

## International Symposium:

### “Art and Disability: The cases from Africa and Asia”

In this international symposium, three anthropologists explore the experiences of impaired artists or/and representation of disabilities and impairment in the arts. By examining cases from Sub-Saharan Africa, Japan, and Indonesia, This symposium also illustrate cultural diversity regarding the conceptualization and perception of disabilities, bodies, and arts.

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2017 (Sunday)

Place: room 304, The Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA)

(3-11-1 Asahi-cho, Fuchu-shi, Tokyo, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

\*Free, No registration required\*

#### Program:

13:00-13:10 Opening

13:10-13:50 HANDS OF A GOZE (blind female musician): the Tactile Culture of Visually-impaired People in Modern Japan.

Kojiro HIROSE (Associate Professor, National Museum of Ethnology)

13:50-14:00 Q&A

14:10-14:50 Imperfect Bodies and Comedy in Balinese Theater.

Yukako YOSHIDA (Assistant Professor, ILCAA)

14:50-15:00 Q &A

15:10-15:50 7th Art and Disability in Sub-Saharan Africa: Staging Altered Bodies and the Process of Normalization.

Aggée Célestin Lomo Myazhiom (Visiting Professor, ILCAA)

15:50-16:00 Q&A

16:10-16:30 Comments.

Mikako TODA (Research Fellow, National Museum of Ethnology)

16:30-17:30 Discussion

Language: English

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This project is co-hosted by JSPS project 17H00948 “New Anthropological Approach to Affective Studies through Fieldwork of Critical Situations”, and ILCAA’s Core Project

-Anthropology.

### **HANDS OF A GOZE (blind female musician): The Tactile Culture of Visually-impaired People in Modern Japan. (Kojiro HIROSE)**

The word "Goze" refers to blind female musicians who traveled around Japan playing a shamisen (Japanese plucked stringed instrument). After the World War II, and with the expansion of welfare services for the disabled and enhancements for blind schools education, the Goze culture became a relic of pre-modern times, with no modern successor. With the passing of Haru Kobayashi (1900-2005), known as the "last Goze," Goze culture, maintained by visually impaired people, disappeared from Japanese society in the 21st Century. However, it is not acceptable to witness complete disappearance of Goze culture.

This portion of the symposium will focus on the "hands of a Goze" within the framework that Goze culture is relevant on three fronts: "touching the sound," "touching the color" and "touching the heart." Rooted in the Goze uta (Goze folk songs) that Gozes created and spread as their own oral traditions, this research will examine the role the tactile culture of the visually impaired should take today.

### **Imperfect Bodies and Comedy in Balinese Theater. (Yukako YOSHIDA)**

This study focuses on the performance of physically impaired amateur artists in Balinese comedy theater. These artists perform at Hindu rituals to entertain visiting worshippers and the deities. During the show, physically impaired performers' physical features, combined with their unique behavior, become a source of jokes. Their co-stars and the audience usually laugh at such jokes without hesitation. What cultural value or norm exists behind this playful attitude towards disability, physical differences, or imperfection? What do those performers achieve by provoking laughter? How is the meaning of their body formed, negotiated, or modified through such comical play? This presentation explores these questions by analyzing the cases of an actress with dysarthria, and a group of visually impaired singers.

These shows have no written scripts, so actors improvise while following a basic story line. "Able" actors can influence their impaired costars, and the audience can influence both the "abled" and impaired actors with their response to the performance. This study examines the performance not as an impaired actor's "self-expression," but as a mutual, interactive process between impaired and non-impaired actors, as well as with their audience.

### **7th Art and Disability in Sub-Saharan Africa: Staging Altered Bodies and the Process**

### **of Normalization. (Aggée Célestin Lomo Myazhiom)**

Cinema is a powerful and fertile social analyzer. During the 20th Century, disability became a social issue, and despite obstacles encountered, the new dogma in international public policies is to move away from a biomedical centered perspective to a coherent, integrated approach that is “respectful of human rights”, dignity and the principle of accessibility for disabled persons (UN 1975, OAU 1979). It is this context that permits certain filmmakers to circumvent standards, free themselves from imposed social norms, and break down barriers. It allows filmmakers to create “singular” characters, sometimes comic, sometimes dramatic, and to invent situations that cannot be staged by so-called “normal” actors. The major benefit of globalization is that it allows filmmakers to influence each other. For example, Senegalese filmmaker Sembène Ousmane, inspired by French realistic cinema, featured stigmatized bodies in his movies. We can also find this “cinema of the real” in the 2010 documentary-fiction film “Benda Bilili”, which narrates the adventure of Congolese musicians (DRC).

This project provides a historical and a sensory anthropological perspective, questions continuities and ruptures, and aims to: (1) explore cinematic social representations of disabilities, (2) analyze disabled ‘actors’ movie performances; and, (3) examine ‘global audiences’ and disabled persons reception of these works. This study will examine the function of image and its effect on the transformation of mentalities in Sub-Saharan Africa. After a brief overview of movies in Sub-Saharan Africa, this research focuses on movies in Senegal and the Democratic Republic of Congo.