

**FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN TO THE AMERICAS.
ITALIAN ETHNIC SCHOOLS IN RIO GRANDE DO SUL BETWEEN
EMIGRATION, COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM (1875-1925)**

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ABSTRACT

Between the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, the development of Italian educational institutions has been associated with new processes. The needs related to the formation of Nation-State, widen and intertwined with those determined by new phenomena as the colonialism and massive emigration. Millions of Italians crossed the Mediterranean to reach the coasts of the Americas: there arose new colonies of immigrants. The dynamics that involved the Italian society have requested schools to take on new and relevant functions for the basic education of citizens in the states of emigration and in those of colonization. The essay presents the case study of Italian ethnic schools abroad: it aims to examine the functions performed by institutions and school cultures—by textbooks—used to ensure the preservation and the promotion of specific educational models by ethnical and identity characteristics in a national sense in a different context, like the Brazilian State of Rio Grande do Sul.

KEY WORDS

Italian migration and education in Brazil;
Educational policy nineteenth and twentieth century; Italian ethnic schools in Brazil;
Educational culture and Italian schools abroad.



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From the Mediterranean to the Americas. Italian Ethnic Schools in Rio Grande do Sul between Emigration, Colonialism and Nationalism (1875-1925)¹

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INTRODUCTION

In its various forms, transnational mobility is among the most significant processes of recent contemporary history. The educational dynamics that followed these processes constitute a very fertile field of research, allowing us to investigate the development of the multicultural society and of the internationalization of relationships. By using conceptual tools that recent cultural history has made available, we can verify how the educational processes have helped to perpetuate or to create new forms of identity. In this perspective, the study presents partial results of a research project on the history of Italian ethnic schools in Brazil, aiming to both illustrate how the schooling processes were set in motion and to study the schooling practices and knowledge in a specific context, the one of Rio Grande do Sul between the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. The understanding of the school processes and the formation of identity processes among Italian immigrants and their descendants is relevant for the comprehension of the plurality of school initiatives in Brazilian, as well as in Italian, History of Education. The process of international mass mobility has involved large groups of Italians from the second half of the nineteenth century and, as it is well known, while on one hand it suited the projects of the Brazilian aristocratic classes of finding alternative solutions for the replacement of workforce after the abolition of slavery, on the other hand it also suited (Franzina & Sanfilippo, 2003) the desire of the Italian elites of ensuring alternative options for the poor classes who were facing problems linked to the country's socio-economical lagging and to specific stages of crisis. In this text the focus will be placed in Rio Grande do Sul, first as an imperial province then as a State, which makes it a singular case in the context of the Italian communities abroad. During the period in review, the southern state of

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Brazil was characterized—more than any other State—not only by episodes of rebellion and wars, but also by a fairly strong migratory phenomenon with very specific characteristics, absorbing high numbers of immigrants in their territorial occupation, such as Portuguese (namely Azoreans), Germans, Italians, and Poles (Pesavento, 1980). One of the Brazilian states that most received immigrants, in the case of the Italians the majority emigrated between the end of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth century, occupying colonies and urban areas such as the state capital (Rosoli, 1993). These immigrants built schools linked to their ethnic belonging, i.e., Italian ethnic schools. Many of these schools were subsidized by the Italian Government through a consular network which provided school supplies (mostly books) and, at times, financial contributions. These learning spaces ensured a process of education that aimed to spread the feeling of Italian identity. This feeling was brought back after the end of the First World War and, with the fascist reforms, was reinforced from the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s.

As part of the suggestions offered by the historiographic advances in the field of education (Julia, 1996; Sani, 2011; Viñao Frago, 1998) these contributions are intended to meet some advanced thesis on the cultural history. The empirical verification is based on the analysis of the archival documents preserved at the diplomatic historical archive of the Foreign Ministry.

THE MIGRATORY MOVEMENT IN SOUTH AMERICA AND THE CRISPI REFORM OF ITALIAN SCHOOLS ABROAD: “HEARTHSTONES OF NATIONAL EDUCATION AND PATRIOTIC SENTIMENT”

The inauguration of a new emigration policy and the reorganization of Italian schools abroad were part of the framework of the complex project of Crispi, who intended to build a strong State and a foreign policy of power (Duggan, 2000; Levra, 1992). The modernization of the diplomatic policy of Italy under the leadership of Francesco Crispi, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, aimed at an approximation with the emigrants. The law 5866 of December 30th, 1888 stated that Italy should not lose sight of its emigrants, but on the contrary should follow them in the “new nation”, tutoring them. The nationalism of Crispi considered immigration as a power factor for the expansion of Italy also in terms of trade relationships (Salvetti, 2002), and the reorganization of schools was placed under the wider national and civic revival of education that would



pivot on patriotic values and on the construction of a collective imaginary based on the cult of the homeland. The presence of educational institutions abroad assumed different aspects depending on the countries of destination of the migratory flows. As it is known, the Royal Decree No. 6566 of 1889 approved the planning of Royal Italian Schools (common in the Mediterranean area) and of the Italian schools abroad. This regulation established the direct and immediate management of educational institutions as a duty of the Italian State, stating the secular nature of education and establishing grants for elementary schools run by associations and by individuals, as well as providing for the possibility of opening subsidized schools for secondary education. It was a period in which the budget for education subsidies increased. The objectives set by the new reorganization law were pursued through the distinction between government schools and subsidized schools with funding provided by the ministries and managed by the consular authorities (Ciampi, 1998; Floriani, 1974). Given their orientations as “hearthstones of national education and patriotic sentiment” (Damiani Circular, Italian schools in the American colonies. Circular of the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Abele Damiani, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Annual report of the ethnic schools for financial and school year 1899-1890, p. 207), the schools to be established overseas had to comply with the governmental programs, appropriately adjusted for their specific geographical circumstances. The newly unified Italian foreign policy also included, from 1870 on, the administrative competence of the Italian schools abroad. From then on, the consular structures were responsible for the organization, promotion, inspection and systematization of schools. There was a prospect of regulating and establishing the teaching program and the textbooks that would be used, as well as to perform inspections to verify the school operation.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOLS IN RIO GRANDE DO SUL IN THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND IN THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: THE VIEW OF THE ITALIAN CONSULAR AUTHORITIES

The first forms of schooling for Italian migrants came to light in the first fifteen years of colonization, during the last phase of the Brazilian Imperial Regime². Researches on its causes have been pointing to an increase of

² The birth of the Italian colonial area was a consequence of the reestablishment of the colonization policy of the Imperial Government after the failure of the previous colonization policies of the Province. In 1875, the Imperial Government engaged in promoting and populating the colonies of Conde D 'Eu and D. Isabel, already demarcated,



preliminary need for education, besides indicating the need for further research to investigate both the literacy levels of the immigrants and the levels of school attendance (Luchese, 2014a). These questions are even more important in the light of the considerations set out by the consular authorities, who routinely informed the Foreign Ministry on the development of the schools. During this period schools were established in both rural and urban areas in order to deal with the poor dissemination of Brazilian schools in the region. Luchese has documented the difficulties brought by the delay in the development of primary education in the colonial area of the imperial province of Pedro II of Brazil and the complexity of its causes, not only due to the shortage of eligible teachers and the deficiencies among the existing ones, but also because of the difficulties of running the inspection services, in a context of poverty and ignorance (Luchese, 2015). This situation continued despite the law ruling the occupation of the colonies, which, according to a Regulation from 1867, provided for the establishment of schools as a public service; improvements in the organization of the public educational system were attempted with a new law of 22 February 1876. The first schooling initiatives, at the beginning of the experience of Italian immigration in Rio Grande do Sul, were supported by the colonial administrations. In this first period, extending at least until 1883, the teaching assignments were given to the migrants with more education. The fact that the classes were performed in (Venetian) dialect soon aroused serious concerns in Brazilian authorities about the emergence of new generations of Brazilians completely alien to the culture and the language of the country. These were the reasons for a first assignment of public teachers of the Portuguese language in 1883, still restricted in number (Luchese, 2015). In order to overcome the deficiencies of the public education system, other policies came to pass. Luchese has verified, from 1884 on, a more intense participation of the mutual aid society initiatives, by firming contracts with teachers and by using the aid of the consular authorities for the acquisition of school supplies. How long did these initiatives last? Luchese mentions ephemeral initiatives (Luchese & Kreutz, 2010). The economic crisis that had reached Brazil in the second half of the eighties, motivated by poor harvests and limited communication resources, emphasized the difficulties of the settlers in providing autonomous resources for the ethnic schools (Report of Consular Agent Petrocchi, 1909). In face of this situation, the commitment of the consular authorities and the increase in the resources for the

and in the foundation of a third colony called "Fundos de Nova Palmira", (later called Caxias) whose boundaries were defined by Campos de Cima da Serra, and by the colonies of Nova Petrópolis, Nova Palmira and Picada Feliz. Two years later, the Imperial Government created a fourth colony to accommodate new immigrants who arrived in the province. This colony was called Silveira Martins and it completed the initial basic center of Italian immigration in Rio Grande do Sul. The Imperial Government had arranged for the installation of agricultural colonies in the areas specifically managed and controlled by the *Repartição Geral das Terras Públicas*. Therefore, the agricultural colonies in the northeast of Rio Grande do Sul were divided into square leagues, limited by the so called *linhas* and *travessões*.

maintenance of schools was considered positive. The intervention of the consular authorities was oriented to support the development of schools both in the urban context of the State capital and in the countryside, where the settlement of migrants was more intense. At the end of the imperial era and on the eve of the new republican phase in the history of Brazil, the province of Rio Grande do Sul had a significant presence of Italian ethnic schools. In Porto Alegre, in 1889 the presence of the Italian schools was strengthened when management by the local Mutual Aid Society began with a licensed teacher, Dionigi Ronchi, in charge for 60 students; an evening course, attended by 25 students, was also inaugurated. The Mutual Aid Society took over the initiative of a small school with a few dozen students run by a disliked teacher. In the colonial region of Caxias, however, where the consul registered the presence of nearly 20.000 Italians, there were eight ethnic schools with 314 students, counting on an allocation that amounted to 7.500 Italian lire. In the colonial area of Dona Isabel there were nine schools; however, each of them was different in terms of importance. While the evaluation of the school located in the facilities of the Charitable Society was positive, the judgment of the schools, located in the so-called “linhas”, was differentiated. The number of enrolled students was 284 and the contribution received amounted to 2.000 Italian lire. Even though less populated, the province of Conde D'Eu had eight schools, one of them under the direction of the local Charitable Society and the other seven located in the “linhas”, with a total number of 291 students and an allocation of 2.000 lire. In the colony of Silveira Martins there were three schools, subsidized with 1.500 lire and 81 students enrolled. In the colony of Rio das Antas there was a single small school of 22 students, kept by teacher Lessona, daughter of the renowned Michele, which received a contribution of 1.500 lire. The schools of Encantado had 40 students and a licensed teacher, with a subsidy of 500 lire. The schools of Pelotas, Rio Grande and Bagé were directed by their respective Charitable Societies and had together a total of 80 students; each of them received an allocation of 500 lire. The two schools of Alfredo Chavez and Serra dos Tapos were never actually opened. The allocated subsidy of 500 lire for each of these schools was redirected to cover the expenses of other schools and, at the same time, to the revision of the subsidy allocated for the schools of Rio das Antas and for the opening of a school for girls in Porto Alegre (Report of Consul Marefoschi, 1889).

The value of these schools was rather uneven. The methods employed were influenced by their specific needs: the teaching often didn't go further than the first two years of education, limiting the students to “attend school to learn how to read and write”, projecting the creation of additional classes mostly in the urban areas of Porto Alegre, Rio Grande and Pelotas, “but in the colonies it will not be easy, because parents do not send their children to school for more than two or three years”. The consul emphasized:



there is no doubt that these schools are affected by the uncertainty and instability that are characteristic of institutions maintained almost entirely by private initiative and that are supported with very limited means. The subsidy from the government is very useful in attributing to the institutions a firm aspect that allows the students to attend the same schools and follow the same courses for a certain time. This subsidy, although modest, guarantees to teachers a fixed allowance in addition to the small contributions received from students. This grant also entitles the Consulate to the opportunity and the responsibility of monitoring the evolution of these schools, through supervision, which is the only effective way of control, as it is difficult to meet people who have enough education to direct even the first class of elementary schools, especially in the colonies. (Report of Consul Marefoschi, 1889)

During the first phase of the Italian colonies in Brazil the Italian Government, through the consular authorities, tried to take profit out of the fragility of the Brazilian educational system. This is confirmed by the several reports that the consuls and vice consuls sent periodically to Italy in order to illustrate the condition and the development of schools in Brazil and, in particular, in the State of Rio Grande do Sul. The intervention of the consular authorities was ideologically connected to the need to promote the most effective ways of ensuring the maintenance of traits of national identity, starting with the language. As the Consul wrote in 1889:

The need to promote and encourage Italian schools in this part of Brazil becomes evident by the fact that there are more than 80.000 Italians here, who without this instrument would soon lose all practical knowledge of the language, the main link of attachment and of connection with their country of origin. Besides that, education is so neglected by the local government, especially in the Colonies, that in many of the Italian population centers Brazilian schools do not even exist, and the children of our settlers would grow in a state of complete ignorance without the opportunities to acquire even the first, indispensable knowledge to which they would have access in our schools. (Report of Consul Marefoschi, 1889)

The vice consul who resided in Pelotas, one of the most southerly cities in the state, underlined the opportunity to support the development of schools, especially in rural areas, where, despite of the greatest difficulties, the local state authorities were able to ensure the presence and the development of educational institutions. The observation carried out by the Vice-Consul is interesting and reveals a very special way of thinking and identifying strategies to defend and promote the national identity. In his opinion, what had proved particularly useful to this end was the spreading of schools along

with the maintenance of a certain isolation of the settler communities from the contact with native Brazilian people, given that their mixture would inevitably result in a loss of the national identity traits. This later aspect paradoxically became one of the main criteria to define the model of insertion in the state. In fact, the vice-consul wrote as follows:

According to me, having meticulously visited the colonies, there seems to be no doubt: they demand many schools, small schools though, and distributed in each “linha”. There are many arguments which I could adduce in support of my opinion; I will mention only a few that, for their value, dispose of the others: 1st the colonies occupy a vast territory; it might then be physically impossible for the children of settlers to attend a central school; each colony consists in an area of more than 100 kilometers in diameter with no means of communication; to claim that a single school was enough would be like saying that the children of Naples should go to Rome to educate themselves...! 2nd The places where schools are currently located result to be less useful: in fact a) at these locations the identity feelings are weakened by the predicted mixing with the local element; b) the progress of Italian Associations will permit that they run their schools on their own; c) the wealthiest settlers reside at the locations where they can provide for the education of their children, including those who lend themselves to teaching; 3rd In the “linhas” with the cooperation of the schools we can keep alive the national spirit on farmers, as they are not having any contact with the Brazilian people: in this perspective, we attack with greater force the weak side. (...) By promoting the language and the Italian traditions in agricultural colonies, an easy task given their isolation and the negligence of the Brazilian government, we will achieve the dual advantage, political and economic, of having large national communities supporting the mother country and, in the future, consuming our industrial products. On the other hand, in the urban areas it is usual for Italian families, after a few years of residence, to undergo a complete transformation: fostered by friendship, business relationships, marriages, by the similarities between the two native languages and especially by our natural disposition to assimilation; for this reason, Brazil prefers Italian emigration in relation to others. Why fight against this fatal degeneration? Social schools are sustained only for the official support, certainly not in order to respond to a need or a patriotic ideal. (Report of Acton E., 1890)

The first years that followed the introduction of the provisions of Crispi on Italian schools abroad have offered the opportunity of a very significant impulse in the establishment of schools sponsored by the consular authorities. The annual report from 1890-91 mentioned the presence of 33 rural schools in the ethnic area of Rio Grande do Sul alone; and even if in 1889 the



total amount of subsidies given to schools in the state was of 6.000 lire, within two years the subsidy had been increased to 15.000 lire (MAE, 1889, 1890).

The network of Italian ethnic schools also contributed to the development of education in Rio Grande do Sul from the outset of the Republic and the launch of the Constitution in 1891 until the First World War. In the new reality of the State, education was perceived as an important field oriented to the development of a progressive expansion of primary education, while secondary education remained in the hands of private enterprises. The education policy, developed by the republican positivists during the decades of the First Republic, integrated a more involving strategy and State actions took place in the form of greater interventionism in the social environment, developing a series of policies in which actions towards education increased in importance, as characterized by four aspects: the intervention of the national parliament, the actions at State government level, the mediation with the Catholic Church and the construction of a republican imaginary that intended to build up a national consciousness (Corsetti, 1998). The school became a new resource to prepare the restructuration of the society in Rio Grande do Sul according to a positivist perspective, for which education should be seen not only as an instrument to learn reading, writing and arithmetic, but should also aim at the harmonious development of body, mind and ethics. The “*castilhista*” positivist approach that supported the advance of the schooling process in Brazil was unraveled, albeit very slowly, with the birth of autonomous municipalities in the Italian colonial region of Rio Grande do Sul, such as the ones of Bento Gonçalves and Garibaldi (the former colonies of Conde d’Eu and Dona Isabel), and with an active role for the school intendant, along with those of the superintendent and the school inspectors, after the establishment of the school board in 1906. However, with the administrative centralization of the State, especially after the decree 874 of 28 February 1906, the demands from the State authorities for a greater participation of municipal intendants increased as means of expanding the number of subsidized schools and the number of classes.

In this new perspective, although in a nonlinear form, the experiences of Italian ethnic schools continued. During the first years of the new Republican State, in fact, the development of Italian ethnic schools was influenced on the one hand by the choices made by Minister Di Rudinì, which aimed at reducing the availability of financial resources to subsidize schools; on the other hand, by the absence of a genuine commitment of the consular authorities on organically supporting the development of the network of ethnic schools. The choices derived, however, from different ideological views. Pio di Savoia persisted in expressing a rather negative view on the role of the presence of Italian immigrants and on the possibility of achieving the objectives of supporting the national identity:

The Italian language has no force of expansion in the State of Porto Alegre in Brazil or in general, and I appeal to all those who have been here and have observed it. It has no force and it couldn't be different because—apart from many other considerations of a more general nature—the vast majority of the immigrants are uneducated, rough, ignorant people who do not even speak the language of Dante, but the dialects spoken in Veneto, Friuli, Napoli, Sicilia and so on. They came here driven by poverty, in search of a new homeland and to achieve all the benefits it could offer; in doing so, they need to assimilate the habits, the customs, and the language as soon as possible, earlier rather than later. In fact, after two or three months, they are already able to express themselves in the language of the country; after two or three years they don't know how to say a few words in Italian without tripping over four words in Portuguese anymore, and after a longer period they no longer speak their language. It's impossible to go against this current. (Report of Consul Pio di Savoia, 1894)

The school had emerged not exactly by virtue of attachment to their country of origin and to their language, but rather, “for the need of having their children to be supervised as they go to the field work”. At the same time, according to the consul, the same migration experience had helped the settlers to realize that “it was necessary that their children learned something, so as to be a little braver against those who know more”.

Despite the limitations of the rural schools to achieve the established objectives, the consul considered the financial support as essential, given that “while there is human solidarity, we cannot consider as wasted the money employed to subsidize schools for children of the most unfortunate people that poverty has driven from Italy”. He believed that the subsidy for rural schools had “a more philanthropic than Italian purpose, more patriotic than national, like the one that has paved the way to a feeling of solidarity among the Italian emigrant and Italy, but that does not properly point to a national interest”.

Thus, a different view on the role of urban and rural immigrant communities persisted. Those of Porto Alegre and Pelotas, according to him, “did not deserve any attention” but their schools were important mechanisms for having “a moralizing influence”.

Urban communities were marked by an immigration not related to the constraint of the property but to “crafts and small trades”, and their importance was in the potential development that they represented for the business relations. For these reasons, the economic contribution was considered important, but without plans for a more organic support: “it is not even worth thinking about laying the foundations of a real school organization [considering it is related to an excessively inconstant element], rather undisciplined, without any orientation”. According to the



consul, the financial support did not need much expansion, but the Italian government should rather

go back and do to our compatriots more than has been done so far, so it's necessary to bring back to the government contribution the characteristic it should have; which is the characteristic of a real subsidy that now finds itself completely replaced by the one of actual maintenance. (Report of Consul Pio di Savoia, 1894)

From this perspective, the consul, Pio di Savoia, performed a radical reform on the distribution of subsidies to ethnic schools in the state of Rio Grande do Sul which, according to him, had been performed in an “unwise and equitable” way. The changes were preceded by a circular note announcing the purposes of the reform on the distribution of subsidies through which all forms of subsidy in money paid up to that moment were canceled. The subsidized teachers would receive the contribution for the last time. From that moment on, the schools would receive a regular subsidy “in books, at the beginning of the school year, and a small cash prize at the end of the year”. Regarding the economic contribution, consular authorities established the financial reward of 50 lire per year, but also introduced a rewarding prize of 100 lire for the 12 schools that would be judged worthy by a special committee chaired by the consul. To obtain these contributions, the schools would have to fulfill precise criteria such as:

a) The school must have more than a year of existence; b) the teacher must be a person of recognized honour; c) the teaching shall be conducted in Italian; d) twice a year the teacher must report on the school to the consulate; e) the school year should not be less than ten months; f) the school day should not be less than three hours. (Circular Pio di Savoia, 1894)

The choices of the consul determined rather heavy consequences resulting in manifestations of open dissatisfaction on the part of the representatives of the settlers' associations, forcing the subsequent consul, Legrenzi, to press the Ministry with demands for the introduction of new measures (Report of Consul Legrenzi, 1894). Even the successor, though in the picture of a less pessimistic and negative view on the work of the colonies of immigrants, considered it appropriate to give priority to the support of rural schools, due to the persistence of strong disagreements between the urban associations of Porto Alegre and Pelotas (Report of Consul Legrenzi, 1895). The consequences of the restrictive measures were felt especially in the

second half of the nineties, leading to a significant decrease. The consul of Porto Alegre indicated to the ministry a total number of 41 schools, compared to the 57 previously reported. While in Porto Alegre and in Pelotas the schools could benefit from physical structures lent by the Mutual Aid Society Vittorio Emanuele II, in Rio Grande and in Bagé the schools had declined and disappeared. The following consul pointed to the difficulties and to the uselessness of the Italian urban schools as a tool to limit the expansion of Brazilian schools (Report of Consul Dall'Aste Brandolini, 1898).

Between the end of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, significant changes affecting the further development of schools in the State of Rio Grande do Sul were recorded, particularly the establishment of a larger number of schools and educational institutions with religious background. After the expulsion of the French religious congregations, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambéry, the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Marist Brothers and the Lasallian brothers settled in the Brazilian State. These new religious congregations were joined in 1915 by the Carlist and the Passionist Priests (Giron, 1998; Luchese, 2015). All of them invested heavily in the construction of schools and seminars. Their commitment to founding schools led to the development of enhanced course offerings, including for the community of Italian migrants located in the distant colonial areas. As pointed by consul De Velutis, the French congregations were a “great competition to ours, as they freely admit poor students charging only those who can afford” (Report of Consul De Velutis, 1906). The Italian ethnic schools, however, continued to live “stunted lives” and the settlers, facing the difficulties of the economic crisis exacerbated by the scourge of locusts and drought, struggled to ensure a salary for the teachers, “who were poorer than them”. On the other hand, the contribution of the mutual aid societies seemed to be conditioned by many tensions: “They rise, they break down and decay, easily, on behalf of the energy and good will of those who run them, and according to the moods of their associates and of the conditions of their members” pointed the consul (Report of Consul De Velutis, 1906). In spite of the growth of the competition with the educational institutions created by religious congregations as well as with the Brazilian State institutions and the municipal ones—which aroused strong concerns in consular authorities—, the first decade of the twentieth century was the most significant phase of quantitative development of the Italian ethnic schools due to the increase in the allocations and to the important role played by the consular agents and by the teachers. This new configuration was already a reality during the early years of the twentieth century but it was only fully recognized, as we shall see, by the law Tittoni launched in 1910. In this year, one of the most ready consular agents, Luigi Petrocchi, sent to the consulate an updated statement of schools in the search of subsidies. There were 127 schools, out of which 17 were of confessional character, while 106 were run by the teachers. The schools



managed by mutual aid societies were 3. The schools run by secular teachers and the religious schools included a total of 5580 students (Report of Consular Agent Petrocchi, 1909).

In the second decade of the twentieth century, however, we can observe a real growth of the participation of municipalities in the Italian colonial region resulting in a development, more occasional and arbitrary than planned, of the network of subsidized schools. This period was followed by the transformation of many private isolated schools, maintained by the community with the teaching of Italian, into subsidized schools, supported by the State or by the municipalities, sometimes even becoming municipal schools in which the curriculum provided teaching also in Portuguese. In the studies produced in recent years, there are several clues and traces indicating the increasing demand for schools, by the part of the settlers towards the municipal governments, as these institutions were perceived as a form of social advancement and socio-cultural and political distinction (Luchese, 2015; Werle, 2005).

Another significant step was the creation of elementary schools according to the decree of May 1909, in which the gradual implementation of a new primary school model was provided. Up to that moment the schools in Rio Grande do Sul were organized in one class involving only a teacher and many students in different levels. From this moment on, the development of elementary schools which should have at least two hundred students and should be organized in graded series began, with students grouped in different rooms according to their levels of learning and having one teacher for each class with a single direction. In the Italian colonial region, elementary schools were established in 1910 in Bento Gonçalves and in 1912 in Caxias do Sul. In Garibaldi, however, a school group was recognized only in 1926.

The provisions of the Brazilian state were in line with those later established by the Italian political authorities which, in December 1910, promoted the Law n. 867, organically reforming the legislation on Italian schools abroad (Floriani, 1974).

THE REVIVAL OF THE SCHOOL POLICIES FOR *ITALIANITÀ* FROM THE END OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR TO THE EARLY YEARS OF FASCISM

After the end the First World War, the programs to recover the role of Italian schools abroad and the actions promoting the language and the national culture regained strength. As part of the initiatives to support an expansion in the presence of Italian schools abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs



recovered an active role through the Directorate General for Italian Schools Abroad. From 1920 on, headed by the intellectual Ciro Trabalza, the Directorate favored the redefinition of a program of action with a particular attention to the educational and cultural institutions in the Americas (Barausse, 2015).

In the period between the crisis of the liberal institutions and the first phase of Fascism, until 1925, the main concerns of the ministerial authorities were to determine the most appropriate forms of reorganization of the school system in the Americas. The goal was the development of the presence of “ethnic schools”, considered essential to promote the *italianità* and to prevent the loss of national identity traits—a phenomenon defined by experts as the “denationalization process”. In continuity with the school policies from the previous decade and mediated by the Directorate General for Italian Schools Abroad, the orientation was to provide for a more efficient didactic reorganization, to support the inclusion of teachers with a specific training, to mediate with religious authorities in order to involve Italian clergy, and to promote the collaboration of local communities through an active participation in religious associations linked to *Italice Gens*. While considering the conclusions of a mission carried out between 1922 and 1923 in southern Brazil, the head of the commission specified:

1) that the Italian government promotes in the country, and specially in the regions from which the emigration to Brazil was more intense, the education of teachers prepared to work in those lands with a specific cultural program. 2) that, at the same time, a project of primary education for our colonies in Brazil is to be developed, which will give our distant schools efficiency both in the properly didactic field and as in the more dignified field of the conservation of the national soul 3) that among the conditions posed by Italy to assure the Italian identity of those emigrated and about to emigrate in Brazil, there must also be a rational freedom of the expansion of popular culture, integrating or replacing (and never supplanting) the actions of the Brazilian States in this matter. The future work of our teachers in America should be based on culture and civilization, in defense of our feelings and not offending nor neglecting those of others; it should be of reasonable tribute to the country's conditions. The Italian school must be included as a mean of protection and of the attentive providence which the fatherland disposes, and not a means of determining currents of thought and hostile emotions towards the host country; instead, it should create more worthy guests. The formation of teaching personnel to Brazilian emigration, and there is a need of more than 2000 of such, while it is still necessary to our new generations within the country, will seem to some people an inopportune anticipation. But we can answer that illiteracy, even worse than the occlusion of the feelings and of the national soul, would be a far greater barrier outside the



borders than it would within the country: and that if the State forces considered themselves unable in their efforts of spiritual safeguarding millions of Italians, in the only possible way, because they are not living on our soil, the State should at least help in every way corporations, missions, and any association that could give confidence to the national attempts, especially by appointing Italian religious people to the Italian colonies, while accepting the protection and supervision of the State. (Report from DGSIE, s.d. [but from 1921])

The question of education was the object of a true diplomatic intervention in 1924, in the eve of the visit by the ambassador in Brazil, Badoglio, when the director of the organization in charge with the management of the Italian schools abroad drew up a memorandum in which the fundamental points to be developed at the diplomatic level for supporting the process of *italianità* were recalled. The diplomatic action had to be directed, in particular, to “temper the restrictive provisions on the freedom of teaching in foreign schools (which is especially true for the state of São Paulo in Brazil)”; to the recognition of the equality of the Italian language in the local school programs and to the action with individual institutions aiming to introduce the teaching of Italian in local schools, in particular in those managed by Italian religious orders, especially the Salesian ones. The efforts should also be directed to the assignment of Italian clergymen in the parishes of the Italian colonies with schools, in order to counterbalance the presence of clergymen of other nationalities—particularly the French. The plan also included the foundation of middle schools, the creation of co-ordination and inspection offices, the restoration of the consular agent position (by then fallen into disuse), a more effective training of teachers for Italian schools, the enactment of missions for the foundation of new schools to be entrusted to the Catholic Association Italica Gens, and a better distribution of subsidies and locally prepared school supplies, starting from textbooks (Pro-Memory, 1924). In essence, during this first phase of Fascism, by preparing a comprehensive program, the government leaders and the head personnel in the ministries focused on a greater involvement of local communities through the collaboration of local religious institutions, which would consolidate the educational institutions responsible for guaranteeing the expansion and the defense of the Italian national identity character.

During the first half of the twenties, however, the number of ethnic schools decreased along with a change in their characteristics. Both the consular agents on mission in Rio Grande do Sul and the other consular authorities noticed a significant reduction in the number of secular schools, matched by a growth in that of religious schools, in addition to the dissemination, in both rural and urban areas, of schools promoted by the Brazilian State after an intensification of nationalist intents (Bastos &

Tambara, 2014; Quadros, 2014). A consular agent of Italica Gens was the first to identify, during a long mission which lasted almost two years, the loss of attraction of Italian schools. In August of 1922, while describing the situation of the schools of Porto Alegre, captain Luigi Seghetti wrote that:

the conditions of the Italian schools here are not prosperous at all. I observed bitterly the greatest lack of interest regarding the study of our language. In general, we could say that their children [of the immigrant settlers] do not speak Italian and they do not study it. And even when they do study the language, as it has already been observed, they do not speak it. The parents care that their children know Portuguese and other languages considered necessary, and most are thus sent to Brazilian schools. An Italian mother, owner of a hotel, told me that her daughter goes to the German school, and that the kid will have enough time to learn Italian. I've heard about many people who hold important positions in the patriotic associations and whose children cannot speak a single word of Italian. There are three Italian schools here: "*Umberto I*" and "*Princess Elena of Montenegro*" (both of them maintained by the namesake charitable societies) with the elementary classes, and the *Instituto Italo Brasileiro Dante Alighieri* (a small school with some external students), which, besides the four basic courses, offers four commercial courses. The three schools are attended, in total, by no more than 130 students (our colony in Porto Alegre is composed by about 30,000 people). The Italian language is not taught in the government schools. Until 1918, for admission into the faculties of law and into the engineering school it was required to pass in the examination in one of these three languages; English, German, Italian. Since that year, the Italian language was excluded. (...) As an accelerating factor in the decline of the *italianità* in the colonies, and contrary to the government regulations, we could bring to mind the indifference of our fellow countrymen, who, while on the one hand solemnly celebrate the sixth centenary of Dante and on every occasion give clear evidence of their ardent love for Italy, on the other hand do not bother if you don't teach their children the language of their country of origin. (Report of Seghetti, 1923)

A few years later, the consul of Porto Alegre, Luigi Arduini (1925), spoke of a real "debacle", of a "disastrous situation". In particular, Arduini denounced "the current conditions, unfortunately far from thriving, in our schools", with a special emphasis to the state of "abandonment" and "carelessness" in which had fallen "all small secular schools" in the colonial area, subsidized by the royal government and most of them located in the rural zone, our "little bastions of *Italianità*." At the same time, he once more spoke of the poor "effectiveness, utility and scope" of the teaching actions performed by institutions sponsored by religious congregations, "most of them of French



origin and mentality”, for the promotion of the national language. The report of the consul, which would rise rather alarmed reactions within the ministerial meetings³, reported with the following words the loss of the national feeling within the Italian immigrant population and their condition of isolation that a few years earlier had represented a force of resistance to the “*Brazilianization*” process:

The process of denationalization is of course much easier in the cities than in the countryside, but the fact is that it is increasing, even in the countryside, with the construction of new highways and roads, with the intensification of trade relations between the colonies and the population centers and, mostly, with the work done by local authorities, who do not look favorably upon foreign schools, no matter how modest they are, and try to close them in every way they can. (Report of Consul Arduini, 1925, p. 5)

Arduini did not perceive opportunities for an “advance”, but on the contrary the need of outlining a true “barrier” through a series of measures including an increased financial commitment, the support of schools in the colonial area managed by secular teachers, the insertion of Italian church personnel and an expanded diffusion and circulation of school supplies and textbooks (Report of Consul Arduini, 1925).

“PENS, NOTEBOOKS AND TEXTBOOKS”.

PRACTICE AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE ETHNIC SCHOOLS

Since the first experiences of schooling in colonial contexts, the consular authorities did not fail to emphasize the importance of appropriate teaching tools such as textbooks. Consul Marefoschi stressed the need of making school supplies available and the demand for textbooks for the first elementary classes in his report on the importance of the subsidy, in order

to cope with costs of paper, books, awards etc., which are demanded to encourage such incipient institutions, which live in a very precarious state.

³ In relation to the negative situation of schools, the consul made reference to the fruits of the “absenteeism of the Royal Government” what resulted in some nuisance within the Directorate General. The demands of Tralbalza were not helpful to change the tones and make them more compatible with what was indeed analyzed and reported by the consular agent of Itálica Gens, Cesare Bompard, who had sent the ministry a report that contained a less pessimistic view. As in the note by Ciro Tralbalza of 3 December 1925 in ASMAE, Archivio Scuola 1923–1928, b. 637.

(...) I should also ask this Royal Ministry to deliver as soon as possible a new supply of primers and textbooks for schools of first and second grade. For those of third and fourth grade I still have a certain amount, considering the restricted number of students who can profit from it. It would be quite necessary to have a certain amount of pens and notebooks for the first calligraphy exercises, as these items here are sold at a high price. (Report of Consul Marefoschi, 1889)

The problem of a wider circulation and distribution of textbooks and school supplies was already pointed during the first decades of colonization. The Vice Consul of Pelotas, Errico Acton, indicated the shortage of “elementary books, alphabets, syllabaries, first readings etc.” in immigration territories and the necessity of notebooks, given that paper was a luxury item in the colonial areas. His report also reminded of the risks posed by the introduction and use of Brazilian books, “which leave out the national character of education” (Report of Acton E., 1890).

The difficulties in the distribution and circulation of the educational material, and in particular of the textbooks used in Italian schools abroad, were a constant concern during that period. Already in a note prepared in 1894 by the Consul Angelo Legrenzi one can read as follows:

I hasten in informing you that, after 5 months of travel, I have finally received the 3 boxes of school supplies, and, as they were packaged with the habitual disregard by the part of Italian producers and industrial men, many copies of the books arrived worn out. (Report of Consul Legrenzi, 1894)

Traces that reveal the use of textbooks in Italian schools in Brazil as well. However, the task of identifying which textbooks were in use in the schools established in the colonies is not a simple exercise. The consular sources available regarding the second half of the nineteenth century, allow a more precise identification of the few books used in the Italian schools established in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Still, we can assume that the consular authorities required and received the kind of manuals that the ministry considered appropriate for Italian schools abroad, and for which the authorities had begun to offer more precise indications through the annual books published in the late eighties and mid-nineties, which inform us on the title of the books indicated for use. For elementary schools it was possible to use the primer and of the primer exercises of Giuseppe Toti. This teacher had created a booklet for the learning of writing and reading based on the most innovative methods of those decades, i.e., graded, phonic and illustrated, through which he intended to improve learning through the



simultaneous act of reading and writing: a method that had begun to be promoted in Italy since the mid-seventies of the nineteenth century (Barausse, 2014). Among those first texts circulated the reading book written by the Director of one of the largest and most widely read magazines for teachers, Gabriele Gabrielli, author of *I primi affetti*. But in addition to the book of Gabrielli, the Ministry suggested the same texts subject to an extensive use during the first two decades of the post-unification, such as those written by Pietro Dazzi. Among the titles written by this Tuscan author, a particular recommendation was given to *Il bambino* and *Il fanciullo*, intended, respectively, for the second and third grade. A second list of books was published in the annual for the year 1897. This second list was composed by almost all the texts already indicated seven years earlier, but complemented by new books that were in accordance with the programs reviewed by the Minister Baccelli in 1894. For the first grade of elementary school, next to the name of Gabriele Gabrielli, we find the primer and the related exercise book written by Siro Corti and Peter Cavazzuti, entitled *Il bambino italiano alla scuola* and published by in Milan by Vallardi, while for the second grades the books of Gabrielli and Dazzi were kept and still considered valid. For the third grade, *Il Frugolino*, by the administrator of schools in Rome Carlo Tegen, and *Lezioncine*, by Ida Baccini, were introduced as reading books. For the fourth grade, in addition to the *Grammaticetta* written by Fornaciari, the use of *Minuzzolo* by Collodi was also indicated. Collodi also appeared as the author of the indications for the fifth grade with *Il Giannettino*, accompanied by the novel *Cuore* by De Amicis. The poetic anthology written by Camillo Randazzo completed the picture of the readings. For the teaching of history and geography, besides the book of reading by Bacci and Gotti entitled *Le Glorie della Patria*, the text of Pietro Valle was also listed (MAE, 1897, pp. 63-66, 1899).

The circulation of the books that made the lists of the ministry is confirmed by other documentary traces, such as the circular distributed by the consul Pio di Savoia in which the reform in the system of distribution of subsidies was established. After clarifying the intention of eliminating the abuses and the confusion in the distribution of books, he wrote

I mentioned a regular allowance for books to make it clear that, unless for exceptional and entirely plausible reasons, once we have made the first shipment of books to the beginning of the school year, following the criteria that will later be shown, we shall not make others, given the confusions and abuses that have deplored the distribution of those books in past

And the Consul announced the adoption of some criteria, for, considering

the very elementary nature of the ethnic schools and in their distribution, we will take into account the number of students in each school.

In the book distribution, as I am directed by the Superior Ministry, we should not pass the limits of the indispensable, given that the student in these schools does not need many books, but the books proposed need to be well suited to his intelligence and to the level of education that we want to achieve. (Circular Pio di Savoia, 1894)

For these reasons, the consul referred to a rather limited book production, choosing among the titles reported in the annual books: among the books intended for distribution he indicated the two parts of the text written by Caramuele De Luca, entitled *Leggere, scrivere e pensare*, that seemed to match both the educational needs and the objectives and requirements of the local schools. At the same time, the consul did not state the need for an arithmetic text which, “however elementary, surpasses the needs of these schools and the learning of the four operations—to that extent we cannot advance—the best book is still the blackboard”. The head of the consulate pointed to the need to replace the book of Giovanni Merighi, *Morale nella Storia*, then distributed to schools, with *Geografia teorico-pratica* written by Eugenio Comba. He also indicated the *Grammatichetta italiana* by Raffaele Fornaciari. All these books were considered “elementary books, but not sufficient to these schools, and the teachers will keep a very limited number of copies in order to distribute them among the most advanced and promising students” (Circular Pio di Savoia, 1894).

Regarding religious instruction, the consul indicated that the ecclesiastical authorities would be responsible for the provision of the catechism to the children of Catholic faith. But there was a significant note:

it is highly desirable that children of Italian immigrants also receive religious education, and in fact particularly the religious education, in Italian, and the prayers intended to be their most intimate comfort in the struggles of life until their deathbeds should be registered in their minds and in their hearts in the sweet mother language; therefore, I am willing to perform the necessary actions at the Italian Government, or privately through the Italian Society of Patronage for Emigration, in order to obtain the appropriate texts. I will wait, though, that the teachers inform me the needs of their schools and the number of catechisms that I should ask. (Circular Pio di Savoia, 1894)



The content of the three boxes to which consul Legrenzi referred in the aforementioned document confirms the circulation of the texts indicated in the official information of the lists approved by the Ministry: 1500 copies of the first volume of the primer written by Caramuele De Luca and another 1500 of the second volume; the geography book written by Eugenio Comba, the history book written by Giovanni Merighi, and the grammar book by Raffaele Fornaciari. One ABC poster and four maps were also part of the material. The boxes should also have contained 1000 copies of the first readings by Gabriele Gabrielli, which were missing due to the customary malpractices in distribution remarked by the consul. However, it is worth to examine briefly the words that followed the reception, a signal of the real difficulties faced by the settlers:

I will now begin the distribution of the books we received among the 1936 students of the 55 Italian schools in this State, as indicated in the statistical sheet attached and compiled for the occasion, delivering to each teacher, based on the number of his students, 75% of each of the two parts of the primer, 15% of each of the other works and, to those most in need, some ABC poster or a map, collecting from each delivery the corresponding receipt, which will be sent to Your Excellence in order to legitimize the work of this Consulate. And, given the existence of a huge demand, by the fact that all of our schools in this State receive the children of poor farmers and workers, I would ask Your Excellence to order and send me, while requesting diligence in shipment and a better packaging, the 1.000 copies of Gabrielli that were promised, and possibly some more ABC posters, not a complete series, but the first sheets at least, plus two or three thousands of small striped notebooks for the first writing classes, because, in consequence, of the high prices of paper here, the children do not write, while I am aware that in Italy those notebooks cost 10 cents each one, and also blotting paper. (Note of Consul Legrenzi, 1894)

The limited choice was an answer to the standards of a publishing production destined to ensure the transmission of educational models and values which were dear to the liberal class, the bourgeoisie.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, the circulation and distribution of textbooks in the colonies continued to be considered a central point, while sometimes disregarded, for the functioning of the ethnic schools. The consular officials reminded on several occasions that “little schools”, that reached a quantitatively significant presence, “survive especially because of the reading books dispatched by the Italian government” and for this reason it became necessary to provide for their distribution at the beginning of the school year (Report of Consular Agent

Ancarani, 1909); the immigrant teachers' activities would be more effective if they could receive school supplies and “in particular primers, reading books, and small arithmetic compendia” (Report of Consular Agent Petrocchi, 1909). The officials did not refrain from indicating specific texts, such as those of Fornari for the teaching of history and geography (Report of Consular Agent Della Ragione, 1909) or the history book written by Carlo Pozzi and published by Paravia (Report of Consular Agent Ancarani, 1909). Meanwhile, the consuls could potentially count on a richer production. After the decisions of the Minister of Education, Orlando, to put an end to the experience of centralized committees for the evaluation and review of textbooks for the entire previous decade (Barausse, 2008), the Foreign Ministry, through the General Inspectorate, arose the question of how “to perform a total reconstruction” in the list of textbooks (Memorandum, 1905). The documentary material, however, does not confirm the production of a new list in the following years. The definition of guidelines on textbooks became more complex with time, but only at the end of World War I a much more significant revival of the question of textbooks in Italian schools abroad can be identified.

In fact, the Italian ethnic schools located in the Brazilian State in the early twenties could rely on a production of Italian texts that was richer than in the past. This was also the result of a strong commitment from the ministerial authorities in defining a specific list for Italian schools abroad. Since January 15th, 1921, a Special Commission of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was in charge with the approval of some manuals (ASMAE, 1921; Contini, 1932, p. 148), but a Special Commission for the examination of manuals within the Ministry of Colonies was reestablished by a Decree of April 10th, 1921. On February 26th, 1922, when this commission still had not completed its work, the Directorate General informed the list of approved and unapproved books for elementary schools. The Director-General invited the consular offices to transmit the note “in confidence” to school managers, to not communicate the lists, and to make use of them only if teachers insisted in adopting textbooks that were not approved by the commission. The list included twenty-five titles of primers, first readings and other reading books; four grammar and writing titles; a manual of moral education; six books of history and geography; nine arithmetic and geometry manuals. We ignore the reasons for this choice. However, the work of the commission did not have a significant continuity, largely due to some changes in its composition (Barausse, 2015b).

During that period, to request the production of more suitable books for Italian schools abroad, the ministerial authorities, as well as the committees, resorted to specific measures such as public announcements by the Ministry of Education for the production of new textbooks that would be adopted in Italian schools abroad and in ethnic territories. The first procedure was a



public announcement for the production of a book of national history to be adopted in primary schools and free courses abroad⁴, followed by a second announcement for a reading book intended for Italian schools abroad⁵; later, a public announcement to produce manuals for elementary schools in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica was issued⁶.

The first announcement expected the production of a book which would deal with the provisions of government programs for the teaching of history in primary schools and, at the same time, encouraged nationalistic feelings since childhood.

A patriotic text that could

give an adequate idea of what the world owes to Italy: not a depository of erudition, but a thorough knowledge; not an assortment of names and dates, but safe chronological guidelines; not an accumulation of concepts, but a whole understanding of the multiple and complex elements of historical life; not an emphasis, but a contained passion and faith, capable of stimulating in the tenderest minds of readers the pride of being and feeling Italian. (Barausse, 2008, p. 1331)

The second public announcement, of December 1921, instituted a prize to promote the writing of a reading book to be used in primary education abroad. The resulting work, to be completed in five volumes, should correspond to the programs established for the schools of the Kingdom, but should also adapt itself to the particular local conditions in order to encourage the local students attending Italian schools. Its texts should not only give account of the differences in habits and behaviors between males and females, but they should also consider the different environments, “especially in the case of the Mediterranean region and the Americas”, highlighting above all

the contribution made by our great and humble workers for the development and expansion of civilization in the world, in every subject and every place, so that the feeling of nationalism in the Italian children living in so varied and distant countries would be enhanced and made stronger by a conscious faith in the greatness of the nation. (Barausse, 2008, p. 1335)

4 Bando di concorso a premio per un testo di storia patria ad uso delle scuole elementari e popolari italiane all'estero, *Bollettino Ufficiale del Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione* [henceforward BUMPI], n. 25 Vol. II, – June 22nd, 1922, pp. 968–969.

5 Bando di concorso a premio per un libro di lettura ad uso delle scuole elementari italiane all'estero, BUMPI, January 12th, 1922, II, pp. 44–45.

6 Ministerial Decree of August, 20th, 1922 – Concorsi per libri di testo nelle scuole primarie della Tripolitania e della Cirenaica (published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* of October 31st, 1922, n. 256), BUMPI, n. 45, Vol. II, – November 9th, 1922, pp. 2081–2085, now also in A. Barausse, 2008, vol.II, p. 1331.

In terms of reading books for the six grades of primary schools in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, however, this second public announcement had criteria indicated by the Ministry which reflected a more moderate nationalism through a pedagogical approach that intended to consider traditions and local cultures. The authors, for example, were asked to avoid “any trait of confessional nature and also to avoid moral judgments or examples that [could] offend the feelings and practices of Jews and Muslims”, as well as to avoid “patriotic demonstrations that [would] be ineffective among non-Italian students”; they were also asked to include in their narratives not only Italian children “but also, occasionally, local children”, fostering in the students a “mutual affection and respect, despite the deep differences of nationality, race, confession, and habits” (Barausse, 2008, pp. 1335-1336).

These actions anticipated the changes in the cultural and educational environments that in the following year led to a new proposal of ministerial initiatives, with the establishment of the committees for reviewing textbooks. The first one, chaired by Lombardo Radice, would begin a brief but intense season that, through the work of subsequent committees chaired by Vidari, Giuliano, Romano, and Melchiori, all similar in their intention of detailing the fascist textbook, would represent a significant change in the scenario of Italian educational publishing (Ascenzi & Sani, 2009; Galfré, 2005).

The arrangement of the editorial products for Italian schools abroad was also affected by the intervention of the new programs launched by the regulations of October 1st, 1924, designed for an educational program in which schools would be of key importance, as indicated in the words of the instructions for teachers. The new programs established by an Order of October 1st, 1924, would also influence the type of editorial products for Italian schools abroad. They were designed for the specific function of the Italian school abroad, destined to assume a fundamental importance in contexts marked by very specific problems, such as language, religion, and culture, and intended to adjust the nationalistic tones to a more moderate way (Oriani, 1926, p. 86). The reading books played a fundamental role and the programs gave very precise instructions on them:

The choice of textbook for schools abroad was a delicate task. The textbook should have ample references to the life of our distant colonies, it should exalt the feelings and the love for the homeland without offending other nationalities, it should teach the beauty, the old and the new monuments, the most magnificent forms of civilization and of activity, presenting the most representative people and recalling the unmeasured efforts made during the recent national war. (Oriani, 1926, p. 93)



The fruit of this first season was the production of books that were oriented to encourage the transmission of educational models based on the pride of the Italian cultural traditions and, at the same time, to foster the ability to be good Brazilian citizens. Their usage and distribution were considered essential and fundamental by the consular authorities for the recovery and preservation of the ethnic identity, at a time when the prevailing inclination in Brazil seemed to be that of “denationalization”. Among these were books such as the one of Francesco Pasciuti and Giovanni Di Giusto, entitled *Cuore lontano*, published by Mondadori in 1922 (Pasciuti & Di Giusto, 1922); or the one of Alarico Buonaiuti, published by Bemporad in 1925, entitled *Italia lontana* (Buonaiuti, 1925). Buonaiuti's volumes were distributed from the beginning of the second half of the twenties: it took almost three years for the work of the first public announcements to be finished. Only on December 2nd 1925, six months after the delivery of the report by the committee, Mussolini officially announced the results, which were negative for the two announcements for the history book and positive for the two of the five volumes of reading books by Alarico Buonaiuti (Report of Boselli, s.d. [but of 1924]).

The Italian consular authorities of Rio Grande do Sul judged the textbooks an essential tools to prevent the loss of national identity traits. Consul Luigi Arduini reaffirmed this view while stating the need for an organized distribution of textbooks by the consulate, particularly in the case of “bilingual primers, primer exercise books, reading books for primary classes (rural schools in Italy), notions of history and geography, arithmetic manuals, descriptive geographical posters”, along with “small blackboards, chalk, notebooks and writing materials”. The consul also demanded that they were not issued from the stock funds that some publishing houses “had no qualms about sending to Rio Grande do Sul ignoring completely the environment to which they were intended” (Report of Consul Arduini, 1925, pp. 14-15). This framework was also confirmed by Cesare Bompard, an agent member of the Association Italica Gens on a mission in the colonial area, who reminded the heads of the Directorate General of Italian Schools Abroad inside the ministry not only of the essential function of the textbooks, but especially of the lack of responses to the demands expressed by another agent from Italica Gens, the aforementioned captain Seghetti. In his demands, the agent had pointed how the shipping of religious books “tuned to a live religious sentiment” was “absolutely essential”, reminding the opinion “of most of the teachers” about the book of Alarico Buonaiuti, *Italia Lontana*: “They have summarized their judgement in this statement, 'here is the book for our schools’”. But, as if to emphasize the deficiency of the consular authorities, the agent remarked that there were 150 copies deposited in Porto Alegre “that so far have not been delivered because the Consulate claims to have no instructions to this concern” (Report of Bompard, 1926, p. 6).

The question would however suffer further changes soon, in the face of decisions and guidelines that were developed by the heads of Italian fascism after the country's totalitarian turn. This led to the reorganization of both the management of schools and Italian communities abroad proposed by the Foreign Ministry and the guidelines for the textbooks, with the intention to better adapt these books to the new functions of educational institutions, which were a special vehicle for the fascist propaganda and for the building of the “new man” also in Rio Grande do Sul, precisely when the Brazilian political class was starting to encourage the internal process of nationalization, the *Brazilianization* (Barausse, 2015b).

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