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A

GEOGRAPHICAL AND TOPOGRAPHICAL

DESCRIPTION

OF THE

# CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

BY

O. F. MENTZEL.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL GERMAN

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PART THREE

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A COMPLETE AND AUTHENTIC  
GEOGRAPHICAL AND TOPOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION  
OF THE FAMOUS AND (ALL THINGS CONSIDERED)

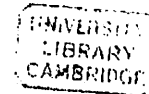
REMARKABLE

# AFRICAN CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

*Wherein is described clearly and accurately  
the rural parts according to their division  
into districts, mountains and rivers; the  
Christian inhabitants and their customs;  
the agronomy and viticulture, stock  
farming, the ordinary expeditions,  
game hunting and finally also  
the aborigines, namely the  
Hottentots, besides many  
other lately discovered  
curiosities.*

BY

O. F. MENTZEL.



GLOGAU  
CHRISTIAN FRIEDRICH GÜNTHER

1787.

*(Title of Volume II of the original edition).*

of game in this region. The first rhinoceroses were killed here by two Hottentots; afterwards more were found and shot, our two travellers discovering at the same time that their meat was quite good to eat; to which Sparrman adds that according to his own examination this animal has no gall-bladder. There was likewise no lack of eland; they kept together in herds without being particularly shy.

From Quammedacka which is actually only a pool of water, the journey continued to Agterbruintjes Hoogte, where springbok are very plentiful, then the expedition turned towards the Little Fish River in search of hippopotami. Two lions came within 200 yards of them in broad daylight (between 9 and 10 a.m.), but neither horses nor the gazelles feeding nearby were scared, probably because they are naturally aware of the fact that a lion does not attack openly but stalks or lies in wait for its prey. For that reason these two lions were soon put to flight by our travellers. They also chased a male ostrich that was sitting on eggs in its nest; from which it is clear that the ostrich lives monogamously and takes turns with the female to sit on the eggs as Thevenot testifies.<sup>133</sup> This is well known at the Cape from information given by the Hottentots.<sup>134</sup>

From the Little Fish River they journeyed to the Great Fish River and shot a buffalo and an eland. Sparrman also saw a t'Gnu<sup>135</sup> but could not hunt it down. Between these two rivers they saw many springbok, quaggas and deer. Here our travellers for the first time found shelter again in a house belonging to an old elephant hunter called Printslow<sup>136</sup> who had settled here a short time ago.

<sup>133</sup> Jean de Th venot: d. 1657. His *Voyages* describing his travels through Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia and India were in great vogue in the 17th century. His reputation as a Naturalist has not stood the test of time.

<sup>134</sup> On the contrary Barrow and Lichtenstein remark upon the polygamous nature of the ostrich. Lichtenstein found a nest occupied by one cock and five hen ostriches.

<sup>135</sup> Mentzel proceeds: 'actually this animal is called *Xgnou* by the Hottentots. By keeping the tongue against the upper palate and jerking it loose so that it clicks in pronouncing the letter *X* and the word "*gnou*" the correct Hottentot pronunciation is obtained'.

<sup>136</sup> Willem Prinsloo defied the law by trekking beyond the colonial boundary in 1772. He was followed by others and, as orders to return were of no avail, the Council of Policy in 1775 extended the boundary to the Little Fish and Bushman Rivers.

The Agterbruintjes Hoogte, which encloses the upper part of the Little Fish River and is separated from the Camdebo by high mountains, lies near the Sneeuwbergen whose summit is covered with snow the greater part of the year. The lower Sneeuwbergen are inhabited throughout the year, but because of the intense cold the inhabitants have to leave the high Sneeuwbergen in winter and move to the Camdebo. Hereabouts live the wildest Bushmen who often cause great damage to the farmers and even oblige them to move away.

There formerly lived in this neighbourhood a tribe of Hottentots of somewhat lighter colour, yellower than the others, called on that account Chinese Hottentots; they were on very peaceable terms with the settlers. Their present abode is near the Great and Little Fish Rivers, but a section of them has trekked an eleven days' journey farther North and split into separate Kraals, which live in community and engage in cattle breeding.

Among the rivers that flow through the Hottentot land, the t'Kamsi-t'Kay, the t'Nu-t'Kay<sup>137</sup> (or rather X Kamsi-X Kay, and X Nu-X Kay) are the smaller and the great Zomo the largest; they flow through Kaffirland into the Indian Ocean. Beyond the Zomo there is a tribe called the "Tambucki"<sup>137a</sup> by the Chinese Hottentots, similar to the latter but much more powerful and warlike. According to these Chinese Hottentots, another tribe, still more warlike called the "Mambucki" borders on the "Tambucki." A few colonists, who visited the Zomo river, saw much smoke rising in the mountains about a two days' journey northwards. The Chinese Hottentots assert that the "Tambucki" melt a kind of metal from which they make ornaments that resemble pistol-gold.<sup>138</sup> Upon examining a ring of this kind, brought home by Sparrman, the Director of Mines, Engelstr m, found it to be a mixture of silver and copper. It would be a very important discovery if great quantities of copper rich in silver were found in this country.

A somewhat obscure and as yet doubtful story of a real unicorn, having the shape of a horse with a horn in front of its

<sup>137</sup> The White Kei and the Zwart Kei.

<sup>137a</sup> See note on p. 336.

<sup>138</sup> Gold of 21 carat (Grimm: *Deutsches Worterbuch*.)

be an accident if they should miss their object or a mark no bigger than a gulden. Their bullets consist of one-third tin and two-thirds lead. If more tin is used the bullet becomes too hard and is deflected on striking a bone: but if made entirely of lead, it would be flattened and fail to pierce.

On an elephant or similar hunt the hunter must above all be able to rely on his horse; for when he wants to aim at such an animal, he dismounts, rests his heavy gun on a small crotch brought with him or, if the ramrod is strong enough, rests his left hand on it, kneels on his right leg, and supporting the barrel on his left hand takes aim and fires. At the same time he must be sure that his horse would not be frightened by the shot and bolt; or if he cannot yet rely on it thoroughly, and has to put the bridle over his arm, that the horse does not shy while he is taking aim. When the shot has been fired and the animal has been hit but not brought down, it becomes enraged and charges its enemy who would certainly be killed, if one of his comrades did not help him with a second shot at the animal, unless he could swing himself into the saddle and race away before he was overtaken. If things go wrong, an animal may sometimes receive three or four shots before it falls; in such case all who have shot at it have to mount their horses and retire as far as the one who has fired the last shot is pursued, or until the wounded animal falls. On a buffalo hunt it is most dangerous when there are several buffaloes in a group. For when a buffalo is hit, whether he is killed or merely wounded, and the others see blood, the entire herd will attack the hunter and charge him at least until he can retreat to a hill. For when it is hard going up a hill, they halt. Thus when there are several buffaloes it is best not to fire into the herd, but if one fires and does bring one down, to retire immediately to a hill and wait until the others have left the fallen animal which can then be fetched and carried off. There is less danger from a wounded rhinoceros; for he is quite alone and cannot look sideways or far in front of him, and unless one stands in the line of its scent, it is easy to escape. One may easily get away from hippopotami on horseback for they are too clumsy. They are generally stalked at night when they wade out of the river. Then,

unless they are wounded so severely that they fall immediately, they are more frightened at the flash of the powder than the report of the gun and withdraw into the water.

Now I shall tell what facts I know for certain about African animals; more than I know myself, nobody can or will expect from me.<sup>236</sup>

Of APES there are none in the entire Cape except those known as *Baviane*; at least, others have not yet been discovered. I did hear from the mouth of Lieutenant (later Captain) Allemann that in 1734 along with the Governor de la Fontaine he had visited a large forest, a two days' journey beyond Mossel Bay, where he saw not only much ebony, but also apes and parrots. But Sparrman saw only black long-tailed monkeys but no apes, and the parrots were of a kind called *Ioris*.<sup>237</sup>

AUROCHS: These resemble tame oxen, but are larger and ash-grey in colour. They have a small head, short horns, long crisp hair, both on their breast and between the horns, and a long beard like a goat. Since they can run very fast, they are called "Baas" by the Hottentots,<sup>238</sup> that is "Master" or "Sir". The word "Baas" is no real Hottentot word, but adopted by the slaves from the "Lingua franca".

BABOONS: The largest species of all those belonging to the ape family and in all other respects like them. They live in the mountain crags and never descend except when they want to eat their fill in the orchards or vineyards, where they do much

<sup>236</sup> Mentzel follows an alphabetical order of arrangement; this is lost in the translation.

<sup>237</sup> Lichtenstein (I. p. 241) describes this bird under the name of touraco (*cucullis persa*.)

<sup>238</sup> This passage is taken almost verbatim from Brink's Journal under date, 22 November, 1761, i.e. when the expedition had reached the furthest North of the journey. As neither the European auroch nor the American bison has been found in South Africa, there is a strong presumption that the travellers meant by "auroch" the wild ox or wildebeest. The description applies most closely to the blue or bastard wildebeest (brindled gnu). Confirmatory evidence is obtained from Harris, *Game and Wild Animals of South Africa*, Plate 4, who mentions that this animal was called "baas" by the Namaqua Hottentots. We may therefore conclude that this reference in Brink's journal is the earliest one to the blue wildebeest, for according to Sclater, *Fauna of South Africa*, I, 154-5, the species was discovered near Kuruman in Bechuanaland by Truter and Somerville in 1801.

hide under stone heaps and does not dislike fowls and other poultry, but preferably feeds on them.

**RHINOCEROS:** the largest animal after the elephant and the hippopotamus. From the extreme tip of its muzzle to the root of its tail it is at least twelve feet long, and attains a height of more than six feet. In appearance its body is rather thickset and is made still more misshapen by the surrounding hide which is very thick, hard, inelastic, rough and hairless. The animal's gait would be impeded had not nature provided it with several pads and soft creases, which lie deep, especially behind the shoulder-blade and in front of the back loins. Flexible folds in the hide run round the neck and on either side of the rump towards the belly. Still another runs straight from the softer parts of the belly to the tail and likewise at the lower ends of the legs. All these folds are about three to four inches deep, and give and expand like the leather of a bellows through which it is deflated and inflated. These deep folds give the animal the appearance of being covered and hung with shields, which has given rise to some queer reproductions of it and fabulous tales about it: among them the following may specially be mentioned; that when a rhinoceros sees an elephant he attacks it by crawling under its belly, rips it open with the horn on its nose and kills it in this way. But if one reflects that neither of these animals is carnivorous, and has therefore no cause for jealousy, that the rhinoceros is far too big to sneak between the elephant's legs and crawl under its belly, one sees at once how foolish such fairy-tales are. In the year 1515, a live rhinoceros was brought from India to Lisbon for the King of Portugal, who presented it to the then ruling Emperor Maximilian. The famous painter, Albrecht Dürer, made a reproduction of it, either after a false and wrong description of it, or out of his own imagination, which, contrary to all sound reason, made it appear to be not only hung with shields, but profusely studded with knobs and nails and covered with fish-scales. Professor Sparman has given a far more natural portrait in the German edition of the description of his travels. Kolbe, who pretends to have seen the animal in Africa, to have eaten of its flesh and smoked a pipe of its dung, was credulous enough to believe the myth about the elephant and to have Dürer's

drawing copied; this can be seen on plate 4 on page 158, but not without disgust, abhorrence and derision, for such false reproductions and untrue descriptions of unknown objects do greater harm than good to scholarship. Boccanelli's *Relationes ex Parnasso* are known to every scholar;<sup>256</sup> Gratianus compares it with a dish very highly spiced with salt and pepper. Had Boccanelli read Kolbe's *Caput Bonae Spei* he would surely have had it burnt on Parnassus; and Gratianus would have called it an insipid dish without salt and pepper. I have been assured by Boileau that he criticised Kolbe's work very severely, and he certainly did it no injustice. It is still more surprising that he — or the publisher of the *Illustrated History of Foreign Land-animals*<sup>257</sup> reproduces this very drawing of Dürer on the second leaf for the month of February 1747, and adds the myth of the elephant to it. As a bit of information, I would still have let this pass, if the rhinoceros-calf shown on this page had been drawn true to life. For in the year 1746 a Dutch skipper called Martje Dan (unless I am mistaken) brought a ten year old rhinoceros calf (the subject of the said copper-plate) with him and exhibited it in Berlin, Breslau, Glogau and many other places for payment. At the same time he offered for sale two copper-engravings of the animal in different sizes. The publishers would have done well to have had their plate engraved like either of these, for they could have had no better example.

They err who think that Dürer's drawing represents an older, full-grown male rhinoceros. It is the chimera of an idle freak-monger, and no such monstrous creature has been seen either in Africa or in the kingdom of the great Mogul, whence the reproduced calf originated. The difference between the two types consists mainly in that most African rhinoceri have two horns, one big, one small, but the Asiatic ones have generally only one. I say *mostly*, for in Africa one also finds some which have only one horn on the nose — and in Asia some which have two. Whether this is a difference of age, nature of the country or of sex, I

<sup>256</sup> The reference is to Boccacini (not Boccanelli) who died in 1613. His *Relationes* was a satire on the actions and writings of eminent contemporaries. First published in Italian in 1612, it was translated in many languages and passed through several editions.

<sup>257</sup> This work is not listed in the British Museum Catalogue.

cannot say, but in the whole world I have never seen one with a horn and a saddle on its back as appears from the portrait mentioned.

This animal, though it was seen alive by many people in Germany in the year stated, is nevertheless probably known to very few people to-day: therefore it will not be inappropriate to give a somewhat more detailed description of it. Its entire body, especially the soft part of the belly, is covered with small hairless knobs. It is dark-brown in colour. Compared with its size, the head is longer than that of the elephant, but the eyes are much smaller and are so placed that it can mostly look only straight ahead, and little sideways. The upper lip can be stretched half a foot and ends in a pointed fleshy protuberance, which it uses as a kind of hand and imperfect trunk for taking up its food and putting it into its mouth. On its nose, embedded in the hide, it has a horn which is large or small according to the animal's age, but has not been known to exceed twenty-four to twenty-six inches in length. It is seldom more than six to seven inches thick at its base, somewhat olive-coloured at the lower end, but black at the upper; the point which has a sharp curve is weak and thin compared with the central part. Some of them also have a second but much smaller horn a few inches behind the first, which is shorter and smaller. The animal is supposed to be able to bend the large one back, while it is digging for roots with the smaller one, this however, has not yet been proved beyond doubt, and Sparrman who knew nothing of this supposition, did not investigate it. The African species mostly have two horns when full-grown, though at present it is uncertain whether they are an offshoot of the single-horned ones, but this seems the more credible. It is generally believed that the horns are affected by poison. Kolbe accepts this view and relates a lot of inconsistent nonsense of which he pretends to have been an eye-witness. This, however, is entirely untrue as I have already proved in Volume I of this book.<sup>258</sup> The animal has a much better sense of smell than of sight and gets the scent of a thing much more quickly than it can

<sup>258</sup> Lichtenstein (V.R.S. 10. p. 106) says that he was unable to shake the popular belief that liquid poison became harmless when poured into a rhinoceros horn.

see it; for which reason one can easily escape its rage, by moving a little sideways and away from its wind. During the breeding season or when angered, it thrusts its great horn into the earth and rips it up like a ploughshare; when it is moving forward in this manner, no root, stone or whatever other obstacle may be in its way, can withstand it. Formerly its flesh was held to be inedible, but now we know from experience that it is good and wholesome. Sparrman who cut one open and examined the entrails, declares that he found no gall in it and this is the more credible since, if caught young, they easily become tame and companionable. The blood of these animals is carefully preserved by game hunters, and is supposed to be very useful as a remedy for different ailments, especially in cases of sprains and ruptures.

The inhabitants of Africa cut driving-whips or so-called *Schambocke* from its hide, and with these they are accustomed also to chastise the slaves. It is, however, prohibited by law to whip a Christian with it, since it inflicts agonising pain and cuts unbelievably deep into the flesh, drawing blood. I saw a female slave who had received a lash with such a *Schambock* over her shoulder. The point had made a cut in her breast as deep as a finger's thickness, leaving a scar which had the appearance of a human finger lying on her breast.

SEA-COW, HIPPOPOTAMUS, NILE OR RIVER HORSE: This is an amphibian and the largest of the quadrupeds after the elephant. It is never seen in the sea, but lives in the rivers by day. There it digs deep holes, coming up to the surface from time to time to breathe. At night these animals come ashore to graze and sleep; they also calve on land but soon take their young with them into the water carrying them to the surface on their backs to breathe. Occasionally, and when they do not find sufficient food on the river bank, they wander far inland to obtain adequate nourishment. Since the rivers in which they prefer to live are usually surrounded by thornbushes and other shrubs, they make their own passages through which they pass regularly, and this provides the best opportunity to stalk them and either to shoot them or catch them in concealed pits, in the making of which the Hottentots are great adepts. Their meat which resembles pork, is tasty and wholesome. Anyone affected with gonorrhoea, is supposed to be cured very soon