

## CHAPTER 6

### *AMERINDIA IN A NON-EUROCENTRIC VISION OF WORLD HISTORY*

He had already made the necessary *fundament-of-  
the-word*<sup>1</sup>

to-open- itself- in- flower.<sup>2</sup>

He had already made the unique love of the wisdom  
contained in his being-from-heaven<sup>3</sup>

to-o pen -itself- in -flower.

In virtue of his knowing that he-opens-himself in-flower,  
he produced a song that would-open-in-flower,  
a sacred song<sup>4</sup> in solitude.

Before the earth existed,  
in the middle of the ancient night,  
when nothing was known,

he produced a *sacred song* that would-open-in-flower  
for himself in solitude.

-Ayyu Rapyta of the Guaranís

It is now time to change skins and to see through new eyes. It is now time to put off the skin and the eyes of the *I conquer* which culminates in the *ego cogito* or the will-to-power. One's new hands are not those that clutch iron arms, and one's new eyes are not those looking out from the caravels of the *European intruders*,<sup>5</sup> who cry Land! with Columbus. The new skin is the soft, bronzed skin of Caribbeans, of the Andean people, of the Amazonians. The new eyes are those of the Indians who, with their bare feet planted on soft, warm, island sands, saw<sup>6</sup> in wonderment new gods floating on the sea as they approached. This new skin suffered punishment on the plantations and land distributions, rotted with strangers' plagues, and hung in shreds at the column where slaves were scourged. These slaves, once peaceful peasants in the African savannah, were sold like animals in Cartagena of the Indies, Bahia, Havana, or New England. The new eyes are those of the Other, of the other *ego*, of the *ego* whose history requires reconstruction as modernity's other face. This history begins in the Pacific Ocean.<sup>7</sup>

It is time to change skins like a serpent, not the perverse treacherous serpent tempting Adam in Mesopotamia, but the *plumed serpent*, the divine duality (Quetzalcóatl),<sup>8</sup> who changes skins in order to grow. It is time to put on methodically the skin of the Indian, the African slave, the humiliated mestizo, the impoverished peasant, the exploited worker, and the marginalized person packed among the wretched millions inhabiting contemporary Latin American cities. It is time to take on the eyes of the oppressed, those from below (*los de abajo*), as Azuela's well-known novel expresses it. It is time to turn from the *ego cogito* to the *cogitatum*, who also thought—even if Husserl or Descartes ignored him or her. Before being a *cogitatum*, this Other was a dis-tinct (*dis-tinta*) subjectivity, and not merely different in the postmodern sense.

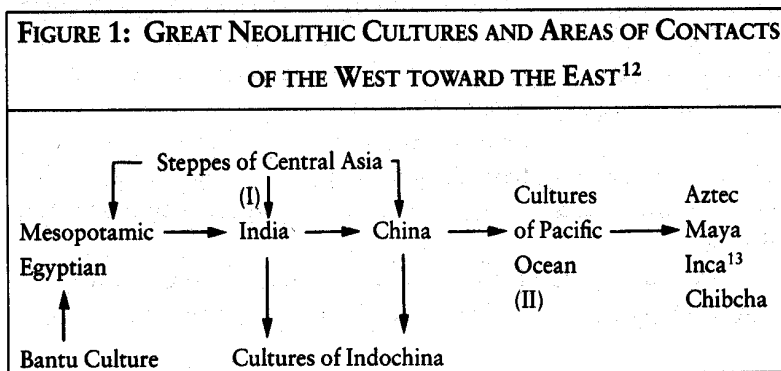
## FROM THE WEST TO EAST: AMERINDIA IN WORLD HISTORY

A historically and archeologically acceptable reconstruction is needed to correct the Eurocentric deviation that excludes Latin America from world history.<sup>9</sup> Such a reconstructed and full account of the histories of the civilizations that produced occidental Europe will unmask Hegel's vision of history not merely

as a Eurocentric ideological invention but also as an inversion of the facts.

Indigenous American ethnic groups did not first appear in world history merely to provide a context for the discovery of America, contrary to the usual college and university history program that first mentions Indians in 1492. Such programs note that—in addition to islands, palm trees, and exotic animals—Indians, too, lurked on the beaches Columbus discovered. In order, however, to locate the Indians' real place in history, it is essential to return to the neolithic revolution, which witnessed the birth of agriculture and cities. This revolution, contrary to Hegel's proposal, began primarily in the West, first in *Mesopotamia* and later in *Egypt*, and then surged forward toward the East, usually with few contacts between civilizations. This revolution spread eastward to the Indus valley, to China's Yellow River valley, to the Pacific Ocean region, and finally into Mesoamerica, home of the Mayan and Aztec civilizations, and the southern Andes, where the Incas resided.<sup>10</sup>

In certain propitious places and moments, at least six<sup>11</sup> great urban civilizations arose and intersected at two contact zones (I and II in Figure 1). Although this presentation of world history might appear naive and familiar, it includes from its origin Latin America, Bantu Africa, and Asia. These other cultures do not serve merely as the ancient age antecedent European culture, but stand as pillars of world history in their own right, according to Alfred Weber's terminology. Moreover, the Mesoamerican and southern



Andes region experienced their own enlightenment (*Aufklärung*), which ought to fall under Jaspers's notion of axis time.

In the Mesopotamian region (Sumeria, Acadia, Babylonia), a high neolithic culture had developed irrigation and established the great cities of Ur, Eridu, Erech, and Larsa by the fourth millennium before the common era.<sup>14</sup> "Around 4000 B.C.E., the vast semiarid land bordering the eastern Mediterranean, reaching toward India, and centered in Mesopotamia, experienced the growth of several communities."<sup>15</sup> The Tel-el'Obeid culture extended over "all ancient western Asia, from the Mediterranean to the plateaus of Iran"<sup>16</sup> and formed the broth out of which Sumeria was born. King Mesilim of Kisch left traces of his glorious campaigns, motivated by struggles between Lagasch and Umma. Centuries afterward, King Eannatum solidified his power in 2700 B.C.E. and set in motion a succession of kingdoms and small empires. The Ziggurat of Ur, the most splendid temple of Sumeria, built in honor of Nannar, the moon, consisted of a garden shaped like a scaled pyramid and reminiscent of the immense way of the dead of Teotihuacan, Mexico. Although Enlil was adored in Nippur and An in Uruk, the mythic mountain of the Ziggurat formed the center of the universe, the meeting place of heaven, earth, and Hades (*Dur-An-Ki*).<sup>17</sup> This mythological-ritual vision and its symbolic discourse systematized into meaningful narratives reflected a highly critical rationality and enlightenment (*Aufklärung*). Likewise, according to Claude Lévi-Strauss, the structured myths of the Bororos and other Indian peoples of tropical Brazil represented a system of enormous, *rationaly* codified complexity. Even though these mythologies fell short of those of Mesopotamia, Mexico, or Peru, they depended on "codes of second order, with the first order codes pertaining to language."<sup>18</sup>

Thus, a *rational* world of myth flourished in the great urban civilizations reaching from Mesopotamia to the southern Andes. Cortés confronted a rational consciousness at this same neolithic cultural level.

Centuries later, the famous Codex of Hammurabi (1728-1686 B.C.E.) laid down rationally universal ethical principles:

I have governed them in peace. I have defended them with wisdom in such a way that the strong do not oppress the weak and that they do justice to the orphan and widow.<sup>19</sup>

Egypt's<sup>20</sup> primordial myths sprang from the Bantu cultures, which inhabited the deserts flanking the Nile<sup>21</sup> Near the end of the fourth millennium B.C.E. (around 3000 B.C.E.), the Bantu, African negro " kingdom of the South " conquered the servant of Horus of the North.<sup>22</sup> The first Tinita dynasty, which was named for the city of This or Tinitis near Abydos, initiated Egypt's national history on a highly ethical footing, as is evident in the *Book of the Dead*:

I have given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothing to the naked, a ship to shipwrecked, and offerings and libations to the gods. ...Divine spirits, free me, protect me, and do not accuse me before the great divinity Osiris!<sup>23</sup>

For the Tinitas, the body and soul did not separate from each other in death, but rather the *flesh* died and rose.<sup>24</sup> Such a belief indicated that the flesh possessed absolute dignity and that to give bread, water, or clothing constituted absolute *concrete* ethical principles.<sup>25</sup> The principles did not mention housing for the homeless since in Egypt's hot climate it was more important to have a ship, which served as means for housing, the provision of food, and transportation.

From the Indus valley (today Pakistan) to the Punjab, cultures such as the Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, with their murals dating to 2500 B.C.E., prospered. The neighboring cities of Amri, Chanhu-Daro, Jhangar, Jhukar, and Nal had divided themselves into quarters and built streets eight meters wide. Although scholars have discredited the Indo-European/Aryan invasion of this region, the whole area relied upon Sanskrit as its commercial and sacred language. Also, in this period of the *Rig-Veda*, castes supervened upon primitive modes of interrelationship<sup>26</sup> -Also, in this axis time, Buddha criticized caste religion and embarked upon the narrow path of contemplative life in community.

In China's Yellow River valley,<sup>27</sup> from the capital city of Anyang, the Shang dynasty conquered the Yangtze, the Shansi,

and Shensi and ruled from 1523 to 1027 B.C.E. Confucius brought this culture to a high point by his wisdom, which Lao-Tse summarized in his *Tao Te Ching*:

Calm signifies rest, and, when the principle of rest prevails, one fulfills duties. Rest means being at one with the self and at peace with oneself. The one at rest overlooks pains and fears, and enjoys a long life.<sup>28</sup>

The morality of the Tao order, the totality, governs for centuries. In addition to these achievements, the Chinese, as experienced navigators, traveled to eastern Africa and apparently as far as the western coasts of America. Does the ancient Catigara on Martellus's 1487 map correspond to the pre-Incan city of Chan on Peru's coast?<sup>29</sup> Is not this city, of which Arab and Chinese mariners had spoken in conversations with the Portuguese, evidence of a Chinese presence? At any rate, neolithic history progressed eastward to the coasts of the Pacific and was ready for its next major step.

#### THE PACIFIC OCEAN AND THE "CEMANAHUAC," "ABIA," "YALA," "TAHUANTISUYO"<sup>30</sup>

This new vision of world history, of the consistent progress of humanity, refuses to consider Africa and Asia as immature moments. It includes the Amerindian peoples who are now on the verge of migrating from the eastern Pacific region. These peoples from the extreme east of the Orient were Asians by race, language, and culture. It is crucial to follow their eastward movement to appreciate Amerindia's own authentic being in spite of efforts to deny it by everyday consciousness, college and university history programs, and Edmundo O'Gorman's anthropology. It took a similar effort by Amerigo Vespucci to recognize that America was a new world after Columbus had died affirming that he had reached Asia. Having acknowledged this eastward itinerary, one will never be able to claim again that only with America's *discovery* did its Indian peoples first claim their place in world history. Indeed, this ideological framework of discovery covered over Amerindia conceptually just as the genocidal invasion did so militarily.

The pillar cultures (Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus valley, the Yellow River, Mesoamerica, and the Inca zone) interlinked in different *contact areas*, such as the eastern Mediterranean<sup>31</sup> or, more importantly for the Eurasian continent, central Asia, numbered (I) in Figure 2.<sup>32</sup> This area began in the east with Mongolia, famous for the Gobi Desert and the domestication of horses in the fifth millennium B.C.E.,<sup>33</sup> and crossed eastern Turkestan or China (Sinkiang, from Dzungaria to the valley of Turfan, the Tarim) and western or Russian Turkestan (the Turan). It finally ran southward near Iran and then headed westward through the steppes north of the Black Sea until it reached Europe. This immense region of caravan routes, the Road of Silk, played a central role in Euroasian history until the sixteenth century. From this area, successive waves of invasions swelled forward: first the horsemen with arms of iron such as the Hittites or Hyksos, then the Archaeans, Dorians, and Ionians, and finally the Persians and the Germans. When the Turks, present in 760 B.C.E. in Turfan, dominated this region in the fifteenth century C.E., the Europeans sought contact with the Indian Ocean via the Atlantic, since the Muslim *fence* blocked any land access.

The Pacific Ocean, designated by Martellus's map as the mythic *Sinus Magnus* and numbered (II) in Figure 1, provided another *contact area* as important for the Spanish as for the Aztecs and Incas of the southern sea. Although for the Greeks this great sea marked the *horizon* of neolithic explorations, it functioned as the *center* of America's protohistory. In an interglacial epoch 50,000 years B.C.E., according to the latest estimates, numerous Asian migrations crossed the Bering Strait, traversed the Anadir valley, and forged the Yukon River. Thus they discovered<sup>34</sup> these lands and commenced America's protohistory (and not its prehistory<sup>35</sup>). Fleeing Asia under demographic pressures from the Gobi and Siberia, these migrants included representatives of the Australoid, Tasmanian, Melanesian, Protoindonesian, Mongoloid, and even Malayan-Polynesian races. The latest arrivals, the Eskimos, straddled both continents. The Amerindian, thus, is an Asian who originally settled the western coasts of the Pacific.

In addition, 1700 years B.C.E., proto-Polynesians from Burma, Java, other Indonesian islands, and southern China, launched forth on the great ocean and passed through Melanesia (New Guinea) and on to Samoa, whose fossil remains date to 800 B.C.E.. Some headed northeast (Micronesia) and others toward Hawaii, arriving in 124 C.E., others due east (Isles Marquises), and others southeast (Society Islands and Tuamotu, Tahiti, Pitcairn). Two invasions, the latter involving the Akiris, reached Easter Island, one hundred kilometers from Chile. During July and August, the Humboldt current in the South Pacific conveyed large balsa boats with as many as 150 persons from Tahiti to Easter Island or to the coasts of Chile or Peru in a matter of weeks. The equatorial current could also propel explorers from the Christmas Islands toward what would later be the Mayan and Aztec regions. In the North, one could hug the continental coasts, as did the Chinese, bridge the gap between northern Asia and Alaska, and descend along the California coast.

The ocean engendered a single cultural world. For example, the word *toki* means ax, an instrument for warfare or labor, on the islands of Tonga, Samoa, Tahiti, New Zealand, Mangareva, Hawaii, Easter Island, and among the Araucanians of Chile.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, the verbs *tokin* and *thokin* signify to mandate, to govern, to judge in all these locations. "According to our data and categories, we can deduce that the isoglossal semantic chain of *toki* extends from the eastern limit of Melanesia, across the Pacific islands, all the way to American territory where it shaped various cultures' vocables. During this entire trajectory, the meanings of this vocable have undergone identical semantical transformation."<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Polynesian and Quechua, an Incan language, illustrate the following parallels: carry (*auki, awki*), medium (*waka, huaca*), eat (*kamu, kamuy*), old (*auki, awki*), warrior (*inga, inga*), strong (*puhara, pucara*).<sup>38</sup>

At other levels within what Schmidt and Graebner call the *circle of culture*, the similarities between Polynesian and Amerindians become even more astonishing.

Friederici has shown the identity of the *taclla*, the Peruvian agricultural shovel, even in its secondary details, with the Maori

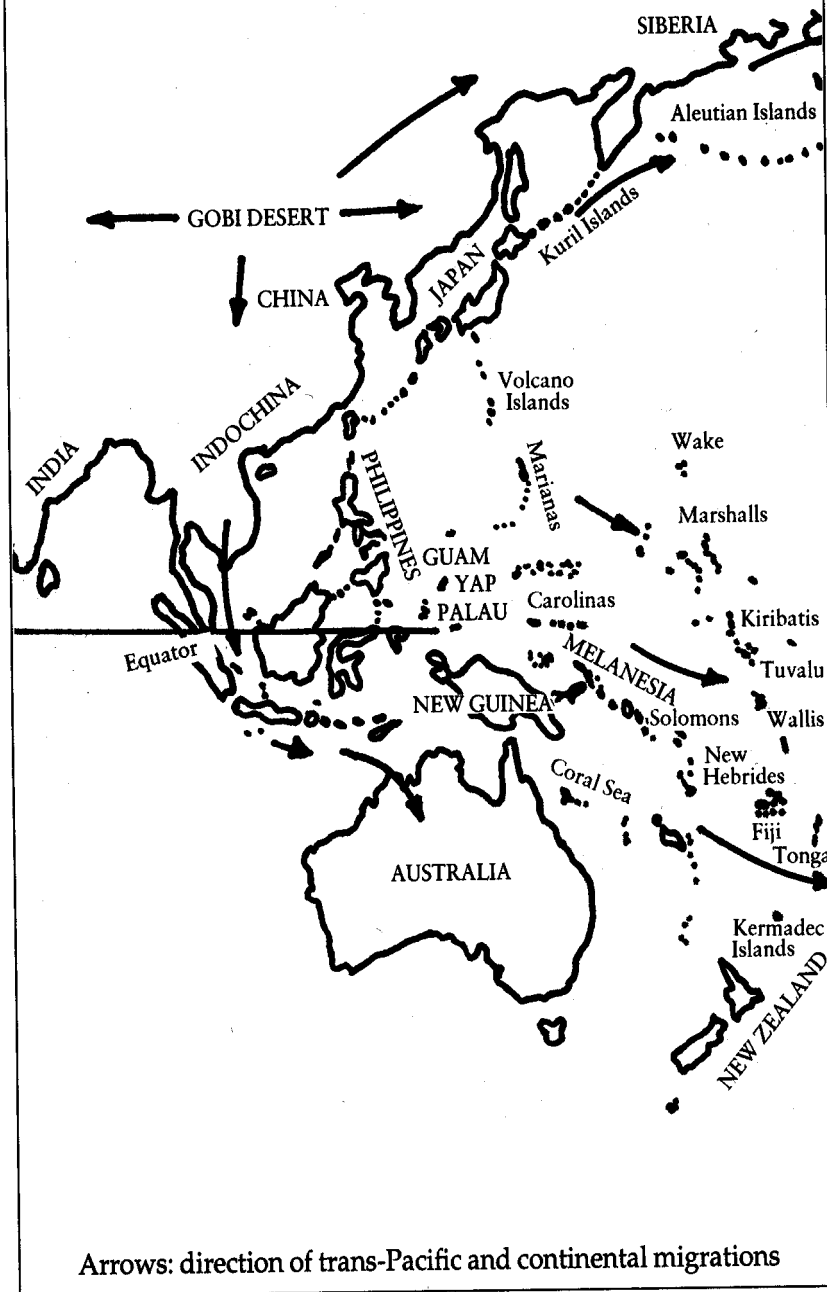


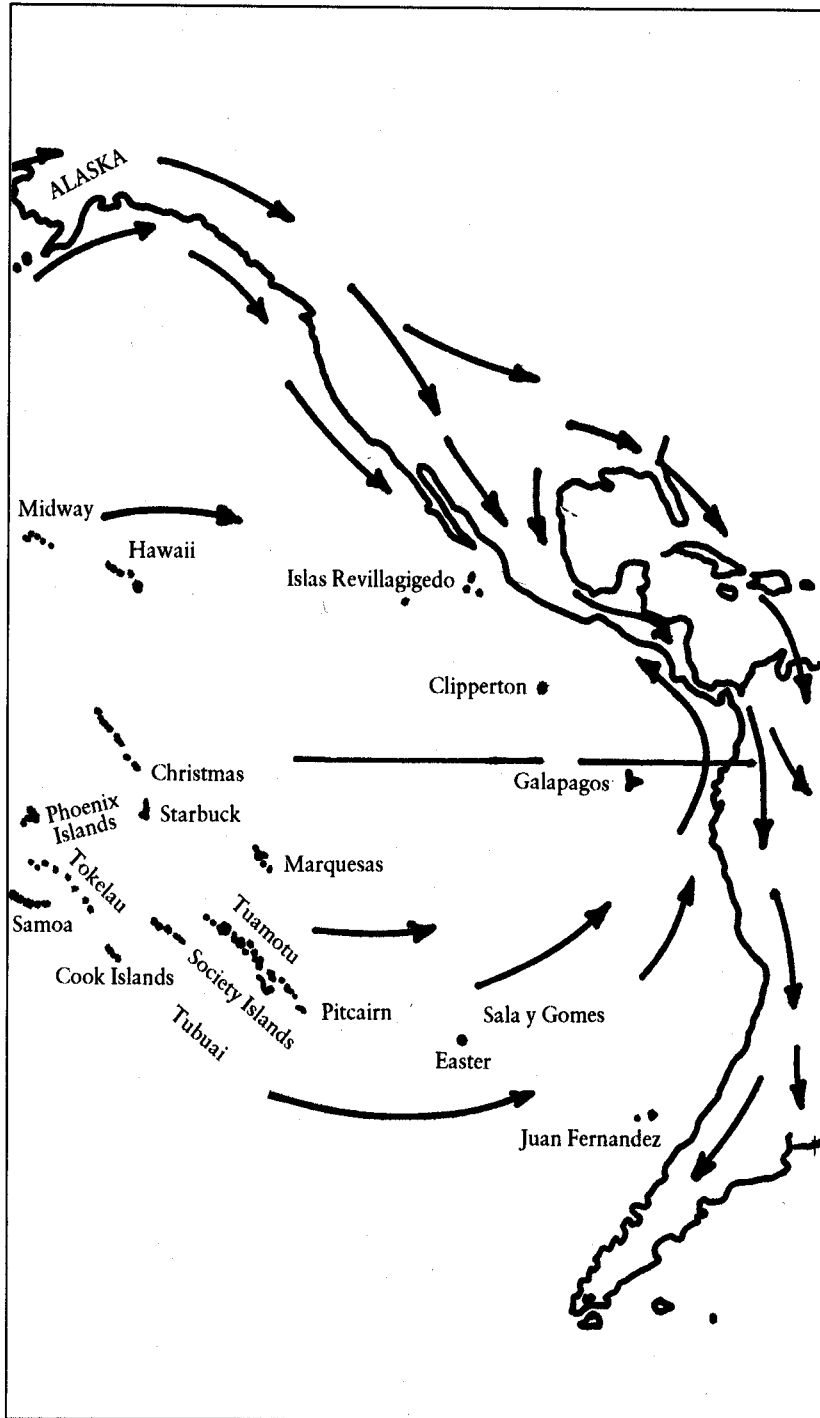
*taclla* of Zealand. In southern Chile one drinks kava, the Polyne-  
sian national drink, called by the same name and likewise fer-  
mented by chewing plant roots. Sticking out the tongue as a  
sacred gesture bears similar religious meaning throughout the  
Pacific area as far as India, whether one considers Easter Island's  
cyclopean statues or Aztec sculptures. For instance,  
Huitzilopochtli of the fifth age of the world, that of the rock of the  
sun, sticks out his tongue, as can be seen in the expositions at  
Mexico's Museum of Anthropology.

One could draw other comparisons, such as the identity or  
similarity in blow-pipes, propellents, wooden clubs (*macanas*),  
ring fingers (*anulares*), arches, slings, ropes, fishhooks, bridges of  
liana vines, oars, rafts, double canoes, prow decorations, types of  
dwellings, mortar, seats or pillows of wood, hammocks, mosquito  
nets, hair brushes, fiber coats for protection against rain, textile  
procedures, nasal ornaments, wooden drums, drum rhythms,  
musical bows, flautas of bread, games of the most diverse type,  
alcoholic drinks, terraced cultivations, types of irrigation, fishing  
with poisons, religious offerings of shells, dances with masks,  
mutilations, the meaning of instruments in ritual functions, and  
liturgical music and lyrics.

Thus, the Pacific formed the *cultural center of the Amerindian  
protohistory* and extended its influence throughout urban *nuclear  
America* in Mexico, Guatemala, or Peru. In its protohistory,  
Amerindia derived in part from the generative nucleus of the  
Asian cultures of the Pacific. It would be a grave mistake to claim  
that Amerindian cultures originated from Polynesia, since Mexi-  
can agricultural fossils dating to the eighth millennium B.C.E. have  
been found in Texcoco Lake. I only suggest that the Pacific pro-  
vided a context for cultural interchange after the origins of Ameri-  
can humanity left Asia by crossing the Bering Strait. Opposite  
Asia, sprawled an immense continental mass on which its diverse  
inhabitants bestowed different names: the Cemanáhuac of the  
Aztecs, the Abia Yala of the Cunas of Panama, the Tahuantisuyo  
of the Incas. These are diverse autochthonous names for a conti-  
nent already humanized in its totality when Columbus arrived.

**FIG. 2: MIGRATORY CURRENTS TOWARD AMERICA  
FROM THE CULTURES OF THE PACIFIC**





THE TEKOKHA<sup>39</sup> OR WORLD OF THE AUTOCHTHONOUS AMERICAN PEOPLE

Beginning from the Pacific basin, the Amerindian peoples descended from Alaska for over fifty thousand years and scattered throughout the valleys near the Great Lakes or along the Mississippi, in the Missouri valley and on to Florida and the Antilles Islands or even to the Orinoco, the Amazon, and the Rio de la Plata-in brief, from Chicago to Buenos Aires. They populated the mountainous regions from the Rockies to the Sierra Madres of Mexico, which funneled migrants into enormous demographic concentrations. They moved on to the Andes as far as Tierra del Fuego. Originally Asiatic in race, language, and religion, they shaped new cultures during their long migratory passages and in the semiautonomous centers they established often without frequent exterior contacts.

All these cultures, from the simple fishers and food-gatherers of the extreme South (like the Alacaluf or Yahgan) to the Eskimos of the extreme North, recognized a heavenly mythic great divinity. They usually considered this divinity dual-natured as the great mother-father, or twin brothers or sisters, or as a combination of abstract principles. Although I lack the space to describe fully the Amerindian world, this amazing mythic similarity pervading the continent<sup>40</sup> helps to highlight Amerindia's place in history as the result of very early Asian migrations.

In my interpretation, these American peoples forming the continent's protohistory attained three levels of cultural development. At the *first level*, I would situate clans and tribes of fishers, hunters, and nomadic food-gatherers of the South<sup>41</sup> and the North.<sup>42</sup> At the *second level*, I would include agricultural villages, composed of clans, tribes, and (preurban) tribal confederations. This second level appeared in the Cordilleras to the south and southeast of the Inca empire extending as far as the Amazons. This level would also encompass such groups as the Tupi-Guaraní, the Arawaks, the Caribs, and the indigenous cultures of the plains, southeast, and southwest of the present-day United States. Nuclear or urban America, including the Inca empire and Mesoamerica with its Aztecs, Mayans, and Chibchas comprised the *third level*. This multilayered

cultural world had *discovered* rivers, mountains, valleys, and plains, endowed them with names, and incorporated them within varied life-worlds. Amerindia was no *empty*, uncivilized, or barbaric world, but rather a *plenum* of humanization, history, and meaning.

The Tupi-Guaraní, who inhabited the Amazon forests in the Paraguay region, exemplify the second-level culture. Their external cultural manifestations might have seemed totally devoid of any development,<sup>43</sup> and José de Acosta might have classified them as barbarians in his third, most primitive sense.<sup>44</sup> They are, though, the Other, covered over (*encubierto*) by the discovery (*des-cubrimiento*), the diachronic and metaphoric 1492, which has steadily been sinking its roots throughout the continent since the fifteenth century. But modernity is not that distant from the existential Heideggerian world of the Guaraní, as Ayvu Rapyta expresses it in his *great song*.<sup>45</sup>

The true Father Ñamandú, the first,  
with his knowing that opens-itself-as-a-flower,<sup>46</sup>  
engendered flames and tenuous fog  
from part of his own heavenly being,<sup>47</sup>  
from the wisdom in his heavenly being.  
Incorporated and raised up as human,  
he knew the *fundamental* word of the future  
from the wisdom in his heavenly being,  
and with his knowing that opens-itself-as-a-flower, ...  
and he made that word part of his own heavenly being. ...  
This is what Ñamandú, the true Father, the first, did.<sup>48</sup>

Guaraní existence revolved around a profoundly rational, mystical cult dedicated to the word: the word as divinity, the word as "the person's (*ayvu o ñe'e*) initial nucleus, the divine portion in which one participated."<sup>49</sup> The *word-soul*, forming a person's essence, was discovered in sleep,<sup>50</sup> and then interpreted and expressed in the community's celebration of the *ritual song*. Upon receiving a name, each Guaraní commenced a biography that unfolded that word "which keeps-standing<sup>51</sup> the flowing of speech."<sup>52</sup> The eternal word of Father Ñamandú founded and *made stand* each human existence when it *opened-in-flower* at birth, and this word guided each Guaraní's mode of being, or *teko*.<sup>53</sup>

Oh, our First Father!  
 From the beginning you knew the rules of our *mode of being (teko)*.  
 From the beginning you knew the *fundamental word*,  
 before the opening and appearance of the *earthly dwelling (tekkoha)*.<sup>54</sup>

The earthly dwelling referred to the place the Guaraní cleared<sup>55</sup> in the woods to construct their village, to plant crops, and to live humanly. In this dwelling, each Guaraní's word would unravel as a destiny bestowed by the fundamental word mysteriously hidden from its origin in the first father, the creator, who opens himself in flower.

This word, embedded in a system of total reciprocity, was always communitarian and economic:

Beyond the ceremony, the Guaraní feast also functions as the concrete metaphor for a reciprocally lived economy. ...Principles of egalitarian distribution direct the interchange of goods for consumption or use in such a way that the giver is obliged to receive and the receiver to give. In this social, dialogic exchange of goods, the prestige of the giver and joy of the receiver circulate among all participants. Hence, the Guaraní imitate the first fathers and mothers, who hosted and were hosted from the very beginning.<sup>56</sup>

In the feast the Guaraní celebrated the word inspired in their dreams by improvising and singing great mythic narratives and by joining as a community in the ritual great dance for days. The feast also embodied economic reciprocity, since whoever shared in the banquet was obliged to prepare it and to invite others.<sup>57</sup>

Since these forest peoples quickly exhausted their lands' productivity, they wandered as nomads. As a result, their celebrations of the word envisioned a land-without-evil:

The expression: *yuy marane'y*, translated by modern ethnologists as land-without-evil, signifies either "untouched soil on which nothing has been built" or *ka'a marane'y*, "a mountain where no one has removed tree trunks or tampered with anything."<sup>58</sup>

On this land-without-evil, the Guaraní would not have to expel enemies, kill dangerous animals, or work in order to eat. In this imagined land, governed by perfect reciprocity, they would only have to sing, dance, and bring forth the *fundamental word* eternally. "The word in the Guaraní's soul, *ayuy*, meant word-soul or soul-word. The Guaraní's life and death depended on the life of his or her word, and one could measure successes and crises by the forms that word took. A Guaraní's history was the history of the word imposed with one's name, and each Guaraní would listen to that word, say it, sing it, or pray it until in death it became the word that was, *ayvukue*."<sup>59</sup>

How could one ever express all this to the conquistador of the Rio de la Plata or to the generous, profound Jesuits who built the magnificent Paraguay reductions? Those *barbarian*, indigenous peoples ...deeply worshiped the eternal, sacred, historical word among the tropical forests. To know their world, one would have had to know their tongue, their word, and to have lived it. To dialogue with them, one would have to inhabit their world, their *tekoha*, so beautiful, profound, rational, ecological, developed,<sup>60</sup> and human. To establish the conditions necessary for the kind of conversation Richard Rorty recommends, one would have to discover the world of the Other. The inescapable difficulties of such mutual comprehension in no way proves the total incommensurability of the worldviews. However, when the conditions for such conversation were not even in place, as occurred among the Eurocentric conquistadores, conversation became impossible, as did any argumentation in a *real communication community*. Modern humanist Ginés de Sepúlveda shared the conquistador framework, as do contemporary rationalists who anticipate an easy dialogue or as does Jürgen Habermas, who has yet to develop a theory of the conditions of the possibility of dialogue. From the moment of Europe's discovery of America, the Europeans disgracefully covered all this over. Under the mantle of forgetfulness and barbaric modernization, Europeans have continued realizing that mythic 1492 throughout the continent.

I could have provided hundreds of examples of either less developed peoples such as the northern or southern nomads or

more developed ones such as those of nuclear America. The case of the Guaranís, however, *indicates* the question, which I will pursue by carefully considering as an example the Náhuatl culture of nuclear America.

#### EXCURSUS ON EUROPE AS PERIPHERAL TO THE ISLAMIC WORLD

Until 1492, present-day western Europe was *peripheral* and *secondary* to Islam. Western Europe, hemmed in by the Turks at Vienna on the east until 1681, had never been the center of history. From Vienna to Seville in the west, Latin-Germanic Europe never exceeded a hundred million in population, and thus always fell short of China's population. This isolated culture failed in the Crusades to recover its presence in the Middle East, the neuralgic pole of Eurasian commerce. In what is now Palestine, the homeland of the holy sepulcher, caravan commerce arriving in Antioch from China, Turan, and Chinese Turkestan used to intersect with seafaring traffic from the Red and Persian seas. Via these routes, Italian cities like Genoa (the city of Columbus and origin of several clandestine Atlantic discoveries since 1474), Venice, Naples, and Amalfi connected with tropical Asia and India. Thus, when Europe lost control of the eastern Mediterranean, Islam confined it all the more to an isolated, peripheral status.

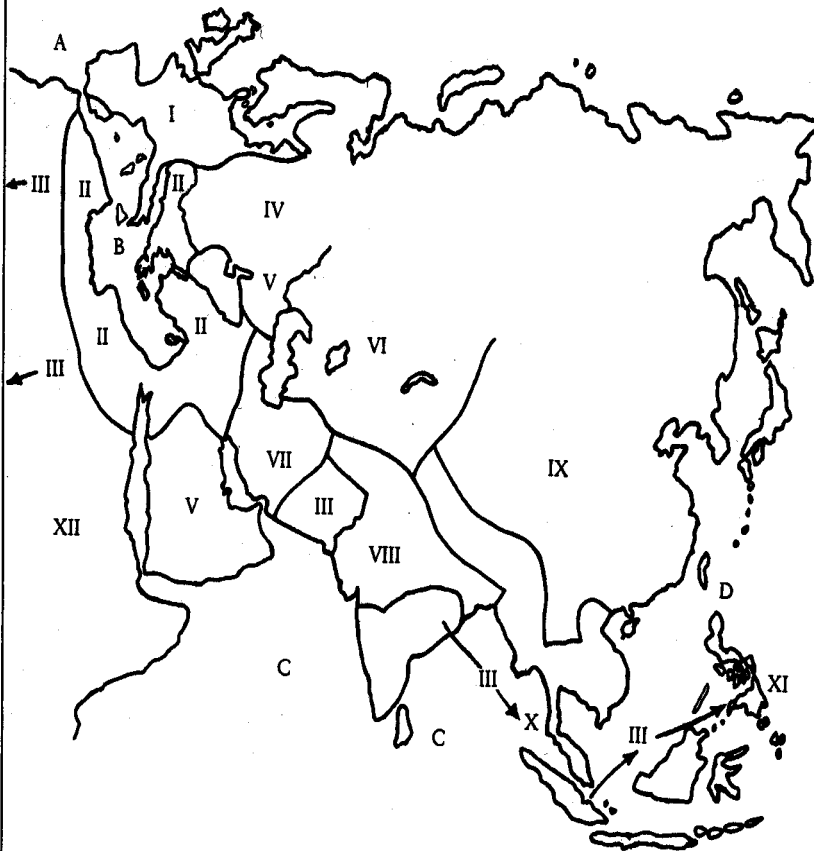
Islam commenced in northern Africa with the Almoravides<sup>61</sup> and flourishing cities in Morocco and the Magrib. It passed through Tripoli, the starting point of caravans heading south toward the Sahara and the kingdoms of the savannah, such as Mali or Ghana. Islam then extended to present-day Libya and Egypt, later seized by the Ottomans. It spread to the Baghdad caliphate, to Iran, which the Saffarid empire conquered, and further to northern India, where the Mogol kingdoms built capital cities at Anra and later Delhi, and produced splendid art, such as the Taj Mahal. The Muslim world finally expanded to Malacca and, due to Islamic traders, reached its limits when Mindanao in the southern Philippine Islands converted at the end of the fourteenth century. Thus, the Giving-of-Islam, the house of faith, sprawled between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. To be sure, Turkish invaders, themselves Muslims, had broken the dorsal spine of the Arab-



FIGURE 3

## EUROPE PERIPHERAL TO THE ISLAMIC WORLD (1480-1500)

- |      |                            |     |                                     |
|------|----------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|
| I    | Peripheral Europe          | IX  | China                               |
| II   | Ottoman Empire             | X   | Islamic traders                     |
| III  | Other Islamic peoples      | XI  | Islamic Mindanao (Philippines)      |
| IV   | The Golden Horde (1480)    | XII | Copts ("Prester John")              |
| V    | The Blue Horde (1480)      | A   | Atlantic Ocean                      |
| VI   | Other Mogolian hordes      | B   | Mediterranean Sea                   |
| VII  | The Saffarid Empire (1500) | C   | Arabic Sea                          |
| VIII | The Mogol Empire (1600)    | D   | <i>Sinus Magnus</i> (Pacific Ocean) |



Geographical source: Arnold Toynbee, *Historical Atlas*, from *A Study of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), vol. 11, pp. 132, 158, 164

Muslim commercial world. By occupying the Balkans, Greece, and Turkey, they had isolated the western parts of Islam from its east. Meanwhile, China had fallen into a profound economic crisis and the Mongols' golden horde dominated Russia (1240-1480). When the Turks took over Constantinople in 1453, Europe found itself surrounded and reduced to a minimal role.

Thus Hegel slips into myopic Eurocentrism when he speaks of Europe as the beginning, center, and end of world history.<sup>62</sup> Western Europe,<sup>63</sup> which never was the center of history, had to wait until 1492 to establish itself empirically as the center with other civilizations as its periphery. In my opinion, western Europe's bursting the bounds within which Islam had confined it, gave *birth to modernity*. In 1492 the European *ego* first transformed other subjects and peoples into its objects and instruments for its own Europeanizing, civilizing, and modernizing purposes.

Western Europe was the first to embark upon the conquest of the world. Russia under Ivan II, the Great, began an expansion through the northern taiga. Even though Ivan III founded the Kremlin in 1485, the Russians did not reach the Pacific Ocean until the early 1600s. In contrast, Europe broke the Muslim siege, which had been in effect since Mohammed's death in the seventh century A.D., and launched westward by the efforts of Spain and Portugal, which seized Ceuta in Africa in 1415.<sup>64</sup> Spain initiated modernity, even though western Europe later forgot and despised it, and even though Hegel ceased considering it part of Europe.

In the conquest of Mexico, the European ego first controlled, colonized, dominated, exploited, and humiliated an Other, another empire. It is important to view these events *from below*, from the viewpoint of the Other, from Indian perspective, from the horizon opened in this chapter that began with Asia and the Pacific. How did the Indian experience these Europeans, so marginal to Islam, as they pursued their triumphal course toward the center of world history?