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PRODUCTION AND COMMERCIALIZATION OF AGUARDIENTE IN THE REGION OF CONCEPCIÓN, XVII-XIX CENTURIES*

Producción y comercialización de aguardiente en la región de Concepción, siglos XVII-XIX
Produção e comercialização de aguardente na região de Concepción, séculos XVII-XIX

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ABSTRACT
This article uses unpublished colonial records recovered from the Chilean National Archive to study the origin and proliferation of aguardiente in the region of Concepción. Its importance and production cycle are analyzed through individual 18th and 19th century vineyard production records and related civil and criminal court cases. The overall production for the corregimiento of Puchacay was studied by comparing individual production records for the years 1777 and 1779. Through this analysis, we hope to show the importance and singularities of locally produced aguardiente in the region of Concepción, Chile.

KEYWORDS
Colonial Chile, aguardiente, wine, rural history, agricultural history.

RESUMEN
Este artículo utiliza registros coloniales inéditos recuperados del Archivo Nacional de Chile para estudiar el origen y la proliferación del aguardiente en la región de Concepción. Su importancia y ciclo productivo se analizan a través de registros individuales de producción de viñas de los siglos XVIII y XIX y de causas judiciales civiles y criminales relacionadas. La producción global del corregimiento de Puchacay se estudió comparando los registros individuales de producción de los años 1777 y 1779. A través de este análisis esperamos mostrar la importancia y singularidades del aguardiente producido localmente en la región de Concepción, Chile.

PALABRAS CLAVE
Chile colonial, aguardiente, vino, historia rural, historia agrícola.

RESUMO
Este artigo utiliza registos coloniais inéditos recuperados do Arquivo Nacional do Chile para estudar a origem e a proliferação da aguardente na região de Concepción. A sua importância e ciclo de produção são analisados através de registos individuais de produção de vinhas dos séculos XVIII e XIX e de processos judiciais civis e criminais relacionados. A produção global do corregimiento de Puchacay foi estudada através da comparação de registos de produção individuais para os anos de 1777 e 1779. Com esta análise, esperamos mostrar a importância e as singularidades da aguardente produzida localmente na região de Concepción, Chile.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE
Chile colonial, aguardente, vinho, história rural, história agrícola.

Introduction

The origin of the Chilean aguardiente beverage, locally known as pisco, has been the subject of numerous historical and scientific studies (Lacoste and Skewes, 2024; Cofré and Stewart, 2020; Lacoste, 2016; Lacoste et al., 2016 and 2015). Most of these studies focus on its first appearance in the La Serena region and the ongoing disputes with Peru over the origin of the name (Cofré and Stewart, 2020; Lacoste, 2016). This investigation aims to add to the historical framework established by previous studies by examining the origins and development of the same aguardiente beverage in the southern Chilean region of Concepción. Today, this region is known historically for its colonial frontier along the Biobio River and its wine production and the role that it played in the continuous cross-border trade with the Mapuche communities South of the Biobío River (Stewart, 2015b). However, very little quantitative archive research has been conducted, for the region of Concepción, to determine the extent and economic significance of the production and commercialization of other alcoholic beverages, in particular aguardiente, during the Colonial and early Republican periods (Del Pozo, 2004). Unlike the aguardiente produced in the Chilean region of La Serena, we do not have a specific name for its counterpart from the Concepción region, for which reason we will use the generic term of aguardiente to refer to the locally produced liquor or distilled beverage made by grapes and wine.

In this paper, we explore the origins of local aguardiente production in the Concepción region by examining little-known historical records that enable us to identify the region's original 17th-century aguardiente producers and trace its rapid expansion during the 18th century. We will analyze the economic and social processes that drove local aguardiente production and how they led to aguardiente becoming a vital part of the local production cycle in nearly every vineyard by the end of the colonial period. We present previously unpublished records, from civil and criminal court cases stored in the Chilean National Archive, showing the existence of production equipment and systems that allowed local landowners to use not only the byproducts of their wine production but also unsold old wine to produce a highly valued aguardiente. Lastly, we will show the use of archive records from individual haciendas allows us to estimate regional production levels and cycles.

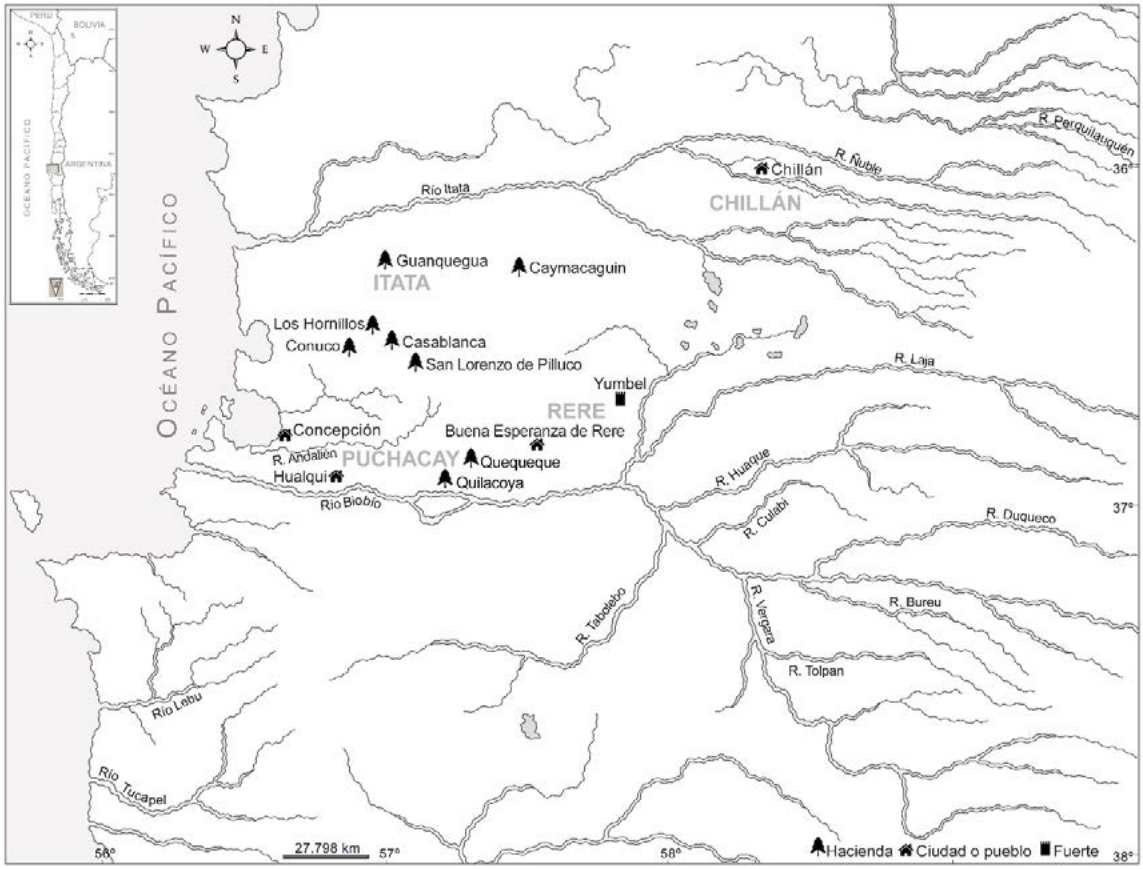
Origins of aguardiente in the Concepción region

While the origins and expansion of aguardiente production have been studied in several regions of Chile and other parts of Latin America, the Chilean region of Concepción has largely been overlooked (Lacoste and Skewes, 2024; De Ramón and Larraín, 1982). During the colonial period the region consisted in corregimientos: Chillán, Concepción, Itata, Puchacay, and Rere (Figure 1). Although few administrative records survive today from these corregimientos, an exhaustive search in the Chilean National Archives has permitted us to reconstruct part of their history. Recent studies show that the Arauco Indian War made simple tasks like predicting the grape harvest nearly impossible. Furthermore, reduced maritime traffic at the port of Concepción made importing materials needed for distillation difficult (Stewart, 2024). The region depended on the yearly Real Situado from Peru to pay the salaries of the two thousand soldiers comprising the Spanish army. While nearly every hacienda was owned by a military officer, only a small group of officers had the resources needed to invest in their rural haciendas (Stewart, 2021). The absence of export crops made local farmers dependent on sales of wheat and meat to the army as their only source of income (Stewart, 2024). Most also

sold wine directly to the soldiers on credit, but the lack of a stable economy made purchasing new equipment and expanding existing installations unpracticable (Stewart, 2015a).

The earliest mention of locally produced aguardiente comes from the year 1663, when Felipe Vásquez Cortés, secretary general of the army, purchased the Hacienda Caymacaguin from doña Ana de Castro.[1] At the time of the purchase, the hacienda and its vineyards were in disrepair and had only recently been repopulated after the 1655 Indian uprising. Several years later, when Felipe Vásquez Cortés sold the hacienda, he included in the sale record all of the installations needed to produce aguardiente. Another official, Andrés González Asugasti, sergeant major of the army, purchased the Hacienda Casablanca in 1665; he subsequently repaired the vineyards and imported the copper equipment necessary for aguardiente production.[2] A third official, Jorge Lorenzo de Olivar, Quartermaster General of the army, purchased the Hacienda Quilacoya, where he quickly expanded the vineyard and the production and storage capabilities of the adjoining warehouse.[3] Finally, a recently discovered list of approved urban store prices from the Concepción Town Council from the year 1665 includes a "quartillo de aguardiente en 8 reales."[4]

Figure 1. Map of the region of Concepción with the localities mentioned in this investigation
Figura 1. Mapa de la región de Concepción con las localidades mencionadas en esta investigación



Source: own elaboration. Fuente: elaboración propia.

1 ANH.CG vol. 74 pieza 10.
2 ANH.RA vol. 350 pieza 1.
3 ANH.RA vol. 72 pieza 1.
4 ANH.RA vol. 1846, foja 221.

During the following decades, many of the leading *haciendas*, including most, if not all, of the those belonging to Jesuit missions, implemented aguardiente production. Specific trips were made to Coquimbo to import the copper equipment necessary for production. Jesuit records show the distribution of aguardiente to their missions and central convent in Concepción, and military supply records confirm that a vibrant market for aguardiente existed within the walls of most of the region's military installations and within the city of Concepción's *pulperías* and convents.

A recently discovered ecclesiastical court case from 1687 sheds further light on the Jesuits' previously unknown involvement in the expansion of aguardiente production.[5] On June 20, 1687, the priests Francisco Mardones, Pedro Camus Sevallos, and Juan de Olivares convened a disciplinary council for the Concepción diocese, which was without a bishop at the time and under the administration of Pedro Camus Sevallos. The council was called due to rampant rumors claiming that Father Antonio Aleman, Prior of the Jesuit Convent in Concepción, was using the Convent as a store to sell imported goods, without paying import taxes and ignoring current Papal instructions prohibiting the sale of commercial goods by religious orders. Fearing that the commercialization of non-locally produced goods by the Jesuits was a significant issue that needed swift resolution, a disciplinary council was assembled.

Several witnesses were called, who subsequently confessed to having purchased cloth and other luxury goods from the Jesuit Fathers' private quarters and from booths set up in the convent's inner hallways. However, it was the testimony of Captain Juan Carrasco that drew the most attention. He stated that he was a local merchant with a store in the main plaza and had a large and varied number of items on consignment from Father Aleman. Among the products he was given to sell were over 70 copper jars or containers of various sizes, imported from the Chilean port of Coquimbo. While there is no detailed description of each copper item, they clearly correspond to the equipment needed to produce aguardiente. At this time, we have not located further records show the importation or sale of copper containers or equipment in the Concepción region during the 17th century, which leads us to suggest that this single previously unknown event played a pivotal role in the expansion of the production of aguardiente in the Concepción region.

Several other civil court cases reviewed during our investigation revealed the production of aguardiente and the complexities surrounding its inclusion within the colonial economic system. The earliest of these cases referred to the hacienda purchased by Quartermaster General Jorge Lorenzo de Olivar.6 Julio Retamal Ávila (1985) studied this civil court case, particularly the documents related to wine production at the Quilacoya Vineyard from the years 1676-1682. He noted an unusually large difference between the wine production reported by the vineyard's owner and the production calculated by the opposing witnesses (Table 1). The owner used tithing records and an inventory of his storage jars (vasijas) as evidence to show the amount of wine produced each year (Column A). Using the same production information presented to the court, an expert witness estimated the vineyard's wine production based on the number and age of the plants (Column B). A second expert

5 Archivo Roma, Chile, vol. 5.

6 ANH.RA vol. 72, pieza 1.

witness made a larger production estimate by including the harvest capabilities of the hacienda's indigenous workers (Column C).

Table 1. Wine production in the vineyard of Quilacoya
Tabla 1. Producción de vino en el viñedo de Quilacoya

Year	Wine production from tithing records	Expert wittness one	Expert wittness two
1676	150	644	800
1677	256	644	800
1678	380	785	800
1679	426	830	900
1680	510	950	1100
1681	791	1000	1200
1682	841	1400	1500
Average	**479**	**893**	**1014**

Source: own elaboration based on Real Audiencia, volume 72, from the Chilean National Archive and data originally published by Retamal (1985). Fuente: elaboración propia en base a Real Audiencia, volumen 72, Archivo Nacional Chileno, y datos originalmente publicados en Retamal (1985).

Both production estimates, vineyard size and paid harvesters, suggested that the hacienda's wine production was superior to the tithing records and available storage jars. These findings were then analyzed by additional witnesses who pointed out that the cited tithing records did not include the *hacienda's* aguardiente production. They testified that the vineyard's owner, Jorge Lorenzo de Olivar, was not only the Quartermaster General of the army but also one of the largest aguardiente producers in the region. They indicated that a substantial portion of the discrepancy between the reported and estimated wine production was due to an unreported production of aguardiente made from wine that occurred during the harvest period.

While portions of ranch production records, are cited in court documents, such as the case of the Quilacoya vineyard, original account books are very rare today. Only a handful of hacienda account books are known to exist from the Concepción region (Stewart, 2018). One of these account books comes from the Jesuit hacienda of Guanquehua, originally studied by Guillermo Bravo (2000). The surviving account book provides the production record for the Hacienda Guanquehua for the years 1721-1727.[7] In this particular case each annotation within the account book, referring to the wine and aguardiente production, included an explanation as to its source and if the production was affected by adverse weather conditions.

Table 2 shows a detailed summary of Jesuit's aguardiente production for the years 1721-1727. For example, the Jesuit records indicate that in 1721, aguardiente was produced on four separate occasions. First, 20 arrobas of aguardiente were made from the orujo of that year's harvest of 700 arrobas of wine. Several weeks later, 73.5 arrobas of old wine were distilled into 16.5 arrobas of aguardiente. This process was repeated a few weeks later, yielding 2.5 arrobas of aguardiente from 12 arrobas of old wine. Finally, several weeks later, 1.25 arro-

7 ANH.JES vol. 24.

bas were produced from 7.5 arrobas of borras. In total, 40.25 arrobas of aguardiente were produced, most of which were used locally or sold in the hacienda's on-site store. Weather conditions created yearly variations in the vineyard's harvest, which impacted the amount of aguardiente produced from orujo and borras, while economic trends either reduced or increased the available old wine that could be distilled into aguardiente. Furthermore, the simple, ye detailed, explanations found in the Jesuit account book allow us to estimate that amount of old wine or borras needed to produce an arroba of aguardiente (6/1) and the size of the harvest needed to produce an arroba of aguardiente from the orujos (35/1).

Table 2. Aguardiente production of the vineyard of Guanquehua
Tabla 2. Producción de aguardiente del viñedo de Guanquehua

Year	Arrobas of aguardiente	Source	Ratio: Aguardiente to wine	Production details
1720	4	Wine	1/6	4@ from 22.5@ of wine
1721	20	Orujo	1/35	20@ from the harvest of orujos
	16.5	Wine	1/5	16.5@ from 73.5@ of wine
	2	Borras	-	2@ from the borras
	2.5	Wine	1/5	2.5@ from 12@ of wine
	1.25	Borras	1/6	1.25@ from 7.5@ of borras
1722	16	Orujo	1/31	16@ from the harvest of orujos
	0.75	Borras	1/9	0.75@ from 6.5@ of borras
	1.5	Borras	1/9	1.5@ from 13.5@ of borras
	3.5	Borras	-	3.5@ from borras
1723	30	Borujo	1/27	30@ from the harvest of orujos
	12	Wine	1/6	12@ from 68@ of wine
1724	21	Orujo	1/34	21@ from the harvest of orujos
1725	-	-	-	-
1726	16	Orujo	1/31	16@ from the harvest of orujos
1727	16	Orujo	1/49	16@ from the harvest of orujos

Source: Archivo Nacional Histórico de Chile, Jesuitas de Chile, Vol. 24.

A third example of aguardiente production comes from the court documents related to the administration of the Hacienda Quequegue during the period of 1805 to 1822 (Table 3).[8] The hacienda's administrator report indicated that he had to deal with weather related difficulties, periodic raids during Chile's war of independence, and an overall scarcity of available manpower. It is interesting to note that despite these additional difficulties that

8 ANH.JY legajo 1, pieza 4.

he was able to maintain a consistent if not systematic production process. Even though the court documents do not indicate the origin of the recorded aguardiente production, an average of 41 arrobas of wine was recorded for each arroba of aguardiente, which when compared to the previously described Jesuit hacienda allows us to ascertain that this particular hacienda's aguardiente production came exclusively from the orujos and not from old wine.

Table 3. Wine and aguardiente production of the vineyard of Quequeque
Tabla 3. Producción de vino y aguardiente en el viñedo de Quequeque

Year	Wine production (arrobas)	Aguardiente production (arrobas)
1805	227	8
1806	331	14
1807	249	9
1812	271.5	3
1813	241	6.5
1814	225	5.5
1815	296	7
1816	272	1
1817	182	5.5
1818	202	5
1819	233	6
1820	228	6
1821	237	6
Average	246	6

Source: Archivo Nacional Histórico de Chile, Judiciales de Yumbel, legajo 1, pieza 4.

Aguardiente production in the Corregimiento of Puchacay

While visualizing the aguardiente production in specific haciendas is vital to our understanding of its importance within the local economy, a more general view is also important. As previously mentioned, the region of Concepción was divided into five administrative sectors known as *corregimientos*, each governed by a *Corregidor* (Judge) appointed by the Governor for a term generally lasting two years (Figure 1). The corregimiento of Concepción consisted of the city itself and its urban population, while the remaining *corregimientos* were mostly rural. Among them, Itata, Puchacay, and Rere were known for their wine and aguardiente production. Although few administrative records from these sectors survive today, part of their history has been reconstructed. Previous investigations have shown that the *corregimiento* of Itata became the region's wine export center, as the costs associated with transporting wine to Concepción made selling it at local prices impractical (Stewart, 2015b). The *corregimiento* of Rere focused on supplying frontier military installations and engaging in cross-border trade with the Mapuche communities. Lastly, Puchacay concentrated on supplying the cities of Concepción and Chillán with wine and aguardiente for the local population. Within Puchacay, two centers of production developed: the first, in Quillón and Cerro Negro, produced wine and aguardiente for the nearby city of Chillán, while vineyards in the Andalién and Hualqui valleys provided a steady supply of locally produced wine and aguardiente to the city of Concepción.

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Of the three wine-producing *corregimientos*, only Puchacay has a substantial variety of existing historical records. Local notary and judicial records from the 18th century, as well as judicial appeals of local court cases argued before the Real Audiencia in Santiago during the 17th and 18th centuries, allow us to identify most of the *corregimiento's* wine-producing *haciendas*. Additionally, the region's harsh, mountainous geography made it unsuitable for large commercial haciendas, encouraging instead the proliferation of small family farms and vineyards (Solano, 1996). Understanding the internal dynamics of these family farms and *haciendas* is key to grasping how local aguardiente production operated within the *corregimiento*, differentiating it from the rest of the region.

Puchacay between the years 1777-1779

Previous investigations revealed the existence of two valuable reports that provide a unique view of the overall wine and aguardiente production in the *corregimiento* of Puchacay for the years 1777 and 1779. They provide us with a better more focused understand of the inner workings of aguardiente production and commercialization in the Concepción region. The first report (List A) contains answers to a series of questions submitted in 1779 by its Corregidor Gregorio Álvarez Rubio. Several years earlier, the Spanish King had requested that each *Corregidor* answer a set of questions about their jurisdiction to help officials in Spain better understand the local social and economic conditions. A copy of the final report eventually reached the British Museum, where it was located and published in its entirety by Francisco Solano (1996) (Table 4). Santiago Lorenzo (1992) and other Chilean historians have since used parts of this report as a foundation for analyzing the region's economic development and demographic distribution.

Their analysis showed that each *Corregidor* submitted an individual report, with varying levels of detail. The *Corregidores* of Concepción, Chillán, Itata, and Rere submitted reports that answered each question without providing specific data to support their findings. By contrast, Gregorio Álvarez Rubio, *Corregidor* of Puchacay, submitted a highly detailed analysis of his jurisdiction. One of the questions requested a list of the most important *haciendas* and their production. Álvarez Rubio stated that he did not consider any of his jurisdiction's *haciendas* regionally important or economically distinguished; instead of leaving the question blank, he chose to include a detailed list of all the *corregimiento's haciendas*. This list includes the name, size (in *cuadras*), vineyards (number of plants), and names and family sizes of each of the owners and sharecroppers of 144 *haciendas* or farms within his jurisdiction. The results showed 730 owners or tenants and 107 separate vineyards located in 73 *haciendas* or farms. Despite the report's level of detail, it has two minor deficiencies: first, small farms on the outskirts of the city of Concepción or the ruined city of Penco were not described in as much detail as those farther inland, suggesting that several small vineyards were left out of his analysis. Second, two inland *haciendas* are absent from the list, indicating that the report in the British Museum may be missing a page. Even with these issues, List A remains the most detailed land-use report available for the Concepción region during the colonial period.

Table 4. Vineyard distribution for the Corregimiento of Puchacay for the year 1779
Tabla 4. Distribución de viñas para el Corregimiento de Puchacay en el año 1779

Haciendas of Puchacay	Individual (1-5.000 plants)	Small (5-15.000 plants)	Medium (15-25.000 plants)	Large (>25.000 plants)	Total
# of vineyards	43 (39%)	37 (34%)	9 (8%)	21 (19%)	110
Total plants	117.800 (8%)	338.000 (23%)	183.000 (13%)	821.000 (56%)	1.459.800
Estimated wine production	2.356	6.760	3.660	16.420	29.196
Average wine production	55	150	407	782	265

Source: own elaboration based on Solano (1996). Fuente: elaboración propia en base a Solano (1996).

An analysis of the vineyards described in List A, along with the addition of the two missing vineyards, shows a total of 1,459,800 plants, which a previous investigation indicates would correspond to a wine production of at least 29,196 arrobas.[9] A closer look at the distribution of the vineyards reveals that 43 can be categorized as individual or family vineyards, with an average wine production of 55 arrobas—enough to cover the basic consumption of the extended family and the costs directly related to its production. The next group of 37 vineyards falls into the category of small yet potentially commercial operations, producing an average of 150 arrobas of wine, which, after individual consumption, would have been used to pay workers and buy trade goods from traveling merchants. These first two categories accounted for 73% of the total vineyards. The medium (9) and large (21) vineyards are considered commercial and produced large quantities of wine sold throughout the region in stores known locally as pulperías, or in the port of Talcahuano, where it was exported as cheap wine to Peru.

While List A was sent to the Spanish King before making its way to the British Museum, a second, earlier report, List B, remained unpublished in the Chilean National Archive. This second report, titled "Padrón de viñas y cantidades de vinos y aguardientes que producen," was a detailed analysis of Chile's rural vineyards and aguardiente production for the year 1777 (Table 5).[10] It is unclear at this time what the intended purpose of this report was or why it was not included in the main report sent to Spain. It is also intriguing that the report in the Chilean National Archive is incomplete, as several Corregidores appear not to have submitted their local production numbers. Just as with List A, Gregorio Álvarez Rubio, the Corregidor of Puchacay, submitted a simple, yet uniquely detailed report on the production and commercialization of aguardiente in Puchacay. While other reports included testimonies from specific aguardiente producers or small lists of the largest producers, Álvarez Rubio submitted a simple chart listing the name of each producer, the number of arrobas of aguardiente produced, and the amount of aguardiente commercialized outside of the hacienda. In other words, List B provides the names of all the aguardiente producers and the quantities they produced for personal and commercial purposes.

9 An analysis of 284 vineyards from the Concepción region showed that the annual wine production in arrobas, in the 18th century, corresponded to 2% of the total number of plants. In other words, one arroba of wine was produced for every 50 grape plants.

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Table 5. Distribution of the production of aguardiente in the corregimiento of Puchacay, year 1777
Tabla 5. Distribución de la producción de aguardiente en el corregimiento de Puchacay, año 1777

Aguardiente producers	**Individual (0-2 arrobas)**		**Small (2-5 arrobas)**		**Medium (5-10 arrobas)**		**Large (>10 arrobas)**		**Total**	
	82 (49%)		**45 (27%)**		**26 (15%)**		**16 (9%)**		**169**	
Personal use	Total: 51.75	Average: 0.64	Total: 80.5	Average: 1.78	Total: 91	Average: 3.5	Total: 107	Average: 6.69	Total: 330.25	Average: 1.95
Comercial use	Total: 36	Average: 0.44	Total: 87	Average: 1.93	Total: 110	Average: 4.23	Total: 220	Average: 13.75	Total: 453	Average: 2.68
Total production	Total: 87.75	Average: 1.1	Total: 167.5	Average: 3.7	Total: 201	Average: 7.7	Total: 327	Average: 20.4	Total: 783.25	Average: 4.6

Source/fuente: Archivo Nacional Histórico de Chile, Capitanía General, Volumen 353 pieza 1.

List B includes the names and production numbers of 169 aguardiente producers. A review of the list indicates that the landowners omitted on List A appear on List B, and about a quarter of the names on List B do not appear on List A, many of which have been identified as the owners of small farms that were not thoroughly examined on List A. Additionally, there are 50% more producers of aguardiente on List B than individual vineyards identified on List A, which shows that many communally owned vineyards had individual production processes. The total amount of aguardiente production recorded for 1777 was 783.25 arrobas, of which 453 arrobas were sold outside the hacienda where it was produced.

To analyze and compare the data presented in the Puchacay questionnaire (List A) and the aguardiente production (List B), it was necessary to establish the correlation between them and assess their accuracy. While we were able to review List B in person at the Chilean National Archive, we could only access the published transcription of List A (Solano 1996). Since List B did not include the names of the corresponding haciendas, we cross-referenced the list of aguardiente producers with List A, along with judicial and notary records from the region. This allowed us to confirm three aspects of the list: first, that all aguardiente producers were owners and not sharecroppers (*inquilinos*); second, that the names of the owners of the three haciendas missing from List A were included in their entirety; and third, that List B included, in some cases, the names of the oldest child or son-in-law of widowed landowners from List A. We were unable to correlate around a dozen names from List B, which we assume correspond to the landowners of the "chacras" or small farms located near the city of Concepción, whose owners' names were left blank on List A.

List A included 73 haciendas with vineyards. We added two additional haciendas missing from the original list, bringing the total to 75 haciendas with 110 vineyards. Comparing the names on lists A and B, allows us to confirm the production of aguardiente in 67 of the 75 haciendas (89%) and the probable production in the remaining 8. Further analysis shows that the 75 haciendas reported a total of 250 owners, 169 of whom produced aguardiente (68%). This indicates that at least half of the vineyards had more than one aguardiente producer, which is expected in a region where many of the original 17th-century haciendas had not been judicially subdivided but had defined internal divisions (Stewart, 2015a).

Production of aguardiente in Puchacay

The 1777 and 1779 production lists for Puchacay provide insight into the local production of aguardiente. However, it is unclear how the production system functioned as a whole, as many of the 169 registered producers do not seem to have had the necessary resources to produce aguardiente. To better understand how the system operated, we reviewed local judicial and notary records for the period 1700-1830, as well as court cases appealed to the Real Audiencia in Santiago during the same period. While we generally focused on wills, probate, and notary records, several criminal and civil court cases involving vineyards proved invaluable in understanding how the system worked within medium and small aguardiente-producing vineyards.

One such case involves the criminal court proceedings between Rosa Farías and Pablo Ruiz over allegations of stolen grapes dating back to 1761.[11] Rosa explained that her husband had inherited part of the hacienda Los Hornillos, which included a vineyard and equipment for wine production, from his mother. Since her husband was a soldier stationed at the Valdivia garrison, several hundred kilometers from Los Hornillos, the day-to-day management of the hacienda was left to the butler, Victorio Sepúlveda. However, after her husband's death, Rosa learned that Pablo Ruiz, who lived nearby, had entered her vineyard, and harvested a large portion of her grapes without her prior knowledge or permission. Witnesses testified that Pablo Ruiz had illegally harvested grapes for three years and brought them in large baskets to Nicolás Arriagada's house, where he used Arriagada's distilling equipment to process the grapes into wine and aguardiente. Although the production was relatively low—between 5-10 arrobas of wine and 0.5-1 arrobas of aguardiente each year—witnesses emphasized that Pablo Ruiz had not given Rosa Farias her share of the production since he had only paid Nicolás Arriagada for the use of his distilling equipment. The witnesses also noted that renting the distilling equipment from a local producer like Nicolás Arriagada was considered normal and did not arouse suspicion.This type of rental agreement allowed many co-owners of smaller vineyards to produce aguardiente without investing in the equipment themselves.

A second court case specifically addresses this process of renting aguardiente production equipment.[12] In 1742, Ignacia Díaz sued her uncle Juan Carrasco over the possession of a large copper paila that their great-grandparents, Juan García Carrasco and Catalina Ramírez, had purchased in Coquimbo. Ignacia claimed that the copper paila, which could cook 5 arrobas of wine, was purchased during Juan García Carrasco's first marriage and that her uncle descended from García Carrasco's second marriage. The last will and testament of Catalina Ramírez, dated 1687, was submitted as evidence, showing that the paila had been in use since that time. Juan Carrasco responded that he did not physically possess the paila because it had been rented out for aguardiente production for the last fifty years. It is unclear whether Ignacia Díaz wanted to recover the paila for her own use or just wanted the rent payments from the local producers who benefited from it.

11 ANH.JP legajo 5 pieza 4.

12 ANH.JP legajo 4 pieza 3.

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Probate records also show evidence of aguardiente production and equipment. For instance, in 1819, Manuel Oyoldes passed away, leaving his property to his daughters.[13] An inventory of his belongings showed several copper containers used in aguardiente production and 11 arrobas of aguardiente, valued at 3 pesos each, three times the value of the wine listed in the inventory. Another probate record from the same year revealed that Felipe Varela owned all the equipment necessary for producing aguardiente and had 6 arrobas of aguardiente.[14]

One of the larger commercial producers of aguardiente listed in List B was Juan Francisco Narbarte. In 1780, he produced 10 arrobas of aguardiente, 8 of which were sold in the city of Concepción.[15] He owned two adjoining haciendas, San Lorenzo and Pilluco, in the corregimiento of Puchacay. Each hacienda had several large vineyards and all the necessary equipment for producing aguardiente. Upon his death in 1789, an inventory of the haciendas showed that while large amounts of aguardiente were produced alongside traditional wine, unlike the wine, the aguardiente was not stored on-site. We can assume that the year's production had already been sold in Concepción, explaining why none was found in his hacienda's warehouses.

Another court case from the corregimiento of Puchacay illustrates the internal complexities related to aguardiente production.[16] In 1794, civil court proceedings commenced between Bruno Bazán and Vicente Inojosa concerning the division of the properties left by Juan José Inojosa, Vicente's father and Bruno's father-in-law, who had died in 1780. Bruno claimed that after his father-in-law's death, the hacienda's wine and aguardiente production had been equally divided among the legal heirs. However, he claimed that the situation had changed four years earlier when he married Mercedes Inojosa, since then she had been left out of the yearly distribution without an explanation from her brother Vicente. An inventory of the hacienda by the local judge in 1793 showed that most of the aguardiente equipment was in disrepair. Vicente Inojosa submitted production records for 1790-1792, showing that the vineyard's production barely covered the cost of hired help. His notes indicated that in 1790, no aguardiente was produced since the orujo had spoiled, and in the following two years, the annual production was just three arrobas.

Bruno Bazán accused his brother-in-law of letting the hacienda fall into disrepair to lower its value and purchase it at a reduced price. He insisted that the vineyard produced 250 arrobas of wine and twenty arrobas of aguardiente annually. Witnesses were called to clarify the differences between the brothers-in-law. Timoteo Gallardo, who had worked as a cowboy at the hacienda for several years, recalled a wine production of 200 arrobas and aguardiente production that filled two tinajas, each containing six arrobas. Vicente Inojosa's witnesses testified that when Vicente took over the vineyard, it was overgrown with weeds and bushes and produced little to no wine. They explained that Vicente had restored the vineyard at great cost, which accounted for the reduced production. Further evidence corroborated their statements, showing that while the hacienda and vineyard were in disrepair, this was due to the high cost of production and harsh weather conditions, rather than an attempt to lower the property's value for his own personal gain.

13 ANH.JP legajo 1 pieza 8.
14 ANH.JP legajo 1 pieza 8.
15 ANH.JC legajo 174 pieza 6.
16 ANH.RA vol. 802, pieza 1.

Analysis of aguardiente production in Puchacay

Some questions arise from unpublished List B's detailed production record for aguardiente in the corregimiento of Puchacay. First, how does its production compare to that of the neighboring corregimientos of Itata and Rere? Second, did the majority of the aguardiente produced come from orujo or old wine? Neither the Corregidor of Itata nor Rere submitted a report (List B) describing the aguardiente in their jurisdictions, so we must rely on the reports, published by Solano (List A) (Solano, 1996). The Corregidor of Itata described the wine production of the region's largest haciendas but did not include any indication of its overall production or the aguardiente production within his jurisdiction. Meanwhile, the Corregidor of Rere submitted a chart showing the wine and aguardiente production for the parishes within his jurisdiction. However, it is unclear how the production numbers were calculated since only the small forts of Santa Juana and Talcamávida included non-rounded numbers. Furthermore, he reported a total production of 19,686 arrobas of wine, nearly equal that of Puchacay, while also recording a production of 4,953 arrobas of aguardiente—over six times the production of Puchacay.

Table 6. Wine and aguardiente production for the Corregimiento of Rere, year 1779
Tabla 6. Producción de vino y aguardiente para el Corregimiento de Rere, año 1779

Parish	Wine (arrobas)			Aguardiente (arrobas)		
	Produced	Internal use	Exportation	Produced	Internal use	Exportation
Rere	10.000	6.000	4.000	2.400	800	1.600
Yumbel	7.000	4.300	2.700	2.000	900	1.100
Los Ángeles	2.000	817	1.183	517	316	201
Santa Juana	170	348	172	30	30	0
Talcamavida	516	348	172	30	30	0
Total	**19.686**	**11.635**	**8.055**	**4.953**	**2.052**	**2.901**

Source/fuente: Solano, 1996.

The Table 6 suggests that either the amount of wine produced in the corregimiento of Rere was severely underreported or that a large portion of the new wine was immediately converted into aguardiente, making aguardiente the region's principal cash crop instead of wine. Unfortunately, the report itself is silent on this matter. However, surviving criminal court proceedings from Yumbel indicate that large amounts of aguardiente were sold in local pulperías (stores) and that its consumption by lower-class workers was excessive.[17] Therefore, we can assume that a significant portion of the corregimientos' wine production was converted into aguardiente, which was sold to the local population and exported South to the Mapuche villages or West to the city of Concepción.

Lastly, the previously mentioned Jesuit records from the hacienda Guanquehua in the corregimiento of Itata allow us to ascertain not only the aguardiente production cycle implemented in that corregimiento—where aguardiente was produced at different times from orujo, borras, and old wine—but also the relative correlation between the amount of wine used or needed in each process, as shown on Table 2. While the amount of aguardiente produced from orujo varied yearly, on average, 35-40 arrobas of wine were needed to pro-

17 ANH.CG vol. 524 pieza 3.

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duce one arroba of aguardiente from orujos. As mentioned earlier, a previous investigation estimated the overall wine production for the corregimiento of Puchacay in 1779 at 29,196 arrobas. Using the average derived from the orujo of Guanquehua, the estimated amount of aguardiente produced from orujo in 1779 in Puchacay would be between 730 and 834 arrobas. List B records the total production for the year 1777 as 783.25 arrobas, suggesting that while most aguardiente production in Itata and Rere came from old wine, in Puchacay, the orujo was the primary, if not the only, source of aguardiente production. This explains the connection between the initial wine production and the production of aguardiente in the corregimiento of Puchacay.

Conclusions

The region of Concepción has long been regarded as one of colonial Chile's poorest and least developed areas (Carmagnani, 2001). Within this region, the corregimiento of Puchacay was particularly poor, with most haciendas situated in rugged, mountainous terrain unsuitable for large-scale cattle ranching or extensive wheat fields. Its location along the frontier with Araucanía made it a frequent target for bandits and Mapuche raiding parties (Casanova, 1987). Nevertheless, the ongoing military presence and relative peace along the frontier provided economic opportunities for local producers that differed from those available to their counterparts in the Santiago and La Serena regions (De Ramón and Larraín, 1982; Carmagnani, 2001).

One such opportunity was the cultivation of vineyards, as Concepción's climate made them relatively easy to plant and maintain. Vineyards quickly became an integral part of every hacienda in the region. They varied in size, from a few thousand to over a hundred thousand plants. Large warehouses, often exceeding the size of the main hacienda house, were built adjacent to the vineyards to store wine and aguardiente production equipment, as well as large earthenware jars for wine storage. The significance of wine and aguardiente as cash crops stemmed from their essential role in the diets of both the Spanish and indigenous populations (Stewart, 2015a). They could be easily sold to soldiers at the region's frontier forts or through small stores located at the haciendas or in the city of Concepción. A soldier on leave visiting his family's ranch could return to the fort with leather bags full of wine and jars of aguardiente, which he could sell almost immediately to fellow soldiers and their Mapuche allies. While the military market was a constant, it was not economically viable for producers in Itata to undertake the lengthy overland journey, leaving the military and indigenous markets primarily to the producers of Puchacay and Rere.

After an initial increase at the beginning of the 17th century, the number of vineyards remained static. However, a reduction in the size of the army and the internal subdivision of numerous haciendas introduced many new vineyards the first half of the 18th century. Subsequent overproduction of wine led to a sharp decline in prices, leaving many merchants or hacendados unable to sell all their production before the next harvest. Since most wine was stored in large earthenware jars, any unsold wine had to be removed before new wine could be introduced. Smaller quantities of wine were stored for immediate sale or transport in cured leather pouches; however, local records indicate that this was not a sustainable long-term solution, which made converting excess wine into aguardiente essential to prevent spoilage.

In the second half of the 17th century, military officials began producing aguardiente. Initially, the high cost of imported copper equipment limited aguardiente production to a select group of military landowners. However, the opening of the Peruvian wheat market in 1689 brought new resources to the region, tripling the number of ships stopping at the port of Concepción (Ramos, 1966). This increased trade between the internal ports of Concepción and La Serena permitted the importation of the copper equipment needed for aguardiente production.

Most aguardiente production initially occurred during the wine production phase, utilizing leftover or waste materials that would otherwise have gone unused, known as orujos. Historical records also suggest a second period of aguardiente production occurred in the weeks leading up to the grape harvest, when any remaining wine from the previous year's crop was converted into aguardiente to make room for the new wine. Records show that 5 to 6 arrobas of old wine were needed to produce one arroba of aguardiente, making this process crucial for reducing the stock of wine stored in the region's large earthen jars. Shortly thereafter, a third production period was introduced after the main wine production, during which a portion of the newly fermented wine was distilled into aguardiente, allowing for additional wine production in the case of an abundant grape harvest.

The region's economic expansion came to an abrupt halt in 1751 when a massive earthquake destroyed most vineyards and warehouses. Almost all of the large earthenware jars (vasijas) used for wine storage were smashed or otherwise damaged, and it took nearly twenty years for many vineyards to replace their storage capacity. During this time, the number of small aguardiente producers in Puchacay increased significantly, partly due to the ease of storing and transporting aguardiente. By 1780, every vineyard several owner's producing aguardiente for personal use and as a cash crop. Workers' salaries, local taxes, commercial debts, and individual purchases were often paid in aguardiente. While most producers in Puchacay generated relatively small amounts of aguardiente, its importance as one of the corregimiento's main cash crops made it an essential part of their economy and society, persisting long after the colonial period.

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