

Medical Training, African Auxiliaries, and Social Healing in Mwinilunga, Zambia

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After the Second World War, colonial authorities and medical missionaries in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) sought to recruit scientifically-minded African auxiliaries in their respective crusades to bolster waning imperial power and to undermine local healing systems with their associated rituals. To this end, they reinvigorated the training of African medical auxiliaries at both state- and mission-controlled hospitals. The proposed paper seeks to illustrate the ways in which auxiliaries trained by the Christian Missions in Many Lands at Kalene Hill hospital in Zambia's Mwinilunga district after the war confounded their employers' expectation to turn them into pliant agents of cultural annihilation once they had imbued scientific comprehension of disease and healing. The paper hypothesises that in the face of mounting social inequalities and allied tensions associated with colonial and post-colonial economic policies in Zambia, African medical auxiliaries, like traditional healers, transformed mission-based medicine into a discursive space for redressing social conflicts and tension. In this way, they reinforced, rather than undermined, interpersonal comprehension of disease and suffering. Their work in mission hospitals and clinics thus came to occupy the centre-stage in healing the social body rapidly fragmenting under the growing pressure of colonial and post-colonial policies.