

The Cape Doctor in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History (Clio Medica, 74)

Howard Phillips

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The Cape Doctor is a social history of medicine, which places formal Western medicine within its political, social and economic context. The work shows the way in which the Cape medical profession excluded all but a few women and black practitioners, and discriminated along lines of race, class and gender in their practice. It revises traditional whiggish and linear accounts of professional advancement, but it also moves beyond the classic revisionist tradition, which documents the emergence of a society divided along lines of race and gender, by providing examples of cultural crossover and medical pluralism. It also provides a perspective on a broad historical process within which to understand present debates about the most appropriate health policies in South Africa today.

The Cape Doctor is well researched and provides a wealth of data on a large variety of medical-historical topics, inter alia, the origins of the Somerset and other early hospitals, medical associations, the South African Medical Journal, and Cape medical education. The authors are to be commended on a project well done. Professor Dan J. Ncayiyana (Editor, South African Medical Journal, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Cape Town).



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