

Uganda – Japan Joint International Workshop in Kampala

Situating Universal Concepts to the Reality of Marginalized African Nomads: A Challenge for Area Studies of “Citizenship” and “Humanitarianism”

Abstract

The current reality of marginalized nomadic communities (i.e., refugees, immigrants, and nomadic pastoralists) in Africa has been overlooked by both national and international concerns and discourses. Since the colonial period, national and international frameworks of intervention have mainly been applied without regard for the views of marginalized people, which were consequently submerged by superficial global narratives. Many universal concepts of Western origin (e.g., human rights, democracy, justice, governance, citizenship, humanitarianism, resilience) have undoubtedly been imposed on African communities without examining the marginalized nomads’ local circumstances, resulting in even more confusion, conflict, and chaos on the ground.

The aim of this joint international workshop is to reconsider and recreate these Western universal concepts from the perspective of marginalized African nomads. First, it approaches the current complex reality of these communities with both field research evidence and the people’s opinions. Second, it attempts to recapture global narratives from the marginalized nomads’ perspective. This workshop is organized by mainly international and interdisciplinary researchers in area studies of Africa and representatives from the local communities.

This workshop focuses on two typical Western concepts: “citizenship” and “humanitarianism.” These are the most important concepts for the marginalized African nomads, accounting for many accompanying discourses and affecting their daily lives.

Most of the national and international interventions stemmed from a negative attitude towards the marginalized African nomads: “We have everything, they have nothing.” However, we do not presuppose that the universal concepts of “citizenship” or “humanitarianism” have never existed among African communities before and after intervention. Instead, we attempt to analyze and reveal how these critical concepts interrelate and intertwine the global and local contexts.

The objective of this workshop is to open up the possibility of reframing universal concepts of Western origin from the people’s perspective and creating truly universal frameworks that include non-Western perspectives.

Date: August 18th–20th, 2017

Venue: Grand Global Hotel, Kampala, Uganda

Program

Keynote Speech

Edward Kirumira (Professor, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Makerere University)

Panel 1

Citizenship in East Africa: Creative Engagement for New Space

Chairperson: Itsuhiro HAZAMA (Nagasaki University)

Abstract for Panel 1

Mainstream citizenship studies regard the “citizen” in Africa as a negligible concept, different from that in Europe and the United States. This panel understands the plurality of citizenship as a range of possibilities for people to coexist, drawing on long-term and intensive research about Uganda’s mobile populations, which often remains on the periphery of public politics.

Modern Africa is in a maelstrom of neoliberalism that dominates individual Western subjects. In this panel, we will not take the path of introducing into Africa the type of citizenship that penetrates modern European republicanism and multiculturalism; rather, we explore the essentially different triggers from those of Western citizenship. We clarify how “African Citizenship” constantly regenerates as living

conditions change, with people being open to the possibility of living in collaboration, negotiation, and conviviality with one another.

Panelists of Panel 1

Itsuhiro Hazama (Associate Professor, School of Global Humanities and Social Sciences, Nagasaki University)

Noriko Tahara (Professor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Shitennoji University)

Kiyoshi Umeya (Professor, Graduate School of Intercultural Studies, Kobe University)

Gaku Moriguchi (Part-time Lecturer, Gakushuin University)

Tamara Enomoto (Research Fellow, Meiji University Research Institute for the History of Global Arms Transfer)

Nobuko Yamazaki (Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University)

Francis Nyamnjoh (Professor, Faculty of Humanities, University of Cape Town)

Motoji Matsuda (Professor, Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University)

Panel 2

Humanitarian Assistance from the Perspective of East African Nomads: Towards its Localization

Chairperson: Shinya KONAKA (University of Shizuoka, Japan)

Abstract for Panel 2

This panel explores the possibility of localizing humanitarian assistance frameworks to East African pastoralists, by examining and evaluating the Japanese research project outcomes from the viewpoint of scholars from and refugees in Uganda.

It is wrong to describe the livelihood of East African pastoralists without considering humanitarian assistance and its secondary effects; however, very little attention has been paid to the issue.

Many studies have revealed that humanitarian assistance is not necessarily a neutral, impartial, and apolitical act. In addition, cultural diversity has not yet been examined thoroughly in humanitarian research, although humanitarian assistance is not an acultural practice.

To respond to both cultural diversity and the current reality of the transformation, this panel will introduce the “articulation-sphere approach,” which focuses on the intermediate realm between the local and universal. This approach could reveal not only initial signs of the disaster victims’ self-help efforts but also the possibility of localizing universal humanitarian assistance frameworks from the bottom up.

Panelists of Panel 2

Shinya Konaka (Professor, School of International Relations, University of Shizuoka)

SUN Xiaogang (Researcher, Graduate School of Area Studies of Asia and Africa, Kyoto University)

Itsuhiro Hazama (Associate Professor, School of Global Humanities and Social Sciences, Nagasaki University)

Yoshinori Mochizuki (Visiting Researcher, Center for Global Studies, University of Shizuoka)

Christine Mbabazi Mpyangu (Lecturer, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Makerere University)

Bul Garang (Chairperson of Refugee Welfare Committee, Baratuku Refugee Settlement, Adjumani)

Wilson Senyonyi (Protection Officer, Oxfam)

Plenary Discussion

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