

C 4.6. COMMUNICATION – FULL ARTICLE

Manuel Rosado Fernandes Gião: The Physician and Surgeon of the Portuguese Army

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ABSTRACT: This article presents a biographical and analytical overview of Colonel Manuel Rosado Fernandes Gião (1878–1969), a leading figure in twentieth-century Portuguese military medicine. Drawing on research conducted for the volume *O Exército e a Saúde Militar na Primeira Guerra Mundial: Memórias e Progressos*, Biblioteca do Exército, 2021, (The Army and Military Health in the First World War: Memories and Progress», Portuguese Army Library, 2021), the study examines his clinical and organizational contributions, his pioneering role in radiology and electrotherapy within the Armed Forces, his participation in the 14th and 15th International Congresses of Medicine, and his relevance as one of the earliest historians of the Portuguese Military Health Service. The analysis highlights Gião's impact on the modernization of the medical services deployed in the field, as well as the lasting value of his historiographical works for the study of military medicine and the institutional evolution of the Portuguese Army.

KEYWORDS: Manuel Rosado Fernandes Gião; Military Health; Military History; Portuguese Expeditionary Corps; Army Library.

INTRODUCTION

The publication, in 2021, of the work *O Exército e a Saúde Militar na Primeira Guerra Mundial: Memórias e Progressos* (The Army and Military Health in the First World War: Memories and Progress, Portuguese Army Library, 2021) brought together a wide range of studies and a bibliographic catalogue with more than seven hundred resources on military health. During the preparatory work for this book, the figure of Colonel Medical Officer Manuel Rosado Fernandes Gião (1878–1969) emerged with particular prominence, whose scientific production, although extensive, remained little known.

This article aims to present the life, work, and organizational thinking of this military doctor,

highlighting his influence on the evolution of the Portuguese Military Health Service and the modernization of field health formations.

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Manuel Rosado Fernandes Gião was born on February 17th, 1878. He graduated in Medicine from the Lisbon Medical-Surgical School and joined the Military Medical Corps on September 5th, 1900. In the early years of his career, he collaborated in the drafting of internal regulations for field medical teams, reviewed drug formularies for military hospitals, and contributed to technical manuals, such as the *Manual de Maqueiros* (Manual for Stretcher Bearers) of 1916. In 1909, he joined the Military Medical Corps, assuming the leadership



of the Radiography Department of the Permanent Military Hospital of Lisbon, and in the following year he became Director of the Radioscopy and Electrotherapy Laboratory, being recognized as one of the pioneers in the introduction of Radiology and Electrotherapy in a military context.

SERVICE IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

As a graduate Medical Major, he joined the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps (CEP), embarking for France on February 7th, 1917, and remaining on mission until July 8th, 1918. After his return, he served as director of the 2nd Section of the 5th Division of the 2nd General Directorate of the War Ministry, later reassuming command of the Radioscopy and Electrotherapy Laboratory. He was also a professor at the Military School. The culmination of his career occurred between 1931 and 1933, when he served as Director of the Military Health Service, conducting technical and administrative reforms in hospital services and promoting military medical training. He was distinguished with 15 commendations and 14 national and international decorations, reflecting the relevance of his contribution to the Portuguese military medicine. He died on November 17th, 1969.

PARTICIPATION IN THE 14TH AND 15TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESSES OF MEDICINE

Manuel Gião represented the Portuguese Army at the 14th (Madrid, 1903) and 15th (Lisbon, 1906) International Congresses of Medicine. His papers constitute fundamental documents for understanding the evolution of the organizational thinking of the Military Health Service.

14TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF MEDICINE (MADRID, 1903)

The paper *Service de Santé en Campagne – Organisation du Service de l'Avant* (Campaign Health Service – Advanced Service Organisation) analyzed the Portuguese health structure based on the 1895 Regulations. Gião identified three essential formations: First Aid Post; Divisional Ambulance; and Mobile Hospital (equivalent to the French field hospital). He considered the system of replacing the divisional ambulance with the mobile hospital after combat to be deficient. Inspired by the French model, he proposed its replacement with three new mobile units: First Aid

Post; Blood Hospital; and Transport and Hospitalization Columns. These units should operate in an articulated manner, ensuring greater speed and continuity in care.

15TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF MEDICINE (LISBON, 1906)

In the communication *Organisation du Service de Santé de l'Avant* (Organization of the Advanced Health Service), Gião elaborates on the previous proposal, adapting it to the Portuguese reality, where the Division constituted the fundamental operational unit, unlike the French system based on Army Corps. He maintained the functional division into three levels: Regimental Service, Hospital Service, and Ambulance Service. He criticized the excessive weight of the vehicles, the dispersion of personnel, and the operational slowness of the ambulances. He proposed: maintaining the Regimental Service; replacing Ambulances and Field Hospitals with single-type, lightweight, and mobile Sanitary Training Units; creating an Independent Group Specialized in Transport; and defining the Hospitalization Column with precision. He also presented a complete organizational plan, with numbers and functions of the new units (for example, six Blood Hospitals, two Transport Columns, and four Hospitalization Columns).

The evolution of his thinking demonstrates a shift from a predominantly logistical analysis to an integrated structural vision of the Campaign Health Service. Many of these proposals would later be incorporated into the reorganization of the Portuguese Army.

14TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF MEDICINE VERSUS 15TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF MEDICINE

The papers presented by Manuel Gião at the Madrid and Lisbon congresses reveal a coherent evolution of his thinking on the organization of the Health Service in the Field, moving from the identification of structural problems to the formulation of a complete organic model. He maintains the functional tripartite division of the Frontline Health Service, but with progressive technical sophistication:

- the Regimental Relief Posts, mentioned in 1903, are fully valued in 1906 as the indispensable first line of the Health Service;
- the Field Hospital, an advanced medical unit intended for the immediate treatment of the wounded, constitutes the core of the system in 1903 and remains in 1906 with improvements in equipment;

– the Transport Column, responsible for evacuating the wounded from first aid stations to field hospitals, evolved from a complementary section into an independent and specialized group in 1906, and the Hospitalization Column, initially conceived as post-combat reinforcement, acquired a precise and well-equipped organization in 1906.

The logic of successive substitution between ambulances and hospitals was abolished, being replaced by an articulated structure, simultaneously mobile and stable, capable of ensuring continuity of care in combat (Table 1).

TABLE 1. Comparative table – 14th Congress *versus* 15th Congress

Key elements	14th Congress (1903)	15th Congress (1906)
First Aid Station	Only referred to as the initial evacuation point	Revalued as part of essential "regimental service"
Blood Hospital	Advanced medical unit for frontline wounded	It remains the essential core of the system
Transport Column and Hospitalization Column	Responsible for transporting the wounded Sets up and maintains hospital centers after combat.	Strengthened and organized as an independent group More detailed, with modern equipment (X-ray, tents, beds)

Manuel Gião recommends for mobile and articulated units, which are lighter and more efficient, the vehicle models of Colonel Doctor Cunha Belém — awarded in Paris in 1900 — among which are the sanitary vehicles (Fig. 1), the surgery and pharmacy carts (Fig. 2) and small hospital tents (Fig. 3).

This model would be adopted in the reorganization of the Portuguese Army Health Service, a sign of the recognition of the practical value of its ideas.

The set of two communications marks Portugal's transition to a modern, rational and integrated conception of the field health service, aligned with international trends of the early 20th century.

LITERARY PRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Manuel Gião is recognized as one of the first historians of the Portuguese Military Health Service. Among his main works are: «A Guerra Peninsular»; «O Serviço de Saúde na Campanha do Roussillon»; «O Recrutamento dos Cirurgiões Militares no Exército Português: notas históricas»; studies on the Military Health Service during the French Invasions; and texts dedicated to the military hospital structure, therapeutics, and medical training. A large part of these works is preserved in the collection of the Portuguese Army



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

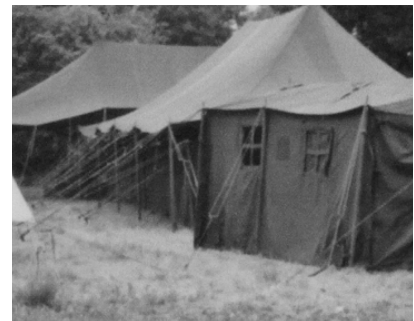


Fig. 3



Library, some accompanied by handwritten dedications, such as the one addressed to the erudite researcher, [...] Captain Chaplain Reverend Father Ernesto Pereira Sales, patron of the institution.

His vast work combines practical experience, administrative reflection, and historical reconstruction, offering a comprehensive view of the evolution of Portuguese Military Medicine.

CONCLUSION

Colonel Medical Officer Manuel Rosado Fernandes Gião was one of the main figures responsible for the modernization of the Portuguese Military Health Service at the beginning of the 20th century. His participation in international congresses, his pioneering work in radiology and electrotherapy, his contribution to the sanitary organization in the field, and his vast historiographical production makes him a central figure in the study of Portuguese Military Medicine.

His legacy remains relevant to both historians and researchers in the health sciences and military organization.

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C 5.1. COMMUNICATION – ABSTRACT

A Feminine Voice in Medical History and Deontology: The Legacy of Maria Olívia Rúber de Meneses

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ABSTRACT: Maria Olívia Rúber de Meneses (1932–1990) was a pioneering physician, historian, academic, and bioethicist whose work profoundly shaped the development of the History of Medicine and Medical Deontology in Portugal. As the first woman to obtain a Ph.D. at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Porto, she established a scholarly trajectory grounded in rigorous historical inquiry, ethical reflection, and a sustained commitment to bridging scientific practice with humanistic sensibility.^[1]

Her intellectual journey began well before her university years. From her adolescent years, she distinguished herself by exceptional academic performance and a deep engagement with literature and poetry, a sensibility that later informed both her historical writing and pedagogical practice. During her medical studies (1949–1955), she consistently ranked among the most outstanding students of her cohort, receiving academic distinctions, and cultivated a parallel literary activity, authoring poems for academic publications and commemorative volumes.^[2]

Her scholarly career was inaugurated with the innovative 1956 dissertation, *Duas Figuras Femininas da Medicina Medieval*, in which Professor Olívia examined the intellectual legacy of Trota of Salerno and Hildegard of Bingen to challenge long-standing assumptions regarding women's intellectual inferiority, anticipating later feminist historiography.^[3]

Following the institutional lineage of her mentor, Luís de Pina, Professor Olívia was closely associated with the Maximiano Lemos Museum from the outset of her career. She played a decisive role in its reorganization during the institutional transition of 1959–1960 and later became its director in 1976, having previously transformed the institution into a center for interdisciplinary research and pedagogical innovation.^[4] In parallel, she succeeded her mentor as head of the disciplines of History of Medicine and Medical Deontology, consolidating their academic structure.

Her historiographical production encompassed medieval medicine, public health, tropical medicine, institutional history, and medical biography. Her studies on the evolution of Anatomy and Surgery in Porto constitute landmark contributions to Portuguese medical historiography.^[5,6] In the field of Tropical Medicine, her doctoral thesis resulted from extensive archival research in Portugal, France, and Germany and remains a major reference.^[7]



In Medical Deontology, Professor Olívia emerged as a precursor of modern bioethics in Portugal. Motivated by concerns regarding professional indifference and ethical decline, she emphasized the moral centrality of the doctor–patient relationship and professional secrecy, particularly in *Segredo Médico*.^[8,9]

Her pedagogical legacy is highlighted by her leadership in the creation of the first pedagogy course for medical teachers in 1983, advocating that exemplary conduct was as essential as scientific competence.^[10] Widely regarded as a mentor, she combined intellectual rigor with attentive personal guidance.

Until the end of her career, she remained intellectually active, leaving a final testament in the preface to the reedition of Maximiano Lemos's *História da Medicina em Portugal: Doutrinas e Instituições*.^[11] Her death in 1990 marked the loss of a central figure in Portuguese medical humanism.^[12]

By integrating historical consciousness, ethical reflection, literary sensibility, and institutional leadership, Maria Olívia Rúber de Meneses forged a lasting model of scholarly and professional excellence. Her work remains a definitive touchstone for understanding the intersections of history and ethics, while contributing to a sustained reappraisal of women's intellectual and professional legitimacy within Portuguese medical academia.

KEYWORDS: History of Medicine; Medical Deontology; Bioethics; Women in Science; Pedagogy; Portugal.

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