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GREGÓRIO THAUMATURGO DE AZEVEDO AND THE BRAZILIAN NURSING

*Gregório Thaumaturgo de Azevedo e a enfermagem brasileira**Gregório Thaumaturgo de Azevedo y enfermería brasileña***Claudia Labriola¹** **Fernando Porto¹** **Lucia Helena Lourenço²** 

ABSTRACT

This study of approach in micro-history, has temporal delimitation in 1908, when Gregório Thaumaturgo de Azevedo was elected president of Brazilian Red Cross to 1918, his departure from this institution. It was held in the digital library of the Biblioteca Nacional and news was found in the newspaper *Correio da Manhã* and *O Paiz* that pointed to the creation of the school of volunteer nurses in 1914 and in 1916, the school of practical nurses. The marshal's administration coincided with the World War I and the news about the course of paddlers indicate the interest in training professionals for the war. The news also indicates the acquisition of the land that today is the headquarters. In 1918, during the Spanish flu epidemic, the pioneering initiative was taken to open a war on the institution's premises. This management conquered the social, political and sanitary space demarcating history, due to its initiatives aimed at professionalizing nursing.

DESCRIPTORS: Nursing; Nursing history; Nursing schools; Brazilian Red Cross; Press.

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RESUMO

Este estudo de abordagem em micro-história, tem delimitação temporal em 1908, quando Gregório Thaumaturgo de Azevedo foi eleito presidente da Cruz Vermelha Brasileira a 1918, sua saída da instituição. Foi realizado na hemeroteca digital da Biblioteca Nacional e foram encontradas notícias nos jornais *Correio da Manhã* e *O Paiz* que apontaram a criação da escola de enfermeiras voluntárias em 1914 e em 1916, a escola de enfermeiras práticas. A gestão do marechal coincidiu com a Primeira Guerra Mundial e a notícia do curso de padoleiros indica o interesse em formar profissionais para a guerra. As notícias também indicam a aquisição do terreno que hoje encontra-se a sede. Em 1918, durante a epidemia de gripe espanhola, foi tomada a iniciativa pioneira de abrir uma enfermaria nas dependências da instituição. Essa gestão conquistou o espaço social, político e sanitário demarcando a história, devido as suas iniciativas voltadas para profissionalização da enfermagem.

DESCRITORES: Enfermagem; História da enfermagem; Escolas de enfermagem; Cruz Vermelha Brasileira; Imprensa.

RESUMEN

Este estudio de abordaje en microhistoria, tiene delimitación temporal en 1908, cuando Gregório Thaumaturgo de Azevedo fue elegido presidente de la Cruz Roja Brasileña en 1918, su salida de la institución. Se llevó a cabo en la biblioteca digital de la Biblioteca Nacional y se encontraron noticias en los periódicos *Correio da Manhã* y *O Paiz* que apuntaban a la creación de la escuela de enfermeras voluntarias en 1914 y en 1916, la escuela de enfermeras prácticas. La administración del mariscal coincidió con la Primera Guerra Mundial y la noticia sobre el rumbo de los palistas indica el interés en formar profesionales para la guerra. La noticia también indica la adquisición del terreno que hoy es la sede. En 1918, durante la epidemia de gripe española, se tomó la iniciativa pionera de abrir un pabellón en las instalaciones de la institución. Esta gestión conquistó el espacio social, político y sanitario que demarca la historia, por sus iniciativas encaminadas a la profesionalización de la enfermería.

DESCRIPTORES: Enfermería; Historia de la enfermería; Escuelas de enfermería; Cruz Roja Brasileña; Prensa.

INTRODUCTION

The history of nursing is full of paths and shortcuts that leave gaps in the research, no matter how hard the researchers try to fill them. Historicizing facts/events requires skill with the pen, as well as access to the documental mass to (de)crystallize previously unrevealed aspects.

In this perspective, we will go into the context of educational institutions such as the Brazilian Red Cross in bygone times, as a contribution to the professionalization of nursing in Brazil. To do so, we will conduct the study through the biography¹ axis of a social agent, namely: Marechal Thaumaturgo de Azevedo.

Gregório Thaumaturgo de Azevedo was born on November 17th, 1853, in Piauí. He was admitted into the army at the age of 15. He graduated in military engineering (1874) and juridical and social sciences (1889). His trajectory was marked by his leadership in the states of Piauí (1890) and Amazonas (1891), when he governed both, and he founded the city of Cruzeiro do Sul, Acre (1904).

He was one of the founders of the Brazilian Red Cross (1908), and president of the institution for about 10 years (1908-1918), being responsible for struggles and achievements for the advancement of health, with emphasis on nursing and social assistance in the country.²

During his administration, he faced challenges: the fight against tuberculosis, the creation of the Voluntary Nurses Course (1914), the Professional Nurses Course (1916), the Practical School of Nurses that housed both courses (1916), the Spanish flu, and the conquest of the land where today stands the building of the Brazilian Red Cross – central organ, Rio de Janeiro.³

Studies 2,4,5 cite several aspects of the fight for the professionalization of nursing, through the Brazilian Red Cross, but lack highlighting the figure of Marshal Thaumaturgo de Azevedo in Brazilian nursing.

Professionalizing nursing was an arduous task, due to the lack of candidates, as well as to the circumstances after the proclamation of the republic in Brazil. Thinking about this perspective requires bringing up illiteracy, the female condition in this period, political, social, cultural, and health aspects of a country with a recently republican regime.

The first record so far about the creation of the first nursing school in Brazil is dated 1890 – Escola Profissional de Enfermeiros e Enfermeiras, followed by schools and courses in the Rio-São Paulo axis^{6,7,8,9}. In this sense, historiography has occurred and each author proposes versions and interpretations with a dispute for pioneering, as if the title of first was a symbolic trophy for the development of Brazilian nursing. This is said because the most invested axis in the field of nursing history research is the axis of institutions.¹⁰⁻¹¹

In summary, in the wake of facts/events, investigating the contribution of Marshal Thaumaturgo de Azevedo to Brazilian nursing is our proposal. Therefore, we aim to identify in the management of the president of the Brazilian Red Cross, Thaumaturgo de Azevedo, through the written press, the contributions to the development of Brazilian nursing.

We present as justification that the biographee was one of those responsible for training nurses in the Brazilian Red Cross. We highlight one of the considerations that, at the time, the director of the Escola Prática de Enfermeiras da Cruz Vermelha Brasileira – central organ – was Dr. Getúlio dos Santos, who deserved

investigation and publication of an article by researchers¹², which ratifies once again the need and relevance to the present research.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on the historiographical method with a micro-history approach. The temporal delimitation was based on the search for the 10 years (1908-1918) of Gregório Thaumaturgo de Azevedo's presidential term at the Brazilian Red Cross – central organ. However, the reduction of the micro social and political aspect prevailed in the findings.

The research was carried out in the Hemeroteca base of the National Library in search of news records from the written press. The strategy used in the search was the term Cruz Vermelha Brasileira (Brazilian Red Cross) and Escola de Enfermeiras (Nurses' School), and the inclusion criteria were the newspapers with the highest number of occurrences of the theme addressed, and the exclusion criteria were those that indicated in the search a demand for copyright request.

For the search we applied an instrument to collect the following data: year, name of the press, title, content of the article, page. With the collection we organized the data from the news articles in chronological order for contextualization and triangulation with other studies, which promoted the discussion to outline the final considerations towards meeting the proposed objective.

RESULTS

Through the established criteria, we had two newspapers as a result, which delimited the corpus of the study and the temporality of 1914-1918 to be presented in the demonstrative chart 1.

We emphasize that the objective of the news records was to inform society about facts/events without the proposal of a historical record. In this sense, it is up to the researcher to have the critical eye for the construction of knowledge, even considering that they occurred in the past. It is important to highlight this, because the so-called truth is relative, even because it is necessary to consider the editorial line of the newspapers that produced the news report.¹³

In summary, the eight journalistic articles show that the Women's Section of the Brazilian Red Cross inaugurated the course for volunteer nurses at the Army Central Hospital. Months later a lecture for the course was reported, which shows the progress of the proposed training.

In the chronology of news records, the inauguration of the Professional School for Nurses took place in 1916. At the time, this showed the need to professionalize the nurses, as an offshoot of the Volunteer Nurses Course, due to the success of the Brazilian Red Cross investment.

With the Practical School of Nurses, Thaumaturgo took upon himself the responsibility of better infrastructure. On May 8, 1917, the headquarters was installed at Rua Prefeito Barata n. 75 and describes the activities performed with days of the week and working hours. In the same year we find that the Practical

Course of Bakeries was implemented and in the following year, in the post-war period, the performance of nurses to those affected by the Spanish flu in Rio de Janeiro.

DISCUSSION

The *Correio da Manhã* was created in June 1901 and its editorial line was to oppose the government, identifying itself with the popular classes¹⁴. The newspaper *O Paiz* was created in October 1884 and its editorial line was to support the republican government, the anti-monarchist and abolitionist campaign¹⁵. Therefore, as we can identify, these are two newspapers with distinct editorial lines, which, for the construction of the historical narrative, shows balance in the discussion of the context to be carried out from now on.

The period from 1914 to 1918 that the news records present, the context was World War I with the beginning of the Spanish flu epidemic. This implies that when looking at the macro circumstance, the micro details aspects providing dialogue between the two, a characteristic in the perspective of the micro analysis of the biographe's 10-year tenure.

For some, at this point, the doubt occurs if in the methodology this should not be clear about what was said. We clarify that it can even be considered; on the other hand, it would be not showing the constructed path of the study concomitantly with the documentary search, which points to the proposal of micro history studies advocated by Carlos Ginzburg¹⁶. This implies that the result of the study interferes in the typology and analysis strategy to be adopted by the researcher.

The first news item from December 3, 1914, describes the participation of the women's section, known as Ladies of the Red Cross, in the inauguration of the course for volunteer nurses. This course was given to members of the Brazilian Red Cross, ladies of the elite who did not intend to practice the professional activity of nurse¹⁷.

The courses for Volunteer Nurses and Professional Nurses were created to meet the internal demand of the Red Cross in times of war and public calamities, since the courses were created during the First World War.

The marshal's tenure spanned the period of World War I (1914-1918), which initially involved European countries, which led to the development and testing of new weapons such as tanks, submarines, airplanes, and chemical weapons¹⁸. In this aspect, there was important female participation, mainly, in the voluntary and humanitarian work of the International Red Cross.

The Red Cross Nurses Course was initially taught at the Sociedade de Geografia do Rio de Janeiro, as reported in the newspaper *O Paiz*, on August 1, 1915, since the institution did not have its own headquarters yet.

After two years of the Volunteer Nurses Course, it opened inscriptions for the Professional Nurses Course, which had the objective of training ladies to work in hospitals or residences. It was taught by doctors with classes at the Army Central Hospital. The news of May 2, 1916, published in *Correio da Manhã*, infor-

Chart 1 – News records on the management of Marshal Thaumaturgo de Azevedo, president of the Brazilian Red Cross, Rio de Janeiro (Br) (1914-1918)

Date	Press Name and Page.	Title	Content of the Journalistic Articles
3/12/1914	Correio da Manhã (pág.4)	The Women's Section of the Brazilian Red Cross	"The Women's Section inaugurates tomorrow its course for volunteer nurses – From the Countess Souza Dantas, 1st Secretary, we received the communication that the course for volunteer nurses will be inaugurated tomorrow, at the Army Central Hospital, at 3pm. The second theoretical-practical lesson is scheduled for Monday, at the same time. "
1/08/1915	O Paiz (pág.5)	Conferences	"In the building of the Geographical Society, at Praça XV de Novembro, another lecture for the nurses course of the feminine section of the Brazilian Red Cross will take place tomorrow, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon."
2/05/1916	Correio da Manhã Newspaper (pág.3)	Professional School of Nurses	"Professional School for Nurses – under the sponsorship of the Sociedade da Cruz Vermelha Brasileira (Brazilian Red Cross Society), the Professional School for Nurses was inaugurated in this capital. It is a continuation of the Volunteer Nurses Course, which had been running regularly for two years, and whose students, ladies of our high social circle, decided in good time to make a useful and profitable work. Following with the maximum of interest the theoretical and practical teachings that were given, these ladies had the opportunity to evaluate the great gap that is observed among us, regarding the lack of "professional nurses", and, at the same time, to verify the reason of their non-existence."
25/01/1917	O Paiz (pág.4)	Brazilian Red Cross	"the day before yesterday, General Thaumaturgo, president of the Brazilian Red Cross Society, started the construction of the Nurses' Practical School, on the Society's land, located on Senado Hill". "is definitely installed in its headquarters at rua Prefeito Barata n. 75, the School of Nurses of the Brazilian Red Cross. Classes continue to be held on Mondays and Thursdays from 3 to 4 pm, and on Tuesdays and Fridays from 4 to 5 pm. The service of external medical and surgical consultations for the indigent was also inaugurated, and takes place daily from 12 to 5 pm. The first-aid course is held on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 4 to 5 pm, and registration for this course is permanently open. The students of the school will be divided into classes, not only to attend the hospitals, but also for the consultation service, which the students of the first aid course will also attend. The Red Cross meets requests for nurses for home care."
8/05/1917	O Paiz (pág.3)		"the day before yesterday, General Thaumaturgo, president of the Brazilian Red Cross Society, started the construction of the Nurses' Practical School, on the Society's land, located on Senado Hill". "is definitely installed in its headquarters at rua Prefeito Barata n. 75, the School of Nurses of the Brazilian Red Cross. Classes continue to be held on Mondays and Thursdays from 3 to 4 pm, and on Tuesdays and Fridays from 4 to 5 pm. The service of external medical and surgical consultations for the indigent was also inaugurated, and takes place daily from 12 to 5 pm. The first-aid course is held on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 4 to 5 pm, and registration for this course is permanently open. The students of the school will be divided into classes, not only to attend the hospitals, but also for the consultation service, which the students of the first aid course will also attend. The Red Cross meets requests for nurses for home care."
13/11/1917	O Paiz (pág.6)	Brazilian Red Cross	"Brazilian women have responded with enthusiasm to the appeal made by the National Red Cross. A great number of women have enlisted as members of the humanitarian institution, all of them trying to contribute to its development, full of the greatest dedication. The practical instruction of nurses, regarding the learning of bandages, has been actively intensified, and the board of directors has decided to install in the dispensary another office to meet the development of practical work".
25/11/1917	Correio da Manhã (pág. 2)	Brazilian Red Cross	"A practical course for bakers will be inaugurated at the beginning of next month. The classes of this course will take place from 8 to 11 am, on weekdays, and its teacher will be a military doctor. Candidates for enrollment should present themselves at the Red Cross headquarters, from 2 to 4 am, and the following requirements are required: identity card, being able to read and write, being over 21 years old, vaccinated against smallpox and not suffering from a chronic or contagious disease, as well as having no physical defects. At the Nurses School there will be no interruption in the teaching of volunteer nurses, and the school vacations, which according to the regulations should have started next December, will be suspended. The classes of this course will continue to be given on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays, with daily practical work in dressings, from 12 to 5 in the afternoon. The enrollment is permanent and unlimited, and the candidates must enlist as members of the Red Cross. Registration, enrollment and more information, every day, from 2 to 4 o'clock, with the secretary general, at the headquarters of the Red Cross Society, at 75 Prefeito Barata Street."
6/11/1918	O Paiz (pág.4)	The Spanish Influenza	"The Brazilian Red Cross has just had its first baptism of fire, not in the machine-gun fire of the fields of warfare, but in the treacherous and reaping flame of the epidemic that ravages the country (...) Yes, because nurses are not improvised from one day to the next, and it should not be in the rush of hospitals or at the bedside of dying patients, the moment to be taken to learn this noble profession. What is happening at this moment in the Red Cross is characteristic and gives an irrefutable demonstration of the advantages of the technical competence of the nurses; with only one and rarely two doctors in charge, the clinical service has been irreproachable, the nurses, already practical, qualified and capable, masters of their trade, have the initiative for any case that comes their way, they act with ease and effrontery, contributing so that there is not the slightest flaw nor the slightest defect in the treatment of the sick that are entrusted to them."

ms about its importance and that the Red Cross would receive requests for hiring for home and hospital work. The journalistic record shows the importance of the professional training of the nurse and the scarcity of schools that train personnel, leading to a lack of qualified personnel for health care.

It is worth mentioning that the Escola Profissional de Enfermeiros e Enfermeiras (Professional School of Nurses), created in 1890, would have graduated one class by 1917, and that in the period from 1917 to 1921, nurses were trained by the Curso de Enfermeiras da Policlínica de Botafogo¹⁸. This justifies the assertion pointed out in the news record about the scarcity and lack of qualified personnel for the nursing field, as well as we deposit the newspaper's critical tone to the government, considering that the Escola Profissional de Enfermeiros e Enfermeiras (Professional School of Nurses and Orderlies) belonged to the governmental portfolio.

Even before a definitive headquarters, Thaumaturgo de Azevedo started the construction of the Nurses' School building, reported in the newspaper *O Paiz*, on January 25, 1917. We infer that it was published in the newspaper due to governmental support, enforcing its editorial line, because the location on rua Prefeito Barata n. 75, is due to the fact that, in 1916, the National Congress – under the presidency of Venceslau Brás Pereira Gomes (1914-1918 administration) – authorized the Brazilian Red Cross the land it had been requested in 1911, located on Morro do Senado and bordered by Praça Vieira Souto and streets Henrique Valadares, Prefeito Barata (today Ubaldino do Amaral)¹⁹.

At this site, in addition to the installation of the school, there were consulting rooms, where the students did their internships and the needy population was served. To evidence the effective support of the land the newspaper *O Paiz*, on May 08, 1917, reported the creation of the Nursing Course in first aid. This implies the relevance of the donation, which can also be understood as an articulation of the government in the marshal's management. Furthermore, it is worth remembering that the president of Brazil was Venceslau Brás Pereira Gomes, the period of World War I was on, and that the country entered it in 1917. Therefore, we deduce that the donation occurred for political reasons articulated to the context, when there was a need to train nurses to care for the wounded and sick in war situations, which ratifies the interest of the newspaper *O Paiz* to make the journalistic article.

With Brazil's entry into World War I (1917), there was an increase in the demand for Red Cross courses for nurses with the intention of collaborating with the army, as seen in the clipping of November 13, 1917 published by the newspaper *O Paiz*. Although there is no evidence of the participation of nurses of the Brazilian Red Cross at the front²⁰. The war brought to women the possibility of leaving the private sphere to perform public functions⁶ and the activity of a nurse was close to the function hitherto known to women, that of caring.

Under the tension generated by the war conflict, the Brazilian Red Cross created a course for nurses, as reported by the *Correio da Manhã* newspaper. The course was about the possibility of

providing care to the war wounded, considering the training of nurses, uninterruptedly, so that, in case it was requested, the institution would have an available workforce. By bringing the article, we can infer that the newspaper reported the concern with the population, by signaling to the government the importance of the health field, be it internal or external, considering that Brazil is going through serious public health problems with yellow fever and tuberculosis, for example.

In 1918, the Spanish flu epidemic devastates the country and Marshall Thaumaturgo de Azevedo opens an infirmary at the Dispensary of the Nurses' School for the care and treatment of those affected by the epidemic. To this end, he requests the participation of female graduates to provide care in the institution and/or in homes that the Brazilian Red Cross demanded. The institutional care was the target of the newspaper *O Paiz*, on October 6, 1918, when it registered the effective participation of the Red Cross for the care provided. We articulate the record as a consequence of the donation of the land and alignment of the Brazilian Red Cross to the government's interests, considering that at the time its actions were criticized by the opposing groups, especially for the lack of structure in the health field²¹.

It is worth mentioning that the Director General of Public Health, Theophilo Torres, provided, among other initiatives, the creation of assistance posts to care for severe patients from the Spanish flu, in addition to the private and philanthropic initiative posts, such as the Red Cross, which was the first and surpassed the others in attendance numbers.

Through the discussion, by means of two different newspapers in their editorial lines, we identify that the actions of Marshal Thaumaturgo de Azevedo were effective. This leads us to believe that his articulations with politicians at the time and the government were providential, and that nursing, through the nurses' courses, were the flagship for possible negotiations, considering the fragility in the public health field.

CONCLUSION

To think that the news records presented to the readers were only to inform/communicate their readers, is a naive analysis. This was pointed out when we learned the editorial lines of each newspaper. The marshal strategically, possibly, in the name of kindness and charity, for example, based on institutional principles knew how to negotiate and articulate with the agents of the political field the effects for the advancement of the institution. Moreover, considering that it was of an international nature, which pointed to relations in this field.

We assume here some gaps left in the article, such as: expansion of the articulations of the marshal with the nominal citation of some politicians and government members, for example. On the other hand, we understand that this gap opens a window for future research into the history of nursing, when international relations were also at stake, especially during the period of World War I.

As a contribution of the research, it brought light to a character who invested, conquered, and one cannot deny the legacy in favor of the professionalization of Brazilian nursing.

Finally, through the results, discussion, gaps, and contributions left to the history of Brazilian nursing, new data are evidenced with each investment in this theme. This implies the construction of the assertion that we still know little about the facts/events that sustain the professionalization in current times, when sometimes the text and context of various studies need to be deepened for the discourse of historical narrative, because it is in full construction.

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