

The Emblematic Elephant:

Elephants, the Dutch East India Company, and
Eurasian Diplomacy in the Seventeenth Century



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Cover illustration: The VOC elephant emblem on the map of Colombo in 1659

(Source: TANAP, http://www.tanap.net/content/universities/sri_lanka.cfm)

Abstract

When the Dutch East India Company (VOC) came to Asia, its presence was contingent on relations with Asian polities. Elephant gift-giving was one of the practices the VOC conducted and experienced with Asian rulers alongside trade. The VOC acted as a giver and a receiver; it received gift-elephants from Southeast Asian polities plus Kandy and transferred them westward. This study examines the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy and sociocultural foundations behind the diplomatic scene during the seventeenth century. It argues that the existing Dutch acknowledgment of elephant gift-giving traditions and imaginations and perceptions of the emblematic elephant facilitated the elephant diplomacy between the VOC and Asian polities. In other words, these mentalities were integral to the commensurability in the Dutch-Asian elephant gift-giving. Furthermore, the case of the emblematic elephant imagined and perceived by the Dutch shows that the seventeenth-century historical change in worldview from emblematic to empirical was more nuanced and not linear.

Keywords: Dutch, VOC, Elephant, Diplomacy, Gift-giving, Emblematic

Map



Polities mentioned in the thesis

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Introduction

“Animals are ... not only good to eat, but good to think.”

Claude Lévi-Strauss¹

In 1641, the Siamese *Phrakhlang* (minister of external and trading affairs) of the Ayutthaya Kingdom in today Thailand sent a letter to Governor-General Antonio van Diemen (in office 1636-1645) and his Councilors of the Dutch East India Company (VOC, established in 1602) in Batavia. In the letter, the *Phrakhlang* on behalf of King Prasat Thong (reign 1629-1656) asked the VOC, among other requests, to make the paintings of the elephants: “seeing that some Dutchmen are excellent in the art of painting, we request Your Honour to have two elephants painted for our King, two *asta* high² ... in the most skilful way, and kindly have them sent hither ... in haste.”³ Unfortunately, the painting did not survive to this day. However, this message shows how symbolically important the elephants were to the Siamese King and how reliable the VOC was to the Thai culture in imaging and perceiving elephants through paintings. In exchange, Siam also sent many fresh-and-blood elephants as gifts to the VOC. These mutual practices hint at how the Dutch imagined and perceived elephants and how their imaginations and perceptions involved the elephant diplomacy between the Dutch and the Siamese court.

¹ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Le Totémisme aujourd'hui* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), p. 128. cited in Halvard Leira and Iver B. Neumann, “Beastly Diplomacy,” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 12 (2016), p. 339.

² *Asta* was the local scale of units from the tip of the middle finger to the elbow. The word is also in Javanese *basta*, which derived from Sanskrit. In the Dutch East Indies, 1 *asta* equaled 42 centimeters. “VOC-Glossarium,” Huygens, <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vocglossarium/VocGlossarium/zoekvoc>. The painting requested here is 84 centimeters high.

³ “Letter from the Phrakhlang on behalf of King Prasatthong (r. 1629-1656) to the Supreme Government in Batavia, 2 March 1641,” Document 21, in *The Diplomatic Correspondence between The Kingdom of Siam and The Castle of Batavia during the 17th and 18th centuries* (Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia and The Corts Foundation, 2018), p. 8.

Diplomatic practices include what is performed on the diplomatic stage and inextricably associate with what behind the diplomatic scene. “The New Diplomatic History” has incorporated the wider cultural and social foundations of diplomatic practices into the legal, institutional, and political aspects thereof.⁴ Once the VOC had set up its trading activity in Asia, the VOC’s presence was not aloof. Its power was “negotiated and contingent on relations between the Company and the indigenous states and polities in which the Company nodes were located.”⁵ In this condition, the VOC unavoidably had to involve in the affairs of Asian polities to produce amity (and hostility) for conducting trade and establishing its (partial) sovereignty.⁶ In other words, to achieve what the Company aspired, a diplomatic activity was needed. As the VOC-Siam case shows above, elephants played a significant role in Dutch-Asian diplomacy. But why elephants? The editorial book *Global Gifts* argues that gifts given on a global scale can illustrate “shared values and material and visual experiences.”⁷ What do gift-elephants—including live and imagined elephants—tell us about these shared aspects between the Dutch and Asians? While being one of the elephant diplomacy players, the VOC was not only a giver, but many times it also received gift-elephants from Asian polities. The mutual practices of gifting elephants between the VOC and Asian counterparts can be examined along with Thomas R. Trautmann’s argument. He demonstrates how elephants were practically and emblematically related to kingship

⁴ Zoltán Biedermann, Anne Gerritsen, and Giorgio Riello, “Introduction,” in *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 8.

⁵ Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 15-16.

⁶ For hostility, see how the VOC directed friendship during the early seventeenth century toward the native people in South Land to gain more goods such as iron and copper and how the result turned out to be hostility and violence in Susan Broomhall, “Emotional Encounters: Indigenous Peoples in the Dutch East India Company’s Interactions with the South Lands,” *Australian Historical Studies*, 45:3 (2014), pp. 350-367.

⁷ Biedermann, Gerritsen, and Riello, “Introduction,” p. 1.

established across Eurasia.⁸ In this study, I will bring the emblematic aspects of elephants to the forefront. Over the long run of history, elephants had great receptions in Eurasian imaginations and perceptions. Elephants in flesh and blood were transferred to menageries for empowering symbolic meanings of kingship/rulership over Eurasia. When the VOC practiced and experienced the elephant diplomacy with Asian polities by giving and receiving gift-elephants, the two worlds of elephant emblems became united.

This thesis studies when the two worlds of elephant emblems became united through diplomacy and sociocultural elements behind the diplomatic scene by only focusing on one particular agent, the Dutch East India Company. For the scope of the thesis, the Low countries—including and beyond the Dutch Republic—and the VOC networks in Asia are my spatial focus. The temporal focus is in the seventeenth century. Throughout the century, “the emblematic worldview”—discussed in detail below—enjoyed its life and paved the path for the diplomatic activities associated with emblematic animals to run on. The thesis examines (1) how the Dutch acknowledged elephant diplomacy, (2) how elephants were imagined and perceived emblematically and empirically by the Dutch, and (3) how these acknowledgments, imaginations, and perceptions influenced the elephant diplomacy between the VOC and Asian polities.⁹ It argues that the existing Dutch mentalities toward elephant gift-giving traditions and the emblematic elephant facilitated the way the VOC practiced and experienced elephant gift-giving activities because these mentalities were integral to the commensurability in the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy.

⁸ Thomas R. Trautmann, *Elephants & Kings: An Environmental History* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2015).

⁹ By using *imagination* and *perception*, this thesis differentiates these two terms: the Dutch *imagined* elephants without seeing them in flesh and blood; and *perceived* them alive when the elephants were transported to the Low Countries or the Dutch traveled to places where elephants were in persistence.

Commensurability without “Mirroring”

The previous studies regarding the Eurasian diplomacy between the Dutch East India Company and Asian polities emphasize the divergence between the two worlds (the “VOC world” and the Asian world).¹⁰ In their editorial book, Peter Rietbergen and Elsbeth Locher-Scholten accentuate the interaction between Asian societies and the VOC. All articles in the book circle around the central question of the interactions between the indigenous rulers in Asia and the VOC.¹¹ This interaction brings the “culture” to the forefront of analysis by examining “the influence of the Asian thought over authority and religion, over contact, contract, and interpersonal relationships, over ceremonial and ritual ... on the relations with the Europeans, economics, politics, and diplomacy.”¹² This way of analyzing implies that there were—at the minimum—two cultural entities that were contrasting but interacted with each other in Eurasian diplomacy. Jurrien Van Goor also shows that the VOC envoys who were merchants acting as diplomats conducted diplomatic missions with an eye on exotic elements of Asian polities, even though he points out that “European and Asian diplomacy were in many ways similar, but had their individual characteristic as well.”¹³ Frank Birkenholz cites Van Goor’s work and states that “the Company realized it had to mirror the political and cultural characteristic of Asian society” when conducting diplomacy.¹⁴ In

¹⁰ The term “the VOC world” I borrow from Nigel Worden (ed.), *Contingent Lives: Social Identity and Material Culture in the VOC World* (Rondebosch: University of Cape Town, 2007).

¹¹ Peter Rietbergen en Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, “Een dubbel perspectief: aziatische hoven en de VOC, circa 1600 - circa 1720,” in Elsbeth Locher-Scholten en Peter Rietbergen (red.), *Hof en bandel. Aziatische vorsten en de VOC, 1620-1720* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), p. 6.

¹² *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³ Jurrien Van Goor, *Prelude to Colonialism: The Dutch in Asia* (Hilversum, Uitgeverij Verloren, 2004), pp. 27-47.

¹⁴ Frank Birkenholz, “Merchant-Kings and Lords of the world: Diplomatic Gift-exchange between the Dutch East India Company and the Safavid and Mughal Empires in the Seventeenth Century,” in Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings (eds.), *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410-1800* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), p. 221.

this thesis, I propose that in the case of elephant gifting, the VOC did not have to “mirror” or imitate because the existing mentalities toward the emblematic elephant helped the Dutch or the VOC in particular conceive the gift-giving practice.

In Guido van Meersbergen’s work, he shows how cultural commensurability is foundational to a successful diplomatic mission. He elaborates on the concept of commensurability in diplomacy:

... as has been established for a number of different contexts, multiple structural commonalities and ‘interconnected repertoires’ existed between court cultures across Eurasia, enabling diplomatic actors to recognize and engage with (if not always fully appreciate) one another’s ceremonial language and symbolic practices.¹⁵

However, when he uses this concept, his analysis is equivalent to the idea of “mirroring” cited by Frank Birkenholz in the same editorial book. Van Meersbergen takes the cultural commensurability of the Dutch as “learning” other customs and tastes through the adoption of social practice and interpersonal relations gained from the long-standing contacts with the more experienced Dutch and indigenous officials who had lived in a “strange” country for a long time. This explanation is not so different from suggesting that the Dutch had to mirror or imitate local cultures when conducting diplomacy. In this way, Van Meersbergen’s idea of cultural commensurability is merely a pretended commensurability. In the other work, he argues that ethnographic discourse was crucial for the approaches to cross-cultural trade used by the VOC and the East India Company (EIC). This work also emphasizes the importance of “learning” to gain

¹⁵ Guido van Meersbergen, “The Dutch Merchant-Diplomat in Comparative Perspective: Embassies to the Court of Aurangzeb, 1660-1666,” in Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings (eds.), *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410-1800* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), p. 154.

more in-depth about other cultures, including the tradition of gift-giving.¹⁶ He gives an example of that “experience in dealing with Mughal officials taught them [the Dutch] which items were in demand and they defined their gift-giving strategies accordingly.”¹⁷ In a nutshell, the bifurcation between cultures (Europe and Asia) is yet heard in his works.

Edward Said’s charm of Orientalism might have influenced the binary opposition between European and Asian cultures in historiographies. This monumental work deconstructs the Oriental images of the Western eyes by showing how a mode of discourse supported by institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, colonial bureaucracies, and colonial styles culturally and ideologically shaped the Oriental awareness of the Westerners.¹⁸ In turn, the concept has set a framework analysis in academic research that emphasizes the clear distinction between the East and the West, which was hard to be reconciled when these two cultural entities met or clashed. An estrangement could be seen by the word Occidentalism revenging the ideas of imagining the East. The East and the West have become “enemies” of each other, and this could not be solved even by the history of diplomacy studied by the research mentioned above.¹⁹

Nevertheless, an attempt to harmonize the East and the West could be found in the field of global history. This attempt is part of the academic shift called “global turn” which looks and writes “events” in history from a global perspective. The phenomena that used to be deemed as distinctly European have been perceived in the global context and put forward to suggest that what used to be thought of as European movements

¹⁶ Guido van Meersbergen, “Dutch and English Approaches to Cross-Cultural Trade in Mughal India and the Problem of Trust, 1600–1630,” in Cátia A.P. Antunes and Amelia Polónia (eds.), *Beyond Empires: Global, Self-Organizing, Cross-Imperial Networks, 1500-1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 69-87.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁸ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

¹⁹ Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004).

could be found elsewhere outside Europe as well.²⁰ For example, Peter Burke, Luke Clossey, and Felipe Fernández-Armesto have globalized Renaissance. They point out that Renaissance characteristics such as philology, skepticism, and linear perspective existed globally and could be found in India, China, Japan, or the Islamic world.²¹ Jos Gommans wrote a history of the relation between the Netherlands and India from 1550 under this “global turn.” He proposes that the Dutch and Indian cultures shared the corresponding worldview under Neoplatonism’s metaphysical concept as reflected in visual and textual arts.²²

This study follows the footsteps of the “global turn” in writing history by focusing specifically on how elephants were imagined and perceived by the Dutch and how these imaginations and perceptions were essential in the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy. This thesis suggests that the VOC had existing vocabularies of the emblematic elephant when conducting elephant diplomacy with Asian counterparts or when confronting Asian elephants. These vocabularies were commensurable to both parties of the bilateral diplomatic practice. The VOC had no *tabula rasa* and did not have to “mirror” when it practiced or experienced the elephant gift-giving.

The Emblematic Worldview

This thesis depends on the central methodology on the concept of “the emblematic worldview” coined by William B. Ashworth, Jr.²³ What is the emblematic worldview?

²⁰ Peter Burke, Luke Clossey, and Felipe Fernández-Armesto, “The Global Renaissance,” *Journal of World History*, Volume 28, Number 1 (March 2017), p. 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-30.

²² Jos Gommans, *The Unseen World: The Netherlands and India from 1550* (Nijmegen: Rijksmuseum and Vantilt Publishers, 2018).

²³ William B. Ashworth, Jr., “Natural History and the Emblematic World View,” in Robert S. Westman and David C. Lindberg (eds.), *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 303-332. and

Ashworth cautions historians not to understand Renaissance natural history as we know from modern zoology and comparative anatomy and taxonomy. “The Renaissance view of the natural world was more densely layered and more intricately interwoven than ours.”²⁴ In the world of emblems, every element of nature had myriad hidden meanings. If one wants to know an animal, one ought to comprehend as many of its meanings as possible.²⁵ The meanings were embedded in animals and represented through symbols, fables, folklores, adages, or emblems. This worldview started to grow from the time of Conrad Gesner (1516-1565) when he published the *Historia animalium* in Zurich between 1551 and 1558 to the time of Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522-1605) who, as argued by Ashworth, brought the emblematic worldview of nature to fruition.²⁶ However, we should keep in mind that the emblematic worldview expressed itself through various avatars in varying cultures. This thesis uses this term to encompass all mentalities that looked at something as part of, dependent on, or associated with something another. Hidden meanings of things in each culture were influenced by the existing cultural elements. During the Renaissance and Age of Exploration, for example, the resurrection of classical texts and new discoveries shaped how one imagined and perceived the natural world. In other words, they were used as new similitudes to associate with existing things in nature.

Apart from the Renaissance and Age-of-Exploration influence, the Reformed orthodoxy also impacted how the Dutch contemplated the natural world emblematically. This contrasts with the image of the seventeenth-century Dutch scientific culture colored by concepts like “the Scientific Revolution” and “the

William B. Ashworth, Jr., “Emblematic Natural History of the Renaissance,” in Nick Jardine, James A. Secord, and E. C. Spary (eds.), *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 17-37.

²⁴ Ashworth, “Emblematic Natural History of the Renaissance,” p. 17.

²⁵ Ashworth, “Natural History and the Emblematic World View,” p. 312.

²⁶ Ashworth, “Emblematic Natural History of the Renaissance,” pp. 17-37.

Mechanization of the World Picture.”²⁷ Eric Jorink shows that in 1634 “it has pleased the great Lord to give us the *Book of Scripture* as a key or interpreter to the *Book of Nature*, in order that the first explains the latter.”²⁸ In short, Scripture was the source and key in comprehending nature.²⁹ All creatures were also full of symbolic meanings, even the minute ones like insects. The world of insects had deeply religious meanings. The metamorphosis from a caterpillar into a butterfly, for example, was a symbol of the Resurrection because it was believed that butterflies were born from caterpillars that had died.³⁰ Also, butterflies symbolized love and purity, bees the social order, ants industry, grasshoppers the devastating gluttony, etc.³¹ Interestingly, elephants and insects were often compared with each other. God manifested himself no less in the minuscule insects than the mighty elephants.³² Nonetheless, as shown in Chapter 2, the emblematic elephant imagined by the Dutch had few similitudes related to Christian, but more to the great men in history.

Neoplatonism was another term resembling the emblematic worldview. Jos Gommans connects between the Low Countries and India with the Neoplatonic thread. He explained that Neoplatonism was “a systematic development of the Platonic contradiction between ... ‘sensible,’ everyday material world and an unseen, intelligent

²⁷ Jorink, “Reading the Book of Nature in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic,” in Klaas van Berkel and Arjo Vanderjagt (eds.), *The Book of Nature in Early Modern and Modern History* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), p. 45.

²⁸ “Daerom heft het den goeden Godt belieft ons te gheven het *Boeck der Schrifture* tot het *Boeck der Nature*, als Tolck ofte Taelman van het selve / ‘t eene door het ander verclarende.” Dionysius Spranckhuysen, *Macro-cosmus ofte aenmerckingen over de scheppinghe vande groote werelt, soo als ons deseve beschreven wordt van Moses, Gen.1.v.1* (Tot Delf: de Weduwe van zal: Jan Andriesz. Kloeting, 1634), p. 5. I use the translation by Eric Jorink in Jorink, “Reading the Book of Nature,” p. 49.

²⁹ Jorink, “Reading the Book of Nature,” p. 53.

³⁰ Jorink, “Between Emblematics and the ‘Argument from Design’. The Representations of Insects in the Dutch Republic,” in Karl A.E. Emenkel and Paul J. Smith (eds.) *Early Modern Zoology: The Construction of Animals in Science, Literature and the Visual Arts* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 157.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 149 and 152.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 155 and 159.

world of abstract Forms.”³³ This metaphysical perspective was not so much different from the emblematic worldview in which material things were chained with something abstract. In another way, materials in the world of “phenomena” emblematically represented something in the unseen world that could not be seen by a physical eye but an intelligent eye. Elsewhere, Gommans and Said Reza Huseini use the chronicle *Tarikh-i Alfi*, commissioned by the Mughal ruler Akbar in the late sixteenth century, to suggest that the chronicle was composed of Neoplatonic elements reinforcing the universal kingship and imperial ideology of the commissioner Akbar. Gommans and Huseini point out that Neoplatonism encapsulating an all-inclusive monist theology was more requisite in the context of the Asian Arid Zone where the post-nomadic ruler like the Mughal exercised the political power than Europe where rulers were more sedentary.³⁴ Azfar Moin also compares Akbar’s space with Europe (England) by following Victor Liberman’s groundbreaking “strange parallels.” He suggests that the “exposed zone” influenced Akbar who had to compete with other Indic and Islamic competitors to incorporate an unrivaled element like Jesus to be part of his kingship. In contrast, in England, as situated in the “protected zone,” the kingship had the weaker form.³⁵ However, although Neoplatonism was less prominent in politics in Europe, Gommans and Moin illustrate how it was manifested more through art, literature, and drama.³⁶ In South India, Gommans also suggests that, during the globalized period of the early seventeenth century, the Nayaka states—the late Vijayanagar ruler Venkata II in particular—developed the cosmopolitan kingship along with Hindu monism that

³³ Gommans, *The Unseen World*, p. 177.

³⁴ See Jos Gommans and Said Reza Huseini, “Neoplatonic Kingship in Islam: Akbar’s Millennial History” in Azfar Moin and Alan Strathern (eds.), *Sacred Kingship in Global History* (submitted to Columbia University Press, 2020). and Jos Gommans and Said Reza Huseini, “Neoplatonism and the Pax Mongolica in the Making of *Ṣulḥ-i Kull*: A View from Akbar’s Millennial History,” submitted to *Modern Asian History* (2020).

³⁵ Azfar Moin, “Akbar’s “Jesus” and Marlowe’s “Tamburlaine”: Strange Parallels of Early Modern Sacredness,” *Fragments*, Volume 3 (2013-2014), pp. 1-21.

³⁶ Gommans, *The Unseen World*. and Moin, “Akbar’s “Jesus” and Marlowe’s “Tamburlaine”.”

“mingled so well with the dominant cosmological, Neoplatonic mood at the contemporaneous Mughal and Bijapur courts,” as expressed through the painted textile known as Brooklyn *Kalamkari*.³⁷ To sum up, under Neoplatonism, resembled in various forms, all things were integrated into one single entity. They added to it more meanings and made it more layered and hierarchical.

From the 1640s, the myriad meanings of nature under the emblematic worldview were challenged by Cartesianism. René Descartes (1596-1650), who lived in the Dutch Republic between 1628 and 1649, believed that nature was operated mechanically. Thus, nature was not composed of a cosmic array of references, analogies, and symbols.³⁸ It was from the same time that the study of insects started to get rid of symbolic meanings. Thanks partly to the invention of the compound microscope around 1620 by the Dutch inventor Cornelis Drebbel (1572–1633),³⁹ misapprehensions of insects were debunked. The “king” of bees was actually a queen, which ironically deprecated the patriarchal social order. The discovery that the organs of the future butterfly were in a caterpillar’s intestines also disproved the symbol of Resurrection. However, the discoveries of nature did not mean to depreciate the Great Creator’s power. On the contrary, to appreciate his grand design honestly, one should understand the rational description of nature. “Wonder was now evoked by the marvelous design of [creatures], and not by their hidden qualities, deeper meaning, and symbolic value.”⁴⁰

Also, Ashworth suggests that during the second half of the seventeenth century, the emblematic worldview in Europe declined. Natural history began to focus more on description and anatomical investigation, with the classification system’s purpose.⁴¹

³⁷ Jos Gommans, “Cosmopolitanism and Imagination in Nayaka South India,” *Archives of Asian Arts*, Volume 70, Number 1 (April 2020), pp. 1-21.

³⁸ Jorink, “Reading the Book of Nature,” p. 57.

³⁹ Jorink, “Between Emblematics and the ‘Argument from Design,’” pp. 153-154.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-163.

⁴¹ Ashworth, “Emblematic Natural History of the Renaissance,” p. 35.

Animals were stripped off of their similitudes; they became “naked, without emblematic significance.”⁴² Ashworth attributes the decline of the emblematic worldview to animals from the New World, antiquarianism, and Baconianism. The first one is due to the New-World animals that had never been known to the Old World. Thus, these animals had no known similitudes. All they could be comprehended was physical description and pictures.⁴³ At the end of the sixteenth century, antiquarianism in the northern countries in Europe changed quite differently compared to Italy. It was because northern countries had no classical, canonical histories like the history of ancient Greece and Rome, which had already been written by “historians” since classical antiquity. Antiquarianism in northern Europe aimed to gain historical truth by reconstructing the historical artifacts such as coins, inscriptions, and the remaining Roman roads. Natural historians were exposed to the new ideas of antiquarianism and saw animal symbolism as not capable of gaining truth.⁴⁴ Lastly, Francis Bacon’s *Sylva Sylvarum* was published posthumously in 1627. His natural history idea had “nothing of Imagination” and he considered the emblematic worldview as invalid.⁴⁵ Animals in the new worldview started to be intelligible by themselves, not anymore by similitudes in God’s cosmos.

Nonetheless, Ashworth’s argument was framed in a linear perspective, not to mention that the “cultural survivals” and circumstances of the emblematic worldview in Asia are ignored.⁴⁶ Until the nineteenth century, as demonstrated by Trautmann, elephants were still perceived and represented through the lens of cosmic emblems

⁴² Ashworth, “Natural History and the Emblematic World View,” p. 318.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 318-319.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 319-322.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 322-323.

⁴⁶ The term “cultural survivals” is from Peter Burke. He elaborates that “[a] cultural history of revolutions should not assume that these events make everything new. ... [A]pparent innovation may mask the persistence of tradition. There should be a place in the story for cultural survivals.” See Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), p. 126.

related to religions and kingship.⁴⁷ Although Gommans points out that Mughal India's Neoplatonic world was gradually disenchanted since Islamic scholars distanced themselves from Neoplatonic mysticism and considered it non-Islamic, he insists that its "cultural survivals" continued to live until the colonial rule with the re-imported Enlightenment disrupted the Neoplatonic worldview significantly in the nineteenth century.⁴⁸ This corresponds with the arguments by Trautmann and Sujit Sivasundaram in the case of the emblematic elephant. Trautmann argues that the introduction of the teak industry by the British colonial power brought an end to elephants' symbols related to the royal war and kingship.⁴⁹ Sivasundaram shows that, in the middle of the nineteenth century, anthropomorphic views of elephants gave way to an objective and Christian science of animals.⁵⁰ Chapter 2 in this thesis will also show that the emblematic worldview toward elephants was still well received by the Dutch throughout the seventeenth century. Even though there emerged a new empirical worldview, some of the empirical elements were employed to stress the elephants' emblematic qualities associated with kingship and piety. Thus, I propose that the change from the emblematic to the empirical worldview in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic was more nuanced and not linear. We can say that the elephant enjoyed their symbolic meanings in the emblematic worldview across early modern Eurasia.

When the VOC men came to Asia, they carried the emblematic vocabularies for elephants along with other goods. They on the one hand still upheld the emblematic worldview, although on the other hand they were merchants who "valued the search for exact description of natural things as they could be grasped by the senses, allowing

⁴⁷ Trautmann, *Elephants & Kings*.

⁴⁸ Gommans, *The Unseen World*, p. 241.

⁴⁹ Trautmann, *Elephants & King*, pp. 318-339.

⁵⁰ Sujit Sivasundaram, "Trading knowledge: The East India Company's elephants in India and Britain," *The Historical Journal*, 48, 1 (2005): pp. 27-63.

comparison alteration and use for material betterment.”⁵¹ As shown in Chapter 2, those merchants had their scholarly resources like books from Europe at hand, and they used them to contemplate the natural world from which their lucrative merchandise emerged. They thus were Janus-faced: one trade-oriented and another emblematic. These two contrasting but complementary mentalities affected how the VOC men imagined and perceived things in nature.

The VOC and Its Elephants

Elephants were important to the VOC in terms of trade and gift-giving diplomacy. Lodewijk Wagenaar states that until around 1750 “some ninety to a hundred elephants a year were shipped to South India. The elephants were not only traded commercially; there was also an old tradition of giving these animals as gifts.”⁵² The emblematic worldview played a role for both aspects, but to a significant degree for the latter. Elephant possessed some emblematic qualities which were commonly perceived by and communicated with peoples. Their tusks also held a considerable value as ivory.⁵³ To achieve a high profit and a successful diplomatic mission, elephants in possession of the VOC must have the required, good emblematic qualities. All physical attributes such as height, tusks, ears, tails, and nails were taken into consideration when the VOC had to trade and give the elephants.

The VOC was one of the participants involved in trading elephants. The elephant trade had a long practice before the VOC came to Asia. Before the VOC was able to

⁵¹ Harold J. Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 6.

⁵² Lodewijk Wagenaar, *Cinnamon & Elephants: Sri Lanka and the the Netherlands from 1600* (Nijmegen: Vantilt Publishers, 2016), pp. 159.

⁵³ Martha Chaiklin, “Ivory in Early Modern Ceylon: A Case Study in What documents Don’t Reveal,” *International Journal of Asian Studies*, Volume 6, Issue 1 (January 2009), pp. 37-63.

control Ceylon tightly in 1658, it had negotiated with local polities such as Aceh to have a hand in the elephant trade.⁵⁴ After 1658 when the VOC ousted Portugal from the island, the VOC began to establish itself as the direct ruler of peoples and territories in the lowlands of the island.⁵⁵ Ceylonese elephants were also deemed to be under the VOC's control.⁵⁶ In 1689, the VOC made a record of all Ceylonese elephants in the Company's possession that were sold at Jaffanapatnam since the year 1658. As seen in appendix I, the record separated elephants into two categories, which are "elephants" (tusked elephants) and "*aliassen*" (elephants without tusks).⁵⁷ Jaffanapatnam was situated to the north of Wannu region. Hendrick Zwaardecroon, Commander of Jaffanapatnam, said in his memoir that elephants from Galle, Matara, and other places in Ceylon were sent to this region and sold at considerable profit.⁵⁸

Elephants were animate. They had an agential capability.⁵⁹ Unlike the other bred animals, elephants were generally born wild and later domesticated.⁶⁰ Their presence required human action in handling them. Elephants could even rampage the lands and harm people's lives. Some places in Ceylon were garrisoned by *toepasses* (Christian natives) under the command of Dutch Sergeant for preventing the incursion of these

⁵⁴ Sher Banu A.L. Khan, "Aceh-India Commercial and Literary Relations in the Seventeenth Century," in Pius Malekandathil (ed.), *The Indian Ocean in the Making of Early Modern India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2016), p. 156.

⁵⁵ Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon 1658-1687* (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1958), p. 21.

⁵⁶ *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, Deel III: 1655-1674, uitgegeven door Dr. W. Ph. Coolhaas ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), p. 225.

⁵⁷ VOC 1479, Sommarium van alle s' comp. Getande en ongetande eliphanten die verkoght zijn, t' sedert van jaere anno 1658 tot 1689 en hoe veel deselver gerendeert hebben tot Jaffanapatnam, fol. 542r-542v.

⁵⁸ Hendrick Zwaardecroon, *Memoir for the Guidance of the Council of Jaffanapatnam 1697*, translated by Sophia Pieters (Colombo: H. C. Cottle, Government Printer, 1911), p. 5.

⁵⁹ See Jonathan Saha, "Colonizing Elephants: Animal Agency, Undead Capital and Imperial Science in British Burma," *BJHS Themes*, 2 (2017), pp 169-189.

⁶⁰ Martha Chaiklin, "Elephants and the Making of Early Modern India," in Pius Malekandathil (ed.), *The Indian Ocean in the Making of Early Modern India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2016), p. 457.

wild animals.⁶¹ To have the elephants shipped as merchandise when trading or gifts when conducting diplomacy, the VOC had to possess the elephants in its stables and corrals. This required an act of finding and taming elephants and also a deep interest and management.⁶²

The knowledge of how to catch elephants was circulated well in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. The places in Ceylon where elephants were collected were in Jaffna, Matara, and Galle.⁶³ The Dutch minister Philip Baldaeus, who used to travel to Jaffna, recounted in detail how elephants were captured in Ceylon:

They fix abundance of large Stakes or Trunks of Tree in the ground, so as to leave the Entrance wide enough, but growing narrower within by degrees; in these they have certain Traps, and the wild Elephants being decoy'd by the tame ones into these enclosures, are catch'd in the Traps or Snares ... They are very hard to tam'd, and require sometimes four whole Months before they can be brought to lie down: All this while they must be carried twice a day to some River or other to swim. This is done by putting a wild Elephant betwixt two tame ones, who take such care of the other, that they hit him from both sides with their Trunks, till they make him pliable, and at last quite tame.⁶⁴

Another narrative by the Dutch writer Elias Hesse also shows “how the elephants in Ceylon were tamed and caught by *Hollanders*.” Hesse wrote that the elephant hunt in Ceylon involved more than a hundred people equipped with snares, axes, shovels, spades, and “animal-like tools.” Once setting up a big corral, the hunters went to the

⁶¹ Zwaardcroon, *Memoir for the Guidance of the Council of Jaffnapatam 1697*, p. 85.

⁶² Jane Buckingham, “Symbolism and Power: Elephants and Gendered Authority in the Mughal World,” in Piers Locke and Jane Buckingham (eds.), *Rethinking Human-Elephant Relations in South Asia: Conflict, Negotiation, and Coexistence* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 103.

⁶³ Wagenaar, *Cinnamon & Elephants*, p. 157.

⁶⁴ Philip Baldaeus, *A True and Exact Description of the Most Celebrated East-India Coasts of Malabar and Coromandel as also of the isle of Ceylon*, translated from the High-Dutch printed at Amsterdam, 1672 (New Delhi, Asian Educational Services, 1996), p. 825.

forest and hit the drums and cymbals to frighten elephants and let them run into the corral.⁶⁵ We know from Zwaardcroon's memoir that those involved in elephant hunting activities were local peoples. They had the head called "Master of the Hunt" who usually adopted the Portuguese names.⁶⁶

The notable VOC places for receiving and keeping elephants were Batavia and Dutch Ceylon. In Batavia, elephants sent from other places such as Siam, Kandy, Arakan, and Pegu as gifts were taken care of by slaves. They cleaned and gave food to the elephants. Also, they had to repair the elephants' stable once it was worn out.⁶⁷ Pieter Nuyts, the Governor of Taiwan, wrote in his treatise about elephants that the animals ate rice and drank water.⁶⁸ In Ceylon, the VOC had to deal with many elephants since Ceylon was a place where the VOC could obtain many of them from their natural habitats in the forest. In another record, the VOC listed all elephants that were caught in Matara in 1689 and were caged in different corrals. Interestingly, all the elephants had names in the local language which were probably given by indigenous elephant keepers.⁶⁹ This also shows the corroboration between the Dutch and local agents in managing elephants.

Source Material

This thesis conducts its research for the most part by using two kinds of primary sources. Firstly, the "public archive"—to which I mean books and visual arts circulated

⁶⁵ Elias Hesse, "D' aenmercklycke reysen van Elias Hesse, nae en in Oost-Indiën; van 't jaar 1680 tot 1684" in *Drie Seer Aenmercklijcke Reysen nae en door Veelerley Gewesten in Oost-Indiën*, vertaald door S. De Vries (Utrecht: Willem vande Water, 1694), p. 212.

⁶⁶ Zwaardcroon, *Memoir for the Guidance of the Council of Jaffnapatam 1697*.

⁶⁷ *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, Deel I: 1610-1638, uitgegeven door Dr. W. Ph. Coolhaas (s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), p. 431.

⁶⁸ Pieter Nuyts, *Lof des elephants* (Delf: Arnold Bon, 1670), p. 111.

⁶⁹ VOC 1468, Rolle van alle de eliphanten inden jaar 1689, fol. 335r-336r.

in the public sphere in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic—will be the main sources for the first and second chapters. Published books consulted in this thesis were written originally in Dutch and translated from Latin. The notable books about elephants are the works by Justus Lipsius and Pieter Nuyts written in encomium style. The latter had experience of serving the VOC. Visual arts used in this study range from paintings, engravings, tympanum of a building to material culture such as an elephant goad.

The second type of primary sources is the “VOC archive” which circulated within the Company’s enclosed circle. The VOC sources—transcribed and published during the colonial period in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—will be used meticulously in Chapter 3. These sources are *Dagh-Registers* and *Generale Missiven* in which various elephant diplomatic practices with Asian polities and implications behind were recorded. This thesis also consults some of unpublished VOC manuscripts which are found in National Archives of the Netherlands (*Nationaal Archief*) and inventoried in *het archief van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), 1602-1795 (1811)*.

Chapter Outline

This thesis is organized into three main chapters and a conclusion plus epilogue. The first chapter investigates an overview of a long history of elephant distributions and elephant gift-giving practices across Eurasia and how the Dutch acknowledged these phenomena in the seventeenth century. This chapter shows that in the public sphere the Dutch acknowledged how elephants were brought to Europe and how they were used as gifts in the diplomatic missions between one sovereign and another. In this chapter, we will also see that the VOC was aware of elephant gift-giving practices between Asian polities and the implications behind the practices.

The second chapter will examine how elephants were imagined and perceived by the Dutch during the seventeenth century. Lipsius' and Nuyts' works will be used very thoroughly. These two writers' works will be compared with each other and with works and arts circulated contemporarily. While Lipsius' writings represent general mentalities toward elephants of peoples in the Low Countries, Nuyts' treatise about elephants can be seen as the imaginations and perceptions of a person under the VOC service. However, these two mentalities were complementary and paralleled. These existing mentalities were the vocabularies that the VOC employed to apprehend and communicate when conducting and experiencing the elephant diplomacy in Asia. This chapter also shows that the two competing worldviews—emblematic and empirical—existed simultaneously in the Dutch Republic, and this indicates that the worldview shifting during the early modern period was hardly dramatic and linear.

The last chapter explores how the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy was practiced during the seventeenth century. It will not only focus on the Dutch side when the Dutch acts as an elephant giver because the VOC frequently acted as a receiver. This chapter will show the general pattern and characteristics of the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy and how gift-elephants were signified when they were given to the other party. The significations of elephants in diplomatic practices implied in the VOC records can be read along with the Dutch acknowledgment of elephant gifting traditions in Chapter 1 and imaginations and perceptions toward elephants in Chapter 2. In this way, this chapter builds upon the first and second chapters to argue that the existing Dutch mentalities shown in the previous two chapters facilitated the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy during the seventeenth century and were fundamental to the commensurability between the two parties in bilateral diplomatic practice.

The conclusion will summarize the general ideas discussed in the three chapters. It will bring this thesis into dialogue with previous studies on the history of gift giving by showing how the study of the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy can contribute to

this historical research field. The conclusion also has an epilogue that will propose future research investigating the human-animal relations between the VOC and elephants. Furthermore, future research can study in-depth how Dutch imaginations and perceptions toward elephants were compared, connected, entangled, or disparate to/with Asian counterparts. This can be brought into dialogue with the concept of “connected histories.”⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3, Special Issue: The Eurasian Context of the Early Modern History of Mainland South East Asia, 1400-1800 (July 1997), pp. 735-762.

Chapter 1

Elephants and Long Gift-Giving Traditions: An Overview

Elephants had a long reception across Eurasia. While elephants could be naturally found in Asia, elephants never roamed around in European forests. To make their presence in European countries, men brought them from the original habitats located in Asia (especially in India, Ceylon, and Southeast Asia) and sub-Saharan Africa. From antiquity, they were brought predominantly on land to Europe through conquests and warfare by the Hellenic and Hellenistic empires and later by the Romans. They began to be mainly shipped by sea during the expansions of Portugal and Spain in the sixteenth century. Since the classical era, elephants have been given as gifts across Eurasia. The elephant gift-giving traditions did not limit the pattern of giving only between Europe and Asia. The traditions dynamically happened within Europe between one sovereign and another as did in Asia. These phenomena left their footprints through ink on historical documents or images in visual arts.

This chapter will explore an overview of a long history of the distributions of elephants and elephant gift-giving traditions across Eurasia and how the Dutch acknowledged these phenomena during the seventeenth century. This chapter has two parts. The first part gives a history of the elephant distributions and how the traditions of giving gift-elephants emerged from them. The second part will discuss how the Dutch acknowledged when elephants were transported to Europe before the seventeenth century and how they were aware of diplomatic activities regarding gifting elephants across Eurasia. This chapter suggests that the Dutch had the existing acknowledgment of elephant gift-giving traditions when the Dutch East India Company or the VOC performed the elephant diplomacy whenever it played as a giver or a receiver.

The Long Traditions of Elephant Gift-Giving in Europe and Asia

Donald F. Lach argues that Europeans gained their first experience on elephants when Alexander of Macedon (r. 336-323 BC) defeated Darius III of the Persian Achaemenid Empire (r. 336-330 BC) in 332 BC because, after the victory, Alexander captured 15 elephants from his Persian enemy.¹ Lach suggests that one of these elephants might have been observed by Aristotle in his *History of the Animals*.² However, Thomas R. Trautman states that Aristotle based his work partly on the works of Ctesias of Cnidus.³ Trautman also proposes that Alexander might have been familiar with Ctesias's work, which had an account of Indian war elephants because the Macedonian conqueror knew how to dilute the deployment of war elephants when waging war with the Persian at the Battle of Gaugamela.⁴ Throughout his eastward campaign to India, elephants from defeated polities were presented to Alexander as gifts and tribute.⁵ From Alexander's time, elephants started more and more to capture the European imaginations.

Elephants became acquainted with the Romans when the Greek King Pyrrhus of Epirus (r. 297-272 BC) invaded Italy during the third century BC. His troop composed of elephants won the victory over the Romans. However, the Romans could later defeat the Greek army under Manius Curius Dentatus. Four elephants from the Greeks were brought to Rome and put in the triumphal procession. In 251 BC, the consul Lucius Caecilius Metellus waged war against Carthaginians at Palermo in

¹ Donald F. Lach, "Asian Elephants in Renaissance Europe," *Journal of Asian History*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1967), p. 135.

² *Ibid.*, 135.

³ Ctesias was a Greek scholar who lived in the Greek city Cnidus in Caria, which was part of the Persian Achaemenid Empire.

⁴ Thomas R. Trautmann, *Elephants & Kings: An Environmental History* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 223.

⁵ Thomas R. Trautmann, "Towards a Deep History of Mahouts," in Piers Locke and Jane Buckingham (eds.), *Conflict, Negotiation, and Coexistence: Rethinking Human-elephant Relations in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 155.

southern Italy. After the victory, he brought over 100 African elephants to Rome. Their mahouts (elephant keepers)—who were, as Lach suggested, probably Indians or trained by Indians—were integrated into the Roman service as well. Elephants from Metellus’s time became increasingly involved with the Roman sociocultural life passing into the *Anno Domini* years.⁶ The way the Romans integrated the elephants into their realm resembled the way the Greeks made themselves familiar with the elephants; they warred against others who possessed elephants or conquered the lands where elephants were present and then brought the elephants back to their realms.

In the Middle Ages, Eurasian elephant diplomacy was increasingly practiced. At the beginning of the ninth century during the early Middle Ages, the Abbasid Caliph Harun-al-Rashid sent an elephant to Charlemagne (748-814), the Emperor of the Romans. The elephant was called Abul-Abbas and disembarked at Pisa in 801.⁷ In the biographies written after his death, Charlemagne enjoyed friendly relations with foreign nations. The narratives of Charlemagne’s relations with the distant nations to the East gained wide currency throughout the Middle Ages. They were employed to serve and shape the political schemes of the monarchs and empire during the High Middle Ages. In the Low Countries at the turn of the fourteenth century, the Flemish poet and chronicler Jean d’Outremeuse also recounted the arrival of the diplomatic elephant Abul-Abbas from the country in the East.⁸ In 1255 Louis IX of France sent an elephant as a gift to Henry III of England after traveling back to France from the Holy Land in the previous year.⁹ The Holy Land was an area which was part of the Near East where

⁶ Lach, “Asian Elephants in Renaissance Europe,” pp. 137-138.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁸ See Anne A. Latowsky, *Emperor of the World: Charlemagne and the Construction of Imperial Authority, 800-1229* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2013).

⁹ Lach, “Asian Elephants in Renaissance Europe,” p. 142.

the distribution of elephants had taken place because this geographical unit had been divided and ruled separately by the Diadochi or Alexander's successors.¹⁰

When the Portuguese gained a foothold in Asia during the early sixteenth century, they could reach the elephants. With Portuguese's contacts made with Asian polities, the Portuguese might have received gift-elephants from Asian sovereigns, as in the case of Ceylon.¹¹ Further, the elephants were sent as presents to Portugal to King Manuel I (r. 1495-1521).¹² In this way, Manuel conducted himself similar to the Indian rulers. He began to collect elephants and built a stable for keeping them near Estaus Palace in Lisbon. Manuel sent elephants as diplomatic gifts to several sovereigns in Europe, including the Pope. In 1514, Manuel sent an Indian elephant accompanied by the embassy and a Hindu driver to Pope Leo X (papacy 1513-1521). The Pope was delighted and so much fond of this gift-elephant. The Romans later named the elephant Hanno. The Pope became emotionally attached to Hanno. He even had great mental suffering when Hanno was ill and sorrow when Hanno died in 1516.¹³ Almost 40 years later, in 1552, another Indian elephant was bestowed to the Archduke Maximilian of Austria (the eldest son of Ferdinand I, the Holy Roman Emperor) by King John III of Portugal (r. 1521-1557). The elephant was transported to Vienna, where Maximilian had been recalled to after stationing in Spain for many years.¹⁴ Due to the Portuguese presence in Asia, the great distribution of elephants to the West—to which I would term as “the second westward elephant distribution”—occurred again since Alexander and his Diadochi had initiated.

¹⁰ Trautmann, *Elephants & Kings*, pp. 223-243.

¹¹ Felicity Heal, “Presenting noble beasts: Gift of animals in Tudor and Stuart diplomacy,” in Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings (eds.), *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410-1800* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), p. 193.

¹² Donald Ferguson, “The Discovery of Ceylon by the Portuguese in 1506,” *The Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, Vol. 19, No. 59 (1907), p. 298.

¹³ Lach, “Asian Elephants in Renaissance Europe,” pp. 148-152. See also Silvio A. Bedini, *The Pope's Elephant* (London: Penguin Books, 2000).

¹⁴ Lach, “Asian Elephants in Renaissance Europe,” pp. 160-167.

“[o]ne saw me in Brabant, now throwing first steps. So I went on land to the Emperor.” From the broadsheet, we also see probably the Indian mahout which was written as “the Moor” riding on the back of the Emperor’s gift-elephant.

After the 1580 succession crisis in Portugal, Philip II of Spain (1527-1598) was crowned to sit on the Portuguese throne as Philip I of Portugal. Now, he officially took the Portuguese role in conducting elephant diplomacy. During his coronation, he received an elephant and a rhinoceros as gifts from Lisbon. A decade later, he sent a gift-elephant to France’s new Bourbon King, Henry IV (r. 1589-1610). In turn, Henry IV sent an elephant across the English Channel to Queen Elizabeth of England (r. 1558-1603) in 1592.¹⁶

Asian states and polities were indeed not unfamiliar with elephant gift-giving traditions. Although elephants in China had retreated southward due to the “pressure” from human economic activities such as clearing forests for farming throughout Chinese history,¹⁷ elephants still made their way to China by Southeast Asian kingdoms, where elephants were persistent. As shown in the *Ming Shi-lu* (a daily chronicle of the Ming dynasty ruling from 1368-1644), embassies from Annam, Champa, Cambodia, Siam, and Java were sent to China bearing tribute, which frequently consisted of living (and sometimes white) elephants. In 1386, for example, the Kingdom of Champa (Southern Vietnam) presented 54 live elephants to the Chinese Emperor on his birthday. The record also shows that the mahouts occasionally accompanied the gift-elephants as tribute to China.¹⁸ In Japan, elephants rarely made their way to the island. Nevertheless, in 1597 an elephant named Don Pedro was sent as a gift by the Spanish

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 172.

¹⁷ The clearing-forest pattern for agriculture in China was different from India and Southeast Asia, where the human economic activities compromised with environment. See Trautmann, *Elephants & Kings*, Chapter 1. and Mark Elvin, *The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

¹⁸ Thomas R. Trautmann, “Towards a Deep History of Mahouts,” p. 159. Also see Geoff Wade (translator), *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu*, An Open Access Resource, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl>.

governor of Luzon in the Philippines, Don Luis de Navarrete Fajardo, to the Japanese daimyo Toyotomi Hideyoshi. The elephant had been trained to be able to trumpet. Hideyoshi was seemingly pleased by the gift-elephant and fed melons and peaches to the animal.¹⁹ Besides China and Japan, as we will see later, elephant gift-giving practices were energetic among Asian polities, and these activities could not avoid being noticed by the VOC through its records.

The tradition of giving (white) elephants sometimes did not end up in amity, but war. During the latter half of the sixteenth century, Pegu (Hongsawadee) in nowadays Myanmar demanded two white elephants from the Siamese Kingdom (Ayutthaya). This clearly did not express an equal relationship between Pegu and Siam; Pegu saw itself superior to Siam by demanding two white elephants that could be deemed as tribute. King Chakkraphat of Ayutthaya (r. 1548-1564) therefore refused to do so, and “replie[d] in royal friendship to [his] royal younger brother ... [that] it is an ancient tradition that, whoever has a sufficient abundance of merit to become a supreme monarch, will have [among other things] precious elephants.”²⁰ Chakkraphat was clear that he did not want to send white elephants to Pegu because the act of sending implied the inferior status of his kingdom according to the concept of gift-elephants as tribute, and it would diminish the sacredness and perfection of his kingship. In contrast to the complimentary close of Chakkraphat, the King of Pegu felt very slighted and later attacked Siam with the result of Pegu’s victory. This white-elephant war became well known to the Dutch.

¹⁹ Martha Chaiklin, “The Merchant’s Ark: Live Animal Gifts in Early Modern Dutch-Japanese Relations,” *World History Connected*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (February 2012), <https://worldhistoryconnected.press.uillinois.edu/9.1/chaiklin.html>.

²⁰ The chronicles states that King Bayinnaung of Pegu was a younger brother to King Chakkraphat because King Bayinnaung was born in 1516, while King Chakkraphat was in 1509. David K. Wyatt (ed.), Richard D. Cushman (translator), *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* (Bangkok: The Siam Society Under Royal Patronage, 2000), pp. 42-43.

Dutch Acknowledgment of Elephant Distributions and Gift-Giving Traditions

During the seventeenth century, the Dutch were aware of the historical occurrences regarding elephant distributions and elephant gift-giving practices from Alexander's era to the seventeenth century. Books about elephants published contemporarily in the Dutch republic mentioned these phenomena in the past. *Historie vanden Elephant* (History of the Elephant)—written by Justus Lipsius (1547-1606) and published in Dutch in 1621—provided the long history of elephants from the Hellenistic period to the time after the Portuguese landed in India. Alexander was deemed in Lipsius's work to be the first who had brought elephants to Europe: “Alexander first had the elephants in Europe.”²¹ In the other version, he cited the Greek traveler and geographer Pausanias to articulate that “Alexander has been the first who had the elephants among Europeans ... he brought or sent them to Europe.”²² In *Historie vanden Elephant*, Lipsius continued telling the history of elephants during the Roman Republic: “Pyrrhus transferred [elephants] to Italy. ... Metellus at a time caught 142 [elephants] and sent [them] to the City [Rome].”²³ In the work about elephants by the VOC governor Pieter Nuyts (1598-1655), he pointed out that after Lucius Caecilius Metellus conquered the elephants from Carthage, fears of the Romans toward elephants diminished.²⁴ Because of these lesser fears, Nuyts continued that “one hundred forty-two [elephants] that the Romans had overcome were brought in the theater inside Rome.”²⁵

Moreover, Lipsius also acknowledged “the second westward elephant distribution” initiated by the Portuguese. He wrote that “the *Portughijzen* opened those

²¹ Justus Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant* (’s Gravenhaghe: Aert Deuris, 1621), fol. 4^v.

²² Justus Lipsius, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” in *Veeler wonderens wonderbaareljck lof* (’t Amsterdam: Samuel Imbrecht en Adam Sneewater, 1664), p. 139.

²³ Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 4^v.

²⁴ Pieter Nuyts, *Lof des elephants* (Delf: Arnold Bon, 1670), p. 75.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

lands [in Asia] for their sailing, in the lands that those animal[s] [were] manifold.”²⁶ Not only referring to the “the olden Writers”²⁷ from classical antiquity to the Middle Ages, the text also depends much on the contemporary work of Cristóbal Acosta (1525-1594), the Portuguese natural historian, who “... is well-informed of that new World where one names East-Indies ... [and] lived there for long, saw [and] wrote among other things not a little matters about the Elephant which [he] saw by himself or has an understanding of the one that they saw because that Animal is very numerous in those places.”²⁸

The sixteenth-century elephant diplomacy conducted by European sovereigns appeared in the Dutch published books. The book *Toonneel der wereltscher zaaken* (Theater of the world occasions), published in 1659, narrates a story of the elephant Hanno “that was sent as a gift by *Emanuel* [Manuel] the King of Spain to the Pope Leo X”²⁹ in 1514. In volume 3 of *Triumph der Pausen van Roomen* (Triumph of the Popes of Rome) published in 1681, it states that King Manuel I of Portugal sent an ambassador “to offer obedience to [Pope Leo X]” and “revered him with a present of two elephants.” The elephants would be “... pleasant to many Romans because since the triumphal processions and public shows of the ancient Romans, Elephant was never seen by the Romans.”³⁰ Furthermore, he sent another ambassador and elephant, which was probably Hanno, to the Pope. When they arrived at the Papal Palace, the Pope sat at a window, “the elephant ... bent the knees three times and bowed his body as showing reverence.”³¹

²⁶ Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 4v.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. 10r.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, fol. 5v.

²⁹ J. Sanderum, *Toonneel der wereltscher zaaken* (Dordrecht: Abraham Andries, 1659), p. 106. In this quote, “*Emanuel* [Manuel] the King of Spain” is anachronistic given that during the time of Hanno in 1514 Portugal and Spain were the separate polities. Nevertheless, when *Toonneel der wereltscher zaaken* was published, the Iberian Union between Spain and Portugal under the Spanish Crown had already been established almost 80 years ago in 1580.

³⁰ P. Cornelivs Hazart, *Triumph der Pausen van Roomen*, het derde deel (t Antwerpen: Michiel Knobbaert, 1681), p. 186.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-187.

The gift-elephant sent to Maximilian in 1562 also captured Lipsius' eyes. He wrote that “[we] who have hardly ever seen [the elephant] in this our whole century (I mean the one the King of Spain sent to the Emperor in the year 1562).”³² The pronoun *we* which was employed by Lipsius might suggest the popularity of this gift-elephant to his general readers.³³ In addition, the sentences in *Toonneel der wereltscher zaaiken* and Lipsius' work might be an anachronism given that the two writers mistook the King of Portugal for “the King of Spain” due to the Iberian Union that combined Spain and Portugal under the Spanish Crown between 1580 and 1640.

The transfer of elephants in Ceylon to Europe appears in the VOC record through the *Dagh-Register* of Batavia Castle. The *Dagh-Register* in 1641 attaches the Dutch translation of the answers by Rajasinha II of Kandy (r. 1635-1687) in Portuguese to “the King of Spain.”³⁴ The question number 26 refers to the request of “the King of Spain” to possess the elephants: “the Spanish King has ... yearly 4 elephants with tusks and 50 without tusks from the province of *Matura* [Matará].”³⁵ Rajasinha continued, “the King of *Cotta* [Kotte] was a brother in arms with the King of Spain, he bestowed the lands that [had] belonged to him to the King of Spain.”³⁶ Rajasinha obviously talked about what had happened in the sixteenth century because the Kingdom of Kotte had ruled Matará and had dissolved at the end of the sixteenth century when King Dharmapala of Kotte granted his Kingdom to Portugal in 1597. Elephants which “the King of Spain” acquired were also probably granted to him as gifts. Again, “the King of Spain” here was also the King of Portugal because, due to the Iberian Union, all the

³² Lipsius, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” p. 139.

³³ Lipsius' elephant treatise had been written before the flesh-and-blood elephant from Ceylon arrived in the Netherlands in 1633. See Michiel Roscam Abbing, *Rembrandts Olifant: In het spoor van Hansken* (Amstelveen: Leporello Uitgevers, 2016).

³⁴ *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India, Anno 1640-1641*, uitgegeven door het Bataviaash Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, met medewerking van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering en onder toezicht van M^r. J. A. van der Chijs ('s Hage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1898), p. 408.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 416.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

overseas possessions previously owned by Portugal were merged under the Spanish monarch.

The VOC records also show how studious the Dutch were in recording elephant gift-giving activities within Asia. The Mughal was a notable sovereign who received gift-elephants from other Asian polities such as Aceh, Kandy, and Golconda as recorded in *Dagh-Registers* in 1641, 1643, and 1682 respectively.³⁷ As we will see in Chapter 3, the Mughal was also the major polity that received gift-elephants from the VOC. Along the Malabar coast, as recorded in *Generale Missive*, Travancore received an elephant as a gift in 1661 from the neighboring polity Kayamkulam that would later be annexed to Travancore during the early eighteenth century. From the *Generale Missive*, we already can anticipate the sign of submission because it was recorded that Kayamkulam sent the elephant to Travancore as the “symbol of subservience.”³⁸ We also know from the VOC records that Southeast Asian kingdoms such as Siam and Arakan conducted elephant trade in the Coromandel coast. These two kingdoms also probably sent gift-elephants across the Andaman sea and the Bay of Bengal to the Coromandel polities.³⁹ As recorded by the VOC, the elephant gift-giving practice was also conducted among

³⁷ See Aceh in *Dagh-Register*, Anno 1640-1641, pp. 206-207. See Kandy in *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India*, Anno 1643-1644, uitgegeven door het Departement van Koloniën onder toezicht van Dr. H. T. Colenbrander (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1902), pp. 250-251. See Golconda in *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India*, Anno 1682 I, uitgegeven door het Bataviaash Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, met medewerking van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering en onder toezicht van W. Fruin-Mees (Batavia: G. Kolff & Co., 1928), p. 666. The Golconda monarch sent 21 elephants to the Mughal Emperor along with a silver howdah and bells.

³⁸ *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, Deel III: 1655-1674, uitgegeven door Dr. W. Ph. Coolhaas (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), p. 510.

³⁹ For Siam, see *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India*, Anno 1644-1645, uitgegeven door het Departement van Koloniën onder toezicht van Dr. J. De Hullu (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1903), p. 357. and also Julispong Chularatana, “Kan Kha Chang Samai Ayutthaya [The Elephant Trade in Ayutthaya],” *Silapanattanatham* (3 January 2004), pp. 119-120. For Arakan, see *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India*, Anno 1641-1642, uitgegeven door het Departement van Koloniën onder toezicht van Dr. H. T. Colenbrander (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1900), p. 295.

and between the mainland and archipelagic polities within Southeast Asia: from Makassar to Aceh in 1641, Pattani to Johor in 1661, Palembang to Mataram in 1668, and Perak to Johor in 1693.⁴⁰ In addition, the VOC records also show how the elephant gift-giving practice was conducted at the individual level by a merchant to a ruler as recorded in 1641 when the wealthy merchant Chinnana donated two elephants—one to “King of *Carnatica* [Vijayanagara]” and another one to his “brother-in-law *Accapaneyck*.”⁴¹

The *Generale Missive* in 1683 recorded about the visit of the Jambi ambassadors at the Siamese court giving many elephants to King Narai (r. 1656-1688). The VOC stated clearly that this giving practice of Jambi was “a symbol of submission [under] and seeking protection [from]” the Siamese King.⁴² This practice caused a dispute between the VOC and Siam because Jambi, according to the VOC, had already submitted to the Sultan of Mataram and because this practice sometimes involved a large quantity of pepper while Jambi, as asserted by the VOC, had already granted the

⁴⁰ See Makassar to Aceh in *Dagh-Register*, Anno 1640-1641, p. 208. See Pattani to Johor in *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India*, Anno 1661, uitgegeven door het Bataviaash Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, met medewerking van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering en onder toezicht van Mr. J. A. van der Chijs (’s Hage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1889), p. 385. See Palembang to Mataram in *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India*, Anno 1668-1669, uitgegeven door het Bataviaash Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, met medewerking van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering en onder toezicht van Mr. J. A. van der Chijs (’s Hage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1887) p. 121. See Perak to Johor in *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, Deel V: 1686-1697, uitgegeven door Dr. W. Ph. Coolhaas (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), p. 628.

⁴¹ Chinnana was a merchant and a member of the merchant caste of Balija which had close connections with the ruling Nayaks. See Joseph J. Brenning, “Chief Merchants and the European Enclaves of Seventeenth-Century Coromandel,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 1977, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1977), p. 324. and *Dagh-Register*, Anno 1641-1642, p. 186.

⁴² *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, Deel IV: 1675-1685, uitgegeven door Dr. W. Ph. Coolhaas (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1671), p. 534.

exclusive rights to the pepper trade to the VOC.⁴³ However, despite the dispute, Siam was the most energetic polity in giving gift-elephants to the VOC as seen in Chapter 3.

As stated earlier, the white-elephant war between Siam and Pegu in the sixteenth century became well known in the Low Countries. Jan Huyghen van Linschoten (1563-1611), whose work was influential to the VOC's maritime activities, recorded this war and its cause in his *Itinerario*.⁴⁴ Pieter Nuyts also included this white-elephant war in his writing under the topic of "some strange histories of the elephants" in which he referred to Linschoten for credibility. Nuyts pointed out in his writing that men could find multifarious elephants in "East-Indies" and how symbolically important the (white) elephants were to the "Holiness" of Asian kings.⁴⁵ The holiness of elephants in relation to kingship was not actually "strange" to Europeans as his topic title suggests. Before this topic, he spent more than 100 pages talking about how practically, emotionally, and religiously significant the elephants were to kings and humanity across Eurasia. He also gave an example in India of how dignified a white elephant was to the Indian king (but the man who owned this white elephant refused to give the elephant to the king because of his affection for the precious animal).⁴⁶ Something that was "strange" for Nuyts in the white-elephant war, instead, might be the root of the catastrophic war between Siam and Pegu, that is, only the need of King of Pegu to possess two white elephants. These sources ranging from the Company's records to the public books show that the VOC continuously kept an eye on how elephant diplomacy among Asian polities was

⁴³ Bhawan Ruangsilp, *Dutch East India Company Merchants at the Court of Ayutthaya: Dutch Perceptions of the Thai Kingdom*, ca. 1604-1765 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 132.

⁴⁴ Jan Huyghen van Linschoten's work made the knowledge of the maritime route no longer exclusive to the Portuguese. Femme S. Gaastra, *The Dutch East India Company: Expansion and Decline* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2003), pp. 15-16. and Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, *Itinerario* (ʼAmstelredam: Cornelis Claesz, MDXCVI [1596]), p. 23.

⁴⁵ Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, p. 110.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

conducted contemporarily, and it also was aware of the implications behind these diplomatic activities.

Conclusion



Figure 1.2 The seventeenth-century tympandum of the city hall in Amsterdam

(Source: Rijksmuseum, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/BK-AM-51-3>)

The knowledge or awareness of the elephant persistence, the elephant gift-giving traditions, and the close relationship between elephants and sovereigns throughout Eurasia circulated well in the Dutch Republic and the VOC circle. During the seventeenth century, the country experienced “the quiet revolution.” Dutch society produced massive numbers of books that circulated across the entire country because of the networks of canals and the regular services of barges, boats, and coaches.⁴⁷ Particularly, Linschoten’s and Lipsius’ works were very popular and prevalent in the Dutch public sphere during the early seventeenth century. Moreover, one of the prominent VOC officials, Pieter Nuyts, who might have been inspired by Lipsius, did write the book on elephants with a similar title as Lipsius’ work—*Lof des Elephants*. This

⁴⁷ Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen, *The Bookshop of the World: Making and Trading Books in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

work was published posthumously by his son in 1670.⁴⁸ However, it must have been written much earlier than that, given the year 1655 when Nuyts passed away. (These works by Lipsius and Nuyts will be discussed meticulously in the following chapter.) This chapter suggests that the VOC, especially at the upper echelons of the Company's hierarchy, seemed to recognize a long history of elephant distributions and the elephant gift-giving traditions which had been practiced long before the seventeenth century. The acknowledgment thereof made the VOC perform the diplomacy with Asian polities properly. More importantly, the acknowledgment together with imaginations and perceptions toward emblematic elephants (see the next chapter) were vital to the commensurability in the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy.

The seventeenth-century tympanum on the rear façade of Amsterdam's new city hall (see Figure 1.2) illustrates the image of the four continents bringing gifts to Amsterdam. This tympanum restructures the position of the City of Amsterdam to become the center of the world. To the left of *Stedenmaagd* (Amsterdam's maiden) appears the elephant which came to Amsterdam as a gift.⁴⁹ Although the elephant on this tympanum might have traveled from Africa, elephants became visible in the Dutch personification of Asia during the seventeenth century. The engraving by Cornelis van Dalen shows the woman with the turban sitting on the elephant as the personification of Asia (see Figure 1.3). In reverse to the tympanum, it was time for Amsterdam via the Dutch East India Company to bring gift-elephants to Asian cities through its diplomacy.

⁴⁸ Leonard Blussé, "Bull in a China Shop: Pieter Nuyts in China and Japan (1627-1636)" in Leonard Blussé (ed.), *Around and About Formosa: Essays in honor of Professor Ts'ao Yung-Ho* (Taipei: Ts'ao Yung-ho Foundation for Culture and Education), p. 110.

⁴⁹ To the left of Amsterdam's maiden is Africa, while Asia is to the left. See Jos Gommans, *The Unseen World: The Netherlands and India from 1550* (Nijmegen: Rijksmuseum and Vantilt Publishers, 2018), pp. 151-157.



Figure 1.3 The seventeenth-century female personification of Asia by Cornelis van Dalen
(Source: Rijksmuseum, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-1888-A-12764>)

Chapter 2

Dutch Imaginations and Perceptions of Elephants

“**E**lephants populate the global consciousness more deeply and emotively than perhaps any other species.”¹ As shown in the previous chapter, elephants occupied European imaginations and perceptions since antiquity. Europeans acquired elephants from and encountered them in Asia and Africa. These two geographical habitats determine how elephants were classified into species. Therefore, there are two major types of elephants: Asian and African.² However, in this study, these differences were not that notable because imaginations and perceptions toward them are more concerned regardless of where elephants originally were. The better questions here are not about what types of elephants are shown in historical documents, but how elephants (no matter Asian or African) were imagined and perceived and how the imagined and perceived elephants were applied or adapted in a historical context. In the seventeenth century, the classical era’s knowledge had been “reborn” and underwent the intellectual transformation that separated the early modern period from the Middle Ages.

This chapter places elephants in the contexts of the seventeenth-century Netherlands and examines how elephants were imagined and perceived emblematically and empirically by the Dutch during the time. It argues that the imaginations and perceptions toward the emblematic elephant were integral to the elephant diplomacy practiced between the VOC and Asian polities (which we will see in the next chapter). We will begin by discussing the main sources used in this chapter. A categorization of

¹ “... bar dogs and cats.” See Dan Wylie, *Elephant* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), p. 7.

² Elephants can be distinguished visually, especially by looking at their backs. African elephants have a concave back that slopes sharply to the rump, longer tusks, and larger ears. Asian (or sometimes Indian) elephants have a concave back and smaller ears. The physical differences between the two types of elephants were beneficial when studying them in art. See Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume 2: A Century of Wonder*, Book 1: The Visual Arts (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 125.

the Dutch's imaginations and perceptions will be a follow-up. The conclusion will also propose that although there was a shift from an emblematic to a more empirical worldview in the seventeenth century, this was not a linear transformation.

Between Justus Lipsius and Pieter Nuyts

This chapter relies predominantly on three sources published in the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century. Two of them are *Historie vanden Elephant* and “’t Lof van den Olyphant” written by Justus Lipsius (1547-1606), who used to teach at Leiden University.³ The remaining one is *Lof des elephants* written by Pieter Nuyts (1598-1655), who had worked in the service of the VOC as “Councilor of India and the former Governor of Tayouan [in Taiwan] and the coast of China.”⁴ In this chapter, I will consult these three works with each other and also analyze them with other sources published contemporarily. This chapter has four sections according to the common ground found among these three works: the elephant as a symbol of kingship, piety and virtue, a human, and the elephant as an empirical animal.

The two works by Lipsius—*Historie vanden Elephant* and “’t Lof van den Olyphant”—were translated from Latin into Dutch and published posthumously in 1621 and 1664 respectively. Textual content and organization in these Lipsius' two works are very similar, although there are some minor differences and the second one is more detailed.⁵ The first one has 12 pages, while the second 27 pages. However, they were doubtlessly translated and edited from the same source. The original source of these two translated works was most likely from the *epistola* (Latin letter) about the

³ Justus Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant* (’s Gravenhaghe: Aert Deuris, 1621). and Justus Lipsius, “’t Lof van den Olyphant,” in *Veeler wonderens wonderbaarelijck lof* (’t Amsterdam: Samuel Imbrecht en Adam Sneewater, 1664).

⁴ Pieter Nuyts, *Lof des elephants* (Delf: Arnold Bon, 1670), frontispiece.

⁵ *Historie vanden Elephant* and “’t Lof van den Olyphant” have more or less the same subheadings which can be consecutively listed as language, taming, learning, memory, love, honor, piety, justice, and religion.

elephant written by Lipsius to his friend Jan Hauten in 1582.⁶ During this time, Lipsius was still in Leiden. His letter was later published in 1586 in the *Epistolarum selectarum* and republished in 1638 in the *Dissertationum ludicrorum et amoenitatum, scriptores varii* issued at Leiden.⁷ The first one, *Historie vanden Elephant*, was translated by Jos Nothevs who addressed himself as “vice-director of your Latin School.” He also called Lipsius’s original writing as “*Brieff*” (letter) in his preface.⁸ The publisher of *Historie vanden Elephant* was Aert Deuris, the bookseller in the Papestraat in Den Haag. The second one, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” is part of the book titled *Veeler wonderens wonderbaarelijck lof* (Much more wonders, wonderful praise). The translator of this version was unknown. This book’s publishers were the booksellers Samuel Imbrechts and Adam Snewater in Amsterdam.⁹ This book is composed of the works in encomium style for “praising” a person or thing. “t Lof van den Olyphant” was thus included amid miscellaneous praises.¹⁰

⁶ Laura Orsi, “The Emblematic Elephant: A Preliminary Approach to the Elephant in Renaissance Thought and Art,” *Anthropozoologica* 20 (1994), p. 79.

⁷ Leonard J. Slatkes, “Rembrandt’s Elephant,” *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1980): p. 9.

⁸ Justus Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 2r-2v.

⁹ In the preface, interestingly, the writer (probably one of the publishers) asked himself, “how I properly call my reader.” He then continued by suggesting the possibility of who his readers should be: “curious or high-learned, or modest, or nobleman, or commoner, or peasant, or the stay-at-home, or night-*kroller*, or thrifty, or drunk, or crazy, or wise, or sweet, or fighter, or smith, or as one might think of a man in the spiritual like Pope to Butcher, and in the worldly of Emperor to Garbage man and Night worker, etc.” Although his list of readers might be rhetoric, it implies a growing number of literate people in the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century. See “Voor-Reden,” in *Veeler wonderens wonderbaarelijck lof*, p. 3.

¹⁰ The other praises in the book are *podagra* (gout) by Willibald Pirckheimer and Gerolamo Cardano, *vloos* (flea) by Celio Calcagnini, the art of swimming by Nikolaus Wynmann, *slyck* (dirt) by Marcus Antonius Majoragius, *luisen* (lice) by Daniël Heinsius, and swan by Ulisse Aldrovandi.

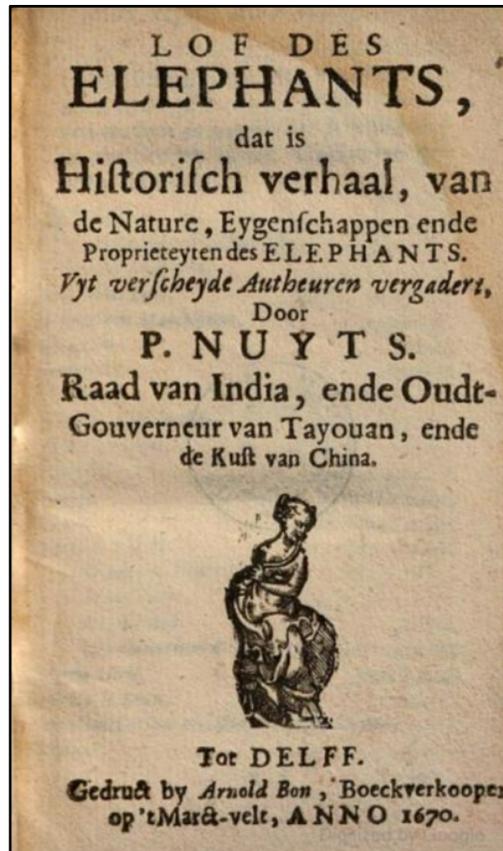


Figure 2.1 The frontispiece of *Lof des elephants* by Pieter Nuyts

(Source: Koninklijke Bibliotheek)

Nuyts' *Lof des elephants*, as stated in the previous chapter, was published after his death by his son in 1670 (see the frontispiece in Figure 2.1).¹¹ Nuyts' writing has in total of 116 pages and was subdivided into three books and an addendum. Each book has its own chapters; the first book has nine chapters, the second seven, the third also nine. Most of the chapters discuss elephants' emblematic qualities, whereas the first and second chapters of the first book deal with the general description of elephants and

¹¹ In 1714, Gijsbert Cupper received a correspondence from the Amsterdam Lord Major Nicolaes Witsen with a manuscript of *Lof des Elephants*. He mistook that this work had never been printed to publish, that is why he encouraged to put the work into print because it would be well received. See Leonard Blussé, "Bull in a China Shop: Pieter Nuyts in China and Japan (1627-1636)" in Leonard Blussé (ed.), *Around and About Formosa: Essays in honor of Professor Ts'ao Yung-Ho* (Taipei: Ts'ao Yung-ho Foundation for Culture and Education), pp. 96-97 and 110.

their special characteristics. The addendum talks about “some strange histories of the elephants.” Nuyts’ chapters structurally correspond with the subheadings in Lipsius’ works. His work was published in Delft by the publisher Arnole Bold.

To engage deeply in these works, we need to get to know their authors briefly. Justus Lipsius was born in the southern part of the Low Countries. During the second half of the sixteenth century, the Dutch revolt against Spain partly impacted his academic life. He moved from place to place. He studied with the Jesuits in Cologne and classical learning in Rome. In his professional life, he worked as a professor consecutively at the University of Jena, Leiden University, and the Catholic University of Louvain.¹² He usually exercised his intellectuality through letter-essays with his friends and students.¹³ He was part of the shifting in political thought from Cicero to Tacitus. By linking prose and realism from Tacitus with practical ethics from Seneca, he created what can be termed Neostoicism. Prudence thus became part of his stoic morality in public and private matters.¹⁴

For Pieter Nuyts, he studied at Leiden University and earned a doctorate in philosophy. He was dispatched with the rank of Councilor of the Indies in May 1626 and arrived in Batavia in April 1627. After one month of his arrival, he was appointed Governor of the VOC establishment at Formosa Island and was sent as an envoy to the Shogunal court of Japan to unsuccessfully stress Dutch sovereignty over the island. He was sent to Batavia as part of the colonial Grand Strategy advocated by the first-term Governor-General Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1587-1629). Coen needed an infusion

¹² Halvard Leira, “Justus Lipsius, Political Humanism and the Disciplining of 17th Century Statecraft,” *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (October 2008), p. 671.

¹³ Jan Papy, “Justus Lipsius on Travelling to Italy: From a Humanist Letter-Essay to an Oration and a Political Guidebook,” in Karl A.E. Enekel and Jan L. de Jong (eds.), *Artes Apodemicae and Early Modern Travel Culture, 1550-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 92-113.

¹⁴ Halvard Leira, “Justus Lipsius, Political Humanism and the Disciplining of 17th Century Statecraft,” *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (October 2008), pp. 669- 692.

of well-educated men for his civilized and well-ordered Batavia. A Dutch physician and a scholar of tropical medicine Jacobus Bontius (1592-1631) also sailed to Batavia for Coen's grand project with his voluminous library. When Nuyts was under house arrest because of charges against him for illegal private trade and promiscuity with Formosan women, he spent time in the company of Bontius. Nuyts discussed matters of mutual interest with him, borrowed, and even purchased books from his library. Seventy titles of books—from antiquity to contemporary time ranging from political, historical to literary themes (almost all in Latin) including Lipsius' works, which probably contained his elephant lore letter—were in Nuyts' possession. After he was released from house arrest, he was assigned by the High Government of the Indies to sail again to Japan in 1632. Upon arriving in Japan, he was again put under house arrest in Hirado. Two Dutch junior merchants had free access to meet him. One of them was Justus Schouten, who later would be a head of the newly opened factory in Siam and recorded his experience in his writing. Nuyts corresponded with Schouten, reading his letters about the place assigned to elephants in Siamese court rituals. He drafted his *Lof des elephants* in encomium style and also sent his writing to Schouten. His way of corresponding with the colleague resembles the *epistola* tradition of the professional humanists. For writing this book, he might have also been influenced by Lipsius, given his title *Lof des elephants* and how he organized his praise of the elephants. He was released from house arrest in Hirado in 1636 and sailed to Batavia, then returned home in the fatherland.

Thanks to Renaissance humanism legacy developed in the Low Countries since the late fifteenth century, by composing the works, the two writers accumulated their content from what had been handed down for generations by the *ouden* (predecessors).¹⁵ The ways Lipsius and Nuyts composed their works were constitutive of the Renaissance and Age-of-Discovery traditions in which classical texts from antiquity were reborn and

¹⁵ See Richard Walsh, "The Coming of Humanism to the Low Countries: Some Italian Influences at the Court of Charles the Bold," *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 1976, Vol. 25 (1976), pp. 146-197.

consulted with new ideas and information gained from explorations outside Europe. Their most notable sources from the classical period are the Greek philosopher Aristotle and the Roman scholars Pliny the Elder and Claudius Aelianus. The contemporary one is from the sixteenth-century Portuguese natural historian Cristóbal Acosta who used to travel to the East.

What can we find between the professional humanist like Lipsius and the amateur humanist like Nuyts? While the first one was a humanist polyhistor by profession, the latter was a VOC-official writer who did not professionally engage in scholarship. Despite the difference in professions, Lipsius' works can be read in parallel with Nuyts' treatise to see the interconnections between their elephant lore (and others produced or published contemporarily). These works can reflect general readers' imaginations and perceptions toward the elephant. Moreover, when reading Lipsius' works along with Nuyts', we probably see a microcosm of how the imaginations and perceptions toward the elephant were shared between people who never traveled overseas and spent most of their lifetime in the Low Countries and the one who used to work in Asia under the Dutch trading company. In other words, The VOC's imaginations and perceptions paralleled (sometimes had more dynamics because of direct experiences in the East) with ones in *Patria*.

Kings, Elephants, and Warriors

The elephant is “the greatest beast and the king of others,”¹⁶ said Lipsius in *Historie vanden Elephant*. In *Uitbeeldinge der figuren* by Karel van Mander published in 1604, it was stated that “[t]he Elephant means the King, and the Egyptians also had it meant that.”¹⁷ Since the early fifteenth century, hieroglyphs were part of Renaissance fascination and

¹⁶ Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 5^v.

¹⁷ Karel van Mander, *Uit beeldinge der figuren*, in *Het schilder-boeck* (Haerlem: Paschier van Wesbvsch, 1604), fol. 128^r.

the cultural matrix of the emblematic worldview when Horapollo's *Hieroglyphics* was recovered and translated from the Greek.¹⁸ The Egyptians drew animal hieroglyphs to signify other meanings. In this case, the elephant means the king. The elephant-king was well received by the early modern Low Countries' imaginations as seen in both Lipsius' and Nuyts' works. The elephant-king seems to go against today's prevailing imagination that a lion is the king of the jungle. This can be traced back to *Physiologus*, the predecessor of Middle-Ages bestiaries.¹⁹ But when a lion confronted an elephant in Nuyts' work, the lion swiftly fled.²⁰

The elephant was not only the king in the animal kingdom, it also symbolized a king or a ruler in general. A proximate relationship between the king and the elephant was articulated through paintings and narratives. Three elephants take a leading role in a triumphal procession of the Dutch painting *Verbeerlijking van Willem de Zwijger* (The Glorification of William the Silent) by Hendrik Gerritsz Pot for the town hall of Haarlem in 1620 (see Figure 2.2). This painting can be compared with the late-fifteenth-century series of paintings *The Triumphs of Caesar* by Andrea Mantegna in which three elephants stand at the back.²¹ The elephants in William of Orange's procession signified his rulership over the Dutch Republic and his victory against the Spanish rule. A story told by Cristóbal Acosta and cited in Lipsius's writings emphasized this proximate relationship. In Cochin on the Malabar Coast, a weary working elephant at a port refused to tow a cargo ship into the sea. The Portuguese Governor begged him to continue towing "for [the] sake of the King of Portugal." The elephant replied in the

¹⁸ William B. Ashworth, Jr., "Natural History and the Emblematic World View," in Robert S. Westman and David C. Lindberg (eds.), *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 307.

¹⁹ *Physiologus: A Medieval Book of Nature Lore*, translated by Michael J. Curley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 3-4.

²⁰ Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, p. 107.

²¹ Orsi, "The Emblematic Elephant," p. 72.

Malabari language “Hoo, hoo” which means “I will, I will.”²² The elephant who lived overseas under the Portuguese sovereign could signify the presence of the Portugal kingship.



Figure 2.2 *Verbeerlijking van Willem de Zwijger* by Hendrik Pot at Frans Hals Museum in Haarlem
(Source: Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis (RKD), <https://rkd.nl/nl/explore/images/177859>)

Nuyts stressed a relationship betwixt the king and the elephant through a mutual affection of loving friendship. He raised the Greek King Pyrrhus of Epirus as an example for whom “our Animal” carried the love. In return, King Pyrrhus also “once entered into friendship” with the elephant.²³ Nuyts compared the elephant case of being loving and friendly toward the king with the similitude of the Greek general Hephaestion, who was the close friend of Alexander of Macedon. Nuyts recounted the time when Hephaestion took the mother of King Darius of Persia to Alexander, she mistook the general for Alexander. After she had realized, she excused herself, but Alexander told her “you shouldn’t mother because this is also Alexander.”²⁴ After Hephaestion was dead, Alexander “has been disparaged” He devoted his friend a

²² Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elefant*, fol. 5^v. This story is also in Lipsius, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” pp. 144-145.

²³ P. Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, p. 52.

²⁴ Quintus Curtius Rufus cited. P. Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, pp. 52-53.

magnificent funeral and ordered him be venerated as a god.²⁵ Their relationship also corresponds with the emotive friendship between Pope Leo X and the elephant Hanno (see Chapter 1). Thus, the relationship between the elephant and the king resembles the friendship between Hephaestion and Alexander. If their friendship was indivisible to the extent that Darius's mother could not discern, why not the king-and-elephant friendship. Nuyts continued “[j]udging now what Alexander did to his friend Hephaestion [was] more like this Animal, and in contrary how many men make this Animal ashamed, in which true friendship and affection are hoped for, [but] rarely found.”²⁶ Indubitably, elephants were used to stress the friendship between the VOC and Asian polities in the gift-giving diplomacy as we will see in the next chapter.

Subsequently, Nuyts praised the elephants for being as gentle as King Philip II of Macedon, father of Alexander. When an elephant saw a herd of cattle in the forest, he did not only do any harm, but also gave way for cattle to get through.²⁷ At one time, a large and strong elephant was bullied by some kids. They struck his “nose [trunk], also tormenting this mighty and strong Beast.” The elephant took the bully on his tusk, raising him, but in the end, put him down “yet without doing wrong.”²⁸ This benign behavior of elephants was, for Nuyts, a similitude to the kindness of Philip II when he received the ambassadors from Athens. Although the ambassadors had no respect for Phillip II, the King talked to them with politeness.²⁹ Obviously, it just goes only to show that the King was the “mighty and strong” elephant, while the Athenian ambassadors were the bullies.

Besides being a friend, elephants were deemed to be the most trusted servants of the king. By citing Aelianus, Lipsius wrote “these animals always stand in a service

²⁵ Plutarch cited. *Ibid.*, p. 53-54.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

²⁷ Pliny cited. *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

²⁸ Plutarch cited. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

²⁹ Seneca the Younger cited. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

of the King of Indians [for] 24 [hours], keep guarding him”³⁰ as they are “the most trusted servants.”³¹ Nuyts referred to the 24-hour guarding elephants by citing Aelianus as well.³² When the king was in danger, the elephant would be an adjutant shielding him from a danger. Nuyts recounted a story of the Indian King Porus and his elephant. This story “has proved an excellent faithfulness of the Elephant to his Lord.”³³ During the war between King Porus and Alexander, King Porus was injured fatally. The elephant who carried the King on the back helped him pull an arrow gently out of the King’s body with the trunk. When King Porus seemed to fall down, the elephant kneeled on the ground. Alexander who had seen from afar approached to kill him. The elephant stood and defended his King, then holding him with the trunk, placing him on the back, and escaping with him.³⁴

The key attribute of being the most trusted servants of the king was to follow royal orders unconditionally. A story of the elephant named Ajax of the Seleucid King Antiochus proves this attribute, and it appears in Lipsius’ and Nuyts’ works. When the King Antiochus and his army wanted to cross a river, Ajax who was the first in the vanguard and the chief of all refused to do. The other elephant named Patroclus took the lead in entering the stream. Patroclus was rewarded and raked as a chief. Ajax who had not followed the royal command starved himself to death because of the ignominy.³⁵

³⁰ Lipsius, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” p. 147.

³¹ Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 6r.

³² Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, pp. 94-95.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

³⁴ Pliny the Elder and Curtius Rufus cited. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

³⁵ Pliny cited. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97. Also Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 9r. and Lipsius, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” pp. 157-158.



Figure 2.3 Michiel de Ruyter and his elephant badge in 1660

(Source: Zeeuws Archief, Historisch-Topografische Atlas Vlissingen, nr 1666.)

Bravery was a moral quality that a royal warrior had to carry. In his writing, Nuyts gave examples of courageous elephants who fought in the kings' armies. In the war between Rome and Carthage, each side had many thousand soldiers, but “only the courage of hundred elephants, without great help from the soldiers of their side, ... brought the whole victory.”³⁶ Thus, elephants as brave warriors alone could bring triumph to the kingdom. As being fearless, when an elephant was injured during a battle, he could heal the wounds by himself with herbs.³⁷ Michiel de Ruyter (1607-1676), known for his heroic navy battle during the Anglo-Dutch wars, also held the honorific

³⁶ Polybius cited. Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, pp. 73-74.

³⁷ Claudius Aelianus cited. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

title of “Knight of St. Michael and the Elephant” in the order of chivalry. As shown in the portrait in 1660, he wears the tusked elephant badge hanged in front of the sash to signify his chivalrous title (see Figure 2.3).

Nuyts provided readers with several similitudes resembling the brave elephants; namely the Roman consul Metellus Scipio who fought against Julius Caesar’s forces, the Roman plebeian Lucius Sicinius who revolted against the patrician ruling class, the Roman centurion Cassius Scaevus who defended Caesar from the Pompeian cohort, the Messenian King Aristomenes who slayed 300 enemies, the Albanian commander Skanderbeg who fought against the Ottoman, and, last but not least, a 20-year-old woman in West Indies who killed 28 Spaniards!³⁸ The last similitude might have impressed Nuyts greatly since Spain was the long-lasting enemy of the Dutch. Furthermore, the West-Indies woman proves that the arrival of a New-World story thereof did not undermine the emblematic worldview as William B. Ashworth, Jr. suggests with New-World animals.³⁹ Conversely, a New-World element was imported and framed within the existing Old-World mentalities. It even reinforced the emblematic worldview, as in this case regarding the elephant-warrior.

The king or ruler was one of the symbols that men attributed to the elephant. Unequivocally, elephants played a major role in the diplomacy practiced and experienced by the VOC with Asian sovereigns. Gift-elephants were given and received within the networks of the Dutch trading company. Elephants as the emblems of kingship operated effectively whether the VOC acted as a giver or a receiver. The process of “localization” did not diminish elephants’ emblems since across Eurasia elephants were imagined and perceived alongside kingship.⁴⁰

³⁸ Aulus Hirtius, Aulus Gellius, Caesar, Pliny, Simon Goulartius, and Hieronymus Benzo respective cited, *Ibid.*, pp. 71-73.

³⁹ Ashworth, “Natural History and the Emblematic World View,” pp. 318-319.

⁴⁰ Thomas R. Trautmann, *Elephants & Kings: An Environmental History* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2015).

Pious and Virtuous Elephants

“[F]or what purpose was [the elephant] created, so one will find that the principal cause is well for long since glorifying his creator and expressing in all actions with a pious Christian behavior and thereby lending love to fellow creatures and being useful,”⁴¹ wrote Nuyts in the last part of his praise of the elephant. Because the elephant stood side by side with the king as his “most trusted servant,” the elephant needed to be religiously and morally purified. Elephants were thus gifted with piety and virtues when they were created, as Lipsius wrote by citing the Greco-Roman poet Oppianus “that there is a godly heart in [the elephant’s] chest.”⁴² Using Nuyts’ words, they incarnated on earth to glorify his creator and express all virtues to the world. In 1633, when an elephant from Asia, later named Hansken, was disembarked in the Dutch Republic by the VOC, directors in the Amsterdam Chamber decided to have the elephant shown in an exhibition and some amount of the money gathered from ticket fees would be donated to the Dutch Reformed Church.⁴³

⁴¹ Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, p. 108. Besides bearing a resemblance to “official religions,” elephants had intuition in learning religions since they worshiped the Moon and the Sun. They also buried their fellows when one of them died. Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 10r.; Lipsius, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” p. 162.; and Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, pp. 13-14. Also, elephants had a behavior of secluding themselves from company and worldly matters which resembled a hermitage. Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, p. 15.

⁴² Lipsius, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” p. 162.

⁴³ VOC 231, Minuut- en net-resoluties van de ordinaris en extraordinaris vergaderingen van de kamer Amsterdam, donderdach 21 juli 1633, fol. 104. Also, Michiel Roscam Abbing, *Rembrandts Olijfant: In het spoor van Hansken* (Amstelveen: Leporello Uitgevers, 2016), pp. 13 and 15.



Figure 2.4 The elephant in the Adam-and-Eve etching by Rembrandt in 1638

(Source: Minneapolis Institute of Art, <https://collections.artsmia.org/art/55308>)

Five years after the arrival of Hansken, she was framed again into the Christian discourse. When she was exhibited in Amsterdam in 1637, Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) was living in the city. He might have seen Hansken alive and left several drawings of the elephant.⁴⁴ In 1638, he created the etching in which the *Physiologus'* lore of the elephant was interwoven with the myth of Adam and Eve (Figure 2.4). In the etching, the elephant is standing behind, while Adam and Eve are holding an apple under the tree on which the evil dragon is perching. According to *Physiologus*, the dragon was an antagonist to the elephant. While the elephant was symbolized with virtues, the dragon was with wickedness. "If the elephant finds a serpent, he kills it by tramping on it until

⁴⁴ Abbing, *Rembrandts Olifant*, pp. 20-22.

it dies.”⁴⁵ Interpreting along with Nuyts’ writing, the elephant in Rembrandt’s etching represented “a pious Christian behavior” in the paradise, even when descending from heaven, the elephant would perform all virtues to glorify his creator.

Another aspect the elephant in Rembrandt’s Adam-and-Eve etching represents was purity, which had existed before the first man and woman ate a forbidden apple. Even though humans failed to preserve chastity after the Garden of Eden, elephants managed to do so. “[T]hey approach each other only once in their life, not out of lecherousness, but only through [the] holy passion for generating and propagating, for that their species [will] not be lost,” wrote Nuyts in his writing.⁴⁶ He continued that this did not mean elephants lacked love and affection, but they had to live this way because of their “internal chastity and purity.” Thus, “they hate all those who live differently.”⁴⁷ Nuyts provided readers with several adultery cases from Rome to India, showing how immoral humans were and how elephants punished them.⁴⁸ In 1641, when Hansken visited the Protestant city Harderwijk, a story of her pointing with the trunk to a *hoerenloper* (literally whoerwalker) who was a Catholic cleric was told.⁴⁹ The moral lesson concerning adultery learned from elephants might have imprinted well on Nuyts’ moral

⁴⁵ *Physiologus*, p. 30. The elephant and the *draak* (dragon) story was also in *Vorstelijcke warande der dieren* by Joost van den Vondel. See Joost van den Vondel, *Vorstelijcke warande der dieren* (t’ Amsterdam: Sander Wybrantsz, 1682), p. 112. The engravings in Vondel’s book were done through the original copperplates of Marcus Gheeraerts which had been bought during the early seventeenth century by the Amsterdam painter and publisher Dirck Pietersz. Pers. He asked Vondel to write new verses for each engraving. These engravings had been used before in one of oldest Dutch emblem books, *De warachtighe fabulen der dieren*, published in 1567. This book was adapted from the French writer Gilles Corrozet’s emblem book. See Johan Koppenol, “Noah’s Ark Disembarked in Holland: Animals in Dutch Poetry, 1550-1700” in Karl A.E. Enenkel and Paul J. Smith (eds.), *Early Modern Zoology: The Construction of Animals in Science, Literature and the Visual Arts* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 456.

⁴⁶ Aelianus cited. Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, p. 31.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

⁴⁸ Aelianus cited. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

⁴⁹ Abbing, *Rembrandts Olifant*, p. 39.

codes because he had been charged with promiscuity with Formosa women and put under house arrest in Batavia before he wrote this elephant treatise.⁵⁰

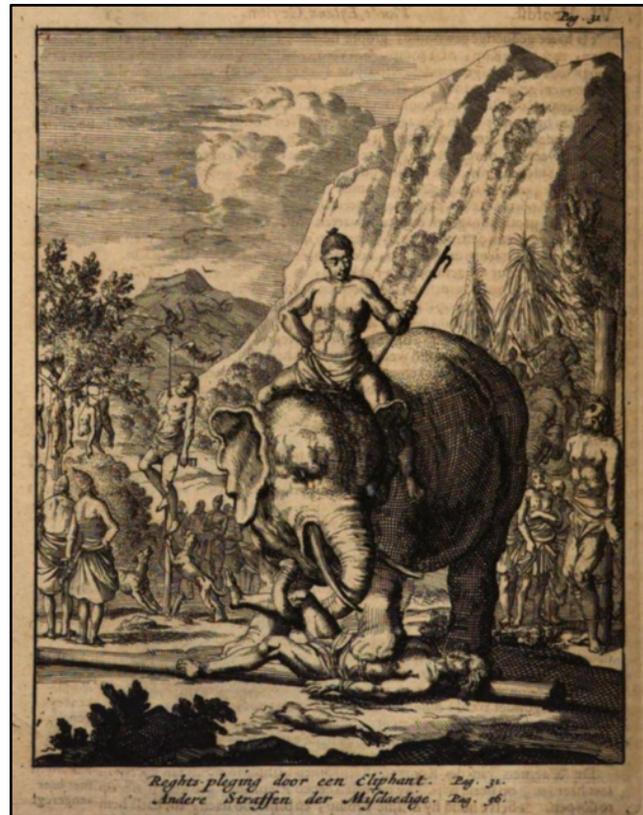


Figure 2.5 The Asian elephant executing the criminal

(Source: Robert Knox, *T' eyland Ceylon in sijn binnenste*, vertaald door S. de Vries (Utrecht: Wilhelm Broedelet, 1692), pag. 31.)

Being just, which was one of the king's archetypes, was also attributed to the elephant. When King Bocchus ordered an elephant to trample on 30 innocent men, the elephant disobeyed the King because, as Nuyts recounted, "the elephant noticed the inequity."⁵¹ That the elephant was disobedient to the King does not end up indeed like the elephant Ajax since Bocchus, in the elephant's eyes, was no longer a king, but a

⁵⁰ Blussé, "Bull in a China Shop," p. 104.

⁵¹ Pliny cited. Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, p. 23.

tyrant. Nuyts gave another example of the unjust ruler when the King Physcon (Ptolemy VIII of Egypt) wanted to execute innocent people, including Jews, kids, women, and men. The elephant thus defied and rescued them.⁵² Lipsius also compared the just elephant with the Spartan lawgiver Lycurgus who is still esteemed for his justice until today.⁵³ Nonetheless, when it comes to immoral acts, the elephant had the legitimacy to punish or execute them such as punishing those with adulterous behaviors and the evil dragon as said before. A picture of an Asian elephant crushing and dismembering a criminal in a public execution such as one shown in the Dutch version of *An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon* by Robert Knox was in tune with the imagined just elephant. Therefore, the caption of the picture was said “Justice by an Elephant” (see Figure 2.5).⁵⁴

As Nuyts implied, elephants were created with virtues, they instinctively practiced all virtues they carried. Lycurgus was invoked also by Nuyts, but Nuyts employed him to be a counterexample. According to Lycurgus who noticed the lack of virtues in humans, *Lacedemoniers* (Spartans) needed to be taught and sharpen in order to possess virtues.⁵⁵ Conversely, “without discipline” young elephants respected elder ones; without “the school of the learning” elephants helped each other cross a canal, showed the way to a man who was lost in the forest, looked after a sick elder, rescued an elder who had fallen into a canal, helped a wounded companion during a battle, paid homage to friend’s carcass.⁵⁶ Nuyts concluded that one could hardly find these all

⁵² Ibid., pp. 23-23.

⁵³ Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 9^v. and Lipsius, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” p. 160.

⁵⁴ Robert Knox, *T’eyland Ceylon in sijn binnenste*, vertaald door S. de Vries (Utrecht: Wilhelm Broedelet, 1692), pag. 31. This engraving was made by Jan Luyken.

⁵⁵ Plutarch cited. Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, p. 35. Also, Lipsius, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” p. 160.

⁵⁶ Aelianus, Pliny, and Plutarch cited. Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, pp. 35-38

virtues of elephants even in a reasonable man in the moral school of Lycurgus, Solon, or Plato.⁵⁷ The Elephant, for Nuyts, could teach men a moral lesson.

All the piety and virtues the elephants have shown were all the more reason why elephants were used in the elephant diplomacy between the Dutch and Asian polities. The elephant represented all the goodness, namely respect, honor, and amity. When sending elephants as diplomatic gifts, the moral messages attached to the animals traveled along as well. As a giver, the VOC wanted to convey these messages to Asian recipients. As a receiver, these messages were also understood by the VOC when receiving gift-elephants from Asian sovereigns. This mutual understanding implied the commensurability in the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy regarding the moral qualities of the elephant.

Anthropomorphizing Elephants

Elephants were imagined in the seventeenth century as having similitudes of human elements. During the last period when Hansken was in the Netherlands (1646-1648), the owner, Cornelis van Groenevelt, made the Dutch print advertising for boosting Hansken's reputation (Figure 2.6).⁵⁸ The central jingle in the print showed how the elephant could act like a human.⁵⁹ Hansken was known for her intelligence all over Europe that she was able to perform tricks and understand human verbal and non-verbal languages. Her reputation as being the intelligent beast corresponded with the perception of Joris van Spilbergen (1568-1629) who sailed to Ceylon in 1602 and proclaimed when he saw elephants on the island that "[t]hese elephants are very

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 38-39.

⁵⁸ Abbing, *Rembrandts Olifant*, p. 71.

⁵⁹ The jingle reads "Hansken the elephant is my name, In many countries I have big fame, I am also the greatest beast of all countries, I know multiple skills, I am tamed with a small hook, Which I can learn [from] my master, That is why [one] buys this print to look at, your money and you shall not repent."

understanding and wonderfully trained in all aspects, [t]hese elephants of *Celon* are considered to be the most intelligent in the whole of the Indies.”⁶⁰

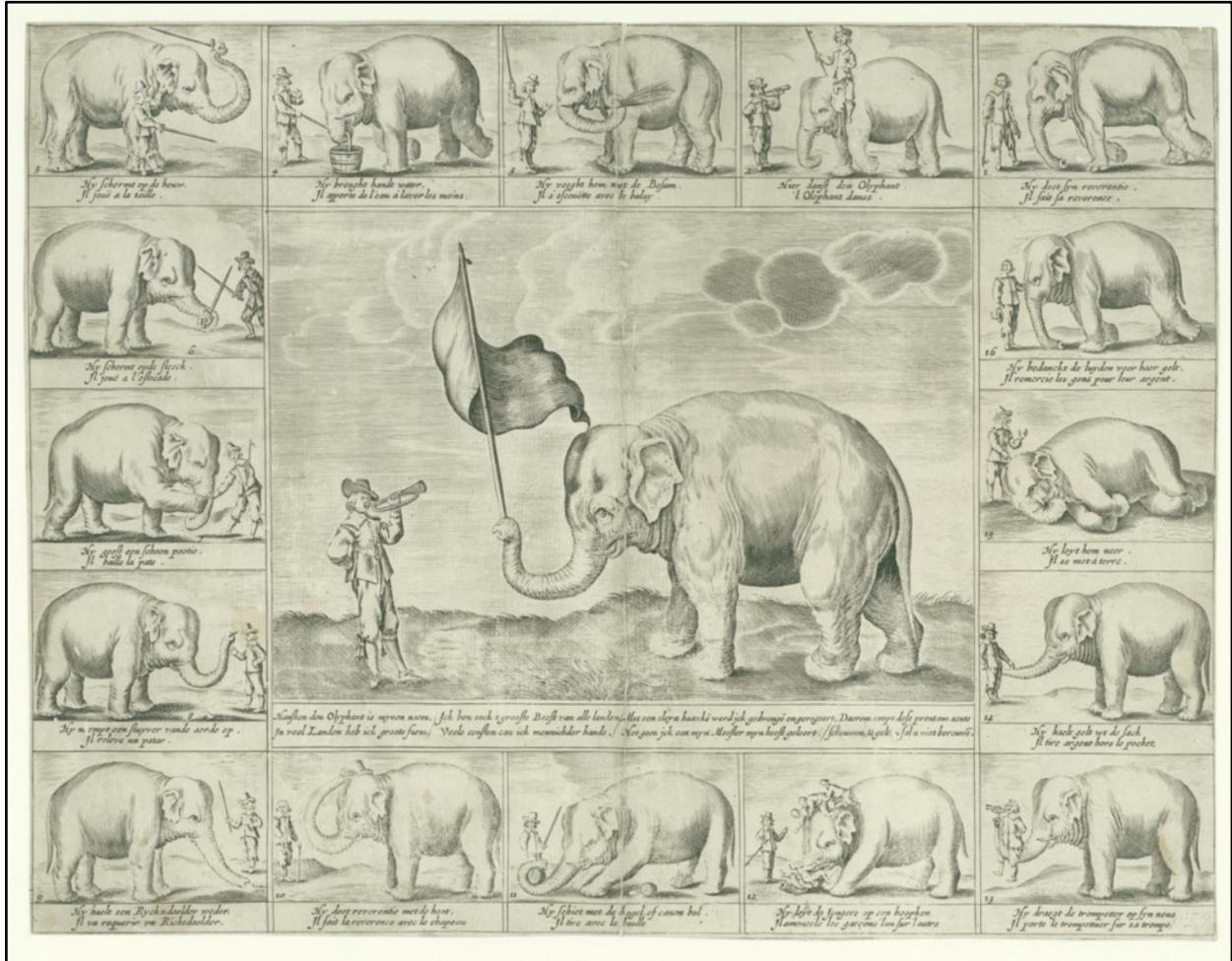


Figure 2.6 The print advertising about Hansken’s tricks

(Source: Rijksmuseum, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/RP-P-OB-77.795>)

In Lipsius’ and Nuyts’ treatises, the talent of elephants in understanding languages was also articulated. In Malabar, elephants talked with each other and even spoke in a language.⁶¹ However, they comprehended only a mother tongue such as “the

⁶⁰ *Journal of Spilbergen, the first Dutch envoy to Ceylon 1602*, translated by K. D. Paranavitana (Dehiwala: Sridevi, 1997), p. 22.

⁶¹ Cristóbal Acosta cited. Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 5v. and Lipsius, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” p. 144.

Indian, *Moren* [Arab?], African, and all, under which they were born.”⁶² By referring to French physician Louis Guyon (1527-1617), Nuyts gave an example of an elephant in Cochin who spoke and asked for food and water from the master. He also mentioned Portuguese physician Garcia de Orta (1501-1568) who had witnessed the elephants’ communication skills.⁶³ A story of an elephant who could write Greek and Latin letters with the trunk was prevailing and appeared in the works of Lipsius and Nuyts.⁶⁴ The ability to understand the human languages of elephants also led to another talent that impressed humans. Nuyts gave us some examples that elephants could perform entertainment such as dancing which could be found in Rome and Constantinople.⁶⁵

Elephant’s love was another aspect worth to be praised, and they expressed love not only toward their species, but also toward humanity. A mother elephant never left her child behind even though her child was in extreme danger.⁶⁶ Nuyts linked the mother elephant’s love with a story told by Seneca the Younger about the Roman mother Rutilia who did not leave her son, Gaius Aurelius Cotta, go into exile alone.⁶⁷ Furthermore, Nuyts related the love from the elephant parents toward their children with Aesop’s fable about the lark bird who protected the children from danger caused by a farmer and his people.⁶⁸ Apart from parental love, Lipsius and Nuyts wrote several examples when elephants had affection toward humans, including an infant.⁶⁹ Nuyts

⁶² Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 5r. and Lipsius, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” p. 142.

⁶³ Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, pp. 113-115.

⁶⁴ Lipsius, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” pp. 148-149. and Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, pp. 40-41.

⁶⁵ Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, pp. 41-45. For an elephant dancer in Constantinople, Nuyts gained the information from the Flemish writer Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq who was sent by Ferdinand I of Austria to the court of Suleiman I in Constantinople during the middle of the sixteenth century for negotiating a border dispute with the Ottoman Empire.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁶⁸ Aulus Gellius cited. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-60.

⁶⁹ Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 8v-9r.; Lipsius, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” pp. 155-157.; and Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, pp. 54-57.

again provided a counterexample to elephants' love: the case of the Roman patrician Catiline who killed his own son and wife in order that he could marry Aurelia Orestilla.⁷⁰

Elephants also had good memories. In Lipsius' writings, on the one hand, this talent made elephants teachable.⁷¹ On the other hand, it influenced how elephants behave toward humans. For instance (based on Acosta's account), an elephant threw a nutshell back to a man who had thrown it at him, one revenged a man who had obstructed a road, and one brought a lost kid back home where the kid's mother who used to give the elephant food lived.⁷² Furthermore, Nuyts associated elephants with retentive memories with many historical figures, namely: the Athenian politician Themistocles who knew all his citizens' names, the Achaemenid King Cyrus II who remembered all his soldiers, the Pontic King Mithridates VI who spoke 22 languages, the Sasanian King Khosrow I who knew Aristotle's philosophy, the Ptolemaic ruler Cleopatra who could speak in many languages with her visiting ambassadors from foreign cities, and the Roman statesman Julius Caesar who was good at multitasking.⁷³

Interestingly, good memories contributed to the nostalgic feeling of elephants. When the elephant was caught and taken away from the homeland, Nuyts said, "[the elephant's] recollection, memory, love, and longing toward [the] fatherland should be greater than ours."⁷⁴ What Nuyts said here is very emotive given his own experience. When he wrote this elephant treatise under house arrest in Japan, he had been far from home for at least 6 years without fast-track technology, he had been in detention twice in houses in Batavia and Japan. His son, the first Pieter, died in Batavia while he was in

⁷⁰ Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, pp. 49-50. Elephants had, however, their enemies as well, namely pigs, mice and rats, and pests. Ibid., pp. 100-102.

⁷¹ Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 6r.

⁷² The first story see Ibid., fol. 8r. The second see Ibid. and Lipsius, "t Lof van den Olyphant," p. 153. The third see Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 8r-8v.

⁷³ Cicero, Pliny, Pliny and Gellius, Lipsius, Johannes à Chohier, and Pliny respectively cited, Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, pp. 78-79.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 80-81.

exile.⁷⁵ No wonder he felt nostalgic toward his homeland and family, and he expressed it through the elephant's feeling. Anticipatedly, he could have hoped to be back home. His hope, eventually, became true when he was released in Japan and sailed back home.⁷⁶ Contrarily, the elephant, once taken away, hardly ever would be brought home. This is why he said the nostalgia of the elephant "should be greater than ours."

Empirical Elephant

As argued by Ashworth, the emblematic gave way to empirical worldview during the second half of the seventeenth century.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, we can see some empirical aspects from Lipsius' works, which was based on the letter written before 1650. Moreover, the emblematic worldview seemed to still enjoy its life during the second half of the century (or even the early eighteenth century). Nuyts' work, having a lot to say emblematically, was published in 1670, and, in 1714, Gijsbert Cuper (mistaking that Nuyts' work on elephants had never been published) wanted to publish this treatise because Cuper thought that "it would be well received unless the same things can also be discovered among the writings of such learned men as *Germerus* and *Aldrovandus* who have been published *De Animalibus* (about animals)."⁷⁸ Cuper expectation on Nuyts' treatise implied that the emblematic worldview on elephants was still "well received" by him and general readers. Also, the two names he did mention, Conrad Gesner and Ulisse Aldrovandi, were the iconic scholars in the emblematic worldview.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Blussé, "Bull in a China Shop," p. 110.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ William B. Ashworth, Jr., "Emblematic Natural History of the Renaissance," in Nick Jardine, James A. Secord, and E. C. Spary (eds.), *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 35.

⁷⁸ Blussé, "Bull in a China Shop," pp. 96-97.

⁷⁹ Ashworth, "Emblematic Natural History of the Renaissance," pp. 17-37.

In Lipsius's works, he questioned several statements he borrowed from his sources, while criticism on sources is absent in Nuyts' work. Lipsius questioned whether the elephant was gifted with human qualities.⁸⁰ When he talked about the elephant who could speak the Malabari language to the Portuguese Governor who had asked the animal to continue working, he said that "how [this] surprised you ...? I will tell you, however, some more wonders and will let you in doubt."⁸¹ He did not state clearly that he did not believe in such a story which he had gained from Cristóbal Acosta, but he encouraged readers, including himself, to be more critical of what they read. Lipsius also doubted the chastity of elephants. He questioned Aelianus and thought that Aelianus might have misunderstood Aristotle when he had talked about the one-time copulation of elephants.⁸² Although Nuyts did not question his sources, one thing that his work is different from Lipsius is his general description of elephants and their special characteristics which focus more on description and anatomical investigation, even though some are myths due to modern thought.⁸³ Nuyts and Lipsius also talked about how to catch and tame elephants in an empirical way.⁸⁴ Musth of elephants (the periodic condition when elephants have high reproductive hormones which resulted in their aggressiveness) was discussed both by Lipsius and Nuyts. Lipsius attributed elephants' musth euphemistically to love which had been considered by Greek in some respects as madness.⁸⁵ Nuyts also talked about musth empirically at first, but he later associated

⁸⁰ Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 5^v.

⁸¹ Lipsius, "t Lof van den Olyphant," p. 145.

⁸² Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 9^v. and Lipsius, "t Lof van den Olyphant," p. 160.

⁸³ Nuyts wrote that the gallbladder of an elephant is not attached to the liver, like other animals, fish, and men, but to the chest; elephants had to hearts; elephants had cold-blooded; the tusks of female elephants are better in value than males'; elephants' longevity is 200 to 300 years. Aelianus, Pliny, Aristotle, Gellius, Johannes Bodinus cited. Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, pp. 7-15.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.; and Lipsius, "t Lof van den Olyphant," p. 143.

⁸⁵ Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 5^v. and Lipsius, "t Lof van den Olyphant," p. 143. See a brief history of love in Danijela Kambaskovic, "Love," in Susan Broomhall (ed.), *Early Modern Emotions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), p. 53.

it with a story of the gentle elephant who managed to stay calm (from musth) when encountering a kid of a mother who had been a benefactor to him.⁸⁶ When Nuyts talked about elephants having cold blood and their habit of enjoying staying in pooled, marshy, and watery places, he associated this behavior of elephants with similitudes of “Holland and Brabant women” who pleased to stay in rooms or salons to hide from the heat of the Sun.⁸⁷ In short, we can find some empirical aspects from Lipsius’ and Nuyts’ writings. However, Lipsius’ works were more empirical (and critical) and were published before Nuyts’.

Notably, the myth that elephants could not bend their knees was debunked by both of them. This myth was also in *Physiologus*.⁸⁸ In 1602, one of the De Bry collection engravings used this myth to explain how elephants in West Africa were captured.⁸⁹ Lipsius and Nuyts, on the contrary, were all in agreement that elephants had knee joints.⁹⁰ The elephant Hansken also disenchanting the myth in front of the Dutch. The 1650 Dutch edition of the natural history by Pliny the Elder, who also had said that elephants have knee joints, added the text verifying that the elephant could bend the

⁸⁶ Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, pp. 112-113.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.

⁸⁸ “This is the nature of the elephant: if he should fall, he is unable to get up again. But how can he fall since he rests against a tree? The elephant has no knee joints enabling him to sleep lying down if he wanted to. Shortly before the beast arrives at the tree against which he is accustomed to rest, the hunter who wishes to capture the animal cuts partly through the tree. When the elephant comes and rests against the tree, both tree and beast fall at the same time.” See *Physiologus*, pp. 30-31.

⁸⁹ The caption reads, “B. You were shown to know the way they [West Africans] catch an elephant. Because when an elephant may come to sleep and lie against the tree, [if the tree was cut] so that an elephant falls and is captured by them.” See this illustration in Johann Theodor de Bry, *Jacht op olifanten en andere dieren*, 1602, Rijksmuseum, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-BI-5260>. Also see Michiel van Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages* (1590-1634) (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 164-165.

⁹⁰ Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 6^v.; Lipsius, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” pp. 147-148.; and Nuyts, *Lof des elephants*, pp. 11 and 111.

knees; “[t]hat the elephants themselves are laying and are able to stand up, one saw in the Netherlands, to the one [Hansken] which has been actually here now a few years.”⁹¹

Although we see some empirical aspects of elephants in Lipsius’ and Nuyts’ writings, the Dutch translation of *Description of the Nature of Four-Footed Beasts* by Polish naturalist John Jonston published in 1660 provided Dutch readers with entirely empirical elephants. Ashworth regarded Jonston as “the demise of emblematic natural history.”⁹² His academic life was also nomadic across Europe. In Toruń where he studied in gymnasium, he gave a speech in which he expressed his gratitude to Lipsius. When he started a journey out of Poland in 1629, he went to study in Franeker and then used to spend some time in Leiden. His encyclopedia *Historia naturalis* in seven volumes including *Description* began to be published in 1650.⁹³ In addition, as argued by Gordon L. Miller, Jonston’s adoption of the change in worldview was more influenced by Protestant millenarianism in which he believed that the new empirical way of looking at nature would promise the optimistic future to come.⁹⁴ By composing his *Description*, he based his writing on three prominent sources namely Aristotle, Aelianus, and Pliny as did Lipsius and Nuyt, but Jonston only chose the empirical aspects. His elephant could not talk. Before the time of Carl Linnaeus with the new classification of animals, Jonston classified elephants as *quadrupedes* (four-footed).⁹⁵ His book explored many

⁹¹ C. Plinius Secundus, *Des nijd-vermaerden natuur-kondigers vijf boecken* (Amsterdam: Loost Hartgers, 1650), p. 165.

⁹² Ashworth, “Natural History and the Emblematic World View,” p. 317.

⁹³ See his brief biography in Adam Matuszewski, “Jan Jonston: Outstanding Scholar of the 17th century,” *Studia Comeniana et historica*, 19 (January 1989), pp. 37-53.

⁹⁴ Gordon L. Miller, “Beasts of the New Jerusalem: John Jonston's Natural History and the Launching of Millenarian Pedagogy in the Seventeenth Century,” *History of Science*, Vol 46, Issue 2 (2008), pp. 203-243.

⁹⁵ During the eighteenth century, Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) classified animals into 6 classes: *Mammalia* (mammals), *Aves* (birds), *Amphibia* (amphibians), *Pisces* (fish), *Insecta* (insects), and *Vermes* (worms). Londa Schiebinger studies the politics of classifying some animals into a mammal category. She notices that the mammal class was the only one in Linnaeus’s classes that focuses on reproductive organs and the only one associated primarily with the female. She argues that the mammal class reflected the cultural politics of the female breast and the motherhood, which entangled with Western science. Londa Schiebinger, “Why Mammals are Called Mammals: Gender Politics in Eighteenth-Century Natural History,” *The American*

aspects of the empirical elephant.⁹⁶ He also referred to the elephant in Antwerp, probably the one sent by Portugal to Maximilian as Lipsius had mentioned (also see Chapter 1).⁹⁷ Jonston used this elephant in Antwerp as an example to describe what the elephant consumed.⁹⁸ He debunked the idea that elephants copulated in private. He said Aristotle mistook to state that elephants had no gallbladder to the liver. He referred to Aelius Galenus to verify that elephants had gallbladder.⁹⁹ Interestingly, he classified elephants into sub-species by their natural habitats: *Poel* (pool), *Berg* (mountain), *Veld* (field), *Bosch* (forest), *Lybise* or *Moorsche* (Libya?), *Indise* (India), *Prasie* (Persia), and *Taxile* (Taxila?).¹⁰⁰ These classes can be grouped into modern classes, that is, African and Asian. In short, Jonston's elephant was "naked," literally naked and also because the elephant was stripped of all similitudes.¹⁰¹ The elephant was imagined and perceived only through the physicality.

Pictures of elephants in Jonston's book were very realistic (Figure 2.7). Donald F. Lach argues that realism in the iconography of elephants had been increased during

Historical Review, Vol. 98, No. 2 (April 1993), pp. 382-411. For Jonston's animal classification, see John Jonston, *Beschrijving van de Natuur der Vier-Voetige Dieren*, vertaelt door M. Grauius (t Amsterdam: I. I. Schipper, 1660), p. 1.

⁹⁶ He described namely (1) how elephants were called across languages, (2) how big they were, (3) how black (sometimes white), tough, impenetrable, and hairy their flesh was, (4) how deformed their heads were, (5) how their external and internal organs were, (6) how heavy they were, (7) how they bent the knees, (8) their natural habitats, (9) what they ate and drank, (10) how they mated, (11) how long they were pregnant, (12) how they gave birth, (13) what they antagonized and were afraid of, (14) how long their longevity was, (15) what illness they suffered, (16) how docile, loyal, and intelligent they were, and (17) how they are classified by places in which they live.

⁹⁷ Lipsius, "t Lof van den Olyphant," p. 139.

⁹⁸ "The one in Antwerp ... ate four *maten* of apples a day. The Portuguese also wrote that they ate Melon. Her drink is water ... wine from rice, and other fruits ... and also our wine. The one in Antwerp drunk at once more than four *pinten* [pints]." Jonstons, *Beschrijving van de Natuur der Vier-Voetige Dieren*, p. 23.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ He said the *Lybise* elephant was smaller than the *Indise* elephants because the *Indise* was the largest. The *Veld* elephant had the biggest tusks. The *Taxile* elephant was the second largest and also found in Sumatra. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 22. Also see Ashworth, "Natural History and the Emblematic World View," p. 319.

the second half of the sixteenth century.¹⁰² No wonder why pictures of elephants in Jonston's resembled the reality. However, we should keep in mind that being realistic in the iconography does not mean empirical in the iconology. Jonston's illustrations of elephants were shown together with realistic unicorns and centaurs as seen from the frontispiece. Some of his descriptions of toads, frogs, and pilot fish also include sixteenth-century scientific styles and assumptions such as a dichotomy of sympathies and antipathies and magic.¹⁰³ By having pictures of the mythical animals and old elements from the previous century, a publisher and Jonston might probably want to please the Dutch readers who were still upholding the emblematic mentalities.

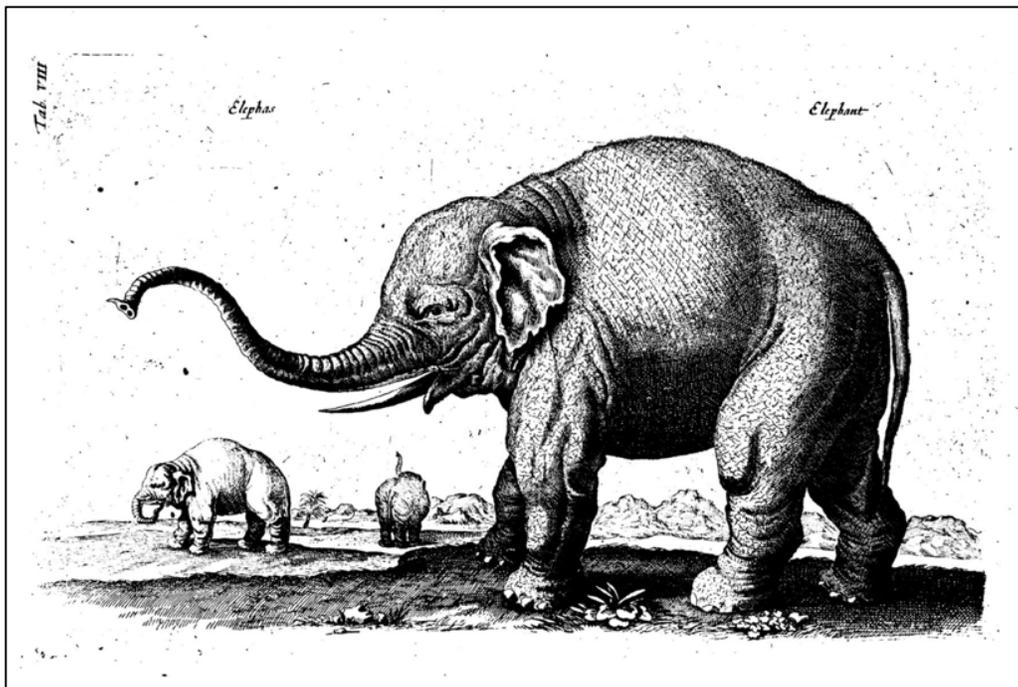


Figure 2.7 Elephants in the Dutch edition of John Jonston's book about four-footed animals

(Source: I. Jonstons, *Beschrijving van de Natuur der Vier-Voetige Dieren*, vertaelt door M. Grausius (t' Amsterdam: I. I. Schipper, 1660), tab. VIII.)

¹⁰² Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume 2: A Century of Wonder*, Book 1, pp. 123-158.

¹⁰³ Miller, "Beasts of the New Jerusalem," *History of Science*, Vol 46, Issue 2 (2008), pp. 209-210.

The Elephant in a Nutshell

Pieter Nuyts' elephant treatise shows that most similitudes of the imagined and perceived elephants were related to the kings, the great men, or the heroes/heroines in the past. While Lipsius' works had several similitudes, Nuyts' had a multitude. Lipsius wrote about elephants by using numerous cases in "history" recorded by the authoritative writers. However, Lipsius had more criticism of his sources. This is probably because of his stoic morality of prudence. He was thus more skeptical of what he read. By contrast, Nuyts did not question his sources. He associated elephant lore with mythical and historical cases that have similar structural meanings including even his own experience! Thus, the elephant in Nuyts' work was more intricate and layered than one in Lipsius' which was more empirical. Nonetheless, that is not to say Lipsius was not at all part of the Renaissance humanist tradition under the emblematic worldview. His passion toward dogs evidently shows the opposite.¹⁰⁴ His empirical case was also employed to stress the emblematic meanings of the elephant such as the elephant-king emblem.¹⁰⁵ As Lipsius states, "[elephants] were trained to knee down [and] to bow paying homage to the King."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Lipsius associated dogs with four typical characteristics of scholars: working long at night with alertness (*vigilantia*), physical power and stamina (*robur*), intelligence (*ingenium*), and loyalty to their studies (*fides*). As his writings on dogs in *epistola* tradition aimed at his pupils in Louvain, these traits of scholars sharing with dogs were also a pedagogy he intended to communicate with his students about the virtuous qualities of being the scholar. For being a true dog lover, he used to own three dogs and wrote a Latin epitaph when one of them died. See Jan Papy, "Lipsius and His Dogs: Humanist Tradition, Iconography and Rubens's Four Philosophers," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 62 (1999), pp. 167-198.

¹⁰⁵ The similar cases are also found in a case of elephants in Britain and the Mauritius dodo birds. See Christopher Plumb, "'Strange and Wonderful': Encountering the Elephant in Britain, 1675-1830," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 33 No. 4 (2010), pp. 525-543. and Natalie Lawrence "Assembling the Dodo in Early Modern Natural History," *BJHS*, 48 (3) (September 2015), pp. 387-408.

¹⁰⁶ Lipsius, *Historie vanden Elephant*, fol. 6^v.

Lastly, by considering Lipsius' and Nuyts' works—the former was more empirical than the latter, but the latter was published after the former, I propose that the historical change from the emblematic to empirical worldview in the seventeenth century was more nuanced and not a linear historical process. The emblematic worldview toward elephants was still operative throughout the century. It facilitated the elephant diplomacy practiced between the VOC and Asian polities which we will see in the next chapter. Claude Lévi-Strauss once argued that animals are not only good to eat, but good to think.¹⁰⁷ Since elephants are difficult to eat, their quality of being good to think is more preferable. As imagined and perceived as a kingly, pious, virtuous, friendly, intelligent animal, these qualities of elephants were indubitably the reason why elephants were used as diplomatic gifts.

¹⁰⁷ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Le Totémisme aujourd'hui* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), p. 128. cited in Halvard Leira and Iver B. Neumann, “Beastly Diplomacy,” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 12 (2016), p. 339.

Chapter 3

Elephants and Early Modern Dutch-Asian Diplomacy

In 1629, the Dutch East India Company intended to transport a young elephant, among other beasts, to the Netherlands for “satisfaction of thy order and the contentment of the Lord Prince of Orange [Federik Hendrik].”¹ Unfortunately, the young elephant did not have a chance to reach the Netherlands because the ship and this “beauteous young elephant” caught fire in April 1630.² Twenty years later, in 1650, the VOC sent another elephant described as “the biggest elephant caught last year” to Surat (northwestern India). This giant elephant would be presented as a gift to “the Great Mughal who, [as] we are certain, shall be pleased.”³ This chapter will explore how Eurasian elephant diplomacy between the Dutch and Asian polities was practiced in the seventeenth century and how these diplomatic activities associated with elephants implied the mutual worldviews, perceptions, and sensibilities toward the elephants across Eurasia.

This chapter will bring the first and second chapters together to argue that the knowledge of the long elephant gift-giving traditions before the seventeenth century (Chapter 1) and the preoccupations with emblematic elephants (Chapter 2) facilitated the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy in the seventeenth century. How the Dutch acknowledged elephant gift-giving traditions and imagined and perceived the emblematic elephant were integral to the commensurability in the elephant diplomacy between the VOC and Asian polities whenever the Dutch trading enterprise was acting

¹ *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, Deel I: 1610-1638, uitgegeven door Dr. W. Ph. Coolhaas (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), p. 277.

² Pieter Van den Broecke, *Korte historiael ende journaelsche* (Haarlem: Hans Passchiers van Wesbusch, 1634), 160-161.

³ *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, Deel II: 1639-1655, uitgegeven door Dr. W. Ph. Coolhaas (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), p. 406.

as a giver or a receiver. We will see later in this chapter that the expectations of Asian givers in giving elephants to the VOC were compatible with the expectations of the VOC when presenting gift-elephants to Asian polities. These expectations involved several affective diplomatic lexicons raised by both the VOC and Asian partners because of the commensurability operative in the diplomacy between both parties.

The commensurability in the elephant diplomacy did not result only in mutually expected affective responses, but also in a protocol which was an unwritten rule regulating how a diplomatic activity should be performed. In February 1668, Captain Hendrik van Rheede led the mission to the Madurai Nayak court in South India. Rheede recounted what he had been informed when the emissary had arrived at the Madurai jurisdiction: “in case that we did not bring along elephants, [we] better go back because without such eminent gifts to the supreme of the Nayaka[s] we were about to see little respect.”⁴ What Rheede was told illustrates how considerably significant the elephants were to the Nayakas. If the Dutch came to the court without any elephants, they would be disparaged or, at least, receive little respect from the Nayaka. As suggested by Felicity Heal, gift-animals “represented the person of the monarch and, in a culture that had not fully separated the sign from the signifier, it could actually embody the nature and qualities of the ruler.”⁵ In other words, elephants represented high respect embodied in the ruler, which in this case is the Nayakas. Consciously, the Dutch emissary led by Rheede knew how to play this game because there were two elephants accompanying

⁴ VOC 1268, Rapport Inde daagelijckse aenteijkeninge voor gevallen op de Reijse in onderhandeling geduurende het gezantsz vanden Neyk van Madure, doorden Cap. Hendrik van Rheede, 2 Juli 1668, fol. 1160^r. See also Markus P. M. Vink, “Images and Ideologies of Dutch-South Asian Contact: Cross-Cultural Encounters between the Nayaka State of Madurai and the Dutch East India Company in the Seventeenth Century,” *Itinerario*, Volume 21, Issue 02 (July 1997), p. 84.

⁵ Felicity Heal, “Presenting Noble Beasts: Gift of Animals in Tudor and Stuart Diplomacy,” in Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings (eds.), *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410-1800* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), p. 188.

the emissary. They stood in the lengthy list of all the gifts to the ruler of Madurai, Chokkanatha Nayaka (r. 1659-1682).⁶

This chapter will discuss how the elephant diplomacy was conducted and expected by the VOC and Asian polities. The general pattern and characteristics of diplomacy are a starting point. It will be followed by a microscopic perspective that zooms in how gift-elephants were given between the VOC and Asian rulers, officials, and merchants and how these gift-animals implied the elephant diplomacy's sociocultural and political aspects. Throughout the seventeenth century, the VOC and Asian partners used gift-elephants to pay honor, express their respect and friendship, and drive their political agendas such as making peace between polities. These aspects, however, were intertwined with each other. In addition, the elephant diplomacy did not involve only fresh-and-blood elephants, but also some objects related to the animal, such as garments, accouterments like hooks and howdahs, and paintings. The commensurability between the two parties streamlined the elephant diplomacy flow throughout the century and made those aforementioned aspects become fruitful.

The Pattern and Characteristics of the Dutch-Asian Elephant Diplomacy

To understand the pattern of the elephant diplomacy, we need to know the natural habitat and distribution of Asian elephants. Asian elephants could be found in these modern nation-states from west to east, namely: India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Indonesia in Sumatra and Kalimantan.⁷ In the deep past, as illustrated by Trautman, the natural distribution of Asian elephants swelled far beyond India to the west along the Persian Gulf until the northwestern part of today Iran and far beyond Southeast Asia to the

⁶ VOC 1268, fol. 1187v.

⁷ Debabrata Swain, *Asian Elephants: Past, Present & Future* (Dehradun: International Book Distributors, 2004), p. 15.

north until North China before Inner Mongolia. However, past to present, the natural distribution has shrunk southward, so the Asian elephants are now confined in the middle countries (see Figure 3.1).⁸ In the seventeenth century, the VOC establishments and networks were located in these areas. The VOC, therefore, could reach and receive Asian elephants. Their distribution was expanded, again, by the human intervention, which we call gently diplomacy.

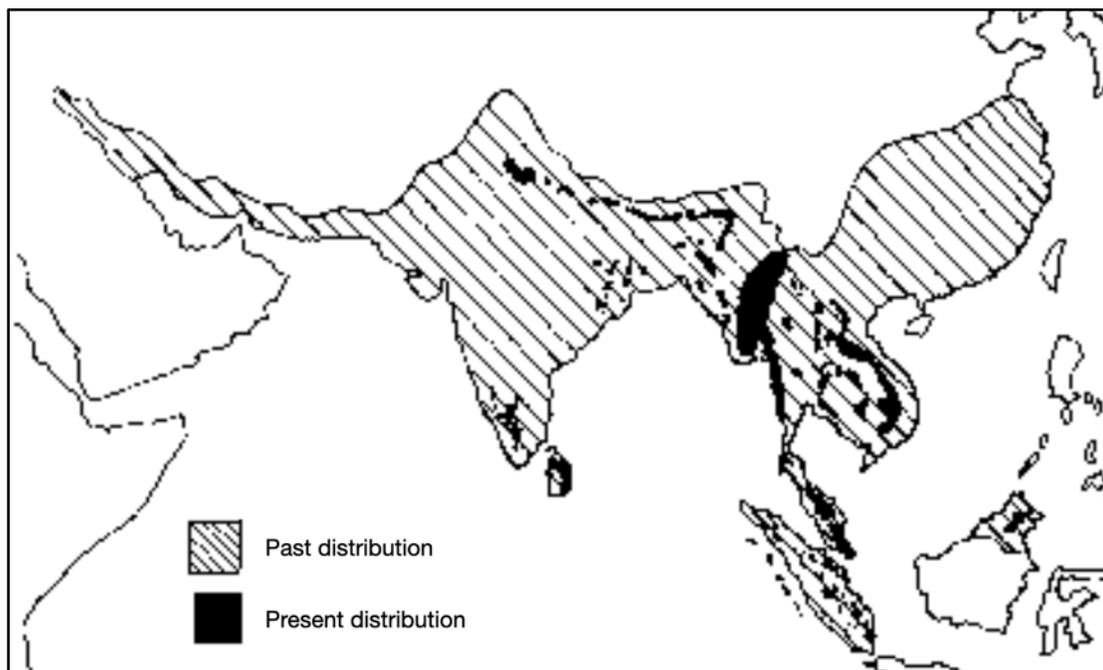


Figure 3.1 Past and present distributions of Asian elephants

(Source: Elephasmaximus, <http://elephasmaximus.weebly.com/conservation.html>)

The elephant diplomatic activities between the VOC and Asian polities in different circumstances were recorded in *Dagh-Registers* of Batavia Castle and *Generale Missiven* sent to *Heren XVII*. Using published 31 volumes of *Dagh-Registers* and 6 volumes of *Generale Missiven* spanning between the years 1610 and 1699, we could see the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy's pattern and characteristics across Eurasia.

⁸ Trautmann, *Elephants & Kings*, p. 11.

Throughout the years, the VOC involved directly in the elephant gift-giving activities with at least 16 polities from Western to Eastern Asia, namely: Persia, Surat, Keladi, Travancore, Mughal, Madurai, Golconda, Thanjavur, Kandy, Bengal, Arakan, Pegu, Siam, Kedah, Banten, and Mataram. Furthermore, elephants were transported as gifts to the Prince of Orange as seen at the beginning of this chapter or in the case of the elephant called Hansken.⁹ The VOC did not only act as a giver but, many times, as a receiver. The diplomacy format included sending representatives accompanied with elephants to another polity or sending elephants (from time to time along with royal letters) through vessels owned by a giver's or a receiver's polity. Figure 3.2 shows the maritimately macroscopic perspective on the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy's networks. This Figure does not show the micro-networks thereof between the VOC and, for example, Banten, Mataram, Kandy, or South Indian polities.

Noteworthy, the VOC never sent elephants as gifts to Siam, Kandy, Aceh, and Arakan as, at least, *Dagh-registers* and *Generale Missiven* never reported about such giving. The VOC sent diplomatic gifts to Siam, but not including elephants.¹⁰ These kingdoms were renowned for possessing elephants and controlling elephant-related resources. The sovereigns of the kingdoms also associated their kingly power elephants. The practical reason might be to avoid repetition because the VOC received gift-elephants from these kingdoms except Aceh. Nevertheless, one attempt was made in 1632, for example, when the VOC commissioner arrived in Aceh to offer the VOC's assistance to Sultan Iskandar Muda in attacking Portuguese Malacca. In return, the Sultan gave

⁹ The VOC record referred to Hansken as the “*overgebrachte Oliphandt* (transferred Elephant).” See VOC 231, *Minuut- en net-resoluties van de ordinaris en extraordinaris vergaderingen van de kamer Amsterdam, donderdach 21 juli 1633*, fol. 104.

¹⁰ *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India*, Anno 1653, uitgegeven door het Bataviaash Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, met medewerking van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering en onder toezicht van Mr. J. A. van der Chijs (’s Hage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1888), p. 164.

him some privileges in trade and valuable gifts, including an elephant. However, the gift-elephant was respectfully refused due to the boat capacity.¹¹

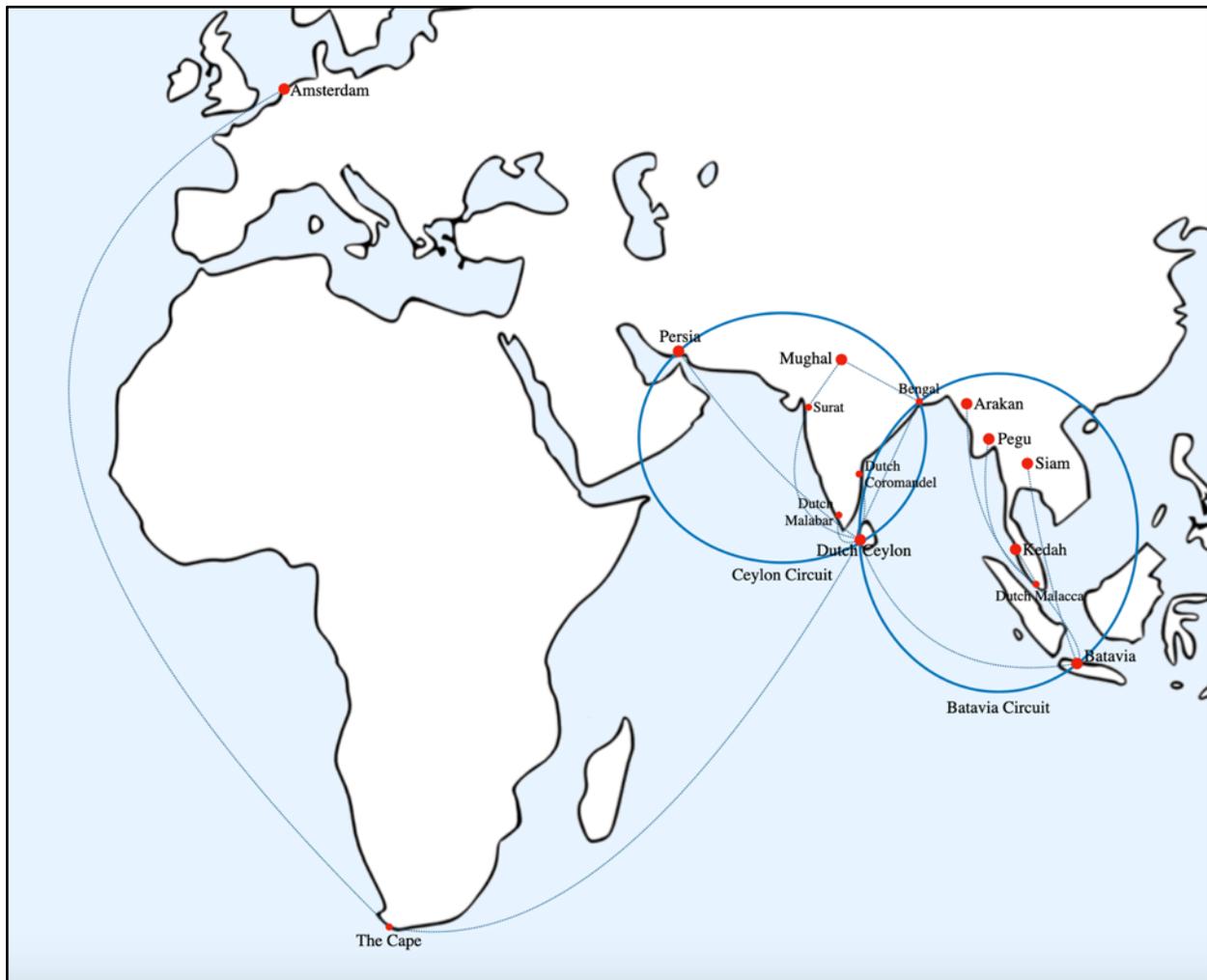


Figure 3.2 The macro networks and two circuits of the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy (the data collected from *Dagh-Registers* and *Generale Missiven*)

The routes for the VOC to access Asian polities or to receive elephants could have more variations than seen from the bird's-eye view in Figure 3.2. For sending gift-elephants to the fragmented South Indian polities, the VOC could have done by

¹¹ Ingrid Saroda Mitrasing, "The Age of Aceh and the Evolution of Kingship 1599-1641" (PhD. dissertation, Leiden University, 2011), p. 159.

breaking a journey at each major Dutch trading post in South India: Masulipatnam, Pulicat, and Negapatnam under the governorates Dutch Coromandel¹²; and Cochin under the commandment Dutch Malabar. To the north of Deccan Plateau, which was during the seventeenth century under the Mughal's control, the VOC's gift-elephants could pass through the directorates Dutch Surat to the west and the directorates Dutch Bengal to the east and continued a journey further to the Mughal court. For polities in Southeast Asia, the VOC could have accessed by using inland navigation such as rivers connected to the sea such as the Chao Phraya River to the Siamese Kingdom (Ayutthaya). For receiving gift-elephants, Batavia and VOC establishments in Ceylon were places where the Dutch received those. Also, the governorate Dutch Malacca on some occasions received gift-elephants from a nearby polity such as Kedah.¹³

As seen in Figure 3.2, the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy's networks can be seen in two diplomatic circuits: the Batavia circuit and the Ceylon circuit. The general pattern of the elephant gift-giving by the VOC looks like a westward arrow. Southeast Asian polities gave gift-elephants to the VOC, and then the VOC sent elephants as gifts in a westward direction. Lodewijk Wagenaar also points out that some elephants received from Kandy were transferred to Batavia to be used as gifts.¹⁴ In the Batavia circuit, the VOC received gift-elephants from Siam, Arakan, Pegu, Kedah, and Kandy, then the VOC sent them westward.¹⁵ In the Ceylon circuit, while the VOC received

¹² Pulicat used to be the seat of the governor and administration of Dutch Coromandel before the VOC decided to shift southward to Nagapatnam in 1690 due to the rising competition from other European trading companies. S. Arasaratnam, "The Dutch East India Company and its Coromandel trade 1700-1740," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Deel 123, 3de Afl. (1967): p. 328.

¹³ *Generale missiven*, Deel II: 1639-1655, p. 815.

¹⁴ Cynthia Viallé, "'To Capture Their Favor': On Gift-Giving by the VOC" in Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North (eds.), *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), p. 309.

¹⁵ Hansken, the elephant from Asia to the Netherlands, might have been transported from Batavia as well. The *Dagh-Register* of 4 December 1632 reports that the former governor-general Jacques Specx was ordered by the directors of the

elephants from Kandy and procuring them from natural habitats, the VOC also sent gift-elephants westward. Mughal, Persia, and South Indian polities were the destinations where gift-elephants were given to.¹⁶ Both circuits overlapped at Dutch Bengal; as being an overlapping zone, Dutch Bengal also received elephants from both Ceylon and Batavia.¹⁷ In short, although both circuits sent gift-elephants westward, the Batavia circuit was an area where the VOC received gift-elephants from Southeast Asian polities, while the main givers in the Ceylon circuit were the King of Kandy and local employees as we will see below.

According to the VOC's hierarchical perceptions toward Asian polities, the elephant gift-giving practices in each polity might have different connotations. Imperial rulers, namely the Great Mughal, the Shah of Persia, the Emperor of China, and the Shogun of Japan, were sovereigns at the top of the pyramid. Other rulers—deemed as “vassal states” such as the King of Siam who paid tribute to China—were at the center, while some rulers in the Indonesia archipelago were at the lower level¹⁸ (not including

Company to depart “the ships *Prins Willem*, *Hollandia*, *Amelia*, *Rotterdam* and *Hoorn*” from Batavia for the “*vaederlandt*.” These ships were reported later in July 1633 by the first printed Dutch newspaper *Courante uyt Italien, Duytslandt, &c.* that one of these ships carried the elephant to the Netherlands. See *Dagh-Register*, Anno 1631-1634, uitgegeven door het Departement van Koloniën onder toezicht van D^r. H. T. Colenbrander (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1898), p. 127. and Michiel Roscam Abbing, *Rembrandts Olifant: In het spoor van Hansken* (Amstelveen: Leporello Uitgevers, 2016), pp. 13-14.

¹⁶ For Persia, the VOC manuscript record in 1689 shows that in Matara (Southern Ceylon) some of the elephants in corrals were sent to Persia. See VOC 1468, *Rolle van alle de eliphanten inden jaar 1689*, fol. 335^r-336^r.

¹⁷ See *Generale missiven*, Deel II: 1639-1655, p. 383. and *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, Deel IV: 1675-1685, uitgegeven door Dr. W. Ph. Coolhaas (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1671), p. 424. In 1657, three elephants, that had been sent as gifts from Siam, were probably in turn sent to Bengal as gifts. See *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India*, Anno 1657, uitgegeven door het Departement van Koloniën onder toezicht van D^r. J. de Hullu (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1904), pp. 158 and 245.

¹⁸ J. van Goor, *De Nederlandse Koloniën: geschiedenis van de Nederlandse expansie, 1600-1975* (The Hague: Sdu, 1994), p. 131; L. Blussé, *Tussen gerevinsde vrunden en verklaarde vijanden*, inaugural lecture, Universiteit Leiden, 8 January 1999 (Amsterdam, 1999), p. 12. cited in Viallé, ““To Capture Their Favor,”” p. 293.

the Susuhunan of Mataram in the seventeenth century). Regarding the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy circuits, gift-elephants sent to Mughal and Persia thus signified the lower status of the VOC, whereas ones sent to other Asian rulers denoted the equal relationships. Besides receiving gift-elephants from Southeast Asian polities and Kandy, the VOC also received elephants from the *Wannias*. They were the chief inhabitants living in northern Ceylon districts between Jaffna and Mannar. Elephants received from *Wannias* were evidently seen as tribute by the VOC.¹⁹ Yearly, *Wannias* had to deliver elephants at a certain amount to the VOC. Nevertheless, Hendrick Zwaardecroon, Commander of Jaffnapatam, complained in his memoir in 1697 that they continually failed to comply.²⁰

The quantitative data, as shown in Figure 3.3, are collected from the table in appendix II. Although the data here is far from complete, this chapter tries to use these available data to grasp the Dutch-Asian elephant gift-giving pattern in the seventeenth century. The quantitative data is chosen by a period of the published *Dagh-registers* from the years 1624-1682. The data that is chosen from *Generale Missiven* is only the data within that range of time and does not exist in the *Dagh-registers*. All the years are approximately grouped into decades. The elephant gift-giving recorded in December 1639 was performed by Kandy to the VOC. In Southeast Asia, Siam was the most enthusiastic kingdom that sent gift-elephants to the VOC. During the beginning of the second half of the seventeenth century, the transmission of elephants from Siam became more frequent (the detail of Siam as an elephant giver will be discussed more below). From the year 1660, the VOC started to give more elephants as gifts to Asian polities. This rising trend is probably because the VOC already controlled the large parts

¹⁹ *Generale missiven*, Deel IV: 1675-1685, p. 148; *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan beren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, Deel V: 1698-1713, uitgegeven door Dr. W. Ph. Coolhaas (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), p. 59.

²⁰ Hendrick Zwaardecroon, *Memoir for the Guidance of the Council of Jaffnapatam 1697*, translated by Sophia Pieters (Colombo: H. C. Cottle, Government Printer, 1911), p. 5.

of Ceylon after expelling Portugal in 1658, and Ceylonese elephants were henceforth only under the VOC's control as stated in *Generale Missive* in December the same year.²¹ However, the overall number of times when the VOC received gift-elephants is more than the times when giving them.

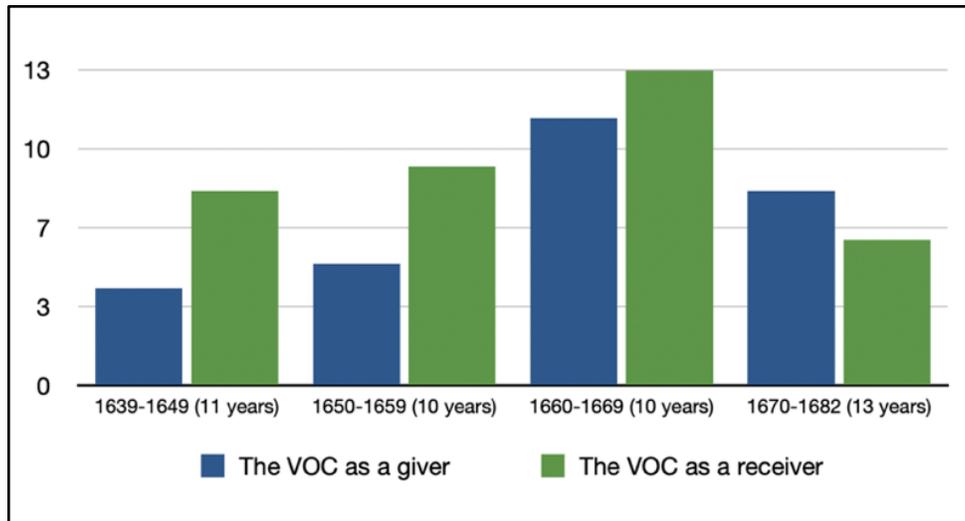


Figure 3.3 The quantitative data with minimum numbers of Dutch-Asian elephant gift-giving practices during the seventeenth century as recorded in *Dagh-registers* and *Generale Missiven* between the years 1639-1682²²

Comparable to the trading activities in the Indian Ocean, the elephant diplomatic activities depended on the monsoon. From around November through January, high pressure over continental Asia blows dry winds from Arabia and western India toward

²¹ *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, Deel III: 1655-1674, uitgegeven door Dr. W. Ph. Coolhaas ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), p. 225.

²² As stated above, the data in this chart is far from complete due to a limit of sources on which the data is based. However, this chart can be used to ask more questions. For example, giver and receiver categories relatively correspond each other with respect to increasing and declining trends; if the number of giving elephants rises, the number of receiving also follows along (but always surpassing). However, from the years 1670-1682, both categories decrease. Why do they shrink? This will probably bring into consideration the environmental factor during this diminishing period. An environmental history of elephants can probably answer this question.

eastern Africa and from China toward Southeast Asia. Reversely, from around April to August, high pressure builds up in the southern hemisphere and push strong winds toward the north.²³ If a mission to sail gift-elephants to another polity did not correspond with the monsoon's pattern, the mission could be postponed. As recorded in the *Dagh-Register* in September 1665, the yacht *Hen* was sent to Bengal with the letter by the Governor-General to the director Rogier van Heijningen and the council at the *comptoir* in Hooghly. The letter instructed the Bengal director to keep two elephants intended to send to Surat in Batavia until "the upcoming season."²⁴ The gift-elephants, sometimes, might have taken a long time to reach a destination. In 1675, the governor of Surat Ghiyas Khan had asked the Company to send him "two good elephants."²⁵ Two years after his request, the two elephants were eventually dispatched from Ceylon to reach him in Surat.²⁶

Even though there was no price tag attached to gift-elephants, "ambassadors and diplomatic observers spent much time in calculating the exact monetary worth of most gifts."²⁷ This quote could not agree more with a commerce-oriented company like the VOC. Not merely outgoing gifts were evaluated, the VOC also calculated the amount of gifts' value received from Asian polities.²⁸ For example, it was reported in 1644 that

²³ Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in World History* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 7.

²⁴ *Dagh-Register*, Anno 1665, p. 277.

²⁵ *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India*, Anno 1675, uitgegeven door het Bataviaash Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, met medewerking van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering en onder toezicht van Mr. J. A. van der Chijs ('s Hage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1902), p. 84. Ghiyas Khan was referred to as *Geadsichan* in the VOC records. In the seventeenth century, governors of Surat were often Mughal princes residing to the north of Surat at Ahmadabad. See James D. Tracy, "Asian Despotism? Mughal Government as Seen from the Dutch East India Company Factory in Surat," *Journal of Early Modern History*, Volume 3, Issue 3 (January 1999), p. 263.

²⁶ *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India*, Anno 1677, uitgegeven door het Bataviaash Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, met medewerking van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering en onder toezicht van Mr. J. A. van der Chijs ('s Hage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1904), p. 195.

²⁷ Heal, "Presenting Noble Beasts," p. 192.

²⁸ See, for example, when the VOC calculated outgoing gifts' price in *Generale missiven*, Deel IV: 1675-1685, p. 351.

the two gift-elephants from the Siamese King combined with rice, sandalwood, indigo, *benjaijn*, and red-colored gum (*gommelakko*) were worth *f* 29740.²⁹ As gifts could be rendered in number, the VOC had to maximize gifts received from one polity by sending them to another polity. In 1669, four Siamese elephants, which likely had been the gifts from Siam to Batavia, were shipped as presents for the ruler of Golconda, including other gifts and goods that charged the Company more than *f* 170000.³⁰

Dagh-Registers also show how gift-elephants and royal letters were received in Batavia. Batavia Castle was, as argued by Hendrik E. Niemeijer, one of the most important diplomatic centers. Colossal letters and gifts came in from and went out to Asian rulers and dignitaries.³¹ When gifts were accompanied with royal letters and diplomatic delegations, high VOC officials would welcome the royal visitors on the quay of Sunda Kelapa harbor. They were brought through the city to Batavia Castle. Once military salutes had been performed at the gate, the diplomats offered their royal letters to the Governor-General. The diplomatic letters were read aloud in the audience room in the original languages and later would be translated and kept as records as seen from *Dagh-Registers*.³² In 1659, the royal letter and five elephants were shipped from Siam by the Dutch *fluyt* vessel. The license master Joan Croon and other merchants were commissioned to receive the letter and the gift-elephants, among other gifts. The

²⁹ *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India*, Anno 1644-1645, uitgegeven door het Departement van Koloniën onder toezicht van Dr. J. De Hullu ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1903), p. 96.

³⁰ *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India*, Anno 1668-1669, uitgegeven door het Bataviaash Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, met medewerking van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering en onder toezicht van Mr. J. A. van der Chijs ('s Hage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1887) p. 308.

³¹ Hendrik E. Niemeijer, "The Diplomatic Correspondence between Asian Rulers and Batavia Castle during the 17th and 18th centuries: The Digital Reconstruction of a Lost Treasure," in *The Diplomatic Correspondence between Asian Rulers and Batavia Castle during the 17th and 18th centuries: The Digital Reconstruction of a Lost Treasure* (Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia and The Corts Foundation, 2018), p. 3.

³² The letters from Asian rulers were composed in Malay, Javanese, Buginese, or Chinese before being handed to the Dutch. Niemeijer, "The Diplomatic Correspondence between Asian Rulers and Batavia Castle," p. 3.

letters and the elephants were brought to the Castle and received the military salute, including cannon and musket shots. When the artilleries and firearms were discharged, the Governor-General let the five elephants enter the stall probably because the sound of the weapons firing could make the elephants skittish and become very harmful.³³

At a reception in an Asian polity, the gift-elephants sent by the VOC would have been examined by local experts in terms of their emblematic and physical qualities, which were inextricably linked. In July 1661, it was reported that an elephant was sent as a present to the Nawab of Bengal. When the elephant arrived, the animal was well-received in Dhaka by the Company, but not for the Nawab. He looked at the elephant and was advised by his people about the undesirable of the elephant qualities. In the end, the Nawab received the elephant from the VOC but said that the elephant “pleased him slightly and poorly.”³⁴ The VOC did not seem to lose face. Around two months later, the VOC sent another elephant to the Nawab. This time the VOC might be able to save its face because “after many troubles, for the sake of our being employed, it has thus finally brought so far, that on 15 September the Nawab has received the large and beautiful elephant which has become very fertile and clean ... as [a] gift.”³⁵

As mentioned above, Siam was the most energetic among Southeast Asian polities in sending gift-elephants to the VOC in Batavia. Not only the King who gave elephants to the Company, but the activities also included the high Siamese officials—such as *Phrakhlang*, *Okya Chakri*, *Okya Sombattiban*, *Okya Phitsanulok*, *Okphra* “Bata

³³ *Dagh-Register gebouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India*, Anno 1659, uitgegeven door het Bataviaash Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, met medewerking van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering en onder toezicht van M^r. J. A. van der Chijs (’s Hage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1889), pp. 82-83.

³⁴ *Dagh-Register gebouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India*, Anno 1661, uitgegeven door het Bataviaash Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, met medewerking van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering en onder toezicht van M^r. J. A. van der Chijs (’s Hage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1889), pp. 239-240.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

Somdit”—and the Mon merchant woman named Osoet Pegua.³⁶ During the second half of the seventeenth century, gift-elephants from Siam became more frequent. Due to this frequency, when a royal letter came to Batavia without gift-elephants, the VOC was also informed about the cause of not having elephants accompanied, that is, no elephants in stock in Siam.³⁷ That Siam was an enthusiastic elephant-giver was not surprising if considered the forms of address when the Siamese King addressed himself in royal letters sent to the VOC and the Prince of Orange in 1633 as “divine Lord of [the] gold palace, the white and red elephant.”³⁸ The “Instructions Given to the Siamese Envoys Sent to Portugal” in 1684 emphasized the address of the Siamese King related to sacred elephants: when the Siamese envoys were asked by foreigners if there are many elephants in their kingdom, the instructions instructed them to answer

that there is no kingdom in which there are finer nor more numerous beasts, that there are two white elephants to which much respect is shown, that there are in the city of Siam at least 400 pavilions for the finest, that there are also outside the city many others, that

³⁶ See *Phrakblang* and *Okyā Chakri* in *Generale missiven*, Deel II: 1639-1655, p. 221.; *Okyā Sombattiban* in *Ibid.*, p. 776.; *Okyā Phitsanulok* in *Dagh-Register*, Anno 1661, p. 184.; *Okyābra “Bata Somdit”* in *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India*, Anno 1664, uitgegeven door het Bataviaash Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, met medewerking van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering en onder toezicht van Mr. J. A. van der Chijs (’s Hage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1893), p. 540.; Osoet Pegua in *Generale missiven*, Deel II: 1639-1655, pp. 525 and 825. Osoet Pegua was very influential in a trading affair of the kingdom and acted like a “supplier” of the Siamese goods for the VOC. She had children with the VOC trading-post director (Jeremias van Vliet) in Ayutthaya and prevented from losing her children to Batavia. See Dhiravat na Pombejra, “VOC Employees and their Relationships with Mon and Siamese Women: A Case Study of Osoet Pegua,” in Barbara Watson Andaya (ed.), *Other Pasts: Women, Gender and History in Early Modern Southeast Asia* (Hawaii: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), pp. 195-214; Bhawan Ruangsilp, *Dutch East India Company Merchants at the Court of Ayutthaya: Dutch Perceptions of the Thai Kingdom, ca. 1604-1765* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 52, 109, and 110.

³⁷ *Generale missiven*, Deel III: 1655-1674, p. 719.

³⁸ *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India*, Anno 1636, uitgegeven door het Departement van Koloniën onder toezicht van D^r. H. T. Colenbrander (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1899), p. 88.

even in all the important towns there are many. Not a year passes without the Moors [Muslim Indians] buying for the Mogul two to three hundred.³⁹

The answer repeats simultaneously the godlike and economic statuses of the Siamese King and his kingdom: that the King possessed a white elephant which was holy for the kingdom and the King himself; that the King was affluent in selling elephants and made his kingdom prosperous. The letter in 1653 to the VOC reiterated the Siamese King's status in possessing the white elephant. He was addressed in the letter as the King "whose palace is [made] of gold and [who] possesses the white elephant."⁴⁰ The divine status of the Siamese King with regard to elephants was emphasized internationally again when he conducted his elephant diplomacy with the VOC (and France in 1681 as recorded in *Dagh-Register* and in April 1688 as seen in *Generale Missiven*⁴¹).

Honor, Reverence, Amity, and Unity

In 1641 the VOC missive was sent to the governor of Surat with an accompanying elephant listed as a priority among other gifts. The VOC honored him "in regard of the

³⁹ Michael Smithies and Dhiravat na Pombejra, "Instructions Given to the Siamese Envoys Sent to Portugal, 1684," *Journal of the Siam Society*, 90.1 & 2 (2002), p. 128.

⁴⁰ *Dagh-Register*, Anno 1653, p. 164.

⁴¹ *Dagh-Register* reported that Siam intended to send two elephants to Louis XIV of France in 1681, but one of them died and the other was not sent. See *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India*, Anno 1681, uitgegeven door het Bataviaash Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, met medewerking van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering en onder toezicht van D^r. F. De Haan ('s Hage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1919), pp. 34, 67, 111-112, and 396. *Generale Missiven* reported that Siam sent envoys to France again in April 1688 before the death of King Narai in July. This time the envoys were accompanied by elephants and rhinoceros. Unfortunately, the animals died along the way. The four Siameses who had been in charge of taking care of these animals were sent back to their homeland by the Company's ships as the commander of the Cape was informed by the French men about this incident. See *Generale missiven*, Deel V: 1686-1697, p. 218.

elephant” and expected him to be “the most thankful.”⁴² When gift-elephants were given, the affective diplomatic lexicons—namely honor, veneration, contentment, and friendship—were provoked. As Asian rulers, dignitaries, and merchants were crucial in conducting operative trading in Asia, one of the most important VOC approaches was to build the relationships of trust or amity with them to gain their favor or permission for having trading posts in their lands.⁴³ Gift-elephants were used to gain practical and beneficial results in running the VOC’s business in Asia. As stated in the VOC record, gift-elephants were used to reduce toll charges imposed by Asian rulers, and the VOC rather used them to gain such a result than using violence.⁴⁴ Elephants as diplomatic gifts were used for enhancing diplomatic relations between the VOC and Asian partners. As shown above, the elephant diplomacy was reciprocal and interactive; it was not only the VOC who acted as a giver and Asian polities as receivers, or vice versa (as we see from the Chinese panda diplomacy nowadays). The exotic quality of elephants diminished when they were used as gifts to Asian polities because they signified other qualities that were closely linked with kingship/rulership, dignity, virtue, and piety with which the VOC and Asians were conversant.

The VOC and Asian counterparts, when acting as a giver, were able to anticipate one another’s diplomatic affective responses when receiving gift-elephants. This was totally in contrast with what the VOC experienced in South Lands during the early seventeenth century.⁴⁵ The historian of the history of emotions Susan Broomhall studies the role of affective rhetoric, expression, and practices in the VOC’s relationship with the native people in South Lands. To put it simply, she asks “what emotions did”

⁴² *Dagh-Register*, Anno 1640-1641, pp. 458 and 310.

⁴³ Jacqueline Van Gent, “Global Trading Companies,” in Susan Broomhall (ed.), *Early Modern Emotions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), p. 305.

⁴⁴ *Generale missiven*, Deel IV: 1675-1685, p. 577.

⁴⁵ The name for which Australia was called in the Dutch sources of the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. See Femme S. Gastra, “The Dutch East India Company A Reluctant Discoverer,” *The Great Circle*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1997), p. 109.

when the VOC had to interact with unfamiliar lands and peoples. Broomhall points out that the emotional standards expressed in the VOC instructions expected the commissioned VOC men to be friendly with local peoples by giving “strange” gifts to them. In 1623, Jan Carstenszoon was commanded by the instructions for his voyages to conclude treaties with local people and explore the potential of the region. Unfortunately, his voyages ended in tragedy. Without the commensurability, as we see from the elephant diplomacy, the local people did not receive the “friendship” that the VOC offered through the gifts and started to attack the VOC men.⁴⁶ Meanwhile in Asia, the elephant diplomacy between the VOC and Asian polities built productive relationships, resulting in trade alliances and (expected) mutual affective responses.

Friendships were signified by gift-elephants sent by the VOC to Asian polities, and they were well received. In 1661, two elephants were sent as presents to the Nayak of Keladi, Chikka Venkatappa Nayaka (r. 1660–1662).⁴⁷ The Nayak sent a letter to Joan Maetsuycker, the Governor-General in Batavia, to thank the VOC for the elephants with his “regards” and “love.”⁴⁸ However, he continued, “the two elephants that Your Honor has sent to revere were not necessary, there [are] so good friendship and unity among us. Having said that, as Your Honor sent me from good heart, I have received the elephants joyfully.”⁴⁹ The Nayak might have been just considerate. Even though there were already amity and unity among them, the VOC sent the elephants to stress the existing relationship. The elephants were received eventually by the Nayak with his great pleasure. As seen from the previous chapter, elephants were also imagined by the Dutch as a symbol of friendship, even more so the friend alongside the king.

⁴⁶ See Susan Broomhall, “Emotional Encounters: Indigenous Peoples in the Dutch East India Company’s Interactions with the Southlands,” *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 45 (2014), pp. 350-367.

⁴⁷ He was written as *Ventapaneyk* in the VOC records.

⁴⁸ *Dagh-Register*, Anno 1661, p. 122.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

When polities had new rulers, elephants as gifts were shipped to express respect and congratulate. In 1668, the VOC sent an elephant to salute the “the new King” of Persia, Suleiman I, who had enthroned in 1666. The elephant was well-received by the monarch.⁵⁰ When Cornelis Speelman was named as the Governor-General in Batavia in October 1681, “the young sultan” Abu an-Nasr of the neighboring polity Banten also sent a Javanese vessel to Batavia with a letter for “congratulating His Honor” and an elephant “as a symbol of lively and sincere friendship in the world.”⁵¹ Even though Java was not a natural habitat of elephants, Banten could likely procure them from Sumatra, the adjacent island to the west, given that during the seventeenth century elephants were abundant in Sumatra, especially in Aceh.⁵²

Asian polities were also so much active in building productive relationships with the VOC by sending gift-elephants. In 1638, the treaty between the VOC and the Kandyan King (Rajasinha II, r. 1635-1687) was signed. It states clearly about their relationship: “[t]he King of Kandy and his subjects acknowledged and accepted the Dutch as their friends and allies, and the protectors of their country against the Portuguese.”⁵³ In 1641 (three years after the treaty), Kandy sent four Singhalese envoys with five tusked elephants to Batavia to venerate the Governor-General and the Council of East India, although the amity had already been established.⁵⁴ With the tusked elephants, the Kandyan King wished the Governor-General have “contentment.”⁵⁵ In

⁵⁰ *Generale missiven*, Deel III: 1655-1674, p. 651.

⁵¹ *Dagh-Register*, Anno 1681, pp. 725 and 735.

⁵² Anthony Reid, “Elephants and Water in the Feasting of Seventeenth Century Aceh,” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (257) (1989), p. 35.

⁵³ The 1638 Treaty also let the VOC “be recouped in cinnamon, pepper, cardamom, indigo, wax, rice, and other valuable product of [the King’s] country, except wild cinnamon.” See R. G. Anthonisz, *The Dutch in Ceylon, An Account of their Early Visits to the Island, Their Conquests, and Their Rule over the Maritime Regions during a Century and a Half* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2003), pp. 37-38.

⁵⁴ *Dagh-Register*, Anno 1640-1641, p. 334.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

1644, an elephant in Ceylon was also symbolized for the affective lexicons of “friendship” and the “unity” when “a tusked elephant of 5 *cubiten* [*cobido*] high” was given to field marshal François Coran who in January had fought the Portuguese and recaptured the fort of Negombo.⁵⁶

Friendship in a productive relationship was not only built between an Asian polity and the VOC, but sometimes it was intended to be made across Eurasia to the Netherlands with the *Stadhouder* of the Dutch Republic through the VOC as a middleman. A 1648 letter from *Phrakblang* in the representative of the Siamese King was sent to Batavia along with three elephants. This time it was not only for amity between the Siamese Kingdom and the VOC but also for the Netherlands’ sovereign. *Phrakblang* said in his royal letter that “[the elephants] is for a symbol that His Majesty is in friendship with the King of Holland and that of the times until [the] present day.”⁵⁷

“The Peaceful Frequency”

As stated in Justus Lipsius’ treatise, “[elephants’] comprehension and intelligence [are] instructive, adaptable, illuminating, competent to learn all arts, so they are committed and experienced as in war times as in peace times.”⁵⁸ Elephants as gifts were used to render peaceful sentiments among polities. This section will focus on how gift-elephants were used as a pacifier by VOC and the neighboring polities on Java Island—

⁵⁶ *Dagh-Register*, Anno 1644-1645, p. 235. When gifts from foreign rulers were given personally to a person in the service of the Company, those gifts were considered as the property of the VOC and were sent to the Netherlands for auction. This rule was from the artikelbrief (the letter of articles) with which all the VOC employees had to comply. See Viallé, ““To Capture Their Favor,”” p. 309. See François Coran’s seizure of Negombo in Anthonisz, *The Dutch in Ceylon*, pp. 106-107.

⁵⁷ *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India*, Anno 1647-1648, uitgegeven door het Departement van Koloniën onder toezicht van Dr. J. De Hullu (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1903), pp. 69 and 71.

⁵⁸ Lipsius, “t Lof van den Olyphant,” p. 146.

Cirebon and Mataram, the two polities located geographically and politically close to Batavia.

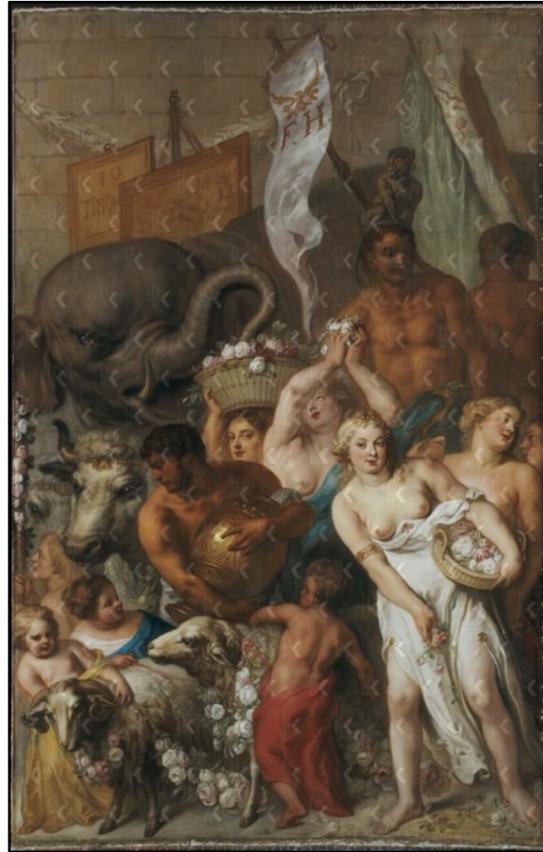


Figure 3.4 The painting dedicated to Federik Hendrik in the *Oranjezaal* at *Huis ten Bosch*
(Source: Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis (RKD), <https://rkd.nl/nl/explore/images/248799>)

In 1650, it was reported in *Generale Missive* that the VOC intended to send an elephant to the Susuhunan (Amangkurat I, r. 1646-1677), the monarch of Mataram. Before mentioning Mataram, the missive demonstrates “the good situation” in Batavia. Junks were present; rice was in remarkable quantity; the livelihood was normal. This stable state of the city

[emerged] out from the peaceful frequency and the alliance with the neighbor as principally the peace with the Mataram that mutually ... was maintained with full content

and trust of continuation ... To this end, a beautiful elephant will require, that seems very glad to be, also [the Company's] emissaries have already lent, hoping with the arrival of the Siamese vessels, of that animal will be seen, from which then will be able to accommodate the Susuhunan.⁵⁹

The VOC planned to use again a Siamese elephant—which most likely would be sent to Batavia by Siameses—as a gift to signify the mutual peaceful happiness between Batavia and Mataram.

An elephant as a symbol of peace was acknowledged by the VOC and Mataram in Asia and also in the Netherlands at around the same time. As discovered by Michiel Roscam Abbing, in 1646, the Asian elephant (Hansken)—which had been sent by the VOC to *stadhouder* Federik Hendrik in 1633—visited the cities of Münster and Osnabrück where the Peace of Westphalia was negotiated until it was signed in 1648.⁶⁰ Three delegations who participated in the negotiation wrote about the elephant. After Federik Hendrik had died in March 1647, his widow Amalia van Solms dedicated a hall in the *Huis ten Bosch* to be in memory of him. The hall was named *Oranjezaal*. The paintings in the hall portray Federik Hendrik as a peacemaker. One of these paintings (Figure 3.4) shows the procession in which the elephant stands behind next to the flag of the initials of Federik Hendrik (F.H.).⁶¹ These two incidents in 1648 and 1650 were not a coincidence since an elephant was mutually symbolized as a sign of “the peaceful frequency.”

In the second last decade of the seventeenth century, the two local polities on Java Island, Cirebon and Mataram, conducted elephant diplomacy with each other. Cirebon had been in a tug-of-war between Banten and Mataram since the Sunda

⁵⁹ *Generale missiven*, Deel II: 1639-1655, pp. 439-440.

⁶⁰ The Peace of Westphalia is a treaty signed in October 1648. The treaty ended the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648) in the Netherlands and the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) in German.

⁶¹ See Abbing, *Rembrandt's Olifant*, pp. 62-63.

Kingdom in western Java declined in the late sixteenth century. Cirebon decided to ally with Mataram during the reign of Sultan Agung (r. 1613-1645). However, in 1681, Cirebon signed a contract with the VOC, and it started to be hegemonized by the Dutch.⁶² Mataram might have been so discontent about this political side-sifting since Cirebon had been its vassal polity. To make the situation calm and encourage Mataram to be on the same side, in 1682, it was reported that the three princes of Cirebon met the Susuhunan of Mataram in person with envoys and an elephant.

As a “patronage” of Cirebon, The VOC seemed to be a wire puller behind the scene in the Cirebon-Mataram elephant diplomacy. The missive which was sent by the VOC to the three princes explains why sending a gift-elephant to Mataram was a good idea: “that the elephant, either one or two, brought through the junk from Siam, was sent to the Susuhunan because as the brothers are aware of that [the elephant] shall make him pleased.”⁶³ From the missive, it could be suggested that the VOC’s experience in 1650—when the VOC had sent an elephant as a symbol of peace to Mataram—might have influenced the VOC to persuade Cirebon to send a gift-elephant to Mataram. Furthermore, we also see how the VOC and Cirebon mutually understood the symbolic quality of an elephant as a peace token as the missive says, “... as the brothers are aware of that.”

Material Culture

The elephant diplomacy was not only about sending live elephants as gifts, but it involved material presents as well. Emblematic qualities of elephants captured peoples’

⁶² Mason C. Hoadley, *Selective Judicial Competence: The Cirebon-Priangan Legal Administration, 1680-1792* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1994), p. 11.

⁶³ *Dagh-Register gebonden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over gebeel Nederlands-India, Anno 1682 I*, uitgegeven door het Bataviaash Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, met medewerking van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering en onder toezicht van W. Fruin-Mees (Batavia: G. Kolff & Co., 1928), pp. 608-611.

imaginations through visual arts as much as through fresh-and-blood elephants. Although the Javanese island was not a place where elephants were to be found in nature, the polities on the island desired to possess goods that had pictures of elephants. In 1648, the letter of the governor of Japara in central Java, Kyai Nebeij Wiera Sittia, sent to the VOC Governor-General in Batavia, shows merchandise in the Javanese society, including cloths painted with elephants or other animals.⁶⁴ In 1671, a letter of Kyai Nity Sastra was sent from Mataram to Batavia. In the letter, said he, “as I have ordered to buy some cloths which are worthy of presenting to the Susuhunan Mataram, like silk *chindes*⁶⁵ painted with elephants and tigers.”⁶⁶

Elephants’ accessories such as a goad and a howdah were also integral in the elephant diplomacy. When elephants were sent as gifts, an object like a goad (*ankus* or *ankusha* in Sanskrit) was also brought along for being used to handle and train the animal. When the Siamese King gave five gift-elephants to the VOC in 1659, he also shipped “the silver goad” in company with those live elephants.⁶⁷ A howdah (a carriage on the back of an elephant) was another object that was sent to accompany gift-elephants. In 1668, a female elephant from Siam was sent to the Governor-General along with a “*span*” (harness), which likely means a howdah.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ *Dagh-Register*, Anno 1647-1648, pp. 415 and 418.

⁶⁵ *Chindes* or *Chindos* is colorful painted cloth of cotton or silk.

⁶⁶ *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India*, Anno 1670-1671, uitgegeven door het Bataviaash Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, met medewerking van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering en onder toezicht van Mr. J. A. van der Chijs (’s Hage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1898), p. 306.

⁶⁷ *Dagh-Register*, Anno 1659, p. 82.

⁶⁸ *Dagh-Register*, Anno 1668-1669, p. 40.



Figure 3.5 The seventeenth-century goad from South India

(Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/30844>)

The VOC also sent a howdah to an Asian ruler. In 1662, the VOC sent an emissary led by Dirco van Adrichem to the Mughal court. One of the Company's gifts presented to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb was "1 piece of elephant's house,"⁶⁹ which means a howdah or an elephant throne. The howdah was not strange to the VOC or Europeans. In 1632 when the Sultan of Aceh (Iskandar Muda, r. 1607-1636) sent three elephants to welcome the VOC emissary, it was reported that "one among others [has] a house on the body."⁷⁰ An image of an elephant and a castle was not strange to Europeans. Donald F. Lach suggests that medieval illustrations prominently featured

⁶⁹ *Journal van Dirco van Adrichem's Hofreis naar den Groot-Mogol Aurangzeb 1662*, uitgegeven door Dr. A. J. Bernet Kempers ('s-Gravenhage, 1941), p. 26.

⁷⁰ *Dagb-Register*, Anno 1631-1634, p. 129.

an elephant with a castle on the back, even though the bestiaries rarely depicted elephants as warlike beasts.⁷¹ The painting titled *Siege of the Elephant* in 1601 by the Netherlandish Hieronymus Bosch also depicts an elephant with a castle.

Paintings of elephants seemed to attract an Asian ruler's attention greatly. In March 1641, the Siamese *Phrakhlang* asked the VOC to have the paintings of the elephants painted and sent to the Siamese King as gifts.⁷² We know from the VOC record that the paintings were handed to the King in September along with the letter of "the King of Holland and the Noble Lord General."⁷³ Michael Auwers points out that in early modern Europe, "the visual arts constituted a vital means of royal representation: in describing how the experience of monarchy was largely an experience of the media through which it was communicated ... rulers regularly sent their painted images to each other, so as to create vicarious presences in the realm of international politics."⁷⁴ However, not only in Europe, the VOC also presented the portraits of the "surrogate dynasty"—House of Orange in the Dutch Republic—as gifts to indigenous rulers.⁷⁵ By contrast, regarding the early modern Siamese tradition, the Siamese monarch separated itself from the public gaze, and commoners could not look at the bodily monarch in a royal procession. Therefore, royal portraits were absent in early

⁷¹ Donald F. Lach, "Asian Elephants in Renaissance Europe," p. 142.

⁷² "Letter from the Phrakhlang on behalf of King Prasatthong (r. 1629-1656) to the Supreme Government in Batavia, 2 March 1641," Document 21, in *The Diplomatic Correspondence between The Kingdom of Siam and The Castle of Batavia during the 17th and 18th centuries* (Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia and The Corts Foundation, 2018), p. 8.

⁷³ VOC 1139, Journale van 't notabelste dat in 's Compagnies affairen ter presentie, en onder de directie van mij Jeremias van Vliet voorgevallen is, 't sedert 5^{en} september anno 1641, fol. 768^v.

⁷⁴ Michael Auwers, "The Gift of Rubens: Rethinking the Concept of Gift-Giving in Early Modern Diplomacy," *European History Quarterly*, 43(3) (2013), p. 424.

⁷⁵ Michael North, "Art and Material Culture in the Cape Colony and Batavia in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North (eds.), *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), p. 125.

modern Siam.⁷⁶ Despite the absence of royal portraits, the way the Siamese King requested the VOC to make the paintings of elephants can be explained in the same way as Auwers suggests. Since the VOC and the Siamese King perceived in a similar way that elephants, in one aspect, emblemized kingship, having paintings of elephants painted by the European was, using Auwers's words, "to create vicarious presences in the realm of international politics."

Conclusion

The elephant diplomacy between the VOC and Asian polities has shown us that these two cultural geographies were close to each other even though they were set apart by the physical distance. The "multiple structural commonalities" and "interconnected repertoires" played a vital role when the VOC and Asian polities conducted the elephant gift-giving.⁷⁷ As previous scholars have explained the commensurability in the Eurasian diplomacy, the idea of "mirroring" by one party to conduct the diplomacy with another could not best be applied here. When the VOC and an Asian polity conducted the elephant diplomacy, they did not have to mirror or learn from one another since both parties had a long tradition of an elephant gift-giving and perceived the emblematic elephant to a certain extent in a similar way. "Unity," as invoked by the Asian sovereigns when giving elephants to the VOC, stressed the commensurability in the elephant diplomacy. Thus, "the structural unity" in the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy was not

⁷⁶ Siamese royal portraiture appeared for the first time in the mid-nineteenth century due to the arrival of photographic technology, which was exploited by the Thai royalty to serve the representations of their social identity to Europe during the age of colonialism. See Maurizio Peleggi, "The Aesthetic and Politics of Royal Portraiture in Thailand," *Ars Orientalis*, Vol. 43 (2013), p. 84.

⁷⁷ Guido van Meersbergen, "The Dutch Merchant-Diplomat in Comparative Perspective: Embassies to the Court of Aurangzeb, 1660-1666," in Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings (eds.), *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410-1800* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), p. 154.

only created by the monsoon winds and economic interdependence but by the commensurability in imagining and perceiving elephants, and it expanded out of the Indian Ocean to encompass Eurasia.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ See Kirti Narayan Chaudhuri's "the structural unity" of the Indian Ocean in K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 83.

Conclusion and Epilogue

The acknowledgment in elephant gift-giving traditions, which had a long reception throughout history, and the imagination and perceptions toward the emblematic elephant facilitated the elephant diplomacy practiced and experienced by the Dutch trading company with Asian polities during the seventeenth century. As previous chapters have shown, the seventeenth-century Dutch were aware of how elephants were used as diplomatic gifts, and the Dutch imagined and perceived an elephant as a kingly, honorary, pious, virtuous, and intelligent beast. Indubitably, these qualities of the emblematic elephant were the reason why elephants were used as gifts in diplomacy between sovereigns and “surrogate sovereign.” In practice, the VOC did not only act as a giver but also as a receiver. Within the elephant diplomacy circuits, the VOC received gift-elephants from Southeast Asian polities plus Kandy in Ceylon and then, as a giver, sent them to South Asia, Persia, and the Dutch Republic.

The VOC knew how to play this diplomatic game. Elephants were given to European monarchs as gifts long before the seventeenth century. This thesis also argues that the VOC did not have to “mirror” or imitate the elephant gift-giving tradition, as previously argued by the studies of various VOC diplomatic activities. The VOC already had knowledge of how the elephant gift-giving functioned. It also had existing imaginations and perceptions toward an elephant as a precious animal suitable for being a diplomatic gift.¹ These vocabularies were commensurable to Asian counterparts to which the VOC gave gift-elephants. They also served the VOC as inputs when Asian

¹ The VOC’s elephant gift-giving practice thus discords with the argument by Adam Chulow for the case of the VOC’s gift-giving practices in Japan. He suggests that “[gift-giving in Japan] required an extended learning process lasting for years or sometimes even decades to master the basics of gift-giving.” See Adam Chulow, “Gifts for the Shogun: The Dutch East India Company, Global Networks and Tokugawa Japan,” in Michael Adas, Heather Streets Salter, and Douglas Northrop (eds.), *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 198-216.

vocabularies of the emblematic elephant entered its system when giving gift-elephants to the VOC. In other words, the existing Dutch mentalities toward gift-giving traditions and the emblematic elephant were integral to the commensurability between the VOC and Asian polities with which one of two parties did not have to imitate another.

One of the factors that many scholars have argued in the history of diplomatic gift-giving is the concept of exoticism or *rariteit* in Dutch.² When elephants were listed as gifts among other things in the VOC records, elephants were distinct from the *rariteit* quality. Although in Europe elephants could not be found in nature, Europeans have been familiar with elephants, either through direct experiences or through imaginations and perceptions, since antiquity. Moreover, needless to say, elephants were omnipresent in Asia. This thesis suggests that the elephants as a gift in the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy had less the quality of being exotic than the quality of being commensurable between the Dutch and Asians.

This thesis, in addition, revisits the change in worldview during the seventeenth century from emblematic to empirical illustrated by William B. Ashworth, Jr.³ Ashworth suggests that in 1650 the emblematic worldview called for its demise and the empirical was on the rise. However, considering Justus Lipsius' and Pieter Nuyts' treatises on the elephant, we can see the empirical aspects since the early seventeenth century and

² For example, these are works that emphasized the exotic quality in diplomatic gifts given and received by the Dutch: Cynthia Viallé, "'To Capture Their Favor': On Gift-Giving by the VOC" in Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North (eds.), *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), pp. 291-319.; Claudia Swan, "Exotica on the Move: Birds of Paradise in Early Modern Holland," *Art History* 38, 4 (September 2015), pp. 612-635.; Claudia Swan, "Dutch Diplomacy and Trade in *Rariteyten*: Episodes in the History of Material Culture of the Dutch Republic," in Michael Adas, Heather Streets Salter, and Douglas Northrop (eds.), *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 171-197.

³ William B. Ashworth, Jr., "Natural History and the Emblematic World View," in Robert S. Westman and David C. Lindberg (eds.), *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 303-332. and William B. Ashworth, Jr., "Emblematic Natural History of the Renaissance," in Nick Jardine, James A. Secord, and E. C. Spary (eds.), *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 17-37.

emblematic even after 1650. The intellectual transformation in the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century thus was not dramatic or linear. The cases of Lipsius and Nuyts suggest otherwise.

Epilogue

This postscript will propose several possible aspects for future research. This thesis has focused mainly on the diplomatic role of elephants in the VOC networks, while the trade side has been left out, although elephants brought the VOC “considerable profit.”⁴ Besides being a diplomatic gift rendering goodwill relationship with Asian polities, the emblematic elephant can be the emblematic capital for enhancing the financial power of the VOC. This will shed light on the economic history of elephants. Furthermore, since the elephant was not inanimate like other goods in the Company realm, hefty manpower was required for dealing with the animal. This leads to other aspects of how the VOC handled the elephants and also with the peoples involved and the environment where the animal lived. Environmental factors can determine the number of elephants in their natural habitats which in turn affected the trade and diplomatic activities of gifting elephants. The VOC could also bring a change in the environment. The VOC records from 1697 and 1699 show how the VOC built a new road for transporting elephants from Negombo to Puttalam and from Puttalam to Jaffanapatnam.⁵ This new elephant road might have caused the VOC to participate in deforestation which sequentially resulted in the change in environment and the retreat

⁴ Hendrick Zwaarddecroon, *Memoir for the Guidance of the Council of Jaffnapatam 1697*, translated by Sophia Pieters (Colombo: H. C. Cottle, Government Printer, 1911), p. 5.

⁵ VOC 1596, Rapport bij forma van dag-register opgesteld en overgelevert aan de Ed Heer Gerrit de Heerre gouvenor en directeur des eijlants Ceylon, fol. 124-138. and *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan beren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, Deel VI: 1686-1697, uitgegeven door Dr. W. Ph. Coolhaas ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), p. 334.

of elephants. In short, future search can explore the human-animal relations between the VOC and the elephants, including gifting, trading, managing, and knowing this mighty animal.

For the moment, I will elaborate more on the aspects of managing and knowing elephants. This thesis argues that there was existing commensurability in the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy. But an aspect of “entanglements of empire” has not been explored in this thesis.⁶ The way the VOC/Dutch managed elephants and constructed the knowledge of them can probably illustrate an entangled history of the VOC/Dutch. The aspect of entanglements can be brought into dialogue with the concept of “connected histories” proposed by Sanjay Subrahmanyam.

“Connected histories” investigate how “ideas and mental constructs ... flowed across political boundaries ... even if they found specific local expression.”⁷ Subrahmanyam ends with the plea that “we not only compare from within our boxes, but spend some time and effort to transcend them, not by comparison along but by seeking out at times fragile threads that connected the globe, even as the globe came to be defined as such [with areas].”⁸ Besides messianic movements and Alexander myths that Subrahmanyam demonstrates how these constructs could be the “fragile threads,” this thesis proposes that the emblematic elephant can be another thread that connected Eurasia. Although this thesis focuses on the Dutch and VOC sources, it has tried to read these sources against the grain to gain the mutual cultural implications of elephants between the Dutch and Asian partners. Future research thus can incorporate more

⁶ Tony Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Maori, and the Question of the Body* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

⁷ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3, Special Issue: The Eurasian Context of the Early Modern History of Mainland South East Asia, 1400-1800 (July 1997), p. 748.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 761-762.

Asian sources concerning elephants. In this epilogue, I will demonstrate some aspects that might be the “fragile threads.”



Figure 4.1 The ill elephant with the deformed nails in the Thai elephant treatise
(Source: *Tamra Chang* [Thai Elephant Treatise], Digitised Manuscripts, British Library, fol. 15^v.)

As we have seen from Chapter 3 in the case of the Nawab of Bengal, the emblematic qualities of elephants expressed themselves through an animal’s physicality. The appearance of elephants’ nails was one of the physical qualities that could determine whether the animal was emblematically well or not. This can take the concept of “learning,” as argued by Adam Chulow, into consideration.⁹ In Thai elephant lore, elephant’s nails were one of the emblematic concerns. The traditional Thai elephant manuscript portrays one elephant with deformed nails (Figure 4.1). It was believed that having only this ill elephant would bring “a great catastrophe”¹⁰ to the elephant’s owner. When the VOC recorded all elephants captured in Matara in Southern Ceylon, the VOC

⁹ Adam Chulow, “Gifts for the Shogun,” p. 199.

¹⁰ *Tamra Chang* [Thai Elephant treatise], Digitised Manuscripts, British Library, fol. 15^v.

not only set tusked elephants apart from untusked and noted the elephant details (names, physical sizes, dates of death, and destinations of sending), but the VOC also included their physical qualities, including their nails. The VOC wrote these physical qualities next to each elephants' physical size. One elephant was described by the VOC as having "16 nails and a bruise."¹¹ As put next to the bruise, we can tell that having 16 nails was not good physical quality. Comparing this to elephant lore elsewhere, we will see an aspect of the entanglement between the VOC and Asian constructs regarding the emblematic elephant. In *Mantra Gajah* (elephant mantra) found in the Malay peninsula, a "very good and lucky" elephant should have 20 white nails, "if it has fourteen toes, or fifteen toes ... an evil brute ... will bring ill health and sickness upon any one that keep it."¹² The Sanskrit elephant lore also stated the same: "(good is) an elephant whose feet are distinguished by nails numbering twenty."¹³

Another aspect in which the Dutch involved and that was also commensurable to Dutch's emblematic worldview was the composite animal or elephant specifically. In Sanskrit and Pali traditions, the law of dependence or *Pratītyasamutpāda* explains how all entities emerge in dependence with others. One of the legs in a three-legged chair cannot come into existence without the other two legs. *Pratītyasamutpāda* is a metaphysical construct shared by Sanskrit-Pali cosmopolis. It also resembles the Renaissance tradition of the emblematic worldview; the emblematic elephant was chained with myriad entities. The composite elephant could not agree more with these two metaphysical concepts. In the Dutch Republic, Mughal India, and Siam, the composite elephant was received through visual arts. As seen from Figures 4.2 to 4.4, although these three composite elephants, using Subrahmanyam's words, have their

¹¹ VOC 1468, Rolle van alle de elphanten inden jaar 1689, fol. 335v.

¹² "Mantra Gajah," translated by W. George Maxwell, *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, No. 45 (June 1906), p. 39.

¹³ *The Elephant-lore of the Hindus: The Elephant-sport (Matanga-lila) of Nilakantha*, translated by Franklin Edgerton (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985), 54.

own “specific local expression,” they illustrate how “ideas and mental constructs [flowed] across political boundaries.” I believe that India was the axis that spread the composite animal tradition to both the east (to Siam) and the west (to the Netherlands). The VOC record also hints at something that we can see the Mughal influence in Siam. One of the gift-elephants sent from Siam to Batavia in 1670 had the name of “*Mongol*,” to which I believe it was a Thai variant of Mughal.¹⁴ The composite animal tradition was commensurable in Siam because Siam was part of Sanskrit-Pali cosmopolis and in the Dutch Republic because of the emblematic worldview (and also hybrid beast folklore).

Even though these aspects are beyond the scope of this thesis, they serve as a microcosm to widen the perspective of Eurasia’s “connected histories” and shed light on the dark corner behind the diplomatic scene that has usually been explained to what happened on the stage. The history of the Dutch-Asian elephant diplomacy thus can reconcile the East-West stereotypes influenced by the Saidian charm. This is what the word diplomacy should connote.

¹⁴ *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands-India*, Anno 1670-1671, uitgegeven door het Bataviaash Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, met medewerking van de Nederlandsch-Indische Regeering en onder toezicht van Mr. J. A. van der Chijs (’s Hage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1898), p. 216.



Figure 4.2 (Top left) The composite elephant in the seventeenth-century Mughal painting

Figure 4.3 (Top right) The composite elephant in Willem Schellinks' late-seventeenth-century oil painting portraying the parade of Shah Jahan's sons

Figure 4.4 (Below) The composite elephant from the Thai elephant treatise

(Source: 4.2: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 4.3: Victoria and Albert Museum. 4.4: British Library)

Appendix I

A summary of all the Dutch East India Company's tusked and untusked elephants that were sold from 1658 to 1689 and how much they rendered at Jaffanapatnam¹

Years	Tusked Elephants	<i>aliassen</i>				
1658		12	all rendered	<i>f</i>	11702	10
1659	9	79			98023	15
1660	7	40			92062	10
1661	5	36			50437	10
1662	5	63			103948	
1663	1	61			98730	
1664	13	82			172380	
1665	19	53			154860	
1666	10	29			61740	
1667	3	27			47325	
1668	17	112			171540	
1669	10	113			164145	
1670	4	46			65655	
1671	4	55			85230	
1672	2	19			30675	
1673-74	15	36			60390	
1675	12	55			76590	
1676	7	55			60090	
1677	1	20			18915	
1678	5	33			31110	
1679	6	77			56400	
1680	6	46			40215	

¹ VOC 1479, Sommarium van alle s' comp. Getande en ongetande eliphanten die verkoght zijn, t' sedert van jaere anno 1658 tot 1689 en hoe veel deselver gerendeert hebben tot Jaffanapatnam, fol. 542r-542v.

1681	1	23		18480	
1682	4	40		35220	
1683	1	46		36375	
1684	19	54		69450	
1685	7	51		50190	
1686	7	50		50250	
1687	3	18		19905	
1688	11	69		68055	
	12 Elephants	1598 <i>aliassen</i>	Transport	2100089	5
1689	10	38		49220	19
	224 Elephants	1636 <i>aliassen</i>	all rendered <i>f</i>	2149310	4
	10	38	here drawn out of the year 1689	49222	19
	214 Elephants	1598 <i>aliassen</i>	still remains <i>f</i>	2100089	5

Appendix II

The list of elephant gift-giving practices between the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and Asian polities as recorded in *Dagh-Registers* (DR) and *Generale Missiven* (GM). Data from GM which corresponds with data from DM are left out. The years shown in the table are the times when practices were recorded.

Recorded Years	To/From	Elephants	Status of the VOC	Sources
Dec 1639	From Kandy	5 elephants	receiver	GM
Jan 1641	From Palembang	1 elephant	receiver	GM
May 1641	To Surat	1 elephant	giver	DR
May 1641	To Mughal	2 Ceylonsese elephants	giver	DR
May 1641	From Kandy	5 tusked elephants	receiver	DR
Jun/Jul 1642	To Mughal	GM mentioned as 1 Ceylonese tusked elephant	giver	DR
Apr 1644	From Kandy (to Negombo)	1 tusked elephant	receiver	DR
Nov 1644	From Siam to Batavia	2 elephants	receiver	DR
Mar 1645	From Arakan	1 elephant	receiver	DR
Apr 1645	To “ <i>den heer Assalatchan</i> ”	1 elephant	giver	DR
Apr 1647	From Siam	5 elephants	receiver	GM
Apr 1648	From Siam	3 elephants	receiver	DR
Dec 1650	To Mughal	1 Ceylonese tusked elephant	giver	GM
Dec 1650	To Mataram	1 elephant	giver	GM
Dec 1651	From Kandy (to Galle)	2 elephants; 1 with tusk and the other without tusk	receiver	GM

Dec 1651	From Siam	6 elephants	receiver	GM
Jan 1654	To “ <i>der bertogg Nawassischen</i> ” in Bengal	2 elephants	giver	GM
Nov 1654	to Nawab “ <i>Mirmamet Saby</i> ”	2 elephants	giver	GM
Jan 1655	From Siam	2 elephants by <i>Okya</i> Sombattiban	receiver	GM
Jan 1655	From Kedha (to Dutch Malacca)	3 elephants	receiver	GM
Apr 1655	From Siam	4 elephants; 2 by Osoet Pegua and the other 2 by <i>Okya</i> Sombattiban	receiver	GM
Jan 1657	From Siam	2 elephants	receiver	DR
May 1657	From Siam	3 elephants	receiver	DR
Sept 1657	To Bengal	3 elephants	giver	DR
Dec 1658	From Siam	3 elephants; 1 by <i>Okya</i> Chakri and the other 2 by <i>Phrakblang</i>	receiver	GM
Apr 1659	From Siam	5 elephants	receiver	DR
Dec 1659	From Banten	1 elephant	receiver	DR
Dec 1659	From Siam	1 elephant	receiver	DR
Dec 1660	From Siam	3 elephants	receiver	GM
Dec 1660	To the Nawab	more than 1 elephant	giver	GM
May 1661	To Keladi	2 elephants	giver	DR
Jun 1661	From Siam	4 elephants	receiver	DR
Jul 1661	To Bengal	1 elephant	giver	DR
Oct 1661	To Golconda	4 elephants	giver	DR
Nov 1661	To Bengal	1 elephant	giver	DR
Dec 1662	From Siam	1 elephant and also 4 ivories by <i>Phrakblang</i>	receiver	GM
Dec 1663	From Banten	1 elephant and 2 calves	receiver	DR

Aug 1664	From Pegu	2 elephants	receiver	DR
Nov 1664	From Siam	2 elephant; 1 by the King and the other by <i>Phrakblang</i>	receiver	DR
Dec 1664	From Siam	1 elephant by <i>Okphra</i> “ <i>Bata Somdil</i> ”	receiver	DR
Dec 1664	From Siam	3 elephants; 1 by the King and the other 2 by <i>Phrakblang</i>	receiver	DR
Aug 1665	To Bengal; to Nawab “ <i>Chaestachan</i> ”	1 elephant	giver	DR
Sept 1665	To Persia	2 elephants, DR in Dec 1664 mentioned “from Ceylon”	giver	DR
Nov 1665	To Golconda	1 elephant	giver	DR
Dec 1665	From Siam	2 elephants; 1 from the King and the other from <i>Phrakblang</i>	receiver	DR
Dec 1666	From Siam	2 elephants; 1 from the King and the other from <i>Phrakblang</i>	receiver	DR
Mar 1668	From Siam	2 elephants	receiver	DR
May 1668	From Kedah	1 elephant	receiver	DR
Dec 1668	From Siam	4 elephants	receiver	DR
Dec 1668	To Persia	1 elephant	giver	GM
Apr 1669	To Golconda	4 Siamese elephants	giver	DR
Dec 1669	To the Nawab	6 tusked elephants	giver	GM
Nov 1670	From Siam	2 elephants	receiver	DR
Dec 1671	From Siam	3 elephants	receiver	DR
Aug 1672	From Siam	more than 1 elephants	receiver	DR
Jan 1673	To the Nawab	2 elephants	giver	GM

Jun 1677	To the Surat governor “ <i>Gladsischam</i> ”	2 Ceylonese elephants	giver	DR
Dec 1679	To “ <i>den prins</i> ” (probably in Bengal) for the “ <i>parvanna</i> ” ¹	3 tusked elephants	giver	GM
May 1680	From Kandy	2 elephants	receiver	DR
Nov 1680	To Thanjavur	2 tusked elephants	giver	DR
Dec 1680	To Bengal	4 Ceylonese elephants	giver	GM
Dec 1681	From Banten	1 elephant	receiver	DR
Mar 1686	To Madurai	1 elephant	giver	GM
Feb 1689	To “ <i>de landheren</i> ” probably in South-Coromandel	more than 1 elephant	giver	GM
Feb 1689	To Travancore	1 tusked elephant	giver	GM
Mar 1690	To Persia	5 elephants	giver	GM
Mar 1692	From Kandy	1 tusked elephant	receiver	GM
Feb 1698	From Kandy	2 elephants	receiver	GM
Feb 1699	To Thanjavur	5 elephants	giver	GM

¹ *Parvanna* was a written order, privilege, or letter of favor granted by subordinates in the Mughal Empire. The ones granted by the Great Mughal himself would be called *firman*.

Glossary

<i>alias</i>	elephants without tusks
<i>asta</i>	a scale of units from the tip of the middle finger to the elbow
<i>chindes/ chindos</i>	colorful painted cloth of cotton or silk
<i>cobido</i>	the Indian measure around 70 centimeters
<i>comptoir</i>	trading post
<i>fluyt</i>	a Dutch sailing vessel
<i>Heren XVII</i>	The central board of the Dutch East India Company in the Netherlands
<i>mahout</i>	elephant's keeper
<i>okphra</i>	rank of Thai official (lower than <i>okya</i>)
<i>okya</i>	rank of Thai official (higher than <i>okphra</i>)
<i>Patria</i>	homeland; the Netherlands
<i>Phrakhlang</i>	Minister of external and trading affairs in Siam
<i>Stadhouder</i>	Stadholder of the Dutch Republic
<i>stedenmaagd</i>	Amsterdam's maiden or a personification of Amsterdam
<i>Wannias</i>	Chief inhabitants who lived in the districts of northern Ceylon

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