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Garcillasso De La Vega

Excerpt

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FIFTH BOOK
OF THE
ROYAL COMMENTARIES OF THE YNCAS.

IT EXPLAINS HOW THEY DIVIDED AND CULTIVATED THE LAND.
THE TRIBUTE THAT WAS RENDERED.

THE STORES OF ARMS AND PROVISIONS THEY KEPT FOR WAR.

WHAT CLOTHING THEY GAVE TO THEIR VASSALS.

HOW THEY ALLOWED NO MENDICANCY.

THE LAWS AND ORDINANCES IN FAVOUR OF THE VASSALS, WITH
OTHER NOTABLE THINGS.

THE VICTORIES AND GENEROSITY OF THE PRINCE YNCA UIRA CCOCHA,
EIGHTH KING.

HIS FATHER IS DETHRONED.

THE FLIGHT OF A GREAT CHIEF.

THE PROPHECY CONCERNING THE COMING OF THE SPANIARDS.

THE BOOK CONTAINS TWENTY-NINE CHAPTERS.

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THE FIFTH BOOK.

CHAPTER I.

HOW THEY DIVIDED THE LAND AMONGST THE VASSALS.

AS SOON as the Ynca had conquered any kingdom or province, and established his Government amongst the inhabitants according to his laws and idolatrous customs, he ordered that the cultivated land capable of yielding maize should be extended. For this purpose he caused irrigation channels to be constructed, which were most admirable, as may be seen to this day; both those that have been destroyed, the ruins of which are yet visible, and those still in working order. The engineers led the irrigation channels in directions required by the lands to be watered; for it must be known that the greater part of this land is barren as regards corn-yielding soil, and, for this reason, they endeavoured to increase its fertility as much as possible. As the land is under the torrid zone it requires irrigation. The Yncas supplied the water with great ingenuity, and no maize crop was sown without being also supplied with water. They also constructed channels to irrigate the pasture land, when the autumn withheld its rains, for they took care to fertilise the pastures as well as the arable land, as they possessed immense flocks. These channels for the pastures were destroyed as soon as the Spaniards came into the country, but the ruins may be seen to this day.

Having made the irrigation channels, they levelled the

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fields and arranged them in squares, so that they might get the full benefit of the water. On the sides of the mountains, where there was good soil, they made terraces so as to get level ground, as may be seen at this day round Cuzco and all over Peru. These terraces or *andenes* consisted of three walls of strong masonry, one in front and two at the sides, slightly inclining inwards, as are all their walls, so as to sustain the weight of the earth, which was filled in until it reached the top of the walls. Over the first *anden* they constructed another narrower one, and above that another still smaller. Thus they gradually covered the whole mountain, levelling the ground after the manner of a flight of stairs, and getting the use of all the land that was suitable for sowing, and that could be irrigated. Where there were masses of rock, the rocks were removed and earth was brought from elsewhere to make terraces, so that even such a site might be made useful and not lost. The first terraces were of a size conformable to the position of the site, capable of containing a hundred to two or three hundred *fanegas*,* more or less; and the second were smaller; and so they went on diminishing in size as they ascended, until the highest only gave room for two or three rows of maize. So industrious were the Indians in all work tending to enlarge the extent of the land capable of yielding maize. In many places they led an irrigation channel for fifteen or twenty leagues, to irrigate only a few *fanegas* of maize land, that it might not be lost.

Having thus increased the quantity of arable land, they measured all that was contained in each province, every village by itself, and then divided it into three parts. The first part was for the Sun, the second for the King, and the third for the people. These divisions were always carefully made, in order that the people might have sufficient land for their crops; and it was a rule that they should rather have

* Corn yielded by a *fanegada*, which is equal to 1.1 acre.

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more than was requisite than too little. When the people of a village or province increased in number, a portion was taken from the lands of the Sun and of the Ynca for the vassals. Thus the King only took for himself and for the Sun such lands as would otherwise remain desert and without an owner. Most of the *andenes* belong to the Sun and to the Ynca, because the sovereign had ordered them to be made. Besides the maize lands which were irrigated, other unirrigated tracts were portioned out, in which they sowed pulses and other crops of much importance, such as those they call *papas*,* *ocas*,† and *añus*‡. These also were divided into three parts: for the people, the Sun, and the Ynca. But as they were not fertile, from want of irrigation, they did not take crops off them more than once or twice, and then portioned out other lots, that the first might lie fallow. In this way they cultivated their poor lands, that there might always be abundance.

The maize lands were sown every year, because, as they were irrigated and manured like a garden, they were always fertile. They sowed a seed like rice with the maize, called *quinua*,§ which is also raised on the cold lands.

CHAPTER II.

THE ARRANGEMENT THEY ADOPTED FOR TILLING THE LAND, AND
OF THE FESTIVAL THEY HELD WHEN THEY CULTIVATED
THE LAND OF THE YNCA AND THE SUN.

They also established a regular order in the tilling and the cultivating of the land. They first tilled the fields of the

* The potato. † *Ocalis tuberosa*. An edible root.

‡ Also a variety of the *Ocalis*; but the root is rather more bitter.

§ *Chenopodium Quinoa*. A cereal.

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Sun; then those of the widows, orphans, aged, and sick, for all these persons were classed as poor, and, as such, the Ynca ordered that their fields should be tilled for them. In each village, or in each ward, if the village was large, there were men deputed to look after the lands of persons who were classed as poor. These deputies were named *Llacta-camayú*, which means "officers of the village." They superintended the ploughing, sowing, and harvesting; and at such times they went up into towers the night before, that were built for the purpose, and after blowing through a trumpet or shell to secure attention, cried with a loud voice that on such a day such and such lands of the poor would be tilled, warning those, whose duty it might be, to repair thither. The inhabitants of each district were thus apprised on what lands they were to give assistance, which were those of their relations or nearest neighbours. Each one was expected to bring food for himself of what he had in his house, for those who were unable to work were not required to find food for those who could. It was said that their own misery sufficed for the aged, sick, widows, and orphans, without looking after that of their neighbours. If the disabled had no seed, it was provided from the stores, of which we shall speak presently. The lands of soldiers who were employed in the wars were also tilled in this way, like those of widows and orphans; and while the husbands were serving in the wars, their wives were looked upon as widows during their absence. Great care was taken of the children of those who were killed in the wars, until such time as they were married.

After the lands of the poor and distressed had been tilled, the people worked on their own lands, the neighbours assisting each other. They then tilled the fields of the Curaca, which were the last that received attention in each village or district. In the time of Huayna Ccapac, an Indian superintendent, in the province of Chachapoyas, was hanged because he caused the land of a Curaca, who was a relation

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of his, to be tilled before that of a widow. He was punished as a breaker of the rules established by the Ynca for the tilling of the land, and the gallows was set up on the land of the Curaca. The Yncas ordered that the lands of their vassals should take precedence of their own, because they said that from the prosperity of his subjects was derived their faithful service to the King; for if they were poor and in need, they would not be able to serve well either in peace or war.

The last fields that were cultivated were those of the King. All the people tilled the lands of the Ynca and of the Sun in common, and they went to them with great joy and satisfaction, dressed in the clothes which they wore on their grandest festivals. These garments were covered with plates of gold and silver,* and the people also wore plumes of feathers on their heads. When they ploughed (which was the labour they most enjoyed) they sang many songs, composed in praise of their Yncas, and they went through their work with joy and gladness, because it was in the service of their God and of their King.

Hard by the city of Cuzco, on the slopes of the hill where the fortress stands, there was a terrace covering many *fanegas* of ground, and it will be there still, if it has not been covered with houses. It was called the Colcampata.† The suburb which contains it, takes its name from the terrace, and this terrace was the special and principal jewel, so to speak, belonging to the Sun; for it was the first land that was dedicated to that deity throughout the whole empire of the Yncas. This land was cultivated by persons of the blood royal, and none but Yncas and Pallas could work on it. The work was performed with great rejoicing, especially the ploughing, when the Yncas came forth in

* Little square plates, beaten very fine, with holes bored at each corner. They were sewn in rows, on the edges of cloaks and tunics.

† See vol. i, p. 179.

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their richest clothes. All the songs that were sung in praise of the Sun and of their Kings, were composed with reference to the meaning of the word *Haylli*, which in the general language of Peru means “triumph.” Thus they were said to triumph over the earth by ploughing it, and turning it up so that it might yield fruit. In these songs they inserted graceful references to discreet lovers and to valiant soldiers, all bearing on the triumph over the land that they were tilling. The refrain of each couplet was the word *Haylli*, repeated as often as was necessary to complete the compass which the Indians made; for they ploughed the land backwards and forwards so as to break it up more thoroughly.

Their plough consisted of a pole about a *braza* in length, flat in front and rounded behind. It was four *dedos* in width, and had a point at one end to penetrate the earth. At a distance of half a *vara** from the point there was a flange consisting of two pieces of wood strongly fastened to the pole, on which the Indian placed his feet with a jump, and thus forced the pole into the ground as far as the flange. The ploughers work in rows of seven or eight, more or less, and going all together, they raise such large furrows that it is almost incredible to those who have not seen them. It is most wonderful to behold such simple instruments performing so great a work, and the labourers do it with the greatest ease and without losing the drift of their song. The women walk behind the men, to break the clods, and take up the roots of the plants with their hands and throw them on the top, that they may dry up and die, and there may be less to weed. They also join their husbands in the song, especially in repeating the refrain *Haylli*.

The songs of the Indians and their tune appearing good to the master of the choir of the cathedral church of Cuzco,

* 32.89 English inches is one Spanish *vara*.

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he composed a chaunt, in the year 1551 or 1552, for the feast of the most holy sacrament, very like the *haylli*. Eight mestizo boys, school-fellows of mine, came forth dressed as Indians, each with a plough in his hand, to represent the song of *Haylli* in the procession, and the whole choir joined them in the refrain of the couplets, which pleased the Spaniards, and caused great joy to the Indians to see the Spaniards solemnising the festival of our Lord God, whom they called Pachacamac, with the native songs and dances.

I have described the special ceremony performed by the Yncas, when they ploughed that terrace dedicated to the Sun, because I saw it on two or three successive years in my childhood; and from it may be gathered how the other ceremonies were performed in all parts of Peru, when they ploughed the lands of the Sun and of the Yncas; although that ceremony which I saw was but the shadow of those that were performed in the days of the Yncas, according to the accounts of the Indians.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE QUANTITY OF LAND GIVEN TO EACH INDIAN, AND
HOW THEY IMPROVED IT.

They gave to each Indian a *tupm*, which is a *fanega* of land, on which to sow his maize; but this would be a *fanega* and a half in Spain. They also call a league of road a *tupm*, and they derive a verb from it which signifies “to measure;” and the word *tupm* is used for any kind of measure, whether of water, wine, or any other liquor. It is also applied to the large pins with which the women fastened their cloaks. The measure for seeds had another name, which was *Pochu*, the equivalent to a *fanegada*.

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One *tupu* of land yields sufficient for the sustenance of one married peasant without children.* As soon as he had children another *tupu* was granted for each boy, and half a *tupu* for each girl. When a boy married, the father handed one *tupu* over to him, which had been granted for his sustenance, because when the son left his home the father could not retain what had been given for his son's use.

The daughters did not take their half *tupus* when they married, because they had not been granted as dowers but as the sources of their maintenance; and as land had to be granted to their husbands they could not take away these. For no account was taken of married women, only of women who were not provided with husbands to maintain them before marriage, or after they became widows. The fathers retained the lands granted for the sustenance of their daughters if they required them; and if not they reverted to the State, for no one was allowed to sell or buy.

Besides the lands intended for the maize crops, they set apart some portions for the growth of pulses that were not irrigated.

To the nobility, such as the Curacas who were lords of vassals, were given lands varying in extent according to the number of their wives, children, and servants; and the Yncas of the blood royal received estates in the same way, wherever they desired to live. These estates, however, were in addition to the share that each member of the royal family had in the revenues of the King and of the Sun, as sons of one and brothers of the other.

They manured the land to increase its fertility, and it is to be noted that in the valley of Cuzco, and, indeed, in almost all parts of the Sierra, they used human manure for the

* On the road between Tarma and Xauxa there are many square fields, all of the same size, divided by small stone walls. These are the *tupus* of the times of the Yncas. They are now abandoned and overgrown with rank grass.

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maize crops, because they said it was the best. It was collected with great care and diligence, and dried and pulverised when the time for sowing arrived. Throughout the Collao, a province one hundred and fifty leagues in length, where it was too cold to grow maize, they manured the crops of potatoes and pulses with the dung of llamas, which was there considered more beneficial than any other manure.

On the sea coast from below Arequipa to Tarapaca, a distance of more than two hundred leagues, they use no other manure than the droppings of sea birds, of which there are large and small along all the coast, and they fly in such enormous flocks that it would be incredible to any one who had not seen them. They breed on certain desert islands on the coast, and the quantity of manure they make is also incredible. From a distance these heaps of manure look like the peaks of snowy mountains. In the time of the Kings Yncas such care was taken to preserve these birds, that it was unlawful for any one to land on the islands during the breeding season on pain of death; that the birds might not be disturbed or driven from their nests. Nor was it lawful to kill the birds at any time, either on the islands or elsewhere, also on pain of death.

Each island was, by order of the Ynca, set apart for the use of a particular province, or if the island was large it served for two or three provinces; and marks were set up to let the people of one province know their limits, and to prevent them from encroaching on those of another. More minute divisions were also made, to show the portions set apart for each village, which were again subdivided into portions for each individual, according to the quantity of manure that he would require. The inhabitant of one village was punished with death if he took manure from parts set apart for another: nor was he allowed to take more from within his own limits, than had been settled in accordance with the requirements of his lands. Now, in these