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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### **THE RHINOCEROS IN CAPTIVITY: A LIST OF 2439 RHINOCEROSES KEPT FROM ROMAN TIMES TO 1994**

**L.C. Rookmaaker**

**SPB Publishing bv, The Hague, 1998  
lv, 410 pp, 166 illustrations, \$120.00.  
ISBN 90 5103 134-3**

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Dr Kees Rookmaaker is the curator of the Rhino Museum at Melkrivier in the Northern Province, South Africa. He has collected detailed information on rhinos in captivity (or as he prefers it 'in human hands') for 25 years or more and now makes available, to all who are concerned with the rhino, the record he has compiled. The book is a great achievement and is to be commended for its fulfilment of its purpose of conveying information about every traceable individual rhino kept in captivity from earliest times. It also brings a secondary gain in the increase to our knowledge of the animal and the benefit thereby to its status as a species that has declined in numbers alarmingly in the wild. It 'has always fascinated us by its prehistoric bulk, its massive power, and its lack of conventional beauty'. Dr Rookmaaker's book adds much to that fascination.

He has divided the book into ten sections starting with a clear introduction, a chapter of demographic and reproduction statistics, and a chapter on early rhinos mostly of unknown species in captivity (going back to Alexandria in 275 BC until 1699) in Rome, China and the Near-East. The next five chapters list the 397 Indian, 22 Javan, 96 Sumatran, 775 black

and 1,105 white rhinos recorded in captivity. Within each chapter is a table of collections where the species has been exhibited, a table of population changes, a chronological list of all known species, and a list about the specimens which covers the main body of the data. These chapters are followed by a 16-page bibliography and an excellent index.

Captive Javan rhinos are very few due to their rarity and inaccessibility in the wild - only four finally made it to be exhibited in distant zoos, in Adelaide, Calcutta and, the earliest, London in 1874. The first white rhino was held in a zoo only as recently as 1946, but 479 (42%) have been born in captivity since 1967. As both the northern and southern subspecies of the white rhino have neared extinction at different times, breeding programmes in zoos, sanctuaries and parks have played, and will play, their part in their survival. Of the black and Indian rhinos, 292 (38%) and 137 (35%) respectively were born in captivity while only four Sumatran (4%) and no Javans were. Captivity has also benefited research into the rhino's physiology and habits. Dr Rookmaaker does not stress this point but then one of the strengths of his book is that he does not stray from his basic purpose, which is to list, identify and locate all captive rhinos on record. He says that there are omissions in his record, notably for China where data is hard to collect. This leaves scope for follow-up work. It could have also been helpful to have had graphs showing the rise and fall of captive wild and bred species world-wide through history. Perhaps Dr Rookmaaker could consider such work for a future *Pachyderm* piece. He included details of certain rhinos translocated into sanctuaries - this is interesting but extraneous material as not all such rhinos in sanctuaries are listed, as he admits on page 2: this could be another book in itself. There is another small digression when he considers the need to differentiate taxonomically correct subspecies of

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rhinos. He quotes Raoul du Toit's contributions to *Pachyderm* in the 1980s on the black rhino subspecies.

Even within the rather limited confines of his subject matter, there is much to interest the general reader, not least in the plentiful and fascinating illustrations (although these are unsourced). The famous Dürer woodcut was based on a merchant's drawing done in Lisbon in 1515, and the Pietro Longhi rhino painted in Venice in 1751 may have been a Javan. The tufted-eared Sumatran in Fig. 78 makes clear the naming of 'Rapunzel' in the Bronx Zoo. Surprising facts are many throughout this book - Joymothi, the Basel matriarch, had 70 descendants at the time of writing, and Clara from Assam, who toured Europe in 1758 was priced too high even for Sun King, Louis, XIV's elastic purse. Such subtext gives the book a third gain: it entertains while it instructs.

## **LE RHINOCÉROS DANS L'ART DE LA PRÉHISTOIRE A NOS JOURS.**

**Pierre Millet**

**Paris, privately published, 1995, pp, i-v, 1-83, illustrated. Price not stated.**

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In that wonderfully chatty and informative newsletter *Really Rhinos!* which is already in its twelfth year, the editor Judyth Lessee regularly includes profiles of people affected by some kind of 'rhinomania' and who collect everything 'rhinocerotical' obtainable. That such people are not only found in the Americas is obvious, and Pierre Millet of Paris, France is a case in point. Although he would have liked to state in truth that he was drawn to rhinoceros horn in search of an ingredient which could give a local brand of cigarettes some kind of aphrodisiacal property, his hobby in fact started when searching for a nicely esoteric way to occupy his ailing wife. Soon the house was filled with hundreds of these solitary animals in all shapes and kinds. His book, a slim volume of 83 pages, is a rather more comprehensive tour through

realms of rhinocerotical art. One chapter is devoted to the animal in rock engravings, found in France and in Africa. The second chapter deals with rhinos in China, in the Indus valley, in Egypt and in comparison with unicorns. He continues with the rhinoceros depicted by Dürer and its manifold derivations. A last chapter is a mixed bag of more recent images, including the life-size bronze rhinoceros made by Alfred Jacquemart in 1877 and now standing in front of the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, another in mahogany by Mateo Hernandez found in the gardens of Armande Béjart in Meudon, just outside Paris, and a 1979 painting of a rhinoceros being carried on a bier by Stanislas Lepri. Zoological notes, a chronology of paleontological styles, an extract of a traditional Chinese medicine, the unicorn passages in the Bible, and a bibliography of 58 items conclude the volume. Millet did not aim his book to be as comprehensive as T.H. Clarke's *The Rhinoceros from Durer to Stubbs* (1986) and it would fall short in many other respects as an academic treatise. The French text is intricate, the plates interesting but often poorly reproduced. This book will appeal to any rhinoceros aficionado looking for the esoteric, the eccentric, the unusual, not least because the book, privately published, seems to be just about unobtainable.

## **LE RHINOCÉROS: AU NOM DE LA CORNE.**

**Alain Zecchini**

**Paris, Editions l'Harmattan, 1998. pp. 1-270, with 8 monochrome plates. ISBN 2-7384-6677-x. Price in UK: STg: 22.95.**

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Disgraceful, antediluvian, anachronistic, heavy, homely, stubborn, solitary, irascible, dangerous, but more than this, essentially lovable. That is how the author starts this book stated to be the first monograph on the rhinoceros in the French language. For once, that claim rings a bell of truth, unless one would consider Claude Guérin's extensive (118Spp.) treatise, primarily on extinct species, but