

**CATTLE PRAISES OF THE KWAMTHETHWA AREA
OF EMPANGENI, KWAZULU-NATAL
AS A REFLECTION OF SOME SOCIO-CULTURAL NORMS
AND VALUES OF THE AREA**

BY

JETROS MUZOMUSHA MATHABA

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts: Orality-Literacy Studies

University of Natal, Durban

January 2000

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My gratitude and thankfulness goes to the following persons

1. The academic staff of the Graduate Programme in Orality-Literacy Studies for their contributions: Professor E. Sienaert and J. Conolly (my supervisor).
2. My family for their prayers and encouragement: Mr & Mrs N.J. Mathaba (my parents), Mamazi (my wife) and my children and all members of the family.
3. M.A. Orality-Literacy class of 1998-1999 Mqeqeshi, Theo, Mzuyabonga, Zandile, Nelly, Veeana, Christinah and Clementine.
4. My sources: Mr Mdaba Foco, Mr Muqayi, Mr Dangazela, Mr J Mthethwa, Mr Elphas Mthethwa, Mrs MaMbokazi Mthethwa.

MAY GOD BLESS THEM

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Natal, Durban hereby submitted by me, has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or at another University, and that it is my own work in design and in execution and that all material contained herein is acknowledged.

J.M. MATHABA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Topic	Page
1.	Introduction	4
1.1	Main Subject of the Study	5
1.2	Data Collection (Methodology)	5
1.3	Review of Literature	6
2.	The Application of the Anthropological Global Oral Style to Cattle Praises	6
3.	The Importance of Cattle to the Zulu Nation	13
4.	Social Aspects	15
4.1	The Poet	15
4.2	The Owner	16
4.3	The Herdsman/Herdboy	16
4.4	Members of the Family and Other Poets	16
4.5	The Modern Poet	17
5.	Social Setting and Praising	17
5.1	The Bull	17
5.2	The Ox	22
5.3	The Cow	27
6.	The Role of Praisers as Poets	28
7.	The Effects of Praises on Cattle	32
7.1	Encouragement	32
7.2	Praising to show love	33
8.	The Effects of Praises in the Society	33
8.1	Disciplinary Message	34
8.2	Preservation of Customs	35
8.3	Entertainment	36
9.	Audience	37
9.1	The Cattle as Audience	37
9.2	People as Audience	38
10.	Conclusion	38
11.	Bibliography	40
List of Illustrations		
1.	Nkosibuka, the Bull	19
2.	Ngqondo Mntambo's Span of Oxen	24
3.	Mndaba Foco's Span of Oxen	26
4.	Maliyami, the Cow	27

1. Introduction

The Zulu nation have various assets that they value, the most valuable of which are their cattle. Cattle form the link between the living and *amadlozi* (ancestors). For any marriage to be processed cattle must be used as a means of payment of *lobola* (bride price). Cattle are the only domestic animals which provide meat and milk, and which are praised. When cattle are slaughtered some parts are used for cultural purposes, e.g. *umhlwehlwe* (fatty layer) is worn by a maiden in her ritual called *umemulo* (marriageable ritual).

Traditionally, the Zulu people voice out their concerns and appreciation by means of idioms, proverbs, songs and praises. Cattle praises are also used to voice their approval and disapproval of social behaviour and to establish the norms and values of their society. This study will examine the following:

- What contribution do cattle praises make in establishing the behavioural norms of a community?
- How do praises reflect the love and admiration of owners, herders and members of the family towards their cattle?

I will concentrate on the praises of a bull, an ox and a cow praised in KwaMthethwa area, eNhlabosini, Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal during 1999.

Of praises, Opland (1983:33) says :

I am describing here a phenomenon that I call oral poetry the verb defining the action of uttering poetry in both Xhosa and Zulu is *ukubonga*, and I am describing that activity.

This quotation emphasises the fact that oral poetry depends on the spoken word. Consequently, it has to be spoken. The written representation is the praise itself, but a significantly reduced **shadow** of the reality. As praises need to be spoken, I regard cattle praises as relevant to the field of Oral Studies.

It can be noted that by the time we lose the older generation, who are illiterate, we shall no longer have people who can memorise praises and show how praises are composed. If cattle praises are not collected and documented, they will disappear. The younger generation will not enjoy this culture of praising. I have undertaken this study to document and record cattle praises.

1.1 The Main Subject of the Study

This study looks at the cattle praises as a chain that binds or connects cattle and owners together. It is the aim of the study to find out what contribution cattle praises make in the community. This study will also demonstrate how rich cattle praises are in terms of anthropological global Oral Style. All praises collected here, whether from interviewees or written sources, will be analysed.

1.2 Data Collection (Methodology)

I have used three types of sources for reference in this work: written sources, interviews with oral composers of praises and observation of the performance of praises. The published references contain not only praises of cattle but also of all domestic animals, for example, cattle, horses, dogs and cocks. In this study I will focus on the praises of cattle only.

From the six interviews conducted in the field I have collected a number of praises. I interviewed elders who have been involved in the tradition of praising, and who still possess praises in their memories. All

interviews were conducted in the interviewee's residences so that they felt comfortable about expressing themselves. Zulu, the mother-tongue of the interviewees, was used so as to encourage and enable them to speak freely.

Oral interviews were used since most of the elders favour the oral mode: they cannot read and write. I used audio-cassettes to record the performance of the praises, so that interviewees were not disturbed while praising.

The audio-types of the praises helped me to record the praises and to analyse them line by line, since one can rewind to listen to the rhythm and mnemotechnical devices. The analyses of praises helped to show how rich the cattle praises are in the elements of Oral Style as discovered and described by Marcel Jousse.

1.3 Review of Literature

The research and documentation of praises to date have included those of people (Jankie 1939) including those of heroes (Kunene 1971) and Kings (Nyembezi, 1958). Swazi clan praises have recently been extensively documented in Kamera (1999). Praises of domestic animals in Xhosa were the focus of Opland's study (1983) and in Zulu of Molefe's study (1992). To date there are no in-depth written materials on cattle praises. Nor have praises of any kind been analysed as Oral-style texts as demonstrated in the next section.

2 The Application of the Anthropological Global Oral Style to Cattle Praises

I am using Jousse's theory of human expression which involves the Laws of Mimism, Rhythmism, Bilateralism and Formulism to demonstrate the mnemonic nature of the structure of cattle praises. The

reason for using Jousse's theory is that the oral traditions of the world are all identical insofar that they all employ the anthropological capacities of breathing, moving and speaking rhythmically to transmit their traditions from one generation to another. The Mnemonic Laws of Mimism, Rhythmism, Bilateralism and Formulism, and the Mnemotechnical Devices identified by Jousse account for the 'traditioning' of oral practices such as cattle praises over many generations.

According to Jousse the act of miming is the first expression of the human being. What humans mime "express" - is what the world around them "impresses" upon them. This means that man by nature imitates others and the world in which he lives. He "receives" "registers" and "replays" a number of impressions which are his actual experiences (Jousse 1997:91).

The cattle praising, the herder or owner is 'impressed' by either a bull roaring or cow lowing or the physical features of cattle and he 'expresses' his admiration and appreciation by praising the cattle. The herder or the owner is joined by the community in praising which is a further function of mimism. The members of the community "mimism" the herder's or owner's praises.

Actions that are replayed in the individual are reflections of the universe. These actions are rhythmic. The combination of Mimism and Rhythm forms Rhythmo-mimicry (Jousse 1997: Chapter 2). Jousse indicates that the rhythms in human expression can be represented in "Rhythmic Schemas" presented on the page on either side of the spine of the page, as it were. I use the praises of two spans of oxen as examples:

Example 1: Praises of Oxen informed by J Mthethwa of Nhlabosini in Mnemonic Rhythmic Schemas:

1	2
<i>Iyaphi</i>	<i>luphaya</i>
3	4
<i>Komeli</i>	<i>Blesi</i>
5	6
<i>Vuthela</i>	<i>Othomeni</i>
7	8
<i>Nkalankala ziyawugudl' yinde</i>	<i>lenyon' kayiboni KwaZulu</i>

See page 14 for English translation

These praises are composed of four Binary Rhythmic Schemas in balanced pairs. When spoken, each part of each rhythmic schema balances its other part.

Praises of Oxen by N Mntambo of eNtinkulu in Mnemonic Rhythmic Schemas:

1	2	
<i>Nabanisa</i>	<i>Eshisi</i>	
3	4	
<i>Gezubuso</i>	<i>Nkomishi</i>	
5	6	
<i>Gwevanazo</i>	<i>Tamanisi</i>	
7	8	
<i>Qhwayilahle</i>	<i>Sosobala</i>	
9	10	11
<i>Shosholoza</i>	<i>stimela</i>	<i>samalahle</i>

See page 26 for English translation

These praises are composed of four Binary Rhythmic Schemas and one Ternary Rhythmic Schema. When spoken the parts of each rhythmic schema balance the other parts.

The 'balancings' of the Rhythmic Schemas reflect the bilateral structure of the human body. In this way Jousse demonstrated the natural structure of the expression in that it reflected the biological structure of the human body with a left and a right side.

Presence of Mnemotechnical Devices of Oral-style Expression in the Praises of a Bull

It must be noted that in cattle praises there is a repetition of sounds, words and phrases which Jousse refers to as "clamp elements" (Jousse 1997:565-568). The repetition of sounds and words in the following praises of a bull, are examples of clamp elements. The repetitions are marked in colour to highlight their occurrence in the following praises:

ubukuda kwesinengwenya

Ingweny' ingamala

I a 'amagweb' u he

He who swims in a pool with crocodiles

The crocodiles do not bother about him

They bother about his bubbles

Avocalisation

Avocalisation means the repetition of a similar vowel sounds in a word. Avocalisation is present in the above praises where the vowel sound [u] in the word [ubukuda] and [e] and [kwesinengwenya] are repeated which facilitate recitation and memorisation.

Aconsonantisation

This is a process in which the consonant sounds are repeated in a word. Aconsonantisation can also be noted in the above praises where the sounds “ny” [ɲ] and [ng] are repeated in the word *lkwesinengwenya*.

The use of the word *ingwenya* and *kwesinengwenya* is a symbol of size and danger. In other words, the bull is big and dangerous and can kill other bulls. *Kwesinengwenya* may refer to a river where there is a crocodile as metaphoric reference to the way in which the bull, referred to in the above praises, can move from one herd to another without being challenged.

Marcel Jousse’s Anthropological Law of Bilateralism is also evident in the above praises since a balance is maintained between phrase one and phrase two. The utterance time of the two phrases is roughly equivalent. The two phrases encapsulate matching ideas which are linked by the word *ingwenya*.

Presence of Mnemotechnical Devices of Oral-style Expression in a Cow’s Praises

The following lines are an example of cow’s praises:

Iyakubuka iNkosi

Uyakubuka uJehova esemafini

Uyakubuka uMenzi owusenzayo

God watches you

God looks at you whilst he is in the clouds

The Creator who created us looks at you and sees

The above phrases of the praises are structured in such a way that certain words are repeated to facilitate memorisation. The word */yakubuka [jakubuka]* is used repeatedly in phrase one, two and three, introducing the beginning of the phrase in each instance.

Avocalisation of the vowel [i] is evident in */yakubuka [jakubuka]* and */Nkosi [ykos]* and also the use of [] in *iyakubuka, Jehova*. To say [i] we have to open our mouths. [i] is the front high vowel in all languages. The height and forwardness of the sound [i] signifies that God is the highest power – God is Omnipotent, God is leading us, therefore He is in front and everyone must follow his will. God is Omniscient and Omnipresent.

When saying [u] the mouth is still kept open and the lips are narrow and rounded like the narrow neck of a jar in which that which is special is preserved. This signifies the quality of maintaining, preserving and keeping oral tradition in memory. The oral tradition needs to be preserved, maintained in the memory so that it can be transmitted to the young generation by word of mouth.

A common characteristics that is prevalent in the above cow's praises is aconsonantisation. The repetitive use of certain words and syllables emphasis the value of a aconsonantisation as a Mnemotechnical Device. Mnemotechnical Devices operate in the repetitive use of sounds, that is, the consonants and vowel sounds which make it easy for the praiser to memorise and recite the praises. In the praises the word “*yakubuka*” and sounds */y/ = [j]*, */k/ = [k]*, and */b/ = [b]* are repeatedly used bringing about a rhythmic flow when the praises are recited. It becomes easier for the praiser to remember sounds which are similar and connect similar ideas.

The beginnings of the phrases in these praises operate as 'clasp rhymes':

Iy' ku-buk iNkosi

Uyakubuka uJehova esemafini

Uyakubuka uMenzi owasenzayo

Clasp rhyme has been used in these phrases to create phonological cohesion in the sound, which in turn coheres the meaning of the praises. The efficient and effective use of the initial clasp rhymes compliment meaning during recitation, and the rhythmic incidence of this aids memory.

Presence of Mnemotechnical Devices of Oral-style Expression in the Praises of a Span of Oxen

When the span of oxen is pulling hard, they are praised by name and with praises. The following is an example:

Iyaphi laphaya

Komich - Blesi

Vuthela - Othomeni

Nkalankala ziyawugull' yindle le nyon' kayiboni KwaZulu

Where are you going

Committee - White head

Cause-fire - Ottoman

Crabs move along tall bird cannot see Zululand

Gestual expression in cattle praises

The Mnemonic Laws of the Oral Style are not restricted to verbal expression. They can also refer to the movement of the people: the gestual expression. Jousse's Law of Bilateralism is evidenced when the driver whips alternatively the ox on the left and then on the right side. The driver may whip the ground on the left and on the right side of the span thus maintaining a physical balance.

Movement of the span on the straight track is achieved by the use of Bilateralism. It must be noted that the driver may not move along only one side of the span but, moves from the left to the right side interchangeably this creating a rhythmic balanced pattern of physical movement

Jousse's Law of Mimism is highlighted during the praising when the community joins the driver and owner or header in praising. The person who accompanies the driver with the span of oxen may not keep quiet but can find himself singing praises imitating the driver.

Oral-style texts analysed in this way account for the full range of performance elements "putting performance on the page" in the words of Chamberlin (1998)

3. The Importance of Cattle in the Zulu Nation

Cattle are exceptionally important in the cultural, spiritual and ritual life of the Zulu people. For any marriage to take place cattle must be used as a means of payment of *lobolo* (bride-price)

When the cattle have been slaughtered, some parts are used for special cultural purposes. for example, *ishoba* (a tail) is often used by *izangoma* (fortune tellers); *inyongo* (gall bladder) is worn by the new bride

so that the ancestors of the family into which she is marrying will accept her.

The living members of the Zulu society and cattle are linked by spiritual bonds with the *amadlozi* (departed members of the society). The function of the *amadlozi* is to ensure well-being and health for the family, the society and nation. The *amadlozi* are responsible for bringing rain, making crops grow and for the healthy growth of the children. Members of the family need signal their respect and care for the *amadlozi* by slaughtering goats and cattle. Therefore, cattle are very important in the culture of the Zulu nation in that they link the living and the dead and provide meat and milk

Members of the Zulu society exercise an accepted division of labour. This means that the father, as a head of the family will assign different duties to different members of the family. For example, elder boys will be given the duty of looking after the cattle while the younger boys look after the calves and goats. It is also the duty of the elder boys who are herders to send cattle home for milking

During the milking process, the older boys or fathers sing the praises of the cows to show their love and admiration for their cattle for their milk which is the basic food of the family. In the case where the family is without cattle, the father *nyosiselwa* (is given a cow for him to milk for his family).

Molefe writes:

All domestic animals are processed because owners love them the cow is the most loved animal among domestic animals because it is the only animal that supplies meat and milk (1992:58).

The provision of food and services rendered by cattle inspire the fathers and herders to praise their cattle. Cows are praised during milking, bulls are praised mostly when they roar in pastures and during fighting. Oxen are praised during ploughing in the mealie-fields. Each ox has its own praises if it works hard

Lekgotorane (1938:191) states: "The praises reveal what a man thanks in his heart. It is his speech." This means that the Zulu people voice out their values and attitudes by means of praises. From their move through the cattle praises people can voice their approval and disapproval of the behaviours and values on the society.

Through the praises, the herders and the owners can show their appreciation of the physical appearance of the cattle. The praises of cattle of a collaborating social group reveal much about the behaviour of the group.

4. Social Aspects

The social aspect will examine the poet (one who sings praises) the suitable time and place for praising. The attitudes which the poet adopts when praising cattle. Another aspect that will be examine is the purpose of praising and who becomes the audience when the praising takes place.

4.1 The Poet

I will discuss the poet in four categories, the owner, the herdsman, a member of the family and lastly the modern poet. By "poet", I simply mean any person who can sing praises and also any who can compose and record the praises without performance. Besides the header or owner who is always involved in praising, any member of the family, who is a good listener and is gifted can sing praises.

4.2 The Owner

Molefe (1992:15) states: "More than seventy percent of the poets are owners of domestic animals."

The person who is the owner of cattle usually becomes the owner of the *Umuhi* (house) and is an *Ummumizane* (head) of the family. This is most frequently the father of the family. The father can give other members the right to own cattle and that is called *Ukusisa*. A herdboys can become an owner of cattle as payment, if the cattle he herds do not belong to his family. Very few women can take part in praising since they are engaged in domestic work, which excludes caring for cattle.

4.3 The Herdsman/Herdboy

There are few herdboys nowadays since boys attend schools. Those presently working as herders are from other African states such as Mozambique, Swaziland and other neighbouring countries. The boys from these countries are not accustomed to the culture of praising. There are elders in KwaZulu-Natal in particular, who are employed to become herdsman. These elders can show their love of herding by chanting the praises of cattle.

4.4 Members of the family and other poets

One of my sources, Mdaba Foco (interviewed on 12 June 1999 at Nhlabosini, Empangeni) mentioned that besides the owner and herdsman any member of the family who is suitably talented, can compose and sing praises. If there is a male person at home who can listen to the owner of cattle praising, he can learn to chant the same praises. When a bull that is praised is popular as a result of its fighting ability, very often other poets in the same area memorise and sing those praises as well.

4.5 The Modern Poet

There are books of poetry that contain both general poetry and praises. The following are two such examples: Kunene (1971) in the *Heroic Poetry of the Basotho*, and Zulu, Mbhele, and Hlongwane, (1989) in *Unyazi 3*. They contain praises of people and praises of all domestic animals. Modern poets often do not sing praises but compose, collect and record them in written volumes.

5. Social Setting of Praising

This aspect looks at the time factors which influence the praise to chant the praises and places at which the cattle should be during times of praising.

5.1 The Bull

There are specific instances in which the bull can be praised. My source, Dangazela (interviewed on 6 February 1999 at Ntobozi, KwaMthethwa, Empangeni) mentioned that Zulu men have a proud history as warriors: during the war the warrior chants his own praises when he succeeds in killing his enemies. Likewise owners and herdsman value the fighting attributes of their cattle, so praises are chanted to encourage the bull to fight. Bull fighting can take place anytime and anywhere but usually at the dipping tank or in the veld.

When a bull begins to pursue a cow during the mating period, the owner and herdsman encourage mating because it means an increase in the size of the herd, and thereby exaltation of wealth. Therefore it is necessary for a bull to be encouraged to continue mating since there are so many competing bulls who are taking part in pursuing the cow. Success in mating is perceived and believed to be related to the bull's bravery in fighting.

The following is an extract from the praises of the bull, *Nkosibuka* (God watches). These praises were given by grandfather Ntusi Mathaba some years ago and on the 10 February 1999, my late father, Mandlensizwa Mathaba passed them on to me. The praises are as follows:

Jiba ongadlulwa nyoni

Ziyawudlu ziyawutshakela

Unompunyumpunywana

Inkuzi engenampando

Uphunyuk' bemphethe

Unziqomele enjengenduna

Inobola engeluhlo

Jiba corn cannot be eaten by a bird

They eat and spit it out

An un-holdable one

A bull without horns

He who escapes from holding

A leaping thing like a leader

A closing thing like a leader

A useless man

Illustration 1: The following is the picture of the bull, *Nkosibuka*, photographed at *Ogome* pastures, KwaMthethwa area 1999.



Nkosibuka (God watches) was very aggressive towards other bulls. The praiser refers to the bull as 'unholdable one' which means that no other bulls can stop him from being a successful fighter. *Nkosibuka* had short horns but was never defeated in a fight. He moved from one herd of cattle to another without opposition from other bulls which resulted in the praise-singer referring to him as 'a leaping thing'. *Nkosibuka* was so huge that he stood out in any herd and was a Zulu man who loved meat and sour milk, but as the bull could not produce sour milk and did not work in the cultivation of the lands, he refers to *Nkosibuka* as a 'useless man'.

The second example of praises of a bull are as follows:

Izibongo zenkunzi Janidube (John Dube)

Igodl' elimthuyisi

Uhluba zephukele

Ubhejan' ochudul' iziphunzi

Kwancinciz' Izibonkolo

Esengqind' engqameni

You sand-coloured left-handed bull

You who stabs and breaks weapons

You are a rhinoceros that pushed logs

You hard that brown ants crumbled

And you were only blocked by a ram.

The name *Janidube* (John Dube) was given to the bull by my late father, *Mundlensizwa*, to his bull in the 1960s. John Dube was a very famous leader in Inanda, KwaZulu-Natal in the 1960s. He introduced the newspaper called *Ilunga laseNatali* during the difficult times when freedom of press was not available to all racial groups of South Africa. He showed bravery and that he was afraid of no-one. He was a hero of the Zulu people in the 1960s, as a result of which my father compared his bull, which was also very brave and successful in fighting, to John Dube, hence the name '*Janidube*'.

Janidube, the bull was an aggressive bull: so there was a spot where he would wait for all the herds moving towards the dipping tank. His aim was to fight any bull which showed any aggression towards him. At the dipping tank, Janidube would move up and down roaring and inviting any bull to a fight. Where there were

bulls that were pursuing a cow, Janidube would exclude all the other mating contenders and claim the cow.

The praiser names the bull as a 'left-handed bull' which refers to that one horn of the bull pointed downwards and the other one pointed up. Left-handed persons usually become good fighters, as an opponent finds it difficult to protect himself from left-handed fighter. Janidube was a left-handed fighter 'in his praiser's eyes'. Janidube was so energetic that the praiser compares him to a rhinoceros that pushed the logs. This means that besides the skills he had a fighting with his horns, Janidube was able to push other bulls aside but was beaten only by a ram. The ram pushes when fighting and it is so powerful that the bulls are defeated by ram. The praiser states that even though Janidube was so successful in fighting, he was defeated by a ram.

A third examples of praises to a bull are the Praises of Jamludi, the bull

Unomalevulevu kaNomalekethe

Unkohe zaphekw' emthini zanyanta

Zakhwezehwa yimpaka nesikhovu

Utolotolo usiziba esizwiwa ngobhoko ohubuthunu.

Uklevu uNomaklevuza

Uklevuklevu wezihlabathi

Umahlaba phansi abuye nodaka

Umphandela nkunzana kachanas' imithentazana

UJamludi obony' onjengentolwana

Inkunz' ekhony' izibaya ngezibaya

Umakhonya kunyakaz' iziziba

Inkunz' emchwayidwa kade ziyidwengula'

Nomalevu of Nomalekethe

Grains of mealies that were cooked in the tree and stayed moist

The wizard's animal together with the owl made more fire under the same grains.

He who swam in the crocodile infested pool

Tolotolo, the deep pool that is surveyed with a blunt stick

Klevu of Nomaklevuza Klevuklevu of the sands,

He who stabbed the ground and brought back the mud

He digs out soil to challenge smaller bulls

Heifers are wondering around freely

Jamludi who is red like the *ntolwane* shrike

It must be noted that Jamludi is so strong that the praiser compares him to the grains of mealies that were cooked and stayed moist. If mealies are not fresh, it becomes difficult to cook them well, and it takes a lot of time to cook old mealies. The reference in the praises means that other bulls have to be brave and skilful in order to defeat Jamludi in a fight. Jamludi was able to move from one herd to another without any fear of other bulls.

5.2 The Ox

The ox is responsible for ploughing in the mealie-fields. Each ox is known by its name. During ploughing the ox can be encouraged by name to pull hard and if the person who has chosen to carry the whip is eloquent, he can sing songs and sing the praises of each ox. The praises of the ox are not as well-known as those of the bull since the ox is just like an ordinary man in the family, while the bull is like the king of a nation.

Molefe (1992:22) states "If he, the driver, is active in praising, less whipping of the oxen takes place".

This means that an active driver does not always have to whip the span of oxen. The span enjoys the work without the whip, if they are being praised. My source, J Mthethwa (interviewed in 1999 in the Nhlabosini area of KwaMthethwa) states that ox-praises are not different from ox-names. As a span of oxen is pulling, they are praised by name, and praises are changed depending on the driver. One example is as follows:-

Iyaphi laphaya

Komchi-Blesi

Vuthela-Othomeni

Nkalankala Ziyawugudl'

Yinde le nyoni kayiboni KwaZulu'

Where is it going there,

Committee-Whitehead

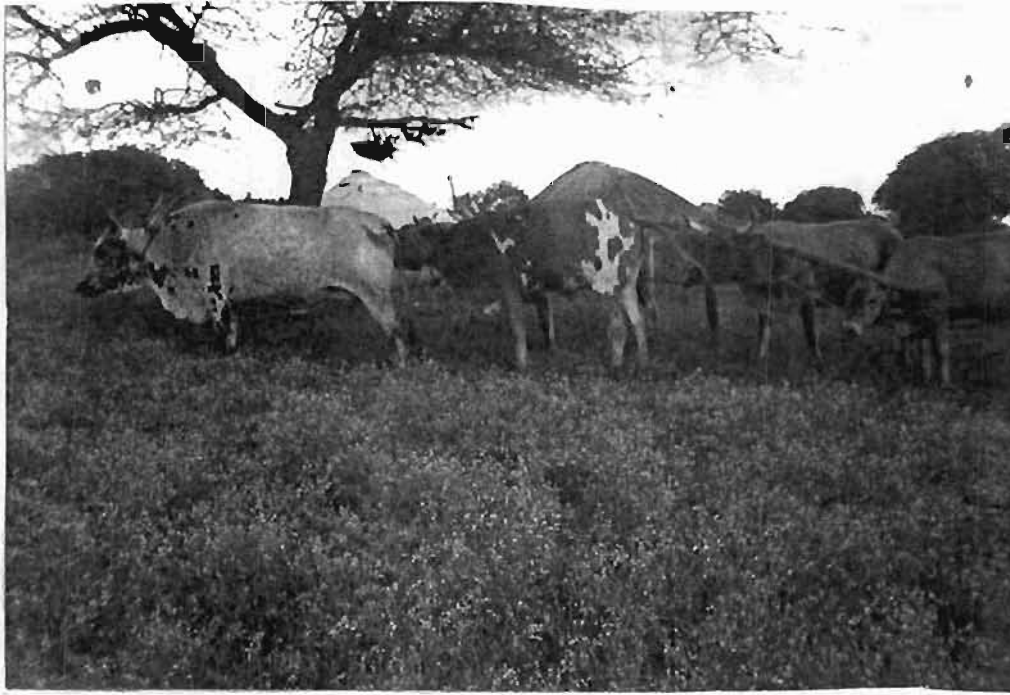
Vuthela-Ottoman

Crabs that are migrating along

This bird is tall but cannot see Zululand

This means that as the span is pulling hard it moves slowly like a crab along the fertile area. Crabs are usually found moving along the river banks, similarly the span usually cultivate the fertile area along the rivers, hence the comparison with crabs. The Zulu man usually chooses oxen for his span which are noticeably taller than others. Even though the oxen are tall, they cannot see Zululand which simply means the span would not only cultivate along the rivers nearer to the home, but also further a field.

Illustration No. 2: The following is the picture showing Ngqondo Mntambo's span of oxen taken on the 5 April 1999, eNtinkulu, KwaMthethwa.



The following is the example of praises of Mntambo's span:-

Xabanisa - Eshisi

Gezubuso - Nkomishi

Gwevinazo - Tamatshi

Qhwayilahle - Sosobala

Shosholoza stimela samalahle

Cause-conflict - Eshisi

Wash-your-face - Cup

Refuse-with-them - Tomato

Unemployed-man - Sosobala

Move quickly train for coal

What is noticeable in the above praises is that although this is a span of oxen, there are cows which form part of the span. In the above span the following are cows: *Eshini, Gezubuso and Lamatisi*. If there are not enough oxen to form a span, cows are used to make up the required numbers. Mntambo, the praiser, compares the span to the goods train carrying coal which moves quickly from one area to another. The span moves quickly while pulling hard like a train.

My source, Mndaba Foco also provided an example of the praises of his span of oxen. What is amazing here is that when Mndaba sings the praises of his span, he weeps. When I asked him how he feels and what has happened, he simply says "Remembrance". The example is as follows:

Bathathe - Magazini

Leyintusi - Spithu

Mabomvini - Blobeli

Mangabantu - Bangabantu

Madoda endawo benzelem abantu benkosi

Bondleli bulumbile

Dubula magazini safa indlala

Take-them - Magazine

Leyintusi - Spirit

Mabomvini - Blobeli

People's lie - **Fighting** for the country

Local men do it for the King's people

Feed them they are hungry

Shoot Magazine we die of hunger

What is noticeable in Mndaba Foco's span of oxen is that the span consists of oxen only: no cows form part of the span.

Illustration no. 3: The following is the picture showing Mndaba Foco's span:



The praiser refers to his span *Madoda endawo* (local men) meaning that they are men who can solve local problems. This means that the span can help any member of the community. Mr Mndaba's span does not only cultivate his fields but also helps all the neighbouring people. The span also takes part in *ilimo* (working together). Mr Mndaba's span also helps those who are without a span and he refers to those as *balambile* (hungry people).

The praiser encourages his span to move as quickly as a gunshot in cultivating the fields because the families are hungry and need food. The rust ox on the left is called *Bathathe* meaning 'lead them'. By

leading, he not only refers to his own span but also to all the other spans in the area. Mndaba therefore is implying that his 'leader' ox, should provide an example of leadership to the rest of the span, and to all other spans in the area.

5.3 The Cow

Illustration no. 4: The picture below shows Maliyami, the cow.



There are two ways in which the cow can qualify to be praised. Firstly the cow qualify to be proud if it produces more milk than other cows.

Mzolo (1977:33) states:

If praises depict external physical features such as the size of the udder and its teats as they become gorged with milk.

This shows that praises of a cow like that of the bull can be created to reflect the physical structure of a cow and the way it is productive. Secondly, if the cow has a voice that is easily distinguishable, its praises may well be reflective and proportionate to the quality and length of its *ukukhalima* (the way it lows and the length of its lowing). Cow's praises often include disciplinary messages directed to people who may be lazy and those involved in witchcraft.

Praises of Maliyami, the Cow

Uhomayikayika umzimba osindwa zihlobo

Uname wekula kaggoki nyathandela

Overloaded body full of relatives

Indian mother does not wear but wrap

My source, Elphas Mthethwa (interviewed in 1999 at Enhlabosini, in the KwaMthethwa area) states that Maliyami (My Money), the cow was given praises for producing a great quantity of milk. This helped him to provide for the many relatives who stayed with him. Without the help of the cow he would not have managed to provide for all these hungry people. This emphasises the importance of cattle in the lives of Zulu people where cattle can provide a solution to a problem.

6. Role of Praisers as Poets

A. Narrating the events of the past

The praises of cattle sometimes record histories of events in Zulu communities. Praises of Ngangetshe, the cow, narrate an event that occurred when Mr Mbhele (who was believed to be a witch doctor) killed an oxpecker. Mr Mbhele wished to use the oxpecker to mix traditional medicine to elicit love from Mr

Mbokazi's sister. The dead oxpecker disappeared but there were allegations that Mr Mbokazi (My source's father) had seen the dead oxpecker and hidden it as he knew that Mr Mbhele would mix it into a medicine. Whenever Mr Mbhele met Mbokazi, he would ask for his oxpecker. My source gave the praises of Ngangetshe, the cow, by Mr Mbokazi, her owner, which obliquely informed the community, and Mr Mbhele, that he is harassed by the constant questioning.

Nansi indoda

Ingibuza ilanda layo

Ngigondwe umthakathi

Ngibe ngishona ngapha angibuze ilanda

Ngithi ngiyachama, ngiyaphuza abuze ilanda

Ngithi yebuya baba ilanda angilazi

Ngigondwe umthakathi

Ngigondwe usibuya esekhunda

Iyangibuza le ndoda

Kodwa ngiyasazi isono lupho sisuka khona

Ngenqaba ibhodlela ethi angilifakele udadewethu

Ngathi chabobo angeke ngikwenze lokho

Yangifundekela indoda ngebhodlela

Ngaze ngalithatha yebuya baba

Ngahamba nalo ngaliphonsa esizibeni

Ngizikhulula kule ndoda

Ithi cha ngizokunika isithole

Uma uke wangishayela ngaphakathi kudadewethu

Yafika indoda ngehule

Yabuza ukuthi ngikwenzile yini

Yathi ngizobona ngoba efika ezogana ukuthi ukwenzile

Here is a man

He asks me for his oxpecker

I am encountered by a witch doctor

He asks me about his oxpecker when I urinate, drink

He asks me about his oxpecker

I say 'Hey father I don't know your oxpecker'

I am encountered by a witch doctor

Encountered a kraal at the head

This man hates me

But I know where my sin comes from

I refused the bottle

He says I must put it to my sister

I say no I cannot do that the man persist for a bottle

Until I take it 'Hey father'

I walk with it and throw it to the river

To free myself from this man

He promises to give me a heifer

If I have slash inside my sister

The man arrives where I was herding cattle

He asks whether I have done the thing

He says he will see - by my sister

Coming for marriage - that it has been done.

What is also important in these praises is that their focus is not really about the dead oxpecker, but really about the enmity between Mbhele and Mbokazi, but rather about Mr Mbhele's information for Mr Mbokazi's sister. Mr Mbhele was angry that Mbokazi had refused to take bottle of traditional medicine and participate in a traditional love ritual. Mr Mbhele persisted until Mbokazi took the bottle, but then threw it into the river. Mbhele then promised to give Mbokazi a heifer if he succeeded in intervening on his behalf with his sister. When Mbhele asks for his "oxpecker", he is actually demanding to know what happened to the bottle of traditional medicine. As Mbhele could not ask for the bottle, he asked repeatedly for oxpecker.

These praises always have the effect of reminding Mbokazi, the poet, of the terrible days he experienced whenever he met Mbhele who continuously asked for his oxpecker. My source stated that the praises had the effect of reminding her of the enmity that occurred between Mbhele and Mbokazi. The praises again reminded Mbhele that the community suspected him of being a witch doctor, and that they were aware of the love he bore for Mbokazi's sister. The repetition of the praises of the cow, *Ngangetshe*, could not but keep the community informed of the interaction between Mbhele and Mbokazi.

B Restoration of facts in memory

My source Mr Mnqayi (of Matholeni, KwaMthethwa area, interviewed in March 1999) recites a stanza that tells a story of his poverty which he believed was the result of his wife being totally opposed to polygamy. As a result, Mnqayi, had few children, and was therefore unable to work all his fields. The following lines are an excerpt from his cow's praises

Praises of Mhlathuze, the cow

Bantu abangangammbila

Abalinywa abanjengammbila

Ukuba bayalinywa ngabe kuqhakaze bona kuzo zonke lezi miba

People are not like maize

They are not cultivated like maize

If they were cultivate-able

They will have been flowering all over these mountains

In this praise, Mngayi accounts for his frustration. The praiser believes that if he had many children, he would have produced more which would have improved his standard of living.

7 The Effects of Praises on Cattle

7.1 Encouragement

Most praise-singers of cattle encourage them in fights, milking and cultivation. The bull is encouraged to fight successfully by owners or herders. They say:

Ubhukudu kwesinengwenya

Iigweny' ingammbila

Inak' amagweb' akhe

He who swims in a pool with crocodiles

The crocodiles do not bother about him

They bother about his bubbles

The praises implies the bravery of this bull which is able to move through all other herds, and among other bulls with impunity so greatly feared is this bull by all other bulls.

7.2 Praising to show Love

Molefe (1992:58) says:

All domestic animals are praised because owners love them the cow is the most loved animal among domestic animals because it is the only animal that supplies meat and milk

The fathers and headers are inspired to praised their cattle for the production of food, and for services rendered. The more cattle produce and render services, the more praises they get. The praiser **may be** attracted by the physical structure of the animal and praises will be related to this structure.

For example, when the praiser looks at the horns, he compares their sharpness with that of a fork.

Umahlaba zihlungana

Onjenge mfoloko

The one who stabs when they meet

Who is like a fork.

8. The Effect of Praises in Society

This section will look at the manner in which poets use praises of cattle to communicate with society. We shall look at how messages are carried by the praises to certain members of the community. This portion will show at how members of the community discipline one another through praises and how Zulu customs are preserved in the praises of cattle.

8.1 Disciplinary Messages

Praises constitutes an important and everyday aspect of life. Praises usually reveal the behaviour of human beings within the community and portray the accepted values and norms of the society. Cope (1968:31) states that praises bring about conformity to the appropriate modes of behaviour.

A praiser can sing praises with the aim of warning people against unaccepted behaviour or encouraging good faith and co-operation within the community. The praiser can say when praising a cow, Mabomvini.

Iyakubuka iNkosi

Uyakubuka uJehova esemafini

Uyakubuka uMenzi owasenzayo

Owenza thina emhlabeni nasezulwini

Vumani izono zenu

Uyokusha emhlabeni

Uyokusha nasezulwini

God watches you

God looks at you whilst he is in the clouds

The Creator who created us looks at you and sees

He who created us on earth and in heaven

Admit your sins

You will be burnt even in heaven and on earth

The praiser, Mr Dangazela, was warning people who were committing crimes within the community such as adultery, witchcraft, stealing and killing. In this praise, he tries to make people aware that even if people do not know their secrets, God knows and God will punish the sinners. In the praises he urges people to repent if they wish to see the kingdom of God.

8.2 Preservation of Customs

Some cattle praises play a major role in preserving the Zulu customs. In the praises of a cow called Bhotela, the first two lines of the last stanza are reminiscent of the Zulu belief that at times a person can be “licked” by the ancestors, which is a sign of good fortune. My source, Mndaba Foco, March 1999, gives the following praises as an example:

Wakhothwa ngabalele

Wabesewukhothwa mvenwe

You were licked by those asleep

And you licked the calf

Kunene (1971:142) records the praises of a cow, Tshemedi. The praises reminds society that the ancestors appreciate the slaughtering of beasts.

Tshemedi. Ha olla olekisa mang?

Batla reng motseng ha ba

Uthwa ba moreneng?

Batla re: Kgomo ha ella motsaneng

Hou Ronana

Butcher bird, who in your crying are you emulating

What will they of the royal village say when they hear you?

They will say: It is not fitting for a cow to low within the homes of commoners.

The above praises remind the nation that people are not all equal and the authorities must be respected by the community.

8.3 Entertainment

Cattle praises can be entertaining: the poet can make a joke out of the way a lazy woman is never seen working outside the house. People in the vicinity can be entertained by this type of praise. My source, Elphas Mthethwa (interviewed at Enblalabosini, Kwa-Mthethwa 1999) gives the praises of a cow, Ntandokazi (lovely women) as an example:

Mbo ngendlu mfazi wesuhumane, kahonwa

Ngaze ngahgaya idokwe ngamehlo

Hidden in the house

Wife of Muslim cannot be seen

I have grind the porridge with my eyes.

The above praises are entertaining because while the woman is lazy, she is mostly loved by the man. Other wives make a joke out of her laziness.

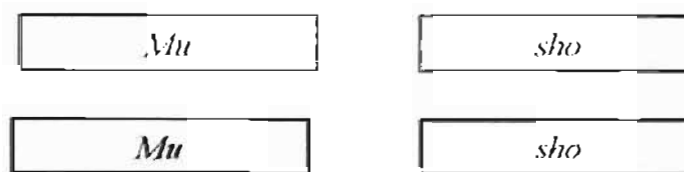
9 Audience

In cattle praises there are two kinds of audiences. The first one is the animal itself. It has to hear when it is being praised. The second is any person who happens to be in the vicinity when the praises are being chanted.

9.1 The Cattle as Audience

Mzolo (1977:46) states "Oral literature depends on Performance in order to survive." This means that for oral performance to be meaningful there must be a person who is performing and there must be an audience. In cattle praising the cattle being praised must hear its praises.

The audience of the performance of royal praises, is the king himself and also the general public. The king listens in silence and may be inspired to whistle softly. The general public also listen attentively but utter shouts of approval and encouragement saying '*Mu-sho! Mu-sho!*' meaning literally – 'Tell us about him! Tell us about him!' that is to say 'Praise him more!' '*Mu-sho!*' is chanted rhythmically in Binary Schemas:



When cattle are given praises, especially the family bull, it is the bull who is the direct audience of the praise and here one finds some sort of response from the animal. When the bull is praised while lying down resting, relaxing in the cattle byre, it stands up and begins to paw the kraal-manure with its front hoofs

If the bull is praised in its presence, the action of the tail as response can reveal its bravery or cowardice. Sometimes the bull roars with the tail moving sideways which is a sign that the bull is not a fighter, but if the tail does not move, that shows that the bull is brave and is ready for a fight. The cow on the other hand responds with powerful lowing while the ox responds by pulling hard in the yoke.

9.2 People as Audience

Cattle are always close to Zulu people who may be owners, headers, members of the family and any other person who happens to be in the vicinity when cattle are being praised. As audience, people are expected to listen and register the meaning of the message.

People's response depends on the type of praises. If the praises are meant to be entertaining, people will respond by laughing. If the praises are meant to be encouraging, they say to the bull "*Mbuke*" (Face him') which means "Fight him'". In Binary Rhythmic Schemas:

<i>Mbu</i>	<i>ke</i>
<i>Mbu</i>	<i>ke</i>

As in all Oral-style texts, the audience is a critical participant in the composing process of the performance. If we remove the physical audience, the text is reduced, and there is immediately a reduction in the meaning of what is being performed.

11. Conclusion

Cattle are very important in the lives of the Zulu people for the fact that most of the Zulu rituals and ceremonies involve the slaughtering of cattle to report that particular ritual or ceremony to *umadllozi*

(ancestors). For *amadlozi* to bring good life to the living and bring rain to the cultivated crops, cattle must be slaughtered. The importance of cattle in the Zulu nation makes them deserve the praises. Cattle praises are oral in nature, therefore cattle praises are memorised by owners of herds and recited without book learning. Cattle praises are communal that every member of the community can sing praises

Cattle praises operate, in part, as archives in that they preserve aspects of the culture of the Zulu nation. Past events are narrated in the cattle praises. Cattle praises also operate as social monitors and regulators in that they guide the community towards the accepted norms and values. There are also those cattle praises which warn the community against unaccepted behaviour and attitude in the community. Consequently, cattle praises play a significant role in shaping the life and identity of the Zulu nation.

Traditioning, that is the transmission of the cattle praises without writing is dependent on performance and memory, which in turn can be accounted for by the Mnemonic Laws and Mnemotechnical Devices identified by Marcel Jousse in the *Anthropology of Geste and Rhythm*, also referred to as the Oral Style. The benefits of literacy cannot be denied, but their negative effect on the oral traditions of people all over the world are inevitable. In Africa, we need to use writing to lessen its negative effect on African oral tradition. Cattle praises, identified as a field of study by Poland (1996) in the conclusion to her thesis, are virtually untouched. This present study has indicated some of the ways in which this field can be explored and analysed. It is hoped that there will be further studies in this fascinating field, and others like it. Such studies will go a long way to preserve something of the 'oral libraries' of Africa, and at the same time explain, demonstrate and preserve the norms and values of a society that has recorded its socio-cultural archive in the movement and speech of its people – its *Anthropology of Geste and Rhythm* (Jousse 1997)

Bibliography

- Chamberlin, T.E (1998) Doing things with words: putting performance on the page. *Voices 1: A Journal for Oral Studies*. Centre for Oral Studies, University of Natal, Durban.
- Cope, A.T. (1968) *Izibongo: Zulu praise poems*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press (Oxford library of African literature).
- Deng, F.M. (1973) *The Dinka and their songs*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.
- Finnegan, R. (1970) *Oral literature in Africa*. Oxford : The Clarendon Press.
- Jousse, M. (1990) *The Oral Style*. Translated from the French by Edgard Sienaert and Richard Whitaker. (The Albert Bates Lord studies in Oral tradition services). New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc. Originally published in 1924.
- Kunene, D.P. (1971) *The Heroic Poetry of The Basotho*. Oxford : The Clarendon Press.
- Lekgothoana, S.K. (1938) The Praises of Animals in Northern Sotho *Bantu Studies*. Vol. 12(3). pp 189-213.
- Molefe, L. (1992) *Praises of Domestic Animals*. Unpublished MA thesis, Zulu Department, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
- Opland, J. (1983) *Xhosa Oral Poetry*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.
- Poland, M. (1996) *Uchibidolo: The Abundant Herds: The descriptive study of the Sanga-Nguni cattle of the Zulu people*. University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
- Zulu, E.S.Q, N.F. Mbhele, and E.M.Hlongwane (1989) *Unyazi 3*. Pietermaritzburg Centre Publication.