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Autore	Walker Timothy
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Sommario/riassunto

Inquisition trials for sorcery and witchcraft in Portugal reached a late crescendo (1715 to 1755). This study of those events focuses on the Inquisition's role in prosecuting and discrediting popular healers (called saludadores or curandeiros), who were charged with practicing magical crimes. Significantly, these trials coincide with the entrance of university-trained physicians and surgeons into the paid ranks of the Portuguese Inquisition in unprecedented numbers. State-licensed medical practitioners, motivated by professional competition combined with a desire to promote rationalized "scientific" medicine, used their positions within the Holy Office to initiate trials against purveyors of superstitious folk remedies. The repression of folk healing reveals a conflict between learned medical culture and popular healing culture in Enlightenment-era Portugal. In this rare instance, the Inquisition functioned as an instrument of progressive social change.
