INTRODUCTION

Roland Hamilton

One of the most fascinating books on pre-Columbian and early colonial Peru was written by a Peruvian Indian named Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala. This book, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, covers the pre-Inca times, various aspects of Inca culture, the Spanish conquest, and colonial times up to around 1615, when the manuscript was finished. The original manuscript, located in the Royal Library, Copenhagen, Denmark, has 1,189 pages and can be viewed on the Internet on the Royal Library's official Web site along with a transcription prepared by John V. Murra and Rolena Adorno for their 1980 edition of the work and updated with the collaboration of Ivan Boserup of the Royal Library in 2004 (www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/info/en/frontpage.htm). The main text is accompanied by 398 full-page drawings, which are the most accurate graphic depiction of Inca and colonial Peruvian material culture ever done.

This translation goes up to page 369 of the original manuscript and has 146 full-page illustrations. It describes pre-Inca and Inca times, with many comments on the colonial period. The original title has been retained. Although, strictly speaking, Guaman Poma's comments on good government appear more fully in the last part on colonial times, he also discusses this topic in the section translated here.

One of Guaman Poma's basic objectives was to expose the exploitation of the Indians by the Spanish colonial government. He argues that the indigenous governments treated their subjects far better than their Spanish overlords. Apparently in order to qualify as an advocate of Indian rights and appeal directly to the king, Guaman Poma calls himself a prince, glorifies his ancestors, insists on his orthodox Catholic beliefs, and states that pre-Inca Indians were Christians (see MS p. 73). Guaman Poma also has unkind words for mestizos, considering them inferior to both Indians and Spaniards (see MS p. 215). However, he made an exception for Martín de Ayala, whom he identifies as his half-brother and praises as an exemplary Christian (see MS

pp. 17–18). Guaman Poma implies that the king should appoint native Indians like himself to positions of authority in the colonial government in order to improve the administration and provide just treatment of the Indian masses.

In a letter to King Philip III of Spain dated 14 February 1615, Guaman Poma says that he has written a “*coronica o historia general*,” and evidently he hoped that the work would be published in Spain. Though there is no documentary evidence, the manuscript must have been sent to Spain, and from there made its way to the Royal Library of Denmark in Copenhagen, where it remains to this day. Though the handwriting of the letter is more refined than that of the manuscript, the signatures and flourishes are exactly the same (see Adorno, *Guaman Poma*, pp. 81–83, and the original manuscript, p. 10).

The manuscript is written in a careful and generally uniform script, and Guaman Poma’s desire to publish it is reflected in his imitation of the printing conventions of his time. His lettering is similar to that of books printed in Spanish in the 1500s. He numbered each page, rather than each folio, and placed at the bottom right corner of each page the first word of the next page. Headings are in very large letters, and occasionally in the text there will be a line in large print. Nevertheless, Guaman Poma’s book was not printed until 1936, when a facsimile edition was published in Paris (see Adorno, *Guaman Poma*, pp. 13–15, 19–22). Guaman Poma’s manuscript does have some apparently unique features, with each section continuous, no paragraph headings, and no capital letters at the beginning of a sentence or a proper noun. There are no periods or commas, only hyphens (-), in the original manuscript.

Guaman Poma’s approach to each subject starts with a full-page drawing and captions. The following text describes the drawing in detail. In the introductory material, Guaman Poma includes letters to the pope and the king of Spain, along with comments on the great value of his book. These letters follow the style of Spanish authors. For instance, the letter attributed to Guaman Poma’s father closely follows an introductory letter written by Martín de Murúa for his book on the Incas (see the introduction to the *Codex Murúa* by Ossio, pp. 18–20, and Adorno and Boserup, “Guaman Poma,” pp. 72–173, 220–222). Most of the rest of the book is written in Guaman Poma’s powerful but rather difficult style, which was influenced by his native Quechua (see Urioste’s introductory comments to the 1980 edition of Guaman Poma’s book). It continues with chapters on the ages of the world, following biblical history, and includes sections on the pre-Inca era of Peru as well as the history and customs of the Inca and early colonial Peru.

The manuscript’s wealth of information on Inca and colonial customs is not found anywhere else. This includes descriptions of ordinances, age grades, the calendar, idols, priest-sorcerers, burials, punishments, jails, songs, palaces,

roads, boundary markers, storage houses, and officials. The authenticity of this information is documented with numerous Quechua names and expressions.

John Rowe's scholarly article "The Age Grades of the Inca Census" compares Quechua terms for age grades of the Incas in several chronicles and concludes that the most reliable source is Guaman Poma. Similar studies could probably be made of the *acllas*, or chosen women, the *camachicoc* and *curaca* (officials), the *chacras* (fields), the *huacas* (deities), sicknesses, *quipu* interpreters, *sapsi* (common property), kinds of *uasi* (houses), prayers, songs, and so on.

Guaman Poma's fondness for long lists may stem from the use of the *quipu* (or *quipu*), Andean knotted strings used to record numbers. The quipo interpreter had to know what the numbers meant. For instance, a quipo would be used to inventory items in a storage house: so much jerky, so many garments, blankets, maize, quinoa, and so on. Such a list might include as many as forty or fifty items (see Murra, *Formaciones económicas*, 243–254).

Guaman Poma was more influenced by the Andean genealogical approach to history than European chronologies in years before and after Christ, though he also uses that system. Thus Guaman Poma copies biblical genealogy from Adam to Christ. He lists the kings of Persia and Egypt in biblical times, the Roman emperors, the popes, and numerous pre-Inca rulers as well as the Incas, their wives, and captains.

Guaman Poma developed a characteristic style of illustrations and commentaries that has been well documented (see especially Adorno, *Guaman Poma*, pp. 57–120). I will concentrate here on the manuscript of Fray Martín de Murúa dated 1590, "*Historia del origen y genealogia de los reyes ingas del Piru . . . compuesta por el padre fray Martin de Morua*." The very complicated relations between Guaman Poma and Murúa have been studied in depth by Adorno and Boserup ("Guaman Poma and the Manuscripts of Fray Martín de Murúa"). A discrepancy in spelling ("Morua" versus "Murua") seems to be due to an Indian scribe who misspelled the name in the manuscript. Guaman Poma spells the name "Morua" and tells of him mistreating the Indians, but he also describes him as a "*gran letrado*," great man of letters (Guaman Poma, *El primer nueva corónica* [1980], p. 521). Guaman Poma's illustrations are similar to many of the paintings in Murúa's manuscript, including his depiction of a number of the Inca rulers and their main wives, or *coyas* (queens). However, the Inca rulers and their wives in the Murúa manuscript look European, while those of Guaman Poma look Indian. For instance, a drawing by Guaman Poma of the ninth Inca, Pachacuti (MS p. 108), shows him with a sling in the right hand, a cloak tied over his shoulder, and a star-headed club in the left hand — almost exactly the same pose found in the Murúa manuscript (folio 17,

dorso). As already mentioned, Adorno and Boserup did an in-depth analysis of the Murúa Poyanne manuscript (published by Ossio as the *Codex Murúa*) and the Guaman Poma text. They concluded that an unknown artist did the paintings of the Inca rulers and their wives in the Murúa text, but that most of the other illustrations were done by Guaman Poma. They also indicate that Guaman Poma “was an artist-and-illustrator-turned-author by virtue of what he had learned from Murúa about the genre and subgenre of historical writing” (Adorno and Boserup, “Guaman Poma,” pp. 193–94, 224).

The only chronicles that describe the *coyas* in such detail and treat them in a separate chapter with drawings are those of Murúa and Guaman Poma. For instance, Guaman Poma’s drawing of Mama Huaco (MS p. 120) shows her with a mirror in the left hand, while in the Murúa illustration, she has it in the right hand (folio 22, dorso); otherwise both are very similar. Although the Murúa manuscript has color paintings, Guaman Poma’s drawings appear to be in black ink on white paper. Nevertheless, his descriptions of the Inca rulers and their queens give the colors of their garments almost exactly as in the Murúa paintings.

Guaman Poma and Murúa deal with many of the same topics in similar ways, but there are differences between the two manuscripts. Murúa writes in a rambling but correct Spanish prose, in contrast to Guaman Poma’s problems with Spanish grammar. The style of the script for Murúa’s work is more refined, and the numbering is done by folio, while Guaman Poma numbered each page in the style of a book. The use of numerous terms and expressions in Quechua as well as his additional comments makes Guaman Poma’s work generally more valuable for the study of Inca culture.

A Summary of the Life and Times of Guaman Poma

Guaman Poma states in the chronicle that he was born after the Spanish conquest of 1532 (*El primer nueva corónica*, p. 860). He also gives his age as eighty, both in the chronicle and in his accompanying letter to the king of Spain dated 1615 (*El primer nueva corónica*, p. 1106). If taken literally, this would mean he was born in 1535. However, Guaman Poma probably means that he considered himself very old. The Indians of Peru did not keep track of chronological age or dates of birth. The Incas, however, were interested in age grades and celebrated a boy’s first haircut after he was weaned at about two, and puberty rites for girls on their first menstruation and for boys at about age fourteen, after which boys were considered ready to marry and join the labor force. Older men unable to do a full day’s work were retired from labor service.

The principal source for Guaman Poma up to the 1590s is his own work. He tells very little about his early years. He was probably born in the city of

Huamanga (modern Ayacucho), learned Quechua from his family, and later learned to read and write in Spanish from a local priest. In colonial times, many Indians of the provincial elite served under Spanish clergymen and administrators. Guaman Poma tells of serving as assistant to a Spanish priest, Cristóbal de Albornoz, who led an inspection tour of towns and villages south of Huamanga in an effort to identify and punish Indians practicing ancient religious rites in the period 1569–1570 (see MS p. 282). Guaman Poma was familiar with the administration of Viceroy Francisco de Toledo (1569–1581), and he states that Toledo studied the ancient ordinances and adopted the best (MS p. 195). Toledo also ordered the resettlement of numerous small Indian villages into larger towns called *reducciones*. This was done to make it easier for the caciques under Spanish administrators to raise Indian tribute labor. Guaman Poma explains that this disrupted the lives of many Indians because it moved them too far from their fields (*El primer nueva corónica*, p. 447).

Toledo claimed that the Inca had usurped power in the region, and that the Spanish had liberated the Indians of Peru. This may explain why Guaman Poma traced his lineage to a pre-Inca dynasty. Evidently he felt that this would enhance his standing with the Spanish rulers.

During the 1590s Guaman Poma worked as an interpreter in proceedings of the assignment of lands to colonial and native parties in Huamanga and did illustrations for Murúa's chronicle. After losing a dispute over a land claim in 1600, Guaman Poma seems to have spent much of his time writing and traveling to gather information for his monumental book (see Adorno, *Guaman Poma*, pp. 27–40). He did a drawing of himself asking questions about the history of Peru and comments that he interviewed Indians from all parts of the Inca Empire. He also mentions that he learned much as an assistant on official inspection tours of the country organized by the colonial government (MS pp. 368–369). In addition, he gives his principal written sources, including José de Acosta and Martín de Murúa, mentioned above (*El primer nueva corónica*, pp. 1088–1090). Guaman Poma was familiar with the “Doctrina Christiana y catecismo para instrucción de los indios,” written in Spanish, Quechua, and Aymara in 1583 by the priests of the Third Church Council in Lima under the guidance of Acosta and published in Lima in 1584. (For a detailed and fully documented account of Guaman Poma's life, see Adorno, *Guaman Poma*, pp. xi–xviii, xxii–xxxviii.)

Guaman Poma and the Inca Garcilaso

Both Guaman Poma and the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, whose works Guaman Poma probably did not use, lived from about 1539 to 1616 (the actual dates of Garcilaso's birth and death). Quechua was their native language, and they also

learned Spanish. Both wrote chronicles in their old age, during the early 1600s, about their native Peru. Their works are more useful for aspects of Inca culture that survived in colonial times and that they saw with their own eyes. They also equate Pachacama with the Christian God. They consider the last legitimate Inca ruler to be Huascar, and his brother Atahualpa to be a usurper. Both wrote in Spanish with numerous expressions in Quechua.

The first part of Garcilaso's work, *Royal Commentaries of the Incas*, was published in 1609, but the second part was not published until 1616, shortly after his death. Garcilaso was a mestizo, son of an Inca princess and a Spanish military officer. He left Peru in 1560 and spent the rest of his life in Spain, mastering Spanish prose. He translated all of the Quechua in his book into Spanish and quoted earlier Spanish chronicles extensively. In contrast, Guaman Poma never left Peru, had problems with Spanish grammar, included passages in Quechua without translation, and only mentions his sources in a general statement toward the end of his book (MS pp. 1088–1090). In this respect Guaman Poma followed the style of most other chronicles of his day. Garcilaso did no illustrations for his book, while Guaman Poma combined his superior skills as an illustrator and writer. In fine, both Guaman Poma and Garcilaso left monumental books filled with a treasury of information on pre-Columbian and colonial Peru.

A Note on the Translation

This is the first English translation of the entire first part of Guaman Poma's book; it is based on the online copy of the manuscript mentioned above. The aim here is to render the original into readable English, a task made difficult because of Guaman Poma's usage. In his native Quechua there is no agreement in gender or number of adjectives and nouns, nor is agreement obligatory for subject and verb. Sometimes Guaman Poma uses a masculine adjective with a feminine noun, or a plural noun with a singular adjective: "*de este cuarto edad de los indios llamado auca pacha runa descendiente de noe*" (MS p. 64). At other times the subject does not agree with the verb: "*los yndios que hacia merced el rrey se llamaua allicac*" (MS p. 65). He also uses either all lowercase or uppercase, and no periods or commas, but hyphens to show breaks. However, in context his intended meaning can usually be deciphered, and punctuation has been added to improve readability.

The transcriptions of Guaman Poma's book in the 1980 Murra-Adorno edition and included with the online text contain capital letters, periods, and commas, and all Quechua words and phrases are translated into Spanish. These sources have been a great help in understanding the book.

In translating archaic or obscure words or passages, I have used reference

works that reflect Spanish and Quechua of the 1600s. The most important dictionary is the *Diccionario de Autoridades* (1726–1729) by the Real Academia Española. I have also used Spanish-Quechua vocabularies, especially the anonymous *Vocabulario y frases en la lengua general de los indios del Peru llamada quichua* (1951 [1586]) and *Vocabulario de la lengua general de todo el Peru* (1901 [1608]) by the Jesuit Diego González Holguín. I have also consulted *Amerikanistisches Wörterbuch* (1960 [1944]) by Georg Friederici.

With regard to the mechanics of rendering Guaman Poma's Spanish and Quechua into modern English, there have been some special problems. Proper nouns have either been translated into their common English equivalent or transcribed more or less as they appear in the manuscript. For example, "guanoco" in the manuscript has been rendered "Huanuco"; "mango capac ynga" is "Manco Capac Inca." In keeping with the orthographic standards of the time, Guaman Poma did not use the written accent, and I have not added it. Words common in the literature on Andean topics—such as *tambo*, Quechua for lodging—have been used instead of the manuscript spellings *tanbo* or *tampu*. A few other similar changes have been made, including the use of consistent spellings for the frequently used Quechua words that appear in the glossary, but most of the Quechua has been left as in the original. Anyone interested in doing an analysis of Guaman Poma's usage should consult the Royal Library's Web site for the manuscript and its transcription.

Many of Guaman Poma's spelling inconsistencies stem from the fact that the Spanish alphabet used in the 1600s was inadequate for a precise transcription of Quechua. The Spanish vowels "i" and "e" (as well as "u" and "o") were often used interchangeably. Quechua has only three vowels: "i," "u," and "a." In addition, Quechua does not have the voiced counterparts of "p," "t," and "k," which are "b," "d," and "g," but this was not understood. The Quechua word *qumpi*, "fine cloth," can be spelled as *cumbe*, *cumpi*, or even *compi*. Guaman Poma spells it *cunbe*, *cumbi*, and *qumbi*. He represents the Quechua sound "wa" as "ua" or sometimes "gua." The word Guaman Poma spells *uaca*, an idol or deity, has been changed to *huaca* because this form is common in other chronicles and modern studies of Andean culture. In Quechua, as in Spanish, there is a distinction between "n" and "ñ," but for some reason Guaman Poma very seldom uses the "ñ." Words such as *ñaupa pacha*, "in olden times," which Guaman Poma spells with "n," have been changed.

The notes are meant to clarify the meaning and explain some differences between the Guaman Poma text and the conclusions of modern authorities. For instance, Guaman Poma's chronology needs explaining. Following biblical history, he describes five ages: (1) Adam and Eve, (2) Noah and the Flood, (3) Abraham, (4) King David, and (5) Christ and the popes down to around

1532 (MS pp. 22–47). For the Andean world, five parallel ages are discussed: (1) Vari Viracocha Runa, (2) Vari Runa, (3) Purun Runa, (4) Auca Runa, and (5) Inca Runa to the Spanish conquest (MS pp. 48–119). Guaman Poma says that the second Inca, Cinche Roca, was eighty years old when Christ was born (MS p. 89). This differs greatly from modern estimates, which place the foundation of Cuzco at around 1200 AD, but this discrepancy can be explained. In the first place, Guaman Poma understood history more in terms of genealogy than in years before and after Christ, a new concept for the Andean people. In addition, Guaman Poma accepted biblical history, including the advanced ages of characters from Genesis, such as Noah, who is said to have lived 650 years. Apparently these periods of Andean history were conceived by Guaman Poma, although his genealogy of the Inca rulers and their wives coincides with most of the other chronicles (see, for example, Cobo, *History of the Inca Empire*, pp. 108–177).

Translations of Quechua words and phrases appear on first use in brackets. In some instances, a note has been added for clarification.

My renderings of the many Quechua expressions are based on a variety of sources: the context in Guaman Poma's book, his Spanish translations, the illustrations, the reference books listed above, and Urioste's translations in the 1980 edition of Guaman Poma. I also consulted with a fellow translator, David Frye; a professor of Quechua, Serafín M. Coronel-Molina; and a scholar of indigenous Peruvian languages, Rodolfo Cerrón-Palomino. I must also mention that I have relied on John Howland Rowe's classic study, *Inca Culture at the Time of the Spanish Conquest* (1946).

This translation was initiated on the suggestion of the leading expert on Guaman Poma, Rolena Adorno. Her advice and examples of translations she has done served as a model for my own rendering.