

**LITERACY AND NATIONALIZATION OF ITALIAN CHILDREN IN BRAZIL:
PRESCRIPTIONS ON TEXTBOOKS**

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ABSTRACT

The following article discusses aspects of Italian nationalization found in two primary education textbooks in Brazil, which were used in Italian schools in this country. It analyses how the ideal of an Italian nation was instilled in Italian elementary school students in Brazil at the beginning of the 20th century, through many references to figures such as the queen mother, kings, and Italian national heroes. It also highlights the reactions to such inculcation methods from many sectors of Brazilian society.

KEY WORDS

history of education; nationalism; italian immigration.



SISYPHUS
JOURNAL OF EDUCATION
VOLUME 6, ISSUE 03,
2018, PP.76-98

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25749/sis.13062>

**ALFABETIZAR E NACIONALIZAR A INFÂNCIA ITALIANA NO BRASIL:
PRESCRIÇÕES EM LIVROS DE LEITURA**

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RESUMO

O presente artigo trata de aspectos da nacionalização italiana contidos em dois livros didáticos destinados à educação primária no Brasil para serem usados em escolas italianas neste país. Analisa como o ideal de nação italiana deveria ser inculcado em crianças da escola elementar italiana no Brasil no início do século XX por meio de distintas referências, tais como, a *nonna*, reis e heróis nacionais italianos. Além disso, destaca as reações a esses modos de inculcação, por vários setores da sociedade brasileira.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

história da educação; nacionalismo; imigração italiana.



SISYPHUS

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 03,

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Literacy and Nationalization of Italian Children in Brazil: Prescriptions on Textbooks

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INTRODUCTION

The organized process of Italian immigration to Brazil is a phenomenon manifested at the end of the nineteenth century (1870), which damped at the beginning of the twentieth century (1920). The southern and southeastern regions were those to where a large number of immigrants directed themselves, and the state of São Paulo, in the southeast, received the largest amount to work, mainly on coffee farms, replacing the slave labor that had been suppressed with the abolition of slavery in 1888, but also having groups settled in the capital and colonial nuclei. In these, as part of colonization actions of the Brazilian State (Bertonha, 2016; Cenni, 2003; Trento, 1989)¹. According to Trento between 1880 and 1924 3,600,000 immigrants entered Brazil, 38% of whom were Italians.

In the southern region, Italian immigrants settled in the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Paraná. In addition to coffee farms, colonial nucleus were also insertion spaces regarding work in small farms, where school education became a motive for claiming the state and, at the same time, on the initiative of the settlers themselves.

The educational offer pretension in the colonial nucleus by the public power during the Empire was left out but it was contemplated in the law of 03/29/1884² and later in the São Paulo State Regulation for the Immigration Service of 08/30 / 1887. In this state, in the First Republic, through state decree No. 1458 of April 10th, 1907, there is also a guarantee of instruction to the settlers' children in public schools, but these determinations are no longer fulfilled in their entirety, since immigrants had to organize school educational spaces, because even when they existed as a state offer, they were not enough to meet the needs existing in those places. This demonstrates that, although in the transition from the Monarchy to the Republic, the educational system, especially with regard to primary education, undergoes major changes, with emphasis on primary education, whose bases are broadly based on a modernizing conception of science through the intuitive method, with the institutionalization of school groups, however, measures like these that resulted in a certain expansion of primary education were not extended to the majority of the school-age population at this level of education (Souza, 1998).

The provinces, later states, since the Empire, have had autonomy to organize their own systems of education, since the additional act of 1834. The changes operated in that

1 Italians were already present on Brazilian soil since the discovery, for instance travelers, sailors, political refugees (Bertonha, 2016; Trento, 1989).

2 Law n. 28 of 03/29/1884. This law provided for the creation of a mixed primary education chair in each colonial nucleus (Makino, 1971-1974, pp. 104-112).

passage result from isolated actions of the central power and the states. The Reform Benjamin Constant (Decree No. 981 of November 8th, 1890) is an example, when it is only intended to regulate changes in primary and secondary education of the federal district, then headquartered in Rio de Janeiro. Another example is the Caetano de Campos reform in São Paulo in 1892 which advocates the modernization of primary education. Other reforms were made by different states from 1915³, with the aim of modernizing education, but also and especially of its nationalization.

In the nationalist logic, the formation of the National Defense League (1916), created by Olavo Bilac, through conferences which highlight two aspects: the moral situation and the education, considering the raising illiteracy rate, in around 76.5% (Carvalho, 2003) aimed at combating the internal danger manifested by the breakdown of national unity due to the rarefied national spirit that existed at that time. What triggers nationalistic civic preaching (Nagle, 1985). According to Nagle (1985), the federal government intervened and combined efforts with the states to close foreign schools. Thus, by the end of the first war, in 1918, by decree, subsidizes them financially to keep foreign schools in former European colonies.

From my first, and I would say, rudimentary approximation of school textbooks⁴, I established the first periodization that encompasses the years 1890 to 1920, including the end of the nineteenth century and the first part of the First Republic of Brazil⁵, which results in a considerable period of thirty years. This has motivated me to speak about nationalism and, at the same time, to demand a more careful introduction of school books, with a view to having a more thorough approach to the inter-related sources that influence them. I was then required to establish a theoretical/methodological approach that considers the “particular,” to examine the “general” in the History of Education as articulated within Social History. The particular is understood as the books with which I try to engage, following an argument that sometimes makes me more distant from and sometimes closer to the general understanding of the historical period in which these books were disseminated in Brazil, and at the same time, the reasons/purposes behind their editing, which would justify the use (Certeau, 1994) and dissemination of these books in different times and places.

Effectively, as I previously indicated, this paper focuses on two books. The first one is a syllabary, the *Sillabario Italiano Illustrato, per la sezione inferior dela prima classe elementare maschile e femminile ad uso dele scuole italiane al Brasile*. The second is *Lo Scolaretto Italo-Brasiliano, libro III, ad uso dela classe terza ementare, compilato per uso dele scuole Italiani al Brasile conforme I ultimi programmi governativi Italiani Brasilliani*.⁶

Although these books do not have a publication date, there are indications within the texts to suggest that they were disseminated in Brazil at the end of the nineteenth

3 It is worth saying that the Constitution of 1891, it was up to the states alone to legislate on their educational subjects. See also in this meaning in the article by Veiga (2011).

4 By school book, we understand a material that was specifically organized for school education purposes that can comprehend different areas of knowledge, and in which formative and informative purpose is given through values that are intended to be conveyed. In general, the school book is organized by knowledge areas in different grades, increasing in complexity for each grade and teaching degree.

5 Encompasses the period between 1889 and 1930.

6 This book was published in São Paulo by steam Typ. in Casa Endrizzi – publisher, 74 – Boa Vista Street – 74. S/D. The nominated government program was implemented under Deputy Samuel Malfatti's project proposal, regarding Italian language teaching in schools of that ethnicity. This project was converted into law in August 1893 (Cfr. Cenni, 2003, p. 326). Which had been under the administration of the Italian government since 1870, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy under the auspices of the Ministry of Public Instruction.



century and during part of the First Republic. This research was structured from this perspective, which allows for a degree of flexibility in my analysis of the school books. In light of this, I will first introduce the appreciation of literacy and the nationalization of Italian children in Brazil within the *Sillabario Italiano Illustrato*, and then go on to consider the process of teaching Italian children in Brazil, still at the end of the nineteenth century, in *Lo Scolaretto Italo-Brasiliano, libro III*. The *Syllabary*⁷, though seemingly published after the *Scolaretto*, will be taken first as an analysis reference point from which to contemplate the sequence of literacy/nationalization, before turning to the *Scolaretto*, which contemplates nationalization, and apparently aimed to disseminate (Julia, 2001) this concept among the students.

I center my analysis on aspects of Italian language teaching in schools that were founded by Italian immigrants in São Paulo, and on the knowledge that this teaching expresses values that were apparently disseminated and instilled in children attending Italian schools in São Paulo. Such values include a greater emphasis on the Italian national dimension through civility and patriotism, and, subsequently, subjects such as family, work, solidarity, obedience, kindness, courage, and honesty, which are somehow linked to divinity⁸.

We understand values to be everything that is idealized by the individual or subject in a subjective or spiritual strand, as opposed to the sensitive strand. In this sense, values are understood as an idea, which, according to Hessen, leads us to approach them “as an ideal content of Being, referred and subordinated to the Spirit’s emotional side, that is, to our sentiment towards values” (Hessen, 1974, p. 52) School books (Corrêa, 2000), because they contain messages with a clear purpose, also contain ideas that aim to significantly guide the student according to an ideal. Values are disseminated through languages and specific codes, and also embed “a secret that brings in itself, but on the surface, the decipherable marks of what it means. It is, at the same time, an underground revelation, and a revelation that, little by little is reestablished in an ascending clarity” (Foucault, 1995, p. 51). In this sense, texts from Italian textbooks that exalt patriotic/nationalistic values express this comprehension for two reasons: first, they appear to be subtly distributed between texts that introduce different value proposals (religion morality, solidarity, etc.), and second, different areas of knowledge are used in the dissemination of these values. Therefore, on the one hand, this concealed dimension can be explained by these two aspects, and also through the underlying intentions or perhaps by reading between the lines. On the other hand, as these are printed texts, and codified in a specific language, we can appeal to Foucault once again, in the sense that “whilst language, those texts are not placed there arbitrarily, due to the fact that they concern a specific world” (Foucault, 1995, p. 51), and to an even greater extent, for existing with clearly defined purposes, despite being concealed most of the time. It is thus precisely because the language used represents what this author considers as “an enigma to be solved, because words are proposed to men as things to decipher” (Foucault, 1995, p. 52). Such comprehension occurs rapidly to me, since these are books that were largely organized by Italian authors and published in Brazil.

7 The *Syllabary*, it seems, was published after 1900, because it refers to King Vitor Emanuel III as the current king of Italy. He took over the throne after the death of Umberto I in 08/29/1900. The *Scolaretto* portrays Umberto I as the king of Italy and Margherita de Savoia as the Queen, who were still the country’s monarchs in 1895, the date contained in a letter on page 78 of this book.

8 The comprehension of the relationship between family and a divinity comes very close to, for example, a positivist understanding under Comte’s comprehension. In this sense, read Comte & Giannotti (1996) and Comte (1996).

LITERACY AND NATIONALIZATION OF ITALIAN CHILDREN IN BRAZIL

THE SYLLABARIO ITALIANO AND THE LO SCOLARETTO ITALO-BRASILIANO

Data regarding the literacy of Italian immigrant children in São Paulo, Brazil, can be inferred from the *Syllabario Italiano*. This illustrated booklet frequently refers to a rural childhood, as can be seen on the cover of the book, shown below.



Figure 1. the second cover of the italian syllabary.

Source: "Syllabario Italiano Illustrato", per la sezione inferiore della prima classe elementare maschile e femminile ad uso delle scuole italiane al Brasile, [s.d], p. 6.

Animals – such as rats, snakes, lambs, oxen, goats, dogs, flowers, cats, birds (chickens, parrots, owls, eagles), insects (spiders, mosquitoes), and reptiles (snakes, frogs) – and work tools (a shovel) are shown in this image and in the other pictures spread throughout the book, situating the elements that must be taught to the youth. Such images have a central importance in the material. The eye surely symbolizes the ability of the child to see his/her surroundings and to learn from them. These are rudimentary learnings, similar to those written by Hebrad (1990), which are fundamental, along with others, to the construction of notions of



nationality, and which are also intended, through students' comprehension of the world they live in and their reading about it, to follow the empiricist guidelines preached since the eighteenth century.

The end of page fifteen of the *Syllabary* shows a picture of a child, Emilio, at an early age lying on a crib of branches, representing his babysitter (balia), a nurse. From this point of view, there is evidence of an educational guidance based on the child's natural world, inspired by the classic book *Emile* by Rousseau (2009), and his reference to the dedication of this work to mothers and the protection that mothers must grant to their child, the growing bush, against human influences. In terms of the illustration in the *Syllabary*, the child is entwined with a bush, which confuses nature in its most absolute form with the nature that was lived, as previously indicated.

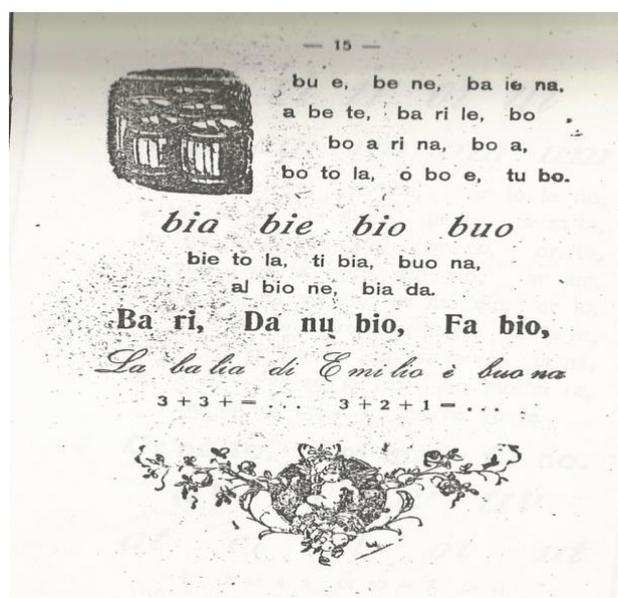


Figure 2. A child sheltered by nature.

Source: "Sillabario Italiano Illustrato", per la sezione inferiore della prima classe elementare maschile e femminile ad uso delle scuole italiane al Brasile, [s.d], p. 15.

With regard to the *Syllabary*, the literacy process begins with the learning of vowels, the first one being the letter "i" – from the word Italy, it seems – as seen in the image placed in the next page:



Figure 3. Image of the vowel *i* – Sillabario Italiano.

Source: “Sillabario Italiano Illustrato,” per la sezione inferiore della prima classe elementare maschile e femminile ad uso delle scuole italiane al Brasile, [s.d], p. 3.

The letter *i* can be interpreted here as the seed, so to speak, of the infant’s initiation in subjects of a national/patriotic order, and is followed by an image of Elena (Regina de d’Italia) and Nona. This elementary knowledge in its rudimentary sense is thus bound up with important and traditional Italian characters.



figure 4. Image of Elena Queen d’Italia and nona.

Source: “Sillabario Italiano Illustrato,” per la sezione inferiore della prima classe elementare maschile e femminile ad uso delle scuole italiane al Brasile, [s.d], pp. 4-5.



For Hobsbawm (1996), the idea of language and its teaching as a process of nationalization was introduced at the end of the nineteenth century by those who knew how to read and write, and not by those who spoke. From the *Syllabary's* point of view, this would serve as a basis for representing the country and, at the same time, it would form part of the three-part system – along with elementary work and religion notions – of shaping Italian national children living abroad.

The *Syllabary* as a whole is a school textbook (Choppin, 1992, 2002) that contains elementary knowledge (Júnior Gatti, 1997) aimed to introduce children to the processes of reading and writing. Gradually, through an analytical method and the introduction of numbers, its organization is developed according to intuitive logic – that is to say, from elementary knowledge that is relatable for the children rather than distant (Valdemarin, 1998, 2004) – whilst also according to syllables that then give rise to learning words, small sentences, and texts. When considering what would be relatable for the children, their rural environment and the beings and objects around them, such as small animals (initiation to sciences) and toys, constitute the “Things” (Calkins, 1861) to which the knowledge would be linked and would have, at the same time, a meaning for the child from the scientific perspective of observation. Patriotism would still be emphasized, however, according to the logic of the closest (most relatable) to the most distant, through the figurative representations of the monarchy distributed throughout the book. For example, King Vittorio Emanuele III (Re d'Italia) appears on page 9 of the *Syllabary*, and Queen Margherita (madre) d'Italia, on page 36.⁹ It should be noted that such illustrations of king and queen are not placed arbitrarily in the books. They are part of the construction of Italianity, which for the Italian state became necessary to disseminate abroad, resulting from Italian unification in 1852.

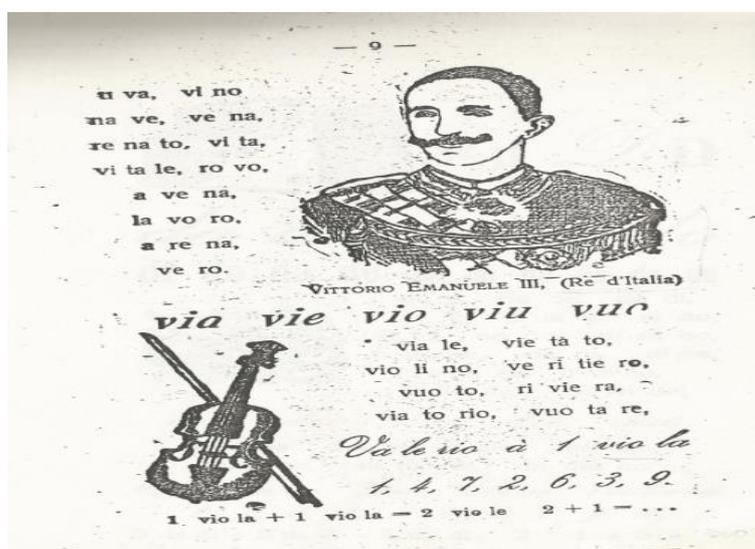


Figure 5. Image of Vittorio Emanuele III.

Source: “Sillabario Italiano Illustrato”, per la sezione inferiore dela prima classe elementare maschile e femminile ad uso dele scuole italiane al Brasile, [s.d], p. 9.

9 The *Syllabary* has 40 pages.

Effectively, there is a form of nationalism that is taught and learned through language, with a strong emotional content emphasizing the values of a good child. In the *Syllabary*, obedience to the mother is embodied in the Queen and the Nona, who become substantial actors in the nationalization process, which was at an incipient phase especially during the period between 1870 and 1914, according to Hobsbawm (1996), when the ideological and political content of nationalism advanced.¹⁰

Nationalism gained strength in Europe after the unifications of many States, including the Italian state, after 1870. Seemingly, after this period, until the First Republic of Brazil, Italy tried to consolidate its unification process by expanding the nationalistic sentiment to Italians who had emigrated to Brazil while they were still children, or even those that were born in Brazil, but had Italian parents. This was done with the permission of the Brazilian government, as stated on the cover of the book, *Lo Scolaretto Italo-Brasiliano*, published after 1895,¹¹ three years after the law of 1893, which was approved by the São Paulo Legislative Assembly.

It has not been possible to find information about the effective use of this material in Italian schools. For this reason, one should ask the following question: was it used? All evidence indicates that it was. As for the potential of dissemination of this book, it is hard to know since the copy used in this analysis does not include the publication number.

The pretension of nationality diffusion, however, can also be seen in the example below, destined for third-grade students, of which only the passages with the most patriotic emphasis are recorded, given its length. Alongside an illustration of the map of the country, the following text is shown.

ITALY – Italy is my nation, the rich country from where I was born and from which I will be a strong, honest, and laborious citizen. I love Italy with all of my soul. That is why I will grow up to be good, smart, robust; that is why I will always be ready to donate my blood and sacrifice my life. Because I love my country so much, I will meet it, I will see how it is, I will contemplate all of its beauty, I will admire its monuments, I will study how it is governed. Next year, I will be a soldier, I hope, and how I will have to walk through it and visit the city and the fields. But for now I must be satisfied with seeing it in my mind, contemplating its map. This imaginary trip does not cost much, it only takes a bit of good will and patience. (...). By observing Italy's geographic map, I see that my country has the shape of a boot. And I understand that if I could be taken high up in the sky, to be able to contemplate it with one single gaze, it would look to me as a giant boot floating over the water. Italy is a peninsula, as surrounded by the sea on three sides. This north part is crossed by the Alps that, similar to a wall, separates it from the opposite site of Europe. (...). my country, by the glory of its sky, by the rich and diverse vegetation of its hills and plateaus, by its picturesque beauty, by its weather, that is almost always delightful, was

10 According to Hobsbawm, "the word nationalism appeared for the first time at the end of the nineteenth century, to describe groups of right-wind ideologists in France and Italy, who enthusiastically brandished their national flag against foreigners, liberals, and socialists who were in favor of that aggressive expansion of their own States, which would come to be a feature of such movements. (...)" (1996, pp. 203-204).

11 This suggestion taken from data contained on p. 78 of the referred book.



called *The Garden of Europe*. Let's make it always prosper, loved, and feared. (Lo Scolaretto Italo-Brasiliano, [s.d], p. 30) ¹²

The content of the text draws attention to the force of many expressions within it, which we considered appropriate to highlight. Undoubtedly, it was intentionally drafted for children who felt distant from the country, which denotes a different literary style, reinforced by expressions that sound more emphatic. This passage aims to disseminate love of the nation by stimulating the child to construct representations of the distant nation that should be cultivated. In this sense, it is not enough to look at the map and see Italy; it is necessary to cultivate in the mind what that map represents as a nation. This mental journey aims to instill a deep and lasting love for the nation, which is translated through the idea of growing up to be good, smart, strong, and to fight for your country if necessary. This passage aims to disseminate not only love for the nation, but also the idea that it must be feared. This all seems to be done with the intention of geographically guiding the young and distant reader through the geography of his home country, although the patriotic element of geographical content appears to a lesser extent. As a result, the country becomes a spatial reference for the student, which can inform and guide them about their place in the world. In this sense, it becomes a reference point for their identity, as well as for their national character.

In this way, following the same patriotic trajectory, *Lo Scolaretto Italo-Brasiliano* was published in Italian, as with the other books considered in this research. It also follows the organizational logic from *Lessons of Things* (Calkins, 1861), with the only difference being that it introduced contents denoting knowledge of Brazilian Geography and History, but to a lesser extent compared to those regarding Italy, as can be seen in the image below, showing the book's contents pages. It is different from the *Syllabary*, in which the introduction of the patriotic occurs by praising the monarchy, through images of the king and the queen, as shown above.

¹² Our emphasis. The content of this book refers to morality and patriotic values, as well as geography (both Italy's and Brazil's) and also to both countries' histories, as well as very limited content on arithmetic.

LO SCOLARETTO ITALO-BRASILIANO		Continuazione del indice del terzo libro	
LIBRO III ad uso della classe terza elementare Compilato per uso delle scuole Italiane al Brasile conforme i ultimi programmi governativi Italiani e Brasiliani CONTENENDO MATERIE DEI PROFESSORI: D. Bocci, A. Zaccaria, A. Alfani, I. Benvenuti, Dazzi, Pansio, ecc.			
Indice delle materie del terzo libro			
Morale	Reverenza 59	Storia del Brasile	La battaglia di Javara 20
Amore allo studio 5	La scuola d'Italia 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
Rispetto e soccorso alla vec- chia 6	Alta coscienza 21	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
L'amore fraterno e al bisogno 6	— La Religione 21	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— La discordia 6	— La Religione 21	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— Separati 6	— La Religione 21	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— Invidiosi 6	— La Religione 21	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— Si abbracciano 11	— La Religione 21	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
Due eredi 12	— La Religione 21	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
Il matrimonio 12	— La Religione 21	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
Il giorno e la notte 12	— La Religione 21	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
Il povero mendicanti 12	— La Religione 21	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
Il servizio nella foresta 17	— La Religione 21	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
Il fiore e la favola 18	— La Religione 21	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
La favola e il cavallo-pompa 19	— La Religione 21	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
Geografia	Geogr. del Brasile	Storia d'Italia	Storia naturale
Piani topografici 21	Il Brasile 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
Carte geografiche 21	La par di geografia 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
Le montagne, le valli 22	Gli Stati Uniti del Brasile 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
I fiumi, i ghiacciai, i torrenti 22	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
I laghi 22	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
Il mare, gli oceani, le isole, la pioggia 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
Geografia d'Italia	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
L'Italia - descrizione 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
Il regno italiano 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
Le regioni d'Italia 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— La Liguria 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— La Lombardia 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— Il Veneto 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— L'Emilia 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— La Toscana 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— La Marche 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— L'Umbria 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— Il Lazio 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— Gli Abruzzi 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— La Campania 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— La Puglia 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
— La Calabria 25	— Parabiato 46	— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20
		— La battaglia di Javara 20	— La battaglia di Javara 20

Figure 6. Image from the contents pages of *Lo Scolaretto Italo-Brasiliano*.

Source: *Lo Scolaretto Italo-Brasiliano*, libro III, ad uso della classe terza elementare, compilato per uso delle scuole Italiane al Brasile conforme i ultimi programmi governativi Italiani Brasiliani, [s.d.], pp. 172-173.

The book *Lo Scolaretto Italo – Brasiliano, libro III*¹³ is aimed at an intermediate level, in which the texts are long and contain diverse contents, organized into different knowledge areas, such as philosophy (morality), general geography (allusive to Italy), history and geography (Brazil and Italy), natural history, law (Italian laws), and sciences (atmospheric phenomena).

It also contains the approach to patriotic/nationalistic content, and to content regarding family and religious morality (again, a positivist substrate). These can be defined as the core approaches, as they are found in all subjects of a geographic, historical, and religious nature. Together they form a three-part system that is represented by *royalty*, which symbolizes the nation and nationality, through the representation of the country of Italy, *family* (Nona), and *morality*, either religious or social in nature. In this way, in general terms, we have three themes substantially represented: *nation, family, and religion (God, Morality)*.

From this perspective, the authors have perhaps embryonically applied what Hobsbawm (2013) called the “nationality principle,” referring to that part of a political and social speech in which content focuses on various elements in an attempt to give both sense and concreteness to the feeling of nation to be disseminated, in this case, among primary Italian school children.

The nation is considered through six aspects: the country itself, Italy; the city of Rome; the Italian flag; historical figures or national heroes; the Italian monarchy; and the defense of the country during the war.

13 Only book published after 1878, year when the king Vittorio Emanuele I dies and his son Umberto I takes the throne, becoming the second king of Italy, later replaced by his son, Vittorio Emanuele III.



In the *Scolaretto*, the texts that accompany them are long, considering this is a book aimed at third-grade students.

OUR KING – In the morning of June 24 1866, during the war to free *Venice*, our soldiers vigorously attacked the *Austrians*, even though they did not reach victory, they bravely fought and spilled a lot of blood on *Custoza* field. PRINCE UMBERTO, who was then 22 years old, commanded the 16th division and was seen boldly riding through the fight while the bullets crossed through; the cannons blew; horses and soldiers simmered, surrounded by clouds of gunpowder and smoke that hid everything. And he, safe and calm, gave orders and conveyed courage. It was an indescribable mess, a moment of supreme heroism. When the smoke dissipated, the land was covered in dead and wounded horses and Austrian soldiers. Prince Umberto, impassive and composed, turned around and looked to see if his soldiers were, such as him, safe and sound. Prince Umberto I, the valuable general of 1866, is currently our King, our dearly beloved King. (...). Now he spends most part of his time commanding the state. (...). We must love our Sovereign the way he loves us; we must remember, wherever he is, he suffers, wherever he goes, he alleviates pains and disgraces. We must love Italy as much as he loves it, we must always try to fulfill our duty, as he does. We must be smart and brave students, because he is the loyal King, fair of heart. UMBERTO PRIMO DI SAVOIA was born in Torino, in March 14 1844, and rose to the throne on January 1878. (Lo Scolaretto Italo-Brasiliano, [s.d], pp. 73-74)¹⁴

It can be noted that the monarch is an example of a man and patriotic hero¹⁵ to be followed; for this reason, everyone must love him. He not only defends the nation, but also each one of its citizens, curing all ills.

Similar to this approach, the queen's celestial image appears to be related to kindness, promptness, and dedication, especially to the child; the Italian student must also love her as her mother and, for that reason, be faithful to her:

Our Queen – So much kindness in that celestial look that seems to reflect from the sky! So much tenderness in that smile that inspires confidence and comforts us! Our queen, Umberto I's faithful companion, is indeed an angel of kindness. There is no disgrace she will not solace, nor a tear she will not dry. The orphan, widow, a hurt worker who is incapable of working, are sure to find a cautious and gentle protection. She loves boys in another way, and wherever she goes, she dedicates to, first of all, visit a school. When she is among good and intelligent students, she truly feels happy; and if she sees them approach, she kneels to kiss them and fill them with love and gifts (...) She wishes she could hug and caress all Italian boys; but she cannot; she is content with demonstrating the affection she feels for them by celebrating with a few of them together. However, all

¹⁴ This is one of the longest texts. For this reason, it has not been quoted in its entirety and only the excerpts mentioned have been translated.

¹⁵ The text refers to the war to free Venice in 1866, one of the wars fought to unify Italy, which happened in September 20th 1870.



Italian boys must pretend they received a kiss from the queen, for the acknowledgment we get. Our acknowledgment will always be, if fulfilling the duties, growing up to be good, scholar, and honest, as she wishes, and loving the queen as we love our moms. Margherita di Savoia was born in November 20th 1851, and became Umberto's wife on April 22nd 1868. (Lo Scolaretto Italo-Brasiliano, [s.d], pp. 74-75)¹⁶

Fidelity to the nation stems from fidelity to the monarchs. The queen is entwined with the nation itself. In this sense, loving her also means loving the nation, which she represents and incarnates as the great mother. Since she loves all unconditionally, everyone must therefore unconditionally love her as much as they love their own mothers. Simply loving her is not enough; one must satisfy her. In order to do so, it is indispensable to study and to be honest and good.

Beyond the representation of the monarchy itself, however, Italian personalities also proliferate in these textbooks as patriotic symbols, such as Giuseppe Mazzini, Camilo Benso di Cavour, and, perhaps the most famous one, Giuseppe Garibaldi. All three of them, along with Vittorio Emanuele II, are highlighted as the heroes of what is known as the Italian resurgence, the unification of the country, which happened on September 20th 1870.

What remains through the Italian resurgence heroes is the idea of a nation and nationality. From the children's educational point of view, these are examples to be followed for two reasons: first, because they incarnated the nation and made it their personification, and second, because they fought and sacrificed their lives to defend and construct the Italian nation. From this perspective, it is about instilling the concept of nationality in the child through the examples of these personalities, and therefore constituting nationality *in a network of non-imaginary personal relations*.

Hobsbawm, referring to the unified States after 1870, highlights,

(...) the State not only did the nation, but it had to make the nation. The governments now would directly reach the citizen in the territory of its daily life, through modest but omnipresent agents, from mail carriers to police officers, even teachers, and, in many countries, railroad workers (...) (1996, p. 212)

In this sense, communication could not only be conveyed orally, but also through other means that could contain the messages from the State to be deciphered by students. The school book was one such method. The primary school emerged as a great ally in terms of its use as a tool to form subjects and good citizens. In Brazil in 1908, there were 232 Italian schools, with 13,656 students, and by 1911 there were 303 schools, with 16,295 students enrolled. In 1913, the number increased to 396 schools with 23,323 students enrolled, and in 1924, fell to 329 schools and 18,940 students enrolled (Trento, 1989, p. 182). During the same period, the state of São Paulo had the largest number of Italian schools. In 1908, there were 115 schools, and in 1911, 122, with a total of 80 schools in

16 Two excerpts were not quoted; however, the text has been translated in its entirety.



the capital. In 1913, the number increased to 187 (121 in the capital) and, finally in 1924, it decreased to 87 (46 schools in the capital), and a total of 10,626 students enrolled (Trento, 1989).¹⁷

In Brazil, however, the “movement” in favor of nationalization of the Italian immigrant seems to have been a two-way street, as previously stated. For this purpose, politicians, such as the deputy Samuel Malfatti, and the Catholic Church claimed a two-way partnership with the Italian State.

It seems that the intentions within the texts represent the implementation of ideals that had been long postulated, which concretely substantiated the objective of disseminating Italianism and expanding Italian nationality in America. In this sense, Veronesi stated,

We must keep in mind that these are the few oases of Italianness that still survive in America, and if we do not want to see soon all traces of our great national expansion in those continents, we must try at all costs to save... (1914, pp. 4-5)

The school would become a crucial alternative for the Italian national expansion in the American continent. In order to achieve this, it would be necessary to focus the Italian government’s attention in terms of avoiding the denationalization of Italian settlers. Although long, the following passage shows that intention:

already too many important Italian colonies in America that, with their constant work, started in their time, they could have been preserved in our nationality, are now almost completely lost. We feel the duty to draw the attention of our country and our Government on the opportunity and the means to save from *snazzionalizazione* at least those colonies where Italianity is still preserved and in which we can still usefully work; and we feel the duty to insist on the necessity in their regard, of an urgent action, since the possibility of action is diminishing every year, by hand to man in those our colonies are made more frequent contacts with the indigenous elements, as their parents in Italy die in them; perhaps what can be done now will not be as little as between a dozen years ago. (Veronesi, 1914, p. 6)

The sense of identification with their native country would be reduced each year. Veronesi emphasizes that this remains pertinent because he sees schools’ main purpose as conserving the language and national sentiment. It thus becomes important to protect

17 I did not have access to data to prove the efficient distribution and use of the books analyzed in the schools of Italian immigrants. Everything leads one to believe that they were used at the primary school of the Circolo Italainai Unito Association, on which specific research was carried out. It was verified the use of the *Sillabario Italiano Illustrato* was made in a document of this school, as well as access to a copy.

schools as a national institution aiming to assist the immigrant, providing him with a way of instruction (Veronesi, 1914, p. 6).¹⁸

This author's pretensions regarding Italian schools in America are interesting. He considered necessary "a project of Italian scholastic organization, not temporary, but lasting" (my emphasis). He adds that this is easy to accomplish, especially in Southern colonies, such as Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul, where Italian schools do not find a strong competitor, as would happen in the rest of America. Italian schools did not aim to simply disseminate a useful foreign language; rather, it was the only way for the settlers' sons to be instructed, since Brazilian schools were scarce and deficient as a system (Veronesi, 1914).

The diffusion of these texts refers to what the press in Campinas was already reporting on during the first decade of the nineteenth century. Under the title "The Italianization of Brazil," through a story published in the *Correio de Minas* newspaper, they said the following:

When entering one of the public schools of Congonhas do Campo, (...), I was hurt to see at the very first moment that the school was decorated with symbols of the Italian colony, with no presence of anything that represented national sovereignty. The teacher, a woman of color, had found a subject of King Victor Manoel for a husband. When I was visiting the school Regina Margherita founded and kept in this city by an Italian association and destined for sons of Italians, although born here, I found a complete absence of anything that indicated we were in Brazilian territory. The education was exclusively in Italian, not even one Portuguese word was heard. The textbooks were Italian, from the syllabaries to the learning books. The civic lessons were conducted according to Italy's national interests, and not according to our country. The classroom walls were covered with symbols that represented Italian glories, Italian things, the Italian government; the school was a center of denationalization fed in our own country. (Jornal Gazeta de Campinas, 1907, p. 15)

The *Jornal Cidade de Campinas* would worry about that matter throughout the second half of the 1910s. This newspaper focused on defending the national language: "Everything in Brazil leads to denationalization. The objects are good if they are foreign; the objects are bad if are made here; the men are only worth something when they come from outside." (Desnacionalização, 1910). Similarly, for the writer, there is no defense of nationality, as can be seen in the little regard paid to our language and in the disdain with which it appears in the will to imitate foreign languages.

We are illiterates in our language. A child is a prodigy, a genius when he knows English, French, but no one worries if they know the meaning of the words in Portuguese. No one

¹⁸ It is important to highlight that this statement was published in the magazine *Italica Gens*, an Italian Catholic missionary journal, which perhaps explains the constant presence of God alongside patriotic allusions, both in the text mentioned and in other existing texts in this specific book. In this sense, the church plays a substantial role in the defense of nationality.



worries about correcting the syntax mistakes of the scholars who are wise in foreign languages, but illiterate in their own. Yesterday, I decided to count the foreign language schools with which our kid's heads are ruined, and notice the number of people speaking strange languages. It was as if I had seen the draft of the Tower of Babel. (Jornal Cidade de Campinas, 1910, p. 1)

In the writer's opinion, foreign schools would be held responsible for the non-appreciation of the national language; however, they had society's support.

THE "BATTLE" AGAINST ITALIAN NATIONALISM IN SÃO PAULO

Given this other dimension of Italian patriotism – intended to be fostered and, to a certain extent, disseminated among immigrant descendants in Brazil – it is not surprising that many voices have spoken out against such a situation in the state of São Paulo, even if some were slightly xenophobic. Similarly, they vehemently defend the public school, not only secular and free, but also national in terms of the obligation to teach the Portuguese language. Such defense would only come to be part of educators' concerns after 1909. We have already seen that parts of the press had already been reporting on the foreignization of the national language since 1906. Effectively, although the 1909 Education Yearbook had already shown that from the educational authorities' perspective, there was a clear need to control foreign schools¹⁹, they were, however, still fairly hesitant. Nevertheless, the most incisive positions would only be unleashed after 1913. The first recorded criticism comes from Reis Júnior to the Interior Secretary:

(...) in addition to what we just said about the private teaching establishments, (...) I appeal to talk about a fact almost generally treated in foreign schools.

I refer to the absence, in these schools, of the teaching of our country's history, geography, and language...

Imagine now a system of schools, spread throughout all states of the country, and, in the distant future there could be a fatal obliteration of patriotic feeling, which excites and promotes the greatness of nations... (Reis Júnior, 1914, pp. 19-20)²⁰

Only at this point did the general director of public education turn his "gaze" to a matter that was especially present in Italian schools—texts of a patriotic/nationalistic nature, such as the *Scolaretto Italo-Brasiliano*, published in Italy and disseminated in São Paulo

¹⁹ The São Paulo State Education Yearbook corresponding to the years 1909 and 1910 introduced, on page 122, the record of the existence, of two Italian associations in Jornal Diário de Campinas, de 8 de maio de 1909, arquivo Edgard Leuenroth.

²⁰ Report presented to the Interior Secretary by the General Director of Public Education, São Paulo State Education Yearbook. São Paulo State archive.

in the eighteen-hundreds. Additionally, it is still important to highlight some important passages from that report:

(...) understanding that men are the ugliness of your education, what to expect of future citizens to whom the knowledge of our great men, of our traditions, our language, the greatness and strength of our territory, our institutions, all these facts that characterize our nationality, is a mystery?

The state can no longer endorse such irregularities; therefore, it is your duty to shelter and protect the youth against the evils that may fall upon them from the absence of the education to which they have the right. (Reis Júnior, 1914, pp. 19-20)

One can see that this education administrator reported on the need to nationally legitimize schools and education in the state of São Paulo, whilst also defending a nationalism that must be nurtured; it seems to us, however, not too far from the Italian molds that we were able to distinguish in the texts laid out above. In this sense, he positions himself in the same nationalistic frame as Alberto Torres who, with his positivist nationalism, defended the idea that there was a need to form a legitimate national consciousness, with no traces of any foreign influence, which could therefore genuinely be called *Brazilian* (Torres, 1933, pp. 24-54). In the report from the following year, 1914, that same manager speaks again:

It is indispensable to adopt a more direct intervention to the management of education in the surveillance and execution of the respective programs. There is a law that makes teaching Portuguese language and Brazilian history and geography mandatory in these schools, but such teaching, if any of them do it, is deficient, unproductive, ineffective. Generally administered by foreigners, unfamiliar with our language, altering it, misrepresenting it in its terminology and syntax, in a way that it can be anything but Portuguese. (Reis Júnior, 1914, pp. 19-20)

The reporter refers to an 1898 law that made Portuguese language teaching mandatory in foreign schools. As for the ineffectiveness and productivity of teaching Portuguese, if we take into account the fact that the textbooks were analyzed and consigned to the second and third grades of primary schools, the criticism made by this reporter is well grounded, since, in the second-grade books, there is no allusion whatsoever to any aspects of Brazilian geography and history. In the third-grade books, even though this would have been a concern for the Italian author, because the book was written after an agreement between Brazil and Italy, there are few pages dedicated to Brazilian matters, when considering the entire work. Of the 171 pages of this book, only 17 are dedicated to Brazilian geography and history. On the other hand, those who taught at Italian schools were generally well-educated Italians. In this sense, it is also important to refer to a passage from the reporter who initially refers to the capital:



There are here, in the Capital, countless schools where not even a word of Portuguese is spoken when teaching, and those are not language schools, but primary schools, destined to the teaching of the youth, integrated part of our nationality, through birth or nationalization, and that tomorrow will inflict in our destinies as Brazilian citizens.

How can these children love their nation, if they do not know the language that is spoken in it, its national traditions, the history of its heroes, its ethical and geographical greatness, its natural riches, the glorious future that awaits it?

They will grow up ignorant of it all, and will not be able to collaborate with us, conventionally, patriotically, in our national progress and aggrandizement. (Reis Júnior, 1914, pp. 19-20)

There was no desire to deal with the contradictions of immigration, especially Italian immigration, in any way. This is what the reporter continues to discuss:

I remember, by the way, that a few days ago, a jaunty poster arrived in my hands, published by an Italian society in this Capital, where it puts before Italian children, in burning, persuasive terms, the moral greatness, the material richness, the glorious traditions of Italy, making them see that, at any moment, in any place where they are, they should not forget Italy, but eagerly love it, enthusiastically honor it, make it greater, always ineradicably bringing its glorious name stamped in their hearts and spirits. Will they do anything for Brazil? (Reis Júnior, 1914, pp. 19-20)

Complaints about the foreignization of Brazilian schools had already been observed in São Paulo since the beginning of the first decade of the twentieth century, but would only acquire resonance after 1916, according to Nagle, with Olavo Bilac's conferences and the consequent formation of the National Defense League.²¹

From an educational point of view, the expansion of primary school would be the only way to avoid promoting the patriotic spirit. In this sense then, for Nagle, the year 1915 marks what is considered to be the beginning of a phase called the "enthusiasm for education,"²² which became more consistent in the 1920s. During those five years, they also demanded greater responsibility from the State towards education.

We previously saw that, when it comes to Campinas, not only those related to the educational arena, but also those in the press, had been taking a stand ever since the first decade of the nineteenth century against the problem of having exclusively foreign education in foreign schools. Even though the democratization of primary education had been a liberal and republican policy, it was not concretely or effectively expanded to the majority of the population, which included foreigners.

21 By means of four fronts: on one side, through military service, to take front against the external danger represented by international greed, and on the other side, by the education, to fight the internal danger, that is manifested on the break of unity, by the impoverishment of character and languishing of patriotism (Nagle, 1985, p. 162).

22 According to the author, he understands the manifestation through alteration in one or another aspect of the educational process, and especially through the effort to spread the existing (model) school. Refers to the model school then operating in the capital.

When it comes to the use of the Italian textbook in Brazil by Italian immigrants' schools, it seems that it was only one of many so-called biases that existed in primary schools – in São Paulo, and in Brazil – until the outcome of the campaign for nationalization that marked the 1920s. Bittencourt, for example, highlights that the diagnosis made by José Veríssimo in 1890 represents the nationalistic trend that began to influence the intentions of those who created the school books. Citing his own experience, the author points out that his entire formation was based on foreign books, and that even those translated to Portuguese were unrelated to the reality of the country. For this reason, he suggested that the government should conduct a general survey of Brazilian education:

In this general survey, that it is necessary to perform in order to promote national education, one of the most necessary reforms is the reading book. They must comply with being Brazilian, which is not the most important factor, but Brazilian in its contents, in its spirit, in the translated authors, in the poets reproduced, and in the national feeling that uplifts it. (Bittencourt, 1993, pp. 19-20)

It seems that Veríssimo's proposal was finally carried out in 1918. In January of that year, Sampaio Dória presented the following report to the other members of the Textbook Selection Commission:

...On the preliminary reports, I examined textbooks, as to the priority of their subjects. In this aspect, two main things are extended: the interest in the subject, with its perfect adaptation to the preparation and school age, and the moral convenience of the subject as a factor in forming children's ethics, all geography, history, physical and natural science compendia, calligraphy books, manual work, must be rejected. As well as the Heart of E. de Amicis who, incomparable and exemplary, does not serve the goals of our patriotic and nationalistic formation, especially where the population of Italian descendants is more intense. That book is an admirable standard, through which national subjects can be conveyed to cooperate on the maintenance and development of national consciousness. (Bittencourt, 1993, pp. 19-20)

The report is directly concerned with an Italian school book that was used in these immigrants' schools in Brazil.

Lastly, this excerpt also demonstrates a more incisive action by the State when it comes to controlling the contents of foreign schools. Incidentally, and by way of conclusion, this action is a consequence of the 1.159 Law, which dates from December 15th 1917, which imposed rigid control on these schools, as well as the obligation to teach Portuguese language and Brazilian geography and history, as explained by Souza: "In 1917, the federal government demanded that all foreign schools located in the south of the country were closed, subsidizing those on the following year, as a way to monitor and control them" (Souza, 1998, p. 31).



SOME FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The purpose of this work was to bring data contained in two schoolbooks in spite of the dissemination and inculcation of Italianity among students of Italian primary schools, which the Italian State intended to be the spirit to foster among them in America, especially in Brazil in São Paulo state.

The texts and images are understood as values carriers to instill in those students, because they contain languages (Foucault, 1995) from the perspective of this work, to be deciphered. In this case they refer to the specific reality, of Italy and its representations perpetuated in the imagination of the small descendants, about their meaning, Distant homeland, now a Nation. In short, of being Italian, before the efforts of those who, like their heroes, have made it what it is. In this sense, school books are objects, values carriers, and therefore need to be deciphered in the messages / languages they contain and convey.

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Received: September 12, 2017

Revised version received: September 25, 2018

Accepted: October 18, 2018

Published online: October 31, 2018

