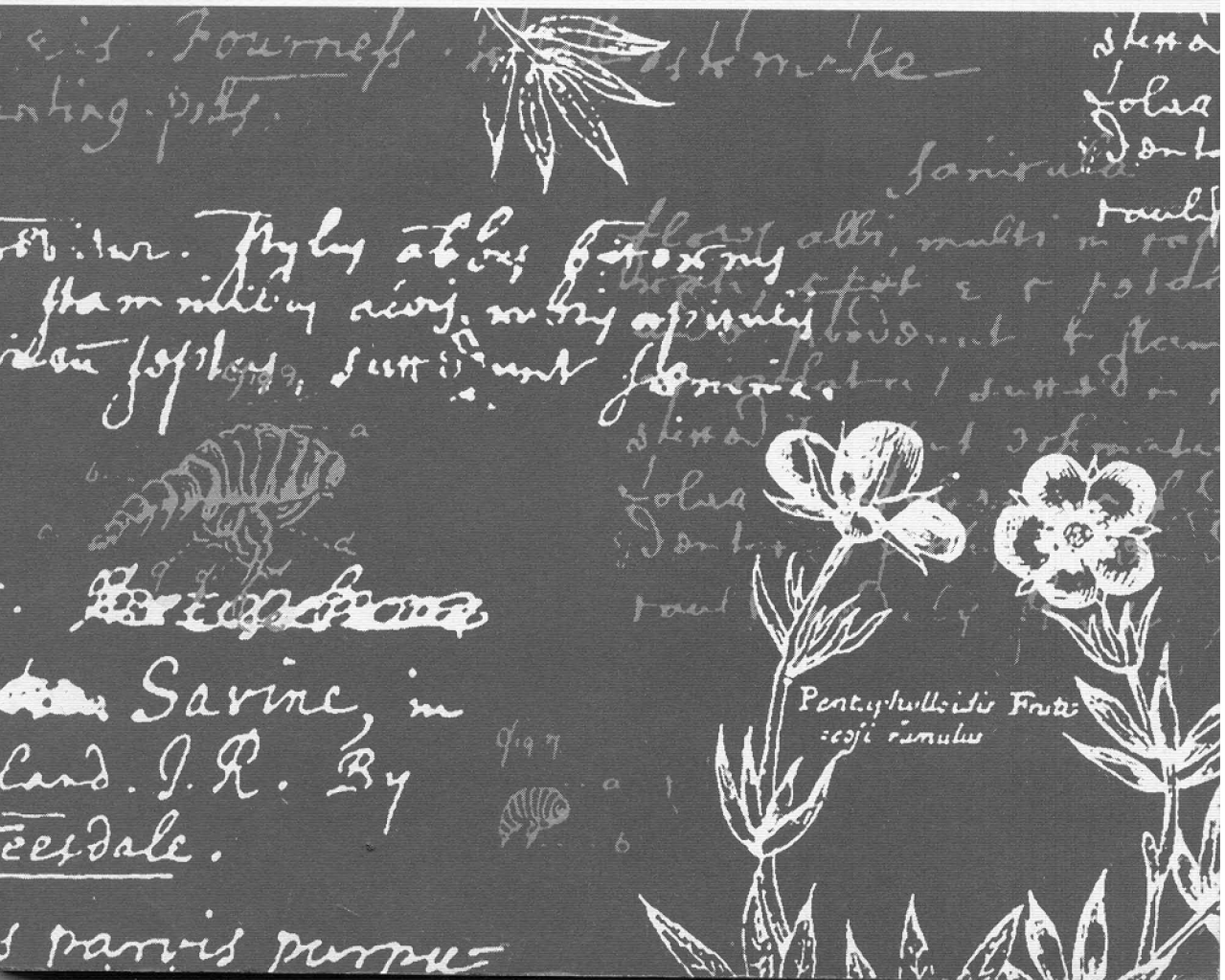


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William Daniell's depictions of the rhinoceros in India

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The British artists Thomas Daniell (1749–1840) and his nephew William Daniell (1769–1837) have become well known for their aquatints of scenery and buildings made in different parts of the world at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. They worked in the Indian subcontinent between 1785 and 1794. Initially based in Calcutta, they made several long journeys, first along the River Ganges to Delhi (August 1788–November 1791), then in the southern parts (March 1792–February 1793) and in the western parts of India (February 1793–September 1794). Everywhere they were busy with pencil and brush, sketching the landscapes and monuments encountered on the way. Archer (1980) has given details about their journeys and their work, illustrating all known aquatints of their Indian adventures. The animal drawings were left out of her elaborate documentation, because her research was directed to art-historical background. The rhinoceros drawn by the Daniells serves as an example of the gift of observation of these artists. They saw the animal during their journey along the Ganges.

THE JOURNEY ALONG THE GANGES

Thomas and William Daniell left Calcutta on 3 September 1788, travelling by boat up the River Hooghly and the River Ganges. They visited places like Patna, Benares, Lucknow, Agra, Delhi, before they reached the towns of Hardwar and Srinagar in Uttar Pradesh (U.P.). They returned to Calcutta in November 1791. Today one would not expect to see a rhinoceros anywhere along this route, at least not in the wild, as the Indian rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis* L., 1758) is now confined to localities in north-eastern India (in the states of Assam and West Bengal) and in the southern part of Nepal. Early records of rhinoceroses seen in the regions north and immediately south of the Ganges are quite rare, but the few available observations with dates up to the beginning of the nineteenth century have been collected by Rookmaaker (in press).

After leaving Calcutta, the party of the two Daniells reached the River Ganges on 8 October 1788. Here they could see the contours of the Rajmahal Hills on one side. Currently these hills are largely cultivated or at least inhabited by tribal groups, but at the end of the eighteenth century they were well known for game-hunting. When the Daniells saw the jungle, they would have remembered stories heard in Calcutta and expected to see elephants, tigers and rhinoceroses. From the town of Rajmahal they went to see the Moti Jharna waterfall, where William discovered the footprint of a rhinoceros, without seeing the animal itself (Archer, 1980: 41). The rumours of the



Figure 1. Drawing of the Kottwara rhinoceros, 20 April 1789, by William Daniell. Size 355 × 210 mm (Helen Seiferheld Gallery, New York, Dec. 1962, No. 8; present whereabouts unknown).



Figure 2. Second sketch of the Koldwara rhinoceros, signed by W. Daniell (present location unknown).

existence of rhinoceroses in this area persisted well into the nineteenth century, although actual sightings have been uncommon.

Near the north-western end of their journey, north of Delhi, they reached less well-known territory and were escorted by British soldiers. They intended to visit Srinagar in the Garwhal (U.P.), but while waiting for permission to proceed, they spent a few days in a small town called Najibabad. On 20 April 1789, they were wandering in the nearby hills at 'Coaduwar Gaut, Rohilcund' (Archer, 1980, nos. 44, 45), now spelled Kotdwara, when suddenly they saw a rhinoceros. Long after their return to England, William Daniell published a series of seven volumes entitled *The Oriental Annual; or Scenes in India* (1834–1840) with engravings originating from the Daniells' journeys in India, and text written by Rev. Hobart Caunter. In the second volume dated 1835, the encounter with the 'Kotdwara Rhinoceros' is vividly remembered:

The elephant is found in the lower regions of the mountains, and so is the rhinoceros, though less frequently. Of the latter animal we were fortunate enough to obtain a view, which is by no means a usual thing, as it is not gregarious like the elephant, and therefore much more rarely met with. We had turned the angle of a hill that abutted upon a narrow stream, when, on the opposite side of the rivulet, we saw a fine male rhinoceros; it was standing near the edge of the water with its head slightly bent, as if it had been just slaking its thirst in the cooling stream. It stood, apparently with great composure, about two hundred yards above us, in an open vista of the wood. Mr. Daniell, under the protection of a lofty intervening bank, was able to approach sufficiently near it to make a perfect sketch of it; after which, upon a gun being fired, it deliberately walked off into the jungle. It did not appear in the least intimidated at the sight of our party, which remained at some distance, nor at all excited by the discharge of the gun (Daniell and Caunter, 1835: 4).

This is the only definite record of a rhinoceros anywhere in northern Uttar Pradesh west of Nepal, and Daniell's sketches make it particularly exciting.

THE ARTWORK

It seems clear from the above passage that the sketch of the rhinoceros was made by William Daniell. It may be this actual pencil drawing made on the spot, or a later copy of it, which is known from a catalogue of the Helen Seiferheld Gallery, New York (1962). It clearly shows a male Indian rhinoceros (Figure 1), not a Javan rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus* Desmarest, 1822), which has sometimes (probably erroneously) been suspected to inhabit these parts of India. A second drawing (Figure 2) shows the animal in a slightly different position with some indications of a landscape. It is signed 'W. Daniell' in the lower left-hand corner. It is quite a good depiction of this powerful animal with a long horn.¹

This second drawing must have been used to engrave the plate in *The Oriental Annual* of 1835. The engraving has the following text: "The Rhinoceros / London, Published Oct. 1, 1834 by Bull & Co. 26 Holles Street, Cavendish Square / Drawn by W. Daniell, R.A. / Engraved by J. Redaway / Printed by J. Yates" (Figure 3). The rhinoceros is reversed by comparison with the drawing in Figure 2, while there is a second rhinoceros in the background and the gorge is enlivened with storks and deer. In this engraving the animal has lost some of its power, but it is still a remarkable record of a rhinoceros encountered at Kotdwara, U.P. in April 1789.

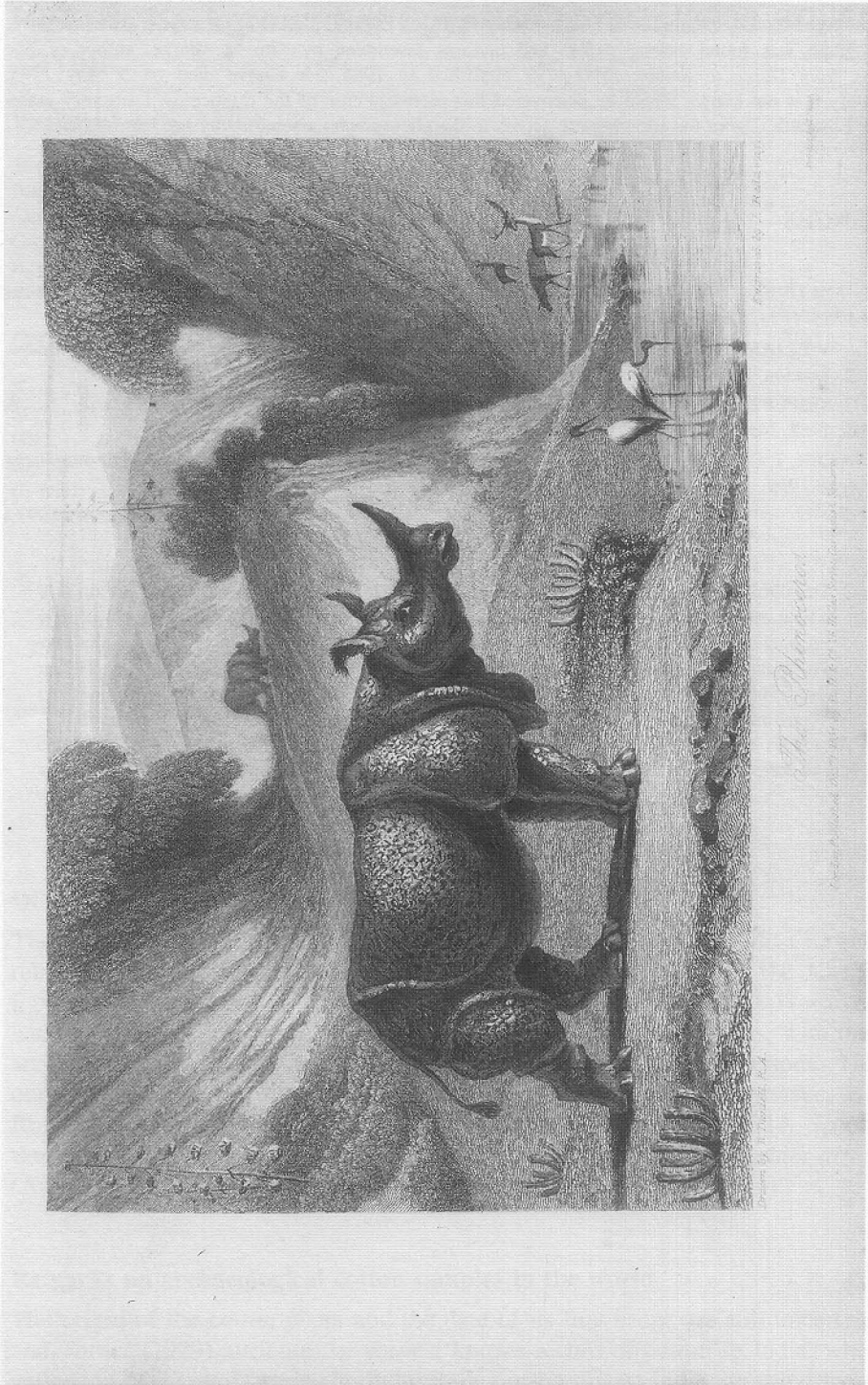


Figure 3. The Rhinoceros by William Daniell, engraved by J. Redaway, 98 × 150 mm, from *The Oriental Annual*, volume 2, 1835.

NOTE

¹ The whereabouts of the rhinoceros drawing by William Daniell illustrated in Figure 2 is unknown. The photograph was found among papers and pictures assembled by Tim H. Clarke, author of *The Rhinoceros from Dürer to Stubbs 1500–1799* published in 1986. Mr Clarke died on 5 May 1995. Unfortunately it is not known where he discovered this representation of the rhinoceros. I am very grateful to Mrs Elisabeth Clarke for allowing me access to the photographs assembled by her late husband.

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