Three great moments mark the modern reception of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala’s Nueva corónica y buen gobierno. The first was Richard A. Pietschmann’s 1908 announcement of his reading of the extraordinary autograph manuscript (Gl. kgl. S. 2232, 4°) in the Royal Library. The second was the publication of the first modern edition of the work, the 1936 photographic facsimile published under the direction of Dr. Paul Rivet by L’Institut d’Ethnologie of the University of Paris. The third, exactly sixty-five years later, is the Royal Library’s on-line presentation of this complete digital facsimile of Guaman Poma’s autograph manuscript. In an earlier era, D. G. Moldenhawer, the renowned director of the Royal Library from 1788 to 1823, had once hoped to publish parts of Guaman Poma’s work (Ilsøe 1993). Today that hope has been realized and exceeded in a new medium that was inconceivable in Moldenhawer’s day. It is altogether appropriate that the institution to which the manuscript’s centuries-long safekeeping is owed now makes it available to the world at large. It has been, and continues to be, an exemplary stewardship.

What is remarkable about this on-line digital version is that its resolution of detail is superior to that which direct observation of the physical manuscript allows. Having carefully examined the autograph manuscript page by page in preparation for transcribing the work for the 1980 Siglo Veintiuno critical edition, I can vouch for the fact that details unclear to the naked eye or even under ultraviolet light are at least partially and sometimes fully revealed in the new digitalized version. Conversely, areas that seemed to the naked eye to be hopelessly obscure are now confirmed as being beyond recognition and retrieval.

Whether the reader wishes to read the prose text of the manuscript or simply peruse its full-page drawings, this extraordinary digital version provides easy access to the scholar and the non-scholar alike. The pagination used here is based on Guaman Poma’s own. Hoping that his work would be published by King Philip III of Spain, Guaman Poma employed the modern system of pagination, not the more traditional foliation. (Some scholars insist on calling Guaman Poma’s pages folios, which confounds the sequential enumeration and lends to the work an inappropriately archaic air that Guaman Poma conspicuously sought to avoid.) Yet Guaman Poma made occasional errors, repeating a numerical sequence or failing to introduce a page number. Hence, the pagination used in this digital version is the corrected, consecutive page count that Guaman Poma hoped to, but did not, achieve. It reproduces the enumeration employed in the 1980 Siglo Veintiuno edition to identify the pages of the manuscript, and it is used throughout this essay and the critical apparatus of the digital edition. The reader will thus find identified as page 453 the drawing of the execution of the Inka prince Tupac Amaru, which Guaman Poma numbered 451 but which is actually page 453 of the manuscript.

Siglo Veintiuno Editores, Mexico City, has graciously allowed the use here of the indices that John V. Murra, Jorge L. Urioste, and I prepared for the 1980 critical edition. There are three such aids: (1) Jorge L. Urioste’s glossary-index of Guaman Poma’s Quechua terminology, which offers access to Andean lexicon, cult, and custom as presented in the work; (2) a standard index of onomastics, toponyms, and ethnic groups, which reproduces Guaman Poma’s original spellings and their variants, cross-referencing their modern spellings where necessary; (3) John V. Murra’s index of ethnological categories, that allows the reader to pursue topics ranging from the Inka’s federal administration to the Andean social category of yana. The spelling of the Quechua glossary’s entries corresponds to Urioste’s rephonologized version of Guaman Poma’s original locutions, and the reader can consult in the 1980 edition the phonemic alphabet used by Urioste (1980:xx-xxi).

There are two new aids that John Charles and I have prepared especially for this online edition. One is the Table of contents that we devised to offer a guide to the prose text of the Nueva corónica y buen gobierno. The other is the List of drawings that serves the reader whose special interest is Guaman Poma’s visual art. In both cases, we employ a division of chapters that we developed to facilitate the use of the manuscript on the Internet.
I. Overview of the áeœNew Chronicle and Good Governmentáe

On 14 February 1615, from Santiago de Chipao in the province of Lucanas (see map) in the south central Peruvian Andes (see map), Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala wrote King Philip III of Spain that he had just completed a áeœchronicle or general historyá (plate I). It contained, he said, everything he had been able to learn in his eighty years about Andean history and Spanish rule in the Andes. He added that he would be glad to send his work to the king, should he request it (Lohmann Villena 1945:326-27); A.G.I., Audiencia de Lima 145). Guaman Pomaá€™s chronicle of more than a thousand pages had two main purposes: to give the king an account of ancient Andean history from the beginning of time through the reign of the Incas and to inform the monarch about the deepening crisis in Andean society that was a result of Spanish colonization. Guaman Poma called his work áeœEl primer Nueva corñnica y buen gobiernaá that is, a áeœnew chronicleá and a treatise on áeœgood governmentá or governmental reform for the Peruvian viceroyalty.

The Andean author called his chronicle áeœnewá because it presented a version of pre-columbian and conquest history unfamiliar to readers of the Spanish-authored histories of Peru then in print. He called it a áeœchronicle or general historyá because he posited it as a comprehensive history that took as its subject áeœthe kingdom of the Indies of Peruá from the Andean perspective, in contrast to the genre of the comprehensive or general history of the Indies at large written from the Spanish viewpoint.

Guaman Poma presented an elaborate and complex cosmology that wove the dynasties of the Andean past into a Christian model of universal history, and he made the Incas not the first and only great Andean dynasty, but merely the most recent one, succeeding that of the Yarowilcas of Allaucha Huánuco from which he claimed descent. With respect to the theme of good government, Guaman Poma sought to convince the king to take action to halt the destruction of Andean society that he described in these terms: The traditional Andean social hierarchies were being dismantled (the world was áeœupside-downá). The native Andeans were being exploited in the countryside and driven to death in the mines. To escape a dire fate, they were fleeing to the cities where they engaged in the dissipated lifestyle of rogues and prostitutes. From Guaman Pomaá€™s Andean perspective, one of the greatest threats was the rapid growth of the mestizo (mixed race) population. Unlike native Andeans, mestizos were free from paying tribute to the colonial administration and, due to miscegenation and intermarriage with native Andeans, they were increasing in numbers at an alarming rate. Meanwhile, the ethnic Andean population was declining precipitously. Large-scale miscegenation, armed violence, the exploitation of native labor, and the spread of epidemic disease would bring an end, in Guaman Pomaá€™s view, to the Andean peoples and their culture.

Guaman Poma thus fashioned himself in his work as a trustworthy advisor to the king (see plate II). He claimed the right to address the king because of his service to the colonial administration and, most importantly, on account of his aristocratic credentials as heir to the Yarovalcas dynasty that had preceded the Incas and as the son and grandson of men who had served the Inka lords of Tawantinsuyu in important posts (plate II).

The vehicle in which Guaman Poma presented his views was a long prose text, written mostly in Spanish with occasional sections in Quechua, one of Guaman Pomaá€™s native languages. He complemented his written text with 398 full-page line drawings interspersed throughout the work. Guaman Poma explained his creation of the pictures by remarking that he understood the king to be fond of the visual arts. Yet Guaman Pomaá€™s heavy reliance on the pictorial mode to state his positions and argue his points, particularly about the colonial abuse of the native population, suggests instead that he considered his drawings to be the most direct and effective way of communicating his ideas to the king and persuading him to take remedial action. Guaman Poma wrote that he hoped the king would have his work published so that its advice might be followed by the full range of the kingá€™s civil and ecclesiastical officials to halt colonial abuses, protect the native Andeans, and ensure their well-being.

A dramatically truncated sentence on the penultimate page of the manuscript announces its intended presentation to an unnamed recipient: áeœin the city of the kings of Lima, royal court and principal city of Peru, it was presented before. . . .á Left blank are the designation of the recipient and the date of presentation (Guaman Poma 1188). Circumstantial evidence suggests, however, that the manuscript did pass through the viceregal court at Lima. A Franciscan friar, Buenaventura de Salinas y CÁ³rimdo, who served as a page at the court of the viceroys Juan de Mendoza y Luna from 1607 to 1615, repeats Guaman Pomaá€™s uncommon version of pre-Incaic Andean history. He may have been at the court when Guaman Pomaá€™s manuscript arrived and made later use of its contents in his own Memorial de las historias del Nuevo Mundo PerúÁº (1630). Luis E. Valcárcel (1957:xiii) and Warren L. Cook (1957:xxi, xxxix) have suggested that Guaman Poma was Salinas y CÁ³rimdoá€™s source because of the textual similarities on several points: the tradition of the four ancient, pre-Inkaic ages of Peru, the legend of Mama Huaco, the tradition by which Manco Capac married her, his natural mother; the descriptions of the colors in the attire of each Inka portrait, and the accounts of the conquests carried out by each Inka, as well as the religious innovations introduced by each one. In Cooká€™s view, there is sufficient similarity between the works to deduce that áeœeither Fray Buenaventura used Guaman Pomaá€™s manuscript or he received his accounts at second hand from some individual familiar with it.á

We will never know whether King Philip III personally received Guaman Pomaá€™s book, although it seems almost certain that the manuscript arrived at the Spanish court because of its apparent passage through aristocratic hands and its ultimate and present location at the Royal Library of Denmark. This seems to suggest that there had been some form of diplomatic acquisition, such as, for example, the possible receipt of Guaman Pomaá€™s manuscript by a Danish ambassador and collector of books who came upon it at the Madrid court. In 1802, according to August Hennings, D.G. Moldenhawer queried
Because of their intrinsic interest, it seems certain that Guaman Poma’s pictures ensured the work’s survival. Here a particular kind of collector’s motivation comes into play. The learned reading public of northern Europe would have been familiar with Johann Theodor de Bry’s illustrated accounts of the Spanish conquests in the New World. For example, his Latin translation (Frankfurt, 1598) of Bartolomé de las Casas’s Brevisima relación de la destrucción de las Indias (Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies), included copper engravings that illustrated the horrors of conquest. (These engravings, in turn, reproduce the compositions of the watercolor paintings that are found in at least one of the manuscript copies, dated 1582, of the first translation of Las Casas’s work. This was the Flemish Jacques de Migrode’s 1579 French version, published in Antwerp as a warning and admonition to the citizens of the Low Countries about the “tyranny and cruelties” of Spanish governance.)

The agencies responsible for the Nueva corónica’s Scandinavian destination were quite likely to have been interested in its pictorial testimony that the work offered and its potential contribution to the international Black Legend of Spanish history (plate IV). In this regard, it is worthy of note that the Danish Royal Library houses one of the most important European collections of materials on the Spanish Inquisition. In addition to the New World conquests and Spanish domination of the Low Countries, the Inquisition was one of the principal sources of the construction of the Black Legend of Spanish history. The political interests of Protestant northern Europe were thus likely factors influencing the Nueva corónica’s northern European destination. In this context of international cultural politics, its final repository could as well have been in northern Germany, the Low Countries, or any other country of the Protestant north.

II. The Autograph Manuscript

Catalogued in the Royal Library of Denmark in Copenhagen since before the original census was made of that repository’s holdings in 1785, the quarto-size volume is made up of 23 to 25 unusually large signatures or gatherings of twelve to sixteen sheets each. The high quality paper carries throughout a watermark consisting of a Latin cross superimposed on a shield under which the initials A A and, alternatively, I A appear (Adorno 1979-80:16). The book measures 14.5 x 20.5 cm in its outer dimensions and is bound in leather. The present binding dates from the period 1848-1863, according to the emblem of the Danish King Frederick VII, which appears on the spine of the book. At least one previous binding is indicated by the visible differentiation of the separate signatures which obviously were not cut afresh for the present binding. The chased edges, that is, the repeated pattern stamped into the gilt that protects the book’s cut edges, suggest that the earlier binding had been done in the seventeenth century when that particular technique of finishing books was widely used (see Glaister 1960:155).

Guaman Poma’s expressed hope to have his work published is given substance by the full complement of printing conventions he used in the preparation of his manuscript. He imitated the practices of typeset books in every detail from using running heads and catchwords and paginating rather than foliating the leaves. He even included a title-page annotation, intended for the prospective printer, that tallied the number of folios (597 fojas) and folded sheets (146 pliegos). The latter calculation seems to supersede the former, somewhat confused one. The number 146 multiplied by 8 yields 1168, which is the number he applied to the last page of the manuscript he numbered (Adorno 1979-80:20-21). This calculation corresponds, yet again, to his use of the modern convention of pagination rather than the traditional foliation.

Guaman Poma’s customary drafting procedure is revealed by his use of a single color of ink and its shading into another color as he dipped his pen into a new ink source. His method of composition was to draw a series of pictures and then write in their titles and captions at the same time as he transcribed the accompanying pages of prose text. The inks he employed show today as black and brown, with several intermediate shades due to color mixing. His compositional procedure suggests that this is the final copy of a previously drafted work. He added catchwords and page numbers later, as evidenced by the use of another shade of ink and a wider-than-usual pen nib (Adorno 1979-80:17). Valerie Fraser (1996:272) has described Guaman Poma’s calligraphy as ãœœa Latinate form of cursive derived from ecclesiastical scriptorial traditions that employs as well lettering styles that reproduce the main families of type font used in the sixteenth century (roman-italic and gothic or black letter) and the manuscript traditions from which they were derived (plate V).

Guaman Poma’s (1074) reference to the original version of his work affirms that the autograph document is a clean copy of the completed work. It is also the record of a subsequent series of additions and emendations that correct Guaman Poma’s earlier oversights and reveal his deepening preoccupations. Both the main draft and all the modifications are the work of a single individual. The occasional variation in writing style provides no evidence of a change in hand, and the foot-of-the-page additions exhibit a penmanship identical in its formation of letters to that found throughout the body of the manuscript. The most notable apparent difference in handwriting style is found in the late textual additions found at the bottom of more than one hundred twenty pages (see table of emendations in Adorno 1980:xlvi). Here the handwriting style is
Guaman Poma added several folios to the manuscript after the quires were already sewn. He originally had omitted the sixth viceroy of Peru from his Buen gobierno presentation, and so he added a folio containing the portrait of Fernando de Torres y Portugal as well as an accompanying page of prose (Guaman Poma 466-67). He then corrected the numbering on the portraits of his successors. Since in 1586 this viceroy seems to have precipitated Guaman Pomaâ€™s ultimately disastrous land-claim suits by granting disputed lands to a competing ethnic group, the Chachapoyas, the omission could be read as a sleight rather than an oversight. Yet Guaman Pomaâ€™s prose account of the administration of Viceroy Torres y Portugal, from 1585 to 1589, expresses unmitigated praise for his governance.

Other additions of new folios reflect the authorâ€™s deepening concerns and his desire to impress their importance on King Philip III. These consist of the addition of two folios to his imaginary dialogue with the king, entitled â€œPregunta Su Magestadâ€ the addition of a single folio devoted to Guaman Pomaâ€™s iconographic representation of Potosâ€”; and the eighteen folios that constitute the chapter â€œCamina el autorâ€ in which Guaman Poma narrates his journey to Lima to deliver his completed manuscript to the viceregal court (Guaman Poma 978-81, 1066-67, 1104-39) (plate VI). Two new folios in the dialogue text advocate the abolition of priestsâ€™ salaries, utilizing as exempars the unremunerated â€œfirst priest in the world … God and living man, Jesus Christâ€ and the â€œnatives (naturales), Indians of Your Majesty.â€ In the added folio about Potosâ€”, Guaman Poma pointedly underscores the Spanish crownâ€™s dependence on the Potosâ€”silver mines and its donation to the king by the lords of Peru. â€œCamina el autorâ€ decryes the suffering caused in the native communities of the valley of Huarochirâ€”by the extirpation of idolatries campaign of Francisco de Ajivila. This same chapter condemns the disarray and corruption of life in the viceregal capital.

As Guillermo Lohmann Villena (1945:326) first noted, the temporal references in the autograph manuscript cluster in the early seventeenth century. Apart from the year 1587, which appears in the apocryphal letter by Guaman Pomaâ€™s father introducing the author to the king, and in addition to a single reference to the year of 1600 (Guaman Poma 7, 886), Guaman Pomaâ€™s mentions dates that span the years 1608 through 1615. He implicitly mentions the present date of his writing when calculating, for example, the age of the world or the number of years elapsed since the birth of Jesus Christ. By his calculations, the time spanned from the first generation of Andeans (Vari Vira Cocha Runa) through the end of the reign of the Inkas, who ruled for fifteen hundred years according to his calculus, was six thousand years. He calculated the time spanned since the birth of Jesus Christ, which he represented as having occurred during the reign of the second Inka, Sinche Roca, as more than sixteen hundred years. By means of these calculations, he indirectly but repeatedly referenced the years 1612 and 1613 throughout the course of his work (Guaman Poma 13, 49, 55, 58, 87, 91, 437).

Guaman Poma used specific dates to document events he witnessed or, in one case, an interview gathered, in the style used by the inspection tour officials in preparing their documentary reports (Guaman Poma 502, 519, 592, 595, 638, 687, 693, 704, 933, 944, 1114). Apart from the apocryphal reference to 1587, the earliest date Guaman Poma mentions is 1600, which he acknowledges as the year he began his peregrinations. The latest year is 1615, and he used it to mark the conclusion, which occurred on 18 December 1615, of Don Juan de Mendoza y Luna's governance of Peru as its eleventh viceroy (plate VII; Guaman Poma 886). From these collected references we can surmise that this final version of the Nueva corÃ­nica y buen gobierno was drafted after 1600, mostly probably entirely between 1612 and the first months of 1616.

III. Guaman Pomaâ€™s Visual and Verbal Art

The Nueva corÃ­nica y buen gobierno is an artistically conceived text, and its knowledgeable and creative manipulation of European literary modes, Western Christian iconographic traditions, and Andean forms of signification render inadequate any single generic classification that might be proposed to describe it (Adorno 1979-80:8-9). Adorno (1974, [1986] 2000, 1989) and Mercedes LÃ­pez-Baralt (1980, 1988, 1993) were among the first to examine the work as an object of literary and artistic investigation.

As an object in its own right, the autograph manuscript is a work of considerable delicacy and beauty. With regard to its artistic composition and esthetic traits, Valerie Fraser (1996) opens a new area of study by looking at Guaman Pomaâ€™s calligraphy, which she qualifies as the unifying feature of the entire work. Drawing attention to Guaman Pomaâ€™s mastery of techniques of drawing and calligraphy, and his familiarity with a wide range of European iconographic and compositional types, Fraser sets forth the hallmarks of his extraordinary visual acuity (Fraser 1996:274, 285).

Her examination of Guaman Pomaâ€™s introduction of imagery into his written texts complements earlier studies of his use of verbal information in his drawings in which â€œlanguage floats free from the constraints placed on it in verbal narrationâ€ (Adorno [1986] 2000:84; Adorno 1991:114; see also Cummins 1992; LÃ­pez-Baralt 1988, 1992, 1993). The reader of the digital facsimile can appreciate Guaman Pomaâ€™s success in â€œblurring the distinctions between text and image, integrating imagery into the text by means of inventive uses of lettering, incorporating text into images, and blending one page into the nextâ€ (Fraser 1996:285).

The language of the Nueva corÃ­nica y buen gobierno has been closely studied in recent years, and scholars agree that Guaman Pomaâ€™s writing reveals that he spoke more than one dialect (Husson 1985; Szeminski 1993:10-11), perhaps at
least three varieties of Quechua and two or three of Aru, related to Aymara (Szeminski 1993:14). Jan Szeminski (1993:13) has identified Guaman Poma’s use of three Quechua dialects: one that Guaman Poma identified with the Inka, another which he cued as Quechua as spoken by Spaniards, and a third Ñemish language based on Quechua syntax and Spanish morphemes. His knowledge of Aymara seems to be that found in the province of the Aymaraes, located in the present-day Department of Apurimac (see map), Peru (see map), rather than the principal Aymara-speaking area of Quillasuyu, about which Guaman Poma’s references suggest only indirect knowledge (AlbA³ and Layme 1993:16).

Guaman Poma renders, in Quechua, lyric traditions that are identified with pre-Hispanic Cuzco, and, in Aymara, those emanating from the province of Aymaraes (Husson 1985, 1995:61-65; AlbA³ and Layme 1993:16). The important studies of Jean-Philippe Husson (1985, 1995) on Quechua lyrical art and oral traditions in the Nueva corÃ³nica y buen gobierno reveal a significant dimension of Guaman Poma’s verbal art. They are complemented by Urioste’s (1980, 1987) studies of Guaman Poma’s styles of speech in Quechua and Bruce Mannheim’s (1986) examination of Guaman Poma’s Quechua lyric.

Guaman Poma’s Spanish likewise presents a complicated picture. If earlier commentators of the 1940s and 1950s emphasized his errors of grammar, today’s scholars focus on his linguistic control. The influence of Quechua on the phonology, grammar, and syntax of Guaman Poma’s written Spanish has been carefully analyzed (Urioste 1980:xxviii-xxi; Szeminski 1993:9; CAÃ¡rdenas Bunsen 1998:101-38). The language of his prose is described as being close to the standard oral norms for Castilian in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (CAÃ¡rdenas Bunsen 1998:143). Despite its formal problems, Guaman Poma’s Spanish prose is highly expressive and rhetorically effective. JosÃ© CAÃ¡rdenas Bunsen (1998:143) characterizes it as remarkable in its mastery and manipulation of the resources of written language, thus revealing Guaman Poma’s finely honed linguistic consciousness and his subtle capacity for representing distinct registers and types of speakers.

The links that have been drawn between Guaman Poma’s work and various Andean and European intellectual and artistic traditions are manifold. The question of his cosmology and concept of time has invited frequent reexamination (Imbelloni 1944; Ossio 1970, 1973, 1977; Duviols 1980; Szeminski 1983; Fleming 1994; Barnes 1995; Pease 1995; Plas 1996). The renewal of this discussion highlights the complexity of the issues at stake and reaffirms the importance of conceiving Guaman Poma’s elaborations as part of larger cultural interactions and/or alternate traditions (Adorno 1992:347; Barnes 1994:236; Fraser 1996:274). The current and independently discovered identification of Guaman Poma’s specific source for his paradigm of five or six ages as JerÃ¡nimo de Chavesâ€™ ChronografÃ­a o Repertorio de los tiempos (Seville, 1548) suggests both Guaman Poma’s choice of a European model that resonates with his own Andean ideas of time and change, as well as his creative manipulation of written and traditional oral sources (Fleming 1994; Barnes 1995; Plas 1996). Frank Salomon’s (1999:42-59) brilliant conceptualization of Guaman Poma’s complex historical and cosmological perspective situates the discussion in the broader context of current ethnohistorical efforts to transcend habitual dichotomies like â€œmythâ€œ and â€œhistory,â€œ and to imagine how human continuity appeared when memories were grouped under less familiar premises.

Of the relationships drawn between the Nueva corÃ³nica y buen gobierno and Andean and European traditions, none is more direct or pervasive than the visual evidence supporting Guaman Poma’s artistic relationship to Fray MartÃ­n de MurÃ­a; even Guaman Poma’s narrative conceptualization of his history of the Inkas follows the outline set forth in MurÃ­a’s Historia del PerÃ­ (Cummins 1992, 1993, 1997; see also Ballesteros Gaibrois 1978-79, 1981; Mendizábal Losack 1961, 1963). Additional evidence of this relationship is Juan Ossio’s recent revelation of the analogue for Guaman Poma’s visual depictions and verbal descriptions of the costumes and colors worn by the Inkas and their quayas, or queens, in his history of the Inkas (Guaman Poma 197-143). These turn out to be the corresponding watercolor drawings in the recently recovered MurÃ­a’s manuscript of 1590 (the so-called Loyola manuscript). This new discovery signals once again the strong artistic links between the Andean author and the Mercedarian friar. Along other lines, Maarten Van de Guchte (1992) has shown that Guaman Poma’s use of iconographic types is derived from earlier, northern European compositions disseminated to Spain and Spanish America through generations of reproduction in woodcut engravings. LÃ­pez-Baralt (1988, 1993), Thomas Cummins (1992), and Teresa Gisbert (1992) have also made important contributions to our understanding of Guaman Poma’s use of European visual sources.

New work by R. Tom Zuidema offers a key to understanding, within the Andean tradition, the relationship between textile designs, patterns of Inka administration, and imperial Inka social distinctions. Yet even as Zuidema’s work reveals the mythical, ritual, and political intent of his subject matter as well as the historical events in which his subjects play a role (Zuidema 1994:38; Zuidema 1991), Guaman Poma’s signature piece with respect to the blending of andean and European traditions is his famous mapamundi (plate VIII).

On Andean textile design per se, Cummins shows how little Guaman Poma actually reveals. Cummins emphasizes that Guaman Poma refrains from explicating the encoded meanings of Andean objects, such as the abacus that appears in his drawing of the khipukamayuq, or Inka’s secretary who kept the accounts of the khipu, or knotted cords, of dynastic and statistical information (plate IX). He likewise points out that Guaman Poma refuses to elucidate the independent mnemonic function of objects for recalling Inka history. Cummins (1997:238) has argued, in fact, that â€œGuaman Poma’s hermetic and hermeneutic world of text and illustration shields from us some fundamental aspects of Andean and colonial
The Toledan legacy is crucial to interpreting Guaman Poma’s claims. Like many others, he participated in the colonial governmental functions. This meant that the optimum situation for a native Peruvian was to be able to claim local community. Toledo had dismissed Inka rule as illegitimate and tyrannical, and he fused the local hereditary leadership of mitmaq, or mitmaquna (Poma 1581). In the 1570s, Toledo revamped the ethnic power structure, institutionalizing state control over the succession of tukapus administrators (Guaman Poma’s documented privileges in the colonial system. From the 1550s onward, native lords had served as subordinates to Spanish colonial administrators (Guaman Poma’s documented privileges in the colonial system). Overall, we find that Guaman Poma’s assertions reflect the attitudes and actions of the Andean provincial elite from the mid-sixteenth century onward. On the whole, these individuals responded eagerly to the chance to seek offices and privileges in the colonial system. From the 1550s onward, native lords had served as subordinates to Spanish colonial administrators (Guaman Poma’s documented experience is an example), and they continued to compete for positions in the Spanish colonial bureaucracy after the reorganization of native society under the viceroy Francisco de Toledo (1569-1581). In the 1570s, Toledo revamped the ethnic power structure, institutionalizing state control over the succession of mitmaquna, or mitmaq. Furthermore, Urton (1997:208) continues, in Guaman Poma’s view of the matter, the mitmaq instruments of the political arithmetic of the Spaniards that is, Hindu-Arabic numerals were on a par... with the God of Christianity as elements that could not be compromised, or translated, into a supposed Andean equivalent if his argument to the king of Spain for the integrity and high level of achievement of Andean civilization was to prove successful.

Overall, the outstanding work done in recent years by a number of distinguished scholars serves as testimony to the conceptual power and complexity of the Nueva corónica y buen gobierno and the ongoing pursuit of its still untapped riches.

IV. Overview of Guaman Poma’s Life

By his own claim, Guaman Poma (860, 1106) was born after the time of the Inkas, and, as we saw, he declared himself to be eighty years of age at the time he finished writing his work. Although his calculations are unlikely to be precise, we can approximate the period of his birth between the mid-1530s and the mid-1550s and his death, after the year 1615. Guaman Poma was descended from mitmaquna, or members of an ethnic community sent with special privileges by the Inka to settle a newly conquered area. His ancestors were natives of Huánuco and eventually settled in Huamanga; Pablo Macera (1991:28) has estimated that this migration occurred in the fifteenth century. After the arrival of the Europeans in 1532, the status and prestige of mitmaquna suffered a decline as the concept took on new meanings. To put it succinctly: The pre-Columbian ambassadorial settlers who represented the Inka’s power and prestige and carried out his imperial mission became the viceroyalty’s migrants and outsiders (forasteros).

Guaman Poma’s mitmaq heritage explains why he claimed Huánuco in the cordillera of today’s central Peru as his ancestral home and yet located his familial legacy and life history in the areas of Huamanga and Lucanas in today’s Department of Ayacucho (see map) in the southern Peruvian Andes (see map). Documents from the late sixteenth century bear out his assertions about his life in the Huamanga and Lucanas region, and modern scholars such as Porras Barrenechea (1948) and Monica Barnes (1999) have used topographical, institutional, and ethnological evidence to confirm it. The site of Guaman Poma’s recollections of events from the period of his youth, as well as his decade-long litigation to support claims to hereditary properties, was the new colonial city of Huamanga (today’s Ayacucho). Huamanga was his familial home, probably the place where he was born.

About a hundred miles (as the crow flies) to the south, still in the colonial jurisdiction of Huamanga, lay the province of Lucanas. Guaman Poma worked as a church inspector’s assistant in the Lucanas area in the late 1560s, returned there as a low-ranking colonial Indian administrator in the late 1590s, and settled there after 1600. His itinerant life exemplifies that of thousands of Andean members of his generation.

Guaman Poma was a full-blooded native. He was not a mestizo. He presented himself as a devout Christian, and his obsessive insistence on this point is a measure of the suspicion with which ethnic Andeans’ conversion to Christianity was held. He would have known as an indio ladino, that is, as someone who was presumably proficient in Castilian, Christian in belief, and Hispanized in custom (Adorno 1991). Besides denoting ostensible assimilation to Hispanic language and religion, the term ladino connoted negative values of craftiness, cunning, and untrustworthiness. It was a colonialist term applied by Europeans and creoles, or individuals born in America of European parentage or descent, to Indians and black Africans who had in some fashion assimilated to European ways. It was never used as a term of self-identification. Guaman Poma acknowledged the sting of the negative, status-leveling connotations of the term when he mentioned that he and others were scorned as aceladinejos or acoesanticos ladinejos, that is, as great and impertinent talkers or overzealous converts—in short, as unwanted native meddlers in colonial Spanish affairs.

Overall, we find that Guaman Poma’s assertions reflect the attitudes and actions of the Andean provincial elite from the mid-sixteenth century onward. On the whole, these individuals responded eagerly to the chance to seek offices and privileges in the colonial system. From the 1550s onward, native lords had served as subordinates to Spanish colonial administrators (Guaman Poma’s documented experience is an example), and they continued to compete for positions in the Spanish colonial bureaucracy after the reorganization of native society under the viceroy Francisco de Toledo (1569-1581). In the 1570s, Toledo revamped the ethnic power structure, institutionalizing state control over the succession of kurakakuna, or Andean ethnic lords, and converting them into agents of the state for overseeing the directed activities of the local community. Toledo had dismissed Inka rule as illegitimate and tyrannical, and he fused the local hereditary leadership with colonial governmental functions. This meant that the optimum situation for a native Peruvian was to be able to claim noble but non-Inka lineage while being engaged in service to the colonial state.

The Toledan legacy is crucial to interpreting Guaman Poma’s claims. Like many others, he participated in the
V. Guaman Poma in the Documentary Record

External documents verifying Guaman Poma’s existence and experience began to emerge in the late 1930s, after the 1936 facsimile publication in Paris of the autograph manuscript. The first was Rodolfo Salazar’s 1938 publication of a document in which Guaman Poma served as an interpreter and witness in a November 1595 transaction whereby land claims of the heirs of the *kuraka* of Lurinsaya, Don Pedro Suyro, were upheld in the jurisdiction of Huamanga (Salazar in Varallanos 1979:210-11). Appearing as assistant or secretary to the natives’ appointed representative (protector de naturales) Amador de Valdepeña, Guaman Poma signed his name to the document, dated 20 November 1595, as Don Pedro Phelipe Guaman Poma, indicating the noble social status by which he was recognized and anticipating the form of self-identification he later used in his chronicle (Varallanos 1979:31, 38n9); Porras Barrenechea 1948:71). The next major event was Lohmann Villena’s 1945 publication of Guaman Poma’s 14 February 1615 letter to King Philip III of Spain, located in the Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain.

In 1952 and 1954, the Reverend Elías Prado Tello published, respectively, one of Guaman Poma’s petitions and three drawings, obviously copies of ones originally drawn by Guaman Poma, contained in the dossier pertaining to the dispute over the lands of Chiara in the area of Chupas that the Monsignor Prado Tello would later publish in full in 1991. In 1955, Fray Pedro Mañaricúa published the criminal sentence pronounced against Guaman Poma in the year 1600. Drawing together this scattered evidence in 1969, Edmundo Guillón rightly argued that their cumulative effect provided sensational new findings about the life of Guaman Poma.

Evidence continued to accumulate in the 1970s when Guaman Poma’s participation in confirmation of land title proceedings revealed, as had the 1938 Salazar discovery, that Guaman Poma served once again as a witness and interpreter and that by the appearance of the title â€œdonâ€ before his name, he was recognized as a person of elite status. One such document, dated 16 September 1594 was found and studied by Juan C. Zorrilla (1977:50n1) and Steve J. Stern (1978:226). Another, also dated September 1594, was discovered and transcribed more recently by Nelson Pereyra Chávez (1997:261-70). A major publication of the 1970s was Zorrilla’s 1977 transcription of the Compulsa Ayacucho, which in thirty-two folios revealed the conflicting claims of the Chachapoyas ethnic group and Guaman Poma and his kin to the lands of Chiara outside Huamanga in the 1590s. The proceedings concluded with the 1600 sentence against Guaman Poma which Mañaricúa had published in 1955.

The 1990s have been particularly fruitful in producing documentary evidence that sheds further light on Guaman Poma and his activities as they relate to the production of the work by which we know him. Prado Tello and Alfredo Prado Tello’s 1991 publication of the dossier of litigations concerning the lands of Chiara gives a much fuller and more detailed picture of the land-title struggles of Guaman Poma against the Chachapoyas than appears in the Compulsa Ayacucho. The Expediente Prado Tello, from which Prado Tello’s 1954 publication of the three drawings had been taken, is the necessary complement to the Compulsa.

The second major advance of the 1990s has been the recovery, by Ossio, of the lost Loyola manuscript of Fray Martín de Murúa’s 1590 history of the Inkas (see Ossio 1996; Ossio 1998, 1999, 2000). Once newly published, the Loyola manuscript will renew the incontrovertible evidence of Guaman Poma’s artistic relationship with the Mercedarian friar. More than any other documentary discoveries, the Prado Tello and Loyola manuscripts allow us to place Guaman Poma’s literary and artistic achievements in the sphere of his activism as a literate litigant and his broader creative endeavors.

VI. The Genesis of the *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*

With respect to his literacy, Guaman Poma wrote that he learned reading and writing from a religious hermit and mestizo priest, Martín de Ayala, whom he identified as his half-brother and whose piety he celebrated (plate X, Guaman Poma 14-19). Despite the presence of a mestizo in his own family and notwithstanding his admiration for his half-brother, Guaman Poma condemned mestizaje, as we have seen, as the fundamental force that threatened the survival of the Andean race.

Guaman Poma’s artistic mastery was given expression under the eye of another priest, the already-mentioned Mercedarian friar Martín de Murúa, whose two manuscript chronicles of Inka history include drawings by Guaman Poma. Murúa was working as a parish priest in the province of Aymaraes located in the present-day Department of Apurímac nearly due east from the clustered pueblos of San Cristóbal de Suntunto, Concepción de Huayllapampa de Apca, and Cabana, and, slightly to their south, Santiago (San Pedro) de Chipa that Guaman Poma frequented in the province of Lucanas (see map). Santiago de Chipa, we recall, was the site from which he wrote his brief, February 1615 letter to King Philip III. Guaman Poma’s detailed account of Murúa’s conflicts with the local native community suggests his...
Guaman Poma’s discussion of local Andean governance in Yanaca, the pueblo of which Murá§a was in charge as comendador, or prefect, and his mention of a score of traditional customs still practiced there despite their prohibition by the church, testify to his firsthand knowledge of the community which probably served as the setting for his artistic collaboration with Murá§a. Furthermore, his criticism of the limitations of Murá§a€™s history of the Inkas for ignoring the Incas’ provenance, their legitimacy of rule, and the consequences of their fall, point to his intimate knowledge of Murá§a€™s historical works (Guaman Poma 1090). According to Guaman Poma€™s account, his relationship with Murá§a was fraught with conflict and ended bitterly.

How did Guaman Poma come to write his remarkable work? Here we must draw together the events of his life as an Andean in the service of the local colonial government and the church whose subsequent legal petitioning and social activism led to dramatic consequences. Those consequences—his assignment of corporal punishment of two hundred lashes and expulsion from his home city of Huamanga—no doubt stimulated his turn to writing. He went from a position of collaboration with the Spanish colonial regime as a church assistant and minor functionary in local civil administration to an attitude of exposing its injustices and excesses. Putting no faith in the civil administration of justice after the year 1600, when he was defeated in his legal claims to ancestral lands in the area of Huamanga, he turned to the king himself as his ultimate recourse. The question that remains unresolved is whether Guaman Poma maintained to the end the conviction that the monarch could or would take remedial action on behalf of himself and the Andean peoples of Peru. What is certain is that he turned to writing when all other avenues of social participation were closed to him.

We offer now a more detailed account of Guaman Poma€™s experiences and views of life in the Peruvian viceroyalty that rest on the episodes he presents in the Nueva corÃ±nica y buen gobierno as well as on documentation that comes from other period sources.

Guaman Poma€™s activities first came into view for the period of the 1560s through the early 1580s. After recounting the post-conquest civil wars among the Spanish conquistadores, Guaman Poma€™s earliest reference to colonial affairs is DamiÁ±n de la Bandera€™s 1557 general inspection tour—effectively, a colonial census to measure the size and constituency of the Andean population for the purpose of assessing the colonial labor supply. Guaman Poma called it â€œthe first general inspection of the Indians of this kingdom carried out by order of the emperor and King of Castile Don Carlos,â€ but its scope was actually the province of Huamanga. He illustrates a typical census event in which the inspector Bandera asks the mother of a young boy to identify her son (plate XII). She responds in Quechua that the child, who is her own, is the son of a powerful lord. This census-taking episode no doubt recalls Guaman Poma€™s own family€™s encounter, in their Huamanga home, with this basic institution of colonialism and the information it gathered.

Subsequent to this youthful recollection, Guaman Poma (282, 285, 690) writes of having served the visitador, or ecclesiastical inspector, CristÃ³bal de Albornoz in the identification and punishment of practitioners of traditional Andean religion in the earliest campaigns to â€œexterminate idolatria€”in early colonial Peru. It is likely that Guaman Poma was recruited in Huamanga for Albornoz€™s 1568-70 campaign to the provinces of Soras, Lucanas Laramati, and Lucanas Andamarca in the southern area of Huamanga€™s jurisdiction (see map). The names of inspection team personnel who appear in Albornoz€™s reports from this specific tour, as well as the names of local Andeans punished, are also found in the Nueva corÃ±nica y buen gobierno, suggesting that Guaman Poma€™s claims about his service to Albornoz are accurate. Like other Andean adolescent boys, Guaman Poma thus fulfilled the crucial role of the native assistant, whose task it was to recognize practices that the missionary church considered idolatrous and facilitate the exchanges between Spanish- and Quechua-speaking parties. Although he does not include himself in the picture, he depicts the priest Albornoz supervising the punishment of a weeping Andean male as carried out by another native member of the priest€™s inspection team (plate XIII).

Albornoz€™s extirpation of idolatries campaigns probably provided Guaman Poma€™s earliest significant experience with the policies and practices of the missionary church in native Andean communities. He expressed enthusiastic approval of Albornoz€™s punishment of the practitioners of Taki Unqy, a radical nativist movement that preached the triumph of Andean gods over the Christian god and advocated the rejection of all that was European. Albornoz has been broadly credited for the suppression of the Taki Unqy movement, which flourished at the time armed rebellion against the Spaniards was threatened from the neo-Inca stronghold at Vilcabamba (see map). Guaman Poma€™s reference to the practitioners of Taki Unqy as â€œfalse shamans€”(â€œhechicheros falsos€”) suggests that he viewed its leaders as exploiting for their own personal and/or political gain the traditional rituals which in Inka times had been mounted for the expulsion of sicknesses.

The 1570s are vividly represented in the Nueva corÃ±nica y buen gobier noby Guaman Poma€™s recollections of Cuzco and the administration of the viceroy Francisco de Toledo. The first years of Toledo€™s regime in particular seem to have constituted for Guaman Poma one of the most significant periods of colonial affairs with which he was familiar. He registered as the most permanent economic and social effects of the Toledo years the systematic census-taking and one of its consequences, the reducciones, whereby native communities were removed from their traditional homelands and relocated in order to serve colonial needs for native labor. Guaman Poma provided an extensive account of the legislation promulgated by Toledo in Cuzco and examined Toledo€™s general inspection tour of the viceroyalty.
Guaman Poma pointed out that the inspection tour was carried out after the resettlement program had been undertaken. He named two of the inspectors appointed for the province of Huamanga, Jerónimo de Silva and Rodrigo Cantos de Andrada, again revealing that Huamanga was the locus of his close acquaintance and, no doubt, the sphere of his activity (Guaman Poma 454). He described Toledo's late 1570 journey from Lima to Cuzco, starting with his account with Toledo's visit to Huamanga and reporting events of the subsequent journey to Cuzco, as if he had been an observer and participant (see map). Recounting Toledo's reception in the city of Huamanga, he described the highly theatrical and symbolic act that Toledo carried out at the Inka site of Vilcashuaman on the stone step pyramid from which the Inka presided over his court. Guaman Poma told how Toledo ascended the steps and took the Inka's seat, or usnu, from which he received the principal lords of the region as though he were the Inka himself. He added that Toledo then commanded the oldest and most highly ranked lord present to ascend to the top of the monument and be honored with him (Guaman Poma 447).

As though he were an officer of Toledo's inspection tour, Guaman Poma later provided a modified version of avisita-style report. He named himself (aedeDon Phelipe de Ayala, prince, author of this said chronicle) as its author, thus honoring the tradition of imperial service he attributed to his Yarurilca ancestors. He set forth an exposition of the characteristic inspection tour report themes, namely, the standard topics of the forms of local or regional governance and succession (Guaman Poma 455-59).

Guaman Poma recollected most vividly the execution of the Inka prince Tupac Amaru. He recalled in detail the skirmish enacted in Cuzco's Plaza de San Francisco by the Spanish military party prior to its departure for Vilcabamba to capture the surviving Inka prince. He portrayed with considerable drama Tupac Amaru's 1572 entrance into the ancient Inka capital as a prisoner and his subsequent execution and burial. As if he had been an eyewitness to those events, Guaman Poma drew a picture of the powerful scene in which the Inka prince was beheaded (he was actually garroted) and noble Andean men (orejones) and women wailed in protest and mourning (plate XIV; Guaman Poma 451-54).

Guaman Poma's principal recollections from the early 1580s concerned the activities of the church. His familiarity with the provincial church councils held in Lima for the purpose of establishing and refining policies for the proselytization of the Andean peoples was considerable. His enthusiastic support of its decrees on a broad range of issues suggests that he viewed rigorous and thorough evangelization as a pressing need in Andean society. Guaman Poma's positions in this regard are hallmarks of his work and they are consistently expressed throughout the Nueva corónica y buen gobierno. Together with his militant defense of the need for surveillance of the Andean communities and his detailed exposition of all the prohibited practices that survived in his day in the provinces of Lucanas Andamarca and Soras, Guaman Poma's religious perspective was orthodox and inflexible in no way syncretic or ambiguous and it reflects the outlook he must have developed in his youth or early adulthood, accompanying Cristóbal de Albornoz on his inspection tours. Guaman Poma's approbation of the activities of the colonial church is evidenced by the fact that he criticized its representatives shortcomings as roundly as he praised and adhered to the values for which they stood.

Guaman Poma demonstrates a thorough familiarity with the policies of the colonial church and the edicts approved at the Third Church Council, held in Lima in 1582-83. Although he mentioned a few of the churchmen who participated (the Jesuit JosÁ© de Acosta, one of its principal theologians; Luis JerÁ­nimo de OrÁ©, a Franciscan friar from Huamanga; and a secular priest and author Miguel Cabello Balboa), he nevertheless referred to them not as personages he had met but as authors of the books they wrote. His contact with these churchmen seems to have been with their written works rather than through personal contact as a Council observer and informant. His praise of the Jesuits, for example, may reflect his indirect acquaintance with the prominent role they played in Peruvian church affairs. Yet Guaman Poma mentioned only two Jesuits by name in the course of his entire work, which indicates that he probably knew few of them personally (Albó 1998:339). In general, the flesh-and-blood priests who populate Guaman Poma's chronicle are overwhelmingly those who served in local Andean parishes in the provinces of Lucanas Andamarca, Soras, and Aymaraes in the southern Peruvian Andes.

The portion of Guaman Poma's life best known from external sources is the six-year period from 1594 to 1600. During this decade he was serving as an interpreter and witness in proceedings in Huamanga that confirmed land titles and implemented the policies resulting from Toledo's forced resettlements of the Andean population (reducciones). At the same time, Guaman Poma was busy in legal pursuits, defending in the courts the land interests of himself and his kin in the valley of Chupas, just a few leagues from the colonial city of Huamanga. Losing these legal battles and later acknowledging them only allusively in the Nueva corónica y buen gobierno Guaman Poma nevertheless let slip the observation, in discussing the pretensions and criminal activities of acommon Indians, â€œthat he first became aware of such social disintegration—Andean society being turned â€œupside-downâ€—when he began his travels, that is, â€œin the year that we left, of 160[0] and afterwardâ€ (Guaman Poma 872, 886). We review the events that led up to that fateful year. (For fuller details see Adorno 1993.)

The struggle over the lands of Chiara, located in the valley of chupas some two leagues from the city of Huamanga, began in 1586 when in Lima the viceroy Fernando de Torres y Portugal granted the presumably vacant lands to Don Baltazar Solsol and the Chachapoyas, who had come from the eastern highlands and western Amazonian slopes of today's northern Peru and settled in the Huamanga area in the 1540s (see map). Reasons given for the Chira grant were their status as mitmaqkuna, as well as their ongoing service to the crown in law enforcement in Huamanga. Granting them land on which to settle and sow was thus presumably based on need and merit. Guaman Poma's clan and that of Don Juan Tingo also claimed these lands. In October 1595 the Guaman/Tingo titles to the Chiara lands were confirmed in Lima by the Royal Audiencia, the highest civil and criminal court of the viceroyalty.

The Chachapoyas and the Guamanes/Tingos then filed petitions and counter-petitions over the next few years, each side
of the struggle to hang onto a disappearing Andean order and to reform, not overturn, the decadent foreign imperial regime gives to the “archive of the world,” at least three decades. Perhaps the most remarkable dimension of the work is this consistency and comprehensiveness of blooded native Andean who offers a rich, in-depth view of life in a specific, southern Andean Peruvian locale over a period of

What is certain is that the

Finally, in March 1599, Guaman Poma was again at the Royal Audiencia in Lima, asking that documents he brought upholding his claims to the lands of Chiara be certified and recorded. After comparing them to other original documents and official copies, or traslados, the royal notary Juan de Herrera verified the authenticity of those brought by Guaman Poma and provided legal certification for those that Guaman Poma would carry away. Nevertheless, the tide of events now turned dramatically against him.

The Chachapoyas evidently found an apparent weakness in Guaman Pomaâ€™s earlier claims that they could now exploit against them. In September 1597 Esteban de Vega, the Indianâ€™s legal advocate representing Guaman Poma, had made a reference to one of Guaman Poma's relatives as a yanacona, that is, as an Andean servant of Europeans detached from his ethnic and kin group (Urioste in Guaman Poma 1980:1107). The reference to one of Guaman Pomaâ€™s family members as someone separated from his ethnic community cast a shadow over all of them as recent immigrants and potential outsiders to the Huamanga area. Although Guaman Poma earlier had accused the Chachapoyas of being recent immigrants, or forasteros advenedizos, and runaway Indians, or indios cimarrones, the charge was now turned full force against him.

On 23 March 1600, in Huamanga and before the corregidorâ€™s deputy and justice official Pedro de Rivera, Chachapoya leaders criminally accused Guaman Poma of falsely presenting himself as a cacique, or lord, who called himself Don Felipe; they claimed that he was instead a humble Indian named LÃ¡zaro. They charged that this â€œDon Felipe/LÃ¡zaroâ€œ had secured a royal order to have the Chachapoyasâ€™ lands surveyed under false pretenses, and that heâ€œthe pretender â€œDon Felipe/LÃ¡zaroâ€œ had then failed to appear at the Chiara site where the survey was to have been carried out. Juan SÃ¡nchez, the municipal notary accompanying the survey team, affirmed that the alleged pretender â€œDon Felipeâ€œ had failed to present himself.

Subsequent to this denunciation of Guaman Poma, no noteworthy legal event appears to have occurred until 18 December 1600. On that date, the Chachapoyasâ€™ rights to Chiara were confirmed. On the same day, a criminal sentence was imposed on Guaman Poma. As condemned in the verdict, his crimes consisted of being a â€œcommon Indian who, through deceit and trickery, called himself a cacique and was neither a cacique nor a principal, yet he subordinated Indians so that they respected him as such. He always behaved and sought offices with malicious intentions and deceits and was an Indian of evil inclinations and all the rest as should be evidentâ€ (Zorrilla 1977:63). Thus Guaman Poma was sentenced to two hundred lashes to be administered publicly, and he was condemned to two years of exile from the city of Huamanga and its six-league radius. If he violated the conditions of the sentence, his exile would be doubled to four years. The costs of the suit, furthermore, were to be borne by him. The sentence was proclaimed publicly in Huamanga on 19 December 1600.

References to Guaman Pomaâ€™s activities in the years subsequent to 1600 are found in his 14 February 1615 letter to King Philip III as well as in the Nueva corÃ¡nica y buen gobierno. It is clear that most of Guaman Pomaâ€™s experience during those years was limited to the Lucanas region, south of the city of Huamanga. The twenty-odd settlements, the majority of local colonial officials, and the local events he named—the Buen gobierno is suffused with these myriad references—all pertain to this area for the period from 1608 to 1615, with several references to noteworthy occurrences of the years 1611, 1612, and 1613. For example, he referred to an inspection of the local priests and parishes in Lucanas as part of a general inspection tour carried out in 1611, and he mentioned that he had been imprisoned at the time for seeking to defend local Andean citizens whom he represented as an appointee of the colonial administration.

Social activism and writing the Nueva corÃ¡nica y buen gobierno occupied Guaman Poma during these Lucanas years. His role as social activist and mentor in teaching fellow Andeans the skills of reading and writing is documented at length in the Nueva corÃ¡nica y buen gobierno. He wrote of teaching fellow Andeans how to advocate for their rights by making legal claims and filing petitions with colonial authorities. One of his most well-known drawings depicts such an idealized situation in which an Andean commoner enumerates his grievances on the fingers of one hand while an Andean lord, dressed in European garb and sitting at a desk, drafts the complaint that later will be submitted to the colonial authorities (plate XV; Guaman Poma 602, 828). Guaman Poma recommended dozens of times that European literacy be extended to traditional Andean elites. He understood the potential power of the written word in colonial society for documenting abuses, recording laws and other legal actions, and authorizing the redress of grievances. Because Guaman Poma wrote his extraordinary book, we might assume that his faith in the power of the written word and the colonial authoritiesâ€™ willingness to act on it was unshakable. Yet if we read the words he wrote at the end of his book, â€œThere is no god and there is no king. They

What is certain is that the Nueva corÃ¡nica y buen gobierno provides us with the sustained, consistent perspective of a full-blooded native Andean who offers a rich, in-depth view of life in a specific, southern Andean Peruvian locale over a period of at least three decades. Perhaps the most remarkable dimension of the work is this consistency and comprehensiveness of viewpoint of its author and his expressiveness in word and image. In this regard, the manuscript in its digitized version gives to the â€œarchive of the world,â€ that Guaman Poma (751) imagined, a unique and coherent native Andean account of the struggle to hang onto a disappearing Andean order and to reform, not overturn, the decadent foreign imperial regime
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