Statistics and the Language of Global Health

Yi-Tang Lin presents the historical process by which statistics became the language of global health for local and international health organizations. Drawing on archival material from three continents, this study investigates efforts by public health schools, philanthropic foundations, and international organizations to turn numbers into an international language for public health. Lin shows how these initiatives produced an international network of public health experts who, across various socioeconomic and political contexts, opted for different strategies when it came to setting global standards and translating local realities into numbers. Focusing on China and Taiwan between 1917 and 1960, Lin examines the reception, adaptation, and appropriation of international health statistics. She presents the dynamic interplay between numbers, experts, and policy-making in international health organizations and administrations in China and Taiwan. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

Yi-Tang Lin is a Swiss National Science Foundation postdoctoral fellow at the University of Geneva and a visiting scholar at the Harvard Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies for 2021–22.
Global Health Histories

Series editor:

Sanjoy Bhattacharya, University of York

Global Health Histories aims to publish outstanding and innovative scholarship on the history of public health, medicine and science worldwide. By studying the many ways in which the impact of ideas of health and well-being on society were measured and described in different global, international, regional, national and local contexts, books in the series reconceptualise the nature of empire, the nation state, extra-state actors and different forms of globalisation. The series showcases new approaches to writing about the connected histories of health and medicine, humanitarianism, and global economic and social development.