

HORSES, STAGS AND BEAVERS: ANIMALS AS PRESENTS IN LATE-MEDIEVAL LIVONIA

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The article discusses the significance of animals in late medieval gift-giving and diplomatic culture. It demonstrates that animals as presents were needed, desired and publicly displayed. Some animals were widely recognized as markers of status. In the case of some other animals, it was their symbolic value that mattered the most. Sources from the medieval Livonian cities indicate the use of the following local and exotic animals and birds as a gift: horse, deer, beaver and turkey. The gifts could also include animal products, such as pelts and garments, or food.

Throughout the centuries, gift-giving has played a significant role in political and social communication. The ritual itself and the choice of gifts reveals a great deal about relations between the donor and the recipient, as well as about the mentality of a particular society. The gift (as well as the counter-gift) had to be something appropriate, that is, with a certain material and symbolic value. It had to be something that the recipient needed or desired, and something considered socially acceptable to give to an individual with a particular social rank. It also had to be something both parties recognized as culturally appropriate.¹

Animals, some more than others, fulfilled these criteria very well.² Particular species were appreciated for their costliness and regarded as status markers.

¹ On the principles of gift-giving and on appropriate gifts, see e.g. **Bumke, J.** *Höfische Kultur: Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter*. 10. Ausgabe. Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München, 2002, 314–317, see also 185–186, 287–289; **Häberlein, M.** *Geschenke und Geschäfte: Die Fugger und die Praxis des Schenkens im 16. Jahrhundert*. – In: *Faszinierende Frühneuzeit: Reich, Frieden, Kultur und Kommunikation 1500–1800*. Eds W. Weber, J. Burkhardt. Akad.-Verlag, Berlin, 2008, 135–149; **Groebner, V.** *Gefährliche Geschenke: Ritual, Politik und die Sprache der Korruption in der Eidgenossenschaft im späten Mittelalter und am Beginn der Neuzeit*. Univ.-Verlag, Konstanz, 2000; *Geschenke erhalten die Freundschaft: Gabentausch und Netzwerkpflege im europäischen Mittelalter*. Ed. M. Grünbart. LIT, Berlin, 2011.

² **Kaestner, N.** *Tiere als Mittel der Repräsentation und Diplomatie im Deutschen Orden im Lichte der Marienburger Tresslerbuches (1399–1409)*. – In: *Perzeption und Rezeption: Wahrnehmung und Deutung im Mittelalter und die Moderne*. Eds N. Henkel, J. Sarnowsky. (Quellen und Studien zum europäischen Mittelalter, 12.) V&R Unipress, Göttingen, 2014, 67–105.

Different animals were naturally valued for various reasons. For instance, a horse as a means of personal transport was needed by almost everybody. On the other hand, a horse was a particularly suitable gift for kings and other rulers, because a horse was an important symbol of courage, power and manhood. It could be an object of representation, because a good horse was expensive, and so forth. In the medieval and early modern periods, when rulers frequently travelled, conducted war and practised hunting, one could be certain that a ruler always needed a horse.³ Animals were also invaluable as a source of food, but it was again very much status-dependent what one could and was allowed to consume. Exotic animals (and their products) brought to European courts from distant lands were appreciated because they were objects of curiosity, and because they were rare and expensive (like any other luxury item).⁴ Some (exotic) animals and birds, such as lions or eagles, also had a great symbolic value, and their images were frequently deployed in heraldry. They were something for the rich and the powerful. All these criteria made certain animals especially appropriate as gifts for a ruler. Animals as presents were needed and desired: they reflected honour and prestige on the recipient as well as on the donor. Therefore it can be claimed that animals played a very relevant role in late medieval diplomatic gift exchange.⁵

Animal-gifts were not something to be hidden in deposits but to be displayed to and admired by as many people as possible, including one's court and visitors. Animals were objects of representation.⁶ Although there is already information on private animal parks or collections of exotic animals from the High Middle Ages, these became more fashionable towards the end of the medieval period. There is evidence for royal animal collections in late medieval England, France, Italy, the Low Countries, Portugal, Germany and Poland. This list may not be exhaustive, and the phenomenon was not limited to Europe or to the Old World. Such collections were used as status symbols not only in secular courts but in ecclesiastical ones as well. For instance, in the fourteenth century, the Avignon popes are known to have kept exotic animals, and some popes even used to travel in the company of both their wild and domesticated "pets".⁷

³ See the data on the horse acquisitions of some English and French kings: **Hyland, A.** *The Horse in the Middle Ages*. Sutton Publishing, Stroud, 1999, 14–17; on the horses presented to or acquired by the Teutonic Order in Marienburg, see **Kaestner, N.** *Tiere als Mittel der Repräsentation und Diplomatie*, 68, 74–75, 90–91, 95–97.

⁴ Aleksander Pluskowski has discussed issues surrounding animals and the meaning of exotic: **Pluskowski, A.** *Narwhals or unicorns? Exotic animals as material culture in Medieval Europe*. – *European Journal of Archaeology*, 2004, 7(3), 291–313; **Pluskowski, A.** *What is exotic? Sources of animals and animal products from the edges of the medieval worlds*. – In: *The Edges of the Medieval World*. Eds G. Jaritz, J. Kreem. (CEU Medievalia, 11.) CEU Press, Budapest, 2009, 113–129.

⁵ **Kaestner, N.** *Tiere als Mittel der Repräsentation und Diplomatie*, 67–94, 102–105.

⁶ **Jaritz, G.** *Zwischen Augenblick und Ewigkeit: Einführung in die Alltagsgeschichte des Mittelalters*. Böhlau, Wien, 1989, 184–185.

⁷ **Kiser, L. J.** *Animals in medieval sports, entertainment and menageries*. – In: *A Cultural History of Animals in the Medieval Age*. Ed. B. Resl. (A Cultural History of Animals, 2.) Berg, Oxford, 2007, 105–106; **Boehrer, B.** *Introduction: the animal renaissance*. – In: *A Cultural History of Animals in the Renaissance*. Ed. B. Boehrer. (A Cultural History of Animals, 3.) Berg, Oxford, 2007, 20–21.

But what was the situation in peripheral countries, such as Livonia, where there were no magnificent courts and where the economic possibilities of the local elites cannot be compared to those in the major countries of Western Europe? However, in Livonia also, local authorities had to receive guests and give them gifts according to their status. They also had to send envoys with gifts to other countries to conduct diplomacy, to strengthen the alliances, and so forth. Animals as presents to local or foreign dignitaries were not unknown in Livonia, although the information on this sort of gifts is not abundant. This article will primarily survey those presents that can be classified as diplomatic, and does not consider other occasions for gift-giving, for instance, those connected to calendar feasts or life-cycle events. The examples are mainly taken from the three largest towns in medieval Livonia: Riga, Tallinn (Reval) and Tartu (Dorpat).⁸ The sources include municipal accounts, church records, and correspondence between local and foreign dignitaries. Records on animals as presents originate mainly from the second half of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth century (the surviving source material from the previous two centuries is generally very scarce). In the following, I will discuss some of these instances in order to demonstrate what kind of animals were chosen as gifts, and to what extent this choice was dependent on animals available in the local natural environment or was influenced by international trends of the time.

Records in the account books of Tallinn and Riga are not very informative regarding the gifts of animals. There is usually just a sentence or two about what was sent to who and how much it cost. Juhan Kreem, who has analysed the reception of guests in Tallinn as reflected in the municipal accounts from 1432 to 1533, has pointed out that most of the gifts sent to the guests comprised wine (40 per cent), beer (36 per cent), food (9 per cent) and fodder for horses (9 per cent). The “other” gifts formed only six per cent of the total.⁹

The most elaborate receptions were those arranged in honour of the overlord, i.e. when a new Master of the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order arrived in Tallinn to receive the oath of fealty from its citizens.¹⁰ These festive entries can be regarded as the most spectacular events taking place in the local context. The town council of Tallinn, in addition to sending wine, beer, and fodder to the Master and his entourage, also tended to give a special present to the Master, sometimes a golden cup with the coat of arms of the town or expensive scarlet cloth.¹¹ However, in February 1536, when Master Hermann von Brüggeneu arrived in Tallinn, the councillors gave him two presents: a golden cup and a live hart

⁸ Throughout the article, modern place-names are used. The historical German equivalent is given in brackets.

⁹ **Kreem, J.** Gäster i Reval under medeltiden: Gåvor i stadens räkenskaper [*Guests in Reval in the Middle Ages: gifts in the town accounts*]. – *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland*, 1998, **83**, 3, 476.

¹⁰ For these events, see **Mänd, A.** Urban Carnival: Festive Culture in the Hanseatic Cities of the Eastern Baltic, 1350–1550. (Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, 8.) Brepols, Turnhout, 2005, 183–200.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 194–195.

(*ein leuendich hertte*) worth 30 marks of Riga.¹² The Middle Low German word *herte*, in modern German *Hirsch*, refers to red deer (*Cervus elaphus*). However, it is also possible that the town scribe who recorded the event did not differentiate between various deer species and used the term *herte* to describe an elk bull (*Alces alces*), the most impressive and wide-spread cervid living in Estonian forests since prehistoric times.¹³ Arnold Süvalep probably thought so, because he translated the *herte* of 1536 as elk (Est. *põder*).¹⁴ However, when Balthasar Russow in his sixteenth-century chronicle lists the wild animals that could be found in Livonia, he correctly mentions elk (*Elende*) and roe deer (*Rehen*), and does not mention red deer,¹⁵ a situation which corresponds with the archaeozoological evidence.

Whether the gift was of a male red deer, or was indeed a bull elk, remains a question since red deer was not native to medieval Estonia.¹⁶ If it was red deer, the town council must have purchased the animal from southern Latvia, or perhaps even from Prussia. There are references to the town councilors in Riga and Tallinn eating red deer (*herte*) and roe deer (*re*) at their drinking feasts at Shrovetide.¹⁷ At least once, in 1486, it was specified that these animals were bought from Danzig (present-day Gdańsk) in Prussia.¹⁸

However, the ritual of gift-giving in 1536 also deserves attention – the stag was guided through the streets up to Toompea hill (Domberg), to the castle of the Teutonic Order.¹⁹ Thus, presenting this wild animal was a public performance that was obviously meant to impress not only the Livonian Master and his entourage but also the audience, that is, the town dwellers. What happened to the animal afterwards is not known. Since there is no information about the animal parks of the Teutonic Order in Livonia,²⁰ the stag was most probably turned into a good meal.

¹² Ibid., 194; see also **Süvalep, A.** Ordumeister Herman von Brüggeneý külaskäik Tallinna 1536. a. ja turniir Raekoja platsil [*The visit of the Livonian Master Herman von Brüggeneý to Tallinn in 1536 and a joust in the Town Hall square*]. – In: Vana Tallinn, I, 1936, 63–64, 76.

¹³ **Паавер К.** Формирование териофауны и изменчивость млекопитающих Прибалтики в голоцене [*The formation of mammals and the variability of mammals in the Baltic States in the Holocene*]. Академия наук ЭССР, Тарту, 1965, 251–259; **Jaanits, L. et al.** Eesti esiajalugu [*Prehistory of Estonia*]. Eesti Raamat, Tallinn, 1982, 301, 391.

¹⁴ **Süvalep, A.** Ordumeister Herman von Brüggeneý külaskäik Tallinna, 64.

¹⁵ **Russow, B.** Chronica der Prouintz Lyfflandt. – In: Scriptores Rerum Livonicarum. Bd. 2. Eduard Frantzen's Verlags-Comptoir, Riga, 1853, 10.

¹⁶ **Паавер К.** Формирование териофауны, 241, fig. 4.

¹⁷ **Mänd, A.** Urban Carnival, 224.

¹⁸ Kämmererbuch der Stadt Reval 1463–1507. Ed. R. Vogelsang. (Quellen und Darstellungen zur Hansischen Geschichte. Bd. 27/1–2.) Böhlau, Köln, 1983, no. 1945.

¹⁹ **Süvalep, A.** Ordumeister Herman von Brüggeneý külaskäik Tallinna, 63–64. It remains unclear though, how they managed to persuade or force a strong wild animal to move up the hill.

²⁰ The lack of textual evidence does not necessarily mean that there were no animal parks in Livonia. Data on the daily life in the castles of the Teutonic Order in Livonia is generally very scarce.

Short records in the municipal accounts do not shed light on the question of why exactly this or that animal was chosen as a gift. In this particular case, the reason behind choosing a stag might have been both practical as well as symbolic. Practical, because a stag in town is certainly an impressive sight and makes a good public performance, and also because it can be turned into venison – food for the nobility. On the other hand, the stag (or hart or deer) was regarded as a symbol of Christ, piety and religious aspiration²¹ – and for those reasons it was a proper gift for a Christian ruler.

It should be added that the choice of such a gift by the town council of Tallinn was not original on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea. For example, in 1478, the town council of Lübeck presented a live hart (*een levendich herte*) to Duke Albrecht of Saxony. In this case, it was specified in the document that the gifts, including the hart, four oxen and twelve sheep, all were delivered to the cook, and thus, were intended for a meal.²²

If a wild animal like a stag was certainly something extraordinary in the urban context, domestic animals had to have other qualities to impress the receiver. The animal that most frequently turns up as a gift in the Livonian sources is undoubtedly the horse.

For instance, in January 1479, the town council of Tallinn bought an extremely expensive horse and sent it as a gift to the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order in Prussia.²³ It is not indicated in the account book what kind of horse it was, where it came from, and what made it so expensive. Neither do we know the reason for sending the gift. It cannot have been connected with the inauguration of a new Grand Master since Martin Truchsess von Wetzhausen had been the Grand Master since August 1477, and the next one was elected in September 1489.²⁴ The only thing that was worth recording was its unusually high price – 80 marks of Riga. It is necessary to set this price in the context of the time. The horses that were kept in the town's paddock (and that probably included both work horses and riding horses), cost 3–5 marks in the late fifteenth century.²⁵ The horses that were used by the town councillors of Tallinn and Riga for representative purposes, such as travelling abroad or to the Diet (*Landtag*) in Livonia, usually cost about 10–20 marks.²⁶

²¹ **Ferguson, G.** *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art.* Oxford University Press, London, 1977, 25. This connotation is, among other things, based on Psalm 42: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God".

²² **Hagedorn, A.** Johann Arndes Berichte über die Aufnahme König Christians I. von Dänemark im Jahre 1462 und des Herzogs Albrecht von Sachsen im Jahre 1478 in Lübeck. – *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Lübeckische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, 1884, 4, 3, 309. In the case of the other animals it was not mentioned if they were alive or already butchered.

²³ *Kämmereibuch der Stadt Reval 1463–1507*, no. 1672: *Item betalt her Johann Grest vor eyn pert, dat de rad unserem heren homeister schenkende und sande, 80 mr.*

²⁴ *Die Hochmeister des Deutschen Ordens 1190–1994.* Ed. U. Arnold. (Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens, 40.) Elwert, Marburg, 1998, 147–148, 150.

²⁵ *Kämmereibuch der Stadt Reval 1463–1507*, no. 2386, 2462, 2463, 2464.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 2004, 2236; *Liv-, Est- und Kurländisches Urkundenbuch. Zweite Abteilung.* Bd. 3. Ed. L. Arbusow. Deubner, Riga, 1914, no. 652; *Kämmerei-Register der Stadt Riga 1348–1361 und 1405–1474.* Bd. 1. Ed. A. von Bulmerincq. Duncker & Humblot, Leipzig, 1909, 316, 321.

In 1500, when the Teutonic Knights were preparing a campaign against Russia (the war actually took place in 1501–1503²⁷), the Livonian Master proclaimed that horses valued at over eight marks had military importance and that no one was allowed to leave the country with them.²⁸ It may therefore be assumed that the horse that was sent to the Grand Master was a warhorse of extraordinary quality, because such horses could cost 10 to 800 times as much as an average riding horse or a peasant's plough horse.²⁹ Perhaps this horse also had a rare colour, for instance, white, which was often associated with rulers and military saints (in particular St George),³⁰ but sadly this information is not included in the source.

In 1488, when an inspector (*visitor*) of the Teutonic Order from Prussia arrived in Tallinn, the town presented him a horse worth 38 marks, two barrels of beer and four bottles of wine.³¹ In 1494, when the town negotiated with the Muscovites about the release of imprisoned Hanseatic merchants in Novgorod, the councillors sent presents to the Grand Duke of Muscovy Ivan III, including a horse worth 40 marks and a crossbow.³² Apparently, these presents did not sufficiently soften the heart of the grand duke because a year later, the town sent him a stallion (*henxst*) worth no less than 100 marks, as well as a knife or a dagger in a silver-gilt sheath.³³ Stallions were often used as warhorses in the Middle Ages due to their natural aggression.³⁴ The extraordinarily high value likewise indicates that the animal sent to Ivan III must have been a warhorse. What cannot be detected from any of the sources mentioned is whether these horses, especially the most expensive ones, were bred in Livonia³⁵ or obtained from outside the country.

In all these instances it was the price of a horse that was the most remarkable quality that had to be recorded. However, there are also cases when the price is

²⁷ See, e.g., **Wimmer, E.** Die Russlandpolitik Wolters von Plettenberg. – In: Wolter von Plettenberg: der grösste Ordensmeister Livlands. Ed. N. Angermann. Nordostdeutsches Kulturwerk, Lüneburg, 1985, 71–99.

²⁸ Liv-, Est- und Kurländisches Urkundenbuch. Zweite Abteilung. Bd. 1 (hereafter LUB, 2. Bd. 1). Ed. L. Arbusow. Deubner, Riga, 1900, no. 1020.

²⁹ **Carey, B. T., Allfree, J. B., Cairns, J.** Warfare in the Medieval World. Pen & Sword Military, Barnsley, 2006, 113; **Morrison, E.** Beasts Factual & Fantastic. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2007, 21; **Hyland, A.** The Horse in the Middle Ages, cf. 75–76 and 150.

³⁰ For example, in 1382, the city of London presented Richard II with a white horse: **Kiser, L. J.** Animals in medieval sports, entertainment and menageries, 108; St George, an exemplary Christian knight, was in medieval art in the dragon episode nearly always depicted with a white horse: **Scott Fox, D.** Saint George: The Saint with Three Faces. Kensal Press, Windsor Forest, 1983, 130.

³¹ Kämmereibuch der Stadt Reval 1463–1507, no. 2016: *Item betalt Gerd Witten vor 1 perd, dat deme visitor ut Prussen geschenket ward, 38 mr. Item vor twe t. bers unnde 4 vlaschen Romenie, ock deme visitor gesant, 4 mr. 16 s.*

³² LUB, 2. Bd. 1, no. 630. See also no. 829.

³³ LUB, 2. Bd. 1, no. 630. In 1496, the presents also included a golden ring with a turquoise.

³⁴ **Hyland, A.** The Horse in the Middle Ages, 110–111.

³⁵ On this subject, see **Maldre, L., Lõugas, L.** Hobune Eestis muinas- ja keskajal [*The horse in Estonia in prehistoric times and in the Middle Ages*]. – In: Meie hobune [*Our Horse*]. Ed. H. Tamsalu. Eesti Hobuse Kaitse Ühing, Tallinn, 2001, 28–34.

not mentioned at all and emphasis was laid on the physical qualities of the animal, such as its colour, strength or beauty. For example, in 1499, the Livonian Master sent to the Grand Master a beautiful red stallion with a white mane (*einen schonen rothen hengst mit eym weisszen maehn*).³⁶ In 1500, two noblemen who were wardens of the church in Hageri (Hagers), presented the commander of the Teutonic Order in Tallinn with two white stallions (*twe wytte hengste*).³⁷ In June 1515, when Johannes IV Kievel became the Bishop of Saare-Lääne (Ösel-Wiek), he presented gifts to the high-ranking ecclesiastics who had consecrated him – the Archbishop of Riga, the Bishop of Kurland and the Abbot of Kärkna (Falkenau). The presents consisted of gold and silver and thirty two strong horses (*xxxij validi equi*).³⁸

In 1431, the Bailiff of Maasilinn (Soneburg) sent to the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order a grey stallion from Saaremaa (Ösel). On the left side of the animal was a mark, which was described as a half cross.³⁹ It can be assumed that this unusual distinguishing mark, which was probably interpreted as a Christian symbol, made the animal a valuable gift to the Grand Master.

These and several other examples⁴⁰ demonstrate that in Livonia, just as elsewhere in Europe, a horse (particularly a stallion) was the animal most frequently given or sent as a gift to local or foreign dignitaries, whether they were laymen or ecclesiastics. For the reasons I pointed out in the introduction, it was a particularly appropriate gift for mighty rulers, someone like the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order or the Grand Duke of Muscovy.

However, the rulers also appreciated other kinds of animals. In August 1489, the town council of Tallinn sent seven beavers to the King of Denmark.⁴¹ At that time, there were negotiations going on between King John (Hans) and the Hanse towns concerning the privileges of the Hanseatic merchants, and it can be assumed that the council of Tallinn hoped that the gift would make the king look more favourably on the town's interests. Again, the reasons behind choosing these specific species may be manifold. The beaver was valued for its fur and meat, but perhaps most of all because of the valuable secretion from its castor glands, used

³⁶ LUB, 2. Bd. 1, no. 871.

³⁷ LUB, 2. Bd. 1, no. 903.

³⁸ Danish State Archives (*Rigsarkivet*) in Copenhagen, Fremmed proveniens, Øsel stift, Registrant 1A, fol. 133r. For the consecration ceremony, see **Kala, T.** Ühe Liivimaa kirikuvürsti ametisseastumisest [*Consecrating a Livonian prince of the church*]. – Tuna: Ajalookultuuri Ajakiri, 2009, 1, 33–34.

³⁹ Liv-, Est- und Kurländisches Urkundenbuch. Bd. 8. Ed. H. Hildebrand. Deubner, Riga, 1884, no. 419.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Kämmererbuch der Stadt Reval 1463–1507, no. 1496; LUB, 2. Bd. 1, no. 354, 854, 905; Liv-, Est- und Kurländisches Urkundenbuch. Zweite Abteilung. Bd. 2. Ed. L. Arbusow. Deubner, Riga, 1905, no. 443 § 32.

⁴¹ Kämmererbuch der Stadt Reval 1463–1507, no. 2065: *Item betalt her Johan Mouwerd van denn druncken unde vor 4 bever, deme koninghe van Dennemarke gesand, 100 unde 19 mr.; no. 2070: Item betalt Gerd Kock vor 3 bewer, de he to Lubeke umme deme koninghe van Dennemarken to szendende gekofft hadde, 27 ½ mr.*

in medicine.⁴² As it will be discussed below, the beaver's tail was considered to be a delicious fasting food, but since the records in the account book of Tallinn were made in August and September, it may be assumed that the animals were not given to the king with this idea in mind. The beaver had been extinct since about 1000 AD in Denmark,⁴³ and therefore King John was likely to have greatly appreciated such a luxurious present.

Allegorically, the beaver was considered to be a symbol of a good Christian. According to a legend from antiquity and widely spread in the Middle Ages, the beaver, when hunted and not able to escape, bit off his own testicles. This quality of self-castration made him a model for a good Christian who renounces his bodily desires, firmly confronts the hunter (i.e. the Devil), and thus saves his soul.⁴⁴ Hence, it cannot be excluded that in addition to the practical uses and great economic value of the beaver, the town councillors of Tallinn may also have had its symbolic meaning in mind when choosing this gift.

The beaver was one of the most widely spread mammals in medieval Livonia.⁴⁵ However, at least three of the seven animals that were given to the king were obtained from Lübeck.⁴⁶ The reason for this may have been purely practical: animals bought on the spot were more likely to remain alive and healthy than those consigned to a long sea trip from Tallinn. On the other hand, it could also have been considered more prestigious to purchase the gift from the leading commercial centre than to pay Estonian peasants to catch some beavers in the wilderness. Also, these beavers were quite expensive: three of them cost 27 ½ marks, meaning that at that time, a living beaver was worth as much as a good riding horse.

Due to the nature of the sources, not much is known about gift exchange, that is, we are informed of the gifts but not of the counter-gifts. However, there is at least one instance, when both parties involved sent exotic animals to one another. In March 1534, the Bishop of Tartu Johannes V Bey received a letter from the

⁴² Beaver. – In: *The Medieval Bestiary: Animals in the Middle Ages*. Ed. D. Badke. Available at: <http://www.bestiary.ca/beasts/beast152.htm> [Accessed 12 August 2016]. For Eastern Europe, including Livonia, see **Leimus, I., Kiudsoo, M.** Kopräd ja hõbe [*Beavers and silver*]. – Tuna: Ajalookultuuri Ajakiri, 2004, 4, 37–39, 41–43.

⁴³ In Denmark, beaver was introduced back into the wild as late as in 1999. See, e.g., The Danish Nature Agency: Beaver (*Castor fiber*) in Denmark. Available at: <http://eng.naturstyrelsen.dk/nature-protection/nature-projects/beaver/> [Accessed 12 August 2016].

⁴⁴ **Blaschitz, G.** Der Biber im Topf und der Pfau am Spieß. – In: *Ir sult sprechen willekommen: Grenzenlose Mediävistik. Festschrift für Helmut Birkhan zum 60. Geburtstag*. Eds C. Tucsay, U. Hirhager, K. Lichtblau. Peter Lang, Bern, 1998, 421; **Morrison, E.** Beasts Factual & Fantastic, 66.

⁴⁵ **Паавер К.** Формирование териофауны, 61–68; **Jaani et al.** Eesti esiajalugu, 301, 391; see also **Luik, H.** Beaver in the economy and social communication of the inhabitants of South Estonia in the Viking Age (800–1050 AD). – In: *Bestial Mirrors: Using Animals to Construct Human Identities in Medieval Europe*. Eds K. Kunst, A. Pluskowski. Vienna Institute for Archaeological Science, University of Vienna, 2010, 46–54. The European beaver in Estonia was hunted to extinction by 1871 and reintroduced in the 1950s.

⁴⁶ Kämmereibuch der Stadt Reval 1463–1507, no. 2070.

Russian duke, Mikhail Glinski. The letter itself has not been preserved but the bishop's reply survives. The bishop wrote that he had been very pleased and impressed that the duke had sent him as a gift "an expensive and in these lands a rare and wonderful Tatar animal, which in German is called a camel".⁴⁷

In his letter, Duke Glinski had asked that in return he would like to receive two silver rings from the tomb of St Edward the Confessor that were believed to help against St Valentine's plague (i.e. epilepsy). The Bishop of Tartu did not yet have the rings but he promised to send them to Moscow as soon as possible. Instead, he presented the duke with other relics, namely two silver pennies from Cologne, pierced by the holy nails, as well as "a rare animal, called the turkey, that is to be found in the New World". He praised the turkey for being a very pious, benevolent and amusing animal, who is full of pranks.⁴⁸ He added that he had received it together with a Moor from a friend in Germany, and that the servant who would bring the gifts had been instructed about how to feed and keep it. Additionally, the bishop sent more gifts to the duke: a hunting knife, a golden ring, a piece of Flemish cloth, confectionery (i.e. spices covered with sugar) and some books.⁴⁹

In this correspondence, again particular adjectives were used to praise the animals: they were "rare and expensive", and this was enough to make them "wonderful". In addition, the turkey was characterized as being "pious", which made it a good Christian bird.

Since the bishop replied to Duke Glinski only a week after having received his letter, he obviously already had the turkey in his household. And since Glinski had sent him a camel, one is tempted to think that perhaps the bishop was a collector of exotic animals. Unfortunately, the archives of the Bishopric of Tartu have not survived and there are no other sources which would throw light on this matter. However, this entire case indicates that it was possible to acquire exotic animals in the periphery as well, provided that one had money and connections.

Thus far, I have discussed presents of living animals. However, the gifts could also include all kinds of animal products, such as objects, pelts, garments, or food. These goods, especially that of food, represent categories too large to be treated in detail; therefore, I will provide but a few examples of such cases.

There are actually only single mentions in the municipal accounts of Livonia concerning the gifts of animal pelts or clothes of fur. In 1492, the town council of Tallinn sent six wolf pelts (*wulvevelle*) worth 10 marks to the town scribe of

⁴⁷ **Kivimäe, J.** Ein Kamel für Dorpat und ein Truthahn für Moskau: Geschenksendungen zwischen Livland und Russland im Jahr 1534. – In: Zwischen Lübeck und Novgorod: Wirtschaft, Politik und Kultur im Ostseeraum vom frühen Mittelalter bis ins 20. Jahrhundert. Eds O. Pelc, G. Pickhan. Institut Nordostdeutsches Kulturwerk, Lüneburg, 1996, 245: [...] *eynes theurbarnn, vnnd In diesenn Landenn garr seltzamen vnnd wunderbarlichenn Taters dierths, auff Teutzsch Camell geheissen.*

⁴⁸ Ibid., 246: *eyn seltzams thier, das mann heist eyenn Calkunysch thier, ist yn eyenn neuen lande aldar erfunden werden, Welchs vnsers achtens eyenn gar from, berue, spottisch thier vnnd fuller bossen ist.*

⁴⁹ Ibid., 247.

Lübeck.⁵⁰ In 1473 or 1474, the town council of Riga presented Johannes II Bertkow, the Bishop of Tartu, who visited the town on his way back from Rome, with a long overcoat of marten skins (*marthen sube*) and Rhenish wine.⁵¹ In both instances, although these were diplomatic gifts, the specific context remains unknown. An expensive fur mantle was certainly an appropriate gift for a high-ranking person like the bishop: it was a representative piece of clothing, and also badly needed to survive the harsh Livonian winters. The wolf pelts for the Lübeck town scribe, on the other hand, were quite cheap (in comparison with the pelts of other fur-animals), and not at all commonly mentioned in medieval written sources. However, there is no way to know why the town council of Tallinn thought that the town scribe of Lübeck would be happy to receive such an unusual gift, and what kind of gift or favour they expected in return.

As referred to above, the most spectacular events in late medieval Tallinn were the festive entries into the town of the Livonian Master of the Teutonic Order. An integral part of these festivities was the banquet in the town hall. These occasions were much more splendid than, for instance, the annual drinking feasts of the town councillors. Differences concerned both the amount of food served as well as the greater variety of food, particularly the variety of meat. In addition to domestic animals, the Livonian Master was treated with wild game and fowl, such as roe deer, hare and partridge. The highlight of those banquets was without doubt a surprise dish, in which the emphasis was laid on visual effects. For instance, in 1513, a gilded peacock was served.⁵² It is not known from where the bird was acquired but obviously the intention of the town councillors was to impress and please the Master with something exotic. The beautiful feathers of the peacock and the use of gilding were likely to have had the desired effect. The belief that the peacock symbolized resurrection and immortality⁵³ may have played an additional role in its choice as a surprise dish for the ruler.

There are two good examples of banquets in Tallinn arranged during Lent, and of the animals served on these occasions. In 1501, on the Thursday and Friday before *Laetare* (the third Sunday in Lent), the Bishop of Tallinn Nicolaus Rodendorp, who inspected St Nicholas Church in the lower town, was treated by the church wardens with a fresh roasted seal (*vrischen seell gebraden*).⁵⁴ In mid-

⁵⁰ Kämmereibuch der Stadt Reval 1463–1507, no. 2179.

⁵¹ Kämmerei-Register der Stadt Riga, 332.

⁵² **Mänd, A.** Urban Carnival, 226.

⁵³ **Ferguson, G.** Signs & Symbols in Christian Art, 23; Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie. Bd. 3. Ed. E. Kirschbaum. Herder, Rom, 2004, 409–410, keyword “Pfau”.

⁵⁴ The description of the event has survived in an early-seventeenth century transcript. Tallinn City Archives, coll. 31, inv. 1, no. 142, fol. 22v–23r. In my earlier article, I incorrectly translated *seel* as the sole: **Mänd, A.** Beaver tails and roasted herring heads: fast as feast in Late-Medieval Livonia. – *Medium Aevum Quotidianum*, 2004, 50, 9–10. There were probably more transcripts circulating, because Christian Kelch, who cited the bishop’s menu in his late-seventeenth century chronicle, used the word *Sehlhund*: **Kelch, C.** *Liefländische Historia*. J. Mehner, Reval, 1695, 157–158. For the Estonian translation of this passage in the chronicle, see **Kelch, C.** *Liivimaa ajalugu [History of Livonia]*. Translated by I. Leimus. Eesti Ajalooarhiiv, Tartu, 2004, 122.

Lent 1525, during the festive entry of the Livonian Master, the highlight of the menu was three beaver tails.⁵⁵ These examples reflect the well-known fact that during the Middle Ages, several aquatic mammals, such as whales, dolphins, and porpoises, qualified as fish and therefore it was legitimate to consume them in fasting periods.⁵⁶ In the case of the beaver, it was acknowledged that the creature itself was a mammal, however, its tail, covered with scales, was considered to have fish qualities. It was even believed that the tail never left the water.⁵⁷ Because of its high fat content, beaver tail was a much appreciated Lenten food and that is also the reason why three tails appeared on the table of the Livonian Master in 1525.

Since no account books of the Livonian bishops or masters of the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order survive, it is difficult to assert whether the seal and the beaver tail was something ‘exotic’ and ‘extraordinary’ for these dignitaries or whether it was something they usually ate during Lent (or even in periods of non-abstinence). In the case of the beaver tail, there are reasons to believe that it was mostly an ‘exotic’ fasting food for upper classes. The fact that only three of these tails were served at the banquet of 1525 indicates that they were, above all, meant for the Livonian Master and perhaps for some important persons in his immediate retinue. In sixteenth-century Europe, the beaver populations rapidly decreased, and in 1655, it was written: “The tail, like all of the beaver, is a delicate food, and that is why in Germany beavers are always reserved for the emperor’s table on the rare occasions they are caught”.⁵⁸

The seal, on the other hand, was likely to have been more common in countries around the Baltic Sea. For instance, written sources from medieval Denmark reveal that whales and seals were particularly appreciated during the fasting periods.⁵⁹ On the basis of osteological find material, it is evident that the seal – mainly the ringed seal (*Pusa hispida*), but also the grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) – was regularly consumed in the islands and coastal areas of medieval Livonia.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ **Mänd, A.** Urban Carnival, 226; **Mänd, A.** Beavert tails and roasted herring heads, 8.

⁵⁶ **Wheaton, B. K.** Savoring the Past: The French Kitchen and Table from 1300 to 1789. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1983, 12.

⁵⁷ **Henisch, B. A.** Fast and Feast: Food in Medieval Society. 5th print. Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, 1994, 47; **Blaschitz, G.** Der Biber im Topf, 422.

⁵⁸ A Description of New Netherland by Adriaen van der Donck. Translated by D. W. Goedhuys. Eds C. T. Gehring, W. A. Starna. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2008, 123.

⁵⁹ **Kjersgaard, E.** Mad og øl i Danmarks middelalder [*Food and Beer in Medieval Denmark*]. Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen, 1978, 73–74.

⁶⁰ Seal bones have been found in villages as well as in coastal towns of Pärnu (Pernau) and Haapsalu (Hapsal): **Lõugas, L.** Post-glacial Development of Vertebrate Fauna in Estonian Water Bodies: A Palaeozoological Study. Tartu University Press, 1997, 75; **Maldre, L.** Eesti keskaegsete linnade arheozooloogilisest leiumaterjalist [*Archaeozoological finds in medieval Estonian towns*]. (Tartu Linnamuuseumi aastaraamat, 13.) Tartu Linnamuuseum, 2007, 30; **Maldre, L.** Koduloomad keskaegses Pärnus [*Domestic animals in medieval Pärnu*]. – In: 100 aastat Pärnu Muinasuurimise Seltsi. Pärnumaa ajalugu, 1. Ed. A. Vunk. Pärnu Maavalitsus, 1997, 99–100.

Among the Estonians, the custom of eating seal continued well into the mid-twentieth century, when the seal became an endangered species; for instance, in an interview in 2009, old people on a small island of Kihnu were pleased to recall how they used to eat seal when they were children.⁶¹ However, if we look at the entire menu of the bishop's visit in 1501, it is evident that everything that was served to him and to four canons in his retinue was delicious upper-class fasting food, including a great variety of expensive fish, exotic spices, and so forth.⁶² It is clear therefore that the roasted fresh seal must also be regarded as a prestigious meal, suitable for people of the highest social rank.

It should be added that the seal was not the only aquatic mammal consumed in Livonia. At the end of November 1473, the town councillors of Tallinn paid for the common porpoise (*merswyn*) that was sent to them.⁶³ Since nothing else was added to the record, there is no way to find out if the porpoise was served at the council's feast or perhaps at the banquet in honour of a distinguished guest.

CONCLUSIONS

The study of animals in the context of the gift-giving in late medieval Livonia revealed the general importance of animals in the category of gifts. Very often, an animal can be found in the list of presents together with precious metal objects, luxurious textiles or garments, and weapons. Thus, animals occupied an important place in the selection of gifts to high status individuals as the named objects. As for prices, it is clear that in several cases the animal (in the examples presented here, the warhorse in particular) was the most expensive of all these gifts, confirming that animals were among the most highly appreciated of gifts in the late medieval period.

This survey revealed that despite the peripheral location of Livonia, the town councillors and other local authorities did their best to follow contemporary trends in Europe and find suitable animals as gifts. The variety of these animals was not as large as in the great kingdoms of Europe and their prices often reflect the somewhat limited financial possibilities of the donors, but nevertheless they formed an inseparable part of the diplomacy and ritual communication in Livonian towns.

Gift-giving was part of a public ceremony and the gift for the ruler had to be appropriate in every sense. The same was true for the banquets held in honour of high-status guests which required a proper surprise dish. An animal, be it a high-

⁶¹ **Moora, A.** Eesti talurahva vanem toit [*Historical Food of Estonian Peasants*]. Ilmamaa, Tartu, 2007, 368–369; **Jürgen, M.** Kui ikka lapsest piast oled ülgeliha süen [*When you have eaten the seal since childhood*]. – Eesti Ekspress, 19.3.2009.

⁶² **Mänd, A.** Beaver tails and roasted herring heads, 9–10.

⁶³ Kämmererbuch der Stadt Reval 1463–1507, no. 1498.

priced destrier, a wild animal or an exotic animal, fit the criteria of appropriateness very well. The sources particularly emphasize the following qualities: rare, expensive, and unusual. Occasionally, some Christian values, such as piety and benevolence, were ascribed to an animal to increase its significance in the eyes of the recipient. The symbolic connotations of an animal also played an important role. Thus, the material and symbolic values of a present were interconnected. If possible, the gift was purchased from abroad, either from a metropolis in Europe or, even better, from some exotic place, such as the New World. Even if an animal was native to Livonia, it was occasionally acquired from abroad, which emphasized the wealth of the donors and added to their prestige.

In some sense, wild or exotic animals, either living or cooked, were the stars of the feast: they served as objects of display and of curiosity. They were displayed to a large number of people and they were meant to impress a wide-ranging audience. The animals were placed at the centre of attention particularly at the moment of the delivery, which marked the culmination of the gift-giving ceremony. One may assume that the donors felt proud that they could afford such an expensive or unusual gift, and the lord was pleased to receive it, because such gifts reflected his power and prestige, and re-affirmed his status. What happened to the animal after the ceremony was not regarded important and therefore not recorded in the sources.

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HOBUSED, HIRVED JA KOPRAD: LOOMAD KUI KINGITUSED HILISKESKAEGSEL LIIVIMAAL

Anu MÄND

Kingituste tegemisel ja vastuandmisel oli keskaja kultuuris ning poliitilises suhtluses väga oluline koht. Kingitus pidi olema kohane saaja seisusele ja ametile, seda nii materiaalses kui ka sümboolses mõttes; see pidi olema midagi, mida saaja vajas või ihaldas ja mis oli mõlema poole meelest sobilik. Kinkide üleandmise tseremoonias peegeldusid kinkija ja kingi saaja vahelised suhted, mida rituaali läbi tugevdati ning kinnistati.

Artikli eesmärgiks on uurida loomade kasutamist kingitustena keskaegse Liivimaa diplomaatilises kultuuris. Allikatena on kasutatud eelkõige Tallinna ja Riia rae 15. ning 16. sajandi algupoole arveraamatuid, aga ka mitmesuguste võimukandjate kirjavahetust ja muid materjale. On välja selgitatud, milliseid loomi ja linde kingitusteks valiti ning mis põhjustel (looma kallihinnalisus, eksootilisus või erilisus, esinemine kohalikus looduskeskkonnas, talle omistatud tähendus kristliku sümbolina jne).

Kõige sagedamini esineb kingitusena hobune. Ühest küljest oli hobune hädavajalik transpordivahend, mida võimukandjad alati vajasid, ent teisest küljest oli tegemist ka olulise staatuse- ja võimusümboliga, mis ühtlasi seostus ka mehelikkuse, vaprusel ja teiste valitsejaomadustega. Eriti hinnatud olid treenitud sõjaratsud (iseäranis täkid), kes maksid palju rohkem kui harilikud veohobused. Näiteks 1479. aastal saatis Tallinna raad Saksa Ordu kõrgmeistrile kingituseks 80 Riia marka maksva hobuse, samal ajal kui rae enda kasutuses olevate ratsahobuste hind jäi harilikult 3–5 marga vahele. 1494. aasta läbirääkimistel saadeti aga Ivan III-le kingituseks koguni 100 marka maksev täkk.

Loomade tõupuhtuse ja kallihinnalisuse kõrval olid aga mõnikord olulised ka nende harvaesinev värv, ilu, tugevus või midagi muud, mis neid teiste hulgast esile tõi ning seetõttu neile väärtust lisas. Näiteks peeti terves Euroopas sobivaks kingituseks valget hobust, mis valitsejaid lahinguväljal või paraadidel teistest selgelt eristas. Keskaja kunstis kujutati valgete hobuste seljas kurjusega võitlevaid pühakuid, eriti Püha Jüri, kes kristliku sõduri võrdkujuna oli ka üks militaarordude armastatumaid kaitsepühakuid. Valgete hobuste kinkimise kohta on teateid ka Liivimaalt. 1431. aastal aga saatis Maasilinna foogt kõrgmeistrile halli Saaremaa täku, mille üheks väärtuseks oli selle vasakul küljel asuv pooliku risti kujuline märk, mida ilmselt tõlgendati kristliku sümbolina ja seega hea endena.

Peale hobuste on teateid ka metsloomade kinkimisest, nagu hirv (mõnede autorite arvates põder), kelle Tallinna raad kinkis 1536. aastal ordumeister Hermann von Brüggeneyle. Kui tegemist oli punahirvega, siis oli ta arvatavasti hangitud Läti lõunaaladelt või koguni Preisimaalt, sest keskaegses Eestis seda liiki ei leidunud. Hirve valikul kingituseks võisid oma osa mängida nii metslooma eksootilisus, tema maitsev liha kui ka hirve tähendus kristlikus sümboolikas. Ka

seitsme kopra puhul, mille raad saatis 1489. aastal kingituseks Taani kuningale, võisid otsustavaks osutada samad kriteeriumid. Taanis olid koprad selleks ajaks juba ligi viissada aastat välja surnud, nii et kuninga jaoks oli tegu tõeliselt eksootiliste elukatega. Lisaks peeti koprasabasid hiliskeskajal hinnatud paastutoiduks, seda just kõrgklasside seas. Populaarne legend, mille kohaselt sooritab kobras ohu korral enesekastratsiooni, tegi temast aga väga kristlase võrdkuju.

Uue Maailma avastamise tagajärjel jõudis Euroopasse hulk eksootilisi loomi ja linde, keda mõistagi kasutati ka kingituste tegemisel. Üheks selliseks näiteks on kalkun, kelle Tartu piiskop saatis Moskvasse vürst Glinskile (kes omakorda oli talle kinkinud kaameli). Kalkunit kirjeldati kui väga ja hea loomuga lindu, mis on järjekordne näide sellest, et loomadele-lindudele omistati kristlikke voorusi. Lahtiseks jääb, kas Tartu piiskopil võis oma loomakolleksioon olla, ehk koguni väike loomapark, kus eksootilisi olevusi hoida ja eksponeerida.

Ehkki elusaid loomi esineb kingituste seas kõige enam, väärtustati mõistagi ka nende nahku või haruldastest loomadest-lindudest valmistatud peoroogi, mida serveriti kõrgetele külalistele. Tallinnas kostitati ordumeistrit või piiskoppi näiteks kullatud paabulinnu, koprasabade ja praetud hülgega.

Uurimus kinnitab, et loomadel oli Liivimaa poliitilises kommunikatsioonis oluline osa, neid hinnati, vajati ja võib-olla koguni kolleksioneeriti. Hiliskesk-aegse ja varauusaegse võimukandja representatsioonivajaduste hulka ei kuulunud enam mitte üksnes uhked ratsa- või sõjahobused, vaid ka haruldased ning eksootilised loomad.

Loomi kui kingitusi ei tule aga eraldi vaadelda, vaid võrdlevas kontekstis teiste kingitustega. Paljudel juhtudel ei sisaldanud kingitus üksnes looma või loomi, vaid ka väärismetallesemeid, hinnalisi kangaid, relvi ja muud seisusekohast. Kingi üleandmise tseremoonias oli elus loom sageli tähelepanu keskpunktis, ent enamasti pole teada, mis temast hiljem sai: toleaegete kirjanijate jaoks oli tähtis jäädvustada kink, selle hinnalisus ja üleandmise tseremoonia, mitte aga kingi edasine saatus.