



Syllabaries and reading exercises in Italy from post-unification to the end of the 19th century: production, circulation and methods

Silabários e exercícios de leitura na Itália da pós-unificação até o final do século XIX:
produção, circulação e métodos

Silabarios y ejercicios de lectura en la Italia de la posunificación hasta finales del siglo XIX:
producción, circulación y métodos

Sillabari e compimenti di sillabari nell'Italia post-unitaria fino alla fine del XIX secolo:
produzione, circolazione e metodi

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Abstract

This paper intends to analyze the production and circulation of primers and readings booklets in the Italian school and publishing context in the period between unification and the end of the 19th century. In addition to pointing out the authors, the article intends to highlight the characteristics of primers and readings booklets from a linguistic and educational point of view in the light of the programs envisaged for primary schools. In particular, those contents introduced by the authors of primers and readings booklets with the aim of supporting the development of the civil and ethical dimension and the promotion of national identity in Italian primary schools will be recalled. The research makes use of unpublished or only partially used sources to census the lists of primers and readings booklets and compendiums published in the first forty years of the Italian State. The analysis of the various databases, lists and paper and electronic catalogues that exist today has been supplemented by the archival sources held in the Central State Archive, produced by the officials – the school inspectors – and by the bodies of the school administration that were called upon to assess the suitability of textbooks for elementary schools during the period under examination.

Keywords: Literacy; Primers and reading books; Italy; Methods of learning to read and write; Production and circulation; 20th century.

Resumo

Este artigo pretende analisar a produção e a circulação de silabários e exercícios de primeiras leituras, chamadas no contexto escolar e editorial italiano *silabarios* e *compimenti* dos silabários, no período entre a unificação e o final do século XIX. Além de apontar os autores, o artigo pretende destacar as características dos silabários e das primeiras leituras do ponto de vista linguístico e educacional, à luz dos programas de estudo previstos para as escolas primárias. No específico, serão lembrados os conteúdos introduzidos pelos autores dos programas de estudo com o objetivo de apoiar o desenvolvimento da dimensão civil e ética e a promoção da identidade nacional nas escolas primárias italianas. A pesquisa faz uso de fontes inéditas ou apenas parcialmente utilizadas para recensear as listas de programas de estudo e compêndios publicados nos primeiros quarenta anos do Estado italiano. A análise dos vários bancos de dados, listas e catálogos eletrônicos e em papéis existentes hoje foi complementada pelas fontes de arquivo mantidas no Arquivo Central do Estado, produzidas pelos funcionários – os inspetores escolares – e pelos órgãos da administração escolar que foram chamados a avaliar a adequação dos livros didáticos para as escolas primárias durante o período em análise.

Palavras-chave: Alfabetização; Itália; Métodos de aprendizagem de leitura e escrita; Produção e circulação; Século XIX; Silabários.

Resumen

Este artículo pretende analizar la producción y circulación de los silabarios y primeras lecturas en el contexto escolar y editorial italiano en el periodo comprendido entre la unificación y finales del siglo XIX. Además de señalar a los autores, el artículo pretende destacar las características de los silabarios y las primeras lecturas desde un punto de vista lingüístico y pedagógico a la luz de los programas previstos para la escuela primaria. En particular, se recordarán los contenidos introducidos por los autores de los silabarios con el fin de apoyar el desarrollo de la dimensión cívica y ética y la promoción de la identidad nacional en las escuelas primarias italianas. La investigación recurre a fuentes inéditas o utilizadas sólo parcialmente para censar las listas de silabarios y compendios publicados en los primeros cuarenta años del Estado italiano. El análisis de las distintas bases de datos, listados y catálogos en papel y electrónicos existentes en la actualidad se ha completado con las fuentes archivísticas conservadas en el Archivo Central del Estado, elaboradas por los funcionarios – los inspectores escolares – y por los órganos de la administración escolar que debían evaluar la idoneidad de los libros de texto para las escuelas primarias durante el periodo examinado.

Palavras claves: Alfabetización; Italia; Métodos de aprendizaje de la lectura y la escritura; Produccion e circulation; Siglo XIX; Silabarios.

Riassunto

Il presente articolo intende analizzare la produzione e la circolazione di sillabari e di prime letture nell'ambito del contesto scolastico ed editoriale italiano nel periodo compreso tra l'unità e la fine dell'Ottocento. L'articolo oltre a indicare gli autori intende mettere in evidenza le caratteristiche dei sillabari e dei compimenti o delle prime letture dal punto di vista linguistico e da quello educativo alla luce dei programmi previsti per le scuole elementari. In particolare saranno richiamati quei contenuti introdotti dagli autori dei sillabari con l'obiettivo di sostenere lo sviluppo della dimensione civile ed etica e della promozione dell'identità nazionale nelle scuole elementari italiane. La ricerca si avvale di fonti inedite o solo parzialmente utilizzate per censire gli elenchi di sillabari e compimenti pubblicati nei primi sessant'anni di vita dello Stato italiano. L'analisi delle diverse banche dati, degli elenchi e dei cataloghi cartacei ed elettronici oggi esistenti, è stata integrata dalle fonti archivistiche custodite presso l'Archivio centrale dello Stato, prodotte dai funzionari – gli ispettori scolastici – e dagli organi dell'amministrazione scolastica che, nel periodo preso in esame, furono chiamati a valutare l'adeguatezza dei libri di testo per le scuole elementari.

Parole chiave: Alfabetizzazione; Italia; Metodi di apprendimento lettura e scrittura; Produzione e circolazione; Sillabari; XIX secolo.

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Methodological Introduction

The textbooks are an extremely valuable source for reconstructing the complex formative and cultural processes that characterized the Italian peninsula throughout the 19th and 20th centuries (Ascenzi, 2013). Although school textbooks have been the subject of studies for some decades, in certain national contexts, such as Italy, they still represent a fascinating field for research and analysis¹. This article presents the first results of an ongoing study that specifically focuses on the production and circulation of one of the least analyzed sectors in the production of Italian schoolbooks: syllabaries and their complements.

The sources examined come from different sources. Firstly, the lists of syllabaries and complements collected by the provincial school councils and school inspectors during the investigations carried out by the Ministry of Public Education in 1869 and between 1875 and 1881 were considered. These lists, sent by the prefects and supervisors to the Higher Council of Public Education for evaluation of their suitability and use in classrooms, are now preserved in the Central State Archives. Later, the records submitted to the Commission chaired by Barrili between 1881 and 1883 were included, as well as the syllabaries and complements published in the bulletin of the Ministry of Public Education after the work carried out by the Commission led by Giuseppe Chiarini and Pietro Cavazza between 1894 and 1898. The archival sources were supplemented by the analysis of several databases of a specifically historical-educational² nature and by repertoires and catalogues, both printed and digitized.

In many cases, the volumes intended for daily use and used by students for a long period of time have not been preserved or are only accessible in a few libraries or specialized centers. Furthermore, it is not always possible to recover the different editions produced over the decades, and information regarding the authors of the textbooks is not always easy to obtain.

1. The production and circulation of syllabaries in the years of the *Destra Histórica* (1861-1876)

The common thread is represented by the educational policy of the new Italian State. As documented in other studies, learning to read and write constituted for the new Italian national state one of the most important cultural pillars for the basic education of future citizens. The programs established by the Prime Ministers of Public Education between 1860 and 1867 provided for the lower sections of the first grade graduated exercises in syllabification, explanation of the words read, formation of syllables, letters and words by imitation, and writing of dictated words in simple syllables. For the classes in the upper sections, "graduated exercises in syllabification and fluent reading in the textbook; explanation of the words and propositions contained therein; writing by imitation; progressive exercises under dictation; practical rules of spelling" were provided. The most significant indications, however, were those present in the observations, where the minister explained how elementary education

¹ It is not possible here to provide an exhaustive overview of the many studies that have emerged in recent years that have enabled a more in-depth understanding of legislative and regulatory provisions, editorial production specifically aimed at schools, disciplinary manuals used in primary and secondary schools, catalogues and editorial series, and tools such as repertoires or databases of textbooks and school manuals. For an initial review, see: GALFRÈ (2001); MARAZZI (2012).

² reseducationis.it; manes.

"should have as its objective education and be useful, over time, in the various needs of life". For this reason, even the simplest notions, the teacher should take advantage of to "declare and reinforce some good moral precept, some useful information about hygiene, some rule appropriate to civil coexistence, thus inspiring in his students a sense of duty, love of country, urbanity of manners, without the apparatus of a severe and studied class, but as a natural and obvious application of what he himself explained"³.

In the programs established six years later, Minister Coppino, after reminding that "education must always be linked to instruction", considered it useful to remember that teaching should provide "useful information, both from the physical and moral worlds, which, by instructing the student's mind, educates his intellect and, from the wonders of nature, elevates his soul to the knowledge of the Creator, instilling in the hearts of young people the love for all virtues". Coppino focused on the aspects of correct pronunciation and spelling, influenced by the extensive use of dialect, and, after specifying that it was not the task of elementary schools to "train calligraphers", he reaffirmed the crucial importance of linguistic learning. To this end, he confirmed, for the first grade, exercises in syllabification, reading and correct pronunciation, together with exercises in writing by imitation and under dictation, spelling and mnemonics, and those related to nomenclature.⁴

In order to ensure more effective action, Italian schools sought uniformity in their teaching plan, and in this regard, textbooks were given a fundamental role. From the first years after the birth of the national State, the Ministers of Public Education worked to ensure that appropriate manuals and texts were disseminated in Italian schools. To this end, the control and review of textbooks were established and assigned to different bodies. In fact, the Italian Ministry of Public Education wanted to ensure, from the first months after unification, strict control over the production and circulation of textbooks to be introduced into schools, which were still very insufficient to guarantee the reduction of the high illiteracy rates. Periodically, the texts were submitted for review by bodies established at provincial level or by central bodies. Between 1861 and 1897, schoolbooks were initially reviewed by a central body, the Higher Council of Public Education. After the reform of school administration, Minister Michele Coppino decided to delegate to decentralized administrative bodies, the provincial school councils, the task of drawing up lists of schoolbooks authorized for use in classrooms. In this way, a system of double evaluation was created, since the Higher Council of Public Education did not lose its prerogatives. It was precisely between the end of the 1860s and the beginning of the 1870s that the Higher Council collected the lists prepared by the provincial school councils (Barausse, 2008). Later, in 1875, the issue of textbooks returned to the center of political and scholastic attention, when Minister Ruggero Bonghi assigned the Higher Council of Public Instruction the task of examining the 446 texts that were in use in the peninsula. Among them, there were also 49 syllabaries and complements that were analyzed by

³ R.D. 15 settembre 1860 "Programmi delle scuole elementari annesse al Regolamento 15 settembre 1860 e C.M. 26 novembre 1860-Istruzione ai maestri delle Scuole primarie sul modo di svolgere i Programmi approvati col Regio Decreto 15 settembre 1860. In **Codice dell'istruzione secondaria classica e tecnica e della primaria e normale**. Torino: 1861, p. 373, p. 401 e p. 415

⁴ Istruzioni e programmi per l'insegnamento della lingua italiana e dell'aritmetica nelle scuole elementari approvati con R.D. 10 ottobre 1867, n. 1942. In **Nuovo Codice della istruzione pubblica**, [de agora em diante *Codice*] Saluzzo: Tipografia Fratelli Lobetti Bodoni, 1870, pp. 702-711.

the commission with the support of external experts.⁵ This evolution also includes the analysis of the production of syllabaries, which was the subject of new research in 1883 and, finally, in the three-year period between 1894 and 1897.

1.1 The typographic-editorial reality and the production of syllabaries and complements

In the first fifteen years of the unified State, the means of disseminating textbooks and, within school literature, syllabaries, varied. A significant role, which deserves a more in-depth analysis, was played by the pedagogical congresses organized annually by the Italian Pedagogical Association, chaired by Giuseppe Sacchi (Bucci, 1989), together with the teachers' and pedagogical conferences. The prizes awarded to the best didactic works highlighted textbooks as the main focus of attention. Alongside the annual meetings of scholars of pedagogy and didactics, however, there were also magazines produced for teachers, which publicized and evaluated the products intended for schools by the publishers who owned these publications.⁶ The educational and cultural processes are, in fact, extremely influenced by the development of the publishing industry and typography. Research in recent decades, conducted by Italian scholars who have dedicated themselves most to this new field of study, has brought to light the complex articulation of the school publishing world, designed, after national unification, to expand the production and distribution capacity of textbooks. School and educational literature, in turn, represents a modernizing dimension of the development of didactics in the schooling processes.⁷

With regard to the production of syllabaries and supplements, it is possible to identify a significant evolution. In the period between 1861 and 1875, the presence of one hundred and fifty-two syllabaries can be recorded. Analyzing the period of the *Destra Histórica* in more detail, we can see that during the first decade fifty-six syllabaries were circulated. In five cases, there were re-editions of texts published during the first five years. However, it was in the following five years that production was significantly enriched, with ninety-five new copies of syllabaries and supplements being published. This initial increase was accompanied and favored by the initial development of a more diversified presence in the publishing and typographic sector. Among the new syllabaries that appeared between 1871 and 1875, thirty-three were produced by Turin-based printing and publishing companies. In particular, alongside the more established publishers, such as G.B. Paravia, which distributed twenty-six titles, and Vaccarino, which published four, there were smaller but equally productive companies, such as Binelli & C., Petrini, Pietro Cerruti, Civelli, Carlo Favale, Carlo Pozzi and Giuseppe Tarizzo. The only non-Turin Piedmontese publisher present was *Tipografia Devecchi e Vinassa* of Asti, which demonstrated the almost absolute monopoly exercised by the Turin center in relation to the regional area, unlike what happened in other regional contexts, except in Liguria,

⁵ The experts appointed were Pietro Dazzi and Filippina Gaio who conducted the analysis of the texts in 1875, Archivio Centrale dello Stato [hereinafter ACS], Ministero Pubblica Istruzione [hereinafter MPI], Fondo [hereinafter F.] CSPI, I Series 1849-1903, Atti posteriori versati, b. 5, f. 6.

⁶ There is a very extensive bibliography on the subject of school periodicals. See the recent monographic issue of the journal: History of Education & Children's Literature organized by BARAUSSE, PANIZZOLO, SANI; WARDE (2021).

⁷ Regarding the development of the world of school-educational publishing, see the two repertoires CHIOSSO (2003) and (2008).

where the production of syllabaries was limited to two titles produced by *Tipografia dei Surdo-Mudo* and one by *Tipografia dei Juventus*, both in Genoa.

The production of syllabaries and complements in the Lombard area, in a context still characterized by a certain fragility, in addition to being represented by a title by the typographer Lamperti, which was added to those already produced in the first years after unification by the *Tipografia Escolar Pagnoni*, *Tipografia Redaelli* and the typographer Golio, it managed to express some interest in the school typographic-publishing market between 1871 and 1875, with the production of five more titles by the publishers F. Volontè of Saronno, the typography Brughera and Ardizzi of Sondrio, the *Tipografia Mondovì* of Mantua, the *Tipografia Cairo of Codogno* and the *Tipografia dos Irmãos Bertola*. The remaining four titles were from the better-known and already consolidated *Tipografia Paravia*. There was little interest on the part of the Triveneto typographic and publishing community in the production of syllabaries during this period, which, in a total of five years, published six titles, produced by four different typographers: the Venetian printers G. Favai and Tondelli, the F. Apollonio printer of Verona, the *Tipografia Real Burato* of Vicenza and the publisher Gaetano Longo of Treviso. Even weaker was the supply of school literature for teaching reading and writing in the Emilia-Romagna area, where only two titles were produced: one by the Monti printing house of Bologna and the other by the Bertola brothers' printing house of Piacenza.

The publication of syllabaries and supplements in central Italy was ensured by the Florentine branch in the Tuscany region, which published five titles by Felice Paggi, four by Casale, two by *Società Editrice* and one title each by the publishers *Cooperativa Editrice and Claudiana*. These productions were joined by four titles by a printer from Pisa and the printer from Siena, T.A. Moschini, as well as by Massimo Ristori from San Miniato and B. Canovetti from Lucca, who responded to a request from a municipal teacher from Viareggio. In the Marche region, we can note the presence of small local printers, such as G. Cherubini from Ancona, Bacher Gentile from Fermo and Floro Flori from Iesi, who together produced six new titles. The typographic and publishing reality of the capital, however, still showed signs of difficulty in entering the market for school literature aimed at reading and writing, with the publication of only one title by the Pallotta brothers and another five by the Roman branch of Paravia.

The support for the development of the production of syllabaries recorded between 1871 and 1875 in southern Italy was relatively limited. In this context, the investigations identified the production of twenty new titles, of which seven were produced by printing houses in Palermo, three by Neapolitan printing houses and publishers, two by publishers in Avellino, one title by a printing house in Salerno and four by a printing house in Cagliari.

During the first forty years after unification, it is possible to observe an interesting evolution in the authors who dedicated themselves to syllabaries, in relation to the development of methods. For a more detailed understanding of the circulation of syllabaries in the first fifteen years after unification, two significant, although not exhaustive, sources can be used. The reports transmitted by the provincial school boards in 1869 to the Higher Council of Public Education and those sent by inspectors between 1874 and 1875 allow, at least, to capture the representation that the central bodies had of the texts distributed in schools.

The most innovative alphabets, from a methodological point of view, sought to promote the simultaneous acquisition of reading and writing skills. The structure of the alphabets produced in the decades following the unification of the State was, in many respects, similar to those published at the end of the 18th century (De Roberto, 2011), when, driven by the implementation of school reforms in the various pre-unification States, a new type of syllabary was disseminated, as an evolution of the Santacroce alphabets. In Lombardy, under Austrian rule, the book by Francesco Soave (Pancera, 2000; Morgana, 1995), based on the phonetic-syllabic method and accompanied by sentences and moral apologues of classical origin, was widely disseminated. The text was introduced into many schools in the first half of the 19th century, not only in Lombardy but also in the Papal States, as a recent study has revealed (Dainoto, 2007; Viola, 1998). However, throughout the 19th century, in many regions of the Italian peninsula, reading and writing were taught through adaptations of the phonetic method of normal words or the analytical-synthetic method of J. Jacotot, which was developed based on passages of a religious nature. Jacotot associated the teaching of different subjects with the book *Télémaque* by Fénelon, which also served as a syllabary and the first reading book for students. However, the lack of gradation and the complexity of the contents of the volume did not facilitate the widespread dissemination of the method. The idea was applied in a more practical way by other teachers, who introduced methods through stories, propositions or words. Generally, the syllabaries presented a series of propositions, often expressed through prayers or religious content (such as the Sunday prayer, the Lord's Prayer) to exercise children. An improvement of the phonetic method was introduced by pioneers such as Lambruschini, who introduced the method of normal words, and others such as Muzzi, Farini, Canon Figlinesi of Empoli, Francesco Gazzetti, Vincenzo De Castro, among others, who adapted their teachings for simultaneous reading and writing⁸. The syllabaries were structured, fundamentally, in two parts. In the first, they generally began with the presentation of vowels and semiconsonants, followed by the illustration of diphthongs and hiatuses. In a second stage, the consonants were introduced, as well as the direct and inverse syllables. The way in which the consonants were presented varied greatly. Almost always, on the first pages, there was a list of illustrative words. In the second part, a section was developed containing short narrative texts, simple sentences, poems to exercise the student and stimulate lexical development, short stories and moral maxims. Initially included in the same booklet, this section soon became differentiated as an associated product, but distinct from the first, with the aim not only of promoting the acquisition of reading skills, but also of inculcating values, norms and educational models of civil and social discipline (Del Negro, 1983).

The new method gradually established itself. Until the 1870s, the circulation of syllabaries and supplements by authors linked to the liberal Catholic cultural movement continued to predominate. Among the most widely circulated authors were Giuseppe Borgogno (2013), the aforementioned Raffaele Lambruschini, Giovanni Castrogiovanni (2013), Domenico Carbonati, Cipriano Mottura (2013), Giovanni Parato (2013), Giovanni Scavia

⁸ See the entries on the different methods and practices of teaching reading and writing *ABECEDAIRE, ECRITURE, ECRITURE-LECTURE*, (1882, p.2-3); *Lecture* (1882); *METODI PER INSEGNARE A LEGGERE* (1910); *RACCUGLIA* (1893). See also *LOMBARDO RADICE* (1951, p. 270-271); *DE ALIVE* (1965); *LUCCHI* (1978) and (19XX); *GENOVESI* (1987); *ZOI* (1990); *ROGGERO* (2000); *D'ASCENZO* (2003); *MORANDINI* (2011) and (2022).

(2013; Morandini, 2003a), Pietro Thouar (orandini, 2003a and 2003b), Vincenzo Troya (2013), Giuseppe Vago and Luigi Stocchi (2013). These figures were often also employees of the Public Education system. In particular, some of the authors of syllabaries held positions as extraordinary delegates and, in some cases, also as educational supervisors or regional inspectors and school directors, such as Domenico Carbonati and Luigi Stocchi (2013), who before taking up the role of inspector in 1864, directed the normal school of San Severo, in the province of Foggia⁹. Through their roles, they played a significant role in the dissemination of the texts, although they also generated controversies related to possible conflicts of interest. Others, such as Vago (2013), Giuseppe Borgogno (2013) and Giovanni Parato, were teachers who knew how to exploit the role of both textbook authors and that of journalists or editors of periodicals, such as *L'Osservatore scolastico*, published to help teachers make better use of the various textbooks written by the Piedmontese teacher in collaboration with Giovanni Scarpa; *La guida del maestro elementare italiano*, with the editorial activity of the Parato brothers and Mottura; or *L'Amico delle scuole popolari*, founded in Naples by Mauro Valente and Giuseppe Vago, with the idea of supporting the cultural development of teachers (CHIOSSO, 1993, p. 13-15). An expression of the new trend in basic education, which aimed to associate writing with reading, was the syllabary developed by Vincenzo Garelli. According to him, teachers confused the training of calligraphers, the art of beautiful writing, with that intended for writing and reading: "Beautiful writing will be thought of later; for now, one thinks of writing simply and clearly" (Garelli, 1869). The process of acquiring writing under dictation would favor the acceleration of the learning of skills. Syllabaries such as those proposed by Garelli included some methodological considerations along with practical advice: the use of the blackboard, stimulation of the senses of sight and hearing, brevity of exercises and alternation between reading and writing, the correct way to hold the pen and the division of the work plan into lessons. There were also mnemonic exercises with propositions written on the blackboard.

1.2 The circulation of syllabaries in schools according to school councils and inspectors

However, the effective dissemination of syllabaries by this group of authors was not homogeneous. For a more detailed assessment, it is useful to analyze the survey carried out by provincial school councils in 1869, the documentation which, preserved in the Central State Archive, was the subject of a recent publication (Barausse, 2018). The reports sent to the minister by the mayors, responsible for local school bodies, reveal a different picture of the circulation of syllabaries, as well as only partial awareness of the production published throughout the decade. The total volume of syllabaries and complements examined by the provincial school boards was 25 authors, in contrast to the 48 who, according to research carried out, had produced syllabaries and complements in that period. In the northern provinces of the country, the authors most frequently mentioned in the reports sent to the ministry were Giovanni Scavia (1861; 1876) and Vincenzo Troya (1869), whose syllabaries and complements were present in schools in the provinces of Genoa, Porto Maurizio, Alessandria, Cuneo, Turin, and in the Lombard provinces of Mantua, Como and Pavia, in the Venetian provinces of Padua, Belluno, Ferrara, Venice and Udine, and in the Emilian province of Modena. These authors had

⁹ ACS, MPI, Personale 1860-1880, b. 2033 **Stocchi Luigi**.

significant competitors only in Giovanni Castrogiovanni, published by the Turin printing house Favale (Castrogiovanni, 1869), and Vincenzo Garelli, whose work was produced by the printing house of the Deaf-Mutes (Garelli, 1869).

The presence of other syllabaries in schools was more sporadic, such as that of Giovanni Lanza, published by Paravia and used in schools in Alessandria. Syllabaries, together with readings, formed the category of didactic literature that had been produced at a local level since the first decade after unification. The recommendations of the provincial school councils in the north mentioned authors whose works, unfortunately, were not recovered, such as the rural teacher Giuseppe Sander, who published a syllabary widely used in local schools (Sander, 1885), by means of a printing press in Cesena, or the syllabaries of Ernesto Pizzigati, printed by a small printing press in Turin, Di Giuseppe, and those of G.B. Rossini and Mosè Gallottini, used in schools in Brescia and published by the local printing house Apollonio (Rossini, 1868). Other examples included an anonymous author whose syllabary was distributed in schools in Como and published by the printing house Martinelli (n/y).

Less widely known authors such as Luigi Bordis, published by the Turin typographer Speironi and awarded at the VI Pedagogical Congress (1869, p.4), are also among those mentioned, along with Girolamo Giardini, Francesco Gazzetti and P. Lavezzari, the latter printed by the Milanese Wilmont (Wilmont, 1867). Syllabaries produced in the pre-unification period were also used, such as that by Lorenzo Molossi (1844) in the Parma region.

The names of Scavia and Troya appeared most frequently among the twenty authors of syllabaries adopted in the provinces of central Italy, mentioned by the provincial school boards; they were joined by Giovanni Parato and Vincenzo Garelli, whose syllabaries were used in schools in the provinces of Arezzo, Siena, Perugia, Ancona, Chieti, L'Aquila and Teramo. In the center of the country, syllabaries of lesser importance also circulated, such as those by Giuseppe Bettini, Vincenzo Bianchi, Roberto Panzini and Luigi Bordis in Ancona, Giovanni De Mattei in L'Aquila and Eugenio Valentini in Ascoli Piceno (Barausse, 2018, p. 203-207).

After those of Scavia and Troya, the most widespread syllabaries in southern Italy were those of Garelli, Carbonati and Castrogiovanni, especially in the provinces of Naples, Salerno, Bari, Foggia, Potenza, Reggio Calabria and Sassari. In Bari, the most widely used syllabaries included those of Scavia, Garelli, Castrogiovanni, Parato and Pozzi, although Garelli's was considered the only one to differ significantly from Scavia's, but it was difficult to use due to the insufficient didactic preparation of the teachers. The success of these texts was attributed by the Bari school board to their simple and graduated structure, with a preference for the syllabic method over the spelling method (Barausse, 2018). In some southern provinces, such as Bari, the school calendars also mentioned the syllabaries of Lambruschini, Thouar and Troya, which, although appreciated by the textbook commission, were not adopted in schools and, in order to promote their dissemination, it was decided to include them in the lists of approved books. In Naples, Giovanni Lanza's *Sillabario per le scuole rurali*, published by Paravia, was well received. Locally produced syllabaries, such as that of Vitaliano Asturi from Catanzaro, or those that had circulated in the pre-unification period, such as that of Lelio Maria Fanelli, used in Cosenza, and others, were less widely circulated, the Matteucci syllabary used in schools in Naples and Salerno, the Guacci alphabet used in girls' schools in Naples, the Musso syllabary used in Salerno and that created by Luigi Stocchi and used in primary schools in the province of Reggio Calabria (Barausse, 2013).

In general, among the syllabaries most frequently mentioned by school boards and which deserve special mention were the *Sillabario e prime letture per le scuole rurali*, published in Turin by the Bocca brothers, printed by the G.B. Paravia printing house and which, by 1869, had already reached its ninth edition; and the *Sillabario e prime letture per le scuole femminili delle campagne*, also in its ninth edition, published by Paravia (1869).

Since the end of the 1860s, signs of dissatisfaction with the syllabaries in use in schools began to emerge. The committees did not hesitate to express reservations about the texts adopted. Some school boards in the north, such as those in Verona and Venice, decided to replace Scavia's books with those of Parato and Troya (Barausse, 2018, pp. 442-444). The Bari provincial school board committee, in turn, criticized the syllabaries of Troya and De Stefano, widely used in Campania and Liguria: although they accepted them, they called for "greater simplicity" and "more appropriate knowledge adapted to the different ages of the students". De Castro's syllabary was not approved, but Andrea Gabrieli's text received significant praise. Bruto Fabbriatore, a member of the committee that examined the production of syllabaries in Naples, rejected Giovanni Scavia's text, stating that "it has no particular merit that distinguishes it" (Barausse, 2018, p. 315-326), as one of the main representatives of southern purism¹⁰ put it. In the mid-1870s, signs of more significant changes began to emerge. An important indicator of this process of transformation was the analysis of the 49 syllabaries revised by the committee established by Bonghi. From the syllabaries still considered valid, only 17 were approved by the committee, and of these, only nine were considered the best¹¹. Among the approved authors were Professor Carlo Azzi, a teacher at the Ferrara grammar school and author of a manual of "preparatory exercises for reading" for primary school, published in Ferrara in 1860 by the *Regia Tipografia Bresciani*; Master Massimili Barbieri, whose syllabary was innovative in including many figures to facilitate the association between words and images; and the priest and teacher from Alexandria, Giovanni Lanza (2013). These authors no longer included the texts that had been widely circulated in Italian schools in the previous decade — and which, as we will see, would continue to be present for several years to come. The syllabaries and complements by authors such as Agapito Agabiti, Giuseppe Borgogno, Vincenzo Troya and Giovanni Scavia were judged as "mediocre"; the texts by figures such as Giovanni Castrogiovanni, Giovanni Parato, Vincenzo Garelli, Giovanni De Mattei, Luigi Stocchi, among others, were considered unsuitable for adoption.

Despite the evaluations of the experts invited to analyze the quality of the syllabaries, the texts considered outdated continued, in fact, to have a significant circulation in schools. The reports of the inspectors of 63 districts, sent to the Ministry of Public Education in response to Bonghi's circular calling for greater attention to textbooks (BARAUSSE, 2008; 2018)¹², provide many indications about this. The texts of Scavia and Troya continued, albeit to a lesser

¹⁰ *Puotismo* refers to the movement that originated with the Italian grammarian Basilio Puoti (1782-1847), member of the *Accademia della Crusca* and inspector of the Kingdom of the two Sicilies.

¹¹ The seventeen syllabaries and completions approved by the commission were the following: Azzi (1874); BARBIERI (1872); BINI (1867); BRUNI (1879); LANZA (1874); *Sillabario* (1880); Siri (1871); PARATO (1876); Pozzi (1874); *Sillabario* (1875); SCAVIA (1861); *Piccolo Sillabario* (1876); *Prime letture* (1883) TROYA (no year and no publisher); TROYA (1869); TROYA (1873); TROYA (1872).

¹² The 63 reports refer to 22 administrative districts (*circondari*) of northern Italy, 18 districts of central Italy and 23 districts of southern Italy. They are all kept in the ACS, MPI, F. *CSPI*, I Serie 1849-1903, Atti pós-versati, b. 5, f. 6. They are now reproduced in full in Barausse (2018).

extent, to be the most widely distributed in Italian schools. In northern Italy, Scavia's *Sillabario*, published by Paravia of Turin, was mentioned in 17% of the inspectors' reports. Troya's *Nuovo sillabario graduato*, published by *Tipografia Sordomuti* of Genoa¹³, was mentioned almost 13% of the time; then Carlo Pozzi's syllabary appeared in 9.8% of the reports analyzed (BARAUSSE, 2018, p. 451). In the northern region, the *Sillabario graduato* and the complement of Troya were widely spread throughout Piedmont, according to the inspector of Cuneo, together with a syllabary drawn up by a brother of the Christian schools, based on that of Troya. The first, as reported by the inspector, was adopted in almost all schools, especially in rural ones, because of its simplicity. In some regions, such as Cuneo, the syllabaries of Cipriano or Carlo Mottura and Giovanni Parato (Barausse, 2018, p. 597-605) were also highly appreciated.

In the schools of the Genoa district, the most highly valued syllabary was that of Antonio Bruni, praised by the inspector for its graduated approach and for avoiding “monotonous sequences of syllables and meaningless words, replacing them with adequate sentences and thoughts” (Barausse, 2018, pp. 606–611). Syllabaries produced in the South rarely found their way into schools in the North. Nevertheless, the Genoa inspector mentioned that, in addition to syllabaries based on the syllabic method, a syllabary by Vincenzo De Castro was being introduced, which was found in schools in the South and which, complemented by rural posters, seemed quite suitable for a phonetic methodological approach (Barausse, 2018).

During these years, the local production of syllabaries, mainly by teachers, continued to grow. However, this production did not always undergo the necessary revisions, emerging only in cases of more attentive inspectors. For example, in the Vicenza district of Bassano, there were thirteen syllabaries in circulation, but only four were considered adequate and valid by the inspector: two written by local teachers, Boeche and Ciscato, and two more widely distributed, such as those by Scavia and Garelli. In particular, the syllabary by Bernardino Ciscato (Rumor, 1904), headmaster of the schools of Vicenza and teacher of Italian at the boys'¹⁴ high school, received praise from the inspector:

The syllabary with a simultaneous method of reading and writing, published two years ago by Bernardino Ciscato, has been gaining more and more followers in the province, especially after the good results observed in the higher and adult schools in the districts of Valdagno, Schio, Lonigo and Vicenza. It begins with exercises in head posture and holding the pen, moves on to the first signs of writing, then to writing by imitation and dictation, and ends with the alternation of reading cursive and printed writing. In my opinion, it is superior to those of Gazzetti and Garelli, who follow the same method, and its only obstacle

¹³ This syllabary continued to be circulated in an 1873 edition entitled *Sillabario graduato*, published both by the Sordomuti printing house in Genoa and by the more widespread Paravia publishing house in Turin, which was also distributed by the schools of Milan. This edition had a serious defect in the placement of diphthongs and the author was forced to produce a new edition.

¹⁴ Bernardino Ciscato was born in Velo d'Astico on 18 August 1834. He was an elementary school teacher, first in Valdagno between 1863 and 1866, and then in the schools of the municipality of Vicenza until 1893. Between 1884 and 1891 he was also headmaster of the S. Marcello school, while between 1872 and 1876 he was a mathematics teacher at the girls' teacher training college in Vicenza and between 1877 and 1882 he taught Italian at the boys' teacher training college in Vicenza (Rumor, 1904).

to greater diffusion is its higher price, since it is lithographed. When the teacher knows how to make good use of this syllabary, I believe it is equally suitable for rural schools. In fact, this year it was adopted as a text in all the high and low schools in the municipality of Vicenza (Barausse, 2018, p. 463).

Another example was the district of Verona, where the syllabary created by a local teacher, Luigi Panizzoni, stood out, and about which the inspector expressed a particularly positive opinion:

Finally, the *Nuovo Sillabario* that I recommend was composed, according to the syllabic method, by Mr. Luigi Panizzoni, an experienced and skilled teacher who has been working in the elementary schools of Verona for thirty years. The qualities that distinguish this booklet are: constant observance of the law of graduation, the appropriate choice of exercises, both to practice reading and to help develop intellectual faculties and educate the heart. This syllabary is used in the schools of Verona and in many rural schools and has obtained excellent results (Barausse, 2018, p. 442).

In the schools of the districts of central Italy, the most widely used syllabaries were those of Troya and Scavia, followed by those of Bini, Pozzi, Giovanni Parato, Castrogiovanni, Garelli, Carbonati, De Castro, Pozzi and Melga, Bettini, Thouar, Borgogno, Barbieri, Altavilla, Rosa, Fanucci, Ricci and Gastaldi. For the inspector of Massa Carrara, Antonio Bruni — who himself wrote a text — Scavia's syllabary was the most successful because of its simplicity, being preferable to those of Pozzi and Troya, which had the defect of including different types of writing. The inspector of Ancona also considered the syllabaries of Scavia and Troya to be the best because they respected the law of graduation, but for night and Sunday schools he considered Garelli's to be more useful, since it presented a faster method.

In the schools of the districts of southern Italy and the islands, the name of Scavia appeared even more frequently in the inspectors' reports, being mentioned in 32% of cases; that of Troya in 21% and that of Pozzi in 15%. In 6% of cases, the names of Castrogiovanni and G. Parato were mentioned, and in 3% of the reports, those of Mottura, Parato, Pozzi and Melga, Bini, Borgogno, De Pamphilis, Arces and Giudice (Barausse, 2018, p. 451-453). According to some inspectors, there were several reasons for the preference for the texts of Scavia and Troya. The inspector of the Naples district noted that the syllabaries of Scavia and Troya were the most widespread, as they best interpreted the transition from the alphabetic to the syllabic method (Barausse, 2018, p. 646-649). In the Nicastro district, the Scavia syllabary was preferred for its strong educational, moral, religious and civic emphasis (Barausse, 2018, p. 643-645), while in the Caltanissetta district, the Troya syllabary was praised for its clarity, simplicity and respect for the law of graduation, using verbs, adverbs, adjectives and nouns that reflected the reality familiar to the children and, no less important, for its affordable price. The only limitation pointed out by the inspector was the difficulty of using it according to the simultaneous reading and writing method (Barausse, 2018, p. 481-494). For the inspector from Trapani,

Castrogiovanni's syllabary was the most successful, rich in "moral maxims" that should be the central objective of instruction, although, at times, it lacked the characteristic of gradation:

If these maxims are not distributed in the books in such a way as to touch the heart following a harmonic law of gradation, the book will not be able to win the heart of the student. Moral faculties are no different from physical and intellectual ones; to be developed, it is necessary to proceed from the easy to the difficult, from the known to the unknown (Barausse, 2018, p. 625-626).

The inspector of schools in Sardinia, in the Oristano and Lanusei regions, also had no doubts in recognizing "scientific truth, literary merit and didactic value" in the three most widely used syllabaries in the district: those of Pozzi, Scavia and Parato. This analysis included contemporary scientific discussions among experts in metrology, orthophony and spelling, involving the use of the number and typology of diphthongs, triphthongs, as well as simple direct and inverse or compound syllables. In addition, the authors sought teaching tools appropriate to the age of the students (Barausse, 2018, p. 650-653).

However, the inspectors' judgments were not unanimous and critical considerations began to emerge, especially of a methodological nature, which increasingly questioned the syllabaries that had dominated the didactic panorama for teaching reading and writing. The inspector from Genoa, for example, pointed out that Troya's work had the defect of being "too long" and that Scavia's lacked whole words, which, if implemented, would make it possible to avoid the use of the complement and thus reduce costs (Barausse, 2018, p. 625-626). The inspector from Milan, on the other hand, considered that the syllabaries of Mottura and Parato should not be used (Barausse, 2018, p. 631-638). In Aquila, the inspector stated that the best teaching tool was the blackboard, considering that syllabaries in general were "innumerable and similar to each other, lacking logic and common sense". According to him, many of these books were slightly modified copies of others and sold by teachers seeking to supplement their low salaries. In the inspector's opinion, these syllabaries contained syllables that, when pronounced, formed meaningless words, as in the examples of Dante's poem *Pape Satan Aleppe* or *Nembrod's Raphel mai amech zabi almi*. Under these conditions, the children did not acquire any real knowledge.

He also pointed out that most of these little books seemed old-fashioned, both in the way they were written and printed. When the author wanted to express a sentence, he divided the words in a way that made it difficult to understand. For example, a sentence like "*temerete i pericoli*" (you will fear the dangers) was presented in a fragmented form, as "*te-me-re-te i per-ri-co-li*", which led the children, and sometimes even the teacher, to read it incorrectly and without understanding the meaning of the sentence. He criticized works such as those of Troya, Scavia, Bini, Borgogno, Barbieri, Altavilla and Castrogiovanni, among others, which, in his opinion, lacked logic and practical sense.

For the inspector, the true syllabary should be the blackboard, where the teacher could compose meaningful words from syllables, explaining them to the students. However, if a syllabary had to be adopted, he preferred that of Lorenzo Molossi, published in Parma in 1845, which suggested graduated questions to the students, guiding them to read words

defined with linguistic precision, so that the names of things remained imprinted in their minds. This method allowed the children's minds to reflect on a sequence of objects, shapes and ideas in a clear and orderly way.

In the second half of the 19th century, especially in the schools of the south, the circulation of texts increased and the hegemony of the syllabaries of Scavia, Troya and Parato began to decline, making room for new and local authors. However, some inspectors still considered the Parato's syllabary of unsuitable for the first grades, despite the attempts to reconcile old and new methods.

Some evidence of growth in local production and the development of the typographic-publishing market in the south was also noted by the inspectors of the southern districts. The inspector of Caltanissetta, for example, mentioned the *Nuovo sillabario graduato* by Alfonso Arces, a teacher in the municipal schools of Palermo, published by a small local printing house, Terzi, in 1873, which won an award at the VII Pedagogical Congress of Naples. In other cases, as in Bari, the purist tradition influenced the preference for syllabaries such as that of Giacinto De Pamphilis rather than those of Bini, Borgogno and Scavia.

2. The evolution of production in the years of the *Esquerda Histórica* (1876-1898)

During the decades of government of the *Sinistra Histórica*, the total volume of production of syllabaries and their complements registered a considerable increase. Between 1876 and 1898, at least 669 copies of syllabaries and their complements were published. The number of publishing houses increased to 118. If we divide the long period of the *Sinistra Histórica* between the years of government of Depretis and those of Crispi, we can observe continuous progress.

Between 1876 and 1888, the year of the promulgation of the new programs inspired by positivism by Boselli, 220 new syllabaries were published by 160 editors and typographers in 72 different publishing houses, demonstrating a growth in the attention of the school publishing industry at the time. The same pattern continued in the decade marked by the Crispino experience and the end-of-the-century crisis, with 449 syllabaries and supplements published between 1889 and 1898, including new editions and reissues of previous titles. In the end, around 355 typographers and publishers were involved in the production of syllabaries and supplements for primary schools, evidencing an increase in interest in the genre, probably related to the gradual expansion of literacy and schooling in the 19th century.

This phenomenon was parallel to the growth of periodicals aimed at teachers. Within this expansion of production, it is possible to observe a significant evolution among the publishers involved in the specific sector of the first books for learning to read and write. During the long period of the *Sinister Histórica*, the typographer-publishers most present in the production of didactic literature for teaching reading and writing continued to be the large publishing centers, such as Turin, which was responsible for around one sixth of the didactic production (136 titles). In this context, the Paravia publishing house continued to play a predominant role, ensuring the publication of 82 syllabaries and supplements on the market. The rest of the production was divided among smaller publishers such as Grato Scioldo, formerly Vaccarino, with 14 titles, Giulio Speirone with 4, G.B. Petrini with 2, Tarizzo with 3, and others such as Cerruti, Loescher, Roux and Favale with one title each.

Although Turin maintained a monopolistic role in the Piedmontese area, some small printing houses emerged that published syllabaries, such as those of Alba, Alessandria, Cuneo, Mondovì and Saluzzo, which together produced 13 titles over the course of 22 years. However, Turin was no longer the only dominant hub, facing competition from productions from Milan and Florence. The Milanese context, with 120 titles, had active publishers and typographers such as Vallardi and Trevisini, who published 28 and 17 books respectively, including syllabaries and supplements. Other smaller publishers also contributed, such as Carrara, Massa, Pagnoni, Messaggi, Sonzogno, Debalà and Wilment.

The Milanese hub attracted a lot of attention, leaving little space for other typographic and editorial realities in Lombardy, such as Pavia (Marelli), Mantua (Stab. Tip. Mondovì), Brescia (Apollonio), Bergamo (Stab. Tip. Lit. Fr.lli Bolis) and Varese (Tip. May and Malnati), which together gave rise to the 31 other titles identified.

In Tuscany, the 91 titles produced came mainly from the Florentine publishing and printing house, with Bemporad publishing 27 titles, Felice Paggi 12, and Salani 7. In addition, there were other small publishers and printers who contributed more sporadically, such as Giusti from Livorno (4 titles), Sansoni (3), and Barbera (1). An important fact is that, in those years, many provincial publishers and printers began to take an interest in the didactic genre, often with the collaboration of local teachers who published their own syllabaries and supplements.

In Liguria, Genoa was the hub that concentrated almost all the production of syllabaries, thanks to the Printing House of the Institute for the Deaf-Mute, the printing house associated with the periodical *L'Educatore Ligure* and the publisher F. Lombardi and C. On the other hand, the situation in Veneto and Emilia-Romagna was more fragmented. In these regions, there was a more dispersed production, which seemed to better meet the demand of teachers, representing about a sixth of the total production in the 22 years. In Veneto, 20 titles were published between 1876 and 1888 and another 20 between 1889 and 1898, thanks to about 30 printers and publishers spread across cities such as Padua, Verona, Venice, Vicenza, Belluno, Treviso, Udine, Rovigo and Ferrara. The most notable were the Apollonio Printing House of Verona, Civelli and the Royal Burato Printing House of Venice.

In Emilia-Romagna, the publishing market produced 60 titles during the same period, with 18 in the first 12 years and 42 in the following 10. One third of this production was ensured by the publisher and typographer Luigi Battei of Parma, while the rest were the result of the work of more than 33 small publishers and typographers located in Bologna, Modena, Reggio Emilia and Piacenza, such as the *Establissemento di Zamorani e Albertazzi*, G.T. Vincenzi e Sobrinhos, Leopoldo Bassi, A. Del Maino, Fratelli Bernardi and Augusto Asioli.

The production of syllabaries in the central regions of Italy was relatively limited. In total, 49 published titles were identified. The Lazio did not particularly stand out in this context. The only publishers and typographers involved in the publication of syllabaries, according to the research, were the publisher Claudio Stracca of Frosinone and the *Tipografia Pansera de Fondi*. Even the Roman typographic-publishing sector did not seem to pay much attention to the growing market, with the capital producing only 18 titles, of which five were from the Roman branch of Paravia, and the rest distributed among the publisher Dante Alighieri, the *Tipografia Nazionale de G. Bertero*, the Pallotta brothers, *L'Avvenire dei maestri italiani* of Giovanni Merighi, the *Tipografia Forzani e C.*, the *Tipografia da Real Academia dos Linceas* and the *Tipografia Metodista*.

The typographic-publishing reality of the Marche, Umbria and Abruzzo was even less sensitive. In the Marche, six of the eight titles published were produced in the first ten years of the *Sinistra Histórica*, by small printers located in Ancona, San Severino Marche, Loreto, Osimo and Pesaro. In Umbria, six titles were printed, two of which were published between 1876 and 1888 by printers in Foligno, Umbertide and Rieti. In Abruzzo, two-thirds of the total

production between 1876 and 1898 (9 out of 15 titles) was guaranteed by the growth of the Rocco Carabba publishing house in Lanciano, as well as printers in L'Aquila and Vasto.

In the 22 years between Coppino's arrival at the Ministry of Public Education and the institutional crisis at the end of the century, there was a surprising increase in the number of printers and publishers ready to meet the growing demand for syllabaries and supplements in southern Italy. This process was not limited to the major centers, but included a more fragmented typographic-editorial reality.

In total, the southern typographic-editorial reality produced 109 works: 47 of them produced before the approval of the new programs of 1888 and 62 in the following period. Production was led by the regions of Campania and Sicily. Between 1876 and 1898, Campania produced 31 titles, 14 of them during the Depretis years and 17 during the Crispino period. A third of Campania's production was produced in Naples, thanks to the work of various printers and publishers, including Antonio Morano's Ditta, the Tipografia De Angelis e Bellisario (with 3 titles), and Vincenzo Pesole's *Estabelecimento Tipografico* (with 2). Small publishers, such as Bideri and Ciro Petruzzelli, contributed one title each.

In Sicily, the 65 titles published over the 22 years were mainly the result of the publishing activity of Palermo, which produced 49 works including syllabaries and complements. The development of Remo Sandron's typographic-publishing company was significant, covering 26 titles—24 of which during the Crispino period—ensuring the Sicilian *capoluogo* a leading position in the production of teaching material for primary schools. Other cities, such as Catania, Messina, Caltanissetta, Sciacca and Girgenti, contributed with the publication of 13 syllabaries, 10 of which were produced between 1876 and 1888, and only 3 in the following years. In Palermo, in addition to the Sandron publishing house, typographers and publishers stood out, such as Salvatore Biondo, who, at the end of the century, published 6 works, Luigi Pedone Lauriel with 3 and Benedetto Lima with 2.

The diffusion and circulation of syllabaries and supplements for early readings in southern Italy were therefore marked by the competition between the urban publishing realities of Naples and Palermo. Other regions had smaller and more distributed production, with smaller publishers and printers playing an important role.

For example, to print the five syllabary titles in Puglia, typographers and publishers from smaller towns such as Bitonto (Estab. Tip. Garofalo), Trani (Tip. Ascanio Laghezza), Taranto (Natale) and Ostuni (Ennio G. Tamborino) were called upon. In Molise, three primary school teachers made an effort to publish the syllabaries used in the classroom, using the Colitti Brothers' Typographic Establishment and the Jamiceli printing house, both in Campobasso. In Basilicata, the three titles identified were produced by local printers in Potenza (Estab. Tip. A. Pomarici), Lagonegro (Tip. del Sirino) and Rionero (Tip. Torquato Ercolani). In Calabria, only one title was recorded, printed by a printer in Catanzaro. In Sardinia, the four syllabaries produced were printed by four different printing houses (Dessi, Gallizzi, Commercio and Timon) (Relazione, 1894).

In the last decades of the century, the trend towards direct involvement of teachers, inspectors and school principals in the writing of syllabaries and supplements became consolidated, in addition to “some writers who did not disdain to dedicate themselves to this humble work” (RELAZIONE 1894, p. 18). It was increasingly common to find primary school teachers among the authors, a trend that was consolidated from the mid-1870s onwards, driven by the holding of pedagogical and masterly conferences, which involved the most qualified members of the teaching staff (GONZI, 1875). These teachers often participated as publicists for magazines aimed at teachers and were promoters of educators' associations and advocates of a more secular approach in schools.

Among these authors, Natale Inverardi, a primary school teacher in Rome, stood out. He was the author of a successful syllabary that was widely distributed in the capital and other

regions. Inverardi maintained close contact with Emanuele Celesia, a professor at the University of Genoa, and from the beginning of his career in Rome he stood out for his "intelligence and zeal", receiving the support of several advisors for his teaching skills.

Thanks to his expertise, Inverardi was frequently consulted to study regulations and programs, as well as to improve teacher training, giving lectures and classes. By 1871, he had already earned the respect of the provost and inspectors, and was tasked with giving pedagogy classes to Roman teachers and giving public lectures about rights and duties. On March 30, 1872, he was appointed special director, and in 1890 he won the competition to become inspector. In the same year, 1872, he was president of the Society of Teachers of Rome and, in 1879, he participated in the founding of the first attempt to create a national organization for primary school teachers, the National Association of Primary School Teachers (In Memoria, 1912; Barausse, 2014).

In the second half of the 1870s, Inverardi became a figure appreciated by Michele Coppino. His work as a teacher was complemented by his activities as a publicist. His specific interest lay in the production of textbooks for the first elementary classes. Before moving to Rome, he published *Lezioni di grammatica italiana*, approved by the Genoa school board in 1869; later, his *Primi esercizi del leggere e dello scrivere*, approved by 29 school boards, accompanied by a writing course in 8 notebooks, won an award at the Paris Exhibition of 1878 (SUL LIBRO, 1876).

During this period, there was a further development in the production of syllabaries designed to facilitate simultaneous teaching, such as that of Giuseppe Celli, which won a medal at the General Italian Exhibition held in Turin in 1884. This syllabary was adopted by the municipal schools of Milan and, by 1886, was already in its ninth edition, introducing greater attention to the visual arrangement of vowels in different sizes.

Giuseppe Celli's syllabary (1886) became particularly popular for its innovative approach, which facilitated the simultaneous learning of reading and writing through carefully graded exercises and the use of visual material that reinforced students' memory. This trend towards more visual and practical methods reflected a progressive methodological shift towards pedagogical techniques that sought to engage and sustain students' interest. Celli's manuals not only represented an example of effective adaptation to pedagogical demands, but also of how the production of textbooks was becoming more diversified and specialized.

The subsequent development of the production of manuals was initially influenced by the reform of the programs promoted by Minister Boselli who, as is known, in 1888 introduced the measure drawn up by the commission presided over by Aristide Gabelli, inspired by the principles of positivism (RIFORMA DEI PROGRAMMI, 1888). The programs for teaching the language again emphasized, among other things, the need to correct defects in pronunciation, the importance of dictation and memory exercises, but in the context of an activity that took place within the child's everyday experience. Simultaneous reading and writing exercises and objective teaching through the explanation of nouns present in classrooms and domestic environments were planned. Later, in 1894, it was Minister Baccelli who intervened again, reducing what had been prescribed by Boselli. As a result of these measures, Baccelli decided to reestablish the work of the Central Commission responsible for monitoring the production of textbooks (Tabacchi, 2013). The commission, chaired by Giuseppe Chiarini, examined 193 books and 66 supplements in April 1894. It subsequently analyzed 94 products, including new syllabaries presented after September 1894 and those re-presented with more or less significant modifications. These did not include posters and other similar simultaneous reading instruments. This choice derived from the considerations made in the Instructions that preceded the 1894 Programs, which condemned "the terrible habit still present in some schools of making several students read simultaneously from posters or syllabaries, so that the exercise

for many becomes a fiction and for all a habit of reading with pauses or vicious cadences that are difficult to extinguish in the upper classes" (Relazione, 1895, p. 1430).

The Chiarini commission also wanted to examine 87 supplements to the syllabaries, including in this category even those "first booklets of the complete reading courses and all the other reading books that, without being expressly titled as such, seemed to have the character and intention of supplements to the Syllabary, either because they contained the necessary exercises for current reading, or because of the simplicity and ease of form and content appropriate for children who, because they are young in age and ideas, should not and cannot seek or acquire in books and at school new and difficult notions for which they have neither need nor capacity, but only and mainly the habit of reading" (Relazione, 1895, p. 1428).

In the more general panorama of a production considered unsatisfactory ("overloaded with poorly made, poorly conceived and poorly written books"), the commission gave preference to texts that adopted the phonetic-syllabic method, considered more suitable for rapid learning, and to supplements that more respected the principle of gradualness and educational content. In the end, only 44 syllabaries and 27 supplements were approved (Relazione, 1895).

Finally, in 1898, a new list was presented that examined 169 new editions of syllabaries. Among the approved authors, new figures emerged: teachers, directors of normal schools, school publicists, writers such as F. Agabiti, I. Baccini, V. Bagli, M. Bargoni, R. Barberis, C. Ottini, G. Barengo, C. Benedicti, E. Berni, L. Bertelli, L. Bettini, A. Cavezzali, V. Caroli, S. Corti, F. De Grazia, P.P. Fongoli, E. Pantaleo, S. Raccuglia, M. Zaglia, etc. (Relazione, 1897). Many of them took a careful approach to translating the pedagogical principles of positivism into syllabaries in order to renew language teaching. As one of them, Antonio Ambrosini, stated:

Today, school, while teaching writing and reading, sharpens the senses, opens the mind, improves children's language skills and activates all their physical and spiritual capacities; so that language teaching, becoming fresh, lively and varied, is highly enjoyable for children (Ambrosini, 1913, p. 7).

3. The syllabaries between language, moral education, civic ethics and national identity

From the linguistic point of view, the syllabaries do not deviate from the standards of traditional literary Italian in terms of vocabulary and morphosyntax. However, an analysis of the booklets reveals, as has been recently pointed out, the existence of a "certain polymorphism" (De Roberto, 2011). However, this is not the place to present technical aspects of a linguistic nature. A more detailed analysis should be made, on the other hand, of the vocabulary used in the syllabaries. References to everyday reality predominate. The nomenclature used in the syllabaries, as it was intended for a still illiterate public, uses a very simple lexicon, where references to abstract terms are not frequent. The most frequently used lexical component reflects the Italian socioeconomic context of the time. Thus, terms that refer to rural and peasant reality can be found. In many cases, this dimension is even made explicit in the titles, especially in the additions to the syllabaries. Children are often introduced to syllabification by resorting to the nomenclature directly linked to work in the fields (*La zap-pa è un ar-ne-se as--sai u-ti-le al--l'a-gri-col-tu-ra. La zan-go-la e il bat-ti-bur-ro. Il vi-gna-iuo-lo in-trec-cia i tra-lci della vi-te. Grap-po-lo di u-va mo-sca-rel-la*)¹⁵ (Sillabario, 1870). The limited industrial development does not favor the use of a more articulated terminology, except in very generic

¹⁵ The hoe is a very useful tool for agriculture. The butter dish and the butter churn. The winegrower intertwines the branches of the vine. Bunch of muscat grapes.

terms (“*Il traffico e l’industria fanno la ricchezza dei popoli*”)¹⁶ (Sillabario, 1870). Rural and peasant identity constitutes the community foundation of the new national reality. As indicated in a proposition in Massimiliano Barbieri’s syllabary, inserted to exercise students:

Young people, from your earliest years be studious and enrich your intellect with useful knowledge. When you grow up, let your main concern be to advance the fine art of agriculture. The Italian people must, in a special way, dedicate themselves to cultivating their own lands. A well-cultivated land never fails to produce its fruits in abundance: it is from it that we must extract great riches. The very climate of our beautiful peninsula contributes to the fertility of our soil (Barbieri, 1872, p.44).

The nomenclature mentioned in the post-unification syllabaries also reflects an encyclopedic dimension of knowledge, accompanied by constant references to the religious dimension. It is common to find syllabaries that similarly repeat the nomenclatural structure and division suggested by those of Thouar, Scavia or Troya (1872), which — following the basic model established by Alessandro Parravicini — often serve as a model for many other syllabaries, such as Vago (1870), where there are groups of words referring to vegetable foods, animal foods, drinks (“*In Inghilterra si fa grande uso della birra, in Italia delle limonate*”¹⁷) (Vago, p. 8), men’s clothing, housing, kitchen utensils, cellar tools and “school tools”. Or that of Celli (1886), where the nomenclature includes the sky, the earth, the air, the water, the weather, the plants, the animals, man, the school and the fruits of the school. Also in the *Pequeno Silabário das Escolas Rurais com os primeiros exercícios de leitura corrente*, by Carlo Mottura and Giovanni Parato, flowers, plants and animals constantly populate the few pages of these booklets, alternating with proverbs, apologues or short moral fables.

In the heart of the liberal elites, albeit with variations, the idea that the Italian social structure is characterized by the presence of two distinct peoples is deeply rooted. On the one hand, the ruling classes, a minority; on the other, the subordinate classes, who must be subjected to a process of civilization that favors their integration into the new national society, supported by a true “civil religion” (Chiosso, 1987; Sani, 2012). The texts presented in the syllabaries or in their complements extol the virtues that are thus consistent with the ethical-civic perspective pursued by the liberal elites. Through syllabaries, educational content is expressed and intended to be transmitted, based on a precise ethical conception of human life, which precedes and sustains the formation of the Italian language and its national identity. With these words, Master Azzi specified these concepts:

The capable teacher will immediately understand the need to explain words, their combinations and propositions, training his students in nomenclature, developing the organs of speech and providing the opportunity to enrich their intelligence with knowledge indispensable for civil life (Method, 1869).

Within this perspective, syllabaries constantly use proverbs or moral maxims, as well as short fables, often with animals as protagonists, to reinforce moral duties and exemplify vices and virtues. The phrases like “*do-ve-re è la-vo-ra-re*” “*I be—vo-ni me-no-ma-no i lo-ro di*” “*La ro-ba ru-ba-ta ro-vi-na i ru-ba-to-ri*” “*Te-mi Di-o, a-ma-lo, o-no-ra-lo*”. “*Di-o ti ri-mu-*

¹⁶ Traffic and industry make people rich.

¹⁷ In England they drink a lot of beer, in Italy, lemonade.

ne-re-rà.” [“God will reward you”]¹⁸ are frequent examples. Even in the revisions of syllabic readings, ethical themes are often found. The internalization of bourgeois values and ethics, such as honesty, integrity, a sense of honor, respect for laws and authority, rejection of excesses and acceptance of one's own status, constitute common themes of these syllabaries and their complements, such as those of Thouar or Borgogno, which, in addition to serving as a model for other authors, especially of reading books, had the objective of introducing children to what, in a reading exercise, is defined as civil society:

Civil society. I am a student, attend school, where I hope to learn many beautiful and useful knowledge. But, in order to fulfill my school duties, I need others to provide what is necessary for me. The baker, in fact, provides me with bread. The tailor makes my clothes; the shoemaker, the shoes; the hatter, the hats. The washerwoman cleans my clothes. The teacher strives to instruct me. These people take care of me, thinking continually about making my life better! But these people also need each other. The baker could not bake bread if the miller did not turn wheat into flour; and the miller could not do this if the farmer did not provide him with wheat at the cost of long and arduous efforts. I too, when I become an adult, will think about being useful to my fellow men, exercising some profession or art or craft. We all need each other; we all, therefore, have the duty to love, protect and help each other. These needs and duties are what constitute civil society (Mottura; Parato, 1886, pp. 6-7).

The use of short fables in which animals are the protagonists is recurrent in the exposition of vices and virtues, as well as to emphasize the defense of private property, as in the fable of the wolf, the donkey and the gardener:

A wolf wanted to devour a donkey. Hermete, the gardener, saw him. Immediately he took a stick, raised it and invited the wolf to come approach. The wolf was hungry; still, he went away. Moral: Take care of yourself and your things; be resolute and avoid timidity (Borgogno, 1886).

The use of the pedagogy of example is equally evident, often associated with the negative fate of those who do not follow the precept “*Chi non ha un me-stie-re e va a spas-so, s’ av-via al-l’os-pe-da-le pas-so pas-so*”¹⁹ (Scavia, n/y).

One of the most recurrent themes, both in the lexicon and in the simple propositions suggested for children, is that of diligence in work, which, together with obedience, temperance and generosity, appears frequently (“We are born for work. Idleness is a vice. Idleness and vices lead to misery. The proud man will be humiliated. Mauricio, be sincere. The good life brings us joy. If you want to live long, have an orderly and happy life”) (Sillabario, 1870, p. 28). And further: “[...] *Dopo una vita oziosa viene la miseria. The rubata is not very hard and burns hot. Date all’operation at the price of your fatigue. Gli oppressi trovano lor premio in cielo* [...]”²⁰ (Sillabario, 1870, p. 28). Gradually, over the years, the themes of duties towards work, such as “*Assuéfati di buona ora al lavoro*”²¹ (Sillabario, 1870, p. 28), grow in the syllabaries,

¹⁸ “Work is a duty”, “Drunkards ruin their own days”, “Stolen goods ruin thieves” and “Fear God, love him and honor him.”

¹⁹ He who has no job and walks aimlessly, walks with long strides to the hospital.

²⁰ After a life of idleness comes misery. Stolen goods last but a short time and ruin the thief. Pay the worker the price of his labor. The oppressed find their reward in heaven.

²¹ Get used to work early.

anticipating the self-help topics that would be even more present in the syllabaries produced in the eighties (Berra, 1981; Chemello, 1991).

Another duty frequently emphasized in the syllabaries is that of hygiene, with the use of norms and precepts of a hygienic nature. It is common to use a lexicon that refers to these aspects (potty, washbasin, table) or expressions such as: “*Le ma-ni de-vo-no es-se-re te-nu-te pu-li-te. Il mo-to mo-de-ra-to fa be-ne. Mi la-ve-rò le ma-ni e il vi-so ap-pe-na le-va-to. L’a-bi-to rap-pez-za-to non fa on-ta, co-me un a-bi-to mac-chi-ato*”²² (Sillabario, 1870, p. 8).

Among the recurring duties, we find that of education, almost always presented as a step towards ensuring progress and civilization, as emerges from this brief excerpt expressed in the form of a direct and immediate dialogue:

How happy I am to have gone to school, said good Giulietto to his dear mother the day before yesterday. In just nine months I learned to read correctly, to write dictation, to know numbers, to do math and even to speak a little without doing too many stupid things. Don’t you think, mother, that I knew how to make good use of my time and take advantage of everything my good teacher taught me? Yes, replied his mother, kissing him tenderly, you were very good; keep it up, and the day will come when you will be useful to yourself and to others (Celli, 1886, p. 56).²³

The appreciation of schooling processes also involves admiration for the figure of the teacher and criticism of lazy students or the presentation of examples negative examples in the form of short stories, such as “*O menino desobediente*”, where Silvio is a boy who “One morning disobeys the wishes of his parents and teacher, and instead of going to school, he joins some mischievous boys and goes to play by the river”. After introducing elements of geographical nomenclature, the author concludes the narrative: “What happened to Silvio? — He began to pick some little flowers that grew by chance on the riverbank; but, going too far, he fell and drowned miserably in the river current” (Vecchione, 1887, p. 23).

The dramatic outcome of the story, through the use of “pedagogy by example”, was intended to remain engraved in the mind of the child, who, in this case, was encouraged to choose school instead of the street, full of temptations and dangers. The child, therefore, should listen to the good advice of his parents and teachers to be a good boy and a good citizen, an objective constantly indicated in syllabaries, such as that of Silvestro Bini:

The one who wants to be called civilized respects monuments and does not stain them with mud or other materials, nor mutilates any part of them, just as he respects everything useful that has been bequeathed to us by modern times. How can a man or a child be called civilized and kind who, with every word, insults God and good customs! Civilized is that people who respect divine and human laws: those who trample on them and despise them are below the savage, who is excused for his involuntary ignorance (Bini, 1867, p. 28).

²² Hands should be kept clean. Moderate movement is good. I will wash my hands and face as soon as I get up. Patched clothing does not dishonor, unlike stained clothing.

²³ Como estou feliz por ter ido à escola, dizia outro dia o bom Giulietto à sua querida mãe. Em apenas nove meses aprendi a ler corretamente, a escrever ditado, a conhecer os números, a fazer uma soma e até a falar um pouco sem cometer tantos erros. Não acha, mamãe, que soube aproveitar bem o tempo e tirar proveito de tudo o que meu bom professor me ensinou? Sim, respondeu a mãe, beijando-o com ternura, você foi realmente bom; continue sempre assim, e chegará o dia em que será útil a si mesmo e aos outros

The modest pages of the first school booklets convey an image of “adultized” childhood that the liberal bourgeoisie sought to instill in the classrooms (Becchi; Julia, 1999). The good boy is represented as one who knows how to be obedient to his parents (Vecchione, 1887), who before leaving home to go to school takes care of his personal hygiene (“he arranges his hair with a comb, removes dandruff with a brush, scrubs and washes his face, neck and hands; cleans his nails well; removes secretions from his eyes and earwax from his ears”), follows appropriate behavior when going to school, in contrast to the model of the naughty boy, being an example for the:

naughty, quarrelsome and noisy”, respects the teacher and maintains a disciplined posture at school “keeps his arms crossed over his chest or rests them skillfully on the table in front of him. He does not talk, does not whisper, does not laugh; does not look away from one side to the other, but keeps them fixed on the teacher (Vago, 1870, p. 11-12).

Educational models from the 18th century are revisited, inspired by the discipline of behavior based on silence and obedience, and respect for authority, with constant references to the stigmatization of spontaneous and naive behavior in children. The idealized child is one who knows how to contain his or her displays of impatience, who knows how to be moderate even in games, avoiding dangerous ones involving fire, and who inspires his or her attitudes with a sense of piety and charity (“It is a duty to help those in need. [...] Give charity to the poor. Helping the helpless is a duty, just like working. I will give alms to the poor and help those in need”). A child who knows how to appreciate the benefits of school, useful because it is a place to learn “valuable knowledge” through observation of things, in addition to being knowledge of the “infinite power, wisdom and goodness of God”, and which “makes us able to speak the beautiful Italian language, uniting us and bringing us closer to our brothers and sisters from all other parts of our Italy” (Vago, 1870, p. 17). The female profiles presented for imitation also follow the models of good behavior:

Annina is good, wise and very kind. She gets up at dawn; she cleans, organizes her things, strives to do her duty well and to learn her lesson. Annina also has a charitable spirit: she helps the poor and usually gives them a copper coin or a piece of bread. Her father praises her a lot and she is happy to be his joy. The good Annina deserves to be imitated by you. (Celli, 1886, p. 31).

The syllabaries produced in the first years after unification contain, in their lexicon and in short propositions, many references to the Catholic religious’ universe. It is common to identify words and expressions, often associated with moral teachings, characteristic of Catholicism, such as those contained in the *Silabário graduado para uso das escolas elementares* compiled by Canon Vago:

*Il pa-ra-di-so. Ve-ri-tà, u-ni-tà, Noè, Mo-sè. Sa-rò do-ci-le e co-sì Id-dio mi do-ne-rà il Pa-ra-di-so, e sa-rò fe-li-ce and be-ato. La di-vi-ni-tà è a-do-ra-bi-le, ed io a-do-re-rò Id-dio. Dio be-ne-dì Noè. Id-dio vuo-le da noi a-do-ra-zio-ne, o-no-re and ve-ri-tà. Ub-bi-dia-mo a Dio ed ai su-oi su-pe-ri-ori and sa-re-mo fe-li-ci. La me-mo-ria è do-no di Dio. A-ma-te Dio in ve-ri-tà di pa-ro-le and in pu-ri-tà di o-pe-re. Ub-bi-di-te ai di-vi-ni vo-le-ri*²⁴(Vago, 1870, p. 31-32).

²⁴ Paradise. Truth, unity, Noah, Moses. I will be docile and thus God will give me paradise, and I will be happy and blessed. Divinity is adorable, and I will worship God. God blessed Noah. God wants from us adoration, honor and truth. Let us obey God and our superiors and we will be happy. Memory is a gift from God. Love God in truth of words and in purity of deeds. Obey the divine designs.

In sentences as an example, the syllabaries in use during this period contain fixed themes, such as the Sign of the Cross, the Lord's Prayer, the angelic greeting, the creed, the commandments and the children's prayer before school (Vago, 1870).

In the following decades, references of a religious nature did not disappear completely, but became more subtle (Serra, 1884). Instead, references that more directly refer to the civic and urban dimension of future citizens gained prominence. Thus, for example, the presentation of consonants was often accompanied by examples of city names. Not only of the main urban centers, but also of smaller, less used towns (Orvieto, Osimo, Ortona, Savona, Sora, Susa, etc.), almost as a way of underlining the common national belonging, reinforced by propositions such as “We are Italians and we love Italy, which has become free and united, thanks to the love and union of good Italians”.

The appeal to nationality is also observed in the titles. Several syllabaries, such as the one printed in Naples by Giuseppe Ricci (1862), by Girolamo Giardini (1886), or the one compiled by the director of the Campobasso high school, Pierpaolo Fongoli (1885), with the significant title *Silabário da criança italiana*, make explicit reference to the national dimension.

In the exercises for regular reading, usually placed as a section after the presentation of the different forms of syllabification, we find, in varying quantities, references to national identity, starting with the mentions of the various cities that characterize the peninsula (Turin, Venice, Italy) or the increase in references to the words Nation, Savoy, Italy (associated with exile). An example of this is the passage in Silvestro Bini's syllabary:

Italy is a peninsula of Europe, the people who inhabit it are called Italians, and the language spoken is Italian; the kingdom of Italy is constitutional, and its king is Victor Emmanuel II. The capital of Italy is Florence; The most famous city in Italy is Rome; Genoa is the most commercial port in Italy. Naples is the most populous city in Italy. Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica are the largest islands in Italy. The Alps and the sea are the borders that God made for our beloved homeland (Bini, 1867, p. 26).

The syllabaries insist on the most emotional aspects to represent the homeland - before the nation - represented as a large family in which the professional classes most immediately identifiable by children with those of their small territorial context, whether rural or urban (the farmer, the artisan, the merchant) are recognized:

I will love the country where I was born, which is my homeland. My homeland is Italy. The hard-working farmer, the honest merchant, the diligent artisan loves her. The pious priest and the diligent teacher love her; the national soldier and the magistrate. But above all, he loves the soldier who faces his enemies with intrepidity, fights and dies. He who is a good son and a diligent student will one day be a virtuous citizen, who will know how to love and serve his country²⁵ (Mottura; Parato, 1876, p.28).

²⁵ Io amerò il paese dove sono nato, cioè la mia patria. La mia patria è l'Italia. La ama il laborioso agricoltore, l'onesto commerciante, l'industrioso artigiano. Lo ama il pio sacerdote e l'operoso maestro; il milite nazionale e il magistrato. Ma sopra tutti la ama il soldato che intrepido affronta i nemici, combatte e muore. Chi è buon figliolo e diligente scolaro, sarà un giorno un virtuoso cittadino, che ben saprà amare e servire la sua patria.

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