

**A Bibliography of BA Theses on Oral Literature**  
**Submitted to the Department of Ethiopian**  
**Languages and Literature,**  
**Addis Ababa University**

Fäqadä Azäzä  
Department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This bibliography is an updated version of the one prepared in 1984 and included in the paper "Ethiopian Oral Literature: a preliminary review and bibliography", presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, held from Nov. 26-30/1984. In its earlier form, the bibliography included entries from the following sources: Ethiopian oral literature published in various European journals, books published in Ethiopian and foreign languages, theses, articles written on Ethiopian oral literatures, and a list of oral literature collections in the Department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature, and the Ministry of Culture. It tried to include the material obtained upto 1984. Here, only the theses of the Department on oral literature are presented.

**2.0 THESIS**

The staff and students of the Department have made considerable effort in the study of Ethiopian Languages and Literatures. The B.A. theses produced in the Department testify to this claim. However, these works are unknown to many Ethiopian and expatriate scholars although they are shelved in IES, Kennedy and ILS libraries in AAU. This is the first publication of a list of theses written on the oral literatures of Ethiopian nationalities. Further effort needs to be made towards the publication of the bibliography of theses on Ethiopian languages and literature submitted to the Department and the Department of Linguistics.

The theses on oral literature are written in Amharic. Almost all of them have an introductory section where they inform the reader about the nationality they write about: its history, geography, language, customs etc.

The oral literature material collected in the language of a nationality is transliterated in the alphabet used to write Geez, Amareña, Tegrēña etc. A translated version in Amareña (Amharic) is included in the appendix of each thesis along with the one written in the nationality language.

The bibliography is alphabetically arranged by language. When the entry under each language is more than one these are arranged chronologically.

The bibliography has 163 entries. Of these 87 are on various types of oral poetry (wedding songs, love songs, dirges, children's poetry, war chants, work songs, poems of litigation etc.): 15 are on proverbs, 14 on names, 12 on lullaby and riddles, 11 on idioms and customary sayings, 10 on folktales, 8 on blessings and curses, and 6 on jokes.

The distribution by language is as follows 73 on Amareña, 25 on Oromo, 12 on Tegraña, 9 on Sidama, 7 on Guragé, 5 on Wälaytta, 5 on Kestané, 4 on Adäré, 4 on Hadiya, 3 on Kāmbata, 2 on Kāfa, 2 on Gamo, and one on each nationality language of Agāw, Ari, Burji, Māsqaṇ, Qottu, Gédéwo, Selté, Selté and Azärenāt Bārbäré, Géto, Gofa, Somalé and Guji.

### 3.0 TRANSLITERATION

Attempt has been made to translate the titles of the theses for the benefit of the expatriate reader. The names of nationalities are presented here as they were presented in the titles. The symbols used for the transliteration of names in Ethiopian languages are as follows.

#### 3.1 Vowels

ä	pronounce as the 'u' in 'burn'
u	pronounce as the 'u' in 'pull'
i	pronounce as the 'i' in 'fig'
a	pronounce as the 'a' in 'fag'
é	pronounce as the 'e' in 'bell'
e	pronounce as the second 'e' in 'even'
o	pronounce as the 'o' in 'scold'

#### 3.3 Consonants

The following consonants are difficult to pronounce for speakers of English, French, Italian etc. The nearest alternative is given to provide these readers with slight clues of pronunciation.

q †	(read as 'k') eg. Fäqadä as Fäkadä
† m	(read as 't') eg. †älla (meaning, 'a kind of home brewed beer') as tālla (meaning 'it rotted')

- ረ ጫ read as the 'ch' in 'chance'  
 ሸ ፀ (read as 's') eg. ሸጋላ (meaning 'one who prays') as ሸጋላ (meaning 'one who spies')  
 ሸ ጥ read as the 'gn', in 'gagner', in French.

The following consonants are not so difficult to pronounce. The sounds the symbols represent are indicated below.

- ሸ ሸ read as the 'sh' in 'shame'  
 ሸ ጥ read as the 'ch' in 'chain'  
 ሸ ጥ read as the 'g' in 'genuflect'

Gemination of consonants is shown by doubling. Eg. Bäqqälä, tälla, etc.

#### 4.0 BIBLIOGRAPHIES

The interest in oral literature has increased during the last fifteen years. Some books have been published. Proverbs, riddles, oral poems and short tales are published in newspapers and magazines, and transmitted in various radio programmes more frequently than before. Folk music and poetry have become the unacknowledged but the major sources of material and inspiration for the popular music recorded in cassettes for the market. Bibliographies of the books and articles published have been submitted as theses to the Department. There are other works too.

Samuél Endalä's thesis (1990) has tried to examine the problem of oral literature terminology in various writings. The recent article by Säyfu Mättäfärya (June 1993), published in Journal of Ethiopian Studies, discussed the problem of folklore terminology indicating the ground work he has done towards the preparation of a folklore dictionary. These two works, especially the latter, indicate how fast the field is expanding. Moreover the number of theses dealing with the creative use of proverbs, riddles, folktales, superstitions etc. in Amharic novels, plays, poems etc. is increasing. Some of the theses in the Department of Theatre Arts have started studying the folkloric nature of traditional drama. Since my bibliography focuses on the theses that collect and analyse oral literature these works are not included here. However, the bibliographies that bear the phrase 'oral literature' or 'folklore' are listed below for the benefit of researchers in these areas.

- 1983: Fäqadä Azäzä: "A survey, review, and bibliography of studies on Ethiopian oral literature." Mimeographed. 53 pages. Since the work deals with Ethiopian contributions to the field, only the

entries in Ethiopian languages are included. (The review, written in Amharic, is 42 pages long. The bibliography is eleven pages.)

- 1984: Fäqadä Azäzä: "Ethiopian oral literature: a preliminary review and bibliography." Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Nov. 26-30/1984. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Mimeographed. 56 pages. (The review, written in English, is twenty pages long. The bibliography is thirty-six pages.)
- 1986: Däggenäš Bullo, "An annotated bibliography of Amharic articles and books on oral literature." B.A. Thesis, Department of Ethiopian languages and literature.
- 1990: Élyas Ayällä: "An annotated bibliography of articles on folklore published in Yäkatit, Yäzarévetu Ityopya, and Addis Zämän - 1974-1988." (Yäkatit is an Amharic magazine; Yäzarévetu is a weekly newspaper in Amharic; Addis Zämän is a daily Amharic newspaper).
- October  
1992: Umär Hussén: " An Annotated bibliography of articles on language and folklore published in Zéna Lessan and Zéna Bahel." (Both are Amharic magazines published by the Ministry of Culture)

These bibliographies have methodological problems. Däggenäš's thesis was submitted in 1986, two years after Fäqadä's bibliography. Since her work is closely related to a section of his bibliography, one expects her to start by reviewing an existing work. However, Däggenäš simply mentions his work without recognising its contributions and/or its deficiencies. To make things worse, Élyas Ayala fails even to mention the work in his list of bibliographies prepared after Fäqadä's. Such kind of oversight, assuming it is, invites confusion in this budding area of research in the country. If it is deliberate, to say the least, it is unethical. It is hoped that future researchers, students or otherwise, will seriously note this. After all aren't we just starting?

## 5.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THESES BY LANGUAGE

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1971: Berhanu Kenfu, Amharic idioms.  
1971: Gulelat Abärra, Proper (personal) names of Gojjam.  
1971: Taddäsä Mänggestu, Gojjam dirges.  
1972: Gošu Mogäs, Begging (Beggar's) songs in Amharic.  
1973: Šibäsi Lamma, The old esät-agäba form of litigation.  
1976: Dänäqāw Asayä, Amharic poems from the province of Gojjam.  
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1976: Rätta Alāmayāhu, Qalleča poems in Amharic.  
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- 1982: Engeda W/Sä'mayat, Folktales I heard in Amareña in the district of Čelalo.
- 1982: Gäddefäw Walä, A study of blessings from Gondär province.
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