

## Abstract

# Contesting Control: Land and Forest in the Struggle for Loita Maasai Self-government in Kenya

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*Contesting Control* is about the Loita Maasai in Kenya who, faced with increasing outside interventions and pressure from neighbouring communities, the state and other agencies, have been struggling to maintain access and control over the land they inhabit and the forest they use. They have been on the losing side in territorial struggles with neighbouring Purko Maasai and (non-Maasai) Sonjo. However, with regard to the state, NGOs and environmental organizations, the Loita have successfully navigated policies and projects and retained access and control of their land and forest. Interventions have, nevertheless, changed the way people engage with the land and forest and with each other on these issues. This study investigates the (in)direct effects of interventions and how they have articulated with existing relations, practices, processes and struggles in Loita. It considers the state-led land adjudication programme of the 1960s that sought to convert Kenya's pastoral lands into privately owned group ranches, the attempt by Narok County Council to turn the Naimina Enkiyio Forest into a nature reserve for tourism in the 1990s, and a forest co-management project carried out by IUCN in the early 2000s. This volume captures the process of property-in-the-making and socio-political change among the Loita Maasai as they struggle for autonomy and self-government.