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PREFACE

The title of the current issue of African Study Monographs is African Potentials: Their Diversity, Dynamism and Challenges. It is a compilation of selected papers presented at a forum financed by the Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (S) “‘African Potential’ and overcoming the difficulties of modern world: Comprehensive research that will provide a new perspective for the future of humanity” (no. 16H06318, headed by Motoji Matsuda, Kyoto University), sponsored by the Japan Society for the Scientific Promotion of Science.

The above-mentioned forum, the Sixth African Forum of ‘African Potentials’ was held in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, from December 9–11, 2016. Participants were from Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, South Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania, and Japan. The forum consisted of five sessions: “Citizenship,” “Conflict,” “Nation/State,” “Gender,” and “Livelihood.” Twenty-two rich and wide-ranging presentations (fourteen oral presentations delivered in the five sessions mentioned above and eight poster presentations) in total were made and participants engaged in an enthusiastic interchange of findings and thoughts. Such a variety of sessions and presentations reflected multiple aspects of the concept, ‘African Potentials.’

The forum contributed to progress in the exploration of local-based solutions for various difficulties facing humankind in general and African societies in particular, as alternatives to the hegemonic global prescriptions which have largely been found to be ineffective. This supplementary issue of African Study Monographs aims to record a trace of the progress made in the forum.

The seven papers included in this supplementary issue are based upon the authors’ presentations at the forum. They were selected since they cover the diverse dimensions of the issue as a whole, in which African potentials, sometimes associated with difficulties and challenges, could dynamically come into reality. In these papers readers will find that people’s capability to address and sometimes solve personal, collective, and social/national difficulties evolve at all levels: individual, local community, over a wide area spreading along international borders and in nations.

The papers discuss: the post-colonial states’ symbolic power to consolidate people’s potential in the normative dimension, demonstrated in national anthems (Onditi’s paper); African indigenous understanding of personhood, which in its own way leads to enhancement of prosperity of the continent as a whole (Musana’s paper); pastoralists’ perceptions on citizenship uniquely rooted in their close relationship with live-stock (Hazama’s paper); minority people’s mobility changing diverse boundaries restricting individuals in a multi-ethnic area near an international border (Tahara’s paper); changing gender relations in a once patriarchal community affected by the spread of a new wave of Christianity

(Massoi's paper); people's proactive engagement in eco-tourism mobilizing locally available resources (Ondicho's paper); situation of children in a remand home whose access to quality education is largely denied (Galabba's paper). Readers will come to appreciate the richness and complexity of this issue through the variety of ways African people are dealing with these situations in their everyday lives. The process is very dynamic and brings about both new solutions and sometimes difficulties. Contemporary African societies are surely facing many unique kinds of difficulties which grow out of local contexts, sometimes imposed by the force of globalization, and often caused by a combination of both. These are some of the difficulties the papers present: inherent duality in the lyrics of national anthems, implications of which could lead to exclusion and violence (Onditi); marginalization and degradation of Africa in the global discourse on personhood (Musana); discrimination against women (Massoi); increase in homelessness and delinquency of youths (Galabba); the still limited outcomes achieved by poverty reduction initiatives (Ondicho); and finally oppression, restriction, enmity, and neglect experienced by ordinary people in their relations with national governments (Hazama, Tahara, and Galabba).

Given these diverse difficulties, endeavors to overcome them, i.e., processes to achieve 'African Potentials,' should necessarily be diverse and dynamic. It is sincerely hoped that this current issue of African Study Monographs will give readers a glimpse of the richness and multi-dimensionality of Africans' endogenous efforts to overcome difficulties and the implications of this for the future of humanity, under the 'African Potentials' project.

We deeply appreciate the support given by Makerere University, the Uganda office of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, and the Embassy of Japan which allowed us to hold such a successful forum at Kampala. We also thank anonymous reviewers' cooperation.

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