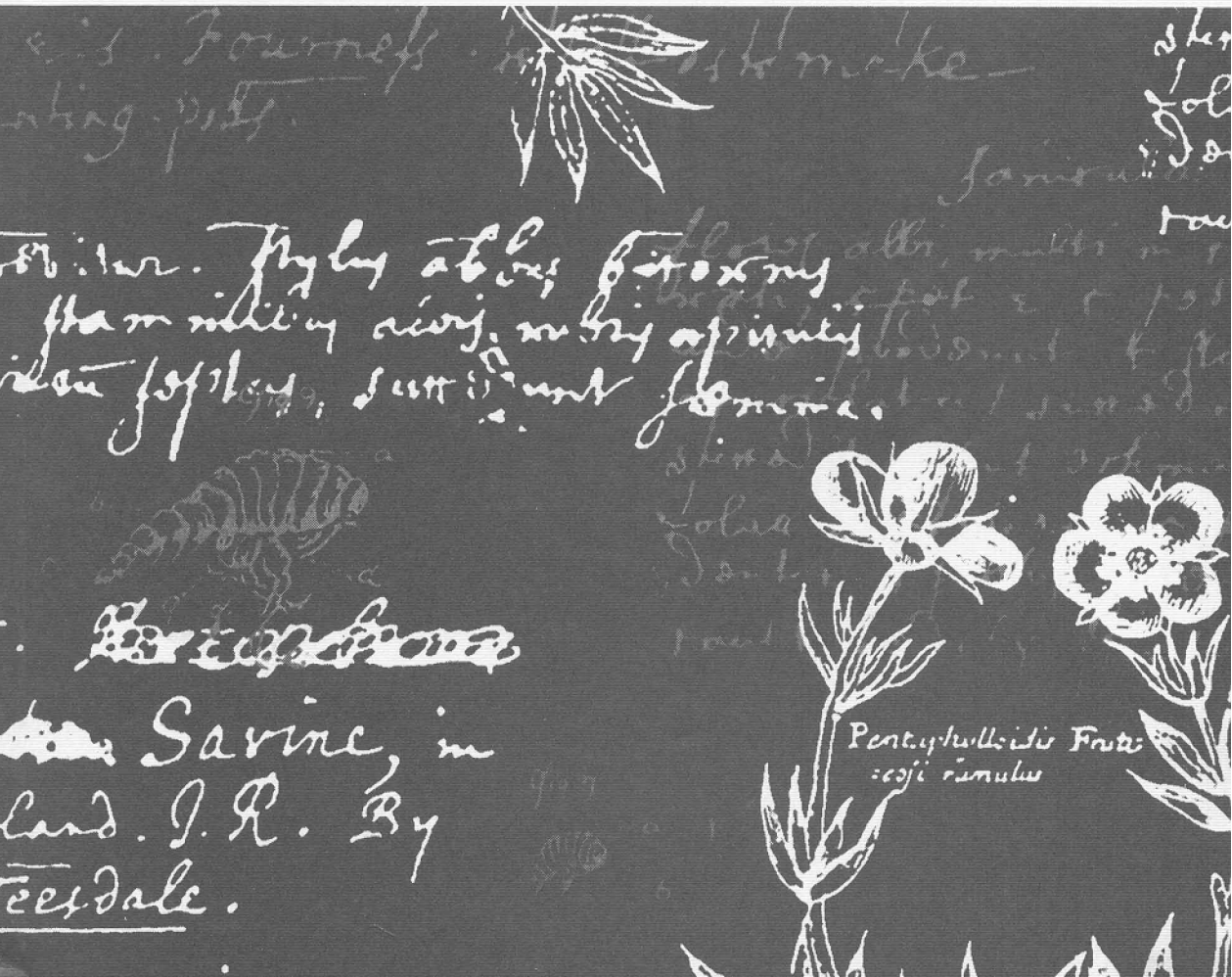


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This volume is respectfully dedicated to
Alwyne Wheeler

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for preliminary information on the contents of future issues see
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CHAPMAN, J. *The art of rhinoceros horn carving in China*. Christie's Books Ltd., London: 1999. Pp 288. Price £ 85. ISBN 0-903432-57-9.

My favourite rhinoceros horn carving is one of a crab, because it is so unusual. The author's choice, based on handling hundreds of these objects, seems to be a caryatid cup showing a small Chinese boy holding a large lotus leaf by its stalk. These and many other objects made from rhinoceros horn are described in this book and illustrated in 401 figures, many of them in colour. Orientalists have considered the art of rhinoceros horn carving a minor art, on the same level as crafts like metalwork and lacquerware. Hence the absence of just about any literature on the subject. Several years ago I visited the Museum voor Volkenkunde in Rotterdam to see their collection of rhinoceros horn cups. I remember that I came away astonished and bewildered. Astonished by the beauty and variety of the cups, bewildered by the lack of information. Where did these cups come from? When were they made? Who made them? Which species of rhinoceros was commonly used to obtain the horn? How did the horns get to China where the animal has long been extinct? Is it possible to classify the cups? What techniques were used to carve the horns? Many questions, but in the ensuing years I only found bits and pieces of information scattered in (to a biologist) rather inaccessible places. Jan Chapman, former Far Eastern Curator of the Chester Beatty Library collection in Dublin, has filled this gap in knowledge. She addresses all the above questions and more. The book is easy to read, aimed at a rather wider audience than just the scholars who have studied Chinese arts and who are familiar with their names and dates.

While rhinoceros horn in most biological texts is described as a solid mass of agglutinated hair, Chapman exposes this as a piece of folklore and corrects this as "composed of a solid mass of closely packed longitudinal fibres of keratin." The differences between the horns of the two African and three Asian species are discussed in some detail, although it still needs a person with a lot of experience to tell them apart. The horn cups are classified according to shape and according to subject matter of the carving. Dating the carvings is a great challenge as there is very little evidence to follow. The earliest known cups date from the Tang dynasty (618–907AD) and they are very simple in design. I was surprised to learn that the art of rhinoceros horn carving has actually died out in China, as the latest known pieces date from the end of the nineteenth century. No new cups have been carved during the past hundred years or so. As Esmond Bradley Martin stresses in his foreword to this book, at least the demand for rhinoceros horn as raw material for carvings was not responsible for the drastic decline of all rhinoceroses in the twentieth century. Christie's Books have produced a beautiful volume which should grace the shelves of both art and animal lovers, and Jan Chapman guides us through the difficult subject matter with ease, confidence and an obvious love for these graceful objects.

KEES ROOKMAAKER

SIGRIST, R., BARRAS, V. and RATCLIFF, M. *Louis Jurine, chirurgien et naturaliste (1751–1819)*. Bibliothèque d'Histoire des Sciences, Chêne-Bourg: 1999. Pp 494, illustrations. Price not given. ISBN 2-8257-0640-X, ISSN 1422-0520.

The introduction to this comprehensive account in French of the life and work of Louis Jurine describes it as a "collective enterprise ... for the historical exhumation" of Jurine and goes on to summarise it as "taking a micro-historic approach" to give insight into "the training of scientists in Napoleonic France" and demonstrating "the relationship between medical practise and scientific research" at that time, as well as elucidating "the characteristics of a naturalist tradition". Of humble origin, Jurine achieved great fame as a surgeon during his lifetime, only to fall into almost total eclipse after his death. Work on echo-location in bats by Galambos, Dijkgraaf and Griffin in this century lead to re-evaluation of the experimental work of Jurine and Spallanzani, this being the subject here of a major contribution by Colán MacArthur, together with four other reviews papers on Jurine's unpublished work in anatomy, geology and medicine.