

Swiss Alpine Milk, Education, and the Fabrication of the Ideal Swiss Citizen

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Abstract

Since the 18th century, the Swiss Alps and Swiss alpine life have been idealized, giving rise to the Swiss Alpine myth. In the late 19th century – as a part of the so-called agrarian revolution – dairy farming was transformed into the main sector of Swiss agriculture. Unlike in other countries, in Switzerland milk became available to all social classes and was advertised as the Swiss national drink. Because milk was associated with the idyllic notion of healthy cows grazing on lush mountain pastures, dairy products eventually became an integral part of the Alpine myth. As a result, relatively banal activities such as drinking milk or eating cheese were subsumed into the Swiss identity. In this paper, the role of primary school education in this phenomenon is explored and the significance of schooling in the conceptualization of the ideal Swiss citizen as a milk drinker is analyzed.

Key words: *national identity; nutrition; primary school; Switzerland; temperance movement.*

Introduction

In 1927, a booklet entitled *Res and Resli* was published in a first edition comprising of more than 30,000 copies (Balzli, 1927), with further editions regularly issued until the middle of the 20th century. The story of *Res and Resli* was intended for German lessons in Swiss primary schools. On the cover page of the booklet there was a drawing of a man and a boy. In Switzerland, *Res* is a short form for the male first name *Andreas*, and the suffix *-li* is used to indicate a diminutive. Primary school students therefore knew from the title of the story that the man in the drawing was *Res* and the boy was *Resli*. By their clothing, their headwear, and the objects shown on the picture, the two were easily recognizable as alpine herdsman. Reading the story, the students learned

that Res was a Swiss dairy farmer and Resli, his son, was a primary school student like them. Res went to the village inn, where he drank a lot of alcohol and gambled away the money he had earned by selling the milk his two cows produced, even though the family was short of cash and Resli and his little sister urgently needed new winter clothes. Res, ashamed and desperate, milked his cows and watered down the milk in an attempt to make more money. Afraid that his demeanor would give away his wrongdoing, Res did not dare to deliver the milk himself to the dairy, and sent his son instead. Watching Resli set out on his journey through the cold and darkness, Res was overwhelmed by his guilty conscience and confessed what he had done to his wife. Together they waited, tense, for Resli to return. When the boy finally came home, Resli's face was blue with cold, tearstained and swollen, his cap was wet and all crooked. On his back he carried the empty milk container, snow stuck to his pants, and hot fear flickered in his eyes. As it turned out, Resli had made it to the dairy, was attacked by a dog there, fell down and spilled all the milk. He was anxious to return home as he expected to be beaten by his father, but was instead hugged and kissed. The story ended with Res swearing to his wife never to drink alcohol again. The moral of the story was that, deep down, Res was a good person and a loving father, who could distinguish right from wrong. His misdeeds were solely a consequence of his drinking, which he vowed to refrain from in the future. In other words, the family's downfall was rooted in alcohol, while their happiness derived from (pure) milk.

From the 1920s onward, milk became a popular subject in Swiss primary education, and the story of *Res and Resli* was recommended as class reading material in this context (e.g., Zeugin, 1931, p. 252). It was – as will be explained later – no coincidence that alcohol played such a prominent role in this story. Likewise, the depiction of Res and Resli as alpine herdsman on the cover page was anything but coincidental. This story and thus milk lessons were to convey a very specific image of Switzerland and its inhabitants – that of an idyllic alpine Switzerland and of ideal Swiss people in the form of virtuous alpine herdsman. This article commences with the discussion on how this image came about, the role of milk in its conception, and the importance of this phenomenon for Switzerland, which always has been and still is a “contested” nation (Zimmer, 2003). This is followed by the analysis of the role primary school education played in advertising the consumption of milk as a patriotic duty, on the one hand, and as a healthy alternative to alcohol, on the other, from the 1920s onwards. The paper concludes with a reflection on how primary school contributed to the conceptualization of the ideal Swiss citizen as a milk drinker. The source material for this article consists of pedagogical journals, lesson outlines and other teaching materials as well as printed and archival documents concerning milk promotion.

Alpine milk as *the* Swiss national drink

In the second half of the 18th century at the latest, the Alps became an object of public admiration as a particularly beautiful, sublime landscape untouched by civilization (Mathieu, 2005, p. 71; Mathieu & Boscani Leoni, 2005, pp. 9-10). At that time, the

poem entitled *The Alps* published in 1729 by the Bernese scholar and writer Albrecht von Haller (1708-1777) had received wide attention and was already translated into several languages. In Haller's poem, the Alps appeared as an idyllic place, harmoniously interwoven with the simple life of their inhabitants (Schrader, 2010, p. 78). Another text that enjoyed great success was published in 1761 by the Genevan philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). The novel, originally titled *Lettres de Deux Amans, Habitans d'une petite Ville au pied des Alpes* (*Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*), became known as *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (*Julie, or the New Heloise*). Rousseau presented the Alps "in contrast to a critical view of civilization"; in his book, they were "a realm of otherness, the incarnation of nature" (Mathieu, 2009, p. 228). The romantic notion of untouched nature and pastoral lifestyle was by no means Swiss per se, but echoed a general narrative spreading throughout Europe at the time. Haller's poem and Rousseau's novel, however, offered the Swiss Alps as a real place for these longings (Heidemann Vischer, 1992, p. 158).

Publications by Haller, Rousseau, and others stimulated enthusiasm for Switzerland and its natural beauty – most of all the Alps. These idealized images conveyed through popular literature had practical consequences. From the second half of the 18th century, Switzerland developed into one of the most popular travel destinations and, since alpine air was considered healthy, the Alps were portrayed as a "health paradise" (Wolff, 2010, p. 10). However, the beauty of the landscape was not the sole focus of this widespread interest, which was also captured by the inhabitants of the Alps. From the perspective of foreign visitors, the Swiss Alpine dwellers were considered virtuous herdsmen (Böning, 2005, p. 182). This image dominated not only the outside but also the inside view. The national perspective connected the Alps and their inhabitants with the Old Confederacy, thus reinterpreting the history of Switzerland. The Old Confederates now appeared as pious, virtuous, self-sufficient, and strong herdsmen, who lived in harmony with nature, and whose simple but healthy diet included milk. Pastoralism and mountains became essential elements of Swiss history and eventually also of Swiss identity (Marchal, 2007, pp. 68-71; Zimmer, 2003, p. 205). Since its creation in the 18th century, the myth of the Swiss Alps as a harmonious ideal realm has been effective in promoting the national image and is currently being used in a wide range of contexts, most notably in the tourism sector.

Yet, milk and other dairy products, which are nowadays commonly associated with Switzerland, have not always been the main produce of Swiss agriculture and food industry. Under the pressure of the developing world agricultural market, a wave of change swept through the Swiss agricultural sector from the 1860s onwards. With the advent of the railways and larger overseas vessels, cheap grain began to arrive in Switzerland, first from Europe and then increasingly from the USA. The price of grain declined by more than half and the Swiss agricultural sector, which mainly relied on grain, fell into a crisis. The farmers looked for alternatives and increasingly shifted their production to milk and other dairy products. This process, which especially

affected the Swiss Central Plateau, became known as one of the so-called agricultural revolutions. The growing reliance on livestock was accompanied by a massive increase in milk production per animal. Sales of milk and other dairy products such as butter and cheese were secured by the growing Swiss population, as well as by a greater demand for exports. The introduction of railway refrigerated wagon in the 1870s and the refrigerated ship in the 1880s made it possible to transport dairy products over long distances. In the second half of the 19th century, a milk-processing industry also emerged, focusing mainly on condensed milk and milk chocolate (Baumann, 1993, pp. 26, 38; Popp, 2000, pp. 13-14).

Although milk was already known as a nutritious foodstuff in ancient times, it remained a relatively insignificant aspect of the daily diet until the second half of the 19th century. This changed in the 1860s. Parallel to the intensification of the Swiss dairy industry, milk and other dairy products became staple foods. Nutritional and physiological analyses played an important part in this dietary shift. These scientific analyses emphasized the importance of animal protein, which had previously only been consumed in relatively small quantities (Rossfeld, 2007, p. 143). Contemporary nutritionists presented meat as the best source of protein. However, meat was very expensive and protein deficiency had been identified especially among members of the lower social class. It was in this context that milk became of special importance, as it was considered the best source of protein in relation to its price and was therefore propagated as a meat substitute (Koellreuter, 2009, pp. 24-30). As a result of the increase in production, combined with an efficient supply from milk centers and dairies, in Switzerland milk became accessible to all social classes, unlike in other countries, where it was mainly reserved for the more affluent (Hauser, 1989, p. 175). For the lower classes, milk was promoted not only as a cost-effective alternative to meat, but above all as a substitute for the consumption of alcoholic beverages. In the 19th century, alcoholism was perceived as a major social problem and a part of what in German was called *Soziale Frage* (social question). A section of the bourgeois public used the concept of the social question to address social problems arising as a result of industrialization. With the onset of the Industrial Revolution, the consumption of (hard) alcoholic beverages increased. The industrial living and working conditions encouraged the drinking of liquor. Liquor was easily available and cheap, and it served the purpose of “quenching thirst, appeasing hunger and forgetting woes in one go” (Tanner, 1994, pp. 50-51). From the 1880s onwards, concerns about the nutrition and physical development of children from the working class prompted doctors, biologists, and anthropologists to carry out extensive growth measurements on school children (Staub, 2011, p. 9). The results of these measurements were in part responsible for poor Swiss children being provided free school meals in the late 19th and early 20th century, and milk was the most important part of this welfare measure (Heinzer & Rothen, 2014; Koellreuter, 2009, pp. 72-83). The habituation of children from lower classes to the consumption of milk can also be understood as alcohol prevention and a contribution to solving the social question.

Not only did the consumption of milk and other dairy products increase sharply in Switzerland in the second half of the 19th century, but this phenomenon was also nationalized in a sense that milk consumption and the image of an idyllic alpine lifestyle associated with it was portrayed as typically Swiss. This process started after the middle of the 19th century and involved different social spheres and actors. Beside school and teachers – which will be the focus of the next section – especially science and scientists, as well as social reformers contributed to making milk uniquely Swiss.

Based on their nutritional and physiological findings, which emphasized the importance of animal protein, scientists linked the image of healthy herdsmen in the idyllic Alpine world created in the 18th century to milk consumption. In so doing, the scientists implicitly attributed the health and strength of the Swiss alpine inhabitants to regular milk intake (Tanner, 1999, p. 107). This scientifically-backed connection with the Alpine myth not only made milk appear particularly healthy, but also gave the impression that it was *the* Swiss national drink. Milk was thereby equated with alpine milk, even though the milk sold by local dairymen was not produced in the alpine region, but in the Swiss Central Plateau. The members of the *Schweizerische Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft* (a Swiss welfare organization), who were involved in the fight against poverty, took on this narrative. Against the backdrop of dairy products being considered not only healthy but also cost-effective, they praised milk and cheese as ideal and typical Swiss foods (pp. 109-110, 458).

Apart for the short-lived Helvetic Republic (1798-1803), until the middle of the 19th century, Switzerland was a confederation of sovereign states, the so-called cantons. In 1848, the Swiss cantons united as a federal state. Unlike many other nation-states founded in the 19th century, Switzerland lacked a common language and a common religion. The Swiss therefore needed other concepts that would bring them together in national unity. The analyses presented in the remainder of this paper are based on the premise that the consumption of milk and other dairy products associated with alpine living became an integral factor in fostering national togetherness in Switzerland. Swiss milk promotion can thus be understood as “banal flagging of nationhood” (Billig 1995, p. 10) and an expression of “everyday nationhood” (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008; Skey & Antonsich, 2017). With regard to the latter, for the Swiss, drinking milk became the concretization of what Ernest Renan called a “daily plebiscite” (Renan, 1882). It can thus be hypothesized that, since the late 19th century, relatively banal activities such as drinking milk or eating cheese have become part of the Swiss identity and that primary school education played an important role in this phenomenon.

Learning to drink milk

Swiss milk producers took advantage of the scientifically legitimized link between Alpine myth and milk consumption established after the mid-19th century and advertised milk as a healthy and Swiss drink. Milk promotion was especially important in times of economic crises, as became particularly apparent after the First World War,

which ushered in an acute crisis for Swiss agriculture. In the spring of 1920, after the lifting of nearly all the wartime economic measures, the reduction of crop cultivation – which had to be extended because of the First World War – and the high volume of dairy product imports resulted in a catastrophic collapse of the milk price. The price erosion was further aggravated by the worldwide economic crisis that hit the industrialized countries in the 1930s (Stadler, 2009, p. 578). Overall, the period after the First World War was characterized by an agricultural crisis that fluctuated, but generally lasted until the Second World War (Philipona, 2019, p. 95).

In these difficult economic times, a partnership was formed between milk producers and abstinent teachers, which at first glance might seem unusual. In Switzerland, the temperance movement had become an important social movement at the end of the 19th century, drawing support from many teachers. In 1899, the Swiss association of abstinent teachers was founded and took up the fight against alcohol in schools. Initially, the association members demanded complete abstinence from alcohol for all teachers. Given such radical demand, they found little acceptance on the part of their fellow teachers. The abstinent teachers were further criticized for portraying the alcohol issue only in negative contexts. This criticism referred in particular to the book *Graphical Tables with Accompanying Text on the Alcohol Issue* published in 1907 (Stump & Willenegger, 1907). The extensive tables showed alcohol consumption in relation to other factors, including crime, illness, mortality, and degeneration. It was one of the first textbooks aimed at anti-alcohol education in Switzerland.

In the course of the economic crisis following the First World War, the opponents of alcohol found partners in milk producers, who were willing to support their cause, as they saw an opportunity to advertise milk not only as typically Swiss but also as an excellent subject matter for anti-alcohol education. This juxtaposition meant that primary school children could simultaneously learn about the health benefits of milk and the harmfulness of alcohol. As this directly benefitted the dairy producers, they were keen to actively support the abstinent teachers' efforts to take up milk as a teaching subject. As a result of this collaboration, countless lesson planning ideas, examples, and lesson outlines on this subject matter were developed, published, and made available to Swiss teachers. In addition, posters and protective booklet sleeves were designed, and school campaigns were initiated (Hofmann, 2015; Hofmann, 2016, pp. 185-212).

During the post-war period, milk and other dairy products were advertised intensively in Switzerland. This advertising was institutionally anchored in 1922 with the founding of the Swiss Dairy Commission, whose departments included the Special Commission for Advertisement. Given the importance of the dairy industry to Swiss agriculture, the state supported the promotion of milk and other dairy products. Accordingly, the Milk Commission involved not only all the major dairy industry associations, but also numerous cantonal and federal authorities (Moser & Brodbeck, 2007, pp. 186-187). Primary school was not the only social sphere where milk drinking was promoted, as this initiative extended to the leisure sector, the world of work, and the military, among

other areas (pp. 206-207). Primary school, however, was of particular importance because it was the place where all children of a certain age, and thus the future citizens, could be reached and instructed. Primary school education was crucial when it came to promoting the idea of drinking milk and eating cheese as typical Swiss activities, thereby fostering national togetherness by imprinting the image of an idyllic alpine Switzerland and of ideal Swiss people in the shape of virtuous alpine herdsmen in their young and impressionable minds.

The abstinent teachers illustrated in a manner that was descriptive and customized to the different primary school levels how the subject matter of milk should be treated in the classroom. The authors agreed that no specific school subject needed to be created for anti-alcohol education, but that instruction on milk should flow into the existing subjects at all primary school levels. The teachers' own abstinence, which had been demanded forcefully in the years following 1900, scarcely played a role in this endeavor, because all teachers were expected to give classes on milk. Naturally, it was also possible for non-abstinent teachers to dedicate classes to the subject matter of milk without any reference to alcohol prevention. Owing to this important distinction, milk became a popular subject matter in Swiss primary schools from the mid-1920s onwards, as evidenced by the numerous teaching materials, which were either printed in pedagogical journals or published as independent booklets and books. The association of abstinent teachers founded its own publishing house and published teaching materials in three series titled *Fountain of Youth*, *Check for Yourself!* and *Healthy Youth*. By the 1950s, more than 50 titles had been published that achieved a broad circulation and often received several editions. These titles included the booklet *Res and Resli* mentioned at the beginning of the paper. The milk producers also issued teaching materials in the form of booklets and books. The book *Die Milch (Milk)* by Fritz Schuler (1931), a Bernese teacher, and a booklet entitled *Milch, das ideale Getränk (Milk, the ideal drink)* (c. 1930), for example, were published by the Swiss Dairy Commission's Special Commission for Advertisement. These and other publications were made available to the teachers free of charge.

Most of the lesson planning ideas were intended for mathematics and nature studies. The students were to calculate, for example, a family's daily, weekly, monthly, and annual expenditure for milk (Fröhlich, 1934, p. 241). An example from the field of nature study is an experiment presented in 1934 in the *Swiss Teachers' Journal* by a former teacher and head of the Swiss central office for the fight against alcoholism in Lausanne, Max Oettli (1879-1965). In Oettli's (1934) scientific experiment, which he deemed suitable for children, the students were to find out which elements milk contained by heating a drop of milk on a razor blade. In this case, as the reference to alcohol prevention was not self-evident, it was the teacher's responsibility to establish the link after the experiment. In Oettli's opinion, the objective was to make the students "marvel at the miracle of milk, and they no longer regard it as merely baby food but resolve to drink it also during military service and to order milk instead of beer when

playing cards at the pub!” (p. 230). This quote illustrates the future-oriented nature of anti-alcohol education, as its aim was to inculcate in the students the idea that milk is a healthy and tasty alternative to alcohol.

In addition to mathematics and nature studies, suggestions for planning anti-alcohol lessons based on milk were also made for other school subjects, such as language lessons, home economics, drawing, life science, singing, handicrafts and needlework, history, geography, and gymnastics. In language classes, for example, students wrote about their “milk experience” (Eberli, 1936, p. 139). In home economic classes, the school children were to learn to prepare “a truly tasty dairy dish” (Tschiffely, 1936, p. 125). For singing lessons, the abstinent teachers recommended “a cheerful shepherds’ song” (Eberli, 1936, p. 140). In handicraft classes, the children were to build a “two-wheeled milk cart from a matchbox, with sticks as an axle and cork discs as wheels” (Fröhlich, 1934, p. 241). In addition to these subject-specific recommendations, the abstinent teachers presented teaching units that cannot be attributed to one or several school subjects. These lesson outlines – with titles such as *Milk, the ideal drink* and *Milk in a bottle* – were intended primarily for teaching in the lower primary school classes.

Articles published by abstinent teachers also repeatedly suggested employing large-format educational illustrations and posters on the subject matter of milk. Until the 1930s, most of the illustrations hanging in Swiss classrooms came from Germany. In the winter of 1934/35, the Swiss Federal Council took measures to combat the economic crisis, one of which was cessation of school materials delivery from the German Reich. However, this measure was also linked to the aim of portraying more Swiss images and motifs in primary schools and thus ultimately promoting national cohesion (Abplanalp, 2020). As a result of this initiative, between 1935 and 1995, over 250 large-format illustrations were produced and used in Swiss primary schools. Not surprisingly, the Alps and alpine living were among the most popular themes. The illustrations include *Ascent to the Alps* from 1937, *In the alpine hut* from 1938, *Mountain pasture* from 1939, and *Glacier* from 1941 (Kunst, 1996).

Aside from booklets and schoolbooks, the association of abstinent teachers also published themed, protective book covers for exercise books. Several themes associated with milk were available, including *Pro milk* and *Cowherd’s song*. In 1930, a competition was held to find suitable themes, instructing the prospective entrants to submit “an artistically designed protective cover, which can be used for exercise books and possibly also for textbooks and which are graphically designed both to meet the stated purpose and to bring about an alcohol-critical attitude in the students” (Wettbewerb, 1930, p. 375). The published protective covers were available in batches of 100, 500, 1000, or even 10,000 and were made of “strong paper, which can be colored in with watercolors or crayons” (SNL, n.d.).

Protective book covers designed to be colored in with watercolors and crayons, and teaching suggestions such as preparing a tasty dairy dish or singing a cheerful shepherds’ song, show that teachers did not necessarily have to make a connection to alcohol

prevention when they talked about milk in class. This made the subject matter of milk relatable for all teachers, which was crucial for the dairy producers. For the latter, sales were far more important than temperance and thus the original aim of promoting milk in schools, which was fighting alcoholism, gradually lost its relevance. In fact, in the promotion of milk sales, something else turned out to be much more important than anti-alcoholism – the widespread portrayal of milk as *the* Swiss national drink.

In the 1930s, the school milk program was introduced whereby all children were given pasteurized milk in glass bottles as a refreshment during the morning break. The city of Basel was the first to introduce this initiative, as all local children were already receiving school milk in 1931/32. Other Swiss towns and villages soon followed the Basel example (Moser & Brodbeck, 2007, pp. 208-209). In contrast to the school meals of the late 19th and early 20th century, milk was no longer provided only for the poor, but for all children. The head of the Swiss Dairy Commission's Special Commission for Advertisement, Ernst Flückiger (1901-1980), complained in 1934 in a speech to the Teachers' Association of the City of Berne that the milk had a "poor man smell," for which he partly blamed the school meals (F. B., 1933/34, p. 643). He was of view that primary school should help to counteract this prejudice by ensuring that students perceive milk is an ideal drink for everyone. Another accusation was that the Swiss had become alienated from milk and this too could be mitigated through primary school instruction.

The *Schweizerwoche* (Swiss Week), an association founded in 1917 and committed to promoting domestic production, organized an annual essay competition drawing entries from 20,000-30,000 school children each year. In 1929, together with Swiss Dairy Commission's Special Commission for Advertisement, the Swiss Week association launched a competition on the topic of milk titled "What do I know about Swiss milk and how it is used?" (Jahresbericht, 1929, p. 11) Against the backdrop of the dairy market crises, this competition illustrates that the children were to be educated from a very young age to consume Swiss products. The milk producers argued that the Swiss population had become alienated from this typically Swiss product and that the youth needed to be trained to "better appreciate and to consume more milk" (Nagel, 1932/33, p. 178; also Feisst, 1936, p. 113; Javet, 1934, p. 228). To do so, they argued that the students needed to be familiarized with Swiss farmers in order to appreciate them and their products. However, the focus was less on actual farmers and more on a specific, idealized image of Swiss peasantry.

In connection with the subject matter of milk, the simple and healthy eating and living habits of the ancestors were invoked, and rural (alpine) lifestyle was idealized. For instance, in the lesson outline *Milk, the ideal drink*, published in 1934 in the journal *Swiss School*, Josef Hauser (1892-1981), a teacher from Neuallschwil (Canton of Basel-Landschaft), recommended visiting a farm, arguing that a "tour through the stable, barn, cellar, through the meadows and orchards opens the child's eyes to many a thing that up to now it has passed by heedlessly" (Hauser, 1934, p. 1139). He further

noted that the visit to the farm “can now easily be followed up by a new weekly target, precisely, ‘Milk, the ideal drink’” (p. 1139). By addressing this subject matter in the classroom, Hauser opined, “the children’s respect for the cow is strengthened, . . . and in their eyes, the farmer takes the place he deserves” (p. 1139). Crucial in Hauser’s lesson outline are the alpine farmers’ activities (pp. 1139-1141). Although the farmers in the Canton of Basel-Landschaft, where his students lived, were not herdsmen, Hauser portrayed the Swiss farmer as an alpine shepherd. In addition to his lesson outline, Hauser recommended the story of *Res and Resli*.

Conclusion

The image of Swiss farmers as herdsmen must be seen in light of the mythologization and idealization of the Swiss Alps and alpine life that began in the 18th century. This image can not only be found in Hauser’s lesson outline, but also in other teaching proposals on the subject matter of milk. These suggestions paint the picture of an earlier, simpler, and therefore better Switzerland, where the diet was healthy and, in addition to bread and potatoes, consisted mainly of milk and other dairy products. This idyllic Switzerland was inhabited by herdsmen who are characterized by good health and physical robustness – in other words, the ideal Swiss citizens.

In the context of economic crises that affected Swiss agriculture in the aftermath of the First World War, primary school became an important social sphere for the promotion of milk, as it allowed the future citizens to be reached and instructed on the most important national messages. These future citizens were to learn that buying and drinking milk was their patriotic duty. Milk was presented in class as a typically Swiss foodstuff that, due to its health benefits, conveys a certain idea of virtuous Switzerland and its inhabitants. It was the notion of an idyllic, rural, alpine Switzerland that was to be communicated to the students. Likewise, the ideal Swiss citizen was presented as a healthy and strong alpine herdsman. All milk, irrespective of its source, was equated with Alpine milk, which represented this image of Switzerland and the Swiss. Hence, students were to learn that by drinking milk they could imbibe all the good that the Alps stand for and thus become ideal Swiss people themselves. Primary school thereby became an important site for promoting and fostering national unity based on their shared cultural heritage, given the lack of common language and religion. Such simple and virtuous alpine living dating back to the Old Swiss Confederacy was to become an integral part of the children’s second or national nature. Since the consumption of milk and other dairy products was associated with alpine living, calculating annual expenditure for milk in mathematics lessons, preparing dairy dishes in home economic classes, and drinking pasteurized milk from glass bottles during the morning break are wonderful examples of everyday nationhood. The everyday glass of milk truly is what Renan called a daily plebiscite.

Banal flagging of nationhood in the form of promoting milk and other dairy products as typically Swiss was not a phenomenon limited to the first half of the 20th century,

as attested by the following – the most telling and slightly embarrassing – examples from the recent past. From 1992 to 1998, the members of the Swiss national ski team, whose main sponsor at that time was the Swiss Cheese Union, wore yellow suits with simulated cheese holes. Similarly, milk producers still rely on primary school instruction to maintain the idea that drinking milk and eating cheese is an integral part of the Swiss identity. On their website, Swiss milk producers provide a wide range of worksheets, teaching materials, didactic aids and handicraft instructions on the subject matters of milk and nutrition, all of which fully conform with the current Swiss curricula (Schule, 2020).

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Švicarsko alpsko mlijeko, obrazovanje i stvaranje ideala švicarskoga građanina

Sažetak

Švicarske Alpe i švicarski alpski život idealizirani su od 18. stoljeća, dajući zamah švicarskome alpskom mitu. U kasnom 19. stoljeću, kao dio takozvane Agrarne revolucije, mliječno poljodjelstvo transformirano je u glavni sektor švicarske poljoprivrede. Za razliku od drugih zemalja, mlijeko je postalo dostupno svim društvenim slojevima i oglašavano kao švicarsko nacionalno piće. Zbog toga što je mlijeko povezivano s idiličnom zamisli krava koje pasu na raskošnim planinskim pašnjacima, mliječni proizvodi konačno su postali integralni dio alpskoga mita. Kao rezultat, relativno banalne aktivnosti, poput pijenja mlijeka ili jedenja sira, utkane su u švicarski identitet. U ovom radu ispituje se ulogu osnovnoškolskoga obrazovanja u spomenutom fenomenu i analizira značajnost školovanja u konceptualizaciji ideala švicarskoga građanina kao mlijekopije.

Ključne riječi: nacionalni identitet; osnovna škola; pokret umjerenosti; prehrana; Švicarska.