

realities on Murundi hill. De Lame found not a single exclusively farming or herding family on her hill. Ethnicity was to some extent a language for discussing exploitation. Kabera, a rich Hutu, told de Lame that in the past he would have become a Tutsi. Kabera was an “inveterate accumulator” according to de Lame, and feared vengeance from those less well-to-do. The most daring of the peasants “allow[ed] their goats to graze by mistake in his fields” or allowed a fire to burn his woods (223–24, 296–97). Ethnicity played a part in electoral politics, as did religion and class. A Tutsi connection could be a handicap in the political sphere. However, a young Dahumbya (Hutu) woman, married to a member of a minor lineage of Tutsi land-clearers, was able to win an election by combining traditional and modern appeals.

De Lame was overtaken by events, in that she carried out her fieldwork under the Habyarimana regime but the book was published after the genocide. This makes it much more interesting than most of the books on Rwanda published since the genocide. First, de Lame knows far more about Rwanda than most of those other authors. Second, unlike many of the others, she is not mining the Rwandan past selectively, to “explain” the genocide. After the genocide de Lame visited a camp in eastern DR Congo (then Zaïre) where many Hutu from Murundi had taken up residence. She reports that they did not consider themselves refugees and saw no reason to obey the laws of Zaïre. Kabera, the wealthy Hutu who had said that in earlier days he might have become a Tutsi, was living in comfort on the hill-top, in the camp.

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Lisa Cliggett. *Grains from Grass: Aging, Gender, and Famine in Rural Africa*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005. xvii + 193 pp. Photographs. Maps. Figures. Tables. Notes. References. Index. \$19.95. Paper.

About three months after her arrival in Zambia to begin fieldwork, Lisa Cliggett saw an old Tonga woman harvesting seeds from stalks of grass. Her research assistant explained that the old woman had no maize to eat and that she would spend about three hours collecting enough “grains from grass” to provide herself with a small bowl of porridge, her meal for the day. When I tried harvesting grains from grass in my own garden, I realized that it would indeed take a long time to produce a very small and inadequate amount of food. And though I have been doing research in rural Kenya for many years, this story brought home the meaning of poverty and persistent hunger in a new way.

Grains from Grass deals with socioeconomic change in Zambia, its effects on family relationships, and how Gwembe Tonga people, especially older persons, have learned to cope in an economy of scarcity and ongoing

food insecurity of varying intensities. The first three chapters establish the context with a discussion of older populations in non-Western societies, a vivid description of Cliggett's fieldwork experiences, and the history of the Gwembe Valley, which has come to be an environment of extreme poverty and environmental degradation, largely as a result of the building of Kariba dam in 1958 and the forced relocation of Tonga from their fertile river lands into an area of uncertain rainfall. This story of socioeconomic change has been the focus of decades of research by Elizabeth Colson and Thayer Scudder in their ongoing Gwembe Tonga Research Project, which Cliggett will carry forward into the future.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 describe Tonga social organization and social relations from the different perspectives of male and female elders in relation to "making a village-style living" (78), residential arrangements, and manipulating the spirit world. Lifetimes of gendered differences in access to productive and material resources and the labor of others have produced a "gendered vulnerability in old age" (63), the theme around which Cliggett constructs her analysis. She shows how older women and men have developed different strategies for negotiating sustenance and support for themselves, with men relying primarily on material wealth and women on social networks. She also weaves into her discussion the theme of matriliney and its effects on access to resources. Chapter 7 looks at elders' relationships with their children who have migrated to Zambian towns or frontier farming areas. Migrants' assistance to parents is minimal, intended primarily to keep open the possibility of the children's return to their rural homes. The final chapter summarizes the findings and includes a discussion of the value of long-term research.

Cliggett wrote *Grains from Grass* to serve as a text in her courses, to bring methodology (participant observation) to life and demonstrate the relevance of theory to research and interpretation (often difficult for students to grasp). She is an actor in her ethnography, telling her own story as a researcher and often writing from a personal perspective about how she came to get particular data, so readers know the various sources of her information. But her story is modestly told so that it enhances, rather than intrudes into, the ethnographic findings.

Overall, *Grains from Grass* gives readers a sense of the complexity of individual lives through the portrayal of local people and their struggles to survive. Cliggett's account of the realities of lived experience contributes to more nuanced understandings of essentialist concepts of "Africans," "the poor" and "the elderly." It is a very readable counter to media portrayals of Africans and could be useful in courses, both undergraduate and graduate, in research methods, African history and ethnography, and gerontology.

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