

and Gabon are indicative of emerging pluralist democracies. Yet, it is indisputable that vibrant electoral competition in these two countries distinguishes their people's efforts to establish representative governments. Given his misunderstandings, I would guess it has been a long time since Mr Yates last visited the continent. I suggest he do so and re-read the book on the flight.

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**Property and Political Order in Africa. Land Rights and the Structure of Politics**

by CATHERINE BOONE

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Property rights in land, and their social complexities, negotiation and contestation, are a central theme of much analysis of rural dynamics in sub-Saharan Africa in relation to a wide range of issues. Those encompass, and sometimes connect, agrarian change and development policy, political authority and social differentiation in the countryside, violent conflict and war, and such other topical and highly charged themes as 'land grabbing' and climate change and other ecological pressures.

Catherine Boone's previous *Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) centred on the powers of regionally differentiated rural elites and how they affect state formation and capacities. She proposed a matrix of low/high social standing (principally in terms of chieftancy), and low/high economic autonomy, of rural elites which generate their strengths and weaknesses as allies or rivals of the central state. This was applied to, and illustrated by, marked regional variation in Senegal (three cases), Côte d'Ivoire (two cases) and Ghana (two cases). Boone argued that the different outcomes, or patterns, she identified as power sharing, usurpation, administrative occupation and non-incorporation, are best explained as the results of 'endogenous institutional choice' in the relations between central states and regional elites of different strengths.

Her new book is informed by a similar institutionalist approach to the comparative politics of African states, now focused on property rights in land which were somewhat in the background of the earlier work. Her principal interest here is the effects of conflicts over land rights for politics, especially when they generate violent upheavals on a national scale. She proposes a schema of land tenure institutions that vary according to the locus of political authority over land, jurisdictional boundaries, citizenship rules and property rules. These feed into a typology of two basic kinds of 'neocustomary land regimes' and various forms of 'statist land tenure' regimes. The former comprise 'a continuum from decentralized (family) to centralized (e.g., chieftancy) authority structures' governing access to land (p. 65). The latter includes 'a private property regime ... (as) a particular variant or subtype of a statist land regime' (p. 67). In neocustomary regimes conflict over land tends to be contained within localities (of different scales); where statist land regimes are central, conflict over land can generate violent upheavals in national politics.

Of the aspects of land regimes listed, ‘citizenship rules’ seem to be of especial salience given longer and more recent histories of rural in-migration and of ethnicity/indigeneity as a principle of access to land, typically established during colonial rule. In this respect, Boone acknowledges the influence of Mahmood Mamdani’s *Citizen and Subject* (Princeton University Press, 1996) while sidestepping the controversies it stimulated. Her principal case studies are western Burkina Faso, Ghana’s cocoa region (including peri-urban Kumasi) and west, northern Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, the Rift Valley and Kisii in Kenya, eastern DRC, Rwanda and Zimbabwe. Their major rural zones tend to display increasing demographic pressure over time and similarly increasing intensity of commodification, which however are not sufficient to explain *variations* in conflicts over land, and notably their ‘nationalization’ in conditions of statist regimes.

This summary provides only the barest bones of an analytically and empirically rich account, with many nuances of the times and places of its case studies, including shifts in land tenure regimes and/or the forms and severity of land conflicts. Like the earlier *Political Topographies*, this is an extremely fruitful book not least for readers who may find themselves disagreeing with aspects of its avowedly institutionalist approach, its explanatory framework and/or the author’s interpretations of particular case studies. The latter are somewhat uneven in the degree of original research that informs them, hence in depth.

One interesting issue is the precise character of Boone’s institutionalist allegiance, and its relationship with political economy in the broader sense. For example, in a criticism of narrower versions of the ‘new institutionalism’, she observes that ‘property institutions not only assign ownership, they also organize the social relations of production and surplus appropriation’ (p. 307). Indeed, but such social relations are mostly absent in this book (by contrast with consideration of the economic base of rural elites in *Political Topographies*). One indication of the underlying centrality of ‘social relations of production and surplus appropriation’ is Boone’s view that the grip of ‘ethnicity’ on rural (and sometimes national) political processes may be combined with, or give way to, more evidently ‘class-like’ (in her term) dynamics and social forms. This is another much debated topic of social change in contemporary Africa on which one would like to hear more from Boone, more centrally and explicitly.

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**Immigrant Exclusion and Insecurity in Africa: Coethnic Strangers** by CLAIRE L. ADIDA

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There is a trivial yet telling authorial slip in Claire Adida’s book. It comes on page 8, where she talks about the violence that broke out against foreigners in South Africa in ‘the spring of 2008’. It may well have been spring in North America, but in South Africa, as indeed in all of the southern hemisphere, May is, of course, an