

gimes. The peaks occur at younger ages, however, suggesting selective hunting of a very young population. No tusks belong to an animal over the age of 35 and a large proportion of animals, particularly males, appear to have died before reaching sexual maturity, it seems highly unlikely that the mortality pattern indicated by these results would be sustainable for very long.

The method used to age this sample of tusks was developed from an examination of ivory collected in East Africa. The extent of variations in the relationship between tusk dimensions and age in different elephant populations have not been quantified. It is conceivable that elephants found in the CAR may be consistently younger or older for given tusk dimensions than their East African relatives, possibly older if they are forest elephants (***Africana loxodonta cyclotis***). Remarkably different parameters would be required, however, in order to suggest that anything other than very young elephants have been sampled in this case.

The WWF/IUCN aerial survey found a massive decline of elephants in this region and evidence of high recent mortality (Douglas-Hamil-

ton **et al.**, 1985), results which are consistent with the mortality pattern derived from the tusk sample. In the absence of census data, the analysis of tusks in the ivory trade is clearly a powerful tool available to those concerned with elephant conservation.

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The Ivory Room, Mombasa, in past days. P.R.O. Bally/WWF.