

to eliminate coral stockpiles and facilitate enforcement, the Aquino government temporarily lifted the export ban from May 1986 to April 1987. The Philippine CITES Management Authority notified TRAFFIC(U.S.A.) in September 1987 that the ban was back in force but pointed out that unauthorized coral shipments were continuing to leave the Philippines. A memorandum TRAFFIC received from the Philippine embassy in Washington confirmed this information. Although the FWS was notified of this, coral shipments continued to enter the United States. According to customs data, over 333 tons of Philippine coral were imported from October 1987 through March 1988—possibly a record amount. Most of this was imported through the ports of Los Angeles, Miami, Norfolk, and San Francisco. According to FWS, some shipments were accompanied by apparently valid Philippine export documents.

The Philippine coral trade has clearly been difficult to police, and a number of important issues remain unresolved. The FWS has assured TRAFFIC that efforts to obtain answers to the longstanding questions are under way. FWS officials are apparently seeking clarification of Philippine law so that proper coral trade controls can finally be implemented. ■

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Rhino Horn Use in North Yemen

by Lili Sheeline

Rhinoceroses, heavily exploited for their horns and other body parts, have declined to the point where most wild populations of all five rhino species are now critically endangered. For centuries, rhino horn has been a popular ingredient in oriental medicinals. It was not until 1979, however, that Dr. Esmond Bradley Martin documented the surging market for rhino horn dagger handles in North Yemen, a Middle Eastern nation bordering the Red Sea. (See *TRAFFIC(U.S.A.)* 7(4), July 1987 for a discussion of the rhino horn trade.)

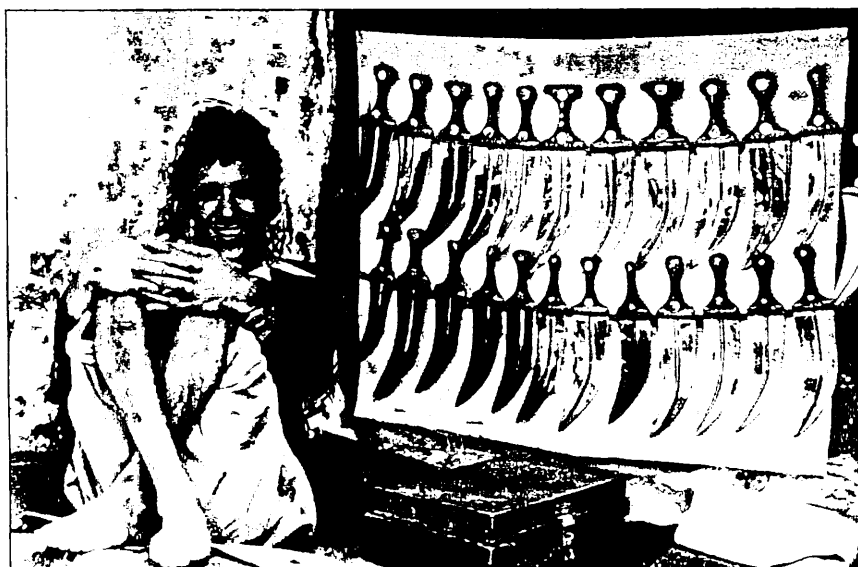
Daniel Varisco, a cultural anthropologist with years of experience in North Yemen, recently investigated the cultural significance of rhino horn under a World Wildlife Fund and U.S. Agency for International Develop-

ment grant. A brief summary of his December 1987 report follows.

The dagger, a standard part of male Yemeni dress, historically has served a variety of purposes, including use as a weapon. Its real importance, however, is a symbolism that permeates all levels of Yemeni society. Even today, a dagger declares the wearer's ability to defend himself and be a full member of the tribal community.

Various forms of the dagger have evolved through the centuries, but the most common variety currently worn is the *janbiyya*, a J-shaped dagger with a sheath of wood wrapped in leather. Although horn from buffalo or cattle, wood, and even plastic are used for hilts, the preferred handle is one made of rhino horn.

Varisco discards the suggestion that the *janbiyya* is a phallic symbol. He notes that there is no explicit interest in the dagger as a sexual symbol in Yemeni tradition and that rhino horn is rarely considered an aphrodisiac in North Yemen. In fact, it is simply the physical characteristics of the rhino horn, which improves with age and handling, that make it such a valuable material for dagger handles. Rhino horn is perceived as rare, and therefore valuable, and over time has become the



Rhino horn is still considered the most precious material for handles of *janbiyyas*, daggers that have important cultural significance in Yemeni society. (Esmond Bradley Martin)

standard by which other materials are measured.

Varisco sums up his findings by stating, "The rhino horn dagger is so deeply a part of Yemeni culture, and a part still imbued with value as the country develops, that demand for it will not diminish simply because it is illegal to obtain it or use it." He concludes that, while the government has shown good faith by banning the import, export, and use of rhino horn, it is unrealistic to expect adequate enforcement at this time in the nation's development.

Meanwhile, dagger craftsmen are under increasing government pressure to abandon their use of rhino horn, and many are interested in finding quality substitutes. While continued negative international attention may force the government into an increasingly defensive position, the public may better respond to positive conservation messages broadcast by the Yemeni media. Varisco's most crucial point is that, for rhino conservation to succeed in North Yemen, it must be part of a broader conservation campaign initiated in North Yemen and focusing on that country's own issues.

Varisco makes a number of recommendations: he notes the need for institutional support, technical and financial support for proposed wildlife conservation projects that remain without funds, and identification of other conservation needs for North Yemen. Specific initiatives include North Yemen's affiliating with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, surveys of North Yemen's flora and fauna, and the reintroduction of ibex and gazelle, both of which are endangered in North Yemen. For the rhino, however, the only short-term hope may be in identifying a suitable substitute for the luxury janbiyya market. ■

Ivory Trade Update

In response to the increased attention given to the plight of the African elephant (Loxodonta africana) and the need for current information on trade in elephant ivory, TRAF-FIC(U.S.A.) will be providing regular updates on elephant ivory trade issues. In the column, we plan to provide readers with news on export quotas, the CITES Ivory Control System, and worldwide efforts to stop poaching and illegal trade in ivory.

How Much Ivory Does the United States Consume?

A new TRAFFIC(U.S.A.) analysis concludes that U.S. consumption of African elephant ivory probably amounts to no more than 10 to 12 percent of the total annual production of ivory in Africa.

This analysis clarifies information published last year by TRAF-FIC(U.S.A.), which stated that U.S. imports account for about one-third of the total reported international

trade in worked ivory. This figure is correct but had been incorrectly extrapolated by some readers to mean that the United States consumes one-third of all ivory in trade.

The 10 to 12 percent figure was derived by multiplying the average weight of a piece of worked ivory reported in trade (11.6 grams) by the total amount of worked ivory imported by the United States in 1985. This figure—73 metric tons—represents approximately 10 percent of the total amount of raw ivory exported from Africa the previous year, 750 metric tons (presuming that most worked ivory traded in a given year is derived from raw ivory exported the previous year, and taking into account that the United States does not import a significant amount of raw ivory).

Japan is the world's largest consumer of ivory, importing more raw tusks and worked ivory than any other country for its substantial ivory industry. Between raw ivory and worked ivory imports, Japan probably consumes about 75 percent of all ivory available in a given year. By contrast, much of the raw ivory imported into Hong Kong is reexported as worked ivory. Over 90 percent of U.S. ivory imports come from Hong Kong. (Analysis by Jorgen B. Thomsen)



Tanzania's 1988 ivory quota of 13,214 tusks consists largely of seized ivory. Most of these tusks were recently put on tender and sold for an average of \$140 per kilogram. (Jorgen Thomsen/WWF)

Why Is the United States Still Importing Philippine Coral?

by Andrea L. Gaski

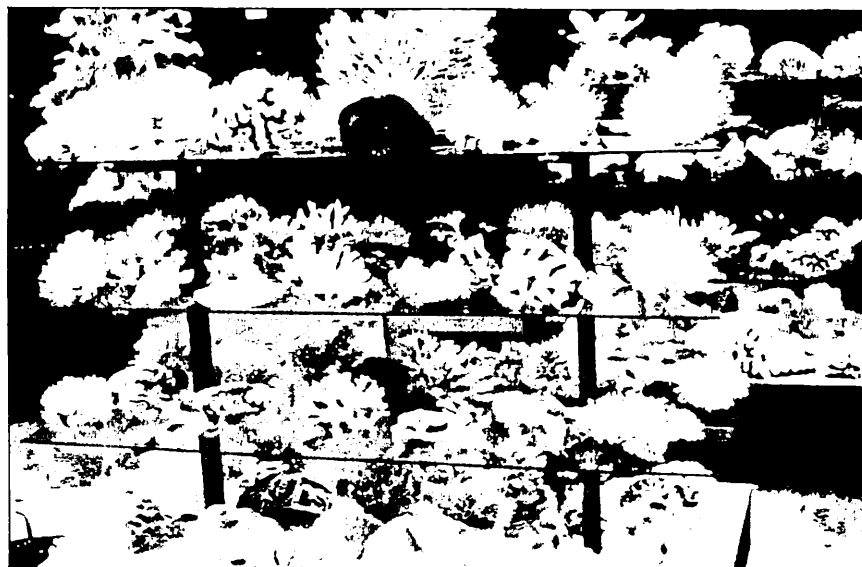
The trade of invertebrates—a group that includes close to 1 million described species—is mostly unstudied except for a few commercially valuable groups. Of these, the trade of corals, is one of the best known.

In consumer markets, stony corals (i.e., reef-building corals) are used in raw form as souvenirs, for adorning aquariums, and in building materials such as cement. Precious corals (such as red or pink) and semiprecious corals (black) are valued for their use in jewelry, vases, and sculptures. Although the world trade in corals is voluminous, it is mostly unregulated, and its effect on coral reefs throughout the tropics is largely undocumented.

Analyses of the world trade in crude corals—which represents mostly stony corals—indicates that the United States is the world's largest importer. According to cus-

toms statistics, the United States has imported almost 14.6 million pounds (7,304 tons) of crude corals over the last 10 years, or an annual average of 730 tons. Leading suppliers include Indonesia, Taiwan, and Fiji, while about two-thirds of all reported imports over the last decade have come from one country—the Philippines (Figure 1). (Customs statistics are based on customs declarations and do not necessarily indicate verification of contents of shipments. Shipments marked "crude coral" may include unworked stony, precious, and semiprecious corals.)

The Philippine-U.S. coral trade has proven extremely difficult to regulate and raises a number of important questions. On the ecological side, scientists are concerned that U.S. demand for coral is contributing to the degradation of Philippine coral reefs. Only about 30 percent of



The United States is the world's largest importer of crude corals, many of which are sold in shell shops as tourist trinkets. (David Mack/WWF)

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