



QUINA AND QUININE FROM SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE (19TH-20TH CENTURIES): CULTIVATION OF THE WRONG SPECIES

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Abstract

Quina can be considered the American drug with more impact in the European therapy. Its therapeutic use was, very early on, essentially, to combat malaria and fevers. In Portugal, in the 19th century, two hundred years after its entry into the European scientific literature, and after being well established in the Portuguese official pharmacopoeias, quina continued to raise scientific studies and to attract the interest for plantations in order to extract quinine and to obtain quinine salts.

In Portugal, in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century there was a strong investment in quina plantations in the Portuguese colonies, especially in São Tomé and Cape Verde. Quinas entered the national territory in 1869. The global context gave indicators of prudence to Portugal because other countries were scientifically and technically more developed, especially the Netherlands. The objective was to extract quinine and to obtain quinine salts. In Portugal, the studies succeeded about the more adaptable species to be cultivated outside their natural habitat, with special relevance of the studies by Julio Henriques. The euphoria around the quina plantations was huge, especially in the sixties and the eighties of the 19th century. In Portugal, there was recognition of the value and opportunity of quina plantations and investment in the extraction industry of quinine mining the benefit of the Portuguese economy and also the tropical medicine.

In this paper, the authors analyze different studies published in Portuguese scientific journals with the aim of understanding the gap between the optimism placed in quina plantations, quinine extraction and obtention of quinine salts and the disappointing results of the results obtained.