

Lamp: sign invented for nursing

Lâmpada: Signo inventado para a enfermagem

Lampada: letrero enventado para la enfermería

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to reflect on the signs of the invented tradition of the nursing sign, known internationally as the lamp. **Content:** adopting the path of the theoretical essay for the sign invented for nursing, we discuss the aesthetics of the lamp, its functional morphology and lexicon (lantern, lucerne and lamp), for the purpose of its representativeness, considering the historical milestones related to it. **Final considerations:** understanding the implication of the sign as belonging for nursing students and professionals is to assume its direct analogy, by similarity and conventionality.

Descriptors: Nursing; History; History of Nursing.

RESUMO

Objetivo: refletir sobre os indícios da tradição inventada do signo da enfermagem, conhecido internacionalmente, como a lâmpada. **Conteúdo:** ao adotarmos o percurso do ensaio teórico para o signo inventado para a enfermagem, discutimos sobre a estética da lâmpada, sua morfologia funcional e léxico (lanterna, lucerna e lâmpada), para o efeito de sua representatividade, considerando os marcos históricos a ela relacionados. **Considerações finais:** entender a implicação do signo como pertencimento para os estudantes e profissionais da enfermagem é assumir sua analogia direta, por semelhança e convencional.

Descritores: Enfermagem; História; História da Enfermagem.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: reflexionar sobre los indicios de la tradición inventada del signo de enfermería, conocido internacionalmente como la lámpara. **Contenido:** adoptando el recorrido del ensayo teórico para el signo inventado para la enfermería, discutimos sobre la estética de la lámpara, su morfología funcional y el léxico (linterna, luz y lámpara) para efecto de su representatividad, considerando los marcos históricos relacionados a ella. **Consideraciones finales:** comprender la implicación del signo como pertenencia para los estudiantes y profesionales de enfermería es asumir su analogía directa, por semejanza y convencionalidad.

Descriptor: Enfermería; Historia; Historia de la Enfermería.

INTRODUCTION

The internationally known symbol of Nursing is the Greco-Roman type lamp¹, adopted since the 19th century. Historically, this comes from Florence Nightingale's participation in the Crimean War (1853-1856), although she uses a Turkish model lantern to monitor those affected with health problems.

It is worth clarifying which sign is the element of the message that the sender transmits to the receiver, as it represents a given thing. This implies understanding it to comprehend, interpret and analyze human beings' needs. Therefore, signs are classified according to their relationship: when direct, in the case of an index; and, by similarity, it is the symbol's icon and convention².

The sign classification triad is directly related to the referent, which is understood as the one that is in reality, but not concrete, and can be imaginary, fictitious, supernatural or even abstract. However, it should be noted that it is not the meaning understood as what we find in dictionaries. To this end, the index can be natural and/or artificial, for example, in the sentence *Where there is smoke there is fire*; the icon is visual, audible, gustatory, olfactory and/or tactile, and the symbol is the word, number, gestures, artifacts and/or marks. Therefore, they can exist combined or not based on the sign².

Articulating the sign of Nursing made us refer to the monument erected in honor of Florence Nightingale (1915) in *Waterloo Place*, London (England), five years after her death (1910). In one hand, the bronze statue bears the symbol: the Greco-Roman type lamp.

Over time, the symbol displayed by Florence for the movement she created began to be adopted by educational institutions in favor of the professionalization of Nursing around the world as Modern Nursing.

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Currently, the artifact stands out in several insignia and flags, among other symbolic representations, even in institutional rites in order to keep alive the memory of Florence Nightingale. In addition, the socio-cultural and regulatory institutions of the profession apply it. In Brazil, the Federal Nursing Council (*Conselho Federal de Enfermagem*, COFEN) and the Brazilian Nursing Association (*Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem*, ABEn) are cited as examples.

In summary, as we can identify, the sign adopted by Nursing refers to an invented tradition³, understood as part of the set of practices regulated by tacit rules of a ritualistic or symbolic nature for belonging to values and norms of behavior, by repetition in one of the forms of connection of the past with the present.

Therefore, the sign brings about several reflections due to its polysemy² on its morphology, mystical aspect and functionality. Therefore, our objective was to reflect on the hints of the tradition invented as a sign of Nursing, internationally known as the lamp.

Therefore, we justify the proposal as a theoretical essay⁴. This is understood as subjecting something to verification, although it is not definitive, that is, relative by its nature. This will point to deepening of the professional identity, as well as to motivation to open new investigative questions for the profession and, perhaps, in other knowledge fields.

Based on the above, we will present some texts from the national and international literature as a theoretical contribution to the Semiotics, Communication, Archeology, Nursing and History fields on the professional representation artifact for Nursing. These were selected through adherence to the reflection object, when they will be debated in favor of meeting the objective proposed.

CONTENT

The Turkish lantern is pointed out by the literature as articulated to Florence Nightingale's biography and to the context of the military conflict in Crimea. It is an artifact mentioned in several literatures¹⁻⁵, composed of metal and fabric, and which produces light by means of a candle.

It is on display at the *Florence Nightingale Museum* in London (England), as shown in films, documentaries and drama plays. However, in the same location, a monument was erected in honor of Florence in 1915, displaying another type of representation, the Greco-Roman type lamp and flame light⁶.

The change in the type of representation of the artifact draws the attention of those who know the honoree's career. This can be found in the documentary produced by the *British Broadcasting Corporation* (BBC)⁷ from London, in a rereading for children and youth, which, at the end, brings about the question about the sign displayed by Florence on the statue.

Thus, we searched for the hints⁸ left in other knowledge fields to recognize morphology of the artifact and its functionality. In this perspective, we find oil lamps or candles, many of which are locally produced.

A study⁹ carried out in the archaeological contexts of the *Bracara Augusta* city from Braga (Portugal), capital of the Roman province founded by Emperor Augustus (15 to 13 BC), brings up the artifacts under consideration. These were discovered in the excavations at *Albergue Distrital* (Braga, Portugal), where traces of a *domus*, also known in architecture as a skylight, were found, associated with a possible chandelier that corresponds to a shaft, with the functionality of keeping the candles or oil lamps hanging high for lighting, found in the public baths of *Alto da Cidade*, in Braga¹⁰.

Oil lamps are Roman objects that can be classified by series and then by types, such as: republican late, volute, disc, channel, mining, beak and glazed⁹. They are found in several types of contexts, the most common being thermal spaces. *Domus* and necropolises are common for domestic or votive use as lamps or candles fed with olive oil, for example, characteristic of the Roman and Suevo-Visigothic period¹⁰.

In Rome times, the artifact was one of the objects that the Romans presented to each other on New Year's Eve. They used to present friends and relatives with oil lamps as a symbol of good luck¹¹. This can be verified by habits and customs, which draws our attention to their representation.

Thinking about Rome and its domains made us go further back in time, more specifically to 168 BC. In short, when the Romans conquered Greece, which began a new period for Greek history, moving from ancient Greece to Roman Greece called Hellenism, a period when the Roman Empire appropriated this culture, giving rise to Greco-Roman one. One of the examples was the Greeks' lighting prototypes (oil lamps), especially for consumption and trade in the Iberian Peninsula communities¹².

Oil lamps and other artifacts from the Italian Peninsula (located between the Iberian and Balkan peninsulas, with 93% occupation of the Italian territory) were associated with use by the Army. This does not mean they were representative, but rather, by volume, consumed around the middle of the first century A.D.¹².

Therefore, through the Greco-Roman oil lamp and the Turkish lantern artifacts, known in the current voice as lamps, we believe we are facing an epistemic impasse. In this field, it is considered in a methodical and reflective study of knowledge in the sense of organization, formation, development and functioning with their respective derivations. Etymologically, the term is about discourse (*logos*) about science¹³. Thus, we understand that we are facing the epistemological surveillance category by the reflective attitude.

The term “lamp” is directly related to lighting. In ancient times, it was produced based on combustion, by creating fire to lighten dark spaces.

With the discovery of fire, for example, it was possible to make fire to cook, heat and illuminate. The Egyptians, Babylonians and Phoenicians used it for various purposes¹⁰. In lighting we can mention torches, even in Rome in public spaces, theaters, festivities and other enclosures, to the point that there are torch bearers as State servants, as well as oil lamps made of clay or metal¹⁰.

As artifacts, lanterns are as old as oil lamps, both intended for public and private lighting. They were found at secular and religious moments, when they were associated with various rites such as for the dead, considering the superstitions articulated to fire with the meaning of purification. In fact, it produces light for nights at night activities. Therefore, within the houses, they were used as candle holders or combustion substance and, when taken to the street, together, they were called lanterns¹⁴.

The term “lamp” was applied prior to the 19th century. In summary, in the Bible it is at least understood in two senses, namely: a lamp as a clay instrument to illuminate and in the sense of the permanence of the dynasty of David - royal house in the United Kingdom of Israel and after the reconfiguration, called the Kingdom of Judah (1030 BC to 607 BC) -, bearer of the restoration hope of the Yahweh people, with the connotation of ploughing, cultivating the land for the first time. Over time and theologically, it comes to be used with the connotation of clarifying beyond David's promises, especially for the annunciation of the coming of Jesus¹⁵.

In the search for distinction and/or development of the terms lamp, oil lamp and lantern, among other derivations, we understand it in the connotative/denotative sense because they are probabilities of uncertainties. On the other hand, artifacts are another problem when applying lexicons. This points to research in approaching the History of Concepts.

We highlight the History of Concepts, when it is necessary to trace the semantic structure, as well as Reinhart Koselleck (1923-2006) with the term “modernity”. The approach is a set that rescues the understanding of new possibilities in relation to nature and history, as well as time in transformation¹⁶.

Articulating the representation of the sign is to face certain epistemic impasse. Whatever it is, the fire flame is directly related to the index² by the effect it produces: lighting. Thinking about it brings us to the work entitled *Por detrás da chama da lâmpada - a identidade social do enfermeiro* (Behind the lamp flame - Nurses' social identity)¹⁷.

In its conclusion, the work¹⁷ records that the motivational question for research was due to the difficulties encountered by “uprooted, loose and lost” professionals in search of their professional identity. This is considered as a mostly female profession, with roots in the private environment (home) towards the public one (hospital) when, due to their social condition, women took care of the sick until they followed formal education.

We emphasize that we understand the expression “formal education” when there is *habitus* training¹⁸. This acts as a magical effect incorporated by social agents, individually and/or in groups, when it is inculcated in their applied forms of gestures, behaviors and linguistic repertoire towards distinction. Therefore, applied to this reflection, it is one of the strategies to reassert who is who in health institutions, in favor of investing in appreciation in the labor market and socially.

When re-reading the title of the work *Behind the lamp flame*, we identified that the author needed to highlight the symbol, opting for the direct relationship with the referent of the sign². This drew our attention when the sign-symbol was replaced by its index sign as representation.

The flame as a product of the fire referred us to several aspects. Among them, the one that illuminates in the darkness, the one that transforms and renews. Whatever it is, its articulation takes place in the path of Nursing as a significant representation in the professional field.

By bringing the flame from the lamp, the work¹⁷ signals us that, for it to remain lit, its power is necessary. In the material aspect, we can mention the chemical and sociocultural elements, as well as the ethical and moral values in the

Nursing professional practice. Therefore, it is the sign index, as it is a primordial element in the construction of professional identity.

In fact, lamps, lanterns, oil lamps and their derivatives are signs invented for Nursing. In this perspective of invented traditions³, we can correlate to that of a flag, for example, when they unite groups with their symbolologies. This implies understanding its functionality, which has the effect of belonging.

Here, belonging is understood as fitting in, from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics. This means that it belongs to the work, to history and to language¹⁹. Thus, it is one of the ways of establishing a connection that occurs through the sign in reflection, when the group identifies with its representation.

Conducting the reflection, from this perspective, is to approach archesimilarity²⁰. This is the original likeness of itself that does not provide the replica of a reality, but the testimony of another place, that is, where it comes from. This means that whether it is a lantern, oil lamp, Turkish or Greco-Roman type lamp, it is a support – sign – that produces light and has a direct relationship – index – when witnessing functionality in Nursing historiography.

The representation of the artifact as a Nursing sign consists of some aspects. Therefore, we appropriate when establishing the links, namely: 1) “it is certain dependence of the visible in relation to the word”; 2) it is the “relationship between knowing and not knowing, between acting and suffering”; and 3) “a representative obligation, understood as the invention of actions to regulate reality”^{20:123-124}.

This means that representativeness of the lantern, oil lamp and/or lamp as a sign produces the effect of belonging in Nursing professionals, when the fire flame – index – is present²¹. Its representation brings the memory of its predecessor in the Crimean War (1853-1856), as well as its successors in favor of secular and professional Nursing.

In view of the above, the sign in institutional rites is to bring the memory of the past, to know where we came from and where we want to go, by the index that illuminates the future of the profession's path. This points us to its direct relationship as an integral component of the construction of professional identity.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We reflected on the hints of the invented tradition of the sign of Nursing, internationally known as the lamp. This was relativized, considering the construction in the past, through the sign, as one of the traditions invented for Nursing. Therefore, it produces a belonging effect, when applied in rites and displayed in the bodies of students and professionals, for example, through its direct relationship, by similarity and convention.

Finally, even in view of the content presented, we need to understand the change that took place from the Turkish to the Greco-Roman artifacts, which we left as a gap. On the other hand, we contribute with this reflection to strengthen the professional identity, reduce theorizing insufficiencies and open investigative perspectives in favor of building the historiography of the profession.

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