



Breeding change?

Gender and cattle in Botswana

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Cattle politics in Botswana

- Accumulation of cattle in Botswana has a long history of signifying economic and political power
- Export to the EU has had a significant impact on beef farming practices since the mid-1970's
- The Botswana Meat Commission: para-statal monopoly on export abattoir is to a large extent regulating management practices for all cattle farmers

Cattle and gender

- Cattle have throughout Botswana's history been linked to men and male interests: work, status, kinship relations
- Male exclusiveness in focus in literature and assumed by many Botswana citizens and politicians
- However, many women are involved in cattle production as owners and active managers

A need to problematize the meaning of women's involvement in cattle production

- How are women's positions being renegotiated through their involvement in cattle production?
- What implications might women's involvement in cattle production have for the future of gender relations in Botswana?

Departures

- Interpretative approach: understanding meaning rather than finding laws
- Geertz (1975;1977) Ethnographic stance: richness, texture and detail
- Ortner's (2006) agency: culturally and historically constructed
- Kaber's (1999) notion of empowerment: strategic life choices
- Agarwal's take on relative access: command over cattle
- Hovorka's gender-species positionality: gender-ethnicity-species positionality

Data collection

- Rocheleu's "Seeing multiple" approach
- Cross section of different women
- Participant observation
- Semi structured interviews
- Records of cattle ownership, etc.

Mma Serole watching her
cattle coming in to drink



From oxen system to weaner system (2009)

Cattle with Bolusses

Tollies	150 – 340 kg	Milktooth	P11	/ kg
Tollies	341 and up	Milktooth	P10.75	/ kg
Tollies	260 and up	1 + 2 Tooth	P8	/ kg
Heifers	150 and up	Milktooth	P8	/ kg

Cattle with no Bolusses

Tollies	150 and up	Milktooth	P8	/ kg
Heifers	150 and up	Milktooth	P7	/ kg

DATES

17-07-2013	-	Tshootsha
19-07-2013	-	Chobokwane
22-07-2013	-	Kule
24-07-2013	-	Xanagas
26-07-2013	-	Karakubis

Same day payment

New breeds



Bolus scanner for traceability



Fences divides cattle and people



Brands



Increased focus on sale, and on the EU market

- Increased regulation of cattle ownership and sale
- Price by weight – men and women equal benefit
- Cattle an option for entrepreneurship initiatives

- Efforts of gender equality:
 - in land and property legislation
 - Supporting women's entrepreneurship



Having cattle can be an expression of being “a real woman”

it becomes a means for self-worth: independence, hard working rural femininity



- Motivations for heading cattle operations are both economical: *“if I want to build a house I can”*, and socio-emotional: *“you can’t live without a cow, it’s in my blood”*
- Women enter as owners and managers – not as workers
- Women have their own brands, know what breeds are good for the market and who to sell to

Linkages?

- Increased emphasis on selling cattle
- Formalisation of cattle transactions
- Changing norms of gendered decision making
- cattle a potential asset for women leading to diversification of women's economic activities as well as greater security and independence

Preliminary findings

- Opportunities are opening up as women increasingly feel they can also have cattle
- At the same time their participation in the cattle work is limited by household/child responsibility
- However, most men and women hire someone to do the daily tasks
- Cattle as cash is useful for whereas cattle as prestige objects and exchange objects were so tied to male traditions?

Multiple actors

- Farms on both
 - fenced areas (ranches) and
 - communal grazing areas (cattle post system), as well as
 - zero-grazing farms (feedlots)

➤ involved in commercial export beef production
- Naro and “Tswana tribes”, Herero, Afrikaner and English
- Different perceptions of women engaging in farming

Varying cattle connections

- Relative equal command over cattle makes a difference
- Economic security, active life choices and a feeling of worth – empowerment
- Different perceived cultural norms around gender and cattle call for a gender-ethnicity-species positionality

Changes and challenges

- **Women's farmers association as network**
- **Courses on commercial cattle production**
- **Make use of inheritance and gifts from parents**



Thank you!



Funders

- KSLA – Kungliga Skogs-och Lantbruks Akademien
- SSAG – Svenska Sällskapet för Antropologi och Geografi
- KVA – Kungliga Vetenskaps Akademien
- NRML – Natural Resource Management and Livelihoods in International Development
- NAI – Nordic Africa Institute
- SLU – Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitets internationaliseringsstipendium
- HAJ – Helge Ax:son Johnsons stiftelse