

Area Studies on the Livelihood of the Elderly People in Ethiopia — the Case of the Aari People in Southern-Western Ethiopia —

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Background and objectives of my research

With recent advancements in medical technology and the improvement of healthcare services, aging of society is becoming problems not only in developed countries but also in many of developing countries. Besides, the elders in the developed countries are generally considered to be non-productive or difficult to live independent life economically due to the decline of physical function or the illness. Thus they are considered as negative beings.

In the late 1960's, anthropological studies on the elderly began to become popular. Glascock and Feinman show the 7 markers of aging (Glascock, Feinman 1981) but these aging markers and the role of the elders depend on the background of their culture.

However, most scholars of the aging consider the societies in Africa as those pre-aging stage. There are only a few multi-disciplinary and collaborative researches in the domain. Value judgments from the economics and/or demographic studies perspectives are still imperative. Therefore we have not enough case studies that grasp the realities of the elderly people in Africa.

The objective of this study is to show how the elderly people, who tend to be regarded as “a social burden”, make their livelihood, i.e. how they live their social, economical and cultural life, and make networks with other people in the changing socio economic environment. The Aari people in the southern-western Ethiopia, who are the target of this study, don't count their age but know relating the order of the birth or unforgettable, big events. Through the investigation, I would like to present the understandings about “aging”, the way the respective local people look at the elders and how narrate their lifestyle or life history in the society studied.



Picture 1: The fish market in Awasa. They sell fishes in the instant of coming back from the lake and if you need, they cook fish and you can eat.



Picture 2: This is the class for disability peoples in Metsir. This class is offered first time in this village this year.



Picture 3: He is one of the Aari elderly in Metsir. They help each other with his sons and the neighbors. He makes one of his cows to drink water.

Reference

Glascok, A.P. & Feinman, S.L.(1981) 'Social Asset or Social Burden: Treatment of the Aged In Non-Industrial Societies,' Fry, C.L.& contributors eds., *Dimensions: Aging, Culture and Health*, Praeger Publishers: 13-29.