

# Guaman Poma's Illustrated *Khipus*: Signs of Literacy, Emblems of Colonial Semiosis

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Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala's chronicle of the Andean world, *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (First New Chronicle and Good Government), completed c.1615, is arguably the most famous colonial manuscript to survive in the Americas. Its significance rests on the fact that it is the only indigenous manuscript documenting the Andes' pre-colonial and colonial past, and thus it aids in reconstructing Andean history. Written in Spanish, Quechua, and Aymara, the manuscript consists of 1189 pages with 398 full-page line ink drawings.<sup>1</sup> While much research focuses on Guaman Poma's manuscript, in particular the spatial organization of the images and the representation of indigenous peoples, few studies have critically examined one of its most significant themes—namely, the author's purposeful comparison between Andean and Spanish forms of literacy, a topic to which he returns repeatedly in both the manuscript's text and its images. This essay examines Guaman Poma's juxtaposition and comparison of these two different systems of literacy through close examination of text and imagery, demonstrating how the author-artist valorized native Andean culture, in the process ennobling himself and his ancestors.

Central to this investigation is an image from the end of the chronicle labeled *Pregunta su Majestad, responde el autor* (His Majesty asks, the author responds), which represents a kneeling man presenting a book to a king (Figure 1). At first glance, it appears to mimic offering pages in European manuscripts of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance.<sup>2</sup> The identity of the two figures, however, is significant for our comprehension of a significant message that runs throughout the illustrations: the kneeling man is not from the Old World, but is the author and illustrator of the book, Guaman Poma, a

native Peruvian who claimed matrilineal descent from the Inka and patrilineal descent from the pre-Inka Yarovilca dynasty. He presents his text to King Philip III (reign 1598-1621), the leader of the Spanish Empire that controlled the region after the conquest in 1534. Guaman Poma wrote his chronicle for two reasons: one, to provide an account of Andean history that valorized the pre-conquest history of the region; and two, to promote a treatise of good government that would hopefully end Andean suffering wrought at the hands of the Spaniards.<sup>3</sup> Despite the use of a European decorative formula for this page, elements within the book subtly assert native traditions. For example, instead of being dressed exclusively in European clothing, the author wears a flowered tunic, a point to which this discussion will return. The embedding of such elements within the manuscript suggests the complex interplay between the overall artistic formulas of the conqueror, particularly formulas derived from missionary books, and design elements or iconographic details derived from the native culture. Such artistic negotiations are common in works of art created in colonial cultures, a phenomenon that has been theorized by a number of scholars.<sup>4</sup> This paper examines several native elements found in the manuscript in order to investigate how the colonized could assert identity even within a book made for presentation: these elements include the representation of the *khipu*, a knotted accounting device, and the depiction of *khipukamayocs*, native scribes.

The *khipu*, a series of threads with carefully placed, tied and colored knots, played an important administrative and documentary role in the Inka empire prior to the Spanish conquest.<sup>5</sup> It recorded information for the Sapa Inka and recalled myths and narratives about the genealogical histories of rul-

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<sup>1</sup> The *Nueva corónica* [1615] is in the Royal Library of Denmark, Copenhagen (Gl. Kgl. S. 2234, 4°). The manuscript was completed on high quality European paper. Its outer dimensions measure 14.5 x 20.5 cm, while the written and pictorial text measures 12.8 x 18 cm. Rolena Adorno, *Guaman Poma and His Illustrated Chronicle from Colonial Peru: From a Century of Scholarship to a New Era of Reading* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2001) 15, 19.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see the frontispiece of *Le triomphe de neux preux* in Maarten van de Guchte, "Invention and Assimilation: European Engravings as Models for the Drawing of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala," *Guaman Poma de Ayala: the Colonial Art of an Andean Author*, ed. Rolena Adorno et al. (New York, NY: Americas Society, 1992) 94, fig. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Adorno, *Guaman Poma and His Illustrated...* 15-16.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Jeffrey Quilter and Gary Urton, eds., *Narrative Threads: Accounting and Recounting in Andean Khipu*, 1st ed. (Austin: U of Texas P, 2002); Rolena Adorno, ed., *From Oral to Written Expression: Native Andean Chronicles of the Early Colonial Period* (Syracuse, NY: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, 1982); Rolena Adorno, *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru*, 2nd ed. (Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 2000); Tom Cummins, "Representation in the Sixteenth Century and the Colonial Image of the Inca," *Writing without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes*, ed. Elizabeth Hill and Walter D. Mignolo Boone (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> For a good introduction to the *khipu* see Marcia Ascher, *Code of the Quipu: A Study in Media, Mathematics, and Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI: U of Michigan P, 1981).

ers and their queens, coronations, battles, and astrology.<sup>6</sup> Following the Spanish conquest, the utilization of the *quipu* was not immediately discouraged. After the 1560s, however, the *quipu* came under attack by the Spanish. The Third Lima Council of 1583/84 condemned them as idolatrous objects and ordered their destruction. Many sixteenth-century Spanish chroniclers comment on the *quipu* in their texts and seem to acknowledge its ability to record some sort of information.<sup>7</sup>

The fact that the Inka had no writing system that corresponded to European notions of text did not go unnoticed, however. Many chroniclers relegated Andeans to a culturally inferior position due to their lack of alphabetic writing.<sup>8</sup> For example, Spanish chronicler Agustín de Zárate condemned the Peruvians as less literate than the Mexicans or the Chinese because they had never possessed pictures or hieroglyphs as had the latter cultures. He noted that “in Peru there are no letters to conserve the memory of the past nor pictures that serve in place of books like in New Spain; instead there are knotted cords of many colors.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the Spaniard José de Acosta placed the Andeans in an inferior position relative to the Chinese or Mexicans for they had “no method of writing, not letters nor characters, ciphers or figures, as the Indians of Mexico and China had.”<sup>10</sup> In the minds of the Spaniards, information recorded by the *quipu* was not equivalent to writing. As a result, it was thought that Andeans occupied an inferior position relative to other colonized peoples.

Guaman Poma, on the contrary, accorded the *quipu* a status equal to writing. He asserted his esteem of *quipus* by openly stating that he found them more trustworthy and objective than other written records.<sup>11</sup> In fact, of the ten known colonial

image of *quipus*, seven can be found in Guaman Poma’s *New Chronicle*, testifying to his emphasis on their narrative function and capability. He claimed that he used no “written facts but only those obtained by way of the [*quipus*], narratives from memory given me by old Indians...to assure myself of the truth of the events I narrated.”<sup>12</sup> Guaman Poma praised the *quipukamayocs*, stating: “They noted in declarations what happened in each town of this kingdom...these scribes the judges and mayors brought to the provinces in order to testify by the *quipu*...What difference would it make to me if it were in letters? With the cords they governed the whole kingdom.”<sup>13</sup>

The representation of the *quipu* and its juxtaposition to European forms of recording became a vehicle for Guaman Poma to prove the *quipu*’s worthiness. He did this by contrasting a European sign—either manifested in writing or as a visual icon—to an Andean one by creating a form of visual bilingualism.<sup>14</sup> Each object is readily understandable to its specific audience as a sign for something—the book and *carta* (letter) to Europeans, the *quipu* to Andeans.

In the colonial situation in which Guaman Poma was immersed, many, if not most, Andeans would have been able to recognize a book, which had been brought by the Spaniards to “educate” them. Thus, the book and the word “*carta*” had the potential to convey a specific meaning to Andeans, as well as to Europeans. By comparison, to most Europeans the *quipu* connoted an inferior method of accounting that once belonged to the Inka.

No other Inka objects, such as the *kero*, were identified with placards marked by a European word in Guaman Poma’s illustrations. This is likely due to the fact that a *kero* paral-

<sup>6</sup> Rebecca Stone-Miller, *Art of the Andes* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999) 184; Gary Urton, *Inca Myths* (London: British Museum Press, 1999) 25.

<sup>7</sup> Chroniclers did not see them as forms of representation. This may explain why *quipus* escaped the early post-conquest iconoclasm that occurred in New Spain to the north (Cummins, “Representation...” 192). *Quipukamayocs* were even called upon to present evidence in court and there is no indication that they were forced to do so using European forms, as Mexican *tlacuilos* (scribes) were required to do. Cummins, “Representation...” 194-95.

A manuscript known as the *Relación de los Quipukamayocs* (1608/1542) was written in Spain, assembled on behalf of a man named Melchior Carols Inka, who apparently claimed to be the heir to the Inka throne. To legitimize his claims, he added into his manuscript “mythic materials concerning the foundation of the Inka that derived from an inquest undertaken in Cusco, in 1542 before the Licenciado Vaca de Casto. The informants at that inquest were four elderly *quipucamayocs* who had served the Inka as historians before the time of the conquest.” Urton, *Inca Myths* 30.

<sup>8</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, “The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Colonization and the Discontinuity of the Classical Tradition,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 45.4 (Winter 1992): 323; Walter D. Mignolo, “Signs and Their Transmission: The Question of the Book in the New World,” *Writing without Words*, ed. Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter D. Mignolo (Durham and London: Duke UP, 1994) 221.

<sup>9</sup> Cummins, “Representation...” 192; “...que en al Peru no ay letras que conservar la memoria de los hechos pasados ni aun en las pinturas que sirven en lugar de libros en la Nueva España, sino unas ciertas cuerdas de diversos colores añudadas...” Agustín de Zárate, *Historia del*

*descubrimiento y conquista del Perú*, Colección clásicos peruanos Colección Clásicos peruanos (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú), 1. ed. ed. (Lima [Peru]: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1995) 23.

<sup>10</sup> José de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias, en que se tratan de las cosas notables del cielo, elementos, metales, plantas y animales dellas y los ritos y ceremonias, leyes y gobierno de los Indios*, ed. Edmundo O’Gorman, 2. ed., rev. ed. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1962) 290-91. Despite placing them in an inferior position relative to other conquered peoples, Acosta did recognize the *quipus*’ ability to “signify many things” and document more than numerical data.

<sup>11</sup> Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1980) 8.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Richard N. Luxton, “The Inca Quipus and Guaman Poma de Ayala’s ‘First New Chronicle and Good Government’,” *Ibero-Amerikanisches Archiv* 5.4 (1979): 332.

<sup>13</sup> “...éstos asenttauan lo que pasuau en los dichos cada pueblo deste rreyno... [sic] Y auía escribamos nombrados; estos dichos escribamos lo lleuaua los jueues y alcaldes a las pronuincias para que dé fe y aciente por quipo...¿qué me hiciera ci fuera en letra? Con los cordeles gouernaua todo el rreyno. Éste fue el buen monteroso que escribía cin mentira y con cohecho ninguna. Era cristianícimos.” Guaman Poma de Ayala 331.

<sup>14</sup> For a description of “visual bilingualism” see Cecelia F. Klein, “Editor’s Statement: Depictions of the Dispossessed,” *Art Journal* 29.4 (1990): 109. She describes it as a means of resistance used to turn the dominant culture’s language against itself. Here Guaman Poma utilizes both images and texts to resist the Spanish.

leed a European drinking glass, and thus needed no further explanation. The *kipu*, on the other hand, had no European equivalent and therefore needed to be compared to something that a European audience would recognize. Nevertheless, the *kipu* did not act as an empty signifier of the past to Andeans; rather, it operated within an alternative semiotic system that developed during the colonial period.

*Khipus* had a place in Guaman Poma's discourse to improve the status of Andean "writing" and culture. They continued to function as records of history and memory and helped to forge colonial Andean identities. In effect, Guaman Poma sought to undermine Spanish notions of European intelligence by promoting Andean scribes, himself included, as superior literati and thinkers who were able to move easily between sign systems and languages.

The examination of several pages in Guaman Poma's works will demonstrate how his system functioned. A nuanced reading of the signifying value of the *kipu* arises from the examination of the *kipu* images in Guaman Poma's *First New Chronicle* and the Mercedarian, mestizo Fray Martín de Murúa's *Historia del origen y genealogía real de los reyes ingas del Peru...* (History of the Origin and Royal Genealogy of the Inka Kings of Peru...), completed in 1590.<sup>15</sup> It is significant that Guaman Poma drew some of the illustrations for Murúa's manuscript, including the two *kipu*-images contained within it.<sup>16</sup> In Guaman Poma's image of a *regidor* (governor) a book and a *kipu* appear side by side, associating the measure of literacy of the colonizer with that of the colonized (Figure 2). One might venture to label the result mimicry—acting subversively by appropriating the colonizers' language to use against them—as Homi Bhabha has theorized.<sup>17</sup> Guaman Poma wrote his chronicle in Spanish, but he used Andean history recorded on the *kipu* by *kipukamayocs* as his evidence.

Guaman Poma's image *Qu[i]nto Calle, Saiapaiaac* (Fifth Way, Messenger) presents a similar construction. In it, a youth carries a rolled *kipu* and a placard labeled "carta" (Figure 3). By including the word "carta," Guaman Poma signaled to the

Spanish king that the *kipu* was equivalent to a European letter, imparting to the *kipu* some of *carta*'s meaning, a strategy that created a layered understanding of Spanish and Andean notions of literacy. Another earlier image, drawn by Guaman Poma in Murúa's manuscript, displays a similar composition. The image shows two men, one standing and one kneeling, most likely Sapa Inka Topa Yupanqui and a *kipukamayoc*.<sup>18</sup> The words "carta y quipo del inga" (letter and *kipu* of the Inka) are glossed above the *kipu* reader. The word *carta*'s relation to the *kipu* is thus both visual and textual.

In addition to using the *kipu* as a signifier of Andean culture, Guaman Poma tried to reconcile the *kipukamayoc*'s social position by inserting into images of native scribes specific signifiers of Andean identity, thus establishing a direct relationship between European and Andean scribes (Figures 4, 5). *Khipukamayocs* commonly transformed into native scribes in the colonial period, a social position similar to the one they occupied in pre-colonial times.<sup>19</sup> *Escribano* (Scribe) became their new social role and social identity. Both positions required the ability to record information, to "write," and to remember. Guaman Poma visually and textually asserted the similarities of these two social positions in *The First New Chronicle*. First, he displays each scribe holding his tool(s) of communication, the *kipu* and the pen and paper, respectively. Second, the scribe wears the same flowers in his hat that the *kipukamayocs* once wore in their hair, thereby retaining ties to the latter's pre-colonial occupation and social role. Third, glossed next to the native scribe is the word "quilcamayoq," referring both to his position as a scribe and his actions, which are signified by the word *quilca*.

In Quechua there was no linguistic or semantic differentiation between the words painting, drawing and writing, all of which were denoted by the word *quilca*. In parts of his text, Guaman Poma refers to both *kipukamayocs* and native scribes trained in alphabetic writing as *quilkamayoqs*, implying that he believed both possessed the knowledge and skills to write

<sup>15</sup> Martín de Murúa, *Historia del origen y genealogía real de los reyes ingas del Peru...* [1590], private Galvin collection, Dublin. It measures 32 x 21 x 2 cm and contains 145 folios with 113 watercolor illustrations. Murúa (d. 1616) was a mestizo Mercedarian friar.

<sup>16</sup> Guaman Poma and Murúa had a working relationship, despite the fact that Guaman Poma despised Murúa. He thought him a horse thief and wife stealer and felt that Murúa had inaccurately relayed the history of the Inkas in his *Historia general del Pirú* (1613). See Rolena Adorno, *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru* (Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 1986) 55. Although Guaman Poma claimed that Murúa had inaccurately documented the history of the Inkas, it has been proposed that Guaman Poma's "narrative conceptualization of his history of the Inkas" follows the outline of Murúa's 1590 manuscript. Adorno, *Guaman Poma and His Illustrated...* 25; Tom Cummins, "The Uncomfortable Image: Pictures and Words in the Nueva corónica i buen gobierno," *Guaman Poma de Ayala: the Colonial Art of an Andean Author* (New York, NY: Americas Society, 1992). As a result of this collaboration Guaman Poma gained access to Murúa's library, which included a wide assortment of historical and eccle-

siastical books and documents published in Spanish. Guaman Poma would later use many of these for his own chronicle. See Gary Urton, *The Social Life of Numbers: A Quechua Ontology of Numbers and Philosophy of Arithmetic* (Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 1997) 202. The images' compositional and stylistic techniques reflect Guaman Poma's distinct style of drawing, specifically in the men's faces. One also notices Guaman Poma's distinct graphic style in his characteristic wavering pen lines; the horizontal lines detailing the ground; the expressive hand gestures; the lack of detailed modeling or musculature; and the figures' flat appearance akin to Guaman Poma's other images.

<sup>17</sup> See Homi K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> It relates in composition and iconography to Guaman Poma's same image in *Nueva corónica*.

<sup>19</sup> Mignolo "Signs and Their Transmission..." 237.

text and draw imagery.<sup>20</sup> Thus, with one simple word, Guaman Poma drew associations between the action of the scribe and the *kipukamayoq*.

In the depiction labeled *Depocitos del Inga, collca* (Granaries of the Inka) Guaman Poma exhibits a *kipukamayoq* kneeling before Topa Inka Yupanqui, the tenth Inka ruler (Figure 6). The sapa Inka stands to the left, gesturing with his right hand towards the *kipu* held by the *kipukamayoq*.<sup>21</sup> This page can be compared to the image *His Majesty Asks, the Author Responds*. Both images depict the recorder of information holding his accounting tools, a book and a *kipu* respectively, and kneeling before a ruler who gestures in his direction. It is the position of this paper that Guaman Poma intentionally analogized the composition of the two images. In both, he sought to equate pre-conquest methods of recording facts and history with post-conquest European ones to solidify his own position as the speaker for the Andeans and to prove that Andeans possessed intelligence equal to or above that of Europeans.

In order to garner the respect he thought he deserved, Guaman Poma not only constructed Andeans in a positive manner, but also elevated the status of his ancestors. In his chronicle, he depicted them as high-ranking *kipukamayoqs*. In *Granaries of the Inka* (Figure 6), Guaman Poma showed Topa Inka Yupanqui with a *kipukamayoq* named “Administrador suyoyoc apo Poma Chaua” (Second Person to the Sapa Inka, Chava Poma, or Guaman Chava, administrator of one of the four Inka administrative zones). Guaman Poma claimed that this *kipukamayoq* was his grandfather. The illustration titled *El doze [sic] capitan Capac Apo Guaman Chaua* is another image displaying his grandfather wearing a unique *unku* (tunic) with the Kantuta flower on it, which was Guaman Poma’s familial costume (Figure 7).<sup>22</sup> During the colonial period the Kantuta flower was referred to as the flower of the Inka, and today it is the national flower of Peru.

The image entitled *Administrador de provincias, suyoyoc Guaia Poma* (Administrator of the provinces, Carua Poma) displays a single administrator holding two *kipus*, one rolled, the other unfurled and dangling (Figure 4). Guaman Poma names this administrador “apo, señor”, or “Second Person” Carua Poma, the son of *capac apo* Chava Poma. This man is, in fact, his uncle.<sup>23</sup> He wears the distinctive Kantuta decorated *unku* associated with Guaman Poma’s family. Guaman Poma’s father, Guaman Malqui, was, like his father and brother, a viceroy and second person to the Sapa Inka.<sup>24</sup> He, too, is seen wearing the same *unku* as his family members (Figure 8). All three men wear the same unique *unku* and the same flowers in their hair. Guaman Poma dons the same *unku* in various illustrations, as seen in *His Majesty Asks, the Author Responds*, thereby linking himself to these important functionaries.

Guaman Poma related himself to *kipukamayoqs* in other ways as well. He claimed in his text that at fifty years of age he had left his house and lands and set off to collect information throughout the empire in order to complete his chronicle; such a statement compares his responsibilities to those of the *kipukamayoqs*, who traveled around the Inka empire to document and preserve history.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Guaman Poma referred to himself as *auqui* (prince), or “the Second Person of the King [of Spain],” paralleling his description of the senior *kipukamayoqs* under the Inka, including his ancestors, as the “Second Persons” of the Inka.<sup>26</sup> As the “Second Person” he occupied the rank just below that of the Inka ruler himself. Evidently, Guaman Poma felt he was second to the King of Spain, and by occupying this position could act as an intermediary in the plea to restore order to Peru.<sup>27</sup>

The complex meaning of the image of Guaman Poma kneeling before King Philip III becomes clear when one relates it to images displaying *kipukamayoqs*. First, Guaman Poma used a similar composition and style in *His Majesty*

<sup>20</sup> Guaman Poma uses the word *quilca* or a variant of it on many pages of his chronicle, including 193, 383, 361, 828, 1160. Guaman Poma states that these men also called themselves *quilca camayoc* (*encargado de la iconografía*) or *quilla uata quipoc* (caretaker of iconography). Guaman Poma de Ayala 331[61]. These Spanish translations of the Quechua were done by Murra and Adorno.

<sup>21</sup> The *kipukamayoq*’s *kipu* has equidistant cords, punctuated inconsistently with knots, yet it offers no indication of its end cord, material, colors, or types of knots. Despite Conklin’s claim that Guaman Poma “provides no images of the *kipu* actually being read or constructed,” this image does represent the specific *kipu* reader orally transmitting the information recorded on the strings, his mouth agape as his hands move over the knots. Nevertheless, it is still impossible to “read” the *kipu*. William J. Conklin, “A Khipu Information String Theory,” *Narrative Threads: Accounting and Recounting in Andean Khipu*, ed. Jeffrey Quilter and Gary Urton, 1st ed. (Austin: U of Texas P, 2002) 57.

<sup>22</sup> Henry Wassen translates the Quechua word “apo” as “Señor grande, juez superior.” See Henry Wassen, “El antiguo abaco peruano según el manuscrito de Guaman Poma,” *Quipu y yupana: colección de escritos*,

ed. Hugo Pereyans and Carol Mackey, et al. (Lima: Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 1990) 205.

<sup>23</sup> Guaman Poma de Ayala, *El primer nueva corónica...* 321[51].

<sup>24</sup> Guaman Poma relates how his father was loyal to the Sapa Inka as his “Second Person” and after the Spanish conquered Peru he then honors the kings of Spain, Philip II and III. Guaman Poma de Ayala 1030.

<sup>25</sup> Luxton 319.

<sup>26</sup> Juan M. Ossio Acuña, “Myth and History: The Seventeenth-Century Chronicle of Guaman Poma de Ayala,” *Text and Context*, ed. Ravindra K. Jain (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1977) 80-81; Guaman Poma 1936, quoted in Luxton, “The Inca Quipus and Guaman Poma de Ayala’s ‘First New Chronicle and Good Government’” 324. Guaman Poma also pointed out that because of his lineage he was eligible to be considered as a senior *kipukamayoq*. See Guaman Poma 1936, 960, quoted in Luxton 324. It is significant that he used Inka criteria to legitimate his self-appointed position as a *kipukamayoq* rather than European criteria.

<sup>27</sup> Ossio Acuña 81.

*Asks, the Author Responds* and in images exhibiting *kipus*, drawing parallels between the Sapa Inka and King Philip III, Guaman Poma and the *kipukamayoc*, the book and the *kipu*. Second, both King Philip III and Topa Inka Yupanqui appear on the left side of the composition, holding scepter-like objects in their hands. In case these formal characteristics went unnoticed, Guaman Poma established direct visual and textual connections between the *kipu* and the book as well as the *kipu* and the letter. Finally, while presenting himself dressed in a Spanish-style hat and pants, Guaman Poma wears the same flowered *unku* as his ancestors who were *kipukamayocs*.

Guaman Poma also pleaded his case using biblical imagery—imagery that Philip III was sure to understand. It is possible that the image *His Majesty Asks, the Author Responds* was meant to resonate with Old Testament images of David, the poet and singer of the Psalms, who played the harp and sang before King Saul, the king of Israel. These biblical depictions, common in Europe, represented David calming Saul by his harp playing, which restored balance between the body and the soul, putting the cosmos in order.<sup>28</sup> That Guaman Poma was familiar with illustrations of David playing the harp is clear because he includes one near the beginning of his manuscript in which David kneels on the floor playing before God (Figure 9). The similarities between David and the *kipukamayoc* are notable. David, like a *kipukamayoc*, was the “second person” to Saul. Furthermore, *kipukamayocs* finger their knotted cords in a manner very similar to the way in which David plays his instrument. Finally, both *His Majesty Asks, the Author Responds* and the illustration of David depict basic compositional similarities: both Guaman Poma and David kneel before a higher power, communicate orally and aurally, and have placed a hat or crown to their left. From these analogous elements, it is possible to surmise that not only did Guaman Poma view himself as the official recorder and raconteur of the Spanish monarch, but he cast his role in Biblical terms as the “true” record keeper of the Andes. Such an analogy would have been familiar to a Catholic monarch such as Philip III. Thus, by drawing parallels between himself, the *kipukamayocs*, scribes, and David, Guaman Poma became the “Second Person to the Inka,” and by extension the “Second Person” to King Philip III. Such a position would

have verified his family history and text, and boosted the status of *kipus* and *kipukamayocs*. Guaman Poma’s image of himself kneeling before King Philip III displays how he has taken the place of his ancestors as the true keeper of knowledge and history and as the person trying to restore balance to Andean society.

The incorporation of these indigenous tools within the manuscript’s pages demonstrates the artistic negotiation between the proud Andean past and the conquering Spanish present. However, one cannot understand their complex semiotic function without viewing them in conjunction with other depictions in Poma’s manuscript, related colonial manuscripts, and the wider Andean visual culture. The image *His Majesty Asks, the Author Responds* was added to his final draft some years later by Guaman Poma, no doubt to build up his contentions for the King of Spain.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, despite his great efforts, Guaman Poma’s complex visual and textual arguments failed to reach their intended audience—the chronicle never reached the hands of King Philip III, but resurfaced in the next century in Denmark where it has remained to this day in the collection of the Royal Library in Copenhagen.

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Figure 1. *Pregunta su Majestad, responde el autor*. Guaman Poma, 1615. Pen and ink. Courtesy of the Royal Library, Denmark.



Figure 2. *Regidores, tenga libro quipo*. Guaman Poma, 1615. Pen and ink. Courtesy of the Royal Library, Denmark.



Figure 3. *Qu[?]into calle, saipaiac*. Guaman Poma, 1615. Pen and ink. Courtesy of the Royal Library, Denmark.

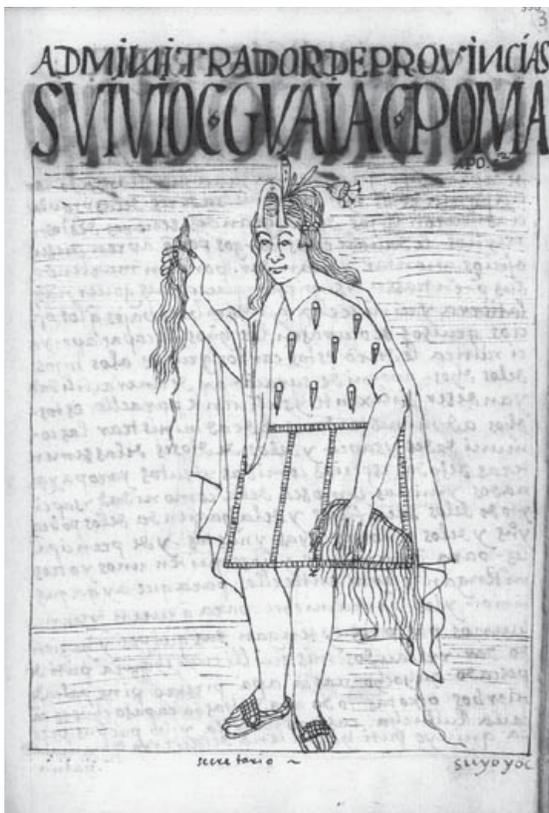


Figure 4. *Administrador de provincias, suiuc Guaiá Poma*. Guaman Poma, 1615. Pen and ink. Courtesy of the Royal Library, Denmark.



Figure 5. *Escrivano de cabildo de su majestad*. Guaman Poma, 1615. Pen and ink. Courtesy of the Royal Library, Denmark.



Figure 6. *Depocitos del Inga, collca*. Guaman Poma, 1615. Pen and ink. Courtesy of the Royal Library, Denmark.



Figure 7. *El doce capitán Capac Apo Guaman Chava*. Guaman Poma, 1615. Pen and ink. Courtesy of the Royal Library, Denmark.



Figure 8. *Conquista el primer embajador de Vascar Inga...* Guaman Poma, 1615. Pen and ink. Courtesy of the Royal Library, Denmark.



Figure 9. *Quarta edad del mundo, desde Rei David*. Guaman Poma, 1615. Pen and ink. Courtesy of the Royal Library, Denmark.