

Ceremonial ostentations of wild and domestic Bos in Sudan from prehistory to contemporary times

Elena A.A. Garcea¹, Julia Budka², John Galaty³, Salima Ikram⁴, Shayla Monroe⁵

¹Department of Letters and Philosophy, University of Cassino and Southern Latium, Cassino, Italy

²Department of Cultural and Ancient Studies, LMU Munich University, Germany

³Department of Anthropology, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

⁴Department of Sociology, Egyptology and Anthropology, American University in Cairo, Egypt

⁵Department of Anthropology, Harvard University, Cambridge (MA), United States of America

Abstract: Drawing from a book currently in press entitled *The Deep History of Cattle Herding and Symbolism: New Perspectives from Anthropology, Archaeology and Zooarchaeology in Sudan* by the present authors, this presentation offers an overview of ceremonial ostentations of Bos in Sudan from prehistoric to contemporary times across more than 10,000 years. It explores the complex relationship between humans and wild African aurochs (*Bos primigenius africanus*), as well as the ecological and ideological relevance of that relationship to the adoption of cattle pastoralism by African peoples. Aurochs had been part of the human spiritual imagination before domestic *Bos taurus* from the Middle East arrived. They already represented the transcendent intermediary between humans and divine/supernatural entities and their material impersonation since the final Pleistocene. The supremacy of cattle in the economic and symbolic sphere was consolidated in the Neolithic and Late Neolithic periods. Later, from the mid-third millennium BCE, the emphasis on cattle reached its highest material and spiritual expression across the entire Sudanese country, continuing into historical and contemporary times. The aims of this paper are twofold: on the one hand, it demonstrates the long *durée* of cattle-centred behaviour in this part of Northeastern Africa, with its emergence, formation, and retention; on the other, it seeks comparative archaeological occurrences outside Africa, such as those in the southern Levant from Ain Ghazal and Jericho.

Keywords: *Bos primigenius africanus*, Cattle, Ceremonial ostentations, Northeastern Africa, Sudan
