

Timothy D. Walker: *Doctors, Folk Medicine and the Inquisition. The Repression of Magical Healing in Portugal during the Enlightenment.* (Brill: Leiden-Boston, 2005). ISBN 90 04 143459

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Looking at the title of this work, the reader would be forgiven if he or she thought that this was another study of the Inquisition in Portugal. It is not. This is a highly original work that blends sources from the Inquisition and medical history (as well as many others, particularly intellectual history) to examine the stark contradiction of professionally-trained medical doctors during the Portuguese Enlightenment using the repressive apparatus of the Inquisition to eliminate their rustic and (largely) unlettered competition: folk-healers.

After a discussion of the role played by folk healers in early modern Portuguese society (chapters one and two), Professor Walker then examines the intricate details of how medical knowledge was transmitted from abroad to doctors in Portugal and how they diffused this knowledge among their colleagues throughout the country (chapter three). He then outlines the pivotal importance of the interlocking intellectual interests (particularly as they relate to the practice of medicine) of Inquisitor-General D. Nuno da Cunha de Ataíde e Mello (held office from 1707-1750) and King D. João V, who nominated D. Nuno and who ruled from 1706-1750 (chapter four). He then brings this argument to its logical end in chapter five, where he clearly shows the interconnections among the medical profession, the Holy Office, and the Royal Court. The second part of the book focuses on the details of this all-out attack on folk healers: an overview of the policy (chapter six); examples of folk-healers brought before the Holy Office, with commentary (chapter seven); the nature of their punishments (chapter eight); an analysis of what these folk-healers did and from where they originated (chapter nine); and finally a very brief conclusion (chapter ten). The work is also filled with illustrations and a glossary that nicely compliment the text.

Professor Walker's argument is that a relative handful of professionally trained medical doctors were able to infiltrate the Inquisition as familiars and consultants to both increase their own social status as well as assist in that institution's drive to end folk healing in eighteenth century Portugal. Folk healing was a threat to both the medical establishment as well as the Inquisition. For the former, folk healing represented not only competition but also unenlightened and ineffective attempts to heal the sick. For the latter, folk healers were highly suspicious quacks, misled at best and possibly in league with the Devil. It makes sense that these two powerful bodies would work in tandem to reach a mutually desired goal.

This work is thoroughly enjoyable and well researched. Walker has used documentation from numerous archives in Lisbon, Évora and London. In many ways this work interlocks a number of very divergent themes and their respective literatures: namely, folk-healing and early modern popular culture, intellectual history of the Enlightenment, early modern medical history; and inquisitorial history. As a result, it should not come as a surprise that Walker's bibliography (pp. 408-420) is wide-ranging and extensive.

Folk-healers, while a threat to the power of the church and the monopoly envisioned by the professional medical establishment, were an important part of the social fabric of medieval and early modern Portugal. Walker shows this quite clearly. The Inquisition did not consider most of them to be a serious threat, as is reflected in the sites and duration of their punishments. The vast majority of first time offenders were sentenced to terms of three years or less of exile within Portugal, many to Castro Marim (extreme SE Algarve). Again, all of this is very clearly outlined in this work. Of all convicts and sinners sent to Castro Marim, those convicted of folk healing and witchcraft (frequently indistinguishable sins since the source of power was unclear) were the largest segment (22%). Other frequent sins were providing false testimony (20%) and blasphemy (15%).¹ This very clearly shows that folk-healers were part of a wider range of minor sinners (largely) banished to sites within Portugal. Major sinners and convicts, such as those guilty of murder, heresy, or sodomy would have faced much more serious and long-term sentences to sites overseas.

Walker's research has led him to describe some of the outstanding characteristics of this group of folk healers. Those accused of folk healing and other magical sins were 41% male and 59% female (p. 343); age was apparently not a factor since those arrested "represented the entire spectrum of age groups" (p. 351). Women arrested for healing were largely married (45%) or widowed (28%) when their marital status was known (pp. 359-360), while a significant percentage of men in the same group were single (42%) (p. 360). About half of those accused of folk healing were outsiders to the community (pp. 376-380).

This is a dense work that cannot and should not be read quickly. It is obviously the result of many years of research and writing. Walker very carefully builds his argument in layers and is very convincing. His work will be of immediate interest to historians of any of the four thematic areas listed above, as well as many others. The work has much to say about social control in Portugal, as noted above.

As Walker points out in his conclusion, the Holy Office did not end the rustic ways of folk healers in Portugal. In fact, by the end of the eighteenth century, the combination of the Pombaline reforms at the University of Coimbra (restructuring the medical curriculum, which gave the elite medical establishment many of the Enlightenment reforms it had been seeking) while simultaneously curbing the power of the Holy Office meant the end of this cozy medical-inquisitorial relationship (pp. 395-397). Since the professional medical establishment obtained the changes and control it had long sought, it no longer needed the Inquisition. The Holy Office "experienced a marked decline in its prestige and power" (p. 396). Folk healers were largely beyond its interest and only a total of eight cases were brought to trials after 1771, the last in 1802 (pp. 395-396). Walker then points out that folk healers became more visible in Portuguese society (even placing advertisements in the newspaper) and continue to be part of the social scene in modern Portugal to this day (p. 400).

¹ Geraldo Pieroni and Timothy Coates, *De couto do pecado à vila do sal. Castro Marim [1550-1850]* Lisboa: Sá da Costa Editora, 2002. p. 30. Professor Walker was kind enough to share his research with us in this work.

If this work has not yet been translated into a Portuguese edition, it should be. Readers in Portugal and Brazil would enjoy it and would find Walker's study to be invaluable. The details of how folk-healers attempted to cure the ill (i.e. specifically what they did and why) and what role they played in medieval and early modern Portuguese society would make an excellent follow-up study for Professor Walker or others who care to build upon this fascinating, insightful, and original study.