

Trade and Circulation of Medicines in Medical Texts: Digital Humanities and History of Colonial America *

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1 Trade and Circulation

1.1 Textual Analysis with *Recogito in Curvo Semedo's work*

Doctor João Curvo Semedo (1635-1719) was an important figure in the diffusion of chemical medicines in eighteenth century Portugal. Graduated in Coimbra he conciliated chemical formulations with galenic conceptions in the treatment of innumerable diseases. His major contribution to pharmacy is the strong defense and popularization of some chemical drugs, especially antimony and Quintilium powders.

Although the chemical pharmacy had influential figures in the early seventeenth century, the use of these drugs only grew from the late eighteenth century, due to the changes in the teaching and practice of this discipline by apothecaries and the increase in the publication of medical treaties and pharmacopoeias. The imports of chemical compound medicines were small and concentrated in Europe, which demonstrates a certain permanence in the entry of monopolized prepared formulas, the so-called secret remedies.

It can be said that the normative action taken by the Portuguese State collaborated, in the eighteenth century, with regard to the trade of medicines, essentially for the expansion of shipments of imported medicines on a global scale, through the expansion of the consumption of drugs integrated into the official conception of medicine from anywhere in the world. It is important to draw attention to the fact that during the colonization process we observed two coexisting moments:

- (1) Arrival of imported drugs in Portuguese America;
- (2) Departure of some native remedies towards Europe.

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From the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, this two-way street deepens and this trade now has a large quantity of shipments arriving and departing from European and overseas ports.

In analyzing one of João Curvo Semedo's texts we identified how this moment of circulation of information about medicinal plants in the Portuguese Empire occurred in the first half of the eighteenth century. Choice of work for analysis:

Memorial de Vários Simples que da India Oriental, da América e de outras partes do Mundo vem ao nosso Reino. s/d.

By analyzing Semedo's work it is possible to notice the contact with other works and the influence / reference to other authors, for example one can compare with the work of Friar João Jesus Maria (who also made the inventory from his apothecary). Friar João de Jesus Maria in his work *Historia Pharmaceutica das plantas exóticas* (who was at the Botica Bookstore of S. Bento da Saúde Monastery)

From the automatic analysis undertaken, it was found that most of the medicines listed by João Curvo Semedo originate from India, followed by those from the African continent and soon after Brazil. Nevertheless, if we look at the local scale, Brazilian medicines are in second place among Curvo Semedo indications.

The descriptions made by Semedo show that the author may have maintained in touch with other works and / or apothecaries, druggist and religious who knew and marketed these plants. This practice was common due to the proximity of its description with the one made by other authors.

The circulation of knowledge through information networks allows us to understand how science was co-produced by the encounter and interaction of heterogeneous communities and experts from diverse backgrounds.

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