

61st KUASS (Kyoto University African Studies Seminar)

Date and Time: January 27, 2017 (Fri) 16:00-18:30

Venue: #318, Inamori Memorial Foundation Building (3rd floor), Kyoto University

Presentation 1:

The State of African Studies in Europe

Presentation 2:

Forging New Alliances: Reflections on Religion and Politics in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Speaker: Prof. Dr. Barbara Bompani (Center of African Studies, University of Edinburgh)

Abstract of presentation 1:

For whom do we research Africa and for what purpose? We, as scholars working on Africa-related research projects and teaching, should periodically return to this question in order to reflect on the challenges, opportunities and legitimacy of our own work. From colonial times in which constituent disciplines within African Studies were helping dominant powers to grasp knowledge of local contexts in order to facilitate control, to the 60s and 70s in which African Studies was called upon to produce new understandings of Africa in and for post-colonial times to more contemporary endeavours where understanding development trajectories is the focus, African Studies presents different morphologies in each era and in each context. This short presentation will reflect on the state of African Studies in the UK and more broadly in Europe in recent times, highlighting challenges and reconfigurations brought about by national and international challenges such as migration, European divisions, funding, the growth of the AEGIS European network, and questions around real partnerships and collaborative research with African institutions. In particular, the presentation will reflect on debates around Decolonizing the Academy that, riding the wave of intellectual and activist movements started in South African universities by students, has dominated critical thinking within European institutions over the past two years.

Abstract of presentation 2:

South Africa presents an excellent opportunity to understand the evolution of the relationship between the state and religious organisations and their public role in post-colonial contexts. Prior to the end of the undemocratic regime of Apartheid, many Christian churches and religious organisations were broadly aligned with the anti-Apartheid movement and their strategy of state resistance during the liberation struggle. The years immediately following the first democratic election in April 1994 marked a period of consensus between the state, civil society, and religious organisations. This period was characterised as one of 'critical solidarity' in the process of nation building as religious

organisations eschewed the critical voice of the liberation struggle and aligned themselves with the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC). However, in more recent times the post-1994 consensus has slowly eroded in the face of governmental inefficiency, continuing inequality, and social crises that belie the ideal of an inclusive, tolerant country based on respect for human rights, justice and equality that was both promised and expected. In response, it appears that new trends are emerging and that religious leaders and religious organisations are to some extent reoccupying the public sphere and redefining their public role by condemning government ineffectiveness in meeting the needs of the new South Africa. New alliances have subsequently been forged in this period. This presentation will offer an analysis and an explanation of these changes within the South African post-apartheid context bringing to light the complex but extremely relevant interrelation between Religion and Politics in South Africa.

Co-hosted by:

"Network formation for reconstructing the paradigm of African Area Studies in a globalizing world" for the JSPS Program for Advancing Strategic International Networks to Accelerate the Circulation of Talented Researchers (PI: Jun Ikeno)