

# What is madness - historical background from Portugal

V. Podence Falcao, M.J. Amaral, R. Lousada.

Hospital Beatriz Ângelo, Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health, Loures, Portugal.

## Introduction

Madness is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been a topic of interest throughout history. This poster aims to provide a historical and cultural perspective on madness in Portugal. The poster will focus on key events, influential figures and cultural factors.

## Madness in Historical Perspective

The cultural history of insanity has been explored from the Bible to modern medicine. Foucault explores the evolution of the meaning of madness in Europe's cultures and laws, politics, philosophy, and medicine from the Middle Ages until the end of the 18th century. Madness evolved from being seen as a nonconformity in the Classical Age that should be confined and silenced to become a form of wisdom, creativity, and inspiration in the Renaissance. In *A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, the author argues that the emergence of the modern concept of madness in Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries was closely linked to broader social and cultural changes, including the rise of scientific rationalism, treated and controlled by medical and psychiatric practices.

## Conclusion

Madness is a complex topic that requires a multifaceted approach to understand fully. We can gain insight into a more comprehensive perspective by exploring the cultural, historical, and legal factors contributing to its development.

## References

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## Madness and Civilization in Portugal

In Portugal, the high prevalence of consanguinity and insanity among the Portuguese monarchy and their antecedents probably contributed to their mental health problems. Another crucial factor to consider is the influence of Catholicism and the Christian tradition, which has played a significant role in shaping Portugal's view of mental illness. The idea of demonic possession, for example, was a common explanation for unusual behavior in the past.

A notorious example of this is the period of 1578-1640, known as the "Madness and Greatness" period, which was marked by the Period of Spanish domination of Portugal between 1580 and 1640, following the disappearance without heirs of King Sebastião (1578) and Cardinal Henrique (1580), with the crown passing to Philip II of Spain, grandson of King Manuel I.

It was a time of political dishonor and misery, with the country adrift and at risk of losing its identity. The popular classes raised doubts about the king's death, sustaining their hopes of regaining autonomy. The Sebastianist myth gained strength due to the Portuguese collective psyche's adherence to messianism, and the Sebastianist myth is a representative force as a feature of national culture. Another key figure, Queen Maria I, sheds light on the historical background of madness in Portugal. While Queen Maria I has gone down in history for her political achievements as the first undisputed Queen Regent of Portugal, her life contained great darkness, and her battle with mental illness became famous with *The Madness of Queen Maria*, a biography of the fragile woman caught up in an epic battle between church and state in eighteenth-century Portugal.

