

Property and Political Order in Africa

Land Rights and the Structure of Politics

Catherine Boone

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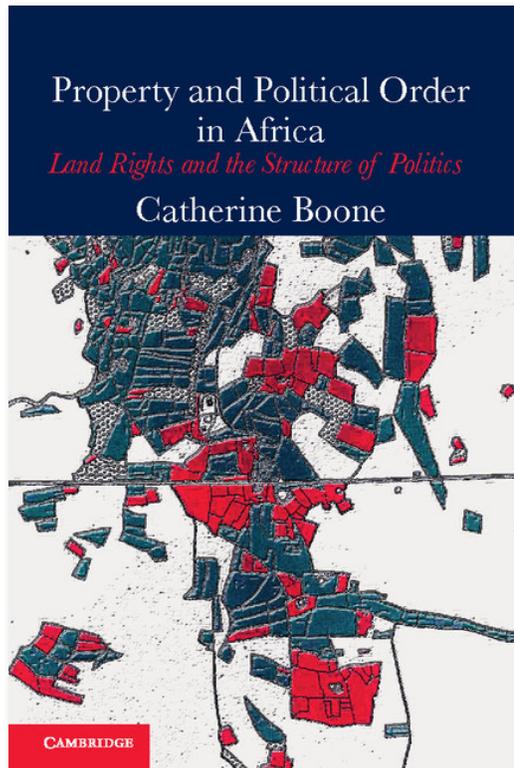
About the Book

In sub-Saharan Africa, property relationships around land and access to natural resources vary across localities, districts, and farming regions. These differences produce patterned variations in relationships between individuals, communities, and the state. This book captures these patterns in an analysis of structure and variation in rural land tenure regimes. In most farming areas, state authority is deeply embedded in land regimes, drawing farmers, ethnic insiders and outsiders, lineages, villages, and communities into direct and indirect relationships with political authorities at different levels of the state apparatus. The analysis shows how property institutions – institutions that define political authority and hierarchy around land – shape dynamics of great interest to scholars of politics, including the dynamics of land-related competition and conflict, territorial conflict, patron-client relations, electoral cleavage and mobilization, ethnic politics, rural rebellion, and the localization and “nationalization” of political competition.

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Praise for the Book

“This is a wide-ranging and deeply researched work. It encompasses both Francophone and Anglophone Africa and exhibits a clear mastery of the politics of the conflicts that have drawn the world’s attention: the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Rwanda, and eastern Congo. It promises to become a classic in our field.”

– Robert Bates, Eaton Professor in the Department of Government, Harvard University

“This book is a masterpiece, which will consolidate Catherine Boone’s standing among the topmost rank of practicing Africanists. The comparative scope, the field research in multiple countries, the thorough documentation on the others, and the coherence as well as the intellectual force of Boone’s analytical framework all mark the work as a contribution that will be obligatory reading for comparativists. Boone’s focus on the local and its relationship to the national is a valuable counterpoint to a number of recent political science treatises focusing on Africa. The differences of detail in the cases explored are fascinating, and Boone’s interpretive schema impressively organizes them into a parsimonious explanatory frame.”

– M. Crawford Young, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, University of Wisconsin–Madison

“The overarching argument of Catherine Boone’s book is that land conflicts lie at the core of political competition in Africa. Land tenure is not an epi-phenomenon that political scientists (or others) can afford to dismiss. Land conflicts – and property – are at the heart of the structuration, and differentiation, of political institutions and governance in Africa. Moreover, even if attention seems to have shifted from rural to urban development in recent years, the book claims that civil conflict mainly takes place in the rural areas, and, as importantly, a major part of the electorate lives in rural areas, wherefore the connections between livelihood, property, tenure regimes, and political institutions are central for political analysis. This is the kind of text with which one would feel entirely comfortable on a syllabus. It is up to date, it is comprehensive, and the methodology is explicit and effective. I would definitely recommend it to students.”

– Christian Lund, Professor of Development, Resource Management and Governance, Department of Food and Resource Economics, University of Copenhagen

Available from February 2014 | 424 pages

3 b/w illus. | 13 maps | 12 tables

Hardback | 978-1-107-04069-4

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