

Scientific Circulation, Language Policies, and the Geopolitics of Translation in the IBGE Geographic Bulletin During the Estado Novo Period (1943–1945): an introduction

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Circulation scientifique, politiques linguistiques et géopolitiques de la traduction dans le Boletim Geográfico de l'IBGE pendant l'Estado Novo (1943-1945) : une introduction

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ABSTRACT

This introductory text seeks to explore the history of geography from a perspective rarely examined in Brazil, both in terms of subject matter and methodology: that of languages and translations, framed by decoloniality and *translation studies*. To this end, we focus on the IBGE Geographic Bulletin during the Estado Novo period (1943–1945), identifying a noteworthy issue: Implementing an intensive multilingual editorial policy facilitates scientific circulation through various translations. However, this policy emerged within a context where the Estado Novo promoted the Portuguese language as a key symbol of nationalism and national identity. Beyond shedding new light on the history of Brazilian geography, a study of the Geographic Bulletin can contribute to understanding why a peripheral country invests so heavily in translation as a genre of scientific exchange and how this process unfolds.

KEYWORDS: nationalism; multilingualism; translations.

RESUMO

De caráter introdutório, este texto visa acessar a história da geografia sob um ângulo pouco explorado no Brasil tanto em termos de objeto quanto de método: o das línguas e das traduções baseado na decolonialidade e nos *translation studies*. Para tanto, selecionamos o Boletim Geográfico do IBGE durante o Estado Novo (1943-1945) e identificamos uma questão de vulto: a ocorrência de uma intensa política editorial multilíngue de circulação científica por meio de diversas traduções. Contudo, tal política ocorria em meio a uma conjuntura em que o Estado Novo promovia a língua portuguesa como um dos principais símbolos do nacionalismo e da identidade nacional. Além de permitir lançar novas luzes sobre a história da geografia brasileira, uma pesquisa sobre o Boletim Geográfico pode ajudar a entender as razões pelas quais um país periférico tanto investe na tradução como gênero de circulação científica e de que forma isto acontece.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: nacionalismo; multilinguismo; traduções.

RESUMEN

Este texto introductorio tiene como objetivo explorar la historia de la geografía desde una perspectiva inusual en Brasil tanto en términos de tema como de método. Al analizar lenguas y traducciones basadas en la decolonialidad y en los estudios de traducción en el Boletim Geográfico del IBGE durante el Estado Novo (1943-1945), salió a la luz una cuestión importante: una intensa política editorial multilingüe comprometida con la circulación de la ciencia a través de la traducción. Sin embargo, esta política se produjo en un período en el que la lengua portuguesa fue elegida por el Estado Novo como uno de los principales símbolos del nacionalismo y de la identidad nacional. Además de arrojar algo de luz sobre la historia de la geografía brasileña, mi investigación puede ayudar a comprender por qué y cómo un país periférico ha traducido muchos artículos científicos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: nacionalismo; multilingüismo; traducciones.

RÉSUMÉ

A titre d'introduction, cet article vise à analyser l'histoire de la géographie sous un angle peu connu au Brésil en termes de sujet et de méthode de recherche : celui des langues et des traductions à partir de la pensée décoloniale et des translations studies. Ainsi, à partir de la revue Boletim Geográfico publiée par l'IBGE pendant l'Estado Novo (1943-1945), j'ai identifié une

question importante : une politique éditoriale multilinguistique et vouée à la circulation scientifique à travers des traductions. Néanmoins, cette politique a eu lieu dans une époque où la langue Portugaise avait été élue par l'Estado Novo en tant qu'un des principaux symboles du nationalisme et de l'identité nationale. Au-delà d'éclaircir quelques aspects de l'histoire de la géographie brésilienne, cette recherche peut aider à comprendre comment et pourquoi un pays périphérique a traduit beaucoup d'articles scientifiques.

MOTS-CLÉS : nationalisme ; multilinguisme ; traductions.

A HETERODOX INTRODUCTION TO A STILL-TO-BE-JUSTIFIED OBJECT

One of the pivotal moments in shaping modern Brazilian geography can be traced to 1936 and 1937, when the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) and the National Council of Geography (CNG) became essential instruments of the Estado Novo. Coincidentally, a century earlier (1838), the Empire had established what would become one of the nation's main scientific institutions: the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB) (Guimarães, 1988; Guimarães, 2011). Both institutions were subordinated to the highest political authorities of their respective times—Emperor Dom Pedro I and President Getúlio Vargas—and each had its vehicles for disseminating ideas: *the Revista do IHGB* (1839), *Revista Brasileira de Geografia* (1939), and *Boletim Geográfico* (1943). While further analogies could be drawn, the key point here is the centrality of geography in state power projects.

This centrality, however, came under intense scrutiny by representatives of Brazilian critical geography starting in the late 1970s. These geographers, broadly speaking, sought to rethink geography through the lens of capitalist contradictions. Not merely a *reflection* of social relations but a determinant of them (to use the terminology of the time, cf. Santos, 1978), space became a pivotal category for analyzing Brazil's social formation. In the struggles against military dictatorship and the subsequent push for democratization, historical-dialectical materialism emerged as an intellectual and political framework that galvanized an entire generation (Moreira, 1977; Santos, 1982). Within this context, the first books on the history of geography written by Brazilians appeared—a significant milestone. Although IBGE geography journals published extensive theoretical-methodological texts and translations (primarily associated with “classical” and neopositivist traditions), the study of geography's history as an academic field remained largely unsystematized in Brazil throughout the twentieth century. Thus, works like *Introdução à geografia: geografia e ideologia* (Sodré, 1976), *O que é Geografia?* (Moreira, 1980), *Geografia: pequena história crítica* (Moraes, 1999 [1981]), and *Geografia, ciência da sociedade: uma introdução à análise do pensamento geográfico* (De Andrade, 1987) were *groundbreaking*. They inspired young scholars to explore this “new” field. However, in a framework where any geography not explicitly Marxist was considered ideological, and all ideology was seen as serving capital-driven goals, the past was often treated as a burden to critique and, in many ways, leave behind. This approach extended to one of Latin America's

largest “centers of calculation” (Latour, 1987): the IBGE. While Milton Santos, the leading figure among Brazil’s radicals, lamented the termination of the *Boletim Geográfico*, “which had rendered great service to scientific dissemination and the training of geographers” (Santos, 1982, p. 215), his opinion of the *Revista Brasileira de Geografia (RBG)* was markedly different: “Far from being the voice of a single tendency, it had become the mouthpiece of an in-group” (idem). Santos was likely aware, however, that the same group published both journals: the geographers of the IBGE.

Once influential in shaping generations, books and articles under its auspices fell into obscurity during the 1980s and 1990s. With few exceptions—such as Prêve’s 1989 master’s thesis on the *BG*’s contributions to geography education and Penha’s 1993 research highlighting the IBGE’s geopolitical role in shaping territories and regions during its formative years—the Institute only began to regain attention in the 2000s. Both Penha and Almeida, as internal staff members, paved the way for renewed recognition of the Institute’s geography and, by extension, its publications. Over the past two decades, a growing body of literature reflects this revival (Angotti-Salgueiro 2005, Bomfim 2007, Lamego 2010, Camargo 2009, Barcelos 2010, Pereira & Bomfim 2014, Ribeiro 2015, Senra 2017 [2016], De Aquino 2016, De Oliveira 2017, Cesar & Pinto 2018, Ribeiro 2020, 2024).

With humility, we aim to contribute to this resurgence. Managed by the National Geography Council between 1943 and 1978 (its final year of publication), the *Boletim Geográfico (BG)* seems to have been overshadowed by the *Revista Brasileira de Geografia (RBG)*. However, if we take Bourdieu’s (2004 [1997]) directive seriously—that it is the social scientist’s duty to address questions that remain unformulated—the *BG* surpasses its more prominent counterpart in one crucial respect: translation. According to our preliminary findings, while the *RBG* translated around ninety texts between 1939 and 1996, the *BG* rendered over 400 texts into Portuguese in a much shorter period (1943–1978). This likely makes it the largest collection of translations among Western geography journals¹. During its publication in the Estado Novo period (1943–1945), the *BG* featured 36 issues with 26 translations, representing 17 authors (notably Pierre Deffontaines with eight appearances and only two

¹ In our exchanges with colleagues from various countries at events on the history of geography and historical geography held in Belo Horizonte (2016), Warsaw (2018), Québec (2018), Kiel (2019), Grenoble (2021 [online]), Rio de Janeiro (2021 [online]), and Quito (2024), we have had the opportunity to propose this hypothesis.

women translated), four languages (12 in French, six in Spanish, seven in English, and one in German), seven translators (with Orlando Valverde contributing 14 translations), and one dedicated translation reviewer.

In essence, the BG functioned as a kind of “intellectual embassy”, diplomatically welcoming foreign geographers and their work. Was it a mere coincidence that José Carlos de Macedo Soares, the IBGE’s longest-serving president (1936–1951, 1955–1956), had also served as an ambassador? The CNG and the BG establish themselves as privileged spaces for scientific circulation in the periphery. Despite publishing solely in Portuguese, the BG pioneered a multilingual editorial policy from its inception, reinforcing the observation that linguistic diversity in science is far greater in peripheral countries than in central ones. Yet, the implications of this remain unexplored. Historians of geography have neither a quantitative nor a qualitative grasp of the authors, themes, translators, and sources mobilized, as translation is not yet considered a valid research object *among* Brazilian geographers.

We advocate for translation as a practice *and, consequently, as* an integral part of human geography, aiming to deepen the recognition of translation as a geographical subject. In other words, it is a phenomenon whose spatiality—encompassing the transfer of articles, books, and journals involving editors, translators, and readers—forms a network that significantly impacts science at large and the history of geography in particular. Especially in the Brazilian context, where the nation’s history is intertwined with linguistic exchanges as a means of accessing the external world (cf. Gonçalves Barbosa & Wyler 2001 [1998], Ramicelli 2009, Hanes 2014, Santoro & Buarque 2018), we are convinced that analyzing translation as displacement in the broadest sense—considering the Latin etymology of “translate” (*trans* + *ducere*), meaning “to carry across” (Laranjeira 2003:15 [1993]) —offers a fertile and innovative way to problematize the field of the history of geography.

Translations serve as traces, evidence, and markers of how science moves across places, languages, contexts, and cultures, without resorting to essentialism. However, translations do not merely facilitate circulation; they also play a pivotal role in creating “schools,” “traditions,” and “canons” (Keighren 2010, 2013; Keighren, Abrahamsoon, della Dora 2012; Ribeiro, Haesbaert & Pereira 2012; Ferretti 2019; Hammond & Cook 2023). Thus, they shape a geography of scientific production that extends beyond simply mapping items distributed across space. Translators, as *social agents*, play a central role, with their work paving *the* way for these exchanges to occur (Schulte 1992; Spivak

2000 [1999]; Rupke 2000; Kershaw & Saldanha 2013; Italiano 2012). From this arises the concept of the *geotranslator*, which we have proposed elsewhere (Ribeiro 2021) and continue to refine.

The text is structured into three sections: the first provides a methodological framework for approaching translations in geography, blending decolonial thought with *translation studies*; the second outlines how studying translations in the *BG* o can illuminate the circulation of authors, texts, and foreign languages while challenging the nationalist linguistic policies of the Estado Novo; and the third concludes by highlighting how the *BG* combined nationalism with multilingualism.

GEOPOLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE, MODERN TRANSLATION REGIMES, IMAGINED COMMUNITIES, AND EDITORIAL CAPITALISM: METHODOLOGICAL INTERWEAVING

In addressing scientific circulation, we examine translations through the lens of *geopolitics*, while building upon a trajectory that has expanded its original scope and shifted toward the political left (Ó Tuathail 1996, Cowen & Smith 2009, Mezzadra & Neilson 2013). Decolonial frameworks, such as Walter Mignolo's concept of the geopolitics of knowledge, provide a theoretical-methodological tool that spatializes scientific production in opposition to universalist Eurocentrism and politicizes it through geographical dimensions *like* territory, circulation, and *language*. In textual descriptions or cartographic representations, neutrality is absent; what emerges is the projection of worldviews by those who turned writing, grammar, history, borders, and geography—as well as religion and law—into fields that legitimized the global order inaugurated by the Atlantic Revolution at the close of the 15th century. Thus, everything—including languages and translations—was colonized (Mignolo 1995, 2003 [2000], 2007 [2005]).

Mignolo emphasizes that critiquing Western science is impossible without addressing linguistic issues in their broad and geographical sense. He even introduces the notion of decolonial translation (Mignolo 2012), from which we infer that the location from which a translation is produced reveals much about the language and nature of the translated content. In this context, location is not merely a fixed cartographic coordinate, but a bundle of experiences inclined toward certain kinds of knowledge and languages over others. Given the undeniable inequality among nations—particularly regarding scientific asymmetries—we argue that the geopolitics of knowledge acts as

a regulator of flows *between central and peripheral countries, including translations* (see also Simeoni 2008, Mulinacci 2015, Castro 2020, Spivak 2004 [1993], Wright 2002, Minca 2016).

We then weave the geopolitics of knowledge with Naoki Sakai's concept of "modern regimes of translation", which sheds light on how translations shape national languages, orchestrated by territorial states seeking cultural homogenization and unity. Sakai describes modern regimes of translation as predicated on the principle that:

a language must be clear and exhibit no perceptible ambiguity relative to another, and, in principle, two languages must never overlap or blend like conjoined twins. It was through this regime that the idea of an original Japanese language was introduced in the 18th century to the multilingual and creole-rich social milieu of the Japanese archipelago (Sakai 1997, p. 51-52, our translation).

For Sakai, translation serves as the nexus of a network of multiple vectors, enabling, in a single movement, a critique of modernity and the constitution of the human sciences. Translation becomes, methodologically, a boundary—sometimes porous, sometimes rigid—through which one can reassess modern cultural, linguistic, and geopolitical practices and representations (Sakai 1992, 1997, 2012, 2017; Sakai & Mezzadra 2014). His perspective offers a timely warning:

If we insist on regarding modern regimes of reading, writing, recitation, translation, etc., as self-evident, we risk assuming the modus operandi of these regimes as universally valid. Inscribing this historically specific modus operandi into the past, we lose the ability to imagine alternative regimes beyond this nationally marked homolingualism (Sakai, 2019 [2010], p. 255-56).

This homolingualism is crucial to our case study, as it forms a central component of the nationalist policies of the Estado Novo. These dynamics, in turn, lead us to revisit Benedict Anderson's concepts of imagined communities and editorial capitalism (Anderson 2008 [1983]). The IBGE's geographic journals, exclusively envisioned and funded by the state, were instrumental in crafting textual and visual narratives designed to contribute to building national identity through state-driven initiatives.

Based on a vast repository of literature emerging from *translation studies* over the past three decades (Venuti 1995, 2009, 2013 [2003]; Spivak 2010, 2000 [1999]; Italiano 2012, 2016; Cassin 2016, 2018), and responding to both Bachmann-Medick's (2009) call to incorporate the *translational turn* into the humanities (see also Schulte 2012) and Venuti's (2004) emphasis on the necessity of learning *how to read translations*, we propose four methodological premises for studying translation in geography:

- (i) translations should be understood as independent texts rather than mere transcriptions between two languages. translators, acting as interpreters of the text, context, author, and language, operate as social agents. The languages they mobilize influence reading, writing, and research in significant ways.
- (i) translations must be de-naturalized and studied beyond linguistic and literary circles. This is particularly crucial given their unique role in the political and cultural exchanges that shape humanities.
- (i) translations demand the politicization of their content, agents, and vehicles of transmission. The asymmetrical scientific structure between dominant and dominated languages necessitates a geopolitical understanding of translations to illuminate the global networks of scientific circulation.
- (i) translations are both a geographical object and a form of geography. Much like borders, they shift, enabling or obstructing access. They create spaces and shape imaginaries around “traditions,” authors, and nations.

TRANSLATION, LANGUAGE POLICY, AND EDITORIAL STRATEGIES

Toward geopolitics of translation

To examine the range of translations published in the *Boletim Geográfico*, we focus on the Estado Novo period (1937–1945), when geography had recently achieved the *status* of a higher education discipline (combined with history) at the newly established Universities of São Paulo (1934) and the Federal District (1935). During this time, geography also played a pivotal role in modernizing state administration through the IBGE, under Getúlio Vargas’s leadership starting in 1936 (Penha 1993). However, as Foucault (1970) reminds us, the nexus between science and power is undeniable. Thus, it is imperative to elucidate the *modus operandi* of the Estado Novo, a regime that dissolved Congress and abolished political parties with military support (Skidmore 2010 [1967]). This authoritarian restructuring was accompanied by the elevation of intellectuals aligned with the regime and the centralization of cultural production under federal control (Miceli 1989, Gomes 1996, Bomeny 2001). The Department of Press and Propaganda (DIP) managed both the censorship of dissenters and the sponsorship of state-aligned intellectuals (Grecco 2021). In addition to funding private companies such as Companhia Editora Nacional and Livraria José Olympio, the Estado Novo assumed the

role of publisher (Vieira 2019), establishing and managing journals such as *Cultura Política* (Velloso 1982, Gomes 1996) and the *Revista de Imigração e Colonização* (Castro 2021), alongside the RBG and BG. This creates a unique case within Western capitalist regimes: a political regime leveraging its financial resources and spatial reach to mobilize periodicals—two exclusively dedicated to geography—and a form of *intelligentsia* to propagate official narratives on nationality, Brazilian identity, and territorial unity.

Much more than mere transcription—the name of the *BG* section dedicated to translations—translation is a complex act of interpretation. It not only demands linguistic and intellectual skills related to the author or subject being translated but also positions the *geotranslator* as a crucial political-cultural agent in the dynamics of knowledge circulation. Understanding the reception and dissemination of foreign geographers in Brazil necessitates examining the role of languages and translations. These intertwined processes entrenched French, and later English after World War II, as prestigious academic languages.

The diversity of translations published in the *BG* adhered to three intersecting geopolitical objectives: (i) external geopolitics of the Estado Novo, engaging with French, American, and German intellectuals; (ii) cultural centralization, wherein the regime acted as editor, financier, organizer, and distributor of geographic materials aligned with nationalist linguistic and territorial ideals; and a (iii) scientific modernization, incorporating foreign contributions to establish university courses and professionalize geographers for state administration.

From the extensive and diverse literature on the French Mission at the universities of São Paulo and the Federal District in the 1930s and 1940s (De Almeida 1989, Massi 1989, Lefebvre 1990, Paris 1999, De Almeida 2000, Machado 2009, Da Silva 2012), our thematic focus highlights that this mission took place precisely when France was in crisis due to the aftermath of World War I and the economic rise of competitors like Germany and the United States (Demangeon 1920). Additionally, it unfolded in a context of change marked by the decline of the French language alongside the growing prominence of American culture and English in Brazil (Rolland 2004). Despite internal political differences, French intellectuals united to promote their language as a strategy to maintain cultural *prestige* (Suppo 2019). Yet, the linguistic dimension of this mission has often been underexplored (Petitjean 1996, Rolland 2004, Suppo 2019).

During the Estado Novo, the *BG* devoted significant attention to translating works by Pierre Deffontaines, a French scholar based in Brazil, publishing eight of his articles, six translated by Orlando Valverde—a novice geographer and CNG assistant secretary. Deffontaines’s in-person presence played a pivotal role, as he was working *in* Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo—primarily in Rio, where he maintained close ties with the Catholic circle that included figures like Christovam Leite de Castro, Secretary-General of the CNG and editor of the RBG and *BG*. His work was translated by a young geographer who, in turn, demonstrated linguistic proficiency in Spanish, English, and French (and would later translate into German), thereby gaining the attention of his peers. Moreover, Deffontaines’s articles, focused on Brazil (to be analyzed in detail in a future study), depict the country’s rich regional landscape diversity while reinforcing *its territorial unity and avoiding criticism of the Estado Novo’s authoritarian regime*. These two latter aspects were pivotal in shaping the so-called “DIP effect” (Ribeiro, 2024).

However, the prominence of the French language in the early years of Brazilian academic geography warrants closer examination, as its supposed “omnipresence” risks overshadowing the significant influence of American geography. During the Estado Novo, several key IBGE figures traveled to the United States as part of a government initiative to enhance practical geography skills for addressing regional and territorial issues in Brazil’s central, northern, and northeastern regions (Zarur 1944). Prominent names include Delgado de Carvalho, who lectured in 1940; Jorge Zarur, a master’s student at Wisconsin-Madison that same year; and, in 1945, Fábio Guimarães, Orlando Valverde, Lúcio de Castro Soares, Lindalvo Bezerra dos Santos, and José Veríssimo da Costa Pereira, all of whom pursued postgraduate studies at the Universities of Wisconsin-Madison, Chicago, and Northwestern. Taking Zarur as an example, he engaged with leading figures in geography, including Richard Hartshorne, Carl Sauer, Isaiah Bowman, Harlan Barrows, Derwent Whittlesey, Clarence Jones, and Vernor Finch (De Barros 2008, Zarur 2016).

This exchange underscores the specific networks and broader geopolitics of knowledge within which Valverde and Zarur operated. Notably, in 1943, they translated *Geopolitics*, an article by American economist and *Life* magazine editor Joseph J. Thorndike Jr., into Portuguese. The text discusses the origins of *Geopolitik* in the works of Ratzel and Kjéllen, while focusing on Haushofer as Hitler’s ideological influence. Thorndike Jr. reveals that German expansionist plans, previously secret, were exposed through the English

translation of Ewald Banse's *Raum und Volk im Weltkriege* (1932) (Thorndike Jr. 1943 [1942]). This translation effort highlights Valverde and Zarur's commitment to making American literature accessible to Brazilian readers. Before his journey to the U.S., Valverde also translated an article by American diplomat John F. Melby on a wartime-critical subject: rubber in the Amazon (Melby 1943 [1942]). At the time, federal employees traveling abroad were required to gain knowledge about the language, customs, and educational systems of their destination, as documented in the *BG*'s informative "Noticiário" section (*BG* v.1, n.3, pp.68–69, 1943).

On the flip side, American interest in Brazil was equally notable. Within the scope of frontier expansion and capitalist development studies led by Isaiah Bowman (Smith 2003), regional fieldwork in the 1930s and 1940s attracted geographers like Preston James to Brazil's coffee-growing southeast, and zoologist-botanist George Tate to the Amazon². Originally published in leading journals like *Geographical Review* and *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, James's works were translated by the *BG* during the final year of the Estado Novo (The Coffee Lands of Southeastern *Brazil*, James 1945) and continued to appear under the Dutra government (James 1946, 1947, 1949). These translations established James as a leading U.S. expert on Latin America (Dawsey III 2002).

However, as recorded by the *Boletim Geográfico* in 1943, Tate was involved in a minor diplomatic incident: after being discovered in Manaus and questioned about the nature of his research, he informed the press that he could not provide any statements "due to higher and confidential orders regarding the matter" (*BG*, vol. 1, n. 3, p. 76, 1943). Since no Brazilian authority had been consulted about the trip, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—headed by Oswaldo Aranha, a strong advocate for closer ties with the United States—and local CNG advisors declared the foreigner's stay illegal. The U.S. consulate was contacted and subsequently sent a telegram to the State of Manaus confirming Tate's return to the United States, "from where he will soon return, with the given consulate to notify the relevant authorities of his return and the purposes of Mr. Tate" (*idem*, p. 77).

Apparently, the diplomatic impasse reached a positive conclusion: in 1945, Regina Pinheiro Guimarães, from the CNG's Geography and Cartography Studies Section, translated into Portuguese Notes on the Region of Mount Roraima, originally published by Tate in the *Geographical Review* in 1930 (Tate

2 For the topic of modern colonization in the tropics, see Nogueira (2023).

1945 [1930]). The next step will be to analyze the content of this article in detail. After all, Tate was not just any figure; he served as head of the *Rubber Development Corporation*³ expedition, an official agency of the U.S. government with which Brazil negotiated, in 1942, a \$100 million credit line in exchange for increasing rubber production in the Amazon to meet the demands of the global conflict (Garfield 2006).

Amid the intricate threads of our research, one cannot help but wonder: What transpired between Tate's expulsion from Brazil and his translation into Portuguese? *What criteria were used to select a text for translation? What kind of diplomacy does translation enact, and what type of geopolitics does it adhere to?* Ultimately, the cases described above reveal that translation is not only an act of rewriting but, fundamentally, an act of reading. Reading here is understood from a dual perspective: not only as what geographers of the time consumed in foreign languages but also as what geotranslators wanted students, *teachers*, and the broader public in Brazil to read. Translations unveil what we often take for granted as "affinities", which, far from being accidental, are the result of specific historical, geopolitical, and cultural structures and circumstances⁴ (Bourdieu 2002 [1990]).

Language policies in times of nationalism

To deepen our understanding of the main debates, sources, and authors mobilized by Brazilian "geotranslators"—along with their intentions—connections of this nature must be closely examined. In the *BG's* "Weekly Geographic Gatherings" section, dated February 23, 1943, we learn about the *Vocabulário Ortográfico da Língua Nacional* (Orthographic Vocabulary of the National Language), an initiative of the Associação Brasileira de Letras. The association sought guidance from the CNG to establish proper spelling for toponyms and

3 See JSTOR. Available at <https://plants.jstor.org/stable/10.5555/al.ap.person.bm000060457>. See also: "George Henry Hamilton Tate". *Science and Its Times: Understanding the Social Significance of Scientific Discovery*. *Encyclopedia.com*. (August 18, 2021). <https://www.encyclopedia.com/science/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/george-henry-hamilton-tate>. Accessed on August 24, 2021.

4 A peculiar finding from our research on English-language translations is found in the text *Organização de uma unidade em geografia matemática*. Although the author is listed as Katheryne T. Whittemore (a pioneer and founder of the Buffalo State Geography Department and Buffalo State College), the text belongs to Katheryne Colvin Thomas, who was affiliated at the time of publication with the State Teachers College at Buffalo. It was originally published in the *Journal of Geography*, vol. 30, no. 6, pp. 247–251, 1931. On this issue, see https://geosciences.multistg.buffalostate.edu/sites/geosciences/files/documents/Whittemore_Department_Tribute.pdf e <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00221343108987750>. Accessed on October 23, 2024.

geographic concepts, given the existence of foreign-language terms. French Council member Francis Ruellan referenced the issue's mention at the 1931 Congress of Geography in Paris, remarking that "this case assumes an international character, [being] therefore of extreme delicacy" (BG, n.3, p.64, 1943). The following month, Ruellan delved further, asserting that "before translating a term, it is necessary to determine its exact meaning; for certain phenomena, it is preferable to retain foreign terms, as even the choice of spelling is difficult when the meaning is unclear" (BG, n.4, p.91, 1943). Brazilian military officer Commander Luiz de Oliveira Belo, however, took a contrasting stance. Reflecting on the vastness of Brazil's territory, he noted the challenges of unifying geographic names and proposed the "formation of a commission tasked with associating different regional names with geographic features" (idem).

This controversy is far from trivial. Beyond illustrating the prominence of translation-related debates in the *BG*, it highlights tensions likely noted by the geographers handling translations—many of whom were CNG members themselves. How this impasse was resolved remains an open question. For the Estado Novo, however, linguistic issues were not secondary but integral to its geopolitical project, positioning Portuguese as a cornerstone of Brazilian identity. A 1941 document from IBGE's General Secretariat, tellingly titled *Problemas de base do Brasil* (Basic Problems of Brazil), underscores the central role of language: "To firmly safeguard, as the most sacred and transcendent guarantee of national unity and greatness—namely, the historical destiny of the Nation—the unity and controlled, uniform evolution of language throughout the country..." (IBGE 1941, p.67).

Although the *BG* actively supported the state's cultural and linguistic nationalist propaganda—valuing indigenous toponyms in its recognition of landscapes and places—this did not preclude the preservation of a multilingual editorial policy. As highlighted earlier, during the Estado Novo's years of *BG* publication (1943–1945), its 36 issues featured 26 translations from 17 authors (notably Deffontaines, with eight texts, and only two women, reflecting the era's biases), in four languages: French (12 times), Spanish (6), English (7), and German (1). Seven translators contributed, with Valverde handling 14 translations, and one reviewer overseeing the work. The presence of foreign influences was undeniable⁵. Likewise, from 1939 to 1957, the *RBG* de-

⁵ The adopted criteria were as follows: although some translations were published in parts, they were counted only once. Furthermore, although Monbeig had twelve articles published in the *BG* between 1943

monstrated similar multilingual ambitions, offering article summaries in six languages—English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, and Esperanto—even though it lacked Portuguese summaries. This effort had the explicit support of prominent figures such as Everardo Backheuser, renowned for his work in pedagogy and geopolitics; Teixeira de Freitas, secretary-general of the National Statistics Council and a foundational figure at IBGE alongside the CNG; and José Carlos de Macedo Soares, IBGE president.

Interestingly, despite Decree-Law No. 383 of 1938 banning foreigners from “maintaining newspapers, magazines, or other publications, publishing articles and commentary in the press, granting interviews, giving lectures, speeches, or addresses” (Weber 2020, p.29), and Decree-Law No. 406 of the same year banning the teaching of Japanese, Italian, and German in schools—languages associated with Axis nationalities but also representing some of the largest immigrant communities in Brazil since the 19th century, alongside Portuguese and Spanish—and the confiscation of educational materials in these languages (Seyferth 1999), this did not prevent the frequent translations of Pierre Deffontaines, Francis Ruellan, and Pierre Monbeig in the *RBG* and *BG*, nor the reproduction of their lectures and texts in newspapers. Furthermore, Monbeig co-founded the short-lived *Geografia* magazine in 1935 (see Huerta 2019). Notably, Deffontaines and Ruellan were the most translated authors during the Estado Novo in the *BG* and *RBG*, respectively.

Considered by the state as one of the “ethnic quagmires” (Koifman 2019, p.553-557) potentially undermining the construction of cultural unity, the German language persisted during the Estado Novo and World War II, appearing in the pages of the *BG*. In 1945, filmmaker and *cameraman* Franz Eichhorn had a brief excerpt from his journey to the Rio Araguaia translated into the language of Machado de Assis. Eichhorn had traveled to Brazil in 1936-1937 to scout locations for the “expedition-film” *Kautschuk* (Rubber), a genre widely favored in both the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany that exploited exotic imagery of animals and the perils of “savage” peoples. Predictably, this depic-

and 1945, some were reproductions from other journals, while others lacked any indication of the source (which, if foreign, would suggest a translation, for example) or the translator. There is also the possibility that he might have written in Portuguese—an uncertainty that persists despite consulting both Brazilian and French scholars familiar with his work. Ultimately, it was not possible to confirm that any of his articles in the *BG* were translations. Regarding the language, it was determined based on the source language from which the translation was made. Vidal de la Blache was translated from Spanish in the inaugural edition of the *Boletim Geográfico* (*BG*), for example. The complete list can be found in the *Appendix* at the end of the article.

tion conflicted with the image Estado Novo sought to project abroad (see De Luca 2011, Vieira 2019). The translated excerpt may have been taken from *In der grünen Hölle: Kurbefahrten durch Brasilien* (*In the Green Hell: Raft Voyages through Brazil*, 1937), a popular book Eichhorn co-authored with his brother, later translated into French (O'Brien 2004).

The most intriguing case of German-language material, however, concerns B. Brandt's *Kulturgeographie von Brasilien* (*Cultural Geography of Brazil*, 1926), which was translated in eight parts for the BG between 1944 and 1945 by Rodolfo Coutinho, a professor at Colégio Pedro II. This raises questions about the content and significance of a German interpretation of Brazilian culture during a period when the Estado Novo centralized cultural narratives to serve its authoritarian agenda. Coutinho's "Translator's Note" openly disagreed with some of Brandt's dichotomous critiques of Brazilian customs, showcasing the translator's agency in shaping the circulation of knowledge—contrary to the passive role translators are often assumed to play. However, Coutinho agreed with Brandt on the importance of immigration, emphasizing that "cultural clashes will become a dynamic element of national life" (Brandt 1944, p.421, emphasis added), a view that may have conflicted with the nationalist campaign of the Estado Novo (Coutinho 1944, p.420-421; see Gomes 1982). A final twist lies in Coutinho's political affiliations: he was a member of the Brazilian Communist Party, a delegate at the Fifth Congress of the Comintern in the Soviet Union in 1924 and was arrested during the 1935 Communist Uprising (De Castro 2010). In other words, he was deeply connected to one of the Estado Novo's primary adversaries (Dutra 2012 [1997], Motta 2020 [2002]). Soon after, in 1945, Brandt's translation was consolidated into a book as part of the Biblioteca Geográfica Brasileira project, coordinated by the CNG⁶.

Such cases underscore that the state is not a monolithic entity without agents; the machinery driving it is neither uniform nor automatic, and the interplay between science and politics is far more intricate than it seems

6 It is worth mentioning, in passing, Leo Waibel, a German-born American naturalized scientist brought to the IBGE as a scientific consultant through the intervention of the Brazilian students previously listed, who had attended his courses in the United States. His field research in the southern region of Brazil from 1946 to 1950 (notably during the Dutra government) revealed that the conditions experienced by German communities still reflected the war's impact. His influence profoundly shaped one of the most prominent Brazilian geographers of the 20th century: Orlando Valverde. Waibel also had articles translated and published in the BG between 1947 and 1955. It can be inferred, therefore, that after Vargas aligned Brazil with the Allies during World War II in 1942, Waibel would have found it challenging to secure a favorable working environment in the country. For more on Waibel, see Etges (2000), Kohlhepp (2013), and Nogueira (2020).

(Maia, 2010). In this vein, Grecco demonstrated how censorship during the Estado Novo was sometimes circumvented, even by employees of the Department of Press and Propaganda itself (Grecco, 2021). Our task is to analyze how the *BG* navigated this context, identifying potential deviations from Estado Novo policies. After all, the most repressive phase of the DIP, under Lourival Fontes from 1939 to 1942, had already passed when the *Boletim Geográfico* was first published.

Within this framework, a seemingly innocuous 1943 article titled *Geografia das línguas* (Geography of Languages) by Delgado de Carvalho—a professor at the National Faculty of Philosophy and member of the Central Directory of the National Council of Geography and the Brazilian Geographical Library—presents arguments that appear at odds with the regime’s linguistic nationalism. He remarks, “Language is not indispensable to the desire to live together, although it greatly helps. It is willpower that creates a nation... language defines a people, but not necessarily a nation” (De Carvalho, 1943, p. 47). Furthermore, amid the Estado Novo’s crackdown on languages read, spoken, and taught within Italian, Japanese, and German communities, Carvalho—himself the son of a Brazilian father, born in France, and educated in *France, Switzerland, and England* (De Barros, 2008)—candidly observes: One relationship between territory and language *lies in the political use the sovereign of a territory seeks to make of language to achieve unification*. Let us cite only the attempts, sometimes violent, of ‘Russification’ carried out during the time of the czars in Poland and Finland. Indeed, language is an element of resistance and national vitality: it was the passive obstacle Poland opposed to Russia, Bohemia to Austria, Schleswig to Prussia, and Flanders to Belgium” (ibid., p. 50, emphasis added).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Blending Benedict Anderson’s reflections with those of Naoki Sakai, one might argue that, in the name of an “imagined community”, the editorial capitalism of the Estado Novo established a geography and statistics institute aimed at modernizing government administration through science. This initiative brought foreign intellectuals to Brazil, harnessed their *expertise* in founding the first universities, translated their scientific works into a nationally distributed journal, and sent geographers abroad who, upon their return, became geography translators within Brazil’s “modern regime of translation” (Anderson 2008 [1983]; Sakai 2010).

When translations are denaturalized and treated as geographic objects, they shed light on multiple dimensions simultaneously. They serve to update the geographic field and attract a broader readership while addressing bibliographic gaps in Portuguese—an enduring challenge, especially for the *Boletim Geográfico* due to its bibliographic nature. Translations also materialize networks of intellectual exchange and highlight the editorial work of the National Council of Geography (CNG).

Within an authoritarian regime and amidst World War II, the *Boletim Geográfico* of the IBGE implemented a multilingual editorial policy that bridged the monolingual nationalism championed by the Estado Novo and the international linguistic exchanges fostered by foreign cooperation networks and the translation capacities of CNG geographers. The BG's translations can be understood as a mechanism for transforming and “adapting” international knowledge to fit in national contexts, aligning with the linguistic and territorial nationalism pursued by Vargas and the scientific modernization spearheaded by the CNG. These considerations underscore the importance of addressing the linguistic dimension as a central element in the history of geography in a peripheral country like Brazil. While its dominated language may compel reliance on translations within the geopolitics of knowledge, it also enriches the circulation of knowledge through multilingualism. ●

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APPENDICES

Translations of journal articles and book chapters (chronological order)

Vidal de la Blache, Paul (1943). A geografia na escola primária. **Boletim Geográfico**, v. 1, n. 1, p. 18-24. Trad. do espanhol porém sem indicação do tradutor.

Pomfret, John E. (1943). A geografia humana e a cultura. **Boletim Geográfico**, v. 1, n. 2, mai., p. 19-26. Trad. do espanhol por Orlando Valverde.

Deffontaines, Pierre (1943). O que é a geografia humana. **Boletim Geográfico**, v. 1, n. 3, jun., p. 13-26. Trad. do francês por Orlando Valverde.

Eddington, Arthur (1943). A recessão das galáxias. **Boletim Geográfico**, v. 1, n. 3, jun., p. 18-30. Trad. do francês por Orlando Valverde.

Melby, John. F. (1943). Rio da borracha: um relato do surgimento e do colapso do surto amazônico. **Boletim Geográfico**, v. 1, n. 4, jul., p. 26-34. Trad. do inglês por Orlando Valverde.

Sanchez, Pedro C. (1943). A evolução da geografia. **Boletim Geográfico**, v. 1, n. 5, ago., p. 32-46. Trad. do espanhol por Orlando Valverde.

Thorndike Jr., Joseph J. (1943). Geopolítica. **Boletim Geográfico**, v. 1, n. 6, set., p. 32-46. Trad. do inglês por Orlando Valverde e Jorge Zarur.

Branner, John Casper (1943). Caráter geográfico da zona dos lagos no Estado de Alagoas. **Boletim Geográfico**, v. 1, n. 7, out., p. 30-46. Trad. do inglês por Axel Löfgren.

De Launay, Louis (1943). A Terra – sua estrutura e seu passado. *Boletim Geográfico*, v. 1, n. 8, nov., p. 19-51. Trad. do francês por Orlando Valverde.

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Deffontaines, Pierre (1944). Como se constituiu no Brasil a rede das cidades. **Boletim Geográfico**, v. 2, n. 14, mai., p. 141-148. Trad. do francês por Orlando Valverde.

Deffontaines, Pierre (1944). Como se constituiu no Brasil a rede das cidades (continuação). **Boletim Geográfico**, v. 2, n. 15, jun., p. 299-308. Trad. do francês por Orlando Valverde.

Brandt, Bernhard (1944). Geografia Cultural no Brasil. **Boletim Geográfico**, v. 2, n. 16, jul., p. 423-27. Trad. do alemão por Rodolfo Coutinho.

Brandt, Bernhard (1944). Geografia Cultural no Brasil (parte II). **Boletim Geográfico**, v. 2, n. 17, jul., p. 636-40. Trad. do alemão por Rodolfo Coutinho.

Brandt, Bernhard (1944). Geografia Cultural no Brasil (parte III). **Boletim Geográfico**, v. 2, n. 18, jul., p. 829-36. Trad. do alemão por Rodolfo Coutinho.

Deffontaines, Pierre (1944a). Ensaio de divisões regionais e estudo de uma civilização pioneira – o estado do Espírito Santo. **Boletim Geográfico**, v. 2, n. 19, p. 985-999. Trad. do francês por Almeida Cousin.

Brandt, Bernhard (1944). Geografia Cultural no Brasil (parte IV). **Boletim Geográfico**, v. 2, n. 19, out., p. 1000-08. Trad. do alemão por Rodolfo Coutinho.

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