

# Casebook of International Activities @ Kansai University

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International Symposium on Asian and African Regional Studies and Kansai University Asian and African Studies Group (AASG)

Professor Katsuhiko Kitagawa  
Faculty of Economics

- Outline**
- Main activity / The holding of international symposiums themed on Asian and African Regional Studies
  - Relevant organizations / Stellenbosch University (South Africa), Kansai University (Japan), Doshisha University (Japan)
  - Past symposiums / Nov. 2013 The First International Symposium at Stellenbosch University (South Africa)  
Jul. 2014 The Second International Symposium at Doshisha University  
Jul. 2015 The Third International Symposium at Kansai University  
May. 2017 The Fourth International Symposium at Kansai University



“In Africa, people see Asia as China. The diversity of Asia needs to be recognized.”

—How did you start the activity?

Kitagawa: As you know, African countries have in recent years been looking toward Asia, trying to enhance the relationship with the continent. In Africa, however, people see Asia as China. For them, expanding business in Asia means advancing into China. It is a

problem if too much importance is attached to China. It has to be recognized that Asia has a high level of diversity, including advanced economies such as Japan and South Korea. So, in around 2011 and 2012, it was suggested to build a network for Asian studies in Africa with representatives from Asian countries. Accordingly, the Association of Asian Studies

in Africa (A-ASIA) was established in Africa. The association's steering committee members include Professor Yoichi Mine from Doshisha University and Professor Scarlett Cornelissen from Stellenbosch University (South Africa) whom I have known well for years. The two professors decided to work toward the expansion of Asian and African studies in Japan and invited me to join them. We then started this international symposium in cooperation with A-ASIA to expand Asian and African studies.



>> Symposium on the development of Asian and African studies and education in Japan (held at Kansai University in May 2016)

“ The Fourth International Symposium attracted world leading researchers in the field of Asian and African studies.”

—Could you tell us the specifics of the activity?

Kitagawa: Our first meeting was held at Stellenbosch University in 2013. We started with independent studies under the theme of “Africa and Asia Entanglements in Past and Present.” At the first symposium at Stellenbosch University, we made an arrangement to hold the second symposium at Doshisha University and the third symposium at Kansai University. The second and third symposiums were held as planned at Doshisha University in 2014 and at Kansai University in 2015. Because we needed a management organization at Kansai University to host the third international symposium at our university, the Asia Africa Study Group (AASG) was established with the help of Professor Kitaba and Professor Goto from the Faculty of Economics. Later, we thought that while Asian and African studies are important, it is also necessary for higher educational institutions in Japan to provide education regarding various phenomena occurring in Asia and Africa. For that reason, we organized a special educational symposium at Kansai University in June 2016 in collaboration with TICAD and with support from the Suntory Foundation.

Since the beginning of my engagement in this international symposium in 2013, my activity might be said to have provided opportunities to consider what is necessary for Kansai University to enhance its public image. In my opinion, the key is to connect with researchers and organizations engaged globally in academic activities. For example, the Fourth International Symposium held in May 2017 attracted world leading researchers in the field of Asian and African studies, including Professor Scarlett Cornelissen from Stellenbosch University (South Africa), Professor Pedro Rapposo from the University Lusida of Porto (Portugal), Professor Kweku Ampiah from the University of Leeds (England), and Professor Yoichi Mine from Doshisha University. It may be small but is a top level international conference. Moreover, with Professor Tukumbi Lumumba Kasongo from Cornell University (USA) and Professor Seifudein Adem from the State University of New York at Binghamton (USA), the symposium would be second to none. This symposium has been held four times, and I hope this activity will be continued and expanded at Kansai University.

—What difficulties have you faced in this

activity?

Kitagawa: Although we received a subsidy from Kansai University for the third international symposium held at our university, our budget faced a shortfall. Researchers who supported the symposium provided their scientific research grants and other funds to make up the deficit. For 14 researchers we invited from outside Japan, I did most of VISA-related paperwork myself. It was tough. When things calmed down after the symposium, I compiled a report.

When the first symposium was held at Stellenbosch University, Professor Scarlett Cornelissen also did a lot of the work herself. Participants in the conference from Japan flew at their own expense to and from the Republic of South Africa. A professor from the University of KwaZulu-Natal also participated at his own expense when the symposium was held at Kansai University because we could not afford his airfare. The costs for all these symposiums were covered by ourselves.



>> International conference held in Ghana by the Asian studies network in Africa

“ With lively African businesses, academic interaction may also be fostered from now on. So, in my opinion, student exchanges should also be encouraged. ”

—What are the future prospects?

Kitagawa: As for Africa, while progress is slow in terms of academic exchanges, business forums have been set up to provide support for African businesses in Japan. The African Development Bank has established in Tokyo the External Representation Office for Asia, which serves as a platform to provide assistance to African businesses. Academic interaction has been broadening gradually, but it is still slow. With lively African businesses, academic interaction may also be fostered from now on. So, in my opinion, student exchanges should also be encouraged.

As I said earlier, four international symposiums have been held. Though not yet an official campus organization, AASG has played a major role in the activity. At Kansai University, East Asian studies have been actively pursued. Going forward, the target of our activity will likely to expand to include the educational and research interactions with South Asian countries such as India and the Western Indian Ocean region, as well as the area from the west of India to the Africa’s Indian Ocean coast. In particular, academic and business interactions with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) will be further facilitated. The

6th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) held in Nairobi, Kenya, for example, attracted as many as 1,000 participants from Japan. It was the first time for the city to receive such a large group of Japanese people. This is the scale of the movement happening in the business world. I hope to bring this momentum to academic interaction, too.

In around 2009, there was a movement to build an African studies network in Asia, which is the opposite of A-ASIA. The Centre for African Studies of Jawaharlal Nehru University in India and the Institute of African Studies of the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in South Korea have set up an organization with the central role played by these two organizations in India and South Korea, along with the Japan Association For African Studies, as well as Peking University and Beijing Foreign Studies University, which are engaged in African studies in China. The reason that we continuously held the said international symposiums and established AASG at Kansai University is that we wanted to consider what we should do in response to these trends. To keep up with this global trend, Kansai University needs an organization like AASG. Otherwise, the University would be left behind in



>> International conference on African Studies held in India

interregional exchange between Asia and Africa. With AASG playing a key role, establishing a research center, for example, will allow us to lead the process of globalization at Kansai University.

We plan to continue the international symposium into the future. On the

second day of the Fourth International Symposium held in May 2017, we had a round table discussion where we talked about the holding of an academic forum once every three years alternately in Africa and Japan, to be held concurrently with TICAD, which is also held every three years. My hope is to have someone from Kansai University as my successor.



Researcher's name/  
Katsuhiko Kitagawa  
Faculty and department/  
History and Economic Thought Major,  
Department of Economics  
Academic status (qualification)/  
Professor  
Research field/  
Economic history, African studies (sub-Saharan)  
Researcher information/  
<http://gakujo.kansai-u.ac.jp/profile/ja/181bedd901va6aaf5eac891y-dab4.html>



AASG Website:  
<http://www2.kansai-u.ac.jp/AASG/index.html> (in Japanese)

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<http://www.kansai-u.ac.jp/Kokusai/english/>

