

Travelers and the writing of animal economics in Brazil (19th century)¹

Os viajantes e a escrita da economia animal no Brasil (Século XIX)

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Abstract

The article analyzes, from the perspective of foreign travelers, the importance of pack animals – mules, oxen, and horses – in shaping commercial networks and territorial integration in Brazil between the colonial period and the Empire. It seeks to understand the so-called “four-legged economy,” an expression used here to refer to the set of economic and logistics activities dependent on animal consumption, traction, and transport – essential elements for the circulation of people, goods, and wealth. Accounts by Langsdorff, Luccock, Saint-Hilaire, Spix and Martius, Henderson, Isabelle, and Dreys are examined. When describing routes, fairs, and commercial practices, they reveal Eurocentric and comparative perceptions of the colony's material and productive life. The study shows how *tropeirismo* (the muleteer activity) consolidated routes, connected the pastoral South to the mining regions and the Court, and formed an internal economic network sustained by animal mobility. Thus, it demonstrates that travel narratives, more than mere descriptions, constitute interpretive instruments for understanding and representing an economy based on animal traction and its significance in the Brazilian territory integration process.

Keywords: foreign travelers; *tropeirismo* (muleteer activity); livestock; territorial integration; animal economics.

Resumo

O artigo analisa, a partir do olhar de viajantes estrangeiros, a importância do uso de animais de carga – mulas, bois e cavalos – na estruturação das redes comerciais e na integração territorial do Brasil entre o período colonial e o

¹ The term “animal economy” is used here figuratively to designate the set of productive and commercial activities sustained by the use of draft animals—mules, oxen, and horses—and not in reference to the physiological concept employed in the medical sciences of the period. The expression seeks to convey the idea of an economic network driven by animals, whose strength was essential for the functioning of the domestic market and for the territorial integration of 19th-century Brazil.

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Império. Propõe-se compreender a chamada “economia sobre quatro patas”, expressão aqui utilizada para designar o conjunto das atividades econômicas e logísticas dependentes do consumo, da tração e do transporte animal, elementos essenciais à circulação de pessoas, mercadorias e riquezas. São examinados os relatos de Langsdorff, Luccock, Saint-Hilaire, Spix e Martius, Henderson, Isabelle e Dreys, que, ao descreverem caminhos, feiras e práticas comerciais, revelam percepções eurocêntricas e comparativas sobre a vida material e produtiva da colônia. O estudo evidencia como o tropeirismo consolidou rotas, conectou o sul pastoril às regiões mineradoras e à Corte, e formou uma rede econômica interna sustentada pela mobilidade animal. Dessa forma, demonstra-se que os relatos de viagem, mais do que simples descrições, constituem instrumentos de leitura e representação de uma economia baseada na tração animal e de sua importância para o processo de integração do território brasileiro.

Palavras-chave: viajantes estrangeiros; tropeirismo; pecuária; integração territorial; economia animal.

Introduction

Throughout the 19th century, numerous foreign travelers visited Brazil² and recorded their impressions in travel reports, those were many times produced in the context of scientific missions which multiplied from 1808 onwards, with the arrival of the Portuguese Court in the country. Although the initial objective was to describe nature and geography of a territory that was not well known to Europeans, such writings ended up building up broad narratives about society, economy, and the local population’s everyday life³. More than mere objective records, those reports must be understood as a way to write about the Brazilian economy and society, filtered by Eurocentric feelings and literary conventions specific to the travel report genre, which makes them rich sources but at times partial views⁴.

² The term “Brazil” is also adopted here for periods prior to Independence, following both the common usage in accounts by foreign travelers and the historiographical tradition that recognizes the existence of a territorial and social unit referred to as “Brazil” before 1822. Cf. ABREU, João Capistrano de. *O descobrimento do Brasil*. 1. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Darcy Ribeiro, 2013. (Coleção Biblioteca Básica Brasileira, v. 11); MELLO, Evaldo Cabral de. *Um imenso Portugal: história e historiografia da formação do Brasil*. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2002.

³ HOLANDA, Sérgio Buarque de. *Visão do Paraíso: os motivos edênicos no descobrimento e colonização do Brasil*. São Paulo: Brasiliense; Publifolha, 2000. (Grandes Nomes do Pensamento Brasileiro).

⁴ Mary Louise Pratt analyzes the narratives of travelers as productions inserted in asymmetric power relations, in which colonizers and colonized interact unequally, but not without cultural exchange. PRATT, Mary Louise. *Os olhos do império: relatos de viagem e transculturação*, Bauru, SP: EDUSC, 1999.

For example, Auguste François Biard, who explored Brazil in the mid-19th century, illustrates how the country was judged using European civility patterns in aspects that impacted the material life organization. That painter reported the moments before his travel to Brazil, received with “surprise” and “disapproval” by his European contemporaries, who believed that “one does not set foot in this country unless one intends to be its Emperor. Were you, by any chance, appointed Emperor of Brazil?”⁵ After arriving in this country, Biard emphasized that “the climate makes Europeans as lazy as the inhabitants from the South after they arrive in Brazil”⁶. This excerpt shows that the traveler’s critique to the “New World” was culturally comprehensive, reinforcing the idea that it was constantly evaluated and very often diminished in comparison with the European civilizational center.

Not only did the lenses of the European traveler of the 19th century describe Brazil, but it also judged its progress based on liberal civility and sedentary life values. Such perspective of progress and discipline is noticed in the observation of Southern indigenous populations:

The generation that currently occupies the Mission territory is far and forgotten of the lazy habits of their parents; they accepted in good faith the manners and obligations of sedentary life, and nowadays belong, by habit and conviction, to the community of civilized men, specially after Brazil’s emancipation and the establishment of liberal institutions, following which they are admitted into the great Brazilian family, with equality of administration and rights.⁷

This excerpt confirms the view that the way to progress, mainly regarding the territorial and economic organization depended on the imitation of the European sociopolitical model.

Even if such comparative and judgmental view is inherent in the reports, it is undeniable that from the travelers’ perspective, it was possible to capture the type of existing society in different periods, habits, circulating ideas and, mainly, details of the economy of that time. From the North to the South of the country, the strengths and weaknesses that pervaded the social

⁵ BIARD, Auguste François. *Dois anos no Brasil*. Brasília: Senado Federal, Conselho Editorial, 2004. (Edições do Senado Federal, v. 13), p. 11.

⁶ *Idem*, p. 35.

⁷ DREYS, Nicolau. *Notícia descriptiva da província do Rio Grande de São Pedro do Sul*. Introdução e notas de Augusto Meyer. Porto Alegre: Instituto Estadual do Livro, 1961. (Coleção Continente, Estante dos Forasteiros, n. 1), p. 156.

structure of the time were recorded, in its urban and rural environments, as well as details related to nature, and flora and fauna, one of its greatest targets⁸.

Based on these considerations, we opted for considering travelers' reports as historical sources due to their descriptive and interpretive characteristics. While describing landscapes, people and economic activities, those observers produced narratives which contain foreigners' perceptions about the territorial and social features they observed. Those documents allowed us to examine how animal and goods circulation was translated into language and image, thus revealing values, contrasts, and expectations of a European audience watching the "tropical world". The choice of these sources aims at seeing animal economics within a comparative and symbolic perspective, without intending purely economic quantification. However, it seems relevant to mention that such descriptions many times convey subjective impressions and value judgements, which express more the foreign sensitivity than local aspects.

Among the several aspects recorded by travelers, the economy dynamics associated with animals stood out, that is, breeding, managing and circulating cattle, horses and mules were activities that supported the territorial integration in Brazil in the 1800s. By means of their descriptions, travelers such as Saint-Hilaire, Langsdorff, Luccock, Dreys, Isabelle and Henderson not only observed the centrality of animals in economic life, but also built representations about roads, caravans, fairs and markets, revealing both the structuring role of that economy and its logistic and social frailties.

This attention is not only drawn by naturalist curiosity, but rather by the insertion of the country in scientific and philosophical discussions being held in Europe. From the Enlightenment onwards, the study of animals was included in the debate about civilization, progress and nature mastering. Keith Thomas (1983), in *Man and the Natural World*, shows how the relationship between human beings and animals became a moral and economic issue in the 18th and 19th centuries. Thus, the observation of Brazilian practices of animal breeding, transportation and trading represented, for travelers, a

⁸ For an analysis of scientific missions in Brazil, mainly experiences by naturalist travelers and official instructions that guided their practices, see: KURY, Lorelai. *Viajantes-naturalistas no Brasil oitocentista: experiência, relato e imagem. História, Ciências, Saúde - Manguinhos*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 8, supl., p. 863-880, 2001. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-59702001000500004>; PATACA, Ermelinda Moutinho; PINHEIRO, Rachel. *Instruções de viagem para a investigação científica do território brasileiro. Revista da SBHC*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 3, n. 1, p. 58-79, Jan./Jun. 2005; Neil Safier, *Measuring the New World: Enlightenment science and South America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

privileged field to evaluate the adaptation of colonial societies to “natural” laws and economic conditions⁹.

Based on this framework, this study focuses on the Center-South of Brazil, understood as a process of human irradiation with economic purposes – or what was called “the search for wealth in the backlands”¹⁰ –, starting from captaincy of São Paulo, including Paraná (who only became autonomous in 1853) toward southern provinces, mainly Santa Catarina and Rio Grande de São Pedro¹¹.

The capture of animals occurred in the Province of Rio Grande de São Pedro and from there, they would go to distribution centers in São Paulo, mainly Sorocaba, which supplied to the Center-South of Brazil, specially Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro, thus consolidating a circulation network that was essential for the domestic market and the colony’s economic integration and later, for the Brazilian Empire. However, such interaction was more economic than political or social, since the south region remained relatively peripheral in relation to the central power, even if it was indispensable for the supply.

⁹ The theme is also inserted in the emerging field of History of Animals, or History of the relationships between human beings and other animals, a research line that seeks to understand multiple economic, cultural and symbolic interactions. This field started to draw attention from the pioneer studies by Keith Thomas, *Man and the natural world: changing attitudes in England - 1500-1800* (1988), and Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate* (1989), which investigated the ways modern societies built up meanings and practices around animals. In Brazil, even if it is still recent, the area has been consolidating with works by Nelson Aprobato Filho, Regina Horta Duarte and other researchers linked to USP, UFMG and UFRJ, who discuss relationships between human beings, nature and culture in a historical perspective. See: THOMAS, Keith. *O homem e o mundo natural: mudanças de atitude em relação às plantas e aos animais, 1500-1800*. Translation: João Roberto Martins Filho. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1988; RITVO, Harriet. *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989; APROBATO FILHO, Nelson. *O couro e o aço: sob a mira do moderno – a “aventura” dos animais pelos “jardins” da Paulicéia, final do século XIX/início do XX*. 2007. Thesis (Social History Doctorate Program) – Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2007. DOI: 10.11606/T.8.2007.tde-16072007-113730; DUARTE, Regina Horta. *História dos animais no Brasil: tradições culturais, historiografia e transformação*. *História Ambiental Latinoamericana y Caribeña (HALAC)*, v. 9, n. 2, p. 16-44, 2019.

¹⁰ The expression “wealth of the backlands”, as emphasized by John Manuel Monteiro, designated the expeditions intended for the capture of indigenous people, carried out by the *bandeirantes*. Its use represents the continuation of a process put into practice by individuals from São Paulo, regarding the appropriation of natural wealth of the backlands, mainly from the territory which became Rio Grande de São Pedro, where the animals of interest abounded. Cf. MONTEIRO, John Manuel. *Negros da terra: índios e bandeirantes nas origens de São Paulo*. 2. ed. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2022, p. 72.

¹¹ Due to the lack of a consolidated expression to characterize the territory, several designations were used, such as “Continent”, “Continent of São Pedro”, “South”, “Backland”, Viamão, Fields of Viamão. In the 18th century, documents referred to the region as “São Pedro do Rio Grande do Sul” or “Rio Grande de São Pedro”. These variations show the historical evolution of the territory name, defined as “Rio Grande do Sul” only after the Proclamation of the Republic.

A complex network of transport, supported by breeding, transporting and trading animals, became essentially a “four-legged” movement, which created roads, villages and markets. Nevertheless, such movement also reinforced social and regional inequalities since it benefited mainly the elites who bred and traded animals while overloaded poor free workers and enslaved ones, involved in the job of breeding and transporting.¹²

The constant flow resulted in many links, with a human contingent needed for the capture and breeding and in the subproduct industry – mainly the jerked beef and hide industry¹³ –, in conducting the mule trains to the distribution centers and the final market, or in higher positions, represented by owners and traders.

As a result of this economic movement of animal circulation, ways were consolidated that reduced distances and integrated different regions of the territory. Not only did those roads serve the transport of cattle and goods, but they also favored the formation of settlements, villages and parishes, thus contributing significantly to the urbanization of towns. At the same time, those were fragile ways, constantly degraded, and whose lack of maintenance hampered the progress of the flows they supported.

In such context, foreigner travelers’ views offer an external perspective about the way those routes worked, and the conditions faced by local inhabitants and the caravans in movement.¹⁴ This constant wear and tear of the roads reveals the intensity of the cattle driving and muleteer activity and the territory dependence on this animal movement.

¹² About the insertion of poor free men in the slave-owning order, see FRANCO, Maria Sylvia de Carvalho. *Homens livres na ordem escravocrata*. 4. ed. São Paulo: Fundação Editora da Unesp, 1997. To analyze cattle driving as economic and social activity, cf. GOULART, José Alípio. *Tropas e tropeiros na formação do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Arthur Cezar Ferreira Reis: Estabelecimentos Gráficos Borsoi, 1961. (Coleção Temas Brasileiros).

¹³ About jerked beef economy and the organization of *charqueadas* (meat drying plants) in Rio Grande do Sul, see: CORSETTI, Berenice. *Estudo da charqueada escravista gaúcha no século XIX*. 1983. Dissertation (History Master's Program) – Instituto de Ciências Humanas e Filosofia, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, 1983; PESAVENTO, Sandra Jatahy. *História do Rio Grande do Sul*. Porto Alegre: Mercado Aberto, 1980; GUTIERREZ, Ester Judite Bendjouya. *Barro e sangue: mão-de-obra, arquitetura e urbanismo em Pelotas (1777-1888)*. Pelotas: UFPel, 2004.

¹⁴ ELLIS JÚNIOR, Alfredo. “O ciclo do muar.” *Revista de História*, São Paulo, ano I, n. 1, p. 73–82, Jan.–Mar. 1950; APROBATO FILHO, Nelson. “Trilhando caminhos com tropas de mulas.” In: BORREGO, Maria Aparecida de Menezes; NASCIMENTO, Ana Paula (orgs.). *Mundos do trabalho*. São Paulo: EDUSP, 2022, p. 44–49. About the history of mule trains and the transition to mechanized means of transport, see LINS, Sílvia Queiroz Ferreira Barreto. *De tropas, trilhos e tatus: arredores paulistanos no auge das tropas de muares à instalação das estradas de ferro (1855–1885)*. 2003. Thesis (Social History Doctorate Program) – Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2003.

Langsdorff, who was in Brazil in different moments from 1803 onwards and remained here up to his definite return to Europe in 1830, started one of his expeditions from São Paulo toward the interior, in a land journey. He observed that on the way to Rio de Janeiro, "animals could not walk firmly since the way was destroyed due to the great movement of mule trains and oxen, mainly, which were taken to Rio de Janeiro".¹⁵ The traveler noticed that the same roads that were used by local inhabitants also served the caravans, which emphasized the precariousness of those spaces as a function of constant use and lack of maintenance.

The strengthening of the routes used by muleteers¹⁶ also contributed to the mobility in the region so that travelers could go through ways that otherwise would not be useful. In the foreigner's view, colonial society showed its level of necessity in relation to animals – either for the transportation of people and cargo, essentially dependent on mules and horses, or in the food aspect, related to the meat supply.

Taking that into account, this article proposes an analysis of the Brazilian animal economics of the 18th century based on foreigner travelers' views, understanding their reports as discursive constructions that join empirical observation and cultural mediation. The travelers' descriptions, more than simple registers, configure a specific type of knowledge about the territory and its economic practices, marked by the European point of view and interpretive categories specific to those times. Therefore, the objective is not to revisit animal economics in its entirety, but rather to understand how it was noticed, described and symbolically represented by those authors.

Rio Grande de São Pedro: Breeding and Supply Center

Regarding animal economics, the province of Rio Grande de São Pedro stood out as a strategic region, even though it was explored late by the Overseas Empire.¹⁷ It was initially seen as an area of access to Colonia del

¹⁵ BERNARDINO DA SILVA, Danuzio Gil (org.). *Os diários de Langsdorff*. Vol. 2: São Paulo, 26th August 1825 to 22nd November 1826. Translation: Márcia Lyra Nascimento Egg and others. Campinas: Associação Internacional de Estudos Langsdorff; Rio de Janeiro: Fiocruz, 1997, p. 59.

¹⁶ HERBERTS, Ana Lucia. *Arqueologia do Caminho das Tropas: estudo das estruturas viárias remanescentes entre os rios Pelotas e Canoas*, SC. 2009. Thesis (History Doctorate Program) – Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, 2009; BUENO, Beatriz Piccolotto Siqueira; BARRETO, Alice Pereira; DIAS, Guilherme Silvério. *Cultura material e práticas sociais no Caminho do Viamão: paisagens topográficas, arqueologia do cotidiano das viagens, perfil e bagagem dos tropeiros (séculos XVIII e XIX)*. Anais do Museu Paulista: História e Cultura Material, São Paulo, v. 29, p. 1-44, 2021. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-02672021v29d1e18>.

¹⁷ OSÓRIO, Helen. *O império português no sul da América: estancieiros, lavradores e comerciantes*. Porto Alegre: Editora da UFRGS, 2007. (Coleção Academia II).

Sacramento, an enclave considered essential in the dispute over the Rio de la Plata, Rio Grande de São Pedro became a center for the breeding and supply of livestock, from the 18th century onwards.

The permanent population of the region started around 1723, associated with the animal trade between the Prata and the Brazilian colony.¹⁸ Colonization started from the advance of explorers from São Paulo and Laguna toward the South, in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. These movements were linked to both the confrontations with indigenous populations and disputes with the Spanish, as well as to the need to consolidate the Portuguese-Brazilian presence in border areas. The foundation of Laguna (1684) and after that the opening of ways to Rio Grande de São Pedro marked the start of this process, which integrated the region to the colonial system through the supply of food and the creation of the base for the future livestock economy.¹⁹

In a document from 4th February 1746, the governor and general captain of the captaincy of São Paulo, Antônio da Silva Caldeira Pimentel, reported that he had ordered the opening of a way through the interior of Rio Grande de São Pedro toward his captaincy.²⁰ The job was carried out by colonel Cristóvão Pereira de Abreu, who, according to the report, “used resources from his own farm to do it”.²¹ This piece of information shows the strategic importance of

KÜHN, Fábio; COMISSOLI, Adriano. *Administração na América Portuguesa: a expansão das fronteiras meridionais do Império (1680-1808)*. Revista de História, São Paulo, n. 169, p. 53-81, Jul./Dec. 2013.

¹⁸ FORTES, João Borges. Rio Grande de São Pedro, povoamento e conquista. Rio, Gráficos Bloch, 1940, p. 18.

¹⁹ Set of documents referring to Domingos and Francisco de Brito Peixoto, which describes the first efforts of Portuguese colonization in extreme south, since the foundation of Laguna (1684) up to the opening of roads to Rio Grande de São Pedro, emphasizing the role of São Paulo explorers in land occupation, confronting indigenous groups and supplying the region with goods, which marked the start of the formation of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. These records are found in: SÃO PAULO (Província). *Documentos interessantes para a história e costumes de São Paulo*. Vol. XXIV. São Paulo: Typographia da Companhia Industrial de São Paulo, 1898. p. 64, 118, 196-197. Retrieved from: <http://bibdig.biblioteca.unesp.br/handle/10/6967>. Access on: [17/09/2025].

²⁰ Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. Projeto Resgate - São Paulo Alfredo Mendes Gouveia (1618-1823). AHU ACL CU_023-01, Cx. 16\Doc. 1580, p. 4/72.

²¹ Christovão Pereira D'Abreu was one of the first Portuguese explorers to cross the territory of the current state of Rio Grande do Sul and, due to his activities as cattle drover, he helped the Portuguese crown in the process of exploring and colonizing the region. His relationships had wide ramifications, from the Colonia del Sacramento to the Portuguese court. He appears in several moments in the documents related to the Prata Region and Rio Grande de São Pedro. In a certificate of 28th November 1725, the governor of the New Colony of Sacramento certified that Colonel Christovão Pereira D'Abreu loaded a ship bringing aid to his stronghold in a dispute with the Spanish, and for this he deserved all the favors they wished to bestow upon him. On 22nd March 1746, when D'Abreu lived in Rio de Janeiro, a certificate of good standing was requested for him, which states that he was born in Fontão, within the jurisdiction of the town of Ponte de Lima, archdiocese of Braga. Next, several clerks attested that there was nothing discrediting on his record and that he had been granted the honors of squire and knight. The document

that way and also the role of individuals linked to the elites in the construction of routes that could support animal trade.

The expeditions coming from São Paulo to Rio Grande de São Pedro to obtain animals pervade the regional history of that period. Herds roaming freely in the southern fields became the solution to fundamental problems in the colony, namely, transportation and meat supply. The opening of roads, however, did not occur without challenges. There were interruptions in the construction and improvement projects, the population of the place was only formed later, after the implementation of those routes – and the conflict with indigenous populations was constant.

A continuous and intense flow was observed throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. As emphasized by Caio Prado Júnior, cattle from Campos Gerais and Curitiba supplied São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro for some time, but from the mid-18th century onwards, Rio Grande de São Pedro started to take over the central role of supplying “animals to the central-south region”.²²

Several foreign travelers recorded these developments in their reports. Arsène Isabelle (1807–1888), in *Viagem ao Rio da Prata e ao Rio Grande do Sul*²³ (Travel to Rio da Prada and Rio Grande do Sul), was one of the most critical writers, he observed that the plains of the Jacuí and other rivers, which were quite fertile, were affected by floods that forced cattle breeders to keep large areas of land to protect the herds in rainy periods. According to him, the ambition of cattle breeders, who owned herds with tens of thousands of animals, favored the appropriation of huge land areas, mainly in Missões and on the border with the Eastern Band. Isabelle considered this process a hurdle to the agricultural and demographic progress since many centuries would be necessary to populate the province.²⁴ Despite his critique, he recognized the economic relevance of the region by stating that: “It is now an indispensable province to Brazil, since it is the only one able to supply meat, tallow, hides, horses, mules, corn, and even wheat”.²⁵

also recorded that his services were noteworthy for being extraordinary. SPALDING, Walter. *Construtores do Rio Grande de São Pedro*. Volume 1. Porto Alegre: Ed. Sulina, 1969. P. 148. Projeto Resgate – São Paulo Alfredo Mendes Gouveia (1618–1823). AHU_ACL CU_023-01, Cx. 16\Doc. 1580, 5/72.

²² PRADO JR., Caio. *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo – colônia*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2011, p. 214.

²³ ISABELLE, Arsène. *Viagem ao Rio da Prata e ao Rio Grande do Sul*. Translation and note about the author: Teodomiro Tostes; Introduction: Augusto Meyer. Brasília: Senado Federal, Conselho Editorial, 2006. (Edições do Senado Federal, v. 61).

²⁴ *Idem*, p. 221

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 240.

In the same publication, Isabelle addressed enslaved work in Southern Brazil, emphasizing that “the bundles, however heavy they may be, are carried by Black people to the customs yard to be examined. From there, other Black people (because in Brazil the African race serves the same purpose as horses and mules) transport them to their destination”.²⁶ This comment is revealing because, while dehumanizing, it also highlights the dimension of manual labor in the daily life of animal economics.

Nicolau Dreys²⁷, German trader based in Porto Alegre also recorded one of the most complete overviews of the business. For him, the province's wealth was based on the abundance of “herbivorous quadrupeds”, that is, horses, mules, sheep, and cattle. He described the ranches, responsible for extensive livestock farming, and the *charqueadas*, which processed meat, hides, and byproducts destined for local and external trade. Estimates show that the *charqueadas* (meat-drying plants) slaughtered approximately 400,000 head of cattle annually, resulting in roughly 1.8 million arrobas (approximately 2,000 kg) dried meat, in addition to 400,000 hides, tallow, grease, tongues, and other byproducts. By land, they also exported 10,000 to 12,000 head of cattle, 12,000 to 15,000 mules, and 4,000 to 5,000 horses, almost always paid for in cash—a sign of the monetary importance of the activity.²⁸

The productive organization, according to Dreys, was supported by two types of facilities: ranches, where animals were kept free up to the time of being sold, and the *charqueadas*, which processed castrated steers over five years old. The local law, which regulated cow slaughtering, preserved herds. It is worth noting that mules, abundant in the southern plains, were not used in Rio Grande do Sul, but kept wild until they were sold to other provinces of the empire. Such particularity shows how the province produced to export, supplying regions whose economy depended directly on animal transportation.²⁹

Enrico Schutel Ambauer³⁰ (1840–1899), a Milanese traveler, arrived in the South in the spring of 1858. In his accounts, he highlighted the

²⁶ ISABELLE, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

²⁷ DREYS, *op. cit.*

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 142-143.

For a comparison with the reality of Southern *charqueadas*, see the study on *charqueadas* in Mato Grosso in: NASCIMENTO, Luiz Miguel do. *As charqueadas em Mato Grosso: subsídio para um estudo de história econômica*. Dissertation (History Master's Program) – Faculdade de Ciências e Letras, UNESP, Assis, 1992.

²⁹ DREYS, *op. cit.*, p. 130-131.

³⁰ AMBAUER, Enrico Schutel. *A Província do Rio Grande do Sul – Descrição e Viagens* (1873, unpublished

muleteer tradition as a fundamental link in the integration with São Paulo. In Tupanciretã, in the central region of the province, he reported that “they encountered muleteers from São Paulo who were leading mules to the Curitiba fair”³¹, signaling the trade interprovincial character. In Cruz Alta, he described a modest village with strategic importance for being a crossing point for muleteers. A scene recorded by him illustrates the everyday presence of men from São Paulo: “an old man from São Paulo, justice of the peace from that parish was sitting behind a rustic table, next to an individual who wrote, in the middle of a trial”³², showing how natural it was for men from São Paulo to go through and settle down in that territory.

Saint-Hilaire observed horse breeding in Rio Grande de São Pedro and criticized what he considered negligence of the local inhabitants, who, according to him, did not feed the animals with maize and left them free in the fields. For this reason, in dry periods, the animals became thin and weak and could only travel short distances forcing travelers to “take a large number of spare horses with them or change horses at each ranch”.³³ As observed by Mary Louise Pratt³⁴ (1999) in *Os olhos do império* (the Empire's Eyes), travel reports worked as an instrument of colonial mediation, joining scientific curiosity and cultural distinctions. In such perspective, the roughness of local practices opposes the European idea of rationalization and technical progress.

Another traveler, the Englishman John Luccock³⁵, who lived in Brazil between 1808 and 1818, highlighted the vastness of the ranches in Rio Grande do Sul. According to him, the smallest properties had “four square leagues”, while the largest reached “one hundred square leagues”, sheltering thousands of animals. Luccock also described the rodeo, the moment when the cattle were gathered, branded, and handled, an event that, amidst the monotony of the fields, took on the character of a pastoral spectacle. His description

manuscript). The manuscript was cited by Valter A. Noal Filho, *A colonização alemã no Rio Grande do Sul: a visão de Enrico Schutel Ambauer*, 2003, but was not found in public collections; part of the text was published in *Revista Trimensal do Instituto Histórico Geográfico e Etnográfico do Brasil*, tomo XXXI, parte II, 1868, e na *Revista Trimensal do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, tomo LI, parte II, 1888.

³¹ NOAL FILHO, Valter Antonio. “A viagem de Ambauer pela Província do Rio Grande”, *Estudos Ibero-Americanos*, Porto Alegre, PUCRS, v. 38, supl., p. S223-S239, Nov. 2012, p. 233.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 236.

³³ SAINT-HILAIRE, Auguste de. *Viagem ao Rio Grande do Sul. Translation: Adroaldo Mesquita da Costa*. Brasília: Senado Federal, Conselho Editorial, 2019, p. 76.

³⁴ PRATT, *Os olhos do império*, op. cit., p. 42.

³⁵ LUCCOCK, John. *Notas sobre o Rio de Janeiro e partes meridionais do Brasil: tomadas durante uma estada de dez anos nesse país, de 1808 a 1818*. Translation: Milton da Silva Rodrigues. 2. ed. São Paulo: Livraria Martins, Biblioteca Histórica Brasileira, s.d.

helps to illustrate the scale of livestock farming and the routine of extensive breeding.³⁶

Likewise, Auguste de Saint-Hilaire observed land property concentration and social inequalities in Rio Grande de São Pedro, emphasizing the power of large landowners and the authoritarian character of local relationships, aspects that reveal the intertwining of livestock wealth and social domination.³⁷

Reading all those travelers' accounts enables the characterization of the animal economics network as structured from a productive base in Rio Grande do Sul, comprising extensive breed ranches and *charqueadas* for the processing of meat and hides. A circulation axes was formed between the extreme South and the center of the colony originated from the Missões region, the former core of the Jesuit reductions, from Cruz Alta or from other muleteer routes, heading towards Curitiba and, later, Sorocaba, which allowed the southern production to be linked to the São Paulo fairs.

Thus, Rio Grande de São Pedro gained recognition as a supply province for the colony and, later, for the Empire, with animals and their byproducts. In addition to describing extensive livestock farming, a critical narrative was also produced about land concentration, exemplifying how travelers' writings interpreted the animal economics as abundant, but contradictory.

São Paulo – Sorocaba Fair

The captaincy of São Paulo was a space of production and stood out as a point of redistribution in the animal economics for being a link between the coast, the mines and the pastoral south. Although animals were bred in the captaincy, its greatest importance resulted from its role in promoting the trade integrating Rio Grande de São Pedro, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais. Such integration occurred in the Sorocaba Fair, which started as a small village and became a dynamic center where fortunes were built in the trading activity.³⁸

The French naturalist Auguste de Saint-Hilaire³⁹, who was in São Paulo in 1819 and 1822, observed that agriculture was the captaincy main economic

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 144.

³⁷ SAINT-HILAIRE, Auguste de. *Viagem ao Rio Grande do Sul*, op. cit., p. 347-348.

³⁸ BACELLAR, Carlos de Almeida Prado. *Viver e sobreviver em uma vila colonial: Sorocaba, séculos XVIII e XIX*. São Paulo: Annablume/Fapesp, 2001, p. 252

³⁹ SAINT-HILAIRE, Auguste de. *Viagem à comarca de Curitiba (1820)*. Translation: Carlos da Costa Pereira. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1964. (Coleção Brasiliiana, v. 315).

resource, but animal trade was also a strong economic activity. He called it the “successful mule trade”, emphasizing that men from different social classes, that is, “from industry workers to farmers, when manage to save some money, go to the south to buy wild mules and sell them in their own region or take them to Sorocaba”.⁴⁰ His description shows that the fair held in Sorocaba attracted large breeders and small traders alike.

Baron Langsdorff also recorded his impressions on the animal economics vitality. He advised travelers not to buy animals in Santos, but do it in Cubatão, “since throughout the year, large mule trains come here bringing sugar, coffee and other goods from the Province of São Paulo”.⁴¹ At another moment, he described the city and the fair: “even before arriving to the small town, we saw thousands of mules, which at this time of the year are brought here from Curitiba and other southern regions to be sold”. For the baron, that was a spontaneous market, which “now is the main source of livelihood and food for the local population”.⁴² Those remarks revealed the organic nature of the trade, since Sorocaba was not originally planned as a trading post, but became central due to the strength of the muleteer routes. Both Saint-Hilaire and Langsdorff, when highlighting the fair vitality, built up a discursive image of the mule trade as a central phenomenon in the life in São Paulo, which transformed the fair in a symbol of regional integration.

Spix and Martius⁴³, German naturalists, who traveled throughout Brazil between 1817 and 1820, reinforced the idea that São Paulo was more than just a passageway, but rather a strategic piece in the network. About the ways of São Paulo, the travelers recorded that in the places they traveled through “the road was, in fact, wide and quite open due to the passage of many herds, often thousands of mules, which, coming from Rio Grande, pass through here”.⁴⁴ Later, they also observed that “from Rio Grande do Sul and from São Paulo thousands of head of cattle are sent annually to slaughtering, horses and mules are also spread to the neighboring captaincies”.⁴⁵ These excerpts describe the intensity of the animal flow and Sorocaba’s position as

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

⁴¹ BERNARDINO DA SILVA, Vol. II, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

⁴² BERNARDINO DA SILVA, Vol. II, *op. cit.*, p. 52-53.

⁴³ SPIX, Johann Baptist von; MARTIUS, Carl Friedrich Philipp von. *Viagem pelo Brasil (1817-1820)*. Tradução de Lúcia Furquim Lahmeyer. Brasília: Senado Federal, Conselho Editorial, 2017. 3 v., il. (Edições do Senado Federal, v. 244-A).

⁴⁴ *Idem*, p. 198-199.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 82.

the main axis of redistribution, from where the regions of Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro were supplied.

The report by Medeiros⁴⁶, published in 1864 and reproduced in the *Boletim Paulista de Geografia* (1949) (Geography Bulletin of São Paulo), describes the importance of the mule fair of Sorocaba in the 19th century, which is considered one of the most important phases in the economic life of that city. According to that author, the fair gathered tens of thousands of mules coming from Rio Grande do Sul, attracting buyers from several regions, mainly Minas Gerais. The event transformed Sorocaba into a vibrant space, with peddlers, money changers, artists, and traders of diverse backgrounds. This description complements that of foreign travelers for highlighting the urban and social dimension of the event: during the fair, the city changed its pace, only returning to its routine when the fair was over.

In the extreme south, Rio Grande de São Pedro consolidated from the 18th century onwards as a space of extensive breeding and processing in *charquedas*. The region had open and fertile fields for the livestock, able to support large-scale herds. Ranches and *charqueadas* became the pillars of production, supplying both local and external markets. The cattle provided meat and hides, while mules and horses were bought by cattle drovers, muleteers and miners from São Paulo to meet the demands of transport and circulation in other provinces.

The Sorocaba fair was not characterized by production, but rather by trade. Occupying a strategic position in the interior of São Paulo, it became the main commercial center for the trade of mules and cattle in Brazil in the 19th century. Travelers such as Saint-Hilaire, Langsdorff and Spix & Martius emphasized the intensity of mule trains that came from Rio Grande and the Campos Gerais toward Sorocaba. There, animals were negotiated and sent mainly to Minas Gerais to work in mining and agriculture, and to Rio de Janeiro, which became the political and urban center of the Empire.

The comparison between the two spaces shows a functional division in the network. While Rio Grande de São Pedro is the breeder and exporter center of cattle, mules and horses as well as a supplier of jerked beef, hides and other byproducts, Sorocaba is the intermediary center, responsible for integrating the flow coming from the South and the demands from Minas Gerais and Rio

⁴⁶ MEDEIROS, F. L. d'Abreu. "A feira de burros de Sorocaba". In: F. L. d'Abreu Medeiros, *Curiosidades brasileiras*. Rio de Janeiro: Eduardo & Henrique Laemmert, 1864, p. 20-28. Excerpt reproduced in: *Boletim Paulista de Geografia*, São Paulo, n. 1st March 1949.

de Janeiro. Both Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais, the consuming centers, depended directly on those products to support their domestic transport (mules) and the food supply (meat).

Reading all those authors also reveals the contradictions of the system. In the south, large scale breeding faced logistic difficulties and the land ownership concentration, while in São Paulo the fair attracted wealth and movement, but also implied in high costs for cattle drovers/muleteers and traders. However, the reports show that without that network, economic integration would not be possible, mainly in the center-south in the colonial and imperial period.

Such complementarity between the south and the interior of São Paulo shows the animal economy integrative role for joining production, redistribution and consumption in the same circuit. It is from these dynamics that the importance of consumer markets is understood. This theme will be addressed below.

Consumer markets: Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais

The animal economics circuit reached the provinces of Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais, which became the large consumer center in the colonial and imperial Brazil. For being producers of agricultural and mineral goods, those regions depended on mules, cattle and horses, which came from the south and the interior of São Paulo, for transportation and food supply.

The foreigners' records help to understand concrete aspects of that economy. Among the descriptions of material life and productive practices, data about the breeding, trade and circulation of animals emerge, showing the internal functioning of the colony and the Empire. In his study on Antônio da Silva Prado — a cattle trader and tax collector who maintained close ties with the South, from where he acquired the animals and organized the march of the beasts to Sorocaba —, Maria Thereza Petrone emphasizes that the expansion of sugar cane and coffee production in the center-south generated great demand for pack animals and cattle mainly destined to supply fresh meat to Rio de Janeiro, the main consumer market. At that time, sugar mill owners and coffee growers from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo became the main buyers of pack animals, essential for transporting the produce to the export ports. Thus, cattle trade was fundamental to supply Rio de Janeiro

after the arrival of the Royal Family in 1808, when the demand for meat and pack animals intensified.⁴⁷

This historiographic reading confirms what travelers such as Langsdorff observed directly during their expeditions. The baron described the crossing of the Paraíba river as a strategic point of circulation between Minas Gerais and the Empire capital. Around 2,000 people and 4,000 mules circulated there monthly, paying fees between 250 and 370 réis each. The inspection point, with its commander, secretaries, and corporals were supposed to oversee traffic and curb the smuggling of gold and diamonds, but Langsdorff noted that the control was only partial.⁴⁸ His observations reveal both the importance of animals in the colonial logistics and the institutional frailty regarding the circulation volume.

The Englishman James Henderson, author of *A History of the Brazil*⁴⁹ (1821), portrayed the caravans that connected the interior to the city. Henderson observed drovers of varying builds, dressed in cotton shirts and trousers, wide-brimmed hats and overcoats, leading horses and mules that traveled long journeys of two to three months. Different garments, equipment and saddles, many times fantastic or antique, showed the functional and cultural adaptation of those journeys. Henderson also highlights the courtesy and communication between travelers, who used the city to sell products from the interior and buy manufactured items, thus consolidating specific streets as trade centers. His remarks reveal how the mobility of people and animals not only supported the circulation of goods but also integrated economically the interior and the city.⁵⁰

Henry Chamberlain, in his considerations published in 1822, emphasized the precariousness of the ways linking the city of Rio de Janeiro and the interior and, at the same time, the absolute dependence on animal transportation for the circulation of goods. He also reported that mule trains containing from twelve to twenty animals, each one carrying around two hundred pounds, crossed the mountain toward the capital, bringing varied cargo to supply

⁴⁷ PETRONE, Maria Thereza Schorer. *O Barão de Iguape: um empresário da época da Independência*. São Paulo: Instituto Nacional do Livro, 1976. 177 p. (Brasiliiana, v. 361), p. 10-11.

⁴⁸ BERNARDINO DA SILVA, Danuzio Gil (org.). *Os diários de Langsdorff*. Tradução de Márcia Lyra Nascimento Egg e outros. 3 v. Campinas: Associação Internacional de Estudos Langsdorff; Rio de Janeiro: Fiocruz, 1997, p. 7-8.

⁴⁹ HENDERSON, James. *A history of the Brazil: comprising its geography, commerce, colonization, aboriginal inhabitants*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 60 a 61.

that market. The bundles were protected from weathering by pieces of crude hides, and the muleteers, usually from São Paulo, were described as reliable men, respected for their activity and courage. Chamberlain also recorded material and symbolic aspects linked to that practice, such as the use of the poncho, which served both as clothing and bedding, and the social distinction between the mounted drover—identified by the bridle and stirrups of solid silver—and those who traveled on foot.⁵¹

Authors such as Henderson and Chamberlain, while describing the caravans and drovers, not only informed about logistics and supply. They also described a worldview in which the precarious ways contrast with the indispensability of the mule trains, thus reinforcing the metaphor of an Empire supported “on four legs”.

The iconography by Jean-Baptiste Debret complements those written descriptions. In his *Viagem pitoresca e histórica ao Brasil*⁵² (Picturesque and historical travel to Brazil), he portrayed mules, drovers and oxcarts within the city, showing that even at the court, animal transportation was essential. The French artist helped to visualize what travelers like Henderson, Chamberlain and Langsdorff described with words.

Although the main focus of this study is cattle driving and muleteer activities, it seems relevant to mention that oxcarts also played an expressive role in the configuration of such animal economics.

In several regions of Brazil, mainly in the routes linking the interior to port zones, oxcarts complemented the work of mule trains, being used to transport large and heavy cargo, such as agricultural produce, building material and goods destined to the urban supply. In addition to revealing the diversification of technologies of animal transportation in the 19th century, oxcarts also demonstrated a type of collective and community work, many times family businesses, which were part of the productive and logistic chain of villages and farms.⁵³

⁵¹ CHAMBERLAIN, Henry. *Vistas e costumes da cidade e arredores do Rio de Janeiro em 1819–1820: segundo desenhos feitos pelo T. Ten. Chamberlain, da Artilharia Real, durante os anos de 1819 a 1820, com descrições*. Rio de Janeiro; São Paulo: Livraria Kosmos Editora; Erich Eichner & Cia. Ltda., [s.d.]. (Coleção de Temas Brasileiros, v. 1), p. 83.

⁵² DEBRET, Jean-Baptiste. *Viagem pitoresca e histórica ao Brasil*. Tomo I (vols. I e II). Translation and notes: Sérgio Milliet. São Paulo: Livraria Martins, 1940. Jean-Baptiste Debret, *Viagem pitoresca e histórica ao Brasil*. Tomo II (vol. III). Translation and notes: Sérgio Milliet. São Paulo: Livraria Martins, 1940.

⁵³ About the importance of oxcarts in colonial and imperial Brazil, see SOUZA, Bernardino José de. *O Ciclo do Carro de Bois no Brasil*. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1958. (Brasiliana, v. 15).

The constant presence of pack, draft, and riding animals in Brazilian cities reveals a little-explored dimension of the animal economics: its integration into urban life. In the streets of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and other important towns, the daily circulation of mule trains, oxcarts, and horses was common, transporting products from the interior, supplying local commerce, and ensuring the mobility of people and goods.

This coexistence between rural and urban areas indicates that the “four-legged economy” was not restricted to the countryside, but also structured daily city life, linking the urban space to the productive dynamics of the interior.⁵⁴

Rio de Janeiro received all kinds of goods daily – from food and building material to charcoal and firewood – brought on boats, mule trains and enslaved workers, fueling a network that supported the Court and its inhabitants.⁵⁵ In this same vein, John Luccock documented the precariousness and centrality of this system by noting that even the queen herself traveled in “a simple carriage pulled by common mules”, a symbolic image of the distance between the opulence of the Court and the fragility of its means of transport. For the traveler, the most relevant aspect was that all urban life and communication with the interior were only possible thanks to organized caravans of fifty or more animals, each carrying one hundred pounds of goods – without which it would be impossible to maintain the economy and daily life of the capital.⁵⁶

Some years later, the remarks by Auguste François Biard reinforced the idea that in Rio de Janeiro, mules and horses competed with more modern urban transportation, revealing the animal economics permanence, even if a modernization process was in development.⁵⁷

However, in Minas Gerais, cattle driving and the muleteer activity structured the economic life of villages such as São João del-Rei. According to Luccock, oxen, mules, horses and their byproducts – cheese, jerked beef, among others – supported the regional trade and enabled the population to

⁵⁴ About the presence and importance of animals in the urban environment, see: McSHANE, Clay; TARR, Joel A. *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. See also: APROBATO FILHO, Nelson, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵ About the role of cattle drovers and muleteers in the supply circuit, see: ZEMELLA, Mafalda P. *O abastecimento da capitania das Minas Gerais no século XVIII*. 2. ed. São Paulo: Hucitec; Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1990. The author highlights that many muleteers, in addition to being couriers, also possessed capital invested in pack animals, merchandise, and credit instruments, because “over time, the muleteer became rich” (p. 141).

⁵⁶ LUCCOCK, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁵⁷ BIARD, *op. cit.* p. 35-36.

purchase imported goods, mainly coming from England. Regular caravans, with fifty or more animals, traveled the route to Rio de Janeiro several times a year, serving as a supply infrastructure.⁵⁸

These crossed testimonies describe the workings of a network that linked the livestock-producing south, the redistributing interior (Sorocaba), and the consumer centers of Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais. The cattle-driving trade was not merely a means of transport, but a structuring economic sector, capable of generating tax revenue, energizing urban life, and integrating distant regions of the territory. The contradictions—poor roads, high costs, and ineffective fiscal controls—do not negate the central fact that the animal economics was the material basis that sustained the integration between the interior and the main centers of consumption and administration in Brazil during the 19th century.

However, it seems relevant to highlight that the city of São Paulo was also consolidated as a consumer and redistribution hub, connected to trade with the South as well as supplies from the interior and the coast. Through the streets of São Paulo, mule trains, oxcarts, and horsemen circulated, ensuring the transport of goods, raw materials, and manufactured products.

Thus, the animal economics sustained not only the integration between the interior and the coast, but also the functioning of São Paulo's urban fabric itself, whose economic and social life depended heavily on animal power.⁵⁹

Final considerations

Observations from travelers such as Saint-Hilaire, Langsdorff and Luccock allow the understanding of economic circuits that linked the South to the central portion of the country as well as the ways Europeans represented this animal economics as a sign of exoticism and backwardness. From their narratives, it is possible to visualize the economic integration network in Brazil in the 1800s in the light of foreigners' experiences and perceptions.

A comparative analysis of the reports shows that foreign travelers not only recorded the economic activities linked to animals but also built up a narrative on the functioning of Brazil. Their remarks reveal both the material importance of breeding, transport, and trading of mules and oxen and the

⁵⁸ LUCCOCK, *op. cit.* p. 312.

⁵⁹ About the presence and importance of pack animals in the city and province of São Paulo, see: APROBATO FILHO, Nelson, *op. cit.*

cultural perceptions that transformed that economy into a symbol of life in the colony. By describing cattle drovers and muleteers, fairs and routes, those observers offered a view that combines empiricism and moral judgement, projecting on the country a mirror of the aspirations and contradictions of the European 19th century. Thus, the so-called “animal economics” emerges in the travelers’ writings, as a way of understanding Brazil, at the same time productive, vast and unequal, from the lenses of alterity.

The simultaneous examination of the three central spaces — Rio Grande de São Pedro, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro/Minas Gerais, demonstrates that that economy was not limited to a specific productive sector, but rather constituted an infrastructure of Center-south integration in colonial and imperial Brazil.

The pastoral south provided material base, with its herds and byproducts, while the interior of São Paulo, mainly Sorocaba, worked as a redistribution center, where the movement of caravans was organized and acquired new directions; and, finally, the consumer markets of Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais, which were at the same time urban and mining areas, depended directly on that flow to keep their economic and social vitality.

What emerges then is a dynamic and interdependent network, in which each center can only make sense in connection with the others. The extensive breeding in the South would not have the deserved scale without the Sorocaba fair. Sorocaba would not have prospered without consumer markets; and Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais could not have sustained their populations, nor promoted their commercial circuits, without the animal transport that ensured their continuous supply.

This system allowed for more than just the transport of goods; it also created roads, shaped landscapes, structured social practices, and consolidated the circulation of money, goods, and people. Ultimately, it was one of the material conditions that enabled the very cohesion of the Brazilian territory before the arrival of railroads or centralizing projects of the imperial state.

Thus, understanding animal economics is not only about recovering an aspect of the economic past, but it is about recognizing the role of cattle drovers, mule trains, and horses as historical agents of integration. Between the open field of Rio Grande, the lively fairs of Sorocaba, and the hectic streets

of Rio de Janeiro, a vital network was created, whose logic explains great part of the economic and territorial connections of Brazil in the 1800s.⁶⁰

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⁶⁰ About the recent debate on animal agency and the broadening of History borders beyond human beings, see: DOMAŃSKA, Ewa. *A história para além do humano*. Organization: Taynna Marino and Julio Bentivoglio. Rio de Janeiro: FGV Editora, 2024; HOWELL, Philip. “Animals, Agency, and History”. In: KEAN, Hilda; HOWELL, Philip (Eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History*. New York: Routledge, 2018; BOVENKERK, Bernice; KEULARTZ, Jozef (ed.). *Animals in Our Midst: The Challenges of Co-existing with Animals in the Anthropocene*. Cham: Springer, 2021. (The International Library of Environmental, Agricultural and Food Ethics, v. 33). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-63523-7>; APROBATO FILHO, Nelson. “Já passamos o Éden”: Machado de Assis e a abertura de caminhos para uma agência animal compartilhada no Brasil. *Historia Ambiental Latinoamericana y Caribeña (HALAC)*, v. 14, n. 3, p. 66–93, 2024. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32991/2237-2717.2024v14i3.p66-93>.

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