

BOOK REVIEW

Ivory markets of Europe

Esmond Martin and Daniel Stiles, drawings by Andrew Kamiti

Care for the Wild International, West Sussex, UK, and Save the Elephants, Nairobi and London 2005; 104 pages. ISBN 9966 9683 4 2

Review by Kees Rookmaaker

Chief Editor, Rhino Resource Center (sponsored by the International Rhino Foundation and SOS Rhino); Research Assistant, Darwin Online Project, Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Cambridge; Researcher, Strickland Archives at the University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge

The African elephant in 1989 was added to Appendix I of animals governed by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), where the Asian elephants had been listed since 1975. For CITES Parties this meant a ban of all international commercial trade in elephant products, which came into effect in January 1990. The European Union now allows only the import of ivory antiques, defined as items manufactured before 1 June 1947, while raw and worked ivory can be exported from EU countries subject to the destination country issuing a certificate to authorize the import. Because obviously illegal trade in ivory can easily be linked to poaching wild elephants, Esmond Martin and Daniel Stiles have been engaged in a series of surveys to monitor the extent of ivory trade around the world.

Their latest report, the subject of this review, is the fourth in a continuing series of surveys to establish baseline figures that can assist in monitoring current ivory trade. After covering the markets in Africa, South-East Asia and East Asia in three previous books, the authors now for the first time look at the extent of the trade in a region where elephants have not occurred naturally in the modern epoch. The authors surveyed the trade in selected cities in Germany, the

United Kingdom, France, Spain and Italy. It is not altogether clear why these countries were selected, or rather why their neighbours were excluded. One would equally expect some trade in Holland or Belgium, in Scandinavia, or in some of the countries in the eastern section of Europe.

Ivory carving has been practised in Germany for many centuries. Erbach on the Rhine has been a centre for this industry from the middle of the 18th century, and at its peak in the 1870s and 1880s some 200 craftsmen were employed as carvers. Since that time, the trade has had its ups and downs, based on fashion, economy and the ability to export. In the 1980s, Germany imported on average 19.76 tonnes of ivory per annum, less than the domestic consumption in previous decades of 24 tonnes per annum. At the time of the survey, there were only 7–10 carvers active in Erbach, producing mostly small figurines and ornaments. In Michelstadt, close to Erbach, where in four shops surveyed, 8639 ivory items were offered for sale, all new items processed from legally acquired stock. Most products are bought by Germans for private use.

In the United Kingdom, ivory has mostly been worked to produce piano keys, bagpipe mounts, small jewellery and similar items. In 2004, the survey

counted 8325 items in various London outlets, mostly in stalls in antique markets. Only 166 of these were found to have been manufactured after the 1989 ban on ivory trade. Traders said that Americans bought most of the items and in all probability exported them without official permits.

There was relatively little ivory for sale in France, Spain or Italy. About 40% of the items were made in Asia. Claims that the figurines and jewellery items were imported before 1989 could not be verified. Spain had a commendable record of law enforcement and record keeping on ivory seizures, while the statistics kept by Italy were far from complete.

One of the outcomes of the survey, which possibly was least expected, was that the ivory markets in Germany and the UK ranked sixth and ninth from the top according to the minimum number of items found for sale during the surveys in Africa, Asia and Europe. Hence the demand in Europe far exceeds that in China, Japan, Cameroon and Nigeria, which are all viewed as important ivory markets. Most of the European ivory, however, was manufactured pre-1989 and is therefore legal, while the African and Asian markets use material obtained from freshly poached elephants. Some raw ivory and small amounts of worked ivory are still entering the European countries surveyed, mainly from Africa and East Asia. Sizeable quantities of worked ivory are imported from the USA. The quantities, however, seem to be diminishing and the demand falling.

Like its predecessors, this is a handsome volume, A4 size, soft cover, well printed. It is illustrated by original drawings prepared by Andrew Kamiti, but I missed a short biography of this artist in the book. There are maps showing places mentioned in the text, some black-and-white photographs in the text, as well as eight (unnumbered) pages with colour pictures taken by the authors in the course of their survey. Had they been numbered, it would have been easier to refer to them in the text, which might have given them something more than just decorative value. The bibliography with 66 references is carefully prepared and properly presented. There is a list of tables, but no list of illustrations and no index—which with the

growing number of pages in these reports might be something to consider in future instalments.

Because the four reports thus far published in this series deserve to be kept for future reference, I was curious how many copies were available in the larger libraries. I was somewhat surprised to find that a search of the major depositories in the UK (accessible globally through www.copac.ac.uk) found only one copy of one of the reports in one library. A search through European national libraries as well as the Library of Congress (accessible through www.ubka.uni-karlsruhe.de/hylib/en/kvk.html) did not show any copies beyond the one mentioned. The books are provided with an ISBN number, but they are not sold by the large Internet book stores like Amazon or the Natural History Book Service. I then had a look at the websites of the publishers. Care for the Wild International mentions this latest report (on the trade in Europe) on their website, but without any information on price or availability. Save the Elephants gives details of the first three reports among their publications, with an email link to request a copy. Possibly the distribution of copies could be improved.

Esmond Martin and Daniel Stiles have again provided valuable baseline statistics to help in monitoring the trends in the availability of ivory. The attention to detail in the report is remarkable, and the text guides us through the myriad of numbers and trends carefully and confidently. It should provide a basis for policymakers to review the impact of the ivory ban on the populations of elephants in the range states and the use of stockpiles of ivory obtained from elephants that died naturally. I assume that the current team will have a chance to continue their efforts to provide more badly needed statistics, maybe by surveying the markets in the USA and Australia, and possibly after a while re-visiting the major ivory hotspots in Africa and Asia. Wherever they go, they will assemble large amounts of data not available elsewhere, they will ensure that the results are properly published, and they will make every effort to alert the press to the most important outcome. I recommend this report to everybody interested in elephants or animal trade issues.