Why Has the Rhinoceros Come from the West? An Excursus into the Religious, Literary, and Environmental History of the Tang Dynasty

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Taking Dongshan Liangjie's reference to a "chicken-scaring rhinoceros" as a starting point, this paper explores the cultural and literary significance of the rhinoceros with special attention to Buddhism. I argue that the precise parameters of the rhinoceros' significance were never firmly established, in part because it remained an exotic animal. Further, the horn of the rhinoceros often stood for the whole, even though horn and animal have very different meanings. From a very early period the horn was closely associated with the supernatural and with curative powers, and thus is valued as a medicine. By the end of the Tang dynasty the rhinoceros as an animal was perceived as an exotic tribute, one that was out of place in the capital. Through the new *yuefu* of Yuan Zhen and Bai Juyi, a tribute rhinoceros came to represent the failure of Dezong's rule in the late eighth century. I show that this was likely the source for Dongshan's remark, and then explore the interpretative possibilities of this phrase. The ambiguity of his remark—in comparison with other kinds of utterances from Chan teachers—helps to clarify the range of strategies used in middle-period Chan texts and the hermeneutic challenges they present.

In the sayings attributed to the Dongshan Liangjie 洞山良价 (807–896), the Chan master is asked by a student, "Why did the First Patriarch come from the west?" To this Dongshan is said to have replied, "it is much like a chicken-scaring rhinoceros" 大似駭雞犀.[1] While the question is a frequent one in Chan texts, Dongshan's reply is striking, for both its mention of the unusual animal and its particular description.[2] One approach to exchanges such as these has been to see them as non sequiturs intended to cut off unproductive lines of thought; this

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1. This appears in the earliest record of Dongshan's life and teaching included in the *Collection of the Patriarch's Hall* (*Zutang ji* 祖堂集), compiled in 952. See *Zutang ji* 祖堂集, comp. Jing 靜 and Jun 筠 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 297. The exchange is also found in subsequent biographies and *yulu*. See *Junzhou Dongshan Wuben Chanshi yulu* 筠州洞山悟本禪師語録, in *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, ed. Takakusu Junjirō et al. (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–32), 47: 512a10. Henceforth this collection will be cited simply as *T*, followed by volume number, page, register, and line number where applicable. See also *Ruizhou Dongshan Liangjie Chanshi yulu* 瑞州洞山良价禪師語録, *T* 47: 523c24; and *Jingde chuandeng lu*, *T* 51:322b03. The first two texts are late, compiled in the Ming dynasty and in eighteenth-century Japan respectively. The *Jingde chuandeng lu* dates from 1004. For all texts in the Buddhist canon, I have relied on the online editions provided by the SAT Daizōkyō Text Database, http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/ and Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association, www.cbeta.org.

2. This exchange stood out for a reviewer of William Powell's translation: Timothy Barrett notes that Powell's footnote on this exchange inaccurately presents the story of the rhinoceros presented to Dezong. Timothy Barrett, review of *The Record of Tung-shan*, by William F. Powell, tr., *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 51 (1988): 405–6.

is an interpretive strategy that tends to mystify Chan.[3] Yet it is true that the Chan master in these encounters seems to be operating in a way that deliberately thwarts expectations. John McRae writes of the general patterns of such exchanges, noting that "in many cases the student's inquiries are standardized" but the master's response is intended to be "spontaneous and unique," and the exchanges without "explicit rules."[4] Understanding these exchanges, then, is a process of discovering the latent rules and patterns through consideration of their intellectual and cultural contexts. McRae, Yanagida Seizan, and others have shown that Chan encounter dialogues emerge out of Buddhist history and have antecedents in earlier Chan texts.[5] Even as they are at times resistant to analysis, Robert Sharf has demonstrated how to read these exchanges within the framework of Buddhist doctrinal debates.[6] Further, the particularities of Chan anecdotes have the potential to yield insight into the cultural *imaginaire* of Tang-dynasty Chan, territory that has begun to be profitably explored by Steven Heine.[7] I take this exchange as a starting point to examine representations of the rhinoceros in the Tang-dynasty and the curious intersection of the rhinoceros with Buddhism. The resistance of this exchange to resolution highlights the interpretative challenges of lesser-known Chan episodes, but it also reflects the way in which animals and events can take on different meanings over time without ever fully shedding prior associations.

To make sense of Dongshan's answer, in which Bodhidharma is likened to "a chicken-scaring rhinoceros," we might first consider an environmental perspective, and inquire as to the rhinoceros's range in the mid-ninth century. It was not very likely that Dongshan himself would have seen a rhinoceros. Even in early texts, the rhinoceros often is associated with remote regions. Indeed, driving out rhinoceroses and other wild beasts was seen as part of the

3. One student of Chan has made this argument with reference to Dongshan's rhinoceros:

> 他的答案與學者所完全不相關，其意無非是希望截斷學者的妄想，讓學者不至於繼續執取妄念，而能當下回歸自己本心，這種方法我姑且(sic)名之曰「截斷眾流」法，下一個公案回答「大似駭雞犀」，亦與學者所問不相關，也是一種「截斷眾流」式的方法。
>
> His answers have absolutely no connection with what his student [asked], [and] his intent is certainly to cut off his student's deluded thinking, to make the students unable to continue to hold onto ignorant thoughts, and able to immediately return to their own original mind; this kind of method I have provisionally called the method of "cutting off the currents." The answer to the next *gong'an*, "Much like a chicken-scaring rhinoceros," is also unconnected to what the student asked, and is also an instance of "cutting off the currents" method.

Zheng Canshan 鄭燦山, "Dongshan Liangjie Chanshi de Chanfeng ji qi Huayan tese zhi sixiang" 洞山良价禪師的禪風及其華嚴特色之思想, *Dazhuan xuesheng Foxue lunwenji* 大專學生佛學論文集 6 (1996): 9–10. "Cutting of the currents" is one of the "three phrases" (*sanju* 三句) of Yunmen 雲門, where it is a question: "*What* stops all flows?" the answer to which is "one mind" (*yixin* 一心). See Charles Müller's entry on *sanju* 三句 in the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism, http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/.

4. John R. McRae, "Encounter Dialogue and the Transformation of the Spiritual Path in Chinese Ch'an," in *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and Its Transformations in Buddhist Thought*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Robert M. Gimello (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 1992), 355.

5. See, for example, John R. McRae, "The Antecedents of Encounter Dialogue in Chinese Ch'an Buddhism," in *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*, ed. Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 46–74, and Yanagida Seizan, "The 'Recorded Sayings' Texts of Chinese Ch'an Buddhism," in *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, ed. Whalen Lai and Lewis R. Lancaster (Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1983), 185–205.

6. Robert H. Sharf, "How to Think with Chan *Gong'an*," in *Thinking with Cases: Specialist Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History*, ed. Charlotte Furth, Judith T. Zeitlin, and Ping-chen Hsiung (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 205–43.

7. Steven Heine, *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text: Philosophy and Folklore in the Fox Kōan* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 1999). Dongshan is also a product of this late Tang and Five Dynasties culture; the earliest written text about him dates to several decades after his death.

civilizing process in early China. For example, when Mencius lists the Duke of Zhou's accomplishments, he praises him for "expelling tigers, leopards, rhinoceroses, and elephants so that they were far away" 驅虎豹犀象而遠之.[8] From both the archaeological and written record it is clear that rhinoceroses ranged across the territory controlled by the Shang and Zhou, where they were hunted for their hide, which was used for shields, and their horn, used for drinking vessels. Over the subsequent centuries, however, rhinoceroses began to disappear from central China. Both Berthold Laufer and Edward H. Schafer argue that by the Tang dynasty the rhinoceros inhabited a territory that included western and southern Hunan and adjacent areas. Mark Elvin, in his *The Retreat of the Elephants*, concurs, noting that by this time the rhinoceros survived only to the far south and the west.[9] Likewise, the scholars Wen Huanran 文煥然, He Yeheng 何業恆, and Gao Yaoting 高耀亭 indicate that during the Tang rhinoceroses could be found in Hunan, Hubei, Guizhou, and Sichuan. They persisted in Guangxi through the Song, and last disappeared from Yunnan. The primary cause of their shifting habitat seems to have been cooling temperatures, but deforestation also played a role.[10]

All of these scholars work primarily from tax and tribute records of the Tang dynasty to establish where rhinoceroses might have been found; pharmacopoeias also provide some information. In the *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書, rhinoceros horn frequently appears in lists of tribute. To take one example, the record of tribute from Qianzhou 黔州 (in present-day Sichuan) lists rhinoceros horn (*xijiao* 犀角), luminous cinnabar (*guangming dansha* 光明丹沙), and candles (*la* 蠟) as the regional items (*tugong* 土貢) presented to the throne.[11] In other records, items such as goldthread (*huanglian* 黄連; Coptis chinensis), sweet-peel tangerines (*gan* 柑), coarse fabric mats (*zhushu dian* 紵練簟), fennel (*lingling xiang* 零陵香; Lysimachia foenum graecum), fine linen (*bozhu* 白紵), and silver are enumerated alongside rhinoceros horn. Generally speaking, tribute offerings included luxury items, local products, and medicinal plants—and rhinoceros horn fits into two, if not three, of these categories. Like goldthread and fennel, rhinoceros horn has medical applications. Rhinoceros horn hairpins (*xizandao* 犀簪導) are also mentioned in description of royal attire.[12] It is worth noting that what appears as tribute at the capital is, for the most part, rhinoceros horn. Tribute offerings of the animal itself were far more rare and of a different order. Because it is the horn that appears in tribute lists, and because this could have been acquired through trade with regions farther south or west, we must be cautious about taking these lists as definitive evidence of the rhinoceros's range.

Aside from the ecology of the rhinoceros's habitat, the textual record provides a sense of the Tang cultural understanding of the animal. Reflecting the fact that it was an exotic beast, the chicken-scaring rhinoceros stands out as anomalous within Dongshan's discourse record.

8. *Mencius* III.B.9. Jiao Xun 焦循 annot., *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 13.449.

9. See Mark Elvin, *The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2004), 31–32. Elvin thus gives the rhinoceros a more limited habitat than Berthold Laufer, who, nearly a century ago, suggested on the basis of tax and tribute records that during the Tang the rhinoceros was fairly widespread in regions south of the Yangzi, and especially Hunan. They were also numerous in Indochina. See Berthold Laufer, "History of the Rhinoceros," in *Chinese Clay Figures*, pt. 1: *Prolegomena on the History of Defensive Armor* (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1914), 164. See also Edward H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1963), 83.

10. Wen Huanran 文煥然, He Yeheng 何業恆, and Gao Yaoting 高耀亭, "Zhongguo yesheng xiniu de miejue" 中國野生犀牛的滅絕, in *Zhongguo lishi shiqi zhiwu yu dongwu bianqian yanjiu* 中國歷史時期植物與動物變遷研究, ed. Wen Rongsheng 文榕生 (Chongqing: Chongqing chuban she, 1995), 220–31.

11. Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 and Song Qi 宋祁, comp., *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 41.1073. See pp. 1072–74 for many other instances of rhinoceros horn in lists of tribute.

12. See, for example, *Xin Tang shu* 24.517–18.

Take, for example, the responses in other instances in which students asked Dongshan the meaning of Bodhidharma's arrival in China. In one case Dongshan turns the question back to the disciple, asking how he would respond when he becomes a teacher. In another instance he replies that he will answer only when Dong Creek flows backwards.[13] As Dong Creek is in the vicinity of Mount Dong, both these answers refer to the immediate surroundings. When we look at the other kinds of animals to which Dongshan made reference, we find a similar pattern. There is an ox being led through rice paddies,[14] a question about a snake swallowing a frog,[15] birds fighting over a frog,[16] bird paths,[17] a white rabbit,[18] and a bull giving birth to a calf.[19] Although this last example is impossible, all the animals mentioned in dialogues are common, and were either directly observed by the monks or could have been.[20]

On the face of it, then, the rhinoceros is distinguished by the fact that it is a non-local animal. Given that Dongshan was located in the northwest part of Jiangxi 江西, it is improbable that any rhinoceros inhabited the area, although not wholly outside the realm of possibility. It remains very unlikely that Dongshan is referring to a local rhinoceros in his response, not only for environmental reasons but also from the descriptions of animals in his discourse record. As I have noted, the rhinoceros stands out among the common animals mentioned in Dongshan's dialogues themselves, but more exotic animals appear in two poems at the end of the later versions of Dongshan's record. The first poem is a *gāthā* composed following a dialogue with a student, and mentions the cuckoo (*zigui* 子規), a jade elephant (*yuxiang* 玉像), the *qilin* 麒麟, and the francolin (or chukar, *zhegu* 鷓鴣).[21] A second poem, presented to Caoshan 曹山 on his departure, mentions herons (*lu* 鷺), a colt (*ju* 駒), a rat (*shu* 鼠), a tiger (*hu* 虎), a horse (*ma* 馬), a raccoon-dog (*linu* 貍奴), and a white bull (*baigu* 白牯).[22]

13. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, *T* 51:322b23, and *Ruizhou Dongshan Liangjie Chanshi yulu*, *T* 47:522c20, translated in William F. Powell, tr., *The Record of Tung-shan* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 1986), 39 and 44 respectively. Note that the exchange about Dong Creek seems to be a late addition. Neither instance appears in *Zutang ji*, meaning that the exchange about the rhinoceros is the only time Dongshan is asked the meaning of Bodhidharma's eastward trek.

14. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, *T* 51: 323a17–19; translated at Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, 47. This does not appear in *Zutang ji*.

15. *Zutang ji*, 298; *Jingde chuandeng lu*, *T* 51:322b6. See also Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, 50.

16. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, *T* 51:323a13. This does not appear in *Zutang ji*; for translation see Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, 56.

17. *Zutang ji*, 302; *Jingde chuandeng lu*, *T* 51:322c22; also Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, 55.

18. *Junzhou Dongshan Wuben Chanshi yulu*, *T* 47:509a17; translated at Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, 35. As far as I can tell, this only appears in the later versions of Dongshan's record, and is not in the *Zutang ji* or *Jingde chuandeng lu*.

19. *Junzhou Dongshan Wuben Chanshi yulu* *T* 47:507c23–25, also *T* 51:312a29; Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, 60. This is absent from the *Zutang ji*.

20. Steven Heine observes: "Although numerous kōan feature animals—such as Chao-chou's 'Does the dog have Buddha nature?,' Nan-ch'üan's 'Cutting the cat,' Wu-tsu's 'Pushing the buffalo through a window,' and other cases containing animistic elements—the fox kōan is perhaps the only case concerning the deeds of a shape-shifting creature that makes a human appearance." These animals, even the fox, are all observable in and around the monastery. For a discussion of the monastery cat in Buddhism, see T. H. Barrett, "The Monastery Cat in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Cat Poems of the Zen Masters," in *Buddhist Monasticism in East Asia: Places of Practice*, ed. James A. Benn, Lori Meeks, and James Robson (London: Routledge, 2010), 107–24. Other studies of animals in Chinese Buddhism include Okimoto Katsumi's 沖本克己 study of Naquan's cat in *Zen shisō keiseishi no kenkyū* 禅思想形成史の研究 (Kyoto: Hanazono Daigaku Kokusai Zengaku Kenkyūjo, 1998), 410–21 and Huaiyu Chen's forthcoming book-length study.

21. The Chinese francolin is native to the southeastern portion of the country. For the poems, see *T* 47:516a ff., and *T* 47:525c ff.

22. As a phrase *linu baigu* 貍奴白牯 refers to animals unable to understand words or Buddhist teaching, and by extension someone of low spiritual capacity. See *Zengaku Daijiten* 禅学大辞典 (Tokyo: Komazawa Univ., 1985), 1268d., where *linu* is glossed as a member of the cat family.

While a few of these are animals that Dongshan might have encountered himself, more are wild or fanciful animals, several of which refer to legends or to other texts.[23] Given the appearance of other animals in Dongshan's *yulu*, the fact that his answer to the question about Bodhidharma's purpose refers to a rhinoceros and not a more common kind of animal suggests that this is an allusion. In other words, for Dongshan, where the rhinoceros could be found was in written words and, I will argue, specifically in poetry. That is, the rhinoceros occupies a textual environment in ninth-century China, and this informs the significance of the rhinoceros in this context.

Although I believe Dongshan's reference has more substantial connections with the events of the Tang, the rhinoceros also appears in earlier Buddhist works. One of the earliest Buddhist scriptures, the *Rhinoceros Sūtra* (*Khaggavisāṇa-sutta*), advises the practitioner to be like the rhinoceros (or the rhinoceros horn) in avoiding attachments and leading an eremitic life.[24] The solitary ascetic is identified with the *pratyeka-buddha* (*bizhifo* 辟支佛), one who achieves enlightenment without the aid of a Buddha and apart from the Buddhist community.[25] For example, in the *Discourses on the Causes and Conditions of the Pratyeka-Buddha* 辟支佛因緣論, we find the line "[The *pratyeka-buddha*] is like the rhinoceros's one horn, leaving far behind the company of disciples" 譬如犀一角, 遠離諸徒眾.[26] Another passages expands on this theme of singularity: "Silently preserving his integrity, constantly in a state of detachment, he dwells in still and silent places such as mountains and forests, and alongside ravines and streams. Because his mind courses in quietude, he has nothing to say. It is like the horn of the rhinoceros, solitary in its travels" 默然自守恒入捨心。住於山林幽谷河側寂靜之處。心行寂故, 亦無言說。譬如犀角獨一之行.[27] The *pratyeka-buddha* chooses to live apart from others, this deep reclusion augmenting his spiritual practice. This is akin to the habits of the rhinoceros, infrequently seen by humans and living as solitary animals rather than in groups.[28] Note that here the horn serves as synecdoche for the rhinoceros, appropriate as its single horn is its most outstanding feature.[29] Further, the rhinoceros may have some general association with Buddhism simply by virtue of being an exotic animal. It was also frequently paired with the elephant, which is clearly linked with Buddhism and with India. For example, the "Elephant King" (象王) is an epithet for the Buddha.[30] Additionally,

23. On these see Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, 88–89 nn. 185–87.

24. There has been scholarly debate about how best to translate *khagga-visāṇa*. K. R. Norman explains that it could mean either 'the horn of a rhinoceros' or 'having a sword as a horn'. K. R. Norman, "Solitary as Rhinoceros Horn," *Buddhist Studies Review* 13 (1996): 134. Stephanie Jamison concludes that it must be the latter option, as the former "conjures up an unintentionally comic picture." Stephanie W. Jamison, "Rhinoceros Toes, *Manu* V.17–18, and the Development of the Dharma System," *JAOS* 118 (1998): 253 n. 18.

25. Whether or not the sūtra was originally identified with the *pratyeka-buddha* is unclear. Richard Salomon, *A Gāndhārī Version of the Rhinoceros Sūtra: British Library Kharoṣṭhī Fragment 5B* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2000), 9.

26. *T* 32:473c 14. See also *T* 32:473c22: "Cultivating a solitary practice, like the rhinoceros's single horn" 修於獨一行, 如犀牛一角.

27. *T* 32: 473b9.

28. Because rhinoceroses were rarely encountered, early European illustrations of the rhinoceros were often inaccurate and fanciful. See Kelly Enright, *Rhinoceros* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 34–35. The Western Han bronze rhinoceros *zun* in the China National Museum, Beijing, suggests that the animal was more easily observed in the Han.

29. In the passages cited above, the Chinese translators concluded that "rhinoceros horn" was the correct interpretation.

30. Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, 82–83. William Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* (1937; rpt. Gaoxiong: Foguang chuban she, 1962), 390–91.

rhinoceros horn was commonly used to make the *ruyi* 如意, an important ritual implement.[31] However, in the entries on the rhinoceros in two important encyclopedias, the Tang-dynasty *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 and the Song-dynasty *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽, no mention of any connection with Buddhism is made.[32] This is true of the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 as well.[33]

Many early references to the rhinoceros concern the special properties of the horn. By the time of the Tang dynasty, the horn was both a luxury item and used for medicine due to its long-attested special powers. Rhinoceros horn was often described as *tongtian* 通天, an expression referring to the horn's ability to absorb or reflect the patterns of the sky. The *Baopuzi* 抱朴子, by Ge Hong 葛洪 (280–340?), is the most frequently cited source on the rhinoceros, and the relevant passage is primarily concerned with the special qualities of the rhinoceros horn. Ge Hong notes its magical abilities:

> 得真通天犀角三寸以上，刻以為魚，而銜之以入水，水常為人開，方三尺，可得炁息水中。又通天犀角有一赤理如綖，有自本徹末，以角盛米置羣雞中，雞欲啄之，未至數寸，即驚却退。故南人或名通天犀為駭雞犀。以此犀角著穀積上，百鳥不敢集。大霧重露之夜，以置中庭，終不沾濡也。此犀獸在山中，晦冥之夕，其光正赫然如炬火也。
> If you get piece of genuine Tongtian rhinoceros horn at least three *cun* in length, carve it into a fish, and enter water while carrying it in your mouth, the water will usually open a space three square feet, and you will be able to breathe in the water. There are also Tongtian rhinoceros horns with a red pattern like a thread running from base to tip. If you take this horn, fill it with rice, and place it among a flock of chickens, the chickens will wish to peck at it, but when they have not yet gotten within a few inches of it, they will be frightened and retreat. Thus some southerners call the Tongtian rhinoceros the "chicken-scaring rhinoceros." If you put this rhinoceros horn on top of a pile of grain, none of the many kinds of birds will dare gather. On misty, dewy nights, place it in the courtyard, and it will not get damp. When this rhinoceros-beast is in the mountains, on dark nights the light [of its horn] is as bright as a torch.[34]

The horn can part water, providing safe passage across rivers. It is also known to scare chickens when employed as a vessel for their feed, a property that extends to frightening other birds, and in other sources even to foxes.[35] The horn can also aid in keeping courtyards free of moisture, and is luminescent. Elsewhere the rhinoceros horn is said also to dispel dust.[36] The *Baopuzi* passage continues:

> 以其角為叉導，毒藥為湯，以此叉導攪之，皆生沫湧起，則了無復毒勢也。以攪無毒物，則無沫起也。故以是知之者也。若行異域有蠱毒之鄉，每於他家飲食，則常先以犀角攪之也。人有為毒箭所中欲死，以此犀叉刺瘡中，其瘡即沫出而愈也。通天犀所能煞

31. Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, 242. On the *ruyi* generally, see John Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2003), 138–52. J. LeRoy Davidson cites a Tang-dynasty anecdote in which a rhinoceros horn *ruyi* is described as "heat repelling." See J. LeRoy Davidson, "The Origin and Early Use of the Ju-i," *Artibus Asiae* 13 (1950): 247.

32. See Li Fang 李昉 ed., *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 890.3953–54.

33. See *Taiping yulan* 891.3598–99.

34. Wang Ming 王明, annot., *Baopuzi neipian xiaoshi* 抱朴子內篇校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghu shuju, 1980), 17.286. See also the translation of these passages in James R. Ware, ed. and tr., *Alchemy, Medicine, and Religion in the China of A.D. 320: The Nei P'ien of Ko Hung* (New York: Dover Publications, 1981), 297–98.

35. Cited in *Taiping yulan* 890.3953, with *Huainan wan bi shu* 淮南萬畢術 given as the source. Laufer, "History of the Rhinoceros," 137 n. 1.

36. The quality is described in the *Nanyue zhi* 南越志, quoted in the commentary to Li Shangyin's 李商隱 "Green Jade City" 碧城. A line of this poem reads "A rhinoceros [horn] banishes the dust, jade banishes the cold" 犀辟塵埃，玉辟寒. The commentator Daoyuan 道源 cites a number of sources for this expression. The term "dust" in Buddhism has connotations of sensory delusion and defilements. For the Li Shangyin poem, see Liu Xuekai 劉學鍇 and Yu Shucheng 余恕誠, eds., *Li Shangyin shige jijie* 李商隱詩歌集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 4: 1660–62.

> 毒者，其為獸專食百草之有毒者，及眾木有刺棘者，不妄食柔滑之草木也。歲一解角於山中石閒，人或得之，則須刻木色理形狀，令如其角以代之，犀不能覺，後年輒更解角著其處也。他犀亦辟惡解毒耳，然不能如通天者之妙也。
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> Take the horn as an implement, and have the poison made into a soup. When using the [horn] implement to stir it, it will produce white foam that rises to the top, and then it will not be poisonous. If you use it to stir something that is not poisonous, no foam will rise, and thereby you can know [whether something is poisonous or not]. If you travel to foreign regions where there are areas with poison, every time you eat or drink at someone's house, use the horn to stir things. If someone has been struck by a poisoned arrow and is about to die, then put the horn implement in the wound. The wound will then foam up and be healed. The ability of the Tongtian rhinoceros to stop poison is due to the fact that it eats the poisonous among plants and the thorned among trees, and does not recklessly eat soft and smooth plants and trees. It drops its horn once a year among the rocks of the mountain. If someone obtains this, then he must carve a piece of wood so that its appearance and form are like the horn and can substitute for it. The rhinoceros will not be aware of this and the next year will again shed its horn in the same spot. Other rhinoceroses can ward off evil and get rid of poison, but their efficacy is not as marvelous as the Tongtian one.[37]

Rhinoceros horn is further capable of detecting the presence of poison and healing the wounds inflicted by poison arrows. This particular quality functions through homeopathic response: because the rhinoceros eats poisonous herbs and prickly bushes, and not soft plants, its horn reacts to that which is poisonous and barbed. By the tenth century and Li Xun's 李珣 work on medicinal plants, the *Haiyao ben cao* 海藥本草, this lore had been largely standardized, and elaborated. The *Haiyao ben cao* explains the special quality of the rhinoceros horn as follows: "The rhinoceros, when 'communicating with the sky' during the time of pregnancy, beholds the forms of things passing across the sky, and these are reproduced in the horn of the embryo: hence the designation 'communicating with the sky.'"[38] Rhinoceros horn had near-magical qualities, contributing to its value as medicine and allure as ornamentation.

The trained rhinoceroses that were occasionally sent to the Tang court as tribute, primarily from the kingdoms of Indochina, developed a different set of associations that tied them to the quality of rule. As animals of tribute, rhinoceroses were often paired with elephants. These animals usually performed in royal shows; for example, Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–56) is noted for having dancing elephants and other animals entertain him.[39] Perhaps most famously, he had a troupe of horses that danced in time to music. After Xuanzong fled to Shu, some of these horses ended up in the stables of one of An Lushan's commanders, their unusual talents unrecognized. Consequently the horses' spontaneous dancing to music was mistaken for sinister possession, and they were flogged until they dropped dead.[40] While the horses' deaths in this case was due to a misunderstanding, the treatment of animals under the care of the emperor came to serve as an index of good governance. One extreme example is that of the elephants and rhinoceroses forcibly brought to Luoyang following the An Lushan 安祿山 rebellion. An Lushan was certain that the animals would bow to him as the new emperor, thus demonstrating that all under heaven would recognize his rule. However, the elephants failed to kneel when they were brought in, sending him into a fury. He ordered

37. *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi*, 17.286.

38. Li Xun 李珣, *Hai yao ben cao* 海藥本草, comp. Shang Zhijun 尚志鈞 (Beijing: Renmin weisheng chuban she, 1997), 4.72. Cited in Laufer, 147. In his notes Laufer relates another tradition that states that patterns are formed when the rhinoceros looks at the moon, while the patterns in an elephant's tusk derive from the sound of thunder.

39. Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, 81–83.

40. Paul W. Kroll, "The Dancing Horses of T'ang," *T'oung Pao* 67 (1981): 240–46. See also his "Four Vignettes from the Court of Tang Xuanzong," *T'ang Studies* 25 (2007): 19–26.

all the animals to be thrown in a pit, where they were stabbed and set afire. The falconers and musicians forced to witness the torture were moved to tears.[41]

In the case of An Lushan's elephants and rhinoceroses, the beasts were subject to the emperor's wrath for their failure to behave in conformity with his expectations, but less dramatic deaths of animals at court could also be read as a kind of real-world allegory. For Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831) and Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), the treatment of animals was a means by which to assess government. Both men wrote poems entitled "Tame Rhinoceros" 馴犀 that they included among the verses they called "new *yuefu*" 新樂府, poems with explicit social or political themes. This new movement of the ninth century was popularized by three poets, Yuan Zhen, Li Shen 李紳 (780–846), and Bai Juyi. Reflecting on Bai Juyi's preface to his set of fifty *yuefu*, Joseph Allen writes that what made these "new" was the fact that they were intended to be instructional, and that they "were focused on people and things of the actual world and not on texts." That is, these *yuefu* did not play on previous treatments of a given topic, in the way that traditional *yuefu* did, but offered commentary on real events.[42] Yuan Zhen wrote twelve *yuefu* in 809, of which "Tame Rhinoceros" is one. His poems in this genre were inspired by a set of twenty *yuefu* authored by Li Shen, and Yuan in turn forwarded his poems to Bai Juyi, prompting Bai to compose similar poems. In his introduction to the 809 set of *yuefu*, Yuan Zhen wrote that he selected topics that "were especially urgent in our parlous times" 其病時之尤急者.[43] For his part, Bai Juyi was yet more explicit about the connection between form and content in his preface: "the pieces have no fixed number of lines, and the lines have no fixed number of characters, [because these are] bound to the intent [of the poem], [and] not bound to the literary pattern" 篇無定句，句無定字，繫於意不繫於文. In his preface, he further asserts that the poems were "not made for the sake of literature" 不為文而作, and presents them as instructive pieces.[44] Although they were of course literary works, Bai downplayed their craft in order to focus attention on their political message.

Given these aims, the circumstances prompting the poems are made explicit. Yuan Zhen's poem "Tame Rhinoceros" is preceded by a short introduction noting the death of a rhinoceros in the imperial menagerie a decade earlier: "Li [Shen] has told me that in the twelfth year of the Zhenyuan reign (796), a [rhinoceros] was brought from the south seas in tribute; in the winter of the thirteenth year, it died in the imperial park from the bitter cold" 李傳云，貞元丙子歲，南海來貢; 至十三年冬，苦寒死於苑中.[45] This historical background is developed in the first part of the poem.

馴犀　　Tame Rhinoceros[46]
建中之初放馴象，遠歸林邑近交廣。

41. Lu You 陸游 recounts this episode and attributes it to the *Minghuang zalu* 明皇雜錄 in his *Bishu manchao* 避暑漫抄, in *Gujin ghuohai* 古今說海 (Shanghai: Dushu jicheng gongshi, 1909), 1:1. Schafer notes that this section is not included in the extant editions of the *Minghuang zalu*; the *Bishu manchao* was written in the twelfth century. Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, 82, 300 n. 41.

42. Joseph R. Allen, *In the Voice of Others: Chinese Music Bureau Poetry* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies Publications, 1992), 232.

43. Ji Qin 冀勤, annot., *Yuan Zhen ji* 元稹集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 24.277. Also cited in Angela C. Y. Jung Palandri, *Yüan Chen* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), 57.

44. Zhu Jincheng 朱金城, annot., *Bai Juyi ji jianjiao* 白居易集箋校 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chuban she, 1988), 2.136.

45. *Yuan Zhen ji*, 24.283; also Palandri, 90.

46. *Yuan Zhen ji*, 24.283; see also the translation in Palandri, 90. Following the phonological reconstructions in David Prager Branner, "Yīntōng Chinese Phonological Database" (http://americanorientalsociety.org/yintong/public/), accessed April 14, 2011, the entire poem uses the rhyme *yangQ* 養.

獸返深山鳥構巢，鷹鵰鷂鶻無羈鞅。
貞元之歲貢馴犀，上林置圈宮司養。
玉盆金棧非不珍，虎啖狴牢魚食網。
渡江之橘踰汶貉，反時易性安能長。
臘月北風霜雪深，踡跼鱗身遂長往。
行地無疆費傳驛，通天異物罹幽枉。
乃知養獸如養人，不必人人自敦獎。
不擾則得之於理，不奪有以多於賞。
脫衣推食衣食之，不若男耕女令紡。
堯民不自知有堯，但見安閑聊擊壤。
前觀馴象後觀犀，理國其如指諸掌。

1 At the beginning of the Jianzhong reign, tame elephants were released,
From afar they returned to Linyi; near, they were delivered to Guang.[47]
Beasts return to secluded mountains, birds build nests,
But goshawk and eagle, sparrowhawk and falcon are freed from jesses and leashes.
5 In the Zhenyuan reign, a tame rhinoceros was brought in tribute,
It was put in a pen in the Shanlin park, under government care.
As for its jade basin and golden stall, neither was not valuable,
But how can tigers feed while imprisoned, or fish eat when netted?
The tangerine that crossed the river, the badger that passed over Wen,[48]
10 To go against seasons and to change nature—how can this extend life?
The northern wind of the twelfth month, the frost and snow deep,
The rhinoceros coiled its scaly body, then forever departed.
It had walked endless lands, in vain transferred from post-station to post-station,
The strange "communicating with heaven" creature met with injustice.
15 Thus we know caring for beasts is like caring for people,
There is no need to commend everyone.
If you do not intervene, then they attain it in their natural pattern,[49]
If you do not wrongfully take, there will be a greater reward.
Taking off one's clothes and refusing food so as to clothe and feed them,[50]
20 Is not as good as men plowing and women in charge of spinning.
The people of Yao's time did not themselves know there was a Yao,
But being at leisure they played "hitting the clapper."[51]
Before we saw the tame elephant, later we saw the rhinoceros,
The ordering of the state—it is like pointing to one's palm.[52]

47. Linyi can refer both to a region of Guizhou and to part of Vietnam; Guang refers to Guangdong and Guangxi.

48. This is the sour-peel tangerine. After being taken across north across the Huai river, the fruit became inedible; likewise, the badger could not survive across the Wen river. *Zhou li zhu shu* 周禮注疏, in *Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 39.906a.

49. The "it" here seems to refer to the natural state of being.

50. Yang Jun notes that this a reference to *Shiji* biography of the Marquis of Huai-yin, in which the Marquis praises the King of Han's kindness and trust, the former exemplified by the King sharing his own food and clothing. See Yang Jun 楊軍, *Yuan Zhen ji biannian jianzhu* 元稹集編年箋注 (Xi'an: Sanqin chubanshe, 2002), 121, and the biography in Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 92.2622.

51. *Jirang* 擊壤 is a game in which players attempt to throw a wooden piece as close as possible to another wooden piece. According to legend, the sage ruler Yao went out on tour and encountered a man playing *jirang* in the road, who then chanted a verse in praise of the simple life possible under sagely rule. The game, and the song chanted by the man, later came to stand for social harmony. See Yang Xiaoshan, *Metamorphosis of the Private Sphere: Gardens and Objects in Tang-Song Poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 2003), 197 n. 2.

52. *Analects* 3.11. See Cheng Shude 程樹德 comp., *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 5.172.

A second piece of historical information is given in the first two couplets. In 780, Dezong 德宗, newly ascended to the throne, had released elephants, hawks, and dogs in the palace care, while also dismissing a large number of palace women. According to Edward Schafer, the release of animals and servants was in part an austerity measure, but here it is treated as a return to the natural state of affairs.[53] The liberation of these animals might also be understood as a Buddhist act, *fangsheng* 放生, a release of captive animals intended for consumption.[54] In the poem, the animals Dezong frees know where to return, and they take up their proper activities. The arrival of the rhinoceros as tribute is thus juxtaposed with the appropriate treatment of these earlier animals: taken out of its natural environment, it is placed in an imperial park to be cared for by the government. However, this contrasts sharply with the release of the animals; where the falcons and hawks were freed from their bindings, we now see the rhinoceros placed in an enclosure. The next two couplets heighten the distinction between what is natural and what is forced or cultivated. The rhinoceros is treated well—it drinks from jade and sups from gold—but captivity impedes the most basic and natural of activities. The care of the animal seems not to be at issue: *Jiu Tangshu* notes at the animal's death that it was "dearly loved" (甚珍愛).[55] And yet, as with the tangerine and badger relocated to new, colder climes, altering the patterns of nature shortens life. The rhinoceros, from the more temperate regions, curled up and died when faced with northern winds and snow. Yuan Zhen augments the sense that this death was in vain by describing the length and futility of the journey to bring the rhinoceros to the capital, perhaps also suggesting the inappropriateness of this kind of tribute.

Yuan Zhen concludes his poem by making explicit his message, which is that there is a "natural" way to govern. His link is the phrase "Thus we knowing caring for beasts is like caring for people" 乃知養獸如養人. However, Yuan Zhen does not use the correct care of people to inform the care of rhinoceroses; rather we are to extract lessons about correctly governing the people from the negative example of the rhinoceros. The next two couplets elaborate this theme, by stressing that people should not be overly manipulated or forced. They should not even be given too much, as this would interfere with natural functions such as tilling the land and spinning cloth. The poem concludes with two examples of perfect, natural government. First, under Yao's rule, people were so content that could enjoy simple games, unaware and unconcerned with government. In the final line the image of pointing to one's palm, a gesture that conveys ease and naturalness, is a familiar phrase from the *Analects*. Under sage rulers we are to assume that the rhinoceros would not have died and the people would be content. Yuan Zhen used this sad episode to state his concerns about government.

Although he also uses this subject to reflect on governance, Bai Juyi's poem recounts the episode in greater detail, augmenting the emotional impact of the poem. Following the title of each of his fifty "new *yuefu*" poems, Bai adds a brief sentence to state the intent of the work. For this poem he writes, "I am stirred by the difficulty of bringing governance to

53. Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, 82.

54. I am grateful to the reviewer for suggesting this connection. On *fangsheng* see Joanna F. Handlin Smith, "Liberating Animals in Ming-Qing China: Buddhist Inspiration and Elite Imagination," *Journal of Asian Studies* 58 (1999): 51–84, esp. p. 52, where she notes that the Tang emperor Suzong 肅宗 (r. 756–762) set up ponds for releasing fish.

55. Liu Xu 劉煦, *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 13.385. This entry for the twelfth month also notes that it snowed two feet, killing off trees as well. For the arrival of the rhinoceros, see *Jiu Tang shu* 13.377.

completion" 感為政之難終.[56] Like Yuan, Bai juxtaposes the release of the elephants with the death of the rhinoceros. The meaning he draws from the two events would seem to be similar to that of Yuan, but Bai does not make it explicit.

馴犀 Tame Rhinoceros
馴犀馴犀通天犀，軀貌駭人角駭雞。
海蠻聞有明天子，驅犀乘傳來萬里。[57]
一朝得謁大明宮，歡呼拜舞自論功。
五年馴養始堪獻，六譯語言方得通。
上嘉人獸俱來遠，蠻館四方犀入苑。
秣以瑤芻鎖以金，故鄉迢遞君門深。
海鳥不知鐘鼓樂，池魚空結江湖心。
馴犀生處南方熱，秋無白露冬無雪。
一入上林三四年，又逢今歲苦寒月。
飲冰臥霰苦蜷跼，角骨凍傷鱗甲縮。
馴犀死蠻兒啼，向闕再拜顏色低。
奏乞生歸本國去，恐身凍死似馴犀。
君不見建中初，馴象生還放林邑。
君不見貞元末，馴犀凍死蠻兒泣。
所嗟建中異貞元，象生犀死何足言。

1 Tame rhinoceros, tame rhinoceros, "communicating with heaven" rhinoceros,
Its appearance scares people, its horn scares chickens.
The Man of the sea heard there was an august emperor,
Drove the rhinoceros forth, post-station to post-station, coming ten thousand *li*,
5 One morning they had an audience at Daming Palace,
Hailing aloud and making obeisance, they themselves discoursed on its merits.
After five years taming it, [the rhinoceros] was fit for presentation,
Six times the words were translated, and only then were they understood.
The emperor praised both humans and beast, both come from afar.
10 The Man lodged at the tribute-bearers' hostel, the rhinoceros entered the park.
It was fed with fine fodder and caged in gold,
Its old homeland far, its master's gates deep.
The sea bird does not know the music of bells and drums,
Fish in the pool in vain form desire for rivers and lakes.
15 The rhinoceros's birthplace is in the hot southern regions,
where autumn had no frost, in winter, no snow.
Once it entered the imperial park in the twelfth year,
it again encountered the bitter cold month of this year.
Drinking ice, sleeping in sleet, curled up in suffering,
20 Horn and bones injured from the cold, scales shrunken.
The tame rhinoceros died, the Man grooms wept,
Facing the throne, they bowed time and again with lowered countenance.
They entreated [the emperor] to return alive to their homeland,
Afraid that their bodies would freeze to death like the tame rhinoceros.
25 Have you not heard that at the beginning of the Jianzhong reign,
Tame elephants were returned alive to Linyi?[58]

56. Zhu, *Bai Juyi ji jianjiao*, 3.185–86. The poem follows.

57. The first two lines have the rhyme *dzei* 齊 / *tsyiQ* 止; the next two lines rhyme on *tung* 東. Lines 9 through 14 use the rhyme *ngwan* 元 / *tshem* 侵, followed by the rhyme *sat* 薛 / *ngwat* 月 / *uk* 屋 for lines 15 through 20. The next two lines use the rhyme *dzei* 齊, followed by two lines rhymed with *tshep* 緝, and a final line with the rhyme *ngwan* 元.

58. Linyi was the kingdom preceding Champa, in what is now Vietnam.

Have you not heard that at the end of the Zhenyuan reign,
The tame rhinoceros froze to death, and the Man grooms wept?
How regrettable, that the Jianzhong reign was different from the Zhenyuan reign,
30 Elephants alive, a rhinoceros dead—how can words be sufficient?

Bai Juyi begins with an exclamation about the rhinoceros, highlighting the unusual qualities of the rhinoceros we have seen already: its ability to "communicate with heaven," its fearsome body, and its horn that scares chickens. From these general qualities, the poem shifts to the circumstances of the tribute mission that brought this particular rhinoceros. Here Bai is more detailed than Yuan, relating that it was a gift from the Man, and had been trained for five years, then brought over great distance by its grooms.[59] As in Yuan Zhen's poem, we see that superficially the rhinoceros was treated well, housed in the imperial park and fed lavishly, but contravening nature led to disaster. The rhinoceros's home territory is described as warm and free of snow, which made it unprepared for a harsh northern winter. Faced with frigid weather, its only defense was to curl up, but even still it suffered and died, to the sorrow and horror of the grooms who had accompanied it. Bai concludes by contrasting the death of the rhinoceros with the freeing of the elephants roughly twenty years earlier, bemoaning the difference between the two reign periods.

Both the extended treatment of the rhinoceros's suffering and the reaction of the Man hostlers make this poem more emotionally vivid than Yuan's version. Further, Bai suggests that the tears of the Man were the proper response to the death of the rhinoceros. This echoes the falconers and musicians forced to watch An Lushan massacre the elephants, who wept spontaneously in reaction to the slaughter. Interestingly, in both cases it is marginal people who empathize with the animals. This detail would seem to carry a rebuke: Bai Juyi, by showing the emotional response of "barbarians," is pointing out the callousness of his peers. Indeed, many of Bai Juyi's "new *yuefu*" poems point out social ills that he feels are unrecognized by the leading elites of his age.[60] However, Bai Juyi's version is less overtly political than Yuan's. While the normative emotional response is indicated by the Man grooms' tears, the political message is conveyed primarily through the juxtaposition of the release of elephants and the death of the rhinoceros.

The views of animal tribute presented by Yuan Zhen and Bai Juyi intertwine two perspectives on animals and their territories. The first sees animals as intimately connected to their place of origin, as indeed were humans. Roel Sterckx writes that this "sociobiological order" tied animal life to the climate and quality of the soil, and that "humans and animals cannot transgress their habitat or change locality without significant physical, social, or symbolical consequences."[61] Yuan Zhen's reference to the tangerine and badger that could not survive

59. The Man were a group of tribes that lived in the southwest, between Chengdu and Tibet. See Charles Backus, *The Nan-chao Kingdom and T'ang China's Southern Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981), 27. Backus notes that a number of the Man peoples were conquered by the Nanzhao after 794, and that the term "Man" was often used imprecisely in the Tang, sometimes referring to the Nanzhao, and sometimes referring more generally to border peoples to the south and southwest (pp. 99, 104). The term "hai Man" 海蠻 here suggests that Bai is thinking of someplace more southward than westward.

60. His attack on the new Chancellor of the Right in the poem "Government Ox" (官牛) is another poem about the suffering of an animal. Forced to haul sand to create a clean path for the new Chancellor, the ox's neck "will stream with blood." Bai concludes the poem by asking, rather sarcastically, "Are you only able to benefit the people, bring the state to order, and harmonize the yin and yang? Can't you also prevent the galls on the neck of your government ox?" 但能濟人治國調陰陽，官牛領穿亦無妨. Denis Twitchett, "Po Chü-i's 'Government Ox'," *T'ang Studies* 7 (1989): 23.

61. Roel Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2002), 105.

beyond their own territory is a reflection of this view. Likewise, in Bai's poem the fear of the Man grooms is based in part on the belief that they shared salient characteristics with the rhinoceros, and thus might suffer the same fate removed from their homeland. From this perspective, the rhinoceros could never acclimate to a new place, and the role of the emperor was secondary. However, another tradition held that the ruler exercised dominion over not just land and peoples, but animals as well: "Through transcending the regular geographical order in which both human and animal species would dwell on their regional soil without crossing territorial boundaries, both the human subject and the animal object were invested with real and symbolic authority."[62] Such a view provides the logic behind imperial animal parks and the presentation of exotic animals as tribute. In this case, the demise of the rhinoceros demonstrated the impotence of the emperor, who was unable to maintain the animals of his realm and by extension the symbolic order unifying different regions. When Yuan and Bai compare the Jianzhong and Zhenyuan reigns, it is to undercut the latter's claim to "symbolic authority." This also reflects the shift in Emperor Dezong's standing: while his reign began well, by the time the rhinoceros arrived he had ceded a good deal of power to the provinces, and increasingly relied on eunuchs. Yuan and Bai's criticism of the former emperor also reflects their optimism about the times in which they composed the poems, the early years of the reign of Xianzong 憲宗 (806–820).[63] In short, in these poems both models of the relationship between animals and territory seem to be active: the rhinoceros died because it was out of place, an unnatural condition, but also because the sovereign lacked the cosmic power to unite the discrete parts of the realm. These two perspectives are mirrored in the interpretative possibilities for Dongshan's reply to the query about Bodhidharma.

If we return to Dongshan and his utterance on the rhinoceros, it is possible that his biography may have shaped his response. He lived two generations later than Bai and Yuan, and his career was bisected by suppression of Buddhism in the Huichang 會昌 reign period (841–846), with the most active period of his career occurring afterwards.[64] As noted earlier, a survey of the other animals mentioned in his conversations with students strongly suggests that the rhinoceros is a literary reference from the Chinese tradition. Given that the chicken-scaring quality is associated with the rhinoceros's horn, he may be making reference to the lore granting the horn supernatural qualities. The horn gains its powers either from the sky or through the ingesting of poisonous plants, and its powers all have to do with repelling undesirable things, from chickens to moisture to poison. Dongshan's comparison to Bodhidharma may hinge on this repellence: his teachings cannot be approached in the normal fashion. As the horn frightens off the birds, Bodhidharma's teachings repel the masses. But the horn can be interpreted in another way. To be used, it must be severed from the rhinoceros, doing violence to the animal and transforming part of its body into medicine or ornament. If the comparison is understood as referring to these aspects of the horn, it may then be a critique of the exoticization of Bodhidharma's teachings.

Yet it is not so clear that Dongshan meant the horn, and the problem of distinguishing between references to the rhinoceros and those to its horn is a longstanding one. Indeed, this distinction forms the core of the ninety-first case of the *Biyan lu* 碧巖錄:

62. Sterckx, *Animal and Daemon*, 111.

63. On Dezong's reign, see C. A. Peterson, "Court and Province in Mid- and Late T'ang," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 3: *Sui and T'ang China, 589–906*, pt. 1, ed. Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), 497–521.

64. Abe Chōichi 阿部肇一, *Zhongguo Chanzong shi* 中國禪宗史, tr. Guan Shiqian 關世謙 (Taibei: Dongda tushu, 1988), 84.

> 鹽官一日喚侍者。與我將犀牛扇子來。侍者云，扇子破也。官云，扇子既破，還我犀牛兒來。侍者無對。投子云，不辭將出，恐頭角不全 。雪竇拈云，我要不全底頭角。石霜云，若還和尚即無也。雪竇拈云，犀牛兒猶在。 資福畫一圓相，於中書一牛字雪。竇拈云，適來為什麼不將出?
>
> One day Yanguan called to his attendant, "Bring me my rhinoceros fan!" The attendant said, "The fan is broken." [Yan]guan said, "If the fan is broken, return to me the rhinoceros!" The attendant had no response.
>
> Touzi said, "I do not refuse to bring it out, but I'm afraid that its horn is not complete."[65] Xuedou took this up and said, "I want an incomplete horn." Shishuang said, "If I return it to the monk, then I'll be without." Xuedou took this up and said, "The rhinoceros will still be there." Zifu drew a circle and wrote the character for *niu* in it. Xuedou said, "Just now, why didn't you bring it out?"[66]

From this passage, we first see that rhinoceros horn was used for objects around the monastery beyond just the *ruyi*. More importantly, this series of exchanges plays with the problems of language and representation, and the relationship of part to whole. If the "fan" of a "rhinoceros fan" is broken, this says nothing about the state of the "rhinoceros," and thus it should be possible to return the rhinoceros. (This is, *mutatis mutandi*, a version of Gongsun Long's white horse paradox.) Touzi, later suggesting how the attendant might have answered, asserts that the horn was not whole—which it certainly was not, since it had been carved into a fan. The exchange between Shishuang and Xuedou returns to the relationship between the "fan" and the "rhinoceros" of the "rhinoceros fan," and their presence or absence. Finally, Zifu applies the tactic Yanguan used with regard to the "rhinoceros fan" to the word "rhinoceros" itself: throughout the exchange the binomial *xiniu* has been used, and here Zifu uses the second character *niu*, meaning "cow," which can no more stand for "rhinoceros" than "fan" can adequately designate "rhinoceros fan." Further, the character *xi* 犀 has a *niu* 牛 as its lower component, providing a visual echo of the distinction between *xiniu* and *niu*. Thus Zifu makes doubly plain the gap between word and representation, since he not only *writes* a character, but writes the character for "cow," which makes up the lower half of rhinoceros. Hence he garners guarded praise from Xuedou. However inventive and entertaining this wordplay is, the rhinoceros is used here primarily because its horn serves as synecdoche for the animal, not for the qualities of the horn or the animal itself. These exchanges require only that an object's source material be readily identifiable and distinct from the object itself, and the particularities of rhinoceros horn have no bearing here.

In his response, Dongshan does not mention the horn, and given this fact I would argue that he likely refers to the more recent death of the rhinoceros in the late Zhenyuan reign period and its representation in the poems by Yuan and Bai. If this is indeed the case, Buddhism, or Chan specifically, is being likened to the rhinoceros. For a ninth-century reader the rhinoceros was a creature brought from far away that could not survive in China even though treated well. As a response to the query about Bodhidharma's travels from the West, "chicken-scaring rhinoceros" functions as a rebuke to the student. Like the rhinoceros, Dongshan implies, Bodhidharma's teaching will not survive because the environment is unsuitable,[67] an echo of the biological perspective tying fauna to a specific place. In fact, the

65. *Toujiao* 頭角 refers to the horn here, but the term can also describe a young man of talent who distinguishes himself from others.

66. *T* 48: 215c1–10. For an alternate translation, see Thomas Cleary and J. C. Cleary, tr., *The Blue Cliff Record* (Boston: Shambala, 1992), 501. Note that the Clearys translate *niu* as 'rhinoceros'.

67. Buddhism has a long history of predicting its own demise, a tradition that began in India and was well accepted in China. In the Chinese context the decline of Buddhist teaching was described by three time periods, of

inhospitable environment is none other than the student-interlocutor himself, asking futile questions. This is a common pattern in Chan dialogues, with teachers fond of deflating those who thought they understood, and of remarking that the teaching may well be destroyed.

This reading, while making reference to external events, understands the exchange as internal to Chan itself. It is also possible to take the reference to the rhinoceros as more political in nature, as Yuan Zhen and Bai Juyi did. For the two poets, the treatment of the rhinoceros was a symbol of poor, and overly interventionist, government. Given that Dongshan lived through the Huichang suppression of Buddhism, he may have had reason to see the dynamic between the rhinoceros and the government in a similar light. The government was directly responsible for the downfall of Buddhism. Although William Powell has observed that there is no mention of the Huichang suppression in Dongshan's *yulu*—and remarks that this is a notable omission—this may indeed be an oblique reference to this episode to Buddhist history.[68] In this reading, the futility of the Bodhidharma's mission is due to external threats, and the failures of Chinese rulers.[69]

Although these readings offer two possible contexts for Dongshan's response, our interpretation is complicated by the fact that it is difficult to map a consistent set of meanings onto the figure of the rhinoceros. This is not true only of the rhinoceros, and many references in *yulu* lack sufficient context. Such exchanges, like many other examples in literature, rely on omission: Stephen Owen writes that the act of reading a poem entails supplying what the poem did not, and further, that "the complete ground can never be filled in; it is against the interests of the poem that this ever occur. The energy of the poem may lie in that very process, and for the process to have force it must continue to withhold basic information."[70] The exchanges in Chan *yulu*, some of which were later included in *gong'an* collections, often function in much the same way. The exchanges are always terse, and the meanings are often not immediately clear and are shaped by the indeterminacy of language, as in poetry. In this case, it is particularly apt that a phrase appearing in Bai Juyi's *yuefu* made its way to the mouth of Dongshan. In 839 Bai Juyi sent a copy of his collected works to a Buddhist library, explaining the purpose of his contribution in this way: "May the worldly writings of my present incarnation, all the wanton talk and fine phrases, be changed into a hymn of praise that shall glorify the doctrines of the Buddha in age on age to come, and cause the Wheel of Law forever to turn."[71] His phrases many have found a roundabout turning of the Law in Dongshan's reference.

I will discuss one final example of the intersection of Buddhism, rhinoceroses, and literary culture. The "Ballad of the Stone Rhinoceros" (石犀行) by Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) takes as its topic the statues erected by Li Bing 李冰 (third c. B.C.E.) to guard his irrigation system. Faced with the frequent flooding of the Min 岷 River, yet wishing to avoid damming the

True Dharma 正法, Semblance Dharma 像法, and End Dharma 末法. While not specifically associated with the Chan school, the idea of End Dharma would have been a familiar concept to Tang Buddhists. For a history of the concept of End Dharma and the three ages, see Jan Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time: Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline* (Berkeley: Asia Humanities Press, 1991).

68. Powell, *Record of Tung-shan*, 18.

69. Mid- and late-Tang anxiety about foreignness plays out in fox stories more clearly, as "fox" and "barbarian" were homophones. See Xiaofei Kang, "The Fox [*hu* 狐] and the Barbarian [*hu* 胡]: Unraveling Representations of the Other in Late Tang Tales," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 27 (1999): 35–67.

70. Stephen Owen, "Poetry and Its Historical Ground," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, and Reviews* 12 (1990): 111.

71. Arthur Waley, *The Life and Times of Po Chü-i (772–846 A.D.)* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1949), 193–94. This passage is also quoted in Bernard Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights: A Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993), 205.

river, Li created artificial channels to control the water. Five stone rhinoceros were made to "satiate the water spirit" 厭水精.[72] These statues may be conceptually related to ritual vessels and royal ornamentation in the shape of rhinoceroses. Rhinoceros-shaped ritual vessels from the late Shang period and several late Eastern Zhou belt-hooks in rhinoceros form link the animal to political and symbolic power.[73] Rhinoceroses serve a similar function at Xianling, the tomb of the first Tang emperor. There a pair of stone rhinoceroses, carved in a life-like manner with a single small horn, heavy armor, and scales on the legs, guard the tomb in the only extant instance of this animal in connection with imperial graves.[74]

Du Fu regards these kinds of displays as superficial, and rejects the idea that animals or supernatural creatures can affect nature. Such superstition is ineffectual in comparison with good government. He makes this argument with reference to five stone rhinoceroses:[75]

君不見秦時蜀太守，刻石立作五犀牛.[76]
自古雖有厭勝法，天生江水向東流。
蜀人矜誇一千載，泛溢不近張儀樓。
今年灌口損戶口，此事或恐為神羞。
修築隄防出眾力，高擁木石當清秋。
先王作法皆正道，詭怪何得參人謀。
嗟爾五犀不經濟，缺訛只與長川逝。
但見元氣常調和，自免洪濤恣凋瘵。
安得壯士提天綱，再平水土犀奔茫。[77]

1 Have you not seen that during the Qin, the governor of Shu,
Carved stone to erect five rhinoceroses.
Although from ancient times there were methods to control things,[78]
Heaven produced the rivers that flow to the east.
5 The people of Shu boast that for a thousand years,
The rising waters have not approached Zhang Yi's tower.[79]
This year Guankou[80] has lost population,

72. Ren Naiqiang 任乃強, annot., *Huayang guo zhi jiao bu tu zhu* 華陽國志校補圖注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chuban she, 1987), 3.133. See 136 n. 6, where Ren connects the ability of the rhinoceros to control water with the power of the rhinoceros horn to part water, as described by Ge Hong.

73. Jan Fontein and Tung Wu, *Unearthing China's Past* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1973), 54–55.

74. Ann Paludan, *The Chinese Spirit Road: The Classical Tradition of Stone Tomb Statuary* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1991), 88–89, esp. illus. 103. Paludan does not draw any conclusions about the significance of rhinoceros statues here. She notes that one of the rhinoceroses is now in the Shaanxi Provincial Museum, and the other was buried in order "to facilitate the modernization of agriculture." In such contexts, the rhinoceros likely symbolized strength, and because of this is often found paired with bulls in Tang art. I am grateful to Chao-Hui Jenny Liu for bringing this to my attention.

75. Although these are stone animals, they too are included in the entry on rhinoceroses in the *Taiping Yulan* 太平御覽, 890.3954a.

76. Note that the texts of Guo Zhida, 郭知達, *Jiujia jizhu Du shi* 九家集註杜詩 (Taibei: Taiwan Datong shuju, 1974), 7.475, and Jin Shengqin 金聖歎, *Du shi jie* 杜詩解 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chuban she, 1984), 2.115, have three rather than five rhinoceroses. Pu Qilong 浦起龍 suggests that three is an error in *Du Du xinjie* 讀杜心解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 2b.271. The rhymes for this poem are as follows: lines 1 through 12 use the rhyme *ghou* 尤 / *ghou* 侯, with lines 13 through 16 employing the rhyme *tseiH* 祭 / *kweiH* 怪, and the final line using *dang*唐.

77. Qiu Zhao'ao 仇兆鰲, *Du shi xiangzhu* 杜詩詳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 10.835–36.

78. *Yansheng fa* 厭勝法 indicates spells and other techniques of sorcery used to dominate or control others or things.

79. Zhang Yi is credited with building the city walls of Chengdu in the fourth century B.C.E. One story of its founding indicates that initial attempts at building were unsuccessful. A great tortoise appeared and made a circle, whereupon a shaman advised that this be the new location of the walls. Zhang Yi's tower is to the southwest, overlooking the river. See Qiu, *Du shi xiangzhu*, 10.835.

80. Guankou is located to the northwest of Chengdu.

And this fact some fear is an embarrassment to the spirits.
In rebuilding dikes all exert their strength,
10 Lifting wood and stone in the clear autumn.
The methods of the former kings were all the True Way,
How could strange beings participate in human plans?
Alas, the five rhinoceroses do not manage and aid,
Disintegrating and flowing with the long river.
15 Only if one sees the Primal Qi as always in harmony,
Can one naturally avoid great waves unleashing their destruction.
How can one find a stalwart to lift Heaven's guide-rope,
And again calm water and earth as the rhinoceroses rush to oblivion?

Du Fu contrasts the former effectiveness of Li Bing's irrigation channels, as represented by the rhinoceroses, with the loss of life in the present year. Gods and spirits, what Du Fu calls "strange beings," are opposed to the "True Way" in the previous line. Du Fu describes the masses working to build dikes and levees against winter rains, the appropriate response to the forces of nature.[81] The "True Way" established by the former kings is distinctly human, something in which supernatural forces do not take part. The next couplet returns to the stone rhinoceroses, and Du Fu describes their disintegration over time: they break apart, eroded by wind and water, and gradually slip into the river whose banks they were meant to control. In contrast to the eternal Way of the former kings, it is the inability of the stone rhinoceroses to exercise any real control that dooms them to eventual disappearance. The correct way to control flooding, on the other hand, is to find a bold man who understands natural patterns; when this happens the rhinoceroses will disintegrate, unnecessary and insignificant, and be carried off in the river waters.

For Du Fu, the rhinoceroses were clearly associated with "methods to suppress things" 厭勝法. Further linked with "strange beings"—things like demons and monsters—the rhinoceroses are contrasted with the natural order, good government as the Way of the former kings, and the proper, effective means to control water. People should build dams and levees, rather than relying on talismans. Magic powers do not exist, and the forces of nature are controlled through understanding them in accordance with the right Way. In the conceptual world of a proponent of Confucian governance, Buddhism would align with the superstition represented by the stone rhinoceroses. The Qing dynasty commentator Qiu Zhao'ao (1638–1717) makes this association plain. He adds the following comment to the poem, reading it as an allegory with very specific referents:

乾元元年九月，置道場於三殿以宮人為佛菩薩, 北門武士為金剛神王，召大臣膜拜圍繞。當時黷禮不經甚矣，故有厭勝詭怪等語。且自李峴貶斥，朝無正人，故有調和元氣之說。

In the ninth month of the first year of Qianyuan (758), altars were set up in the Sandian hall, and using palace servants as Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and academicians and military men as the vajra spirit-kings, the Grand Ministers were ordered to kneel and worship them, and circumambulate them. At this time the rituals were corrupted and extremely disordered. Thus [Du Fu] talks about the magical spells, demons, monsters, and so forth. Also, because of the demotion of Li Xian, the imperial court had no upright men, and thus there is talk of harmonizing the Primal Vapor.[82]

81. In his commentary Qiu Zhao'ao makes explicit the connection between building levees and the "True Way." Qiu, *Du shi xiangzhu*, 10.836.

82. Qiu, *Du shi xiangzhu*, 10.836. Li Xian 李峴 (709–766) was demoted twice, once during the reign of Xuanzong and once during the reign of Suzong. The latter demotion occurred in 759, and is likely the one meant here. Li Xian was considered an upright and compassionate official. Zhao Cigong 趙次公 likewise connects this poem

Although elements of Qiu's explanation of the poem may seem like over-interpretation, in his view it is possible to connect rhinoceroses with Buddhism, both here representing superstition. Buddhism, like the rhinoceros, could be assigned many values, due to the fact that they were both marginal. Just as in early Chinese and Western writings on the rhinoceros there is disagreement about what exactly the animal looks like, likewise the shape of Buddhism remains culturally ill-defined, subject both to honor and disparagement. Although rhinoceros and Buddhism do not emerge as a standard pair, their paths crossed more than once as they made their way from the border regions to the Central Plain.

The tangled relationship between Buddhism and rhinoceros, and the resulting ambiguity in Dongshan's response, also reflects the complexity of Chan *yulu* and *gong'an* literature. These are not meaningless or mystical locutions meant to thwart ratiocination and leave the student in awe of the Chan master. Arguing against this position, informed by his analysis of Zhaozhou's *wu* 無, Robert Sharf has written that *gong'an* present "a dialectical method that could be applied to a wide range of doctrinal issues."[83] Certainly this method is at work in the case about the rhinoceros-horn fan from the *Blue Cliff Record*. However, the proto-case of Dongshan's rhinoceros requires cultural knowledge of the rhinoceros, a body of knowledge that never entirely crystallized. Further complications arise from the fact that the rhinoceros and its horn are at times treated as synonymous, even as each has specific boundaries of meaning. The multivalence of the rhinoceros means that the answer to our question of why the rhinoceros has come from the west is no more easily resolved than the question put to Dongshan. Yet this does not reflect the impenetrability of Chan but rather the intended and incidental lacunae present in reading medieval Chinese literature.

to Li's demotion, although he draws no connection to Buddhism. See Zhao Cigong 趙次公, *Du shi Zhao Cigong xian hou jie ji jiao* 杜诗趙次公先後解辑校 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chuban she, 1994), 3a.403–4. On Li Xian see Denis Twitchett, "Hsüan-tsung," *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 3, 451; *Jiu Tang shu* 112.3343–45; Sima Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1956), 221.7076–77. Sandian 三殿 is another name for the Linde Hall 臨德殿, which was located in the Daming Palace (大明宮).

83. Sharf, "How to Think with Chan *Gong'an*," 235.