The 119th ASC Seminar

Meeting of Kanto Branch of Japan Association for African Studies

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“Delegated Patronage: Back-Office Officials and the Daily Governance of Administrative Existence in the Congolese Civil Service”

2026 11/17 (Tue)

Venue:【Hybrid】
Onsite: Room102・Online: ZoomMeeting
(TUFS Research and Lecture Building 1F / Fuchu campus)

Language: English・Admission: Free
Time：17:40～19:10（JST）



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【Abstract】

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, civil service lists, registers, payroll records, censuses and retirement procedures have become instruments of patronage, determining who is officially recognised, paid or removed. This presentation develops the concept of delegated patronage, whereby senior and mid-ranking civil servants exercise effective control over these procedures, turning administrative bottlenecks into sources of power. This control stems not from legal delegation but from institutional fragmentation: the Ministry of Public Service recognises employees, the Ministry of Budget pays them, and those managing the process face little accountability. Political actors thus retain influence but no longer monopolise patronage.

Drawing on historical analysis from the colonial period to the 2025 reforms, twenty-one interviews in Kinshasa, two civil service surveys, and legal and audit records, the study examines four administrative stages: list, registry, pay and exit. It finds that exceptional regularisation has become a routine path into public service, payroll decisions operate partly independently of formal recognition, and retirement procedures are seldom enforced. Successive reforms have improved the state’s capacity to register and pay employees, yet discretion persists by shifting to administrative stages left unaddressed. The Congolese civil service thus emerges as an administration undergoing transformation rather than simply institutional decline.

Keywords:
Delegated patronage; Civil service; Payroll and personnel management; Bureaucratic discretion; State transformation; Democratic Republic of Congo

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