

Environmental Beliefs and Values of Borana Oromo in Ethiopia: A Focus on Narratives

By

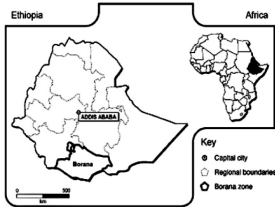
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Whatever happens to an environment in a certain corner of the world has a global impact.



Location of Borana Zone in Ethiopia

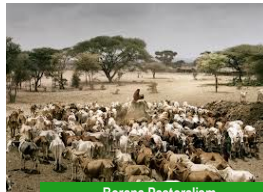
Background

The Borana, who live mainly in southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya, are an Oromo-speaking people. They are estimated to number at least 300,000, about a quarter of whom are in Kenya (Leus and Cynthia, 2006:784). According to Helland (2001:606), the Borana of southern Ethiopia, one of the many pastoral societies in eastern Africa, have gone through several phases in the history of pastoral development.



Ritual Ceremony of the Borana People

Primarily driven by dynamic socio-economic trends, and natural and human made shocks, however, Borana pastoralism has been profoundly affected by intense internal and external pressures of change (Coppock, 1994; Desta and Coppock, 2004 in Wessie and Bichaka, 2010:037). Pastoral societies, once robust and vigorous, are disintegrating. They seem no longer able to contend with the challenges posed on them by the environments in which they must exist, by the ecological foundations of their economies, or by the effects created by their interrelationships to the larger social, economic, political, military contexts in which they find themselves.



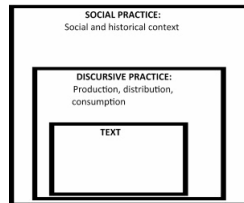
Borana Pastoralism

This study explored dominant environmental beliefs and values of the community as an organized, viable, and dynamic social force basic to the creation and dissemination of environmental messages. It was guided by the following research questions:

- What are the dominant environmental beliefs of the community as conveyed in its ecological narratives?
- What are the dominant environmental values of the community as implied in the narratives?
- What are the varieties of discourses that the community members use to situate themselves within the natural environment?

Methods

The methodological framework for this study was based on Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse analysis, which considers discourse as a text, as a discursive practice and as a social practice, each of which is indispensable for discourse analysis (Fairclough 1992:049).



The researcher also used a qualitative approach in the analysis of data gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and extended participant and non-participant observations.

Results and Discussion

The environmental beliefs and values people hold, and often embedded in ecological narratives, constitute environmental discourses and dictate how people interact with their natural environments.

The analysis of the narratives reveals some dominant environmental beliefs and values, which are presented under discourse categories such as necessity and survival, scarcity and security, hopelessness, seniority, and obedience and disobedience.

