



## Evil Eye as a cause of social conflicts and the cultural status of the Manaas, a Marginalized potter subgroup of the Dawuro ethnic Community, Southwest Ethiopia

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**Abstract:** This study explores the perceptions of the evil eye, its consequences, and the status of the manas, a marginalized potter subgroup of the Dawuro community. The Dawuros number about a million people living in the Southwestern part of Ethiopia, the Dawuro zone, and speak the Dawuro language. The manaas are groups practicing pottery and are regarded as evil-eyed among the Dawuros. To Dawuro in general, the manaas are a low-ranking group, accused of possessing Evil Eye which is supposed to endanger the lives of others. They are by tradition the object of much marginalization, prejudice, and superstition, and continue to be discriminated against in housing, schooling, social gathering, funeral, and marriage opportunities, although they provide useful goods and various ritual services to the Dawuros. The paper employs qualitatively gathered data and discusses the perceptions of the evil eye among the Dawuros and its consequences and implications on the lives of the Manaas.

**Keywords:** Evil eye, Social strata, superstition, ritual purification, social conflicts.

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### INTRODUCTION

The notion of the evil eye has been a part of human culture since time immemorial as a widely believed concept across the globe (Qureshi, 1990). Belief in the evil eye tradition is commonly accepted among a significant number of people in countries such as Italy, Greece, Arab countries, Spain, Portugal, India, Brazil, North Africa, and Scotland although early literature repudiates its prevalence among native Americans and sub-Saharan Africa (Berger, 2013). It is an irrational, but usually deep-rooted belief in the magical effects of the projection of malicious power towards someone through an envious gaze or stares and is believed to cause sudden illness, accident, danger, harm, and inflict misfortune on someone's health or life (Abu-Rabia, 2005; Gebeyehu, 2012; Gershman, 2015). Abu-Rabia (2005) explains the causes and consequences of evil eye in Bedouin folk culture:

*The evil eye in Bedouin folk belief is tied to the fear of envy and jealousy in the eye of the beholder. [This] It is said to be conveyed by a strange gaze, or by admiration without a blessing. The evil eye is [Known] said to cause impairment of sexual activity, impotence, sterility, disorders in menstruation, problems in pregnancy and childbirth, deficient breast milk, mastitis, a baby's refusal to suckle, and so on (Abu-Rabia, 2005: 241).*

Evil eye infliction and effect are also believed to transcend humanity and can attack any living object (Reminick, 1974). Others also believe that, as opposed to beneficial divine power, the evil eye is the result of sin or the outcome of the sin of envy linked to demonic or any other form of supernatural power (Hocart, 1938; Reminick, 1974). Such a contentious issue is one of most widely debated topics across many cultures of the world including academic realms and continues to be a topic lacking widely agreed upon cultural or scientific justification.

This paper discusses the perceptions of the evil eye among the Dawuro ethnic community, Omotic (a subfamily of the Afro-Asiatic language family spoken around the Omo River valley) language speaking group (Fleming, 1973), located in the southwestern part of Ethiopia (Dea, 1997). The paper will also attempt to depict the sociocultural explanations and narratives of the reasons why the manaas (potters), one of the craft working groups in the social hierarchy of Dawuro are widely accused of possessing evil eyes and the consequent life conditions experienced by this group of people for supposedly possessing such a mystic power. The power of the evil eye that manaas are supposed to possess often causes various forms of social conflicts between them and the dominant majority of the peasants. Hence, it is aimed to throw in light as a scientific effort and hoped to include the Dawuros' world view towards such a controversial subject. Furthermore, the study attempts to showcase the controversies, changes, and continuities in the life patterns of manaa social groups compared to their previous many years.

## **METHODS**

Regarding the methods of data collection and materials used in this study, qualitative data collection methods and tools have been used to collect firsthand information from four different woredas (local administrative divisions often referred to as districts) namely, Toc'c'aa, Marek'aa Dissaa, and Gennaa districts out of the ten districts and two city administration structures currently possessed by the Dawuro zone of Southwestern Ethiopia. Informed verbal consent was obtained from the study population before gathering first-hand information from the field. The informants' verbal consent to participate in the study was obtained by audio recordings from each of the participants. The community leaders, elders, religious heads, students, court officials, and academicians from the study area were involved in using purposive and snowball sampling methods and techniques.

The four different woredas as study areas were purposively selected because they have a considerable number of manaas, that is, the study population, and for the availability of cases relevant to the study topic. The settlement patterns of the manaas are sometimes difficult to access because they possess marginal and remote locations as compared with that of the farming community, and this became the major reason for selecting study localities where there are considerable subjects of study. Moreover, school teachers, clan chiefs, and political heads from the majority farming groups were also consulted to grasp multiple views on the topic to have a balanced and data-rich report. The community elders were chosen for their rich and time-proven experiences and knowledge of the perceptions of the evil eye and its conflicting consequences. Face-to-face interviews involved 20 individuals from the study sites and 10 from the general public.

Four focus group discussions one in each of the sites comprising 7 to 8 individuals per group, and field observations were administered to conduct an in-depth study on the

topic. People from different walks of life including females, the elderly, and school children particularly from potter groups are included in both the interview and focus group discussions to represent various voices. In addition, the available and relevant prior works on the topic were used as secondary data sources to make the study reliable. Field data were gathered between the first weeks of January 2024 and the end of April 2024. Accordingly, the following section discusses the pattern of social hierarchy and structure, the extent of marginalization across the stratum, sociocultural roles played by the manaas as community members, and the commonly held perceptions and conceptions of the evil eye and its resultant societal conflicts among the Dawuro ethnic group.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Social structure and hierarchy among the Dawuros**

The Dawuro ethnic community, which has about a million people and is located in southwestern Ethiopia, comprises complex social stratification, structure, and hierarchy that exhibit pronounced exclusion, social inequality, and conflicts of various types across the strata. Dawuro is known for its stratified order of various hereditary status groups, including farmers, several groups of craft workers, and hunters (Tefera, 2018). Accordingly, the dominant social groups collectively referred to as farmers, or locally referred to as maallas, comprise the majority of the population, and represent an upper social status in the long-sustained sociocultural history of Dawuro. The term maallas is a generic name designating the majority farming group and is one of the major clans of Dawuro preordained to dominate other status groups in the social strata. The maallas are further classified into three major subdivisions often called major clans: the dogalaas who are supposedly born to lead spiritual dimensions of life, the maallaas born to lead the political and administrative aspects of life, and the amaaraas who are born to lead the economic dimensions of life, each of which comprises numerous sub-clans exceeding one hundred and fifty clans. The slaves, artisans, and manjjaas (foragers or hunters) on the other hand, are hierarchically subordinated in the social stratum and have been compelled to experience social inequality as compared to that of the maallaas. The intensity of differences and complexity of inequalities increases in descending order in Dawuro's social hierarchy. In other words, Dawuro's social strata comprise groups that exhibit nuanced status differences at the top of the strata to groups that experience unpleasant marginalization and social inequality at the bottom (Ahmed, 2007; Abebe & Dea, 2001; Gebeyehu, 2012). Accordingly, the social hierarchy of Dawuro can be represented in descending order as the maallas at the top, followed by slaves, which are further subordinated to; the royal family slaves, slaves of the commoners, and slaves of the slaves; artisanal groups comprising smiths, tanners, and manaas; and the manjjaas at the bottom of the hierarchy (Ibid).

The life of manaas, which is the focus of this study, and as social groups representing one of the bottom strata in Dawuro's social hierarchy, is characterized by various forms of controversy, assaults, and discrimination. For instance, it has been a common practice for maallas to utter invectives against manaas whenever they meet them accidentally. Distancing from social relations and events, economic activities, political participation, representation, public institutions, and services, are some of the challenges manaas social groups face. Displaying submissive greetings conveying noticeable status differences and perceivable spatial distances is the norm often expected from manaas whenever they meet someone from the upper strata. In other words, the extent of exclusion in the bottom strata particularly pertinent to the lives of the potters might show broken relationships ranging from unfriendly treatment during social contact to the destruction of property and murder. Such exclusion practices worsened over time compared to the previous two regimes. According to my informants, during the imperial and egalitarian socialist regime led by Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam, manaas were said to be less excluded and hence,

believed to be actively participating in sociopolitical spheres of life in the Dawuro social system.

Since the implementation of ethnic-based federalism in the country led by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) the rights of marginal people particularly manaas have worsened in the locality. This is partly because, as explained by my informants, the regime paid the least attention to the rights and representations of minorities under minorities and partly because of the coming of maallaa favoring local leaders to political power. As further explained by my informants, the numerical and economic inferiority of potters did not allow them to struggle for their rights under the EPRDF's suppressive regime in which pseudo-democracy and phony federalism were characteristic features. Following the national reform initiated in the country in 2018 and the arrival of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali to power in April 2018, the life of the manaas became exacerbated to the worst end and more dreadful incidences were recorded in the Dawuros' land. According to my informants, due to the frequent political unrest and nationwide turbulence that occurred during the early periods of the 2018 national reform potters in Dawuro experienced one of the worst incidents. As reported by my informants, from June 2018 to September 2018 the political turbulence that occurred in the area claimed six manaas' lives and ended up with the burning of more than one hundred grass-roofed houses with their entire belongings uncovered the severity of the problem. Figure 1 below, shows the manaa homestead burnt during the violence between June and September 2018.

Recurrent political unrest at the national level often has an overarching effect on local political structures, hence, such an incident is assumed to be the repercussion of national political turmoil. In other words, whenever the central government becomes weak in maintaining peace and order across the entire country, it is obvious that marginalized social groups such as manaas and other vulnerable groups are often risked even though the extent and severity of risks may vary with the ascribed status and contempt towards a given social group.



**Figure 1.** One of the manaa homesteads burnt during the violent incident (Photo by author).

Nevertheless, unfriendly relationships between the maallas and manaas are often channeled through exclusion from marriage, local money-saving institutions; sharecropping and grazing, owning urban plots of land, shaking hands during greetings, and eating together in the same plate as such cases are also commonly experienced among neighboring Omotic states such as Oyda and others (Dereje, 2002). Submissive greetings

and maintaining perceivable spatial distances during any contact with people in the upper stratum are also obligatory requirements to get rid of potential assaults and to live in society.

Apart from these undesirable life experiences and hostilities, the manaas are also widely accused of possessing evil eyes that supposedly can endanger the lives of the people in the upper strata. Consequently, they are not only hated and feared but relegated to the lowest social status where social trauma and extreme poverty are daily life encounters. They are also accused of practicing cannibalism even though no one in Dawuro society offers evidence surpassing reasonable doubt for such a superstitious view. These and other culturally constructed misconceptions made the manaas experience not only a marginal life leveled down to sub-humanity but also agents of social evil. In other words, it is widely believed that manaas are socially evil because they supposedly possess evil eyes which in turn make them experience marginal life characterized by abject poverty as compared with others in the hierarchy. In economic terms, unlike the buda (evil-eyed persons) of Amhara society who practice numerous craftworks (Reminick, 1974), the manaas of Dawuro particularly female potters are predominantly dependent on clay production to subsist their livelihood. Clay production is a task exclusively left for female manaas among the manaas of Dawuro. The male manaas in Dawuro are seldom engaged in pottery production and hence support their livelihood by vending firewood and practicing minimal activities such as harvesting wild honey along with providing labor service for petty payments from moderate maallaas. However, regardless of the gender and economic activities practiced, the manaas' status is inherited by birth, and being evil-eyed becomes an ascribed status.

### **Sociocultural status of the manaas and the perceptions of the evil eye among the Dawuros**

The sociocultural status of the manaas in Dawuro is often expressed in terms of the cultural and ritual roles they perform, ascribed ranks they possess, and socioeconomic activities they practice. Accordingly, people usually consider them k'ooraa (evil-eyed) because they possess a supposedly magical power referred to as evil eye; tunaa (polluted or defiled), for their food preferences and custom to consume socially tabooed foods; and sanctifiers for their ritual role in exorcizing evil spirits and purifying polluted things.

The perceptions of the evil eye in Dawuro have manifestations conveyed through a system of beliefs and perceptions commonly held by upper groups in society. In specific terms, it is said to be a system of belief in a malignant power that is hurled through the direct gaze of the person towards someone. Such a projection is believed to be sometimes willful emanating from a certain sort of envy towards the victim and at other times involuntary power operating against their control. However, whether the projection is willful or involuntary, this malignant power, is believed to inflict dangers that range from simple detriment on someone's family or property to misfortunes of serious types that can harm the lives of individuals. As such, the notions of evil eyes in Dawuro, can be divided into two in terms of its supposed extent of power and its consequences. The first is that of a serious type believed to cause serious misfortunes such as death and is believed to be exclusively linked with the members of the manaa social group. The second is a type of evil eye power that is relatively less harmful than the first type and is believed to be found among some individuals from all social groups of Dawuro including the maallaas.

In Dawuro, the evil eye of the first type is locally called k'ooraa or manaa (evil spirit or evil eye) often associated with manaa social groups and in most cases considered to be the most dangerous and treated despicably by the majority of the people in the upper strata. People referred to as k'ooraa or manaa are believed to possess harmful magical powers projected through their eyes. They are also said to be grave raiders and people who consume the bodies of dead persons by exhuming graves. Moreover, people in Dawuro believe that evil-eyed manaas ride on or change themselves into hyenas at night

especially when they exhume graves even though such a myth remains mysterious and is hard to explain by drawing evidence. Regarding the mysterious cultural status of the manaas, different social groups in Dawuro hold different views and beliefs. For instance, people in the locality including artisans and manjjaas commonly believe that manaas possess evil eyes and practice cannibalism. According to my informants, this view is shared by most of the people in the locality and by most educated groups and government officials at different office levels. Therefore, the enormous majority of Dawuro believe that manaas eat their fellow human beings.

This widely held notion made the manaas antisocial beings and subjected them to experience severe marginalization, abysmal life patterns, and extreme punishments including condemnation and murder without a legal trial. Such prejudice is often denounced publicly and sometimes running underground and has a paramount impact in causing mass fear and large-scale paranoia which in turn leads to conflicts of various forms including maltreatment, irrational feelings, marginalization, and occasional persecutions. On the contrary, few individuals argue that the manaas never eat their victims rather some of them might have some evil powers projected through their malicious gaze towards someone as is the case in other social groups across the hierarchy. Such a group of people in the locality holds firm support with logical arguments and believes that the manaas never practice cannibalism. They strongly argued that they had never seen the manaas eating other human beings and felt that it was merely a superstition emanating from the manaas' poor economic condition and numerical inferiority. They further argue that they had long-established attachments with the manaa social groups and could not find any evidence showing that the manaas are man-eaters, even though they do not deny that some possess some mystical powers manifested through their eyes.

Contrary to the above arguments, another group of people see the case differently and argue that manaas generally possess some malevolent power that can endanger the lives of non-manaa social groups and believe that manaas eat their fellow human beings. Individuals in this category also believe that the malicious power projected through the eyes of this group of people has strange source activated involuntarily. In other words, they think that manaas truly possess evil spirits that have the power to endanger the lives of others. Such spirits are not similar to those conceived by the majorities in Dawuro and have nothing to do with the cannibalistic features attributed to the manaas. Rather, they strongly argue that as any evil spirit does, these spirits have the power to endanger the lives of individuals as they are forces working against the divine or beneficent power. Accordingly, in many protestant Christian churches, the followers think that the manaa spirits are exorcized and repelled off by rebuking and praying in the name of Jesus Christ, and therefore, conversion to Evangelical Christianity and the expansion of protestant churches in Dawuro has certain integrative roles in this regard (Tefera, 2018).

However, the manaas themselves, on the other hand, argue that none of them possess evil power endangering other social groups, and strongly protest against the general accusation claiming that they are anthropophagus. They assertively argue that they never eat fellow human beings and denounce that people in the upper stratum simply vilify their reputation and slander their social base because they are economically disadvantaged and numerically inferior. They further assert that if they had possessed such power they would have eaten all the maallaas and others in the strata who often vilify their lives and throw them to miserable marginal life.

The exclusion and fear never end by distancing them from participation in social systems rather they are subjected to various forms of persecution and murder because they possess supposedly malevolent powers. In Dawuro, manaas are often suspected and accused of endangering others and attacked when someone suddenly gets sick whether the cause of sickness is therapeutically identifiable or related to other sources. It is often a recurring incident to experience assaults targeting the manaas whenever there is sudden death or sickness among the neighboring community because people automatically link

such an inflict with the evil spirit of the manaas. Moreover, people also consider manaas antisocial beings with covert ties to supernatural forces to curse or call for misfortunes against someone. For instance, it is common to hear curses such as neena manaay moo! (Let the spirit of the manaa eat or destroy you)! or neena anaay s'eello! (Let a manaa gaze at you or let the manaa spirit attack you)! manaan gakettaa! (Let the manaa spirit find or touch you)! And so on, in instances when someone becomes disappointed and wishes for harm to come to somebody. Thus, each of the curses pointed out above is often uttered to wish misfortunes upon someone suggesting a hostile and unfriendly belief in the manaas' possession of strange and malevolent powers (Gebeyehu, 2012). As such, it is not uncommon to see social conflicts of the above types between the manaas and the surrounding nonmanaa communities across the social hierarchy of the Dawuro ethnic group.

### **Cultural remedy and aversion of the evil eye spirit**

Culturally, Dawuro society uses indigenous mechanisms of protection and cure in connection with inflictions supposed to result from the evil-eyed manaa spirits as is the case in many countries across the world. The wearing of any kind of coral (Potts, 1890), dipping a thumb in a bowl of oil and anointing the thumb of the patient in ancient Greece and Rome (Clarke, 1964), tying the hair of a white stallion tied around the finger (Taylor, 1933), using amulets, phallic charms, special body or garment adornments or prayers (Berger 2013), hanging a small bunch of chili peppers outside village doors in Italy (Gagahan and Gahagan, 2006), burning green peppers, and aromatic herbs, applying fumigation and prayers in India (Qureshi, 1990), are some of the mechanisms to protect and ward off the spirit of evil eye. People in the Dawuro locality often use different aromatic herbs such as rue (*ruta graveolens*), to test whether a sick person is endangered by manaa or k'ooraa spirit, and apply various mechanisms to ward off the spirit. After identification, individuals with special knowledge of casting out such cases were consulted. A knowledgeable person may prescribe bringing suspected individuals from the manaa social group to spit saliva on the victim. The spittle from the mouth of the suspected manaa is believed to reverse the spirit of the evil eye as the use of rituals involving certain fluids including saliva is true in other cultures (Berger, 2013). They usually prepare herbal remedies from different herbs and plants in a clandestine way that is not noticed by others. Having noticed by others is believed to reduce the effectiveness of the remedies apart from the usual precautions taken to hide the elements and ingredients used in such a healing process. The man always takes the necessary care to hide the types of herbs he uses to sustain his vitality and importance in this regard. It is widely believed that after smelling medicine, the victim is supposed to declare when, where, and how the manaa spirit found them. Finally, a medicine prepared from different herbs is sewn together with a piece of fabric and worn around the neck of the victim as a precautionary measure or protection against any further infliction emanating from evil eyes or similar negative forces.

The second type of evil eye in Dawuro, on the other hand, and is generally referred to as iita ayifiyaa or asaa ayifiya, meaning bad or strange eye, and referred to as an unfriendly or envious look. Evil eye infliction of this type has different manifestations than the former and is believed to cause various misfortunes. The effects of the evil eye have various supposed misfortunes and ill consequences on people, animals, plants, or personal properties in different parts of the world (Berger, 2013). Likewise, as it has been so among the Bedouin tribes of the Negev of the Middle East (Abu-Rabia, 2005), some of the widely believed consequences of the workings of the evil eye in Dawuro are scabies or itches on the bodies of good-looking children, causing food to stick or choke in the throat, changing the color of milk in the udder of the cow into blood, dries up well-growing crops in the field, ceasing of milk production in cows, drying up of milk in the breast of lactating women, withering of fruit of trees, disease, accidents, and disagreements between intimate friends. In Dawuro's cultural setting, ill fates resulting from evil-eyed people are exorcized

and reversed by cultural mechanisms such as wearing or fixing some amulets made from different seeds, corals, stones, or plants around the neck of a victim or on objects suspected. The amulets or talisman, corals, and other objects in this regard are also supposed to protect against evil, injury, disease, or any kind of misfortunes resulting from the envious look.

### **Notions of pollution, ritual purification, and the Manaas**

Another cultural dimension through which the life of the manaas in Dawuro is represented is the notion of tunaa (pollution or spiritual impurity) and its resultant reversal mechanism called piilaa meaning distancing or exclusion from the social system. As I attempted to describe earlier and as is the case in other neighboring Omotic states (Abebe and Dea, 2001) the conceptions of tunaa are predominantly based on their food preferences and certain culturally ascribed statuses. As a result, the manaas in Dawuro are usually accused of feeding on culturally tabooed foods such as bakutaa (carrion or carcasses of a dead animal) or when an animal is not slaughtered in the dominant maallaas' style. Moreover, manaas are also often accused of transgressing food taboos because they consume the flesh of some wild beasts such as swine and hippopotami which are seldom practiced by maallas. Each of these things is considered culturally abominable or impure among the maallas despite the rumors that some people from the farming maallaa groups secretly consume hippopotami because it is believed to heal certain diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis. Accordingly, manaas are culturally viewed as tunaa and, therefore, physically distanced from any possible contact with the upper classes. Such an action is locally called piilaa and any contact made with them is believed to cause spiritual impurity and misfortune called gomiyyaa (misfortune) unless cleaned by ritual purification processes.

On the contrary, the manaas in Dawuro are considered specialized experts possessing mystic power in warding evil spirits and purifying impurities. Such an instance is usually called meecussa (cleansing) or hulluk'uwa (purifying) cultural pollution and averts the resultant misfortunes. The waataa subgroups of the manaa social group are assumed to have special knowledge and mystic powers in cleansing spiritual misfortunes and impurities. Ritual purification in Dawuro in general is considered a magic bullet for dangers arising from cultural impurities and can be performed in different ways. One of the cultural purification methods uses land as a means of purification.

A tunnel with an entrance and exit is usually dug underground and a sacrificial animal's blood usually a heifer is prepared and placed at the exit. Thus, a person who needs to be purified must enter the gate of the underground tunnel to pass through the tunnel and be bathed by the blood of a sacrificial animal placed at the other end of the tunnel. Hence, such a process is widely recognized as a cultural remedy that purifies a person from his transgression and averts the consequent dangers and misfortunes.

Dawuros also use cultural mechanisms to purify material impurities such as polluted houses or plots of land. Having sex in someone's residence, especially in grass-roofed houses is an act of pollution that needs to be purified. For instance, residences of this type are purified by stabbing a sacrificial animal and throwing it out of a polluted house through a newly opened outlet on the wall of the house. Another purification method is performed by the manaas themselves especially the waataa subgroup of the manaa social group. As mentioned earlier, waataas are the manaa subgroups who have at least a relatively friendly interaction among some of the farmers, if not all, and are sometimes considered less harmful and less polluting than the rest of the manaas. Regardless of their polluting power, this group of manaas usually purifies polluted land, instruments, or domestic articles by blowing zayyiyaa (a windblown local musical instrument made from bamboo tree and horn of an animal) accompanied by fumigation and cleansing with the leaves of certain plants. Apart from this, the manaas, especially the waataas are considered experts in circumcision, uvelectomy meaning cutting off uvula, and for their knowledge of some traditional medicines for which they are paid money and



foodstuffs. In this regard, they possess a cultural status of relative vitality and importance in which they have an opportunity to have some cultural interactions with the farmers without violating rules pertinent to greetings and maintaining spatial distances.

Nevertheless, a very limited number of manaa youths have been allowed to be employed in government offices as health practitioners and members of the local police force despite the assaults and unfriendly relationships they confront intermittently from their nonmanaa colleagues. Moreover, some manaa youths have been migrating to the neighboring areas of the Dawuro zone and the capital Addis Ababa in search of better life opportunities. Again, a smaller number of manaa youths have been serving in the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) and come back with new life lessons and experiences that might be important to activate the manaas to champion their rights thereby bringing about an inclusive environment.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study sheds light on the evil eye perspectives in Dawuro and contributes to adding insights to the scientific community to gain a better understanding of the sociocultural dimensions of the evil eye and its role in triggering social conflicts among the Dawuros. It could be an additional input for researchers and scholars who attempt to conduct a study on such a widely debatable topic in particular and on any related topics in the southwestern part of the country at large. This study could be the first to represent the cultural remedies and Indigenous resolution mechanisms practiced among the Dawuros for the infliction of the evil eye, understanding the links between the evil eye and social marginalization and their reciprocal influence on one another particularly in the Dawuro context. The various cultural puzzles and manifestations linked with the lives of the manaas that are exorcisers of evil spirits and providers of various services to society on the one hand and evil-eyed, antisocial beings, polluted and impure, and so forth members of society on the other, make them people of controversial and conflicting cultural statuses and identities. In the social hierarchy of Dawuro, it is widely believed that the manaas are not only assumed to be mysterious creatures accused of eating human flesh and polluting others but also the most unheard groups of the community. Due to these and other culturally constructed attributes ascribed to the manaas, people in Dawuro fear and distance manaas from various social activities and participation. It is observed that most of the members of the community in the Dawuro social hierarchy have strong abhorrence and therefore reciprocate such a malignant attitude towards the manaas through invective, execration, assaults, and violent conflicts including Lynch law. They are widely discouraged from going to the schools they attend, are excluded from social gatherings including funerals, and even share the same graveyards. Their access to places frequented by members of the upper classes is very much limited and they are generally subjected to various forms of sufferings and mistreatments. The consequences of such social conflicts and violence between manaas and nonmanaas particularly between the manaas and maallaas made the manaas feel inferior to and belittle themselves which in turn made them constitute the bottom last stratum of the hierarchy where agony, lack of impunity, abysmal encounters, and impoverishment are often experienced as routines lifestyles.

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