

ENCUENTROS



Andean Millenarian Movements:

*Their Origins, Originality and Achievements
(16th - 18th Centuries)*

Lecture by

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ANDEAN MILLENARIAN MOVEMENTS: THEIR ORIGINS, ORIGINALITY, AND ACHIEVEMENTS (16TH-18TH CENTURIES)

Manuel Burga

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, Andean millennialism manifested itself in social trends, artistic expressions, and political aspirations designed to restore Andean values and ethnicity, while maintaining distance from the European colonial system. The concept of *millennialism* originally referred to collective movements during the European medieval period, and was later used to describe movements in contemporary societies. For our purposes, the concept of millennialism will help us analyze a set of attitudes purposely designed to recreate the past and, in so doing, bring down the curtain on an era marked by upheaval, injustice, and the breakdown of traditional

native culture. Medieval European millennialism worked its way into the hearts and minds of ordinary citizens at the grassroots level. Andean millennialism, however, was primarily a political and ideological strategy designed to benefit the native elites.

Similar movements have been studied in Africa, Oceania, India and Brazil where conquered and colonized peoples—in disarray and at the prompting of their ethnic leaders—turned against the European colonial government. A practical aspect of Andean millenarian movements stems from the fact that the Spanish colonial government had taken over from an important preexisting Indian imperial organization called the “Tahuantinsuyo.”

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The destruction of the Inca state meant that the various groups within the Inca bureaucracy (members of the Cuzco nobility and all Indian noble families in the Andes) were relegated to a subordinate role, dominated, and barred from political power. These millenarian movements were primarily concerned with restoring power to the Indian nobility, and were therefore encouraged and nurtured by members of the Indian elite.

How were the Incas, who had been so easily beaten in the sixteenth century, able to recapture their glory and status? How were they able to reinvent themselves as symbols of resistance and rebellion against Spanish rule in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? The answer would appear to be quite simple: the underdog status of native peoples within the colonial system, the development of a new folk memory, and the emergence of a new identity restored authority and credibility to the traditional Indian nobility. They, in turn, took nostalgia for the past and tried to transform it into a political program to end an era of pain and suffering.

My lecture falls into three parts: memory, identity, and institutions. My aim is to show that Andean millennialism was not simply an intellectual phenomenon, but it also had a practical social dimension, which reflected the human and cultural interests, convictions, and institutions that nourished it, sustained it, and gave it life.

Memory: The "Marvelous Decades" (1600-1630)

The Spanish conquest was a confrontation that ended very quickly and had a clear

result—the Incas were defeated and the Spanish were victorious. The subsequent organization of the colonial system (as a continuation of the conquest) was every bit as successful: there was no major crisis, no widespread military resistance, no return to the status quo. After the conquest, the indigenous populations who had earlier been dominated by the Incas, had common cause with the conquistadors and became the archenemies of their former rulers. The concept of “vanquished Incas” and “victorious Spaniards” soon spread throughout the Andes, generating a new and unprecedented anti-Inca attitude, which also facilitated the establishment of the Spanish colonial system, and a rejection of the traditional ethnic leadership.

The colonial system became even more firmly entrenched during the governorship of the Viceroy Francisco de Toledo (1569-1581), who introduced new laws and institutions, and who broke down the Inca stronghold of Vilcabamba when the rebel Túpac Amaru I was captured and executed in 1572. Toledo also implemented a novel program for legitimizing the Spanish presence in the Andes. A new “historical memory” was invented to serve the interests of the Spanish legal tradition. Thanks to the efforts of its intellectuals, chroniclers, and lawyers, such as Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, the Toledo government’s new, all purpose historical memory drew upon the folk memories of the vanquished communities under Cuzco rule and delegitimized Inca rule. This period, the last quarter of the sixteenth century, represents the high watermark of the Toledo philosophy in the Andes.

The situation began to change at the end of the sixteenth century when the colonial system began to deteriorate. The demographic collapse of the indigenous population, the ever increasing tribute exacted by Europe (taxes and forced labor), and the Spanish crisis on the Peninsula, not to mention a proliferation of corrupt Spanish officials, all contributed to the breakdown of the Toledo philosophy, and to a reappraisal of pre-Hispanic social history. This process has a key date, and a name: the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega and his *Comentarios reales de los Incas*, published in 1609.

This mestizo chronicler, the son of a conquistador and an Inca princess, was born in Cuzco in 1539 and traveled to Spain in 1559, where he remained until his death in 1616. Garcilaso de la Vega was a mestizo in the biological and cultural senses of the term, and his chronicles represent an attempt to defend both the Spanish and the indigenous worlds. In Garcilaso's opinion, the Christianization of the New World justified its conquest, and the idolatry of the indigenous peoples, in many cases, paved the way for the arrival of Christianity. To counter the prejudices of the Toledo administration, Garcilaso, as an Inca, endeavored to explain that the former government of the Incas had possessed three chief characteristics: a) the Incas had civilized the Andean world just as the Romans had civilized Europe, and so the Incas laid the foundation for Christianity; b) because the Incas pioneered the corn crop and introduced a monotheistic religion and other cultural achievements, their political expansion

could hardly be expected to have been peaceful or well received by the Incas' neighbors; and c) the Incas were fair and generous rulers, called *huachacuyas*.

The extraordinary thing was that Garcilaso was writing from Córdoba, Spain; even so, his views enjoyed wide currency among the Andean noble families who, throughout this period, were endeavoring to regain their former privileges by putting forward new versions of their Inca history. Furthermore, a new sympathetic treatment of the Incas and the indigenous peoples is found even in chronicles written by Spanish and *criollo* clergymen, including Miguel Cabello Balboa, Anello Oliva, Martín Murúa, and later the monastic authors Antonio de la Calancha, Buenaventura Salinas y Córdoba, and his brother Diego de Córdoba y Salinas. They all portrayed Tahuantinsuyo as a civilized society, untouched by social ills, exploitation, or poverty. Non-Cuzco chroniclers such as Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala and Juan Santacruz Pachacuti, who were primarily interested in singing the praises of their respective regions, also took up many of the same themes that had originated with Garcilaso; namely, that Tahuantinsuyo was an ancient, peace-loving society concerned for the welfare of its citizens and led by fair and magnanimous rulers. In short, they created a new historical memory of the pre-Hispanic period, in which the indigenous were seen as good, valuable, and civilized. All that was missing was Christianity and obedience to the King—"justification" for the conquest.

These were the arguments of the

intellectuals who were reasonably skilled interpreters of emerging social sensibilities. Thanks to their ideas, it became possible to take a fresh look at the Incas, to mourn their downfall, and lay the groundwork for future claims by the descendants of Inca nobility. The texts written by Spaniards, indigenous people, and mestizos reflected the viewpoint of the Andean elites, and embodied their aspirations to regain their special privileges. The descendants of the conquistadors, many of whom had fallen on hard times, also sought to embellish the deeds of their ancestors, marveling at how a handful of Spaniards were able to conquer such a vast and prosperous empire. Indian chroniclers, however, generally wrote to corroborate and defend the claims and interests of their households, as distinguished from Garcilaso who tried to preserve the historical record of his ancestors. These chronicles may thus be regarded as testimonials of a changing social consensus that put us in touch with the oral traditions of the period, rather than as documents that unveil a newly established Andean social consensus.

In these marvelous decades, at a time of material and spiritual crisis, indigenous elites and majorities alike gazed respectfully back at the past with a nostalgic yearning to interpret it anew. This was a change from the Toledo-era attitude that rejected the indigenous in favor of the Hispanic. The new mentality followed in the footsteps of Garcilaso. Formerly perceived as tyrants, the Incas had come to be portrayed as fair and generous native rulers, archetypes of a bygone era of stability and constancy. Inca

legend thus enjoyed a renaissance throughout the Andes.

Identity: from Aspirations to Reality (1630-1680)

This fresh attitude about the past had more to do with aspiration than with day-to-day reality. The reality was in part political, part economic, and part social with these three elements melded together into a baroque, aristocratic society controlled from Madrid. This society drew sustenance from principles like those summarized in the *Estatutos de limpieza de sangre*, or the blood purity laws. According to José Antonio Maravall (*The Culture of the Baroque*, 1986), these laws were designed to ensure the stability and perpetuity of the aristocratic system, and accordingly specified that members of the nobility must conduct themselves in accordance with three basic principles: they must obey God, or be good Christians; they must obey the King, or show loyalty; and they must be of noble lineage. In order to maintain its purity and perpetuate itself, Spanish baroque society defended its nobility and tolerated no other religions or cultures. This philosophy was the source of some contradictions in Spanish colonial rule in the Andes. For example, Spanish bureaucrats had to show respect for the native nobility, for descendants of the major Inca *curacas* or chiefs, all the while enforcing European Christian cultural and religious norms.

In praising indigenous society, Andean intellectuals came up against the realities of the colonial administration, under which bureaucrats, both secular and religious,

recognized only one system and one religion. This baroque-era policy and the spirit of the European Counter-Reformation ushered in a second major spiritual conquest of the Andes in the seventeenth century. This process has been described as an “extirpation of idolatries” or an iconoclasm. The rural parish clergy was instructed to destroy all forms of indigenous worship. In carrying out these orders, they destroyed artifacts, burned idols and mummies, prohibited rituals and festivals, and punished native priests together with their patrons and accomplices.

In the seventy years between 1610 and 1680, the natives were once again catechized, spiritually purified, and theoretically converted to Christianity once and for all. The main losers under this new catechism were the *curacas* of the various Andean regions, since the old Andean cults had perpetuated their authority. When the cults were banned, they were left out in the cold without the memories and ideologies that had given them stature. They had to change their social and political strategies in an environment of intense repression.

In the process of conforming, the *curacas* came up with the audacious idea of concealing their traditional cultural practices within the Christian rituals. In the reinvention of their public persona, they undertook to celebrate festivals in honor of patron saints within each of the small Andean communities.

These traditional Andean ethnic leaders had to appear in public as devout Christians in order to maintain their ancient privileges as members of the local nobilities. If they

wanted to preserve their power and authority, and have broad acceptance by both the Spanish government and the indigenous communities, the ethnic leadership had to search for a new identity. They portrayed themselves as descendants of the Cuzco Incas, frequently adopted new lineages, and began to systematically commemorate the initial events of the conquest during the festival days of patron saints. As part of this quest for identity, they began to portray in their festivals what would later be described as *La tragedia de la muerte de Atahualpa*, or *The Tragedy of the Death of Atahualpa*. Thus we see the Inca beginning to die a ritual death on every patron saint’s feast day.

During these proceedings, the *curacas* would assume the native roles, and ended up reinterpreting events and even rewriting history in order to create new imagery and messages more in keeping with the strategies of the Indian and *mestizo* intellectuals whom we referred to earlier. These brand new portrayals of the Incas were popularized through the festivals, and the native communities began to identify with them and regard themselves as their originators. If the elites were claiming to be descendants of the Incas, and if the indigenous communities regarded themselves as having kinship with the elites, then both would appear to be descended from the legendary Cuzco rulers. Thus everyone could claim to be an Indian and an Inca all rolled into one; this had the effect of enhancing the status of a once disparaged cultural identity.

What had been mere aspiration was at last transformed into tangible results. At

that time there were many royal descendants of the Incas who were petitioning for restoration of their long lost privileges. While seeming, however, to gain legitimacy in the cultural arena, an Inca inheritance could also mean death. I would like to refer to three specific cases: Alonso Inga, in the province of Imbabura, Quito in the years 1665-1666; a native uprising at the Churín labor camps, near Lima in 1663; and Pedro de Bóhorques in Tucumán in the years 1659-1664. All of these events took place during a decade in which fears were running high and rumors were rampant in urban and rural areas.

Don Alonso Inga was named magistrate of Imbabura, and while traveling to take up his post, he was received in Otavalo and Ibarra with Inca rituals and ceremonies. He was a royal descendant of the Incas from the line of Atahualpa. Sumptuously attired in native costume, he made a public spectacle of his noble Inca blood. Not long after, however, he was stripped of his office and expelled from the Quito *Audiencia*. In the second example, the natives who burned down the Churín labor camps were heard to cry out: "*Esta tierra es de nuestro rey Inga*" (This land belongs to our King Inga). The third example is the stuff of Inca legend: Pedro de Bóhorques was a Spanish adventurer who reached the coast of Peru. He traveled to the Andean region, and tried to make his way into the forests of Central Peru; he failed and then proceeded to visit the mines of Huancavelica, finally settling down in Tucumán. There, among the Calchaquí communities, he reinstated the Spanish revenue system. The natives showed him

obedience and respect, and stranger still, began treating him like an Inca. When he began to act the part in public, the Spanish authorities intervened. Pedro de Bóhorques was hunted down, captured, transferred to Lima, and publicly executed in 1667.

In the seventeenth century, the return of the Inca took two main forms: first, we observe the rise of the Inca as an intellectual phenomenon, as reflected in the emergence of a new folk memory; second, we should note its social or practical dimension, as embodied in leaders who in all probability were genuine descendants of the Incas. The new movement manifested itself in the emotions expressed in native uprisings and in outsiders' attempts to "go native," as in the case of Pedro de Bóhorques. The possibility (or probability) of the return of the Inca posed an awkward problem for the Spanish, who responded with further repression by jailing and executing the native leaders.

Old Lineages and New Institutions:

The Twelve Royal Inca

Houses of Cuzco

The descendants of the Incas began receiving titles from the Spanish government that formally acknowledged their nobility in the sixteenth century. The descendants of Huayna Cápac, the last undisputed Inca leader, were the first to achieve such recognition. Two other categories of Incas obtained titles: the collaborationists, headed by Paullu Inca, and the rebels who took refuge in Vilcabamba until Túpac Amaru I was captured and put to death by Viceroy

Toledo. Thanks to a more sophisticated understanding of Andean society, and to the efforts of intellectual bureaucrats like Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa and Juan Polo de Ondegardo, who were both influential at the Toledo Court, it dawned on the Spanish government that there was not just one line of Inca descendants, but rather as many Incas as had governed the Tahuantinsuyo. This was the hallmark of the Inca nobility—a royal genealogy distinct from the more traditional European family tree used to identify various types of aristocratic families.

Allow me to cite a passage from *Historia general* (1617) by Garcilaso de la Vega, in which he says that Jerónimo de Oré gave him a cloth on which were painted the Inca *panacas* or families, and their descendants then living in Cuzco, and anxiously awaiting the partial return of their privileges. These amounted to ten or twelve households, families, or *panacas*, and 560 persons who held titles on the grounds that they were descended from the Incas. They petitioned for annuities, sought exemption from taxes, and requested public privileges in recognition of their titled status. At the end of his *Historia general*, Garcilaso lamented the fact that Melchor Carlos Inca, descendant of Paullu Inca (one of the sons of Huayna Cápac) and an arch collaborationist, demanded privileges that rightfully belonged to large numbers of noblemen who had been stripped of their titles during the conquest. Garcilaso also regretted being unable to give his undivided attention to the goings-on at the Court of Madrid because he was busy writing his chronicles.

He wrote that in 1610, estranged from his kinfolk, Melchor Carlos Inca died of grief and melancholy in the Spanish township of Alcalá de Henares.

In 1614, royal letters authorized the creation of the *Marquesado de Oropesa*, with annuities for the descendants of Huayna Cápac, the Tumipampa *panaca* from the blood line of Sayre Túpac, whose female descendants (in two generations, Beatriz Coya and Beatriz Clara Coya) had married Spanish noblemen. The history of the Marquisate of Oropesa is well known, and has tended to overshadow the story of other Inca families, who no doubt were left clamoring for their rights throughout the seventeenth century. We have a great deal of information on other Inca dynasties, consisting of impoverished families who independently, and sometimes in competition with similar dynasties, slowly but surely gained recognition as members of the nobility.

By the end of the seventeenth century, and certainly by the beginning of the eighteenth, we witness the emergence of a distinctive Andean institution known as "The Twelve Noble Inca Houses of Cuzco" (*Las doce casas nobles ingas del Cuzco*), all brandishing their letters or affidavits from the Spanish kings of the preceding centuries. These twelve noble households were as follows: Manco Cápac, Sinchi Roca Ynga, Lloque Yupanqui, Cápac Ynga Yupanqui, Mayta Cápac Ynga, Ynga Roca, Yahuar Huacac Ynga, Viracocha, Pachacuti Ynga, Ynga Yupanqui, Túpac Ynga Yupanqui, and Huayna Cápac.

Various Indian families claimed kinship with each of these households.

They cherished their aristocratic titles, their family crests, their roles in society, privileged places, and their family histories describing deeds of heroism performed by the founding father of each *panaca*. The pooling of family memories probably comprised what we now refer to as the “history of the Tahuantinsuyo.” These were family stories, memorized by descendants and often repeated in social gatherings and informal conversations which, wrapped in a haze of nostalgia for a bygone era, served to idealize the deeds of each of these Inca leaders.

According to the *Libro de las elecciones de los alfereses reales indios* (Book of Elections of Official Indian Royalty), each year every Inca royal household would choose two of its members as “electors,” who then proceeded to serve on the 24-member Indian Council of Electors or *Ayuntamiento*, a governing body of the indigenous peoples from whose ranks the *Alférez Real* or Royal Officer would be elected each year. The *Alférez Real* was required to hoist the Spanish standard on July 25th each year (the day of Patron Saint Santiago) in a gesture of obedience and fealty to the King of Spain. This ritual act was performed in all public squares in the major cities of the Spanish colonies, and it was an occasion which allowed all the social elites—be they Spanish, *criollo*, mestizo, or Indian—to swear an oath of obedience and fealty to the Spanish crown.

The twelve Inca houses of Cuzco would accompany the *Alférez Real* during the hoisting of the Spanish standard in the main square and in the established order of

seniority: first, the house of Manco Cápac, and last, the house of Huayna Cápac. This procession was repeated each year in the same order, and the representatives of the royal houses of Cuzco could show off their shields and vestments, and occupy their privileged places. This was an official festival day, organized by the Spanish authorities, the local *corregidor* or mayor, and the royal officials of the city. The ceremony held special resonance in Cuzco with the special Andean institutions in attendance.

Through this procession, the Indian *Alférez Real* showed loyalty and obedience to the Spanish monarchy on behalf of all the Andean indigenous peoples, and on behalf of their noble kinfolk tracing their ancestry to the Incas. All this was done in order to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the colonial government and comply with one of the chief duties incumbent upon men of his class.

The same families of the Inca nobility would form a procession once again for the festival of Corpus Christi, a religious folk ceremony organized rather spontaneously by the civilian population who were grouped together in guilds, brotherhoods, fraternities, or simply local families. The electors of the same Inca royal households would file past once more, heading the processions for the various patron saints of the eight principal parishes of the city. They would show off and take their places with the eyes of the world upon them. The patron saints of each district would be carried forth from their parishes, converge on the cathedral, and return to their churches in accordance with a well

established Christian ritual that continues to be reenacted to this day.

The Inca families generally organized the ritual ceremony within each parish. They paid the expenses (as custom demanded), led the processions, and duly acted in a manner pleasing to the people from their parishes as well as their own families. Participation in these festivities allowed them to pass down from generation to generation the memory of each family during the social gatherings or *tertulias* that were an inescapable feature of these Christian festivities. Participation in the festival of Corpus Christi enabled the Inca families to demonstrate their credentials as good Christians, while gaining in stature in the eyes of the local indigenous population.

These descendants of the Incas became the principal architects of a vast cultural movement aimed at the renaissance of a new Inca culture. They purchased suitable costumes, had their portraits painted by local Indian painters, and decorated their homes with Andean art objects. Some even claimed to have had their houses built according to the principles of ancient Andean architecture. Some were able to gain prestige, accumulate wealth, and establish alliances (through marriage) with mestizos and *criollos*. For the latter, access to these Inca dynasties was the easiest route to ennoblement. By the mid-eighteenth century, many leading Cuzco families had married into the Inca dynasties, foreshadowing the emergence of a highly distinctive Andean Christian nobility, loyal to the King but also proud of its indigenous

blood, and keenly interested in reclaiming, rediscovering, and disseminating its own cultural heritage.

Epilogue

During the decades from 1600 to 1630, "marvelous decades" as I have called them, a new historical tradition came into being. Under this tradition, the Inca leaders were revealed as just and magnanimous monarchs, and the Tahuantinsuyo was portrayed as a society distinguished by its welfare and justice. It was at this time that the whole notion of the return of the Inca began to threaten the stability of the Spanish colonial administration.

In the eighteenth century, with the advent of the more rational and tolerant thinking of the European Enlightenment, the descendants of the Incas publicly advocated a return to Andean cultural values. Such a return could ultimately have led to the onset of a new and distinctive society. Similar phenomena have been observed in other settings, according to Kenelm Burridge in *New Heaven, New Earth* (1969): "Whether as fool, fraud, saint, respectable bourgeois, farmer or tycoon, the pain of the millennium belongs only to man. It is why he is man, why, when the time comes, he has to make a new man."

Criticisms have been leveled at those who talk about "Andean millennialism," or utopian movements in the Andes. The fact is that such movements did exist, and exist to this day. They provided a glimmer of hope and pointed a way forward for many Andean communities. In closing, we might paraphrase the words of Juan Arazandi in

his 1982 book, *Milenarismo vasco* (Basque Millennialism): "What exactly is Andean millennialism? Is it simply there to bestow an esoteric charm upon what was in fact a tragedy?" As far as the Andes are concerned, we might say that this was no

tragedy, but rather a kind of anguish, a ray of hope inspiring Peruvians to find their own answers, and to continue to believe in the possibility of great practical and spiritual accomplishments for Peru.

M. Burga

Manuel Burga, an expert in the field of Andean historical research, was born on March 26, 1942 in Chepén, La Libertad, Peru. From 1962 to 1967 he studied History at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (Lima, Peru). In 1973 he received a scholarship from the Government of France, where he earned his doctorate in the History of Latin America at the Université de Paris I (the Sorbonne), under Professor Ruggiero Romano. In 1983 he obtained a second specialized certification in Historical Anthropology. Since 1973, he has lectured in Social Sciences at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos. In 1996-97, he was a visiting professor at the College of William and Mary, Virginia, U.S.A.

From 1976 to 1980 he led the Center for Historical Research, and from 1988 to 1990 he served on the Advisory Commission on Social Science and the Humanities of the National Committee for Science and Technology (Concytec). From 1991 to 1993, he was President of the Fundación Andina, and from 1989 to 1995 he headed the Colección Grandes Estudios Andinos de Fomciencias (Lima). He was also on the editorial board of *Historia de América Latina* published by the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar (Quito, Ecuador), with responsibility for Vol. III covering the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries.

Dr. Burga has published extensively, and his bibliography includes *Nacimiento de una utopía: muerte y resurrección de los incas*, published in Lima in 1988 by the Instituto de Apoyo Agrario, and also won the Jorge Basadre-Concytec National Prize for History. Other publications include *De la encomienda a la hacienda capitalista*, Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1976; *Feudalismo y luchas campesinas, 1867-1960* (with Alberto Flores Galindo), Lima: Colección Nueva Historia del Perú, Vol. XI, 1980; *Apogeo y crisis de la república aristocrática* (with Alberto Flores Galindo), Lima: Ediciones Rickchay-Perú, 1981; *Lanas y capital mercantil en el sur: la casa Ricketts, 1895-1935*, Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1981; Editor, *Andenes y camellones en el Perú andino: historia, presente y futuro*, Lima: Concytec, 1986; *Para qué aprender historia en el Perú*, Lima: Derrama Magisterial, 1993; *Los orígenes de nuestro atraso: ensayo de historia social y política*, Lima: Fundación Friedrich Ebert, 1995.

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