

Demonic Possession and Healing of Mental illness in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church

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በጥቂቱ የተወሰደ ሙሉውን የምሁራን የጥናት ሪፖርት ይህንን ሊካክ በመጫን ማንበብ ይቻላል <http://pubs.sciepub.com/ajap/3/4/2>

3.1.3. Possessing Evil-spirits: Prominent Types

In the following section, the researcher has listed four selected types of spirits. These are The **Zar** spirits, the spirits of shadow of the eye-**Ayine Tila**, the evil eye spirits (**Buda**), and conjuration spirits (**Digimt**). It was possible to get their names form observations in the showering room, and was further supplemented by interviews.

Though the interviewee from the exorcist`s sub-unit were hesitant to tell the researcher a clear distinction about the evil spirits for they claimed it is not found in books that belongs to the church, the researcher tried to dig information regarding the above mentioned evil spirits including their characteristics, what they can cause, and how. Unlike the interviewee`s claim however, some writers [23,30] put their own classifications and claims about the existence of distinct evil spirits known in the EOTC.

A. The Zar Spirit

Abba Tesfa when talking about this spirit claims, The Zar spirit is one that is believed to be handed down to human beings through ancestors. Zar is Amharic term, etymologically came from the term **zer**, which means lineage, or parentage a name that shows the Zar spirit is handed down from ancestors.

If a spirit is in a family`s line, children or family members are exposed to the spirit. The ancestors care for the evil spirits by providing different materials including perfumes and foods and sometimes their newly born children. The primary aim of this kind of evil spirit, as Abba Yared said, is haunting and controlling people and making them their own property. Abba Tesfa said that the gate of these spirits to people is sometimes the people themselves. In coffee ceremonies, people call the evil spirits that are believed to be the protector of their village or their neighborhood for good fortunes and even put foods on the floor in their names. He added that other times, for example, in the time of delivery people call them for assistance. In strengthening this, the researcher has heard in one exorcism process when a

spirit in a kid speaks about how it possessed him. The spirit claimed that it is the kid's mother that has given the child for it.

Other times, the evil spirits may find their way to go into others during a ceremonial dancing, when the Zar spirit descends. It is the time, when the Zar spirits do not get proper treatment or is threatened by the presence of a rival spirit, the spirit of God. The researcher has observed this when a Zar possessed women shouted and claimed that the spirit had possessed her during a ceremonial period in her neighborhood. *Za'r Worede* that literally can be translated as the Zar spirit descended, is a term used to describe the process when the possessed individual begin talking in nonsense languages, which the person himself cannot comprehend. It is also possible for Zar to descend during proper treatments, a sign that tells the host that he/she is under protection of the evil spirits. When the spirit in the women clarify this (in answering to the monk's question),

When I descend in her, she starts to speak (the host) in my language that other people cannot understand. They simply clap their hands for me; sing a song after her, and when I see a person of my interest I will jump and settle on them (*Esefribetalehu*).

B. The spirit of Ayine Tila (The spirit of shadow of the eye)

Abba Tesfa concerning this spirit said, "This spirit is another class that works to take down people by residing

in their works, perceptions and understanding." (ሁሉም የሰውን ልጅ እድል መስበር ያሰቡትን እንዳያደርጉ ማስናከል ስራቸው ነው). They always work to cause

failures, bring misfortunes and other kinds of problems in many facets of life. This kind of spirit does not manifest pathogenically, rather it is manifested in controlling and performing roles against the host. Abba Tesfa said that he distinguished feature of this spirit is that it acts through others, may be employers, colleagues, partners, family members etc, against the host.

To this Abba Yared added that, This kind of spirit is capable of adapting to the host's behavior and able to easily identify their weaknesses. It is also capable to foresee where our life is heading, what we will achieve in the future, and how we are going to achieve that. Its ability to adapt to the host's behavior makes it the most dangerous for it prevents easy identification of the evil spirit.

Then, always presenting in front, it will track the people down and bring all the misfortunes to their life. In general, when the trouble they make can be condensed into two categories. These are: creating life obstacles and breaking success. In explaining the way the evil spirits create life obstacles, Abba Yared said that People who are under the control of this spirit find themselves struggling much but achieving little or nothing. Things are not easy, there is no such thing as fortune and good luck for them. Little things even require them to strive and struggle much. This is due to the obstacles of the spirits upon them. Even if an individual succeeds, passing the obstacles, the **Ayine Tila** spirits always come to the fore and make the success meaningless. The spirit does not inflict sickness; nor does it causes physical problems. Rather, it is specialized in controlling and attacking an individual's brain so that it can drive the individual wherever it wants to.

C. The Buda spirit-the spirit of the evil eye

This kind of spirit has a common characteristic with the Zar spirit. Both spirits can run in lineage. The Buda spirit is transmissible. The transmission uses the eye of the possessed person and the eye of a new host as a bridge to move into.

Since the evil spirit is in the family, all the fortunes of the family members are under the control of the Buda spirit. If a person is possessed by a Buda spirit, it takes seven years until he/she becomes capable of transmitting the evil spirit.

As Abba Tesfa stated the consideration that the evil eye people as cursed or as people with special gifts is not acceptable in the Church. The evil eye people do what they do for reasons beyond their control. They are possessed by an evil spirit, and the evil spirits make them suffer, and make them causes for others suffering. Suggestions lie use of amulets as protection against the evil eye spirit is judged as evil in the church.

One can acquire the Buda spirit in either of the two ways: either it runs in families (the Buda spirit can be handed down from ancestors to family members) or can be acquired from possessed individuals outside of the family, initially the spirit rests in an individual. Then starts to explore and “eat” others of his interest. When it „eats”, the person being eaten will show different signs that show that the person is indeed eaten by others.

D. Digimt Spirits-Spirits from Conjuraton

Sending evil spirits to victims of interest by the evil works of people is called **Digimt**. The spirits that are inserted are different depending on the mission they are required to accomplish. The spirits are called up by request of people that maybe are jealous of their friends, work colleagues or any other person in their way. To do that, they go to sorcerers, magicians, witches, and debteras (people with special church trainings) and pay money to send evil spirits that are supposed to cause problems to other people.

One of the spirits that magicians, sorcerers, and/or witches, send is called የ መስ ተፋቅ ር መን ፈ ስ -the spirit of affection. In this variety of spirit, people do not pay to cause direct problems. They would rather pay to let the other person love them against his/her will. It was possible to observe a girl possessed by this kind of spirit in the monastery. The process is, if people want somebody to fall in love to them, they simply pay to send evil spirits so that the evil spirits can finish all the work. This spirit first conquers the mind of the victim, and changes their mind the way it was supposed to do so.

There are two grand reasons why a man sends *Ye Mestefaqir Menfes*- the spirit of affection to another. These are either to win their hearts, just to initiate love affair and to benefit from wealthy individuals.

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