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The King Duarte of Portugal: Advices and Recipes Against Plague (15th Century)

In the realm of Portugal, after the Black Death (1348—49) there are several outbreaks of plague during the 15th century. This fact had generated an interest on medical matters inside the royal court. The Portuguese prince and after king D. Duarte (1434—1438) had included in his personal library some titles on Medicine, such as Canon of Avicena, Book of Leper and so on. The King was worried about the health of the kingdom and accordingly his work is directed at offering advice about preserving health and his guidance concerning moderation in eating and drinking. He had compiled some advices and recipes (mezinhas in archaic Portuguese) against plague in his Book of Cartuxa or Book of Advices. He recommends quarantine for the healthy people flee from plague and avoid human contact. He registered the more everyday homemade medicines such as common pills and the pós do Duque (Duke's powders) and others designed to combat epidemic outbreaks. The most complex prescription for combating the plague is that of the badger powders, in two very similar versions. The badger is a medium-sized mammal that is part of the Portuguese fauna to this day and can be found in many other European countries. It has natural immunity to bee stings and snake venom.

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