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“Near to teachers”. The association ANIMI (National Association for the Interests of Southern Italy) at the beginning of 20th century

“V bližini učiteljev”. Združenje ANIMI (Nacionalno združenje za interese južne Italije) v začetku 20. stoletja

Izvleček

Namen prispevka je prikazati zgodovino društva ANIMI (Associazione Nazionale per gli Interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia/ Nacionalno združenje za interese južne Italije, ustanovljeno 1908), izvirno italijansko društveno izkušnjo na področju poučevanja in boj proti nepismenosti v južni Italiji v začetku 20. stoletja. Leta 1921 je društvo dobilo od ministrstva nalogo razširiti osnovno šolstvo v različnih regionalnih območjih južne Italije (Bazilikata, Kalabrija, Sicilija in Sardinija), zlasti pa usmeriti ukrepe v razširjanje kulture in povečanje izobraževalne dejavnosti. Združenje ANIMI je veliko pozornosti namenilo odprtju vrtcev, šolskih knjižnic in ljudskih, večernih, prazničnih, vsakodnevnih šol, preskrbi z učnim gradivom in pripomočki kot tudi skrbi za pedagoško ter izobraževalno pripravo učiteljev in učiteljic.

Abstract

The object of the paper is to describe the history of ANIMI (Associazione Nazionale per gli Interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia / National Association for the Interests of Southern Italy), an original Italian associative experience in the field of teaching education and the struggle against the illiteracy in Italy through the beginning of 20th century.

In 1921, it obtained from the ministry the task of the work for dissemination of primary school in different regional areas of southern Italy, like Basilicata, Calabria, Sicilia and Sardinia, in particular directing action to the dissemination of culture and the increase in educational works. In addition to the opening of kindergartens, school libraries and popular, evening, festive, daily schools, supply of teaching materials and tools, significant attention was paid by ANIMI to the choice and care, pedagogical, educative preparation of male and female teachers.

Ključne besede: združenje ANIMI, učiteljstvo, izobraževanje, nepismenost, južna Italija
Key words: association ANIMI, teachers, education, illiteracy, South Italy
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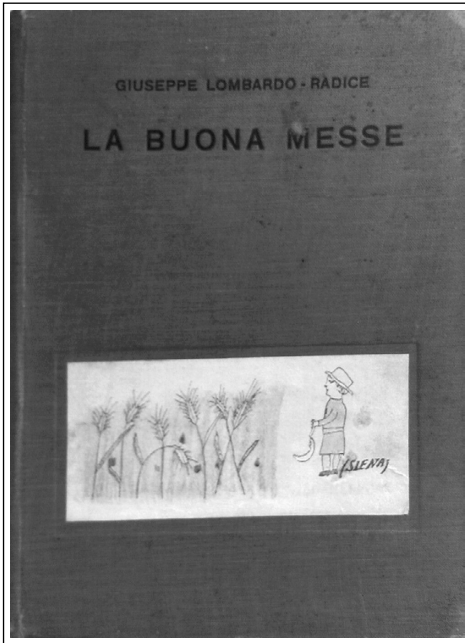
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The object of the paper ("Near to teachers".¹ The Association ANIMI (Associazione Nazionale per gli Interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia / National Association for the Interests of Southern Italy) during the first half of 20th Century) is to describe the history of ANIMI (Associazione Nazionale per gli Interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia), an original Italian associative experience in the field of teaching education and the struggle against the illiteracy in Italy through the first XX century. It was a "wide experiment freely school activity"² that gave "a major contribution to the history of the school and pedagogy not only Italian and Italian"³ until today not exhaustively considered in the field of historiography.⁴

The ANIMI was concerned with the promotion of school-education and assistance to its national teachers.⁵

My essay aims to reconstruct the broad spectrum of initiatives undertaken by the field "near to teachers" of rural schools, in the performance of their fundamental "education and hygienic propaganda" in the southern regions of

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- 1 The title comes from a work dedicated to the teachers by Giuseppe Lombardo Radice, "Near to teachers". Propaganda pedagogical new essays (Accanto ai maestri: nuovi saggi di propaganda pedagogica, Torino: Paravia, 1925). On the background of educational problems emerging in the Italian society of the early twentieth century are very significant proposals drawn up by Giuseppe Lombardo Radice, on the reform of school and the updating of teachers' pedagogical culture and the initiatives undertaken by the National Association for the Interests of Southern Italy. On the prominent figure and the educational work deployed by Giuseppe Lombardo Radice (1879-1938), professor of education at the University of Catania and then in Rome, close collaborator of the minister Gentile during the development of the reform of 1923, are still obliged the references to the special issue dedicated to Giuseppe Lombardo Radice, in "Reform School", 14 (1968), no. 8-9, in addition to a rich bibliography of studies (Picco, Chiosso, Cives, Margiotta, Pesci and many others). See especially the conference proceedings of Giuseppe Lombardo Radice, Proceedings of the International Congress for the centenary of his birth (1879-1979) edited by Iclea Picco (L'Aquila: Ed Gallo Cedrone, 1980). A timely collection of bibliographic information on the "fervent activity as a writer and educator born" Lombardo Radice, prior to the lessons of 1913 and followed until 1934, is due to the editor of Lugano "The Educator of Italian Switzerland": Edoardo Pelloni, Bibliography of the writings of Giuseppe Lombardo Radice (1899-1934), (Lugano: Tip. Rezzonico - Pedrini, 1935).
 - 2 See Giuseppe Isnardi, Educational and school activity of the Association, in AA. VV., The National Association for the Interest of Southern Italy in its first fifty years (Rome: South Collection Editrice, 1960), especially on pages 195-251.
 - 3 On the occasion of the centenary of ANIMI birth was successfully produced a work of historical reconstruction on the "most important private initiative of the century" in defense of Southern Italy, in Guido Pescosolido and others, One hundred years of activity of the 'National Association for the Interest of Southern Italy and the Southern question today (Soveria Marinelli: Rubbettino, 2011).
 - 4 Around the educational work carried out by the association with the contribution of its members actively involved in providing educational advancement is now in Michela D'Alessio, A scuola fra casa e patria. Dialetto e cultura regionale nei libri di testo durante il fascismo /At school between home and homeland. Dialect and regional culture in textbooks during Fascism (Lecce: Pensamultimedia, 2013).
 - 5 As is known, the issue was provided to the Minister Baccelli RDL September 2nd, 1919 n. 1723 which established the National Authority for the education of illiterate adults, a measure designed to focus on a single autonomous body initiatives to combat illiteracy. With the R.D. August 28th, 1921, n. 240 born to work against illiteracy: Giuseppe Tognon, Benedetto Croce to Minerva: the Italian school policy between Caporetto and the March on Rome (Brescia: La Scuola, 1990), 208-209.



Front cover of Giuseppe Lombardo Radice's book: *La buona messe* (*The good harvest/Dobra letina*), edited by Associazione Nazionale per gli Interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia Editrice, 1926 (<https://usolibri.it>, accessed 12. 10. 2019)

tion to municipalities and populations for the improvement of school premises, furniture and furnishings, as well as over the time was always engaged in exciting a "continuous action of the State in order especially for the prompt application of laws in favor of the South" (Viola). The collected data show how many aspects of the development education formulated by Lombardo Radice and legislative requirements of the programs aired in 1923, positioned right in the experiences carried out in person by the Sicilian educator within the ANIMI, the most important antecedent and the real forge work, that "intense training" which will be based on the "innovative lines" of his ministry (Viola).

Sources

The exploration of the Archive of the Associazione Nazionale per gli Interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia in the Library of Southern Studies "Giustino Fortunato" in Rome has returned a rich harvest of documents: reports, information and use-

Italy. The main interest is directed to educational experiments and innovations introduced by the Association in respect of the special recipients of teaching, especially the illiterate adults in the regions of South of Italy. In this particular hairpin, a significant importance was the centrality and encouragement "at distance" that led Lombardo Radice as director of elementary education, tireless promoter and determined action of ANIMI in favor of the deplorable condition of the school for children and illiterate adults; editorial director of an organ of great prestige and influence, which was the journal named "National Education"; prominent figure who had a specific role in educational and school activity. He was very active on both sides in the public administration and private associations, in an unusual and difficult revived harmony and selfless joint action between the educational activities of the state and associated initiatives. The ANIMI played an important role in urge action

ful activity exercised in Southern Italy during the '10s and '30s of the 20th century. In the archive, you can find many documentary papers about the organization of the Association between 1910 and 1920; reports of culture (the popular libraries and kindergartens) and economic activities (the International Book Fair and the press); several correspondences about other exhibitions of the book data and reports on kindergartens in the three regions entrusted to the Association; dossiers on the publishing entity, with the practices and matches to other publishers and authors; drafts of papers published at the institution; reports on the work against illiteracy, brochures and other publications. An important source is represented by the initial library policy directed by the opening popular libraries and was carried out between 1925 and 1928. The catalogue on one hand reflects the ANIMI's interest about school manuals and pedagogical books, on the other the other publications related to internal needs of operation, cultural and economic relations flowed in circular educational budgets and programs.

The origins of a project

ANIMI was born as a service made on volunteer basis (which met in its ranks intellectual exponents of political and cultural different orientations, Villari, Fortunato, Salvemini, Zanotti-Bianco and others) during Messina (Sicily) earthquake in 1908.⁶ ANIMI was born on March 1st, 1910 and it was "a partnership inspired by spiritual, liberal and democratic values" aimed to "any purpose politician" since there was rather "the ambition of a direct action, targeted and volunteer in the South of Italy."⁷ The voluntary contribution and public financing worked together in order to reach an extraordinary national solidarity, in which the care of the organization represented one aspect of the success of the ANIMI.⁸

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- 6 The earthquake on December 28th, 1908 gave substantial acceleration orientation of the Italian political and cultural life, in relation to the southern question. The "significant contribution in the fight against illiteracy and [...] in favor of promoting socio-economy of the South" carried out by the place was recently highlighted by the work of F. Mattei, ANIMI. *Il contributo dell'Associazione Nazionale Italiana per gli Interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia alla storia dell'educazione / ANIMI The contribution of the "National Association for the Interests of Southern Italy" to the history of education (1910-1945)* (Roma: Anicia, 2012). Some comments on the initial interventions in the field of education, popular education and child protection, to improve the sanitary conditions of the South and the spread of popular libraries and schools, in G. Alatri, "Schools and social and cultural action of the National Association for the Interests of the South of Italy from the foundation to the fall of Fascism", *The problems of pedagogy XXVI*, no. 6 (1990): 561-582.
- 7 Gerardo Bianco, Introduction to *Per una storia dell'Associazione nazionale per gli interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia. I presidenti / History of the National Association for the Interests of the South of Italy (1910-2000). The Presidents* (Rome: from the Association, 2000), 10-11.
- 8 "The development of primary and popular education" in the South of Italy was part of the fundamental purposes of the association (art. 3 of Statute).

Organization

In its organization there was a Central Directorate located in Rome to have relations with the Ministry and with other agencies delegates and regional directors, these directors were: for Sicily Vitale Chialante, for eastern Sicily Archangel Sciacca and for the central Giuseppe Liotta; for Sardinia Guglielmo Zanini; for Calabria Giuseppe Isnardi and for Basilicata Emilio Larocca and Domiziano Viola. Policy intervention was geared to different fields: health, social, urban and civil. Channels of financing were voluntary contributions, ministerial channels and the Bank of Italy and other institutions, furthermore Industrial companies active in the social field. The creator of ANIMI was Umberto Zanotti Bianco, the first president Leopoldo Franchetti, Honorary President was Pasquale Villari, in the Council executive committee there were Bodio, Fortunato,⁹ Stringher, Tito Poggi, Giuseppe Lombardo Radice, Gaetano Salvemini, Tommaso Gallarati Scotti. The General Secretary was Gaetano Piacentini.¹⁰

Aims

The principal aims of the Association were the improvement of local conditions with regard to primary education; agricultural economics and credit to work; forms of interest of public awareness and accurate knowledge of Italian civil life problems of southern regions and appropriate means to solve them gradual and complete; "to continue to excite the action of the state in order to apply application of the above read in favor of southern".

The task

In 1921 ANIMI obtained from the Ministry the task of work for disseminated primary school in different regional areas of southern Italy, like Basilicata, Calabria, Sicilia and Sardinia, in particular directing action to the dissemination

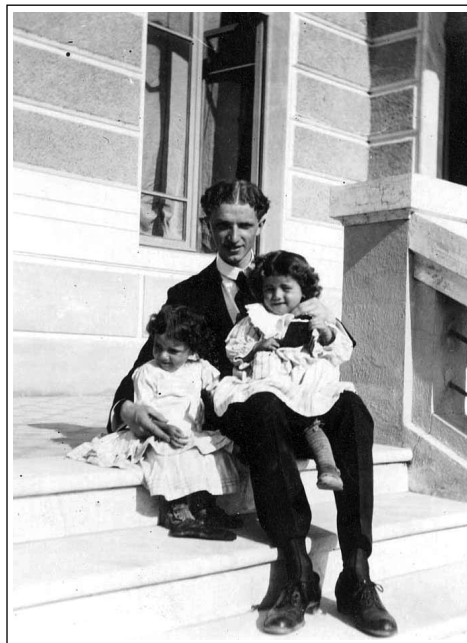
9 Giustino Fortunato was a greatest exponent of the "Southern question" posed in terms of emancipation of the rural world of the South, with recall assumption of political responsibility by the middle classes not only in southern Italy, but especially at the national level. He defined ANIMI "so far the only organized force in Italy for the awakening of the Southern Provinces" setting the terms of engagement spent from ANIMI "intransigent on the continuity of an ideal philanthropic and autonomy from fascism" (G. Bianco).

10 Gaetano Piacentini and Lombardo Radice were the main holders and coordinators operating in organizational management and boost cultural activity of ANIMI, in a happy "complementarity of personal qualities [...] in the service of school and the emancipation of the southern nations and progress of all of Italy".

of culture and the increase in educational works.¹¹ During the first year of activities, 1,163 schools were established with 5,000 students enrolled and 2,200 approved; 114 of them were day schools, 114 festive and 1,262 evening schools with a total of 66,413 pupils and 32,707 approved.

After receiving the task, the Association ANIMI helped to aim the effective instruments to offer assistance in poor areas and underprivileged in the South; child health and social works (in 1923, about 100 subsidies case of children); to open school and popular libraries (competition system in taking part in the 50% of the costs of buying new volumes received from the ANIMI; in 1930 gave assistance to 146 libraries for a total of 5,549 books, appreciable results in areas that are heavily pervaded by illiteracy); to give hospitalization in villages for Armenian refugees; the education of illiterate adults; to open rural schools in the daytime and festive schools in the afternoon; theoretical development and production of required teaching materials; a special choice in the care of personal employee.

In seven years the ANIMI ran on behalf of the state about 33 millions by creating more than 2,000 schools. The important novelty was represented in that year by the passage by the school administration to those of the Managing Authorities of the Opera of many rural schools so-called "poorly performing" leaving to them the autonomous decision to keep them alive or to abolish or instead of transfer them elsewhere. In 1923, the Association ran 229 rural schools in poor performance state. The schools of Basilicata, 36; Calabria, 77; Sicily, 61; Sardinia, 55, called "unclassified" or "provisional" were given to ANIMI. The evening



Umberto Zanotti Bianco, one of the founder of association ANIMI (<https://www.lazio900.it/istituto/associazione-nazionale-per-gli-interessi-del-mezzogiorno-ditalia-animi/>, accessed 12. 10. 2019)

¹¹ The ANIMI obtained a substantial funding estimated in 4/10 of the entire allocation for local delegates, with a clear recognition of the prominent role played in the contemporary field of volunteering. C. Cassani, The National Association for the Interest of Southern Italy between voluntary contributions and public funding, in History of the National Association for the interests of the South of Italy (1910-2000). The Presidents, cit., 196.



Different activities of association ANIMI in the beginning of 20th century: from health and childcare to lottery to raise money for activities. (<http://www.animi.it/>; <https://scripofilia.it/> accessed 12. 10. 2019)

and festive classes for adults reached the maximum number in 1923-24 with 1,159 schools and 55,358 students. By Royal Decree of December 31st, 1923 ANIMI was named Committee against illiteracy dealing with a popular school with the original contours of educational and social. The other areas where ANIMI took care were the school building and the health system. Through the work of these cultural institutions, the rule was intended to finance the establishment of evening, festive and summer schools for adults, farmers, fishermen, immigrants (as well as daytime only for the lower course), in the places with less density school.

Between 1925 and 1928 ANIMI recorded the steady increase in the number of rural and unique day schools, with identical decline in the number of so-called adult schools and the establishment of complementary or supplementary courses. In addition to the opening of kindergartens, school libraries and popular, evening, festive, daily schools, supply of teaching materials and tools, significant

attention was paid by ANIMI to the choice and care, pedagogical, educative preparation of male and female teachers. They often were war veterans, the elderly and elements with "service" spent in state schools, which were chosen with different modes - order of merit, information about their knowledge, interviews, competition tests: "the thinking in the selection of teachers was the first element that allowed and encouraged the success of the school."¹²

"Near to teachers"

Unclassified schools' teachers had to accept assignments and working conditions greatly disadvantaged with regard to the workplace, to the tools and educational opportunities. They had to reside in the schools of the most distant and abandoned villages, with a deep spirit of dedication and sacrifice. The ANIMI sometimes reached to build them a home, providing the means to live there -as you can read in a lot of correspondence with the Regional Directors. They had a benefit for each lesson, with the maximum limit of 120 lessons for evening schools and 180 hours for the day ones - teachers need continuous presence and valuable attachment to work prize for each student promoted.

The educational and cultural action was developed through the organization of educational conferences; culture courses for rural teachers (including those in education and child hygiene education, between those in Maratea, Palermo and in Sardinia); permanent educational exhibitions at the regional offices; an intense editorial publication (*Connection sheets for teachers; Rules and instructions; Teaching programs*). You can see the brochure in which you learn the goals and the means by which the Association wants to be "near to teachers" giving assistance especially with instructions and useful to their educational work.

Some important information come from the *Educational program*, duly given to the teachers: rules of practical utility and which concern "the teaching of writing, the alphabet, numbering, dictation, reading, goodwill to compose, of the various notions of design, the node of the corrections and the tightness of the notebooks. The programs give useful indications to the teachers of schools for peasants, miners, fishermen. The action of these schools for peasants etc. is preparative and avant-garde action... "(p. 21). The expected results are summarized "in good reading, knowledge of the four operations, the right to express their needs and desires in writing, in the notion of the fundamental laws that govern our civic life, and especially those affecting the agricultural populations, in the elementary notions of hygiene, geography and agriculture. "It seems clear that the main task of schools for peasants are in "instrumental teaching" ..."

12 F. Mattei, ANIMI. The contribution of the "National Association for the Interest of Southern Italy" to the history of education (1910-1945), cit.

Among the key factors in the proposal of new teaching methods, include the specificity attributed to new schools and the evaluation of the environmental and cultural living conditions of the southern part of Italy, resulting in the search for new ways of teaching and practical models that take account of attention to the local culture, the need to disseminate hygiene education, diagnostic and preventive maintenance, as well as the experiments of agricultural operations.

In this work of "differentiation teaching" that is given to the places, the central figures of rural male and female teachers, as well as to an appropriate manuals for schools, lies much of the effectiveness of education and teaching, promoted by local delegates and of "innovative lines." "Different countries, different difficulties, different temperaments and aptitude of people who are in charge of our educational services" (Lombardo Radice). After seven years of important and portentous activities (1921-1928),¹³ the Association gave back the delegation to the State, because of the inability to continue with freedom and autonomous spirit in its field of action, since the urgent interference of fascism, from its representatives in local political level: the delegation was later passed on to the Opera Nazionale Balilla.

It had been thrown a "good seed" (Isnardi), in the wake of a large experiment not yet sufficiently remarked on the importance of the educational value and goodness of teaching practices, a unique meeting of the conditions of the environment and the specificity of its beneficiaries.

Summary

“Near to teachers”. The association ANIMI (National Association for the Interests of Southern Italy) at the beginning of 20th century

Michelina D'Alessio

The object of the paper is to describe the history of ANIMI (Associazione Nazionale per gli Interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia), an original italian associative experience in the field of teaching education and the struggle against the illiteracy in Italy through the beginning of 20th century.

ANIMI was born as a service made on a volunteer basis during Messina (Sicily) earthquake in 1908. In 1921, it obtained from the ministry the task of the work for disseminated primary school in different regional areas of southern Italy, like Basilicata, Calabria, Sicilia and Sardinia, in particular directing action to the dissemination of culture and the increase in educational

¹³ (Editorial note.) The author also deals with this topic later: Michelina D'Alessio: Our Schools. The work of the Association of Southern Italy against illiteracy in Basilicata (1921-1928), HECL 2015, 10 (2), pp. 463-480, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321993690_Our_Schools_the_work_of_the_Association_of_Southern_Italy_against_illiteracy_in_Basilicata_1921-1928 (accessed 12. 10. 2019).

works. In addition to the opening of kindergartens, school libraries and popular, evening, festive, daily schools, supply of teaching materials and tools, significant attention was paid by ANIMI to the choice and care, pedagogical, educative preparation of male and female teachers. The educational and cultural was deployed on several levels: through the organization of educational conferences; culture courses for rural teachers (including those in education and child hygiene education); permanent educational exhibitions at the regional offices; an intense editorial publication (Connection sheets for teachers; Rules and instructions; Teaching programs). Among the key factors in the proposal of new teaching methods, include the specificity attributed to new schools and the evaluation of the environmental and cultural living conditions of the southern part of Italy. In this work of "differentiation teaching" that is given to the places, the central figures of rural male and female teachers, as well as to an appropriate manuals for schools, lies much of the effectiveness of education and teaching, promoted by local delegates. After seven years of important and portentous activities (1921-1928), the Association gave back the delegation to the State, because of the inability to continue with freedom and autonomous spirit in its field of action, since the urgent interference of fascism, from its representatives in local political level: the delegation was later passed on to the Opera Nazionale Balilla.