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Buen Gobierno: Chronicles of Violence Committed Against Amerindians in the Andes

Book Review Essay by Arij Ouweneel

- *Unlocking the Doors to the Worlds of Guaman Poma and His Nueva corónica*, edited by Rolena Adorno and Ivan Boserup. Copenhagen: The Royal Library and Museum Tusulanum Press, 2015.
- *The Chankas and the Priest: A Tale of Murder and Exile in Highland Peru*, by Sabine Hyland. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016.
- *Art from a Fractured Past: Memory and Truth-telling in Post-shining Path Peru*, edited by Cynthia E. Milton; with an Afterword by Steve J. Stern. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014.

Over a decade ago, historian Susan Ramírez explained the crux of pre-Hispanic – and post-Conquest – Andean culture as “to feed and be fed”.¹ Fierce battles, real, ritual or virtual, did not simply end in winners and losers. In fact, after the battle, the victor turn into the real, ritual or virtual caretaker of the defeated. In short, the unmitigated consequence of cyclical thinking is an attitude of *non-defeat* in which the ones with the Upper Hand (the “victors of the battle”, the “conquerors”) *take care of* the ones who ended up with the Lower Hand (the “conquered”). If this picture is accurate, and if it can be used to interpret the Spanish Invasion of the early 1500s, then the Amerindians would not have felt defeated in *our* sense of the word. And the colonized would have had the idea that they should be taken care of by the colonizers. If the latter would not fulfil this promise, the colonized had the right to remove the colonizers from power. These are a lot of “ifs”, indeed. However, in my earliest days in Mexico, I also heard about the principle of *non-defeat-and-being-taken-care-of* when the head of the family where I lodged, a senior of the Mexican Revolution who had been

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involved in Plutarco Elías Calles' rural education programme (1924-26), taught me about farming techniques and the principles of local politics as he had done at the time to many classes of Nahuatl speaking girls. He instructed me to realize that the government at the time executed a proper *buen gobierno*, or good government, by taking care of the children of the towns that had been "defeated" by Calles' armies.

An Amerindian Voice on *Buen Gobierno*

Besides viewing the world through my European lenses, within a few weeks I also learned to use a different pair to read most of the data found in eighteenth-century archives, as well as all kinds of published documents. One of the early and most famous books discussing *buen gobierno* was written by the Andean *indio* Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, born in Lucanas, Peru, around 1535: *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1615).² This 1,189 page letter to the king is an expression in art, dominated by 397 line drawings.³ Although much scholarly attention has been given to the explanation and interpretation of the Inca past in Guamán Poma's book the *Nueva Corónica*,⁴ two thirds of the book is effectively about *Buen Gobierno* and comprises a long series of chapters about life in the early seventeenth-century Peruvian viceroyalty that was recorded on the spot while travelling through the country as a legal counsellor. Guamán Poma was not the only Amerindian writing about *buen gobierno*. In fact, Diego Muñoz Camargo, a local noble of Amerindian descent from Tlaxcala, had written *Descripción de la ciudad y provincia de Tlaxcala de las Indias y del Mar Océano para el buen gobierno y ennoblecimiento dellas* (found in the National Library of France in Paris).⁵

Curiously, the recent compilation of fourteen chapters *Unlocking the Doors to the Worlds of Guaman Poma and His Nueva corónica*, edited by Rolena Adorno and Ivan Boserup, does not inform us deeply about what Guamán Poma understood by *buen gobierno* – in fact, the title focusses mainly on his first book, the *Nueva Corónica*. Some chapters offer a historicist vision on the manuscript itself: a debunking of a forgery of the manuscript (Ivan Boserup and Mette Kia Krabbe Meyer); a comparison with one of Las Casas' books (José Cárdenas Bunsen); Guamán Poma's native sources (Jean-Philippe Hussion); the bilingualism in his book (Gregory Khaimovich); an analysis of one of Guamán Poma's chapters as written in the specific narrative genre of *warikza arawi* (a festival narrative; Bruce Mannheim); a comparison of visual representations of dedications and devils in early colonial manuscripts (Jesper Nielsen and Mettelise Fritz Hansen); the graphic description of Inca nobility in older manuscripts (Juan M. Ossio); the lives of the Saints in Guamán Poma's book (Audrey Prévotel). Other chapters use the book as a source for historical analysis. Jan Szemiński contributes with a very lucid discussion of Guamán Poma's description of Inca government agencies. Gregory Cushman's contribution about the environmental contexts in Guamán Poma's book offers an interesting

study of interethnic conflict over forest resources in late sixteenth-century Huamanga and an analysis of the Amerindian perspective on ecological changes in this part of the world. Amnon Nir writes about the miracles that were thought to have accompanied the military campaign in Cuzco, 1536. Finally, Tom Zuidema provides a learned reading of the chronicler's descriptions of Inca hierarchies, before and after the Spanish Invasion. All these chapters are well-written and clearly founded in good and readable scholarship.

In her contribution to the volume, a study of law, land and legacy in Guamán Poma's manuscript, Regina Harrison comes closest to an analysis of his ideas about *buen gobierno*. Students of colonial law will profit deeply from her well-informed overview. Personally, I would stress the crucial role of the *república de indios* much stronger as the basic foundation of much of the legislation she discusses. But very instructive is her observation of Guamán Poma as a motivated defender of the written form of doing justice. If they wanted to enjoy the good side of the law system, he argued, the *indios* and especially their community officers should write, present and preserve documents in written form. In turn, the Spanish officials of the viceroyalty should work with them in court, write answers to them and return them to the local officers, "so that there is justice [meted out] even with an *indio alcalde*" (p. 146; italics in original, somewhat modified). Guamán Poma advises his fellow *indios* (p. 146, quote in chapter): "Never agree to justice by word [oral], only written [*letra*] so that the royal official recognizes it. If it comes as an oral decision, do not listen and ask for it in writing." Another contribution discussing *buen gobierno* as "taking care of" is Frank Salomon's analysis of *sapçi* (here: "the whole economic sector of the commons, that is, its factors of production as well as its expendable funds," p. 356); he compares Guaman Poma's version with modern anthropological research. Guaman Poma thought that "*pobres* and *curacas* should not control the communal sector" (p. 357, italics in original), but that it should come under the authority of the viceroy, and especially his local Amerindian authorities such as the *regidores*, *alcaldes de indios* and their *alguaziles*, all of which are local authorities of the *república de indios*. He gives detailed instructions to these officers how to properly do their jobs for the common good. A similar situation existed in New Spain, where local Amerindian authorities were addressed as the *común*. They distributed *pueblo* property among the *indios tributarios* (or tax payers).⁶

We should realize that Guamán Poma's text is early seventeenth-century. This was a dreadful time of epidemics following an equally devastating civil war between the Spanish rulers. It was a period of destruction but also of reconstruction. Only one generation before, Viceroy Francisco Álvarez de Toledo had tried to repopulate deserted towns all over the Andes with groups of survivors, the so-called *reducciones* (consolidations). In Guamán's days, the system still lacked the legitimation of later times. No wonder, one could say, that Guamán Poma wrote his manuscript as a letter to King Philip III (1587-1621) to improve the system. He praised the good lords and priests by name,

and mostly wrote in general terms about the accusations. Being hot-tempered himself, Guamán Poma had got in trouble with the authorities and even lost his property by confiscation in 1600. Exiled from the city of Huamanga (now Ayacucho), he began wandering the Southern Andes, trying to reconstruct the Inca world – the *Nueva Corónica* – and design a reformed plan for an inclusive Amerindian government called the *Buen Gobierno*. However as the anthropologist Sabine Hyland discovered, he also presented a very critical example of the colony’s problems. “Father Albadán,” Guaman Poma wrote, “was a very tyrannical, cruel Father; the things that this priest used to do cannot be described.” Among the more personal experiences, Guamán Poma was probably triggered to write his manuscript in an attempt to condemn the activities of the psychopath Father Juan Bautista de Albadán,⁷ the parish priest of Pampachiri (1601-1611). In 1604, Pampachiri parish also included Umamarca and Pomacocha and counted a little over 2500 *indios*; with a gender ratio of one man to three women due to forced labour obligations in the Potosí mines (including the ones who ran away from this).

In her *The Chankas and the Priest: A Tale of Murder and Exile in Highland Peru*, Hyland, at crucial moments assisted by the very able historian Donato Amado González from Cusco, discusses the sparse documentation that is available about Father Albadán. She introduces his activities in the very first sentence of the first chapter: “Four hundred years ago, in a remote corner of the Peruvian Andes, a sadistic Catholic priest tortured, sexually abused, and murdered native peoples from the southern region of Andahuaylas, where the ethnic group known as the Chankas lived”. And although Guamán Poma found Albadán’s crimes too horrible to describe, he did it anyway: every morning Albadán asked girls from Pampachiri to strip naked before his eyes, to examine their buttocks and their vaginas with his fingers; Amerindians who protested were publicly tortured with candles, some died. Moreover, he forced local peasants to hand over cattle, llamas, textiles, fishing nets and other products and became disproportionately wealthy within a few years. Curiously, Albadán managed to subvert investigations into his crimes; he “shared” wealth and power with a few selected Spaniards and local Chanka leaders and he was very creative in avoiding juridical steps. He died suddenly in 1611, probably poisoned by local Amerindians, while the Spanish official, Corregidor Don Alonso de Mendoza Ponce de León, kept his silence. Due to the hostility of the Pampachiri people, Albadán was buried in the town of his closest ally, the *kuraka* of Umamarca. Hyland underscores Guamán Poma’s assessment of Albadán as an exception (pp. 1-3), “many Catholic priests and missionaries were honest, caring individuals who did their best for their native parishioners”. Feed and be fed. In her intriguing history, originally part of the archaeologist Brian Bauer’s project on Chanka history, Hyland describes how Albadán was able to drive a wedge between rivalrous factions of the Chanka, thereby affecting the local Amerindian government for generations after his death. He had privileged the *kuraka* of Umamarca against the traditional leaders of Pampa-

chiri. As the cruel exception to the rule, Albadán's crimes were widely known in the area. Even his brother in Potosí, some 1500 kilometres away, or months of walking distance, heard about the acts of horror committed by Albadán in his isolated town. In fact, Father Albadán's reputation even reached Spain. The Spanish playwright Tirso de Molina (Fray Gabriel Téllez, a close colleague of Albadán's uncle Fray Francisco de Prado) introduced a character remarkably similar to Father Albadán in his play *Condenado por desconfiado* (Damned by Doubt) (Madrid, 1635).

Testimony of victims of the Internal Conflict

According to Hyland, Father Albadán was not the last sadist active in the Chanka heartland. During the Internal Conflict in the Andes (1980-2000), cells of Sendero Luminoso and soldiers of the National Army persecuted the towns. On 16 July 1984, they murdered twelve Pampachiri community members in a massacre known as the "Express Bus to Death". A public bus entering the Sendero controlled "red zone" was stopped and the 102 passengers killed, including twelve from Pampachiri. Other works than Hyland's show that recent memory and truth-telling in Peru still make use of art. For example, the collection of ten essays edited by Cynthia E. Milton, *Art from a Fractured Past* (2014), concentrates on works that were inspired by the Peruvian Truth Commission's *Final Report* (2003) during a series of art contests, *Rescate por la Memoria* (Recovering/Rescuing Memory) (2003-04). These were in part organized by the NGO Colectivo Yuyarisun and made by the "poor, rural, indigenous, and young" (p. 53) from the area where the war had made the most victims. The drawings, paintings, and *retablos* refused to address reconciliation, but contributed on the arena with "questions of remembrance, continued poverty, and the base of rubble on which a new era must be built" (p. 63). Cynthia Milton introduces the collection; Steve J. Stern concludes it.

Milton's contribution tells about monuments and their histories, like the *El Ojo que Lloro* (The Eye That Cries) (2005), a crying eye within a monolith, surrounded by a small labyrinth. Made by Lika Mutal and located in the Campo de Marte park of Lima, it is at the centre of yearly meetings of remembrance. The monument is still being contested violently by the supporters of the former powerholders and the military.⁸ Other contributions in the collection follow this line. María Eugenia Ulfe explains the role of *retablos* (colourful 3-D wooden triptychs) from Ayacucho. The Ayacucho-based anthropologist, journalist and retablo artist Edilberto Jiménez Quispe shares twelve drawings and ensuing written testimonies.⁹ Víctor Vich offers a way to read the novel *La hora azul* (The Blue Hour) (2006) by Alberto Cueto as an attempt to highlight the role of the urban middle- and upper-class of Lima in memory politics. A treasure for university class-rooms is the inclusion of a ten-page section of the comic (graphic novel) *Rupay: Historias de la violencia política en Perú, 1980-1984* (Rupay: History of Political Violence in Peru, 1980-1984) by Luis Ros-

sell, Jesús Cossio and Alfredo Villar. It deals with the 1983 massacre in Uchuraccay, where eight journalists and one guide were killed by anti-Sendero villagers. Ponciano del Pino interviews Ayacucho filmmaker Palito Ortega Matute about his film *El rincón de los inocentes* (The Innocents' Corner) (2005) and the fictional form of testimony. Of course, theatre performance has been included as well. Local performances by people from the villages are discussed by Ricardo Caro Cárdenas as well as the work of the well-known professional group Yuyachkani by Cynthia Garza. Finally, local testimonial songs, most of them in Quechua, are presented as voices of the victims, by Jonathan Ritter.

Conclusion

Because most empirical chapters in *Art from a Fractured Past* concentrate intensely on what happened during the war in the Andes, the volume demonstrates that works of art can indeed act as active agents in memory politics. Curiously, historian Milton does not recognize art as an agent in the present but sees it as merely representing a past, “to promote reflection and discussion” (p. 23). She does recognize “testimonial art”, however, that rescue victims’ memories: “Art is also one of the many modes by which individuals and groups forge acts of remembrance” (p. 37). Nevertheless, she prefers narratives of both the history of the Dirty War in the Andes and the aftermath in the arena of the Peruvian politics of memory. This approach is different from several of the chapters Milton compiled in her volume. It is also different from the central role of the drawings in Guamán Poma’s manuscript, who dedicated most of his time to the horrors caused by one Spanish priest, the sadistic psychopath Father Albadán, and privileged his art in telling about it in almost four hundred drawings. Many of the authors discussed above also recognize that pictures and fiction may help memory to consolidate. In all, what sinks in after reading these three books is that a small area in Southern Peru inhabited by the Chankas has suffered under too many violent idiots within their communities. The Chankas have rarely seen *buen gobierno*.

* * *

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Notes

1. Susan E. Ramírez, *To Feed and Be Fed: The Cosmological Bases of Authority and Identity in the Andes*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005.
2. Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, *Guaman Poma: el primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, edited by Rolena Adorno. Copenhagen, DEN: Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek (Denmark), 2002; a recently digitized reproduction of the *Primer nueva coronica i buen gobierno*, written to King Philip III by the Inca chronicler Guamán Poma de Ayala between 1583 and 1615.
- 3 See: <http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/titlepage/es/text/>.
4. See for example, Franklin Pease, Ed., *Nueva crónica y buen gobierno: selección*. Lima: Casa de la Cultura del Perú, 1969.
5. Diego Muñoz Camargo, *Descripción de la ciudad y provincia de Tlaxcala de las Indias y del Mar Océano para el buen gobierno y ennoblecimiento dellas*, edited and with a preliminary study by René Acuña. Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, 1981.
6. Arij Ouweneel, *Shadows over Anáhuac. An Ecological Interpretation of Crisis and Development in Central Mexico, 1730-1800*. Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico Press, 1996, pp. 138, 225, 242-248, 262.
7. Hyland worked with the Psychopathy Checklist Revised and the Psychopathic Personality Inventory to assess Albadán's "madness," see: Hyland, *Chankas*, pp. 102-109.
8. Followers of former President Alberto Fujimori called the monument a "monument to terrorism" and partly destroyed it in 2007. It was restored and eventually declared national patrimony on 24 August 2013.
9. For an impression of these drawings, see: <http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/titlepage/es/text/>.

