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THE DREADFUL BIGHT OF BENIN AND QUININE

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"Beware, beware the Bight of Benin There's one comes out for forty goes in" (a rhyme by seamen from the 19th century). The history of quinine can be a model for the history of modern pharmaceuticals and industry. Cinchona bark was introduced into Europe at the early 17th century and it cured the continent within two centuries. Malaria was not present in the Americas where Cinchona trees grow though as findings of genetic polymorphism suggests. Ague appeared in European literature, in fine arts (e.g. Durer's self-portrait). "The introduction of quinine in medicine resembles to the introduction of gunpowder into military science in results" - stated an Italian physician in 1700. Malaria prevention by quinine was established in the 19th century by an expedition on the Niger. Quinine became indispensable in "Scramble for Africa". Travellers e.g. D. Livingstone, or the Hungarian L. Magyar described African fever and quinine overdose, cinchonism. Cinchona plantations and quinine industry had formed a global market by the 20th century. The first global campaign against malaria with quinine took place at that time in the Raj. The Quinine Conventions and the quinine market were destroyed by the 2 WWs. Quinine shortage pushed research for analogues and insecticides (DDT) against the vector Anopheles mosquito. Quinine analogues appeared but resistancy seems to race with new products.