

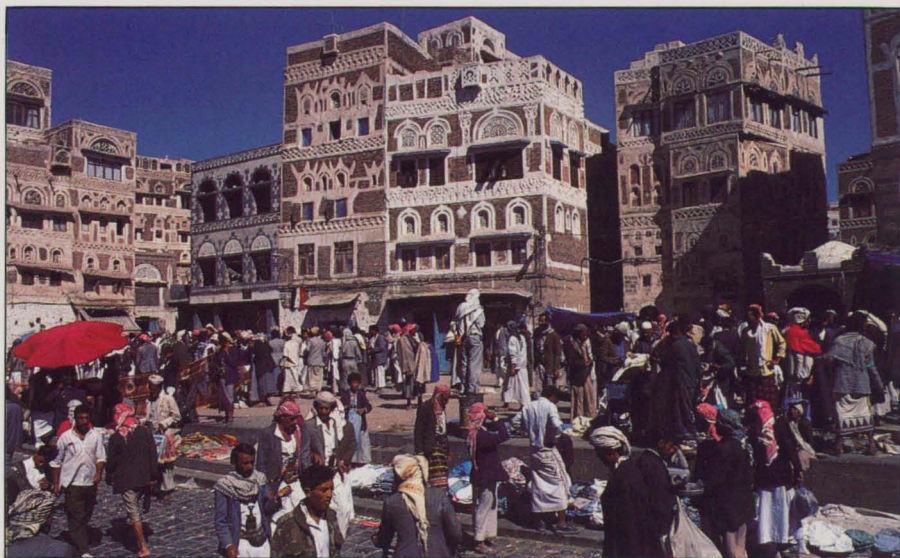
Will the main rhino horn markets ever close?

Story and photos by Lucy Vigne and Esmond Bradley Martin

REPUBLIC OF YEMEN
Since North and South Yemen united to form one country in 1990, the new democratic government has been under great pressure to meet many demands. Political and economic crises have steadily worsened, culminating in the civil war which broke out during our visit in early May 1994. As a result, although certain officials in Yemen have good intentions of committing themselves to the world-wide effort to save rhinos from extinction, the government machinery with which to do so has been virtually paralysed.

On 30 April, five days before the civil war started, we returned to Yemen under the auspices of WWF to see whether the government was enforcing its ban on new rhino horn and whether steps had been taken to join CITES. We were also to warn officials of the danger of trade sanctions being applied to Yemen, and of negative international publicity if the government had not been effective in stopping new rhino horn coming into the country and being carved into dagger handles. We were to monitor the trade by assessing rhino horn import volumes and prices as well as trade routes. Since November 1993, we had had no contact with Yemeni officials, despite being told that Yemen would join CITES in early 1994 and would take stronger action to stop rhino horn smuggling.

In Sanaa's old souk, where most *jambiyyas* (curved daggers) are made, we counted 92 craftsmen making dagger handles and blades, working in 65 workshops. This was similar to our last count during our November 1993 visit. At that time, we had seen only three new handles being made out of rhino horn compared to ten in February 1993. On this visit we counted a total of seven new rhino horn handles being carved by one craftsman on two out of three investigations in the souk. Each time, he pretended to be working on buffalo horn, but he was collecting the shavings on a sheet of plastic: this is done only when valuable rhino horn



is being processed. On one newly cut handle remained the distinctive rough outer layer of a rhino horn. Supplies of rhino horn were obviously still entering Yemen.

Two informers posing as rhino horn middlemen verified this for us and were able to collect good information on this commerce. They spoke to four traders who wanted to buy rhino horn. The first offered \$1,200 to \$1,300 a kilogramme for as much as possible, while the second, who volunteered that he had bought 10 kilogrammes in 1993 for 40,000 rials (\$900) a kilogramme, hoped to buy a little more than that this year. He had already bought six kilogrammes of new horn in February for 60,000 rials (\$1,000) from a trader in Sanaa. He showed our informers a half-kilogramme piece of rhino horn which he claimed was from Kenya and that fishermen working in Kenya bring rhino horn in their fishing boats to Socotra Island (off the South Yemeni coast), with Yemeni boats bringing the horn across to the Yemen mainland. A third trader told our informant that he had bought 14 kilogrammes of new rhino horn so far in 1994. He said it was easy to transport to Yemen,



and that friends brought it from Sudan, Ethiopia and Djibouti; this supply had come via Djibouti. Our informers lastly spoke to a member of the main *jambiyya* trading family, responsible for buying most of the

*Top; Half a kilometre from this entrance to Sanaa's souk are the *jambiyya* workshops.*

*Bottom; These *jambiyya* handles are made of rhino horn which can be recognised by the cross-hatching markings.*

rhino horn brought into Yemen over the years. After one and a half hours of gradual questioning, our informers learned that the main trader had organised the import of nearly 20 kilogrammes of rhino horn this year which had been brought to Sanaa by a friend via Oman. He too explained that there were many ways to bring in rhino horn; that some traders have relations who work in airports such as in Sanaa, Taiz and Addis Ababa; some use little boats which move from Djibouti to Yemen; and others take petrol in barrels to Djibouti, Somalia and Kenya, bringing rhino horns back to Yemen in the empty barrels. Yemenis are experienced and successful smugglers. We also learned from a foreign researcher who visited Sanaa in February 1994 that a Somali had brought 20 kilogrammes of African rhino horn to Sanaa for sale, making at least three consignments of illegal imports of rhino horn into Yemen within the first four months of 1994.

We were extremely fortunate that we were able to contact one of the busiest ministers in the government, Dr al-Iryani, Minister of Planning and Development. We met in his house, and his first question to us was, 'What is this?' showing us a newly made *jambiyya* with a beautiful amber-like handle. Indeed it was amber, and had been made only two months earlier and given to Dr al-Iryani as a sample of a new material for *jambiyya* handles. We agreed that it could make an acceptable alternative to rhino horn, being also rare, valuable and attractive. The Minister arranged a meeting with the *jambiyya* maker for us.

We then asked about CITES. Dr al-Iryani, when he had been Foreign Minister, had prepared the documents for joining CITES, but then had to pass them on to the new Foreign Minister, Mr Basindwah, for his signature. We were discouraged to learn that there had been no progress since then. Dr al-Iryani explained that when no one is reminding and pushing the government on the rhino horn trade problem, officials forget to follow-up, being swamped in their administrative turmoil. Mr al-Haymi, Minister of Supply and Trade, whom we met the next day, also admitted regretfully that he had done nothing since November 1993. After our last visit to Yemen, he had registered all those who had traded in rhino horn and who had any rhino horn powder stockpiles, and he had telephoned us personally in Nairobi with the results: 40 names and 722.5 kilogrammes of rhino horn powder

had been listed by his Ministry in November 1993. Any other raw rhino horn found in Yemen was illegal and would be confiscated on sight, we had been told. During our May 1994 meeting, we learned that no inspections had yet taken place as no such orders or instructions on punishments had yet been given. During our meeting he therefore called his legal adviser into his office and they efficiently drafted a decree stating that anyone with raw rhino horn would be sent to the Justice Department for penalties. All the governors in Yemen use officers of the Ministry of Supply and Trade to inspect the souks for illegal commodities; now these officers would be told to inspect the souks for rhino horn every month throughout the country. This draft decree was thus an important step and it was to be completed for us to examine by the end of the week. The next day, however, civil war broke out, and it is extremely unlikely that any progress with this decree was made.

We were caught in the start of the civil war with aerial bombings of Sanaa. Soon, communications were cut off from the outside world, telephone services within the country deteriorated, electricity supplies were cut, petrol became difficult to obtain, and food shortages began. During the nights and early mornings the noise from the anti-aircraft guns was deafening. One never knew when or where a missile would land in Sanaa. All scheduled commercial flights stopped coming into the capital after the first day of fighting as the airport had been bombed by the southerners, and transport within the country became extremely hazardous. Hence, we were stuck inside our hotel for three days. We did not see the maker of amber handles, nor have a meeting with the main *jambiyya*-making family, nor could we follow up with our informers, who, we learned had escaped the town of Dhamar (where we had sent them) only one hour before it had been heavily bombed. We were not able to meet other officials we had planned to see, among them the Foreign Minister.

On 7 May, the US Embassy evacuated us to Riyadh on one of their four US Air Force C-130 transport 'planes, which came from Saudi Arabia. We were disappointed to leave without completing our work, but one positive aspect of the civil war for rhino conservation is that it is unlikely that any

significant quantities of new rhino horn will enter the country in the near future due to the breakdown of transport. In addition, the deteriorating economy, including high inflation and a falling currency, will reduce the demand for new daggers with rhino horn handles, as rhino horn is a luxurious and expensive raw material.

The facts must be faced, namely that; (1) the Yemen government had not inspected any souk for new rhino horn, (2) no

'Pressure from the international community takes effect'

legislation for penalties had been introduced for those people possessing new rhino horn, (3) no recent progress had been

made by the Yemen government in joining CITES (as promised repeatedly), and (4) new supplies of raw rhino horn have continued to be smuggled into Yemen to be used illegally for making into dagger handles in 1994. There is no alternative but that a major international effort must be targeted at the Yemen government to persuade them to implement their strategy to stop new rhino horn trade and use. This action must commence immediately after the end of the civil war.

Republic of Korea

According to the owner of a large Oriental medicine clinic in South Korea, small amounts of African rhino horn were smuggled into the country, mostly via Hong Kong, in 1992. The horn is also brought by Koreans from southern Africa or from Yemen as chips and off-cuts from dagger handles. The import price for African horn in Seoul in July 1992 was \$2,110 per kilogramme. Esmond Martin carried out a survey in Seoul and Pusan, the two largest cities in South Korea, in June 1993. Of the 25 clinics he visited in Seoul and 10 in Pusan, 31 percent claimed they had raw rhino horn or medicines containing rhino horn. The most popular use for rhino horn in Korean medicine is the Chung Shim Wan ball which is consumed mostly to reduce high blood pressure and was selling for nearly \$14 each. Raw rhino horn was \$11 per gramme retail, but it was kept hidden from the public in 1993. One doctor said that in 1991 some Chinese people had come to Seoul to buy rhino horn wholesale to take back to China.

Probably as a result of pressure from the US government, the CITES Standing Committee, UNEP and certain NGOs, the government clamped down on the rhino

IUCN/SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group 1993

Population Estimates for Asian Rhinos

Greater one-horned rhino	2,000
Sumatran rhino	320-540
Javan rhino	65

The Indian rhino population has increased slightly in numbers in India and Nepal in the last five years. Sumatran rhino numbers, however, have declined by half over the last ten years due to heavy poaching on the island of Sumatra; detailed information on this only became available after surveys were carried out in Sumatra in 1992 and 1993. The number of Javan rhinos has remained stable over the last few years with about 50 in Java and 15 in Vietnam.

horn trade and sent inspectors round to most of the clinics. In January 1993, the government issued a decree rendering the sale of rhino horn, and the display or possession of it with intent to sell, a crime punishable by up to six months in prison and a fine of one million won (\$1,250). Finally, after years of procrastination, the Republic of Korea acceded to CITES on 7 October 1993 and became the 120th party to the Convention.

Taiwan

In 1985 Taiwan prohibited rhino horn imports. Since the mid-1980s, however, Taiwan has been the largest importer of African and Asian rhino horn. Despite the 1989 Wildlife Conservation Law prohibiting the internal trade and display of rhino horns without special permit (no special permit was ever granted), rhino horn was openly for sale until late 1992 in many of the traditional Chinese medicine shops. Therefore, in November 1992 WWF US and the National Wildlife Federation filed a petition with the US government under the Pelly Amendment to impose trade sanctions upon Taiwan for failing to control the illegal trade in compliance with CITES requirements. Severe pressure also from NGOs led to Taiwan's Council of Agriculture, on 19 November 1992, repeating a total ban on rhino horn. This was widely publicised and from that date rhino horns disappeared from public view. (See *Swara* July/August 1994, Vol. 17 No. 4, *Taiwan and the Pelly Amendment* by Keith Highley.)

In March 1993 the Chairman of the CITES Standing Committee wrote a letter to the Taiwanese authorities noting that their officials had not implemented measures sufficiently to stop the trade in rhino horn. In May 1993 TRAFFIC-Taipei carried out a survey of traditional medicine shops in Taipei and found rhino horn for

sale in only 36 percent of the shops, however, compared to 72 percent in 1991, and that both wholesale and retail prices had fallen. In June 1993, Esmond Martin as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Special Envoy for rhino conservation spoke to officials in Taiwan about further enforcing the ban. It was, among other points, decided that a reward of NT\$ 20,000 (US\$ 765) would be offered for information leading to the arrest of any person with illegal rhino horn and that fines would be increased ten-fold to NT\$ 300,000 for people convicted of trading in rhino products. A Special Task Force would be established by the police to enforce the Wildlife Conservation Law. The Taiwanese government was at last taking the rhino horn issue more seriously.

Nevertheless, rhino horn continued to be smuggled into Taiwan, most of it originating probably in Zimbabwe and coming via South Africa. On 7 September 1993, the US Secretary of the Interior certified both China and Taiwan under the Pelly Amendment for undermining the effectiveness of CITES concerning the ongoing trade in rhino and tiger parts. In early November, President Clinton told the US Congress that he would defer until March 1994 the decision on whether or not to initiate trade sanctions under the Pelly Amendment. Later in November a CITES Technical Assistance Delegation visited Taiwan to advise the government to improve monitoring and policing the trade in rhino products.

On 21 December the US Secretary of the Interior communicated with the Taiwanese authorities concerning the minimum the US government would require on the issue of rhino horn trade control. These were 1) to register, mark and control all stocks of rhino horn, 2) to enforce registra-

tion and implement CITES requirements, 3) to state the relevant laws and penalties to the pharmacists and general public, and 4) to create an investigations unit.

In late January and early February 1994 a CITES High Level Delegation visited eastern Asia including Taiwan to 'assist the specified countries of that region in implementation of appropriate measures to control illegal trade in rhinoceros horn and tiger parts, and to assess progress in this matter'. On 26 January the Wildlife Protection Unit was set up in Taiwan, and started to do undercover investigations.

By March, the Wildlife Conservation Law, which among other issues, was supposed to 1) increase penalties for illegal imports and exports of rhino horn, 2) increase the maximum fine and prison sentence for violation of the Law, and 3) provide a wildlife conservation fund, was still not made into law.

On 11 April 1994, US President Clinton wrote to the Speaker of the House of Representatives:

'Because Taiwan's constitutional provisions are understood to prevent the consolidation of stocks of tiger and rhinoceros parts and products, Taiwan made an effort to identify, register and mark these stocks on a voluntary basis. However, this effort has only located one third of the stocks voluntarily registered in a 1990 initiative. Draft amendments to Taiwan's Wildlife Conservation Law making registration of stocks mandatory and enforceable - including limited penalties for non-compliance - were transmitted to Taiwan's legislative body, but have not yet been enacted... The most pressing outstanding action is final enactment of adequate amendments to Taiwan's Wildlife Conservation Law... As a result of Taiwan's lack of progress in the key areas identified in my 8 November report, I have decided to follow the recommendation of the CITES Standing Committee and direct that imports of wildlife specimens and products from Taiwan be prohibited...'

The President can increase economic penalties to Taiwan in the future if he so wishes. This is the first such economic sanctions ever imposed upon a country for a wildlife trade offence.

China

When Esmond Martin spoke to officials in China in October 1992, as UNEP's Special Envoy for rhino conservation, they claimed that the import/export corporations had

bought their stocks legally before the country joined CITES in 1981. They said that it was therefore not fair to ban internal sales of rhino horn or medicines containing rhino horn, although the Chinese prohibited the export of medicines containing rhino horn in late 1992. Pressure increased from the US government to certify China under the Pelly Amendment, and also from NGOs. In March 1993, the CITES Standing Committee urged the Chinese government to take conclusive action on stopping the internal trade too. On 29 May 1993 the Chinese State Council reacted positively by publishing a Notice banning with immediate effect the manufacture of medicines containing rhino horn (and tiger bones) and prohibiting by the end of November 1993 all internal trade in rhino horn. China was the last major consuming country to ban domestic sales of rhino horn. Esmond Martin visited China again as UNEP's Special Envoy in June 1993 and discussed with officials how the Notice would be enforced. The procedure would necessitate sending officials to every import/export corporation, medicine factory

and traditional pharmacy in order to determine the quantity of raw rhino horn, rhino horn antiques and medicines containing rhino horn. Then arrangements would have to be made to seal up these stocks in Government stores. Follow up would also be necessary to see that commercial establishments that used to deal in rhino products would no longer do so.

After the US government certified China under the Pelly Amendment in September 1993, the CITES Technical Assistance Delegation visited China in November 1993 to advise and ascertain what progress had been made on the enforcement of trade controls on rhino products. In early 1994, the CITES High Level Delegation visited China, and was pleased with the officials' commitment and with the progress on the consolidation of the rhino horn stockpiles and with the establishment of a central registry of stocks.

President Clinton's letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives of 11 April 1994 read as follows:

"The PRC (People's Republic of China)

has consolidated much of its stocks of rhinoceros horn and tiger parts and products. The PRC has used radio, TV, newspapers and poster announcements - as well as burnings of rhino horn and tiger bones - to educate its population on new laws and the need to protect wildlife. In addition, large enforcement efforts were made, netting many prosecutions and seizures... As a result of the PRC's progress in the key areas identified in my 8 November report, I have decided that export prohibitions are not warranted at this time.'

Conclusion

Since late 1992, all the countries which have been the main consumers of rhino horn - Yemen, the Republic of Korea and China including Taiwan - have either tightened up earlier laws which prohibit domestic trade or have introduced new legislation to ban internal trade in rhino horn. This has been mostly the result of pressure from the international community. Such pressure must continue to ensure that these countries enforce their new laws. ●

IUCN/SSC African Rhino Specialist Group 1993 Population Estimates for Black and White Rhinos

Country	White Rhino		Total	Trend	Black Rhino				Total	Trend
	C.s. <i>simum</i>	C.s. <i>cottoni</i>			D.b. <i>bicornis</i>	D.b. <i>longipes</i>	D.b. <i>michaeli</i>	D.b. <i>minor</i>		
Angola					5*			5*	10	?
Botswana	18+		18+	Down				4	4	Down
Cameroon						27*			27*	Down
Ethiopia							5*			?Down
Kenya	87		87	Up			417		417	Up
Malawi								2	2	New pop.
Mozambique	Extinct?		Extinct?				45*		45*	Down
Namibia	98		98	Up	583				583	Up
Rwanda							10*		10*	Down
South Africa	6,376		6,376	Up	23		34	840	897	Up
Sudan		Extinct?		Extinct?						
Swaziland	33		33	Down				4	4	Down
Tanzania							26	106*	132	Down
Zaire		32	32	Up						
Zambia	6		6	New pop.				33*	33*	Down
Zimbabwe	134		134	Down				381	381	Down
Totals	6,752	32	6,784	Up	611	27	492	1,420	2,550	Stable

* >70 % Guestimate + 50 - 69 % Guestimate

According to estimates by IUCN, the black rhino population has slightly increased in number in the last year from 2,475 in 1992 to 2,550 for 1993. Although there have been serious losses in Zimbabwe, black rhino numbers are rising in Kenya, Namibia and South Africa, and these have been higher than the numbers lost. The white rhino population has also grown in number, despite major poaching over the last two years in Swaziland and Zimbabwe, from 5,820 in 1992 to 6,784 in 1993. This is partly due to an actual increase in numbers, mainly in South Africa, and partly due to better counting of white rhinos on private land in South Africa.