
SPECIES, MAMMALS - ELEPHANTS AND RHINOS - TRADE

- Improving international communication, especially with regard to enforcement and investigation of suspected contraventions, preferably through the acquisition of telex facilities.

In addition, it is recommended that the CITES standard format be adopted for export/re-export documentation, or a document as close to this format as possible, by all countries as soon as possible.

It is also recommended that countries should consider effective enforcement of current domestic legislation as a higher priority than revision of the legislation. The former will lead to a higher level of implementation of the Convention than the latter approach.

Three officers, one each from the United Republic of Tanzania, Botswana and Kenya, were recommended for possible inclusion in a two-week training course in Europe to be organised by the Secretariat in 1982.

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RHINO TRADE STUDY - JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA, INDONESIA, MALAYSIA AND BURMA (Project 1936)

An understanding of the use of rhino horn and other rhino products is essential to conservation of the five African and Asian species of rhinoceros, all of which are endangered. In 1979 Dr Esmond Bradley Martin wrote a monograph for WWF and IUCN on the International Trade in Rhinoceros Products, based on research in Hong Kong, Macao, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand (for an abridged version see WWF Yearbook 1979-80). Dr Bradley Martin recently returned from a trip to Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia and Burma for the purpose of further developing his study of the trade in rhino products in countries where the Chinese are less predominant. He reports on the trade in these countries.

Japan. Rhino horn is available in Japan in both tablet and traditional forms. However, it seemed to me that the Japanese who consume it still prefer to buy it in slices which they boil in a cup of water for about 15 minutes, reducing the liquid by half and drinking the strained potion before meals. Rhino horn taken this way is primarily for reducing fever, especially resulting from the onset of

a bad cold; and it is given to both children and adults. It may also be used in this manner by people who have measles, blood poisoning and nosebleeds. Less frequently, boiled slices of rhino horn are prescribed for those suffering from erysipelas (an inflammatory disease which causes a bright redness of the skin, usually shown on the face), weakness of the heart, diarrhoea and vomiting.

In the 1960s imports of rhino horn rose sharply; the annual average of 404 kg were more than double that for the previous decade. This was due to several factors. Firstly, the Japanese economy was expanding faster than that of almost any other country in the world and the Japanese had more money to spend on rhino horn than consumers elsewhere. And, secondly, traditional medicine was making a come-back after having been almost swept aside in favour of western medicine.

In the 1970s the price for African rhino horn soared. In 1970 the Japanese importers had paid only \$41 a kg, but by 1977 they were having to spend \$116 per kg; a year later the price had tripled to \$308. By the end of the decade it had reached \$341 - more than eight times as much as in 1971 and almost 23 times higher than the 1953 price.

In November 1980 the Japanese Government ratified the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Before agreeing to the treaty, the Japanese Government insisted on certain allowances regarding the fin whale, musk deer, green turtle and a few lizard species, but made no reference to exempting rhino products from the list of



Rhino horns on display in a Chinese medicine shop in Singapore

Photo: WWF/Michèle Dépraz

prohibited imports and exports. Knowing well in advance the implications of CITES, Japanese traders between January and August of that year brought in 763kg of rhino horn, of which 77% originated in South Africa, 6% from Zambia and 1% from Kenya. The 14% which came from China probably consisted of chippings from the carving of handles for daggers which the Chinese had purchased themselves from North Yemen. The origin of the remaining 2% was unidentified, but arrived via Hong Kong as did most of these rhino horn imports, for which the Japanese paid an average price of \$383 per kg. As from September 1980 the traders stopped importing rhino horn; and, for the time being, it is unlikely that rhino horn will come into the country.

Although conservationists may rejoice in the fact that Japan has ratified CITES without making an exemption for rhino horn imports, I do not believe that they should now consider this the end of the matter.

I think what is needed in Japan now is a campaign to inform the people of the decline of the rhino in Africa - with emphasis on what has happened to rhino populations during the last ten years. In conjunction with this, an appeal should be made to pharmacists to suggest other traditional medicines that can be satisfactorily substituted for rhino horn. In working together, importers, drug manufacturers and pharmacists could do a lot to decrease the demand from the public for rhino horn medicines.

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Korea: For the past six centuries it appears that Korean medicine was derived almost entirely from local products. The people could not have afforded rhino horn even when international trade links were re-established in the latter part of the 19th century, for this was then, too, a relatively expensive commodity. Moreover, there is no evidence in the statistics of Indian or African source countries of rhino horn going directly to Korea until the beginning of the last decade, when the Korean economy expanded by leaps and bounds. From 1972 to 1980, Korea's official imports averaged an annual 233kg, thus making Korea one of the major rhino horn consuming nations in Asia. The Koreans also had to accept the huge price increases that came about in the 1970s; whilst they could obtain the horn in 1970 for just \$30 a kg, they claimed officially that they paid \$355 for it in 1979.

In Korea, rhino horn is used to lower fever and high blood pressure, to stop bleeding and cure snakebite. In addition to these major uses, rhino horn is considered a relaxant which prevents hallucinations, nightmares and infantile convulsions and also as a cure for shock, paralysis and dysentery.

The Korean Government should be encouraged to join CITES; but due to the fact that large quantities of wildlife products are already being impounded by customs officials (and possibly just as much does manage to enter the country illegally), something must be done to discourage the use of rhino horn in Korean medicine. The individual traders who supply the clinics with rhino horn should be approached and requested to stop dealing in this product. Equally important, the doctors should be asked to prescribe substitutes for the rhino horn.

Indonesia is the home of the two rarest of the five extant rhino species, the Javan and Sumatran. Products from these animals have not only been traded within Indonesia for hundreds of years, they have also constituted valuable exports to other southeast Asian countries and to mainland China. The horn was carved into works of art and used as a medicine.

By the 1960s the numbers of Javan and Sumatran rhinos in Indonesia had declined to low numbers (an estimated 28 Javan and probably under 150 Sumatran). The export of rhino horn had already been declared illegal, but by then it was no longer necessary to sell it overseas for the highest profit margin. Of the nearly 3,000,000 Chinese living in Indonesia at that time, there were enough traders among them who were able to offer the same prices as the Chinese in Singapore or Hong Kong. Moreover, there was much less risk involved in selling rhino horn at home than abroad.

In the late 1960s, earlier in Indonesia than in other southeast Asian countries, the cost of rhino horn began to escalate. This was because the market depended on what was produced locally, and horn was becoming increasingly difficult to obtain since the animals were so rare. In 1963 and 1964 about ten Javan rhinos were poached in the Ujung Kulon Nature Reserve, the only place in the world where this species remained. However, beginning in 1965 the Indonesian Government, with support from WWF/IUCN made a concerted

effort to protect rhinos there, and only about six are known to have been killed since then. Their population is believed to have increased to at least 55 today.

Regrettably, it has not been so easy to provide protection for Indonesia's Sumatran rhinos. Those that exist outside reserves are under dire threat of being poached, and even in Gunung Leuser Reserve at least three and perhaps as many as six were poached in 1975. The following year six were illegally killed.

The pharmacists who have rhinos horns do not take shavings from them until a customer asks for some, whereupon they show him the horn, assuring the buyer that he is getting the genuine article. This is the usual practice throughout southeast Asia.

The major affliction for which rhino horn is used in Indonesia is high fever, but in this country rhino horn has also traditionally been used by the Chinese against typhus and to clear the body of poisons.

Asian horn is considered to be superior to African, and I was given the same explanation why every time I asked in Djakarta: its smaller size means that its curative properties are more highly concentrated.

For several decades Sumatran and Javan rhinos have been fully protected on paper in Indonesia. In openly selling Sumatran and Javan rhino products, the Chinese medicine shops in Indonesia encourage the poaching of these animals, thereby placing such pressure on them as to threaten their very survival.

Malaysia. In Kuala Lumpur well over one-half of the population is ethnically Chinese, and there is a major demand for traditional Chinese medicines.

Of the 26 pharmacies I visited in Kuala Lumpur in January 1981, nine sold rhinoceros horn, purchased mostly from Hong Kong and Singapore. One might think that because some Sumatran rhinos still occur in the wild in peninsular Malaysia, more Asian rhino horn would be offered for sale in the country's capital. This, however, is not the case because the few that there are exist mainly in the relatively well protected reserve of Endau Rompin, where poaching has not been a acute problem. Moreover, officials from the Malaysian Department of Wildlife do occasionally check Chinese pharmacies in Kuala Lumpur for illegal sales of products from the country's own endangered wildlife species. Perhaps because it is well known in the Chinese community that rhino horn is a risky commodity to sell, the prices for it - even those for African species, are, in some medical halls, the highest in the world: one pharmacist in Chinatown was offering it for the equivalent of \$48,930 a kg and two others in that same area were selling for \$36,697.

Manufactured medicines containing rhino horn are sold in most medical halls. These are the same as those found in other southeast Asian countries, imported from China; but, in Malaysia, there is a 15% to 30% duty on them.

In addition, there are locally manufactured "waters", usually sold in six-ounce bottles retailing for US 25 to 30 cents.

Under the Wild Animals and Bird Protection Ordinance of 1955, a poacher convicted of killing a rhino in Malaysia could be fined \$327 or imprisoned for six months. The penalties were increased to \$1,375 and/or two years imprisonment when the Protection of Wild Life Act was passed in 1972. This law also prohibits dealers, including Chinese pharmacists, from selling Javan or Sumatran rhino products.

However, the law did not include Indian or African rhino products, which could still be legally imported and sold; and investigators who searched medical halls were unable to distinguish Javan or Sumatran horns from the others when they had been cut down into small pieces. Even after Malaysia ratified CITES, the government did not try to halt the sale of imported rhino products that were already in the shops. Traders can often pretend that the stocks they hold were purchased before 1977; and, while attempts were made to stop all new imports, there is ample evidence that rhino horn and hide are still coming into the country.

Nevertheless, it is encouraging to note that the Department of Wildlife and National Parks in Malaysia takes its responsibilities conscientiously and seriously.

Results of my study indicate that there are limits to what people will pay for rhino horn from Asian species. I believe that if the Malaysian Government tightened up controls on the sales of all rhino products, dealers would ask their customers to pay even more than they presently do in order to compensate for their risks. This in turn would lead to a decline in the demand and an appreciable decrease in the trade.

Burma. There is only one Chinese medical hall remaining in Rangoon. There were very few animal products, mainly saiga antelope horn, buffalo horn and seahorses. There were some manufactured medicines from China, but none having rhinoceros derivatives.

The pharmacists confirmed that rhino products have traditionally been consumed not only by the Chinese in Burma but also by the Burmese themselves. The Chinese prefer the horn, hide and hoof; the Burmese primarily use rhino blood, but also heart, urine and meat. The latter is made into a curry to feed to weak people, to give them more stamina and to improve their blood. In the past the medical hall has sold all these rhino products, but never rhino dung.

There was no rhino horn for sale when I made my visit in January 1981; the proprietors had sold the last of what they had in November 1980 for the equivalent of \$12,810 a kg.

Rangoon's Chinese medical hall has not had genuine rhino hide since 1977, but there is "processed" hide made from buffalo which is sold in place of rhino hide to treat high fever.

Some Burmese doctors who had dried rhino blood told me they were usually able to get it free when they travelled to the hill states. Hunters who still occasionally kill rhinos in parts of Arakan, Kachin and Karen willingly supply it to them in return for the doctors' professional services to their families and friends.

This information helps to explain why the Sumatran rhino is endangered in Burma. Nobody knows how many of them are left; the most optimistic guess is a hundred, while some conservationists think that "under 25" is a more realistic figure. Burma is the only country I have studied in southeast Asia where there is still a major demand by the indigenous people as well as the Chinese for supplies of rhino products.

Recommendations

- For several years there have been two major entrepots for rhino horn, Hong Kong and Singapore. The traders themselves in Hong Kong requested a ban on further imports, and from early 1979 international trade in rhino horn from Hong Kong stopped. However, it appears that so-called old stocks are now being legally exported. In order to prevent new supplies from coming into Hong Kong and being reexported as supposedly old stocks, a date should be set after which no further exports of rhino products will be allowed. Singapore has no laws preventing the import or export of rhino products. Its government has not signed CITES and to date has shown little interest in this convention; however, rhino products constitute only a small proportion of Singapore's wildlife trade, and they could be stopped without undue economic hardship to those involved. A major effort should be directed at trying to convince the government to declare imports and exports of rhino horn illegal.
- China, having ratified CITES, still permits the export of manufactured medicines purporting to contain rhino horn. These sales, particularly to southeast Asian countries constitute a large portion of the rhino-based medications in traditional pharmacies, and their availability encourages people to use them, which in turn stimulates the demand for rhino products in general, giving additional incentive to poachers to kill these animals in Asia and Africa for the trade. China should be requested by an international conservation agency to halt these exports.
- The laws against the trade in rhino products in Indonesia and Malaysia should be reinforced by preventing the import of any rhino-based medicines, and the government authorities should intensify their investigations into wholesale and retail outlets which have traditionally traded rhino products.

- A person who is knowledgeable about the imports of traditional ingredients for Chinese medicines should visit the main importers for the purpose of explaining that rhinos are endangered in almost every country where they exist in the wild. He should try to persuade the importers not to buy any rhino products and to encourage them to provide their clients with acceptable substitutes, such as saiga antelope horn and, in Burma, dried blood from the water buffalo.
- I have found that most doctors of traditional medicine are not particularly concerned about the dwindling of supplies of rhino products. They are willing to prescribe substitutes and this practice should be encouraged.
- A representative from an international conservation agency should go to the factories in Malaysia which manufacture "antifever waters". Whether or not these contain genuine rhino horn, the practice of advertising them as such should be stopped.
- The public should be made aware of the dire threats to rhinos from poachers. The only long-term solution to stopping the trade in rhino products is to decrease the demand for them, and conservationists should make this a major objective in their action plans to save the rhino.

Extracts from a Report to WWF/IUCN
by Dr Esmond Bradley Martin

Editor's Note: The recommendations in this report are at present under consideration by WWF/IUCN.