

CHAPTER

8

*FROM THE RESISTANCE
TO THE END OF THE WORLD
AND THE SIXTH SUN*

And they said: Now we have come to *tlatzompan*,
the end of the world, and these newcomers will
remain. There is no hope for anything else since our
ancestors predicted what has happened.

—Gerónimo de Mendieta,
*Historia Eclesiástica Indiana*¹

The parousia of the gods (first figure) ended Moctezuma's empire, and the European invasion (second figure) extended its tentacles throughout the continent. The American *resistance* (third figure), more fierce and prolonged than many believe, would not triumph, in most cases because the indigenous people lacked interpretive flexibility and military technology. Even though the Amerindians faced the *end of the world* (fourth figure), they believed that a new cosmic era would take up the thread of eternal

becoming. The *sixth sun* (fifth figure) was now commencing, and we in the periphery have lived the last five hundred years under its sway.

THE RESISTANCE

We cannot give an adequate account of this theme so important for the social block of the oppressed. A historian tells us:

Traditional history presents the conquest as a prodigy achieved by a handful of valiant men who for the sake of God and Castille and with only their presence dominated thousands of primitive savages. A simple consultation of the chronicles discloses that a ferocious and systematic opposition began immediately after the surprise and confusion of the initial encounter. The battle ensued as soon as these gods whose arrival had been announced by the tradition turned out to be only earthly invaders. Indigenous men and women offered decisive, brave, and often suicidal resistance... to firearms, horses, and dogs trained to feed on Indians and tear them cruelly to pieces.²... Since so few of the resistance heroes have been remembered, we wish to revive the memory of all those who defended their land and liberty.³

Instead of following the resistance step by step,⁴ I will indicate a few instances. In Santo Domingo on Hispanola, the site of the *celebration* of the discovery and evangelization of America in 1492, the following chiefs governed five small kingdoms: Guarionex, Guacanagarí (traitor to his own people and friend of Columbus), Caonabo, Behechio (brother of the brave and beautiful Queen Anacaona), and Catubanamá. When the Spaniards left by Columbus in Fort Navidad set about robbing, raping, and killing Indians, Caonabo initiated the hemisphere's first resistance by attacking the fort and punishing its denizens. In addition, the Spanish had forced Cibao, Caonabo's hometown, to pay a large tribute because of its wealth in gold. They also required the Indians to wear about their necks a copper coin recording the date they had paid the tax. Since the tribute was excessive and the sign of tribute-payment degrading,⁵ Caonabo provoked a rebellion and prepared for war.

However, the Spaniards achieved by treachery what they could not win through arms by summoning Caonabo to receive a gift from Columbus and capturing him. He drowned en route to Spain when

the ship carrying him sank. Although the other chiefs struggled for years in diverse forms, one by one they were defeated and their populations disappeared at a rapid rate. Only Guaracuya, called Enriquillo as a young student of the Franciscans, eluded the Spaniards until his death by waging guerrilla warfare in the mountains.

Concluding this sad history, the bishop of Santo Domingo in its first synod in 1610 felt no need to provide for the Indians *because not a single Indian remained*. Furthermore, the first rebellion of African slaves in the Americas occurred in Santo Domingo on the property of Diego Columbus, the admiral's son.

Great acts of heroism were displayed by chiefs Hatuey in Cuba,⁶ Argüebana and Mabodomoco in Puerto Rico,⁷ Cemaco and Urraca in bloody battles at Veragua and the Darién,⁸ and Nicaraguán in Nicaragua.⁹ In Mexico,¹⁰ Xicontecatl in Tlaxcala and Cacama in Texcoco withstood the Spanish as did the hundreds of thousands of soldiers who battled to the death in Náhuatl cities surrounding Mexico until young Cuahutemoc's execution. The Mexicans opposed the Spaniards often to the last man and woman,¹¹ and entire villages committed suicide rather than surrender.

The Mayas prolonged their subtle insurrection until the twentieth century.¹² Distinguished heroes include Tecum Umán, a sixteenth-century Quiché killed in Quetzaltenango by Alvarado, Jacinto Canek, an eighteenth-century Mayan, and Lempira in Honduras.¹³ In Florida¹⁴ the indigenous peoples were indomitable. In Venezuela¹⁵ chiefs Guaicaipuro and Yaracuy refused to submit to the ferocious invasion launched by the Welzers, German traders. Tundama of Duitama and others combatted avaricious pearl hunters in northern Colombia¹⁶ (Santa Marta and Cartagena) and the greedy Sebastian de Belalcázar in the south (from Pasto and Cali to Popayán). These Spaniards had pursued their devastating search for riches to the point of disintering Chibcha mummies to rob them.

In the Tahuantisuyo, the Incas confronted the most cynical European treacheries with a longer and more fierce opposition than the Aztecs offered.¹⁷ Rumiñahui, the emperor's brother, defended Quito valiantly, only to die under torture. General Quizquiz repeatedly routed the Spaniards, and General Calichima's bravery resulted in his being burned alive. Manco Cápac led a new generation of Incas

by besieging Cuzco for eight months before taking refuge in Vilcabamba in the Andean cordillera. Fighting until the seventeenth century, these Incan refugees left the Machu Pichu as a testimony to their resolve. Túpac Amaru's rebellion in 1780,¹⁸ the last before emancipation from Spain, proved that the Incan refusal to capitulate continued without interruption.

In Rio de la Plata,¹⁹ only five hundred of Pedro de Mendoza's twenty-five hundred troops survived after the Querandís and Guaranís attacked them and burnt Buenos Aires in 1534. While the Guaranís also rebuffed the Spaniards in Paraguay, the Calchaquís obstructed their path in northern Argentina. Many nomad indigenous peoples in the Pampas skillfully deployed the horses abandoned by Mendoza against the Spaniards. The Mapuches (Araucanians) of Chile seized Patagonia and held it until Julio Roca embarked upon his 1870 *desert invasion* with the support of Remington rifles and the Morse wireless telegraph.

In Chile,²⁰ the Mapuches (Araucanians) triumphed as no other indigenous peoples due to their political organization and war pacts modeled on the Polynesian *toki*. Lautaro, son of Curiñancu, and Caupolicán, who defeated the conquistadores, excelled among the Mapuches, who impeded European and *criollo* occupation of southern Chile until the nineteenth century. The ravaged Tucapel fort marked the enduring southern boundary of the conquest.

While political-military control clearly had passed into the hands of the invaders in the great empires, the resistance persisted throughout the colonial epoch. In these empires, a new figure, the end of the world, succeeded the resistance, as the vanquished indigenous peoples recognized that one epoch had finished and another had begun.

THE END OF THE WORLD (THE TLATZOMPAN, THE PACHAKUTI)

The annihilation of the resistance compelled diverse peoples to interpret the new state of things with the resources of their world visions. The Aztecs, for instance, had anticipated their own tragic dénouement when the very arrival of the strangers under Cortés's authority evoked terror and weeping. Almost from the start, they interpreted these events as foreboding the end of the world and the fifth sun.

They huddled together for meetings and discussions, and every person wept for the other. With heads drooping, they would burst into tears whenever they greeted each other.²¹

Moctezuma had pondered the third possibility of those listed in chapter 7—namely, that Quetzalcóatl had returned to declare the fifth sun 's demise, but he sought to set it aside until the end. Instead, he hoped that Quetzalcóatl, prince and wise man, had come again to take over his throne. This option was preferable to failing at the historical mission of the Aztecs over which Tlacaélel had obsessed—the prolongation of the fifth sun by the sacrifice of blood (*chalchihuatl*). Signs were to accompany the end of the fifth sun:

Four movements precede the fifth sun.... As the old ones say, in it there will be movement of the earth and a hunger from which we will perish.²²

One day the four movements (*nahui ollin*) and the epoch of the fifth sun, the era of the Aztecs²³ and their god Huizilopochtli, would come to an end. According to the Náhuatl cosmovision, everything had been regulated from eternity, and there could be no unforeseen or accidental changes. Besides, the passage to a new epoch was to occur catastrophically through a radical hecatomb, which the Incas called *pachakuti*²⁴ and which would instantaneously revolutionize the universe. To postpone this tragedy:

The sacrifice and the war of the flowers which provided victims to maintain the sun's life were their two central preoccupations and the axes of personal, social, military, and national life.²⁵

For the Mayans and according to their account of the Katunes, the Spaniards' arrival signified the end of an epoch of peace, prosperity, and song.

The Incas summed up the end of the world by *pachakuti*, a word that spread doom as it circulated throughout the empire upon the arrival of the invaders.

The Guaranís understood the end of the world in terms of the end of the forest and of the elimination of any future time. This *absolute evil* (*mba'e maquá*) similar to such great evils as the great flood (*yporú*) had already begun insofar as modernizing forces were

destroying the forests and preventing the Guaranís from reproducing their lives in accord with their traditions:

The worst of all the colonial evils would have been simply to deny the Guaranís their own land. Where would they have gone? The circle of devastation was closing in on the east and the west. Land which had not been traveled upon, exploited, violated, or built upon—the ideal of the *land without evil* (*yuy marane 'y*)—no longer existed. The whites had converted forests and mountains into farm land and claimed it for their own. The earth had become evil; the *mba'e mequá* covered everything.²⁶

The Guaraní fate was more ruinous than that of the Aztecs, Mayans, or Incas whose urban cultures had acquired high agricultural capacities with which to resist colonization.

THE INCONCLUSIVE DIALOGUE

Tragic resignation replaced defiant resistance. A narration claimed:

The dogs consumed three *tlamatinime* of Tezcocano originally from Echécatl.²⁷ They had come to the Spaniards to hand themselves over. No one had obliged them. They had come carrying only their papers with paintings.²⁸ They were four, one fled; three were attacked in Coyoacán.²⁹

Only today can we imagine the humiliation, the lack of respect, the tragedy these wise men experienced. They had intended to hand over the treasures of their culture and its traditional mystical world vision to illiterate, brutal, and uneducated invaders.³⁰ Christianity did not accommodate these indigenous cultures in the way that it transformed the Hellenist and Roman cultures into Byzantine, Coptic, Georgian, Armenian, Russian, or Latin-German forms of Christendom around the fourth century C.E. In contrast, the Amerindian cultures were torn up from their roots.

Therefore, the manuscript of the *Colloquios y Doctrina Cristiana*³¹ possesses particular value since it gives an account of a historic dialogue. For the first and only time, the *tlamatinime*, those few remaining alive, were given the opportunity to enter into a somewhat respectful debate with educated Spaniards, the twelve recently arrived Franciscan missionaries. In this dialogue, the *reason of the*

Other faced the *discourse of modernity* as it was coming to birth. The argumentation lacked symmetry and fell short of Apel's ideal *argumentative community* since some participants were the conquered and others the conquerors. In addition, the arguing parties differed in their cognitive development in unexpected ways. While the *tlamatinime* had received a highly sophisticated education in the *Calmécac*, the friars, although very select and excellent religious, were not their equals. Although during the dialogue it might have seemed as if the Indians were mute and the Spaniards deaf, power rested with the Spaniards because of the conquest. Therefore, the Spaniards never attained the quality of argumentation on which Bartolomé de las Casas insisted in the *De Único Modo* and so they interrupted the argumentative dialogue and resorted to indoctrination. They treated the *tlamatinime* in the same way that catechists treated children when imparting doctrine to them in Seville, Toledo, or Santiago de Compostela.

The *tlamatinime*, on the other hand, produced a magnificent piece of rhetorical art (*flower and song*), filled with beauty and logically structured into six parts.³² They commenced with a greeting and introduction to the dialogue:

Our much esteemed lords: What travail have you passed through to arrive here.³³ Here, before you, we ignorant people contemplate you.³⁴

After the rhetoric, they then asked:

What shall we say? What *should we direct to your ears?*³⁵ Are we anything by chance? We are only a vulgar people.

After briefly establishing the framework, they proceeded to the second part, an elaboration of the precariousness of dialogue, in response to the missionaries' initial proposal. That proposal had presented an unsophisticated catechism of beliefs which would have been acceptable only to someone who already believed in Christian doctrine, but it would have been incomprehensible to the Other. The real flesh and blood Other in this dialogue inhabited another culture, language, religion, and hermeneutical space. The *tlamatinime* continued:

Through the interpreter³⁶ we will respond by returning the-nourishment-and-the-word³⁷ to the lord-of-the-intimate-which-

surrounds-us.³⁸ For his sake, we place ourselves in danger.... Perhaps our actions will result in our perdition or destruction, but where are we to go?³⁹ We are common mortals.⁴⁰ *Let us now then die, let us now perish since our gods have already died.*⁴¹ But calm your heart-of-flesh, lords, for we will break with the customary for a moment and open for you a little bit the *secret*,⁴² the ark of the lord, our God.

In the third part, they state the question to be discussed, the marrow of the dialogue:

You have said that *we do not know* the lord-of-the-intimate-which-surrounds-us, the one from whom the-heavens-and-the-earth come.⁴³ You have said that our gods were not *true* gods.

The *tlataminime*, as good rhetoricians, center the discussion on the essential question of the divine (the lord or our gods) as the truth of humanity and the whole Aztec world. In this question about what is actually the comparative history of religions, the wise Aztecs have more to say than their contemporaries might have thought. The Jewish *Yahweh* and the Roman *Father God* (Jupiter) were uranic gods of the type frequently worshiped by shepherds, nomads, or farmers,⁴⁴ and not all that different from Ometeótl, Pachacámac (as Garcilaso showed), and the Toltec, Aztec, or Incan diurnal gods (the sun, Huitzilopochtli or *Inti*).

The fourth part of their argument presents aspects significant for a consensual (not consensualist) theory of truth.⁴⁵

We respond that we are perturbed and hurt by what you say, because our progenitors never spoke this way.⁴⁶

The *tlataminime* then assert three defenses for their deities: from *authority*, from intramundane *meaning*, and from *antiquity*. They first cite authority:

Our progenitors passed on the *norm of life*⁴⁷ they held as *true*⁴⁸ and the doctrine that we should worship and honor the gods.

These gods were part of a coherent meaning system:

They taught... that these gods give us life and have gained us for themselves⁴⁹... in the beginning.⁵⁰ These gods provide us with sustenance, drink and food including corn, beans, goose

feet (*bledos*), and *chia*, all of which conserve life. We pray to these gods for the water and rain needed for crops. These gods are happy... *where they exist*, in the place of *Tlalocan*, where there is neither hunger, nor sickness, nor poverty.

Finally they appeal to antiquity:

And in what form, when, where were these gods first invoked? ...This occurred a very long time ago in Tula, Huapalcalco, Xuchatlapan, Tlamohuanchan, Yohuallichan, and Teotihuacan. These gods have established their dominion over the entire universe (*cemanauac*).

In the fifth stage, the tlamantinime conclude:

Are we now to destroy the ancient *norm of our life*?—the *norm of life* for the Chichimecas, the Toltecs, the Acolhuas, and the Tecpanecas? *We know* to whom we owe our birth and our lives.

After discussing their feelings about life, they assert: "We refuse to be tranquil or to believe as truth what you say, even if this offends you."

These wise men do not accept as true what the Spaniards proposed to them, since they find valid contrary reasons that support their own way of life. The sixth segment terminates this *flower-and-song*, this piece of rhetorical-argumentative art:

We lay out our reasons to you, lords, who govern and sustain the whole world (*cemanáhualt*). Since we have handed over all our power⁵¹ to you, *if we abide here, we will remain only prisoners*. Our final response is do with us as you please.

Those prisoners who ended up their discourse in their fatherland today complete half a millennium in the hands of a modern humanity which dominates the world. Since they were never taken seriously in the only exchange they had, the dialogue has remained definitively interrupted.

THE SIXTH SUN, A GOD WHO IS BORN DRIPPING WITH BLOOD⁵²

What could possibly remain after the end of the world? The beginning of a new age, another sun or *katun*, as the Mayas called it—the sixth sun. In *El Libro de los libros de Chilam Balam* of the Mayas it is written:

The eleventh *Ahuau Katun*, the first to be explained, is the initial *katun*.... In this *katun* the red-bearded strangers arrived, sons of the sun, the white colored ones. Ay! Let us mourn that they came from the East!... Ay! Let us mourn that they came, these great gatherers of rocks... who explode fire from their arms' extremities.⁵³

The Mayas recognized the dawn of a new epoch:

The eleventh *Ahau* begins this account because it was passing when the strangers arrived... those who brought the Christianity that ended the East's power, caused weeping to rise to heaven, and filled the corn bread of the *katun* with sorrow. Yaxal Chuen's throat was slit in his own epoch.... All those singing, men and women, old and young, were dispersed throughout the world.⁵⁴

The Mayans grasp immediately the sense of the new *katun*:

In this epoch these strangers will exact tribute.... In the *katun*, enormous labor will be forced upon us and the hangings will begin.... With the burden of battle, the tribute, and Christianity and its seven sacraments, which appear in conjunction with the tribute, the great travail of the peoples starts and misery is established upon the earth.⁵⁵

The Mayans date this new *katun*:

One thousand five hundred and thirty-nine years, 1539. To the east is the door of the house of Don Juan Montejo, who established Christianity in Yucalpeten, Yucatán.⁵⁶

These strangers were not going to leave, and the Amerindians knew that they would have to live under them in the future *katun*.

Everywhere, in the Caribbean, in New Mexico to the north, and in Araucanian territory to the south, the invaders carried on the same way. They no sooner seized Tenochtitlan than, before doing anything else, they revealed the meaning of new sun:

They requisition gold, asking the Indians if by chance they have a little gold, if they have hidden it in their shield or in their war insignias, or if they are keeping it somewhere.⁵⁷

Filipe Guaman Poma de Ayala has described similar scenes among the Incas:

All day long all they did was think of the gold, silver, and the riches of Peruvian Indians. Because of their greed, they seemed desperate, stupid, crazy, deprived of all judgment. Sometimes they could not even eat, so obsessed were they with gold and silver. When it seemed that there was no more gold or silver to be seized, they would celebrate.⁵⁸

A new god ascended on the horizon of this new epoch. He began his triumphal march in the heavens, not under the sacrificial sign of Huitzilopochli, but under the auspices of modernity's sacrificial myth. This new god was *capital* in its mercantilist phase, which prevailed in Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and later in Holland. This new fetish metamorphosed, acquiring its industrial face in eighteenth-century England and its transnational embodiment in the twentieth-century United States, Germany, and Japan.

The Portuguese in Africa and Asia and the Spaniards in Latin America craved gold and silver, the world-money by which they grew richer throughout the entire world that had just been recognized as a planet. The Portuguese and Spanish had invented a world market, E. Wallerstein's *world-system*, which spread its clutches worldwide and consumed its new sacrificial victims in every corner of the earth. A kind of mimetic desire⁵⁹ prompted each conquistador to hunt what every other conquistador hunted, even though such greed resulted in civil wars, such as that between Pizarrists and the Almagrists in Peru. During the period of capitalism's originary accumulation, this mimetic desire inspired these first modern individuals to horde without limits the universal medium of the new system, money.⁶⁰ Money, the abstract equivalent of every value, whether in Arabia, Bantu Africa, India, or China, flowed toward Europe, which heaped up exchange value. Money facilitated the transference of value and eventually the dominion of North over South and the center over the periphery. The new world order, born in 1492 as the sixth sun, concealed from its own actors the sacrificial myth that demanded no less blood than Huitzilopochtli:

Capital is *dead* labor that, vampirelike, only lives by sucking living labor, and it lives the more, the more labor it sucks.⁶¹ The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement, and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population,

the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black skins, signalized the rosy dawn of the era [the "sixth sun"] of capitalist production.⁶²

Using another metaphor, the author of *Capital* writes:

If money, according to Augier, "comes into the world with congenital blood on the cheek," capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt.⁶³

In its rational nucleus, modernity entails the emancipation of humanity from cultural immaturity. As a world encompassing myth, however, modernity exploits and immolates men and women in the peripheral, colonial world as it first did with the Amerindians. Modernity hides this victimization, though, by claiming that it is the necessary price of modernization.⁶⁴ The act of liberation rationalizes modernity by transcending and deconstructing its irrational myth. As a practico-political program, liberation surpasses both capitalism and modernity in search of a new transmodernity characterized by ecological civilization, popular democracy, and economic justice.

Although Octavio Paz in his "Crítica de la Pirámide"⁶⁵ (critique of the pyramid) compared Aztec sacrifices with the contemporary Mexican system, he did not imagine that perhaps all of modernity demands a "Crítica de la Pirámide." The year 1492 ushered in a new era which has been immolating the colonized peoples of the periphery, or the so-called Third World, on a new god's altar:

In actual history, it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly violence, play the great part.⁶⁶