

06 DECEMBER 2021

ANIMAL MARKETS AND WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING: ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES



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ONLINE WORKSHOP

Organised by Frédéric Keck, Arnaud Morvan and Felipe F. Vander Velden

The Covid-19 pandemic has raised suspicions over Chinese « wet markets » as the potential origin of SARS-Cov2, largely because of the zoonotic risks of putting wild animals such as bats or pangolins in contact with domesticated or semi-domesticated species like racoon dogs, in a human environment. The China Wildlife Protection Association showed that in 21 Chinese cities, 50% of restaurants sell wild animal products and 46% of inhabitants have eaten game. The World Wildlife Fund estimates that 25% of bush meat consumed in Beijing between 2012 and 2016 are bought online. If wildlife farming and selling are crucial problems in China due to the use of animal body parts in traditional markets, they reveal global dimensions of wildlife trafficking, and at the same time, they contrast with Western understandings of the division between wildlife and livestock, or between markets where animals are sold as meat and zoological parks where they can be seen alive. Anthropological comparisons are thus necessary to understand what an animal market is and who the actors in charge of managing and regulating the traffic from rural areas to farms and markets are. Global controversies on zoonotic risks and animal welfare should be placed within local discussions around which animals are considered as protected wildlife, living commodities used as meat, pharmaceutical products, handicrafts or ornaments. The conference will gather anthropologists who work in different fields across the world and cast social issues around animal markets in such a way that the dialogue with wildlife associations becomes fruitful.

A workshop organised by the research group “Anthropology of zoonoses”
<https://www.zoonoses-research.com/results-publications>

To register please send an email to arvan7933@gmail.com



PROGRAM (Paris, UTC +1)

(9:00) General introduction to the workshop by Frédéric Keck, Felipe Vander Velden & Arnaud Morvan

(9:15) Mao's Bestiary: Medicinal Animals and Modern China
Chee Pui Yee

(9:45) Three families of live poultry traders in Central China: first results of a field survey conducted in Chengdu in 2021
Nan Nan

(10:15) Two dogs with one stone: Urban markets and shifting cosmologies in South Korea
Julien Dugnoille

Pause: 15mn

(11:00) Multi-species ethnography of live animal markets in Cambodia: preliminary results.
Arnaud Morvan

(11:30) Slithering Globalization. Serum markets and snake venom commodification in India.
Mathieu Quet

(12:00) General discussion

(12:30) Lunch break

(14:00) From the forest to the market stall. Anthropological insight on bushmeat trade in Central Africa
Romain Duda

(14:30) Rethinking wet market classifications.
Bing Lin

(15:00) (De)regulating animal markets: legal and illegal trade in the donkey skin business
Mariana Bombo Perozzi Gameiro

Pause: 15 mn

(15:45) Savage meats and crafts: indigenous peoples and wildlife trafficking in the Brazilian Amazon.
Felipe Vander Velden

(16:15) First approaches to the illegal wildlife market in Uruguay
Juan Martin Dabezies

(16:45) Quebec Fur trade 2.0
David Jaclin

(17:15) Conclusive remarks and general discussion (30mn)

ABSTRACTS

Dr Liz P.Y. Chee

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Mao's Bestiary: Medicinal Animals and Modern China

In my newly published book, I've traced an aspect of Chinese medicine and pharmacology that has been surprisingly neglected despite its controversial character, or maybe because of it. Although the book went to press just at the onset of COVID-19, and does not deal directly with zoonotic disease, it helps fill the gap in our knowledge of how and why "medicinal animals" have proliferated in the modern period, arguing that the early Communist period is an overlooked watershed. My main argument is that while animals (alongside plants and minerals) were accorded medicinal value from ancient times in China, their use expanded and transformed as they became a resource for state medicine in the Mao period. What the book calls *faunal medicalization* was a process that, by the current century, would contribute to the endangerment and extinction of animals as far afield as Africa and South America, but had roots in Sino-Soviet relations, The Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and other phases of the first few decades of Communist rule. One of its aspects was the institutionalized "farming" of formally wild-caught animals for their parts and tissues, partly to fuel increased overseas exports which survived despite trade embargos. Farming also increased the number of species marketed as medicine. Even for 'traditional' medicinal species, the logic of production sometimes meant infusing even more body parts with curative powers. The Tokay Gecko, for example, was first farmed for its re-growable tail, but is today sold as a whole body on a stick. Scientific studies also expanded treatment regimes and delivery methods, and labs worked on substituting the tissue of more common animals for those facing extinction through medicalization (e.g. water buffalo horn used to replace rhino horn). Faunal medicine made the transition to capitalism under Deng's reforms, when bear bile farming – a technology likely pioneered in North Korea - becoming the signature and most controversial of all faunal drug industries.

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Nan Nan

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Three families of live poultry traders in Central China: first results of a field survey conducted in Chengdu in 2021

How have live poultry markets in China been regulated since the Covid-19 crisis? How have live poultry traders (some of whom are also farmers) managed to continue their business activity after this crisis, in a condition of increasingly restrictive sales, both imposed by the state and new consumer trends? I present here the first results of a field survey conducted in Chengdu, in southwest China, and its rural surroundings during the months of May and June 2021. I will draw the portrait of three families I met in my field research: a family (father and son) of live poultry traders in the suburbs of the city, and two couples of chicken farmers and traders in the countryside. These three case studies illustrate different forms of live poultry markets, spanning wholesale and retail markets, as well urban and rural markets, and their respective forms of regulation. They also highlight how different actors have adapted their strategies, either to preserve business in the event of control, or to gain market share from competitors.

Dr Julien Dugnoille
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Two dogs with one stone: Urban markets and shifting cosmologies in South Korea.
(with Miwon Seo-Plu and Frédéric Keck)

While South Korea was considered a model for social distancing and mass testing of the population during the Covid-19 pandemic, the tradition of eating dog meat has been perceived by some as jeopardizing the modern image of the nation and bringing it dangerously close to the Chinese practice of “wetmarkets”. In this article we explore how the urbanization policies that municipalities have pushed forward in the past decades for traditional markets have stigmatized dog meat production, animal slaughter and the holding of live animals in cages as unsightly and unsanitary activities. On the basis of interviews conducted with dog retailers, activists and veterinarians, we argue that these “modernizing” policies have been accompanied by the imposition of a “naturalist” paradigm on these markets and that this imposition revealed the ontological nuances and perfusions that coexist in contemporary South Korean society.

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Arnaud Morvan
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Multi-species ethnography of live animal markets in Cambodia: preliminary results

I will present the preliminary results of a research part of the ANR program “Regulating wet markets: Ethnographic Study of the Perception of Zoonotic Risks after the Covid-19 Crisis” (RegWet) aiming to study Asian wet markets as a site of interspecies relations, where new viruses possibly emerge. This ethnographic study focuses on Cambodia, a place of particular interest because of the presence of a close relative to SARS-Cov 2, recently identified by the Pasteur Institute in the country north-east. This coronavirus has been circulating among different types of local horseshoe bats (genus *Rhinolophus*) for at least 10 years, implying a longstanding presence of the virus in a wild animal reservoir. To analyse the wild / domesticated animal interface and its connexion with humans, my research focuses on two large animal markets in the city of Phnom Penh (Phsar Orussey et Phsar Chba Ampov), where regional food supply enters an urban setting. I am analysing the market spatial organisation in terms of relations between the different species, how various domesticated, semi-domesticated and wild animals are put into contact, and how consumers, sellers, and farmers, are interacting with them in the every-day life of the market.

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Mathieu Quet
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Slithering Globalization. Serum markets and snake venom commodification in India

This communication will focus on the Indian market for snake antivenom serum. Snake envenomation has been acknowledged as a neglected disease by the World Health Organization in 2017; and one major issue pointed by public health organizations in order to overcome envenomation epidemics has been the availability of good quality antivenom. In that regard, the Indian antivenom market shows different dynamics from usually overexploitative, overcommodifying pharmaceutical markets. The market for snake’s serum is characterized by a “low demand, low offer” profile; its international reach is pretty low; the role of public actors is more important than in other subfields of the pharmaceutical sector; it is run by a particular kind of monopoly since the late-1970s – that of an Indian scheduled tribe, the Irulas who procure most of the venom used in antivenom manufacturing. This is from this sidestep that my communication, based on current fieldwork on the politics of serum procurement in India, will engage with the tropes of commodification and trafficking.

Romain Duda

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From the forest to the market stall. Anthropological insight on bushmeat trade in Central Africa

In Central Africa, the increasing urban demand for wildmeat has led to unsustainable hunting rates, now identified as one of the greatest threats to Central Africa's biodiversity. Animals and their meat have become in the last decades the focus of controversy between organizations, political and ethical postures, and between scientific disciplines. Wildlife conservation organizations focus on emblematic species on the verge of extinction (elephant, gorilla, chimpanzee), human rights organizations emphasize that hunting is a central element of the cultural identity of certain peoples and their food security, while experts in public health and emerging diseases stress that more common species (rodents, antelopes, bats, monkeys) may carry pathogens transmissible to humans through consumption or through exposure to body fluids and feces. In this context, being the first link in the bushmeat chain from the forest to the capitals, the Baka and Bayaka indigenous populations (Cameroon, Congo), hold an uncomfortable position: as specialized hunters, they are solicited by buyers who take advantage of a strong urban demand, therefore they are the first actors to run the zoonotic risks, and the legal risk, faced with repressive wildlife conservation policies. The hunting and trade of wild animals is thus at the heart of the great contemporary question that runs through the Congo Basin and on which political postures and world visions are confronted: how to reconcile respect for human rights, health and the prevention of sanitary risks while facing the urgency of the crisis of the 6th mass extinction? This communication will focus on the bushmeat commodity chain in Central Africa and explore the social, economic and biological dimensions of this trade from the perspective of Baka indigenous villages, in Cameroon.

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Bing Lin

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Rethinking wet market classifications

Wet markets have been implicated in multiple zoonotic outbreaks, including COVID-19. They are also a conduit for legal and illegal trade in wildlife, which threatens thousands of species. Yet wet markets supply food to millions of people around the world, and differ drastically in their physical composition, the goods they sell, and the subsequent risks they pose. As such, policy makers need to know how to target their actions to efficiently safeguard human health and biodiversity without depriving people of ready access to food. Here, we propose a taxonomy of wet markets, oriented around the presence of live or dead animals, and whether those animals are domesticated or wild (either captive-reared or wild-caught). We assess the dimensions and levels of risk that different types of wet markets pose to people and to biodiversity. We identify six key risk factors of wet markets that can affect human health: (1) presence of high disease-risk animal taxa, (2) presence of live animals, (3) hygiene conditions, (4) market size, (5) animal density and interspecies mixing, and (6) the length and breadth of animal supply chains. We also identify key factors informing risk to biodiversity. Finally, we recommend targeted, risk-adjusted policies to more efficiently and humanely address the dangers posed by wet markets.

Mariana Bombo Perozzi Gameiro

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(De)regulating animal markets: legal and illegal trade in the donkey skin business

Donkeys played a historical role in the development of modern societies, mainly in Latin America and Africa. It is estimated that about 42 million working donkeys are still used in developing societies, notably for the transport of people and goods, and in other domestic, agricultural or commercial activities. Recently, however, donkeys have been assigned a new role: supplier of raw material for the Chinese pharmaceutical industry. This animal skin is used for the production of ejiao, a blood fortifier according to the Traditional Chinese Medicine. Today industrialized, the ejiao is sold as the cure for many different health problems. The growing market for ejiao led to a sharp decrease in the Chinese donkey population and, therefore, to the import of donkey skin from developing countries. Through a comparative analysis of Brazil and Kenya's cases, this presentation aims to discuss the unstable regulatory environment of the donkey skin trade in these countries, highlighting its impacts on local communities. Legal and illegal activities coexist in these commercial chains, favored by the existence of a large donkey feral population in Brazil, but facing difficulties to establish in Kenya, where social forces tend to reject the consolidation of this market. Interviews and ethnographic fieldwork in both countries provide the empirical elements to the discussion.

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Felipe F. Vander Velden

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Savage meats and crafts: indigenous peoples and wildlife trafficking in the Brazilian Amazon

The hunting of animals from native Amazonian fauna to consume their meat and use parts of their bodies, products and substances is a usual practice and even a definer of indigenous identities in contemporary Brazil: to be an Indian is to be a hunter. These peoples are increasingly connected to regional urban markets, which they often enter through the offer of so-called "forest products", including game meat and handicrafts made with animal parts, especially feather art. Nonetheless, Brazilian environmental legislation characterizes such exchanges as illegal: indigenous peoples can make unrestricted use of native fauna within their officially recognized lands, but not outside them. All trade in native animals between Indians and non-Indians is thus defined as animal trafficking. With this scenario as a backdrop, and taking as an ethnographic context the city of Porto Velho, capital of the state of Rondônia, in southwestern Brazilian Amazon, this communication focuses on the arguments of indigenous peoples in favor of this trade. First, considering the native socio-cosmological reasons that explain the legitimacy of the circulation of wild meat and handicrafts through circuits outside the villages. Second, showing how such reasons, which we can call "internal", are integrated into the constitution of regional markets for indigenous arts and crafts that present contradictory messages to the Indians. In these circuits, the very recognition of their identity is linked to artifacts made with animals, especially feathers, which are sought after by the urban consumers and displayed in homes, commercial establishments and even in public buildings as markers of a certain regional Amazonian identity, as such stimulating the very market that is intended to be opposed.

Juan Martin Dabezies

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First approaches to the illegal wildlife market in Uruguay

This talk aims to present some advances of the first research project developed in Uruguay aimed at characterizing the illegal wildlife market at the national level. The project is framed within an interdisciplinary approach that articulates anthropology and green criminology. It is led by the University of the Republic with the collaboration of the NGO Vida Silvestre Uruguay and the Ministry of the Environment. The work team is made up of biologists and anthropologists. In this project, which is just beginning, we are aiming to characterize supply and demand, with different methodologies and scales. In this presentation, we will share the results of the first meetings with groups that have informally worked on the subject.

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David Jaclin

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Quebec Fur trade 2.0

While the multi-secular economy of the fur trade in Quebec occupies a place of major significance (economical, political, socio-cultural, colonial) in recent North American history, its present activities often remain discreet. In this presentation, I would like to share the 2.0 turn of the Quebec fur trade. From forests to online auctions, through traps and apps, we will follow the intricate path of some animal skins and reflect on the profound ecological and ideological shifts such *commerce* now supports.

To register please send an email to arvan7933@gmail.com



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