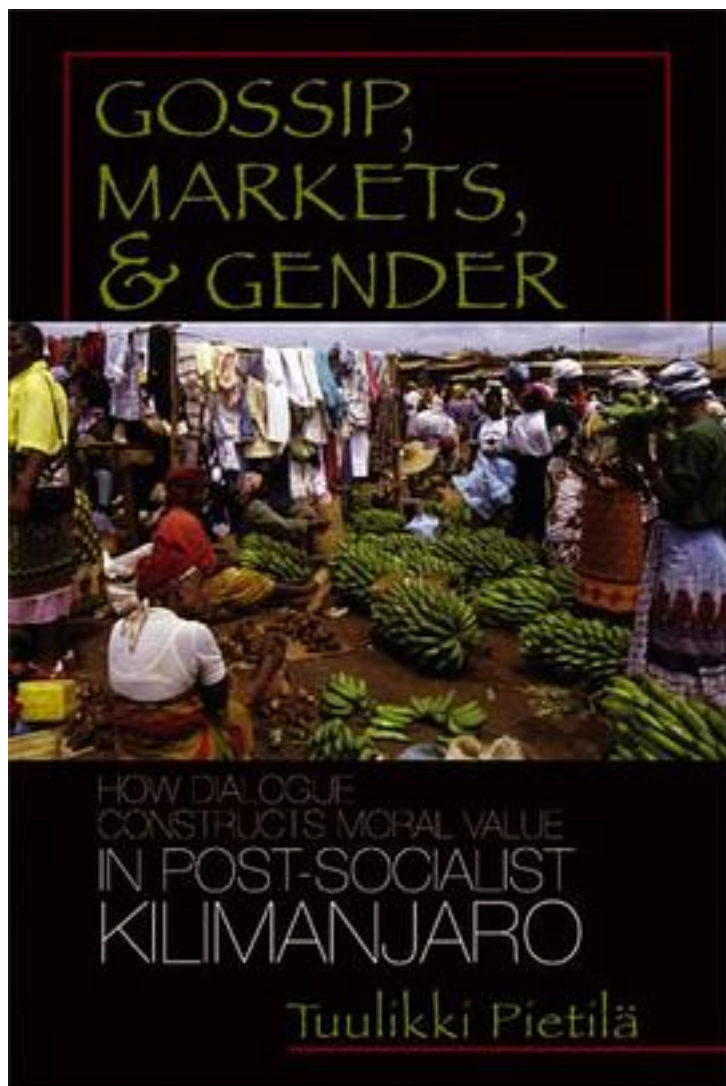


Gossip, Markets, and Gender



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著者:Pietila, Tuulikki

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"All traders are thieves, especially women traders," people often assured social anthropologist Tuulikki Pietila during her field work in Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, in the mid-1990s. Equally common were stories about businessmen who had "bought a spirit" for their enrichment. Pietila places these and similar comments in the context of the liberalization of the Tanzanian economy that began in the 1980s, when many men and women found themselves newly enmeshed in the burgeoning market economy. Even as emerging private markets strengthened the position of enterprising people, economic resources did not automatically lead to heightened social position. Instead, social recognition remained tied to a complex cultural negotiation through stories and gossip in markets, bars, and neighborhoods. With its rich ethnographic detail, "Gossip, Markets, and Gender" shows how gossip and the responses to it form an ongoing dialogue through which the moral reputations of trading women and businessmen, and cultural ideas about moral value and gender, are constructed and rethought. By combining a sociolinguistic study of talk, storytelling, and conversation with analysis of gender, the political economy of trading, and the moral economy of personhood, Pietila reveals a new perspective on the globalization of the market economy and its meaning and impact on the local level.

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