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'A World in Reverse': Guáman Poma de Ayala's Temporal Reordering of Andean-Christian History in *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*

In "Delinking - The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of de-Coloniality," Walter D. Mignolo contends that the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality "works through the imposition of salvation," operating via the "colonization of space and time to create a narrative of difference that placed contemporary languages 'vernacular' (indeed, imperial) languages and categories of thought, Christian religion and Greco-Latin foundations in the most elevated position."[1] In other words, the very architecture of colonial domination hinged upon a meticulously crafted temporality, one that constructed history as a veritable linear progression in which Indigenous peoples were permanently positioned as behind—a calculated maneuver that rendered them perennially in need of salvation, civilization, and subjugation. To sustain this logic—to justify the need to civilize, evangelize, and educate Indigenous peoples—coloniality necessitated the erasure of Indigenous epistemologies that conceptualized time not as a fixed, unidirectional progression, but as a cyclical and mutable construct. For if time is not an immutable, teleological sequence, then neither is history. And if history is not an indisputable, immovable march toward progress, then what need is there to colonize? Even the very title of Guáman Poma de Ayala's *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* subverts colonial historiography, as it asserts his account as the first, his chronicle as history, and his way of knowing as truth. By embedding an Andean temporal framework into a traditionally linear Biblical narrative, by intertwining Andean mythological historiography with Christian genealogies, and by the very act of syncretizing religion and reinterpreting history itself, Guáman Poma rewrites a *New Chronicle* that places Andean people at the center of a universal Christian history—not as an uncontacted population awaiting salvation, but as a rich, complex culture that had always already been Christian, educated, and civilized without the forces of colonization.

Early colonial ideology framed history as a linear progression aimed toward Christian salvation, viewing the Americas as 'new' lands entering into history and Christianity only upon European contact. Scholars and theologians wracked their minds trying to figure out a way to make sense of why Biblical narratives lacked any mention of these lands and peoples. In *A Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, José de Acosta attempts to resolve this discordance by claiming that, "after the Universal Flood, of which all these Indians had knowledge," the Incas strayed from their true Christian origins, replaced by rulers who "emerged from the cave of Pacaritambo" and asserted that "only they possessed the true religion" to justify their conquest.[2] For Acosta, the Indigenous populations' "natural capacity to receive good instruction" derived from their now-obscured Christian origins, a condition that could be rectified through their re-education into Christianity. Similarly, Guáman Poma's chronicle integrates Indigenous history into the Christian narrative of Creation, Flood, and Redemption. Yet, in Guáman Poma's *New Chronicle*,

[1] Walter D. Mignolo, "Delinking - The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of de-Coloniality," Cultural Studies 21, no. 2–3 (2007): 449–514, 470.
[2] José de Acosta, Natural and Moral History of the Indies, trans. Frances López-Morillas (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 329, 360.

Andean history unfolds not behind but parallel to Christian history, reframing the Spanish conquest not as the linear 'arrival of modernity,' nor the 'arrival of Christianity,' but as a cyclical upheaval that evokes the concept of *pachacuti*—a Quechua term that merges *pacha* (the Andean space-time continuum) and *kuti* (a turn or reversal) to express a cyclical space-time rupture, a rhythmic process of death and rebirth into a new cosmic order.[3] Hence, as Rolena Adorno observes, "on more than a dozen occasions, [Guáman Poma] complains that the proper order of things is reversed," frequently invoking "the world upside down."[4] Rather than a one-way progression, Andean time is understood as cyclical and regenerative, defined by successive epochs of creation, destruction, and renewal, in which each *pachacuti*, often catalyzed by cataclysmic events such as floods and earthquakes, marks the end of one era and the beginning of a new—a complete reset and reordering of the world.

Adopting the Christian chronological ordering from Creation to present, Guáman Poma restructures historical time by dividing it into successive ages that flow in dual parallel streams—one tracing the lineage of the Incan kings, the other following the biblical passage from Adam to Christ. In Drawing 3, "God creates the world and gives it to Adam and Eve," Guáman Poma pictures the Genesis narrative against the unmistakable background of the Andes mountains, a visual assertion that inscribes Andean lineage within the divine genealogy of humankind. By placing Vari Viracocha alongside Adam and Eve and linking Vari Runa—"who descended from Noah after the Flood"—to the first Inca king, Tocay Capac, he asserts a divine continuity that situates the Indigenous Andean peoples within the Christian origin story. Tocay Capac, he writes, was "of the lineage of the legitimate descendants of Adam and Eve and the progeny of Noah and the first of Vari Viracocha Runa and Vari Runa," directly invalidating evangelical rationale that sought to expel Indigenous peoples outside of God's sacred convent.[5] In Guáman Poma's account, the peoples of Peru are not only direct offsprings of one of the sons of Noah, but are also direct descendants of Adam and Eve, thereby destabilizing colonial narratives that cast the peoples of the Americas as an inferior or separate humanity.

Having established a common sacred origin, Guáman Poem then narrates how Andean and biblical histories diverge after the Flood, yet continue to unfold in parallel: as the biblical world proceeds through the lineages of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the Andean world follows the line of Noah's progeny in the Americas. In this period, Guáman Poma recounts, Cinche Roca "killed the first legitimate Inca, the descendant of Adam and Eve and Vari Viracocha Runa, the first king Tocay Capac," and subsequently "gave the order and made it law that [his conquered subjects] worship the *huacas*, idols, and make sacrifices."[6] This moment marks the split from the primordial, monotheistic workshop of the first Incas to the subsequent idolatry that alienates them from their original Christian roots. Unlike Manco Capac, Guáman Poma stresses that "the first Inca, Tocay Capac, had no idols nor ceremonies," venerating only the Christian God up until "the reign of the mother and wife of Manco Capac Inca."[7] The introduction of idol worship coincides with the ascent of Mama Huaco, whom he vilifies as "a great deceiver, idolater, sorceress, who spoke with the demons of the inferno and performed ceremonies and witchcraft."[8] He further castigates her within a moral discourse that conflates female sexuality and promiscuity with

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[3] Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar, Rhythms of the Pachakuti (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).
[4] Rolena Adorno, *Guáman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru*, 2nd ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000): pp. 152-173, 122.
[5] Guáman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government: On the History of the World and the Incas up to 1615*, trans. by Roland Hamilton (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009) pp. 7, 57.
[6] Guáman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, 57.
[7] Guáman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, 57.
[8] Guáman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, 57.

unholy corruption, underlining how she "slept with all the men of the town whom she liked."[9] By summoning a distinctly Christian moral framework, Guáman Poma frames Mama Huaco as an Andean Eve—a woman whose transgressions introduce sin, disorder, and separation from God.[10] Just as Eve's fall from Eden precipitates humanity's exile from paradise, Mama Huaco was "the original inventor of the huacas, idols, witchcraft and enchantments," who "deceived the Indians" into straying away from their divine provision.

From this narrative of deviation—akin to the Biblical Old Testament—sprouts the redemptive figure of Christ, whom Guáman Poma directly places within the Andean timeline. According to his account, Jesus Christ was born "when Cinche Roca Inca was eighty years old," and soon after, he sent "the apostle Saint Bartholomew to visit the Indies of this kingdom of Peru" to "bring the miracle of God" and restore Christianity among the Indigenous peoples.[11] This intervention predates the Spanish conquest by over a millennium, suggesting that evangelization was not an Iberian accomplishment from the sixteenth century, but rather an ancient, historical phenomenon that began in the first century A.D. The conversion of Anti, an Incan man later baptized Anti Viracocha, further reinforces this context: having recognized the power of the Christian God, Anti begs Saint Bartholomew, "for mercy and restitution," ultimately affirming that "the poor man and his God were the most powerful," and thus restoring the precedence of Christianity in the Andes. By strategically placing evangelization at the moment of Christ's apostleship rather than at the moment of European contact, Guáman Poma positions the Indigenous peoples not as newly Christianized subjects but as a people who had long understood and worshiped the one true God—casting the Spanish colonizers, who arrived much later with greed and brutality, as the poorly behaved Christians.

From this moment forward, Guáman Poma recounts a series of recurring miracles and divine punishments, cyclical in nature, augmenting his argument that Christianity was deeply entrenched within the core of the Andean world long before European intervention. He laments that "no record was left of this because there was no one to write it down," yet nonetheless asserts that the Incan kingdom was undoubtedly permeated with Christian faith.[12] Notably, he employs the Quechua concept of *pachacuti* as a theological framework to describe these interventions, declaring that "the punishment of God" manifests as "pachacuti [cataclysm], pacha ticra [world upside-down]."[13] Through this choice of language, Guáman Poma explicitly links *pachacuti* to historical cycles, explaining that "some kings were named Pachacuti," precisely because they rose during these eras of profound cataclysmic upheaval.[14] He then recounts a succession of natural disasters—from "the eruption of volcanoes" to "measles, smallpox, croup and mumps"—interpreting them not as random occurrences but as divine miracles and punishments in the shape to *pachacuti*, recalling the Andean understanding of history as a cyclical destruction and renewal.[15]

With this Andean-Christian temporal framework in place, Guáman Poma transitions into the heart of his chronicle—the indictment of the present: "Another pestilence that God sends is the bad Christians to rob the possessions of the poor and take their wives and daughters and use them…the way the Indians of this kingdom depopulate and leave their towns…the death of many Indians in the mercury and silver

[9] Guáman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, 57.
[10] Guáman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, 57-59.
[11] Guáman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, 66-69.
[12] Guáman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, 69-70.
[13] Guáman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, 70.
[14] Guáman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, 70.
[15] Guáman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, 70.

mines."[16] Here, he deploys *pachacuti* not merely as a historical pattern but as a theological critique, directly inverting the Spanish colonial rhetoric that framed the conquest as a providential advent of salvation. Rather than heralding the dawn of Christianity, Spanish rule itself becomes the *pachacuti*—a catastrophic schism that has plunged the world into disorder, injustice, and moral corruption. The Spaniards do not appear as divine emissaries guiding a lost people to newfound faith, but as 'bad Christians," agents of havoc and destruction who have desecrated a land of legitimate descendents from Adam, Eve, and Noah—a Christian peoples who had already been worshiping God long before European arrival.

As a divinely ordained *pachacuti*, Guáman Poma does not frame conquest as an irreversible event: just as past *pachacuti* cycles led to rebirth, violent Spanish rule is a "world upside down" that can and must be undone. The conquest, like the biblical flood, is not an ultimate endpoint but an impermanent disruption—a moment of destruction that precedes renewal. Just as Cinche Roca's era of spiritual corruption was followed by the birth of Christ and the reintroduction of Christian faith, so too must the current *pachacuti* be rectified by reinstating Andean Christian order. If the King of Spain were a true Christian monarch, he would recognize the violence and brutality of the conquest as a perversion of divine law and move to rectify the injustices wrought by his "bad Christians." By meticulously restructuring history through Andean temporality, Guáman Poma does more than place the Andes on equal footing with the Old World—he dismantles the very foundation of colonial logic. The Spanish conquest is not the beginning of Andean history, nor is it its inevitable conclusion—it is a mutable moment within an ongoing temporal cycle. Through his *New Chronicle*, Guáman Poma rewrites history itself, presenting not a colonial teleology but an Andean-Christian historiography in which the conquest is neither natural nor permanent, but a *pachacuti* awaiting divine restoration of justice.

[16] Guáman Poma de Ayala, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, 70-71.

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