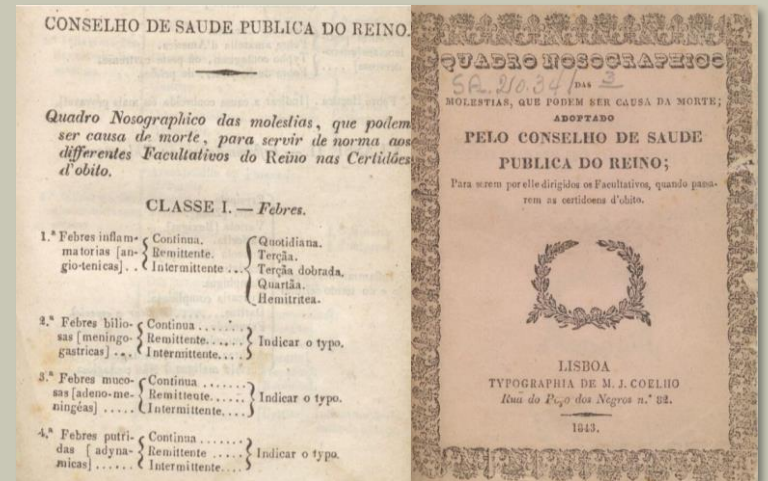


STANDARDIZING DEATH CAUSES IN PORTUGAL (1834 - 1910): THE STATISTICAL LIBERALISM ON THE MOVE

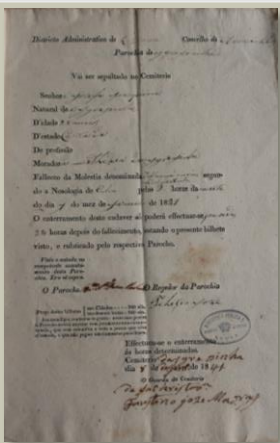
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Public health acquired a prominent role in Portugal in 1834 with the establishment of Liberalism. Following European trends, the "statistical liberalism" strengthened the Portuguese State, with numbers underpinning political decisions. A *Leviathan* of statistical tables emerged, with health and demography taking a central role. In 1837, the Council of Public Health required that all burials should be carried out in public cemeteries.

In fact, no one could be buried without a certificate (*bilhete de enterramento*) signed by a doctor and stating the cause of death. This was used to annually picture the "Nosographic table of the Kingdom of Portugal", which would help guiding public health policies.



Nosology adopted by the Conselho de Saúde Pública, 1843



As doctors used the nosology they were most familiar with (such as Cullen's or Duchan's), a general taxonomy with 21 death classes was implemented in 1843, following the French model dated 20.8.1833. Despite not being the most advanced at the time, it was adopted because it was the most intelligible to the Portuguese health professionals. Recognizing its limitations, in 1879 the Public Health Council established a new taxonomy with 206 diseases classified into 14 general classes. And, in 1901, the well-known Bertillon nosography was implemented, being also used throughout Portugal's overseas territories. It included 179 causes divided by 14 classes.

Death certificate Arraiolos (Évora District), 1841. Arquivo Distrital de Évora, Governo Civil, Saúde e Assistência Pública, Mapas Nosológicos, 1841-1855

The burial certificates of citizens included the name, age, marital status, profession, residence, cause and time of death. The monthly tables of deaths were compiled by the village officials and sent to the municipal authority.

Statistical chart of the deaths in the city of Lisbon (houses and hospitals), 1864. ANTT, Ministério do Reino, maço 3363

In turn, each municipality complied the information in a general table which was then sent to the government of each district.

Deaths in civil and military hospitals also followed this process. Later, the death certificates included more details such as birthplace, parentage, geographical orientation and hygienic conditions of the house, vaccinations, etc.

Before the Republic (1910), records with death causes were relatively scattered, uncatalogued, or had simply been lost. The surveys carried out so far point to a good level of preservation in some regions of Portugal, such as in Évora, Braga and Viana do Castelo, and in Angra do Heroísmo and Horta in the Azores islands.

Table of the deaths during the year of 1902. District level, Tabelas do movimento fisiológico da população de Portugal. Decénio de 1901-1910. 1916

However, since the 1840's, there is a large corpus of aggregate statistics, largely housed at the National Archives in Lisbon. Many of these were published in the form of reports, bulletins from the *Conselho Superior de Saúde* or simply in the official gazette. The regular publication of causes of death in the statistical annuaries of Portugal started in 1885.