

## COMMODIFYING CATTLE

### TRANSFORMING LIVESTOCK ECONOMIES AND KNOWLEDGE REGIMES IN THE FRENCH COLONIAL EMPIRE, 1890-1960

Samuël Coghe

For many centuries, cattle has been playing a key role in many societies across Africa and Asia - as a means to accumulate wealth and prestige, to pay the bride price or to enrich local diets with dairy products or meat, just to name a few. With the onset of colonial rule in the second half of the nineteenth century, however, many European

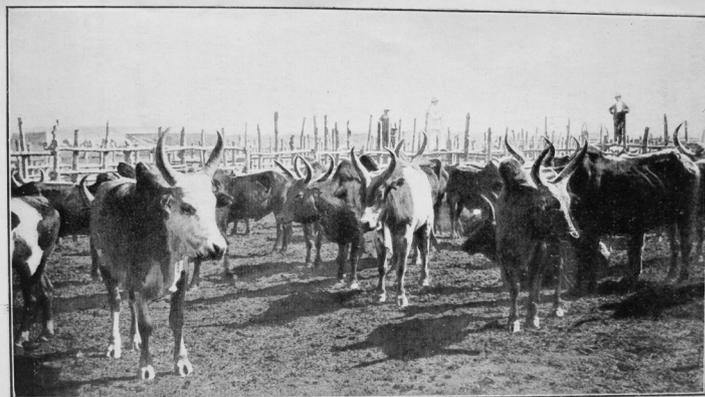
Asia and the global history of knowledge. Indeed, while it analyzes global market integration processes and social changes under colonial rule, it also pays attention to the conflicts and negotiations over knowledge between European scientists and African and Asian actors. Colonial interventions, the project assumes, did not always manage to reshape the economic practices and world views of Asian and African actors. However, they often triggered other unintended and far-reaching consequences.

By analyzing the barely researched history of colonial livestock in French Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, my project promises valuable new insights into the history of global capitalism, agricultural development and colonial knowledge regimes. Moreover, by examining French colonies in different parts of

Africa and Asia, it pursues two further goals. On the one hand, it aims to transcend the usual boundaries of Area Studies and to explore local processes from a transregional and global perspective. On the other hand, it seeks to provide a more differentiated view on European colonialism, for the analysis of which the vast historiography on the British Empire is often implicitly used as a norm and benchmark. With this project, I will draw attention to variations as well as entanglements both between and within Empires.

administrators, entrepreneurs and veterinary scientists quickly assumed that, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, pastoralists did not tap the full economic potential of their animals. In order to turn cattle into a more profitable commodity for the colonial economy, they believed it necessary to change the 'passive' and 'irrational' practices and attitudes of African and Asian actors and to 'modernize' the entire value chain. With that purpose in mind, they devised a whole series of interventions, ranging from the improvement of local breeds and new methods of cattle disease management to the sedentarization of pastoralists, the establishment of meat factories and the opening of new trade routes and markets.

My current research project explores the rationales, dynamics and consequences of these interventions in various parts of the French colonial Empire, notably in French West Africa, Madagascar and Indochina. Based on a wide range of published and archival sources from France and its former colonies, the project is situated at the crossroads of global economic history, the history of colonialism in Africa and



Un parc à bœufs à Madagascar.

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Samuël Coghe promovierte 2014 am EUI in Florenz mit einer Arbeit zur Bevölkerungspolitik im kolonialen Angola. Von Oktober 2018 bis Juli 2019 vertritt er die Professur für Afrikanische Geschichte am IAAW. Im Anschluss wird er seine Forschung im Rahmen einer durch die DFG geförderten Stelle am Center for Global History an der FU Berlin fortsetzen.