

Inter-South Technological Exchange Effectiveness: The Case of Chinese-Funded Medicine in Tanzania, 1968-1990.

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Abstract

Studies on the technological circulation have examined the North-South exchange as mainly one-way traffic, with Southern countries predominantly being recipients of the technologies from the Global North. Such presupposition has engendered the impression that countries of the Global South have little or no knowledge and technological artefacts to exchange among themselves as well as with the Global North. This paper contributes to the ongoing debate on “Theory from the South”, which underscores Southern countries’ role in techno-scientific development and innovation. The paper does so by examining the role of Chinese actors using three Chinese-funded medical projects, namely Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) research and treatment, Chinese Medical Teams (CMTs), and the Chinese-funded pharmaceutical industries as a focal point. The paper argues that knowledge was exchanged under the spirit of the South-South Cooperation (SSC), a spirit that espoused inter-South reciprocity in technological exchange. The paper shows that Chinese sponsorship of Tanzania’s health sector was critical not only in breaking the yoke of dependency on medical technologies from the North but also debunking the Global North narratives that posited Africa as backwards and lacking initiative in the medical and industrial technologies. It also discusses the manner and implications of Sino-Tanzanian medical exchange in developing Tanzania’s health sector. Employing the qualitative analytical methods on pertinent archival, oral and published information, the paper concludes by arguing that there was ineffectiveness in the Sino-Tanzanian medical exchange, which was not caused by African lack of initiative in adopting new technologies but by the wrong *modus Operandi* from the onset.

Keywords: Chinese Medical Teams, South-South Knowledge Exchange, Traditional Chinese Medicine, China, Tanzania.