

## **54<sup>th</sup> KUASS (Kyoto University African Studies Seminar)**

**Date and Time:** 15 July 2016 (Fri), 17:00—19:00

**Venue:** Small Meeting Room 1, Inamori Memorial Foundation Building (3rd floor),  
Kyoto University

**Title:**

**African (Food-chain) from Ideas to Consumption: Addressing weaknesses of reductionism in knowledge systems studies**

**Speaker: Dr. Zvakanyorwa Wilbert Sadomba (University of Zimbabwe, Centre for Applied Social Sciences CASS, Visiting Scholar, Department of Sociology, Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University)**

**Abstract:** This project presentation argues that the structural weaknesses of western science cause insurmountable problems in studying other knowledge systems. Science is reductionist – it splits the object of knowledge into thin hairs then focuses on each in complete isolation of the others as though the division is natural. Secondly, science does not accommodate ignorance as part of the knowledge system resulting in lack of restraint. Thirdly, western science is hegemonic; it advances on a premise that other systems of knowing are inferior and predated. By failing to develop a comprehensive and integrated approach that recognises limitations of all forms of knowing, so-called indigenous knowledge studies have compounded the problem. Constructed inferiority to western science of other knowledge systems is enhanced through disaggregation. This is simultaneous with selective adoption and use of isolated elements to advance western science but without acknowledgement. By reducing other knowledge systems to inferior positions, then select elements for its own use, western science essentially expresses power positions than quality of thought. We are experimenting on an approach to studying non-written knowledge system in the southern African region with thought-provoking results. First, the project combines theoretical as well as practical approaches. In this presentation however, I focus on the later. We are engaged in a comprehensive and integrated study of the African food chain from cosmology to consumption. The approach is promising in many ways including

better understanding of African applied mathematics, chemistry, physics, agronomy, genetics, food science, etc. classified as 'hard sciences' in the western fashion. This has resulted in deeper understanding of technical fundamentals and design principles leading to unique inventions and innovations far competing favourably with western technologies in many fields along the food chain. Studying these technical details has resulted in inventions and innovations of modern equipment to solve current problems where science has either not ventured into or shown limitations. The project illustrates that it is not correct to consider non written knowledge to be inferior and proposes a new approach to non-western knowledge studies.