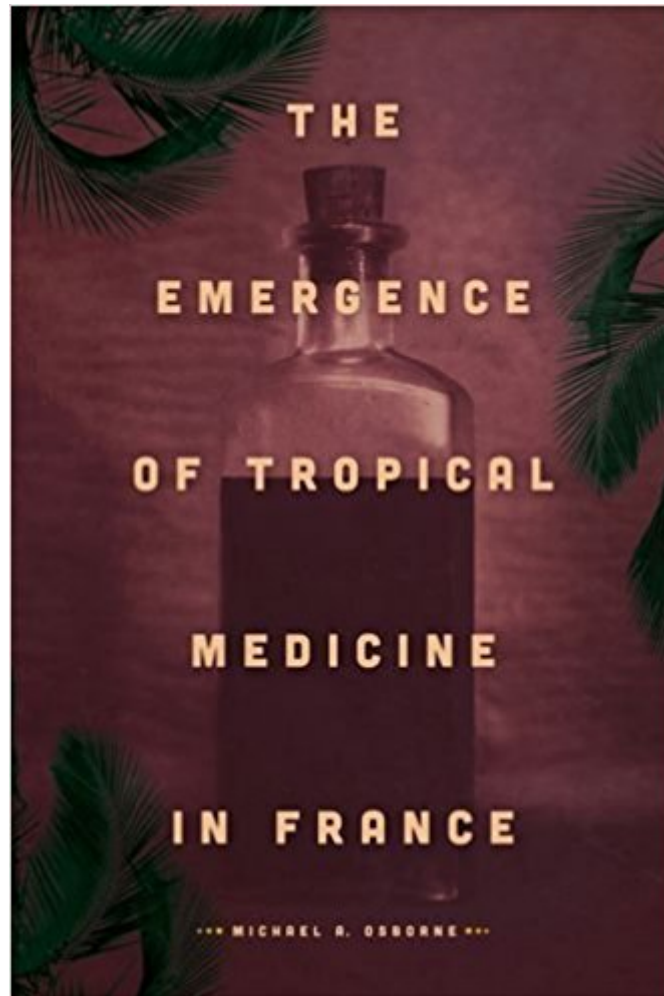


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The Emergence Of Tropical Medicine In France



Synopsis

The Emergence of Tropical Medicine in France examines the turbulent history of the ideas, people, and institutions of French colonial and tropical medicine from their early modern origins through World War I. Until the 1890s colonial medicine was in essence naval medicine, taught almost exclusively in a system of provincial medical schools built by the navy in the port cities of Brest, Rochefort-sur-Mer, Toulon, and Bordeaux. Michael A. Osborne draws out this separate species of French medicine by examining the histories of these schools and other institutions in the regional and municipal contexts of port life. Each site was imbued with its own distinct sensibilities regarding diet, hygiene, ethnicity, and race, all of which shaped medical knowledge and practice in complex and heretofore unrecognized ways. Osborne argues that physicians formulated localized concepts of diseases according to specific climatic and meteorological conditions, and assessed, diagnosed, and treated patients according to their ethnic and cultural origins. He also demonstrates that regions, more so than a coherent nation, built the empire and specific medical concepts and practices. Thus, by considering tropical medicine's distinctive history, Osborne brings to light a more comprehensive and nuanced view of French medicine, medical geography, and race theory, all the while acknowledging the navy's crucial role in combating illness and investigating the racial dimensions of health.

Book Information

Hardcover: 328 pages

Publisher: University Of Chicago Press; 1 edition (March 24, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 022611452X

ISBN-13: 978-0226114521

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.9 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #2,712,092 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #58 in Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Clinical > Tropical Medicine #99 in Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Internal Medicine > Infectious Disease > Tropical Medicine #1229 in Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Special Topics > History

Customer Reviews

"Thoroughly yet concisely discusses the development of French colonial and naval medicine from

the 17th through the early 20th centuries. . . . Beginning with the construction of the three oldest naval medical schools using prison labor, Osborne meticulously discusses naval physicians and etiological theories across centuries. . . . One of the most interesting facets is how the concept of race inside France influenced the perception of the colonized races and the resulting Creole populations." (J. P. Bourgeois, Nicholls State University CHOICE)"Osborne has written a superb and foundational study. Rather than engaging in the kind of sweeping discursive analysis associated with Michel Foucault, Edward Said, and Ann Laura Stoler, he focuses more upon the specific personnel, institutions, and policies that shaped the rise of tropical medicine. Throughout, Osborne emphasizes the concrete material realities that influenced colonial practitioners and how these realities structured and often limited practices in the oft-vaunted 'colonial machine.' For these reasons, his book is essential reading for historians of science and medicine, as well as those scholars working more generally on the history of European imperialism." (Sean M. Quinlan, University of Idaho American Historical Review)"Osborne carefully explains the transition from an unregulated and pluralistic medical profession to a 'regime of universal tropical medicine'. This seismic shift had significant implications for the way in which French practitioners learned about and treated medical conditions in the colonies. The new military regulations increasingly curtailed that flexibility and ushered in more centralisation and institutional oversight at home and overseas. Osborne's work effectively highlights the interplay between naval medicine and the rise and transformation of French imperialism." (Contemporary European History)"Osborne examines the early history of French colonial medicine around his notion of place. finely interweaves information from numerous books published at that time, some archival material and secondary literature. In a concise manner, he provides important background information, such as a short general history of yellow fever or details on the recruitment processes in the army and navy. The book always remains highly readable." (Gesnerus)"In this illuminating history of French colonial medicine during the long nineteenth century, Osborne shows how naval medical officers brought home the tropics and domesticated the exotic. Sensitive to the terrain of ship, port, and colony, naval physicians sought to chart the medical geography and racial diversity of the world. In widening our knowledge of the history of tropical medicine, Osborne crucially turns our attention to maritime France and thus provincializes Paris in the history of French medicine." (Warwick Anderson, author of Colonial Pathologies)"An important contribution to our growing understanding of colonial and military medicine. The French story provides an illuminating contrast to its more familiar English counterpart. Osborne paints a finely wrought picture of a world of naval medicine and medical training heretofore obscured by our

canonical focus on Parisian institutions, ideas, and practitioners; professionalization and bureaucracy can assume a variety of shapes, and Osborne's study provides a fresh contribution to the history of the professions as well as to the circumstances and rationales of French colonial policy. (Charles E. Rosenberg, Harvard University) "Deeply researched in a dozen archives, this concise book shows how nineteenth-century French naval and colonial medicine came to grips with an expanding empire and its bewildering assortment of peoples, places, and diseases. Osborne combines the study of institutions, individuals, and ideas into an elegant essay that everyone interested in the history of disease, health, and medicine will want to read." (J. R. McNeill, author of Mosquito Empires)

Michael A. Osborne is professor of history at Oregon State University and the author of *Nature, the Exotic, and the Science of French Colonialism*. He lives in Corvallis, OR.

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