

## **Preface to the Series of Five Volumes**

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### 1. Defining ‘African Potentials’

The five volumes of the African Potentials series, which includes this collection, comprise the results of a research project carried out from 2011 to 2015.<sup>1</sup>

During this project, we discussed various phenomena connected with the themes of ‘conflict and coexistence’ in Africa. In the context of this process, however, the substance of what readers might envision from the problematique of ‘African conflict resolution’ also gave rise to the consideration of several quite unexpected questions, an example of which might be that of how to define the concept of ‘tradition.’ For this reason, the contents of the papers collected in these five volumes are extremely wide-ranging, and in some cases include discussions that do not touch directly on conflict at all. Here, I would like to begin with a discussion of the associations of our project’s key concept of ‘African Potentials’ as well as in relation to the original aims and characteristics of this research.

Normally, studies that analyse the causes of conflict and seek the means to resolve it – studies relating to ‘peace-building’ to use a term that has come into common use over the past decade or so – have largely been carried out by researchers in the fields of political science and international relations, or else peace and security studies or development economics. In contrast, our research project has sought to bring these together as a comprehensive whole from the perspective of area studies while securing the participation of researchers in a variety of other disciplines. In this project, a total of more than fifty Japanese researchers and in excess of twenty international colleagues, primarily from Africa, have taken part and expanded the discussion in a variety of ways. This is the first project in the history of African Studies in Japan to have marshalled so many researchers to explore the issues of conflict and coexistence in cooperation with African researchers. It is thus as a testament to that history that I take pride in the publication of the project’s collected results here in the African Potentials Series.

Contemporary Africa, particularly since the 1990s, has experienced frequent outbreaks of violence, including civil wars, ethnic conflict, religious strife, and disputes over resources. The Rwandan genocide, which saw the massacre in a very short time of between 500,000 and 800,000 people, is still

fresh in our memories. Civil wars continued for a prolonged period in places like Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Somalia, while in South Sudan, which overcame a civil war spanning more than twenty years to achieve independence in July of 2011, civil war broke out once more in December of 2013, with few prospects of any path to a resolution. Most recently, the civil war in the Central African Republic and terrorist bombings by Boko Haram mainly in northern Nigeria have garnered considerable attention in the mass media. In addition, all manner of conflicts have taken place in Africa, even aside from these large-scale conflicts, including struggles over political power and natural resources, clashes over land use rights between farmers and pastoralists, as well as tensions between local peoples and governments over the establishment of natural parks, resulting in the generation of vast numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

To address this situation, the international community has become involved in African society in a variety of ways, including armed interventions and support for the signing of cease-fire and peace agreements, cooperation in post-conflict institution-building, and legal interventions such as through the International Criminal Court. Civil society organisations in the non-profit sector have also instituted various measures to assist in the relief of conflict victims and reconstruction of post-conflict society. Such actions on the part of the international community have been powerfully driven by Western ideological and value norms that have their origin in notions of liberal democracy and retributive legal justice. In other words, this is a line of thinking which holds that peace is realised precisely through efforts to stabilise public order by strengthening state sovereignty and the rule of law, through defending human rights through the establishment of democratic governance, and through extending free market economics. Interventions based in this ideology are referred to as *liberal peace-building*.

While I will discuss this point in more detail below, such interventions by the international community have a tendency to attempt to resolve conflicts using the same sorts of remedies no matter where these conflicts occur. The fact that conflicts occur in the absence of established democracies, market economics, and state sovereignty leads to the conclusion that these *should* be introduced. Therefore, the international community tends to regard conflict resolution as more than anything a *technical problem*, and assume that they will be able to resolve these problems by sending in external experts to promote peace-building activities. Partially hidden below the surface, this line of thinking hints at the attitude that *because African societies lack mechanisms for conflict resolution, and because they do not have the expert technical knowledge for peace-building, the correct measures must be provided by the international community*. It follows that peace-building interventions are pervaded with a way of thinking that sees such assistance as a unidirectional flow of knowledge to African people, who in turn lack the capabilities (and agency) to clear a path to peace on their own. Africa is treated as being in a

state of *deficiency*.

We do not wish to argue that the international community's support of and interventions in Africa are all utter failures. There are certainly many cases that have achieved some degree of success. Nevertheless, several reports have also suggested that, in fact, failed interventions by the UN and regional agencies far outnumber their successes (e.g., Boulden 2003, 2013). Moreover, even if interventions by the international community are successful militarily, politically, or economically, they are rarely effective in realising social reconstruction and reconciliation between African neighbours scarred by conflict.

What is needed here is *inspiration from the lived experiences of African people* – in other words, a fundamental shift away from concepts that originated in the West. Rather than viewing Africa as *deficient*, we take a close-up look at the knowledge, institutions, and values that Africans have themselves created, accumulated, and put into practice for achieving conflict resolution and coexistence. The people of Africa have avoided the escalation of conflict on the basis of their own formulas; where such conflicts have occurred, they have achieved coexistence by seeking strategies for their resolution and carrying out some manner of adjustment or accommodation. In our research project, we characterise such knowledge and institutions as 'African Potentials' and have adopted the stance that these have traditionally been effective in their own ways and can moreover be leveraged to achieve settlement and reconciliation among people in contemporary conflicts, as well as in the revival of social order and restoration of post-conflict societies. In this way, by endeavouring to be attentive to and learn from practices grounded in the experience of people living in African communities, this also poses a challenge to mainstream Western-centric discourse – implicit within peace-building activities by the international community – in which the people of Africa are merely a passive presence incapable of achieving peace and coexistence on their own.

## 2. 'Conflict and Coexistence': The Scope of the Issues

In studying the issues of *conflict* and *coexistence* in the African context, we directed our study so that it would be inclusive and comprehensive in two senses. The first of these was with regard to discipline. As already noted, a large body of international research regarding African conflicts and their resolution now exists in the fields of political science, international relations, and security studies (e.g., Mekenkamp et al. 1998; Boulden 2003, 2013; Francis 2008; Falola & Njoku 2010). On the other hand, the field of African studies in Japan, based on accomplishments achieved through long-term engagement in fieldwork, has produced unique interdisciplinary studies of conflict that bridge the macro spheres of history and political structure and the micro spheres of society and culture (e.g.,

Fukui & Markakis, eds. 1994; Kurimoto & Simonse, eds. 1998; Takeuchi, ed. 2000, 2008; Takeuchi 2009; Kawabata et al., eds. 2010, Sato, ed. 2012, 2013; Ochiai, ed. 2011, Kurimoto 1996; Sagawa 2011). Our research project, while following on in this tradition, has sought to comprehensively explore the issues of conflict and coexistence from the perspective of area studies. The resolution of conflict and achievement of human coexistence involves a diverse and complex array of political, economic, and cultural elements. In a manner of speaking, it was thus inevitable that a study of these phenomena should aspire to be comprehensive in scope.

The second sense is that of the inclusivity of our research focus. In our research project, we explored African Potentials in terms of the common threads running through the entirety of conflict occurring on different scales; not only large conflicts like the civil wars that have produced vast numbers of dead and displaced persons, but also the various struggles that occur in the sphere of daily life. In these two senses, then, our study was a comprehensive one. In explaining the intrinsic breadth of scope occupied by issues relating to conflict and coexistence, I propose in what follows to adhere to the discussion developed by Johan Galtung in his classic study on ‘Violence, Peace, and Peace Research’ (Galtung 1969).

In this article, Galtung defines violence in the following terms. ‘Violence is present,’ he writes, ‘when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations’ (Galtung 1969: 168). In other words, *violence* is defined as the cause of a gap between *what was feasible* and *what has actually taken place*. While Galtung goes on to analyse the various characteristics of violence, what is most important is his distinction between *personal* or *direct violence* that involves the presence of an agent who exercises violence and *structural* or *indirect violence* that does not involve any such specific actors. For instance, whereas a husband beating his wife represents the former case of personal violence, a society where husbands keep their wives in a state of ignorance would represent an example of the latter case, or structural violence. Or else, in a society where the average life expectancy of elites is twice that of the lower classes, we would consider that structural violence is being exercised. To put it another way, the presence of structural violence is an absence of social justice – a state in which injustice has been built into the structure of society.

In the same way that Galtung distinguishes between these two aspects of violence, he also divides the corresponding notion of peace. That is, the absence of personal violence is defined as *negative peace*, while the absence of structural violence is defined as *positive peace*. In more general terms, the former refers to an absence of violence, while the latter refers to a state in which social justice has been realised. Peace does not only indicate, as is generally thought, an absence of conflict (negative peace), but also the absence of any discrimination, oppression, and poverty rooted in political, economic, or

social structures (positive peace). In extending such an inclusive conceptualisation of violence and peace, Galtung argues that the study of peace is intimately associated not only with *conflict theory*, but also with *development theory* (1969: 183). Whereas conflict theory is primarily associated with the realisation of negative peace, development theory is linked to positive peace.

In other words, thinking about conflict resolution and coexistence involves not only the problem of how to deal with direct violence, but also leads to consideration of a wider range of issues including modalities of political power, the political and economic distribution of resources, as well as religious and ethnic identity and other cultural issues. Our decision to adopt a cross-disciplinary approach for thinking about African Potentials, then, emerged simply as the result of the intrinsic requirement for a comprehensive engagement dictated by the object of our research.

### 3. Critiquing the View of Liberal Peace as Self-Evident

Interventions into conflicts by the international community carried out under the banner of ‘peace-building’ have been taking place since the 1990s. With the end of the Cold War, the worldwide shift in political and social conditions was accompanied by changes in the nature of conflict (Kaldor 1999) as well as the manner in which the international community became engaged in it (UN Secretary General 1992).<sup>2</sup> Since the turn of the millennium, it has been pointed out that these engagements have not had their intended effects, and the interventional methods pursued by the international community have themselves come under close scrutiny in fields such as international relations, political science, and peace studies. This discourse has been focused on debates around ‘the Liberal Peace.’

The Liberal Peace (also referred to variously as ‘liberal democratic peace’ and ‘Western peace’, and referred to hereinafter as simply ‘liberal peace’) is in effect a shorthand for the character of the peace that the international community aims to realise. The focus here is on elements specific to Western concepts, namely ideologies of individual liberalism, open market economics, the establishment of state sovereignty, a multi-party system founded on a mature civil society, elections-based democracy, individual human rights, accountability, and the rule of law. Roland Paris (2002) has indicated that state-building based on principles of liberal democracy and market economics has been promoted as a part of peace-building activities implemented by the international community in conflict-stricken countries. Paris sees such activities as having been attempts to transplant specific standards about what might constitute ‘norms of appropriate or “civilised” conduct’ (2002: 656) – which is to say modern Western norms – into other regions; in that sense, he argues, they are similar to the civilising mission advocated by Western society in the colonial era (Paris 2002). Paris, however, is not trying to move beyond liberal peace or criticise it in a fundamental sense. Rather, he acknowledges that the critique

of liberal peace has, in some cases, gone too far, and that in the absence of any realistic alternatives, the best option is to revise current approaches to peace-building within the liberal framework (Paris 2010).

In addition, according to Roger Mac Ginty (2008), advocates and proponents of liberal peace are firm in their belief in its supremacy and universal appeal. Liberal peace is thus always carried out according to standardised formulae (e.g., ceasefire monitoring, peace negotiations, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration [DDR] programmes, security sector reforms [SSR], civil society capacity building, good governance, and economic reorganisation). Even though these approaches are grounded in a limited ethos specific to the modern West, they tend to exclude or reject non-Western methods that seek to realise peace (Mac Ginty 2008). Mac Ginty also cites technocracy as an issue for liberal peace (2014a). Basically, concepts and approaches that have come to be used in the industrial sector have also been adopted in the context of peace-building, such that the problems that must be resolved are regarded as merely technical in nature.<sup>3</sup>

While critically examining liberal peace in this fashion, Mac Ginty also points out the prior existence of conventional peace-building approaches in the regions where the international community has intervened (Mac Ginty 2008, 2010). Thus, in the settings where peace-building is being carried out, he argues that liberal peace approaches have been blended with conventional approaches, resulting in the realisation of a state he calls 'hybrid' or 'composite' peace. Mac Ginty argues for a pragmatic approach that aims at achieving peace while integrating people's conventional institutions and values with those of the modern West; such approaches are more likely to be accepted as legitimate by the people involved, and will thus have the greatest possibility of achieving sustainable peace (Mac Ginty 2010). In other words, this is to emphasise the interaction of 'top-down peace' delivered by the international community with 'bottom-up peace' arising from the local community.<sup>4</sup>

Such criticisms of liberal peace are extremely important in that they serve to illuminate the uncritical assumptions that underlie our concepts – namely the notion that liberal democracy and market economics are a panacea that can be applied in any situation. However, the discussion by Mac Ginty and his colleagues becomes cloudier with respect to the specifics of how these 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' activities might be integrated. For this reason, it has been suggested that criticisms of liberal peace may be ineffective as an analytical lens by virtue of being too broad in scope and lacking in precise focus, and there has also been some discussion that they are without benefit even for those working on the ground in the field of peace-building (Zaum 2012). Also, while liberal peace expounds a universal and clear vision of state and society whose construction is its goal, there is also the view that where this is not the case, the question of how to establish criteria for evaluating peace-building

activities becomes more complicated, making the validation of such efforts difficult (Yamashita 2014).

In response to the critique of liberal peace, doubts have also been raised as to whether liberal institutions and values should be discarded entirely. For the present, however, it lies beyond my abilities to formulate an answer to this by grappling with liberal ideology directly. Also, the emphasis given to what is meant, exactly, by liberalism (or libertarianism) can also vary depending on the proponent (Seiyama 2006). The critique of liberal peace has brought light to the universalising concepts on which peace-building activities by the international community are uncritically founded. And while these activities have raised the fundamental problem of imposing standardised formulae while promoting reforms based on neoliberal democratisation and marketisation as the one and only method of resolving conflict, their ultimate destination remains unclear.

#### 4. Two Paths to Exploring ‘African Potentials’

In this research project, our aim has been to explore African Potentials as a means of realising conflict resolution and coexistence. As I have already mentioned, like the critics of liberal peace, we were concerned that in its interventions into African conflicts, the international community was introducing peace-building efforts based on the notion that it could universally apply ideologies and values that have their origins in modern Western thought. Many of us working on the ground felt that these interventions were not very effective, and in particular how external interventions did little to help repair social relations impaired by conflict or achieve coexistence between peoples.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, we were resolutely opposed to a stance that understood Africa to be in a state of *deficiency*. This was because we had seen in reality that forms of knowledge and institutions for achieving coexistence were alive and well in Africa, created and put into practice by the people of Africa themselves.

We have seen first-hand how people with opposing interests, who embrace differing opinions and beliefs, have come together through various processes to form consensus, and communities in which struggles have been brought under control, where wounded social relations have been repaired. Given these realities, which we call ‘African Potentials’, we feel that it is an area highly worthy of elucidation and we have accordingly explored these ‘potentials’ as the theme of our research.

In seeking to elucidate these African Potentials, our studies have intentionally adopted two separate and complementary approaches. The first of these are studies of African Potentials as knowledge, technique, institutions and practices, while the second is the exploration of African Potentials as a kind of ideology or set of values.

#### 4.1. African Potentials as Knowledge, Technique, and Institution: Empirical and Experiential Inquiries

The researchers who have taken part in this project have all had a great deal of experience carrying out field studies in Africa, where they sensed the presence of African Potentials for themselves. Specifically, the people of Africa have realised reconciliation and coexistence by building close social relationships through the production and distribution of foodstuffs, by pre-emptively avoiding the intensification of confrontation, by expelling envy, resentment, and anger by airing such emotions in public to be shared among members of the community, or else resolving struggles through arbitration. We have therefore once again made careful notes of such knowledge and practices, endeavouring to think about what we can learn from them, and how they might be leveraged in support of the resolution of ongoing conflicts. Also, generally speaking, conflict and violence become research questions by virtue of their claim on our human interest. However, it is also true that matters of peace attract little attention. We have looked for mechanisms that enable peace by shining a light on situations marked by the absence of direct conflict (i.e., peaceful situations). In this way, the initial direction for our studies was to clarify the practicality and effectiveness of African Potentials as a topic for empirical description and as a practical, empirical, and objective study. To this end, we cast our eyes over the lived realities of African people, and lent our cumulative support to the forms of agency that these entailed.

I suspect that many readers will consider the knowledge, practices, and institutions that we take up as African Potentials to have been ‘long-held properties of the people of Africa’ and as such, as ‘traditional heritage.’ This is a viewpoint that I would like here to briefly refute. Generally, the word ‘traditional’ is used in reference to a form of knowledge or institution that people have possessed since long ago, and which continues unchanging into the present day. In our project, however, we draw a clear distinction vis-à-vis concepts that are ‘traditional’ in this sense. This is because we recognise that knowledge, institutions, and customs often undergo change. Generally, human beings live their lives in possession of some manner of customs and culture. However, these are constantly and continuously being renewed and created anew through transformations arising from within or through foreign contacts. The knowledge and institutions possessed by African people, in precisely the same way as customs and culture, exist in a state of dynamic change.

In preference to the term *tradition*, we have begun using the term *convention*. Here, convention refers to customs, culture, ideologies, and norms that have been created and used by people in a given community. In other words, there is no need for conventional norms and behaviour to be regarded as ‘traditional.’ As they respond to changes in the ecological and social environments that surround them, and as they make reference to the institutions they have used and knowledge they have appropriated



from the outside, people are constantly devising new forms of knowledge and institutions in order to improve their lives. We refer to the things that people in these communities have created and adopted for the betterment of their own lives as ‘conventions.’ In other words, the knowledge and institutions that we discuss as African Potentials are not immutable or intrinsic entities, but are rather always being formed in the midst of the give and take with the outside world. Specifically, they are formed in the process of negotiations with outside influences such as the modern Western and Arabic-Islamic world views, and continue to be transformed even today.

Therefore, in our research project, we have striven to free ourselves from the dualistic trap of either seeing Africa as a font of intrinsic, inherent, and immutable wisdom or, conversely, holding that extrinsic knowledge and institutions, and thus interventions by the international community do not work well because they have all been ‘imposed from outside.’ To do so is tantamount to the romanticisation and entrenchment of African tradition, and it is our contention that this is what must be rejected above all. What are ‘traditions’ and ‘conventions’? Shifting how we think in order to apprehend these in the midst of their complex and dynamic transformations without regarding them as fixed entities is not such a simple task.

Not only in Africa, various conflicts have broken out around the world following the end of the Cold War, and other studies have also been carried out with a focus on conventional practices of arbitration (e.g., Fenrich et al. eds., 2011). These studies have referred to conventional approaches as ‘customary law,’ leading to discussions of how these might differ from or complement the modern legal frameworks of states. Yet despite this emphasis, ‘customary law’ in this context is frequently positioned as something ‘used by people living in poverty, without much access to school education on the frontiers where state controls have not sufficiently penetrated.’ In addition, discussions have also taken place assuming conventional methods of conflict resolution are applicable for different occasions, without regard to context. Discussing the international community’s intervention into the conflict in northern Uganda, Tim Allen (2008) has criticised the decontextualised use of rites specific to the Acholi people as ‘traditional justice,’ pointing out that this has not necessarily obtained the support of the people.

Another point I would like to mention with regard to conventional institutions and practices is that we do not necessarily consider all such practices as being unconditionally ‘good.’ For example, in Africa when some kind of conflict arises, this will sometimes be discussed and resolved in meetings whose main participants are the elders of the communities affected; it is also true, however, that women will frequently be excluded from these meetings, and the speaking rights of young people will be severely curtailed. Who is able to determine whether such conditions are ‘good’ or ‘bad’ – for whom and by

what credentials – is truly a difficult problem. While we are critical of the reality that interventions based in institutions and values originating in Western modernity are being applied indiscriminately to Africa, this does not amount to our unconditional affirmation of all African conventions without regard to context.

#### 4.2. African Potentials as Ideology and Values: Philosophical, Theoretical, and Ideological Inquiries

The second direction we adopted in our research project was to explore African Potentials as a kind of ideology or set of values for overcoming West-centrism to provide alternative concepts. To put this another way, this was to initiate a philosophical and theoretical exploration of what it means to be human, and what the ideal form of coexistence might look like.

As noted earlier, critics of liberal peace have brought to light and questioned the international community's unconditional adoption of Western-derived concepts when intervening in conflicts that break out around the world, as well as how the interventional methods are predicated on such thinking. This concept assumes autonomous individuals with universal human rights, and is premised on the establishment of sovereign states on the basis of a contract with these individuals. Here, therefore, human beings are treated as independent actors disconnected from the wider community. Liberal peace regards the order produced in this way as the universal, supreme, and only possibility.

In contrast, Francis Nyamnjoh (2002), also one of the contributors to this volume, based on the example of Cameroon, argues for the existence of humans as having *domesticated agency*. Here, the term 'domesticated' is used in the sense of *living in the midst of a deep relationship with others*. Human beings, at the same time as being left to fully pursue their own potential, share in collective interests with their families and other members of their communities. In other words, it is precisely through their interactive relationships with others that human beings exist as autonomous and independent individuals. It is precisely this relational view of human existence as being based in mutual and complex networks with others that serves to provide direction to the studies we carried out. Nyamnjoh (2002) uses the term 'conviviality' to express the practices carried out by human beings in the context of their fundamental relationships with others, and in Chapter 9 of this volume, he argues that, understood in this way, human existence is characterised by what he describes as 'incompleteness.'

Mac Ginty, whose work I discussed earlier when presenting the critique of liberal peace, advocates a concept that he refers to as 'everyday peace' (Mac Ginty 2014b). This is an attempt to focus on ways of behaving that people adopt in order to avoid direct violence in societies suffering from ruptures due to religious or ethnic differences. Mac Ginty claims that these are not merely passive strategies for

avoiding struggles, but lead to active efforts to contain violent confrontation and transform conflict. An edited volume theorising peace as a ‘space of living’ has recently been published as a response to this discussion (Oda 2015; see also Oda 2014). All of these studies have focused on the forms of subjective (and political) agency that can be observed in the midst of local everyday life.

In our exploration of African Potentials, we wanted to construct a view of the world – an idea of coexistence – that was grounded in the local life-worlds of the day-to-day existence of African people. This is something completely foreign to the concept, derived from Western modernity, that rational order is only achievable through a system of states and the rule of law. In this regard, I would like to refer readers to Motoji Matsuda’s Introduction and Professor Nyamnjoh’s essay in Chapter 9. However, as mentioned earlier, I also want to remark that we do not seek to dismiss or reject all concepts deriving from Western modernity. Africa has a history of repeated and close negotiations with Western modernity and other regions of the outside world, and so that history is already deeply engraved in the ‘conventional’ knowledge and institutions of African people. As a result, to completely reject Western modernity would have no meaning in the first place.

I am confident that our attempt to construct African Potentials as an idea for fundamental coexistence will provide useful guidance not only for the tumultuous era in which we live at present, but also for future of human society. In the exploration of African Potentials, attempts aiming in this direction are only just beginning, and so do not feature very explicitly in the five volumes of this series. However, all of the papers collected here offer rich material that will contribute to such an idea of coexistence.

##### 5. Aims of the Five Volumes in the ‘African Potentials’ Series

As described above, in our research project, we have not only taken up the various conflicts that have arisen in Africa as our direct theme, but have also dealt with a diverse set of problems relating to conflict and coexistence, including regional economic and environmental issues as well as development and social transformation. For this reason, having established a General Council as the core of our research, we created an organisation that linked four research units, working respectively on the themes of Culture and Society, Politics and International Relations, Economy and Development, and Livelihood and the Environment, with four research clusters that focused on respectively Northeast Africa, East Africa, West Africa, and Southern Africa. In addition to holding intensive discussions in each unit and cluster, we also adopted a framework in which members were able to deepen their knowledge while moving across these boundaries together. As a part of this project, as well, each year we held a Conflict Resolution and Coexistence Forum somewhere in Africa, inviting native African researchers and practitioners working on conflict issues to refine and polish the concept

of African Potentials. These Forums were held on a total of five occasions, and I would like to refer readers to Motoji Matsuda's Introduction, included in this volume, for details on their outcomes.

The five volumes in this series on 'African Potentials: Towards Coexistence and Conflict Resolution' have been assembled based on the four research units described above. The overall structure of the series is as follows:

Volume 1: Cultural Creativity for Conflict Resolution and Coexistence: African Potentials as Practice of Incompleteness and Bricolage

Volume 2: Beyond Armed Conflict: Complexity and Diversity in People's Strategies and Peace-Building Institutions

Volume 3: People as Lithe Agents of Change: African Potentials for Development and Coexistence

Volume 4: How People Can Achieve Coexistence through the Sound Use of Ecological Resources

Volume 5: Who Owns African Nature? African Perspectives on the Future of Community-Based Conservation

Volume 1 focuses on research carried out by the members of the Culture and Society Unit. In this research, the knowledge, techniques and institutions that operate and are practiced in African societies for avoiding confrontation and preventing conflict, or resolving conflict and realising reconciliation and coexistence are elucidated from a micro-level perspective. Its feature contribution, summarised in highly abstract terms, is that African Potentials are characterised by 'dynamism, flexibility, pluralism, complexity, tolerance, and openness.' (Matsuda's Introduction, this Volume).

Volume 2 deals with conflicts from the state down to the local level. While it was compiled mainly around the members of the Politics and International Relations Unit, it features contributions not only from experts in the fields of political science and international relations, but also from researchers with backgrounds in the fields of sociology and cultural anthropology. This volume describes how people throughout Africa explore the establishment of a new political order, and analyses how local actors behave in relation to conflict, as well as how activities that seek to realise reconciliation and coexistence at the state level have been deployed under the influence of the international community.

Volume 3 is compiled with a focus on the members of the Economy and Development Unit. In this volume, the primary emphasis is on confrontations and competition arising out of the large and complex social transformations facing the people of Africa, which are described and analysed in the context of their association with resource scarcity, the penetration of market economics, and state

formation. As a result of extrinsic transformations such as the development of the global economy and the expansion of development assistance projects and under the changing social conditions of population increase and growing disparity, people are seeking to realise more desirable ways of living and coexisting. This volume describes ways of expressing the African Potentials found in these settings, and discusses their problems and possibilities.

In bringing their research findings to publication, the contributions of the members of the Livelihood and Environment Unit who made up part of our research project have been broadly divided between Volume 4, which deals with problems of livelihood, and Volume 5, which takes the environment (nature conservation) as its theme. Volume 4 considers farming and pastoralist livelihoods that are particularly reliant on natural vegetation, and how these have changed in response to fluctuations in social conditions and the ecological environment. People bring ingenuity to their ways of life and modes of subsistence, nipping conflict and strife in the bud while exploring paths toward coexistence. In this volume, we look at the potential for coexistence possessed by local African communities in terms of knowledge and practices that serve to avoid disputes and mitigate antagonism in advance.

Africa's rich ecosystems are threatened with rapidly progressing deterioration stemming from a variety of factors that include the destruction and reduction of habitat, hunting, problems arising from introduced species, and outbreaks of infectious disease. In Volume 5, we examine a variety of conflicts and disputes over nature conservation. Then, how these conflicts and disputes might be overcome and what African Potentials can be seen therein are discussed. A variety of rationales for nature conservation originating in the West have infiltrated the African continent, where they have collided with conventional logics that have supported peoples' lives, with both of these mingling in complex ways. Volume 5 takes up the challenge of carefully disentangling the aspects of these conflicts to explore the African Potentials therein.

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, Africa has been undergoing dramatic changes in keeping with the rapid growth of its economy. The Africa once seen to be in need of the world's assistance, portrayed solely through negative images of poverty, conflict, the spread of AIDS and other diseases, and deferred education, has emerged as a leader in terms of economic growth, and with its market of a billion individuals is now seen as an extremely promising destination for investment. The world has now situated the Africa it once saw as a subject in need of relief as a partner for growth. Firms from various countries have embarked on competitive ventures to develop resources, while new businesses have begun to make inroads into Africa. Neither is Japan an exception here. In these circumstances, it is our sincere hope that this African Potentials Series will help answer the question of how we are to build relations with African society in future, and so help initiate a major transformation of our

understanding of Africa.

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## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> With regard to UN policies relating to intervention and support in the context of African conflicts, the need for comprehensive measures including support for sustainable development has been argued in documents submitted to the Security Council by the UN Secretary-General (UN Secretary General, 1998, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> For critiques of liberal peace, see also Belloni (2012) and Richmond & Mac Ginty (2015).

<sup>4</sup> In Japan as well, Kurimoto (2000, 2014) indicated the need to integrate ‘top-down peace’ with ‘bottom-up peace’ relatively early on. For critiques of liberal peace by Mac Ginty and others, see also Mac Ginty and Williams (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Shinoda (2002) states that because reconciliation and the rebuilding of social relationships between the parties to a conflict constitute a difficult challenge, the international community has avoided involving itself in these areas and entrusted such tasks to the parties involved. Rather, the focus of external intervention has been on resolving issues in those areas where visible outcomes can be realised within a specific period of time, namely the establishment of state institutions and the rule of law and the resolution of issues relating to poverty and economic inequality.