

## Notes Tupac Amaru II (1742 – 1780)



Tupac Amaru's birth name (1742) was José Gabriel Condorcanqui Noguera. He was the leader of a massive 18<sup>th</sup> century rebellion by thousands of Quechuas, who were and still are the descendants of the Incas in the region of Perú and Bolivia. During the last decades of the Spanish empire in the Andean region, Tupac Amaru led a militant uprising against the Spanish colonial forces and society. He was great-grandson descendant of the last Inca emperor, who was actually named Tupac Amaru. The latter Inca emperor died in 1571. José Gabriel Condorcanqui Noguera was therefore the legal heir of the Incas. He was educated by the Jesuits in the school of San Francisco de Borja in Cuzco. In 1760, he married Micaela Bastidas Puyucahua.

Because of his nobility he was given the Spanish government gave him the title of the *marqués de Oropesa*, and he was named *cacique* (head) of two Quechua regions of Peru, Tungasuca and Pampamarca. Despite his formal education, privilege, and comfort, he made a common cause with the Quechuas, who were virtual slaves in the Spanish colonial mines and mills in the high Andes. At first, in vain he asked the Spanish colonial governor to improve living conditions for the Quechuas. When he failed to get the governor to help, he changed his name to Tupac Amaru II while shifting from a Spanish colonial lifestyle to a traditional Quechua lifestyle. In 1780, he put together an army of

75,000 Quechua soldiers which took armed control of southern Perú and most of Bolivia. His forces captured and executed the governor in 1780. This was the most serious uprising (there had been many smaller ones) against Spain's colonial system in two centuries. Spain's reaction to this insurrection was to wage war on him and his army. The Spanish army captured Tupac Amaru and his entire family. They were all condemned to death. The Spanish executioners forced him to watch the execution of his whole family. Then they cut out his tongue and quartered him by tying his limbs to four horses that tore his body apart. In reprisal for this rebellion, Spain's colonial army killed 80,000 Quechuas.

As a result of this Tupac Amaru's rebellion and his martyr's death, he became a mythical figure in the Peruvian struggle for independence. He also became a central figure in Peruvian indigenous people's human rights movements throughout the following centuries and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a second result of Tupac Amaru's fleetingly successful rebellion, the Spanish authorities outlawed all things identified with the Incas—language, clothing, customs, religion, etc.. When Perú became an independent republic in 1825, there was hope that conditions for the indigenous peoples would improve, but a complete improvement for the living conditions of Perú's pre-Columbian peoples remains an on-going process. It is symbolically and culturally significant that, first, during the presidency of Alejandro Toledo (2001-2008), an ethnic Quechua, and his leftist French anthropologist wife, Éliane Karp, the Inca Machu Picchu treasures that Hiram Bingham had taken to Yale University following his 1911 discovery of Machu Picchu were returned to Perú and, second, the monumental statue of Francisco Pizarro that had been erected in Lima's central Plaza de Armas was removed and situated, sans pedestal, alongside a freeway overpass.