

LATIN AMERICA: INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES



TRUE ACCOUNT OF THE CONQUEST OF PERU



FRANCISCO DE JEREZ
EDITED BY IVÁN R. REYNA

Written shortly after the capture of the Inca Atahualpa at Cajamarca, Peru, *True Account of the Conquest of Peru* by Francisco de Jerez, Francisco Pizarro's secretary and notary, is the most influential of the early accounts of the conquest of the Andean region. This fascinating text brings to life Pizarro and his men's arrival in the central Andes of South America and their capture of Inca Atahualpa, the ruler of one of the continent's largest and most powerful civilizations. Injured during the massacre that took place immediately after the capture of Atahualpa but wealthy thanks to his share of the ransom offered by Atahualpa for his freedom, Jerez published his account of the events just months after arriving in Seville in 1534.

The present edition is based on the English translation *Reports on the Discovery of Peru* published by Clement Markham in London in 1872 and also includes his translations of the *Letter from Hernando Pizarro to the Royal Audience of Santo Domingo* and the *Report on the Distribution of the Ransom of Atahualpa* by Pedro Sancho. This volume is an invaluable tool for scholars, professors, and students of Latin American studies and students of history and literature interested in the history of the conquest of the Andean region as well as a must read for those fascinated by the history, civilization, and culture of Peru and the Andean region in particular and the Americas in general.

A native of Lima, Perú, **Iván R. Reyna** received his Ph.D. in Hispanic languages and literatures from the University of California, Berkeley, and his J.D. from the Universidad San Martín de Porras-Lima, Perú. His teaching and research interests include colonial Spanish American literature as well as Andean literature, historiography, and culture. Reyna is the author of *El Encuentro de Cajamarca* (2010). He is currently Associate Professor of Spanish in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Missouri, Columbia.

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CONQUEST OF PERU



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New York • Washington, D.C./Baltimore • Bern
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For Ivancito,

hoping that one day this story will be made into a movie.

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Introduction

The conquest of the Incas is one of the most important events in the colonization of the new territories by Spain as a result of the “discovery”¹ of America. Although the definitive downfall of the Incas did not occur until 1572², the capture of Inca Atahualpa by Francisco Pizarro and the rich plunder obtained symbolize for many the fall of the Inca Empire³ and the highest achievement of the Spaniards in the new colonies respectively. Most of what we know about the capture of Inca Atahualpa comes from witnesses’ accounts of the events, primarily from the winner’s side and from these witnesses’ accounts, Francisco de Jerez’s *Verdadera relación de la conquista del Perú* (*True Account of the Conquest of Peru*) is definitely the most influential depiction of these events. The *True Account of the Conquest of Peru*, written by Francisco de Jerez shortly after the capture of the Inca Atahualpa at Cajamarca, and published in Seville in 1534, has become, without receiving the necessary credit, a cornerstone of much of what we know about the initial arrival of the Europeans to the Andes. Not only is it one of the first stories about the fall of the Incas, but it is also the basis for how we remember the conquest of the Incan territories at that time. Although various editions of this book disseminated steadily during the XVI and XVII centuries in Europe, the influence that this book has had on the historiography of the conquest and its effects on the collective memory of the Andean population during the XIX, XX and XXI centuries has surpassed its original popularity.

¹ The word “discovery” suggests passivity on the part of the people “discovered” and has a very strong Eurocentric connotation. It is dense and multiple the bibliography on this topic but the word discovery is still used to describe this event. Maybe the use of this word in quotation marks works much better than trying to explain the validity of any other word to be used to describe what happened in 1492.

² The Incas, after trying to re-conquer the capital city of Cuzco, retreated to Vilcabamba, where they resisted the Spaniards until 1572.

³ The use of the word empire refers to the political organization of the Incas. Although it is a very useful tool for broadly explaining the nature of this conglomerate, it does not truly reflect the socio-political system that prevailed in the Andes at the time of the conquest. As the historian Maria Rostworowski de Diez Canseco suggests, the Quechua word Tawantinsuyu (four regions joined together) represents in a much better way the integrationist effort that the Incas made regarding their territory. (Rostworowski 19-20)

As the late Peruvian historian and renowned expert on the early chronicles, Franklin Pease remarks⁴, the Spaniards began to write about the Incas starting with Francisco Pizarro's early voyages to the northern coast of the territory now known as Peru. The first letters and brief accounts about the region increased over time in direct proportion to the interest that arose over the territories South of Panama. The number of written reports about the Incas became more extensive once Inca Atahualpa was captured. Consequently, the extent of the territories and the wealth and sophistication of the people whom Pizarro encountered also became clearer to Europeans. From those early reports, it is important to mention, because of their significance, a couple of texts produced before the *True Account*. One is the "Sámano-Xerez account", although this text only covers events prior to Pizarro's trip to Cajamarca. The other is the letter which Hernando Pizarro wrote to the oidores⁵ of Santo Domingo during his return trip to Spain, with the purpose of giving the King his share of the spoils of Cajamarca. But it is in 1534 when the first two books that narrate Pizarro's expedition and the capture and murder of the Inca Atahualpa were printed. The first book was *La conquista del Perú llamada la Nueva Castilla* (*The conquest of Peru, also known as the Nueva Castilla*), whose author remains anonymous as his name does not appear in the edition and it has not, so far, been possible to determine who authored the text. However, it was likely one of Pizarro's soldiers who participated in the capture of Inca Atahualpa and arrived in Seville in 1533.⁶

The second book is the *True Account of the Conquest of Peru*, which was published the same year, also in Seville and coincidentally in the same publishing house. Such connection, not only chronologically and geographically, but also thematically, has led many historians and experts to believe that Jerez's *True Account* is merely a defense of Francisco Pizarro by his secretary and notary. This is because *The conquest of Peru, also known as the Nueva Castilla*, criticizes Pizarro for his unfair distribution of the gold and his hasty murder of Atahualpa. While it is reasonable to assume that Jerez tried to protect his former benefactor by publishing a text which is clearly favorable to Pizarro, the closeness of

⁴ Las Crónicas y los Andes pag.15. For a more specific approach on the various texts written about Peru during the early years of the conquest, it is very useful to consult this book, in particular chapters I, II, III.

⁵ Oidores were ordinary judges, most of the time attached to the audiencias.

⁶ For a long time it was accepted that the text could have been written by Cristóbal de Mena. This was the result of a suggestion made by Raúl Porras Barrenechea in various writings during the first part of the XX century. The veracity of this authorship has not been confirmed or denied completely so far.

the two texts in time, place and theme is not enough of an argument to sustain that claim. In addition, the lack of reference to the previous text made us doubt that this claim is totally valid or that we can explain Jerez book's existence for these reasons. Whatever the reality of this actual or imagined textual rivalry, the *True Account of the Conquest of Peru* has long surpassed *The conquest of Peru, also known as the Nueva Castilla*, in popularity and therefore played a more important role in the construction of the historiography of the conquest of the Incas.

Editions of the *True Account of the Conquest of Peru*

To this day we have not found the original manuscript of this work, but it was probably in the hands of Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo at the time of writing his *Historia General y Natural de las Indias* (*General and Natural History of the Indies*) according to claims made by the same Fernández de Oviedo. The *editio princeps* of the *True Account of the Conquest of Peru* was published in Seville in the year 1534⁷. The following year the *True Account of the Conquest of Peru* was translated into Italian and published both in Venice and in Milan. In 1540 an edition appeared that some consider "pirated"⁸, which served as the source, with all its mistakes and omissions, for an edition published in Salamanca in 1547.⁹ It is this same edition which was used for a new Italian translation published in Venice in 1556 and reissued in 1565 and 1606. It was not until 1749 that this text was published in Spanish again, this time in Madrid, as part of the collection of *Historiadores primitivos* (*Early historians*) directed by Gonzales de Barcia. It is once again the 1547 edition derived from the "pirated" edition of 1540 which serves as the basis for a French edition published in Paris in 1837 and then translated into Italian and published in Prato in 1842. The next edition is a translation into German from the Madrid edition, published in 1843, which according to Palau might have been previously published in 1835. Then we find another Spanish edition that appeared in Madrid in 1853 which will be followed in 1872 by an English translation published in London by Clements Markham as part of his

⁷ For a more detailed study of the different editions of this text see: Alberto M. Salas et al: *Crónicas iniciales de la conquista del Perú*; included in the bibliography.

⁸ Printed by an "unscrupulous ...employee that took advantage of a temporary absence of the owner to do business with an edition of quick sale when the first was probably already exhausted." (Salas, 132) that clearly attests to the popularity of this text.

⁹ This edition omits the last paragraph which announced the poem included at the end of the text and part of the poem as well. This omission is partially reproduced in Clements Markham's translation which does not include the last paragraph or the poem in its totality.

Reports of the Discovery of Peru, which seems to follow the 1547 edition, and a Spanish edition published in Madrid in 1891.

The *True Account of the Conquest of Peru* was published for the first time in Peru in the year 1917 by Horacio Urteaga, following the Madrid edition of 1891. Another Spanish edition was published in Spain, this time in Badajoz, in 1929, following the same edition of 1891. In 1938 a Spanish edition was published in Paris, edited again by Horacio Urteaga, which seems to follow the *editio princeps* of 1534. José Luis Moure also mentions an edition published in Mexico, without any date, but which should have been published in 1946 as indicated by Esteve Barba. In 1982 Pierre Duviols prepared a new edition in French, based on the 1837 translation into French. The second time that our text was published in Peru is in 1968, in Lima. This text appears to copy the Mexican edition mentioned above. In 1983 Marcelo Grotta published a facsimile edition of our chronicle in Madrid and Concepción Bravo Guerrero published a critical edition in 1985 which was reissued in 1988, both in Madrid. The more detailed critical edition was published in Buenos Aires in 1987, in the volume entitled *Crónicas iniciales de la conquista del Perú* (*Early Chronicles of the conquest of Peru*). It also includes *The conquest of Peru also known as the Nueva Castilla* mentioned earlier. The several editions of our chronicle in so many languages help us to understand, not just the popularity that this text had since its first publication in 1534, but also its ongoing interest. However, this does not completely explain, in our view, the importance that this text has had in initiating a very particular way of seeing the history of the conquest of Peru and its main historical characters.

It has been argued elsewhere that the *Encuentro de Cajamarca*¹⁰ not only symbolizes the confrontation between two completely different cultures but also the justification for the subjugation of the indigenous population of the Andean region for many centuries. The idea of the superiority of the European ethos, the institutionalization of writing as the natural way to represent knowledge and the exclusiveness of the catholic faith as the only true belief system are clearly articulated in this event and in many other instances in the narrative of Jerez. It can be argued that Francisco de Jerez' portrayal of the differences between Europeans and Andean people, although enormously influenced by his experience in Central America and clearly the product of his times, has determined in many ways how other contemporary historians saw these events and therefore how

¹⁰ The Cajamarca Encounter is the name used to describe the dialogue between Inca Atahualpa and Fray Vicente de Valverde in the central plaza of Cajamarca right before the Inca's capture.