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MEANING OF AMERICA TO
THE ORIENTALIST

BY

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IT IS A PRIVILEGE and a joy to be an orientalist in our day. The Chinese walls that formerly fenced off each branch of oriental learning as a separate mandate are gradually crumbling away. We begin to recognize clearly that all oriental civilizations have been closely connected with one another from very ancient times and that particularistic Monroe doctrines like China for the Chinese, India for the Indians, hold good no longer in scientific research. We are now confronted, for instance, with the spectacle of an early Indian substratum in Western Asia, a wide Sumerian expansion over Iran, northwestern India, central Asia and northern China, and an intimate interaction of Iranian and Chinese civilizations. The ancient history of Asia should be rewritten, not by an individual, but in sympathetic coöperation by the entire brotherhood of orientalist. And more than that—our territorial ambitions may lead us far beyond the natural boundaries of Asia, for Asiatic civilizations could not fail to exert a profound influence over Europe, Africa, the South Sea Islands, and perhaps even Australia. The entire Old World is ours, therefore, but our oriental imperialism is one of peaceful penetration, and, accentuating as it does the unity of mankind and the common origin of human civilization, it tends to work toward the unification and harmony of mankind.

The question I wish to ventilate to-day is: Does America hold out a similar interest to the orientalist? Have we the right to expand our activity into the western hemisphere? Are we privileged to knock at the door of the Americanist, humbly and modestly, of course, and to offer our collaboration in the study of problems in which he is interested? This is a vast and complex subject, also much misunderstood, and on this occasion I can only hope to sketch it in its broadest outlines and to stimulate your interest in this fascinating inquiry.

* Presidential Address read at the Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society, Princeton, April 7, 1931.

Our interest in America begins with the history of the discovery of the New World. In fact it was through the medium of Asia that America was discovered. Without the scanty knowledge that ancient Greece and mediaeval Europe possessed of faraway China, America might not have been discovered, or its discovery at any rate would have been long delayed. In 1492 when Columbus set out on his first memorable voyage, he was not actuated by the ambition to discover a new continent, but his principal objective was to find a shorter route to India and the Cathay of Marco Polo, the country of the Great Khan, by sailing in a westerly direction from Europe.

China played an eminent part in all of Columbus's calculations. He was an ardent admirer and a deep student of the memoirs of Marco Polo, his countryman, whose glowing accounts of the Far East left a lasting impression upon his mind. On his first voyage he took along a Latin translation of Marco Polo's travels in which he entered in his own hand numerous notes and observations. This copy of Marco Polo is still preserved in the Colombina Library of Seville.¹

Another powerful factor that determined Columbus's project was the adoption on his part of the geographical computations of Marinus of Tyre, in which China entered in another subtle way. Marinus, a renowned Greek geographer, who lived in the first century of our era, was a contemporary of the Han Dynasty when the Chinese entertained commercial relations with the Roman Orient and when Chinese silk found a ready market in Syria, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Domiciled at Tyre in Syria, Marinus had occasion to interview many traveling merchants who returned from the Far East by land or by sea, and gathered from their lips much valuable information regarding the geography of the distant countries of the East. The book he wrote is unfortunately lost, but fragments of it have been preserved by Ptolemy. Marinus was one of the founders of mathematical geography, and computed the extent of the eastern hemisphere from the Isle of Ferro in the Canary Islands to the east coast of China as 225 degrees—a serious error, for this distance is only 130 degrees. This miscalculation, however, was the most fruitful error ever committed by a scholar;

¹ Columbus's annotations have been published in the *Raccolta Columbianiana*, part I, vol. II, pp. 446 et seq.

for Columbus, in adopting Marinus's computation as correct, quite logically concluded that the ocean stretching west of Europe was rather narrow and that the distance from Europe to the coast of China was quite short, while in reality it was about twice as long as he figured. Here again it was the dawn of a geographical knowledge of China in the West which ultimately led to the discovery of America.

When on October 12, 1492, Columbus reached Guanahani in the Bahamas—now identified with Watling's Island—he was convinced that he had arrived at an island off Cipangu, as Japan was called by Marco Polo. Scars which he noticed on the bodies of several natives elicited the inquiry as to what they meant, and he understood that people from neighboring islands had come to capture them and that they had made defensive war against the invaders. The Admiral was persuaded that their enemies were subjects of the Great Khan of Tartary, who, Marco Polo wrote, were wont to make raids upon the islands off the coast and to enslave the inhabitants. On his first contact the Admiral designated the natives "Indians," and this title was subsequently applied to all the aborigines of the western hemisphere. This name, and like it the name "West Indies," have survived as mementoes of the first discovery, while for a long time the term "The Indies" was used for America in general. On his first and second voyages Columbus took Cuba to be the mainland of Asia, more specifically a part of Mangi, as southern China was called, its eastern end corresponding to the cape of Zaitun. Española (now Hayti) he then identified with Cipangu and the identification was seemingly confirmed by a local Indian name, Cibao. On his third voyage the Admiral sailed farther south and touched the coast of South America near the mouth of the Orinoco River. There, again, he found partial confirmation of his geographical beliefs. The several thousand (7459) islands were there and were inhabited by savages, as had been written by Marco Polo and Sir John Mandeville. On his fourth voyage (1502) Columbus turned southwest of Cuba to make for the India of the Ganges. When the fleet sighted the coast of Honduras, it was recognized as the coast of Ciamba (Champa—in Indo-China). The plan was to follow this coast in a southerly and ultimately westerly direction past Java Major, Pentan, Seilan, the Strait of Malacca, and into the

Indian Ocean to the India of the Ganges. In the letter describing his first voyage, Columbus writes, "When I reached Juana [i. e. Cuba] I followed its coast to the westward, and I found it to be so extensive that I thought that it must be the mainland, the province of Catayo (la provincia de Catayo)." As late as 1494 he was convinced that Cuba was tierra firme. "And since there were neither towns nor villages on the seashore, but only small hamlets, with the people of which I could not have speech, because they all fled immediately, I went forward on the same course, thinking that I should not fail to find great cities and towns." In this idea he was influenced by Polo's account of large and populous cities in Cathay, and therefore he despatched from a certain harbor two men inland to learn whether there were a king or great cities. They traveled three days' journey and found an infinity of small hamlets and people without number, but nothing of importance; for this reason they returned.

Before 1892 it was not doubted that Columbus died in the conviction that he had reached Asia. Since then, however, several scholars have adopted the view that it had dawned upon Columbus before his death that he had discovered a new world distinct from the India and Cathay which had been the original object of his search. This verdict has been scrutinized at great length and definitely refuted by George E. Nunn in his book *The Geographical Conceptions of Columbus: a critical consideration of four problems* (published by the American Geographical Society, New York, 1924). This author has arrived at the conclusion that no evidence has as yet been advanced sufficient to disprove the belief that in 1502-03, during his fourth voyage, Columbus believed himself to be on the coast of Asia and that he died so believing. After him, Balboa in 1513 so believed. Waldseemüller and the German cartographers did not reject Columbus's ideas. The writings of Castañeda, the chronicler of the Coronado expedition, and the famous Gastaldi map of 1562 are further evidence that many successors of Columbus continued in the same belief down into the middle of the sixteenth century.

Not only, however, were Columbus's expeditions and movements determined by his notions of Asiatic geography, but, what is still more attractive to us, his mind was imbued with Oriental lore to such a degree that he projected Asiatic tales into the life of the

aborigines of the New World. Columbus was a man without profound education and learning, and was endowed with a vivid and poetic imagination, which equaled his knowledge of navigation; he was somewhat credulous, deeply religious with a trend toward mysticism, yet a man of extraordinary abilities, keen intelligence, indomitable courage and energy, foresight and sagacity. Whatever fault his critics may have found with him, he remains the man who did the deed.

Of the Oriental lore that exerted a predominant influence on Columbus, the cycle of wondrous peoples was uppermost in his mind. Originating in India, transmitted to the Greeks by Ctesias in his *Indica*, these stories migrated to China, as well as to Europe, and formed the stock-in-trade of mediaeval mariners who delighted in story-telling.

The outstanding tale is that of the dog-headed people, the Kynokephaloi of Ctesias, usually welded with the fable of the Amazons, in ancient Chinese lore as well as in mediaeval Europe. The frequent close coincidences of Chinese and mediaeval European folklore present an interesting problem that remains to be studied at close range.

At this point I must make a little digression so that you may better appreciate the Columbian tradition which has assumed vast proportions in the history of the Spanish conquest of America.

The Chinese located the wondrous nations in fabulous islands far away in the north-eastern Pacific, and as early as the sixth century A. D. had outlined a complete picture and a fixed scheme of their geography and ethnography. The *Annals of the Han Dynasty* (*Hou Han shu*, chap. 115, p. 4b) mention a woman's kingdom in an island east of Korea, populated solely by women. In this country there is a marvelous well: when the women gaze into this well, they soon give birth to children. Another Chinese tradition tells of an Amazon kingdom in Ta Ts'in, the Roman or Hellenistic Orient, adding that these women bear children under the influence of water. This, accordingly, was a notion emanating directly from the Near East. Again, we read in another Chinese source (*Ling wai tai ta* by Chou K'ü-fei) of an Amazon island east of Java, where the women disrobe when the south wind blows and conceive from the wind, but give birth only to girls. Qazwini likewise has an account of a women's island in the sea of China, where the

women conceive from the wind and bear only girls. The following complex story is contained in the *Nan shi* (chap. 79, p. 4), one of the historical annals which treats the history of China from A. D. 420 to 589. "The women's realm is situated a thousand miles east of Fu-sang. These women have regular bodily forms and a white complexion, but their whole body is covered with hair, and the hair of their head is so long that it trails on the ground. In the second or third month of the year they bathe in a river and thus become pregnant; their children are born in the sixth or seventh month. These women have no nipples, but hair-roots grow on the napes of their necks. Some of these hairs are white, and the white ones contain a sap for suckling their infants. A hundred days after birth the infants are able to walk, and they are fully grown by the fourth year. At the sight of man they are stricken with terror and flee, for they abhor intercourse with males. Like wild animals they subsist on saliferous plants, which have a fragrant odor but are salty of taste. In A. D. 507 a man from Tsin-ngan (in Fu-kien Province) was crossing the sea when he was caught in a storm and cast adrift on a certain island. On going ashore he found it inhabited by men and women who were remarkably differentiated. The women resembled those of China, but their speech was unintelligible. The men, however, had human bodies but heads like those of dogs, and their voices sounded like the barking of dogs. Their food was small pulse, and their garments seemed to be made of cotton. The walls of their houses were of adobe; the houses were circular in shape with an entrance like that to a cave." The most striking parallel to this Chinese story is offered by Adam von Bremen of the eleventh century. In his *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (Church History of Hamburg, an important source of mediaeval history) he writes, "It is said that on the east coast of the Baltic there is the Land of the Women (*Terra Feminarum*) populated by Amazons who, it is asserted by some, conceive merely by drinking water. Others hold that they enter into relations with passing traders, or with their captives, or even with monsters that are said to abound there, and this is the more probable. When they give birth to children, those of the male sex have the heads of dogs (*fiunt cynocephali*), those of the female sex, however, become most beautiful women. They despise intercourse with men whom they bravely repel when

they venture to land. The dog-heads are those that have heads on the breast [this is a confusion with the ἀκέφαλοι of the Alexander Romance, who have no head and who have eyes and mouth on their breasts]. In Russia they may often be seen as prisoners. They bark instead of talking." Here we face the same net distinction between women of human shape and dog-headed men as in the Chinese version.²

It is a matter of great interest that this ancient Indian-Hellenistic-Chinese-mediaeval story functioned as godfather to the discovery of America. It is still more interesting to consult Columbus's Diary and to observe how deeply he was affected by this tradition, how it gradually grew and finally assumed definite shape in his mind. In his Diary the Admiral admits, "I do not know the language of the Indians, and these people neither understand me nor any other in my company, while the Indians I have on board often misunderstand." Despite this frank confession, the Diary teems with stories purporting to have emanated from the Indians, while in fact they are offsprings of Euro-Asiatic lore projected into the Indians.

On the 4th of November, 1492, while the Admiral was in Cuba, there is this entry in his Diary, "He understood [from the Indians] that far away there were men with one eye and others with dogs' noses, who were cannibals, and that when they captured an enemy they beheaded him and drank his blood." The dog-heads appear as cannibals in the Romance of Alexander and in Qazwini.

On the 23rd of November, we read in his Journal, "Beyond this cape there stretched out another land or cape, also trending east, which the Indians on board called Bohio (Hayti). They said that it was very large, and that there were people in it who had one eye in their foreheads, and others who were cannibals and of whom they were much afraid."

On the 26th of November, we read, "The Admiral says that all the people whom he has hitherto met have very great fear of those of Caniba or Canima. They affirm that they live in the island of Bohio, which must be very large according to all accounts. The Admiral understood that those of Caniba come to take people from their homes, they being very cowardly, and without knowledge of

² For more information on the Amazon Traditions see my article in *Festschrift Kuhn*, pp. 204-209.

arms. . . . The natives who were on board declared that the Canibas had only one eye and dogs' faces. The Admiral thought they lied, and was inclined to believe that it was people from the dominions of the Grand Khan who took them into captivity." Caniba is a corruption of Carib, and from Caniba to Cannibal and the Cannibal Islands of ancient Asiatic lore there was but one step; in fact, our word "cannibal" dates from this time, and is derived from the tribal name "Carib." The Spanish change from Caribal to Canibal was made under the influence of *cane*, *canis* ("dog") in allusion to the dog-headed people discovered by Columbus. It is a prank of fortune that the term cannibal, while it hails from America contains the germ of an old oriental tradition.

On the 6th of January, 1493, we are informed, "The Admiral also heard of an island farther east, in which there were only women, having been told this by many people." On the 15th of January he decided to repair to Matinino (now Martinique), which was said to be entirely peopled by women, without men.

On the 16th of January the Journal contains the following entry: "The Indians said that by that route they would fall in with the island of Matinino, peopled entirely by women without men, and the Admiral wanted very much to take five or six of them to the Sovereigns of Spain. But he doubted whether the Indians understood the route well, and he could not afford to delay by reason of the leaky condition of the caravels. He, however, believed the story, and that at certain seasons men came to them from the island of Carib,—distant ten or twelve leagues. *If males were born, they were sent to the island of the men; and if females, they remained with their mothers.*"

This is a complete coincidence with the Chinese and European tradition.

The same story is also contained in Columbus's Letter of his First Voyage.³ Speaking of an island Quaris [either Dominica or Maria Galante], the second at the coming into the Indies, he writes that it is inhabited by a people who are regarded in all the islands as very fierce and who eat human flesh. . . . They are ferocious among these other people who are cowardly to an excessive degree. . . . These are those who have intercourse with the women

³ C. Jane, *Select Documents Illustrating the Four Voyages of Columbus*, I, 1930, p. 16 (Hakluyt Society).

of Matinino, which is the first island met on the way from Spain to the Indies, in which there is not a single man (en la qual no ay hombre ninguno). These women engage in no feminine occupation, save that they use bows and arrows of cane, like those already mentioned, and they arm and protect themselves with plates of copper, of which they have much" (Ellas no usan exercicio femenil, salvo arcos y flechas, como los sobredichos, de cañas, y se arman y cobigan con launas de arambre, de que tienen mucho).

This legend haunted the Spanish conquerors for more than two centuries. The country of the Amazons was discovered in Mexico and South America, chiefly by Francisco de Orellana, a lieutenant of Pizarro, and the Marañon River was finally named the River of the Amazons.⁴

In the letter of his First Voyage Columbus speaks of the Province of Avan in Cuba, where the people are born with tails. Andrés Bernáldez, in his *Historia de los reyes católicos*,⁵ comments, "There they told the Admiral that beyond there lay Magón, where all the people had tails, like beasts or small animals, and that for this reason they would find them clothed. This was not so, but it seems that among them it is believed from hearsay, and the foolish among them think that it is so in their simplicity, and I believe that the intelligent did not credit it, since it seems that it was first told as a jest, in mockery of those who went clothed."

Another ancient oriental tradition⁶ crops up in the search for the fountain of perpetual youth by the celebrated Ponce de Leon, when with three ships he sailed from Porto Rico in March, 1512. On the 27th he discovered Florida, but the water there proved unsatisfactory, and once more he began his search among the Lucayos or Bahamas, his guide being an old crone who asserted the fountain was to be discovered on Bimini. De Leon returned to Porto Rico and placed in charge of the expedition Juan Perez de Ortubia who reached Bimini and took a bath in the fabled spring. His Indian companion was careful to state that its extraordinary effects would not be apparent for at least twelve months. This

⁴ For details compare E. Beauvois, "La fable des Amazones chez les indigènes de l'Amérique précolombienne," *Le Muséon*, V, 1904, pp. 287-326.

⁵ C. Jane, *op. cit.*, I, p. 138.

⁶ See, e. g., A. Wünsche, *Die Sagen vom Lebensbaum und Lebenswasser, altorientalische Mythen* (Ex Oriente Lux, Leipzig, 1905).

fountain of youth is still shown on North Bimini, and its cool and tasteless water is still dispensed to visiting tourists. It is used as a cure for rheumatism, and is said to be valuable in other complaints. Another fountain of rejuvenation, alleged to have been discovered by Ponce de Leon, is pointed out at St. Augustine in northern Florida.⁷

We might expect that the age of new world discoveries and the advance of geography would have dealt the death blow to the ancient fables of wondrous peoples. The reverse is the case, however. Some of them were actually rediscovered. Pigafetta who accompanied Magalhaens on the first voyage round the world records a story told him by an old pilot from Maluco: The inhabitants of an island named Aruchete are not more than a cubit high, and have ears as long as their bodies, so that when they lie down one ear serves them for a mattress, and with the other they cover themselves. This is also an old Indo-Hellenistic creation going back to the days of the Mahābhārata (Karnaprāvaraṇa, Lambakarna, etc.) and reflected in the Ἐνωτοκοῖται of Ctesias and Megasthenes. As early as the first century B. C. the Long-ears (Tan-erh) also appear in Chinese accounts; their ears are so long that they have to pick them up and carry them over their arms.

However paradoxical it may sound, I hope that the day will come when a history of the discovery and conquest of America will be written by an orientalist.

The discovery of America fell like a bombshell into the learned camps of Europe. One must read the writings of the sixteenth century to realize the intense excitement and the tremendous impression produced by this hitherto unknown world, which all of a sudden had emerged from the depths of the ocean, with a new and strange variety of the human species, with numerous novel animals and plants. A new problem had arisen, and the sacred books of the Church and the classics were consulted to solve it, but in vain. The humanists were unable to grasp the idea that high civilizations like those of Mexico and Peru could have developed without the agency of Greeks and Romans, and the fabulous Atlantis was re-

⁷ Cf. G. J. H. Northcroft, *Sketches of Summerland*, p. 194 (Nassau, 1906); M. Moseley, *The Bahamas Handbook*, p. 62 (Nassau, 1926); E. Beauvois, "La fontaine de jouvence et le Jourdain," *Le Muséon*, III, 1884, pp. 409, 415-417.

vived to land the Greeks in America and to stamp them as ancestors of the Americans. The Jewish descent of the Indians from the lost ten tribes was a favorite theme of many scholars that persisted for a long period. According to Ulloa, Noah's descendants continued their father's shipbuilding activity, set out as navigators, and peopled America.⁸ The Phoenicians and Carthaginians likewise appear among the culture heroes of this continent, and "Phoenician" as well as "Hebrew" inscriptions have sometimes been forged and "discovered" on American soil and used in support of such like speculations. The theory that America's cultures originate from Eastern Asia has always had many adherents, and was eagerly defended by Alexander von Humboldt, who expressed his opinion thus: "It seems to me clearly demonstrated that the monuments, the method of time-reckoning, and many myths of America display very striking analogies with the ideas prevailing in eastern Asia, analogies which prove ancient historical connections." In general and to some extent this opinion still holds good, but in the present state of science it must be somewhat modified and can be formulated more satisfactorily and precisely.

I need hardly point out here that the alleged Chinese discovery of Mexico in the fifth century of our era, which kept the public in suspense for more than a hundred years, is pure fiction. The Chinese account of a marvelous island called Fu-sang, on which this deduction was based by De Guignes in the eighteenth century, is devoid of any historical value and presents a fantastic concoction of Buddhist monks. Fu-sang is not a real country, but a product of the imagination, a geographical myth pieced together from many heterogeneous elements emanating from different sources and quarters.⁹

Whatever Chinese influences may be found in America are not due to a migration of individuals or a direct transmission of cultural ideas from China or Japan across the Pacific, but have gradually filtered in over the land route through intertribal communication from northeastern Asia down our northwest coast.

⁸ R. Andree, "Der Ursprung der amerikanischen Kulturen," *Mitteilungen der anthrop. Gesellschaft Wien*, 1905, pp. 87-98.

⁹ Cf. my remarks in *Young Pao*, 1915, p. 198; *Memoirs Am. Anthr. Assoc.*, IV, 1917, p. 102; and *Festschrift Kuhn*, p. 207.

Briefly stated, the problem as we now see it is as follows. The appearance of man in the western hemisphere is of comparatively recent date. No remains of an early man comparable to paleolithic man of western Europe have as yet been discovered in America. The Old World is the cradle of mankind, and the American Indian is an immigrant from Asia.

It is justly assumed that at some remote period, which may roughly be estimated at about 25,000-20,000 B. C., North America was populated in many successive waves of immigration from Asia across Bering Strait or the Aleutians. In physical type our Indians are close relatives of the peoples of northern Asia. The stock of culture brought by these first immigrants into this continent was extremely primitive; they were hunters clad in skins, understood the chipping of stone axes and arrowheads, possessed the dog as their sole domestic animal, presumably made crude pottery, cordage, fishing-nets, and baskets, had dugout canoes, and lived in pit-dwellings.

The fact that culture evolved independently in America for many millenniums becomes evident from the great number of diverse linguistic stocks which both in structure and lexicography offer no point of contact or affinity with Old World languages. Many Indian tribes advanced to a highly developed stage of agriculture long before they had the misfortune of being discovered by the Spaniards. All their cultivations are derived from wild plants native to this continent. None of the American cultivated plants occurs in the Old World prior to the age of discovery; on the other hand, not a single cultivated food plant of Asia, Europe, or Africa had found its way to America in pre-Columbian times, not a grain of wheat, barley, or rice. Again, all fundamentals of Asiatic civilizations are strictly absent in ancient aboriginal America, such as agriculture practised by means of the plow and with the ox as draught-animal; all domesticated animals like cattle, horse, camel, reindeer, sheep, goat, swine, and chicken; chariots built on the principle of the wheel; the potter's wheel; stringed musical instruments; roofing tiles; and the art of smelting, forging, and casting iron. All this is sufficient evidence to convince one that in the dim past American and Asiatic cultures must have taken an independent course of development for many millenniums.

But when all this has been said, there is no reason for assuming that America has always marched along in splendid isolation; on the contrary, we recognize more and more that in historical times, at least during the last one or two thousand years, there has been an intimate contact between the two continents and that currents and undercurrents of Asiatic thought have swept over America, especially its northern part. The old hit-and-miss methods formerly employed in such investigations, as forcing conclusions from purely outward resemblances, trivial analogies, or coincidences, have happily been discarded. No one, for instance, will regard any longer the presence of the Swastika in Mexico as an indication of Buddhist propaganda. Intense methods and profound study of particular culture traits, however, are apt to produce results. To cite an example—divination, oracles, riddles, and ordeals are characteristic of most Asiatic civilizations, but are almost completely absent in vast tracts of America, and if such traits occur there sporadically, it is perfectly justifiable to trace them to an outside impetus. Scapulimancy, divination from the cracks produced by scorching over a fire the shoulderblade of an animal, has its centre of gravitation in Central Asia. In America it is restricted to a well-defined area chiefly embracing the Indian tribes of Labrador and Quebec, and Dr. John M. Cooper, of the Catholic University of America, who has made a special study of this subject, admits that it is genetically related to Asiatic scapulimancy. Dr. Cooper has also described scrying in the eastern Algonkian area, a method of divining by gazing into a basin filled with water, corresponding to the crystal-gazing of India and eastern Asia.¹⁰

We owe a model investigation to Dr. A. I. Hallowell of Philadelphia into the bear ceremonialism in northern Asia and America where the worship of the bear is widely distributed and practically alike in form and content.¹¹ The same may be said of that primitive type of religion we call shamanism, which also flourished in

¹⁰ Frank G. Speck, "Divination by Scapulimancy among the Algonquin of River Desert, Quebec," *Indian Notes, Museum of the American Indian*, V, 1928, pp. 167-173. John M. Cooper, "Northern Algonkian Scrying and Scapulimancy," in *Festschrift Schmidt*, pp. 205-217. In general cf. R. Andree, "Scapulimantia," *Boas Anniversary Volume*, pp. 143-165.

¹¹ A. I. Hallowell, "Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere," *American Anthropologist*, 1926, pp. 1-175.

ancient China, and is still alive throughout central and northern Asia as well as North America. The association of the shaman with a tambourine recurs throughout this area, even in Lapland.

The game of backgammon—the nard of the Persians, the pachisi of India—appears in ancient Mexico as patolli.¹² Football and other ball games may likewise have penetrated from Asia into America.

The composite bow, i. e., a bow reinforced by layers of sinew, is found in its highest development in Asia. In various forms it covers the highlands of North America well down into Mexico, and is likewise the chief weapon among the Eskimo. As it does not appear in South America, it is justly regarded as an Asiatic intrusion in North America.¹³ Even so typical an Indian affair as the moccasin has been shown to be of Asiatic origin.¹⁴

As I demonstrated in a study of Chinese Armor,¹⁵ the type of plate armor consisting of laminae or plates of metal, bone or ivory lashed together and arranged in parallel horizontal rows was used both in ancient Egypt and Assyria, where it is represented on monuments of King Sargon (722-705 B. C.); through Iranian mediation it spread through Central Asia to China, Korea, and Japan, further into the entire North Pacific area both on the Asiatic and American side, where according to Chinese data it must have been in existence from at least the third century onward. Walrus and narwhal ivory was anciently traded from the arctic shores of North America to China and Japan, and through the medium of the Arabs to India, Persia, Egypt, and Constantinople, long before the discovery of America.¹⁶ I suspect an ancient interrelation of the realistic ivory carvings of the Chukchi and Eskimo and the ivory art of China; likewise an historical contact of ancient Chinese art with the peculiar forms of decorative motives of our Northwest Coast Indians. Systematic excavations in Alaska and northeastern Asia will doubtless have many surprises in store for us.

¹² E. B. Tylor, "On the Game of Patolli in Ancient Mexico, and its Probably Asiatic Origin," *Journal Anthropol. Institute*, VIII, pp. 116-129.

¹³ C. Wissler, *The American Indian*, p. 133.

¹⁴ R. Dixon, *The Building of Cultures*, p. 128.

¹⁵ *Chinese Clay Figures*, part I, pp. 258-291 (Field Museum Anthrop. Series, XIII, No. 2, 1914).

¹⁶ *Ivory in China*, Field Museum Anthrop. Leaflet, No. 21, 1924.

Still more intimate relations between Asia and America are revealed by a large common fund of beliefs and traditions, and the study of the intercontinental migration of folklore remains the most attractive subject to the Orientalist. The first methodical and critical investigation along this line is presented by the work of Paul Ehrenreich, *Die Mythen und Legenden der südamerikanischen Urvölker und ihre Beziehungen zu denen Nordamerikas und der alten Welt* (Berlin, 1905). The fundamental source-book to be recommended to the investigator is Boas' *Tsimshian Mythology*. The number of correspondences of tales and specific motives on both sides is so overwhelmingly large that the thought of independent origin is virtually excluded. Eastern Asia and northwestern America present a continuous area in folklore; the myths from practically a single group, allied both in form and actual content, and a stream of Asiatic folklore has flowed down the Pacific coast from North to South America.

I have only time to present a few examples.

One of the best examples of intercontinental diffusion is the story of the magic flight or obstacle pursuit: the hero, pursued by his enemies, flings behind him successively a whetstone, a comb, and a vessel of oil or other fluid. The stone turns into a mountain or precipice, the comb into a forest, the fluid into a lake or river. Each of these obstacles detains the pursuer and contributes to the hero's final escape. This story is widely disseminated in the Old World from Morocco to the South Seas and Bering Strait, and it is known in closely related form in America all along the arctic coasts, on the North-Pacific coast, and inland as far as the Mississippi Valley. The Indians of British Columbia have embodied this tale in their most sacred traditions, and for this reason it may be assumed that it has been known there for a long time. The salient point is that the three obstacles occur in the same order in the American versions, and, what is still more significant, the sacred number "three," so prevalent in Eurasian folklore, magic, and ritual, is scarcely ever thus used by the American Indians who replace it either with "four" or "five," but in this particular tradition they have adhered to the number "three."¹⁷

¹⁷ A. L. Kroeber, *Anthropology*, p. 198; F. Boas, "Migrations of Asiatic Races and Cultures to North America," *Scientific Monthly*, 1929, p. 116.

Another Old-World tale still more widely distributed over North and Central America is the test-theme, the trials of a prospective bridegroom by superhuman tasks in order to win his bride.¹⁸

Boas¹⁹ has found among the Tsimshian the classical story of the war between the Pygmies and the Cranes, three versions of which are also contained in ancient Chinese records. The creation of the earth through an animal diving into water for mud recurs all over North America and northern Asia and even among Finnish tribes.²⁰

The concept of the hare in the moon looms up both in ancient India and China. Chavannes assumed Chinese priority and derivation on the part of India. Mayers and Conrady²¹ plead for Indian origin and China's indebtedness to India in this respect. The question is more complex, however; for we meet the same notion in Mexican and South-American mythology; the latter, in agreement with the Chinese, also knows of a frog in the moon. In Peru and other parts of South America we encounter many mythological traditions and motives traceable to India, which do not occur in North and Central America and appear to have been imported directly by way of the Malayan or Polynesian islands.²²

Some years ago I published an article under the title "The Prehistory of Television"²³ in which I treated of mirrors and other magical devices that allow the owner to scan the surrounding country or to see any distant person or object desired. This is a typical Old World motive distributed from India and Iran to western Asia and Europe. Subsequently I was surprised to find two American parallels of this incident—one among the Eskimo and another among the Kekchi of Guatemala,²⁴ who tell the story

¹⁸ R. H. Lowie, "The Test-Theme in North American Mythology," *Journal of American Folklore*, XXI, 1908, pp. 97-148.

¹⁹ *Tsimshian Mythology*, p. 867.

²⁰ R. H. Lowie, *Primitive Religion*, p. 180.

²¹ W. F. Mayers, *Chinese Reader's Manual*, p. 219; A. Conrady, *T'ien-wen*, p. 173.

²² P. Ehrenreich, *Mythen und Legenden*, pp. 36, 69, 82, 93.

²³ *Scientific Monthly*, 1928, pp. 455-459.

²⁴ K. Rasmussen, *Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimo*, p. 205 (Report Fifth Thule Exped., VII, Copenhagen, 1929). J. E. Thompson, *Ethnology of the Mayas*, pp. 127, 173 (Field Museum Anthr. Ser., XVII, No. 2, 1930).

of a man possessing a magical stone in which he could see everything that was happening in the world—the exact counterpart to the cup of King Kai Khosrau in the *Shahnameh*, that mirrors the world and distant persons. This example goes to show that the Orient may sometimes be nearer to our door than we are inclined to assume.

Where there is smoke there is fire. If numerous tales and myths have found their way from Asia to America over the northern and southern routes, we may expect similar transmissions of other culture traits, such as notions of astronomy, especially the zodiac, calendrical and chronological systems, technical methods and art motives. These investigations are still in the beginning. I have merely touched here superficially one some of the problems confronting us or awaiting further study. There are many others which for lack of time I cannot discuss.²⁵

I merely wanted to convey to you the message that America and Asia are closely linked together in a common bond and that the orientalist, if he is so inclined, can contribute his modest share to the elucidation of an early phase of American history. With some modification the orientalist also may adopt the timely slogan: See America first!

²⁵ Compare, for instance, A. L. Kroeber, "American Culture and the Northwest Coast," *American Anthropologist*, 1923, pp. 1-20; P. D. Kreichgauer, "Neue Beziehungen zwischen Amerika und der alten Welt," *Festschrift Schmidt*, pp. 366-377; F. Boas, "Migrations of Asiatic Races and Cultures to North America," *Scientific Monthly*, 1929, pp. 110-117; E. M. v. Hornbostel, "Chinesische Ideogramme in Amerika," *Anthropos*, 1930, pp. 953-960 (not convincing); Laufer, *Jade, a Study in Chinese Archaeology and Religion*, 1912, p. 52.