

The 107th ASC Seminar

Meeting of Kanto Branch of Japan Association for African Studies

“Kenya’s 2024 Gen Z Protests and the Aftermath: Waithood and Digital Storytelling in an Ethnic-Patronage Democracy”

【Speaker】 Dr.KINYUA Laban Kithinji

(Research Fellow, African Studies Center TUFs)

Dr. Kinyua Laban Kithinji is a Research Fellow at the African Studies Center, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (ASC-TUFS).

He holds a PhD in Area-based Global Studies from Sophia University. His research focuses on African politics, digital ethnography, and youths. He has also conducted ethnographic research in Nairobi’s informal settlements. His scholarship seeks to bridge African lived experiences with global debates on democracy, social transformation, and political participation.



【Abstract】

The 2024 Gen Z-led protests in Kenya marked a rupture in the country’s political history, challenging entrenched ethno-political structures and state-controlled narratives. While the immediate withdrawal of the Finance Bill and the dissolution of the cabinet represented important victories, the aftermath revealed the structural fragility of sustaining a decentralised, leaderless, and tribeless movement in a system still shaped by patronage politics and ethnic alignments.

This paper situates the Gen Z protests within Alcinda Honwana’s concept of waithood, which captures the prolonged socio-economic limbo in which many African youth find themselves due to unemployment, precarity, and exclusion.

For Kenyan youth, the punitive tax regime of the 2024 Finance Bill crystallised this condition, galvanising a generation that has “waited” too long for economic and political inclusion. The protests thus became a collective refusal of waithood, signalling a demand for recognition and accountability from the state.

At the same time, the study highlights digital storytelling as the strategy that has both mobilised and sustained the protests. Through TikTok, YouTube, podcasts, and memes, young Kenyans narrated personal struggles, reframed civic identity, and built a moral community of resistance that transcended ethnic boundaries. And this continues to date. Digital storytelling—ranging from testimonies to satire and even rumours—has kept the protests alive online, ensuring their memory and urgency persist beyond the streets.

By foregrounding waithood and digital storytelling, this paper argues that the Gen Z protests represent more than episodic dissent. They reveal emerging forms of youth political mobilisation that challenge Kenya’s ethno-political order and hold the promise of redefining democratic participation through digitally mediated forms of civic belonging.

Keywords: Gen Z protests; Waithood; Digital Storytelling; Digital Activism; Ethnic Mobilisation; Collective Action Problem; Youth Political Mobilisation; Kenya

Language: English Admission: Free

Register in advance



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11/6(Thu)

5 : 40 p.m. ~

7 : 10 p.m. (JST)

Venue: 【Hybrid】

Online: Zoom

Onsite: Room109

(TUFs Research and Lecture
Building 1F / Fuchu campus)



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