

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE HOLOCENE TO RECENT DAYS WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS AND ARMADILLOS IN ARGENTINA?

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RESUMO

The aim of this work is to analyze the relation of armadillos-humans from early times to nowadays. We try to establish the role of the armadillos in human populations. Based on the archaeological record we could explore the social cosmovision, exhibition, and communication. We propose the idea that it is very important to reconstruct the different uses and significances along times of this relation from a social and scientific point of view. Archaeological records show that armadillos were consumed during the early Holocene by hunter gatherers, as a complement of guanacos (*Lama guanicoe*), american ostriches (*Rhea americana?*) and small-sized mammals. From these, we also observe osteoderms of different species with thermal alterations, which suggest that armadillos were cooked. The ornamentation of the exposed surface of these osteoderms allowed us to determine the taxonomic identity, and establish which species were more consumed. In this context, we determine that the most consumed armadillo species were *Zaedius pichiy*, *Chaetophractus villosus* and *C. vellerosus* in order of abundances. As another example of this deep relationship, from 600 to 950 A.D "La Aguada" culture, we can find what we call "pucos-quirquincho", which are zoomorphic ceramic bowls, representing armadillos. These "pucos" appear as a part of the funeral trousseau in human burials, and we also find this relation in today 's native communities, like Wichís and Qom from El Gran Chaco region in Argentina (or Aché-este in Paraguay, as well). Armadillos are also part of the artistic inspiration in different Argentinian cultures, which represent these species as ornaments, as in the musical instruments called "charango" , meaning "armadillo". Although some farmers and native people have concerns on armadillos' persistence and they do not consume them during the reproductive season, others purchase these animals in regional markets throughout South America, and hundreds of armadillos are annually seized by wildlife control agencies from illegal hunting for commercial purposes. This group of ancient mammals has demonstrated to have an ancestral relationship with south american cultures. This is the main reason why it is necessary to elaborate new investigation, conservation and educational programs which include the popular knowledge as a cooperative way to construct a much more responsible and respectful relationship.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Armadillo, human, Holocene, relationship, Argentina, today, archaeological.

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