

**An Inca Account of the Conquest of
Peru.** *Titu Cusi Yupanqui*, Boulder, CO:
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This volume presents the first published English translation of the earliest known book by a native Andean author: an account of the Spanish invasion of Peru by

the penultimate neo-Inka ruler, Titu Cusi Yupanqui. This testimonial from 1570 is invaluable both as an exceedingly rare indigenous account of the convulsive events that shaped the early colonial encounter in Peru, and as a window into the hybrid historiographical genres and historical claims that emerged from it. It is simply one of the most fascinating documents from 16th century Peru, and Bauer's well-executed and annotated English translation, along with his lucid introductory essay, at last makes this important text accessible to an Anglophone readership.

The introductory essay by Bauer orients the reader with an overview of the history of the document itself, and situates its production and contents both historically and historiographically. It opens (appropriately, given that many readers will be non-specialists) with a brief overview of the Spanish conquest of Peru, from the initial violent encounter between Pizarro's invading party and Atahualpa in 1532, to the execution of the last neo-Inka ruler (and Titu Cusi's younger brother) Tupac Amaro in 1572, just a year after Titu Cusi's own death. To say that this text is a mediated, hybrid account is an understatement, and the complexity of its production is rightly the main focus of Bauer's introduction. From his neo-Inka refuge of Vilcabamba, Titu Cusi dictated his account to the Augustinian fray Marcos García, who translated it into Spanish, while Martín de Pando, Titu Cusi's secretary, transcribed the translation. The actual registry of the account in written form, in other words, was a trans-cultural and trans-literative act, and Bauer's analysis disentangles many of the sources and goals of its rhetorical and historical content.

Titu Cusi's difficult task was to present an account that was intelligible to his

monarchal audience using Andean source materials that were often incommensurate with European notions of genre, rhetoric, authority, and diachrony. Within the Spanish legal system, the account was a brief, or *relación*, addressed to King Phillip II, to be presented by Lope García de Castro, the outgoing governor of Peru. The outline of the document conforms to the general conventions of a *relación*, which as Bauer points out, probably owes to the redaction of Marcos García. There are three major sections: (1) a request by Titu Cusi for the advocacy of García de Castro on his behalf; (2) an extended (and eccentric) account of the conquest of Peru in which his father, Manco Inka, figures centrally as the legitimate Inka sovereign who, after repeated betrayals by the conquerors fled to Vilcabamba, where he named Titu Cusi his successor after being mortally stabbed by Almagrist assassins, and (3) a power of attorney granting García de Castro authority to represent him in legal matters in Spain related to his title and interests. As a genre, *relaciones* lean on firsthand experience for their authority, and are often polemical tracts for airing grievances and seeking royal patronage. In this case, Titu Cusi described how his state-in-exile was threatened by incursions, abductions, and, increasingly, legal and historical challenges from both Spanish and indigenous quarters, and he sought recognition by the crown of his claim to be the sole legitimate sovereign of Peru.

But below this veneer of conformity to a European genre, Titu Cusi's claim required creative, syncretic emphasis and elision of European and Andean norms regarding rights of succession, and more broadly, a highly partisan representation of watershed events in terminal prehispanic and early colonial history. Here, Bauer's

introductory analysis builds on the work of Catherine Julien, Susan Niles, and others, to identify how Titu Cusi's account engaged competing genealogical claims to Inka sovereignty—claims that were particularly charged, as the official viceregal historian Sarmiento de Gamboa at that moment was compiling testimony from other royal lineages (*panacas*) to establish the “true history” of the Inka dynasty. For example, Titu Cusi foregrounds the European ideal of primogenitor to lay claim to his legitimacy as successor of Manco Inka, but omits discussion of his mother's pedigree, which would have been equally salient according to Inkaic ideals of succession. But he invokes those same Inkaic ideals in his claim that Manco Inka was of “pure blood” (though never specifying his mother's relatives), while asserting that Atahualpa and Huascar were illegitimate rulers because, although both were sons of Huayna Capac, their mothers were “commoners” (61). Recasting Manco Inka as the legitimate Inka ruler in this way requires Titu Cusi to present a version of protohistoric events that is at odds with most other chronicles and dynastic sources. The account places Manco Inka at the center of historical events, and extols his virtues while denouncing his treatment by the Spanish, whose treachery eventually forces him to flee to Vilcabamba. In his analysis of this narrative, Bauer excavates features of Inka genres of life history and genealogical narrative evident in its structure.

Titu Cusi's account constitutes the first sustained attempt by a native Andean to harness the power of the written word in this way, and Bauer's analysis emphasizes how the shift to alphabetic writing may have changed the relationship between competing claims to power among the Cuzco elite by externalizing and affixing

what were previously more fluid, performative genres of Inka genealogy and history. This line of argumentation is not uncontroversial in current anthropological thinking about the relationship between such narratives and the technical and historiographical functions of Andean information registries—particularly “narrative” *kipus* (Andean knotted cord records). Whether *kipus* encoded parts of speech, required oral exposition, or registered data in non-linguistic terms remain topics of healthy debate. The conundrum for Titu Cusi and his contemporary natives of Cuzco, as Bauer also acknowledges, was how to negotiate the shifting arenas of power within which distinct systems of knowledge and its media were embedded, as much as the change in the medium itself.

But these contradictions and ambiguities are what make this such a rich text, both as a window into the competing historical narratives of the time, and into the shifting means by which they were expressed. It illustrates how primary archival documents were as much a part of making history as they were repositories of it. The accessibility and depth of the introductory essay, combined with the fluid style of the translation make it well-suited for both undergraduate and graduate surveys or seminars.

Available in English for the first time, *An Inca Account of the Conquest of Peru* is a firsthand account of the Spanish invasion, narrated in 1570 by Diego de Castro Titu Cusi Yupanqui - the penultimate ruler of the Inca dynasty - to a Spanish missionary and transcribed by a mestizo assistant. The resulting hybrid document offers an Inca perspective on the Spanish conquest of Peru, filtered through the monk and his scribe. Titu Cusi tells of his father's maltreatment at the hands of the conquerors; his father's ensuing military campaigns, withdrawal, and murder; and his own succession as ruler. The life of Pizarro :with some account of his associates in the conquest of Peru /. Helps. Arthur. Read more. Article. History of how the Spaniards arrived in Peru [1570] â€” by Titu Cusi Yupanqui and An Inca Account of t March 2008 Â· Bulletin of Latin American Research. Tristan Platt. Read more. Discover more. Download citation. What type of file do you want? RIS. BibTeX.