African Studies meets Asian Studies

This year marks the 50th year since the founding of the Japan Association for African Studies. Tireless scholarly activities and contributions by members since its establishment have positioned this association as a leading Japanese academic society for regional studies. After 50 years, the time has come to share with the rest of the world the cumulative achievements in African studies in Japan. At the same time, as globalization continues apace and several Asian countries assume a significant presence on the world stage, the need for African studies becomes more important. Challenges for the future include utilizing the international changes in African studies as a source of energy in the development of African studies in Japan. Also, research activities in Africa will require more contributions in the future.

In the 60 years that have passed since the Bandung Conference, the relationship between Asia and Africa continues to change form as it continues to deepen. As one of the countries of Asia, we would like to take this delightful opportunity to celebrate the 50th year of JAAS. With the coming together of major Asian researchers on African studies and African scholars of Asian regional studies to share experiences in their respective streams of study, we commemorate this international conference in the hope of gaining common ground upon which we could build future cooperation for trans-continental research.

Program

23rd May 2014
Room (333) on the 3rd floor of Inamori Foundation Memorial Hall, Kyoto University

13:00 Opening remarks: Shuhei Shimada (President of JAAS, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)
Welcome speech: Shigeki Kaj (Director of The Center for African Area Studies, Kyoto University)

Chair: Yoichiro Min (Doshisha University)

Youngkyu Chang (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea)
“Korean African Studies and Its Discontents: Facing with Societal Ignorance and Academic Marginalization”

Scarlett Corniessen (University of Stellenbosch, South Africa)

Masahisa Kawabata (Ryukoku University)

Xiaomen Sun (Beijing University of Foreign Studies, China)
“African Studies in China: Opportunities and Challenges”

Ajay Dubey (Jawaharlal Nehru University, India)
“African Studies in India: Geopolitics and Challenges”

15:15 Poster session

16:30 2nd session: History of Relationship between Africa and Asia
Chair: Takuo Iwata (Ritsumeikan University)

Aparajita Biswas (University of Mumbai, President of African Studies Association of India)
“Burgeoning Trade and Investments Relations between India and Africa in Contemporary Times”

Kyudeung Hwang (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea)
“Revisiting Developmental State in South Korea: Some Implications for Africa”

Gebre Yentiso (Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia)
“The Developmental State in Ethiopia: Inspirations from Asia, Achievements and Challenges”

18:00 Closing remarks: Masayoshi Shigeta (Kyoto University)
Korean African Studies and Its Discontents: Facing with Societal Ignorance and Academic Marginalisation

Korean Association of African Studies (KAAS), a nation-wide wide academic association for the study, just turned 30 years last year. Neither official celebration nor memorial conference was held, and it, I think, shows the current stagnant state of African studies in Korea. African studies in Korea has long been marginalized in academia and, in the presentation, I will attempt to interpret this stagnant situation of African studies in Korea by indicating two aspects, societal ignorance and academic marginalization, as the major hindrance. Societal ignorance towards African continent is mainly caused by the lack of national interests both on economic and political (diplomatic) perspectives. Korea and African continent have virtually no historical relations until before the middle of 20th century. Even after that, Korea-Africa relation has always been the last consideration of diplomacy to Korean government. In like wise, Korea’s economic interest on African continent has occupied the least attention. Academic research funds in Korea, particularly of international area studies, sensitively reflect the diplomatic policy of Korean government. Therefore, naturally, African Studies, as a branch of international area studies, has seldom being given serious attention in academia. Registered member of KAAS outnumbers one hundred, however, members’ loyalty to the association is weak, since they take African studies as the secondary or supplementary research fields. To overcome these difficulties, I suggest in this presentation, Korean Africanists need to be ‘transnational’ by building up academic networks out country, which is the mandatory for the development of African studies in Korea.

Asian Studies in South Africa: Reflections on the past, present and future

There has been an upsurge in interest in recent years in establishing stronger scholarly and academic institutional links between Africa and Asia. This parallels observably closer economic and diplomatic interaction between African countries and Asia’s rising powers in particular China and India - and is perhaps driven by a desire to understand the impetuses and implications of these newer types of engagement. How is greater interaction between Africa and Asia found reflected in scholarship, what are the identifiable lines of investigation, and to what extent can discrete subfields of study be discerned? Further, what are the foundations on which current scholarly build and what tendencies can therefore be identified in each region as regards the study of the other? In this paper I trace the origins and development of ‘Asian Studies’ in South African, with the aim of outlining the prevailing institutional conditions, scholarly concerns and the epistemological and methodological features of research conducted on the African region over the years. I focus on questions such as ‘what constitutes “Asian Studies” within the South African context?’; ‘how does the study of Asia fit into the broader development of area studies and disciplinary fields in South Africa?’ and, ‘what factors have underpinned this development?’ In addition to looking at the contents and emphasis of the scholarly literature on Asia, I also consider the epistemologies underpinning those works. The paper aims to draw conclusions about the future of Asian Studies in South Africa given present conditions.

Masahisa Kawabata
Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Law, Ryukoku University, Japan.
Founding President of Japan Association for Africa Studies (April 2011 - March 2014)

The Foundation of the Japan Association for African Studies and the Dawn of African Studies in Japan
I would like to discuss the dawn of African studies at the time of the foundation of the Association for African Studies. The Japan Association for African Studies was founded in April 1964. At the time, African studies of Japanese scholars were at the dawn stage. I will present the overview on the beginning of African studies in 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and explain the creation of academic groups and research institutions for African studies. I will also trace the experiences of field researchers of Japanese scholars in Africa and the formation of educational institutions for African studies in Japan, commenting characteristics and tasks of Japan’s African studies in the following topics. (1) Human Sciences: cultural and social anthropology, history, linguistics, thought and religion, human geography, art, and literature. (2) Social Sciences: political science, economics, agricultural area, international relations, development and cooperation, education, and women. (3) Natural Sciences: primatology, medical science and pharmacy, geology, natural geography, ecological anthropology, animal and botany, archaeology, agriculture, and engineering. (4) Associations and Institutions of African Studies: Area studies, African studies, the Association for African Studies, academic groups and institutions for African studies.

African Studies in China: Opportunities and Challenges

In the year 2000, Sino-African relations entered the new phase of comprehensive upgrading and development. President Xi Jinping is a strong advocate of fostering mature African policy. The establishment of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000 further provided mechanism for the development of bilateral relations. As China has grown, it has created opportunities for Chinese Africanists, African studies in China since the new millennium. My paper studies African studies in China, its developments, trends and features, problems and challenges. In conclusion, African studies in China are essential to the healthy and comprehensive development of China-Africa relations and pave the way for future cooperation, it is a promising field, but there is space for more effort and collaboration for the upcoming years.

African Studies in Geopolitics and Challenges

African studies as a systematic academic subject was initiated and promoted by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Indian Prime Minister. He visualized the importance of understanding Africa under his plan for Afro-Asian resurgence and Non-alignment during cold war. In the immediate aftermath of Nehru’s vision, there was an Indian push towards Africa to tap it as an important and large region for economic cooperation under South-South framework. New centre came particularly focusing on this issue. Under globalization, a fast growing India looked towards Africa as an important source for supplying energy products and raw materials and as a region with crucial voting power required in restructing institutions of global governance and international negotiations. India responded by massive injection of public money through a bureaucratic set up which is known for corruption and lack of its integrity. Most of the Indian academicians and their academic institutions refused to accept the dole to appreciate the misconstrued Indian engagement in Africa which became a den of corruption and was therefore eroding historical goodwill of India in Africa. As a result, Indian bureaucracy launched massively funded pseudo academic initiative of conference, research and publications by its fully controlled and funded outfits in name of truct two initiatives (sic) to justify and publicize its controversial economic operation in Africa. However, the independent public funded Indian academic institutions came together under Pan Indian African initiatives to carry on studies of Africa and Indo-African engagements in long term interest of India, Africa and above all African studies as an academic discipline largely supported by University Grant Commission of India. The paper intends to analyze the genesis and evolution of African studies in India as an academic discipline with its strength, weakness, opportunities and challenges.

"Asian Studies in South Africa: Reflections on the past, present and future" by Yongkyu Chang

"African Studies in China: Opportunities and Challenges" by Xiaomei Sun

"African Studies in Geopolitics and Challenges" by Ajay Dubey