

WALKER, Charles, 2015, *La rebelión de Tupac Amaru*, Lima, IEP. 377 pp.

*La rebelión de Tupac Amaru* by Charles Walker is a translation and revision of the original version in English published in 2014. In the introduction to the Spanish edition, Walker confesses that after writing *De Tupac Amaru a Gamarra: Cuzco y la creación del Perú republicano, 1780-1840*, he turned down offers from various publishers to write a history that dealt only with Tupac Amaru because he was "convinced that he would have nothing original to add and that it could end up being a history that was not academically serious"\* (p. 11).

Walker only decided to undertake the project when he found unpublished archival material and discovered that many published documents had not been appropriately analyzed. In addition, he was attracted by the possibilities of new forms of narrative history. In contrast to structural history, narrative history tells a coherent story and is more focused on the actors than on the circumstances. In the 1990s, British historian Peter Burke suggested that narrative history should adopt the anthropological concept of "thick description" developed by Clifford Geertz in order to interpret the "social interaction of a given society in terms of that society's own norms and categories."\*\* In *La rebellion de Tupac Amaru*, Walker masterfully carries out this task, inquiring into how the participants understood and participated in the rebellion and endeavoring to "give the reader a feel for the lived experience of the uprising."\*\*\*

Like in the best dramas, Walker starts his book with a crucial event: the arrest and execution of the *corregidor* Antonio de Arriaga. Tupac Amaru and Arriaga knew each other well. On November 4, 1780, they shared an "amiable lunch" with the priest Carlos Rodríguez (p. 20). That same day, when Arriaga was returning to Tinta, Tupac Amaru ambushed and arrested him. Six days later, in front of thousands of witnesses, the *kuraka* sentenced the *corregidor* to death by hanging. What stood out at this point was that Tupac Amaru stated that he received orders from the King; he summoned mayors and powerful personages, sending them letters in the name of the *corregidor*; he organized Spaniards, mestizos, and Indians in military columns; he promoted the use of the Quechua language in proclamations; he promised to abolish the *mita*, the *alcabala*, customs duties, abuses in the *obrajes* (textile mills) and the forced sale of goods; and he stated that according to "superior orders," Indians should live free and in harmony with the Spanish. This is how the most important anti-colonial rebellion in the history of the Americas before the wars of independence began.

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\* Translation by *Apuntes*.

\*\* Burke, Peter. 1987. *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication*, Cambridge University Press: p. 3.

\*\*\* Walker, Charles. 2016. *The Tupac Amaru Rebellion*. Belknap Press. Kindle version, location 223.

Arriaga was not the first *corregidor* to lose his life in indigenous uprisings. Studies on socio-economic history have demonstrated that the Bourbon Reforms caused general social discontent which led to what Steve Stern calls in an article of the same name: "*La era de la insurrección andina, 1742-1782.*" Not only indigenous people rebelled; creoles and mestizos did the same: the first protested, among other things, against increases in taxes and forced sale of goods; and the mestizos, against the *alcabala* and customs duties. Nevertheless, the Tupac Amaru rebellion was exceptional, not only because of its "level of organization, initial success and magnitude,"\* as Garret notes, but also because it was a project with a certain maturity that was based on political ideals.

Walker contextualizes the rebellion very well. The conditions were in place: the Indians were ever more oppressed; the middle sectors, more frustrated; and the elites, more divided – the Bishop of Cusco, Juan Manuel Moscoso y Peralta had gone as far as to excommunicate the *corregidor* Arriaga while the *visitador* José Antonio de Areche was engaged in a confrontation with Virrey Agustín de Jáuregui. This context, however, is not in itself enough to explain the exceptionality of the rebellion. Following Alberto Flores Galindo, who considered the Bourbon Reforms as the context rather than the cause of the rebellions, Walker stresses that knowledge of the biography of Tupac Amaru is fundamental to understanding the rebellion. The *kuraka* had the experience and the social and cultural capital necessary to lead a revolution. As an intermediary between Indians and Spaniards, he was witness to the worst of the exploitations of indigenous people; as a trader and a muleteer, he got to know the southern Andes well and established an important social network; as a litigant in Lima, he expanded his knowledge of Peru and met people who expanded his political perspectives. In addition, his demands were related to the colonial order as a whole.

Firmly basing his work on primary sources, Walker not only narrates and analyzes the rebellion as a whole – including its expansion into the Titicaca Lake basin after Tupac Amaru had already been executed – but also contributes to historical knowledge about two of its very significant aspects: revealing the protagonism of Micaela Bastidas and clarifying the role of the Church, which has been debated for a long time.

Micaela Bastidas learned to administer and to lead, taking charge of Tupac Amaru's businesses when he went to Lima for eight months as a litigant for the Oropesa marquise. During the rebellion, she put this experience into practice and became an "intelligent and efficient commander" (p. 115). She commanded the rebel base in Tungasuca while

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\* Translation by *Apuntes*.

Tupac Amaru expanded the rebellion. Her tasks included obtaining and administrating munitions and provisions; recruiting, motivating, and commanding troops; and carrying out communications and espionage activities. They both shared power; Tupac Amaru consulted her regarding all important political decisions. In addition, because of her determination and daring, it was she who was most feared by rebels and by the *realistas*.

Walker also demonstrates how the Church managed to undermine the rebellion. After the rebels were defeated, Bishop Moscoso y Peralta was accused of supposed sympathies with Tupac Amaru. Walker states that this campaign and other trials of priests has led historians to conclude that a significant sector of the clergy tacitly supported the rebellion. But while there were a few priests that provided their support, Walker thinks that the latter assertion is exaggerated and even erroneous. The campaign against Moscoso y Peralta was primarily motivated by political disputes between the *visitadores* who took a hardline position in punishing the rebels. The truth is that the bishop effectively mobilized all his resources to defeat Tupac Amaru.

Walker explains that at that time, a world without the Catholic Church was unimaginable. Thinking that he could win while maintaining the Church intact, Tupac Amaru protected priests. For his part, Moscoso y Peralta commanded the defense of Cusco, excommunicated Tupac Amaru and ordered priests to remain in their *doctrinas* in rebel territories. The effects of these measures were significant. The excommunication devastated the rebel couple and weakened the impact of their proclamations that they were defending the faith; and the priests, with considerable freedom of action, became a de facto government that undermined the actions and legitimacy of the rebellion.

Despite its merits, the book does not satisfactorily explain something that surprises many contemporary readers: why did the Inca nobility remain on the side of the colonial government and fight with it, providing thousands of combatants against Tupac Amaru? According to David Cahill, the lawsuit for the Oropesa marquisate, which lasted from 1776 to the eve of the rebellion, is key to understanding not only the hostility of the Inca nobility to Tupac Amaru but also Tupac Amaru's "obsessive hate" of the Spaniards (p. 165). The lawsuit for the marquisate required demonstrating the most direct descent from the last Inca. Tupac Amaru suffered a series of judicial defeats and humiliations, which included two periods in prison at the hands of both Spanish and indigenous officials. Inca nobles considered him "an Indian of vile extraction"\* and publically dishonored him (p. 154). For them, noble affiliation was more important than ethnic affiliation; and controlling Inca

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\* Translations in this paragraph are by *Apuntes*.

membership and seeking status through the legal system was more appropriate than taking a chance on the rebellion of a parvenu. In addition, as Cahill points out, *corregidor* Arriaga was about to remove Tupac Amaru from his *cacicazgo*. Walker mentions the lawsuit as something that worried Tupac Amaru but does not consider Cahill's argument.

Despite this limitation, Walker has written a great narrative history, demonstrating how the norms, categories, and values of colonial society molded the strategies – sometimes astute, sometimes erroneous – of an indigenous leader who never gave in. *La rebellion de Tupac Amaru* is an indispensable book for understanding Peru, not only in the colonial period but also today.

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