

【Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (S)】

Humanities and Social Sciences (Social Sciences)



Title of Project : “African Potential” and overcoming the difficulties of modern world: comprehensive area studies that will provide a new perspective for the future of humanity

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Research Area : Area Studies

Keyword : Africa, potential, development, environment, conflict

【Purpose and Background of the Research】

The aim of this research project is to change the conventional perception under which Africa was considered to be only an object of assistance and sympathy, or the source of supply of resources and a promising market, to make clear the potentials Africa has created for problem solving and development, and to examine comprehensively its possibilities to make great contributions for the entire world of the 21st century. Sub-Saharan Africa was praised as one of the engines of the world economic growth in the first decade of this century. However, on the other hand, difficulties such as widening disparity in the society, confrontation seemingly based on religion, race and ethnicity, environmental destruction are becoming even more serious. In order to deal with these difficulties, we will extract and conceptualize the dynamic coping ability of African society that has been ignored by conventional thoughts and ideas that have an intellectual origin in Western modernity, and will provide a perspective for problem solving by utilizing such potentials. With the help of such endeavor, we aim to show a creative articulative process of knowledge genesis to become the basis of the African potentials as another mode of knowledge of the humanities and social sciences originating from Africa, which will make it possible to understand and live the world in a different way.

【Research Methods】

The research plan of this project is comprised of three following phases. At the first stage, we identify the problems that African society faces within historic processes and social changes, and bring to light various kinds of politico-economical, socio-cultural and ideological ways to deal with them. At the second stage, we examine the effect and mechanism of "African potentials" through the comparison of each way of problem-resolution. At the third stage, we identify the domains in which "African potentials" functions effectively in problem solving, and concentrate our efforts on organizing an intensive joint research concerning those domains. Therefore, the research method is as follows: to set up two research teams in each of the three fields (nature and environment, society and co-existence, body and succession), and to

create a special team that will integrate all findings and results of each research teams and will energize the unitary connectivity of the six research groups. The research teams are characterized by core participation of woman researchers and researchers from Africa of each generation, and by participation of eight front-line African researchers who created and developed the idea of "African potential" together.

【Expected Research Achievements and Scientific Significance】

By using “African potentials” as another intellectual and practical tool for problem resolution, we will achieve three goals. The first goal is to make a practical contribution to solve the problems such as conflict resolution and social reconciliation or environmental conservation. The second expected outcome of this project is to make a critical reconsideration of the dominant perspective to recognize Africa, which has been developed and prevailed for several centuries. The last goal is to formulate another mode of knowledge that Africa has created and recreated with entanglement of other elements/forces from the outside world. In this sense, “African potentials” will not be comprehended as a practical skill for problem solving. By formulating an “African potentials” in which the another way of thinking, knowing, imagining and doing are producing, different from those ways that originated in Western modernity and have monopolized a dominant position within humanities and social sciences until now, we will develop a new kind of humanities and social scientific knowledge, which will become an intellectual property for the future of human society.

【Publications Relevant to the Project】

- Matsuda Motoji, Hirano (Nomoto) Misa eds., “Culture that solves conflicts” African potential 1, Kyoto University Press, 2016.
- Matsuda Motoji ed., “For those who study African society”, Sekaishisousha, 2014.

【Term of Project】 FY2016-2020

【Budget Allocation】 140,000 Thousand Yen

【Homepage Address and Other Contact Information】

<http://www.africapotential.africa.kyoto-u.ac.jp/m>