

“Apu Ollantay”: Inca Theatre as an example of the modes of interaction between the Incas and Western Amazonian societies

“Apu Ollantay”: teatro Inca como exemplo das formas de interação entre os Incas e as sociedades da Amazônia ocidental

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Abstract: The article looks closely at the Quechua play “Apu Ollantay” in order to better understand the relationships of power that the Incas established with the Amazonian corner of their empire, known in Inca terms as Antisuyu. It is argued that the drama “Apu Ollantay” functioned as a social and political device in order to enhance Inca imperial magnitude and project an image of a magnanimous ruler.

Keywords: Incas. Western Amazonia. Quechua theatre. Antisuyu.

Resumo: O artigo analisa a obra de dramaturgia Quechua “Apu Ollantay” com a intenção de melhor compreender as relações de poder que os Incas estabeleceram com a parte amazônica de seu império, o Antisuyu. Argumenta-se que a peça “Apu Ollantay” funcionou como um instrumento social e político para ampliar a magnitude imperial Inca e para projetar a imagem de um governante magnânimo.

Palavras-chave: Incas. Amazônia ocidental. Teatro Quechua. Antisuyu.

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INTRODUCTION

The modes of interaction established between the Incas and Western Amazonian societies are still a *terra incognita* in studies interested in the Pre-Columbian history of South America. In another occasion, we have looked at this problem through different sources: chronicles written by native Andean authors, Quechua manuscripts (the Huarochirí Manuscript) as well as the iconography of Inca wooden beakers known as *qeros* (Bertazoni, 2007). There are still several ways in which one can analyse how, in Pre-Columbian and colonial times, the Andean world of the Incas and the diverse Western Amazonian world interacted. This article addresses the Inca Quechua play "Apu Ollantay" in order to try to elucidate a little more the Andean-Amazonian relationship, a chapter in Latin American history that is still so unknown to most of us.

Firstly, we shall offer the reader with some historical information about Inca Theatre as well as the play itself, followed by a very brief description of the issues regarding the origins of the play. After that, we shall focus on the analysis of the play and how it helps to clarify the ways of interaction between the Incas and Western Amazonian societies.

INCA THEATRE

Theatre and stage performances are found in many ancient cultures, such as those of the Greeks, the Romans and the Japanese, for example. With the Quechua Indians of Peru it was no different. Plays representing tragedies and comedies were displayed in Cuzco and beyond when, for instance, the Incas celebrated their victories and new territorial conquests. It was also a way of remembering their ancestors' memories as Spanish chronicler Martín

de Murúa once wrote, and of reproducing such grand Inca battles as Cabello Valboa recorded in his *Miscelánea Antártica*. The writer, poet and *Indio ladino* Garcilaso de la Vega also informs us that the Incas entertained their public with tragedies when telling of their ancestors or about outstanding heroes, but chose the comedy format when telling family or agricultural anecdotes:

No les faltó habilidad a los amautas (que eran los filósofos) para componer comedias y tragedias que en días y fiestas solemnes representaban delante de sus reyes y de los señores que asistían a la corte. Los representantes no eran viles sino Incas y gente noble, hijos de curacas – y los mismos curacas – y capitanes, hasta los maeses de campo, para que los autos de las tragedias se representasen al proprio, cuyos argumentos siempre eran de hechos militares, de triunfos y victorias, de las hazañas y grandezas de los reyes pasados y de otros heroicos varones. Los argumentos de las comedias eran de agricultura, de hacienda, de cosas caseras y familiares (Garcilaso de la Vega, 2005 [1609], p. 130)¹.

Although Garcilaso writes about 'tragedy' and 'comedy', it is clear that the author chose these terms to better please an Occidental reader. It is known that the Incas had in fact two kinds of theatrical genres: *wanka* and *aránway*. The first had a historical and memorial character, while the *aránway* style concerned a wider range of themes, usually about the everyday life of the Incas (Lara, 1969, p. 61).

According to Nicolás de Martínez Arzans, until 1555, eight plays were performed in Cuzco, one of them representing the victories of the eleventh Inca, Huayna Capac, over the Chancas, *ch'unchus* and *montañeses* (all Antis Indians)².

¹ "The *amautas* (Inca philosophers) did not lack the ability to compose comedies and tragedies that during days of important celebrations were performed in front of kings and chiefs (...). The actors were not commoners, but Incas and noble people, sons of *curacas* – and the *curacas* themselves (...). The themes were always about military victories and triumph, about the great achievements of the old emperors and other heroic men. The themes of comedies were about agriculture, farms and about family life". Free translation by the author.

² The Quechua word 'Antis' by itself is a general or collective name used to describe a great variety of ethnic groups living in the Antisuyu. Indeed, the term does not define only one, but many indigenous groups. Tahuantinsuyu, the land of four quarters, comprised Chinchaysuyu, Collasuyu, Condesuyu and Antisuyu, the last of which represented the Amazonian corner of the Inca Empire. Hence, we see the use of Antis as a general term to refer to those inhabiting the Antisuyu.



The key element here is that a strong dramaturgical tradition existed among the Incas far before the arrival of Francisco Pizarro in Cajamarca in 1532³. So strong and enduring was the Quechua tradition of performing dramas that the Catholic Church installed in Peru slowly tried to replace these indigenous stories with performances telling about Christian saints and the like⁴. Later, during the Túpac Amaru uprising in 1781, the *Visitador General* José Antonio de Areche prohibited any theatrical representation in order to avoid celebrations of the Inca past as well as any revival of their history and memory (Lara, 1969).

These pre-Hispanic plays and literature were written by a well-educated elite known as *amautas*, who were the official philosophers and poets working for the Inca nobility. They produced a literature the purpose of which was, among others, to spread Inca values and ideology. Given the nature of the Inca Empire, these authors maintained their anonymity and, as put by Higgins (1987, p. 2), “their task was not to produce personal works of art but to interpret and express official ideology or the collective consciousness”. Such literary works were kept safe in *kipus*⁵ and frequently, according to the Inca calendar, plays would be performed in the open air accompanied by dancing and music.

Among the plays known under the title of *Teatro Indio Precolombino* is the Quechua drama (or more appropriately, *wanka*) called “Apu Ollantay”. The original text written in Quechua was first published in 1853 by J. J. von Tschudi in Vienna together with a translation in German. It was followed by other translations from von Tschudi’s German into languages such as Spanish (1868), English (1871) and French (1878).

As is often the case with native texts in the Americas, the Quechua drama “Apu Ollantay” was not immune to scholars who were sceptical about the plays’ indigenous origins. Due to some characteristics of the play, a few authors have claimed that “Apu Ollantay” was a mere imitation of imported plays from Europe. On the other hand, many others defended not only its Inca and pre-colonial birth (Cid Perez and Marti de Cid, 1964; Bramlage, 1952; Brotherston, 1986; Lara, 1969; Markham, 2004), but also that the play was often on stage during Inca times. Pacheco Zegarra (1878) also places the drama historically in the hundred years before the Conquest, during the time Inca Túpac Yupanqui was in power. However, “Apu Ollantay” was probably not performed during Túpac Yupanqui’s times since, by Inca law, *wanka* plays could not concern living individuals (Lara, 1969).

Later, based on the text’s structure itself, some authors have argued that “Apu Ollantay” is not only of pre-Hispanic origin, but also shows very significant indications that it was based on *kipus*. For instance, Brotherston (1986, p. 207-208) recognises some khipu-like decimal and duodecimal numerical patterns in the play’s scenes and dialogues: 12 characters, 15 scenes, 15 changes in scenery in total and so forth. Ultimately though, there are indications that the drama was indeed of autochthonous birth, yet with some considerable influences from Spanish literature such as, for instance, its colonial vocabulary and other insertions.

According to some authors (Cid Perez and Marti de Cid, 1964, p. 309; Brotherston, 1986, p. 190), the play had many stage performances in Cuzco and throughout Tawantinsuyu, functioning not only as entertainment or

³ The first Spanish play to be performed in Peru took place during the celebration of *Corpus Christi* in 1563 in the new capital, Lima. There are no records of such plays being performed before this date (Lara, 1969, p. 59).

⁴ “Porque es así que algunos curiosos religiosos de diversas religiones, principalmente de la Compañía de Jesús, por aficionar a los indios a los misterios de nuestra redención han compuesto comedias para que las representasen los indios, porque supieron que las representaban en tiempo de sus reyes Incas y porque vieron que tenían habilidad e ingenio para lo que quisiesen enseñarles” (Garcilaso de la Vega, 2005 [1609], p. 138).

⁵ *Khipus* are considered to be a type of writing system developed during pre-Inca times, but refined and sophisticated by the Incas. It is not unusual that some Andean indigenous writers claim that they used information stored in *kipus* in order to write their chronicles. For example, that is the case of Guaman Poma de Ayala who claims that the first part of his work “El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno” was based on information taken from several *kipus*.

artistic recreation, but mainly as a social and political device to enhance Inca magnitude and project a desirable image of a magnanimous ruler and the empire he represented. Additionally, it was originally written in the Quechua style which was used during Inca times and is composed of many words that only take on meaning when compared to the earliest Quechua colonial dictionaries (Cid Perez and Marti de Cid, 1964, p. 310)⁶.

A QUECHUA PLAY ON THE SPOTLIGHT

This unique piece of Quechua literature tells us the story of Ollantay, a heroic and loyal warrior from the Antisuyu who loved Cusi Coyllur, an Inca princess, daughter of emperor Inca Pachacuti. Cusi Coyllur's mother, the queen Anahuarqui, welcomed and approved of Ollantay for his courage, honesty and strength. However, much to the misfortune of the couple, Cusi Coyllur's father, the emperor Inca Pachacuti, did not accept their relationship. Even though Ollantay was a warrior famous for his bravery and courage, and Cusi Coyllur was pregnant of his child, the Anti was not a member of an Inca family, did not have royal blood and happened to be from the Antisuyu, the Amazonian corner of Tahuantinsuyu. Due to his background and to Inca rules, he could never marry the royal princess Cusi Coyllur.

Offended and rejected by the denial of the hand of his beloved Cusi Coyllur, Ollantay – who always served the emperor and was a loyal subordinate – rebelled against Pachacuti and was named the new Inca by his fellows in the Antis country, in the Amazonian territories

of the Inca Empire. When Cuzco was informed about the insurgence, Pachacuti sent his warriors to fight against the Antis, without achieving any success whatsoever given Ollantay had built fortresses which made difficult the access to his lands. Meanwhile, Cusi Coyllur (who was pregnant with Ima Sumaj) was sent as a prisoner to *Ayahuasi* – the house of the virgins in Cuzco – as a punishment or, as known in Inca vocabulary, *zancay*⁷.

Ten years later, Inca Pachacuti died and his son, Inca Tupac Yupanqui (brother of Cusi Coyllur), succeeded him as the new Inca emperor. Ollantay, meanwhile, was eventually captured by Rumiñahui, an Inca warrior. At first, the new king Inca Tupac Yupanqui spoke of sacrificing Ollantay, but in a sudden moment of clemency, decided to forgive him in an act of generosity. Surprisingly, the emperor not only forgave Ollantay, but also offered the Amazonian warrior a place as an Inca representative, while the Sapa Inca himself would set off to conquer new places and peoples in order to expand his empire.

Following these events led by Tupac Yupanqui which signalled the end of hostilities between Cuzco and the Antisuyu, Cusi Coyllur was freed from her ten-year imprisonment and re-encountered her daughter, Ima Sumaj, who was by then ten years old, and was also set free from the Inca house of the virgins. Eventually, Ollantay, Cusi Coyllur and their daughter Ima Sumaj were reunited with the blessing of Inca Tupac Yupanqui; suggesting a new phase in the relationship between Cuzco and its Amazonian corner, the Antisuyu.

⁶ Although mentioned here briefly, the intention of this article is more to elucidate the ways of interaction between the Incas and Western Amazonian societies, and less about the discussion regarding the authenticity of the play "Apu Ollantay". For those interested in a detailed discussion on the origins and authenticity of the play see Cid Perez and Marti de Cid (1964), Lara (1969), and Brotherston (1986).

⁷ *Zancay* was the first of five Inca punishments. It was a prison-like cave where the serious sinners and traitors would spend years surrounded by snakes and jaguars among other creatures. Guaman Poma de Ayala (1980 [1613], p. 276 [302]) offers an image of a *zancay* and also mentions that after some years the Inca, and only him, had the power to free someone from such imprisonment by pardoning and forgiving this person. This might help to explain the sudden change of mind of Inca Tupac Yupanqui when freeing Cusi Coyllur and pardoning both her and Ollantay. In "Suma y narración de los Incas", Betanzos writes that jaguars and snakes brought to Cuzco from the Antisuyu were sent to Cuzco Zancay: "(...) y luego mandó Yamque Yupanque que los tigueres y amaros fuesen echados en las casas de las fieras y juntamente con ellas los prisioneros" (Betanzos, 1996 [1576], XVIII, p. 136).



“APU OLLANTAY”: INCA IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY ON STAGE

Above all, “Apu Ollantay” is a Quechua play written from an Inca perspective, since everything happens with the Inca capital as the main reference point. Essentially, it represents Inca ideology, helping to enhance and celebrate Inca victories over the rebels of the empire. It was conceived as a court play to entertain audiences in the very centre of the empire, Cuzco. As stated by Brotherston (1986, p. 194) it was doubtless designed in the first place as a public means of reinforcing Inca hegemony: “(...) these works were said to have celebrated Inca victories, over heathen and rebel, by force and stratagem”.

Given that the play is intrinsically embedded within the Cuzco/Inca viewpoint, the reader knows from the outset that the Antisuyu warrior Ollantay stood no chance against the power of the Inca. Already in the first scene of the play, Ollantay is warned by a fortune-teller that should he chose to follow his heart and disobey Inca power by pursuing his love for Cusi Coyllur; his fate would be a tragic death: “Obedece tu cabeza a tu corazón diabólico? Te concedo este día para que, a tu gusto, elijas tu felicidad o tu perdición, la vida o la muerte” (Anonymous, 1964, p. 194).

As can be observed from the excerpt above, the message was clear: either Ollantay obeys the laws of the Inca or death will follow. In the play, no matter how brave and defiant Ollantay was as a warrior, he was subject to manipulation by the Incas. In this Inca ideological display of superiority which is the drama of “Apu Ollantay”, the Antisuyu warrior’s threats and rebellion against Cuzco are depicted in the play as being almost insignificant and easily disarmed. Nevertheless, historically, this portrait of a weak and effortlessly disarmed Antisuyu offered by this play from a Cuzco elite perspective is far from what one reads in the historical records such as those of Guaman Poma or Santa Cruz de Pachacuti.

The recurrent theme of conquest and manipulation of time and space also appears among the lines of “Apu Ollantay”. Here, it was Ollantay who during his rebellion against Inca Pachacuti chooses exactly the summer solstice⁸ to dare declare himself the new emperor of the Antis country. However, he fails and is defeated by Pachacuti who, as the representative of the Sun on Earth, displays his power by manipulating the moon, Venus and the sky represented respectively in the play by his wife Anahuarqui, his daughter Cusi Coyllur and Ollantay who was from the Antisuyu and thus ruled by the sky rather than the sun (Brotherston, 1986). One could say that it was a truly astronomical battle which was won by the Sun or Inca Pachacuti.

From Pachacuti’s perspective, his family had such a strong celestial power that he could never contemplate establishing any sort of family liaisons with warriors who hail from Amazonia such as Ollantay (Brotherston, 1986, p. 202). On this, Ollantay is advised by the astrologer, who tries to convince the Anti warrior that the Inca would never accept an asymmetrical matrimony between Ollantay and Cusi Coyllur: “Sabes muy bien que el rey no consentirá nunca que su hija haga un casamiento desigual” (Anonymous, 1964, p. 229).

Nevertheless, such marriage rules seem to be recent in Inca history. With regard to this, there is yet another important shift in Tawantinsuyu’s policy which can be grasped from the drama: Pachacuti, known in Inca history as the reformer of the Andean world, its policies and shapes, was the son of an Antis princess (Brotherston, 1986, p. 204), yet he denied his daughter Cusi Coyllur to another Anti. If in the past, the royal court of Cuzco had blood liaisons with other less royal *suyus* such as the Antisuyu, now, under Pachacuti’s new laws, it would not be possible. Due to the reformer Inca, the Andean world was changing and so were its rules and laws. Once again, the drama “Apu Ollantay” functions as a State device to spread the tightening up of Inca laws under the new emperor’s system.

⁸ In the play, one reads that Ollantay rises as the sun does: “El rey Ollantay se eleva como el astro del día!” (Anonymous, 1964, p. 247).



With the strengthening of Inca power, the traditional Andean reciprocity was slowly transformed into the Inca redistributive system (Godelier, 1989). It was precisely Inca Tupac Yupanqui, a refiner of Pachacuti's new Tawantinsuyu, who first tried (albeit without success) to establish the redistributive system over the traditional Andean reciprocity. Again, this indicated a changing empire where ancient Andean laws were slowly disappearing to be replaced by an ever-increasing bureaucratic and controlling empire. In many ways, "Apu Ollantay", by being one of the means used by the empire to spread the Inca word, portrays these transformations.

Marriage, or the exchange of women via matrimony, was one of the ways in which the Incas interacted with Western Amazonian societies. In this system, which was one of many Inca strategies during the process of expanding the empire and acquiring new lands, the Incas would encourage marriage between themselves and members of local elites in order to facilitate their social interaction and communication (Santos-Granero, 1992, p. 294). However, the manner in which it was done would only reinforce Inca supremacy: the Inca would choose women among the local elite to be his secondary wives in the Inca capital, Cuzco. However, the opposite scenario, whereby royal Inca women would be chosen by local elite members as wives, would happen less often⁹. The last is exactly the situation seen in the Quechua drama "Apu Ollantay".

Remarkably, it was precisely among some Western Amazonian groups that this Inca logic would be inverted and threatened. For instance, in some Ashanika myths, the Incas were the ones who were vanquished and had their women turned into Ashanika wives. Here, rather than taking women, the Incas were providing them in an inversion of the imperial rule. Also, among the Shipibo Indians there is a myth which tells that, after the disappearance of mankind, the last Shipibo

who survived had taken an Inca servant as wife, and from their offspring the current Shipibo were created. Among the Amuesha Indians the situation was slightly different, but still an inversion of the usual Inca practice. In this case the Inca remains the one who takes a woman called Yachor Pallá as his wife. However, according to the Amuesha story, it was the Inca who went to live among his new wife's relatives and had to position himself under her father's authority as well as serve him (Santos-Granero, 1992, p. 293-295).

Under Inca imperial policy, it was always the Inca (*hanan*) who had the right to choose a wife; the wife would then move to Cuzco and take her position as a subordinate female (*hurin*). This Inca imperative can be observed in "Apu Ollantay" at the moment Ollantay discloses his intentions to marry Cusi Coyllur and Inca Pachacuti tells him that by wanting to marry his royal daughter he dared to climb too high, and that it was the Inca who chose what was more convenient, not the Anti warrior: "no es a ti a quien toca elegir; yo soy quien debe escoger lo más conveniente. No has reflexionado pretensión semejante. Vete" (Anonymous, 1964, p. 238).

Bearing that in mind, there are compelling suggestions that the quarrels between Inca Pachacuti and Ollantay regarding Cusi Coyllur's hand described in "Apu Ollantay", represent also an Inca necessity to reinforce its power over the many Western Amazonian societies which persevered not only in opposing conversion to Inca sovereignty, but also in continuing to invert and subvert the logics of the empire. Often, when confronted with the Antisuyu, the numerous tough laws of the Incas had little influence.

As can be read in the quotation below from the words of the fortune-teller, the Inca offers alliance with the Antisuyu via Ollantay, however, solely in his own terms. Though the Inca recognises in him an honourable and worthy warrior, who had overcome innumerable enemies¹⁰, the king is

⁹ The Inca could offer women from the *acllas* (house of the virgins) who were not necessarily blood related to the Inca royalty.

¹⁰ In scene III, it is clear that Ollantay was not only recognised by Pachacuti as a good warrior, but he also represented the whole of the Antisuyu and its soldiers who helped Pachacuti when fighting the Collas. In scene III, the Inca asks Apu Ollantay to gather his fellow warriors with their arrows in order to march with him in Collas country. In the same scene, Ollantay reminds Pachacuti of how much he and the Antis helped the Inca in many of his campaigns (Anonymous, 1964, p. 236, 238).



inflexible and the warrior Ollantay was left with one single choice: in order to maintain the alliance between Cuzco and its Amazonian corners, it was essential that he had to forfeit his love for Cusi Coyllur. Any other decision would cost him his life and a declaration of war with his country, the Antisuyu:

El pueblo te venera como jefe del país de los Andes; el rey te estima mucho, y desearía compartir contigo su corona (...) Tu brazo lo ha encontrado fuerte contra los golpes de sus enemigos, y los ha vencido a todos, por numerosos que han sido. Pero esto es una razón para que hieras el corazón del rey? Amas a su hija y pretendes que por ti vuelva loca abusando de esta pasión es un motivo para pagar su amor con la deshonra? (Anonymous, 1964, p. 229).

Over the next lines, Ollantay categorically refuses to accept any deal in exchange for his love for Cusi Coyllur. Ollantay affirms that water would flow from stones and the sand would cry before he would forfeit his love for Pachacuti's daughter: "sería más fácil hacer que el agua brote de la roca y que lllore la arena, que obligarme a abandonar la estrella de mi felicidad" (Anonymous, 1964, p. 230).

For love he decides to fight the powerful empire. Or, in another reading, he refuses to worship the sun and, for his beloved Coyllur (the bright star) he will fight. One could hardly resist not interpreting these lines as a complete refusal from the Amazonian hero and his Antisuyu followers to submit to Inca power in order to keep worshipping the sky, its stars and the jaguar, or *Otorongo*, whose skin is associated with the Milky Way (Brotherston, 1986). If this hypothesis is correct, it would suggest that the ideological contents of "Apu Ollantay" are even stronger, as it would be a clear message for those who resist worshipping the sun and, therefore, oppose surrender to Tawantinsuyu. Moreover, it would also suggest that even though the play was performed for the Inca elite in Cuzco, the drama was, more pragmatically speaking, addressed to a very specific audience, the insurgents of the Western Amazonia or, maybe, any other quarter or group considering to resist Inca presence.

Logically, one may wonder why in "Apu Ollantay" it is an Antisuyu hero who takes centre stage in the drama rather than a Colla or a Conde. Would it be irrelevant for the purposes of the play, or was the election of Ollantay from the Antisuyu an intentional Inca choice? There is a good chance that the answer to this question lays in the particular way that the Incas related to their Amazonian quarter (Bertazoni, 2007). It is notable that from all the *suyus* of the empire, the Antisuyu was the corner which the Incas had least success if compared to the other parts of Tahuantinsuyu. The relationship established between Cuzco and the Antis was heavily based on gift giving or flattery policy, vertical control and reciprocity and few, if any, Antisuyu groups were operating fully under the Inca redistributive system (Santos-Granero, 1992). The drama's hero, thus, seems to have been picked extremely carefully by the Inca elite in order to demonstrate to the whole empire the perils of rebellion against the Inca sovereign. Yet, the very same Inca Emperor, given the appropriate and convenient circumstances in his own favour, may also forgive the insurgent.

In the play, there is a clear-cut turning point in Inca policy at the moment Tupac Yupanqui acceded to power following the death of his father, Inca Pachacuti. After ten years of discord, Tupac Yupanqui restored the good relationship with the Antis by pardoning Ollantay, freeing his sister Cusi Coyllur and allowing them both to reunite with their daughter. In this sudden and surprising shift of State policy, Inca Tupac Yupanqui not only forgives Ollantay, but also places the Anti warrior in one of the highest positions within the empire: as the Inca's substitute while he is away marching against the Collasuyu.

In Tupac Yupanqui's speech, the king asks Ollantay to announce to the whole of Tahuantinsuyu that he will occupy the king's place and will rise with the sun. Ollantay refuses the offer claiming that Cuzco is not his place since he is a warrior and thus used to battlegrounds. Only after the Inca Emperor's insistence and suggestion that he finds a wife and settles in Cuzco (again the marriage



alliance), did Ollantay accept. Though in the play he does not expressly say so, it is implied by the fortune-teller's announcement of the news to everybody. This passive acceptance reinforces the argument that, in the play, Ollantay was a character manipulated by the Inca. Even though he tries through the whole play, the Anti had no agency at all. Everything happens according to the Inca Emperors' wills, either Pachacuti or Tupac Yupanqui, and it is clearly implied that had Inca Tupac Yupanqui not changed his mind in an act of forgiveness, Ollantay would certainly have been killed in Cuzco. Throughout the whole play, the Antis's fate is in the Inca Emperors' hands.

This unexpected change in Inca attitude could be understood in many ways. First, it could merely be a case of *zancay* as described by Guaman Poma, where after a period of years the captive would be released by the Inca king and forgiven, thus restoring the prisoner's honour. However, this possibility excludes the fact that it was Cusi Coyllur who suffered the *zancay* punishment, not Ollantay who, far from being in prison, declared himself the king of the Antis country, ready to fight Cuzco at any time.

On the other hand, there is evidence showing that forgiving rebels, on behalf of diplomacy and the wellbeing of the Inca *Pax*, was a common practice among the Incas. The Incas would only annihilate their enemies in case of a complete refusal in recognising Inca power. Often, when rebels accepted the laws of the empire, the Inca Emperor would allow them to take back their local leadership. For instance, the kingdom of Chimú on the fertile-valleys at the northern coast of Peru, refused to accept the demands imposed by the Incas. As a result, the Inca-Chimú war entered the history books as one of the bloodiest wars ever witnessed in the Andes, at least during Inca times. The Chimú chief, convinced by his people that without a ceasefire, the consequences

could have been even more disastrous, decided to surrender. Vanquished, he presented himself to the Inca who, without any resentment, welcomed and forgave the Chimú leader, saying that as long as he accepted Inca laws and traditions, he could go back to his people and continue to lead the Chimú (Cid Perez and Marti de Cid, 1964, p. 318). Thus indicating that the sudden pardoning of Ollantay by Tupac Yupanqui is in complete agreement and harmony to Inca tradition.

Alternatively, the absolving of Ollantay could also be interpreted as the ultimate display of Inca power and authority as well as projecting an image of a good-hearted Inca which could also have politically positive outcomes, since it is only the king who could decide on the warrior's destiny. Or else, it could also be considered that the radical shift performed by Inca Tupac Yupanqui in relation to Ollantay could represent a historical moment which indicates that during Inca Tupac Yupanqui's reign, Cuzco either decided or was forced to change its policies regarding the Western Amazonian peoples that the Incas interact with in a way or another.

Does this marked shift in Inca attitude in the play correspond to any particular historical turning point concerning the Antisuyu? It seems that there are in fact considerable correlations between the royal attitude shifts as presented in the drama and the Inca expansion towards the Western Amazonia, since it was during the reign of Inca Tupac Yupanqui when the empire's eastern borders had mostly enlarged.¹¹

FINAL REMARKS

The action taken by Inca Tupac Yupanqui in forgiving Ollantay exemplifies not only an Inca 'good example' policy, but also suggests the need for the empire to keep important alliances and to have subordinates under its

¹¹ According to Pärssinen (1992, p. 129), the Inca Empire suffered many rebellions during the reign of Inca Tupac Yupanqui. It was also under his government that the empire expanded towards the east submitting the Chachapoyas, Moyobamba as well as several other groups settled by the rivers Ene, Tambo, Urubamba, Madre de Dios and Beni.



power. We should not forget that Ollantay was a powerful and respected chief among the Antis and, from an Inca perspective, it made more sense to have him on their side rather than fighting against them. On this particular issue, one should remember that “Apu Ollantay” is an Inca play that represents Inca ideology and, therefore, celebrates Inca superiority.

In any case, this non-belic Inca approach to the Antisuyu is observed twice in the play. First, when Pachacuti sends his chief Rumiñahui to capture Ollantay: knowing that he could not get Ollantay by force or arms given the Antis power, Rumiñahui uses lies and stratagems in order to do so (Brotherston, 1986). The second example is at the end of the drama, where Túpac Yupanqui asks Ollantay to continue as the king of the Antis and reduce them peacefully, *por la dulzura*, rather than by force (Anonymous, 1964, p. 272).

Another interesting aspect of the play is the double-sided character of Apu Ollantay. At the same time he represents a brave, outstanding warrior and bears the rejection of his marriage to Cusi Coyllur. He has all the good qualities that a warrior is expected to have, but he is not an Inca descendant and is from the Antisuyu. Both Guaman Poma de Ayala (1980 [1613]) and Cieza de León (1985 [1553]) stress in their texts the ambiguous meaning of the Antisuyu for the Incas. The Amazonian part of the empire was for the Incas simultaneously inviting and dangerous; its inhabitants were brave but uncivilised. This mixture of rejection/admiration can be found in the character of Ollantay.

Furthermore, Ollantay is described as being a *straying lamb* (Brotherston, 1986, p. 204) who needed to be brought to justice by the Incas in response to his love for Cusi Coyllur or, in other words, for daring to rebel against the new laws imposed by Emperor Pachacuti. Here, a parallel could be drawn with the *straying savages* dwelling in the Western Amazonia, who supposedly, from an Inca perspective, all needed to be subjected to progress and civilisation by the Incas.

This all indicates that “Apu Ollantay” is indeed not only of indigenous pedigree, but also reaches far back to Andean compositions, reflecting a particular historical time – that of the radical transformations orchestrated by Pachacuti, and its continuation performed by his son, Inca Túpac Yupanqui.

The argument of an indigenous ancestry for the play gains more weight if we remember the fact that “Apu Ollantay”, being so strongly embedded in Inca ideology, was officially banned from stage performances around 1781, during the Túpac Amaru II insurgence against Spanish colonial power, which happened in Antisuyu’s territory. The colonial authorities rapidly learned that drama celebrated Inca culture and, thus, took action on its prohibition. More importantly, the drama sheds some light on the Antisuyu’s perpetually troubled relationship with Cuzco and enhances our current understanding on the relationships the Incas established with Western Amazonia.

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