Social Exclusion of Marginalized Minorities in Kaffa, Ethiopia

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Abstract

This article examines the situation of marginalized minority groups in Kaffa Zone, Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State. It critically reflects on the aspect of social exclusion of two social minority groups, the Mano (tanners and potters) and Manjo (descendants of former hunter-gatherers and wood workers). The article examines how long-lived practice of social exclusion affects the groups in a wide range of ways preventing them from participating in social, economic and political life, and enjoying their basic rights. The Manjo and Mano are discriminated in every aspect of human interaction and are excluded from mainstream social life of the society. They are economically disadvantaged, politically disempowered, socially excluded, culturally subordinated, and spatially segregated. This in turn, contributed to their abject poverty and destitute life as aptly captured in this article. It is argued in this article that, the problem of exclusion of minority groups in Kaffa Zone has structural, socio-economic elements that tend to be trivialized often escaping the attention of policy makers. Consecutive visits made to five *woredas* of the Kaffa zone over the last fifteen years allowed the writer to get rich insight and on the issues under discussion.

Keywords: *marginalized minorities, social exclusion, social inclusion, Kaffecho, Mano, Manjo*

Introduction

There is a great cross-cultural variation in the degree to which relations of inequality exist between individuals and groups in a society. Drawing on Tilly (2001) and Quijano and Ennis (2000), this chapter understands inequality as relational, historically embedded, a phenomenon comprising several dimensions ranging from social, economic and political to other aspects of inequality. Relations of inequality refer

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to the extent to which culturally valued materials and social rewards are allocated disproportionately to different individuals, families and groups. These rewards can be wealth, power or prestige (Peoples and Bailey 1991:270; Tumin 1978).

People need the opportunity to fully participate in the life of their community if they are to flourish and realize their potential. Certain groups in society, however, are systematically excluded from opportunities that are open to others, discriminated on the basis of their race, religion, gender, caste, age, disability, or other social identity (Tilly 2001). Social exclusion deprives people of choices and opportunities to escape from poverty and denies them of their basic rights. It is often a cause of poverty, conflict and insecurity (Estivill 2003).

Kaffa, in Southern Nation, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS), is one area where social exclusion of minorities (marginalization, social discrimination, and inequality) is evident; a good example of society that makes it difficult for minority groups to acquire or accumulate wealth, power and prestige (Gezahegn 2001; Pankhurst 2001; Halteren 1996).

This article goes beyond previous works that focused on cultural discrimination of exclusion and brings a broader understanding of marginalization and violations of rights in Kaffa zone, as a phenomenon involving socio-political and economic marginalization. The article primarily focuses on two discriminated social minority groups, the Mano (tanners and potters) and Manjo (descendants of former hunter gatherers and wood workers) mainly living in five *woredas* (districts) of the Kaffa zone. These *woredas* (i.e. Gimbo, Tello, Decha, Bitta and Gesha) are places with large concentrations of Mana and Manja communities, the majorities in the Kaffa community.

Different methods of data collection were employed in this longitudinal study. Semi-structured interviews (forty-three in number) were conducted with community members, government officials, employees of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and religious leaders. Ten focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in all the selected *woredas* with members of the marginalized groups representing different age groups and people from different walks of life. A thorough review of available literature was made on marginalized groups of the Kaffa zone in particular and Southwest Ethiopia in general. In addition to these, available archival materials and documents were collected from different governmental offices

such as the *woreda* administration and NGOs in Bonga town. A few written materials about the socio-economic life of the Mano of Gesha *wored*a and the Manjo of Bechi *kebele* of Yeki *woreda* of Shaka zone were also obtained from the marginalized groups themselves.

Social Stratification among the Kaffa

During the nineteenth century, the Kaffa kingdom, ruled by the Minjo clan, was the most powerful polity in the area, and held supremacy over the neighbouring people. The political life of the kingdom was hierarchically organized whereby the royal Minjo clan held leadership positions (Lange 1982:12; Kochito 1979:23; Orent 1969:100). The higher clans were known as *Ogge-ashi-yaro*, while the lower clans and the stigmatized minority were known as *Gishi-ashi-yaro* and *Sharare-yaro* respectively. The higher clans dominated the political affairs of the kingdom, while the majority of the lower clans were involved in farming. Meanwhile, the minorities were predominantly artisans and hunters. The king, head of the government, was the nominal owner of the land located in his region. However, most governmental affairs were controlled by *Mikrecho*, a local council comprised of noblemen. The kingdom was divided into eighteen regions, governed by administrators known as *Worafe-rasho*. The eighteen regions in turn were sub divided into units called *Gudo*, which were further sub-divided into *Tatekisho*, and finally into *Tugo* (Gezahegn 2001:81; Kochito 1979:26).

At present, the Kaffa people are divided into three social strata; the Kaffecho (the majority farmers constituting the traditional ruling elites and free commoners), artisans (smith, potters and tanners) and the Manjo (traditional hunter-gatherers).[184] Each of these groups are further subdivided into patrilineal clans with their own deities marking their specific status in the social stratification ladder. Membership to these social strata is ascribed by birth and is thus considered as being hereditary.

The Kaffecho represent a farming majority and local elites composed of indeterminate number of clans, which are ranked as higher or lower depending on the origin myth claiming autochthony and based

184 The settlers (*Naftegna*) stratum, which was the highest social stratum between 1897 and 1974, has been dropped out of the local stratification system because it does not have much influence on local structure currently.

on their historical deeds (Kochito 1979). In its broad reference, the Kaffecho form the most prestigious and dominant stratum. According to informants, the term Kaffecho has a dual meaning in two different social contexts. In relation to artisans and the Manjo, as in the past, the Kaffecho are privileged 'Kaffa citizens'. The second reference to the term is made in relation to property ownership and political positions. In the past, the Kaffecho were property owners and holders of political titles whereas the artisans and the Manjo were not entitled to these rights of citizenship. However, the category referred as Kaffecho is a complex set of clans composed of heterogenous social group who differ in rank, wealth and power. This group is treated in contrast to the Manjo and artisans (Lange 1982; Orent 1969).

Before the incorporation of Kaffa into the Ethiopian empire in 1897, artisans and the Manjo were considered to be of low social standing and belonged to occupational groups. These groups included the gold and silversmiths, blacksmiths (Q'emo), weavers (Shamano), potters (Kajeche), tanners (Mano) and hunter-gatherers (Manjo). The goldsmiths, silversmiths, ironsmiths and weavers were ranked higher than the Mano and the Manjo as their professions are considered to be better and are believed to have food taboos unlike the mano and Manjo who are considered to be scavengers (Gezahegn 2001:82). Regardless, based on their occupation, all within the groups faced discrimination and social exclusion. In recent years, smiths and weavers are integrated with the Kaffecho farmers and do not face severe exclusion (Gezahegn 2001:82; Pankhurst 2001). The Mano and Manjo, however, are still marginalized with no or little change in their social position. They are excluded from the rest of the population; they are despised and marginalized by the farmers and are often considered impure. The marginalized minority groups in Kaffa are estimated to account for 5 to 10 percent of the estimated one million total population of the Zone (Haltaren 1996:5).

The Mano, who are primarily tanners, often engage in leather work producing a valued painted sleeping mat and saddlers, pillows, sacks, bags, strap for fastening load, belt, knife sheaths, and other leather products. Tanning, however, has now become an off-farm activity for the Mano of Kaffa; they are engaged in agriculture on a full-time basis. They grow cereal crops and plant *Enset*. Nonetheless, they own and cultivate small plots of land, compared to other farmers. The Mano women, besides assisting their husbands with the daily routines, are primarily engaged in pottery making.

Regardless of their occupational diversity, the identity of the Mano, for most part, is related to impurity and possession of the evil eye (*Korro*). The claim of impurity comes from their dietary habit of eating meat scratched from the skins, and their 'bad smell' caused by the skins they tan. They are also accused of eating carrion and carcasses of dead animals. According to informants, pottery made by Manjo women could not be used by farmers for ritual purposes due to the underlying belief that these are products of the impure.

Further, the Mano are characterized as untrustworthy, lazy, indebted (not paying debts), and less punctual (Pankhurst 2001). Being at the lowest level of the stratum, the Mano live in a separate settlement, at the outskirts in an unsafe environment without access to basic social services like water and electricity. They do not participate in communal activities such as farmer work groups, but share labour amongst themselves (Gezahegn 2001).

The Manjo, descendants of the former hunter-gatherers, are also among the marginalized groups of the Kaffa society. Alike the Mano, the identity of the Manjo is disdained mainly for their eating habits and thus impurity. Traditionally, the Manjo hunted colobus monkey, porcupine, baboons, wild pig and antelopes. For the Kaffecho, who make the social rules, hunting of such wild animals is a major taboo (Pankhurst 2001).

The Manjo, nowadays, practice agriculture along with woodwork and charcoal making. They also collect and sell honey. Following the recent restrictions on the use of wood by local government, however, the Manjo are not making as much wood products as they used to. The Manjo women and children collect firewood for sell, which constitutes the main source of income for households. Women also earn income for the family by making and selling pots.

Before the 1974 revolution, the Manjo were landless and moved from one area to another along the edges of the Kaffa forest. In addition to hunting, they depended mainly on exchanging firewood for *Enset* and cereal crops. They received food items as remuneration for the labour services they rendered to farmers during weeding, cleaning courtyards and drying beans and peas (Pankhurst 2001). Though the Manjo were allowed to own land after 1974, they have not been involved in intensive cultivation due to lack of oxen or technology and destruction of crops by wild animals. They thus grow a very small number of *Enset* plants around their homesteads and cultivate cereal

on small scale. They do not own much livestock, and so enter into cattle keeping arrangement with farmers, through a local traditional mechanism called *Adero*, whereby the Manjo keep sheep, cow, or ox, and share the offspring with the owners (Gezahegn 2001).

Aspects of Exclusion/Marginalization

The Keffecho, Mano and the Manja have had active interactions over a long period. While some of these social relations are quite personal, most interactions take place under structural (institutionalized) frameworks. These relations, as briefly explained in the previous section, manifest layered exclusion and marginalization of the Mano and Manjo. These two groups have low social status whereby they are often considered to be 'sub-human' by the largest majority around them. This section examines the multi-layered aspects of marginalization by discussing the ways in which the Mano and Manjo are economically disadvantaged, politically disempowered, socially excluded, culturally subordinated and spatially segregated.

The Economic Dimension

Land and livestock are major economic assets in rural Ethiopia. For most of the poor, land continues to remain the primary means for generating livelihood. The Mano and Manjo had no or limited access to land and livestock throughout history. They tended to live on the land of patrons or lords and could be evicted at any moment, forcing them to seek new patrons (Pankhurst 2001:3). Their exclusion from land ownership was justified on the grounds that they could endanger the fertility of soil and crops (Pankhurst 2001:3). With the redistribution of land subsequent to the 1975 land reform, the marginalized groups gained usufructuary access to some land. Those living on patrons' or lords' land were considered tenants and were therefore entitled to use the land they were cultivating. As accounts of informants clearly show that, land holdings of the marginalized remained smaller than average and were also of poorer quality, as better quality land has already been occupied by the dominant Kaffecho.

In addition to restricted access to land, the marginalized minorities generally have few livestock; the belief the marginalized groups could endanger the fertility of livestock was sometimes even stronger than fears for them cultivating the land (Pankhurst 2001:4). Despite

these taboos, minorities have begun to rear livestock, although their holdings remain generally insignificant.

The minorities are also fundamentally disadvantaged economically in terms of exchange. In the past, they used to produce objects for their patrons and were also expected to give gifts and provided corvee labour without pay. At present, the Mano and Manjo have problems in accessing the local market to sell their products. The following statement by a Manjo informant from Tello *woreda* is a typical example of the type of problems the Manjo and Mano are facing in selling their products:

> *We produce some cereals and other food stuffs and take them to the markets for sale. But the farmers do not want to buy them from us. They say any cereals touched by the Manjo and Mano is polluted and should not be consumed. It is even worse with animal products like milk and butter and any kind of food and drink we prepare at home. The Mano sometimes pay other non-Mano individuals to sale their products for them in the markets. But they (the Kaffecho) buy and use our honey and livestock without restrictions, although they pay us lower prices.*

Another Manjo informant expresses the problem pertaining to economic interaction as follows:

> *They do not allow us to touch their cereals and other products if we want to buy in the markets. If we do so, they will force us to buy them with high prices. We just have to see from distance and buy items we need without touching it.*

These types of restriction on economic exchanges have negatively affected the marginalized minorities in Kaffa by depriving them of generating income and enjoying the fruits of their labour.

The Social Dimension

Social marginalization of minorities is characterized by segregation and non-reciprocal relations expressed in restrictions on social interactions, commensality, joint labour, membership of associations, burial practices and most profoundly in intermarriage (Pankhurst 2001:5).

The Mano and Manjo are strictly restricted in their interactions with the farmers. They are often not welcomed to farmers' social events. According to informants, the Mano and Manjo may be allowed to attend Kaffecho's weddings and funerals but barred from entering houses. In such events, the Manjo are expected to provide services as musicians, heralds and gravediggers. They are also expected to provide firewood and prepare mourning grounds for no or little pay. While members of the Mano and Manjo may be allowed to attend farmers' social events, the farmers often avoid invitations extended by the minority groups.

The denial of commensality is one of the most pervasive forms of exclusion of the Mano and Manjo (Pankhurst 2001). At social events, they are served separately, often being expected to eat leftovers, food from broken pottery or food placed on their own bare hands than plates. Any plates or cups used by them would have to be disposed. Whereas the Mano and Manjo may eat food prepared by farmers, the reverse is inconceivable. The Manjo could not enter bars, tea houses, and *Tella* and *Tej* houses[185] frequented by farmers. If they do, they are served outside of the main house and with different glasses (or calabash). During the fieldwork, in Bonga town, the author observed distinct *Tej* houses, serving the Manjo exclusively. In most *woredas* the author visited, the Mano and Manjo are not allowed to use flourmills (public or private) or allowed only after farmers finish their parts. Furthermore, they are not allowed to use water from the same springs. The Mano and Manjo still greet Kaffecho farmers obediently when they meet on the streets. In schools, the Mana and Manjo students are usually expected to sit on the backbenches to restrict their interactions with farmers' children.

The social seclusion also involves separate burial places. During the Derg regime, an attempt was made to participate them in burial associations and be buried in the same burial sites as everybody else. Although this was tolerated for several years, after the downfall of the Derg, the community returned to using separate burial grounds. The most pervasive form of marginalization, however, is the rule against intermarriage. Individuals from Mano and Manjo are not allowed to marry members of the farmers, and any hint of sexual affair with the group is denounced. This taboo is still extremely pervasive.

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185 *Tella* and *Tej* houses are houses where local alcoholic drinks are sold.

The Political Dimension

Marginalized minorities of Kaffa were generally excluded from the dominant traditional political organization of the Kaffecho kingdom. They had very limited political or judicial rights. Minorities in the area have for long been excluded from village level political institutions, such as Peasant Associations or Service Cooperatives, and never obtained leadership positions in few occasions they were permitted to participate. Due to their social standing, they could not aspire for positions of leadership. In the early days of the 1974 revolution, minorities enjoyed a brief period of favor and were elected to leadership positions, with the backing of the Marxist government (Pankhurst 2001:5). Soon after the revolutionary rhetoric subsided, they lost office and the short-lived political recognition.

At present, farmers are unwilling to entertain the idea of being represented by minorities; and so, the new local level institutions have tended to reproduce traditional inequalities (Data 2000). According to informants, almost all judges and the police officers in the zone are from the Kaffecho group, who in most cases are described as being 'biased' against the marginalized minorities. Informants during the course of the study that led to this publication emphasized their views that marginalized minorities in general have little recourse to justice in such cases of discrimination.

The Cultural Dimension

According to Pankhurst (2001:6), cultural marginalization is expressed in negative stereotyping, claims of pollution, and mythological justifications for the low status of minorities. Much of the cultural marginalization of minorities is legitimized by the negative stereotype about minorities, a view widely shared by the rest of society. The Mano, for example, are often portrayed as possessing 'evil eye', as being 'unclean' and 'stinky'. Manjos are considered to be wasteful and extravagant consumers, lacking the skills to use money wisely, being thoughtless about their future. They also have a reputation for being drunk, and displaying unacceptable social behaviors such as being loud, singing and dancing at markets and social events. Their physical attributes are also described as being unattractive due to their darker skin color and broader noses. In general, the Mano are stereotyped as the 'evil eyes' in the community while the Manjo are the 'wild' and 'uncivilized'.

The 'polluting' nature of minorities is often associated to the 'impure' meat they are said to consume. This 'impure' meat can be either hunted wild animals or farm animals that have died before being slaughtered (Pankhurst 2001:6). Besides this, the Mano are said to eat the scrapings from the hides that they work on. Today, most Mano and Manjo claim they no longer consume such meat, but are still suspected by farmers of continuing such tradition in secret. This may well be simply an accusation to legitimize separation.

Cultural exclusion is also expressed through mythology, which portrays the current predicaments of each group. A prominent Kaffa myth, for instance, states:

> *At the beginning of time, the earth was pregnant and gave birth to different tribes, which emerged with their specializations. First came Addo (Manjo) with a tuto (hunting net) on his shoulder. Then came Minjo (Gomaro or Kafa) with a milk jug in his hand; from him would come the cattle herders and the kings. Finally came Matto, with a drum, and he began there and then to offer a calf in sacrifice to Yeri (God), at the foot of a dio – tree, from who would come priests (Cerulli 1930:235).*

A common mythical theme is the idea that the marginalized are destined to be what they are by creation or had been put in their current status by their wrong doings. The following Manjo mythology the author collected from the field supports this:

> *The Manjo were indigenous people who used to have their own king before the arrival of the Kaffecho in Kaffa. Their king ruled over both the Manjo and Kaffecho. But the king was bad and used to do lots of wrong doings. One day while leading a meeting, he (the king) saw a colobus monkey coming out of the forest and started running after it, ignoring the important meeting. Disappointed by his act, people disposed him and power was later transferred to the Minjo (Kaffecho).*

The Spatial Dimension

The spatial dimension of marginalization can be seen in settlement patterns and in segregation during social events (Pankhurst 2001:2).

The Mano and Manjo usually live on the outskirts of villages, close to forests and on steep slopes, which are susceptible to wild animals that destroy crops. The number of Mano and Manjo households that live integrated with farmers is very small. Farmers sometimes like to have the Manjo and Mano groups as a 'buffer zone' between the forest and the cultivated areas. Thus, marginalization is reflected and mapped on to the landscape, where these minorities are considered to mediate symbolically between nature and culture (Pankhurst 2001:3).

Spatial marginalization is also expressed in segregation at markets, in access to urban land and rental houses, and in social events and interactions. In markets, the Mano and Manjo do not often enter the center. The Manjo can be seen carrying bundles of firewood and sacks of charcoal and move from one bar to another, but are rarely seen in the markets selling these items.

In towns, both the Manjo and Mano face extreme difficulties in finding urban land to build their houses or rentals. The youth is thus forced to drop out of school, mainly located in urban centers, for lack of rental houses accessible to the Manjo and Mano. According to informants, there are only five Manjo families who have built their own houses in Deka city of Gesha *woreda,* supposedly one of the liberal *woredas* towards minorities in the zone. This, however, is not the case in other *woredas.* At Amero Atta *kebele*, a house bought by a Manjo was burned down by a Kaffecho who was disappointed about a Manjo being allowed to own a house in the town. The Mano do not own a single house in Deka as they are denied access to urban land. During the fieldwork, about seventy Mano students, who have completed grade six from Wochito Yeri, Amero Atta and Yesheto Yeri elementary schools, have dropped out of schools due to the problem of finding rental houses close to urban centers. There was also a Manjo teacher who was forced to walk two hours to his school every day because he was denied of rental house in the town where he teaches.

In social interactions, when the Manjo and Mano meet farmers on the road, they are expected to walk on the lower side and bow down to the Kaffecho. The Kaffecho believe meeting a Mano is bad luck; however, on the contrary, an encounter with a Manjo on the street is a sign of good luck. During social events of the Kaffecho, such as wedding, mourning and feasts, the Manjo and Mano generally sit outside, on low ground, symbolically expressing their subordinate position (Pankhurst 2001:3). In case a farmer attends a Manjo or Mano wedding or mourning, he

neither enters into the house, shake their hands nor eat anything provided by them. Such behavior is still displayed in Kaffa zone.

Inter-minority Relations

In the socio-political hierarchy of Kaffa, despising and distancing those below one's stratum also holds amongst marginalized minorities. For instance, the Qemo (gold and silversmiths, blacksmiths) feel superior to the Mano and Manjo. Few in number, though the Qemo are low-status occupational group, they live among farmers and currently do not face marginalization. However, their relation with the Manjo and Mano is characterized by hierarchy and marginalization. The Qemo, like the farmers, believe the Mano and Manjo are 'impure' and polluting. They are thus not admitted to the Qemo house, nor can they shake hands with the Qemo. The exclusion also includes of intermarriage, communal work, membership of burial and religious associations, and dining together.

Similar hierarchical relation is observed between the Manjo and the Mano as well. The Manjo look down on the Mano and do not identify themselves with them. Intermarriage and communal work are not common between the two marginalized groups. The Mano are expected to hide from meeting a Manjo on the road, as the Manjo may attack them (Gezahegn 2001:94). Some Mano, however, do not believe that the Manjo are in a better position than them. Most recently, the Manjo and Mano of Gesha *woreda* are discussing to establish a common cooperative relation. Though potentially such inter-minority relations and co-operations could have been stronger and used to challenge the ideology of domination, this has not happened so far.

Institutions Maintaining Social Exclusion

Interaction between and across the social stratum takes place in the context of institutional frameworks. Hence, it is important to identify institutions most responsible for these structured social exclusion between the study groups. In this regard, religious organizations, *kebele* administration and voluntary associations are some major institutions that maintain and perpetuate social exclusion in Kaffa.

The Alamo

This is an indigenous religious institution; a possession cult of *E'ko, Kolle dejo* and *Baare K'ocho* in which many Kaffecho and minority groups believe. The *E'ko, Kolle Dejo* and *Baare K'ocho* are spirits, which approaches a man, usually after the death of his father. These spirits can be individual clan spirits or spirits of natural phenomena. There are thousands of these spirits (Orent 1967:1). According to Halteren (1996:21), before the revolution of 1974, every Kaffa hamlet used to have one or more men who were in possession of such spirits, usually an elder. Once a man was chosen by these spirits, he would be considered an *Alamo*, one who can communicate with ancestral spirits (Orent 1967:9). First, however, he had to go and ask permission from the *Ibedah Godah*, the chief alamo who was in possession of the king of all spirits, *Dochay*. Once accepted, various different food-taboos such as prohibition of eating mutton, chicken and cabbage would apply to the *Alamo* (Halteren 1996:21).

People would consult the *E'ko* and other spirits through the *Alamenao* (plural for *Alamo*). It is believed that the *E'ko* and other spirits could heal the sick, make the sterile fertile, bring wealth, and adjust marital problems through the *Alamo*. When requests are made, sacrifices of all sorts are being made to the *Alamo*, to propitiate the spirits (Halteren 1996:21). The *Alamo* would then listen and reply on the questions the next day (Orent 1967:10). This worshipping of the spirits existed alongside Christianity and Islam. Most people would consult the *Alamo*, whether Christian, Muslim or otherwise (Orent 1967:10). The *Alamo* was/is thus a powerful man in Kaffa.

Alamenao have hundreds of servants who work for them. According to an informant (first wife of an *Alamo* in Decha *woreda*):

> *My husband has more than five hundred servants (workers). We sacrifice animals and distribute meat to the needy during holidays, give clothes to the poor, provide them with long-term credits and we possess large amount of land on which our servants grow crops and rear livestock for us. We help them and they serve us in return.*

The *Alamenao* are thus rich individuals with large number of servants, followers and with substantial wealth. They are the ones who tell their followers what to do or what not to do. Accordingly, they teach (most correctly agitate) their followers not to eat, drink, intermarry,

shake hands or work with the Mano and Manjo. Those who are found associating themselves with these groups would be excommunicated. For *Alamenao,* the Mano and Manjo are impure, ritually polluting, and therefore should be avoided. Most individuals interviewed (both Kafecho and minorities) believe that traditional religious leaders (*Alamenao*) and their followers are responsible for discriminating and excluding the Mano and Manjo.

Christianity

Orthodox Christianity has long history in Kaffa. It was said it reached Kaffa from the north around 16th century (Orent 1969). However, minorities in Kaffa have not yet been integrated into the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. At the center of the problem are the alleged eating habits of the Mano and Manjo. Food habits of the Manjo and Mano (eating wild animals and meat of farm animals that are not ritually slaughtered) are said to be in violation of biblical food taboos. Because of this, in the past, there was absolutely no possibility for a Mano or Manjo to enter into the Church.

Under the Derg regime, however, the Mano and Manjo were allowed to enter the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. This has allowed some interaction between them and the Kaffecho. Many Mano and Manjo still claim to have church 'certificate' but do not go to church after the fall of Derg regime. The reason being, as they themselves asserted, is the rejection of the Orthodox Church, preventing them from entering (Halteren 1996). Derg's effort to integrate the Mano and Manjo into Orthodox Christianity and other religions did not bear fruit because it was imposed from the above. Though there are Mano and Manjo followers of Orthodox Church, active recruitment and relative acceptance by other religious institutions such as the Protestant and Catholic churches made the Manjo and Mano abandon Orthodox Christianity.

Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam are gaining advantage among the Manjo and Mano in recent times. The abandonment of food taboos among Protestant and Catholic Churches that do not adhere to the Old Testament attracted minorities into these religious institutions. However, the Kaffecho members of these churches have difficulties in accepting the Mano and Manjo. According to Halteren (1996:21), in Mutti, for example, an agreement was reached for the Kaffecho to accept the Manjo into the Catholic Church, with the precondition they

will not be allowed to bring any food or coffee during the traditional *senbeti*[186]. A few Mano followers of Islam interviewed in Gesha *woreda* also confirmed that Kaffecho members of the Mosque do not share food with them.

Thus, though not as pronounced as it is with the *Ameno* and Orthodox Church, other religious institutions also do not approve minority groups' food habits in practice, even if they are less concerned with the traditional ideal of pollution. Despite their conversion into these religions, minorities are still discriminated and looked down. There were few cases in Kaffa where separate Protestant and Catholic Churches have been established for the Mano or Manjo exclusively. This practice, however, further perpetuated exclusion than integration into the mainstream Kaffecho society.

Kebele Administration

Kebele administration (peasant association) was first introduced in Ethiopia during the Derg regime. *Kebele* represents the lowest structure of the government administration and is perceived as the most powerful institution affecting decision making at local levels. A closer look at the *kebele* administration power relations in Kaffa reveals that almost all 'important' positions such as the *kebele* chairperson, deputy chairperson, secretary, treasurer, judges are taken by the Kaffecho. A Manjo informant from Gesha *woreda* explained the situation vividly:

> *As far as I know, no Manjo or Mano has ever become the chairman of any kebele in our woreda and I have never heard of any Manjo or Mano who has become a kebele chairperson in our zone. There are only few Manjo tataki (militia/ guards) who are recruited to serve Kaffecho authorities. The Kaffecho do not in any case allow a Manjo or Mano to become their kebele chairperson.*

Power relations in *woreda* administration, and most probably in the zone too, are not different from the reality in *kebele* administration. It is to be noted that in Kaffa even the government structure plays a role in excluding and discriminating minority groups. Most important, political positions are often held by non-minority groups, predominantly by the Kaffecho.

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186 Sunday celebrations

Voluntary Associations

There are a number of important indigenous voluntary associations (institutions) in Ethiopia, which play vital roles in people's lives. Although their names and forms may vary from culture to culture, these associations include *Iddir*[187], *Equb*[188], *Mahiber*[189], *Senbete* and *Debo*[190] (Kebebew 1978; Alemayehu 1969). Besides these associations/ institutions, people in various parts of the country also engage in different types of mutual economic relations such as, sharecropping and share-rearing. All these associations/institutions are currently present in Kaffa. While associations are important for social interactions, membership in them could be restricted to certain social groups.

The Mano and Manjo in most cases have their own separate *Iddir*. In a few cases where the Mano are nominally considered members of Kaffecho burial associations, they are not expected to contribute food and drinks, and do not take turns to spend nights with the bereaved Kaffecho family, as is the tradition among *Iddir* members. During the Derg regime, both Mano and Manjo were allowed to join burial associations with the Kaffecho, and started to bury their dead in the same graveyards. However, this practice was reversed with the fall of the Derg. The Mano and Manjo have also their own communal work groups *(Debbo*). These groups can work for the Kaffecho whenever asked, although the Kaffecho do not participate in the *Debbo* of the Manjo and Mano. Both minority groups also cooperate with the Kaffecho in share-cropping and share-rearing arrangements.

The fact that the Kaffecho and minorities have their own separate associations means that they lack an important forum for social interaction, which in turn reinforces the long existing boundaries between them. A point worth noting, particularly in relation to local institutions, is that most of these institutions have elements, which

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187 *Iddir* is a voluntary association based on neighbourhood for the purpose of mutual aid in matters of burial and community concerns.

188 *Equb* is a voluntary association established for the purpose of saving money.

189 *Mahiber* and *Senbete* are religious and/or social self-help associations in which members help each other both on cultural occasions, such as wedding, which require allocation of relatively large resources, and during incidents like death or temporary incapacitation by accident or disaster

190 *Debo* is one of the most known indigenous forms of voluntary associations through which rural communities cooperate with each other to meet certain social and economic ends.

reproduce and perpetuate social exclusion. For instance, in cases where these social associations are shared across the stratum, minorities do not hold leadership positions; only the Kaffecho are elected to lead these associations.

Interventions to Change Social Exclusion of the Marginalized Minorities

Attempts in transforming the situation of marginalized minorities in Kaffa can be conveniently reviewed from historical perspective. A quick overview of the history of minorities during different governments helps understand their present day socio-cultural and economic situations. Thus, this section provides a brief account of changes in the lives of marginalized minorities from the time of the Kaffecho kingdom to the present.

The Minjo Dynasty (16th century – 1897)

Historical and ethnographic accounts reveal that during the Minjo dynasty, the Kaffa society was divided into four hierarchically organized strata of clans (Bekele 2004:213; Gezahegn 2001:81; Lange 1982:242; Kochito 1979:23; Orent 1969:100).

- *Ogge– ashi – yaro*: land and slave owners; clans of the great people
- *Gishi – ashi – yaro*: serfs; clans of the little people
- *Sharrare – yaro*: occupational castes; clans of the bad people, and
- *Sonno*: slaves

During the Minjo dynasty, minority groups in Kaffa were considered as slaves of the king by the virtue of being born to a family of lower social standing. They were treated as slaves of the local dynasty and accordingly they were not allowed to own land, but were treated slightly different than slaves in Kaffa (Halteren 1996:12). According to Halteren (1996), the Manjo, for instance, were allowed to move around freely in the country, and possessed weapons for hunting. Most important, the Manjo-slaves were not to be sold (Mary 1966:54), exported by their feudal lords or allowed to work on the fields or in the houses of their masters. Because of their low status, the Manjo were the most suitable to carry out dangerous duties. They had the social duty of guarding the

watchtowers and gates of the Kaffa kingdom, but on the (dangerous) outside. They also were the guards of the (supernaturally dangerous) royal gravesites, the hangmen and castrators of Kaffa, pathfinders and fence builders (Halteren 1996:12). Halteren further described the status of the Manjo under Kaffa kingdom as follows:

> *The low status of the Manjo had its effect not only on their position as slaves or on their duties. They were considered impure and dirty and regarded and treated as sub humans and untouchable. The Manjo were not allowed inside the house of non-Manjo and not permitted on to the main paths. A non-Manjo would never touch a Manjo, or anything continually used by one. When speaking with them, a distance of at least three steps must be maintained. Upon meeting higher-status travelers, the Manjo were to step aside, bow, and say 'Sohochi" (let me die for you). Passing royalty members were greeted by prostrating themselves and eating the grassy earth (Bieber 1923:138). They were not permitted to wear cotton trousers (Bieber 1920:142) and any grain sown or reaped by them was not eaten by non-Manjo (Halteren 1996:12).*

Emperor Menelik II (1897 – 1913)

The Minjo dynasty as an independent and autonomous entity ceased to exist with the coming of Emperor Menelik II. Emperor Menelik force conquered Kaffa in 1897 and was incorporated into the Ethiopian Empire with the assistance of Jimma Oromo King, Abba Jiffar. The conquest and incorporation caused profound changes in the lives of the Kaffecho with change in the traditional land holding system and other socio-political structures.

Before the conquest, the Kaffecho were independent people who used to administer their socio-political and economic affairs without any foreign interventions. The king and nobility collectively owned land. Following the conquest, however, the vast territory of Kaffecho land was expropriated. Consequently, large area of land came under the ownership of the government, church, administrators, soldiers, and other settlers from the north with the establishment of the *Naftegna-Gabbar* (serfdom) system. Under this system, the *Naftegna* (literally, gunman or conqueror) was supported by a number of *Gabbars* (serfs). It

was required that the *Gabbar* provided grain and animals for slaughter, along with labour in the field and households of the *Naftegna*. The *Naftegna* established virtually a colonial relationship over the Kaffecho, taking their lands and imposing an alien rule on them (Abdul Mejid 1976).

In addition, taxes were collected from each area, majority of which was sent to Menelik's central treasury while the local officials kept parts. At the lower level, Kaffecho *Balabats, Koros* and *Chika Shums*[191] were incorporated into the system of the *Neftegna* domination to collect taxes, maintain peace, and administer the law within territories designated by the administration. These local elites were allowed to use government land in exchange for services they rendered to the conquering power.

However, nothing changed for the marginalized minorities of Kaffa under the rule of Menelik. Slavery continued to exist while the Kaffecho maintained their socio-economic and political dominance over minority groups (Halteren 1996:13). The minorities remained the (nominal) slaves of their feudal lords, and were discriminated and treated the same way as before the conquest (Halteren 1996).

Emperor Haile Selassie (1930 – 1974)

Imperial land alienation and economic exploitation continued under the administration of Emperor Haile Selassie. More northern settlers were brought into the conquered regions of the South, including Kaffa. Outsiders controlled much of the political life of the Kaffa community. However, slavery was effectively abolished under the Haile Selassie rule and some of the former slaves were integrated into the mainstream Kaffecho society, although initially at a lower socio-economic and political ladder.

However, the opportunities created by the abolishment of slavery did not bring any significant change into the life of the marginalized minority groups. The few political officers from other parts of Ethiopia who were ruling Kaffa and who were not traditionally biased against minority groups lacked sufficient strength and will to curb any discrimination directed against any low status group, such as the Mano and Manjo.

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191 *Balabats, Koros* and *Chika Shums* were local level political positions/status given to local administrators during the imperial regimes from higher to lower status respectively.

In between the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie, during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1936-1941), a number of changes were initiated in the South, including Kaffa area. The Italians abolished the *Naftegna-Gabbar* system and land tax. The Kaffecho (with other people of the south) were given greater freedom to conduct their traditional socio-economic and political practices. The Italians, according to informants, also attempted to change the status of marginalized minorities. For instance, few individuals from the minorities were appointed by the Italians as local chiefs. From the informants' point of view, the marginalized minorities fared relatively better under the Italians. But due to the short occupation period, the changes initiated did not last long.

The Derg (1974 – 1991)

When the Derg, a military junta, came to power in 1974, it adopted a radical land reform program in 1975. The land reform, with the formation of peasant associations, was the most popular reform among the peoples of Southern Ethiopia. It liberated them from an age-old feudal exploitation and oppression by abolishing private ownership of land and landlord-tenant relations. The land reform entitled every individual farmer, including marginalized minorities, to equal rights over land use. As a result, the Mano and Manjo have become farmers. This reform has greatly improved the status of minorities, although some lacked experience and means of cultivation such as farm implements and oxen.

The Derg's villagization and resettlement programs, which started in mid 1980s, further changed the previous relationships between the Kaffecho and minorities. Derg officials forced the Kaffecho and marginalized minority groups to live in the same villages next to each other, breaking traditional socio-cultural barriers. Besides, Derg officials weakened the position of the *Alamenao* within the society; Derg was a communist regime that discouraged religious practices.

It was the socialist idea of equality that further enhanced the position of minorities by a vast set of rules and regulations, meant to socially integrate all peoples of Ethiopia, including its minority groups. The effects of these rules and regulations in Kaffa were described by Halteren (1996) as follows:

> *Like the Kaffecho, the Manjo (and Mano) too were encouraged and forced to to enter the schools the only Manjo ever to*

> *finish Bonga Senior Secondary School did so during the Derg period and other social institutions. Discriminatory practices were punished and therefore superficially disappeared. The Manjo (and Mano) made use of that situation to enter bars, government buildings and churches that previously had been off-limits to them. The churches were the first to be used by many Manjo as a jumping-board to social integration (whether sincere Christian or not). Many Manjo were baptized and obtained their 'certificate' of the Ethiopian-Orthodox Church or entered the Catholic Church or Protestant Church during the Derg. They were (forced to be) equally participating in Peasant Associations and Women Associations, although in reality this did not always turn out to succeed (Halteren 1996:15).*

However, all the above-mentioned measures brought superficial change in the attitude of the Kaffecho towards minority groups. After the downfall of the Derg in 1991 and the disappearance of the socialist policies, previously suppressed Kaffecho prejudices and discriminatory practices re-emerged and taboos got reinstituted.

The EPRDF Government (1991 to present)

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) overthrew the Derg regime in May 1991 and produced a constitution (1994) in which 'nations, nationalities, and peoples' in Ethiopia are granted the rights to self-determination including independence. The constitution emphasized the rights of 'nations, nationalities and people' to preserve their identities and administer their own affairs. The decentralization process has created a Federal system of government with both the Federal and Regional constitutions having provisions against any discrimination based on race, nationality, color, sex, language, religion, political views, social background, wealth, birth, and others (Federal Constitution 1995: Article 25; SNNPR Constitution: Article 26).

Both the Federal and Regional constitutions give more attention to ethnic minorities, than social minorities like the Mano and Manjo. The implementation of these constitutional rights is very much limited in places such as Kaffa where political offices are by and large in the hands of the privileged groups. Discussions with officials of the zone and study *woredas* indicated that there is no government

policy specifically concerned with social minorities such as the Mano and Manjo. Nonetheless, there are occasional discussions and interventions to improve the condition of social minorities with attempts of empowering the younger generation from the minority groups. For example, in 2005, the Kafa Development Association (KDA) has sponsored a Manjo student at Addis Ababa University and two Mano students at Mekele and Alamaya Universities. According to the regional educational bureau, few children from minority groups were recruited and sent to attend a boarding school in Arba Minch as a special intervention. Although these interventions are insignificant compared to the problem at hand, there are a few Kaffecho officials who are concerned about the situation of minorities and want to see changes.

There are also interventions by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to change the situation of marginalized minorities in Kaffa. From 2000 to 2005, FARM-Africa started a joint forest management project with a plan to conserve the Bonga forest by addressing the needs of the Manjo, who have historically been depending on forest resources. According to Gezahegn (2001:97) and findings from this study, the Manjo have benefited from employment in plantations and nurseries, and credit scheme that enabled them to purchase livestock, thus challenging the old stereotypes that the Manjo cannot save. The project has assisted the Manjo in gaining recognition of rights to land from which they had been evicted during the Derg under the pretext that it was within the State forest (Gezahegn 2001:98). The Project has also given the Manjo the experience in dealing with external agents who are beyond the zone and the region offered them the exposure to an outside audience to voice their concerns (Pankhurst and Kubsa 2000).

Action Aid Ethiopia is another NGO working in Kaffa zone. The main objective of this organization was to create awareness among government institutions and the public about human rights issues. It organized workshops on human right issues, minority rights, good governance and rule of law. However, because of its short implementation period, it is difficult to measure the impacts this organization brought on the lives of marginalized minorities of Kaffa.

To sum up, since the turn of the 20th century, Kaffa society has seen profound social changes, such as incorporation into the State system, change in land tenure, urbanization and growing monetization of the

local economy, introduction of new religions, and exposure to modern education. These have affected the Kaffa society one way or another. Amidst such changes, however, the Mano and Manjo are still greatly subjected to various forms of exclusion despite their crucial economic and social contributions. From our discussion so far, it is also clear that not much have been done by the government and NGOs to change the situation of social minority groups in Kaffa zone.

Nonetheless, claims of right by social minorities, at times aggressively, should be particularly alarming to the government. Social discrimination must be given due attention not only because the practice is against the constitution but also if left aside indefinitely it may cause disharmony and instability (Data 2000:25-26). In some *woredas* of Kaffa zone, such as Bitta, conflicts and armed confrontation between the Kaffecho and Manjo have already started in the process of the Manjo claiming their rights. According to an informant, armed confrontation between the Kaffecho and Manjo in 2002 has left more than seventy-five people dead from both sides (majority being from Manjo) and caused destruction of innumerable property.

Towards Social Inclusion of Marginalized Minorities

The Manjo and Mano are excluded from mainstream Kaffa society. They are economically disadvantaged, politically disempowered, socially excluded, culturally subordinated and spatially segregated in their relations with the dominant Kaffecho. Their exclusion and discrimination are structural in a sense that the problem gets its root in the system that is built on values and principles, which govern the interaction of the society in a manner that is discriminatory (Barash and Webel 2002; Galtung 1969). The problem is also cultural; it refers to an aspect of culture that appreciate, acknowledge and legalize discrimination or exclusion as a proper character and action (Galtung 1990). It is the niche of prevailing attitudes and beliefs that have been inculcated into the minds since childhood and kept in daily life akin to the power (Galtung 1990).

There have been some attempts to change the situation of marginalized groups. In spite of these efforts, the situation has not shown any significant improvement. This is due to the fact that most interventions were spontaneous rather than systematically planned. Regression has been witnessed in the socio-economic and political position of marginalized groups under EPRDF. Revival of traditional beliefs as

part of general cultural revitalization was not to the advantage of the Mano and Manjo. Under the rule of respect for ethnic groups and their cultures, traditional beliefs regained its previous influences in Kaffa, including those that perpetuate discrimination of minority groups.

Having showed discrimination exists, and also having argued that change is possible and necessary, it is important to indicate ways and strategies that would help to achieve a just social order and better economic situation for the marginalized minorities of Kaffa. Given minorities are the poorest among the Kaffa society, intervention in economic sphere is a necessary (but not the only) condition. In this regard, minorities should be provided with credit, livestock aid, and modern agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, improved seeds, implements and training in agriculture. They also need free access to market, employment opportunities, urban land and housing, and to the provision of other social and infrastructural services. Besides, as an important tool for socio-economic mobility, effort should be made by the government to provide access to education. Schools should be opened close to Manjo and Mano villages and attendance of minorities must be insured. Non-formal education should also be provided to adult members of minority groups.

The political marginalization and discrimination of minorities in Kaffa is manifested vividly at the *kebele* level. Representation at *kebele* would be very important step in empowering the minorities. Federal and Regional governments should work closely with *woreda* councils to bring such change. Representation of the marginalized minorities shall be ensured at all levels of government structures as well. Above all, the legal, regulatory and policy frameworks of the country should be properly implemented to protect and realize the human rights of all in a non-discriminatory way. This involves supporting and strengthening programs focusing on governance, rule of law, accountability and right based approach.

The social and cultural domains seem to be the area where change is lagging the most. Many elements of the traditional social stratification and prejudice persist to this day. The long-term solution for the negative socio-cultural attitude against minority groups is, in fact, raising the level of consciousness of both the minorities and the Kaffecho on equality of citizens to bring attitudinal and behavioral change. Particular emphasis should be given to educating and changing the attitudes of *Alamo* and the Orthodox Church towards minority groups. The government also need to work with local associations, such as the

Iddir, to reach to the community and address the root causes of the problem.

In implementing the above suggestions, the approach should be integrative; designed in such a way that they reduce and gradually eliminate social discrimination. The integrative projects to be implemented should systematically target minorities in their own rights, addressing all or most aspect/dimension of discrimination. Intervention also needs to be inclusive of all stakeholders, including the government, NGOs, civil society organizations, volunteers, workers' and employers' organizations, and community members at large. If we are to tackle social exclusion effectively, we need to duly recognize the problem and find ways to ensure social inclusion.

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