



· TREMPULCAHUE ·

The soul of human beings, the 'Am', becomes Pillü at death, a state in which it is very vulnerable to evil spirits 'wekufe'. To save itself, it must travel east to a legendary Pacific island called Ngill chenmaiwe. That journey cannot be undertaken by Pillü alone, but has to be transported by the Trempulcahue. These are four old women who every night, at sunset, are transformed into whales that travel to the island taking with them the souls of the dead. These women are invisible to the living, and play an essential and benign role in the cycle of human life.



Trempulcahue is a **MAPUCHE** creature
Current population: 1.950.156



The Mapuche people is one of the original American ethnicities, with evidence of their settlement in the southern cone of the continent since at least the fifth century BC. Hunter and horticulturist people never had a desire to conquer or built empires, choosing to organize locally and with a predilection for self-sufficiency. In the 15th century a victorious war was waged in response to the Inca Empire's attempt to conquer its territory, although the northernmost parts had to agree to pay a tribute. Shortly after, the arrival of the Spaniards and the conquest of the continent destroyed the Inca Empire. The Europeans also tried to conquer the Mapuche territories, which at that time were inhabited by a million people. Again, the Indians responded with a war of resistance that lasted more than a century. Although European diseases had decimated the indigenous population (there were only 200,000 Mapuches left in 1598), they managed to defeat the Spaniards in the battle of Curalaba.

Over the following centuries, the Spaniards recognized Mapuche independence, agreed to establish the border on the Biobío River, and avoided entering their territories, which continued under their traditional self-government.

In the nineteenth century, Argentina and Chile, states under construction after achieving independence from Spain, undertook the conquest of the Mapuches, which they achieved through bloody wars. As a result, most of the common lands were stolen by the state and sold to landowners, causing cultural and economic trauma for a people deeply rooted in their physical environment. The struggles to recover these lands continued until today, with occupations and demonstrations being common, often harshly repressed.

The Mapuche social organization is based on the small scale, being the main unit the core family. Several families, linked by kinship, live in nearby houses forming a *lof*, where the most important jobs are shared. Only in emergencies (war, hunger, disease) did the *lofs* organize themselves into larger entities, the '*rehues*'.

Mapuche religiosity is focused on the relationship between the supernatural and the tangible world, with special concern for honoring nature spirits and ancestors, as well as Mother Earth (*Ñuke Mapu*). According to their cosmovision, the world has three planes: the superior ('*Wenu Mapu*'), where divine beings and Mapuche ancestors live, the terrestrial world ('*Nag Mapu*'), where people and nature reside, and the underworld ('*Miñche Mapu*'), subterranean, where evil spirits live.

The Mapuches do not know the institutionalization of religion, nor do they construct buildings for their ceremonies, which are generally carried out in nature. In each locality there is a shaman who guides the rites.

