

Research Article

# History of Ambo Ambaa Lafaa of Western Shewa Zone of Oromia Regional State: The Heartland of Hero and Heroism

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## Abstract

History is indispensable to understanding ourselves and the world around us. This study attempts to construct the history of Ambo Ambaa lafaa of western shewa zone of Oromia regional state. Its foundation, gradual change, economic activity, politico-administration and religion in different leaders. Further the study recognizes the problem which affects the development of Ambo town. In this study, the researcher utilized primary, secondary and pamphlet sources as well as oral information through interview in order to gather the data. The collected data was organized and analyzed using qualitative research methods. The study is based on historical and Ethnographic approach. The historical foundation of Ambo was not directly concern for the cause of military garrisons like many other Ethiopia Towns, its growth and internal character came to be closely connected with the mineral water, God Bridge and commercial activities. Ambo is town found in west shewa zone of oromia regional state. Ambo was known by pride of their nation in different era of various ruler of Ethiopia. They struggles for their right and know their responsibility simultaneously. Ambo known by patriots, hero and brave those who stand for the freedom of country in any controversy and pleasure time. The society of town needs peace, stability, truth, justice, equality, brotherly hood and fraternity with diverse nation and nationalities in the empire, because Oromo are founders of gada system that did for equality of human beings. Ambo town was established in late of 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the beginning the spatial size of Ambo town is small, it is around 1320 hectares and became expand to 8578 hectares after it makes gradual expansion to the neighboring farm land. As the result Ambo is very comfortable for different investment activities because of comfortable climate condition and stability (safety) in area, there is also different attraction site including Wanchi lake, Dandi Lake (it had number eight shape/symbol), Guder fall, obse fall, old palace of emperor Haile sillase and other different natural, cultural and ritual sites

## Keywords

Ambo, Hora Ambo, God Bridge, Senkelle Stone, Economy and People of Ambo

## 1. Introduction

Ambo is the land of hero, land of moral and ethical conservation, the land were true nationalist and blocker of oppressors were found. Ambo was conserved and developed by

three child of liban macha in general and Torban kutaye, child of liban in particular. Ambo town is established since 1889 as a small village. Starting from 1908-1931 Ambo

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considered as the rural town and after 1931 it considered as privileged towns of the time to have its own municipal administration before the Italian invasion of Ethiopia [1].

There are different factors for the emergence of Ambo town in the area. Factors like, God bridge, and (Riqicha Waaqaa) was played important role to attracting merchants to the area and make long journey to the west and southwestern part of the town. The other push and pull factor for the formation of Ambo town is *Hora* (Ambo mineral water). Because, of hora people who were living around Ambo and its environs were frequently came to the area to treat their cattle and free of their disease. According to the local elders and different informants those who had a good knowledge about the formation of Ambo explained at different time *Riqicha waqaa* and *Hora* Ambo are the main factor for the emergence of town. This town is known by abounded of hero like Mamo Mozamir (assassinated by emperor Haile silasse in 1960s), artist Hachalu Hundessa Bonsa (murdered due to his nationality in 2020 at Addis Ababa city), Loret Tsagaye Gebra Madin Qaweessaa (luca Robale), Darara Kafani, Jagama Badane (student of Ambo preparatory school and visionary boy murdered by wayane troops), Kebeda Dinsa Tasisa (from Ginch high school he was killed by soldier of wayane in 1997EC), Colonel Alemu Kitesa, Lagessa wagi and different fighter of truth and nationalist those who sacrificed for justice, equality, truth, brotherhoods, fraternity, egalitarian system, ethics and moral of Oromo nation in particular and for Ethiopians in general.

Let me I came back to the emergence of Ambo town. According to the local elders information different peoples were frequently come to the area as the result of the *Hora*, these peoples were slowly began to settle permanently in the area, this settlement began to increase from time to time because people continuously migrated to the area, which led to the formation of small village settlement at late 1880s. As trade activities developed in Ambo and its environs people from the surrounding rural areas began to demand those who were at the village level with what they required and they also frequented to the Ambo market to purchase valuable good such as salt, coffee etc., the rural side sold different goods like butter, honey, sheep, goat, ox, caws, food items to the town [2]. In addition to manufacture products some people, especially women began to sale local drink (*xala or farso*) for people who repeated came to the area and they try to sale bread of wheat called *Ambasha* (local name) [3].

The establishment of Ambo Yesus church in 1894 was the other good opportunity that increased the value of Ambo village settlement. According to informants, it was beginning from that event that *Hora* Ambo began to be called as Ambo *Xabal*. Originally Yesus church was established by Dejazmach Garedew Wolde at *Tullu Diimtu*, in present day Tokke kutaye district and stayed there until it was brought to Ambo by Fitawrari Habte Georgis in 1894E.C. when this church enter into Ambo it was constructed in a place called Red Cross in front of Ambo town administration police of-

lice [4].

According to the elders the *Hora* is known as *Hora Ayyeetu*. It became called as *Xabala* Ambo after the establishment of Ambo Yesus Church in 1894. The *Hora* is important for both its curative value and its cultural expression. As a medicinal value, it is known to bring about recovery from different diseases for both human beings and livestock's. The *Hora* also used as ritual specially those who following orthodox religion, they are celebrating festival to the area of *xabal* [5].

The other events that contribute for the development of Ambo settlement was the visit of Ras Teferi Mekonen W/M/Gudisa (later Emperor Haile Sellasie I) in 1931. On that time, emperor was impressed by resource of the area like fertility of the land, climate condition, wonderful senkelle stone, that used for construction of house and the mineral water. Emperor then took important measures to improve the development of Ambo. Teferi Mekonen did different infrastructure like Agricultural school and appointment of town Administrator. Following the fact, Balambaras Mahiteme Sellasie Wolde Mesqal was assigned as administer and planner of the town. As the demand for land increased free land distribution was conducted especially for the royal family members (princes). As the village developed into town from it faced short of money. It began to collect tax.

In this way, Ambo village have already took a form of urban character before the Italian invasion in 1935. However, only very few developments that could demonstrate urban character were established before the Italian invasion. This includes the agricultural school (1930/31) and the pioneering school that began in the agricultural school campus (1930/31). The Italian occupation (1936-41) has had improved significant building in Ambo town.

The Italians had introduced a number of innovations contributing to urban development in Ambo as they did in all over the country. Some enduring features of urban landscape of Ambo under the Italians include the construction of the main road from finfinne to Wollega, the modern Bridge on Hulluqa River, and construct of number of buildings in their Residence, Hospital, and some other buildings which are present at present-day in mayor office, and remain of different Hotels like Bambaras hotel. The Italians also introduced Telecommunication, postal and Electricity services to some parts of the town. They promoted commerce by encouraging weekly market and establishment of small shops, bar and drinking houses in town [6].

The Macha Oromo calls the vicinity of Ambo town as *Ambaa Lafaa*. According to local elders *Amba Lafa* is the share of *Kuttaye* child's when Liban Macha distributed land to his three children i.e. *Amaya* (the senior), *Waliso* (middle) and *Kuttaye* (the junior or *Quxisu*). The knowledgeable fathers says that among the seven children of *Kuttaye* (i.e. *Itu*, *Hidhabu*, *Maliyu*, *Macca*, *Burra*, *Dada*, and *Abebe*, the last two predominantly inhabit Ambo) the locality of present day Ambo town [7]. There are different gada sites in the area

before the incorporation of emperor Menelik II like *Qilxu Homa*, *Finca'a Obse*, Bokku Cittu (general assembly of *Torban Kuttaye*), *Bokku Xule*, *Wacan* (site of Qaalluu Ambo) etc. [8]. Qallu is a religious leader of Oromo and anointment father in gada system. Gada system of Oromo were weakened by different reason like the adoption of new religion to the area (Islamic and Christian), long distance trade, establishment of different *moti* in different Oromia region, colonialism of foreign forces, the incorporation and persecution of the former rulers of Ethiopia on the system of Oromo. Internal and external factor were reason for the weakness of Oromo system of administration called Gada. Gada is the socio, political, Economic, ritual system of Oromo people and we can say that it is the constitution and law of Oromo, it is beyond the ordinary system of any governance system stand for justice and equality of any living things including wild animal and plants.

## 2. Socio Economic Activities of Ambo

Ambo and its vicinity had different economic activities like trade, mixed agriculture, poultry, apiculture, small scale enterprise and other. The town is very comfortable for investment and investors who demand (interest and ability) to do with Ambo. The climate condition and people of the town were very smart beyond the word can express. The people

were known by justices, truthfulness and equality for all human beings, even wild life. The town showing progress of development in different infrastructure.

Historically if we return back to see the commercial initiation of Ambo and its vicinity according to informant Bekele Bayeta different commercial activities around Ambo were stated before long period ago. For instance there was a market at *Dabbasi*, *Doobbi* before the incorporation of macha Oromo by the force of menelik II. Amus Gebeya (Ginchi), *Segno Gebeya* (Bodda), *Jafaro* market (Guder).

Therefore *Doobbii* market was transferred to *Oddo Liban* by *Wayyessa Manqa*, *balabat* of the time. After moved to *Oddo Liban* it was named as *Qidame Gebeya* (market). The commercial activities in vicinity of Ambo grew largely under *Quse Habte Georgis Dinagde*. There is also known market at *Ginch* called *Amus Gebeya*; *Segno Gebeya* in *Bodda*, *Jafaro* market in *Gudar* for exchange of different goods and services like butter, honey, salt, coffee, grain, spice, cattle, clothe etc. for the progress of their economic level. According to local elders there was the market at *Dabbasi* which was transferred to *Oddo Liban* by one of the *balabats* of the area named *Wayyessa Manqar*, who was supported by *Ras Gobana* in his rivalry against another *balabat* of the area, *Dabal Jibiti*; after it was transferred to *Oddo Liban* it was named as *Qidame Gebeya* [9].



Source: photo taken by researcher

**Figure 1.** Mini Market (*Gabaq Baqqalaa*) in Ambo (Left) and Cattle and sheep Market (Right).

## 3. Resource of Ambo, Senkelle Mineral Stone

Sekele stone is found in Ambo town in *Senkelle Faris kebele*. As informant described this mineral is discovered during the Italian invasion in 1936 when Italian want to construct a bridge on *Huluqa River* and for the other construction purpose, they use the local stone and discover *senkelle* stone. For the first time *Ras Mesfin* (vizier of Emperor *Hayile sillasse*) was used this stone more than one year as the owner of the land. But, the owner of the land was *Ato siksa*

*Dakso* and he is one of the strongest, heroic and patriot of the time. During the invasion of Italy *siksa Dakso* played a pivotal role for the expulsion of Italy in *shewa* and later he was wounded by sword on his ahead and shoulder in violence then *siksa Dakso* returned to his home. While a time he treated by traditional medicine and return to his normal life [10]. After he cured he started grievance on the action of *Ras Mesfin* to get his land that was conquered by *Mesfin*. At the time of their skirmish unfortunately one commander of Italy came to the area to travel to *Guder town* and *Siksa Dakso* crying to the commander and he said like this:

*Commander this land is my property, Ras Mesfin conquered my land by his force. Please commander see my true*

*my head and shoulder is injured down by Mesfin workers. I have true on this land, I was born on this environ and it's my birth land please commander help me.... crying ... shout... strong sound.*

Thus the commander guided and support Siksa Dakso and he get his land from the conquest of Ras Mesfin. Senkele stone is used for construction of house and bridge. This mineral used for the local community by creating job opportunity, more than five hundred peoples get job opportunity now a time by the name of micro and small scale enterprise. This stone is used as beauty for constructing house beside to its strength. Due to this reason the stone that is used for 'walik' is four thousand birr for each *Ebola* car, four birr for a single

stone out of this three birr for enterprise and one birr is for loaders, they load one single stone by one birr. The senkele stone that is used for the construction of wall house is expensive. The price of one stone that long 25cm is 150 birr. Thus, Senkele stone is playing a good role for the development of Ambo town.

The small scale enterprise that gates job opportunity in this area are giving tax for Ambo town and the car that inter this environ for load of mineral are paid one hundred for the municipality in each car. Thus Senkele stone is used for attraction site and good opportunity for the town to invite the investors to the area.



Source: field survey (adopted by Author)

**Figure 2.** Senkele stone.

## 4. Research Methodology

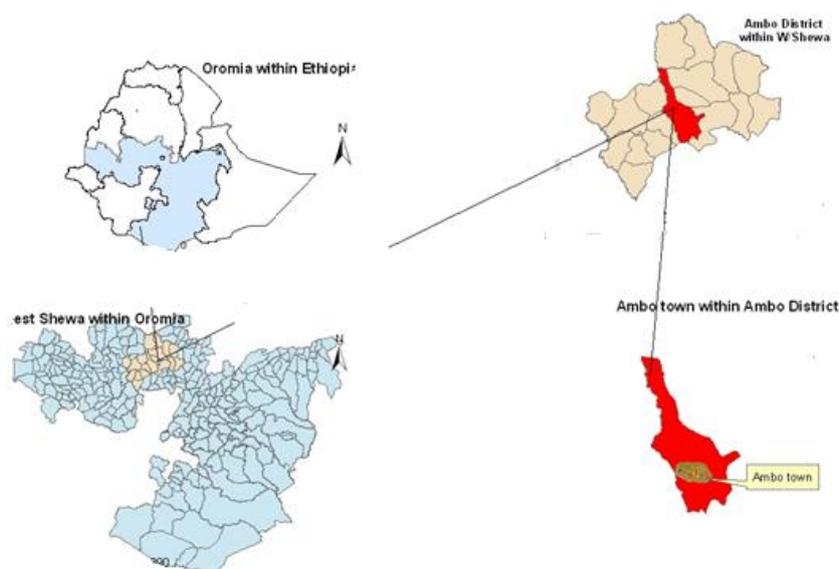
### 4.1. Climate Condition

The climate condition of Ambo is *Woyna Daga*. It is gifted with suitable climate and favorable for every production like agriculture, apiculture, trade and different investment. The various natural, social, ritual and cultural sites were attracting people to the area. Ambo town and it's environ are known for its different natural resources like Hulluqa river, Obse waterfall, Hot water (Hora Ambo), Sanqalle stone, water mineral factory, Haile silasse palace, heroic of oppressors, on the ground and under the ground resources etc... Above all, the Ambo mineral

water (*Hora Ambo*) is one of the important natural resources, which have direct relation with the formation of Ambo town.

### 4.2. Geographical Location of the Area

The study was conducted on Ambo town, which is found in western shewa zone of Oromia regional state. Ambo is a spa town and the geographical location of town is between 8° 56'30'' N - 8° 59'30'' N latitude and between 37°47'30" E - 37° 55'15" E longitude. Relatively Ambo town a transport hub in Central Ethiopia located 114 kms faraway west of Addis Ababa. The town was established in 1889 as a small village. Ambo is among a few privileged towns of its time got municipal administration since 1931. Based on the present fact the town has six urban *kebeles*.



Source: accepted from Ambo town administration office

**Figure 3.** Geographical map of Ambo Town.

### 4.3. Data Collection Procedure

In order to gather the data, the researcher is used the systematic data collection methods such as questionnaires, interview, and observation of change and continuity of Ambo town. Thus, the primary and secondary sources were used to gather the necessary information for this study. Relevant written materials concerning Ambo town was collected from various archives of government offices and annual report of the offices such as culture and tourism office, mayor office, health office and social affair office. In addition to this the reading materials which are available at town, and Ambo University were the source of this study.

Furthermore, oral information was obtained through interview from officials of different experts, and other knowledgeable informants of both sexes and different religion (indigenous residents of the town in order to collect authentic data), and of different age groups who live in the town. Snow ball sampling technique (based on referral) was used to find knowledgeable informants whom the researcher interview. The interview was held face to face. In these ways, the necessary information was collected by the researcher.

## 5. Conclusion

I have attempted to document this paper the slight history of Ambo town from its foundation to present. Ambo town is the oldest town that found in western shewa zone of Oromia regional state. It located 114 km far away West of Addis Ababa. The various ritual, natural and cultural sites were used as pull-factors attracting people to the area. The main reasons for the formation of Ambo town were natural bridge

(*Riqicha Waaqaa*) was important as merchants who had crossed it in their long journey to the west and southwest. The mineral water for which people frequented to the area to get liberate of their disease and treat their cattle, even peoples began to permanently settle, this settlement began to increase from time to time because people continuously migrated to the area, which led to the formation of ample village. The presence of Ambo mineral water and its factory, different attraction site of the surrounding area, topography of the area, different education institution and commercial activities, weekly market in the area had further facilitated the growth of Ambo town.

The town of Ambo which founded in 1889 was serviced as a center of socio-economic, cultural, political, and religious issues for about one century and three decades. This town has two different names at different regime rather than Ambo in different era. These were *Dingat Alem* (1928-1936) and *Hagre Hiwot* (1948-1974). But, returned to its original name after socialist government Dergu (Colonel Mangistu Haile Mariam) came to power in 1974. According to the available sources, political instability, lack of good governance (mal administration of government officials), small number of investment and industry in area and lack of income is hampered the growth of the Ambo town as much it needed when it compared with the other Ethiopia towns.

Religiously Orthodox Christianity, protestant, Islam and traditional *waaqefataa* had been predominantly practiced in Ambo town. Majority of the people of the town were Orthodox Christian and Protestants followers. The people had been living based on mutual coexistence for several years in all directions of Ambo town and the adjacent areas.

## Author Contributions

Getu Gonfa Ararso is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict interest.

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