Special Issue of Nomadic Peoples on Securing the Land and Resource Rights of Pastoral Peoples in East Africa

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Abstract

The land question in many African countries has geographical, political, economic, social and demographic nuances. These factors color land and resource rights for pastoral and forest dwelling communities. Land as property draws from the universality of the theory of property in time and space with the earliest theoretical explanations of property being occupation of land and where property belonged of right to him who seized it first. Land therefore represents the earliest form of property and includes resources on the land such as trees; pasture; water and wetlands. Land tenure - the nature and manner in which rights and interests over various categories of land are created or determined, allocated and enjoyed - is pivotal to land as property especially for resource-dependent communities for whom land and livestock comprise the only property and source of livelihood.

The introduction of a modern tenure system through colonialism and continued by post-independence government policy and legislation has made the rights of pastoralists and forest dwelling communities insecure. Pastoralism, a livestock based land use that has flourished in arid and semi-arid lands, requires a supportive tenure system for both land and related resources. Pastoralists’ livelihoods are dependent on pasture and water resources. Indeed, the scarcity of water and pasture in areas inhabited by pastoralists raises livelihood security issues as people and animals compete for access to water during dry periods.

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