

# Domesticating the Global and Materializing the Unknown: A Study of the *Album of Beasts* at the Qianlong Court



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**Abstract** In 1750, three projects of image-compilation were embarked upon by the court; namely, *Official Tributes* (*Zhigong tu* 職貢圖), *Album of Birds* (*Niao pu* 鳥譜), and *Album of Beasts* (*Shou pu* 獸譜). All were initiated around the same time (1750) and finished around the same time (1761), and they also share the same format and size. In contrast to the relatively well-studied *Official Tributes* and *Album of Birds*, the *Album of Beasts* (*Shou pu* 獸譜), a six-volume work containing 183 images, preserved in the Beijing Palace Museum, is almost unknown to the field. Significantly, this *Album of Beasts* contains a considerable amount of rewritten styles, elements, and even images from the natural history writings of Renaissance Europe, especially Renaissance Europe's depictions about the New World.

Why were these European images of animals on a global scale incorporated into the *Album of Beasts*? What was the purpose and agenda behind producing this *Album of Beasts*, which took the Court Painting Academy and related imperial workshops a total of eleven years to accomplish? And what are the roles that the European images of animals play in shaping the album? This paper focuses both on how images and knowledge of natural history from Renaissance Europe were appropriated in the *Album of Beasts*, and on analyzing the implementation of new techniques, styles, and even application of colors, to explore how the original woodblock prints of European images were materialized and domesticated alongside other images of Chinese origins. This paper seeks to demonstrate how the material aspects of the global circulation of images helped Emperor Qianlong to construct his vision of the “World” and “Empire,” in dialogue with the traditional rhetorics of Chinese politics.

In 1750, three projects of image-compilation were embarked upon by the court during the Qianlong 乾隆 reign (1736–1795); namely, the *Zhigong tu* 職貢圖 (*Official Tributes*), a visual documentation of the peoples the Qing empire ruled

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(both physically and symbolically), the *Niao pu* 鳥譜 (*Album of Birds*), an encyclopedic collection of images on birds, and the *Shou pu* 獸譜 (*Album of Beasts*), featuring zoological depictions of animals in the world. All were initiated around the same time (1750) and completed around the same time (1761); they also shared the same format and size. More importantly, an entire bureaucratic network was mobilized by the *Junji chu* 軍機處 (Grand Council), the center of political power at the time, in order to collect and produce the images, suggesting that these were highly important projects to both the court and the state. As a result, the *Official Tributes* in particular has drawn considerable attention from historians such as Pamela Kyle Crossley and Laura Hostetler.<sup>1</sup> Two previous studies by the present author have also shown that the *Official Tributes* and the *Album of Birds* were both important constituents in the formation and construction of the Qianlong emperor's (1711–1799) imperial image.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the relatively well-published and researched *Official Tributes* and the *Album of Birds*, the *Album of Beasts* (in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing), which contains six volumes and a total of 180 images, has only just begun to attract scholarly attention.<sup>3</sup> Most significantly, this *Album of Beasts* contains a considerable number of reworked styles, pictorial elements, and even entire image compositions from the natural history writings of Renaissance Europe, especially in the depictions of the New World.

Why were European images of animals on a global scale incorporated into the *Album of Beasts*? What was the purpose and agenda of producing the *Album of Beasts*, which took the Painting Academy at court and related imperial workshops a total of 11 years to accomplish? What was the role of European images of animals in shaping this album? This paper will focus on the *Album of Beasts* to demonstrate how images and knowledge about natural history from Renaissance Europe were

<sup>1</sup>Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), especially chapter 5; Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 41–9.

<sup>2</sup>Lai Yu-chih 賴毓芝, “Tuxiang, zhishi yu diguo: Qinggong de shihuoji tuhui 圖像、知識與帝國：清宮的食火雞圖繪 (Images, Knowledge, and Empire: Depicting Cassowaries in the Qing Court),” *Gugong xueshu jikan* 29, no. 2 (2011): 1–75, and its English version: Yu-chih Lai, “Images, Knowledge and Empire: Depicting Cassowaries in the Qing Court,” *Transcultural Studies* no. 1 (2013): 56–63; Lai Yu-chih 賴毓芝, “Tuxiang diguo: Qianlong chao Zhiqong tu de zhizuo yu didu chengxian 圖像帝國：乾隆朝《職貢圖》的製作與帝都呈現 (Picturing Empire: Illustrations of “Official Tribute” at the Qianlong Court and the Making of the Imperial Capital),” *Zhongyang yanjiu yuan jindai shi yanjiu suo jikan* 75 (March 2012): 1–76.

<sup>3</sup>A curator at the Palace Museum in Beijing, Li Shi 李滉, is probably one of the first to have paid attention to the *Album of Beasts*. She organized an exhibition on “*Qingdai gongting huapu zhan* 清代宮廷畫譜展 (*The Illustrated Albums from the Qing Court*),” in which she introduced several leaves from the *Album of Beasts*. Later, her colleague Yuan Jie 袁杰 wrote an introductory article on the *Album of Beasts* in 2011. See Yuan Jie, “Gugong bowuyuan cang Qianlong shiqi ‘Shou pu’ 故宮博物院藏乾隆時期《獸譜》 (The *Album of Beasts* of the Qianlong period in the Palace Museum),” *Wenwu* 7 (2011): 65–70. The complete reproduction of the extant *Album of Beasts* did not come out until 2014; Yuan Jie, ed., *Qinggong Shou pu* 清宮獸譜 (*Catalog of Animals Collected in the Qing Palace*) (Beijing: Gugong bowuyuan, 2014).

appropriated in China, while also analyzing the implementation of new techniques, styles, and even ways of applying colors to explore how woodblock printed images of European origin were materialized and “domesticated” to fit with Chinese tradition. This paper will show how material aspects of the global circulation of images helped the Qianlong emperor construct his vision of “world” and “empire” in dialogue with the traditional rhetoric of Chinese politics.

## Producing the *Album of Beasts*

The *Album of Beasts* features six volumes and 180 leaves of various animals rendered in color.<sup>4</sup> Each leaf has an image on the right and a text on the left, which is written in both Manchu and Chinese. The work is not dated, but there is a colophon signed by officials and staff who participated in this project, which states:

*Album of Beasts* was done in imitation of *Album of Birds*. The names, contents, and forms were based on *Complete Collection of Writings and Illustrations, Past and Present*, and the coloring was rendered by Yu Sheng and Zhang Weibang under imperial decree. We took care of the translation and writing. The month and day for the start and finish were the same as *Album of Birds*. . . .<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, it is clear that the format of the *Album of Beasts* was patterned after the *Album of Birds*. The schedule for its production is also the same: the *Album of Birds* was started in 1750 and finished in the winter of 1761, as is indicated in its colophon.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, details concerning the production can be found in the archives of the Imperial Household’s workshops (*Zaoban chu gezuo chengzuo huoji Qing dang* 造辦處各作成作活計清檔), which indicate that the two projects were literally proceeding side by side.<sup>7</sup> Later, we also see early versions of the *Official Tributes*

<sup>4</sup>The Qing imperial catalogue, *Qinding Shiqu baoji xubian* (欽定石渠寶笈續編), records a total of 183 kinds of animals, but only 180 are mentioned in the colophon and in the extant album. See Wang Jie 王杰, Dong Gao 董誥, and Ruan Yuan 阮元, “Yu Sheng Zhang Weibang he hua *Shoupu* 余省張為邦合畫獸譜 (The *Album of Beasts* painted jointly by Yu Shen and Zhang Weibang),” in *Qinding Shiqu baoji xubian* 欽定石渠寶笈續編, ed. Guoli Gugong bowuyuan (Taipei: Guoli Gugong bowuyuan, 1971), vol. 4, 1894–5.

<sup>5</sup>Orig. “《獸譜》倣《鳥譜》為之，名目形相，蓋本諸《古今圖書集成》，而設色則余省、張為邦奉勅摹寫者也。圖左方清漢說文。臣等承旨繕譯，及始工藏事月日，並與《鳥譜》同。 . . .” Wang, Dong, and Ruan, “Yu Sheng Zhang Weibang he hua *Shoupu*.”

<sup>6</sup>For the production of the *Album of Birds*, see Lai, “Tuxiang, zhishi yu diguo,” 31–6, or its English version: Lai, “Images, Knowledge and Empire,” 56–63.

<sup>7</sup>See, for example, the entry on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of the tenth lunar month in the 22<sup>nd</sup> year of the Qianlong reign (1757) for the archives of the *Ruyi guan* (如意館) in *Zaoban chu gezuo chengzuo huoji Qing dang* 造辦處各作成作活計清檔 (*Archives of the Workshops Governed by the Imperial Household Department*) [hereafter abbreviated as Q22 (1757)/10/18, *Ruyi guan*]. See Zhongguo diyi lishi dang’an guan 中國第一歷史檔案館, and Xianggang zhongwen daxue wenwu guan 香港中文大學文物館, ed., *Qingong neiwu fu zaoban chu dang’an zonghui* 清宮內務府造辦處檔案總匯 (The Assorted archives of the Workshops of the Imperial Household Department) (Beijing:

project joining the day-to-day record of the Imperial Household's workshops.<sup>8</sup> In short, the archive shows that both the *Album of Birds* and the *Album of Beasts* were initiated in the spring of 1750. The project involving the *Official Tributes*, however, did not begin recruiting local images (at first from Sichuan) until the eighth lunar month of 1750, and then on an imperial scale in the intercalary fifth month of the following year.<sup>9</sup> As mentioned, the completion time for both the *Album of Birds* and the *Album of Beasts*, was in the winter of 1761, but the situation for the *Official Tributes* was more complicated. The album version of the *Official Tributes* was basically finished in 1757 but did not yet bear the name *Official Tributes*, instead it was called *Zhifang huilan* 職方會覽 (*Assembled View of Foreign Lands*). The year 1761 is when not only the first scroll version was made, but also when the name *Official Tributes* was given officially to this group of images of tribute from various lands in both its handscroll and album forms, as can be seen in the title *Yuzhi Zhigong tushi* 御製職貢圖詩 (*Imperial Production of Poetry and Illustrations of Official Tributes*), written in the same year and attached to each work.<sup>10</sup> In particular, the album version of the *Official Tributes* is painted on silk and measures thirty-nine by thirty-nine centimeters, which is similar to the size of both the *Album of Birds* and the *Album of Beasts*. There can be no doubt, then, that *Album of Birds*, *Album of Beasts*, and *Official Tributes* all belong to the same joint undertaking at the Qing court.

The only difference in the *Album of Beasts* compared to the other two productions, is one of scale. It contains only 180 images, far fewer than the 361 in the *Album of Birds* or the 301 paired figures depicted in any single set of *Official Tributes*. Moreover, we do not see any recruitment of local first-hand materials for this project, as seen in the *Album of Birds* and the *Official Tributes*. Is it true, then, that the only source for the *Album of Beasts* is the *Complete Collection of Writings and Illustrations, Past and Present* (hereafter referred to as *Complete Collection*), as indicated in the album's colophon?

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Renmin chubanshe, 2005), vol. 22, 565; and the entry on Q26(1762)/10/16, *Ruyi guan*, in *Qinggong neiwu fu zaoban chu dang'an zonghui*, vol. 26, 720.

<sup>8</sup>The title *Zhigong tu* 職貢圖 (*Official Tributes*) did not appear until the end of the 26th year of the Qianlong reign (1761). In the early stage of production, it had various titles, including *Zhifang huilan Miao tu* 職方會覽苗圖 (*Assembled View of Miao Tribes*) and *Zhifang huilan tu* 職方會覽圖 (*Assembled View of Foreign Lands*). See the entry on Q26 (1762)/6/14, *Ruyi guan*, in *Qinggong neiwu fu zaoban chu dang'an zonghui*, vol. 26, 708. For details on the transformation of different titles for *Official Tributes*, see Lai, "Tuxiang diguo," footnote 52.

<sup>9</sup>For a reconstruction of the process of its production, see Lai, "Tuxiang diguo," 6–16.

<sup>10</sup>Lai, "Tuxiang diguo," 6–16.

## From “Strange Animals” to “Animals of Foreign Lands”

Before we explore the answer to this question, we have to understand the nature of *Complete Collection*. Initially compiled by Chen Menglei 陳夢雷 (1650–1741) in the Kangxi 康熙 (1661–1772) period, completed in 1723 by Jiang Tingxi 蔣廷錫 (1669–1732), and published in 1725 by the court, it consists of 10,000 *juan* (fascicles) in more than 5,000 bound volumes. In contrast to the previous Ming encyclopedia *Yongle dadian* (永樂大典) undertaken by Emperor Yongle 永樂 (r. 1402–1424) of which only a few volumes have survived, *Complete Collection* is the largest extant Chinese encyclopedia to date. It is divided into six basic categories (*huibian* 匯編): “Celestial Phenomena (*lixiang* 曆象),” “Geography (*fangyu* 方輿),” “Human Relationships (*minglun* 明論),” “Nature (*bowu* 博物),” “Literature (*lixue* 理學),” and “Political Economy (*jingji* 經濟).” The *huibian* categories are divided into sections (*dian* 典). For example, the category of “Nature” includes sections on “Arts and Professions (*yishu* 藝術),” “The Spiritual and the Strange (*shenyi* 神異),” “Fauna (*qinchong* 禽蟲),” and “Flora (*caomu* 草木).” The sections are then further subdivided into parts (*bu* 部). The *Album of Beasts* is basically excerpted from the part on “Walking Animals (*zoushou* 走獸)” in the section of “Fauna” under the category of “Nature,” comprising images from the parts on “*Qilin* (麒麟)” to “Strange Animals (*Yishou* 異獸).” The part on “Walking Animals” includes fifty-seven entries, starting with the auspicious *qilin*, a horned mythical creature said to appear with the arrival of a saintly and benevolent ruler, and covering such larger beasts as the lion, elephant, and tiger before moving on to other wild but smaller animals, including the leopard, wolf, fox, rabbit, monkey, and then domesticated ones such as the horse, ox, sheep, and pig before finally ending with “Strange Animals (*yishou* 異獸),” which are seemingly fantastic or imaginary creatures.

The *Complete Collection* was meant to amass and organize everything that was deemed worthy of knowing about the past and the present; it is therefore based on a classification of extant knowledge at the time. For example, the final part on “Strange Animals” is sourced from three major earlier publications: *Shanghai jing* 山海經 (*The Classic of Mountains and Seas*), *Sancai tuihui* 三才圖會 (*Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms*), and *Kunyu tushuo* 坤輿圖說 (*Illustrated Explanations of the Entire World*). The first is a compilation of mythic geography thought to have existed in the fourth century BCE.; the second is one of the most popular illustrated encyclopedias from the late Ming period compiled by Wang Qi 王圻 (1529–1612) and his son, Wang Siyi 王思義; and the third is a booklet accompanying *Kunyu quantu* 坤輿全圖 (*Map of the Whole World*) that was compiled and published in 1674 by Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–1688), a Flemish Jesuit who worked as an astronomer and cartographer at the Kangxi court.

The editors of the *Complete Collection* quoted the contents from these three books and re-organized them into the structure of an encyclopedia. Taking the *Illustrated Explanations of the Entire World* as an example, the editors broke down the original order of the images and re-assigned them into different categories in the *Complete Collection*. Consequently, “African lion (*Liweiya shizi* 利未亞獅子)” was assigned to the “Part on Lions (*shibu* 獅部);” “South American snake (*Nan yamolijiazhou she* 南亞墨利加州蛇)” to “Part on Snakes (*shebu* 蛇部);” and so forth. In addition to these identifiable animals in the Chinese context, other animals are distributed throughout the categories of “Strange Birds (*Yinia* 異鳥),” “Strange

Animals,” and “Strange Fish (*Yiyu* 異魚),” which are juxtaposed with imaginary animals from the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* and *Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms*. Since the *Album of Beasts* consists of images from “Walking Animals,” we must ask: What is the definition of “walking animals”?

The *Illustrated Explanations of the Entire World* contains descriptions of twenty-four creatures, but only twelve of them are included in the “Walking Animals” section and, therefore, in the *Album of Beasts*. It is interesting to note, for instance, that the alligator, called a “Lajiaduo Fish (*Lajiaduo yu* 喇加多魚),” is deemed a kind of fish and therefore excluded, but the chameleon, under the name of “*Jiamoliang* 加獸良,” is included, despite the fact that both are reptiles. Understanding this structure involves unpacking the very complicated issue of discrepancy and dialogue between the biological taxonomies of China and Europe, and, moreover, demands a disentanglement of the classifications of unknown species in descriptive text and imagery, which is beyond the scope of the present study.

It is noteworthy, however, that despite the claim that the main source of the *Album of Beasts* is the *Complete Collection*, the colophon to the *Album of Beasts* declares with confidence that its contents are all “verifiable facts (*zhengshi* 徵實),” similar to the other two aforementioned projects,<sup>11</sup> which do indeed engage first-hand materials supplied by the bureaucratic network (unlike the *Album of Beasts*). It even specifies that

This project goes beyond the hidden peculiarities pursued by *Annotations to Classic of Mountains and Seas* by Guo Pu [276–324] and the exaggerations and fabrications shown in the inventory of animals in Emperor Wudi’s Shanglin Garden in the Han dynasty.<sup>12</sup>

Why and how the *Album of Beasts* can assert that its contents are “verifiable facts” despite the adaptation of numerous texts and images from *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (by means of *Complete Collection*), the annotations (by Guo Pu 郭璞) of which were fiercely criticized in its colophon, is a question that remains to be answered. And what does “verifiable facts” mean, exactly? It does not necessarily indicate first-hand investigation, given that most of the images depicted in *Classics of Mountains and Seas* are creatures that do not exist in reality.

Looking into the details of the *Album of Beasts*, some alterations from the contents of *Complete Collection* in terms of structure, style, and items were made. For example, the legendary animal called a “*pi* 羆” is depicted twice in *Complete Collection* (Figs. 1 and 2).<sup>13</sup> One *pi* appears in the part on “Bears and *Pi* (*Xiong pi* 熊羆),” the other in the

<sup>11</sup>Wang, Dong, and Ruan, “Yu Sheng Zhang Weibang he hua *Shoupu*,” 1894–5.

<sup>12</sup>Orig. “郭璞《山海經注》務探隱怪，西京上林獸簿之徒誇羅致，所能彷彿哉。” See Wang, Dong, and Ruan, “Yu Sheng Zhang Weibang he hua *Shoupu*,” 1894–5.

<sup>13</sup>Yuan, *Qingong Shou pu*, 44–5 and 60–1.



**Fig. 1** *Gujin Tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成, *qin chong dian* 禽蟲典, *xiong pi bu* 熊羆部, *juan* 67, 2b

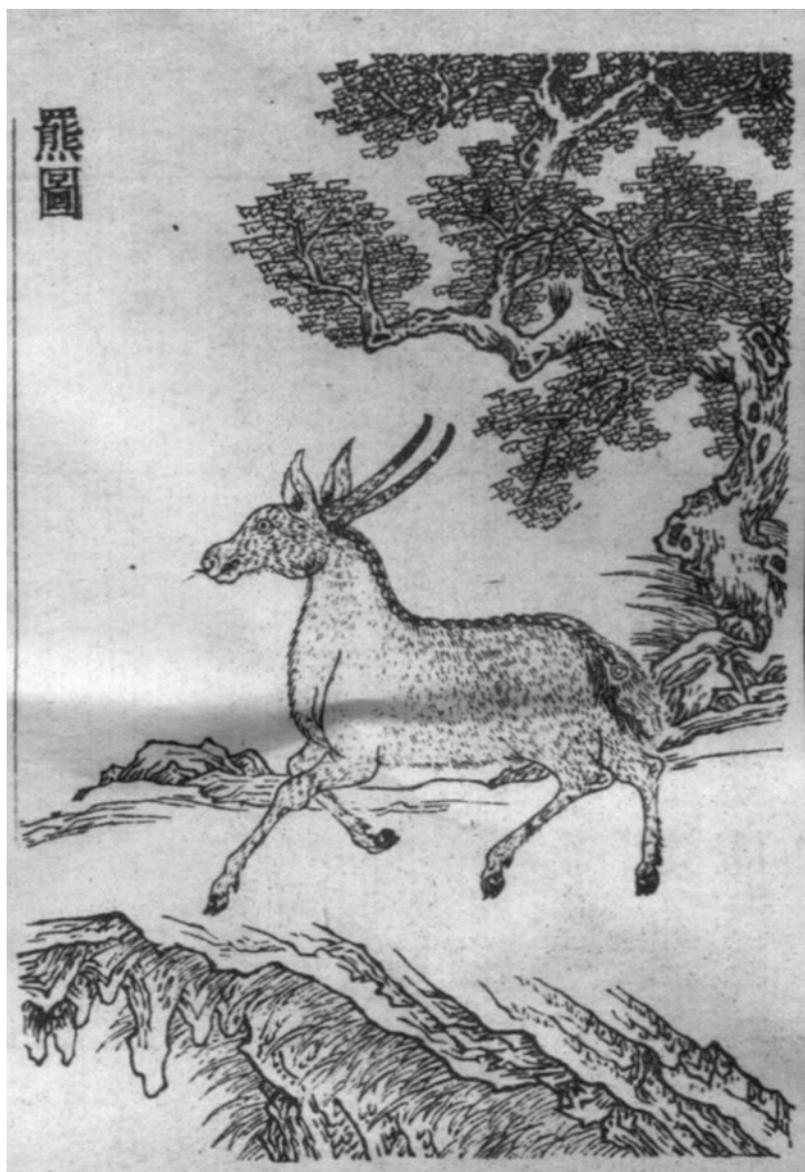


Fig. 2 *Gujin Tushu jicheng, qin chong dian* 禽蟲典, *yi shou bu* 異獸部, *juan* 123, 62a



**Fig. 3** Yu Sheng, Zhang Weibang, *Album of Beasts*, 17th leaf, volume one. 1761. Beijing Palace Museum

part on “Strange Animals.” In the *Album of Beasts*, however, the latter was deleted and a new addition made to bears and *pi* (Figs. 3 and 4). This new addition was rendered on the basis of a proclamation that the Qianlong emperor had shot and killed a *pi* during his Eastern Tour to Jilin (吉林).<sup>14</sup> Its corresponding text declares “[the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*] states that the *pi* looks like an elk, which led to a mistake in its

<sup>14</sup>For the imperial poem written by the Qianlong emperor, see “*She pi* 射熊 (Shooting a *pi*),” in *Yuzhi shiji erji* 御製詩集二集, *juan* 52, 6b, as in *Jingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (*The Wenyuange Edition of the Complete Collection of the Imperial Four Treasuries*) (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983–1986), vol. 1304, 96. For the officials’ poems rhymed with the imperial poem on this event, see the ones by Wang You dun 汪由敦 (1692–1758) and Liu Lun 劉綸 (1711–1773), collected in A Gui 阿桂, and Liu Jinzhi 劉謹之, “*Qinding Shengjing tongzhi* 欽定盛京通志 (*Imperial Shengjing Gazetteer*),” *Jingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 503: 489–90. Also see the text on the leaf for a “*Pi*” in volume one, *Album of Beasts*, Palace Museum, Beijing, in Yuan, *Qinggong Shou pu*, 44.



**Fig. 4** Yu Sheng, Zhang Weibang, *Album of Beasts*, 18th leaf, volume one. 1761. Beijing Palace Museum

image. What it says is truly supernatural fiction and hard to verify. Therefore, seeing is believing.”<sup>15</sup> This statement emphasizes that the new image was rendered from a first-hand account, which not only replaced the old one that looked like an elk and was criticized in the text, but also legitimized its removal from “Strange Animals” and to a placement among bears and *pi*.

In addition to revising the old images based on the emperor’s personal experience, *Album of Beasts* also adjusted or rewrote images from *Complete Collection* based on those from the database at the imperial workshops. One of the most notable examples is the imagery for horses. For the leaves on “Fine horse (*liang ma* 良馬)” (Fig. 5) and “Whorl horse (*xuanmao ma* 旋毛馬)” (Fig. 6),<sup>16</sup> the original images in *Complete Collection* (Figs. 7 and 8) are more like diagrams with text denoting certain qualities to teach people how to identify a rare steed by certain characteristics of its appearance,

<sup>15</sup>Orig. “惟經言狀如麋，圖因之而誤。洵夫志怪難徵，百聞故不如一見乎。” Eighteenth leaf in volume one of *Album of Beasts*, Palace Museum, Beijing, in Yuan, *Qinggong Shou pu*, 44.

<sup>16</sup>See the twenty-ninth leaf of volume two and the first leaf of volume three, respectively, in the *Album of Beasts*, Palace Museum, Beijing, in Yuan, *Qinggong Shou pu*, 148–9 and 154–5.



**Fig. 5** Yu Sheng, Zhang Weibang, *Album of Beasts*, 29th leaf, volume two. 1761. Beijing Palace Museum

such as bone structure, hair, body, etc. The new images with color and shading, however, are without text, show no diagrams, and are instead similar to lively horses in the flesh. The two horses, one a piebald and the other pure white, resemble imperial mounts shown in two of Qianlong's *Dayue tu* 大閱圖 (*Grand Review* paintings; collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing) (Figs. 9 and 10) in which Qianlong rides a piebald and white horse, respectively. Unfortunately, it is uncertain whether these two steeds in the *Album of Beasts* indicate specific horses that Qianlong once owned or are just representatives of imperial horse types. It appears, nonetheless, that the composition and style of these two leaves evoke Jean Denis Attiret's (1702–1768) *Shijun tu* 十駿圖 (*Ten Steeds*; Fig. 11), now in the Palace Museum, Beijing. Therefore, the *Album of Beasts* indeed replaced the original images from the *Complete Collection* with contemporary images from the court repertoire. This is in accordance with the text accompanying the leaf on “Fine horse,” which emphasizes that good steeds used to come only from the areas of Yunzhong 雲中 (Inner Mongolia) and Daibei 代北 (northern Shanxi province and northwest of Hebei province), but now there are many choices. The text goes on to describe the unprecedented circumstance of having many options to choose from, it being truly the case that “Heavenly steeds



**Fig. 6** Yu Sheng, Zhang Weibang, *Album of Beasts*, 1st leaf, volume three. 1761. Beijing Palace Museum

present the talent so as to demonstrate a golden age of benevolent government that draws talent from afar,”<sup>17</sup> of which “not even [the most famous steed connoisseurs] Bole 伯樂 and Jiufang Gao 九方皋 could glimpse.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, the new presentation of two courtly steeds in *Album of Beasts* corresponds clearly to what is stated in its colophon: “The bowing of Altishahr to [Qing] sovereignty results in the [presentation of] tribute, so images on heavenly steeds of talent were made.”<sup>19</sup> On the one hand, using images of horses at court to replace the images from *Complete Collection* turns court horses into the personifications of “Fine horse” and “Whorl horse,” and on the other it lends a more definite sense of reality to the depictions of horses in the *Album of Beasts*.

Therefore, one might say that in replacing or supplementing the images from *Complete Collection* with new ones, the repertoire of images at the court workshops

<sup>17</sup>Orig. “天驥呈材，所以彰歸德徠遠之盛。” Yuan, *Qinggong Shou pu*, 148.

<sup>18</sup>Orig. “又豈陽皋所能窺測哉。” Yuan, *Qinggong Shou pu*, 148.

<sup>19</sup>Orig. “回部向化底貢，而圖天驥之材。” Yuan, *Qinggong Shou pu*, 407.

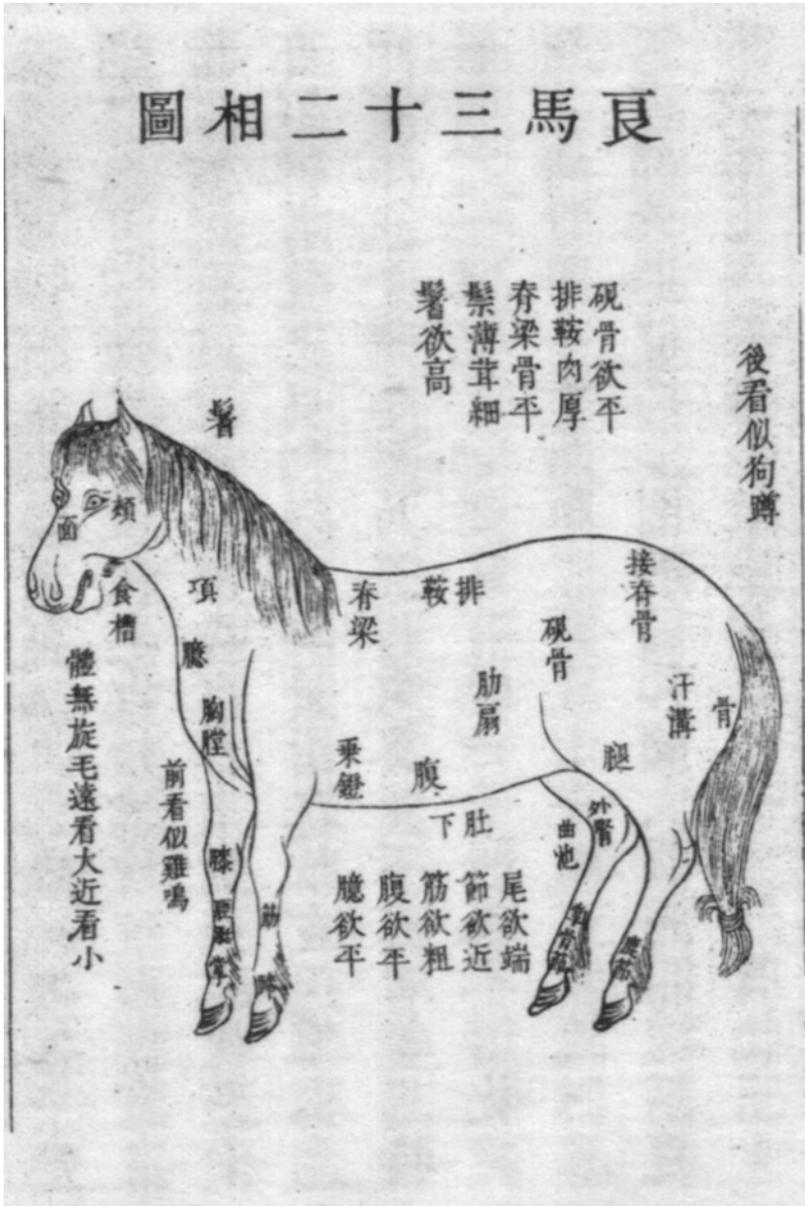


Fig. 7 Gujin Tushu jicheng 古今圖書集成, qin chong dian 禽蟲典, ma bu 馬部, juan 91, 21b





**Fig. 9** Giuseppe Castiglione, *Dayue tu* 大閱圖 (*Grand Review*), Beijing Palace Museum. Nie Chongzheng, ed., *Qing dai gong ting hui hua* (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1996), 151, Fig. 29

became an effective testimony of “verifiable facts.” These cases, however, only account for a very small portion of the 180 images in the *Album of Beasts*. The most significant alteration to images from Europe made at the Qing court can be seen in the final twelve leaves of the sixth volume of the *Album of Beasts*. The images were



**Fig. 10** Anonymous, *Dayue tu* 大閱圖 (*Grand Review*), 1758, Beijing Palace Museum. Jean-Paul Desroches, *La Cité interdite au Louvre: Empereurs de Chine et rois de France* (Paris: Somogy éditions d'Art, 2011), 179, Fig. 64

transcribed from the final part on “Strange Animals” in the *Completed Collection* and originated with Ferdinand Verbiest’s *Kunyu tushuo* 坤輿圖說 (*Illustrated Explanations of the Entire World*), which was presented to the Kangxi emperor in



**Fig. 11** Jean Denis Attiret, *Shijun tu* 十駿圖 (*Ten Steeds*), 7th leaf and 2nd leaf, Beijing Palace Museum. The Palace Museum, ed., *Qing dai gong ting hui hua* 清代宮廷繪畫 (Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 1999), 149, Fig. 79

1674. This final part, which contains animals from the *Illustrated Explanations of the Entire World*, is the only section in the *Completed Collection* that includes specific places of origin in foreign countries. Taking into consideration that the colophon specifies “the order is from ‘Auspicious Animals’ to ‘Animals of Foreign Lands,’”<sup>20</sup> this part, for the editors of the *Album of Beasts*, is not dedicated to “Strange Animals” but redefined as “Animals from Foreign Lands.” Animals adopted from the *Illustrated Explanations of the Entire World*, despite how unimaginable they may appear, are no longer perceived as fictional but are defined instead as something real but from faraway lands.

Since the *Album of Beasts* re-defines the animals in Verbiest’s *Illustrated Explanations of the Entire World* as corresponding to reality, one must ask: What kind of animals were they? Where are they from? What are their pictorial origins? And, most importantly, how were they perceived at the Qing court? In order to answer these questions, we must trace not only from the *Complete Collection* to the *Illustrated Explanations of the Entire World*, but also from the *Illustrated Explanations of the Entire World* to their European origins in order to analyze what kind of European images and forms of knowledge were appropriated and transformed in the *Album of Beasts*, what role those images and related texts played in the structure of the *Album of Beasts*, and what was implied in terms of their meaning and purpose.

<sup>20</sup>Orig. “其序自瑞獸至異國獸。” Wang, Dong, and Ruan, “Yu Sheng Zhang Weibang he hua *Shoupu*,” 1894–5.

## Domesticating “Europe” in *Album of Beasts*

The *Illustrated Explanations of the Entire World* was first published in 1674, the same year as the *Kunyu quantu* 坤輿全圖 (*Map of the Whole World*).<sup>21</sup> Apart from images of animals, the booklet also contains views of the sculptures and buildings known in Europe as the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and is basically a collection of the kinds of texts and images that one might find on the margins of an early modern European world map. And indeed, the *Illustrated Explanations of the Entire World* was deemed a supplementary booklet to the map made by Verbiest. The map and booklet, presented to the Kangxi emperor and brought to China by European missionaries in the seventeenth century, were considered a summary of world knowledge at that time from the European perspective.<sup>22</sup>

It was a German sinologist who first pointed out that the images of the animals are from the famous encyclopedia of zoology, *Historia animalium*, which was compiled by the sixteenth-century Swiss naturalist Conrad Gessner (1516–1565).<sup>23</sup> In fact, we find that Verbiest’s sources actually go beyond Gessner to also include Ulisse Aldrovandi’s (1522–1605) *Historia animalium*, which was published successively

<sup>21</sup>There are many studies on Verbiest’s map. Just to name a few, for example, see Gang Song and Paola Demattè, “Mapping an Acentric World: Ferdinand Verbiest’s *Kunyu Quantu*,” in *China on Paper: European and Chinese Works from the Late Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century*, ed. Marcia Reed and Paola Demattè (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2007), 71–87; Wang Qianjin 汪前進, “Nan Huai-ren *Kunyu quantu* yanjiu 南懷仁坤輿全圖研究 (*The Study on Ferdinand Verbiest’s Kunyu quantu*),” in *Zhongguo gudai ditu ji* 中國古代地圖集, ed. Cao Wanru 曹婉如 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1997), 102–7; Tongyang Lin, “Ferdinand Verbiest’s Contribution to Chinese Geography and Cartography,” in *Ferdinand Verbiest S. J.: Jesuit Missionary, Scientist, Engineer and Diplomat, 1623–1688*, ed. John W. Witek (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994), 134–64; Hartmut Walravens, “Father Verbiest’s Chinese World Map (1674),” *Imago Mundi* 43, no. 1 (1991): 31–47; Christine Vertente, “Nan Huai-je’n’s Maps of the World,” in *Nan Huai-ren shishi sanbai zhounian guoji xueshu taolun hui lunwenji* 南懷仁逝世三百周年國際學術討論會論文集, ed. Furen daxue 輔仁大學 (Taipei: Furen daxue, 1987), 225–31; Lin Dongyang 林東陽, “Nan Huai-ren de shijie ditu: *Kunyu quantu* (1674) 南懷仁的世界地圖: 坤輿全圖 (1674) (Ferdinand Verbiest’s world map: *Kunyu quantu*),” *Donghai daxue lishi xuebao* 5 (1982): 69–84.

<sup>22</sup>For the relationship between the *Illustrated Explanations of the Entire World* and *Complete Map of the World*, see Ayusawa Shintarō 鮎澤信太郎, “Nan Kaizin no *Konyo zusetsu* to *Konyo geki* ni tsuite: tokuni Edo jidai no seikai chirigaku shijō ni okeru 南懷仁の坤輿圖說と坤輿外記に就いて:特に江戸時代の世界地理學史上に於ける (On Ferdinand Verbiest’s *Kunyu tushuo* and *Kunyu waiji*, Especially in the Context of the World Geography History in the Edo period),” *Chikyū* 26, no. 6 (1937): 26–33; Ayusawa Shintarō, “Nan Kaizin ga Shina ni shōkai shita seikai chirihon nit suite (first part)(second part) 南懷仁が支那に紹介した世界地理書に就て(一)、(二) (On the World Geography Books Introduced by Ferdinand Verbiest to China),” *Chikyū* 24, no. 5 (1935) and 24, no. 6 (1935): 59–67 and 49–56; Akioka Takejirō 秋岡武次郎, “Nan Kaizin cho no *Konyo zusetsu* ni tsuite (first part) (second part) (third part) (fourth part) 南懷仁著の坤輿圖說に就いて(一)、(二)、(三)、(四) (Ferdinand Verbiest’ *Kunyu tushuo*, part 1, 2, 3, 4),” *Chiri kyōiku* 29, no. 1 (1938), 29, no. 2 (1938), 29, no. 3 (1938), and 29, no. 4 (1938): 1–10, 21–30, 32–6, and 20–9.

<sup>23</sup>Hartmut Walravens, “Konrad Gessner in chinesischem Gewand: Darstellungen fremder Tiere im K’un-yu t’u-shuo des P. Verbiest (1623–1688),” *Gesnerus* 30, no. 3–4 (1973): 87–98.

from the end of the sixteenth century to the early seventeenth century, and Johannes Johnstone's *Historiae naturalis*, which was published between 1650 and 1653. There are several versions recorded in *Catalogue of the Pei-T'ang Library*, the catalogue of books owned by the Jesuits in the old collections of Beijing's four churches during the Qing dynasty.<sup>24</sup> They are also the most representative and authoritative books on European natural studies from the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries and were widely read among the European cultural elite.<sup>25</sup>

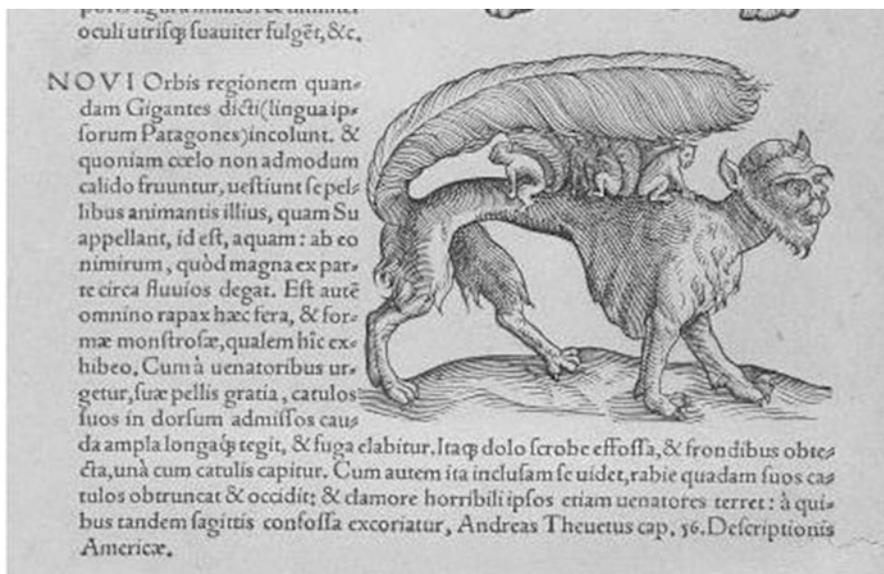
There are twenty-four kinds of animals recorded in *Illustrated Explanations of the Entire World*; except for four aquatic animals, the twenty land animals are allocated among four continents, each containing five. However, the *lihou* 狸猴, apparently a kind of opossum supposedly living in South America,<sup>26</sup> was mistaken by Viebiest as an animal from Africa. The animals from the Americas, especially South America, occupy the largest portion, and many of them represented crucial findings in European zoological studies after the Age of Discovery. Verbiest was eager to introduce the latest in European natural studies to China. For the *Album of Beasts*, there are only twelve true "beasts," all of which are from Gessner's works, except for the lion, whose origin was not identified. It is important here to analyze in detail each case so as to construct a fuller picture of how and what kind of European knowledge and imagery was framed and appropriated in the *Album of Beasts*. However, given the limitations of the present study, only three cases will be discussed: the *su* 蘇 from South America, the giraffe from Africa, and the Asian rhinoceros.

Before going into these case studies, it is worth noting that the images from Gessner, Verbiest's map and booklet, and the *Complete Collection* are all

<sup>24</sup>For the history and collection of the Beitang library (Pei-T'ang Library), see the Lazarist Mission, Peking, *Catalogue of the Pei-T'ang Library* (Peking: Lazarist Mission Press, 1949; reprint, Peking: National Library of China Publishing House, 2009); Fang Hao 方豪, "Mingji xishu qiqian bu liuru Zhongguo kao 明季西書七千部流入中國考 (The Research on the History of the Inflow of the Seven Thousand Western Books into China)," *Wenshi zazhi* 3, no.1–2 (1944); Fang Hao, *Fang Hao liushi ziding gao* 方豪六十自定稿 (*The Self Edition by Fang Hao at the Age of Sixty*) (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1969), vol. 1, 39–54; Fang Hao, "Beitang tushuguan cangshu zhi 北堂圖書館藏書志 (The Note on the Collection of Beitang Library)," in *Fang Hao liushi ziding gao*, ed. by Fang Hao (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1969), 1833–47; Tuo Xiaotang 拓曉堂, "Beitang shanben shu gaishu 北堂善本書概述 (The Overview of the Rare Books in the Beitang Library)," *Guojia tushuguan xuekan* 2 (1993): 110–8, 81; Li Guoqing 李國慶, and Sun Liping 孫利平, "Beitang shu ji qi yanjiu liyong: lishi yu xianzhuang 北堂書及其研究利用: 歷史與現狀 (The Books in the Beitang Library and its Research and Utilization: History and its Current Situation)," *Weixian* 1 (2003): 214–31 and 256.

<sup>25</sup>Concerning the study of natural history in early European history, see Roger French, *Ancient Natural History* (New York: Routledge, 1994), especially chapter 3; Miguel de Asúa, and Roger French, "Introduction," in *A New World of Animals: Early Modern Europeans on the Creatures of Iberian America*, ed. Miguel de Asúa and Roger French (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), xiii–xvi; Robert Huxley, ed., *The Great Naturalists* (London: The Natural History Museum, 2007), 44–75.

<sup>26</sup>For how Europeans came to know and picture the opossum, see Victoria Dickenson, *Drawn from Life: Science and Art in the Portrayal of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 40–4; Miguel de Asúa and Roger French, *A New World of Animals: Early Modern Europeans on the Creatures of Iberian America* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 13–4.



**Fig. 12** Conrad Gesner, *Icones animalium quadrupedum viviparorum et oviparorum* (Tiguri: Officina Froschoviana, 1560), 127

monochrome prints with very limited copies that were partially water-colored by hand.<sup>27</sup> However, the *Album of Beasts* is not only colored but also painted in a fusion style that combined Chinese and European elements. The court paintings in this particular style usually show the main subject matter (figures, birds, animals, etc.) in the rich renderings of texture and colored shading that were developed at court—mainly by the Italian Jesuit painter Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766)—but situated within a traditional Chinese landscape that is embellished with brushstrokes. As seen later, with the help of this new style the *Album of Beasts* makes every effort to render imported images in the Chinese context as visually comprehensible as possible.

For example, the first depiction of the *su* from South America in Gessner's and Verbiest's works looks somewhat supernatural (Figs. 12 and 13) with its strange combination of sunken eyes, a monkey face, devil- or cat-like ears, a goatee, long eyebrows, and sagging abdomen. According to Gessner, he adopted the information and image (Fig. 14)<sup>28</sup> from a publication by André Thévet, a French Franciscan priest, explorer, cosmographer, and writer who traveled to Brazil in 1551. Thévet published two books about the New World on his return from Brazil—*Les singularitez de la*

<sup>27</sup>The version in the National Palace Museum in Taipei, the original court one, is monochrome; see Fung Ming-chu 馮明珠, ed., *Kangxi dadi yu Taiyang wang Luyi shisi tezhan 康熙大帝與太陽王路易十四特展 (Emperor Kangxi and the Sun King Louis XIV)* (Taipei: Guoli Gugong bowuyuan, 2011), 110–3.

<sup>28</sup>Conrad Gesner, *Icones animalium quadrupedum viviparorum et oviparorum* (Tiguri: Officina Froschoviana, 1560), 127.



Fig. 13 Nan Hui ren, *Kunyu quantu*. 1674. National Palace Museum, Taipei

*France Antarctique* in 1558 and *La Cosmographie universelle* in 1575. Both mention the animal known as a *su* in Chinese.<sup>29</sup> Most scholars see Thévet's books as full of pretentious writing, mistakes, and outright fiction, and therefore not very reliable sources.<sup>30</sup> In the case of the *su*, for instance, Thévet first claimed in 1558 that it lived in Patagonia, the southernmost part of South America, and then in 1575 changed its place of origin to Florida.<sup>31</sup> No other contemporary writer reported this animal, nor was any specimen ever brought to Europe. In other words, Thévet was the only witness. Given its bizarre and ghostlike appearance, it is highly possible that the *su*'s features belong to a body of invented knowledge in the New World that became canonized once it was accepted in Gessner's mainstream encyclopedia.

In contrast to the surrealistic look that was transmitted all the way from Thévet to Gessner, and finally to Verbiest, the image in *Complete Collection* (Fig. 15), with its tender drooping ears and whiskers that spread out on the sides of its face, transforms the *su* into something akin to a household pet, such as a cat or dog. Most importantly, and differing from Thévet's, Gessner's, and Verbiest's images, in which the animal is standing on a patch of ground against an abstract blank background, the *su* in the

<sup>29</sup> André Thevet, *Les singularitez de la France antarctique: autrement nommee Amerique, & de plusieurs terres & isles decouvertes de nostre temps* (Paris: Heritiers de Maurice de la Porte, 1558), 109, see Dickenson, *Drawn from Life*, 36.

<sup>30</sup> Dickenson, *Drawn from Life*, 35.

<sup>31</sup> André Thevet, *La cosmographie universelle: d'André Thevet, cosmographe du roy: illustrée de diverses figures des choses plus remarquables veues par l'auteur, & incogneues de noz anciens & modernes* (Paris: Guillaume Chandiere, 1575), see Dickenson, *Drawn from Life*, 36.



Fig. 14 André Thevet, *Les singularitez de la France antarctique: autrement nommee Amerique, & de plusieurs terres & isles decouvertes de nostre temps* (Paris; Antwerp: Heritiers de Maurice de la Porte, 1558), 109

*Complete Collection* is situated in a landscape. The *su* in the *Album of Beasts* (Fig. 16) adopts this composition and new image. Moreover, it was not only given grey and brownish fur with detailed rendering of the individual hairs, but, quite significantly, this European-inspired style creates a sense of volume and texture with modeling as well as a more reasonable anatomy, which makes it appear an alive and



Fig. 15 *Gujin Tushu jicheng, qin chong dian* 禽蟲典, *yishou bu* 異獸部, *juan* 125, 19b



**Fig. 16** Yu Sheng, Zhang Weibang, *Album of Beasts*, 32th leaf, volume six. 1761. Beijing Palace Museum

tangible creature. Its wide open mouth is supposed to reflect the text which declares: “The *su* will roar when it becomes desperate.”<sup>32</sup> However, its neat white teeth and upward curving mouth give the animal looks so friendly an aspect that we cannot imagine any of the horrifying characteristics described by Thévet, Gessner, and Verbiest. In particular, the other texts indicate that the large tail of the *su* was used, presumably, to protect its babies from danger, but here it has become smaller, thinner and more like a joyful dog wagging its tail. Also, the *su* here is framed by the branches emerging from the rock on the left. The landscape this *su* resides in is not depicted in monochrome woodblock printed lines, but by blue-and-green-style rocks, a curving tree, and lush grass textured by short, curving, hemp-fiber-like calligraphic brushstrokes and stacked dots. In other words, it is a landscape that has nothing to do with the habitat of the *su*, but instead looks more like the traditional

<sup>32</sup>Orig. “急則吼.” Yuan, *Qinggong Shou pu*, 404.

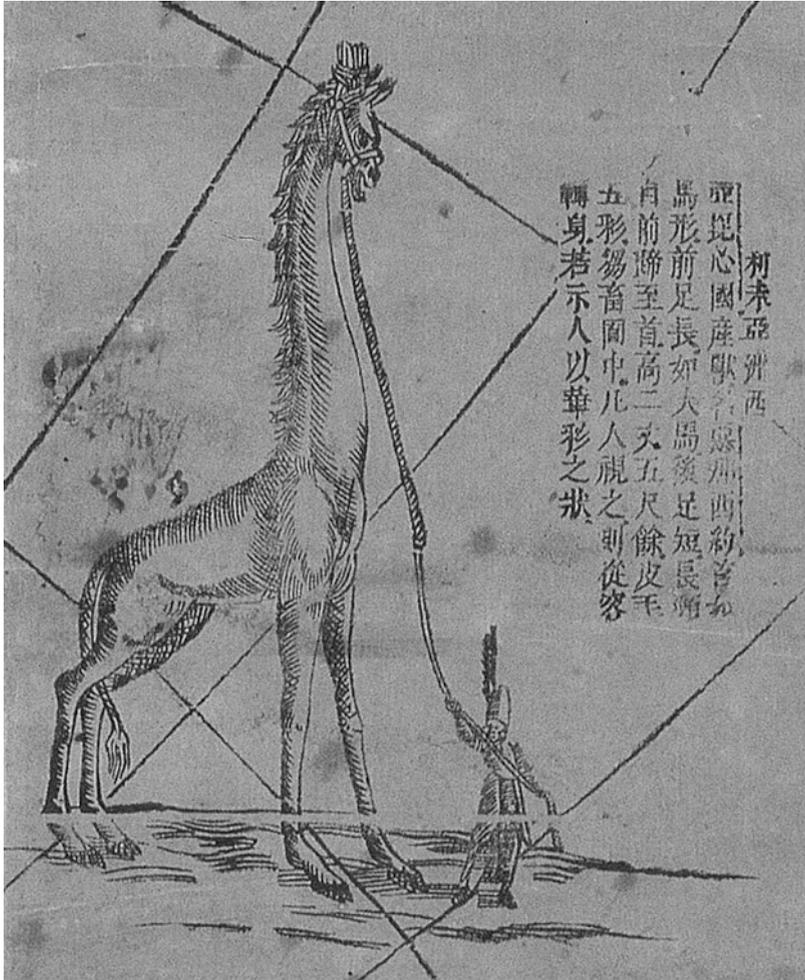


Fig. 17 Nan Huiren, *Kunyu quantu*. 1674. National Palace Museum, Taipei

idealized Chinese setting closely associated with the blue-and-green style of landscape painting. By this time, this invention from the New World had become more akin to a tamed dog, relocated and domesticated on idealized Chinese soil complete with a happily-ever-after smile.

The animals Verbiest selected were not only from the New World, but also from the Old World. For example, the animal called an “*Enaxiyue*” 惡那西約 (Fig. 17) by Verbiest, according to its appearance and place of origin (Africa), as indicated in the text, is almost certainly a giraffe. According to Gessner’s 1551 work, the sultan of Babylon had sent the Holy Roman Emperor Friedrich II (1194–1250) an animal

called an “Orasius,”<sup>33</sup> which is probably the phonetic origin of the term for *Enaxiyue*.<sup>34</sup> However, the illustration accompanying Gessner’s text is not the one that Verbiest copied; instead he chose a less accurate source from the medieval period. It was not until the publication of the second edition of *Icones animalium quadrupedum viviparorum et oviparorum* in 1560 (Fig. 18) that the new image of the giraffe that we see in Verbiest’s version was finally adopted<sup>35</sup> and later incorporated into the second edition of Gessner’s *Historia animalium* in 1603.<sup>36</sup> According to Gessner, this new image was acquired from a print published in Nuremburg, which was itself based on a drawing from life of a giraffe sent to the Ottoman emperor Mehmed III Adli (r. 1595–1603) as a diplomatic gift in 1595.<sup>37</sup>

Arabian merchants had started trading giraffes from Africa and sending them to Mediterranean countries, Persia, India, and even China as early as the tenth century.<sup>38</sup> Zheng He 鄭和 (1371–1433) also brought back the famous giraffe given by the king of Bengal in 1414, which was thought by the Chinese recipients to be a legendary *qilin* and deemed an auspicious omen for the reign of Emperor Chengzu 成祖 (Yongle, r. 1402–1424) (Fig. 19).<sup>39</sup> Several paintings of the giraffe circulated, and all used the same composition of a foreign keeper with a turban holding the reins while looking back at it.<sup>40</sup> The Chinese images, Gessner’s, and those from Central Asia all seem to share this format of composition. It is unknown exactly how they are related within the very complicated and untraceable network of image-making, but it is evident that when the *Complete Collection* and the *Album of Beasts* adopted Verbiest’s phonetic translation of *Enaxiyue* for the giraffe, it was introduced as a

<sup>33</sup>Conrad Gesner, *Historia animalium liber I: De quadrupedibus viviparis*, 2nd ed. (Francofurti: Bibliopolium Cambierianum, 1603), 162–3. For the digital version in the library of University of Sevilla, see <http://fondosdigitales.us.es/fondos/libros/3226> (accessed on April 21, 2013).

<sup>34</sup>“Orasius” is actually a typographical error for “orafus” (because “f” and “s” look alike in the manuscript), which is derived from “azorafa,” a Spanish word deriving from Arabic. The modern word “giraffe” also shares the same origins. See Berthold Laufer, *The Giraffe in History and Art* (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1928), 72.

<sup>35</sup>Conrad Gesner, *Icones animalium quadrupedum viviparorum et oviparorum, additiones*, 124–5. For the digital book from Bibliothèque nationale de France, see <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b23002468.item.f102.legendes> (accessed on April 21, 2013). Gesner died in 1565, so the supplement should have been added by him, not by others later.

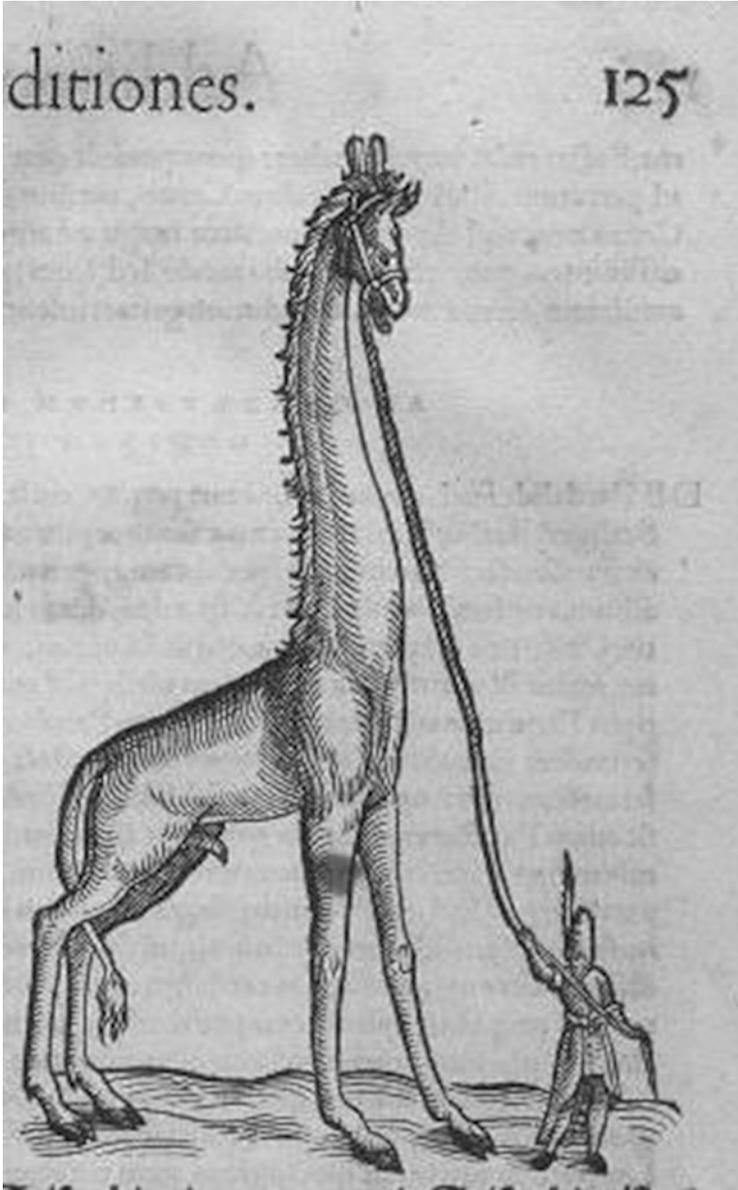
<sup>36</sup>Gesner, *Historia animalium liber I*, 149.

<sup>37</sup>Gesner, *Icones animalium quadrupedum*, 124–5; Linda Komaroff, *Gifts of the Sultan: The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), cat. no. 219, 106–7, 288.

<sup>38</sup>Laufer, *The Giraffe in History and Art*, 31–40.

<sup>39</sup>Chang Renxia 常任俠, “Mingchu Mengjiala guo gong qilin tu 明初孟加拉國貢麒麟圖 (The Painting on Bangladesh sending the Qilin animal as a tribute (to China) in the early Ming Period),” *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 3 (1983): 14–7; Chen Guodong 陳國棟, “Zheng He chuandui xia Xiyang de dongji: sumu, hujiao, yu changjinglu 鄭和船隊下西洋的動機: 蘇木、胡椒與長頸鹿 (The Motives of the Voyages to the Western Oceans by Zheng He’s Fleet: Sapan Wood, Pepper, and Giraffes),” *Chuanshi yanjiu* 17 (2002): 121–34.

<sup>40</sup>The two most famous versions are an anonymous Ming dynasty Qilin Painting with Shen Du 沈度’s Ode (*Ruiying Qilin song* 瑞應麒麟頌) in the National Palace Museum in Taipei and another version with the same title and composition in the Philadelphia Museum of Art.



**Fig. 18** Conrad Gesner, *Icones animalium quadrupedum viviparorum et oviparorum, additiones, 125*



明人畫麒麟沈度頌 軸

調一四七87 故畫甲〇二・一〇・〇三六四

Fig. 19 Anonymous, *Qilin Shen Du song* 麒麟沈度頌 (*Qilin Painting with Shen Du's Ode*), National Palace Museum, Taipei. National Palace Museum, ed., *Gugong shuhua tulu* 故宮書畫圖錄 (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1989), vol. 9, 346

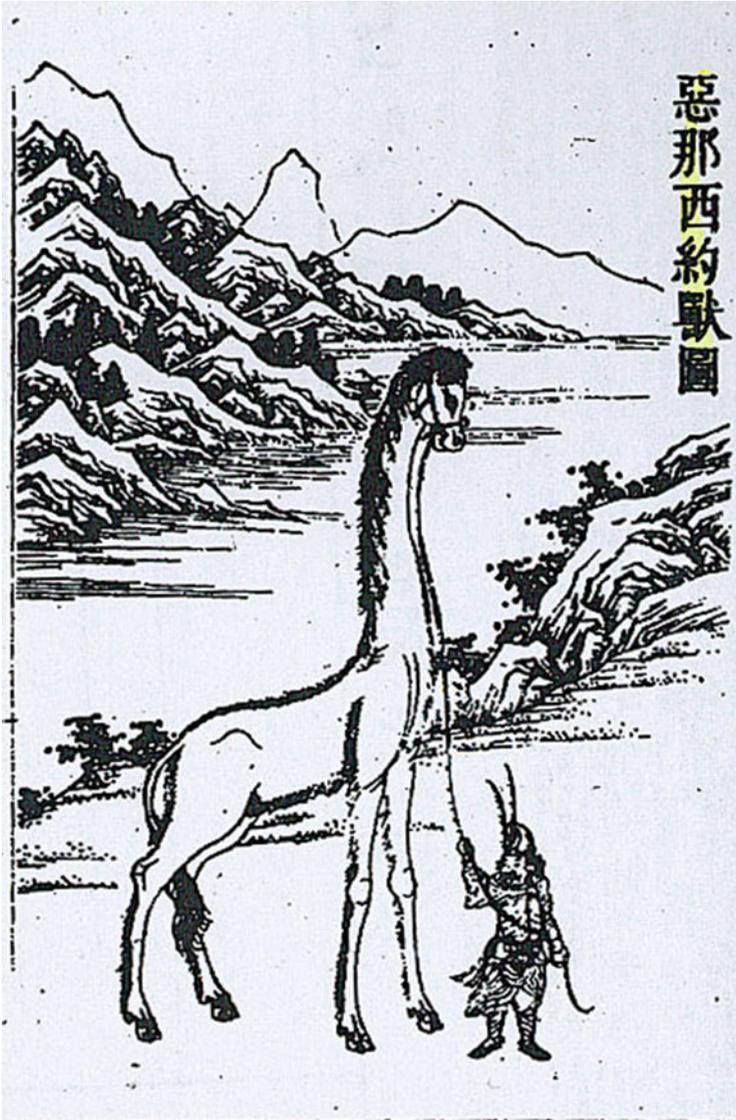


Fig. 20 *Gujin Tushu jicheng, qin chong dian* 禽蟲典, *yishou bu* 異獸部, *juan* 125, 18b

brand new beast to China and disconnected from its previous association with traditional Chinese knowledge on the *qilin*.

For the image of the giraffe, as with other cases, Verbiest's versions copy precisely from Gessner's, right down to the details of shading. But in *Complete Collection* (Fig. 20), the giraffe was placed in a Chinese landscape. A more interesting detail is that it replaces the Indian or Persian keeper with a Chinese theatrical figure wearing long plumes on his head. The *Album of Beasts* (Fig. 21) also modifies



**Fig. 21** Yu Sheng, Zhang Weibang, *Album of Beasts*, 31th leaf, volume six. 1761. Beijing Palace Museum

the background of the landscape from the *Complete Collection* and removes the figure and reins.<sup>41</sup> The most striking characteristic of the giraffe in the *Album of Beasts* is the almost iridescent colors on its back, which is mentioned in the inscription: “The fur has five colors,”<sup>42</sup> which in the Chinese context commonly implies a special radiance of multi-colored materials, such as foreign minerals.

Different from the woodblock-printed landscape in the *Complete Collection*, in which the mountains are depicted with angular lines to create a stern and edgy style, the landscape surrounding the giraffe in the *Album of Beasts* again borrows from the traditional Chinese blue-and-green style of painting. The giraffe is placed among beautiful autumn foliage rising above a running creek, which is enveloped by blue-and-green style rocks. Its colorful fur and flowing hair almost seems to flow in the breeze against a wisp of mist floating above. The mist, the radiating appearance of the giraffe, and the blue-and-green rocks all evoke the sense of an ideal paradise, possibly even referring to the land of the immortals in the Chinese context. However, upon closer examination, the giraffe is rendered with very subtle coloring and

<sup>41</sup>See the thirty-first leaf in volume six of the *Album of Beasts*.

<sup>42</sup>Orig. “皮備五彩.” Yuan, *Qingong Shou pu*, 402.

shading, bringing an almost tangible texture to its furry hair and soft skin. In contrast to the transparency that traditional Chinese ink-wash painting with light coloring creates, the European-related style used here seems to purposefully add layers of colors to build up opaqueness and convey a sense of actual material existence, which previous Chinese paintings seldom cared about. Through the application of this European fusion style at court, the seemingly auspicious character of the giraffe has become actualized, or materialized, but has also been transformed into another anima with a different name—the *Enanxiyue*.

This mis-representation is not unexpected. Given that the mimetic style of the *Album of Beasts* required information about the coloring and texture of the depicted animals, which the original European print failed to supply, the painters most likely produced details based on texts and their imagination that were unrelated to the actual animals. For example, the new giraffe created in the *Album of Beasts*, though it looks “real,” is far removed from any existing animal. A Chinese person who had encountered a real giraffe would probably have neither recognized this image nor connected it with the giraffes recorded in Chinese history.

The giraffe is not the only animal that loses its Chinese connection through this re-encounter. The rhinoceros, or “beast with a nose horn (*bijiao shou* 鼻角獸),” as translated by Verbiest, is another significant case. Verbiest’s image of the rhinoceros is from the famous print by Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), which was transmitted through Gessner’s rendering (Figs. 22, 23, and 24). Dürer depicted the first Indian



Fig. 22 Nan Huairen, *Kunyu quantu*. 1674. National Palace Museum, Taipei

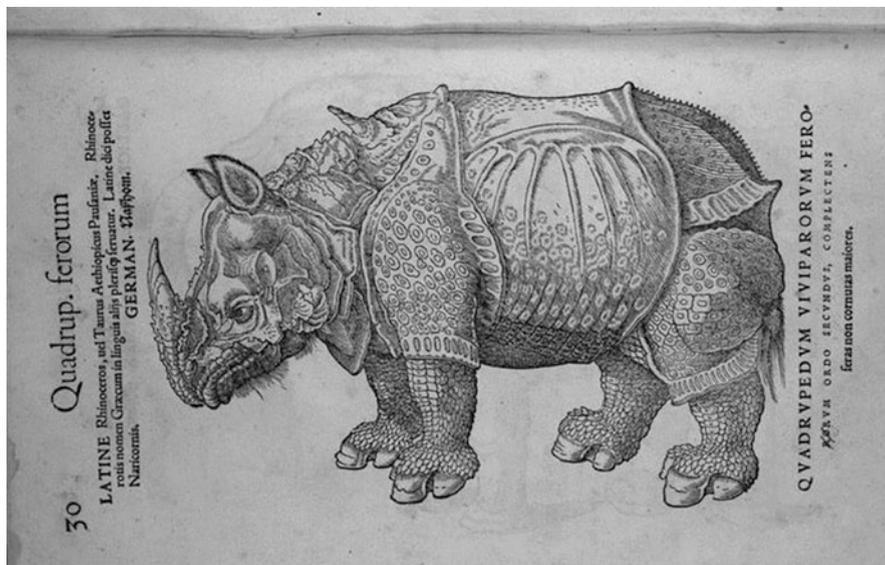


Fig. 23 Conrad Gesner, *Icones animalium quadrupedum viviparorum et oviparorum*, 30

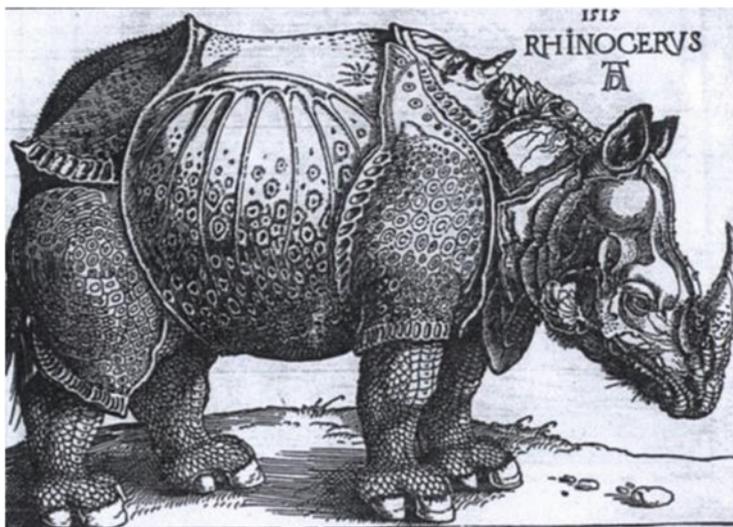


Fig. 24 Albrecht Dürer, *Rhinoceros*. 1515. Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. II, book 1, Fig. 119

rhinoceros to be seen in Europe since Roman times, which arrived in Lisbon on May 20, 1515 from Cochin in India and caused a tremendous sensation at the time.<sup>43</sup> Dürer did not actually see the rhinoceros in person nor the specimen made from it; his drawing and print was based on an image sent from Lisbon.<sup>44</sup> However, the history of Dürer's rhinoceros perfectly matches the narrative that is re-told in Verbiest's text. And therefore, the image of the rhinoceros imported into China was framed and perceived mainly within the milieu of the beast that had been brought to Europe.

This is not to say that China was unfamiliar with the rhinoceros throughout its history. Many documents show that tribute from Southeast Asia often included rhinoceros horns and sometimes even live specimens. Various rhinoceros images also appear in Chinese art and culture, from bronze vessels to illustrations in the *bencao* 本草 (*materia medica*) tradition. Generally speaking, images of the rhinoceros from the late Shang period (c. 1600–c. 1046 BCE) of high antiquity to the Tang dynasty (618–907) are more realistic than the illustrations in *materia medica* writings after the Song dynasty (960–1279), which often depict the animal more like an ox or goat with a horn on its forehead (Fig. 25).<sup>45</sup> Scholars, though, have pointed out that the illustrations in *materia medica* books pay more attention to identifying materials for medicinal use. Therefore, in the case of the rhinoceros, its horn is rendered as a known object attached to a fantasized body, or “a real rhinoceros horn on an imagined rhinoceros.”<sup>46</sup>

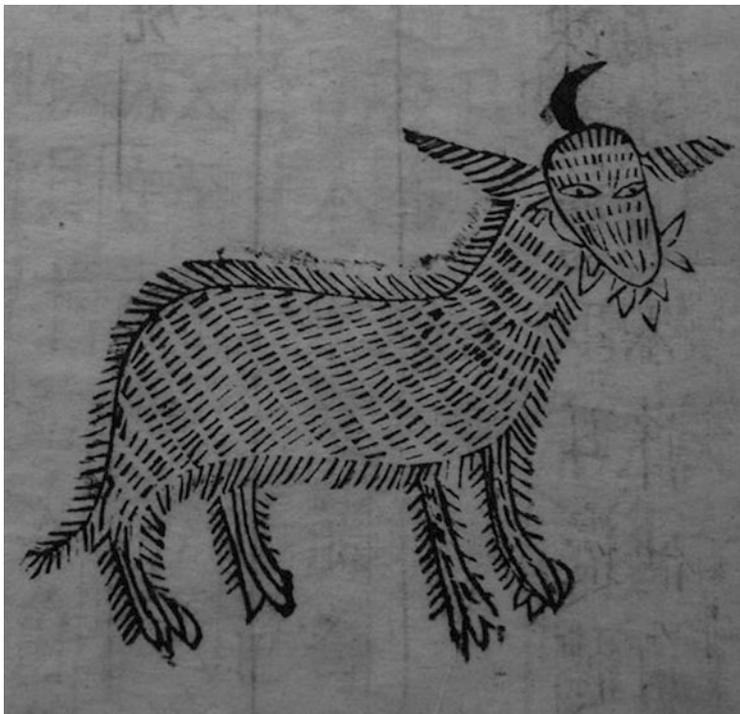
Although Verbiest's image of the rhinoceros is an exact copy from Gessner, the one in the *Complete Collection* (Fig. 26) is highly simplified and a distortion from the original. What is even more confusing is that the rhinoceros in the *Album of Beasts* (Fig. 27) claims to be copied from *Complete Collection*, but it appears to be more similar to Dürer's than to the one in *Complete Collection*. It not only

<sup>43</sup>This rhinoceros immediately became the most treasured beast in the menagerie of Manuel I, the king of Portugal. He even arranged a fight between the rhinoceros and an elephant to verify the saying by naturalists in Roman times that the elephant and rhinoceros were natural enemies. He later offered it to Pope Leo X. Unfortunately, it died in a shipwreck, but its body was made into a specimen and arrived in Rome in February of 1516. For more on the story of this rhinoceros in Europe, see Donald Lach, “Rhinoceros,” in *Asia in the Making of Europe*, ed. Donald Lach (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970), vol. II, book 1, 158–72; Eugenio Menegon, “New Knowledge of Strange Things: Exotic Animals from the West,” *Gujin lunheng* 15 (October 2006): 40–8; Walravens, “Konrad Gessner,” 87–98.

<sup>44</sup>Lach, “Rhinoceros,” 163.

<sup>45</sup>For a more detailed discussion on images of the rhinoceros in China, see Lai Yu-chih 賴毓芝, “Cong Dule dao Qinggong: yi xiniu wei zhongxing de quanqiu shi guan cha 從杜勒到清宮: 以犀牛為中心的全球史觀察 (From Albrecht Dürer to the Qing Court: the Observations on the Depictions of rhinoceros from a Global Perspective),” *Gugong wenwu yuekan* 344 (2011): 68–81.

<sup>46</sup>See Chen Yuanpeng 陳元朋, “Chuantong bowu zhishi li de ‘zhenshi’ yu ‘xiangxiang’: yi xijiao yu xiniu wei zhuti de ge’an yanjiu 傳統博物知識裡的「真實」與「想像」: 以犀角與犀牛為主體的個案研究 (Reality and Imagination in the Knowledge of Traditional Natural History: A Study Based upon the Rhinoceros and Rhinoceros Horns),” *Guoli Zhengzhi daxue lishi xuebao* 33 (2010): 1–82.



**Fig. 25** *Xiniu* 犀牛. Tang Shenwei 唐慎微, ed., *Jingshi zheng lie daiquan* 經史証類大全本草 (1600). Tokyo National Museum. Photo taken by author

reproduces the most eye-catching characteristics of Dürer's design, such as the bulging armor-like body, but also some of the less noticeable details, such as a floral-like pattern on top of the shoulder blade, which is hard to discern in Verbiest's rhinoceros. One must conclude, therefore, that the maker of the *Album of Beasts* must have had Gessner's book on hand for direct reference.

Of further note is that, in the case of the *Album of Beasts* as well as its source in *Complete Collection*, although Dürer's rhinoceros was included and named a beast with a "nose horn," it was actually another rhinoceros from the Chinese tradition that had been blended in—that is, the ox or goat with a horn (Fig. 28). Without the mediation of living animals or their dead bodies, the new European images and knowledge introduced by Verbiest and transformed by the reproductions of the *Complete Collection* and the *Album of Beasts* became something foreign beside the traditional Chinese knowledge of the same subject. In other words, in the cases of both the rhinoceros and giraffe the introduction of European knowledge and the image shown did not have an impact on the history of Chinese science as written by intellectuals. Nevertheless, the use of a traditional Chinese landscape style combined with imaginative, yet materially tangible, renderings of the animals from all over the globe in Western texts formed a European fusion style, through which knowledge and images from Europe were not only "domesticated" but actually re-invented and re-planted on Chinese soil in painting.

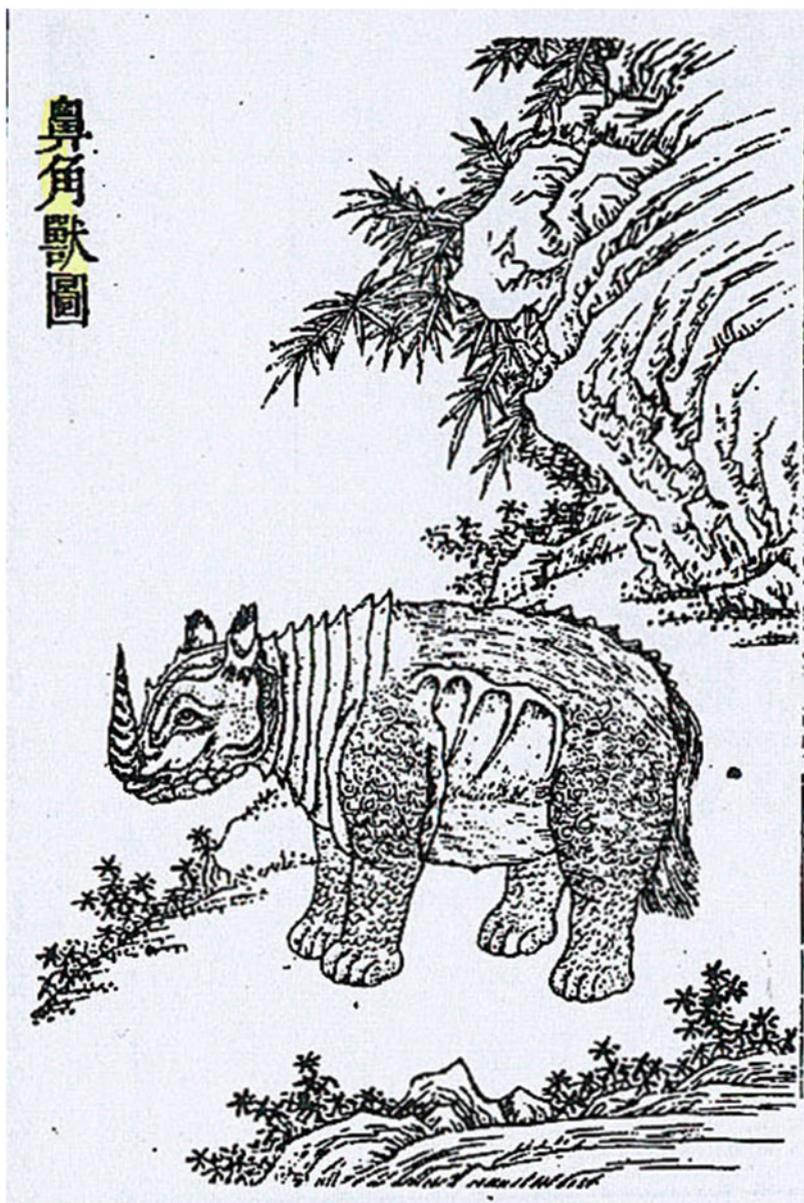


Fig. 26 *Gujin Tushu jicheng, qin chong dian* 禽蟲典, *yishou bu* 異獸部, *juan* 125, 10b



**Fig. 27** Yu Sheng, Zhang Weibang, *Album of Beasts*, 22th leaf, volume six. 1761. Beijing Palace Museum

## Materializing the Unknown

Though it did not challenge the Chinese epistemological tradition, does this mean that we must conclude that the *Album of Beasts* is only a follower of the Chinese traditional *leishu* 類書 type of encyclopedia? And if not, what are the differences between the categories? While it is true that much of the content in the *Complete Collection* derives from traditional Chinese encyclopedias, such as *Classic of Mountains and Seas* and *Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms*, on the other hand it also exhibits many differences. The most obvious is that the *Album of Beasts* transforms the printed into the painted image. Different from the transformation of the painted into the printed, which mainly entails a mere reduction or deletion of details, the transformation from the printed to the painted involves addition or embellishment of non-existing details. In the the *Album of Beasts*, the original printed images have literally become embodied by the addition of texture, colors, delicate shading, and three-dimensional volume to form an eclectic European style. The attention to texture created through the opaqueness of color gives the depicted animals a sense of solidity and volume. One might even say that this court style



**Fig. 28** Yu Sheng, Zhang Weibang, *Album of Beasts*, 19th leaf, volume one. 1761. Beijing Palace Museum

actualizes what is beyond the imagination, such as the *su* beast, into something imaginable, thereby providing it with a tangible sense of existence in the material world.

This “realistic” style enhanced by European techniques in shading and creating three-dimensional volume not only applies to animals from foreign sources and those familiar in daily life, but also to some specimens that are far removed from reality. In *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, one can see, for example, an animal with multiple heads called an “Enlightened beast (*kaiming shou* 開明獸),” and one with only a single leg called a *kui* 夔 (Figs. 29 and 30). Although the influential philosopher Nelson Goodman argues that realism has nothing to do with resemblance judged by “constant and independent” standards<sup>47</sup> but is “a matter of habit” conditioned by different cultures,<sup>48</sup> scholars have increasingly challenged this purely cultural relativism and become willing to ponder the possibilities that there is still

<sup>47</sup>Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1976), 39.

<sup>48</sup>Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 38.



**Fig. 29** Yu Sheng, Zhang Weibang, *Album of Beasts*, 6th leaf, volume six. 1761. Beijing Palace Museum

some objectivity involved in deciding whether some styles or paintings are more realistic than others. For example, Margaret A. Hagen believes that realistic pictures “succeed as representations because they provide structured visual information equivalent to that provided by the real scene represented.”<sup>49</sup> In our case, it is almost impossible for us to know the texture of the skin, hair, and even the color of this mythical creature from the original monochrome print, but the painted version in the European fusion style in the *Album of Beasts*, on the other hand, manages to provide us with all the information needed to make this creature appear alive in reality (although by fabrication), including its texture, anatomic volume, animation, or “modality,” to use John Hyman’s term.<sup>50</sup> And it is not only by Hyman’s standard

<sup>49</sup>Margaret A. Hagen, *Varieties of Realism: Geometries of Representational Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 8.

<sup>50</sup>John Hyman, *The Objective Eye: Color, Form, and Reality in the Theory of Art* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 155–237.

夔圖

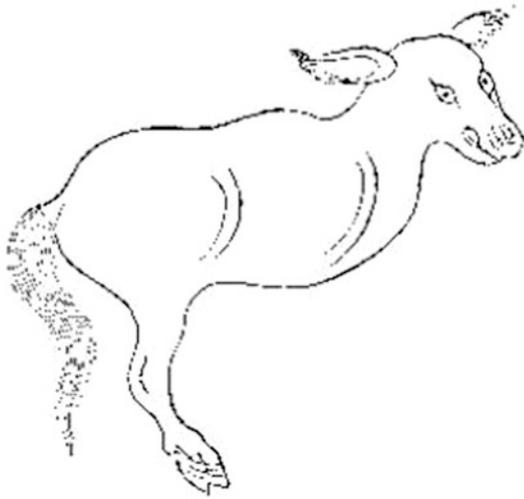


Fig. 30 *Gujin Tushu jicheng, qin chong dian* 禽蟲典, *yishou bu* 異獸部, *juan* 124, 42b

that these court paintings which absorb European painting techniques are more realistic than, for example, contemporary Chinese Orthodox school paintings. It is important to note that this eclectic European style was very much seen by Qing emperors, such as Kangxi and Qianlong, their officials, and even painters of the time, a being more mimetic (*si* 似) or real (*zhen* 真) than the Chinese style, as shown in many contemporary writings.

For example, in the famous *Study of Vision* published in the Yongzheng 雍正 period (1722–35), Nian Xiyao 年希堯 (d. 1738), a powerful high official active in the Yongzheng reign, explicitly pointed out that Chinese painting may be appreciated for its “specially managed arrangements” in the genre of landscape paintings; however, one cannot but adopt “the method from the West” when it comes to

depicting architecture and objects with precision.<sup>51</sup> He even challenged the traditional Chinese paradigm of aesthetics and said, “Do not blindly follow the cliché and irresponsibly say [one painting] is full of likeness, but not of excellence (*miao* 妙). How could a painting not look real but achieve the excellence (*miao* 妙).”<sup>52</sup> Nian’s opinion was supported by the scholar-official painter Zou Yigui 鄒一桂 who was active in both the Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns. Zou also insisted that “no one can achieve complete spiritual expression without formal likeness (*wei you xing que er shen quan zhe* 未有形缺而神全者).”<sup>53</sup> The Qianlong emperor, furthermore, thought it was important to combine the two. In 1763, when Afghan envoys presented four steeds to the Qianlong emperor, he asked the court painter Jin Tingbiao (d. 1767) to imitate Li Gonglin’s 李公麟 (1049–1106) painting of *Wuma tu* 五馬圖 (*Five Horses*) to depict these four steeds. He explicitly instructed Jin to “combine the mimetic quality of Giuseppe Castiglione’s works with the ‘ge’ or ‘style’ of Li Gonglin’s.”<sup>54</sup> For him, the Western style specialized in depicting “formal likeness” and was different from the Chinese literati tradition represented by the archetypal scholar-official painter Li Gonglin. Li was a brilliant practitioner of the dictum of Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), the famous poet, writer, art theorist, and statesman, and also Li’s friend, that “anyone who judges painting by form-likeness shows merely the insight of a child.”<sup>55</sup> He, therefore, rejected the “realism” practiced by his contemporary artisans and invented a so-called *Baimiao* style that pursued self-expression through the simple, yet modulated ink outline that captures and

<sup>51</sup>Nian had been the Governor of Guangdong, Supervisor of the Jingdezhen Imperial Kilns, Supervisor-in-chief of the Imperial Household Department, Commissioner of Huai’an Customs. The two Chinese phrases here are “意匠經營” and “秦西之法,” see Nian Xiyao, *Shixue* 視學 (*The Study of Vision*), in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (*The Continuation to the Complete Collection of the Imperial Four Treasuries*), vol. 1067 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995–2002), 27.

<sup>52</sup>Orig. “毋徒漫語人曰，真而不妙，夫不真又安所得妙，” see Nian, *Shixue*, 27.

<sup>53</sup>Orig. “未有形缺而神全者。” See Zou Yigui 鄒一桂, *Xiaoshang huapu* 小山畫譜 (*The Painting Manual of Xiaoshang*), in *Jingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (*The Wenyuange Edition of the Complete Collection of the Imperial Four Treasuries*), vol. 838, 703; Qianlong Emperor 乾隆, *Yuzhi shiji sanji* 御製詩集三集 (*Imperial Poems*), *juan* 31, 10b–11a, in *Jingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (*The Wenyuange Edition of the Complete Collection of the Imperial Four Treasuries*), vol. 1305, 722.

<sup>54</sup>Orig. “以郎[世寧]之似合李[公麟]格。” See the Qianlong Emperor, *Yuzhi shiji sanji* 御製詩集三集 (*Qianlong Imperial-Compiled Poem Collection, Collection III*), *juan* 31, 10b–11a, in *Jingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (*The Wenyuange Edition of the Complete Collection of the Imperial Four Treasuries*), vol. 1305, 722.

<sup>55</sup>Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037–1101) to Tung Ch’i-ch’ang (1555–1636)*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Studies 27 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 26.

reveals the true spirit and essence of his sitters or objects. For Emperor Qianlong, only when these two seemingly contrary traditions were combined, would great art be born.<sup>56</sup>

It is through this style that the *Album of Beasts* reconciles animals of the known with those of the unknown, and animals from daily life with ones from classical texts. Thus, it makes the multi-headed “Enlightened beast” from *Classic of Mountains and Seas* and the Indian rhinoceros equally convincing to viewers without any further knowledge or means to judge them. Despite the fact that, with the help of a very specific style, the editor fashioned the album with distinctive colors of reality, it remains to be asked whether the mythic creatures from, for example, the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, were actually received as real in any sense by contemporaries. It is probably absurd to imagine that these creatures, like the one-legged *kui*, could have existed in reality. But the question of how to understand the mythic creatures mentioned in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* is actually a very important issue in the historiography of evidential research, or *kaozheng xue* 考證學, which has flourished since the eighteenth century. The famous sinologist Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927) used the texts written on excavated oracle bones to conduct intertextual reading between them and the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, confirming that the records in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* are not total fantasy, but that they actually reveal important facets of ancient Chinese history.<sup>57</sup> It is not clear whether the Qianlong emperor and his team of compilers ever inquired into the authenticity of the records in *Classic of Mountains and Seas*. However, by juxtaposing the colophon’s criticism of Guo Pu’s *Annotations to Classic of Mountains and Seas* as “[being] hidden peculiarities” and the actualization of those fantastic creatures by appropriating the features of known animals, such as their skin color, fur, and some details, to create a “realistic” style—using layers of opaque coloring and shadowing to create the tangible solidity of physical existence—we may at least say that the *Album of Beasts* took a very clear approach to actually materializing the unknown in classical texts.

Therefore, despite the fact that the *Album of Beasts* did not involve any first-hand investigation, it successfully replaced traditional images with contemporary ones originating from first-hand experience, such as horses, and materialized the unknown through building solidity and volume on the surface of silk with delicate applications of color and shading in a European fusion style. Most importantly, it effectively exerted the cultural perception of a “Western style” and “information

<sup>56</sup>See *Yuzhi shiji sanji* 御製詩集三集 (*Qianlong Imperial-Compiled Poem Collection, Collection III*), juan 31, 10b–11a, in *Jingyin wenyuange siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (*The Wenyuange Edition of the Complete Collection of the Imperial Four Treasuries*), vol. 1305, 722.

<sup>57</sup>For example, his breakthrough research on *nao* 夔, using records in both *Classic of Mountains and Seas* and oracle bones, argues that it was the ancestor of people in the Shang and Zhou (1100–256 BCE) period; Wang Guowei 王國維, “Yin puci zhong suo jian xiangong xianwang kao 殷卜辭中所見先公先王考 (The Research on the Early Dukes and Kings seen in the Oracle Bones of the Yin Period),” in *Guantang jilin* 觀堂集林 (Collected Works of Guantang) (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1992), juan 9, 1a–15b.

from the West” as something that was closely related to reality. The *Album of Beasts*, like the other two projects, proclaims its close connection with reality and indicates that “the paintings included are all based on verifiable facts.”<sup>58</sup>

## Virtualizing Ideal Rule

If this is the case, we should then ask how images conceptualizing a sense of reality could be equated with the real? This reminds us of Qianlong’s famous series of paintings entitled *Shiyi shier tu* 是一是二圖 (*One or Two*), which were started in 1745 and extended until 1750, around the same time that the three projects were initiated. In this series, by adopting the format of a painting within a painting, the image is combined with an inscription that states, “One or two? My two faces never come together yet are never separate.”<sup>59</sup> In so doing, the Qianlong emperor asks whether the portrait in the painting or the painting itself is the real him. For Qianlong, images of illusion and reality mirror each other and were created, not by denial or substitution, but through inter-dependence.<sup>60</sup> In Patricia Berger’s words, “If the portrait needs the emperor to take form in the first place, the emperor likewise needs his portrait to project himself into history as a series of mirrored, familiar, but ever transforming shapes.”<sup>61</sup> Similarly, if we ask whether the animals depicted in the *Album of Beasts* and the animals in reality are “one or two,” the answer should be that “they never come together, yet are never separate.” This is similar to using the style of Castiglione or Attiret to depict Qianlong’s horses in reality for the leaf of the idealized “Fine horse” in the *Album of Beasts*, which, on the one hand, endows the *Album of Beasts* with a sense of reality, and, on the other, makes Qianlong’s horses the embodiment of the “Fine horse” defined by the historical canon. They are certainly created in response to each other and are mutually dependent.

If the illusion of images can be equated to the truth of reality, then there are probably no differences between mythical creatures such as the *qilin*, fictional ones such as the “Enlightened beast,” court animals such as the “Fine horse,” or foreign animals such as the rhinoceros, as long as they are rendered in an eclectic European style with an illusionistic effect. According to this logic, is it still necessary to conduct first-hand investigation to see if there is a difference? According to its preface, the *Album of Beasts* imitates the format of the *Album of Birds* and was planned a little bit later than the *Album of Birds*, though they were created side by

<sup>58</sup>Orig. “繪事所垂，皆悉徵實。” Yuan, *Qinggong Shou pu*, 407.

<sup>59</sup>Orig. “是一是二，不即不離。” This translation is from Wu Hung, *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 235.

<sup>60</sup>Kristina Renée Kleutghen, “One or Two, Repictured,” *Archives of Asian Art* 62 (2012): 25–46; Patricia Berger, *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 51–4; Wu Hung, *The Double Screen*, 200–36.

<sup>61</sup>Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*, 53

side. Is it therefore possible that the *Album of Beasts* gave up first-hand investigation after the development of visual discourse shown in *One or Two* from around the same time? This is an aspect worth considering in further studies on the subject.

Finally, returning to the original question of how the Qianlong emperor understood the world he ruled, we must ask: What role did visual imagery play in his perception? The *Album of Beasts*, modeled after the structure and content of *Complete Collection*, superimposes information associated with reality but without challenging the original understanding. In this context, the “beast with a nose horn” and rhinoceros, *qilin*, and giraffe, as well as the imaginative “Enlightened beast” and a real horse, can co-exist without the need for further dialogue. Nevertheless, with the information, images, and styles from Europe, especially the fusion European style with its dense rendering of details, texture, and light (hence, its illusionistic effect), the *Album of Beasts* is able to diminish the inconsistencies within and expunge the possibility that any viewer might differentiate the fictional from the real or the imaginative from the foreign, while at the same time also claiming that its depictions have close ties with reality. Therefore, despite the fact that no first-hand investigation was undertaken for the production of the *Album of Beasts* and some of its images are far removed from reality, the album successfully uses imagery to refer to, correspond to, and even construct an outside world.

The “world reality” that the *Album of Beasts* constructs is populated by mythical animals that were plucked from traditional classics and actual species from specific geographical habitats. Therefore, it combines a mixture of the “truth of philology” and the “truth of reality.” In that floating age of outside stimuli and a re-examination of old traditions, it may not always have been easy for the Qianlong emperor and the people around him to differentiate between the two, despite the effort he showed in overthrowing some apparent absurdities and falsehoods in traditional texts using information from his version of reality. Thus, the knowledge of the world that the *Album of Beasts* encompasses is by no mean comprehensive, but rather fragmented.

So how could fragments of knowledge or information enable Qianlong to comprehend the empire he was ruling? It brings to mind the priming mechanism in psychology that refers to an implicit memory effect in which exposure to a stimulus influences a response to a later stimulus. For example, if one sees an incomplete sketch that one is unable to identify and is then shown a more complete segment of the sketch until they are able to fully recognize the motif in its entirety, one will later identify the sketch at a much earlier stage than he/she did the first time. In other words, fragments can be completed by previous experiences through priming.<sup>62</sup>

In the case of the *Album of Beasts*, the fragments of reality and the fragments of traditional texts (mostly carrying layers of Confucian moral meaning) could be primed as universally “real” and “ideal” worlds based on the Qianlong emperor’s previous experiences of reality and knowledge in Chinese classical learning. Moreover, through the mediation of mimetic visual images, these two worlds collided,

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<sup>62</sup>See Bryan Kolb, and Ian Whishaw, *Fundamentals of Human Neuropsychology* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2003), 453–4, 457.

syndicated, and merged into one “reality,” in which the Qianlong emperor perceived himself as, acted as, and actually was a Sage King, bearing knowledge of every living thing in the realm of his rule. In this world of “reality,” foreign animals taking shape and materializing on the basis of European texts no longer appear in front of an abstract background, but like other domestic animals and mythic creatures from classical texts, they live in a traditional Chinese blue-and-green style landscape. Despite their origin in foreign lands, these animals have become “domesticated” in submission to the benevolent government of the emperor on Chinese soil. This notion is echoed in the colophon which records that the region of Altishahr bowed to Qing sovereignty, resulting in the picture of the tribute of heavenly steeds in the *Album of Beasts*.<sup>63</sup> These foreign animals appropriated from Verbiest’s text, though they never reached China, represent virtual tribute and embody an answer to the call of the benevolent rule of the Qianlong emperor. This is one of the most traditional rhetorics of Chinese politics. However, given the help of global knowledge, trans-cultural imagery, and crucially, the new technique of (re)making them in China in a palpable fashion, the rhetoric is not just an abstract statement but a make-believe representation of ideal rule in painting.

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<sup>63</sup>Orig. “回部嚮化底貢，而圖天驥之材。” Yuan, *Qinggong Shou pu*, 407.

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