

# Research on African Development in Japan: With Special Reference to Japan Association for African Studies (JAAS)

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This paper overviews studies on African development by Japanese researchers. The notion of “development” contains a wide range of meanings: it refers to exogenous as well as indigenous social evolution in a desirable direction; in addition, although the notion originally tended to be based almost exclusively on economic aspects, as the concepts of social and human development have become widely accepted, it has come to incorporate or at least relate to topics such as the environment, education, gender, health, governance and peace-building. This paper introduces major publications on development by Japanese Africanists, making special reference to members of the Japan Association of African Studies (JAAS).

Since its establishment in 1964, JAAS has maintained its interdisciplinary character: its membership includes Africanists in the fields of natural, social and human sciences. Despite the difference of their academic disciplines, many members of JAAS place importance on fieldwork in Africa. Detailed researches on African society, based on long-term fieldwork, have therefore been accumulated in Japan.

Research on African development has grown considerably since the mid-1980s. This can be explained by three factors. Firstly, dramatic changes and crises in African countries during this period led Japanese Africanists to focus on the problems of “development.” For researchers who had kept in touch with African society, the topic was perceived as critical. Secondly, African development came to be considered as an important issue in Japan, as the country became the largest ODA donor of the world in the 1990s. Thirdly, a wide range of research fields came to be connected with the topic of development, in line with the mainstreaming of social and human development.

Japanese Africanists, having accumulated detailed research outcomes based on fieldwork, are now asked to contribute to African development in more effective ways. To do this, they should establish constructive relationships with academia in other disciplines as well as practitioners.