

A Javan Rhinoceros, *Rhinoceros sondaicus*, in Bali in 1839

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Ein Java-Nashorn, *Rhinoceros sondaicus*, 1839 in Bali

Abstract

During negotiations to open a new trading post on the Indonesian island of Bali in the 1830s, the governors of the Dutch Trade Association promised a live rhinoceros to the King of Klungklung. The animal, probably obtained in West Java, was shipped via Surabaya and arrived in the harbour of Kuta on 30 July 1839. Taken to Klungklung in East Bali, it was kept until it was used in a post-cremation ritual in 1842. The proceedings were described in a 'Song of the Killing of the Rhinoceros', which ascertains that the animal was killed in a pit during the ceremony. It was one of very few specimens of the Javan Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) known in captivity.

Key words

Rituals, animal slaying, trade, Klungklung

The Javan rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) has been a rare sight in captivity. Earlier I was able to provide details about 22 specimens, which included nine kept in Java from the 17th to early 19th century, and only four exhibited in the zoological gardens of Adelaide, Calcutta and London (ROOKMAAKER 1998). It has been argued that this count was too conservative (KEELING 1999, REICHENBACH 2000), but I believe that there should be reliable and unequivocal evidence to show that any of the questionable animals could not have been an Indian rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*). It is clear that any oversight or new evidence is worth recording.

The rhinoceros is absent from the small Indonesian islands of Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa and Flores eastwards of Java (MERTENS 1930). The circumstances how a rhinoceros captured on Java reached Bali in 1839 was pieced together from manuscripts in Dutch archives by LEKKERKERKER (1923). At the end of the 1830s, the governors of the 'Nederlandsche Handels Maatschappij' (Dutch Trade Association) in Java were looking to establish a new trading post on Bali. Their emissary C. A. GRANDPRÉ MOLIÈRE visited both Bali and Lombok from December 1838 to February 1839, and reported that only the rulers of Klungklung in East Bali and Kuta in South Bali were interested in any kind of cooperation. THE KING OF KLUNGKLUNG gave a black horse

as a present to MOLIÈRE, who in turn had to promise to provide him with a rhinoceros, because the horn, meat, blood and skin of this animal were used during certain religious feasts (LOHUIZEN-DE LEEUW 1955).

When the Dutch traders decided to extend their business to Bali, they had no choice but to present a rhinoceros to the KING OF KLUNGKLUNG. It was probably obtained in western Java, because the animal was transported to Surabaya on the J. P. Koen, and from there to Bali on the Bora. The staff of the new trading post led by D. BOELEN SCHUURMAN arrived in the western harbour of Kuta on 30 July 1839. The reception was disappointingly inhospitable. THE KING OF KUTA did not want to assist with the transportation of gifts meant for his rival in Klungklung. The captain of the ship needed 600 bamboos and five small boats to be able to disembark the rhinoceros. Bamboos were brought, and immediately stolen. Finally, the rhinoceros was landed on 31 August 1839, and according to the records it had cost no less than 869.25 guilders.

The rhinoceros was evidently killed during a post-cremation or ligya ritual held at Klungklung in 1842. This historical event is the subject of the "Kidung Karya Ligya" (Song of the Ligya Ritual), alternatively known as the "Geguritan Padem Warak" (Song of the Killing of the Rhinoceros), transcribed, translated and explained by VICKERS (1991). It was probably the first time that a rhinoceros was used in a grand post-cremation ritual instead of a buffalo, which it exceeded three times in size. Because nobody knew how to kill the animal, the risk was obviously great, but intended to show the power and strength of the King (HOWE 2000). In the narrative of the song, different methods to kill the rhinoceros are discussed. The priest ordered a strong enclosure to be constructed with a pit in the middle: "on the appointed day the rhinoceros was trapped in the corral, fell down the pit, and was impaled on stakes at the bottom," followed by its slaughter and consumption of its meat (VICKERS 1991, p. 117–118). In later years, the rhinoceros was remembered in connection with ligya rituals, but only once were rhinoceros parts again obtained for this purpose, by the KING OF KARANGASEM in the 1930s.

There are sufficient details in the song to show that the rhinoceros was in fact killed during the ceremony in Klungklung in 1842. It is clear, therefore, that a specimen of *Rhinoceros sondaicus* was kept in captivity in the Palace at Klungklung, East Bali, from September 1839 to 1842.

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