

Military Surgeons and the Teaching of Surgery in the Portuguese World – 1773-1910

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ABSTRACT: In Portugal, including several overseas territories, in particular Portuguese America, the Military Institution and the Military Surgeons actively contributed to the teaching of surgery and to the care of the most peripheral and vulnerable populations. This reality, whether through the rudimentary teaching of Anatomy and Surgery in the Military Hospitals, or through the Anatomy and Surgery Classes, and later in the contribution to the Royal Schools of Surgery and Medical-Surgical Schools formation, cannot be forgotten.

KEY WORDS: Portugal, Military Institution, Military Surgeons, Surgery Education

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the figure of Teodoro Ferreira de Aguiar is evoked for his particular and presumed intervention in the creation of the Royal Schools of Surgery of Lisbon and Porto. However, it would be too simplistic to consider him an isolated actor and to ignore the institutional and other military surgeons' efforts since the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

I – The Last Quarter of the Eighteenth Century

Until the end of the eighteenth century (and even in the first decade of the nineteenth century), the training path of surgeons varied widely. Many pursued simple learning methods without undergoing examinations by the competent authorities, including the Chief Surgeon of the Kingdom, the University of Coimbra (1772-1782) or the Junta do Protomedicato (1782-1809). This process was complex, often

involving overlapping jurisdictions, insufficient resources, and was not free from corruption⁽¹⁾. Some degree of solid training was available in civil environments, notably in the Royal Hospitals of S. José and Misericórdia do Porto, but also in those of the Misericórdias of Évora and Setúbal⁽²⁾.

However, due to the scarcity of practitioners, this requirement was often ignored (3), and even rarer was their submission to assessment by civilian authorities^(1,4).

To try to improve the level of surgeons admitted to the Corps, the Military Institution created Anatomy and Surgery Classes in Almeida, Elvas, Tavira and Chaves, between 1773 and 1789. The establishment of the latter was particularly urged by Manuel José Leitão, Surgeon of the Royal House and later Major Surgeon of the Cavalry Regiment of Chaves. It should be noted that Elvas and Chaves could even, in addition to student soldiers, receive civilian students who, wishing to continue or join the ranks, had

priority in admission to vacancies of Surgeon Major in the Regiments of these Provinces^(3,5). Manuel José Leitão published a Treatise on Anatomy.

During this period, surgery and anatomy were taught in other Military Hospitals, such as the Navy Hospital and, in Portuguese America, in Rio de Janeiro and Goiás, among others⁽⁶⁾. As an example, Teodoro Ferreira de Aguiar, born in Rio de Janeiro, in 1800, 3 years after returning from France and Leiden, identified himself as Chief Surgeon and Professor of Surgery at the Navy Hospital in an application for the position of Surgeon Major and Royal Professor of Surgery at the Military Hospital of his hometown⁽⁷⁾.

Several of the most categorized Military Surgeons were Deputies or Commissioners of the Chief Surgeon of the Kingdom or of the Board of Protomedicato, according to their validity, in the evaluation of credentials or examining candidates for the practice of surgery, the office of bleeder, algebraist (“endireita”), etc.

II – The First Two Decades of the Nineteenth Century

In addition to the efforts of personalities such as Bernardo José de Abrantes e Castro, Inspector of Military Hospitals, regarding the observance of the assessment of credentials and knowledge by the Chief Surgeon of the Army, he and Ferreira de Aguiar, at the time already “Cirurgião Mór da Armada Real e dos Exércitos”, drafted, at the request of António de Araújo de Azevedo, a Regulation for Military Hospitals⁽⁸⁾. Approved in Salvaterra de Magos on March 27, 1805, it provided, in Title II, article XIX, the obligation to teach medicine and surgery, because “It is not possible to separate Medicine from Surgery; and the Military Hospitals should be from today to the future true Schools of Surgical Medicine (...)”.

In 1807, José Correia Picanço, who had been Chief Surgeon of the Kingdom since 1799, went to Brazil (an official page - Memórias da Administração Pública do Brasil - also mentions him as having been Chief Surgeon of the Armies, a quality that could not be confirmed, in particular due to the absence of references in the Military Historical Archive). Born in Pernambuco, probably the son of a “barber-surgeon”, he was appointed, in 1766, at the age of 21, surgeon of the “Corpo Avulso de Oficiais de Ordenança dos Entrados e Reformados”⁽⁹⁾. Recommended for his work, he managed to go to Lisbon where he enrolled in the Surgery Course at the Hospital de S. José, becoming a disciple of Manuel Constâncio⁽⁹⁾.

After his graduation, he was appointed by his master to go abroad for training, a decision he accepted, as can be seen by the birthplace of his eldest son (Paris)^(9,10).

He was a demonstrator of Anatomy and Surgical Operations at the University of Coimbra between 1772 and 1778 and then lecturer between 1779 and 1790, after a doctorate at a non-consensual date and place (Paris? Montpellier?). Enjoying great prestige, being Surgeon of the Royal House, knighted and awarded with the habit of the Order of Christ, and Member of the Board of Protomedicato, he is clearly assumed as the mentor, together with the Prince Regent, in the creation of the Escola Cirúrgica da Baía (the oldest University in Brazil) by the Decree of 18 February 1808, which is reproduced below⁽¹¹⁾.

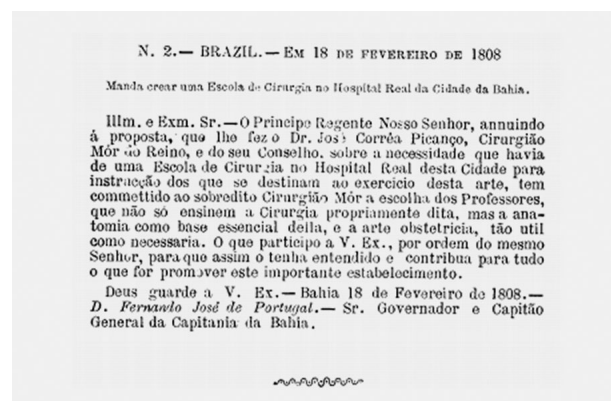


Fig 1. The Decree of Creation of the School of Surgery of the Bay, on February 18, 1808. Credit – Coleção das Leis do Brazil (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1808, Parte I), 2.

Current bibliography and historiography have also attribute to him the founding of the “Aula de Anatomia e Cirurgia” or “Escola Anatómica, Cirúrgica e Médica”, of Rio de Janeiro, in the Military Hospital of that city, a narrative that is not possible to definitively confirm. With the initial designation of Cadeira de Anatomia (April 2, 1808), its creation appears to be the result of a collective initiative with His Royal Highness support (in addition to Picanço, also from Frei Custódio de Campos, Cirurgião Mor “dos Exércitos e Armadas Reaes”, Joaquim da Rocha Mazarém and others)⁽¹²⁾.

As for Teodoro Ferreira de Aguiar, he also accompanied the Royal Family in the transfer to Rio de Janeiro, supposedly being in charge⁽³⁾, on April 2, 1808, of teaching Anatomy at the Military Hospital of that city and, on October 12 of the same year, in charge of teaching Ligatures, Surgery Operations and Parturia-

tion which he would have continued until 1813. These assertions are refuted by consultation with the *Collecção de Leis do Brazil*⁽¹³⁾, by which we were able to verify that the Decrees of 2 April and 12 October 1808 refer to Joaquim da Rocha Mazarém as Anatomy Teacher of the Military Hospital and, in the latter, additionally stipulating the obligation to teach Ligatures and Parturition. Mazarém began his training in the Anatomy and Surgery Class of the Military Hospital of Chaves, later moving on to the Royal Navy and, as we will see, he will also play a prominent role in the teaching of obstetrics in Lisbon.

Regarding Continental Portugal, in 1816, we have news of the intention of the Enfermeiro Mor of the Hospital de S. José, António da Câmara, to reform the facilities and the teaching of surgery at his School⁽⁹⁾. On the other hand, Beresford, at the end of the war, promoted the internship of several Assistants of Surgery of the Army Corps not yet approved in the School of Surgery of that hospital⁽¹⁴⁾. The desideratum of these personalities converged with or was a reflection, in the case of the Chief Marshal, of the content of the Charter of June 14, 1816. In this document, D. João VI ordered the observance of the Regulation of Military Hospitals of 1805 (to the detriment of the 1813 one promoted by Beresford), with some changes, and mandated the creation of a Military Medical School at the Hospital of S. José.

III – The Twenties of the 19th Century

In 1822, with the aim of encouraging a modern and scientific approach to medicine (in the broad sense), as well as promoting the method of “mutual teaching”⁽¹⁵⁾, pharmacology, public health, among other aspects, a group of doctors, surgeons and pharmacists from the Military Hospitals, meeting in the Convent of S. Francisco da Cidade, created the foundations of the Society of Medical Sciences of Lisbon, later extending the invitation to a greater number of members. Having decided the 1st December to be the date to make the official “installation”, elections were held on 26th November for the Board of Directors and Committees⁽¹⁶⁾. For reasons of the Elected President's health, Francisco Soares Franco was quickly chosen as President of the Society, to whom Abrantes e Castro, former Inspector of Military Hospitals and an old rival, will make the report of the deputation, which he headed, sent to D. João VI (who received them at the Palace of Bemposta). As has been pointed out, among the founders of the society there were numerous mem-

bers who belonged or had belonged to the military institution, which was the case for all the doctors and surgeons of that deputation. As a curiosity, it is noted that Francisco Soares Franco became president of the Army Health Council between 1837 and 1841. The first phase of the Society was short-lived, since, with the absolutist movement of 1823, its sessions were interrupted from May 1823, and the Society suspended in December. It was only reinstated in 1835. By 1866, there were five Presidents of the Society who were or had been military physicians or surgeons⁽⁵⁾.

A project already cherished by several personalities (the Enfermeiros Mores of the Hospital de S. José, for example, as already mentioned) and the Crown, the foundation of the Royal Surgical Schools of Lisbon and Porto resulted from a collective effort, including military surgeons such as Teodoro Ferreira de Aguiar (also a PhD in Medicine), who played a particularly important role, Jacinto José Vieira, Joaquim da Rocha Mazarém, António Pedro Cardoso, Vicente José de Carvalho, Joaquim Inácio Valente and António de Lima Leitão (also a Medicine Doctorate).

Although some attribute its foundation to Jacinto José Vieira⁽¹⁸⁾, the future Chief Surgeon of the Kingdom⁽¹⁰⁾, most of the bibliography and historiography presents a version of the issue based on tradition, which is perpetuated, especially based on the work *A Régia Escola de Cirurgia* (The Royal School of Surgery), by Professor Augusto Silva Carvalho⁽¹⁹⁾. Viera Reis was not an exception and transcribes some excerpts from it. On the subject, Silva Carvalho⁽¹⁹⁾ says:

“It is well known that Teodoro Ferreira de Aguiar managed to have one of the tobacco contractors released, taking advantage of the high esteem in which he was held by D. João VI, a favor that the beneficiary tried to pay with a large sum that that meritorious doctor refused, asking in exchange that it be used to subsidize two schools of Surgery in Lisbon and Pôrto, not by a one-time gift, but by an annual subsidy payable by all the contractors of that manufacturing monopoly.”

With this commitment (most likely coming from José Ferreira Pinto Basto, according to our investigations), Teodoro planned the course of the new schools and drew up the budget for their expenditure and revenues, as can be seen “clearly” from a letter, addressed to the Minister and Secretary of State for Kingdom Affairs, signed by him and dated 26 May 1825⁽¹⁹⁾. Although Lima



Leitão stated that the Regulation had been drawn up by Joaquim da Rocha Mazarém, Silva Carvalho maintains his conviction regarding Teodoro Ferreira de Aguiar. His explanation for this lack of definition stems from the apparent modesty of Teodoro, who even suggested that the first Director should be Jacinto José Vieira⁽¹⁹⁾. The Charter for the Creation of the Royal Schools of Surgery (25 June 1825) and its Regulation are published in the *Gazeta de Lisboa* of 4 July 1825⁽²⁰⁾. In the first, it is clear that the initiative resulted from the intervention of several personalities: D. João VI, in the Charter of its creation, speaks of a project that was brought to his consideration by “very intelligent people”⁽²⁰⁾. The inaugural speech, delivered in the presence of King João VI and the Infantas, on 27 September 1825, by Francisco de Assis Leite, one of the teachers, is silent on the specific role of Ferreira de Aguiar or others⁽²¹⁾.

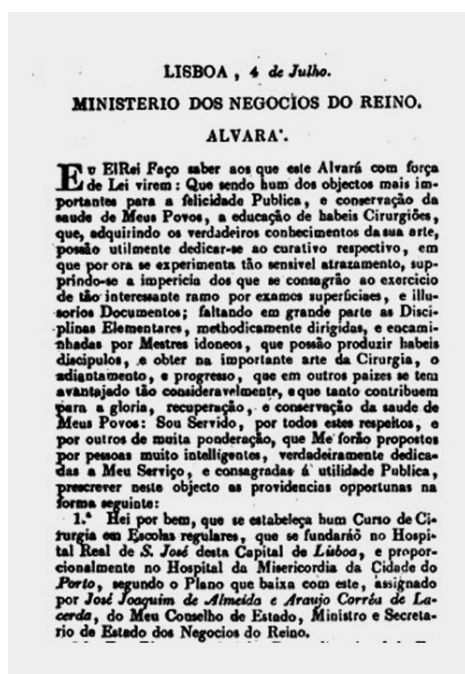


Fig 2. Excerpt from the Charter for the Creation of the Royal Schools of Surgery (June 25, 1825). *Gazeta de Lisboa*, Suplemento ao nº 154, de 4 de Julho de 1825, 641.

In Porto, we also found the participation of several military “facultativos”, such the already mentioned Vicente José de Carvalho, surgeon and first Professor of Anatomy, born in Setúbal and who graduated from the Hospital de S. José, and Joaquim Inácio Valente, born in

Lisbon. The Inaugural Session took place on November 25, 1825, and Bernardo Campeão, first Director of the School and 1st Physician of the Military Hospital of Porto, delivered the “Inaugural Oration”⁽²²⁾. Salustiano Arnaud, also a physician attached to the military institution (as well as a military engineer), served as Director for some time during the Civil War^(3,22).

IV- Medical-Surgical Schools

In 1836, by Decree of 29 December, the Medical-Surgical Schools of Lisbon and Porto were created, succeeding the respective Royal Schools of Surgery. It should be noted that it was only in 1866 that the same rights and prerogatives were recognized in relation to those from the Medical Course of the University of Coimbra⁽⁵⁾. At the Porto School, for example, three military faculty members stood out: Roberto Frias, Lopes Martins Júnior and Maximiano de Lemos (a major figure among those who dedicated themselves to the History of Portuguese Medicine)⁽²³⁾. The same Diploma provided for the creation of similar Schools in the Capitals of Overseas Administrative Districts. In this context, the Medical-Surgical Schools of Funchal (1837-1910), Ponta Delgada (1837-1839) and Goa (active since 1842, officially regulated in 1847, being the first Higher Education Institution in the whole Indian subcontinent), emerged⁽²⁴⁾. In the latter, it was common for military personnel on commission in that territory to be appointed as professors, as was the case of Herculano de Sá Correia, the author’s great-great-uncle, a naval surgeon, trained at the Medical-Surgical School of Lisbon, while serving in Goa and Macau between 1849 and 1853⁽²⁵⁾.

CONCLUSION

With this article we have provided a brief overview on the contribution of military surgeons to the teaching of surgery both within the Military Institution and in the Civilian Environment. In the latter case, not only in the foundation and teaching in educational establishments, but also congregating in societies that promoted scientific progress in the various areas of Medicine, Surgery and Pharmacy, as was the case of the Society of Medical Sciences of Lisbon. In this regard, we have rectified or clarified some aspects that current historiography and narratives tend to perpetuate, hoping to contribute to future research.

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