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Changing Identifications and Alliances in North-East Africa

Volume I: Ethiopia and Kenya

Edited by Günther Schlee
and Elizabeth E. Watson



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List of Illustrations	vii
List of Maps, Figures and Tables	ix
List of Abbreviations	xi
Introduction	1
<i>Günther Schlee</i>	

Space and Time: Introduction to the Geography and Political History	15
<i>Günther Schlee and Elizabeth E. Watson</i>	

Part I. Identification and Insecurity in the Lower Omo Valley

1. The Fate of the Suri: Conflict and Group Tension on the South-West Ethiopian Frontier	35
<i>Jon Abbink</i>	
2. Resistance and Bravery: On Social Meanings of Guns in South-West Ethiopia	53
<i>Ken Masuda</i>	
3. Modernization in the Lower Omo Valley and Adjacent Marches of Eastern Equatoria, Sudan: 1991–2000	77
<i>Serge Tornyay</i>	

Part II. Institutions of Identification and Networks of Alliance among Rift Valley Agriculturalists

4. Burji: Versatile by Tradition	89
<i>Hermann Amborn</i>	
5. The Significance of the Oral Traditions of the Burji for Perceiving and Shaping their Inter-ethnic Relations	103
<i>Alexander Kellner</i>	
6. Mobility, Knowledge and Power: Craftsmen in the Borderland	113
<i>Hermann Amborn</i>	

Part III. Land, Identification and the State in Ethiopia

7. 'We Have Been Sold': Competing with the State and Dealing with Others	135
<i>Tadesse Wolde Gossa</i>	

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Resistance and Bravery: On Social Meanings of Guns in South-West Ethiopia

Ken Masuda

Guns as Socially Constructed Things

Guns are not only material and industrial products, they are also symbols of violence and triggers of memories, and sometimes they even form a historical index that reflects the political history of a particular location. While I was living among the Banna, I sometimes tried to touch or take a picture of a person's gun, but I was rarely successful because of the political and social attributes of guns.

The political attributes of guns are constructed in particular settings. One such setting is the Ethiopian centre/periphery situation, which stratifies the relationship between the centre of government and peripheral society, culturally, politically and economically. No one denies that anthropological studies in Ethiopia have been influenced by the so-called 'centre/periphery model', where, as Donham says, 'what was "peripheral" was always relative to a particular level of the hierarchy of centres' (Donham 1986: 24). On the issue of guns, the Muguji (Koegu) society was defined as relatively peripheral, as they bought out-of-date guns from the Banna, who are also peripheral to the centre of Ethiopia (Matsuda 1997). In addition, Ethiopia is peripheral to the centre in the modern world system.

The fact that all the guns described in this chapter were produced in Europe, the USA, China and North Korea reflects Ethiopian foreign policy and the history of the global political situation. However, the people who used those guns at each level of the world system are not necessarily conscious of their position in the whole. For example, the Banna collaborated with the British army and with Ethiopian soldier-settlers in an anti-Italian resistance. Those soldier-settlers had been previously recognized as oppressive 'enemies'. It does not seem to be that the Banna saw joining the Allied Forces as a case of switching 'from foe to friend', but that they saw themselves as fighting 'direct' enemies who threatened their lives at that particular time. An exploration of the history of guns and resistance among the Banna can lead to a better understanding of the way the Banna have identified themselves in their particular historical, economic, cultural and political settings.¹

1. The following anthropological studies contain information on guns and societies: Pankhurst (1962, 1968, 1990); Abbink (1993b) on the Suri; Tornay (1993) on the Nyangatom; Turton (1993) on the Mursi; Matsuda (1997) on the Koegu; Chapple (1998).

This approach requires an examination of the cultural biography of guns. According to Kopytoff, the status of 'things' is always moving from being a commodity (with use value and exchange value) in a particular context into a new context where it is 'resocialised and rehumanised' (Kopytoff 1986: 65) and given a new identity and value (singularization). Kopytoff illustrates the process with the case of slavery: when an individual is a commodity, he becomes a slave, who is exchangeable. When the slave is acquired, he is reinserted into a particular community, where he takes on new identities and meanings and moves away from the status of a commodity. The potential is always there, however, for the slave to become a commodity again through resale (*ibid.*). This argument can be applied to guns: guns, produced in Europe and brought to Africa by traders, are exchangeable due to their value as commodities. However, no sooner are guns owned and used than they are immediately singularized and given new identities. The biography of a particular gun seems ambiguous, and is usually erased in the moving process by traders, governors and owners.

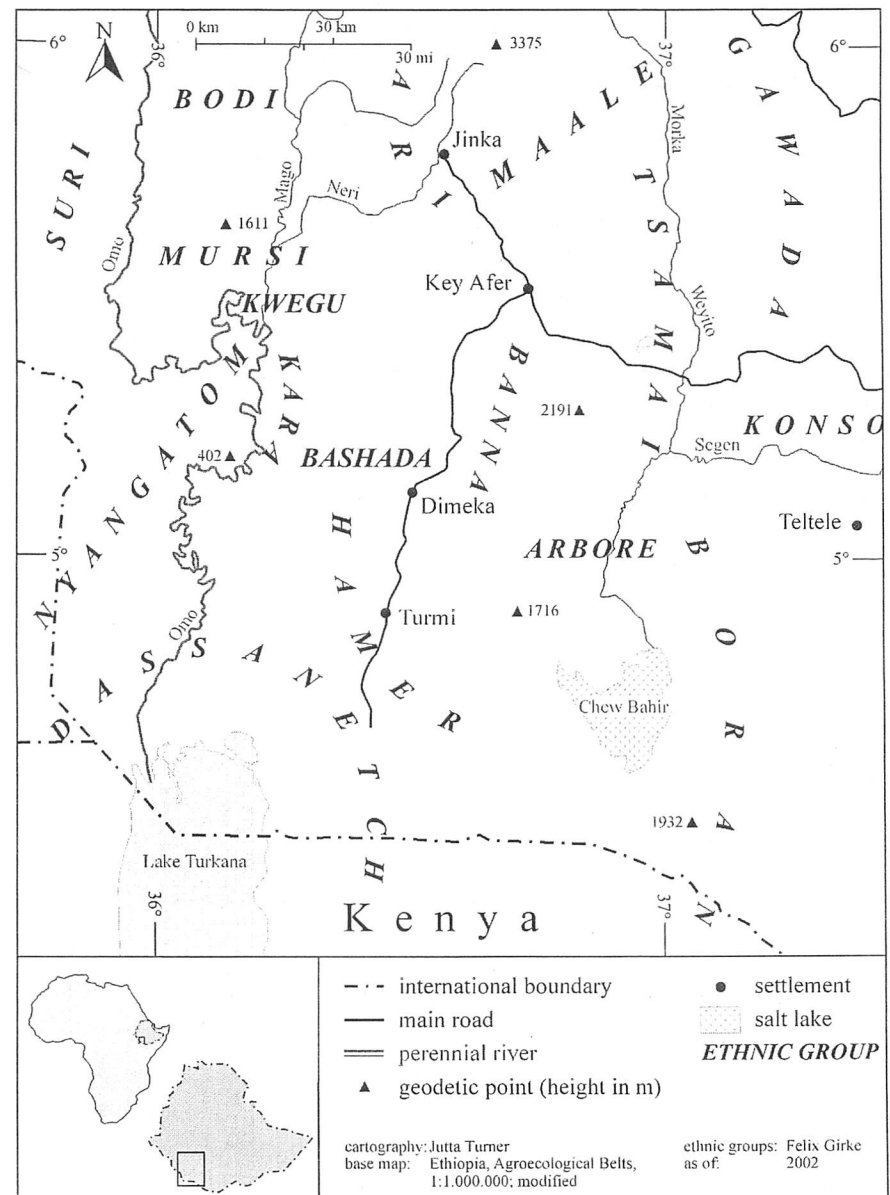
Meanwhile, the brand names and models of guns are connected to the memory of eras that would be traceable by mapping their names at points along a chronological table (see Table 2.1). In Banna, the periods of time, from Amhara domination to the post-socialist regime, are partially defined by reference to guns' names, memories of warfare and the types of guns that were used in them.

The Banna used guns in their resistance against the Ethiopian government and because of this the guns have political meanings. Through their resistance to the government the Banna expressed their collective self-image and through resistance they developed what they wanted to show and the way they wanted to be seen. Part of Banna identification, therefore, was accomplished through warfare and conflict. Important in this process were the use of and meanings attached to guns as socially constructed things.

The context in which the Banna identified themselves must be understood at two scales: the Banna and their neighbouring groups; and the Banna and the state (Ethiopia). Scholars' approaches to the former have been dominated by the ethno-system approach² and to the latter the centre/periphery approach. The study of guns is a case that enables these two perspectives to be combined.

Guns among the Banna: a Historical Overview

The Banna are an Omotic-speaking group living in the mountainous area between the Rivers Omo and Woito in southern Ethiopia (see Map 2.1). The population is estimated to be around 20,000.³ According to Fukui (1984: 476–77), an ethnic category of Hamari, including both the Banna and the Hamar, is recognized by the



Map 2.1 Location of the Banna in south-western Ethiopia.

2. Fukui (1988) points out that the process of ethnic grouping can be considered to be an autonomous system of identification between groups, and proposes a concept of an ethno-system.
3. According to the Central Statistical Authority (1996), the estimated population of people speaking Hamarigna (the Hamar and the Banna) was estimated at around 40,000, but the exact number is unknown.

Bodi as an 'eternal enemy', and there is no way of resolution nor are there any rules for fighting with these groups. From the Banna perspective, the Bodi and the Mursi are the groups with whom relationships are hostile. The Dassanetch, Nyangatom, Arbore, Tsemmer and Maale are also said to be enemies. In some villages in the lowlands, the Banna and Tsemmer live together and practise intermarriage (Melesse

Table 2.1 A chronology of war memories

Date	Political Events	Gregorian Calendar	Events among the Banna	Comments	Names of Guns Referred to at the Time
Before 1890s	Before the Amhara domination	?	Korre banki (Korre war)	A mysterious group 'Korre' came from the east to attack and burn Banna villages. The Korre were said to be armed with spears and guns and to ride on horses. The Banna had no guns then. People ran away to the bush or went far away. The <i>Bita</i> of the eastern Banna, Doyo, died around that time.	
c. 1896–1935	The Amhara domination	C. 1896	Conquered	The situation of the early phase of contact is not clear. A <i>ketema</i> (garrison town) was established in Bako in the Ari area, and the government forced the Banna to pay taxes.	Naasi Massarya, Washtra
		?	Slavery	The people who could not afford to pay tax were commanded to present their children instead. Those children were later transferred to a slave market. A Banna, named Truga, was engaged in the slavery transaction and became rich.	Washtra, Laban
		?	Arrest of <i>Bita</i> Dore Wangi	The <i>Bita</i> of western Banna, Dore Wangi, was arrested and imprisoned in Addis Ababa.	
1935–41	Italian occupation	1935–41	Collaboration with Ethiopian <i>arbagnotch</i>	The Banna collaborated with <i>arbagna</i> patriots and resisted the Italian army and its Ethiopian collaborator, the <i>banda</i> .	Washtra, Kolle, Minishir, Alben, Dubai
			Atrocities of Italian army	The Italian army had only one Italian and others were <i>banda</i> (or Hamasien) soldiers, who were said to come from Tigray. Reportedly the <i>banda</i> raped Banna women, forced the people to work, and killed.	
1941–74	Haile Selassie period	1950s–60s	Resistance against the government	Gun confiscation by the government happened many times. The Banna killed governmental officers, police and merchants. The ambush gradually became a common style of attack.	Minishir, Alben, Dimotopor, Washtra, Gawutamura, Laban, Damba Mawzar, Dubai

Date	Political Events	Gregorian Calendar	Events among the Banna	Comments	Names of Guns Referred to at the Time
		Around 1960s	Cattle raiding against the Bodi	After obtaining a large number of guns, the Banna raided the Bodi for cattle. The raidings were followed by massacres.	
		Around 1960s	The murder of <i>Bita</i> Bura Dore	The <i>Bita</i> of the western Banna, Bura Dore, was indirectly killed by a Bako governor.	
		Around 1960s	Air raids	The Ethiopian air force bombed some places around the Banna-Hamar border.	
		1941–74	Governmental system	The government gave noble titles to Banna <i>Bitas</i> . <i>Bitas</i> were expected to act as local governmental chiefs.	
1974–91	The Derg Regime	1974–75	Arrival of revolution	Although neighbouring groups like Maale or Ari were forced to change, the Banna avoided strong socialist interference. Most people remember the age as a better time. Some Banna worked as <i>wereda</i> chief officers.	Dubai, Dimotopor, Chi'cha, Klash
		1974–80s	Conscription	Many Banna youths were conscripted and sent to the battlefield as Ethiopian soldiers.	
		1974–late 1980s	Infrequent guerrilla activities	Some groups of men engaged in sporadic guerrilla activities, including attacking the cars of government workers or merchants.	
1991–	The EPRDF Regime	1994–	New policy	After the promulgation of the new Constitution in 1994, each ethnic group was given the right to autonomy. The position of the zone president in Jinka has been occupied by an individual from one of the local groups, the Ari, Nyangatom or Hamar.	Klash, Chi'cha, Dubai
		1992	The death of <i>Bita</i> Bezabih Bura	The <i>Bita</i> of the western Banna, Bezabih Bura, was shot by an EPRDF member with AK.	

1995: 123). Maale-Banna relations were very bad until the 1960s, but nowadays there is reportedly also intermarriage between them.

Social Meanings of Guns

The social implications of guns (*mura*)⁴ should not be underestimated. Nowadays guns are used in bridewealth payments, as a supplement for cattle, goats, honey and money. Guns are connected to the construction of masculinity, and boys begin carrying a gun on their shoulder from the age of about fifteen. Male Banna youths are required to shoot wild animals around the Mago plain: through successful hunting, especially that of buffalo, lion and other big animals, a youth can prove himself to be brave and masculine. Guns are also crucial for cattle raiding and the killing of enemies. The killing experience is another opportunity for a man to increase his reputation. The values attached to such killings can be seen in some of the elders who, now over seventy years old, have patterned scars on their arms to show they have killed, and they also have their own 'killer's name'. The sound of gunfire also signals that someone has died, and it is common at a funeral to see condolence callers firing their guns at the sky. In addition, although I have only a few recorded cases, the gun can be used as a means of suicide in Banna society.

The guns that are carried by men are frequently empty of bullets. Most of the guns are decorated with a colourful piece of animal skin, and are of symbolic importance and value. Youths are also keen to buy and wear a *kansh* belt that has many pockets in which to keep bullets.⁵ They are constantly interested in the maintenance and beautification of guns: some apply varnish or butter to its wooden stock. Bullets (*ushki*) are used as a substitute for money, and empty cartridges (*koiDe*) are used as decorations.

People like talking about guns. Whenever they have a conversation about hunting and killing, they always mention the name of the gun that was used. During dancing men gesture as if aiming at a target, and sometimes they actually fire guns. At the dance gatherings (*warsa*) held at midnight, the boys carry guns as ornaments on their shoulders.

The relationship between an owner and his gun can be likened to that between a husband and wife: when the Ethiopian government confiscated Banna guns and later sold them back during the Haile Selassie period, each Banna individual could find his own gun in a large pile. When someone found a gun belonging to his friend, he purchased it and returned it to him. The payment was subsequently reimbursed. No one could purchase and keep another person's gun, as owning another person's gun was considered equivalent to marrying another man's wife.

Gun Classification

Before describing the kinds of guns in Banna and their classifications, I shall first discuss the limitations of the investigation. The first difficulty that I encountered was that I had no opportunity to collect direct information concerning the older guns. These were mainly obsolete and were described in anecdotes of warfare, conflict and successful hunting. Through these discussions I learnt the names, the prices and the features that were recognized by the people. The names of the products, the manufacturing places, makers and specifications like calibre and bullet type could not be identified. In contrast to my own interest in gun type and places of production, I found that the Banna people paid little attention to these kinds of information; their gun cognition consisted of its form, its performance, the type of bullet and memories of warfare associated with it. The most reliable clue to identifying guns of pre-Kalashnikov generations is the names used by the people in the Banna or Amharic language. Some names are directly transferred from the original product names into Banna/Amharic (see Table 2.2).

It is possible to look in more detail at gun classification through the example of the Kalashnikov assault rifle (AK).⁶ The most favoured AK among the Banna is the Chinese-made *Klash NatriBoqo*. It is distinguishable from the Chinese-made *Klash Dimpr* (*Nypr*), as the *Klash NatriBoqo* has a bayonet under the barrel and the *Klash Dimpr* has none. According to many, it is the bayonet that is considered attractive and makes the gun so popular. Differences in appearance do not always correspond to differences in the internal mechanisms and detailed specifications. For example, the category of AK called *Klash NatriBoqo* includes the Type-56 (AK-47) and Type-56 Press-Frame (AKM), both of which are made in China. These are not different in appearance but only in the manufacturing process and performance.

The Vicissitude of Guns

For the Banna, all guns are considered to be foreign things and they are imported to the area through various channels. Guns are classified locally into four generations. The first period (1890s–1930s) is when the Banna encountered the Ethiopian Empire, and the guns *Naasi-massarya* and *Washtra* were distributed. The next generation of guns, *Dubai*, *Laban*, *Damba Mawzar*, *Minishir* and *Alben*, were common in the second period, from the 1930s to the 1950s. This period was during and after the Italian occupation (1936–41) and these guns were brought by the Italian army. In the third period (1950s–80s), the only new introduction was the *Dimotopor*, but the older types coexisted with it. In the fourth period, from the 1980s, guns of the Eastern bloc like the *Chi'cha* (SKS) and *Klash* (AK) were introduced, during the time of the Derg regime and afterwards.

4. With this term, I exclude pistols (*shungcho*) from the discussion because I did not personally see any. I only saw the bullets for them.

5. There are two kinds of belt; a *kansh* has pockets that can hold several bullets, while a *kansh zinnare* is a belt with smaller pockets into each of which one bullet is inserted.

6. Developed by Mikhail Timofeyevich Kalashnikov, the first AK-47 (Avtomat Kalashnikova obrazet 47), using a 7.62 mm × 39 mm round bullet, was released in 1947. I generally use the abbreviated designation of AK or AKs. AKs have been produced in countries most of which belonged to the Eastern bloc during the cold war. All AKs I saw in southern Ethiopia were Soviet as were its successors, AKMs, and their variations. A comparatively new generation of AK (AK-74), which uses a new type of bullet (5.43 mm × 39 mm), had not been discovered.

Table 2.2 Guns that have been used among the Banna

	Name in Banna	Name of Product, Manufacturing Country	Calibre	Age	Remarks	References
1	Naasi Massarya	?		1890s-?	This gun is said to be the first the Banna encountered and the one the Ethiopian army used when it came to the area for the first time. It was a single shot gun. <i>Naasi</i> means child in Banna, and <i>Massarya</i> means gun in Amharic.	
2	Kongo	Russian?		1890s	Although its performance had a bad reputation, many Kongo were distributed. The origin of the name is unclear.	Matsuda (1997) says Kongo was a Russian musket. Kurimoto (1992: 13) reports that Russian guns named <i>moscob</i> were used among the Anywaa.
3	Washtra, Astra, Wajigra	French Gras?		1890s	It is quite difficult to identify what the Washtra (or Astra, or Wajigra) was. It possibly existed before the Italian invasion, or was brought by Italians. It was also a single shot gun or five-shooter. I think there were two kinds of Washtra: one was long and black and called Kolle; the other was short and metallic and called Gawumura or Gawutamura because its colour resembled that of a <i>gawu</i> brass bracelet. The Washtra was also called Orgo, and the term <i>orgo</i> means short in Banna. It is possible that the Washtra Orgo was the same as Gawutamura. It is said that the first man who shot an elephant used an Orgo gun.	The local name Washtra, or Wajigra, resembles the Abu Gigra gun of the Nuer (Hutchinson 1996: 11) but I have no evidence to confirm a connection. Kurimoto (1992: 13) also mentions a Wajagira rifle among the Anywaa and says the name originated in Fusil Gras. According to Pankhurst (1968: 600), Ethiopia was provided with many French Gras from 1895, and the guns were used in the Battle of Adwa in 1896. Fusil Gras was produced from 1871, and Pankhurst (1962: 172) suggested that Fusil Gras was called <i>wajigra</i> in Amharic around 1990. Alexander Naty (1992: 76) mentions that the Ethiopian army was armed with Wajigra Moscob when it conquered the Ari of southern Ethiopia.

	Name in Banna	Name of Product, Manufacturing Country	Calibre	Age	Remarks	References
4	Dubai	Czech or Belgian		late 1930s		According to Pankhurst (1962), Ethiopia purchased many guns from Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Japan in order to defend themselves from attack by Italy. The Dubai appears similar to the British 0.303-inch Short Magazine Lee-Enfield, which was used during the First World War.
5	Laban	French Lebel?		1930s?-1960s	The Laban was a six-shooter and its barrel was long. The Banna began to use Laban during the Italian regime, but, because of its price, only rich men could afford to buy it. Ordinary people used Washtra or Gawutamura at that time.	Because of the resemblance of pronunciation, the Laban could be the French Lebel, produced from 1886.
6	Damba Mawzar	German Mauser?		1930s	The Damba Mawzar probably came to the Banna in the same period as the Laban, but it was rarely mentioned by informants. It may be a Mauser gun from Germany.	The German Mauser was one of the most famous firearms used during both world wars; many were exported to Africa. In Ethiopia, the Mauser was used in the Battle of Adwa (Chapple 1998) and during the anti-Italy war in 1935 (Pankhurst 1962: 174).
7	Minishir	Austrian Mannlicher?		1930s	Minishir was brought by Italy and arrived in Banna later. Banna informants recollected that one Minishir was bought for fifteen cattle in the 1950s and 1960s.	Pankhurst (1962) says that a gun called Minishir had already been used in Ethiopia, but the product name was unclear.
8	Alben	Belgian Albini?		Late 1930s	The Alben was also brought by Italy. It was a six-shooter and powerful enough to shoot over a long distance. There might be a long and a short form.	

Table 2.2 *Continued*

	Name in Banna	Name of Product, Manufacturing Country	Calibre	Age	Remarks	References
9	Dimotopor, Dimopor, Dimas	British Lee-Metford?		1950s–1980s	The Banna came into contact with the Dimotopor during the Haile Selassie regime. The heavyweight gun had two variations: one was the long Guncho Dimotopor, which was used by British army to fight Italy; the other was the short Afadist Dimotopor, which was formerly used by the Ethiopian army. Dimotopor was a major weapon in the 1950s to 1960s.	Matsuda (1997) reports that there was a gun called 'Dimmotfer' in the past and says it was a DM-4, which was one of the DM products made by the German Deutsche Metallpatronenfabrik in the 1890s. It is also possible that the Banna Dimotopor was a British Lee-Metford. Pankhurst (1962: 170) writes that Ethiopia imported many Lee-Metfords in the 1890s, and I suggest that some Lee-Metfords became Dimotopor.
10	Otomatik	US M-1 rifle			There were only a few Otomatic. The name is derived from the English automatic. It is thought to have been imported from Somalia. The Banna recognized the gun as that of the police.	The M-1 rifle was used by the US army during the Second World War.
11	Chi'cha	Russian SKS-45 and Chinese Type-56 Carbine	7.62 mm	1980s	At present, there are many Chi'chas. Most of them have a serial number in Chinese letters. Ten AK bullets can be charged at a time. According to a rumour, the first man who bought a Chi'cha paid for it with eighty head of livestock.	The meaning and origin of the name Chi'cha is vague. It is called SKS (<i>es kei es</i>) or Chi'ch in the Amharic-speaking world.
12	Princhi'cha	Chinese Type-63	7.62 mm	1980s	Few people own Princhi'cha. Its shape is similar to Chi'cha, but it can shoot twenty bullets.	

	Name in Banna	Name of Product, Manufacturing Country	Calibre	Age	Remarks	References
13	Klash	Made in the Eastern Bloc	7.62 mm	1980s	The term Klash indicates the Soviet-made AK-47, AKM and variations. Its banana-style magazine is distinctive. There has been a plentiful supply of bullets from southern Sudan, which cost three birr in 1999 (and five birr in 1993). AKs have been the main weapon of the Ethiopian defence force since the 1970s, when the country had strong ties to the Eastern bloc, and it became popular among the Banna after the collapse of the Derg. A Klash cost five cattle in the late 1980s, but, because of supply increase, people paid only two to five cattle or four hundred to one thousand birr in 1999.	AKs are called Klash among Amharic speakers too.
14	Klash Labana	Russian AK-47 and North Korean 58, etc.	7.62 mm	1980s	Klash Labana seems to be a Soviet AK-47. It is difficult to identify variations in detail.	
15	Klash NatriBoqo	Chinese Type-56 (AK-47) and Type 56 Press-frame (AKM)	7.62 mm	1980	This is the most popular copy model of AK-47 and AKM. Most of them have a bayonet.	Matsuda (1997) mentions that the Koegu had a kind of AK called Natolibok and identifies it as made in China or made in Yugoslavia. The name Natloboko is derived from a cattle hide pattern <i>natdobo</i> (personal information by a Nyangatom friend).
16	Klash Sholo	Russian AKM	7.62 mm	1980s	AKM was a revised model of AK-47. Its muzzle shape is distinct from that of AK-47.	
17	Klash Nimpr (Dimpr)	Chinese M22	7.62 mm	1980s	Chinese model of AKM. The Banna identify Nympr from NatriBoqo by the form of muzzle.	

Table 2.2 Continued

Name in Banna	Name of Product, Manufacturing Country	Calibre	Age	Remarks	References
18 Klash Kuntsa	Hungarian AMD-63 or Romanian AIM?	7.62 mm	1980s		
19 Klash Chaagi	?	7.62 mm	1980s	The folk term <i>chaagi</i> is a basic colour term for green or blue, so it is possible that the Banna named Klash Chaagi for a kind of AK that may be a Hungarian AMD with a pearl blue stock. According to the people, Klash Chaagi had an additional grip under the barrel.	
20 Klash Chamma	Polish?	7.62 mm	1980s	This gun has a grip under the barrel.	
21 Klash Mattis	PRK and variations	7.62 or 5.45 mm	1980s	AKM was modified to be an RPK machine gun with folding legs under the long barrel. RPK are used by the police and army; only a few are owned by Banna.	

In 1993, old guns like the *Dubai* were most common, and the *Klash* was still a luxury item. This seems to have changed around 1999, when most men had either a *Chi'cha* or a *Klash*, and only a few had a *Dubai*. In the late 1980s, a Banna man could visit Teltele, beyond the River Woito, and pay fifteen cattle for a brand new AK. A famous anecdote relates how the first *Chi'cha* owner paid eighty goats and sheep for it. By 1999, the price of these guns had dropped to two to five cattle for one gun, or in money, around one thousand birr.⁷ The prices of bullets changed from five birr in the early 1990s, to four birr in 1993 and three birr in 1999, as supply increased from southern Sudan.⁸

Changing Alliances

In this section, I examine the Banna memories of conflict and warfare along with the chronological usage of guns. Chronology in this context does not mean an objective, scientific and authentic scale, measured with homogeneous ticks, but refers to varying, emic classifications and meanings. I have to justify the reasons for choosing such an 'unreliable' material of study. The first, somewhat negative, reason is the lack of written historical sources. The second, more positive, reason is that in studying Banna identification it is preferable to use oral histories, in which memories and interpretations are mixed (Masuda 1997). In the description below, I combine these histories with other information from bibliographic research.

Amhara conquest (c. 1890s–1936)

Banna memory concerning first contact with the Ethiopian Empire is ambiguous. Ras Wolde-Giorgis was the person who led the army advance to the south and, with the support of Dejazmatch Tesemma Nadew and Dejazmatch Damtew Ketema, began the conquest over the region. It is not surprising that the Banna do not know the name of Wolde-Giorgis, as control over the Banna was not strong in comparison with that of the Ari and the Maale. From the early phase of encounter with the northern regime, the Ari and Maale social systems were forced to undergo fundamental changes (Alexander Naty 1992; Donham 1994). A garrison town *ketema* was established in Bako, southern Ari, after the conquest, and thereafter the *ketema* functioned as a local centre of government. Small police substations were built throughout southern Ethiopia, even in the Banna-Hamar area. The stations not only raised an Ethiopian flag and distributed malaria medicine, but provided material images of 'modernity' (Donham 1999).

In the early phase of contact, when Ethiopian soldiers began to penetrate into Banna land, many people left the villages and ran away into the bush. Some of them were killed for their supposed commitment to resistance activity. The expression 'ran into the bush' (*qaunte gobidi*) is a typical phrase that I have heard repeatedly during conversations. After bloody battles, the Empire managed to appease the Banna *Bitas* (priest-chiefs) by giving them many gifts, including guns, and people began to pay

7. This was possibly triggered by the 1998–99 famine.

8. Bullet price in 2001 was five birr because of shortage of supply from southern Sudan.

taxes. The *Bitas* of western Banna had stronger connections to the government than the eastern *Bitas*. Amhara soldiers and officers sought natural resources like ivory, which had already disappeared elsewhere. After receiving guns such as the *Washtra*, the Banna, who had known only trap hunting until then, began shooting wild animals. This increase in hunting activity caused a decrease in wildlife in the south.

While Banna *Bitas* kept good relations with the government, dissatisfaction about tax payment was smouldering among the ordinary people, whose children were sometimes taken and sold if they could not pay taxes by a deadline. It was around this time that Banna resistance against Amhara soldiers and *neftenya* (soldier-settlers) took place, mainly by ambush. At this time guns were also usually hidden in the bush.

Italian colonization period (1936–41)

The actions of the Italian army are described by the Banna as brutal. The army had only one Italian commander; most of the soldiers were Ethiopian collaborators with Italy and were known as *banda*.⁹ The Banna direct their resentment to the *banda*, not towards Italy, because of their memories of the cruel experiences that the *banda* forced upon them. Many people were compelled to carry things, to supply foods and so on. Some exhausted people were recognized as useless and were shot. The most infamous story of *banda* mercilessness is of rape: some *banda* soldiers raped a Banna woman in front of her husband. He was forced to watch and later was hanged from a tree.

Confronted with these miseries, the Banna were gradually absorbed into partisan activities. They allied themselves with Amhara patriots (*arbagnotch*), who had been *neftenya* settlers. Together they waylaid the *banda* soldiers in the bush. People who did not join the guerrilla activity moved to the south. Some of them passed across the Ethiopia-Kenya border and joined the British army (*jambo*), where they supported the effort to prevent the Italians from marching further south.

The Italian occupation of Ethiopia brought with it brand new and contemporary European guns (*Dubai*, *Damba Mawzar*, *Minishir*, *Alben*), which the Banna obtained from the soldiers they had killed. The 'military revolution' (Parker 1988) that came with the more rapid-firing guns spread into Ethiopia. In Banna, the increase in gun possession was also accompanied by a high frequency of cattle raiding.

Haile Selassie regime (1941–74)

Although Emperor Haile Selassie instituted the new constitution in 1931, his presence as Emperor became recognized by the Banna people only after the liberation of 1941. The relationship between the Banna and the Ethiopian government was very hostile during the period of rule that followed.

During this time, the Ethiopian government recognized *Bitas* as *balabbats*, and conferred some titles of Amhara aristocracy on them. The title of *Grazmatch* was given to authentic *Bitas*, and the title of *Balambaras* was given to acting *Bitas*, who were *Bitas'* younger brothers during the *Bita* vacancies (see Figure 2.1). Through this process, Banna *Bitas* were incorporated into the class of Amhara nobility.

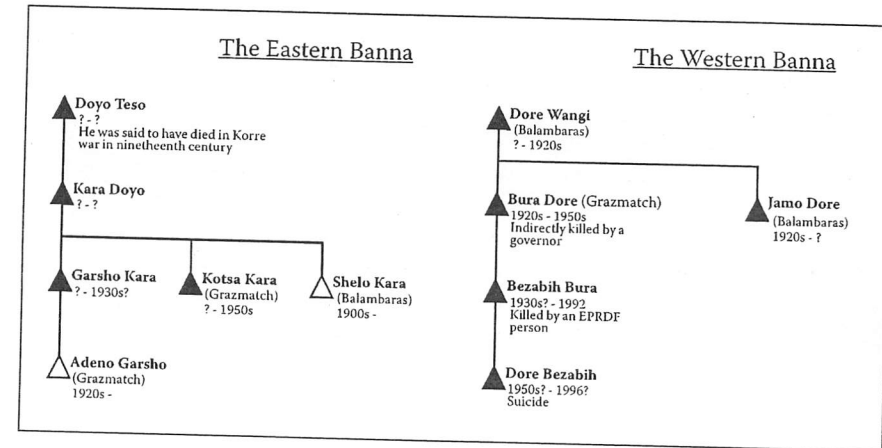


Figure 2.1 Genealogies of *Bitas* with their offices.

On the other hand, the Banna continued to resist the northern Ethiopian regime by attacking officers, policemen and, sometimes, traders. They referred to all these people as *gal* ('Amhara' or 'enemy' in the Banna language). People recollected that, 'when we saw shoe prints on the ground, we quickly recognized them as belonging to an Amhara because the Banna did not wear shoes then. Tracing the prints, we killed the men immediately after we found them.' In addition, 'when we heard the sound of a car, we immediately ran into the bush and watched. Whenever they acted suspiciously, we killed them' (interview in Bori, 1999).

During this time, 'everything', said a Banna, 'was required and taken by police. They were like thieves' (interview in Bori, 1998). Some Banna were appointed *Chika Shum*, an official position to collect taxes. They sided with the government and always accepted bribes. It is said that not only *Chika Shums* but also some *Bitas* were exploiting ordinary people. In brief, Banna society, in a sense, began to fracture politically.

The Banna clearly remember the cases of gun confiscation, which were organized by Amhara officers at this time under pretexts like 'war is forbidden by the law' or 'prevention of anti-governmental activity'. This case apparently happened in the 1950s: a lieutenant, residing in Bako, came to the Banna and hanged Bura Dore, the *Bita* of western Banna, and Kotsa Kara, acting *Bita* of eastern Banna, and then ordered all guns to be brought in. People complied with these orders. The guns were kept in storage for several months and then sold to their former owners. Around the time that similar gun confiscations were carried out, people, especially youngsters, became more involved in resistance with violence.¹⁰ Violent resistance took place with the use of guns, but the resistance was also organized covertly and took more

9. The term *banda*, originally from Italian, signified Ethiopian collaborators (Bahru 1991: 174).

10. It is interesting to compare this with the Karamoja case, where the spread of AK-47s after 1979 and the involvement of youngsters introduced a new dynamic, again favouring the emerging of warlords and the decline of the elders (Mirzeler and Young 2000: 419).

subtle forms: people kept silent to the police and hid murderers. The government called the Banna *shifia* (outlaws) and labelled them 'the people who were never governed'.

Bita Bura Dore was killed by the governor, Asfaw Gebre Amanuel, who was in position in 1957. Bura Dore's death was followed by his small brothers and sons firing guns at police and governmental officers as retaliation, saying 'we are not dogs'. After a series of small battles, the Ethiopian air force decided to bomb Banna and Hamar.¹¹ Planes bombed an area around the border between the Banna and the Hamar intensively, and the government sent its military forces in by land. The Banna fought these soldiers with the guns they had obtained during and after the Italian occupation. This battle brought Ethiopian soldiers' *Dimotopor*, which were recognized as being made in Britain.

It was during this period that inter-ethnic cattle raiding became even more frequent. The Banna raided the Mursi and the Bodi in the west and the Maale in the north. Inter-ethnic warfare is considered to have changed radically at this time, as the shift from spears to guns led to an increase in the number of victims of raiding. The government intervened in the conflicts, arrested criminals and forced them to return the cattle. The rural people, however, believed that the government or officers appropriated those cattle. There are similar kinds of government interventions and assertions reported in the Hamar case by Lydall and Strecker (1979a: 90).

The Derg regime (1974–91)

In Maale and the Ari society, the new Derg government acted severely and abolished the chiefs. In Banna, by comparison, the relations with the government were peaceful. The reason for this was that the Banna land system, which does not admit individual landownership, only use rights, did not conflict with socialism. Powerful newcomers, who had been resented by the Banna, like the *neftenya*, were abolished. Moreover, there were some opportunities for some educated southerners to become officers and administrators in the local government.

The most fundamental change occurred at this time, as Banna society became more incorporated into the state than ever before. While the area in northern Banna, formerly ruled by the *neftenya*, was returned to its original owners, those people were simultaneously reorganized into peasant associations, which functioned as the lowest level of the governmental system (*kebele*).

Ethiopia in the 1970s and the 1980s was always at war, and the government conscripted Banna youths through the peasant associations, trained them and sent them to the war front. Socialist Ethiopia was provided with a huge number of firearms from the Eastern bloc. By the end of the 1980s, SKSs (*Chi'cha*) and AKs (*Klash*) had arrived in Banna. Most of the guns used there were still old types like the *Dimotopor* or the *Dubai*, however.

Post-socialist regime (1991–)

The collapse of the Derg and the establishment of the EPRDF government led to new developments, not only in the centre but also in the southern periphery. The political power of southerners became much stronger because the new Constitution declared the self-governance of regions by local people. The administrator of the Banna area¹² is an educated Banna and the relations between the Banna and the government appear to be amicable.

The peace and the Banna's trust in the government are no more than superficial, however. After the news of the Ethiopia-Eritrea war (in May 1998), Banna youths did not go to market because they were wary of conscription. The Banna still conceal their guns from the police. They never bring guns to the market, or, if they do, they leave the guns outside the town. The possession of a gun by a Banna is given unspoken consent as long as they stay peaceful. Nevertheless, it is certain that the police will arrest someone who is discovered taking part in the gun trade. Conflict has been intermittent: the most strained situation occurred when Bezabih Bura, the *Bita* of western Banna, was shot in the town of Kako in 1992. The man who shot him was said to be from the EPRDF. Soon after Bezabih's death, his relatives attacked Kako and killed some policemen and teachers.

For a while after the collapse of the Derg regime, the supply of AKs became greater. This made it easy for the Banna to obtain guns peacefully. A large number of *Chi'cha* and *Klash* were brought and sold by traders, and the Banna lost many cattle as payment. Old types of guns like *Dimotopor* or *Dubai* were replaced by *Chi'cha* and *Klash* (see Table 2.3). From a military point of view, the Banna armaments developed almost equally to those of the police, but the latter were equipped with newer technologies like sub-machine guns and RPKs, known locally by the name of *Klash Matrix*.

With respect to inter-ethnic relations at this time, hostile relationships seem to have disappeared. The Banna have stopped raiding the Maale for cattle, and recently there have been several cases of intermarriage between the two groups. Because of their remoteness, the Banna are rarely in contact with the Bodi and the Nyangatom. The only group they still have strong hostility towards is the Mursi and there have been some killings in the Mago Plain in recent years. Turton (1993: 167) reports that, during some five years from April 1985 to July 1990, twenty-seven Mursi were killed by Hamari (Banna and Hamar together).

Historicity of Identification

For attacking and raiding neighbouring groups, the Banna used two modes of attack, *sula* and *banki*. On the one hand, *sula* is a small-scale attack usually done by a small group; on the other hand, *banki*, which generally continues over a long period, indicates a large-scale attacking mode, executed through detailed operation plans and ritual procedures by military organization of the age-grade system. After warnings of Mursi attacks, the Banna began preparations for conflict by purchasing guns and

11. Despite their recollections, I could not find any documented evidence of the bombing. As Gebru mentions, the Ethiopian air force often bombed to suppress anti-government riots in Gojjam in 1968 and Bale in 1969 (Gebru 1991: 148, 184).

12. Banna-Kule *wereda* (district), then Hamar-Banna *wereda*, and then Banna-Tsamay *wereda*.

Table 2.3 Guns owned (1998-99)

No.	Age of Owner	Guns' Name in Banna	Type of Product	Remarks
1	40	Klash Sholo	AKM (USSR)	
2	30	Klash Sholo	AKM (USSR)	Purchased with four head of cattle
3	35	Klash Sholo	AKM (USSR)	
4	?	Klash NatriBoqo	AK (China, export model)	Serial number 386 56 3640874.
5	50	Klash NatriBoqo	AK (China, export model)	Purchased from a merchant with four head of cattle. Sold at 2,000 birr later.
6	45	Klash NatriBoqo	AK (China, export model)	The stock made of light-coloured wood. The muzzle and bayonet decorated with animal skin. Purchased from a brother at 1,700 birr.
7	25	Klash NatriBoqo	AK (China, export model)	
8	25	Klash NatriBoqo	AK (China, export model)	Decorated with skin of <i>murja</i> (sitatunga or kudu).
9	20	Klash NatriBoqo	AK (China, export model)	
10	20	Klash NatriBoqo	AK (China, export model)	
11	17	Klash NatriBoqo	AK (China, export model)	Serial number 386 56 3545654.
12	30	Kash Labana	AK (North Korea)	Purchased from a Banna with four head of cattle. Same appearance as Soviet AK-47. The muzzle decorated with skin of <i>murja</i> .
13	16	Klash ———	?	Local name unidentified.
14	?	Klash ———	?	Local name unidentified.
15	?	Klash ———	AK (China, domestic model)	Type 56 model with folding stock. The stock made of plastic. Local name unidentified.
16	55	Klash ———	M22 (Chinese AK-47)	Without bayonet. Local name unidentified.
17	45	Klash ———	Chinese Type 56-1 model?	With folding stock. Local name unidentified.

No.	Age of Owner	Guns' Name in Banna	Type of Product	Remarks
18	25	Klash ———	?	Local name unidentified.
19	20	Klash ———	AK-47 (Bulgaria)	The stock is made of plastic. Local name unidentified.
20	90	Dubai	?	Data in 1999.
21	40	Dubai	?	Data in 1998.
22	35	Dubai	?	Data in 1998.
23	50	Chi'cha	Chinese Type-56	
24	50	Chi'cha	Chinese Type-56	
25	50	Chi'cha	Chinese Type-56	Serial number 0136 五六式 25007567 in Chinese characters. The bayonet decorated with skin of <i>gash</i> (warthog).
26	45	Chi'cha	Chinese Type-56	The trigger decorated with skin of <i>guumi</i> (antelope). The bayonet decorated with <i>ukuso</i> (mongoose or civet).
27	40	Chi'cha	Chinese Type-56	
28	40	Chi'cha	Chinese Type-56	
29	40	Chi'cha	Chinese Type-56	Data in 1999.
30	25	Chi'cha	Chinese Type-56	Purchased from a Banna with three head of cattle.
31	18	Chi'cha	Chinese Type-56	Purchased from a merchant with four head of cattle. The muzzle and trigger decorated with goatskin. Number 15377 stamped on the stock. Serial number '五六式 24005607' with Chinese letters.
32	17	Chi'cha	Chinese Type-56	Skin covering from the muzzle to the body. The muzzle also decorated with animal hair.
33	50	Princhi'cha	Chinese Type-63	Imported through Mursi area.
34	50	Oromatik	M-1(USA)	

bullets, sending out scouts and driving cattle away. The 'army' consisted of young 'warriors' and old 'commanders' classified roughly by the age-grade system, while boys who were not recognized as fighters were engaged in guarding cattle. The Banna age-grade system is said to be imported from the Nyangatom and functioned well in the past. Nowadays, however, people are not attentive to the name of each grade or the order in which it comes. It seems possible that there is a correlation between the decline of the age-grade system and a recent decline in inter-ethnic conflicts.

Inter-ethnic conflict and relations were often interpreted previously as locally produced within a self-contained system (ethno-system: see Fukui 1988). From the ecological point of view, inter-ethnic relations and their history are interpreted as a result of pressure on natural resources. Without denying the ecological approach as one way to deepen the discussion, I would like to suggest the importance of a 'political ecology' approach. This would see inter-ethnic warfare not only as a local matter, but also as one that is linked to national and global processes. Here, it is connected also to Banna resistance to the state and to colonial power.

The example of the Mursi-Nyangatom conflict from 1987 to 1992 shows that the political conditions around the state influenced the peripheral situation. The Nyangatom attacked the Mursi in 1987 with AKs they had bought from southern Sudan. The groups had been hostile to each other before then, but this AK-armed attack inflicted serious damage on the Mursi. The Mursi became ready to take revenge on the Nyangatom in March 1992, when they obtained AKs that were taken from an Ethiopian military armoury after the collapse of the Derg regime, and after they had recruited new warriors at an age-set ritual in 1991. Being armed with AKs made it possible for the Mursi to attack the Nyangatom (Turton 1993).

These examples of the Banna, the Nyangatom and the Mursi suggest the following points: (1) the introduction of new types of gun changes existing inter-ethnic relationships; (2) the guns were from the civil war in southern Sudan and the Ethiopian armoury; and (3) the condition of armaments among each group reflects domestic political situations and foreign relationships. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that guns were (and are) a violent device of social control, exploitation and oppression, and that they are found in marginal areas, where they are used in inter-ethnic conflicts and in resistance to the state.

In addition, I should point to the possibility, already suggested by several authors, that inter-ethnic conflicts were triggered by pressure from outside. A Hamar elder, Aike Berinas, said that the decision to attack the Mursi was taken by his father, Berinas. The Banna tell stories indicating that it was the government that made Dassanetch/Hamar-Banna relations hostile, and that an Amhara officer, fuelling an already hostile relationship, led Banna warriors to raid the Maale.¹³ Therefore, there is a situation where inter-ethnic relations result from the intermingling of the ethno-system with the outer influences of politics and materials such as guns.

The fact that the times of inter-ethnic warfare from the 1950s to the 1970s overlapped with periods of anti-governmental resistance leads to three hypotheses: (1) although two kinds of warfare (with the state and with the neighbouring groups) were different both in context and fighting style, they were contemporaneous; (2) one of the factors increasing cattle raiding during the Haile Selassie period was the desire for capital to pay for guns; and (3) gun-purchasing possibly caused a decrease in numbers of Banna cattle.

The word *gal* (enemy) has two implications: it refers to hostile neighbouring groups like the Mursi, and also to Amhara people and northerners. Banna people usually say '*gal*' to indicate the Amhara category, which includes officers, policemen, military commanders, merchants, bar owners, teachers and so on. The Banna usually choose ambush as the mode of attack against *gal* Amhara. This type of activity could be called a guerrilla-style attack, which means physical violence by a sub-state subject. The Banna guerrilla-style activities did not have an ultimate purpose, for example the collapse of government, but remained as revenge for personal loss and exploitation.

According to Gebru Tareke (1991: 126), one of the distinctive features of resistance activity among Ethiopian peripheral societies is that, like the Bale resistance of south-eastern Ethiopia in the 1960s, their military activity was not successful in promoting any social changes because of a lack of leadership with long-term vision. In Bale, the Oromo-Somali obtained new guns and were militarized in both technical and organizational aspects with assistance from Somalia. In contrast, among the Banna, neither modern militarization nor the organized military operation based on the age-grade system functioned in resistance against the state. Although some Banna were engaged in the Ethiopian national army during the Derg period, the modern military system was not introduced into the Banna. In the following paragraph, I point out three reasons for this.

First, Banna soldiers were at the lowest level in the army, as a centre/periphery structure also functioned in the military. Secondly, the Banna's relations with their neighbours had become calmer by the time the Banna joined the Ethiopian army. Thirdly, the modern organizational system was so alien to the Banna that they could not adopt it. On the contrary, they adopted the age-grade system of their ideal enemy, the Nyangatom. The decision as to whether or not they adopt the enemy's military system depends on the degree of 'otherness'. While I recognize many differences between the Nyangatom age system and the Banna one, the Nyangatom was possibly recognized as being closer to themselves than the features of Amhara society. A Banna told me, 'We, the Banna, seek cattle and human life, but the Amhara seek land. We do not own land because all land belongs to *barjo* [good fortune or well-being]' (interview with *Bita* Adeno Garsho, 1999). The Banna and the Nyangatom share the same values of their cattle-based culture.¹⁴ The narratives

13. Lydall and Strecker (1979b: 25–26) introduce an anecdote which shows that a Bako governor, Dedjazmatch Biru, forced the Hamar to attack the Mursi.

14. In an article, Gray points out that the Karimojong, who once lost their identity as cattle herders, regain it through cattle raiding after firearms became available (Gray 2000).

point out the linkage between a lack of landownership with the idea of *barjo* to stress a cultural difference. Such recognized cultural differences were also reasons for the avoidance of the modern military system.

Guns as Historical Index

The hypotheses above require an investigation of why the Banna were enthusiastic about guns. However, this question immediately leads to circular reasoning: is it that increasing guns caused cattle raids and attacks, or that increasing cattle raids caused demand for and a flood of guns?

Guns replaced the spears (*banki*) and arrows (*om*) that were previously used for violence.¹⁵ This replacement, however, did not undermine the Banna idea of the connection between violence and masculinity.¹⁶ The construction of Banna masculinity is based on violence, as a man who cannot beat his wife will be laughed at (Lydall 1994).

It is interesting to compare the case of the Ari, reported by Alexander Nary, to the case of the Banna on gender and violence. Alexander Nary reports that the Ari, who were dominated in the early period of the Amhara conquest, represented themselves as powerless people: as men 'becoming women'; 'becoming sheep'; 'being castrated'; experiencing 'the shortening of the penis'; or 'lacking a penis' (Alexander Nary 1992: 257). In contrast, the Banna never presented their self-image as female, and labelled the Ari as 'tired people' or 'people accepting defeat'. The Banna said 'the Ari never receive guns for bridewealth' and 'the Ari prefer money instead of guns'. A gender dimension is present if the continuation of resistance equals violence and masculinity, and if the suspension of resistance equals subjugation and femininity. Violence was the self-representation projected by the Banna towards Ethiopia and neighbouring societies, and this image probably corresponded to a stereotype of the Banna also held by others.

In spite of the strength of the masculinity-violence linkage, opportunities for violence have been decreasing over the last few decades. I would like to point to two kinds of symbolization as the reasons why the Banna, nevertheless, possess guns as a form of gun fetishism: (1) guns as symbolic violence; and (2) guns as historical symbol. First, because guns are by nature associated with violence, each man can display his violence without firing. In other words, men acquire status and masculinity just by owning guns, even if its magazine is empty. Secondly, guns are imbued with political meaning, which, at least among the Banna, is based on their historical experience. Although gun models have changed many times over the

generations, the memories of war, conflict, gun-firing, murder, raids and so on are symbolically accumulated in guns. Moreover, these memories are still being reproduced through narratives. People easily refer to and interpret the memories of violence from the names of old guns during a conversation: the guns among the Banna exist, therefore, as a form of historical index.¹⁷

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