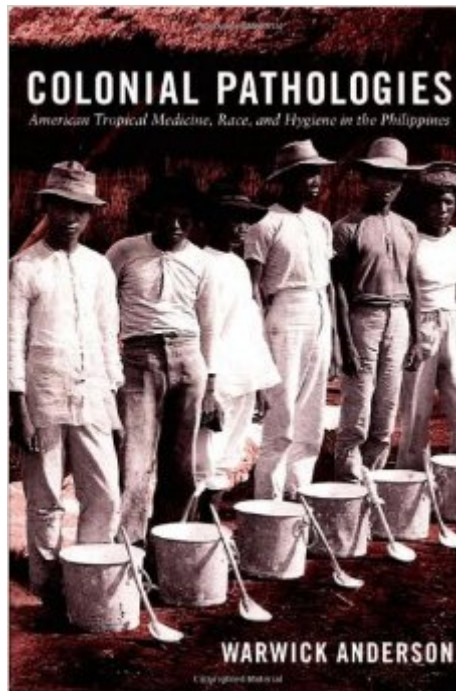


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Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, And Hygiene In The Philippines



Synopsis

Colonial Pathologies is a groundbreaking history of the role of science and medicine in the American colonization of the Philippines from 1898 through the 1930s. Warwick Anderson describes how American colonizers sought to maintain their own health and stamina in a foreign environment while exerting control over and "civilizing" a population of seven million people spread out over seven thousand islands. In the process, he traces a significant transformation in the thinking of colonial doctors and scientists about what was most threatening to the health of white colonists. During the late nineteenth century, they understood the tropical environment as the greatest danger, and they sought to help their fellow colonizers to acclimate. Later, as their attention shifted to the role of microbial pathogens, colonial scientists came to view the Filipino people as a contaminated race, and they launched public health initiatives to reform Filipino personal hygiene practices and social conduct. A vivid sense of a colonial culture characterized by an anxious and assertive white masculinity emerges from Anderson's description of American efforts to treat and discipline allegedly errant Filipinos. His narrative encompasses a colonial obsession with native excrement, a leper colony intended to transform those considered most unclean and least socialized, and the hookworm and malaria programs implemented by the Rockefeller Foundation in the 1920s and 1930s. Throughout, Anderson is attentive to the circulation of intertwined ideas about race, science, and medicine. He points to colonial public health in the Philippines as a key influence on the subsequent development of military medicine and industrial hygiene, U.S. urban health services, and racialized development regimes in other parts of the world.

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Customer Reviews

Colonial medicine has been a major issue of debate in social science these years. One reason for that is the emergence of globalization that elevates previous colonies to the focus of attention because of their roles in the global system of production and their peculiar political configurations. No longer subliminal, these ex-colonies however pose intriguing but difficult questions regarding various aspects of (post-)modernity. How did they deal with the so-called colonial legacy? How did the modernity defined in "the West" mean to them? What insights can we get by looking at the disciplinary process that the colonized people embraced, or worse, endured? Or, for this book, what is the relations between the medical and public health measures in colony and those in metropolis? It is easy for studies of this kind to fall back into either a progressivist eurocentric argument (such as Basalla's diffusionism) or a normative pluralistic claim. The former refers to a pattern of diffusion of knowledge from the center (read Europe) to the periphery (the rest of the world); the latter means that we need to appreciate the achievements not only in the center but also in the periphery. But Anderson pushes the claim further. He challenges the logic of the center/periphery division and argues that in fact, the center of colonial force may be the periphery of knowledge production. The conceptual hierarchy is shaken and replaced with a more reciprocally dynamic and interactive notion. Think about the medical knowledge that was obtained in the Philippines but was later applied in America.

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