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Book Review by Fekadu Fullas

Title: Hikemina be'betatchn (in *Amarigna*); English translation: Household medicine (Household traditional remedies); Author: Bekelech Tola; Publisher: alpha asatamiwotch; ISBN 97899944-811-01-1; XXIII + 379 pages; Year of publication: *Tir* 2007 (Greg Cal, Sept, 2014).

This book is the 2nd edition of a previously published (2007 Greg Cal) version. The author of the book claims (page 16) that the current edition is not much different from the first. It would have been better if the author had laid out the changes made in this edition. The 1st edition was not available to this reviewer for comparison purposes. Thus, this review focuses only on the current volume. The book is written in the native official language *Amarigna*, and thus understandably, the intended audience of the book is the vernacular-reading public.

The first several pages of the book (I to XXIII) are devoted, in turn, to: dedication of the book, preface, purpose, acknowledgements, a narrative as to how the different sections of the book are organized, table of contents and the meanings of selected words/phrases. It is worth noting that in the acknowledgements section only those who directly contributed to the publication of the book could have been credited. It is not customary to credit authors, whose works have only been cited as references in the book.

Pages 1-104 deal with disjointed potpourri issues: the usefulness of traditional medicine, causation of diseases, comparison of traditional and modern medicine, maintenance of agricultural fields, especially those of medicinal plants, land/soil conservation and maintenance, nutrition, the need for vaccinations, abstinence from activities that affect health, sources of traditional remedies, caring for medicinal plant gardens, brief synopses of select medicinal plants and how to plant/propagate them and preparation of medicinal plant remedies. Despite the fact that these sections provide useful general information, they jump from one topic to another, and in so-doing appear to blur focus of the book.

The rest of the main part of the book is divided into sections that explain organ-based diseases and home remedies that are used to treat them. Thus, pages 105-120 are devoted to respiratory diseases, 121-126 to headache and infections of the scalp, 127-132 to ear and eye complaints, oro-pharyngeal cavity and tooth problems, and 142-186 to internal organ diseases. This organization of the book may be useful to readers who are

interested to learn about home remedies for diseases that affect certain parts of the body. Pages 187-210 deal with wounds, bleeding and burns and their treatment. However, the majority of pages in this section are devoted to skin related problems and the traditional remedies for them. This latter part could have been included under the organ-based disease classification (*vide supra*). Pages 259-305 are devoted to miscellaneous items, including explanations and in many cases traditional treatments of livestock diseases, various internal diseases, insect bites, and poultry diseases/care.

Close to the end of the book (pages 305-336), a list of 417 useful Ethiopian plants is presented. The author does not mention which of these plants are used in traditional medicine. However, it appears that the majority, if not all, of them are used as herbal medicines. Botanical, vernacular (*Oromiffa* and *Amarigna*) and English names are in turn provided in the list. Another shorter list of 40 plants (pages 329-330) is included. This appears to be a subset of the previous longer list, with the only difference being that in this list local *Awi* names are included. The two could have been consolidated into one single list. Pages 331-336 provide *Ge'ez* and the equivalent *Amarigna* names for 131 plants. The final pages of the book are divided into nutrition information table, paired English-*Amarigna* list of diseases, conclusion, references and index.

In summary, this book is useful to readers who seek general information on household remedies for many health-related problems. However, it doesn't critically examine the proposed remedies, nor rely on up-to-date and current references. It falls short of providing evidence-based original information to researchers in academia. Another shortcoming is that some sections which do not fit into the general scheme of the book come up throughout the book. Despite these shortcomings, the book is a welcome addition to the body of information on the subject that is available to the Ethiopian public in particular.