

# Situating the Banna: An Ethnographic Description of Ethnic Identification

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Studies of interethnic warfare in the Lower Omo Valley have explored relationships between ethnic identity and culture and between society and ecology. This paper is the first to add ethnographic information about myth, clan classification, and interethnic warfare among the Banna to academic discourse. It also clarifies how Banna people construct their “ethnic” identity: they identify themselves as members of the Banna through a various forms of recognition and narratives, but these everyday activities do not guarantee a discrete Banna land, language, and culture. Research has revealed that, contrary to the group’s assertion, Banna identity has no discrete unity. Appadurai (1996) theorized that locality is a “phenomenological property of social life,” which might be discovered through description of neighborhoods as “the actually existing social forms in which locality, as a dimension or value, is variably realized.”

**Key words:** Banna, clan distribution, identification, locality, warfare

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since Fukui and Turton published “Warfare among East African Herders” in 1979, many researchers have focused on inter-ethnic warfare and relations among groups in the Lower Omo Valley. These studies of southwest Ethiopia have clarified not only warfare, but also the dynamic processes of survival strategies and migration. Fukui conducted intensive research on the Bodi (1984, 1988, 1994) and demonstrated that warfare, migration, and ethnic identity are strongly and profoundly indivisible. Clearly, material-objective factors and conscious-subjective factors are related, and it remains to be seen which of these is decisive for the process of ethnic identification. According to Fukui, “shared cultural attributes cannot form an ethnic group, unless its members also share what Ri (1985) calls the ‘we consciousness.’ It is quite natural that the consciousness of ‘they’ is a prerequisite for the existence of ‘we.’ These two kinds of consciousness are not permanently fixed in contradistinction” (Fukui 1994: 33).

The goal of this study is to provide an ethnographic description of ethnic identification among the Banna. However, this will first require addressing other issues: Who are the Banna? What makes the Banna an ethnic collective? And do the Banna have any substantial basis that guarantees their identity? Addressing these issues may involve questioning assumptions about fixation and naturalization of ethnic discreteness. While the Banna appear to be a group defined as an aggregate of individuals, this study approach them as an ethnic “group” by focusing on the identification process. When we view an “ethnic group” by focusing on each person’s identity (rather than simply an “ethnic identity”), we realize that the real feeling of “ethnic unity” that may appear in daily discourse is historically and

socially constituted from a complex of plural identities, such as, clan, lineage, moiety, village, and age-grade. These plural identities have objective attributes that can be considered organizational; as a whole, these identities are phenomenological.

Appadurai (1996) claimed that, when discussing cultural dimensions of globalization, it is important to include the process of identification, specifically the relation between “locality” and “neighborhoods.” According to Appadurai, locality is “a phenomenological property of social life” and “a structure of feeling that yields particular sorts of material effects” (Appadurai 1996: 182). In contrast, “neighborhoods” refer to “the actually existing social forms in which locality, as a dimension or value, is variably realized” (Appadurai 1996: 178–9). If this is correct, ethnic identity can be equated with *locality* through use of *neighborhoods* such as lineage and clan name, myth, narrative, spatial recognition, and memory of warfare.

Banna people certainly refer to themselves as Banna, differentiating themselves from other surrounding groups, but the process of identification involves plural factors, which can even be situational. This study analyzed discursive aspects of Banna myth, clan classification, and warfare because the people have indicated that these represent the recognized and valued social order and *neighborhoods*. Although each person’s narrative is basically subjective, it acquires objective attributes once it is shared with society. Schlee (1989) studied pastoral peoples in Northern Kenya and found that clan identity occupies a significant position in the process of ethnic identification. When examining “ethnic identity,” an analysis of inter-ethnic warfare can provide important information for two reasons: first, as demonstrated by Barth (1969), the process of self-identification functions in terms of other groups; second, considerable research is available about inter-ethnic conflicts in southwest Ethiopia. When focusing on the narrative aspects of myths, information about clans and warfare can help situate Banna identity as a phenomenological property.

## 2. LAND OF THE BANNA

### 2.1. Land of the Banna

The Banna, or *Banya*<sup>(1)</sup>, live in the savannah-woodland area between the Weito and Omo Rivers. The language of the Banna, which is a dialect of Hamar, is classified as south Omotic (cf. Tsuge 1996). Their subsistence economy is based on sorghum and maize cultivation and cattle herding. The Banna share a common cultural background with the Hamar, their southern neighbor, and intermarry with the South Ari and North Hamar.

Based on a census conducted in the early 1990s (Central Statistical Authority; CSA 1996), Banna land is administratively included in the Hamar-Bena district (*wereda*) and divided into 15 administrative villages (*kebeles*), each of which consists of several traditional villages.

Banna people consider Banna land to be divided into two ritual regions: *Ailama* and *Anno* (or *Arkor*). The western part of Banna land, *Ailama*, covers the area corresponding to three *kebeles* (Dizishi’sh, Goldya, and Mokocha) and some southern Ari areas; it is said to be protected by the ritual power of a *bitta* (ritual chief) of Dore<sup>(2)</sup> lineage. Therefore, this region is also called “Dore *peino* (land of Dore’s lineage). The eastern part, *Anno* or *Arkor*, covers a vast area and is said to be protected by the ritual power of a *bitta* of Garsho *zere*<sup>(3)</sup>. Both *bitta* lineages belong to the Gata clan.

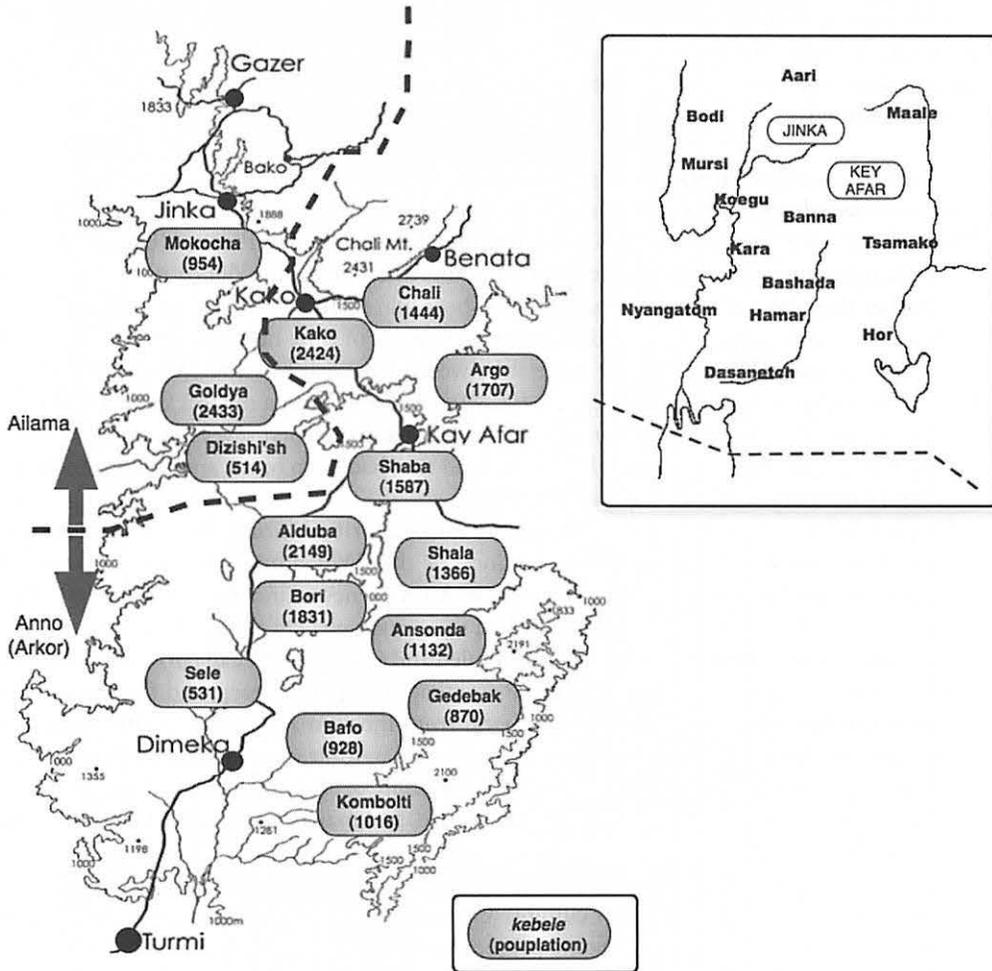
### 2.2. Spatial Imagination in Myth

The myth of *bitta* lineage in the west tells the origin and story of Ailama boundary fixing.

*Bitta* Wuloa came from Barka in Ari, where *babi* She’i Gundeis now rules.

Wuloa was the first son of his father’s second wife, but after his father died, he succeeded his father because the first wife had no son.

Some years later, his father’s first wife became pregnant as a result of having relations with another man and she bore a boy, who might be considered his father’s legal “first born son.” He



Map 1. Land of the Banna (Central Statistical Authority 1996).

would have been the *babi* rather than Wuloa by virtue of the mother's rank.

Wuloa resigned from the position of *babi*. Then he immigrated to Banna bringing a pair of goats, sheep, and cattle (a cow and a bull), and he was accompanied by his *parko* (ritual assistant).

They reached Mt. Molla, where they decided to settle. There were no people living in Banna at that time. The *parko* let a red bull walk around the area, which included southern Ari and the Tsamay lowlands. Wuloa proclaimed that it was all his territory.

Then he collected honey. People started coming from Ale (over the Weito River), Ari, and so on, since the time when Wuloa came to the Banna.<sup>(4)</sup>

This story reveals two characteristics of Banna spatial identity. First, the Ailama boundary was fixed by a *parko*, a ritual assistant, who was led by a red bull. Second, the original area was larger than the current Ailama; the area over which the red bull walked extended farther than the current domain. According to the Banna, the present Ailama area is very small because original Ailama land was invaded by surrounding groups.

With regard to the tradition that Wuloa came from an Ari's *babi* lineage, the *babi*'s kinsmen have a completely opposite story; they claim that their ancestor, named Denga, originated from the Banna (Gebre 1995: 13). Despite having different stories, the *babi* lineage and Wuloa's descendants share an

awareness of their historical kinship with one another.

In the myth of Anno (Arkor) territory, the name of the first *bitta* was Wuloa, so two individuals of *bitta* lineage shared the same name as the founders. However, the relationship between the Wuloas has not been clarified.

Wuloa was a younger brother of the *babi* of Bako in southern Ari. One day he decided to go down southwards to the present Banna area. First, he took a rest at Kaisa along the Gamaiso River, which is now supposed to be a boundary, then he reached Mt. Pinte. He took up his residence there because many bees gathered around him when he came. Wuloa put his metal spear (*parko*) and flag (*labitsa*) on a tree and put on a sheepskin cloth.

He asked people to give him land, but they were wary of how he could live alone without a wife. They permitted him to live at Pinte if he would live with his wife. Wuloa went back to Bako and took his wife and four sheep (*yaati hayna*) to Pinte. Wuloa made a fire with a fire-stick and set the grass alight. The fire spread rapidly. Wuloa dispatched several men to see how far the fire had spread. He proclaimed that all the land that had been burnt and that extended from the current territory would be his own land.

People tried to persuade him to undergo the initiation ritual (*atsa*). Wuloa accepted a suggestion of his kinsmen in Bako. The suggestion was that Wuloa might try the initiation ritual so long as he would not be circumcised, because Ari men never undergo circumcision. Wuloa brought one cattle to leap over, then he finished the ritual.

One day people of Pinte brought a goat to Wuloa and asked him to call *barjo* and rain. Wuloa said he couldn't call *barjo* by sacrificing a goat and that he required sheep, and then he killed one of four sheep he took from Bako. Chyme (*soko*) from the stomach of the sacrificed sheep was thrown around fields, and the fat of the tail was buried. Adult men (*donza*) took some chyme on a *karko* plant to display in their houses. As a result of these procedures, the Banna land became fertile, vegetation flourished, cattle multiplied, and many people came from every direction (from Masuda 1997: 462, with minor revisions).

This story describes some traits of Ari culture. Circumcision is generally practiced by all Banna men except for those of the Gata clan. Some people say this is because the Gata clan is still Ari. A Hamar storyteller, Aike Berinas (Baldambe), told researchers that cutting the foreskin meant shifting identity from Ari to Hamar (Lydall and Strecker 1979: 21). This case suggests that *atsa* initiation was more important to being accepted as a Banna man than was circumcision. Here, ethnic distinction amounts to a difference in cultural characteristics.

### 2.3. Virtual Border

According to these oral traditions, the ancestors of the Banna and surrounding groups fixed clear-cut boundaries. However, there are no obvious visual borderlines. In addition, it is quite difficult to distinguish culturally between the two ethnic groups near the "boundary." In the northwest area of Banna land, Mokocha and Chali, many people speak the Ari language, wear Ari clothing, have Ari hair styles, and exhibit other material forms of Ari culture; half of the residents consider themselves to be Ari.

The same challenge arises when the Banna and Hamar are treated as different ethnic groups. Linguists consider the Banna language to be a dialect of the Hamar language, and Banna people claim that they have only slight difficulties when communicating with Hamar and Bashada people. The Banna used to be classified in the same ethnic group as the Hamar; the Ethiopian Central Statistical Authority classifies the Banna and Bashada into one category: "Hamar." Urban dwellers, most of whom are descendants of northern immigrants, consider the Banna to be part of the Hamar. This equation of Banna with Hamar people was probably caused by various similarities between the two groups in cultural appearance. In fact, it is difficult to distinguish the Banna from the Hamar using only their clothing, subsistence economy, and other cultural matters as criteria.

As discussed in the next chapter, Banna people specify clan locality in a particular way, for example, “Ba clan is not Banna; it’s Hamar.” Similarly, they can identify cultural differences in matters such as cooking, clothing, hair styling, type of herds, and political and ritual customs. The rite of passage, *atsa*, is one example of how the Banna distinguish between the two groups.

One of the most characteristic aspects of the *atsa* rite of passage is when the boy leaps across the back of several cattle. This feature of *atsa* is still in use throughout Banna-Hamar land. According to Banna elders, this ritual originated among the Hamar and was adopted by the Banna in the early 20th century; they say that long ago, Banna men lifted and lowered their right thigh four times in front of cattle or a row of *granti* (solanum) fruit instead of jumping over the cattle.

These cases of Banna-Ari and Banna-Hamar relationships reveal no obvious spatial borderline between groups, although people recognize local differences in language and cultural traits. This “locality” on which identity is based must not be understood simply in terms of physical proximity.

### 3. CLANS

#### 3.1. Classification

Jensen carried out ethnographic research in the early 1950s and identified 18 clan names classified into two categories: Binnas and Galabu (Jensen 1959: 321). Lydall and Strecker recorded 21 Hamar clans classified into Binnas and Galabu moieties, and one clan classified as “both moiety.” Many groups in addition to the Hamar and Banna have a similar duality in clan classification<sup>(5)</sup>. The next section describes the Binnas/Galabu division among the Banna as an example of clan classification and exogamous categorization.

The word “Binnas” is derived from *bitta naasi* (*bitta*’s descendant). This implies that all clans included in the Binnas category are recognized as derived from the Gata clan, generally recognized as *bitta*’s clan, even though the two *bitta* lineages may not have any historical-genealogical connection, as mentioned above.

The origin of the name of the other category, Galabu, is unknown. However, its alternative name, “Kaisi” is derived from *kais*, which means “prohibited” and the Kaisi people are “subject to ritual prohibitions with respect to the *bitta*” (Lydall and Strecker 1979: 173).

The Gasi clan is regarded as the core Galabu clan, and Gasi ancestors are said to have lived in Banna land long before the first *bitta* came from Ari. This tradition sometimes inspires Galabu people to claim that they are the true Banna and that not only the Gata clan, but all Binnas are merely immigrants. Individuals who hold this belief consider the fact that male members of Gata clan remain uncircumcised as support for their opinion; to them, this choice means that members of the Gata clan are not Banna, but outsiders.

I have refrained from terming the Binnas/Galabu categorization a “moiety system” because many clans cannot be absolutely classified into either category. For example, the Hamar includes the Rach clan. Lydall and Strecker classified this clan as “both moiety,” but did not explain why.

Unclassifiable clans also appear among the Banna. Many of the individuals whom I interviewed about clan classification were unable to classify these clans and chose to place them into a separate category of “*wul’ed*.” The term *wul’ed* is a compound of *wul*, full or all, and *eedi*, people or human being, and indicates that members of these clans are permitted to marry any clan member, regardless of the Binnas/Galabu duality. When someone says, “Rach clan is *wul’ed*,” this assertion merely connotes marriage rules for clan combination. Therefore, the category of “*wul’ed*” is not similar to that of Binnas or Galabu.

The Zare clan will help elucidate the complexity and inconsistencies in clan classification. Table 1 shows various forms by which the Zare clan is recognized and how Binnas/Galabu classification and *wul’ed* recognition are based on different criteria.

Importantly, Binnas/Galabu classification involves two criteria: the ideal scheme of attributing each clan to one of the two categories; and the exogamous rule according to which marriages have

**Table 1.** Results of questions about Zare recognition among 14 interviewees, not including Zare members (1993)

Answer about classification.	Detailed classification and Supplementary explanation	
"Zare is Galabu"	"Zare is just Galabu." without any supplementary comments.	4
	Galabu and <i>wul'ed</i> .	1
	"Zare is Galabu and <i>wul'ed</i> ." Galabu and <i>wul'ed</i> . Another name of Gulet.	1
	Galabu and <i>wul'ed</i> . Another name of Gulet and Bokka.	1
	"Zare is Galabu. Another name of Gulet."	3
	"Zare is Galabu. Another name of Bokka."	1
"Zare is neither Galabu nor Binnas."	"But Zare is <i>wul'ed</i> . Another name of Bokka."	1
No idea about classification.	"But Zare is <i>wul'ed</i> . Another name of Bokka and Gulet."	1
(Confusing. No record.)		1
	Total	14

**Table 2.** Clan classification among 14 men (1993)

Binnas	Galabu	
Gata	Gasi	} 100% Consensus.
Gola	Gal	
	Ora	
	Binka	
	Melez	
	Adar	
	Ganaz	
	Duma	
	Peren (Feren)	
Benet	Rach	} More than 80% Consensus.
Wolmok	Zubat	
Garshima	Zare	
Gudo	Gulet	
Maiz, Bokka, Kurs, Kurtum		Less than 60% Consensus.

been practiced. For instance, Rach is classified as Galabu (or as not Binnas), but many people also consider Rach to be *wul'ed* by a criterion of exogamous rule.

Table 2 presents the results of interviews with 14 men in Bori and Dizishi'sh villages in 1993 and 1994. Each man was asked to classify clans as either Binnas or Galabu<sup>(6)</sup>. All the men classified two clans (Gata and Gola) as Binnas and nine clans (Gasi, Gal, Ora, Binka, Melez, Adar, Ganaz, Duma, and Peren) as Galabu. More than 80% of the men agreed that four clans (Benet, Wolmok, Garshima, and Gudo) are Binnas and another four (Rach, Zubat, Zare, and Gulet) are Galabu.

In contrast, the men were inconsistent in their classification of four clans (Mais, Bokka, Kurs, and

Kurtum). One explanation is the limited number of interviewees. If more interviews had been carried out at more villages, responses might have agreed more.

### 3.2. Clan Classification in Practice

Clan classification is exogamous, as are Binna/Galabu categories. This section examines 187 marriages (113 in Bori, 74 in Dizishi'sh) to clarify practical aspects of clan classification. Both Bori and Dizishi'sh are Gata-dominant villages where majority of married men (82% in Bori, 51% in Dizishi'sh) are members of the Gata clan. In addition, some men are engaged in polygamous marriage, so the number of married women equals the total marriage cases in the collected data (see Table 3).

Based on the categories shown in Table 2, clan classifications in practice can be identified by classifying the husband's clan in one category and the wife's in another (Table 4). Couples are supposed to belong to differing exogamous categories (e.g., a Gata husband and a Gasi wife). If another couple (e.g., a Gata husband and a Gal wife) is classified in the same way, then the clans of Gasi and Gal will fall into the same category, corresponding to the ideal classification shown in Table 2. If a clan must be categorized to a third category, this third category is probably "wul'ed." The hypothesis is that the third category, *wul'ed*, might include clans that were not successfully classified using the Binna/Galabu categorization in the analysis discussed in the previous section (Fig. 1).

The analysis revealed that only four clans (Gata, Gola, Benet, and Gudo) are highly likely to be rec-

**Table 3.** Clans of married men and women in two villages (1993)

Married Males' and Females' clan in Dizishi'sh (1993)				Married Males' and Females' clan in Bori (1993)			
Married male		Married female		Married male		Married female	
Gata	29	Gasi	13	Gata	48	Gasi	31
Garshima	5	Gal	10	Duma	3	Rach	12
Gasi	5	Gata	10	Gasi	2	Ora	12
Gal	3	Adar	10	Maiz	1	Gal	9
Adar	3	Zare	6	Gal	3	Adar	9
Ora	3	Garshima	4			Binka	9
Zansa	2	Ora	3			Gata	6
Zare	2	Zansa	2			Duma	6
Bokka	1	Bokka	2			Zare	5
Kurtum	1	Binka	2			Gulet	3
Binka	1	Wokmok	2			Garshima	2
Zubat	1	Kurtum	1			Melez	2
		Zubat	1			Ganaz	1
		Baya	1			Zubat	1
		Duma	1			Lera	1
		Berda	1			Gola	1
		Gola	1			Gudo	1
		Gudo	1			Aman	1
		Alli	1			Wolmok	1
		Kabur	1				
Sub-total	56	Sub-total	74	Sub-total	57	Sub-total	113

**Table 4.** Clan combinations between husbands and wives in two villages (1993)

Clan combination between husband and wife in Dizishi'sh (74 cases)			Clan combination between husband and wife in Bori (113 cases)		
H(Binnas)-W	H(Galabu)-W	H(other)-W	H(Binnas)-W	H(Galabu)-W	H(other)-W
Gata-Gal	8	Gal-Gata 1	Gata-Gal	8	Gal-Gata 2
		Gal-Garshima 1			Gal-Aman 1
Gata-Gasi	8	Gasi-Gata 3	Gata-Binka	9	
		Gasi-Garshima 2	Gata-Adar	9	
		Gasi-Kabur 1	Gata-Ora	12	
		Gasi-Kurtum 1	Gata-Rach	12	
		Gasi-Gudo 1	Gata-Gasi	31	Gasi-Gata 1
Gata-Adar	9	Adar-Gata 1			Gasi-Garshima 1
		Adar-Wolmok 1	Gata-Melez	2	
Gata-Wolmok	1		Gata-Duma	6	Duma-Gata 3
Gata-Zansa	2				Duma-Zare 1
Gata-Binka	2	Binka-Gata 1			Duma-Gola 1
Gata-Duma	1				Duma-Garshima 1
Gata-Zubat	1	Zubat-Gata 1	Gata-Zare	4	
Gata-Ora	3	Ora-Gata 1	Gata-Gulet	3	
		Ora-Bokka 1	Gata-Zubat	1	
Gata-Bokka	1	Bokka-Gata 1	Gata-Wolmok	1	
		Ora-Zare 1	Gata-Ganaz	1	
Gata-Zare	3		Gata-Lera	1	
		Adar-Zare 1			Maiz-Gal 1
		Zare(Gulet)-Gata 1			
		Zare-Garshima 1			
		Garshima-Gasi 4			
		Garshima-Zare 1			
		Garshima-Gal 1			
		Adar-Gola 1			
		Zansa-Gal 1			
		Zansa-Adar 1			
		Zansa-Ora 1			
		Kurtum-Gasi 1			
Gata-Baya	1				
Gata-Berda	1				
Gata-Alli	1				

ognized as Binnas; and many clans (Gasi, Ora, Binka, Gal, Melez, Zubat, Adar, Duma, and Ganaz) are highly likely to be recognized as Galabu. Some clans (Bokka, Wolmok, Zansa, Garshima, Zare, Rach, Kurtum, and Maiz) are not classified as Binnas or Galabu; these clans are discussed below.

1. **Bokka, Zare, and Gulet:** Based on interviews, these three clans may be identical. Members might be classified into the third category or classified inconsistently because Zare members do not appear to have married Gata (Binnas) or Duma (Galabu) members.
2. **Wolmok:** Recognition of the Wolmok clan appears to be inconsistent. The fact that only

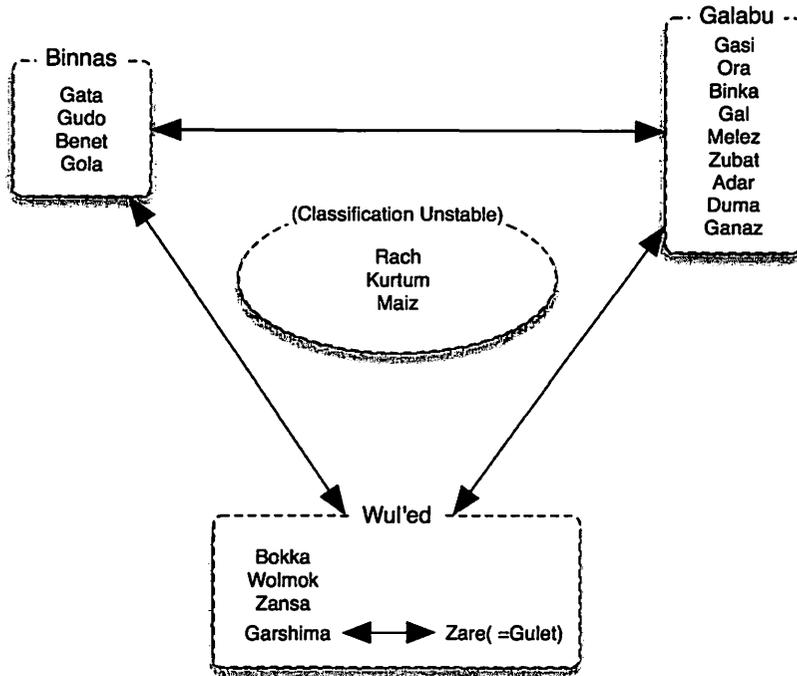


Fig. 1. Clan combinations in 191 marriages

Note: Among these 191 marriages, three clans (Rach, Kurtum, and Maiz) are identified simply as “not Binnas.”

three marriages involved a Wolmok member (one to a Gata member, one to an Adar member, and one to a Rach member) suggests that the Wolmok clan is neither Binnas nor Galabu.

3. **Zansa:** The name Zansa has never appeared in any publication. Four Zansa members in Dizishi'sh were originally from the Arkisha area of the Ari.
4. **Garshima:** The name Garshima has appeared in some publications about Ari (Jensen 1959b: 49), Hamar (Lydall and Strecker 1979: 231), and Kara (Matsuda, personal communication). Although many people classify this clan as Binnas, this case study revealed that it should be classified into the third category. Two marriages including Garshima members were identified in Dizishi'sh (to Zare and Gasi members), and four were identified in Bori (to Gata, Gasi, Duma, and Ganaz members).
5. **Rach:** In Bori, 12 Rach women from the southern Banna and the Hamar all married Gata men. These cases demonstrate that the Rach clan cannot be classified as Binnas. Lydall and Strecker classified Rach as “both moiety” (Lydall and Strecker 1979: 231).
6. **Kurtum:** Only two cases of marriages involved Kurtum members; both had married Gasi members in Dizishi'sh, so the Kurtum clan is not Galabu.
7. **Maiz:** One Maiz man in Bori had married a Gal woman, indicating that the Maiz clan is not Galabu. However, many elders classify the Maiz clan as Galabu. This discrepancy might indicate that the recognition of Maiz is inconsistent.

### 3.3. Ethno-history through Clan Distribution

Local residents told two different stories about the origin of the Binnas and Galabu. In one, no one lived in Banna land before the first *bitta* Wuloa came from Ari. The descendants of Wuloa became Binnas and other people who later came from outside became Galabu. In the other story, the Galabu lived in Banna land before the first *bitta* immigrated.

It is impossible to know which story is true and which group first came to Banna land. However, the moiety-like structure in which one party has ritual-political authority is found in neighboring

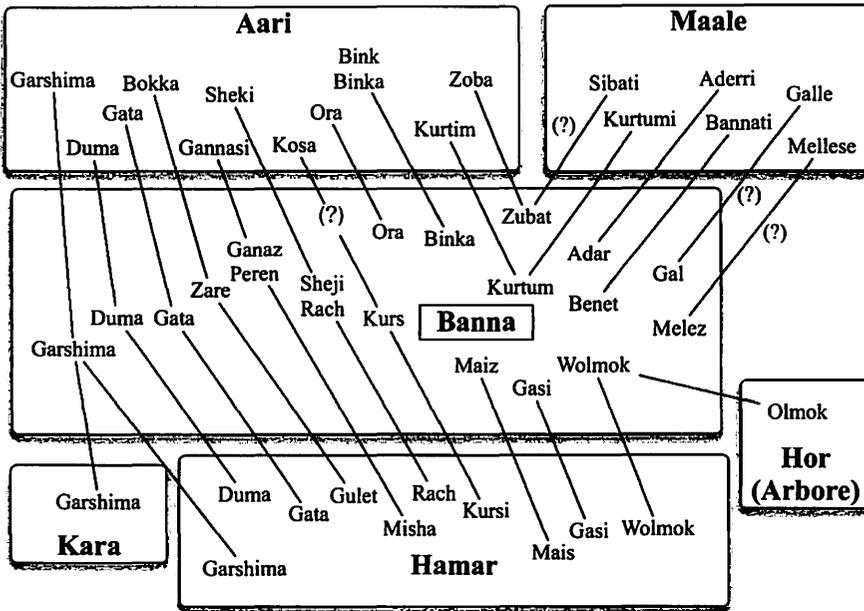


Fig. 2. The distribution of clans beyond Banna land

groups. In Ari, all the *babî's* clan belong to Ashenda (Gebre 1995: 26–28). In Maale, a man from outside taught the local people how to control fire and became their king. His descendants are Karazi moiety and the autochthonous people become Raggi moiety (Donham 1986: 71).

Though access to *barjo* (fortune) seems to have been exclusively given to *bitta*, there are two other ritual leaders. One is the fire-sticker, *gudul*, who is also responsible for rain and harvest; the other is the war-leader, *arti*. Both titles are given only to Galabu members<sup>(7)</sup> because, according to some people, the Galabu are indigenous to Banna land.

A *gudul* makes fire using a firedrill, *kogo*, ideally three times per year. The ritual, carried out in late July, is particularly important for three reasons: (1) at this time, the *gudul* makes a new fire that must replace the old ones in every household and field; (2) this fire distribution redefines the extent of ideal space of the village; and (3) people are forbidden to reap sorghum before this ritual.

However, the certainty that Galabu are autochthonous people does not extend to clans beyond Banna land.

Figure 2<sup>(8)</sup> shows the distribution of clans beyond Banna land. This is only a tentative representation based on previously-published material, but it clearly shows that the Banna area is a patchwork consisting of migrants from various origins, assuming that clan names certify genealogical links. The fact that many clan names appear in neighboring ethnic groups does not explain why one clan is classified as Binna and another as Galabu or why some clans are considered by most people as Binna while others are ambiguous.

#### 4. ENMITY AND AMITY

##### 4.1. Intermarriage Relations to "Kin People"

Inter-ethnic conflict is an important consideration when analyzing how the Banna identify themselves in terms of neighboring groups. Relationships between the Banna and other groups vary. The Banna do not see neighboring groups simply in terms of an enmity/amity dualism; instead, they use a complex scheme based on various factors such as the history of warfare, clan distribution, and intermarriage.

The range of people that the Banna do not consider enemies roughly corresponds with the groups with whom they intermarry, the “ideal availability of intermarriage.” They have no general word for non-enemy. Of the five ethnic groups described below, four speak the south Omotic language: Ari, Hamar, Bachada, and Kara.

**Ari:** The Banna say they have never raided the Ari because the Ari are not cattle herders. They frequently intermarry, and in most cases, an Ari woman marries a Banna man.

However, amity does not entail overall reliance. Generally, the Banna consider the Ari to be cunning and greedy for money; they usually require cash rather than cattle as bride-wealth. However, the Banna also consider the Ari to be important allies, as they need kinship linkages through intermarriage to ensure a food supply from the Ari during the dry season.

**Hamar:** As mentioned above, the Banna consider the Hamar to be Banna. The only differences lie in the name and location of the group and some cultural traits.

**Bachada:** The Bachada, or Bashada, are a small group living in the southern part of Banna land; they speak the same language as the Banna and the Hamar. Because the southern Banna and the Bachada have intermarried, raids and warfare have not occurred between the two groups.

**Kara:** The Kara are a small group that live along the Omo River; contact and intermarriage is far more frequent in southern Banna than in the northern area. The Kara speak a dialect of the Banna-Hamar language, and the Banna people are aware of the differences. The Kara have a poor reputation; the Banna consider the Kara to be thieves and murderers. However, personal relationships have occurred between the groups, especially in southern Banna.

**Muguji (Mugunya):** The Muguji or Mugunya, generally known as Koegu or Kwegu, are a small group that engages in cultivation, hunting, and gathering along the Omo River. The Muguji call the Banna “Atula,” which is the name of the land along the western edge of Banna land. The Muguji are not enemies to the Banna, and some Banna and Muguji have engaged in personal relationships (Matsuda 1992: 44)

Generally speaking, many Banna men marry Ari women in northern Banna land, while in southern Banna land they are more likely to marry Bachada or Hamar women. Intermarriage forms a larger network among these groups. However, these linkages do not create alliances between ethnic units; they are purely personal connections of marriages and kinship. The same applies to personal relationships between the Banna and the Muguji.

#### 4.2. *Enemies (Gal)*

The Banna consider themselves to be surrounded by enemies (*gal*). The Banna’s enemies have two common characteristics. First, they speak a different language, making it impossible to communicate verbally and less likely that they share cultural traits. Second, most enemies live in remote areas, so the Banna do not have frequent personal contact in the form of cattle exchange, intermarriage, and other personal relationships. However, violent exchanges are also infrequent due to the spatial distance between the groups. The Banna’s hostility toward enemies does not necessarily result in actual fighting; some groups are “ideal enemies” that have never attacked or been attacked by, the Banna.

**Tsamay (Tsamako):** The Tsamay, or Tsamako, are considered enemies, but in some villages in the eastern lowland, the Banna and the Tsamay live together with no actual hostility. Their two languages differ, but the groups communicate in the Banna language.

**Marle (Hor/Arbore):** The Marle, generally known as the Hor or Arbore, are considered enemies, but the Banna do not know much about the Marle. The eastern end of Banna land has a huge ridge that has prevented the Banna from approaching the Hor directly. Miyawaki (2006) reported that the history between the Hor and the Hamar is convoluted, and it is not clear whether the Hor consider the Hamar to be Banna.

**Korre (Samburu):** A raid by the Korre is the oldest warfare that the Banna people remember, but no Banna people currently know who the Korre were. They say the Korre raid happened when *bitta* Doyo was in office. Doyo was killed, and many people fled the land. According to Strecker (n.d.), all Hamar land was occupied by the Korre, probably in the mid-19th century, and the Turkana came up

to the Hamar mountain from the south to fight the Korre.

**Geleb (Dasanetch):** The Banna consider the Geleb, or Galeba, to be enemies, but while relationships are not particularly strong, neither is hostility. According to elders, the Banna frequently used Geleb land as a refugee destination during their first contact with northern military expansion in the late 19th century.

**Bume (Nyangatom):** The Hamar and the Bume used to fight with each other and later carried out a peace-making ritual (Strecker 1979: 31–34). The Banna also consider the Bume to be strong enemies, but did not talk about any cases of invasion or attack.

The Banna people often exhibit negative attitudes about Bume culture, saying things such as “Bume do not cut their foreskin,” or “They are supposed to marry their aunt.” However, some traces of Bume culture can be found among the Banna, especially in vocabulary about warfare, the age system, and songs. One example is a “killer-name.” Some Banna elders have their own “killer-name,” which is given in praise for killing an enemy during a previous war. It is said that the “killer-name” is from the Bume language or borrows from Bume pronunciation.

The age system is also considered to have been imported from the Bume. Table 5<sup>(9)</sup> lists personal knowledge among five individuals about names of age-grades. The names of past age-grades recalled by the five informants do not agree, and the names use a mixture of Banna and Bume words. These inconsistencies are probably due to the relative unimportance of this knowledge, the failure of its function as a military system, and a lack of ritual. The functioning Banna age-system is the “*donza* system,” in which the social system is managed by the authority of adult men (*donza*). This authority

Table 5. Knowledge about names of age-grades among five informants

Estimated Age	informant A	informant B	informant C	informant D	informant E
?					dalba
?					garzo
?				<b>nymrupus</b>	
90'(?)	<b>inqaqoqe</b>	<b>inqaqoqe</b>	<b>inkakoke</b>	<b>yinkakoke</b>	<b>yinkakoke</b>
80'(?)				<b>yingagamong</b>	<b>yinyagamong</b>
80'(?)	<b>yiwaira</b>	<b>nyuwaira</b>	<b>yuwaela</b>	<b>yiwaira</b>	<b>yiwaira</b>
80'(?)			<b>yemyerbol</b>		
?	<b>nyagamong</b>	<b>nyagamong</b>	<b>innayamon</b>		
?	<b>nyemurBole</b>				
70'(?)		<b>nyakatakori</b>	<b>inkattakoel</b>	<b>yinkatakori</b>	<b>yinkatakori</b>
?		<b>nyammarpus</b>			
?		<b>nyuwoiya</b>			
60'(?)		<b>nyumisik</b>	<b>nyemesk</b>		<b>nyomesek</b>
50'(?)		planna	flanna	planti	planti(planna)
50'(?)		logodo	logodo	logod	logod
40'(?)		golbalcha	golbalcha	golbalcha	golbalcha
30'(?)					nyslkoy
30'(?)		kofinna	kofinna	koopini	koopini
20'(?)		kantsale	kontsale		
20'(?)				gepinikaza	gepinikaza
10'(?)				maqalatilcha	maqalatilcha

Note: Names in bold type are likely to be Bume word.

is personally acquired through several ritual steps, including the *atsa* rite of passage.

**Murso (Mursi) and Bodi:** The Banna consider the Mursi and the Bodi to be evil and are always afraid they will attack. Above all, the Banna are supposed to kill the Mursi if they encounter any while hunting, herding cattle, or raiding. Banna members who have experience fighting with and raiding the Mursi say that Banna-Mursi warfare occurred during the 1950s and 1960s.

The Banna do not know much about the land of the Mursi and the Bodi, probably due to the large forest and plain between the groups. Only a few young hunters now visit the Omo River. Consequently, the Banna have a mainly imaginative idea of the Mursi. One Banna member compared the Mursi to ghosts, "Murso haunts everywhere like a ghost. They enter our village secretly and drink coffee with us. We should beware." Another said, "Mursi sometimes watch us from the mountaintop, and they know much about our pasturage. If a Banna notices a Mursi coming to raid our cattle in the evening, he will be killed." They have contradictory images about the Mursi: on one hand, they fear the Mursi as an actual violent enemy; on the other hand, they regard the Mursi as malevolent supernatural beings like ghosts. The former belief is derived from experiences of actual fighting, and the latter stems from the fact that most Banna members have not experienced raids by the Mursi.

**Maale:** Maale land borders the Argo area in northern Banna. Banna elders remember raiding the Maale and warfare that continued until the 1960s. Some elders considered the Maale to be enemies as late as the 1990s. However, in northern Banna land, some Banna people marry Maale members.

#### 4.3. Imaginary Borders and Cultural Otherness

The short descriptions above illustrate that the Banna people are aware of clear distinctions between "people to kill" and those "not to kill." This distinction is not always based on historical fact, actual warfare, or raiding history.

The groups that the Banna consider to be enemies tend to have common characteristics including cultural and linguistic differences, and can be classified into three categories from a spatial point of view. The first category includes Maale and Tsamay. Both groups are spatially near the Banna, and they probably all share common resources such as water, land, and pastures around the border. The second category includes Mursi and Bodi, who are considered to be potential attackers. The wide plain lying between Banna and Mursi/Bodi land functions as buffer zone. The third category includes Marle, Geleb, Bume, and Korre, groups who are so remote they are not considered to be an active threat.

The previous discussion of clan identification revealed that the roles of *bitta* and *arti* are overlapping and complementary. While the role of a *bitta* includes calling *barjo* and ancestors' spirits to secure peace and richness, an *arti* mainly involves securing the imaginary boundary between inside and outside, for example preventing evil (enemies, locust, illness) from entering the land. As discussed above, every time a war breaks out, an *arti* is chosen from among only Galabu members. Some interviewees said that the reason for this is Galabu's autochthony.

When a war breaks out or the Banna decide to raid an enemy, they choose an *arti* by divination using two pieces of goatskin. The chosen *arti* goes to war with a shoot of aloe<sup>(10)</sup> as a talisman; this is placed into the muzzle of cattle taken during the raid. The animal with the talisman in its muzzle follows the *arti* and leads the entire herd, as described in the following example.

In about 1957 (EC), a huge number of Banna men raided Gra in the Bodi's territory. There was a famous *arti* whose name was Belachew Aldi.

Belachew participated in the raiding party at that time, and he successfully took whole herds from the Bodi. He rode on the biggest cattle and roared as cows do. Following him, whole herds roared.

The Bodi followed them and arrived in Banna. The Bodi had an *arti* too. The Bodi *arti* buried a black goat with only its head left above the ground. Belachew, not knowing the meaning, approached the goat, and got shot. When Belachew died, the herd automatically went back to

the Bodi.

This example illustrates two main points. First, an *arti* is expected to act as a kind of negotiator on the front line of a raiding party, which represents the boundary between inside and outside. Second, Belachew was unsuccessful in his negotiation and was shot dead, probably because of unfamiliarity with the communication protocol.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The previous sections have described some aspects of *neighborhood*, such as Appadurai's terminology, myth narrative, clan classification, and warfare.

The Banna define the *locality* of "Banna" by narrating the myth of *bitta*, which performatively explains not only cultural differences between the Banna and the Ari, but also the dualistic structure of clan classification. An analysis of clan classification and distribution helps to clarify their historical background and how clans move beyond "ethnic" boundaries through communication with the outer world. War and inter-ethnic relations, which help to found and strengthen group identity, are also based on spatial cognition and historical memory. These aspects of memory and recognition and discourse about them function to construct the Banna *locality*, or imagination.

Therefore, one important finding is the significance of Binna/Galabu duality. This can be used as a clue when examining historical and spatial consciousness among the Banna. Clarifying inter-ethnic relations around southern Ethiopia will require more data about clan classification and distribution, although to date few ethnographers have focused on these issues.

From a subjective perspective, cultural differences, or cultural otherness, appears to be linked to geographical-spatial conditions such as remote distances or to obstacles to communication, such as mountains. Still, human networks formed through practices such as intermarriage and immigration, which are reflected in clan distribution, carry great potential to move beyond spatial barriers, cultural strangeness, and "ethnic" boundaries. The otherness of culture, either imagined or real, plays an important role in Banna self-identification.

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## NOTES

- (1) The people who are called Banna (Bana, Bena) and live in southwest Ethiopia call themselves *Banya* in the Banna language.

- (2) Dore Wangi, who was a *bitta* in western Banna around the end of the 19th century, acted as a mediator between the Banna and the Ethiopian government when northern troops invaded the south. This lineage's *bitta* genealogy is: Wuloa–Danga–Teso–Wulli–Laale–Garsho–Wangi–Dore–Bura–Bezabih (Masuda 1997). It has had no *bitta* since Bezabih died in the early 1990s, but in early 2007 it was rumored that a new *bitta* was about to succeed.
- (3) This lineage is commonly known as Garsho *zere* after *bitta* Garsho who acted as *bitta* during the time of the Ethiopian Imperial invasion in the late 19th century. This lineage's *bitta* genealogy is: Wuloa–Boqeka–Garsho–Teso–Saara–Doyo–Kara–Garsho–Adeno (Masuda 1997).
- (4) Narrated by Belachew Dore, 1993. This story was taken from my previous paper (Masuda 1997: 461) with minor revisions.
- (5) In Ari, clans are divided into Ashenda and Endi; the former includes all nine chiefs (Gebre 1993: 29–30). In Maale's case, "the autochthonous clans became the Raggi moiety while the king and his followers became the Karazi moiety" (Donham 1986: 71).
- (6) Interviews were conducted as a preliminary survey, and the very small sample does not allow a detailed analysis. Both Bori and Dizishi'sh are considered to be *bitta's* villages.
- (7) According to Jensen, the first *gudel* (*gudul*) was the younger brother of *bitta* Wlawada (Wuloa), and four *gudels* were given land; also, all *gudels* are Gata (Jensen 1959: 318). Jensen's findings did not match my own data, possibly because Jensen collected data in western Banna and I studied eastern Banna.
- (8) This figure is based on information from several publications. For Hamar: Lydall and Strecker 1979, Jensen 1959b; for Ari: Gebre 1995, Jensen 1959c, 1959d; for Maale: Jensen 1959e; for Arbore: Miyawaki 1992.
- (9) In Table 5, bolded text indicates words that are thought to have a Bume origin; the rest is in the Banna language. Transcriptions for Bume words are inconsistent due to a lack of researcher ability and unfamiliar pronunciation.
- (10) The Banna distinguish between two kinds of aloe (*walqo*) based on color and shape: one kind is called *walqo binnas*, while the other, which is used by the *arti*, is called *walqo galabu*.

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