

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear readers,

In April 2012 the first Portuguese-Brazilian Encounter on the History of Tropical Medicine was held at the Institute of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (Instituto de Higiene e Medicina Tropical, IHMT) in Lisbon under the sub-title of “Tropical medicine in national, colonial and post-colonial spaces (nineteenth and twentieth centuries).” It was timed to coincide with other events marking the 110th anniversary of the founding of the Lisbon School of Tropical Medicine (Escola de Medicina Tropical de Lisboa), precursor of the IHMT, as well as the 60th anniversary of the first National Tropical Medicine Congress held in the Portuguese capital in 1952.

The 2012 meeting of Brazilian and Portuguese researchers of the history of tropical medicine and related topics – the first of its kind – was organized with the decisive support of Paulo Ferrinho and Zulmira Hartz, director and vice-director of the Lisbon institute, and the crucial participation of Isabel Amaral, from the Department of Applied Social Sciences at NOVA (Universidade Nova de Lisboa).

A variety of sessions were held over the four days of event in which some key topics were discussed. In “Tropics and medicine”, the debates revolved around the meanings attributed to tropical medicine as an object of study, the representations of the “tropical” in different historical contexts and social formations, and the considerations and controversies spawned by the idea of tropicality in thinking about Portuguese African, Asian and Brazilian societies and nations. The sessions on “Medical knowledge and practice: plural histories and traditions” provided a forum for reflection about how knowledge of tropical medicine and related techniques has been deployed in the fight against disease in national and colonial lands in different historical contexts, including in interaction with native medicine and traditional knowledge, either by domination, exclusion or interchange, and the healing arts and welfare structures introduced to Portugal and its former colonies in Africa, Asia and America. The third arena for discussion at the first Portuguese-Brazilian Encounter on the History of Tropical Medicine was “Slave trade, migratory flows and the circulation of diseases” between Portugal and its former colonies in Africa, Asia and the Americas in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Meanwhile, “Actors, diseases and institutions” highlighted the trajectories and interactions of entities and individuals involved in tropical medicine, microbiology and public health in the above mentioned contexts. This included investigations of scientific expeditions and biological and biomedical research programs aimed at controlling diseases

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in different geographical regions. The final thematic area, “International health policies,” encompassed comparative histories, trajectories and interactions between institutions and other players involved in international initiatives by Portuguese-speaking countries in the fields of tropical medicine, microbiology and public health.

These topics were covered in unequal measure in the papers presented, and fewer than half have reached the pages of this edition of *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos*, although some have been published in other editions of the journal. This edition has, however, accepted submissions of papers that were not given at the event but whose subject matter is aligned with the theme of “Medicine in the context of Portugal, Africa and Brazil.”

There are also six thought-provoking articles in this edition that cover a diverse array of topics: social representations of the rural world in Europe and other regions; an overview of the anthropologies of medicine, suffering and biopower in the USA and Europe; two articles concerning Argentina: one on how sport for the physically disabled was viewed in the 1950s and 60s, and the other on cancer as a scientific and sanitation issue in the early 1900s; an article on the application of Darwinism to the realm of culture; and a paper, available on the Scielo portal since January, that now brings to printed pages the study of the socio-technical networks underpinning the Acupuncture League run by the Faculty of Medicine at the Univeristy of São Paulo (Faculdade de Medicina da Univerisdade de São Paulo).

This edition of HCS-Manguinhos also contains two reviews and one interview about Ernesto Laclau, the recently deceased Argentinean theorist who made unique contributions to discourse theory, including *On populist reason*, one of the books reviewed here. The interview is with Chantal Mouffe, Laclau’s partner, who also penned some influential works on the use of discourse theory in contemporary democracies. The second reviewed book is *O lugar da diferença no currículo de educação em direitos humanos*, by Aura Helena Ramos, educator who uses this theoretical framework to study the place of difference in human rights education, and who also takes part in the interview with Mouffe.

I conclude this letter with a tribute to two recently retired colleagues: Ruth Barbosa Martins, founder and long-standing editor of this journal, a highly capable journalist and a dear friend, who leaves in her wake a luminous trail of achievements and *camaraderie*; and Isnar Francisco de Paula, who, with a mild yet efficient working method, served as the journal’s secretary from its earliest days. Now at a safe distance from the “daily grind”, Isnar, Ruth and another dear coworker, Ângela Pôrto, can cheerfully salute other veterans, like the author of these lines, with the enticing promise of well-earned rest in the future.

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Science editor