

## Games and jokes in children's magazine *O Tico-Tico* (1950s)

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**Abstract:** The article examines the interweaving of school practices and cultural practices through the analysis of the final editions of the children's magazine *O Tico-Tico*, published in the 1950s. Launched by the publisher *O Malho* in Rio de Janeiro, then the federal capital, this magazine circulated nationally between 1905 and 1962, with the declared aim of contributing to children's education. By utilizing textual and visual elements designed to guide young readers' comprehension, the magazine is analyzed as a discursive space that enables discussion about the intertwining of school and cultural practices – serving as an object of knowledge and entertainment, a producer of meaning, and a product of society. The analysis encompasses editorial devices and various sections, such as comics, games, and playful and pedagogical activities, emphasizing its contribution to shaping children's behavior and transmitting values idealized by adults through educational and cultural practices, which were often interconnected. The study highlights that the magazine's adherence to the characteristics and values that marked its trajectory was decisive for its longevity of more than five decades but also contributed to its decline by not fully keeping pace with the social and cultural transformations of the period.

**Keywords:** *O Tico-Tico*; cultural practices; school practices; childhood education.

### 1 Introduction

The interweaving of school practices and cultural practices will be addressed in this text, using as a source the issues of the children's magazine *O Tico-Tico*<sup>1</sup>, published in the 1950s, a gift that was given to me. Transforming this gift into a documentary source implies analyzing a printed publication whose stated objective was to contribute to children's education, and which was published, with periodicity variations, for 57 years (from 1905 to 1962). It

<sup>1</sup> The almost complete collection of this children's magazine is available at the National Digital Library: <https://bndigital.bn.gov.br/acervo-digital/tico-tico>. Despite gaps in the series, variations in periodicity can be observed: between 1906 and 1941, the publication presented itself, from the cover, as a children's weekly, published every Wednesday. From August 1941 onward, that is, from issue 1869, it became a monthly publication.



is, therefore, a successful editorial enterprise by any circulation metric adopted, pioneering in electing children as a reading public and co-participants in a national education project. Given these characteristics, this publication can be examined as an object of knowledge and entertainment, as a meaning producer, and as a product of a society. The elements that structure the publication – mechanisms designed to guide readers' comprehension and engagement (Chartier, 1991) – allow us to highlight the intertwining of school and cultural practices in its composition. From this perspective, the magazine *O Tico-Tico* can be conceived as a *swinging door* (Depaepe *et al.*, 2008), that is, a discursive space projected by the editors so that the reader could move between cultural and school practices without clearly demarcated boundaries between them.

The analysis is limited to the magazine's final circulation phase, the 1950s, a period when tensions intensified between the values it conveyed and those emerging from societal transformations underway in Brazil, including the expansion of the audiovisual market aimed at children. The survey of issues, that is, the documentary analysis, included reading the issues and categorizing them thematically and chronologically, focusing on textual content, images, sections, and editorials. In the discursive analysis, pedagogical and cultural practices – often interconnected – were highlighted through their visual and narrative elements. A dialogue was also established with other studies on *O Tico-Tico*, allowing for comparative approaches and broadening the understanding of the potential of this documentary source for the history of education. This methodological approach enabled the mapping of how the magazine acted as a mediator between school and cultural practices, offering insight into early childhood education and the circulation of knowledge during the period.

In its broader perspective, this article reiterates that periodical press in general, and the magazine analyzed here in particular, constitutes a significant source for historical studies since it records aspects of daily life and serves as an instrument for shaping public opinion. It captures transformations, tensions of the time, and social dynamics – at times reinforcing established values, at others opening possibilities for dissent. Therefore, it allows us to unravel the complex articulations between culture, education, and politics<sup>2</sup>.

## **2 *O Tico-Tico*, Children's Weekly**

The publishing house *O Malho*, based in Rio de Janeiro, was founded in 1902 with the launch of a magazine of the same name<sup>3</sup> and, in 1905, introduced a new publication – *O Tico-Tico* – aimed at children. As described by Roberta Gonçalves (2020, p. 260):

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<sup>2</sup> On the analytical possibilities of the periodical press, see, in particular, Luca, 2006; Catani & Bastos, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> The illustrated weekly magazine of political satire *O Malho* began circulating in 1902 and continued until 1954, featuring mainly cartoons and caricatures about national politics and discussions on urban culture

A new illustrated magazine from the group sought to combine entertainment with formative objectives, aiming not only to amuse children but also to contribute to the moral, civic, and scientific education of its readers. By committing itself to the education of boys and girls, mostly belonging to the elites and middle classes of the country, the new magazine upheld education as the solution to national problems, a discussion dear to intellectuals and the press at the time (Nagle, 1974, p. 97-102). The concern with the dissemination of instruction, they believed, should extend to various sectors of society, especially among those who developed cultural projects, such as print media.

The ambition to merge humor with the analysis of events and news was a characteristic already present in *O Malho*, which addressed the political issues of the federal capital by using cartoons, caricatures, and illustrations, presenting itself to readers as a humorous, artistic, and literary weekly. Both publications also benefited from technical advancements, as the acquisition of new rotary presses by the company allowed for time savings, higher print quality, increased circulation, and the use of photographs, colors, and illustrations, which, in turn, expanded the catalog available to readers.

The first owners of *O Malho* magazine - Luiz Bartolomeu de Souza e Silva and Antonio Azeredo<sup>4</sup> - both journalists and politicians, turned their facilities into a meeting place for illustrators, intellectuals, writers, poets, and artists in general, as well as attracting occasional contributions from foreign artists. It was a venture that fostered and was nourished by the optimistic atmosphere of early 20th-century Rio de Janeiro, which Costa & Schwarcz (2000) referred to as *the era of certainties*. Electric lighting, railways, new urban layouts, theatrical performances, and the press were seen as markers of progress, overshadowing the poverty, diseases, and social inequality that, nevertheless, did not disappear merely as an effect of this optimistic will.

The long existence of *O Malho* company fluctuated according to political conditions. Opposing the Liberal Alliance that brought Getúlio Vargas to power and disrupted the political dominance of the states of Minas Gerais and São Paulo, *O Malho* was looted and vandalized in 1930. It returned to activities in 1931 but without its traditional emphasis on political issues and humor, a shift in editorial direction that also affected other press outlets. In 1945, there was an attempt to return to its former style, but this did not last long under the pressure of the Department of Press and Propaganda of the Vargas government, and the magazine ceased publication in 1954. Amid these transformations,

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and customs. The magazine included artists who, it can be said, created Brazilian cartoon art and became references in graphic arts. *O Malho* ceased circulation in 1930 due to political repression, and from 1935 onward, it shifted its focus to cultural and literary themes. The collection is available at the following address: <https://bndigital.bn.gov.br/acervo-digital/malho>.

<sup>4</sup> Luiz Bartolomeu was also the owner of the newspaper *A Tribuna*, while Antonio Azeredo, a partner from 1910 onwards, was a senator.

The children's audience seemed to be the company's last stronghold, as in the 1950s, it invested in the creation of three more monthly children's publications: *Tiquinho*, launched in January 1950, aimed at children learning to read; *Cirandinha*, in April 1951, directed at young girls; and *Pinguinho*, in March 1954, intended for younger children. These magazines had some success, although they never reached the level of popularity and longevity of the group's first children's magazine (Gonçalves, 2020, p. 270).

The magazine *O Tico-Tico*, the editorial success that sustained *O Malho* as its longest-running (1905–1962) and most successful product, was launched in October 1905 with a print run of 21,000 copies, priced at 200 réis. By the end of that same year, it had reached a circulation of 27,000 copies.

The undeniable success and longevity of the magazine, despite variations in page count and print runs, can be attributed, according to various analysts, to several factors: the recognition of a group of readers – children – for whom no Brazilian products were available at the time; the technical resources that ensured high-quality printing; and the engagement of intellectuals willing to dedicate their artistry to this audience, including writers, illustrators, translators, and editors<sup>5</sup>.

At a time when schooling, and therefore literacy – the prerequisite for enjoying the magazine – was unevenly distributed in society<sup>6</sup>, the magazine's target readership primarily comprised the urban middle classes, whose values it both expressed and reinforced. More than addressing childhood in general, the magazine was primarily aimed at boys, featuring them as central characters in its stories and portraying a future social role for men.

The magazine has remained an object of study for researchers from various fields, who adopt different perspectives. Patroclo (2019) examined the first twenty years of publication (1905–1925), focusing on gender relations and linking female representations to family formation, as women were explicitly assigned motherhood as their primary social function, caregiving as a priority activity, and submission as a formative value. The magazine dedicated specific sections to them, although these expected roles were also present in other content and advertisements. The author states:

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<sup>5</sup> Among the main illustrators were the Argentine Alfredo Storni, Max Yantok (probably a pseudonym), and the Italian Angelo Agostini – who is widely recognized as a pioneer of comic strips in Brazil. Another notable artist was J. Carlos, who worked in various artistic fields and became renowned as a caricaturist. The magazine also featured contributions from poets, writers, and translators, whether already established or at the beginning of promising careers.

<sup>6</sup> Schueler & Rizzini (2019) present census data on the federal capital that contribute to understanding the context in which this publication circulated. In 1906, 51.9% of the male population and 48.1% of the female population were illiterate, considering both urban and suburban populations. The proportion was similar among children aged 6 to 15, with 54.7% of boys and 47.6% of girls unable to read.

One can question the construction of female gender representation in its issues, but not the presence of silences about being a woman. The magazine framed its content within the dichotomy of *the strong sex* versus *the beautiful sex*. It upheld a model based on the submission of girls to boys. Girls were expected to be beautiful, kind, skillful, and well-behaved. It is no coincidence that specific spaces were created for young female readers to learn about the latest fashion trends and how to embroider beautifully (Patroclo, 2019, p. 745).

Silva (2024) also analyzed the first year of publication from a gender perspective but focused on representations of masculinity. Adopting punishment and the body as analytical axes, he created a catalog of images. Regarding the construction of masculinity, the author highlights:

Boys were formally educated in schools and physically civilized when they disobeyed prevailing behavioral norms. *O Tico-Tico* was embedded within these institutional frameworks that sought to transform society. The ideal boy was healthy, vigorous, and reflected these traits in both his physical and moral vitality. To become a great man [...] meant progressing toward becoming a valued citizen, esteemed for his intellect and talent. To foster this conception of masculinity, it was necessary to combat the idea of a man without worth, *lost* in idleness (Silva, 2020, p. 67).

Focusing on the magazine's pedagogical aspects, Gonçalves (2021) analyzed biographies published up to the 1920s, highlighting the use of heroic and exemplary narratives for teaching history – a methodological approach also prevalent in formal schooling:

Biographies played a fundamental role in constructing a regime of truth that reinforced values and political intentions regarding the past through trajectories claimed to be rational and linear. The biographical narrative served as a model of “ordered chronology, a coherent and stable personality, actions without inertia, and decisions without uncertainty” (Gonçalves, 2021, p. 229-230).

Discini de Campos and Guillier (2024) analyze part of this documentary corpus, the initial issues, placing it within the context of the circulation of children's and youth press of the period. They identify similar magazines that either inspired the publication of the Brazilian one or with which it established dialogues. Belonging to the same genre as illustrated magazines, the authors analyze, alongside *O Tico-Tico*, *La semaine de Suzette* (1905-1960), a French magazine specifically aimed at girls and identify “[...] graphic and content similarities [...]” (Discini de Campos; Guillier, 2024, p. 22) or even similarities in characters.

The reiteration of values is evident in the discourse and iconography of *O Tico-Tico* through the incorporation of aspects of Brazilian urban society of the period. However, the authors also highlight subversive aspects, generally legitimized or coated in the humor that

permeated the magazine. Despite the incorporation of a family model centered on the paternal figure, this figure could be ridiculed in both illustration and discourse. It is noticeable that, beneath this apparent centrality, children and women used cleverness to circumvent oppression. From this carnivalesque perspective, marked by laughter, they ask:

After all, who really ruled this Brazilian household, depicted on the cover of the first edition of *O Tico-Tico*? The children, “future saviors of the homeland,” as reiterated by common sense? The women, “future mothers of families,” as envisioned by educators, legislators, doctors, and intellectuals in general? Or the **pater**, here portrayed as a weak, submissive, and somewhat ridiculous figure? (Discini de Campos; Guiller, 2024, p. 14).

Vergueiro and Santos (2008) analyzed the magazine, highlighting, among other characteristics, its pioneering role in the publication of comic strips (HQ) in Brazil, for which Brazilian and foreign illustrators and writers contributed, as well as the series derived from it and published by the same company. Among them are *O Almanaque d'O Tico-Tico*, an annual edition with a hardcover selection of material from the previous twelve issues (circulated between 1907 and 1957); the magazine *Tiquinho*, launched in 1950 and published for ten years, aimed at children in the literacy phase; the magazine *Cirandinha*, launched in April 1951, which had 59 issues and was dedicated to girls; *Pinguinho*, which was released in March 1954, targeted at preschool-age children, but only had 27 issues. Regardless of their circulation period, annual almanacs were produced for all these magazines.<sup>7</sup>

In the 1930s, the company *O Malho S.A.* started publishing explicitly educational books linked to school content and a children’s library (*Biblioteca Infantil d'O Tico-Tico*), composed of literary works by Brazilian authors. In the 1960s, it also produced volumes with patriotic and civic content.

According to Vergueiro and Santos (2008), the innovative aspects of *O Tico-Tico* are linked to its pioneering concern with childhood, to the originality of the publication that makes children a segment for the production of national authors and stories, to the graphic aspects, and the artists whose work it fostered. However, it was a product of its time. Present in its pages were the values of the urban middle class, the positive force of labor, a family model with clearly defined roles, devoted to God and the nation, paternalistic, structured by the hierarchy between generations, reinforcing adaptation patterns to a specific type of society that it helped sustain. Socially ingrained racial stereotypes from the period were also reproduced, with Black boys depicted as dependents of white families, without labor ties,

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<sup>7</sup> For further engagement with studies on the magazine, see also Rosa (2002) and Merlo (2003), who attest to the interest that this source has generated.

in images that caricatured their phenotypic traits. In this representation, social inequalities were understood as surmountable through work and respect.

Thus,

It was in this environment, reflecting the values aspired to by the dominant layers of society, that *O Tico-Tico* emerged, grew, and flourished, a bastion of traditional morals and the positivist spirit of the so-called Old Republic. It blended elements of civism and religious precepts of Catholicism, the dominant religion in the country, which appeared in various sections of the magazine, such as children's tales, patriotic poetry, and historical narratives (Vergueiro; Santos, 2008, p. 29).

The dissemination of these values, the advertisements for various products, and the different sections open to children's participation turned adults – the payers – and children into allies of the magazine, demonstrating the editors' clear perception of market sensitivities.

The magazine's editorial approach remained practically unchanged throughout its existence. The image of a beneficial publication, where only good sentiments and wholesome entertainment could be found, was widely promoted by its editors, who remained faithful to their initial stance. In other words, they refused to acknowledge that such a model of a children's magazine, in which even playful aspects had to be subordinate to didactic-pedagogical objectives, had become entirely outdated. The magazine paid dearly for this, failing to survive beyond the 1960s, when the traditional values it upheld increasingly became the subject of constant questioning (Vergueiro; Santos, 2008, p. 33).

### **3 The 1950s: the final phase of *O Tico-Tico***

It can be said that the magazine's adherence to its original characteristics and values sustained its circulation for over five decades, but these same factors also contributed to its decline. Listing some of the transformations and innovations in media and entertainment available to the public in the 1950s helps outline a broader picture of changes that put pressure on both the content and format maintained by *O Tico-Tico*.

Among publications aimed at the youth audience, competitors had already emerged since the 1930s with their own magazines, capturing or creating trends, such as the American heroes Tarzan, Popeye, and Superman. In the 1950s, the effects of this competition were evident in the decline of *O Tico-Tico*'s print runs, the introduction of new sections, and the reformulation of others – attempts to adapt to readers' evolving tastes. In this decade, beyond competition from other publications and characters, a new medium – television – would reshape the landscape of information and entertainment, including for children, through animated cartoons.

Daily newspapers, which played a decisive role in shaping public opinion, expanded their reach. Established publications such as *Correio da Manhã*, *Jornal do Brasil*, *Diário Carioca*, *A Noite*, and *O Globo* underwent graphic and editorial reforms in this period, reflecting the diversity of perspectives characteristic of a society in transformation. The magazines *O Cruzeiro* and *Manchete*, specializing in photojournalism, employed some of the country's most renowned journalists and featured contributions from leading intellectuals in articles and columns. It was also the golden age of great photographers who revolutionized visual storytelling through their reporting. Meanwhile, radio stations such as Nacional, Mayrink Veiga, Globo, and Tupi prioritized news and popular culture, bringing the public closer to national artists through live audience shows, musical programs, and comedy broadcasts – formats that established new standards for humor and entertainment.

However, the societal changes taking place were deeper than just an increase in media products for children. The Federal Capital was undergoing transformations in the post-war period. Other forms of popular cultural expression were expanding and diversifying, such as samba schools and carnival, rooted in the samba tradition, while new artistic experiments were emerging, later culminating in the *Cinema Novo* movement.

The vibrant cultural atmosphere of Rio de Janeiro spread to other states, transmitting new artistic values and standards through sound waves, visual media, and an extensive distribution network. The *Tico-Tico*'s illustrations and graphics faced competition from more technically sophisticated visual narratives with greater impact, capable of captivating both children and adults.

Although urbanization was being driven by the growth of the middle class because of the expansion of commerce and services, the Federal Capital's infrastructure failed to meet the demands of the increasing population. Social inequalities deepened, either due to precarious housing conditions or the exclusion of large portions of the population from the benefits of rapid modernization and public services. Cosmopolitan cultural offerings coexisted with stark social contradictions, which segmented access to culture according to the varying economic conditions of different social groups.

These transformations were subtly incorporated into *O Tico-Tico*'s pages during the 1950s, but in doing so, the magazine lost its innovative edge, unable to keep up with emerging trends, leaving its pioneering role in the past. Faced with growing social and cultural diversity, *O Tico-Tico* survived by targeting an increasingly restricted readership – one for whom the traditional family structures and behavioral norms the magazine reinforced still resonated. However, the combination of educational and recreational elements that characterized *O Tico-Tico* may have contributed to distinguishing it among available options and extending its lifespan.

## 4 School Practices and Cultural Practices

From its inception until the 1950s, *O Tico-Tico* embraced the idea that entertainment was an ally of education in addressing social problems and that a printed publication aimed at children was a valuable contribution to this process. The *swinging doors* metaphor (De-paepe *et al.*, 2008) aptly illustrates the dynamic exchange of various practices observed between *O Tico-Tico* and school activities and content, as well as between school and cultural practices, mutually reinforcing themes, objects, habits, and rituals.

The symbiosis between school and the magazine is evident in numerous aspects and meaning-organizing devices. The magazine was directed at literate children – readers – an essential trait for engaging with all sections. In some months of the year, it featured serialized stories, formatted in landscape mode, which could later be removed from the magazine and bound into a book – a familiar school object – that, along with others, would form a small library. *A Ilha dos Três Mistérios*, by Galvão de Queiroz, was one such book published in this manner in the 1950s.

Every issue included short stories, poetry, and even craft activities, all requiring reading for proper execution. Whether read silently or aloud, by children themselves or by adults, reading presupposed a literate home environment.

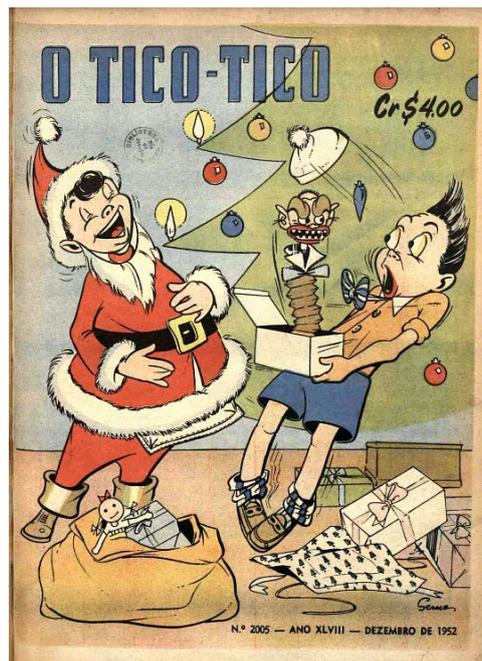
This exchange is noticeable from the covers themselves. Many referenced commemorative dates studied in primary school (*Dia do Soldado*, *Proclamação da República*, among others) or school vacations and religious holidays (Figures 1 and 2). The school calendar also dictated the inclusion of subjects, sections, and content. Issues published in February typically featured more activities related to games and leisure, as justified: “Sometimes, during vacation, we get bored, not knowing what to do to fill the long hours that drag on during the holidays...” (*O Tico-Tico*, Feb. 1950, p. 10). These included game boards and/or sheets meant to be pasted onto cardboard and then cut out to assemble paper dolls with their outfits, or even a nativity scene, published gradually in the second half of the year, with the final pieces appearing in the December issue, suggesting their use in holiday home decorations.

Figure 1 – *O Tico-Tico*. Cover, Jan. 1956, nº 2042, year LI. Illustration by Luiz Sá.



Source: Personal Collection.

Figure 2 – *O Tico-Tico*, cover, Dec. 1952, nº 2005, year XLVIII..



Source: Personal Collection.

The two figures illustrate distinctive characteristics of the magazine: a minimalist artistic style – though by different illustrators – the dominance of primary colors, and allusions to seasonal celebrations. Figure 1 evokes school vacation, during which urban spaces were imagined as playgrounds for children and animals, a luxury unavailable to packed public trans-

port users visible in the background. In Figure 2, the magazine's humor, a hallmark since its inception, is evident. Christmas, an annual feature in *O Tico-Tico*, also contained elements of subversion (as noted by Discini de Campos; Guillier, 2024) in the traditional representation of Santa Claus: here, he is not the kindly old man typically introduced to children, but clearly someone in costume, whose goal is not to distribute gifts but to frighten and amuse.

In its editorial-like section, always placed on page 3 and titled *Lições de Vovô* (*Grandfather's Lessons*), the magazine addressed readers as *little grandchildren*, offering them advice. These could be reflections on the end of one year and the beginning of another, an opportunity for self-improvement: "As for us, let's continue being good children, good students, good Brazilians [...]" (*O Tico-Tico*, Jan. 1950, p. 3). For Carnival, a widely accessible and popular festival, readers were reminded of its pagan origins and that it should not override Catholic duties, aligning the magazine with religious values: "Even though your heads may be spinning with thoughts of the upcoming Carnival, [...] do not forget that Momo's pagan festivities will pass, and our Catholic duties will remain the same, now, throughout 1950, and forever." (*O Tico-Tico*, Feb. 1950, p. 3). The importance of cultivating reading habits was another recurring theme. The June 1954 issue acknowledged competition from other available publications but advised young readers to choose literature appropriate for children, emphasizing books that imparted lessons rather than those that conveyed obscenities or left them with a "[...] lingering taste of remorse and sadness" (*O Tico-Tico*, Jun. 1954, p. 3). The editorials also engaged with urban issues: the magazine supported a campaign led by Dom Hélder Câmara to build homes as replacements for Rio de Janeiro's favelas in the April 1956 edition, and in 1950, it encouraged participation in the upcoming census, framing it with a moral and religious tone rather than a civic one. Thus, events, campaigns, and celebrations circulated between schools and society, reinforcing each other and being presented in a playful language for children's and adults' home reading.

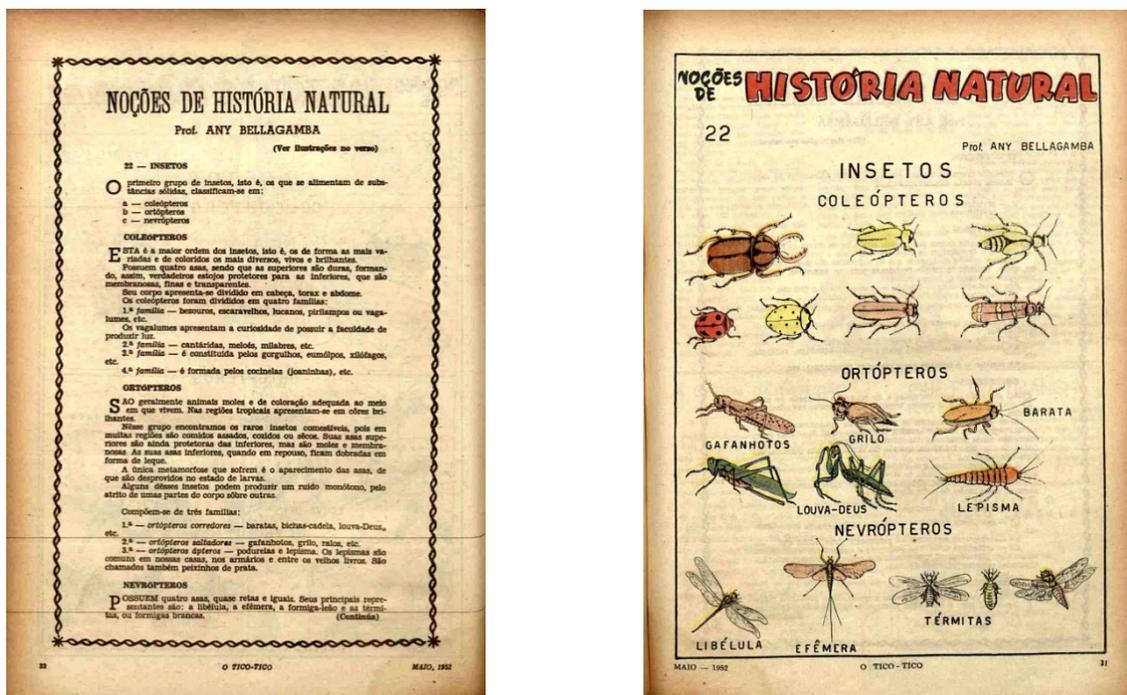
The influence of school is deeply embedded in the magazine's lexicon, with many sections framed as *lessons*. Besides *Lições de Vovô* there were other grouped as *courses*, mimicking school timeframes and curricula, published sequentially. *Noções de Botânica* (*Notions of Botany*) and *Noções de História Natural* (*Notions of Natural History*), written by Any Bellagamba<sup>8</sup>, are formatted on the front and back of a page: the first contains illustrations arranged for observation, while the second (which requires the action of turning the page) transforms what was seen into a written text, a lesson to be memorized (Figures 3 and 4). Other sections, such as *Aves e Pássaros do Brasil* (*Birds and Fowls of Brazil*), *Prodígios da Natureza* (*Nature's Wonders*), focused on animal descriptions, and *Grandes Figuras da História* (*Great Figures of History*, featuring biographies of historical figures and heroes),

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<sup>8</sup> Professor Any Bellagamba was the author of textbooks, some of which were compilations of *O Tico-Tico's* lessons, published by *Editora O Malho* until at least 1977. Some of these books are available on the *Estante Virtual* website.

were clearly linked to school subjects. School temporal references such as: curriculum, school year, teaching programs, vacations and holidays are themes of different sections and show the similarity of objectives between the school and the magazine. However, these contents are not directed at specific school grades, possibly to avoid limiting the readership.

Figure 3 and 4 – *O Tico-tico*, May 1952, n. 1998, year XLVII, p. 31 and 32.



Source: Personal Collection.

The structuring of knowledge within these sections mirrored the order imposed by schools, aligning with disciplinary methods that regulate learning. They relied on methodologies (observation/memorization) to approach different fields of knowledge, thought, and art, characteristics that Chervel (1990) attributed to school disciplines: the formation of a culture that is disseminated, shapes, and modifies society.

The content of these lessons was linked to formative aspects, with didactic interaction mediated by common school and social objects: pencils, erasers, glue, scissors, various types of paper, and designated spaces for writing, coloring, cutting, and pasting. Supporting the values dominant in the adult world, the magazine also contributed to shaping childhood behavior, structuring activities into orderly sequences that disciplined conduct to achieve a desired result.

As shown in Figure 5, not only the content but also the format and vocabulary were school-oriented. The verification of knowledge through questions, the correctness of responses marking a *good student*, and even the idea of studying during vacation illustrate the magazine's educational partnership. Following Warde's (2007, p. 32) interpretation based

on Norbert Elias, one could say that both the school institution and the children's entertainment magazine functioned as tools for: "adapting individuals to these behavioral patterns, which the structure and situation of the society they live in make necessary."

Figure 5 – *O Tico-Tico*. Mar 1956, p. 9. n. 2044, year LI.



Source: Personal Collection.

Although school elements were prominent in *O Tico-Tico*, the magazine also had distinct characteristics. Reader engagement mechanisms, crucial to its long-term success, were varied.

This *swinging door* metaphor seems to allow the passage of less school elements, such as comic strips – *O Tico-Tico* was a pioneer in this format, which, at the time, was not accepted in schools. The magazine's original artwork, produced by illustrators working in both the press and advertising, was a defining feature, and Figures 6 and 7 showcase the variety of characters, printing techniques, and story compositions. The character *Pluck* references *Puck*, the mischievous elf from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, both in its forest setting and medieval attire. These serialized stories encouraged sustained reader engagement across multiple issues, maintaining interest through suspenseful plot development. However, by the late 1950s, the involvement of graphic artists declined, reflecting the magazine's decreasing investment and financial struggles, though the serialized storytelling strategy persisted.

Figure 6 – *O Tico-tico*, Sep. 1952, n. 2002, year XLVII, back cover.

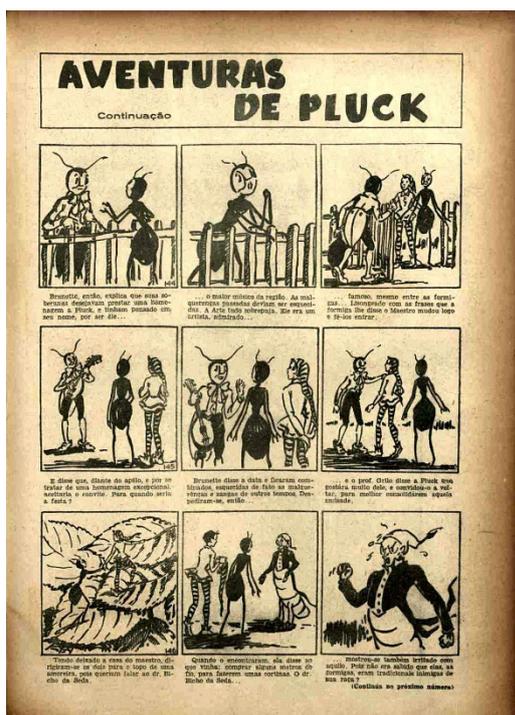
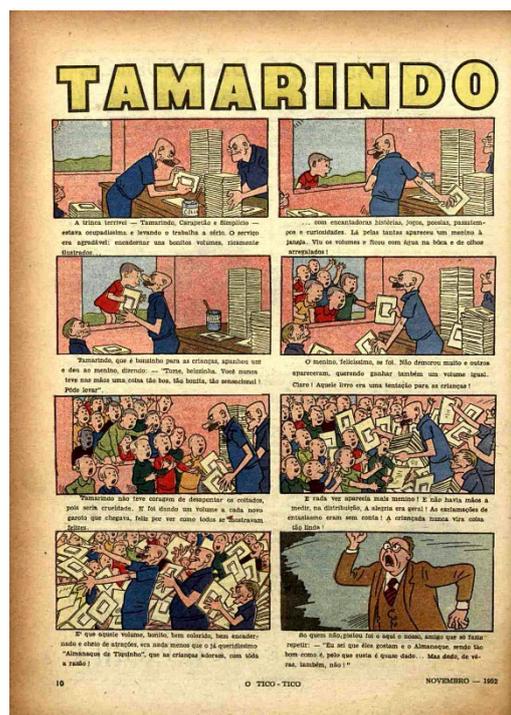


Figure 7 – *O Tico-tico*, Nov. 1952, n. 2004, year XLVIII, p. 10.



Source: Personal Collection.

The *Nossos Concursos (Our Contests)* section, in addition to providing participation instructions, published the solutions to games, riddles, and puzzles in subsequent issues. The *Quadro de Honra (Honor Roll)* announced: “The following contestants, who sent in correct solutions to the last two contests, were randomly selected to appear in the honor roll” (*O Tico-Tico*, Apr. 1952, p. 29). Thus, the prize was not based on answering correctly but on having one’s name published in the magazine. The list of twenty monthly winners included readers from nearly every Brazilian state - an editorial strategy designed to affirm the national reach of the magazine and to maintain the young reader’s hope of seeing their name featured.

Some advertisements were aimed at the children’s audience. Among them, publishing houses such as *Edições Melhoramentos* predominated, promoting textbooks, primers, collections, and standalone works aimed at the same readership as the magazine. Another publisher advertised a magic tricks book for entertainment at parties and gatherings, while a harmonica manufacturer both advertised and sponsored a contest in partnership with *Rádio Guanabara*. *O Malho* itself was a major advertiser of its own products: its monthly magazines and annual *Almanaques* were marketed as excellent Christmas gifts or as compilations of the previous year’s issues (Figure 8).

Figure 8 – O Tico-tico. Feb.1953, n.2007, year XLVIII, p. 31.

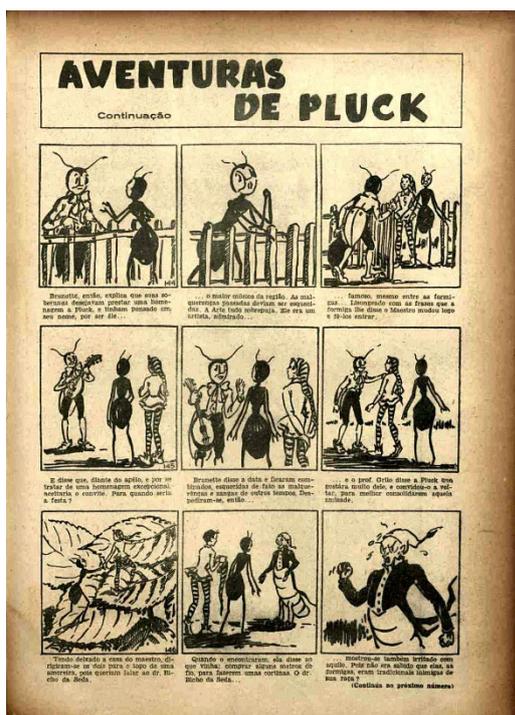


Figure 9 – O Tico-tico. Feb. 1953, n. 2007, year XLVIII, p. 11.



Source: Personal Collection.

Advertisements also targeted parents, particularly mothers. These included lotions, creams, and other beauty products promising benefits for skin and hair, as well as remedies for common household ailments such as coughs, colds, fever, and stomach aches. There were also books on embroidery and other handicrafts, which could be purchased at newsstands, bookstores across the country, or through mail-order services. The most intriguing of these was the *Anuário das Senhoras* (*Ladies' Yearbook*), described as “a masterpiece of good taste”, containing topics considered of interest to women: “Literature, poetry, cinema, interior design, fashion, art, recipes, lingerie, bridal suggestions, etc.” As seen in Figure 9, the advertisement was inspired by major fashion publications (the American *Harper's Bazaar* was one such influence), which, in turn, disseminated representations of the ideal feminine figure based on haute couture sketches from French fashion houses.

Some sections engaged with readers in less predictable ways than those with a more explicitly educational structure. The *Você sabia?* (*Did You Know?*) section, written by Paulo Affonso, presented trivia through rhetorical questions: “Did you know that a *cimitarra* is an Oriental sword with a highly curved blade that widens from the hilt to the tip? Did you know that a *stylograph* is a writing instrument with a pointed tip and an ink reservoir?” (*O Tico-Tico*, Mar. 1950, p. 15).<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that the words *cimitarra* and *stylograph* had

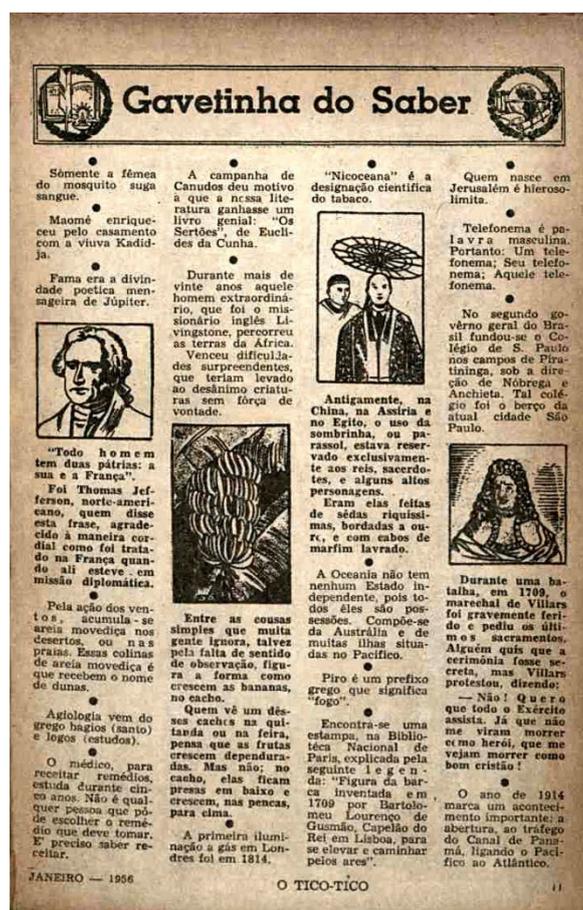
<sup>9</sup> I have a very vivid childhood memory of an uncle who, at family gatherings, would walk among the children asking these kinds of questions. Obviously, no one knew the answers, but he fascinated us and seemed

previously appeared in the magazine's texts; the former frequently appeared in stories about sultans and princesses, while the latter was mentioned in one of the *Lições de Vovô*, which explained the origins of fountain pens.

The *Gavetinha do Saber* (*Little Drawer of Knowledge*) section (Figure 10) followed a similar logic, compiling trivia on a wide range of topics:

Brazil is not a country of great altitudes, as its highest points do not exceed 3,000 meters. The leaves of the *Victoria amazonica* can reach two meters in diameter. Camels cannot climb or descend slopes. They are animals made for desert plains. Banana trees bear fruit between nine and eighteen months after being planted. In Spanish, what we call a *theater box seat* is known as a *palco* (*stage*). As early as 1250, the English monk Roger Bacon prophetically stated: *It will not be impossible to build machines that, through winged devices, will allow flight, as birds do*. The only Brazilian state whose name does not contain the letter "A" is Sergipe. (*O Tico-Tico*, Jan. 1950, p. 12).

Figure 10 – O Tico-tico. Jan.1956, n.2042, year LI, p.11.



Source: Personal Collection.

incredibly knowledgeable. (Note by Vera T. Valdemarin).

Sections like these, though not the magazine's main features, engaged young readers differently than those structured with a more explicitly educational intent, yet they also produced meaning-making processes. These were condensed bits of information meant to stimulate the imagination, even without visual appeal, printed in small type with tightly packed page layouts (possibly to fill empty spaces). They were akin to encyclopedias and almanacs, sometimes dismissed as *useless knowledge* because they were not tied to school applications or assessments. However, they implied a form of intergenerational collaboration: adults would read these questions or short texts, while children were left to imagine the answers or think about topics that might not otherwise have crossed their minds.

Sergio Augusto (2024), in a recent column for *O Estado de São Paulo* commemorating the 1964 launch of the *Barsa Encyclopedia* in Brazil, described it as *a tutor for the ignorant and the curious* and lamented that the magic of such publications had been lost in the Google era. Perhaps, along with them, a form of sociability between adults and children that *O Tico-Tico* had fostered has also faded.

## 5 Final Considerations

This analysis joins others with which it has engaged in dialogue, and rather than drawing definitive conclusions, it seems more relevant to emphasize the richness of this pioneering publication aimed at children. The periodical press in general, and this magazine in particular, constitute important sources for historical studies as they provide access to collective discourses and opinions, as well as the tensions that permeate societies and culture, playing a significant role in the informal education of the reading public.

*O Tico-Tico* does not suffer from the issues that researchers frequently face when working with this type of documentary source. It maintained a regular circulation for several decades, and thus, its pages recorded various transformations that contribute to understanding cultural aspects of Brazilian society. Moreover, it is preserved in the National Library and is digitally accessible to all, circumventing the major obstacles that often hinder research: gaps in serialization, handling restrictions, and the dispersion of copies across different collections.

While appealing to readers, further analyses could deepen the understanding of the editors' engagement with certain values, the reproduction of ethnic and gender stereotypes, and the underrepresentation of marginalized social groups. The values and purposes that guided *O Tico-Tico* can be examined in terms of its moral and religious conservatism, as well as the ingrained and naturalized prejudices present in its pages. However, these very values ensured its successful reception and long-running publication.

The magazine's material aspects - its format, layout, periodicity, cover design and illustrations, typographical and technical characteristics - can be analyzed in conjunction with its editorial and commercial intentions, allowing for integrated analyses that highlight the complexity of these cultural products. The magazine can be investigated through each of its sections or through the transformations they underwent over time, which, in turn, reflect changes in knowledge, social values, and the relationships between different practices, as outlined here.

The artistic aspects of this publication also merit further in-depth studies to catalog its stylistic features, the characters it created, the type of humor it conveyed, and the history of the artists and intellectuals who contributed to it and built their reputations within its pages. The tension between formal innovations and traditional content also reveals significant aspects of Brazilian culture and society during this period.

The suggestions mentioned here, along with others not yet explored, may contribute to the broader goal of understanding not only the past but also our present – particularly the cultural and educational practices that reveal the nature of the society in which we live.

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