

La Florida del Inca and the Struggle for Social Equality in Colonial Spanish America



JONATHAN D. STEIGMAN

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Introduction

Among the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish chroniclers who contributed significantly to popular images about the New World was the world's original Amerindian-Spanish (*mestizo*¹) historian and literary writer, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539–1616) (Castanien v). He authored several works, of which *La Florida del Inca* (1605) stands out because of its unique Amerindian and European perspectives on the de Soto expedition (1539–1543). Since 2005 marks the four hundredth anniversary of the publication of this important work, it seems appropriate to take another look at *La Florida* to discover why the book has remained relevant and the object of scholarship for four hundred years.

El Inca was born into the original mestizo generation in Peru. He arrived upon the scene just as the New World conquest ended. Because he was half Spanish and half Incan, El Inca lived in two worlds, and he loved them both. He longed to see these two worlds come together into an integrated society. He believed the Spaniards should supervise the society, replacing the Native American's paganism with Catholic teachings. Otherwise, he wanted the Amerindians to be allowed to live as they had always lived. His writings tell us that throughout his life he struggled to integrate his Spanish and his Inca heritages. He blended the Amerindian perspective and the Spanish perspective into one—the mestizo perspective. As a mestizo, he was connected to the New World natives; he was concerned particularly with changing the subhuman status into which the Europeans had cast them.

As El Inca states in his prologue to *La Florida del Inca*, he set out to give to

1. El Inca states, “así nos llaman en todas las Indias Occidentales a los que somos hijos de español y de India o de indio y española” (292) (“thus throughout the West Indies they call us who are children of a Spaniard and an Indian woman or of an Indian and a Spanish woman”; 134).

the world a historical accounting about the Adelantado Hernando de Soto and “caballeros españoles e indios” (254) (“heroic Spanish and Indian cavaliers”; 12) in the de Soto expedition.² When he began *La Florida del Inca*, he concentrated not upon literature and style but upon the Spanish experiences in the New World and upon presenting what the Native Americans had been, were, and could become. Soon his outstanding literary talents burst through and, in spite of his intentions, his work became known as a New World Spanish classic (Varner 360; Menéndez y Pelayo 76–77). His writings, written in the contemporary Renaissance style, became characterized as literary art (Varner xxxiv). *La Florida del Inca* reveals, in a general sense, emotions, struggles, and conflicts experienced by those who participated in the grandiose adventure into La Florida.

When El Inca began writing in 1585, he was the world’s only mestizo writer and the only American-born writer (Castanien v; Clayton xxii). His Spanish-Inca heritage and his childhood provided him perspectives that Spanish-heritage writers could not possess, giving him a uniqueness among chroniclers that has been recognized through the centuries. Incidents and experiences in his childhood in Peru gave him characters, scenes, and language to supplement what he learned about the de Soto expedition. He knew Gonzalo Silvestre, the informant for the *Florida* narrative, in Cuzco. He knew about de Soto because de Soto joined Francisco Pizarro in the Peruvian conquest in 1531, eight years before El Inca was born.

El Inca’s interest in converting the inhabitants of La Florida to Catholicism,

2. All quotations from *La Florida del Inca* will appear in Spanish and English. The Spanish quotations are from an edition published in 1960 as part of a collection of El Inca’s works entitled *Obras completas*, edited by Carmelo Saenz de Santa María. This edition is valuable because it is the same as the original edition published in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1605. I was able to verify this by comparing the edition with a 1982 edition, edited by Sylvia-Lynn Hilton, which is a facsimile of the original. Except for an updated orthography, the texts are the same. Quotations from El Inca’s other works are also from the *Obras completas*.

All English quotations from *La Florida* are from *The De Soto Chronicles*, edited by Clayton, Knight, and Moore. This two-volume set contains English translations of all four of the chronicles about the de Soto expedition, including *La Florida*. This publication is useful particularly because it is a product of an interdisciplinary approach to the translation and annotation of the accounts by Elvas, Biedma, Rangel, and El Inca. This edition allows comparisons of information contained in *La Florida* with similar information from the other three narratives. The interdisciplinary presentation of the essential points of the narratives, with the inclusion of information based upon recent scholarship, makes this edition the best choice among the English translations. All other translations are mine.

Text references to *La Florida* that do not involve quoted material are to *The De Soto Chronicles*.

establishing Spanish colonization in the area, and recording the honorable and courageous acts exhibited by Spaniards and natives inspired him to compile and record information available to him concerning what de Soto and his conquistadors experienced in La Florida. El Inca's interpretation gave the world an account that is both scholarly and accessible to lay people.

When there is a true history behind a given work, it should be known before criticism proceeds. One should be a "total" scholar in the neoclassical tradition. When the historical inaccuracies that are known to exist in El Inca's interpretations in *La Florida del Inca* are weighed against the accuracy it contains, the book's relevance to historical scholarship is obvious (Quesada 152–53; Varner 360; Clayton xxi). It provides insight into not only how but also why the indigenous people reacted as they did to the Spanish intrusion into their lives.

In *La Florida*, El Inca presents Amerindian and European ethnic and cultural representations and presents his rationale, both explicitly and implicitly, concerning his presentations. The current book is a critical inquiry into these representations and into El Inca's supporting rationale and motivations.

El Inca's *La Florida del Inca* is a beautiful composition that remains the most extensive and well-written narrative on Hernando de Soto's unfortunate expedition through Florida and other areas in southeastern North America. Scholars should include this source when studying the writing style of El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. Quesada notes that *La Florida*, because of its literary qualities, is an excellent tool with which to study "el pensamiento, la formación intelectual, las calidades estilísticas y los alcances posteriores del Inca Garcilaso" (153) ("the thought processes, intellectual development, stylistic qualities, and literary successes of the Inca Garcilaso"). El Inca writes his historical account with a purpose—to end the European self-serving, biased reports that the Amerindians were impossibly savage and barbarous. His intention is to add to the historical record an ennobling portrayal of the Native American based upon his belief in the equality of all humanity.

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Prelude

THE CONQUEST

Columbus's sea voyage west in 1492 to establish a new trade route to India for Spain that would avoid challenging Portugal's claims to the eastern trade route to India and his consequential accidental landing at Española gave Spain hegemony over New World explorations until the mid-sixteenth century. This colonization experience was called "the conquest" by the Spaniards. The narrative form now called the chronicle was the primary communicative tool used to record and relate conquest history and the exploits and activities of conquest participants, and those who wrote these works came to be known as chroniclers. The medieval tradition of the historical romance—idealizing individuals and their deeds—suited their purpose, and these sixteenth-century writers revived this medieval epic literary style. When El Inca wrote his chronicles about the New World, a Renaissance writing style based upon the Italian Renaissance writings had become popular in Spain. He includes both the medieval tradition and the newly acquired Spanish Renaissance style in his chronicles.

The Spanish soldiers who participated in the New World conquest created an entirely new social group in the world's population. The half-Amerindian and half-Spanish children born to these individuals and Native American women were called *mestizos*. These children had to learn to integrate their two-sided cultural heritage on their own; there was no previous mestizo generation to imitate. Mestizos were treated poorly and largely ignored in the evolving cultural social orders in the New World (Varner 46–50).

When the Spanish arrived in Peru in 1531, the twelfth Inca emperor, Huayna Capac, and his warriors ruled over the inhabitants in the vast territories that the Incas had conquered in wars over centuries. Huayna Capac knew that the Inca oral history contained an ancient prediction that strangers would one day

appear and conquer the Inca empire, “a story that bears a strong resemblance to the Aztec legend of the coming of Quetzalcóatl” (Castanien 14). This analogy was not a connivance between the two civilizations. There is no trace of historical evidence that either nation had any communication with, or knowledge of, the other (Prescott 1: 8). Huayna Capac predicted that he would be the last Inca and that the old prophecy would soon become reality. He ordered his people to obey these conquerors and told them that their law would be superior to the Inca law (Castanien 12–14).

In January 1531, Francisco Pizarro, the soldier Diego de Almagro, the priest Vicente de Valverde, 180 men, and 27 horses sailed from Panama in three ships and landed on Peru’s shore. Charles V, King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor, and the Council of the Indies granted Francisco Pizarro permission to explore and conquer Peru, or New Castile (Castanien 13). Pizarro established his beachhead on the island of Puná, which was close to the Bay of Tumbes, a Peruvian seaport to the south, and shortly thereafter he was joined by reinforcements led by Hernando de Soto. The participants in the Peruvian conquest cooperated while conquering the natives, but otherwise they continuously argued about each other’s opinions and actions. Pizarro and de Soto were continuously suspicious of each other. Each was afraid that the other would try to gain political advantage and become the governor and captain general of Peru and enjoy all resulting economic benefits (Castanien 18).

Just prior to the conquest, the Inca ruler Huayna Capac died. Huayna Capac left his northern kingdom to his son Atahualpa, borne by his concubine. He left his southern kingdom to his son Huáscar, borne by his sister-wife.³ He asked the half-brothers to agree to this inheritance and to live amicably with each other. With this last act, Huayna Capac subverted the Inca laws by leaving half his kingdom to a son not born into the “pure” lineage and created the seeds of discord and division (Prescott 1: 240).

In 1532, just before the Spaniards landed in Peru, Atahualpa, coveting the southern kingdom, started a civil war and captured and imprisoned his half-

3. Inca emperors were allowed to marry cousins, nieces, and sisters. Only one within this group could be considered the lawful wife. Imperial law required that the lawful wife belong to the Inca (ruler) line—thus the sister-wife creation. The lawful wife was always the mother of the Inca’s successor. This practice was to keep “purity” within the royal family line. The Incas (the people) were taught that Manco Capac, the original Inca, and his sister-wife were sent by their god, the sun, and were heaven-born, thus uncontaminated by anything earthly. This “purity” was to be passed on through this one heaven-born lineage. Concubinage was a standard practice among the rulers also (Prescott 1: 15, 24). See also Schwartz (34) and Castanien (90).

brother, Huáscar. His army chased his southern-kingdom kinsmen to a plain north of Cuzco, where his warriors encircled their captives and attempted to complete the genocide ordered by Atahualpa. Among these captives were two children—the Palla Chimpu and her brother Hualipa—El Inca's mother and his uncle.⁴ The guards allowed children younger than eleven years old to escape. The Palla Chimpu and her brother were within this age group and were allowed to slip away to safety (Varner 12).

By this time, Francisco Pizarro and a small contingent of his army had landed at Tumbes and were proceeding toward Atahualpa's residence, Cajamarca. Atahualpa could have conquered the Spaniards rather than having the Spaniards conquer him, but apparently he believed that they were sons of Viracocha, the white-skinned and bearded god of the sun, and had come to fulfill the ancient prophecy told by Huayna Capac. Rather than confront the Spaniards, Atahualpa "retreated to his suburban baths and left . . . noblemen to render to the invaders those luxuries due men descended from the Sun" (Varner 13). When de Soto and Pizarro visited Atahualpa at his retreat, he thought the Spaniards resembled the legendary Viracocha, as well as the image that the eighth Inca had asked to be carved on a stone portraying the Viracocha apparition he said he had seen when he was a prince, banished by the seventh Inca to the sheep pastures at Chita to effect a change in his attitude (Varner 13).

The Spaniards plotted to capture Atahualpa by extending to him an invitation to meet in Cajamarca. Atahualpa accepted the invitation, and the two leaders and their armies came together on November 16, 1532—the first encounter between official representatives of these two alien civilizations (Castanien 13). When Atahualpa arrived in the town, the priest Valverde appeared before him and began explaining Catholic doctrines, which the Spaniards expected him to accept. It is unlikely that Atahualpa perfectly understood what the interpreter who had accompanied Pizarro from the coast told him. He probably did understand, however, the suggestion that he should recognize the authority of the Spanish king (Castanien 15). Atahualpa asked the priest upon what he based his authority. The priest answered by giving Atahualpa a religious book.⁵

4. A "Palla" was any woman who belonged to the Inca royal family. El Inca always referred to his mother with this title (Varner 388).

5. Castanien states that the book in question may have been a breviary (prayer book) (15). Patricia Galloway believes the text was the "*requerimiento*" (32). Galloway states that the *requerimiento* was the "text to be read to the Indians when offering them a spiritual good and demanding obedience" (16). Spanish law required that the *requerimiento* be read to the Native Americans. Schwartz notes, "A system had been developed by the early 1500's whereby a 'requerimiento' (requirement) was read aloud before invasion of a new area. The 'requeri-

Atahualpa glanced at the book and threw it upon the ground. Pizarro used this incident as the excuse to arrest Atahualpa. He gave the signal to attack, and his soldiers began to slaughter the natives. Within half an hour, Pizarro and his forces had killed more than three thousand Amerindians, winning a very one-sided victory (Varner 14).

Huáscar's murder was ordered by Atahualpa and executed by his loyalists after the Spaniards put Atahualpa into prison. Pizarro wished to use the murder of Huáscar as a pretext to execute Atahualpa immediately, thereby avoiding the possibility of his leading a native revolt against the conquering Spanish. De Soto believed that Atahualpa should be sent to Spain to receive a fair trial and due process of law. This desire on the part of de Soto was probably due less to a sense of justice and more to the fact that Atahualpa was more useful to him than to the Pizarros: "Soto's attitude toward Atahualpa had elements of fair-mindedness, generosity, and chivalry, but there was also another dimension . . . Atahualpa alive and free would represent a threat to the rulers of Peru, the Pizarros, but for Soto . . . such a fluid and insecure situation might bring with it great opportunities" (Lockhart 191, 196). During a period in which de Soto was absent, Pizarro and his forces put Atahualpa through a pretend trial and executed him (Varner 14–15; Castanien 15).

Not only was Atahualpa's execution by Pizarro considered extraordinary but also the way he and his army plundered and pillaged the natives' possessions was shocking. The 169 Spaniards who marched across the highlands to Cajamarca secured over a million pesos for division, with horsemen receiving some 8,800 gold pesos and 362 marks of silver and footmen about half that amount. Brading writes, also, that the Pizarro brothers sent the Spanish king 153,000 gold pesos and 5,058 marks of silver (31).

After Atahualpa's execution, Francisco Pizarro led his army to the ancient Inca capital, Cuzco, and set up a Spanish-type government. While engaged in this task, he received word that another army was arriving in Peru, led by Pedro de Alvarado, who was already known for his exploits with the Cortés army in the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan. Alvarado believed that Pizarro's claims excluded the northern Inca kingdom, Quito. He organized an expedition, which

miento' stated that the Indians should submit to the temporal crown of Spain and to the spiritual head of Christianity, the Pope. When this had been read and peaceful submission was not forthcoming, then Spanish troops felt justified in conducting the cruel arts of their warfare" (79). Varner notes that interpretative inadequacies could have contributed to Atahualpa's *requerimiento* rejection: "Through the lips of an interpreter[,] . . . a despicable coastal Indian who, even had he known the language of Cuzco, would have been hard pressed to find Quechuan words to clarify Spanish ethics and mysticism, the devout religious attempted to explain his theology" (13).

included about five hundred men, to explore this region. It was this expedition that brought Captain Sebastián Garcilaso de la Vega, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's father, to Peru. No date for his departure from Spain is available, but historians believe that Sebastián Garcilaso de la Vega joined Alvarado's expedition in Spain in July 1528 (Castanien 15). Historical evidence corroborates that he was with the Alvarado army in Guatemala in 1531.

Castanien describes the ensuing events:

Pizarro, whose ideas of his own rights did not correspond with those of Alvarado, sent his partner, Diego de Almagro, to challenge the intruder. By the time the two met, it was obvious that it was mutually advantageous to join forces. Alvarado had discovered that the kingdom of Quito did not offer all the rewards he had hoped for. Almagro and Pizarro could make good use of the additional strength offered by Alvarado's army. (16)

At this point, the Alvarado army, including Captain Garcilaso, joined the Pizarro army. Thus began the Pizarro-Garcilaso association that was to so greatly affect El Inca's life. The ever-threatening civil war in Peru was postponed, although this reprieve was short-lived.

In 1534, Francisco Pizarro returned to Peru after a visit to Spain and brought with him new land grants given to him by the king that allowed him and his brothers to gain economic advantage over Diego de Almagro, his partner. Feeling that his land grants were of poor quality, Almagro captured Cuzco, an act that provoked the full-scale civil war that caused such suffering in Cuzco and other areas in Peru. Francisco Pizarro and his army eventually captured and executed Almagro and stole his land grants. This provoked Almagro's allies and his mestizo son to plot vengeance against Francisco. On June 26, 1541, they entered his home in the colonial capital and killed him. Gonzalo Pizarro replaced his brother as the army's commander. The younger Almagro was captured in battle and executed, which ended this phase in the Peruvian civil war. Peace, however, was not yet to be (Varner 34-38, 46-49).

THE NEW LAWS

In Spain in the 1540s, the public was shocked and unhappy with the news about events in Peru. Charles V—the Hapsburg prince who had inherited the Spanish throne because his mother, married to a Hapsburg, was the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella—was absorbed by interests in his European empire and had allowed Spain's New World empire to progress almost unheeded by his court (Prescott 2: 173). The land and the natives were “appropriated by the vic-

tors as the legitimate spoils of victory; and . . . outrages were perpetuated . . . at contemplation of which humanity shudders" (Prescott 2: 174).⁶

In 1541, after having been in Germany overseeing his German interests, King Charles revisited Spain, "where his attention was imperatively called to the state of the colonies" (Prescott 2: 178). No one pressed the issue as strongly as Bartolomé de las Casas, the priest called "Protector of the Indians" because his attitudes and actions toward the Amerindians were so benevolent. Las Casas had just completed his well-accepted treatise on the Spanish destruction of the Indies, and he gave his manuscript to Charles V in 1542. That year, a council was called, comprised chiefly of jurists and theologians, to write laws to govern the Spanish colonies (Prescott 2: 178). Las Casas, "the uncompromising friend of freedom" (Prescott 2: 179), appeared and presented the proposition that Amerindians were free by the law of nature and that they had a right to the Crown's protection. His arguments prevailed, and the council passed a code of ordinances called "The New Laws." The laws received the king's approval, and in 1543 they were published in Madrid. The ordinances threatened the economic security of the colonial landholders. The news "was conveyed by numerous letters to the colonists, from their friends in Spain. The tidings flew like wildfire over the land, from Mexico to Chile" (Prescott 2: 181). The laws applied to all Spain's colonies. A number of provisions had an immediate effect upon Peru. First, the laws stated that the Amerindians were true and loyal vassals of the Crown and were to be free. Yet, to keep the promises the government had given the conquerors, those who lawfully owned Indian slaves could retain them until the next generation, at which time the slaves were to become free. Second, slave owners who had neglected or ill-used their slaves would lose them. Third, slave ownership by public functionaries, ecclesiastics, and religious corporations would end. Fourth, all who had taken a criminal part in the Almagro and Pizarro feuds would lose their slaves. Fifth, Indians should be moderately taxed; they should not be compelled to labor where they did not choose and where from particular circumstances this was necessary, they should receive fair compensation. Sixth, the excessively large land grants should be reduced, and seventh, the landowners who had been notoriously abusive to their slaves should lose their estates altogether (Prescott 2: 180; Castanien 19).

Cristóbal Vaca de Castro was sent to Peru in 1541 by Charles V to work with

6. "[T]he manner in which the Spanish territories of the New World had been originally acquired was most unfortunate both for the conquered races and their masters. Had the provinces gained by the Spaniards been the fruit of peaceful acquisition—of barter and negotiation—or had their conquest been achieved under the immediate direction of the government, the interests of the natives would have been more carefully protected" (Prescott 2: 173–74).

Francisco Pizarro to calm the social unrest caused by the provisions of The New Laws, and he became governor upon Pizarro's death. He was unable to calm the upheaval caused by the new ordinances, so the king sent a viceroy (royal representative), Blasco Núñez de Vela, to Peru to regain governmental authority and to implement The New Laws.⁷

Núñez de Vela was unable to promulgate these laws because his approach was "high-handed" (Brading 30) and was provocative to Gonzalo Pizarro, who by this time had become a very influential landholder. The participants in the civil war between Francisco Pizarro and Almagro were in danger of losing their land grants, and "the entire land was inflamed, but the turmoil at Cuzco exceeded that of any other city" (Varner 57). In accordance with the royal decree establishing the office of viceroy, Vaca de Castro resigned upon Núñez de Vela's arrival and ceded all governmental authority to him (Varner 69).

In 1544, before stepping down, the governor had bestowed upon Captain Garcilaso five Indian towns in Havisca that had belonged to Francisco Pizarro, as a reward for his help in defeating the younger Almagro's forces in the Battle of Chupas on September 16, 1542. With this new acquisition added to his other landholdings, Captain Garcilaso qualified as one to be severely targeted by The New Laws. Captain Garcilaso was willing to join with others to choose someone to present their cause to the king's viceroy in Peru's new governmental center, Los Reyes, but he wanted to stay loyal to the Spanish government. The group thought that Gonzalo Pizarro was the logical person. The petition that they presented to him included no seditious intent or overtones. Captain Garcilaso and others "apparently had misjudged Gonzalo Pizarro, since . . . there lurked a stubborn determination which could not be satisfied with subservience to a viceroy who threatened . . . economic ruin" (Varner 57). Pizarro believed that the new viceroy would not be willing to negotiate and that the armed strength of the landholders should be employed in the pursuit of their cause.

As Gonzalo Pizarro prepared to embark upon the journey to Los Reyes, Cuzco began to look like an armed camp:

7. Bartolomé de las Casas, a Catholic bishop, who had witnessed much of the New World conquest, published a book in 1552 entitled *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (*Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*) in which he described the atrocities committed by the Spanish against the Native Americans. He recommended to the Spanish king abolition of the land grant system that put the Amerindians into de facto slavery, and he called for an end to violence against the natives. He stated his belief that the Amerindians were inherently good, rational beings and that the Spanish conquerors were greedy and not interested in the well-being of the natives (Ross 93-97). The king and his council incorporated Las Casas's ideas into The New Laws.

[M]any were alarmed lest what purported to be a peaceful and justifiable plea should eventually come to be regarded as a manifestation of sedition. Captain Garcilaso, among others, remonstrated privately with Pizarro, but the latter quickly excused the militant aspect of his preparations by referring to necessity for protection along the highroad against the guerillas of the Inca Manco and in Los Reyes against the Viceroy himself, who was known to have boasted of the power to deprive Pizarro of his head. (Varner 58)

Captain Garcilaso and others wished to comply with the viceroy's summons to Cuzco's citizens to travel to Los Reyes and submit to the king's authority; however, when Pizarro threatened to withdraw entirely, along with his well-equipped army, the other estate holders, including Captain Garcilaso, agreed to continue to support him. On the road to Los Reyes, Garcilaso and other officers who wished to remain loyalists deserted Pizarro's army. They preceded Pizarro to Los Reyes and joined the viceroy's company; however, Viceroy Núñez de Vela, not willing to confront the rebel army, had left by the time Garcilaso and company arrived, leaving the *Audiencia* as the king's only representatives in the town (Varner 56–68). A council of judges created to assist the viceroy in adjudicating land disputes and enforcing The New Laws, the *Audiencia* had no ability to field an army larger than the fifty soldiers that garrisoned Los Reyes and quickly capitulated to Pizarro when he arrived, after which he proclaimed himself governor. Captain Garcilaso went into hiding, but he eventually was captured by Pizarro's men and held in house arrest. Pizarro's forces, accompanied by Captain Garcilaso under house arrest, defeated Núñez de Vela's forces on November 19, 1546, in a battle fought near Quito (Varner 70).

Meanwhile, Charles V had dispatched another administrative emissary to Peru named Pedro de la Gasca. With the simple title of "president," he was empowered to implement The New Laws by whatever means necessary. Whereas Núñez de Vela had been reckless and had exercised poor judgment, which led to his defeat, Gasca was skillful and cunning. He was able to marshal enough loyalist forces to attack Pizarro's rebel force at Huarina on October 26, 1547. Pizarro's forces, however, after a long and desperate battle, defeated Gasca's loyalist forces. Present at the Battle of Huarina, though not a direct participant, was Pizarro's prisoner, Captain Garcilaso de la Vega.

While Garcilaso was in this imprisoned status, an incident occurred that later would badly affect his son, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. The gossip that got recorded was that Pizarro's horse had been killed in the Huarina battle and that Captain Garcilaso turned the tide against the royalists by lending Pizarro his horse. Pizarro was able to rally his troops, as the story went, and rout the king's forces. The truth was that the battle had already ended when Pizarro

gained Garcilaso's horse (a horse that, ironically, Captain Garcilaso had purchased with a loan from Pizarro). Pizarro's own horse was slightly wounded, and he did not want to enter Cuzco on a wounded horse (Varner 70–81).

Captain Garcilaso escaped to the loyalists' side just before the conclusive Battle of Sacsahuana on April 9, 1548, where Pedro de la Gasca, having recovered from his defeat at Huarina and rebuilt his forces, conquered the rebel army and beheaded Gonzalo Pizarro. With the defeat and execution of Pizarro, Gasca and his army restored to Peru the law and order that had been lost sixteen years earlier in 1532 (Varner 85–90).

EL INCA'S BIRTH AND HERITAGE

On April 12, 1539, seven years after the Spanish arrived in Peru and well into the civil war period, a son was born to Palla Chimpú Ocllo (baptized Isabel Suárez), an Inca princess, and Captain Sebastián Garcilaso de la Vega y Vargas. He was "the future historian of his mother's people and of their defeat by his father's people . . . Peru's first truly distinguished man of letters, christened with the name of his Spanish great-grandfather, [who] chose later to be known as The Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, a name with which he proudly advertised his double heritage" (Castanien 18). The baby was given the name Gómez Suárez de Figueroa.

Gómez's parents belonged to societal groups that were somewhat conspicuous in their respective cultures. Captain Sebastián Garcilaso de la Vega belonged to the Spanish noble class known as *hidalgos*. Chimpú Ocllo carried the title *palla*, which signified she belonged to Inca nobility. It was not, however, his descent from Inca nobility that gave Gómez royal status; rather, it was the Inca superstition about Viracocha. Believing the legend, the natives regarded the elder Garcilaso and his comrades as semidivine, thus imparting to their children a special status. Gómez was entitled to use the royal title "Inca" because of "his having been sired by a fair-skinned conquistador whom the Indians had superstitiously regarded as a viracocha and thus a legitimate descendant through the male lineage of the Moon and the Sun" (Varner 43).

Captain Sebastián Garcilaso de la Vega's parents, doña Blanca de Sotomayor Suárez de Figueroa and Alonso de Hinestrosa de Vargas, had nine children. Gómez's father was born in Badajóz, Extremadura, Spain, sometime between 1500 and 1510. He grew up in Badajóz and received a gentleman's education, which included horsemanship and arms. In those days, Spanish custom required that young men with noble inheritance be employed by the king's court or the army or that they enter the priesthood. Among his maternal relatives were some well-known Spanish writers. His mother was related to prominent figures in medieval literature, such as Pedro Lopez de Ayala and Fernán Pérez

de Guzmán. The most prominent of doña Blanca's relations was her soldier-poet cousin Garcilaso de la Vega, who helped to revive Spanish poetry in the sixteenth century through his innovative use of Italianate meters. Military accomplishments characterized Gómez's paternal ancestral lineage. One ancestor, García Pérez de Vargas, assisted Fernando I in his battle with the Moors in Andalucía during the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula. In Peru, Captain Sebastián Garcilaso de la Vega was accepted into the ruling class and was rewarded with estates, slave Indians, and the royal administrative office of *corregidor* of Cuzco.

Chimpu Ocllo was the granddaughter of the eleventh Inca emperor, Tupac Inca Yupanqui, the niece of the legendary twelfth Inca emperor Huayna Capac, and the cousin of the famous Atahualpa and the lesser-known Huáscar. She was the daughter of Huallpa Tupac Inca Yupanqui, who was the younger brother of Huayna Capac. Since she belonged to the family of Huáscar, the loser in the civil war that preceded the arrival of the Spanish, she and her brother very narrowly escaped death at the hands of Atahualpa's victorious forces. Her perspective was unique, as she was a witness to both the war of Inca succession and the Spanish conquest of her native land. Having heard the ancient prophecies, she, too, believed the Spanish were descendants of Viracocha. Unable to marry her common-law husband, Captain Garcilaso, she married a Spanish colonist of a lower economic status and adopted a Spanish name. El Inca Garcilaso, in his dedication to *Diálogos del amor* (*Dialogues of Love*) (1590), refers to her as "la Palla doña Isabel" (11). She never learned to read or write Spanish. On November 22, 1571, she dictated her will to an interpreter, and it was signed by a witness because she "did not know how to sign her name" (qtd. in Castanien 21).

EL INCA'S CHILDHOOD

Gómez's childhood and adolescent years were spent in his birthplace, Cuzco. This ancient town was built and named by the Incas when they established their empire.⁸ The Spanish later superimposed upon Cuzco their lifestyle, gov-

8. With regard to the founding of Cuzco, it is impossible to determine an absolute date for this event, since the Incas had no written language with which to record their history and did not think of time in the same way as Europeans thought about it. When talking about the past, the Incas considered something that happened ten years prior to be no more recent than something that happened a thousand years prior; all that mattered to them were the events of history, not the times in which they occurred. According to Bernabé Cobo, a priest who spent years living among the Incas during the colonial period, they did not even keep track of the ages of individuals. The closest archaeologists can come to a date for the founding of Cuzco is approximately A.D. 1100 (Schwartz 36-37).