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The struggle for distinction in the foundation of the Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem – Amazonas Chapter (1950)

A luta por distinção na fundação da Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem Seção Amazonas (1950)

La lucha por el reconocimiento en la fundación de la Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem - Sección Amazonas (1950)

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To understand the formation of the Amazonas Chapter of the *Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem* as a professional distinction strategy within the sociopolitical context of the 1950s. **Methods:** This study employed documentary analysis, using letters and articles from the association's archives. Additionally, newspaper articles published between 1940 and 1959, available in the Brazilian Digital Newspaper Library, were analyzed. Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic power and distinction, Roger Chartier's notion of social representation, and Michel de Certeau's theories on strategies and tactics were adopted as an analytical framework. **Results:** The establishment of the Amazonas Chapter of the *Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem* was led by Rosaly Taborda, who had been appointed by the *Serviço Especial de Saúde Pública* to organize the Escola de Enfermagem de Manaus. Taborda leveraged a favorable political moment and her connections with local nurses to establish the Chapter, thereby consolidating institutional autonomy and promoting the legitimation of the profession within the state. The Chapter played a pivotal role in advancing nursing in the Amazonas region, strengthening the professional organization of nurses and enhancing their symbolic capital. **Conclusion:** The foundation of the Amazonas Chapter represented a professional distinction tactic that conferred greater autonomy and symbolic capital to nursing. The creation of the Chapter and the establishment of higher education in nursing formalized the profession's presence in Amazonas's educational field, reshaping its image within the social imaginary. Rosaly Taborda's role exemplifies the articulation of institutional strategies and individual tactics that were crucial to legitimize the Amazonas Chapter and consolidate nursing in Northern Brazil. **Descriptors:** History of Nursing; Nursing; Nurses; Societies, Nursing; Records.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Compreender a formação da Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem Seção Amazonas como tática de distinção da categoria no contexto sociopolítico de 1950. **Métodos:** Estudo de análise documental, utilizando cartas e artigos do acervo da entidade como fontes principais. Complementarmente, foram analisados artigos publicados entre 1940 e 1959, disponíveis na Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira. Para fundamentar as análises, adotaram-se os conceitos de poder simbólico e distinção de Bourdieu, representação social de Chartier, estratégias e táticas com De Certeau. **Resultados:** A criação da Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem Seção Amazonas foi liderada por Rosaly Taborda, enviada pelo Serviço Especial de Saúde Pública para organizar a Escola de Enfermagem em Manaus. Taborda aproveitou o momento favorável e suas conexões com enfermeiras locais para fundar a seção, consolidando sua independência institucional e promovendo a legitimação da profissão no estado. A entidade desempenhou papel central na promoção da enfermagem no Amazonas, fortalecendo a organização da categoria e ampliando seu capital simbólico. **Considerações Finais:** A fundação da Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem Seção Amazonas foi uma tática de distinção profissional, conferindo autonomia e capital simbólico à enfermagem no contexto regional e sociopolítico da década de 1950. A criação da entidade e o estabelecimento do ensino superior em enfermagem formalizaram a presença da profissão no campo educacional amazonense, redefinindo sua imagem no imaginário social. A atuação de Rosaly Taborda ilustra a articulação de estratégias institucionais e táticas individuais, ambas cruciais para legitimar a Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem Seção Amazonas e consolidar a enfermagem na região Norte. **Descritores:** História da Enfermagem; Enfermagem; Enfermeiras e Enfermeiros; Sociedades de Enfermagem; Registros.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Comprender la formación de la Sección Amazonas de la *Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem* como estrategia de distinción profesional en el contexto sociopolítico de la década de 1950. **Métodos:** Estudio de análisis documental basado en cartas y artículos del acervo institucional. Además, se analizaron artículos publicados entre 1940 y 1959, disponibles en la Hemeroteca Digital Brasileña. Para fundamentar los análisis, se adoptaron los conceptos de poder simbólico y distinción de Pierre Bourdieu, representación social de Roger Chartier y las teorías de Michel de Certeau sobre estrategias y tácticas. **Resultados:** La creación de la Sección Amazonas de la *Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem* fue liderada por Rosaly Taborda, enviada por el *Serviço Especial de Saúde Pública* para organizar la *Escola de Enfermagem de Manaus*. Taborda supo aprovechar el contexto político favorable y sus vínculos con enfermeras locales para fundar la Sección, consolidando su autonomía institucional y promoviendo la legitimación de la profesión en el estado. La Sección desempeñó un papel central en la promoción de la enfermería, fortaleciendo la organización de la categoría y ampliando su capital simbólico. **Consideraciones finales:** La fundación de la Sección Amazonas constituyó una táctica de distinción profesional que otorgó autonomía y capital simbólico a la enfermería. La creación de la Sección y la implantación de la enseñanza superior en enfermería formalizaron la presencia de la profesión en el campo educativo, redefiniendo su imagen en el imaginario social. La actuación de Rosaly Taborda ejemplifica la articulación entre estrategias institucionales y tácticas individuales, que fueron fundamentales para legitimar y consolidar la enfermería en la región Norte del país. **Descritores:** Historia de la Enfermería; Enfermería; Enfermeras y Enfermeros; Sociedades de Enfermería; Registros.

INTRODUCTION

The Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem (ABEn, Brazilian Nursing Association) is a professional organization that represents nursing at the national level, and its state chapters play a critical role in organizing, advocating for, and advancing the profession in their respective regions⁽¹⁾.

The founding of ABEn resulted from a collective effort by pioneering nurses seeking to increase the visibility of nursing and organize it as a regulated profession. The association, established in 1926, was originally called the Associação Nacional de Enfermeiras *Diplomadas Brasileiras* (ANEDB, National Association of Graduate Nurses of Brazil), reflecting its goal of bringing together nursing professionals with recognized technical and scientific training⁽²⁾.

It was not until 1954 that the association adopted the name ABEn, expanding its scope to include other categories of nursing professionals, such as technicians and nursing assistants. Since then, it has been committed to promoting continuing education, advocating for public health policies, and organizing scientific events, thereby becoming the leading professional organization for nurses in Brazil⁽³⁾.

The history of the Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem Seção Amazonas (ABEn/AM, Amazonas Chapter of the Brazilian Nursing Association) is closely intertwined with the development of nursing in Brazil—particularly in the Northern Region—and is marked by significant milestones for the profession⁽⁴⁾. ABEn/AM has been dedicated to addressing the region's specific challenges, including healthcare delivery in remote areas and the need to adapt nursing practices to local conditions. It remains a key pillar in strengthening the profession and promoting public health in the state of Amazonas^(5,6).

The formation of ABEn/AM was guided by the need to affirm the specificity of the profession and consolidate its practical and symbolic distinctions within the local context⁽⁶⁾. This movement can be interpreted as attempting to assert a distinct position within social and educational structures, seeking both recognition and legitimacy. Founding the chapter represented a means of securing visibility and professional differentiation, underscoring the value of nursing as a practice of distinction within the Amazonian context⁽⁷⁾.

Understanding the history of ABEn/AM is crucial for tracing the contributions and transformations this organization has made to education and professional development in the region. Its trajectory reflects not only the challenges encountered but also the advances achieved over time, highlighting the importance of social engagement, professional recognition, and the symbolic spaces occupied by nursing⁽⁵⁾. Our interest in uncovering this history led us to the central research question: What events, contexts, and individuals were instrumental in forming ABEn/AM?

OBJECTIVE

To understand the formation of ABEn/AM as a strategy of professional distinction within the sociopolitical context of the 1950s. We also aimed to examine the consolidation of nursing as a scientific and academic profession in the state of Amazonas, as well as to identify the nurses involved and the tactics used in the founding ABEn/AM.

METHODS

This historical study is based on documentary analysis using letters and articles preserved in the Association's archives as primary sources. We examined documents from the ABEn/AM collection, including 124 correspondences dated from 1950 to 1956 and 6 archival folders containing materials related to the chapter's first five years after its founding. The folder labeled "Year 1950" contained letters sent to the then-president of ANEDB, Ms. Edith Fraenkel, as well as letters received from other chapters addressed to Rosaly Taborda. The folders labeled "Year 1951," "Year 1952," and "Year 1953" contained reports, letters, telegrams, a draft of a Nurses' Code of Ethics, and other documents addressed to presidents of other chapters, institutions, and public figures. The folders labeled "Year 1954," "Year 1955," and "Year 1956" included letters, telegrams, receipts, and bank statements.

In total, we analyzed 124 letters, 10 of which were telegrams, along with 11 additional documents related to the creation of ABEn/AM and its first five years. These included four reports, two receipts, two preliminary drafts of a code of ethics, one circular, one decree, and one questionnaire.

To supplement the primary sources, we searched for newspaper articles in the Brazilian Digital Newspaper Archive, maintained by the Digital Library of the National Library Foundation. We used the terms "ABED," "ANEDB," "Amazonas," "Nursing Congress," "Rosaly Taborda," "São Paulo," and "Rio de Janeiro" to locate articles published during the 1940s and 1950s. This search yielded 26 citations from the newspapers "Correio da

Manhã" (RJ), "A Noite" (RJ), "O Fluminense", "Revista Médico-Social: Questões Hospitalares Médico-Sociais" (SP), "O Diário" (SP), "Correio Paulistano", "A Tribuna" (SP), and "Jornal do Comércio", based in Manaus/AM.

After reviewing the 26 citations, we selected 19 publications related to the early context of ABEn/AM, published between 1945 and 1956. We also visited the Amazonas State Public Library since some newspapers were no longer in circulation and were unavailable in digital format. During this visit, we manually reviewed editions of newspapers published in Manaus between November 1950 and January 1951, including "A Crítica", "Diário da Tarde", "A Gazeta", "O Jornal", and "A Tarde". No articles referencing the School of Nursing of Manaus, Rosaly Taborda, or ABEn/AM were found during this manual review.

Historians cannot directly verify the events they investigate; their knowledge, therefore, is indirect, grounded in recovered sources and in the traces that emerge during historical analysis. Documents function as tools that guide the reader's interpretation of reported facts and may influence perceptions in accordance with the viewpoints of their authors⁽⁸⁾.

Analyzing historical sources requires consideration of the context in which they were produced, interpreted through the temporal and spatial logic of their time. Each historical inquiry may demand the definition of specific temporal and spatial boundaries to ensure appropriate investigation⁽⁹⁾. From this perspective, we highlight Le Goff's assertion⁽¹⁰⁾, who, when reflecting on the relationship between the historian and their sources, emphasized the importance of a cautious approach. This caution involves acknowledging the potential biases inherent in historical documents and continuously questioning them in light of the purposes that may have influenced their production⁽¹⁰⁾.

Exploring these materials while investigating possible representations of nursing in the 1950s posed the challenge of understanding how letters and documents function as historical sources. These records reflect the experiences and challenges encountered during the process of constructing a profession grounded in scientific principles, as well as the efforts to reshape society's perception of nursing.

Thus, we drew on Chartier⁽¹¹⁾ to understand how social representations are constructed and disseminated, observing how discourse and narrative shape perceptions of the nursing profession. Representations are not mere reflections of reality but constructions formed at the intersection of discourse and social practice, influencing the organization and legitimization of professional groups. From this perspective, the creation of ABEn/AM can be analyzed as a strategy for constructing a collective identity in the pursuit of recognition for nursing as a distinct and socially valued professional field⁽¹¹⁾.

To guide the documentary analysis, we grounded our approach in Bourdieu's theoretical framework, drawing on the concepts of symbolic power, symbolic capital, and the field of recognition. Symbolic power functions as a subtle mechanism of domination, upheld by the social recognition of a group's authority and, in the case of nursing, may have been essential to the profession's scientific and institutional legitimization. Symbolic capital, in turn, is reflected in the accumulation of prestige, credibility, and social recognition that the ABEn/AM sought to secure for professionals in the field, thereby transforming nursing from a care-based activity into a domain rooted in academic and scientific foundations⁽⁷⁾. In this sense, possessing symbolic capital grants authority to the profession, while exposing it to ongoing disputes within the health field, where different groups compete for the monopoly of scientific legitimacy.

From De Certeau's perspective⁽¹²⁾, institutions are generally characterized as "strategic," operating from a position of authority that structures and organizes social space. Strategies function as instruments of power, typically aligned with dominant structures or legitimized by hegemonic forces, and aim to systematize and impose a stable, enduring order. In contrast, tactics refer to everyday practices that capitalize on the opportunities and gaps created by circumstances. Rather than following the logic of dominance or victory, tactics unfold as improvised and creative actions, infiltrating and momentarily subverting established strategies to meet immediate needs⁽¹²⁾. These perspectives were applied in analyzing the documents and actions surrounding the founding of the ABEn/AM.

As this was a documentary study based on public data and conducted in accordance with Resolution No. 510/2016, submission to a Research Ethics Committee was not required. Authorization was obtained to access the archives of the ABEn/AM and to use photographs and documents for publication. In accordance with Law No. 9,610/98, which updates and consolidates Brazilian copyright legislation, journalistic articles and images are considered intellectual property, and all rights have been properly secured⁽¹³⁾.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Rubber cycles: from prosperity to war

The Amazon's economic, urban, and cultural history is often analyzed through the dynamics of cycles. These cycles represent episodic events that, at different times and locations, linked the region to the expanding circuits of capitalism. Although temporary, such integration fueled economic flows, altered demographic composition, reshaped territorial hierarchies, and transformed both urban and regional landscapes⁽¹⁴⁾.

In the 19th century, the history of Amazonas was marked by economic ascent, driven primarily by the intensive export of rubber extracted from the Amazon Rainforest to industrialized countries. The state achieved significant revenue levels, enabling the transformation of Manaus into a city with architectural and urban features inspired by Europe. This period witnessed accelerated urbanization, investments in basic sanitation, electrification, resource development, and the rise of the bourgeoisie, as well as the creation of the first *Escola Universitária Livre de Manaós* (Free University School of Manaós)^(15,16).

The development of extractive production activities reshaped the region. However, the rapid expansion of rubber extraction in the forest interior—driven by growing international demand for latex—revealed the limitations of the traditional economic model and exposed its declining productivity^(17,18). This process marked a turning point in the state's economic cycle. After reaching the height of its development, Amazonas entered a deep economic recession in the early 20th century. During this time, efforts emerged to reorganize the economy and provide subsistence resources for the population⁽¹⁸⁾.

Amid this crisis, worker migration intensified, particularly from Brazil's Northeast, in a phenomenon known as *Transumância Amazônica* (Amazonian Transhumance). This population movement involved approximately 300,000 northeastern migrants between 1877 and 1920, during a period marked by the transition in Brazil's production relations toward the establishment of wage labor following the abolition of slavery⁽¹⁹⁾.

World War II introduced a new dynamic to the Amazon, driven by a growing demand for strategic materials to produce weapons and military components. In the 1940s, Japan's control over major rubber-producing regions in Malaysia led to a significant shortage of rubber-derived products in the United States, thereby increasing the Amazon's strategic relevance in supplying this critical resource^(18,19).

This context underscored rubber as one of the most vital resources for the war industry, redirecting the Allied bloc's attention to the Amazon region. In response, an agreement between Brazil and the United States allocated more than \$5 million dollars to improve the quality of rubber produced in the Amazon and finance a health and sanitation program in the production areas⁽²⁰⁾.

In parallel, the policies of the *Estado Novo* (1937–1945) consolidated the centralization of power and the creation of national institutions, reinforcing the State's presence in strategic sectors such as health and education. In this context, public health was envisioned as a fundamental tool for driving economic and social development while projecting Brazil's image as a sovereign and modern nation^(21,22).

Integrating peripheral regions such as the North and Northeast became a priority as part of a national development project. The creation of the *Serviço Especial de Saúde Pública* (SESP, Special Public Health Service) reflected this vision, as it aimed not only to address health issues but also to consolidate State presence in strategic areas. This was particularly important at a time when the Amazon region had gained prominence due to the war effort⁽²³⁾.

SESP was created to promote public health in hard-to-reach regions, such as the Amazon. Its primary responsibilities included improving sanitation in the Amazon and Rio Doce Valleys, training professionals in public health, and collaborating with the *Serviço Nacional de Leprosia* (National Leprosy Service) to expand access to medical care and improve local sanitary conditions^(24,25).

The establishment of SESP and its contribution to nursing education in Brazil—particularly in the Amazon—are closely tied to the country's historical context of the 1940s, marked by the leadership of Getúlio Vargas and by the international agreements signed during World War II^(26,27).

The war offered Brazil an opportunity to reaffirm its position on the global stage. With the rising demand for raw materials such as rubber and the Northeast's strategic location for military bases, Brazil became a key partner to the United States. The Good Neighbor Policy promoted by the U.S. government helped strengthen ties with Latin American countries^(21,23).

In this context, the 1942 cooperation agreement between Brazil and the United States, which led to the creation of SESP, directly addressed the need to ensure sanitary conditions for both Brazilian workers and American technicians in resource extraction areas—especially rubber—and at military bases. The partnership was led by the Institute of Inter-American Affairs (IIAA) and the Rockefeller Foundation, which provided financial resources and skilled personnel to carry out health and sanitation programs⁽²¹⁾.

Although nursing education in Brazil began to take shape in the early 20th century, the training experienced substantial growth with the assistance of SESP. Between the 1940s and 1960s, scholarships, technical assistance, and funding were provided for establishing nursing schools, thereby enabling the training of nurses to work in public health programs. More than addressing the shortage of professionals, this initiative contributed to consolidating nursing as an essential profession for the modernization of Brazil's public health system^(23,27).

The scholarships granted by SESP were vital to the development of the *Programa Enfermagem* (Nursing Program), contributing to advancements in nursing care⁽²⁶⁾. Besides their direct care roles, nurses trained under SESP's influence held key leadership positions in programs such as the Programa Amazônia and institutions such as like the Hospital das Clínicas de São Paulo. Many also went on to hold leadership positions in government agencies in their regions of origin⁽²⁷⁾.

In Manaus, the *Escola de Enfermagem de Manaus* (EEM, School of Nursing of Manaus) was one of SESP's key achievements. Created in December 1949 and authorized to operate in 1951^(28,29), EEM was instrumental in training professionals in a region historically underserved in terms of infrastructure and public services. By graduating its first class in 1955, the school helped improve regional health conditions by preparing nurses to work in remote areas and to address challenges such as endemic disease control⁽²⁹⁾.

The legacy of SESP and the public health and education policies of the Vargas administration remains significant. The creation of institutions such as SESP and the expansion of nursing education were foundational steps in building a more comprehensive and integrated healthcare system—one that would eventually culminate in the establishment of the Sistema Único de Saúde (SUS, Unified Health System) decades later.

The challenges and the development of nursing in Amazonas

Nurse Rosaly Rodrigues Tabora was a key figure in the history of nursing in Brazil, with especially significant contributions to the development of the profession in the Amazon region, particularly in the city of Manaus. Born in Rio de Janeiro on May 22, 1904⁽³⁰⁾, she devoted her life to strengthening nursing as both a profession and a science—shaping health policies, generating knowledge, and training new generations of professionals. An article published in the “Jornal do Comércio” of Manaus in 1950 emphasized the importance of recognizing Tabora's career (Figure 1).

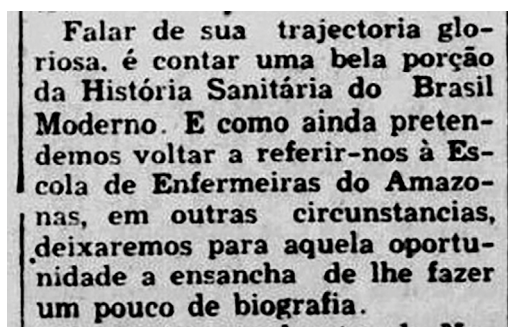


Figure 1 - Clipping from the article “Voz do Magistério - Figuras excepcionais”¹ (Voice of the Teaching Profession – Exceptional Figures)⁽³¹⁾.

1 To speak of her glorious trajectory is to recount an important chapter in the Public Health History of Modern Brazil. And since we still intend to return to the topic of the School of Nurses of Amazonas on another occasion, we will leave for that opportunity the chance to present a bit of her biography (Translated from Portuguese by the authors).

Taborda graduated in 1931 from the Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery (School of Nursing Anna Nery), in Rio de Janeiro, the first officially recognized nursing school in Brazil, which has since become a center of excellence aligned with international nursing standards. This institution played a crucial role in establishing the profession as a scientific field essential to the healthcare system^(32,33).

She moved to Manaus to help establish the state's first institution of higher education in nursing, located on land acquired on November 24, 1949, through the Programa de Desenvolvimento da Amazônia (Amazon Development Program) of SESP. Taborda arrived in the city in December 1949 to oversee the "organization and selection of personnel"⁽³⁴⁾, taking office as the first director of the EEM—a major milestone for the Amazon region. Under her leadership, the school was structured according to the standards adopted at the Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery, with a strong emphasis on high-level technical and scientific training^(29,35).

Her professional trajectory reflected the pursuit of autonomy and recognition in a field that required the articulation of administrative and educational practices, while symbolizing the expansion of women's roles in a region like the Amazon, marked by specific logistical and cultural challenges⁽³⁶⁾. Thus, Taborda was not merely a director or organizer but a historical figure who embodied the active involvement of women in building institutions fundamental to social and educational progress, thereby challenging normative frameworks and helping to redefine the possibilities for women's professional participation during that period⁽³⁷⁾.

In addition to the challenges posed by the region's isolation from major urban centers and the high prevalence of infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and leprosy, Manaus also faced serious structural issues. Taborda wrote about these difficulties in a letter addressed to Edith Fraenkel:

We lack resources of every kind—no water, no electricity, no interest, no will to work. Now we finally have electricity because our engines are working. But the lack of water has been terrible [...] We're anxiously waiting for SESP to provide us with clean and abundant water within the next three months^(38:1, our translation).

This excerpt highlights the precarious infrastructure in Manaus during the 1940s and 1950s, when the city faced a lack of basic services, including water supply and electricity. Alongside the academic and administrative efforts, establishing a nursing school in such circumstances required a struggle to ensure the basic conditions for the institution's functioning^(16,25).

Taborda's work extended beyond administrative and organizational responsibilities, encompassing active involvement in the establishment of the EEM. By leading its founding and development, she not only broke traditional barriers for women in leadership positions but also played a pivotal role in building a technical and scientific foundation for nursing education. Her efforts contributed to consolidating a profession historically associated with care into a specialized and respected field of knowledge.

She served as director of the EEM from its founding until December 3, 1954, helping to lay a solid foundation for nursing education in the region^(29,32). Her career was marked by a deep commitment to education and public health across various regions of Brazil. She served as head of nursing services at the Santa Casa de Santos, where, alongside other graduates of the Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery, she taught courses to train young women from Santos to work as nursing assistants^(32,39).

Always committed to the advancement of nursing, Taborda hoped that in the coming years, those young women would also take an interest in enrolling at the Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery. In an interview published in the "Jornal da Tribuna de São Paulo", she expressed her hope:

We will be very happy if, three years from now, we have 30 or 40 certified nurses to take leadership positions at the new Santa Casa de Santos. Let the young women of Santos reflect on the opportunities they will have to pursue a profession as dignified as it is useful^(39:14, our translation).

This aspiration reflected her awareness of the institutional needs faced by hospitals, especially in a historical context marked by epidemics of infectious diseases, where the shortage of trained nurses was a serious vulnerability. In her 1945 article titled "*O departamento de Enfermagem de um hospital*" (*The Nursing Department of a Hospital*), she emphasized the importance of qualified professionals, adequate physical infrastructure, organized management, and collaboration among hospital teams to ensure effective care delivery⁽⁴⁰⁾.

Among her scholarly contributions is the article *O papel da enfermeira na cura da tuberculose* (*The Role of the Nurse in the Cure of Tuberculosis*), published in *Annaes de Enfermagem* in 1934. In it, she emphasized the importance of the nurse's role in preventing and treating this disease, which was one of the leading causes

of mortality at the time. She emphasized the importance of health education, continuous care, and close contact with patients with tuberculosis in achieving recovery and reducing transmission⁽⁴¹⁾. These writings reveal her pioneering vision of nursing's central role in both hospital organization and in addressing public health challenges.

In addition to her scientific output, Taborda actively participated in numerous nursing congresses, where she shared her experiences and contributions to the advancement of the profession. Her involvement in these events—at both national and international levels—was marked by lectures on topics ranging from hospital management to innovations in nursing practice^(42,43).

Beyond solidifying her reputation as a leading figure in the field, these gatherings enabled her to engage with other professionals, fostering knowledge exchange and the dissemination of innovative approaches to healthcare⁽³²⁾.

The pioneers behind the founding of the Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem – Seção Amazonas

Taborda was recognized for her contributions in Brazil—and especially in Amazonas—as highlighted in an article published in the *Jornal do Comércio* of Manaus on February 15, 1950:

Rosalý is one of those exceptional figures whose radiant personality seems to surface at first glance, when she speaks [...] this extraordinary woman, who has rendered so many valuable services to the cause of Brazilian health—in Rio de Janeiro, in the Rio Doce Valley, in Bahia, and so many other places in our country, and now in Amazonas [...] ^(31-2, our translation)

Taborda's career as a professor at the Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery (School of Nursing Anna Nery)—the first officially recognized nursing school in Brazil and a national reference in nursing education—reflects her solid academic background and expertise in the field of health education⁽⁴⁴⁾. Her work at Anna Nery, where she taught courses such as school nursing, demonstrated not only her technical and pedagogical competence but also her engagement with educational practices aligned with the highest standards of the time⁽⁴⁵⁾.

This background likely granted Taborda the credibility and preparation needed to take on the task of organizing and leading the first nursing school in Manaus. More than a demonstration of technical qualification, her prior experience at a prestigious institution reflected her ability to adapt consolidated models of excellence to a regional context marked by structural and logistical constraints. Her presence in Manaus, therefore, brought a well-established paradigm of nursing education into the Amazon region, contributing to the development of a local professional identity.

However, the challenges she encountered were not limited to organizational matters; they likely also reflected a cultural setting in which nursing had yet to secure its place. In a letter to Edith Fraenkel, Taborda wrote: *"The work here is quite arduous. Everything remains to be done—from the hospital itself to the mindset and culture of the physicians, which must be reformed"*⁽³⁸⁾.

This statement reflects her broader concern with the sociocultural and professional context in which nursing was situated at the time. She likely sought to underscore the need for a comprehensive transformation that addressed not just hospital infrastructure and material resources but also the attitudes of healthcare professionals, including physicians, who needed to be educated and sensitized to value nursing as a qualified and essential health profession. This perspective reveals her intent to reform practices alongside deeply ingrained perceptions and behaviors, with the ultimate goal of establishing nursing as a scientific and respected profession within the local healthcare system.

One of the actions that could strengthen and empower the profession in the state was the creation of a local ABEn chapter. Amid the many responsibilities involved in organizing the EEM, Taborda was also committed to providing nurses in Amazonas with a space for representation, professional development, and recognition⁽³²⁾. In November 1946, when ABED underwent reorganization, there were three chapters: São Paulo, the Federal District, and Amazônia. The Amazônia Chapter encompassed the states of Amazonas, Pará, and Maranhão, as well as the northern territories of Amapá, Acre, and Guaporé (now Rondônia).

During the First National Nursing Congress, held in Rio de Janeiro on March 17, 1947, the first meeting of ABED's Deliberative Council took place, with the participation of Edith Fraenkel, Rosalý Taborda, and Tessie Williams⁽³²⁾. Williams served as a consultant to the Institute of Inter-American Affairs in partnership with SESP

and worked on the Programa Amazônia (Amazon Program) from 1944 to 1950. Her role was instrumental in the establishment of the chapter, and according to the *Annaes de Enfermagem* of 1948, she also served among its presidents⁽³²⁾.

Fraenkel was regarded as the first Brazilian nurse to complete her training with a scholarship from the Rockefeller Foundation to pursue advanced studies in the United States. She had been elected the first president of ABED in 1927 and, during the 1948–1950 term—when Taborda was organizing the Amazonas Chapter—Fraenkel served as national president⁽⁴⁶⁾.

Due to the growing number of nurses in the region and the creation of new schools, the Amazônia Chapter was eventually divided, giving rise to the following chapters: Amazonas and Pará (1950); Maranhão (1958); and the Federal Territory of Amapá (1961). The former Amazônia Chapter was renamed the Pará Chapter on November 27, 1950, with Leontina Gomes serving as its president, later succeeded by Cacilda Rosa Bertoni⁽³²⁾.

In a letter, dated October 9, 1950, Taborda reported to Fraenkel that she was accompanied by nurses Doralice Regina Ayres, Georgette Teixeira, and Maria da Conceição S. Cavalcanti with the goal of “setting up and organizing a School of Nursing”⁽⁴⁷⁾. She also mentioned other professionals working in different institutions across Manaus and said she would invite them to a meeting. During that meeting, she proposed inviting them to join ABED and suggested the creation of a regional chapter, as she stated:

When I receive the bylaws, I will hold a meeting at the School of Nursing to suggest to my colleagues the creation of the Amazonas Chapter, since we are very far from Belém and the nursing challenges here are so significant that they justify its creation^(43:1, our translation).

The strategies and tactics described by De Certeau can be directly related to Taborda’s actions in this context. She employed tactics to promote and prepare the national expansion of ABEn, using mechanisms that enabled her to better manage, anticipate, and guide the development of the nursing profession⁽¹²⁾. Moreover, by appropriating knowledge as a form of power, she transformed uncertainty into legible space and skillfully operated within the conditions she faced.

One example of this dynamism was her ability to seize the opportunity offered by SESP, which, through a broader institutional strategy, assigned her to assist in organizing the EEM. Within that context, Taborda strategically capitalized on this moment to structure the Amazonas Chapter, aligning her actions with the goals and expansion of ABEn. This approach demonstrated her ability to operate within the constraints of institutional strategy, creatively identifying openings and adapting to them to secure meaningful gains for the nursing profession⁽¹²⁾.

Just over 45 days later, she sent another letter to Fraenkel⁽⁴⁸⁾, formally stating that the Amazonas Chapter had been founded on November 27. She also listed the names of the first generation of ABEn/AM members: Rosaly Rodrigues Taborda, Sister Maria Laura Lima, Sister M. Anselma Voegeli, Perpétua Bugalho Péres, Lucymar Silva Lima, Ethel C. Hardy, Georgette de Jesus Teixeira, Maria da Conceição Siqueira Cavalcanti, and Doralice Regina Ayres (Figure 2).

Gradually, these tactics and strategies led to the definition of a distinct social and epistemic space for nursing in Amazonas. This invites us to consider ABEn/AM as a *dispositif*—that is, a framework through which Amazonian society began to perceive what it meant to be a nurse and what roles nurses could fulfill. Let us reflect on this historical development through Bourdieu’s lens:

Knowledge of the social world and, more precisely, the categories that make it possible, is the stake par excellence in the political struggle—a struggle both theoretical and practical—for the power to preserve or transform the social world by preserving or transforming the categories of perception of that world^(7:142, our translation).

Establishing a nursing association in Amazonas reflected the ability to make the profession and its practices publicly visible, explicit, and officially recognized—practices that had remained, until then, within the realm of individual experience. It represented what Bourdieu describes as “a considerable social power, the power to construct groups by constituting the common sense, the explicit consensus, of any given group”^(7:149, our translation). From the moment an entity was created to bring professionals together, unify voices, and discuss the challenges of the field, a struggle emerged to assert a social vision of the profession, in which the professionals themselves held power in proportion to the recognition they received from the group.

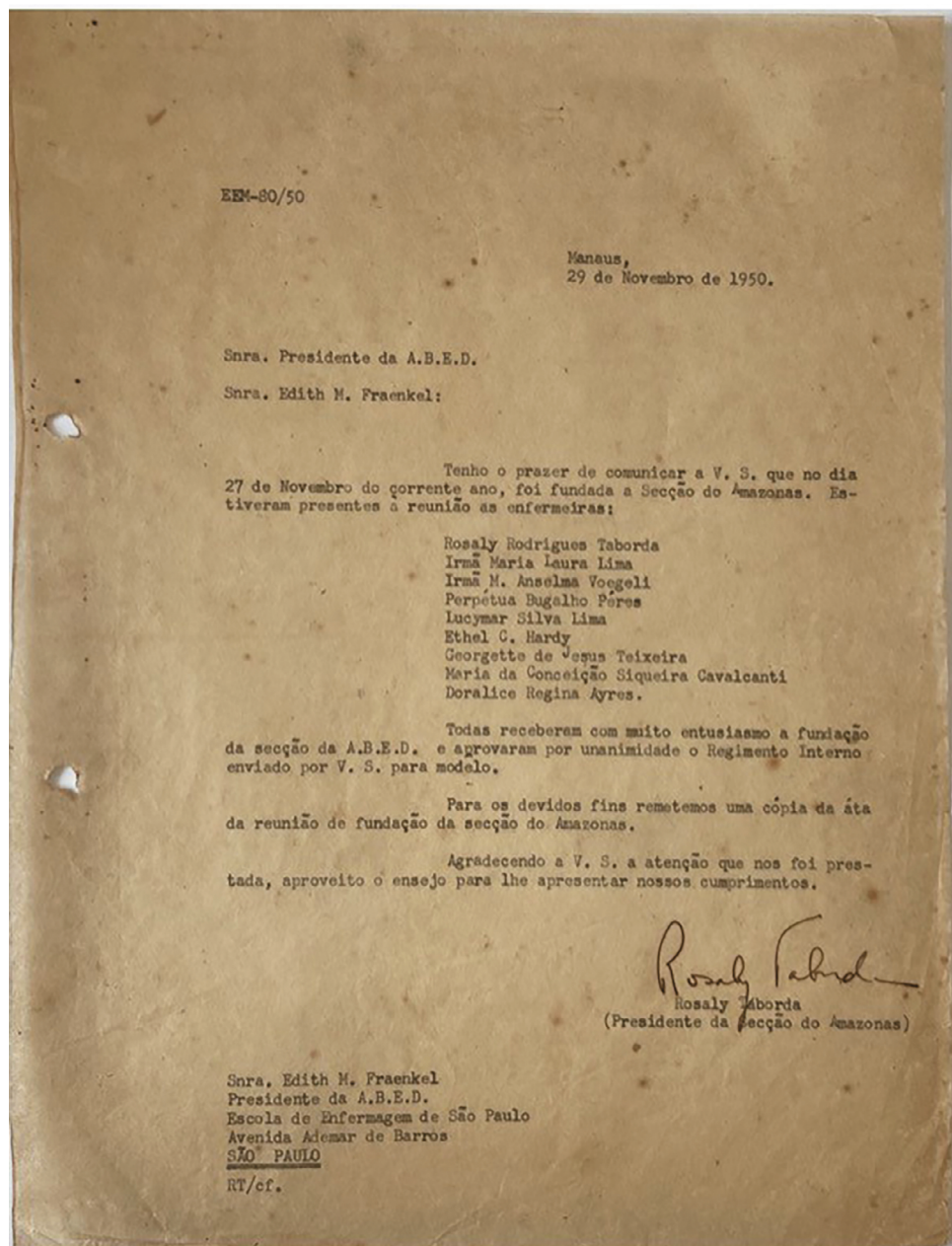


Figure 2 - Letter¹ from Rosaly Taborda to Edith Fraenkel reporting the founding of the *Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem – Seção Amazonas*⁽⁴⁸⁾.

Source: ABEn/AM archives.

- 1 Manaus, November 29, 1950; To the President of A.B.E.D. Mrs. Edith M. Fraenkel; I am pleased to inform you that on November 27 of this year, the Amazonas Chapter was founded. Present at the meeting were the following nurses: Rosaly Rodrigues Taborda; Sister Maria Laura Lima; Sister M. Anselma Voegeli; Perpétua Bugalho Péres; Lucymar Silva Lima; Ethel C. Hardy; Georgette de Jesus Teixeira; Maria da Conceição Siqueira Cavalcanti; Doralice Regina Ayres; All received the founding of the A.B.E.D. Amazonas Chapter with great enthusiasm and unanimously approved the Internal Regulations sent by you as a model.; For record purposes, we are sending a copy of the minutes from the founding meeting of the Amazonas Chapter.; Thanking you for your kind attention, I take this opportunity to extend our regards.; Rosaly Taborda; President of the Amazonas Chapter (Translated from Portuguese by the authors).

The first board of directors of ABEn/AM, as recorded in the Activity Report of the Amazonas Chapter for the period from November 1951 to May 1952, was composed of Rosaly Rodrigues Taborda (President), Ethel Hardy (Vice President), Doralice Regina Ayres (First Secretary), Maria da Conceição Cavalcanti (Second Secretary), and Georgette de Jesus Teixeira (Treasurer)⁽⁴⁹⁾.

The founding of ABEn/AM in 1950 can be understood as more than an act of professional organization. It represented both a symbolic and practical transformation in the nursing field in Manaus and contributed to reshaping the profession's social and cultural representations. Cultural practices, such as creating associations and institutions, are ways of constructing meaning that directly influence how society thinks, acts, and organizes itself⁽¹²⁾.

Moreover, it may be seen as a strategic effort to legitimize and consolidate nursing as a professional field in the Amazon region. Symbolic power lies in the ability to shape perceptions, validate practices, and legitimize positions⁽⁷⁾, and the creation of ABEn/AM was a clear example of this process.

Taborda and the other nurses mobilized the symbolic resources available to them, such as the cultural capital associated with the technical and scientific training offered by the Escola Anna Nery and the social capital embodied in their network of local nurses and institutions, to build legitimacy and prestige for the profession in Manaus. Therefore, beyond acknowledging the relevance of nursing in the region, the creation of the chapter conferred symbolic value on the practice, distancing it from its historical association with informal caregiving and aligning it with professional and scientific recognition—thus promoting distinction within the field^(7,12).

Taborda worked in Manaus until 1954, when she returned to southeastern Brazil and continued her nursing support work. She passed away on July 29, 1995, at the age of 91, at the Hospital de Clínicas Nossa Senhora da Conceição in Rio de Janeiro⁽³⁰⁾.

Despite this study's contributions to understanding the founding of ABEn/AM, certain limitations should be considered. The main difficulty involved accessing detailed information about Rosaly Taborda, a central figure in the chapter's creation. The scarcity of digitized records and the fragmentation of available sources limited the reconstruction of her trajectory and her role in the professionalization of nursing in the Amazon region.

Additionally, the research relied primarily on documents preserved in the association's archives and on searches conducted through the Brazilian Digital Newspaper Library. The absence of specific references to ABEn/AM and its founder in Manaus's printed newspapers posed challenges to contextualizing the organization's initial impact. Another relevant point concerns the nature of the documentary sources analyzed, which reflect perspectives shaped by their time and may carry inherent biases. As Le Goff⁽¹⁰⁾ noted, the historian works with traces of the past and must interpret them in light of their conditions of production and circulation. Therefore, the findings presented here should be understood within the limits imposed by the availability and perspectives of the sources examined.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study reaffirmed the importance of understanding the formation of ABEn/AM as a strategy of professional distinction within the sociopolitical context of the 1950s—a milestone in the organization and advancement of nursing in Northern Brazil. The documentary analysis highlighted the pioneering role of figures such as Rosaly Taborda, whose leadership and strategic vision contributed to the institutionalization and recognition of the profession in a context shaped by structural, cultural, and logistical challenges.

The founding of the association in 1950 represented more than a technical or administrative step forward. It was a symbolic act of legitimizing nursing as a scientific profession, essential to social development and the promotion of public health in Amazonas. The efforts of these pioneers led to significant progress in building a professional network engaged in improving working conditions and educational standards in the health sector.

Furthermore—and perhaps most relevant to the distinction of the professional category—ABEn/AM, by virtue of its nature as an association, brought together nurses who organized not for economic ends but to define, share, and transmit the cultural traits and characteristics of their profession. Through their collective practices and deliberative decision-making in meetings, the association may have contributed to outlining the symbolic boundaries of the nursing profession in Amazonas.

Although this study focused on the historical development of ABEn/AM, it also underscored the need for a sustained and critical perspective on the challenges still faced by nursing in the Amazon region. Recognition

and appreciation of the profession, in the face of persistent regional adversities, remain essential to the consolidation of public policies that meet the needs of the local population and acknowledge nursing's central role in health promotion.

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