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THE USES OF ANIMALS IN EARLY MODERN PORTUGUESE – JAPANESE RELATIONS[1]

João P. R. Joaquim[2]
CHAM, FCSH, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa

Abstract

This article deals with the role that animals played in the Portuguese Japanese diplomatic and trade relations in the 16th and 17th centuries. Animals were an integral part of the diplomatic tributary system prevalent in the early modern period in East Asia and the intra-Asian trade of fauna was an equally common feature of the region. Europeans, upon their arrival in East Asia, became part of this system and used it to their advantage. The use of fauna in diplomatic initiatives was particularly relevant in Japan, where European nations contended for the favours of the local elites. The research focused on sources of Jesuit origin, which comprise the bulk of early modern European accounts about Japan. This topic has had little historiographic attention given that references to animal trade and diplomatic use are quite dispersed throughout the documentary corpus available. Fortunately, other sources can be considered in this effort, namely material culture ones, specifically *nanban* art.

Resumo

Este artigo trata do papel que os animais desempenharam nas relações diplomáticas e comerciais entre Portugal e o Japão nos séculos XVI e XVII. Os animais eram parte integrante do sistema diplomático prevalecente no período moderno no Extremo Oriente, sendo o comércio intra-asiático de fauna igualmente comum. Os europeus, aquando da sua chegada ao Extremo Oriente, integraram esse sistema, usando-o a seu favor. O uso de fauna em iniciativas diplomáticas foi particularmente relevante no Japão, onde os europeus disputavam os favores das elites locais. A pesquisa centrou-se em fontes de origem jesuíta, que constituem o grosso das descrições europeias sobre o Japão do início do período moderno. Este tópico não tem merecido grande atenção historiográfica, uma vez que as referências ao comércio de animais e ao seu uso diplomático estão bastante dispersas através do corpus documental disponível. Felizmente, outras fontes podem ser consideradas neste estudo, nomeadamente a cultura material, em particular a arte nanban.

要旨

本稿では、16、17世紀のポルトガル・日本間の外交および商業関係で動物が果たした役割について検証する。動物は、東アジアの近世初期に広く見られる外交的支流システム

1 Article translated by Fernanda Maio.

2 ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1504-2265

に組み込まれ、動物のアジア内交易は同地域でよく見られた一般的な特徴であった。ヨーロッパ人は、東アジアに到着すると、このシステムに入り込み、活用した。外交イニシアティブでの動物相の使用は、欧州諸国が地元の支配者層の恩恵をめぐって争った日本で顕著であった。本研究は、同時代での日本・ヨーロッパ間貿易の大部分を独占していたイエズス会士の残した記述に焦点を当てる。動物相貿易と外交上の使用への言及が非常に分散していることから、この主題は歴史的にほとんど注目されてこなかったと考えられる。　幸いなことに、本研究は、他の情報源、すなわち物質文化の表層、特に南蛮芸術を精査することで検証が成し得る。

Keywords:
Animals; *Exotica*; Diplomacy; Intra-Asian Trade; Jesuits
Animais; *Exotica*; Diplomacia; Comércio Interasiático; Jesuítas.
動物、外来性、外交、アジア内交易、イエズス会

In this article I propose to understand the role that animals played in the relations between Japanese and Portuguese during the almost hundred years of direct contact between the two cultures, from 1543 (when the Portuguese reached Japan) to 1639 (the year of their expulsion). Jesuit sources were invaluable for this work, constituting the bulk of the documentation and literature produced by the Europeans in Japan during the period under analysis. The dispersion of references to animals in the corpus of the researched documentation pushed me to make use of alternative sources, namely material-cultural ones. The *nanban* screens produced in Japan between the late 16th century and the early 17th century constitute a repository of information about the Japanese-Portuguese contacts, providing a set of data often absent from documentary sources.[3]

The role played by animals in early modern societies was multiform: mundane and exceptional, utilitarian and symbolic. Animals could be found in almost all dimensions of life, starting with the fundamental: as food. We find them, or their by-products, in almost all the tables, from the humbler to the wealthier. They also play an essential role in agricultural activity: pulling ploughs, as beasts of burden and producers of manure. Terrestrial trade routes relied on the use of pack animals. And many recreational activities, from the noble mounted hunting to the humble cockfighting, required the use of animals. Of course, animals were also used in warfare, making them desirable spoils of war. Some animals stood out for their importance. The possession and use of horses were a common

3 On the potential of material culture as a tool for understanding the several dimensions of the Portuguese presence in Asia, see Curvelo 2008. The term nanban, of Chinese origin, means "barbarians of the south", and the individuals are referred to as nanban-jin. Originally it was the Japanese designation for those who came from Southeast Asia, and later it designated also the Portuguese. The term was extended to the Spanish after their arrival in Japan.

expression of power and prestige for the European and Asian elites. Their use in hunting activities, in many ways a proxy for war, together with dogs and birds of prey, further accentuated their symbolism. These animals were often exchanged among members of elite social groups, strengthening the ties between different individuals and courts[4].

A similar role was played by the exotic fauna that began to arrive in Europe in large numbers due to the Iberian expansion towards the New World and Asia, passing through Africa. While there are instances of long-distance animal trade between Europe and both South and East Asia during the medieval period, and dating back to antiquity, the early modern period brought an intensification of this phenomenon.[5] Lisbon functioned as the entryway for oriental exoticism, supplying European courts with a plethora of *exotica* that included live animals.[6] The practice of keeping *menageries*, animal collections akin to the Renaissance *Wunderkammer*, became an indispensable affirmation of sophistication for many rulers.[7]

The true dimension of animal trade in the early modern period is hard to measure. Unlike other goods, like spices or precious metals, animals seem to have evaded the official records more often. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to consider this trade irrelevant. If the difficult long-distance transportation of large-sized animals, such as elephants or rhinoceros, seems to have been reserved to diplomatic initiatives, no such barriers impaired the trade of small-sized animals. Monkeys, birds or small mammals could easily integrate the private luggage of the crew. This trade, like most others, did not go unnoticed by the most powerful commercial dynasties of the period, the Fugger and the Welser, who supplied live exotic animals to the European elites.[8] Some wealthy private individuals went as far as establishing private networks of agents ready to acquire and forward exotic specimens.[9] Evidently, trade was not unidirectional and physical goods were not the only things being transported through the new maritime trade routes. The early modern period was a time of intense cultural exchange between different societies around the world, with parallel instances of *exotica* trade in many non-European societies.[10]

The first dictionary of the Portuguese language, written in the early 18th century, defines "exotic" as "Strange. From a foreign land."[11] Borrowed from the ancient Greek by

4 Fortunately, there is a growing number of historiographic works concerning animals in history / the history of animals. See, for instance, Braga and Braga 2015 or Cockram and Wells 2018.

5 On the topic of long-distance animal trade in medieval times, see, for example, Dalton, Niemelä and Örmä 2018.

6 See Gschwend 2010; Tudela and Gschwend 2007.

7 Concerning the history of *menageries,* see *e.g.* Hoage, Roskell and Mansour 1996; Rothfels 2008.

8 On the role played by the Fugger in animal trade, see the pioneering work of Michael Gorgas: Gorgas 1997, 195-225. On the Welser, see Tudela and Gschwend 2007, 422.

9 Queen Catarina of Austria, spouse of the Portuguese king João III, was such an individual. See the aforementioned article, as well as Gschwend 2012.

10 Chaudhuri 1997, 487-496.

11 Bluteau 1712-1728, 416. Translated from the original Portuguese.

way of Latin, this word has been used in Portuguese since the 16th century.[12] Etymology aside, this term is certainly highly contingent in context and time. Concerning animals, some may have appeared exotic to early modern East Asians but common to coeval Europeans. Some other animals, despite not being originally from either Europe or East Asia, circulated widely in both regions due to trade networks and diplomatic gift exchange. Additionally, specific breeds of domestic animals, like horses and dogs, were also traded and exchanged on account of their singularity or utility.

I intend to present a view, as broad as possible, of the use of animals in the context of Portuguese – Japanese diplomatic and commercial relations. While recent years have seen the increasing popularity of an interesting historiographical trend emphasising animal agency and the intertwined study of human and animal history,[13] this work does not go as far. It is centred upon the use of animals by humans – as goods to be traded, diplomatic tools, and even, when sources allow such assumptions, as companions. Overall, animals are regarded as one more element through which an intense period of cultural exchange between European and East Asian cultures can be measured, highlighting both parallels and differences.

1. Trade and diplomacy

The diplomatic relations between East Asian polities were, formally at least, a tributary system, placing great emphasis upon a strictly defined hierarchy with the Chinese Empire at the zenith. China, the cultural beacon of the region, influenced the religious and political practices of its neighbours. However, Japan was frequently an outsider to this model, refusing the formal authority of the Chinese court.[14] Still, during part of the early modern period, local Japanese daimyos interested in securing trade relations with China, took up the task of sending tributes.[15]

Between the late 16th century and the 1630s a more centralised system was in place – the *shuinsen* –, which centralised the lucrative international trade under the *bakufu*.[16] The process of obtaining a permit to engage in international trade was complex and included gaining the patronage of administrative officials, who expected to be presented with valuable goods in exchange for their good-will. These practices continued after

12 See Simões 2012.

13 See, *e.g.*, Cockram and Wells 2018.

14 Kang 2010, 8-11.

15 Deal 2007, 127. The Japanese *daimyō*, translated as "great master", were powerful feudal lords who gained a significant role in the Japanese political landscape between the mid-15th century and the early 17th century.

16 *Shuinsen* – the "red seal ship," refers to the colour of the official seal given to Japanese ships authorising them to sail to foreign ports. Laver 2008, 57-58. *Bakufu*, "the tent government." The "tent" was the place where the military command was installed, it designated the shogun's government.

the institution of the *Sakoku*, despite its commercially restrictive character, limiting the overseas trade with China, Korea and the Netherlands.[17] For example, traders returning from Southeast Asia in 1612 presented the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616) with red silk, scarlet damasks, spices, medicinal herbs and a litter of cats. These presents were expected at all levels of society, e.g. in 1710 Chinese traders gave exotic birds to local Nagasaki officials in order to be allowed access to the port.[18]

Asian inter-state diplomacy prominently comprehended the exchange of animals. These gifts had a strong symbolic value. In 1594, a peace-seeking Korean delegation presented the powerful daimyo Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536/37-1598) with a tiger, a symbol, in both cultures, of warriorship, ferocity and courage.[19] The peacock, a more peaceful animal, was highly valued given its association with the Amitabha Buddha.[20] Tokugawa Ieyasu was also often presented with such animals by Southeast Asian delegations.

Strict hierarchy and the importance of patronage networks in early modern Japanese culture meant that gift giving practices were a fundamental part of social interactions. The inclusion of animals within this system goes back to the 8th century BC and its origin is most likely connected to the ritual offerings imposed by the animistic roots of Shintoism. Animals retained their symbolic value over the following centuries. Early modern practices, like the annual *sankin-kôtai*, included the traditional gift of animals to the shogun by daimyos from all over Japan. Daimyos included horses, hunting dogs and birds of prey in their entourages and used animal products like swan feathers and monkey or otter skins as clan symbols.[21]

Upon their arrival in East Asia, the Portuguese quickly adapted to the circumstances, playing a relevant role in the region's commercial network.[22] Animals were not absent from this process, circulating around the Portuguese Empire as tools, gifts and companions, a

17 *Sakoku* or "closed country", designates the period during which the contact between Japan and the outside world was limited (1630-1854). Laver 2008, 2.

18 Akira 2016, 125. The *shogun*, meaning "military commander," designates the autocratic hereditary position that, between the 12th century and the 19th century, dominated Japanese politics. Upon the arrival of the Portuguese in Japan, the Ashikaga Shogunate (1336-1573) was in accelerated disaggregation, coming to be replaced, in the course of a period of heated internal conflict, by the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1868).

19 Chaiklin 2012, 1.

20 *Ibidem* 5, 11. On the Amitabha Buddha, see Coulter and Turner 2000, 45-46.

21 *Sankin-kōtai* – "alternated residence", constituted a form of control of the shogunate over the daimyos, forcing them to remain in the capital, away from their provincial domains, for specific periods. Vaporis 2005, 31.

22 Kang 2010, 134. Upon their arrival in Japan, in 1543, the Portuguese rapidly realised the potential of becoming intermediaries of the exchange of Japanese silver for Chinese silk, rendered incipient as a consequence of the mistrust of the Chinese coastal communities towards the Japanese; given the actions of the *wakō*, pirate groups of different origins but usually identified as Japanese. This soon became the most profitable of all the Portuguese trading endeavours. Costa 1995, 124-125.

phenomenon evidenced by coeval visual sources.[23] Animals and their trade are present, albeit obliquely, in many of the 16th century Jesuit works written in Japan under the Portuguese royal patronage (*Padroado*).Two Portuguese Jesuits are particularly relevant for this research: Luís Fróis (1532-1597) and João Rodrigues (ca. 1560 – ca. 1633). Fróis left an impressive set of works, namely *Tratado das Contradições e Diferenças de Costumes entre a Europa e o Japão* [Treaty of the contradictions and differences in customs between Europe and Japan]. Concluded in 1585, this work is a comparative study with the aim of familiarising Europeans with Japanese cultural practices. Rodrigues, known as "*tçuzzu*" – from *tsuji*, "interpreter" in Japanese –, was the author of the first Portuguese – Japanese dictionary and the first Japanese grammar ever written, a language which he mastered.

The Portuguese and Japanese engaged in a process of mutual curiosity, with animals and animal products among the many elements that fascinated and interested both sides. As a relevant example, both Jesuit written accounts and Japanese visual sources note the use of feline pelts as horse blankets by the other side.[24] Additionally, caged felines and pelts can be found in *nanban* screens depicting the Portuguese trading activities in Japanese ports.[25] Portuguese traders, like their Asian counterparts, did not overlook the benefits of maintaining good relations with key elements of the Japanese society. That was most likely the reason why white mice were transported to Japan aboard a Portuguese vessel in 1637, as presents to Japanese officials.[26]

Rodrigues observes the existence in Japan of "monkeys with no tail, the tailed ones come from abroad and are much esteemed."[27] From Fróis, we learn that "the monkeys of Europe for the most part have tails; in Japan, with being many, there is no one who has it and for them it is a new thing."[28] Even these short sentences can be illuminating for us. Not only do we learn that the Portuguese were aware of the local Japanese fauna but also that exotic animals were being imported to Japan at that time. As a bonus, we even learn that, at least in Fróis' experience, tailed monkeys, necessarily brought from elsewhere, were common in early modern Europe.

23 Paulo Drummond Braga in his *História dos Cães em Portugal, das Origens a 1800* notes the presence of dogs in many illustrations of Jan Huygens Linschoten's 17th century account (Linschoten 1998). Braga 2000, 41-42. See also the *Codex Casanatense* 1889, at the Casanatense Library of Rome, a work that illustrates the Portuguese presence in 16th-century Asia. Matos, 1985. Losty 2012, 13-40.

24 Fróis 2001, 111. A screen by Kanō Naizen (1570-1616), at the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga in Lisbon, contains a European figure riding a horse covered by a leopard-pelt horse blanket. Curvelo 2015, 101.

25 See, for example, a screen at the Kobe City Museum, in Japan, by Kanō Naizen, as well as that belonging to the *Nanban Bunkakan* made by the Kanō School. Curvelo 2015, 135.

26 Boxer 1959, 197. The symbolic importance of the white colour for Japanese culture, associated with Buddhist religiosity, especially the horses of that colour, is highlighted by Chaiklin 2012, 3-7. In the summer of 1593, Hideyoshi was given white horses brought by a Chinese embassy. Cooper 1994, 100.

27 Rodrigues 1954, 151.Translated from the original Portuguese.

28 Fróis 2001, 140.Translated from the original Portuguese.

Why were these monkeys brought to Japan? It seems reasonable to suppose that they were kept as pets by elite individuals, as this was their fate in Europe. The way in which animals are represented in some *nanban* screens further strengthens this hypothesis. One can find curious depictions of Europeans with songbirds or monkeys perched on them, while other figures lead dogs by the leash. Additionally, a variety of other animals, many caged or leashed, are represented among the cargo unloaded from the *nanban-jin* vessels: rabbits, peacocks, cockatoos, camels, civet cats, wild cats, deer, leopards, tigers, and horses.[29] The fact that most animals depicted can be found in Asia, aligns with the Portuguese practice of expanding their trading power by integrating pre-existent trade networks. The difficulties of long-distance transportation of live animals further advised a more regional approach to this trade. Several early modern authors refer to this problem, especially in what concerns the transportation of birds between Asia and Europe through the Cape Route.[30]

The Spaniards adopted the same tactics and gave Hideyoshi an elephant in 1597. This embassy, coming from the Philippines, should be considered in the context of the Portuguese-Spanish rivalry for the commercial control of the region. The elephant arose the curiosity of the locals, which was hard to contain by the authorities.[31] In the course of his rule he was presented with a large number of animals brought by several European and Asian embassies: elephants, horses, oxen, parrots, civet cats, etc. Hideyoshi had made specific requests for an elephant since 1583, for example, asking for a white elephant from a Chinese embassy that visited his court.[32] It should be mentioned that even during the *Sakoku*, the Japanese interest in the possession of elephants, as well as other exotic animals, remained unaltered.[33]

The Japanese appetite for unusual fauna did not, apparently, originate *menageries* like the ones found in early modern Europe, created from the mix of curiosity, collecting impulse and the search for symbols of social distinction that permeated early modern European society.[34] Yet, the European expression of this phenomenon was known in Japan. The first Japanese embassy sent to Europe, between 1582 and 1590, visited *menageries* in Madrid and Florence, although it does not designate them as such.[35] In Japanese culture, animals whose possession could be more useful or practical, such as horses, dogs and

29 See, for example, the screens displayed at Lisbon's Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Kanō Domi 1583-1602 / Kanō Naizen 1583-1602; and the one at Oporto's Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis, Kanō School 1600-1610.

30 Linschoten 1998, 193-198; L'Estra 2007, 247.

31 Cooper 1981, 113-114. For a similar account of the excitement provoked by the arrival of an elephant, set in early modern Europe, see Gschwend 2010.

32 Cooper 1994, 151.

33 Kang 2010, 127.

34 I. Braga 2015, 318 – 324.

35 Sande 2009, 414, 446.

songbirds, took precedence over unusual fauna, often difficult and costly to maintain. In the context of Dutch – Japanese relations, for example, part of the exotic fauna transported by the *kômô-jin* was refused, or accepted but regifted to temples.[36] Indeed, the Japanese were avid collectors of exotic fauna when its possession was not considered too costly. That was the case of songbirds, parrots and cockatoos transported in large numbers to Japan by the Dutch.[37]

2. Animals

2.1. Horses

Horses were a constant in daily life in most parts of early modern Europe and Asia. The importance of these animals, both as tools and status symbols, can hardly be exaggerated.[38] The relevance of horse-trading for the Portuguese presence in South Asia is also well known. The quasi-monopolistic Portuguese control of this trade between the Persian Gulf and the west coast of India guaranteed high earnings and allowed them to extend their influence over the surrounding Indian sultanates.[39] Nonetheless, as one moves east, sources concerning horse-trading become scarce.

During the *Sengoku jidai*, armies increased in size and started to favour the use of infantry, yet the centuries-old centrality of cavalry in Japanese warfare was maintained as an elite corps trusted by military leaders.[40] With the introduction of firearms in Japanese battlefields, mounted samurai lost their military preponderance while maintaining a relevant ceremonial and symbolic role in the Japanese social structure.[41] Horses were also used in hunting and in a variety of equestrian games.[42] Additionally, these animals had a symbolic significance in Japanese culture, connected with the animistic roots of Shintoism and Buddhist hagiography. This was noticed by European visitors, such as John Saris (c. 1580-1643), who described how Hideyoshi's horse had been kept in the vicinity of his *hotoqui* since the death of its powerful rider.[43]

36 Chaiklin 2012, 16. *Kōmō-jin* – a term initially used to designate the Dutch, as a result of their physiognomy (*kōmō*= red hair).

37 *Ibidem*, 11.

38 Loureiro 2010, 503-504

39 *Ibidem*, 505-507.

40 Turnbull 2008, 48. The *Sengoku jidai*, translated as "Age of Warring States", refers to the long period of political instability and internal conflict lived in Japan, between the mid-15th century and the early 17th century.

41 Deal 2007, 154-155.

42 Turnbull 2008, 49.

43 Chaiklin 2012, 3. Also, Saris 1967, 141. Saris referred to the *hotoke*, which designates an image of Buda and also by metonymy the place of worship for a deceased.

From the very first contact between Portuguese and Japanese, the former understood the high regard in which horses were held by the latter. Fernão Mendes Pinto (1510? – 1583), in his partly literary account *Peregrinação* [Pilgrimage], informs that the local daimyo had been busy "seeing running horses that had been brought to him from abroad," before coming to witness the newly-arrived Portuguese making use of firearms.[44] This is not surprising, as the Japanese had imported horses from continental Asia as far back as the 5th century and exchanged them in the context of their diplomatic relations with their neighbouring polities since, at least, the 7th century.[45] Jorge Álvares, a companion of Pinto, also stresses the use of "small very tough horses" for all the needs of Japanese society, considering that the Japanese:

> "Are great horse riders. They have many horses and are small. They have saddles that seem to resemble our bastarda saddles. The breaks are as we have bequeathed. The kings and lords have good horses, which they breed. They fight on horse."[46]

There are some inconsistencies in the accounts analysed. For instance, Álvares tells us that the Japanese fought on horseback, while a few decades later, Fróis assures that they "dismount to fight."[47] Other coeval sources differ from Fróis' account, emphasising the Japanese reliance on mounted warfare.[48] Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the Portuguese level of adaptation to the material circumstances of Asia, this reality becoming the standard for Fróis: "among us, horses, dromedaries, camels, etc. carry the soldiers' outfit; in Japan the *fiaxos* of each one carry their outfit and provisions on their back."[49]

Jesuit sources indicate the overall lack of beasts of burden in Japanese agricultural practice and the use of horses, and not only oxen, as draught animals.[50] In a recurring trend when describing Japanese animals, Fróis considers Japanese horses and oxen to be "small and meek," but still watchfully handled.[51] Nonetheless, Rodrigo de Vivero y Velasco's chronicle of his stay in Japan, in 1609-1610, describes the horses stabled at the Shogun's castle in Edo as robust and well looked after but lacking in proper training.[52] If

44 Pinto 1983, 392. Translated from the original Portuguese. For a more recent and complete edition of Pinto's chronicle, see Alves 2010.

45 Chaiklin 2012, 7.

46 Ruiz-de-Medina 1990, 6, 15. Translated from the original Portuguese.

47 Fróis 2001, 107. Translated from the original Portuguese.

48 See the account by Francesco Carletti transcribed in the compilation by Michael Cooper. Cooper 1981, 233.

49 Fróis 2001, 107. Translated from the original Portuguese. *Fiaxos* – from the Japanese *hyakushō* (peasants or villagers).

50 Rodrigues 1954, 151.

51 Fróis 2001, 133, 136.

52 Cooper 1981, 141.

a positive appreciation of the qualities of Japanese horses was uncommon among early modern European visitors, they appear consensual in their disapproval of Japanese training methods. Through Fróis' account we can understand further what the Europeans regarded as inadequate training: "ours [horses], in running they stop precisely; theirs are most unbridled."[53] The horseman's very actions were also the focus of attention: "among us, when one gallops or rides, the rein is carried in one hand only; in Japan it is to be taken in both two."[54]

Other Iberian chroniclers shared Fróis' views on Japanese horses and horsemanship.[55] The Englishman John Saris (c. 1580-1643) differed, considering that Japanese horses, despite being small, were well built and combative, surpassing the Spanish.[56] Could the Anglo-Spanish rivalry have been extended to horse evaluation? Regardless of that, in a reversal of the European documentary sources, horses brought by the *nanban-jin* are often depicted by Japanese visual sources, perhaps disapprovingly, as irascible.[57] Despite the overall disregard of Japanese horses by Iberian chroniclers, Japanese traders had no difficulty exporting cattle and horses to the Spanish-controlled Philippines in the late 16th century.[58]

Concerning the riding and saddle style referred by the first Portuguese observers, *bastarda* concerns the use of long stirrups, thus stretching the legs of the rider along the flanks of the animal. In contrast, the *gineta* style uses shorter stirrups that imply the flexion of the rider's legs. These different styles have equally different objectives: the *gineta* privileges the speed and agility of equestrian manoeuvres while the *bastarda* provides a more comfortable ride. Other elements, namely the size of the rubies and the arches of the saddle, further differentiate the two riding styles.[59] In that regard, Fróis appears to contradict Álvares, stating that: "we have *bastarda* saddles and stirrups, in Japan you do not ride but in the *gineta* style."[60]

Fróis dedicates a chapter of his *Tratado* to the role of horses in Japanese society, titled "in what concerns horses", with details like the Japanese custom of tying the horses' tails with knots and cutting their manes short, unlike the European preference for a long and free-flowing mane.[61] He also describes the differences between European and Japanese

53 Fróis 2001, 109.Translated from the original Portuguese.

54 *Ibidem*, 112. Translated from the original Portuguese.

55 Cooper 1981, 142; Rodrigues 1954, 150.

56 Cooper 1981, 143-144.

57 The liveliness of the horses depicted is particularly visible in the case of a screen that includes an imaginary representation of the originating port of the *nanban-jin*. Kanō Naizen, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, 1583-1602.

58 Gil 2011, 576.

59 On the differences between these styles of ridding see, Pereira 2008, 108-135.

60 Fróis 2001, 110. Translated from the original Portuguese. Added emphases.

61 Fróis 2001, 111. 136.

saddles, harnesses, stirrups and horse shoes, accurately noting elements that were depicted by Japanese artists in *nanban* style works. For instance, the contrast between the closed Japanese stirrups and the open stirrups preferred by the Europeans.[62] Some *nanban* screens depict European horsemen galloping horses with flying manes and tails and riding them in the *bastarda* style, commanding them with only one hand or even none.[63]

Horses were a prominent asset in diplomatic initiatives. In 1582, the daimyo of Shimazu sent Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606), Visitor of the Society of Jesus in Japan, an embassy asking the Jesuits to settle in his lands and requesting that "a good horse and a richly ornamented short sword" be delivered on his behalf to the Portuguese viceroy in India.[64] The Portuguese responded in kind and in 1590 an embassy to Hideyoshi, headed by Valignano, included two Arabian horses, of which only one reached Japan alive.[65] They were sent with two richly ornamented sets of saddles and harnesses, one *bastarda* and one *gineta*.[66] Despite Fróis' obvious interest in emphasising the success of the Portuguese and Jesuit diplomatic efforts, his description allows a glimpse of the Japanese curiosity for European horsemanship and imported horses:

> "He [Hideyoshi] immediately called for his tent to be assembled in that patio, and also that the horse be brought because he wanted to see it, and that some Portuguese would ride it. (…) he then saw a Portuguese riding a horse, which he did very well, leaving him, and all the other lords, admired and amazed with the elegance, grandeur and lightness of the horse, saying big things in its praise, and showed that the horse pleased him above all else."[67]

Hideyoshi appears to have been impressed and promised to return to the viceroy an even more magnificent embassy and presents, with the exception of the horse and the letter itself, which he admitted unable to surpass.[68] Rodrigues adds that, as a consequence of a court intrigue, Hideyoshi was led to doubt the official character of the embassy but was reassured by the quality of the horse presented to him, only obtainable in India or further west.[69]

62 Concerning Japanese horsemanship and saddles see, Friday 2004, 96-99 and Turnbull 2008, 111.

63 See the screen authored by Kanō Domi, at the end of the 16th century, currently at Museu de Arte Antiga in Lisbon. In the foreground of this work, at an angle that shows its details, we can find a saddle placed on a horse brought by the *Nanban-jin*. Curvelo 2015, 23.

64 Fróis 1981-1984, 82-124.

65 The question arises as to how the transport of these animals by sea would take place in practical terms. Rui Loureiro refers to that question concerning the Indian Ocean. Loureiro 2010.

66 Fróis, 1984, 299.

67 *Ibidem*, 309. Translated from the original Portuguese.

68 Cooper 1994, 83-84.

69 *Ibidem*, 89.

The 1590 embassy was organised in the context of the return to Japan of a group of young Japanese noblemen sent in 1582 to Europe under the patronage of the Jesuits.[70] According to one account of this embassy, written by another Portuguese Jesuit, Duarte de Sande (1547-1599) – *De Missione Legatorvm Iaponensium ad Romanum curiam* [Dialogue concerning the mission of the Japanese ambassadors to the Roman Curia] –, the Japanese themselves had insisted on the transportation of horses to Japan, despite the difficulties imposed by the long trip. One of the Japanese characters of Sande's dialogue considers that the horses and harnesses, despite being Arabian, sourced in Portuguese India, and thus "not comparable" to the European equivalents, still conveyed an idea of grandeur to the Japanese.[71]

Analysing Sande's account of the long trip of this embassy through Europe, we find a set of references that demonstrate the Japanese interest in foreign horse breeds and horse-riding styles. This reinforces an understanding of the transversal importance of these animals for both societies. Like in the aforementioned accounts, the beauty and elegance of European horses are emphasised, as well as the riding expertise, and the richness of the harnesses used.[72] As noted by Fróis, the Japanese ambassadors learned how to ride in "our style" by the time of their journey through Portugal.[73]

The Portuguese were not the only Europeans that transported horses to Japan as diplomatic gifts in the early modern period. Fróis disparagingly describes a Spanish embassy sent in 1593 and its "melancholic ambassador with a lame horse," who, additionally to the horse, presented Hideyoshi with a civet cat.[74] This negative description may be explained by the competition between Portuguese and Spanish in East Asia, indissociable from the commercial rivalry between Macau and Manila and the conflict between Portuguese-sponsored Jesuits and Spanish-sponsored mendicant orders.[75]

The expulsion of the Portuguese and Spanish from Japan and the instauration of the *bakufu* did not mean the end of the Japanese elite's appetite for imported horses. In the 17th and 18th centuries the Dutch transported horses to Japan, supplying specific orders made by the shogunate.[76] Furthermore, the Japanese curiosity about European horsemanship was unaltered and exceptions, were made to European trainers, who could remain in Japan for extended periods of time.[77] Despite the constant importation of horses into Japan, they were gradually represented in a more mundane way in *nanban* art; no longer

70 Sande 2009, 5-11.

71 *Ibidem*, 214. Sande's dialogue was translated from Latin to Portuguese by Américo da Costa Ramalho and Sebastião Tavares de Pinho. Here translated to English from the Portuguese.

72 *Ibidem*, 212-214.

73 Fróis 1993, 50. Translated from the original Portuguese.

74 Fróis 1981-1984, 507. Translated from the original Portuguese.

75 Costa 1998, 179.

76 Chaiklin 2012, 8-15.

77 Eberspacher 1994 *apud*. Cullen 2003, 113.

the galloping creatures of before but simple pack animals. As the 17th century progressed, the *nanban* style gradually lost the freshness and richness of details that characterised it in the previous century; animals were more rarely depicted, and compositions became increasingly unimaginative and plain.[78]

By gathering disperse references and re-centring our focus of analysis, horses emerge in different facets of Portuguese – Japanese relations and common traits arise. In both ends of Eurasia, horses were a common interest of noblemen, a good to be traded, pack animals, a valuable diplomatic gift, and an invaluable tool in warfare. Both European and Japanese made use of these animals in their relations, as a desirable good that could be exchanged solidifying shared practices of power display. Commonalities aside, the overall negative characterisation of Japanese horses and horsemanship in most European accounts is a matter that cannot be ignored.

Japanese horses were disregarded as mere pack animals in most of the documentary sources and pushed to the bottom of a hierarchy that placed Spanish and Italian horses at the top, followed by Arabian and Persian. It is tempting to interpret this as an allegory for a Eurocentric stratification of the world: the political and military power of Spain and the cultural predominance of Italy outstripping the Islamic powers, which in turn supplanted the Eastern gentilities. There is some truth in such interpretation but other explanations are possible, given the positive light in which Japanese culture was regarded by most early modern European chroniclers.[79]

Different horse breeds were developed with the purpose of fulfilling various human needs. The bigger Arabian horses were more fitting for conspicuous power display by the Japanese elites than the smaller Japanese breeds. As aforementioned, this phenomenon was not limited to Japan. Indeed, early modern Indian Sultanates imported horses from the Middle East on a large scale. Concerning the harsh judgement of Japanese horsemanship, it seems likely that they were tainted by European perceptions of Japanese society; deeply hierarchical but also, at the time of the European arrival, marked by endemic conflicts and violence.[80] For European observers there was a contradiction between the sobriety of most aspects of Japanese society and their frequent use of violence. Fróis eloquently remarks that "in Japan, rebuke and punishment are to chop one's head."[81] This might explain descriptions of Japanese animals as meek but unpredictable and, thus, strictly watched.

78 See, for example, the *nanban* folding screen, dated from the second half of the 17th century, from the collection of Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga in Lisbon. Curvelo 2015, 157. Here, one finds represented no longer the Arab horses that delighted the Shogunate but small pack horses.

79 See, for example, the compilation by Michael Cooper. Cooper 1981, 37-50.

80 On the Jesuit surprise with the endemic violence in Japanese society, see Costa 1995, 218-221. Concerning the Japanese criminal system in the early modern period see Botsman 2007.

81 Fróis 2001, 138.Translated from the original Portuguese.

2.2. Hunting, eating and baiting animals

As previously stated, gift exchange was an essential part of Japanese culture. The shogunate made extensive use of this practice. Food, especially game meat, was a preferred tribute or gift in early modern Japan. Daimyos were encouraged to include animals or animal products originating from their domains in their tributes to the shogunate. Fish and birds, live and destined to later consumption, were particularly appreciated.[82] While both Buddhism and Shintoism looked down on the consumption of domestic animals, game meat and seafood were tolerated.[83] Hunting, a highly symbolic warlike activity, was a favourite exercise for the noblemen throughout Europe and Asia, Japan included. In Japan, as elsewhere, the possession of hunting dogs and the practice of falconry were reserved to noblemen.[84] John Saris' 17th century account refers that Japanese military commanders were accompanied by their hunting dogs and birds of prey even during their campaigns.[85]

Since their arrival in Japan, the Portuguese became aware of the importance of hunting in the archipelago. Álvares' account describes the most important game animals found in the region that he visited, hunting methods preferred, and the popularity of falconry among the noblemen: "There are also goshawks, falcons, and I was told they also hunt [with] golden eagles. And only great lords can have these birds for their amusement."[86] Pinto agrees with Álvares, adding that falconry in Japan was "done our way", and further noting its popularity throughout China and Southeast Asia.[87] As usual, Fróis' accounts contain minute details of the differences between European and Japanese practices, noting e.g. that "in Europe the goshawks and the falcons are almost always with hoods in their eyes; in Japan they always have their eyes uncovered."[88]

Japan's idiosyncratic and highly ritualised tradition of falconry, known as *takagari*, was widely practiced by the imperial and shogunal courts. Falconry was exceedingly popular among East Asian elites, and, unsurprisingly, birds of prey were among the diplomatic gifts exchanged between different polities of the region. For instance, in 1596 Hideyoshi received such birds from Korean emissaries seeking truce. In fact, Korea remained the major Japanese source of these animals throughout the early modern period.

82 Chaiklin 2010, 3-4.

83 Watanabe 2004, 2-5.

84 Chaiklin 2012, 6. Recreational hunting by the elites was coexistent with subsistence hunting by the inhabitants of mountain areas. Watanabe 2004, 5.

85 Cooper 1981, 143-144.

86 Ruiz-de-Medina 1990, 7. Translated from the original Portuguese.

87 Pinto 1983, 399. Translated from the original Portuguese.

88 Fróis 2001, 139.

The transportation of birds of prey was difficult and only the high prices justified the risk of the, equally, high mortality during transport.[89]

Rodrigues stresses the interest of Japanese noblemen in falconry: "the Lords and nobles raise in their house many sorts of birds of prey to hunt with them." [90] As in Europe, game reserves existed for the private use of noblemen and by the 17th century falconry had become one of the most popular court activities.[91] Hunting activities, including falconry, constituted a point of mutual curiosity for European and Japanese elites. Sande's aforementioned account of the first Japanese embassy to Europe notes the Japanese enthusiasm for European hunting practices, e.g., listing European hunting dog breeds.[92] Moreover, the ambassadors collected books on hunting and were presented with hunting dogs throughout their journey, taking part in hunts in several noble-owned game reserves.[93]

European dogs also found their way to Japan. *Nanban* screens depict mastiffs and sighthounds, wearing collars or leashes, standing near the Portuguese; these might well have been travel companions more than trade goods.[94] In Japan, sighthounds helped falconers and their birds to spot hidden prey.[95] Incidentally, one finds *podengo* dogs, a Portuguese sighthound breed, represented in *nanban* screens.[96] It is likely that many dogs transported by the Portuguese eventually found their way into Japanese hands. In at least one occasion, in 1584, a daimyo received a small dog as a present from a Portuguese.[97] The expulsion of the Portuguese did not end the trade of European dog breeds to Japan, which was continued by the Dutch. These animals were meant as presents to Japanese officials who ordered them through illustrated catalogues.[98]

Besides hunting, eating was also a point of interaction between Portuguese and Japanese. As referred at the beginning of this section, game meat was an exception to the otherwise stringent Japanese dietary habits. Rodrigues describes how Japanese noblemen exchanged such goods: "they are very prone to hunting with hawks, and to send as present

89 Jameson 1962, 3-4. This allows us to understand why the Dutch refused the transportation of European birds of prey to Japan, convinced that these would not survive. Chaiklin 2012, 11.

90 Rodrigues 1954, 152.Translated from the original Portuguese.

91 Jameson 1962, 6-7.

92 On the differences between dog breeds existing in early modern Portugal, listed by the Japanese ambassadors, see P. Braga 2000, 29-35.

93 Fróis 1942, 220, 228; Sande 2009, 230, 408.

94 Kanō Domi, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, 1583-1602. Kanō Naizen, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, 1583-1602. Kanō School, Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis, 1600-1610.

95 Chaiklin 2012, 10; Jameson 1962, 69.

96 Kanō School, Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis, 1600-1610.

97 Chaiklin 2012, 9.

98 Chaiklin 2012, 9.

the prey that they catch, which is of high esteem and honour among them."[99] Some kinds of game fowl were reserved to special occasions and highly valued, like the wild duck, swan and crane.[100] The Jesuit missionaries were themselves included in this system. For instance, Valignano was presented by the powerful daimyo Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582) with game fowl:

> "Upon returning home he [Nobunaga] gave him [Valignano] a present that in that same day had come from the Bandou region, which is in the very outskirts of Japan, on the northern part, which were ten large birds like wild ducks, which do not exist in Japan except for that region and therefore are much appreciated. This was for the Christians a great consolation, understanding how much it mattered the favour of a gentleman so powerful for the honour and name of Christianity."[101]

While the Jesuits were certainly integrated in the Japanese gift exchange system, there were still difficulties to be overcome in their relations. The eating habits, in particular, were a challenge. Fróis' *Tratado* goes into detail comparing European and Japanese food, contrasting the "raw seaweed" and the "racoon dog" enjoyed by the Japanese with the pastries and chicken preferred by the Portuguese.[102] At first, these circumstances hindered the proselytising efforts of the Jesuit, according to Rodrigues: "they would accuse us, saying, that we eat cow, and domestic animals, and even human flesh." Nonetheless, as the author remarks, cows, chicken and pigs were being bred in some port cities in order to supply Portuguese merchant ships, "and many [Japanese] there already eat these things." Not only did the Japanese merchants adopt European eating habits, but also some noblemen followed suit.[103] Beef, reported as having curative properties, grew in popularity in 16th century Japan because of *nanban-jin* influence. Eventually, it became part of the gift exchange network that characterised Japanese society.[104]

Japanese observers were not oblivious to the novelty of European eating habits. Domestic animals such as chicken, pigs and cattle are also represented in the port scenes depicted in *nanban* screens. The inclusion of these animals in the paintings might be intended as a counterpoint to exotic animals brought by the Europeans. However, they can also suggest the novelty of the eating habits of the newcomers. One 16th century

99 Rodrigues 1954, 429.Translated from the original Portuguese.

100 *Ibidem*, 152. Jameson 1962, 5.

101 Fróis 1981-1984, vol. III, 254.

102 Fróis 2001, 97. Translated from the original Portuguese. The raccoon dog, in the original Portuguese "*adibe*", a synonym of jackal. Fróis possibly refers to the *tanuki,* the racoon dog (*Nyctereutes procyonoides viverrinus*), an animal considered as having therapeutic properties in early modern Japan. Watanabe 2004, 5.

103 Rodrigues 1954, 151. Translated from the original Portuguese.

104 Mowat 2009, 42-43.

painted screen in particular, depicting two oxen, might well be a representation of different varieties of *wagyu* cattle, the *Kuroge washu* (black variety) and the *Akage washu* (red variety).[105] The connection between depicting exotic elements and registering local diversity can hardly be considered coincidental.

Concerning the differences in eating habits and attitudes towards the animal world between Europe and Japan, Fróis seems surprised that: "among us it is astonishing to kill a man and none in killing cows, chickens or dogs; the Japanese are astonished to see animals being killed and [to them] killing men is a common thing."[106] As mentioned in the previous section, Fróis struggles to understand the paradox between the compassionate attitude of Japanese society towards fauna and their violence towards humans.

Eating habits differed considerably in Europe and Japan but the two civilisations shared many other aspects of the human-animal relations. The popularity of animal baiting, transversal to all social groups, was a feature of early modern Europe.[107] Portugal was no exception, with its overseas empire providing a continuous supply of exotic animals that could be used in such way.[108] Among the animal baiting blood sports cockfighting was particularly popular in medieval and early modern Europe.[109] Cockfighting constituted an age-old activity which, by the early modern period, was also widespread around Asia.[110]

The popularity of cockfighting in early modern Japan is unquestionable, occupying a prominent place alongside *sumo*, fishing and falconry as recreational activity *par excellence*.[111] Japan is home, still today, to a variety of rooster breeds, and one of their most valued characteristics is the length of the tail feathers.[112] Jesuit sources describe the popularity of cockfighting and the use of rooster feathers as helmet ornaments.[113] Furthermore, cockfighting appears to have been introduced in Japan through Southeast and East Asia precisely during the early modern period, coinciding with the Portuguese presence in the region.[114] Japanese visual sources give us some clues about the prevalence of cockfighting also among the Portuguese newcomers. Roosters of fighting breeds are depicted in proximity with both Japanese and European figures. *Nanban-jin* holding

105 Kanō Naizen, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, 1583-1602. Curvelo 2015, 101.

106 Fróis 2001, 138. Translated from the original Portuguese.

107 Hoage, Roskell and Mansour 1996, 13-14.

108 I. Braga 2015, 337-340.

109 Kiser 2007, 116-117.

110 Dundes 1994, 242.

111 Deal 2007, 353.

112 The feathers of these animals were used for decorating the spears of the daimyo's entourage in the context of the *sankin-kōtai*, and varieties with specific colourings associated with certain clans were created. Vaporis 2005, 28-31.

113 Fróis 2001, 101, 106.

114 Tsudzuki 2003, 91-116.

roosters in their arms can be seen in some paintings, including the idealised representations of the ports of origin of the European.[115]

In this section I explored the similitudes and differences in attitudes towards the animal world that influenced the relations between Portuguese and Japanese throughout the early modern period. The significance of hunting, a recreational activity loaded with symbolic meaning, constituted a phenomenon that brought Japanese elites closer to their Portuguese / European counterparts. Horses, as we have seen in the previous section, were also a shared passion for European and Asian elites. Eating habits pushed Portuguese and Japanese apart, requiring an adaptation process on the part of the Jesuit missionaries and the introduction of new habits in Japan. Likewise, the popularisation of cockfighting in early modern Japan may well have been aided by the Portuguese. The popularity of animal baiting is certainly another interesting point of contact between European and Japanese societies in the period under consideration.

Conclusion

Most of what is known about the transportation of animals to Japan by the Portuguese in the early modern period comes from disconnected snippets of information, which are dispersed over the wealth of documents written by the Jesuit missionaries concerning their religious and administrative duties. This is a common obstacle to historiographic work focused on animals and their role in societies.[116] The use of visual sources helps to bridge documental silences and to corroborate written accounts. When analysing *nanban* artworks one is faced with the presence of a myriad of animals that far surpasses coeval written accounts. Is this a proof of a rich artistic imagination or of omissions in the written records? Considering what has been discussed in this article I am inclined to the latter option.[117]

Why is fauna practically absent from the Portuguese registers about Japan? It may be argued that the scarce attention that has been dedicated to these issues allowed many sources to be overlooked. A general review of the sources concerning Portuguese – Japanese interactions in the early modern period may well uncover currently unsuspected matters. Furthermore, work on this topic would need to be continued also by historians proficient in Japanese, and other East Asian languages, to allow local documentary sources to be added to the European ones.

115 Kanō Naizen, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, 1583-1602. Curvelo 2015, 101.

116 Braga and Braga 2015, 14-15.

117 Alexandra Curvelo trusts the high degree of likelihood of the representations of *nanban* art, contextualizing this style in the heart of the pictorial cycle in vogue at the time in Japan, which privileged detailed representations of the everyday world. Curvelo found that these artworks are accurate in their depictions of early modern society and material culture. Curvelo 2015, 14-16.

It would be especially interesting to gather more information about the methods through which these animals were obtained, bred, reared, trained, transported, and traded. This approach would contribute to focus the debate on the animals themselves. Animals are often extras, more than leading characters, in historiographic sources and subsequent research. *Admittedly*, they fare little better in this work, where they are mostly a means to an end: traded and given away as tools in diplomatic and commercial endeavours. Another possible avenue of research is the way in which exogenous animals were received and incorporated into Japanese society.[118]

Perhaps the "invisibility" of animals in document sources is a sign of their omnipresence, transpiring into written records only as consequence of some extraordinary event, like the arrival of an embassy. It is also likely, based on the sources consulted, that animals constituted secondary trade goods and were often transported with non-commercial purposes, considered as particular belongings of crew members. The Dutch left a much more careful record of their commercial activities. Limited to the trading post of Deshima, they successfully traded and used animals in their diplomatic initiatives in Japan throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.[119] It seems perfectly plausible that the Dutch took over the pre-existent trade networks, as in many other places and circumstances, as the Portuguese had done before them at the time of their arrival in East Asia.

The Portuguese managed to establish themselves in East Asia, in the early modern period, as intermediaries of the problematic Sino-Japanese trade. Seen as suppliers of desirable goods, their proselytising efforts were tolerated until the emergence of a less spiritually enterprising competitor. In the early 17th century the Dutch were successively questioned by the shogunate concerning their capacity to supply Japan with the same amount of goods as the Portuguese.[120] In the following centuries the Dutch were often requested by the shogunate to source exotic and difficult to transport animals. One is thus inclined to question if animal trade cannot also be interpreted as an assessment of the *nanban-jin* and, later, of the *komo-jin* trading skills and suitability as preferential trading partners.

This article should be regarded as a first attempt at understanding an underexplored topic: the role that animals had in the Portuguese Empire and in its relations with other polities. As we have seen, in the context of early modern Portuguese – Japanese relations, animals took a variety of roles: goods to be traded, gifts to be exchanged, resources to be used or consumed, and even companions. Further research on these matters, and with a greater focus on the animals *per se*, is certainly required in order to clarify the

118 Chaiklin raises the question of the possible impact in Japan of the introduction of exogenous fauna. Chaiklin 2012, 8-17. Watanabe notes how imported cattle breeds were assimilated by Japanese society. Watanabe 2004, 5.

119 Chaiklin 2012, 1-22.

120 Laver 2008, 160.

many questions left open by this work and to bring non-humans to the foreground of historiographical narratives.

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