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International Migration and the History of Education in the Brazilian Countryside

Interview and Book Review

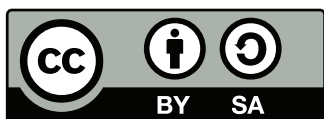
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Abstract

Abstract: During the Age of Mass Migration, circa 250 thousand German-speakers immigrated to Brazil. Even if numerically limited, these immigrants played a central role in the consolidation of the Brazilian culture, society, and economy. The German-speaking immigration to Brazil also influenced the country's settlement policies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and had a feedback effect on global labor markets during the first age of globalization. In this compilation for the Global Migration Studies, Flavia da Silva Varolo discusses in an interview her research on German settlements in the Riograndense Colony, a project for land selling to foreigners in the western portion of the state of São Paulo. She debates the persistence of cultural habits among descendants of immigrants and the negative effects of violently imposed assimilation, such as that perpetrated by the Brazilian State in the 1930s-1940s. As a linguist and education historian, Ms. Varolo highlights the importance of interdisciplinarity for studying immigration history. In the sequence, Luiz Mateus da Silva Ferreira revises Varolo's book. His review puts the case study at hand into the general framework of the Age of Mass Migration and presents economic aspects related to education history. The review also points to the need of critically assessing the attempts of influence exercised by the NSDAP over regions that had received German-speaking immigrants in Latin America since the nineteenth century.

Keywords: settlement policies, settlement colonies, landownership, education history, Latin America, Brazil, Riograndense Colony

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International Migration and the History of Education in the Brazilian Countryside

Interview and Book Review

Flavia Renata da Silva Varolo
Luiz Mateus da Silva Ferreira
Bruno Gabriel Witzel de Souza

Introduction

BRUNO GABRIEL WITZEL DE SOUZA

On July 25, 2024, the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Federal Republic of Germany will have reason and occasion for commemorating the history of their long bilateral exchanges, as the date marks the bicentenary of German immigration to Brazil.

Certainly, the mobility of people and the interrelated exchange of ideas, capital, and goods between Central Europe, the Iberian Peninsula, and the Portuguese colony in the Americas predates the nineteenth century. The historiography has extensively surveyed the direct links between the histories of these regions since the very first day of the Portuguese conquest of

the Brazilian territory, as well as the role that German-speakers played in Brazilian colonial history, even if the Portuguese Empire attempted to enforce very restrictive immigration rules over its transatlantic possessions (Fouquet 1974, pp. 19–26; Oberacker Jr. 1968; Bolle and Kupfer 2013).

Notwithstanding, the arrival of the first German settlers in the *São Leopoldo Colony* on July 25, 1824, does constitute an inflexion point in the Brazilian history¹. This so-called “colony” was an initiative of the Brazilian central government to promote European immigration via settlement in rural communities. The most important motivations in pursuing such settlement and immigration policies included the promotion of demographic growth in the recently independent Brazilian Empire, the settling of sparsely populated border regions, the fostering of economic growth with the introduction of new technologies by immigrants, and, to some extent, the racist goal of the Brazilian political elite to whiten the population (Oberacker Jr. 1968, 2004; Campos 1969; Seyferth 1988, pp. 3–9; Dreher 2013; Kupfer 2021). To which extent these various goals have been successfully reached and how they have influenced the formation and evolution of various aspects of the Brazilian ethnicity, culture, society, and economy are themes recurrently debated by various social sciences². However, what is certain is that, even if numerically limited, the pioneering experience of São Leopoldo changed the paths of the history of immigration and settlement in Brazil and thus influenced the global labor markets during the first globalization age.

¹ Previous attempts to establish rural settlements in the captaincies/provinces of Bahia, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo were mostly short-lived.

² Readers interested in the ethnolinguistic identity of German-speaking immigrants in Brazil will find good references in English in Volume 33 (3) of *German History*, which is a special issue on “Germans and Brazilians”. Classical ethnographic studies are Willems ([1940] 1981) and Seyferth (2016). Important historiographical revisions and new problematizations related to the identity of German-speaking communities in Brazil are frequent objects of the journals *Prâxis* and *História UNISINOS*.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, a number of settlements founded by the central or provincial governments in Brazil acted as the spearheads for the advancement of new colonies based on private land selling in the southern provinces of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina, as well as in the province of Espírito Santo (Oberacker Jr. 1968; 2004; Ferreira da Silva 2019). Concomitantly, new plantation owners of southwestern Brazil who did not have a consolidated stock of enslaved Afro-Brazilians, particularly in the province of São Paulo, started demanding the public subsidization to promote the immigration of agricultural laborers, instead of rural settlers (Buarque de Holanda 1941; Siriani 2015; Witzel de Souza 2019a). After a long process of political maturation and economic experimentation, this proposal finally allowed for the mass immigration of Italians, Portuguese, and Spaniards as of the late 1880s, in a historical period characterized by the threat of the abolition of slavery, which took place in Brazil only in 1888 (Levy 1974; Holloway 1978; Klein 1995; Petrone 2004).

Finally, in the first decades of the twentieth century, the rapid expansion of agricultural frontiers in the states of São Paulo and Paraná led to the predominance of the selling of rural plots by land incorporators and private companies. Combined with the position of Germany in its emigration life cycle and the economic and political crises of the 1920s, this led to a renewed inflow of German-speakers to Brazil (Rinke 2008; Schulze 2015). Interestingly, those new immigrants now came to be in direct contact with a stock of descendants of immigrants that had arrived in the country for over a hundred years.

This later period of the history of German immigration to Brazil is the main theme of the interview with Flavia Renata da Silva Varolo and the book review by Luiz Mateus da Silva Ferreira.

Flavia Renata da Silva Varolo is a linguist and education historian. Her research has focused on the immigration history and educational practices in the *Riograndense Colony*, a private incorporation initiative that settled foreigners, particularly Germans, on the Valley of the Paranapanema River, in the southwest of the state of São Paulo. Besides providing a historical overview of the region and contextualizing it within the history of immigration to Brazil, the interview deals with the survival and persistence of cultural habits among descendants of immigrants and with the negative effects of violently imposed assimilation, such as that perpetrated by the Brazilian State with its nationalization laws under the dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas (1930–1945). Flavia da Silva Varolo also highlights the importance of interdisciplinarity for studying immigration history and discusses how her own multidisciplinary education helped her in developing methods that combine oral history with documental research.

Luiz Mateus da Silva Ferreira then revises Flavia da Silva Varolo's co-authored book, "*Trajetória educacional dos imigrantes alemães no interior do estado de São Paulo. Uma escola alemã na colônia Riograndense: 1922–1938 (Maracá/Cruzália- SP)*". Luiz Mateus da Silva Ferreira is assistant professor of economic history at the Federal University of Ouro Preto, Brazil. His research has focused on German settlements in southern Brazil. In the book review, he invites us to see the case study of Ms. Varolo in the general context of the *Age of Mass Migration*. Prof. Ferreira points out to the relevance of studying communication channels between immigrants for the consolidation of historical chain migration; he also discusses in depth economic aspects related to educational history. Finally, the review also points to the need of critically studying the attempts, failed or not, of influence of the NSDAP over regions that had received influxes of German-speaking immigrants in Latin America since the nineteenth century (Bisan Alves 2006; Dietrich 2008; Curi et al. 2019).

Besides the immediate goal of presenting an interesting case study of historical migration, the joint compilation of this interview and book review for the Paper Series *Global Migration Studies* aims at stimulating the debate on how historical international migration might enlighten our understanding of current migratory episodes. We invite readers to reflect on how historical migration since the 1820s influenced migratory policies and settlement strategies in the 1920s and how decisions made back then still affect various facets of the Brazilian culture, society, and economy in the 2020s. Two themes are striking in demonstrating this persistence of historical decisions. First, the preservation of linguistic heritage for more than a century, the revival of cultural traditions among the descendants of immigrants, and the increasing demand for the command of Portuguese-German bilingualism all point to the traumatic failure of violently imposing cultural assimilation over foreign populations, as attempted by the Brazilian government in the 1930s-1940s. Albeit specific in time and space, historical events as these provide empirical material for social scientists and practitioners interested in the consequences of policies for sociocultural integration. Second, although the following pages present strong evidence that immigrants have significant agency in moulding receiving societies – demonstrated e.g. by their cooperatives and by the very foundation of foreign schools –, the impacts of international migration are still to a large degree limited by prevailing domestic institutions. The fact that an old settlement based on family farming in the 1920s underwent a process of land concentration until the 2020s is certainly telling about the economic and political conditions that have permeated Brazilian history.

To conclude, this compilation for the Paper Series *Global Migration Studies* also aims to serve as an early input for the commemorations of the bicentenary of German immigration to Brazil. As Ms. Varolo's interview demonstrates, many facets of these important episodes of the *Age of Mass Migration* remain unknown. New empirical findings and archival discov-

eries, innovative projects on cultural heritage preservation, and reinterpretations of well-known episodes from new critical angles will all help to put together a mosaic of the influence of German-speakers in Latin America and to appreciate the role that they played, together with the Brazilian population, in shaping the dynamics of global mobility, past and now.

Interview with Flavia Renata da Silva Varolo

BRUNO GABRIEL WITZEL DE SOUZA



Flavia Renata da Silva Varolo

Your research focuses on the German immigration to the Brazilian State of São Paulo in the twentieth century, particularly to the municipality of Cruzália. Could you please tell us about the presence of German immigrants in the region and how you got interested in this research line?

Cruzália is a county in the southwestern portion of the Brazilian state of São Paulo. This region received a relatively large contingent of German-speaking immigrants throughout its history, particularly for set-

tlement in the so-called *Riograndense Colony*. Founded in 1922, this colony is a rural district where the German settlement started; nonetheless, as we will discuss later, there were other, smaller, immigrant settlements spread around the rural districts of Cruzália, including those named Caçador and Castelo.

Being myself from Cruzália and having indigenous, Portuguese and Spanish ancestors, I have always observed with interest and curiosity the intermixing of my own family with the Germans, be it by marriage and kinship ties, work relations, friendship, or social networks. In particular, my aunt was a dressmaker who had many German customers. It was therefore commonplace to have at home a number of fashion magazines imported from Germany in the 1980s. Having become a teacher, I look fondly back to the days when I used to play school with those magazines and crop letters from them for schoolwork during my alphabetization.

In 1997, I started my undergraduate studies in Literature and Linguistics at the State University of São Paulo, in the campus of Assis, *ca.* 50 km away from Cruzália. Having the option to specialize in two foreign languages, I realized that that was the opportunity to learn the language in which the magazines of my infancy were written, as well as the language spoken by the German women when they wanted some secrecy from the Brazilians during birthday parties or the Church's bazaars³. In short, German was a language that was part of my life, even though I did not speak it.

Near the completion of my B.A., I went to Germany for six months as *Au pair* to improve my language skills and get to know the culture closer. When I returned to Brazil, many German-descendants in Cruzália started asking for language courses, for translating documents, personal letters etc. The great majority of the German-descendants in Cruzália still use German to communicate orally, but have lost command of the written form.

This cultural feature and the existing demand for German as a written language fascinated me. Once I started my specialization in "Teaching of Foreign Languages" at the State University of São Paulo, I decided to conduct research on the education history of German immigrants in the *Riograndense Colony*. Prof. Dr. José Luis Felix, my advisor, had held a lecture on "Language, Culture and Immigration" in which he presented historical evidence for the existence of a school in the colony during the German colonization. However, many questions remained open and I was especially interested in themes related to educational practices and to the use of foreign languages before the Brazilian nationalization laws of 1938⁴. This motivation by Prof. Felix sparked my interest in writing my first scien-

³ Free translation to "quermesse", a celebratory bazaar related to the June festivals in honor of Saint Anthony, Saint John, the Baptist, and Saint Peter.

⁴ These are nationalization laws enacted by the Brazilian government since 1938 during the dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas (1930–1945). Among other effects, these laws

tific work: “*The German school of Riograndense Colony*”⁵. In 2008 I joined the M.A. program in “Education and Pedagogy” at the State University of São Paulo, campus of Presidente Prudente. One of my goals was precisely to continue that research on German immigration and their educational practices.

After completing the program, my advisor, Prof. Dr. Arilda Inês Miranda Ribeiro, and I invited Prof. Felix for the project of a co-authored book extending my research. This led to the publication, in 2015, of “*The educational path of German immigrants in the countryside of the state of São Paulo in light of a German school in the Riograndense Colony, 1922–1938 (Maracaí/Cruzália-SP)*”⁶.

The *Riograndense Colony* and neighbouring towns, particularly the counties of Cruzália, Maracaí, and Tarumã, gained visibility after that publication. By promoting the book at the cultural festivals of *Brooklinfest*, in 2015, and the *Maifest*, in 2016, Prof. Felix and I were invited to start a new research project about the German immigration to the county of Tarumã. Starting in 2017, that new project built up on an academic cooperation between the State University of São Paulo and a consortium of municipalities from the region known as the *Paranapanema Valley*, the CIVAP⁷. The project was completed in 2020 with the publication of the book “*Narratives of German immigrants and their descendants*”⁸, edited and organized by Prof. Dr. José Luis Félix.

nationalized foreign organizations, especially those of German, Italian, and Japanese immigrants.

⁵ Free translation to “*A escola alemã da Colônia Riograndense*”.

⁶ Free translation to “*Trajatória educacional dos imigrantes alemães no interior do estado de São Paulo: uma escola alemã na Colônia Riograndense: 1922–1938 (Maracaí/Cruzália-SP)*”.

⁷ Acronym for “Consórcio intermunicipal do Vale do Paranapanema”.

⁸ Free translation to “*Narrativas de imigrantes e descendentes de alemães*”.

You have pursued a very interdisciplinary career, combining Linguistics, Pedagogy, and History. How do you evaluate the importance of the multiple lenses offered by these disciplines to your study of international migration?

My first interest in studying Literature and Linguistics came from my fascination with foreign languages and literature, so I focused my undergraduate studies precisely on their theoretical aspects. In the meantime, two sociocultural observations I made in the region where I came from intrigued me intellectually. The first was the dichotomy between the oral and written expressions of the German colonists and their descendants that I mentioned before. The second was that many of the German descendants had completely lost the contact with the German language, while those who still used it tended to do so only within the limits of their households, with a feeling for speaking publicly.

These observations encouraged me to debate the topic with Prof. Dr. José Luis Félix, specialist in the field of foreign language and international migration. Besides attending his lectures, I was fortunate to join the research group on German immigration that Prof. Felix had founded at the State University of São Paulo. This training gave me the tools to conduct research on regional history, particularly by talking to German immigrants who were still alive and, afterwards, recording interviews using methods of oral history.

In this research project, I observed in loco the long-termed consequences of historical events. The fact that most descendants do not speak German is a direct consequence of World War II and the nationalization laws that took place during the dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas in Brazil (1930–1945).

I was also fortunate in receiving an enormous affection from the immigrants as the research moved forward. Their confidence built up over time and they started showing other historical sources to me, including books,

photographs, and personal documents; in short, the interviewees gladly shared with me all material that could add up to my research. This abundance of collected material and primary sources – interviews, documents, photographs, notarial deeds, certificates, etc., most of them in German – motivated me to continue that research at the graduate level, as I wished to analyze thoroughly all the empirical material that I was not able to use in my specialization thesis.

Because the postgraduate specialization in the campus of Assis was more related to literature, I decided to change to the campus of Presidente Prudente, which had a research focus on Education History. As such, I formally moved away from the field of Literature and Linguistics into that of Education History. This allowed me to study education history jointly with the theme of immigration history, combining them into studies of the German educational history across various Brazilian regions.

During my postgraduate studies, I worked concomitantly as teacher in a public school, was the mother of one child, and espouse. These circumstances gradually made me leave aside the study of German as a language: a painful process for people who love languages. Nonetheless, I was fascinated with the idea of diving into the past to understand historical events and the cultural, sociological, and political aspects that have influenced (and actually keep influencing) the teaching of foreign languages in Brazil.

I discovered back then a passion for learning, questioning, and researching – things that bring me real joy. With the research project on the history of immigration to Tarumã already going on, I felt again an urge to continue my studies. In 2017, I joined the research group on “Literature and Primary Sources” at the State University of São Paulo, campus of Assis, under coordination of Prof. Dr. Carlos Eduardo Mendes de Moraes. I then started, in 2018, a PhD in literature, with focus on primary sources. In a full circle, I came back to the field of Literature. My ongoing stud-

ies deal with classical literature and primary sources and I currently work with manuscripts from the seventeenth century.

I see this interchanging of specialization fields as a learning process, as an opportunity to bring together all those areas. I am many Flávias, transiting between Linguistics, Cultural Studies, History, and Literature – be it modern or classical. All of that is in me and make me who I am. I wonder at times if I should have specialized in one single field, but in fact I enjoy diversity in learning; and I enjoy the paths and professional opportunities that that knowledge has brought to me.

You mentioned being a descendant of Iberian immigrants and indigenous peoples. Could you elaborate on that, telling us more about the interconnections between various immigrant groups and ethnicities in the *Riograndense Colony*?

I can give you only an incomplete answer to this question, because I am still researching the history of my own family. In fact, the research on German immigration sparked my interest and even a certain urge to learn more about my own family.

My mother's grandfather – family Alves Dias – descended from a Portuguese who arrived in Brazil at the age of 16, hidden from his family, which stayed in Portugal. He settled in the county of Altinópolis, circa 350km from the city of São Paulo. There, he is said to have “caught an Indian girl by the lasso”⁹ for his marriage, a very sad happening that nonetheless occurred frequently in the first decades of the twentieth century. My grandfather thus descends from this indigenous woman and a Portuguese immigrant. My grandmother's family, the Teodoro de

⁹ The original in Portuguese, “pegar índia a laço”, is reminiscent of the violence and abuse against indigenous peoples, in particular of sexual violence against indigenous women.

Souza¹⁰, descended from Portuguese who had first settled in the province of Minas Gerais, although she was already born in the county of Santa Cruz do Rio Pardo, in the state of São Paulo. It is important to notice that these grandparents met and married already in the county of Cruzália, located 480km away from the city of São Paulo. That couple had seven children.

My grandfather from my father's side has indigenous and Afro-Brazilian ancestors – family Silva –, while my grandmother descends from Spanish immigrants – family Rodrigues Garcia. Both grandparents were born in the region of Assis, but also moved to Cruzália, showing the attractiveness of that region, where they had 11 children.

My indigenous ascendants are, therefore, not related to the indigenous tribes that lived in the region of Cruzália. Nonetheless, the elderly population of Cruzália maintains the oral tradition that many indigenous groups lived in the region at the beginning of the colonization process, even if there are no written sources confirming that fact, unfortunately.

Building up on the biographies of your grandparents, who moved to the west of the state of São Paulo, could you please give us a panorama of the history of the counties of Cruzália, Maracaí, and Tarumã? Moreover, what does explain the immigration of German-speakers to these localities in the first half of the twentieth century?

The settling of the region known as the Paranapanema Valley, where these municipalities are located, is part of a historical process that the Brazilian historiography has named as *March to the West*. This expression summa-

¹⁰ The evidence suggests that this family descends from Mr. José Teodoro de Souza. Born in the Brazilian State of Minas Gerais, Mr. Teodoro de Souza achieved historical fame as one of the first persons– perhaps even the very first – to start official settlements in the Paranapanema Valley. Ms. Varolo recommends the research by Célia Penço to the interested readers.

rizes the occupation and economic exploration of vast portions of land in the west of the state of São Paulo since the end of the nineteenth century, leading to new possessions and the setting of legal titles over land that had remained officially unclaimed until then.

The first official settlements in the municipality of Maracaí occurred in 1905. After receiving the legal status of “District”, that settlement had its name changed to Maracaí. The name derives from the indigenous Tupi word “MARA-AÇÃ-Y”, which means “River of the Maraca”. “Maraca”, in turn, is a type of rattle. The name makes reference to the fact that the bank of the Capivari River is abundant in tumbled pebbles; when water runs through them, the sound reminds that of a rattle.

The settlement of the lands of Cruzália, in turn, started in the early 1920s, when the region was still officially part of the county of Maracaí. That locality enjoyed the reputation of having very fertile soils and thus attracted the population of neighbouring counties. The first families to settle were occupied mainly with subsistence agriculture, particularly in the cultivation of maize and pig farming. Over time, the first maize fields gave way to coffee production and, afterwards, to cotton and wheat; currently, the region’s economy is based mostly on the production of soya, maize, and sugarcane.

The population influx led to a boom in local commercial activities. New commercial houses were installed, especially good stores and bars. The new trade networks were very relevant to countervail the serious supply bottlenecks that had prevailed for a long time, as transportation was precarious in the region and larger municipalities with access to railroad, such as Assis and Cardoso de Almeida, were relatively far away from Cruzália.

Because Cruzália belonged officially to Maracaí and given that the original area of German colonization was actually nearby, various German fam-

ilies were also attracted to Cruzália and to other localities neighbouring the Paranapanema River.

It is in this context that the *Riograndense Colony* was founded in Maracaí, becoming the locality with the highest concentration of immigrants. Although this is the best-known colony of the region, it is not the only one: other smaller settlements formed in Caçador and Castelo, *i.e.* in districts that belong to the county of Cruzália. Besides Germans, the municipality received from the onset Italian and, to a smaller scale, Japanese immigrants.

The Germans started to settle in the region in 1922, primordially in the rural area, forming two nuclei of colonization. The Lutherans were mostly in the *Riograndense Colony*, which was a rural settlement. The Catholics went to São José das Laranjeiras, a settlement in the format of a village that had its commercial houses, workshops, and public facilities, such as a hospital, police station, and jail. Upon arrival, these German immigrants built up, in complement to the public facilities, their own churches and schools, with teachers and teaching material coming directly from Germany.

The region settled by the immigrants had its economy initially based on pig farming and, later, on the cultivation of alfalfa. In 1939, the *Riograndense Cooperative* was founded. It would become the largest Brazilian producer of alfalfa, which was absorbed almost in its totality by the Brazilian Government's Cavalry. While the German immigrants were mainly concentrated in the production of alfalfa, other rural proprietors produced coffee and cotton.

Now, the history of Tarumã starts at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1890, Dr. Mathias Lex (1826–1907), a German medical doctor, bought the so-called Dourados farm. Dr. Lex visited the region only four years later, envisaging the plan to found a municipality in there. With his passing away in 1907, the plan was temporarily abandoned. His son, the pharma-

cist Gilberto Lex (1880–1961), commenced to take ownership of the lands in 1913, thereafter continuing the plan of his father¹¹. Mr. Gilberto Lex set aside a portion of the farm that would constitute an urban nucleus – the Vila Lex –, while the remaining lands were allotted in rural smallholdings.

I will leave below a quote from Prof. Felix that summarizes this process:

The plan was to build up a city in one of such plots of land, at the right side of the Tarumã River; [Gilberto Lex] named that place “Mathias Lex Settlement” in tribute to his father and mentor of the farm. The rural and urban plots were sold to immigrants, predominantly German and Italians, thus starting the “Vila Lex”, later Tarumã. From its beginning to the current days, the economy of Tarumã has always been tied to the planting of sugar cane (Felix, 2020: 21; free translation).

Turning to the German settlement, could you please describe to us the historical foundation of the *Riograndense Colony*?

According to my sources, the settlements founded in the counties of Cruzália and Maracáí received no public subsidies or other governmental incentives. Rather, these so-called “colonies” were real estate sold to immigrants by private enterprises.

This was precisely the case with the *Riograndense Colony*. Mr. Alfredo Antunes de Oliveira, proprietor of the *Capivara farm*, where the colony was installed, started an allotment project in its 4.840 hectares¹² to avoid squatters. The firm *Isernhagen & Malves* was the real estate incorporator. In fact, recent findings in Felix (2020) suggest that the settlement in Tarumã preceded the foundation of the *Riograndense Colony*. If this is correct, then the following hypothesis might be true, namely that the success of

¹¹ In Portuguese there is a distinction between farms and “sítios”, which in this case occurred by dismembering the lands of a farm into smaller proprietries, the “sítios”.

¹² Converted from the original 2.000 “alqueires”, as measured in the state of São Paulo.

the project in Tarumã could have motivated the hiring of a German firm as the real estate incorporator of the *Capivara farm*.

Prof. Carlos Oberacker Jr. (1965) has shown that brothers Isernhagen had a clear division of labor in the project: while Mr. Gustav Isernhagen was responsible for the topographical services, Mr. Otto Isernhagen took care of the commercial activities. The latter covered an ample geographic area in his business activities and promoted the selling of plots for German immigrants spread across the Brazilian states of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Espírito Santo, and Paraná. Actually, the very name “Riograndense” comes from the fact that the first settlers who arrived in the *Capivara farm* were German-speakers who had originally immigrated to the Brazilian province of Rio Grande do Sul; among them was Mr. Michael Lamb, who became a distinguished entrepreneur, as I will discuss later. Mr. Isernhagen had connections also in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, and probably in other European countries, as well. He also acted in other regions of the state of São Paulo and he sold plots of land even to immigrants recently arrived at the “Hospedaria dos Imigrantes”, the lodging house maintained by the state of São Paulo to promote immigration to country, particularly of rural laborers for the coffee plantations.

The classical studies by Friedrich Sommer have found that the number of German-speaking families living in the *Riograndense Colony* varied between 60 and 80 in 1925–1930, increasing to 155 in 1937 if the settlement of Laranjeiras is considered. That author (1945, p. 661) has found that 90 families were born in the Germany, 45 were Brazilian families with German ancestors, and 20 were German-Russians.

The spread of other German colonies in the region relates to changes in the original plans envisaged for the *Capivara farm*, including the dissolution of *Isernhagen & Malves*.

According to some registries, that real estate developer did not pass on the money obtained from the immigrants to the farm's proprietor. Consequently, some settlers did not receive their corresponding legal land titles. The escalating conflicts even led to the return migration of some families to Germany.

After these major problems, Mr. Michael Lamb organized his own firm of real estate incorporation and settlement. Mr. Lamb bought the farm of Mr. Elizio Galvão, located in the Estiva District, nearby Cruzália. That farm had excellent agro-ecological and topographical conditions, with flat and non-stony plots, in a region covered with forest rich in hardwood¹³.

Mr. Lamb thus started a new real estate enterprise with promising prospects for the cultivation of the most profitable crop of the region: alfalfa. That was the so-called *New Riograndense Colony*.

Besides the *New Riograndense Colony* established in the old farm Galvão, Mr. Lamb promoted other real estate projects in neighbouring areas, being active in the foundation of colonies *Caçador*, *Castelo Branco*, and *Nova Wolhynia*.

Regarding their geographic limits, the old core of those settlements were located in the *Capivara farm* along the Capivara River, which separated the Catholics in São José das Laranjeiras from the Lutherans in the Barra Mansa District. For clarity, in the beginning only the settlements in the *Capivara farm* were considered part of the *Riograndense Colony*. Over time, however, this denomination was attributed to the settlements in the old farm Galvão and in surrounding areas, as well. Even previously independent projects, such as *Colônia Wolhynia*, *Castelo Branco*, and *Lex*, were later named as part of the *Riograndense Colony* by public authorities and researchers.

¹³ "Madeira de lei" refers to timber of high-quality for human purposes, such as for carpentry.

The distinction between Catholics and Lutherans seems to have played an important role even for the geographic distribution of the German-speaking immigrants. Is that correct?

I will use the work of Dr. Lídia Braun, a specialist in the religiosity of German immigrants in the region, to give an answer here. Dr. Braun has shown that the very first settlement in the *Riograndense Colony* in 1922 took place in the localities known as *Água do Macaco*, *Água dos Porcos*, and *Água da Barra Mansa*. These localities are considered the original core of the colony and a privileged place due to their physical amenities. The cooperative was built in there and the other colonization initiatives irradiated from it.

This early settlement received immigrants from various nationalities, including Germans, Swiss, Polish, and Austrians, as well as German-capixabas, *i.e.* older German immigrants originally settled in the Brazilian state of Espírito Santo, and German-gaúchos, *i.e.* older German immigrants from the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Notwithstanding this variety of origins, the majority in that locality was of evangelical Lutherans.

Another irradiation point of colonization emerged from the surroundings of São José das Laranjeiras as of 1924. The predominant religion here was Catholicism and the settlers had come from various German regions, including East Prussia, as well as from the Brazilian state of Espírito Santo. This region nowadays concentrates the largest number of large properties.

Finally, another settlement was formed in the region known as *Água da Estiva*, with most settlers coming from Rio Grande do Sul. This predominance of “gaúchos” is related to the advertisement made by Mr. Michael Lamb in that Brazilian state for the colonization of farm Galvão since 1929, as discussed above.

You have recurrently mentioned the terms “colony” and “settlement”, sometimes interchangeably. Both concepts have a meaning in Brazilian history related to government-sponsored projects to create smallholdings in public lands. However, what happened in the region was the creation of a number of private initiatives for the selling of agricultural land. Could you please elaborate on the definition of the term “colony” as applied to the western portion of the state of São Paulo?

The settling of the *Riograndense Colony* was a private business. It was a real estate incorporation conducted by a firm, the *Isernhagen & Malves*, in an allotted private plantation.

The nomenclature we use to refer to that settlement – “Colony” or “Settlement Colony”¹⁴ – is due to the presence of foreign settlers, of immigrants. That nomenclature used to be and still is applied in a somewhat loose manner. In this particular case, the “colony” was not a settlement founded by public authorities; rather, the “colony” refers to a large farm that was dismembered in smaller units, the so-called *sítios*, destined to a specific group of immigrants, in this case, Germans and their descendants.

In its early days, the colony was constituted of small properties. However, as some families had the means to buy more than one plot of land, while others, unable to acclimatize, sold their properties and returned to Germany, a process of land concentration took place. Some smallholdings still subsist to this day; however, the large properties are now predominant.

There were many reasons for the inadaptability of some families, including health issues, complaints about the climatic conditions, and even fraud committed by the colonizing firm, as I have mentioned. A large number of immigrants had been attracted by the promises of fertile, flat,

¹⁴ “Colônia” ou “núcleo colonial”, in the original in Portuguese.

and smooth plots. Although fertile, the topography was nonetheless rugged and some plots had steep inclinations. Moreover, the original vegetation – a dense forest – still covered the region at the beginning of the settlement.

Although the German presence seems to have been prominent in the region, exactly one century has passed by since the foundation of the first settlement. How do you evaluate the persistence and influence of those immigrants for the socio-cultural life of the region?

Among the various rural settlements mentioned in this interview, the *Riograndense Colony* is the only one to be remembered as an old “colony”. While other settlements in the region still join in for local festivities, religious celebrations etc., these cultural manifestations are mostly conducted under the umbrella of the *Riograndense Colony*.

Because it preserves some features of an old rural settlement, one can still observe in the *Riograndense Colony* the existence of smallholdings and festivities that retain themes brought by the German immigrants. However, it is the Lutheran Church that holds the most prominent position as the institution congregating people and maintaining cultural traditions related to religious practices, including the festivities of Advent and Christmas, the German choir, and the Women’s Group (OASE). For some commemorative days, the Lutheran service is still in German. The Catholic Church is more neutral in these cultural-linguistic aspects; however, hymns are still sung in German in some memorial days – I myself sang in German in the Christmas Eve mass in São José das Laranjeiras.

The elderly still command German as a language. Actually, the majority of the descendants who still live in the colony are among the oldest and include the children and grandchildren of the pioneering settlers. The younger are able to understand their grandparents and parents in German, but speaking German is rarer. Exceptions include students of Liter-

ature and Linguistics, as well as those who attend language courses in the municipalities of Assis and Maracaí. Interestingly, the latter remains a relatively common practice for some families. The prospect of international exchanges with Germany has been a new motivation for the local youth, increasing the demand for German courses; the recent cases of two students, descendants of old settlers, who went to Germany with the support of the Lutheran Church has awakened a similar wish in others.

Various cultural traditions are maintained, especially culinary ones, such as receipts of Christmas biscuits, ricotta cheesecake, “Cuca”¹⁵, Strudel, Eisbein, and Sauerkraut, as well as the prevalence of beer as a drink. Dance groups perform in local festivities and some special dates, such as the immigration day to Brazil, are still commemorated with traditional culinary.

One also notices the longing of the descendants to revive older traditions and experiences. For instance, one of the old clubs that hosted local festivities and commemorations has been recently restored. Previously known as the “Lyric Club” (“Clube Lírico”), it had a sort of library and hosted a number of cultural performances, such as those of the music group “Edelweiss”, the male choir, theatre presentations, dance balls, and Christmas festivities. After the restoration, it received the name of “Cultural Center of Riograndense Colony, July 25” (“Centro Cultural 25 de Julho da Colônia Riograndense”)¹⁶. Besides sociocultural events, such as Christmas commemorations and rehearsals of the dance group, the center also hosts talks and seminars, such as the one that I had the opportunity to hold with Prof. Dr. José Luís Félix and Mr. Luiz Delfino

¹⁵ Corresponding to a phonetic adaptation of “Streuselkuchen”. See the work of Matthes, D. e Checcucci, M. (2017). “Território, campesinato e tradição: a cuca (*Kuchen*) como elemento emblemático da alimentação no médio Vale do Itajaí e sua relação com o desenvolvimento local”, *Prâxis*, A15, No. 1.

¹⁶ July 25 is the official commemoration date for the German immigration in Brazil, as mentioned in the introduction.

Cardia regarding our research for a group of the descendants of those immigrants about whom we had written.

We have briefly mentioned the Brazilian nationalization laws of the 1930s as a rupture juncture for the cultural and educational practices of Germans, Italians, and Japanese in Brazil. How did immigrants in the *Riograndense Colony* and surroundings deal with those measures?

Educational practices in the *Riograndense Colony* were maintained in their fullness until 1938, when the dictatorial government of President Getúlio Vargas enacted the nationalistic decree prohibiting the use of foreign languages in schools, churches, and other public segments of the Brazilian society.

This epoch is remembered bitterly by all, given that immigrants were not allowed to express themselves in their mother tongue. Once Brazil joined the Allies in 1942, police raids and search warrants for documents, books, and other materials that might have been related to the Nazi presence in the colony implied that family photos, letters, and personal diaries could be (and actually were) confiscated, even if they had no relation at all to the Nazis. Fearing retaliation from the police, even poetry books ended up being burned. Many of my interviewees recollect sad memories from this period, not really understanding what was going on.

Although the German-speaking community did develop strategies of resistance to maintain their culture, the educational practices, religious cults, and civic festivities suffered an acculturation process imposed and mandated from above, by the Brazilian State.

German cultural practices were allowed to be taken up again only after the end of World War II. Religious cults, festivities, and other sociocultural practices aligned with traditions of the older settlers were resumed in the *Riograndense Colony*. The German school, however, remained closed and was later substituted by a public rural school. Nonetheless, to a certain

extent, the reappearance of cultural and linguistic habits in the post-War period did revive the educational project of the German immigrants in the form of non-institutionalized practices, while also allowing for the insertion of their offspring into the Brazilian society. Indeed, the socio-economic conditions of the descendants of the pioneers are, in general, good. A large parcel had access to high quality education and hold good positions in the private sector, including in multinational companies, as well as in educational institutions, including universities. Many have left the colony and reside in larger municipalities; some even re-emigrated to Germany.

Did the Nazi regime exert any influence over the colony, considering that the NSDAP's largest cell in Brazil was based in the city of São Paulo?

The question of the political and ideological influence of Nazism over the colony is complex, as I have found one single document that makes explicit reference to the Nazi Party. This document is a report signed by the last teacher of the German school, Mr. João Troucurt; the document has been archived by the Martius-Staden Institute in São Paulo and can be found in the appendix of my master's thesis, translated into Portuguese by Prof. Dr. José Luís Félix.

Mr. Troucurt himself wrote the report, in German. This document from 1937 sketches a brief history of the colony, including of its foundation, of the creation of the school, of visits of public figures to the colony (such as that of the General Consul Dr. Speiser), of the number of students, and of cultural and educational practices.

The following excerpt do indicate at least an attempt by the Nazi party to gain influence over the colony: "The first event that we organized was the commemoration of May 1st; jointly with the support of the NSDAP. A simple, but impressive festivity" (Troucurt 1937; free translation by the editor). A final word on the Nazi influence requires further research. Among my

interviewees, there were those who mentioned that Mr. Troucort taught songs from the Hitler Youth, while others stressed that the school had no association with the Nazi party or ideology.

In terms of oral tradition, there is also the legend that Josef Mengele would have hidden in one of the meeting clubs of the Germans in the region, namely in the “Club of the 30” (“Clube dos 30”), which belongs nowadays to the municipality of Cruzália. According to the legend, Mengele would have lived hidden in the attic of the building. Although some objects have been found in this club, which according to legend belonged to Mengele, I did not comment on this case in the book because there is no supporting evidence for what seems to be part of the community’s imagination and an extension to the fact that Josef Mengele did hide in the municipality of Assis in the 1970s, as shown by the work of Ms. Aline Mustafa Ferreira da Silva (2007).

A fascinating feature of your work is the combination of oral and documental history, whose mastery, I suppose, is related to your interdisciplinary formation. Could you tell us how you combine them, particularly for the conduction of interviews?

The methodological choices for the interviews in my master’s thesis had to follow a clear thematic thread. They had to be focused on the educational aspect of the history of German immigration to the region covered. Therefore, I first surveyed the names of the oldest members of the colony still alive and contacted them to schedule various visits and meetings. I was particularly interested in those who had studied in the German school. From the networks thus slowly built up, I got acquainted with other people who had further oral information or primary sources, including photos and documents. Back then, I used a K7 tape recorder to record the interviews.

The research for the book on the history of Tarumã followed a different methodological approach. Our first task was to survey the families of German origin documented in primary sources available in the notary office, as well as in the birth and death registries of that municipality at the beginning of its settlement. Based on this information and counting with the support of the Municipal Hall, we surveyed those families that still resided in Tarumã, finally selecting at least one person representing a remaining family, preferentially among the elderly. Before conducting the interviews, the Municipal Hall of Tarumã facilitated a number of meetings for us to explain the goal of the interviews, the book project, and our previous experiences. The informal environment of various coffee breaks that we had together paved the way for the interviews. I had taken part in the elaboration of the questions, but I unfortunately could not attend the interviews. Nonetheless, all interviews were filmed with the goal of elaborating a documentary in the future. Finally, we combined the content of the interviews with documents from CEDAP¹⁷ as the empirical material to elaborate the narratives presented in the book.

Two institutional repositories preserve abundant material from and about the *Riograndense Colony*: the archives of the Martius-Staden Institute and CEDAP. Much is still scattered in private archives and in personal collections. Unfortunately, there is currently no archive with a unified collection of documents relating to immigration to the region of Cruzália, Maracá, and Tarumã. A group in the Lutheran Church showed interest in organizing such archive, but the project did not move forward. From the public initiative, the compilation of the book sparked the interest of the municipality of Tarumã in setting a documentation center about immigration; however, no concrete plan has been presented to date. Certainly, there is

¹⁷ Acronym for “*Centro de Documentação e Apoio à Pesquisa*” (“Documentation and Research Support Center”), an organization of the State University of São Paulo in its campus of Assis.

still much to be researched and learned. Practically speaking, I still have many primary sources obtained during the research that I want to translate into Portuguese. These are already among my plans for the future.

Book Review

LUIZ MATEUS DA SILVA FERREIRA

DA SILVA VAROLO, Flávia Renata; RIBEIRO, Arilda Inês Miranda; FELIX, José Luis. *Trajetória educacional dos imigrantes alemães no interior do estado de São Paulo. Uma escola alemã na colônia Riograndense: 1922–1938 (Maracaí/Cfruzália- SP)*. Jundiaí: Paco Editorial, 2015, 184 p.

This book aims at depicting the educational history of German immigrants and their descendants in the *Riograndense Colony*, a rural settlement founded in 1922 between the municipalities of Maracaí and Cruzália, in the countryside of the Brazilian state of São Paulo. Following an approach based on cultural history, Flávia Varolo and co-authors conducted a very interesting research with the primary sources. They used a variety of material, including photographs, diaries, and accounts written by the pioneers who lived in the *Riograndense Colony*, as well as a number of books and booklets, registries, and memoirs of the alumni of the German school that existed in that settlement between 1925 and 1938. With minor changes, the book follows closely parts of Ms. Flávia Renata da Silva Varolo's thesis defended in the M.A. program in Education-Pedagogy at the Faculty of Sciences and Technology – State University of São Paulo (UNESP).

The book starts with a short summary of the history of German immigration to Brazil. It first outlines the main reasons that motivated millions of Germans to take the transatlantic route from the 19th to the beginning of the twentieth century. The goals and political interests of the Brazilian government in promoting the immigration of German-speakers to the country are then presented, as well as the overall relevance of these immigrants and their descendants for the development and formation of the Brazilian society. In the sequence, the book describes, also briefly, the profound transformations, ruptures, and upheavals that characterized the po-

litical history of Brazil in the first decades of the twentieth century – after a federalist Republic was proclaimed in 1889, putting an end to the centralized Empire. With this contextualization, Ms. Varolo and co-authors aim at sketching the political, military, and institutional framework that started to develop in Brazil since the military coup that began the Republican era and which, in 1938, would end up in a series of nationalistic policies leading to the final shutting down and nationalization of foreign schools in the country. The next part of the analysis focuses on the ideologies and conceptualizations about immigration held by an important parcel of the Brazilian intellectual and political elites in the nineteenth century. The prevailing view was that European immigrants constituted an instrument for “civilizing” the country; as such, promoting their immigration became a cornerstone for the Brazilian State and its public policies. From a historiographical perspective, this discussion is somewhat concise and restrict in the book, but it nonetheless provides the reader with a clear picture of prevailing contemporaneous views, in particular of the stereotyped preconception that distinguished European immigrants (defined as hardworking, creative/ingenious, and civilized) from the Brazilian *caboclos* (always qualified as lazy, indolent, and backward). It is important to notice that, at the period considered, the term *caboclo* was used in Brazil to indicate and mostly discriminate against the ordinary and usually poor Brazilian; frequently a man of colour or of mixed ethnicities, the *caboclo* was a category of social classification that allegedly indicated their socio-cultural and “ethno-racial” inferiority to European immigrants and their descendants.

In spite of important uncertainties regarding the accuracy of the data, estimates suggest that between 230 and 260 thousand German-speaking immigrants arrived in Brazil in the period 1824–1945. In their majority, those were immigrant households – much more frequent than individual immigrants –, composed mainly of agricultural laborers, small businessmen,

merchants, and village craftsmen and artisans. Most of them left their regions of origin due to poverty (be it rural or urban), expectation of economic gains in Brazil, and, to a smaller scale, due to wars and political persecutions. The most frequent form of settlement was the formation of small rural nuclei founded by the central or provincial authorities or by private companies and land sellers, which were particularly important in the Brazilian provinces/states of Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul, Paraná, Espírito Santo, and São Paulo. More frequently than not, these immigrant households attempted to maintain their cultural heritage by preserving their language, lifestyle, and habits. Ms. Varolo and co-authors show that the *Riograndense Colony* was no exception in that regard.

In short, the official discourse of Brazilian authorities responsible for land settlements in the nineteenth century aimed at attracting European immigrants, preferably those from German-speaking regions. This was justified for those immigrants' alleged "innate" "aptitude to work in agriculture and industry; [due to] their practical and conservative spirit, their love for hard work, family, sobriety, resignation, respect to the authorities – virtues that distinguish them from colonists of other origins", as put in 1846 by the Brazilian diplomat Miguel Calmon du Pin e Almeida, the Viscount of Abrantes¹⁸. The eminent and prestigious Brazilian General Consul in the German Hanseatic States and Free Cities, Luís Peixoto de Lacerda Werneck, expressed a similar opinion. In 1865, he remarked: "the German is sober, economical, peaceful and hardworking. [...] To these virtues, he adds patience and moderation. His sources of enjoyment and amusement are moderate and methodical"¹⁹. Such conceptions predominated among and guided an influential parcel of the Brazilian political elite and intelligentsia in defending and promoting the German immigration to Brazil. Although such perceptions were marginally discussed in the

¹⁸ Free translation from the original in Portuguese.

¹⁹ Free translation from the original in Portuguese.

book, I believe that these points need to be further assessed and stressed. This is so not only because such views matter for our general understanding of the history of German immigration to Brazil, but also (and primarily) for comprehending the influence that such perceptions had on the emergence and consolidation of a feeling of double belonging in terms of nationality and ethnicity among German-speakers in Brazil, which is a theme of central importance for the book. Over time, this feeling of double belonging gave rise to the concept (politically abused, at times) of the *Deutsch-Brasilianer* (German-Brazilian).

The formulation and legitimization of an alleged “German-Brazilian ethnicity” was based on the concept of *Deutschtum* (“Germaness”), *i.e.* on the myth and belief in a common ethnical and cultural origin. The degree of intensity, use, and abuse of such concept in the political arena augmented in the course of the nineteenth century and became particularly important after the Unification of the German Empire in 1871. A number of community-based institutions in the German colonies in Brazil helped to spread and to strengthen this belief and the resulting feeling of belonging to one single German ethnicity among immigrants and their descendants. Prominent among these were the school, the church (mostly Lutheran), recreational and artistic associations, the press, and forms of public cultural-civic manifestations. The German school always played a central role in preserving the German language and in strengthening a common culture among immigrants by teaching German history and culture.

This “Germaness” of the German-speakers and their descendants, however, soon collided with the new nationalist ideals of the First Brazilian Republic (1889–1930), which demanded the assimilation of the German-Brazilians to a “Brazilian” culture. As this theme sets much of the stage for the case study at hand, the reader gets the impression that such debate could be improved in an eventual second edition of the book, both in his-

toriological and in social-political discussions – including comparative analyses between the region being studied and other German communities in Brazil and in Latin America more broadly.

The book could also have provided a more in-depth analysis of the propaganda about Brazil that circulated in Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Concomitant to the goal of the Brazilian government to promote the immigration of German-speakers was an increased interest and the mass outflows of German-speakers from their regions of origin. These combined forces stimulated the publication of various books, booklets, leaflets, magazines, guides, and brochures about destination countries in various German-speaking regions of Central Europe. Moreover, a number of periodicals were exclusively dedicated to the theme of emigration, including, but not limited to, *Der Kolonist*, *Allgemeine Auswanderungs-Zeitung*, and the *Deutsche Auswanderer-Zeitung*. For a long time, such periodicals served also the purpose of disseminating news and advertisements about Brazil in Europe. Ms. Varolo and co-authors correctly point out to the frequently biased (and at times misleading) propaganda contained in many of these publications, which announced Brazil as a promised land, where a family could harvest many times per year due to a pleasant climate and extraordinarily fertile soils. The authors show with primary sources that the *Riograndense Colony* was advertised in Europe in the 1920s as a “purely German” region, as a locality in “full blossoming”, located in the “most fertile of the [Brazilian] regions”, with “insurmountably fertile [and] plain [soils], [...] with no rocks” that offered the “best guarantees for a secure development and a tranquil future” for German immigrants and their descendants²⁰. In spite of these laudatory views, Ms. Varolo and co-authors remark the simple and important fact that nobody had yet checked the good (or bad) quality

²⁰ Free translation from the original in Portuguese.

of the soil, as most of the region of the recently founded *Riograndense Colony* was still predominantly encircled by its native and virgin forest.

There is no doubt that such advertisements contained exaggerations that can be justified only for publicity purposes. It is also unquestionable that many immigrants were enticed, deluded, and deceived by fallacious propaganda and by some hiring agents in Europe. Nonetheless, one should recall that letters of friends and family members who had already settled abroad encouraged the decision and determined the destinies of many immigrants who followed. Some of these letters were published in German newspapers, where they allegedly provided irrefutable proof for news that had only been “heard of” before. It is therefore likely that advertisements about Brazil in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century were less deceptive and misleading than they had been by the mid-nineteenth century. In this sense, it is noted that Ms. Varolo and co-authors do not present primary evidence to irrefutably prove that the pioneers of the *Riograndense Colony* had been deceived, although certain excerpts of the book’s historical narrative induce this interpretation.

Notwithstanding, this book by Ms. Varolo and co-authors holds the reader’s attention for telling the very relevant and interesting history of the *Riograndense Colony*. The book is an important case study within the broader context of the European immigration to Brazil. Historians and social scientists will certainly benefit from the detailed descriptions that the authors provide for the conceptualization of the colony and its actual settlement; the characteristics of the houses of the colonists; the difficulties faced initially by the pioneering settlers; the agro-ecological features of the soil; and the discussions about the most important religious, social, and economic features of the *Riograndense Colony*.

The book provides a detailed historical account of the foundation of the colony in 1919 by Mr. Alfredo Antunes de Oliveira and his nephew, Mr. Cu-

pertino de Oliveira Castro. Together, they organized the firm *Cupertino de Castro e Cia* with the goal of surveying and selling plots of land in *ca.* 4.840 hectares of land from the *Capivara farm*, located in the municipality of Maracaí, in the rural countryside of the state of São Paulo. This project of settlement and land selling was commissioned to the entrepreneurs Otto and Gustav Isernhagen; the latter was in charge of surveying and demarcating the plots, while the former would work in the commercialization plans. Otto Isernhagen promoted the selling of plots not only in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, but also in other regions of German settlement and colonization in Brazil. These included the states of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Espírito Santo, and São Paulo – here, prominently in the so-called *Hospedaria dos Imigrantes*, which lodged and supervised the mass arrival of immigrants to the state since the late 1880s. It is important to remark that the *Riograndense Colony* was a private project for rural settlement, *i.e.* the colonization and settlement of the locality was neither organized nor financed by the Brazilian government, as it had been the case in other localities.

The book then goes on to study the historical figure of Mr. Michael Lamb, who arrived in the *Capivara farm* with his wife, their ten children, and two brothers (each with their own families) in 1922. Descendant of German colonists first settled in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Mr. Lamb is considered the actual founder of *Riograndense Colony*, which was first circumscribed to the limits of the *Capivara farm*. The very name of the colony – *Riograndense* – alludes to the regional origins of Mr. Lamb, who supported the settling of a large number of German-Brazilian families from Rio Grande do Sul. The book discusses in a sober and clear manner how, after its foundation in 1922, the *Riograndense Colony* expanded by the initiative and leadership of Mr. Michael Lamb, to whom Ms. Varolo and co-authors give the main credits for the settlement and economic progress of the region. In this debate, the authors highlight the relevance of the

*Joint Agricultural Cooperative of the Riograndense Colony*²¹ in promoting the economic development of the region. Founded in 1929 by the initiative of brothers Michael and Gustav Lamb, the *Riograndense Cooperative* catalysed and boosted the agricultural development of the region, in particular for the cultivation and commercialization of alfalfa.

The authors hypothesize that the power of cooperativism among rural colonists of German origin rapidly transformed the *Riograndense Colony* into the largest producer of alfalfa in Brazil, highlighting that “the cultivation of alfalfa brought wealth and economic wellbeing to the colony”²². However, that crop suffered severe price reductions in the 1950s. Consequently, local producers turned to other crops, particularly to soya and wheat. Ms. Varolo and co-authors argue that such change – together with other structural modifications in the Brazilian economy – significantly altered the agricultural landscape of the colony. Gradually, the previously predominant small-scale and family-based farms gave way to large-scale farming.

Considering the varied origins of the settlers in the *Riograndense Colony*, this book gives an important contribution to the historiography on immigration, as it provides a case study for a recognizably important phenomenon that has yet been little studied: the geographic mobility of foreigners already settled in Brazil and their contact with newcomers. The *Riograndense Colony* had German-speaking households coming from Rio Grande do Sul, from other Brazilian states, and from Austria, Germany, Poland, Prussia, and Switzerland. The authors notice that these colonists spontaneously organized in a slightly segregated manner right after the foundation of the colony: German-Brazilians from Rio Grande do Sul and Espírito Santo separated from German-speakers from Europe. Moreover, there was religious division between Catholics and Protestants, although

²¹ Free translation for “*Cooperativa Agrícola Mista da Colônia Riograndense*”.

²² Free translation from the original in Portuguese.

the latter was predominant in numerical terms. Notwithstanding such differences, the German language, certain cultural traits, traditions, and common habits and customs united the settlers of the *Riograndense Colony*, which was inhabited by approximately 80 families in 1925, classified in the reports of the local church and school as families of German origin. Portuguese was barely spoken in the colony. In this regard, the authors highlight the importance of the triad German language-School-Church in creating and preserving the concept of “Germaness” in the *Riograndense Colony*. Similar to other regions settled by German immigrants, particularly after the Unification of the German Empire in 1871, the Church, in particular the Evangelical-Lutheran, meant more than a space for the exercise of religious services and spiritual relief. It was also an ambience for social interactions and exchanges that reinforced habits and traditions of the regions of origin of those colonists via practices that included common reflectance, singing, praying, and commemoration of religious-social festivities. Moreover, the links between religion and education were explicit in many cases. The clearest example is given by the fact that, for very long, the Lutheran Church served as the direct seat for the German school of the *Riograndense Colony*.

In this last regard, the book provides another interesting and new case study by turning to the educational aspects of the German immigrants and their descendants in the *Riograndense Colony*. One should point out here to the care of those immigrants with the primary education of their offspring, as well as to their capacity for social mobilization and organization to found and maintain a German school in the Brazilian rural countryside at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The book highlights the existence of 1.345 German schools in Brazil in 1931, with more than 56 thousand children enrolled in them. These impressive numbers deserve a deeper study in this review. The absolute majority of these schools (97%) and of the total number of students (90%)

were in the states that had historically received the majority of German-speaking immigrants: Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Paraná and Espírito Santo. Even more interesting is the fact that these four states plus Rio de Janeiro (the Brazilian capital at the time) and São Paulo had the highest rates of enrolment in primary education among all Brazilian states in 1930. Other recent studies have shown the existence of a strong correlation between immigration, enrolment rates in primary schooling, and educational performance in Brazil (e.g. Carvalho Filho and Colistete 2010; Kang 2010; Colistete 2016; Witzel de Souza 2019b). In future editions, the book could consider dialoguing with some of these studies. Ms. Varolo and co-authors could even explore further the qualitative effects of the German educational practices on the sociocultural and economic livelihoods in the municipalities of Cruzália, Maracaí, and neighbouring regions.

Differently from the wealthier and more affluent urban German schools, the curricular structure of German schools in the countryside was more concise, focusing on subjects that were more immediately relevant for the daily lives of the colonists, such as elementary mathematics, reading and writing in German and Portuguese, and the teaching of values and culture associated with their German origins. At the same time, the German schools in this period already played a crucial role in the insertion of German immigrants and their descendants into the Brazilian socioeconomic life. The authors stress the centrality of the German school in providing education towards the Brazilian citizenship and serving as a space of interaction and exchange between Germans and their descendants, on the one hand, and Brazilians, on the other. In fact, Ms. Varolo and co-authors show that native German-speakers were not the only students in the German school of the *Riograndense Colony*. Although numerically predominant, Germans and their descendants studied together with Brazilian “caboclos”. Moreover, the authors de-

scribe in detail the organization of the teaching concepts and materials: the teaching of Portuguese grammar and orthoepy was based primarily on textbooks, while the didactic material on biblical and cultural history, on elementary mathematics, and on Brazilian geography were edited in German. Similarly, teachers hired and maintained by the local community taught almost exclusively in German; festivities in which the school took part included typical German cultural displays; and singing classes were based on German folk songs and hymns.

It is in this context that the book discusses the figure of teacher João Troucort. According to some ex-students, that teacher was very patriotic and wished to spark and preserve the feeling of “Germaness” in the local community. It is also in this context that Ms. Varolo and co-authors mention the commemorations of May 1st in the *Riograndense Colony*, which received the support of the Nazi Party, as well as radio broadcasting in the colony of news from Germany, including the Olympic Games and discourses of Adolf Hitler.

Political ideology unquestionably influenced many German-Brazilian associations by amalgamating the concept of the “German people” as an ethnic community spread around the globe, but united by an allegedly common ancestry, language, and culture. Such idea had been supported at least since the unification of the German Empire in 1871 and was well spread in the interwar period. In 1925, for instance, the *National League of German-Brazilian Teachers* [*Landesverband deutsch-brasilianischer Lehrer*] was founded with official support from the German government and from the *Association for the Germaness Abroad* [*Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland – VDA*]. Its main goals were to organize teaching in the German schools and to advise German-Brazilian teachers in maintaining and promoting the idea of “Germaness” in Brazil. With its seizure of power, the Nazi Party reinforced the nationalist and racist ideology implicit in the concepts of “people’s community”

(*Volksgemeinschaft*) and of a “*people’s comradery*” (*Volksgenosse*), which aimed at standardizing in one single ethnic community the very diverse historical experiences of Germans and their descendants living abroad. Contemporaneous observers and recent academic studies stress, however, that the concept of “Germaness” in Brazil cannot be equated to its European counterpart; although a critical analysis is required, it would be incorrect to simply equate the activities of German-Brazilian associations with the international aspirations of the III. Reich. Taking into account the complexity and relevance of such theme for the period covered in the book, the influence (or lack thereof) of the Nazi Party on the *Riograndense Colony* certainly deserves further historical scrutiny.

Finally, cultivated among some descendants of German immigrants, the idea of being Brazilian, but simultaneously belonging to a German nation put two important national principles in a collision rout: nationality *vs.* citizenship. The principle of *nationality* and of national belonging was embedded in the concept of *jus sanguine*; it was an ethnical conception of nation, crystalized and idealized as a cultural and linguistic unity that could amalgamate different peoples sharing a common origin. The principle of *citizenship*, in turn, followed from a legal recognition of civil rights. In the Brazilian case, those rights had been recognized in the 1891 and 1936 Constitutions, which granted citizenship by the concept of *jus soli* (Seyferth 1982).

This conflict between nationality via *jus sanguine* and citizenship via *jus soli* was not a new phenomenon in the Brazilian history, characterized as it had been by various migratory waves. However, a growing nationalist movement in Brazil intensified such conflict at the beginning of the twentieth century. As discussed in the book, the government of São Paulo enacted a number of laws to nationalize elementary schools already in the early 1920s. Among others, these laws imposed the obligatory teaching of Portuguese in all schools, especially in the private ones, prohib-

ited teaching in foreign languages for children younger than 10 years old, and imposed the condition that only Brazilian teachers should teach Portuguese, History, and Geography. This process of educational nationalization was intensified and expanded at the federal level by the *Estado Novo*, the nationalist and dictatorial regime under President Getúlio Vargas, who seized power in 1930 via a *coup d'état*. The so-called *Nationalization Campaign* started in 1938 led to shutdowns of foreign schools, including a large portion of the ca. 1.300 German schools that had cultivated aspects of the German language, values, and culture. With Brazil joining the Allies in 1942, the *Nationalization Campaign* became even stronger, leading to a recrudescence of Brazilian nationalism and to a feeling of opposition to discourses related to the German-Brazilian ethnicity. Ms. Varolo and co-authors evaluate the impact of the *Nationalization Campaign* in the *Riograndense Colony* based on interviews and memories of its elderly inhabitants. The authors point to the difficulties faced by German immigrants and their descendants during World War II, including police raids and the confiscation and incineration of belongings of colonists considered suspects by Brazilian authorities. The local German school, perceived as crucial for the preservation of the *Germaness*, was shut down in 1938. “Its closure implied irreparable losses to that colony”²³, as the authors put it. Considering the illegality of teaching in German, of using the German language in public, and of holding German cultural representations of any kind after Brazil entered World War II, the language, the culture, and older traditions of the immigrants were severely impaired.

To conclude, the book “*Trajetória educacional dos imigrantes alemães no interior do estado de São Paulo. Uma escola alemã na Colônia Riograndense: 1922–1938*” focuses on the primordial role of the German school in moulding the citizenship of German immigrants and their descendants in Brazil. By approaching the object of education history via

²³ Free translation from the original in Portuguese.

the angle of cultural history, this book by Ms. Varolo and co-authors offers substantial contributions to the debates on the relationship between education and identity of immigrant groups. The book sheds light onto the cultural identity of immigrants; the organizations they established in the country of destination; their relations to public authorities; as well as their feelings of belonging. Albeit not being an explicit goal of the book, all these themes seem of great relevance to conceptualize also modern migratory policies.

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