PREFACE

THERE HAVE BEEN differences of opinion as to the significance of the position which the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega holds in the scale of values as a chronicler of the Indies; but it is not to be denied that his position as one of the great chroniclers of the sixteenth century is secure. He did have the advantage, though not unique, of being on the scene during the Peruvian civil wars and of knowing personally and sometimes intimately the great conquerors and their rabble following who were responsible for those wars. And more important still, he knew intimately and was favored with the confidence and affection of many of the remnant Incas who had witnessed the devastation of their classic civilization and ancient realm. But Garcilaso is unique among early chroniclers in that he was born on American soil and in that, being born to the Quechuan tongue, he was able to obtain from native sources his information concerning the Incaic past as well as the present tribulations of his Indian relatives.

It appears unquestionable and inevitable that Garcilaso should reveal racial and patriotic bias in depicting both the Indian and the Spaniard, and historians have found it easy to condemn him for ennobling Indians, accepting with astonishing credulity both pagan and Christian traditions and superstitions, and in a number of other ways violating more recent codes of realism. This charge of bias and romanticism, however, can and has been made against most, if not all, of his contemporary chroniclers, who saw the whole episode of the Conquest from a different perspective and with different emotions. All made the claim that they had written the truth, a claim which appears to have become almost a literary device in an age which had long been ab-

xii Preface

sorbed in the books of chivalry and the lying histories; but one must not forget that it was the truth as they saw it, or, in far too many cases, the truth as they had heard it. Yet Garcilaso, perhaps in some instances at the expense of surface reality, has managed to attain an underlying verity not to be found in some of his contemporary chroniclers. He has given a graphically accurate picture of incurable romantics who, it cannot be denied, actually existed in an era of inflamed imagination, which already had been ignited by ancient poetic traditions. He has caught the mood and spirit of two civilizations, both to some extent in their death throes. He has enabled us to see the Incas, heirs to a proud and splendid tradition, weeping in desolation as they submit to old superstitions and new forces; and he has enabled us to see the Renaissance Spaniard, clinging to futile chivalric fantasies, as he encounters the trying realities of a previously unknown and scarcely believable world, and as he cautiously watches the slow but inevitable encroachments of a new democratic spirit upon a worn feudal civilization. He has caught the spirit of two merging worlds, both equally ancient, and he has foreshadowed the tragic aspects which were to haunt them down through the ages.

The Peru that Garcilaso knew was the fading Tahuantinsuyu of the Incas and the new Eldorado of the Pizarros; the Spain that he knew was the glittering age of Philip II and Philip III, known respectively as the Prudent King and the Picture King. It was the Spain of Lope de Vega and Cervantes. Among his friends and acquaintances in Spain were the decadent nobility, the multihued ecclesiastics, philosophers, and humanists, and the lowly and oftentimes desperate folk who worked the farmlands and vineyards of Andalusia to feed the social and political whims of the powerful. The story of Garcilaso's remote and noble Spanish progenitors is to be found in the enchantingly vintaged rhetoric of Washington Irving's The Conquest of Granada and The Moorish Chronicles; and the story of the Peruvian turmoils which were so closely interwoven into the tapestry of Garcilaso's boyhood and youth is revealed in the magnificent prose of William Hickling Prescott's The Conquest of Peru. Modern historians have relied extensively on Garcilaso's account of De Soto's exploration of the southern and southwestern regions of what is now the United States of America, and he PREFACE XIII

has for several centuries been regarded as a primary source for information concerning the early Incas. Strangely and ironically some scholars, while condemning him for romanticism and debatable data, have persisted in using him, for his value as an authoritative source is undeniable.

In those areas of the Andean world which lie immediately north and south of the equator Garcilaso long has been regarded as a Messiah, and even today he is revered as a symbol by those who plead for the welfare of the Indians, mestizos, and creoles of America—not for the indigent, but for worthy men of all castes and races who seek human status and opportunity honestly. He believed in races and in the individual nobility of separate races, but he believed and vehemently proclaimed that there was but one world. He held to a democratic concept that all men should be provided equal opportunity but that their social and political status and power should be established and maintained by personal merit and not by arbitrary laws. Yet he appears never to have been able to deliver himself from the idea that such merit was most frequently to be encountered in men of noble blood. Such a concept was to him inevitable. He was a Renaissance man.

In my presentation of the life of the Inca Garcilaso and his historical background, it has never been my purpose to attempt to clarify or defend those of his statements which later historians have questioned. Instead, I have tried to present life as I believe he saw it. Much of it he saw through the eyes of the Spaniard; more of it he saw through the eyes of the Indian; and though he was in constant contact with painful reality, he, like the vast majority of the men of the Golden Age, did view it with the perspective of a romantic.

In a study of this scope my indebtedness is, of course, unlimited. My first and deepest obligation is to my wife, Dr. Jeannette Johnson Varner, scholar and trained linguist, whose name by all rights should occupy a place alongside my own on the title page of this book. She transcribed and translated scores of original sixteenth-century documents, translated a multitude of critical articles and books, listened patiently to and contributed valuable comments on my readings of passages of the original drafts, and tirelessly assisted with the multiple details involved in preparing a manuscript for publication. Together we personally fol-

xiv Preface

lowed the trail of the Inca Garcilaso from Cuzco and Lima to the Isthmus, and then on through the Azores to the archives of Seville, Madrid, Simancas, Badajoz, Córdoba and Montilla. I am next indebted to the Research Bureau of the University of Texas and to the Penrose Fund of the American Philosophical Society for financial grants which made possible our research in both the Americas and Spain, and to the Cultural Division of the United States Information Office, which by offering me employment for a number of years in Mexico and South America helped me to a more accurate understanding of and sympathy with the Latin psyche. There is not space here to list the names of individuals who came to our aid. Significant of course are the curators of archives in Spain and the Americas, and I wish especially to acknowledge the generosity of the following individuals: don José de la Torre y del Cerro who, after providing us office space, gave us severe and patriarchal advice tempered with good fellowship, revealed to us the unique charms of historic Córdoba, and bolstered our egos and courage by presenting our names for membership in the much respected Real Academia de Ciencias, Bellas Letras y Nobles Artes de Córdoba; don Rafael Aguilar Priego, archivist of the Sagrado of the great Cordovan Mosque-Cathedral; don Tomás Gómez Infante, who aided our research and enthusiastically entertained us at Badajoz; don Francisco Sánchez Rico, an official transcriber at the Archivo de Indias, who gave generously of his time and directed us through the nooks and corners of old Seville; don José Cobos, scholar and producer of famed vintage wines as well as the generally recognized custodian of Garcilaso memories at Montilla, who with his charming wife welcomed us to that fabled village and received us, not as aliens, but as one of their own; Padre Lorenzo Cirio Ruiz, who opened to us the records of the ancient Church of Santiago at Montilla, and when not dashing off for almost hourly requiem masses, fed us sweetmeats and entertained us with the chatter of a jolly friar; and to all the gracious people of Andalusia who taught us to regard that land with an affection approximating that of the Inca Garcilaso.

JOHN GRIER VARNER