Purpose and Background of the Research

One of the most serious problems in Africa is the disruption of the social order due to civil wars and regional conflicts. Conflicts in the 1990s and beyond are especially notable in their production of enormous numbers of refugees and IDPs. It is essential to the stability and growth of African societies to find effective means to ameliorate the varied problems these conflicts cause.

Both governmental and non-governmental international bodies have intervened in these conflicts in various ways, such as, peace keeping missions, supporting the establishment of post-war political institutions, and prosecuting violations of human rights and war crimes. These interventions have, however, achieved limited success, because they are based on ideologies, values and processes that are fundamentally Western in origin. This research project, in contrast, emphasizes the knowledge and institutions that African societies have themselves developed and utilized in resolving conflicts and maintaining co-existence. We thus aim to understand how this existing body of indigenous knowledge and institutions—which we term “African Potentials”—might most effectively be employed in settling conflicts, bringing about reconciliation, and healing post-conflict societies in Africa today.

These African Potentials have long been generated through encounters and clashes with European and Arabic Islamic societies and continue to undergo constant transformation, an ability we term “Interface Functions.” As we identify and evaluate African Potentials, we also will explore how they are articulated with the external factors through the work of Interface Functions.

Expected Research Achievements and Scientific Significance

This project is significant because of its focus on that which has previously been underplayed in previous studies of conflict resolution and peace-building: Namely, African Potentials and Interface Functions, and the ways to most effectively utilize such institutions. To further facilitate this goal, and disseminate findings, African scholars and practitioners will also participate in this project. We also believe that it is our duty to tackle the difficult problems of conflict resolution and coexistence in order to respond to the social needs of contemporary African societies.

Publications Relevant to the Project


Term of Project: FY2011-2015

Budget Allocation: 157,600 Thousand Yen

Homepage Address and Other Contact Information

Our website is under construction. For the outline of the project, see the following URL:
http://jambo.africa.kyoto-u.ac.jp/kibans/index.html