

## THE SOMALI ROLE IN ORGANIZED POACHING IN NORTHEASTERN KENYA, c. 1909-1939

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For centuries the peoples of the Horn of Africa have supplied foreign consumers with game products and trophies. Due to the introduction of colonial governments, however, these peoples, such as the Somali of Kenya, faced restrictions on such activities. Although some scholars have written about this trade in the area to the south of the Tana River, very little is known about what occurred to the north.

Organized poaching<sup>1</sup> played an important part in the economic life of the Somali of the Northern Frontier District (NFD) of Kenya. From the earliest days of the establishment of administration until the eve of World War II, Somali pastoralists, livestock traders, and shopkeepers were major participants in a network which operated north of the Tana River. Cooperating with many other ethnic groups, they dealt in game trophies such as ivory and rhino horn, and game products such as leopard skins, giraffe and oryx hides, hippo teeth, and ostrich feathers. This activity led them into direct conflict with British colonial interests.

The Somali arrived in what became northern Kenya before the British. They entered the area as a result of a centuries-long movement in the Horn. By mid-nineteenth century, they successfully challenged Galla-speaking nomads such as the Orma and the Boran for leadership in the vast semi-desert area between the Juba and Tana rivers.<sup>2</sup> Although primarily interested in seeking pasturage and

<sup>1</sup>"Organized poaching" refers to both organized illegal hunting and the trading of game products. "Game product" and "game trophy" are synonymous, meaning any portion of the animal sold except its meat. See M. Stone, "Organized Poaching in Kitui District: A Failure in District Authority, 1900 to 1960," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, V, 3(1972), 436.

<sup>2</sup>E. Turton, "Bantu, Galla and Somali Migration in the Horn of Africa: A Reassessment of the Juba/Tana Area," *Journal of African History*, XVI, 4(1975), 519-538.

water for their large herds of camel, cattle, sheep, and goats, the Somali also engaged in an extensive camel caravan trade which terminated at the Indian Ocean coast. They worked in all facets of trade, acting not only as producers and consumers, but also as merchants, financiers, and caravaneers.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, the British, after a precarious tenure on the coast, gradually established control in the interior of what became the East Africa Protectorate and Kenya Colony.<sup>4</sup> They moved into northern Kenya just before World War I, and set up a number of administrative posts. Among the tactics employed by the British in establishing political control was the attempt to impose economic structures and restrictions which hampered Somali pastoralism and trading. The British managed to undercut the caravan trade by introducing a commercial system oriented to townships which encouraged alien<sup>5</sup> *duka* (shop) owners who were dependent on Nairobi.<sup>6</sup> They found that the Somali sometimes violently resisted this intrusion, and, at other times, openly persisted in their traditional way of life.<sup>7</sup>

As part of their new colonial economic structure, the British demanded that no trading of game trophies take place without government sanction. As early as 1897, they enacted game laws. Through such legislation, the administration intended to earn revenue and to protect animals from what it considered to be mindless slaughter. Although these laws periodically underwent modification, the British left the basic structure intact. As M. Stone explains, the game laws hinged on three constants: (1) the need to hold a license for elephant or rhino in order to possess ivory or rhino horn; (2) the stipulation that a seller of game trophies be licensed; (3) complex schedules for hunting licenses detailing the number and type of

<sup>3</sup>P. Dalleo, "Trade and Pastoralism: Economic Factors in the History of the Somali of Northeastern Kenya, 1890-1948," (Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1975), Chapter II.

<sup>4</sup>See G. Mungeam, *British Rule in Kenya, 1895-1912: The Establishment of Administration in the East Africa Protectorate* (Oxford, 1966).

<sup>5</sup>The British considered any Somali from downcountry Kenya or from the Italian side of the border to be "alien." But generally those Somali who opened *dukas* in the NFD belonged to the Herti or Isaaq lineages. Additionally the British referred to shopkeepers of Indian or Arabian descent as "alien." For the role of the "alien" Somali in resistance movements in Kenya, see E. Turton, "Somali Resistance to Colonial Rule and the Development of Somali Political Activity in Kenya, 1893-1960," *Journal of African History*, XIII, 1(1972), 117-143.

<sup>6</sup>Dalleo, "The Somali of Northeastern Kenya," Chapter III.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, Chapter IV.

animal which each holder could kill.<sup>8</sup> These British-imposed laws were inimical to traditional Somali trading patterns.

Prior to the arrival of the British, Somali camel caravans traversed the expansive area between the Tana and the Juba. They travelled between the interior and the coast, using towns such as Lugh and Bardera as staging points. These Somali caravaneers and merchants imported cotton cloth, copper wire, condiments, tea, and firearms. They exported livestock and livestock products, perfumed wood, gum, slaves, and a considerable volume of game products.<sup>9</sup> Both British and Italian officials commented on the significant traffic in ivory and rhino horn that took place in towns like Lugh.<sup>10</sup> Trade figures collected at Kismayu reveal how important this activity was. For example, for the period from 1 July 1891 to 31 December 1893, the value of exports from Kismayu amounted to Rupees 248,713. Of this total, exports of ivory and rhino horn accounted for Rupees 100,683.<sup>11</sup>

Although primarily pastoralists, the Somali refused to abandon such a lucrative economic activity because of the British. They deliberately refused to conform to British rules. Although they continued to hunt game and trade in trophies, very few sought government sanction. For example, after 1927, no Somali name appeared on the licensed rhino or elephant hunters' lists.<sup>12</sup>

Actually the alleged illegal trade in the NFD reflected a larger Kenyan activity in which poaching and the handling of illicit goods was widespread. Viewed in this wider perspective, the Somali trade ranked lower than that of many other Kenyan ethnic groups.

<sup>8</sup>Stone, "Organized Poaching in Kitui," 445; "A History of the Ivory Question," in *Annual Report of the Game Warden 1911-1912* (Nairobi, 1912); and Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 November 1909, C.O. 533/63, Public Record Office, London (hereafter PRO).

<sup>9</sup>Dalleo, "The Somali of Northeastern Kenya," Chapter II.

<sup>10</sup>P. Zaphiro, "Commerce in the Frontier Districts," 10 August 1907, Kenya National Archives Microfilm Collection, Syracuse University (hereafter KNA mic.) Film no. 2082, reel 77; V. Bottego, *Viaggio di Scoperta nel cuore dell'Africa il Giuba Esploratore* (Rome, 1895), 447; U. Ferrandi, *Seconda Spedizione Bottego Lugh Emporio Commerciale sul Giuba* (Rome, 1903).

<sup>12</sup>Annual Reports of the Game Department (hereafter ARGD), 1927-1934; Officer in Charge of the Northern Frontier to all District Commissioners (hereafter DC), 26 October 1933, DC MDA 5/1, District Commissioner's files, Mandera, Kenya. Many names on these lists were European, and some Europeans poached game in the NFD. They were, however, usually peripheral to the Somali network after the establishment of administrative posts. For some examples of such European activity see DC Digo to Senior Commissioner Coast, 1 October 1925, KNA mic., Film no. 1995, reel 38; Northern Frontier Annual Report (hereafter NFAR) 1948, PCNFD 1/1, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi (hereafter KNA); and G. Adamson, *Bwana Game* (London, 1968), 169.

According to the British, the Somali trailed such major poaching groups as the Turkana, Dorobo, and Kamba.<sup>13</sup>

In Kenya traders conveyed game trophies along two main routes, both of which terminated at the Indian Ocean coast. Participants did not necessarily remain fixed to a particular area, and often readily moved outside their normal territory. For example, the Kamba hunted in the NFD, and the Somali killed game south of the Tana River.<sup>14</sup> Some Somali were even found with game trophies as far south as present-day Tanzania.<sup>15</sup> In the area to the south of the Tana, hunters and middlemen transported their products to coastal outlets such as Mamburi, Kilifi, Takaungu, and Mombasa.<sup>16</sup> In the northern sphere, they carried their contraband across an area which stretched from Turkana to the eastern NFD, and sold it in Ethiopia, Italian Somaliland, and on the Kenyan coast.<sup>17</sup>

Within this northern sphere, Jubaland held an important position. Prior to its cession in 1925, some British administrators optimistically regarded the Juba River as a natural deterrent to smuggling. Others, however, acknowledged that ivory traders "crossed anywhere between the mouth of the Juba and Lugh."<sup>18</sup> They noted that places such as Gobwein, Yonti, Songolo, Fanole, and Bardera attracted sellers of game trophies. Nevertheless since the entire area was within British-controlled territory, the British still hoped to halt the trade. After 1925, when the Italians gained Jubaland, however, British officials openly complained that the transfer brought sixty miles closer that border and those networks which dealt with impunity in game trophies.<sup>19</sup>

By the 1930s a number of alternate routes existed in the NFD which led to Jubaland and other points in Somaliland. The district of Wajir's central locale enabled it to serve as a collection center for

<sup>13</sup>*East Africa and Rhodesia*, 7 October 1937, 131. For the Kamba experience see Stone, "Organized Poaching in Kitui."

<sup>14</sup>Senior Commissioner Coast to Commissioner of Customs, Mombasa, 12 May, PC JUB 1/4/10, KNA; Garissa Annual Report (hereafter GAR) 1930, PC NFD 1/7, KNA; *East African Standard*, 3 March 1934; Stone, "Organized Poaching in Kitui," 437.

<sup>15</sup>ARGD 1935; Assistant Provincial Commissioner to Provincial Commissioner (hereafter PC), 14 May 1913, KNA mic., Film no. 1995, reel 12.

<sup>16</sup>ARGD 1927; Stone, "Organized Poaching in Kitui," discusses in detail poaching in the area south of the Tana.

<sup>17</sup>For examples of the Ethiopian connection, see Moyale Annual Report 1932, PC NFD 1/6 KNA; His Majesty's Consul, Southern Ethiopia, to Officer in Charge Northern Frontier, 22 July 1935, PC GRSSA 20/1 KNA.

<sup>18</sup>DC Mfudu to PC Jubaland, 4 August 1917 and 29 July 1917, DC GOS 6/4 KNA.

<sup>19</sup>Northern Frontier District Handing Over Report (hereafter NFHOR) 1926, PC NFD 2/1 KNA. See also ARGD 1924.

game products from other parts of the NFD. It could be reached from Isiolo, which itself was a funnel for trophies from Turkana and Samburu herdsman.<sup>20</sup> From Wajir routes radiated north toward Moyale and Mandera, and thence Lugh; directly into Jubaland; and south toward Garissa and the Tana.<sup>21</sup> Garissa contained a number of good hunting spots such as Koreh-Kinna and Ijara-Welho, and it offered the advantage of a market on the Tana at Nanagi. From there a trail could be taken overland to Somaliland, or canoes could be used to navigate the Tana to the coast. Once at the coast, traders could go northward by Bajuni dhow, or continue overland southward to Mombasa.<sup>22</sup>

An important aspect of the trade was that ethnic groups living along these routes in the NFD and in adjacent territories often supplied the Somali with game trophies. In the western portion of the NFD, the nomadic Turkana and Samburu disposed of rhino horn to Somali livestock traders.<sup>23</sup> The pastoral Boran, Gabbra, and Sakuye hunted wild game, sometimes on horseback, near Mt. Marsabit, Moyale, and Garba Tula. They also willingly traded ivory gained from one of their client hunting groups, the Waata.<sup>24</sup> Nearer to Isiolo, Dorobo hunter-gatherers acted as the main suppliers,<sup>25</sup> but Kikuyu, Meru, and Kamba also sold game trophies to the Somali.<sup>26</sup> Farther east along the Tana, Pokomo agriculturalists<sup>27</sup> and Orma nomads<sup>28</sup> served the same function.

In procuring trophies, the Somali frequently utilized special connections with their neighbors like the Pokomo and the Boni. They paid for Pokomo ivory with sheep and goats, and sometimes

<sup>20</sup>Wajir Annual Report (hereafter WAR) 1928, PC NFD 1/5 KNA; DC Moyale to Officer in Charge Northern Frontier, 30 October 1934, PC RVP6A 1/7/1 KNA; Adamson, *Bwana Game*, 173.

<sup>21</sup>A. Hodson to Charge d'Affaires, Addis Ababa, 23 April 1920, PC NFD 4/3/3 KNA; Abdalla bin Omar, interviewed July 1972, Mandera.

<sup>22</sup>DC Lamu to Senior Commissioner Coast Province, 23 June 1921, KNA mic., Film no. 1995, reel 84.

<sup>23</sup>Isiolo Handing Over Report 1934, PC NFD 2/4 KNA.

<sup>24</sup>E. Dutton, *Lilibulero or the Golden Road* (Zanzibar, 1946) 2nd. ed., 44-46; E. Cerulli, "The Folk Literature of the Galla of Southern Abyssinia," *Harvard African Studies*, III (1922), 222-228.

<sup>25</sup>Isiolo Handing Over Report 1934, PC NFD 2/4 KNA.

<sup>26</sup>Sheikh Abdi Adot and Haji Farah, interviewed August 1972, Nanyuki; Stone, "Organized Poaching in Kitui District."

<sup>27</sup>For Somali-Pokomo relations see R. Bunker, *Islamization Among the Upper Pokomo* (Syracuse University, 1973); see also "Extract from Game Warden's Report 1923," in Ag. Game Warden to Chief Secretary Nairobi, 3 January 1924, C.O. 533/308 PRO.

<sup>28</sup>Stone, "Organized Poaching in Kitui District," 445, 449.

even relied on these agriculturalists to hide rifles in their huts.<sup>29</sup> Some Somali, especially the Abdalla and the Mohamed Zubeir, exploited their client-like relationship with the Boni from whom they received oryx and giraffe hides from which they made shields, arrow poison, and ivory. In return they offered these hunter-gatherers minimal supplies of milk, meat, and cloth. They were able to do this because of a number of reasons. The Boni had little use for cash, and thus preferred payment in kind. Second, due to their tse-tse infested forest, the Boni had no great need for large numbers of livestock. Finally, and most important, the Boni were definitely in a subservient position. Some sources indicate that they were even obliged to surrender one tusk of every elephant they killed to the Somali.<sup>30</sup>

Some of the township-based Somali, such as the Herti and the Isaaq, also benefited from their unique position. Whereas the Isaaq were relegated more to the western portion of Kenya, the Herti appeared in greater numbers in the eastern part.<sup>31</sup> Both were owners of dukas in towns and livestock traders. Thus they were very mobile and had bases scattered throughout the NFD. The Herti held two other advantages. Their kinship ties were strongest among the Ogaden pastoralists such as the Mohamed Zubeir, Aulihan, and Abd Wak who ranged on both sides of the border. Furthermore, they were directly related to Herti herdsmen who grazed their livestock in the area outside of Kismayu. Not surprisingly the British accused the Herti of exercising "a practical monopoly of the business of middlemen in the illicit ivory trade."<sup>32</sup>

In addition to trading for game products, some Somali killed wildlife. According to the British, every major Somali pastoral group in the NFD, such as the Mohamed Zubeir, Aulihan, Abd Wak, Abdalla, Maghbul, and Degodia,<sup>33</sup> and some agriculturalists such as the Garre Marre on the Daua River,<sup>34</sup> hunted for game trophies. But

<sup>29</sup>DC Kipini to DC Lamu, 10 January 1921, and DC Lamu to Senior Commissioner Coast Province, 18 February 1921, PC NFD 1/4/10 KNA; Sir Francis Lloyd, interviewed June 1973, London, England.

<sup>30</sup>Game Warden to Chief Secretary Nairobi, 29 October 1925, KNA mic., Film no. 1995, reel 38; E. Coronaro, "La popolazione dell'Oltre Giuba," *Rivista Coloniale*, XX (1925), 335; Lamu Annual Report 1927 and 1933, KNA mic., Film no. 2081, reel 52 and 53; and E. Salkeld, "Notes on the Boni Hunters of Jubaland," *Man*, V (1905), 168-170.

<sup>31</sup>E. Turton, "The Isaaq Somali Diaspora and Poll-Tax Agitation in Kenya, 1936-41," *African Affairs*, LXXIII (1974), 325-346.

<sup>32</sup>M. Mahony, "Herti Mijertein," in Garissa Political Record Book, vol. 2, KNA mic., Film no. 2082, reel 69; DC Chore to Game Warden, 9 August 1921, PC NFD 1/4/10 KNA; Tana River District Annual Report, 1920-21, KNA mic., Film no. 2081, reel 51.

<sup>33</sup>NFAR 1915-1948 PC NFD 1/1, and NFHOR 1919-1948, PC NFD 2/1 KNA.

<sup>34</sup>Mandera Annual Reports 1914-1948, PC NFD 1/3 KNA.

neither the pastoralists nor the agriculturalists depended on hunting for their livelihood. Indeed some killed giraffe in order to obtain hides tough enough to fashion sandals and water buckets. Some even hunted larger game because of the demand for ivory and rhino horn. Generally, however, they usually reserved such activity for servile groups. For example, only one Somali group in the NFD, the Bon Marehan, was specifically geared to hunting; and these people originated in Jubaland, and were considered to be servile.<sup>35</sup> Some parties from the Italian side even undertook forays as far west as Isiolo in search of game.<sup>36</sup>

Hunting groups varied in size and in their methods. Sometimes individuals searched alone for game. On other occasions they joined with as many as twenty to fifty men, and established a base camp before breaking into smaller bands from four to eight persons. Men who were knowledgeable about the local terrain and available water supplies were essential for a successful expedition in this harsh semi-desert territory. Although they usually started after the beginning of the rainy season, hunters knew that the most suitable time of the year occurred just before the surface pools dried up. At that time, they easily watched the few existing pans which held enough water to attract game and still provided a safe exist from the more isolated areas. Because of the British prohibition of firearms, they used rifles sparingly for big game such as elephant. Generally they relied on bow and poisoned arrow. Although some knew how to make poison, in most cases the Somali traded for this useful commodity. When tracking leopard, however, they used metal traps baited with giraffe meat.<sup>37</sup>

As previous authors have shown, a worldwide demand encouraged this trafficking in game trophies. The Indians and Chinese purchased rhino horn because of its reputation as an aphrodisiac. They also wanted ivory for carvings and ornaments. Europeans sought ivory for purposes such as the manufacture of billiard balls and piano keys. Other items such as leopard skins found ready markets in fashionable places like New York City.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup>Juston Barton, "Ivory," 4 August 1917, DC GOS 6/4 KNA; "Somalia Handbook," Ms. Fort Jesus Library, Mombasa, Kenya; Coronaro, "La popolazione," 337.

<sup>36</sup>Mandera Handing Over Report 1937, PC NFD 2/3 KNA. Some DCs blamed Somali from the Italian side for the poaching which occurred in the NFD.

<sup>37</sup>Abshiro Herin, interviewed July 1972, Rhamu, and Nuria Dido, interviewed June 1972, Wajir. See also DC Wajir to PC Jubaland, 13 December 1920, PC JUB 1/4/10 KNA.

<sup>38</sup>R. Beachey, "The East African Ivory Trade in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of African History*, VIII, 3(1967), 269-290; Stone, "Organized Poaching in Kitui," 437-439; WAR PC NFD 1/5 KNA.

To meet this demand, Arab and Indian traders located in such coastal ports as Mogadishu, Brava, Kismayu, and Lamu became the most important dealers in game trophies. They utilized their contacts with NFD *duka* owners, many of whom were Arab and Indian, as well as with entrepreneurs in Arabia and India.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, these coastal merchants were more than mere passive recipients of contraband commodities. To stimulate the trade, they often offered financial support to hunters and middlemen.<sup>40</sup>

British attempts to break up this network reflected administrative attitudes. The British viewed poaching as more anti-government than anti-animal in nature. Often administrators emphasized making examples of those caught rather than undertaking serious preventative measures.<sup>41</sup> Ironically the most effective action against poaching occurred during the earliest years of British-Somali contact in the NFD. In 1918 the colonial government disarmed the Somali. They thus limited the pastoralists and *shegaad* (clients) to their traditional weapons, the spear, bow, and arrow. But the administration had undertaken the campaign to pacify the Somali, not to suppress poaching.<sup>42</sup> In the 1930s when government was more established, the British did outlaw the use of steel traps in the NFD in hopes of curtailing the decline of the leopard.<sup>43</sup>

Government also failed to develop an effective agency to combat poaching. The Kenya Game Department, charged with the responsibility of overseeing and protecting wildlife, had little impact in the NFD. It simply could not supply an adequate number of men to enforce game laws in this vast district. In Wajir District alone, the game department's representatives faced 20,000 square miles of semi-desert territory known intimately to the Somali. Yet rarely did the department allocate more than four scouts to the district, and even then the full complement was rarely filled.<sup>44</sup> As late as the

<sup>39</sup>W. Amadio, "L'Oltre Giuba un anno nel Nuova Territorio," *L'Esplorazione Commerciale*, XVI (1926), 205; R. Cani, *Il Giubaland* (Naples, 1921), 27; C. Zoli, *Relazione Generale dell'Alto Commissione per L'Oltre Giuba* (Rome, 1926); and Coronaro, "La popolazione," 330.

<sup>40</sup>Senior Commissioner to Chief Native Commissioner Nairobi, 4 August 1921, KNA mic., Film no. 1895, reel 84; DC Gosha to PC Jubaland, 14 October 1919, DC GOS 6/8 KNA.

<sup>41</sup>Stone, "Organized Poaching in Kitui District," 442; Officer in Charge Northern Frontier to all DCs, 26 October 1933, DC MDA 5/1, District Commissioner's files, Mandera, Kenya; and DC Garissa to Officer in Charge Northern Frontier, 11 June 1943, PC NFD 4/1/3 KNA.

<sup>42</sup>Dalleo, "The Somali of Northeastern Kenya," 113-115.

<sup>43</sup>ARGD 1934.

<sup>44</sup>For statistical data of this nature, see NFAR 1915-1948, PC NFD 1/1 and NFHOR 1919-1948, PC NFD 2/1 KNA.



1930s, only thirty-five game scouts patrolled the 80,000 square miles included in the Northern Reserve.<sup>45</sup> One game warden complained that the attempt to halt poaching under these constraints was comparable to the efforts of a "toto [child] with a stick attempting to keep a swarm of hungry locusts off a five-thousand acre maize crop."<sup>46</sup>

Although such a comparison was hyperbolic, Somali persistence in trading in these traditional commodities was obviously a key to the British failure to prevent poaching. British raids and confiscations hampered the Somali, but did not stop them. On one occasion in 1932, a British party confiscated over 200 traps of which sixty-two belonged to five Herti.<sup>47</sup> At least two other raids resulted in the death of poachers.<sup>48</sup> But generally the Somali easily avoided British patrols. Officials also learned that some game scouts willingly cooperated with local peoples. In Wajir, one district commissioner maintained that game scouts talked openly about giraffe killings but remained secretive about the death of elephant and rhino. Administrators also discovered that kinship ties among the game scouts and pastoralists impeded efforts to halt poaching.<sup>49</sup>

Accessibility to Italian Somaliland compounded the problems of inadequate staffing and ongoing Somali resistance to British regulations. Even before they acquired Jubaland in 1925, the Italians regarded it as a source of ivory. Although they agreed to a treaty stipulating joint control of the ivory trade, and in spite of repeated confirmations during the years following the cession, the Italian government failed to meet its obligations.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, according to the British, some Italian officials stationed in Somaliland directly benefited from the illegal trade.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>45</sup>Adamson, *Bwana Game*, 163.

<sup>46</sup>ARGD 1930.

<sup>47</sup>GAR 1932, PC NFD 1/7 KNA.

<sup>48</sup>NFAR 1929, PC NFD 1/1, and NFHOR 1939 PC NFD 2/1 KNA.

<sup>49</sup>WAR 1932, PC NFD 1/5, Wajir Handing Over Report 1927 and 1930, PC NFD 2/5, GAR 1933, PC NFD 1/7 KNA; ARGD 1932.

<sup>50</sup>L. Alemanni, "La Regione del Giuba," *Rivista Coloniale*, XVII (1920), 236; G. Pistolese, "L'Aquisto dell'Oltre Giuba," in T. Sillani, ed., *L'Africa Orientale* (Rome, 1933), 100; B. Mussolini to Sgr. Ambasciatore, 26 November 1932, in *Exchange of Notes Between His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom Regarding the Control of Traffic in Game Trophies Across the Frontier Between Kenya and Italian Somaliland*, Cmd. 4232 (London, 1933).

<sup>51</sup>R. Sperling to Undersecretary of State for the Colonial Office, 10 October 1923, C.O. 533/301 PRO; ARGD 1924; NFHOR 1938, PC NFD 2/1 KNA.

Certainly the high prices in Italian Somaliland compared favorably with the situation in Kenya. Under the British system, the Somali could bring in only what was termed found ivory. That is, if a nomad inadvertently discovered a dead animal, he could turn in its hide or tusks for a reward. But first he had to accede to rigorous questioning before receiving a miserly four shillings per pound for ivory. If, on the other hand, he sold the same ivory in Somaliland, he might receive up to twenty shillings a pound. Furthermore, the Somali knew that there was no reward offered in the British colony for rhino horn. Thus they willingly took this item across the border. In Kismayu they could sell it for between twelve to forty shillings a pound.<sup>52</sup> Leopard skins were also highly valued on the Italian side. After 1933 when Kenya banned the sale of leopard skins, the Somali brought them to the Italian side for disposal. Whereas a confiscated leopard skin in Kenya earned only five shillings, in Kismayu or Bardera nomads could receive as much as one hundred to one hundred and fifty shillings for each skin.<sup>53</sup>

Ironically, as midcentury neared, it was not British efforts but rather natural and man-made disasters which temporarily reduced poaching activities. Officials cited the fact that poachers had brought the leopard close to extinction on the Daua and the Tana rivers by the 1930s. Additionally the dessication of the Lorian Swamp to the south of Wajir caused a severe decline in the size of elephant herds.<sup>54</sup> Then the Italo-Abyssinian War led to tighter border controls which in turn restricted trading.<sup>55</sup> Finally, British-Italian conflicts in the Horn related to World War II resulted in a change in normal patterns. Fighting and large troop movements had a deleterious effect on the animals' habitat. The destruction of towns such as Wajir and Moyale forced traders to evacuate the area, and thus disrupted their network of contacts. At the same time, the British once again gained control of the Somaliland coast, and therefore had greater opportunity to deny the Somali access to traditional

<sup>52</sup>Senior Commissioner Coast Province to Game Warden, 18 July 1927, KNA. mic., Film no. 1995, reel 85; Abdalla bin Omar, interviewed July 1972, Mandera.

<sup>53</sup>WAR 1934, PC NFD 1/5, GAR 1943, PC NFD 1/7, and Mandera Annual Report 1941, PC NFD 1/3 KNA. Abdalla bin Omar, interviewed July 1972, Mandera, and Nuria Dido, interviewed June 1972, Wajir.

<sup>54</sup>Mandera Handing Over Report 1937, PC NFD 2/3 and NFHOR 1948, PC NFD 2/1 KNA.

<sup>55</sup>A. Smith, "The Open Market: The Economy of Kenya's Northern Frontier Province and the Italo-Ethiopian War," *East Africa Journal*, VI (1969), 39-40; ARGD 1935 and 1936.

outlets.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, shortly after the end of fighting, poaching continued as it had before the war.<sup>57</sup>

Thus a study of organized poaching in northeastern Kenya during the period from 1909 to 1939 reveals the existence of a widespread network involving numerous ethnic groups. This network managed to trade in traditional products in spite of colonial pressures aimed at ending such activities. Although almost all of these peoples participated in the hunting of wildlife, some such as the Boni and the Waata specialized in that pursuit. Others, such as the *duka*-owning Arab and Indian merchants, preferred trading such items. Because of their previous trading connections and the proximity of the Somaliland coast, the pastoral Somali and their urban kin played a major role in this network. Somali perseverance in procuring and trading game trophies brought them into direct conflict with British-imposed game laws, and can be viewed as a form of resistance to the newly established British colonial structure. Combined with British administrative weaknesses and a steady demand for goods like ivory and rhino horn, Somali resistance resulted in a failure to end the trade in game trophies.

<sup>56</sup>J. Drysdale, *The Somali Dispute* (London, 1964), 57–58; W. Coutts, "History of the War," Wajir Political Record Book, vol. 1, KNA mic., Film no. 2082, reel 81.

<sup>57</sup>V/AR 1947, PC NFD 1/5 and NFHOR 1948, PC NFD 2/1 KNA.