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BOOK REVIEW

Black Poachers, White Hunters: A Social History of Hunting in Colonial Kenya. Edward I. Steinhart. Oxford: James Currey, 2006. 248 pp.

Employing a Marxian perspective, Steinhart examines the social history of hunting in colonial Kenya to highlight the prevalence of hunting by subsistence farmers who have been largely overlooked relative to 'pure' hunters in academic literature. He also demonstrates that the big game safari represents a truly cross-cultural or 'trans-cultural' practice, and notes the mixed blessings of the triumph of the preservationist ideal as evinced by Kenya's 1977 ban on hunting. Steinhart argues that there were so few female hunters as to be negligible thus the book concentrates on men. Geographically the focus is on Kwale, Kitui, and Meru Districts because each contains a major national park (Shimba Hills, Tsavo, and Meru respectively) and was inhabited by Bantu-speaking people who supplemented their agro-pastoral activities with hunting. The author believes that his book is the first history of hunting and wildlife conservation in Kenya to treat both African and European hunters and gamekeepers. The author hopes to contribute to understandings of the place of wildlife in the world and humans' relationship to it.

The introduction is followed by four parts: The African Hunters, The White Hunters, Black and White Together, and Gamekeepers and Poachers. Part one describes the tradition of bow hunting and African hunting generally in each of the three research districts. African elephant hunters using bow and poisoned arrow were viewed as primitive or non-existent by Europeans, yet bow hunting persisted during the colonial period and was arguably more humane than Europeans' rifle use. Steinhart believes it was European prejudice against peasants that blinded them to the prevalence of hunting among African farmers and herders, such that they dismissed hunting activities as aberrant behavior. Steinhart argues that meat from hunting regularly supplemented local diets during dry seasons, not only during crisis or drought and that Africans contributed to Europeans' misperceptions by considering elephant kills, but not animals caught in traps as 'real hunting'.

In part two, the focus is much more on class, ideology, and individual action as opposed to the more geographic focus and non-class based analysis of part one. Steinhart posits that the European hunting heritage is steeped in the upper class and the expression of mastery over nature. The hunt was also associated with military skill and leadership and East Africa seen as a virtual Garden of Eden with an infinite supply of wildlife. Africans became the "dark companions" of early European hunters in the form of guides, porters, gun bearers, skinners, and cooks setting a class-based stage for later years when settler colonists from diverse class backgrounds joined in the hunt. The wealthy remained the dominant figures among hunters (Lord Delemere, Lord Cranworth, Berkeley and Galbraith Cole), but a movement towards a more populist movement in hunting was underway. Steinhart points to the abuses of the privileged including the literal hunting of Africans by a Hungarian Count and colonial officers who issued themselves licenses in violation of game regulations. Corruption and other abuses would remain an element of the big game safari, the focus of part three.

Steinhart believes that the modern game safari has its origins in a melding of the Arab/African caravan trade and European hunting practices and that a few well-publicized safaris greatly shaped the nature of the industry. Theodore Roosevelt's 1909 safari involved the bagging of numerous trophy animals and set the stage for luxury safaris in which customers could bag desired animals without hardship. Eastman-Pomeroy-Akeley's 1926-27 safari captured wildlife using Akeley's new lightweight camera which would help popularize mixing hunting with photography increasing people's interest in natural history and wildlife conservation. In 1927 and 1930, the Prince of Wales undertook luxury safaris during which he sought to photograph animals and gain new travel experiences as much as hunt. Hemingway's published memoir of his 1934 big game safari helped romanticize the safari for the 1940s and 1950s when the reduced cost of air travel helped popularize the safari. White hunters served as professional guides for some time, but public sentiment and declining elephant populations helped Kenya transition to wildlife preservation.

In part four the transformation from hunting wildlife for sport and game control to preserving it in protected areas is described by focusing on the lives of colonial game wardens. Mention is made of Africans serving as scouts and former poachers including being used to as informants to capture others engaged in illegal off take of animals, but the reader does not gain much insight into African perspectives on wildlife management.

There is a notable lack of specific information on Africans in *Black Poachers, White Hunters* even though the author sought to have an inclusive study. Other than part one, the book is almost entirely about people of European descent. Three Kenyan districts were chosen for comparative purposes, but connecting people to specific districts is largely restricted to parts one and four. Steinhart used research assistants to conduct oral histories, but how many people were interviewed is unclear as is and why virtually no African voices are present even when covering events as recently as the 1960s. The desirability of using class analysis rather than the more conventional use of race or gender in East African studies is also not generally supported by the material presented—race and class essentially go hand in hand. The book is well-written and suitable for use in graduate courses in East African history or human-environment relations in Africa. Steinhart raises the interesting point of whether Kenya might not be better served by controlled hunting rather than allowing the hunting traditions of the Waata, Kamba and others to merely pass away.

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