

Italian Immigrants, Brazilian Football, and the Dilemma of National Identity*

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Abstract. This article considers the cultural adjustment of immigrants to Brazil through an analysis of the role that association football (soccer) played in identity formation in twentieth-century São Paulo. It focuses on the city's large Italian population, in particular the experiences of a leading club, the *Società Sportiva Palestra Itália*, and of the first generation of Brazilian footballers who migrated abroad in order to play football professionally, many of whom were *Paulistas* of Italian descent. It demonstrates that through football Italians obtained agency in negotiating the process by which they became Brazilian and found a means by which to preserve a sense of discrete ethnicity within São Paulo's multiethnic community.

Keywords: Brazil, Italy, immigration, ethnicity, nationalism, football, soccer

In 1934 Italy's national football (soccer) team won the second World Cup, four years after the inauguration of the trophy in Uruguay. The tournament was held in Italy, but the triumph was not only cause for celebration there. It was also celebrated abroad, among the Italian emigrants who had settled in North and South America, Australia, and elsewhere during the preceding half century. The victory also belonged to the immigrant communities in Argentina and Brazil which had provided the Italian team with no fewer than five members. Four Argentine-born players, Enrico Guaita, Luís Monti, Raimondo Orsi and Atilio de Maria, and one Brazilian-born footballer, Amphilio Guarisi, made the winning team a product of greater Italy, with its large diaspora. Yet, these five were only a few of the many South Americans who migrated to Italy during the 1920s and 1930s to play football in the land of their parents and grandparents.

Were these footballers Argentine and Brazilian, or Italian? Did they and their families consider themselves permanent immigrants or sojourners in the New World? At what point did their Italian communities, in places like La Boca in Buenos Aires and Brás in São Paulo, become local ones? How did

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the members of these communities manage the transition? To what extent were they obliged to give up their old loyalties and traditions and accept new ones in order to become local people? Such questions gained the attention of the contemporaries of players, especially in Brazil, where observers debated the role and attitude of immigrant Italian sportsmen and their progeny, and especially the decision of Guarisi (widely known as Filó) and other footballers who were nurtured in Brazil to migrate to Italy to ply their trade.

This article engages these questions, suggested by the story of Filó and his fellows, about identity and nation, and migration and immigrant communities in Brazil during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The episode demonstrates that sport both reflected and helped to condition the ways in which immigrant communities interacted with their host society. Football offered immigrants and their descendants a site in which to negotiate their integration into Brazilian society, as well as a means to maintain discrete ethnic personalities. On the one hand, they came together with other groups, participating in multiethnic leagues that included Brazilians, Germans, Italians and others. On the other, they built and maintained ethnic loyalties in clubs organised by national origin. Such clubs trained players like Filó to view themselves as both Italians *and* Brazilians; for them national identity was not a zero-sum game. But neither was it true that all among them would consider themselves Italo-Brazilians.

Scholars of migration to Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America have done much to elucidate this complex, and at times conflicted, process of adjustment and integration. Some who have studied the experience of Italians and other European immigrants to Latin America have focused on the mechanics of migration, stressing the importance of chain migration and the strength of the ties that immigrants maintained with their countries of origin.¹ Scholars have pointed out immigrants' success in adjusting to their new environments. They have argued that such indicators as residence patterns, the lives of mutual aid societies and other ethnic institutions, house and land ownership, and employment opportunities demonstrate immigrants' confidence and success in carving out spaces for themselves in the 'lands of promise'.² However, some scholars have pointed out that immigrants faced

¹ See *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos*, vol. 3, no. 8 (April 1988), a special issue on chain migration among Italians.

² Especially important are Samuel L. Baily, *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise: Italians in Buenos Aires and New York City, 1870–1914* (Ithaca, 1999); Fernando J. Devoto, *Historia de los italianos en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 2006); Fernando J. Devoto and Eduardo J. Míguez (eds.), *Asociacionismo, trabajo e identidad étnica: los italianos en América Latina en una perspectiva comparada* (Buenos Aires, 1992); Thomas H. Holloway, *Immigrants on the Land: Coffee and Society in São Paulo, 1886–1934* (Chapel Hill, 1980); and two articles by Herbert S. Klein, 'The Social and Economic Integration of Portuguese Immigrants in Brazil in the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2 (1991), pp. 309–37, and

significant difficulties in pursuing adjustment and integration. They have, for example, observed marriage patterns that reflect considerable ethnocentrism among natives, as well as the poor working and living conditions endured by agricultural and other labourers.³

This article shows that the analysis of sport can contribute to develop a better understanding of the process of adjustment and integration that immigration scholars have explored. Much of the work done by such scholars, especially on Italian immigrants to Brazil, focuses on the rural environment, to the relative neglect of the urban immigrant experience.⁴ This article demonstrates that, given the urban context in which modern sport has prospered, football provides a focus for the further consideration of immigrants in the urban environment. Moreover, the article explores not only social functions and relations but also the attitudes and markers of identity grasped in the study of popular culture and sport.⁵

Many scholars of sport in Latin America have focused on the formation of identities, and shown that it has afforded a powerful means by which to define and articulate national, gendered, class and racial/ethnic identities. They have also shown that Latin Americans have asserted their identities through the choice of games they play, baseball or football helping to differentiate those with modern sensibilities from those with more traditional outlooks.⁶ Some of the literature has explored the importance for Latin Americans of the ways in which a preferred sport is played, and how they identify with, for example, a particular style.⁷ Similarly, they have explored the ways in which Latin Americans have managed their social relations through sport, for example through the exclusion or incorporation of women or people of colour in their sporting communities.⁸

'The Social and Economic Integration of Spanish Immigrants in Brazil', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1992), pp. 505–29.

³ See Mark D. Szuchman, *Mobility and Integration in Urban Argentina: Córdoba in the Liberal Era* (Austin, 1980); and Zuleika M. F. Alvim, *Brava gente! Os italianos em São Paulo, 1870–1920* (São Paulo, 1986). See also two works by Jeffrey Lesser, *Welcoming the Undesirables: Brazil and the Jewish Question* (Berkeley, 1995), and *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil* (Durham, 1999).

⁴ Important works on Italians in rural São Paulo include Holloway, *Immigrants on the Land*; and Verena Stolcke and Michael M. Hall, 'The Introduction of Free Labour in São Paulo Coffee Plantations', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 10, nos. 2/3 (1983), pp. 170–200.

⁵ One important work on popular culture is Mário Carelli, *Carcamano e comendadores: os italianos de São Paulo: da realidade à ficção (1919–1930)* (São Paulo, 1985).

⁶ William H. Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (2nd edition, Lincoln, 2004); and Leonardo Affonso de Miranda Pereira, *Footballmania: uma história social de futebol em Rio de Janeiro, 1900–1938* (Rio de Janeiro, 2000).

⁷ José Sergio Leite Lopes, 'The Brazilian Style and Its Dilemmas', in Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti (eds.), *Football Cultures and Identities* (London, 1999), pp. 86–99.

⁸ José Sergio Leite Lopes, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Color in the Making of Brazilian Football', *Daedalus*, vol. 129, no. 2 (2000), pp. 239–70; Eduardo P. Archetti, *Masculinities: Football, Polo*

Still, just as historians of immigration have tended to neglect popular culture and sport in favour of such indices of adjustment as residency, marriage and work, so too scholars of sport have tended to neglect the importance of immigrants and immigration in defining sporting identities.⁹ This article addresses these gaps in the historiography, demonstrating the utility of the study of sport for understanding the history of immigrants in Latin America, and introducing the significance of the participation of immigrants in defining Latin Americans' sporting identities. Like the mutual aid societies and schools established by immigrant communities, football and other sporting institutions afforded immigrants their own cultural spaces in adopted societies. Like struggles for work opportunities and access to housing and land, sporting success or failure could affect the lives of immigrants and immigrant communities. Like people of African descent, immigrants and their descendants utilised sport to challenge notions of the acceptable in terms of social, ethnic and national identities. Thus, when Filó and other footballers migrated to Italy, they forced their contemporaries, natives and immigrants alike, to consider the extent of Italian adjustment in their society and the place of sport in facilitating integration. They found that while Italians and their descendants had adjusted well and obtained no small success in Brazil, on and off the playing field, the process of integration was still incomplete in the 1930s.

The Sporting Community of São Paulo

According to tradition, football arrived in Brazil in 1894, when Charles Miller, a Brazilian-born Englishman, returned to São Paulo from his studies in England with ball and rulebook in hand. Before then, the city's sporting life was limited, with horseracing, rowing and athletics among the few outdoor activities in which the city's residents, *Paulistas*, took much interest. From the time Miller introduced football to his São Paulo Athletic Club, however, the game quickly became one of the city's most popular pastimes. Beginning with the British community and São Paulo's cosmopolitan upper classes, thousands from across the city's social landscape learned the game. They became players and fans, founded clubs, organised neighbourhood and

and the Tango in Argentina (Oxford, 1999); Aldo Panfichi et al., *Fútbol: identidad, violencia y racionalidad* (Lima, 1994).

⁹ One exception is José Renato de Campos Araújo, *Imigração e futebol: o caso Palestra Itália* (São Paulo, 2000). Scholars have begun to consider the migration of athletes, but most have focused on recent developments: see John Bale and Joseph Maguire (eds.), *The Global Sports Arena: Athletic Talent Migration in an Interdependent World* (London, 1994). The critical early years have received less attention: Pierre Lanfranchi and Matthew Taylor, *Moving with the Ball: The Migration of Professional Footballers* (Oxford, 2001) is an exception.

city-wide leagues, filled paper and magazine columns with news of and musings on the game, and participated in a veritable 'footballmania'.¹⁰

Following the example of Miller's club, many other football clubs were organised around ethnic and national identifications. For example, the first city league, founded in 1901, counted, beside the British São Paulo Athletic, two Brazilian clubs, one so-called 'international' club made up mainly of European immigrants, and Sport Club Germânia, drawn from the city's sizeable German population. In the ensuing years other ethnic/national clubs came on the scene, such as Portuguesa de Desportos, Hespânia Foot Ball Club, and Sport Club Syrio. Such ethnic identification was not unique to São Paulo. Rio de Janeiro, the other major centre of early Brazilian football, had its British clubs, such as the Payssandu Cricket Club, and its Portuguese club, the Club de Regattas Vasco de Gama. Clubs based upon ethnicity and nationality could also be found in Salvador, Belo Horizonte and elsewhere as football proliferated throughout Brazil.

It is not the case, however, that football during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was dominated only by ethnic clubs. Other clubs were based on neighbourhood geography, on school ties, and on workplace connections. Indeed, some of the most successful and most enduring clubs, such as Corinthians and Paulistano in São Paulo, or Fluminense and Flamengo in Rio de Janeiro, were not organised according to ethnic or national connections. However, along with the more prominent of the ethnic clubs, these organisations and their representatives helped to construct football communities which held an elitist vision of proper sporting practice, a games ethic which helped to marginalise those deemed undesirable as opponents and team-mates, especially non-whites and working-class players.

Elitists realised their vision of an exclusivist sporting community in São Paulo through a variety of means. First, football and other sporting clubs were self-selecting bodies. Elite and middle-class Englishmen, Brazilians, Germans, and others, organised clubs and carefully recruited from within their own communities in their search for members. The clubs were as much social and cultural bodies as sporting ones, places where one could pursue a variety of interests, from the artistic to the romantic, and members thus felt entitled to invite only those with whom they felt comfortable to join.¹¹

¹⁰ Pereira, *Footballmania*. On the history of football in Brazil, see also Waldenyr Caldas, *O pontapé inicial: memória do futebol brasileiro (1894-1933)* (São Paulo, 1990). Works in English include two articles by Robert Levine, 'Sport and Society: The Case of Brazilian Futebol', *Luso-Brazilian Review*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1980), pp. 233-52, and 'The Burden of Success: Futebol and Brazilian Society through the 1970s', *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1980), pp. 453-64; as well as the works of Leite Lopes cited in footnotes 7 and 8.

¹¹ Pereira, *Footballmania*, pp. 21-102, describes the structure of and recruitment for these clubs.

These clubs came together to form the first sports leagues, over which elitist sportsmen held collective control. When such self-selecting restrictions did not suffice, there were also the financial obstacles of club and league dues which cautioned undesirables against attempting to participate in first-class football. In such circumstances, it was largely unnecessary to construct explicit barriers to the participation of non-whites and working-class players.

The major barrier constructed by elitist sportsmen in São Paulo and elsewhere was that their clubs and leagues would be exclusively amateur. In theory, any footballer, regardless of race or occupation, could play for a league club and in league matches, as long as it could not be proved that he gained monetarily by his participation. But it was the middle class and the wealthy who possessed considerable free time for practice and play, and who could afford to pay the coaches, construct the facilities, and purchase the paraphernalia to hone football skills and field the best teams, without recourse to payment to players. Thus, for many years, combined with social, ethnic, and financial obstacles to participation by non-whites and working-class players, the amateur code was enough to ensure that the vast majority of players who appeared on first-class Brazilian football pitches were men of means and of European ethnicity.

The centrepiece of Brazilian football exclusivism was, for much of the early twentieth century, Europhilia, with a heavy dose of Anglocentrism. This was elaborated in a variety of ways. Anglophile sportsmen paired their preference for including European players in local clubs with the hiring of English coaches, the consumption of British-made football equipment, and the hosting of teams visiting from Britain and elsewhere in Europe. They also legislated the rigid observance of English football practices that were dictated by the Football Association in London, and in one instance even established the obligation that all club and league correspondence preserve English sporting terminology.¹² Of course, such an extreme position could not be imposed easily, but the cultural preference was unmistakable. The sporting press, which began to flourish during the early twentieth century, reified the preference. Whether all readers understood the exact meaning of such terms as ‘corner kick’, ‘offside’, and ‘centre forward’ is open to question. But elite and middle-sector sportsmen used such linguistic means to communicate to each other and their more modest fellow enthusiasts that Europe, especially England, was the touchstone of proper Brazilian football practice.¹³

In this construct, the obvious preferences were for British people and practice, and those with financial means. But it was inclusive enough to

¹² *Estatutos da Liga Metropolitana de Sports Athleticos* (Rio de Janeiro, 1907), Appendix.

¹³ On the Anglophilia of Brazilian enthusiasts, see Darién J. Davis, ‘British Football with a Brazilian Beat: The Early History of a National Pastime (1894–1933)’, in Oliver Marshall (ed.), *English-Speaking Communities in Latin America* (New York, 2000), pp. 261–84.

benefit others as well, namely those with ethnic or cultural connections to the prized identity. Thus wealthy foreign-educated Brazilians and middle-class European immigrants counted Charles Miller and his compatriots as their peers. For Italians in São Paulo this meant that, despite the largely working-class status of the community as a whole, the more economically successful among them would be accepted into first-class sporting practice from the time they were able to organise themselves and obtain financial security. Culturally, Brazilians generally preferred northern Europeans to southerners like Italians.¹⁴ But by the second decade of the twentieth century there were sufficient numbers of Italians of wealth in São Paulo, such as the industrialist Francisco Matarazzo, for the community to begin to feel its worth and obtain social and sporting status.

The case can be seen most clearly in an examination of the experience of two clubs organised in the second decade of the century. Sport Club Corinthians Paulista was founded in 1910 by a multiethnic group of working-class employees of British-owned enterprises in the city. The name was an explicit reference to the Corinthians Football Club, the leading amateur football and cricket club in the world at the time, which drew its players from the ranks of Oxford and Cambridge graduates. The Corinthians visited São Paulo twice, in 1910 and 1913, their visits garnering intense interest from across the sporting landscape, their patrician status reinforcing the self-image that elite Brazilian sportsmen had cultivated.¹⁵ But for their part the members of Corinthians Paulista found it very difficult to enter fully into the city's sporting life. The team began to play in 1910, but did not obtain entry into the first-class Paulista league until 1917. Despite on-field success and the allegiance to elite sporting practice implied in its name, the working-class club struggled against the class prejudices of the city's sporting leaders. Entry into the city's major league came only after much debate and controversy, including a league reorganisation intended specifically to exclude the Corinthians.¹⁶

The experience of *Società Sportiva Palestra Itália* was rather different. Known today as the *Sociedade Esportiva Palmeiras*, *Palestra Itália* was founded in late

¹⁴ As distinguished from labor preferences. As Hall points out, early preferences among landowners for German immigrants gave way to preferences for Italians when the latter proved 'more easily managed than the German colonists'. Michael M. Hall, 'The Origins of Mass Immigration to Brazil, 1871–1914', unpubl. PhD diss., Columbia University, 1969, p. 88. See also the discussions in Holloway, 'Immigrants on the Land' and Carelli, 'Carcamano e Comendadores'.

¹⁵ 'A famosa "equipe" Corinthians está no Rio', *Correio da Manhã* (Rio de Janeiro), 23 Aug. 1910, Archive of the Fluminense Football Club; and 'O Team Corinthians em S. Paulo', *O Estado de São Paulo* (OESP), 28 Aug. 1913 and 3 Sept. 1910, Archive of the Club Athletico Paulistano (CAP).

¹⁶ Plínio José Labriola de Campos Negreiros, 'Resistência e rendição: a gênese do Sport Club Corinthians Paulista e o futebol oficial em São Paulo, 1910–1916', unpubl. M.A. thesis, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 1992, pp. 136–45.

1914 by members of São Paulo's community of Italian immigrants. As with the Corinthians, the founding of the club was inspired by the visit of footballers from Europe, in this case two Italian sides that visited the city in 1914. Rival football leagues, the *Associação Paulista de Sports Athleticos* and the *Liga Paulista de Foot-ball*, had hosted the Pró-Vercelli and Torino teams, representing two successes after years of false starts in attempts to bring Italian footballers to the city.¹⁷ Both touring sides attracted much attention, in part, according to one observer, because of the gratitude Brazil owed to Italy, a 'nation that has provided us, through the energy and ingenuity of its children, with the greatest contributions to our economic development'.¹⁸ Certainly those 'children' were intensely interested in the visits, and thousands attended the various matches between Italian and local sides.¹⁹

Encouraged by the presence of their erstwhile compatriots, Italian sportsmen began to improve their organisation, drawing strength from informal and multiethnic football clubs, as well as non-footballing sports clubs. As one of Palestra Itália's founding members announced in *Fanfulla*, the Italian-language newspaper in São Paulo, the club was to be a club of Italians for Italians:

In São Paulo we have ... the football club of the Germans, of the English, of the Portuguese, of the internationals and even of the Catholics and the Protestants, but [forming] a club that might be composed exclusively of Italian 'sportsmen', and our colony the largest in the State, still nothing has been tried!

As skillful Italian footballers can be found in Sao Paulo, why don't we, by common accord, hold a meeting of such gentlemen, and thus as we have Italian associations for rowing, theatre, secular matters, patriotic activities, etc., etc., we can also have an exclusively Italian football club.²⁰

The club's original members included middle-sector and working-class sportsmen, including some who had been members of Corinthians. Despite this connection, Palestra Itália quickly gained entry into the city's first-class league, after only one season of indifferent and irregularly organised matches. Indeed, Palestra Itália was awarded the place in the first-class league that by rights ought to have belonged to Corinthians. Why? According to one scholar, Palestra Itália did not offer the same threat to the traditional clubs in terms of skill as did Corinthians. Moreover, Palestra Itália was able to present itself as a more palatable alternative from a social point of view, a middle and

¹⁷ 'Italia vs. Brasil', *OESP*, 3 Aug. 1914, CAP.

¹⁸ 'Os Italianos em S. Paulo', *OESP*, 2 Aug. 1914, CAP. This and all subsequent translations are by the author.

¹⁹ 'Foot-ball: Italianos vs. Brasileiros, O Match de Domingo no Velodromo', *Sportman*, 6 Aug. 1914.

²⁰ Vicente Ragnognetti, quoted in Claudemir M. Barbosa, *Album histórico da Sociedade Esportiva Palmeiras* (São Paulo, 1951), pp. 1–2.

working-class club, as opposed to Corinthians' unalloyed status as a working-class organisation from the *várzea*, or suburbs.²¹ Finally, the Europhile attitudes of league organisers may have played a role in their decision to admit Palestra Itália. In fact, the specific rationale of the organisers' preference for Palestra Itália remains obscure; but São Paulo's sporting Europhilia is unmistakable in its early years and it seems likely that it influenced their decision making in this case. The Italian might not have been viewed as the model sportsman, but in the eyes of wealthy Anglophile Brazilians he was an acceptable one, especially as compared with non-European and working-class players. Palestra Itália benefited from that distinction.

The Experience of Palestra Itália

By the time Palestra Itália began to play in 1914, the Italian presence in the city and state of São Paulo had grown into a community of hundreds of thousands. Italian immigrants flooded into Brazil during the second half of the nineteenth century, with the influx reaching a peak in the 1890s. Between 1877 and 1930, Italians comprised over 36 per cent of the four million immigrants who entered the country.²² The majority was composed of men and boys, but many of the later arrivals, almost 60 per cent between 1908 and 1936, travelled with their families. About half were 'agriculturists'.²³ This migration owed much to the sponsorship of the *Sociedade Promotora da Imigração*, the immigration company founded by Antônio Prado and his fellow Paulista coffee planters, who offered Italians and their families a vision of available work and available land in a temperate climate among fellow Latin people.²⁴ The *Sociedade's* success was reflected in the fact that at least 70 per cent of Italians arriving in Brazil between 1870 and 1920 went to São Paulo.²⁵

These immigrants did not, however, meet quickly with comfort or opportunity. On the state's coffee plantations they instead met with poor pay, harsh conditions, and insecurity, a working and living environment perhaps to be expected in a Brazil that had only abolished slavery in 1888.²⁶ But still the immigrants came, and although many left Brazil to return to Italy or to migrate elsewhere in the New World, the majority remained, and some prospered. By 1920, they counted almost 400,000 in São Paulo state alone,

²¹ Campos Araújo, *Imigração e futebol*, pp. 96–7.

²² Klein, 'The Social and Economic Integration of Portuguese Immigrants', Table 1, p. 316.

²³ *Ibid.*, Table 3, p. 320.

²⁴ Holloway, *Immigrants on the Land*, pp. 37–8; and Michael M. Hall, 'The Origins of Mass Immigration to Brazil, 1871–1914', unpubl. PhD diss., Columbia University, 1969, pp. 81–115.

²⁵ Alvim, *Brava gente!*, p. 118.

²⁶ Holloway, *Immigrants on the Land*; Stolcke and Hall, 'The Introduction of Free Labour'.

almost half its foreign-born population out of a total population of 4.5 million.²⁷

Italians also colonised the state capital, where they passed from agricultural work to labour in the new factories born of the region's coffee wealth. In 1872, fewer than 1 per cent of the city's 31,000 residents was Italian. Only twenty years later, in 1893, fully 35 per cent of residents, or more than 45,000 people, in the fast-growing city were Italian-born. By 1920, the Italian population had doubled, but its share of the population had declined to a little less than 16 per cent of the total. Nonetheless, Italians accounted for the single largest foreign-born group, 91,500 out of 194,000 European and 205,000 foreign-born residents.²⁸ Alongside the many more residents who were Brazilian-born but of Italian descent, these immigrants helped to make São Paulo 'an Italian city'.²⁹

Indeed, despite obstacles such as relative poverty and isolation in rural and marginal urban areas, by the early twentieth century Italians had succeeded in establishing a significant economic presence in the São Paulo region. By 1915, Italians owned over 5,000 agricultural properties in the state (of the 8,500 held by all foreign-born residents), and by 1934 Italians owned almost one-fourth of the state's coffee *fazendas* and produced one-fifth of its coffee.³⁰ In 1915 they owned over 23,500 urban properties in the state of São Paulo, most of which were in the capital, compared to fewer than 19,000 owned by all other foreigners.³¹ For their part, Italian businessmen owned 77 of the 330 firms incorporated in the city during the six months in 1917 surveyed by Herbert S. Klein; seventeen years later they owned 2,000 factories, employing over 20,000 workers.³²

In neighbourhoods such as Brás and Bexiga, Italian immigrants also established their own Italian-centred social and cultural institutions, including mutual aid societies, newspapers, churches, community groups, schools and sports clubs. There were 392 such associations in the state of São Paulo by 1912. That number represented a high from which the total descended in ensuing years, but Italian associations still counted between 100 and 150 during the 1920s and 1930s.³³ These included the *Fanfulla* newspaper, the

²⁷ Brazil, Directoria Geral de Estatística, *Recenseamento do Brasil, realizado em 1 de Setembro de 1920*, vol. IV, part 1a (Rio de Janeiro, 1926), pp. ix, 317.

²⁸ Brazil, *Recenseamento do Brasil*, vol. IV, part 1a, pp. ix, 331; Baily, *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise*, p. 224.

²⁹ Campos Araújo, *Imigração e futebol*, p. 12.

³⁰ Lucy Maffei Hutter, *Imigração italiana em São Paulo de 1902 a 1914. O processo imigratório* (São Paulo, 1986), p. 152; Klein, 'The Social and Economic Integration of Portuguese Immigrants', Table 11, p. 330.

³¹ Hutter, *Imigração italiana*, p. 153.

³² Klein, 'The Social and Economic Integration of Portuguese Immigrants', Tables 13 and 14, pp. 332–3.

³³ Angelo Trento, 'Le associazioni italiane a Sao Paulo, 1878–1960', in Devoto and Míguez (eds.), *Asociacionismo, trabajo e identidad étnica*, p. 32.

Sociedade Dante Alighieri, a literary and theatre group, and the *Club Esperia*, a boating club which was among the earliest Italian sporting organisations in the country, founded in 1899.³⁴ *Società Sportiva Palestra Itália* was another of these institutions, founded with the express purpose of giving Italians their own football club. But, like other Italian organisations in São Paulo and elsewhere in Brazil, it went on to fill a role beyond its most readily apparent purpose. On the field and off, the club promoted an Italian identity and allegiance, helping the immigrant community to cultivate a sense of discrete ethnicity, even as it helped that community enter into the larger society.³⁵

The clearest way that ethnic clubs like *Palestra Itália* asserted a distinct identity was through its people. From the time of its founding *Palestra Itália* fielded teams in São Paulo's elite football league, the *Associação Paulista*. It also fielded second and third teams in lower divisions of the league, and hosted in-house competitions between members. With few exceptions, the players on each of these teams were Italian or were Brazilians of Italian descent. For example, on the first day of league play in 1916 the club's first team was constituted by Fabrini, Grimaldi, Ricco, Fábio, Bianco, De Biase, Gobbato, Valle, Vescovini, Bernardini and Cestari.³⁶ At the opening of the 1926 season, the team sheet read, Primo, Bianco, Covelli, Xingo, Amílcar [Barbuy], Serafim [Serafini], Mathias, Loschiavo, Heitor, Imperato and Perillo.³⁷ And ten years later, Jurandyr, Carnera, Begliomini, Gustavo, Dula, Luciano, Moraes, Luizinho, Gabardo, Rolando and Mathias took the field for the club's first game of the season.³⁸ Moreover, the club sought out Italians to train their players, men such as Effrem Padovani and Domingos Delascio, two masseurs, and Humberto Cabelli and Marinetti, two coaches.³⁹

³⁴ On *Fanfulla*, see Samuel L. Baily, 'The Role of Two Newspapers in the Assimilation of Italians in Buenos Aires and São Paulo, 1893–1913', *International Migration Review*, vol. 12, no. 3 (Autumn 1973), pp. 321–40.

³⁵ Other Italian clubs, with which *Palestra Itália* maintained regular contact, included *Palestra Itália di S. Carlos*, *F.C. Italo*, *Juventus*, *Palestra Itália di Santos*, and *Palestra Itália – Ribeirão Preto*. *Ata: Reuniões Diretoria 18/4/1922 à 09/9/1924*, *Livro no. 05*, Archive of the *Sociedade Esportiva Palmeiras* (SEP). Campos Araújo cautions against assuming one uncomplicated Italian ethnicity among immigrants to Brazil during this period, as Italy was defined by myriad regional identities. However, he does stress the importance of *Palestra Itália*, writing, 'This association, if not the first, was the one with the most success in the attempt to represent the Italians of the city of São Paulo, instilling the idea of Italianness in people who still did not consider themselves Italian': Campos Araújo, *Imigração e futebol*, p. 135. Examination of club documents reveals no references to regional distinctions among Paulista Italians; that is, the directors of *Palestra Itália* imagined themselves as part of an Italian community.

³⁶ Rubens Ribeiro, *O caminho da bola: 100 anos de história da FPF, I Volume, 1902–1952* (São Paulo, 2000), p. 151.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 420.

³⁹ Meetings of the Directorate of *Società Sportiva Palestra Itália* (SSPI), 30 Sept. 1924, 20 July 1928, and 13 May 1932, *Ata Diretoria 09/09/1924 à 11/02/1927*, *Livro 06*, *Atas Diretoria 11/02/1927 à 8/02/1929*, *Livro 07*, *Reunião Diretoria 08/03/1932 à 20/07/1934*, *Livro 09*, SEP.

In short, Palestra Itália's teams were Italian in more than name; when members and fans came to watch the club's sides play against Corinthians, Paulistano and Germânia, they were watching men from their own community, Italians and Brazilians born to Italian parents, defending their ethnic fatherland, dressed in the club's distinctive green, white and red.⁴⁰

The club was as Italian off the field as it was on it. Detailed membership information for the early twentieth century is unavailable, but all evidence suggests that the vast majority of members, of whom there were over 5,000 by the mid-1930s, were Italians or of Italian descent.⁴¹ Every director, every member of the Deliberative Council, from the club's founding until even after it traded its Italian name for a Portuguese one, was ethnically Italian.⁴² Even today, the great majority of club administrators and employees are of Italian descent, and it is rare to find a position of responsibility not filled by an Italo-Brazilian. Club business was conducted in Italian, and directors, councillors, and the Sporting Commission minuted their meetings in the language of the immigrants, into the 1930s. Moreover, club business went beyond the simple matter of training and fielding football and other athletic teams. Like other contemporary Brazilian sports clubs, Palestra Itália was as much a social and community club as it was a sporting one, and its activities and events helped to reinforce a sense of ethnic community among its members.

At its simplest, this could mean merely providing Italians with a place to speak their language and meet with compatriots. But club directors went further, actively asserting their club's ethnic identity and loyalties. They attempted to convince the Italian national football team to visit São Paulo during the 1920s, and briefly considered mounting a tour of Italy in the early 1930s. Neither the visit nor the tour took place, but there is no evidence that the club ever considered forging such ties with sportsmen from other countries.⁴³ Off the field club directors oversaw such activities as helping to raise money for Italian charities; hosting and promoting shows by entertainers from Italy; and celebrating Italian holidays, despite outsiders' suspicions about club members' Brazilian patriotism.⁴⁴ They also maintained

⁴⁰ At least one observer expressed suspicion about the Italian *bona fides* of the club's players. According to 'Chutador', Palestra Itália had a policy of 'hiding' the ethnicity of its players, 'nationalising them ... Italian-ly [*italicamente*]!' Thus 'Navajas lost his father's name, as now he is Novelli, which is pure Italian.' Certainly Chutador meant to lampoon the foibles of Palestra Itália's administrators, but he also revealed their commitment to advertising an exclusively Italian identity, for them a serious business: Chutador, 'Pelotas e pelotasos', *A Plateia*, 24 May 1934.

⁴¹ Trento, 'Le associazioni italiane', p. 33.

⁴² Antonio Carlos Morbio, *Sempre Palmeiras* (São Paulo, 2000), pp. 161–5.

⁴³ Meeting of the Deliberative Council of SSPI, 4 March 1927, *Atas. Conselho Deliberativo*, 04/03/1927 a 14/03/1933, SEP.

⁴⁴ 'O Club Athletico Paulistano e o Palestra Itália encontram-se num match em beneficio da Cruz Vermelha Italiana e do Comitato Pro-Patria', and 'Matches em Beneficio', *OESP*, 30 June 1915 and 19 March 1917, CAP; Meeting of the Directorate of SSPI, 20 Sept. 1929,

friendly relations and regular contact with the Italian consulate in São Paulo, and took great pride in the accomplishments of the Fascist government of Benito Mussolini. For example, they sent the Italian regime a telegram in praise of Mussolini for his ‘energetic defence [of] National Dignity’ in a dispute with Greece in 1923, offered their compliments to Italy’s Aeronautical Ministry on the progress of its air programme in 1926, and gratefully accepted congratulations from the Fascist state on the inauguration of their stadium in 1929.⁴⁵ In the 1930s, the directors of the club regularly made the stadium available to Fascist organisers seeking to strengthen local Italians’ loyalties to the regime, and, according to one scholar, made their club ‘part of the network of Fascist associations’ in Brazil.⁴⁶ Like other Italians who forged contacts with official Italy during the period, the club directors expended much energy on the relationship as it helped them to cultivate the club’s image as nationally Italian, even if their loyalties were rather more rhetorical than activist.⁴⁷

Of course, for all its members’ attempts to create an Italian club and maintain its Italian identity, Palestra Itália would eventually be as much Brazilian as it was Italian. If language can serve as a useful marker for such a transition, it can be stated that the process was well under way by the late 1920s, when club documents began to be produced in Portuguese.⁴⁸ Moreover, from the time of its founding, the club engaged the larger Paulista and Brazilian society. It did so first by fielding sides in multiethnic competitive leagues. Second, the club made individual footballers available to play for teams representing São Paulo and Brazil. Such teams purported to field the best the city and nation had to offer, without regard for ethnicity. In reality, non-whites and working-class players were incorporated only grudgingly; but from the perspective of Palestra Itália the relevant point is that its players participated on such teams not as Italians but as Paulistas or as Brazilians.

Ata Reunião Diretoria 08/02/1929 à 18/03/1932, Livro 08, SEP; and ‘O presidente do Palestra e a vitória da Itália: (De um observador amadorista)’, *Folha da Manhã*, 6 June 1934. In the last piece, the club’s president, Dante Delmanto, was ridiculed for his ‘double navel’, demonstrated in his celebration of the anniversary of Italy’s entry into World War I.

⁴⁵ Meetings of the Directorate of SSPI, 31 Aug. 1923, *Ata: Reuniões Diretoria, Livro no. 05*, 19 May 1926, *Ata Diretoria, Livro 06*; and 20 Sept. 1929, *Ata Reunião Diretoria, Livro 08, SEP*.

⁴⁶ João Fábio Bertonha, *O fascismo e os imigrantes italianos no Brasil* (Porto Alegre, 2001), p. 158 fn. 198.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, and João Fábio Bertonha, *Sob a sombra de Mussolini: Os italianos de São Paulo e a luta contra o fascismo, 1919–1945* (São Paulo, 1999). Bertonha shows that Italians in São Paulo were generally supportive of the Fascist regime, but that their support was less committed than many Fascists hoped it would be. The outlook of Palestra Itália fits this description.

⁴⁸ The first manuscript in Portuguese is *Atas Diretoria, Livro 07, SEP*, dating from 1927. Italian continued to be used, if irregularly.

Thus both by necessity and by choice Palestra Itália participated in a sporting community that both encouraged and, sometimes in spite of itself, eroded the club's attempts to maintain an exclusively Italian identity. In the end, Palestra Itália (like other Italian and ethnic clubs) was able to maintain a national/ethnic identity through the constant reinforcement of its self-perceived image. As the years passed, more members would be Portuguese speakers, more players would be locally born, and Palestra Itália would become progressively more Brazilian. But the club's Italian identity would never be truly dissolved. Even after the club exchanged its name for a more Brazilian one, when it became Palmeiras, the club maintained an ethnic identity. To the fact that even today many members and most administrators are of Italian descent can be added the observation that the club has established business relationships with Italian corporations such as Pirelli and Parmalat.⁴⁹ The structure of the Brazilian sporting community, with its preference for Europeans and its clubs that are as much social and cultural as sporting institutions, has allowed and even encouraged the persistence of that sensibility.

Footballers of Italian Descent

The story of Italian clubs like Palestra Itália was in many respects the story of footballers of Italian descent. Italians and those of Italian descent held a near monopoly over playing positions in Palestra Itália's teams, as they did over the club's coaching and administrative posts. Thus the success of Palestra Itália was the success of individual Italian and Italo-Brazilian sportsmen, and through such clubs Italian footballers obtained opportunities to play in first-class leagues. Especially in the case of working-class players, these were opportunities that many of them might not have obtained outside Italian clubs. By the mid-1920s, however, individual Italian players had begun to find success outside working-class and ethnically exclusive clubs, some of them even obtaining entry into elite clubs.⁵⁰ By then, Italians had begun to appear regularly on Paulista and even Brazilian representative teams, a demonstration of their acceptance by the larger sporting community and a mark of their quality and success.

Like other footballers, however, Italian footballers faced a dilemma in the 1920s and 1930s. Many of the first generation of São Paulo's clubs, such as

⁴⁹ Pirelli sponsors the club and its logo appears on the team's shirt. The club had previously forged close ties to Parmalat, a relationship that foundered upon the company's bankruptcy in 2003.

⁵⁰ For example, early in his career Filó played for the most elite of the city's clubs, the Club Atlético Paulistano.

São Paulo Athletic and Mackenzie College, were no longer participating in first-class competitions. They had been replaced by a new generation of clubs, such as Palestra Itália, Corinthians and Portuguesa, clubs that did not always honour the exclusivist traditions of Paulista football. They fielded working-class players, non-white players and violated amateur rules, to the dismay of the defenders of the old order. Indeed, so intense was the displeasure of the directors of the Club Athletico Paulistano with suspected violations of formal and informal rules, that they twice withdrew their team from São Paulo's first-class league, and ultimately took the drastic step of ceasing participation in competitive football altogether.⁵¹

Most controversial was the ever-widening violation of amateur rules that plagued São Paulo's footballing community. Indeed, so common did the surreptitious payment of players become during the 1920s and early 1930s that the period was known as the era of 'masked professionalism' and 'false amateurism'. In attempting to improve their teams, administrators began to compensate players for their participation and for good performances, with rewards ranging from cash payments to the provision of sinecure employment. By all accounts, by 1930 only a small proportion of the footballers playing for first-class teams were truly amateur sportsmen. But neither were they truly professional. They were obliged to maintain the fiction of amateurism, they could not negotiate legal contracts, and they rarely earned enough to support themselves by playing. Also, in order to avoid losing players in whom they might have invested considerable resources, administrators in São Paulo and elsewhere adopted the 'pass' system. Under this system footballers were allowed to play only for the club that had sponsored their registration in the league; if the club objected, the player was barred from 'passing' to another team. Faced with this dilemma, some Brazilian footballers agitated for change at home, giving their support to the movement to professionalise Brazilian football leagues. Others began to look abroad for opportunities to play professionally. Some signed contracts to play elsewhere in South America; others moved to Spain to play. Italian players looked to Italy for opportunities in professional football, and some succeeded in signing for Italian clubs.⁵²

A limited number of players of Italian descent migrated to the Old World before 1930, but the most significant movement of such players came in 1931, when São Paulo lost at least nine of its leading players to Italian clubs.

⁵¹ Ribeiro, *O caminho da bola*, p. 332.

⁵² Scholars who have commented on this migration include Caldas, *O pontapé inicial*, pp. 201–3; and Tony Mason, *Passion of the People? Football in South America* (London, 1995), pp. 45–51. On the players' experience in Italy, see Lanfranchi and Taylor, *Moving with the Ball*, pp. 69–88; and Simon Martin, *Football and Fascism: The National Game under Mussolini* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 187–96.

Largely responsible for this ‘exodus’ was Amilcar Barbuy.⁵³ Barbuy had enjoyed a long career in São Paulo, playing and coaching for Corinthians and Palestra Itália, among other clubs, and had played in and captained the Brazilian national team. He left Brazil for Italy in 1930, joining two Brazilians, the Fantoni brothers, in the ranks of the Lazio club in Rome.⁵⁴ Barbuy visited São Paulo in July 1931, leading many sportsmen to suspect that he had returned in order to recruit players for his own and other clubs.⁵⁵ On several occasions Barbuy felt compelled to deny that this was his aim, and he asserted that he had come only to visit his family.⁵⁶ But he admitted that as a friend he would advise others to follow his example, and it was surely no coincidence that he was accompanied by Victorio Luciani, Lazio’s representative, who had indeed come with the express purpose of contracting players.⁵⁷

According to Luciani, he found São Paulo’s footballers a ready audience; indeed, more than fifty players, including Italians and non-Italians, whites and non-whites, notified Luciani that they ‘had already prepared themselves to move to the land of Mussolini, saying they were great friends of this great country’.⁵⁸ In the end, the emissary contracted only a handful of these players, all ethnically Italian and all of whom had played with or against Barbuy during his career in São Paulo. These included Corinthians’ Filó, Del Debbio, De Maria and Ratto; Athletico Santista’s Tedesco; and Palestra Itália’s Henrique Serafini and Pedro Rizzetti. Palestra Itália’s Pedro Sernagioto, known as Ministrinho, joined them in their adventure, although he chose not to sign for Lazio.⁵⁹ Other Italians eventually followed in these players’ footsteps, including players from other cities, such as Fernando Giudicelli, who had played for Rio de Janeiro’s Fluminense Football Club.⁶⁰

Italians recruited these players not only due to their obvious talent, but also because of the evolution of football in Italy, especially the impetus given to the game by the Mussolini government. Italian football had suffered its own crisis in the 1920s, stemming from widespread financial woes, mismanagement in the clubs, fan violence and a referees’ strike. In 1926, the

⁵³ ‘O Exodo de jogadores’, *OESP*, 10 July 1931.

⁵⁴ The Fantoni brothers had played for two clubs called Palestra Itália, one the Paulista club, the other in Belo Horizonte.

⁵⁵ ‘A volta do Amilcar ao Brasil’, *Folha da Noite*, 1 July 1931.

⁵⁶ ‘Amilcar aprecia o nosso futebol’, *Folha da Manhã*, 2 July 1931; and ‘Não são bem exactas as informações que os jornas têm divulgado sobre a ida de jogadores brasileiros á Italia’, *Folha da Noite*, 9 July 1931.

⁵⁷ ‘O famoso Amilcar não veio contratar nossos jogadores, mas concedeu uma entrevista que é a propaganda mais inteligente possível do futebol italiano’, *Folha da Manhã*, 3 July 1931; ‘Não são bem exactas as informações’, *Folha da Noite*, 9 July 1931.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* ⁵⁹ ‘Últimas: A primeira colheira’, *A Gazeta*, 10 July 1931.

⁶⁰ ‘Amilcar e os demais companheiros desmentem as declarações que lhes foram attribuidas: Um telegrama dos jogadores paulistas a “Gazeta”’, *A Gazeta*, 18 Sept. 1931.

Fascists stepped in and reorganised the sport. In the 'Carta di Viareggio' the new administrators of Italian football established a national league for the first time and formalised the professionalism already extant in the game. In the ensuing years the party and government continued to promote the sport, which the Fascists saw as a means to improve citizens' health, build nationalism, and conduct diplomacy, the last two goals to be achieved, in part, by fielding a strong national team. They helped to found new clubs, built modern new stadia, and, most memorably and successfully, hosted the World Cup tournament in 1934.⁶¹

Crucially, among the reforms legislated by Fascist administrators was the domestication of the game, an attempt to root out the heavy foreign influence that many sportsmen suggested had retarded the development of Italian football, as foreign coaches and players filled roles better suited to Italians. In fact these foreigners had done much to advance Italian football, introducing new tactics and styles, but this 'indisputably xenophobic and opportunistic measure' served the interests of the regime, and so, by 1928, all 'foreign' players were required to withdraw from clubs participating in the Italian championship.⁶² Into the void thus created came footballers of Italian descent from centres of Italian settlement like Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. From the point of view of the regime, these *rimpatriati*, repatriated ones, were nothing other than Italians.⁶³ Their parents had emigrated from Italy, but they had not ceased to be Italian; instead, the migrants and their children continued to be counted as members of the fatherland, who, the regime hoped, might become consumers, political supporters and, should it prove necessary, soldiers. Thus the recruitment of such players, while controversial at the time and increasingly so in the ensuing years, was part of an Italian outlook that did not see Italians in the New World as 'foreigners' at all.⁶⁴

On the eve of their departure, the Paulista players, all of whom were Brazilian-born, evinced various degrees of enthusiasm over their departure for Europe, and seemed much less sure than the Fascist regime as to where their loyalties should lie. Ministrinho suggested that he viewed playing

⁶¹ Martin, *Football and Fascism*; Antonio Ghirelli, *Storia del calcio in Italia* (Torino, 1990); Robert S.C. Gordon and John London, 'Italy 1934: Football and Fascism', in Alan Tomlinson and Chris Young (eds.), *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup* (Albany, 2005), pp. 41–63.

⁶² Martin, *Football and Fascism*, p. 63.

⁶³ Lanfranchi and Taylor employ the term *rimpatriati* in describing the South American Italians, as opposed to the term *oriundi*, a term for people of Italian descent. They point out that whereas some saw the players as *oriundi*, the regime, and footballing authorities with it, saw them as full-blooded Italians: Lanfranchi and Taylor, *Moving with the Ball*, p. 76.

⁶⁴ On Italian attitudes toward the *rimpatriati/oriundi*, including dissenting views on their nationality, see Lanfranchi and Taylor, *Moving with the Ball*, pp. 72–88; Martin, *Football and Fascism*, pp. 190–6; Vittorio Pozzo, *Campioni del Mondo: Quarant'anni di Storia del Calcio Italiano* (Rome, 1960), pp. 395–8.

professionally as an opportunity to fulfil a dream of visiting Italy, but few others suggested that an emotional attraction had informed their decision.⁶⁵ Most insisted that their decision had been difficult and had been prompted primarily by financial concerns and inducements: the Lazio players received signing-on bonuses of 25,000 lira (US\$1300) and salaries of 2,000 lira (US\$100) per month, compared with the 300\$000 réis (US\$21) that most had received each month as ‘masked professionals’ in São Paulo.⁶⁶ Echoing the feelings of many, Serafini said that he would have preferred to stay in Brazil, as ‘playing for my club was my ideal’. But he had confronted financial ‘difficulties’ and felt obliged to accept the Italians’ offer. Similarly, Tedesco felt constrained to choose professionalism. For him, playing for pay helped to rectify an earlier mistake, when he had forsaken his studies to pursue sporting success.⁶⁷

Most players also stated that they looked forward to being able to call themselves professionals openly. Anticipating one source of criticism, they defended their decision to reject the amateur ideal of Brazilian football, corrupted as it was. As De Maria said, ‘I want to live out in the open. After all, professionalism is an honest thing, against which no one will be able to say anything.’ For his part, Ratto stated that he was not embarrassed to be called a professional. In his words, ‘I don’t feel diminished because I’ve turned professional. It’s a profession like any other.’⁶⁸ Finally, Rizzetti suggested a precedent for the footballers’ desire for financial support and public respect. He asked, ‘Aren’t theatre artists esteemed and applauded?’ Wryly, he observed, ‘Well, I’ll also be an artist ... of the feet.’⁶⁹

Today transfers of Brazilian players to Italian and other foreign clubs are commonplace. But in 1931 the loss of so many talented and popular players was deeply shocking to many in the Paulista community. Observers criticised the decisions taken by these players, calling their emigration ‘an unspeakable calamity’ for Paulista football and the players themselves ‘ingrates’.⁷⁰ One

⁶⁵ ‘Não são bem exactas as informações’, *Folha da Manhã*, 9 July 1931. Another player who cited the ethnic connection as an attraction was Vasco da Gama’s Luiz Gervazoni, known as Itália. When asked if he would like to play in Italy, Gervazoni responded that he would, given the right financial inducements, and noted that his parents and wife were Italian. ‘O zagueiro Itália foi mesmo convidado para actuar na Itália’, *Folha da Noite*, 26 Aug. 1931.

⁶⁶ The Lazio contracts were reported in ‘Os jogadores paulistas em caminho da Italia: Por ocasião de sua passagem pelo Rio, a “Folha da Manhã” conseguiu entrevistar-los’, *Folha da Manhã*, 12 July 1931; the figure of 300\$000 réis is given by R. Castello, ‘O futebol exportador’, *Folha da Manhã*, 10 July 1931. These sums have been converted using the exchange rates for 1931 at www.measuringworth.com/exchange/global/

⁶⁷ ‘Os jogadores paulistas passaram pelo Rio, ao bordo do “Duillio”’, *Folha da Manhã*, 26 July 1931.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ ‘Os jogadores paulistas em caminho da Italia’, *Folha da Manhã*, 12 July 1931.

⁷⁰ Castello, ‘O futebol exportador’, *Folha da Manhã*, 10 July 1931; and ‘Signaes dos tempos’, *OESP*, 15 July 1931.

predicted that these ‘pseudo Paulistas’ would soon return to Brazil, having failed to impress their foreign employers. While they could expect ambitious Brazilian football administrators to meet them with open arms, he asserted, they would find a colder reception from the sporting public, ‘which is no longer foolish’, and which ‘will do everything in order to repel these wayward ones’.⁷¹

Others, however, although they lamented the loss of so many talented athletes, tended to empathise with the dilemma they faced as aspiring professionals. Indeed, one response was to use the example of the migrant player as evidence of Brazil’s need to professionalise its football. Journalists and other observers knew that these emigrating players would only be the first of many, one newspaper labelling the Italians’ exit ‘the first spoonful’.⁷² Not only did the status quo corrupt the morality of Brazilian football and subject players to unfair treatment by administrators, the argument went, but now it was causing Brazil to lose its best players to countries that could offer footballers opportunities for professional play.

Thus, it was not the players who elicited the most criticism, but instead the club directors and league administrators who had ushered in the decadence plaguing Paulista football. One writer argued that ‘no one has the right to rise up against these dedicated footballers who, for a long while, have defended the colours of their clubs and their country’. Instead, he suggested critics should consider the ‘half dozen football magnates, who live almost exclusively from the exertions of these ... players’.⁷³ Another observer suggested that the crocodile tears of sporting directors over their losses would evince only laughter, as it was they who had first introduced the spectre of commercialisation to local football.⁷⁴ This was echoed in another’s terse judgment that there was nothing São Paulo could do to avoid losing its best players, ‘as these are the results of false amateurism’.⁷⁵ Not surprisingly, the campaign for professionalisation intensified in the aftermath of the emigration of the Italian footballers, and pro-professional discourse began to take on a nationalist tenor that supplemented the footballing and moralising elements. It is no coincidence that both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro professionalised their football quite soon after the Italian ‘exodus’, in 1933.

⁷¹ ‘O Exodo dos jogadores’, *OESP*, 10 July 1931.

⁷² ‘Últimas: A primeira colheira’, *A Gazeta*, 10 July 1931.

⁷³ Castello, ‘O futebol exportador’, *Folha da Manhã*, 10 July 1931.

⁷⁴ ‘O Exodo dos jogadores’, *OESP*, 10 July 1931.

⁷⁵ ‘Últimas’, *A Gazeta*, 10 July 1931.

Controversy and the Dilemma of National Identity

Many observers, however, soon began to question the empathy that they had first expressed in considering the migration of the Italian footballers. In late August 1931, Barbuy, Del Debbio, Ratto and Serafini – all now Lazio players – gave an interview to *Il Littoriale*, the official organ of the Italian Olympic Committee. The publication quoted the four footballers as rejecting their Brazilian roots and citizenship; according to *Il Littoriale*, the players said, ‘We do not accept the false and hypocritical expression Italo-Brazilian. We are Italians!’⁷⁶ Indeed, the Italian periodical quoted Del Debbio as having asserted that the players wanted to ‘finish with the ambiguity’, that the idea that they were Brazilian was a ‘joke’ [*droga*], and that they were ‘Italians, arch-Italians’. The group’s acknowledged leader, Barbuy, is reported to have stated less excitedly, ‘We are all Italians and we are proud to offer to the fatherland a synthesis of [Italian] emigration to Brazil, demonstrating that our parents have forgotten neither the language nor the customs of the land of their birth.’⁷⁷

Predictably, this stance proved controversial in Brazil. The editor of Rio de Janeiro’s leading sports periodical, the *Jornal dos Sports*, the first Brazilian publication to report the matter, reacted indignantly, and labelled the players ‘renegades’ and ‘ingrates’. He went on at length and with undisguised distaste:

With an impudence that doesn’t recognise limits, the three players who sold themselves to Italian football sold their character and their dignity as well. In order to obtain a few more tips, a few more scraps, they cynically turned against the Fatherland, denying they are Brazilians, [and] they have had the shamelessness necessary to say that they were uniquely Italian, that they have never considered themselves anything other than sons of Italy. Our public, that so long tired out its hands applauding these renegades, will have those hands ready to receive them, if, some day, they have the audacity to return to our great land.⁷⁸

For the *Carioca* editor, the players, whose aspirations to professional status he had championed, were now only ‘mercenaries’ of whom Brazil was well rid.⁷⁹

The editors of Paulista papers were less visceral in their response, as might be expected of those more personally familiar with the players. Certainly they expressed concern about the controversial statements attributed to Barbuy and the others, and wondered what had happened to their city’s former

⁷⁶ ‘Renegados! Ingratos!: Del Debbio, Amilcar, Ratto e Serafine declaram, em Roma, que são italianos e fazem questão de não ser brasileiros’, *Jornal dos Sports*, 26 Aug. 1931.

⁷⁷ ‘Os Futebolistas brasileiros, contratados como profissionaes para a Italia, renegaram a sua patria’, *Folha da Manhã*, 27 Aug. 1931.

⁷⁸ ‘Renegados! Ingratos!’, *Jornal dos Sports*, 26 Aug. 1931.

⁷⁹ ‘Criticas e sugestões: Renegados!’, *Jornal dos Sports*, 26 Aug. 1931.

heroes. Many took their initial cues from the *Jornal dos Sports*, quoting extensively from its reporting of the matter. But they did not reproduce its disgust. In its initial coverage of the story, for example, *A Gazeta* expressed not anger but disbelief that the players could have made such statements. It reminded its readers that the players had always been ‘good boys and good citizens’, and even suggested that the statements perhaps ‘were inventions of the Italian magazine which interviewed them, in order to awaken its readers’ interest in our players’.⁸⁰ Moreover, the paper sought to clarify the facts of the case by interviewing João Barbuy, Amilcar’s father, and by contacting the players in Italy. Barbuy’s father insisted that his son was ‘a good Brazilian’, and stated that he felt it ‘impossible that Amilcar had said this’.⁸¹ More importantly, *A Gazeta* was happy to report that it had received from the four players a telegram which read, in part, ‘We deny entirely [the] interview [with] *Littoriale*’.⁸² The newspaper continued, over the course of the next weeks, to publish telegrams and letters from the players, as well as editorials, in what amounted to a full-blooded defence of the patriotism of the players.

While exactly what Barbuy, Del Debbio, Ratto and Serafini told their Italian interviewer remains unclear, it is certain that the players’ emigration and their alleged statements prompted a conflicted set of responses from observers in Brazil that helped to undermine the support they had previously enjoyed. In fact, the controversy helped to fuel an official reaction against the players by the administrators of Paulista football and to shed light on the ethnic and national identity and allegiances of local Italian sportsmen. Although one observer suggested that Italian chauvinism had led Palestra Itália ‘not to pose the minimum resistance’ to the players’ decision to emigrate, other observers noted – and the documents demonstrate – that the Italian club took the lead in attempting to punish the players.⁸³ Palestra Itália took aim especially at Ministrinho, who had been one of its best players, and who was certainly its most popular. The player had once won a popularity contest run by *A Gazeta*, and, as Thomaz Mazzoni, the city’s leading sportswriter, observed, ‘Among all the players who went, without doubt it was Ministrinho who, for many sentimental reasons, prompted the most longing [*saudades*].’⁸⁴ However, even before Ministrinho had left for Italy, his

⁸⁰ ‘Amilcar e Debbio, segundo um jornal italiano disseram que deixaram de ser brasileiros’, *A Gazeta*, 27 Aug. 1931.

⁸¹ ‘O pae de Amilcar visitou-nos hontem e disse-nos que não crê em tudo quanto se diz a respeito do seu filho que é um bom brasileiro como sempre foi correcto esportista’, *A Gazeta*, 29 Aug. 1931.

⁸² ‘Amilcar e os demais companheiros desmentem as declarações que lhes foram attribuidas’, *A Gazeta*, 18 Sept. 1931.

⁸³ ‘O presidente do Palestra e a victoria da Italia’, *A Folha da Manhã*, 6 June 1934; ‘O Exodo de jogadores’, *OESP*, 10 July 1931.

⁸⁴ Olympicus, ‘O ‘garoto’ partiu’, *A Gazeta*, 24 July 1931.

former club had petitioned the Associação Paulista for his suspension.⁸⁵ The club was successful and in early September 1931, in the aftermath of the *Il Littoriale* controversy, the association's general assembly voted to ban him from playing in league competitions indefinitely.⁸⁶ This was quickly followed by bans on the other emigrant players, as, according to contemporary reports, Palestra Itália, along with Corinthians, led the way in condemning them.⁸⁷

As this shows, even in the local Italian community the players' emigration caused consternation. Palestra Itália had been the first club to confront the prospect of losing its best players in 1930, with the emigration of Barbuy. Barbuy petitioned the club to release him from his obligations to it, requesting his player's pass. The directorate agreed to consider the request but, no doubt aware of the flood to come, decided that it would 'no longer consider ceding the "pass" of any player who comes to ask for it from this date on, excepting Snr. Amilcar Barbuy'.⁸⁸ The club kept its word, denying requests for passes by Ministrinho, Rizzetti, Serafini and, ultimately, Barbuy himself.⁸⁹ Club documents demonstrate a tetchiness on the part of club directors over the issue, as they reminded the players of their obligations to the club. For example, in rejecting Serafini's request, the club reminded him that it had 'never denied help to him in all the times he needed doctors, medicine, hospitals, etc.'⁹⁰

Moreover, in denying the passes the club demonstrated its conflicted nationality and identity. During the same months that the club was cultivating its contacts in the Italian consulate and building relationships with other local Italian entities, like the Sociedade Dante Alighieri, it was also asserting its displeasure with the adopted Italian identity of its own players. Of course in one sense this is to be expected, as club directors simply did not want to lose their best footballers. On the other hand, it is telling that the club did not, at least in internal documents, express shock at the players' rejection of amateur sport. Most probably the club was already compensating its footballers for their play; certainly it had secured employment on behalf of its players.⁹¹ Instead, in minuting the club's refusal of the requests by

⁸⁵ 'Associação Paulista de Esportes Athleticos', *OESP*, 18 July 1931.

⁸⁶ 'Ministrinho e sua eliminação da APEA', *A Gazeta*, 10 Sept. 1931.

⁸⁷ 'Como irá acabar a questão', *A Gazeta*, 26 Sept. 1931.

⁸⁸ Meeting of the Directorate of SSPI, 1 Aug. 1930, *Ata Reunião Diretoria*, Livro 08, SEP.

⁸⁹ Meetings of the Directorate and Deliberative Council of SSPI, 10 July 1931, *Ata Reunião Diretoria*. Livro 08; 26 Dec. 1930 and 7 Feb. 1931, *Atas. Conselho Deliberativo*, SEP.

⁹⁰ Extraordinary Meeting of the Joint Executive of SSPI, 26 Dec. 1930, *Atas. Conselho Deliberativo*, SEP.

⁹¹ In 1930, the club provided bonds to guarantee the employment of the players Salvador Loschiavo and Francisco Carrone by the Texaco company and Henrique Serafini by the Standard company. Meeting of the Directorate of SSPI, 13 June 1930, *Ata Reunião Diretoria*. Livro 08, SEP.

Rizzetti and Serafini, the club secretary noted that the players ‘abandoned the Club with the aim of signing for a *foreign* Club’.⁹²

In the event, the players eventually won the right to play in Italy, but it is tempting to suggest that the club’s lack of support for their decision reflects a changing ethnic identity and allegiance among some Italian sportsmen in São Paulo. Indeed, despite the controversy and the club’s failure to keep hold of its athletes, the episode suggests the increasingly successful integration of Italians into local society. By the time of the players’ emigration, Palestra Itália had been playing first-class football in São Paulo for over fifteen years. Its players, and other players of Italian ethnicity, were representing the city and the country in representative teams. Club documents were by then being produced almost exclusively in Portuguese, and the club succeeded in winning support from the Associação Paulista in banning the players from local competitions, despite the support they were receiving from some sectors. In the short run, Palestra Itália and other clubs suffered the defection of some of their most skilled and popular players. In the long run, it seems that for Palestra Itália and some individuals left behind, such as the journalist Thomaz Mazzoni and the elder Barbuy, the episode served to fortify their Brazilian identities. They did not completely reject their old allegiances; but they could more truly begin to be called Italo-Brazilian, even if Amilcar Barbuy and other individual players may have considered the term a ‘false and hypocritical expression’.

This is not to say that all and everyone were soon forgiven or that, with the emigration of the Paulistas in 1931, the issue of Italian ethnicity had been resolved. Indeed, the 1934 World Cup can serve as a coda for our understanding of the ambivalence with which the issues of migration and nationality continued to be met by Brazilian sportsmen after the loss of Barbuy and his apprentices. In the first instance, such ambivalence was revealed in relation to the activities of Filó, Corinthians’ old idol. Filó had avoided much of the scrutiny applied to his Lazio team-mates because his name did not appear in the columns of the controversial *Il Littoriale* piece. But in fact he took a more concrete step in asserting an Italian identity by joining the ranks of the Italian national side. He played for the team in the 1934 World Cup, appearing in one match before being injured, and becoming champion when his team took the Cup. One observer took pride in pointing out that ‘in the Italian squad figured a Brazilian jewel, our renowned Filó’.⁹³ Local journalists, in describing Italy’s progress through the tournament, often identified him as Brazilian, but, beyond this, in Brazil there was very little coverage of Filó’s exploits, his decision to represent Italy or his

⁹² Meeting of the Joint Executive of SSPI, 10 July 1931, *Atas. Conselho Deliberativo*, SEP (my italics).

⁹³ ‘Campeonato Mundial’, *Diário Popular*, 27 May 1934.

successes on the pitch. This may have been due to difficulties of travel, communication or resources, or it may have been due to local resentment that the player did not turn out to represent the land of his birth. What is certain is that the issue of ethnicity continued to be fraught with meaning for many Brazilian sportsmen, something impossible to miss when considering the controversy that ensnared Palestra Itália during the competition.

On the eve of the World Cup, Palestra Itália decided that its players would take no part in the national side organised by the *Confederação Brasileira Desportos*. In all probability this decision was informed by an arcane administrative dispute, the kind of disagreement that plagued the first generations of Brazilian football and often impaired the organisation of national teams.⁹⁴ Still, this did not concern the Paulista sportsmen who alleged that the club was among those ‘most responsible for the poor performance of our team at the World Championship’ because it had refused to allow players such as Tunga, Junqueira and Gabardo to join the national side.⁹⁵ Thus, a number of sportsmen, angered by the club’s intransigence and the Brazilian side’s defeat in its first and only match, gathered at the club’s grounds to give ‘vivas’ to Brazil and to express their displeasure. The newspaper *A Plateia* described what happened next.

[B]arely was the result of the game known that members of the popular class manifested hostility toward Palestra Italia, meeting up in front of its headquarters, in the Praça do Patriarcha, booing the club and its directors.

From booing they passed on to throwing rocks, requiring, then, the intervention of the police.⁹⁶

According to the *Diário Popular*, the crowd also attempted to enter the club’s grounds, perhaps in order to cause damage or to accost club members.⁹⁷ The municipal authorities, supported by members of the civil guard, managed to stop the stoning and restore calm. In order to protect against further disturbance, the authorities decided to provide security to the premises of both the club, where a ‘hostile’ crowd remained gathered, and the home of the club president, Dante Delmanto. Finally, ‘the masses’ effected the ‘burial’ of Palestra Itália, which *A Plateia* termed ‘a picturesque note’. The burial entailed a candlelight funeral march and the delivery of a garbage truck carrying flowers in the shape of a coffin to the headquarters of the Associação

⁹⁴ For example, Brazil’s first World Cup team consisted almost exclusively of players based in Rio de Janeiro, owing to a dispute between the Rio-based organisers and the administrators of Paulista football.

⁹⁵ ‘A derrota da nossa equipe em Genova e as manifestações que provocou’, *Diário Popular*, 28 May 1934; ‘O presidente do Palestra e a victoria da Italia’, *Folha da Manhã*, 6 June 1934.

⁹⁶ ‘O povo apedrejou as sédes do Palestra Italia e da A.P.E.A.’, *A Plateia*, 28 May 1934.

⁹⁷ ‘A derrota da nossa equipe’, *Diário Popular*, 28 May 1934.

Paulista. The crowd finished by stoning the association's headquarters, an action that also necessitated police intervention.⁹⁸

The Paulista crowd was not alone. On the same day in Rio de Janeiro, dissatisfied sportsmen protested against the national governing body, the city's league association, and Vasco da Gama, another club that refused to allow its players to play for Brazil in 1934. This helps caution us against attributing the Paulista crowd's behaviour exclusively to problems of Italian ethnicity. Not only is Vasco da Gama a Luso-Brazilian club, but Portugal did not participate in the 1934 World Cup.⁹⁹ However, although we cannot know what these protestors had in mind, it is apparent that some, at least, viewed Palestra Itália's attitude as one based upon ethnicity. In the words of one observer, 'When there was a campaign for the formation of our team, the papers began to insinuate that the attitude of the Palestra president was due to a question of patriotism ... Italian patriotism, a question of "Italianità".' For his part, the observer was convinced that the journalists had been correct, that the directors of Palestra Itália had been motivated by Italian 'patriotism' and that they had been in great part responsible for Brazil's failure.¹⁰⁰ It is not unlikely that a number of stone-throwers were motivated by a similar set of assumptions and a similar disdain for the seeming lack of Brazilian nationalism among the 'Italians' in their midst. The problematic relationship between migration, nationality and football was yet to be resolved.

Conclusions

Players and coaches like Filó and Barbuy continued to ply their trade as professionals in Italy, and attitudes in Brazil seem to have slowly softened. For example, within months of the *Il Littoriale* controversy, *A Gazeta Esportiva* began to carry news of football in Italy, referring to Lazio as 'the club of the Brazilians'.¹⁰¹ The reports were short, but their very appearance seems to indicate continuing interest, and perhaps pride, in the accomplishments of São Paulo's lost footballers. Also, although some may have resented his actions during the period of his greatest success, Filó enjoyed a measure of support when he returned to Brazil some years later. He obtained admission to the still-fashionable Paulistano club, and he received occasional

⁹⁸ 'O povo apedrejou as sedes', *A Plateia*, 28 May 1934.

⁹⁹ 'A derrota da nossa equipe', *Diário Popular*, 28 May 1934.

¹⁰⁰ 'O presidente do Palestra e a victoria da Italia', *Folha da Manhã*, 6 June 1934.

¹⁰¹ *A Gazeta Esportiva*, 29 Feb. 1932. In Italy, the club earned the nickname 'Brasilazio': Lanfranchi and Taylor, *Moving with the Ball*, p. 82.

but glowing press coverage from those who took pride in his accomplishments.¹⁰²

Perhaps by the time Filó returned to Brazil, bitterness against him and the other players had dissipated. Ministrinho, for example, returned and played for Palestra Itália into the 1940s. Certainly in the aftermath of the Italians' migration it became more common for Brazilian footballers to play abroad. Favourites such as Domingos da Guia and Leônidas da Silva sought careers in countries that offered greater monetary rewards than did Brazil.¹⁰³ In 1933 came the professionalisation of leagues in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, which brought greater player movement within Brazil itself.

For its part, in 1941 Palestra Itália fielded its first Afro-Brazilian player, Og Moreira. The club had fielded non-Italian players before, but this was a major departure from past practice, a mark of greater ethnic and social inclusion. The next year, the club renamed itself the *Sociedade Esportiva Palmeiras*, while its Mineiro cousin became the *Cruzeiro Esporte Clube*. This change was imposed upon the clubs, as the government of Getúlio Vargas obliged all sporting societies in the country with any hint of a connection to Axis powers to 'nationalise' themselves.¹⁰⁴ Elsewhere, the journalist Mário Filho had noticed a similar shift among the Italian newsvendors of Rio de Janeiro during the 1938 World Cup. In the semi-final of that year's tournament, Brazil faced Italy, the Brazilian team led by the wildly popular Leônidas da Silva. The journalist recalled, 'On the day of Italy-Brazil, the newsstands opened up with posters of Leônidas. Of Leônidas and little Brazilian flags.' As Mário Filho recognised, this may have had as much to do with business sense as national feeling, as 'the fans who walked through the streets could have broken down the newsstands to the shouts of "viva Brazil!"'.¹⁰⁵ Like the São Paulo club, the vendors might have felt obliged to advertise their Brazilianness.

However, as the journalist stated, perhaps there was more to the vendors' actions than fear of their patrons. The Italians who lived in Rio de Janeiro had previously adopted Leônidas, alongside his Fluminense Football Club team-mate Romeu, as one of their favourites. This was not an ethnic or national adoption; they simply enjoyed watching Leônidas and gave him their support.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, regardless of the provenance of the decision taken

¹⁰² 'Filó: Unico Craque do Brasil que teve a gloria de ser campeão do mundo', *Mundo Esportivo*, 27 May 1948; and Pimento Netto, 'Filó, Campeão do Mundo: O unico brasileiro que tem esse cartão de visita', unknown newspaper, 14 Feb. 1949, *Filó* scrapbook, CAP.

¹⁰³ Both joined Uruguayan clubs in 1933, Domingos signing for Nacional, Leônidas for Peñarol.

¹⁰⁴ The change was legislated by the Vargas regime's Conselho Nacional de Esportes in Sept. 1942. Campos Araújo, *Imigração e futebol*, pp. 126–7.

¹⁰⁵ Mário Filho, *O negro no futebol brasileiro*, second ed. (Rio de Janeiro, 1964), p. 245.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

by Palestra Itália to rename itself, it is obvious that the change was fitting. It was merely the formalisation of a process that had begun long before, of Italian clubs and sportsmen becoming more fully Brazilian.

This process has never been completed, but it was well underway by 1940, and an understanding of it casts light both on the ways in which groups and nations use sport to define identities and on the history of immigrant adjustment and integration. Often the historiography has presented the development of Brazilian sporting identity as a struggle over race and the integration of players of African descent. Some scholars have also considered the issue of class and the place of working-class players in Brazilian football. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the proscription on Afro-Brazilian and working-class players in elite Brazilian clubs and leagues was crucial to the construction of an exclusivist sporting environment, and the halting inclusion of such players was central to the transformation of football into a more truly national institution.

But debates over sporting identities were always more complicated than simply struggles over dichotomies of white and black, rich and poor. Ethnicity and nationality mattered to sportsmen, as early Anglophile preferences demonstrate. The entry of Palestra Itália into first-class competition in 1914 signalled the acceptability of Italians in the estimation of Brazilian sportsmen, and Italian players' participation in clubs, leagues and representative teams helped to complicate the abiding Anglophile and classist vision of the proper sportsman. Thus Italians and other immigrants altered Brazilian sporting identity, making it more reflective of the nation as it was rather than as it might be imagined to be. It might also be said that immigrant participation better prepared football for the inclusion of others who had been previously deemed unacceptable.

Moreover, the experience of Italian and Italo-Brazilian sportsmen helps us to understand the experience of their non-sporting compatriots, who were themselves engaged in the process of becoming Brazilian. It is difficult to know exactly when and to what degree immigrants like these Italians were sufficiently integrated to consider themselves Brazilians. We can track their integration by observing their choice of marriage partners, their movements in the workplace, their patterns of settlement and residence, or their purchase of homes and land. But to understand the complexities of the process, we must also attend to cultural indices, such as immigrants' treatment in local literature, the evolution of their language, and their recreational life. Without them, our understanding of integration tends to flow too narrowly from the study of socioeconomic pressures and motives. While important in accounting for adjustment and social integration, the counting of *réis* earned or houses purchased cannot tell us everything about the transformation of immigrant identities.

As the story of the Italian sportsmen of São Paulo demonstrates, sport offers an unusual lens on immigrants' and natives' attitudes toward national identity and integration. Sport was one site wherein immigrants and their descendants could find the means with which to negotiate the integrative process largely upon their own terms. Mário Filho's newsvendors and the change of name by Italian clubs are remarkable precisely because they were rare instances of pressure against Italian sporting identity. Instead, the ethnic and national prejudices of Paulistas and other Brazilians, prejudices that gave preference to those of European descent, helped to ease Italians' adoption of a more local identity. The Brazilian sporting community allowed them to adopt that identity without obliging them to sacrifice their ethnic and national self-image, on or off the playing field.

Thus the migration of Filó and others was so deeply shocking to contemporaries not only because it demonstrated the problems of false amateurism and the need for professionalisation. It also forced Italians and Brazilians alike to consider the limitations of immigrant integration and the unfinished nature of Brazil's emerging multiethnic identity. The response of the many Brazilian observers who criticised the players demonstrated their unease in considering the loyalties of local Italians. The response of the Italians who turned on migrant players for perceived disloyalties shows the increasing willingness within the immigrant community to claim a Brazilian identity as their own. Italians were as yet unsure of their relationship to Brazilian identity, but many perceived that they had won a place in Brazil, and by the 1930s some were ready to claim that place, even as others continued to look across the ocean for their political heroes, their cultural identity and their national loyalties. Football shows us that by the 1930s the integration of Italians in Brazil had begun, and it had made great strides, but it was not complete.