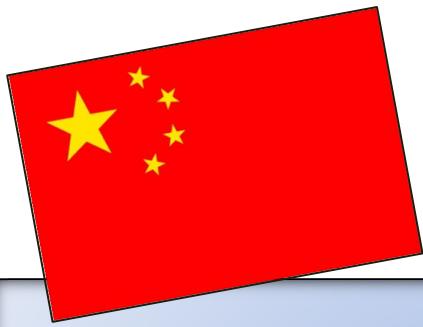


CHINA And the Rhino

Photo compliments of Andrew Calmross and Sabi Sand



A Report by a Chinese Professor
on the history
of the long standing relationship between
China and the Rhino.



Information provided by and used with the permission of
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www.Nikela.org

Nikela is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit supporting those who protect African
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Rhino photographs provided compliments of
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Report compiled by Margrit Harris

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The Early Days... 1200 BC

Rhino are Discovered...

Rhinoceros (犀牛) was named *xi*(犀) or *si*(兕) in ancient China. It is recorded in the Chinese ancient literature such as “*E Ya*”(《尔雅》), “*Guo Yu*”(《国语》), “*Shuo Wen*”(《说文》), “*Kao Gong Ji*” (《考工记》), “*Lun Yu*” (《论语》) “*Shan Hai Jing*” (《山海经》) that Rhinoceros (犀牛) were discovered in the province Hainan, Fujian, Yunnan, Guangxi, Hunan, Guangdong, Shanxi, Shandong, Shanxi, Sichuang, Ganshu, Zhejiang, Jiangshu, and so on.



A: Highly endangered Asian Rhino

Source: www.whozoo.org

The Killing Begins...

According to the reliable documents, since 1200 B.C. the Chinese people began to kill rhinoceros. No.2507 of “*the second chapter of Yin Dynasty Ruins*”(《殷墟文字乙编》) writes an oracle inscription of *Hunting by Burning the Forest* (焚林而猎), and *the king Yin* (殷王) orders his soldiers to burn a forest and got 71 rhinoceros.

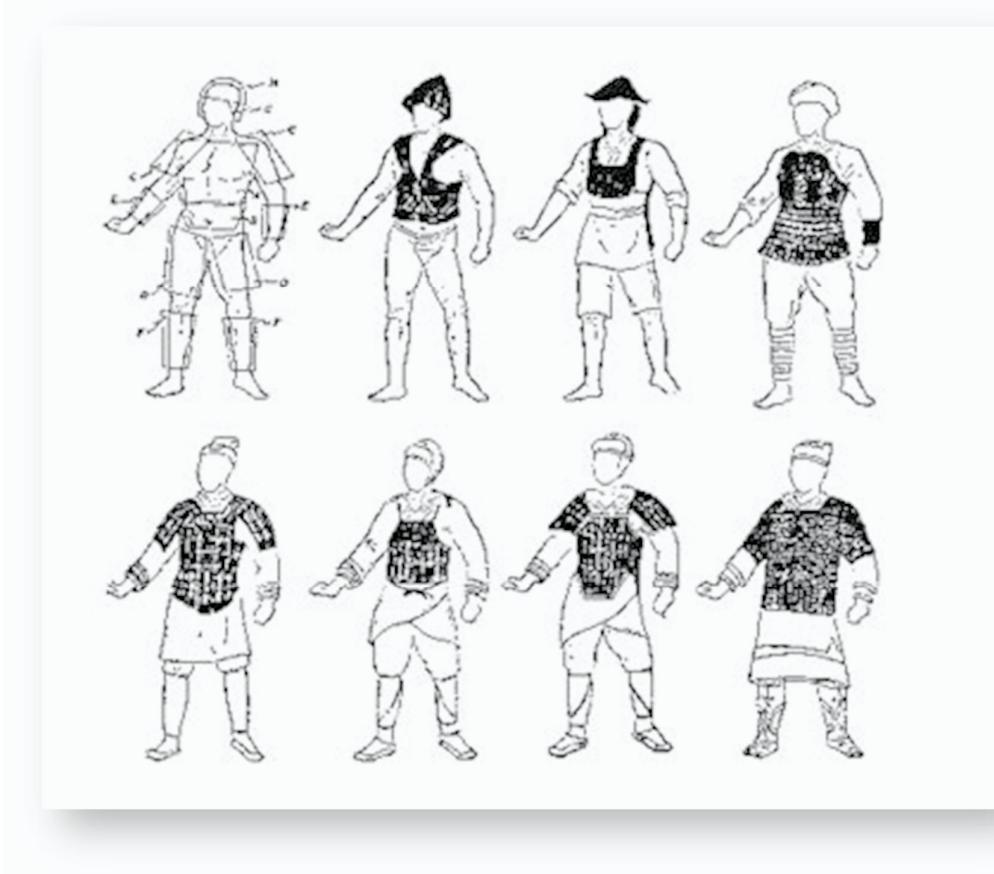
The first reason for ancient Chinese people to kill rhinoceros is that the horn can be used to make wine cups. Chinese ancient literature shows that *sigong*(兕觥) is made of rhinoceros horn, now it is also called *cat bowl* (猫碗) in some cultural relic appreciate and archaeological saying.



B: Rhino bone cup

Source: www.antiquesandthearts.com

In the 8th century before Christ, the Chinese people killed rhinoceros for the skin, which was used to make imperial crown and belt, especially for emperors who glorified their political status. Rhinoceros' skin was also used to make shield and armor for fighters because of its thickness. Fighters in rhinoceros skin shield were not easily to be penetrated by a sword. The workers who made the imperial crown, belt, shield and armor especially with rhinoceros skin, were called *hanren*(函人) at that time. According to the chapter of “*the Story of Goujian Descend upon Wu*” in the book of “*the History of Wu and Yue*”(《吴越春秋·勾践伐吴外传》): “Now, there are about 130 thousands Goujian’s soldiers armed with suits of rhinoceros skin.” Goujian (勾践) was a general who ruled the Southeast China along the coastal provinces then. His officers and soldiers had so many suits of rhinoceros skin, that means there was a large population of rhinoceros in the fourth century before Christ.



C: Rhino skin body armor

Source: www.chinese-unicorn.com

Rhino: The Magical Cure...

From the 6th century after Christ, rhinoceros horns were used for a curative remedy or a godhood stuff of driving out evil spirits. The Chinese people got their absurd belief by their absurd reasoning about their observations as the followings:

- 1. Direct Access to Heaven**
- 2. First Detox Remedy**
- 3. Exorcism!**

Comments:

It appears that thousands of years ago, when Asia was not so populated, there were rhinos in great abundance. Although used (exploited) in great numbers the rhinos seem to have held their own, what today would be called “sustainable use.”

The premise, “sustainable use” is of course questionable. Once we humans intervene we have this knack of sending natural ecosystems into a tail spin. Not only because of our ignorance, but I would dare say because of our inherent lust for ownership, prestige, control and power.

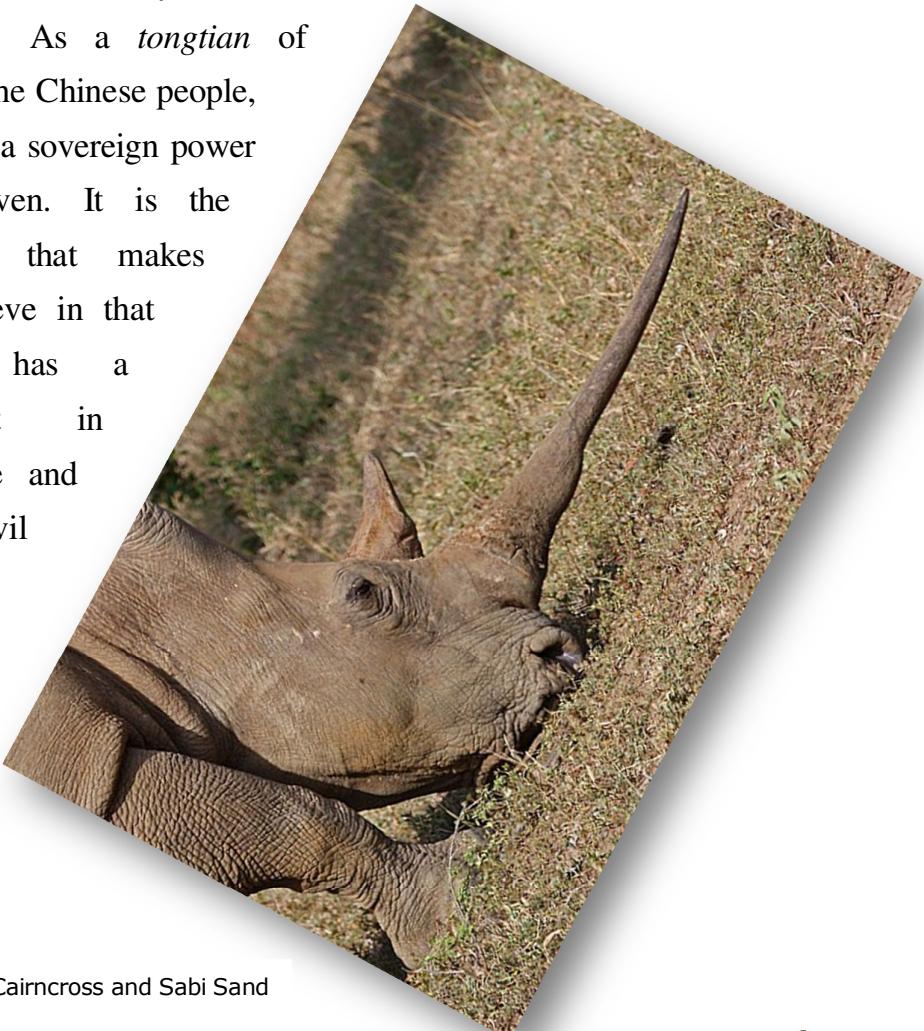
The story of China and the rhino is a clear, sad illustration of humanity at its worst. However, there is hope! So many activists, conservationists, anti-poaching rangers, and ordinary people are getting involved to help bring about change... only, we need to hurry because time does not appear to be on our side this time.

Please get involved... donate, share, volunteer, take action... or do all of them if you can!

Direct Access to Heaven

The First, rhinoceros horn accesses directly to the heaven. The ancient Chinese people discovered rhinoceros horn unparalleled comparing to cattle's and antelope's, because rhinoceros horn grows in the middle of lips, not at the two sides of the head just like cattle or antelopes. What's more, rhinoceros horn is empty and directs towards the heaven, which means it might be accessible to the heaven in Chinese meaning literally, sounds as *tongtian* (通天). Therefore, it leads to a superstitious belief that a rhinoceros horn has accessibility to the heaven in China, and that moves forward to form an idioms of *Xin You Ling Xi*(心有灵犀), there is an intelligent rhinoceros in his heart by a literal Chinese meaning, which means someone is so clever that as if he could directly communicate with the heaven. So rhinoceros horn has another literature name *tongtian*. In ancient Chinese people's superstitious belief, the heaven was sovereign and emperor was always named as the son of heaven. As a *tongtian* of rhinoceros horn, for the Chinese people, it is believed to have a sovereign power to access the heaven. It is the superstitious belief that makes Chinese people believe in that rhinoceros horn has a miraculous effect in treatment of disease and driving out of evil spirits.

tianzi(天子),



D: Photo compliments of Andrew Cairncross and Sabi Sand

First Detox Remedy

The second, rhinoceros horn must be of detoxification. Ancient Chinese found that rhinoceros ate many various herbs and some of which were poisonous, but the rhinoceros had never been in toxicosis after eating. So the Chinese people believed in that rhinoceros horn must have had an effect of detoxification.

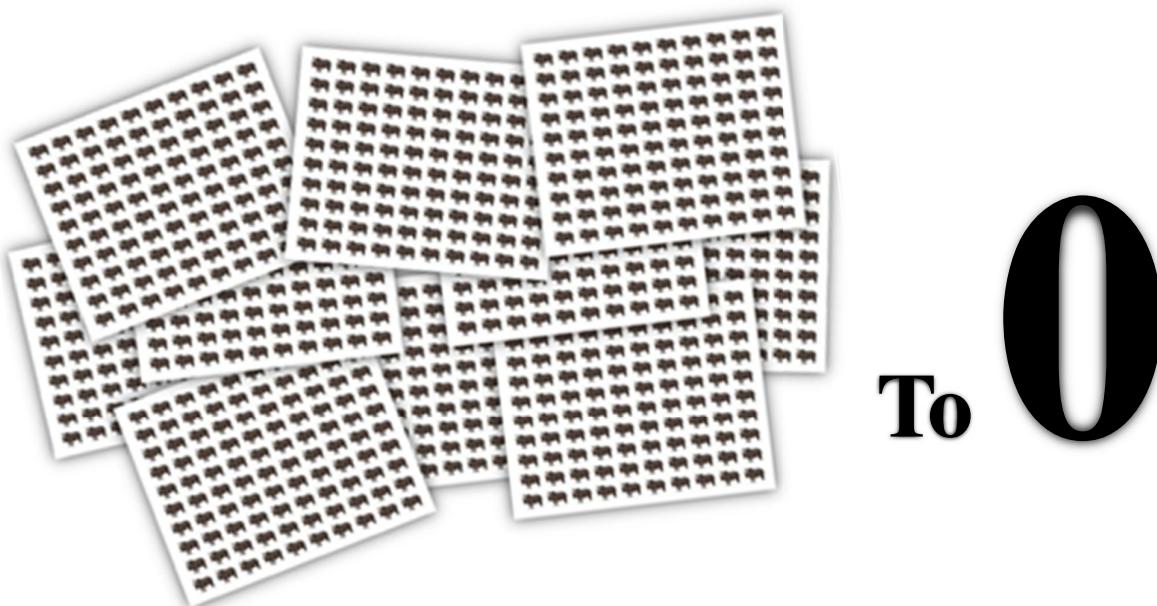
Exorcism!

The third, rhinoceros horn has an exorcising function. Some ancient Chinese people made some tests. They put chicken forages in a rhinoceros horn to feed chicken, and the chicken dared not to eat the forages. The Chinese people also found that they polished the rhinoceros horn to be shine in darkness. So the polished rhinoceros was named as *Ye Ming Xi* (夜明犀), a shining rhinoceros horn in a darkness in literal Chinese meanings. They put the *Ye Ming Xi* aside the way where some beasts and raptors usually come in and go out. The beasts and raptors would dared not approach it. So the Chinese people believed in that *Ye Ming Xi* had an extraordinary power to exorcise beasts and raptors far away from them. Just as Chinese people believed in getting longer lives by swallowing gold because of shining forever of gold, which means the gold is one of the things of longevity in ancient China, the Chinese people also believed in getting the similar extraordinary power to exorcise the harms from evil beasts, raptors, snakes, insects, spirits, and so on, by drinking boiled water with some rhinoceros horns.

Price on the Rhino's Head... ah Horn!

Due to the ancient Chinese people's belief in *tongtian*, detoxification and exorcising, rhinoceros horn became the most expensive and precious remedy stuff in the Chinese traditional medicine. For the curing functions of *liangxue*(凉血, cooling blood) and *jiedu*(解毒, detoxification), Chinese herbalist doctors always use the horn to cure coma, delirium, rave, palpitation, insane, exanthema, dermatitis, snake or insects bite, etc. For the absurd medical usage, the Chinese people began to kill more rhinoceros from the sixth century after Christ.

The facts that horn for a handiwork and remedy, skin for a shield and a suit of armor, were the three main reasons for Chinese people to kill rhinoceros numerously for a long time, which reduced the population of rhinoceros rapidly. From about the tenth century after Christ, the Chinese government had been no longer organizing their people to hunt rhinoceros, but ordered the local government to contribute the parts of rhinoceros, horn in the main. In the 13th century, the local government of Yunnan was ordered to contribute rhinoceros horn once every three years. During that period, the local government of Yunnan contributed 79~123 rhinoceros horns each time. Compared to killing 71 rhinoceros at one time in the Shan dynasty, the population of rhinoceros in Yunnan of Yuan dynasty obviously was much less. Someone published reports saying that the last rhinoceros was killed in 1922.



Illegal Horn Trafficking is Born and Perpetuated...

After rhinoceros became extinguished animal in China, rhinoceros horns that Chinese herbalists using for a ingredient of a remedy formula have been wholly depending on import. Those are always very expensive.

In spite of no curative effects for disease, most foolish Chinese bureaucrats invariantly kept carrying out the plan of a less rhinoceros import for them only, because they thought that the more they feasted expensively and rarely, the higher social position they occupied. For the most ordinary civilians who need rhinoceros horns, the Chinese bureaucrats suggested a substitute for it with that of cattle's.

During the great Cultural Revolution, China had imported rarely rhinoceros horn because of her bad international relationships and less foreign currency. Since reform and opening, China has improved her international relationships and financial position, and has enough money import rhinoceros horns from south Asia and Africa. Following the policies and laws of stopping killing rhinoceros all over the world, on the 29th day of May in 1993, the state council of People's Republic of China released "Legislation of Forbidding the Trade of Rhinoceros Horns and Tiger Bones".

By this legislation, rhinoceros horns and tiger bones are at least namely listed in the illegal trade, and proclaimed in writing to cancel the norm of using rhinoceros horns and tiger bones as medical remedy. However this policy has been always crashed at the cross purpose of paying equal attention to Chinese traditional medicine and western medicine (中西医并重) and protecting and upholding the culture of Chinese traditional medicine (保护和弘扬中医药文化) .

The law of forbidding the trade of rhinoceros horns and tiger bones is not so strictly carried out. In the manufactory of traditional formulary Chinese medicine, which contributes a big part of GDP for the Chinese government, rhinoceros horns and tiger bones are always the ingredients.

In November 2006, the Chinese government initiated a three-year action program to popularize Chinese traditional medicine and remedies. In this

program there is a topic to teach the people how to discriminate true rhinoceros horns from fake ones.

In March of this year (2011), a box with 6 pills of *An Gong Niu Huang Wan* (安宮牛黃丸) made in 1993, implying some 10mg true rhinoceros horn per a pill, was auctioned at a price of ￥58000 (\$9,000) in Beijing.

Currently, a scientific paper expounding that rhinoceros horn and tiger bone has no medical use could not properly and publicly published because of being blamed of destroying Chinese traditional medicine.

Therefore the dark trade of rhinoceros horns is still rampant in China.



Rising Price of Rhino Horn...

In recent years, the price of rhinoceros horns in black market in China is always triple that of gold, and the most expensive one is white rhinoceros horn, which in 2005 was quoted by *Tong Ren Tang* (同仁堂) as high as ￥6000 per a gram. Now we can find some Chinese websites conducting an online trade of rhinoceros horns. June 20th 2011, a public notice was issued on the Capital Website of All the Chinese Herbs (中药材药都网), in province Anhui, offering the wholesale price of rhinoceros horns as least as ￥260000 (\$40,400) for a kilogram. The website proclaims the rhinoceros horn was produced in Fujian Province of China. In fact, there are no rhinoceros anywhere in China. The products of rhinoceros horns traded in China come from India, Africa and Burma in fact.



Who is Responsible to Stop the Trafficking?

Here is what Margrit learned from Dr. Zhang in their email exchanges:

Dr. Zhang: In China, the government is the most important for everything.

Margrit: *Do you mean that the government controls everything?*

Dr. Zhang: Yes! Chinese government have been controlled everything, including the action about scientific research, since he controlled the political power on 1949. If any scientific research not meet the goals or the ideas of the government, he will do something to obstruct the researches. For example, Chinese government had claim to pay equal attention to Chinese traditional medicine and western medicine and protecting and upholding Chinese traditional medicine, if a research try to criticize the Chinese traditional medicine, the research will be forbidden or obstructed, or the researcher will suffer from punishment in all possible aspects and in all possible way, say, reducing salary, blocking promotion, restricting publication, and so on.

Margrit: *Who do you believe is responsible for stopping the poaching?*

Dr. Zhang: China has no rhino now. So, to stop killing rhino is not the responsibility of China. No rhino poaching makes rhino body part trading impossible! So the country that has rhino is responsible for stopping the poaching.

Dr. Zhang: The herbalists of Chinese traditional medicine will be more and more poor because of their bad medicine skill and risky fraud in cure

Margrit: *You believe that Chinese Traditional Medicine is no good and must be stopped?*

Dr. Zhang: Yes! I think Chinese Traditional Medicine is no good but much more unpredictable harms for anybody's health and should be stopped it as soon as possible.