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## **Women and Cattle “Becoming-With” in Botswana**

**Introduction.** Cattle form an integral part of lives, livelihoods, and landscapes in Botswana. They offer people socio-cultural and politico-economic means through which to participate in society as respected and supported citizens. When asked what it means to have cattle, many of our study respondents stated: “I feel like a person” or “cattle are life.” At the same time, people shape the circumstances and experiences of cattle. Human connections to cattle within subsistence and commercially-oriented realms generate practices of ownership, rearing, and (re)producing of this particular species that influence their value, role, and use. Human-cattle relations emerge and evolve through historically-situated social relations of power based on gender, ethnicity, and class. In turn, these relations present people with different political and economic opportunities associated with cattle production, and present cattle with different opportunities for eating, drinking, moving, and breeding. Ultimately, intersectional human-cattle relations make both humans and cattle who they are in terms of societal positionality, economic opportunities, and political clout. Humans and cattle are “becoming-with” – using Donna Haraway’s concept – in Botswana with implications for humans, cattle, and the broader context.

The broad aim of our paper is to explore intersectional human-cattle relations in contemporary Botswana, characterized over the past few decades as enhanced commercialization. This period has generated new configurations of cattle based on breeding, mobility, and markets, and new opportunities especially for women to connect with cattle across ethnic-based contexts. Cattle throughout Botswana’s history has been a male affair, regardless of ethnic group, be it the dominant Batswana, Bakgalagadi, Herero, Nharo (San), Afrikaner, or English. Our paper thus explores specifically how women and cattle are becoming-with in Botswana. We organize the paper as follows: first, we articulate a multispecies conceptual frame of intersectional “becoming-with”; second, we outline human-cattle relations in Botswana as situated within social relations of power based on gender, ethnicity, and class; third, we provide methodological details of our case study in Ghanzi District; fourth and fifth, we illustrate empirically how women across ethnic groups are becoming-with cattle in traditional and non-traditional ways respectively; sixth, we consider how cattle are becoming-with women through class-based processes of the cattle sector; finally, we

summarize our findings and reflect on what a multispecies intersectional “becoming-with” lens offers our Botswana case study and human-animal studies more broadly.

**Intersectional Becoming-With.** Our relations to those around us make us who we are. We do not pre-exist our relations to others but rather we “become-with each other or not at all” (Haraway, *Staying* 4). A material-semiotic becoming-with emphasizes the physical reality of a relation and the meaning-making that the relation entails. Relations materialize together, are ascribed specific meanings at the core of our existence, and are always situated in a specific context (Haraway, *Species* 287). Hence, becoming-with is always becoming someone, somewhere in particular, through relations with another someone, somewhere. A necessarily multispecies becoming-with takes both humans and other animals seriously by engaging the relationships between them.

We operationalize Haraway’s multispecies “becoming-with” through intersectionality theory to articulate the nuanced ways in which individuals or social groups of distinct and different species (here humans and cattle) become-who-they-are. Intersectionality articulates the relationships among numerous dimensions of social relationships, subject formations and categories of power (McCall). It reveals hidden acts of discrimination and highlights how a particular individual stands necessarily “at the crossroads of multiple groups” (Minow 3). Critical race and feminist scholars have been instrumental in embracing complex, overlapping categories of gender, ethnicity, race, class, orientation, age, and ability and exploring how they emerge in relation to one another symbolically and materially (Butler; Collins; Crenshaw; hooks; Mohanty, Russo, and Torres; Valentine; Walby, Armstrong, and Strid).

We begin from the category “woman.” Gender analysis of power relations reveals that what it is to be of a certain gender identity is defined and naturalized in different contexts through intricate socio-ecological dynamics (Nightingale). Social and political constructions of gender are always linked to the biophysical and more-than-human elements of existence (Arora-Jonsson). Learning and practicing gender may be thought of as an interaction of both structural forces and the more or less conscious choices of individuals (Connell and Connell). Specific to our paper, gender-livestock relations are grounded in what it means to be a man or a woman in particular contexts and become (re-)produced through daily practices and positionalities associated with animal rearing and relations (Hovorka, “Feminism and animals”). We can think about gender-species relations of power as driven by particular discursive and material placements of women relative to particular species (here, for example, in terms of proximity to or distance from cattle) (Hovorka, “Women/chickens vs. men/cattle”; Petitt, *Women’s Cattle*).

We then consider how the category “woman” is constituted differently within and across ethnicity in terms of roles, rights, and expectations of those labelled or labelling themselves as such. Hence we recognize that the category “woman” is far from unified (Mohanty). We acknowledge that ethnicity mediates what it means to be, for example, a man or a woman in a particular context. Ethnicity is an “articulation of cultural distinctiveness in situations of political and/or economic competition” (Ballard 28). It is a process of differentiation through which the (re-)creation of ethnic categories and cultural differences are ascribed meaning and significance (Wilmsen and Vossen; Eriksen). These differences are not based on an inherent characteristic shared by other group members but rather the shared meanings expressed and experienced through social relations (Eriksen). Ethnic categories are then reinforced by the simplification of features into a generalized idea of both othering and selfhood, anchored to a sense of collectivity (Wilmsen and Vossen).

Further, we appreciate that class relations also shape how women and cattle relate to each other. We understand class as a combination of social ranking (Ortner) and material wealth that in Botswana are expressed through cattle and land (Bolt and Hillbom). Large cattle herds and privately held fenced grazing lands are associated with higher classes, while small herds and communal unfenced grazing lands are associated with lower classes. However, having large cattle numbers and private land tenure do not always coincide, as high class Botswana elite keep large cattle herds on communal land. In Ghanzi, large freehold fenced farms are primarily held by Afrikaner and English farmers while Nharo residents tend to make up the labor force in these operations; here Afrikaner and English people are associated with relatively high social ranking regardless of their material wealth compared to Nharo people. Botswana, Bakgalagadi, and Herero people differ widely in their class positioning both in terms of social ranking and material wealth.

Finally, we consider the category “cattle” as constitutive of the same intersectional relations of power that shape “women” across ethnic groups. We take species seriously as a driver of social construction, difference, and inequality for humans, as well as a category in itself emerging out of power dynamics at the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and class (Deckha; Hovorka, “Feminism and animals”). Engagement with different species can within a social context reproduce distinct expressions of gender (Petitt, “Cowboy masculinities”). On the one hand, we conceptualize women’s relationship to a particular species in relation to men’s so as to highlight how gender-species relations of power serve to (re-)produce men’s privileged roles, rights, and

expectations associated with a particular species relative to women's association with that species. Often those animal species that are privileged tend to be associated with human social groups that are similarly privileged; in Botswana this is expressed in terms of a men-cattle pairing (Hovorka, "Women/chickens vs. men/cattle"). On the other hand, we conceptualize animals themselves as becoming particular animals through their relations with humans in particular ways in particular contexts. We explore how class affects how cattle materially and socially evolve relative to humans. Scholars exploring "becoming animal" articulate the ways in which animal subjects come to be who they are and form subjective experiences through multifaceted relations with humans in particular contexts (e.g. Birke et al.; Geiger and Hovorka; Lien).

The remainder of our paper applies this multispecies intersectional becoming-with conceptual frame. Specifically, we offer empirical illustration of women and cattle becoming-with in Botswana. We demonstrate how gendered human-cattle relations in this context are mediated through ethnicity and class, and are manifested in contemporary commercialization trends generating new configurations of cattle and women's empowerment opportunities. By doing so we offer an intersectional becoming-with frame that will be useful for other scholars exploring interspecies relations.

**Human-cattle relations in Botswana.** The cattle sector has historically garnered much attention from national development mandates; cattle have been a backbone of Botswana's economy and society since long before Independence in 1966 (Guldbrandsen). The sector commercialized through the opening of export markets, initially in South Africa, followed by Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Mauritius, and culminating in the European Union (EU) (GoB 2005). The national herd comprised in 2013, when our field work was carried out, of 1,845 million cattle (**Statistics Botswana, 12**). Cattle have generated revenue worth US\$40 million to US\$100 million annually since Independence (Darkoh and Mbaiwa; Mapitse).

The contemporary period of human-cattle relations features renewed emphasis on commercial production, especially export to the European Union (Guldbrandsen; Ransom; Mbaiwa and Mbaiwa; Petitt, *Women's Cattle*). The Government of Botswana offers substantial loans and grants for agricultural entrepreneurship, including cattle farming, to enhance national coffers and local livelihoods. Government initiatives highlight gender equity and encourage women to apply for funds from the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA) or the Youth Development Fund (YDF) without authorization from a male spouse/relative (Petitt, *Women's Cattle*). The cattle

sector is bound by strict EU regulations, interpreted and implemented by the Botswana Meat Commission (BMC), which holds a monopoly as a parastatal export abattoir, and the Division of Veterinary Services (DVS), which guides breeding and monitoring programs. This institutional scenario privileges exotic cattle breeds that grow quickly, fenced grazing lands, and identification technology (e.g. branding, tagging, boluses, certification) to ensure traceability. Cattle sold on the export market must align with these regulations.

Human-cattle relations have long emerged and evolved through historically-situated gender relations of power. The centrality of cattle to local masculinities and men's lives is widely documented (e.g. Dahl; Talle; Curry; Hodgson; Njuki and Sanginga; Schapera; Peters; Schapera and Comaroff; Comaroff and Comaroff; Kalabamu; Hovorka, "Women/chickens"; Solway). Specifically, cattle ownership and responsibility in Botswana largely fall to men as a birthright. Young boys are socialized into cattle rearing while girls are relegated to tending smaller animals such as chickens, pigs, sheep, and goats (Brown; DAPS; Kalabamu; Van Allen; Hovorka, "Women/chickens"). Men thus acquire relevant skills and knowledge of cattle, enhancing their ability to access, interact with, or control them. Men further benefit from associations with cattle through access to draft power for commercial food production, enhanced social status through the quantity of cattle owned, and entry into exchange or income-generating from selling cattle on the open market (Hovorka, "Women/chickens"). The cattle sector is thus dominated by men and male influence. Approximately 76 percent of the national herd and 66 percent of all cattle operations are owned by men (MoA 2014). Notably, little scholarship investigates gender dynamics or the role and importance of cattle to women (Must and Hovorka). Research is warranted for Ghanzi District specifically, given that cattle holding statistics and local brand certificate registers indicate more women owning cattle than national statistics show (Petitt, *Women's Cattle*).

Human-cattle relations have also emerged and evolved through historically-situated ethnic relations of power. Three overarching "cultures" predominate in the Kalahari region: Bantu speaking peoples of the Batswana, Bakgalagadi, and Herero; the San (including Nharo); and English and Afrikaner of European descent (Chebanne; Kent; Barnard). The historical importance of cattle for various ethnic groups is well documented, including the dominant Batswana agro-pastoralists (Schapera; Schapera and Comaroff) Bakgalagadi agro-pastoralists (Kuper; Solway; Solway et al.), Herero pastoralists (Vivelo; Henrichsen; April et al.), English colonial elite (Guldbrandsen), and Afrikaner settlers (Russell).

Batswana settled the area of contemporary Botswana in the mid-1700s, after which time the economic production of the Bakgalagadi and the indigenous San, including the Nharo, was slowly disrupted (Solway; Guenther). Unequal labor relations developed with differentiated cattle production distinguishing the San from the Bakgalagadi. As relations between groups became increasingly asymmetrical, class relations formed (Solway; Guenther). Herero people immigrated from South West Africa (present-day Namibia) after their uprising that suffered defeat against the German government in 1904, and gained a reputation of having great skills of cattle rearing (Vivelo; Lindholm). Further, those of European descent secured control over boreholes and established surveyed, fenced, freehold cattle farms in the early mid-19th century on previously San (including Nharo) held hunting grounds (Russell). The San were dispossessed and many resorted to working as cattle hands for the English and Afrikaner farmers (Russell; Russell and Russell; Guenther).

Ethnicity-based differences and inequalities regarding cattle have been shaped further by the capitalist transformation brought about by the increasing importance of trade relations with South Africa and Europe (Solway; Darkoh and Mbaiwa; Gulbrandsen; Government Botswana 2013). The early cattle trade with South Africa favored large size cattle in large numbers, and the trade with EU also requires traceability measures in order to secure disease control, which is facilitated by private property rights. Thus class relations further cemented and were increasingly mediated through the commercialised beef sector (Government Botswana 2013). Notably, gender-based experiences with cattle across ethnicity are underexplored in existing scholarship (Petitt, *Women's Cattle*). Before turning to address this gap, we provide methodological details of our Ghanzi District study site, data collection and analytical approach.

**Methodology.** We draw on data collected through an ethnographic field study conducted by the first author in Ghanzi District, Botswana. The district is characterized by its remote location, harsh Kalahari climate, and intensive cattle production (largely for export to the EU). Its administrative center is the town of Ghanzi, surrounded by Ghanzi Farms and Charleshill sub-district. The former includes freehold fenced land owned primarily by those of Afrikaner or English ethnicities as well as a major Nharo settlement; the latter is largely communal grazing land inhabited by Batswana, Bakgalagadi, Herero, and Nharo ethnic groups.

Nine months of fieldwork in 2013 included participant observation (Bernard; Adler and Adler) of cattle and cattle-based activities throughout Ghanzi District. Semi-structured primary interviews (Bernard) were conducted with forty women cattle owners selected

across six ethnic groups, namely Batswana, Bakgalagadi, Nharo, Herero, Afrikaner, and English. Purposive sampling was used to ensure inclusion of women keeping cattle across various ethnicities and contexts such as herd size, land tenure, and geographical locale. It emerged quickly that residents of Ghanzi District referred to women amidst three loosely identified “traditions” of cattle practices: “English and Afrikaner,” “Herero” and “Batswana and Bakgalagadi.” Women were interviewed from each of these traditions until no new themes of data emerged from interviews were reached, with Nharo women included to expand the cross-sectional approach. In total forty women cattle owners were interviewed and fifty additional interviews were conducted with key informants such as extension officers, village chiefs, and government personnel.

Interviews were conducted in respondents’ language of choice and translated to English as warranted. A translator training workshop was held to ensure sensitivity to nuances of words and expressions related to both cattle and gender. Formal interviews were recorded when possible and detailed notes were taken. Interviews were transcribed and qualitative data were analysed thematically (Malterud; Giorgi). Field notes from observations, informal interviews, and conversations were also analyzed thematically based on Bernard’s approach, where the material is scanned to get a sense of themes emerging, reshuffled, and explored according to the themes.

**Women Becoming-With Cattle Across Ethnic Groups.** The privileged status of cattle in Botswana makes relations with cattle meaningful in ways that relations to other animals do not (Hovorka, “Women/chickens”). Becoming-with cattle means becoming a real person (Petitt, *Women’s Cattle*). Importantly, becoming-with cattle in Botswana is symbolically and materially manifested differently according to gender and ethnicity. Specifically, intersectional dynamics result in some women becoming-with cattle by being without them (Batswana, Bakgalagadi, Nharo); some become-with cattle by engaging indirectly with them (Afrikaner, English); and some become-with cattle by engaging directly with them (Herero).

First, according to many Ghanzi women interviewed: “cattle are for men.” They spoke of relations to cattle in terms of culture, tradition, and how things were in the past when women’s roles, rights, and expectations did not revolve around cattle. They brought forth the idea that women are “distant from cattle,” particularly within Batswana, Bakgalagadi, and Nharo ethnicities (Petitt, *Women’s Cattle*). Across class segments, on both fenced and unfenced land, women’s domain is subsistence crop production and

small stock farming. Kagiso, a woman cattle owner, articulates this differential positionality:

Hereros are different from us [Batswana], the women are more involved in cattle farming than the men are. It's in their culture maybe [...] I think they [Afrikaner and English] are different from us, the Batswana, the Setswana speaking people, because they grew up with cattle [...] the Afrikaans speaking people grew up with cattle [...] the children grew up on the farm [...] we just grew around the home, our activities are just around the home, Batswana women, and our children, our girls, their activities are just around the home, whereas our husbands, the men, the activities would be more at the cattle post and so forth. So the Afrikaans speaking women would be more knowledgeable on cattle than us. (Interview, 31 October 2013, Ghanzi Farms).

Thus Batswana, Bakgalagadi, and Nharo (San) women are, from Kagiso's perspective, which was typical for the women interviewed, placed distant from cattle (and San men as low class laborers), as well as from the social status, political power, and economic wealth associated with these privileged animals. Becoming-with cattle in Ghanzi means that these women are in fact *becoming-without* cattle and afforded less benefits as a result. In a society where ownership of, control over, and knowledge about cattle is on a broader level key to social and economic status, becoming-without cattle (rather than just not having cattle) marks an othering, as well as fewer possibilities to achieve independent social and economic security. However, while women owning cattle in the statistics are often assumed to be widows, narratives emphasize their lack of choice and do not afford them status as "real farmers."

Second, other Ghanzi women interviewed spoke of their indirect proximity to cattle, primarily through their husbands' relations to cattle and connection to farming activities. These women were often referred to, by others as well as themselves, as "farmers' wives" and belonged primarily to Afrikaner and English ("white") ethnic groups (Petitt, *Women's Cattle*). These women spoke of growing up on farms in proximity to cattle and learning about cattle production. Yet their own farm roles entail running errands, food purchasing and preparation, and staff management rather than activities associated with cattle. Cattle are the domain of men in this context, with women playing a supporting role. As Yolana, an Afrikaner woman claimed: "there are not many young white women farming, but a lot of women are helping their husbands" (Interview 4 December 2013, Ghanzi town). Another white, albeit English, woman cattle

owner, Denise, suggested that the first author go out with her husband and adult son to watch the cattle work, as she was to spend the day doing administrative tasks for the farm. While she feels broadly involved in cattle production, hands-on cattle tasks are not for her but rather her husband's and adult son's domain. It should be noted that only on larger farms with many employed cattle-hands are these supporting tasks a full time occupation. As well as being tied to ethnicity, being a "farmers' wife" is thus associated with higher class.

Third, another group of Ghanzi women interviewed spoke of their direct proximity to cattle, primarily through the everyday practicalities of cattle farming despite ultimate control reserved for men (Petitt, *Women's Cattle*). These women belonged to the Herero ethnic group, and were often referred to by others as an exception to the common storyline that cattle are men's domain. While higher class Herero families also hire manual labor, across class segments Herero women primarily milk cows for subsistence, placing them in direct proximity to cattle and hands-on engagement via milking. As one Herero woman, Louisa, explained: "In our culture [...] when we grow up, we grow up knowing that we are farmers, we always stay with cows" (Interview 15 June 2013, south of Charleshill village, translated). Hilya, another woman, specified: "In our culture, Herero women look after the home, food, things like that, but the *kraal* [cattle paddock] is for the man [...] In our culture, Herero women look after the cattle, but can't decide without talking to the man" (Interview 16 June 2013, Charleshill). Yet, as Kunouee confirmed: "Women are involved in cattle farming, but more especially the Herero, we are milking" (Interview 3 June 2013, Charleshill). Indeed, Herero women such as Violet, dressed in a long dress and horned hat reflective of Herero culture and custom, proudly explained and showed us the milking process and her cows. They thus become-with cattle through both symbolic and hands-on cattle work.

In sum, women's proximity to cattle in Botswana, in terms of their access to, use of, control over, and benefits from cattle, is differentially manifested across ethnic lines. Specifically, there are three ways that women are expected to become-with cattle in Ghanzi District: by becoming-without them as part of Batswana, Bakgalagadi, and Nharo ethnic groups ("distant" from cattle); by engaging indirectly with them as part of Afrikaner and English ethnic groups (as "farmers' wives"); and by engaging directly with them as part of the Herero ethnic group (as "milkers"). This intersectional becoming-with must be taken into account in understanding women's positionality within the cattle sector and how government policies and programming may be realized differentially according to gender and ethnicity. Their engagement with cattle are dependent on ideas of what a (primarily married) woman should do in specific

ethnic groups and the details of cattle practices varies with class. Importantly, however, one must recognize that women's proximity to cattle irrespective of ethnicity is necessarily dependent upon, subordinate to, and inequitable relative to men's. This warrants investigation as to how women across ethnic groups may be becoming-with cattle in non-traditional ways so as to improve their lot in life. We turn to this investigation in the following section.

**Women Becoming-With Cattle Across Ethnic Groups in Non-Traditional Ways.** Ghanzi women are becoming-with cattle in ways that depart from traditional expectations of women across ethnic groups outlined above. Hence, they are becoming-with cattle differently and pushing beyond roles, rights, and expectations associated with being distant from cattle, farmers' wives, or milkers. They are forging for themselves new places in which to engage in cattle production and open up empowerment possibilities within the cattle sector.

First, Batswana, Bakgalagadi, and Nharo women interviewed are challenging their distance from cattle. For example, Sarah claims that she feels "like a person" because she has cattle. She is a late thirty-something un-married Nharo (San) woman with a partner and four children. She keeps a herd of five cattle on communal village grazing land in New Xanahas, which she received through a government poverty alleviation program. Sarah makes all cattle-related decisions herself and directs her son and another male relative to assist with cattle rearing as she cannot afford to hire a cattle hand. As a Nharo woman, Sarah feels empowered by having cattle. Similarly, Leano is a thirty-something Mokgalagadi woman who recently bought two heifers that graze on her partner's fenced grazing land in Charleshill sub-district. She owns cattle in a way that specifically breaks with traditional gender roles: "[In the past] women took care of goats [...] women were responsible for the household and men for the cattle" (Interview 1 August 2013, Charleshill village, translated). Finally, Masego is an un-married twenty-something Mokgalakgadi woman with a herd of twenty cattle that she bought after receiving a YDF grant. She manages her cattle and lives near her cattle kraal; she knows how to care for them, she knows intimately their life histories and their personalities. However, she hires a male relative to do some of the daily manual labour. According to Masego, this is something that women in her village could never have done in earlier times. She explains that "In the past, the women would take care of the fields [...] and knew that the cattle were for men, not women." Today "a woman can stand for herself and have her own cattle" (Interview 18 June 2013, south of Charleshill village, translated). These three women all enjoy independent ownership of and control over their cattle; they decide how to run the herd, when and what cattle to sell and what to

do with the money. Their cattle face similar restrictions and possibilities as cattle owned by men. However, restrictions and possibilities of cattle notably differs depending on fencing.

Second, Afrikaner and English women interviewed are challenging the extent of their indirect engagement with cattle in ways that differ from expectations of “farmers’ wives” discussed above. For example, Christine is a married Afrikaner woman who has involved herself more thoroughly in herd management of her and her husband’s farmholding. She has also started and is in charge of a stud operation. Christine is often found out by the cattle *kraals*, proudly overseeing the herd. She sees her engagement with cattle as different from that of other white women: “The women don’t understand why. Because I go in the vehicle with the guys and look at the cattle, and the women ask me, ‘Why do you do that?’ [...] They don’t think I am well [pointing to her head, laughing]” (Interview 5 August 2013, Ghanzi town). Christine has control of the cattle and their production, as well as a close physical connection to cattle on a daily basis. She is thus becoming-with cattle differently among the Afrikaner and English ethnic groups. Likewise, Annelies is a married Afrikaner woman in her forties who decided to have her own cattle. In contrast to Christine, her husband is not a cattle farmer, but a plumber, and Annelies runs the whole cattle operation singlehandedly. After being gifted a piece of freehold land from her father she successfully applied for a CEDA loan with which she could buy her cattle. Annelies, like Christine, sees herself as an exception among white women in Ghanzi, but explains that having her own cattle had been a dream of hers: “I have always wanted to farm, that’s why I came back to Ghanzi, I love farming” (interview 25 Oct 2013, Ghanzi Farms).

Third, Herero women interviewed are challenging the extent of their direct engagement with cattle beyond milking. For example, Tjavanga, a young, married Herero woman explains: “I manage this cattle post and my husband manages the other. We are two heads of the family” (interview 3 June 2013, Charleshill village). As joint head-of-household, Tjavanga’s engagement with cattle has moved beyond only milking to herd management, ownership, and control. Further, Gendere, a Herero widow who owned her own cattle, pointed to a way for Herero widows to access cattle more actively. In the past, she explained, cattle of a deceased man would go to a male relative and the family would stay together and support each other. Today, however, due to changes in family bonds, Herero widows are taking control over the the herds of their late husbands: “The difference these days is that women have to stand up when the borehole is broken, and take care of things themselves — it’s the life of today. You have to take care of yourself”

(interview 12 June 2013, north of Charleshill village, translated). However, cattle care seemingly does not change in any noticeable way with the shift in gendered ownership.

In sum, what Sarah, Leano, Masego, Christine, Annelies, Tjavanga, and Gendere have in common is that their becoming-with cattle differs from traditional or mainstream positionalities of women in relation to cattle to their specific ethnic group. Indeed, these are women forging new ways (such as independent ownership and management) and places (such as *kraals* and markets) in which to engage more thoroughly with cattle specifically and the cattle sector more broadly. Doing so reflects women's efforts to be less subordinate to, less dependent on, and more equal to men irrespective of ethnicity, while the possible paths to do so are shaped by intersections of gender and ethnicity. Importantly, however, women's proximity to cattle relative to men's must be contextualized within broader political economic trends in the cattle sector (especially as related to commercialization and class relations of power), as well as related to the ways that cattle are becoming-with humans in Botswana. We turn to these dynamics in the following section.

**Cattle Becoming-With Women Through Class-Based Dynamics.** Gender and ethnicity clearly matter for how women become-with cattle in traditional and in "new" ways in Botswana. At the same time, these becomings are situated within broader dynamics related to the political economy (especially related to commercialization of the cattle sector) and class relations of power (especially related to elite, powerful men who establish ultimate access to, use of, and control over cattle and the sector itself). These broader political-economic and class-based dynamics in turn matter to how cattle become-with humans (in other words, how cattle become who they are in Botswana and what that means for the humans with which they engage). This stretches our intersectional storyline further: while gender and ethnicity matter to how women become-with cattle on a local scale, class, mediated through material relations integral to the commercialized cattle sector, matters to more broad scale human-cattle relations and cattle becoming-with humans. These broader class dynamics are also reflected in how cattle on a local scale become-with humans, and in this case women, in both material and symbolic ways. We explore these dynamics below.

Out of the forty women cattle owners interviewed, twenty-six had independent control over their cattle, seven had joint control with their husbands, and seven had no control over cattle production (Petitt, *Women's Cattle* 150). These cattle (along with other cattle owned or handled by women in Botswana) are becoming-with women. These women span six ethnicities and various class segments, grazing their cattle on fenced land or

communal land. Class dynamics associated with the contemporary cattle sector shape cattle becoming-with humans in Ghanzi and Botswana more broadly. The Government of Botswana's push for income-generating, export-oriented, high-quality cattle production means that cattle lives are mediated through spatial controls, breeding programs, and marketing channels; these are differently available to people of different classes and thus their cattle.

In terms of spatial controls, women — through direct engagement or mediated through employed labor and technology — determine cattle access to food and water as part of a rearing regimen. Cattle spend most of their time grazing, ruminating, and drinking, and they move between grazing lands, water stations (cattle posts), and home kraals on a daily or weekly basis. Fences are arguably the most efficient way for farmers to control cattle movement and reproductive activities, as well as for ensuring that soil and grasses regenerate sustainably. Within a cattle sector impacted by drought and traceability regulations, fences ensure privileged access to grass and water as well as the control needed to optimize production and sales (Petitt, *Women's Cattle*). According to EU regulations, cattle kept on unfenced grazing land are required to stay in a fenced area for at least forty days to ensure that traceability requirements aimed at disease management are upheld (European Commission). As building fences requires funds and can only be erected on privately held land, fences are linked to class and ethnicity in Ghanzi. How cattle can roam, eat, and drink are thus shaped by class relations based on a commercialized cattle sector. Cattle are becoming-with women whose ownership and control of infrastructure and mobility shapes the everyday experiences of the cattle.

In terms of breeding programs, exotic cattle varieties are privileged relative to the traditional Tswana breed in the contemporary cattle sector on account of their mobility, grazing needs, growth rates, and climate adaptability. With high cattle mobility, cattle roaming leads to breeding with neighboring herds of different breeds. The next generation of cattle then embody property rights of others across the landscape, and the investment of a bull is for the owner lost to the neighboring herd. With fenced grazing land breeding is controlled and limited to a specific herd. Class relations thus shape the way that cattle breed and the bodies of next generations. While farmers with fenced land also keep mixed breeds, cattle on these lands do not have the same possibilities to choose for themselves when and whom to breed with. Cattle on communal grazing land in small herds are sometimes artificially inseminated (made possible with government support) with a breed of the farmer's choice, but reproductive attempts at other times with or without calves as consequences is still within reach for these cattle. The ability to purchase and rear a specific breed is class-related (Petitt, *Women's Cattle*).

Cattle are becoming-with women whose access to technology and property shapes cattle breeding practices and outcomes.

In terms of marketing channels, access to a vehicle to drive cattle to the abattoir is classed, given the costs involved to purchase or rent this resource. This means that cattle kept by farmers of lower class are more likely to be herded by foot to a cattle market and from there either be driven directly to the abattoir or first to feedlots acting as mediators. Cattle reared by higher class farmers are, in contrast, loaded on big trucks at their farms and driven straight to the abattoir. Moreover, farmers from higher classes are more likely to have direct contact with buyers, and their cattle are less likely to suffer the dire consequences of a delayed market day, such as long hours without grass or water, and the double stress of travelling back and forth to the market twice.

In short, class dynamics manifested within enhanced cattle commercialization shape how cattle are becoming-with women cattle owners in Ghanzi, and people more broadly, in Botswana through spatial controls, breeding programs, and marketing channels. Ultimately, cattle themselves are spatially controlled, specifically bred, and kept in market-oriented production systems, and they wield substantive power and clout for women. The experiences of cattle, their relations to their surroundings, and their bodies are shaped by human relations of class. Further research is needed to compare if and how cattle become-with women and men cattle owners differently. In existing scholarship on Botswana ethnicity tends to come out as an explanatory factor for differences in cattle production, but in our data class stands out as most salient. Coming full circle, cattle becoming-with humans through class relations of power mediated through commercialization of the cattle industry have implications for women across ethnic groups and how their becoming-with(out) cattle in traditional and non-traditional ways may be impacted. We offer our thoughts on these issues in our final section below.

**Conclusion.** Our paper explores intersectional human-cattle relations in contemporary Botswana within the context of enhanced commercialization. Processes of commercialization have generated new configurations of cattle based on breeding, mobility, and markets, and new opportunities for women especially to connect with cattle across ethnicity-based contexts. Grounded in Haraway's concept of multispecies "becoming-with" and drawing on indepth ethnographic field work in Ghanzi District, we illustrate how women's positionality in the cattle sector both reproduces and challenges gender and ethnic social norms that render women subordinate to men in their roles, rights, and expectations regarding cattle. Particularly, intersectional

dynamics result in specific expectations on different women's relation to cattle, as well as women's symbolic and material reproduction of these so that some women are becoming-with cattle by becoming-without them (Botswana, Bakgalagadi, Nharo); by engaging indirectly with them (Afrikaner, English); and by engaging directly with them (Herero). This highlights how species is relevant to the intersectionality of power relations of gender, ethnicity and class even when human and cattle are not interlinked. Thus, humans can "become-with" another species through particular intersections of power relations by an explicit lack of engagement with that species. At the same time, women are becoming-with cattle in non-traditional ways, forging new empowerment possibilities in the cattle sector by addressing their distance from cattle, their labeling as farmers' wives, or their roles as milkers, respectively. We also illustrate that cattle are becoming-with women in ways that extend beyond gender and ethnicity dynamics to class-based dynamics of the cattle sector. Our findings illustrate how cattle are spatially controlled, specifically bred, and kept in market-oriented production systems, which in turn shape people's access to, ownership of, and control over them.

It is well documented that while women across Africa are engaged in a number of cattle-related tasks, their control over cattle in settings of increased commercialization is often limited (Dahl; Talle; Curry; Hodgson; Njuki and Sanginga). In Botswana, however, our findings suggest that enhanced commercialization of the cattle sector offer opportunities for women across ethnic groups to challenge longstanding traditions of gender relations to cattle. Hence it is through "new" cattle – created materially and discursively through the commercialized cattle production systems defined by class relations – that women at the local scale must become-with to challenge norms and become-with cattle in "new" ways. Different breeds have different temperaments and the cattle bodies shaped by variations in access to grass, water, and breeding define their possibilities to successfully engage in the commercial cattle sector. Cattle-human relations at a broader level thus matter to women-cattle relations on a local and individual level. The way that cattle are becoming-with women cattle owners, directly or mediated through hired labor and/or technology, is most visibly shaped by class. In turn, the way that women are becoming-with cattle differently across ethnicities might affect the classed, gendered and racialized character of commercial cattle industry at a broader level. Throughout this paper, we have thus shown how "becoming-with" of women and cattle in Botswana is intersectional. We thus encourage other scholars to explore interspecies relations in other contexts with an intersectional becoming-with frame.

To conclude, women-cattle relations are shaped by intersections of human relations of power. In the co-shaping of species, Haraway underlines, actual animals and actual people are engaged in “always asymmetrical living and dying, nurturing and killing” (Haraway, *Species* 42). In the case of women and cattle of the Kalahari in Botswana, not only are the relations of becoming-with asymmetrical in a practical sense of power inequalities, but also in what intersections of (interspecies) power relations that primarily and most visibly define who, how, and what humans and animals become-with. Whereas gender and ethnicity are primary relations for how women become-with cattle, it is class that most visibly defines how cattle become-with women. As such, the becoming-with of women and cattle in Ghanzi, and of humans and cattle in Botswana, is intersectional, but asymmetrically so. The ways in which gendered ownership and daily caretaking might affect the ways that cattle become-with men and women differently is, still, a matter for future research. Moreover, exploring the way that cattle agency might impact and contribute to the reproduction of human class relations could provide new insights to discussions of the intersectional becoming-with of human-animal relations in agriculture.

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