

Histoire de la santé publique et communautaire en Afrique. Le rôle des médecins de la mission suisse en Afrique du Sud^{1*}

Hines Mabika

Summary

It was not Dutch settlers nor British colonizers who introduced public and community health practice in north-eastern South Africa but medical doctors of the Swiss mission in southern Africa. While the history of medical knowledge transfer into 19th–20th century Africa emphasises colonial powers, this paper shows how countries without colonies contributed to expand western medical cultures, including public health. The Swiss took advantage of the local authorities' negligence, and implemented their own model of medicalization of African societies, understood as the way of improving health standards. They moved from a tolerated hospital-centred medicine to the practice of community health, which was uncommon at the time. Elim hospital's physicians moved back boundaries of segregationist policies, and sometime gave the impression of being involved in the political struggle against Apartheid. Thus, Swiss public health activities could later be seen as sorts of seeds that were planted and would partly reappear in 1994 with the ANC-projected national health policy.

Keywords: South Africa, Switzerland, Public Health, Medical Missions, Medical Apartheid.

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Hines Mabika, Institut für Medizingeschichte der Universität Bern, Bülhstrasse 26, CH-3012 Bern (hines.mabika@img.unibe.ch)