

**Were the Incas Natural Lords of Peru?  
Contrasting views of Titu Cusi Yupanqui and Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa**

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Writing in 1570 from the last Inca stronghold of Vilcabamba, the Inca Titu Cusi Yupanqui begins his *Relación de la conquista del Perú* by saying that he is the grandson of the Inca Huayna Capac and son of Manco Inca Yupanqui, “the natural lords that used to rule these kingdoms and provinces of Peru.”<sup>1</sup> The term “natural lords” was used by Spanish philosophers and theologians, including Francisco de Vitoria at the University of Salamanca in Spain, to indicate rulers of hierarchical societies whose subjects accepted their rule. Meanwhile, writing in Cuzco, the Spanish navigator and conquistador Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa was given the task by Viceroy Francisco de Toledo of proving exactly the opposite: that the Incas were not natural lords of their lands and were, in fact, tyrants. Vitoria had maintained that it was not legitimate to attack societies ruled by their natural lords except in the case of tyranny, protection of innocent people, or self-defense. Titu Cusi makes a special effort to show the devotion of the people to his father Manco Inca and thus prove that he ruled with their support and favor. On the other hand, Sarmiento de Gamboa worked to compile acts of cruelty and tyranny on the part of each Inca ruler in order to prove that the conquest had been justified. This paper will examine the writings of Titu Cusi and Sarmiento de Gamboa on this issue which was one of the major controversies of the early colonial period in Spanish America.

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<sup>1</sup> Titu Cusi Yupanqui, *An Inca Account of the Conquest of Peru by Titu Cusi Yupanqui*. Translated by Ralph Bauer (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2005) 57.

## **Titu Cusi Yupanqui**

The Inca Titu Cusi's grandfather Huayna Capac had at his prime ruled a vast empire that extended from what is now Ecuador to central Chile. That empire, called Tawantinsuyo and centered on the highland city of Cusco, had grown in the 1400s with the conquests of the ninth Inca, Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui, and his son and successor Tupac Inca. The Inca Empire, however, had no established policy of succession, only the custom that the Inca's most able son would inherit the title of Sapa Inca. At the death of Huayna Capac in 1525 (from smallpox brought by the Spaniards who had landed in South America the year before), a conflict arose between two of his sons, Huascar and Atahualpa, over who would take the throne. Kenneth J. Andrien states that a "stalemate soon developed, with Atahualpa and his generals ruling in the north, and Huascar and his allies in Cusco controlling the imperial state apparatus and the remainder of the empire."<sup>2</sup> In the end Atahualpa defeated his brother Huascar and ordered the killing of Huascar's family, generals, and supporters in 1532 and finally of Huascar himself in 1533. However, in November of 1532, Atahualpa was captured by the Spanish under Francisco Pizarro in the town of Cajamarca when he agreed to a meeting with the strange new men who had arrived in his land. He was killed by the Spanish only a few months after the death of his brother Huascar. The Spanish proclaimed Tupac Huallpa, a younger brother of Atahualpa and Huascar, as Inca and, when he died suddenly, they chose another brother, Manco Inca Yupanqui, Titu Cusi's father, as their puppet ruler.

Manco Inca initially collaborated with the Spaniards but, in 1536, as their treatment of him worsened and he was imprisoned for ransom twice, he turned against them, calling together an army of 100,000 warriors and attacking Cusco and Lima. His army laid siege to Cusco for

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<sup>2</sup> Kenneth J. Andrien, *Andean Worlds: Indigenous History, Culture, and Consciousness under Spanish Rule, 1532-1825* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 37.

more than a year but that effort eventually failed and, in 1537, Manco abandoned the highlands for the eastern slopes of the Andes, establishing his capital at Vilcabamba.<sup>3</sup> From there, his forces were able to harass the Spaniards, their towns, their crops, and the travelers on their roads, until his death in 1545. In his jungle hideaway, Manco Inca had made the mistake of giving refuge to six Spaniards, followers of Diego de Almagro, fleeing punishment for the assassination of Francisco Pizarro. After a time, Spanish officials offered the murderers clemency if they would kill Manco Inca. This they did while playing *heron*, a type of ball game, with him. The murderers were then themselves killed while trying to escape.<sup>4</sup>

Sayri Tupac succeeded Manco Inca while his brother Titu Cusi Yupanqui was named high priest of the Sun. But, in 1556, emissaries from the Spanish Viceroy convinced Sayri Tupac to leave Vilcabamba to live in Cusco with the grant of substantial lands and tax income plus the threat of military attack if he did not agree. Sayri Tupac died unexpectedly in 1560 or 1561<sup>5</sup> and Titu Cusi then succeeded to the throne.

Titu Cusi was born around 1530 in Cuzco. The name of his mother is not known but she was referred to as a wife of Manco Inca and an important woman from the town of Anta.<sup>6</sup> Titu Cusi and his mother and sisters were taken by Manco Inca to Vilcabamba in 1537 but shortly thereafter the children and their mother were captured during a Spanish raid and taken to Cusco

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<sup>3</sup> The Incas “had already constructed four major installations (Machu Pichu, Choquequirao, Vitcos, and Vilcabamba) and dozens of smaller settlements within the [Vilcabamba] region.” Brian Bauer, Madeleine Halac-Higashimori, and Gabriel E. Cantarutti. *Voices from Vilcabamba: Accounts Chronicling the Fall of the Inca Empire* (Louisville, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2016) 4.

<sup>4</sup> For more information about the killing of Manco Inca, see Edmundo Guillen Guillen, *Visión peruana de la Conquista: La Resistencia Incaica a la invasion española* (Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1979), pp. 102-105; and George Kubler, “A Peruvian Chief of State: Manco Inca (1515-1545),” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* (Vol. 24, No. 2, May 1944) 271-274.

<sup>5</sup> Raquel Chang-Rodríguez, “Writing as Resistance: Peruvian History and the *Relacion* of Titu Cusi Yupanqui,” *From Oral to Written Expression: Native Andean Chronicles of the Early Colonial Period*, Ed. Rolena Adorno (Syracuse: Maxwell School, 1982) 46-48; Guillen Guillen, 107; Andrien, 197-198.

<sup>6</sup> Ralph Bauer, “Introduction,” to Titu Cusi Yupanqui, *An Inca Account of the Conquest of Peru*. Translated, introduced and annotated by Ralph Bauer (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2005) 37.

where they spent about five years in the home of a Spanish official. In about 1542, Manco Inca succeeded in abducting his son and returning him to Vilcabamba<sup>7</sup> where he would remain for the rest of his life.

The territory controlled by the rebellious Inca was far from small. Nathan Wachtel notes that Titu Cusi's state "consisted of the tropical Andes region: an almost limitless expanse to the east, and running from the latitude of Huanuco in the north to south of Cuzco. .... All the inhabitants of these provinces...paid him tribute."<sup>8</sup> Titu Cusi, like his father before him, harassed the Spanish settlements and commerce while engaging in sporadic diplomatic negotiations with the apparent goal of establishing a recognized neo-Inca state.

In 1565 a messianic religious rebellion called the *taki onqoy* arose in which leaders said the old gods would be revived and the Spanish defeated. The hope was that Indians from Quito in the north to the land of the Araucanians in the south would rise up. The plot was betrayed and crushed by the Spanish.<sup>9</sup> In the wake of the foiled plot, Titu Cusi negotiated favorable terms with Governor Lope García de Castro, signing the Treaty (or Capitulations) of Acobamba in 1566 or 1567, depending on the source.<sup>10</sup> The negotiations had been initiated by King Philip II himself in a 1563 letter to Governor García in which Philip notes that "mistreatment by the Spanish" had made the native Indians flee into the Andes. He authorizes the governor to negotiate with Titu Cusi for him to become a Christian and be given lands from which to make a living.<sup>11</sup> In the

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<sup>7</sup> Ralph Bauer, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Nathan Wachtel, *The Vision of the Vanquished: The Spanish Conquest of Peru through Indian Eyes: 1530-1570*. Translated by Ben and Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977) 174-175.

<sup>9</sup> Chang-Rodriguez (1982 "Writing"), 50; Wachtel, 176.

<sup>10</sup> Legnani gives the date as 1566 while Andrien says 1567. Andrien, 198; Nicole Delia Legnani, "A Necessary Contextualization," to Titu Cusi Yupanqui, *Titu Cusi: A 16<sup>th</sup> Century Account of the Conquest*. Adapted by Nicole Delia Legnani (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005) 33.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Alejandro Herrera Villagra, "Titu Cusi Yupanqui: diálogo, comunicación y traducción en la redacción de epístolas entre la mascapaicha quechua y la corona española. Vilcabamba, 1560-1570. Revisitado," *Yuyay Taqe: Los Incas en su tiempo y en el nuestro*. Ed. Roberto Ojeda Escalante and Alejandro Herrera Villagra (Cuzco: Universidad Andina del Cusco, 2019) 82.

treaty, Titu Cusi agreed to end the fighting and accept Christianity, taking the Christian name of Diego de Castro. He would be a vassal prince of the King of Spain. In turn, he achieved agreement on the marriage of his son to the daughter of Sayri Tupac and the promise of lands that had previously been under control of the Inca, plus tax revenues. Following this agreement, Augustinian friars were allowed to enter the Inca kingdom to evangelize the Indians but Titu Cusi, in this as in every aspect of his relations with the Spanish, ceded only the minimum necessary. It is likely that he never intended to leave Vilcabamba as the Spanish hoped.<sup>12</sup> Catherine Julien says that “nowhere in the Capitulations... was Titu Cusi’s removal from Vilcabamba required or even mentioned. The Capitulations were about Titu Cusi’s acceptance of vassalage to the King of Spain and about the peaceful incorporation of the province of Vilcabamba into Spanish Peru, agreed to by both sides.”<sup>13</sup>

Titu Cusi finished his missive to the governor with a message for the King in 1570. But before he could even know whether his message was delivered, Titu Cusi died, from pneumonia or, according to some historians, including Edmundo Guillén Guillén, poisoned,<sup>14</sup> in 1571.

Titu Cusi was succeeded by his half-brother Tupac Amaru. At this time, although a war against the Vilcabamba Incas had not been authorized by King Philip,<sup>15</sup> Viceroy Francisco de Toledo realized, according to Raquel Chang-Rodríguez, that

Spanish hegemony in the region would always be challenged as long as Vilcabamba remained in the hands of the rebels; thus he ordered the military campaign that destroyed that last bastion of Andean resistance. The capture of Tupac Amaru I, and of the statue of the god Punchao belonging to the Cuzco temple of Coricancha, put an end to a struggle which had lasted more than forty years.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ralph Bauer, 26.

<sup>13</sup> Catherine Julien, “Francisco de Toledo and His Campaign against the Incas,” *Colonial Latin American Review* (Vol. 16, No. 2, Dec. 2007) 250. (243-272)

<sup>14</sup> Guillen Guillen 1979, 114.

<sup>15</sup> Julien (2007), 257-258.

<sup>16</sup> Chang-Rodríguez (1982, “Writing”), 52-54.

Viceroy Toledo held a three day trial after which a Spanish judge ordered the beheading of Tupac. The execution took place on the plaza of Cusco on September 24, 1572,<sup>17</sup> before a crowd of his mourning subjects. Sayri Tupac's daughter Beatriz (who had been betrothed to Titu Cusi's son) was then married to the Spaniard who had led the expedition that captured her uncle Tupac Amaru.

Titu Cusi's work is composed of three parts—1) a few introductory paragraphs addressed to Governor García de Castro with the request that, “upon safe arrival in Spain,” he present Titu Cusi's case for compensation to King Philip; 2) the long historical “*relación*” of the conquest and Incan resistance; and 3) a power of attorney for the former governor to represent his interests in Spain.<sup>18</sup>

Titu Cusi's account is full of speeches in the voices of Manco Inca and his captains and dialogue from the Pizarro brothers to the degree that it reads like a dramatic performance.

**Gonzalo Pizarro:** Señor Manco Inca, a few days ago, you and my brother Hernando Pizarro made an agreement that you would neither plot nor have any dealings in any more conspiracies. But it seems to me that you have not kept your promise, for we have received intelligence that you have gathered many people with the intention of attacking us by night. In the king's name, give yourself up as a prisoner....

**Manco Inca:** What sort of game are you playing with me? Are you mocking me at every turn? Do you not know that I am a son of the sun and a son of Viracocha, as you claimed to be? Do you think that I am just any person or some Indian of the common sort? Do you want to scandalize the country and be hacked to pieces? Do not mistreat me for I have not given you any reason.<sup>19</sup>

Julien speculates that the speeches were based on the memories of Manco's comrades and “may have been truer to the emotions of the speakers... than to the words themselves.” She adds

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<sup>17</sup> Andrien, 193. For a detailed description of the capture of Tupac Amaru, see Guillen Guillen (1979), 131-141.

<sup>18</sup> Ralph Bauer, 22.

<sup>19</sup> Titu Cusi Yupanqui, 86-86.

that in combining the Spanish informational *relación* with indigenous oral discourse, “Titu Cusi created an entirely new and original literary genre.”<sup>20</sup>

Although Titu Cusi had spent part of his boyhood among the Spanish in Cusco, he was probably not fluent in the Spanish language. Song No points out that the production of the document was complicated: Titu Cusi told his story aloud in Quechua; his Mestizo secretary Martin de Pando translated it into Spanish and finally Friar Marcos García transcribed it into elite 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish.<sup>21</sup> A lengthy document, Alejandro Herrera Villagra states that its writing probably took at least two years.<sup>22</sup> The long section in which Titu Cusi related the resistance struggle of his father was witnessed by Pando and García and also by three of Titu Cusi’s captains, Suya Yupanqui, Rimache Yupanqui, and Sullca Varac. Chang-Rodríguez notes that it was important to show that the narrated story was an accurate account of what had occurred.<sup>23</sup>

How important was the involvement of Pando and García in the final product of Titu Cusi’s account? To what degree is it a hybrid work? Liliana Regalado de Hurtado states that, given what we know about the manner in which the document was written, we cannot deny the difficulties for the modern reader in distinguishing in every case between what are Titu Cusi’s ideas and what might have been the ideas of Pando or García.<sup>24</sup> Titu Cusi recognized the importance of the written word. Chang-Rodríguez says that he and other indigenous writers accepted those important European symbols in order to describe their history and personal merits

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<sup>20</sup> Catherine Julien, “Introduction” to Titu Cusi Yupanqui *History of How the Spaniards Arrived in Peru*. Dual-Language Edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 2006) xxi.

<sup>21</sup> Song No, “La heterogeneidad suterada: Titu Cusi Yupanqui.” *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* (Año 31, No. 62, 2005) 88-89.

<sup>22</sup> Herrera, 19.

<sup>23</sup> Raquel Chang-Rodríguez, “Rebelión y religión en dos crónicas del Perú de ayer,” *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* (Año 14, No. 28, 1988) 177.

<sup>24</sup> Liliana Regalado de Hurtado, “Estudio Preliminar,” Inca Titu Cusi Yupanqui, *Instrucción al Licenciado Don Lope García de Castro (1570)* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1992), xxxii.

and make demands while, at the same time, they were rejecting European institutions.<sup>25</sup> Ben Post notes that the text tries, at the same time, to accommodate to the colonial world and resist it.<sup>26</sup> Some Indigenous scribes appropriated the Spanish alphabet to write in their Indigenous languages, including the native collaborators of Friar Bernardino de Sahagún and the writers of the *Annals of the Cakchiquel Maya*. Guaman Poma de Ayala was able to write in Spanish and like Sahagún made extensive use of drawings. Titu Cusi chose to work with a scribe and a translator and Susana Jákfalvi-Leiva says that, in her view, all three must share credit for authorship.<sup>27</sup> Ralph Bauer, however, gives more credit to Titu Cusi and says that, in his account, Titu Cusi made “calculated use of everything he had learned about Spanish culture without becoming unfaithful to his own culture.”<sup>28</sup>

Julien makes the point that most historians have accepted the version that control of Peru passed to the Spanish with the capture of Atahualpa in 1532 and that what followed were merely operations to put down various rebellions. But, she notes, “As Titu Cusi’s *History* makes clear, there are other ways to tell the story.”<sup>29</sup> Chang-Rodríguez says that it “is not simple tale, but rather history recorded from the point of view of the vanquished. The events narrated thus acquire a unique poignancy because the writer uses them to defy Spanish rule.”<sup>30</sup> She adds that Titu Cusi’s is the first Indigenous chronicle to narrate the resistance of the Incas to the conquest and that it is saturated with the nostalgia of one who contemplates the disappearance of a way of

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<sup>25</sup> Raquel Chang-Rodríguez, *La apropiación del signo: Tres cronistas indígenas del Perú* (Tempe: Center for Latin American Studies, Arizona State University, 1988) 40.

<sup>26</sup> Ben Post, “Titu Cusi Yupanqui (ca. 1526-1570), *Narradores Indígenas y mestizos de la época colonial (siglos XVI-XVII)*, edited by Rocío Cortés and Margarita Zamora (Lima: Centro de Estudios Literarios Antonio Cornejo Polar, 2016) 180.

<sup>27</sup> Susana Jákfalvi-Leiva, “De la voz a la escritura: La Relación de Titu Cusi (1570),” *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* (Año 19, No. 37, 1993) 266.

<sup>28</sup> Ralph Bauer, 18.

<sup>29</sup> Julien (2006), viii.

<sup>30</sup> Chang-Rodríguez (1982, “Writing”) 55.



life, of a world that is disappearing.<sup>31</sup> Regalado de Hurtado states that Vilcabamba constituted for the Andean people the tangible expression of an ideological position, of a hope for the reconstruction of a lost world that ended with the capture of the Inca Tupac Amaru.<sup>32</sup> We can see that in Titu Cusi's presentation of his father's speech to his subjects as he leaves for Vilcabamba:

**Manco Inca:** “[Y]ou are not to believe anything that these bearded ones, who have mocked me because of my good faith, may say for they lie a lot, as they have lied to me in all their dealings with me, and they will continue to lie in their dealings with you as well. .... [T]hey may order you to worship what they themselves worship, namely some sort of painted rags that they claim to be Viracocha. Even though they are just mere rags, they will demand that you pray to these rags as you would pray to our *huacas*. Don't do it but keep with what we have, for, as you can see, the *villcas* speak to us; we can see the sun and the moon with our own eyes....”<sup>33</sup>

We can see that Titu Cusi's narration is an example of a voice from among the vanquished, a voice that is rarely heard in history.

### **Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa**

Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa was born in Alcalá de Henares, Spain, to a Galician father and a Basque mother in about the year 1532<sup>34</sup> and was well educated in languages and the sciences which proved useful in his varied life as navigator, explorer, writer, and conquistador. *The History of the Incas*, which he completed in Cuzco, Peru, in 1572, was written at the direction of Viceroy Francisco de Toledo in an attempt to prove that the Incas were not natural lords in their lands because their rule was tyrannical and their customs violated natural law. The work is considered by historians to be one of the most important surviving manuscripts from the

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<sup>31</sup> Raquel Chang-Rodríguez, *Violencia y subversión en la prosa colonial hispanoamericana, siglos XVI y XVII* (Madrid: José Porrúa Turanzas, S.A., 1982)

<sup>32</sup> Regalado de Hurtado, xxi.

<sup>33</sup> Titu Cusi Yupanqui, 115, 116.

<sup>34</sup> Clements R. Markham, “Introduction,” to Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, *Narratives of the Voyages of Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa to the Straits of Magellan*, trans. Clements R. Markham (New York: Burt Franklin, Publisher, 1895) x.

period of the Spanish conquest of Peru and most particularly from the works associated with the administration of Toledo, the preeminent viceroy of that time.<sup>35</sup>

It is not known where Sarmiento studied to acquire his knowledge of mathematics, languages, history, astronomy and navigation but he first traveled to the New World in 1555 when it is believed that he was in his early twenties. In Puebla, Mexico, he was brought before the Inquisition (something to do with magic and what he claimed was a joke) and was punished with a public lashing.<sup>36</sup> After a similar encounter with the Inquisition in Lima, Sarmiento served six months imprisonment. He was freed in order to serve as pilot with a fleet of ships under the command of Alvaro Mendaña that set out to explore the Pacific Ocean, discovering the Solomon Islands in 1567.<sup>37</sup>

Returning to Peru, Sarmiento was taken into the service of Francisco de Toledo, who was to serve as viceroy from 1569 to 1581. Toledo had been charged by King Philip with several tasks, among them ending the tradition of the *encomienda* in Peru, thus centralizing authority in the hands of the Viceroy and the Crown; ending the war with the Inca royalty exiled in the jungle fastness of Vilcabamba;<sup>38</sup> and bringing the scattered Andean Indians together in villages so that they could be taught Christian doctrine.<sup>39</sup>

In 1570, Toledo began inspections of his vicerealty in order to send reports to the King and charged Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa with the writing of a history of the Incas. Sarmiento

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<sup>35</sup> Brian S. Bauer and Jean-Jacques Decoster, "Introduction" to Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, *The History of the Incas*, trans. & ed. by Brian S. Bauer & Vania Smith Austin (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007) 1, and Soledad González Díaz, "Del Génesis a los Andes: la cronología del incario en la *Historia de los Incas* de Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa," *Estudios Atacameños* (No. 51, 2015) 153.

<sup>36</sup> Francisco Carrillo, *Cronistas del Peru Antiguo: Enciclopedia Histórica de la Literatura Peruana, Vol. 4* (Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 1989) 103.

<sup>37</sup> Porras, 363.

<sup>38</sup> Bauer and Decoster, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Stephen Clissold, *Conquistador: The Life of Don Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa* (London: Derek Verschoyle, 1954) 67.

interviewed Inca elders to compile his *History* and Brian Bauer and Jean-Jacques Decoster praise his collection methods saying that the history was largely based on material compiled in the Cuzco region where Sarmiento had access to the highest Inca nobility. They add that he “went to extremes to collect and compare separate versions of the Inca past.”<sup>40</sup> Sarmiento intended to write three works: a geography of the region of Peru, a history of the Incas, and a history of the conquest of Peru by the Spaniards. While he completed and sent to Spain only the second one, the history of the Incas, he wrote to King Philip II assuring him that he was working on the geography as well.<sup>41</sup>

Upon completion of the *History*, Sarmiento called together senior representatives of the Inca dynastic groups of Cuzco and had the entire work read to them in Quechua asking them to suggest any corrections, of which reportedly there were few. Bauer and Decoster note that “little did the participants realize that in just a few months the last rebelling Inca, Tupac Amaru, would be captured and, after a short trial, executed in the plaza of Cuzco.”<sup>42</sup> Sarmiento’s manuscript, “bound in green leather and lined with red silk,”<sup>43</sup> along with four painted cloths depicting the origin myth of the Incas and their history, were sent to King Philip in March of 1572. The cloths were put on public display by the King but Sarmiento’s book was never mentioned in Court documents.<sup>44</sup>

On April 14, 1572, less than two months after sending the *History* and the painted cloths to Spain, Viceroy Toledo declared war on Titu Cusi in his refuge of Vilcabamba, supposedly in retaliation for the killing of an emissary of the Viceroy near the refuge. Sarmiento was named

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<sup>40</sup> Bauer and Decoster, 14, 18-20.

<sup>41</sup> José Miguel Barros Franco, “Los últimos años de Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa,” *Boletín de la Academia Chilena de la Historia* (No. 90, 1997/1998) 55.

<sup>42</sup> Bauer and Decoster, 18.

<sup>43</sup> Catherine Julien, *Reading Inca History* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000) 56.

<sup>44</sup> Bauer and Decoster, 18.

Royal Ensign of the party of some 250 Spaniards and 500 Indians who were sent to capture this last safe haven of the Incas, task which they accomplished on June 24.<sup>45</sup> In the Vilcabamba plaza, Sarmiento planted the Spanish flag and said the words that normally accompanied Spanish conquest: “I, Capitan Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, Royal Ensign of this field, by order of the illustrious Martín Hurtado de Arbieta, General, take possession of this town of Vilcabamba and all its provinces and jurisdictions.” Then he said three times, “Vilcabamba, for Philip, King of Castile and Leon.”<sup>46</sup> By this time the Spaniards had learned that Titu Cusi had died and had been succeeded by his brother Tupac Amaru. Tupac Amaru escaped during the attack but was later captured and taken to Cuzco. There he was tried and executed in spite of pleas by religious authorities that, because of his rank, he be sent to Spain for the King to decide his fate.<sup>47</sup>

Sarmiento declared that the capture of Vilcabamba and of Tupac Amaru was one of the most important services for God and the King since the beginning of the conquest because it had punished rebels against His Majesty’s rule and totally extirpated the idolatries and sins against nature and God committed by the Incas. He later wrote the King that “these kingdoms were not truly conquered until the final conclusion of this campaign.”<sup>48</sup> Toledo’s position was the same. But, according to historians, Toledo had not had authorization from the King to go to war against Vilcabamba; in fact just the opposite. In his 1567 treaty, Titu Cusi had agreed to be a vassal prince of the Spanish crown.<sup>49</sup> The King, as noted above, eventually wanted to bring him out from Vilcabamba and give him land from which to make a living. However, Toledo’s actions were in accord with a current in Spanish policy promoted by Royal Council President Cardinal

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<sup>45</sup> Barros, 60-62.

<sup>46</sup> Barros, 60-62. Translation by this author.

<sup>47</sup> Barros, 63-64.

<sup>48</sup> Barros, 65. Translation by this author.

<sup>49</sup> Ralph Bauer (2005) 26.

Diego de Espinoza who favored policies of repression against dissident populations whether in Europe or the New World.<sup>50</sup>

The last twenty years of Sarmiento's life were marked by one adventure after another. After British privateer Francis Drake attacked Spanish ships off Peru's coast, Sarmiento was sent on an unsuccessful voyage to capture him, after which he made a proposal for colonizing and fortifying the Straits of Magellan to prevent the passage of British ships around the southern tip of South America. After a 1579 exploratory voyage,<sup>51</sup> he convinced King Philip to support his plan and in Dec. 1581 set off from Spain with 23 ships holding 3,000 persons and with the title of Governor of the new province. Off Brazil, the admiral of the fleet deserted leaving Sarmiento to lead the ships to the Straits where he founded two settlements. Numerous calamities befell the colonists, including hunger and desertions, prompting Sarmiento to decide to return to Spain for supplies and reinforcements. But on this return trip he was captured by Sir Walter Raleigh and taken to England as a prisoner with valuable navigational knowledge. All sources state that he spoke with Queen Elizabeth I for a half hour in Latin, their only common language.<sup>52</sup> After a year, Sarmiento was released by the English with peace proposals for King Philip but, on his journey through France in Dec. 1586, he was captured and held for ransom by the Huguenots, fierce foes of Catholic Spain. The Spanish court finally ordered payment of the 15,000 escudos demanded by the Huguenots and Sarmiento was freed in 1590. However, the Spanish Armada had been defeated in 1588 and the peace proposals he carried were no longer relevant. In 1591, King Philip named Sarmiento admiral of a fleet charged with protecting Spanish ships bringing

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<sup>50</sup> Julien (2007) 251-252.

<sup>51</sup> Sarmiento kept a log about the voyage which was published in 1768 with the title *Viage al Estrecho de Magallanes por el Capitan Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa en los Años 1579 y 1580* and which can be viewed on line at: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015024213848&view=1up&seq=5>. It was translated into English by Clements Markham in 1895.

<sup>52</sup> For example, Carrillo, 104.

gold and silver from the Americas. The fleet left Cádiz in May of 1592 but Sarmiento fell ill off the coast of Portugal and was taken to Lisbon, where he died between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of July. He was probably sixty years old.<sup>53</sup>

An old controversy related to Sarmiento is whether his *History of the Incas* or El Inca Garcilaso's *Royal Commentaries of the Incas* gives the more accurate picture of the Inca reign. Soledad González Díaz says that scholars in the first half of the twentieth century (after Sarmiento's history was first published in Spanish in 1906 and in English in 1907) were divided between those who ascribed to the vision of the Incas as a "civilizing" force as portrayed by Garcilaso and those who chose to defend the more warlike version of Sarmiento. She states that the academic conflict, which lasted until the last quarter of the century, held back the emergence of new levels of interpretation.<sup>54</sup> On the one side, Raul Porras Barrenechea (1897-1960) wrote that Sarmiento's vision of the Inca Empire was full of power and strength as opposed to that of Garcilaso who portrayed a tame, idyllic empire led by Incas who were able to conquer all of South America without breaking a single plate. He added that Sarmiento's version was more virile and more real.<sup>55</sup> Philip A. Means, on the other hand, stated that Toledo and Sarmiento "made it their business to anathematize the Inca dynasty in such a way that their fair name would perish and that it would become clear to everyone that the King of Castile is legitimate Lord of these realms."<sup>56</sup> In contrast, he notes that El Inca Garcilaso was one of those chroniclers who produced "saner, sounder ... pictures of Peru and its grandeurs."<sup>57</sup>

## Discussion

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<sup>53</sup> Porras, 364-365; Barros, 12-27; Carrillo, 104.

<sup>54</sup> González Díaz, 154.

<sup>55</sup> Raúl Porras Barrenechea, "Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa [1532-1592?]," *Los Cronistas del Peru (1528-1650) y Otros Ensayos*, Ed., prólogo, notas Franklin Pease (Lima: Biblioteca Clásicos del Perú, 1986 [1962]) 366.

<sup>56</sup> Philip Ainsworth Means, *Fall of the Inca Empire and the Spanish Rule in Peru: 1530-1780* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932) 124.

<sup>57</sup> Means (1932), 229.

Philosopher and theologian Francisco de Vitoria was the founder of the school of thought known as Second Scholasticism, a method of reasoning in dialectic form closely associated in the Catholic Church with the ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) who worked to reconcile the thought of Aristotle with Christian revelation. Second Scholasticism arose in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and among its most noted practitioners were scholars at the Spanish universities in particular at the University of Salamanca, where it became known as the School of Salamanca. Francisco Quijano notes that one of the few theses of Aristotelian philosophy that the Second Scholastic writers rejected was his division of men into those who were by nature free and those who were by nature slaves.<sup>58</sup> While recognizing that there were differences among human beings, Vitoria and his followers felt that they all had the same rights under natural law. The philosophers of Second Scholasticism also expanded on and modified in various ways Aquinas' ideas on natural law.<sup>59</sup>

In his 1539 *Relectio* "On the American Indians," Vitoria, who at that time was professor of theology and philosophy at the University of Salamanca, discussed whether the natives of the New World had true dominion over their lands, saying that:

[T]he barbarians<sup>60</sup> are not impeded from being true master [of their lands], publicly and privately, either by mortal sin in general or by the particular sin of unbelief. Nor can Christians use either of these arguments to support their title to dispossess the barbarians of their goods and lands.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Francisco Quijano Velasco, *Las repúblicas de la Monarquía: Pensamiento constitucionalista y republicano en Nueva España, 1550-1610* (México: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas UNAM, 2017). 139. The use of "men" is correct here as Aristotle put women, children, slaves, and beasts together in the lower category.

<sup>59</sup> For a detailed discussion of the ideas on natural law of the Spanish philosophers, see Chapter 5 "The Revival of Thomism," in Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume Two: The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) 135-173.

<sup>60</sup> The School of Salamanca philosophers discussed Aristotle's various classifications of "barbarians" as they might relate to the New World inhabitants. Bartolomé de Las Casas accepts that, although most of the societies "lack the art and use of writing [and thus could be called barbarians], they are not wanting in the capacity to rule and govern themselves." Bartolomé de Las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*. Translated from the Latin and edited by Stafford Poole (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1992) 42.

<sup>61</sup> Francisco de Vitoria, "Relection of the Very Reverend Father Friar Francisco de Vitoria, Master of Theology and Most Worthy Prime Professor at the University of Salamanca, Delivered in the said University, A.D. 1539,"

Karen Spalding notes that,

Vitoria insisted conversion to Christianity was not a justification for war and conquest; it was not legitimate to attack or plunder people who lived in ordered societies subject to rulers they accepted [in other words, natural lords], unless those rulers systematically oppressed their subjects.”<sup>62</sup>

Vitoria said that there were only a few “just titles” that could be accepted as justifications under which the inhabitants of the New World “could have come under the control of the Spaniards.”<sup>63</sup>

War could be waged, he said,

either on account of the personal tyranny of the barbarians’ masters towards their subjects, or because of their tyrannical and oppressive laws against the innocent, such as human sacrifice practiced on innocent men or the killing of condemned criminals for cannibalism.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, Titu Cusi stated at the very beginning of his *Relación* that his ancestors were “natural lords” of the “kingdoms and provinces of Peru” and throughout his narrative sought to portray his father Manco Inca as a just ruler who was respected and loved by his subjects. The activist Bishop of Chiapas, Bartolomé de Las Casas, wrote in his late work *Doce Dudas* that the Catholic King of Castile, in order to save his soul, was obligated to return the kingdom of Peru to the King Titu because the Spanish had established a tyranny over that kingdom that in the past had belonged to his grandfather and which had been taken from him against all justice.<sup>65</sup>

In his writing to King Philip, Titu Cusi makes a special point of tracing his ancestry as son of Manco Inca and grandson of the Inca Huayna Capac in order to establish his legitimacy as the natural lord of his land of Peru.

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Francisco de Vitoria, *Political Writings*. Translated and Edited by Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 246.

<sup>62</sup> Karen Spalding, “Notes on the Formation of the Andean Colonial State,” *State Theory and Andean Politics: New Approaches to the Study of Rule*. Edited by Christopher Krupa and David Nugent (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015) 221.

<sup>63</sup> Vitoria, 277.

<sup>64</sup> Vitoria, 288.

<sup>65</sup> Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Obras completas 11.2 Doce dudas* (1564), 194-195.



His majesty should ... be informed that my father, Manco Inca Yupanqui, as the son of Huayna Capac and grandson of Topa Inca Yupanqui, and thus the descendant of their ancestors in a direct line, was the highest ruler of all these kingdoms of Peru. As such, he was designated by his father Huayna Capac and, after the latter's death, recognized and respected by everyone throughout the land, as I, to, was then, am now, and have been ever since my father's death.<sup>66</sup>

And, Ralph Bauer notes "the emphasis on the uncompromising loyalty of the various local leaders to Titu Cusi's father" reinforces Titu Cusi's image and that of his predecessors as natural lords of Peru.<sup>67</sup> Here Manco Inca's supreme military commander Vila Oma speaks to the Inca:

**Vila Oma:** We all, I and your people, are very upset about what has happened and feel great sympathy for you when seeing you like this [imprisoned by the Spaniards]. Give me your permission, so you can see that I haven't changed, and I will free you and destroy these beard-faces in no time at all. You still command enough people who will help me with this.<sup>68</sup>

Jákfalvi-Leiva adds that Titu Cusi uses a series of dichotomies of good versus evil, order versus chaos, virtue versus vice in an effort to convince the King that the native government had the moral and political right to exercise power.<sup>69</sup> His speeches and dialogues present a vivid story of Spanish injustice, back up his claims for compensation in accord with his status and make demands for recognition as a natural lord and legitimate prince of Peru under the Spanish king.

In contrast, one of Viceroy Toledo's principal goals, as he arrived in Lima in 1569, was to prove to the satisfaction of the Crown that the Incas had not been natural lords in their lands by showing that their rule was tyrannical and that their customs violated natural law. In this way he could establish that the Spanish conquest was justified and that Las Casas' insistence that the Andean lands be returned to the Inca was unfounded.<sup>70</sup> Rolena Adorno says that Toledo

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<sup>66</sup> Titu Cusi Yupanqui, 59.

<sup>67</sup> Ralph Bauer, 25-26.

<sup>68</sup> Titu Cusi Yupanqui, 90.

<sup>69</sup> Jákfalvi-Leiva, 276.

<sup>70</sup> Lewis Hanke, "Viceroy Francisco de Toledo and the Just Titles of Spain to the Inca Empire: The Defense of the Spanish Title to Peru," *The Americas* (Vol. 3, No. 1, July 1946) 3-5.

discovered that the arguments in favor of returning to Inca rule were still alive and potent. [He] realized that such demands could not be countered by trying once again to prove the Spanish right to rule; the only effective argument was to prove the illegitimacy of the rule of the Incas.<sup>71</sup>

Sarmiento's goal in his *History of the Incas* was thus to disprove the theories of the Spanish clergymen and philosophers who wrote negatively about the right of the Spaniards to conquer and hold in subjugation the lands of the Indies by establishing the unjust rule of the Incas. Sarmiento states that "They [the clergymen] began to make a difficulty about the right and title which the kings of Castille had over these lands." And, he adds, "They gave it as their opinion that these Incas, who ruled in these kingdoms of Peru, were and are the true and natural lords of that land." He notes further that the governors of New World lands paid too much attention "to certain reports of the Bishop of Chiapa [Bartolomé de Las Casas] who was moved to passion against certain conquerors in his bishoprick with whom he had persistent disputes."<sup>72</sup>

Bauer and Decoster note that Sarmiento's "history was to show that each of the Incas committed crimes against natural laws and were thus tyrants and unfit to rule."<sup>73</sup> Sarmiento says his work

will certify to the truth of the worst and most inhuman tyranny of these Incas and of their *curacas* [local leaders] who are not and never were original lords of the soil, but were placed there by Tupac Inca Yupanqui, the greatest, the most atrocious and harmful tyrant of them all.<sup>74</sup>

And Sarmiento summarizes some of the tyrannical practices:

It is a thing worthy to be noted for the fact that besides being a thing certain and evident the general tyranny of these cruel and tyrannical Incas of Peru against the natives of the land, may be easily gathered from history, and any one who reads and considers with attention the order and mode of their procedure will see, that

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<sup>71</sup> Rolena Adorno, *The Polemics of Possession in Spanish American Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) 51-52.

<sup>72</sup> Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, *History of the Incas*. Translated and edited by Clements Markham (London: Hakluyt Society, 1907 [1572]) 5. (<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.tz1fxs&view=1up&seq=38>) Accessed March 25, 2021.

<sup>73</sup> Bauer and Decoster, 15.

<sup>74</sup> Sarmiento, 10.

their violent Incaship was established without the will and election of the natives who always rose with arms in their hands on each occasion that offered for rising against their Inca tyrants who oppressed them, to get back their liberty. Each one of the Incas not only followed the tyranny of his father, but also began afresh the same tyranny by force, with deaths, robberies and rapine. Hence none of them could pretend, in good faith, to give a beginning to time of prescription<sup>75</sup>, nor did any of them hold in peaceful possession, there being always some one to dispute and take up arms against them and their tyranny.<sup>76</sup>

There is, however, controversy over whether Sarmiento actually portrayed the Incas as the tyrants that he announced them to be at the beginning of his work. Sabine MacCormack believes that he did and states that “the Incas emerged not as legitimate rulers but as war-leaders... who differed little from other leaders of the region except that they were more aggressive and successful.” Citing crimes by each ruler, Sarmiento “condemned the Incas as tyrants who maintained their imperial power only in the face of persistent opposition and rebellion by their subjects.”<sup>77</sup> Jeremy Ravi Mumford says, however, that Sarmiento

sometimes seemed to forget which side he was on. Of Topa Inca, he wrote: “He was liberal, forgiving in peace and cruel in war and punishment, a favorer of the poor, spirited and a man of much industry, a builder. He was the greatest tyrant of all the Incas.” The tyrant had become, it appears, a model for kings.<sup>78</sup>

González points out another problem with Sarmiento’s account. By extending the life spans of the twelve Inca rulers, Sarmiento describes an Inca state that lasted a thousand years, challenging another of Toledo’s principal objectives which was to show that the Incas were a recent or modern tyranny with little right to be considered legitimate lords of Peru.<sup>79</sup> González

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<sup>75</sup> Bauer and Smith translate this phrase as, “none of them could therefore claim to have begun [their rule] in good faith”. Bauer and Smith, 203.

<sup>76</sup> Sarmiento, 190-191.

<sup>77</sup> Sabine MacCormack, “History, Historical Record, and Ceremonial Action: Incas and Spaniards in Cuzco,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (Vol. 43, No. 2, April 2001) 348.

<sup>78</sup> Jeremy Ravi Mumford, *Vertical Empire: the general resettlement of Indians in the colonial Andes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012) 105.

<sup>79</sup> It is generally believed that the Incas established themselves at Cuzco in about 1100 CE and began to build their empire in about 1425. See Mark Cartwright, “Inca Civilization,” *Ancient History Encyclopedia* (Sept. 2014) [https://www.ancient.eu/Inca\\_Civilization/](https://www.ancient.eu/Inca_Civilization/) Accessed March 23, 2021.

suggests that the reason Sarmiento's *History* was not published for three hundred years was because it did not satisfy the expectations of Viceroy Toledo and the King.<sup>80</sup>

MacCormack warns that “the Spanish, when translating and ordering the narratives that they collected from their Inca and Andean informants, inevitably viewed Inca history self-referentially.” She notes that while the Incas’ historical recitations highlighted glorious deeds and skipped shameful ones, the Spanish in their writings about the Incas also emphasized in Inca history and customs what they found useful for their own ends and she adds, “In light of all these difficulties, modern historians of the Incas view these Spanish accounts with some distrust.”<sup>81</sup>

So, what should be our answer to the question of whether the Incas were natural lords in their lands by the criteria of these 16<sup>th</sup> century writers? We can look at some of the other commentators who lived in Spanish America at the same time as our two opponents. Alonso de la Vera Cruz was the first theology professor at the University of Mexico when it was founded in 1553. While he never justified for any reason the wars of conquest and the overthrow of the Indigenous governments and, in fact, argued that these actions were not justified, he ended up accepting the legitimacy of the dominion of the king of Spain over the Indies.<sup>82</sup> His convoluted argument was this:

It is possible that those who began the war acted unjustly; but that later with victory secured, the retention of the territory is just. .... Hence it could be that, in the beginning, the emperor was forbidden to start the war; but later, with the *fait accompli*, the step is validated, with the consequence that he is now in legitimate possession.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> González, 173.

<sup>81</sup> MacCormack, 331.

<sup>82</sup> Monica Quijada, “From Spain to New Spain: Revisiting the *Potestas Populi* in Hispanic Political Thought,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* (Vol. 24, No. 2, Summer 2008) 153.

<sup>83</sup> Alonso de la Vera Cruz, *The Writings of Alonso de la Vera Cruz: Vol. II. Defense of the Indians: Their Rights*. The original Latin texts with English translation, edited by Ernest J. Burrus. (St. Louis: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1968) 387.

Vera Cruz considered the conquest irreversible and so what he felt must be done was to examine how the damage to the rights of the Indians by the conquest could be minimized. This was an argument accepted de facto by many writers, including some among the Indigenous.

Peruvian Guamán Poma, a descendant on his mother's side from the ruler Topa Inca Yupanqui, wrote what was both a history and a book of advice to the king along the lines of other works of "mirror of princes" literature and sent it to Philip III in 1616. In it he described a life of justice under the Incas, condemned the injustices of Spanish rule, and then made numerous suggestions to the king as to how Peru could be better governed. Here, Poma writes first about an ordered hierarchical but just life under the Incas where their subjects had "plenty to eat" and then advises the King as to how Peru could be governed more justly:

I say to Your Majesty that, in those times, the Inca alone was king, though there were also dukes, counts, marquises, and great noble lords. But [the people] lived under the laws and commandments of the Incas, and because they had a king, they peacefully served in this kingdom; they multiplied, and had estates, plenty to eat, and their own children and wives.<sup>84</sup>

Then, he advises the King:

I say to Your Majesty that, in every province, these Indian men, women and children should be gathered into some old pueblo, for they are lost. Give them cropland and bounded pastures, so that they may serve God and Your Majesty. Let them be called your royal crown Indians, and let them pay taxes and tribute, and hold no other office. Their administrator, the noble *cacique*, should be subject to you.<sup>85</sup>

Along the same lines as Vera Cruz, Guamán Poma accepted the *fait accompli* of the imposition of the Spanish God and King but at no time asserted that the Incas had not been legitimate rulers of their lands or had deserved to be conquered. He asserted the rights of the Indians to just treatment. Also, Titu Cusi, in accepting status as a vassal prince under the King of Spain, was

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<sup>84</sup> Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*. Selected, Translated, and Annotated by David Frye (Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing Company, 2006) 335.

<sup>85</sup> Poma de Ayala, 336

both asserting his rights as a descendant of the former natural lords of Peru who had governed their people justly and recognizing the reality of the Spanish conquest.

Thus, after an examination of the writings of Titu Cusi Yupanqui and Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa along with several of their contemporaries, we must come to the conclusion that the arguments of Sarmiento de Gamboa are deficient. He fails to prove that the Incas had established a new and cruel tyranny over the people of their empire so evil that they deserved to be overthrown by the Spanish in order to free its people. Titu Cusi Yupanqui, on the other hand, convinces us that the Inca rulers governed in a just fashion that would allow them to be considered natural lords of their lands. At the same time we applaud the efforts of the writers of the time who pushed the Spanish monarchy to govern its colonies more justly because it appears, based on the denunciations in the writings of Spaniards and Indians alike, that it was rather the Spaniards who had established unjust government in the New World. These judgements are made, of course, within the parameters set down by Second Scholastic Catholic scholars of the School of Salamanca in the 16<sup>th</sup> century on rights under natural law. Interestingly, as we noted, these ideas about natural rights, including the right to dominion over one's land, appeared to resonate also with elite Indigenous writers of that same period and were appropriated by them to make their own arguments. Concern over their own salvation led the Spanish to use natural law arguments to denounce the conquest as unjust and also to engage in mental acrobatics in order to justify that rule. Meanwhile, elite Incas adopted some of the same arguments and inserted themselves in those conversations, arguing for rights within the logic of Spanish colonialism.

It is worth noting one more thing and that is that the British did not argue these issues in their colonization of the Americas. An exception in what would become the United States was Roger Williams who was banished from Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1635 in part because he

challenged the right of the British to take Indian land without compensation. The reasons for the absence of this discussion are beyond the scope of this paper but the matter is worthy of further examination.

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