YAGHAN'S, EXPLORERS AND SETTLERS:
10,000 years of Southern
Tierra del Fuego Archipelago History

The Museum Permanent Exhibit Script

Martin Gusinde Anthropological Museum · Puerto Williams - Chile

Participants in Initiation Rite in the year 1922.
(Martin Gusinde, last row, fourth position from left to right).
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Martin Gusinde Anthropological Museum

Introduction

The creation of a museum on Navarino Island was an ambitious project that grew out of a deep interest in and concern for the island's natural and cultural heritage. The initiative was originally proposed by the Chilean Navy, the same institution that built the Martín Gusinde Anthropological Museum (MAMG), which opened its doors in Puerto Williams in 1975.

In the 1960s, before the museum was founded, a collection was begun of archeological material from the island's coastal areas, along with some objects of historical interest from the first occupation by pioneers. This collection was exhibited in the now defunct Mixed School N° 3 in Puerto Williams. The collection was moved when the Martin Gusinde Museum was established, becoming part of that institution permanent collection.

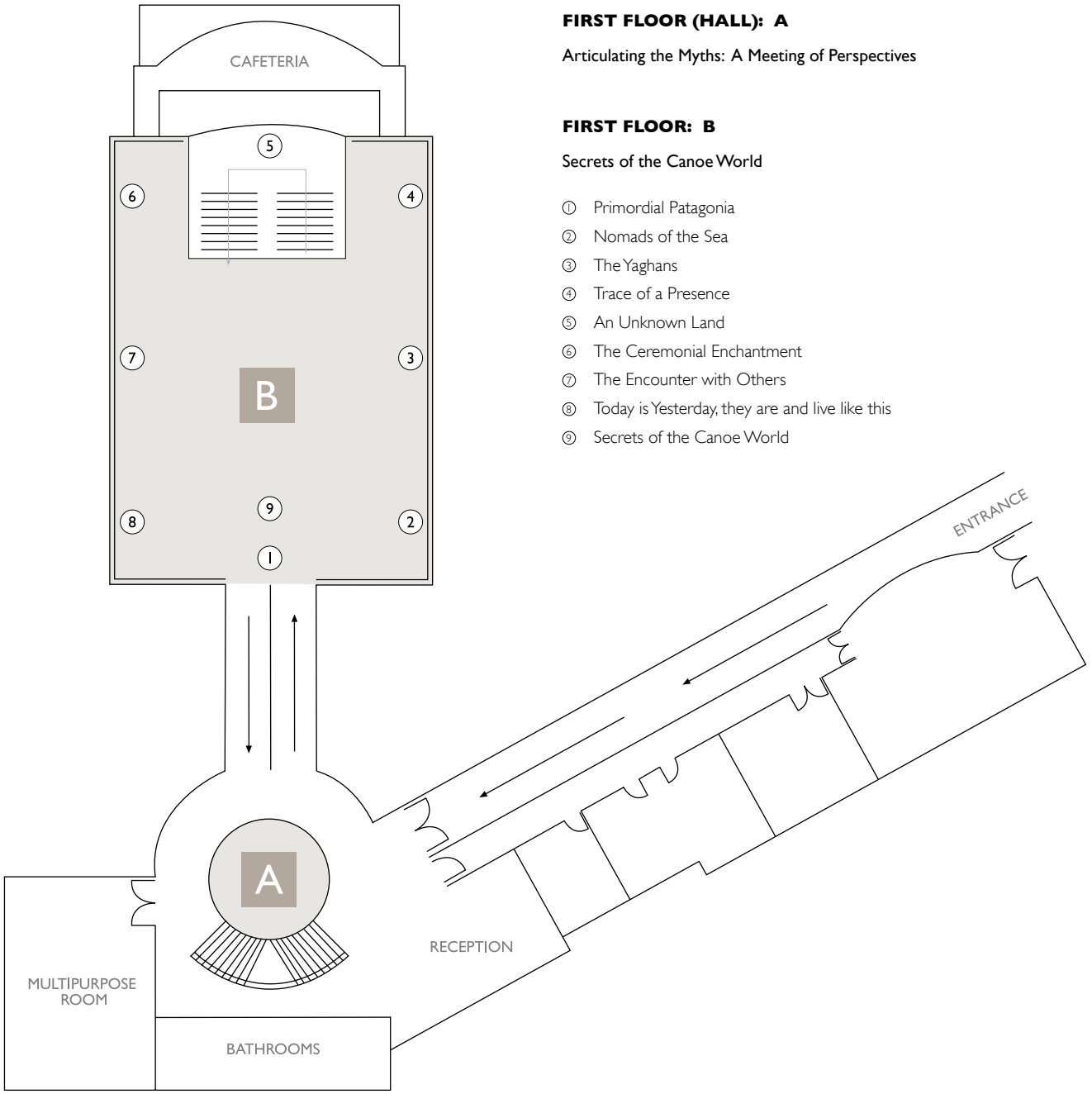
The Museum was named after the Austrian anthropologist and priest Martin Gusinde S.V.D. (1886-1969), who worked among the Yaghan and Selk'nam people from 1918 to 1924. His body of work offers the greatest collection of ethnographic studies about a world that was already on the verge of disappearing. His seminal work "The Indians of Tierra del Fuego" was published between 1930 and 1974, and will forever remain the principal source of information we possess about the native people of Tierra del Fuego.

The Museum focuses on aspects of the settlement of the Tierra del Fuego archipelago: an ethnographic review of the groups that populated the region, mainly the Yaghan's and their ancestors, who were the first to settle at the southern end of the the Americas, and the process of discovery, exploration and colonization of this zone from the 17th Century onwards.

This Museum is part of a network of entities across Chile that comes under the authority of the National Directorate of Libraries, Archives and Museums (DIBAM).

Exhibit:

The Museum has a central hall entitled "Articulating the Myths: A Meeting of Perspectives" and two permanent galleries located on the first and second floors of the building. The first gallery offers "Secrets of the Canoe World" and the second, "Tales of Discovery".



FIRST FLOOR (HALL): A

Articulating the Myths: A Meeting of Perspectives

FIRST FLOOR: B

Secrets of the Canoe World

① Primordial Patagonia
② Nomads of the Sea
③ The Yaghans
④ Trace of a Presence
⑤ An Unknown Land
⑥ The Ceremonial Enchantment
⑦ The Encounter with Others
⑧ Today is Yesterday, they are and live like this
⑨ Secrets of the Canoe World

First Floor

A

HALL:
Articulating the Myths: A Meeting of Perspectives

Visitors enter the central hall, which leads to the permanent galleries. It is a circular space that has been given the title *"Articulating the Myths: A Meeting of Perspectives"*. It is here, in the hall's images of Yaghan's, explorers, missionaries and scientists, that one comes face to face with different forms of "the other" in the same natural environment.

The figure of Lakutaia Le Kipa, affectionately called Grandmother Rosa by the townspeople, the face of the priest-ethnographer Martin Gusinde, painted like just one more initiate in the Chiajaus rite, and a portrait of navigator and explorer Robert Fitz-Roy, fuse into an expression of that marvelous cultural diversity.

In the center of the hall is a reproduction of a canoe done to scale by Martin Gonzalez C., an elder craftsman of the native community. It symbolizes the spirit and heart of the Museum: *the museum as a canoe*, a vessel that enables people to travel to other shores.

B

ROOM:
Secrets of the Canoe World

1. PRIMORDIAL PATAGONIA

On the trail of the Megafauna

When the first bands of hunter gatherers crossed the Bering Strait at the northern end of the American continent from Asia some 20,000 years ago, they never imagined the vastness of the lands that lay before their eyes. The land bridge they crossed, formed at the end of the Ice Age during a geological period known as the Pleistocene, also allowed countless new animal species to enter the continent. Those remote times bring to mind spectacular herbivores (Mylodon, Macrauchuenia, the American horse, and giant sloths) and the frightening carnivores that preyed on them (saber-toothed tiger, American panther, giant bears). These species quickly adapted to the different natural environments the continent offered, living alongside and even competing with native fauna. The human groups that followed these enormous creatures developed new ways of life and found places to settle; but they also discovered new routes to explore. Always moving around, these first communities left their mark throughout North and Central America and into the South American continent. The most widely accepted theories affirm that these hunters populated the region as they advanced

steadily from north to south, reaching the remote lands of Patagonia in just a few thousand years.

The presence of archeological sites in different parts of Southern Patagonia offer evidence of this early human occupation, when humans had to endure the impact of enormous retreating ice fields, volcanic eruptions, sea level fluctuations and a harsh or simply unfamiliar environment. They also had to protect and even defend themselves from the very animals upon which they depended for food.

Towards the end of the Ice Age

The prehistory of Patagonia/Tierra del Fuego is generally considered to date from around 11,000-12,000 years ago, towards the end of the Ice Age, when the first bands of land-based hunter-gatherers reached Última Esperanza, the Magellan region and Tierra del Fuego. At that time, the region's entire land mass was connected and most of the ice was in retreat. Experts agree that the Strait of Magellan came into being some 8,000-9,000 years ago, while the Beagle Channel was formed more recently. The landscape at the end of the Pleistocene was quite different from what it is today: Glaciers that today are found in the Andes Mountains extended inland to the East, what are now the Straight of Magellan, the Otway Sound, and Useless Bay were actually huge lakes, and Tierra del Fuego was connected to the mainland by a land bridge. Vestiges of the land's ancient inhabitants have been preserved in different caves and rock shelters of the region. In these places, archeological excavations have recovered evidence of human use of rock and bone to manufacture instruments, along with the skeletal remains of the animals they consumed.

Culturally, the time of the first human settlements in America is known as the Paleo-Indian period; in Patagonia this period is characterized by the presence of fishtail projectile points. These points were first found at Fell Cave (in Magellan Region) and were perfectly adapted for hunting extinct camelid species (Lama gracilis), American horse and other large prey (including guanaco, among other species that still remain today). Found together with this very typical item were large sharp instruments (flat and pointed scrapers) that were used on animal skins, meat and bone. Another kind of artifact discovered, known as a discoidal stone, is thought to have been for symbolic use. These flat round stones have no marks that indicate they were used on other materials, as grinders or otherwise.

A number of the elements described have been found in the Argentine Patagonia, associated with the remains of extinct horse, camelids and other fauna, both extinct and existing. Los Toldos Cave is an archeological site on the central plateau that has, in addition to more typical elements, fallen fragments of the rock ceiling bearing remnants of paint, remnants of the earliest forms of rock art known in the region. The walls of Las Manos Cave, southwest of Lago Argentino, still hold rock art figures that were probably made by ancient hunters (negative handprints and hunting scenes). Elements typical of the Paleo-Indian period have also been found at archeological sites close to Los Toldos, including Arroyo Feo, El Búho, El Ceibo 7 and Las Buitreras caves; the last of these houses evidence that the inhabitants consumed the giant Magellanic ground sloth Mylodon. Radiocarbon (C^{14}) dating attributes these sites to 12,000 -9,000 years before the present (BP).

An area that has abundant remains from this period is the region of Última Esperanza, in the northern part of Magellan Region. This zone contains a series of caves and rock shelters that have afforded us a closer look at the first inhabitants of this region and their environment. Sites such as the Mylodon Cave and the Cueva del Medio, dated between 11,000 and 9,500 years BP, are shelters that are clearly associated with extinct fauna and human groups (fishtail projectile points), and show evidence of a large extinct feline, the Patagonian panther (*Pantera onca mesembrina)*. The Lago Sofia 1 and 4 sites (11,590 BP) also hold the remains of large cats, probably *Smylodon* (saber-toothed

tiger) and *Pantera*, animals that consumed some of the same species as the ancient humans.

Feline remains were also found in the region at Los Chingues Cave. This cavern, located in Pali Aike National Park, has a lower level containing extinct fauna remains with no evidence of human occupation. The most notable remains here are of puma (*Felis concolor*) and other larger felines such as the *Pantera onca mesembrina* and an extinct species of bear (*Arctotherium paractotherium*). This level has been dated at 11,210 years BP. In the same park is the Pali Aike site, another cave with finds attributed to this period.

Finally, Tres Arroyos archeological site is worth noting. This is a rock shelter located in the north-central region of Tierra del Fuego. It contains evidence of extinct horses and camelids, *Mylodon* and *Pantera onca mesembrina,* associated with debris from the manufacture of stone and bone artifacts and instruments.

In summary, the Paleo-Indian period in Patagonia was a time of human discovery and colonization, when the first human groups were adapting to an environment that was constantly changing and even affecting the animals upon which they depended for food. The disappearance of many animal species due to environmental instability and other concurrent factors had a major impact on the behavior of human communities here, which had to develop new subsistence strategies and technologies to face these new realities. The retreat of the ice, the formation of the Strait of Magellan and the western channels, and the isolation of Tierra del Fuego from the mainland reduced contact among human groups. This isolation produced the differences that would later materialize in the different Magellanic ethnic groups referred to in European visitors' and settlers' written accounts. The virtually complete disappearance of these ethnic groups during the 20th Century is the result of the second wave of Patagonian migration and colonization ten thousand years later by the present day inhabitants of the southern tip of America.

2. NOMADS OF THE SEA

The canoe people and the sea

It has been estimated that the first groups of canoe indians arrived in the Patagonian region only 6,000 years ago. However, it is still not clear whether the appearance of these first sea-going people –their culture, language, and indeed way of life– was the result of local adaptations by land-based hunter-gatherer groups, or whether they migrated from other lands. During this period the climate was somewhat milder than it is today. The *sea level* was *rising* and the *land* had begun to emerge after being freed from the *weight of the ice*, *forming channels, bays and fiords. The forest also stood* beyond its present day boundary. Indeed, when the canoe indians first colonized this region they probably found an environment that was a little richer and more diverse than what exists today.

"Later, with the retreat of the glaciers, the sea level began to rise, and rose above its present level, producing the highest marine incursion of the Holocene around 6000 years BP (Porter et al. 1984). This changed the coastline and, along with tectonic and isostatic aspects, explains why most sites with evidence of the early Patagonian canoe indians are found rather distant from today's shoreline, between 8 and 15 m above sea level. Six thousand years ago, these sites would have been closer to or even at the coast. This is the case, for example, in the central zone of Magellan, where a relative timeline has been recorded for 3,000 to 6,500 years BP based on geomorphological and archeological evidence. First, the marine incursion occurring around 6000 BP created marine terraces and other coastal formations at a height of approximately 6 - 11 m above sea level; it is these formations that are associated with the early canoe sites"
(Morello, F. et al, 2007: p. 7)

"In Southern Patagonia new evidence points to another period when marine terraces formed 4 to 7 m above sea level, around 3,000-5,000 BP, at a time when the sea level was dropping, on it´s process to reach the present level" (Ibid : p. 8).

About 6,000 years ago, a major change occurred in the way of life of these human societies. This new stage of exploration and the availability of new resources to be exploited enabled the emergence of one of the most striking and important technological achievements in the region: the canoe, a small craft that allowed people to sail through the waves and venture into new parts of this territory. As the sea waters fell, allowing new lands to emerge and leaving others exposed, human groups quickly began to populate the region, adapting in ways that allowed them to live in and make use of the immense landscape that was opening up before their eyes. Their adaptation focused especially on the ability to take advantage of marine resources, with groups building and sailing small canoes on the ocean.

Different researchers affirm the probable existence of two populated centers on the coast. The first is located in an area of archeological sites situated near the Beagle Channel and Navarino Island, while the second is a concentration of ancient sites located on the Otway Sound and the Brunswick Peninsula. Seafaring groups would have spread out from these populated centers to occupy different parts of the archipelago, even reaching Cape Horn and Staten Island.

In the zone of transition between the steppe and the forest, around what were known as the inland seas, some archeological sites have been found that illustrate the evolution from a land-based hunting economy to one adapted to the sea. The Ponsonby site, located on the shore of the Fitz-Roy Channel (Chile) contains both marine and terrestrial resources dated at 7,450 years BP. While archeological excavations of this site have shown a preponderance of guanaco compared to other food sources, the presence of sea mammals and birds as a dietary complement is also significant. Some researchers believe that this evidence reflects the first experiences of marine adaptation ever recorded in Patagonia. A similar find showing a mixed economy dominated by guanaco is found at the Túnel I site on the Beagle Channel in Argentina, which has been dated at 6,980 years BP. Both sites are seen to represent the transition from the land-based hunting groups that originally occupied Patagonia, to communities clearly based on exploiting marine resources. The groups that emerged at that time endured into the 20th Century.

In 1952, a French expedition led by anthropologist Joseph Emperaire excavated a major archeological site on Englefield Island in the Otway Sound, where they discovered a large number of instruments and stone waste. The most notable finds included some made of obsidian (volcanic glass) and the first examples of an item that would become a trademark of these groups –bone harpoons with two protuberances at the base. The cruciform base of this instrument would become a key indicator that a site had been occupied by the earliest canoe groups, even if other varieties of harpoons were also found.

This ancient feature has also been identified at the sites of Bahía Buena, Punta Santa Ana, Bahía Colorada and Pizzulic. Similar artifacts around the same age have allowed for attributing a series of finds on the Beagle Channel, in the zone of Ushuaia and Navarino Island, to this same period of early maritime adaptation.

On the Argentinean side of the Beagle Channel, archeological sites investigated include Lancha Packewaia, Túnel I (with early and late occupational stages), and Imiwaia, among others.

Ancient sites found in Navarino Island include Grandi I in the southern part of the island, as well as 136 Áridos Guerrico, 169b and 171 Bahía Honda. All of these have been dated at

Facsimile of Yaghan Canoe
Produced by Martin Gonzalez, Chile, 2007
Photographer: Giorgio Addrizzi, Authorized Digital Copying
Photograph Archive Martin Gusinde Anthropological Museum (MAMG)

7,000 to 5,000 years BP, testifying to the fact that since early times man has hunted marine mammals, captured birds, fished and collected mollusks. Different evidence (environmental reconstruction, ethnological data) collected at these sites clearly suggests an economy based on marine predation. Dwellings were built on the beach, probably just above the high tide line.

More recent prehistoric societies

In the last 3,000-4,000 years, material elements have emerged that are thought to represent a shift away from the established cultural traditions of both land-based and maritime hunting groups.

Archeological remains of terrestrial hunters are abundant throughout Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, which suggests a growth in population over time. The materials used by these later land-based groups include new kinds of projectile points with a wide, low-cut stem, triangular edge and side fins. Also typical are the small "nail" scrapers, so-called for their tiny size and the fact that they were used with a handle. Other instruments used during those times include balls, strikers and scrapers, as well as bone instruments like retouchers and hole punchers.

Similar changes have been observed among canoe groups, which increased in number and spread to every corner of the region, eventually reaching Cape Horn. Technologically, the points tend to have different forms, although green obsidian continued to be the material of choice. Of the bone weapons these people used, the *cruciform-based harpoon gradually disappeared*, to be replaced by other kinds of harpoons also usually manufactured from whale bone. *Multiple-barbed harpoons became common and simple ones with one or two barbs also began to be used*.

Archeological evidence of later canoe groups has also been found over a large area, reflecting an increase in that native

population. Recent archeological sites contain the typical shell middens –piles of waste containing seashells and other remains from human consumption of marine fauna such as sea lions, whales, fish, birds and other animals. The most indicative instruments are bone harpoons, especially those with a single tenon and one barb, and those with a double tenon and two barbs.

Information from the 16th to 20th centuries has led to the identification of two ethnic groups: Yaghan's or Yamanas and Alacalufe or Kaweskar. However, observations about the culture and way of life of the region's first inhabitants should be considered with care, as they describe these societies at a time when they had been negatively impacted by newly arrived conquistadores and colonists, both European and Chilean. The descriptions therefore do not always reflect ancestral cultural traditions. Moreover, there is not always a direct correlation between more recent ethnic identities and ancient prehistoric groups.

3. THE YAGHAN'S

Nomadic canoe indians: The southernmost hunters, fishers and gatherers on Earth

The first description of the Yaghan people was written by Jacques L'Hermite in 1624, after he encountered a group of canoe indians on Hoste Island's Hardy Peninsula and another on Windhond Bay. Later recorded sightings are few, and are centered in and around the Cape Horn archipelago, up until the expeditions sent by the British Admiralty between 1829 and 1832, one which included the famous naturalist Charles Darwin.

The seamen who wrote these accounts gave the world a very singular image of the inhabitants of this land. The Yaghan's were viewed as 'living fossils,' because in those days the predominant idea was that social and cultural progress as well as human perfection, depended on the development of technology. Later investigators corrected some of these misconceptions, but the natives continued to be viewed as an example of cultural archaism or primitivism.

This lasted until the end of the 19th Century, when the Anglican missionary Thomas Bridges conducted the first detailed study of Yaghan language and customs. Later, Martin Gusinde (1919-1923) and Wilhem Koppers (1922) carried out new studies that revealed deeper facets of the group's social and spiritual lives. Subsequent studies have focused mainly on the gradual disappearance of these people and the causes of this.

Thomas Bridges was the first person to use the name "Yaghan" to identify this ethnic group (1869). The term was derived from the word Yahgashaga, the name of one area of the Murray Channel, the location of various Yaghan settlements, according to observations by numerous travelers, explorers and scientists. Decades later, the priest and ethnographer Martin Gusinde (1937) identified this group as the Yámana, and since then this name has been used in much of the anthropological and historical literature.

There is still no absolute consensus among scientists and academics, however, and both names continue to be used interchangeably. Importantly, present day descendants of this group, including those who speak their tongue, reject the name Yámanas because it means "man," not in a generic sense but only in reference to male members of the group. The Yaghan term for woman is kippa (or xippa). The people therefore call themselves Yaghan's, and out of respect for the right to self-denomination, we will use this name here.

"Everyone knows me as Rosa, because that is how the English missionaries called me when they baptized me. But my name is Lakutaia le kipa. Lakuta is the name of a bird, and kipa means woman. Each Yaghan bears the name of the place where he or she was born, and my mother brought me into the world in Lakuta Bay. That is the way with our race: We are named after the land that welcomes us" (Stambuck 2004: p.15).

Their territory

"I am the last of the Wollaston race. There were five Yaghan tribes, each from a different place, but sharing the same tongue. Before I could walk, I traveled with my mother to Cape Horn, tied to her back" (Stambuck, 2004: p.15).

"This insular, extremely restricted and inhospitable world is home to the Yámana, the southernmost inhabitants of the Earth. Their close proximity to the Antarctic Circle immediately brings to mind a harsh climate where few plants and animals can flourish. There, where the sun does not shine as brightly or as warmly, life is meager and wretched. This reality has such an impact on the natives' way of life, inhibiting and limiting opportunities for subsistence that it determines and orients their economic system in a very particular way. Indeed, they appear to be at the mercy of their surroundings to such a degree that it is impossible for them to rise beyond their circumstances. But the creative force that enables man to rise above the forces of nature and bend them to his service also triumphs here." (Gusinde, 1986:p.4).

The Yaghan's inhabited the region that extends from the southern coast of the big island of Tierra del Fuego to the Cape Horn archipelago (54.5° - 56° S), frequenting especially the coasts of the Murray Channel, the Beagle Channel and islands such as Hoste, Navarino, Picton and Wollaston. Between Buen Suceso Bay and the eastern end of the Beagle Channel, they maintained contact with the Selk'nam or Ona people, while from the Brecknock Peninsula and the western end of the Beagle Channel they communicated with the Kaweshkar or Alacalufe people.

Archeological remains attest to their presence over a vast territory, while information gathered from the accounts of travelers, explorers and scientists identifies five occupational areas or zones:

Wakimaala: located in the Beagle Channel, running from Yendegaia to Puerto Róbalo and including Navarino Island, the Murray Channel and Hoste Island.
Utamaala: East of Puerto Williams and Gable Island, to the islands of Picton, Nueva and Lenox.
Inalumaala: From the Beagle Channel, past Punta Divide up to the Brecknock Peninsula.
Ilalumaala: From Cook Bay to False Cape Horn.
Yeskumaala: The area of the Cape Horn archipelago.

Physical appearance: truth and prejudice

Accounts by travelers and sailors, coupled with ethnographic records written at different times, offered notably different views of the Yaghan's. Some descriptions compared their appearance to that of Europeans, while others were dismissive, shocking or uninformed and clung to them for decades, leaving an indelible mark. Such descriptions included accusations of cannibalism, among other things.

Both male and female Yaghan share physical traits with their neighbors the Kaweshkar, who were also nomads and canoe people. But their physical makeup clearly distinguishes them from other ethnic groups such as the land hunters. In general, they were of shorter than average height, around 1.60 m, with well-formed bodies, broad, robust trunks, powerful arms and slender legs. Facially, they had rather small, wide noses, generous mouths with generally full lips and small, dark, slanted eyes, all of which suggests an association with populations of Asian origin. Their skin color was white with a copper or olive tone. Their hair was dark (black or dark brown), straight, and relatively smooth, and both baldness and body hair were relatively rare.

One central feature of the Yaghan's physical constitution is their special adaptation to the conditions of life on the sea, most notably their resistance to the ever-present cold in this zone. Yaghan women demonstrated this trait while contributing to the family subsistence, gathering shellfish and crustaceans by partly or completely immersing themselves in the freezing waters of the southern ocean.

Without a doubt, the initial impressions of the Europeans –many of which were founded upon ignorance and fear– prevented them from fairly assessing the millennium-long process that had enabled the Yaghan's to successfully adapt both physically and culturally to one of the most inhospitable environments on the planet.

Jacobus L'Hermitte 1624

"The inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego are, by nature, white like those of Europe: Such was the appearance of a child that we have seen" (Martinic, 1992: p. 113)."He has a handsome figure, with well-proportioned limbs and a stature similar to that of Europeans. They have black hair, which they wear long and stiff to appear more fearsome" (Ibid p.113)

…"about completely nude, without covering their private parts, but the women cover themselves with a small piece of animal skin, paint themselves like the men, and adorn their necks with seashell necklaces. A few natives wear a seal skin across their shoulders that affords little protection against the cold, which is so severe in this region that it is a marvel they can bear the winter" (Ibid p. 113)

George Foster 1778

"In that corner of the world we had seen, and sympathized with, the miserable savages of Tierra del Fuego; half dead from hunger, stupefied and unresponsive, unable to protect themselves from the harsh climate, they had sunk to the lowest level of human existence, on a par with the unreasoning animals" (Gusinde, 1986: p. 62)

James Weddel, 1823

"The contour of their faces and the form of their heads are those which are found to be peculiar to most indians: they have flat noses, small eyes, full and well-formed chests, small arms; - their legs are small and ill shaped, which arises, no doubt, from the custom of sitting on their calves, in which situation their appearance is truly awkward. The women are better featured than the men: many of their faces are interesting, and, in my opinion, they have a more lively sense of what passes." (Gusinde, 1986: p. 67)

Charles Darwin 1833

I never saw more miserable creatures; (...) stunted in their growth, their hideous faces bedaubed with white paint & quite naked, their red skins filthy & greasy, their hair entangled, their voices

discordant, their gesticulation violent... Viewing such men, one can hardly make oneself believe that they are fellow creatures placed in the same world. It is a common subject of conjecture; what pleasure in life some of the less gifted animals can enjoy? How much more reasonably it may be asked with respect to these men" (Darwin, 1996: p. 263)

"How little can the higher powers of the mind come into play: what is there for imagination to paint, for reason to compare, for judgement to decide upon, to knock a limpet from the rock does not even require cunning, that lowest power of the mind. Their skill, like the instinct of animals is not improved by experience…" (Darwin, 1996:p. 85)

Their language

"The elders gathered in the akar in bad weather and told their stories in front of the fire" (Stambuck, 2004: p. 25)

Like many other languages of the world, Yaghan is an oral tongue and has no written form. Writing systems were invented and developed in the past as a means to preserve the spoken word (stories, invocations to the gods, prophecies, medicinal practices) and to record different kinds of relationships or inventories (tributes, goods, names of individuals, among other things). As societies became more complex, these recordkeeping systems –whether syllabic, alphabetic or logographic in form– became more and more essential.

The Yaghan alphabet was established as part of a government initiative to preserve the languages and cultures of Chile. The linguist Óscar Aguilera undertook the work of researching and collecting examples of the language, which includes the only official alphabet of this tongue. According to studies, the Yaghan language contains 24 phonemes and graphic forms, 7 of which represent vowels.

Yaghan and Kawesqar are the only two languages of Tierra del Fuego that remain today, but modern linguistic descriptions of the former are few. Some information was collected in the last century, including translations of the gospels and other sections of the Bible, as well as a Yaghan-English dictionary compiled by Thomas Bridges containing more than 30,000 words (published in 1933 and 1987). To date, however, there is no description of the grammar of the language.

There is a wide variety of literature available about the Yaghan language, but these writings invariably tend to reflect the nationality of the observer: thus, the English, French and so on, adapted the sounds they heard to the graphic forms of their own alphabet. Modern linguistics now has the International Phonetic Alphabet to represent the sounds of any spoken language.

Recent studies and ethnographic records point to the existence of five subdivisions of the Yaghan ethnic group, each with differences in dialect that are mutually perceptible and comprehensible. These are denominated as: south, central, eastern, western and southwestern. Today, Yaghan is spoken fluently by only one elderly woman; and for this reason it is considered the language most in danger of extinction in the country.

The most notable features of this language are found at the level of syntax and grammar. Yaghan has what is called "a substantive case system," with different ways of indicating who or what receives the action of the verb. While different pronouns exist, the feature that most distinguishes Yaghan from Spanish is the use of the dual expression: "we / we two", as in many other languages of the world.

The verb is usually in the middle or end of a sentence, and only rarely at the beginning. Because of this, word order is not very relevant when determining the subject or object of a sentence.

In Yaghan, grammar operates through a process in which "lexical items" (usually what we commonly identify as "words") change their function and occasionally their form, becoming part of the grammatical structure. For example, verbs that can express a position (stance) can change to markers of aspect. Aspect markers express the mode of action such as duration and frequency, among other things. A verb denoting the position (or stance) of an entity: möni "to be standing;" mutu "to be sitting;" (w)ia "to be lying down, to recline." Other examples include: Akulu, "to fly, to jump;" köna, "to float."

Conjugations:
Hai ha-mut-ute = I sat down (hai = I; ha = 1st person singular; ute = past tense)
Sö sö-möni-te = you were standing (sö = you; sö = 2nd person singular)
With the same root but with grammatical forms added:
Hai ha-möni-mut-ute = I was always standing, or as a general rule, I was standing (the aspect here is the frequency of the action).
Sö sö-murh-möni-te = You often sat, or you were ready to sit.

Another important feature is that the verbs are more complex, due to the "supplementary" nature of the Yaghan language; in other words, the verb forms differ so much, having changes in both roots and suffixes that they may seem to be different verbs entirely. This supplementary character is shared by other languages of the world; in English for example, we say: "I am," "you are," "he is," "we are." In this case there is no obvious regularity in the conjugation, as there is with regular verbs: "I eat," "you eat," "he eats," "we eat," "you eat," "they eat."

A final aspect of Yaghan is that actions are often expressed by compound words containing pronouns embedded as prefixes. Meanwhile, aspect, time and mode appear as suffixes, and number can be indicated precisely or appear in plural form: once, twice, three times, or numerous times.

4. TRACE OF A PRESENCE

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

"At first we emphasized that the Yámana had to live a nomadic life because of the environment and conditions prevailing in the land in which they lived. However, their response to environmental limitations was not simply mechanical; rather, they took full advantage of their intellectual faculties to structure an economy that seemed to be the best possible way of adapting to their environment" (Gusinde, 1986: p. 603)

Political life

"Her Yaghan name was Carrapu le kipa, but she was baptized as Julia because that was the name of the English missionary's wife. Often they took photos of her and wrote in the newspaper: "The Queen of the Yaghan's," because she was the oldest of them. But the Yaghan's have no kings, or queens or princesses" (Stambuck, 2004: p.75)

Ethnographic studies tell us that the Yaghan's had no authority higher than the head of each family. There were no secret societies, social classes or chiefs that governed the group, nor castes of any kind. For many purposes the biological family was the ruling political unit. They had a profound sense of individual freedom. No man took orders from any other, though strong, aggressive individuals could dominate others, especially when encouraged by their relatives. Elder males of recognized

intelligence and integrity had considerable moral influence. Above the immediate family was the extended family, usually the paternal kin. These individuals helped each other and lived in the same place near the husband's family, though the rules for this were not well defined.

The Yaghan's five linguistic subdivisions had few political implications. Generally, groups would not venture into the territory of other groups except for economic reasons: to search for food, share a beached whale, exchange goods, or to collect bark to manufacture canoes, materials (stones) to make fire, etc. The five dialect groups were subdivided into local groups, which were interrelated based on blood kinship or marriage. Each sub-group had its own territory and own name, derived from the place in which it lived.

A chief was chosen by the local group to oversee the ceremony of ciéxaus (rite of passage), and remained in power only for the duration of the ceremony. The Yaghan's had no formal process for administering justice. If an individual was murdered, his relatives sought vengeance by shedding the blood of the murderer. The crime was strongly condemned and the perpetrator was shunned by the group. There was no war as such; their weapons were adapted for hunting.

Social relations among the five groups seem to have been peaceful, though violent encounters did occur at times. At those times, the friends of conflicting parties intervened to reestablish peace through both persuasion and force.

Marriage and family

"The mother painted her daughter's face with long lines before giving her away, and the man who asked for her hand took wood to the door of the house." (pp.94)
"The Yaghan's still upheld customs to ensure the health of their children at birth. The expectant parents could not eat sea urchins, and it was also unacceptable to drink water from the river the otters swam in, "because at night the babies would cry," said the medicine men. Some still laid down beside the woman giving birth, as though they were also giving birth, to accompany her" (Stambuck, 2004: p. 101).

The close kinship relations meant that the Yaghan's tended to marry outside their immediate group, though marriages between individuals from distant localities or different linguistic groups were rare. Individuals could usually choose a mate freely and such choices seemed to be based on affection and mutual respect. The groom was expected to give presents and perform services both before and after the wedding, but no dowry was stipulated. Young people of both sexes did not get married until they underwent the rite of passage (ciéxaus), between 15 and 19 years of age.

The most prevalent form of marriage was monogamy; polyandry (one woman married to two or more men at the same time) was not permitted, while polygamy (one man married to more than one woman at the same time), though rare, occurred as levirate marriage (in which a widow marries one of her deceased husband's brothers). When a married woman died, her husband often took his wife's unmarried sister as a bride. Levirate marriage was practiced because uncles were responsible for their nieces and nephews well being; this responsibility could not be evaded, even if the brother of the deceased spouse was already married and his wife objected to the union.

By custom, the couple lived with the parents of the bride for a few months, and then moved to the groom's territory. For this reason local Yaghan family groups tended to be paternal. After the marriage, the paternal uncle of the groom and maternal aunt of the bride became highly important figures and were considered to be stepfather and stepmother, while their nieces and nephews had to take care of them in turn if necessary due to illness or another cause.

The man was considered the head of the family and was the person responsible for making decisions. In practice, however, his authority was not absolute; the woman was her own master, especially in regard to activities like raising children, collecting food and rowing the canoe. Women seem to have been respected in the family and the community and enjoyed freedom and independence.

Up to the age of seven, children of both sexes lived together. After that time, they lived separately and the elders prevented them from having sexual relations. Premarital sex was not accepted, but this rule was frequently broken. In theory, marriage between blood relatives was taboo, but in practice this ban included unions between half brothers and sisters, uncles and nieces, aunts and nephews, first cousins from both sides of the family and may have extended somewhat beyond these limits.

Adultery, though disapproved of, was not infrequent. If the woman was caught in this act, her husband would beat her and her behavior was censured by the community. When the husband committed adultery, the couple might fight intensely, leaving the husband violently beaten. Separation was common. The most common cause was wife abuse, though couples also separated when the husband believed his wife to be lazy or negligent in performing her duties.

Great care was taken with the group's elders, who were well treated and respected. Elders were not abandoned or intentionally killed.

Property

The Yaghan's believed in individual property in regard to weapons, clothing, adornments and baskets. This applied to all members of the community. In contrast, food, huts and canoes seemed to be family property.

Food was valued as a gift from the Supreme Being; losing it was seen as disrespectful to this Being.

The right to own personal property was acquired through use, work, donation or exchange. Exchange occurred in one of two ways: goods exchanged for goods, and exchange of gifts. Gifts were frequently exchanged, and were given without regard for the wishes of the receiver. Indeed, the receiver risked offending the giver if a gift was refused and was obliged to give something in return.

Dwellings

The dwellings of the Yaghan's were a major element of their economic system; their appearance and features were perfectly suited to their customs. They were built to provide only temporary shelter for a night or a few days, and generally were not reinforced unless they were going to be used for longer periods. Externally, these huts took one of two forms, vaulted or conical, and their function was to offer shelter and to provide a place to keep the fire always burning, which was absolutely essential.

Subsistence was always a major concern, and the Yaghan's had to go on long journeys in search of food. Their dwellings therefore were temporary and irregular in form and building style and were not built in a particular place. Depending on the place of disembarkment, the family would decide whether to raise a simple shelter, a conical hut or a more complex vaulted dwelling. When the family members continued on their way, they abandoned the dwelling with complete unconcern, leaving it to the destructive force of nature and renouncing their right of ownership over it.

In the West, which is rainy and wet, the land is broken and has few open spaces, and upon the rocks grows forests of trees with thin, flexible trunks. In these places, the Yaghan's built vaulted huts, which are more enclosed to enable a more even

distribution of heat inside. This type of hut was used by the western and southern Yaghan's.

In the East, however, precipitation was lower, sites near the water were less protected from wind and storms, and the trees grew more upright. Tree trunks there were more suitable for conical huts, and their very weight helped make these buildings more solid. The eastern and central Yaghan's used this kind of hut.

The cone-shaped hut was built by clearing the area and removing a layer of earth a few centimeters deep. Around this, some 10 or 12 trunks were embedded in the earth, leaning toward the center and supporting themselves with their own weight without the need for binding them together. The hut was covered with the skins of sea lion and pieces of tree bark and the spaces between were filled in with clods of earth, roots, seaweed and leafy branches. These dwellings were very similar in size, though they did vary slightly depending on the number of inhabitants they housed. Inside they reached 1.80 m in height and had a diameter of approximately 3.30 m; the entry was around 0.90 m wide and was situated out of the wind. To cover the entrance, an animal skin was hung in front or some small trunks were placed there.

This kind of dwelling could also be built in a less solid manner, with thin branches instead of tree trunks for posts. In that case it was covered with sea lion skins and did not have a layer of earth dug out, but food waste was used to create a low barricade around the structure. Since these were not strong structures, they could only be built in well-protected locations or in good weather, because a strong gust of wind could blow them over easily. Smoke from the fire was released through the top of the cone-shaped structure.

The buildings were left standing when the site was abandoned, though the wind lost no time in blowing them down. They might later have been occupied by other families who camped in the same place, however.

The vaulted hut was a special adaptation in the western and southwestern regions. It generally looked like a somewhat flattened half-globe that widened out a bit at the sides, especially if it housed numerous residents. To build in this zone, flexible poles were braided together to provide the needed support. First, the strongest poles were implanted into the earth, including those that would form the entryway; the remaining poles were then added to give the vaulted shape. This structure was reinforced with long poles running from side to side, interlaced between the upright ones. The poles were tied together with rush stems or saplings at the junctures. Outside, a wall of earth, moss and grass was built halfway up, while the top half was covered with leafy branches interwoven with the poles. Often, the vault was covered with large pieces of animal skin, the weight of which helped to reinforce the building. At the top of the vault a hole was left for smoke to escape. The entryway was low, allowing only one individual to pass through sideways. On average, these dwellings were 1.75 m high and from 2.60 m to 3.30 m. wide and were built to accommodate one to four families.

In both styles of hut, the earthen floor was compacted or dug out to a depth of 50 cm. The fireplace was set in the middle of the hut, often over a layer of stones, and those inside squatted around it. The fire was lit by striking flint against iron pyrite and lighting a ball of moss, feathers or wood chips with the sparks.

The fire itself was usually maintained with beech wood, as canelo wood gave off too much smoke. A communal bed was built on the earth floor by layering branches and dried seaweed and placing guanaco or seal skins on top. The Yaghan's covered themselves with their own capes, made of a single skin or a number of skins stitched together.

The man of the house sat at one side of the entrance and the woman at the other, to observe what was happening outside and leave the rest of the hut free for the children. If they had to spend more than two weeks in the same place, they built

a new hut for sanitary reasons. No permanent settlements were established; in fact, there were few reasons for families to remain in the same place for any significant length of time. This usually only occurred when a whale beached on the coast, which guaranteed a supply of food and therefore allowed the Yaghan's to perform different ceremonies, such as the *ciexaus* and the *kina*.

Clothing

The only attire the Yaghan´s used was a scrap of animal skin hung on their back; it was the same size and shape for all sexes and ages. This type of attire allowed the fire to heat the entire surface of their bodies.

Indeed, it is the fire itself that explains the complete absence of any protective clothing among these people. The short cape they did wear was roughly rectangular in form. On the shorter side, holes were punched in the leather to enable the cape to be strung under the chin. These capes were usually made with the skin of a small sea lion, but they could also be made of sea otter, fox or even bird skins at times, with the hair hanging on the outside to allow the rain to run off. The men's loincloths were somewhat larger than the women's and were usually made of smooth leather. The men wore sandals made of seal skin, probably due to the influence of the Selk'nam. Women never used these, however.

Children's attire was no different than that of the adults. Babies were given their first cape when they began to walk; at four years old girls were given their first triangular loincloth, which they never removed thereafter. Males, on the other hand, never wore a loincloth before 10 years of age. The women made these items of clothing.

Both men and women wore their hair long, with the men's somewhat shorter than the women's. To brush their hair they used combs made of dolphin jaws, whale baleen with five to ten carved teeth, or the stems of feathers tied together. They used body paint to adorn themselves when they visited other groups, to express different states of mind, and for special ceremonies. In regard to colors, red represented peace and was obtained from burnt earth, black represented pain or grief and was obtained from coal, and white, obtained from clay, was used for violent disputes. Their designs used mainly lines, points and, to a lesser degree, circles.

The women wore bracelets and anklets made from guanaco skins. They also made necklaces with interlaced whale baleen or tendons, as well as from seashells and bird bones. As adornment, they incorporated bone or shell pendants in their necklaces and used feather headdresses in their hair.

Tools and weapons

"My fellow countrymen were intelligent; they could make everything they needed to live" (Stambuck, 2004: p.36).

The Yaghan's used the bow and arrow. Bows were made of Antarctic beech, and were shorter and more delicate than those used by the Selk'nam; their length ranged from 120 cm to 160 cm and the bowstring was made from sea lion tendon. Arrowheads were made from shale, bone, flint or quartz. The shaft was made of calafate wood and the feathers on the end were usually cormorant. The quiver was made from sea lion or sea otter skin.

They also used small harpoons, a large harpoon, darts, daggers and spears with stone points, slingshots, and snares. They had seashell scrapers with handles, stone or shell knives, and awls made of bone. They also made leather bags and sacks, bark containers, and different kinds of baskets using different techniques.

Diet

"This is how the ancient ones fed themselves, finding what they could in nature. But they were healthier than the Yaghan's of today, whose diet is so politically correct. They were not stupid. How delicious the baby sea lion meat is, when it is well cooked, salted and dressed. The oil is also very good. The beach caiquén (kelp goose) gets fat when it grows new feathers and is very tasty to eat, as are the quetro (flightless steamer-duck) and the penguin. And in summertime, there were always eggs. These were the delicacies of the ancient ones: They fell asleep from eating so much!
For my people, there was nothing better than finding a whale. The Yaghan's climbed up the high hills to watch the coast and see when one beached itself. The white ones are very good, more tender than the black ones, and they have a lot of oil" (Stambuck, 2004: p.17)

The people's greatest concern was to obtain enough food to survive. The man of the family took care of hunting while the woman was responsible for gathering. Except for guanaco, which were found only in a small part of Yaghan territory, these people lived entirely on marine resources.

They hunted sea lions on land with clubs, but much more often they hunted seals in the water: They attracted them by whistling or singing softly or by slapping the water, getting the harpoon ready as they came closer and closer. When they were close, they sank the small harpoon into its body, making sure it was deeply embedded. If it was mortally wounded the animal sunk immediately; when it was not, then an angry fight ensued. If the wound was superficial, then the animal sometimes was able to escape and the hunter lost his prey and his harpoon.

They also hunted whales. Usually they identified a wounded or exhausted whale when it floated without moving on the surface, attracting seabirds, which circled above it. This was carried out from canoes as a group hunting activity. The Yaghan men would paddle their canoes close to the whale and throw their large harpoons into it. The whale often escaped, but when they were able to kill it, they then dragged it to the shore.

In regard to bird hunting, the Yaghan's preferred prey included penguins, cormorants, wild geese and ducks. Their method for capturing these varied according to the habits of each type of bird. Penguins were only hunted occasionally, using a slingshot or bird dart.

To hunt cormorants, which flocked together on the shore or on the water, they used a slingshot, and those that attempted to escape were killed with a dart or stick. At night, they approached the nests of birds that nested on land and blinded them with torches, then clubbed them. Wild geese were hunted using snares placed on the grasslands where these birds flocked at dusk. The best method for hunting flightless steamer-ducks was to chase them with a noose tied to a pole. To do this, the Yaghan's built a small hut where the birds flocked and hunted them one by one.

The eastern Yaghan's hunted guanaco, although not with the same skill as the Selk'nam. With the help of their dogs, the southern and western Yaghan's often hunted sea otter for their skin; they ate this meat only if they had no other food. They did not hunt the fox as such, only butchering the ones that their dogs killed. They skinned them and flung the pelt to the dogs, as it held no value for them. They had a general taboo against eating carrion-eating animals or birds, especially those that could have come into contact with human remains.

The women gathered mussels from their canoes using a long pole with forked point. They also collected them on the shore using a basket. They scoured the areas the sea left uncovered during low tide. Here they also collected clams, limpets, crabs and snails.

Sea urchins are much more abundant in the West and South than in the East. They are best gathered in autumn. A four-pronged pitchfork was used also to capture crab (king crab) from a canoe. When there were many, however, the Yaghan's dove for them. The pitchfork was also used to catch smaller crabs, which they did around one or two hours before the tide began to go out. Women fished with a line or fished shoals with a fishing basket.

Other foods available included eggs in spring, different species of mushrooms throughout the year, berries in summer and fall, and a few other plants such as wild celery.

Navigation

"The ooanas are a kind of channel on the beach where it´s possible to beach the canoes"
(Stambuck, 2004: p.26)

Canoes were indispensible to the Yaghan's, and they did not travel far on land. The oldest seagoing vessels were made from the bark of evergreen beech. These were later replaced by wooden canoes, sometimes made from a single hollowed out trunk or from boards nailed together, in the European style.

The bark canoe was made using three strips of bark stitched together, one for the bottom that was 1.2 - 2.5 cm thick, and one for each side. Bark canoes were between 4 to 7 m in length (5 m on average), approximately 1 m wide and 60 cm deep at the midpoint. The canoes were made in spring because fresh, flexible bark was more available at that time. A segment of bark was cut off with a seashell knife, was smoothed and then cut into three long pieces that were stitched together with whale baleen. Holes were caulked. The craft's single paddle was made of beech wood.

There was always a fire burning in the canoe, laid on some stones, a bed of clay and coarse sand. Firewood was stored next to the fireplace and in the stern. Children were responsible for tending the canoe fire. They also had a bark bailing scoop and a rope made of rush stems tied together to secure the canoe to a trunk or rock. Although it was the men who built the canoes, it was the women's job to care for them. A woman would carry out minor repairs and ask her husband to perform major ones.

While on the water, each member of the family occupied his or her customary place: The man sat forward with his darts and harpoons; in the center sat the children around the fire and firewood; and the woman sat behind alone, paddling with the single paddle. They reaffirmed the purpose of their journey before pushing off, and during the voyage everyone stayed as still as possible to prevent the craft from capsizing. The woman had to secure the vessel once everyone else had disembarked. Unlike the men, the women knew how to swim "dog paddle" style and to dive, and they passed these skills on to their daughters.

The Yaghan's were nomads of the sea, having to move around in this environment each day in search of food and to obtain the materials they needed to manufacture their tools and utensils. Although they inhabited what is considered a hostile environment and traveled frequently from place to place by sea, accidental capsizing was rare. Yaghan women were highly skilled paddlers and all of them were familiar with their territory and able to judge when the weather was suitable for their journeys. Men only assisted the women with paddling when the craft was in serious danger.

5. AN UNKNOWN LAND

Nature always gives its warnings

"When many sea lions came from all over, this foretold a harsh winter; and when the dolphins smacked their tails on the water, bad weather will come. I sometimes hear them when I am spinning wool in the afternoon in the doorway of my house: ¡pou, pou, pou! Goes the smacking sound on the calm sea and the dogs begin to bark. Then it is better not to go out to sea. The walemoco bird and seagulls fly very high when bad days are coming, and a high hill on Hoste Island is covered with clouds when a storm approaches. That is why you always have to look at it before crossing from Orange to Wollaston" (Stambuck, 2004: p.102)

The descriptions of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego that have emerged are full of images of vast, infinite and arid wind swept plains. While this view is indeed accurate, it is far from complete. Patagonia contains diverse geographies and landscapes, some where precipitation is below 200 mm per year and others where it rains more than 1,000. Travels in these places pass by rugged coastlines or broad pebbled beaches and through forests, wetlands, lowlands and lava plains.

Some believed that Patagonia was almost completely covered by ice for thousands of years, during a lifeless stage devoid of animal or plant life. While it is true that there was ice –500 meters thick and more– covering the Andes mountain range and on the islands and channels of the southwest, that ice hardly reached more than a dozen kilometers to the East. Only south of the Gallegos River, including what is today the Strait of Magellan and Tierra del Fuego, did the leading edge of the ice reach the coast of the Atlantic Ocean.

The broken geography of this region began to take form as the ice retreated some 15,000 years ago, creating immense lakes that would later connect to the seas when the water level rose, giving way to a completely new system of channels and inland seas. We now know that only 9,000-10,000 years ago, the island of Tierra del Fuego did not exist and the Strait of Magellan, the discovery of which was a milestone in global navigation, was just another ice bridge.

Today, Patagonia, including Tierra del Fuego, is a vast territory that covers more than 900,000 square kilometers. It is located between 39° and 55° South on the South American continent. Its topography is dominated in the west and south by the presence of the Andes Mountains, a chain of mountains that has a great impact on plant development and climatic conditions on the eastern watershed, where high steppes and lowlands extend down to the Atlantic Ocean. The Strait of Magellan separates Patagonia from Tierra del Fuego, and the Beagle Channel separates Tierra del Fuego from the other islands. This division reflects the tectonic structure of the region, where the predominant features are the sliding of the Pacific Ocean plate under the South American continent and the strong compression of the western edge of the Antarctic plate that led to the formation of the Andes Mountains.

As well as defining land forms, the region's topography creates different climates. The moisture-laden ocean winds blow in from the southwest and up against the mountains, leading to constantly high precipitation that transforms the western and southwestern slopes (the archipelago district) into a vast sector dominated by wetness, with two types of climates: The very humid, cold-temperate zone that predominates towards the northern part of the Strait of Magellan, and the isothermal tundra of the southwestern Tierra del Fuego archipelago. A third type –a high altitude icy climate– predominates in the upper mountain ranges. The eastern watershed of the Andes houses two kinds of climate that are much less distinctive: the transAndean with steppe degeneration, which covers the

broad band of foothills, and the cold steppe, which prevails in the large district of the same name. These climates of the eastern watershed are characterized by lower rainfall, which diminishes even more as one moves further away from the Andes, with cold-temperate temperatures and seasonal variations coupled with wind systems that are most notable in spring and summer.

As a result, the flora and fauna of Patagonia develop in different ecosystems. In the West, leafy perennial forests predominate, along with tundra formations in the desert region of the Andes Mountains, while in the East the main ecosystems include deciduous forests, scrubland and grassy steppe. Each one of these large scale associations has local variations and its own particular set of fauna.

In this broad scenario it is obvious that the territory in which the Yaghan canoe culture developed boasted a rich biodiversity. The type of environment is an archipelago, due to the many mountainous islands found in this final segment of the Andes, before the range sinks into the sea at Cape Horn.

The air temperature at sea level differs from one place to another, with an average summer temperature of 12° C and an average winter temperature of around 0°C and a low of -10° C. This zone is known for sudden changes in temperature; snowstorms are frequent here, even in summer.

Up to 500 m above sea level, the ground is covered by a dense vegetation that includes species such as lenga (*Nothofagus pumilio*), coigüe (*Nothofagus betuloides*), canelo (*Drimys winteri*), Chilean firebush or notro (*Embothrium coccineum*) and hardwood (*Maytenus magellanica*), along with extensive bogs and scrubland. Over 650 m, plant cover diminishes substantially. The forest floor in this region is densely covered with fallen tree trunks, which makes travel on land difficult. On the forest edges or clearings grow bushes like calafate (*Berberis buxifolia*), mata negra (*Chiliotrichum diffusum*) and mata verde (*Lepidophyllum cupressiforme*), michay (*Berberis ilicifolia*), chaura (*Gaultheria micronata*), zarzaparrillas (*Ribes magellanicum*), and others, which provide berries, small and seasonal fruit and edible mushrooms. In fact, on coigüe and lenga trees one can commonly find a fungus known as "Indian bread" or dihueñes (*Cyttaria darwini*); this plant was frequently consumed by the yaghan's. On the ground we can find yellow orchid, white orchid, yellow violets and wild strawberries, among other plants.

Ñirre or ñire (*Nothofagus antartica*) grows at the tree line. In the area of Macizo de los Dientes, there is a hilly region that is virtually bare except for some beautiful flowers such as the mountain daisy, the cardito and senecio. Mosses and lichens also grow here, as do the "dwarf rush" and coiron grasses, among other plants.

The land is home to only a few tree species and large mammals, such as guanaco and fox, although only the former are a major source of food for the Yaghan's. In contrast, the marine environment offers a great variety of food sources, including birds, marine mammals, fish, mollusks and shellfish.

Fauna. Navarino Island

More than 150 bird species can be observed on this island. In the forests and scrubland, bird species that can be found include the Magellanic woodpecker (*Campephilus magellanicus*), the rufous-collared sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*), the green-backed firecrown hummingbird (*Sephanoides sephanoides*), the black-chinned siskin (*Carduelos barbatus*), the Magellanic Tapaculo (*Scytalopus magellanicus*), the Austral blackbird (*Curaeus curaeus*), the thorn-tailed rayadito (*Aphrastura spinicauda*), the Austral Parakeet (*Enicognathus ferrugineus*) and the Austral Thrush (*Turdus falklandii*). In the watercourses and beside the sea ibis, geese, kingfisher can be found. Along the shore are kelp goose, southern seagull and Dominican seagull. In the Andean desert, the predominant bird species include eagles (*Geranoaetus melanoleucus*), seedsnipe (*Attagis malouinus*) and condors (*Vultur gryphus*), to name a few.

The island's fauna includes beaver (*Castor canadensis*), a species that was introduced in Argentina in the 1940s and quickly expanded into the archipelago of Tierra del Fuego. According to scientific studies, there are more than 12,000 beavers there today. The beaver is a large herbivorous rodent that can weigh up to 25 kilograms and grow to 120 cm long. This mammal can produce up to 6 offspring after a 110 day gestation period. It is considered a destructive species. In the inland valleys one can still see guanacos (*Lama guanicoe*), large herbivorous mammals that can weigh between 120 and150 kg. These animals reproduce once per year and give birth to a single offspring after 11 months of gestation. The number of guanacos here has diminished, mostly because of overhunting by humans for food or as fishing bait, or due to deaths from wild dogs.

Another species that is a newcomer to the island is the American Mink (*Mustela vison*). Native to Canada and the USA, the mink was introduced for the first time in the 1960s in Aysén to establish a fur trade. In 1988 they began to be seen in the Magallenes Region, and they are thought to have crossed the Beagle Channel from Ushuaia, Argentina. The mink is a fierce predator of the native fauna. Its diet is quite varied and includes fish, frogs, birds and bird eggs, insects, rodents and fruit. Minks share their habitat with the river otter *huillín* (*Lutra provocax*) and the *chungungo* (*Lutra felina*), which is the only carnivore. The female has multiple offspring, producing up to twelve at a time.

On the nearby coast and channels one can observe two kinds of sea lions (*Otaria byronia* and *Actocephalus australis*), as well as dolphins and killer whales. The most common shellfish are the southern king crab (*Lithodes antarcticus*) and the Chilean snow crab (*Paralomis granulosa*). The most prevalent mollusks found at water's edge or the intertidal zone are snails, *maucho*, mussels and limpets. The most common deep water species are the Chilean sea bass, silverside, and southern hake, among others.

NOTE:

Undoubtedly, only an intimate understanding of their surroundings and a close connection with their environment built over thousands of years of observation and learning could have led to the success with which the Yaghan's, the planet's southernmost inhabitants, have adapted to their land. Their knowledge included not only the means to secure their survival by taking advantage of certain resources according to the season and the ecological niche of these creatures; it also embraced aspects as crucial as the best weather for canoeing, local geography and topography, and the medicinal properties of plants, trees and seaweed, among other things.

Hainola or Killer Whale

"The ancient Indians had great respect for hainola, which is like a person. Once a woman went down to the beach and, speaking to hainola, she said "I have a craving for sea lion. Bring me some." Moving its fin, hainola responded to Mery's words. She returned to her camp and told what had happened, but no one would believe her. The next day she went back to the beach, but this time she was not alone. From afar, she saw hainola, who with his fin was pointing to a stone, upon which her meal was, a sea lion, as though it had been waiting for her. Hainola was feared and respected by the Yaghan's, especially by couples, who had to abstain from sexual relations the night before they were to journey out into the channels. This is because hainola often surprised them and chased their canoes, making the voyage dangerous if they had not abstained the previous night (Calderón, Calderón, 2005: p 59)

Lejuwa or Ibis

One day, with the arrival of spring a Yamana(1) came out of his akar and saw an ibis flying in the sky. The Yamana was so filled with joy that he called to the others: -"An ibis is flying over our akar, look!" Immediately the others came out of the hut, shouting: "Spring has arrived, the ibises are coming back," and they leapt for joy.

Hearing their cries, the ibis became furious, and deeply offended, it caused a heavy snowstorm. It snowed without stopping, it was icy cold. The land and the water were covered all over with ice; they were frozen.

Many people died because they could not go out in their boats in search of food. Neither could they go out of their akars to find firewood, as everything was covered with snow. Many people died because of this.

After a long time, it stopped snowing and the sun began to shine, giving off an intense heat that melted the ice and the snow that had completely covered the earth. And thus, large volumes of water began to flow.

Both narrow and wide channels began to melt also, and the Yamana could paddle their canoes and gather their food. However, high on the hillsides and in the valleys, the ice was so deep that the heat could not melt it.

Today one can still see the glaciers that reach down to the sea, reminding us of the harsh snowstorm caused by lejuwa. Since then, the Yaghan's have treated the ibis bird with great respect. They say that this bird is a sensitive and delicate woman who likes to be held in high esteem. When these birds come close to camp the people remain still and silent, especially the children, who are not allowed to look at them

(Calderón, Calderón, 2005: p. 29 -30)

Kushteata or the Sea Lion

Two sisters were at the seaside, watching the tide rise. The younger sister insisted that she had seen a sea lion; but her sister denied that she had seen it, even though she had responded to the glances of the sea lion. In fact, They the older sister had actually fallen in love with the sea lion. So the game continued, until the sea lion came to shore hidden in a wave, and carried the older sister away with him.

When the younger sister realized what had happened, she returned home to tell her family.

Time passed, and the sea lion and the girl were married and started a family. They conceived a child who had a head like his mother and a body like his father.

One day kushteata the sea lion told his wife he would like to meet her family. She had always feared such a meeting because she thought her husband would not be pleasant to her family; however, she could not refuse him his wish.

Once they decided, they quickly found themselves camping with the girl's family.

And so the days passed, until one morning the mother invited her daughter to gather seafood. The girl did not trust her brothers and was afraid to leave her husband alone with them, but her mother insisted, commenting on how friendly her brothers were being to the sea lion. The girl and her mother were soon paddling the canoe, when she heard the cries of the sea lion from afar. The girl wanted to return to shore, but her mother distracted her, adding –"Don't be afraid, they are only playing."

Upon their return to camp, her son came to meet them, holding a piece of meat in his hands and singing: "How tasty is this piece of my father I am eating," encouraged by his uncles, who in the absence of his mother had killed the sea lion and then cooked him.

(1) Yamana: A Yaghan word meaning man.

Reacting to what had happened, the woman desperately picked up a sea urchin and threw it directly at the forehead of her son, who was transformed into a kayes [(2)], a fish that now bears on its forehead the mark of the sea urchin thrown by its mother (Calderón, Calderón, 2005: p.13)

Hannush and the woman

Hannush was always present throughout Yaghan's generations. For a long time he was not seen, but the people felt the presence of the kashpij, the spirit of the Hannush that inhabited the hills. And when a Yamana walked in those hills, if he heard a horrendous scream- oohhh! -he had to continue walking without looking back, and walk to the edge of the sea.

The story tells of a very clever woman who lived alone in a cabin that she had built herself, with a solid foundation. A Hannush had always come around, trying to make her fall in love with him and become his lover. She always resisted his advances. Her cabin was not only very strong, it also had a very low floor, and the woman stayed in an underground room there because Hannush, offended by her refusal, had threatened to come for her and kill her like he had done to others.

One day Hannush, her lover, came with that very intention. He entered her cabin and looked around and around but did not find her, and when he decided to leave, the woman, who was hiding below him, and with an urchin grabbing spear she aimed at his genitals and tore them off.

And it happened that, after hearing of this, many Hannush came looking for the woman, and the same thing happened to them. Seeing the others hurt, more still went to her cabin, until the woman decided to leave her house. She collected her things one winter's day when the cold had left frost on the seaside. She then left her cabin, and with the same urchin grabbing spear, she broke up the ice as she walked upon the frost. When the Hannush saw the woman they ran after her. One by one they walked on the ice and fell through into the water. This allowed the woman to get into her canoe and paddle away, giving death to the Hannush at the same time.

According to the story, a man surprised the Hannush. He followed it to a cliff, where the Hannush tried to hide; but the man hit him with rocks, killing the Hannush.

Today, we have Hannush Arkush or Mono Cliff that stands at Molinares on Hoste Island. There we can see the stone that reminds us the existence of Hannush between the Yaghan's, over which a great tree grew upon it.

(Calderón, Calderón, 2005: p.47)

Lana or the Woodpecker

It is said that in the time when birds were human, a boy fell in love with his sister and sought a way to lure her out of her akar and be with her. His sister, who had realized his intentions, eluded her brother each time he came looking for her, avoiding from having forbidden relations.

One day in the forest he discovered enormous amai, chaura fruit, and went to call his sister. She picked up her basket and went into the forest in search for the fruits, while his brother stayed in a place near her way. When she came near, he threw himself at her and embraced her, and together they fell to the ground, realizing their love. And when they arose, they were transformed into birds and flew away as lana.

(2) Kayes, also called the seaweed fish because it is found among these plants.

"Since then, they have lived together in the forest and the brother has a red crest on his head recalling the colour of those big amai fruits"
(Calderón, Calderón, 2005: p. 25)

6. CEREMONIAL ENCHANTMENT

Religion

"The imaginative world of our Fuegians is full of many different kinds of spirits of all shapes and sizes, who are valued in different ways and have their own unique relationships with humans…
All activities in which these natives make conscious reference to the Supreme Being, whether ceremonial acts of homage, formulaic prayers or free prayer, should be treated as "religious activities" or "ritual acts." Taken together, these activities constitute the Yaghan religious heritage. The entire treasury of prohibitions and rules that come under the general notion of "moral law" presupposes a genuine moral responsibility and is a closely bound set of principles" (Gusinde, 1986: p.1003)

"My race believes in the spirits"
(Stambuck, 2004: p.87)

According to ethnographic studies, the Yaghan's lacked formal rites and ceremonies to express the complex world of their religious beliefs and ideas. But their respect and veneration for spiritual matters was so deep that that they did not even discuss these issues at length among themselves; so it is even less likely that they would have shared them with the Europeans, who from the beginning underestimated their intellectual, moral and spiritual capacities.

This state of affairs, coupled with the Yaghan's discretion in their spiritual practices, explains to a large degree why many travelers did not learn of the Yaghan's rich spiritual world. Each individual established a direct relationship with Watawuineiwa, the Supreme Being and an omnipresent and omnipotent figure. He was also called by other names, including Strong One, Great One and My Father.

Creator of plants, animals and humans and generally viewed as benevolent and good, he had no body, no wife and no children. He was clearly and remarkably different from and superior to all the other good and bad spirits.

The Yaghan's legacy of religious ideas and moral precepts are both extensive and profound in essence, being based on individual altruism; a constant willingness to help others; reciprocity between spouses underpinned by the free choice of mates; the division of labor according to physical and intellectual capabilities; and parents taking real responsibility for educating their children. Respect for in-laws and an unflagging willingness to help family members fostered close ties among members of local Yaghan groups. The respectful behavior of young people in the presence of their elders and their hospitable attitude towards visitors from other areas prevented hostilities. Regardless of the actions of the immediate family, it was a local custom for the entire community to take care of orphans, widows and the sick. The Yaghan's had a well-defined notion of private property, and individual property rights were therefore respected.

The Yaghan's Life Cycle

Parents celebrated and welcomed the birth of children.

Labor occurred inside the hut; the father was not present, and the woman was assisted by other women. The placenta was burned, while the umbilical cord was dried and kept to be

used as a necklace or amulet. Some hours after the birth, the mother bathed with her child in the sea, a practice that she continued herself for some days. With a firstborn child, the father remained in the hut without working for a number of days, while friends and relatives provided food for the family.

It was usual for couples to abstain from sexual relations for 6 weeks or more after the birth. In general, children were weaned at 10 to 15 months of age. Children remained together up to the age of 7, accompanying their mother in her daily routine.

It was customary to name children after the place in which they were born. In regard to education, adults and elders taught the children by telling stories that reinforced the group's moral teachings. Corporal punishment was not usually practiced; the most serious sanctions included verbal reprimands or banishing the child from the hut for the day.

Menarche or the onset of menstruation among girls was commemorated with a special celebration that included fasting and a restricted diet for three days, special facial paint (both cheeks were painted with radiating red lines) and moral advice from older women, who schooled the girl in the moral principles and customs that every Yaghan woman should live by. Between the 8th and 10th day, the girl bathed in the sea, and when her period ended a celebration was held with the entire group. In some cases, unwed mothers induced abortions by mechanical or medicinal means.

Death and burial

"When a person of our race dies, someone always sends word, because there is always someone going out in a canoe; and wherever they go, they tell of the death. The old ones lit three bonfires; these three columns of smoke meant that someone had died"
(Stambuck, 2004: p.37)

"Mourning wasn´t always the same. The facial paint differed according to the particular form of death. If the person had died at home, the people simply wept. This was also the practice when someone died from illness or if they had fallen off a cliff while trying to capture birds at night. But if the guy had drowned, the relatives came together and spoke on the plain as though they were enemies, though they remained friendly. One group here, the other there. They then came together and embraced each other. They spoke together and blamed each other. That was how we mourned my father. It was nice. (Stambuck, 2004: p. 37-38). The place becomes full of people. Their faces are painted black and white. (Ibid: p. 38) The oldest man in the group has to sing. The other ones follow him next. Then they always name Watauineiwa." (Ibid: p. 38)

"If a Yaghan drowns, his káshpij (spirit) could remain swimming in the water"
(Stambuck, 2004: p.86)

According to the stories of their beliefs, each body possesses a soul, a spirit, a "kespix," and as long as that entity remains in the body to which it was assigned, life flows through that body. After the body dies, the soul does not die. When a person dies, the spirit abandons the body and continues to exist on its own, but does not know where it came from; because of this, the two cannot be reunited after death. That`s how mourning ceremonies were moving, reflecting the people's uncertainty about life after death, when the body decomposes ("do not remember, forget, dispose of the belongings, do not name"). He who has died is invisible to and unreachable by all others.

Grief was expressed by fasting, special body and face painting, and sometimes by self-inflicted wounds made with sharp stones or shells. The men would also cut the hair on the crown of their heads, and usually chanted special mourning chants. Angry protests were directed at Watauinewa for allowing the individual to die. There was a collective grieving rite in which both men and women, immediate family and non-family members, painted themselves and wept. Finally, a simulated fight was held in which the men were armed with clubs and the women with paddles.

Personal accounts and archeological evidence indicate that in the past cremation was used to dispose of the body, to prevent foxes, rats and dogs from finding it. Burial practices were developed later. Most of the personal belongings of the deceased were burned, and the burial place was not used as a camp for a number of years if the deceased was an adult. The name of the dead person was never spoken.

There was an obvious fear of the dead. The souls of deceased shamans played a part in the beliefs and practices of Yaghan medicine men, but there was no organized ancestor cult, and neither did the people pray to the dead. Animism was limited to shamanic practices, but there were a variety of magic-religious beliefs: Each individual had a kind of guardian spirit, the Yefacel, and in daily life the Yaghan's observed nature's warnings closely for good and bad omens. They also had a set of prohibitions or taboos: For example, when journeying by canoe the people had to throw their waste into the fire and not into the water, otherwise the children would cry. This action was also considered offensive and disrespectful to the sea, the source of food and of life itself, and according to their beliefs could provoke serious consequences.

Ciéxaus: iniciation rite, from childhood to adulthood

(…) "This is how they tricked me. My mother already was in the Chiajaus house, waiting for me to come to that first Yaghan school" (Stambuck 2004, p.49). "Two watchers came, painted all over and singing. They were like policemen coming to catch me. I was not that young, but I was very afraid. They sang as they took me away. I struggled a lot, I cried and squealed like a pig." "The Chiajaus house was near the mission. It was larger than a regular hut, and a different shape" (Ibid: p.49). "Everyone inside made a noise like the wind howling, and they put out the fire with water. Shshshshooooo!, hissed the water and the fire. They also made noise by stamping their bare feet on the flat ground. I was very afraid" (Ibid p. 49). "They were dressed in their usual clothes, but their faces, hands and feet were painted with white clay. The place was also beautiful inside, decorated in red, white and black" (Ibid: p. 49 - 50). "With a well formed stick with a flat end, she painted my face with mud and put sea lion oil over it to make it last, because I had to go everywhere with the paint on; the old and young people all knew that I was going through the rite of passage. They dried the mud in the sun and then spread it all over the face and body, rubbing it on with their hands. They also mixed the paints with oil or water, or they cooked imi- red earth-like tortillas *over the fire, using a special stick. They did not use Canelo wood. They gathered all these things together until they had what they wanted." "My godmother came back every morning to paint me, sometimes with lengthwise stripes and other times with spots. She also gave me a tube of bone, a stick and a basket. She had prepared all of these things because she knew I was going to go through the Chiajaus rite". "They also put a headdress on my head; it was made by my aunt and had the feathers of a white bird that*

you always see on the beach. To make it, they staked out the bird and waited until it dried and then cut out the chest with a knife. This adornment and the stick are indispensable for the Chiajaus rite"
(Ibid: p. 50 - 51)

"Remain silent when you see the things of others; do not speak with other women; if you meet another person in need, even one who is from far away, even though they are not from your family, you must give them something; if you collect some shellfish from the beach –mussels, limpets, sea urchins– you have to share them, it does not matter if the people you share them with are not from here; obey your relatives, respect your elders, do not speak of things you should not and do not take anything that does not belong to you; and when you leave this house, do not go around telling the other girls who have not yet come here what you saw or did, because if you do- they will die! That is what they said to me in Chiajaus"
(Stambuck, 2004: p.51)

"Many days I spent in that house. It was like a school to make me civilized; more than a school, you could say"
(Stambuck, 2004: p.52)

"At first the Chiajaus was sad. It seemed to be only for eating. Two Germans watched, studied us and took photos. An old man began to sing and the others followed him. Milicic helped. After, they got hold of a group of boys and then the old men began to teach them the teachings and make them work"
(Stambuck, 2004: p.111)

Ciéxaus was a rite practiced collectively with boys and girls; all members of the community who had already been initiated participated actively in it. It was the most important ceremony, and in a certain way it was the focus of Yaghan religious life, as it played a central role in transmitting their social order and cosmovision. Only by undergoing this ceremony was it possible to become a Yaghan adult, with the attendant rights and responsibilities.

According to existing stories, when the population was high, the Ciéxaus rite was performed by local groups rather than by dialect groups or the entire society. It was not performed in a certain season or with a certain frequency, but when it was necessary or when suitable conditions arose, particularly when food was abundant. This "school" might therefore be held each year, or more often, or less, and its duration could vary from days to weeks or months. The candidates were boys and girls who had already reached puberty.

The ritual was directed by a chief (chosen for the occasion), a mentor and guardians, who prevented outsiders or pre-pubescent children from intruding. A large cabin was built especially for the occasion, and inside it was decorated with lines and spots in red, ochre black and white. Each participant wore a feather headdress and had a ceremonial staff specially painted for the occasion. Each candidate also had godparents: One or two men and a woman for the boys, and one or two women and one man for the girls.

The candidates were subjected to certain privations and tests: vigils, lack of food and drink, hard work, daily baths in the freezing sea water, and sitting with legs crossed for long periods of time, among other things. The aim of these activities was to build their character and moral fortitude, prepare them for the rigors of adult life and give them specific rules of behavior to follow. These rules included respecting their elders, being obedient, supportive and hard working, and not making trouble or interfering with other people's business. This moral

teaching was conveyed by the mentor, godparents and other adults, following the wishes of Watauinewa, who was all-seeing and therefore could punish those who failed to obey by cutting their lives short or bringing death upon their children or other loved ones.

The ritual included dancing, singing and telling of legends. To finalize the rite, the godparents gave each candidate a basket, a bird bone tube for drinking water and a ceremonial staff. The rite itself ended with a simulated battle between the men and women, followed by a celebration.

Only men who had participated in at least one Ciéxaus rite could take part in the rite of kina, which often took place afterwards.

Kina: rite of passage, into the Secret World of Men

The central function of this rite was to transmit to the men the rules of behavior that governed social relations between men and women. However, it also had important religious features. This ritual was led by a shaman or medicine man.

The foundation of the rite of Kina was the belief in a mythological time women held the power of the tribe and ruled over the men. To maintain their supremacy, the woman used masks to personify the spirits and trick the men. But one man discovered the trick and told the rest, and they killed all the women, except for the youngest girls. Since that time the men have presided over this ceremony.

The Kina ritual was celebrated in a cone-shaped hut that was built upon a circular base and framed with posts, giving it a high, broad entrance slightly to one side to facilitate the entry of the men, who donned body and face paint and masks made of bark and sea lion skin to represent different spirits. The aim was to scare the children and especially the women, in order to keep them submissive to their will.

Yekamush (Shamanism)

"Good witch doctors save the lives of those who are sick, but there are bad witch doctors who can kill their own people by gripping their spirits with his dream or by making a bundle out of the hair or clothing of that person and capturing their soul inside to destroy them" (Stambuck, 2004: p.81)

"All the other yejámush I met were good ones and worked to rid the body of ills, like a doctor, because that is what they had learned to do for many winters. If one of our people got ill or threw a maucho shell into the water and then got a pain, they called on him to take care of it" (Stambuck, 2004: p.81)

Any man, and even some women, could become a medicine man or Yekamush if they felt a calling that was manifested in dreams and visions of the future. Through these dreams and visions the apprentice would learn which spirit would become their guardian, and would receive a song from this spirit.

The apprentice was trained by a senior medicine man or shaman. There was also a shaman school that candidates attended. This could last for months, during which time they lived apart and submitted to different physical tests, especially fasting and vigils, and learned healing techniques and the use of medicinal plants, among other skills.

The main functions of the shaman were to heal and make predictions. For healing, they used techniques that included massage, rubbing and anointing to remove a foreign entity from an individual. The Yaghan's believed these had been sent by an evil shaman, and the only way to free the victim was to extract them. An evil shaman could steal the soul of a victim and keep

it in his power, and the victim would die if his soul was not freed by another shaman.

Another primary responsibility of the shaman was to assign a guardian spirit to each child as soon as it was born: a male spirit for the men and a female one for the women. The most important duty of this spirit was to protect their charge against illness, bodily harm and all other kinds of danger.

Mythology

"The rainbow that you see in the sky is called Watauineiwa. The Yaghan witch doctors and anyone else who needs something, appeal to him because Watauineiwa does not punish, he only assists. If you look at the sky when the rainbow appears, you can see a small one beside the big one: That is called Akainij and it is the son of the other. They are one and the same" (Stambuck, 2004: p.45)

One important feature of Yaghan mythology is related to the presence of the cultural heroes and mythical beings: The Yoalox brothers and their sister. To them is attributed the knowledge given to men about how to make and use weapons and tools, as well as fire. These entities that existed in the distant past, created the supernatural world and manifested themselves in natural events and phenomena.

Yaghan cosmological myths include a story of the great flood. Gusinde recorded more than 60 different stories with central figures like cormorants, sea lions, whales, hummingbirds, foxes and otters, among other creatures.

The people believed in supernatural beings like the dreaded cannibals, the water spirits Lakúma and the giant Hánnush. They had many spirits, some benign and others evil. Some of these are: Yetaite (evil spirit of the earth), Ulamineska (spirit of the mountains and forests), Haniaka (spirit of the North), Wongoleaku (spirit of the sea), Lachuwakipa (female spirit who protects the Kina house), Asapakaiaka (spirit of the sky and of the South), and others.

7. THE ENCOUNTER WITH OTHERS

Looking back

"(..)..Who knows whether it hurt them to live the way they did. They no longer went out like before, because they had houses at the mission and had to take care of them. Neither did they eat natural food, like the old ones— sea lions, fish, birds, seafood—because they were given food at the mission. They exchanged drinking water for tea and coffee, and stones for making fire with matches. Everything was easier; they did not even have to tend their fires. Today we are used to clothing and meals, but they could not endure it. They stopped going around naked and finding and eating their own food, and they became sick. Civilization attacked their lungs and stomachs and they began to die off. We would be more numerous if we had continued to eat what was our habit: Sea lion oil, mauchos, challes and sea urchins, and whale meat" (Stambuck, 2004: p.16)

"The only consolation that seemed to cheer them up when they recalled the cruelty they had suffered at the hands of civilized people was that they had gotten to know me; I seemed to be the only white man who had shown them charity. This fact moved me deeply and, like them, I felt the chain of undeserved bitterness and suffering that had bound up their race and bury it with the force of the cruelest suffering" (Gusinde, 2003, pp. 68)

The voyages of discovery of the 16th and 17th centuries led to more frequent explorations in the 18th century for both scientific and commercial purposes. This gradually intensified the contact between Europeans and the different native groups that inhabited the vast region of Patagonia. Contact occurred in different ways and circumstances, though most often the natives were at a disadvantage in terms of might and power, with dramatic and harmful results for the survival of these indigenous peoples.

Starting in the mid-19th Century, Anglican evangelical missions were established in the territory inhabited by the Yaghan's, bringing with them a new tongue and a new god. They were driven by a desire to rescue the souls of the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego and instill customs and practices that would enable the natives to assist any shipwrecked Europeans they might happen upon. Later, this would also lead to their assimilation into western culture.

Yaghan Population 1855 – 2000

Year	Source	Based on	Number
1855	TH. Bridges	Estimate	3,000 individuals (1)
1860 / 70	M. Gusinde	Estimate	2,500 individuals (1)
1883	L. Martial	Estimate	1,300/1,500 individuals (1) (b)
1884	TH. Bridges	Estimate	1,000 individuals (1) (c)
1886	TH. Bridges	Census	407 individuals (2)
1889	R. N. Kennedy	Estimate	400/500 individuals (3)
1889	E. C. Aspinall	Estimate	300/400 individuals (3)
1892	L. Burleigh	Estimate	More than 200 individuals (4)
1892	W. H. Stirling	Estimate	Less than 200 individuals (5)
1902	J. Lawrence	Estimate	130 (6)
1905	S.A.M.S.	Estimate	170 (7)
1909	Rio Douglas Mission	Recount	150 (8)
1911	Rio Douglas Mission	Recount	150 (9)
1923	M. Gusinde	Estimate	70 (10) (d)
1930	National Population Census	Census	71 (11) (e)
1940	National Population Census	Census	68 (11) (e)
1946	A. LIPSCHUTZ-G. MOSTNY	Recount	63 (12) (e)
1972	O. ORTIZ-TRONCOSO	Recount	58 (13) (f)
1993	J. AYLWIN	Recount	51 (14) (f)
2000	CONADI	Estimate	90/100 individuals 15 (13) (f)

(1) Gusinde, 1982; (2) S.A.M.S. 1886; (3) S.A.M.S. 1889; (4) S.A.M.S. 1892; (5) S.A.M.S. 1899; (6) S.A.M.S 1902; (7) S.A.M.S. 1906; (8) S.A.M.S. 1909; (9) S.A.M.S 1911; (10) Gusinde 1986; (11) I.N.E; (12) R.G.CH.T.A 1950; (13) A.I.P 1973; (14) Aylwin 1995; (15) CONADI 2000. Notes: (a) Bloodpoisoning epidemic, (b) Appearance of tuberculosis, (c) Measles epidemic, (d) Includes pureblood natives and mestizos, (e) Residents of Mejillones (pure and mestizos), (f) Residents of Ukika, mainly mestizos (only three pureblooded individuals).
Source: (Martinic, 2005: p. 264)

Along with these cultural changes, we should not forget the impact that the arrival of contagious diseases had on the Fueginos, whose immunological systems were not able to withstand them and who received neither timely care or medicines to treat them.

It is also worth noting that in the late 19th Century, the waters of the Tierra del Fuego archipelago were filled with the constant traffic of two kinds of vessels. There were mining vessels, mostly of Yugoslavian origin and based in the city of Punta Arenas, that sailed to the coasts of Picton, Nueva and Lennox islands, setting in motion a true "gold rush." As well, there were sea lion hunters, whose craving for the valuable skins of these animals decimated the populations of both kinds of sea lions and threatened the very survival and subsistence of the canoe groups, who in short order were deprived of their main source of food and raw material.

Diseases and the gradual decline of the population

"We died off from one illness or another. There in Mejillones we were attacked by one of the last great epidemics. It was in May, and the Milcavi happened to be in the Beagle Channel because an official from Punta Arenas had come to visit us. We were covered with multicolored blotches all over our bodies: arms, face, legs…"

"My race was rich, because all of the land belonged to us, from Onashaga to Cape Horn. When the miners first arrived to extract gold from Lennox Island, the members of my group did not become angry; and when the ranchers took possession of the land, they said nothing, because they were no longer savages but had been civilized by the English"

(Stambuck, 2004: p.113)

Rename

"The names that the Yaghan's gave to each part of the land and sea in their territory were lost. There was no respect. No one asked. The few that remain are not spoken correctly, but they are not interested. Our channel Yakashaka they named Yagashaga, just because someone decided to write it that way"

(Stambuck, 2004: p. 132)

Wreck collecting

"How many ships were lost and how many sunk in the Wollaston islands! There was no shortage of boards and planks. It was a pleasure, the men made their boats using only an axe. Now, there is no wreckage and no foreign ships pass by, only those of the Chilean Navy"

(Stambuck, 2004: p.114)

The closing of the Douglas mission: Visions of the Future (1917)

"There were few of us, but that is not why the missionaries left Douglas. Mister Williams was sick, he felt ill. When they left us, he spoke in English to all of the Yaghan's at the mission: We are going now to Punta Arenas and you are going to be alone. You must take care of yourselves. From now on, you are going to see and to know many things. I am going to tell you. You will see something flying, up high, and under the water another thing that moves, and carries people inside; and in a little while, men will speak to you out of a box."

"(…) Chacón, who is deceased now, used to tell how he first saw an airplane flying when he was very young. All of the elders gathered together to look up at the sky and began to sing. "What a beautiful song! How did they sang," he said. We Yaghan's had not seen a radio, but when the marines built Puerto Williams, then we knew what it was" (Stambuck, 2004: pp.65-66)

8. TODAY IS YESTERDAY THEY ARE AND LIVE LIKE THIS

Weaving identity

"When I was at the hospital in Punta Arenas, some dark skinned Chileans looked at me and said: "You are an Indian." I said nothing. What are they? Pure Chileans are like us, Indians, and when they began to intermix with the English, with the North Americans, their children were whiter; and the same thing happened with our people. Lying in my hospital bed, I see how others look at me as they walk by. Who knows what they think: "Oh, there is that Yaghan woman." A nurse points me out to someone, saying: "She is a Yaghan Indian."

"But when I have to obtain permission from the authorities to leave, no one puts on the paper, "Rosa Milicia, Yaghan." Then I am Chilean. So, why make an issue out of the fact that I am Yaghan? Everyone knows that is my race, but I live in a country called Chile. People stop and look at me and ask: Are you pure Yaghan? And I want to answer them: No, sir I came from North America" (Stambuck, 2004: p.100)

Most of the descendants of the Yaghan canoe people from Puerto Williams live in Villa Ukika. Some have moved to other places, as others do in search of change, for reasons of health, education or employment.

More than 60 people live in our city. They fish, make crafts, work in construction or raise livestock, among other things. Their hearts still beat in time to our heritage. That beat emerges from the point of a harpoon carved and polished on a lathe, from the hands of she who warms the rushes in her hands, twists them and uses them to weave the baskets that are bought by the tourists, and from he who takes time to recover the stories from the memory of the elders.

Today, the academic perspectives and technical discourses on identity building show that we must know more than the degree of racial purity or racial mix of a people to define the ethnic and/or cultural group to which they belong. Language, traditional knowledge, beliefs, ritual practices and ceremonies are all features of culture that undergo natural changes and transformations as the group comes into contact with other groups, but they also reveal an ethnic identity and are a sign of cultural vitality.

And it is in this very context of constant change that we witness the moving phenomenon of cultural resistance and/or adaptation, particularly among native peoples. This trend is an important point for discussion, and offers a shift away from invisibility –through which we lose ourselves in homogenization on a global scale– and towards cultural revival, as an effect, reaction or survival strategy. Here emerges a hidden truth: "We exist to the extent that we identify ourselves as such," "I am Yaghan when I recognize myself as such" and in this context, racial distinctions lose their significance.

Am I less Yaghan because of the percentage of blood I carry?
What about the person who has Yaghan blood but does not feel himself to be Yaghan, and less still wishes to be identified as such?
Have we learned the story of denial?
What is important, then?
What percentage is required to make a Chilean?

We are multiple identities that coexist in the land we inhabit and together we define a multicultural landscape (Today we open a window in a house with open doors. A house in which remembrance and forgetting have united to remind us of who we are).

9. SECRETS OF THE CANOE WORLD

The creation of the world. When the Yaghan's populated the earth

"Just as the Christians speak of Jesus Christ, we Yaghan's remember our Wátuwa. In the time of the ancient ones the sun was a man, the moon was a man and even the birds were human; but after the great flood they became animals, as I already told you.

Ah, I shall be a Wápisa, said one, and he turned into a whale.

I wish to be Takikáshena, said another, and so he became a tiny bird.

I shall be Amma, and she turned into a sea lion.

And thus the earth, sea and sky were filled, creating the earth as we know it today. Many men drowned, but some were saved. And the savage Indians did what Noah did; they went forth everywhere and brought forth families until they once again filled the land" (Stambuck, 2004: p. 133)

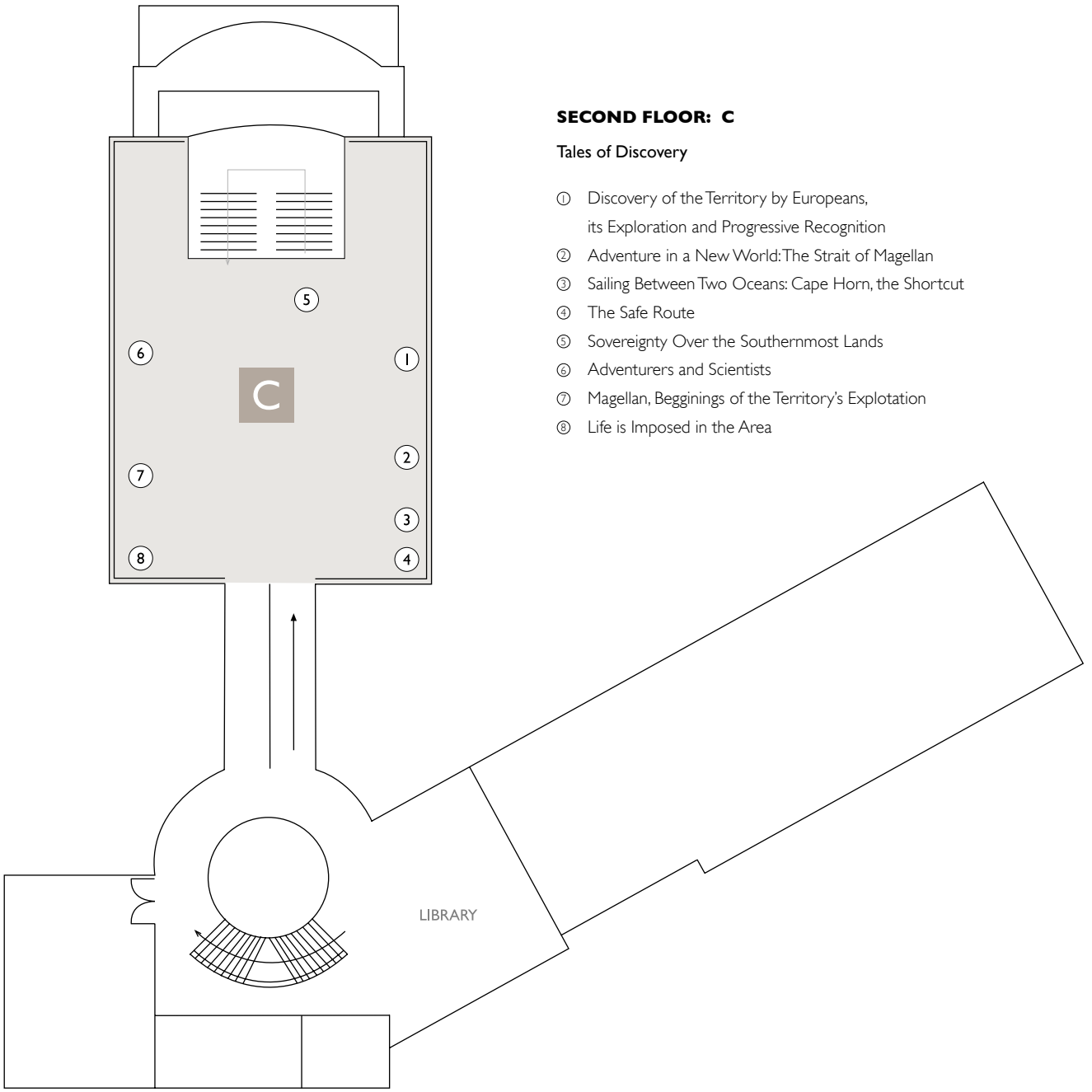
The discovery of fire

"This is the legend: Once, Yoalox the elder had gathered some small stones and was passing the time hitting them against each other. Among the stones was a good sewali stone. When he hit this one against another stone, a small spark flew out. Surprised by this, he hit one stone against another again and again, and each time sparks flew. Quickly he picked up a handful of very dry down feathers and placed them on the ground. Once more he began to make sparks with the sewali stone. He placed himself in position, so that by hitting the stones in a certain direction the sparks flew into the feathers. The feathers began to smoke, they caught fire and soon a small flame emerged. Yoalox quickly looked for some dried plants and wood, and placed all of it upon the flame. And there grew a great fire. It gave off a pleasing heat. Yoalox found it very pleasant to sit beside the fire during the day and sleep beside it during the night. Fire also became very useful for other things: It helped to cook meat, to dry skins, to bend or harden strips of bark and thin poles.

Very satisfied with what he had achieved, Yoalox the elder exclaimed: "Fire is truly beneficial and makes many things. Let us make it burn always, never let it go out. Once lit, it must burn continually so that people may use it without having to suffer hardship to obtain and tend it. I do not wish for humans to have to make the effort to light it each time (they need it), nor to have to feed it constantly with wood." Yoalox the younger heard these words and was bothered by them. He did not like his older brother's plan at all. He responded immediately: "I do not agree with your plan. It is much better if humans have to make the effort. Each person should make an honest effort to light the fire and tend it carefully. Let each person have to light the fire again if he lets it go out. Humans should work!"

He immediately took a long stick and dug around in the embers and separated them. The fire soon went out. Since that time, without exception, any fire that is not carefully and constantly tended will go out. And therefore all humans are forced to work.

Yoalox taught the men how to light a fire using sewali stone, how they should stir it, and how they should tend it. Since that time, anyone who lets the fire go out must light it again with much effort. Yoalox wanted to force all the people to tend their fires carefully always; anyone who did not would see his fire go out and would be forced to light a new fire with difficulty and to keep it burning" (Gusinde, 2003: pp.36)



SECOND FLOOR: C

Tales of Discovery

① Discovery of the Territory by Europeans, its Exploration and Progressive Recognition
② Adventure in a New World: The Strait of Magellan
③ Sailing Between Two Oceans: Cape Horn, the Shortcut
④ The Safe Route
⑤ Sovereignty Over the Southernmost Lands
⑥ Adventurers and Scientists
⑦ Magellan, Begginings of the Territory's Explotation
⑧ Life is Imposed in the Area

Second Floor

C

ROOM:
Tales of Discovery

1. DISCOVERY OF THE TERRITORY BY EUROPEANS, IT´S EXPLORATION AND PROGRESSIVE RECOGNITION

The unknown land

In the 15th Century of the Christian era in Europe, at the peak of the Renaissance, an unprecedented wave of geographic discoveries began. Driven by the search for new trade routes to India and the Orient, European sailors mapped new courses on the seven seas.

In the vanguard of this process was first Portugal and then Spain, both peninsular nations with a seagoing tradition. Portugal, a nation with advanced knowledge and experienced sailors, claimed a new sea route to the Orient when Vasco da Gama rounded the southern tip of the African continent, which he named the Cape of Good Hope.

This important discovery soon encouraged new sailors to new exploration, venturing further on the high seas. Christopher Columbus was one such man. Inspired by the notion of a round planet, he sailed westward from Puerto de Palos, Spain. Though he never reached the East Indies, he did discover a new continent, overturning all previous knowledge of the planet.

After Columbus reached the American coast and before the great Portuguese discoveries in Africa, in the Spanish town of Tordesillas (Valladolid) a series of agreements were established by Pope Alejandro VI regarding the ownership and division of the Atlantic Ocean, Africa and the "New World." In the Treaty of Tordesillas, signed in 1494, the kings of Castilla and Portugal drew an imaginary line dividing North and South, 370 leagues distant from the Cabo Verde Islands (46° 35' W of the Prime Meridian). Under the agreement, everything discovered to the East of that line would belong to the King of Portugal and his successors, and everything found West would be "for the honorable King and Queen of Castile and León and their successors for all time." This treaty divided up the globe and gave form to the long, ever-growing process of exploration, discovery and trade that was the European expansion, driven mainly by the search for a new route to the East Indies.

It was during this push, in the attempt to find a new way to the Orient around the American continent, that the Portuguese sailor Ferdinand Magellan appeared. In the employ of Spain, just 28 years after Columbus had reached the continent, Magellan found the long sought-after route, through the channel we know today as the Strait of Magellan.

2. ADVENTURE IN A NEW WORLD: THE STRAIT OF MAGELLAN

Ferdinand Magellan's discovery of a new passage to the Indies prompted 16th Century cosmographers and geographers to imagine that Tierra del Fuego itself was a new southern continent. This they named the Unknown Southern Land or Terra Australis Incognita.

At first Spain's efforts were directed towards establishing Magellan's passage as the only alternate sea route to the Indies, after the primary route around the Cape of Good Hope.

The men who made these journeys of reconnaissance to the Strait in sailing ships faced great danger from the strong winds that blow from the West and Southwest near the eastern entrance of this passage. These winds could destroy ships and blow others a great distance off course.

The first geographic information about this new land was somewhat vague and imprecise, leading to stories that were widely believed in a Europe predisposed to fantasizing through books and maps describing Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego as strange lands populated by fabled animals, giants and strange looking men. Names such as "Country of the Big Feet," "Giant's Land," "Magellan's Land," "Terra Incognita," "Terra Australis Incognita," and "Country of Bonfires" were descriptive titles commonly given to this new continent.

Soon after this, the need for more information on southern geography would lead to an unceasing succession of new maritime expeditions.

The journeys of the Italian explorer Marco Polo in the 13th Century, the Christian crusades in the 12th and 13th centuries, and the Spanish and Portuguese voyages to explore new lands in the 15th and 16th centuries, all opened new horizons for the Europeans and prompted the appearance of geographic works and treatises. In the 15th Century, Henry the Navigator, Prince of Portugal, encouraged and sponsored explorations of the African coast and became one of the main promoters of geographic studies. In addition, the voyages and nautical charts of Giovanni Caboto (called John Cabot in English), Juan Díaz de Solís, Vicente Yáñez Pinzón, Juan de la Cosa and Américo Vespucio were crucial to the geographic progress of the times. Among the most outstanding accounts of journeys and discoveries published in the 16th Century are those of Giambattista Ramusio in Venice, those of Richard Hayklut in England and those of Theodore de Bry in what is today Belgium. Finally, the voyages and studies undertaken during this period proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Earth was round. Up to then many people, especially those of the Christian world, had believed that the earth was flat.

3. SAILING BETWEEN TWO OCEANS: CAPE HORN, THE SHORTCUT

Freed from Spanish domination, Holland began to make its own sea voyages to the Indies. The Government of the Netherlands decided to merge a number of lesser companies and form the East Indies Company (1602), which would control the passage around the Cape of Good Hope and the Strait of Magellan for Flemish sailors.

The success of this monopoly for the Dutch State prompted other navigators and merchants to set out for the Indies. Isaac Le Maire, a rich merchant from the Dutch port city of Hoorn,

had heard rumors of a third passage to the Indies and decided to investigate them.

In 1621, the Dutch East India Company was established to suport the many Dutch sailors on the seas and as a strategy in the war against Spain. Even before the Company was formed, there were many independent and uncoordinated operations being carried out by Dutch adventurers who had reached the Caribbean, traded on the Brazilian coast, stepped foot on the coasts of Chile and reached the shores of Peru before sailing West towards the Philippines. By so doing they developed a very profitable triangular trading system: textiles and manufactured goods were brought from Europe and Africa, where they were exchanged for slaves, which were then transported to the Caribbean and Brazil (Curacao), from whence plantation products were loaded for Europe.

The Dutch may be credited with the discovery of the southernmost islands of the continent and the second inter-oceanic passage, and the legacy of these bold discoverers can be found in local place names today:

- the islands of Terhalten, Evout, Barnevelt, Hermite, and Staten;
- the bays of Nassau, Orange, Windhond, Schapenham and San Valentín;
- Goeree Pass, Le Maire Strait and Cape Horn.

4. THE SAFE ROUTE

Corsairs and Buccaneers

Once the first navigators had made their discoveries on the Southern Sea, a second dynamic stage of European voyages took place. Strictly scientific expeditions would come later, but this stage established the route as a channel for communication and trade and a place to search for riches and for piracy. The ambitious sailors of this period made an important contribution to exploration and discovery.

Pirates and Corsairs. The first of these were bandits of the sea, simple outlaws who inevitably assaulted any target that could provide them with booty to sell in complicit ports, or simply accosted those who were caught off guard. The second were fighters on a mission entrusted by a given government (a commission or "permit to chase"), which granted them permission to harass enemy settlements in a declared or undercovered war, and to take payment for their services by selling booty or ransoming prisoners. In return they enjoyed the same status as prisoners of war when captured, or could appeal for assistance or collaboration from allied and neutral ports. Of course, there was a fine line between one and the other.

Buccaneer: A pirate of the 17th and 18th centuries dedicated to the looting of Spanish possessions on the high seas. The term buccaneer originated in the custom of these individuals to launch surprise attacks on La Española (Dominican Republic, Haiti) and steal the livestock abandoned by the Spanish in the Antilles. They cooked and smoked the meat on grills called boucan in French. Most buccaneers were French, English or Dutch.

Kingfisher (Ceryle torquata stellata, Meyen)
Photographer: Giorgio Addrizzi, Authorized Digital Copying
Photograph Archive Martin Gusinde Anthropological Museum (MAMG)

Filibuster: A pirate who was a member of one of the groups that overran the Caribbean Sea in the 17th Century. This term may have originated with the Dutch term for freebooter or perhaps flyboater, the patron of a flyboat, so named because it moved very quickly.

These sailors flourished in response to restrictions placed by the Spanish crown on other European states, as the latter zealously sought to develop trade with the American colonies. Always on the trail of Spanish and other nations' possessions, the Caribbean Sea was the natural arena for them to pursue their goals.

5. SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE SOUTHERNMOST LANDS

From the Viceroyalty of Peru to the Republic of Chile

At the same time that Spain was expanding its territory in the Americas, aided by land explorations southward from the center of the continent, navigators opened new routes and introduced new perspectives on the extreme south. With central Chile already under Spanish control, securing the southern territory for the Crown became a necessity. To do so, in 1539 King Carlos V appointed Pedro Sancho de la Hoz Governor of Tierra del Fuego and the surrounding islands. De la Hoz never took office in the South, however, and the Spanish then called upon Pedro de Valdivia.

After Valdivia's untimely death, Jerónimo de Alderete, who was processing the required authorization in Spain, was appointed Governor in 1555. But when Alderete also died unexpectedly, the title passed to García Hurtado de Mendoza in 1557. This individual commanded Juan Ladrillero to take possession of the lands around the Strait. Sailing from Chile (Valdivia) and arriving from the West, in 1558 Ladrillero reached the Strait of Magellan, claiming possession of it and the surrounding territory.

From then on, all governors and general captains of Chile that came after Mendoza had jurisdiction over the islands of Tierra del Fuego. Indeed, when renowned chronicler Alonso de Ovalle described these islands, he included them in his 1646 Map of the Kingdom of Chile.

Almost two hundred years later in 1843, the schooner Ancud sailed from the town of the same name on the island of Chiloé under the command of Captain John Williams R. On September 21st of that year, the Captain took possession of the Strait of Magellan and Tierra del Fuego all the way to Cape Horn for the Republic of Chile.

In this way the islands of the surrounding archipelago, including the so-called Austral (Southern) Islands, became part of Chilean territory. Still, an official Chilean presence was not installed until 1892, when the town of Puerto Toro was established on Navarino Island. Despite this limitation, Chilean dominion over the territory was established and indirectly recognized when the English Anglican Missions, the first whites to inhabitant this land, formally requested land concessions from the National Government of Chile.

It was the Governor of Magellan Daniel Briceño who took the first concrete measures to secure the Austral Islands. He did so in response to an event that was of great importance to the country: the discovery of gold on those islands, which sparked a burgeoning gold mining industry. This "gold fever" prompted immigration to and exploration of these remote regions, virgin territory that was virtually unknown to the rest of the country. With the Argentine city of Ushuaia newly founded, Governor Briceño proposed that the central government establish a Maritime Authority on Navarino Island and found a colony to take advantage of the abundant supply of wood and pastureland suitable for raising livestock. This would help to centralize shipping in the region, keeping watch over Chilean ships and offsetting the Argentine presence on Chilean territory and channels.

Post Capitan Manuel Señoret, succeeded Briceño as Governor of Magellan in 1892, holding office until 1896. One of his primary concerns was the colonization of the Austral Islands. He reiterated Briceño's concern and stressed to the Chilean Central Government the need to create a Maritime Authority and establish a colony on Navarino Island, due to the expansion of both the Argentine presence and gold mining.

Indeed, Señoret felt it was so important to reaffirm national sovereignty and achieve these much desired measures, that in 1892 he organized an expedition to the Austral Islands, becoming the first Chilean authority to visit this territory. On that journey the Governor visited different mining sites on Navarino and Picton islands, False Cape Horn and, most importantly, Lennox Island. Through this journey he was able to see for himself the conditions and methods the miners used to extract gold, as well as to determine the magnitude and scope of this activity. Exploring on land, he decided that the most suitable site for a settlement that could serve as a center of administration and commerce in the region was a bay on the eastern coast of Navarino Island, which faced Picton, Nueva and –most importantly—Lennox island, where most of the miners were based. He named the site Puerto Toro, in honor of the steamship that had first spotted the bay. Work was begun immediately and the town was founded, with personnel left to continue the necessary work. Sea traders quickly flocked here to supply the miners with goods, mainly brought from Ushuaia. Señoret took the necessary steps to authorize the traders to establish themselves in the new town, which operated under Chilean jurisdiction.

Aware of the isolated location, he also granted the request of José Menéndez to develop coastal trading in the zone, extending the shipping route already in use by the steamship Amadeo around Tierra del Fuego to the extreme south.

Finally, in order to encourage potential settlers to colonize the region, Señoret recommended that the Government streamline the process of obtaining long term land concessions. This enabled the development of livestock raising and the extraction of timber and other products, building upon the presence of the miners, who represented the first wave of settlers in the area. Señoret himself is credited with initiating the concession process by identifying available lands and allowing the settlement of the first immigrants.

6. ADVENTURERS AND SCIENTISTS

In the 18th Century the ideas of the period known as the Enlightenment were flourishing in Europe. The European nations, encouraged by new scientific discoveries and a renew desire to explore the unknown corners of the world, unleashed a series of expeditions that joined traditional mercantile aspirations with an interest in expanding human knowledge.

As a result, in addition to the regular navigators who served these ocean powers—skilled in both military and maritime tactics—there appeared a new kind of commander of ocean voyages: Accomplished captains instructed in the most diverse scientific matters, sailing the best ships with the newest navigational instruments, making these long journeys both safer and more rewarding. Thus, in the decades that followed the southern waters of the world were traversed by sailors with the most varied interests (in addition to traditional ones), who occupied themselves with botanical collections, hydrographic investigations, astronomical observations and ethnographic accounts, not to mention meteorological, geographical and geological studies.

A major result of these efforts can be appreciated in the Spanish maps of the late 18th century. Based on the Dutch maps from the time of Discovery, these new maps described large portions of Nueva, Picton and Lennox islands, south Navarino, southwest Hoste, the Hermite islands and the seaward Pacific coast. Though they were not always accurate, they captured the true physical outline of the Southern archipelago of Tierra del Fuego.

Another movement that began in this period was that of polar exploration, with voyages crossing the Antarctic Circle and exploring the most remote islands on the planet.

This deepening of scientific knowledge continued through explorations over the years and even up to the present day.

7. MAGELLAN. BEGINNINGS OF THE TERRITORY´S EXPLOTATION

EXPLOTATION, RICHES AND ABUNDANCE

Sea lion hunters

Towards the end of the 18th Century, with ships sailing to the southernmost tip of the Americas and around the world, intensive hunting of marine species began in the region. The first hunters of sea lions and whales were renowned navigators whose search for riches made them true pioneers, venturing into such far flung corners of the world as the southern archipelago and even Antarctica.

Ships sailing under different flags, albeit most of them from England, Scandinavia and the United States of America, indiscriminately pursued the highly desirable skins of both types of sea lions, the one haired and the two haired sea lions. As a result of this intense activity, populations of this species became limited to the western archipelagos of Patagonia, from the Gulf of Sorrows to Cape Horn, and the survival of these animals was seriously threatened.

This had a great impact on the Yaghan's way of life, which was now endangered not only from cultural contact but because the people were deprived of their principal source of protein, calories and raw material.

Wreck collectors

Because of the severe storms that ravaged the seas around Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, shipwrecks were a common occurrence, all of which increased the terrible reputation of these waters. But the constant search for new economic opportunities and resources that typified the waves of migration to the region also made these shipwrecks productive. Wreck collecting (raqué or raqueo in Spanish) was a curious endeavor that emerged along the coasts, in which wreck collectors profited from the foundations, instruments, objects, accessories, tools, merchandise, silverware and, in effect, any and all vestiges or materials that could be recovered from the ill-fated vessels.

The Spanish term for this activity was derived from the English word wreck.

Gold fever

The discovery of gold in the extreme south near the end of the 19th Century sparked a powerful drive to colonize the area, particularly around Tierra del Fuego. The news of this discovery quickly spread abroad, unleashing an intense wave of migration of prospectors seeking this valuable metal.

Mining activity in this period was concentrated around three focal points where most gold had been discovered: the interior of the big island of Tierra del Fuego; the tip of the continental Atlantic coast and Tierra del Fuego; and the Austral Islands, the archipelago south of the big island.

The discovery and extraction of gold on the northern coast of the Beagle Channel saw the islands southward of this beautiful channel filled with individuals seeking their fortune, as often occurs in such times of exploration and expansion.

Following the trail of alluvial gold, one miner discovered new deposits, expanding mining to the archipelago of the Austral Islands, particularly on Lennox Island, where the largest deposit was found.
The vast majority of gold prospectors who reached the far South were foreigners, mainly Croatians who employed basic mining techniques using simple tools and lived a precarious existence in that remote place. These small scale or independent mining operations prompted by gold fever lasted from 1890 to 1895.

In this way, the presence of gold led to the first population and colonization policies of the southern islands. The wave of migration and proven existence of riches led the Chilean government to exercise its jurisdiction and national sovereignty here much more directly. Though English missionaries had already populated the area - accelerating the declining process of the Yaghan population-, it was the immigrants attracted there by gold who would consolidate the white man's occupation of the region.

8. A NEW WAY OF LIFE IS IMPOSED IN THE AREA

FIRST WAVE OF SETTLERS

Land concessions and colonization

The colonization process in the Austral Islands expanded naturally in response to the constant flow of wealth from foreign gold prospectors.

Whether the immigrants squatted on land or obtained formal concessions for it, by the end of the 19th Century the first settlements had been established in the region, coinciding with a major decline in the Yaghan population.

Land concessions began to be issued in 1891. However, none of these reached a favorable conclusion until 1893, under the administration of the Governor of Magellan, M. Señoret. The Government of Chile was interested in encouraging the founding of colonies to reinforce national sovereignty, and this would only be made possible by allowing the settlers to use the land to raise livestock and extract timber.

The Land Concession policy implemented by the Governor was simple and efficient, facilitating the occupation of those lands, in opossition to the slow Central Government policies.

Fishing concessions

From 1902 to 1906, as a strategy to strengthen national sovereignty in the lands and waters of Tierra del Fuego and even the Antarctic territory, the Chilean Government granted some major fishing concessions, authorizing Chilean entrepreneurs to use different islands in the far south for whale and sea lion hunting, activities that had been carried out only by foreign vessels up to that time.

SCIENTIFIC MISSION:

Anthropological missions

In the early 20th Century, when social sciences and anthropology were at their peak, the imminent extinction of the Yaghan people prompted a new wave of scientific expeditions to the far south. These sought to study not only the natives' material culture, but to find and record all information that would enable a greater and deeper comprehension and assessment of their way of life.

Emblematic scientific expeditions

In parallel with these anthropological missions, there was a last great wave of exploration to the southern region, accompanied by a series of scientific expeditions that lasted throughout the 20th Century.

Indeed, it is important to note that scientific missions have continued to the present day as, in the natural course of things, new advances in technology and human progress have led to a renewed spirit of enquiry in a wide variety of scientific fields.

GOVERNMENT INDIFFERENCE AND DISREGARD FOR THE AUSTRAL ISLANDS

The colonization process slows down

As gold mining became less profitable and the wave of immigration it generated slowed down, colonization of the Austral Islands also began to diminish. While settlers who came to the region for ranching remained, overall migration declined as national and regional authorities stopped promoting it.

Settlers who had already staked their claim stayed in the region, trusting the Government of Chile to renew their land concessions. And around 1918, some well known businessmen from the Magellan region sought to expand operations into territories west of Navarino Island, but they had to give up due to the difficulties they encountered.

The Government looses interest

By around 1920, the Chilean authorities were displaying an almost complete lack of concern for the Austral Islands. This resulted in a lack of basic social services such as a hospital, civil registry, schools, and basic goods and services for day to day life. It also meant poor sea communication with Punta Arenas. Naturally, this led the population to look towards Ushuaia, the closest city that could satisfy these basic needs.

This situation worsened during the term of President Arturo Alessandri Palma when land leases were not renewed. In fact, the entire island of Navarino was given in concession to Armando Hinojosa, a journalist from Santiago, apparently in payment of a political debt.

From 1931 to 1950, the Austral Islands were in a state of complete economic stagnation, with little opportunity to take part in the social processes occurring in the rest of the country. Residents made their living on sheep ranches, in the timber industry and through trade with Ushuaia.

PUERTO WILLIAMS IS FOUNDED

Strategic interest

The territory of the Austral Islands, the southernmost area of the continental basin, is of enormous strategic value to the Government of Chile. It contains two ocean shipping routes, the Beagle Channel and the Drake Passage, and is the main point of connection and a support base for any activity on the Antarctic continent. In addition, the rich biological diversity of its inland and ocean waters has a huge productive and touristic potential.

Because of this, in regard to the long-running border dispute between Chile and Argentina, this geographic area is the main arena in which the territorial interests of these two countries have been played out.

The interplay of these factors prompted the Government of President Carlos Ibáñez to establish a town on Navarino Island and implement a variety of projects to promote development there. These measures sought to restrict Argentine influence

over the lives of Chileans residing in the zone. With the same aim, concessions were regularized and many settlers and long time residents received land leases.

TIMES OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Navarino plan

As part of the strategy to reassert Chilean sovereignty, a second stage of development sought to promote colonization from a civil perspective. This plan sought to secure sovereignty by populating the islands to take advantage of the territory's potential.

Concretely, this process addressed a number of fundamental issues: social infrastructure offering basic goods and services; economic development of sheep and cattle ranching, fishing and tourism; scientific development, through the exploration of fishing and mining resources; political development through the reorganization of land use and ownership; and finally geopolitical development by ensuring an official presence in the south of Chile.

By 1970, Puerto Williams' population numbered close to one thousand inhabitants and it had become a permanent settlement. The islands under dispute were also populated and already settled sites were reinforced by the permanent presence of the Chilean Navy.

TERRITORIAL CONTROVERSIES: DISPUTE WITH ARGENTINA

Imprecise borders

Many years after Chile and Argentina had won their independence from the Spanish crown, the border dispute between these two countries was still going on. As a territorial principle, the original borders established by the colonial authorities were accepted, based on the principle of uti posidetis—"you will have what you have possessed." However, as the 19th Century advanced and colonization of the far south continued, the border between these two countries became irregular and difficult to define.

In 1881 the two countries signed a treaty defining the Chile-Argentina border. Under the treaty, the border in the Tierra del Fuego area would follow the line 68°34'W of Greenwich to where it reaches the Beagle Channel, with Chile in possession of the land west of this line and Argentina holding the land to the East. In the Beagle Channel itself, the border would turn to the East, leaving to Argentina everything north of there, including Staten Island, the surrounding small islands and all other islands on the Atlantic Ocean east of Tierra del Fuego and Eastern Patagonia. Chile, for its part, would own all the islands south of the Beagle Channel all the way to Cape Horn, and all those to the West of Tierra del Fuego. Problems arose due to the differences in the interptretation of the Beagle Channel course, which wasn´t correctly defined.

Still the border dispute raged on. As the 100 year anniversary of the signing of the treaty approached (1981), in 1971 both nations officially agreed to accept the ruling of the British Crown as arbitrator, and in 1977 the English court issued a resolution recognizing Chilean sovereignty over all the southern islands. However, the Republic of Argentina did not accept the ruling, leading to an increase in political tension in the region.

An armed conflict between the two countries was ultimately avoided, thanks to the mediation of Pope John Paul II, and in 1984 Chile and Argentina signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship that put an end to the long running dispute and recognized Chilean sovereignty over Picton, Nueva and Lennox islands.

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COVER PHOTOGRAPHS:

(from left to right, from top to bottom)

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  Photograph Archive Martin Gusinde Anthropological Museum (MAMG)

- MAMG at night
  Photographer: Giorgio Addrizzi
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- "Abuela Chacona". Ukika, Navarino Island, Chile. November, 1964.
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- "Rosa Yagán". Ukika, Navarino Island, Chile. November, 1964.
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- "Ursula Calderón with a beaver on her arms". Puerto Williams, July 1987.
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- "Aspirants working"
  Anthropos Institute. Sankt Augustin, Germany. c. 1922
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- "Armature of the Cabin of Initiation. Interior view"
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- "Martin Gusinde in the middle of two Yamanas translators"
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