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Garcillasso De La Vega

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First Part of the Royal Commentaries of the Yncas

The publications of the Hakluyt Society (founded in 1846) made available edited (and sometimes translated) early accounts of exploration. The first series, which ran from 1847 to 1899, consists of 100 books containing published or previously unpublished works by authors from Christopher Columbus to Sir Francis Drake, and covering voyages to the New World, to China and Japan, to Russia and to Africa and India. Volume 1 of this 1869 English translation contains Books 1–4 of the Royal Commentaries of the Yncas by Garcilaso de la Vega (1539–1616), the son of a Spanish soldier and an Inca princess. Brought up to speak Quechua as well as Spanish, Garcilaso had access through his mother's family to the history and traditions of the Incas, which he recorded in Part 1 of the Royal Commentaries. The posthumously-published Part 2, on the Spanish conquest of Peru, is not included here.

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VOLUME 1

GARCILLASSO DE LA VEGA



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M.DCCC.LXIX.

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FIRST PART

OF THE

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OF

THE YNCAS

BY THE

YNCA GARCILASSO DE LA VEGA.

TRANSLATED AND EDITED,

With Notes and an Introduction,

BY

CLEMENTS R. MARKHAM.

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(CONTAINING BOOKS I, II, III, AND IV.)

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THE first part of the Royal Commentaries of Peru describes the manners and customs of one of the two great civilised communities of the New World, and was written by an author who had known the country from his childhood, and had peculiar qualifications for his task. The writer was not one of those travellers or explorers who set out from Europe in search of adventures in the New World. He had even greater advantages as a describer of a distant and little known land; for he was the son of such an adventurer by a native mother, and thus began to acquire the knowledge which enabled him afterwards to write this invaluable work, in his very cradle. So that his travels over all parts of Peru were not commenced until he had learnt the traditions and customs of his mother's people, and had become intimately acquainted with their language. The young Ynca had a wonderful start of all other contemporary travellers, for he was born, as it were, in the midst of his work, and began to store his material as soon as he could speak.

Our author's father, Garcilasso de la Vega,* was a

* The Spaniards in those days had very uncertain rules in the adoption of surnames. One brother would take his father's, another his mother's, and a third his grandmother's. Garcilasso

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son of Don Alonzo de Hinestrosa de Vargas and his wife Doña Blanca Suarez de Figueroa. His paternal ancestry, the lords of Sierrabrava, descended from that gallant warrior who fought by the side of St. Ferdinand at the capture of Seville from the Moors—Garci Perez de Vargas, in 1348. In an old popular song the famous city is made to say :—

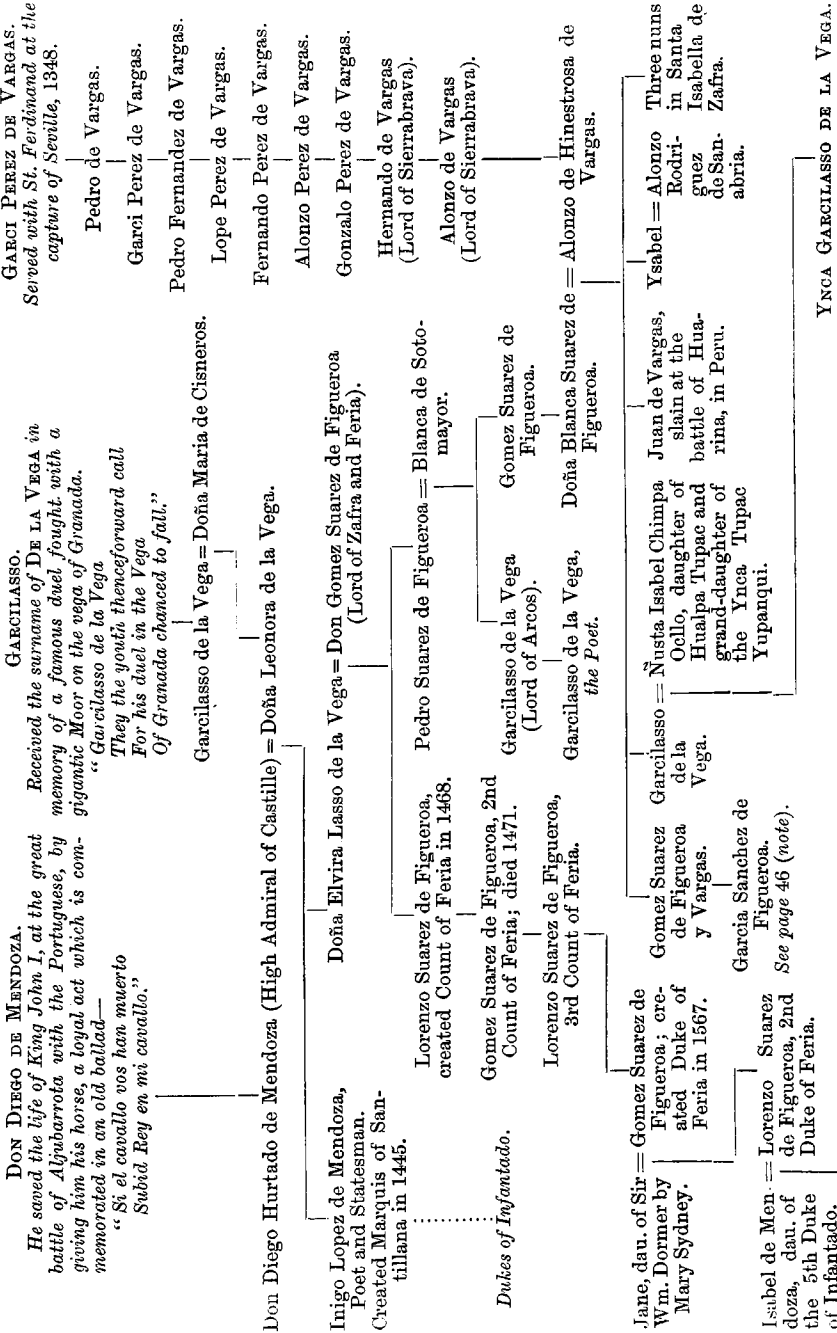
Hercules built me
 Julius Cæsar encircled me
 With towers and long walls
 The sainted King conquered me
 With Garci Perez de Vargas.*

The head of his mother's family was her cousin the Duke of Feria, one of the Spanish courtiers who accompanied Philip to England, and the only one who gained an English wife. He married Miss Jane Dormer, daughter of Sir William Dormer by Mary Sydney. The famous poet Garcilasso de la Vega was of the same family, and a first cousin once removed of our author's father.

So that the ancestry of Garcilasso de la Vega the father was sufficiently distinguished and noble, as will be more clearly seen by an examination of the pedigree on the following page. He was born in the city

de la Vega was a Vargas on his father's side, and a Suarez de Figueroa on his mother's. His own name, adopted also by the poet and others of his relations, was that of a maternal ancestor.

* Hercules me edificó
 Julio Cesar me cercó
 De torres y cercas largas
 El Rey sancto me ganó
 Con Garci Perez de Vargas.



of Badajoz in Estremadura, in the year 1506 ; and was a tall handsome young man, polished, generous, and well practised in the use of arms when, in 1531, he set out for the New World as a captain of infantry in company with Don Alonzo de Alvarado, who was returning to resume his government of Guatemala. That famous chief, on hearing of the riches of Peru, sailed with a large fleet from Nicaragua, and landed in the bay of Caragues in May 1534. Garcilasso de la Vega accompanied him, and shared all the terrible hardships and sufferings of the subsequent march to Riobamba. After the convention with Almagro, and the dispersion of Alvarado's forces, Garcilasso was sent to complete the conquest of the country round the port of Buenaventura. He and his small band of followers forced their way, for many days, through dense uninhabited forests, enduring almost incredible hardships, and finding nothing to repay their labours. He displayed much constancy and perseverance, but, having lost eighty of his men from hunger and fever, he was at last obliged to retreat. He then went to Lima, at the time when Pizarro was closely besieged by the insurgent Indians, and afterwards marched to the relief of Cuzco, which was also surrounded by an Indian army under Manco Ynca.

Then followed the civil war between the conquerors of Peru, and the defeat and death of Almagro. During these troubles Garcilasso de la Vega appears to have settled at Cuzco, where he received a portion of a palace of one of the Yncas as his share of the spoils,

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besides grants of land in the neighbouring districts.* After having reaped the fruits of his warlike exploits, and settled himself as a citizen of Cuzco, this noble cavalier, like many of his comrades, became enamoured of a young Ynca princess. Their connection must have commenced in about the year 1538, when the Pizarro faction in Peru had become all-powerful, through the defeat and death of Almagro. The name of the young Indian was Chimpa Oello, and she had been baptised as Doña Isabel, but most of her older relations were still worshippers of the Sun. A contemporary picture of this *ñusta* or princess still exists at Cuzco—a delicate looking girl with large gentle eyes and slightly aquiline nose, long black tresses hanging over her shoulders, and a richly ornamented woollen mantle secured in front by a large gold pin. Her father's name was Hualpa Tupac, brother of the great Ynca Huayna Ccapac, and son of Tupac Ynca Yupanqui. Our author, the Ynca Garcilasso de la Vega, was born in 1540; and during the first years of his life his father was engaged in the civil wars which distracted the early days of the conquest.

Garcilasso de la Vega, the father, accompanied Gonzalo Pizarro in his expedition to Charcas, and on the arrival of the new Governor Vaca de Castro in Peru, he joined his camp, and in September 1542 was wounded in the bloody battle of Chupas, where the younger Almagro was overthrown. When Gonzalo Pizarro rose in rebellion against the Viceroy Blasco Ñunez de Vela, Garcilasso appears to have joined the

* See pages 191, 242.

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insurgents in the first instance, and his brother Juan de Vargas was slain in the battle of Huarina on the shores of lake Titicaca, on October 26th, 1547. After this battle Gonzalo Pizarro marched in triumph to Cuzco, and his entry into the city is one of the earliest reminiscences of our author, who was then but seven years old. The day before, the little boy had gone out with his mother to meet their returning lord, as far as the village of Quispicancha, three leagues south of Cuzco. He tells us that he walked part of the way, and was carried on the back of an Indian when he got tired. But his father got him a horse to ride back on, and he passed under all the triumphal arches of gay flowers, with the victorious cavalcade.*

Soon afterwards Garcilasso de la Vega resolved to desert the cause of the rebel chief, and, with several other knights, he fled from Cuzco to Arequipa, and thence up, by the deserts of the coast, to Lima, in order to share the fortunes of the Viceroy Blasco Nuñez de Vela. But when he arrived at Lima, that ill-fated and wrong-headed knight was gone, so the fugitives concealed themselves as best they could. Garcilasso was lodged in the house of a friend, and afterwards hid himself in the convent of San Francisco. Through the intercession of friends, Gonzalo Pizarro granted him a pardon, but detained him as a prisoner until he escaped to the army of Gasca, on the

* He says he remembered all these things most distinctly, even down to the houses where each of Gonzalo's captains lodged in Cuzco, "porque la memoria guarda mejor lo que vió en su niñez, que lo que pasa en su edad mayor." *Comm. Real*, II, v, 27.

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morning of the battle of Xaquixaquana, galloping across the space between the two camps at early dawn, on his good horse *Salinillas*. This was in 1548. He afterwards resided quietly at his house in Cuzco until the rebellion of Giron broke out in 1553, when he once more showed his loyalty by escaping in the night, and joining the royal camp. The insurrection of Francisco Hernandez Giron broke out at Cuzco. The Corregidor and principal citizens were assembled at supper in the house of Alonzo de Loaysa, a nephew of the archbishop of Lima, to celebrate a wedding, on the 3rd of November. Amongst others, Garcilasso de la Vega and his little half-caste son, then fourteen years old, were present. Suddenly the doors were burst open, and Giron, with many armed followers, rushed into the room. Garcilasso, with his son and a few friends, got out by a back way, and over the roof of the house, and so into the street. The boy was then sent on in front as a sort of sentry, to whistle if the coast was clear at each turning. In this way Garcilasso and his friends got to their houses, mounted their horses, and rode off to Lima.*

Our author's mother, the Ynca princess, was probably dead at this time, for he speaks of his step-mother in his interesting account of these stirring transactions.

After the fall of Giron, Garcilasso de la Vega was appointed Corregidor and Governor of Cuzco, where he appears to have devoted himself to the duties of his office, and, amongst other good deeds, he restored

* II, lib. vii, cap. ii, iii.

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the aqueduct which brought a supply of water from the lake of Chinchira for a distance of two leagues, to irrigate the valley of Cuzco. His house was a centre of hospitality and kindness, where the conquerors fought their battles over again in the evenings, and where numerous charities were dispensed. Both he and his wife were engaged in acts of benevolence, and in collecting subscriptions for charitable purposes during the time that he held office. It is said that in one night he raised 34,500 ducats for a hospital for Indians. They were also the guardians of many orphans, and Garcilasso particularly took charge of the children of his old companion-in-arms Pedro del Barco, who was ruthlessly hanged by savage old Carbajal, the lieutenant of Gonzalo Pizarro.* When Garcilasso was relieved of his office, the *Juez de Residencia* who came to review his administration, honourably acquitted him of the charges which, in those days, were invariably brought against retiring officials.

The future historian was thus brought up amidst the turmoil and insecurity of civil wars in a newly conquered country; but he was fortunate in having one of the few honourable cavaliers of noble blood among the conquerors for his father; while he learnt much from the gentle Ynca princess, his mother, and her kindred. His education was not neglected. He went to a day school at the house of the good Canon Juan de Cuellar, a native of Medina del Campo, who taught grammar to the half-caste sons of the citizens of Cuzco. This excellent priest undertook the work of

* See page 295 (*note*).

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teaching out of kindness, and at the request of the boys themselves; for as many as four previous schoolmasters had forsaken their scholars after a few months, thinking to make more money in other ways. Men were unsettled and restless in those early days of the discovery of the New World. But the good canon read Latin with his pupils, about eighteen in number, for nearly two years, amidst all the turmoil of the civil wars. Among the young Ynca's schoolfellows were Diego de Alcobasa, his adopted brother, whose father was guardian to our author when his warlike sire was absent in the wars;* Pedro Altamirano, whose eye for beauty once caused him to lose a race;† a son of the gunner Pedro de Candia, one of the famous thirteen who stood by Pizarro on the isle of Gallo; sons of Juan Serra de Leguisano,‡ Juan Balsa, and Pizarro by Ynca princesses, and the children of Pedro del Barco. There was also a young Indian of full blood at the school, named Felipe Ynca, who was an excellent scholar; and indeed the schoolmaster was so pleased with them all that he used to say:—"O sons! what a pity it is that a dozen of you should not be in the university of Salamanca."

During these early days, while our author was learning some of the lore of the old World at school, his mind was stored with the history and traditions of his native land at home. Almost every week, he tells us, some of the relations of his Indian mother came to visit her; and on these occasions their usual conversation was on the subject of the former grandeur of their

* See p. 211.

† See p. 104.

‡ See p. 272 (*note*).

fallen dynasty, of its greatness, of the mode of government in peace and war, and of the laws ordained by the Yncas for the good of their subjects. The half-caste boy listened eagerly to these conversations; and at last, when he was about sixteen or seventeen years old, he began to put questions to an old Ynca nobleman, who was his mother's brother, and received from him the story of the origin of the Ynca dynasty.* As the lad grew up, his father employed him in various ways, such as superintending and visiting his estates, and the young Ynca appears to have travelled over most parts of Peru, scaling the snowy passes, crossing the rapid streams in *balsas*,† and traversing the arid deserts. At last, after a long illness, his father died in the year 1550, and he was left an orphan.

Ynca Garcilasso de la Vega was just twenty years of age when he found himself alone in the world, and he resolved to seek his fortune in the land of his father, leaving Cuzco and Peru for ever in the same year that he became an orphan. He tells us that on his voyage he was becalmed for three days on the equator, off Cape Passaos;‡ and, when at last he landed in Spain, he received patronage and kindness from his father's relations, for which he afterwards expressed exaggerated gratitude. He became a captain in the army of Philip II, and served in the campaign against the Moriscos, under Don John of Austria. When he retired from active service the Ynca took up his abode in hired lodgings (“*esta pobre casa de alquiler*,” as he

* See p. 62.

† P. 259.

‡ Page 17.

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calls them) at Cordova, and devoted himself to literary pursuits. He was both poor and in debt when he left the army, and his father's implication in the rebellion of Gonzalo Pizarro cast a cloud over the fortunes of the Ynca.

His first literary production was a translation from the Italian of the *Dialogues of Love*, by a Jew named Abarbanel, who wrote under the name of "El Leon Ebreo." The Ynca's translation was published in 1590.

His next work was a narrative of the expedition of Hernando de Soto to Florida, which he completed in 1591. He is said to have got his information chiefly from the accounts of an old soldier who served with de Soto, and Mr. Bancroft characterises the work as "an extravagant romance, yet founded upon facts—a history not without its value, but which must be consulted with extreme caution." It was first published at Lisbon in 1605, with the following title: *La Florida del Ynca. Historia del Adelantado Hernando de Soto, Gobernador y capitán general del reyno de la Florida, y de otros heroicos cavalleros Españoles è Indios*. It was reprinted several times, the best edition being that of 1723, uniform with the Royal Commentaries; and was translated into French by Pierre Richelet, and published at Leyden in 1731.

A very curious manuscript fragment, in the handwriting of Ynca Garcilasso de la Vega, is in the possession of Don Pascual de Gayangos. It appears to have been intended for a dedicatory epistle to be placed at the beginning of the Ynca's work on Florida, and

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to have been addressed to the head of the Vargas family. It consists of a geneological account of the house of Vargas, followed by an abstract of the contents of the work, and an explanation of the system adopted by the author in its division into six books.

As years rolled on, the Ynca began to think more and more of the land of his birth. The memory of his boyish days, of his long evening chats with his Indian relations, and of the stirring times of the civil wars at Cuzco, came back to him in his old age. He was equally proud of his maternal descent from the mighty Yncas of Peru, as of the noble Castilian connection on his father's side. So when at last he resolved to write the story of his native land, his plan was to divide the work into two parts, one to contain a history of the Yncas and their civilisation—his maternal ancestry; and the other to be a record of the mighty deeds of the conquerors, amongst whom his gallant father was one of the foremost. It was a great undertaking, and when he began it he was full of apprehension lest he should not be spared to bring it to a conclusion. Fortunately for posterity the Ynca lived to a good old age, and completed both parts of his Royal Commentaries of Peru.

As soon as he had resolved to compose a history of Peru he wrote to all his surviving schoolfellows for assistance,* and received from them many traditions which enabled him to compile a connected history of the deeds of the different Yncas. He then carefully collated his own account with those given by Spanish

* P. 77.

historians, such as Ciera de Leon, Zarate, Gomara, and Acosta. He was also fortunate in getting possession of the papers of a missionary named Blas Valera, who had been in Peru during the first years of the conquest, and had taken great trouble in collecting all the traditions of the Indians, and in observing their laws and customs, at a time when the generation which had seen the Ynca empire in its glory was still living. Blas Valera was evidently a man of learning and a keen observer, and it is much to be regretted that more than half his papers were destroyed when the English sacked Cadiz in 1596.* The rest were given to the Ynca, after their author's death, and the information which had been so carefully collected was preserved in the pages of the Royal Commentaries.

The Ynca Garcilasso de la Vega is, without any doubt, the first authority on the civilisation of the Yncas and on the conquest of Peru.† His intimate knowledge of the Quichua language, his recollections of discourses with his mother's relations, and the correspondence he kept up with Peruvian friends in after

* P. 33.

† Mr. Prescott, in his *Conquest of Peru*, quotes—

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Garcilasso de la Vega | no less than 89 times |
| Polo de Ondegardo (MS.) | - 41 „ |
| Sarmiento (MS.) | - - - 25 „ |
| Cieza de Leon | - - - 20 „ |
| Acosta | - - - 19 „ |
| Pedro Pizarro (MS.) | - - 14 „ |
| Montesinos | - - - 8 „ |
| Zarate | - - - 7 ₁ „ |
| Herrera | - - - 6 „ |
| Gomara | - - - 2 „ |

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life, gives his testimony a weight and authority such as no Spaniard could lay claim to. The conversations he had heard at his father's house, where the old soldiers of Pizarro fought their battles over again, and his own personal recollections, also give his version of the conquest and of the subsequent civil wars a peculiar value.

The first part of the Royal Commentaries of Peru, divided into nine books, which has been selected by the Council of the Hakluyt Society for translation, contains a detailed history of the origin of Ynca civilisation in Peru, of the deeds and conquests of the successive sovereigns, and of the religion, institutions, and customs of the people. The story of the origin of the Yncas, as given by their descendant, was undoubtedly the one generally received by his mother's relations; and although both it and the reigns of the earlier Yncas are fabulous, yet they contain some foundation in fact, and are beyond dispute more authentic, as traditions, than the versions given by any of the Spanish historians. I have already, in the Introduction to my translation of Cieza de Leon,* given my reasons for believing that the historical period of Ynca history commences with Uira-cocha (or Huiracocha), the eighth Ynca in our author's list. From his time the succession of sovereigns given by Cieza de Leon agrees with the more detailed narrative of Garcilasso de la Vega. The Ynca will be found a pleasant though rather a garrulous companion. His long historical narratives of the battles and conquests of the early Yncas often become tedious, and of this the

* P. 1.

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author is himself well aware. He, therefore, intersperses them with more entertaining chapters on the religious ceremonies, the domestic habits and customs of the Peruvian Indians, and on the advances they had made in medicine, poetry, music, astronomy, and other arts. He also frequently inserts an anecdote from the storehouse of his memory, or some personal reminiscence called forth by the subject on which he happens to be writing. He prided himself on being a strict Catholic, but at the same time he zealously and boldly defends his people, and shows a loving and tender regard for the reputation of his gentle mother's kindred, and their subjects, which does him honour, and cannot fail to enlist the sympathy of the reader.

The first part of the Royal Commentaries of Peru received the approbation and license of the Inquisition in 1604, and was published at Lisbon in 1609, dedicated to the Duchess of Braganza. The second part was first published at Cordova in 1617, "by the widow of Andres Barrera, and at her cost."

Our author, the Ynca Garcilasso de la Vega, died and was buried at Cordova,* in the year 1616, at the age of seventy-six, having just lived long enough to accomplish his most cherished wish, and complete the work at which he had steadily and lovingly laboured for so many years. Without it our knowledge of the civilisation of the Yncas, the most interesting and important feature in the history of the New World, would indeed be limited.

* He was buried in the cathedral at Cordova, in a chapel called Garcilasso, where a monument was erected to his memory.

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A second edition of the Royal Commentaries was published at Madrid in 1723; and a third (the two parts in four volumes 12mo.) appeared in Madrid in 1829.

The present translation has been made from the original Lisbon edition of 1609, collated with that of 1723.

An abridged English version of the Royal Commentaries appeared in London in 1688, having been “rendered into English” by Sir Paul Rycaut, Kt.,* and dedicated to James II. The worthy knight had a very slight knowledge of the Spanish language, and he did not scruple to make wild guesses at the meaning of sentences, and to omit whole chapters. Thus he only gives fourteen out of the twenty-six chapters in the first book, and sixteen out of the twenty-six in the second. Besides this very imperfect abridgment, there is no previous translation of the Royal Commentaries in English, though they have been published in French, German, and Italian. The French edition was translated by M. J. Bardouin, and was published at Amsterdam in 1737. The German version, by G. C. Böttger, is in two volumes 8vo. It was published at Nordhausen in 1798. It has been thought that the work of the Ynca, furnishing as it does the best account of the most civilised of the aboriginal American races, will form an acceptable addition to the Hakluyt Society’s series.

* Sir Paul Rycaut was a Fellow of the Royal Society, and eighteen years consul at Smyrna. After dedicating his mutilated version of the *Royal Commentaries* to James II, he was appointed Resident at Hamburg. He also wrote a continuation of Knolles’s *Turkish History* down to the peace of Carlowitz in 1699, which was published in 1700, and dedicated to William III.