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Faked rhinoceros horns. (Met 2 platen)

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FAKED RHINOCEROS HORNS

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In 1927 Neuville described and discussed at length two peculiar Java rhinoceros-horn-like specimens then in the Anthony collection, without a record for the exact locality. They show a small and blunt, slightly curved horn, and in addition five low, conical, horny eminences seemingly protruding from the skin and symmetrically arranged around the raised base of the horn (Neuville, 1927, pp. 190-195, pi. III C-D). Although Neuville did not fail to observe that the specimens had been worked with an awl or rather even with a triangular file all over the surface whereas the apical horn and the basal eminences had been artificially polished to a high degree, he nevertheless considered these to be genuine horns of the species *Rhinoceros sonddicus* Desmarest, the Java rhinoceros. In the recent *Traite de Zoölogie*, Bourdelle has refigured one of the specimens (Bourdelle, 1955, p. 1109, fig. 1050 B), and the caption to the figure reads: "Rhinoceros unicomne de la Sonde (*Rhinoceros sonddicus* Desm.) ... corne ayec sa partie basale".

I have recently obtained a specimen closely resembling the alleged rhino-horns described by Neuville. It was purchased a few years ago by the late Mr. G. Klay, senior officer at the Department of Fisheries of Indonesia, in a shop in Djakarta, and was presented to me by his son, Mr. G. Klay, Jr. The specimen is figured on pi. I.

As was at once evident from the texture of the horn (solid and stratified rather than composed of closely appressed longitudinal horn pillars) as well as from the subtriangular cross section at base (pi. II), the specimen is not a rhino horn but is manufactured from a water buffalo horn, *Bubalus bubalis* (L.), an ordinary domestic animal in Asia. Upon closer inspection it proved to consist of two parts, the apical portion of the buffalo horn having been inserted in the central cavity for the bony horn core (processus cornus) of the basal part of the horn. The two parts, firmly stuck together by means of a pin the hole of which is still to be seen in the base of the smaller portion, fit very nicely. The outer surface of the specimen, except for the shiny black central horn and the conical eminences (of which there are seven in this particular specimen) has been extensively carved and chiseled

I and II. Faked rhinoceros hom, lateral and basal views. $\frac{9}{10}$ nat. size.

in an attempt to simulate the horny skin of a rhinoceros. And a very successful attempt at that, witness their acceptance as genuine rhinoceros horns in the French zoological literature referred to above.

What is the use of these contraptions? I am greatly indebted to Dr. A. C. V. van Bemmél, one-time mammalogist at the Zoological Museum at Bogor (Java), for telling me that these "faked" rhino horns may be found in Chinese drug-stores in Djakarta. As is well known, genuine rhino horn, in powdered form, is considered by the Chinese to be a potent aphrodisiac. Now the "faked" rhino horn, placed under a glass-bell in a prominent place, visible to all customers of the drug-store, would serve as a sort of poster or sign-board indicating that the owner of the shop has the precious aphrodisiac in store. Professor A. F. P. Hulsewé of the Sinological Institute of Leiden University, has very kindly made a perusal of Chinese pharmaceutic literature but failed to find any reference to these "faked" rhino horns. This is, perhaps, not to be wondered at since the contraptions dealt with in the present paper are not really used as medicine but merely for advertising purposes. Moreover, these contraptions, although displayed in Chinese drug-stores in Java, may not be in use in China proper. Be that as it may, it seems worth while to draw attention to the "faked" rhino horns in order that the mistake signalized above will not be perpetuated.

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