

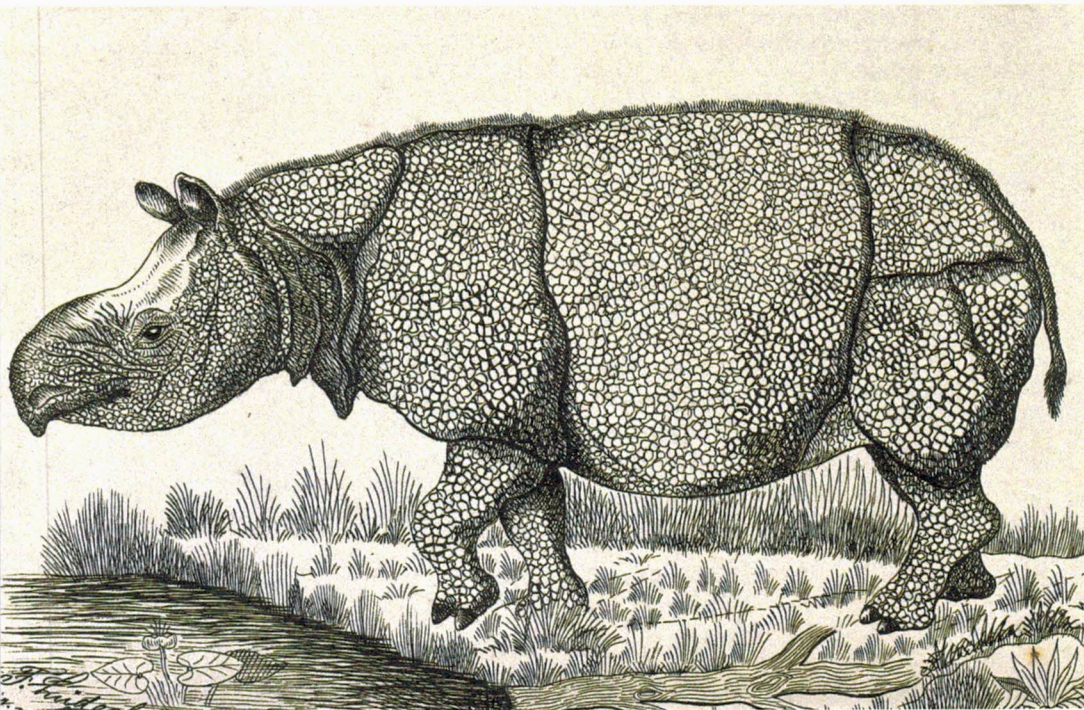


A sketch of a Javan Rhinoceros in Germany in 1882

BY KEES ROOKMAAKER

There have been only two specimens of the Javan rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) alive in Europe. The first, imported from Java, was exhibited in the London Zoo from 7 March 1874 to 23 January 1885 (EDWARDS 2012). The second specimen was offered for sale by the animal dealer CARL HAGENBECK in Hamburg in 1881. In many ways this extreme rarity of the species in captivity is surprising, because the animals once had a very extended range throughout most of Southeast Asia. Although Javan rhinos are not easily seen in their original habitat, it is remarkable that they were much less often captured than the other species of rhinoceros in the same region. Maybe we have overlooked some or misidentified them. In my own works, I have followed a rather rigorous principle that there must be positive proof that a certain specimen was in fact *R. sondaicus* rather than

Pen-and-ink sketch of a Javan rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) signed by F. LÜDECKE, 1882.



the more common Greater one-horned rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*). The two species are easily confused, especially when there is only written evidence, like the “Liverpool rhinoceros” of 1834–1843 (ROOKMAAKER 1993) and Huguet’s rhinoceros of 1845–1862 (ROOKMAAKER 2015), both suggested to be Javan but in fact Indian. However, the possibility of wrong identification always remains. Earlier in my listings of rhinos in captivity (ROOKMAAKER 1998), I included the specimen owned by HAGENBECK, but I was unable to discover who bought the animal from him. DITTRICH & RIEKE-MÜLLER (1998), however, have shown that HAGENBECK in 1881 exchanged it with REICHE, the rival firm of animal dealers run by CARL (1827–1885) and HEINRICH (1833–1887) REICHE in Alfeld. REICHE in turn sold it to Baron VON OPPENHEIM to be donated to the Zoo in Cologne. As far as I am aware, there is no record of the specimen in that facility (KOHLE 1981 only mentions *R. unicornis*), but one day some details may be found.

In the Wellcome Library in London, there is a set of drawings signed by F. LÜDECKE showing different types of animals (catalogue online, see references). There are 27 items attributed to this artist. They appear to be pen and ink drawings, three with watercolour. They are all mounted on cardboard mounts. The lettering indicating authorship is written on the drawing sheet, while the identifications of the animals in German and Latin names (available in 13 cases) are written on the mounts. Sometimes the authorship lettering is repeated on the mounts. The animal names provided by the artist, besides the rhinos, were *Leopardus antiquorum*, *Felis onca*, *Felis senegalensis*, *Felis concolor*, *Tapirus indicus* (coloured), *Equus burchelli*, *Hippopotamus amphibius* (one coloured, one monochrome), *Elenantilope*, *Beisa*, and *Casuaris galeatus*.

One of the watercolour drawings (size 12.8x18.3 cm) shows an “Einhörniges Nashorn, (*Rhinoceros indicus*)” – now *Rhinoceros unicornis* – and is signed “F. LÜDECKE gez. n.d. Leben 1881. Hbg.” where Hbg. is likely to be an abbreviation for Hamburg. An uncoloured pen-and-ink drawing (size 11.3x17.3 cm) is called “Javanisches Nashorn (*Rhinoceros javanicus*)” and is signed “F. LÜDECKE gez. n.d. Leben 1882” (fig. 1). There is no place name. The triangular shape of the shoulder folds clearly shows that this was the Javan rhinoceros, significantly said to be drawn from a living specimen (“n.d. Leben” = nach dem Leben). It probably was a young specimen, maybe a couple of years old. The absence of any indication of a horn is noticeable, as this was thought to be one of the characteristics of at least the females of this species living in the Sunderbunds (now largely in Bangladesh), classified as a separate subspecies *Rhinoceros sondaicus inermis*.

The style of the drawing is rather naïve, which may indicate that the artist was an amateur, who was interested in animals. None of these drawings now in the collection in London ever seem to have been published. In fact I have not been able to find any information, even the full name, of the artist F. LÜDECKE. He was obviously German, and possibly a resident of Hamburg in the 1880s. There is, however, a published plate showing three sketches of a hippopotamus signed: “F. LÜDECKE gez. n.d. Leben 1882. Hambg.” in the zoo journal *Der Zoologische Garten* (vol.21, p.133, 1883) illustrating a paper by W. SIGEL.

Given the paucity of clues, I suggest that F. LÜDECKE sketched the Javan rhinoceros in the premises of CARL HAGENBECK in Hamburg in 1882, before it was sent to its next destination. It is the only drawing of this animal known to exist, which increases its significance. It is highly likely that the animal had been captured in Ganges delta called the Sunderbunds, now divided between India and Bangladesh.

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- Wellcome Library, London, catalogue online <https://search.wellcomelibrary.org/> (accessed September 2018). The Lüdecke items can be found by searching his name in the image search.

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