

HISTORICAL MAMMAL INCIDENCE IN THE CAPE PROVINCE

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THE WESTERN AND NORTHERN CAPE

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by

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SECOND IMPRESSION (1982)

17. ORDER PERISSODACTYLA - FAMILY RHINOCEROTIDAE17.1 Black rhinoceros, Diceros bicornis (Linnaeus, 1758)

As with the elephant, the rhinoceros does not seem to have been seen on the Cape Peninsula itself. For the Cape Flats and their immediate hinterland, records are firm enough which suggests that if the rhinoceros did live on the Peninsula its presence there must have been unusual, unless it retreated immediately a colony of people began to settle there. It could hardly have gone unnoticed and unremarked had it been there when Van Riebeeck's colonists set up their homes in the Table valley. The grassy conditions in the Table valley might not have suited it as well as the scrubby and bushy veld of the flats and the interior, but some parts of the Peninsula could surely have provided the type of food it preferred.

In attempting to identify the species of rhinoceros at the Cape a blank wall is encountered. Nobody thought to describe the animal in any detail. Why should they? There was no other rhinoceros with which it could be mistaken. What we now know as the white rhinoceros, Ceratotherium simum, was an unknown animal of the far interior and still far from white man's first sighting of it, and when eventually it was found, a great deal of confusion reigned until well into the 19th century as to its relationship with the black rhinoceros. Indeed, for many years even the most capable hunters claimed that many species of rhino occurred in Southern Africa and not only the two, the black and the white, which were eventually accepted.

S.F. du Plessis (1969:8) encountered this problem of rhino identification when working on a thesis on past animals in South Africa and, after giving several references, was forced to depend on two extracts which seem to put the issue beyond doubt and which pointed to the black rhinoceros as the species at the Cape and

elsewhere, unless otherwise delineated. Du Plessis wrote:

"In none of these references is any distinction between the species given, but in the revised version of Mentzel's description of the Cape of Good Hope in 1787 by Mandelbrote (1944), the rhinoceros found in the Cape is described as follows: "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".

Kolben (1731) writes of the Cape rhinoceros: "His mouth is like that of a Hog, but somewhat more pointed". "He is not fond of Feeding on Grass, chusing rather Shrubs, Broom and Thistles. But the Delight of his Tooth is a Shrub, ... the Rhinoceros-Bush".

From the above descriptions, the characteristic prehensile upper lip and the preference for browsing can be deduced. These, together with the fact that no records of the square-lipped rhinoceros so far to the south could be found according to Sclater (1900) and others, lead to the assumption that the species recorded at the Cape was D. bicornis."

Du Plessis then gives records of the rhino's distribution up to the Orange River and for some distance beyond it.

Perhaps the first record of the rhinoceros at the Cape, whether on the Peninsula or not is unknown, came from Leendert Janssens (in Raven-Hart 1967a:169) who along with a few colleagues, survived the wreck of the 'Haerlem' in Table Bay in 1647. The party had to live ashore as best they could until a ship called and picked them up. His report seems to have stirred the Dutch East India Company into sending a colonising party under Jan van Riebeeck to the Cape. In this report, Janssens wrote that a rhinoceros was shot near their fort and that "the flesh was firm and tasty", his "near the fort" ①

surely being on or very near the Peninsula proper.

Jan van Riebeeck's journal says very little about rhinos at the Cape, a fact which heightens the doubt that they occurred on the Peninsula to any extent, if at all. Surely so large, conspicuous and dangerous a beast could not have gone unreported in the journal had it been anywhere within easy range of the settlers?

✓
 = report
 Jan 1652
 Van Riebeeck arrived at the Cape on 6 April 1652 and his first rhinoceros record is for the Cape Flats in September of that year, at a place somewhere between Cape Town and the Hottentots Holland mountains at Somerset West. Three deserters from the settlement had been followed and tracked down to a spot near the Strand, on what was the first real journey by white men away from the encampment at Table Bay. A report (in Van Riebeeck 1, 1952:68) handed in by one of the men sent to apprehend the deserters ran: "In the evening marched 7 miles (11,2 km). Saw two rhinoceroses which charged us and threatened to destroy us, but God protected us. Jan Verdonck had to abandon his hat and sword ... Took our rest for the night alongside a brook, in God's name. Also saw two ostriches. Had to leave this place when two rhinoceroses advanced upon us". That report seems definite enough; the men are not likely to have mistaken the animal's identity but they do not seem to have been on the Peninsula proper when they met the rhinoceroses.

✓
 The next extract does not appear for two years, and then from a passing caller at the Cape, in March 1654, one Johan Nieuhof (in Raven-Hart 1, 1971:11) "We heard that a rhinoceros, or nose-horner, was fallen in a marsh and, because of its weight could not get out. Commander Rietbeek sent some soldiers with muskets, but the bullets rebounded from its hard wrinkled skin. They cut an opening in its withers and fired into this until at last they killed it. The horns are still preserved in the Fort at the Cape and from them at times healths are drunk". Here, again there is no certainty that the animal was on the Peninsula proper but it may

well have been very close, in one of the marshes at Rietvlei or Salt River.

Nosehorner is doubtless a translation from the German, Nashorn, for the rhino. In early South African Dutch the term neushoring sometimes appeared.

✓ Dapper (in Schapera and Farrington 1933:19) who was at the Cape in 1658 tells of a party that had gone about 18 km from the Fort to the Cape Flats and although no humans were seen, not even Hottentots, they did see "rhinoceroses, elephants and other wild beasts" fairly often.

✓ When in December 1660, Van Riebeeck (3,1958:300) sent a party under Jan Dankaert to explore the interior, the group reported on their return that "They had seen only one elephant, but a large number of rhinoceroses". The exact locality is not known but it cannot have been far from the Fort.

✓ The Tigerberg, only 9 km northeast of Cape Town, seems to have been good rhinoceros country because on 31 January 1661 (Van Riebeeck 3,1958:344) a party "saw seven rhinoceroses" near there, while on 28 January 1665, four year later, (Leibbrandt 1901:138) a report states that a rhino was shot at Tigerberg and while it was being loaded for transporting to the Cape the men were surrounded by five lions. = Pieter van Meerhoff

✓ A year earlier, on 6 November 1664, according to Leibbrandt (1901:127) a young rhino was caught near the Cape. "At noon, Willem Willemsz brought us a live rhinoceros whose mother, as well as a young one, he had shot behind the 'Rondeberg' (? Blueberg) about four miles (6,4 km) from here and opposite Robben Island. He and his comrades were accordingly presented with two sheep, six rix-dollars, and 6 lbs (2,7 kg) of tobacco. We hope to rear this rare animal and send it home with the return fleet expected", but it died on 30 November before this could be done.

It may be that the offers of rewards involving livestock, cash, and tobacco were worthwhile enough to induce the men at the Cape to shoot out the rhinoceroses. Undoubtedly, many more encounters than have been found must have taken place between man and rhino, but the dangerous nature of the animal, especially if it was the black rhinoceros, seems to have induced the authorities to destroy them as soon as possible. Thus, in about 1684 (in Theal 1882:229) the Free Burghers, i.e. the better-class farmers who had been released from the Company's service on the strength of their good farming capabilities, were allowed to shoot only one rhinoceros, one hippo, eland and hartebeest per year, and then only for use as meat by each Free Burgher's family. No rhinoceroses could have lasted long under such circumstances especially a species already scarce by comparison with eland and hartebeest in their fairly strong herds. They too, disappeared in time under pressure from huntsmen and from huntsmen shooting for food, not just for the sake of hunting, in the way the herds in the interior were later to be eliminated in the mid-19th century.

From the Cape Flats to the Great Berg River

In October 1653 a small expedition that had left the Peninsula for a short inland trip towards Saldanha Bay returned with the news (Van Riebeeck 1,1952:186) that they had met many elephants, rhinoceroses, elands and harts, etc. Twice they had seen elephants, a herd of seven and one of eight. The men were afraid of the elephants because "like the rhinoceroses they remained standing firm so that our men had to get out of their way". Also a little way inland, but five years later, in September 1658 (Van Riebeeck 2:341), another party returned from a trip on which "everywhere they had seen rhinoceroses and elephants by the hundred", possibly a numerical exaggeration of a kind not unusual today when tallies of birds and animals are grossly overstated.

1687

✓ Stellenbosch was not without its rhinos. Tachard (in Raven-Hart 2,1971:282) wrote of them at the Bottelaryberg only 8 km northwest of Stellenbosch and not far from the eastern edge of the Cape Flats. He wrote of the Bottelaryberg being "full of lions, elephants and rhinoceroses of prodigious size". Of these he can only have heard and not seen, judging by what he wrote. "Trustworthy persons who have travelled have assured me ... that they saw various rhinoceroses of the size and height of an average elephant. All I can say regarding this is that I saw two horns which this animal carries on its nose, fixed together as they naturally are, of a size and weight (= mass) which inclined me to believe what I was told. The Lieutenant of the Fort, Ensign Isaac Schryver, who was with this journey, told me that the rhinoceros when enraged thrusts its larger horn into the earth, making a sort of furrow until it comes near to whoever hit it. The skin of this animal is so tough as to be musket-proof, unless one waits to shoot it until it exposes its flank, the only part of its body which can be wounded by firearms or by the halberds with which the travellers are armed", a halberd being a combined spear and battle-axe, the wielding of which against a rhinoceros, if indeed ever used as suggested by Tachard, must have taken a man of great courage for him to have approached a rhino at such short range. Even the primitive matchlock or flintlock muskets of the time could not fire a bullet able to penetrate the skin of a rhino. ✓

Here was the
1658 ✓

Paarl, to the immediate north of Stellenbosch, also knew the rhinoceros. Jan van Hwarden, who led the second expedition from the Cape in February 1658 (Van Riebeeck 2:246) and who went as far as Riebeeck Kasteel in Malmesbury, saw one near Paarl. "A rhinoceros with two horns on its nose, carrying them just as goats do, appeared among the cattle, but did not molest or harm them, and fled when fired on". The thought of a rhinoceros with horns on its head in the manner of a goat does not ring true but the original Dutch text carries the same imputation, as is explained in a footnote by Van Riebeeck's editor, Dr H.B. Thom. It seems improbable

that Van Hawarden had mistaken his animal: the error may have crept in later during transcription into the journal at the Castle.

Another expedition (Van Riebeeck 3:344 & 345) in February 1661 saw two rhinoceroses and three ostriches near Paarl and, two days later, near Riebeeck Kasteel, about 40 km northwest of Paarl. The journal states that on this mountain, i.e. the Kasteel, "there live all sorts of animals, viz. lions, rhinoceroses ..." and the following day five rhinoceroses were seen there.

This area of the Malmesbury district must have been fairly good rhinoceros country because Van Riebeeck's journal (2:315) says of the country towards the Berg River that "One might suppose that this region was the kingdom of the moles for it is so undermined that one is forced to follow the rhinoceros trails, otherwise one sinks knee deep into the sand ..." an expression anyone who has visited that region will have come to know only too well.

Of the country towards and around Saldanha Bay, very little has been told of the rhinoceroses there, but De Rennefort (in Raven-Hart 1966b) during a French visit in December 1666, saw the tracks of lions and rhinoceroses near the springs of water. It must be presumed that the tracks were those of rhinos; the visitors could not have known them from personal experience.

Although we know so little of rhino incidence, it is obvious from items in the literature that rhinos were more numerous on the flats, and inland from there, than on the Peninsula itself, whence no firm records have emerged.

From the Great Berg River to the Orange River

North of the Great Berg River and into the Piketberg district the incidence of rhinos does not seem to have weakened. One of the earliest expeditions from the Cape (Van Riebeeck 3:347) had an experience with a rhino on the Grey's Pass Heights (then called Meerhoff's Kasteel) which links Piketberg with Clanwilliam over

Van Meerhoff
1661

Jan D. Smeets
1666

Van Meerhoff
1661 →

the Olifantsrivierberge. The entry for 10 February 1661 reads: "After we had rested we packed up again and continued north following the rhinoceros paths which led along the lower slopes of the mountain. If we had not found these paths we would have experienced great difficulty for this part of the world had nothing but thorn tree and underwood. On the way we saw a rhinoceros with a young one beside her".

Six weeks later (p. 377) in much the same area, the party were awakened during the night of 29 March when "At 2 o'clock in the night a rhinoceros passed us and our oxen began to jump about wildly. We all took our arms thinking it was a lion. I commanded the sentinel to fire a shot which he did but his powder-horn caught fire so that his arm and hand were severely burnt", an incident showing the continuous state of watchfulness a trekking party had to maintain against dangerous animals.

has not von
Menschhoff 29.3.
was 11 mit
(Molaberge, I)

In Piketberg itself and near the bulk of the mountain of the same name occurred the event which nearly ended the rule of Governor Simon van der Stel in September 1685. Francois Valentyn (1726) (1, 1971:243) gives an eye-witness account of the drama that overtook the party as it trekked along in file: "... an unbelievably large rhinoceros appeared, coming with great fury and viciousness straight for the centre of our column and from there running along to the rear where His Excellency was in his coach. It made directly for this, His Excellency having barely time enough to get out from the coach, leaping out with a blunderbuss in his hand and aiming this at the beast which was not six paces distant from him; and, he intended to fire but the blunderbuss misfired, the rear catch striking the forward one. We expected nothing else but that the furious beast would devour His Excellency before our eyes but it ran past him, brushing against his body. We believe that this was due to the shot that one of His Excellency's hunters fired at it, whereat it ran from us at great speed. Several others who

←

2. view
Menschhoff
29.3.1661
Mulliken
p. 63

Simon
v. d. Stel

were on horseback were unable to avoid it, falling from their mounts in great fright, whereby they wounded themselves in many places".

The rhinoceros, by its sudden ill-tempered attack and its apparent short-sightedness, must have been a black rhinoceros. It ran away at speed followed by a hail of musket balls which it survived.

Starrenburg
1705

Twenty years later, in November 1705, Johannes Starrenburg (in Valentyn 2, 1973:47) had a brief experience with an inquisitive rhinoceros on the eastern flank of the Piketberg, about 15 km north of the present town. "During the night a rhinoceros came close to the tent, snuffling around the waggons, but on our making up the fire to a blaze, it went away". He was lucky because six weeks before (p. 31) when near Wolweberg in the northwestern corner of the Piketberg district towards Elandsbaai "... a rhinoceros stood in our path only about 100 paces from the track, which we feared would throw us into disorder, but it went off up hill at the shouts of the Hottentots".

|| North of Piketberg, extracts on rhinoceros incidence become fewer, presumably because rhinos were less common; they were not the sort of animal to go unnoticed or unrecorded. The increasing aridity of the country in this far north might have been a cause; rhinos like water of some kind reasonably near at hand in which to wallow, if for nothing else.

Namaqualand

✓ → Along the south bank of the Orange River in September 1778, William Paterson (1790:64) saw elephants, rhinoceroses, giraffes and zebras when he was east of Ramansdrift in Namaqualand, and a year later in September 1779, Wikar (in Mossop, 1935:43) saw fresh spoor of both giraffe and rhinoceros at Kalagas, not far

to the northeast of Pella, but outside the Namaqualand border in Kenhardt. He did not see the animals "for at this time water was still everywhere in the veld so that they were seldom to be seen along the river".

That black rhino trek from one place to another even under extremely dry conditions is shown conclusively by Tinley (1971:11), a modern ecologist who has worked in the Kaokoveld of northwestern South West Africa, where conditions are far drier than in the northwest Cape, or along the Orange River. He wrote: "The Kaokoveld and adjoining Namib Desert are also of extreme importance ... as this is probably the last place in Africa where big game (e.g. elephant, black rhino, giraffe, lion) occur on a desert coast by following the seasonal river courses which traverse the desert. Elephant and rhino also walk across the bare desert between river courses, a distance of 30 miles (48 km) or more".

In Southern South West Africa

Experiences with rhinoceroses in the dry southern regions of South West Africa immediately north of the Orange River bear out the incidence of the animal in arid country. Hendrik Hop (in Mentzel 3,1787:142) saw rhinos among the many other species of animals he found at the Löwen River (Leeurivier) not far south of Keetmanshoop in December 1762. Lt. William Paterson (1790:126) had the same experience in much the same area in October 1779 while Wikar (p. 51) found them just across the Orange River at Beenbreek, which he called Kaykoop, a little northeast of Pelladrift and in the Warmbad district, of which he wrote: "Now that we are away from the river we have to dig for water for ourselves and for our draught oxen. Here, elephants and rhinos dig for water for themselves", but he was not far from the Orange River at the time, certainly not too far for a rhino.

Meester (1973:7), in discussing Francois le Vaillant's travels north of the Orange River into what is now the Warmbad district, gives an insight into the rhinoceros status there in the 1780's: "All his encounters with rhino took place north of the Orange River where both black and white rhinoceros are believed to have occurred, but he nowhere mentions the white rhino nor indicates in any way that he is aware of the distinction between the two species. The animal he illustrates is quite clearly a black rhino, judging from the shape of the snout. Presumably, therefore, he did not encounter the white rhino on his travels".

Plate 101 in the Library of Parliament volume shows the animal to be a black rhino⁷.

Many other references point to rhinos in the southern part of South West Africa in what, until recently, was known as Great Namaqualand in contradistinction to what was then Little Namaqualand south of the Orange River and in the northwestern Cape Province. That rhinoceroses were reasonably common there is shown by Willem van Reenen in his journal of 1791 (in Mossop 1835: 307-319) where he shot many in the Keetmanshoop and Rehoboth districts and still more on his journey to Windhoek and back. Indeed he says (p. 319) that "On these journeys there and back sixtyfive rhinoceroses were killed, and six giraffe" and in so doing he lifts some of the darkness hiding rhino incidence in these dry regions. ←

Of prehistoric relics, Joubert (1971) records that the remains of "rhino skulls and/or parts of skeletons were also found in the Fish River", among other places (pers. comm. Mr De la Bat).

"A little way southeast of Luderitz in the Namib a set of rhino footprints is encased in a limestone layer. At Grullental a rhino skeleton, completely fossilised, was found. Carbon-14 dating method showed this to be about 10 000 years old".

According to Shortridge (1942:72) "In 1895-96 (sic) Alexander recorded both species of rhinoceros from the Fish River valley in Great Namaqualand". It is obvious that the dates 1895-96 are wrong because Alexander was there in 1836 and 1837. He died in 1885 and no other comparable Alexander appropriate to the dates 1895-96 has been found, and rhino had been exterminated there by then. When Alexander's own work (1 and 2, 1838) is studied carefully and his route plotted on modern map (as far as this is possible) it becomes obvious that he saw no rhinos south of the southern entrance to Bullsport on the Chountop River in the southwestern corner of the Rehoboth district, some 450 km north of the Orange River. That he knew the difference between a black and a white rhinoceros is shown by his descriptions of them (2:1 and 150). Certainly, if they were not seen by Alexander south of Bullsport (they might of course have been commoner in country through which he had not travelled) he met both species fairly often thereafter in that part of South West Africa beyond the geographical limits of this work. When he wrote: "Two-horned rhinoceroses, both black and white, are found in the upper parts of the Fish River" (Vol. 1, 1838) he must have meant that part of the Fish River's course north of the Mariental-Rehoboth border and nowhere near the Orange River. Certainly he saw both species together when he was northeast of Rehoboth for when his party chased a white rhino "They rapidly pursued it and it fled before them when, in passing a clump of bushes, a black rhinoceros rushed out on the hunters". It can be accepted that Alexander knew the difference between the rhino species.

Bushmanland and the Karoo regions

Rhinoceroses certainly occurred eastwards along the Orange River to the Augrabies Falls, in the Gordonias district, and beyond. Wikar (p. 97) tells of coming upon a party of six rhinos when he was following one he had wounded at Seekoeisteeck in the Kenhardt district just south of the river. Later, when just west of the

Augrabies Falls (p. 103) he came on a rhino and calf. Of rhinos he said: "I have noticed a remarkable thing among the rhinos. They keep to a fixed sleeping place or lair, to a fixed place where they rub themselves, and a fixed place for excreting, where they go for the set purpose of doing so".

In August and September of the same year 1779, Robert Jacob Gordon was also west of the Augrabies Falls (in Barnard 1950:356) and on the south bank of the Orange River. He describes how within the arc of a semicircle about him he saw five rhinoceroses as well as giraffes, elephants, kudu, zebra, hippo and ostriches. Gordon does not give a hint of which species the rhinos might have been but a small figure of a rhino on his map has the appearance of a black rhino, although this may be coincidence.

In the previous year in November 1778, Gordon (p. 348) had been far to the south near Beaufort West and had shot a rhino about 10 km northeast of Beaufort West town at a place he gave as near the source of the Gamka River. This animal is depicted as No. 205 in the Gordon collection of pictures kept in the Rijksmuseum, Holland, all drawn by Gordon himself. A request to the Director of the Rijksmuseum for an appraisal of the rhinoceros species brought the reply (in litt. 1974) "No. 205 was to all appearances a Diceros bicornis and shot at the source of the Gamka, or Leeuwenrivier. Though drawn in profile the upper lip is clearly pointed. On the other hand the hump about the shoulders, peculiar to C. simus is lacking, and the head is rather on the small side".

On the basis of the dry and bushier Karoo veld-type the rhinoceroses seen there should all have been black rhinos.

Also in 1778, the same year as Gordon, William Paterson (1790:49) arrived at a place called "Rhinoceros Bush farm, so called because these animals were here some years ago", a place which could have been about 30 km south of Calvinia town and on the

edge of the Roggeveld, well south of the supposed 'white rhinoceros' of John Barrow in the Hantamberge north of Calvinia, mentioned below. In 1803 when Lichtenstein (1,1812:122) was in much the same area he wrote that there were "rhino just over the Colony boundary" i.e. beyond the colony as then known.

Of that part of Bushmanland behind the Hantamberge in Calvinia, John Barrow (1,1801:395) wrote the account that has had all modern authorities on animal distribution groping for the meaning behind his words. Telling of a Bastaard Chieftain he met when taking shelter from a severe thunderstorm, Barrow wrote " In his younger days he had been a lover of the chase ... He boasted that in one excursion he had killed seven camelopardales [i.e. giraffes], and three white rhinoceroses. The latter is not uncommon on the outskirts of the Colony behind the Hantam Mountain and seems to be a variety only of the African two-horned rhinoceros. It differs from it in colour which is pale carnation, in size which is considerably larger, and in thinness of its skin; all of which may be the effects of age".

In describing its size, Barrow could have been correct insofar as the white rhinoceros is concerned, but not in the thinness of skin of which there is no significant difference between the two species. Of its colour, much controversy still rages, but were these true white rhinos, 'Ceratotherium simum? H.A. Bryden (1897:182) author of many well-considered books on early animal life cites Barrow in support of his contention that it was: "There can be little doubt, I think, that, prior to the beginning of this century [the 19th] this enormous terrestrial mammal ... wandered upon the great grassy plains of Bushmanland (a continuation of the Kalahari desert) just south of the Orange River. Native tradition has it so", Bryden's native tradition being the incident mentioned

by Barrow, but Bryden adds that "... at all events later Europeans have never encountered this rhinoceros south of the Orange" and he mentions how famous travellers and authors such as Andrew Smith, William Cornwallis Harris, W.J. Burchell and others found it only north of the Orange River in the first half of the 19th century.

Unless reliable supporting archaeological material is found, the controversy is likely to continue. Shortridge (1942:72) claimed that both the black and the white rhino lived in the Fish River valley in southern South West Africa and reports that in 1895-96 Alexander recorded both species from there. This reference to Alexander has not been found as explained above. Shortridge (1934) stated that the horns of a white rhino from Seeheim, 55 km southwest of Keetmanshoop in southern South West Africa, were housed in the Port Elizabeth Museum but a horn, kindly supplied on loan and supposedly one of those in question, proved to be unlabelled and its condition too exfoliated for accurate assessment.

On ecological grounds, bearing in mind the grazing habits of the white rhino as against the browsing habits of the black rhino, the white could have thrived on veld as far south as Cape Town, and even into the Swellendam and Bredasdorp districts when those regions were still covered in grass undisturbed by man. Also, they could have found grazing in Bushmanland, in the so-called Toa-veld where the grass Aristida, a steekgras, flourished, but we have no grounds for assuming that such was the case. On the other hand, the only adequate reason we have for presuming that all the rhinos encountered from the Cape to the Orange River were blacks are the statements by Kolbe (1731) and Mandelbrote (1944) that they had the prehensile lips of the black rhino. Certainly, the rhinoceros shot by Robert Jacob Gordon (in Barnard 1950:348) 10 km northeast of Beaufort West in the Central Karoo in 1778 was a black rhinoceros as his picture No. 205 of the Gordon Collection has shown.

Against this argument is the discovery in the Albany Museum, Grahamstown in 1974 of a partial jawbone with teeth from a white rhino found in June 1961 at Grassridge, 45 km north of Cradock, in the eastern Cape (Meyer 1974:27). This throws the whole picture into confusion. By today's standards of veld condition, Cradock is no place for white rhinos, but according to Acocks (1953, Map. No. 1, opp. p. 12) the region was formerly covered in sweetgrass which food the white rhino relished. Until further corroboratory evidence is forthcoming the whole issue must be held in abeyance.

Running northwards some 40 km east of Calvinia town is a main river known as the Renosterrivier which comes out of the Sutherland district to the south, passes through Calvinia and becomes the Fish River in the northeastern part of the Calvinia district and remains such until it joins the Sak River a little south of Brandvlei. When W.J. Burchell (1,1822:258) was at the Renoster River just north of the Sutherland boundary in August 1811 he learned that rhinos were already becoming scarce there, and were rarely seen. He remarked that the rhino inhabits dry country abundant in low bushes. Burchell was to come to know the black rhino well seven months later in March 1812 when somewhere west or northwest of De Aar, at a place he called Kaabi's Kraal that has defied locating. Here, he not only saw, but shot, rhinos and his description leaves no doubt that the animals he shot were black rhinos (pp. 36, 41, 52, 69, 74). Moreover Burchell, like Gordon, was clever with his pen and could draw and sketch accurately. His two illustrations (p. 46 and p. 79) of rhinos taken at Kaabi's Kraal, one a front view and one taken from the side, leave no doubt that the black species was intended; the prehensile lip is definitive. He wrote: "This rhinoceros is of the species already described by Sparrman under the name Rh. bicornis, but other species with two horns having since been discovered, the name Rh. africanus has been substituted by Cuvier, and, as I have subsequently discovered another species in Africa, also with two horns, this name

would now, according to that principle of nomenclature, require again to be changed". His new species was, of course, the white rhinoceros which he found at Heuningvlei in the Makuba Hills of western Vryburg in the Northern Cape.

Farther to the south, at Van Wyk's Vlei in the Carnarvon district of Bushmanland, Dr M. Courtenay-Latimer, then Director of the East London Museum, found in 1954 a calcified rhino skull which was identified as that of a black rhinoceros.

That rhinoceroses might have been commoner in the central Karoo than has been thought is possible from the number of place-names containing the word 'Renoster' in one or other of its spellings. Apart from the Renoster River mentioned above, there is a Renosterfontein in the southwestern corner of the Carnarvon district, and, strangely, two Renosterkops stand only 9 km apart on the south bank of the Orange River a short way below the Augrabies Falls.

Northern Cape

Rhinoceroses of both kinds must have been reasonably common in the Northern Cape, they certainly were in Botswana to the northwest and in the western Transvaal to the northeast, but very few rhinoceros records of either species are known from the Orange Free State just to the east across the Vaal River.

In 1826, Steedman (1:232) saw both black and white rhino at Setlagodi about 60 km southwest of Mafeking in the far northeast, and in 1834, A.G. Bain (in Lister 1949:39) wrote of his experiences on the Setlagodi River "Our record day's sport was varied by the accession of some white and black rhinoceroses", while Cumming (1909:385) in May 1846 took black rhino on the Maritzani (Mareetsane) River south of Mafeking.

Indeterminate rhinoceros records in the Northern Cape

To supplement the records of known black rhino and white rhino records in the Northern Cape where both species seem to have been reasonably common when the white man arrived, a few records unrelated to a particular species are worth recording.

In 1835, when Dr Andrew Smith (in Kirby 1,1939:286) was at Griquatown (then called Klaarwater) in the Hay district, he could only say that rhino, elephant and buffalo used to be there, and, when he reached Heuningvlei at the Makuba Range of hills in the far western part of the Vryburg district, the place which was later to be designated the type locality of the white rhinoceros, he found that rhinos had left that part (p. 311). At Stella on the road between Kuruman and Vryburg, but in the eastern sector of the Vryburg district, he found rhino and giraffe spoor abundant in May 1835 (2:35) and when Gordon Cumming (1909:184) was at Stella in May 1844, nine years later, he found the skull and bones of a rhino, and saw fresh spoor.

North of Vryburg on the way to Mafeking, Dr Smith (in Kirby 2:42) found rhino at Maritzani (Mareetsane) in May 1835. Nine years before, in 1826, Steedman (1,1835:235) had shot many rhinos between Maritzani and the Molopo River in the western part of the Mafeking district. This must have been in the vicinity of where Cornwallis Harris (1838:84/5) later saw three rhino on the Molopo in October 1836.

From the Cape eastwards to Mossel Bay and the Tsitsikamma

Knowing that rhinoceroses were well established on the Cape Flats and within the sweep of the Great Berg River it would seem reasonable to suppose that they occurred east of the Hottentots Holland mountains, if not in the central plains then certainly along the foothills of the Langeberg and towards the coast where more bushiness and forest conditions prevailed, perhaps on a

limited scale. If they did occur there, nobody has thought to mention them, an omission so striking that it can only mean that none was seen. Most other species, large and small (excluding buffalo), were discussed. Moodie (2,1835:249) whose book covered the ten years from 1819 to 1829 and who came from an old-established family in Swellendam, could say no more than that the place-names of 'Rhenosterfontein' and 'Buffel Jaagte River' (Buffeljagsrivier) "commemorate these animals. Both rhino and buffalo have totally disappeared". Certainly, no early references to buffalo have been found for the Buffeljagsrivier region, despite the name, any more than rhinos have been found for Rhenosterfontein. Further south, to anyone knowing the Bredasdorp district in the vicinity of De Hoop and along the coast, the scrubby bushveld, as it now is, would seem most suitable for black rhino. The absence of sight records in Bredasdorp is more understandable because this part of the Cape was little travelled.* The main road then went under the mountains, and few adventurers bothered to deviate southwards. Paterson (1790) did so in the 1770's but mentions no rhinoceros. Had he seen them he, keen observer that he was, would almost certainly have remarked on the fact in an area otherwise seemingly devoid of rhinos. The possibility of their having been there is strengthened by the place 'Rhenosterkop' only 7 km southwest of Zoetendalsvlei in southwestern Bredasdorp and no more than 4 km from the coast. If there, or anywhere along the southwestern Cape coast, they might have been scarce at all times and therefore shot out before man had had a chance to refer to them in print.

A vague reference to rhino near the Gourits River is recalled but, unfortunately, the item was not filed when found and has not been re-discovered. Here, the drier country and the Valley Bush of the river's course would have been good rhino veld.

* Black rhino remains have since been found on De Hoop Provincial Nature Reserve.

The George and Knysna districts have produced nothing, understandably perhaps because of the better forested conditions, but John Barrow (2,1804:368), wrote "In the forest of Sitsikamma are elephants, buffaloes and rhinoceroses". This must surely be an error for the forest. His "Sitsikamma" may have been meant to include the open portion of the Tsitsikamma east of the forest edge at Storms River. Nevertheless he used the word "forest", country disliked by rhinos. Moreover, no author has mentioned rhinoceros in the Humansdorp district and it must be concluded that, as this extract is from Barrow's second volume, which was not so clearly an account of his travels as was his first volume, this ex cathedra statement should now be ignored. Rhinos along the southern coastal belt only return to the mammal story on the Swartkops River near Uitenhage, 150 km east of the Tsitsikamma River, although there seems to be no ecological reason why they should not have occurred in much of the Humansdorp district.

The Little Karoo

No black rhino records for this region have been found but the region should have suited them. Shortridge (1,1934:416) includes in his historical items for this animal "Gordon - Gamka River, Oudtshoorn". Presumably he is referring to that part of the river south of the Swartberg in the Calitzdorp district and west of Oudtshoorn, before it becomes the Gourits River. This may well be the case but no firm rhino records are known from there. They lived on the dry interior of the Great Karoo near Beaufort West immediately north of the Great Swartberg range.

The Langkloof

No record, nor hint of a record has been found for the valleys behind the Tsitsikamma Mountains, although veld conditions would surely have suited them.

17.2 White rhinoceros, Ceratotherium simum (Burchell, 1817)

For most, if not all, of the region under discussion, the presence of the white rhinoceros should demand no consideration were it not for a few vague references which must be recorded, considered, and, if possible, evaluated. The grazing needs of the white rhino could have been met as far south as the Caledon-Swellendam-Bredasdorp triangle, and probably east towards Mossel Bay, but no sight records there by literate man are known or have been hinted at, not even for the black rhinoceros. A glance at the chapter dealing with the early ecological background to the districts concerned will show how grassy conditions fit for white rhinos persisted into the southwestern Cape from as far north as the Orange River in Namaqualand, and of how bushy conditions fit for black rhinos did the same.

Capt. G.C. Shortridge (1,1934:428) records what he thought to be the first record of the white rhinoceros. "1743, Parsons (Phil. Trans. pl. III, fig. a horn figured) - the first record of the White Rhinoceros" but Bigalke (1963:5) claims this to be wrong, as a result of correspondence he had with Mr R.W. Hayman, a mammalogist at the British Museum, who studied the Parsons deductions and found them inaccurate. As is generally known now the first acceptable record of a white rhinoceros is that of W.J. Burchell (2,1824:75) at the type-locality now given as Heuningvlei (Chue Spring) on the Makuba Range, 80 km NNW of Kuruman in the Northern Cape. Cave (1947:141-146), writing on Burchell's rhinoceros drawings now in the Gubbins Collection at the library of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, found this on a map amongst the drawings.

Namaqualand, N.W. Cape

The idea of white rhinos in Namaqualand might never have been considered had not one or two items of doubtful provenance opened the issue without doing anything to clarify it. Shortridge's

entry (1,1934:428) "1801, Barrow - supposed occurrence in Namaqualand" contains two errors. Firstly, the year 1801 was the year of publication of Barrow's first volume whereas the year in which Barrow heard of the 'white rhinoceros' was 1790 when he was at the Hantam, just north of Calvinia, in Bushmanland (or Little Bushmanland as it is sometimes called) about 100 km south-east of the nearest part of the Namaqualand district as at present delimited (1970's). The actual wording from Barrow (1,1801:395) is:

"In our descent of the mountain [i.e. the Kamiesberg in the southern part of Namaqualand] we were driven to seek shelter from the violence of the rain in a mixed horde of Bastards and Namaquaas. The chief was of the former description. In his younger days he had been a lover of the chase ... He boasted that in one excursion he had killed seven camelopardales and three white rhinoceroses. The latter is not uncommon on the outskirts of the Colony behind the Hantam Mountain and seems to be a variety only of the African two-horned rhinoceros. It differs from it in colour which is pale carnation, in size which is considerably larger, and in the thinness of its skin; all of which may be the effects of age."

On leaving the Kamiesberg, Barrow travelled to the Hantam country but does not mention seeing white or any other rhinos there. This suggests that he must have obtained his information on their being "not uncommon" from hearsay. To what extent the claim of the Bastard Chief to have killed seven giraffes and three white rhinos in one day is acceptable, cannot now be known. He could have been correct in the case of the giraffe because they were known in the north-west Cape. He might have killed them just south of the Orange River, or even just north of it in southern South West Africa. The white rhinoceroses, too, might have been

taken in northern Namaqualand if enough grass to sustain the grazing white rhino grew under the arid conditions there. This need not have been impossible.

Bigalke (op. cit.) dismisses Barrow's reference to the difference in skin thickness between the two species but the most puzzling aspect of Barrow's comment is his definite use of the word 'white' which later he refers to as 'carnation', presumably a pale pink. Was the term 'white' really in use by 1790 when he was there in person, or even by 1801 when his book was published?

Eight years after publication of his book on the 'Mammals of South West Africa' (1934), Shortridge (1942:71) wrote that "Although the Black Rhinoceros Diceros bicornis was always presumably more plentiful than Ceratotherium simum south of the Orange River, 'HABA, the Hottentot name still locally surviving, refers correctly to the White species, an indication of its former occurrence in Little Namaqualand". Shortridge's paper covered his expedition through what he called Little Namaqualand in 1936, as it was then still called but which is now known as Namaqualand only and the tone of his paragraph certainly suggests his own belief in an erstwhile possible occurrence of white rhinos south of the Orange River, but more definite proof is still needed, perhaps through archaeological discoveries still to be made.

H.A. Bryden (1897:182) who wrote prolifically and with some accuracy and authority on game animals in South Africa, but whose overall knowledge must necessarily have been limited by the weaker communications of that day and age, wrote of the white rhinoceros: "Its modern range has invariably been between the Orange River and the Zambesi, and it has never been found south of the latter river .. There can be little doubt, I think, that prior to the beginning of this century [19th] this enormous terrestrial mammal ... wandered upon the grassy plains of Bushmanland (a continuation of the Kalahari Desert) just south of the Orange River. Native tradition has it so".

Bryden then cites Barrow's comment on the white rhinos in the Hantam Mountains near Calvinia, and adds: "... But at all events later Europeans have never encountered this rhinoceros south of the Orange" and he then shows the extent of his reading when mentioning how Dr Andrew Smith, Capt. W. Cornwallis Harris and others had found it north of the Orange River. He is no doubt correct in saying that the animal could have subsisted on the grass in Bushmanland, dry as it was, because the known occurrence of this rhino in the southern part of South West Africa shows how it thrived on the dry grassy country there.

South West Africa

In archaeological terms, Shortridge (1942:72) states that "In the Port Elizabeth Museum there is a weathered pair of White Rhinoceros horns (oswelli type) discovered at Seeheim (Great Namaqualand) by G. Wickham in 1919". Seeheim is on the Great Fish River, 43 km southwest of Keetmanshoop town, the Fish River being the boundary between the Keetmanshoop and Bethani districts with Seeheim about 160 km from the Fish River's junction with the Orange River. In 1974, Mr J. Greig of the Cape Department of Nature Conservation, then stationed temporarily at the Albany Museum, Grahamstown, approached the Port Elizabeth Museum for a loan of these horns which, however, could not be found. Instead a single weathered, and strongly exfoliated, horn was sent. As it bore neither label nor identifying marks no connection could be found between this and the Seeheim specimens mentioned by Shortridge who might have seen the horns and their labels, and satisfied himself that they were the genuine article. His reference to their being of the oswelli race of white rhinoceros suggests that he did, but he has left nothing to show that he did.

In 1836/37 James Edward Alexander (1,1838:191) travelled from about Goodhouse on the Orange River to Walvis Bay via Bethany and Bullspoot. He then trekked eastwards from Walvis Bay to the north-eastern corner of Rehoboth district and from there turned southwards to the Orange River via the Schwarzrand and Hunsberge to about Sendelingsdrift. Generalising somewhat, he stated that "Two-horned rhinoceroses, both black and white, are found in the upper parts of the Fish River". He shows clearly from his text that he knew both species - he identified them - but curiously he does not mention any actual sighting of a white rhino in the Fish River valley. His "upper parts of the Fish River" would presumably be the stretch of river running along the Rehoboth - Maltahohe boundary on a latitude of about $24^{\circ}20'$ south. Of this record, Shortridge (1942:72) wrote: "In 1895-96, Alexander recorded both species of rhinoceros from the Great Fish River valley in Great Namaqualand" a sentence which carries the implication that he met them generally in the river valley, a fact certainly not borne out in Alexander's own text. The dates 1895-96 given by Shortridge are also incorrect because Alexander died in 1885 and no other Alexander appropriate to the dates and places has been found to fit the circumstances. In the item following the above extract Shortridge mentions "In Alexander's Map (1835-36)". This strongly suggests that Shortridge mistakenly wrote 1895-96 for 1835-36, but this too is at fault because Alexander was there in 1836/37.

Alexander (2,1838:150) gives his first written account of sighting a white rhino in May 1837 at the "Chama, or Soft, River" which, by tracing his route as far as this is practicable, would have been somewhere south of the Gamsberge (which he called 'Tans Mountains) in the northern part of the Rehoboth district at about latitude $23^{\circ}20'$ s. If Alexander saw white rhino south of this point on his upward journey he did not identify them as such but some of his 'rhinoceroses' might have been 'whites'.

Of this sighting in May 1837 Alexander said: "... we saw a huge white or cream-coloured rhinoceros on a hill, which moved about impatiently as the hunters ran towards it. It seemed a mountain of flesh and was, apparently, upwards of seven feet high (2,1 m). It went off with a ball in its neck". He then described it and in so doing leaves no doubt of the species he had seen and shot at. "The proportions of the head and neck of the white rhinoceros are different from those of the black. The mouth is square and the foremost horn is always, I believe, much longer in the white than the hind one. The fore horn of the white specimen we had just seen seemed to be between three and four feet (0,9 to 1,2 m) long, and Hendrik, the hunter, said he had seen them up to one's shoulder. The white rhinoceros eats grass, and it is a timid animal compared with the savage black species which commonly charges whether wounded or not, whereas the white variety tries to effect an escape".

This short description is definitive and effective. His reference to the square mouth, the grass-eating habits and the milder nature are consistent with our modern knowledge of the white rhino. His remarks on the horns need not be taken seriously because, as shown elsewhere, the use of horns as identifying criteria between black and white rhinos led to unbelievable confusion until well into the 19th century and even to the creation of as many as five species of rhinoceros. The term two-horned rhinoceros was used almost universally from the earliest days at the Cape for the only rhinoceros they seem to have known, and which, by implication was the black rhinoceros. Then, they did not know that a second species of rhinoceros, also with two horns on its snout, was waiting to be discovered.

Again in May 1837 but further east at a place Alexander called Niais in the northeastern part of Rehoboth, he wrote (p. 174). "Some of the people went after a white rhinoceros one day, not far from Niais. They rapidly pursued it, and it fled before them, when, in passing a clump of bushes, a black rhinoceros rushed out on the hunters..." At this the men scattered but one was tossed, horned and savaged on the ground, fortunately with no more than superficial wounds as a result of his experience. This short sentence by Alexander shows the black and the white rhinos to have been sympatric in the mixed bush and grass of the northern Rehoboth district, at least.

The next and final white rhinoceros record from James Alexander, in June 1837 was a little south of Rehoboth town, probably at about 23°23' south latitude, the most southerly record of the white rhinoceros yet found for these western regions, unless Barrow's white rhinos at the Hantam in Calvinia of Bushmanland were really of this kind. In June 1837, at a place "abounding in water, grass and trees ... a white rhinoceros was shot in the valley", a record which can be accepted.

A quotation from Shortridge (1,1934:425) on rhinoceros in South West Africa can close the issue. "Beyond any reasonable doubt the white rhinoceros has been extinct in South West Africa for the last fifty years or more, since then no actual occurrence has been recorded." Here, Shortridge was writing of South West Africa generally and not the southern part with which we are more closely concerned here. He added "The supposed survival of the 'White Rhino' in the mountainous Kaokoveld is evidently due to mistaken reports. The Black species has a habit of wallowing in limestone pits and naturally becomes tinged with white after a day or so".

Statistically, the distances between the various places mentioned for white rhinoceros in this western part of their range are:

Southern Rehoboth district, S.W.A. to the upper Fish River Valley - 80 km.

Upper Fish River valley to Seeheim - 300 km at about 26°50's.

Seeheim to the Orange River at Goodhouse 230 km at about 28°50's.

From Goodhouse south-eastwards to Hantamberge, Calvinia - 315 km to about 31°20's.

The distance overall from the known sight record of Alexander south of Rehoboth to the speculative record of Barrow at Hantam is 935 km.

Northern Cape

Archaeological evidence of the white rhinoceros's occurrence in the Northern Cape is given by Bigalke (1963:8) when telling of the unearthing in 1893 of the imperfect skull about 19 km from the Vaal River in the Kimberley district. This must have been somewhere on the south bank of the Vaal according to the boundaries of the Kimberley district in those days.

It was at Heuningvlei (also called Chue Spring) in the Makuba Hills on 16 October 1812 that W.J. Burchell (see Bigalke 1963) shot the white rhinoceros that was to become the holotype of the species. The Makuba Hills are in the far western part of the Vryburg district at about 26°15's; 23°10'e and some 185 km west of Vryburg town. Burchell's own reference to this event is not recorded. It would appear that a large batch of his notes covering this interesting part of his journey in the Northern Cape is missing.

In 1826, Steedman (1,1835:232) met both black and white rhino at Setlagodi in the Mafeking district, and eight years later on the Setlagodi River, Andrew Geddes Bain (in Lister 1949:39) wrote that "Our second day's sport was varied by a succession of white and black rhinoceroses ..."

Finally, on the Molopo River after a trip up from Maritzani (Mareetsane) in May 1835 and somewhere west of Mafeking, Dr Andrew Smith (in Kirby 2,1940:46) shot a white rhino with a young one whose horn was just starting to grow. Two days later, near the sources of the Molopo and nearer Mafeking town (p. 49), he came across white rhino.

As with the black rhino, the white rhino was commonly seen by reliable chroniclers and hunters in both Botswana to the northwest and in western Transvaal to the northeast at about this time.

17.3 Hunting rhinoceroses

The inevitable pitfall for large animals not easily killed by arrows and spears was used against rhinos by the aboriginal peoples at the Cape. Johan Schreyer (in Raven-Hart, 1971,i:122) tells of how the Hottentots killed rhinos in 1668 when he was there. "To catch these beasts, the Hottentots dig deep pits in the ground, like our wolf-pits, on the ways where these beasts are wont to pass when in the great heat of summer they wish to drink; and cover the same with branches. Then, when the beast comes and steps thereon, if only with one foot, he must fall in and let himself be killed". Kolbe (1,1731) says much the same in his discussion on elephants to which he adds "The rhinoceros and the elk $\sqrt{=}$ eland $\sqrt{}$ the Hottentots generally take after much the same manner."

Hendrik Jacob Wikar (in Mossop 1935:99) had a narrow escape from six rhinos at Seekoeisteeck just west of the Augrabies Falls in 1779. "But since then" he wrote "I have learnt to know

the rhinoceros better than before, and now I am more daring in dealing with the rhino than with any other animal". He then describes how a rhino behaves before it attacks: "I have learnt from the Hottentots and my own experience has proved it to be true, that even when the rhino has you in a tight corner, and is only a yard or three (say 1 to 3 m) behind you, you have only to throw yourself behind a bush and, if there is not one, you swerve to one side and throw yourself in the open plain so that your body is not in the direct line of the charging horn. Every snort means a forward thrust of the horn; even when there is nothing in front of the rhino he turns up the ground till it looks as if it has been ploughed, and even if in this charge he ploughs up the ground at your very feet, that need not worry you; his rage is too great, he slips past and cannot check his pace, or possibly he does not see your honourable self, for in any case his eyes are very small and, as the Hottentots tell me, his sight is weak; but when he is standing still, his hearing is all the keener by contrast ... When the Gyzikoa [a Hottentot tribe] men find a rhino which shows fight or begins to attack them, it does not escape. This type of rhino does not look in the least like those I have seen drawings of. Its body closely resembles that of an elephant, but its head is almost like a pig's, with two horns, one above the other, loosely fixed in the skin. The horns curve upwards, but I have heard the Hottentots say that they have seen rhinos with horns curving downwards. I have heard the same from Christians, men whose word you can take, and a certain Jacob Louw himself shot them in the country beyond the Roggevelt". In a footnote to this he says "The rhinoceroses which I have seen resemble fairly well the description and drawing of them by P. Kolbe". The Roggevelt is in the Calvinia district.

From Wikar's descriptions and remarks it seems that the rhinos he knew were black rhinos. This strengthens the surmise expressed before in this account that the rhinoceros of the western and south-western Cape, and well into the colony, was the black rhinoceros. The Hottentot observation that rhino horns sometimes point downwards is borne out by experiences of later hunters, but is unusual.

The uses to which rhinoceros hide was put were many and varied, its thickness being its great asset. Dapper (in Schapera and Farrington, 1933:49) who was at the Cape as a passer-by in 1658 mentioned that the Hottentots' "shoes consist of quite flat, uniformly level, patches of tough rhinoceros hide which cannot be worn out, fastened to the ridge of the foot by two leather cross-strips, and at the back by a heel-band similar to that worn by the Capuchin Friars". His description rings true and examples of such shoes, of a style still used by Bushmen in the Kalahari Desert, can be seen in the ethnological collections of many South African museums.

For making sjamboks (in Afrikaans, sambok), the thick short whips used for whipping recalcitrant horses, cattle and slaves, rhinoceros and hippopotamus hides were ideal, the hippo's perhaps being better. Sparrman (2,1786:284) remarked that hippo sjamboks were stronger and more pliable than those of rhinos "though they are not as transparent as these latter are when new". John Barrow (2,1804:125) thought otherwise; he wrote "The skin of the two-horned rhinoceros .. is so thick that the Dutch boors cut out of it their largest sambocs or horse-rods which, if well prepared, are better than those of hippopotamus, and as transparent as amber".

The term sjambok as used in South Africa, according to Partridge (1971:105) comes from the Malay word samboq, a whip; the word appeared in English as early as 1645. "A strip of the hide of rhinoceros, hippopotamus or giraffe."

Strange beliefs inevitably surrounded the rhinoceros in early times. De Grevenbroek (in Schapera and Farrington 1933:269) for about 1684 at the Cape, tells that the drinking of half a pint (284 ml) of blood of either the "two-horned rhinoceros, the eland, the bison [in this case the buffalo] immediately it has been killed" has brought recovery to patients suffering long-term illnesses.

Kolbe (1731:104) exaggerated on the rhino's magic properties. "His skin, his horn, and his blood are used in medicine. A German gentleman who was employed in the Company's laboratory at the Cape, assured me he had extracted from the skin of a rhinoceros a salt by which he performed great cures. He returned, while I was at the Cape, to his native country, taking with him, as he said, a considerable quantity of this salt, and not doubting it would procure him not a little of the wealth and fame in Germany".

Kolbe goes on to say that the horn of a rhinoceros "will not endure the touch of poison. Many people of fashion at the Cape have cups turned out of rhinoceros horn. If wine is poured into one of these cups, it immediately rises and bubbles up as if it were boiling, and if there be poison in it, the cup immediately splits. If poison be put by itself into one of these cups, the cup, in an instant, immediately flies to pieces, yet some writers have affirmed that the rhinoceros horn has no virtue. The chips made in turning one of these cups are ever carefully saved and returned to the owner of the cup, being esteemed of great benefit in convulsions, faintings, and many other illnesses."

Kolbe also tells that "The blood of the rhinoceros is not a little valued at the Cape. When the Europeans there get it fresh they put it in some of the guts of the rhinoceros, and hang it in the sun to dry. 'Tis of great virtue for the opening of obstructions and the healing of inward sores, and it is taken in a glass

of wine or in a dish of coffee or tea". If such be true, it is perhaps not surprising that what few rhinoceroses there were near the Cape were soon killed off.

Kolbe's stories, related as he would have heard them, tend to warn against the placing of too much reliance on what he wrote of other things at the Cape. Nevertheless, as a chronicler he has to be given consideration.

According to Leibbrandt (1896:244) Jan van Riebeeck in 1657 was instructed to see that "All large and half the number of small rhinoceros horns be sent to Holland, as samples, and the rest to India, excepting six tusks, two of the largest, two of medium size, and two of the smallest, which are to be sent to patria via the two ships, that the directors may examine them and send out the orders necessary". Presumably the tusks refer to elephant tusks, but the journal (Van Riebeeck 2:100) for 9 March 1657 says that "The orders detailed above were carried out and, in the possession of Harmans Harmanssen, were found ostrich shells and nineteen fine rhinoceros horns which no doubt he embezzled, as up to now he has not disclosed anything about them". The Company in Holland were persistent in their demands because the journal for 27 October 1657, seven months later (p. 166), contains the passage: "Should you find rhinoceros horns and elephant teeth and hippo tusks in the Saldanha Bay, you shall ... purchase as many as you are able to obtain ... Until now our men have made little effort to obtain these things ...".

Mentzel's (1,1785:27) comprehensive survey of conditions at the Cape tells of the turning of rhino horn and the effect of such horn on poison, an idea already mooted by Kolbe. "When I was at the Cape there was a certain expert turner in the employ of the Company ... This man constructed a big cup or chalice out of a rhinoceros horn which measured seven inches (176 mm) in diameter at the mouth. Between the cup and its pedestal he screwed three balls. In the upper and smallest of these he skilfully placed a set of nine-pins, intertwined with two ivory balls; in the middle and largest one a

draughtsboard was inset, made of ivory and ebony, with 24 draughts=men of the same materials; while below in the smaller ball he was still engaged upon the task of modelling three cannons mounted on their gunwales. The statement that the rhinoceros' horn secures immunity from poison, or that it will cause wine to ferment is quite fabulous. These things have been tested several times and disproved".

7.4 Rhinoceroses in early museums and zoos at the Cape

In 1681, according to Hesse (in Raven-Hart 1967b:287) "Wild beasts are often captured in this region and brought to the Dutch Castle so that at this time one can see all sorts of such animals namely lions, tigers, rhinoceroses, snakes, and wolves, but all dead and stuffed". Martin Wintergerst (in Raven-Hart 1971,2:462) mentions seeing a stuffed rhinoceros when he was at the Cape but saw none alive. That was in 1699, and in 1714, Francois Valentyn (1726(1,1971:109)) saw in a house in the Cape Town gardens several stuffed rare beasts, one of which was "a small rhinoceros with a large and small horn on its nose, the larger about a span long and the smaller barely as thick as one's fist".

In a zoo at the Cape on 30 April 1706 Spohr (1967:116) tells of a "Rhinoceros, almost as big as an Elephant" in the spacious garden kept by the Dutch East India Company. In 1828 Teenstra (1830:311) went west of the town to a point below the Lion Mountain and "On the road we stopped at the small menagerie of Mr Villet, a Frenchman by birth ... this collection of indigenous fauna includes a lion, a lioness, a leopard, an elephant, a rhinoceros and many varieties of antelope ...".

Early visitors to the Cape seem to have found rhino flesh to their liking. In 1647, the shipwrecked Leendert Janssen (in Raven-Hart 1967a:169), a survivor of the wreck of the Haerlem,

who had perforce to spend a year at the Cape until the chance call of another ship could relieve him and his colleagues, said in his report that the flesh of a rhinoceros shot near the fort was "very fine and tasty". Peter Kolbe (1731,2:104) commented that "The flesh of a rhinoceros which I have often eaten with a great deal of satisfaction is not so sinewy as some writers have represented it", an experience which was to be enjoyed by many another hunter and traveller in other parts of South Africa as the country was opened up and rhinoceroses were gradually wiped out.

The unicorn, mythical to us, was nevertheless something all travellers hoped to see when they landed at the Cape. Many stories claimed the rhinoceros as the true unicorn despite the two horns on its nose and its local name of two-horned rhinoceros. By 1698, interest in unicorns must have been waning because Francis Leguat (in Raven-Hart 1971,2:429) could write "As for the unicorn there is no such sort of beast. The oldest and most curious inhabitants of the Cape are well satisfied with it, and he that made Caesar's Commentaries was a liar, as well as the rest. The rhinoceros is the true four-footed Unicorn ... for there are fish, birds and some insects that have likewise but one horn" and he then dismisses the story of the unicorn with various exaggerated drawings of the rhinoceros.