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### **The Journey of a Chronicle from New World to Old and Back: Martín de Murúa's *Historia general del Perú* in the J. Paul Getty Museum (Ludwig Ms. XIII 16)**

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#### **Abstract**

*Martín de Murúa's Historia general del Perú, dated 1613, is the earliest illustrated chronicle of that country's prehispanic and early postconquest history. In the almost 300 years since its completion, it journeyed first throughout the Viceroyalty in search of ultimately unfulfilled publication approvals, before making its way to Spain and England, accumulating the scars of politics, history and celebrated figures who cherished it, but consigned it to genteel oblivion for over a century. In 1945, it resurfaced, then resumed its odyssey, to New York, Germany, and back to the New World, where the book, its accretions and deletions are finally enjoying sustained study.*

(bolded words refer to images on screen)

The *Historia general del Perú*, written by Martín de Murúa in the decades around the turn of the seventeenth century, is the earliest illustrated chronicle of that country's prehispanic and early postconquest history. Murúa, a Mercedarian friar born in Basque Spain sometime in the second half of the sixteenth century, spent most of his adult life in various towns within the Viceroyalty

of Peru, including Cuzco, Aymaraes, and Arequipa. Before 1590 he drafted text and commissioned illustrations for a first version of his history of Peru. By 1613, he had completed his second and substantially different final version, the one we are discussing today. Both volumes describe, in detailed text and images, the Incas, their government, customs, cities and the early years of the conquest and new viceregal government. The thirty-seven illustrations in the second, or Getty version, consist of **coats-of-arms** of Peru, full-length, full-page portraits of the **Incas** and their **queens**, some depicting **episodes** from their histories. They were executed by several artists, including the native-born Felipe **Guaman Poma de Ayala**, who also wrote and illustrated the chronicle that is to be the subject of the paper to be presented by my colleague, Ivan Boserup.

Murúa disappeared from sight with the completion of his second manuscript. Like the author, the first version vanished as soon as it was written and assembled, to resurface only in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and then only very quietly until the anthropologist Juan Ossio traced the manuscript to Ireland in 1981, announced its survival and is overseeing its first publication. We know much more about the history of Murúa's second version, which experienced a rich and far-flung life in several stages, treasured by the few who knew it, and even playing a role in major events along the way, but essentially remaining hidden in plain sight for over three hundred years, in five countries and three continents.

The earliest indications of its travels are to be found within the manuscript itself, and these have to do with its journey toward the publication the author fervently wanted but never realized. Like all manuscripts aspiring to print in the Spanish empire during this period, this one had to acquire the proper written approvals, in order to obtain a license. Between 1611 and 1615, Murúa probably took it himself throughout the viceroyalty, to Ylabaya, La Paz, Charcas, La Plata, Potosi, and Cordoba de Tucumán, gathering the "privilegios" from various religious and civil authorities who obligingly attested to its authenticity as well as its compatibility with church doctrine, in one-page statements signed, dated and inserted into the front of the manuscript. The consistency of script in several of these with that in the body of the manuscript suggests that the approbations were drafted and transcribed by Murúa or his scribe, as they journeyed from place to place.

Later in 1615 the manuscript reached the Mercedarians' mother convent in Madrid, and from there made its way to King **Philip III** and his Secretary of State, Pedro de Contreras, who signed their own approbation in 1616, and appended the license to publish, which, despite the royal imprimatur, came to naught. On the following undated and unsigned sheet is the flowery offering of the manuscript as a gift to the Prince of Spain, Philip IV and his Princess, whose name is left blank. As Philip became king and married in 1621, this must have been given before then, but it is unclear who transcribed and inserted this sheet and when, because the shaky hand is different from any of the others, and full of strikeovers. In a casual hand different from the beautiful, even script of the body of the text, but similar to some of the emendations, are inscriptions over several of the illustrations, saying "**no sea de pintar.**" These seem to be publication instructions not to reproduce the particular images. Currently under study by the eminent scholar Rolena Adorno, it will be interesting to know whether these are Murúa's changes in his hand, or a potential editor in Spain.

Books and manuscripts about the New World that reached the Crown in Spain often ended up in the hands of those in the Spanish court charged with chronicling or advising on administration of the Indies. From the Americanist bibliographer Nicolas Antonio's *Biblioteca hispana nova* of 1672, we know that the manuscript had been in the collection of Lorenzo Ramírez de Prado, a diplomat and lawyer with close ties to both Philip III and IV, and appointed by the latter to the Council of Indies in 1631. A major bibliophile, his vast library contained virtually everything published on the New World. After his death in 1658, his books were inventoried and ended up in the library of his alma mater, the Colegio Mayor de Cuenca of the University of Salamanca, where the Murúa was recorded in the earlier of two surviving inventories, dated 1782.

How widespread was the book's reputation or its use in the various histories of the Indies written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is unclear, but it was certainly known. After Nicolas Antonio's publication of 1672, Andrés González de Barcia's new and greatly expanded 1738 edition of Antonio Leon Pinelo's 1629 bibliography of works about the Americas included an abbreviated entry on the Murúa lifted from the earlier work, without reference to its location. The first documented scholarly consultation of the manuscript was in 1785, when Juan Bautista Muñoz, royal chronicler of the Indies, copied it in Salamanca during his travels throughout Spain searching libraries for sources in writing a history of the Indies. The book remained uncompleted at his death in 1799, and his copy of the Murúa manuscript, although deposited at his death in the Royal Academy of History in Madrid, was lost.

Shortly after Muñoz saw the manuscript, Charles III ordered the closure of all the colegios mayores in Spain. Then around 1802, the Murúa and many other precious medieval and Renaissance manuscripts left Salamanca for Madrid when Charles IV scavenged treasures from the libraries of newly defunct colegios, to enrich his library in the Royal Palace. An inscription on the **frontispiece** of the Murúa: "de la Bibl. Del Co Mr de Cuenca," also appears, in a similar hand, on other volumes, and probably refers to this transfer, which is documented in a manuscript inventory now in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid.

Not long after the manuscript's return to Spanish royal ownership, Charles IV was forced off the throne by Napoleon, who replaced him with his brother Joseph Bonaparte in 1808. Joseph had his own seal stamped inside the new bindings he commissioned for many books in the library, especially those that had only recently entered the palace. This seal, now lost from the Murúa, survived until 1961, when it was removed for the rebinding of the manuscript.

In 1813, the manuscript entered a new phase and played a new role as a pawn in European historical events during the Peninsular Wars to drive the French from Spain. Assisting Spain was England, which sent its most dashing military hero, Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, to command the combined Anglo-Spanish troops. In the aftermath of the decisive Battle of Vitoria, Joseph Bonaparte attempted to escape into France in a caravan of carriages loaded with books and paintings from the palace. When he realized that Wellington's men had his entourage surrounded, Joseph is said to have leapt onto a waiting horse and galloped to safety over the Pyrenees, leaving his looted treasures behind.

Wellington seized them, had them shipped to England and asked his brother, Henry Wellesley, British ambassador to Spain, to arrange for their evaluation in London and speedy return to the

newly reinstated king Fernando VII. His brother appreciated the importance of the hoard, and tried for two years through diplomatic channels in England to get them all returned to the royal collections. In 1816, in one of his only known acts of generosity, Fernando officially declined to accept them back, making a gift to Wellington in gratitude for his role in removing the Bonapartes. Thus, 200 years after the manuscript reached what Murúa had hoped would be its final home, it left Spain and settled in England.

Not only had the manuscript survived this bloody episode, but it also took part in another turning point, this time in the history of collecting. In the aftermath of the French Revolution and the Peninsular Wars, among other erupting conflicts, private collections went abroad in droves, often for the first time since their creation, and primarily to England, either as war booty or for sales forced by the newly impoverished circumstances of the nobility in war-torn countries. It was in this period that the art of Spain, and in this case its colonies, first became known and desirable outside the empire, widening the definition of England's national patrimony, as it came to be understood in 20<sup>th</sup>-century hindsight.

The manuscript might also have entered the pantheon of English literature. After reading Robertson's history of Peru, Wellington realized the value of the manuscript, and in 1824 lent it to Sir Walter Scott, thinking that it would make good material for him. History does not record Scott's reaction, but he returned it without making use of it. With that dismissal, it gathered dust in the Wellington library for the next 125 years.

In 1945 its fortunes reversed when the manuscript was rediscovered and immediately introduced to the scholarly community by the 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Wellington, an amateur historian.

In 1961, while still in the Wellington collection, the manuscript was rebound in London, probably for at least the third time in its history. In addition to the loss of Joseph Bonaparte's seal, other historical information could have been lost when the book was rebound. To further complicate matters, the Wellington manuscript has suffered numerous alterations that cannot be conclusively dated, thereby frustrating a full understanding of the author's intentions. A number of scribal hands are apparent in the manuscript, and their analysis would help to sort out the layers of emendations. Murúa himself struck and corrected his own texts, and later Inquisition censors in Spain may have done the same with controversial passages about banned Inca practices. Several folios contain sheets with illustrations pasted onto the rectos of earlier text pages that Murúa had discarded. These were split apart around 1979 when with the New York dealer H.P. Kraus, revealing very interesting texts. In addition, many folios, including whole chapters listed in the table of contents, have been excised from the manuscript, leaving only ruled stubs. Did Murúa shape his text this way, or was it an editor, Inquisition censor, collector, or some combination?

Many books acquired by Wellington after the Battle of Vitoria, including the Murúa, were auctioned at Sotheby's London in 1979 and bought by H. P. Kraus, who sold the Murúa to Peter and Irene Ludwig, collectors in Cologne with extensive holdings in European illuminated manuscripts. They kept this collection together only until 1983, when it was sold *en bloc* to the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

Although the Murúa may seem like an orphan within the Getty's otherwise entirely European illuminated manuscripts, over the last twenty years since its arrival in Los Angeles it has been consistently the most often consulted item in the Getty's holdings. Its travels are not entirely over, because the Metropolitan Museum in New York will feature it in an exhibition opening next month. The Getty will soon be devoting an exhibition, a facsimile publication, workshops and eventual web publication to the manuscript, to facilitate progress in various areas of scholarship, such as scientific testing of its pigments and inks, sorting out the artistic and scribal hands, as well as the texts. The manuscript, in very good state despite its peregrinations, has found a resting place back in the Americas, where it at last basks in the light of much well deserved attention.