The 122nd ASC Seminar

Meeting of Kanto Branch of Japan Association for African Studies

Pre-Register

“Poaching and Illegal Biltong ‘Export’ in the Tuli Block 1930–1960s: A Trans-Border Criminal Enterprise”

2026 12/15 (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）

【Speaker】

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Professor Bolaane is currently a visiting professor at the African Studies Centre, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, an associate professor in the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities, and the director of the San Research Centre at the University of Botswana.

【Abstract】

Border studies, which can draw on diverse sources and multiple specialisms, form an area of growing interest for historians. The aim of this paper is to examine a case of cross-border crime in terms of illegal trans-border economies, which are best understood by drawing insights from ecology, geography, environmental and natural resource management studies.

From the 1930s to the 1960s, a major local industry emerged on the border between the Union of South Africa and Bechuanaland Protectorate (Botswana), with farmers from the South African province of the Transvaal poaching game in the Tuli Block (Botswana) – with the assistance of some locals from within the Protectorate – and producing biltong in Botswana, which they sold in South Africa. Poachers entered from and returned to the Union either on foot or horseback, or occasionally in vehicles north of the Motloutse-Limpopo conjunction. Poaching became a serious concern in the Tuli Block, and White Tuli farmers attempted to organise policing even though some of them were involved in the crime. The matter received more attention from the colonial government of Botswana in the 1950s and 1960s, as the scale grew and Tuli farmers increasingly complained. Due to the threat of extinction of some game species, the government sought measures to reduce or control poaching. Archival sources from Botswana and literature review note Transvaal farmers’ economic needs and a 1949 Transvaal Ordinance restricting hunting and imposing heavy penalties on poaching, which made the Tuli Block more attractive because detection was weak and penalties were lower.

At a deeper level, the Tuli Block was a contested frontier area between Afrikaners (Transvaal Boers), British imperial ambitions, and indigenous population. It is worth noting that relations between the Tuli Block Batswana and Afrikaners over the border were sometimes more co-operative than might be expected, reflecting a limited history of direct conflict and the fact that both were somewhat on the margins of the power structures of their states. The study thus examines a complex historical and territorial power struggle in an area in Botswana largely for wildlife conservation and tourism.

Keywords: border studies, poaching, illegal trans-border economies, Tuli Block (Botswana), Transvaal (South Africa)

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