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Spiritual Edification and Publishing Policies in Jesuit Work in South American Missions (Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries)

JUAN DEJO, S.J.

Writing as Part of the Society of Jesus's Policy for Spiritual Edification

On July 27, 1547, during the period when the Society of Jesus was beginning to expand and open schools, Ignatius of Loyola asked his secretary, Juan Alfonso de Polanco, to write a foundational text for what we might call a substratum of "Jesuit spiritual policies" on the objectives for any kind of writing in the order.¹ This was the origin of the *Formula scribendi*, adopted during the Second General Congregation under the government of Francisco de Borja (in office 1565–72) (decree 54, after his election in 1565).

The governments of Everard Mercurian (in office 1573–80), and, later on, Claudio Acquaviva (in office 1581–1615), refined the role of writing for the Jesuits, but the basis for these changes was still found in Polanco's letter. In a manner analogous to the relationship that the Spiritual Exercises have with the entire institutional structure, the *Formula scribendi* and its initial rules are related to the regulation of the Jesuits' lives. Furthermore, both are related to an understanding of apostolic activity as essential to the Society's further development.

Polanco wrote two letters in 1547.² Both were dated on the same day, and they indicated that the aim of the Jesuits' writing was the edification of those who would eventually read their texts, no matter the kind. Consequently, the texts should only be read by those who already had a disposition prone to edification:

People who tend to be spiritual, benevolent, and pious, and not those with a mundane spirit, who do not like or misinterpret such things. And because this seems to be the general situation, it could harm spiritual edification for some spiritual people; therefore, it is more convenient to decide whether to

¹ This paper is a revised version of a conference presentation at the symposium "Engaging Sources: The Tradition and Future of Collecting History in the Society of Jesus," organized by the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies, Boston College, June 11–13, 2019.

² *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu* (1903) (MHSI), *Monumenta Ignatiana*, series Prima, Imp. Lopez del Horno, Madrid, doc. 179–80, 22:536–49.

not show anything, or only some parts that could help their edification, while not showing other parts.³

The first of these letters addresses the spiritual meaning behind the framework of the exercise of writing, based on three benefits or objectives: (1) for the institution; (2) for the universal church; and finally, (3) for Jesuits themselves.

Regarding the first objective, the intention behind writing (starting with letters) for the Society, Polanco reminds his readers that this should help to unite the missionaries who were dispersed among the various missions. He highlighted the importance of cultivating mutual love, “preserved and enlivened with memory, which takes the place of actual presence”:

For among those who normally are absent from one another, as are we, can see how much it is important to refresh the memory of each other to keep our love alive. The demonstration of charity by those who write has the same effect; as he obliges, so it also helps love. And these three ways of help we can learn from heretics, who, at great cost to the common good of Christianity, by communicating among themselves, fortify and love each other.⁴

All Jesuits should, above all, encourage each other to persevere in that which they have promised for their lives and to strengthen their bonds with God. In this way, they will also stimulate a healthy “mimetic rivalry,” with Jesus Christ as model, thus following the Renaissance discipline of the *Imitatio Christi* (Imitation of Christ), according to Thomas à Kempis’s spiritual methodology. Writing also works as an incentive because it engenders the desire to “wake up and do something that can be written.” That is, it inspires people to do things worth writing about. The writing of stories also reassured Jesuit authorities, since, by reading them, they could corroborate if their men were spiritually stable and adapting well to their respective missions.

³ MHSI, 22:543: “Como suelen personas espirituales y benevolas y pías, o [y] no como suelen hombres llenos de espíritu del mundo, que no gustan o interpretan mal semejantes cosas. Y bien que esto parece en general ser assi, ya podría ser que algunos espirituales se edificassen menos que algunos mundanos. Assi que vea la discrecion [*sic*] si sería conveniente a los tales no les mostrar nada, o mostrar parte, con que se edificassen, y parte no [...]”

⁴ MHSI, 22:538: “Pues entre los que por el ordinario andan ausentes uno de otro, como los nuestros, puede si ver cuánto es menester que se refresque la memoria de unos para con otros para entretener el amor. Haze también el mismo efecto la demostración de caridad de quien escribe que, como obliga, así también ayuda a amar. Y estas tres ayudas aprenderemos de los herejes, que a costa grande del bien común de la cristiandad, con el comunicar se unen, fortifican y aman.”

Regarding the benefits for the Catholic Church, Jesuit texts, when read by outsiders, should always edify them. Following the logic of the spreading of spiritual ideals for “salvation,” Polanco was convinced that, as all Jesuits “represent” their superiors in their missions, it would also help them not to lose sight of God’s meaning or purpose due to their multiple labors. The dispersal of their attention among their various responsibilities threatened their unity with the most universal aspect of everything, that is, God:

Because they will be better served and helped when more advice is given, for their good, and better means to do so are found; for this, it will be helpful to communicate the goings on here, and to relate them to the superior, so that he can see the entire work as it proceeds, because in this way he will be better able to think of something that could help he who works up close; who, because he is stretched thin and busy with particular details, may not be fully aware of the many things that could help him in the work of God.⁵

The scope of the Jesuits’ works helped the institution have a panoramic vision of how efficiently it was developing and evolving in its labors for the greater glory of God, highlighting the Society’s leadership as a model for religious life.

Finally, thanks to the exercise of writing or further reading of their narrations, the Jesuits increased their own certainty that God was directing their activities from within. They displayed their gratitude and ultimately increased their faith. Thus it was an opportunity to grow “glory and praise of God (which is the purpose of all the universe), if in their works, the better they do, the greater they honor him, as they manifest what he charges for the instruments, which his omnipotent hand wants to use.”⁶

Within this framework of the importance of writing as an identity and spiritual narrative, we cannot ignore the role of two principles drawn from the *Constitutions* and the *Formula* that gave rise to the Society: (1) the idea of “saving souls” and (2) the idea that serving the greater universal good gives greater glory to God than working for a particular good. These operative and metaphysical principles

⁵ MHSI, 22:539: “Por qué serán mejor servidos y ayudados cuanto con más consejo se atendiere a su bien y mejores medios para ello se buscaren: y a esto ayudará el comunicar las cosas acá, y el representarlas al superior, en manera que se pueda veer toda la obra cómo procede, porque así se podrá mejor pensar algo que ayude al que de cerca trabaja; que, por estar muy esparcido y ocupado en los particulares, es de creer que no cae en muchas cosas, que le ayudarían en la obra de Dios.”

⁶ MHSI, 22:540: “La gloria y alabanza de Dios (la qual es fin de todo el universo) si en las obras, que, quanto mejor se hacen, tanto a mayor honra suyas son, como en manifestar lo que él cobra por los instrumentos, que es su omnipotente mano quiere usar.”

(totality and universality) are the keys to understand the entire organizational infrastructure of the Jesuits' network.

Polanco's second letter reshapes the principles and values laid out in the first letter as a set of "Rules about How the Members of the Society of Jesus Should Write." The first letter had the purpose of defining written texts as tools for the edification of those who read the stories about work done by the Jesuits. Stories also had to be adequately conveyed through a specific order and structure, which would allow Jesuits around the globe to replicate, intensively and extensively, their spiritual identification with God. This idea was behind the notion of the rules. Polanco arranged what would become the basic outline of the *Formula scribendi*: (1) the letters to be received; (2) the letters to be sent (and first of all, what is to be written); (3) the way in which they are written; and (4) care in writing and sending letters. I will not go into further detail on these regulations but will rather read between the lines on how they are spiritually shaped by Polanco's first letter. For example, in the first section (mentioned above), he states that letters are not for everyone, recommending consideration of the convenience of showing them, or not, depending on the extent to which people have a real disposition to be "edified." The following section, on what letters should be sent, stipulates that "it is necessary to write and represent the entire state of spiritual affairs [*negocio espiritual*]." This "state," in Jesuit terms, is related to concrete evangelization: "First [communicate] what is done and what [activity] is attended, such as preaching, reading, confessing, exercising, conversation, study."⁷ Writing must be intended for "divine glory and the edification of those who hear it, and to see if the work is well done there or if it would be better to exercise elsewhere, etc." This kind of pragmatism, led by the spirit of *parrhesia*,⁸ maintained the institutional discourse elaborated by the global machinery established by Rome; eagerness for universal fruits justified the generation and classification of writing tools as a specialized system to disseminate the Spirit's activity. Every tool must also be read from the perspective of an autobiographical narrative. We can assume that institutional identity was being elaborated along with each individual's personal narrative. Biographical character can be individual and institutional; thus identity was elaborated through each of the Society's members' personal stories. A correlated dynamism was established between the spiritual and the concrete (apostolic activities), and between the individual and the corporate. Both, in turn, interacted to nourish each other. The Ignatian biography was the original model; his life nurtured the Spiritual Exercises, and these, in turn, replicated this founding experience:

⁷ MHSI, 22:544.

⁸ *Parrhesia* refers to candidly speaking the truth, following the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

12. Write about yourself, health, and the way you live in the body, [your habits of] eating, dressing, or [being at] home, etc.; 13. Describe how you feel in the spiritual realm, where weaknesses and temptations enter, and the special graces and favors of God; the one and the other as it edifies or if the story is useful for remedy, etc. From the colleges: here they will also write about quietness and peace or the opposite, if God allows; and how they are doing in their courses, and in general everything that a friend would want to know about the other.⁹

Description of daily routines and what they should be like is closely linked to spiritual experience in everyday life. A constant evaluative style is implemented with a recommendation similar to the structure of the Spiritual Exercises' "composition of place":

It would be good if every day, or at least sometime during the week, each one would look, as if from a high place, over all his work, how he proceeds, how he gains or loses, what means are best for God's service, and thus which ones should be taken, or continued, or left behind, or moved; and, from what he feels to be to the greater glory, do what he can according to his commitment and write it down, conferring with Father Superior, asking his advice.¹⁰

Therefore, the criterion of edification is what prevails, advising that one should write about the "spiritual business that he treats [*sic*]" and not about mundane things.¹¹

Writing tools began to be systematized thanks to Polanco's document and the rules it established. His indications for autobiographical accounts generated a wave of epistolary exchanges between all members of the Society, establishing one of the first global networks of spiritual communication. The narrative of Jesuit doings and actions gave shape to their spiritual realm, which in turn flowed through

⁹ MHSI, 22:546: Note similarities in ideas with the Contemplation with regard to attaining love and of *communication* being essential to any relationship. "12. Scriba de sí mismo, la salud, y el modo de bivar que tiene en lo corporal, el comer, vestir o casa, etc.; 13. Scriba cómo se alla [*sic*] en lo spiritual donde entran las flaquezas y tentaciones etc., y las gracias y favores especiales de Dios; lo uno y lo otro en quanto edifica o la relation es util para que se de remedio, etc. De los collegios: aqui se scrivirá también la quietud y paz, o lo contrario si Dios lo permittiese; y cómo estan adelante en sus cursos, y en general *todo lo que un amigo querria saber de otro.*"

¹⁰ MHSI, 22:545.

¹¹ MHSI, 22:544. The document gradually went toward the more concrete, recommending writing about houses and colleges, finding out about those who lived there, their health, economic origin, languages, and skills (MHSI, 22:545–46). It also stipulated a need to record those who left the Society. This was the origin of the catalogs, which would come to be of great importance for the organization of the institution.

the media of letters, catalogs, memorials, rules, and even “scrapbooks,” as recorded in some schools, which were a miscellaneous collection of memories from the Jesuit community that, in turn, served as spiritual mediation. These writing habits were more or less well established when the Jesuits went abroad. But how did they deal with new cultures and sensitivities in their communications? How could working with new languages influence them and their narratives?

New Challenges for Writing during the Society of Jesus’s Expansion: Beyond Edification?

When the Jesuits went beyond Europe, they ventured into unknown regions where languages had different cultural roots. The Americas were one of the first places to provide the Jesuits with the opportunity to experience linguistic deracination, which was reflected in their spiritual awareness. I propose that the new genre of writing grammar and vocabulary handbooks for native languages, while apparently practical, followed the prescriptions of writing for spiritual objectives. However, in this case, linguistic reflexivity in Jesuit missionaries not only produced semantic divergences but also had deep symbolic and spiritual effects of an intercultural nature, destabilizing certitudes and interfering in the very action of writing. The writings were still spiritual mediations, certainly, but would they help to edify, as required by Polanco’s institutional instructions?

The Jesuits arrived in Peru in 1568, when the Society was beginning to expand. They perceived that part of the difficulty of effectively communicating the Gospel was a lack of care in preparing the catechisms, but also, above all, the former missionaries’ ignorance of the native languages. In contrast to previous missionaries from different religious orders, a few years after their arrival some of the Jesuits were able to speak the native languages. Consequently, after a debate about the acceptance of “doctrines” (parochial systems dedicated to the religious formation of indigenous people), they began a praiseworthy project with the aim of systematizing the native languages and elaborating an editorial policy for doing so. Between the Jesuits’ arrival and the first printed “vocabularies” of native languages, more than thirty years elapsed. As a result, two milestones in the history of the Jesuits must be taken into account. First, a doctrine was established in the region of Juli, in the Altiplano, during the Jesuits’ provincial congregation of 1576. They also decided to print two catechisms, one in Aymara and the other in Quechua.¹² The second milestone was the participation of the Jesuits in Peru in the Third Council

¹² “Let them do Arts and books in the Aymara and Quichua languages,” postulate 5 at Provincial Congregations 1 and 2, *Monumenta Peruana*, 1576, doc. 23, 2:202–4.

of Lima in 1582, which led to policies focused more specifically on the missionary work carried out in the viceroyalty of Peru. Of the 119 decrees, thirty-six were related to indigenous catechesis; two versions of the catechism (the *Tercero catecismo y exposición de la fe de la doctrina cristiana por sermones* [Third catechism and exposition of the Christian doctrine for sermons]) were written out, one extended and the other abbreviated. They were printed in 1584–85 along with a *Confesionario para los curas de indios* (Confession booklet for the curate of the Indians) at the Jesuit College of Saint Paul in Lima. The Third Council of Lima encouraged the active learning of native languages, which influenced local Jesuit policies; Father Provincial Juan de Atienza, at the provincial congregation of 1594, for example, proposed that Jesuits must know local languages as a requisite for accessing the “fourth vow.” This criterion ended up being decisive even for the election of superiors.¹³

Forced or not, here was a new format of Jesuit writings that up until then had not been fully envisioned in the *Formula scribendi* and that amplified the scope of Polanco’s idealistic narrative. If all text written by Jesuits had to edify the spirit, how could grammatical texts achieve that aim? Or should they be read only as practical “tools” for the mission? As previously mentioned, the topic of native languages was not secondary in the Jesuits’ organizational policies in Peru. In fact, Saint Paul’s College in Lima established a chair of Quechua, which was later replicated in the College of Transfiguration in Cusco, as well as the colleges of Potosí and Chuquisaca¹⁴ with the Aymara language. The increase in this kind of linguistic awareness went hand in hand with an editorial policy for publishing texts.

One of the first Jesuits to write a systematic work on native languages with catechetical goals was Fr. Alonso de Barzana, who is said to have learned Quechua on his way to Peru under the guidance of the first vocabulary and grammar handbook developed previously by the Dominican friar Domingo de Santo Tomás. According to sources, Barzana also wrote a similar tool for Quechua and Aymara, as well as two versions of the catechism, abbreviated and extended.

The first works the Jesuits produced in Juli were Diego Torres Rubio’s *Arte de la lengua quechua* (The art of the Quechua language) and Ludovico Bertonio’s *Arte y grammatica muy copiosa de la lengua Aymara* (Very copious art and grammar of the Aymara language), published in Lima and Rome, both in 1603. The last edition, which was printed in 1612, was entitled *Arte de la lengua Aymara con una silva de frases de la misma lengua y declaración en romance* (The art of the Aymara language: A compendium of phrases in the same language and their equivalent meanings in Spanish). In the same year, the most renowned of all Bertonio’s

¹³ Aliocha Maldavsky, *Vocaciones inciertas: Misión y misioneros en la provincia jesuita del Perú en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Lima: IFEA-UARM, 2013), 227–28.

¹⁴ ARSI, Perú 4, Jesuit catalogs of 1583, 1598, 1606, 1618 etc.

books was edited, *Vocabulario de la lengua Aymara* (Vocabulary of the Aymara language). Diego González Holguín also published *Gramática* (Grammar [1607]) and *Arte y vocabulario* (Art and vocabulary [1608, 1614]). Torres Rubio did the same in Lima with his *Arte de la lengua aymara y un breve vocabulario* (Art of the Aymara language and a short vocabulary [1616]); he is also credited with a catechism in the Aymara language, published in 1604 in Madrid. Years later, in 1627, according to Enrique Torres Saldamando,¹⁵ he published *Arte de la lengua chiriguana* (Art of the Chiriguana language).

Bertonio's work went beyond the previous ones since his grammatical work was similar to two books of an apostolic nature published in a native language: *Libro de la vida y milagros de Nuestro Señor Iesu Christo en dos lenguas, Aymara y romance* (Book of life and miracles of Our Lord Jesus Christ in two languages, Aymara and romance [1612]), and a bilingual *Confesionario* (Confessionary [1612]), in Aymara and Spanish with an "instruction" on the seven sacraments.¹⁶

Consequently, Jesuits tried to reconstruct indigenous mental spaces, which gave them identity and shaped their spirituality, through the work of understanding their languages.

Born from missions, grammars were nurtured and prepared by experience according to the doctrine of Juli, which was so important that it even shaped the model for Paraguay's reductions. That is why the last set of printed texts I will refer to for the hypothesis of this article is that of Antonio Ruiz de Montoya.

¹⁵ Enrique Torres Saldamando, *Los antiguos jesuitas del Perú: Biografías y apuntes para su historia* (Lima: Imprenta Liberal, 1882).

¹⁶ Juan Dejo, "La misión jesuita en el Perú (siglos XVI–XVII)," in *La Iglesia San Pedro de Lima*, ed. Juan Dejo, Ramón Mujica Pinilla, and Luis Eduardo Wuffarden (Lima: Banco de Crédito del Perú, Lima, 2018), 37–73, here 62.

Table 1. Jesuit Grammarians in Peruvian Missions

Gonzalez Holguin	Ludovico Bertonio	Diego Torres Rubio	Antonio Ruiz de Montoya
<i>Gramática</i> (1609)	<i>Arte y gramática copiosa</i> (1603)	<i>Arte de la lengua Ay-mara compuesto por el padre Diego de Torres Rubio de la Compañía de Jesús</i> , 2nd ed. (Lima: Francisco del Canto, 1616)	<i>Arte y vocabulario de la lengua Guarani</i> , 1639
<i>Arte y vocabulario</i> (1609)	<i>Arte breve</i> (1603)	<i>Arte de la lengua Quichua</i> (Lima: Francisco Lasso, 1619)	<i>Tesoro de la lengua Guarani</i> (1640)
	<i>Arte con una silva de phrases</i> (1612)	<i>Catecismo</i>	<i>Catecismo</i> (1639)
	<i>Vocabulario (en dos partes)</i> (1612)		<i>Silex del divino amor</i> (1640[?])
	<i>Libro de la vida y milagros de Nto. Sr. IC</i> (1612)		
	<i>Confessionario copioso</i> (1612)		

My hypothesis is that the initial intent laid out in the *Formula scribendi* was maintained in the pragmatic spirit of the mission once it became a true evangelizing enterprise. Spiritual logic provided the endeavor of translation with a transcendental character that fell within the objective of preaching the Gospel. Thus, pastoral strategies to communicate the Christian faith to indigenous people extended the Jesuit policies for writing that, since their origin, had been understood as spiritual. Father Atienza, for example, advised that leisure time in Juli should be dedicated to the study of native languages.¹⁷ The apostolic tools of writing and, later, editorial activity, were part of the daily rhythm of regular Jesuit religious life. Grammar exercises, preaching, and teaching virtues were part of the same dynamic.

¹⁷ Letter of Fr. Atienza to the Jesuit community in Juli, *Monumenta Peruana* 4, doc. 18, May 25, 1586, 45.

It must be kept in mind that the orderly structure of an *Arte* came from the Latin teaching model and was a tool based on written language. However, native languages had a different framework. This therefore required previous ministerial work, as Sabine MacCormack pointed out years ago: “In terms of language, this meant that Christian virtue was adapted to Aymara grammar and ways of speaking and the grammar and ways of speaking were adapted to virtue.”¹⁸

Linguistic work reversed the role of Jesuits as evangelizers, as they became recipients of new knowledge. “The teacher, the Jesuit [i.e., Bertonio], became the student, and the Aymara people were the teachers, instructing him [Bertonio] in how to give voice to virtue in their language.”¹⁹

Writing Spiritual Narratives, Intercultural Experiences, and the Limits of “Edification”

Despite the difficulties it involved (approval, correction, and printing itself), printing handbooks of grammar and vocabulary became part of the policies promoted by the Jesuit authorities, especially after Juli legitimized this linguistic work. Ruiz de Montoya continued this work in Paraguay according to Bertonio’s Juli model by producing a grammar and a vocabulary, while also adding an innovative “treasure.”²⁰ Although linguistics had an *ad extra* objective for its practical application to apostolic work (by virtue of catechism), it also corresponded to a subjective experience of intercultural relationships displayed in the relentless quest to comprehend the Other’s language, which consequently produced linguistic tools. In other words, this work also had an *ad intra* impact, verified in Ruiz de Montoya’s *Silex of Divine Love*, a mystical treatise composed inside a Jesuit mission, which was rather unusual.

Among the many features of this text, I will highlight two ideas to express how working in the Other’s language allowed the Jesuits to live a spiritual experience that expanded the canons of Ignatian spirituality through a dialogue with indigenous cultures. The first is the role that Ruiz de Montoya’s *Silex* assigned to Guaraní culture in Christian and Ignatian spiritual practice and the claim that it possessed the conditions for spiritual experiences as relevant as those of Western

¹⁸ Sabine MacCormack, “Grammar and Virtue: The Program in Early Colonial Peru,” in *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773*, ed. John W. O’Malley et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 576–601, here 587.

¹⁹ MacCormack, “Grammar and Virtue.”

²⁰ The model was proposed by Portuguese Jesuit Manuel Álvares (1526–83), whose Latin method, *De institutione grammaticae libri tres* [Institution of grammar in three books] was published in Lisbon in 1572. This grammar handbook was recommended by the *Ratio studiorum* and used in most of the Jesuit colleges.

culture. The second idea is that missionary practices and spiritual exercise in the midst of nature, far from the urban context, would have aroused a series of questions about some of the features of Ignatian methodology. Those remarks, when read, may have awakened the authorities' suspicion, resulting in their refusal to send *Silex* to print.

Addressing a hypothetical reader (a Jesuit student interested in going to a remote mission?), Ruiz de Montoya gave the following piece of advice: "Stop composing places: stop imagining objects; only give shape to an *act of faith* in your mind, that God is in everything, and everything within you, more than you are in yourself."²¹

The "act of faith" was a practice of contemplative perception similar to that of Nordic mysticism, which Ruiz de Montoya had probably learned by way of sixteenth-century Spanish disseminators, but it was also similar in nature to the sensibility of the indigenous people of South America. Thus, he described the indigenous Ignacio Piraycí as his "master in prayer," who, before going about his labor, went to church and performed an "act of faith":

He adored the vivifying sacrament of the Eucharist, and as a source of grace much was communicated to him every day; the aspects of his prayer, the speeches; the composition of place was always just to believe that God was present everywhere. This act of faith was poured out through his continuous exercise and, without another nor any master other than the divine light, he took such advantage of virtue that his works were a testament of his inculpable life.²²

To say that this indigenous man had no master other than the light that God gave him in his prayer was perhaps the most radical argument; this reason alone may have sufficed for the text to be brought into question. However, Ruiz de Montoya's sympathy for this manner of prayer influenced him in such a way that not only did he turn from his Ignatian practices but he also concluded that other forms of prayer

²¹ "Deja aquí de componer lugares: de fingir objetos; forma un acto de fe que Dios está en todo y dentro de ti, todo, más que tú estás en ti mismo." Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, *Silex del divino amor* (1640). Transcription of the original manuscript in Juan Dejo, S.J., *Mística y espiritualidad: Misión jesuita en el Perú y el Paraguay durante el siglo XVIII* (Lima: Biblioteca Nacional del Perú-Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, 2018), 2:120, fol. 76^r.

²² *Silex del divino amor* (1640), 142, fol. 96^v: "Adoraba el vivífico sacramento de la eucaristía y como fuente y manantial de gracia le iba cada día comunicando mucha; los puntos de su oración, los discursos; *la composición de lugar fue siempre sola creer que Dios estaba en todo lugar presente*. Este acto de fe sólo tubo por su continuo ejercicio y sin otro, *ni otro maestro que la luz divina, aprovechó tanto en la virtud*, que sus obras fueron testimonio de su inculpada vida."

would be better to practice in a mission: “Tell me, how many years have you practiced spiritual consideration? Probably twenty or thirty. And what fruits have you reaped?”²³

Later, he goes even further:

You say that it is an intolerable burden to pray because of the composition of place, the materials, the forms, the speeches, the imaginations, the aspects, the reflections, and other factors that accompany it. The air you went out into barely touched them and made them vanish and transcend your presence, and you were not weighed down by it as you say that it is such a heavy burden that it is impossible to walk with. I say the same, and I further add that, with prayer being so tasty, so soft and sweet, and, nevertheless, even that brief time that you have it [Ignatian prayer], it is so bland, so insipid and scabrous that the clock slows down because of your desire to leave it.²⁴

These are only a few examples from the *Silex of Divine Love* that reflect the Jesuit author’s deep spiritual questioning in the midst of his mission. As a spiritual text, and since sources show that the Jesuit authorities promoted the printing of spiritual texts, it is important to ask why this text was never published despite having the characteristics of a manuscript made to be printed. This in turn leads to the question of what the censorship policies in the mission were, and to what extent a text questioning official Jesuit practices, while conferring spiritual agency to indigenous people, created difficulties for the discourse on “edification” as a requirement of Jesuit writing, as established by Polanco’s *Formula scribendi*.

I will end this reflection on the limits of the Jesuits’ exercise in writing, and its obligatorily edifying nature, with an enigma pending an answer. In a previous work, I proposed that the issue of *Silex* not being published is not a minor one, since all of Ruiz de Montoya’s other texts were published almost simultaneously in Spain; *Silex* is exceptional in this regard. A curious aspect of the manuscript I have worked with (most likely the “original” made for the printed version), is that the date of 1640 is written on its first page, which contradicts the historical data. The

²³ *Silex del divino amor* (1640), 122, fol. 78r: “Dime ¿qué años a que te exercitas en la consideración? Dirás que veinte o treinta. ¿Y qué fruto has cogido?”

²⁴ *Silex del divino amor* (1640), 138, fol. 92v: “Dices que es intolerable carga el traer la oración auestas todo el día porque la composición de lugar, las materias, las formas, los discursos, las imaginations, los puntos, las reflexiones y otros adherentes que la acompañan. Apenas los tocó el aire a que saliste, quando las desvaneciò y transmontó de tu presencia, y no te pesó de ello porque dizes que es carga tan pesada que es imposible caminar con ella. Lo mesmo digo yo, y aun te añado que siendo la oración de suyo tan sabrosa, tan suave y dulce, aun ese breve rato que la tienes te es tan desabrida, tan insulsa y escabrosa que ya tarda el reloj al deseo que tienes de dejarla.”

information circulated among the few scholars who have worked with this text is that it was written at the request of a young Jesuit, Francisco del Castillo, whose canonization is currently in process. In fact, in the voluminous file for this cause (initiated after del Castillo's death in the eighteenth century), located in the archbishop's archives in Lima, there is a 1774 copy of the manuscript of *Silex*, which was edited for the first time in 1991 by José Luis Rouillon, S.J. However, it seems to have been copied from a version written before the one prepared for printing.

The supposition (still held in the present) that *Silex* was written for the young del Castillo arose from Jesuits such as Francisco Jarque, Ruiz de Montoya's biographer, and was supported by del Castillo's autobiographical testimony:

This servant of God gave me some exercises, with which, and with the warnings and documents he gave me, and with the frequent spiritual conferences and talks we had on this matter of prayer, I acquired great ease in this holy exercise and prayer of union and stillness; for this reason, I took advantage of and also used an art that this spiritual father and great teacher of spirit composed for this holy exercise and mode of prayer and contemplation whose title is as follows: *Silex of Divine Love* [...].²⁵

However, in a letter dated May 29, 1652, addressed to the provincial father of Paraguay Juan Pastor, Ruiz de Montoya also mentions that he wrote this text at the request of a "person very much in love with God and eager to serve him"; the result of this petition was the *Silex*. In del Castillo's version, Ruiz de Montoya lived at Saint Paul's College; in Ruiz de Montoya's letter, though, transcribed by Jarque in 1652, he had already retired to Fundo Bocanegra, one of the properties the Jesuits owned eight miles away from the center of Lima. As Ruiz de Montoya later recalled, *Silex* came to his mind before the Blessed Sacrament at the Church of Callao.

Apart from these references, there are other observations made by the Jesuit missionary that contradict the supposition outlined earlier. Ruiz de Montoya seemed to be addressing his recommendations to someone who had been unsuccessfully exercising the Ignatian way over thirty years. Thus, if there were different

²⁵ Rubén Vargas Ugarte, S.J., *Autobiografía de un místico del siglo XVII: Francisco del Castillo* (Lima: Librería e Imprenta Gil, 1960), 100–1: "Me dio este siervo de Dios unos ejercicios, con los cuales y con las advertencias y documentos que me fue dando, y con las frecuentes conferencias y pláticas espirituales que teníamos de esta materia de la oración, fui adquiriendo muy grande facilidad en este santo ejercicio y oración de unión y quietud; para esto me aproveché y me valí también de un arte que este padre espiritual y aventajado maestro de espíritu me compuso para este santo ejercicio y modo de oración y contemplación cuyo título es como se sigue: *Silex del divino amor* [...]."

recipients for whom *Silex* was intended, this might indicate that the author had dedicated a more extensive span of time to writing *Silex*; it is therefore likely that several drafts were written before a final version was sent to Seville.

Similarly, in the same letter, Ruiz de Montoya mentioned difficulties resulting from two painted images in the manuscript that made it impossible to be printed in Lima. Thus, with the approval of Provincial Father Francisco de Contreras and Fr. Francisco de Soria, professors of Prima and Vespers, respectively, the copy was sent to Seville. Unfortunately, that copy was lost; according to del Castillo, this was due to a plague that struck Seville at that time.

To add further complexity to this storyline, as noted above, an explicit written date, “1640,” was found on the title page of the final version for print (contrary to the date of 1650, the year in which it was previously assumed to have been written), raising additional conjectures about this fascinating text.

There is also another factor that has not yet been sufficiently studied. It concerns a controversial figure, a Beata named Luisa Melgarejo, with whom *Silex* ends.²⁶ This woman frequented the spiritual circles of Lima’s vice royal society; she was close to Saint Rosa of Lima, as well as the Jesuits, to such a degree that she asked to be buried, like any other Jesuit or great donor, inside the church of Saint Paul’s College (today the Jesuit church of Saint Peter). This raises suspicions about the version with the 1640 date and the motives behind it. The manuscript of *Silex* 1991, the first edition (“originally signed” in 1650), mentions Melgarejo as still being alive. But she died in 1650. However, the 1640 copy I have used mentions the Beata as living in the past, assuming she was already dead. This apparent contradiction would demonstrate that the writing of *Silex* took a considerable time to be completed. But it also reveals some heterodoxy in Ruiz de Montoya’s spiritual interpretations, such as the depiction of the Beata living in the highest “mansion,” or level of the mystic “scales,” according to Ruiz de Montoya’s mystical perspective. The enigma persists; knowing that the book was completed and sent between 1650 and 1651, a signature clearly dating 1640 indicates perhaps more than an involuntary mistake. It is a mystery yet to be solved.

Nevertheless, the core of heterodoxy prevailed in Ruiz de Montoya’s spiritual experience in the mission, corresponding to his daily life with the indigenous people. I hope that by carefully reading this article, it is clearer how difficult it would have been for the authorities to ignore a criticism of the methodology of the Spiritual Exercises. It would not have been easy to accept, especially in the context of an evangelizing project. This criticism, however, must be read as an expression of two other issues. First, the extreme frustration experienced by Jesuits wanting to

²⁶ Historian Fernando Iwasaki has given further details about this enigmatic woman in a very interesting study backed up with many important quotes and references: Fernando Iwasaki, *Aplaca señor tu ira! Lo maravilloso y lo imaginario en Lima colonial* (Lima: Fondo de cultura económica, 2018).

feel greater concreteness in their connection with God due to the exhausting activities in the missionaries' daily life. And second, the increasing proximity with indigenous culture and its spirituality, which certainly contributed to some disruptions in the Jesuits' own spiritual certitudes. The idea of an indigenous person (Guaraní, although in the case of European readers, these differences were still very subtle) as an exemplary practitioner of mental prayer (and Ruiz de Montoya's master) suggested that native culture might have previous spiritual foundations, of a different kind from Christian values, but still legitimate.

It is likely that upon *Silex*'s arrival in Seville, at which point it had to pass through the established filters before printing, somebody's cautious observation put a stop to the process by declaring it "lost." Yet even if it was actually lost, the text could have been published later on, but it was not. A study of Jesuit spiritual works that never made it to print could perhaps shed more light on the underlying spiritual policies and lead to a better understanding of whether the principle of edification was a firm guide for all publishing decisions throughout time.

Conclusion

During the Society's first century of existence, the Jesuits' writings were inspired by the idea of "edification." Every Jesuit had this framework in mind while he informed or communicated with his brothers. Every letter was intended as a spiritual instrument to enhance feelings toward God and foster engagement with their mission. While the order was expanding around the world, other kinds of writings were promoted for wider audiences. Grammar tools were a "pre-text" for the expansion of Christian values once the Society of Jesus expanded beyond the western world. Edification was paired with preaching the Gospel, encouraging knowledge and use of native languages, in turn contributing to a deeper spiritual experience in which the originally linguistic exercise of interpretation led the Jesuits to challenge their cultural and spiritual self-understanding. The art-grammar and vocabulary models, ultimately intended for missionary work, evolved from an instrument of communication toward a spiritual artifact that helped the Jesuits improve their spiritual reflections and experiences, but not without being exposed to semantic and spiritual uncertainties.

In the long run, the elaboration of practical linguistic instruments (not only the narrative exercise prescribed by the *Formula scribendi*) also took the missionaries back to Polanco's original intentions.

However, a spiritual reflection taking into account indigenous narratives to the extent of embracing them too optimistically could have been seen as endangering the work of evangelization. Missionaries like Ruiz de Montoya thought that

they wrote to “edify” souls, but their critics and censors certainly had a different perspective on the task of understanding edification. Eventually, Ruiz de Montoya’s spiritual treatise was never printed and was only partially disseminated.

I have tried to address a question behind the Jesuit missionary spiritual experience in the midst of their living with indigenous non-western people. Broadening their limits in order to understand them better, some Jesuits developed bonds of affection until embracing otherness, despite the contradictions with the European spiritual narrative.

Nevertheless, even though there were institutional difficulties when trying to accept an intercultural experience as a foundation for a spiritual shift, the *Silex* remains, after all, an example for our edification. Reading between its lines, we can find a complex experience within Jesuit spiritual journeys that still impacts or affects us today. Although we have not yet fully clarified the dynamics of Jesuit publishing policies in the missions, we can indeed acknowledge how Polanco’s intentions were fulfilled. In other words, reading texts from past Jesuit missions beyond the context of their original production is still an opportunity for our spiritual edification.