



How did 'land taming' and seasonal migration develop side-by-side as sustainability practices?

Rob O'Donoghue

Creating and sustaining cultural landscapes in southern Africa



Communal hunting and the management of grasslands with fire served to both thin out the woodland into savannah and also to restrict the range of the tsetse fly to lowveld areas. These social-ecological practices created habitable landscapes where cattle and people could thrive on the uplands in the wet summer months. In the dry winters it was possible move cattle to lowveld pastures as the Nagana cattle disease receded.

The seasonal movement of cattle was evident on the grassland escarpment areas of the Bokoni.

The later Zulu homelands to the south also reached down into the bushveld habitats where cattle were taken in the dry winter months.

Further south still, the Xhosa would migrate into the Zuurveld in drought years when the sweetveld summer pastures could not support cattle numbers.

These notable examples all illustrate how seasonal migration developed in ways that both created and maintained the cultural landscapes of southern Africa over hundreds of years of slow habitat change.

Rob O'Donoghue

Curriculum TOPIC: Creating and sustaining cultural landscapes



Real-world story:

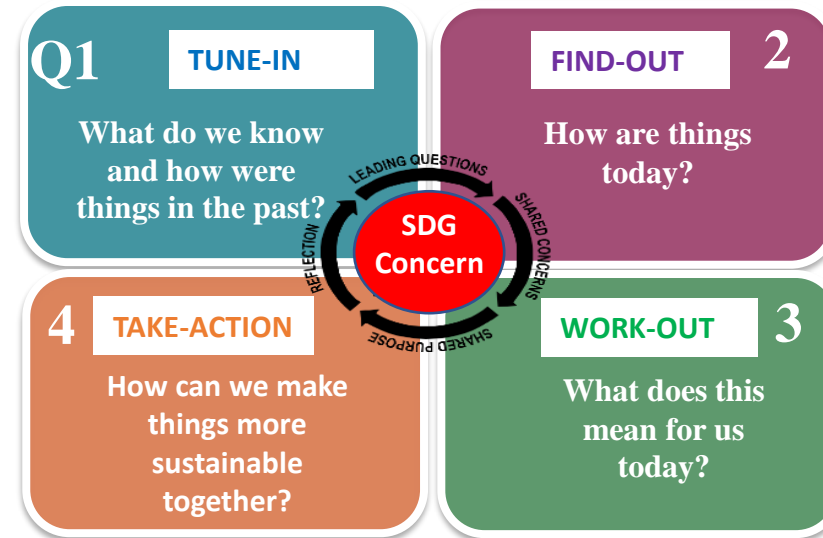
1. In his diary, Magma Fuse describes how buffalo were sighted when they were travelling in an ox cart near Eshowe. He reports how he made a small fire with grass and dung to make it smoke on the oxen so that they would not get the Nagana cattle disease from the buffalo. He explained this practice to Bishop Colenso who appeared to respect the practice of his student but may not have believe in its value as he never reported it in his own diary. Today scientists have shown how Tsetse fly and wild animals move away from the smell of smoke.

2. Cholera came to east and southern African coastal estuaries from India. When people travelled to the coast to trade or to hunt and collect seafoods in the winter months they would bring it back home. People travelling away from a village would always wash their hands before entering a village. This practice served to protect a village from cholera as a hand-to-hand and hand-to-mouth disease.

Concern: Heritage practices to mitigate disease

Inquiry:

Do people always wash their hands when they return home or before preparing food?



Deliberation:

What can we learn from these practices to mitigate COVID 19 and other diseases?

Action:

What daily actions are necessary if we are to control the spread of diseases in pandemic conditions and can we simply stop when the disease recedes?