



## THE CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTIVE DEVELOPMENT OF HORSE RACING: A Case Study of Some Selected Districts of Kafa Zone, Southwest, Ethiopia

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**Abstract :** The major goal of this study was to evaluate the difficulties and potential growth of horse racing (Feres shert) in a few chosen regions in the Kafa zone. Gimbo, Gesha, Decha, Tello, Shishoinde, Chena, and Bonga Town were among the seven districts that made up the study's locations. A descriptive survey strategy, in particular, was used since it was determined to be suitable for addressing the fundamental research objectives. Observation, interview, and questionnaires were used as data gathering tools. Physical education teachers (N=190), sport administrators, and sport professionals made up the sample population for the study. Frequency and percentage were used to assess the data gathered through questionnaires.

The results of this study indicate that the biggest obstacles to horse racing in the study region were a lack of competition programs, a lack of funding for building facilities and buying equipment, and a lack of a strategic plan by district and Zone sport offices. Although horse racing is practiced in the study region, the future of this sport does not look positive.

The suggestions made as a way to advance the sport of horse racing include encouraging districts to take part, competing in regional competitions, organizing an equestrian association and racing club in the study area, hiring professionals to coach and officiate, and fostering effective communication between the district youth and sport offices and the Kafa zone sport sector.

**Index Terms** - horse racing, practice, challenges, prospective development

### I. INTRODUCTION

**Horse racing** is sport of running horses at speed, mainly Thoroughbreds with a rider astride or Standard breeds with the horse pulling a conveyance with a driver. These two kinds of racing are called racing on the flat and harness racing, respectively. Some races on the flat—such as steeplechase, point-to-point, and hurdle races—involve jumping.

Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and South America all have significant professional horse racing scenes. Racing mounted Thoroughbred horses across flat courses at distances ranging from three-quarters of a mile to two miles is by far the most popular type of the sport. Harness racing, steeplechase racing, and Quarter horse racing are three other popular types of horse racing.

With most expensive racehorses being sold for millions of dollars, equestrian activities are truly for the rich. Horses, on the other hand, are an integral component of Ethiopian culture and play a significant role in many of the major social events and ceremonies. In the past, horses were utilized for transportation other than during times of war; however, this practice has totally disappeared in modern metropolitan areas in favor of automobiles and other forms of transportation. Arriving to the cities, it seems that many city residents are no longer interested in riding horses. This is evident in the foreigner-dominated privately owned equestrian grounds in Addis Ababa and Sulilta town as well as the public horse riding area in Jan Meda, Ashby L. (2006).

There are about seven different types of Ethiopian horse breeds, according to Tsegahun (2018), and they are distinguished by being drought and disease resistant, having high endurance, and requiring less food than other breeds. In Timket (Epiphany), the horses that are a part of the customary ceremony stand out in addition to the spectacular holiday procession. Several police horses can be seen trolling the Timket neighborhood over this vacation. The majorities of the horses in the police academy are still living today and were imported from England, Australia, and other nations. One of the first sports organizations to be founded was the Ethiopian Equestrian Association. It was established during Emperor Haileselassie's period with a name of Racing Club. Though most Addis dwellers are not part of the equestrian scene, there are 12 clubs in the capital and the Oromia Regional State.

Topo (a sport that is somewhat akin to hockey), Qicco (wrestling), Gengo, and Harashe tophiiyo are among the popular cultural sports in Kafa (horse racing). This cultural activity is performed on market squares, at wedding ceremonies, and on important days like holidays. Horse racing, or harashe tophiiyo, is an individual activity that involves riding the fastest horse, or haresho. In the distant past, the Kafa people engaged in horse racing primarily as a form of combat training to preserve their sovereign kingdom. Subsequently, horse races were held at weddings, markets, and other festive occasions, particularly the Epiphany. Horses are primarily

used for transportation by men, women, and children, and riding is a common activity. The primary goal of the horse race is to assess the rider's skill and the animal's power, Gizaw Amrot (2012).

This study was among the first in Ethiopia and the study area; other research with the same problem has not yet been conducted. The second rationale for the problem is that the cultural sports, especially horse racing (Feres shert), weren't given much emphasis; most districts are not taking part in the annual Kafa games; and the development of this sport is not observed at the same level as other areas of Ethiopia from the researcher's observations. As stated by Coakley (1998), "sport signifies a great deal about us and different ways of living and, in so doing, contributes to the on-going production of social life. However, the benefits acquired through participation in cultural sports such as Feres shert (horse racing) were not achieved in the study area. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to assess the challenges and prospective development of horse racing (Feres shert) in Kafa Zone and some selected districts and to recommend possible solutions. The study focused on the following research questions:

1. How is the practice and prospective development of horse racing in Kafa zone and districts?
2. Are there sufficient and appropriate equipment, facilities, and resources for horse racing in Kafa Zone?
3. What are the major challenges that affect the development of horse racing in Kafa Zone?
4. What appropriate measures should be taken by different stakeholder groups for the development of horse racing sports in the study area?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In accordance with Baker, W. J. (1988), Horse racing, one of the oldest sports in existence (as of 2019), has hardly changed at all in terms of its fundamental principles.

Horse racing transformed into a massive public-entertainment industry in the modern age from a diversion for the leisure class. The Roman Empire had a well-organized system for public entertainment that included both chariot and mounted rider horse racing. It is not entirely clear when organized racing first appeared in other ancient civilizations. It is likely that organized racing first appeared in places like China, Persia, Arabia, and other Middle Eastern and North African nations, where horsemanship had already attained a high level of development. Around the middle of the 18th century, open competitions with bigger fields of competitors were a result of the need for more public racing.

Horse racing, one of the oldest games known to mankind, dates back to the prehistoric nomadic tribesmen of Central Asia, who domesticated horses around 4500 BC. For thousands of years, kings and nobility enjoyed the lucrative pastime of horse racing. According to Winning Ponies (2020), when English knights returned from the Crusades with quick Arab horses, this is when modern racing began. In order to create horses that possessed both speed and endurance, an increasing number of Arab stallions were imported and crossed with English mares during the course of the following four centuries. Private bets were placed by the nobles on competitions between the swiftest of these horses. Horse racing started to develop as a professional sport during Queen Anne's reign (1702–1714). Match racing changed into multiple-horse events that spectators could wager on.

Racetracks started to pop up all throughout England, offering more and bigger payouts to draw the greatest horses. The purses increased the profitability of breeding and owning racehorses. The sport's quick growth prompted the necessity for a central governing body. The elite of racing gathered at New Market in 1750 to create the Jockey Club. This body continues to govern English racing today.

Nonetheless, the main reason modern racing persists is because it is a significant location for authorized gambling. After baseball, horse racing is the spectator sport with the second-highest attendance in the US. A total of 8,004 days of racing were witnessed by 56,194,565 spectators, who wagered \$9.14 billion.

According to the American Horse Council's 2018 Economic Impact Survey, the horse industry in Maryland contributes more than \$1.3 billion to the state's economy.

According to the study, the horse industry affects more than 21,000 jobs overall and generates more than \$500 million in revenue from just the horse racing industry, Paulick report (2019).

Getahun, S. A. (2009)., it is indeed difficult to describe games, public events and entertainments of pre-colonial Africa as "leisure" or "pastime" for it implies pre-conditions set by labour-capital relations, which, however, did not exist in Africa prior to the imposition of colonial rule and capitalism. It is, therefore, prudent to examine Ethiopian/African pastimes outside of the "free" and "non-free" time frame. In Africa in general, and in Ethiopia in particular, there were and still are indigenous variables that defined and controlled space, time and the nature of games, public events and entertainments that were conducted.

Peoples of pre-twentieth century Ethiopia had various ways by which they entertained themselves. These "pastimes" include but are not limited to *feres gugis* (horse racing), *dula-miktosh* (somewhat similar to fencing), *gibigib* (wrestling), *wana* (swimming), *gena* (hockey), *senterej* (Ethiopian chess), and *gebeta* (Mancala). Markets were, and in some cases still are, public spaces. The public square and the seasons also

play a role in determining the kinds of games that were played and when they were scheduled. The games such as *feres gugis*, *dula-miktosh*, and *gibigib* are, more or less, related to and reflections of the warrior traditions of Ethiopians. All involve the skillful handling of weapons such as *dula* (stick), *gorade* (sword), *tor* (spear) that also include hand-to-hand combat, for which pre-Italian occupation Ethiopian warriors were noted for. Except for *feres-gugis*, we do not have written records of the aforementioned games. The latter, however, appears to be the most favorite sport among Ethiopians.

As Richard Pankhurst noted "raiding ability and prowess on a horseback have been traditionally rated by an essentially warrior people as among the highest of manly virtues, and some of the most daring and highly honored acts of sportsmanship were carried out on a horseback, rulers and important personalities being indeed frequently referred to by the names of their horses, Getahun, S. A. (2009).

The Kafa cavalry, however, had secret passageways and had practiced traversing the above-mentioned ditches. Kafa's horses were kept at home in good condition and served two purposes. The horses were utilized in both war and as the king's chariot. They received a balanced diet, which included a lot of barley and, in times of war, honey wine. They were also given sheep and goat blood. In addition to the natural fortifications, Bekele W. (2010) deployed 50 horsemen (cavalry) to guard suspicious regions each day in turn.

### III. METHODS AND MATERIALS

#### 3.1 Research design

To investigate the challenges and prospective development of horse racing (*fers shert*), the researcher employed a descriptive survey research design with quantitative approach, because it is easy to implement and work with. For this study the quantitative approach was employed for the data collected through the questionnaire, interview and observation.

#### 3.2 Study area

Kafa zone with capital of Bonga, is found on average latitude and longitude of 7°16'N and 36°14'E with an elevation of 1,714 meters above sea level at Southern Regional State of Ethiopia, 469 km far from Capital city; Addis Ababa at south west direction. Kafa zone have twelve (12) districts and two (2) town administrations having 1,206,004 total population size and three permanent tribes; Kafa, Chara, and Na'ο and different other immigrants living together.

#### 3.3 Population and Sample

Among 12 districts and 4 administrative towns in Kafa zone; 7 districts was selected based on simple random sampling technique in a lottery system. The selected districts are Gimbo, Gesha, Gewata, Tello, Shiishoinde, Chena and Bonga. The study was limited to 7 districts youth and sport office and Kafa zone sport commission; so it includes all sport professionals of a sample districts, Physical Education teachers of secondary school from sample districts, and Kafa zone sport commission staff member's purposively based on the fact that the number of sport professionals and Physical Education teachers are few in number. Therefore 190 respondents were being selected for the study.

#### 3.4 Data and Sources of Data

The source of data for this study was primary data sources that include Sport administrators, Sport professionals and Physical Education Teachers. The quota of respondents distributed as follows;

No.	Name of organization	subject of respondents	No. of population	No. of respondents
1.	Local club sport professionals	Coaches and officials	22	16
2.	Secondary Schools	PE Teachers	130	128
3.	District Youth & Sport Office	Sport experts	30	30
4.	Kafa zone sport commission	Sport experts	12	8
5.	Sport Administrators	Office leader	8	8
<b>Total</b>			202	190

#### 3.5 Data collection instruments

Data was collected through Questionnaires, structured interview and Observation. Accordingly, questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data, while and observation was used to obtain qualitative data. Therefore, in order to collect large amount of data from sport Professionals, Physical Education teachers and sport administrators in a short time, a questionnaire which consist of 21 close ended items were prepared to gather data about sport facilities, availability of sport activities, and prospective development of horse racing in the sample districts of Kafa zone.

#### 3.6 Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage were used to assess the data gathered through questionnaires. Quantitative and qualitative methodologies were employed interchangeably in the data analysis and interpretation to meet the study's objectives.

#### 3.7 Ethical considerations

The research was governed by the research code of ethics, which upheld values such as secrecy and privacy. The study's researcher made a guarantee to the participants that the data she collected from respondents wouldn't be shared with anyone else.

## IV. RESULT

## 4.1. Demographic information of respondents

No.	Organization	Working position	Sex of respondents			Educational level		
			Male	Female	Total	10+3 diploma	BA/Bsc degree	Master's degree
1.	Club sport professionals	Coaches and officials	12	4	16	4	-	12
2.	Secondary Schools	PE Teachers	102	26	128	10	120	8
3.	District Youth & Sport Office	Sport experts	23	7	30	16	14	-
4.	Kafa zone sport commission	Sport experts	8	-	8	-	6	2
5.	Sport Administrators	Office leader	8	-	8	-	6	2
Total			153	37	190	26	146	24

Table 1. Demographic information of respondents

## 4.2. Analysis of Questionnaires

## 4.2.1 Horse Racing practice and prospective development

No.	Items	Frequencies				Total
		Yes	%	No	%	
1.	There is a horse racing practice in our district BUT the event has NO future prospective development.	112	61.53	70	38.47	182
2.	There is a good practice & promising development of horse racing in our district.	84	46.15	98	53.84	182
3.	Horse racing is considered a popular cultural activity, an enjoyable and multi spectator event by our district societies.	130	71.42	52	28.57	182
4.	There is informal competition of horse racing sport on market days, wedding program or religious festivals as <i>Timket</i> in our District.	128	70.32	54	29.67	182
5.	There is Equestrian (horse riders) Association and Racing club in our districts/ Kafa zone.	-	-	182	100	182

Table 2. Horse Racing practice and prospective development

According to table 2 above, there is a horse racing practice in selected districts (61.53%); horse racing is considered a popular cultural activity, enjoyable, and multi-stakeholder event (71.42%); horse racing competitions are common on market days, wedding programs, or religious festivals such as *Timket* (70.32%); and there is no equestrian association or racing club in all districts of Kafa zone (100%). Therefore, the prospective development of horse racing in the study area was not promising.

## 4.2.2. Equipment's, resources and facilities

No.	Items	Frequencies				Total
		Yes	%	No	%	
1	There are necessary and appropriate equipment's (Helmets, Knee pads) for horse riding in our districts.	28	15.38	154	84.61	182
2	There are appropriate facilities (playground) and resources to conduct horse racing sport in our districts.	178	97.8	4	2.19	182
3	There is an organized tournament of horse racing in our district.	-	-	182	100	182
4	Horse racing informally conducted on Open roads in our districts as a result of unavailability of horse racing facility.	175	96.15	7	3.84	182
5	Horse racing sport in our district is considered as dangerous for participants because of lack of appropriate equipment's and facilities.	162	89.01	20	10.98	182

Table 3. Equipment's, resources and facilities

According to table 3 above, there are no appropriate equipment (such as helmets and knee pads) for horse riding in selected districts (84.61%); no play grounds and resources to conduct horse racing sport in selected districts (97.8%); no organized tournament (100%); horse racing is informally conducted on open roads in selected districts as a result of the unavailability of horse racing facilities

(96.15%); and horse racing is considered dangerous for participants because of a lack of appropriate equipment and facilities (89.01%). Therefore, there is a lack of equipment, resources, and facilities for horse racing in the study area.

#### 4.2.3. Challenges for horse racing

No.	Items	Frequencies				Total
		Yes	%	No	%	
1	There is NO competition program in horse racing cultural sport in 'sport festival' between <i>Districts in Annual Kafa Games</i> .	182	100	-	-	182
2	There is lack of budget to purchase equipment's and to construct horse racing facilities in our district to conduct cultural & Modern racing tournaments.	157	86.26	25	13.73	182
3	There are NO enough Spaces to Construct horse racing facilities play ground in our districts.	35	19.23	147	80.76	182
4	Our district Sport & Youth office have a plan to construct horse racing training and tournament Facilities and to conduct horse racing Competition within our district.	8	4.39	174	95.6	182
5	Our district Sport office has NO plan to construct safe horse racing facilities and conduct horse racing competitions.	175	96.15	7	3.84	182

Table 4. Challenges

According to table 4 above, there is no competition program in horse racing in the "sport festival" between districts in the annual Kafa Games (100%), there is a lack of budget to purchase equipment and construct horse racing facilities in our district to conduct cultural and modern racing tournaments (86.26%), there are no enough spaces to construct horse racing facilities or play grounds in selected districts (19.23%), the district sport and youth office has a plan to construct horse racing training and tournament facilities and to conduct horse racing competitions within their districts (4.39%), and the district sport office has NO plan to construct safe facilities and conduct horse racing competition (96.15%), and there is no budget to construct safe facilities and conduct horse racing competitions (96.15%).

Therefore, the challenges for horse racing in the study area were a lack of a competition program for horse racing, a lack of budget to purchase equipment and construct horse racing facilities, and a lack of a strategic plan by district sport offices.

#### 4.2.4 Solutions for the development of horse racing sport

No.	Items	Frequencies				Total
		Yes	%	No	%	
1	Kafa Zone Sport commission encourages districts to participate in Cultural sports of Kafa, especially in horse racing.	8	4.39	174	95.6	182
2	Kafa zone was participated in horse racing tournament at Regional level.	15	8.24	167	91.75	182
3	Youth & Sport office has a plan to form Equestrian (horse riders) Association and Racing club in our districts/ Kafa zone for better development of sport.	-	0	182	100	182
4	There is a trained professional to judge, coach and facilitate horse racing competition in our district.	95	52.19	87	47.8	182
5	There is a good communication between Kafa zone sport commission and district youth & sport office to plan, construct and conduct horse racing.	50	27.47	132	72.52	182

Table 5. Solutions for the development of horse racing sport

According to table 5 above, Kafa Zone Sport Commission encourages districts to participate in cultural sports of Kafa, especially horse racing (4.39%); Kafa Zone participated in a horse racing tournament at the regional level (8.24%); Youth & Sport Office has a plan to form an equestrian association and a racing club for better development of sport (0%); there is a trained professional to judge, coach, and facilitate horse racing competition in our district (52.19%); and there is good communication between Kafa Zone Sport Commission and district youth & sport office to plan, construct, and conduct horse racing (27.47%).

Therefore, the solutions for the development of horse racing sports are encouraging districts to participate in horse racing, taking part in regional tournaments, planning to organize the Equestrian Association and Racing Club in the study area, involving professionals to

coach and officiate, and creating a good communication between the Kafa Zone Sport Commission and district youth and sport offices.

## V. DISCUSSIONS

The study districts have special favourable weather to produce famous athletes, but there is no sufficient and appropriate equipment, facilities, and resources for horse racing in each district. The district youth and sport office have no plan to construct standard horse racing facilities to run an organized competition program, share experience with others, form racing clubs and equestrian associations, and strive for change.

The problems and challenges of practicing horse racing in the study area were lack of materials, facilities, and a shortage of budget; equipment was not provided by the Ethiopian Equestrian Association for the study area, and fewer efforts were made between Kafa Zone Sport Administrators and District Youth and Sport Administrators for the revival of horse racing.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn from the study:

- There is a practice of horse racing, but the prospective development of horse racing in the study area (Kafa Zone) was not promising.
- There was a lack of equipment, resources, and facilities for horse racing in the study area.
- The major challenges for horse racing in the study area were a lack of a competition program, a lack of budget to purchase equipment and construct horse racing facilities, and a lack of a strategic plan by district and zone sport offices.
- The solutions for the development of horse racing sports are encouraging districts to participate in horse racing, taking part in regional tournaments, planning to organize the Equestrian Association and Racing Club in the study area, involving professionals to coach and officiate, and creating a good communication between the Kafa Zone Sport Sector and district youth and sport offices.

## VII. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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