Philani Mxathule MXTPHI003

University of Cape Town

Department of Knowledge and Stewardship LIS5035

DKIS Plagiarism Declaration

Traditional and Modern Roles of Livestock in the Eastern Cape, South Africa: A Digital Collection of Horses, Cattle, Goats, and Sheep in Cultural Ceremonies and Societal Development.

Comparing the significance of livestock in the ancient times and in the digital age world.

Website link: https://digital-objectscuration.netlify.app/#/

Signature: …P Mxathule

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Introduction

The bond between people and animals has always been important for communities in the Eastern Cape, in South Africa. Horses, cattle, goats, and sheep have not only helped people with work and food but also play a big part in cultural traditions. "The influence of the animals profiled in the book has been judged according to four categories: edible animals that have shaped agriculture, so-called "medical" animals or disease vectors, commercial animals used in trade or manufacturing, and practical animals used for transport or clothing. Chaline believes that, of these, the humble cow has been the most influential of all - its significance reaching deep into the past and the implications of its exploitation far into the future" (Clutton-Brock, 1981).

For generations, these animals have been used in ceremonies that mark important stages in people's lives, showing respect and honouring community values. In the past, horses helped with transporting individuals or group of people, cattle provided milk and were essential for ploughing fields, preparing the land for agriculture, and were used as draft animals to pull carts and grind grain, goats were often used in religious sacrifices, symbolizing purity or serving as offerings to divinities in various cultures, and sheep were valued for their wool (Frantz et al, 2020).

In modern times, technology has changed some ways these animals are used, yet they remain important in many rural and cultural practices. Today, animals are still a central part of traditions like weddings, funerals, and initiation ceremonies (Frantz et al, 2017). Through this digital collection, I aim to show how these animals' roles have shifted over time, keeping some of their traditional value while adapting to new needs. This essay will explore the ancient and current uses of these animals in the Africa focusing more on South African context. I am choosing to focus on South Africa in the Eastern Cape (EC) side not only for narrowing down the content. It is because EC is where I have experienced some of this life where all these livestock were used by my grandfathers when I was young.

Objects and why?

This collection focuses on six specific types of livestock: horses, cattle, goats, and sheep. Additionally, significance of goat-sound and cattle sound when they are being slaughtered for rituals or traditional ceremonies. These animals are chosen for their cultural significance, particularly in South Africa, where they are essential to both traditional practices and daily life. Each object in the collection represents not only the physical animal but also its role in society,

from cultural ceremonies to agricultural purposes (Bruford. et al, 2003). I have chosen this collection particularly because of the link between these livestock and they are the dominant animals that are kept for livestock in EC. It is quite interesting how horses were used as a mode of transport to fetch cattle, goat, and sheep when they at the forest. How cattle, goats and sheep were used to provide milk prior after giving birth. How goat's and cattle were used to do perform iconic divinity rituals to honour ancestors which I believe that is still being practiced (Bruford. et al, 2003).

This collection has commonalities in different ways, I have already mentioned the actual part of it. Another reason I have chose this collection is because two objects are mass nouns they do not have plural (sheep and cattle). Whereas other two objects have plurals (goats and horses). Another interesting reason that made me choose this collection is that goats and cattle are specifically used when it is necessary for them to be used, and they believed to be the most useful ritual sources. They share the similar energy as opposed to sheep and horses. Sheep and horses are very much hyper but only horses that uses a different technique when they fight which is they using their legs and rarely bite each other. The rest of these animals uses their heads to fight so they share certain things. Sheep and goats are similar in size they are small as opposed to horses and cattle as they are seen as huge creatures.

Importance of controlled vocabulary

Using a controlled vocabulary in a digital collection focused on the cultural and ceremonial roles of animals in the Eastern Cape greatly improves searchability, accessibility, and respect for cultural integrity. Normalizing terms related to these traditional practices, the vocabulary helps users from different backgrounds find specific items, even if they are unfamiliar with local languages. It also connects related items, allowing users to see the deeper connections between rituals and the symbolic roles of animals, presented from an authentic African perspective. This approach challenges Western views by prioritizing indigenous cultural meanings and providing a respectful, accurate experience (Bruford. et al, 2003).

The controlled vocabulary also aids in the collection's long-term preservation and ethical clarity. Consistent terminology makes the collection easier to archive and transfer across platforms while keeping it usable and relevant as digital standards change. Clear terms around concepts like "Cultural Ownership" provide transparency on intellectual property, clarifying how indigenous knowledge should be used and respected. Combining academic terms with user-generated tags further enriches the collection by encouraging public engagement while

maintaining academic standards. This method ensures that the collection preserves cultural heritage while remaining inclusive, engaging, and ethically resonance in a digital setting (Clutton-Brock, 1981).

File formats included & analysis.

The digital collection uses different media formats, including images, audio recordings, and videos, each with a unique purpose. Images show animals in their cultural settings and highlight their features. Audio recordings include sounds of the two animals that signifies that the ceremony has occurred successfully connected to the ancestors. Videos capture traditional rituals and modern farming practices. Together, these media create a richer story and help preserve cultural traditions that are often shared through spoken word or visuals (Gordon, 2017).

Benefits and disadvantages of the file formats

Images play a vital role in illustrating cultural contexts. They allow users to visually connect with animals and their roles in ceremonies, showcasing not just their physical characteristics but also the environments in which they are found. This visual representation can make cultural practices more relatable and understandable, particularly for those unfamiliar with the specific traditions. For example, seeing a traditional ceremony involving animals can help users appreciate the significance of these animals in the community's cultural identity. Additionally, images can serve as educational tools, allowing viewers to learn about specific customs, attire, and settings that are important to the culture being represented (Frantz. Et al, 2020).

Audio recordings provide a realistic preview into the sounds of a culture, capturing traditional songs, chants, and oral histories. This format conveys the emotions and nuances of spoken language that text alone cannot express. For instance, listening to a ceremonial chant can evoke feelings and atmospheres associated with the ritual, making it a more immersive experience. Audio also preserves oral traditions, which are crucial in many cultures, ensuring that these voices and stories are passed down to future generations. This helps maintain the cultural heritage and fosters a deeper emotional connection for users, allowing them to engage with the culture in a meaningful way (Beck, 2013).

Videos are particularly powerful because they combine both visual and auditory elements, offering a dynamic portrayal of cultural practices. They can capture the movement,

interactions, and emotions involved in rituals and modern practices, providing a fuller understanding of these traditions. For example, a video of a traditional dance can show the choreography, costumes, and community participation, all of which are vital to understanding the significance of the event. Videos also allow for the documentation of complex practices that might be difficult to convey through still images or audio alone. By presenting culture in action, videos help users appreciate the richness and diversity of cultural expressions (Frantz. Et al 2020).

However, these media formats also have downsides. For instance, large audio and video files can be difficult to access for people with slow internet or older devices, especially in remote areas. There is also a need to be careful with cultural content in audio and video, as it can be sensitive and should be handled with respect. This means getting proper permissions to avoid misuse or misrepresentation. Additionally, digital files can become outdated or damaged over time, which makes it important to manage them well for future access. Lastly, without enough context, images and videos can be misunderstood, so it's crucial to provide clear explanations and descriptions to help users understand the cultural significance of what they are seeing (Rischkowsky. et al, 2017).

Sustainability of the collection: Is the collection maintained?

The sustainability of the digital collection focused on cultural practices involving animals in the Eastern Cape relies on several key factors. First, ongoing management is essential, requiring regular updates, maintenance, and technical support to ensure that digital files remain accessible and relevant. The collection must also be adaptable to new technologies and standards, allowing for the migration of content to updated formats or platforms as needed. Engaging the local community is another crucial aspect, as involving cultural practitioners and community members in the curation process ensures accurate representation and fosters a sense of ownership, which can encourage ongoing support and contributions (Rischkowsky et al, 2007).

Implications of sustainability.

Factors that need to be considered that might have negative implications.

Animal health

From an ethical standpoint, there is concern over whether it is right to expose animals to such medications without medical necessity. While antibiotics can prevent disease, they can also alter the natural balance of bacteria in animals' systems, potentially harming their health. Furthermore, if antibiotic resistance continues to grow, it could lead to a situation where human and animal diseases are much harder to treat, raising ethical concerns about the long-term effects of this practice (Swart, 2010).

Genetic Modification and Selective Breeding

Advances in genetics have enabled farmers to selectively breed animals for specific traits, such as faster growth, higher milk production, or leaner meat. While these techniques can increase productivity, they also raise ethical questions about animal welfare. Selective breeding often leads to health problems for the animals. For example, some dairy cows are bred to produce more milk than their bodies can naturally handle, leading to udder infections and other health issues. Similarly, chickens bred for large breast sizes sometimes have difficulty walking (Kerven. et al, 2008).

Genetic modification is a newer technique that allows scientists to directly alter an animal's DNA. This could potentially improve animals' resistance to disease, making them more resilient. However, genetic modification also raises ethical questions about whether it is right to interfere with the natural genetic makeup of animals. Critics argue that such practices treat animals as mere commodities, ignoring their rights as living beings. Supporters, however, believe that if it improves animal welfare or reduces environmental impact, it may be justifiable (Kerven. et al, 2008).

Cultural and Social Views on Animal Use

Animals hold different cultural and symbolic meanings in societies across the world, influencing how they are treated and valued. For example, cattle are sacred in Hindu culture, while pork is avoided in Islamic dietary laws. In South Africa's Eastern Cape, cattle and goats

are essential in traditional ceremonies, symbolizing respect and honouring ancestors. Ethical challenges arise when modern farming practices conflict with these cultural values. In some cases, industrial farming methods may not align with traditional ways of raising animals, leading to a loss of cultural heritage and identity (Kerven, 2008).

Balancing modern practices with respect for cultural traditions is a challenge in the digital age. Some communities are striving to preserve traditional ways of raising and honouring animals, even as they adapt to new technologies. Respecting these cultural perspectives is important, as they offer a holistic approach to animal care that values the spiritual and social roles of animals, not just their economic worth (Beck, 2013).

The Rise of Sustainable and Ethical Farming Practices

With growing awareness of these ethical issues, there is an increasing demand for sustainable and ethical farming methods. Practices such as regenerative agriculture, organic farming, and humane treatment standards are gaining attention as alternatives to industrial farming. Regenerative agriculture, for instance, focuses on improving soil health, enhancing biodiversity, and reducing chemical use. In terms of animal welfare, sustainable farming advocates for better living conditions, access to open spaces, and lower stress for animals (Swart, 2010).

Technology plays a role here by offering solutions to track and monitor animal welfare. For example, wearable devices for livestock can monitor animals' heart rates, activity levels, and body temperature, alerting farmers if an animal appears stressed or unwell. This information helps ensure animals are healthy, and it can be a valuable tool in promoting ethical treatment. Digital records also assist in maintaining transparency in animal care, allowing consumers to make informed choices about where their food comes from (Beck, 2013).

In the context of this digital collection focused on the traditional and modern uses of animals in Eastern Cape cultural ceremonies, a controlled vocabulary is a cornerstone of effective organization, accessibility, and ethical representation. By systematically categorizing terms related to cultural practices, animal roles, and ceremonial contexts, your collection benefits from improved discoverability and long-term usability (Gordon, 2017).

Elements I chose not to use?

Some aspects, such as detailed genetic history or extensive modern farming practices, were excluded to maintain a focus on traditional roles and cultural significance. Including such

elements could detract from the core theme and shift the focus away from indigenous practices, potentially complicating the narrative. This focus allows the collection to remain culturally centred and accessible. I chose not to focus on the things that do not correlate to these animals because this was not going to be specific as I had to incorporate differences and similarities with my chosen collection.

What worked? What didn't work? What was the solution?

Creating this collection underlined both successes and challenges. The controlled vocabulary and media formats worked well, enabling clear organization and a multi-sensory experience that resonates with users. However, balancing modern ethical concerns with traditional depictions was challenging. Ensuring cultural sensitivity required extensive consultations, and the technical demands of video and audio files posed challenges for accessibility. To address this, I included comprehensive metadata and provided alternative, low-resolution versions of the media for users with limited bandwidth. Also, I had to use most of the outdated sources since I was analysing a context of how these livestock were significant during the ancient times. What was even interesting is that I didn't even know if there is literature that covers this topic so I was very curious of where I will be getting sources to support my statements and I was surprised that there are lot of scholars who have written about this.

Interesting facts or relevance about these animals in today's world.

Horses are now mostly used in sports, recreation, and therapy. Activities like horse racing, equestrian sports, and therapeutic riding have replaced practical uses. In some rural and urban settings, horses are still used in farming and police work but on a much smaller scale. The role of cattle in modern agriculture has led to concerns about sustainability and ethical treatment, leading to innovations like lab-grown meat and alternative proteins. The bulls are also used in sports in the western countries illustrations will be provided on the website. Sheep are still valued for wool, though synthetic fibres have reduced demand. Technology has improved wool quality through selective breeding. Goats continue to be valued for dairy products, especially for producing goat cheese, which has gained popularity globally. Another interesting factor about Goat is that people refer it to something totally different from it. GOAT (Greatest of All Time) this describes either a person who is the best in a certain sports or profession. Its quite

interesting how people can also create meanings articulating these kind of animals as they sometimes portray an image of the actual goat to represent the statement, Greatest of all time.

Conclusion

To sum up, this digital collection demonstrates the deep cultural bond between people and animals, specifically analysing horses, cattle, goats, and sheep. These animals hold significant roles in both traditional and modern settings, from ceremonial rituals to daily agricultural tasks. This is using a diverse media format—images, audio, and video—the collection preserves and shares these traditions with wider audiences, allowing them to understand and appreciate the rich heritage connected to these animals. A controlled vocabulary ensures that the collection is organized, searchable, and respectful of cultural meanings, maintaining its relevance and accessibility for the future. This approach does not only protect cultural heritage but also supports ethical representation and inclusivity, linking the past with the present. Through this collection, we gain insight into how these animals continue to play essential roles in honouring traditions and sustaining community values, demonstrating the resilience and adaptability of cultural practices in a modern world.

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