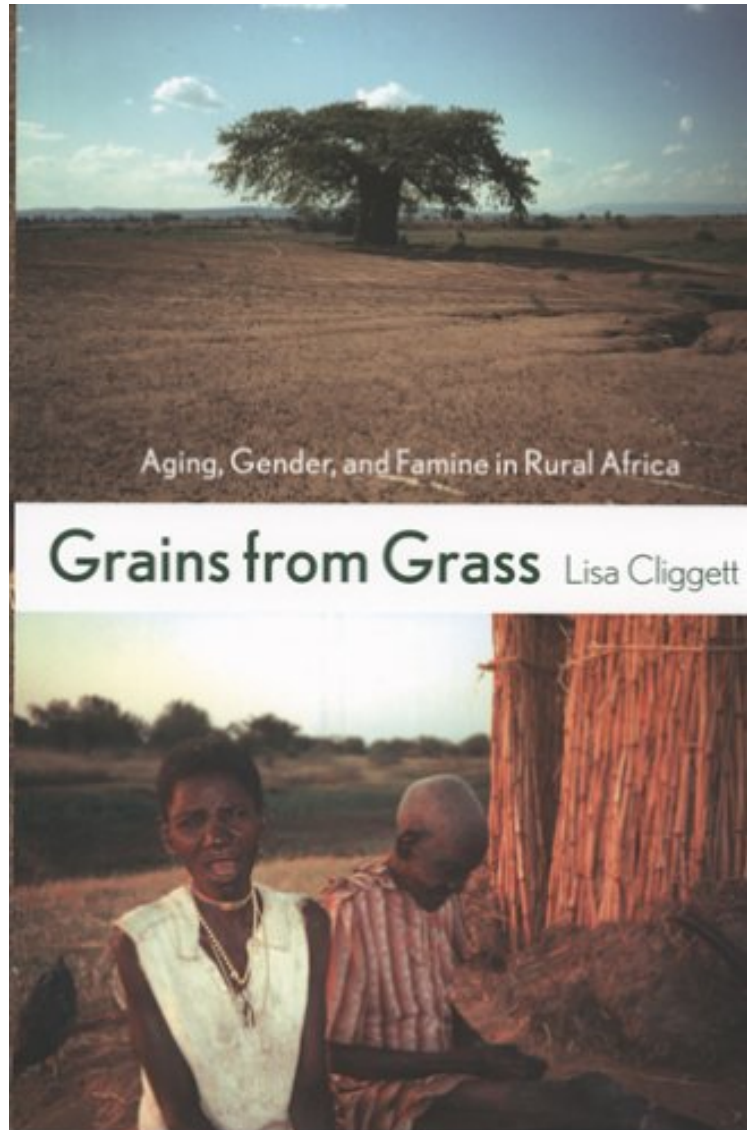


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## Grains from Grass: Aging, Gender, and Famine in Rural Africa

*Lisa Cliggett*

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**Lisa Cliggett : Grains from Grass: Aging, Gender, and Famine in Rural Africa** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Grains from Grass: Aging, Gender, and Famine in Rural Africa:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By jenmemphis Great read!

In her ethnography of the Gwembe Tonga people of rural Zambia, Lisa Cliggett explores what happens to kinship ties in times of famine. The Tonga, a matrilineal Bantu-speaking society, had long lived and farmed along the banks of the

Zambezi River, but when the Kariba Dam was completed and the river valley was flooded in 1958, approximately 57,000 people were forcibly relocated. All of southern Africa has suffered from severe droughts in the last three decades, and the Gwembe Valley has proved particularly susceptible to failed harvests and sociopolitically and ecologically triggered crises. The work of survival for the Gwembe Tonga includes difficult decisions about how to distribute inadequate resources among family members. Physically limited elderly Tonga who rely on their kin for food and assistance are particularly vulnerable. Cliggett examines Tonga household economies and support systems for the elderly. Old men and women, she finds, use deeply gendered approaches to encourage aid from their children and fend off starvation. In extreme circumstances, often the only resources at people's disposal are social support networks. Cliggett's book tells a story about how people living in environmentally and economically dire circumstances manage their social and material worlds to the best of their ability, sometimes at the cost of maintaining kinship bonds—a finding that challenges Western notions of family among indigenous people, especially in rural Africa.

"Grains from Grass is a rich and intimate exploration of what it means to be old and at the brink of survival in a poor rural community. Drawing on classic themes and methods of social anthropology, it provides a subtle account of sociocultural change." Alex de Waal, Fellow, Global Equity Initiative, Harvard University  
"The themes of Grains from Grass transcend Africa and anthropology. Lisa Cliggett offers wonderful methodological lessons for transgenerational cooperation and provides a useful theoretical mechanism for making visible and for disentangling a complex set of relations that traditionally go unnoticed." James A. Pritchett, Boston University  
"In a readable but sophisticated introduction to anthropological approaches to the lives of the African poor, Lisa Cliggett describes age- and gender-specific dilemmas and strategies for physical, social, and spiritual welfare." Jane I. Guyer, The Johns Hopkins University  
About the Author Lisa Cliggett is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Kentucky.