

“The Mapuche World View” tells us about how people understood the world they lived in.

MAPUCHE WORLD VIEW

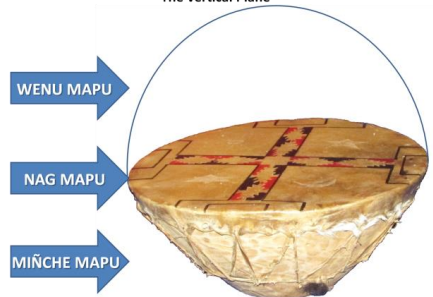
- Understanding the mapuche world view implies understanding their whole culture. One of the most important ideas in their point of view is that the natural and the supernatural worlds coexist, because the mapuche people assume that the latter is as real and tangible as the former. In the
- 5 mapuche culture, everything is understood as a duality – there is ‘**Anthü**’, the sun, and ‘**Küllem**’, the moon; there is man, and there is woman; there is the old man and the child. And most important is the belief that human beings are part of the earth, and people live in harmony and balance with it.
- 10 Before looking into the mapuche spirituality, it is important to notice that when describing the religious tradition of the mapuche people there are no written records of the old legends and myths, since their world view was transmitted orally. This means that their beliefs are not totally homogeneous among the different ‘**Lof**’ or communities.
- 15 The world view in the mapuche religious thought can be taught using the ‘**Kultxüg**’ and can be summarized in two planes: a vertical plane, which is spiritual, and a horizontal plane, which is earthly.

The Vertical Plane

- In general terms, in the vertical plane (fig. 1) the mapuche people describe the
- 20 ‘**Wall Mapu**’ or ‘all the land’ where they identify the existence of a central earth and two other dimensions or levels.

- The central earth’s name is ‘**Nag Mapu**’, which is the visible space where human
- 25 beings and nature inhabit. The ‘**Wenu Mapu**’, above the Nag Mapu, is the sacred and invisible space where the divine family, the good spirits and the ancestors live, and which

FIG. 1. THE MAPUCHE UNIVERSE – ‘WALL MAPU’
The Vertical Plane



25 corresponds to the dimension of goodness. The third dimension is the 'Mifche Mapu' – the underworld – which is below the Nag Mapu and is the space where the bad spirits or evil forces live. These are the three dimensions which shape the structure of the mapuche universe in the vertical plane.

It is important to notice that the **Wenu Mapu** is depicted in the kultxüg as the sacred space where the sun, the moon, the stars and the Divine Family dwell. 'Kuse' or old woman, 'Fücha' or old man, 'Ülche' or young woman, and 'Weche' or young man (Fig. 2) compose the family that reproduces the Nag Mapu, and also reproduces itself in the mapuche family on earth. This means that the elder give their wisdom and

FIG. 2. WENU MAPU – THE DIVINE FAMILY
Horizontal Plane



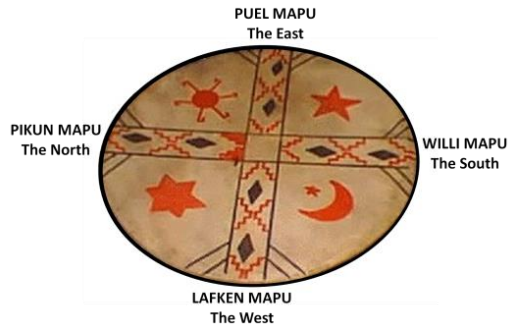
knowledge to the young people, and they, in turn, hand over what they learnt from the elder to the new generations.

The Horizontal Plane

40 In the horizontal plane of the world (fig. 3) – represented by the rawhide of the kultxüg – we have the ethical and spatial orders. This space is the world as it is –

45 the **Nag Mapu** or 'the land we walk'. It is the earth and its division in the four cardinal points. The mapuche people give the four cardinal points a hierarchical order

FIG. 3. NAG MAPU - THE CARDINAL POINTS
Horizontal Plane



50 of opposition between good and evil. They are oriented in a circular shape starting from the East counterclockwise. They always start at the 'Puel Mapu' or the East, which is the place of the gods, the good spirits, their ancestors and the divine help. Then we have the 'Pikun Mapu' or the North, which is a place of bad luck. Afterwards, we have the 'Lhafkenh Mapu' or

the West, where the spirits of evil dwell, and finally the 'Willi Mapu' or the South, which is a place of good luck. According to some specialists, the negative representation of the North and the West is associated to negative historical events. The Inca and the Spanish invasions arrived from the north, and some tsunamis (coming from the west) devastated the coastal villages. This understanding of the four points also regulates the ceremonies and rituals of the mapuche people – such as the 'Ngillatun' or rogation ceremony – starting from the East and moving counter-clockwise to the South. In the rituals where there is dancing, the dancers follow the same direction. Time is also perceived as the eternal return of the circle to the East around the 'Rewe' or sacred Tree, which represents the centre of the world. Even the 'Ruka', or house, is built following the same pattern, starting from the door from East to West.

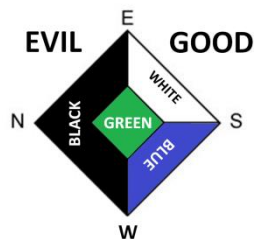
Colour Symbology

Finally, among the mapuche people the colours of earthly nature have been intimately related to their world view and its platforms.

White and Blue – in its three hues: violet, dark blue and light blue – represent the four natural colours of the sky and the clouds. They are the best colours for daily use in clothing, make-up, and decorations. They are also used in rituals, and they are the main emblems for the 'Machi, and the Gillatun. Black symbolizes night, darkness, witchcraft, the bad spirits, and death. Red is war and blood, and it is prohibited at the Gillatun, which is a ritual for social cohesion and fraternity. However, red also has a positive connotation, since it is related to the flowers, especially the Copihue. Finally, Green symbolizes Earth and Nature in all its splendour. It is a symbol of fertility.

The Earth in this culture is divided as a projection of the symbology of colour of the natural and supernatural worlds (Fig. 3). The East and the South are associated to Blue and/or White for the platform of good. The

FIG. 4 – THE EARTH AND COLOUR SYMBOLOGY



North and the East are associated to the platform of evil, and the centre of the Earth is associated to the green of the natural world.

As it can be seen, the world view of the Mapuche Culture is a dual one, where good and evil coexist on earth, not as a fusion but as a dynamic

90 interplay.