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「アフリカ史叙述の方法にかんする研究」(2012年度第1回研究会)

日時：2012年5月29日(火) 18:00-20:00

場所：AA研セミナー室(301)

共催：基幹研究「アフリカ文化研究に基づく多元的世界像の探求」

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報告タイトル：Gendering History: Muslim Women and Power in Matrilineal Northern Mozambique

Liazzat Bonate

“Gendering History: Muslim Women and Power in Matrilineal Northern Mozambique”

This presentation reflected Bonate’s ongoing research on Muslim matrilineal societies of northern Mozambican and focused on the challenges in studying women in African Muslim matrilineal society and suggestions of gendering Mozambican history.

First, the presentation outlined some of the major challenges:

- Addressing women living in Muslim societies, dominated by matriliney and in an African context, poses great challenges because each of these words/concepts (women, gender, Muslim/Islam, matriliney, Africa) are highly contested and controversial;
- Matriliney and Islam are often viewed as incompatible, so people who practice both are described as not real or ‘orthodox’ Muslims but ‘syncretistic’ believers [who mix Islam with African culture and traditions];
- This approach is discriminatory and perpetuates the image of Africans as passive imitators [instead of active makers of their own destinies], ignoring those who don’t know the ‘true’ meaning of Islam;
- it also defines Islam in an Orientalist fashion as static immutable ‘Arab’ ‘religion’ instead of a living faith;
- the existence of Islam is often viewed to be sufficient for transforming matriliney into patriliney;

Second, the presentation focused on the predominance of the feminist approaches to the history of northern Mozambican matrilineal Muslim society, which do not allow for an adequate reflection of the reality. A short overview of the development of feminist scholarship was given in order to underscore why this situation prevails in Mozambique, by highlighting in particular

- that feminism is mostly a political movement, which influenced the Africanist scholarship, who, when dealing with African women, have replicated Western feminist approaches by identifying the universality of female oppression and of the dominance of patriarchy;
- The concept of gender presupposes addressing different genders [at the same time]– male, female, transgender, the ‘third gender’, etc., but in Africa, and in Mozambique case in particular, the scholarship has not been very successful in maintaining this equilibrium, and gender studies often meant women’s studies;
- The development studies, aid and NGO consultancies commission gender studies, but the outcome is often about how women are oppressed by patriarchy and are denied their rights by males;
- Religion, especially Islam, but also "African traditions" and culture are often blamed for this situation a par with the late colonialism and modernity;

Third, the presentation looked into the scholarship that deals with matriliney, and how the intersection of feminist and Orientalist approaches with regard the matrilineal Muslim societies hindered the proper research of these type of societies in northern Mozambique.

Fourth, the presentation ended with a suggestion that matrilineal Muslim societies like in northern Mozambique should be researched comparatively as there are other societies with similar co-existence of Islam and matriliney like along the matrilineal belt of Africa, in Minangkabau in Sumatra, Indonesia; southern India, Philippines, and others.

The other suggestion was to adopt the approach of a Nigerian scholar Oyeronke Oyewumi who criticized this blind imitation of Western scholarship and the adoption of concept that clearly did not fit into African historical or cultural context in her highly acclaimed book *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. She has argued that it was necessary to bring local concepts and local agency into the discussion.