# Vices Are Not What They Used To Be: The Archaeological Importance of the Term "Vices" in Argentinean Historical Military Documents of the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

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**Abstract** This article characterizes the sense and use of the word vicios (vices) in historical documents in nineteenth-century Argentina. The term was frequently used among soldiers, indigenous people, and criollos who occupied the border. The "vices" consisted of a range of highly appreciated edible goods (including tobacco, *yerba mate [Ilex paraguariensis*], and sugar). Documentary sources do not agree what products fall under the term vicios. We propose some archaeological expectations with regard to each of these products.

**Keywords** Vices · Analytical categories · Documentary sources · Archaeological expectations · Argentina

## Introduction

The South American continent presents a particularly rich field for the development of historical archaeology (Funari 1997; Orser 1996). In this region, the social and economical conditions of dependence are reflected on scientific passiveness and receptivity. As Politis (2003) sees it, centers of European and American intellectual production create the majority of theories and models in vogue. On the contrary, most South American scientific centers do not create models or theories and are characterized instead by an uncritical attitude that only includes foreign features for future testing.

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The analytical frames of tactic and strategy (De Certau 1980), dominance and resistance (Miller et al. 1995), and research on nineteenth-century plantation slavery (Leone 1988; Orser 1996) report oppressive and violent realities in the United States. The specific historical contexts where these processes took place seem to invalidate their transportation sensu stricto.

Military settlements on the border have been a topic of research for over 10 years within Argentinean historical archaeology, but a lack of information still exists. Among previous research we can mention the pioneer work of Facundo Gómez Romero and Mariano Ramos (1994) on Miñana fortlet (see this volume). Research on fortlets began in the 1990s and continues today. Marta Rosa and Miguel Saghessi (1998) investigated on the military settlement called Recompensa fortlet, located in Guaminí district (Buenos Aires Province) occupied between 1876 and 1879. The military settlement called Tapalqué Viejo canton in Tapalqué district (Buenos Aires Province) was studied by Mugueta and Guerci (1999). The investigations produced abundant faunal material. Austral and Rochietti (1997) have researched the military settlement called Las Achiras fortlet, inside the town center of Achiras, 70 km from the city of Río Cuarto, Córdoba Province. In the province of La Pampa, Tapia (2000) has researched the settlement called La Perra fortlet located in an area called Bajo del Carbón, in the south of Loventué. Excavations there produced glass, metal, fauna, leather, ceramics, and textiles. Some of the material has been studied (Landa 2006; Pineau and Spota 2005), and other research is on-going. Finally, investigations were carried out at the Blanca Grande fortlet (Goñi and Madrid 1998), the military post of Chaján (Rochietti et al. 1998) and fortlets La Parva, El Perdido and Fe (Langiano et al. 1998).

In recent research, Facundo (Gómez Romero 2002) applies Foucault's concepts on the panopticon to investigate border military settlements. Gómez Romero considers that the fortlet's architecture performed an imperfect panoptic control over the quartered troops. He notes that "The soldier who kept watch from the mangrullo was also a comrade, the friend who could oversee the preliminaries of nocturnal desertion, because he may have been the next one to try. In effect, there was no guard. It is valid, therefore, to wonder whether the fortlet was, in fact, a type of functionally imperfect panopticon" (Gómez Romero 2005, p. 147). The imperfection of the architectural panopticon was the result of the peer group accomplice. This kind of breaking of the military rules was met with heavy punishment, including stocks and even death. In the context of control and discipline of a fortlets' soldiers, the supply of vices (*vicios*) can be a useful way to obtain an understanding of daily life in border military settlements.

#### Brief Discussion on Categories In Archaeology

In Argentinean archaeology, the historical development of analytical categories is part of the larger context previously mentioned. Theoretical dynamics involve the evolution of concepts and categories. These elements form the interface between pure theory and information collected from the field (Clark 1993). It is common in archaeology that both theories and categories come from other sciences, and neither the former nor the later are subjected to a process of conceptual and methodological adaptation to make them compatible with archaeology.

with Winchkler (2001, p. 517) about the following:

The archaeological record forms a material universe arranged according to the events and situations performed at a given moment by past societies. The reconstruction of such events by the association principle allow us to reveal activities or aspects of social behavior at a precise moment of history. Thus, association involves the discovery of a specific temporal, spatial, and cultural unit. To cope with this it is necessary to create classificatory units capable of being isolated and that allow us to establish singular forms that can be compared (Lumbreras 1983, p. 3). Here then lies the main problem: the creation of classificatory units, such as categories. We agree

in its development, Argentinean archaeology did not consider as a priority to stop and study the use it makes of the terms, neither to enrich cognitive aspects of lithic analysis nor to revise the relationships between concepts which have been in historical progress and which are used to make inferences, nor simply to clarify the relationship between these concepts and these terms.... Archaeology is not a formalized science (it does not consist of a coherent internal body of definitions, providing a definition for every term used), nor it is a normalized or standardized science (there is not such a set of rules that direct the use of terms, as for the relationship between terms and concepts).

Accordingly, it is necessary to establish a set of analytical categories that comprise and systematize the information for each artifact.

Additionally, it must be remembered that classification into technological, morphological, or functional categories must take into account the characteristics of the artifact as a social product. Along this line, South (1977) suggests the classification of materials recovered in historical sites in terms of groups of artifacts that correspond to functional criteria. He proposes the following groups for his frontier pattern: kitchen artifact, bone, architectural, furniture, arms, clothing, personal, tobacco pipe, activities, and military. South (1977) argues that patterns of past human behavior can be established from the study of the variations in the frequency of artifacts involved in these groups.

Nevertheless, it must be considered "that categories are artificial constructions built to keep order in the chaos of data. Former generations of scientists were caught in the trap of letting those constructions to determine the way they had to think about the past, instead of using them simply as a way of shaping the evidence" (Renfrew and Bahn 1993, p. 128). According to Bate (1998), classification is a structured system of categories that, as a set, conceptually involves each entity or phenomena existing in a given realm of reality under study. Classification can also refer to the allocation of a specific set of objects or real entities to a category. We thus see categories as classification units possible of change that refer to specific sets of elements, and we support the conceptualization of the term "vices" as a category.

#### Vices in Documentary Sources

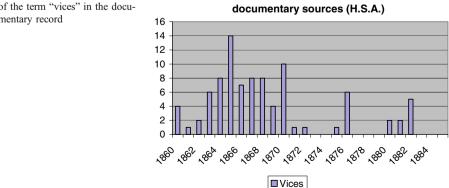
This article has two related aims. The first consists of determining the sense and use of the term "vices" in historical documents of the second half of nineteenth century. The second aim is to characterize the archaeological materialization of the vices. We

define the unique characteristics of the category "vices," while establishing its potential presence in military archaeological contexts. With this aim in mind, we analyze several documentary sources both published and unpublished in which the term "vices" is mentioned.

We examined documentary sources written by military men, travelers, and traders in Argentina during the second half of nineteenth century (Barros 1975; Racedo 1965; Gutierrez 1960; Prado 1960; Fotheringham 1999; Pechmann 1980). We also made a thorough inquiry of the Historical Service of the Army files (H.S.A.; S.H.E. or Servicio Histórico del Ejército) which keeps reports and documents made by military men sent to the borderland between 1860 and 1885. This task was undertaken to quantify the number of occurrences in which the term "vices" was quoted (Fig. 1).

After this analysis, we decided that the greatest proliferation of the term occurred from 1860 to 1871. After 1871, its use became irregular and was substituted by the term "provisions and entertainment" (viveres y entretenimientos). Even though the first term has a long-standing use, we consider that its regular use during 1860–1875 (with emphasis on the 1865-1870 period) is related to the outbreak and development of the Triple Alliance War or Paraguayan War (Guerra de la Triple Alianza or Guerra del Paraguay), a war in which Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay confronted Paraguay. As the Argentinean state was required to send its materiel and human resources toward the front, a laxity was experienced in military discipline against indigenous people. This situation was expressed in the relentless complaints concerning "vices" made both from border military settlements as well as addressed to them.

The entire range of analyzed documentary sources agree on including a certain set of goods among that category, despite the lack of unity in criteria used to identify them. For instance, in an invoice dated on May 19, 1876 and signed by Luis María Campos (Minister of War and Navy) the following products are included within the term "vices": 6,096 pounds of Yerba mate, 1,305 pounds of soap, 4,241 pounds of sugar, 1,036 pounds of red tobacco, 1,140 pounds of black tobacco, 24 reams of thread paper, and 8 sacks of salt. Similarly, Zeballos (a scientist and traveler) notes that Levalle (a military man), while making a request for "vices" named some



Number of occurrences of the term "vices" in

Fig. 1 Number of occurrences of the term "vices" in the documentary record

objects in this category: "Comrades of the South Division! We haven't got neither yerba mate, nor tobacco, nor bread, nor clothes, nor resources, nor hopes of receiving them" (Zeballos 2001, p. 189). It is interesting to note that Zeballos puts *yerba mate* and tobacco before edible staples, which constitute a subsistence resource of major importance. Another documentary source mentions an assorted list of products as "vices": "1st Article. Each ration of vices will comprise the following goods per man: three pounds of Yerba mate from Paraguay or Misiones, one libra of Black Tobacco sticks, four reams of thread paper and one bar of yellow or black Soap" (Servicio Histórico del Ejército, Lucha de frontera contra el indio).

Given the documentary sources, we consider the elements in the vices category as: sugar, *yerba mate*, paper, tobacco, and soap. This does not imply that they must simultaneously also appear in the archaeological record.

### Alcoholic Drinks as Another Vice

The resource supply system to troops quartered at border military settlements was characterized by corruption, fraud, and bribery. For instance, Alvaro Barros says "the supplier who gets on well with the chief delivers dreadful quality goods, in turn he obtains a higher invoice which is made according to the lists of inspection, but not to the actual consumption" (Barros 1975, p. 104). The deficiency and corruption of this system is reflected by the high incidence of suppliers undergoing trials for breach of contract both for the quantity of goods and lapses in the scheduled delivery time (Servicio Histórico del Ejército, Lucha de Frontera contra el indio).

Military sources do not mention alcoholic drinks as a good to be delivered to quartered troops, except in times of campaigns against the indigenous people, such as those conducted by Juan Manuel de Rosas in 1883 and General Julio Argentino Roca in 1879. Juan Manuel de Rosas asked for "twenty boxes of Burdeos wine" for him and his troops (Servicio Histórico del Ejército, Lucha de frontera contra el indio, 4/12/1833). Additionally, in the course of a celebration for a bank holiday during Roca's military campaign "*caña* (a local alcoholic drink) was handed in to the troops, along with coffee and sugar" (Prado 1975, p. 71).

Both the Army and the National Guard had regulations which stipulated the kinds of punishments applied to drunken soldiers (Billinghurst 1895, pp. 63, 72). The most striking feature is the absence of alcoholic drinks in the official supply of military settlements, even though great quantities of glass remains are found in archaeological contexts of this sort (Gómez Romero 1998; Tapia 2000; Tapia and Pineau 2004). Soldiers could have acquired alcoholic drinks could on non-official grounds, such as the *pulperia* (where alcoholic drinks were sold) or from carts arriving to the settlements from the *pulperia*: "in a fortlet, the cart of the pulpero (a man who sold alcoholic drinks) arrived. Protecio Funes had hunted some animal, and changed the feathers for gin. And he got drunk. He caused trouble in the fortlet. They had to tie him up" (Álvaro Yunque, quoted in Scunio 1980, p. 75). Thus, alcoholic drinks were exchanged for goods obtained from the nearby settlements (leather, *ñandú* feathers, and so forth) obtained by hunting, in trade with Indians, or by paying on account. These private networks of exchange took place over structured circuits of supplying and stock (Mayo 1996). Documentary sources mention alcoholic drinks as highly appreciated by the troops. Zeballos (2004 p. 337) refers to expeditionary party to the Nahuel Mapu, that meets another expeditionary party carrying several bundles and "just like that, we found ourselves, chiefs and officials, civilians and troops with a lighted cigarette in our mouths and a packet of them in both hands... and with a huge bottle of gin (brand Llave)." The military's demand for alcohol takes place in the commentaries, orders, complaints and references in general; habitually observed in the frontier literature and military chronicles (Prado, [1906] 1960 and [1907] 1975; Gutierrez [1880] 1960; Pechmann, [1938] 1980). Paradoxically, the alcohol is formally nonexistent as element of daily consumption, there are numerous explicit references about its consumption and supplication in the daily frontier's context.

The previous quotations show that alcoholic drinks were associated with other vices, mixing them altogether in the same set of goods. Therefore, taking into account previous quotations and the archaeological record of military settlements (where several pieces of bottles of gin, whisky, spirits, beer, and champagne were found), we consider that border troops regarded alcoholic drinks as another good within the category of "vice." We can see from the official speeches of the highest military authorities that they did not regard it as such.

The difference between official speech and material reality suggests that the officials' omissions were intentional (Roulet 2003). The newly shaped Argentinean nation-state played a double game in border military settlements. Judging from official speech, the army banned the troops from drinking alcohol while in practice it supplied alcohol as part of the soldier's ration, or turned a blind eye to the ways they obtained it. Resolving this issue is far beyond the scope of this paper, but the official stance on alcohol use is an interesting direction for future research.

#### The Category "Vices" in the Archaeological Record

The physical evidence of vices depends on the characteristics and features of the tangible materials associated with them. Archeological visibility of vices is determined by the internal characteristics of each good, which in turn determined its packaging, preservation, and consumption.

The analysis of documentary sources allowed us to recognize that alcoholic drinks were packed in two ways. The first consisted of bottles of different volume and different types of glass or ceramic stoneware. Foreign companies supplied the Argentinean state with alcoholic drinks (Fig. 2). Since it was compulsory for imported goods to go through port customs (at least the legal imports), the quantity and the places of origin were recorded in custom's registers (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo 1880–1990). Additionally, recent work has made it possible to identify the brands of alcoholic drinks from the fortlets by looking at the color and texture of glass fragments (Pineau and Spota 2005).

The second way in which alcoholic drinks were packed and transported was in *cascos* (barrels) (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo 1880–1990). The act of packing liquid in wooden containers secured its transport since wood withstands the shocks of transport better than glass or crystal (Pineau and Spota 2005).

### Fig. 2 Alcohol bottles



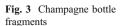
As for the archaeological context, the presence and consumption of alcoholic drinks in border military settlements can be related to both ways of packing. The first method of packing will be archaeologically demonstrated through the presence of stoneware or glass bottles (Fig. 3).

Investigations carried out in settlements such as Miñana fortlet (Gómez Romero 1998), La Parva fortlet (Langiano et al. 1998), Tapalqué Viejo canton and La Perra fortlet (Tapia 2000) shows how important this way of packaging was for soldiers quartered in fortlets. The second way of packaging can be observed by the presence of metal bands from barrels. The wooden parts of the barrels are less likely to survive, given the lack of fuel in the area and its limited preservation in the archaeological record.

Evidence for the consumption of alcoholic drinks can also be seen by the presence of different kinds of bottle closures. Closures were made of lead, tin, and alloys, and they usually carried an imprint mark of their brand as well as their place of origin (Tapia et al. 2006). Closures have been found at Miñana fortlet and La Perra fortlet.

Tobacco has low archaeological visibility and preservation given its nature and characteristics. Tobacco was mainly smoked as rolled cigarettes (rolling paper being another "vices" item). The preservation of paper in the Pampa region is scarce.

The presence of tobacco in fortlets also may be indirectly established by the recovery of smoking pipes. Pipes could arrive at military settlements via national or international importation circuits. An example are kaolin pipes found in Miñana

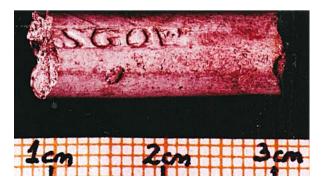




fortlet produced in Glasgow, Scotland (Gómez Romero pers. comm.; Fig. 4). Another possibility was in situ production of these items, such is the case of the pipe found in La Perra fortlet. This pipe was made with an empty cartridge casing as a bowl and bird bone for a stem (Tapia 2000; Landa 2006).

In relation to this, although in a different social and historical context, Beaudry notes similar changes to material culture made by working-class Americans: "Analysis of documentary sources written during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries indicates an increasing association of short stemmed white clay pipes with working-class men.... The pipe collection of the Boott Mills tenements and boarding houses shows evidence that the working class smokers who lived there broke the stems of certain types of white clay pipes to shorten them before use. Within the context of contemporary behaviour, such actions were clear expressions of membership in the working classes" (Beaudry et al. 1991, pp. 167–168). Future research on pipes recovered from military fortlets will allow us to determine the occurrence of similar practices in these contexts. Soap, *yerba mate*, sugar, and coffee pose similar difficulties because their archaeological visibility and preservation are obscured because they were carried in perishable materials (soap, for instance, was wrapped in paper).

Fig. 4 Kaolin smoking pipe fragment from Glasgow, Scotland



*Mate* consumption constitutes a complex activity, since it implies the use of several artifacts in a combined way. *Mate* can refer not just to the infusion but to the final product of that infusion and also to the container where it is prepared. As a result, the artifacts involved in *mate* consumption are: a kettle (*pava*) or metallic container; a *mate* as a container; a straw; and *yerba mate*. As an infusion, *mate* needs hot water to be made, so its presence also implies the use of a kettle or some kind of water container (usually metal) to heat water. The consumption of mate is accordingly associated with firepits or hearths. Colonel Racedo describes his troops' behavior after sounding the retreat during a military campaign, when they "meet one another as hearth mates, the first thing they do is to put the kettle with water on the fire to immediately have a tasty *mate*" (Racedo 1965, p. 20).

The consumption of the infusion called *mate* takes place in a container where *yerba mate* and water are poured. The container can vary in shape (cylindrical, oval, spherical) as well as in material of manufacture (squash, leather, cow or horse hooves, or various metals). These differences can be a useful measure of social status. The straw consisted of a tube whose function was to make sucking easier. Just like the *mate*, it could be produced from several materials (cane, metal) even though its shape could not change.

The act of mate consumption created temporary hierarchy that differed from the military hierarchy. The former were exclusive to the mate consumption "the first *mate* is for the person who makes it, the second one is for the Sergeant or Corporal in the row, the third *mate* is for the joker, and so on the *mate* is poured according to the hierarchies among them" (Racedo 1965, p. 20). This hierarchy was dissolved once the *mate* had been consumed.

Archaeological excavations in border military settlements to date have not recovered any of items associated with *mate* consumption, but given its widespread and daily use, it is expected that they will be found in future projects. Also, the presence of *yerba mate* and coffee in archaeological contexts could be established by flotation techniques, but this method of recovery has yet to be undertaken in fortlet archaeology.

## Conclusion

Even though the term "vices" has both official and historical meanings, it must be understood in archaeology as a set of elements comprising soap, paper, tobacco, *yerba mate*, coffee, and alcoholic drinks. In this paper we mainly focus on alcoholic drinks because of their importance for quartered soldiers in border military settlements along Argentina's southern frontier during the second half of nineteenth century.

We attribute the semantic differences observed in documentary sources to the lack of uniformity in the criteria used by the various authors. We consider that the individuals responsible for the written sources had a similar vision but not a specific understanding of the goods referred to by the term "vices." The differences established by the authors when naming the elements included under this term indicate nonspecific semantics. However, the absence of an exhaustive list of elements that comprised the "vices" category makes it possible that many goods could have been included within it. We thus must call for rigor when referring to the category "vices."

Fortlets did not represent an anomaly with regard to obtaining and consuming the "vices." Investigators have not yet connected the presence and consumption of the "vices" category to social relationships in the context of border military settlements. Future research must aim to correct this oversight.

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