

**THE STATE OF CHILDREN'S
LITERATURE IN
AMHARIC**

**A THESIS PRESENTED TO
THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**



**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE MASTER OF ARTS IN LITERATURE**

**BY
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THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

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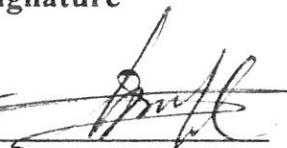
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CONTENTS

	page
Acknowledgments	
Pronunciation key	
Abstract	
Introduction	1
Literature Review.....	4
Chapter One	
Overview of the Theory of Children's Literature	8
Chapter Two	
Children's Literature in Amharic	18
2.1 Background	18
2.2 Children's Books in Amharic	23
2.3 Children's Drama in Amharic	39
Chapter Three	
Evaluation of children's Books in Amharic and Recommendations.....	44
Bibliography	48
I Primary Sources.....	48
II Secondary Sources	65

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D.M.M

PRONUNCIATION KEY

I have used the following transcriptions of Amharic words. Amharic, Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, and other common words are not transcribed.

Consonants

ሸ Sh Shash

ቸ Ch Chair

ቀ Q

ኘ N

ጠ T'

ጨ Ch'

ጸ S'

ጸ P'

ገ ረ Genre

Vowels

አ a' Cat

ኡ u Book

ኢ i Drill

ኤ e' Care

አ e

አ o Boy

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research is to assess and introduce the history and status of children's literature in Amharic. The study shows when and how children's books in Amharic began to be published and conducts a general survey of the development of the genre during its existence.

The thesis has five sections including the "Introduction" and "Bibliography." The objectives of the thesis, the criteria the research has undertaken to choose the children's books in Amharic, the problems encountered during the research, and review of literature are the main points included in the introduction. Chapter one comprises for major theoretical views of children's literature such as what is Children's literature? who are children? what is the difference and similarity between children's and adult's literature? and the use of literature for children. Chapter two surveys the books published for children in Amharic including the oral folktale tradition and traditional church school texts. The survey is conducted by dividing the whole publication time into four major periods, Chapter three, Evaluation of Children's Books in Amharic and Recommendations, conveys the findings of the research and indicates commendable ideas helpful to the future development of the genre in Ethiopia in general, and in Amharic in particular. All children's books published in Amharic are listed in the bibliography section as primary sources.

The research is the first of its kind because there is no study that deals with children's literature in Amharic before as exhaustive as this one. Beside it gives an accomplished bibliographies of children's books published in Amharic till 1984. E.C.

INTRODUCTION

The objective^s of this thesis is to study the state of children's literature in Amharic. The scope of the survey covers the period from the first children's book published in Amharic up to 1984 E.C.

The yardstick used for considering the materials to be considered as children's books primarily depends on writers remarks conveyed either in the "Forward" or in the "Introduction" part of their works. For example, the book entitled *Tálálaq Sawoch* (Great Personalities) is listed under children's books, in Amharic because the author himself confirms that he wrote the book for children because " it may help them in opening up their minds and give them the light of knowledge." (*Kabada Mikáél*, p.3). I also considered works rendered to elementary school children as supplementary reading materials.

However, these criteria do not necessarily mean that their format and contents are properly designed to fit the psychological and intellectual capacity of the children.

This research work had to face unsurmountable problems which are peculiar to this type of work in a developing country. One is the determination of age groups. Both adults and children attended primary grades. Hence, the difficulty posed to both authors and authorities to determined appropriate texts. The second problem encountered is the lack of proper documentation concerning the history of the publication of the books. It is totally impossible to find the information that indicates the number of printed copies of each book. On top this, the absence of the people

who had participated in the writing and publishing of these works aggravates the problem. Since the books are not collected and catalogued, in any of the libraries in Addis Ababa the researcher had to look for them in every nooks and cranny where used books may be purchased.

I would also like to mention the shortage of finance, to buy these early books.

The history of the publication of children's books in Amharic is a recent phenomenon. The study papers undertaken in this literary genre, either from the theoretical or critical aspects did not commence until 1978 E.C., that is, sixty two years after the publication of the first children's book in Amharic.

This thesis has two major chapters. Chapter one deals with the major theoretical concepts regarding literature for children. In this respect, different scholarly points of view such as what constitutes children's literature? who are children and which kind of books can be properly designated as fit for children? what are their similarities and inferences with adult literature? and so on, are assessed.

The second chapter assesses the historical background, development and progress of children's literature in Amharic, and the oral tradition of Folktale. The highlights of the scripts of the traditional church school are also assessed in this chapter. However, this study does not analyses and judge in detail any particular book for its main focus is on the overall picture and trend of the genre in Amharic literature.

My assessment is conducted by dividing the total period into four sub-periods. The division pattern follows the publication time-gap and the stages of development reached at each period. In this regard, we can divide the first period beginning from

1916 E.C. up to the Italian invasion (1928 E.C.). The second period covers the time between 1934 E.C. and the late 1940's E.C. The third period covers the years between the early 1950's (E.C.) until the out break of the revolution (1966 E.C.); and the fourth refers to the post revolution period 1966 - 1983 E.C.

The findings of the researcher and his recommendations for the future development of children's literature in Ethiopia are indicated in the conclusion section.

The bibliography part has two sections. The first section consists of the lists of primary sources. The second section comprises the secondary sources. The first section mainly focuses on the published children's books in Amharic and the research papers conducted in the area. The order follows the chronological sequence of their publication dates. The bibliography indicates the name of the author or the compiler or the translator, the title, the date and place of publication and the publisher and the printer. The list of the research papers, written before this thesis, covers only those in Amharic and in English. Their sequence is also chronological except for the two papers written in English.

The dates indicated as E.C., refer to the Ethiopian calendar which roughly is between seven and eight years behind the Gregorian Calendar.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A decade or so has passed since writers and critics started to deal with children's literature in Ethiopia. Among the first writers who paved the way in this area is Ato Sayefu Matafariyá. In his Article "Oral Literature of Ethiopia As Source Material For Children's Books: A Sample Study," Sayefu took the tales published in **እንቅልፍ ለምኔ** "Enqelf Lamené" (sleep, for what end to me) and analyzed their form. Mesfen Massala's thesis **የልጆች ስነ ጽሑፍ በኢትዮጵያ** "Yalejoch Senas'huf Ba Ethiopia" (Children's Literature in Ethiopia) and the seminar papers presented on the workshops organised by Educational Materials Production and Distribution Agency (EMPDA) have contributed much to the study of children's literature in Ethiopia.

Tesfaye Dubbalas **የሕጻናት ስነ ጽሑፍ መሠረተ ሀሳብ** "Yahes'anát Senas'ehuf Masarata Hássáb" (The Concept of Children's Literature) and **የስእል ሚና በሕጻናትና በአዲስ አበባ-ቢያን መጻሕፍት** "Yasse'el Miná Ba Hes'anátenná Ba Ádis Ánbábeyán Mas'aheft" (The Role of Illustration in Children's As Well As Beginners Books) by Taya Kabada are two among others.

In Masfen's thesis we find a survey of the historical background of children's literature in Ethiopia. Among the thirty seven books he collected he concentrated his analysis on only three of them. In this thesis Masfen declared that **ትምህርት ሕጻናት** "Temeherta Hes'anát (Lesson for Children) (1917 E.C.) the first book published for children in Ethiopia. However, the first children's book in Amharic (in Ethiopia too) is Baqala's **የፍቅር መላክት ለሕጻናት** "Yafeqer Mal'akt La Hes'anát" (Message of Affection) which was published in 1916 E.C. one year before Lesson for Children .

Bezunash Wubé's የሕጻናት መጻሕፍት አስፈላጊነትና ይዘት "Yahes'ánát Mas'áheft Ásfaláginatenná Yezat" (The Need for Children's Books and What Their Contents Ought To Be Like), and Eshatu T'erunah's የሕጻናት መጻሕፍት ዲዛይንና ኢሉስትሬሽን "Yahes'ánát Mas'áheft Dizáyenenná Illustreshen" (Design and Illustration in Children's Books), give emphasis to detailed theoretical discussions.

We also find Kadiro Mahámad's ከመስኩብኛ ወደ አማርኛ የተተረጎሙ የሕጻናት መጻሕፍት የቋንቋና የባሕል ግምገማ "Kamaskobēñá Wada Amáreñná Yatarogomu Yahes'ánát Mas'áheft Yaquánquánná Yabáhel Gemegamá" (Evaluation of Language and Culture in Amharic Children's Books Translated from Russian).

የሕጻናት መጻሕፍትን የሚያዘጋጁ ጸሐፊዎች ማወቅ ያለባቸው ስነ ልቦናዊ ሁኔታዎች "Yehes'ánát Mas'a'heften Yamiyázagáju S'aháfiwoch Máwaq Yálabáachaw Sena Lebbonáwi Hunetáwoch." (The Psychology that Children's Book Writers Need to be Aware of" by Berehánu T/Yoháñnes, ስነ ቃል ለሕጻናት መጻሕፍት ዝግጅት በምንጭነት የሚጫወተው ሚናና ለሕጻናት የንባብ ችሎታ የሚያበረክተው አስተዋጽኦ "Senaqál La Hes'ánát Mas'áheft Zegejet Bamench'emat Yamich'áwataw Minánná La Hes'ánát Yanebáb Chelotá Yamiyábaraketaw Ástawás'eo " (The Role of Folklore as a Source Material for Children's Books and For the Enhancement of their Reading Skills) by Taklu Minás የሕጻናት መጻሕፍት ባሕሪያት ፣ ዝግጅትና ዲዛይን "Yahes'ánát Masa'heft Báheryát Zegejetenná Dizayen" (The Characterstic Features, Preparation and Design of Children's Books) by Mázangiyá Makonen, and Ababa Kássáye's በሀጻናት መጻሕፍት ውስጥ የሚቀርቡ ስእሎች ይዘትና የቋንቋ ዘዴ "Be Hes'ánát Mes'áheft West' Yamiqarbu Se'eloch Yezatenná Yaquánquá Zadé" (Methodology and the Use of Pictures in Children's Books) are some of the works

written in 1982 E.C. and before.

Kadiro's motivation to do research on those books arose from Masfen's statement. In his thesis that reads:

ከተለያዩ ቋንቋዎች ወደ አማርኛ ተተርጉመው ለልጆች
የቀረቡት መጻሕፍት ብዙዎቹ የሕብረተሰቡን ባሕል ወግና
አስተሳሰብ በሚገባ የማይሳውቁ ፣ ሀገሪቱ ለመተካት
የምትፈልጋቸውን ልጆች በትክክል የማይዘጋጁ ፣ ተገቢ
የሆነውን ችሎታና መሠረታዊ እውቀት
የማይስጩባቸው ናቸው ። /መስፍን መሰለ ፣ ገጽ 5 /

Most of the children's books translated from different (foreign) languages into Amharic do not reflect the culture, tradition, and thinking patterns of the society. They do not nurture the coming generation nor impart fundamental skills and know how. Russian children's book translated into Amharic are efficient evidence of this.

Kadiro proves this statement by evaluating twelve books which were published after 1978 E.C. in terms of different approaches, such as language use, traditional expressions, subject matter, and so on. Although his conclusion is not based on the practical reactions and responses of readers, his findings pave the way for further research on the subject.

Faqáda Tarafa's thesis የልጆች ስነ ጽሑፍ ይዘትና ቋንቋ "Yalejoch Senas'ejuf Yazatenná Quánquá" (Content and Language of Children's Literature), Zerihun Ásfaw's ስነ ጽሑፍ ለሕጻናት ልብ ወለድ ፡ ኢ-ለባለድ "Senas'ehuf La Hes'ánát Lebb Wallad, I - Leeb Wallad" (Literature For Children Fiction and Non- Fiction), Álamáyahu Ababa's የሕጻናት የፈጠራ

መጻሕፍት ግምገማ "Yahes'ánát Yafatárá Masáheft Gemegamá" (Analysis of Creative Books For Children), and Taklu Minás's በሕጻናት መጻሕፍት ዝግጅት አንጻንድ መሠረታዊ ደን የትኩረት አቅጣጫ "Ba Hes'a'nánt Mas'aheft Zegejet Ándánd Masaratáweyán Yatkurat Áqt'ách'á " (Some Fundamental Aspects on the Production of Children's Literature) are the studies written in 1984 E.C. on literature for children.

These papers are better than their predecessors because their authors have paid more attention to evidence from the books written in Amharic. Faqáda Tafari, for instance, conducted his study on eleven Amharic children's books published from 1979 E.C. to 1983 E.C. He also attempted to assess the theses written by graduating students of Addis Ababa University, Institute of Language Studies. Zarihun's work deserves to be referred to, for it roughly covers works from earlier period to the present day children's songs of some of the kindergartens in Addis Ababa.

The other paper written in English is Daraja's "Folk Tale Tradition vis-a-vis Modern Narrative Style in Amharic Children's Stories," Which was presented on the Sixth Annual Conference of Institute of Language Studies held in January 1986 E.C. The paper covers not only the summary of the publication history of children's books in Amharic but also it analyzes the basic difference between the traditional oral narration and the modern presentation of children's's stories in written form.

By and large, the research papers conducted on children's literature within the past years are not only few in number, but also most of them incline to discuss theoretical aspects.

CHAPTER ONE

Overview of the Theory of Children's Literature

The term "Children's Literature" basically incorporates two main ideas that make the terminology open to wide discussions. On the one hand, the word "Children" needs to be defined in terms of the genre Literature for children. On the other hand, the word literature needs to be elaborated in view of the "independent children's world."

The question "Who are children?" or "Who is a child?" is common and apparently seems very simple to answer. However, it is quite complex and the response needs to cover other equally important questions such as, "which children?" "who are not children?"

Different disciplines determine the age limitation of children by using different yardsticks. Psychologists and Educationalist's consider childhood to be up to the age of 12. Scholars of children's literature, on the other hand raise it up to the "the age of perhaps 14 to 15." (Encyclopedia Britannica, p, 198).

The initial period of formal education is more or less similar from one field of study to the other. Psychologists point out that it begins at an average of around 6 years old. Educationalist s refer to it as "school age." In some other areas such as religion, the ages vary from 5 to 7.

The former Ethiopian National Children's Commission defined the age of

children from birth to 14 years old. This delimitation worked in Ethiopia for about 15 years till the new "Convention on the Rights of Child" of December, 1991, (Hedar, 1984 E.C.) ratified it as follows:

For the purpose of the present convention, a child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

In this definition 3 to 4 years have been added to the upper limitation of the age of childhood. The neonatal and infancy periods of a child are also included, in the definition, under the period of childhood. According to the definition "a child" is a person who is "dependent" on society and is as yet incapable to lead his or her own life on his or her own.

The idea that the society must decide on what is beneficial for the future of children arises from this notion. Accordingly the child is supposed to shape himself in line with what the society thinks is the right way of life here in this secular world in preparation for the life beyond. This was practiced by the Puritans in the 16th and 17th centuries. Children of that period had no right to choose and enjoy books of their own taste. Rather they were imposed upon to be reserved from any thing that would lead them to enjoy this "sinful" secular world: which was the main purpose of the church, parents, and Christian morals.

The range of a child's age depends upon the socioeconomic-economic and traditional background of a particular society. The more economically advanced the more the possibility of acquiring knowledge through extra-curricular means such as the cinema or T.V.

A child of the Third World on the other hand, is burdened with responsibility

early in life. He may look after the herds of the community or even support his family by the income he earns his labour. In this regard, one might ask how can this age-based yardstick be applied equally to all children in developed and under-developed countries? To minimize, if not avoid, these discrepancies scholars agree in general that:

The psychological dimension depends at least partly on the state of social evolution and its underlying ideology, which provides the anthropological patterns by means of which these different factors can be studied. (Lebovici, p., 11)

To use solely the psychological factors to delimit the age of children can not be justifiable. Psychology covers in general the study of methods of mental functioning. "From the genetic point of view it brings to light internal factors contributing to development" (Lebovichi, p., 12)

Thus it includes the environmental and rational factors for the socio economic and socio-cultural aspects of society which play indispensable roles.

We use the word "children" in this paper to indicate "all potential or actual young literates from the instant they can, with joy, leaf through a picture book or listen to a story read aloud, " which refers on average, roughly 5 to 8 years. (Encyclopedia Britannica, p, 198.)

The term "children's literature" has also another facet which is not yet settled. We may define the word "literature" simply as a written material to be read, that may be creative or informative. It can be as short as half a page or as long as a thousand pages. In our terminology, children's literature, however, can not be defined simply as

"a written material to be read by children." Although a book may be written for a junior audience, it does not necessarily mean that it is not read by seniors. Adults admittedly make up part of the reading population. (Encyclopedia Britannica, p, 199.)

On the other hand, children have their own preferences. As Commager says:

not the parents, the teachers, not even the authors, but
the children themselves who determine what their
literature is to be. Over the years they have followed
their won rules or, better yet, their instincts
(Commager, p, vii)

The idea that children know what they prefer to read leads us to the concept of the psycho-analyst Piaget. In his book, **The Child's Conception of the World** (1929), he explains that the child's way of perceiving the world and interpreting his perception is not determined by his emotions but also by his cognitive development. According to his theory the child's mode of thought and experience are egocentric and realistic. By "egocentric" he does not mean that the child is selfish. He means that the child is incapable of any point of view other than his own. By "realistic" he does not mean that the child's mode of thought corresponds more closely to objective reality, rather that the child attributes to his images and feelings the same status in regard to reality as he does to objects. (Wundheiler, p, 24.)

The literary history of Bunyan's (1628-1688) *Pilgrim's Progress* (1676) and Swift's (1667-1745) ***Guliver's Travels*** may prove this notion. Both authors did not write books for children. They wrote their stories for adults. Despite the authors intention, their books received tremendous response from children rather than adult readers. The successful use in the best tradition of the old fairy tales in ***Pilgrim's***

Progress, enabled children to make it their favorite book. The adventures of *Guliver* conveyed in ***Guliver's Travels*** capture the interest of children the world over.

Writers suggest their views on why parents and teachers choose stories for children despite the fact that children have their own preferences. It is believed among many that in preliterate societies a child was viewed in the light of his social, economic, and religious relationship to the tribe or clan. Though he may be nurtured in all tenderness, he is thought of not as himself, but as a "miniature adult." This attitude was more or less similar among the different old societies regardless of their geographical and socio-cultural background. Among the Old Testament Jews the child's place in society replicated his father's position. So too, in ancient Greece and Rome, the child dressed in the modified adult costume, was conceived as a "miniature adult." His importance lay not in himself but what Aristotle would have called his final cause, the "Potential Citizen-Warrior" (Encyclopedia Britannica, p, 199)

Such attitude persisted throughout the Middle Ages, far into the late renaissance:

A sharp sense of generation gap- one of the motors of children's literature - scarcely existed. The family young and old was a kind of homogenized mix. Sometimes children were even regarded as infrahuman for Montaigne⁴ they had neither mental activities nor recognizable body shape?⁷
(Encyclopedia Britannica, p, 200)

While such dialogues still continued, others also try to give what they believe to be the practical solution. In this regard Jacquelyn Sanders advises that we must ask

three basic questions whenever we think of children's literature. Firstly, is the subject matter really of the child's sphere of interest? Secondly, is the subject matter presented in a way that is manageable and conducive to a meaningful experience? Thirdly, what solutions are made available? (Sanders, p, 17)

According to Sanders the first question refers to the choice of subject matters that are appealing to children. One of the problems that authors of children's books confront is the "tendency to over simplify and to avoid area that are unpleasant or difficult." (Sandrers, p, 17). Sanders believes that such tendency often derived from too much emphasis on children's smallness and lack of ability. This tendency can negate the very essence of the value of literature for children, for it can lead to an omission of the possible important subjects. In effect Sanders indicates that this ill managed attitude creates a negative feeling among children. She remarks that instead of children's literature being the stairway to knowledge of the adult world and guide to mastery, these tendencies emphasize the difference between adults and children and increase the child's feeling that adults wish to hide knowledge rather than to convey it. (Sanders, p., 19)

The second point that Sanders raises regarding the presentation involves the issue of language and feeling created in the child reader. If, for instance, the language is incomprehensible, the child will not be able to understand the subject matter. If the story is presented in such a way as to arouse a great deal of anxiety, the child will not be able to cope with it.

The problem of anxiety might be solved by using the method of fantasy. Because events that are obviously unreal or distant do not have as a great an

emotional impact as those that appear closer to home and therefore more plausible. (Sanders, p, 19).

The third question regarding the solution concerns the obligation of authors of children's books to point out "the best ways of coping with life" (Sanders, p, 20 quoted from Tolstoy)

Sanders explains that children's horizons of knowledge can be broadened by reading about the ways how to cope with their day-to-day life and gathering information unknown to them. (Sanders, p, 2)

By and large, the different views regarding the nature of children's literature can be summarized partially, if not thoroughly, by the following out-looks of three authors: Leon Garfield, John Rowe Townsend, and C.S. Lewis. According to Leon Garfield, "one does not write for children. One writes so that children can understand." (Short Stories, p, 5)

Garfield believes that there is no precise border line between stories for adults and stories for children. He argues that there is no reason why lower standards should apply to literature intended for children, and no reason why younger readers should be satisfied with dull plots, stereotyped characters, and unconvincing action or trivial themes.

John Rowe Townsend on the other hand, comments that "one does indeed write for children but there isn't really any "Great Divide" (short Stories, p, 5). His argument arises from the basic principles of communication. Townsend suggests that if a story goes too far beyond a reader's experience or imagination, or if the style and vocabulary present a tedious barrier, there might be no communication. The

yardstick is the same, although it varies in degree. It is on these grounds that teachers, librarians and parents justify themselves in distinguishing between literature for children and books for adults. "But to exaggerate the gap can be as dangerous as to ignore it." (Short Stories, p, 5)

C.S. Lewis' stand is completely different. He says that there are not so called independent children's stories that are both accessible and at the same time, capable of widening knowledge. These are stories that the reader will always enjoy, whatever his or her age. "A children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's book," Lewis argues.

Despite these arguments scholars do not hesitate to agree that the basic value of literature is similar for both adults and children. When life is difficult stories can give both adult and children momentary release from trouble or a new insight into their problems. Literature have always been a source of information, comfort, and pleasure for the people who know how to use them.

Children need books "at first intensely and narrowly personal, but as they mature these needs broaden and become socialized in proportion to the socialization" of them. (Arbuthnot, p; 2-3). According to Arbuthnot, literature can fulfill the needs of Children in seven fundamental aspects. The first use of Literature to Children is that it fulfills the need for material, emotional, and spiritual security. The child's sense of security begins in his mother's and father's arms. Stories of home life are popular with children of all ages from which they derive emotional security. It is a higher kind of security than material or economic security. "It has an inner and spiritual quality made up of love, fortitude and gaiety the elements of security which

every child should have and build into his ideals of family life." (Arbuthnot, p, 3).

Spiritual security can be derived from stories that give children an unshakable conviction by showing that good people will eventually master the hardships and overcome evils of all kind.

The second importance of books for children is "the need to belong," that is to be a part of a group. Stories about neighborhood and school groups after great difficulties creates the sense of belonging within children for they identify themselves with the hero of the story. In this regard, it is important to give good stories for children so that they can acquire proper insight from the attitudes of the characters, problems of every day life of people, and then understand them and cope with them. The sense of belonging or identification^{of} himself, with home, his school, his team or peer group, later with community his country and perhaps in a few cases with a world.

The need to be loved is the burning desire of children, indeed of all human beings. It is in the family that the child learns his first lessons in the "laws of affectionate relationships." Not only does the child's sense of security develop from these family patterns, but also his whole approach to other people. The substitutes give them some satisfaction and supply them with new insight into what families might be. On another perspective, stories depicting animals defending their mates, their young or their beloved, are tremendously appealing.

Literature give children a sense of achievement. Children would be happy when they understand that they can do something for which they are respected and loved. Children's primary heroes are the doers. In addition,

the enjoyment of physical action and tangible achievements gradually gives place in part to a widening appreciation of intellectual, spiritual, and moral achievements. (Arbuthnot, p. 8)

The need to know or intellectual security is the fifth type of satisfaction that children acquire from literature. This doesn't mean however, that children are always satisfied by what adults believe they should know. In this regard one has to ascertain that informative books satisfy children's of any kind any interests if they are clear and understandable, conveniently arranged, and above all, accurate in every detail.

Children need change. It is a form of escape. As any adult a child needs to relax from boring situations. So children need liberation from the pressure of routines, from the imposition to practice code of manners and morals. They need to relax from school failures, family anxieties, and want to be free from a feeling of physical or social inferiority. "Laughter dissolves tensions. "If we can laugh together, we can live together," to use Arbuthnot's words. The old fairy tales, modern fantasies, mysteries, tales, stories of real adventures, fine poetry, and humorous stories or verse all fit this purpose. Children's literature gives aesthetic satisfaction to a child: the need to enjoy beauty. Their response is often in terms of feeling rather than of intellect.

CHAPTER TWO

Children's Literature in Amharic

2.1. Background

It is about seven decades since the first children's book in Amharic was published. There was no book written in Amharic primarily intended for children readers before. We can consider however, two aspects regarding the background of children's literature in Amharic.

The first aspect concerns with the tradition of telling stories to children. Like any other society, folktales have been told by parents (or elder people) to children "around the cottage fires in humble houses." (Cornella, 1953, p. 4). The folktales have different forms and a variety of contents. Among the widely known Enqoqelesh (riddles) and Tarat-Tarat (tales) are paramount.

Enqoqelesh is a type of quiz performed in question and answer form. Very short in length, it mainly uses word play and analogy of action. Most of the riddles in Amharic are conveyed in verse. It starts with:

Enqoqelesh (to the female) ¹

Enqoqeleh (to the male)

¹ The naming is given from this initial request "enqoqeleh" meaning roughly "let me ask you" or "do you know this?"

If the responder says "Men áwqeleh?"², the requester forwards the question. It is expected of the responder to give the answer within a short time. If he gives the right answer the requester can forward the next question or the responder may ask in his or her own turn.

If the responder fails to give the right answer to the quiz he/she is asked to give up and cedes a "Hagar"(some region.) Here, the requester can refuse to accept the place ceded to him and the responder is bound to give some other place till the requester is satisfied. Then the requester begins to praise the place or region which he has won. He concludes by admiring him/her self and degrading the responder. Here is an example:

ጠያቂ :- እንቆቅልህ

መላሽ :- ምንአውቅልህ

ጠያቂ :- ትንሽ ምላጭ አገር ትላጭ

requester :- Enqoqeleh?

responder :- Men Áweqeleh?

requester :- A little blade shaves the (whole) country

The requester then searches for the right answer. He may use the trial and error approach that might not more than three or four times. The proper answer is "Esát" (fire). The quiz is analogically framed and compares the sharp performance of the blade with the divesting power of a fire in the forest.

If the responder doesn't find out the right answer he/she cede a Hagar (a region or a city). If for instance he/she cede Addis Ababa, the requester might say:

² roughly means "what should I know?"

አዲስ አበባ ምን አጥቼ

ሁሉ በጄ ሁሉ በደጄ

What is there for me in Addis Ababa? All things in

Addis are already in my possession.

These two lines of verse are commonly used by all requesters as an introductory phrase. Then they continue to enumerate the advantages of possessing such a place. These enumerations differ from person to person. In the Addis Ababa case, for example, one requester might praise the beauty of the city, the availability of hospitals and of transport facilities. Another requester may not necessarily enumerate these things. The choices are personal.

The next question might be asked by either the responder or by the requester. How many quizzes shall be asked in each turn is decided by the two persons. Enqoqelsh can be performed by two persons, or in the presence of many persons.

Tarat-Tarat (narrative tale) has long existed among the different nationalities in Ethiopia. Tarat-Tarat may be narrated by adults (parents) to children. In most cases, however, elders narrate the Tarat to the children. The narration may take place around the fire place in a cottage or at any place where it is convenient to both narrator and listener/listeners.

The Tarat-Tarat has multiple characteristics. That is to say that one Tarat-Tarat may have different versions in different places. Some the Tarat-Tarat in Amharic we hear is that some of them also found in foreign languages. The traditions of telling stories to children by adults, or it could be by children themselves, are a common tradition of all societies. By the words of Linda Degh:

Narrative is ageless. The impulse to tell a story and the need to listen to it have made narrative the natural companion of man through the history of civilisation. Stories are able to adapt themselves to any local and social climate. They are old and venerable, but they are also new and up to date. (Oral Folklore: Folk Narrative, p. 55)

The two widely known aspects of oral literature, riddles and tales, ought to be considered because they give us a general picture of the background of children's books in Amharic. Exercising riddles can be conducted by both adults and children. It can be performed by adult(s) vis-a-vis or by a child vis-a-vis another child. Although the tradition of riddles is extensively performed in the Ethiopian society its publication in a book form has been rare.

Concerning the publication of tarat-tarat, we recognize that it has got due attention unlike the riddles. Beginning from the first children's book publication most of the children's books in Amharic have included tales in their collections. In addition, collections of tales were published both translated from foreign sources and domestic narratives. Among those, *Ándeñá Yanbáb Mas'fáfé*, *Hulatañá Yanbáb Mas'háfé*, *Tarato cháchehu*, *Enqelf Lamené*, *Lejoch Yazaré Ábabocho Yanaga Feréwoch* are a few among many.

The other aspect that ought to be considered in relation with the background of the publications of children's books in Amharic is the case^{of} traditional church school texts. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been schooling children in religion to enable them to give church service by means of different religious texts. These texts

range from መልእክተ ዮሐንስ Maleékta Yohánnes (extract from the Gospel of John which is not more than a page long). Then follows ወንጌል Wangél (mainly the whole text of the Gospel of John), መዝሙረ ዳዊት Mazmura Dáwit (the Psalm of David), ውዳሴ ማርያም Wudásé Máreyám (in praise of Saint Mary) መልክአ ማርያም Malkéá Máreyám (Description of St. Mary) መልክአ ጊዮርጊስ Malkeá Giyorgis (Description of Saint George), ተአምረ እየሱስ Taámera Iyasus (the miracles of Jesus), and so on. (Háyla Gabriél Dañné p, 342). The student is expected to cover these religious texts by the time he is 14 or 15 years old.

The texts are written in the Geez language which had been the only language used by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church until recent times. It is no longer a spoken language, but the church service are carried out in it. Since these texts were prepared for religious purpose the traditional church school student has no alternative other than to follow it.

The other point to be noted is that these texts were not written originally for children. They are religious texts intended to be read by all the followers of the Orthodox Church. The student who studies the text is expected also to memorise them in addition to the mastery of the reading skill of the Geez language. Unlike Amharic, Geez reading is very difficult for it uses a system of tanash and wadaqi (stressed and unstressed) words and phrases.

In general, however, the Geez religious literature of the traditional church school has made some contributions for the commencement of the publications of children's book in Amharic. First, most of the earlier writers come from those schools. Second, the texts not only instruct the child in the doctrines of the church, but also develop his mind by the exercise of his memory.

2.2. Children's Book in Amharic

The publication of children's books in Amharic was started in the first quarter of this century. የፍቅር መላክት ለኢትዮጵያ ልጆች (Message of Love to Ethiopian Children) is taken to be the first children's book in Amharic.

The book was originally intended as a teaching material for children and it had been used till the Italian invasion of 1928 E.C. The author Baqala Habta Mikael (Belata) indicates the following in his "Introduction"

ይህችን የፍቅር መላክት ተብላ የተሠየመች መጽሐፌን
ግርማዊ ቀዳማዊ ኃይለሥላሴ የኢትዮጵያ ንጉሥ
ነገስት መንግሥት አልጋወራሽና ባለሙሉ
ሥልጣን እንደራሴ በነበሩ ጊዜ ለጀማሪዎች ሕጻናት
መማሪያ ትሆናለች በማለት ጽፎ አቅርቤላቸው እንድ-
ትታተም ፈቅደውልኝ በ 1916 ዓ.ም. ጥቅምት 6 ቀን
በዘመነ ዮሐንስ ከተፈሪ መኩንን ማተሚያ ቤት ታትማ
ነበር ::

/Baqala, p, 3 /

This book entitled Yafeqer Malákt (Message of Love or Affection) was printed in 1916, E.C. for the purpose of teaching children, with the kind permission of His Majesty Emperor H/Selase while he was the Crown prince. After the publication it was distributed in the provinces and districts and had been used as a text for many children until the war between Ethiopia and Italy of 1928 --- (E.C.).

During the five years of the Italian administration the book was destroyed

because it contains "the advice of the Crown Prince and his photograph" (Baqala, p3-4). It was in 1949 (E.C.) that it was reprinted with "expressive illustration added to it," as the author says in his introduction.

The 1949 edition has 44 pages. Out of these the "Introduction" and "Forward" parts cover 11 pages. In these parts the author explains the motives for writing the book. In the "Introduction" the author has indicated the changes made in this second edition. The "Forward" expresses the author's wish of long age to both Empress Zawditu, and the Crown Prince Tafari Makonen (Baqala, p, 11). This must have been written for the original edition.

In these sections, eight photographs of the royal family, including that of Emperor Menelik, are printed. Two of them are Emperor H/Selase - one depicting him when he was the Crown Prince, the other after he became Emperor of Ethiopia. The remaining five are pictures of Empress Manan, Princess Tanáña Warq, and Prince Sáhela Selllásé. The next six pages illustrate the Amharic alphabet (Fidal), Geez, and the Arabic numerals. Pages 19 to 26 cover word exercise beginning from one phoneme words to words up to eight phonemes. Although the sequence or arrangement is from simple to complex (from alphabet to letter writing), the author has printed a short poem just next to the alphabet section. The poem, which is 14 lines long, is about the merit of education. It advises children to learn dilligently so that they could acquire knowledge. The following extracts are the first two and the last four lines of the poem:

የኢትዮጵያ ልጆች ብሩኮች ፣
 ተማሩ ተግታችሁ አትሰልቹ ፤
 Children of Ethiopia, the blessed,

Learn dilligently, don't give up.

ጊዜን ሳታባክኑ በከንቱ ፣
 እርምጃችሁን ሳትስቱ ፣
 የውቀትን ፍሬ ለማግኘት በሙሉ ፣
 በማስተዋል ዱካውን ተከተሉ ።

Don't waste time in vain,
 Never miss steps,
 To reap of the fruit of knowledge,
 Follow the track with attention.

The reading texts including a poem "አንድነት መሆን ሀይል ይሰጣል" (To Be Unified Gives Power) cover the next 15 pages. Eleven illustrations, four photographs, and the master plan of Addis Ababa are also included. The illustrations are designed to explain the contents of the prose and verse passages. The photographs which depict Manágashá, St. George Church, St. Trinity Church of Addis Ababa, the palace of Emperor Menilik, the palace of Emperor H/Sellase bear no relation with contents.

The first passage is the rephrased words of the Bible (Proverbs 1.7):

ልጆች :- የጥበብ ሁሉ መጀመሪያ እግዚአብሔርን መፍራት
 በልባችሁ ይኑር ። አሜን /p, 26/

Children memorise this: "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God."

This is followed by: "በስመአብ ወወልድ ወመንፈስ ቅዱስ አሁዱ
 አምላክ አሜን ። (In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one Divinity, Amen.)

All the proeses compiled in the book are short passages. The longest one. "በፍቅር ከመተባበር ደስታና አንድነት ይገኛሉ" Befeqer Kamatabábar Dessetána

Ándenat Yaggaññálu (Joy and Unity can Be Attained Through Cooperation And Love,) has only 21 lines. The shortest passage is 48 words long.

The contents of these passages show variety although they all teach morals.

«የታደሉ እናትና አባት» Yatádalú Ennátenná Ábbát (The Lucky Father and Mother)

is about a happy family with well behaved children. "ጊዜ ገንዘብ ነው" - Gizé Ganzag

Naw (Time is Money) explains how a bird and it's nest to show, analogically, how Addis Ababa could be built up step of the bird and it's nest step by step in due time.

The author used the story of the bird and it's nest to show, analogically, how Addis

Ababa could be built up step by step if children learn assiduously without wasting

their time. The other passage gives advice on the need to work hard giving examples

of the butterfly and the bee. It also points out the advantages of respecting one's

parents, of staying away from bad habits, and of working for mother Ethiopia in peace and Unity.

The subject matter of the passage "አስተዋይ አሞራ" Ástaway Ámorá (A wise Crow) is direct translation of one of Aesop's Fables as the following passage quoted from The Great Fables of All Nations (1928), illustrates:

The Crow and Pitcher

A crow, ready to die with thirst, flew with joy to a pitcher, which he saw at a distance. But when he came up to it, he found the water so low that with all his stooping and straining he was unable to reach it there upon, he tried to break the pitcher then overturn it, but his strength was not sufficient for either. At last seeing some small pebbles at hand he dropped a great many of them, one by one, in to the pitcher, and so raised the water to the brim and quenched his thirst. (Komoroff, p, 32)

The Amharic version in የፍቅር መላክት Yafeqer Malakt (Love Message)

reads as follows:

አስተዋይ አሞራ

አሞራ በውሀ ጥም ፈጽሞ ሊሞት ሳለ በፊቱ ታይቶት
 ወደ ነበር ወዳንድ የውሀ እቃ ደስ ደስ እያለው በረረ ::
 ይሁን እንጂ ከዚህ ውሃ እቃ ዘንድ በደረሰ ጊዜ ቢያይ
 ውሀውን እታች ሆኖ አገኘው :: ባለውም አቅሙ ቢያ
 ጎነብስና ቢንጠራራ ለመድረስ የማይቻል ሆነ :: ከዚህ
 ወዲህ የውሀውን እቃ ሊስብረው ሊደፋውም ሞከረ ::
 ነገር ግን ማናቸውንም ሊያደርግ ብርታት ሳያገኝ
 ቀርቶ በመጨረሻ ታናናሾች ጠጠሮች አየና አንዳንዱን
 እየለቀመ በውሀው እቃ ውስጥ ጨመረ :: ስለዚህ
 ውሀውን በውሀው እቃ አፍ አድርሶ ጥሙን ሊያበርድ
 ቻለ :: ግድ አዲስ ጥበብንና ብልህትን ያስወጣናል ::
 በሀይል ለመደረግ የሚያውከውም ነገር በማስተዋልና
 በመታገል ይፈጸማል :: (Yafeqer Malakt, pp, 34-35)

The narrative poem entitled "አንድነት መሆን ብርታትን ይሰጣል" Andenat

Mahon Bertaten Yesat'al (Unity Gives Strength) is adapted from the fable "The Bundle of Sticks." It is rendered in eight stanzas with 59 lines. The fable of Aesop written in Great Fables of All Nations reads as follow:

The Bundle of Sticks

A husband who had a quarrelsome family after having tried in vain to reconcile them by words thought he might more readily prevail by an example. So he called his sons and bade them lay a bundle of sticks before him. Then having tied them into a faggot, he told the lads one after the other to take it up and break it. They all tried, but it was in vain. Then untying the faggot he gave them the sticks to break one

by one. This they did with the greatest of ease. Then said the father, "Thus you, my sons, as long as you remain united, are a match for all your enemies." (Komoroff, p, 3-4)

The Amharic poem compiled in the book has the same story and narrative pattern structure. Here are the concluding lines:

"...ይልቅ ሳትለዩ እንዲህ እንዳላችሁ
 ከመካከላችሁ ቂምን አጥፍታችሁ
 እንደ በትሮቹ በፍቅር ታስራችሁ
 ብትደጋገፉ እርስ በራሳችሁ
 ከቶ የኔን ልጆች ማንም አይደፍራችሁ ::
 (pp, 41)

The adaptation skill of the author is remarkable. The words the author used are clear and simple. The fact that they are rendered in verse is helpful to children because it makes the story sweet to be read and to be listened to.

The book, in general, is well done. The sequence of its content grows from the simple to complex, and the passages are short and show variety.

It was six years later in 1922 E.C., that the second children's book was published by Heruy W/Sellase. In the book, **ስኳርና ወተት የልጆች ማሳደጊያ** Suqarena Watat Yalejoch Masadagiya (Sugar and Milk for Nurturing Children) moralistic and religious texts translated from different books are compiled. The book can be referred as the first translated book for children in Amharic, although there are some verses and prose works translated from Aesop fables, have been included as indicated in **የፍቅር መላክት** Yafeqer Malakt (Love Message.)

From the year 1922 E.C. there was no publication of children's books

presumably because of the Italian invasion of the country.

The books entitled ታሪክና ምሳሌ (1ኛ: 2ኛ: 3ኛ መጻሕፍ) - Tarikenna Messale (Stories and Proverbs (Books 1, 2, & 3) were published for grades three, four, and five immediately after independence in 1934 E.C.. In all the three books, there is a common introduction which talks about: Country (or motherland,) Citizens, the Flag and the King.

The first title, Agar (Country) defines what "Country" means and its use to the people. According to the passage Agar means a part of the world in which people that have one (common) character, live together bonded by common historical lineage, religion, custom, hope, joy, and sorrow. The main purpose of the passage is to nurture the love of their country, Ethiopia, in the minds of the children.

People is defined in the book as peoples living in a country under the umbrella of one state, one flag, and one legal system. The Flag is, as described in the passage, a common belief of the people as a whole, and the strong tie of unity. The book depicts the king as a God-given guardian, scales of justice, and caretaker of religion. **Like Yafeqer Malakt**, these books also contain in common the Amharic alphabet, Geez and Arabic numerals, and word teaching sections.

The contents of the books span over a wide range of subjects such as religion, (mainly christianity,) the merits of education, the meaning of one's country, the reverence of freedom, the greatness of the king, and so on. The three books contain 158 titles. The first book has 40 titles out of which 16 are poems. The second has 70 titles all written in prose. The third book contains 48 titles among which 20 are written in verse.

Aside from folk-tales and fables, the books contain different forms of literature such as essays and short biographies. Both the tales (fables) and poems are either translated or adapted from the famous fables of Aesop and La Fontaine.

Some of the poems are based on proverbs or sayings. "ዝንጅሮ" - zenjaro (Monkey), for instance, (Tarikenna Messale - 3rd Book) is based on the proverb "first for my seat said the monkey." The poem has 22 lines written in very simple every day language. Here is the story: One day, while a monkey was walking in the jungle numberless thorns stuck all over its body. Unsettled by the pain and wandering here and there, meets a person who asks her what happened? Although in a hurry, he does not want to leave her in that miserable condition. So he asks her from which part of its body shall he pull out the thorns first? The answer was immediate: "መጀመሪያ የመቀመጫዬን" - Majamaria Yamaqamachayen (first from my seat.) In the poem it is expressed as follows:

ከነቀልክልኝስ አለኛው ጌታዬ ፣
 መጀመሪያ ይውጣ የመቀመጫዬ ።።
 ቂጤ መሬት አርፎ ትንፋሼን ካገኘሁ ፣
 የቀረውን ሁሉ እኔ አወጣዋለሁ ።።

If you pull out the thorns for me, she said,
 Sir, let it be first from my seat,
 If I rest my buttocks on the floor,
 I'll take the rest out of my body.

It was very common for writers to write about their beloved country, Ethiopia, for the period was marked of intense nationalism. In the same token, "zenejaro" concludes by the following lines:

የመቀመጫችን የሀገር ነገር ፣
 ከሌላው ጣጣችን ይቅደም ይጀምር ።።
 በጣም ቢቸግረን በጣም ቢከፋን
 ጌላ ደስ ይለናል አንቁረጥ ተስፋን ።።

Let the case of our country (our seat)
 have priority over all things.
 Even if we face problems and are unhappy,
 Let us be patient,
 Let us not lose hope!

Most of the proses conveyed in the books, are originally from Aesop's fables.

"ፋኖስና ብርጭቆ" Fanosenna Bercheqo (The Lamp,) "ዋርካና ሰንበሌጥ" Warkanna Sanbalet (The Tree and the Reeds,) "ቁራና ቀበሮ" - Quranna Qabaro (The Raven and the Fox,) "ሉልና አውራ ዶሮ" - Lulenna Awera Doro (The Cock and the Jewel,) "አንድ ሀብታምና አንድ ድሀ ሰው" And Habtammna And Daha Saw (The Cobbler and the Banker,) "ፌንጣና ጉንጻን" Fent'ann'a Gunda'n (The Ant and the Cicada,) "አንበሳና ቀበሮ" - Anbass'ana Qabaro (The Lion and the Fox,) "በሬን ለማከል የምትፈቅድ እንቁራሪት" - Bare'n Lamakal Yametefaqed Enqurarit (The Ox and the Toad,) are few among the many. The skill of the adopter is paramount and laudable indeed.

In the first place their valuable works to introduce these unversally acclaimed fables to Ethiopian children is to their credit. In the second place, the authors effort to make the stories as simple and readable as possible is praiseworthy. The stories are still palatable to children of the present generation. In this regard the books are the corner stones in the development of children's literature in Amharic.

Apart from the **Tarikenna Messale** trilogy, not much was done during the following decade. However, an anthology of poetry, written by Yared G/Mikael, ስለ እንስሳት አገልግሎት ለሕጻናት በረከት - Sela Ensesat Agalgetot Lahes'anat Barakat

(About Animals' Service: A Gift to Children) deserves a special mention in the development of children's literature in Amharic. It was published in 1938 E.C. and reprinted more than eight times until 1964 E.C.

The book consists of thirteen poems which represent a domestic animal, and an honey bee. The title of each narrative poem is the voice produced by each animal. A poem about the cat, for instance, is entitled "ሚያው ሚያው ሚያው" Miyaw, Miyaw, Miyaw: about the dog: "ው ው ው..." - Wu, Wu, Wu, about the Cow: "እምቧ እምቧ እምቧ" - "Embua, 'Embua, 'Embua.

The author has used a prologue and an epilogue to give his work wholeness. In the "መቅደም" - Maqdem (Prologue) he narrates how he became wealthy and came to own a large number of domestic animals. Initially he bought a hen for one Ala'd (25cents) which produced fifteen eggs. He sold all the eggs for 15 Alads, and purchased a female goat and an ewe. They reproduced within a short time. He sold three kids and three lambs for 27 birr and purchased a heifer. The heifer produced many offsprings and he became the owner of cattle, horses, mules, poultry and bee hives.

At this time the farmer asks these domestic animals and the bees what they feel about him. Then he permits the domestic animals to utter their discontent One by one. Beginning from the cow, each explains its mistreatment by humans. The animals included in the book are the following: the Cow, the Ox, the Sheep, the Goat, the Donkey, the Horse, the Mule, the Camel, the Dog, the Cat, the Cock, and the Bee.

No other anthology of its kind has been written during the last five decades. It is the only anthology of Amharic poems written for children.

Kabada Mik'a'el's ታላላቅ ሰዎች - T'al'al'aq Sawoch is considered to be the first biographical book intended for school children. However, one must note that there were short biographical pieces in **Tarkenna Messale** on Socrates and Aesop for example. But these consist of only an episode or two of their life.

Beginning from the end of the 1940's to the middle of the 1960's E.C. a rapid development of children's literature was taken place. Many books from European and other countries were translated into Amharic. In 1947 E.C. a proper collection of Aesop's fables was published entitled ከኤሶፕ ተረቶች - kaesop Taratoch (From Aesop Tales) by Kabada Managasha. In 1950's E.C. አንድ ሺ ከአንድ ሌሊት And shi Ka And Lelit (A Thousand and one Nights), that is from the Arabian Nights, by Lamma Balaynah, አፍንጮ - Afnecho (Pinocio) by Lamma Fayissa in 1952 E.C. were published. Both the simplified versions of Daniel Defoe's ሮቢንሰን ክሩሶ Robinson Crusoe), and Johnathan Swift's የጋሊቪየር ጉዞዎች (Guliver's Travels) were published by Amara Mamo in 1963 E.C.

Biographical books also received proper attention during this period, thanks to the publications of the books through the cooperation of the Ministry of Education and the American Aid Programme, after ten years of the publication of Ta'la'l'aq Sawoch. The books published during this period include: ታላላቅ መንገደኞች Ta'la'la'q Mangedanoch (The Great Travelers,) ታላላቅ የሀይማኖት መሪዎችና ሐይማኖቶች Ta'la'la'q Yahaimanot Mariwochnna Haymanotoch (The world's Great Religious Leaders and Religions) የቀለም ሰዎች Yaqalam Sawoch (Men of Letter) የአፍሪካና የእስያ ታላላቅ መሪዎች YaAfrikanna YaEsseya Ta'la'la'q Mariwoch (The Great Leaders of Africa and Asia), and የአውሮፓና የአሜሪካ ታላላቅ መሪዎች

YaAurop'ann'a Yam'erika Ta'la'aq Mariwoch (The Great Leaders of Europe and America.)

These biographical books were widely used in elementary schools until the outbreak of the revolution. Only one biographical children's book was published after the revolution, and that was Lenin's. Among the important books published is **Ta'la'la'q Yahaymanot Mariwochnna Haymanotoch** which includes six of the world's great religions and their leaders: Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Christianity, and Islam. The book narrates not only the history of each religion, but also quotes their important teachings in simple day to day language.

During this period also, a book with a new approach was published: **ለማና ዘመዶቹ** - Lammanna Zamadochu (Lamma and His Relatives). The story revolves around Lamma in different settings. The trilogy follows Lamma in his home, Lamma at the market, and Lamma in school. Such books enable children to follow the story piece by piece, and makes them curious to read the next one.

Unlike the earlier periods new stories with elements of modern narration crop up during this period. Baemnat's **ልጅነት ተመልሶ አይመጣም** - Lejenat Tamaleso Aymat'am, (Childhood Never Comes Back), and Takla Mariam's **አጫጭር ልብወለድ ታሪኮች** Achach'er Lebbewalad Tarikoch (Short Stories) are the two.

The stories in **Ach'ah'er Lebbewalad Ta'rikoch**, are significantly different from those of oral folktales in their narrative pattern, narrative style (language), and character portrayal, as indicated in Daraja's "Folk-tale Tradition vis-a-vis Modern Narrative Style in Amharic Children's Stories" (Daraja, pp. 5-9)

The stories, five in number, in **Ach'ach'er Lebbewalad Tarikoch** differ from

the tales compiled in Enqelf Lam'en'e in that they contain more descriptions, (of character, and setting). Characters are given real names unlike the tales which use allegorical ones. The stories are set in the present unlike those tales which start with (once upon a time...) "Kaelatat and qan."

Regarding the narration, all the five stories in **Acha'cher Lebbewolad Tarikoch** utilize paragraphs of more than on hundred words to introduce their setting while for example, the tale entitled "**አንድ መኅተቤና አንድ ነብር**" and Manakusena Naber" (A monk and A tiger) uses only eighteen words.

After this period until the end of the 1960's and the beginning of 1970's (E.C.) the publication of children's books in Amharic becomes scarce except for a few translated works coming from the ex Soviet Union. The publication's literature ceases for the next five years, between 1970's and 1976 E.C.

From 1977 E.C. onward publication resumes. The post revolution period is ostensible in the development of children's literature in Amharic. Two major activities are undertaken during this period. First , the starting of children's drama; second, the conducting of research.

When we assess children's books published in the post revolution period, (1966 E.C. - 1983 E.C.) we come across significant studies. Unlike the pre-revolution period, different institutions such as Kuraz Publishing Agency, EMPDA (Educational Materials Production and Distribution Agency), and Raduga Book Publishing House, among others, restarted publishing children's books.

In 1974 E.C, Kuraz started to publish literary works. Four years later in 1978 E.C. it formed a children's books publication section.

Up to June 1983 E.C. Kuraz published 19 children's books. Among these, 7 are translated from foreign languages, three are collections of folk-tales and the other nine are original stories. The total number of copies of the 19 books amounts to 348,840. The highest number of copies of one book is 30,000 and the least one amounts 15,000. There are 8 books published in 15,000 copies each.

out of the 348,840 copies, only 143,280 copies, about 38% were sold up to June 1983 E.C.. Regarding the price of the books we can summarize the following:

	<u>Price</u>	<u>No. of Books</u>
1.)	Less than or equal to 1 Birr	9
2.)	1.05 - 1.50 Birr	5
3.)	1.55 - 1.95 Birr	1
4.)	2.00 - 2.50 Birr	2
5.)	2.55 - 3.00 Birr	2

This shows that almost 50% of the 19 books have the price of less than or equal to one Birr. However, the selling price of some books amounts to more than 15% of their publication cost. The following table proves this:

Title	No.of Copies	Total Publication Printing	Cost of Price	Selling Margin	Profit
			One Book		
Lafontaine	20,000	12,095.01	0.60	1.50	0.90
Wededder	25,260	9,178.46	0.34	1.00	0.66
Yagechelle Meda	15,000	5,400.00	0.36	1.10	0.74

The minimum profit for one book amounts to about 44.1% of its publication cost. Although the amount of gross profit seems to be very high, all the expenses including author's royalty, salary of employees, transportation cost, and others are expected to be covered out this profit since the government does not subsidize such enterprises giving special consideration.

EMPDA, Educational Materials Production and Distribution Agency, is another institution, under the Ministry of Education, that has played a significant role in the development of children's literature during the post revolution period. The institute publishes children's books as supplementary reading materials. EMPDA is the only organization that has paid due attention to the promotion of research papers that deal with children's literature. Regarding the publications of children's books, EMPDA has published 9 books, all written in Amharic, totalling 201,000 copies until 1983 E.C.

The third institution that has played an important role in the publication of the post revolution children's books is Raduga publishing House. It is a Russian institute that has published not less than 20 Amharic children's books translated from the ex-

Soviet languages. These books comprise of many types: such as information books, biographical books, folk tales, and realistic stories. In this respect, we may say that Raduga is more successful than the two domestic institutions in presenting varieties of books for children.

Maxim Gorkey, Alexi Tolstoi, and Lev Tolstoy are some of notable writers whose works, written for children, were published by Raduga. Tesfay'e Lamma, an Ethiopian is the translator of most of these books. The other two notable translators are Hailu Mamo and Kasa Gabra-Hiwot.

Between 1966 E.C. and 1983 E.C., 71 children's books were published in Amharic including both original and translated works.

Other publishers such as Ethiopian Book Center, Progress Book Publishing Agency, and the Soviet Foreign Books Publishing House have also published about 27% of the total post-revolution publications.

Some pre-revolution Amharic children's books were republished during this period. The following table presents a general picture of their classifications:

Type of Books	Total Number	Folk-tale collections	Information books	Remarks
Written in Amharic (original)	34	5	4	a)8 books are not specified in age b)there is only 1 biographical work
Translated Books	37	8	8	
Total	71	13	12	

2.3 Children's Drama in Amharic

The tradition of telling oral stories to children could be as old as the society itself. Although publishing story books intended for children in Amharic has been exercised for about seven decades, the tradition of producing drama for children is a recent phenomenon, which is only 12 years.

This doesn't mean, however, that there were no dramatic activities in schools before. In this paper I use the phrase. "children's drama" for those works written or translated and produced in a proper (professional) Theaters taking children as the target audience.

The first children's drama production in Amharic is ግብረ ገብረ (The Brave), The play was translated from the German by a group of actors and staged in three Addis Ababa theaters: the National Theatre, Ras Theatre, and the Addis Ababa Theatre and Cultural Hall. Thus, the history of staging, properly, children's drama in Ethiopia begins from 1975 E.C. although the very first play "Fabula" by Bajirond T/Hawaryat was staged by children actors in 1916 E.C. However, the target audience of this play was adult but not children.

The play, **Gobaze**, is about the class struggle between the feudal lord and the peasant. The story Gobaze, depicts the peasant, Gobaze, with his comrades struggling to over throw the feudal yoke and to be liberated. The dialogue propagates Marxist ideology based on "from each according to his ability, to each according to his necessity."

Following this, in 1976 E.C., another play, ጸጸል - Ts'ada'l (Brightness) was

staged in Hagar Feqer Theatre. The play was adapted from a Bulgarian children's play by Altaya Warq Zalaqa. It is about two girls: the one from a rich family and the other from a poor family. It is also partial towards the girl from the poor family who is better mannered and sympathetic than the girl from the rich family. 1977 E.C. was more productive than the previous two years in which two children's plays were staged, **ጃርትና ጥንቸል** - Jartenn'a T'enchal (The porcupine and the Hare) in the National Theatre, and **የተራራው ነፋስ** - Yatar'ara'w Nef'as (The Mountains Wind) in the Ras Theatre.

Both plays were translated from foreign children's plays - Jartenn'a T'enchal from German, and Yatar'ar'aw Nef'as from Bulgarian. The latter was taken from the story published in Amharic in **ሁለተኛው የንባብ መጽሐፍ**, Hulattana'w Yaneb'ab Mas'ehafe (My second Reading Book) entitled "Yasam'en Nef'as (Northern Wind), in 1952 E.C.

After four years, in 1978 E.C., we come to the first original children's play in Amharic written by Hayela Mariam Sayefu. The play, **አንበሴ** Anbase (The Lion) was, directed by Kebaba Magarsa, and staged in the National Theatre, in 1978 E.C.

Anbase utilizes animal characters of folk tales. The playwright writes in his "Notes" that "the play teaches the morals of living in peace, work through eliminating sloth, jealousy, prejudice, and the like, from the mind..."

The five characters in Anbase: **አንበሴ** Anbase (the lion), **ጅቦ** Jibo (the hyena), **ጦጢት** T'oti't (the ape), **ኤሊ** Eli (the tortoise), and **ንቢት** Nebit (the bee) depict allegorically different characteristics of human being. Anbase is the powerful king, Jibo is the voracious eater, Totit is the conniver, Eli is the slow sluggard, and

Nebit is the hardworking and disciplined worker.

The drama tells the story of how the three characters, Jibo, Totit, and Eli, went to the kingdom of Anbase to steal his property. But they fall under anbase's custody. Nebit here supports Anbase. Then Anbase flogs all the three criminals till they beg him for forgiveness and Anbase releases them with a final warning and admonishment.

The second original children's play in Amharic was staged in 1918 E.C., after three years of the first production of Anbase. The play ደዮ Doyo, is also written by Hayla Mariyam Sayefu and directed by Ababa Kabada. It was staged in the Ras Theatre.

Unlike **Anbase** its subject matter is about family life, and both human beings and talking animals are depicted. Among the human characters Doyo, an eleven year old child, is the leading character in the play. The others are his mother, Berqe and his father Zabonch. The two domestic animals depicted in the play are Wuro (The Cat) and Buchi (The Dog) that are represented as members of the family. Totit is also depicted in this play as the wise counterpart.

By and large, only sixteen children's plays have been produced in Amharic till 1986 E.C. Out of these plays ten of them are translated from other foreign languages. The following table indicates the over all picture of children's plays produced in Amharic between 1975 E.C. and 1986 E.C.

No	Title of the play	Year in E.C	Play wright's Name	Translator's Name	Director's Name	Staged In
1	Gobaze (The Brave) *	1975	Not indicated	Acotrs in group	Hunsclier Shmit	Ras, National, and Addis Ababa Theatre halls
2	S'adal (The Brightness)*	1976	Alfonso Sostre	Altaya Warq Zalaqa	Alishumume Ibrahim	Ras Theatre
3	Jartenna T'enchal (The Porcupine and The Hare)*	1977	not indicated	Gadlu Asagedaw	Peter Inzkat	National Theatre
4	Anbase (The Lion)	1978	Hayla Ma'ryam Sayefu		Kebaba Magarsa	National Theatre
5	Yatara'raw Nefa's (The wind of the Mountain)	1977	Nadya Trenda Filova	Alishumume Ibrahim	Alishumume Ibrahim	Ras Theatre
6	Aratu Muziqanoch (the four Musicians)*	1979	Peter Inzkat	Gadlu Asgedaw	Peter Inzkat	Hagar Freqer Theatre
7	Timi (Timi)*	1979	Boris Aprilov	Gadlu Asegedaw	Wolfgang Austberg	National Theatre
8	Fala'sfawa (The philospher Woman)	1980	Clary Boico	Alamayahu G/Hitot	Getnat Eneyaw	National Theatre
9	Gobazu Lebs Safi (The Brave Tailor)*	1981	Wolfgang Austerberg	Gedlu Asegedaw	Adis Hezqyas	Hagar Feqer Theatre
10	Doyo (Doyo)	1981	Ha'yla Ma'riya'm Sayefu		Altaya Warq Zalaqa	Ras Theatre
11	Dimtu Bakatama (Dimtu at Town)	1981	Tashoma Berhanu		Ababa Kabada	National Theatre
12	Yazenabua Emabet (Mistress of Rain)*	1982	Iva Mariyana	Millyon Tsegab	Adis Hezqyas	Children's and youth Theatre
13	Yaganfo Tarara (The Mountain of Genfo)	1982	Alamayahu G/Hiwot		Mosisa Qajela	Children's and youth Theatre
14	Yaenqula'l W'afcho (The Mill of Egg)*	1983	Mary Francis	Hayla Mariyam Sayefu	Ababa Kabada	Children's and Youth Theatre
15	Malakote (Malakote)	1984	Abonah Ashagre		Azeb Kabada	Children's and Youth Theatre
16	Abamala (The Clever)	1986	Efrem Baqala			Children's Youth Theatre

*Translated children's play from foreign Languages

Writing original children's drama in Amharic has not yet developed compared with children books in Amharic. It is highly dominated by translated works, out of the 16 staged dramas only 6 of them are originally written in Amharic.

In addition, there is no any dramatic script published to be read and/or to be played by children.

The assessment we have dealt in this chapter gives the highlight of the general trend that the tradition of publishing children's books in Amharic had gone through. The periods, which we have divided in to four, shall give a concrete ground for further detail study in different aspects of the genre.

In the next chapter we will going to evaluate and summarize the general situation of children's literature in Amharic.

CHAPTER THREE

Evaluation of Children's Book in Amharic and Recommendations.

Compared with the publications history of children's books in other countries, Britain for example, our experience is a recent one. It is only seventy years since the first children's book in Amharic was published, while Britain has more than 500 years experience. About 145 children's books have been published in Ethiopia until 1984 E.C. Out of these, about 44 % of them were published as text books.

We can say that the publication of children's books before the Italian invasion was almost non-existent, for only three books were published till then (1916 - 1928 E.C.) It is due to the fact that the education of Ethiopian children was given priority after the country was liberated that the publication of children's books commenced in earnest.

In this respect the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts took, and still does for that matter, the responsibility for publishing books for children, in order to start the formal education of children. The books produced by the Ministry are either texts or supplementary reading materials. Important contributors of these publications include Kabada Mikael, Tekla - Mariyam Fantaye, and Maaze Kabada (compiler).

We accost the difficulty of identifying the proper age classification during the early period. Children were enrolled in schools at the early age of 5 or 6 years old, or as late as 15 or 16. This created a difficult situation for the authors in determining the contents of their books.

One may assume that the writers were playing a medium role between the younger and the older students in selecting their topics and content. On the other hand, since the traditional church school scripts, which the authors had passed through, were not originally written for children, the contemporary writers lacked the experience to differentiate between the materials to be written for children and those to be rendered to adults.

Earlier children's books in Amharic constitute of mostly, Aesop's and La Fontaine's fables. The later publications were also influenced by them. Translating and/or adopting these fables was more common in the pre-revolution periods (1916 - 1966 E.C.) than in the post - revolution periods because of the intensive importation of translated children's stories from the ex-Soviet Union with which Ethiopia had an ideological tie.

The total number of books translated from foreign sources is almost equal to those supposed to be 'original' books for children in Amharic. Among these publications many are translated books from the ex-Soviet Union. These comprise about 32% of the total publications, from 1916 up to 1984 E.C., of children's book in Amharic.

In regard to the formatting and content of the books, the researcher is not satisfied as a whole because most of them were published without giving due attention to important factors. The books published in the fourth period (post revolution time) such as Bolabo, and Mushrawa Ayt', have shown remarkable improvement in the covering, lettering, and illustration technique compared with the books published during the previous periods. However, some earlier books such as Sela Enesat

Agalgetot La Hes'anat Barakat, Lamanna Zamadochu and the other two sequential books are to be commended for their lettering, illustration, and story presentation.

The subject matter of the early books are beyond the capacity of the children because the writers are highly eager to inculcate in the minds of the children such difficult and boring issues like politics, lands tenure, resettlement programme and so on. In addition, they lack adventure stories, and are highly inclined to be more educational than entertaining.

Language is the common problem of almost all of the books. They use difficult words, un common idioms and proverbs, and complex sentence structure.

By and large the researcher recommends the following points which could be of help for the development of children's literature in Ethiopia, in general, and in Amharic in particular:

The first point that ought to be considered is the peoples' awareness of the 'child's world. The situation in Ethiopia can not be different from other developing countries or societies. Here, in Ethiopia, children are taken as "incomplete adults." Hence children are expected to behave or emulate the tastes of adults. Proverbs such as "Yalej nagar hulat fere andu besel andu t'ere" (A child is like two fruits one ripe the other green); "lej Yabokaw larat ayebaqam" (what a child has cooked does not last to dinner), and so on.. demonstrate this view. Unless the identity of the child is properly understood, it is yet too early to expect fast progress in the publication of children's literature in Ethiopia.

The other point is the establishing of facilities such as publishing agencies and libraries of children's books which we are lacking at present. We should at least have

separate sections of children's books in the libraries so that parents could borrow books for their sons and daughters.

Except for Meri Jaefar, there is no one who has set themselves to be writers of children's books. Writers, journalists, educational experts, and so on, write children's books not as their primary goal, but as part time work. This trend out to be changed, and the government should provide subsidies for publishing costs and royalty payments for the authors.

The more the variety and the number of children's books published, the more society becomes acquainted with the subject. Not only books for children, but other related literary activities such as criticism, reviewing, study papers, and so on must flourish. Language and literature departments of Addis Ababa University and teachers training colleges should include the subject in their curriculum either as a course or, at least as a part of a course. This helps to make the graduates aware of the need for children's literature and arouse them to promote it.

Original works based on a variety of traditional folktales are more useful than translations as they sound closer home and cultivate and propagate the cultural roots of the nation.

By and large publishing books for children in Amharic, has not developed as fully as it ought to have during the last seven decades. It needs the high attention of the government and scholars alike for the future depends on nurturing the minds of the children.

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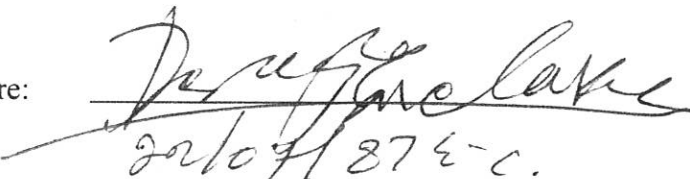
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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my work and that all sources of material used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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