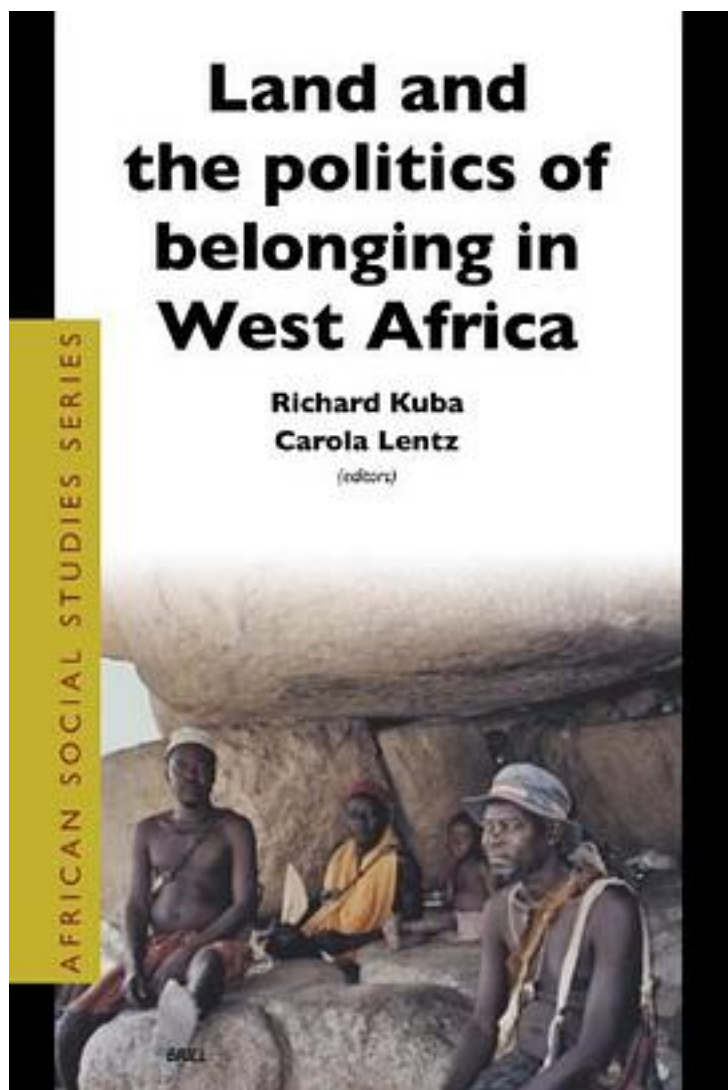


Land and the Politics of Belonging in West Africa



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Recognizing that land rights are ambiguous, negotiable and politically embedded, these case studies explore the long-term processes and recent changes in contemporary rural West Africa affecting the conversion of control over land into social and political capital and vice versa. They point to the colonial origins of what came to be viewed as 'customary' tenure and to the legal pluralism characterizing pre-colonial tenure arrangements. Furthermore, they show the spiritual and ritual importance of land that can be converted into political power and economic prerogatives, a dimension neglected by much of the recent literature. Analyses cover forest and savannah, state and segmentary societies, facilitating comparison and insights across the Anglo-Francophone divide.

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