

BIOLOGICAL JOURNAL of the Linnean Society

VOLUME 8

NUMBER 1

MARCH 1976

**Published for
the LINNEAN SOCIETY OF LONDON
by ACADEMIC PRESS**

An early engraving of the black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis* (L.)) made by Jan Wandelaar

L. C. ROOKMAAKER

c/o L'Abri Fellowship, Burg. Verbrugweg 16,
Eck en Wiel, Holland

Accepted for publication October 1975

In 1758, Linnaeus provided a name for a two-horned rhinoceros, although the animal at that time was still hardly known in Europe. This "species obscura" is our black rhinoceros, presently called *Diceros bicornis* (L.), distributed over eastern and southern Africa. Following Jacobaeus (1696: 4, pl. 3, fig. 4), who described a pair of horns, possibly of the Sumatran species (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis* (Fischer, 1814)), Linnaeus (1758: 56) suggested that this species was typical for "India". This kind of confusion was typical for the first half of the 18th century: the rhinoceros material (mostly horns) available in Europe was inadequate for solving the question of how many different species of rhinoceroses existed and where they lived. Only the Indian *Rhinoceros unicornis* L., 1758 had been imported alive in Europe (Clarke, 1973, 1974; Rookmaaker, 1973), and consequently this was the species best, and almost exclusively, known in the Western world.

It can be assumed to be correct that all reports, however vague, about the black rhinoceros came from the Cape of Good Hope—even though Sloane (1749: 118-9) received two horns, connected by a piece of skin^[1], from the S.W. coast of Africa (Angola). Thomas's remark (1911: 144) that the Cape can be considered to be the terra typica of *Diceros bicornis bicornis* is, therefore, justified and was rightly accepted by all modern workers on the taxonomy of the animal (Hopwood 1937: 452-3; Allen 1939: 556; Zukowsky 1964: 12; Groves 1967: 271).

Depictions of the black rhinoceros were very rare until Camper published his 'Dissertatio' on its head and skull (1777, 1782), although this change might not be attributable to him. Cole (1953: 340) mentions the "Asinus cornutus" of Aldrovandi (1623: pl. II; first edition 1616) which was copied by several other authors. His figure depicts, with some goodwill, an African two-horned rhinoceros. Just as poor is the small representation given by Flacourt (1661: plate opposite p. 66), who said that he saw the animal with his own eyes near the Cape of Good Hope (p. 395).

All the more remarkable, therefore, is an engraving of a reasonably natural-looking black rhinoceros, made by the Dutch engraver Jan Wandelaar (1690-1759), which remained almost unnoticed (Plate 1). It appeared in the Dutch translation (1727) of Kolb's 'Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum', originally published in German in 1719^[2]. In his lengthy treatise on the Cape, Kolb gave for his time a most accurate description of the black rhinoceros (1719: 159ff), in which he stresses, for instance, the bicornity of the animal. It seems however, that the plate of the rhinoceros (Kolb, 1719: pl. IV) was inserted by the publisher, probably without consulting Kolb about it. It shows a crude derivation of the (one-horned) rhinoceros on Albrecht Dürer's famous woodcut of 1515, with its horn in the belly of the elephant that stands beside it (cf. Cole 1953: fig. 21)^[3]. Jan Wandelaar was given the task to copy some of the plates of the original edition for the Dutch translation. And indeed, he made an engraving showing the rhinoceros (without the elephant) of the original German edition, entitled "Rhinoceros zoo als die meest afgebeeldt worden"^[4] (Kolb, 1727: I, opposite p. 189). But he made, too, a much better engraving, which matches Kolb's description (Kolb, 1727: I, opposite p. 190).

In 1734 to 1735 the London doctor James Douglas (1675-1742) was sent over to Holland by George II to attend the Princess of Orange who was thought to be pregnant (Brock, in litt., 8 March 1974). He then met Wandelaar and they had some talk about the rhinoceros. In a recently discovered bound volume of rhinoceros drawings and engravings, being a collection made by Douglas in 1739, preserved in the Hunterian library of the University of Glasgow (shelf-mark Av.1.17), there is a sheet of notes made by Douglas of this conversation, together with two pages of rough sketches by Wandelaar. The engraver told Douglas that, "as he was employed to copy the original plates for the Dutch edition, he procured a Drawing from Commelinus to whom it had been sent from the Cape of Good Hope." Douglas then proceeded to compare the engraving with a "stuffed skin that was very whole". He requested Wandelaar, probably on that occasion, to make the "following corrections of several parts that were not so well represented as: a front view of the head; a side view of the same; one fore hoof, just one half; one hind foot, just one half; a side view of the hind foot; a side view of the fore foot". These rough drawings are here reproduced (Plate 2).

At the bottom of the second page of Douglas's notes on his conversation with Wandelaar and the rhinoceros they discussed, we read: "Debr. 31 [1734?]. Leyden, Ambulacro horti Academici Botanici Leydensis". The ambulatory, or "gallery" of the botanical garden at Leiden, built in 1599, was used as a museum of natural history objects (Heniger, 1973: 31, 47, fig. 8; Veendorp & Baas Becking, 1938: 42), and among these there was a stuffed rhinoceros. In 1677 one of the ships of the Dutch East India Company brought to Amsterdam the remains of a young rhinoceros, "preserved in salt", which had died during the voyage. This stuffed skin was presented to the University of Leiden in July 1677 and it was put on show in the ambulatory.^[5] A catalogue of 1733^[6] still mentions it: "172. Un jeune Rinoceros gratifié par Messieurs les Directeurs de La Compagnie des Indes Orientales d'Amsterdam", which makes it certain that Douglas and Wandelaar discussed this particular specimen. It is impossible to say to which species it belonged. In conclusion it might be stated that this engraving by Jan Wandelaar, after a drawing which

was sent from the Cape of Good Hope, is the first more or less natural representation of the black rhinoceros since the time of the Romans.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am particularly grateful to Dr C. H. Brock, Glasgow, for introducing me to the Douglas collection and for much information and advice. Many details of rhinoceros history would have remained unknown to me except for the generous assistance of T. H. Clarke, London, M. D. Haga, Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam, Drs J. Heniger, Utrecht, and Dr P. O. Troutman, Courtauld Institute, London. To these and many other people who have contributed to my work through encouragement or information, many thanks are extended. I thank the Artis-library, Amsterdam, and the University Court, Glasgow, for their kind permission to reproduce the plates.

NOTES

- [1] Figured in Parsons, 1743, tab. III fig. 8.
- [2] About Kolb and the several editions of his book, see Mohr, 1967: 9.
- [3] This plate was copied from a drawing (or the later engraving) of Francis Barlow, or a similar mezzotint of P. van den Berge. Both probably can be dated 1684 (-1685) as they were made following the arrival of an Indian rhinoceros in London in 1684. Barlow's original drawing is in the Courtauld Institute, London, and from this an engraving was made. The mezzotint of van den Berge was probably copied from the engraving of Barlow. The only known copy is in the Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (inv. no. 15,751). It was advertised in the London Gazette of 26 January 1685 (no. 2002) as being sold "by Pierce Tempest at the Eagle and Child in the Strand over against Somerset House Water-Gate".
- [4] "Rhinoceros as they are mostly depicted."
- [5] This information was kindly provided by Drs J. Heniger of the Bio-historisch Instituut der Rijksuniversiteit, Utrecht. His sources were:
 - (a) Algemeen Rijksarchief, Koloniaal Archief, inv. no. 369: Resoluties van de kamer Amsterdam, 3.1.1675-15.8.1678 (vergadering van donderdag 29 juli 1677).
 - (b) Catalogue of the Leiden ambulacrum: "Vreemdigheden en Rareyten, Die in de Galderije van de Thuijn van d'Academie van Leyden gesien werden", 1692 (rhinoceros is item no. 93).
- [6] "Catalogue de plus rares & plus curieuses choses qui se trouvent à voir journellement dans la Galerie du célèbre Jardin de l'Academie dans la ville de Leide", 1733.

REFERENCES

- ALDROVANDI, ULISSE, 1623. *De quadrupedibus*. Francofurti.
- ALLEN, G. M., 1939. A checklist of African mammals. *Bull. Mus. comp. Zool. Harv.*, 83: 1-763.
- CAMPER, P., 1777. Dissertatio de cranio rhinocerotis Africani, cornu gemino. *Acta Acad. Scient. Imp. Petropol.*, 1(2): 193-209, pls. V-VIII.
- CAMPER, P., 1782. *Natuurkundige verhandelingen over den Rhinoceros met den dubbelen horen*. Amsterdam.

- CLARKE, T. H., 1973. The iconography of the rhinoceros from Dürer to Stubbs. Part I: Dürer's ganda. *Connoisseur*, 184(739): 2-13, figs 1-8 + 1 colour-fig.
- CLARKE, T. H., 1974. The iconography of the rhinoceros. Part II: The Leyden rhinoceros. *Connoisseur*, 185(744): 113-22, figs 1-23 + 1 colour-fig.
- COLE, F. J., 1953. The history of Albrecht Dürer's rhinoceros in zoological literature. *Science, medicine and history*, 1: 337-56, figs 1-22.
- FLACOURT, E. DE, 1661. *Histoire de la grande isle Madagascar*. Paris.
- HENIGER, J., 1973. De eerste Nederlandse wetenschappelijke reis naar Oost-Indië, 1599-1601 *Leids Jaarboekje*, 1973: 27-49, figs 1-8.
- GROVES, C. P., 1967. Geographic variation in the black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* (L., 1758). *Z. Säugetierk.*, 32(5): 267-76, figs 1-2, tabs 1-2.
- HOPWOOD, A. TINDELL, 1937. Contributions to the study of some African mammals.—II. The subspecies of the black rhinoceros, *Diceros bicornis* (Linnaeus), defined by the proportions of the skull. *J. Linn. Soc., (Zool.)*, 40(273): 447-57, pls 10-11, tabs 1-4.
- JACOBÆUS, O., 1696. *Muséum regium*. Hafniae.
- KOLB, P., 1719. *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum*. Nürnberg.
- KOLB, P., 1727. *Naaukeurige en uitvoerige beschrijving van de Kaap de Goede Hoop*. Amsterdam.
- LINNAEUS, C., 1758. *Systema naturae*. Holmiae.
- MOHR, E., 1967. *Der Blaubock, Hippotragus leucophaeus (Pallas, 1766). Eine Dokumentation*. Hamburg. Berlin: Paul Parey.
- PARSONS, J., 1743. A letter from Dr Parsons to Martin Folkes, Esq; President of the Royal Society, containing the natural history of the rhinoceros. *Phil. Trans. R. Soc.*, 42(470): 523-41, pls 1-3.
- ROOKMAAKER, L. C., 1973. Captive rhinoceroses in Europe from 1500 until 1810. *Bijdr. Dierk.*, 43(1): 39-63, figs 1-13.
- SLOANE, H., 1749. A letter from Sir Hans Sloane to Martin Folkes Esq. containing the figure of a rhinoceros with a double horn. *Phil. Trans. R. Soc.*, 46(492): 118-9, 123-5, pl. 2.
- THOMAS, O., 1911. The mammals of the tenth edition of Linnaeus. *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.* 1911(1): 120-58.
- VEENDORP, H. & BAAS BECKING, L. G. M. 1938. *Hortus Academicus Lugduno-Batavus 1587-1937*. Harlemi.
- ZUKOWSKY, LUDWIG, 1964-65. Die Systematik der Gattung *Diceros* Gray, 1821. *Zool. Gart. Lpz. (N.F.)*, 30(1/2-3/4): 1-178, figs 1-81, 1 tab.

EXPLANATION OF PLATES

PLATE 1

Wandelaar's engraving of the black rhinoceros, as published in Kolb, 1727. (Reproduced by permission of the Artis-library, Amsterdam.)

PLATE 2

Wandelaar's sketches of the young stuffed rhinoceros in the Leiden botanical garden c. 1734-35. (Reproduced by permission of the University Court of the University of Glasgow.)



