

household members also did not participate, AK gave money or crops to the *iddir* in exchange for labor.

AK not only received support; he was also observed approaching or helping others. The most frequently observed example of this process involved AK approaching people to facilitate the success of work on his own farm. During this season, especially in August and September, maize must be harvested and seeds must be sowed. AK also had to finish harvesting the maize on his 0.5 ha and then had to finish plowing and sowing before it rained again. All of this work required help, and AK was busy seeking help from his son's household, from neighbors who wanted to work, and from the communal association, negotiating work hours and remuneration. On the other hand, AK was also observed giving others maize, root crops, and sometimes money. Indeed, some people faced shortages in the grain that they had saved for their own consumption. A total of 71 of the 75 persons who did something for AK also received something from AK, although it is possible that these acts were not directly related. That is, it is possible that "open circulation, so-called 'general reciprocity'" (Ueno, 2008: 29) was occurring. This daily series of reciprocal acts surrounding AK demonstrates that elderly individuals in this area rely on the labor of younger people to manage and maintain their livelihood activities and that the younger people use their labor to obtain money or food. Thus, close and interdependent relationships exist among generations.

Elderly Individuals Who Are *Lanqta*

The previous section discussed *galta* such as AK who are proactive in managing their own livelihoods. However, not all elderly individuals in Zelet are active. As people age, they face physical limitations. When an individual falls ill and stops attending meetings or funerals, they say that he/she is *lanqta*. The word *lanqta* means "tired," and some *galta* in Zelet are *lanqta*. In this section, I discuss the life of a *galta* who is *lanqta*.

(1) The case of AG (88-year-old male, No. 1 in Table 1)

AG lived with his 87-year-old wife, BI (No. 11, Table 2). They had three children, all of whom are dead. Their brothers and sisters are also dead, and there are no "*susa*" of the same clan in the location. AG himself had cultivated a 2 ha *wony haami* and had vast coffee fields and many livestock. However, in 2008, when we first met, he had already sold his livestock and turned over his 0.2 ha field to others for cultivation because he was downscaling most of his livelihood-related activities. AG and his wife were exempted from paying a weekly premium to the *iddir*, as well as a tax imposed on his field. He also enjoyed drinking and often travelled to the market on foot, stopping at bars run by his distant relative who lived in another location. He did not require much money to get drunk because younger people who knew him bought him drinks so they could drink together. When he had trouble finding food or money, he visited *molla*, neighbors, irrespective of geographic proximity or ties of blood or marriage, to talk about getting food or money. His wife, BI, also visited the market. She has difficulty hearing, but I observed her talking with others in the

market. It was not clear what she brought to or bought at the market. When we met on the street, she was returning home with only a handful of broad beans.

AK revealed that AG and BI had visited him several times to ask for money and food. I observed this on one occasion. At first, BI visited AK to talk about their shortage of food. Two days later, AG himself visited AK and asked, "you said you would give us food, but was it lie?" AK said, "No, no. It was not. But could you wait for the next harvest because now we are finishing the stored maize. Today, please take this money and use it for drinking." AK gave AG the money for two glasses. Why did AK do this? AK explained to me that "He used to take care of us. He had worked very hard for us, although he does not do so now." He added, "*saabikan*" (for the God). The first answer means he gave money to AG because AG had asked him, whereas the second answer means that even if the person who had asked AK were not AG, AK would have had to give him money anyway.

(2) The case of BN (77-year-old female, No. 12 in Table 2)

BN has lived in the Zelet location since she got married. She is from the lowlands to the west of Metser, and her husband's grandchildren and the daughter of her husband's ex-wife live nearby. Although her daily activities were limited as a result of age, she still performed housework at her own pace. For example, she was not able to gather and chop thick firewood, but she gathered dried twigs from a coffee field and cooked simple meals. She drew water from a river near her house using a small container that holds 3–5 liters. She often complained of pain in her knees, elbows, and other joints and sometimes stayed in bed due to feeling sick. However, she spent most of her time with her husband's ex-wife's daughter, who lived next to her house. When she prepared a meal, they ate it together. When she did not cook but felt hungry, BN visited AK's second son, and members of his household gave her a piece of injera. BN is very tranquil and was called *aako* (grandmother) by local children. When her husband died, she converted to Protestantism. When she had a problem (e.g., needing food or clothes), the church helped her with money or food. Members of the church sometimes visited and talked with her. However, when she needed items essential to her livelihood, she visited neighbors such as AK to ask for food. I observed this once during the research period. AK explained that he gave her food because "She is Protestant, like me. Besides, she does not have her children."

When she was not very ill, BN went to the twice-weekly market held at the center of Metser and sold crops such as taro or herbs from her *tika haami*. Although her house in the Zelet location is about 2 km from the market place, she left earlier than other people and walked slowly to the market because it was difficult for her to move more rapidly when carrying crops on her back. Other *galta lanqta*, such as AG and BI, also walked to the market slowly, at their own pace. As noted in the discussion of AK, the market place is important as a venue for interaction; it may be it is especially important for *galta lanqta* to go to the market despite their physical limitations so that they are able to maintain their relationships.

CONCLUSION

This paper examined the situation of elderly Aari individuals, known as *galta*, in southwestern Ethiopia. In the Zelet location, the research site, those who are 60 years of age or older are called *galta*. These individuals live in close proximity to others. All of the 16 *galta* living in Zelet received perfect scores on their ability to perform the basic ADLs. It is clear that these individuals are active and able to perform the activities required for survival. Although it was difficult for AK to complete his farm work by himself, he often visited others, making and maintaining good relationships with his neighbors as a way to recruit needed labor as well as meet social needs. That is, interactions with others resulted in *norti mishikan*, "a full stomach." Moreover, AK often spent time with his children, grandchildren, and neighbors. Observations of interpersonal interactions involving both AK and others underscored the importance of these encounters for the procurement of food. Indeed, people are able to compensate for what they lack by engaging in mutual exchanges, thereby helping themselves and others to achieve *norti mishikan*.

The relationship between *shedinkan* and *norti mishikan* was also manifested in the situations of *galta lanqta*. These individuals interact with others at their own pace to establish and maintain social relationships and avoid isolation. In fact, *galta lanqta* beg for food if they cannot rely on relatives.

The relationship between caregivers and persons who require care is asymmetrical. Although such relationships are characterized by mutual dependence, one party may become dominant. One might ask if this was the case for AG or BN. As *galta lanqta*, AG and BN were able to live by begging for food. However, they were not dominated by those who contributed to their survival. As mentioned above, when AK, who was often asked for food or money, gave money to AG, he did so because they had lived in the same village for a long time as well as because charity is consistent with his religious beliefs. AK also gave food to BN for religious reasons and because she had no children. Most importantly, AK's life experiences, shared with AG and BN, let him know what they needed. AK was not alone in this knowledge; many people agreed about the nature of their needs. Thus, other neighbors also contributed a little food or money. The people who surrounded AG and BN were in accord about their needs, and this enabled them and others in similar situations to beg without much hesitation and to justify doing so when encountering those who did not contribute. Indeed, at the market, they greeted, talked with, and drank with others. They sometimes interacted with individuals whom they saw only infrequently to confirm social relationships that had been established and maintained before they had reached the status of *galta lanqta*. Indeed, engagement in interactions with many persons may prevent dominance relationships. This also may be why *galta* take the initiative in relationships when they become *lanqta*.

On the other hand, most of those who interacted with *galta lanqta* on a frequent basis were relatives by blood or marriage. However, the Aari people have been affected by outside influences during the past 100 years, and their traditional values have changed. Moreover, the situation in Metser is still changing as a result of the penetration of the cash economy during the previous decades. More

children have moved to urban areas to attend school, and some individuals who graduate from school do not choose a life spent farming in their rural hometowns. It is important to follow up on how these people face and adapt to this situation of inexorable and continuous social change.

NOTES

- (1) In this area, people place a local artificial hive made from bamboo in large trees and wait for wild bees to enter. After the bees settle into this new house and accumulate honey during the next dry season, people remove the honey or bring it to their garden to keep it.
- (2) In recent years, some people have moved their houses to the side of the road, but, with the exception of women who emigrated for marriage, most people who lived in the location were longtime residents. It is believed that the location has been compact since the current occupants were born.
- (3) People belong to a particular *mana*: *gashi-mana*, *tila-mana*, and *faka-mana*. *Gashi-mana* are said to have been engaged in weaving (Kaneko, 2005), but most members now perform farm work. Women in the *tila-mana* make clay pots, and men in the *faka-mana* make ironware and woodwork. The clay pots and ironware are sold to *kantsa* and members of the *gashi-mana* in the market.
- (4) I heard that people who belong to the *ulcha* clan must not hand things to someone in another clan because doing so would cause the receiver to have a bad experience. For this reason, members of the *ulcha* clan have to place objects on the ground so that others can then take them.
- (5) A school in Gazer that offers a 10-year course of study (at the time of 2010).
- (6) A support system allowed children with no parents to buy notebooks and pens. When a child dropped out, the police asked them about why they did so. If the reason was marriage, the police may, depending on the circumstance, threaten to arrest the parents.
- (7) Words in Amharic or Amharic origin are indicated by “Am.”
- (8) An *iddir* is a communal association focused on funerals, especially in urban areas. In the Zelet location, the *iddir* does not confine its activities to funerals; it participates in various activities, such as tree planting, which raises funds, and working together to help members rebuild their houses.
- (9) As many Aari elders do not keep track of their age, I carefully examined such phenomena as birth order and life events (e.g., marriage and childbirth) and correlated them with the history of southwest Ethiopia.
- (10) They were ready to perform the second seeding for maize during this period.
- (11) I classified these activities into six categories: sleeping, eating, working on the farm (working in the field or with livestock), doing housework (e.g., cooking, washing clothes, and cleaning), engaging in social activities (spending time with persons other than household members such as by hosting guests and visitors), and other.
- (12) AK’s wife spent most of her time picking crops for self-consumption, cleaning the house, and washing clothes. Her “social activities” were very limited and included shopping at the market for food and going out for ceremonial occasions or meetings. His fourth son spent much time on social activities because he attended school. The time he spent on “other” activities included watching his parents work and playing alone.
- (13) AK often napped in the early evening before dinner and spent more time sleeping than did the two other featured here.

- (14) All of AK's brothers and sisters lived in other villages, and AK's two daughters had emigrated to other villages for marriage.
- (15) This study included relationships with people who did and others who did not live in the Zelet location. Those individuals who were not related to AK by blood or marriage and lived in a neighboring location were treated as neighbors, *molla*, and those who lived in more distant areas were treated as "others."

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