Royal Commentaries of the Incas, In Two Parts (Excerpt)

by Garcilaso de la Vega (1539-1616); Paul Rycaut (translation) (1629-1700)

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THE ROYAL COMMENTARIES OF PERU, IN TWO PARTS.

THE FIRST PART.
Treating of the Original of their Incas or Kings: Of their Idolatry: Of their Laws and Government both in Peace and War: Of the Reigns and Conquests of the Incas: With many other Particulars relating to their Empire and Policies before such time as the Spaniards invaded their Countries.

THE SECOND PART.
Describing the manner by which that new World was conquered by the Spaniards. Also the Civil Wars between the Piarrists and the Almagrians, occasioned by Quarrels arising about the Division of that Land. Of the Rise and Fall of Rebels; and other Particulars contained in that History.

Illustrated with Sculptures.

Written originally in Spanish,
By the Inca GARCILASSO DE LA VEGA,
And rendered into English, by Sir PAUL RYCAUT, K.

LONDON,
Printed by Miles Flesher, for Jacob Tonson at the Judge's-Head in Chancer-y-Lane near Fleetstreet, MDCLXXXVIII.
Of the Geometry, Geography, Arithmetick and Musick known to the Indians.

They had attained so much Geometry as served them to measure out their Lands, and make out limits and bounds to their several partitions; but this was not done in an artificial manner, but by their lines, and small stones, which they used in all their Accounts.

As to their Geography, they knew how to decipher in colours the Model of every Nation, with the distinct Provinces, and how they were bounded. I have seen an exact Map of Cozco, with the parts adjacent, and the four principal ways to it, perfectly described in a fort of Mortar, compounded with small-stones and straw, which delineated all the places, both great and small, with the broad Streets, and narrow Lanes, and Housefes which were ancient and decayed, and with the three streams running through it, all which were described with great curiоsity.

Moreover in this Draught the Hills and Valleys, the turnings and windings of the Rivers were made to appear so plain, that the best Geographer in the World could not have exceeded it. The use of this Model was to inform the Visitors, which they called Damian, of the extent and division of the Countries, whenever they went by the King's Commission to survey the Province, and number the people within the precincts of Cozco, and other places; this Model which I mention, was made in Mona, which the Spaniards call now Mona, and is distant about five Leagues from the City of Cozco towards the Zat, the which I had opportunity to observe, being then present with the Visitors, who went to number the Indians that inhabited the Division of Garcia de Vega, My Lord and Master.

In Arithmetick they knew much, and were skilled in a peculiar manner and nature in that Science; for by certain knots of divers colours they summed up all the accounts of Tribute, and Contributions, belonging to the revenue of the Incas, and thereby knew how to account, and discount, to subtract, and to multiply; but to proportion the respective Taxes on every Nation by way of division, they performed it in another manner by granes of Meal, or Pebbles, which served in the place of Counters. And because it was necessary that Accounts should be kept of all charges relating to War and Peace, that the People, and the Flocks and Herds of Cattle should be numbered, that the payment of Tributes, and the like, should be registered and noted, there were certain Persons appointed for that work, who made it their study and business to be ready and skillful in Accounts; and because perhaps one Person was appointed to keep the reckonings of three or four distinct things, as Accountant General, which seems difficult to be performed by the way of their threads and knots, we shall discourse it hereafter more at large, in what manner they distinguished their Accounts of divers busineses.

Of their Musick.

In Musick they arrived to a certain Harmony, in which the Indians of Collo did more particularly excell, having been the Inventors of a certain Pipe made of Canes glued together, every one of which having a different Note of higher and lower, in the manner of Organs, made a pleasing Musick by the diaphony of sounds, the Treble, Tenor and Basse, exactly corresponding and anwering each to other; with these Pipes they often plaid in comfort, and made tolerable Musick, though they wanted the Quavers, Semi-quavers, Ates, and many Voices which perfect
perfect the Harmony amongst us. They had also other Pipes, which were Flutes with four or five stops, like the Pipes of Shepherds; with these they played not in concert, but singly, and tuned them to Sonnets, which they composed in metre, the Subject of which was love, and the Passions which arise from the Favourites or Discontents of a Mistress. Thee Musickians were Indians trained up in that art for diversification of the Inca, and the Curacas, who were his Nobles, which, as rustic and barbarous as it was, it was not common, but acquired with great Industry and Study.

Every Song was set to its proper Tune; for two Songs of different Subjects could not correspond with the same Aire, by reason that the Mullick which the Gallant made on his Flute, was designed to express the satisfaction or discontent of his Mind, which were not so intelligible perhaps by the words as by the melancholy or cheerfulness of the Tune which he played. A certain Spaniard one night late encountered an Indian Woman in the Streets of Cocal, and would have brought her back to his Lodgings, but she cried out, For God’s sake, Sir, let me go, for that Pipe which you hear in yonder Tower calls me with great Puffon, and I cannot refuse the summons, for Love constrains me to go, that I may be his Wife and be my Husband.

The Songs which they composed of their Wars, and grand Achievements, were never set to the Aire of their Flute, being too grave and serious to be intermingled with the pleasures and softnesses of Love; for those were only sung at their principal Festivals when they commemorated their Victories and Triumphs. When I came from Peru which was in the Year 1560, there were then five Indians residing at Cocal, who were great Masters on the Flute, and could play readily by book any Tune that was laid before them; they belonged to one Juan Rodriguez, who lived at a Village called Labas, not far from the City; and now at this time, being the Year 1602. 'tis reported, That the Indians are so well improved in Mullick, that it was a common thing for a Man to sound divers kinds of Instrumants; but Vocal Mullick was not so usual in my time, perhaps because they did not much practice their Voices, though the Mongols, or such as came of a mixture of Spanish and Indian blood, had the faculty to sing with a tunable and a sweet Voice.

CHAP. XV.

The Poetry of the Inca’s Amautas, who were Philosophers; and of the Haravec, who were Poets.

The Amautas, who were Men of the best ingenuity amongst them, invented Comedies and Tragedies, which on their solemn Festivals they represented before their King, and the Lords of his Court. The Actors were not Men of the common sort, but Curacas, or some of the young Nobility, and Officers of the Souldiers; because every one acted his own proper part; the plot or argument of their Tragedies was to represent their military Exploits, and the Triumphs, Victories and Heroick Actions of their renowned Men; and the subject or design of their Comedies was to demonstrate the manner of good Husbandry in cultivating and manuring their Fields, and to shew the management of domestick Affairs, with other familiar matters. So soon as the Comedy was ended, the Actors took their places according to their degrees and qualities. These Plays were not made up with interludes of obscene and diabolical fancies, but such as were of serious entertainment, composed of grave and acute sentences, fitted to the place and auditory, by whom the Actors were commonly rewarded with Jewels and other Presents, according to their merit.
Their poetical Verfes were composed in long and short Meetre, fitted to amorous Subjects, and the Tunes to which they were set; their Kings, and the Exploits and great Actions performed in their respective Reigns, were also matter for their Poetry, which they recorded in verse, and served in the place of History; their Sonnets were not long, but short and compendious, so as they might more easily be committed to Memory; they used not rhymes, but loose verse, like our Heroick Poems. I remember four Verfes of an amorous Song, which for curiosity sake, and to shew their short but compendious fence, I shall repeat here; being thereby best accommodated to the Aire of their Flute: the Tune also I would gladly set down, but that the impertinence thereof may easily excuse me. The Sonnet in four verfes is this:

\[\text{Caylla Llapí} \quad \text{Pununqui} \quad \text{Chaspituta} \quad \text{Samusac.}\]

\[\text{In English} \quad \text{To thy Song} \quad \text{I will sleep} \quad \text{At midnight} \quad \text{I shall come.}\]

Many other sorts of Verfes the Inca, who were Poets, composed, who had the Name of Haraucc, which properly signifies an Inventour. Blass Valera in his Writings mentions certain Verfes, which he calls Spondels, consisting of four syllables; the Indian words he hath translated into Latin, the Subject of them is philosophical, and treats of those second causes which God hath placed in the Air, such as Thunder, and Lightning, Rain and Snow, all which are described in verse, and are agreeable to the fancy of their Fables, one of which is this: That the Maker of all things hath placed in Heaven a Virgin, the Daughter of a King, holding a Bucket of Water in her hand, for refreshment of the Earth, when occasion requires; and that sometimes her Brother knocking upon this Bucket, caufes Thunder and Lightning to proceed from it: these noife, they say, are effects of the violent nature of Man, but Hail, and Rain, and Snow, falling with left noife and impetuousity, are more agreeable to the gentle nature of a Woman. They say, that an Inca, who was a Poet and an Astrologer composed many Verfes in praise of the Vertues and Excellencies of this Virgin Lady, which God had bestowed upon her for the good and benefit of his Creatures. This Fable and Verfes Blass Valera reports to have found expreffed in the knots and accounts of their ancient Annals, represented in the threads of divers Colours, and preferred by those to whom the care of the historical Knots and Accounts were committed; and he so much wondered at the ingenuity of the Amantaes, that he thought those Verfes worthy to be committed to Memory and Paper. I remember in my Infancy to have heard this Fable, with many others, recounted by my Parents, but being then but a Child, I was not very inquisitive to understand the significations. Blass Valera hath translated this Song out of the Indian Language into Latin, and which runs in this manner:

\[-\text{Cumac Nuña} \quad \text{Pulchra Nympha,} \quad \text{Fair Nymph,}\]
\[-\text{Torallaygum} \quad \text{Frater tuus,} \quad \text{Thy Brother,}\]
\[-\text{Puyun quita} \quad \text{Urnam tuam} \quad \text{Strikes now,}\]
\[-\text{Paquir cayan} \quad \text{Nunc infringit} \quad \text{Thine Arne,}\]
\[-\text{Hima Mantara} \quad \text{Cujus ëctus} \quad \text{Whose blow}\]
\[-\text{Cumunum} \quad \text{Tonat, fulget} \quad \text{Is Thunder}\]
\[-\text{Tlla Pantaç} \quad \text{Fulminatq;} \quad \text{And Lightning.}\]
\[-\text{Camri Nuña} \quad \text{Sed tu Nymph} \quad \text{But thou Nymph,}\]
\[-\text{Unay quita} \quad \text{Tuam lympha} \quad \text{Pouring forth}\]
\[-\text{Para Muñqi} \quad \text{Fundens plusis,} \quad \text{Thy water,}\]
\[-\text{May nimpiri} \quad \text{Interdümq;} \quad \text{Droppeth rain,}\]
\[-\text{Chichi Muñqi} \quad \text{Grandinem feu} \quad \text{And again,}\]
\[-\text{Riti Muñqi} \quad \text{Nivem mittis.} \quad \text{Sendselt hail,}\]
\[-\text{Pachà}\]
With such trifles as these I have enriched my poor History; for whatsoever I have collected from Blue Vadera, are all pearls and precious curiosities, and such ornaments as my Country doth not deserve; which now, as they report, in these days improves in Poetry; for that the Mongrels, or those of Spanish and Indian blood have taken a good train in Verle, whose subject is Divine or Moral, God give them his grace that they may serve him in all things.

In this imperfect and gross manner had the Indians of Peru the knowledge of Sciences, which is not to be attributed to their want of natural parts and abilities of mind; for had they been instructed in letters, their capacities are such as might have improved every little beginning: And as the first Philologists and Astrologers delivered the principles of their Sciences to their posterity, who erected on those foundations the more lofty buildings of reason; so these people were ended with the like capacities, sufficient to advance such learning as defended from their Parents, especially we find that they were well disposed to the learning of that Morality which contained the Customs and Laws of their Country; and which not only extend to those rules relating to justice and decent comportment of one Subject to another, but as it had reference to that obedience which Subjects and Vassals owe to their Sovereign, and those Ministers which act under their command; for these being a people who were inclined to live according to those Laws which the light of nature dictated, and rather to do no evil, than know well, were more easily made capable of that Science which was directed by material and exterior objects, than of that which was conformable about more abstract and immaterial notions. Pedro de Cieca in the 38th Chapter of his Book, speaking of the Incas and their Government, says, That they acted so well, and that their Government was so good and political, as might be compared to the Wisedom of the best frame and Model of Common-wealths in this World, and Father Meftrro Aofla, in the first Chapter of his 6th Book, makes a discourse in favour of the Incas, and the people of Mexico, in these words:

"Having in the preceding discourse laid down the Particulars of that Religion which the Indians profess, I design in the following Treatise to declare their Customs and Political Government, for two ends: First, that I may undeceive the World of that false opinion which they have framed concerning this people, as being so brutish, and of so little understanding, as deserve not the name of rational creatures: From which erroneous conception, many grievous calamities have been imposed on them without pity or compassion; and being esteemed no other than beasts, all that respect which is due to humane nature, or the person of Mankind hath been lost towards them. But this false notion, which none but the vain-glorious and confident of themselves (who are the common fools of the World) have entertained, hath been sufficiently confused by more solid and considering men, who have made it their business to travel and converse amongst them, and to discover the secrecy of their Customs and Government. To remove which prejudicial censure from them, the most expedient means will be to declare the Justice and Customs which were in use amongst them, at that time, when they lived by their own Laws; with which, though there was a great mixture of Barbarism, and many things without foundation; yet their Government contained many excellent things, and worthy of admiration, and such as may be compared with the best Model of our Common-wealths, and may afford us sufficient evidence of the genius of that people, and of that natural readiness of mind capable to be improved to greater and higher matters. Nor ought it to seem strange, if some erroneous fancies have intermixed with their Customs; for even Plato and Xenagus, and other excellent Legislators have been guilty of some follies, and interwoven superstitions; and vain rites, with their more substantial Laws. And indeed in those wise Common-wealths of Rome and Athens, many ridiculous Customs have been in-"
produced; which to considering men would appear as idle as any of those practices which have been in use amongst the Mexican or the Peruvian Common-wealths. But we who entred by the Sword, and afforded not time to these miserable Indians to give us proofs of their rationality, but hunted them as wild Beasts through the Mountains, and drew them as brutish creatures to bear the burthens of our flavish servitude, could not entertain any great opinion of their Wisdom: Howsoever, some observing men, who have been fo curious, as to penetrate into the secrets of their ancient Government, and into the methods of their proceedings, have found that the Order and Rules they followed, were worthy of admiration. Thus far are the words of Naph Asofia, who also adds, that they had certain compendious Systems of Morality, digested into Verfe by way of Poetry; in which also many of their Laws, and the great Actions of their Kings were rehearsed, and kept in a kind of tradition for better instruction of their posterity; which favouring rather of Truth, than Romance, the Spaniards esteem them to be true and particular Passages of their History: But many other things afford them matter of laughter, being ill-compounded Fables, superflitious and vain, and such also as are contrary to common honesty.

C H A P. X V I.

Of those few Instruments which the Indians attained to, and made use of in all their Works and Handicraft-Trades.

Having already declared how far they were proceeded in their Moral and Natural Philosophy, and in their Poetry; it follows now that we should declare something of their Mechanicks, and how much they failed in the Art of making those Instruments, which are necessaries for shaping and framing those Utensils which are required for convenient living and well-being. And first to begin with their Silversmiths; of which, though there were great numbers, and constantly laboured at their Trade, yet they were not so skilful as to make an Anvil of Iron, or any other Metal; saufed, perhaps, for want of knowledge in what manner to dig their Iron, and separate it from its Ore; of which they had several Mines, and called it Quartz, and therefore instead thereof they made use of a certain hard Stone, of a yellowish colour; which being planed and made smooth, was rare, and of great value amongst them: They knew not the invention of putting a handle of Wood to their Hammers, but worked with certain Instruments they had made of Copper, mixed with a sort of lime Brats. Neither did they know how to make Files or Graving-tools, or Bellows for Melting down Metals; but instead thereof used Pipes made of Copper, of about a Yard long, the end of which was narrow, that the Breath might pass more forcibly by means of the contraction: And as the Fire was to be more or less, fo accordingly they used eight, ten or twelve of these Pipes at once, as the quantity of Metal did require: And till they continue this way, though our Invention of Bellows is much more eafe, and forcible to raise the Fire. Nor had they the use of Tongs to take their heated Metal out of the Fire, but rather drew it thence by a piece of Wood, or some Bar of Copper; with which they call it into a heap of wet Earth, which they kept purposely by them to cool their Metal, until such time as they could take it into their hands: Notwithstanding this want of divers Instruments, they made many things with great curiosity, especially in Boaring Metals, as we shall hereafter discourse more at large. And notwithstanding their simplicity, experience had taught them, that the Steam and Effluviums from Metals,