

HISTORY OF NOURISHMENT IN SOUTHERN EUROPE: THE CASE OF PRISONERS IN LOULÉ (19TH CENTURY)

Luísa Fernanda Guerreiro Martins¹

ABSTRACT

In this paper we use data collected from historical documentation to contribute to a better understanding of the quality of nourishment in southern Europe, in particular, in the Portuguese Algarve. We analyse the typology of the food provided to the prisoners, considering that strong budget constraints in prisons. Also, a trial to understand whether this typology corresponds to an appropriate example of the Mediterranean Diet framework or not.

In general terms, the way how people living in the ancient town of Loulé were nourished, during the last years of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th century, is known due to the studies developed by hygienist Geraldino Brites in 1911 and published in 1914. But we did not know what prisoners in jail used to eat daily, or who was responsible for their nourishment, until we read the documentary collection concerning the prison of Loulé which is deposited in the Municipal Archive of Loulé.

Because studies providing information on the system prevailing in prisons are rare, our study offers precious information related to dietary priorities and food awareness related nourishment of the prisoners, or situations of strong budgetary restrictions.

Keywords: Prisoners; Food; History; Nourishment; Hygienist; Mediterranean Influence.

JEL Classification: N43

1. INTRODUCTION

For this study, we resorted to a documentary collection found in the Municipal Archive of Loulé, whose content reveals the administrative procedures followed in managing the prison and supporting the prisoners. From that collection stands out the text *Instruções para a Comissão encarregada da polícia da cadeia e sustentação dos presos pobres no Districto Administrativo de Faro*, dated 1840². Additionally, we used the public calls for tenders for the provision of food to be consumed by the prisoners of Loulé³.

We also resorted to a published source: the book by Geraldino Brites⁴ (1914) called *Febres Infecciosas, Notas sobre o Concelho de Loulé*⁵, which this doctor, who had recently graduated, wrote while he was working in Loulé, from 1908 to 1910 (15 months approximately). This long and thorough piece of work, completed in 1911 and published in 1914, allowed us to

¹ Member of Cidehus, University of Évora; Collaborates with DIAITA, University of Coimbra; Higher Technician at the Loulé City Hall; (UID/HIS/00057/2013; POCI-01-0145-FEDER-007702; Centro Interdisciplinar de História, Culturas e Sociedades da Universidade de Évora) (lmartins032@gmail.com)

² PT-AMLLE-AL-ACLLE-D-A-2-1.

³ PT-AMLLE-AL-ACLLE-D-A-2-5-1, 1883-1884; PT-AMLLE-AL-ACLLE-D-A-2-7, 1888; PT-AMLLE-AL-ACLLE-D-A-2-9, 1896; PT-AMLLE-AL-ACLLE-D-A-2-10-m0039 e m0044, 1897; PT-AMLLE-AL-ACLLE-D-A-2-11, 1899; PT-AMLLE-AL-ACLLE-D-A-2-12, 1908; PT-AMLLE-AL-ACLLE-D-A-2-9, PT-AMLLE-AL-ACLLE-D-A-2-13, 1929-1951.

⁴ Born in Porto (1882), he died in Lisbon (1941); hygienist doctor, scientist and university professor. His career started in Loulé, where he was stationed as a “party doctor”, serving the Municipality. In this (then) town, he collected sufficient information to draw up a detailed report on living standards and the quality of the health, nourishment and information of the poorer inhabitants, at a time when various political upheavals did nothing to help their well-being or to heal the political wounds of those troubled times.

⁵ Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra.

compare the quality of the nourishment of Loulé's prisoners with the day-to-day feeding patterns and the meals of the (then) town's poorer population who, to judge from the work of this hygienist and researcher, presented a global picture of great social and economic deprivation.

Figure 1. Front page of the 1st edition, dated 1914, of the work *Febres Infecciosas, Notas sobre o concelho de Loulé*, Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, which helped us in our comparative study with the formulas of prisoners' nourishment. The work, in two parts, comprises a total of 432 pages.



Source: Geraldino Brites (1914), *Febres Infecciosas, Notas sobre o Concelho de Loulé*, Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra.

Figure 2. Geraldino Brites, doctor and hygienist, b. Porto, 1882; d. Lisbon, 1941. Reproduction of a photograph dated 1907, one year before the doctor's assignment to the municipality of Loulé.



Source: Fanny Andrée Font Xavier da Cunha, 1979, *Geraldino Brites, 1882-1941: biobibliografia*, Coimbra: Coimbra Editora⁶

The municipality of Loulé is located in the central territory of Algarve, spreading north from the coast to the mountains, where it finds the frontier with Alentejo. This is, broadly speaking, the same delimitation which has come down to us, unaltered, from medieval times. Flanked by the Sotavento ("lee side") and the Barlavento ("windward side") regions, this territory has sustained, since its early days and certainly from the Islamic Middle Ages onwards, an economic, social, and political dynamism which enabled the ancient town of Loulé to match the cities of Faro and Tavira. Throughout the 20th century, up until the 1980's, the economy of its urban space was based on the arts and crafts. Earlier on, in the transition from the 19th to the 20th century, the municipality went through a period of economic and political fragility, just like other parts of the country. This was reflected in the

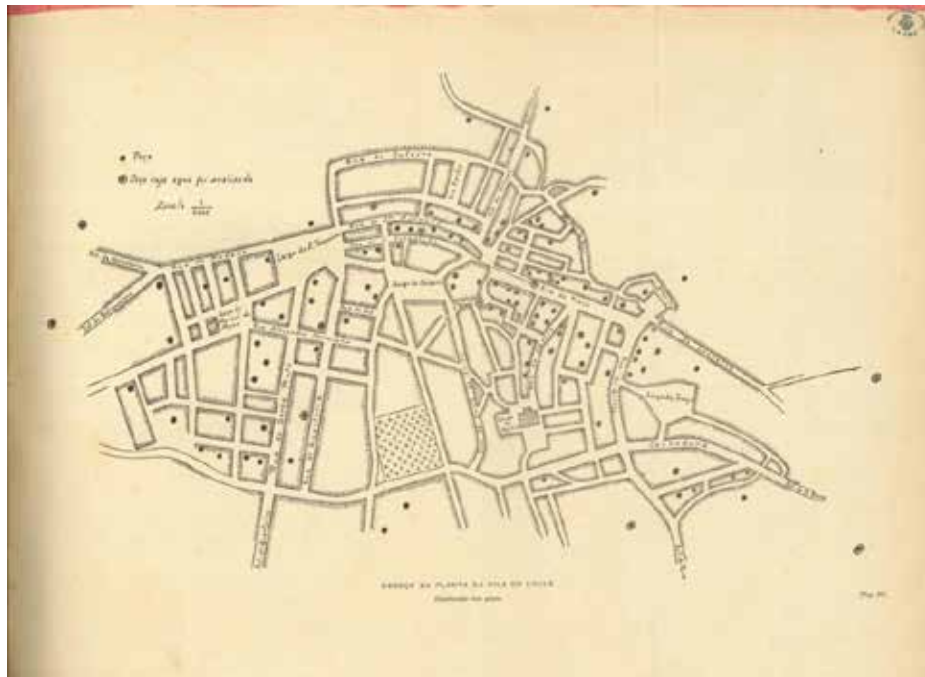
⁶ We thank Professor Carlos Fiolhais, from Coimbra University, for the pictures and bibliographical data sent to us.

everyday lives of its population, especially in times of poverty and social tensions, resulting in many people finding themselves in prison cells.

The town itself, situated at the centre of the municipality, was a meeting point for people and goods, with all the advantages and disadvantages that social relations – with varying degrees of tension and socio-political and economic differentiation – could generate. In the period considered, the town's main spaces were the streets inside the medieval walls (where craftsmen prevailed), the *alcaidaria* (residence of the military governor) and the mother church; and in addition, outside the walls, the municipal market, the Square Street (“Rua da Praça”), and the Town Hall.

The plan of the town of Loulé published by the doctor and hygienist Geraldino Brites, drawn sometime before 1910, shows us the Square Street, closed to the north and south, enabling it to perform its role as a meeting space for the population.

Figure 3. Plan of the town of Loulé, showing the “Rua da Cadeia” (“Jail Street”)



Source: Geraldino Brites (1914), *Febres Infecciosas, Notas sobre o Concelho de Loulé*, Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra.

This plan shows the Jail Street – “Rua da Cadeia” – signalling the existence of a prison on that street which, according to documentation, remained functional up until 1944⁷. Considering how close in time the documents we analysed (late 19th century) are to the days when this plan was made⁸ (early 20th century), it seems likely that the prison we are referring to was the one located on the street that bore its name. Nevertheless, the documents we have read leave us in some doubt as to the exact location of the jail they mention⁹, although

⁷ In one of his visits to Loulé as the Minister of Public Works, on June 23rd 1942, Duarte Pacheco covered several worksites, including the “new jail” (“cadeia nova”), on the spot occupied today by the post of the Guarda Nacional Republicana (National Police). This might point to the end of this “civil jail” (“cadeia civil”) mentioned in documents.

⁸ Geraldino Brites wrote his book before 05.10.1910.

⁹ 1899, Administration of the Loulé Municipality, Auto de arrematação do rancho para os presos da cadeia civil desta vila, pelo tempo de 9 mezes a contar do 1º de outubro de 1899 e termina em 20 de junho de 1900. The 1899 document states: “... I hereby declare that, on the 5th day of the coming month of November, at eleven in the morning, there will be an auction for the provision of the ranch to the prisoners of this town’s jail, opposite the municipal administration, on the town square...”. The wording of the tender notice may lead us to error, or perhaps it does mean that a jail existed opposite the Town Hall. Alternatively, we can consider that it is the auction that will take place in front of the Town Hall, on the Square Street. Fátima Botão explains, in addition, that there was a prison near the castle’s militay garrison, functioning up until 1493, the year in which king João II ordered a new jail to be built. The scaffold’s condition was terrible, and prisoners frequently escaped although they were bound in chains and iron collars. Maria de Fátima Botão (2009), *A construção de uma identidade urbana no Algarve medieval*. Casal de Cambra: Caleidoscópio, p.140.

it is more plausible to suppose that we are dealing with incorrect sentence construction. The author meant to say that the public auction would be held outside the Town Hall building, on Rua da Praça (just like nowadays), but he failed to use commas to separate sentences; and this could lead us to think that the jail was located on that street, a space of gathering for the population of Loulé. That square has now become a wide street. We can also hypothesize that some of the city services would work just down the street from the Chain, just in front of the dungeons. Fátima Botão (2009: 140) explains, in addition, that there was a prison near the castle's military garrison, functioning up until 1493, the year in which king João II ordered a new jail to be built. The scaffold's condition was terrible, and prisoners frequently escaped although they were bound in chains and iron collars.

2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

This study is aimed at understanding the way in which the local administration, in charge of managing the civil jail, and hence of taking care of its prisoners, ensured their nourishment and, in addition, which food typology was applied¹⁰. We will not dwell here on the hygiene and security conditions under which the Loulé inmates lived. That subject is approached by Aurízia Anica (2005) whose work gives us a picture of the everyday life of prisoners in the Algarve region.

We utilise the model proposed by Policarpo Lopes (2006: 78), which rests on “the pillars of the alimentary triangle: the subject of the alimentary act, the food consumed and the situation in which they are inscribed”. It is known that every human subject must take food, regardless of their origin and social, economic, cultural, and political condition. But it is equally true that the choice of foods composing a group's diet depends on the culture, fads, traditions, and the social, economic, political, and religious conditions affecting each individual and his/her surrounding circumstances, as illustrated by these prisoners, circumscribed to their space and relying on others to provide for their nourishment. Finally, we know that the “situation” of the alimentary act is dependent, aside from the economic context within the family, on the social context of integration in the community, in this case the prison environment.

The data collected allow us to organize the documentation under three formats:

1st format – defining the written weekly forms of meals presented by the candidates to food provision, which we have been able to reconstruct for the years 1888, 1896, 1897 and 1899.

2nd format – recording the frequency with which foods are mentioned in the documentation.

3rd format – comparing the prisoners' nourishment to the alimentary context of the municipality's population at the end of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century (Brites, 1914).

The first documentary collection we present defines the creation, for each municipality in the Algarve, of a commission headed by the Mayor, which should appoint two citizens of known reputability. This team would then be approved by the General Administrator of the District, and its functions emphasised the inspection and safeguarding of the respect due to the prisoners, who “do not lose their human nature or their right to public commiseration”¹¹. The “prison houses” and the “dungeons”¹² should be kept tidy, clothes should be hanged to dry, sand should be spread on the floors to prevent filth accumulation which attracted

¹⁰ According to Lisa Cartaxo, a nutritionist at the Centro de Saúde de Loulé, in her report, commissioned by us, analysing the alimentary formulas of the meals provided to the prisoners of Loulé: “nourishment is a key factor in health and well-being. Food gives the organism the nutrients that are needed to ensure its proper functioning. Thus, nourishment should be complete and varied, so as to satisfy nutritional and energetical requirements. By “healthy nourishment” we mean one which includes a daily provision of vegetables and fruit, whole or little refined cereals, legumes and high-protein foods, such as meat, fish, eggs and dairy. Good quality fat should be included, as well as water throughout the day”.

¹¹ PT-AMLLE-AL-ACLE-D-A-2-1, fl.02.

¹² Idem, fl.2v.

insects and provoked infections. Cleaning procedures should be carried out every day, and they should be inspected by the man in charge of daily visits – one of the citizens picked for the Commission. It was his responsibility, too, to register the poorer prisoners in a book, so that their food could be guaranteed every day – through a money subsidy which the General Administration would hand, at regular intervals, to each poor prisoner¹³. He would also have to watch, periodically, the preparation, the distribution, and the quantity and quality of the foods delivered. The nourishment of these prisoners relied on the services of the charity Santa Casa de Misericórdia to ensure “sane and abundant foods”¹⁴, consisting of:

- One loaf of bread weighing 1½ pounds (“1 ½ arrátel”) ¹⁵;
- One plate of vegetables;
- Rice;
- Meat or fish, with “adequate seasonings”.

On great occasions – for political or religious reasons – the quantity and quality of the meals had to be increased.

On the nominal lists¹⁶ analysed by us, we found no data on the products and quantities furnished to the prisoners, aside from the mention of the oil and water which were added to what was already determined, being included in the roll of expenses. These lists do not help us discover which foods were offered, and in what quantities. However, they point already to a concern regarding the prisoners’ survival: while some of them were lucky enough to be fed by their families, others were left totally dependent on the compassion of the town’s inhabitants and on the municipal services. In fact, until the 1840’s, “the lack of a minimum food provision for survival, funded by the State, was repeatedly signalled... as a problem that must be solved” (Anica, 2005: 398). The administrator of the Loulé municipality himself, Joaquim Palermo de Aragão Valadares, explained to the governor of the Faro district the difficulties faced by prisoners in securing their survival. These resulted in the sad vision of hands asking for alms and food on the street. As a result, no one circulated on the prison street, to avoid hearing their laments (Anica, 2005: 398). The administrator called attention, in addition, to the poor nourishment, based on the food provided at noon, which comprised “one pint of vegetables and a loaf” (Anica, 2005: 398). Let us see what the provisions were like, at end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries.

3. THE FORMULAS OF THE RATIONS GIVEN TO PRISONERS

For the year 1888, we managed to collect information on the menus predefined for daily meals¹⁷. We think this was the year in which prisoners began to receive two rations a day¹⁸.

The tender procedure concerning the period from March 1st to June 30th was won by António da Costa Mealha¹⁹, who submitted proposals for the day’s first and second rations – lunch and dinner. No other contestant came forward, and he set the price at 92 réis per meal. Let us look at the proposed formula:

¹³ The General Administration allowed the Commission a monthly amount, in proportion to the number of poor inmates.

¹⁴ PT-AMLLE-AL-ACLE-D-A-2-1, fl.3v.

¹⁵ 1 arrátel was, at the time, equivalent to 459g, implying in this case a 688,50g loaf – a little over half a kilogram.

¹⁶ PT-AMLLE-AL-ACLE-D-A-2-5-1, 1883-1884.

¹⁷ PT-AMLLE-AL-ACLE-D-A-2-7, 1888.

¹⁸ AMLLE, Municipal Administrator’s Fund, Correspondência Expedida, SR1, Book 25, note nº 96, dated 03.02.1888.

¹⁹ Local trader, a single man, brother of the Mayor José da Costa Mealha, himself a trader.

Table 1. Formulas and Rations - 1888

Formulas	Days of the week	Foodstuffs	Quantities	Obs.
1 st formula	Sundays and Wednesdays	Chickpeas or Beans	2dl.	
		Rice	200g.	
		Meat	250g.	
		Lard	30g.	
2 nd formula	Thursdays	Chickpeas or Beans	2dl.	
		Potatoes	400g.	
		Meat	250g.	
		Lard	30g.	
3 rd formula	Fridays and Saturdays	Baked or Boiled Fish	400g.	
		Potatoes	300g.	
		Oil and Vinegar	as needed	
4 th formula	Mondays and Tuesdays	Chickpeas or Beans	2dl.	Seasoned with lard
		Rice	200g.	
		Lard	60g.	
		Potatoes	300g.	

Source: Own Elaboration. The Formulas and the Rations proposed by the only contest.

This 1888 form shows us the prevalence of chickpeas, rice, and meat, seasoned with lard. Food variety is limited, and we notice both the absence of fruit and vegetables and the great quantities of the same foodstuffs, even though they were meant for two meals.

In the year 1896, the tender procedure launched was to be valid for a one-year period, from July 1st, 1896 to June 30th, 1897. The amount established for awarding the tender was 170 réis, for two meals a day. The only bidder who showed up was the same as in previous years: António da Costa Mealha, who committed himself, for the price of 170 réis, to abide by the conditions stated on the table presented by the tender. His guarantor was José Fernandes Guerreiro, a married man, proprietor, and businessman. Here are the proposed meal formulas²⁰:

Table 2. Formulas and Rations - 1896

Formulas	Days of the week	Foodstuffs	Quantities	Obs.
1 st formula	Sundays, lunch ration	Fish per ration	250g.	Fish would be boiled or baked with oil and vinegar (as needed); in the absence of “peixe de peso” (fish to be cut and weighed), no less than 20 réis per person worth of “peixe de conto” (smaller fish) should be provided; if the later was also unavailable, boiled codfish should be served - with oil and vinegar as needed. To be delivered at 9 a.m. If the foodstuffs mentioned were not available, bread “prepared in a broth seasoned with lard or milk” should be supplied.
		Or Codfish	125g.	

²⁰ PT-AMLLE-AL-ACLE-D-A-2-9, m0034, 1896.

2 nd formula	Sundays, dinner ration	Chickpeas or Beans	2dl.	The dinner ration should be supplied at 3 p.m.
		Rice	100g.	
		Meat	200g.	
		Lard	30g.	
3 rd formula	Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays	Chickpeas or Beans	2dl.	
		Rice	100g.	
		Fat, Lard	30g.	
		Potatoes	300g.	
4 th formula	Wednesdays	Chickpeas or Beans	2dl.	
		Pasta	100g.	
		Lard	30g.	
5 th formula	Fridays and Saturdays	Chickpeas or Beans	2dl.	Seasoned with olive oil.
		Potatoes	300g.	
		Rice	100g.	
	Every day	White Bread ²¹	500g.	For each prisoner; when in season, the ration could include green or purple cabbage, broad beans, peas, etc.

Source: Own Elaboration. The meal formulas were similar.

The 1896 form shows a predominance of beans or chickpeas, rice, lard and potatoes. This is not so different from the 1888. However, the 6th clause in the conditions imposed on the bidder contains a note to the effect that the dinner ration might include green or purple cabbage, broad beans, or peas, in their respective seasons.

For the year 1897²², the meal formulas are again similar. Our attention was drawn to a note demanding that the formulas be prepared following the procedures of the culinary arts, expressly forbidding “that they lack the respective seasonings”:

Table 3. Formulas and Rations - 1897

Formulas	Days of the week	Foodstuffs	Quantities	Obs.
1 st formula	Lunch ration	Fresh Fish	200g.	Fish lightly preserved in salt is allowed, in the absence of fresh fish, tuna or codfish.
		Codfish or Tuna	100g.	
		Potatoes	250g.	
2 nd formula	Ration for dinner, Christmas Day, New Year, Quinquagesima, Shrovetide, and Easter	Broth with Season's Vegetables	400g.	
		Rice	100g.	
		Chickpeas	1dl.	
		Meat	250g.	
		Ham, as needed, for seasoning		

²¹ White bread was the most expensive one, being preferred by richer people. Curiously enough, it was included in the prisoners' menu.

²² PT-AMLE-AL-ACLE-D-A-2-10-m0039 e m0044, 1897.

3 rd formula	Sundays	Broth with season's vegetables	400g.	
		Rice	100g.	
		Meat	250g.	
		Ham, for seasoning		
4 th formula	Mondays and Tuesdays	Chickpeas		
		Rice		
		Ham, For Seasoning		
5 th formula	Wednesdays and Thursdays	Beans	2dl.	Boiled with slices of pumpkin, if available for sale
		Potatoes	300g.	
		Ham Or Fat, For Seasoning		
6 th formula	Fridays	Codfish	125g.	Boiled with meat and seasoned with olive oil
		Potatoes	300g.	
7 th formula	Saturdays	Codfish	100g.	
		Rice	100g.	

Source: Own Elaboration. The meal formulas still remain similar.

The 1899²³ meal formula showed little variation from the 1897 one. The winner was obliged to provide water both for drinking and for washing, at 7 in the morning, in addition to a half-kilogram loaf. He would also have to furnish lunch at 9 o'clock and dinner at 3 in the afternoon. The price per day was set at 170 réis for each prisoner's ration.

Table 4. Formulas and Rations – 1899 (1st proposal)

Formulas	Days of the week	Foodstuffs	Quantities	Obs.
1 st formula	Lunch ration	Fresh Fish	250g.	Codfish or tuna are allowed, in the absence of fresh fish
		Codfish or Tuna	100g.	
2 nd formula	Dinner ration	Pasta Soup (on the side)	100g.	
		Season's Vegetables	300g.	
		Potatoes	200g.	
		Meat	250g.	
		Lard, for seasoning	as needed	
3 rd formula ²⁴		Vegetable Soup (on the side)	400g.	Boiled with slices of pumpkin or frade (long, orange-coloured pumpkin) if available for sale; if not, potatoes
		Chickpeas	1dl.	
		Meat	250g.	
		Lard, for seasoning	as needed	
		Potatoes	20g.	
4 th formula		Chickpeas	2dl.	
		Rice	100g.	
		Lard, for seasoning	as needed	
5 th formula		Beans	2dl.	Boiled with slices of pumpkin, if available for sale, and seasoned with lard
		Potatoes	300g.	

²³ PT-AMLE-AL-ACLE-D-A-2-11,1899.

²⁴ This formula, like the ones that follow, does not indicate the days of the week.

6 th formula		Codfish	125g.	Boiled with meat and seasoned with olive oil
		Potatoes	300g.	
7 th formula		Codfish	100g.	These formulas must be prepared following the precepts of the culinary arts. Under no circumstance may they go without their proper seasonings.
		Rice	100g.	

Source: Own Elaboration. This meal formula shows a little variation.

Another proposal which came up in 1899 was concerned with furnishing rations for a new part of the year. It went like this:

Table 5. Formulas and Rations – 1899 (2nd proposal)

Formulas	Days of the week	Foodstuffs	Quantities	Obs.
1 st formula	Lunch ration	Fresh Fish	250g.	Fish lightly preserved in salt is allowed, in the absence of fresh fish, tuna or codfish.
		Codfish or Tuna	100g.	
		Potatoes	50g.	
2 nd formula	Christmas Day, New Year, Quinquagesima, Shrovetide, and Easter Dinner ration	Pasta Soup (on the side)	100g.	In season
		Vegetables	300g.	
		Potatoes	200g.	
		Meat	250g.	
		Lard, for seasoning		
3 rd formula	Sundays	Vegetable Soup	400g.	Boiled with slices of pumpkin or frade (200g.), when available for sale, if there are no potatoes
		Chickpeas	1dl.	
		Meat	250g.	
		Lard, for seasoning		
4 th formula	Mondays and Tuesdays	Chickpeas	2dl.	
		Rice	100g.	
		Lard, for seasoning		
5 th formula	Wednesdays and Thursdays	Beans	20dl.	Boiled with slices of pumpkin, if available for sale, and seasoned with lard
		Potatoes	300g.	
6 th formula	Fridays	Codfish	125g.	Boiled with cabbage and seasoned with oil
		Potatoes	300g.	
7 th formula	Saturdays	Codfish	100g.	
		Rice	100g.	

Source: Own Elaboration. This meal formula shows a second proposal for the same year.

For the years 1908 and 1909²⁵, the structure of the tenders for ration provision was similar to the ones used in earlier years. The only variation had to do with the price per

²⁵ PT-AMLLE-AL-ACLE-D-A-2-12, 1908.

ration, now set at 150 *réis*²⁶. The conditions imposed on the bidders were the same as those in previous tenders. When the meals were inspected by the Municipal Administrator or some other official and found unsuitable, they should be sent back to the provider, while the respective amount would be forwarded to the National Treasury. If the prisoners entered the jail after meal time, they should be given a broth of bread seasoned with lard, accompanied by cabbages, broad beans, peas and others like foods.

Table 6. Formulas and Rations – 1908

Formulas	Days of the week	Foodstuffs	Quantities	Obs.
Lunch ration Single formula		Fresh fish, by weight	200g.	Boiled or baked, with oil and vinegar as needed
		“Peixe de Conto” – smaller fish	200g.	Dose of “peixe de conto” could not weigh less than 200g.
		Codfish or Tuna	100g.	In the absence of fish, salted tuna or codfish
		Potatoes	150g.	Fish of the same type or cost may not be supplied more than two days in a row.
Dinner ration 1 st formula	Christmas Day, New Year, Quinquagesima, Shrovetide, and Easter	Chickpeas	1dl.	
		Rice	150g.	
		Beef	200g.	
		Lard	50g.	
2 nd formula	Sundays	Chickpeas	2dl.	
		Rice	125g.	
		Beef	200g.	
		Potatoes	150g.	
		Lard	20g.	
3 rd formula	Mondays and Wednesdays	Red Beans	2dl.	
		Rice	100g.	
		Potatoes	150g.	
		Lard, for seasoning		
4 th formula	Tuesdays and Thursdays	Chickpeas	2dl.	
		Potatoes	100g.	
		Noodles	50g.	
		Lard, for seasoning	20g.	
5 th formula	Fridays and Saturdays	Chickpeas or Beans	2dl.	Seasoned with olive oil
		Potatoes	150g.	
		Rice	100g.	

Source: Own Elaboration. The structure of the proposals remains; only the prices vary.

Considering that the meal formulas were monotonous, repetitive, and low in fruit and horticultural products, lacking the vitamins and mineral salts needed by the organism, we sought the word of a nutritionist²⁷. We handed her the tables shown above so that, through her expert analysis, we could confirm our idea that the nourishment of the Loulé prisoners

²⁶ Idem, fl.2.

²⁷ Lisa Cartaxo. Analysis requested by us and kindly granted by the nutritionist on the 1st of July, 2017.

was too high in carbohydrates, protein and fat, lacking all other components. Her verdict was the following:

“Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the menus presented some difficulties, since information on food preparation, use of fat, or specific data on the ingredients used was scarce or even non-existent, which made the said analysis more difficult to carry out. Another difficulty lies in the fact that the quantities of fish and meat presented do not make clear whether they refer to gross or edible weight, which affects the final caloric and nutritional values.”

In addition, the nutritionist presented her analysis of the meals, looking to understand whether they actually satisfied the needs of the inmates. Thus, she resorted to the Table of Composition of (Portuguese) Foods to calculate each meal's caloric value and its weight in protein, fat and carbohydrates. Let us look at the results of this study:

“To check whether these nutrients were adequate for the prison population, we used as reference an adult male, 1,75m tall and weighing 70kg, with low levels of physical activity. For an adult male with the said height and weight, around 2100kcal a day, on average, are needed to ensure proper functioning of the organism, requiring approximately 85g in protein, 70g in lipids and 280g in carbohydrates. The table below shows the caloric and nutritional values of some of the meals provided, and also those of the bread (500g) furnished daily.

Table 7. Analysis of Proposals

Meal	Kcal	Protein (g)	Lipids (g)	Carbo-hydrates (g)
1. Beans with meat, lard and rice	1608	106	43,5	192
2. Beans with meat, lard and potatoes	1512	104	61	131
3. Baked or boiled fish with potatoes	791	85,4	17,6	71
4. Beans with potatoes and ham as needed	324	26,6	15,8	107,3
5. Vegetable soup, Chickpeas with meat and potatoes	1125	89,8	49,7	78
Bread (500g)	1350	45	7	270

Source: Lisa Cartaxo: The nutritionist analysed the meals based on the Table of Composition of Food.

According to this table, meals 1 and 2 ensure the protein requirements and, adding 500g of bread, caloric needs are met and even surpassed. The most unbalanced meal is meal number 4, for its lack of any protein food – lard is present, but only as seasoning. Regarding vitamins and mineral salts, in principle, the meals on offer do not guarantee the daily requirements of these micronutrients, due to the scarcity of horticultural products and fruit.”

Confirming our opinion, the nutritionist concluded that the meals provided ensure necessities in terms of protein and energy intake, but their vitaminic and mineral levels are very low, stressing in addition that the information provided by the documents does not allow a more in-depth analysis.

With the help of this nutritional analysis, we can state that the nourishment given to the prisoners was poor in both quality and variety, despite ensuring that no one would starve. In short - and assuming that the providers kept their commitment to the local administration, so that impoverished prisoners never went without food - these menu proposals could guarantee that they would not starve, despite the excess in carbo-hydrates and the lack of variety in the foodstuffs used.

4. THE NOURISHMENT OF LOULÉ'S POOR

If we compare the prisoners' nourishment to that of the poorer people in Loulé – who were the object of a study by Geraldino de Brites – we find that it consisted of no more than half a dozen recipes, in which we find variants aimed at disguising the uniformity of contents, i.e. of its main ingredients (Brites, 1914).

Considering the table we drew up using the doctor's information on what was probably the greater part of the town's inhabitants, we can establish some conclusions.

Table 8. Comparing the nourishment of the prisoners and the poorer people

Typology of the municipal population's diets	Meals	Foodstuffs
1 st	Lunch	Bread, figs (dried in winter, fresh in summer) or other fruit
	Dinner	Xarém (cornmeal)
	Supper	Bread with oil or pork butter
2 nd	Lunch	Bread with tomato salad
	Dinner	Cabbage broth with chickpeas
	Supper	Fruit with bread
3 rd	Lunch	Fruit with bread
	Dinner	Gazpacho and fruit
	Supper	Fruit
4 th	Lunch	Fruit with bread
	Dinner	Haddock or sardine and tomato salad
	Supper	Xarém
5 th	Lunch	Sweet Potato
	Dinner	Sardine with radishes or peas or boiled broad beans
	Supper	Figs

Source: Own Elaboration: What poorer people in Loulé ate in the 1st decade of the 20th century.

The basis of their feeding was the “xerém”, or “xarém”, i.e. the well-known “papas de milho” (cornmeal). To complement “xarém”, one could add “griséu” (peas), sardines or dried horse-mackerel (known as “xarrinho”), pork greaves or, more seldom, little bits of meat. Lunch was based on bread and fruit (figs). Dinner included fish, salad and vegetables accompanying the *xarém*. Supper consisted of bread and fruit.

The doctor considered this menu to be clearly too weak for an average adult, normally a peasant who had to spend energy in everyday labours (Brites, 1914). In fact, although it included horticultural products in their season, which is typical of the Mediterranean nutrition model, when it came to protein and energy levels the daily needs of an adult were not met, because some of the meals failed to include meat, fish or eggs²⁸.

5. CONCLUSION

From the mid-19th century onward, the Civil and Judicial Administration became concerned with the health, hygiene and nourishment conditions faced by prisoners in the Algarve jails, because most of these had standards which were unsustainable, both for the people involved

²⁸ This idea received the agreement of the nutritionist who analysed the alimentary table propounded by Geraldino Brites, although she cautioned that only a qualitative analysis could be made, not a quantitative one.

and for the spaces in which they lived. The documents kept in Loulé's Municipal Archive, spanning the years 1888 to 1909, and the study undertaken by the doctor Geraldino Brites, enable us to make a comparative analysis of the meals given to the prisoners and those which were prepared, generally speaking, by the poorer families of the former town, from 1908 to 1911 – the period in which this scientific report was researched and put together.

For the matter at hand we see that, from 1888 onwards, public tenders were used to obtain the best proposals for providing rations to the prisoners. In actual practice, since one particular candidate was almost always the only one to present proposals and win the contests, we see that the feeding model put forward was mostly made up of meat, chickpeas, potatoes, beans, accompanied by ham or lard, giving vegetables much less importance and making no mention of fruit. This situation reveals comparative nutritional weakness, for its excess of carbo-hydrates and deficiency in vitamins and mineral salts. The meals – lunch at 3 p.m. and dinner at 7 p.m. – to be provided daily as required, left no room for hunger, but they did not ensure healthy nourishment in terms of the Mediterranean nutrition model.

On the other hand, when we try to contextualize and compare the food given to Loulé's prisoners to that consumed by the greater part of the town's population, we find a picture which the doctor Geraldino de Brites registered. It shows us that, unlike the alimentary model followed in the jails, the latter group lay closer to what nowadays we see as the Mediterranean diet. At the same time, however, the poorer people in Loulé, whom Dr. Brites studied, could not get the quantities of carbo-hydrates and protein needed by adults who, for the most part, worked in the field and performed labours which demanded physical exertion. The population's daily meals were rich in vitamins and mineral salts, showing reduced quantities of foodstuffs such as chickpeas, beans, eggs, rice, pasta and the like. This reduction was compensated for by the presence of bread in every meal.

Although they had meals which were significant in food quantities, the prisoners lacked the vitamins and mineral salts which the poorer people of Loulé consumed at the start of the 20th century, while the latter, in turn, lacked the carbo-hydrates which were present in excess in the prisoners' diet. As far as everyday nourishment was concerned, and assuming our sources do not mislead us, we are left pondering the irony of one group's obesity versus the other group's slimness.

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