

Reconsidering the combat of sleeping sickness and public health in the Portuguese colonial context

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Abstract

This panel intends to discuss recent approaches regarding sleeping sickness and the programmes for the eradication and control which were introduced from the beginning of the twentieth century in Portugal's former African colonies. Constituting the main focus of tropical medical specialists during the first decades of the 1900s, coinciding with the establishment of school of tropical medicine in Europe – and elsewhere - the study of this pathology is fundamental for the understanding of the evolution of this new scientific discipline and its organization between metropolis and 'tropical regions'. The papers presented in this panel focus on relations between metropolis and colonies (i.e. São Tomé and Príncipe, Angola and Mozambique), on the way in which biomedicine assumed a vanguard role on the ground in the colonial project of modernization, on the forging of a 'national' narrative on the policies and programs that were implemented, and on the organization and the role of sleeping sickness in the debate in the metropolis with regard to institutional aspects of the organization of public health policies and the campaigns against endemic diseases in the colonies.