



# **Royal Commentaries of the Incas and General History of Peru, Part One (Royal Commentaries of the Incas & General History of Peru)**

*Garcilaso de la Vega*

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## **Royal Commentaries of the Incas and General History of Peru, Part One (Royal Commentaries of the Incas & General History of Peru)** Garcilaso de la Vega

Garcilaso de la Vega, the first native of the New World to attain importance as a writer in the Old, was born in Cuzco in 1539, the illegitimate son of a Spanish cavalier and an Inca princess. Although he was educated as a gentleman of Spain and won an important place in Spanish letters, Garcilaso was fiercely proud of his Indian ancestry and wrote under the name El Inca.

*Royal Commentaries of the Incas* is the account of the origin, growth, and destruction of the Inca empire, from its legendary birth until the death in 1572 of its last independent ruler. For the material in Part One of *Royal Commentaries*—the history of the Inca civilization prior to the arrival of the Spaniards—Garcilaso drew upon "what I often heard as a child from the lips of my mother and her brothers and uncles and other elders . . . [of] the origin of the Inca kings, their greatness, the grandeur of their empire, their deeds and conquests, their government in peace and war, and the laws they ordained so greatly to the advantage of their vassals."

The conventionalized and formal history of an oral tradition, *Royal Commentaries* describes the gradual imposition of order and civilization upon a primitive and barbaric world. To this Garcilaso adds facts about the geography and the flora and fauna of the land; the folk practices, religion, and superstitions; the agricultural and the architectural and engineering achievements of the people; and a variety of other information drawn from his rich store of traditional knowledge, personal observation, or speculative philosophy.

Important though it is as history, Garcilaso's classic is much more: it is also a work of art. Its gracious and graceful style, skillfully translated by Harold V. Livermore, succeeds in bringing to life for the reader a genuine work of literature.

Part One covers the history of the Incas up to the arrival of the Spanish.

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