

## The Numismatic Legacy of the Insurrection of Túpac Amaru II

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### Early History

On the afternoon of September 21, 1572, in the central plaza of Cuzco, Perú, amidst the strident cries and lamentations of 15,000 assembled chieftains and Indian peoples of Cuzco and the surrounding lands, Ynga Topa Amaro, the last *Inca*, or emperor of the Inca people, slowly ascended to the platform of the scaffold there erected. The clamor in the plaza was deafening. The emperor paused, then raised his hands. Instantly, a silence so profound fell upon the plaza that "it seemed as if no living soul were present."<sup>1</sup> Felipe Túpac Amaru, as the emperor was called by the Spaniards, then spoke, telling his people that he was now a baptized Christian, to believe in the one true God of the Christians, and exhorting his people to renounce the Sun God Punchau and his false religion of idolatry.<sup>2</sup>

A delegation of priests and leading citizens immediately set forth to the house of His Excellency Don Francisco de Toledo, Viceroy of Spain, and informed him of the confession and exhortations pronounced minutes earlier by Túpac Amaru. Falling on their knees they begged him to spare the Inca's life, and send him to Spain for trial instead. Viceroy Toledo heard them out, then silently rendered his decision to deny their petition for clemency. The chief of his personal guard then rode to the plaza conveying Toledo's orders that the execution of Túpac Amaru proceed forthwith. The emperor was made to lie down and his head was cut off, and thereafter impaled upon a lance in the plaza, where it remained for two days.

The consequences of this seminal decision were to reverberate through the centuries, altering the course of human history, and impacting us to this day in the global war against terrorism. The misunderstandings, murder and intrigue that led Francisco de Toledo, a harsh man who at the same time drafted some of the most far-reaching and progressive legislation protecting the Indians against abuse, to make this decision is itself one of the most fascinating chapters in history.

### The Insurrection



Francisco de Toledo

Fast forward now two hundred and eight years. It is November 4, 1780, and attending a dinner in the town of Yanooqa, Perú in honor of the priest of Yanasoa, is Don Antonio de Arriaga, corregidor of the province of Tinta. Also attending, is Jose Gabriel Condorcanqui Túpac Amaru, age 42, chief of the Indian tribes of Surimana, Pampamarca and Tungasuca. He is a creole, educated as of age 10 by the Jesuits in their school for Indian chieftains.

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<sup>1</sup>Levillier, Roberto, *Don Francisco de Toledo - Supremo Organizador del Perdu*, Madrid, 1935, p. 348. [My translation.]

<sup>2</sup>Eyewitness accounts of this confession vary, and some assert it may not have occurred, although the majority of reputable sources agree that it did.

He had approached the Spanish authorities as early as 1776, requesting a number of social reforms, including primarily the abolition of the *mita*<sup>3</sup> for Indian labor in the mines.

He had also, during a visit to the Royal Audiencia in Lima, obtained a decree in his favor declaring him to be the fifth generation grandson by direct lineal descent of Felipe Túpac Amaro, last of the Inca emperors. During the official ceremony he had been honored and feted as such, and the Magistrate had spoken to him "such things about his noble blood and rights to the crown of that empire that he became emboldened with pride, and conceived very high things of himself, having been by all accounts heretofore a very devout, humble and attentive man."<sup>4</sup>



**Túpac Amaru II**

But back to the dinner that fateful November 4th: Túpac Amaru II, as he was now known, excused himself early from the dinner, claiming he had guests newly arrived from Cuzco awaiting him. Not long after, the corregidor, Don Antonio de Arriaga, also arose and left the party, departing with just his scribe. Túpac Amaru lay in wait along the road, and as Don Antonio rode past, Túpac ambushed him and took him prisoner.

During Arriaga's imprisonment, Túpac Amaru II berated him over the Spanish authorities' unjust execution of his ancestor Túpac Amaru I, and swore his revenge. He forced Don Antonio's scribe to write out orders commanding Don Antonio's cashier to send Don Antonio the greater part of his fortune in silver and gold, weapons, and mules. Six days later he dragged Don Antonio to the gallows, and assuring all folk present that he was acting directly upon orders of King Charles III, proceeded to hang him by a thin braided leather cord, which broke immediately. A thick cord was then brought, tossed

over the gallows crossbar and tied around Don Antonio's neck. He was then hoisted into the air while two men pulled down on his feet, until he died.<sup>5</sup> Thus exploded the greatest Indian insurrection

<sup>3</sup> The *mita* was a system of forced Indian labor, in place since the sixteenth century, and refined by Viceroy Toledo to ensure a ready and steady supply of labor, principally to the mines. It originally required an Indian drafted as a *mitayo* to work four months out of every twelve, but by the eighteenth century the shortage of available labor often led to abuses and much longer periods of service. See Bakewell, Peter, *Silver and Entrepreneurship in Seventeenth-Century Potosí*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1988.

<sup>4</sup> Anon., *Relation de los Pasajes Acaecidos en Esta Ciudad del Cuzco con Motivo de la Rebelión Causada por el indio Jose Gabriel Tupá Amaro Cacique del Pueblo de Tungasuca Anexo de la Doctrina de Panpamarca, Sita en la Provincia de Mintá*, December 13, 1780, p. 27. (This is an unpublished document handwritten by an unnamed cleric who recounts in great detail the beginning and day-to-day-events of the rebellion as it was occurring. It was unearthed by the numismatist Carlos Jara Moreno and can be found in the National Archives of Chile, in the section devoted to the library of Benjamin Vicuña Mackenna.)

<sup>5</sup> The details contained in this greatly abbreviated account of the execution of Corregidor Arriaga is from the same manuscript cited above and is here published for the first time.

and rebellion of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, eventually costing upwards of 100,000 lives, and extending as far as the kingdom of Nueva Granada, unchaining the events that led to the eventual independence of South America from Spain. During five months of intense battles, a number of Indian chiefs loyal to the Spanish authorities allied themselves with the Spanish forces, leading in April of 1781 to the capture of Túpac Amaru II and the retaking of Cuzco by the Spanish forces. While this did not in itself end the uprising, it certainly tipped the balance in favor of the Spaniards. The war continued until early 1783, when the last of the uprisen Indians were put down and their towns retaken.



On the 18<sup>th</sup> of May, 1781, Túpac Amaru II was dragged to the central plaza in Cuzco and had his tongue cut out. Then he was tied by his hands and feet to the breast straps of four horses. The horses were pointed in the four cardinal directions and made to advance. Despite the urgings of four men at the horses, all they could accomplish was to leave Túpac Amaru "suspended in the air like a spider." After half an hour of trying to draw and quarter him alive, Visitator Areche of the Court, fed up with the failure to tear him apart, ordered his torture ended by having him decapitated.<sup>6</sup> He was carried under the gallows, where his head was cut off and his arms and legs also parted from his body. His head and limbs were then dispatched to widely scattered parts of the kingdom and publicly displayed. His body and that of his wife, Micaela Bástidas, also executed, were burned to ashes. Thus ended the life of José Gabriel Condorcanqui Túpac Amaru II, in the same plaza and in similar manner as that of his thrice great grandfather's, the last *Inca*, emperor Túpac Amaru I.

#### Numismatic Legacy

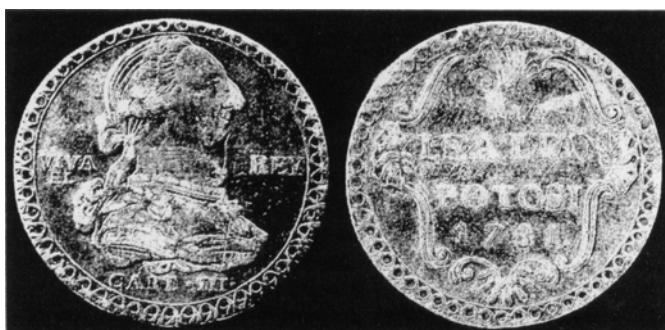
On the 16<sup>th</sup> of May, 1781, two days before Túpac Amaru II's execution, the regent of the Royal Audiencia of La Plata in the province of Charcas, Don Jerónimo Manuel de Ruedas, wrote to Viceroy Juan José de Vértiz in Lima, informing him that he had of his own volition and authority ordered silver medals to be made at the mint of Potosi with the bust of the king to reward certain Indians loyal to the Spanish side. Ruedas personally decorated the chests of the Indian chieftains of the provinces of Porco and Yamparáez with these medals. In his letter he sought official sanction for his actions,

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<sup>6</sup> [http://del-sur.org/SecPer/person.php?id=j\\_tamaru.txt](http://del-sur.org/SecPer/person.php?id=j_tamaru.txt)

and asked the Viceroy to so inform the king, if he thought fit to do so.<sup>7</sup> Ruedas was roundly criticized by some for exceeding his authority and for his presumption in having acted in the king's name without prior authorization, even though it had not been at the king's expense. Generally, in lieu of these medals, portrait coins of 8 Reales, or of 4 and 8 Escudos in gold had been used, hanging them from a ribbon around the recipient's neck. The reasons for so unprecedented an action lie in the magnitude of the services rendered by these loyal Indians in the Spanish cause. They not only fought alongside the Spanish but also recovered and returned to the authorities vast amounts of plundered treasure and personal belongings that had been seized by the rebels throughout the course of the conflict. Ruedas stood firm and justified his actions in letters detailing the reasons for his awards.

Only one of these medals, dated 1781, is known to have survived to this day. It is described in Alejandro Rosa's work<sup>8</sup> and pedigreed to the famed Andres Lamas collection from whence it undoubtedly passed to the collection of Enrique Peña (since Peña was the principal buyer at the auction of this collection in 1905). It resided as late as 1989 in the Fernández Blanco Museum in Buenos Aires, appearing illustrated for the first time in Cunietti-Ferrando.<sup>9</sup> This silver medal carries the legend "A la Lealtad" (To Loyalty) and "Potosi, 1781." It is supposedly the size of a 4 Reales coin. Interestingly, correspondence from Viceroy Vértiz in 1782 indicates that Ruedas had had these medals made on two different occasions during 1781.



The unique Fernández Blanco Museum piece, illustrated in Cunietti-Ferrando

In 1783, the surprising response to Viceroy Vértiz's report on Jerónimo Ruedas' actions arrived from King Charles III in Spain, who had decreed on January 28<sup>th</sup> of that year that he not only approved of Ruedas' actions but instructed Vértiz to cause additional medals in both silver and gold to be made in his name, bearing the inscription "En Premio de la Fidelidad", for the viceroy to award to those Indian chieftains and nobles who deserved it, and in accordance with their rank and merit. The viceroy immediately ordered the mints at Potosi and Lima to strike a few medals in accordance with the king's wishes.

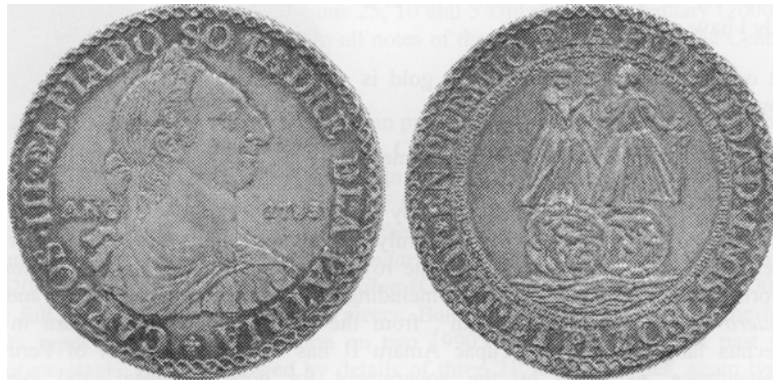
<sup>7</sup> Medina, Jose Toribio, *Medallas Coloniales Hispano-Americanas*, Santiago, 1900, pp. 24-30, citing therein the documents first published by Alejandro Rosa in 1898 (see Footnote 7).

<sup>8</sup> Rosa, Alejandro, *Medallas y Monedas de la Republica Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1898, pp. 2-6.

<sup>9</sup> Cunietti-Ferrando, Arnaldo J., *Historia de la Moneda Argentina: 400 Años de Historia y Arte*, Buenos Aires, 1989, p. 21.

A select few of the Indians who received these new medals ordered by the king are mentioned by name in the previously unpublished documents that Jose Toribio Medina first brought to light in 1900. These singled out the Indian Toribio Vilca Apaza, chief of the town of Azángaro, and Manuel Chuquicuanca, *cacique* of the Province of Azángaro. Medina describes that a few gold medals and a number of silver medals were issued but that he had never seen one, and asserts that they would obviously be different from the ones originally issued by Ruedas in 1781. Alejandro Rosa also mentioned that he had never seen an example. It was not until 1976, when Cunietti-Ferrando published a small article on these medals,<sup>10</sup> that an example of one was illustrated for the first time. It complies exactly with the king's instructions that it should carry the motto *En Premio de la Fidelidad* ("In Reward of Fidelity"). This specimen was holed and seems (from the rather poor illustration) to grade no more than barely VF by wear. Most unfortunately, the date was not discernible, even in the enlarged image in the *Cuadernos* article. Moreover, Cunietti did not reproduce the illustration in his 1989 book on Argentinean numismatics<sup>11</sup> (wherein, as mentioned earlier, he does illustrate the piece of 1781), since by that time he no longer owned the medal. The current whereabouts of this piece are unknown to me.

In January 1997, the second known example of this medal surfaced, virtually unnoticed, in an auction in Switzerland.<sup>12</sup> Its description in this sale was perfunctory, its great rarity unmentioned. This magnificent piece is exactly the same type as the damaged example illustrated by Cunietti in 1976, but is unholed and in beautiful condition. Lo, the mystery of the date was now dispelled! It is 1783. It was spotted by the very knowledgeable dealer Louis Hudson of Greensboro, a cognoscente of Latin American numismatics, who recognized its importance immediately. He gleefully acquired it for only 575 Swiss Francs. Mr. Hudson retained the medal for three years, and only reluctantly decided to part with it in 2004, having turned down a number of offers for it over the years.



**(Enlarged x1.25, actual size approximately 35 mm)**

<sup>10</sup> Cunietti Ferrando, Arnaldo J., *La Medalla de Premio a los Caciques Fieles a Espana Durante la Rebelión Tupac Amaru*, in *Numismática* (Journal of the Sociedad Numismática del Peru) No. 24, Lima, March 1976, pp. 13-15, and *Las Medallas de Premio a los Caciques Fieles a Espana Durante la Rebelión de Tupac Amaru*, in *Cuadernos de Numismático y Ciencias Historicas* (Journal of the Centro Numismático Buenos Aires), Volume V, No. 19, Buenos Aires, August, 1976, pp. 37-40.

<sup>11</sup> Cunietti-Ferrando, *Historia...*, p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> Swiss Bank Corp, Sale No. 42, Basel, 21-23 January 1997, lot 2745.

The obverse legend reads CARLOS III. EL PIADOSO PADRE DE LA PATRIA. ("Charles III, The Merciful Father of the Homeland"), and distributed to either side of his bust, AÑO 1783. ("Year 1783").

The reverse legend reads EN PREMIO DE LA FIDELIDAD. (In Reward of Fidelity.) JUST. ET PAZOSC. SUNT (*Justitia et Pax Osculate Sunt*: "Justice and Peace Kiss"). Standing atop the globes of the old and new worlds which rest on the ocean waves are two female figures sharing a flower, clearly the allegorical figures of Justice and Peace.

The medal's diameter varies slightly from 35.0 to 35.2 mm, being larger than a coin of 4 Reales but not as large as that of 8 Reales, yet it weighs 13.30 grams, corresponding exactly to the weight of a 4 Reales. It is of course a trifle thinner than the latter. It has a plain edge, hand filed to give it a crude diagonal reeding which extends most of the way around. This is perfectly logical in that the intermediate diameter of the planchet would not have fit any of the edge-milling machines for standard-width coinage strip at the mint. It is very interesting to note on the reverse the nostalgic resurrection of the waves and globes design utilizing the corresponding device punches of the 8 Real denomination from the reverse of the recently retired pillars and waves (*columnarios*) coinage.

The medal bears no indication of its mint of origin, so we cannot assert for certain whether it was struck in Potosi or in Lima. Nevertheless, I believe a careful comparison of the portrait, letter, and design element punches with the coins from these mints may reveal linkages that will permit us to assign it definitively to one or the other. This is a study I have not yet undertaken.

Not one of the examples struck in gold is known to exist today.



**Jose Gabriel Condorcanqui  
Tupac Amaru II**

After his death, the person of Túpac Amaru II instantly became a folk hero, and was hailed by many as the last Incan King. By the time the movement for independence truly got underway 40 years later, the Creole rebels were called "Tupamaros" by the royalist forces. To this day, revolutionary terrorist groups invoke his memory, including the *Tupamaros* of the 1970's and the *Sendero Luminoso* ("Shining Path", from the meaning of Túpac Amaru in the Quechua language). Today Túpac Amaru II has become a symbol of Peruvian independence, exploited by the government for popular appeal, and even a numismatic figure, appearing on the Peruvian 500 Intis of 1987.