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Animals and Society in Brazil

from the Sixteenth to Nineteenth
Centuries



Sample excerpt from *Animals and Society in Brazil*

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The White Horse Press, The Old Vicarage, Main Street, Winwick,
Cambridgeshire, UK

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-912186-17-4

Cover image: processed and edited by Stefania Bonura from the picture “Collecting fauna. The intense collection of species of Brazilian fauna increased from 1808, when Brazilian ports were opened”. Source: Debret, 1839, pl. 1

INTRODUCTION

In the *Dictionary of Brazilian Folklore*, the entry for ‘animal’ defines it as something ‘made by God, [which] possesses language and organisation, has leaders, laws, friends and enemies’.¹ It goes on to provide an extensive description of the imaginary universe that surrounds these creatures, their attributes and meanings in multiple Brazilian cultural contexts – in addition, of course, to the archive of official traditions that were introduced as part of the colonial cultural system and the popular ones that sometimes fuse with them, becoming part of the country’s diversified cultural landscape.

Historical literature plays the role of revealing the materiality of this web of interactions, from the moment that the Portuguese disembarked on the coast of what was to become the state of Bahia, on 22 April 1500, the date now known as ‘the discovery of Brazil’. Encounters between humans and non-humans, as they unfolded over the first four centuries of the markedly colonial formation of Brazilian society, were delineated in a multi-faceted field of practices, values and knowledge that brought together the cultural universes of Amerindians, Europeans and Africans.

This book introduces some of these multiple trajectories, in an attempt to overcome the uncomfortable silence that reigns regarding the presence and meaning that these non-human actors have had on Brazil’s historical stage. My dive into this research was motivated by one basic question: what has been said, within our historical records, with regard to non-human animals? I was gradually able to uncover answers to this question, through attentive reading of reports, travel diaries, studies and historical documents, gathering testimonies and records on the extensive period under scrutiny. I carried out this work between 2013 and 2016, presenting the results for the first time in the Portuguese language edition of this book, *Animais e sociedade no Brasil dos séculos 16 a 19*, published in 2017. The present version, in the English language, has been revised and updated for the purpose of providing greater clarity to the reader who is unfamiliar with the socio-environmental context of the first four centuries of the formation of Brazilian society.

Different gazes delineate the tangible and intangible dimensions of these interactions. Non-human animals were described as things and provisions, but also as beings capable of expressing feelings and human attitudes, as sources of spiritual power, ingredients in medical cures, resources of the Portuguese

1 Cascudo, 1993: 56.

Crown or threats to human survival and material wealth. Their acts, or their mere presence, were seen to express demonic forces or the power of God.

Whales were harpooned in the Bay of Guanabara in Rio de Janeiro. Ships left the Brazilian coast headed for Europe with a cargo of thousands of monkeys and parrots. Oxen provided the energy to move the mills of the country's first sugar plantations. Hummingbird feathers adorned the hats and dresses worn by ladies of the Portuguese court or in Paris. A slaughterhouse functioned in the open air, in the centre of Old Rio de Janeiro. Trolley cars crossed the city pulled by pairs of donkeys. Monkeys and ants were served up as meals. Cattle were hunted and shot at in pasture. Powder from the rattles of rattlesnakes was prescribed to treat tooth decay, and soup made from roasted skunk was seen as a cure for kidney stones.

Non-human animals participated directly and indirectly in the process of building Brazilian society – as food and medicine, as a source of energy, as means of transportation, as entertainment, as a component of the Amerindian religious archive, for use in decorative clothing or domestic leisure. There are many remaining lacunae in our knowledge of these interactions in the vast territory of Portuguese America, and this work represents an initial effort to bring other animal species back in from the marginal and secondary place to which histories and social theories of the past have assigned them. Upon immersing myself in such an expansive topic, I realised that I had begun to explore a still obscure chapter of the first four centuries of the formation of Brazilian society. What I present here becomes an invitation to probe more deeply into our reflections on one particular gap that in the work of historians and anthropologists has left in its wake; thus, it also becomes a chance to pursue critical debate on the very construction of Brazilian historiography.

Historical research always represents choices made in relation to spaces of signification which do not necessarily correspond neatly to the 'lived' history of a society. The result of a particular gaze that is constructed through a certain representational scheme defines, in turn, how a historical event becomes a discursive one. As part of collective memory, a particular fact is thus perceived, communicated and kept alive as part of the history of a people, of the culture of a society.² To be able to account for a plurality of perspectives with regard to a historical fact is also a choice.

Environmental history and interspecies studies together produce an inclusive and reflexive view of the diverse agents that inhabit the same space and which, at macro and micro levels, act to transform landscapes.³

2 Rassi, 2012.

3 Roque et al., 2018.

Introduction

The point of departure for such reflections is our return to conventional historical narratives, where we begin to explore their varied discursive configurations. Keith Thomas' book, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England: 1500–1800*, which was translated and published in Brazil in 1988, demarcated this innovative field of historical research by identifying, through analysis of a very rich narrative collection, signs of a gradual break with the abusive practices that characterised forms of dominance and exploitation of other animal species.⁴ His research on changes in the perception, values and customs of English society from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries became my major inspiration and theoretical reference.

The extensive and complex fields of environmental research and interspecies studies come together through interdisciplinary dialogues, providing a meeting ground for anthropological, biological, political, economic, historical, literary, ecological, ethological and psycho-social perspectives. These diverse approaches are the basis for dynamic interpretations of the evolutionary processes of human societies, understood as the expression of influences and results emerging in the fusing of environmental conditions and forms of interaction with other living beings.⁵

Colonial environments were, par excellence, trans-border spaces whose tangible and intangible dimensions were defined and redefined through the opportunities or adversities experienced by a plurality of beings. The colonial environments of the New World were the stage for complex networks of interaction between human and non-human animals. The conflicts and forms of cooperation between them were shaped through the unprecedented agreements and connections forged through the colonial pact that regulated the interactions between European empires and their colonies. The circulation of diverse species of European animals (in particular, the large mammals) that were transferred to and multiplied within colonised territories offers, according to Alfred Crosby, a strategic example of the exchange that formed the basis of the current global animal production system.⁶

Recognising that the colonisation process in North America reflected not only the conscious decisions of human subjects, but also their involvement with other actors, moved more by instinct than by reason, Virginia Anderson situates the domestic animals transferred from the British Empire in the position of agents of historical change.⁷ In her innovative study, she recognises that

4 Thomas, 1984.

5 Diamond, 2011.

6 Crosby, 1993.

7 Anderson, 2004.

these creatures of the Empire, and cattle, in particular, were responsible not only for environmental changes but had significant influence on the feelings and behaviour of colonisers and native peoples.

The pioneering volume *Centering Animals in Latin American History*, published in 2013, examines forms of interaction between humans and non-humans in Latin American colonial and post-colonial history in Mexico, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Chile, Brazil, Peru and Argentina.⁸ Chapters cover a range of issues, from the control of hunting, the notion of animal as commodity, animals in medicine, to animal protection and symbolic discourse on animality. The chapter on Brazil looks at the diversity of native birds, as seen through the gaze of nineteenth-century scientific expeditions. My own research is meant to contribute to this wide and still new field of knowledge by mapping out the numerous types of interaction between human and non-human animals over the expansive territory of Portuguese America. I begin with the pre-colonial period, using a perspective that integrates the social, economic, cultural and political factors that decisively characterised the first four centuries of the formation of Brazilian society.

Limitations concerning existing bibliographic sources on the customs and social life in the early Brazilian colonial period were the consequence of the country's precarious educational system, which restricted the production of records and testimonies and sustained Brazil's isolation from the rest of the world. In 1818, in the city of São Paulo, only 2.5 per cent of all free males of school age were literate. The school reform that was imposed in 1759 by the Marquis de Pombal (1699–1782), Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Portugal, expelled the Society of Jesus from Brazil. Members of this order had been the only providers of education within the colony. In addition to the expulsion of Jesuit missionaries, Pombal prohibited the teaching of Latin, Greek and philosophy, even within convents. This was meant to impede native subjects from receiving titles, official positions or employment in ways other than through the authority or jurisdiction of the king.⁹ King John V of Portugal's Royal Order of 1747 prohibited awarding a licence to any printer in Brazil, a measure meant to restrict the circulation of books and newspapers, or any type of public expression of opinion contrary to the ideas of the Portuguese Crown. Discussion groups were illegal and could lead to imprisonment or prosecution. In 1794, the Literary Society of Rio de Janeiro, which brought the capital's intellectual elite together to discuss philosophy, literature, science and politics, was extin-

8 Few and Tortorici, 2013.

9 Reis, 2004.

Introduction

guished, and eleven of its members were arrested, accused of fomenting the independence movement.¹⁰ To escape censorship, from June 1808 to 1822, the *Correio Brasiliense*, the Brazil's first newspaper, was published in London and illegally distributed to 500 select readers in the colony. When the Portuguese court was transferred to Brazil in 1808, the *Gazeta of Rio de Janeiro* became the first official newspaper printed in the colony.

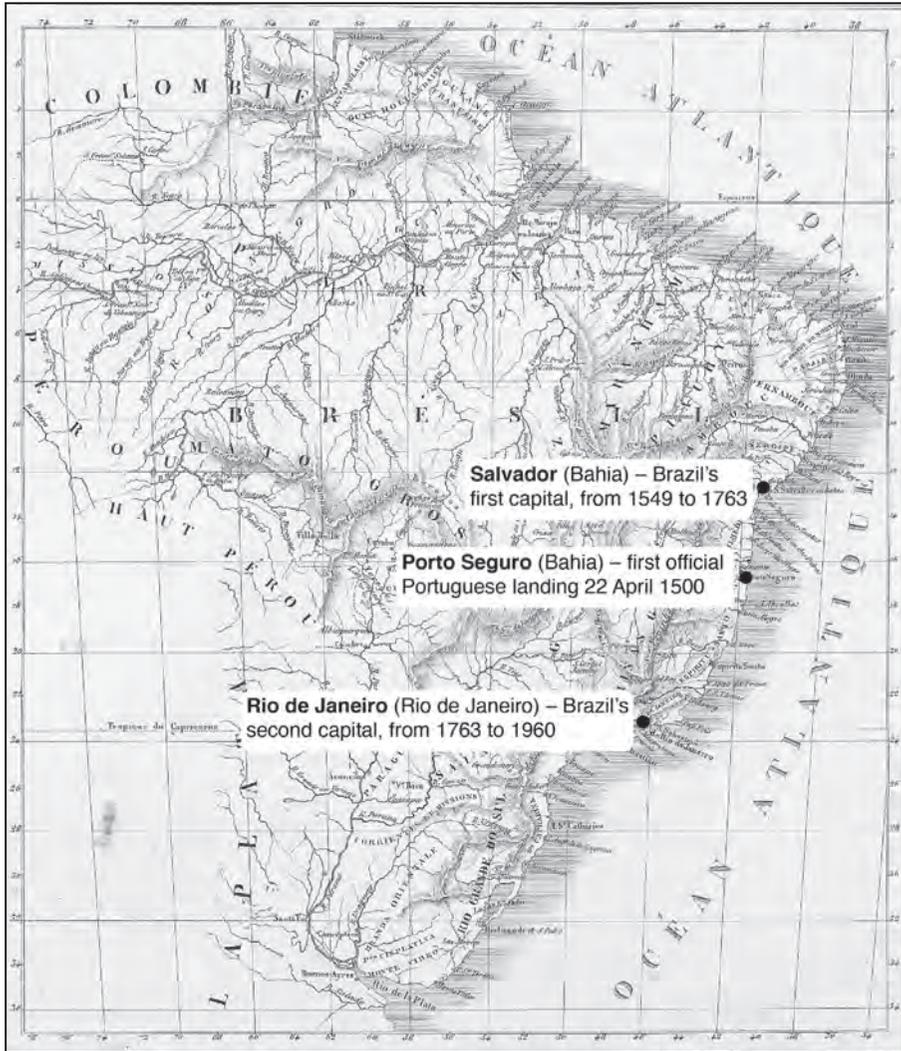
Taking this context into consideration, I began my research by accessing classical texts on Brazilian history. It is important to emphasise here that exhaustive research was not my intention, and new references have not ceased to appear. I was concerned with texts that made direct reference to the presence of animals in Brazilian territory and suggested their possible impact on colonial reality and customs. Although I confirmed that most of the authors who analysed the historical events of the period never mentioned the word 'animal', nor made reference to native species, I was able to identify several valuable contributions to our understanding of the dynamic interspecies interaction that characterised the formation of Brazilian society.

Most of the references spoke of one of the two major administrative and political centres of the colonial period, Bahia and Rio de Janeiro. March 1549 marked the formal beginning of the colonisation process, defined by the establishment of a General Government in Brazil which took the city of Salvador, in the state of Bahia, as its capital. Salvador was located to the north of Porto Seguro, the site of the first Portuguese landing in the year 1500.¹¹ The north-eastern region of the new territory was to concentrate the major areas of sugar production, as well as lumbering activities for Brazil wood, the 'ink tree' that became the object of the first Portuguese monopoly on these lands. In 1763, the capital was moved to the city of Rio de Janeiro, on the south-eastern coast. This was the result of a decline in sugarcane production and the need to promote greater control over the important mining activities of the state of Minas Gerais. It remained the capital until 1960, when these political and administrative functions were transferred to the newly created Brasília, the federal district located in the state of Goiás, in the central western region of the country.

The first mutual encounters between Amerindians, Europeans, native animals and domesticated animals brought from Portugal took place in Porto Seguro, as recorded by Pero Vaz de Caminha. His letter, addressed to the king

10 Gomes, 2007.

11 The first three decades of the sixteenth century are known as the pre-colonial period, characterised by an intense European exploitation of Brazilian natural resources, especially of Brazil wood along the coastline.

**Map 1.**

Localisation of Brazil's two first capitals. The first was established in Salvador, Bahia, in 1549, and can be considered as the true launch point of the colonisation process that began five decades after the first Portuguese explorers disembarked in Porto Seguro, on the north-eastern coast. Moving the capital to Rio de Janeiro, in 1763, allowed the Portuguese Crown greater control over the mining activities of the central south-eastern region of the territory. Source: Debret, 1839, last plate.

Introduction

of Portugal, describes the mythical moment of the ‘discovery’ of Brazil, on 22 April 1500, although the original documentation of the occurrence was not ‘discovered’ until 1773, at the *Torre do Tombo*, in Portugal.¹² Caminha describes the many varieties of parrots he encountered there – large and small, red, green, variegated and innumerable creatures which then became the main allegory of the new land, which the Portuguese court had initially dubbed *Terra Papagali* (‘Land of the Parrots’).

This was also the moment when the Amerindians who inhabited the coast of Bahia had their first contact with European domestic animals – in this case, the sheep and chickens that disembarked along with the Portuguese crew, for whom they had been meant as nourishment over the long maritime journey. It was then that the domesticated hen was introduced within the universe of the Amerindian villages and ethnic groups who inhabited the extensive coastal region of Portuguese America. The species was rapidly incorporated into tribal customs, becoming an object of exchange in the ever more frequent contacts established with European explorers. For the Amerindian population, chickens were not considered an everyday food; rather, they were raised within the villages as companion animals, as we will see.

The texts produced by Portuguese explorers throughout the sixteenth century, essentially descriptive, were meant for one very specific interlocutor, the Portuguese Crown. I give particular salience to the *Descriptive Treatise on Brazil*, written by the Portuguese settler Gabriel Soares de Souza¹³, owner of a sugar plantation in Bahia. This work, published in Portugal in 1587, fulfilled a demand that the Portuguese court imposed on the settlers arriving in the new land: the identification of the riches that were available there that could satisfy Portugal’s immediate needs. Dedicating his writings to King Philip I, the author optimistically assured the ruler that, at a modest cost, Portugal would be able to become the sovereign of a great empire. That first major survey of the coastal region provided detailed descriptions of the habits and costumes of various indigenous tribes, the first settlements established by European explorers, navigable rivers and the plentiful natural resources, such as the wood-providing trees and medicinal plants that were there in abundance. Comprising a survey of the fauna and flora of the extensive Brazilian coast, all data collected by

12 The letter written by Pero Vaz de Caminha (1450–1500) is the best known testimony of the first Portuguese expedition commandeered by Pedro Álvares Cabral, which landed in Porto Seguro, in what is now the state of Bahia, on 22 April 1500. As the Portuguese Crown chose to keep news of the new territory secret, the letter remained unknown until the nineteenth century. The original text was most recently edited by the Brazilian writer Rubem Braga (1999).

13 Souza, 1974.

Soares de Souza were based exclusively on the knowledge and identification systems of Amerindian peoples.

About 300 species of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians as well as invertebrates were described and defined as the ‘natural provisions of the land’. Souza’s survey encompassed the wildlife (fauna and flora) of the richest



Map 2.

Distribution of biomes over the Brazilian territory. A biome is defined as a collection of fauna and flora whose characteristics emanate from specific geological and climatic conditions. As of the sixteenth century, the Atlantic Forest – the most biodiverse of Brazil’s six Brazilian biomes, host to some 1.6 million animal species, including insects – became the main source of natural resources extracted by European explorers. Created by Andrew Johnson based on d-maps https://www.d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=4845&lang=en

Introduction

Brazilian biome, the Atlantic Forest,¹⁴ covering the coastal territory from the states of Rio Grande do Norte (north-east) to Rio Grande do Sul (south), in an expansive corridor with diverse altitudinal levels, from the coastal strip to the high escarpments of the Serra do Mar. Worthy of mention is the fact that, according to the *Red Book of Brazilian Fauna Threatened with Extinction*,¹⁵ published in 2018, there are 8,922 species and sub-species of vertebrates in Brazil, including 732 mammals, 1,979 birds, 732 reptiles, 973 amphibians and 4,506 fish, without even considering the diversity of invertebrates. As over time, researchers continue to identify and register new species, these numbers grow, testimony of the incalculable value of Brazilian biodiversity.

Moreover, the *Descriptive Treatise on Brazil* is also recognised as emblematic insofar as it revealed the degree of knowledge that native peoples had developed and their objective contribution to the construction of Brazilian culture, society and the economy. Most of the terms used to this day to refer to the country's diverse animal and plant species are the names that indigenous peoples used to identify them in the sixteenth century, words subsequently incorporated into the Portuguese language. In this regard, this treatise as well as many other pre-colonial and colonial records are reliable testimonies of the way a body of indigenous knowledge was systematically appropriated by, and often transmitted through the coloniser. Indigenous peoples were decisive agents who contributed to the systematic process of exploration of the extensive Brazilian territory, providing vital understanding of its plentiful resources and wealth. Although continually ignored as historical actors, the silencing of the Amerindian peoples was an incomplete process: their experiences and perspectives persisted, emerging from the accounts and travel diaries of European missionaries, military men and cartographers.

Colonial narratives on native animals reveal the deep correlation between a pre-scientific gaze aligned with a mercantilist European logic profoundly influenced by the Catholic Church. Worthy of mention is the personal narrative style of Ambrósio Fernandes Brandão, a New Christian and owner of sugar plantations in Olinda and Paraíba from 1583 to 1618. In his book, *Dialogue on the Wonders of Brazil*, he described, in a good-humoured and colloquial tone, the social and environmental conditions that prevailed in the north-east

14 Brazilian territory extends itself over six different biomes with distinct environmental and biodiversity characteristics: the Atlantic Forest (Mata Atlântica), Pantanal, the Cerrado, the Caatinga, the Pampas (Pampa) and the Amazon (Amazônia).

15 Published by the Instituto Chico Mendes de Conservação da Biodiversidade – ICMBio/Ministry of Environment (2018).

at the end of the sixteenth century.¹⁶ In the chapter devoted to the animals 'of air, earth and water', their behaviour was explained through recourse to terms commonly associated with human emotional attributes, such as love, intelligence and solidarity, thus transmitting the principle of integration of facts of nature and human behaviour that had guided pre-scientific medieval thought.

During the period of Dutch occupation, from 1624 to 1654, in several parts of north-east Brazil, the most significant administrative and military control came from the court of Prince John Maurice of Nassau-Siegen, from 1637 to 1644. Nassau's doctor, the Dutchman Willem Piso, considered one of the founders of tropical medicine, wrote *A Natural and Medical History of the West Indies*, published in Amsterdam, in 1658.¹⁷ His book, known as the most important work on Brazil written before the nineteenth century, offered an interesting approach to the colonial environment, its climate, endemic diseases and their forms of treatment, as gleaned from his observation of methods of cure practiced by native peoples. Native species were grouped into two major categories: 'aquatic, flying and terrestrial animals that can be eaten', and 'poisonous animals and their antidotes'.

I found significant literature on colonial medicine that presents detailed descriptions of native practices that made use of diverse plants and of the parts of different animal species for treating countless tropical diseases and epidemics. Jesuit missionaries recorded and shared information on Amerindian therapeutics, vital for the survival of Europeans in the new territories.

In the early 1800s, under intense pressure from the British Empire, King John was obliged to move the court to the colony, where diverse tensions related to the colonial system had taken hold, as well emergent antagonisms regarding the Portuguese ideological domain. The desperate move from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro, in January 1808, was followed by the opening of the ports to friendly nations. This signified the establishment of free trade and permits to install factories within Brazilian territory. In the next years, the Military Academy, the Royal Library and the Imperial Publishing House were also created. The opening of ports also initiated the arrival of large numbers of foreign naturalist expeditions, lured by the diversity of Brazilian nature and the colonial environment. Botanists, zoologists, palaeontologists, artists, merchants, military men and European travellers recorded personal observations, inspired by the new science that was emerging in Europe, and by a critical vision of the social

16 Brandão, 2005. This book was completed in 1618 but not published until 1930, through an initiative of the Academia Brasileira de Letras. The text used in this research was the digital version, published in 2005.

17 Piso, 1957.

Introduction

conditions that prevailed in a distant Portuguese colony. Diaries and ‘travel literature’ became a popular new genre no longer tied to the precepts dictated by the Portuguese Crown and the Church. Many naturalists’ texts and diaries were published, describing the countless expeditions carried out within Brazilian territory over the course of the nineteenth century.

These expeditions also demonstrated the deep dependence of European naturalists on the Amerindians and individuals of mixed ethnicity for the activities and surveys they carried out. These local and anonymous actors who held ample knowledge on the nature and habitats of particular animal and plant species were so essential to the success of the expeditions that, on some occasions, they awakened the jealousy of European specialists who felt threatened by the power of an empirically-acquired understanding that turned lay people into naturalists on their own account.¹⁸

As I carried out my quest for information on the colonial period, the convergence of iconographic records of the period and discursive narratives provided refined insights into those who were given no voice in historical record. A sort of symbiotic construction of art and nature went beyond the potential impasse related to issues of ‘visibility’ and ‘intelligibility’.¹⁹ A variegated testimony of human–animal partnership provided by European artists such as the German Johan Maurice Rugendas and the French Jean-Baptiste Debret, to name just two, provided valuable material to enable greater understanding of these diversified relationships. The artist’s eye, often attuned to the strange and the unexpected, has the potential to reveal channels of recognition for things words cannot explain, or which seem unusual in daily life.²⁰

Additional contributions from contemporary researchers have been fundamental in filling in the many gaps left by official history, complementing sources and enabling a greater perception of contexts of interconnection and interdependence in such singular time periods and circumstances. Moving beyond static approaches, recent studies that are substantiated by a plurality of sources and methodologies enable us to recognise that non-human animals were not mere objects, but active participants in the hybrid landscape of colonial relationships.²¹

Stories of this ‘first globalisation’ that brought different peoples and societies of the world closer together are usually told from specific economic, political

18 In this regard, Lorelay Kury (2012: 200) observes that ‘Cowboys and farmers that became naturalists stirred anger in the doctor from Montpellier, as if they meant to steal the fame of his own work’.

19 Belluzzo, 1994.

20 Camphora, 2018.

21 Roque et al., 2018.

and social perspectives. The ecological and biological consequences of crossing the oceans were an intrinsic part of these encounters and confrontations, provoking changes in the cultural systems and worldviews of these societies. Human and non-human animals were appropriated and expatriated through the network of relationships that connected the Americas, Europe and Africa, flowing in several directions following transatlantic routes.²²

As observed by Felipe Vander Velden, Brazil emerges from this process as the result of the joint but not necessarily orchestrated action of human beings and other animals, which had a 'decisive position' within colonial dynamics.²³ The relationships and positions shared by cattle and enslaved Africans, in Brazil as well as on the African continent, were discussed in a sensitive and consistent approach on the history of subjectivities that emerged from this significant tie and the way it is reflected in the field of popular traditions, as expressed in the Brazilian *bumba-meu-boi* festivities.²⁴

A quantitative approach to the economic dynamics associated with animal traction as provided by mules, reveals a vigorous business that emerged around them from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.²⁵ I obtained further data on the value of mules, usually relegated to the background in relation to horses, from the website of the American Mule Museum.²⁶

Whaling represented a significant economic activity promoted along the vast Brazilian Atlantic coastline from 1614 to 1801, in the form of the Portuguese 'Royal Fish' monopoly and, after that, over the course of the nineteenth century, despite the near-complete eradication of this species that visited the warm waters of South Atlantic to give birth and nurse their calves. The activity has been the focus of many scholars involved in research on the huge and continuous worldwide trade based on widespread, unregulated and intense exploitation of several large cetacean species.

Horses' role within colonial society, closely associated with the transmission of European values and habits, expressed tangible and intangible components of colonial power over the new territory. Contemporary studies of equestrian cultures invoke the regional and cultural implications of these interactions

22 Brito et al., 2018.

23 Vander Velden, 2015: 36.

24 *Bumba-meu-Boi* is one of the most important expressions of Brazilian folklore. It is a dance that evokes the death and resurrection of a bull, part of the popular repertoire of several states. Viviane Lima de Morais's doctoral thesis (2009) is an excellent in-depth analysis of the dance and its connections to the colonial slavery regime.

25 Suprinyak, 2006; Suprinyak and Restitutti, 2014.

26 www.mulemuseum.org

Introduction

and their impact on the making of the major Brazilian horse breeds.²⁷

Contemporary anthropological research has offered unprecedented contributions toward a greater understanding of the complex associations established between non-human animals and Amerindian cultures.

These diverse sources have been essential in filling in the gaps of the conventional historical approach on the Amerindian ethnicities that inhabited the territory of Portuguese America. The scarce references that can be found on this subject tend to reflect partial and Eurocentric views that suffer from systematic uninterest in Amerindian cosmologies. Anthropologist Felipe Vander Velden's work has been crucial, supplying a consistent and sensitive groundwork enabling me to develop some novel considerations on indigenous interspecies relations, essential within the context of human–animal studies in Brazilian historiography.²⁸

The chapters that follow reflect plural gazes and perspectives and signal the themes that emerged most frequently from the sources. I have adopted a storytelling style as the best way to harmonise the collection of narrative fragments that span the vast period that this research covers. It was not my intention to structure my narrative chronologically, as the numerous situations that I describe were concomitant, overlapping phenomena that in some cases persist even today. I have included a timeline that identifies the major formative episodes in the history of Brazilian human–animal relations from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries and provides a broad overview of these occurrences.

Throughout the text, there is frequent mention of the many species that comprise the rich native Brazilian fauna, many of which will be unknown to my readers. In order to make them easier to identify, I have included a small glossary with basic data on each species which uses their popular name, as well as offering some illustrations taken from engravings done by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira on the expedition he carried out between 1783 and 1792. Lastly, I apologise to my readers for the excess of commentaries and references that appear throughout the text, justified by the extensive research my work has required. This wide range of perspectives paved the way for a coherent and inclusive approach of Brazil's history that certainly will be enriched by future investigations. Brief commentaries on social and cultural aspects of the long colonial period are essential for a basic contextualisation of the singular conditions that formed Brazilian society, in an environment that was marked by the destruction of millions of Amerindian and African lives and countless

27 Adelman and Camphora, 2020.

28 Vander Velden, 2012.

non-human beings, and by connections between culturally distant universes. In this regard, it is worth emphasising that a large part of the narratives that are reproduced here were written from the dominant hegemonic and Eurocentric perspective of their time, and subject today to revision within contemporary Brazilian historiography.

The first chapter, 'The natural provisions of the land', explores the initial conditions of territorial occupation in which native animals, particularly those identified as a food source, guaranteed the survival of the European explorers who disembarked in Brazil. Particular animal species were almost immediately turned into products that were sold in Europe. The experiences of Portuguese explorers within the new lands were guided by native habits and customs, the discovery of new tastes, as well as the awe inspired by unknown animals. Some of the first impressions recorded in the sixteenth century became part of Brazilian custom. Until the end of the nineteenth century, game meat was sold door to door by street vendors who made their way through the streets of the city of Rio de Janeiro, at that time the nation's capital.

The second chapter, 'In sickness and in health', examines the peculiar association of certain animals with the treatment of particular diseases. Colonial medicine, sustained by the principles postulated by classical medicine and by Amerindian therapeutics, prescribed formulae based on the use of animal horns, teeth, claws, bones, hides, hooves, shells and tallow. In a certain sense, animals or their non-edible parts could become medications or amulets. Upon observing particular animals, such as the brown howler (*guariba*) monkey, which used certain plants to cure its own wounds, Europeans also learned new types of cures that were to guarantee their survival within the colonial context.

The third chapter, 'Hunters and whalers', turns to the extensive literature that records the hunting practices of native people and Europeans. As a component of cultural identities and values, hunting activities brought 'barbarian' natives and 'civilised' Europeans closer. With the establishment of the first sugar plantations, the introduction of cattle and establishment of the first settlements, the hunter took on an indispensable role as someone who dealt with the 'harmful' presence of wildlife that represented a constant threat to human safety and the colonial economy. At the same time, from the sixteenth century onwards, the extensive and systematic capture of animals, taken dead or alive, served the varied interests and curiosities of private collectors and natural history museums all over Europe, whose collections included thousands of native specimens from the New World. Whaling activity monopolised by the Portuguese Crown remained a significant colonial enterprise for almost three centuries. Countless records of this activity provided painstaking descriptions

Introduction

of methods of capture in which the calves were often harpooned in order to attract the mother whale. It was a spectacle that aroused enthusiasm and brought small crowds to the beaches where the whales were brought in.

The fourth chapter, 'Animals that disembarked in Brazil', records the introduction and adaptation of domesticated animals coming from Europe to the New World, placing particular salience on cattle, defined as 'a commodity that transports itself'. This decisive agent in the process of land occupation was the mainstay of activities on sugar plantations, in mines and in the settlements that later became towns and cities. The earliest hamlets were set up in areas with the best pastures, and the roads connecting these settlements often consisted of routes opened up as cattle were driven over the land.

The fifth chapter, 'Horses, mules and *mulatos*', examines the tangible and intangible attributes of traction animals, horses and mules – creatures that represented a cheap and abundantly available source of power. While owning a horse involved privileges that designated membership within the colonial elites, such as the concession of titles and special rights to a 'horseman', mule herds and ox-carts were the very motor force used to carry colonial products to the ports, as well as distribute imported European products to the major settlements on Brazilian territory.

The sixth chapter, 'Whipping posts and slaughterhouses: The city of Rio de Janeiro in the nineteenth century', depicts a colonial city marked by backwardness and by its isolation from major metropolises and the Western world. On Brazilian farms and plantations, as well as in Rio de Janeiro, the nation's capital, little distinction was made between the status of enslaved people and animals, sometimes allotted the same jobs. Furthermore, until the end of the nineteenth century, meat production and distribution conditions were deplorable: slaughterhouses set up in the city offered low quality meat at exorbitant prices, while in rural areas large amounts of meat, with nowhere to be sent for consumption, were routinely wasted. The chapter provides a look at a web of skills, abilities and interests associated with land occupation, survival and the colonisation of the Brazilian territory.

