Reaching Out to the World: Exchange, Hospitality and Globalisation in Africa

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Most Africans can hardly act as real consumers in the global market economy and thus constantly have to create normative tactical plans to overcome their difficulties. My aim here is to give a short case study on such tactical planning and show how the Mursi, a semi-nomadic people in South-Ethiopia, engages with the transnational world. In the first part of the article I focus on people's ideas of consumption, production, sharing and exchange and the institution of hospitality. In the second part, building on the understanding of the Mursi moral economy, I describe the different economic tactics they apply to reach out to the world. With this I argue that the idea of global-local scales should be understood as reflexive, creative and mobile relationships rather than unidirectional encompassing and unifying transactions where the larger always wins over the smaller.

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Introduction

Tourist cars that carry visitors to Mursiland in south-western Ethiopia sometimes run into a 'tourist trap'. It resembles a rope, made from long plant stalks firmly tied together, stretched across the dusty road by Mursi people in front of their settlement entrances. At one end, it is fastened to a tree and the other is held by a person. When a vehicle arrives, packed with tourists, its driver has to make a choice: they can either stop by the settlement and pay the entrance fee (200 Ethiopian birr) or confront the holder of the rope to ask them to move it. I watched this occur many times[1] and saw this tourist trap as a symbol of reaching out. It was a special tactic people chose to engage with outsiders or, to use Anna Tsing's(2005) phrase, with 'global forces'.

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[1] The fieldwork was supported by Leeds Metropolitan University and by the British Institute in Eastern Africa's Minor Fieldwork Grant. I have conducted my ethnographic fieldwork first in 1999 and later in 2008-2009 in South-Ethiopia. During my fieldwork I followed a classical ethnographic research method, conducting interviews, participant observation and spent as much time with the people as possible. This work was supplemented by visual recordings as I took about 500 photographs on tourist encounters.

As Tsing has noted, we only have rudimentary analytical tools to enable an understanding of the relationship between 'local reactions and global forces, local consumption and global circulation, local resistance and global structures of capitalism'(2005:58). The increasing interconnectedness and gradually porous boundaries, characters that mostly orient the concept of globalisation(Inda & Rosaldo 2002), involves a wide range and forms of mobility and cultural flows. The economic aspect is a particular portion of this process that channels other forms of general interconnectedness. Globalisation is a lived practice where people 'reach out to the world' (Theodossopoulos 2010; Strathern and Stewart 2010) along with the practice of consumption and different forms of production, namely with an increasing participation in market economy. 'Markets are networks constituted by acts of buying and selling, usually through the medium of money'(Hart & Hann 2009: 1) and due the aforementioned global flows the boundaries of national and international networks predominantly intersect. Anthropological research, which I present here on these lived practices of economic interconnections, has always been part of mainstream anthropology and is not a recent attempt of socio-cultural anthropology. This is due to the fact that material and human transnational mobility is not a new phenomenon (Appadurai 2005, Friedman & Friedman 2008, Wolf 1982), and researchers have always followed their informants and shown how people activate 'transnational flows' in their everyday life(Eriksen 2003). However, as places and people have become increasingly interconnected and cultural borders have disappeared, a number of anthropologists have tried to give a macro-anthropology of the global ecumene(Hannerz 1996). The global ecumene, or global connections, is regularly depicted as a process of

encompassment; as Li Puma(2001) argues, globalisation is a constant planning and objectification of 'local' desires against encompassing cultural forces.

The tactical planning of localised, immobile, rural, politically and economically weak groups manifests in different forms. Here I concur with Strathern and Stewart's(2010) statement that the main source of these different tactics is one of the experiences of ingenuity. Indigenous people combine their local concerns with a sense of global outreach as they try to overcome economical inequities(Ibid). This is a grim process for many, a challenging act of grasping to acquire local benefits. Africans aspire towards cultural convergence with an imagined global standard(Ferguson 2006). Despite this, most Africans can hardly act as real consumers in the global market economy and thus constantly have to create normative tactical plans to overcome their difficulties. My aim here is to give a short case study on such tactical planning and show how the Mursi, a semi-nomadic people in South-Ethiopia, engages with the transnational world.[2]

Researching globalisation with ethnography initially seems to be a contradiction in terms; the former implies a large scale while the latter operates on a small scale(Tsing 2005). Conceptualising the problem of globalisation requires making miniature details representative for a much broader perspective. Therefore, it is central not only to give a pure description of human acts but to show how people apply relational practices in order to temporarily fix intersubjective relationships with formerly

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[2] Throughout the text the words 'strangers', 'aliens' and 'outsiders' refer to: international tourists, most of whom are European, North-American and Asian; non-Mursi, mostly Amhara-speaking road construction workers and engineers; international NGO workers, and researchers and photographers.

unknown people, ideas and materials. In these cases the structural dichotomy of global-local loses its usual connotation and the investigation should turn towards the movements of people and materials. The boundaries between different economies are rarely possible to draw. As people attempt to overcome political and economic inequalities and try to use the sudden changes in their environment to their advantage, they move through imagined and real borders in the search for new opportunities. Marshal Sahlins'(1976 [1972]: 199) classical kinship-residential sector model positions strangers (outsiders, non-kin) in the outer ring of the trust-reciprocity realm, implying that economic transactions (sharing, exchange, gift giving etc.) weaken as physical and kinship distance grows between individuals. I find this model, directly and indirectly, in many understandings of globalisation and global connection. Space, distance and scale implicitly and explicitly play key roles in the previously mentioned literature on transnational flows. However, as I imply in this text, elements of culture change are not moving in a unidirectional manner from the outside towards the centre. The source of change is often in the centre of the community and opportunities for change should not always come from the outside. There is no culture change without an internal social preparedness and inclination.

Therefore, to understand globalisation not only requires a study of (ethnic, physical, transactional) borders but also an understanding of the 'centre' or inside of their society. An understanding of local concepts of consumption, morality and moral economy has the same importance as the description of outreaching techniques. This perception of a socially embedded economy – that production and distribution of material goods are embedded in social relations of non-economic kind(Polányi 1977) – points towards the fact that

people often communicate and create cultural values and social bonds through goods and services(Gudeman 2002). This communication through actions and materials seems to offer a huge platform for thinking about the different economic forms. Watching the arrogant expansion of contemporary world economy it is easy to conclude that this constant planning is a calculative, self-interested and strategically governed monetary process where the Maussian(Mauss 1966) spirit of gift is mostly ignored. But, is it?

For long time gift economy was mostly distinguished from commodity exchange, demonstrating the fact that while gift economy underwrites social relations and concerned with social reproduction commodity exchange establishes relations between things and ensures their reproduction(Humphrey & Hugh-Jones 1992, Gregory 1982). This view is largely modulated by later ethnographies(Humphrey 1992, Thomas 1991, Hugh-Jones 1992, Parry 1996, Bloch 1996), pointing towards the fact that given the wide range of economic attitudes and underlying motives behind diverse human actions it is difficult to note where one economic form ends and the next one starts. Where the barter becomes gift economy(Hugh-Jones 1992) or where the gift reciprocity turns into monetary economy(Caillé 2010) is often blurred. Western and non-western goods exchange is frequently situated in the context of historical asymmetry, dependency and utilitarian interests(Thomas 1992, Wolf 1982).

Given all these relative positions in economic anthropology today here I will also follow emic categorization of human activities that concern production and reproduction in the Mursi society. In the first part of the article I focus on people's ideas of consumption, production, sharing and exchange and the institution of hospitality. In the second part, building on

the understanding of the Mursi moral economy, I describe the different economic tactics they apply to reach out to the world. With this I argue that the idea of global-local scales should be understood as reflexive, creative and mobile relationships rather than unidirectional encompassing and unifying transactions where the larger always wins over the smaller. This topic is more valid now than ever as the Mursi people are currently facing the biggest challenges in their ethnic history in the forms of foreign land investment and a hydroelectric dam.

The field

The Mursi is a community that has had everyday contacts with global connections only in the past 20 years(Régi 2011a; Régi 2013b). These include the international tourism industry, active government interventions and international NGOs. It is only in about the past five years that Mursiland and its wider geographical setting, the lower Omo Valley, have become the hub of a current international debate. The Ethiopian government is building a hydroelectric dam, known as Gibe III, in the middle basin of the Omo River. Due to begin operating in 2014, this will be the second biggest dam reservoir in sub-Saharan Africa and eliminate the annual floods. This will change the lives of around 90,000 people residing downstream, including the Mursi and seven other ethnic groups. Moreover, the government has allocated a huge area of agricultural and grazing land in the lower Omo to the Ethiopian Sugar Corporation for the production of

sugar cane and the construction of six sugar processing plants. However, Human Rights Watch(2012), the African Resource Working Group(ARWG 2008) and several international NGOs, including International Rivers, USAID and Survival International, have criticised the Gibe III Hydroelectric Dam project[3], and the World Bank and the European Investment Bank have both refused to be involved. Besides this, international tourists visit Mursiland on a daily basis and generate uneasy situations in tourist villages(Turton 2004, Régi 2012). The tourists see the Mursi as a tribe of wild people: the men naked and wielding Kalashnikovs and the women wearing enormous lip-plates. The Mursi people frequently touch their visitors, which many of the latter regard as socially unacceptable and even frightening and this perceived violence is emphasised by the tour guides who want to 'protect' their guests(Régi 2013a). This situation results in crucial everyday uncertainties and social anxiety among the Mursi and made them constantly try to rethink their own relationships to national and international flows and the global consumer culture.

Fear of being consumed

With what kind of Mursi consumption concepts global consumption practices encounter? According to many thinkers one of the main purposes of the global consumer culture is to annihilate, destroy(Bataille 1997, Miller 1998) or incorporate(Li Puma 2001) the objects of desire. '[T]he central

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[3] See a summary of reports on this at: http://www.mursi.org/news-items/huge-irrigation-scheme-planned-for-the-lower-omo-valley

feature of global culture today is the politics of the mutual effort of sameness and difference to cannibalise one another'(Appadurai 2005: 43). Cannibalism and global incorporation are often associated with the progress of globalised economy. As Mauss(1973: 75) noted earlier consumption is a technique of the body as 'technical action, physical action, magico-religious action are confused for the actor.' To understand the Mursi normative actions of consumption, digestion, and encompassment it seems to be a good way to rely on the Maussian techniques of body. Basic Mursi perceptions of the human body strongly connected to the ideas of consumption and incorporation.

According to some Mursi adults and elders I interviewed, the neighbouring Bodi, Nyangatom and Hamar groups are cannibals, eating from the body if they kill an enemy. People from different parts of Mursiland similarly mentioned that their enemies eat people after killing them. Many of the Mursi's neighbouring ethnic groups are their enemies and there have been smaller and larger interethnic fights(Turton 1979, 1989, 1991, 1992; Abbink 1993, 2000) in the past decades. The fears I documented mostly concern how the Nyangatom or Bodi people consume the Mursi bodies they kill in battle. But, when I asked my informants whether white men are also cannibals the majority of the answers were affirmative. This cognitive unification, labelling all neighbouring enemy groups and white strangers as cannibals, shows a fear of being consumed and it reveals one of the major overall Mursi opinions of the outside world: it consumes Mursiland (as a spatial category) and the Mursi (as an ethnic category). The metaphor of cannibalism, the metaphor of digesting the Mursi culture and people, is often expressed through the metonym of eating

(*bhaka*).

This idea of the human body being consumed by the enemy is closely related to another aspect of consumption. Most of the Mursi I talked to thought that highland Ethiopians *(kuchumba)* and white men *(haranchi)* came to their land to take and steal it, along with their souls and their animals. Tourists, for example, according to most of the local people, take individuals' photos in order to gain economic advantage from the whole Mursi society; therefore, taking pictures without paying for them is the same as stealing. This was the reason that most Mursi regard the payment for tourist photographs as entirely unsatisfactory. Most of the tourists do not recognise the social importance of reciprocal solidarity and lost all social esteem. In the general Mursi perception, many outsiders are immoral and undisciplined; therefore, they are frequently called children *(eru)*[4].

This Mursi perception of moral consumption is an important aspect in their fear of strangers. Levi Strauss(2012) has argued that societies neutralise the danger of the cultural other in different ways; he distinguishes actual cannibalism (when people eat human flesh in order to gain power) from the abstract idea of cannibalism (people marry someone in order to nullify the danger of the Other and encompass strangers socially). In the Mursi case, there are different layers of these two forms of encompassment. There is an anxiety and fear of being literally consumed (the human body) and also in an abstract way (the land or the soul). However, besides this, there is also a positive view of the outside world which generates certain expectations

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[4] As the food supply in Mursiland is often limited, especially after a bad harvest, coping with hunger is very important. Controlling the desire to eat is a central aspect of Mursi social esteem. The person who cannot control his hunger is not just physically weak but socially unskilled. Overweight tourists are the subject of constant criticism and laughter.

from the strangers' side. This means that many Mursi engage with visitors in an ambivalent relationship, wherein the most attractive component of the latter is their imagined wealth.

The attraction of wealth

Ira Baskow(2006) has described how the Orokaiva people in Papua New Guinea think about the 'whitemen'. The soft skin the 'whitemen' usually have, in the Orokaivan perception, is the indicator that the former don't do things (work on the fields, for example) which can lead to the accumulation of wealth; the 'whitemen' have material wealth and plenty of cash without doing activities which, in the Orokaivan perception, are the usual way to access wealth and cash (Ibid). For most Mursi, similarly to the Orokaiva, Western strangers also represent material and political wealth, which in turn, puts an emphasis on the absence of such wealth within their own context. In a way, the wealth of the outside world makes them seem – and think of themselves – as poor(Régi 2011b). For example, the white people and the Ethiopian road constructors use cars, have plenty of cash and clothes, tents, shoes, backpacks etc. Because of these experiences of wealth difference, the average Mursi opinion of the outsiders is that most people from the outside world is wealthier than them. As a Mursi man explained once: 'The white men just bring stuff like drinking containers and pots; and they have lots of money to buy things. And the Mursi can see this. They think the white men have lots of money and they are not

worried about anything…' People's expectations of outsiders are derived from everyday experience but narratives about wealth go much further than mere empirical knowledge.

There are positive opinions about the white man's land, where all the admired materials[5] could be bought and cash could be made. In this sense the Mursi did not only esteem the aliens as humans, but for the land which enabled them to be wealthy. People often asked me about the land of the strangers, particularly in relation to its size. Questions like 'how big is the grass / the houses / the trees / how much water does the white man have?' aimed to eliminate ambivalence and to complete their picture of the perceived wealth.

There was a constant negotiation wherein the Mursi self-image was contrasted with the image of the aliens. Because of the positive values which most Mursi people attach to the outside world (ability to produce cash and admired materials) they try to embrace the aliens and ask them to be part of their economic system through exchange, sharing and reciprocity. This, especially in light of the above-described tense political climate and the anxiety that most Mursi people have about aliens, is an ambivalent process. The process of encompassment is not only that of an outsider economy but is also an indigenous tactic, mobilised through different economic practices. However, before describing this let me discuss the moral system that governs most people's everyday economies which they use to seek to accommodate the outsiders' intrusions.

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5 For more about how the Mursi admire alien objects, see Turton (1992).

Some notes on social respect and contempt

Although most Mursi economic activities are designed to accumulate individual and family wealth in the form of cattle farming, grain production and cash, other social practices are used to try to negate difference. There is an extended material exchange system based on reciprocity embedded in the sense of community. The reciprocity is not conceived of as a simple exchange and does not build only on the 'giving-receiving' act. Exchanges of food, grain, animals, hospitality and space are sequential and in endless 'rounds', as Andre Itenau(quoted by Bashkow, 2006: 76) has called this form of material circulation. Debts and favours are created by gifts and other forms of exchange and only those people with things to give can participate successfully in this circular process. Only those that have things to give properly manage their household economy. Consequently, social esteem is closely related to the ability to maintain a functioning household. A person who can organise his household economy is also capable of managing his human relations. Those who can give can also receive, and not only materials but also social respect, which means that one of the main factors of the Mursi social esteem is the capacity to manage the household economy and participate in a wide exchange system with other Mursi people.

Moreover most people respect someone with oratory skills, rather than someone who has no ability to tell stories. Also, those who do not become angry easily and stay calm even under difficult circumstances (such as during hunger and war) also gain respect in their community. But these

assets do not lead to the assumption of a leadership position. There is no formal leadership among the Mursi but respected, central figures in certain groups are recognised in the early *Teri* age grouping. Those with a voice in the community evolve with the community. This sensitivity for personal skills controls most people's everyday behaviour and normalises social values. However, this moral system is also explicit through the different ways of losing respect.

In the Mursi social order generosity, gentleness and oratory skills make someone a good human being but selfishness, aggression and the inability to speak well are despised[6] and provoke the possibility of being cursed or losing one's animals. As an older Mursi man said: 'If you are *gongai* (ungenerous), not giving [of your] things, they don't like you. Like tourists who are not giving, they are *gongai*. If you don't have something, you must say: no, I don't have. But in our culture, if you are *gongai* the enemy will come to take your cattle.' The word *gongai,* referring to a person who does not want to share with others, is one of the most negative adjectives a Mursi can use about someone else. People sometimes 'check' whether another person has something (such as food) hidden. Other than to be accused of being *gongai*, the other worst words used to describe a person are *buttogi* (liar) and *karkari* (lazy). The person who hides his things and does not give to others on request can lose his animals by sickness or to the enemies. Not participating in the reciprocity system causes immorality

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6 David Turton identifies other things regarded as defects in the Mursi social code. For example, he states that: 'There are two standard examples of lack of respect for social norms: leaving one's shit in a public or domestic space, such as on a pathway or within the compound fence of a settlement, and stealing the property of another Mursi,' (Turton, 1992: 26).

which could result in loss of material wealth.

Beside all these, probably the biggest sin among the Mursi is to be a *zini* (a thief). No one can gain material advantage from causing disadvantage to another Mursi person. Taking something from another Mursi without his acceptance causes the whole community to castigate him and call him a *zini*. From a methodological point of view, it was difficult to collect data on this issue. People did not want to talk to me about stealing and thievery as they did not want to slander others. Saying something which might not be true is a critically sensitive issue in the Mursi world; if someone stigmatises another person without evidence, he becomes *buttogi* (a liar, wrong) which is almost as negative as the word *zini*. The power of the spoken word is palpable. Saying something without evidence is a major issue and the *logo* (news, word) plays an important role in everyday life. Sending messages is not a simple task; the deliverer cannot be someone whose words are weak and a respected person always should chose his words carefully.

However, people often gossip and rumours are continuously spread. The Mursi social landscape is open; people live in the space in front of their huts, and most of their acts are visible. What people possess is known and what they say is heard by others. But, despite this open social scape, there are always things (extra money, a machete, clothes etc.) which people want to keep private. Lovers try to keep their relationships secret and some people are always complaining about others' behaviour. There is always something to discuss and a huge part of the social network is based on gossip, which often generates conflict between individuals. Therefore, people respect those who impart genuine and reliable information instead of made-up statements.

Abilities like generosity, oratory and calmness are opposed to parsimony, laziness, stealing and gossiping. One leads to respect, another to disregard. Social respect is closely related to material wealth. A person who gives to others when he is asked to do so can avoid being the subject of rumour and jealousy. Jealousy can lead to being cursed, of which most people are afraid. A Mursi person always seeks these positive and negative qualities in another person, whether the latter is another of their group or a stranger. Outsiders' attributes are contrasted with those qualities which make other Mursi people respected; and the economic prosperity of the aliens is always contrasted with the Mursi poverty. A constant attempt to culturally fix intersubjective discrepancies is the key element of globalisation from an insider perspective. The way the Mursi engages economically with outsiders is permanently guided by a comparison between their own and the outsiders' morality.

Reaching out to the world

About thirty years ago it was only very occasionally that some Mursi people encountered outsiders, such as the Ethiopian government or very rare Western visitors. These days, the Mago National Park recruits Mursi scouts to protect wildlife; the Service in Mission employs local people, international tourists visit Mursiland on daily basis and researchers, film crews and photographers sometimes also pay for locals for their help. However, besides these expanding and more varied contact forms, it is often problematic for

locals to deal with their new forms of guests. One of the problems I often noted is to accept the rules of 'contract', a still ambivalent concept for most Mursi. Tour guides, tourists, photographers and researchers often try to agree on the price with the Mursi well before they will cooperate; however, people often require more money from them than the originally agreed sum. This can lead to growing misunderstandings and often to the breakup of the working relationship.

However, this is certainly not always the case. In many instances people can make monetary trades more easily with outsiders. For example people exchange different materials (clay lip-plates and animal figures) for cash, namely selling things (and not labour) to the tourists. This transaction does not cause as many complications as the others (like taking photographs). One of the main reasons for this, I believe, is that there is an emerging sense of competition among the Mursi women in the tourist villages and every one of them now wants to make quick and successful deals with tourists. Because of this urge these transactions resemble the Western market economy advocated by the guests of the Mursi, however, that is also true that, this is the only case I noted when the Mursi produce surplus products and transform them into a value form (cash) not used before.

Selling materials, labour and 'village scenes' to the outsiders has been one of the most radical developments in the Mursi economy up to my fieldwork. The local people now convert their own materials into something (cash) that was barely known before and therefore scarcely measurable. There was no saleable commodity other than lip-plates and clay bull heads. The Mursi realised the value that the outsiders attached to certain of their objects and then they created a production system for them. They had to

accept the common value of cash, which was difficult as in the beginning it was hard to accept that these pieces of paper they were offered were valuable and exchangeable. The cognitive elements of the process were based on the community's existing moral values and economic concepts, and the main decisions behind culture change did not come from outside of their borders. Producing commodities for the aliens was a result of an historical process whereby people rejected or carefully accepted certain ideas and integrated them into their own moral system. However, this was not a fluent process for everyone. Those individuals who did not accept the outsiders' reluctance to pay them felt they had assumed the position of a beggar.

Exchange and the politics of representing need

Beside the more traditional anthropological concerns of livelihood there is a sensitive feature of economy in small scale societies that ethnographers often carefully avoid in their final descriptions. However, fortunately this is not always the case. Stephen Hugh-Jones(1992) for example collected how ethnographers, including also himself, of Amazonia encounter constant local demands from the anthropologists. The strong desire for manufactured goods, as Hugh-Jones argues, is a fine indicator how otherwise stable economies are corrupted by the growing demand for manufactured materials and gives a fertile ground for future state exploitation.

Most ethnographic discussions of the African informal economy lack this

type of personal accounts of how local people perceive the wealth of the anthropologist. On one hand I think this is a reasonable and sensible silence as it is too easy to project the researcher's own economic imaginations onto an otherwise diverse economic system. However, on the other hand, for an anthropologist, experiencing the hosts' gaze can be the primary experience to learn about the effect of changing consumption needs. During my fieldwork, the people I lived amongst and encountered, understandably, made sure that I never forget the affluence gap that separated us. I call this phenomenon the 'politics of representing need'. This refers to the demonstration of a constant desire for other people's property, in this case the Mursi people's longing for my personal things.[7] Experiencing this helped me to understand their concepts of sharing, exchange and gift-giving and the general expectations of the non-Mursi world. Of all the different requested materials, medicine was probably one of the most difficult issues: people frequently asked whether I could provide drugs for their illnesses, and my ability to do so was limited. Not being a doctor it was difficult to diagnose their maladies and even if I could, I had medication to cure only basic illnesses. Despite this I regularly spoke to people about their illnesses, giving them painkillers for headaches, visiting sick people in their homes and sometimes sterilising and bandaging wounds. Although I wanted to avoid basing my social relationships on healing, I had to accept the contradictory fact that, beside the above mentioned fear from being consumed by outsiders, one of the other strongest Mursi expectations of the outside world was that it can offer cures. It seemed that I could not escape from the old colonial trope

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[7] This was also reciprocal, as I also longed for their things: mostly in the form of knowledge.

wherein the alien (the explorer, missionary, colonial officer etc.) mobilises power through the act of healing. The area around my hut was not just the space of material exchange; it was also the space of healing. Healing seemed to regulate my encounters and the concept of this, implicitly or explicitly, was always part of my everyday exchange with the people around me. Healing mobilised power at different levels and it expressed my relationship with the community.

But, as I mentioned above, beside medicine people constantly asked me for things and there was rarely a day when someone did not request my money, clothes, food, wristwatch, shoes, sunglasses, tent, chair etc.[8] I could often not communicate with people without first refusing their continuous demands and often I felt my communication was restricted to refusing their requests. People frequently asked with just a gesture, pointing to their clothes which were ragged and worn, and to their bare feet. I did not find a good tactic to manage this issue. If I distributed things, people wanted even more. If I did not give anything, some people were unfriendly and I felt guilty. After a while I started to hide my things; when I ate, I stayed in my hut where people could not see me. I realised that I had started to behave like many of the Mursi people: hiding my wealth in order to avoid jealousy. At the end of my fieldwork almost all of my belongings have ended up in the Mursi circulation of material exchange.

The constant gift-giving I have described as one of the most important features of Mursi moral economy was also the most expected forms of the economic transaction that I witnessed between themselves and the outsiders.

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[8] Other visitors who have conducted research in Mursiland have also noticed this phenomenon.

Materials derived from tourists, researchers or from the nearby town travelled through the whole social landscape of Mursiland. If I gave a hat to a man one day, it appeared on another person's head a week later. Tourists gave things to the Mursi children and I saw the same materials miles away, in another settlement in the hands of elders. My gifts of clothing usually ended up with someone other than the individual I had given them to; I often heard: 'He wanted it very much; more than I did. So I gave it to him.' However, this system is not only based on requests but also on offering. The best example of this phenomenon is the social institution of the *komoni*.

A *komoni* can be translated as a guest and the institution of the *komoni* can be simply understood as hospitality. The Mursi society has very strict hospitality practices that affect the economies of everyday interactions. People frequently travel within Mursiland, visiting friends and relatives. For these journeys they do not take food and shelter with them but they stay in their relatives' households where they are given food, water, milk and accommodation. Being a *komoni* has a protected status, as the host is responsible for the guest's safety. Making contact is based on reciprocity; maintaining friendships and social relations is a requisite for a host. This is what they also expect from the outsiders. The Mursi 'representing need' relationship with the aliens is basically still an uncertain, ambivalent and therefore problematic translation of the established Mursi intra-ethnic morality into a behaviour form with outsiders.

The Mursi needs representation is their attempts to more evenly distribute wealth. Through continuous requests, people try to eliminate the discrepancy between themselves and the outside world. In this way, people attempt to

overcome economic inequalities and try to cope with the changes in their social environment. They move through imagined and real borders in order to find and use new opportunities. The practice is difficult for both sides but the idea behind these flexible and mobile practices is moral inclusion. However, whatever shape the wealth flow takes between the Mursi and their visitors, in the end, a certain amount of money and other materialised forms of wealth enters the Mursi economy. And this money, sooner or later, finds its way back to where it came from.

Nomadic desires in the town

The main shopping destination for most Mursi is the highland market town of Jinka but people frequently visit Hana and occasionally Konso, Arba Minch or even Addis Ababa. The attitude of the Jinka townsmen towards the Mursi is unsympathetic. Most of them regard the Mursi as a subjugated race and shout at them in the street. This collective feeling of anger has its roots in the 1960s when the Mursi came to Jinka to cure syphilis(Teferi 2006) and later attacked Ari peasants and robbed their cattle. Later, in the 1980s, the Mursi was banned from going to Jinka with their arms; therefore, they left their weapons outside the town and came to Jinka to buy ammunition on the black market(Teferi 2006: 173).

People came to buy arake (a short drink), tobacco, clothes, beads, pots, dishes and jerry cans, which they regarded as important for their everyday life. Some of the Mursi was short of grain and forced to sell their animals

in order to buy food for their family. They did not or rarely bought medicine, salt, sugar or candy. Travelling to Jinka was something that not every Mursi person could afford, as either they lived too far from the road, or they did not have money for the travelling expenses. 20 ETB was the price for one person travelling on the road in the constructor trucks that went between Hana, Maganto and Jinka. Some people just got someone else to buy goods for them in the town.

Staying in Jinka, buying things there and returning was an important ritual for those who could pay for it. In every Mursi settlement along the road, the arrival of the construction truck was an eagerly awaited event. When the truck stopped, people jumped up and down, shouted and greeted each other. They quickly unloaded the sacks, jerry cans and the other materials they had bought in Jinka. They were helped down from the trucks and their bags of shopping were closely observed. With proud expressions on their faces people returned to their home settlement, walking towards their huts carrying their new commodities. People did not only bring things from the town but told stories about their experiences there.

Thus, the Mursi people's engaging in economic relations with the outside world is a sign of something new and important and, for many, indicates prosperity. Having cash not only engenders a material surplus but demonstrates that the person can manage his economy.

Conclusion

Although economic globalisation is supposed to be a unified process all over the world we see different trajectories, cases and problems in different regions countries and continents. Most of the Mursi people, due to the current land issues and government interventions in their territory, are forced to face new types of encounters on a daily basis. The Mursi topography of global connections gives ground for different imaginations and real experiences. Local metaphors of consumption and incorporation demarcate moral incertitude that frame contacts with tourists and other outsiders and serve as a background for how people move through borders (imagined and real) in the search for new opportunities.

Here I have given insights of how the Mursi people's perception of wealth (their own and the outsiders') has been and is understood and dealt with. With flexible everyday practices, they try to make sense of the economic inequity and fix the imbalanced interpersonal relationships with outsiders. This 'reaching out to the world' practice feeds upon a complex Mursi moral order and value system that is largely based on sharing, exchanging and gift circulation. In this sense globalisation is a question of moral logic, transnational flows entering the community through the filter of a strong solidarity network among relatives, friends, clan members and other Mursi fellows. This sharing network that nurtures the society as a whole is as much a symbolic as a practical system, where things that enter and leave Mursi households create bonds between different actors.

One of the strongest Mursi values associated with the aliens, especially

with the white man, is their wealth. Most Mursi people perceive the aliens as wealthy entities, much wealthier than themselves and the way in which they think about their visitors' wealth inevitably affects their self-perception as poor people. Because of the material inequality, most people think that their visitors should participate in a sharing process that maintains their own society in a symbolic way. Without continuous sharing, it is difficult to gain social recognition. Most Mursi economic activities (exchange, gift-giving) and social practices (creating rumours, lying) point to the judgment of a commonly accepted morality and this principle is expected from everyone who temporarily or permanently enters the community. This usually unsatisfied expectation caused the uneasiness of the Mursi-alien encounters which I witnessed.

Joining the global economy, a system which reaches Mursiland from far beyond Ethiopia, has created a situation that the Mursi people try to handle in their own socially accepted way, mostly through their own encompassment. The usage of cash, the act of producing surplus materials for selling, the selling of labour etc. demonstrates how people try to win over the larger encompassing forces and control global connections. But, as with every other group of people in the world, the cash generates further longings for material possessions and for new aspects of consumer culture. As this new economy of desire inspires people to cross cultural boundaries again and again, the intercultural encounters not only damage the imaginary frontiers between hosts and guests but also strengthen the global awareness of the Mursi community; a careful transnational consciousness that could be the only way to protect their ethnic identity.

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타마스 레지는 계명대학교 사회학과 조교수이다. 2011년 영국의 리즈 메트로
폴리탄 대학 관광과 문화 교환 센터에서 박사학위를 취득했다.
연구 관심은 관광의 사회학과 인류학, 광범위하게는 인간 이동
성이다. 1999년 이래 에티오피아에서 인류학적 현지조사를 실
시하고 있다.

세계에 참여하기: 아프리카의 교환, 환대, 지구화

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대부분의 아프리카인들은 지구적 시장경제에서 실제 소비자로 나서기가 거의 어렵다. 때문에 이러한 어려움을 극복하기 위해 그들은 규범적인 전략적 계획들을 지속적으로 창출해야만 한다. 이 연구는 짧은 한 사례를 통해 이러한 전략적 계획을 살펴본 후, 남에티오피아의 반(半)유목민인 무르시족이 초국적 세계에 어떻게 관여하는지 보여줄 것이다. 먼저 무르시족이 지닌 소비, 생산, 공유, 교환에 대한 관념과 환대의 제도에 대해 살펴볼 것이다. 다음으로는 무르시족의 도덕경제에 대한 이해의 바탕 위에서, 그들이 세계에 참여하기 위해 활용하는 상이한 경제전략들을 기술해 볼 것이다. 지구-지역은 거대한 것이 작은 것을 항상 집어삼키는 일방향적인 포괄적, 통일적 거래라기보다는 성찰적, 창조적, 유동적 관계이다. 이러한 시각은 현재 해외 토지 투자와 수력댐 건설로 큰 어려움을 겪고 있는 무르시족을 이해하는 데 도움이 된다.

주제어 : 지구화, 경제인류학, 유목주의, 아프리카, 에티오피아