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The Imprisonment of Blas Valera: Heresy and Inca History in Colonial Peru¹

SABINE HYLAND

In 1989 Italian scholars Carlo Animato, Paolo Rossi, and Clara Miccinelli published part of an unknown seventeenth-century manuscript written in code by the Jesuit chronicler Juan Anello Oliva and his confrere Juan Antonio Cumis. In this brief series of texts known as the Naples document, Oliva and Cumis made a startling claim: that Blas Valera, the renowned sixteenth-century Jesuit chronicler of the Incas, had been imprisoned by the Jesuits for his heretical writings about Inca history and religion, and not punished by the Inquisition for seducing women in the confessional, as the Jesuit leadership had falsely claimed.² This article will examine whether these claims are true. Modern scholars, such as Rubén Vargas Ugarte, have asserted unequivocally that Valera was a victim of the Inquisition, imprisoned for fornication.³ However, documents from the archives of the Spanish Inquisition in the Archivo Histórico Nacional in Madrid can confirm the veracity of the rumors reported by Oliva and Cumis in 1637. According to manuscript sources in the archive, Valera was convicted not by the Inquisition but by the

¹ This research was funded in part through a travel fellowship from the National Science Foundation (1990) and through a Williams Research Fellowship from Yale University (1991). An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Northeast Andean Ethnohistory and Archaeology Conference at the University of Pennsylvania, 19 October 1996. The author is currently writing a biography of Blas Valera.

² Carlo Animato, Paolo A. Rossi, and Clara Miccinelli, *Quipu: Il nodo parlante dei misteriosi Incas* (Genova: Edizioni Culturali Internazionali Genova, 1989), 37, 69-70. The Naples document was first brought to the attention of the scholarly community in this work by Animato et al., which includes a deciphered transcription of the first part of Oliva's coded material. The entire text of Cumis' and Oliva's portions of the Naples document has been published by Laura Laurencich Minelli, Clara Miccinelli, and Carlo Animato, "Il Documento Seicentesco 'Historia Et Rudimenta Linguae Piruanorum,'" *Studi e materiale, storia delle religioni*, 61 (Rome: n.p., 1995).

³ Rubén Vargas Ugarte, *Historia de la Compañía de Jesús en el Perú* (Burgos: Aldecoa, 1963), 1:251.

Jesuits themselves for his teachings on Inca language and religion. In addition, direct testimony in the Inquisition archives indicates that the Jesuit superiors lied about their role in his conviction, claiming that his harsh punishment was by order of the Holy Office.

By the time Cumis and Oliva made their allegations, Valera had already been dead for forty years; their statements reflected rumors that had circulated in great secrecy within the Society of Jesus in both Peru and Europe since Valera's imprisonment more than fifty years earlier. Valera clearly had not been forgotten by his fellow religious, but the need for secrecy was still apparent in discussing Valera's case in 1637; Oliva, for example, wrote his portion of the document in code to guard it from the eyes of his superiors.⁴ This concern with secrecy reflects the threats experienced by the Jesuits in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from both the Spanish Crown and the Spanish Inquisition, who at different times nearly destroyed the fledgling order.⁵ Throughout the latter part of the sixteenth century, Philip II of Spain worked fervently to bring the Society under his personal control for the stated goal of enforcing religious and political orthodoxy. Although Philip was unable to assert his authority over the Society, the Jesuit General Claudius Aquaviva was forced to use extreme care not to give the Spanish Crown an excuse for subsuming the Jesuits under Spanish control. Likewise, the Spanish Inquisition resented the newly founded order, and periodically tried to suppress it. For example, in the 1580s, the inquisitors in Valladolid imprisoned the leading Jesuit theologian Father Marcenius on trumped-up charges of heresy and attempted to use this as an excuse for driving the Jesuits out of Spain.⁶ The inquisitors' efforts ultimately failed, but they

⁴ It was common for institutions and individuals in the Spanish colonial world to be concerned over the possibility of their written words falling into the wrong hands. Many of the Spanish state papers, for example, were written in code so that foreign governments could not have easy access to these documents. The Jesuits occasionally used ciphers in their communications between Peru and Rome.

⁵ Philip II of Spain was initially suspicious of the Jesuits (founded in 1540) in part because of the prominence of Italians within the Society. Influenced by English Jesuits who had taken refuge at the Spanish Court, he eventually looked more kindly on the Society. Nonetheless, he attempted but failed to have the Society placed under his supervision. See León Lopetegui, *José de Acosta y las misiones*; and B. Schneider, "Acquaviva, Claudius" in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), 1:89-90.

⁶ Barbara Frances Mary Neave, Comtess de Courson, *The Jesuits: Their Foundation and History* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1879), 1:159-60.

illustrate the pressures faced by the Jesuits in Peru. The members of the Society therefore were strongly discouraged from any theological or political discussions that suggested heresy or criticism of the Spanish Crown. In 1578 the Jesuit General Everardo Mercurian repeatedly ordered the Jesuits in Peru not to criticize Spanish policy in the Indies and to refrain from giving the viceroy and colonial authorities any reason whatsoever to remove the Society from its South American missions.⁷ The Naples document suggests the price paid by one Peruvian Jesuit, Blas Valera, for writing about Inca paganism in a manner bordering on heresy; the archival evidence presented below confirms the seriousness with which the Jesuits viewed Valera's heterodox beliefs.

Blas Valera, the outspoken defender of native religion, was born in 1544 in Chachapoyas, Peru, the illegitimate son of the conquistador Luis Valera and a native woman named Francisca Pérez.⁸ Based on evidence from Valera's own writings, most scholars have speculated that his mother was a member of Inca nobility associated with the court of Atahualpa.⁹ Valera joined the Jesuits in Lima on 29 November 1568, at the age of 24.¹⁰ He was one of several mestizos, valued for their language skills, who were admitted during the Society's first years in Peru. In 1570 Valera was assigned to the Jesuit mission in Huarochiri,¹¹ and by 1576 he was in Cuzco, where he

⁷ Mercurian's instructions to this effect can be seen in his letter of 1 October 1578 to Provincial José de Acosta, reproduced by Antonio de Egaña, ed., *Monumenta peruana II (1576-1580)* (Romae: Apud "Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu," 1958) 2:477-78. Similar instructions are found in Mercurian's next letter to Acosta, dated 15 November 1578, published in Egaña, *Monumenta peruana*, 2:565.

⁸ See the Jesuit Provincial Catalogue of 1569, published in Antonio de Egaña, ed., *Monumenta peruana* (Romae: Apud "Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu," 1954), 1:285. See also the entry for Blas Valera in the Libro del Noviciado, Biblioteca Nacional de Lima, Ms. Jesuítas, manuscript #227, f. 40, exp. 15, reproduced in José Toribio Polo, "Blas Valera," *Revista Histórica* 2 (1907):545-52.

⁹ See, for example, Julián Santisteban Ochoa, *Los cronistas del Perú: contribución al estudio de las fuentes de la historia peruana* (Cuzco: Imprenta D. Miranda, 1946), 66.

¹⁰ Egaña, *Monumenta peruana*, 1:285.

¹¹ An account of this mission can be found in an anonymous Jesuit history written in 1600. See the original text in Francisco Mateos, *Historia general de la Compañía de Jesús en la Provincia del Perú* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, 1944), 115-219.

taught Latin and preached to and confessed natives.¹² In Cuzco he also led the *Nombre de Jesús* confraternity, whose membership included many powerful and wealthy Inca nobles. Every Wednesday and Friday, Valera led the confraternity in spiritual discussions in Quechua. It is likely that these meetings served as forums for Valera and other young Inca intellectuals to develop their views on Inca religion and history. Among the Incas who participated, Valera mentions Don Luis Inga, author of two works on Inca religion in Quechua (both lost), and Juan Huallpa Inca, a courtier who had formerly been in charge of Emperor Huayna Capac's wardrobe.¹³ In a work written later in life, Valera referred to discussions with Inca noblemen in Cuzco on matters such as the nature of the Andean creator god, the development of idolatry in Peru, and the manner of Inca ritual sacrifice.¹⁴ From these comments it appears that Valera's spiritual discussions with the native elites in this confraternity were wide-ranging, yet focused on the similarities between the ancient Andean faith and the Christian religion.

In 1576, the Society, following its normal policy of regularly transferring priests, decided to send Valera from Cuzco to Potosí. The Inca nobles in the *Nombre de Jesús* confraternity staged massive protests against his departure. The Jesuit provincial, José de Acosta, described how "an infinity" of native people passed one day and one night crying outside the Jesuit college and then marched through the streets, shouting and shedding more tears in the hopes of detaining Valera in Cuzco. This native group then presented Acosta with a written petition, asking, according to Acosta, "that we not take from them Father Valera, by whose means they knew God and were Christian; and not content with this, they went to the house of the *corregidor* of this city, and they gave such a cry, that they made him come another turn with them and the other Spaniards about the same

¹² This information is from the Provincial Catalogue published in Egaña, *Monumenta peruana*, 2:140-41.

¹³ According to a report made in Cuzco on 13 March 1571, Juan Huallpa was "de casta de Ingas, que en tiempo de Guayna Capac fué 'veedor de su ropa, y costejador si la dicha ropa se hacia del largo y medida que era menester para el vestido del dicho Inga.'" Fernando Montesinos, *Memorias antiguas historiales y políticas del Perú*, ed. Marcos Jiménez de la Espada (Madrid: Imprenta de Miguel Ginesta, 1882), 211.

¹⁴ See, for example, Blas Valera, "Relación de las costumbres antiguas de los naturales del Pirú," in *Crónicas peruanas de interés indígena*, ed. Francisco Esteve Barba (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1968), 153-57.

demand."¹⁵

Although Valera's departure from Cuzco was delayed because of the native protests, he was transferred by 1577 to Juli and by 1579 to Potosí.¹⁶ In 1582 he was recalled to Lima to work on the translation into Quechua of the catechism of the Third Lima Council. It was here that Valera's radical ideas on language more than likely came to the attention of his superiors. Unfortunately, most of Valera's writings have been lost, but his thought can be discerned in his few remaining texts in combination with citations of his lost works by other colonial writers.¹⁷

Central to Valera's theories about language was the belief that Quechua was the equivalent to Latin as a sacred tongue, able to make humans more receptive to the truths of Christianity. While other contemporary scholars, such as Domingo de Santo Tomás,¹⁸ viewed Quechua as the equal of European vernacular languages, Valera privileged the Inca tongue to a higher degree. The knowledge of Quechua, as with Latin, he alleged, conferred a host of intellectual and spiritual benefits. Learning Quechua, he wrote, "turns savages into civilized and conversible men."¹⁹ Repeatedly, Valera stated that

¹⁵ The original wording is: "...trayéndonos una petición escrita y pidiéndonos con mucho sentimiento, que no les quitásemos de aquí el Padre Valera, por cuyo medio conocían a Dios y heran christianos; y no contentos con esto, fueron a casa del corregidor desta cibdad, y tanta grita le dieron, que le hizieron venir otra buelta con ellos y con otros españoles sobre la misma demanda...." Egaña, *Monumenta peruana*, 2:269-70. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.

¹⁶ See the documents printed in Egaña, *Monumenta peruana*, 2:335, and 2:812-13.

¹⁷ Valera's first work, a 1579 account of the conversion of the Andean peoples to Christianity, has been lost entirely. His *Historia Occidentalis* was damaged by fire in the English attack on Cádiz in 1596. The charred remnants of this work (now lost) were taken to Garcilaso de la Vega, who includes extensive quotations from Valera in his *Comentarios reales*. Valera also compiled a *Vocabulario* (also lost) containing detailed historical information; this text is quoted liberally by the chroniclers Juan Anello Oliva and Fernando Montesinos. Raimondo di Sangro, Prince of Sansevero, who owned a manuscript describing Valera's views on Quechua, preserved Valera's arguments in his *Lettera Apologetica* (Naples: n.p., 1750). The manuscript of Valera's remaining work, the *Relación de las costumbres antiguas*, still exists in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid, manuscript #3177.

¹⁸ See the discussion in Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes: Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) 263.

¹⁹ Attributed to Valera by Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, *Royal Commentaries of the Incas and General History of Peru*, trans. Harold V. Livermore (Austin:

learning the "royal" tongue, Quechua, increased both intelligence and civility: "All the Indians who...still retain the language of Cuzco are more civilized and intelligent than the rest..."²⁰ He went on to write that

...the common Indians [who] learn to speak the tongue of Cusco fluently... seem themselves nobler, more cultured and of better understanding...

...[Quechua] makes [the Indians] keener in understanding and more tractable and ingenious in what they learn.... Thus the Puquinas, Collas, Urus, Yuncas, and other rude and wild tribes, who speak even their own languages ill, seem to cast off their roughness and savagery when they learn the language of Cusco, and begin to aspire to a more civilized and courtly life, while their minds rise to higher things. Moreover, they grow better adapted to receive the doctrine of the Catholic Faith, and of course preachers who know this tongue well take pleasure in standing up to discuss higher things.... For just as the Indians who speak this tongue are of keener and more capacious intelligence, so also the language itself has greater scope and a wider variety of elegant ornaments....²¹

Valera clearly held an elevated view of Quechua, imbuing it with many of the attributes commonly assigned to Latin in the sixteenth century. His praise of Quechua held profound implications for the degree of "civilization" in the Inca Empire; to compare the "language of Cuzco" to Latin was to suggest that the Incas possessed the highest degree of culture possible, equal to that of the ancient Mediterranean world.

It is also worth noting how Valera made it quite clear that Quechua was an appropriate vehicle for the most sublime lessons of Christian doctrine when he stated, for instance, that the language is well adapted to discussing the "higher things" of the Catholic faith. At one point in his writings Valera quoted a Spanish priest who asks, "Is it possible that divine words, so sweet and mysterious, can be

University of Texas Press, 1987), 410.

²⁰ Attributed to Valera by Garcilaso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries*, 404.

²¹ Attributed to Valera by Garcilaso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries*, 409-10.

explained in so barbarous a tongue [as Quechua]?"²² This rhetorical question reflects the late sixteenth-century belief among many European and colonial theologians that native languages possessed no words equivalent to basic Christian concepts, such as "God," "angel," "church," "chastity," etc. This lack of translatability was regarded as a sign of the alleged spiritual inferiority of native tongues. Valera opposed this belief, common among the Jesuits by the 1580s, that Andean languages were morally inferior. Instead, Valera maintained that Quechua terms embodied Christian religious concepts as expressed in Latin, as well as in Hebrew and Greek. For example, he states that in the Quechua term for God, "*Illa Tecce*," *Illa* (God) is the equivalent of *El* in Hebrew, *Theos* in Greek, and *Deus* in Latin, while *Tecce* denotes the classical formulation of God as "*principium rerum sine principio*"—the beginning of things without beginning.²³ The lofty property of being able to contain sacred Christian truths, it should be noted, was not accorded by Valera to any other native tongue. Valera's arguments placed Quechua firmly in the constellation of sacred languages along with Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

Valera also pointed out that the Incas, as promulgators of Quechua, were responding to God's call to prepare the way for Christianity. In imposing Quechua, the Incas were guided by "Divine Providence" and by "natural law" to lay the groundwork for Christianization:

Among the many means which the Divine Majesty has used to prepare and summon these barbarous and wild peoples [the Uriquillas and Chirihuanas] to the preaching of the gospel we must mention the care and diligence taken by the Inca kings in indoctrinating their vassals with the light of natural law so that all should speak one tongue, which was to prove one of the chief vehicles to this end. And all the Inca kings—without the guidance of Divine Providence—paid particular attention to the spread of the language throughout the empire.²⁴

²² Attributed to Valera by Garcilaso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries*, 409-10.

²³ Valera, "Relación de las costumbres," 153. Valera wrote, "*Illa* es lo mismo que *El*, hebreo; *Ela*, siro; *Theos*, griego; *Deus*, latino. —*Tecce* es lo mismo que *principium rerum sine principio*."

²⁴ Attributed to Valera by Garcilaso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries*, 410.

The clear implication of Valera's words is that the holy aspects of Inca faith and culture should be preserved in Andean Christianity.

Valera's ideas went beyond the notion that the Incas had been chosen by God to prepare the Andes for the gospel. In his explanation of the Quechua deities Pachacamac and Viracocha, Valera maintained that the Incas had already worshipped God the Father and Christ His Son prior to the Spanish invasion of Peru. Pachacamac, a local pre-Inca oracle, was described by Valera as "God, the Creator of the Universe."²⁵ In common with some of the other Andean Christians in Cuzco,²⁶ Valera considered Pachacamac to be the true God, the same deity worshipped by the Hebrews and Christians. Yet unlike other Andean Christians, he also claimed that Viracocha, an Inca god, was the Incarnation of the true God as Man, in other words, Christ. In his bold and unprecedented assertion about Viracocha, Valera argued that Christ had appeared to an ancient Inca prince, inspiring the prince to win a major military victory against the Chanca, a local indigenous tribe. The prince, who called this apparition of Christ "Viracocha," then took the name of Inca Viracocha in honor of God's appearance and instituted Viracocha's worship as one of the most important Inca cults.²⁷ While Christian philosophers could accept that a non-Christian people might have knowledge of the true God, it was considered impossible for Christ to have appeared to a pagan nation. Valera's suggestion that the Incas' pagan god Viracocha was actually Christ, and thus, that the Incas were practically Christians long before the arrival of the Spanish, was an argument unique to him, one that bordered on heresy.

In his estimation of native religion, Valera was at odds with most of the Jesuit leadership in Peru at the time. For example, his superior José de Acosta, believed that Andean peoples including the Incas held only a "sparse and attenuated knowledge" of the true God. Furthermore, Acosta argued that native worship of the gods Viracocha, Pachacamac, and others was so profoundly compromised by

²⁵ Sangro, *Lettera Apologetica*, 246.

²⁶ Garcilaso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries*, 70-71.

²⁷ Sangro, *Lettera Apologetica*, 246. This incident refers to the famous apparition of Viracocha to the son of emperor Yahuar Huacac. The prince was encouraged by Viracocha to defeat the Chanca, who had raised an army against Cuzco, while the emperor Yahuar Huacac fled in disgrace. By claiming that Viracocha was actually Christ, Valera was implying not only that the Incas were virtual Christians but that the Incas' military expansion was due to divine intervention.

blasphemous idolatries that such native cults must be entirely extirpated.²⁸ Any aspect of Inca faith or ritual which seemed similar to Christianity was, Acosta contended, merely an act of demonic imitation. Valera's view of the Incas as proto-Christians, and of the Inca god Viracocha as Christ, would have been considered idolatrous and capable of endangering the entire Jesuit mission in Peru.²⁹

Throughout 1582 and early 1583, Valera continued his duties in Lima, but by April 1583 he was in prison on mysterious charges. When the Jesuit procurator for the Peruvian province, Father Andrés López, left for Europe on 11 April 1583, part of his mission was to explain to the Jesuit General in Rome the nature of Valera's crime and whether the chronicler ought to be dismissed from the Society of Jesus. This information had to be communicated personally, it was stated, because the Valera affair was too sensitive to commit to paper.³⁰

At this point in Valera's biography, the question arises as to whether Valera was imprisoned by the Inquisition for fornication, as Vargas Ugarte has claimed, or whether he was jailed by the Jesuits themselves for heresy. It is worth noting that, according to unpublished documents in the Inquisition archives in Madrid, the Jesuit house in Lima rented out prison cells to the Inquisition throughout the late 1500s.³¹ Thus any prisoner confined to the basement cells of the

²⁸ José de Acosta, *De Promulgando Evangelio apud Barbaros: Sive de Procrvranda Indorum Salute, libri sexi* (Lyon: Sumptibus Lavrentii Anisson, 1670), 36-40, 42-46, 237-40, and 251-54.

²⁹ The increasing hostility of the Spanish clergy to native Andean culture and religion by the 1580s is discussed in MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes*, 249ff.

³⁰ This letter from Father Juan de Atienza to General Aquaviva is reproduced in Antonio de Egaña, ed., *Monumenta peruana* (Romae: Apud "Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu," 1961), 3:675. In addition to writing in code, the Jesuits also relied upon personal communication to limit the possibility that their enemies might acquire sensitive information about the Society.

³¹ This custom arose from the occasion when the Peruvian inquisitors asked the Lima Jesuits to house some captured English pirates, Joan Oxnem, Joan Butler, Enrique Butler, and Thomas Xeroel, who were to be tried first by the Inquisition for heresy before being handed over to the secular courts on charges of piracy. The inquisitors requested this arrangement out of the belief that among the Peruvian Jesuits there would be some who spoke English and could translate for the pirates. See Charges against Oxnem and crew, Lima, March 1580, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid (hereinafter AHN), Inquisición, libro 1027, fol. 107 and fol. 143r. In fact, Luis Lopéz shared a prison cell with Enrique Butler in the Jesuit house in Lima. This practice of renting out prison cells to the Inquisition may have become

Jesuit house in Lima might have been imprisoned by either the Jesuits or the Inquisition; only the inquisitors and the Jesuit superiors would have known for certain.

During the 1580s, two Jesuit priests were convicted in Lima by the Inquisition for seducing young women. According to case reports in the Inquisition archives, Father Miguel de Fuentes was found guilty of seducing a group of young lay women and most of the younger nuns in the Convent of la Concepción in Lima. For his crimes the Holy Office in Lima sentenced him to be flogged and to not hear confessions from women for ten years.³² However, he was able to continue to serve as a priest within the Society in Peru and was even made head of the Jesuit house in Juli after his conviction. In the second case, Father Luis López was convicted of the brutal rape of Doña María Pizarro and several other women in Lima. The Tribunal sentenced him to return to a Jesuit house in Spain, where he was to endure four years of house arrest. In addition, he was ordered never to confess women.³³ Neither he nor Fuentes were removed from the Society, and both were able to continue as priests, with the stipulation that they could not confess women. Nothing was added to their sentences by the Society; the Jesuit superiors clearly believed that the priests' relatively mild sentences were appropriate for their crimes.

The cases against Fuentes and López lasted for several years and appear repeatedly in the Inquisition archives. Valera, by contrast, is never once mentioned as a suspect in the detailed reports prepared by the Peruvian inquisitors, and there is no evidence whatsoever to lend credence to the supposition that he was convicted by the Inquisition. Furthermore, in the same month that he was first imprisoned, a *flotilla* arrived from Spain bearing authorization from the Roman Curia allowing the Jesuits in Peru to deal with cases of heresy without

customary due to a lack of space in the Inquisition prison. Certainly in 1595, the Jesuits obliged the Inquisition by housing the captured English pirates Richard Hawkins and his crew. See, Charges against Richard Hawkins, Lima, 4 November 1595, AHN, Inquisición, libro 1036, fol. 122r.

³² Sentence against P. Miguel de Fuentes, Lima, [no date], AHN, Inquisición, leg. 1647, exp. 2; and Relación de negocios sentenciados e determinados abril 1581-febrero 1582, [Lima], AHN, Inquisición, libro 1027, fol. 195r-v.

³³ Sentence against P. Luis López, Lima, 19 March 1582, AHN, Inquisición, leg. 1654, exp. 14; and Relación de negocios sentenciados e determinados abril 1581-febrero 1582, [Lima], AHN, Inquisición, libro 1027, fol. 195v.

recourse to the Inquisition.³⁴ Prior to receiving this privilege, the Jesuits would legally have had to turn over to the Holy Office anyone, priest or lay person, whom they suspected of heretical tendencies. In other words, as soon as the Jesuits in Peru received permission to deal with heresy cases on their own, Valera was immediately thrown into prison, thus suggesting that he was condemned by his own order for his heterodox views.³⁵

Valera's punishment, which was decided upon by the Jesuit General in Rome, Father Claudio Aquaviva, and the Peruvian provincial, was very severe for his reported crime of fornication, in marked contrast to the sentences of Fuentes and Lopez.³⁶ Sentenced to spend four years in a prison cell in the Jesuit house in Lima, he was forced to fast, pray, and practice weekly "mortifications," which consisted of floggings under the supervision of the provincial. Valera's health appears to have been broken during his difficult incarceration: prior to his imprisonment the Jesuit reports about him stress his hardiness and good health; while in prison and for the rest of his life, however, he was constantly plagued by illness. After the first four years of incarceration in an underground cell, Valera was offered the opportunity to leave the Jesuits and join another religious order. Maintaining his innocence, he refused to leave the Society and, according to the terms of his initial sentence, was put under house arrest in Lima for six years from 1587 to 1593. He was not allowed to perform any of the sacramental functions of a priest, talk to outsiders, or leave the house for any reason.

Before Valera finished serving his sentence of house arrest, José

³⁴ See *Indice de Bullas, Brebes y Monitorios...*, Archivo del Colegio de Lima [1508-1634], 1634, Colegio de San Pablo, Lima, Yale University Latin American Manuscript Collection, series II, box 2, folder 2, fol. 3v.

³⁵ It is worth noting that none of the other mestizo Jesuits in Peru were charged with any crime or punished in any way in the sixteenth century. For a discussion of the Jesuit policy concerning mestizos and the role played by Valera in that policy, see Sabine Hyland, "Conversion, Custom and 'Culture': Jesuit Racial Policy in 16th Century Peru" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1994); and Sabine Hyland, "Illegitimacy and Racial Hierarchy in the Peruvian Priesthood: A 17th Century Dispute," *The Catholic Historical Review* (forthcoming, 1998).

³⁶ The letter outlining Valera's punishment is printed in Antonio de Egaña, ed., *Monumenta peruana* (Romae: Apud "Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu," 1966), 4:302-03. Note that Valera was sentenced by the Jesuits themselves and not by the Holy Office, another indication that he was never tried by the Inquisition for fornication.

de Acosta spoke with the Jesuit General in Rome, urging that Valera be sent to Spain.³⁷ Acosta argued that this was necessary because Valera's continuing presence in Lima posed a danger, which he did not specify, to Peru. General Aquaviva concurred with Acosta's suggestion, and in 1593 Valera was transferred to Quito, with the intention that he would sail to Spain the following year.³⁸ However, in Quito he fell very ill, and his journey was delayed until 1595. In May 1596 Valera finally arrived in Spain, where he was sent to Cádiz and placed under the care of Father Cristóbal Méndez, the provincial of Andalucía, who was ordered to keep him locked up until further notice. On 3 June 1596, Méndez wrote to General Aquaviva that Valera appeared to have been reformed.³⁹ The Andalucian provincial had permitted Valera to teach in the Jesuit grade school in Cádiz, and he requested of the general that Valera be allowed to resume his duties as priest. Aquaviva's reply was adamantly negative, emphasizing that although Valera could teach other subjects, by no means was he *ever* to be allowed to teach grammar. Since Fathers Fuentes and Lopez had been restricted from confessing women, one may gain insight into the nature of Valera's crime from the nature of his punishment.

For Valera, however, the question of being permitted to teach grammar soon became moot. During the latter half of 1596, the English pirate Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, sacked the city of Cádiz, and his men roamed the city, savagely beating any priests they found. Valera, whose health was already weak, was badly injured in the brutal attack and was removed to Málaga. There he died soon after on 2 April 1597, at the age of 53, an exile far from the homeland to which he had devoted his life.⁴⁰

³⁷ Printed in Egaña, *Monumenta peruana*, 4:819.

³⁸ Valera's departure is mentioned in a letter published in Antonio de Egaña, ed., *Monumenta peruana* (Romae: Apud "Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu," 1970), 5:646.

³⁹ See Antonio de Egaña, ed., *Monumenta peruana* (Romae: Apud "Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu," 1974), 6:168-69.

⁴⁰ Valera's last days are described in José Durand Flórez, "Los últimos días de Blas Valera," in *Libro de Homenaje a Aurelio Miro Quesada Sosa* (Lima: Taller Gráfico, P.L. Villanueva, 1987) 409-20. According to Durand Florez, "En un necrologio manuscrito...existente en el Archivo de la provincia jesuita de Toledo, aparece Blas Valera, del colegio de Málaga, entre los muertos en ese año [1597]" (p. 417).

A close examination of Valera's case suggests that he was imprisoned not by the Inquisition but by the Jesuits themselves for heresy. The absence of any record of Valera as a suspect in the inquisition archives, the determination of his sentence by his Jesuit superiors rather than by the inquisitors, the relative severity of his sentence, and the stipulation that he never teach grammar, all imply that Valera was punished by the Society for his teachings and not for fornication. This view of Valera's case is supported further by the testimony of Father Lucio Garcete, an Italian Jesuit. On 11 August 1591, Garcete testified about Valera's case before the Inquisition tribunal in Panama City. In his deposition before the Holy Office, Garcete stated that he had taught theology for five years in the Jesuit house in Lima and had been recently made superior of the Jesuit house in Panama City. During his time in Peru, he wrote, he had become concerned about the actions of the Peruvian superiors, citing what he called "the very harsh and long imprisonment" ("*estrechisima y larga prission*") of Valera as an example of the questionable activities of the Spanish Jesuits in Peru. Garcete emphasized his superiors' fears of the Spanish Inquisition, which, he stated, increased during the Inquisition's imprisonment of Father Marcenius in Valladolid and the subsequent attempt to drive the Jesuits out of Spain. One can certainly imagine the Jesuits' concern over this; had the inquisitors been successful in using Marcenius' alleged heresy to remove the Jesuits from Spain, the Jesuits would have had to abandon their Peruvian missions as well. In his discussion of the Jesuits' newly-granted privilege to deal with cases of heresy without recourse to the Inquisition, Garcete mentioned that the Jesuits in Peru claimed that Valera was a prisoner of the Inquisition, which he believed was simply not true. Moreover, he also implied that Valera's incarceration, carried out according to this privilege which specifically addressed the crime of heresy, was not for fornication.⁴¹

It was, of course, a serious crime for the Jesuits in Peru to make misrepresentations about the Inquisition, but the tribunal in Panama City did not follow up on Garcete's testimony.⁴² Soon after giving his

⁴¹ Testimony of P. Lucio Garcete, Panama City, 11 August 1591, AHN, Inquisición, libro 1035, fol. 227r-v. According to Garcete, Valera served only three years of his four year prison term before beginning his sentence of house arrest.

⁴² Many of the accusations received by the Inquisitional Tribunals in the Americas were never investigated. See, for example, *Procesos penitenciados y deliberados*

deposition in Panama City, Garcete was recalled to Italy. According to a letter sent from Padre Juan Ordoñez in Seville to General Aquaviva in Rome, Garcete had threatened to go to the Inquisition tribunal with reports of Jesuit misdoings in Peru. Therefore, Ordoñez wrote, it was judged safer to send him to Italy as soon as possible, where his threats could do little damage. He arrived in Cádiz in 1593, from where he booked a passage to Italy.⁴³ In Italy he was sent to the Jesuit house in Naples where he would have met the novice Juan Anello Oliva, who would later help write the Naples document.⁴⁴ Garcete apparently told Oliva about the Valera affair. In 1597 Oliva left for Peru, and it is likely that he took with him the story of how Blas Valera was imprisoned by the Jesuits for his writings about the Incas. The evidence shows clearly that this part of Oliva's and Cumis's story—that Valera had been jailed secretly for heresy by the Jesuits, who had claimed falsely that Valera was convicted by the Inquisition of fornication—is true. Moreover, it reveals that Garcete's testimony may have been the means for the tale of Valera's disgrace and imprisonment spreading secretly through the Society in Europe and in Peru, forming the basis of rumors and speculations.

In conclusion, one must consider why it is significant whether Valera was imprisoned by the Inquisition or by the Jesuits, and for the crime of heresy or of fornication. Certainly Valera's story is a compelling example of courage in championing Andean civilization. Willing to suffer imprisonment and exile to defend his mother's people, Valera merits comparison with Bartolomé de las Casas, the great Dominican preacher and writer.

Additionally, Valera's story deserves investigation for the light it sheds on the Naples document, the series of provocative seventeenth-century texts discovered in the Cera family papers belonging to the Countess Clara Miccinelli. This document has raised a firestorm of controversy for making the following claims: that Blas Valera was secretly imprisoned by the Jesuits for idolatry; that the Incas possessed a secret syllabic writing system taught by Valera (an example of this writing accompanies the original manuscript); and

[Lima, March 1571 to February 1573], AHN, Inquisición, libro 1027, fol. 18r, in which the inquisitor states that many of the cases reported to the tribunal in those years were not investigated because of the limitations of time and resources.

⁴³ Egaña, *Monumenta peruana*, 4:30-32.

⁴⁴ Animato, et al., *Quipu: Il nodo parlante*, 140-41.

that the Jesuits faked Valera's death in 1597 so that the latter could return secretly to Peru and write the *Nueva corónica [sic] y buen gobierno* attributed to Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala. Because of the startling nature of its allegations, various scholars have questioned the manuscript's authenticity.⁴⁵ While not addressing all the claims listed here, this study has demonstrated that documents from the archives of the Spanish Inquisition corroborate Oliva's testimony about the Jesuit treatment of Valera, which had been unknown until now.

Finally, Valera's crime and imprisonment reveals a great deal concerning the production of knowledge about the Incas in this period, especially about the constraints placed on Jesuit chroniclers like Acosta, Arriaga, Cobo, and Oliva. Oliva was hardly paranoid to write his portion of the Naples document in code; he knew that his Spanish superiors were capable of going to great lengths to silence subordinates whose writings posed a threat to the Society. His own chronicle, *Historia del Perú y varones insignes*, was rigorously censored by his superiors, who ordered him to remove several chapters, including one condemning Spanish abuse of the native peoples in which he referred to the conquistadors as the "sergeants of Satan," and another about his fellow Jesuit chronicler, José de Arriaga.⁴⁶ Even José de Acosta, one of the most powerful and respected Spanish Jesuits of his time, had several chapters describing Spanish atrocities against the Indians removed from *De procuranda*

⁴⁵ See David Domenici and Viviano Domenici, "Talking Knots of the Inka," *Archaeology* 49:6 (1996):50-58. See also Sabine Hyland, "Il Documenti Napoli" and "Juan Anello Oliva" in the *Guide to Documentary Sources for Andean Art History and Archaeology* (forthcoming, Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC).

⁴⁶ Long sections were crossed out in Oliva's original manuscript, "Vidas de varones ilustres de la Compañía de Jesús en la Provincia del Perú," [Lima, 1631], British Library, Additional manuscripts 25327, so that Oliva could receive the approval to publish this work, given by Provincial Nicolas Durán in 1631 (unnumbered folio in the manuscript). The sections blacked out on Spanish atrocities run from fol. 153v-fol. 162r. This work was not published in Spanish until 1895. The 1895 edition, based on the officially approved version of the manuscript found in the Biblioteca Nacional in Lima (which burned down early in this century, destroying most of its manuscripts including this one), does not include any of the material crossed out in the original manuscript. See Juan Anello Oliva, *Historia del Perú y varones insignes en santidad de la Compañía de Jesús*, ed. Juan Francisco Pazos Varela and Luis Varela y Obregoso (Lima: Imprenta de San Pedro, 1895).

indorum salute by order of the Jesuit General Aquaviva.⁴⁷ In the Naples document, Oliva accused the Jesuits in Peru of destroying manuscripts about the Incas that did not conform to Jesuit ideas of orthodoxy.⁴⁸ Certainly there are many chronicles cited by Valera which have been lost, and it is quite possible that these works were intentionally destroyed by the Peruvian Jesuits. The story of Blas Valera—his beliefs, his writings, and his trial—reveals that he was just one of many Jesuit chroniclers in Peru whose textual and cultural production requires a further investigation into the possible external influences on their works.

⁴⁷ León Lopetegui, *El Padre José de Acosta S.I. y las misiones* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, 1942).

⁴⁸ Laurencich Minelli, et al., "Il Documento Seicentesco 'Historia et Rudimenta Linguae Piruanorum,'" 387.