


said that the Chinese Ambassador in Ethiopia tells Chinese company managers to inform their workers not to buy ivory items, as they are illegal and they will be caught at the airport and be prosecuted. There are, he said, acceptable good quality hardwoods in China that can be used for signature stamps, and that wooden chopsticks are available in China. He said, however, it would be hard to stop all the Chinese from buying ivory in Ethiopia. With the large and growing number of Chinese coming into the country, this is an increasing threat that must be addressed. It is a warning to Kenya.

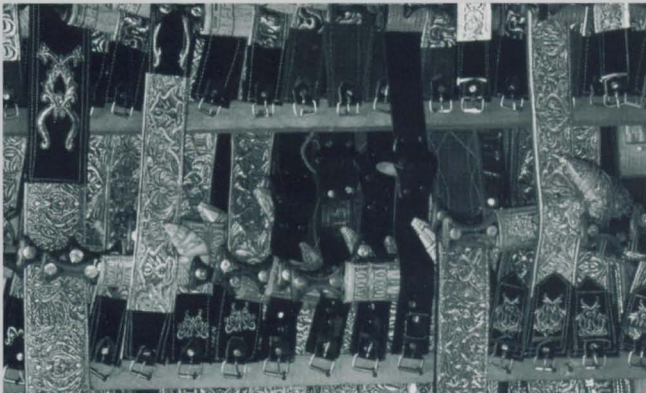
Chinese workers should stop trading in endangered wildlife

products in Ethiopia. The government needs to legislate larger fines and more stringent penalties against smuggling and illegal internal trade. These laws need to be widely publicized, such as at the airport in Addis Ababa, where large warning signs could be placed. Company managers need to speak more frequently to their Chinese workers against buying ivory. The most urgent action needed is a clampdown, once again, on ivory items displayed for sale in Addis Ababa's curio shops. Shopkeepers must be made to realise that they are not allowed to sell recently-made ivory items. TRAFFIC should assist again on this clampdown; they also need

to help the government establish a strategy to monitor the curio shops regularly and frequently, in order to prevent a further buildup of ivory items. This is the only effective way to cut down on the ivory trade and thus reduce poaching pressure on the few surviving Ethiopian elephants. This in turn will help to reduce the smuggling of tusks from elephants poached in neighbouring countries, such as Kenya. The issues of law enforcement must be addressed not only in Ethiopia, but in Kenya and Sudan. Ethiopia can be an example of how wildlife trade controls can work, but it is important for the Ethiopian government to act as soon as possible. 

Cutting edge findings on a traditional knife

Lucy Vigne and Esmond Martin



Has the culture of wearing jambiyas been re-adopted in former South Yemen since their becoming legal to wear after unification of North and South Yemen in 1990?

Jambiyas made before the 1967-1990 Marxist ban in the south were the smaller Bedu-style jambiya, as opposed to the large-handled jambiya of the towns and cities in the north. Were the southerners wearing Bedu jambiyas again or choosing to emulate the northerners with the larger Sanaa-made ones? We had not visited this region since 1993, and reports varied regarding jambiya wearing.

So, in early 2008, we returned to Aden and Mukalla on the coast

and visited the main towns of the Wadi Hadramut region in the interior desert: Sayun, Shibam and Tarim. Compared to 15 years ago, the number of outlets selling jambiyas had increased to 48 in the five towns surveyed, with 1,712 jambiyas on display for sale. There were 15 outlets selling jambiyas in Aden and Mukalla compared to just two on our last visit. There was an increase in outlets also in Wadi Hadramut. As well as Sayun that is famous for its silver shops and where old Bedu daggers are still for sale, 16 outlets have opened in Shibam, now that it has become a world heritage site attracting more visitors.

The comforting facts are that the main buyers for these jambiyas are foreign tourists and that most of the jambiyas have come from Sanaa. Trade is not re-opening in the south. Although southerners are copying northerners in many ways, adhering more strictly now to Islam with women once again veiled, and with a much greater capitalist influence, they do not like jambiyas, looking down on northerners for wearing a dangerous weapon. They say

they would feel ashamed to be seen wearing one. Even northern Yemenis who come to work in southern towns mostly do not wear jambiyas when they see so few. We saw just a handful of Yemenis wearing them in the towns we visited. Nearly all were northerners, but we saw one or two Bedu from al-Bayda province wearing the smaller handled jambiya in some towns. There are a few shops selling mostly northern jambiyas to those who may need one for a party or a present, and children's jambiyas of the northern style were for sale, often available in military shops where northerners go to buy uniforms. A sprinkling of Bedu ones were for sale, the best quality being in silver sheaths found in Sayun where we also saw two old rhino horn handled Bedu jambiyas. Fortunately, these were the exception, not the rule.

It is reassuring that while northern Yemen's demand for jambiyas rises with the growing population, demand in the south is negligible. In time and with better education, the northerners will emulate the southerners, but is there enough time for the rhino whose horn is still the most favoured in Yemen?