

**PIO DAMIÃO: NURSING AS A FORM OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION****PIO DAMIÃO: A ENFERMAGEM COMO FORMA DE PARTICIPAÇÃO POLÍTICA****PIO DAMIÃO: LA ENFERMERÍA COMO FORMA DE PARTICIPACIÓN POLÍTICA****Received: 13/01/2015****Approved: 20/11/2015****Maria Regina Guimarães Silva<sup>1</sup>****Maria Cristina Sanna<sup>2</sup>**

This socio-historical research was conducted in order to identify, describe and analyze Pio Damião's professional career. The study was based on direct sources such as notarized documents, meeting minute books, a public will, news articles of that period and documents from the Public Archive of Minas Gerais, Brazil. Chapters of books which portray the changes in the town and also mention Pio Damião were used as indirect sources. The documents and publications were repeatedly studied in the search for information and its relations. The subject studied was the first "nurse" to ever provide nursing care at Guaxupé's Charity Hospital, Minas Gerais, Brazil. He began his work in 1913, involving himself in the nursing, cooking and laundry activities at the institution. He founded the Brazilian Black Front in Guaxupé, but, was dismissed from the Charity Hospital, supposedly for a religious matter – he was not Catholic – but continued to provide healthcare services to the population at his own house until his sickness and death, in 1953.

**Descriptors:** History of nursing; Professional practice; Biography.

Esta é uma pesquisa sócio-histórica que tem como objetivo identificar, descrever e analisar a trajetória profissional de Pio Damião. No estudo foram empregados documentos cartoriais, livro-ata de reuniões da Santa Casa, testamento público, artigos de revistas e jornais da época e, documentos do Arquivo Público Mineiro. Como fontes indiretas, foram utilizados capítulos de livros que retratam a história da cidade e que também citaram Pio Damião. Os documentos foram submetidos a leituras repetidas para busca das informações e do estabelecimento das relações entre elas. O personagem em foco foi o primeiro "enfermeiro" a trabalhar na Santa Casa de Guaxupé, Minas Gerais. Iniciou suas atividades em 1913, se dedicando à enfermagem, cozinha e lavanderia da instituição. Fundou a Frente Negra Brasileira em Guaxupé. Foi desligado da Santa Casa provavelmente por motivos religiosos, por não ser católico, e permaneceu prestando cuidados à população da cidade em seu próprio domicílio até seu adocimento e morte, em 1953.

**Descritores:** História da enfermagem; Prática profissional; Biografia.

Esta es una investigación socio histórica con el objetivo de identificar, describir y analizar el trayecto profesional de Pio Damião. Para el estudio se utilizaron, como fuentes directas, documentos de archivos, libro de actas de reuniones de la Santa Casa, testamento público, artículos de revistas y periódicos de la época y documentos del Archivo Público de Minas Gerais, Brasil. Como fuentes indirectas, fueron utilizados capítulos de libros que relatan la historia de la ciudad y que también se citaron Pio Damião. Los documentos fueron sometidos a lecturas para buscar informaciones y establecer relaciones entre ellas. El personaje en el foco fue el primero "enfermero" a proporcionar sus servicios en la Santa Casa de Guaxupé, Minas Gerais, Brasil. Empezó sus actividades en 1913, dedicándose a los cuidados de enfermería, cocina y lavandería de la institución. Fundó la Frente Negra Brasileña en Guaxupé. Fue encedido de la Santa Casa probablemente por razones religiosas, puesto que no era católico, pero permaneció prestando cuidados a la población de la ciudad en su propio domicilio hasta su enfermedad y muerte, ocurridos en 1953.

**Descritores:** Historia de la enfermería; Práctica profesional; Biografía.

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## INTRODUCTION

The city of *Guaxupé*, located in the state of *Minas Gerais* was founded in 1837, when *Paulo Carneiro Bastos* donated twenty-fourth land acres, the Catholic Church, for the constitution of the chapel heritage in honor of Our Lady of Sorrows of *Guaxupé*. At the time, the farms around the town produced large amounts of coffee and had slaves as manpower, beyond the first immigrants seeking employment in coffee agriculture<sup>1</sup>.

Later, in the first decade of the twentieth century, some farms already had a telephone, machines to benefit coffee and own vehicles for use on the farm, such as tractors. With the high production and investment of a few coffee barons, the progress was accelerating, being consolidated with the arrival of the railroad. The coffee economy boosted the geographic growth, the migration and the urbanization of *Guaxupé*, bringing many demands of service to the city<sup>2</sup>. The railroad stations attracted Italian, Spanish, Syrian-Lebanese immigrants and Brazilian workers from other cities and states, arousing interest in the city and expanding its occupation, which had, as a consequence, its growth.

With the increase in population, lack of hygiene and medical-health care, infectious diseases ravaged the city, bringing the need to create a health service to provide assistance to farm colonists and workers of the railway network that got sick. Thus, in June 1910, it was inaugurated the *Santa Casa de Misericórdia* of *Guaxupé*. In the city, there were few doctors that met the needs of patients and, at that time, the offer of nurses training courses was almost inexistent, remembering that Nursing, at that time, had an empirical basis and was not taught in schools or recognized as science.

The first initiatives to establish the nursing education in Brazil, in the state of *Rio*

*de Janeiro*, dated 1890, with the creation of Nursing Professional School and Nurses Assistance to Alienated, current *Alfredo Pinto* Nursing School, belonging to the Federal University of *Rio de Janeiro* (UNIRIO)<sup>3</sup>.

In *São Paulo*, the first school created to professionalize nurses was founded in 1894, at the Samaritan Hospital. The course was three years duration and ministered in a boarding school regime and the first hired teachers were formed in England<sup>4</sup>.

In *Minas Gerais*, there are no records of nursing schools before 1933, when the *Carlos Chagas* School was created in *Belo Horizonte*, currently belonging to the Federal University of *Minas Gerais*. The country experienced economic and social Republican growth but had minimal investments in nursing professionals forming schools. In this scenario, *Guaxupé* did not offer any preparatory course for nurses, but with the population increase and the arrival of immigrants, there was a typhoid fever outbreak affecting several workers of the railroad network and also colonists who sought care at the only hospital in the city, which demonstrated the need for professionals able to act in this situation.

With few doctors and only one "nurse", *Rosa Sanchetta*, the *Santa Casa* recorded the attendance of 27 patients, from February 1911 to April 1912<sup>D1</sup>. About this "nurse" little is known beyond her name, but the following year, an important character in the history of the city - *Pious Damião*, arrives at *Guaxupé* to live for forty years, and during this period, he was dedicated to nursing activities and policy.

Considering the contribution of this social factor for the community of *Guaxupé* and the opportunity through the study of his career, to favor the understanding of how were the nursing practices and political participation in the Southeast cities, whose

history was influenced by the production and commercialization of coffee, and it was decided to conduct this study, which aims to identify, describe and analyze the professional trajectory of *Pious Damião*.

## METHOD

The historical and documentary study, whose direct sources were: Public Deed of purchase of two houses by *Pious Damião*, registered in the Book nº 37, pgs. 19-20 of 11-19-1915 and Book nº 40, pgs. 79-80 of 01-08-1917; Municipal Law nº637/1974 which deals with street name; Minutes-Book nº I of meetings of the *Santa Casa*; Outline of division of assets registered in the 1st Notary's Office of *Muzambinho-MG* in 02-10-1917; public testament of *Pious Damião*, registered in the 1st Notary's Office of *Guaxupé-MG* in 01-16-1953; magazine articles and newspapers of the time and documents registered with the folder number 4643 of the Public Archive of *Minas Gerais*, relating to the Brazilian Black Front Movement.

As indirect sources, chapters of books that depict the transformation of the city and also cited *Pious Damião* were analyzed. The data collection took place between November 2012 and December 2013. The documents were organized in physical and electronic databases and grouped by similarity and thematic relevance, in sequential order of events experienced by the character in focus.

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of *Santa Casa* of *Guaxupé* and the Ethics Committee of the Federal University of *São Paulo* - UNIFESP, under Opinion No. 354,873.

## RESULTS

From the analysis of the documents and the organization of historical data, the analytical categories were constructed, namely: personal life, professional trajectory, and political militancy, which have been

described and discussed in the available scientific literature on the subject and the concepts of the World Social Theory of *Pierre Bourdieu*.

## DISCUSSION

On December 25th of 1882, in the city of *Araxá, Minas Gerais*, *Pious Damião* was born. Son of slaves *Tobias Damião* and *Eva Maria* had two sisters: *Rosária Teodoro Damião* and *Suzana Damião*<sup>D2</sup>, all free born as a result of the Free Womb Law. This law was signed by *Dom Pedro II* in 1871 and, according to the law, there would not be slaves born in Brazil again, which meant the gradual abolition of slavery which lasted until the promulgation of the Golden Law signed by Isabel Princess, on May 13th of 1888, releasing all remaining slaves<sup>1</sup>.

The abolitionist movement spread throughout the country in the 1880s, even before the promulgation of the Golden Law. Until then, there were emancipatory attempts which wanted the gradual abolition of slave labor while the abolitionists wanted the total and immediate abolition of slavery. Some particular initiatives, spread throughout the country had highlighted at the end of slavery as the creation of emancipatory and anti-slavery societies, and the *Saraiva-Cotegipe* Law, of 1885, which freed the slaves over 65 years old. In the south of *Minas Gerais*, the abolitionist movement broke out, reaching regions where slave labor was essential to agricultural production, especially coffee agriculture<sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless, in *Guaxupé*, the first act of abolition of slavery took place on May 12th of 1881, by Lieutenant Colonel *Manuel Joaquim Ribeiro do Valle*, later graced by *Dom Pedro II* with the title of Sorrows Baron of *Guaxupé*, who had the initiative to free his 16 slaves and, after consultation with family farmers, restored with them, the freedom of more than 186 slaves<sup>1</sup>.

*Damião*, who was born free in the same state, married *Jeronima Damião* but did not have descendants<sup>D2</sup>. Still Young, invited by *Oliveira Martins* engineer, took up residence in *Guaxupé* to *Damião* work on the highway building of *Guaxupé-Muzambinho*, as an assistant of the said engineer<sup>D3</sup>. At the end of the work, *Damião* worked as a cook of the Mogiana of Railroads Company, time of expansion of the rail network in Brazil.

The railroad brought the first train to *Guaxupé* in 1904, contributing to the progress of the city not only through the outflow of coffee production but the exchange of people and goods, including cultural, since the railroad was treated as the conductor vehicle of the civilization<sup>1</sup>. The city was transforming as immigrants arrived, which also boosted local businesses. With increasing population and the occurrence of typhoid fever outbreak already cited, that contaminated several workers of the railroad network, the *Santa Casa* was inaugurated to meet the needs of those workers.

With few doctors and only one nurse, the need to assist the hospitalized patients, made *Pious Damião* to assume the post of hospital janitor, collaborating with kitchen, laundry and nursing services. At the same time, his wife, *Jeronima Damião*, assumed the midwife post. Both dedicated themselves to hospital work, practicing empirical nursing and taking care of the institution. They acted in providing services without financial compensation, from March 1913 to February 1914, living in the premises of the *Santa Casa*. Later, with the hospital organization, *Damião* began to receive the amount of three hundred and sixty thousand reais (R\$ 360,000) per month, and one thousand reais per day, per patient admitted in the institution<sup>D4</sup>.

The estimated value of this income amounted, at that time, to eight steers or about 4,000 new coffee trees, which cost R\$ 400,000 réis (four hundred thousand réis). A

house to settlers residence, built of wood, was worth R\$ 50,000 (fifty thousand reais), but if the house was built with bricks and tiles, also for settlers, cost R\$ 220,000 (two hundred twenty thousand reais). A bullock cart was rated R\$ 90,000 (ninety thousand reais) and a machine to grind grain worth R\$ 200,000 (two hundred thousand reais). These data were recorded in the Notary's Office of *Muzambinho*<sup>D5</sup> in 1917 and, refer to the estate of a citizen from *Guaxupé*, that among other assets, owned a house in the city center, worth R\$ 3,500,000 (three million and five hundred réis).

*Damião* exercised care and management functions in the hospital and, in recognition for his work, received mixed remuneration where surprisingly appeared "productivity" portion. Interestingly, the character in focus exercised over a function that allowed him to accumulate social and political capital because the financial resources which he was receiving were reversed in part to social work that gave visibility to his leadership.

*Pious Damião* bought his first property in November 1915. The house was located in the *Vieira do Valle* Street, was built of wood and bricks, had a front window and a doorway next to this window. The yard had some plantations and also a cistern. Later, in the same place, was inaugurated the Brazilian Black Front in *Guaxupé*, founded by him<sup>D6</sup>.

The second property of *Damião* was registered in the Notary's Office of *Guaxupé* - a house in the *Porteira* Street. Built of bricks and covered with tiles, it had a door and a window, and at the back, was confronted with the *Santa Casa*. With an entrepreneurial spirit, *Damião* founded a funeral company - "*Pious X Funeral Company*," on June 8th, 1928, attached to his residence. Part of the collected amount, 16% of the sale of coffins,

was donated to the *Santa Casa*<sup>D7-D8</sup>. At that time, it was common for Hospitals to receive several donations and percentages of funerals that subsidize the maintenance of these institutions. *Damião*, realizing this condition, started to manage his own business, increasing his financial resources.

When *Damião* ceased to provide services to the *Santa Casa*, reserved a “room” in his residence to house patients considered hopeless by doctors or indigent and disabled people (children or adults), giving them food and hospitality until they follow a way in their lives. There, he practiced care related to the “administration of medications, application of injections and bandages.” *Pious* also did not neglect the spiritual assistance to patients who attended at the *Santa Casa*, listening to them and comforting them, treating everyone with care, affection and equal interest in the prompt restoration of the health of each patient. For his achievements, he was recognized in the city, especially by the abnegation of his personal interests due to meet or satisfy the needs of others. He did not leave descendants, but created adopted children and was the godfather of many couples and children<sup>5</sup>. *Damião* was recognized by the full care provided to the neediest and also the leadership attitude that exercised in the “nurse” function, serving patients at his home. Thus, the role of “nurse” gave him visibility and social and political recognition.

It is worth mentioning that the two properties acquired by *Damião* were separated only by a wire fence and that *Porteira* and *Vieira do Valle* streets are currently unified and received the name of *Francisco Vieira do Valle*, being located next to the *Santa Casa* in central *Guaxupé*.

*Damião* was cited in the General Assembly Records of the *Santa Casa* in February 1919<sup>D9</sup> as a caring and dedicated

nurse, who dispensed attention to hospitalized patients without any social class, assisted in feeding, hygiene, and dressing. At the same event was recorded the attendance of more than three hundred patients from the city of *Guaxupé*, of the countryside and neighboring municipalities in the three-year period ending in the year before. By Census of 1920, the population of *Guaxupé* consisted of 16,701 inhabitants, 8,427 men, and 8,274 women, which means that about 6% of the population was attended in that institution per year. As a preferential treatment, at the time, was not made under hospitalization regime, this number can be considered significant. The most frequently recorded diseases at the time were tuberculosis, leprosy, typhoid fever and pneumonia<sup>6</sup>.

One year later, the eighteenth Administrative Meeting of the *Santa Casa* occurred presided by *Ranulpho da Silva Faria*, Bishop of the Diocese of *Guaxupé*, invited by the provider, Major *Custódio Ribeiro Ferreira Leite*. This meeting aimed to elect a new administrative board of the hospital that would serve the biennium of 1921 to 1922, demonstrating the close relationship between the hospital board and the representative of the Catholic Church. At that same event, the governing members gave a vote of thanks to *Pious Damião*, for the provided services in the institution, in recognition of his attention to patients hospitalized at the *Santa Casa*<sup>D10</sup>.

Considering that the founders and employees of the *Santa Casa* exercised political activity in the region, it is inferred that appreciated the services provided by *Damião*, because he could be a link to the approximation of the neediest people, influencing public opinion about the partisan political activities practiced in the city.

The next meeting was attended by *Pious Damião* and had, on the agenda, the

board election for the biennium 1923 to 1924. He was the only “nurse” cited in the minutes of that event, which was also attended by Father *José Garcândia*, the provider, physicians and board members. The election was by acclamation and Colonel *Joaquim Augusto Ribeiro do Valle* presented the list that made up that board, determining the following appointment: Major *Custodio Ribeiro Ferreira Leite* as provider, *Aristides Barbosa de Oliveira* as a steward, Captain *Francisco Augusto Ribeiro Valle* as treasurer, *Martiniano Prado Filho* as procurator and *Antonio Lopes Pereira* as secretary. As board members were elected: *Luiz Ribeiro do Valle*, *Esmerino Ribeiro do Valle*, *Manuel Gonçalves Ferraz*, *Américo Ribeiro Costa*, *Agenor Alves de Araujo*, *Eleusippo Epaminondas de Castro*, *Eurico Távora Barretto*, *Eduardo de Oliveira*, *Horacio Ferreira Lopes*, *Antonio Christino Lara*, Fr. *Jose Garcândia* and *Jesuino Costa Monteiro*<sup>D11</sup>. The governing body of the institution was composed by the elite of *Guaxupé*, especially farmers, politicians, doctors, lawyers and members of the Catholic Church, from the beginning of the activities of the *Santa Casa de Guaxupé*.

The announcement in the local newspaper signed by *José E. Diniz Carneiro* on February 24th of 1924, newly re-established from his sickness, made the act of recognition to the nursing care provided by *Pious Damião* at *Santa Casa de Guaxupé*, describing him as “kind and beneficent soul, incomparable nurse, skilled and compassionate”<sup>7</sup>.

The professional activities of *Damião* developed from nursing as a center, allowed him to strengthen his charisma, which led him to achieve a prominent political projection, as seen in the received public recognition.

*Damião* performs in the *Santa Casa*, the basic functions of nursing and also special, as recorded in Book I of the Sick of

the *Santa Casa*, which helped the doctor *Orlando Vairo* in removal surgery of “sebaceous cysts of the head”, held in January 1928<sup>8</sup>. His occupation was divided between providing assistance and administration of the *Santa Casa*, but the presence beside the hospitalized patient was remarkable.

A new board meeting was held in July 1923, and *Pious Damião* also participated. The agenda was referring “to the poor financial conditions of the property,” and it was decided that only those considered indigent would have free health care and that the sick from rural properties would be charged the payment of daily worth R\$ 4,000 (four thousand reais), to be paid by the owner of the farm<sup>D12</sup>. The estimated value of a calf, at that time, was R\$ 30,000 (thirty thousand reais) as Sharing Outline of *João Carlos de Magalhães Gomes*, registered in the Notary’s Office of *Muzambinho* in February 1917, which allows to infer that the value of a daily in *Santa Casa* was an irrelevant amount for the owners of farms<sup>D5</sup>.

Although the financial difficulties, the *Santa Casa* recorded the attendance of 234 patients in 1923; of these, only 27 were hospitalized in private rooms. The other 207 patients used the service of the hospital wards, which were under the responsibility of *Pious Damião*<sup>8</sup>. Probably, this episode made his entrepreneurial vision, glimpsed the possibility of offering own services to the needy that had no owners of farms to pay for them, and save contributions, even small, to the care entity that he would address later.

With the transformation of the city, other social and health institutions were created in the 1920s, as the Society of *São Vicente de Paulo*, the *São Vicente Home*, which had, as a proposal, to shelter carriers of leprosy and tuberculosis, and the *Santa Terezinha Health House*. The first Health Centre of *Guaxupé* was opened in 1938 and,

in 1994, changed its name to *Pious Damião* Diagnostic Center, public health establishment that currently offers to the population, medical and nursing consultations, vaccination room, laboratory and image examinations<sup>1</sup>.

The city's educational scene in the 1920s had theoretical and practical instruction in various establishments such as the "Dr. *Delfim Moreira*" Teachers Group, the Diocesan College of *São Luiz Gonzaga*, and the Commerce Academy of *São José*, which formed book-keepers and accountants and received State grant. The Professional Institute of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, which "housed orphans, discovered the vocation of children and young people and taught them a profession." The Agricultural *Dom Assis* Learning, the College of the Immaculate Conception, the *Rocha* Day-school, and the School *Della Società Itália Unita* were the other schools, all private. The primary rural municipals were located in the surrounding farms of *Guaxupé*, and most were owned by the founders and employees of *Santa Casa*. They worked on farms *Bom Jardim*, *Barra*, *Três Barras*, *Santa Maria*, *Córrego Fundo*, *Cardosos*, *Pintos*, *Santa Rosa*, *Jaboticabeiras*, *Cala Bocca* and *Santa Cruz*. There were also rural private primary, located in the *Serra dos Machados*, of *Jaboty* and *Epitácio Pessoa* farms. A large number of patients treated at the *Santa Casa* was from these farms<sup>9</sup>.

In the same decade, it was created the sanitation service in the city; water supply and sewerage system were designed by engineers *João Ferraz*, *Antonio Machado de Campos* and *J. Amaral Gurgel*. Other important services were installed in the city, such as the Phone Center and the Bank of Brazil<sup>1</sup>. Some clubs were also founded in the city in the same period, as the Recreational Society Club of *Guaxupé*, which began its activities in 1926, promoting dances and had,

as a proposal, to foment the development of the automobile and encourage the construction and improvement of mining roads. The *Guaxupé* Athletic Association, another social guild, also promoted dances on Sundays and Carnival balls. Later, in July 1935, it was founded the *Guaxupé* Country Club, with the proposal of offering to *Guaxupé* population, a sports club, including the construction of a swimming pool<sup>1</sup>.

Some of these clubs did not allow the entry of blacks and, in 1938 *Damião* founded the Brazilian Black Front, based in *Guaxupé*, a relevant political movement that had as its lemma, the inclusion of black people in Brazilian society. On this institution, he held the post of delegate and general fiscal of *Minas Gerais*<sup>10</sup>. The organization held a night school with vocational courses and was kept solely with the members' quota. With strict discipline, it had the proposal to value the black for its future social and professional development, as well as unify and protect them. In *Guaxupé*, this social club organized dances for blacks, in addition to teaching good manners and embroidery and sewing notions to members of the Association<sup>5</sup>.

It is noticed that the political and social life of blacks of *Guaxupé* were a constant concern for *Damião*, who had proposed to offer, to this group of people, new values, and practices, seeking upward mobility of blacks. This was given by *Pious Damião*, by the acquisition of cultural capital of the dominant class, which would allow the entry of blacks into environments, but own of that class, analog to these.

This strategy would guarantee to give visibility to black people and offer them the same as whites had, in a process of assimilation of the dominant culture: while betting on the rise by the accumulation of cultural capital and values and practices of

higher social class, made the black segment ready to join it or at least serve it.

The political movement of the Brazilian Black Front was created on September 16th of 1931, in *São Paulo*, under the presidency of *Arlindo Veiga dos Santos* and, in 1936, was inscribed in the Superior Electoral Tribunal as a political party, expanding to several Brazilian cities. *Pious Damião* was in the leadership of this association in *Guaxupé* until *Getulio Vargas* President extinguished the movement because the political parties were considered illegals at the time, especially since this association was considered as “communist”<sup>6-11</sup>.

*Damião* made every effort to keep the black front movement of *Guaxupé*. One of this evidence is a document sent to the Chief of Police of *Minas Gerais*, *Ernesto Dornellas*, in which he described the objectives of the Black Front, claiming that the party was not “left” and asked to keep the active movement, offering to black, at least, the recreational activities, after the dissolution of parties. The request, however, was denied<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, in *Guaxupé*, after the government's determination to end the activities of the Brazilian Black Front, a new movement was created, in May 13th of 1954, one year after the death of its founder - the Black Recreational Society *Pious Damião*, based at *Francisco Vieira do Valle* Street, nº152, same based off the old association. According to the status of this society, the first board was established by the President *José Ormino Tavares*, Vice President *Austim Paulino dos Santos*, the first secretary, *Raimundo de Macedo Filho*, the second secretary, *Arlindo Souza Mendes*, the treasurer *Eurípides Tobias*, and advice fiscal formed by 12 partners. The objective of the new Black Recreational Society was “to combine all social force for moral,

intellectual, artistic, assistance elevation and the protection of its members”, a proposal similar to the old Society<sup>12</sup>.

The creation of this movement represented an act of resistance of blacks about the government's imposition, maintaining the proposed work to effect the social and political rise of this group of people. Thus, *Sebastiana Damião dos Santos*, sister of *Pio Damião*, assume the post of the second treasurer of the Black Recreational Society in November 1955. Interestingly, is noted that as the elite of farmers has succeeded in power, with the children and other relatives election to the executive and legislative positions, the same happened to the family of the character in focus.

Concomitantly, *Sebastiana Damião* ministered classes in crafts and participated in the organization of parties and dances promoted by members and visitors. Among the most important parties was the annual commemoration of the abolition of slavery, every 13th mat. This lady was present at the meeting in May 1970 and was referenced in the minutes as the “first lady of society”<sup>12</sup>, unequivocal implementation of the cultural value of the dominant class for the black movement. It was noted that it has not employed any cultural reference hierarchical distinction of black culture, for example, the *Candomblé*, but the designation of epithet used in the middle of party politics and State management.

*Damião* followed the spiritual doctrine, and participated in the first meeting theme studies in *Guaxupé* in 1925, although Catholicism was the dominant religion of the time. It should be stressed that the *Santa Casa* was idealized by the elite of *Guaxupé*, with the support of the Catholic Church. He dedicated to providing services in the hospital until the arrival of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in 1933 when



probably the Catholic Church did not accept his stay at the institution. The Sisters of Charity came to manage the nursing of the hospital and stayed there until the 1970s.

Catholicism remained an expressive power of enunciation and economical through the intimate relationship between the clergy and the political authorities of the time. The influence of the church in the educational sector, another strategy of domination and maintenance of symbolic power, began with the indigenous catechesis and in the health sector, since the foundation of the *Santa Casa*. This political force remained until the end of Military Dictatorship and even today, but on a smaller scale, it is present<sup>13</sup>.

There is no record of *Pious Damião* illness, but the *Folha do Povo* Newspaper announced his death on February 26th of 1953, "carrier of serious illness, being a victim of the insidious disease." It is supposed that he died of cancer because that was the characteristic language of the time to designate this disease.

Subsequently, the Municipality of *Guaxupé*, through the Law nº637 of 23th August of 1974<sup>D3</sup>, granted him a tribute by naming a street in the city of *Guaxupé* with his name. The street is located next to his old housing and *Santa Casa* and is perpendicular to an important avenue of the city, called *Conde Ribeiro do Valle*.

*Damião* was recognized by the society as an active citizen, persistent in defense of blacks, claiming social and political rights of equality.

## CONCLUSION

The study allowed to rescuing the life history of an important character of *Guaxupé*. A simple man of humble origin and rudimentary studies, but with high moral values. Pío *Damião* won positions in the field through the professional and professional

exercise in projection companies like Railway Company and the *Santa Casa* of *Guaxupé*, which contributed to the care of inpatients and managed nursing services since the early years of its foundation.

Through Nursing, he amassed economic capital and obtained a political projection, managing his projects, caring for patients with various diseases in his residence and administering the first funeral company in the city.

*Damião* suffered political persecution, first because of the religion he practiced that was not prevalent at that time and second, for being of a lower socioeconomic class and a race that suffered (and still suffer) prejudice. Although these difficulties, he developed skills and added achievements that made him be recognized as active and successful political activist for defending blacks with tenacity and perseverance, for the exercise of Nursing that greatly contributed.

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### CONTRIBUTIONS

**Maria Regina Guimarães Silva e Maria Cristina Sanna** had equal contributions in all stages of the work elaboration – conception, design, analysis and data interpretation.