

Acholi drink the bitter root, *oput*, to deal with deep sorrow. Similarly, digesting a bitter past is necessary for life, in peace, to go on.

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Mortgaging the Ancestors: Ideologies of attachment in Africa, by Parker Shipton. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2009. 336 pp. US\$55.00 (cloth). ISBN 978 0 30011 602 1.

Policy makers have regarded land titling programmes as the panacea for Africa's crisis-ridden agriculture. Titling farmland as individual private property was to enhance tenure security, thereby encouraging farmers to invest in the land's long-term fertility. Most importantly, land titles could serve as collateral for loans that would enable an expansion in production, thus improving rural livelihoods and contributing to development. Kenya, as the first sub-Saharan African country to initiate a nationwide land titling programme, provides an interesting case to test the validity of the 'freehold-mortgage doctrine', as Parker Shipton calls it. Using observations from long-term fieldwork among the Luo of Western Kenya, archival material, and land commission reports, the author argues that the country's state-led agrarian reform has not only failed to meet expectations but also engendered unintended consequences. Besides excluding women and pastoralists from obtaining property rights, state land titles have generally not increased security of tenure. Land registers are notoriously prone to obsolescence, because after the initial titling, people do not register further transactions. Furthermore older rights and claims linked to popular ideas about lineage-owned landholdings continue to be pressed. Therefore, official titles notwithstanding, ownership of any piece of land may be hotly contested. Moreover, because the foreclosure of mortgaged land is usually difficult to implement, state and private lenders have been reluctant to provide loans to land-entitled farmers who are not politically well connected or economically powerful. The underlying reason for the titling programme's problems, however, is, in Shipton's view the underlying reason for the titling programme's problems is not administrative inefficiency but, on the one hand, the incongruence of 'the grand design of linked land and capital markets and of the mortgage that is its quintessence' (p. 7) and on the other African ideas about land and belonging.

This book is the second volume of a trilogy on entrustment, mortgaging, and credit among the Luo. Beyond its main focus on the 'clashes of culture over mortgaging' (p. 238), the book offers a wealth of information on a variety of themes that are sometimes directly relevant, but sometimes somewhat tangential to the major narrative. The second chapter traces the history of European and North American notions of private property, mortgage systems, and 'progress'. The discussion of the ideas of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx and other past political philosophers as well as contemporary thinkers on property is useful, but so brief and general that the finer points of these theories (that do not necessarily equate property with private property or conflate individual and private property) cannot be given due attention.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 provide important insights into Luo society, its history, livelihood strategies, kinship system, and relations to the land, often combining ethnographic detail with sound introductions into anthropological perspectives for the non-specialist. Shipton hints that Luo may not always have been as sedentary and attached to specific stretches of territory as they are today, and that it was only

since the beginning of the twentieth century, with increasing pressure on land and British strictures against mobility and local feuds, that 'belonging' became more territorialized and lineages gained in importance for controlling land. Another fascinating theme in this section is the fate of the 'land clients', who had to ask 'first-comers' to the land for permission to establish themselves. Because they were often not allowed to bury the placenta and their dead near their houses, they always remained 'strangers' to some extent. Unsurprisingly, many land clients welcomed the titling programme because it presented an opportunity to improve their status and tenure security. It would have been interesting to connect these issues with the debates on autochthony and land rights that West Africanists have recently been engaged in – but this may have stretched the limits of this already very broad, informative book.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 discuss the history of the Kenyan land titling programme that started after the Mau Mau uprising, its post-independence development, and its present-day manifestations. Shipton argues that the promises of the titling programme were not fulfilled. For one thing, despite titling their land, farmers continued to have difficulties accessing credit, and those who effectively used land as collateral risked losing their farmsteads. Second, state titles could not protect land owners from the ethnic violence and evictions in the Kenyan countryside in the 1990s, and the post-electoral clashes of 2007 and 2008. Strong emotional attachment to land, as well as poverty and dispossession, were obviously important impetuses of these violent conflicts. However, it is not clear how titling played into the ethnic skirmishes, and whether 'customary' tenure could have avoided or minimized it. In any case, it seems that most Kenyans object to 'mortgaging the ancestors' for individual gain rather than to titling *per se*. This concern was emphasized repeatedly during the hearings of the commission of enquiry into the country's land laws that the post-Moi government under Mwai Kibaki established in 2003 – a development discussed in Chapter 9. These hearings provided a forum for Kenyans' concerns about the inefficiency of land administration, but more importantly about the problematic land rights of women, and the impropriety of land distribution. Participants in these public debates left no doubt that land issues concerned questions of belonging 'bigger than law' (p. 221). That land is meaningful legally, politically, economically, socially, and spiritually, and that one-size-fits-all regulations and reforms do violence to this multifacetedness, is one of the main messages of this accessible, provocative book, which should be of particular interest to development experts and policy makers.

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Intonations: A social history of music and nation in Luanda, Angola, from 1945 to recent times, by Marissa J. Moorman. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2008. 320 pp. with accompanying CD. £22.95 (paperback). ISBN 978 0 82141 824 6.

Rumba Rules: The politics of dance music in Mobutu's Zaire, by Bob W. White. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2008. 328 pp. + links to audio and video on website. £12.99 (paperback). ISBN 978 0 82234 112 3.

Intonations and *Rumba Rules* both analyse the political uses to which music can be put, and musicians' political involvement, direct or otherwise. In the former book