SOAS Mule and Donkey Conference 2012

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An interdisciplinary conference on donkey, mule and hinny cultures worldwide.

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ABSTRACTS

The donkey and the mule in Turkish folk songs and dances

Ali Fuat Aydin [Izmir]

ABSTRACT: Both the donkey and the mule are important figures used in Turkish folk songs and dances. The aim of this paper is to underline the basic characteristics of these

figures in the folk songs and dances which were collected from different regions of Turkey and to draw some preliminary conclusions about how they effected Turkish culture.

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Donkeys and mules in the 'New World'

John Barker [Independent researcher]

ABSTRACT: The donkey was derided by Le Corbusier as the enemy of modernity, but the architect ended up wanting to build a statue to the animal in his 'model city' of Chandrigah in India, having understood it could not have been built without them. A statue has been built outside a monastery in the old Inca capital of Cuzco, Peru. Appropriate because it was monks both in Mexico and Argentina who bred and sold donkeys and mules from the small stock of donkeys and horses which the Spaniards had brought in ships designed for conquest, but which were also 'Noah's arks'. A big market for the Jesuits of Cordoba was the mining town of Potosi, then one of the richest in the world. Mules carried the silver down to the coast for shipment, but in the Potosi mint they had a life span of just two months. They also transformed Andean trade dominated by the colonialists, transformed in the sense that previously the llama could carry loads of no more than 40-45 kg. In the world of business, merchant muleteers had great power. One rare case was the indigenous leader Tupac Amaru, who inherited a herd and as a muleteer made contacts everywhere, and was to lead the most significant rebellion against the Spanish in the late 1770s.

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Recent research on the history of donkeys in Africa: a synthesis of archaeological and linguistic findings

Roger Blench [Kay Williamson Educational Foundation]

ABSTRACT: It is now known that a very small population of African wild asses still persists in Eritrea. Cross breeding with domestic donkeys has virtually wiped out all such populations through introgression. It is likely that the domestication of the wild ass took place through a gradual process of management of wild populations across much of its ancient range. However, linguistic evidence points to the donkey gradually taking on great economic significance in Southern Egypt and the Horn of Africa, and evidence for large-scale caravans seeking ivory penetrating parts of Central Africa illustrates the importance the donkey achieved prior to the introduction of the camel. Archaeological evidence for donkeys remains disappointingly sparse, but by the first centuries AD, donkeys had certainly become significant in Sahelian West Africa. Their spread to other parts of Eastern and Southern Africa is almost certainly post-European, reflecting the low levels of long-distance trade.

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Donkeys and mules in the Indian Ocean in the long nineteenth century

William G. Clarence-Smith [SOAS]

ABSTRACT: Donkeys radiated out from northeastern Africa after domestication, but much more scholarly attention has been paid to them in the Mediterranean Basin than in the Indian Ocean. Prior to the First World War, there were some 8 million donkeys and mules in the lands bordering the Indian Ocean, with the largest concentrations in northeastern Africa, the Gulf lands, and northwestern India. The breeding of mules and hinnies was more concentrated, with Ethiopia, Persia, and the Punjab standing out. The uneven distribution of donkeys and their crosses was partly due to climate and disease, and partly to culture and skills. These animals were mainly employed for pack transport, and were occasionally ridden.

The nineteenth-century sea-borne trade in donkeys and mules in the Indian Ocean was largely a 'South-South' exchange. India took mules from Persia and the Indus Valley, and East Africa imported donkeys from the Horn and the Gulf. The Mascarene islands of the southwestern Indian Ocean (Mauritius and Réunion) were the most recent market to emerge, and became the largest of them all. Initially supplied with donkeys and mules from the Horn and the Gulf, the Mascarenes later obtained mules from the Mediterranean and the River Plate zone of South America. In times of war, imports might rise sharply and involve other suppliers, as with British procurement of North American mules for the Second Anglo-Boer War at the turn of the century.

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Mules and donkeys of Hydra: Reflections on the Greek crisis

Ed Emery [SOAS]

ABSTRACT: Considerations on sustainable development, corruption and economic crisis, viewed through the lens of the mule and donkey culture of a Greek island. Film documentary.

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Stubborn donkey or smart ass?

Ben Hart [Donkey Sanctuary]

ABSTRACT: Does the evolutionary history of donkeys lead to behaviours that are misunderstood and contribute to the donkeys' reputation for being stubborn?
The behaviour of donkeys is an understudied subject. The donkey's behaviour is commonly misunderstood principally because their behaviour is compared to that of the horse, rather than viewed as a separate species. Mistreatment of donkeys takes place because of the subtle behaviour patterns and stoic nature which are overlooked by handlers and observers who are more familiar with horse behaviour. By looking at the domesticated donkeys' evolutionary niche and the behaviour of both free living donkeys and domesticated donkeys it possible to explain the different behaviours of donkeys and to lay to rest their reputation for stubbornness and their misrepresentation as small horses with big ears.

This presentation will examine the behaviour of donkeys in the wild, the effects of environment on social structure in Asiatic and African asses, and the effects on behaviour of solitary living and territory guarding both in the wild and domestic situation.

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Donkeys in Portugal, a brief characterisation

Paulo Lima [IELT, Universidade Nova, Portugal]

ABSTRACT: Mules and donkeys are in Portugal, and throughout the Mediterranean-a strong imprint on the history, landscape and the various identities that make up the agrarian world, today in accelerated breakdown.

Donkeys and mules, which were effective in Portugal about 80,000, data from the late '90s of the twentieth century, are now among the genetic heritage in danger of extinction.

The end of the agrarian world based on the work of blood, as well as the end of the exploitation of small parcels of land, many of them located in northern, central and mountain areas of southern Portugal, led to an impoverishment of the landscape. This depletion also led to the end of many breeds of livestock products of an agrarian culture and pastoral.

Many breeds of goats, sheep, cattle, as well as horses, mules and donkeys are now on the verge of disappearance. A silent extinction that accompanies the silence that settles in the fields.

The Miranda donkey, northern Portugal, the only Portuguese race, with the rural population declines, together with other types of donkeys both at home or on the mainland to the islands.

This communication intends to present, very briefly, the current state donkey in Portugal and, through this characterization, to show the disordering of the landscape in our country, given the collapse of a world of extraordinary genetic wealth, whose disappearance seems irreversible.

[Draft translation awaiting editing]

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The Miranda donkey: A tale of heritage construction and rural revival

Teresa Nóvoa [IELT, Universidade Nova de Lisboa]

ABSTRACT: In many respects, the Miranda Plateau, situated in the Northeast of Portugal, represents the decay of the country's countryside: agriculture is an unprofitable business and brings along a harsh way of life, thus scaring away the young to the cities and leaving only some of the old behind. However, this path to cultural extinction was crossed by donkeys, and those who are guiding them are committed in taking another route. The approval of the Miranda Donkey as a national, endogenous breed, in 2001, was only the first step in its construction as heritage - natural as well as cultural, national and regional - by its steward organisation, AEPGA. This paper will deal with how it has been managing that heritage-making process so as to fight the end of that reality, and will discuss its social and conservational implications. This is the tale of the donkeys who use their beautiful, long ears as peaceful weapons against extinction.

Keywords: heritage-making, natural and cultural heritage, conservation, rural studies, donkeys.

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Nutritional qualities of donkey milk

Paolo Polidori and Silvia Vincenzetti [University of Camerino, Italy]

ABSTRACT: Human breast milk is the best nutritional support that insure the right development and influence immune status of the newborn infant. However, when it is not possible to breast feeding may be necessary to use commercial infant formulas that mimic, where possible, the levels and types of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients present in human milk. Despite this, some formula-fed infant develops allergy, atopic disease and differences in response to infection with respect to breast-fed infants.
Cow's milk allergy can be divided into immunoglobulin Ig-E mediated food allergy (most common) and non-IgE-mediated food allergy, as type III (immune-complexes) and type IV (cell-mediated) reactions. Mainly, allergic reactions to cow's milk proteins are IgE-mediated. Most infants with cow's milk protein allergy (CMPA) develop symptoms before 1 month of age, often within 1 week after introduction of cow's milk-based formula. The prognosis of CMPA in infancy is good with a 85 to 90% remission at 3 years and a remission of 100% of gastrointestinal symptoms. However, an early increased IgE response to CMPA is associated with an increased risk of persisting allergy to CMPA or with the development of reactions to other foods, especially egg, and development of asthma and rhino-conjunctivitis later in childhood.

Donkey milk may be considered a good substitute for dairy cow's milk derivatives in feeding children with severe CMPA since its composition is very close to that of human milk and it has been proposed as an alternative to cow's milk for children affected by cow's milk protein allergy when it is not possible breast feeding. Donkey milk total protein content is low (13-28 mg/mL), very close to the values for human and mare's milk and therefore it does not produce an excessive renal load of solute. In particular, donkey milk is rich in whey proteins; they represent 35-50% of the nitrogen fraction, while in cow's milk only 20%. Some authors suggested the use of donkey milk also for probiotic purposes since this milk is a good growth medium for probiotic lactobacilli strains, because of the high content of lysozyme and lactose. In particular the high content of lactose in donkey milk is responsible for the good palatability but also for optimizing the intestinal absorption of calcium, essential for bone mineralization in infants. Furthermore donkey milk lipid fraction is comparable to that of human milk since it is characterized by high levels of linoleic and linolenic acid.

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The domestic livestock resources of Turkey: Notes on donkeys

Orhan Yilmaz and R. Trevor Wilson

ABSTRACT: Donkeys are an ancient component of Turkey's guild of domestic animals and have been important in the country's agricultural economy for hundreds of years. Turkey is a probable centre of the beginning of the use of donkeys in the breeding of mules. In 2009 there were almost 300 000 donkeys in the country but there is a strong downward trend in numbers. Three distinct donkey types are catalogued but very little is known about two of them and not much more about the widespread Anatolian type. Turkish donkeys are typical of the world population in colour and morphology and colour but are generally of small size. Used historically for pack and as riding animals these roles

continue. The use of donkeys as prime movers and powers sources for agriculture and for wheeled transport is not very widespread. There are no breed societies and no conservation measures in place. Continued downward pressure on numbers (in spite of some local increases due to reactions against the cost of mechanized replacements) seems certain to continue and will inevitably have a negative effect on an important part of Turkey's cultural heritage and its domestic animal biodiversity.

Key words: Donkey, domestic animal biodiversity, morphology, work animals, coat colour.

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