

This exhibition is dedicated to the mapuche people, **Seeds of Chile**. It has been provided by the Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino, and it has been shown in different european countries. Its content shows the development of elements and cultural ornaments as their language, custom, silverwork, textiles and clothing according to their special symbols.

As an example, just to note that silver was worked by specialized metalworkers who made necklaces, pectoral ornaments and headdresses for women, but also produced horse riding gear and even the dishes of the powerful chiefs.

In relation with the textile production, the quality of the woven made by the Mapuche turn these products into a major trade goods, and in a reason for contact with Spaniards and indigenous of the eastern slope of the Andes.

The design of the textiles, colours and arrangement constitute a system of symbols that can be interpreted as a true language.



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MAPUCHE Seeds of Chile

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Museo de América and
Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino



CHAIN SEQUIL

Mapuche

Seeds of Chile

Today, the Mapuche –an Orinary People initially inhabiting Chile’s mid-southern section– number more than 600,000, residing in the nation’s rural and urban zones.

During the period of the Spanish Conquest, they were renowned for their fierce resistance to the invasion of their territories, and subsequently, to the attempts at domination by the Republic. Their final subjugation came only at the end of the 19th century, after almost three hundred years of fighting.

Despite this protracted conflict, there was inevitable contact and strong mixing with the non-indigenous society, resulting in the Mapuche adopting important European elements, such as the horse – essential for their military campaigns. In addition, the integration of this animal into their daily life allowed them to increase their mobility and extend their influence, in effect elevating their prestige among the native societies occupying the Argentine pampas.

Thus, in the 19th century, mapudungun, or the Mapuche language, was spoken in Northern Patagonia, from the Pacific to the Atlantic.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the power and wealth of the Mapuche chiefs was based on warfare, the spoils of war, and control over the traffic and commerce of animals brought from the Argentine pampas. Through their riches, they were able to employ precious metalworkers, who made silver articles to adorn their wives and horse riding gear. Also, each personage’s numerous wives produced fine textiles, which were sold to the colonists. Silver

articles and woven goods were well-known elements of prestige in the period’s indigenous and mestizo, or mixed-blood, world.

At the close of the 19th century, the Mapuche were subjugated by the Republic of Chile’s military forces, and their territories were divided up and distributed by the State to the nation’s colonists and to foreigners, leaving them only small tracts on which to subsist. With the population increase, the land became divided into tinier and tinier farm holdings, adversely affecting the economic and social conditions of this society.

As a result, by the middle of the 20th century, migration became rapid from the country to the city. Today, more than half of the Mapuche live in urban centers.

Beginning in the 1990s, the Chilean Government initiated a “new deal” policy with the nation’s various indigenous groups. Being the largest native ethnicity, the Mapuche are well represented in the country’s Indian organizations, and are most often heard by the nation’s citizens. Nevertheless, the biggest problems they currently face still remain poverty and the difficulty of recovering land once allocated to them by the Government that was later expropriated. Their voices clamor, too, for greater participation and autonomy in the decision-making process affecting their ancestral lands.



A Mapuche chief's manta



PALÍN
Game of warriors



CEPHALIC CLUB HEAD
A symbol of power



MAPUCHE GIRL
Dressed with traditional outfit and jewelry



TRALAL-TRALAL
A silver ornament brooch