

# FREE, ENSLAVED, AND “LIBERATED” WOMEN IMPRISONED IN LUANDA, 1857 TO 1884

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## RESUMO

Este artigo focaliza as mulheres Africanas que foram presas em Luanda, a capital colonial de Angola, entre 1857 e 1884. Apesar de ser uma minoria da população encarcerada, as mulheres eram punidas em maior número por certos “crimes,” particularmente por contravenções municipais, cambolação, e atos “desonestos.” A análise dos casos revela como as mulheres afirmaram sua independência econômica e como isso resultou em alterações com a polícia. Finalmente, este artigo demonstra o papel de status e cor nos casos de prisões.

**Palavras-chave:** Luanda, escravidão, prisões, *pretas*, legislação.

## ABSTRACT

This paper looks at African women imprisoned in Luanda, the colonial capital of Angola, between 1857 and 1884. Despite being a minority of the jailed population, it will show that women were more likely to be punished for certain “crimes”, particularly municipal law violations, *cambolação*, and “dishonest acts” than males. These cases reveal how women asserted their economic independence, and how this led to altercations with the police. This paper also demonstrates that status and colour played a critical role on imprisonment.

**Keywords:** Luanda, slavery, jail, *pretas*, law

## Introduction

During the 1970s, scholars began re-examining the origins of the penitentiary. One of the most important works was Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Contrary to earlier interpretations, which attributed the rise of the penitentiary in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to humanitarian reformers, Foucault argued that it was among a series of institutions designed to shape the mind through surveillance and discipline. As such, the prison

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was no less repressive than punishment directed against the body (FOUCAULT, 1975). David Rothman and Michael Ignatieff also criticized conventional narratives emphasizing the progressiveness of the penitentiary. Rothman (1971) characterized it as a tool of social order that emerged amidst growing fears around the breakdown of communal and familial ties, while Ignatieff (1978) argued that the penitentiary was introduced to control the working class. Although these works greatly revised the history of the prison, they focused on the American and European context. It was not until the 1990s that historians of Asia, Latin America, and Africa joined the debate (SALVATORE; AGUIRRE 1996; BERNAULT, 2003; BRANCH, 2005; DIKÖTTER; BROWN, 2007). By exploring the impact of colonialism and notions of race on punishment, they have since complicated Foucault's original approach.

One notable example is Florence Bernault's *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa*. With the exception of a few centralized states, Bernault points out that African pre-colonial societies typically did not practice punitive incarceration. Rather, they tended to settle minor disputes through mediation and reparation, and punish serious crimes with exile, execution, and enslavement. As such, the dissemination of the prison was associated with the arrival of Europeans, and the imposition of colonial rule. While Foucault, Rothman, and Ignatieff described a shift away from torture to subtler punitive practices, Bernault notes that this transition was largely absent in Africa. Due in part to colonial ideologies that espoused the inherent backwardness of African people, flogging and other forms of physical punishments survived well until the 20th century (BERNAULT, 2003).

Despite the growth in literature on colonial prisons since the 1990s, few scholars have examined how incarceration affected African women. This paper offers a preliminary look at women imprisoned in Luanda, the colonial capital of Angola, focussing on cases found in the *Boletim Oficial da Província de Angola* (BOA), a weekly gazette printed in town from 1845 onward. Between August 29, 1857 and January 14, 1884, the chief of police published a section entitled *Administração do Concelho e Polícia de Loanda* (County Administration and Police of Luanda), citing the sex, colour, and status of the people that ended up in jail. Although somewhat incomplete<sup>1</sup>, this section sheds much light on punishment in this period.

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<sup>1</sup> The police section was not published in August 1882 and between the months of January and October 1883.

Between 1857 and 1884, there were 43,012 cases of imprisonment reported, of which 9,170 involved women. Many of the females were enslaved or *libertas* (liberated), an “in-between status” between slavery and freedom (COGHE, 2012; CURTO, 2020). Most, however, were *pretas* (black women), arrested for disorder and drunkenness. Although males outnumbered females in jail, focussing on women offers valuable insights into punishment. In particular, police seem to have targeted more women for certain “crimes”, specifically municipal law violations, *cambolação*<sup>2</sup>, and “dishonest acts”<sup>3</sup>. Many of these cases highlight how women engaged in the colonial economy. By narrowing in on these examples, this paper highlights how women asserted their economic independence in the face of police repression. It concludes with a brief examination of the conditions inside Luanda’s jails.

**Table 1 – Cases of Imprisonment by Gender**

Gender	Total
Males	20,992
Females	9,170
Unspecified	12,850
Total	43,012

Source: BOA, 1857-1884

## Luanda, A Slave Town

From 1514 to 1867, about 12.5 million people were forcibly shipped across the Atlantic. Of these, about 45% came from West Central Africa. Luanda, in particular, was the most important slave port during the entire period of the Atlantic Slave Trade (ELTIS; RICHARDSON, 2010). Between 1701 and 1867, approximately 1,632,600 captives embarked from this town, the majority ending up in Brazil (DOMINGUES, 2013: 111). Due to mounting pressure from Britain, however, Portugal’s premier, Marquis Sá da Bandeira, officially abolished the export slave trade from its dominions in 1836. Subsequently, it signed the Anti-Slave Trade Treaty in 1842, which granted the British navy the right to search and seize Portuguese ships suspected of carrying captives, and established the Anglo-Portuguese Mixed Commission Court to try suspected slavers (MARQUES, 2006). Thereafter, all captives found on board slave vessels were to be declared *libertos* and placed under the care of the *Junta*

<sup>2</sup> Individuals accused of disrupting trade between the coast and the interior.

<sup>3</sup> A term likely used for prostitution.

*de Superintendencia dos Negros Libertos* (Board of Superintendence of the Liberated Negroes) (COGHE, 2012; CURTO, 2020). After the Brazilian government banned slave imports in 1850, the trade from Luanda was dealt a decisive blow. Without its main outlet for captives, Luanda's economy transitioned to the export of raw materials and tropical products, including, ivory, coffee, beeswax, gum copal, palm and groundnut oil (LAW, 1995; FREUDENTHAL, 2005).

However, the decline of the export slave trade led to an intensification of slavery within Angola (LOVEJOY, 2011). Rather than being shipped across the Atlantic, captives were retained locally and their labour was diverted to the licit economy. Some were sent to *arimos* (large farms) on the outskirts of Luanda to grow goods for consumption and export (FREUDENTHAL, 2005). Others remained in town providing services for Luanda's wealthier residents, or performing tasks associated with the licit economy. Consequently, José C. Curto notes that, between 1844 and 1850, Luanda's population more than doubled from 5,605 to 12,565, with the number of captives increasing from 2,749 to 6,020 respectively (CURTO, 1999: 402). Due to greater opportunities for wage employment, the number of free individuals also jumped in this period from 2,856 to 6,545 (CURTO, 1999: 402). Nevertheless, Luanda remained highly dependent on slave labour.

Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers argued that slavery in Africa, compared to the Americas, was relatively benign (MIERS; KOPYTOFF, 1977). However, Vanessa S. Oliveira has shown that in Luanda violence was a crucial part of the master/slave relationship, and that legal attempts to curtail abuse were not always effective. In 1853, for instance, Governor Visconde do Pinheiro published an ordinance that prohibited slaveholders from inflicting corporal punishment on their captives, and using devices of torture on their bodies. Instead, they were to send them to the police for punishment<sup>4</sup>. Those that did not comply had to pay a fine, or risked losing their human "property" to the state. Following this law, the colonial administration established the *Junta Protectora dos Escravos e Libertos* (Board for the Protection of Enslaved Persons and Freed Africans) in December 1854 to investigate cases of abuse and illegal enslavement. Despite these measures, Oliveira demonstrates that masters and mistresses continued to abuse their slaves with little to no legal repercussions (OLIVEIRA, 2013).

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<sup>4</sup> BOA, n. 419, 8 de outubro de 1853, p. 1-2.

Although the 1853 ordinance did not entirely prevent slave owners from using violence, some evidently preferred to punish their captives through the police<sup>5</sup>. In April 1869, Portugal decreed that all enslaved people in its overseas possessions were to be “liberated”. Leading up to this law, there were 23,023 cases of imprisonment, and almost half involved captives: at least 5,203 were men, and 1,997 were women (Table 2). More importantly, most had been jailed for “correction at their master’s request” (Table 3). The reasons for “correction” are unknown. Nonetheless, these cases underlie some of the limitations with the ordinance. Rather than eliminate abuse, it transferred violence from the slaveholder to the police, and simultaneously reinforced the master/slave relationship. While living and working in Luanda in the mid-19th century, the British mining engineer Joaquim John Monteiro observed this violence firsthand:

When a slave requires correction or punishment, he is delivered over to the police for that purpose, and as desired, he is either placed in the slave-gang, chained by the neck to others, and made to work at scavenging, carrying stone... or receives a thrashing with a cat-o-nine-tails, or a number of strokes on the palms of the hands with a flat, circular piece of wood pierced with five holes and with a short handle (MONTEIRO, 1875:40).

Apart from beatings and forced labour, “correction” also included imprisonment. In November 1859, two slaves belonging to D. Maxima Leonor Botelho de Vasconcellos, one of Luanda’s major slave owners, were taken to the *Department of Public Works* after being imprisoned 30 days for “correction”<sup>6</sup>. As Table 3 demonstrates, men were more likely to end up imprisoned at their masters’ request. However, 1,118 or 56% of female captives were incarcerated for this reason.

**Table 2 – Cases of Imprisonment by Status and Gender**

Status	Total	Males	Females	Unspecified
Slaves	*11,422	5,204	1,997	4,221
Libertos	7,612	3,268	1,624	2,720
Slave/Liberto	963	404	221	338
Other	23,015	12,116	5,328	5,571
Total	43,012	20,992	9,170	12,850

Source: BOA 1857-1884

\*One person was identified as being enslaved after 1869

<sup>5</sup> The police were made up of African troops called *empacasseiros*. These *empacasseiros* were recruited from vassal territories, and some were themselves enslaved. See: Arquivo Nacional de Angola (ANA), Códice 856, Correspondência Recebida, 1859-1860, fl. 96v.

<sup>6</sup> BOA, n. 373, 19 de novembro de 1859, p. 4.

Despite their lower numerical representation, enslaved women were not necessarily spared from punishment. Instead, their absence from police records may suggest that they were more vulnerable to private violence. Due to the proximity of female captives to the slave-holding household, masters or mistresses may have punished them directly instead of sending them to prison. While men no doubt experienced violence at the hands of their owners, female captives frequently complained of mistreatment to the *Junta Protectora*. Among them was Catharina, who appeared before the Board in January 1863, and accused her mistress, D. Maria Apolinaria Mattozo da Câmara, a major slave owner, of punishing her. Catharina alleged that her mistress was present when she was whipped 300 times<sup>7</sup>. In August 1863, the captive Antonia, also went to the *Junta Protectora*, and accused her master, Domingos Vasconcellos, of abuse<sup>8</sup>. Unfortunately, the details of this case were not published in the BOA.

Aside from formal complaints to the Board, some enslaved women fled. As scholars have long pointed out, running away was incredibly risky. Fleeing into the interior depended on African rulers' willingness to provide captives refuge. Moreover, slaves could end up being captured by police and returned to their masters (HEINTZE, 1995; FREUDENTHAL, 1997; CURTO, 2005; FERREIRA, 2014). For women, the stakes were especially high since they often lived in the slave-holding household, and were closely watched (LOVEJOY, 1986). Some may have also had children, making it harder to runaway (CURTO, 2005). Despite the odds against them, however, women fled in high numbers: police captured 453 female slaves in flight, compared to 484 males. In response, the administration made it illegal for slaves to be outside after 10pm without a *bilhete* (pass). Nonetheless, enslaved people resisted attempts to control their mobility, with 1,034 arrested for pass violations. Of these, at least 128 were women (Table 3).

**Table 3 – Major Crimes for the Enslaved Population**

Reasons	Total	Males	Females	Unspecified
Correction	7,420	3,984	1,118	2,318
Flight	1,621	484	453	684
Pass Violations	1,034	192	128	714
Theft	245	127	34	84
Disorder	239	118	76	45

Source: BOA 1857-1884

<sup>7</sup> BOA, n. 4, 24 de janeiro de 1863, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> BOA, n. 31, 1 de agosto de 1863, p. 248.

After the Portuguese government decreed that all slaves in its overseas territories were automatically *libertos*, captives no longer appeared in the police section as incarcerated. As a result, following April 1869, the number of imprisonments involving liberated people increased. Between August 29, 1857 and January 14, 1884, police jailed 7,612 *libertos*, with 98% of the cases occurring after 1869. These individuals were not entirely free, and had to continue serving their former masters until full emancipation, which was scheduled for April 1878 (COGHE, 2012; CURTO 2020). During this intermediary stage, they frequently ended up in jail for reasons that were similar to the enslaved population: a total of 1,647 cases involved *libertos* being imprisoned at their *amos*' (lords') request (Table 4). Although more *libertas* ended up in jail for disorderly conduct, the number of women sent for correction was nonetheless high. Despite being "liberated", police also captured 679 *libertos* for running away. Excluding those for whom gender is not known, two out of very five recaptured *libertos* on the run were women (202 females to 291 males). As was the case with enslaved people, *libertas* may have been vulnerable to other types of violence. In September 1871, for example, the liberated Maria Rosa accused her *amo* of having sent her to jail after she refused his sexual advances<sup>9</sup>.

**Table 4 – Major Crimes for the Liberto Population**

Reasons	Total	Males	Females	Unspecified
Correction	1,647	749	267	631
Disorder	1,327	581	288	458
Flight	679	291	202	186
Drunkenness	645	281	87	277
Theft	543	196	84	263

Source: BOA 1857-1884

### Free women

Most cases, however, (4,062 in total) involved *pretas* (Table 5). This number excludes the captive and *liberto* population, who were almost always black. Another 41 were identified as *pardas* (mixed), while only nine were classified as "white"<sup>10</sup>. *Donas* (ladies), the female component of the local elite, were rarely imprisoned.

<sup>9</sup> ANA, Códice 1007, Correspondência Recebida pela Secretaria do Governo Geral, fls. 233v-234.

<sup>10</sup> This may have included *donas*. Because of their wealth and status, they were often identified as white in colonial censuses. See: MILLER, 1988: 292; CURTO; GERVAIS, 2002.

Only two of these women ended up in jail: D. Joanna Maria da Conceição Bastos, who was accused of murdering a slave in May 1859 and burying the body on her property<sup>11</sup>; and D. Theodora da Conceição Alves Marques, who was arrested in March 1867, for trying to help a prisoner escape from jail<sup>12</sup>. Some foreign women also had run-ins with the police: 64 of these cases involved Europeans and nine were *degradadas* or convicts exiled to Angola for criminal activity (PANTOJA, 2000). Among them was the European *degradada* Rosaria Maria da Lomba, arrested in late April/early May 1863 for insulting another convict and getting drunk<sup>13</sup>.

**Table 5 – Free Population By Colour**

Colour	Total	Males	Females	Unspecified
Preto/Black	12,735	4,950	4,062	3,723
Pardo /Mixed	193	145	41	7
Branco/White	15	6	9	0
Unspecified	10,072	7,015	1,216	1,841
Total	23,015	12,116	5,328	5,571

Source: BOA 1857-1884

Despite being a minority of the incarcerated population, most of these women ended up in jail for “crimes” that were typical in this urban setting. In 1850, Luanda had 70 taverns where residents, free, and enslaved alike, socialized, gambled, and got drunk (CURTO, 1999; 2004). Some of these establishments were owned by *degradados*, which added to their poor reputation (FERREIRA, 2012: 144). Unsurprisingly, cases of disorderly conduct and intoxication were high for both males and females (Table 6). In November 1867, for instance, seven *pretos* and four *pretas* were imprisoned for drunkenness and unruly behaviour<sup>14</sup>. Another *preta* was arrested for being under the influence of alcohol and disturbing the peace in June 1860<sup>15</sup>.

**Table 6 – Top Crimes for Free Population**

Reasons	Total	Males	Females	Unspecified
Disorder	7,070	3,410	2,043	1,617
Municipal Law Violations	2,003	668	963	372
Drunkenness	3,883	2,271	830	782
Theft	3,731	1,779	606	1,346
Injury	606	444	67	95

Source: BOA 1857-1884

<sup>11</sup> BOA, n. 682, 23 de outubro de 1858, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> BOA, n. 11, 16 de março de 1867, p. 110.

<sup>13</sup> BOA, n. 18, 2 de maio de 1863, p. 142.

<sup>14</sup> BOA, n. 47, 23 de novembro de 1867, p. 568.

<sup>15</sup> BOA, n. 767, 16 de junho de 1860, p. 8.



Theft was also common. Luanda was an unequal society, with a slaveholding elite at the top, and a large servile labour force at the bottom. Because of their wealth and prestige, elite women largely avoided imprisonment. As indicated above, only two *donas* ended up in jail, one for murder and the other for helping someone escape from jail. Instead, most of those imprisoned were marginalized people: poor *pretas*, slaves, and *libertas*. Lacking the means to subsist, some may have resorted to petty crime. In January 1860, for instance, police arrested two *pretas* for “*insignificantes furtos*” (minor theft)<sup>16</sup>. Although impossible to draw conclusions in every case, at least some of the women imprisoned for theft may have been poor.

### Female Dominated “Crimes”

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *quitandeiras* or market vendors were largely responsible for selling food and goods to Luanda’s residents. Although some men participated in retail trade, this occupation was the purview of poor and enslaved women (FERREIRA, 2012; CANDIDO, 2015; OLIVEIRA, 2016). Being a *quitandeira*, however, put some at odds with local businesses. Due to ongoing complaints from licensed establishments that vendors were undercutting their profits, the *Camára Municipal* (Municipal Council) attempted to restrict their work by making them obtain licenses, and follow proscribed laws on cleanliness (OLIVEIRA, 2018: 453). It also limited their businesses to the *Quitanda Grande*, a marketplace exclusively for *quitandeiras* located in the centre of the city (FERREIRA, 2012: 134).

**Table 7 – Female Dominated “Crimes”**

Crime	Total	Males	Females	Unspecified
Municipal Law Violations	2,343	783	1,108	452
Cambolação	194	66	86	42
Dishonest Acts	55	16	37	2

Source: BOA 1857-1884

Nonetheless, women resisted attempts to regulate their work (Table 7). In July 1852, it was brought to the attention of the Secretary General of Angola, Carlos Possollo de Sousa, that part of the food coming from the interior was being diverted to the *quitandeiras*, instead of going to the *Terreiro Público* (Luanda’s public market), where it would be taxed. These *quitandeiras* were then bringing the food into town through the *moceques* (suburbs).

<sup>16</sup> BOA, n. 745, 14 de janeiro de 1860, p. 4.

As such, Secretary General Sousa ordered that police watch the vendors closely and arrest those selling “contraband” items<sup>17</sup>.

When female incarcerations are broken down by occupation (Table 8), it is clear that police targeted *quitandeiras* in significantly higher numbers. While some were incarcerated for intoxication, disorder, and other “crimes”, many were jailed for reasons related to their occupation. For instance, police arrested 40 vendors for unspecified municipal law violations, another 26 for “uncleanliness”, and six were imprisoned for not having a license. One *quitandeira*, Anna Francisca, was arrested in June 1882 for selling rotten food<sup>18</sup>. Clearly, their occupation and visibility on Luanda’s streets put them at odds with police.

**Table 8 – Female Incarcerations by Occupation**

Quitandeiras	251
Servants	65
Washerwomen	30
Seamstresses	7
Cultivators	3
Unspecified	8,736

Source: BOA 1857-1884

Similarly, colonial officials frequently complained that trade between Luanda and the interior was disrupted by *camboladores* or *atrevassadores*, traders who “enticed”<sup>19</sup> *sertanejos* (backwoodsmen) into giving them slaves and goods, which they would sell. *Cambolação* led to losses in tax revenues. Moreover, *camboladores* frequently operated at the expense of coastal merchants that supplied *sertanejos* with the credit used in the interior to purchase goods (MILLER, 1988). To put an end to this “abuse”, Governor José Rodrigues Coelho do Amaral published a law in August 1855 stipulating that individuals engaging in *cambolação* could be fined 10\$000 *réis* for the first offence and 20\$000 *réis* for the second or face imprisonment<sup>20</sup>. Despite this measure, the chief of police, Jozé Lourenço Marques, reported in September 1864 that he had received numerous complaints about *camboladores*, which led him to increase security along the routes leading to Barra do Bengo and in the area of Camama<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> BOA, n. 355, 17 de julho de 1852, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> BOA, n. 25, 24 de junho de 1882, p. 440.

<sup>19</sup> This included money, threats, or violence.

<sup>20</sup> BOA, n. 515, 11 de agosto de 1855, p. 9-10.

<sup>21</sup> BOA, n. 38, 17 de setembro de 1864, p. 331-332.

As indicated in Table 7, police imprisoned more women for this particular “crime” than males. Most (47 in total) were enslaved females. Among them was the *preta* Fortuna, a captive belonging to Manuel Pereira dos Santos Vandunem, who was imprisoned in January 1867 for this very reason<sup>22</sup>. Whether she was working on his behalf or independently is unknown. Due to the risks involved in this trade, *camboladores* may have operated in groups. Between July 4 and July 10, 1863, police captured 19 *pretos*, seven *pretas*, 20 female slaves and nine male captives for this specific “crime”<sup>23</sup>. Regardless of their status, *cambolação* gave these women an opportunity to carve out a space for themselves outside official channels.

Last but not least, there were “dishonest acts”. According to a report from October 1896 by the colonial official Viriato Zeferin, *meretrizes* (prostitutes) from Portugal, France, and Spain had moved to Luanda and found work on their own account or in “casas” (brothels). The author also observed that black women frequently got drunk and participated in “dishonest acts”. Concerned about the impact that this would have on “honest families”, he included in his report laws to police the behaviour of *meretrizes*. One, for instance, stipulated that they had to obtain a licence if they owned a *casa*. Another required them to be registered with the state, while others prohibited them from entering taverns, and engaging in “dishonest acts” at night<sup>24</sup>.

The history of prostitution in Luanda has not been explored by social scientists. Nonetheless, *meretrizes* are mentioned in the BOA, suggesting that it was, at the very least, tolerated. On the night of October 23, 1861, for example, police were called to the home of the *meretriz* Maria da Conceição after an altercation ensued between four men. Maria was absent at the time of the alleged incident<sup>25</sup>. In November 1862, a European *ex-degredado*, Joaquim Rodrigues Liborio, and the *meretriz* Maria Rita, were jailed for theft. Due to a lack of evidence, they were released shortly afterwards<sup>26</sup>. Another *meretriz* Marcelina Manuel was arrested in August 1867 for insulting a European woman named Jeronima Manuel<sup>27</sup>.

Despite the presence of *meretrizes*, police arrested people for engaging in “dishonest acts”. Although vague, more women

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<sup>22</sup> BOA, n. 3, 19 de janeiro de 1867, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> BOA, n. 28, 11 de julho de 1863, p. 224.

<sup>24</sup> “Um Projecto de Regulamento Policial e Sanitário Para Obstar Aos Males Provenientes da Prostituição,” ANA, Caixa 1680, 24 de outubro de 1896.

<sup>25</sup> BOA, n. 838, 26, de outubro de 1861, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> BOA, n. 892, 1 de novembro de 1862, p. 313.

<sup>27</sup> BOA, n. 33, 17 de agosto de 1867, p. 395.

than men ended up in jail for this “crime”: 37 females compared to 16 males. Most (25 cases) were *pretas*. Only three were *pardas*. Among them was Josephina Manuel, imprisoned in April 1870 with a European man named José Pedro Nunes. Almost half were *libertas* (13 cases). During the intermediary stage between slavery and freedom, *libertas* were likely vulnerable to see their dependent status maintained and subject to poor working conditions. As such, prostitution may have offered some an opportunity to earn a wage. Others, however, may have been working for their *amos*. Whatever the case, police clearly punished more women than men for crimes against morality.

### Conditions in the Jails

Luanda had several prisons. Like other European powers, the Portuguese established jails within coastal forts, including the fortresses of São Miguel, Penedo, and São Pedro de Barra. During the governorship of D. Manuel Pereira Forjaz (1607 to 1611), they also constructed a *cadeia* (jail) alongside the *Câmara* in the *Largo do Palácio*. After João Correia de Sousa became governor in 1621, he converted both into the *Palácio dos Governadores* (Governor’s Residence), and ordered that the jail and *Câmara* be moved (DELGADO, 1971: 118). The exact date when they were rebuilt is unknown. But by the time Francisco Inocêncio de Sousa Coutinho became governor in 1764, the jail was already complete<sup>28</sup>. Due to frequent complaints about overcrowding, the administration eventually built other prisons. In 1863, for instance, it established the *Prisão do Carmo*, located next to the Church of the Nossa Senhora do Carmo, which was used primarily for slaves and *libertos* (SANTOS, 1970). Luanda also had various “dungeons” located within police stations.

Although the police section of the BOA rarely mentions which jail people were sent to, women could be confined in any one of them. Of the 9,170 cases of imprisonment involving women, at least 59 went to the *cadeia*, 20 to the *Prisão do Carmo*, and one to the Fortress of São Miguel. Another woman was sent to a dungeon. Overcrowding may have determined where they were incarcerated. For instance, in February 1858, 20 individuals from Golungo Alto were taken to the *cadeia* despite complaints that there was no

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<sup>28</sup> Letter from Francisco Inocêncio de Souza Coutinho to Francisco Xavier Aranha, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT), Condes de Linhares, L. 50, fl. 76, 25 January, 1765.

space. Subsequently, the Secretary General, José Alvo Pinto de Balsemão, advised that 30 people be transferred from the *cadeia* to other prisons in the city<sup>29</sup>.

For the most part, conditions were poor. When the surgeon José Maria de Bulhões Madonado visited the *cadeia* in October 1858, he observed that it was filled with “noxious gases”, and that one prisoner was suffering from gastric and lung ailments<sup>30</sup>. By the time Sebastião Lopes de Calheiros e Menezes became Governor in 1861, he noted that the jail was so filthy that the walls and ceiling were black (MENEZES, 1867: 135). Conditions in the fortresses were reportedly not much better. In 1841, the German physician Gustav Tams visited seven soldiers imprisoned in the Fortress of Penedo, where he observed that:

The dreadful close air of this dungeon, had induced them to throw off all their clothes, and their colourless skeleton figures, plainly bespoke the great misery in which they had been languishing for almost two years (TAMS, 1845: 19).

Unfortunately, these accounts do not mention women. But according to a report from the chief of police, Antonio do Nascimento Pereira Sampaio, dated January 1869, the females confined in the *Prisão do Carmo* had their own jail, which was poorly ventilated, and smaller than the one for men<sup>31</sup>. The *cadeia* also had a section for women, which was reportedly filthy and overcrowded<sup>32</sup>. When Luanda’s Governor, Pedro Alexandrinho da Cunha, published prison regulations in 1847, he sought to separate white women from *pretas*, and “honest women” from “dishonest” ones<sup>33</sup>. Whether this was enforced is unknown. Nevertheless, questions around reform were evidently centred on protecting elite women.

## Conclusion

This paper has offered a glimpse at some of the women imprisoned in Luanda’s jail. While men were the majority of the imprisoned population, police arrested more women

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<sup>29</sup> BOA, n. 645, 6 de february de 1858, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU), SEMU, DGU, Angola, Correspondência dos Governadores, Cx. 24-2 (625), Antonio Fermino da Silva Quelhas to the Governor General, 10 October, 1858.

<sup>31</sup> BOA, n. 11, 13 de março de 1869, p. 142-146.

<sup>32</sup> *Relatório das Direcções das Provincias Ultramarinas 1877-1880*, (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional), p. 83, 84.

<sup>33</sup> BOA, n. 24, 26 de junho de 1847, p. 1-3.

for municipal law violations, *cambolação*, and “dishonest acts”. Female captives and *libertas* were also frequently incarcerated. Most of the women, however, were *pretas*, who ended up in jail for disorder and drunkenness. In this context, status and colour clearly played a critical role in punishment.

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Recebido em: 18/11/2019

Aprovado em: 10/12/2019

