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## NOTES ON A DRAWING OF INDIAN ELEPHANTS IN RED CRAYON BY PETRUS CAMPER (1786) IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE RIJKSMUSEUM VAN NATUURLIJKE HISTORIE

by

**A.C. VAN BRUGGEN & FLORENCE F.J.M. PIETERS**

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A drawing of two Indian elephants, signed "P. Camper f. 10 Sept. 1786", in red chalk or crayon, was found in the archives of the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie in a manuscript by T.G. van Lidth de Jeude (1788-1863). Van Lidth de Jeude, professor at Utrecht university, obviously intended to use it as an illustration in his projected manual of the mammals in Dutch. The drawing is almost completely identical to an unsigned drawing in the Artis library, one of a series of three. The Leiden drawing is traced back to H. Schlegel, director of the Leiden museum 1858-1884, who most probably obtained the Van Lidth de Jeude papers upon his death. Van Lidth de Jeude is likely to have acquired the Camper drawing from G.J. van Klinkenberg (1768/69-1841), who in turn must have got it from the custodian of the Stadholder's collection, when he (Prince William V) was already in exile in England. The Camper drawings in the Artis library are also traced back to Van Lidth de Jeude and Van Klinkenberg (via the second Vrolik sale in 1868, and the auction of "Dr. P...." in 1887; "Dr. P...." very probably is Dr. F.P.L. Pollen, 1842-1886, who in the years 1862-1866 materially contributed to the zoological exploration of Madagascar). It is argued that because of the presence of the signature, the Leiden drawing is the original and the Amsterdam drawing a copy, either done by Camper himself or somebody else. Some drawings in the Rijksprentenkabinet (Amsterdam), presented in 1940 by the surgeon Dr. J.C.J. Bierens de Haan (1867-1951) may be preliminary sketches for the red crayon pictures here discussed.

Dr. A.C. van Bruggen, Systematic Zoology Section of the university, c/o Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, P.O. Box 9517, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands.

Florence F.J.M. Pieters biol. drs., Librarian of the Artis Bibliotheek (Universiteit van Amsterdam), Plantage Middenlaan 45A, 1018 DC Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

## INTRODUCTION

The little-known archives of the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie,-

Leiden, contain a wealth of historical material, pertaining not only to the above institution (in existence since 1820), but also to zoology in the Netherlands and its former colonies in Africa, SE. Asia and South America. The majority of the older documents derives from the 19th century, while, of course, the real bulk consists of 20th century material. However, there are also some 18th century documents of great interest.

The archives of the Leiden museum are rich in material on Van Lidth de Jeude senior. Theodoor Gerard van Lidth de Jeude (1788-1863), professor of zoology at Utrecht university until 1858 and first director of the veterinary school (now the faculty of veterinary sciences), was not formally connected with the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie. However, there are three informal ties with the Leiden museum, viz., (1) Van Lidth de Jeude's step-daughter Albertina C.B. Pfeiffer was the second wife of the widowed Hermann Schlegel (1804-1884), attached to the museum from 1825 until his death and director from 1858 to 1884—Schlegel and Van Lidth de Jeude were personal friends as well; (2) important parts of the extensive Van Lidth de Jeude zoological collections (among which material from the Prince of Orange and Albertus Seba) were bought for the Leiden museum by Schlegel in 1858, 1866 and 1867 (fide Boeseman, 1970: 189-200); (3) Van Lidth de Jeude's great-nephew Theodorus Willem van Lidth de Jeude (1853-1937) was curator of reptiles and amphibians (and fishes for a time) at the Leiden museum from 1884 to 1923—the fact that he was only ten years old when his great-uncle died (1863), to all intents and purposes precludes scientific contacts between these two zoologists (junior obtained his Ph.D. at Utrecht university only in 1882) (data ex Gijzen, 1938: 277). There are no data on how the papers of T.G. van Lidth de Jeude were acquired by the Leiden museum; an important reference work (Smit, Sanders & Van der Veer, 1986) does not even mention papers. Of course, Schlegel had a good relationship with Van Lidth de Jeude personally and through his second wife, which contacts were kept with the widow after the death of Van Lidth de Jeude. With respect to the sale of specimens from the latter's cabinet "Schlegel writes that Mrs. Van Lidth de Jeude would be compliant with regards to arrangements facilitating payment." (Boeseman, 1970: 197). All this has made us conclude that the Van Lidth de Jeude papers have almost certainly reached the Leiden museum via Schlegel and not via T.W. van Lidth de Jeude.

The Van Lidth de Jeude papers are voluminous; although he published little, he certainly was a prolific writer. All his papers are manuscripts of which only one, on parasitic worms, was published (1829); some have been (sometimes handsomely) bound, others are in neat parcels, as a rule still in their original wrappings. One does get the impression that certainly the bound vol-

umes are lecture notes; for what other reasons should one have manuscripts bound? Some of the other manuscripts look like real manuscripts for handbooks treating various aspects of zoology, particularly the morphology, comparative anatomy and systematics of the vertebrates. There are also collections of (potential?) illustrations for his manuscripts, mainly consisting of figures from existing books, such as large numbers of beautiful coloured pictures of shells carefully cut out of the plates and separately mounted with new captions. The modern observer will be slightly (?) taken aback by the fact that many of these pictures derive from celebrated volumes, e.g. one of the editions of Knorr's *Vergnügen der Augen* etc. (1757-1772, etc., see Dance, 1986). Van Lidth de Jeude, however, always faithfully acknowledged the sources of his figures, as shown by his list of "Ouvrages contenant les figures originales, dont on trouve les copies dans cette collection" in his 1829 treatise.

#### CAMPER'S DRAWING IN LEIDEN

In 1975 W.J. Roosdorp, at that time re-arranging part of the archives of the Leiden museum, discovered a parcel wrapped in the original rough packing paper bearing a round label reading "Zoologia. — B.C. — over de Gewerfelde Dieren en Zoog-dieren. in 't algemeen." (Zoologia. — B.C. — on the vertebrate animals and mammals in general). This parcel appeared to contain two parts of a manuscript, (1) "Over de Gewerfelde Dieren, in 't Algemeen beschouwd." (On the vertebrate animals, considered in general), which covers pp. 1-18, and (2) "Eerste Classe des Dieren-Ryks. De Zoog-dieren (Mammalia.) (Les Mammifères)" [First class of the animal kingdom. The mammals (Mammalia.) (Les Mammifères)], which covers pp. 1-123. The letters "B. C." cannot be explained; presumably there has been a part "A" and perhaps even parts "D", etc., but these have not been found in a search of all the Van Lidth de Jeude manuscripts. It appears that the manuscript in question is in itself complete in so far that it covers a general summary of the mammals. The final sentences on p. 123 (wrongly numbered 223) read as follows: "Laat ons na deze algemeene beschouwing der Zoogdieren, overgaan tot de Rangschikking dezer Dierclassen. Cl. I Zoog-dieren" (Let us after this general consideration of the mammals, proceed with the arrangement of this class of animals. Cl. I Mammals), implying that part "D" (if any) was going to treat the system of the mammals. However, as said before, such a manuscript has (so far?) not been found in the Leiden museum archives.

On p. 39 of the above manuscript there is a heading "§8. Snuit der Zoogdieren" (Muzzle of the mammals) and pp. 39-45 treat the trunk of the ele-

phants. This is accompanied by some crude and poorly drawn sketches on the manuscript pages. However, between pp. 39 and 40, Mr. Roosdorp discovered an original drawing of two young Indian elephants in red chalk, signed "P. Camper f. 10 Sept. 1786". This drawing was brought to the notice of Dr. L.B. Holthuis, at that time the (unofficial) archivist of the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie. The drawing was subsequently stored in the mammal section of the museum and the matter was left in abeyance.

### CAMPER'S DRAWINGS OF INDIAN ELEPHANTS

A matter of pure coincidence rekindled interest in this particular drawing. As a consequence of a shared interest in the history of zoological gardens, the senior author passed a copy of Pieters (1980) to Mr. Roosdorp, now living in retirement. Mr. Roosdorp drew the attention to note 33 on p. 554 in Pieters (1980), stating "Cuvier thereby followed in the footsteps of Petrus Camper (1722-1789) who had dissected another elephant from the Prince's menagerie (Camper, 1774). Camper's folio work about this dissection was published after his death by his son Adriaan Gilles in 1802... This famous Dutch anatomist [i.e., Camper senior] had observed the two young elephants (which were to be dissected later by Cuvier) closely in 1786. He made three red chalk drawings of them, which are present in the Artis Library (two of them reproduced in Pieters, 1978: 63 fig. 7)."

Two of these three Camper drawings have been figured twice, viz. in Pieters (1978: 63, fig. 7) and in Visser (1985: 54, fig. 7). A comparison of the three Amsterdam drawings with the Leiden specimen results in the following. It is clear that the Leiden drawing (pl. 1) is identical to one of the Amsterdam drawings (cf. the top figures of both Pieters and Visser), bar the fact that the Leiden copy bears the signature of Petrus Camper and the date. All drawings are in the same type of red chalk or crayon, have almost identical measurements (c. 20.5 x 31.6 cm) and are on the same type of thick drawing paper. The drawing under discussion depicts a juvenile Indian elephant laterally from the right side and one slightly obliquely from in front, with two detailed sketches of the (right?) forefoot (above) and of the nasal openings in the trunk (below). It is not known whether one or two individuals have been figured; circumstantial evidence (date, Camper's circle of acquaintances, etc.) points to the fact that the drawings depict either Hans and/or Parkie (sometimes called Grietje or Marguerite in the literature), the young Indian elephants belonging to the Stadholder Prince William V and kept in his menageries, first near The Hague and later at 't Loo near Apeldoorn until they were forcibly removed to Paris in 1797 (see e.g. Houel, 1803; Pieters, 1978; Van Bruggen, 1984).

It has therefore now been established that there are *four* drawings of live Indian elephants by Petrus Camper instead of the three mentioned by Pieters (1978, 1980). The only difference between the Leiden plate and the similar Amsterdam drawing is that the former bears the signature of Petrus Camper and the date, which is the reason why we suggest that this is the original and the Amsterdam drawing an exact copy. By whom this copy was made is a moot point; in the days before the xerox many crucial drawings were copied, either by the artist or by somebody else. The close similarity suggests that the Amsterdam copy was done by Camper himself. Indeed, it is very hard to distinguish between the two drawings, were it not for the signature and date. Details such as the fold in the skin of the left foreleg of the left elephant, the double line in the margin of the left ear of the right elephant, etc. have been faithfully copied. Only one of the Amsterdam drawings is dated and signed in exactly the same manner as the Leiden drawing, which suggests that the other, similar, one is also a good copy.<sup>1</sup>

#### HISTORY OF THE OWNERSHIP OF THE ARTIS DRAWINGS

The drawings in the Artis library may also be traced to Van Lidth de Jeude without too much trouble. The sales catalogue of the library and papers of Van Lidth de Jeude (auction Amsterdam, 1866) includes on p. 13 item no. 323 "Dessins en crayon rouge, représentant des éléphants. Dessinés par P. Camper. 3 pc. fol. obl. *Très curieux.*" (Drawings in red crayon, representing elephants. Drawn by P. Camper. 3 pieces in oblong folio. Very remarkable.). The drawings next appear in the auction catalogue of the library of the zoologist Willem Vrolik (1801-1863). The auction<sup>2</sup> was held five years after his death by the same firm in Amsterdam, the bookseller Frederik Muller (1868). Item 334 on p. 23 reads as follows: "Trois dessins en crayon rouge p. P. Camper, représentant des éléphants. fol. *Très bien dessiné.*" (Three drawings in red crayon by P. Camper, representing elephants. folio. Very well drawn.). According to an annotated copy of this auction catalogue in the Artis library the drawings were sold to an unknown buyer for Hfl. 1.50. It is not easy to judge whether this was a large sum or not. On the same page the following prices for some quite well-known works are noted: Hfl. 4.25 for Camper's anatomy of a male elephant (1802, 20 plates in "gr. fol."), Hfl. 20.00 for Gould's kangaroo mono-

<sup>1</sup>To sum up: there are four drawings, i.e. one original and its copy in the Artis library, one original in the Leiden museum and its copy in the Artis library.

<sup>2</sup>Actually, this is the *second* Vrolik auction; the first was held in 1865 in Amsterdam (Frederik Muller).

graph (1841-1842, 30 coloured plates in "gr. fol."), Hfl. 7.25 for Cuvier's natural history of the whales (1836, 22 coloured plates, 8°), etc. At that time the wages for a keeper of the Amsterdam zoo amounted to about Hfl. 5.00 per week, so that a price of Hfl. 1.50 is probably indeed quite low.

A close look at the dates shows that Vrolik cannot have bought the drawings at the auction of Van Lidth de Jeude's library (1866), because the former had already died in 1863. What may have happened, is probably that the drawings were not sold at the 1866 auction and the bookseller kept them for future inclusion in another sale, i.e. that of Vrolik's library.

The last time the Artis library drawings are mentioned is in the auction catalogue of drawings and books (1887) having belonged to "Dr. P...". Here they are shown under no. 42 "Etudes de l'Elephas Indicus. A la sanguine. 3 Feuilles dont une est signée: P. Camper f. 10 Sept 1786." (Studies of *Elephas Indicus*. In red crayon. 3 Sheets of which one is signed: etc.). In a copy of this catalogue in the Rijksprentenkabinet (Amsterdam, from the Koninklijk Oudheidkundig Genootschap) there is a handwritten note in the margin that these drawings were bought for the Artis library for Hfl. 3.25, more than double the sum that Dr. P. had paid at the Vrolik sale. This obviously was the last time the drawings appeared in a sale.

Who was this mysterious Dr. P.? A search instituted by the present authors came to naught, but Dr. Holthuis has suggested, and probably on good grounds, that it was Dr. François Paul Louis Pollen (1842-1886). Pollen contributed materially to the zoology of Madagascar; first he travelled there with D.C. van Dam (1862-1866) and collected many valuable specimens for the Leiden museum (mainly vertebrates). This was all paid for by Pollen himself, who apparently was quite a wealthy young man. Later he sponsored further research in Madagascar without indulging in field-work himself any more. Pollen died suddenly in May 1886; the sale of Dr. P.'s drawings and books was held on 24 January 1887. Dr. Holthuis has established that in various lists of members (e.g. Nederlandsche Dierkundige Vereeniging, the Dutch zoological society; Koninklijk Zoölogisch Genootschap "Natura Artis Magistra", the zoological society responsible for the zoological gardens in Amsterdam) there is only one Dr. P. that might be the one involved here, viz., Pollen. Pollen had obtained a Ph.D. honoris causa from the German university of Göttingen in 1875. These members lists might also give a clue as to the identity of Dr. P. The sales catalogue contains sets of the journals published by the Amsterdam zoological society, i.e., *Bijdragen tot de Dierkunde* (item no. 252) and *Nederlandsch Tijdschrift voor de Dierkunde* (item no. 265)—Dr. P. as a fellow of that zoological society would have received copies automatically. The absence of the book by Pollen & Van Dam on Madagascar and of the

original plates by Keulemans is striking; would Pollen's widow have kept these for sentimental reasons? The present authors are entirely happy to follow Dr. Holthuis in attributing Dr. P. to Dr. F.P.L. Pollen. Much of the data supplied by Dr. Holthuis are as yet unpublished; what is available, is merely a short obituary by Baron von Rosenberg (1886).

### ORIGIN OF THE DRAWINGS

There remains the question of how Van Lidth de Jeude came by the drawings by Camper. The death of the celebrated anatomist Petrus Camper (1722-1789) almost coincides with the birth of Van Lidth de Jeude senior (1788). Therefore, it is highly unlikely that there has been contact between them. Of course, Adriaan Gilles, Camper's youngest son, to whom was left the "voluminous scientific inheritance" and who as a "worthy heir" (Visser, 1985: 52), posthumously published some works by his father, was a contemporary of Van Lidth de Jeude and may have known him. However, nothing is known about such a relationship, if any; in the exhaustive index in Visser (1985: 203-207) the name of Van Lidth de Jeude is not mentioned.

Boeseman's work (1970) contains an interesting clue as to the origin of the elephant drawings of Camper. Gijsbertus Johannes van Klinkenberg (1768 or 1769-1841) possessed a large collection of natural history objects, "a large library covering the same subject, and also specimens of art" (Boeseman, 1970: 187). Upon his death his material was sold to Van Lidth de Jeude; unfortunately his library was dispersed, although possibly Van Lidth de Jeude acquired a number of items. The auction catalogue of the library, optical instruments, Chinese, Japanese and other curiosities of Van Klinkenberg (Utrecht, 1841) mentions a total of five elephant drawings by Petrus Camper. Nos. 84-85 (p. 42) in "Kunstboek F" (art book F) are entitled "84 Een Aziatische Olijphant, door Petrus Camper. (Ziet berigt op de teekening.)" [84 An Asiatic Elephant, by Petrus Camper. (See note on the drawing.)] and "85 Een dito schets, door denzelfde." (85 A do. sketch, by the same.). On p. 48 among the contents of "Kunstboek I" (art book I) the following items are enumerated: "8 Een Kameel enz. met rood krijt, door Ridinger." (8 A Camel etc. in red chalk, by Ridinger.), "9 Twee Olijphanten met dito, door P. Camper." (9 Two Elephants in do., by P. Camper), "10 Twee dito en koppen, door denzelfde." (10 Two do. and heads, by the same.), "11 Twee dito en pooten, door denzelfde." (11 Two do. and feet, by the same.), "12 Twaalf Olijphants- en verschillende Muilezelskoppen met rood krijt, door denzelfde." (12 Twelve Elephants' and various Mules' heads in red chalk, by the same). It is quite clear that items 84

and 85 on p. 42 could possibly refer to the drawings under discussion. Actually, only item 9 on p. 48 seems to refer directly to the relevant drawings; items 10 and 11 both refer to *two* elephants, but two of the Camper drawings in Amsterdam (see e.g., Pieters, 1978: 63, fig. 7, bottom) depict a single elephant from the rear and, additionally, an elephant's head and leg. Nevertheless, the description of the drawings may be somewhat inaccurate; it is quite clear that at the very least one of the Camper drawings discussed here was sold at the Van Klinkenberg auction.

Boeseman (1970) argues, credibly, that Van Klinkenberg obtained natural history specimens, books, drawings and paintings from the Stadholder's collection through the "Custos" to whom these were presented by Prince William V when already in exile. Petrus Camper was well acquainted with Aernout Vosmaer (1720-1799), director of the natural history cabinet and menagerie of Prince William V, when he made the drawings of the Prince's young elephants in 1786, indeed he may even have been commissioned to do so. The elephants had already been received in 1784 as a present from the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (V.O.C., the Dutch East India company). The animals are Ceylon (Sri Lanka) elephants (*Elephas m. maximus* L., 1758) (e.g., Houel, 1803: 20); at that time the V.O.C. had major trading connections with Ceylon.

Boeseman (1970: 186-187) states that "though the main part of the Cabinet of the Stadholder has been abducted to Paris ..., a considerable part was secretly retained and eventually went to Van Klinkenberg's Museum and hence to the Museum Van Lidth de Jeude." Is it too bold to conclude that the *four* Camper drawings may be traced back to Prince William V via Van Klinkenberg and Van Lidth de Jeude? Van Lidth de Jeude kept one in his mammal manuscript, which came with the other papers to the Leiden museum via Schlegel; the other three finally ended up in the Artis library via the second Vrolik sale as remnants from the Van Lidth de Jeude auction.

#### OTHER ELEPHANT DRAWINGS BY CAMPER

As an artist Petrus Camper must have been prolific indeed and it is also clear that he was fascinated by elephants. One must realize that two centuries ago elephants were decidedly rare in western Europe. His predilection for proboscideans is plainly shown by his numerous drawings of Indian elephants (most likely almost always Hans and Parkie, in The Netherlands 1784-1797, i.e. until eight years after Camper's death), which have been widely dispersed. In the Rijksprentenkabinet (National Collection of Prints and Drawings), Amsterdam, there are eight drawings of Indian elephants by Camper, of



which, however, only two are signed. One is a folio drawing (in colour, brush on green background) of the left side of a different specimen (probably the animal that died in 1774, in which year Camper published his anatomical description in Dutch; cf. Visser, 1985: 52, 184) which Camper had modelled in clay in July 1770 and is signed “P. Camper f: 10 Sept. 1786” — exactly the date shown on the drawings in red crayon in the Artis library and Leiden museum. Incidentally, the caption shows that the drawing was made after the model. The other signed drawing, showing an elephant laterally from the left, is a rather clumsy sketch in Indian ink (the others are in red crayon except for the folio one); it is signed “P. Camper f. 1770”. This presumably is the same elephant as shown in the larger picture. The remaining six drawings are all unsigned and, as stated above, executed in red crayon. At least three of these six drawings are similar to the Artis and Leiden pictures that form the subject of the present paper. Their nature is such (rough style of sketching, one even on squared paper, which most likely was the technique for copying drawings) that it is possible that the much better drawings in red crayon are based on these preliminary sketches.

The six drawings in red chalk in the Rijksprentenkabinet were presented in 1940 by the Amsterdam surgeon Dr. Johan Catharinus Justus Bierens de Haan (1867-1951). How he acquired the pictures has not yet been traced. The folio drawing and the rough sketch in Indian ink, i.e. the only pictures that bear Camper’s signature, are of unknown provenance.

## CONCLUSION

The history of the four drawings, or rather two drawings (i.e., two drawings and two copies), by Petrus Camper, can now be traced as follows:

- 1786, drawings made by Camper on 10 September;
- 1786-ca. 1795, owned by Prince William V;
- ca. 1795-1841, owned by G.J. van Klinkenberg, who had obtained them from the “Custos” of the remnants of the collections of Prince William V;
- 1841-1866, owned by T.G. van Lidth de Jeude, who had bought them at the Van Klinkenberg auction;
- ca. 1863, one drawing came to the Leiden museum with the Van Lidth de Jeude papers via H. Schlegel;
- 1866-1868, three remaining drawings owned by or on commission with Frederik Muller as remnants of the Van Lidth de Jeude auction;
- 1868-1887, owned by Dr. P. (is probably Dr. F.P.L. Pollen), who had bought them at the second Vrolijk sale;

- 1887, bought by the Artis library at the auction of Dr. P.'s drawings and books.

The one drawing has been kept, albeit hidden until 1975, in the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, Leiden, from about 1863; the other three entered the Artis library in 1887, forming part of the fine collections of prints and drawings. Of course, a careful perusal of the above data does reveal a number of flaws, but the conclusions seem to have been based on fairly good, if sometimes circumstantial, evidence.

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- ouvrages classiques de Audebert, Blume, Brehm, Buffon, Burman, Chenu, Cramer, Dodo-naeus, Edwards, Ehrenberg, Geoffroy St. Hilaire, Le Vaillant, Lyonet, Miquel, Nozeman & Sepp, Rösel, Rumphius, Stoll, Swammerdam, Voet, etc. La vente aura lieu Lundi 24 Janvier 1887 sous la direction de MM. Frederik Muller & Cie ...: 4 unnumbered pp., 1-34. Amsterdam.
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Plate 1. Crayon drawing of Indian elephants by Petrus Camper, dated 10 September 1786 (Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie). Actual size c. 20.5 x 31.6 cm. Photograph by E.L.M. van Esch.