The Politics of Property Rights Institutions in Africa

Why do some political leaders create and strengthen institutions such as title registries and land tribunals that secure property rights to land, while others neglect these institutions or destroy those that already exist? How do these institutions evolve once they have been established?

This book answers these questions through spatial and temporal comparison of national and subnational cases from Botswana, Ghana, and Kenya, and, to a lesser extent, Zimbabwe. Ato Kwamena Onoma argues that the level of property rights security that leaders prefer depends on how they use land. However, the extent to which leaders’ institutional preferences are translated into actual institutions depends on the level of leaders’ capacity. Further, once established, these institutions through their very working can contribute to their own decline over time. This book is unique in revealing the political and economic reasons why some leaders, unlike others, prefer an environment of insecure rights even as land prices increase.

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To D. A. Akyeampong and G. K. Tetteh of Senya Bereku. And also to the memory of the late Mzee Frank Mcharo of Taita Mwatate.
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Abbreviations

AASA  Akyem Abuakwa State Archive
AMA  Accra Metropolitan Assembly
BDP  Botswana Democratic Party
CPP  Convention Peoples Party
DLAS  Department of Land Adjudication and Settlement
GEMA  Gikuyu, Embu, and Meru Association
GREDA  Ghana Real Estate Developers Association
GSU  General Service Unit
KANU  Kenya African National Union
KNA  Kenya National Archives
LBC  Land-Buying Company
MDC  Movement for Democratic Change
NDC  National Democratic Congress
NLM  National Liberation Movement
NPP  New Patriotic Party
OASL  Office of the Administrator of Stool Lands
PNDC  Provisional National Defense Council
SFT  Settlement Fund Trustees
SHHA  Self-Help Housing Agency
SLIMS  State Lands Information Management System
TGLP  Tribal Grazing Land Policy (1975)
TLIMS  Tribal Lands Information Management System
UGCC  United Gold Coast Convention
ZANU-PF  Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
Map 1. Map of Botswana.