Networks of Schools.
*The Diffusion of Religious Teaching Orders in Early Modern Italy (16th-18th c.)*

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Abstract

*Barnabites, Somascans, Piarists. The Diffusion of Religious Teaching Orders in Early Modern Italy (16th-18th c.)*

This article aims at analyzing the evolution of the settlement strategies of three among the main religious teaching orders that arose in the wake of the spiritual renewal of the early modern age: Barnabites, Somascans, Piarists. Through the mapping of the foundation of schools, colleges and seminaries between the 16th and 18th centuries, it is possible to shed light on some important elements of modern educational history: how were the educational vocations of these religious orders born? To what social, political, economic and cultural needs were these schools an answer? These are some of the questions to which the article wants to answer. In the perspective of a comparative analysis, moreover, the historiographical acquisitions on the other important religious teaching order of the age considered here, the Jesuits, will be a constant point of reference.

*Keywords*: Religious teaching orders; History of School; Barnabites; Somascans; Piarists.

Resumen

*Barnabitas, Somascos, Escolapios. La difusión de las órdenes de enseñanza religiosa en la Italia moderna temprana (siglos XVI-XVIII)*

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Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar la evolución de las estrategias de asentamiento de tres de las principales órdenes religiosas que surgieron en el contexto de la renovación espiritual de la era moderna: Barnabitas, Somascos, Escolapios. A través del mapeo de la fundación de escuelas, colegios y seminarios entre los siglos XVI y XVIII, es posible arrojar luz sobre algunos elementos importantes de la historia educativa moderna: ¿cómo nacieron las vocaciones educativas de estas órdenes religiosas? ¿Con respecto a qué necesidades sociales, políticas, económicas y culturales fueron estas escuelas una respuesta? Estas son algunas de las preguntas que el artículo quiere responder. En la perspectiva de un análisis comparativo, además, las adquisiciones historiográficas sobre la otra orden religiosa importante de la época considerada, los jesuitas, serán un punto de referencia constante.

Palabras clave: Órdenes de enseñanzas religiosas; Historia de la escuela; Barnabitas; Somascos; Escolapios.

The bulk of the spread of religious teaching orders in the Italian peninsula occurred mainly between the last decades of the 16th and the first half of the 18th century and was generally homogeneous. Despite this, an investigation on the dynamics and the causes of settlement and foundation of boarding schools and colleges highlights some differences that we can identify as characteristic aspects of the various religious orders. In this article we will see the mechanisms of the displacement and arrival of religious teaching congregations in Italy and in contiguous areas.

There are four main factors that can be identified as engines of these movements. The first of these was the convergence of interests between religious orders and Italian aristocracies. On the one hand, with the end of the Great Italian Wars and the affirmation in the Boot of a new political order, an alliance was estab-
lished between the dynasties at the head of the Italian states and the new religious orders. Princes and regional monarchs wishing to relieve the public finances from the expenses for schools (without which, nonetheless, they could no longer stay) and to obtain a more widespread social control on their subjects, saw in the congregations devoted to education the instrument suited to their ends, while the religious, in need of political protection to deploy their pedagogical action, found it useful to submit to these requests. On the other hand, however, there were not only ruling dynasties but also urban and provincial aristocracies which in testaments, donations or legacies established convents with adjoining schools and colleges. In this practice we find both the ancient medieval custom of the nobles who, at the end of their earthly journey, bestowed donations to monasteries and churches to lighten their conscience and facilitate their entry into paradise declined now in a new educational way, and the evergentist practice to equip a community or a village with a religious institution capable of providing services to the population.  

An example of this new religious-educational declination of the ancient practice of endowing or establishing religious institutions at the end of an aristocrat’s public life is given in 1569-1570 by Camillo I Gonzaga of Novellara. He was imperial captain at the service of Charles V and Ferdinand of Habsburg he participated in the purest chivalrous spirit in the various military campaigns conducted by the House of Austria in the central decades of the sixteenth century. Having retired from military life in the late 60s, moved by a sincere desire for spiritual redemption, he decided to establish an important Jesuit convent with an attached school and college, to provide an education to the youth of his dominion. Cfr. D. Salomoni, *Le scuole di una comunità emiliana nel Rinascimento tra religione e politica. Il caso di Novellara*, in «Educazione. Giornale di pedagogia critica», V, 2 (2016), pp. 17-42. Obviously, the categorisations made here are simplifications and do not fully return the complexity of the object, given
The second and the third factors are related to the new educational needs of the two medieval and renaissance urban institutions *par excellence*: the episcopate and the municipality. Both these institutions, at the end of the Middle Ages, had lost their ability to respond to the educational, cultural and social needs of a rapidly changing era, but at the same time, they felt the need to keep up with the urgent needs of their contemporaries. For these reasons, both the bishops and the municipal councils called members of religious orders, old and new, to serve in municipal and episcopal schools, or they established new schools held by these congregations. A fourth element that gave the impetus and partly determined the paths of the foundations of schools held by religious during the early modern age was the need to face the Protestant challenge. The struggle against the Protestant doctrines led to the foundation of Catholic schools even in non-Italian contexts, particularly in the Kingdom of France, through the Duchy of Savoy, where the fight against the Huguenots and the proximity of Calvinist Geneva made the emergence particularly severe, and in central and eastern Europe, where the competition for souls was not only with Protestants but also with the Orthodox Church. The campaigns to catholicize schools run by the Jesuits (like the one made by the Possevino in Savoy and

the artificiality of certain types of distinction as in the case of nobles and religious. These two categories, indeed, at the top of the social pyramid are usually superposed (with some significant exceptions). Popes, cardinals, bishops are almost always of aristocratic extraction, as it was the case for religious even in peripheral contexts. The schools and colleges identified here as established by nobles and aristocrats are intended by the will of individuals who have not taken the religious habit, while the foundations of schools desired by bishops or other religious (noble or otherwise) will be discussed later.
Piedmont) were not the only ones²; other religious orders born during the 16th and 17th century were also deeply committed to this end, particularly the Barnabites and the Piarist. The reasons that could lead to new foundations, however, were not always external. In some circumstances, the religious orders decided independently to move and to create schools in new cities. In these cases, the Theatines and Somascans were particularly active.

1. **The Barnabites: From Lombardy to the Kingdom of France**

Since 1575, when for the first time a Pope, Pius V, asked the Barnabites for a greater commitment in the world of education, the expansion of the schools of the congregation was rapid and intense³. The first few years of this religious order had been marked by a certain distrust of studies, as was often the case with the congregations that during the Sixteenth century wanted a spiritual renewal. However, since the end of the 16th century the educational vocation of the Barnabites emerged clearly. Nonetheless, the first steps taken by the Barnabites in the world of school were cautious, and it was preferred to opt for a gradual entry of lay students into the congregation’s colleges. During the


1580s, the Barnabite Carlo Bascapè, future bishop of Novara and close collaborator of Carlo Borromeo, as well as his imitator in the practices of pastoral government, decided to admit lay students into their college of Cremona. In 1590 some young people from Milan were accepted in the Barnabite college of Pavia. The first Barnabite entrance in the direction of a diocesan seminary, that of Arona, was given to father Timoteo Facciardi at the same time. In 1593, a first attempt to establish a new boarding school for lay boys in Pisa failed, despite the support of the Archbishop and the Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinando de ‘Medici; even the idea of Pope Clement VIII to open a college of Barnabites in Ragusa in 1603 was unsuccessful.

The turning point came in 1608, when, thanks to the legacy left by the noble Milanese cleric Giambattista Arcimboldi, the homonymous schools were opened in Milan. The Arcimboldi college was the first large college of Barnabites expressly designed for young lay people. According to the legacy, the fathers had to oversee every pedagogical and organizational aspect of the new institution. From this moment on the road was open. The school of Milan was quickly followed by the opening of new schools in Vigevano (1609), Asti (1626), Arpino (1627), Lodi (1631; 1662), Pisa (1632), Piacenza (40s), Casalmaggiore (1649), Livorno (1650), Alessandria (1660), Crema (1664), Fossombrone (1675), Genoa (1674), Udine (1679), Acqui (1682) and Cortona (1697). We note that the hard core of the Barnabitic foundations has its roots in the northern Lombard-Piedmontese area, with some sporadic foundations in centre and southern

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Italy. An interesting aspect, however, is that in the initial phase of this wave of foundations, the Barnabites immediately received great favour beyond the Alps. A few years after Milan and Vigevano, and throughout the entire first phase of foundations listed here, Barnabites’ schools were opened in Savoy (Annecy, 1614; Thonon, 1616, Bonneville, 1659), in Ile de France (Montargis, 1620; Etampes, 1644), in Bearn (Lescar, 1624), in the Landes (Dax, 1630; Mont-de-Marsan, 1657), in the Pas De Calais (Loches, 1665) and in Gironde (Bazas, 1695).

Although the foundations of Barnabites colleges in Italy do not know a true solution of continuity between the 17th and 18th centuries, it is precisely the French foundations that represent a watershed in the history of their schools. These foundations, in fact, stopped at the end of the 17th century in correspondence with the attenuation of religious conflict between Huguenots and Catholics in response to which the Barnabites had often been called. Throughout the 18th century, new Barnabites schools continued to rise regularly in Italy. During these years we see the strong rooting in the Lombardy-Piedmont area confirmed with new foundations in Tortona (1700), Bergamo (1701), Finale Marina (1711), Milan (1723 and 1745), Chieri (1724), Casal Monferrato (1739), Aosta (1748), Porto Maurizio (1749), Bormio (1782), Cremona (1790) and Turin (1792). However, the new colleges were not limited to the north-west of Italy but also arose in other areas of the north such as Bologna (1737) and Vittorio Veneto (1738) and in the centre of

the Peninsula, as in Foligno (1728), Florence (1735), Loreto (1794), Sanseverino (1798) and Macerata (1802). Virtually absent were the schools of Barnabites in southern Italy.

If we look at the types of promoters of the newly established institutes, we find a certain balance between the world of nobility and the municipal councils. Of 42 schools founded by the Barnabites between 1603 and 1792, 14 were the initiative of nobles and 17 of communities. Among the aristocracy we find regional sovereigns, such as Cosimo III de’ Medici, who in 1684 opened the Barnabites public schools in Pescia, and Charles Emmanuel I, Duke of Savoy, who, in agreement with Saint Francis of Sales, called the Barnabites to establish schools of grammar and philosophy in Annecy and Thonon. An even more important role was played by urban and provincial aristocracies. The new schools, according to the wishes of the donor could be created for young people from the city or from the countryside, for poor or nobles boys, or for people of any social condition; the examples are many. An interesting one shows us in 1662 the noble-woman Camilla Tavazzi Catenaga endowing in his will a school of grammar and rhetoric for the youth of the countryside of Lodi. In 1674, the noble Bartolomeo Gavanto established in Genoa a school for young nobles with promising intellectual talents. The success of this college led the Genoese Guild of Notaries to endow a new section of the same school dedicated to the young bourgeois of the city in 1675. Again, in 1735 the San Carlo College was recreated in Florence, closed years before due to lack of funds, for students of any social background thanks to the endowment of the noble Francesco Boddi.
Moreover, the history of Barnabites foundations often met with that of the Jesuits, both in positive and negative terms. The Barnabite *Ratio Studiorum* itself was forged on that of the Jesuits and approved in 1665 during the general chapter of the Order. In addition, we see that since the beginning of their activity as educators, the comparison with the famous Society of Jesus was alive in the imagination of the Barnabites. As early as 1616 they had taken over the schools of Thonon, in Savoy, at the invitation of St. Francis de Sales, where the Jesuits had withdrawn, and in 1631 a Milanese chronicler talking about the Arcimboldi College after the great plague of 1630, affirms that the Barnabite schools were «so filled with pupils, that while those of the Jesuits had significantly decreased after the plague our families have grown so that the lower schools no longer contain the students»⁶. However, it was with the suppression of the Society in 1773 that the taking over of Jesuit schools became more significant. In 1774, barely a year after the expulsion, in Bologna the Barnabites took in charge the college of Saint Louis, under the direction of Father Mariano Fontana, the college of nobles of Saint Francis Xavier and the schools of Santa Lucia together with the university library. Again in 1782, the Barnabites took charge of the schools of Bormio after the abandonment of the Jesuits, but in the same year they were also expelled from the Grand Duchy of Tuscany because of their refusal to take over Jesuits schools within the Tuscan borders. The same fate of the Bolognese colleges belonged to the college of nobles of Turin, where in 1792 the Barnabites took in charge the direction of

the institute from the lazy secular priests who, in 1773, had taken over from the Jesuits. The Turin College thus experienced a new phase of flowering that brought the number of pupils up to 90 in 1794, until the Napoleonic suppression of 1799.

2. The Somascans: Schools for Northern Italy and Small Towns

Another regular order arisen shortly after the Barnabites, again in Lombardy, was founded by the Venetian nobleman Girolamo Emiliani: the Somascan fathers. Initially, the attention of the Somascans was specifically addressed to the care of orphans and abandoned childhood. This activity was soon joined by the educational one, with the establishment and took in charge of some schools. The Somascan vocation to studies, however, did not became more intense with their definitive pontifical approval, granted by Pope Pius V in 1568, that raised the group of priests and religious gathered around the Emiliani to an actual regular order. Before that date, only three schools had been opened by the congregation, one in Merone, the territory of Como, in 1551, and two in Milan in 1557 and 1559. In this period, out of twenty-two already existing institutes run by the fathers and scattered throughout Italy, nineteen were orphanages and only three were schools.

7 Acta Congregationis (1528-1602), Fonti per la storia dei Somaschi, Vol. 1, edited by Maurizio Brioli C.R.S., Roma: Curia generalizia dei padri Somaschi, 2006, pp. 19, 26, 28. The orphanages were in Genoa, Savona, Triulzio, Reggio, Pavia, Rome, Vercelli, Naples, Siena, Milan, Tortona, Bergamo, Alessandria, Brescia, Verona, Venice, Somasca, Vicenza, Ferrara. Also in this case we note a con-
It is probable that this difficulty in developing a much more complex institutional activity than just the management of orphanages was also due to the difficulty in defining the identity of the order. The fathers, indeed, between 1546 and 1555, had been united with the Theatines and in 1566, with the reformed priests of Saint Mary the Little (la Piccola) of Tortona. They remained united in 1612, when they united with the priests of the Good Jesus of Ravenna and between 1616 and 1647, united to the priests of the Christian doctrine of Avignon. It was perhaps for this reason that between 1568 and the 1590s the Somascans did not open any school, with the modest exception of Novellara in 1569 where they remained just a few months, before being immediately replaced by the Jes-
uits\textsuperscript{10}. However, starting from 1591 the Somascan pedagogical vocation reached its maturation and the diffusion of their schools began to be constant.

In the geographical distribution of Somascan schools, the most striking figure is the strong concentration of these schools in northern Italy, even more than the Barnabites, and particularly between Veneto, Lombardy and Piedmont. Out of 38 schools established between 1591 and 1715, 31 were located in that area, while only 4 in Central Italy (Amelia, 1601; Rome, 1604; Velletri, 1616; Macerata, 1689) and 3 in the south (Melfi, 1616; Naples, 1628; Caserta, 1696). Even among the northern regions, Emilia-Romagna, the southernmost, has only three schools established: Ravenna (1646), Corte Maggiore (1662) and Cento (1690). A similar argument applies to the Liguria region, where schools are created only in Chiavari (1705) and Sarzana (1714). The three northernmost areas, on the other hand, are full of Somascan schools. In Lombardy, the Somascan’s cradle, twelve scholastic institutions are created: Lugano (1597), Rivolta d'Adda (1614), Paullo (1615), Orzinuovi (1626), Salò and Lodî (1627), Sabbioneta and Brescia (1628), Bergamo (1632), Soncino (1634), Treviglio (1641) and Voghera (1690). We observe a similar situation in Piedmont, where we find nine schools belonging to the congregation: Tortona (1591), Novara and Fossano (1623), Albenga (1625), Casale Monferrato (1626), Biella (1632), Cavallermaggiore (1638), Alba (1662) and Novi (1649). Last but not least, the Venetian area, which also includes today’s regions of Trentino and Friuli, where five schools are present: Treviso (1597),

\textsuperscript{10} Cfr. G. Alcaini, Origini e progressi degli istituti diretti dai Padri Somaschi, in «Somascha» IV, (1979), pp. 70-175.
Verona (1638), Rovereto (1655), Udine (1674) and Cividale (1705)\textsuperscript{11}.

The reason for such an unbalanced geographical distribution in favour of northern Italy can be related to the typology of the founders of such schools. For the Somascans, indeed, out of 42 schools founded or taken over between 1551 and 1715, only in 4 cases did the initiative come from the nobility, which increase to 11 if we include in the list prelates coming from the aristocracy. However, in relation to the plural and diversified nature of early modern aristocracy, the reasons that led these nobles to the founding of schools or colleges could differ greatly. A particular example is the Archimandrite of Messina Felice Novello who in 1601 gave an income of 500 ducats per year to the Somascans to open a school in Amelia, in the Umbria region. Novello, was a native of the town of Amelia, and for this reason he considered it worthy to call the Somascan fathers to keep the local schools\textsuperscript{12}. In this way the prelate fulfilled both his religious duty and the role of benefactor of the community, maintaining his influence and relations with the local elites. Subsequently the municipal authorities and the local bishop also contributed to maintain the new schools, showing how a strict distinction between founders’ typologies is often

\textsuperscript{11} All the data reported here are derived from the three volumes of the \textit{Acta Congregationis} (1528-1737), \textit{Fonti per la storia dei Somaschi}, Roma: Curia generalizia dei padri Somaschi, 2006.

a simplifying artifice, and that the foundation of new schools and the call of religious in a centre were the result of collaborations and collective efforts.

Another case is the Somascan school of Rivolta d’Adda, in the Diocese of Cremona. In this case we also observe an alternation between religious orders, although this time not with the Jesuits but with the branch of the reformed Franciscans, the Capuchins. The college was created in 1614 by the counts of Maino, and initially donated to the Capuchin friars. However, these friars were soon declared incapable of maintaining the school because of their obstinacy in not wanting to have a fixed income, but to live on charity. The Maino family, then, in agreement with public authorities and with the papal authorization of Paul V, replaced the Capuchins at the head of the school with the Somascans, charged with the teaching of grammar and humanities.

Yet, most of the scholastic foundations of the Somascan clerics were requested by a total of 23 public authorities and city councils. However, it does not seem that the cause of the wider presence of the congregation in northern Italy has to be found in the greater share of foundations requested by the public authority; the percentage of public and private foundations is more or less the same in the various areas of the peninsula. Such an investigative bias could be justified by the more urban-centric conception usually attributed by historiography to the north of Italy, but the data that we possess does not support this possibility. A more promising survey path, on the other hand, may be to consider the nature of the settlements that required the presence of Somascan schools. The clerics of So-

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13 *Acta Congregationis*, II, 52.
mascha, in fact, more markedly than the Barnabites (just seen), preferred the creation of new schools in settlements of medium and small size instead of large urban centres, more similarly to what the Piarists will do. This aspect can explain the greater diffusion of the religious order in northern Italy. The small and medium centres of the northern Italian regions, in fact, saw between the 16th and 17th centuries an important demographic and economic expansion, making it necessary to have more schools in order to prepare more people for several tasks and professions. These transformations in non-urban centres were not as marked in the small cities of the south, thus leading to an increase in demand on the educational market of the north and a greater spread in that area of the Somascans.

3. Between Central, Southern and Eastern Europe: the Piarist

In chronological terms, the last congregation to arrive on the Italian educational scene was the Order of Poor Clerics Regular of the Mother of God of the Pi-

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ous Schools, also known as the Piarists, officially recognized by Pope Gregory XV in November 1621. Among the religious orders listed here, the followers of Joseph Calasanz were probably those whose vocation was more clearly and consciously addressed towards the educational sphere\textsuperscript{16}. This precocity, though, was the result of a belated historical genesis, when the processes of redefinition of a Catholic identity centred on the educational sphere had already been accomplished and the yearning for spiritual renewal of the early 16\textsuperscript{th} century had already been sublimated and tamed. In other words, the Piarists did not pass from an initial phase of uncertainty due to the fear that love for studies could represent a road to pride and perdition.

The first years of life of the order saw a great success of adhesions, spreading rapidly first in the regions under the Papal State, and in the Republic of Genoa. After Rome, schools were opened in Moricone (1610), Frascati (1617), Mentana, Magliano, Narni (1618), Norcia (1621), and in the Genoese territory in Carcare (1621), Savona (1623) and Genoa (1624). In this first phase of expansion a school was also established in the mountain village of Fanano (1621), within the Duchy of Modena, while the foundations continued also in the Papal territory in Poli (1629), Ancona (1631) and in the northernmost part of the State in Pieve di Cento (1641), a small town between Ferrara and Bologna. In addition, the southern part of the Peninsula, even more than in the north, was the object of the Piarist expansion. The Pious Schools were opened in Messina (1625), Posillipo (1625), Campi Salentina (1628), and

Cosenza (1631)\textsuperscript{17}. From this list the others capital cities of late Renaissance Italy were not excluded: Naples (1626), Florence (1630), Venice (1632) and Palermo (1634) also had their Pious Schools. At the time of the general chapter of 1637, nine years before the reduction of the Piarists to a congregation of secular priests subject to the jurisdiction of the local bishops, the Order had 24 houses scattered between northern and southern Italy (with a greater presence in the south of the peninsula) and six provinces: Rome, Liguria, Naples, Tuscany, Sicily and Germany. In 1646, on the eve of their reduction, the Piarist had grown up to 37 houses and 500 members in Italy and Europe\textsuperscript{18}.

However, it was precisely the impetuous growth of the Piarist’s first period that brought the seeds of some of the reasons that led to their reduction. The frequent demand for schools and the great distances in which some of these were founded made the governing of new institutes very difficult, and it was even more


difficult to supply them with appropriately trained and educated teachers. An inadequate theological formation, in fact, and the exposure of members of the order in areas where Protestant ideas were strong, as in the central European provinces, represented a risk that in the early decades of the 1600s the fathers could not run. In addition, the extreme pauperistic rigor observed by the Piarists could arouse suspicions of crypto-Protestantism in Catholic hierarchies. These are the perplexities that emerge from the reports made by the Jesuit father Silvestro Pietrasanta, in charge since the early 1640s of carrying out an inquiry into the situation of the Pious Schools by the will of Pope Urban VIII. The contacts with Tommaso Campanella, active in the Pious School of Frascati in 1631, and Galileo Galilei were added to the whole of criticality, contributing to crack the image of the Piarists in the eyes of the popes, eventually inducing the downgrading of the congregation by Innocent X, in 1646.

The result was the reduction of the order to a simple congregation of secular priests subject to obedience to the bishops of their respective dioceses, without the possibility of professing vows and welcoming new members. The decision was made by Innocent X in March 1646 with the papal brief *Ea Quae*, almost an anticipation of the inquiry on the regular orders that he would promote in 1650. However, the Piarists survived

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and they were gradually reconstituted during the 17th century. In the meantime, the expansion of the Piarists in Italy and Europe continued.

Even before the reduction, houses had been opened in Central and Eastern Europa in Nikolsburg in Moravia (1631) and Warsaw (1642). After reconstruction, new houses were opened in Koper (1708), Rastatt (1715), Budapest (1717), Vilnius (1720), Madrid, Zaragoza, Valencia (all in 1728), Prague (1752) and Milan (1759). To better understand the success known by the Piarists during the 18th century, a well-documented case study is represented by the Republic of Venice. Among the types of authority that we most often find as an applicant for a new school are towns and boroughs. These do not always require the opening of public schools, as in the cases of Conegliano (1708), Feltre (1712), Bassano (1722, 1754), Adria (1739), Chiari (1754), Pinguente (1759), Dubrovnik-Ragusa (1776), Gemona (1786) and Pirano (1801), but also boarding schools and colleges for nobles, as in Treviso (1677), Koper-Capodistria (1699), Serravalle (1731), Tolmezzo (1738) and Rovinj-Rovigno (1767). The schools opened by ecclesiastical authorities, always bishops, are five, and the Piarist fathers also engaged in the direction of colleges-seminars, as in the cases of Krk-Veglia (1689), Ceneda (1710), Poreč-Parenzo (1713), Murano (1721) and Split-Spalato (1758). Among the establishment of Pious Schools promoted by private individuals, nobles and bourgeois, we find

21 The territory of the venetian republic, until 1796 extended between from eastern Lombardy to the present Italian regions of Veneto, Trentino, Friuli Venezia-Giulia and to Istria and Dalmatia, corresponding to parts of present-day Slovenia and almost the entire coast of Croatia. The data shown in the following paragraph are based on: Sangalli, cit., p. 351-352.
greater heterogeneity: there are boarding schools: Piran-Pirano (1704), Rovereto (1737); seminars: Gradisca d'Isonzo (1709) and public schools: again Piran (1752), and Venice (1779). Finally, in Gorizia, in 1780, it was the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II, who called the Piarists to teach philosophy.

In this thick succession of new schools we can find several interpretative lines. The picture is enriched by the frontier dimension of the Venetian state, straddling the Italic, Germanic and Slavic world. The Venetian region was located between northern, southern and eastern Europe. In addition, the 18th century is crossed by new and strong tensions both in the Catholic world in its most universal dimension and in the political sense among the remaining Italian states with a margin of political autonomy (Rome and Venice) and between the Italian and the Germanic world. This list of foundations is schematic and cannot portray the potential for failure that usually accompanied the Piarists when they opened an institute, so we can see the expansive strategies of the fathers. Dalmatia, for example, represented a fundamental bridgehead for expansion in the Balkans and its religious heterogeneity with Orthodox Christians, Catholics and Muslims made it an ideal place of mission for a religious order determined to stand out in the apostolic works. Jesuits and Capuchins had already guessed it, and the Piarists’ interests in Central Europe made the Balkans a natural source of expansion for their educational mission.22 Even observing the typolo-

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1. Foundation

In the early 16th century, the expansion of religious orders, particularly in Early Modern Italy, was influenced by the settlement processes of religious teaching orders. The Diffusion of Religious Teaching Orders in Early Modern Italy (16th-18th c.) examines the strategies employed by these orders in the 16th century and their impact on the social and economic landscape of the time.

2. Settlement Processes

The development of religious orders in Early Modern Italy was characterized by the establishment of Pious Schools, which served as centres for the dissemination of religious teachings. The approach taken by these orders varied depending on the cultural and economic context of the regions they targeted. The Piarists, for instance, were known for their emphasis on education and social reform, which contributed to the establishment of a network of schools across Italy.

3. Expansion and Decline

The expansion of religious orders in Early Modern Italy was not without its challenges. The Diffusion of Religious Teaching Orders in Early Modern Italy (16th-18th c.) explores the factors that contributed to the growth and decline of these orders. The religious reforms of the 17th century, particularly the religious reforms promoted by the absolutist states, played a significant role in the decline of religious orders. Additionally, the upheavals triggered by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic ascent further impacted the expansion of these orders.

4. Conclusion

On the whole, the settlement processes known by religious teaching orders in Early Modern Italy experi-
enced common dynamics, with different characters based on vocational, charismatic, relational and political specificities. All religious orders expanded the number of their schools over the course of these three centuries. For some congregations, the path was not immune to danger and reflux, often due to conflicts and competitions with other congregations, as in the case of the Piarists, who were almost erased by the Jesuits, whom, in turn, at the time of their suppression in 1773 were supplanted in many of their schools by the Piarists itself; or in the case of the Somascans, who aggregated over the decades to other congregations. The predilections for certain places (cities or villages) and regions (north, centre or southern Italy) in which we find some orders particularly present are linked to characteristics of the life of the congregations. Principally, we find the schools of those orders with an older and more structured tradition (Barnabites, Jesuits) in the main urban centres, while those that arose later or that matured later in their educational vocation (Somascans, Piarists) are more common in villages and small towns, due to an already full urban educational market, and to a greater adherence to a pastoral ideal in which the suburbs were considered a mission land for education and catechism. In addition, we observe a greater overall dynamism and a greater educational competition in northern Italy, where demographic growth and economic transformations were more intense. Even the greater bond of some religious orders with the nobility of northern Italy can be read in this sense, since the aristocracy of the northern regions invested its capitals in the economic transformation of the territory, compared to a southern nobility which was more attached to old landowner economic models. Of course, these distinctions are artificial and not ex-
haustive, and in any case the exceptions are widespread and important, but they are nevertheless useful tools to orientate within the macro-elements of Early Modern Italy religious scholastic physiognomy.

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**References**


