

*Seventh Edition*

# OCCUPIED AMERICA

## A HISTORY OF CHICANOS

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## PREFACE

*Occupied America*—the book—is approaching its fortieth anniversary. The publication of the new edition falls short of December 21, 2012, the day the Maya calendar marks as the end of this cycle of evolution. The Maya did not arbitrarily set the date; unlike the Christian calendar, their calendar is based on time science. According to the Maya, the Solar System will line up with the plane of the Milky Way at that time. The year 2012 is not apocalypse prophecy, nor is it a conspiracy theory of history. Simply put, the Sun is a god and the Milky Way, the “Sacred Tree,” the gateway to the after life. At the point, the Sun reaches its solstice<sup>1</sup>—for a brief moment, Venus passes directly in front of the Sun resulting in a perfect alignment between the Earth, Venus, and the Sun.<sup>2</sup> This alignment of Earth with the center of the galaxy portend the start of a new era, a time of great changes when choices have to be made.

The first edition of *Occupied America* (1972) was different from this edition. I wanted to get the historical narrative down for the purpose of supporting a political argument—simply I wanted to tell a story. It was successful—to the point that many people believe that I should have left it at that. I probably would have; my dissertation was being readied for publication, and the University of Arizona Press wanted me to write a history of the Mexican Revolution in Sonora. But I am a teacher and the classroom, and community activism introduced questions that cried to be resolved. For example, the period after World War II to 1960 was a black hole in the first edition. So I microfilmed the *Eastside Sun* and researched the *Belvedere Citizen*, and lined up articles on Chicanas/os in a timeline. The documents suggested a pattern; they showed the work of the Independent Progressive Party among Mexican Americans, American nativism, the effects of government’s transportation and housing policy, and urban renewal. The facts obligated me to revise and correct the story.

About the mid-1990s, I realized that the story, which was so personal to me, was not as clear to the students and working-class people of that generation. Their life experience differed from my own. Racism is today not as easily defined, and the illusion of the American Dream has gripped many younger Mexican Americans; in some cases it blurs the civil rights struggles of the Mexican American and Chicano generations. The later generations do not realize that they have the opportunity to go to college because students and community activists of an earlier generation had protested, and some had even gone to jail, to earn this right. The term *Chicano* became an irritant to some—a reminder that they owe a debt to the past. Without thinking, many accepted alternate terms such as *Hispanic* and *Latino*. No doubt, a partial explanation for this trend is that the new generation has the choice to join fraternities and sororities, and be part of the illusion that they are equal partners in the great society. They forget that most of them come from segregated neighborhoods with inferior schools that limit their academic choices—choices that are determined by where they live and their family income and the quality of their high schools. I am concerned that most students do not question the dramatic rise in tuition costs, the Iraq war, or the social consequences of the growing ratio of Latinos to Latinas in college—which is approaching 30–70 by 2010. My narrative history had become like the Hail Mary—the faithful repeated it, ignoring the words.

Two events inspired me to further question the presentation in *Occupied America*: the creation of an online class; research for a forthcoming book on Chicana/o studies, titled *In the Trenches of Academe*. I concluded that Chicano studies were born in struggle, and their original purpose was to motivate and teach Chicana/o students. It was part of a pedagogical process that would evolve into teaching and research fields. Hence, I made the decision to adapt *Occupied America* to a textbook format—a development that had actually begun after the second edition. I played around with learning tools such as the For Chicana/Chicano Studies Foundation website.<sup>3</sup> I kept in mind that history is the study of documents, and the job of the student is to make sense of them. The website I helped construct gives the readers a sense of place, and throughout the book I refer to it and other websites where they can get more contexts for the story. The timeline is meant to function as a map showing where we are and where we were. The objective is to make thinking in terms of cause and effect second nature.<sup>4</sup>

I do not want to minimize the power of the historical narrative; it establishes the template, not only for history, but for other disciplines as well. However, the story must be understood before you know it. When I was in high school, I rebelled at reciting Latin declensions and conjugations; the exercises seemed useless. It was my first introduction to a paradigm, and it internalized my knowledge of language. Nouns, pronouns, and adjectives are declined in order to serve a grammatical function. The word pattern is called a declension. Similarly, history follows patterns that set the basis for the readers' understanding of the past and theories about it. For the readers to understand history, they must organize the documents. They cannot be overwhelmed by them. I work from the premise that everything is easy if you break it down. I remind my students that a medium-sized book is only ten 30-page term papers. The challenge is to build a common thread.

The first day of class, I encourage my students to scan the table of contents into their computers; to get into the habit of taking good notes and spending 15 minutes to synthesize and type their class notes; and to cut and paste them under the appropriate section in the table of contents. The typing of notes is a learning exercise. I never, for example, correct the students' written examinations. Instead, I make them type the answers from the original handwritten essays and then take a pen to correct the grammar and spelling errors—no spell guards. Organization is essential to learning. Unfortunately, our mothers wash our clothes, iron them, fold them, and organize them in the highboy. And many students move from apartment to apartment—to escape disorganization.

The book helps the student organize and analyze the material. The object is to understand the historical process. What is behind the story? Historical vignettes are offered to encourage the readers to question the process. Deduction is a very important part of historical analysis, but it is just as important to think inductively.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, I am acutely aware of the rising cost of textbooks, and that it is almost standard for teachers to assign an anthology or compile a reader to supplement the text. For this reason, I have consciously included documents that can be accessed through clicking on to hyperlinks. It would be impossible to add them to the book since it would then be 1,500 pages in length and cost \$350. So I have added them to the footnotes, which students rarely look at. (They should; footnotes include the documents that form the evidence.) Here I am encouraging students to scan the footnotes into their computers, chapter by chapter, to be able to access the links more easily. This can often be faster than using Google, Yahoo, or any other search engine to hunt down the article or document. In the latter chapters, I also make extensive use of YouTube.com and Google Videos that record the actual events.

I want to emphasize that taking up Chicano history is not the same as taking up Chicano studies; history is just one discipline of many. Chicana/o studies are interdisciplinary studies of the corpus of knowledge comprising the area. Each discipline entails a unique way of studying the body of knowledge. Each has its own unique methodology and also its particular literature, and the student or the reader is encouraged to do further reading in those disciplines.

To help readers understand the historical narrative, there is a Map Room at the end of the book which provides the addresses of websites that house important maps. Location is important in history, and through maps, the readers can trace the migrations of peoples. Again, they show cause and effect; for instance, people move in response to climate changes. Location often determines their resources. There is a reason for everything; nothing happens by accident. There are reasons and explanations for events, conditions, and behavior, and we must understand these in order to discover solutions. The reader is encouraged to use the Internet and the various websites on Chicanas/os and Latinos.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the book, I use the terms *U.S. Mexican*, *Mexican*, *Mexican American*, *Chicano*, and occasionally—toward the end of the book—*Latino*. The use of the term *Chicana/o* recognizes the Chicana struggle for gender equality within the group. The truth be told, the term *Chicana/o* more closely defines the struggle of those of Mexican origin in U.S. history. I sometimes use the term *Latino* to reflect the changing dynamics of a community that is no longer a strictly Mexican-origin enclave. Spanish-speaking people live in critical numbers in close proximity to each other. They share space and contest each other's identity. It is commonplace for a student to have a Salvadoran father and a Mexican mother. More than a few students have African American fathers and Mexican or Central American mothers. These growing populations of



mixed bloods are called *hapas*, the Hawaiian term for halves. However, caution must be exercised in concluding that we are Latinos or Hispanics to the exclusion of Chicana/o or Mexican American. In order to be a national group, you have to have a nation. Further, it is also important for other groups such as the Salvadoran and Guatemalan to evolve their own identities and not be eclipsed by the Mexicans' numbers or duration of residence in the United States.<sup>7</sup>

My friend Dennis N. Valdés, a historian at Michigan State University, makes the point that when Chicana/o history begins depends on the training and specialty of the particular historian. For example, Dennis started out as a Mexicanist, so his story includes much more Mexican history than do the narratives of those trained as U.S. historians. My doctoral work was on Mexico, but my earlier training was in U.S. history. I taught U.S. history at middle and high schools, and at the college level. Thus, I was caught in between two worlds. The first editions of *Occupied America* began Chicano history in 1821, whereas in the later editions I included two chapters on Mexico, the first dealing with the Mesoamerican civilizations and the second, with Spanish Colonialism and its consequences.

In revising this edition, I am cautioned by the words of my colleague Elías Serna from Chicano Secret Service, who said that the book was getting so simple that the next edition would be a “Chicano History for Dummies.” Hopefully, I do not fall into that trap again because the attraction of *Occupied America* has always been its comprehensive approach to history.

My story is inspired by the British historian E. P. Thompson, who trumpets in his preface to *The Making of the English Working Class*, “I am seeking to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the ‘obsolete’ hand-loom weaver, the ‘Utopian’ artisan . . .”<sup>8</sup> This quote is appropriate to the narration of Chicana/o history. The genesis of the Mexican peoples is in Mesoamerica. Through thousands of years, they struggled—hunted and gathered—and built great civilizations. Theirs was such a sophisticated culture that besides its great structures developed science-based calendars; their mathematical discoveries were a thousand years ahead of European. Their cosmological understandings were in advance of those of other civilizations. Anthropologists today are still discovering the complexities of their knowledge and culture, although some choose to dwell on the bizarre practices such as human sacrifice, ignoring mass bombings of our present-day society, which are often blessed by religions.

The intrusion of Western civilizations sought to wipe out people’s historical memory. The languages, written and oral histories, and the religions of millions of indigenous people were eradicated or buried. Recently, there has been a resurgence of the historical past, and despite the conquest, the blood of the “corn people” survives. It has left scars, and many Mexican Americans and Chicanos internalize Spanish racism, perpetuating a colonial mentality. The driving force behind the Spanish occupation of New Spain was the lure of precious ores—the greed for profit. The Spanish conquest created modern Mexico—a country where 90 percent of the people are of indigenous blood. This contrasts the situation in the United States, where American Indians and Alaska natives represent less than 1 percent of the nation’s population. How could 28 million people have been reduced to less than a million within 80 years? How did the Mexican people survive? To help the student understand the historical narrative, I have included items from YouTube—most of which are in English and some videos that are in Spanish—produced by Mexican and Spanish scholars. They are excellent. In most cases, the reader can get a translation by clicking the *translation* button.

It is essential to understand the Spanish conquest for comprehending Chapters 3–7; the themes are the conquests of Texas and the Southwest, and the colonization of Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and California. The United States invades the newly formed Mexican nation and, during two wars, takes half its territory and most of its great rivers. This conquest makes the mass migration of Mexican peoples to their former homeland during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries foreseeable. Racism and oppression contribute to the formation of a group consciousness. To help better understand Euro-American colonialism, I have developed a model showing the motivations for conquest and subjugation of Mexican-origin peoples. The conquest, political control, socialization, and resistance all stemmed from the pursuit of profit. Moreover, the status of the conquered changed as the economy went from subsistence farming, to mercantile capitalism, and then to industrial capitalism. As with Spanish colonialism, race was a mechanism for control.

The story of the exodus from Mexico accelerates as industrial capitalism uproots thousands more Mexicans. Chapters 8 through 14 deal with the twentieth-century experience of people of Mexican

## xviii Preface

origin—their transformation from rural workers to the urban city dwellers. Central to the book is the story of the decline of ruralism in Mexico and the United States, and how industrialization and urbanization transformed the work and living situations of Mexicans. Each chapter covers the themes of immigration, place, race, class, and gender. The post–World War II era also sees a dramatic growth of the Mexican American population and a growing awareness among them of their rights, and the disparate treatment that Mexican Americans as a class are receiving. The demands for civil rights become louder in the 1960s and youth and other progressives take to the streets. The demands for equality expand beyond the male leadership and include demands for gender and sexual equality. Meanwhile, the Mexican population explodes from just fewer than 6 million in 1970 to close to 32 million in 2009. Chapter 15 begins with the 1980s as a heavy Central American migration to the United States takes place. This migration joins the additional millions of Mexicans coming into the United States. Globalization and the U.S. pretensions of empire accelerate the uprooting. Finally, there is a new chapter titled “Losing Fear: Decade of Struggle and Hope”—Chapter 16—which covers most of the first decade of the twenty-first century; here it gets tricky. The chapter may not be as comprehensive as the others in its treatment of the major events. For one, the decade is not yet over. Second, the cause and effect relations will become clearer, which will allow us to identify what causes should be accentuated, only when the effects unfold in the future. Hopefully, in the next edition I may be able to do full justice to this eventful decade.

I want the readers to get into the habit of identifying causal relationships between events, objects, variables, or states of affairs. The timelines in each chapter allow the readers to link past events to the present. For example, what impact did World War II have on the 1960s and on today? What caused the Mexican and Central American migration in the 1980s? What impact did globalization have on the disparate Latino populations in the United States?

## WHAT IS NEW IN THIS EDITION?

This is the seventh edition of *Occupied America*; throughout its history, I have attempted to make each edition less imperfect than the previous one. I am very conscious of the fact that textbooks are costly, so I want to make each edition special. I tried to make the last edition more student friendly by including learning aids such as timelines, links to maps, and a skills section. In this edition, I expand these functions as well as including new books, articles, websites, and documents. I have paid special attention to the footnotes, going footnote by footnote updating the hyperlinks to sites. As we all know, the Internet is not static and many sites are renamed or dropped frequently. So it is important to keep them current, and the students should also use their browsers to update the hyperlinks when and if they change.

I teach at a teaching institution rather than a research institution. Though I have published quite a bit, my focus is teaching. Chicana/o history for me is a project in the making, and the classroom is a laboratory where narrative is continuously vetted and documents are discussed. For instance, I had to cut too much in the sixth edition and had to clarify many vignettes and look at new documents for this edition.

This edition is special because the footnotes form a subtext. To that end, I have tried to locate primary documents online so the students can examine them. For example, beginning with Chapter 3, I use the Sons of Dewitt Colony Texas Archives <http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/archives.htm>, which has one of the best digital collections on the net of documents on Mexican Independence and the Euro-American encroachment in Texas. It also has maps and photo galleries. Yale Law School’s Avalon Project has a treasure trove of treaties online <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/>.<sup>9</sup> There is not a chapter that does not give access to several dozen documents or websites, such as *The Handbook of Texas Online*, a multidisciplinary encyclopedia of Texas history, geography, and culture, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/>. Toward the end of *Occupied America*, the book has extensive references to YouTube and includes lectures and video footage of demonstrations and other current events.

I am aware that there are excellent anthologies such as the one that Guadalupe Compeán and I co-edited.<sup>10</sup> Arizona State University Professor Arturo Rosales has an excellent anthology, *Testimonio*, and many professors have put together excellent readers.<sup>11</sup> The links in *Occupied America*, hopefully, complement works such as these. As I suggested at the beginning of this Preface, I always tell my students to scan

the “Table of Contents” into their computers and to use the file to organize their notes in outline fashion. Again, to access the built-in documents, I would recommend that the reader or a collective of readers scan the footnotes to have the hyperlinks at hand. Most of us are not adept at typing them into the Internet browser. This way, the reader will have the documents handy and can refer to them while reading the book. This process again underscores the importance of footnotes—they are the first thing that I review in a book.

I have also constructed a webpage on a Chicana/o studies website that we are still developing. The site is For Chicana/Chicano Studies Foundation, at [www.forchicanaostudies.org](http://www.forchicanaostudies.org) or <http://forchicanachicanostudies.wikispaces.com/>. Readers are encouraged to visit this site and keep in contact with me. I would appreciate notice of any changes in hyperlinks so I can post them on my site. In the future, we may have a teacher–reader site for this kind of interaction. On this website, besides a section that more fully explains or, better still, discusses the term *Chicano* and what Chicana/o studies are, there is a section of selected current events. I think, just like it is important for students to do community service, it is important for them to know the issues. Lastly, the book is also designed for the non-student reader who wants to become more conversant in Chicano history.

Highlights of other changes throughout the text are:

- There are two new Section Essays following Chapters 3 and 7: “Borders that Crossed Us” and “Empire.”
- The section on the birth of Chicano studies has been expanded.
- Chapter 15 has been significantly recast to bring it up-to-date; almost 40 percent of the chapter is new.
- Chapter 16—Losing Fear: Decade of Struggle and Hope—is almost entirely new.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Chicana/o Studies at California State University, Northridge. Teaching working-class students who “want to be there” has prolonged my life. I feel I belong to a community, and this is important in this society without roots. Because of my students, teaching is not just a vocation, and it has shaped my writing. The icing on the cake is the Central American program, an autonomous unit that has just been approved as a major and consequently will form its own department. Los Angeles is also a great city; I was born here, and only left it for the 19 months I was in the army. This has made me sensitive to changes; this sensitivity allows me to look at documents and analyze their impact. You can never know a community unless you are part of it.

Throughout the years, MEChA (*Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanos de Aztlán*) has inspired me by its political idealism. I am often given credit for the Chicana/o Studies Department; but, as my good friend José Luis Vargas, director of the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP), reminds me, EOP was there first and students created sustained EOP and Chicana/o studies. Thanks are due to Mary Pardo, Jorge García, and Gabriel Gutiérrez, who find time to discuss history. I’d like to thank Benjamin Torres; he has been a good friend and supporter throughout the years. I am grateful to the members of the For Chicana/Chicano Studies Foundation and their support of undocumented students. Finally, I would like to thank Longman editor Charlyce Jones-Owen, who has been behind this project, and the head of copy editing Sadagoban Balaji—both are patient and considerate human beings. I also appreciate the contribution of the reviewers: Ashley Sousa, West Valley College; Laura Larque, Santa Rosa Junior College; James Barrera, South Texas College; Manuel Medrano, University of Texas, Brownsville; and María Flores of Our Lady of the Lake.

Furthermore, I thank my sons, Frank and Walter, and my grand daughters and grandsons. My daughter Angela Acuña is a much better writer; I hope she will continue the tradition of helping herself by helping others. She is a kind person who loves every living creature; her dog, Shadow, which died recently, was the apple of her eye. I love her dearly. The most productive years of my life have been with my wife Lupita Compeán. She is an exceptional and caring human being; she is my partner, my eyes, and increasingly my ears. I owe her an intellectual and moral debt.

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California State University at Northridge

## NOTES

1. Solstice means the “Sun stands still.” In astronomy, solstice applies to either of the two points in the ecliptic orbit when the Sun is farthest from the celestial equator. They occur in the northern hemisphere on June 20 or 21, and on December 21 or 22. The Maya referred to the December date when there is the shortest period of daylight.
2. Mayan prophecy for December 21, 2012—End of Time. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEJ8C2qw5FM&feature=Playlist&p=B2878C04EE3C336D&playnext=1&playnext\\_from=PL&index=37](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEJ8C2qw5FM&feature=Playlist&p=B2878C04EE3C336D&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=37) (accessed November 9, 2009). 2012 Mayan Prophecy End of an Age Part 1, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cH6ig9Xggq3s> (accessed November 9, 2009). Explore. There are excellent documentaries on YouTube.com—some sensationalist, some scholarly. The following demonstrates the alignment. The Actual Astronomy of 2012—Absolutely Amazing <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGPcjMe6Qlw> (accessed November 9, 2009).
3. For Chicana/Chicano Studies Foundation, <http://forchicanachicanostudies.wikispaces.com/> (accessed November 9, 2009)
4. The reader can Google causality and there are numerous sites exploring the theme.
5. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1970). Edwin Fenton, *Teaching the New Social Studies in Secondary Schools; an Inductive Approach* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966).
6. Google and Yahoo are important tools. Also see <http://forchicanachicanostudies.wikispaces.com/Links+> (accessed November 9, 2009) for suggested links to organizations.
7. See “The Word Chicana/o,” <http://forchicanachicanostudies.wikispaces.com/Chicana+Chicano+Public+Scholar> (accessed November 9, 2009). The site also has articles by Ruben Salazar and Frank Del Olmo analyzing the terms. At the same website see <http://forchicanachicanostudies.wikispaces.com/Chicana+Chicano+Studies> (accessed November 9, 2009).
8. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966).
9. Yale Law School, The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/> (accessed November 9, 2009).
10. Rodolfo F. Acuña and Guadalupe Compeán, eds., *Voices of the U.S. Latino Experience*, 3 vols. (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2008).
11. Francisco A. Rosales, *Testimonio: A Documentary History of the Mexican-American Struggle for Civil Rights* (Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 2000).

# OCCUPIED AMERICA



The Mexican Republic, 1821

TED

TES

sas

River

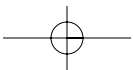
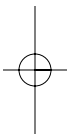
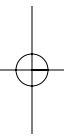
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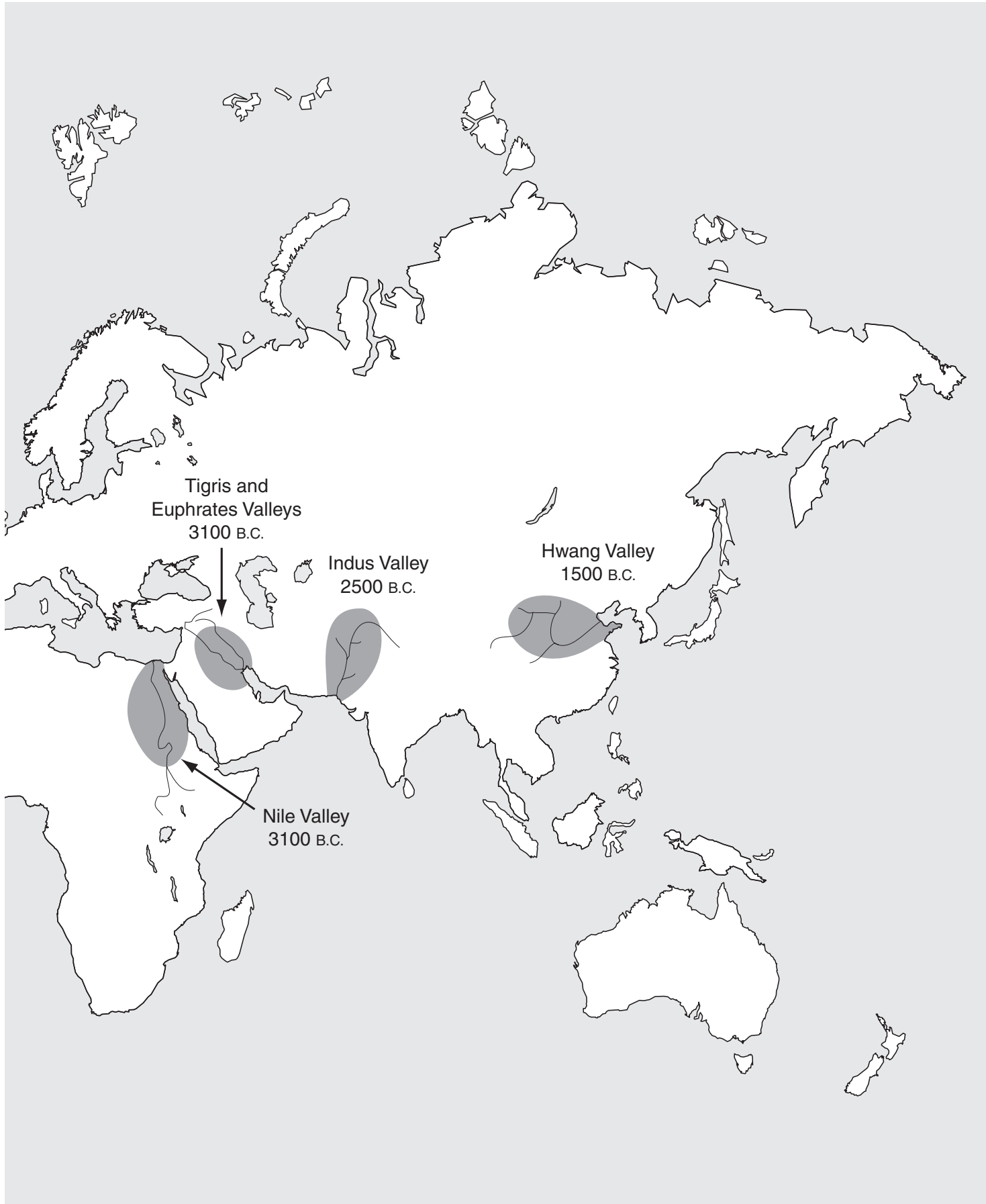
Mesoamerica  
2000 B.C.

Andes  
1500 B.C.

**Cradles of Civilization**

Source: Stanley G. Morley, *The Ancient Maya*, Stanford, 1947.



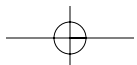
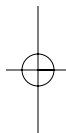
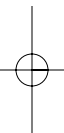


Tigris and  
Euphrates Valleys  
3100 B.C.

Indus Valley  
2500 B.C.

Hwang Valley  
1500 B.C.

Nile Valley  
3100 B.C.



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