62nd KUASS (Kyoto University African Studies Seminar)

**Date and Time:** February 3, 2017 (Fri) 18:00-20:00  
**Venue:** #318, Inamori Memorial Foundation Building (3rd floor), Kyoto University

**Title:**  
Theorising Voice: Performativity, Politics and Listening

**Speaker:** Ms. Jenny Lawy (University of Edinburgh)

**Abstract:**
The aim of this paper is to develop a theory of voice. I claim that the productivity of using ‘voice’ as a theoretical tool is to attend to the voice of the speaker as performative, bodily and relating to gesture, as well as recognising that voice(s) are a necessary part of a functioning political, democratic structure. Indeed, we often focus on the speaker, yet this paper reveals that any research on voice needs to also consider the politics involved in listening. Listening not only nuances the study of voice, but also shifts the focus back to those in positions of dominance who can be forgotten if too much focus is given to a political and social struggle undertaken by a minority group to be heard. I draw on ethnographic research that was carried out in 2010 and 2011 in Botswana with indigenous Ncoakhoe (also known in literature as ‘San’) which revealed how voice was used (performativity) but also how the audience is often restricted in terms of their ability to listen, which impacts the political effect it can have. Since this effects Ncoakhoe who are educated and employed Christians, i.e. Ncoakhoe who have subscribed to the dominant moral code, it suggests that a theory of voice is not only about speaking, participating or making yourself heard but it must also consider the implications of using a voice that relies upon dominant structures to legitimise it. When Ncoakhoe speak, who listens?

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)

4th Colloquium of Natural History of Landscape Formation [financially supported by JSPS Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (A)(Overseas Academic Research) "Natural history of landscape formation in contact zone between hunter-gatherers and agro-pastoralists in Africa" (Primary Investigator: Akira Takada).]