

The “*petto buumu*” and pet paraphernalia:

Reflections on the business of pet animals in Tokugawa Japan

Margarita Winkel

January 10, 2019, Thursday, 18:30–20:00

Room 301, 3F, Building 10, Sophia University

Cats and dogs have been around since time immemorial and especially cats appear frequently in Tokugawa prints. Dutch records show a fondness for the calico cat, with its distinctive fur a popular object in the wish lists of Japanese to the VOC, the Dutch East Asia Company in the Tokugawa period. Dogs present a slightly more complicated picture. Present in Japan since times immemorial, the import of new types of dogs by Chinese and VOC members of respectively Chinese and European races changed the role and position of dogs. The traditional *Norainu*, now called ‘Japanese dog’, mostly roaming the streets as a neighbourhood companion, got company from longhaired exotic types, exquisite status animals, owned by the rich and the powerful.

However, the really popular pet animals in Tokugawa Japan were small, at first sight inconspicuous, pets owned by commoners. Best known perhaps, are crickets and birds, kept for their singing qualities, beauty, or exclusiveness. Less well known is the popularity of goldfish and rats/mice (*nezumi*). Because of their size – and therefore they also do not eat that much – all these small species could well be kept by almost anyone, irrespective of social and financial status. The fact that they were cheap and popular also made them good business in the intensely consumerist urban centres of Tokugawa Japan. Pet shops selling pet paraphernalia as well as guide-books on how to breed and feed your birds, mice or goldfish catered to the demand of pet animal lovers and turned them into status animals in their own way.

This presentation focuses on the business surrounding these small pet animals and how they fit into a wide-spread ‘hobby’ culture, an important pillar of social life in the urban centres of Tokugawa Japan.

Margarita Winkel (Leiden University) is now a visiting professor at TUFU (Tokyo Gaikokugo daigaku). Her research focuses on Japanese antiquarianism and popular culture in the Tokugawa period.

Lecture in English / No RSVP necessary

This talk is organized by Professor Bettina Gramlich-Oka (FLA) for ICC Research Unit “Network Studies”.

Institute of Comparative Culture (ICC) Sophia University: 7-1 Kioicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-8554, JAPAN/

Web: <http://icc.fla.sophia.ac.jp/>

(image: 虫売り。江戸職人歌合。石原正明著 (片野東四郎, 1900) Insect Vendor in the Edo period, Japan)

