

Abstract

Dynamics in land tenure systems have created land contestations across a gender lens in Tanzania. The process has evolved women's land tenure security from colonial to post-colonial settings in many communities in the country. It is argued that women have a sound land tenure security in Female Based Kinships (FBKs) compared to patrilineal-based communities. These two kinship social organisations have distinct models which govern their land tenure processes. The former being maternally-based, is considered to make it easier for women's land access contrary to the latter. This study was therefore designed to interrogate this contrastive claim, given the traditional and historical dynamics that encountered both matrilineal and patrilineal land tenure traditions in Tanzania. Through archival sources, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis, the study has established that, women land tenure security apart from patriarchal based perspective has evolved due to traditional and historical changes anchored by the colonial and post-colonial land policies and laws in the country. The introduction of colonial land ordinances -- for instance in 1895 and 1903 by the German and the 1920s and 1930s by the British colonial states have been discovered to have their shares towards a gendered land tenure practices. The crafted colonial land ordinances, among other issues, subjected all land to the governors who had absolute powers over it. This marked the notion of 'power centralisation over land which gradually deviated the traditional land tenure set up. The enacted policies facilitated colonial economic production and administration which altogether had their shares towards the genesis of women land tenure insecurity across matrilineal communities in Tanzania. Indeed, post-colonial land policies transformed the traditional land tenure practices in Tanzania. This was accelerated by the introduction of various post-colonial practices such as the 1960s-1970s *Ujamaa* policy, the 1990s National land policies and 1990s land formalisation processes. That being the case, this study has lensed women land tenure insecurity in Tanzania from other perimeters by comparing the dynamics of Luguru and Chagga land tenure traditions and their implications on women's land access, control and power. As such, it is of good intention for land scholars, the government, policy makers and other actors to address women land tenure insecurity in the country from a wider traditional and historical evolutions apart from merely male-oriented perceptions bound the contemporary debates.