

Comprehending the World: Jesuits, Language, and Translation

Liam Matthew Brockey*
Michigan State University (USA)

The following essay was conceived as the fifth annual Feore Family Lecture on Jesuit Studies, given at Boston College on October 1, 2019. On that day, Liam Matthew Brockey was awarded the George E. Ganss SJ prize for “scholarly contributions to Jesuit studies” by the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies. For this lecture, Professor Brockey was asked to consider a transversal theme, one which could be seen as unifying Jesuit enterprises around the globe, and which might help inaugurate the coming year’s scholarly work at the Institute. The following discussion of language study represents the text of his lecture with the addition of references and citations of the text translated in their original versions. It should be considered an evocation of a theme rather than a comprehensive study of the topics discussed.

On the eve of Pentecost in 1688, António Vieira SJ¹ gave a talk to the novices gathered in the college’s private chapel at Salvador da Bahia. Already 80 years old, Vieira had been appointed inspector of the Jesuit missions throughout Brazil and sought to inspire a new generation to carry on the work of their predecessors. In his estimation, the challenges inherent to the missionary vocation began with the question of language; that is, the discovery of the diversity of languages, the study of those languages, and, finally, the use of those languages for spreading the Gospel. Vieira invoked the Tower of Babel, recalling that its destruction and the division of

* Liam Matthew Brockey is an historian of Early Modern Europe, and a specialist in the history of Roman Catholicism and the Society of Jesus. Educated at the University of Notre Dame and Brown University, he is Professor of History at Michigan State University and has written extensively on Jesuit missions in China, Japan, and India. He is the author of two monographs, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579-1724* and *The Visitor: André Palmeiro and the Jesuits in Asia*, and many journal articles. Most recently, working with Mónica Leal da Silva, he translated and edited a set of António Vieira’s sermons. Professor Brockey has served as President of the American Catholic Historical Association, and was elected to the Academia Portuguesa da História.

1 António Vieira, * 6.II.1608 Lisbon (Portugal), SJ 5.V.1623 Salvador da Bahia (Brazil), † 18.VII.1697 Salvador da Bahia (Brazil) (*DHSI* IV, 3948–951).

the once-uniform world language was divine punishment for man's ambition. He then posited another tower intended to supplant the first; this one erected by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost when tongues of fire and the gift of tongues came to the Apostles. This miracle was sufficient for building the early church, but disappeared along with that first generation. For Vieira, the apostolic spirit—*o fogo das línguas*, the fire of tongues—could be seen throughout history in those who took up the task to “know, study, and learn strange languages, so as to use them to preach the Gospel, propagate the Faith, and expand the Church”.² But since the work of conversion was not complete in the centuries that followed, Vieira added, the efforts of a “great man, or fiery giant, who hence was called Ignatius” were necessary.³ As Vieira put it:

In the world, at his time, two new worlds had been discovered, an Eastern one in Asia, another Western one in America; there appeared new men and new nations, as different in their languages as in their colors; and word had spread of new peoples to convert, neither known nor named at the time of the Apostles (...) And what Saint Ignatius did was establish and raise the third tower, also outfitted and armed with all languages, so that once divided up and taught, his sons would be able to employ all of them to teach and convert all of those nations.⁴

Vieira summed up thus: the first tower was Nimrod's, in which language was confused as punishment; the second tower was the Holy Spirit's, into which language was infused by miracle; but in Ignatius's tower—meaning the Society of Jesus itself—languages are neither

2 António Vieira SJ, “Exortação Doméstica em Véspera do Espírito Santo”, [Salvador da Bahia, 1688], in Vieira, *Obra Completa*, 5: 229–43 at 231. “É o zelo, e fervor ardente, que têm, e sempre tiveram os herdeiros do espírito Apostólico de saber, estudar, e aprender as línguas estranhas, para com elas pregar o Evangelho, propagar a Fé, e amplificar a Igreja”. The author thanks Mónica Leal da Silva for her assistance in translating all of the passages in this text.

3 Ibid. “...naquele grande homem, ou gigante de fogo, por isso chamado Inácio”. Vieira intends to draw a parallel between Ignatius/Ignácio and *ignis*, Latin for fire.

4 Ibid., 231–232. “Tinham-se descoberto em seu tempo no mundo dois novos mundos, um Oriental na Ásia, outro Occidental na América: tinham aparecido novos homens, e novos nações, tão diferentes nas línguas, como nas cores: tinha-se ouvido a fama de novas gentilidades, não conhecidas, nem nomeadas no tempo dos Apóstolos... O que fez Santo Inácio foi fundar, e levantar outra terceira torre também fornecida, e armada de todas as línguas, para que instruídos repartidamente seus filhos em todas pudessem ensinar, e converter com elas todas as mesmas nações”.

confused or infused. Vieira explains that “they are not confused, because they are learned distinctly and in an orderly fashion; nor are they infused, because they are not a grace *gratis data*, such as the gift of tongues, but acquired and purchased at the cost of much study and great labor, and therefore with many and great merits”.⁵

In Vieira’s understanding, Ignatius secured his tower by fastening it with the rules that gave the Society its shape. The veteran Portuguese missionary cited the third Rule of the Summary about the Jesuits’ vocation to travel to “any part of the world” in the service of God, and paraphrased the tenth Common Rule to remind his listeners that *all* must learn the local languages of the lands where they reside.⁶ “Note those two universal clauses, all and any part,” Vieira continued,

and in what part or parts of the world, and what land or lands are those where they reside? Japan, China, Malabar, the Mughal empire, Mexico, Peru, Brazil, Maranhão, and if an unknown land is discovered, that one, too. And who are those who have to learn these languages? All, it says, without excepting anyone. It could have said that some or most would learn the local language, but it says no more or less than ‘all.’ Students, Professed, Brothers, Priests, Disciples, Masters, the young, the old, the subordinates, the superiors, without any office or occupation being so important as to be excused from it; because it is the greatest, the most important occupation, and the one upon which the aim of the whole Society depends.⁷

5 Ibid, 232. “Não se confundem, porque se aprendem distinta, e ordenadamente: nem se infundem, porque não são graça *gratis data*, como o dom das línguas, mas adquerida, e comprada a preço de muito estudo, e grande trabalho, e por isso com muitos, e grandes merecimentos”.

6 There were many printed editions of the *Regulae Societatis Iesu* printed in Vieira’s time, and which contained both the Rules of the Summary, the Common Rules, among others. The specific rules to which he refers are as follows: Rule 3 of the Summary, “Nostræ vocationis est diversa loca peragrare, & vitam agere in quâvis mundi plagâ, ubi maius Dei obsequium, & animarum auxilium speratur”; and Rule 10 of the Common Rules, “Ad maiorem unionem eorum qui in Societate vivunt, maiusque auxilium eorum apud quos habitant, singuli addiscant eius regionis linguam, in quâ resident, nisi fortè ipsorum nativa illic esset utilior: saluâ tamen Latini sermonis lege in iis, qui litteris dant operam”. See, for example, Society of Jesus, *Regulae Societatis Iesu* [1635], 8 and 25. A recent evocation of the continued reliance on these rules into the mid-twentieth century can be found in O’Malley “How We Were”, esp. 22–26.

7 Vieira, “Exhortação Doméstica” in his *Obra Completa*, 5: 232. “Reparemos bem naquelas duas cláusulas universais: ‘todos,’ e ‘em qualquer parte.’ E que parte,

Vieira's assessment of the foundations of his order is somewhat surprising. He did not point to its spiritual wellsprings, nor to the devotional routines of community life, nor even to the pastoral work aimed at the "reformation of customs". Rather he outlined an intellectual project, one demanding hard work and continual effort, which would equip the men of the Society for their vocation. To be sure, this "domestic exhortation" also contained a complaint about what he deemed the misplaced mental energy of many of his brethren, comfortably ensconced in university settings in Europe or its colonial outposts rather than laboring in the missions.⁸ But Vieira was not too heavy handed in his criticism—nor too original, given that such refrains can be found throughout decades of correspondence from the Society's vast mission territories—since there were still many Jesuits in Brazil and elsewhere around the world engaged in studying, analyzing, and teaching non-European languages. Indeed, Vieira pointed to the great accomplishments of his predecessors on the Brazilian frontier who worked for years to render indigenous languages comprehensible, thereby laying the foundations of the mission church. This particular Jesuit vocation of language study—itself a mission—can be considered one of the hallmarks of the Old Company; it is offered here, just as Vieira did centuries ago, as one of the defining characteristics of the "way of proceeding" employed by Jesuits around the globe.⁹ The rest of this essay will explain how language study became a central part of the preparation for the Society's overseas ministries in the early modern period, addressing the questions of why, how, and to what ends they pursued this arduous task, by examining evidence found

ou partes do mundo, e que terra, ou terras são essas onde residem? O Japão, a China, o Malabar, o Mogor, o México, o Peru, o Brasil, o Maranhão, e se se descobrir a terra incognita, também essa. E quem são os que hão de aprender as línguas? 'Todos,' diz, sem exceção de pessoa. Pudera dizer que aprendessem a língua alguns, ou a maior parte, mas não diz senão 'todos.' Os estudantes, e os professos, os Irmãos, e os Padres, os Discípulos, e os Mestres, os moços, e os velhos, os súbditos, e os superiores, sem que haja ofício, ou ocupação alguma tão importante, que os excetue desta; porque ela é a maior, a mais importante, e a de que depende o fim de toda a Companhia".

8 Ibid., 238–240.

9 To be sure, language study was not unique to Jesuits. Members of other religious orders, especially the Mendicant orders, also produced missionary grammars and other language learning texts, and in certain contexts before the Jesuits began the projects mentioned here. The goal of this presentation is not to elide some early modern linguists in favor of Jesuits, but rather to discuss how this intellectual project was especially aligned with the Society's "way of proceeding".

in the grammars they produced from the mid-sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries.¹⁰

From the Classroom to the Mission Field

As heirs to the Christian Humanist legacy, with its insistence on competency in biblical languages, the early Jesuits were perhaps naturally inclined to such a challenge. It was early on in the order's history that they accepted the care over schools where their primary charge was to teach Latin and rhetoric. As educated men in educational institutions of their time, their habits of mind were formed not only by their "institute", as the collected rules, codified practices, and charism, were termed, but also by their long experience in the classroom. Certainly by the late sixteenth century, but likely before that, young Jesuits taught Latin grammar during their first years in the order—often after having been educated themselves in the Society's classrooms. That most Jesuits petitioned for assignments in the overseas missions after completing a few years of grammar instruction—as an escape, perhaps—and left Europe with it fresh in their minds undoubtedly accounts for a certain predilection for "reducing" extra-European languages to grammatical principles drawn on Latin models. Indeed, the rhythms of grammar teaching became a common refrain in the correspondence of those sent to the mission territories. Francis Xavier SJ¹¹ himself had grammar lessons on his mind when he wrote to Simão Rodrigues SJ¹² from India to describe how colonial officials were corrupted soon after arriving from Europe: "all of them go on the path of *rapis, rapio*; and I am amazed how those who come from there find so many modes, tenses, and participles for this poor verb *rapio, rapis*".¹³

10 The study of pre-modern missionary grammars as key moments in the history of linguistics is a vibrant, though relatively recent, academic field. While a comprehensive bibliography lies outside of the scope of this article, analyses and substantial bibliographies can be found in the work of Otto Zwartjes. See, for example, Zwartjes, *Portuguese Missionary Grammars*; and Zwartjes, ed., *Las Gramáticas*. Also invaluable are the volumes published in conjunction with the International Conference on Missionary Linguistics in the series *Studies in the History of the Language Sciences*, ed. Koerner.

11 Francis Xavier, * 7.IV.1506 Javier (Spain), co-founder of the Society of Jesus, † 2.XII.1552 Shangchuan Island (China) (*DHCJ* III, 2140–141).

12 Simão Rodrigues, * 1510 Vouzela (Portugal), co-founder of the Society of Jesus, † 15.VI.1579 Lisbon (Portugal) (*DHCJ* IV, 3390–3392).

13 Francis Xavier SJ to Simão Rodrigues SJ, Cochin, 27 January 1545, in *Mon. Xavier*,

As António Vieira suggested, the fact that the Society of Jesus emerged in Iberia at a moment of consolidation in the European expansion also determined their linguistic vocation. The broad outlines of the Portuguese and Spanish empires had been traced by the time the first Jesuits stepped ashore, with the foundations of colonial capitals already laid and the process of coming to grips with what had been conquered well under way. In general, they were spared the shock of first discovery that their Franciscan, Augustinian, and Dominican peers experienced in many places—long after sailors, raiders, and merchants had gone through the same—but were nevertheless men who traveled into the unknown. In the case of the Jesuits, that unknown was not the new seas and new lands that increasingly filled the blank spaces on contemporary European maps; rather, it was the minds, traditions, and cultures of the peoples newly encountered, unlocked through the study of their tongues.

Jesuit pioneers in the mission field readily embraced the challenge of learning previously unknown languages. Manuscript evidence from the mid-sixteenth century from Southern India, as well as from slightly later in China and Japan indicates that Jesuits drew up word lists and grammars, typically accompanied by catechisms and other doctrine-teaching tools, soon after arriving in their mission fields.¹⁴ When these apostolic endeavors were small-scale affairs, such instruments were easily shared with new arrivals by veterans, who instructed recruits individually. But by the end of the sixteenth century, the Jesuit presence in certain mission territories had grown large enough to justify the printing of *artes*, that is, grammar and style manuals. Just as printed sermons enabled a preacher's words to reach far greater numbers of readers than listeners, so printed grammar manuals enabled a teacher's words to do the same—thereby ensuring the sustainability of the missions, as well as the preservation of the accumulated knowledge of experienced missionaries. But printing such texts meant the investment of time and money, as well as the assumption that the Jesuit presence in a given, thriving, mission field would continue to expand. It is therefore unsurprising that the

vol. 1, 375. "...Todos vão para o caminho de *rapio*, *rapis*. E estou espantado como os que de lá vem achão tantos modos, tempos e participios a este verbo cuytado de *rapio*, *rapis*".

14 For example, Henrique Henriques's "Arte da Lingua Malabar" from the 1560s or Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci's Chinese-Portuguese dictionary from the early 1580s, both of which have modern editions. See Hein and Rajam, *The Earliest Missionary Grammar of Tamil*; and Ruggieri and Ricci, *Dicionário Português-Chinês*, ed. Witek.

first printed Jesuit grammars appeared in Brazil, Mexico, Peru, and Japan, since the Society's footprint in all four areas had been firmly planted decades prior.

We should not imagine that the transition from missionary notebooks to printed textbooks was an easy one. João Rodrigues SJ,¹⁵ the author of the first grammar of Japanese, gives a sense of the challenges in the preface to his *Arte da Lingoa de Iapam* (1604–1608):

Since helping one's neighbor and traversing various parts of the world to bring souls to the true knowledge of their creator is the very institute of the Society of Jesus, and for this it is necessary to know the languages of the people with whom we deal, the superiors of the Society in Japan have long desired that an *arte* be drawn up and printed so that our priests and brothers who come from Europe and India to work in this vineyard of the Lord can more easily learn the language of this nation; but the great weight of conversion and the continual occupations of the men who could handle this task did not permit this to happen sooner.¹⁶

Indeed, analysing a language that one had learned through years of personal interactions with native speakers and without recourse to established principles was a daunting task. But this was precisely what Rodrigues did at the turn of the seventeenth century: "Now, having more ease, those same superiors ordered me to compose this *arte* in which, in addition to conjugations and rudiments, the rules and precepts that teach correct and elegant speech be set forth with all possible simplicity".¹⁷

15 João Rodrigues, * 1561 Sernancelhe (Portugal), SJ 24.XII.1580 Oita (Japan), † 1.VIII.1633 Macau (China) (*DHCJ* IV, 3389–390).

16 Rodrigues, *Arte da Lingoa de Iapam, proemio* (unnumbered). The letters omitted by the early modern typographers have been replaced below in *italics*. "Como seja proprio do instituto da Cõmpanhia de IESV ajudar o Proximo, & descorrer por varias partes do mundo trazendo as almas ao verdadeyro conhecimento de seu criador, & pera isto se tenha por meyo necessario saber a lingoa daquelles *com* que tratamos; muyto tempo ha que os Superiores da mesma Companhia de Iapão desejavão q se ordenasse, & imprimsse huma Arte pera *com* mays facilidade aprenderem a lingoa desta nação nossos Padres, & Irmãos, que de Europa, & da India vem a trabalhar nesta vinha do Senhor; mas o grave peso da *conversam*, & as *continuas* occupações dos sujeytos *que* nisto poderem entender não deram lugar a se effeytuar mays cedo..."

17 *Ibid.* "...avendo agora mayor comodidade, me ordenarão os mesmos Superiores *que* compussesse esta Arte, na qual alem das conjugações, & rudimenta, se declarassem *com* a facilidade possivel as regras, & preceytos que ensinão a falar certo, & com elegancia".

José de Anchieta SJ¹⁸ faced a similar task in Brazil when he produced a grammar of the languages spoken by indigenous inhabitants of the coastal regions of that land. There, he matched the linguistic functions of different parts of speech to their Latin equivalents, by which he was able to perceive and register a “general language” underneath the regional variants of Tupi encountered along several thousands of miles of coastline—precisely the areas where the Portuguese colonial and Jesuit missionary presence was most strongly established. Consolidating this vast territory into a linguistic whole, Anchieta’s 1595 *Arte da Grammatica da Lingoa mais usada na Costa do Brazil* was, in António Vieira’s later estimation, “with reason worthy of being considered one of his miracles”.¹⁹

While such prodigious feats were valuable for newly arrived European missionaries for transmitting the elements of language, it was not always beneficial to make such Latinate *reducciones*—to borrow a term from elsewhere in the missionary lexicon. Antonio de Rincón SJ²⁰ discovered as much when he produced his 1595 *Arte Mexicana*, a grammar of Nahuatl:

It is not possible to maintain only one method and art for teaching all languages, since they are so distant and different from each other; rather uniformity in such a task would be a great deformity, and result in confusion and bother for those who learned them. But it can nevertheless not be denied that the smoothest and swiftest path to gain advantage in any language is that which has been found for Latin and Greek, as can be seen in the ingenuity with which it is taught and learned... [But] having to write an *arte* myself... I did not want to stray from the ordinary path along which that Latin language proceeds, which is most known among us, nor oblige myself to follow all of its rules (...) As a result, in that which I could take advantage of Latin grammar, I always stuck to it, but at other points where this language differs from Latin, since they are new, it was necessary to reduce them to new rules, with an obligatory new style.²¹

18 José de Anchieta, * 19.III.1534 San Cristóbal (Spain), SJ 1.V.1551 Coimbra (Portugal), † 9.VI.1597 Anchieta (Brazil) (*DHCJ* I, 156–58).

19 Vieira, “Exhortação Doméstica” in his *Obra Completa*, 5, 233. “...com razão se pode estimar por um dos seus milagres”.

20 Antonio de Rincón, * c.1556 Texcoco (Mexico), SJ 25.VIII.1573 Tepotzotlán (Mexico), † XI.1601 Tepeojuma (Mexico) (*DHCJ* IV, 3363).

21 Rincón, *Arte Mexicana*, unnumbered reader’s prologue. “No es possible guardarse en todo un mismo methodo y arte, en enseñar todas las lenguas, siendo ellas (como lo son) tan distantes y diferentes entresi, antes la uniformidade en esto

Collaboration in Language Study

Such a willingness to be creative with the rules of language learning, and to rethink pedagogy with an eye towards outcomes, reveals the origins of these projects among experienced teachers with a shared culture of instruction. While it is customary for scholars of the Jesuits to separate the events of the mission fields from those which occurred in Europe, it bears remembering that the end of the sixteenth century was precisely the moment of the elaboration of the *Ratio Studiorum*. That educational project was not a top-down imposition from Rome, but rather a collaborative effort on the part of the various provinces; an order-wide discussion of pedagogical practice which resulted, after decades of experiments, in the enduring patterns of Jesuit teaching.²² It should not surprise us, therefore, that the same spirit of collaboration and rationalized organization would be applied to the models of language teaching and learning used outside of Europe, as evinced by the Jesuit *artes* produced in successive decades.

The prologues to the seventeenth century *artes* make it clear that the authors who wrote these grammars relied on the collaboration with their brethren and, above all, with native speakers. For example, Diego González Holguín SJ²³ averred in his 1607 *Grammatica y Arte Nueva de la Lengua General de todo el Peru, llamada Lengua Qquichua o Lengua del Inca* that his work was the fruit of twenty-five years of observations in Peru, during which time he repeatedly consulted with *muchos Indios grandes lenguas*, “many Indians who knew their

seria gran disformidad, y por consiguiente confusion y estorvo para quien las deprendiese. Mas con todo esso no se puede negar sino que el camino mas llano y breve para aprovechar en qualquiera de las lenguas, es, el que an hallado la latina, y griega, como se vee por el artificio con que se enseñan y aprenden. (...) Por lo qual haviendo yo de escrevir Arte ... no me pareció apartarme del ordinario camino por donde procede la lengua latina, que es mas sabida entre nosotros, ni tampoco me he querido obligar a seguir del todo sus reglas ... De manera que en aquello que me è podido aprovechar de la grammatica latina siempre me yre arrimando a ella pera en las demas cosa, en que esta lengua tiene diferencia de la latina por ser ellas nuevas a sido forçoso reducir las a nuevas reglas, con el nuevo estilo que se require”.

22 While many early modern examples exist, recent critical editions of the *Ratio Studiorum* and earlier Jesuit pedagogical works reveal the character of this foundational document clearly. See Pavur, ed. and trans., *Ratio Studiorum*; and Casalini and Pavur, eds., *Jesuit Pedagogy*, esp. 241–324.

23 Diego González Holguín, * 1553 Cáceres (Spain), SJ 22.II.1571 Alcalá (Spain), † 1617 Mendoza (Argentina) (DHCJ II, 1784–785).

language well”.²⁴ In similar fashion, Luís Figueira SJ²⁵ noted in his *Arte da Lingua Brasilica* from 1620 that he checked his notes with “native Indians, and priests who knew the language well and who had been born and raised among the same Brazilian Indians”.²⁶ Thomas Stevens SJ²⁷, an English Jesuit who worked in Western India, produced his *Arte da Lingua Canarim* in 1640 with the help of his confrere Diogo Ribeiro SJ²⁸. And before it was published, since both of these men had died, their text was “reviewed and emended by four other priests” of the Society of Jesus.²⁹ We see the same in Pedro Dias SJ’s³⁰ *Arte da Lingua de Angola*, published in Lisbon in 1697, where the provincial superior’s approval included a note that the text had been “reviewed and approved by experts in the same language”.³¹

The content of these printed missionary grammars further reveals the stamp of the particular pedagogical culture of the Society of Jesus in the early modern period. Just as the *Ratio Studiorum* prescribed an educational program that started with the most basic elements and culminated in sophisticated forms of written and oral expression, so the *artes* envisioned a similar path. Anchieta’s guide to the tongue of coastal Brazil, for instance, proceeded from letters

24 González Holguín, *Gramatica y arte nueva dela lengua general de todo el Peru*, unnumbered reader’s prologue.

25 Luís Figueira, * c.1575 Almodôvar (Portugal), SJ 22.I.1592 Évora (Portugal), † 3.VII.1643 Marajó Island (Brazil) (DHCJ II, 1416).

26 Figueira, *Arte de la Lingua Brasilica*, unnumbered reader’s prologue. “...Indios naturais, & a padres grandes linguas nascidos, & criados entre os mesmos Indios do Brasil”.

27 Thomas Stevens (Stephens), * c.1549 Bushton (England), SJ 20.X.1575 Rome (Italy), † 1619 Salcete (Goa) (DHCJ IV, 3637).

28 Diogo Ribeiro, *1561 Tomar (Portugal), SJ VI.1580 Goa (India), † 18.VI.1635 Goa (India) (DHCJ IV, 3346).

29 Stevens, *Arte de Lingua Canarim*, title page. “Arte da Lingoa Canaraim composta pelo Padre Thomaz Estevão da Companhia de IESVS & acrecentada pello Padre Diogo Ribeiro da mesma Companhia. E novamente revista, & emendada por outros quatro Padres da mesma Companhia”.

30 Pedro Dias, * 1622 Gouveia (Portugal), SJ 13.VII.1641 Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), † 25.I.1700 Salvador da Bahia (Brazil) (Leite, *História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil*, 8: 199–200).

31 Dias, *Arte da Lingua de Angola*, unnumbered page with licence by Alexandre de Gusmão, Salvador da Bahia, 7 Junho 1696, mentions that the book was “revista e aprovada por pessoas peritas na mesma lingua de Angola”.

to pronunciation, to nouns, to pronouns, and finally to verbs, the largest section. Similar models were found in Dias's Kimbundu grammar, Stephens's Konkani *arte*, and Lodovico Vincenzo Mamiani SJ's³² *Arte de Grammatica da Lingua Brasilica da Nação Kiriri*, for use among the peoples of the Brazilian *sertão*.³³ Since basic morphology was only part of what was necessary for starting missionary work in extra-European cultures, the printed manuals frequently contained vocabulary lists and catechetical texts as well. As in the *Ratio Studiorum*, this Jesuit educational project was considered as a whole—men headed to the mission field would have a prepared course of study and ready reference tools at their disposal. Antonio Ruiz de Montoya SJ³⁴ made this clear in his 1639 *Tesoro de la Lengua Guarani*:

I present three printed sections: The first is an *arte* and vocabulary in one volume. The second is called Treasure, since I sought to dress it with something of the richness that my limited capacities have been able to draw from its rich mineral veins. The third is a Catechism which will be of some help to those who have the obligation to teach, where they will find material for ordinary lessons.³⁵

This last citation reminds us of the goal of these missionary *artes*: Not just facility in speech, but elegance in expression. After all, much of early modern missionary work was an exercise in persuasion. Here again we see the *Ratio Studiorum* recreated in the missionary context, where instruction in rhetoric capped a program of grammar study. Diego González Holguín's 1607 Quechua grammar asserted that the desired outcome of his *arte* was "not so much for knowing something of the language for confessing,

32 Lodovico Vincenzo Mamiani, * 20.I.1652 Pesaro, SJ 10.IV.1668, + 8.III.1730 Rome (Leite, *História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil*, 8: 361).

33 Mamiani, *Arte de Grammatica de lingua Brasilica da Nação Kiriri*.

34 Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, * 13.VI.1585 Lima, SJ 11.XI.1606 Lima, + 11.IV.1652 Lima (DHCJ IV, 3436–437).

35 Ruiz de Montoya, *Tesoro de la Lengua Guarani*, preface to "padres religiosos, y clerigos, curas, y predicadores del Evangelio à los Indios de la Provincia del Paraguay, y Paraná, etc". "Tres cuerpos ofrezco impressos. El primero, es un Arte y Bocabulario en un tomo. El segundo intitulé Tesoro, porque procurè vestirlo con algo de su riqueza, que mi corto caudal ha podido sacar de su mineral rico. El tercero, es un Catecismo, que serà de alguna ayuda a los que tienen obligacion de enseñar donde hallaran materia para las ordinarias doctrinas".

since that already existed, but in order to train preachers who may find in great abundance all that we can conceive in Spanish in this language, with a great quantity of words and their own elegance, since all of that is necessary to he who preaches".³⁶ Diego de Torres Rubio SJ,³⁷ the author of another Quechua grammar published in 1619, averred that his goal was for learners to "learn the language more perfectly and elegantly".³⁸ And Orazio Carocci SJ³⁹ insisted that his 1645 *Arte de la Lengua Mexicana*—the third such grammar of Nahuatl to be printed in Mexico City—was not superfluous. Rather, Carocci's book contained a *cosa singular*: its inclusion of accents on every word, without which no eloquence could be had "regardless of how much one has worked on it".⁴⁰

Yet even with these language guides, Jesuit authors recognized that true knowledge lay beyond their reach without the help of native cicerones. This was especially the case in Asia, where ancient printed canons complemented oral traditions. In Late Ming China, for instance, a mission-specific *ratio studiorum* was created to guide new missionaries through indigenous texts from the Confucian *Four Books* and *Five Classics*. Clearly identifying the cultural capital to be gained from a ready knowledge of literary commonplaces, specific prescriptions were made of which texts to study and how Chinese masters were to be hired.⁴¹ In early seventeenth-century

36 González Holguín, *Gramatica*, unnumbered reader's prologue. "...no tanto para saber algo de la Lengua para confessar, que essa ya la avia, sino para formar predicadores, que con grande abundancia, todo lo que en romance concebemos, se pueda hallar en la Lengua com copia de palabras y su propria elegancia, que todo esto ha menester el que predica".

37 Diego de Torres Rubio, * c.1547 Alcazár de Consuegra (Spain), SJ 1566 Valencia (Spain), † 13.IV.1638 Chuquisaca (Bolivia) (Torres Saldamandro, *Los Antigos Jesuitas de Peru*, 79).

38 Torres Rubio, *Arte de la Lengua Quichua*, unnumbered prologue. "...saberse la lengua mas perfecta y elegante".

39 Orazio Carocci, * c.1579 Florence (Italy), SJ 23.X.1601 Rome (Italy), † 14.VII.1662 Tepotzatlán (Mexico) (*DHCJ* I, 664).

40 Carocci, *Arte de la Lengua Mexicana*, unnumbered reader's preface. Carocci's original phrase is more disturbing than the phrase included here: "A se añadido à este Arte una cosa singular, que es el ir accentuadas todas las palabras Mexicanas, para que pueda el que la aprendiere, aprender juntamente la pronuncacion, que si esta no se sabe, hablarà qualquiera la lengua Mexicana, por mucho que aya trabajado en ella, poco mejor que un negro boçal la Española".

41 Dias the elder, "Ratio Studiorum para os Nossos que ham de Estudar as letras e lingua da China" [Macau?], 1624, Lisbon, Biblioteca da Ajuda, *Jesuitas na Ásia*

Japan, while the Jesuit mission thrived, João Rodrigues had made similar recommendation about the indispensable use of Japanese texts, best taught by indigenous masters. Having made their way through his nearly five-hundred-page *Arte da Lingoa de Iapam*, he asserted: "All that remains for those who wish to speak in a polished and elegant manner is to concentrate on the lessons that the important authors of Japan composed about their affairs, for it is in them that the pure and elegant language is contained, which not even the native speakers know perfectly without such study".⁴² It is nevertheless certain that Rodrigues heard criticism of the ambitious plan for eloquence that he laid out, since he returned to the topic over a decade later in his *Arte Breve*. Seeking to quiet the skeptics who might find such an obligation to be a waste of time or even morally dubious (given their Shinto or Buddhist content), he wrote: "We have a good example from those who learn Latin, because no one is a good and perfect Latinist if he only learns from the books of modern authors, regardless of how elegant they are, and if he does not drink from the founts of ancient authors, whose natural language it was".⁴³

The Limits of Language Study

Despite their intentions to make straight the path to missionary success, the authors of these *artes* knew that their audience was not the same as that of the *Ratio Studiorum*. All of these grammars were intended for grown men, not for boys, meaning that although their lessons might proceed at an accelerated pace, there were fewer guarantees that they might be easily retained. In the reader's prologue to his grammar of the *Língua Geral*, Luís Figueira made a candid admission of this challenge: "It is not easy, pious reader, for those who learn a foreign language as grown-ups to attain all of its secrets and delicacies; especially if they do not have an *arte*,

collection codex 49-V-7: ff. 301v-91v. An analysis of this document is found in Brockey, *Journey to the East*, 255-68.

42 Rodrigues, *Arte da Lingoa de Iapam*, proemio. "O que resta he que deploys de aprendidos estes principios necesarios, quem quiser falar polida, & elegantemente se dê muyto á lição dos livros dos autores graves de Iapão compuserão de suas cousas, por que nelles està encerrada a pura, & elegante lingoa, aqual nem aynda os mesmos naturaes sem este estudo sabem perfeytamente..."

43 Rodrigues, *Arte Breve da Lingoa Iapoa*, 5r. "Exemplo temos disto nos que aprendem Latim, por que nenhum he bom & perfeito latino, se so aprender por livros de autores modernos por elegantes que sejam, se o nam beber nas fontes dos autores antigos, a quem era aquella lingoa natural".

or masters who teach using an *arte*".⁴⁴ Echoing this realization, Lodovico Mamiani elaborated with reference to patristic and Jesuit authorities:

To Saint Jerome it seemed a difficult undertaking for a man advanced in age to learn new languages with the rules and subtleties that a schoolboy does, as he confesses for a similar reason in the preface to the Gospels: *Periculosa præsumptio est senis mutare linguam, & canescentem ad initia trahere parvulorum*. But this difficulty was generously conquered by our glorious Patriarch Saint Ignatius, who at the age of thirty-three years began the study of the Latin language among children so that he could make himself an instrument of the glory of God through the conversion of souls, and by his example he persuaded all of his Sons and in particular those who live among heathens and barbarians that they might not deem it unworthy of years of study to learn anew barbaric tongues when they are necessary for the conversion of souls.⁴⁵

Mamiani's distainful turn of phrase—his insistence on "barbaric tongues"—reminds us that he speaks to us over a distance of over three hundred years, from a spot deep in the Brazilian hinterlands at the edge of the colonial world. From where he wrote in the late 1690s, there was still a vast frontier to the West and to the South that still represented the unknown—a land yet uncharted by grammar books. Printed texts like his Kiriri *arte* were rarities; they signified, as we have noted, the presence of established missions, they were the linguistic equivalents of the Silver Fleet or the *Carreira da Índia*,

44 Figueira, *Arte de la Lingua Brasilica*, unnumbered reader's prologue. "Não he facil, pio leitor, aos que aprendem alguma lingua estrangeira, de idade ja crescida, alcançar todos os segredos, & delicadezas della; principalmente não avendo arte, nem mestres, que por arte a ensinem".

45 Mamiani, *Arte de Gramatica de lingua Brasilica da Nação Kiriri*, unnumbered reader's prologue. "Difficultosa empreza pareceo a S. Ieronymo em hum sugeito crescido na idade aprender novas linguas com as regras, & apices com que aprende hum minino da escola, como confessa em semelhante proposito na prefação sobre os Evangelhos: *Periculosa præsumptio est senis mutare linguam, & canescentem ad initia trahere parvulorum*. Mas esta difficultade foy generosamente vencida do nosso glorioso Patriarca S. Ignacio, que de idade de trinta & tres annos começou o estudo da lingua Latina entre mininos, para se fazer instrumento da gloria de Deos na conversão das almas, & com o seu exemplo persuadio a todos os seus Filhos, & em particular aos que morão entre Gentios, & Barbaros, para que não julguem estudo indigno dos annos aprender de novo lingoa barbaras, quando são necessarias para a conversão das almas".

well-worn routes to clearly identifiable destinations. But most Jesuit language study never made it to the press; it remained in the notebooks of the men who lived on missionary frontiers, where it was passed from Jesuit to Jesuit. In this regard, we must temper our view of the Society's mastery of languages in the early modern period, since we lack the evidence to make claims about times and places where the documental record is silent.

There are, nevertheless, some places we can seek to gauge the frustrations that were felt by the Jesuits who trained their hearing on the linguistic unknown. Their trepidation was most likely shared by all other pioneers during that age of first encounters, even if the monuments to their memory in ink or bronze communicate undaunted courage. Perhaps the best evocation, once again, comes from António Vieira, in a sermon that he preached on Pentecost in 1657. Here the preacher dwelt on the unknown languages spoken by the peoples of the Amazon River basin, called by some contemporaries *Rio Babel*. Not only was this appellation unjust, Vieira argued, because the Amazon was more a sea than a river; but because

in the Tower of Babel, as Saint Jerome says, there were only seventy-two languages, and those that are spoke in the Amazon River are so many and so diverse, that neither their names nor their number is known. The known ones, until the discovery of the *Rio de Quito* in 1639, totaled one hundred and fifty. Afterwards many more were discovered, yet of the river's immense branches and the nations that inhabit it, only the smallest part has been discovered".⁴⁶

To compound the challenge presented by this diversity, Vieira further evoked the difficulties of making sense of new tongues based on his own experiences:

It occurred to me at times to be with my hearing trained on the barbarian's mouth, and even on that of the interpreter, without my

46 Vieira, "Sermão do Espírito Santo" in Vieira, *Obra Completa*, 5: 256. "...porque na Torre de Babel, como diz São Jerónimo, houve somente setenta e duas línguas, e as que se falam no Rio de Amazonas são tantas, e tão diversas, que se lhes não sabe o nome, nem o número. As conhecidas até o ano de 639 no descobrimento do Rio de Quito eram cento e cinquenta. Depois se descobriram muitas mais, e a menor parte do Rio, de seus imenso braços, e das nações, que os habitam, é o que está descoberto". Vieira found this number in the work of another Jesuit, Cristobál de Acuña. See his *Nuevo Descubrimiento*, 16v.

being able to distinguish the syllables, nor perceive the vowels or consonants that they were made of, mistaking one letter for two or three similar ones, or composing it (which is more like it) with the mixture of all of them; some so fine and subtle, others so hard and harsh, others so interior and obscure, more drowned in the throat than pronounced on the tongue.⁴⁷

Vieira continued, contrasting his language learning experiences with those of Joseph and Ezechiel, whom he claimed clearly had the better part since God assisted them miraculously:

“If it is a labor to hear a language that you do not understand, how much more of a labor is it to understand a language that you do not hear? The first labor is to hear it; the second, to understand it; the third is to reduce it to grammar and precepts; the fourth is to study it; the fifth (and not the least, which obliged Saint Jerome to file his teeth) is to pronounce it. And after all of these labors you have not yet begun to labor, because they are only preparations for the labor.”⁴⁸

Not even Augustine, Vieira exclaimed, had the fortitude to face what the Jesuits of Brazil confronted:

Saint Augustine tried to learn the Greek Language, and arriving at the second declension in which *Ophis*, which means snake, is declined, he went no further, and said with gallantry, *Ophis me terruit*, the snake frightened me so that it made me turn back. So if Saint Augustine, being Saint Augustine, if the eagle of human understanding so

47 Vieira, “Sermão do Espírito Santo” in Vieira, *Obra Completa*, 5: 256–57. “Por vezes me aconteceu estar com o ouvido aplicado à boca do bárbaro, e ainda do intérprete, sem poder distinguir as sílabas, nem perceber as vogais, ou consoantes, de que se formavam, equivocando-se a mesma letra com duas, e três semelhantes, ou compondo-se (o que é mais certo) com mistura de todas elas: umas tão delgadas, e subtis, outras tão duras, e escabrosas, outras tão interiores, e escuras, e mais afogadas na garganta, que pronunciadas na língua”.

48 Ibid, 257. “Se é trabalho ouvir a língua que não entendeis, quanto maior trabalho será haver de entender a língua que não ouvís? O primeiro trabalho é ouvi-la; o segundo percebê-la; o terceiro reduzi-la a gramática, e a preceitos; o quarto estudá-la; o quinto (e não o menor, e que obrigou a São Jerónimo a limar os dentes) o pronuncia-la. E depois de todas estes trabalhos ainda não começastes a trabalhar, porque são disposições somente para o trabalho”. The reference to Jerome filing his teeth in order to pronounce Hebrew and Aramaic appears in widely-read early modern texts, although contemporary authors refuted the claim. See, for example, Fregoso, *Factorum Dictorumque Memorabilium*, 283v; and the refutation of the claim in Siguënza, *Vida de S. Geronimo*, 180.

strongly resisted learning Greek, which was so common among the Latins, and so facilitated by Masters, by Books, by *Artes*, by Vocabularies, and with all the other tools for learning; what would it be for the barbarian and *barbaríssimas* tongues of peoples where there was never anyone who knew how to read or write? What would it be to learn Nheengaíba, Juruuna, Tapajó, Teremembé, Mamaianá, whose mere names seem to cause terror?⁴⁹

Conclusion

This was nevertheless the task, and for António Vieira and his brethren in the Society of Jesus it was far from complete in the mid-seventeenth century. Despite its difficulty, the Jesuits would continue to confront new languages in new mission territories: “digging the first foundations and discovering the first rudiments, distinguishing nouns, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, numbers, cases, tenses, modes, and modes never before seen nor imagined”.⁵⁰ New grammars of South American and South Asian languages appeared by Jesuit authors in the eighteenth century, furthering the linguistic projects that their brethren had begun decades before.⁵¹ These intellectual and intercultural projects would continue in other forms on new frontiers after the Society of Jesus was restored in the nineteenth century. After 1814, Jesuits in Africa, in the American

49 Vieira, “Sermão do Espírito Santo” in Vieira, *Obra Completa*, 5: 257. “Santo Agostinho intentou aprender a Língua Grega, e chegando à segunda declinação, em que se declina *Ophis*, que quer dizer “serpente”, não foi mais por diante, e disse com galantaria: *Ophis me terruit*: ‘a serpente me meteu tal medo, que me fez tornar atrás.’ Pois se a Santo Agostinho, sendo Santo Agostinho, se à Águia dos entendimentos humanos se lhe fez tão dificultoso aprender a Língua Grega, que está tão vulgarizada entre os Latinos, e tão facilitada com Mestres, com Livros, com Artes, com Vocabulários, e com todos os outros instrumentos de aprender; que serão as línguas bárbaras, e barbaríssimas de umas gentes, onde nunca houve que soubesse ler, nem escrever? Que será aprenderes o Nheengaíba, o Juruuna, o Tapajó, o Teremembé, o Mamaianá, que só os nomes parece que fazem horror?” The source for this anecdote about Augustine’s fear of learning Greek is difficult to identify, although it appears to have been well known among early moderns. Indeed, it appears in the context of discussions about the *Ratio Studiorum* in 1586 among the Portuguese Jesuits. See *Mon. paed.*, VI: 333.

50 Vieira, “Sermão do Espírito Santo” in Vieira, *Obra Completa*, 5: 257. “...de cavar os primeiros alicerces, e descobrir os primeiros rudimentos dela; distinguir o Nome, o Verbo, o Advérbio, a proposição, o número, o caso, o tempo, o modo, e modos nunca vistos, nem imaginados...”

51 For example, Marbán, *Arte de la Lengua Moxa*; and Beschi, *Grammatica Latino-Tamulica*.

West, and in East and Southeast Asia, pursued ends similar to those of their forebears with their continued language study.⁵²

Proof of common assent that this “fire of tongues” should continue to be stoked among the men of the Society was most recently reaffirmed in 1995, when the thirty-fourth General Congregation affirmed: “In order to facilitate communication with other cultures and throughout the universal Society, all are to learn languages other than their own, and the Society as a whole should try to have a common language. To that end, Jesuits in formation will learn English; those whose mother tongue is English will learn another modern language of global significance, to be determined by the cultural context in which they live”.⁵³ Ignatius’s counterpart to the Tower of Babel, António Vieira would remind us, was built to last, and he surely would be proud of the Jesuits’ continued dedication to his endeavor.

52 For example, Mengarini, *A Shelish or Flat-Head Grammar*; Torrend, *A Comparative Grammar of the South-African Bantu Languages*; Mathijssen, *Tettum-Hollandsche Woordenlijst*; and Zottoli, *Cursus Litteraturæ Sinicæ*.

53 Society of Jesus, Decrees of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation, Rome, January 5-March 22 1995, Decree 21, point 10; online.

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