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Knowledge and Personal Expectancies: Jesuit Intellectual Culture and Missionary Experience in the Early Jesuit Province of New Spain

HUGO ZAYAS-GONZÁLEZ¹

On October 28, 1575, Superior General Everard Mercurian (in office 1573–80) explained to Antonio Cordeses, provincial of Aragon, that his decision to send Jesuits Pedro de Hortigosa and Pedro de Morales and students Antonio Rubio and Alonso Pérez to New Spain was a response to King Phillip’s (r.1556–98) petition. Because the Jesuit province’s development was still incipient, with both a lack of missionaries and colonial inhabitants needing higher education for their youth, Mercurian had appointed Rubio and Hortigosa to teach philosophy and theology courses, relying on reports that they were experts in these subjects.²

Taking Hortigosa as a central figure, this essay explores the challenges the Jesuits faced in training *operarios*.³ To give a wider view of these challenges in the Society’s Mexican province, the article also introduces some minor figures who also experienced the problem of translating and practicing the Jesuit intellectual culture in the same context.⁴ As we will see, New Spain presented a series of complexities to the Spanish crown and the Catholic Church, with the religious orders involved in converting the Indians to Christianity having to develop specific

¹ The Vatican Film Library Mellon Fellowship and Central Michigan University provided the funds to carry out this research. My sincere gratitude to these institutions and their staff and faculty.

² Everard Mercurian to Antonio Cordeses, Rome, October 28, 1575, *Monumenta Mexicana*, 1:180–81 (*MM* hereafter).

³ The Society of Jesus used the term *operarios* for those who specialized in preaching, hearing confessions, and caring for the sick and dying. *Diccionario de la lengua Castellana* (Madrid: Imprenta de la Real Academia Española/Herederos de Francisco del Hierro, 1737), s.v. “Operario,” 5:41.

⁴ Michael Edwards, “Intellectual Culture,” in *Ashgate Research Companion to Counter-Reformation*, ed. Alexandra Bamji, Geert H. Janssen, and Mary Laven (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 303–4. Edwards defines intellectual culture as the history of knowledge, cultural practices, and institutions, as well as the social and cultural forms through which these practices are understood and transmitted. Its subject is the uses made of ideas by early modern authors and readers; as such, it also examines the institutions and practices developed to transmit and control knowledge. Concerning the idea of translating as used here, see Peter Burke and Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, eds., *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), and Ralph Bauer and Jaime Marroquín Arredondo, “Introduction: An Age of Translation,” in *Translating Nature: Cross Cultural Histories of Early Modern Science*, ed. Jaime Marroquín Arredondo and Ralph Bauer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 1–23.

strategies not only to achieve the aim of instructing the neophytes in the new faith but also of preparing missionaries to carry out the natives' conversion.

Each order had its own approach to conversion and the New World. In the Jesuits' case, the order's pedagogical work responded to local circumstances, the Society of Jesus's own conditions, and the personal expectations of each missionary sent to New Spain.

The role played by religious orders in the history of the Mexican church has been the subject of a large amount of research, beginning with Robert Ricard's vast work on the mendicant orders that arrived in New Spain.⁵ Since then, the problems involved in evangelization and learning native languages have been a recurrent topic in the literature. From an anthropological perspective, Louise M. Burkhart has shown the difficulties involved in translating the concept of sin from Spanish and Latin into Nahuatl. The Franciscans attempted to do so by converting indigenous rhetoric to the expression of Christian moral concerns and making Christian rhetoric adopt Nahua forms.⁶ In a similar vein, Nancy Farriss has addressed the difficulties inherent in translating principles and mysteries across language barriers that emerged when disparate cosmologies and systems of values came face to face.⁷

In the field of Jesuit studies, Bernd Hausberger has studied the evangelization methods and language policies in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jesuit missions. Jesuits were conscious that it was only by learning native languages that they would be able to know the secrets of the natives' world and spirituality without the intervention of an interpreter, who could distort communication. Thus several decrees imposed the obligation to learn a native language as part of the missionaries' arduous training. In the mission, Jesuits had to translate the most important prayers into the native language spoken by their flock. Thus, a supplementary task for a missionary was to produce grammars and vocabularies to help new missionaries. However, only some Jesuits focused on the laborious task of translation.⁸

Esteban J. Palomera has published two works on the Jesuit colleges in the cities of Guadalajara and Puebla. However, even though he provides brief biographies of rectors and teachers, including their native-language skills, he does not delve deeply into how they gained and transmitted knowledge of these

⁵ Robert Ricard, *La conquista espiritual de México: Ensayo sobre el apostolado y los métodos misioneros de las órdenes mendicantes en Nueva España de 1523–1524 a 1572*, 2nd ed., ed. and trans. Ángel María Garibay K. (México: FCE, 1986).

⁶ Louise M. Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahuatl–Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1989).

⁷ Nancy Farriss, *Tongues of Fire: Language and Evangelization in Colonial Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁸ Bernd Hausberger, "Política y cambios lingüísticos en el noroeste jesuítico de la Nueva España," *Relaciones* 78, no. 20 (Spring 1999): 41–77. Republished in *Miradas a la misión jesuita en la Nueva España* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2015).

languages.⁹ Another work focuses on the teaching of Latin, which was a fundamental element in Jesuit culture and training and would play an important role in the production of grammars in indigenous tongues.¹⁰

The Society of Jesus's idea of what evangelization should aim to achieve or how it should be carried out is too broad to deal with thoroughly in this paper. The essay instead analyzes three aspects of the Jesuits' evangelization project and the acquisition and transmission of knowledge, the first of which is the chain of command from Rome in the operation and governance of the Mexican province. The second aspect of the Jesuits' missionary work concerns the relationship between the governance of the province and the Jesuit educational system, which aimed to establish a uniform program of studies that was sufficiently broad to be able to adapt to local circumstances in the Society's colleges. The third is the intimate association between religious zeal and the personal expectations of individual Jesuits upon being sent to New Spain. By analyzing the correspondence of Hortigosa and Jesuit novices with Superior Generals Everard Mercurian and Claudio Acquaviva (in office 1581–1615), the paper also aims to shed new light on Hortigosa's experience as a teacher and theologian between 1576 and 1594, a period in which he established a solid reputation as a scholar and theologian. However, in his soul there was an enormous desire for evangelizing indigenous peoples, one that was ultimately satisfied, at least in part.

Hortigosa was born in Ocaña, Spain, in 1546/47. At an incredibly early age, he mastered Latin and Greek languages; he earned a doctoral degree in philosophy from the University of Alcalá before entering the Society of Jesus's college in the city in 1564. In Alcalá, as in Plasencia, he taught theology even before his graduation as a doctor of theology. By 1570, he was asking to be sent to the Indies, arriving in New Spain in early September six years later. In the Third Mexican Council (1585), Hortigosa was Bishop and Viceroy Pedro Moya de Contreras's theologian consultor; as well as influencing the subjects that were discussed, he also played a role in preparing the decrees for the pope's approval. He was appointed inquisitorial censor in 1597 and examiner of Jesuit students in 1608, shortly before being approved as a province consultor in 1609. In 1620, his poor health forced him to stop teaching; he died in Mexico City on May 11, 1626.¹¹

⁹ Esteban J. Palomera, *La obra educativa de los jesuitas en Guadalajara 1586–1986* (México: UIA–ITESO, 1986); Palomera, *La obra educativa de los jesuitas en Puebla, 1578–1945* (México: UIA, 1999).

¹⁰ Ignacio Osorio Romero, *Colegios y profesores jesuitas que enseñaron latín en Nueva España (1572–1767)* (México: UNAM, 1979).

¹¹ Francisco Zambrano, *Diccionario bio-bibliográfico de la Compañía de Jesús en México*, vol. 7, *Siglo XVII (1600–1699)* (México: Editorial Jus, 1967), 563–626.

Implementing the New Courses

The Jesuit province of New Spain had already started the first course of arts in October of 1575 by assigning Pedro López de la Parra as its provisional teacher. When Provincial Pedro Sánchez was notified that more Jesuits were coming from Europe, he began making the necessary arrangements for their arrival, such as requesting a royal document authorizing the validity of the arts and theology courses, reorganizing teachers and courses, and requesting the textbooks needed for the courses.¹² Concerning philosophy, it is significant that Mercurian recommended that Francisco de Toledo's textbook should be used, not only because it emphasizes Mercurian's intention to make the Collegio Romano the model for the Jesuit colleges in New Spain Jesuit but also because it suggests a direct connection to the *Conimbricenses*.¹³ Hortigosa arrived in September of the following year with the third group of Jesuits and replaced López de la Parra, who went on to teach grammar, in teaching a student body formed by Jesuit and external students (i.e., secular seminarists and lay scholars). Hortigosa thus ensured that his prospective students of theology would gain the solid philosophical grounding this subject required. Within three years after starting the founding process of the first Jesuit school, the Society could offer a complete program of studies to Mexican youth (it had previously only offered Latin grammar and rhetoric).¹⁴

Hortigosa started the theology course on October 19, 1577,¹⁵ in the midst of a conflict with the Royal University of Mexico, whose *claustro*¹⁶ felt threatened by the Jesuits' presence. Between 1575 and 1579, the university sought to control the Jesuits' academic activities by arguing the Society did not have the privilege

¹² Francisco de Florencia, *Historia de la provincia de la Compañía de Jesús de la Nueva España* (México: Iuan Joseph Guillena Carrascoso, 1694), 185–86; Everard Mercurian to Pedro Sánchez, Rome, April 22, 1575. *MM*, 1:161–62; Everard Mercurian to Pedro Sánchez, Rome, March 12 and March 31, 1576, 1576, *MM*, 1:186–89, 207–9; and “Catalogus sociorum provinciae Mexicanae,” c. June 1576, *MM*, 1:221.

¹³ Cristiano Casalini, *Aristotle in Coimbra: The Cursus Conimbricensis and the Education at the College of Arts*, trans. Luana Salvarani (London: Routledge, 2017), 99–10, and John P. Doyle, ed., *The Conimbricenses: Some Questions on Signs*, trans. John P. Doyle (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001), 20. Antonio Rubio (1548–1615) was Francisco Toledo's (1532–96) former student in Alcalá de Henares; he arrived in New Spain together with Hortigosa.

¹⁴ “Litterae annuae” (1577), *MM*, 1:256–57.

¹⁵ The First Provincial Congregation described it in the following way: “In the things of *letters* [the sciences and arts], today we have all that we need for teaching both grammar and arts, and a course of the theology.” “Congregación provincial de la Compañía de Jesús de la Nueva Hespaña para Roma,” Mexico City, October 5, 1577, *MM*, 1:297; and Zambrano, *Diccionario*, 7:572–73.

¹⁶ The governing body, the senate. A rector, elected each year by the *claustro* members, was the highest authority. See Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Historia de la educación colonial en la época colonial: La educación de los criollos y la vida urbana* (México: El Colegio de México, 1990), 71–93, and Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Educación y colonización en la Nueva España, 1521–1821* (Mexico: Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, 2001), 84.

to grant academic degrees.¹⁷ While the early Jesuit narrative saw the conflict as solved by the royal *cédula*¹⁸ called *De la concordia* (On concord), modern historians see a mutual dissimulation that allowed the university to retain its right to grant academic degrees and the Jesuit colleges to keep teaching their courses.¹⁹ In this royal decree, Philip II instructed Viceroy Martín Enríquez de Almanza (in office 1568–80) to mediate in the conflict. The basis for the viceroy's mediation was that the students of the Society had to be registered in the university; furthermore, the viceroy had to ensure that the Society's professors had the academic degrees corresponding to the subject they taught.²⁰

This royal decree mirrors the Society's role in the relationship between Pope Gregory XIII (r.1572–85) and Philip II. Both leaders backed the project of consolidating a Catholic Church organized in dioceses, yet they differed over what the outcome of this project should be. On the one hand, after the Council of Trent (1545–63), Rome was seeking to limit the interference of the royal authorities in ecclesiastical issues. Yet, on the other hand, the crown was seeking to defend its privileges and the right to impose them on its colonies (the *Ordenanza del patronazgo* [Ordinances of the patronage (1574)]).²¹ At a local level, both Archbishop Moya de Contreras and Viceroy Enríquez recognized the Society's achievements, as revealed by the correspondence addressed to the king that contains their opinions based on the excellent results the Jesuit presence had achieved in New Spain.²² At the royal court, the Jesuit procurator Francisco de Porres corroborated the information, emphasizing the benefits that the Society was providing to the inhabitants of New Spain. Thus, Phillip II issued this new order for the benefit of both parties, maintaining the university's higher status and validating the Jesuits' courses.

¹⁷ Clara Inés Ramírez González, "La universidad de México y los conflictos con los jesuitas en el siglo XVI," *Estudios: Revista de historia moderna* 19 (1993): 42–45; Philip II to the Audiencia of New Spain, el Pardo, Spain, November 2, 1576, *MM*, 1:236–38.

¹⁸ Royal decree or letter.

¹⁹ Ramírez González, "La universidad," 47–53, and Gonzalbo, *Historia*, 168.

²⁰ *Real cédula a Martín Enríquez* [de Almansa], *virrey de Nueva España, para que permita y favorezca las enseñanzas que se realizan en los colegios jesuitas, como solicita Francisco de Porres, procurador de la Compañía*. Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Mexico, 1091, L. 9, 67^r–67^v.

²¹ Ma. del Pilar Martínez López-Cano and Francisco J. Cervantes Bello, eds., *Los concilios provinciales en Nueva España: Reflexiones e influencias* (Mexico: Inst. Investigaciones Históricas UNAM/Inst. Cs. Sociales y Humanidades BUAP, 2005), 41; Robert C. Padden, "The Ordenanza del Patronazgo of 1574: An Interpretative Essay," in *The Church in Colonial Latin America*, ed. John F. Schwaller (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 2000), 27–48; and John F. Schwaller, "The Ordenanza del Patronazgo in New Spain, 1574–1600," in Schwaller, *Church in Colonial Latin America*, 49–72.

²² Pedro Moya de Contreras to Philip II, Mexico City, March 28, 1576, *MM*, 1:200–1; Pedro Moya de Contreras to Philip II, Mexico City, November 6, 1576, *MM*, 1:238; and Enrique Martínez to Philip II, Mexico City, March 30, 1577, *MM*, 1:276–77.

As well as this tension between the Society and the royal authorities, there was also some conflict within the Society itself. Mercurian had initiated a program of standardizing the Society's body of legislation with the aim of constructing a set of pedagogical rules providing an integral set of instructions and procedures for all the colleges. It is likely that Hortigosa had experience of using Jerónimo Nadal's *Ordo studiorum* (Order of studies or program of courses [1565]) to teach theology in Plasencia. However, by the 1570s there were other programs in the colleges of France, Germany, and Austria, as well as other pedagogical materials.²³ As Hortigosa also knew about Mercurian's program, he asked the superior general which curriculum he should adopt for teaching the courses that were about to start.²⁴

However, Mercurian had earlier commanded that either the rector of the Colegio Máximo or Provincial Sánchez should appoint a *prefecto* (prefect) or *superintendente* (superintendent) to implement the same curriculum as in the Roman College. Why, he wondered, had Hortigosa not been able to find the correct guide to plan his courses? Was Sánchez adopting a different program of studies for the colleges in New Spain?²⁵ Was Mercurian referring to a high-ranked office from which an experienced Jesuit would oversee instruction and would hence be one of the most important positions in the school? If so, it seems that the nature of Mercurian's superintendent would differ from the prefect of studies Diego Ledesma had described in 1564, when he had suggested a prefect of studies for humanities, another one for arts, and one more for theology. Mercurian had appointed Vincencio Lanuchi prefect of studies for humanities in 1574, so Hortigosa may have believed that he would be able to play the same role for the arts and theology programs.²⁶ Mercurian was expecting to gain a better understanding of the province

²³ Eusebio Gil Coria et al., *La pedagogía de los jesuitas, ayer y hoy* (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2002), 33–40, and Teófanos Egido, Javier Burrieza Sánchez, and Manuel Revuelta González, *Los jesuitas en España y en el mundo hispánico* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2004), 111.

²⁴ Zambrano, *Diccionario*, 7:565–66; Allan P. Farrell, *The Jesuit Code of Liberal Education: Development and Scope of the Ratio studiorum* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Publishing Company, 1938), 109–12, 221–22; William V. Bangert, *A History of the Society of Jesus* (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1986), 54; and John W. Padberg, “The Third General Congregation, 1573,” in *The Mercurian Project: Forming Jesuit Culture 1573–1580*, ed. Thomas Mac Coog (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004), 49–77, here 62, 64, 67. This corpus included Jerónimo Nadal's *Ordo studiorum* (1565), Diego Ledesma's *De ratione et ordine studiorum Collegii Romani* (1568), and the fourth part of the *Constitutions*.

²⁵ Everard Mercurian to Pedro de Hortigosa, Rome, March 24, 1577, ARSI, *Méx. 1*, 20^r; and Everard Mercurian to Pedro Sánchez, Rome, March 12, 1576, *MM*, 1:189. Mercurian also explained to Sánchez that this was the best program of studies and that he had people in New Spain with enough experience and knowledge to implement it.

²⁶ Diego de Ledesma, “Studies and Morals at the Roman College (1564),” in *Jesuit Pedagogy, 1540–1616: A Reader*, ed. Cristiano Casalini and Claude Pavur (Chestnut Hill, MA: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2016), 157–66, here 160; see also the Latin version in László Lukács, ed., *Monumenta paedagogica Societatis Iesu: Vol 2 (1557–1572)* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1974), 481–90.

from Procurator Pedro Díaz, who was traveling from New Spain to Rome; in the meantime, Hortigosa was told to implement a program guided by his immediate superiors. Yet Mercurian made sure Hortigosa would make a decision that was mindful of the common good of the Society and its students.²⁷

This conversation shows that even when the standards of individual obedience and the Society's hierarchical organization were adjacent, there was significant room for personal discernment. Jesuits knew that the chain of command did not always work perfectly and that funding any new province was always a concern because the development of Jesuit work in the cities and missions required a solid economic foundation. In addition, provincials' personalities in governing their confrères and establishing relations with local governments and potential founders either eased or complicated a province's progression. Mercurian had already received some information about Sánchez having neglected to help his subordinates solve their needs. His concern was about how provincials' attitudes were affecting the process of establishing a new curriculum and learning native languages "for helping the Indians."²⁸ As Jesuit training suggested, in situations like this, discernment had to prevail over obedience, so that when Hortigosa considered the tasks entrusted to him to be at risk, he asked the Society's highest authority.

The Society of Jesus sought uniformity in its curriculum. Doctrinal and pedagogical consistency was intended to prepare Jesuit students for an independent and active life, keeping in mind a higher standard of obedience informed by an intense sense of individuality in which subjectivity and interior life imbued every decision. The steps Jesuits like Hortigosa were taking to achieve a uniform program of studies grew out of a consensual procedure informed by local circumstances in which each province used its own experience to mitigate the natural tension between enforcing uniformity and permitting intellectual liberty.²⁹ By 1579, Mercurian attended to the challenges the Mexican province presented by sending the curriculum of humanities (*studia humanitatis*) that all the Jesuit colleges in the Indies would adopt as well as a new group of *operarios* due to a lack of missionaries to carry out the conversion of the Indians, which had become a major concern. Mercurian hoped these decisions would improve the lives of the Jesuits in New Spain and relieve internal tension. De la Parra, for instance, had been expressing a desire to return to Spain for four years because of his family's economic hardships

²⁷ Everard Mercurian to Pedro de Hortigosa, Rome, March 24, 1577, ARSI, *Méx. 1*, 20^r; *Constitutions*, part 8, chapter 1, §663; and "Congregación provincial," *MM*, 1:294.

²⁸ Everard Mercurian to Juan de la Plaza, Rome, March 31, 1576, *MM*, 1:204–5; and Christopher van Ginhoven Rey, *Instruments of the Divinity: Providence and Praxis in the Foundation of the Society of Jesus* (Boston: Brill, 2014), 177–78.

²⁹ *Constitutions*, part 4, chapter 12, §450–51; Silvia Mostaccio, *Early Modern Jesuits between Obedience and Conscience during the Generalate of Claudio Acquaviva (1581–1615)*, trans. Clare Copeland (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 79–80.

and because of his dissatisfaction with his limited responsibilities within the community.³⁰

Hortigosa had also shown some signs of spiritual discomfort and notified Mercurian that he had poor health (*poca salud*). In the hope that working on indigenous conversion would “give [Hortigosa] whole health,” Mercurian had allowed Visitor Juan de la Plaza and Provincial Sánchez to explore the possibility of placing him in missionary work.³¹ According to the provincial catalogs, between 1580 and 1584 Hortigosa was still of “sound [physical] health,” yet in 1585 he was described as having “intermediate health.” By using the word *salud* in his letter, Mercurian meant two different things. The first denoted his physical health (*de la poca salud que V. R. tiene*), and it was this topic that Hortigosa would talk about with de la Plaza. Since this condition could affect his duties (*ejercicios en que se ocupa*), it was necessary to make a decision that took into account Hortigosa’s talent and strength (*conforme al talento y fuerzas que Dios nuestro Señor le ha dado*). Yet with the second meaning, Mercurian was referring to Hortigosa’s psychological health, *hacer buen ánimo* (good mood), a state of mind or feeling concerning the spirit that would lead him to whole health through God’s consolation by missioning among the natives.³²

Separately, Mercurian had commanded de la Plaza to comfort both his confrères. He made two remarks about Hortigosa. First, as Hortigosa had been feeling “disconsolate and dissatisfied,” de la Plaza should try to encourage him to continue teaching. Mercurian hoped that with more students Hortigosa would experience new challenges and “find more consolation lecturing theology.” Mercurian also looked for a similar effect on de la Parra.³³ Second, to continue teaching, Mercurian stated that Hortigosa should earn his doctoral degree in

³⁰ Everard Mercurian to Pedro López de la Parra, Rome, March 12, 1576, *MM*, 1:193–94; and Everard Mercurian to Pedro López de la Parra, January 31, 1579, *ARSI, Méx. 1*, 22^v.

³¹ Everard Mercurian to Pedro de Hortigosa, Rome, January 31, 1579, *ARSI, Méx. 1*, 22^v; “Instrucción para el viaje del Padre Pedro Díaz procurador de México,” Rome, February 25, 1579, *ARSI, Mex 1*, 27^r; and Francisco Javier Alegre, *Historia de la provincia de la Compañía de Jesús de Nueva España*, ed. Ernest J. Burrus and Félix Zubillaga (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1956), 277.

³² “Catalogus Mexicanae provinciae, 1580: Collegium Mexicanum,” *ARSI, Méx. 1*, 10^v; “Catálogo de colegios y misiones en Nueva España: Colegio de México,” Mexico, 1585, *ARSI, Méx. 1*, 22^r (also published in *MM*, 2:743–51); *Diccionario* (1739), “Salud,” 6:31; *Diccionario* (1726), “Ánimo,” 1:299; *Diccionario* (1729), “Consolación,” “Consuelo,” 2:531, 538; and David Mayagoitia, *Ambiente filosófico de la Nueva España* (México: Editorial Jus, 1945), 169. The catalogs list general information on each member of the Mexican province such as name, age, admission, studies, degree, date and place of ordination, duties, health (*sanitas*), temperament and discernment (*ingenium et iudicium*), as well as aptitudes and skills (*talentum*). Although the catalogs between 1576 and 1600 retained a degree of uniformity, after 1585 they omitted the category of health. The 1580 catalog describes Hortigosa as being of sound health, competent, morally virtuous, intelligent, and able to develop almost any ministry, but especially teaching.

³³ “Particular de personas remitida al P[adr]e visitador,” Rome, January 1579, *ARSI, Méx. 1*, 25^r–25^v.

theology. But since the conflict with the university was not yet over, Mercurian commanded de la Plaza, who was still in Peru, to examine Hortigosa even if the university refused to do so. However, in the event, Hortigosa received his doctorate degree from the University of Mexico on May 27, 1581.³⁴

On October 19, 1578, Hortigosa insisted that Mercurian take action on a number of issues he deemed a matter of urgency for the province. Besides the lack of *operarios*, Hortigosa stated that Provincial Sánchez had not established effective communication with his confrères, novices, and lay students, being more occupied with economic affairs and not complying with the Constitutions and the Society's rule. As Mercurian believed that these were also the reasons de la Parra was troubled, he hoped that a change in the provincial government would help enhance the Society's internal environment and that the regulations governing the Roman College would strengthen the Jesuit educational ministry.³⁵

Indigenous Evangelization: A Cultural and Linguistic Challenge

When Acquaviva accepted the position of superior general in 1581, the Society's primacy prevailed in restoring Catholicism. Pope Gregory XIII was funding its educational project in Rome and supporting missionary activities in New Spain and the Far East. Acquaviva's main concern was governance.³⁶ He knew that learning native languages would be vital to the Society's work, and that its religious and political critics could interpret any failure to do so as a lack of leadership. Since 1565, it had been a royal requirement for missionaries to learn the language of whichever indigenous group they were working with. The Society sought both to honor its commitment to the Spanish crown and to reinforce its program of evangelization by prescribing that Jesuit students master a native language before earning a degree. The new superior general accordingly commanded de la Plaza to enforce compliance with the regulation. The Jesuits were convinced that mastering native languages would enable them to convey the Christian tradition to Indians while also eliminating pagan practices and superstitions.³⁷

³⁴ "Instrucción para el P[adre] Plaza," Rome, January 1579, ARSI, *Méx. 1*, 25^v; *MM*, 1:419–20; Zambrano, *Diccionario*, 7:577–78.

³⁵ Everard Mercurian to Pedro de Hortigosa, Rome, February 25, 1579, ARSI, *Méx. 1*, 28^v; "Instrucción particular para el P[adre] doctor Plaza, visitador de la Nueva España," Rome, January 1579, ARSI, *Méx. 1*, 25^r; *MM*, 1:415–16; Everard Mercurian to Juan de la Plaza, Rome, February 15, 1579, *MM*, 1:428–29; and "Memoria de todo el despacho que el Padre Pedro Díaz, procurador de la Nueva España, llevó de Roma," Rome, February 15, 1579, *MM*, 1:434.

³⁶ Under his generalate, the Society approved the *Ratio studiorum*, established a new *Directorium* for the Spiritual Exercises, and published the consecutive editions of the *Constitutions*. Mostaccio, *Early Modern Jesuits*, 13, 83.

³⁷ Andrés Pérez de Ribas, *History of the Triumphs of Our Holy Faith*, trans. Daniel T. Reff, Maureen Ahern, and Richard K. Danford (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1999), 99–101.

Hortigosa was making significant advances in his career at that time.³⁸ In the Colegio Máximo, Hortigosa had twelve internal students and forty external students distributed in two classes. That Hortigosa superiors' correspondence between 1581 and 1583 did not mention anything related to him suggests he felt satisfied with his duties, which accounts for his appointment as rector of the Colegio Máximo, provincial advisor, and theology lecturer.³⁹ These were not the only changes in Hortigosa's life.

De la Plaza had finished his term as provincial, and by appointing an experienced Jesuit to replace him, Acquaviva was attempting to improve the discipline of the Society in New Spain. De la Plaza had already reported to Rome on material and spiritual improvements. However, he felt that the rectors and other confrères who were under his command and in charge of offices and novices were more concerned with "caring for temporal things" than exercising virtue and prayer, thus acting against "our Institute and rules." Because they allegedly lacked material goods, they neglected to provide their disciples with good preparation.⁴⁰ So Acquaviva provided direct instructions about native languages to Antonio de Mendoza, rector of the Jesuit college in Alcalá and the newly appointed provincial, in a letter sent in March 1584. As the Society had primarily been allowed to come to New Spain to help in the conversion of the indigenous people, Mendoza had to ensure, at a minimum, that all the Jesuits in New Spain learned Nahuatl to do this job efficiently.⁴¹ Acquaviva expected major improvements in the operation of the colleges and the students' training.

Hortigosa continued to be interested in living a missionary experience among the Indians, but although Acquaviva appreciated his strong religious zeal, he believed that work in training novices was more important. He regarded the subjects Hortigosa taught as fundamental to inculcating a true and effective commitment "for helping the natives." As much as novices had contact with this type of mentor, they would naturally be engaged in learning native languages and serving Indians. Acquaviva consequently encouraged him to promote the same feeling "from the office in which obedience places you." Even if his health made

³⁸ See Stafford Poole, *Pedro Moya de Contreras: Catholic Reform and Royal Power in New Spain, 1571–1591*, 2nd. ed. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

³⁹ Thirty-eight students were enrolled in the third year of this program, whereas seventy students would be starting a new program in the fall of 1582; "Catálogo de la provincia Mexicana por el P. de la Plaza," Mexico, March 25, 1582, *MM*, 2:47, 52–54; "Carta anua de la provincia de Nueva España," Mexico, April 17, 1582, *MM*, 2:74–76; "Carta anua de la provincia de Nueva España," Mexico, April 20, 1583, *MM*, 2:133–35; "Catálogo de la provincia de Nueva España," Mexico, April 20, 1583, *MM*, 2:150; Claudio Acquaviva to Antonio de Mendoza, Rome, August 15, 1583, *MM*, 2:162–63; Claudio Acquaviva to Antonio de Mendoza, Rome, August 30, 1583, *MM*, 2:168.

⁴⁰ Juan de la Plaza to Claudio Acquaviva, Mexico, October 20, 1583, *MM*, 2:172.

⁴¹ Claudio Acquaviva to Antonio de Mendoza, Rome, March 15, 1584, *MM*, 2:275–76; and Claudio Acquaviva to Juan de la Plaza, Rome, March 15, 1584, *ARSI, Méx. 1*, 47^r.

him unable to “succor [the Indians] by yourself, as you wish, by working with your own hands in motivating others, you will work through other’s hands.”⁴²

With the arrival of another group of *confrères* in 1584, Mendoza made changes to the province’s organization. Hortigosa was devoted exclusively to governing the Colegio Máximo, while de la Parra taught the theology courses. The news that more confrères were being sent to the province fed Hortigosa’s hopes of going on a mission,⁴³ and he interpreted a change in his health as a premonition: “Today, I have the health to learn native languages; later, in any case, I will not have the ability since it disappears while aging.”⁴⁴

Although most Jesuits committed themselves to the study and mastery of one or several native languages, some Jesuit students continued to neglect studying native languages altogether. Acquaviva’s insistence that the Society’s provincials ensure that European novices learn a native language in the same year they arrived in New Spain indicates that this was a common problem.⁴⁵ In 1596, Provincial Esteban Páez had been in office two years, and both Pedro de Mercado and Pedro de Morales, rector of the Holy Ghost College at Puebla, deemed that he was not doing enough to solve the problem of students refusing to learn native languages. Mercado’s and Morales’s letters contrast with what Páez reported in the annual letter. Although Acquaviva assumed Páez was fulfilling his duties, he reminded him how important it was to learn native languages to evangelize indigenous peoples. As a result, Páez could not allow students to avoid learning a native language and insisted they obey the instructions from Rome.⁴⁶

Thus, for some European Jesuits like Hortigosa, the challenge of learning native languages sometimes appeared insurmountable. Between 1592 and 1596, the Society sent a series of catalogs from New Spain to Rome listing the names of Jesuits who knew, practiced (by preaching and hearing confession), and had learned native languages. Although Hortigosa attended the course of Mexican language (Nahuatl) in 1585, he did not practice it regularly because his communication skills in the language remained basic until 1596. These lists show various levels of oral proficiency correlated with preaching and hearing confession as well as the number of years doing so, and after nine years Hortigosa heard confessions in this language

⁴² Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro de Hortigosa, Rome, March 15, 1584, ARSI, *Méx. I*, 48^r.

⁴³ Francisco Vaez to Claudio Acquaviva, Mexico, October 20, 1584, *MM*, 2:376; Antonio de Mendoza to Claudio Acquaviva, Mexico, October 27, 1584, *MM*, 2:391; and Pedro de Hortigosa to Claudio Acquaviva, Mexico, October 28, 1584, *MM*, 2:398–99. The group of twenty-three Jesuits departed from Cadiz on June 25 and arrived in Veracruz on September 10 of the same year.

⁴⁴ Pedro de Hortigosa to Claudio Acquaviva, Mexico, December 13, 1584, *MM*, 2:410.

⁴⁵ Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro Díaz, Rome, June 10, 1591, ARSI, *Méx. I*, 105^r; and Claudio Acquaviva to Diego de Avellaneda, Rome, June 10, 1591, *MM*, 4:49. Pedro Díaz was provincial between 1590 and 1594.

⁴⁶ Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro de Mercado, Rome, April 8, 1596, ARSI, *Méx. I*, 139^v; Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro de Morales, ARSI, *Méx. I*, 140^r; Claudio Acquaviva to Esteban Páez, Rome, April 11, 1596, ARSI, *Méx. I*, 137^v. Esteban Páez was provincial between 1594 and 1598.

only when necessary. Although some colleges and seminaries were genuine language centers, such as the Tepotzotlán seminary in which Jesuits taught Mexican, Otomí, and Mazahua, it was more often the case that most of the novices started becoming competent in Nahuatl before acquiring another language. In the colleges of Valladolid and Patzcuaro, for example, they learned Tarasco, whereas in Oaxaca just one Jesuit had started to learn Zapotec. There were also a few cases of theology students who were highly fluent in Nahuatl and were helping other fathers as part of their training.⁴⁷

The formation of Jesuits who were able to go on mission with well-developed linguistic skills was not enough. At the beginning of his generalate, Muzio Vitelleschi (in office 1615–45) still deemed it necessary to remind Provincial Nicolás de Arnaya of the importance of promoting the ministry of indigenous evangelization among the Jesuit students. Vitelleschi encouraged him “to take great care in this matter, esteeming and honoring the father *lenguas* [i.e., Jesuits able to hear confession in the native languages] and those who appointed to this ministry.”⁴⁸ Two years later, the situation started to change. Diego de Torres, a student of the seminary at Tepotzotlán, perceived Vitelleschi’s excitement when he and other “good subjects” stated a desire to learn Mexican and Otomí, which became an occasion to make some adjustments to the curriculum. Vitelleschi informed Arnaya in Mexico City that since some “good subjects” desired to learn Mexican and Otomí, “those of third year of theology should start to learn them on Saint John’s day [June 24], and progressively to continue until the end of the fourth year.”⁴⁹ It is important to emphasize that the final version of the *Ratio studiorum* had been adopted eighteen years earlier in all the Jesuit colleges, thus pointing to the flexibility of the Society and its pedagogical code.⁵⁰ It is also significant that this modification placed the requirement for learning native languages after the scholars had finished their studies of arts, which was likely a response to two issues:

⁴⁷ The languages Jesuits were practicing in New Spain during this period were Nahuatl or Mexican, Otomí, Tarascan, Mazahua, Zapotec, and Cajime. The various levels of oral native-language proficiency were *aprendiendo* (learning, level 0), *sabe algo* (basic, level 1), *sabe* or *sabe medianamente* (intermediate, level 2), *sabe bien* (fluent, level 3), and *sabe muy bien* (high fluency, level 4). “Catálogo de los padres y hermanos, que en esta provincia de la Nueva España, saben lenguas y las ejercitan y de los que las van aprendiendo,” Mexico, June–October 1592, *MM*, 6:657–61; “Catálogo de los padres y hermanos, que en esta provincia de la Nueva España, saben lenguas y las ejercitan y de los que las van aprendiendo,” Mexico, July 1594, *MM*, 5:281–86; “Catálogo de los padres y hermanos, que en esta provincia de la Nueva España, saben lenguas y las ejercitan y de los que atienden a dependerlas. 1595,” Mexico, 1595, *MM*, 5:515–16; and “Catálogo de los padres y hermanos, que en esta provincia de la Nueva España, saben lenguas y las ejercitan y de los que atienden a dependerlas,” Mexico, April 1596, *Méx.* 4, 93ʳ.

⁴⁸ Muzio Vitelleschi to Nicolás de Arnaya, Rome, July 1, 1617, ARSI, *Méx.* 2, 197ʳ. Vitelleschi succeeded Acquaviva as superior general in 1615.

⁴⁹ Muzio Vitelleschi to Diego de Torres, Rome, March 28, 1619, ARSI, *Méx.* 2, 210ʷ; and Muzio Vitelleschi to Nicolás de Arnaya, Rome, April 22, *Méx.* 2, 221ʷ.

⁵⁰ *Constitutions*, chapter 12, §447.

first, scholars attending the last two years of theology were about to go on missions, and second, they had developed a more mature mind for facing the inherent challenges of any European learning a native language. As a result, by 1622 the six father *lenguas* of the seminary of Tepotzotlán were highly successful, “preaching so carefully and zealously and hearing confession of those poor Indians, since their *curas* [other religious or secular priests] do not know the language of that land.”⁵¹

Struggling with Students’ Discipline

As a rector, Hortigosa strived to do his best to improve the Society’s work and achieve higher standards in evangelizing the native Americans in New Spain. However, he came to feel frustrated that he was not meeting his own goals, which made him unable to see his own success in improving religious observance and discipline among the students and in training well-educated *operarios*. Acquaviva not only encouraged him to continue to perform as before but also provided additional guidance and advice. He asked Hortigosa to focus on rectifying any shortcomings in the Jesuit students and suggested that “even when students’ faults and lack of dedication do not have a great change, do not conclude that everything has been in vain.”⁵²

Hortigosa’s rectorship was interrupted between late 1586 and 1588 when his confrères elected him procurator and he had to leave for Rome. The superior general wanted to meet with him before other procurators arrived to learn why Hortigosa thought that caring for Indians, going on mission, and learning native languages were in decline in the province of New Spain rather than making progress.⁵³

Upon his return to Mexico, Hortigosa found that his superiors had released him from the burden of the rectory. Yet Hortigosa was unable to get permission to go on a mission even though he had been able to discuss the matter directly with Acquaviva. The latter was certain of two things: Hortigosa could convert Indians because he had linguistic sufficiency and that he felt overwhelmed governing the College of Mexico. Despite this, Acquaviva deemed that Hortigosa’s teaching skills

⁵¹ Muzio Vitelleschi to Andrés Pérez, Rome, February 21, 1622, ARSI, *Méx.* 2, 255^v–256^r.

⁵² Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro de Hortigosa, Rome, February 24, 1586, ARSI, *Méx.* 1, 70^r.

⁵³ Claudio Acquaviva to Antonio de Mendoza, Rome, June 16, 1586, ARSI, *Méx.* 1, 75^r; Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro de Hortigosa, Rome, June 16, 1586, ARSI, *Méx.*, 75^v; Claudio Acquaviva to Antonio de Mendoza, Rome, October 4, 1587, ARSI, *Méx.*, 80^v; Claudio Acquaviva to Antonio de Mendoza, Rome, November 24, 1587, ARSI, *Méx.*, 81^v; Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro de Hortigosa, Rome, December 6, 1587, 81^v; Claudio Acquaviva to Antonio de Mendoza, January 28, 1588, ARSI, *Méx.*, 82^r; Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro de Hortigosa, Rome, June 16, 1586, ARSI, *Méx.* 1, 75^v; Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro de Hortigosa, Rome, December 15, 1589, ARSI, *Méx.* 1, 92^r; and Zambrano, *Diccionario*, 7:589.

were still needed to provide well-trained *operarios* for the Society's missionary work in New Spain. He consequently left the last decision in the hands of Provincial Mendoza.⁵⁴

The year after he stopped directing the college, Hortigosa was teaching theology while preparing his course notes for publishing a book. This was a time when internal tension erupted again.⁵⁵ In a letter of April 1590, he thanked Acquaviva for having removed him from an office he had not asked for, but he also expressed his upset because of the rumors some of his confrères were spreading: that Acquaviva's decision was taken in response to several complaints. The superior general had received some protests against the strict discipline on religion and studies that Hortigosa had imposed, but Acquaviva decided to take into account Hortigosa's reputation on "letters and religion." This conversation mirrors the strained relations within the province of Mexico and how they could influence individual attitudes and the province's general functioning.⁵⁶

Besides the conflicts that various personalities might have caused within the Mexican Jesuit province during the late sixteenth century, the province was also struggling to form enough *operarios*. Hortigosa's teaching skills, discipline, and religious zeal could therefore play a significant role in improving this situation from the classrooms. The main obstacle Jesuits found in their students was twofold: an unwillingness to learn native languages and hence a lack of desire to go on mission to convert indigenous peoples.⁵⁷ Hortigosa in particular also thought that the novices were joining the Society at too young an age. Students further faced many distractions in the colleges, some of them positive and necessary such as learning Nahuatl, while others had to do with some superiors' material concerns and courtly interests, which were inconsistent with the Society's rules and codes and affected students' development.⁵⁸

Some historians have identified the period between 1592 and 1595 as one in which superiors were lax in promoting their subjects' spiritual progress and religious observance. Yet this crisis started at least three years earlier in New Spain.

⁵⁴ Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro de Hortigosa, Rome, July 12, 1588, *MM*, 3:342–43; and Claudio Acquaviva to Antonio de Mendoza, Rome, March 21, 1589, *MM*, 3:365–66.

⁵⁵ Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro de Hortigosa, Rome, April 17, 1590, ARSI, *Méx. I*, 95^v; and "Instrucción al Padre Diego de Avellaneda visitador de la provincia de México," Rome, April 1590, *MM*, 3:465. Diego de Avellaneda visited the province between November 1590 and July 1593.

⁵⁶ Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro de Hortigosa, Rome, October 2, 1590, ARSI, *Méx. I*, 101^r; and Claudio Acquaviva to Diego de Avellaneda, October 2, 1590, *MM*, 3:476.

⁵⁷ Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro de Hortigosa, Rome, June 10, 1591, ARSI, *Méx. I*, 102^r; Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro de Hortigosa, Rome, June 8, 1592, ARSI, *Méx. I*, 115^r; Claudio Acquaviva to Diego de Avellaneda, Rome, January 20, 1592, *MM*, 4:116; and Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro Díaz, Rome, January 20, 1592, *MM*, 4:121–22.

⁵⁸ Pedro de Hortigosa to Claudio Acquaviva, Mexico, May 24, 1592, *MM*, 4:415. Peninsular Jesuits like Hortigosa were biased against Spaniards born in New Spain, whom they considered as having lax morality.

Acquaviva took advantage of Provincial Díaz's election to ask him to conduct "an analysis [of the problems] to instruct [the rectors] in improving their duties." He further commanded Díaz to solve the problems the College of Mexico's teachers were causing, namely distracting themselves and their students in other "business and occupations [...], taking the time they must use to study."⁵⁹ Antonio Rubio, the rector of the seminary in Tepotzotlán, received the same instructions for improving students' engagement with their training in order to groom "subjects the Society needs."⁶⁰

The Jesuit Mexican province responded to Acquaviva's demands by recognizing that they needed to produce tools that could be used for evangelization such as *artes* and dictionaries to learn and preach in native languages. As in the province of Peru, Jesuits in New Spain realized the importance of native languages for their ministry with indigenous communities. In their view, the students could be stimulated to learn native languages by reiterating the regulation requiring that all Jesuit students gain proficiency in Nahuatl at least before being promoted to a religious ordination. Agreeing with them, Acquaviva once again encouraged the provincials to comply with this command to "have in those sites enough *operarios*, and to do what in that land the Society is attempting, conversion of those pagans."⁶¹

Conclusion

Hortigosa played a decisive role in the foundation and development of higher education in colonial Mexico. The correspondence examined for this study reveals a personality with strong religious zeal as well as a commitment to spreading early modern Catholicism and the Society of Jesus's expansion. Although his intellectual skills led him to acquire a reputation as a theological authority, his personal aspirations aimed at spiritual goals, namely missioning among the Indians. However, his superiors kept him in Mexico City as a teacher training Jesuit *operarios* who would do the work he desired for himself.

Early modern Western intellectual culture was the basis for the Jesuit training that directly influenced the conversion of the indigenous populations of

⁵⁹ Antonio Astrain, *Historia de la Compañía de Jesús en la asistencia de España* (Madrid: Est. tipográfico Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1909), 3:348–50; Claudio Acquaviva to Antonio de Mendoza, Rome, December 25, 1589, *MM*, 3:415; Claudio Acquaviva to Pedro Díaz, Rome, November 22, 1593, *ARSI, Méx. I*, 123^r–123^v. Pedro Díaz was elected provincial, succeeding Antonio de Mendoza in March 1591.

⁶⁰ Claudio Acquaviva to Antonio Rubio, Rome, March 9, 1594, *ARSI, Méx. I*, 124^v. Acquaviva had already received reports from Procurator Pedro de Morales, who was attending the general congregation in Rome, and other Jesuits through their letters.

⁶¹ "Respuestas romanas al memorial del Padre Pedro de Morales que el Octubre del 93 vino a Roma por procurador de la provincia de México," *MM*, 5:183–85.

New Spain. This caused serious challenges for the Jesuit missionaries who had to consider the best methods to carry it out. However, some of the Jesuits' refusal to learn the languages hindered the Society's evangelizing project from being carried out with greater efficiency.

Taking a glimpse at the communication between the overseas provinces and the headquarters in Rome provides us with a better understanding of how personal expectations intertwined with the needs of the order. It reveals the management of emerging conflicts within the Society and the order's concern with fulfilling its objectives and those of the empire and the church. Hortigosa's and de la Torre's personal experiences show how these concerns underlay the entire conversion process, one that ultimately had to do with the processes of acquisition and transmission of knowledge fueled by the personal experience of the missionary facing realities that were frequently more complex than they could have ever expected.