

Part II: Girolamo Pallas's Handbook for Aspiring Missionaries

2.1. Pallas's Life and Treatise

Girolamo Pallas was born in Reggio Calabria in 1594.¹ He joined the Society of Jesus in 1610, completed his studies at the College of Messina, and left for Peru when he was twenty-three years old. Together with thirty European confreres, Pallas arrived about a year later in Lima. From there, he completed his education and professed his final vows. During his long life (he died aged seventy-six), he worked as a Latin teacher, rector, consultor, companion to a superior provincial, and a writer. As for his personal characteristics, his talents, judgment, and practical experience were always evaluated as average or good. His skills were considered suitable for multiple ministries: studies, governance, preaching, and missions.²

One of Pallas's first tasks as soon as he arrived in Peru was to compose a treatise about the country. He spent two years working on it, but did not do so on his own personal initiative—three men “ordered him to write these four lines.”³ They were his local superiors (Juan de Villalobos, Francisco de Contreras, and Juan Perlín), who not only formally agreed on the utility of such a publication, but must have thought it was very important that someone living in Peru would write

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- 1 For biographical information on Pallas, see the introduction by Hernández Palomo in Pallas, *Misión*, 11–34. See also Antonino Colajanni, “Il viaggio da Messina a Lima di un missionario gesuita italiano nel primo ‘600: Geronimo Pallas (s.j.) e la sua *Misión a las Indias* (1620),” *DADA: Rivista di Antropologia post-globale* 1 (2011): 65–80; Aliocha Mal-davsky, “Conectando territorios y sociedades: La movilidad de los misioneros jesuitas en el mundo ibérico (siglos XVI-XVIII),” *Historica* 38, no. 2 (2014): 71–109; Aliocha Mal-davsky, “Quitter l’Europe pour l’Amérique,” *Transversalités* 84 (2002): 153–72; and Paulina Numhauser, “¿Sublevando el Virreinato? Jesuitas italianos en el Virreinato del Perú del siglo XVII: Gerónimo Pallas (S.J.),” in *Sublevando el Virreinato: Documentos contestatarios a la historiografía tradicional del Perú Colonial*, ed. Paulina Numhauser and Laura Laurencich Minelli (Quito: Editorial Abya Yala, 2007), 73–124. Elisa Frei wishes to heartfully thank Antonio Acosta and Alessandro Arcangeli for the precious support, comments, and bibliography offered during the writing of this section of the book.
 - 2 See the *Catalogi secundi* of the Society of Jesus, as quoted in Pallas, *Misión*, 14. On the catalogs, see Cristiano Casalini, “Discerning Skills: Psychological Insight at the Core of Jesuit Identity,” in *Exploring Jesuit Distinctiveness: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Ways of Proceeding within the Society of Jesus*, ed. Robert Aleksander Maryks (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 189–211.
 - 3 “por mandado de los superiores me hallé obligado a escribir estos quatro renglones.” ARSI, *Peru* 22, letter from Pallas to General Vitelleschi dated Lima, April 30, 1620, quoted in Pallas, *Misión*, 21.

about it.⁴ Their goal was probably to warn their confreres in Europe and avoid any more expeditions of unsupportive (or even “dangerous”) missionaries.⁵

As Antonio Acosta Rodríguez well explained, “Pallas and his book belong to the context of European colonial expansion in the early modern period, and are related to multiple aspects pertaining not only to the internal functioning . . . and actions of the Society of Jesus, but also of the Spanish colonization process in the Indies, having as a background the economic and political network which the Society was a part of.”⁶

When Pallas wrote *Misión a las Indias*, he was just twenty-six years old, and had very limited experience in many respects. He based his text partly on the notes he took during his journey to the West. Two years, however, were not enough to become well acquainted with the topic he wanted to approach: he also had to be updated by his confreres, who were more familiar with the Peruvian missions.⁷ His preparation as a missionary was necessarily scant.

His experience as a writer was not any deeper. Pallas largely leaned on classical *autoritates*: biblical texts, the gospels, and the Christian fathers. He probably knew some of them by heart, even if he was not completely educated before leaving Italy; he could have accessed some others at the Jesuit libraries in Peru, even if he did not have too much time to study them. The contemporary sources Pallas mentions by name are not many: one among them was Pablo José Arriaga (1564–1622), a Jesuit whose life was devoted to the missions against “idolatry,” in practice and theory.⁸ Arriaga and Pallas definitely knew each other personally, but the latter never acknowledged Arriaga’s role as his main source for many sections of his manuscript. Finally, Pallas did not seem prepared for the mission in general: on how to apply for it, on what the journey would have been like, on the Peruvian situation, or on the indigenous cults.⁹

4 Pallas, *Misión*, 18–19.

5 Antonio Acosta, “¿Problemas en la expansión misionera Jesuita a comienzos del siglo XVII? Gerónimo Pallas en el Perú y su ‘Misión a las Indias,’” in *Sublevando el Virreinato*, 44, 67.

6 “Pallas y su libro se sitúan, pues, en el contexto de la expansión colonial moderna europea y están relacionados con una multiplicidad de aspectos no sólo del funcionamiento interno—no exento de polémica por aquellos años—y de la acción de la Compañía de Jesús, sino también del proceso colonizador español en Indias, con todo el trasfondo de relaciones económicas y políticas sobre las que se basaba y en las que, por cierto, la Compañía también participaba.” Acosta, “Problemas,” 39–40.

7 Hernández Palomo argues that thirty-three of the fifty-six chapters of *Misión a las Indias* originated from Pallas’s personal experience, while the others lean on other people’s reports, as accessed in oral or written form. Pallas, *Misión*, 20.

8 Arriaga wrote *Extirpación de la idolatría del Pirú*; this work, in contrast to *Misión a las Indias*, was published in Lima in 1621, but written in 1618. Pallas’s book was written in around 1621. For a synoptic table of the relevant portions of their work, see Antonio Acosta, “La idolatría indígena en la obra de Gerónimo Pallas (S.I.), Lima 1620,” in *Escrituras silenciadas en la época de Cervantes*, ed. Manuel Casado Arboniés (Madrid: Universidad de Alcalá Servicio de Publicaciones, 2006), 257.

9 Acosta, “Problemas,” 60.

All of these circumstances did not, however, prevent him from proudly sending his manuscript to the superior general Muzio Vitelleschi (1563–1645) in April, 1620. At the end of that year, Vitelleschi had already shared his opinion of Pallas's book and activities with the Peruvian provincial Herrán. To the latter, a few months before answering Pallas himself, the general wrote: "This brother [Pallas] should not engage in such work, but rather attend to his studies."¹⁰

Vitelleschi replied to Pallas at the beginning of the following year, kindly thanking him for his letter and manuscript. The general believed, however, that "the time you spent on it should have been better employed in your studies, and I think that this would have been to the greater glory of Our Lord; it is in the future that you will find time for this kind of endeavor."¹¹ On the same day, Vitelleschi sent another letter to the provincial Herrán, advising him not to allow those on missions in Peru to get distracted anymore, as had happened with Pallas.¹²

The reasons for not publishing this book were many: "His heterogeneous character . . . a certain superficiality in approaching the topics about missions . . . an unprecedented naivety . . . the author's youth and inexperience."¹³ Moreover, the biggest part of *Misión a las Indias* does not deal with spiritual advice or recommendations. Up to 65 percent of the book is, fundamentally, a travelogue: only 25 of the 432 total pages are committed to the pious topic of indigenous "idolatry."¹⁴

Misión a las Indias is structured as five books and divided further into chapters. The first book is dedicated to the "superstitions" that were threatening the spiritual salvation of the Peruvians, with a long detour on Pallas's journey from Italy to Spain. Book Two focuses on the overseas voyage and the various stops that were made, describing the customs of the peoples found in different

10 "no tiene el Hermano que ocuparse en obra semejante sino en atender a sus estudios." ARSI, *Peru* 2 (I), letter from Muzio Vitelleschi to the Peruvian provincial, Rome October 15, 1620, fol. 33.

11 "el tiempo que ha gastado en esto le ubiera empleado en sus estudios, y pienso que ubiera sido de mayor gloria de Nuestro Señor, que después tendrá tiempo para escribir esas y otras." ARSI, *Peru* 2 (1), *Epp. Gen.*, f. 64, Rome, February 25, 1621.

12 ARSI, *Peru* 2 (1), *Epp. Gen.*, f. 69, Rome 25 February 1621.

13 "su carácter heteróclito . . . una cierta ligereza en el tratamiento de temas de fondo que afectaban al propio sentido de la misión . . . inaudita ingenuidad . . . la juventud y la inexperiencia del autor." Acosta, "Problemas," 44. Moreover, as Aliocha Maldavsky points out, Pallas's text was too precise and sincere, and this could have led young Jesuits away from the path of indifference they were supposed to take after entering the Society of Jesus. In this regard see her monograph *Vocaciones inciertas. Misión y misioneros en la provincia jesuita del Perú en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Lima: CSIC-IFEA, 2013), esp. 247–48, and her essay "Entre mito, equívoco y saber: los jesuitas italianos y las misiones extraeuropeas en el siglo XVII," in *Missions d'évangélisation et circulation des savoirs, XVII-XVIII siècle*, ed. Charlotte De Castelneau L'Estoile (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2011), in particular 47–51.

14 Acosta, "Problemas," 47. On travelogues and for a complete bibliography, see Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); also Nandini Das and Tim Youngs, eds., *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

locations. The third book concentrates on the arrival of Pallas's group in Peru, with a preliminary description of its history. The fourth and fifth books are the subject of the following sections; they are directly addressed to aspiring missionaries, whom they aim to assist in every phase of their application.

Pallas acknowledges the harsh conditions in which missionaries were supposed to work (in Peru as well as in other environments), but had no doubt about the glory coming for those who undertook such an endeavor. Every difficult moment or circumstance on Earth was nothing compared to eternal salvation—for the missionaries and their converts. Throughout the entire treatise, however, Pallas could not overcome his worry about a substantial problem he witnessed during his new life in the Peruvian province: the shortage of missionaries. This issue was considered of the utmost relevance at the time in Europe as well: General Vitelleschi himself tried to take care of it. With a letter addressed to all of the Spanish provincials in 1626, Vitelleschi expressed his disappointment surrounding the difficulties in finding aspiring missionaries for the Spanish assistancy because of the attitude of some of the superiors there. He complained about those who “dissuaded those Jesuits who wanted to apply for the Indies, and invited them to keep calm and stay in their native provinces.”¹⁵

The general found this behavior very inconvenient and invited the provincials to reprimand the local superiors who tried to suppress and extinguish the overseas vocation of many Spanish Jesuits. Vitelleschi remembered how one of the main goals of the Society of Jesus had always been “seeking the salvation of the souls everywhere, taking care of those who need our help the most, because there are not enough workers of the holy gospel in the places where the missions in the Indies operate.” The general found it intolerable that “such a great multitude of souls” were being lost due to the lack of missionaries. He thought that one of the reasons for this was a sort of “boycott campaign” being conducted by certain Spanish superiors, who had to be reprimanded with a proper “penance.”

Vitelleschi's exhortation is dated 1626; Pallas's treatise was written in the 1620s. Both documents had a Spanish (or at least, Spanish-speaking) target. Both seemed to agree that Spanish religious were not properly supporting missionary vocations for the Indies. Both Pallas and Vitelleschi attempted to ignite this desire again, strongly encouraging Jesuits to apply to the missions, though with due caution. Both documents therefore seem to confirm that, at the time, many superiors were trying to discourage these kinds of vocations, for different

15 “contraddicion de los nostros para que no intentasen ni pidiesen ir à tales misiones, sino que se quedasen en su Provincia.” ARSI, *Hisp.* 86a, f. 196, January 16, 1626. The Roman letter is a copy of the Spanish one preserved at the Archives of the Society of Jesus in Alcalá de Henares, Spain. The following quotations are from the same document: “procurar la salvación de las almas en todas partes, y acudir à las mas necesitadas, y mas faltas de obreros del Santo Evangelio, quales son las misiones de Indias . . . gran multitud de almas . . . penitencia” (to seek the salvation of the souls everywhere, and to attend to the most needy and lacking in workers of the Holy Gospel, such as the missions of the Indies . . . a great multitude of souls . . . penance).

reasons. Many Spanish superiors must not have appreciated investing resources and money into educating “their” Jesuits, only to lose them all at once to the Americas. The Roman policy, on the contrary, insisted on giving Spanish Jesuits the freedom to express their missionary desire without anyone redirecting it to closer horizons. From this point of view, Pallas’s book was following the Roman directives and inviting aspiring missionaries to speak up.

2.2. Book IV—“Spiritual Advice”

In the chapter of *Misión a las Indias* entitled “Spiritual Warnings for Religious People Who Wish to Undertake a Mission to the Indies,” Pallas provides spiritual counseling and practical advice to his readers—whom he imagined were not all Jesuits.¹⁶ His treatise belongs to the genre of practical missionology because “it includes the missionary formation process, the transit from the homeland to the missionary countries; information useful or indispensable for the missionary; what behavior the new missionary should exhibit, and finally the aims and means of his endeavor.”¹⁷ The purpose of Pallas’s entire book was, in fact, to give useful and concrete advice to his readers—not only before having obtained their licenses, but also after. Nobody should have felt uncomfortable or anguished by vocational doubts, discovering unexpected or repellant aspects of the missions only once they arrived abroad.

It was apparently not uncommon for neo-missionaries to be dissatisfied with their offices and duties in their new environments. A few confreres who preceded Pallas in the West Indies by a few years had caused a great scandal. Might this have reached Pallas’s ears, giving him another reason to write his treatise, as well as another reason for his superiors to approve it before sending it to Rome? Two of these missionaries, the Spaniard Antonio Rubio (1548–1615) and the Sicilian Vincenzo Le Noci (1543–93) had arrived in Mexico, not too far from Peru, a few years before Pallas.¹⁸ Both found it very

16 “De algunas advertencias espirituales para los religiosos que huvieren de emprender la misión de las Indias.” Pallas, *Misión*, 227–77.

17 “la misionología práctica . . . incluye el proceso de formación de los misioneros, que cubre el tránsito desde la patria de origen a la misión; los conocimientos útiles o necesarios al misionero; la conducta del nuevo misionero, los fines y los medios de las misiones, entre otros.” Acosta, “Problemas,” 52.

18 On Antonio Rubio and for bibliography on his figure, see the online *Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy*, s.v. “Rubio, Antonio,” by Victor Salas, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02848-4_127-1. On Le Noci, see the article by Mario Scaduto, “Il matematico Francesco Maurolico e i Gesuiti,” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 18 (1949), 126–41. See also Antonella Romano, “Prime riflessioni sull’attività intellettuale dei Gesuiti ai tempi di Claudio Acquaviva: L’impossibile dialogo tra Roma, Spagna e Nuovo Mondo?,” in *I gesuiti ai tempi di Claudio Acquaviva, Strategie politiche, religiose e culturali tra Cinque e Seicento*, ed. Paolo Broglio et al. (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2007), 261–86.

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