

## **The political vitality of Mapuche stones**

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In reviewing the literature on ethnographic Mapuche culture from the late nineteenth century to the present, we find many references to the existence of stones charged with symbolic, magical, religious or even political powers, from large rocks that are the object of collective worship to small stones of (more-or-less) personal use. In the first place, considering this ethnographic literature, we review the various ways in which these stones are related to human beings, in order to then propose an analysis of their ontological status, i.e. the type of "life", "agency" or "personhood" that would materialize in them. Thus, sometimes these stones are presented as people turned into stone by a spell or by a mythical transformation, others they are supposed to be the visible forms of divinities or supernatural beings, and others they just express the auratic power of their "intranscended materiality" (W. Pietz). Often the discourses about the same stone can oscillate through these different perspectives. Secondly we focus on the political role of these stones, as they appear as subjects of alliance with their owner and as a condition of his victories in politics and in war (thanks to their oracular powers and the force and the prestige they confer on him). Finally, we conclude by analyzing how these stones are inscribed in a certain logic of Mapuche decision-taking, in which decision taking is often moved to an heteronomous space (dreams, omens, divine voices and other signals), and in which these stones –as people– seem, in turn, alsto to participate.