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Article

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Ethiopian TV Drama: Development from Moot-Court Rudimentary Viewing to Screening Advanced Serial

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Introduction

Ethiopia had enjoyed indigenous performing and visual arts over the last three millennia when the experience of theater and screen media was imported from Europe recently in the twentieth century. Cinema was introduced to Ethiopia by an expatriate diplomat in 1897 during the reign of Emperor Menelik II,¹ and the art of stage play was borrowed from Europe by Täklä Hawar‘at Täklä Mariyam (= Tekle Hawariat Tekle Mariyam), who was sent to Russia for military training by the Emperor and stayed in England and France as a visitor. Upon his return he produced ፋብላ የአውሬዎች ኮሚዲያ (*Fabula: Yä’awrewočč komediya*, ‘Fable: The comedy of animals’) in Addis Ababa in 1921.² Television drama is the most recent artistic form that began in Ethiopia, just six decade ago, after the establishment of a television station in Addis Abäba with the technical support of a British company.

A number of dissertations, books, and research articles have been produced on the topic of theatre arts by expatriate and local scholars, such as Akalu Getaneh, Albert Gérard, Debebe Seifu, Galina Balashova, Jane Plastow, Tesfaye Gessese, Thomas Kane, as well as the present author.³ Similarly, film has been studied by researchers such as Alessandro Jedlowski, Greg Thomas, Michael Thomas, Steven Thomas, Tekletsadik Belachew, and again the present author.⁴ In contrast, only a little literature has dealt with the subject of Ethiopian television drama, excluding the work of Bitania Tadesse, Dereje Mekonnen, Bonsa Shume, Addisalem Taye, Kate Cowcher, Meseret Chekol, and the present author.⁵

¹ Aboneh Ashagrie 2016.

² Aboneh Ashagrie 2012.

³ See, for example, Aboneh Ashagrie 2020; Akalu Getaneh 1981; Gérard 1968; Debebe Seifu 1988; Balashova 2012; Plastow 1996; Täsfaye Gässäšä [= Tesfaye Gessese] 1970; Kane 1975.

⁴ See, for example, Thomas 2011; Thomas et al. 2018; Thomas 2020; Tekletsadik Belachew 2017.

⁵ See, e.g., Aboneh Ashagrie 2000/2001; Aboneh Ashagrie 2004/2005; Bitania Tadesse 2018; Cowcher 2018; Dereje Mekonnen Lammi et al. 2019; Meseret Chekol Reta 2013.

Although six decades may seem relatively short, what has been accomplished over this time with regards to Ethiopian television drama is significant. Further study of TV drama, including its various courses of development, would add to our knowledge at Ethiopian universities in particular and African as well as international universities in general.

Thus, this research has been conducted to explore the developmental stages and features of Ethiopian television drama with respect to its socio-economic and political milieu by marking the production and exhibition of the serial *ገሙና* (*Gāmāna*, ‘Private secret’) as a turning point in the history of the national screen media. This study, which pays special attention to *Gāmāna* as a case-study, will illustrate the development and dynamic nature of Ethiopian television drama through which it accords with the global order.

The Beginning: The Imperial Era

Ethiopian television service was first established during the time of Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase, with the technical support of the British company, Thames Television, to transmit the foundation summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Abāba on 1 May 1963. Regular television broadcasting began six months later, on 2 November 1964, coinciding with the 34th anniversary of the Emperor’s Coronation Day.⁶ Ethiopian Television (ETV) then began to stream news, music, sport, and western films by British technicians, mostly for three hours a day between 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. Almost 80% of airtime was covered by western films. Drama was a latecomer, starting with the release of a camera-captured moot-court session conducted on a weekly basis by law students of the Haile Sellasie I University.⁷ Being motivated by the positive attitude and response from the audience, ETV targeted public theaters as a rich source for transmitting recorded stage dramas. As a result, the Arts’ Evening Program was set to disseminate variety shows once a week for 30 minutes, in which recorded stage plays of Šäggaye Gäbrāmādhən (=Tsegaye Gebremedihn), Mängəstu Lämman (= Mengistu Lemma), Mulugeta Mäkbəb, Asfa Libän (= Asfa Liben), Täsfaye Abbäbä (= Tesfaye Abebe), Wägayyāhu Nəgatu (= Wegayehu Nigatu), and Däbbäbä Əšātu (= Debebe Eshetu) often competed⁸ to reach the bulk of society who was

⁶ Aboneh Ashagrie 2004/2005; Meseret Chekol Reta 2013.

⁷ Selamu Bekele, interview by the author, Law School, Addis Ababa University (14 February 1988). Selamu Bekele was a professor of law at Addis Ababa University. He performed the main character of the English version of Šäggaye Gäbrāmādhən’s *Tewodros* in front of Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase when he was a law student at Haile Sellasie I University in 1962.

⁸ In 2010 the author personally visited ETV’s Ethiopian Television Archive in Addis Abāba for this research.

not financially privileged to attend play productions at the Haile Sellasie I Theater and the Hagär Fəqər Tiyatər.

The third and brand-new transition in Ethiopian television that occurred in the 1960s was the departure from screening stage plays in order to take torpid steps towards the threshold of professionalism with the production of **ለጅሃው** (*Ləḡəyyāw*, ‘The boy’), an original TV script written by Pawlos Ñño (= Paulos Gnogno) that portrayed exterior scenes. The trend continued with scripts written by Wəbəšät Wārqałämmaw.⁹ Critics of the time pointed out that the quality of those TV dramas did not meet the established standard. According to Solomon Deressa,¹⁰ the famous **እኔና ሀያ ሰባት ገረዶች** (*Enenna haya säbatt gārādočče*, ‘Me and my twenty-seven maids’) did not delimitate the technical variance between stage and TV drama. It was rather packed with too much monologue and long dialogue that lacked dramatic action and was too instructive as well.

TV drama in a real sense obtained an expert’s touch with Wändwäsän Gäbrä-yäsus,¹¹ an employee of the Ministry of Information who was sent to Cologne, Germany, to study radio and TV drama for two years. Upon his return in 1970, Wändwäsän Gäbräyäsus was assigned as director of Journey of Arts, a weekly radio entertainment program that would broadcast over 100 dramas within the next five years. As both the radio and TV entertainment programs were run under the auspices of the Ministry of Information, Wändwäsän assisted in producing other script writers’ work and his own, which improved the quality of TV drama with his acquired knowledge and skill of writing, directing, and editing.¹²

Despite the growing popularity of TV dramas and the increase in audience, very few residents of Addis Abāba had direct access to TV dramas, as a television set at the time was expensive and prestigious property owned exclusively by the royal family, the aristocracy, and the upper middle-class strata. The only alternative for the bulk of the common people devoid of a TV set was to watch dramas at bars and pay twice as much for beverages or go to their neighbours and relatives’ homes. There was no restriction on admission for guests, and anyone familiar to the owners of TVs was welcomed to join, often filling the entire space of the living room. As the number of chairs in a room to be designated for adults was limited compared to the number of guests, the sitting place for children was on the

⁹ Aboneh Ashagrie 2004/2005.

¹⁰ Solomon Derresa 1969.

¹¹ Wändwäsän Gäbräyäsus was also a talented stage actor who died in 1981 right on the Ethiopian National Theatre stage while performing as the main character in Bərhanu Zārihun’s *Moräš*.

¹² Aboneh Ashagrie 2004/2005.

floor. The social norm never allowed owners of a TV set to complain about privacy, overpopulation, or the suffocation of their living room.¹³

TV Drama During *Därg*

After the fall of Emperor Ḥaylā Šəllase's regime and the sequestration of state power by the *Därg* military government in 1974, the need to utilize mass media for disseminating propaganda escalated. As a result, an additional satellite radio and TV station was established at Sululta, some 25 km away from Addis Abäba, to expand the range of transmission to nearby towns, such as Däbrä Zäyt (Bishoftuu), Moḡo, Nazret (Adaama), Mätähara, and Wängi.

In spite of this, new TV dramas were not produced for two years due to the government's intention to prioritize the spreading of state ideology. The directive issued by the military government in 1975 gave emphasis to propaganda that adversely affected free expression and artistic productivity.¹⁴ It was decreed that 80% of airtime should focus on socialist ideology. Accordingly, a few agit-prop sketches and dramas that had been shown in the past were occasionally aired in 1976 and 1977 from the studio archive. Haimanot Alemu, Wagayehu Nigatu, and Däbbäbä Əšätu (= Debebe Eshetu), who had acquired drama education in the USA and Europe, witnessed that the level of television drama had deteriorated since the abrupt end of the Ethiopian Revolution.¹⁵

The remarkable transitional development of Ethiopian television drama transpired after two years under Teferi Bizuayehu,¹⁶ who studied screen arts in Moscow and Vienna and was permanently employed by Ethiopian Television to run the entertainment program. Teferi Bizuayehu's contribution was significant in producing artistically elevated TV dramas by daring to liberate TV drama from political domination. In the process, he took the art to the next level by motivating playwrights and stage actors to differentiate their style between stage and screen drama and to perform their roles accordingly. He further made a commendable effort to ameliorate the production with camera technique and editing skills in collaboration with Afäwärq Mana and Əmərü Wäldä. The audience thus enjoyed over fifteen well-produced TV dramas. Teferi Bizuayehu, being dissatisfied with the administration of the *Därg*, was eventually exiled to England.

A decisive historical event occurred with the change of television format from black and white to colour. It was initiated as an experiment in 1979 and launched

¹³ The writer of this paper has witnessed this occurrence since the beginning of TV viewing. It was late in 1993 that he had bought a tiny second-hand mini car TV to watch too close within a 4-foot radius.

¹⁴ *Addis Zämān* 1975.

¹⁵ *Qum nägär* 1976/1977.

¹⁶ Aboneh Ashagrie 2000/2001, 12.

as part of the regular broadcast on 12 September 1984, to mark the tenth anniversary of the Ethiopian Revolution and the founding of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE), being organized by the military government. In spite of such advancements, the television station's effort to promote TV drama remained minimal, focusing on broadcasting political issues and reporting the day-to-day activities of the government. The Ethiopian television rather reverted to the previous ten years' tradition of screening stage plays in black and white. The restriction on importing entertainment equipment did not allow those who could afford to buy one to do so. Only a handful of party cadres were privileged to buy TV sets from a duty-free shop or were permitted to bring one set tax-free upon return from short-term training in socialist countries. Not more than 2% of households owned a television during the *Därg* period.¹⁷

The decline in the interest of viewers persisted because of the tedious nature of dramas produced merely to illustrate class struggle and wars between government and 'anti-revolution groups'. The social integrity that had been established among neighbourhoods to share TV entertainment programs during the Imperial era drastically plummeted due to political disparity and the intense clandestine struggle that escalated mistrust among the general public. Owners of TV sets were not in a position to feel secure enough to welcome guests at the very time the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and the Eritrean Liberation Front / Eritrean People's Liberation Front (ELF/EPLF) had been waging urban and rural guerilla warfare against WPE members. Citizens, moreover, were not comfortable watching TV dramas in the neighbourhood in such a tense situation.

Paradigm Shift: During EPRDF

After the fall of the *Därg* in 1991, Ethiopian television evolved steadily by expanding its program by building labour and material capacity. Being well-aware of the value of mass media for power consolidation, the immediate major action that the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) took on the day it captured Addis Abäba was to declare its control over the national television station. The Marxist-Leninist-oriented EPRDF, after constituting a provisional government, then moved forward with its desire to establish a strong television service for agitation and propaganda purposes. Senior party members who had demonstrated loyalty and perseverance for guerilla propaganda during the armed struggle were assigned to execute ETV in line with the doctrine of national

¹⁷ Central Statistical Authority 2001, 13.

federalism that had been the kernel of the EPRDF's political principles. The new constitution¹⁸ that issued the 'Right of Thought, Opinion, and Freedom of Expression' in Proclamation Article 29 abolished censorship in principle.¹⁹ The western economic policy of a free market replaced socialist command economy directives with the actualization of the principles of private ownership in mass media institutions. This led to the advent of free-to-air DSTV satellite services like Nilesat from the Egyptian Satellite Co., Arabsat from Saudi Arabia, and the South African-based MultiChoice Africa, which had a positive impact on the rise of the TV audience's number and acted as a test for various TV entertainment programs streamed by BBC World, CNN, MTV, and Sky. In the meantime, electronics' shops flourished by selling TV sets, video cameras, and decoders at an affordable price for the urban middle class, thus progressively increasing the number of TV viewers. Such transformations created a conducive environment for an open variety of entertainment programs in the three major languages of Amharic, Təgrəñña, and Oromiffaa, which subsequently expanded to include other major languages of regional states.

At the early stage, all the programs that aired in different languages were disseminated from Addis Abāba, and later almost all regional states became self-sufficient by establishing their own TV and radio stations. The state-owned ETV signed an agreement with a South African private TV company for the free-to-air ETV Channel 2, to broadcast a four-hour daily program for those living in Addis Abāba, though the agreement was disrupted after a while with disinterest from the company. Fana TV and Walta TV were established by the EPRDF to run TV and radio transmissions, apparently as private entities to escape the legal provision that prohibits ownership of mass media by political organizations. The entertainment programs then were consolidated largely to cox the public into following government policies and political engagements, leading to a growing demand for TV drama production and exhibition with better quality and quantity.

Accordingly, Saturdays and Sundays became desirable days for entertainment programs that incorporated TV dramas. With the delivery of the Amharic **ኦብረ ትርጺት** (*Həbrä tər'it* [sic], 'Variety show') and *Mäto haya mäsnaña* ('120 minutes entertainment'); the Afaan Oromoo *Tabootaa* and *Dhangaa* (both meaning 'entertainment'); the Təgrəñña *Qādam misana* ('Saturday with us') and *Sānbāt misana* ('Sunday with us'), Ethiopian TV drama tended to improve both in quality and quantity. At the early stage, presentations of sketches, one-play, and mini-series dramas, mimes, which variably ran from 3 minutes to 25 minutes, became

¹⁸ *Federal Negarit Gazeta* 1995.

¹⁹ Although the abolishment of censorship has been decreed by the new constitution, rights of thought, opinion, and freedom of expression remain under the systematic control of the government.

the feature of TV programs. The recorded standup comedy of Abebe Belew, Alläbbaččaw Tākka (= Alebachew Teka), Ἴngədazār Nägga (= Engidazer Nega), Dārāḡḡā Ḥayle (= Dereje Haile), Habte Mitiku, Ləmānəḥ Taddäsä (= Limeneh Tadesse), Kəbābāw Gäda (= Kibebew Geda), and Täsḡaye Kasa (= Tesfaye Kassa) also became a source of TV entertainment in *Ḥəbrä tər 'it* and *Mäto haya mäsnaña* formats.

It was after the 1990s that drama became increasingly episodic and developed into a series format encompassing 11 to 22 episodes that ran weekly from 25 to 30 minutes in *Təgrəñña* and *Afaan Oromoo*.²⁰ In the same vein, more than 100 Amharic TV series whose sequels could not exceed six months were broadcast.

When the public demand for TV dramas progressed, entrepreneurs were motivated to pay promotional fees to government and 'private' TV channels, and in the meantime, Ethiopian Television showed more interest in airing dramas in abundance. Nonetheless, the fact that the entire production process was highly centralized by ETV, where rehearsal, shooting, and editing were carried out in a single studio, did not allow TV drama production as envisaged. The skilled labour and amount of time and space that could be devoted to composing adequate TV drama to standards were too limited. ETV then came up in 1993 with the alternative of stepping back to the tradition of exhibiting stage plays recorded from public theater platforms by allotting ETB 930,000 to buy stage productions. The skill to change stage-recorded plays to fit screen format, however, could not reach the required standard, leading to the insufficiency of the program. The mistrust between Ethiopian Television and script writers as a result of venality in the process of purchasing stage plays also contributed to the failure of the new initiative.²¹

The change in policy that urged ETV to generate income for self-sufficiency and not totally rely on government funding then pressured the administration to seek ways through which government institutions and business entrepreneurs would promote their products and services in the interval of entertainment programs. Business entrepreneurs were not attracted in the early period due to the gradual decline in the quality of ETV programs. The attention of the people rather shifted to watching western entertainment programs that were available free of charge without subscription with personal receiver dish and decoder on channels, such as MTV, Al Jazeera, CNN, and BBC World, via Nilesat, Arabsat satellite service, and the South African-based MultiChoice Africa DSTV. This increased the number of TV viewers, so that '33% of the population had watched television by 2003 and by 2005 this had risen to 51%'.²²

²⁰ Ethiopian Television Archive in Addis Abäba during the author's personal visit in 2010.

²¹ Aboneh Ashagrie 2004/2005, 5–30.

²² Gebremedhin Simon Gebretsadik 2006, 20.

Due to a lack of advertising from private investors, ETV had to collect revenue from government, NGO, and party-affiliated institutions with the imposition made by members of the executive board of ETV who were appointed by the state to retain high-party positions. This mechanism faced resistance as the cost of advertising between dramas became more expensive, with a rate of ETB 209.00 per second or ETB 100,005.00 for 30 seconds. The executive board of ETV then commissioned two professors from Addis Ababa University²³ to conduct research on the activities of the agency and propose a way in which ETV could ameliorate its productivity. As a result, the researchers proposed that the only way to attract promotion fees and improve the status of Ethiopian TV drama was by elevating the format of TV drama from one-time and mini-series formats to series, serial, and sitcom styles that would grasp the audience's emotions tightly with 52 successive episodes that would run for one year on a weekly basis. It was also proposed that TV drama productions ought to be outsourced on the basis of competition for seed money, taking into account the production capacity, skill, and knowledge of TV drama.²⁴

Beyond his lectures, the present writer as a director of the Addis Ababa University Cultural Center selected Henok Ayyälä (= Henok Ayele), Nəguṣu Getaččäw, Mika'el Miliyon (= Michael Million), Mä'aza Takkälä (= Meaza Takele), Efrem Lämman, Sälämon Mäkwännän, and Rahel Täšomä (= Rahel Teshome), who were students of theater arts and are now notable performing artists, as a writing team in 1998 EC (= 2005/2006 CE) to initiate and introduce the production of a serial drama in Ethiopia. A workshop on the methodology of writing a synopsis, a treatment, and TV serial scripts was conducted for two weeks. After a system was designed to write 52 episodes in a short period, members of the team worked diligently to fill the gap of national arts. Thorough discussions were held with enthusiasm on each draft, successive amendments made on 28 episodes, and the first season approved on consensus to the satisfaction of the team. The working spirit nonetheless abruptly deteriorated with the emergence of issues related to copyright ownership and dividend distribution, which finally led to the halt of the project.

In the meantime a serial drama competition was announced via ETV, and it was Da'amat Multimedia Production PLC, allegedly a de facto TPLF corporate branch, that won the competition. The first step Da'amat took was to organize a two-day workshop for invited performing artists on the writing and production techniques of TV Serial and Series. With the belief that script would be written

²³ The writer of this article was one of the researchers who presented two papers on the overall performances of television and radio agencies and proposed recommendations as a way forward.

²⁴ Aboneh Ashagrie 2004/2005, 16.

by employees of Mega Arts Center, a sister corporation to Da'amat, two groups were formed to explore ideas and develop a plan for a script. A three-month effort, nonetheless, did not satisfy the producer. Treatments that were submitted by individuals after the call for submission also failed to meet the demands of Da'amat. Finally, Adnew Wondirad (Adonis), an experienced writer of stage plays and film script, was commissioned to write 52 episodes. To the surprise of the producer, Adonis came up in three days with the title *Gāmāna* ('Private secret') and a synopsis of a serial, thereby becoming the first serial writer in the history of Ethiopian TV drama.²⁵

According to Oqubay Berehe,²⁶ the general manager of Da'amat and producer of *Gāmāna* I and II, the casting was so rigorous that five candidates competed for one major character. All in all, 3,000 people auditioned for 500 roles. The most challenging aspect of serial production was a shortage of production equipment. It was so difficult for Da'amat to secure the required professional cameras, costumes, props, locations, and studios that it adversely affected the quality of the production and programming of the release. A lack of dramatic action and sequencing of the story was also a challenge to overcome. Due to the good working relations and commitment of the production crew, Da'amat finally succeeded in producing a serial, *Gāmāna*, with 52 episodes that ran over two seasons.

The Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), inspired by the gradual increase of the investors' interest in advertisements and the success of the serial, later consented to exempt Da'amat from the second competition, and the contract was extended to produce a second *Gāmāna* for the year to come. *Gāmāna* II also ran for 52 weeks, though shortcomings of aesthetic quality and inconsistency in length as compared to *Gāmāna* I have been observed.

Legacy of *Gāmāna* by Way of Conclusion

A half-century voyage of TV drama that started by streaming the rudimentary moot-court exercise of Law School students of the Haile Sellasie I University on black and white television had shown a qualitative change by producing the serial *Gāmāna*, reaching the highest expression of the coloured art of screen media in 2001 EC (= 2008/2009 CE). This is historical, as it was actualized at the beginning of the Ethiopian New Millennium, flamboyantly celebrated at a national level for a year.

²⁵ Da'amat Multi-media Production 2009/2010, 42-48.

²⁶ Interview by author via telephone from Addis Abāba, 5 February 2024 with Oqubay Berehe, who currently lives in Maryland, USA.

It could be asserted that the emergence of a full-fledged serial drama in Ethiopia was intrinsically linked with the socioeconomic and political milieu that prevailed after the fall of the *Därg* military government and the power grab of EPRDF in 1991. The EPRDF government that had been advocating Marxist-Leninist's command economy was later compelled by western powers to shift its policy towards implementing a free market economy, a decisive major step that contributed to the amelioration of TV drama production. The change in government policy reinforced privatization of the arts and the declaration to abolish the censorship office. TV drama production was then outsourced to private enterprises, where the role of EBC was restricted to the tasks of commissioning and quality control. As the agency sought high income from advertising products and services amidst entertainment programs, business enterprises also tended to select quality programs for their commercials. This led to a consensus for serials that would run at least once a week for the whole year, since successive episodes would be more popular among the general public and at the same time generate a stirring income both for the producers and the broadcasters. Under these circumstances, *Gämäna* emerged as the first professional Ethiopian TV serial, giving a new dimension to national drama production. It has rightly been described as 'a major breakthrough for the Ethiopian TV industry [...] a pioneering event that crossed boundaries and took the development of the Ethiopian TV serials a step further'.²⁷

Gämäna's production and dissemination indeed became an applauded first Ethiopian TV serial, which has become exemplary for the sustainability of serial productions in the country. It rendered a multifaceted benefit to the growth of the entertainment industry. It generated intimacy between EBC, TV-goers, performing artists, and businessmen. It created a strong bond with the audience that has turned almost all bars and restaurants into viewing places where people interacted, discussing the themes and characters' interrelations. The effect of *Gämäna* has thwarted the old tradition of one-play and mini-series by establishing a cut-off point for the quality standard of Ethiopian TV drama. It has imparted the general public with more passion for the arts than ever. The TV drama tradition that challenged aesthetic competence with wearisome didactics and advocacy has been ameliorated with socially oriented themes that demonstrated better quality of entertainment. The script writing and acting practices that had unfortunately fell under the influence of stage arts have been relatively minimized. Outsourcing TV drama production against a state monopoly has been comprehended as the best way to produce entertaining works. Awareness has been created that a TV drama is beyond acting and script, and special focus must be given to trained labour in the area of production technology, such as scene design, lighting, sound, make-

²⁷ Bitania Tadesse 2018, 147.

up, costume, photography, and editing. In line with this, private academic institutions have been opened to provide training in these areas at a diploma and certificate level, and theater arts departments in state-owned universities have incorporated TV drama courses into their programs' curriculum.

Being satisfied with the artistic achievement and the revenue generated by *Gāmāna*, EBC in 2010 formed a neutral Television and Radio Drama Advisory Council²⁸ that evaluates and selects competent dramas fairly and conducts trainings for filmmakers and dramatists on techniques of writing and producing serial and sitcom dramas. As a result, working guidelines and a draft of contractual agreement were prepared by the Council and later approved by top management of EBC. Then a press conference was held to disseminate details via television for general awareness. Workshops on the technical details of TV and radio serial and series have also been conducted for selected writers and performing artists. When the actual work began, the guideline that promised rigorous competition required the submission of a synopsis and a hundred pages treatment of 52 episodes; a technical proposal to prove a full-fledged studio and proficiency of production members; and the contractual agreement that obliged producers to submit a finalized recorded episode to the Commission each week before the air date. On the one hand, the strict quality assurance procedure had been a challenge to producers of **ቤተሰብ** (*Betočč*, 'Residents'), the first full-fledged sitcom, and the serials **መለከት** (*Mäläkät*, 'Trumpet') and **ዋዜማ** (*Wazema*, 'Eve'). On the other hand, it has laid the groundwork for a tradition that will contribute to the sustainability of consumable artistic product.

The production of *Gāmāna* also intensified the need for an Ethiopian free-to-air television network, by which privatization of the television industry has historically upturned the number of private and public satellite TV stations to reach more than 50 in two decades. The first initiation was taken in 2008 by Ethiopian

²⁸ Film, Television, and Radio Drama Advisory Council members were Aboneh Ashagrie, Nebiyue Baye, both from Addis Ababa University, and Tesfaye Shimelis, General Manager of the Ethiopian National Theatre. They were appointed by EBC as neutrals to avoid nepotism in the selection of scripts. 5% of the profit from advertisement income used to be divided among them for their service. Nonetheless, EBC had occasionally decided on script selection on its own as in the case of *Sāw lāsāw*. A script of *Sāw lāsāw* that consist 15 episodes was bought from the writer earlier by EBC and stayed at the archive for years. Ethio-Inter-Educate, a private company, then approached the management and retained the copy right from EBC in 2011. Meanwhile, the company received a privilege to be exempted from competition, and from restriction of the regular one year contract agreement to run the drama for three years. That had been suspected as favoritism, which generated controversy among TV drama writers, producers, and the Council. At last, the contract agreement of Council was seized when EBC took back the evaluation activity of television and radio drama projects.

Broadcasting Service (EBS TV), with its headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States of America. EBS TV, the first private channel engaged with airing Amharic TV dramas, became the best alternative for TV drama makers and entrepreneurs.

The Kana TV satellite television channel, which was established in 2016 as a joint venture by Ethiopian businessmen and Dubai-based Moby Media Group, rather emerged as the most popular TV serial drama channel with a unique production of voice-over translations by dubbing mostly Turkish, Indian, and Korean TV serials into Amharic. It closely knitted high-quality TV drama production techniques, making the public, particularly housewives, more habituated to the follow-up of sequential episodes. Nonetheless, the quality standard and the popularity of Kana serials have provoked the opposition of some writers, actors, directors, and TV drama producers to appeal officially to government bodies to banish the drama channel. Artists even went so far as mobilizing professional unions in the context that the foreign tradition and lifestyle streamed by Kana would invade the national culture through the dramas and that its dominance over TV entertainment would affect the growth of the national arts. The issue had been controversial in mass media.²⁹ Nonetheless, the allegation was halted due to challenges by TV fans and a few drama scholars who considered the criticism a gesture of fear of competition arising from the low proficiency of the local TV drama makers in contrast to the high quality of Kana productions. Other TV channels, namely Abol TV, ARTS TV, Asham TV, Bisrat TV, Fana TV, Hagerie TV, LTV Ethiopia, Walta TV, and Yegna TV, have also entered the art business through the production of TV serials, sitcoms, and series.

The advent of *Gāmāna* and the development of serial, series, and sitcom in Ethiopia have had a social and economic effect on audiences, writers, directors, actors, production technicians, mass media agencies, businessmen, and the entertainment industry. Nowadays, people could entertain themselves every hour with at least one episodic TV drama streamed from different channels. The increase of the quality of TV drama and number of channels has motivated private enterprise

²⁹ *Addis Admas* 2011–2024, ‘አዲሱ “ቃና” ተሌቭዥን የአርቲስቶችን መንደር አናወጠ (*Addis “qana” televəžən yäartistoččən mändär anawäṭṭä*, ‘The new Kana Television shocked the artists’ village’), addisadmassnews.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=17942:%E1%8A%A0%E1%8B%B2%E1%88%B1-%E2%80%9C%E1%89%83%E1%8A%93%E2%80%9D-%E1%89%B4%E1%88%8C%E1%89%AD%E1%8B%A5%E1%8A%95-%E1%8B%A8%E1%8A%A0%E1%88%AD%E1%89%B2%E1%88%B5%E1%89%B6%E1%89%BD%E1%8A%95-%E1%88%98%E1%8A%95%E1%8B%B0%E1%88%AD-%E1%8A%A0%E1%8A%93%E1%8B%88%E1%8C%A0&Itemid=180, 4 April 2016 (Mahlet Kidanäwäld), accessed on 1 November 2023; *AllAfrica* 2000–2024, ‘Ethiopia: Kana – Good or Bad?’, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201608030500.html>, 2 August 2016 (Christian Tesfaye), accessed on 1 November 2023.

to pay millions of ETB for advertising their products during commercial breaks. The dividends not only built the financial capacity of TV stations, but they also escalated the rate of payment for the artists. The monthly gross income of TV drama producer and TV channels skyrocketed to millions of ETB. The price for a thirty minute episode has increased rapidly from ETB 2,000 to ETB 15,000 for a writer,³⁰ from ETB 500 to ETB 30,000 for an actor/actress, from ETB 2,000 to ETB 30,000 for a director, thus inspiring new writers, actors, and directors to come onboard. Individual producers as a source of capital often retain advantages of multiple roles as a writer, director, and actor/actress of an alluring character for additional income and popularity. Those writers, actors, and directors who maintained popularity in TV dramas have transferred to film production with very attractive pay. In the meantime, the competition between the film and TV drama markets as well as the contest among TV channels over advertisement income has reinforced quality production enhancing the enter-tainment industry for the good of the society and the performing artists.

In the last decade, TV dramas of various types and quality have become part of the daily lives of the urban and rural general public, particularly after the advancement of Wi-Fi and YouTube. TV drama has now turned into the most significant aspect of the entertainment industry, as private and government-owned TV channels guarantee its sustainability through advertisement revenue, thus promoting artistic competence and productivity for the advancement of Ethiopian professional media entertainment.

Addendum

On 11 September 2024, the Ethiopian New Year, a weighty qualitative change has arisen for the Ethiopian TV serial after *Gāmāna* by broadcasting ፍቅር እስከ መቃብር (*Fəqər əskä māqabər*, ‘Love until grave’), which is based on the illustrious classical novel written by the prominent writer Haddis Alāmayyāhu (= Haddis Alemayehu). Since 2003, attempts have been made to produce the novel *Fəqər əskä māqabər* as a feature film internationally and locally but failed due to matters related to copyright ownership and unsubstantiated reasons. On the inauguration day of the establishment of the Haddis Alemayehu Cultural Center in Däbrä Marqos a decade ago, a high-level zonal administrator of Məsraq Goğğam informed the present author that millions of Birr had been donated by business men to a certain literary figure to produce the film *Fəqər əskä māqabər* years ago and requested to influence the anticipated producer to start making the film in order

³⁰ Interview with TV drama writers, actors, and directors: Henok Ayele, Mulugeta Jawore, and Naod Lema. Addis Ababa University, 20 May 2024.

to halt the rumor that the production fund had been abused. The effort made, however, was not successful. A group of diaspora born and brought up in the area where the story and locale of the novel is based, in the meantime, traveled to the story location with an experienced film producer and crew for filming *Fəqər əskä mäqabər*, but then again permission was denied by the zonal administration for discrepancy over the copyright issue among relatives of the author, Mega Cultural Center, Walta PLC, and EBC. The delay is a blessing in disguise in that the novel is converted to a high quality TV serial with the production budget of 4.4 million Birr to surprise the public with extraordinary cinematographic skills and talents, that marked an escalated standard of Ethiopian TV serial. The released four episodes (out of the forty-eight) by EBC through national television and YouTube channels, however, were misinterpreted to blistering ethnic politics, and raising issues related to violation of copywriter law that led to the ban of transmission of *Fəqər əskä mäqabər* with an order from Federal Supreme Court. Despite the discontinuity, the production of the TV serial *Fəqər əskä mäqabər* has become a testimonial for the transformation of the arts to greater lip.

Appendix

Selected Bibliography of TV Dramas

Abba wəqaw (አባ ውቃው, ‘The tormentor’), writer Täsəfayə Abbäbä, Amharic one play (ETV).

Adära (አደራ, ‘Entrusted’), writer Elyas Täsəfayə, Amharic one play (ETV).

Adäy (አደይ, ‘Adey’), writer Däraggä Məndayə, director Säw Mähon Yəsmaw, Amharic serial (Sewmehon Films, Abol, EBS).

Afaf (አፋፍ, ‘Hill-top’), writer Mika’el Miliyon, director Na’od Lämman, Amharic series (Abol TV).

Akräp yäšärärit dər (አክረፕ የሽረሪት ድር, ‘Spider web’), dubbed (Turkish original *Akrep*), Amharic series (Kana TV).

Amäl (አመል, ‘Habit’), writer and director Dagmawi Amäläwäraq Fäyyəsä, Amharic serial (Roha Film Production, Fana Broadcasting).

Ambar (አምባር, ‘Bracelet’), writer Alazar Salällöññ, director Fəşşum Kasahun, Amharic series, Walta Media and Communication Corporate S.C.

Amen (አሜን, ‘Amen’), writer Nəgəst Haylu, director Bəzu’ ayyähu ‘Alämu, Amharic series (Habeshawi Film, Walta Communication Corporate).

And mängäd (አንድ መንገድ, ‘A Road’), writer Səntayyähu Masräša, Amharic one play (ETV).

Asmatäññaw (አስማተኛው, ‘The Magician’), writers and directors Wägayyähu Nəgatu and Däbbäbä Əšätu [= Debebe Eshetu], Mime-dramas (ETV).

- Assansär* (አላንሰር, ‘Lift’), writer Täsfae Gäbrämaryam, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Aziz* (አዚዝ, ‘Aziz’), dubbed, Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Azurit* (አዙሪት, ‘Whirlpool’), writer Sälämon ‘Alämu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Bäyānay* (በየናይ, ‘Which way’), writer Atakelti Nägga, Təgrəñña Series, 12 episodes (ETV).
- Bägälagay* (በገላጋይ, ‘Arbitration’), writer Sälämon ‘Alämu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Bähəgg Amlak* (በሕግ አምላክ, ‘By God of law’), writers and directors Mulugeta Arägawi and Sälämon ‘Alämu, Amharic serial (Balcha Entertainments, ARTS TV).
- Baläbägunna säga* (ባለበጉና ስጋ, ‘The sheep owner and meat’), writer Täsfae Mamo [= Tesfaye Mamo], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Bälg* (በልግ, ‘Autumn), writer and director Šäggaye Gäbrämādhən, recorded Amharic one act stage play (ETV).
- Baša Zämänu* (ባሻ ዘመኑ, ‘Mr. Zemenu’), writer Wəbəšät Wärqalämmahu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Bäsəntu* (በስንቱ, ‘Mr. Besintu’), writer Biniyam Gäbru, director Abrāham Gäzzaḳaṇñ, Amharic sitcom (Abricom Multimedia, EBS).
- Bäzza bäbäga* (በዛ በበጋ, ‘At that time in summer’), dubbed (Turkish original *Son Yaz*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Bəkurənnä* (በኩርና, ‘Birthright’), writers and directors Təlahun Zäwgä, Allälləññ Mäkwənənt, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Bəsrat* (በስራት, ‘Good News’), writer Abbonäh Aššagərre [= Aboneh Ashagrie], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Betočč* (ቤቶች, ‘Residents’), writers and directors Yäh^walašät Yäšitla and Təlahun Gugsä, Amharic sitcom (Tilahun Gugsä Promotion PLC, EBC).
- Čamma* (ጫማ, ‘Shoes’), writer Usman Addäm, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Čammaw* (ጫማው, ‘The shoe’) writer Adanäčč Wäldägäbrə’el, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Čəlot* (ችሎት, ‘Court’) writer and director Ašäbbər Kabtamu, Amharic series (ETV).
- Čəngənnä läfat* (ጭንቅና ልፋት, ‘Distress and struggle’), writer Mängəstu Tazärä, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Däbdabbew* (ደብዳቤው, ‘The letter’) writer Dawit Wäldämaryam, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Dagmawit* (ዳግማዊት), writer Särawit Fəqre [= Serawit Fiqre], Amharic one play (ETV).

- Dällalaw* (ደላላው, ‘The broker’), writer Yəлма Häbtäyäs, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Dām yänäkkaw əḡḡ* (ደም የነካው እጅ, ‘Bloody hand’), writer Yəлма Häbtäyäs, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Dāmāra* (ደመራ, ‘Dāmāra bonfire’), writer Sälämon ‘Alämu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Dana* (ዳና, ‘Dana’) writer Azeb Wärqu, director Ṭəlahun Tafärrä, Tilahun Production, Amharic serial (EBC).
- Dänb* (ደንብ, ‘Rules’), writer and director Yəttaggäsu Gässəṭ Täčane, Amharic sitcom (Kokeb Media and Advertizing, EBS).
- Därso mäls* (ደርሶ መልስ, ‘Back and forth’), writer and director Mä‘aza Wärqu, Amharic series (Fana Broadcasting).
- Dəbabbəqoš* (ደብብቆሽ, ‘Hide and seek’), writer Abärä Läm̄ma [= Aberra Lemma], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Dəbabbəqoš* (ደብብቆሽ, ‘Hide and seek’), writer Kurabbaččāw Dämmäqä, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Dəngätäññaw* (ድንገተኛው, ‘The emergency’), writer Sälämon Gäbre, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Dərənna mag* (ድርና ማግ, ‘Web and fiber’), dubbed (Turkish original *Siyah Beyaz Aşk*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Doktär Mamušät* (ዶክተር ማሙሽት, ‘Doctor Mamushet’), writer Dawit Afäwärq, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Əččəññamočč* (እጮኛዎች, ‘The fiancées’), writer Täfäri ‘Alämu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Əda kāmēda* (እዳ ከሚዳ, ‘Unexpected debt’), writer Täsfae Abbäbä, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Elzabela* (ኢሊዛቤላ, ‘Jezebel’), writer Addam Rätta, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Ənba* (እንባ, ‘Tear’), writer Tamməru Wäldä‘ab, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Ənenna haya säbatt gäradöčče* (እኔና ሀያ ሰባት ገረዶቼ, ‘Me and my twenty-seven maids’), writer Wəbəšät Wärqälämmahu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Əngədöčč* (እንግዶች, ‘Guests’), writer Särawit Fəqre, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Ərq yälläm* (እርቅ የለም, ‘No reconciliation’), writer Bərhanu Zärihun [= Berhanu Zerihun], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Ərq yəhun* (እርቅ ይሁን, ‘Reconciliation’), writers and directors Ṭəlahun Zäwgä and Allälləññ Māk‘anənt, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Ərräññaye* (እረኛዬ, ‘My shepherd’), writer Qəddəst Yəлма, director Azeb Wärqu and Qəddəst Yəлма [= Azeb Worku and Kidist Yilma], Amharic serial (Emahizee Pictures, ARTS TV).

- ገፍተ ልጅ* (አሳት አደጋ, ‘Fire incident’), writer Wändwäsän Gäbräyäsus, Amharic one play (ETV).
- ገፍተ ልጅ* (እስከ ምን, ‘Until when’), writer Šemälləs Abärä, Amharic one play (ETV).
- ገፍተ ልጅ* (እያሃሃሃ ፈንገስ, ‘ገፍተ ልጅ’), writer and director Gərum Zännäbä and Bäräräkät Bälaynäh (= Bereket Belayneh), recorded one-man Amharic satirical stage drama (Asham TV).
- Färiha* (ፈሪካ), dubbed (Turkish original *Adını Feriha Koydum*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Färtuna* (ፈርቲና, ‘Fertuna’), writers and directors ገረገረ Zäwጅ and Allälləññ Mäkä’anənt, Amharic One-play (ETV).
- Fälläga* (ፍለጋ, ‘Search’), dubbed (Korean original 보고싶다, *Pogosip'ta*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Fälsät* (ፍልሰት, ‘Immigration’), dubbed (Portuguese original *Órfãos da Terra*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Fəqər kəbäqäl* (ፍቅር ከበቃል, ‘Love from revenge’), dubbed (Turkish original *Cesur ve Güzel*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Fəqər yätärabä* (ፍቅር የተራበ, ‘Hungry for love’), writer Eliyas Däጅane, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Fəqərənnä fəqərəye* (ፍቅራና ፍቅርዬ, ‘Darlings’), writer Mängəstu Lämäma [= Mengistu Lemma], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Fərdäññöççu* (ፍርደኞች, ‘The convicts’), dubbed (Turkish original *Karadayi*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Fiñña* (ፊኛ, ‘Balloon’), writers and directors Wäጃyähü Nəጅatu and Däbbäbä ጃፍቲ [= Debebe Eshetu], Mime-dramas (ETV).
- Fozia* (ፊዒያ, ‘Fozia’), writer Tewodros Täklä’aräጅay, Amharic One-play (ETV).
- Fraš addaš* (ፍራሽ አዳሽ, ‘Mattress refresher’), writer Täsfahun Käbbädä, Amharic one man series (ARTS TV).
- Fraš meda* (ፍራሽ ሜዳ, ‘Mattress field’), writer Sälämon ‘Alämu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Gämäna and* (ገሙና አንድ, ‘Private secret I’), writer Adənäw Wändirad, director Ašäbbər Kabtamu, Amharic serial (Da’amat Multimedial Production, EBC).
- Gämäna hulätt* (ገሙና ሁለት, ‘Private secret II’), writers Adənäw Wändirad, Addis Täsfä, Šäwaye Gälaw, Azeb Wärru, Fəqrü Kasa, Täsfäye Gäbrämaryam, director Ašäbbər Kabtamu, Biniyam Wärru, ገረገረ Taffärä, Kəbraläm Fanta, Dawit Täsfäye, Amharic serial (Da’amat Multimedia, EBC).
- Gazeṭäññaw* (ጋዜጠኛው, ‘The journalist’), writer Täsfäye Abbäbä, Amharic one play (ETV).

- Gädäy dädäy aläññ* (ግደይ ግደይ አለኝ, ‘Lust to kill’), writer Mängəstu Läm̃ma [= Mengistu Lemma], recorded Amharic one act stage play (ETV).
- Gəmmaš čäräqa* (ግማሽ ጨረቃ, ‘Half moon’), writer Sosəñña Asäffa, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Golfaa* (‘Curse’), writer Wärfu Gadisa, Afaan Oromoo, 11 episodes (ETV).
- Goräbetamočču* (ጎረቤታዎቼ, ‘The neighbours’), writer and director Na’od Gašaw, Amharic sitcom (EBS).
- Gra qäññ* (ግራ ቀኝ, ‘Left and right’), writer Hammaa Tumma, directors Därrəb däl Asäffa and Mika’el Tamməre, Amharic sitcom (Rusty Town Film Production, EBC).
- Gra yägäbbaw gra* (ግራ የገባው ግራ, ‘The confused left’), writer Däbbäbä Həsetu [= Debebe Eshetu], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Gudatäñña* (ጉዳተኛ, ‘Disabled’), writer Bərhanäwäld Gäbrämaryam, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Gʷaddäññamočču* (ዳደኛዎቼ, ‘The friends’), writer Mäzgäbu Abägaz, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Gʷaddäññännät* (ዳደኝነት, ‘Friendship’), writer Asnaqäčč Käbbädä, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Hawwii* (‘Desire’), writer Wärfu Gadisa, Afaan Oromoo, 14 episodes (ETV).
- Həllina* (ህሊና, ‘Conscience’), writer and director Aster Bädane, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Hodamu daynoräs* (ሆዳሙ ዳይኖረስ, ‘The gluttonous dinosaur’), writer Həbəsət Asäffa, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Hulätt wäddo ayhonəmm* (ሁለት ወዶ አይሆንም, ‘One cannot love two’), writer Wəndwäsän Gäbräyäsus, Amharic One Play (ETV).
- Inispektär Ermiyas* (ኢንስፔክተር ኤርሚያስ, ‘Inspector Ermiyas’), writer Fəqrä Səllase, director Bərhanu Wärfu, Amharic series (Birhanu Worqu Film Production, ARTS TV).
- Käbahər yäwäṭṭa asa* (ከባህር የወጣ አሳ, ‘Fish out of the sea’), writer Däbbäbä Säyfu, Amharic, recorded one act stage play (ETV).
- Käffkäff* (ከፍ ከፍ, ‘Up-up’), writer Eleni Taddäsä, director Sälämon Bärähe, Amharic sitcom (LTV Ethiopia).
- Kähulett and* (ከሁለት አንድ, ‘One from two’), writer Samu’el Abəyu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Kakuu* (‘Oath’), writer Wärfu Gadisa, Afaan Oromoo. 15 episodes, (ETV).
- Käman annəšše* (ከማን አንሺ, ‘Pretender’), writer Sälämon Mulatu, Amharic one play (ETV).

- Käntu mənñot* (ክንቱ ምኞት, 'Vain desire'), writer Säḡəd Mähammäd, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Käqäbär mäls* (ከቀብር መልስ, 'Return from the funeral'), writer Yälma Habtäyäs [= Yilma Habteyes], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Katalina* (ካታሊና, 'Catalina'), dubbed, Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Kätäzäggaw dose* (ከተዘጋው ዶሴ, 'From the closed dossier'), writer and director Aster Getaččäw, Amharic series (Arada Cinemas, EBS).
- Kotte* (ኩቴ, 'Footsteps'), writer Näbäyyu Täkkalläññ, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Kuzi Guni* (ኩዚ ጉኒ, 'Kuzey Güney'), dubbed (Turkish original *Kuzey Güney*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Lebanna polis* (ሌባና ፖሊስ, 'Thief and police'), writer Nəguse Taddäsä, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Ləkk* (ለክ, 'Exact'), writer Mälkamzär Qälämäwärq, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Lelaw ägğ* (ሌላው እጅ, 'The other hand'), writer Yälma Habtäyäs [= Yilma Habteyes], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Ləmməmmət* (ልምምጥ, 'Wheedling'), writer and director Kənfä Bambu, Amharic serial (Sheger Events and Promotion, ARTS TV).
- Lento* (ሌንቶ, 'Lento'), writer Asräs Bäqqälä, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Mädhanit qämsäwal* (መድሀኒት ቀምሰዋል, 'The Honorable has taken medicine'), writer Asfa Libän, recorded Amharic one act stage play (ETV).
- Mädräša* (መድረሻ, 'Destination'), dubbed (Portuguese original *Sol Nascente*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Ma 'əbäl* (ማእበል, 'Wave'), dubbed (Turkish original *Öyle Bir Geçer Zaman ki*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Mäla* (መላ, 'Scheme'), writer Täsfaye Mamo [= Tesfaye Mamo], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Mäläkät* (መለክት, 'Trumpet'), writer Adənäw Wändirad, director Ašäbbär Kabtamu, Amharic serial (Rohobot Promotion, EBC).
- Mälhəq* (መልህቅ, 'Anchor'), dubbed (Turkish original *Bu Şehir Arkandan Gelecek*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Man gäddälat* (ማን ገደላት, 'Who killed her'), writer Täkle Dästa, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Mängädäññaw mušərra* (መንገደኛው ሙሽራ, 'The travelling bridegroom'), writer Sälämon 'Alämu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Mäntäqqo* (መንጠቆ, 'Hook'), writer Ṭəlahun Gugsä, recorded Amharic one act stage play (ETV).

- Maräfiya* (ማረፊያ, ‘Rest place’), writer Däräḡḡä Dämmäqä, Amharic serial (Le’alem Multimedia, Fana TV).
- Märäwwa* (መረዋ, ‘Bell’), dubbed (Spanish original *La ronca de oro*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Märkato* (መርከቶ, ‘The market’), writer Mä‘aza Ġämal, director Sofiniyas Taddäsä, Amharic series (Enqu Films, Walta Media and Communication Corporate S.C.).
- Mäskäräm* (መስከረም, ‘September’), writer Samu’el Abəyu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Masräḡḡa* (ማስረጃ, ‘Evidence’), writers and directors Ṭəlahun Zäwgä and Allälləññ Mäkw’anənt, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Mäššädatatən kädəmmät ənnəmmar* (መጽዳዳትን ከድመት እንማር, ‘Let’s learn defecation from a cat’), writer Abräham Nägaš, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Mastawäša* (ማስታወሻ, ‘Reminder’), writer Sosənnä Asäffa, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Məhrät* (ምህረት, ‘Mercy’), writers and directors Ṭəlahun Zäwgä and Allälləññ Mäkw’anənt, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Məlsät* (ምልሰት, ‘Flash back’), writer and director Yäwəbdar Anbässe, Amharic serial (Tesfa Film Production, Fana Broadcasting).
- Mən lattazäz* (ምን ልታዘዝ, ‘What can I do for you?’), writer and director Bähaylu Wase, Amharic sitcom (Huset Production, Hagerie TV).
- Məññot* (ምኞት, ‘Desire’), writer Abräham Qännaw, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Mərmäraw* (ምርመራው, ‘The investigation’), writer Abräham Asmälaš, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Məštir* (ምስጢር, ‘Secret’), dubbed (Turkish original *İçerde*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Məthatawi ‘alba* (ምትሓታዊ ዓልባ, ‘The magic cloth’), writer Atakəlti Nägga, Təgrəñña series (ETV).
- Mizan* (ግዛን, ‘Balance’), writer Zäbäš Ḥṣṭifanos, director Henok Ayyälä and Na’od Lämman, Amharic serial (EBC).
- Moggačočču* (ጥጋኞቹ, ‘The defenders’), writer and director Mäqdäs Täsfaye, Amharic serial (Mekdi Production PLC, EBS).
- Nägämm lela qän näw* (ነገም ሌላ ቀን ነው, ‘Tomorrow is another day’), writer Nābəyyu Amdäsəllase, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Neša gäbäya* (ነጻ ገበያ, ‘Free market’), writers and directors Ṭəlahun Zäwgä and Allälləññ Mäkw’anənt, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Qal* (ቃል, ‘Word’), writer Mahlet Taddäsä, Amharic one play (ETV).

- Qälām qäbbiw* (ቀለም ቀበው, 'The painter'), writer and director Wägayyāhu Nəgatu and Däbbäbä ʼĪšātu [= Debebe Eshetu], Mime-dramas (ETV).
- Qāzqazzaw wälafān* (ቀዝቃዛው ወላፈን, 'Cold fire heat'), writer Tāšälä Wārqu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Qəbabbəl* (ቅብብል, 'Give and take'), writer Abənnät Dagəm, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Qəbabbəloš* (ቅብብሎሽ, 'Relay'), Amharic one play (Mega Sənätəbābat Ma'əkäl, ETV).
- Qərrit* (ቅርት, 'Remnant'), writer Zännäbä Yəmānəh, Amharic One-play (ETV).
- Qəṭat* (ቅጣት, 'Punishment'), dubbed (Turkish original *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Quçç bälāw aymotumm* (ቁጭ ብለው አይሞቱም, 'Never die with indolence'), Yəlmä Habtäyäs [= Yilma Habteyes], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Qunəçça* (ቁንጫ, 'Flea'), writers and directors Wägayyāhu Nəgatu and Däbbäbä ʼĪšātu [= Debebe Eshetu], Mime-dramas (ETV).
- Rakeb* (ራኬብ, 'Rakeb'), writer Habtamu Däğäne, director Surafel Nəgatu, Amharic series (EBS).
- Robel* (ሮቤል, 'Robel'), writer Asnaqäčč Käbbädä, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Sagantaa himmilkifini* ('Unsuccessful program'), writer Gugsä ʼṬəlahun, Oromiffa, 10 episodes (ETV).
- Sahlu* (ሳህሉ, 'Sahilu'), writer Sälämon Täsfaye, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Sänenna seña* (ሰኔና ሰኞ, 'Monday meets June 1st'), writer and director Dagmawi Lämma, Amharic serial (Estem Entertainment, Fana TV).
- Sanka* (ሳንካ, 'Obstacle'), writer Sälämon 'Alämu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Säw läsäw* (ሰው ለሰው, 'Man for man'), writer Mäsfən Getaččäw, director Mäsfən Getaččäw and Sälämon 'Alämu, Amharic serial (EIO, EBC).
- Säw müsay bäsängo* (ሰው መሳይ በሽንጎ, 'Pretentious'), writer Məhrät Daññaw, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Säwəyyäw* (ሰውየው, 'The man'), writer Samu'el Abəyu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Sayənnaggär motä* (ሳይናገር ሞተ, 'Died without speaking'), writer Yəlmä Habtäyäs [= Yilma Habteyes], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Sayq'attär sittärättär* (ሳይቋጠር ሲተረተር, 'Unrequited'), writer Däbbäbä Sayfu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Səbat* (ስበት, 'Attraction'), dubbed (Turkish original *Doğduğun Ev Kaderindir*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Səga yaṭṭa mänfäs* (ስጋ ያጣ መንፈስ, 'The spirit that lost its flesh'), writer Dämmärä Şəge, Amharic one play (ETV).

- Sələhəywät* (ሰለሐይወት, ‘About life’), writer and director Bəsrat Gämmäčču, Amharic crime episodes (Bisrat TV).
- Səm* (ስም, ‘Name’), dubbed (Turkish original *Şeref Meselesi*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Šəmmiya* (ሽሚያ, ‘Scramble’), dubbed (Turkish original *Zalim İstanbul*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Šəṇqur ləbbočč* (ሽንቁር ልቦች, ‘Pierced hearts’), dubbed (Turkish original *Param-parça*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Šəššət* (ሽሽት, ‘Flee’), writer Dan’el Abbäbä, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Šəṭota* (ሰጦታ, ‘Gift’), writer and director Təgəst Alämu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Šöst lä’and* (ሦስት ለአንድ, ‘Three against one’), writer Wəbəšät Wärqälämmahu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Šöst wäfočč* (ሦስት ወፎች, ‘Three birds’), writer Tarräqäññ Bädaso, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Šöst yäfəqər tarikočč* (ሦስት የፍቅር ታሪኮች, ‘Three love stories’), writer Täsəfaye Mamo [= Tesfaye Mamo], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Šostu māharäbočč* (ሦስቱ መሀረቦች, ‘The three handkerchiefs’), writer Abräham Qəṭaw, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Täbasa sišäräsär* (ጠባሳ ሲሸረሸር, ‘When scars are eroded’), writer Dawit Afäwärq, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Taddaṇu* (ታደኑ, ‘The Hunted’), dubbed (Turkish original *Kaçak*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Tälfo bākise* (ጠልፎ በኪሴ, ‘Snatch and Run’), writer Mängəstu Lämma [= Mengistu Lemma], recorded Amharic one act stage play (ETV).
- Tarik* (ታሪክ, ‘History’), writer Kəfle Əngədasäw, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Täsfanna adära* (ተስፋና አደራ, ‘Hope and trust’), writer Sälämon Mängəste, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Ṭätär* (ጠጠር, ‘Pebble’), writer Ṭələhun Gugsä, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Tazəbe’allähu* (ታዝቤአለሁ, ‘Witnessed’), writer Samu’el Abəyu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Ṭəməz* (ጥምዝ, ‘Curle’), writer Nəgusu Getaččäw, Amharic, One Play (ETV).
- Tənnəšu balabbat* (ትንሹ ባላባት, ‘Little lord’), dubbed (Turkish original *Küçük Aga*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Ṭəqur fəqər* (ጥቁር ፍቅር, ‘Black love’), dubbed (Turkish original *Kara Para Aşk*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Ṭəqur tat* (ጥቁር ጣት, ‘Black finger’), writers Ṭələhun Zäwgä and Alläləññ Mäkw’anənt, Amharic one play (ETV).

- Tərew bāḡonəyya* (ጥሬው በጅንጾ, ‘Crop in a sack’), writer Täsfae Abbäbä, recorded Amharic one act stage play (ETV).
- Tərrəta* (ትርታ, ‘Pulse’), writer and director Sofonyas Taddäsä, Amharic Series, 14 episodes (Fana Broadcasting).
- Tərri* (ጥሪ, ‘The call’), writer Dawit Afäwärq, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Təzzəta* (ትዝታ, ‘Memories’), writer Dawit Afäwärq, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Wälafän* (ወላፈን, ‘Heat of the fire’), writer Ayyälä Əṣetu, director Gäbräḥəywät Gäbräčärqos, Amharic serial (Abnatam Multimedia, EBS).
- Waanfala* (‘Cooperation’, Amharic ደቦ, *däbo*), writer Wärqu Gadisa, Afaan Oromoo series, 22 episodes (ETV).
- Wäsän* (ወሰን, ‘Border’), dubbed (Turkish original *Meryem*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Wätmäd* (ወጥመድ, ‘Trap’), writer Elyas Daññaččäw, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Wätmäd* (ወጥመድ, ‘Trap’), dubbed (Spanish original *Fugitivos*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Wazema* (ዋዜማ, ‘Eve’), writer and director Bəsrat Gämmäčču, Amharic serial (EBC).
- Wəddase* (ውዳሴ, ‘Praise’), writers Ṭəlahun Zäwgä and Allälləññ Mäk^wanənt, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Wäläta* (ውለታ, ‘Favour’), writers Ṭəlahun Zäwgä and Allälləññ Mäk^wanənt, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Wäläta bätəffī* (ውለታ በጥፊ, ‘A slap for kindness’), writer Wəbəšät Wärqälämmahu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yä’ Abeqäläš nuzzaze* (የአቤቀለሽ ኑዛዜ, ‘Abaqelesh’s confession’), writer Yälma Habtäyäs [= Yilma Habteyes], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yäbäqäl mängäd* (የበቀል መንገድ, ‘Way of revenge’), dubbed (Portuguese original *Avenida Brasil*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yabbatu ləğ* (ያባቱ ልጅ, ‘Father’s son’), writers Ṭəlahun Zäwgä and Allälləññ Mäk^wanənt, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yäbet səra* (የቤት ስራ, ‘Homework’), writer Tewodros Täklä’arägay, director Isayyas Gəzaw, Amharic serial (Tewodos PLC, EBC).
- Yäbetäsäb gämäna* (የቤተሰብ ገመና, ‘Family secret’), dubbed, Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yäbetu mäsäz* (የቤቱ መዘዝ, ‘The disastrous house’), writer Yälma Habtäyäs [= Yilma Habteyes], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yäčən əmmäbet* (የጭን እመቤት, ‘The serving lady’), writer Lə’ul Gərma, Amharic one play (ETV).

- Yädämmälläš abbat* (የደመላሽ አባት, ‘Father of Demelash’), writers and directors Ṭəlahun Zäwǧä and Allälləññ Mäkw’anənt, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yä’əgər əsat* (የእግር እሳት, ‘Foot fire’), writer Abrāham Gäzzaḳäññ, Amharic serial (Abricom Multimedia PLC, EBS).
- YäFazilet läḡočč* (የፋዚሌት ልጆች, ‘Fazilet’s daughters’), dubbed, Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yäfəqər nägär* (የፍቅር ነገር, ‘Love matter’), dubbed (Turkish original *Bir Aşk Hikayesi*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yäfez doktär* (የፈዝ ዶክተር, ‘Doctor of mockery’), writer Šäḡaye Gäbrämädəhən, recorded Amharic one act stage play (ETV).
- Yäḡəl bäqäl* (የጅል በቀል, ‘Fool’s revenge’), writer Həllina Dämse, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yähəlina ċilota* (የህሊና ችሎታ, ‘Conscience ability’), writers Ṭəlahun Zäwǧä and Aläləñ Mäkuwanənt, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yähəywät säwasäw* (የሕይወት ሰዋሰው, ‘The grammar of life’), writer Bərhanə Aččame, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yäkärmo säw* (የከርም ሰው, ‘Man of the future’), writer Šäḡaye Gäbrämädəhən, recorded Amharic one act stage play (ETV).
- Yäkätämaw balagär* (የከተማው ባላገር, ‘Not urbanized city boy’), writer Mulugeta Mäkbəb, recorded Amharic one act stage play (ETV).
- Yaltäfätta həlm* (ያልተፈታ ሕልም, ‘Uninterpreted dream’), dubbed (Turkish original *Kadın*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yaltäkäffälä əda* (ያልተከፈለ እዳ, ‘Unpaid debt’), writer Yəlmə Habtäyäs [= Yilma Habteyes], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yaltänək^wakku bäročč* (ያልተንኳኩ በሮች, ‘Doors that were not knocked on’), dubbed (Danish original *Dicte*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yaltasäbä ənbə* (ያልታሰበ እንባ, ‘Unremoved tear’), dubbed (Turkish original *Cennet’in Gözyaşları*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yämaläda təza* (የማለዳ ጤዛ, ‘Morning dew’), writer Wändwäsän Wärqu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yänəsər ‘ayn* (የንስር ዐይን, ‘Eagle’s eye’), dubbed (Italian original *Squadra Anti-mafia*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yäñña säfär* (የኛ ሰፈር, ‘Our neighbourhood’), dubbed (Turkish original *Çukur*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yanne* (ያኔ, ‘That time’), writer Ayyalnäh Mulat, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yänuzzazew mäsäz* (የኑዛዜው መዘዝ, ‘The consequences of the confession’), writer Bərhanu Zärihun [= Berhanu Zerihun], Amharic one play (ETV).

- Yäqalkidan həywät* (የቃልኪዳን ሕይወት, ‘Covenant life’), writer Hanna Getahun, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yäqərb ruq* (የቅርብ ሩቅ, ‘Apparent distance’), writer Mä‘aza Wärru, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yäqolo tāmari* (የቆሎ ተማሪ, ‘Traditional student’), writer Məhrät Daññaw, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yäqossälä fəqər* (የቆሰለ ፍቅር, ‘Wounded love’), dubbed (Turkish original *Vatanım Sensin*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yäras mərkoñña* (የራስ ምርኮኛ, ‘Captive to himself’), dubbed (Spanish original *Pasión y poder*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yäras təla* (የራስ ጥላ, ‘Shadow of one’s own’), writer Mika’el Yəbəyyən, director Bäräkät Täsfaye, Amharic teleplay (Bushmen Production, EBS).
- Yäšāḥay ləğočč* (የዐሐይ ልጆች, ‘Children of the sun’), dubbed (Turkish original *Güneşin Kızları*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yäšama ənba* (የሻማ እንባ, ‘Tears of candles’), writer Dan’el Abbäbä, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yäsänbät šadiq* (የሰንበት ጻዲቅ, ‘Bread of the sabbath’), writers Təlahun Zäwgä and Allälləñ Mäkw’anənt, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yäsar wəst gundan* (የሳር ውስጥ ጉንዳን, ‘Ant in the grass’), writers Təlahun Zäwgä and Allälləñ Mäkw’anənt, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yäsärgu wazema* (የሰርጉ ዋዜማ, ‘Eve of the wedding’), writer Zənnaw Dännäqä, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yäsəmmet wänz* (የሰሜት ወንዝ, ‘River of emotion’), writer Tewodros Təklä’arägay, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yäsostyoš gabəčča* (የሶስትዮሽ ጋብቻ, ‘Tripartite marriage’), writer Säğəd Mähəmmäd, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yätäkäläkkälä* (የተከለከለ, ‘Forbidden’), dubbed (Turkish original *Aşk-ı Memnu*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yätäqäbbäräw* (የተቀበረው, ‘The buried’), writer and director Biniyam Ğon, Amharic series (EBS).
- Yätäqämma həywät* (የተቀማ ሕይወት, ‘Stolen life’), dubbed (Turkish original *O Hayat Benim*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yätärässa səm* (የተረሳ ስም, ‘Forgotten name’), dubbed (Italian original *Le tre rose di Eva*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yätäzägga bärr* (የተዘጋ በር, ‘The closed door’), writers and directors Wägəyyähu Nəgatu and Däbbäbä Əšätu [= Debebe Eshetu], Mime-dramas (ETV).
- Yätəñqolaw mäsäz* (የጥንቆላው መዘዝ, ‘Consequence of the sorcery’), writer Wəbəšät Wärrqäləmmahu, Amharic one play (ETV).

- Yäwäre ʾos* (የወሬ ጦስ, ‘Consequence of rumor’), writer Kasahun Täsfaye, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yäwəbāt əsrāññočč* (የውበት እስረኞች, ‘Captives of beauty’), dubbed (Spanish original *La guerrera*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Yäzämäčä ʾərri* (የዘመቻ ጥሪ, ‘The call for campaign’), writer Ašännafi Yəbārta, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yäzämän gäššočč* (የዘመን ገጾች, ‘Time pages’), writer Šäwaye Gälaw, director Elyas Täkle, Amharic serial (ARTS TV).
- Yəččälall* (ይቻላል, ‘Possible’), writer Nəguse Taddäsä, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Yotorawiyan* (ዮቶራዊያን, ‘Torahians’), writer and director Mənyahəl Bānti, Amharic serial, ARTS TV.
- Zämäd* (ዘመድ, ‘Relative’), writers Təlahun Zäwgä and Allälləñ Mäkwənənt, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Zämän* (ዘመን, ‘Era’), writer Mäsfən Getaččäw, director Sälämon ‘Alämu, Amharic teleplay (Balcha Entertainment Production, EBS).
- Zämän* (ዘመን, ‘Era’), writer Täsfaye Mamo [= Tesfaye Mamo], Amharic one play (ETV).
- Zär Addam* (ዘር አዳም, ‘Offspring of Adam’), writer Täsfaye Gäbrämaryam, Amharic one play Play (ETV).
- Zaranna Čandra* (ዛራና ቻንድራ, ‘Zara and Chandra’), dubbed (Hindi original सरस्वतीचंद्र, *Sarasvatīcamdra*), Amharic series (Kana TV).
- Zaren bāgabəčča* (ዛሬን በጋብቻ, ‘This day in marriage’), writer Kasaye Gäbäyyähu, Amharic one play (ETV).
- Zənna* (ዝና, ‘Fame’), writer Gäzzaḳäññ Mäkwännən, Amharic one play (ETV).

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Summary

It is now more than one hundred years since theatre and cinema were introduced to Ethiopia, and PhD dissertations, books, and journal articles pertinent to the arts have been published by expatriate and local academia. In the same vein, hundreds of TV dramas have been produced in Ethiopia in the last 60 years under various socio-economic and political milieus of the Imperial era, the *Därg* military government, and the EPRDF. Ethiopian TV drama as a subject area, nonetheless, has not attracted the attention of national and international researchers adequately so far. This article attempts to fill this gap in scholarship by illustrating the development of Ethiopian television drama that started in 1964 with the screening of a Moot-Court exercise of law students of Haile Sellasie I University, to gradually acquire a qualitative change with professional production of the serial *Gāmāna* in 2001/2009. The study rather goes beyond this historical period highlighting the overview of the last six decades by way of depicting the legacy of the serial *Gāmāna* as a conclusion. This study hopefully will contribute to the general comprehension of Ethiopian television drama in particular and African TV drama in general. It also commemorates the 60th anniversary of the advent of television drama in Ethiopia.