

The Celebration of Civism and the Promotion of Education: the ritualized daily life of elementary schools in Sergipe at the beginning of the twentieth century

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RESUMO

A instituição dos grupos escolares no início do século XX em Sergipe representou considerável transformação na organização do ensino escolar público. Neste artigo buscou-se compreender o funcionamento cotidiano de tais instituições por meio da identificação e análise dos diferentes eventos de caráter escolar e cívico ocorridos nos grupos. Com base em pesquisa bibliográfica e documental desenvolvida sob perspectiva histórica, percebeu-se que as diferentes cerimônias presentes nos grupos, além de momentos de legitimação da escola primária perante a sociedade convertiam-se em momentos de celebração do civismo em razão da propaganda das autoridades constituídas e da difusão do ideal de nação civilizada.

Palavras-chave: civismo; grupos escolares; Sergipe.

ABSTRACT

At the beginning of the twentieth century the *grupos escolares* (elementary schools) in Sergipe represented a considerable transformation of the organization of public teaching. This article seeks to understand the daily functioning of these institutions through the identification and analysis of different school and civic events that occurred in the *grupos*. Based on bibliographic and documentary research carried out from a historic perspective, it can be seen that the different ceremonies present in the groups, as well as moments of the legitimation of primary school in society, were converted into moments of the celebration of civism due to the propaganda of the authorities and the diffusion of the ideal of the civilized nation.

Keywords: Civism; elementary schools; Sergipe.

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Grupos escolares (school groups, elementary schools) were central elements at the core of the republican education project in Brazil. Primary education institutions were responsible for the institutionalization of primary education, since they had their own principles, objectives and curricular structure. Symbols of pedagogic modernity at the end of the nineteenth century, they possessed the constituent requirements of a modern school.

The modern school is the one that has its own school space, courses divided into levels and a specific professional body. Furthermore, it is characterized by the establishment of regulations and statutes, which were responsible for the creation of norms and conventions capable of creating a rhythm for daily school life and transforming this into a type of ritual. Due to the various orders made by the Directorate of Public Instruction (*Diretoria da Instrução Pública*), in the form of regulations, programs and edicts, the daily life of school groups was marked by a series of events which ended up occupying a great space in the practices of the members of these teaching institutions. The groups were born with the special mission of contributing to the formation of the patriotic republican citizen, for which reason they were seen as powerful temples in the advance of education.

The power aspect of these teaching establishments was materialized in their architectural projects for example. Silently conditioning behavior and spatializing actions and discipline, architectural projects for the groups simultaneously emanated graciousness and solidity. The constitution of the school-space materialized in the school groups, and all their characteristics, became the purest definition of the school in Brazil.¹ The groups were thus physically differentiated from the isolated schools.² The differences in relation to the latter also extended to pedagogical processes. After the creation of the groups in Sergipe, the intuitive teaching method became official for all public primary schools, seeking to serve as a counterweight to the mechanical memorization of school content and the practice of physical punishments.

In addition to the use of the pedagogy of 'intuitive processes,' other aspects marked daily life in the school groups: public exams, school festivities, visits by famous people, commemorations of civic dates, the singing of songs, honor ceremonies, exhibitions of students' work, and the awarding of certificates all contributed to creating day-to-day life in the groups. Examining newspapers since the beginning of the Republic, there can be found the constant identification of registers related to festive events in the schools, often with detailed descriptions of ceremonies. The frequency with which these registers appeared, often as headlines, invites analysis.

Given the above, it can be asked why were events that took place in school groups publicized? What events were they? How were the different ceremonies organized? What were their objectives? This article is primarily concerned with the commemorative events that occurred in school groups in Sergipe at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is sought to identify and analyze the different formal events that occurred in Sergipe school groups. The investigation is based on bibliographic and documentary research, with emphasis on documents from the old groups (official letters, minutes and reports of visits), and on hemerographic documentation.

The article is divided into two parts. In the first, I discuss what are called here school festivities. In the second I look at events that are predominantly classified here as having a civic and patriotic character.

Headmasters, students and teachers ritualistically experienced daily life in school groups. Shortly after arriving the students lined up to sing songs accompanied by their teacher and the headmaster. In general the latter would then say some words to the children, as noted by Araújo, a former student in the General Siqueira School Group: “we queued up in order and then sang the anthem, afterwards the headmaster said a few words, and we went into the classes. Every day, every day the students lined up and sang; at the end of the day they sang as well, they left singing.”³

In addition to the frequent singing of songs, constant school commemorations and even more especially civics commemorations contributed to the construction of a school tradition permeated by the cultural values of the republican government. For society these events were essentially moments of legitimation of primary schools for society. Festive moments were transformed into spectacles which disseminated republican, thereby contributing to the strengthening and consequent popular legitimation of the recently established political regime.

SCHOOL FESTIVITIES

Large numbers of people attended the ceremonies that marked the end of the school year and during which the final exams of the school groups were held. As well as students' families, various authority figures appeared. The 1922 festivity of the General Siqueira Group is a good example of this:

The act was attended by Dr. Cyro Cordeiro de Farias, representative of His Excellency, the president of the state. / The illustrious chief of police delivered

the certificates to the students from the fourth year, who had completed the course. / On the same occasion Major Mecnas Peixoto, headmaster of the group read the minutes of some promotion examinations after which he thanked Dr. Cyro Cordeiro for attending. / The latter gave a beautiful speech in which he made references to the very correct headmaster and the teaching staff of the Group. / Beautiful lines of poetry were recited alluding to the teaching of the teacher D. Elvira Guerra Fontes and one of the students of that teaching establishment. / When the representative of the president of state left, various songs were sung by the students from the Group.⁴

In the following years many returned to honor an always new and breathtaking holiday ceremony in ‘Temples of Knowledge.’⁵ In 1925 in the same Group another solemnity was held. In this, in addition to the reading aloud of the results of final exams and the awarding of certificates to the students who passed, there were various speeches and recitals by students and some teachers. At the end various school anthems were sung, followed by a talk from the headmaster of the establishment, who mainly talked about the Group’s teachers in a very positive form.⁶

Generally speaking, the ending of the academic year involved, in addition to the exams and the awarding of certificates to students, speeches by some teaching figure or someone from the state, generally the director of education or the actual president (governor) of Sergipe. In these ceremonies, which were public, there were musical presentations, recitals, representations, poetry, and patriotic anthems.

In 1919 President Pereira Lobo (1918-22) ended the exams and the awarding of certificates in the General Siqueira Group in this way, stating that Sergipe, territorially small, but large due to the intelligence and capacity for work of its children, would have to win through teaching, by fighting the darkness of ignorance. “Loud and long was the applause that drowned out the last words of the honored administrator, whose head was then covered with flowers by the students from the Group.”⁷

The presentation of gifts and the manual work of students was something else to be seen by all of society. It was one more instant when the success, quality and the teaching rigor of these model institutions was proven. After the various ceremonial activities of the exams – speeches, poetry, music, recitals, representations and the awarding of prizes to students – their works were exhibited. This was considered a special moment, and in these commemorations it represented a rehearsal of the duty of work, even though those responsible

for the constructed materials were students of only six or seven years of age. In November 1922 the *Sergipe Journal* published the following about the Model Group:

In addition to the order, neatness, distinction of treatment and unequivocal proof that the children who studied there had performed well, what very vividly impressed us was the exhibition of the gifts for the teachers in that department of education, due to the intelligence, grace and care to which they spoke to us about these manual works, some of which were made by children aged six and seven, who apart from the freedom to play, already practiced the just obligation for fruitful work, one of the precious and principal duties of life.⁸

In addition to exhibiting the students' works, there was space for the granting of awards by teachers. As a means of discipline, the teaching regulations authorized the granting of awards to classes. Basically, these consisted of being praised in front of the other students, being raised a class, a place of distinction on a special seat, inclusion of the name of the student on the board of honor, or even another award defined by the teacher.

Since the School Group was a model institution to be seen by all of society, even students' awards were published in the press at the time. As a result students' names, in addition to being displayed on the honor board in the School Group, were published in newspapers in the state capital, as can be seen in this 1914 extract from *Diário da Manhã*:

Yesterday the director of this Group [Escolar General Siqueira], using the option allowed by Public Education Instructions, art. 8º, § 1, letter C, in the company of the honored teachers, carried out the solemn distribution among 38 students from both sections, of Notes of Satisfaction, which, in addition to the esteem of their teachers and fellow students, will grant them the rights conferred under letter D of the article in question and inclusion on the honor board. / There were many congratulations, hugs, and cheers for the students equally distinguished by the procedure during the month of May and whose names are in alphabetical order...⁹

In the final exams the prizes given to students were concrete objects, offered by people from outside the school. In 1919 according to *Correio de Aracaju* in the General Siqueira School Group,

the certificates were awarded to the students who had completed the elementary course followed by prizes to the students who had most distinguished themselves during the year. In addition, the poor students received the José Policiano prizes generously offered by the illustrious progenitor of that much missed man, Comodore Antonio José da Silva Cardoso. And, as always, at the end new speeches were given, and in this case Dr. Carvalho Netto, director of Public Education, gave afterwards an eloquent talk about the act and ended by remembering the young man José Policiano, to whom he offered a tribute of being missed / Afterwards allusive speeches were given by various students.¹⁰

The offering of goods to students of school groups was frequent at the time when these institutions were being created. This did occur not only at the end of the school year, but also during the entire school process, often through school assistance funds, for example, or even independent of these, as was the case of Ribeiro Chaves e Companhia. In 1919 this company offered the General Valladão Group “the appreciable present of 60 meters of brim kaki, to be used for the uniforms of the students.”¹¹ This fact, along with the special visits¹² made to the school groups and the great assistance provided for the final exams of students, leads to the conclusion that there existed communication between the school and society through which the new values that the republicans wanted to implement were disseminated.

During the year the school groups received visits from illustrious persons from Sergipe society, municipal and state authorities, and even federal figures passing through the state. These events were also published in the press. Headmasters, teachers and students welcomed the visitors, who, in addition to making a speech, watched some classes or student exercises. On these occasions the students also sang patriotic songs.

Visits were obligatory for teaching officers and school inspectors. According to the Teaching Regulations, each locality in the countryside had to have an deputy of the director of teaching called teaching officers (*delegado do ensino*). These, who were subordinate to school inspectors, were responsible for the following tasks: frequently inspect the schools under their jurisdiction, ensure that the teaching program was completely implemented and learn about aspects related to school hygiene, student attendance and marks, the zeal of students and their aptitude for study, and submitting monthly bulletins about whether or not teachers satisfied the teaching requirements.¹³

The position of school inspector could be created by the state government, with three being allowed per state to inspect teaching, for which purpose the

state was to be divided into three zones. Unlike the teaching officers, the inspectors were appointed following public examinations. They had to visit all the schools in their zone once every three months and at the end of the year present the state government with a report detailing classes, their location, aptitude, the dedication of the teachers and the performance of the children, proposing measures to improve teaching.¹⁴

For this reason inspectors and teaching officers made up the majority of the visitors to the school groups.¹⁵ After their visits these professionals, in addition to signing a visit report in the specific book for this, would prepare reports for the Directorate of Instruction.

However, it was not only inspectors and teaching officers who visited the groups; other people, without being explicitly obliged to visit or inspect the schools, went there to find out about them. For example, in May 1925 the Fausto Cardoso School Group (Simão Dias) was visited by Dr. Antonio Carlos, head of the Sanitation Post of the city and Dr. Jessé Fontes, headmaster of the Gumercindo Bessa School Group (Estância), who returned accompanied by members of the teaching staff and students of this institution in December 1927.¹⁶

The Manoel Luiz School Group (Aracaju) also served as an example, since in March 1925 it was visited by the teaching officer from Bahia, Alberto de Assis, who left his impressions in the visitors' book:

Leaving this house, I do so with the strongest impressions. Sergipe has resolved in the north of Brazil the problem of popular education. Its groups are true revelations to those who study pedagogical questions. Having this one, which at the moment shelters me, under the patronage of the name of 'Dr. Manoel Luiz' and the direction of Leonor Telles de Menezes, strong organization strong organization of the headmaster and precept. / Let this be the example that the glorious state of Segipe gives to the Brazilian Federation, staunching the wound that intimidates us and hinders the march to the destiny of Brazil.¹⁷

The Severiano Cardoso School Group (Boquim) was also visited shortly after being established by members of other groups in the state, such as by professor and headmaster of the Sylvio Romero School Group (Lagarto), Possidônio Pinheiro da Rocha, in March 1930. In April 1929 the Olympio Campos Group (Neópolis) was visited by the headmaster of the General Siqueira School Group (Aracaju), Deputy Mecenaz Peixoto, along with Canon José Nabuco.¹⁸

Deputy Mecenas Peixoto had already visited other groups in different cities. In May 1927, he visited the João Fernandes de Brito School Group in the city of Propriá, as he told the Directorate of Instruction, the director of the Group, Dr. Etelvino de Menezes Tavares. The visit involved a civic ceremony.

Deputy Mecenas Peixoto passing through this city visited this Group and according to his instructions in the civic section in the Hercílio Britto Room gave on the afternoon of 13 May a beautiful talk about that great date which was watched by all the teachers of this group and the isolated schools and the most representative sectors of the city. / For your appreciation I am sending you copies of the visit report and the minutes which were signed by those present...¹⁹

The apparatus formed by ceremonies for famous visitors, school exams, awards, discourses, artistic presentations and the exhibition of the works of students was socially shared and was a point of merit and pride for those who passed at the end of the school year in the groups. Merit attributed not only by the school and even state authorities, but also society in general, who watched, for example, school exams in the halls of the groups and who also could also follow the results of the assessment process through the press. In the newspapers, in addition to student names, marks were also published. Small farmers, seamstresses, bricklayers, and people with little money or education could see at this moment the names of their children printed in the newspapers of the city.²⁰ Pride for the family of the republican citizen being educated who thus came to gain a recognition, a social value. The practice of exams, for example, as well as normalizing, qualifying, classifying, endorsing and – why not? – punishing, also contributed to the legitimization of the republican ideal through the order it created, seen as the means to achieve progress.

The construction of this spectacle in the primary school corresponds to the role that school gained at the beginning of the republic in Brazil. According to Carvalho, “the school in the republican imagination was the sign of the creation of a new order, an arm to effect progress.”²¹ Furthermore, it has to be kept in mind that the Republic in Brazil was not born with strong support among the population, nor was it marked by the involvement of all the social layers of the country, it was born fragile, it bloomed due to the actions of some forces – the army, the coffee-growing elite and positive intellectuals –, in need of popular legitimacy. The adepts of this new regime were aware of the fragility of the republic; proof of this was the acceptance of the leadership of the army,

as it was recognized that only the army was able to guarantee the establishment and sustenance of the new-born republic.

The necessary – democratic – image of the regime had to be created, an image which could reconcile order and progress. Since the majority of the Brazilian population were excluded from the process which led to the implementation of the new form of government, the majority had to be made to accept it, and afterwards to contribute to republican legitimacy. For this reason a new symbolic world had to be prepared in which the republic appeared as something necessary to the country. In the process of preparing the imagination of the Republic and the diffusion of a nationalist discourse, the primary school played a fundamental role through, amongst other aspects, school festivities and civic solemnities.

CIVIC CEREMONIES

The festivities that were held in the school groups not only tell us about the school exams, but also visits of people considered to be illustrious and the ending of the school year. Festive ceremonies were also held for events with a predominantly civic nature, which were important moments in the education project at the beginning of the twentieth century. Part of the instructions given to teachers was civic and patriotic commemorations were to held as full elements in the school tradition that was being molded

In terms of the actual educational process, the teacher was supposed to always appear as someone who encouraged and guided the students in their tasks, not as one who ordered. The teachers were thus part of the foundations for the success of the new school culture. Pedagogical modernization, understood as teaching based on the intuitive method, which was to be implemented in a practical manner, was to be implemented in the classroom or in other environments, such as school festivities, in which people from outside the school groups could participate. As a result the teachers of the groups could be considered not only as the educators of children, but as teachers for all of society.

Festivals, commemorations and solemnities, thus, did not only occur at the end of the school year, when the final exams were held. Other motives also led to the holding of festive ceremonies, starting with the opening of facilities in the school groups, an event widely announced in the press. The opening of the General Valladão School Group, for example, was recorded

in the periodicals of the city. *Diário da Manhã* performed this task when it reported that

Last Sunday at 11.30 the General Valladão School Group was opened ... / The act was carried out with much solemnity, and was watched by a growing number of people from all social classes. / The festivities were opened with a beautiful prayer said by His Grace d. José, illustrious bishop of this diocese, which afterwards gave his sacred blessing to that temple...²²

In the event that was held in the General Valladão Group, after the words of the Bishop of Aracaju, other authority figures also spoke, including the president of the state, Manoel P. de Oliveira Valladão (1914-18); the director of Public Instruction, Helvécio de Andrade, and the representative of the National Defense League, Francisco de Macedo.

The ceremonies having ended, all were served 'champagne', beers, mineral water, liquors and sweets. / Students from the school groups appeared with their respective teachers and assistants, with the General Siqueira School Group being distinguished by its good order, intelligently run by the illustrious lawyer Major Mecenas Peixoto ... The act was made better by the bands of the 41 Rifle Battalion and the Police Body. / Patriotic songs were sung by students in the inauguration solemnity. (ibidem, p.1)

Inaugurating the School Group, moments such as the civic dates and the anniversary of the institution, as well as other events, such as honoring authorities from the state and the obtaining of benefits from school assistance funds, were also experienced with a festive rhythm. Dates such as 21 April, 7 and 21 September and 24 October were among the most celebrated in the school groups in Sergipe during the first decades of the twentieth century.

On 12 October 1928 the Gumercindo Bessa School Group in the city of Estância held a solemn commemoration for children's day, but what was especially commemorated was the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, as shown by the contents of minutes of the civic commemoration:

Meeting in the school building at 10 am, all the teachers and students of the establishment, as well as the students of the Heitor de Souza municipal school, a civic session was held, presided by the regional teaching officer, Antonio Xavier de Assis, who invited João Esteves, then in this city, to act as secretary. Opening the session, the president, after stating its purpose, appointed me to talk about

the date being commemorated, in relation to the great event of the Discovery of America, asking João Esteves to talk about the children. Obeying the honorable solicitation I made a historic summary of the grandiose event, extolling the imminent personality of Christopher Columbus, the immortal discover of the New World. / Next João Esteves spoke, and with the eloquence which is particular to him he talked for a long time about children, talking about their duties when they began to receive the sacred light of education, ending by kissing between applause the forehead of one of the students of the students of Group, as an expression of the most affectionate of the human senses. Afterwards d. Maria Araújo recited Castro Alves' beautiful poem, "*O Livro e a América*", and after her various students from the same group also recited epic poems from national authors.../ Cordial Greetings / Estância, 16 October 1928. / Headmaster / Dr. Jessé de Andrade Fontes.²³

13 May was also a motive of solemnity. Similar to the example of other groups, in 1925 the directorate of the Sylvio Romero School Group (Lagarto) reported to the Directorate of Instruction:

It is with great pleasure that I fulfill the duty of notifying you that with our dignified retired colleagues Maria das Dores de Barros, Esmeralda Flora de Carvalho and Herminia de Araújo Aragão from this School Group, we commemorate today the great success of the Brazilian Fraternity, gave a lecture to the students, who enthusiastically sang patriotic songs, and there were many cheers, including for our illustrious state president and yourself.²⁴

In 1930 in the building of the *Normal* School, where the General Siqueira School Group was based for a time, there was also a commemoration of the abolition of slavery. An article published in *Correio de Aracaju* in May 1930 gives a glimpse of the contents of the festivities. The periodical stated that "the department of public education, which is the General Siqueira School Group, held yesterday in this city, as had been announced, a brilliant commemorative festival for the date of the liberation of the slaves."²⁵ When the newspaper discussed the festivities it mentioned the presence of the president of the state, as well as that of deputies, students, teachers, and a student from Atheneu Pedro II, "offering a vibrant oration about 13 May." Furthermore, the ceremony also included caricatures by the artist, Jordão de Oliveira, then widely known in Sergipe and throughout Brazil.

As could not be otherwise, as in the example of other solemnities that occurred in the period in commemoration of civic dates, speeches given by

authorities from the state always referred to a person or a fact of great national relevance. In the festivities held in the General Siqueira Group mentioned above, the deputies Xavier de Oliveira and Passos Cabral spoke and there were recitations and declamations by students and teachers from the institution.

According to the descriptions of the festivities published in the press at the time, all the events that occurred in General Siqueira Group were carried out with the most perfect discipline, exactly in the form preached by the representatives of the new political regime. In other words, order reigned over everything, demonstrating progress and civility. Festivities in which teachers, porters and servants kept themselves in order, at their posts, counting on the music touch of the band of the Força Pública of the state, generally present at all the civic festivities.

The independence of Brazil was obviously an obligatory date of commemoration. The Directorate of Instruction of the state took on responsibility for holding the ceremony. In 1927 the Olympio Campos School Group held a civic march through the streets of the town, accompanying the local musical band and the Tobias Barreto Night School, which had joined the march, while at the end there was the solemn raising of the flag.²⁶ The ceremony held two years later also portrays the festive nature of these events:

I would like to notify Your Excellency how 7 September was solemnly celebrated in this establishment. / At 9 in the Com. Garcindo hall, there was a brilliant civic session, with the anthem being sung first, a lecture was given about this great historical deed by the teacher d. Maria Zaphira do Sacramento, who was followed by the student from fourth class Elzira Mesquita. After the singing of new patriotic songs, the closing speech was given telling young students about the great love they should have for the history of their country, and the sacred admiration for its great deeds, the study of which will be compensated with the development of sacred civic love.²⁷

In 1928 the directorate of the Coelho e Campos School Group from the city of Capela made a similar statement in its report on the festivities running from the morning to 6 pm on 7 September:

I have the honor to notify you that the date of 7 September, which commemorates our independence, was celebrated in this School Group, under my direction: in agreement with Dr. Nicanor Leal I invited the isolated school of Tamanduá, the two municipal schools and the private colleges in this city to meet in the Group at 10, and my request was fulfilled. At 11, with there being present the

local judge, Dr. Nicanor Leal, the tax assessor and collector, a large number of young girls, ladies, and more education people, the substitute teacher, d. Euthalia Couto and I gave a lecture to the children about the historical fact being commemorated, encouraging in them love for their Patria. / The national and the Sergipe anthem were sung, with the festivities ending at midday. / At 3pm all the students met again in the Group, with a number of more than 200, after which we went to the Municipal Intendancy, in whose main hall were the local authorities and the elite of Capelense society. / On that occasion Canon José Cabral, Judge Nicanor Leal and Advaldo Campos spoke brilliantly about the subject of the day. Four children recited poems suitable for the act. / At 4pm the students from the Group did some gymnastic activities in front of the Municipal Intendancy, after marching through the principal streets of the town to Matriz Square, where once again they did gymnastics exercises, then going back to the Group, disbanding at 6pm. / During the festivities only one absence was noted: that of the national pavilion which this Group does not have.²⁸

Records from other Sergipe school groups reported on the existence of commemorative solemnities of September 7 throughout the First Republic, generally involving meetings with other schools in the city, talks by authorities, songs, poems, the presentation of gymnastics and civic parades.²⁹

Similarly, 21 April also involved a strong moment of civic experience. On this date the figure of Tiradentes was remembered, who according to the headmaster of the Barão de Maroim School Group (Aracaju) was “the hero and martyr of the *Inconfidência Mineira* and one of the most notable and fearless planters of the cherished tree of liberty in Brazilian lands.”³⁰ In a festive format, based on the official order of the Directorate of Instruction, the Gumerindo Bessa School Group (Estância) gave the example of the holding of the solemnity. In an official letter sent to the Directorate of Instruction, the headmaster of the Group reported the holding of the civic solemnity in the presence of “not only the teaching body and the students of the establishment, but also teachers from isolated, state and municipal schools, and private colleges, accompanied by their students and a large number of important persons...”³¹ such as the local judge and the administration of the *Mesa de Rendas Estaduais* (the state inland revenue).

In the Severiano Cardoso Group (Boquim) the day dedicated to Tiradentes was also commemorated. In 1928 the civic session presided by the school inspector Dr. José Maria de Carvalho Mello was organized in two different areas. First, outside the school building, where the presence of all the teaching

staff was noted. The flag was raised, songs sung and poems recited by students, in an atmosphere in which, according to the inspector, “the students, revealing their discipline, gave those watching the impression of a solemnity which translated the patriotic feeling which could be seen forming among the students.” Following this the ceremony continued within the Group building, which had been decorated accompanied by a large number of ladies and girls from the local elite and the principal authorities from the city, including the presence of the local police chief, the intendent, the tax collector and the clerk of the Exatoria (the tax collection office), notary public, businessmen and other famous people. The civic session was presided by the school inspector José Maria Melo who ended his report on the ceremony praising the direction of the establishment and other authorities from the state with emotional words and phrases, providing clear evidence of a cultural manifestation of the epoch.³²

Other dates were also commemorated, such as the Independence of Sergipe (24/10), the ending of the Cisplatine War (27/08), the centenary of the birth of Marshal Deodoro da Fonseca (05/08), the Proclamation of the Republic (15/11), the National Flag (19/11) and the deeds of the Battle of Tuyuti (24/03). The presidents of Sergipe valorized school festivities so much that they even discussed them in messages to state deputies.³³ The importance of the civic and patriotic nature of the festivities was emphasized by president Manoel Dantas (1927-1930), who stated: “I have encouraged this initiative in benefit of the generations of tomorrow, taught since a young age about the value of our great men and in the knowledge of our nationality.”³⁴

Tribute ceremonies were also frequent and presented in a way capable of impressing, seducing, moving, and convincing all those watching that at the end of the solemnities they had experienced real moments of civism. Paying tribute to a famous person from local or Brazilian history was indirectly transformed into a moment elevating the Republic. An example of this were the festivities in 1922 for president Pereira Lobo (1918-22), widely publicized in the newspaper of Aracaju, even before the events in the form of invitations for all of society. On the occasion of the tribute by the Barão de Maroim School Group, the president appeared accompanied by his family and was greeted by other authorities and by the public. After the reception of the guest of honor, a speech extolling the person was made. Afterwards the president gave thanks and commented about his life and political trajectory in a ritual repeated on similar occasions.³⁵

In the Manoel Luiz School Group (Aracaju) president Graccho Cardoso (1922-1926) was honored. He, in the words of the headmaster of the institution,

was “the restorer of Education, the illustrious and honest preserver of democratic principles, who spared no efforts to propel progress in our land,”³⁶ and in October 1924 his portrait was placed in the principal hall of the Group in a festive ceremonial. In relation to this:

In homage of the illustrious president Dr. Mauricio Graccho Cardoso and the other distinguished son of Sergipe, patron of this school union, Dr. Manoel Luiz de Araujo Azevedo, warmly missed ... this act of civism was watched by his Excellency the president of the state and by a considerable number of esteemed people, civilian and military authorities, headmasters of teaching establishments and teaching staff, who with their presence lent brilliance to this festival of civism.³⁷

The tribute was reflected in the countryside of the state, with the Director of Public Instruction receiving invitations: “I have the honor to notify you that on 22 of this month the portrait of his Excellency Dr. Maurício Graccho Cardoso, meritorious former president of the state will be unveiled in the Gumersindo Bessa School Group, and you are asked to send a representative to this solemnity.”³⁸

Motives for holding school festivities were also provided by the work of school assistance funds³⁹ both in the promotion of festivities to raise funds,⁴⁰ and in concrete contributions for the groups, such as the distribution of uniforms for needy students. In 1920 in the capital,

197 uniforms and 55 kepis were provided for the primary classes, a donation made by *Caixa Escolar Elvira Valladão*. / During the act, which included patriotic songs sung by the student body, there appeared, in addition to the headmaster of the establishment, Carvalho Neto, Ascendino Argollo, Major Xavier de Assis and all the teachers... With cheers and songs to the government of the state and to education, the festivities ended, with the above mentioned objects being distributed.⁴¹

It can thus be seen that the school groups, in addition to being teaching institutions, had the function of being a place for social gatherings, since commemorative events in regional schools were centralized in its buildings, and people from these institutions and from society in general were received, who went to these ceremonies due to their significance. For these events the cooperation of the teachers was indispensable. In relation to the headmaster, he was responsible for coordinating the spectacles. He remained in contact

with local authorities to provide the commemorations with prestige. The contact, the assistance and the responsibilities also made the host into an authority figure in the place, it was he who ran the group, the irradiating center of culture – civic as well as school; which certainly contributed, in relation to the school groups, to the construction of a favorable image, because it was festive, organized and aimed at the social imagination.

The songs gave the ceremonies a marked tone of civism. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that the chanting of these was not restricted to solemn festivities. Daily activities in the groups were marked by songs, which demonstrates the joint purpose of the celebration of civism and the promotion of education manifested in ritualized daily school life within the school groups.

It can be adduced that the songs motivated students and teachers for each new stage in the daily tasks and became very important in the demarcation of school time as the instruments of civic pedagogy then practiced. For this reason teachers and intellectuals were involved with the work of composing songs and writing lyrics to enrich and diversify the collection of songs to be practiced in the schools. Borges shows that “civism was a national policy, taking into account values, norms, habits, emblems and myths aimed at ‘aggrandizement of the Patria,’ as well as adapting workers for the factory, disciplined and obedient to the hierarchical norms.”⁴²

In Sergipe the practice of singing songs was systematized in 1913 in the form of a songbook created as a complement to the internal regulations of public primary schools.⁴³ It was divided into two parts – patriotic songs and school songs – and was organized by Balthazar Góes, headmaster of the first two school groups in the state capital, with the collaboration of different Sergipe professionals as composers. According to the 1912 Teaching Program all four years of study had to include the singing of:

Patriotic songs: about the nation, independence, the Republic, Sergipe, etc.
School songs: the start and the end of the school year; the beginning and end of break time. Break and work (during the break): the blacksmith, the oarsman, the carpenter, the small farmer, the sawyer; small verses with the movement of a military march. *This program is for all classes. School music is learned by heart in the classroom.*⁴⁴

This practices was homogenized and disciplined, in such a way that the knowledge of the school songs appearing in the Sergipe songbook became an identifying mark of the education of students in local schools at a specific

epoch, thereby contributing to make local primary education institutions into locations of memory. Although it was only in the 1920s that school groups were expanded in Sergipe, the ritual of singing songs enthroned in these schools was also diffused among the isolated schools, with the result that people educated in the same generation had a very vivid and emotional memory of the singing of songs.

The care taken with this activity is noted by a former student of the General Siqueira School Group, Araújo, who said there were rehearsals for the singing of songs. According to her:

There the anthem was sung, the flag anthem and the national anthem, and we rehearsed every Saturday, every Saturday there was anthem rehearsal. The Sergipe anthem as well, the headmaster afterwards would say a few words, a few things, advising the students to behave well, to study, showing that the future was there. (Araújo, 2003)

The songbook of Sergipe public primary schools, as has been seen, was divided into two parts. In the first part, the patriotic songs, were the words, the music and singing instructions for the following anthems: Sergipe, Independence, Brazilian, the Republic and the flag. All had specific dates and occasions to be sung. The second part of the songbook consisted of school songs. Twelve in number, which were aimed at various moments of daily life in school, such as the beginning of class, going on break, returning from break, as well as the song to be sung before illustrious visitors. The instructions in the Teaching Program for the ritual of singing in schools is very explicit regarding the posture of students and teachers:

Before entering class the students will line up under the vigilance of their teachers and march, singing the song for the beginning of work, to their classrooms, staying standing until the song is finished. Upon leaving for and returning from break the same procedure shall be carried out. At the end of the each session, they shall line up singing the song for leaving.⁴⁵

The effective practice of singing is attested in various records from the old school groups, newspapers and the reports of school inspectors. The importance of the school songs in society can be measured using the frequency with which composers, poets and men of letters in general, also linked to teaching, wrote lyrics or composed songs. This data is indicative of the use of a common language, which allows the verification of how school songs

transmitted the ideas which permeated the republican imagination about public education in the country. Generally speaking the lyrics expressed concepts about work and workers, the relationship between work and study; they spoke of love for the patria, the importance of school, as well as the book, seen as a tool of knowledge. The repetition of these themes was synchronized with the use of certain keywords, used as vehicles for the diffusion of awareness about the arrival of a new time of progress, work and love, stimulating the capacity of sacrifice for the country. Thus the following words mainly appeared: heroes, warriors, progress, glory and dawn.

As Carvalho showed (1989, p.127), republican education was intended to mold the population for the new character that was intended to be imposed on the country. For this reason, “health, morals and work composed the trinomial on which the education of the people was intended to be built.” This concept was present in the school culture, whose administrative and pedagogical organization came to be based on the ideas of scientific rationality and the division of labor. It was hierarchized to administrate, organize and discipline better.

The cult of work was an inspiring theme for various songs. Work as a resource against misery, as an ally in the battles of life, as a key to victory. Study, in turn, appeared as a guarantee for work to be compensated in the future. The importance given to work is central in this republican imagination, concerned with the progress of the patria. To achieve this, everything passed through the order and discipline of school, the path to a modern country and a civilized people.

The establishment of a school group, seen as a ‘temple of wisdom,’ was marked with a ceremonial nature, since it was seen as the result of the progress and development of where it was set up. The groups functioned as supports for political and social symbols, such as the flag, the timetable and patriotic and school songs. In addition, the publication of its events in the press reaffirmed the role of the school in the designs of society.

In the school groups, “and through them, the republicans sought to highlight the republic itself and its exemplary educational project ... A future was projected in which in the republic the people, reconciled with the nation, would shape an orderly and progressive patria.”⁴⁶ As a result the population had contact with the manifestations of school culture through numerous festivities held in the school groups. In these festivities the singing of songs was a striking moment. They were held for various reasons throughout the school

year, including the beginning of holidays, events for school assistance funds, as tributes and civic dates.

These moments were marked by lessons in patriotism. In the lyrics of Sergipe's school songs the worship of heroes as an example to be admired and followed was a frequent inspiration. The patriotic heroes were presented as warriors who had contributed to the new dawn on a country with a brilliant future.

The singing of songs in school was an unquestionable element of civic education. Its practice, as has been seen, was present not only in the commemorative dates of the official calendar, but also on private occasions, such as the anniversaries of school institutions and the welcoming of illustrious guests. On these occasions the enthusiasm with which songs were sung was linked to the strict discipline of the bodies of boys and girls parading respectfully before the symbols of the patria, in the presence of authorities, or in the evocation of heroes of the country and of the state. However, it was daily repetition, measuring the rhythm of school time and motivating students for each new activity, which marked the hearts and minds with strong emotion.

This symbolic construction of the model primary school – the school group – meant that the institution came to be seen by all of society in a differentiated form. It was the place of education where children would receive an adequate schooling, adapted to modern times. All the events mentioned above were, according to Souza, built into the construction of institutional identity and played the function of sacralizing the school group as the expression of the patria and the republic: “Political and symbolic pedagogy of the primary school which cannot be underestimated in the comprehension of Brazilian culture in the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century.”⁴⁷

In the school festivities not only was students success commemorated with the receiving of their graduation certification. This was also a celebration of civism due to the propaganda of the authorities. Through the speeches made on these occasions, the president of the state was remembered with enthusiastic words, which as a consequence served to aggrandize the state and thereby the republic. They functioned as means through which public and educational leaders spread the ideal of civilized nation.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Daily life in the school groups was marked by regular and regulated activities, aimed at school activities and civic formation. Exams, festivities,

official exhibitions, as well as visits by authority figures, marked the tone of a highly organized institution. Rigidly structured daily life, programs and regulations to be obeyed, events to be organized, citizens to be educated; a rigorously planned school culture – this was life in the school groups, places of frequently celebrated school, civic, and childhood memories.

The public primary school, previously discrete and restricted to the culture of the home (isolated schools), now proclaimed progress, order, action, work, patriotism, grandiosity. Hereafter, its discourse would bring the successful teaching that formed men of action and of work, true republican citizens. This discourse was not restricted solely to those involved with the institution, but extended to all of the society in which it was involved, since its doors opened full of spectacle for the entire population. Indirectly, the grandeur of these institutions contributed to the absorption of the ideas of the new organization of the state, in other words, the republican ideal.

NOTES

¹ AZEVEDO, Crislane B. de. Arquitetura e grupos escolares em Sergipe: uma relação entre espaço e educação na escola primária. *Revista Outros Tempos*, v.7, n.10, p.119-142, 2010. (Dossiê História e Educação).

² According to the 1911 teaching reforms, responsible for implementing the school groups in Sergipe, primary education was to be taught in school groups and isolated schools. See: ESTADO DE SERGIPE. *Regulamento do Ensino Primário expedido pelo Exm. Snr. Dr. José Rodrigues da Costa Dória presidente do Estado por decreto n. 563 de 12 de agosto de 1911*. Aracaju: Typ. Commercial, 1911.

³ ARAÚJO, N. M. de: depoimento [ago. 2003]. Entrevistadora Crislane B. de Azevedo. Aracaju, 2003. 1 fita MC-60. Interview given to the research project about the establishment of school groups in Aracaju.

⁴ O encerramento das aulas do Grupo “Siqueira de Menezes”. *Correio de Aracaju*, Aracaju, 25/11/1922, n.3562, p.1; Grupo Escolar Siqueira de Menezes. *Sergipe Jornal*, Aracaju, 24/11/1922, n. 382, p. 1.

⁵ References to where we can find analogies between school groups and temples: *Diário da Manhã*, Aracaju, 31/08/1918, 17/03/1914 and 03/09/1918; *Estado de Sergipe*, Aracaju, 10/07/1917, 03/09/1918 and 13/09/1918; *Correio de Aracaju*, Aracaju, 01/09/1918 and 03/09/1918.

⁶ As férias do Grupo Escolar General Siqueira. *Sergipe Jornal*, Aracaju, 25/11/1925, n.1226, p.2.

⁷ O Grupo General Siqueira encerra seus trabalhos. *Correio de Aracaju*, Aracaju, 23/11/1919, n.2744, p.1.

⁸ Grupo Modelo. *Sergipe Jornal*, Aracaju, 22/11/1922, n.380, p.1.

⁹ Pela Instrução – Grupo General Siqueira. *Diário da Manhã*, Aracaju, 06/06/1914, n.944, p.2.

¹⁰ O Grupo General Siqueira encerra seus trabalhos. *Correio de Aracaju*, Aracaju, 23/11/1919, n.2744, p.1.

¹¹ Donativo ao Grupo Escolar General Valladão. *Correio de Aracaju*, Aracaju, 13/07/1919, n.2639, p.1.

¹² Examples of this can be found in: *Correio de Aracaju*, 07/06/1917, 19/10/1917 e 10/11/1917; *Diário da Manhã*, 09/10/1914, 07/06/1917 e 28/08/1917, and Livro de Termos de Visita do Grupo Escolar Manoel Luiz – 1924-1947.

¹³ See: ESTADO DE SERGIPE. *Regulamento do Ensino...* Aracaju: Typ. Commercial, 1911. p.17.

¹⁴ See: ESTADO DE SERGIPE. *Regulamento do Ensino...* Aracaju: Typ. Commercial, 1911. p.27.

¹⁵ AZEVEDO, Crislane B. de. *Grupo Escolar de Sergipe (1911-1930): cultura escolar, civilização e escolarização da infância*. Natal: EdUFRN, 2009.

¹⁶ Ofício de 01/06/1925 and Ofício 03/12/1927 do Grupo Escolar Fausto Cardoso para a Diretoria da Instrução.

¹⁷ Termo de Vista de 12/03/1925 do Delegado do Ensino da Bahia Alberto de Assis em visita ao Grupo Escolar Manoel Luiz.

¹⁸ Ofício de 27/03/1930 do Grupo Escolar Severiano Cardoso para a Diretoria da Instrução; Ofício 24, de 11/04/1929 do Grupo Escolar Olympio Campos para a Diretoria da Instrução.

¹⁹ Ofício de 01/06/1927 do Grupo Escolar João Fernandes de Brito para a Diretoria da Instrução.

²⁰ Resultado de exames e promoções: *O Estado de Sergipe*, Aracaju, 23/11/1915, 25/11/1915; *Estado de Sergipe*, Aracaju, 22/11/1917, 27/10/1918, 29/10/1918, 30/10/1918, 31/10/1918 and 01/11/1918; *Sergipe Jornal*, Aracaju, 22/11/1921, 25/11/1921, 26/11/1921, 03/12/1921 and 05/12/1921.

²¹ CARVALHO, Marta Maria C. de. *A Escola e a República*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1989. p. 7.

²² Instrução Publica: Grupo “General Valladão” – sua inauguração solemne. *Diário da Manhã*, Aracaju, 03/09/1918, n.2133, p.1.

²³ Acta de comemoração do dia 12 de outubro de 1928 realizada no Grupo Escolar Gumercindo Bessa.

²⁴ Ofício de 13/05/25 do Grupo Escolar Sylvio Romero para a Diretoria da Instrução.

²⁵ A festa de amanhã no Grupo General Siqueira. *Correio de Aracaju*, Aracaju, 12/05/1930, ano 23, n.1359, p.1.

²⁶ Ofício 51, de 08/09/1927, do Grupo Escolar Olympio Campos para a Diretoria da Instrução.

²⁷ Ofício 50, de 16/09/1929, do Grupo Escolar Olympio Campos para a Diretoria da Instrução.

²⁸ Ofício 267, de 08/09/1928, do Grupo Escolar Coelho e Campos para a Diretoria da Instrução.

²⁹ Termo de Visita de 07/09/1927 do delegado do ensino Antonio X. de Assis em visita ao Grupo Gumercindo Bessa; Acta da sessão civica, commemorativa... em 07/09/1928 no Grupo Fausto Cardoso.

³⁰ Ofício 11, de 23/04/1928, do Grupo Escolar Barão de Maroim para a Diretoria da Instrução.

³¹ Ofício de 23/4/1927, do Grupo Escolar Gumercindo Bessa para a Diretoria da Instrução.

³² See: Termo de Visita de 21/04/1928 do inspetor escolar dr. José Maria de Carvalho Mello em visita ao Grupo Escolar Severiano Cardoso.

³³ Cf. SERGIPE. *Mensagem apresentada á Assembléa...* 07/09/1927, 07/09/1929 e 07/09/1930.

³⁴ SERGIPE. *Mensagem apresentada á Assembléa...* 07/09/1927, p.6-7.

³⁵ As recentes homenagens ao sr. dr. Pereira Lobo – No Grupo Escolar Barão de Maroim. *Correio de Aracaju*, Aracaju, 14/10/1922, n.3530, p.1; A inauguração do retrato do dr. Pereira Lobo no Grupo General Siqueira. *Correio de Aracaju*, Aracaju, 24/10/1922, n.3538, p.2/3.

³⁶ In this period Sergipe had suffered an unsuccessful *Tenentista* revolt, and normality was restored in the state capital, Aracaju, in August 1924 after the restoration of Graccho Cardoso to the state government. For this reasons the directorate of Manoel Luiz School Group refers to President Graccho as an “honest conservative with democratic principles.”

³⁷ Livro de correspondência oficial do Grupo Escolar Manoel Luiz– 1924-1927, p.10, 10v, 11, 12v and 13.

³⁸ Ofício de 17/11/1925, do Grupo Escolar Gumercindo Bessa para a Diretoria da Instrução.

³⁹ School assistance funds were civic entities aimed at helping poor students in school, for example by providing school materials. The assets of these institutions were principally composed of contributions provided by members, subscriptions and private or public festivities, donations and legacies and funds stipulated in state or municipal budgets or by the school fund quota, in accordance with the distribution made by the director general of education. These assets were used to provide clothes and footwear, as well as books and other school objects for students recognized as poor.

⁴⁰ There are records of festivities to raise funds to help the groups: *Sergipe Jornal*, Aracaju,

29/09/1921, 01/10/1921 e 03/10/1921; *Correio de Aracaju*, Aracaju, 12/09/1917, 01/10/1921 e 04/10/1921.

⁴¹ Grupo Escolar General Valladão. *Correio de Aracaju*, Aracaju, 27/07/1920, n. 2927, p.1.

⁴² BORGES, Vera L. A. Projetos pedagógicos praticados na Escola estadual de Uberlândia – 1920-1960. In: CONGRESSO BRASILEIRO DE HISTÓRIA DA EDUCAÇÃO, 1. *Anais...* Niterói: s.n., 2001.

⁴³ GÓES, Balthazar. *Hymnario dos School groups e Escolas Singulares do Estado de Sergipe*: complemento do Regimento Interno. Sergipe: Imprensa Nacional, 1913.

⁴⁴ SERGIPE. *Programma para o Ensino Primário especialmente os Grupos Escolares do Estado de Sergipe*. Aracaju: Typ. d'O Estado de Sergipe, 1912. Original italics.

⁴⁵ SERGIPE. *Programma para o ensino primario...*, 1912.

⁴⁶ LOPES, Eliane M. T.; FARIA FILHO, Luciano M. de; VEIGA, Cynthia G. *500 anos de Educação no Brasil*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2003. p.225.

⁴⁷ SOUZA, Rosa Fátima de. *Templos de civilização: a implantação da escola primária graduada no estado de São Paulo (1890-1910)*. São Paulo: Ed. Unesp, 1998. p.277.

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