

## HUNTERS, POACHERS AND GAMEKEEPERS: TOWARDS A SOCIAL HISTORY OF HUNTING IN COLONIAL KENYA\*

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To many people who know little about Africa, their idea of Kenya, more than any other country, has formed their image of the continent. Dominating this image is the picture of a vast open land inhabited by nature's great beasts: the lordly lion, elephant, rhinoceros and uncounted millions of antelope. To those of us who study the history of Africa and Kenya in particular, these vistas remain an entrancing backdrop for the drama of the human struggle for survival and development. But to many Africans and not a few white Kenyans, the animals have been far more than an attractive embellishment of the landscape. They have been central to the struggle for survival and development itself. Historically, Kenyans, like other people who live cheek-by-jowl with nature, have related to their wild neighbours in multifarious ways. Animals have been feared and admired, worshipped and detested. Most often they have been hunted and killed for their meat, hides, bones and teeth. They have been sought after as an important resource in the re-creation of human life or sought out as a threat to its preservation. They have been hunted for sport and recreation in the spirit of adventure, and they have been killed in deadly earnest as a matter of survival.

Yet the history of hunting, except among the small and scattered groups of hunter-foragers,<sup>1</sup> remains largely neglected by Kenya's historians.<sup>2</sup> This despite the fact that the literature on hunting in Kenya from Joseph Thomson and Theodore 'Teddy' Roosevelt to J. A. Hunter and Robert Ruark has continually captivated the reading public.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, hunting during the colonial era was a major element in the struggle for survival, for development and for power among the various forces vying for control of Kenya's resources of land, water and animals, wild and domesticated.

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<sup>1</sup> R. van Zwanenberg, 'Dorobo hunting and gathering: a way of life or a mode of production?', *African Economic History*, II (1976), 12-24. Yet his *An Economic History of Kenya and Uganda*, with Ann King (Nairobi, 1975), makes no reference to the role of hunting in the general economy of Kenya.

<sup>2</sup> But see P. J. Dalleo, 'The Somali role in organised ivory poaching in N.E. Kenya, c. 1909-1939', *Int. J. Afr. Hist. Studies.*, xxii (1979), 472-83; M. L. Stone, 'Organised poaching in Kitui District: a failure in district authority, 1900-60', *Int. J. Afr. Hist. Studies.*, v (1972), 436-52; and T. P. Ofcansky, 'A history of game preservation in British East Africa, 1895-1963' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1981).

<sup>3</sup> J. Thomson, *Through Masailand* (London, 1968; 1st edition, 1885); T. Roosevelt, *African Game Trails* (New York, 1910); J. A. Hunter, *Hunter* (London, 1952); and R. Ruark, *Horn of the Hunter* (Garden City, N.Y., 1953) and *Use Enough Gun* (London, 1969). Hunter's autobiography was a Book of the Month Club selection in 1952, guaranteeing a large readership.

## I. THE BLACK HUNTERS

It would not be far wrong to answer the question of who hunted in precolonial Kenya with one word: everyone. Although some of Kenya's people profess a distaste for game meat and others believe that eating the meat of wild animals will bring disaster to their domestic stock of cattle or goats, most men (and on occasion some women) have taken up arms - catapults, knives, swords, spears, nets, snares and most often bows and arrows - to kill wild animals.

The degree to which hunting by 'pure pastoralists' was practised traditionally or during the colonial era is open to question.<sup>4</sup> The importance of game meat in the diet of pre-colonial African farmer-herders cannot now be told with any accuracy. We can surmise from the sparse evidence that hunting by the agricultural and herding peoples of Kenya was once, and long continued to be, an important economic, social and cultural activity. On the basis of interviews conducted in Kwale, Kitui and Meru Districts and an examination of the District and Provincial files in the Kenya National Archives, it is clear that the people of these districts hunted throughout the colonial era despite the criminalization of their activities, their techniques and their weapons.

Among the Digo and Duruma of Kwale District,<sup>5</sup> hunting for the pot was quite common among adult men, while hunting for birds and small animals by young boys was part of the process of becoming adult. Even today, hunting for bush pig who invade the Digo fields in the growing season is a communal activity, despite the fact that the Digo Muslims are forbidden to eat the meat of the pigs that they kill. The Duruma, less Islamicized and living in a drier, less arable area in the rain shadow of the Shimba Hills, were even more active hunters. More than an occasional elephant has fallen to their poisoned arrows. As they walk, tending cattle and goats, both Digo and Duruma men will carry a bow and a handful of arrows, allegedly for 'personal security' and the protection of their herds. But any dikdik or other target of opportunity will provide an occasion for a meat supplement to the herdsman with a quick eye and steady hand.

Kwale District was never an important area for safari hunting in the colonial era, and the Shimba Hills, preserved by the early creation of a Forest Reserve, remain an important wildlife sanctuary, especially for the rare sable antelope. Elephants continue to be seen in the Shimba Hills and some amount of subsistence hunting there and in the surrounding bush country persisted through the colonial era. It is still possible to meet old men in various locations in the District who have continued to hunt for meat and sport.

The Meru people,<sup>6</sup> like their better known Kikuyu cousins, are numbered

<sup>4</sup> J. Lamphear, 'The persistence of hunting and gathering in a "pastoral" world', *SUGIA*, VII, ii (1986); J. G. Galaty, 'East African hunters: so-called "some historical myths"', Conference paper, American Anthropological Association, 1977.

<sup>5</sup> See Interviews in 'A' series. Interviews with former hunters in each of the three districts were conducted between February and October, 1987 and organized into three series: A: Kwale; B: Kitui; C: Meru. Interviews with professional hunters and Game Department personnel are indicated by Series 'D'. In the longer work I am projecting I will include a fuller description of historical hunting methods, weapons and purposes in each of the three districts studied.

<sup>6</sup> B. Bernardi, *The Mugwe* (London, 1959) and J. Fadiman, *Mountain Warriors* (Athens, Ohio, 1976) can be consulted for the ethnographic and historical backgrounds to

among those Kenyans who despise hunters (*wathi*) and disdain the eating of game meat. Yet in the two divisions of Meru District in which I collected data, Igembe on the Nyambeni Hills and North Tharaka in the stony bush country to the south of Meru National Park, hunting was extensively practised in this century. It was, until quite recently, the chief avenue to prestige, honour and wealth for many men. In Tharaka, in particular, hunting remained a vital economic activity encouraged by the presence of large herds of game animals in and around Meru Park. The absence of soils and temperatures suitable for the cultivation of Meru's typical cash crops such as coffee, tea and (most recently) *miraa*, sustained the Tharaka commitment to the chase. Indeed, one Tharaka informant pointed to the ability to convert ivory and rhino horn into sheep, goats and cattle as the key to the transformation of their social system in this century.<sup>7</sup> In both Tharaka and Igembe, the practice of hunting for meat was a basic activity for young men. They brought home a variety of game birds and animals, especially dikdik and bushbuck, generally hunting in small groups of from two to seven or eight men. In some cases, hunting became a life-long pursuit of those with talent and commitment, although upon marriage the hunter would normally put away his bow and arrows for the more stable, sedentary occupation of farmer-herdsman.

In Kitui District, the Akamba raised the venatic arts from subsistence and part-time economic activity to the motor force of their social and economic system. The hunt, in particular the killing of elephants for their ivory, transformed Kamba society and culture in the century before the colonial occupation. Historical and ethnographic studies of the Kamba<sup>8</sup> have long pointed out their central role in the long-distance trade of Eastern Kenya and their extraordinary ability and desire to travel widely. These studies have seldom noted that both commercial and other travel were frequently the by-products of the ivory business, which began most often, not in the trade itself, but in the pursuit of an ivory-carrying elephant by specialized groups of hunters. An elaborate system of prestige was linked to the possession and ornamental use of ivory among Kamba hunters.<sup>9</sup> The history of Kamba commercial growth and decline can be linked to the development of new techniques and methods of hunting, adapted from the Waata elephant hunters of the Taru desert and harnessed to the demands of the commercial revolution launched from Zanzibar in the nineteenth century. Under colonial rule, Kamba elephant hunting persisted alongside the widespread hunting of game

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the Meru, although they tend to focus on the Imenti divisions near Mount Kenya and slight the Igembe and Tharaka sub-tribes: J. Middleton, *The Kikuyu and Kamba of Kenya* (London, 1953).

<sup>7</sup> Interviews C/7, J. L. Mate, 11 Sept. 1987 and others in series C/1-16.

<sup>8</sup> J. Krapf, *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours during an Eighteen Years' Residence in Eastern Africa* (London, 1968; 1st edition, 1860); C. W. Hobley, *Ethnology of A-kamba and other East African Tribes* (Cambridge, 1910); J. Lamphear, 'The Kamba and the Northern Mrima Coast', in R. Gray and D. Birmingham (eds.), *Precolonial African Trade* (London, 1970), 75-102; K. Jackson, 'An ethno-historical study of the oral traditions of the Akamba of Kenya' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, UCLA, 1972). Contrast G. C. M. Mutisa, 'Kitui ecosystem, integration and change', B. A. Ogot (ed.), *Ecology and History in East Africa* (Nairobi, 1979) and M. O'Leary, *The Kitui Akamba* (Nairobi, 1987), who focus on ecological constraints with little reference to the cultural adaptations evidenced by Kamba hunting and ivory trade.

<sup>9</sup> K. Jackson, 'Ngotho the ivory armlet', *Kenya Historical Review*, v (1977), 35-69.

animals for meat despite efforts by the colonial authorities to curtail it and monopolize the revenue produced by ivory exports.<sup>10</sup>

We can reconstruct a general outline of the history of African hunting in Kenya from the late nineteenth into the early twentieth century using the field data gathered in the three districts studied and the files of the early District and Provincial Officers.<sup>11</sup> We cannot establish with any accuracy the frequency with which men hunted, the rate of success, the size of the bag or the ratio of species within the bag. Assessing the impact of game meat on diet must therefore remain highly subjective. Nevertheless, it can be hazarded from testimony regarding the past scarcity of cattle and goats and the far narrower range of precolonial cultivation, in terms of both acreage and crop diversity and yield, that game meat played a far more important role in diet before 1914 than it has since.<sup>12</sup>

The frequency of hunting and its more general practice within these societies also provided meaningful productive work for large numbers of adult men whom we have come to think of principally as farmers or herders. The official record is virtually silent on hunting activities other than the frequent complaints of administrative officers about the nuisance created by Kamba men carrying bows and poisoned arrows with them wherever they went and the resulting encounters with Maasai warriors.<sup>13</sup> This creates the impression either that men's activities were exclusively dedicated to warfare or that 'lazy' African men refused to assist in the daily work of cultivation or stock-herding, preferring to spend their time away from the village or in drink and idle talk. In contrast to this negative image, the pride of achievement men took in their hunting accomplishments, the universal esteem expressed for hunting experts, the reputation for generosity attained by hunters whose meat would be shared among family members and the hunting group (and, conversely, the contempt expressed indirectly for those who did not 'go to the bush') clearly indicated that hunting defined a place of prestige and honour for men.<sup>14</sup>

It is beyond my competence to deal with the psychological aspects of hunting such as an alleged 'hunting instinct' or a sense of sportsmanship among hunters. I would suggest, however, that racial prejudice and ethnocentrism influenced many white hunters in deprecating African skill in tracking and bushcraft and deplored their lack of interest in the aesthetics of hunting as a sport.<sup>15</sup> On the contrary, African hunters in their pursuit of game testified to the same excitement and sense of achievement and dominion – and, on occasion, the same 'blood lust' – that many white sportsmen tended to

<sup>10</sup> See Interviews B/1-15 for information on both large and small game hunting, techniques of hunting and sale of ivory, regional variations, etc. Also A. Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar* (London, 1987) for the international organization of the ivory trade in the nineteenth century. For the role of the Waata as a distinctive elephant hunting culture, see D. Holman, *The Elephant People* (London, 1967) and I. Parker and M. Amin, *Ivory Crisis* (London, 1983) and Interview D/2, I. Parker.

<sup>11</sup> See the files classified as DC/KWL; DC/KTI; DC/MRU and PC/COAST; PC/CENTRAL and PC/EASTERN in the Kenya National Archives, Nairobi (hereafter cited as KNA).

<sup>12</sup> Interviews in A, B and C series, *passim*. Cf. G. Lindblom, *The Akamba in British East Africa* (Uppsala, 1920), 511.

<sup>13</sup> For example, 'Minutes of a Meeting held at Makindu on November 8th 1956...', in KNA DC/KTI/3/10/2, pp. 4-6 and Appendix A: cf. DC/KTI/1-8, *passim*.

<sup>14</sup> Interviews in A, B and C series.

<sup>15</sup> C. H. Stigand, *Hunting the Elephant in Africa* (London, 1913), 209-11.

believe was their thrill alone. This does not mean that Africans understood hunting in the same way as their European and American counterparts. Absent among African hunters was the sense that hunting was a 'calling' and a privilege reserved to men of wealth and status, an aristocracy of leisure who saw themselves as the only 'true sportsmen'.<sup>16</sup> The tendency to denigrate those who hunted for food as well as sport, for profit as well as pleasure, cannot be found among the black hunters of Kenya. Yet hunting in Kenya was clearly shaped by North Americans and Europeans who exhibited these very attitudes when they came to Kenya over the last 100 years. The impact of these foreign-born hunters and their Kenya-born descendants upon Kenya's unique hunting culture form the subject of the next section.

## II. THE WHITE HUNTERS

Just as virtually all African men hunted early in the century, so virtually all the Europeans who came to Kenya in their capacities as explorers, missionaries, administrators, soldiers or settlers also hunted regularly and sometimes prodigiously. And one must not exclude the considerable numbers of Europeans who came to East Africa from the 1880s through the 1970s exclusively to hunt. Indeed, it is hard to imagine the successful exploration and colonization of East Africa had not the safaris of men like Thomson, MacDonald, and Lugard been fed by the leaders' rifles.<sup>17</sup> Such pioneer missionaries as Stuart Watt would not have attracted much following nor would early scientists like Gerhart Lindblom have found ready informants, interpreters or companions without providing a regular supply of meat.<sup>18</sup> It was the exceptional district officer or police commander who did not both shoot for the pot and take out an elephant licence to supplement his salary by the sale of ivory. In Kenya, as John Mackenzie has suggested for Central Africa, big game hunting provided a hidden subsidy, and in the case of ivory a massive underwriting, of the colonial enterprise.<sup>19</sup> Although some of these early European travellers and residents saw hunting as a handmaiden to their other purposes, some like Frederick Jackson, Richard Meinertzhagen and 'Teddy' Roosevelt found hunting to be their chief joy in life.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Interviews in A, B and C *passim* and D/2. Contrast J. Ortega y Gassett, *On Hunting* (New York, 1972). Also, J. M. MacKenzie, 'Chivalry, social Darwinism and ritualised killing: the hunting ethos in Central Africa up to 1914', in D. Anderson and R. Grove (eds.), *Conservation in Africa: people, policies and practice* (Cambridge, 1987), 41–62.

<sup>17</sup> J. Thomson, *Masailand*; J. R. L. MacDonald, *Soldiering and Surveying in British East Africa, 1891–1894* (Folkestone and London, 1973; 1st edition 1897); F. Lugard, *The Diaries of Lord Lugard*, 2 vols., ed. M. Perham (Evanston, 1959) and his *The Rise of our East African Empire* (Edinburgh, 1893).

<sup>18</sup> R. Watt, *In the Heart of Savagedom* (London, Edinburgh and New York, n.d. [1912?]), 87–92, 108, 150–51, 163–64, 292–96, and 336–361, 372, 380–81, 405–408; Lindblom, *Akamba*, 120.

<sup>19</sup> J. M. MacKenzie, 'Hunting in Central Africa in the late nineteenth century, with special reference to Zimbabwe', in W. Baker and J. A. Mangan (eds.), *Imperialism and Sport* (New York, 1987); and for the fuller development of this and other hunting themes, J. M. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester and New York, 1988).

<sup>20</sup> F. Jackson, *Early Days in East Africa* (London, 1969; 1st edition 1930); R. Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary, 1902–1906* (Edinburgh and London, 1957) and T. Roosevelt, *Game Trails*. Contrast J. H. Patterson, *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo* (New York, 1986; 1st edition 1907).

In order to understand the impact that hunting by Europeans had on African hunting in Kenya, it is necessary for us to understand the different varieties of white hunting during the colonial era. The first type of hunting which lasted down to the First World War can be termed the primary exploitation of big game. In this era the largely unrestrained group of explorers, traders and pioneer administrators killed animals in prodigious numbers, not to say wantonly. Their purposes varied from providing meat for themselves and their porters, retainers and native allies, to the quest for ivory and valuable trophies animated by both commercial and 'sporting' motives. The best-known practitioners of this type of hunting included the revered hunter-naturalists, Frederick Selous and Captain C. H. Stigand,<sup>21</sup> and great ivory harvesters like Alfred Arkell-Hardwick, W. D. M. (Karamoja) Bell, Abel Chapman, W. A. Chanler and A. H. Neumann.<sup>22</sup> Their first-hand accounts of their exploits create a collective portrait of high adventure and record the massive slaughter of game on a scale both unprecedented and unequalled until the contemporary arsenal of hunter's weapons came to include automatic firearms and assault rifles. The changes in Kenyan life wrought by the 'Great War' largely ended this period of 'sportsmanship', although a few rogue hunters like John Taylor, a self-proclaimed poacher, continued to indulge in the large-scale destruction of elephant in East and Central African down to the next great war.<sup>23</sup>

A second phase in the destruction of wildlife was beginning by 1905. A new type of white hunter appeared: the white settler. The arrival of settlers to take up extensive tracts of land in the 'White Highlands' and selected fertile areas dotted around the Colony began the longest-lasting and therefore most destructive hunting. The extermination of wildlife was a frequently stated objective of the settler-hunter. In this objective, hunting was merely the sharp, cutting edge of the sword. The heavy mass of destructive force was created by the clearing of the animals' habitats and their conversion to privately-owned farmlands and grazing areas, fenced and cleared of all but the smallest game animals and birds.

Several facts should be pointed out lest we believe, like the settlers, that this extermination of wildlife was the inadvertent and inevitable result of the progressive growth of agriculture and civilization.<sup>24</sup> First, some settlers, especially in the Boer-occupied areas of the western Highlands, engaged in hunting far more than in the basically subsistence farming which was their supposed occupation. Second, many settlers consciously intended to drive all wild animals from their land as competitors and threats to their expensive imported livestock.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Lord Delamere himself, as both a leading

<sup>21</sup> F. C. Selous, *A Hunter's Wanderings in Africa* (London, 1890) and *African Nature Notes and Reminiscences* (London, 1908); C. H. Stigand, *Central African Game and its Spoor* (London, 1906), *The Game of British East Africa*, (2nd edition London, 1913) and *Hunting the Elephant*.

<sup>22</sup> A. Arkell-Hardwick, *An Ivory Trader in North Kenya* (London, 1903); W. D. M. Bell, *The Wanderings of an Elephant Hunter* (London, 1923); A. Chapman, *On Safari* (London, 1908); W. A. Chanler, *Through Jungle and Desert* (New York, 1896); and A. H. Neumann, *Elephant Hunting in East Equatorial Africa* (London, 1898).

<sup>23</sup> J. Taylor, *Pondoro - Last of the Ivory Hunters* (London, 1956).

<sup>24</sup> See for example, Lord Cranworth, *Kenya Chronicle* (London, 1939), 20-1.

<sup>25</sup> 'To all intents and purposes the plains game has completely disappeared from the Naro-Moru-Nanyuki area and from most of Laikipia. It has in fact gone very largely from practically the whole of the European settled area of the Colony. The whole truth

sportsman and 'progressive farmer' set the tone in calling for and executing the elimination of wildlife from his estates. Third, as we will see below, 'game control' was a principal activity of the colonial Game Department and an essential part of the services provided to settlers. In these control operations, hundreds of animals, especially elephant and rhino, were killed each year to prevent (or to avenge) the destruction of crops and fences on settler farms.<sup>26</sup> With few exceptions, any animal found on private (i.e. settler) land was fair game that could be killed with impunity and without a game licence by the landowner or his agent, while most settlers also possessed a licence which allowed the killing of animals on Crown Land.

In contrast to the permanence of the established settlers, the visiting sportsman came to spend a short, sharp and often ruthless period of a few weeks to a few months of intensified slaughter. Even after the construction of the Uganda Railroad, travel to and within East Africa remained both arduous and expensive. Only the wealthiest European and American aristocrats could make the excursion for the purpose of shooting big game. Supplemented by a flow of military men (and an occasional civilian)<sup>27</sup> seeking to vary their hunting experiences while on tours of duty in Southern Africa, India or the Middle East, these greater and lesser aristocrats of the sword laid the basis for the growth of Kenya's modern tourist industry.

In the early period, a very narrow band of society's leading sportsmen, armed with the latest high-powered rifles and advised by such professional hunter-naturalists as Selous, set out to bag as many specimens of as many species as they could. The most successful and most outrageous expedition of this type was the 1909 Smithsonian expedition led by the former President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt. Visits from British and Indian Royalty as well as many of Europe's leading gentlemen and nobles also gave Kenya a persistent allure and reputation as a new playground for the leisured classes.<sup>28</sup>

These holiday hunters were not in themselves a major source of danger to the wildlife, still less to African hunting. But they contributed to the ideological foundations of the hunting dilemma: their very eminence and wealth, their social standing and class backgrounds supported the belief that proper hunting was the sport of gentlemen who obeyed a civilized and humane set of rules of the game. These rules included the exclusive use of firearms and

of the matter is that the vast majority are not prepared to have any quantity of game on their farms', A. T. A. Ritchie, Game Warden, to Brig. A. G. Arbuthnot, 27 Feb. 1948, KNA KW/1/73.

<sup>26</sup> Monthly Reports and Misc. Correspondence, KNA KW/23/141-144; Also, Game and Vermin Control, KNA KW/15/4; *Game Department Annual Reports, 1925-34* (Government printer, Nairobi). Cf. E. Huxley, *White Man's Country* (London, 1980: 1st edition 1930).

<sup>27</sup> E. Bennet, *Shots and Snapshots in British East Africa* (London, 1914), by an Indian civil servant on leave in East Africa, is illustrated with numerous pictures of animals shot first with his gun and then with his camera.

<sup>28</sup> T. Roosevelt, *Game Trails*. Cf. *Game Department Annual Report, 1925*, for the Royal Safari of the Duke of York; M. Lovell, *Straight on Till Morning* (New York, 1987) for the visit of the Duke of Gloucester; and *East African Standard*, 14 March 1935, KNA KW/20/3 for a visit by the Duke of Norfolk. Also, W. S. Churchill, *My African Journey* (London, 1908) and P. C. Madiera, *Hunting in British East Africa* (Philadelphia, 1909) for two safaris by distinguished commoners.

a disdain for the use of weapons and techniques which were considered 'unsporting'. Such a definition of proper hunting excluded Africans *ipso facto*.<sup>29</sup>

During this period, some African hunters began to assume new roles as ancillaries to white hunters. Africans had found employment as guides and trackers for the pioneer hunters; then they worked as skinners and dressers for the settlers; and ultimately as gunbearers, drivers, camp cooks and porters for the lordly hunting parties. In all cases, a bonanza of meat and occasionally a share in the price fetched by the trophies made the African *Kilongozi* the early prototype of the *kombi* driver and guide on the modern camera safari.

Observers of European society have long noted that the Great War of 1914-1918 dealt a heavy blow to aristocratic culture from which it never recovered. The same can be said for the Kenyan aristocracy and its sportsmen. In part this may well be attributed to the heavy destruction of game by soldiers brought to Kenya to mount an invasion of German East Africa, and also to the need to provision the armies of troops and porters. But the psychological impact of the War may have had a more subtle and deeper effect on the Kenyan sportsman. The emergence of a semi-professional and finally a fully professional group of 'white hunters' dates from the post-War period. These professional hunters in fact acted as guides, organizers and field leaders of the 'champagne safaris' (or hunting parties) which gave the Kenyan safari its unique reputation for luxury and the Colony its overseas image as a wealthy sportsmen's paradise. Those who had previously hunted for mere numbers or commercial gain, like Baron Bror von Blixen-Finecke and the Hon. Denys Finch Hatton, now turned their talents for both hunting and charming to the business of hunting with (and sometimes for) paying clients. These aristocrats, along with many other hunters of lesser distinction, entered trade as 'Professional White Hunters'.<sup>30</sup> Aided by the popular prose of Ernest Hemingway and lesser talents, the White Hunter became an object of romance and adventure. In 1934, the gentlemen hunters organized a trade association, the East African Professional Hunters Association, open, not to commercial hunters, but to 'sportsmen' who contracted their services as safari guides, organizers and entertainers to their millionaire clients. Its president for more than three decades was Philip Percival, younger brother of the pioneer game warden A. Blayney Percival.<sup>31</sup>

During the 1920s and increasingly in the 1930s, a change could also be seen in the social background of the professional white hunter's clients, the visiting sportsmen. Titled aristocrats continued to come, at least such as could afford

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Cranworth, *A Colony in the Making* (London, 1912), 324-35. For an account of European hunting codes, see MacKenzie, *Empire of Nature*, 302-4.

<sup>30</sup> B. Blixen-Finecke, *African Hunter* (New York, 1938); U. Aschan, *The Man Who Women Loved* (New York, 1987); E. Trzebinski, *Silence Will Speak* (London, 1977). Nor should we ignore the famous and talented women who lent glamour and romance to the White Hunter myth: for example, Karen Blixen, *Out of Africa* (Harmondsworth, 1980); J. Thurman, *Isak Dinesen* (London, 1982); Beryl Markham, *West With the Night* (Boston, 1942); and Lovell, *Straight on Till Morning*.

<sup>31</sup> Examples of this romantic literature include: E. Hemingway, *Green Hills of Africa* (Harmondsworth, 1966; 1st edition 1935); *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* (Harmondsworth, 1963); *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber and other Short Stories* (Harmondsworth, 1963). And cf. R. Courtney, *Claws of Africa* (London, 1934); R. L. Scott, *Between the Elephant's Eyes!* (New York, 1954); H. S. Mazet, *Wild Ivory* (London, 1971). For the self-image of the 'Professional Hunters', see KNA KW/5/48.

it, and the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Gloucester illuminated the Kenyan scene during the Depression. More and more, however, the new aristocracy of wealth – especially American millionaires – came to dominate the safari business by sheer weight of numbers and bank balances.

At the same time another transformation became apparent on the safari trail: the weapon of choice began to shift from the large-bore rifle to the camera. Hunting as a blood sport did not suddenly fall out of fashion. Yet as the aristocracy of the sword faded after World War I and an industrial and commercial bourgeoisie gained ascendancy in big-game hunting, a corresponding shift took place in the hunting ethos: away from blood sport and conspicuous violence toward more bourgeois virtues and forms of possession.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to sportsmen, settlers, visitors and professional White Hunters, one further category of hunters must be noted: the gamekeepers. Individually and collectively, these hunters probably accounted for more animals than any other group. Often dedicated, full-time hunters, they turned their passion for the chase and for nature into an occupation, even a 'calling', as gamekeepers in Kenya's Game Department, its senior staff of white Wardens and Game Rangers. As the agents charged with regulating hunting by both whites and blacks throughout the Colony of Kenya, they played a critical part in the unfolding drama of cultural confrontation between the two hunting traditions. As hunters became gamekeepers and a new ethos of game preservation emerged in colonial Kenya, the African hunters who continued to hunt for food and profit now found themselves transformed into poachers, the bane of the game preservationists and the licensed hunters alike.

### III. THE GAMEKEEPERS

As even this brief description of the opposing values of African and white hunting makes evident, a collision course between the two seems to have been inevitable. Surprisingly, that clash did not develop into a serious confrontation until the closing decade of the colonial era. In tracing the interaction between the two hunting groups our attention is directed towards the institution whose chief purpose was to regulate hunting throughout the colony: the Game Department, which was established in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>33</sup> The first thing that strikes a reader of Game Department records is how minor a role the control of African hunting played, especially in the early days under Game Wardens R. B. Woosnam (1908–1912) and A. Blayney Percival (1912–1923). Two aspects of the Department's work far outweighed

<sup>32</sup> On camera safaris, see M. Johnson, *Lion* (New York, 1929); C. T. Stoneham, *Hunting Wild Beasts With Rifle and Camera* (London, n.d. [1932?]); C. H. Stockley, *African Camera Hunts* (London, 1948); and J. L. Sleeman, *From Rifle to Camera* (London, n.d. [1947?]). In the 1930s both the Game Wardens and the East African Professional Hunters Association began publishing tips for photographers: East Africa Professional Hunters Assn., 'Photography', 2p. (1934?), KNA KW/5/48; and A. T. A. Ritchie, 'Game Photography in East Africa', 5p. typescript, KNA KW/18/17.

<sup>33</sup> My special thanks to Kasila Musembi, Chief Archivist of the Kenya National Archives, and his staff who on short notice located, transferred and accessioned many hundreds of files from the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife in order to allow me to read them. The analysis of the purposes and policies of the Game Department which follows is based primarily on my reading of these files.

the control of African hunting in this pioneer phase: the licensing and regulation of sport hunters (and their encouragement) and the attempt to secure revenue from the control of the production, collection and export of ivory.

Down to the mid-1920s, the European staff of the Department never numbered more than a handful.<sup>34</sup> It is not surprising that the policing of African hunting was either ignored or left to the district administration, which gave it a very low priority among its many pressing tasks in these pioneer days. Moreover, the abundance of game and its perceived incompatibility with the development of either the settler economy or the native reserves made it unlikely that conservation would get much more than lip service from a Game Department dominated by keen hunters and outdoorsmen.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, at this stage and for many years after, it was difficult to distinguish hunters from gamekeepers among the whites. Among the Africans, who were often recruited as subordinate staff on the basis of their skills in hunting, tracking, skinning and bushcraft, it was very much a question of turning poachers into keepers.

In 1923, Captain A. T. A. Ritchie became the Game Warden and began to shape the modern Department which would last until Independence. Ritchie, who served until 1949, thoroughly impressed his personality and priorities on the Department he headed and in many ways created. He decided who would become a Ranger or an Honorary Game Ranger and assigned their duties and postings. Captain Ritchie, who was always referred to by his military rank, preferred his staff to be officers, but required them to be gentlemen. He selected his staff of (white) game rangers from among the 'hunters of repute' and 'true sportsmen' among Kenya residents and overseas applicants. A knowledge of wildlife suitable to an outdoor life was required, but no scientific training was needed. A period of military service was seen as an important indication of both leadership capacities and a proper spirit of adventure.<sup>36</sup> Physical stamina under conditions of hardship was considered essential and was also thought to be related to the life in the field of military men. No formal training was required or offered by the Department. Despite low salaries and great temptations, it was apparently believed that the high code of conduct of the gentlemen-sportsmen was proof against laxity in the impartial and unselfish enforcement of that code on a wider society.

During Ritchie's early tenure, a balance among the various aspects of gamekeeping was established that would persist virtually intact through the remaining decades of colonial rule. At the top of the list was the licensing and

<sup>34</sup> For instance, in 1923 there were only three full-time European game rangers, including the warden on the establishment, and two of these were on leave during the year. E. N. Buxton, Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire to Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office, 19 April 1923, KNA KW/27/4.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. the writings of A. Blayney Percival, *A Game Ranger's Notebook* (London, 1924) and *A Game Ranger on Safari* (London, 1928) for the prototypical gamekeeper of the pioneer period.

<sup>36</sup> No formal qualifications or job requirements have been located, nor does it appear from my interviews that any ever existed. Honorary Game Rangers were volunteers who assisted the Department as unpaid auxiliaries especially in its game control functions, and while including a scattering of Asians, Arabs and one Somali, they were clearly selected from among the prominent sporting gentlemen and professional hunters. This tended to emphasize the Department's image as 'an exclusive private club' for gentlemen (cf. *Game Department Annual Reports*, 1925-35).

regulation of sport (i.e. white) hunting which produced, not coincidentally, about half of the revenues generated by the Game Department in most years.<sup>37</sup> The creation of game schedules to accompany the Ordinances that regulated sport hunting involved judgements about those animals that might need the protection of licence limits (e.g. bulls only or a limited number per licence). Making such judgements presumably involved estimating the size and increase or decrease in the species population in the Colony or in specific regions. To do this properly would have involved techniques, equipment and manpower not available to the Department. Until the 1950s, 'guesstimates' took the place of game censuses in this aspect of the Department's licensing, preservation and public relations functions.

Two categories of animals were exempt from the scheduled limits: Royal Game, which from the outset included elephant and rhinoceros, were revenue producers and were 'protected' by an additional licence fee that climbed in the 1950s to £100 for the first and £200 for the second 'special licence' over and above the Resident's or Visitor's Game Licence. However, as the special licence conferred ownership of the trophies (tusks or horn) of the animal killed, it was generally possible to recoup the investment and often make a handsome profit. It is no exaggeration to suggest that most Game Rangers and many civil and military officials of the Colony supplemented their salaries by taking out special elephant or rhino licences and selling the trophies as the law permitted.<sup>38</sup> At the other end of the scale, certain animals were so numerous and pestilential as to constitute 'vermin' and required no licence. At times before 1927, even the King of Beasts was classed as vermin, but baboons, zebra, bush pig and hyena were regularly listed on the vermin schedule and could be shot on sight.<sup>39</sup>

The second leading aspect of the Game Department's work was game control. It was axiomatic within the Department, and within Kenya's settler society, that where the interests of animals and humans or civilization clashed, the animals must give way: the landowner retained the right to kill animals on his own property, in defence of 'life and property' or simply as an exercise of his dominion over the land. Consequently, a number of the Game Department's staff were engaged full-time in game control work, hunting animals on behalf of farmers, white and black, who saw them as a threat to their well-being.<sup>40</sup> Two aspects of this deserve comment: in efforts to aid farmers in crop protection, the Game Department functioned in many ways as an adjunct of the Agriculture Department, often falling within the portfolio of the Member or Minister for Agriculture. Two Game Rangers and several Game Scouts (African subordinate staff) were specially trained to kill vermin, using poisons like strychnine and arsenic. The employment of African poisoners (briefly and colourfully referred to as *borgias*) indicated that the importance of controlling pests was seen to override the Game Department's general concern for animal welfare and humane and sporting behaviour. Second, most Game Rangers came to see control work as both the most important and the most satisfying

<sup>37</sup> *Game Department Annual Reports*, 1925-35; KNA KW/27/4.

<sup>38</sup> W. L. W. Dalton, 'Notes on Kenya game preservation and hunting by a visitor', 10 Oct. 1949, KNA KW/1/73; Parker, *Ivory Crisis*, 16-17.

<sup>39</sup> KNA KW/18/12, 13 and 21 for the Game Schedules enacted in 1921, 1931 and 1951 which could be altered by the Game Warden as needed.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. KNA KW/15/13-19, on Game and Disease.

of their tasks. 'Control work' directly involved them in what they most enjoyed doing – hunting. The applause of their peers within the settler community and the gratitude of African farmers were added dividends. Hunting on control challenged them to track down 'rogue' or difficult animals, often in adverse circumstances in deep bush or forest, which further enhanced their reputation for courage and hardiness. It was good, clean, outdoor work, which did not involve the drudgery of the licence office or the thankless tasks of law enforcement against other hunters, white or black.<sup>41</sup>

Game preservation was the third and lowest priority of Ritchie's Game Department. Plenty of lip-service was paid to the conservation ideal in Annual Reports. In terms of man-hours, however, it got short shrift. Indeed, the only sustained concern with questions of preservation stemmed from the campaign begun in the early 1920s to choke off the smuggling of ivory through Italian territory from the great elephant-hunting districts of eastern and northeastern Kenya. This campaign involved a genuine concern for the preservation of the elephant, especially on the part of Keith Caldwell, a Game Officer and later Secretary to the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire. Nonetheless, it was also clearly motivated by the Department's and Administration's concern for the loss of this most valuable source of government revenue.<sup>42</sup>

Heated debates within the Department and between it and the Treasury over the advisability of paying a reward for 'found' ivory occurred repeatedly. Officials failed satisfactorily to resolve the key question of balancing the need for revenues against the potential encouragement of poaching represented by the payment of rewards for tusks turned over to the government as 'found'. The policy on elephant preservation would always be vexed by the monetary value of ivory, and the government revenues that flowed from its export.<sup>43</sup>

Despite its low priority in practical terms, game preservation as an ideological force grew considerably during the 1930s, partly as a result of changing international and especially metropolitan attitudes. The emergence of conservationism in general and especially soil conservation as a major preoccupation of the colonial authorities was also reflected in the changing attitudes towards animals.<sup>44</sup> Locally, the concern for game preservation grew directly out of Caldwell's earlier efforts to end the smuggling through Italian territory of ivory, horn, leopard skins and other trophies. This local effort, culminating in an Anglo-Italian Agreement, led directly to the convening of the International Conference on the Preservation of Wildlife in London in 1933. From this conference and the convention that resulted, a new impetus was given to game preservation and specifically to the establishment of game

<sup>41</sup> In 1951, Chief Game Warden William Hale ordered his field men to assist Forest Officers in extinguishing forest fires as 'I do not want your work to be entirely control and shooting': W. Hale to All Officers of the Game Department, 17 December 1951, KNA KW/15/16. Cf. Interviews D/2 Parker and D/3 Barrah; and J. A. Hunter, *Hunter*, vi–viii.

<sup>42</sup> For example, R. B. Woosnam to Colonial Secretary, 20 March 1913, KNA KW/14/7; cf. Intelligence Reports (1923–25), KNA PC/Coast/1/17/13.

<sup>43</sup> A. T. A. Ritchie to Ag. Colonial Secretary, 3 August 1933, KNA KW/8/28; 'Appendix A' in Ritchie, 'Memorandum' 2 April, 1927, KNA KW/14/3 No. 60; and Parker, *Ivory Crisis*.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. D. Anderson, 'Depression, dust bowl, demography and drought: the colonial state and soil conservation in East Africa', *African Affairs*, 83, 332 (1986): 32–43.

sanctuaries, which were now to be commonly styled 'National Parks' after the first such total sanctuary, Yellowstone National Park in the western United States.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the changing rhetoric within the leadership of the Game Department, by history and organization it was ill-prepared to take the leadership in the new conservationism. Although in 1934, Captain Ritchie was admitting in public that he 'found it difficult to pull the trigger and could find little to justify the killing of animals for trophies',<sup>46</sup> the Department's personnel policies and its responsibilities for game control and the issuance of hunting licences ill-suited it to conduct the kind of sentimental and aesthetic appeals launched by the preservationists. By the late 1930s, the need for a forum for these appeals and ideals would be filled by the development of the National Parks movement.<sup>47</sup>

A series of public meetings in 1938 and the convening of a Game Policy Committee by the Governor in 1939 announced the presence of the young Kenya-born settler, Mervyn Cowie, as a conservation movement leader and champion of the National Park idea. By assuming the leadership of the preservationist wing of Kenya's wildlife advocates, Cowie relieved the Game Department of the burden of being the sole institutional home for game preservation. The outbreak of war in 1939 delayed the implementation of the National Park programme which Cowie was advocating. The end of the war in 1945 set the stage for the establishment of Kenya's National Park system. The Nairobi National Park was the first to be gazetted in 1946 on the former Nairobi Commonage lands which Cowie had first recommended as a park site in 1938. Within a few years, the creation of the vast Tsavo National Park, Kenya's largest, gave Cowie a sizeable game sanctuary to manage according to the principles of game preservation.<sup>48</sup>

Unlike the Game Department, which was 'just another government department',<sup>49</sup> the National Parks Administration which Cowie headed was controlled by an independent Board of Trustees. Once parks were gazetted they were not subject to legislative interference, but came under the sole jurisdiction of the Governor-in-Council and the Trustees. This was meant to remove the parks from the pressures of settler opinion which continued to be hostile to the existence of game in proximity to settled areas. It succeeded in this and in establishing an elite corps of game wardens and rangers<sup>50</sup> and a

<sup>45</sup> R. Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (3rd edition, New Haven, 1982), 358–61. Cf. 'Preservation of big game' (1930–35) files, *passim*. KNA KW/27/1. See also, J. Stevenson-Hamilton, *The Kruger National Park* (Pretoria, 1928), and MacKenzie, *Empire of Nature*, 227–231.

<sup>46</sup> 'Captain Ritchie on Hunting for Trophies', *East African Standard*, 29 Jan. 1934, KNA KW/27/1.

<sup>47</sup> For a fuller account of the growth of the National Parks movement in its colonial context, see MacKenzie, *Empire of Nature*, 261–94.

<sup>48</sup> M. Cowie, 'History of the Royal National Parks of Kenya', 30p. typescript, KNA KW/1/78; 'Administrative policies, Kenya National Parks', KNA KW/1/67; and M. Cowie, *Fly Vulture* (London, 1961).

<sup>49</sup> Interview D/2, Parker.

<sup>50</sup> There is some confusion in the terminology of ranks between the Game and Parks' systems. In the Game Department there was only one Game Warden, later Chief Game Warden, under whom there were Assistant Game Wardens, Senior Game Rangers and Game Rangers, all of whom were white during the colonial era. Black subordinate staff in the Game Department were designated as Scouts. In contrast, The Kenya Royal

smoothly-functioning bureaucracy. Again in contrast to the Game Department, the National Parks controlled a considerable budget for capital expenditure on roads, dams, lodges and other amenities. This budget was intended to make Kenya's parks into a major attraction for the growing number of American tourists brought to East Africa by cheap air fares and America's post-war economic dominance.

The contrasting figures of Captain Ritchie, the sportsman and gentleman, and Mervyn Cowie, the politician and propagandist, dominated the decade of the 1940s. Respectively, they represented the older, hunter-based, game conservation tradition and the newer, tourist-based, game preservation tradition. Preservation would become dominant by the 1950s and seemingly triumph with the total ban on hunting proclaimed in Kenya in 1977.<sup>51</sup> During the 1950s the two traditions were forced to ally in confronting the newly perceived challenge of increasingly active and effective African poachers.

Two contrasting figures came to dominate this confrontation with the poachers. George Adamson had joined the Department as a young, restless adventurer in the late 1930s and came to epitomize the 'old style' ranger, harking back to the days of Blayney Percival. Adamson would later earn fame as the husband of Joy Adamson, whose return of the lioness Elsa to freedom did much to put Kenya on the modern tourist map. He was by the late 1940s the very model of 'the lone ranger'. Patrolling a vast expanse of the wilderness of Kenya's Northern Game Reserve, often on foot, he was known frequently to pursue gangs of African hunters who poached the wildlife in the arid frontier districts of northern Kenya. Although his judgement and manner would sometimes cause conflict with his Game Department managers, Adamson's commitment to Kenya's wildlife earned the admiration of many sectors of the international conservation community. At the other extreme was David Sheldrick of the Kenya National Parks. As Warden of Tsavo East from 1949, the distinguished Kenya-born military officer pioneered new gamekeeping methods that led to colonial Africa's first and only successful anti-poaching campaign.<sup>52</sup>

By the inter-war years, the Game Department had begun to add its light weight to anti-poaching efforts, making more frequent patrols and trying more vigorously to cut off the flow of illegal exports of game trophies, especially ivory. The challenge of hunting for the pot was considered of little significance to game preservation and the view was generally accepted that poachers armed with only bows and poisoned arrows did not seriously threaten the extensive herds of elephants. This last conception collapsed in the late 1940s and, along with the social turbulence created by the Mau Mau uprising and its suppression in the early 1950s, led to the final crisis of gamekeeping in the colonial era.

National Parks was headed by a Director with a Warden and usually an Assistant Warden for each National Park. African subordinate staff were designated Game Rangers and no African was appointed as a warden until after Independence.

<sup>51</sup> The total ban on hunting remains controversial both within and outside the Wildlife Conservation and Management Department. The older pro-hunting tradition now survives as 'resource utilization' and the total ban is seen as either a crass political manoeuvre or as an ill-advised capitulation to the international conservation lobby. Cf. Interviews D/2, Parker; D/3, Jack Barrah; D/4, J. T. Oriero and D/5, Dr Perez M. Olindo.

<sup>52</sup> Interviews D/2, Parker and his *Ivory Crisis*; Holman, *Elephant People*; G. Adamson, *Bwana Game* (London, 1959) or *My Pride and Joy* (London, 1987).

By the early 1950s an increase in elephant hunting was noted in the eastern regions of the Colony. This was probably caused by the large number of returning soldiers, especially Akamba, whom the Colony's post-war economy could not easily absorb. Within the Game Department the answer to this challenge hinged on a question of strategy: whether to extend the traditional policy of anti-smuggling and the prosecution of the Arab, Asian and Somali buyers of illicit ivory and rhino horn, or to step up anti-poaching efforts in the field by increasing foot patrols and sorties by Rangers and Scouts in attempting to catch poachers in the act. This last approach was strongly advocated by George Adamson, who, as Senior Game Ranger based at Isiolo,<sup>53</sup> contended that earlier poaching had been controlled by such techniques, and that the new challenge could be met by more of the same good medicine.

The anti-poaching methods of the past may only have 'worked' to the extent that the earlier challenge of poaching was not very severe. It may also have 'worked' in the sense that it had satisfied Game Department personnel that they were actively suppressing evil.<sup>54</sup> However, the level of hunting for meat seems hardly to have been affected by the occasional patrols. Ivory hunters soon developed an intelligence network that alerted them to the ranger's patrols. The Department's use of informers was probably more a liability than an asset. The informers were often used to settle personal grudges by receiving accusations against rivals. They were also subject to the temptations of extortion and bribery. The informers themselves viewed their position as 'game people' as a licence to hunt on their own behalf, only being careful not to take any of the larger, commercially valuable game.<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, the methods advocated by Adamson of going after the '*shenzies*' in the bush as the proven, cheapest and most effective method of anti-poaching won the day in the Game Department. But the Chief Game Warden William Hale, a career administrator transferred to the Game Department in 1949, lacked the field experience and the energies or prestige of his predecessor, Captain Ritchie; these capacities were needed to initiate a major policy departure to meet the poaching challenge of the 1950s.<sup>56</sup>

It was left to the new, affluent and energetic National Parks Administration to design and implement the anti-poaching campaign of the 1950s. When David Sheldrick became Warden of Tsavo East, with Bill Woodley as his assistant, they found themselves at the epicentre of ivory poaching.<sup>57</sup> On his initial survey safari through the remote areas of Tsavo East, Woodley discovered a large number of elephant carcasses, apparently killed for their tusks. Surprisingly, he found that virtually all had been killed by poisoned

<sup>53</sup> Cf. G. Adamson's Monthly Warden's Reports, in KNA KW/23/148 and 175. Cf. Adamson, *My Pride and Joy*.

<sup>54</sup> There is a remarkable similarity between the attitudes and rhetoric of many conservationists in the metropole with those of nineteenth century abolitionists and missionaries. Cf. Game Preservation files, KNA KW/27/1; and I. Parker, *Oh, Quagga!* (Nairobi, 1983), 9ff.

<sup>55</sup> See Interview C/8, Kimwere.

<sup>56</sup> *Game Department Annual Report*, 1950: 1-10; Hale Report, KNA/23/151; cf. Interview D/2, Parker.

<sup>57</sup> *Kenya Royal National Parks Annual Reports*, KNA KW/1/73, 79, 82 and Warden's Monthly Reports, KNA KW/23/31 and 6/86. In addition, I have relied on Holman, *Elephant People*, which is based on interviews with Bill Woodley; see also Parker, *Ivory Crisis* and Interview D/2.

arrows. Woodley's report was met with initial disbelief as it contradicted the prevailing shibboleths about the danger and ineffectiveness of hunting elephants with anything less than heavy artillery. Over time, Sheldrick and Woodley were able to build a detailed picture of the activities of the small tribe of 'exclusive' elephant hunters, the Waata or Waliangulu, and to show the impact of the commercialization of their hunting practices. Although there were probably no more than 200 active poachers among the Waata, they accounted for a large number of Tsavo elephant kills. In addition, Kamba poachers, using similar weapons, different techniques and far larger numbers than the Waata, were making what Sheldrick believed were decisive inroads on Tsavo's elephant herds.<sup>58</sup>

From this picture of Waata and Kamba bowmen as the main threat to the elephants and to ivory revenues, Sheldrick set about organizing a campaign of suppression that not only would succeed in its stated objectives, but effectively bring to an end the way of life of the Waata people, who had lived for generations by hunting the elephant herds of eastern Kenya. Sheldrick and Woodley, like many of Kenya's game personnel, had experience as military officers which they put to use in planning the campaign. Sheldrick had been the youngest high-ranking officer in the Kenyan forces during World War II, where a brilliant career in intelligence was predicted for him. Of equal importance, Woodley gained vital combat experience in the techniques for suppressing civil unrest used extensively in Kenya during the anti-Mau Mau operations of 1952-5. Three practices were not entirely new to gamekeeping, but were adapted by Sheldrick and used now to a degree not previously considered. First, the network of informers which had been used to gather information on the activities of suspected poachers, was now used to compile a detailed profile of all known poachers among the Waata. A card file was created with information on the identity, family, known residence and habits of the poachers. Particular incidents of game violations, unprovable at law, were recorded for use in interrogation. These files took several years to prepare and eventually came to contain, in effect, the collective biography of Kenya's greatest elephant hunters.<sup>59</sup>

Second, instead of sending out patrols to intercept poachers in the field, where all their skills at bushcraft and tracking could be put to use to avoid capture, the anti-poachers began to mount lightning, nocturnal raids on the poachers' haunts, hideouts and home villages. This could not lead to convictions for poaching, but with increased penalties being imposed by the Colony's courts for possession of game products, it still provided considerable leverage.<sup>60</sup> Game wardens had always been exempt from the usual requirements of search warrants. Moreover, given the lack of legal sophistication of the poachers the wardens were unlikely to be accused of false arrest or illegal search and seizure. Roused from his bed, a sleepy poacher would be confronted with the evidence against him in the form of trophies seized in the raid. More important, he would be confronted with information about his

<sup>58</sup> Interview B/12, Kikuli and D/2, Parker.

<sup>59</sup> The files which originated with David Sheldrick are now the property of his widow, Daphne Sheldrick. My thanks to Ian Parker for allowing me to examine them while they were in his possession as he prepared a manuscript on the Waata hunters.

<sup>60</sup> Attorney-General's Directive Nos. 1 and 22 for 1956, Governor's Circulars, KNA KW/3/8.

previous misdemeanours, his cherished secrets and intimate details of his private life and his poaching activities. Persuaded that the wardens already knew everything, the accused usually confessed to other crimes and frequently implicated their confederates. Acts of brutality may have occurred, but the most effective technique was intimidation with the authorities' knowledge of the suspects' secret dealings. Accused poachers who cooperated by going on to expose others (there being little sense of disloyalty among the Waata poaching fraternity) would be treated with leniency, often being released with a warning or offered employment as African Rangers by the National Parks as an alternative to fines or imprisonment.<sup>61</sup>

The last 'new' technique employed by Sheldrick was to recruit poachers as game rangers and subordinate staff in the park. Here the established technique of turning poachers into informers was elevated to a new level and the bulk of the Tsavo corps of African scouts came to be Kamba and Waata ex-poachers. Knowing the ways of the remaining poachers, they made the most effective policemen. The only problem of setting a thief to catch a thief was that it offered ex-poachers little opportunity to develop skills with which they could earn a living after they left the Park's service. Many would revert to the only life they knew: life in the bush as hunters. But, between 1956 and 1957 when the campaign against Tsavo's poachers was in full swing, the hunting practices of many Kamba and virtually all the Waata were brought to an end by the National Park wardens assisted by police and Game Department personnel on secondment to the coordinated campaign.<sup>62</sup>

Sheldrick's Tsavo campaign altered the traditions of hunting and game-keeping in important ways. Drawing African staff from among local men experienced in the bush became a regular aspect of recruitment, largely supplanting recruitment from the 'war-like tribes', such as the Samburu and Kalenjin. Perhaps most remarkable was the recruitment of ex-Mau Mau freedom fighters into the Game Department on the grounds of their proven ability to live in the mountain fastnesses of Mount Kenya and the Aberdares. Now, armed with government-issue rifles, they were sent back into the mountains to patrol them in the name of the Queen and to protect the Queen's stag.<sup>63</sup> Creation of the contemporary Anti-Poaching Unit in the early 1970s derives from Sheldrick's efforts to rise to a new challenge. If it has not met with the success of the 1950s campaign, the challenge of poaching in the 1970s and 1980s has also been of a different and higher calibre.

#### SUMMARY

This paper sets out to examine the interactions between African and white hunters in colonial Kenya in an effort to understand the nature of the confrontation

<sup>61</sup> This technique of extracting confessions appears to have been effectively employed by Woodley and Sheldrick, although it was subject to abuse in the hands of some gamekeepers and police. Interview D/2, Parker; and Holman, *Elephant People*, 143–65.

<sup>62</sup> Efforts to re-constitute Waata society by training former poachers in the use of firearms and settling them in a game control community along the Galana River under Game Department supervision was short-lived. Cf. Parker, *Ivory Crisis*, 52–6; and Interview D/2, Parker. My thanks to Mr Parker for sharing his experiences and insights into this little known experiment in cultural survival and social engineering.

<sup>63</sup> Interview D/3, Barrah. Also, J. D. Irwin, 'Poaching and Counter Measures', 8 June 1961, KNA KW/17/12.

between the competing cultural traditions of hunting under colonial conditions. It examines the major tradition of African hunting in eastern Kenya among African residents of Kwale, Kitui and Meru districts from oral and archival materials, arguing that the place of subsistence hunting in the economy of African farmers has been systematically denigrated in the colonial literature. Next, the various representatives of the European hunting tradition in Kenya are surveyed: sportsmen, travellers, settlers, and professionals. A preliminary assessment is made of their impact on game and the growing need for conservation. The history of the game and national park departments, which administered the hunting laws and were charged with the preservation of wildlife, is next described. The records of the colonial Game Department provide a key source for the reconstruction of the attempts to control African poaching and regulate European hunting in the interests of the preservation of game and the control of the colonial economy. At the end of the colonial era, with the emergence of a new sensibility to conservation, Kenya's gamekeepers engaged in a major, successful anti-poaching campaign in eastern Kenya's Tsavo Park. This was the climactic confrontation between the two cultures in their contest for control over Kenya's wildlife resources.