



HIROSHIMA UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences
The International Peace & Coexistence Programme

‘We Owned this Land Before the State was Established’: The State, Traditional Authorities, and the Land Question in Africa

Customary land governance is one of the most contentious land issues in Africa. As many African governments seek to reform land policies to respond to the challenges of increasing population, expanding economic activities and rapid urbanisation, the proposed reforms are often challenged by traditional leaders who see land policy reforms as a ploy to undermine their authority over customary land. In this seminar, I look at land policy reform challenges in Africa, focusing on the struggle between the state and traditional leaders over the control of customary land, in particular. While the state sometimes attempts to co-opt traditional leaders to support the reforms, this alliance often does not hold for long, especially when traditional leaders sense that their interests are being undermined by the proposed land policy reforms. This situation sometimes leads to contestations which often frustrate the formulation and implementation of land policy reforms in many countries on the continent.



A LECTURE BY

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Horman Chitonge is Professor of African Studies at the Centre for African Studies, and research associate at PRISM, School of Economics, University of Cape Town (UCT). He is also visiting professor at African Studies Centre (ASC), Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, and Research Fellow in the Global Justice Programme at Yale University. His research interests include economic development in Africa, agrarian political economy, water supply, social welfare, poverty and inequality. He has published extensively on these and related research areas. His most recent books include *Industrial Policy and the Transformation of the Colonial Economy in Africa: the Zambian Experience* (Routledge, 2021); and *Land Tenure Challenges in Africa: Confronting the Land Governance Deficit* (Springer, 2022).

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