

TRANSMIGRATION AMONG AARI WOMAN POTTERS IN SOUTHWESTERN ETHIOPIA AND THE ACCUMULATION OF EXPERIENCE IN POTTERY-MAKING TECHNIQUES

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ABSTRACT This paper aims to describe the relationship between transmigration among Aari women potters in southwestern Ethiopia and the accumulation of their experience in pottery-making techniques. Aari people do not view favorably women who spend excessive time outside their homes. However, several cases have been observed in which pottery women who ventured outside their homes have been accepted by their husbands and the husbands' relatives. This presentation focuses on women potters' transmigrations after marriage, and preliminary conclusions show that the accumulation of their experience in pottery-making techniques allows women potters who have been divorced several times to establish a new lifestyle based on pottery-making. An examination of the dates of the techno-life histories—life histories combined with knowledge and techniques—of approximately 20 potters provides three points, which are related to the change in their techniques. Transmigration among Aari women potters socially continues, and potters are flexible in changing their pottery-making techniques according to their transmigration, which is related to their social relationships with their husbands and children. Pottery-making techniques can bridge the gap between different social groups, provide potters an economic foundation, and help them establish new lifestyles that are based on their transmigration experiences.

Key Words: Aari women potters; Ethiopia; Techniques; Techno-life histories; New lifestyles.

INTRODUCTION

In many African regions, women who belong to craftworkers' groups are involved in pottery. In Western Africa, the husbands of these women are mostly engaged in ironwork (Nigel, 1993), whereas in Ethiopia, the husbands are engaged in farming. Among the Aari potters' group, female potters assume the central role in maintaining the household economy.⁽¹⁾

Ethiopians consider southwestern Ethiopia to be a peripheral area as it is located 700 km away from the capital city, Addis Ababa. The locals of southwestern Ethiopia have been continuously exposed to new social and political systems such as formal education, healthcare facilities, and democratic elections. Among craftworkers, pottery is considered an important activity for earning a livelihood and promoting the economy; however, farmers and a few potters' husbands consider pottery an inferior activity because, in their cultural context, it constitutes "dirty work" as it involves working with clay rather than with the fertile soil that farmers till. Even today, only female craftworkers are involved in pottery.⁽²⁾

These negative assumptions, in the cultural context, pertain specifically to female potters who take the responsibility of producing pots. However, farmers who buy

pots regularly respect the techniques through which potters produce long-lasting pots and thus try to establish harmonious relationships with the potters.

The objective of this paper is to describe the mutual influences between female potters' transmigration and their pottery techniques through an analysis of their life histories. By examining the change in pottery techniques induced by social behaviors, this paper considers the variations in women's life courses from the gender point of view in the African context. Finally, as this work has never been undertaken before, I outline a basic theory on the mutual influences between potters' technological practices (based on physical techniques) and women's life courses.

PREVIOUS STUDIES AND OBJECTIVES

Previous studies have shown that livelihood activities in Africa are based on the sexual division of labor.⁽³⁾ Through an examination of previous studies in southern Africa, Sugiyama (2007: 163) highlighted four characteristics of gender divisions in Africa, which are completely different from the Western system:

1. In Africa, gender is not the first point of reference for organizing relationships;
2. The gender ratio in Africa changes with the generations;
3. Gender based positions form the basis of solidarity, and the system is not used to exclude sections of the populace; and
4. Various inter-gender relationships are formed, such as that between husbands and wives, parents and children, and siblings.

People choose suitable social relationships according to the sociocultural context. Sugiyama asserted that these characteristics are not common between all African communities; however, these points can form the grounds on which Western gender ideology can be justified and the one-sided understanding of the African gender-based system can be changed.⁽⁴⁾ She also indicated that it is possible to examine the advantages and limitations of African gender perspectives, which, when integrated with other factors, differentiate people into genders.

Some studies that examine women's knowledge and craftwork techniques in Africa⁽⁵⁾ focus on the relationships between the depth of their knowledge, the effectiveness of their techniques, and their life stages. For example, Hebrich (1987: 202) pointed out that the socializing process of married Luo women in the husband's village is facilitated by the process of learning pottery skills. Social relationships thus induce female potters to change their pottery techniques.

Gosselain (2008: 175–176) highlighted the interesting point that cultural transmission through the process of learning the craft of pottery-making was different from the dynamics of culture or cultural change because cultural transmission is a process of continuity that ensures cultural repetition. He also pointed out that individual life histories and interaction with others influence the process of gaining knowledge, learning techniques, and constructing identities. This indicates that women's knowledge and techniques are influenced by social behavior, which is changed and constructed by potters' personal experiences and social relationships.

This paper considers the characteristics of African gender division as proposed by Sugiyama and holds that women's knowledge and technological craftwork practices such as pottery-making are inextricably linked to their life histories and social relationships with their customers, relatives, and other potters. This paper also includes a documentation of their life histories with regard to their technological practices (see also K.W. Authur, in this volume), as most potters integrate their personal experiences with their pottery-making practices. These life histories include both the common experiences in Aari women's lives and distinct personal experiences. On the basis of these factors, I examine technological variations that are based on the potters' practical techniques and that determine the course of women's marital lives.

I conducted my research over the course of four years between 1998 and 2010. This paper is based on data gathered from 1998 to 2002. I documented 20 potters' life histories, detailing their knowledge and pottery-making techniques. In this paper, I focus on the life histories of three of these potters with regard to their technological practices.

RESEARCH AREA

The research area was 700 km to the southwest of Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. The Aari (also Ari) people live in the highlands, which is at an altitude of 1,300–2,000 m. In this region, a year is divided into two seasons: the dry season from October to March and the rainy season from April to September. In kitchen gardens, the Aari people cultivate several kinds of root crops, cereals, and ensete (*Ensete ventricosum*), which comprise their staple foods. They use approximately 60 differently shaped and sized cooking pots. Although the pots have four basic shapes, the Aari people focus on the size of each part of the pot. Each household has an average of 12 kinds of pots (Kaneko, 2011; see also Minami & Shigeta, in this volume). The distribution of pots manufactured by the 350 female potters of Aari is limited to within 2,500 km² of the production site.

As of 2005, Aari's population is about 180,000. Members of the Aari belong to either the farmers' group (*kantsa*) or craftworkers' group (*mana*). Inter-marriage and the sharing of meals between the members of the two groups are prohibited. *Mana* is divided into three subclasses: *gashi-mana*, *tila-mana*, and *faka-mana*. The *faka-mana* consists of blacksmiths along with their families and relatives. The *tila-mana* consists of women potters along with their families and relatives (see also J.W. Authur, in this volume). Inter-marriage and the sharing of meals between members of these subclasses are also prohibited. Each subclass forms a clan within which members of the clan can marry. Succession in a clan follows the paternal line, which means that children inherit their father's clan name. In most cases, fathers divide their land between their male children, giving the land to their children when they are around 15 years old, at which time they start building their fathers' houses.

The members of *faka-mana* generally avoid residing in the same area. When a young *faka-mana* boy learns the necessary techniques from his father and can

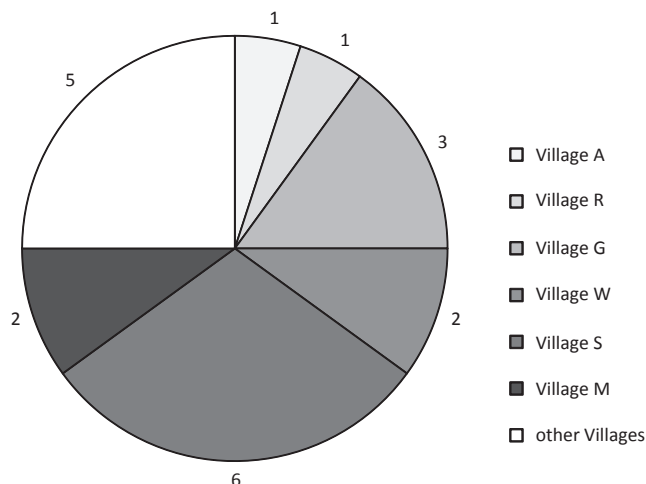


Fig. 1. The ratio of woman potters' natal villages in village S (n = 20).

work independently, he seeks an area with no blacksmiths. Once he finds such an area, he transmigrates from his father's house to the new area where he has nearly no relatives. On the other hand, the members of the *tila-mana* live in the same village near areas where clay is readily available. The village usually consists of members of a single clan. Therefore, once a *tila-mana* girl accepts her marriage to a *tila-mana* boy, she moves from her father's house to her husband's house.

After a *tila-mana* girl is born, she remains in her mother's workplace. Girls play in their mother's workplace and easily acquire information on pottery without any verbal instruction from their mothers. When girls attain the age of six years, they start making pots themselves. At this stage, the mothers provide special direction to their daughters. Girls start selling pots in the marketplaces and the pots are evaluated by *tila-mana* boys who seek good potters to marry. After age 15, a girl marries and moves out of her father's home and into her husband's house. According to the data in village S, all married men are from village S; on the other hand, all married women are from villages other than village S (Fig. 1).⁽⁶⁾

Transmigration of Aari Women Potters

Aari women generally also move from their respective fathers' homes to their husbands' houses when they get married. Although this transmigration related to the marriage is accepted among the Aari as an inevitable social practice, the Aari negatively regard unwarranted transmigration and the act of leaving one's home for any other reason. This is known as *unga* in the Aari language. *Unga* means going out without a specific purpose. As a researcher, I used to go out every day to visit potters in other villages. This led the male head of my host family to bitterly complain about my *unga*. He said, "*unga unga dakariee*," which means that going out is a bad thing. The Aari think it best that people stay in their own

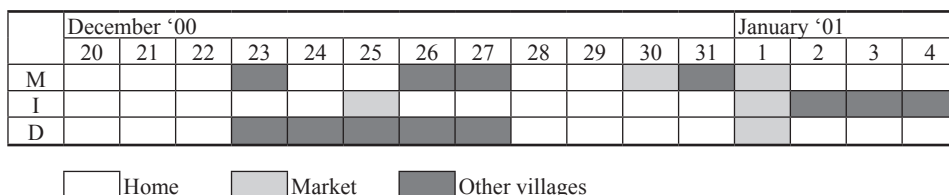


Fig. 2. Frequency of movement: case of potter M, I, and D from December 20th 2000 to January 4th 2001.

villages to work in farms, take care of their cattle, and keep the house in order. The last task pertains to married women who are supposed to stay in their houses and take care of their children and relatives.

However, contrary to what was expected of them, women potters often went out (Fig. 2). During 16 days of observation from December 20, 2000 to January 4, 2001, several potters spent five to six days going to other villages and one day going to the market. During the 16 days, they spent six days going to other villages and markets.⁽⁷⁾

According to my observation, Aari potters go out for four reasons. The first is to visit sick persons and married daughters. This is called *shedinkan* in the Aari language. Second, women go out if they get into a quarrel with their husbands, children, or relatives. This is called *aai* in the Aari language. *Unga*, explained above, constitutes the third reason for venturing out of the home. This term was also applied to a 50 years old potter who had been divorced several times and thus did not have a permanent place to stay. She travelled from one village to another every three or four months, living with her relatives. At that time, she had three different places to stay in different villages. People termed her behavior *unga*. The fourth reason for women to leave their house is *iimi*, which means moving from the father's to the husband's house upon marriage. *Iimi* is regarded as transmigration not only by young female potters, such as those in their teens, twenties, and thirties, but also by those in their forties, fifties, and even sixties. It was common for female potters to remarry after several divorces. Some potters get married two or three times in a single year. The next chapter will mainly focus on *iimi* through an examination of potters' life histories with regard to their technological practices.

POTS AND THE TRANSMISSION OF POTTERY-MAKING TECHNIQUES

Although the Aari use over 60 different kinds of pots, the pots are of only four basic shapes. The use of the pot is determined by the shape of each part, such as the width of the pot, its height, and the thickness of the *tila*. For example, a *tila* that has a rounded bottom could have one of 20 different rectangular shapes. The Aari use each kind of *tila* differently: for processing ingredients, cooking, or serving. This paper focuses on the *tila* while examining the pot-making process.

Women potters are in charge of procuring the clay, forming the shapes, firing the pots on the ground, and selling them at local marketplaces. The women form the *tila* shape without using tools. They use their hands and fingers as tools and form the pots in a step-by-step manner while drying the clay. As part of the study, I examined their hands (*aani*). Although women potters say that their children touch and give form to clay while playing (*reega*), they say that girls have a specific way in which they move their hands and fingers to create different patterns in the course of pottery-making (*mishikan*). A few of the hand and finger movement patterns have been named. Regardless of whether the movement patterns have names, specific hand and finger movement patterns are regarded among potters as an important element in the making of pots. The movement patterns are also employed as a means of communication among potters as well as between the potters and a researcher. This paper describes these hands and finger movement patterns with reference to two elements: fingers and the directions of finger movement patterns.

Several aspects are revealed through an analysis of hand and finger movement patterns. For example, potters use 20 specific hand and finger movement patterns to form *tila* shaped pots (Kaneko, 2007; 2011). Although pottery-making techniques are handed down from mothers to daughters, their sequences of hand and finger movement patterns differ (Kaneko, 2007). Potters who use the same kind of clay from a specific area have various patterns (Kaneko, 2010). Moreover, potters evaluate the pottery-making techniques, which are employed on the basis of the required output, through *aani* expressions.

Transmission of Pottery-Making Techniques among Aari Potters

According to Aari potters, an important aspect of making pots that mothers should inform their daughters about is the amount of clay required for different kinds of pots. Girls tend to spend a considerable amount of time with their mothers in the latter's workplace. When a girl turns six, she starts making pots independently in her mother's household. Potters generally work alone in their work huts; they only work together with their daughters.

Through my observations and interviews with the potters, I found out that girls begin with learning to make pots with small *tila* and then progress to learning to make pots with bigger *tila*. They sell their pots at the marketplaces to earn money; even the very first one they make is sold. In marketplaces, it is common for users of pots to buy them from these novice potters. Finding the pot that is suitable for their use, purchasers would buy this pot from any potter, even from young girls. Experienced potters have achieved a measure of legitimacy for their pottery-making; however, purchasers will still not avoid buying a pot from a small girl merely because of her inexperience.

The bigger the pots, the more the potters are paid for them. This is an incentive for the girls to make bigger pots. Additionally, potters consider the ability to make all kinds of pots a positive factor that will secure their lives. There are some technological difference in making small pots versus bigger pots, such as the way of drying pots and the way of enlarging the pots by adding clay on half-dried

pots. Compare this with making small pots, where potters add several hand and finger movements to the pattern, such as forming the half size of the lower part before drying it and then adding another layer clay onto the half-dried pots. Compared to the technological change that occurs among married potters, the learning process of single potters is less influenced by their social relationships with the customers than by economic incentives as well as the methods employed to stabilize their lives.

Generally, when girls are between 15 to 16 years old, their hands are asked for in marriage by *tila-mana* boys. Boys usually seek girls who are good at making pots and selling them in the marketplace. When a boy chooses a girl, he starts communicating with her through letters and messages if he deems her a good potter. By the time they are of marriageable age, most girls can make various kinds of pots. After a girl marries, she transmigrates to her husband's village and establishes their household life.

When women potters marry, they are expected to fulfill their social obligations at each stage of life while continuing their pottery-making. In the *uuta* stage (that is, within three years of marriage, see also Thubauville, in this volume), potters are expected to make and fire pots with different kinds of clay from their natal village and to establish their household lives. After the *uuta* stage, potters enter the *ma* stage. Some potters have children during this stage while some get divorced and go back their fathers' villages. In any case, women potters in the *ma* stage are expected to make a certain amount of money to support their relatives. Some women continue to make pots as they did in the *ma* stage, even when they have grandchildren (*akin*). Others in the *uuta* stage make fewer pots than they did in the *ma* stage.

LIFE STAGES OF AARI WOMEN POTTERS

In this chapter, the women's life stages, which are determined on the basis of their life histories, are examined. The women potters I interviewed divulged their life stories while they made their pots. They were able to tell me about their lives only once I adapted to communicating with them in the Aari language. Most stories are a combination of events in their lives and their pottery-making techniques. Unlike women farmers and the potters' husbands, each woman potter has a unique way of explaining her life story. In this chapter, I term their accounts *techno-life histories*; a woman's techno-life history consists of several stages such as *uuta*, *ma*, and *akin*.

These terms, which are related to a woman's stage in life, are not determined by biological age. For example, in the first three years of marriage, women are called *uuta*. Although this term is generally used for young women who are still in their teen years, it is also used for women who are more than forty and have remarried to their second husband. The duration of three years is almost the same as the duration during which most have their first baby. Women are usually called "the mother of her first child's name," such as "Mother Kaidaki (child name)," by their relatives. Women who have a second child are clearly classified in the

wife stage, *ma*. If a woman was unable to have a child, she would not have the opportunity to be referred to as the mother of her child. Nonetheless, these women would gradually be referred to less often as *uuta* as the end of the first three years of marriage approached. When women have grandchildren, they are called *akin* by their relatives. It is not so unusual for some potters to be called *akin* in their forties.

Uuta Stage: The case of potter Dabri

In the *uuta* stage, which roughly spans the initial three-year period after marriage, potters can make pots without any difficulties. A few potters, like potter Dabri, face some difficulties: their pots sometimes turn out cracked and broken. Some are able to make a few different kinds of pots. They are sometimes not even able to buy salt, which is cheap, or non-essential spices because they cannot sell all their pots. Some potters make their first attempts at firing the pots. Mothers-in-law generally invite their daughters-in-law to partake in the family meal; however, young potters are expected to sustain themselves.

Potter Dabri married in 2001. She moved from village B to G, which is 10 km away from the former. In her home village, the potters mixed crushed gravel into the clay. However, potters in village G mix sand into clay. Potter Dabri made big pots while she was unmarried and in her home village; however, in village G, her pots would always break. She received considerable advice from her mother-in-law; however, she communicated with the clay through her method of pottery-making, in which she used her hands and fingers to create a consistent pattern. According to her, she learned by making mistakes, changing the clay and sequences of method four times in six months. When I asked about her pottery-making, she answered with a resigned sigh.

Potter Dabri:

The pots were all broken. I tried to switch from the *toninda* clay to the *kinna* clay. But the pots still broke. I tried to put clay inside the pots. But still they broke. (2001 interview)

Young potters did not generally reveal a great deal about their pottery-making techniques. I realized that potter Dabri was slightly nervous and confused about how to establish an effective method of pottery-making. She did not give the reasons for the breaking of the pots; she just explained her pottery-making process. She learned through her mistakes and in the process of making pots through her hand and finger movement patterns, she could communicate with the natural environment.

As mentioned earlier, potters repeat specific procedures of the process of making small pots in order to make bigger pots. As far as I observed, potters could make pots of different size by increasing or decreasing the procedures for making pots. However, potters also pay attention to several elements of the natural environment, such as air moisture when they dry their pots. The duration of drying pots would be deeply related to potters' other work, such as house works and

farming. If potters would decide to dry their pots longer in conditions where there was a high percentage of air moisture, they may reduce their other work throughout the day. Because changes in their pottery-making deeply impact their work schedule, it is not easy for potters to change their pottery-making. Such changes could pose a high possibility of endangering the stability of their livelihood.

Ma Stage: The cases of potters Ija and Aida

The *ma* stage follows the *uuta* stage. Women generally give birth in the *ma* stage. They must thus incur several expenses such as medical expenses and educational expenses as their children grow up. Potters are of course expected to cover the expenses for emergency cases, such as for medical expenses, as well as to provide economically for their household's daily life. In my field research, Potter Ija constantly had 20–30 Ethiopian birr (ET Birr), which was equal to about 4 U.S. dollars. A little more than 2–3 ET birr were used for food expenses, while the rest was collected by the local system, *iqqub*. The women have to rely on relatives to meet these expenses. Some potters focus on making only certain kinds of pots, while others make various kinds of pots (Table 1: S18 & S13). They devise methods to stabilize their lives, and there follows a trend in this respect. During this stage, potters also establish harmonious relationships with customers. Some women get divorced and go back their fathers' villages. It is not uncommon for potters to be remarried two or three months after their divorce. After the marriage, the potters move to their new husbands' villages.

Various kinds of pots are sold at Aari local marketplaces (Fig. 3). These pots are made by potters with different levels of experience: from young six years old potters to experienced potters who are in the *akin* stage. Customers choose their own pots, which are long lasting and user friendly. They try identifying the makers of the pots because they wish to establish good relationships with the potters through the trade of pots. Potters capitalize on these relationships to ensure the sustainability of their lives. One potter, Potter Ija, was unable to make significant sales because she fired the pots too well, which made the surfaces of the pots black. Because she needed to buy salt and cooking oil, she asked her favored customers, *jaala*,⁽⁸⁾ to charge them on trust. When potters do this, they also promise to bring pots

Table 1. Pottery-making techniques: cases of seven potters

Potter	Stage	smaller					bigger
		B <i>til</i>	E <i>til</i>	M <i>til</i>	G <i>til</i>	S <i>til</i>	M
S3	unmarried	●	×	×	×	×	×
S5	unmarried	●	●	●	○	×	×
S8	<i>uuta</i>	●	○	●	×	×	×
S10	<i>uuta</i>	○	○	●	●	●	○
S13	<i>ma</i>	●	●	●	●	●	○
S18	<i>ma</i>	○	○	●	●	○	○
S26	<i>akin</i>	○	●	●	●	○	○

× never made (interview)

● observed

○ made it before (interview)

(March 2000)



Fig. 3. At a market place.

with good clay on another day.

Potters use several networks to ensure the stability of their lives. To successfully collect funds for building a house, they join the local system, *iqqub*, to manage long-term household-related expenses. This system was expanded among the Aari people when the Amhara people from northern Ethiopia invaded this area. According to my research, it was common among the Aari people to join this local system, *iqqub*. In terms of the number of members and the duration, there were three types of *iqqub* among potters. The first type was called *gaba iqqub*, which means *iqqub* at marketplaces. This was a small-scale system over a short period. The members were five to six relatives and friends. Each week at the marketplace, they prepared to offer 5 ET birr, which was equal to about 1 U.S. dollar. One member received about 30 ET birr, and the *iqqub* would be closed after every member received funds. A second system was usually named after the leader of the *iqqub*, such as “Wordes *iqqub*.” This type ranged in membership from 10 to 20, and the group was community-based but relatives from a different village could join. They met once every week or every two weeks at the leader’s house, and 5–20 ET birr were collected from each member. This type of arrangement would continue for more than one year. The third type was a very large-scale *iqqub*, with more than 200 members. Members would bring 1–2 ET birr every week to the leaders’ house. Their activities continued for about seven years. The second and third types of *iqqub* were more organized than the first one. They had secretaries for making record of these activities, and some *iqqub* has regulations among the members.

For example, Potter Aida is planning to build houses, and she also has to meet the educational expenses for her first son. The *iqqub* system fosters relationships

between social groups beyond their residential areas. Because it was difficult for potters to make their income from selling pots constantly, some potters would borrow money from their relatives and friends through this local system of collecting funds. Some could use the *iqqub* for managing long-term household-related expenses, but some could not do so. These differences of *iqqub* management also create economic differences; for example, some potters live in houses with iron leaf, while others do not. Some could get cattle by this *iqqub* and breed them using their knowledge and experience. The *iqqub* gives a chance for its participants to share stock equally, which can then be developed through their local knowledge and techniques.

It was commonly observed that potters leave their marriages. During the process of divorce, a female potter first leaves the husband's house and moves to her father's house. If her father is no longer alive, she can visit her brother's house. Generally, this process is called *aai*⁽⁹⁾ in the Aari language. A husband cannot convince his wife to return to his house in the *aai* process. Then, the procedure of divorce begins.

The *Akin* Stage: The case of potters Lokumi and Arake

The marriage ratio is 88% among the *tila-mana* group. These data were collected between 2000 and 2002. About 10% of households are headed by women. It is not unusual for potters to remarry after getting a divorce. More than half the potters in Village G have remarried more than two times. Menopausal potters in the *akin* stage marry older men.

The Aari people follow a system in which extended family members are not included in a nuclear household. Elders do not live with their sons or daughters; they live alone close to their married sons' houses (see also Noguchi, in this volume). The eldest sons of widowed potters in the *akin* stage usually build a small hut for their mothers, who live alone, as was the case with potter Lokumi, whose husband was claimed by a fatal disease. She asked her daughter-in-law and her grandchildren to sell her pots at marketplaces to help her earn a livelihood. She made three or four small pots in a week, and she earned less than 10 ET birr from selling those pots. At that time, she baked Ethiopian bread, called *injera* in Amharic, for about 1 ET birr. She was able to survive because her first son provided her with meals. Potter Lokumi could be a typical example of potters in the *akin* stage. However, in a few cases, potters who got divorced found themselves with no place to live. I observed some cases in which divorced potters in the *akin* stage took refuge in a Protestant church until they could find other alternatives.

Although potters can achieve economic independence, it is often difficult for them to acquire their own place to stay. In a series of interviews, a few potters revealed that they were able to secure homes due to repeated transmigrations as a result of getting remarried and divorced.

Potter Arake was interviewed at her house in 2002 with her two daughters, who had just gotten divorced. She was born in village G. She learned pottery-making from her mother, who was from village Y. Before she was made to marry

her first husband in village Y, she could make almost all kinds of pots. Her first marriage was very brief, and she immediately returned to her village after the divorce. After that, she got married to a butcher in town GA, near village G, and bore him five daughters. After around ten years, her husband decided to become an enlisted soldier and left. After that, she began suffering from a toothache, the cause of which could not be diagnosed, and the local doctor suggested that she get treatment at a big hospital in Arba Minch, located 200 km away from village G. Because her cheek was drastically swollen, she decided to go to the hospital and decided to sell her cattle, which she had bought with her *iqqub* money, to raise money for surgery. She left her children in her elder sister's care and spent two months in Arba Minch, but she could not get surgery because of insufficient funds. She finally gave up the option of surgery and returned to village G.

The following story was narrated by potter R's daughters. Potter Arake never once interrupted the conversation and just laughed as her personal history was being explained by her daughters. After that, potter Arake got married to another man in village G and then divorced him after one year. The next year, she was asked to marry yet another man in village GAT, and again this marriage lasted a year. She subsequently moved to village GA and stayed there for two years, and then she moved to village GO for two months.

After these transigrations, she went with her children to town J, located 20 km away from village G. She made pots for one year to earn a livelihood and then moved to Bako for three years. During this time, she prepared for a big wedding party for her daughter; she sold her cattle, which she had bought with her *iqqub* money, to help pay for the preparations.

Potter Arake mentioned that all her daughters were good potters, but two of them did not make pots because their husbands forbade them from doing so. In 1991, she purchased some land owned by her elder sister's son, who had passed away suddenly. She bought construction materials and requested that an Ethiopian mutual cooperation group (called an *iddir*) help her build a house. Around this time, she also converted to Protestantism. Around 2000, she underwent surgery at an Arba Minch hospital, once again getting the funds by selling her cattle.

During this time, she made only small pots (Fig. 4); of course, she could make big pots as well, but she preferred to make smaller pots because they sold faster at marketplaces. She owned two cows, one ox, one female goat, and one goat kid. She joined one *iqqub* only and put in 5 ET birr every week.

Changes in local and national policies also supported Arake's activities, such as her ability to buy land. In 1974, the political regime changed from an empirical to a socialist regime. In the socialist regime, craft workers had the same land-ownership rights as farmers. Protestantism, which had been promoted since the 1960s, also influenced the local people to accept new ideas in place of traditional practices. In potter Arake's case, her relatives (who came back from a town with her children) and her younger brother (a Protestant leader) encouraged her to convert to Protestantism when she moved to town J. Potter Arake also depended on her relatives' social relationships to have the operation for her cheek pain. With the help of pottery, potter Arake could actively and independently make a living, which was not common among potters at the time.



Fig. 4. Drying pots under sun.

CONCLUSIONS: TRANSMIGRATION AND GENDER-BASED TECHNIQUES

Several findings describe the influences of the transmigration of potters on their pottery-making techniques, which are deeply related to their life histories. Pottery-making constituted not just technological practices but also social behavior, which has a strong connection to social relationships with potters' customers and relatives. Women potters have some tendency to settle their sequences of techniques of body and kinds of pots, which depends on their life stages. For example, some potters in the *uuta* stage moved away from their home villages and faced new challenges, such as broken pots. These experiences brought potters in contact with various aspects of the natural environment, such as clay, climate, and temperature, and helped them modify their sequences of hand and finger movement patterns. The potters' mothers-in-law may have given some advice on these matters, but basically, potters respected each other's sequences because they believed that each potter had her own unique sequence.

These changes in hand sequences and finger movement patterns influenced potters to build social relationships with farmers when potters joined the *ma* stage, after the *uuta* stage. These relationships played an important role in helping them earn their livings and enhanced communication between potters and users more so than between the potters and their husbands. In addition, although potters moved out of their native villages, they maintained relationships with their relatives and made efforts to sustain the *iqqub* system despite the limitations of distance, since potters and their relatives often moved around the area. Pottery-making techniques and transmigration could thus help potters establish and sustain relationships beyond social groups and networks with their relatives.

The transmigration of potters because of marriage was inevitable among Aari women, who could achieve economic independence. The number of marriages and divorces appeared to indicate that potters enjoyed a transient lifestyle; when faced with the tiniest difficulties in their daily lives, they would simply leave the place where they resided and move elsewhere. However, when I got to know the life history of potter R, who paid taxes every year, prepared for a big wedding party for her daughter, and took care of the medical expenses of her grandchildren, I realized that the number of marriages and divorces partly revealed the process by which she achieved self-reliance by establishing social relationships. The high marriage rate could also have several implications. From the interviews with potters, it could be gathered that they came to terms with their husbands, children, and relatives under a certain social structure that the potters had to follow. In both cases, pottery-making not only was a means of achieving economic independence but also drove social relationships for women potters among the Aari.

Potters respected each other's pottery-making techniques, such as the sequences of hand and finger movement patterns. In this regard, it is natural for them to use different techniques to make pottery. At this moment, potters can accept this variation, provided that the production of pots is on a small scale and distribution is limited. *Iqqub*, the local system for accumulating capital among small-scale potters, also plays a part in minimizing major economic differences. In this respect, the variations in pottery-making among women potters can help them attain economic independence by themselves. It would be a concern if the technological variations caused economic differences and if these variations of pottery-making were based on body movements, which are communicated through the natural environment and social relationships.

Women potters' social and cultural practices dictate that they are supposed to not only take part in pottery-making to sustain their households but also, when they get married, to move with their husbands to different villages and away from the village where they were born. On the other hand, potters' husbands bring their wives to their home village, and they depend on the potters' income to make a living. However, in terms of women potters' knowledge of pottery-making and their techniques, potters can change and create their pottery-making through their social relationships. Potters develop social relationships with their customers when customers evaluate the potters' unique techniques positively. When these technological variations are connected with practices of potters' long-term household-related expenses, differences in their economic and social practices appear. Women potters sometimes cannot avoid getting married and divorced repeatedly, and they cannot help moving from village to village. Although these social practices affect their social positions and economic situation negatively, some potters do achieve economic independence and do go against normal social practice by having their own land and house because of their transmigrations.

NOTES

- (1) There was only one man who belonged to the craft workers' group and engaged in pottery-making in 1999.
- (2) Craft workers are marginalized in various contexts, such as socially, geographically, and culturally, in southern Ethiopia (Freeman & Punkhurst, 2001; Itagaki, in this volume). The *tila-mana* males among the Aari are familiar with the procedure of pottery-making, but they consider males engaging in such practices to be undesirable cultural behavior. In particular, touching the clay to make the pots is a contraindication for males within the potters' group.
- (3) In ecological and anthropological studies in Japan, women's livelihood activities and their social relationships in Africa were important parts of keeping their household economies stable (Kakeya & Sugiyama, 1985; Imamura-Hayaki, 1996; Samuel, in this volume).
- (4) Gwendolyn (1997) proposed African feminism.
- (5) In ethnoarchaeological studies, it was demonstrated that women were highly skillful at stone-tool technology (Weedman, 2005; K.W. Arthur, 2010). Sugiyama (1998) described that women's knowledge about and techniques used for livelihood activities in Zambia were deeply related to their interpretation of the world.
- (6) In some of the 16 villages researched, some women potters just moved from their fathers' houses to their husbands' in the same village (Kaneko, 2011). This has happened since 1974, when individuals could rent lands for the long term. Because *tila-mana* men tend to rent the land in the town, some villages are homes to several clans.
- (7) Women potters seem to leave their houses and villages more often than women farmers. In the case of the woman farmer who was my host mother for two weeks, she did not go out except to farm and to travel to a local market. According to my interview with her, she has been married for two years, she has never left her husband's house for any reason (except to farm and to go to the local market), and she has never stayed even one night in her parents' house alone. One reason for this is that a high percentage of women farmers get married near their fathers' house.
- (8) These relationships are found in southwestern Ethiopia across ethnic groups (Gebre, 1995).
- (9) This social behavior, which is expressed as *bettitsi* in the Maale language (Thubauville, 2010), is almost the same as *aai*.

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