evaluate the archeological visibility of the site and its material record subsequent to abandonment in a region defined as taphonomically active (Borrero, 2014), evaluating its implications for the general archeological record. Thus, when comparing its visibility to those of Middle to Late Holocene sites, *Cholgueros* sites slightly exceed the percentage of low and high archeological visibility but in no case does high visibility dominate the total set (Table 3). In this sense, they constitute a frame with regard to the (trans)formation processes of archaeological sites in the Archipelago, particularly the effects of different disturbing agents. As an example, the assessment of the erosion status of the *Cholgueros* sites due to tidal action illustrates the dynamics of tectonic behavior in the area as well as short-term coastal reshaping, even allowing for projections of this on a millennial scale (Lomnitz, 1970; Plafker and Savage, 1970; Reyes et al, 2018).

Archaeological sites	Zero visibility (%)	Low visibility (%)	Medium visibility (%)	High visibility (%)	Total (%)
Middle/Late Holocene sites	68	7	18	7	100
<i>Cholgueros</i> sites	10	10	67	13	100

Table 3. Comparison of the visibility percentage of the archaeological sites of the Chonos archipelago (modified from Reyes 2020).

Data presented in this report, although preliminary, aims to show and discuss the little-known material evidence of an important historical process of the modern history of the Chonos Archipelago, as a result of extractive activities carried out between 18th to mid-20th centuries. The study of this evidence had only previously been addressed with respect to its location, undermining its importance in historical, taphonomic and sedimentary terms. This report highlights its importance and broadens our knowledge on coastal use through history, incorporating an archaeological perspective to historical and contemporary processes.

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Data availability statement

No material evidence was collected.

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