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Vogan Sheep in Togo: A Socio-Anthropological Study of Breeding Practices and Cultural Values

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Abstract **Original Research Article**

Vogan Sheep (VS), a breed resulting from crossbreeding between Bali Bali Sahelian ram and Djallonke ewe, is numerically the second sheep breed in Togo. Its farming is mostly located in the Southeast of the country without any particular attention. The current socio-anthropological exploratory study aimed to assess the perceptions of livestock stakeholders in terms of breeding practices and cultural values of the Vogan sheep. A total of 115 stakeholders in 6 prefectures (Vo, Yoto, Lacs, Bas-Mono, Golfe and Agoe) in the Maritime Region of Togo were selected. The results showed that the stakeholders involved in VS breeding are non-gender-specific and do not belong to a particular ethnic group. VS is identifiable by its medium height at the withers, the length of its ears that extend beyond the chin, its jar-shaped belly, convex muzzle and the tail size that extends beyond the hock. VS flock averages obtained is 17 heads, with an average of 8 females in its cradle. Farmers acquire VS individuals mainly by purchase (51.30%). VS is found as pure breed in a few localities in the Vo prefecture. In the Vo prefecture, VS breeding is mainly (90.43%) practiced as a pure breed (the only breed in the herds). Animals are mainly conducted on pasture, receive cassava as a supplement. The rainy season and harmattan months are periods of animal vulnerability, leading to high mortality rates (30-50% of the herd). Traditional medication is generally used to treat animals. VS meat is highly appreciated. Culturally, VS, known as "*Sabalo*" or "*Vogan-gbon*", particularly interest Muslim people for their festivals. Successful breeding requires careful monitoring and good husbandry practices.

Keywords: Vogan sheep, Identity characteristics, Maritime Region, Togo.

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INTRODUCTION

In Africa, livestock farming plays a very important role in providing animal protein as it contributes to food security and represents a significant part of the economy, accounting for 44% of agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in ECOWAS Sahelian countries [24]. In Togo, livestock sector accounts for 16.56% of the agricultural GDP and 6.73% of the national GDP [13]. Behind food crops, livestock farming represents the second-largest source of noble food products and provides additional incomes for rural populations. In Togo, sheep population is estimated at 1,991,392 heads [12]. Despite its importance, livestock sector is unable to achieve its full potential because of animal health and animal nutrition constraints, as well as partial knowledge of its genetic potential. FAO [14] highlights the importance of comprehensive knowledge of the genetic potential of animal breeds to promote their conservation and/or improvement strategies. Since the first description of VS in Togo as a crossbred between Djallonke ewe and Bali-Bali Sahelian ram [4;7], its extension over the country meets adaptive and unexplained constraints. The aim of this study was therefore to explore the perceptions of different stakeholders in the value chain of this breed in its cradle and surrounding areas based on a socio-anthropological survey. A comprehensive understanding socio-anthropological perception could improve the dissemination of VS in Togo.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area

The study was carried out in the Maritime administrative region of Togo in the prefectures of Vo, Lacs, Bas-mono, Yoto, Golfe and Agoe (Figure 1). These locations are considered as to be the geographical cradle of the VS breed in Togo. Maritime Region is located in the extreme south of Togo, between the Plateaus Region, with which it borders to the north over a length of 130 km, the Atlantic Ocean to the south over a length of 50 km, the Republic of Benin to the east over a length of 100 km, with the Mono River serving as its natural border, and Ghana over a length of 80 km. Maritime Region covers an area of 6,100 km², almost 11% of the country's total surface area. It comprises 08 prefectures [11]. Maritime Region experiences an equato-guinean type climate, with two rainy seasons (from mid-March to mid-July; from mid-September to mid-November) alternating with two dry seasons (from mid- mid-July to mid-September; from mid-November to mid-March). Total annual rainfall in the region varies between 1,000 and 1,200 mm. The population is estimated at 3,534,991 in 2023 [18], with ethnic diversity and a predominance of the Ewe ethnic group. The main activities farmers are crop production, animal breeding and trade. Lomé, the capital city of Togo is part of the Maritime Region [11] and is a major center for trade of VS.

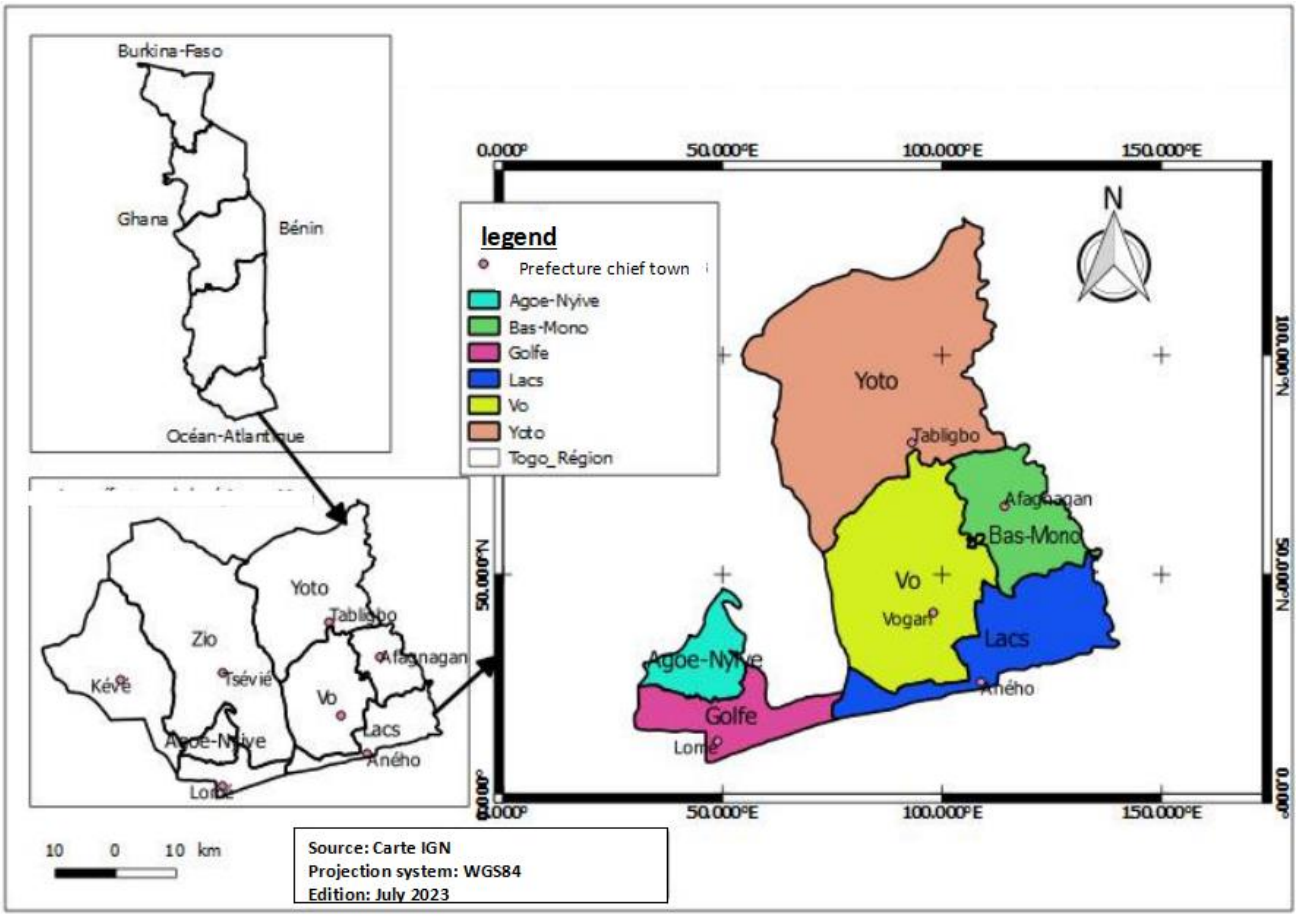


Figure 1: Map of the study area
Source: Alfa 2025

METHODS

The data was collected using semi-open questionnaires administrated to actors in the VS value chain. The various respondents included farmers, butchers and traders. The survey was conducted from September 2023 to January 2024 in the six (6) prefectures of the Maritime Region. The selection criteria for respondents were as follows: being the head of household or their deputy, being a stakeholder in the VS value chain, and being available to answer questions. A total of 115 stakeholders from the various prefectures were interviewed. The questionnaires were administered to each stakeholder in the form of an individual interview. The questions focused on the socio-cultural characteristics of the respondents, criteria for identifying the VS breed, the size of respondents' flocks, method of acquisition, location of VS, feeding, reproduction, disease symptoms, acceptance of VS mutton, cultural values, different names for VS and conditions necessary for successful reproduction.

Statistical analysis

The data obtained was entered and recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. An in-depth analysis of the data was performed using R software [21]. Qualitative data were analysed in terms of frequencies and their significance ($p < 0.05$) using the chi-square test. Quantitative variables were expressed in terms of mean, standard deviation and extreme values (maximum and minimum).

RESULTS

Socio-cultural characteristics of respondents

Table 1 shows the socio-cultural characteristics of respondents. A total of 115 stakeholders in the VS value chain were surveyed, including 15 (13.04%) women. The geographical distribution of these participants, by the prefecture, was as follows: 19 (16.5%) in Golfe; 25 (21.7%) in Agoe, 42 (36.5%) in Vo; 10 (8.7%) in Lacs, 8 (6.96%) in Bas-Mono and 11 (09.57%) in Yoto. This unequal distribution depended on the participation criteria, which mainly concern the possession of VS, and the unequal concentration of VS breeders. The stakeholders surveyed in the various prefectures were ethnically diverse. The Ewe farmers are the most numerous (73 respondents or 63.48%), followed by the Haoussa (21 or 18.26%), the Tem (14 or 12.17%), the Zarma (3 or 2.61%), the Kabye (2 or 1.74%), the Moba (1 or 0.87%) and the Fulani (1 or 0.87%). All respondents were heads of households. The average household size was 8±5 people, with an average of 5±4 children. The economic activities of the respondents included agriculture, livestock production, trade and butchery. The largest number were involved in farming, livestock farming and livestock trading (38 or 33.04%), mainly in the prefectures of Lacs, Bas-Mono, Vo and Yoto. Some were solely livestock traders (36 or 31.30%), mainly in the prefectures of Golfe and Agoe. Others, however, only practice agriculture and livestock production (33 or 28.70%), located in the prefectures of Vo and Lacs, and the fewest (8 or 6.96%) are livestock keepers, traders and butchers in the prefecture of Golfe.

Vogan sheep identification criteria

The criteria for identifying VS were based on body size, mouth shape, height at the withers, ear type and coat colour. Table 2 shows the frequency of VS identification criteria in relation to the stakeholder perceptions in different districts. Most respondents identified VS primarily based on a combination of three criteria: body size (large and tall), height at the withers (medium), and ear type (long and pendulous ears) (26.09%; p-value = 0.000385). Some respondents limited themselves to two criteria: height at the withers (medium) and ear type (long and pendulous ears) (20.87%, p-value = 2.811E-06) or body size (large and tall) and height at the withers (medium) (20.00%; p-value = 0.000139). Others gave only one of these criteria. The order of importance of these identification criteria with their percentages is shown in Figure 2. In decreasing order of importance, we find height at the withers (medium, 39%), ear type (long pendulous ears, 28%), and body size (large and tall, 28%). For most people familiar with this breed, VS is identifiable by its medium height at the withers, the length of its ears that extend beyond the chin, its jar-shaped belly, convex muzzle and tail that extends beyond the hock.

Livestock population of respondents

The average herd size per household is 17 heads (maximum 30 and minimum 3), including an average of 4 males (maximum 8 and minimum 1), 8 females (maximum 15 and minimum 2) and an average of 5 lambs or sub-adults (maximum13 and minimum 1). The flock size varies from one prefecture to another. The highest average of 17 heads was recorded in the prefecture of Vo, Yoto and Agoe, followed by the prefectures of Bas-mono and Golfe with 14 heads and the prefecture of Lacs with 10 heads.

Table 2: Identification criteria for the Vogan sheep

Main distinguishing features	Prefecture						Total	Frequency as % of total respondents	P-Chi²value
	Agoe	Golfe	Lacs	Bas-Mono	Vo	Yoto			
Convex bridge of nose, Long pendulous ears, Medium height at withers	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	0.87%	0.08945
Large, tall animal	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	0.87%	0.8821
Large, high-footed animal, convex muzzle, medium height at withers	-	-	-	4	-	-	4	3.48%	1.066E-10**
Large, high-footed animal Convex muzzle, long drooping ears	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	0.87%	0.01918*
Large, high-footed animal, convex muzzle, long pendulous ears, medium height at withers	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	0.87%	0.01918*

Main distinguishing features	Prefecture						Total	Frequency as % of total respondents	P-Chi²value
	Agoe	Golfe	Lacs	Bas-Mono	Vo	Yoto			
Large, high-footed animal, coat colour, medium height at withers	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	0.87%	0.8821
Large, high-footed animal with long, drooping ears	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	0.87%	0.8821
Large animal, high on its feet, long pendulous ears, medium height at the withers.	3	-	2	1	21	3	30	26.09%	0.000385**
Large, tall animal, long ears, medium height at the withers	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	0.87%	0.8821
Large, tall animal, medium height at the withers	1	-	4	1	10	7	23	20.00%	0.000139**
Large, high-footed animal with long, drooping ears	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	0.87%	0.8821
Large animal, high on its feet, long pendulous ears, medium height at the withers.	8	-	-	-	2	-	10	8.70%	0.0004222**
Long, pendulous ears, convex bridge of nose	1	3	2	-	-	-	6	5.22%	0.03284
Long, pendulous ears	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.87%	0.0004222
Long, pendulous ears, medium height at withers	10	11	1	-	2	-	24	20.87%	2.811E-06**
Average height at withers	1	5	1	-	2	-	9	7.83%	0.03857
Total							**115**	**100%**	

*, ** - significant at 0.05 and 0.01 level of probability, respectively

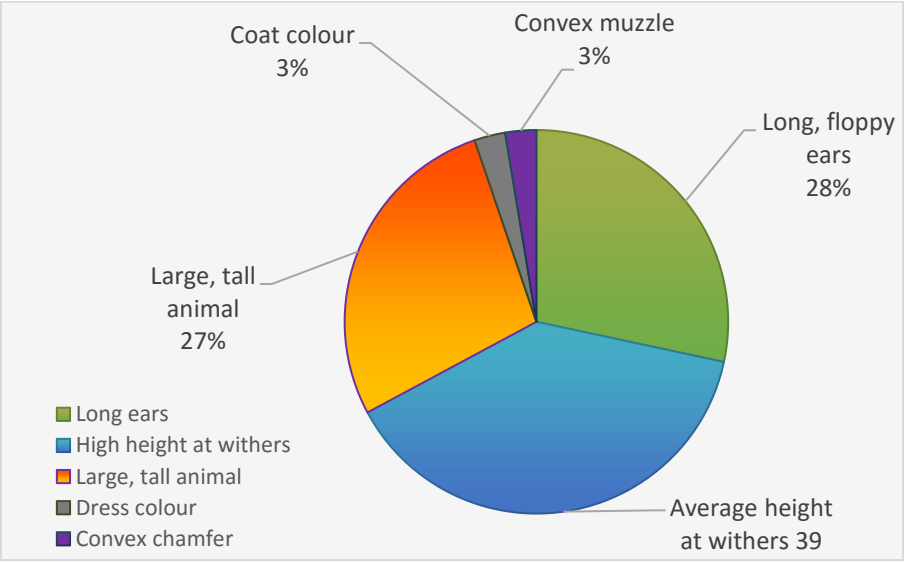


Figure 2: Identification criteria for Vogan sheep

How are Vogan Sheep acquired?

Among the methods of acquiring VS, purchase is the most common (51.30%, with p-value = 1.261E-08), followed by donation (25.21%, p-value = 2.2E-16), inheritance (16.52% with p-value = 0.04872) and shepherding (6.95% with p-value = 0.04872). All the above-mentioned methods of acquiring VS are present in Vo prefecture, with acquisition by purchase being more important than in other prefectures. Inheritance and shepherding/loan are present only in the Vo prefecture.

Geographical distribution of VS

According to the various respondents, pure VS are mainly found in the following localities: Vogan,

Togoville, Badoukpe, Sevagan, Wagba, Anyronkope, Hahotoe, Gbadope, Ketakora, Aklakou, Ekpui, Momè, Vokoutimé, Ekpuigbledji, Momé and Tsihonou. All of these localities are villages in the Vo prefecture. The surrounding localities in the Vo prefecture present a high risk of crossbreeding with Djallonke Sheep (DS) or Sahelian Sheep (SS).

Feeding Vogan sheep

VS are mainly fed on pasture. This pasture includes a variety of herbaceous plants (mainly *Panicum maximum*, *Andropogan gayanus*), and various trees (leaves of *Elaeis guineensis*, *Moringa oleifera*, *Leucaena leucocephala* and *Khaya senegalensis*). When they return from grazing, they receive various complementary foods, depending on the location: cassava leaves and peelings, rice or corn bran or bran cubed, papaya leaves, corn and soybean harvest residues, bean tops and soybean cakes. In addition, some households give them stones to lick in their pens.

Grazing takes place twice a day, in the morning (from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.) and in the afternoon (from 3 p.m to 6 p.m.). The grazing takes places not far from the homes in cassava fields, oil palm plantations, and open spaces composed of herbaceous plants, shrubs, and various trees.

Reproduction

Most mating (90.43% of respondents) occurs between VS. However, crossbreeding occurs between VS and DS (6.96% of respondents) and between VS and SS (2.61% of respondents) in the prefectures of Lacs, Bas-Mono and Yoto. Females give birth to litters of 1 (45.2%, or 52 respondents), 2 (48.69%, or 56 respondents), 3 (4.34%, or 5 respondents), 4 (0.86%, or 1 respondent) and 5 (0.86%, or 1 respondent), mainly in the prefecture of Vo.

Symptoms of disease

The most difficult periods for these farms are the rainy season and the harmattan period, which are mainly characterised by cool and dusty winds. According to the farmers interviewed, these periods make VS more susceptible to disease. The main symptoms of these diseases in lambs are weakness, stiffness, paralysis, hoof sores, and high mortality after a few days. Mortality can vary from 30% to 50% or even 100% depending on the farm. Adults seem to be more resistant, but also succumb depending on the intensity of the disease. These diseases are generally caused by contamination in pasture, particularly for VS in contact with transhumant animals. Herbicide treatments in the fields are also a major cause of disease. To prevent or treat these diseases, farmers use traditional treatments based mainly on medicinal plants or crop residues (leaves and husks/pods of *Khaya senegalensis*, charcoal powder, calcined corn cobs, mango husks/pods, garlic, and ginger in the prefecture of Vo). They also use antibiotics (amoxicillin) and deworming treatments.

Assessing the value of Vogan sheep meat

According to most butchers (8 VS butchers surveyed) in the prefectures of Agoe and Golfe, VS meat is highly valued in butcher shops. The quantity of this meat is significant and allows them to recoup their investment. The meat is low in fat. For most butchers, it is a tender meat that is highly appreciated by consumers, who easily confuse it with SS meat. In these prefectures, the meat is sold fresh (63.4%) and grilled (36.6%). However, in the prefectures of Vo, Lacs, Yoto and Bas-Mono, no butchers cut and sell VS meat. Similarly, no rotisseries sell grilled VS meat. According to some veterinarians in these localities, VS meat is only sold in cases of force majeure, such as slaughter due to poor health, sudden death, or an accident. According to most farmers, butchers and rotisserie owners, the population of southern Togo (the Ewe people in general) is not interested in consuming sheep meat, unlike goat meat, which is widely consumed. As a result, the majority of sheep farms are dedicated to sale of live animals and traditional rituals.

Socio-cultural values of the Vogan Sheep

Vogan sheep are mainly raised to be sold during Muslim religious holidays such as Tabaski (Aïd El-Kébir) and Ramadan (Aïd El-Fitr) (86.5%). Some Muslims also buy them for baptisms (5.2%) and weddings (3.1%). In some localities in the Lacs prefecture (Aneho and Aklakou), they are used for sacrifices (2.2%) and initiation rites (2%) during the *Yekeyeke* festival (festival of the Guin people), as well as for end-of-year celebrations such as Christmas and New Year (1%).

Different names for Vogan Sheep

Table 3 shows various names given tothe VS, depending on how the breed is perceived by breeders. The results show a high frequency (38.26%) of the name "*Sabalo*", which means "*ox-shaped sheep*". The second most frequently cited name (36.52%*) is "Vogan-gbon",* which means "*the sheep originated from Vogan*". This name is linked to the town of Vogan, a large market for the sale of this sheep is held every Friday. Other names are also cited, expressing appreciation (*Ayo-gbon, Ayokploe, Zé-alin, Gbédjibalin)* or comparison (*Haoussa-gbon, Bali-bali, Oudah)* of the actor with another breed. These names are expressed in the Ewe language. The different names are presented in Table 3.

Conditions for successful Vogan Sheep breeding

According to the breeders, VS breeding is not successful everywhere. Even in the prefecture of Vo, there are areas (Atsansi, the zone between Ekpui and Sevagan) where the Vogan breed cannot survive due to environmental conditions. Successful breeding requires a minimum of personal qualities on the part of the breeder (patience, courage, determination) and technical conditions for breeding, which include mastery of good ruminant breeding practices, sufficient and appropriate feed for the animals, mastery of the veterinary prevention

and treatment conditions, mastery of VS adaptability conditions. For other VS breeders (42.2% of those surveyed), successful breeding requires time, equipment and financial resources. Most farmers devote at least 8 hours a day on it, i.e. 5 to 6 hours in the morning and 2 to 3 hours in the afternoon. As VS are very sensitive animals, they must be raised with good grazing skills. Farmers who, in addition to farming, take on sharecroppers or get help from their wives and children.

Table 3: Different names for Vogan Sheep and their meanings

Different names for VS	Meaning of the names	Location	Number of breeders	Percentage
Vogan-gbon	Vogan sheep	Yoto, Bas Mono, Lacs; Vo	42	36.52%
Sabalo	sheep resembling Sahelian sheep, tall sheep on legs	Vo, Lacs, Yoto	44	38.26%
Ayo-gbon	foreigners' sheep, superior breed sheep,	(Lacs, Bas mono)	9	7.83%
Ayokploe	foreigners' sheep, superior breed sheep,	Vo	1	0.87%
Haoussa-gbon	Hausa sheep	Lacs, bas-mono	4	3.48%
Zé-alin	Sheep with a belly like a jar	Vo	3	2.61%
Bali-bali	Sheep resembling the Bali-bali of Niger	Vo	9	7.83%
Gbédjibalin	Forest sheep	Bas-Mono	1	0.87%
Oudah	Sheep resembling the Niger Oudah	Vo	2	1.74%
Total			**115**	**100%**

DISCUSSION

Socio-cultural characteristics of respondents

An analysis of the socio-cultural characteristics of people involved in the Vogan sheep farming shows that this type of farming is not gender-specific, even though men play a more important role [23]. The low presence of women, as shown by our analysis, could be explained by the difficulties associated with the constraint and their unavailability for grazing due to their family responsibilities. This study also reveals that VS breeders are generally farmers, as also pointed out Tchouamon *et al.,*[23]. In Togo and many other African countries, livestock farming and agriculture are closely linked and promoted by agroecological systems as a model of sustainable resilience to climate change, where the residues or waste from one sector complement the needs of the other and vice versa [9]. This study shows that the 'Ewe' ethnic group is very involved in livestock farming, due to its ethnic dominance in the Maritime Region.

This study also shows that VS breeding is not linked to a specific ethnic group. Although it is practiced in the prefecture of Vo and its surroundings, several ethnic groups (Haoussa, Tem, Zarma, Kabye, Moba, Peuls) participate in its breeding. This characteristic is not different from that of the DS, which is bred throughout the country. However, Fulani sheep are generally raised by specific ethnic groups (Fulani or Tuareg) [25]. The fact that this breed is currently raised by a wide range of ethnic groups shows that there is no longer a specific breeding model for it. This could explain the risks of genetic erosion mentioned by Alfa *et al.,*[1], as each breeder would want to carry out different crossbreeding to improve their herd. The presence of the Haussa, Zarma and Tem ethnic groups, who are traders and culturally Muslim, could be explained by the size of VS is similar to that of SS, which are highly prized for the Tabaski festival. However, this socio-anthropological survey revealed the absence of any specific association of VS breeders and therefore shows that the VS industry is poorly organised. Organising these actors intoagricultural cooperatives could provide better support for the control and genetic conservation of this breed in Togo.

Criteria for identifying Vogan Sheep

This study shows that VS stakeholders have criteria for assessing and identifying VS. These are essentially criteria for differentiating VS from DS, as highlighted by Dayo *et al.,*[8] and Alfa *et al.,*[1] with regard to morpho-biometric characteristics, mainly related to height at the withers and the ear length.

Livestock structure of respondents

Herd sizes are large in the prefecture of Vo and its surrounding areas, as this is where the breed originated. The large numbers of VS herds in the Agoe prefecture can be explained by the presence of Muslims in the Agoe-Zongo. Muslims generally purchase their livestock in the prefecture of Vo to fatten them up and sell them during the Ramadan celebrations, particularly the Tabaski festival. The study showed that the average VS herd size consists of 17 heads, including 4 males, 8 females and 5 juvenile/subadults. These results are similar to those reported by Amegee [4] with 7 to 8 ewes per herd. This similarity, with data separated by more than 40 years, clearly shows the low value of this species, as pointed out by Alfa *et al.,*[1]. Compared tothe Djallonké sheep, the average number of ewes is 5 to 15 according to Bonfoh [6] in the Maritime and Savannah regions. In Benin, the average number of sheep is 10 [10]. This number is also very low compared to the

average number of Fulani sheep in Niger (71.75 animals) according to Yaye *et al.,*[25].

Methods of acquiring Vogan Sheep by breeders

The methods of acquiring VS, characterised by purchase, donation and inheritance, are similar to those presented by Yaye *et al.,*[23] in Niger for sahelian sheep. These methods are common to several communities in Africa, with a few specific features. In the case of VS, transactions are limited to the Maritime region and a few prefectures in the region, probably due to the high failure rate encountered by some breeders, but also to ignorance of the existence of this breed, as pointed out by Alfa *et al.,*[1].

Geographical distribution of VS in Togo

With regard to the geographical distribution of VS, this study confirms that the breed originated in the prefecture of Vo, as revealed by Amegee [4] and Dayo *et al.,*[7]. According to a respondent in Sevagan, '*our Haoussa and Fulani parents arrived in this area with Sahelian sheep. Having noticed the resistance of Djallonke sheep to the diseases that were decimating our sheep in the area, they proceeded to crossbreed them, which improve the Djallonke sheep, well adapted and localised in this prefecture*". All this further confirms the difference between this new breed (VS) and the DS, which is known to be resistant to the different agroecological conditions in Togo and is also trypanotolerant [17;20].

Feeding of Vogan sheep

The analysis of the VS feeding system has not fundamentally changed from that described by Amegee [4]. Improving this feeding system in a well-maintained area could further improve the performance of VS, as pointed out by Gbangboche *et al.,* [16].

Reproduction

This survey shows that the VS breed has high prolificacy potential. Although the prolificacy rate for triplets, quadruplets and quintuplets is low, there is an opportunity for genetic improvement in this breed. These results corroborate those of Amegee [4] who demonstrated the presence of twins, triplets, quadruplets and quintuplets. The low prolificacy rate could be explained by the constraints of the traditional breeding system. Improving this breeding system could have a positive influence on prolificacy, as pointed out by Faugere *et al.,*[15].

Animal health management in Vogan Sheep flocks

This survey enabled us to identify the periods of risk for VS diseases, which are mainly rainy seasons and Harmattan periods. These periods had been identified by Amegee [5] in relation to sheep and goats in the southern Togo, which presented little-known diseases that he described as "*Byrsocarpus* Tournis*" and "Grassland Tetany"*. Furthermore, according to the same author [4], there were high mortality rates among VS lambs due to parasitosis. In Cameroon, Johann and Hardouin [19] reported a high rate of juvenile mortality among small ruminants in village environments, which is a cause of animal genetic regression. The vulnerability of VS to disease is explained by Gbangboche *et al.,*[16], who believe that obtaining VS by crossing DS and SS certainly carries a risk of losing potential genes and lowering the resistance threshold of DS. For several diseases affecting small ruminants, strengthening the immune system helps to support the animals' resistance. Alfa *et al.,*[2] reported the importance of endogenous veterinary ethnomedicine practices in improving ruminant health. However, the risk of toxicity and overuse of these practices are challenges for the improvement of these farming systems.

Acceptance of Vogan Sheep meat

VS are bred mainly for sale on the hoof and sometimes for traditional rituals in the prefecture of Vo and its surroundings. VS meat is hardly ever consumed there. In contrast, in the prefectures of Agoe and Golfe, these farms are intended for sale on the hoof and in the form of fresh and grilled meat. The prefectures of Golfe and Agoe make up the greater Lome area, the Capital city of Togo. The commercial intermediaries purchase live VS from the Vogan market (Vo district), which has been the preferred market for VS sales for many years [1]. They sell them live at the Gbossime livestock market in the prefecture of Golfe and at the Agoe-Echangeur, Agoe-Zongo and Togblekope markets in the prefecture of Agoe, as well as in the slaughterhouses of Agoe-Zongo, Gbossime and the main slaughterhouse in the port area (Golfe). Butchers and grillers buy it for sale as fresh meat and grilled meat in the Capital, respectively. Due to a lack of knowledge about this breed [1; 4; 8], grill chefs, butchers and consumers do not differentiate this breed and Sahelian sheep.

Cultural values

the current survey clearly shows that the VS breed is particularly important to Muslims in Togo. The main customers are Muslims, who buy them during celebrations (Ramadan, Tabaski) and cultural ceremonies (weddings, baptisms). Sangare [22] demonstrated the cultural importance of small ruminants, which are highly prized during religious festivals in Africa.

Different names for Vogan Sheep

The diversity of VS names shows the importance that stakeholders attach to this breed, to the point of finding identity-based qualifiers in terms of names. This diversity of names could also explain the existence of intra-racial diversity, as highlighted by Dayo *et al.,*[7]. An in-depth study in terms of molecular characterisation could provide a better understanding of this diversity and enable measures to be taken to limit the genetic degradation of this breed.

Conditions for successful Vogan Sheep farming

The survey clearly shows that VS breeders are well aware of the conditions and provisions necessary for successful breeding. Gbangboche *et al.,*[16] highlighted these provisions, which mainly concern mastery of good breeding practices and techniques, with the aim of improving the genetics of crosses obtained by crossing DS and SS.

CONCLUSION

This socio-anthropological study on VS aimed to understand the perceptions of the actors in this value chain. It is clear from the study that these actors, regardless of gender but dominated by men, raise VS mainly in the Vo prefecture as a pure breed, with a high risk of crossbreeding with other breeds in neighbouring prefectures. This highly prized breed, identifiable by its ears, height at the withers and body size, is raised mainly in the special environment of the Vo prefecture, where it benefits from crops residues from the manioc and corn fields and natural grazing around the concessions, with daily care. It is raised by a various ethnic group, dominated by the Ewe, which means that the breed is known by many different names. However, VS faces conservation risks linked to health factors, particularly for lambs, and various uncontrolled crossbreeding.

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