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Africa in the Time of Cholera: A History of Pandemics from 1817 to the Present (African Studies)

Myron Echenberg

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Written in a style attractive to non-specialists, this book combines evidence from natural and social sciences to examine the impact on Africa of seven cholera pandemics since 1817, particularly the current impact of cholera on such major countries as Senegal, Angola, Mozambique, Congo, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. Cholera's explosion in Africa involves such variables as migration, armed conflict, climate change, and changing disease ecology. Myron Echenberg highlights the irony that this once-terrible scourge, having receded from most of the globe, now kills thousands of Africans annually - Africa now accounts for more than 90 percent of the world's cases and deaths - and leaves many more with severe developmental impairment. Responsibility for the suffering of thousands of infants and children who survive the disease but are left with acute developmental impairment is shared by Western lending and health institutions and by often venal and incompetent African leadership. Cholera is no longer a bio-medical riddle. Inexpensive and effective oral rehydration therapy can now control the impact of cholera, while modest investment in potable water and sewage infrastructure helps prevent major outbreaks. If the threat of this old scourge is addressed with more urgency, great progress in the public health of Africans can be achieved.

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