

## Diplomacy and Brazilian Identity in History of the Americas Textbooks

Diplomacia e Brasilidade em Livros Didáticos de História da América

Diplomacia y brasilidad en los libros didácticos de historia de la América

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### ABSTRACT

With the end of World War II, UNESCO promoted a series of actions aimed at transforming the cultural dynamic based on hatred and rivalry between nations into a culture of peace and solidarity, from the perspective of international understanding. In Brazil, this period is marked by the process of rebuilding democratic society, with direct implications for the organization of the educational system. This article adopts a Textbook History perspective to analyze three textbooks on the History of the America; one by Alcindo Muniz de Souza, a second by Antônio José Borges Hermida, and a third by Ary da Matta, all published after the 1951 Curriculum Reform. It investigates the representations of diplomacy and Brazilian identity in these works and concludes that the three authors attributed to Brazil the desire to resolve conflicts through diplomacy and to maintain good relations with other nations. Regarding the textbooks' teaching methodology, the implementation of activities related to the active learning method was noticeable, although exercises based on the traditional and mnemonic method were still used.

**Keywords:** UNESCO; History Education; Textbook.

### RESUMO

Com o fim da Segunda Guerra Mundial, a UNESCO promoveu um conjunto de ações a fim de transformar a dinâmica cultural pautada no ódio e na rivalidade entre as nações em uma cultura de paz e de solidariedade, fundamentada na

compreensão internacional. No Brasil, esse período é marcado pelo processo de reconstrução da sociedade democrática, com implicações diretas para a organização do sistema de ensino. Este artigo analisa, à luz da história do livro didático, edições de História da América de Alcindo Muniz de Souza, Antônio José Borges Hermida e Ary da Matta, publicadas após a Reforma Curricular de 1951, investigando as representações de diplomacia e brasilidade nelas presentes. Conclui-se que os três autores estudados atribuíam ao Brasil o desejo de resolução dos conflitos por meio da diplomacia e a boa convivência com as nações; quanto às práticas pedagógicas, observou-se a incorporação de atividades relacionadas ao método ativo, embora permanecessem exercícios pautados no método tradicional e mnemônico.

**Palavras-chave:** UNESCO; Ensino de História; Livro Didático.

## RESUMEN

Tras el fin de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, la UNESCO impulsó una serie de acciones destinadas a transformar la dinámica cultural basada en el odio y la rivalidad entre naciones en una cultura de paz y solidaridad, desde la perspectiva del entendimiento internacional. En Brasil, este periodo se caracteriza por el proceso de reconstrucción de la sociedad democrática, con implicaciones directas para la organización del sistema educativo. El artículo analiza, desde la perspectiva de la historia del libro didáctico, manuales de Historia de América escritos por Alcindo Muniz de Souza, Antônio José Borges Hermida y Ary da Matta, publicados después de la Reforma Curricular de 1951, con el propósito de investigar las representaciones de la diplomacia y de la brasilidad presentes en dichas obras. El artículo concluye que los tres autores estudiados atribuyeron a Brasil el deseo de resolver conflictos mediante la diplomacia y de mantener buenas relaciones con otras naciones; desde el punto de vista de la metodología de enseñanza, se observó la implementación de actividades relacionadas con el método de aprendizaje activo, si bien se mantuvo ejercicios basados en el método tradicional y mnemotécnico.

**Palabras clave:** UNESCO; Educación histórica; Libro didáctico.

## Introduction

The temporal scope of this article encompasses the end of the Second World War; the establishment of the United Nations (UN), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); the Cold War; and the reconstruction of Europe. All these processes contributed to the emergence of an international political agenda for culture and education.

In Brazil (Skidmore, 1969), this period corresponds to the democratic era (1946–1964), formed by the rupture with the *Estado Novo* (1937–1945) and the

administrative centralization of secondary education introduced through the Gustavo Capanema Reform of 1942, whose guiding principles emphasized an elitist and patriotic education. This period came to an end with the 1964 civil–military coup, which immediately reshaped the educational system by reforming secondary education, strengthening technical and vocational instruction, and reinstating a moralistic and nationalist orientation in school education.

The historical context examined in this study was shaped by disputes surrounding the organization of secondary education in response to a broad range of demands, including democratization, the promotion of a culture of peace and solidarity among nations, the affirmation of human rights, and the educational challenges arising from Brazil's accelerating industrialization and urbanization.

The findings presented in this article derive from a broader investigation into UNESCO's educational initiatives, particularly its proposal of International Understanding, and their relationship with the reorganization of Brazilian secondary education during the 1950s. The study also examines how these initiatives influenced the selection of historical knowledge, methodological approaches, and the production of History textbooks.

Against this background, we investigate representations of diplomacy and Brazilian identity in History of the Americas textbooks published after the 1951 Simões Filho Curriculum Reform. Our documentary corpus comprises the editions authored by Alcindo Muniz de Souza (1952, 1954), Antônio José Borges Hermida (1953, 1961), and Ary da Matta (1953, 1954). These works enabled an analysis of the final topic included in the official curriculum — Unit X, entitled “Contemporary America” — which addressed continental solidarity and the spirit of unity among American nations promoted through the Good Neighbor Policy. This corpus allows the connection of the selected textbooks with UNESCO's textbook revision initiatives as well as with the 1951 Curriculum Reform.

Our analysis is grounded in the field of Textbook History, approaching textbooks as cultural artifacts within political, curricular, editorial, pedagogical, and aesthetic disputes. At the same time, we draw upon the instrumental dimension proposed by Choppin (2004), according to which the textbook constitutes a cultural object embedded in its social, editorial, and educational contexts, fulfilling specific functions in the production and circulation of school knowledge. From this perspective, Christophe (2019) argues that textbooks simultaneously embody curricular prescriptions and competing historical narratives. Likewise, following Chartier (2010) and Bittencourt (2011), we argue that textbook analysis should address not only textual content but also materiality, representations, pedagogical practices, and the multiple forms of appropriation through which these works acquire meaning.

Accordingly, our examination focuses on the relationship between text and materiality, considering iconography, typography, page layout, cover design, and the graphic project as constitutive dimensions in the production of meaning. We also examine the pedagogical methods and historiographical perspectives underlying each textbook, observed through the learning activities proposed and the historical

actors privileged within their narratives.

The article is organized into two sections. The first examines the relationships among History education, UNESCO's educational proposals, the 1951 Curriculum Reform, and contemporary debates on teaching methodology. The second analyzes History of the Americas textbooks by articulating textual analysis, materiality, and pedagogical approaches in order to understand the representations of diplomacy and Brazilian identity produced in these works.

## History Education in Transformation

Amid the ruins left by the Second World War —cities destroyed and millions of lives lost — an international debate emerged on how to prevent another humanitarian catastrophe. UNESCO assumed a leading role in this process, becoming a forum for politicians, diplomats, intellectuals, and scholars. Researchers working on historical culture (Laville, 1999), curriculum studies (Goodson, 2013), educational reforms (Ribeiro Junior & Martins, 2018; Pinto Junior & Ribeiro Junior, 2023; Ribeiro Junior & Bispo, 2023), and textbooks (Bittencourt, 2011; Choppin, 2020) have identified this period as a decisive turning point in the transformation of History education.

To accomplish its objectives, UNESCO organized international seminars, General Conferences, working groups, and research funding programs designed to promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation (Valderrama, 1995). The organization also disseminated its proposals through journals, books, and official publications that systematized the debates developed during these meetings, while simultaneously establishing an administrative structure to assist member states in implementing educational reforms.

The London Conference, held in 1945<sup>1</sup>, established the fundamental principles of this international agenda. Its Constitution affirmed the commitment to “ensure universal respect for justice, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms recognized by the Charter of the United Nations for all peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language, or religion” (Rodrigues, 2006, p. 167).<sup>2</sup> This statement reflects the emergence of an international educational agenda aimed at combating racism and excessively nationalist historical narratives while promoting peace and solidarity among nations.

In 1949, UNESCO published *A Handbook for the Improvement of Textbooks and Teaching Materials*, the outcome of work carried out between 1947 and 1948. The handbook proposed a framework for textbook evaluation<sup>3</sup> by establishing principles and criteria to guide member states in revising educational materials. Drawing upon Duedahl's (2020) analysis, it is possible to understand this publication as part of a broader strategy that laid the foundations for three international seminars held simultaneously in 1949. These meetings addressed the concept of race, the writing of history — criticizing its excessive emphasis on political and military events — and History teaching itself. Their outcomes demonstrate UNESCO's capacity to disseminate these debates internationally, influencing curriculum reforms in forty-two national education systems.

According to Ribeiro Junior (2008), drawing on statistical data produced by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), Brazilian secondary education experienced remarkable expansion between the 1930s and the 1960s. Student enrolment increased by nearly 500 percent, creating new demands upon the educational system as previously excluded social groups associated with Brazil's urban and industrial development entered secondary schools (Spósito, 1984). As Ribeiro Junior argues, secondary education was expected simultaneously to educate the country's ruling elites and to respond to the aspirations of these new social groups seeking access to formal schooling (Souza, 2009; Braghini, 2005).

Ribeiro Junior (2008) identifies two distinct phases in the administrative organization of Brazilian secondary education between 1946 and 1961. The first began with the Gustavo Capanema Reform of 1942 until the implementation of the 1951 Curriculum Reform, while the second began with the latter and ended with the enactment of the *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (National Education Guidelines and Framework Law) in 1961. The first phase preserved the centralized educational model established during the *Estado Novo*. By contrast, the 1951 Reform introduced a more democratic and decentralized administrative structure that emphasized the autonomy of Brazil's federative units in educational governance.

The implementation of the 1951 Reform emerged from intense political and educational debates that substantially shaped its final configuration, as demonstrated by Ribeiro Junior and Martins (2018). The reform may be understood as part of a broader process of social regulation that contributed to the production of competing regimes of truth within Brazil's sociocultural disputes. Its advocates justified the reform through a rhetoric of national development grounded in the relationship between urban-industrial growth and the aspirations for upward social mobility among sectors of the urban middle class. From this perspective, educational reform represented an essential component of the government's project of modernization.

The drafting of the 1951 Reform also involved complex negotiations and the central participation of members of the Congregação do Colégio Pedro II (CCPII), who occupied leading positions within the institutions responsible for curriculum development, including the Conselho Nacional de Educação – CNE (National Education Council) and the National Directorate of Secondary Education, as demonstrated by Ribeiro Junior and Martins (2018). Consequently, the reform was implemented through a series of ministerial ordinances issued throughout 1951<sup>4</sup>.

Among its most significant innovations was the reversal of the curricular logic established under the Gustavo Capanema Reform. Rather than progressing from World History toward Brazilian History, the new curriculum did the opposite, beginning with Brazil before expanding to broader international contexts. This change was formally consolidated through Law No. 1,359, which reorganized the sequence of History instruction at the lower and upper secondary levels. As an autonomous subject introduced in the second year of lower secondary education, History of the Americas incorporated into the curriculum new international perspectives that emphasized continental diversity and closer relations among the peoples of the Americas.

According to Dias (1997), the establishment of History of the Americas as a school subject in the Brazilian curriculum resulted from the adaptation of sections previously included in a broader syllabus for the teaching of the History of Civilizations. The author highlights factors external to school culture — particularly Pan-Americanism and educational reforms — that directly influenced the creation of the discipline. Its primary objective was to strengthen a sense of continental identity under the leadership of the United States while simultaneously projecting an image of Brazil aligned with the values of progress, civilization, and modernity.

The curricular reforms introduced in Brazil during the early 1950s responded both to the country's process of redemocratization and to educational transformations circulating internationally. This context encouraged the incorporation of new conceptions of History education intended to reshape global political culture, in which International Understanding and the struggle against racism became fundamental educational principles (Pinto Junior & Ribeiro Junior, 2023).

As argued by Ferraz-Lorenzo and Machado-Trujillo (2020), the transnational debate (Vera & Fuchs, 2021) that intensified after the Second World War influenced not only curriculum design but also the production of teaching materials. Drawing upon Dias' (1997) analysis of History of the Americas textbooks, Vianna (2020) argues that Brazil came to occupy a privileged position in relation to its Spanish American neighbors because it was portrayed as following the example established by the United States. The nationalist perspective conveyed by these textbooks legitimized itself by situating Brazil in relation to the other American nations, thereby constructing an image of a harmonious and conciliatory national identity. In Vianna's interpretation, this conception — identified as Pan-Americanism — not only reinforced Brazil's political dependence upon the United States but also served as one of the central foundations of Brazilian nationalism.

Pinto Junior and Ribeiro Junior (2023), however, argue that this redefinition of nationalism was directly associated with the denunciation of the historical injustices committed during the Second World War. This process made it possible to challenge excessively nationalist and militaristic historical cultures at both the transnational and national levels. One of the main figures responsible for disseminating these ideas in Brazil was Vicente Tapajós (1951), through articles published in the journal *Atualidades Pedagógicas*, issued by Companhia Editora Nacional (CEN).

According to the authors, Tapajós sought to promote an epistemological transformation in school education by encouraging the development of new worldviews and new forms of identification and belonging — in other words, a new conception of nationalism that criticized “[...] patriotic and moral concepts, as well as the racism printed in textbooks produced in previous years [...]” (Pinto Junior & Ribeiro Junior, 2023, p. 16).<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the 1951 Curriculum Reform, which reorganized school subjects and the curricular sequence, the *Campanha do Livro Didático e Manual de Ensino* (CALDEME) was established in 1952 under the leadership of Gustavo Sá Lessa and linked to the Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos – INEP (National Institute for Educational Studies). According to Vianna (2020, p. 116)<sup>6</sup>, its central objective was to

question “[...] curricula, books, methods, and teaching content [...]” in accordance with UNESCO's educational recommendations. As the author explains, under the direction of Anísio Teixeira<sup>7</sup>, then head of the Institute, teaching manuals were produced in recognition of the urgent need to improve teacher education during a period of rapid educational expansion.

The appointment of specialists responsible for reviewing textbooks in each disciplinary field was only completed in 1954. Guy de Hollanda was selected to oversee the evaluation of History textbooks, as described by Vianna (2020). In 1957, through the Centro Brasileiro de Pesquisas Educacionais – CBPE (Brazilian Center for Educational Research), Hollanda published a study<sup>8</sup> that critically engaged with the international debate while denouncing the aggressive nationalisms and unfavorable stereotypes directed toward other peoples<sup>9</sup> that remained present in Brazilian History textbooks, characterizing these as a legacy of the *Estado Novo*.

With specific regard to History of the Americas textbooks, Vianna (2020) argues that much of the material previously developed for the teaching of the History of Civilizations was revised and incorporated into the new editions. Based on these observations, the author characterizes the work of the Comissão Nacional do Livro Didático – CNLD (National Textbook Commission) as controversial. Our interpretation, however, differs from Vianna's. We argue that the incorporation of material from earlier History of Civilizations textbooks into new History of the Americas textbooks does not automatically imply the reproduction of the same historical representations. Instead, these works had to be adapted to the transnational educational agenda and to the principles established by the 1951 Curriculum Reform, thereby distancing themselves from the triumphalist and authoritarian nationalism that had characterized previous decades.

The intensification of educational debates following the 1951 Curriculum Reform reinforced the questioning of long-established assumptions regarding History education. During this period, multiple pedagogical perspectives — including liberal, conservative, authoritarian, technicist, and popular approaches — competed to define the educational project of a modern Brazilian nation. As Bernardes (2010) argues, these debates placed a patriotic and right-wing conception of nationalism in opposition to an educational perspective grounded in international proposals for intellectual cooperation and the promotion of peace.

In his analysis of pedagogical debates published in Brazilian educational journals after the *Estado Novo*, Bernardes (2010) identifies an increasing polarization between two major educational currents. On one side stood the advocates of the *Escola Nova* movement, who defended the modernization of teaching through the adoption of the active learning method, emphasizing students' active participation in the learning process and the connection of school subjects to their everyday experiences. On the other side were defenders of traditional teaching methods, largely associated with the Catholic educational movement, who regarded the memorization of historical content as an essential instrument for transmitting patriotic and nationalist narratives. Within this context, Souza (2009) argues that the final struggles over a humanistic conception of secondary education were fought through the educational project advanced by the Catholic movement.

Bernardes (2010) ultimately poses a central question: what should a good history lesson contain? In addressing this issue, he argues that the 1951 Curriculum Reform promoted a modern pedagogical approach based on the active learning method. According to the author, two educational journals played a particularly important role in disseminating these ideas: *Escola Secundária*, published by the *Campanha de Aperfeiçoamento e Difusão do Ensino Secundário* (CADES), and *Revista de Pedagogia*, published by the History Department of the School of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters at the University of São Paulo (FFCL/USP). Both journals proposed teaching practices intended to overcome the mnemonic tradition that had long characterized History education in Brazil.

Our analysis indicates that, in line with UNESCO's broader educational renewal project, periodicals associated with national educational campaigns — particularly those published by CADES — also embraced pedagogical innovation in materials designed for teacher education. In doing so, they contributed to disseminating the active learning method beyond the sphere of curriculum reform, extending its influence to teacher preparation and the everyday practices of History teaching.

## History Textbooks of the Americas

According to Munakata (2012), scholarly research on textbooks in Brazil expanded significantly only after the publication of Bittencourt's (1993) doctoral dissertation. Her study conceptualized the textbook as an educational public policy instrument, emphasizing its particular characteristics as a product of school culture and as a constitutive element of school knowledge. Munakata further argues that the materiality of textbooks cannot be understood independently of the concrete social relations embedded in their production, circulation, and educational use.

In a similar vein, Chartier (2010) argues that both the transitive and reflexive dimensions of representation must be considered in order to understand not only what a text represents but also the authority through which it produces and legitimizes particular representations. From this perspective, the power of written and spoken texts is inseparable from the mental categories through which individuals form structures of interpretation and judgment. Consequently, attention must be paid to the meanings produced through diverse forms of reading and appropriation, since these are connected to the aesthetic experiences of particular societies and become inscribed in the discourses and practices of the social world. Finally, texts must be situated simultaneously within their synchronic contexts of production and their diachronic historical development.

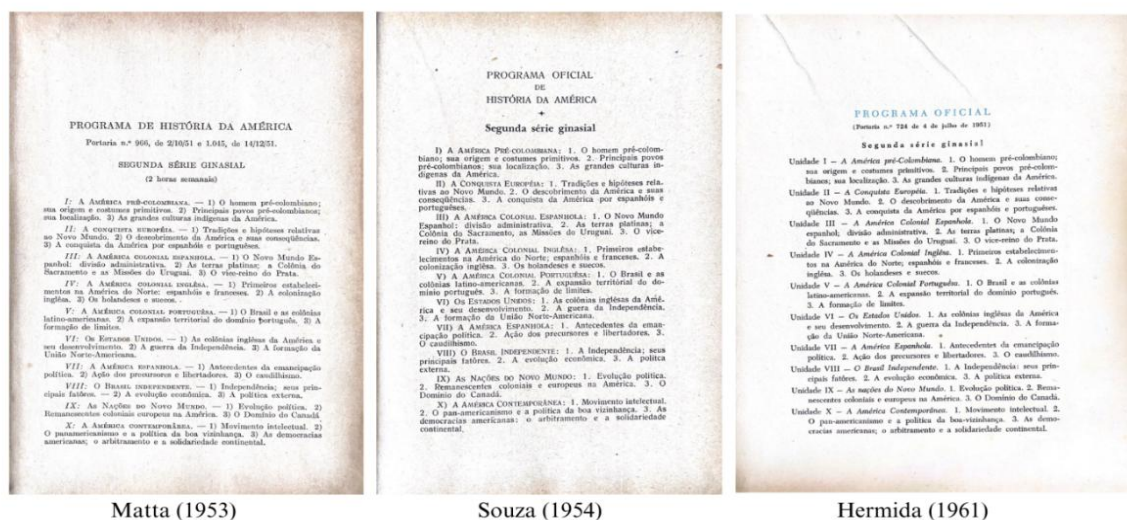
According to Bittencourt (2011), research conducted since the beginning of the twenty-first century has increasingly examined textbooks beyond their written content, recognizing that greater analytical value lies in understanding how these works are interpreted and appropriated. Drawing upon the fields of book history and reading history, the author emphasizes the concept of authorship, according to which textbooks are the result of the work of multiple agents involved in their production and circulation rather than the exclusive product of the individuals whose names appear on their covers.

Choppin (2004) argues that textbooks are not merely mirrors of society but also

screens upon which an idealized, simplified, and often distorted vision of reality is projected. In doing so, they silence certain experiences while privileging others in order to construct a representation consistent with socially established moral values. Consequently, textbook research requires attention not only to historical content but also to pedagogical methods, political participation, and the broader historical context within which these works were produced.

Returning to our research problem, this article seeks to understand the conceptions of diplomacy and Brazilian identity that underpin the interpretations advanced by the authors of the selected textbooks, all of whom situated Brazil within the context of Contemporary America between 1952 and 1961. By Brazilian identity, we refer to the ways in which these authors constructed a distinctive national character through representations of historical actors portrayed as embodying a sense of belonging to Brazil.

**Figure 1** - Official curriculum in textbooks published by Companhia Editora Nacional



**Source:** Matta, 1954, p. 9; Souza, 1954, p. 9; Hermida, 1961, p. 13.

As shown in Figure 1, Unit X is organized into three thematic sections. The first addresses the intellectual movement, the second examines Pan-Americanism and the Good Neighbor Policy, and the third discusses the American democracies, arbitration, and continental solidarity. Compared with the other topics included in the official curriculum, this unit is the one most directly aligned with the promotion of International Understanding among the nations of the American continent, in accordance with UNESCO's educational agenda. At the same time, because of its thematic focus, it provides an especially valuable basis for comparing the representations of Brazilian historical actors with those associated with neighboring countries, since these identities are constructed relationally throughout the narrative.

When considering the readership for whom these textbooks were intended, two aspects must be considered. First, as previously discussed, the rapid expansion of Brazilian secondary education substantially increased the number of students entering schools, particularly from urban sectors of society, thereby generating

growing demand for textbooks. Second, the intense curricular disputes of the period contributed to the formation of teachers committed to different educational and political perspectives, creating a market for textbooks that reflected diverse pedagogical orientations.

Within this context of educational expansion and ideological dispute, textbooks also functioned as commercial products. To achieve commercial success, they needed simultaneously to satisfy the expectations of teachers and students and comply with the curricular requirements established by educational legislation and textbook evaluation bodies. These circumstances point to a heterogeneous readership composed of teachers and students participating in the multiple processes of educational expansion and curriculum reform that characterized Brazilian secondary education during the period.

Among the textbooks selected for this study, those authored by Alcindo Muniz de Souza<sup>10</sup>, published by Companhia Editora Nacional in 1952 and 1954, deserve particular attention. Spanning approximately ten pages in both editions, these chapters consistently portray Brazilian diplomacy as the expression of a national identity grounded in conflict mediation and the promotion of peaceful coexistence among the nations of the Americas. Souza states that “Brazil’s traditional pacifist tendency is expressed in the nation’s own Constitution” (Souza, 1954, p. 178)<sup>11</sup>, right before presenting the Baron of Rio Branco as the main embodiment of this national tradition: “The great Brazilian Baron of Rio Branco, although a monarchist, rendered such notable services to the homeland even after the proclamation of the Republic” (Souza, 1954, p. 178).<sup>12</sup>

When discussing Rio Branco's achievements, Souza emphasizes his role in Brazil's relations with the United States while expressing admiration for the American political model, presented throughout the chapter as a reference for democracy. Within this narrative, the countries of Latin America receive recognition primarily for their contributions to the Fine Arts. By contrast, the discussion of literature remains largely restricted to Brazilian literary movements and intellectuals — exclusively male — while references to the literary production of other American nations are comparatively brief.

Although Souza's textbooks incorporate a larger number of historical documents and visual illustrations than the other works examined in this study, their pedagogical organization remains firmly rooted in a traditional and mnemonic conception of History teaching. Historical agency is concentrated in a limited number of prominent male figures who are portrayed as embodying the aspirations of the Brazilian nation. Overall, the work reflects a conservative educational perspective characterized by a hierarchical historical narrative designed to reinforce the interests of the national elite. Political leaders and members of the ruling classes — including Rio Branco, José Bonifácio, and other influential Brazilian politicians and intellectuals — occupy the central position within the historical account. Consequently, Brazil is consistently represented as occupying a superior position in relation to the other American nations, receiving substantially greater attention than its continental neighbors.

**Figure 2** - Detail of the cover illustration of Souza's textbook published by Companhia Editora Nacional (CEN), 1954



Source: Souza, 1954.

The iconographic program adopted in Souza's textbook is entirely consistent with the model of Brazilian identity developed throughout the written narrative, as it visually evokes both the civilizational development of the American continent and the notion of moral disarmament. The cover features an illustration composed of nine human figures extending continuously from the back cover to the front cover. As shown in Figure 2, the illustrator places an Indigenous figure at the beginning of the sequence, representing the earliest and least developed stage of civilization, while the contemporary man — the only figure depicted without a weapon — appears at the end of the procession, symbolizing the highest stage of human development.

This iconographic composition functions as far more than a decorative illustration. Rather, it constitutes an integral component of the textbook's production of meaning by visually reinforcing the representations of Brazilian diplomacy articulated throughout the written narrative. The cover legitimizes values of conciliation, peaceful coexistence, and political leadership that the text attributes to Brazil within the American continent.

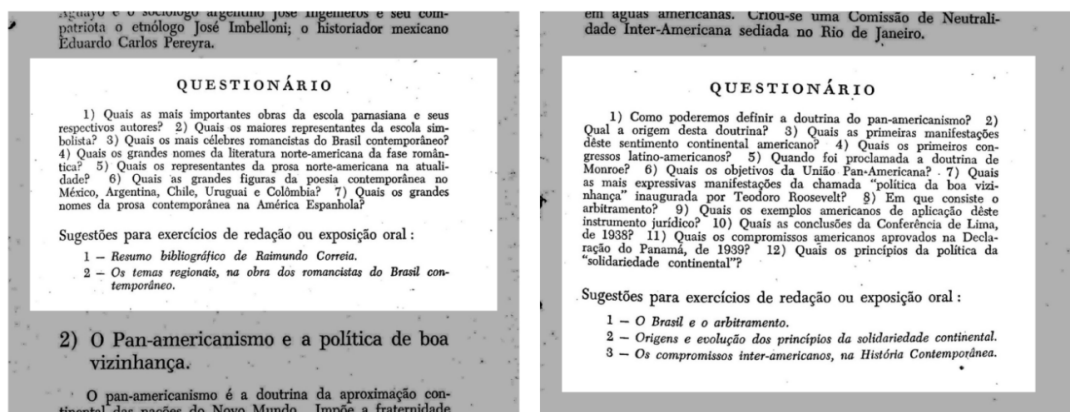
Therefore, we argue that Souza's textbook creates a conception of Brazilian identity fundamentally grounded in diplomacy. Within this interpretative framework, Brazil is assigned a leading role in promoting cooperation among the American nations through peaceful conflict mediation. Diplomacy thus ceases to function merely as one topic within the teaching of History of the Americas and instead becomes the organizing principle through which the textbook constructs a pedagogical narrative concerning Brazil's place within the continent.

Ary da Matta<sup>13</sup>, whose *História da America* textbooks were published by Companhia Editora Nacional in 1953 and 1954, develops a conception of Brazilian identity that likewise assigns a central role to cordial diplomacy and Brazil's capacity to mediate international conflicts. Nevertheless, important differences distinguish the two editions examined. The 1953 edition contains neither learning activities nor historical documents, references, or illustrations, relying almost exclusively on expository narrative. In contrast, the 1954 edition incorporates pedagogical activities that substantially expand the didactic dimension of the chapter.

This revision suggests an effort to align the textbook with the educational debates of the period by promoting greater student engagement with historical knowledge. Particularly noteworthy is the inclusion of learning assessment activities designed to evaluate students' understanding of the topics discussed throughout the

unit, as illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3** - Learning activities proposed in Matta's textbook published by Companhia Editora Nacional (1954)



**Source:** Matta, 1954, p. 167 e 173.

This questionnaire differs from those found in the other editions analyzed because it proposes written compositions and oral presentations rather than exclusively mnemonic exercises. The chapter, however, includes no documentary sources to support its interpretations and historical claims, and it is substantially shorter than the corresponding chapters written by the other authors. Although the work remains predominantly expository, the inclusion of learning assessment activities represents an important shift in its didactic organization, bringing it into closer alignment with the pedagogical orientations that were gaining prominence during the 1950s.

Although Matta's conception of Brazilian identity also places diplomacy at the center of national identity, he structures his narrative differently from Souza by devoting considerably greater attention to the countries of Spanish America and to their cultural contributions to the continent. Nevertheless, his main focus remains Brazil's ability to mediate international conflicts, a characteristic embodied by historical figures such as Joaquim Nabuco, the Baron of Rio Branco, and Rui Barbosa:

In 1906, the Third Conference met, with Joaquim Nabuco taking part. Its conclusions were adopted in Brazil by the Baron of Rio Branco, who guided our foreign policy according to the principles that had always inspired Brazil and that, from then on, came to be adopted by the American countries [...] Arbitration is one of the traditions of Brazilian foreign policy [...] The republican constitutions of Brazil (1891, 1943, 1946) include provisions recommending the use of arbitration in all matters of foreign policy. It was in this spirit that Rui Barbosa, our representative at the Second International Peace Conference at The Hague (1907), defended the principle of arbitration as a mandatory means of resolving international conflicts (Matta, 1954, pp. 169–171).<sup>14</sup>

Matta examines the countries of Spanish America in greater depth, highlighting their literary movements, historical achievements, and contributions to the development of an American spirit founded upon arbitration and continental

cooperation. His 1954 edition is also noteworthy for being the first among the textbooks analyzed to acknowledge women writers within American literature, including Harriet Beecher Stowe, Margaret Mitchell, and Gabriela Mistral (Matta, 1954, pp. 165–166). Regarding Spanish American literature, the author praises both the pace of its production and the quality of its texts, demonstrating a certain affinity with Americanism by including other nations, unlike Souza.

His textbook simultaneously celebrates Brazil's role within the Pan-American Alliance and the historical experiences of the remaining American nations, emphasizing both their particularities and their shared characteristics. The continent is thus conceived as a common historical space. Within this framework, Brazilian identity no longer rests exclusively upon the notion of Brazilian exceptionalism; instead, it becomes part of a broader horizon of continental belonging, in which different national experiences collectively contribute to the formation of a shared American spirit. This perspective is already evident in the opening paragraph of the unit, where Matta explicitly identifies American literature as possessing a distinctive style and literary tradition unique to the continent:

The contribution of the Americas to the history of world literature is one of the most significant [...] Although created under the influence of extra-American currents, this literature acquired a character of its own, distinctly American not only in its locally inspired themes, linked therefore to American life, but also in the modification of literary genres and styles, transformed by new resources and by the American spirit (Matta, 1954, p. 164).<sup>15</sup>

Among the authors examined in this study, Matta's attention was most evenly divided between the United States and its democracy and neighboring Latin American countries, the latter of which, in his interpretation, also contributed to the development of Pan-American thought. His conception of citizenship emphasizes peace and cooperation among the cultures of the Americas, highlighting throughout the chapter the diplomatic settlements and arbitration efforts carried out by Brazilian, Latin American, and North American political figures.

As a defender of continental unity, Matta argues that the common problems and shared characteristics of the American peoples should be addressed through congresses, conferences, and other forms of international cooperation among the nations of the hemisphere. The results of our analysis indicate that Matta constructs a conception of Brazilian identity that is simultaneously national and continental. His narrative associates cooperation among American nations with the construction of a shared identity, preserving Brazil's leading role without reducing the historical experience of the Americas to the Brazilian case alone.

Finally, the works of Antônio José Borges Hermida<sup>16</sup>, published by Editora do Brasil S/A in 1953 and by Companhia Editora Nacional in 1961, also reveal an appreciation of Brazilian diplomacy. In Hermida's case, however, this representation is more explicitly articulated with the American democratic model and with proposals for pedagogical renewal. Rather than merely reaffirming Brazil's diplomatic prominence, Hermida uses these references to bring the historical narrative closer to a project of civic education aligned with the inter-American democratic values forged in the post-war period. Hermida likewise invokes the Baron of Rio Branco to embody

the aspirations of the nation: "Brazil owes to the Baron of Rio Branco the settlement of its borders with the neighboring republic" (Hermida, 1953, p. 234), a statement retained in the subsequent edition.

The national identity conveyed through the iconographic selection adopted in the 1961 edition includes Brazilian male figures such as Machado de Assis, Monteiro Lobato, the Baron of Rio Branco, Eurico Gaspar Dutra, Juscelino Kubitschek, and Jânio Quadros. In the same edition, a vignette depicting the façade of the Palácio da Alvorada in the recently inaugurated city of Brasília appears in the middle of the chapter, underscoring the textbook's commitment to democratic values and to the celebration of the Brazilian nation. This iconographic selection reveals a representation of Brazilian identity that extends beyond diplomacy by incorporating political, literary, and architectural references that associate national development with the modernization of the democratic state.

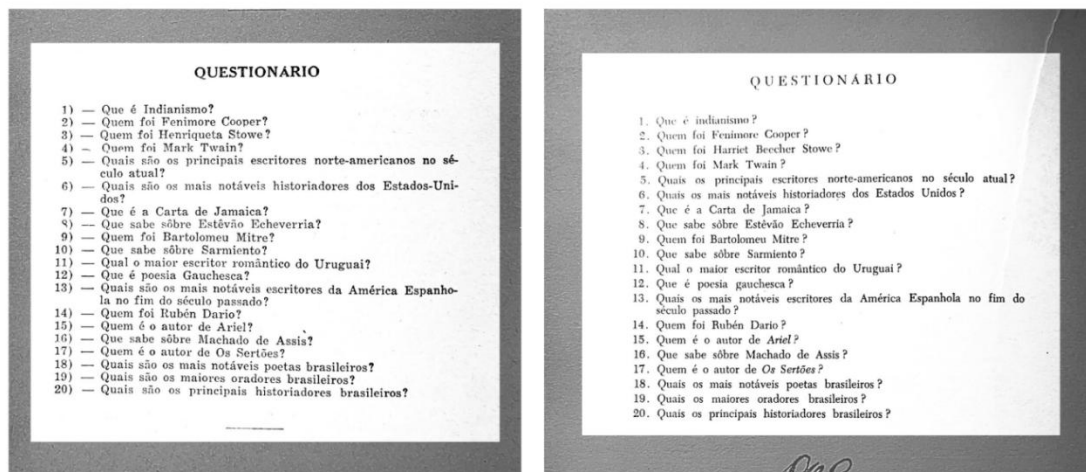
As Brauna (2013) observes, Hermida's historical thought was shaped by nationalism and a linear positivist historiography that reproduced dichotomies between the savage and the civilized. His approach allows us to understand this diplomatic and cooperative representation as a natural extension of a cohesive and consensual national identity, aligned with the typically modern regime of historicity described by Bevernage (2018).

According to Brauna (2013), the foundations of Hermida's historical interpretation can be traced to Capistrano de Abreu and Hélio Vianna, whose historiographical perspective understood the formation of Brazil through a classical interpretative framework. Within this tradition, the organization and development of Brazilian society are explained primarily through the contributions of prestigious male figures.

In historical studies, the illustrious names are Capistrano de Abreu, Varnhagen, Rocha Pombo, and the Baron of Rio Branco. The first, regarded by many authors as Brazil's greatest historian, wrote *Capítulos de História Colonial* [...] Brazil owes to the Baron of Rio Branco the settlement of its borders with the neighboring republics (Hermida, 1961, p. 196).<sup>17</sup>

This emphasis, besides reinforcing Hermida's traditional approach to History teaching, relegates other historical experiences and social conflicts to the background, making it more difficult to challenge his homogeneous representation of Brazilian identity. Hermida's pedagogical thought is grounded in the view that the teaching of History should prioritize the memorization of historical facts. The activities included in the 1953 and 1961 editions maintain almost exactly the same content, focusing students' attention on the historical achievements of particular individuals regarded as the "most notable," "greatest," and "principal," as illustrated in Figure 4.

His conception of Brazilian identity is likewise founded upon the same values of conciliation discussed in the previous textbooks, demonstrating clear alignment with the transnational educational debates of the period. At the same time, among all the authors examined in this study, Hermida is the one who places the greatest emphasis on American democracy and foreign policy, without entirely overlooking the achievements of Spanish American societies. This emphasis reflects the leadership assumed by the United States within the Americas during the post-war period.

ISSN: 1984-6444 | <http://dx.doi.org/10.5902/1984644495880>**Figure 4** - Learning activities in Hermida's textbooks published in 1953 and 1961.**Source:** Hermida, 1953, p. 236; Hermida, 1961, p. 198.

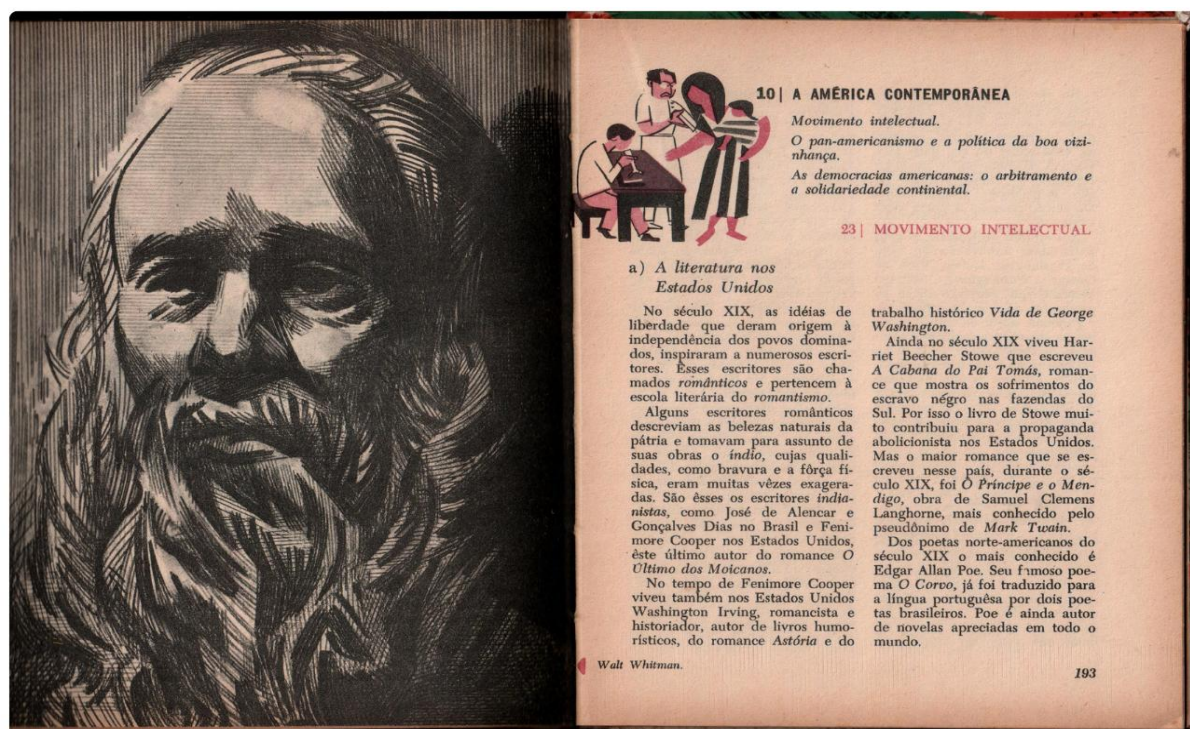
The persistence of this mnemonic pedagogical approach reveals that, although Hermida's textbook engages with proposals for pedagogical renewal through the incorporation of illustrations and other teaching resources, it preserves a traditional conception of learning grounded in attributing great value to exemplary historical figures.

When discussing the American democracies and the intellectual movement throughout the nations of the continent, the United States occupies a privileged position. Hermida expresses this view in the following terms: "Thus, the great republic of the North, being the most powerful nation, assumed the responsibility of protecting the Continent" (Hermida, 1953, p. 237).<sup>18</sup> The author clearly aligns himself with the political and economic perspectives of the United States by attributing, for example, a central role to the Monroe Doctrine in the development and implementation of continental solidarity. This position brings his interpretation into close alignment with the political assumptions that informed Pan-Americanism during the early Cold War.

In a document reproduced by Hermida (1953, p. 249; 1961, p. 209), authored by André Maurois and devoted to the History of the United States, the country's development is praised as the most rapid ever witnessed. According to the text, this unprecedented development enabled the United States to emerge as a world power and as a refuge for oppressed peoples from across the globe. Hermida's textbook also includes an illustration of the American poet Walt Whitman at the beginning of the final unit of the 1961 edition, as shown in Figure 5.

This editorial choice indicates not only the admiration of prominent Brazilian figures but also the celebration of distinguished American figures, thereby reinforcing the privileged position attributed to the United States within the conception of continental identity advanced by the textbook.

**Figure 5** - Opening of the final unit in Hermida's 1961 edition published by Companhia Editora Nacional



Source: Hermida, 1961, p. 192-193.

For Hermida, continental solidarity should take the American democratic model and its conceptions of civility and citizenship as its main point of reference. Despite this emphatic defense, the author also acknowledges the contributions and pioneering role of Spanish American figures such as Sarmiento and Bolívar in the development of a vision of continental unity, although these contributions are discussed only briefly. By articulating nationalism and Americanism, Hermida moves diplomacy beyond the realm of historical narrative and incorporates it into a pedagogical project intended to educate students according to the ideals of continental cooperation, democracy, and civic responsibility disseminated during the period.

Although the texts and learning activities underwent no substantial changes between the editions examined, the version published by Hermida in 1961 introduced significant material and iconographic modifications, as well as a distinct visual identity with the work of the Austrian graphic designer Eugênio Hirsch, as demonstrated by Moraes (2018). A comparison between the covers designed for Hermida and Souza reveals important differences. Whereas the 1961 edition of Hermida's textbook presents Mesoamerican figures rendered through strong chromatic contrasts characteristic of the expressionist style employed throughout the work, Souza's 1954 edition conveys a markedly colonialist conception by highlighting the figures responsible for the civilizing process in the Americas, beginning with the Indigenous inhabitant and culminating in the contemporary man, as illustrated in Figure 6.

**Figure 6** - Covers of the textbooks by Alcindo Muniz de Souza and Antônio José Borges Hermida published by Companhia Editora Nacional and Editora do Brasil S/A

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**Source:** Souza, 1952; Souza, 1954; Hermida, 1953; Hermida, 1961.

This graphic redesign does not constitute merely an aesthetic change; it expands the meanings produced by the textbook by integrating editorial design, historical narrative, and visual language. The representation of Brazilian identity connects the ideals of national modernization with cultural elements of continental integration, evoking an Indigenous past shared by the American nations. This representation of the civilizing process can be seen more clearly in Souza's work through the figures arranged in sequence, but it is incorporated more comprehensively into Hermida's edition, whose graphic design develops the visual construction of a continental identity throughout the textbook.

Among the authors examined in this study, Alcindo Muniz de Souza presents the most overtly nationalist conception of patriotism, downplaying extra-national history while emphasizing the achievements of Brazilian historical figures. Ary da Matta, in contrast, develops a more balanced relationship between nationalism and Americanism by highlighting the contributions of Brazilian, Spanish American, and North American figures to themes such as continental unity, literature, and arbitration, without attributing excessive prominence to the United States. Antônio José Borges Hermida, in turn, assigns greater emphasis to the United States within the themes addressed, while also acknowledging the contributions of Brazilian historical figures, thereby synthesizing a perspective more closely aligned with the American democratic model.

Nevertheless, all three authors engage with the transnational agenda. Although

their differing perspectives may be understood as individual interpretative choices, they may also have functioned as editorial strategies aimed at reaching different readerships. Rather than merely reproducing curricular guidelines, each author mobilizes diplomacy, in his own way, as a central element in the construction of representations of Brazilian identity, assigning Brazil the role of mediator of international conflicts and defender of continental cooperation.

Following the 1951 Curriculum Reform, relatively few changes occurred in the teaching of History of the Americas, since many topics from History of Civilizations were retained, as argued by Vianna (2020). However, although we acknowledge the plausibility of the argument that the traditional approach was largely preserved, the documentary evidence examined in this study does not fully support such a conclusion. Instead, we identified significant changes both in pedagogical orientations and in the material and graphic presentation of the editions, as discussed throughout this article.

These findings suggest that, in light of the tensions generated by the curricular disputes that shaped Brazil after 1951, a degree of textual continuity remained with regard to historiographical orientation, a continuity that may also be explained by the editorial pressures associated with obtaining textbook approval, as argued by Ribeiro Junior (2008). Nevertheless, we contend that important changes were implemented in other dimensions of these works, increasingly aligning them with the educational debates of the period. These changes included the incorporation of written and oral activities, as well as the expansion of iconographic resources. Within this context, the incorporation of the active learning method appears to have been considerably more effective.

With regard to the material characteristics of the textbooks, Ary da Matta introduced relatively few modifications to the printing project. Excluding revisions to the textual content, the main changes involved typographical design. The same cannot be said of Alcindo Muniz de Souza, whose 1954 edition features substantial changes to the cover, replacing the exclusively typographic design of the 1952 edition with an illustration that had previously been developed by the publisher.

Particularly noteworthy are the transformations observed in the editions authored by Antônio José Borges Hermida. The 1961 edition presents a considerably more elaborate graphic project than both the 1953 edition and all the other textbooks examined in this study. These redesigns reveal an editorial commitment to the modernization of the works, partially corresponding to the aspirations expressed in pedagogical journals, which were themselves informed by the ideals of the *Escola Nova* movement and by the broader context of educational expansion and the growth of mass culture. From this edition onward, Hermida's textbook ceased to function merely as a repository of written content and became an educational resource enriched with visual elements drawn from general culture, whose graphic design served to bring historical content closer to students.

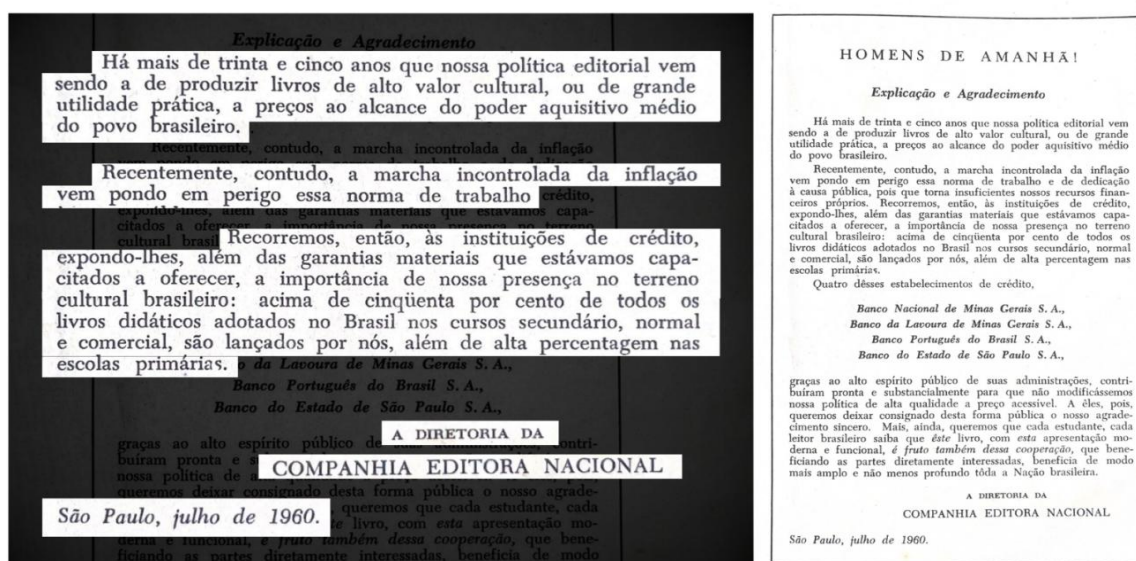
Grounded in the concept of authorship, as discussed earlier, we identify the multiple variables governing the production of these editions, which are often attributed exclusively to their named authors. Although the textual content appears

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relatively stable, the modifications introduced into the works are particularly evident in their graphic presentation, renewing the textbooks and adapting them to the preference for the active learning method expressed both in educational legislation and in contemporary educational movements. This process can also be observed in Munakata's assertion: "The important thing is to have a precise understanding that the materiality of the relationships involved in the book, between author and reader, is overdetermined by the market" (2012, p. 185).<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, these works needed to remain consistent both with educational legislation and with the expectations of the teachers that made use of them.

Alcindo Muniz de Souza authored a 1954 edition that presents a historiographical approach distinct from that of the 1952 edition in iconographic terms, whose cover consisted exclusively of typography. Equally significant changes, this time concerning pedagogical methods, can be observed when comparing Ary da Matta's two editions. Although the written texts remain virtually identical, the later edition introduces written composition and oral presentation activities. This places Matta in a position that encourages not only memorization but also reflection and written practice, indicating a clear process of pedagogical modernization in his 1954 edition.

**Figure 7** - Letter to readers published in Companhia Editora Nacional textbooks (1961)



**Source:** Hermida, 1961, p. 213.

It should be noted that only Borges Hermida's 1953 edition was not published by the publishing house responsible for the largest volume of educational textbooks during the period. This conclusion is based on a letter addressed to readers, found at the end of two History textbooks published by Companhia Editora Nacional in 1961 and signed by the company's board of directors. The letter states that more than fifty percent of the publisher's output was intended for Brazilian basic education. This document appears not only in *História da América*, authored by Borges Hermida, but also in *História do Brasil*, by Taunay and Moraes (1961).

According to the letter, in 1960 the publishing house was forced to seek financial support from a group of credit institutions in order to continue producing what it described as “books of high cultural value and great usefulness”. This statement demonstrates that even the largest educational publisher of the period, in the context of the expansion of the textbook market and the country's political and economic circumstances, required financial support in the form of credit to sustain its publishing activities.

## Final Considerations

The analysis of History of the Americas textbooks demonstrates that these works not only incorporated historical content but also actively participated in the construction of representations of Brazilian identity and diplomacy. Understanding the textbook as a cultural product means recognizing that it not only systematizes forms of knowledge regarded as legitimate for students' education, but also incorporates the pedagogical, political, and historiographical disputes characteristic of its historical context, as evidenced by the representations of Brazilian identity constructed by Souza, Matta, and Hermida. From this perspective, we observe that the production, circulation, and materiality of these textbooks echoed transnational debates and curricular demands while contributing to the construction of representations, values, and sensibilities within school contexts.

From this perspective, the comparative analysis reveals that Brazilian identity is not presented homogeneously across the authors. Whereas Souza associates it with diplomatic leadership and conflict mediation, Matta situates it within a continental framework, assigning Brazilian historical experience a specific role within the broader American horizon. Hermida, in turn, although articulating nationalism and Americanism, differs by promoting a model of civic education grounded in democratic ideals aligned with the context of the Cold War through his praise of the American experience. These differences demonstrate that the curricular guidelines were not incorporated uniformly. Rather, each author developed a distinct project concerning the kind of historical and civic education considered desirable.

The findings indicate that the educational reform had a significant impact on the organization of History textbooks and on the selection of historical knowledge and teaching methodologies in accordance with the principles regarded as fundamental to the democratic society envisioned in the post-war period. We conclude that the editorial production undertaken by Companhia Editora Nacional encompassed diverse historiographical and pedagogical perspectives. Although History of the Americas textbooks generally maintained traditional teaching methods, they also introduced significant innovations in graphic design and in the development of learning activities. With regard to the representations of Brazilian identity and diplomacy advanced by their authors, the textbooks reveal distinct appropriations of international educational guidelines, constructing representations in which Brazil is portrayed as a leading actor within the geopolitical context that emerged after 1945.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The ratification of this conference by the 20 member states took place on November 4, 1946 (UNESCO, 1946). Brazil was the first country to ratify and incorporate the establishment of UNESCO into its legislation.

<sup>2</sup> Original: “[...] assegurar o respeito universal pela justiça, pela lei, pelos direitos do Homem e pelas liberdades fundamentais que a Carta das Nações Unidas reconhece a todos os povos do Mundo, sem distinção de raças, de sexo, de língua ou de religião” (Rodrigues, 2006, p. 167). Translation by the authors.

<sup>3</sup> The text appears in the seventh chapter of the work entitled *A Model Plan for the Analysis and Improvement of Textbooks as Aids to International Understanding*.

<sup>4</sup> The ordinances are Nos. 724, 966, and 1045.

<sup>5</sup> Original: “[...] conceitos patrióticos e morais, além do racismo impresso em livros didáticos produzidos nos anos anteriores [...]” (Pinto Junior; Ribeiro Junior, 2023, p. 16). Translation by the authors.

<sup>6</sup> Original: “[...] programas, livros, métodos e conteúdos de ensino [...]” (Vianna, 2020, p. 116). Translation by the authors.

<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that, between 1946 and 1947, Anísio Teixeira worked at UNESCO at the invitation of its first Director-General, Julian Huxley, contributing to the organization of the General Conferences.

<sup>8</sup> The text is entitled *Um quarto de século de programas e compêndios de História para o ensino secundário brasileiro (1931-1956)*.

<sup>9</sup> The **Other** as the strange, alien, unknown, and distorted, in an interpretation grounded in the dualistic thought implemented by coloniality. This can be observed in dichotomous formulations such as civilized versus barbarian and modern versus ancient.

<sup>10</sup> Alcindo Muniz de Souza, according to the brief biography provided by LEMAD, was born in 1894, completed his studies at Ginásio do Estado (1911–1912), and also completed the preliminary course at Escola Politécnica. He was a professor of History of Civilization at Ginásio do Estado de Campinas. Beyond this information, little else has been found about the author, and none of the editions analyzed provides any indication of his higher education. Available at: <https://lemad.ffclch.usp.br/node/901>. Accessed on: Aug. 20, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Original: “A tradicional tendência pacifista brasileira se encontra expressa na própria Carta Magna da nação” (Souza, 1954, p. 178). Translation by the authors.

<sup>12</sup> Original: “O grande brasileiro Barão do Rio Branco, que, embora monarquista, prestou tão assinalados serviços à pátria mesmo depois de proclamada a República” (Souza, 1954, p. 178). Translation by the authors.

<sup>13</sup> Ary da Matta, who also has a biography available on the LEMAD website, held a bachelor's degree in Letters from Colégio Pedro II and was a full professor at the Faculdade de Filosofia do Instituto La-Fayette in Rio de Janeiro, an institution that would later give rise to the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). The biography indicates that he also taught at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-RJ), information that appears on the title pages of the works analyzed, where the Universidade do Distrito Federal is also mentioned without specifying the nature of his affiliation. No further information was found, including his place or year of birth. Available at: <https://lemad.fflch.usp.br/node/1202>. Accessed on: Aug. 21, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Original: Em 1906 reuniu-se a Terceira Conferência, dela participando Joaquim Nabuco. Suas conclusões foram adotadas entre nós pelo Barão do Rio Branco, que orientou nossa política externa dentro dos princípios que sempre inspiraram o Brasil e que desde então passaram a ser adotados pelos países americanos [...] O arbitramento é uma das tradições da política externa brasileira [...] As constituições republicanas do Brasil (1891, 1943, 1946) incluem em seus textos dispositivos recomendando o emprêgo do arbitramento em tôdas as questões de política externa. Foi com êste espírito que Rui Barbosa nosso representante na Segunda Conferência Internacional da Paz, de Haia (1907), defendeu o princípio do arbitramento como solução obrigatória para a solução de conflitos internacionais (Matta, 1954, p. 169-171). Translation by the authors.

<sup>15</sup> Original: A contribuição da América à história da literatura universal é uma das mais significativas [...] Essa literatura criada embora ao sabor das influências extra-americanas assumiu feição própria, caracteristicamente americana não somente quanto aos temas de inspiração local ligados, portanto, à vida americana, mas também quanto à modificação dos gêneros e estilos literários modificados pelos novos recursos e pelo espírito americano (Matta, 1954, p. 164). Translation by the authors.

<sup>16</sup> Antônio José Borges Hermida was born in 1917 and, according to Moraes (2018, p. 145) and Ribeiro Junior (2008, pp. 52–53), became a contributor to CEN only in 1958. According to his biography available on LEMAD, Hermida occupied a prominent position in textbook production in Brazil during the 1960s and 1970s. According to the title page of *História da América: segunda série ginasial* (1961), he graduated from the Faculdade Nacional de Filosofia and worked as a teacher for the Prefeitura do Rio de Janeiro, at Colégio Pedro II, and at Colégio Arte e Instrução. Available at: <https://lemad.fflch.usp.br/node/1130>. Accessed on: Aug. 21, 2021.

<sup>17</sup> Original: “Nos estudos de História os nomes ilustres são Capistrano de Abreu, Varnhagem, Rocha Pombo e o barão do Rio Branco. O primeiro, considerado por muitos autores como o maior historiador do Brasil, escreveu Capítulos de História Colonial [...] Ao barão do Rio Branco deve o Brasil a fixação de suas fronteiras com as repúblicas vizinhas.” (Hermida, 1961, p. 196). Translation by the authors.

<sup>18</sup> Original: “Dêsse modo, a grande república do Norte, por ser a nação mais poderosa, tomava a incumbência de proteger o Continente” (Hermida, 1953, p. 237). Translation by the authors.

<sup>19</sup> Original: “O importante é ter a exata noção de que a materialidade das relações que estão implicadas no livro, entre o autor e o leitor, é sobre determinada pelo mercado” (2012, p. 185). Translation by the authors.