

Environmental Hygiene as a Prophylactic Measure in Colonial and Post-Colonial Central Africa (1910-1986)

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Abstract:

As soon as they arrive in Africa, Europeans are faced with the existence of a number of new diseases. These are epidemic-shaped diseases, sometimes with gravity traits. Because of the relationship between these epidemics and the living environment of indigenous peoples, and because of the obstacles they posed for colonial exploitation, reformers envisage a multiplicity of measures. Environmental hygiene is the most significant of them. This article is based on the analysis of a varied archival sources and draws on methodological tools of transnational history. It tries to highlight the contribution of environmental hygiene, in the prevention of diseases with endemic potential in Central Africa, from the colonial period to the aftermath of African independence. The article also insists on improving the living and health conditions of the populations of this sub-region. This text highlights the actions undertaken by the colonial and postcolonial authorities to ensure hygiene and sanitation, with a view to preventing the most common epidemics such as African human trypanosomiasis (AHT) and malaria.

Key words: hygiene, environment, sanitation, prevention, epidemics.

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