

Malawi's Ivory Carving Industry

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Malawi's ivory carving industry is considerably older than Zimbabwe's, Botswana's or South Africa's, all of which were established only in the 1970's. The people of Malawi also have a long tradition of trading in raw ivory, going back to the sixteenth century when the Maravi, Makua and especially the Yao began to have commercial contacts with the south-east African coast in what is now southern Tanzania and Mozambique.

While ivory was one of their most important trade items (Alpers, 1975), no evidence has yet been found that the Yao or other people of Malawi carved or worked ivory at this time. However, if any commodities from ivory were made, they would not have been traded to the coast because the buyers wanted raw ivory, primarily for the Indian market. Later, in the middle of the nineteenth century, when there was a sharp increase in the demand in Europe for ivory, the buyers also wanted raw ivory—not worked. Furthermore, there is no report of carved ivory items from Malawi by any of the traders, Mozambique government officials, hunters or explorers. Nor is there any reference to an indigenous ivory carving industry in Malawian oral traditions. The major study of the Yaos, by Yohannah Abdallah with Sanderson, goes into detail on the economic and artistic achievements of the Yao people in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but neither does it mention any ivory carving at all. It is extremely unlikely, therefore, that there was an ivory carving industry in Malawi prior to World War I; there certainly were some individual items made, such as ivory bangles which chiefs wore, but this cannot be interpreted as a significant organized commercial trade.

According to David Anstey, the first Head of Malawi's Department of National Parks and Wildlife, the ivory carving industry began in the 1920s when several Yaos were shown how to carve ivory by resident Singhalese of Zomba. These Singhalese were not full-time carvers in what was then the capital of Malawi; they were businessmen and government employees who simply initiated the activity. This information was given to David Anstey by one member of the Sadiki family, probably the best known ivory carving family in the country. The old man Sadiki, who is still alive but over seventy-five years of age, said that his father had been taught how to carve ivory by one of these Singhalese who in turn taught him. Ian Parker, one of the world's authorities on ivory, and who carried out research in Malawi, also states that the Singhalese were responsible for beginning the ivory industry in Malawi (personal communication with Ian Parker). That carving ivory items for commercial sales at least predates World War II was confirmed to me by the older carvers I interviewed in Malawi. One of these carvers, Morse Yatina, who is still practising the craft, had learned how to do it from his father, in 1946, many years after it had become the family's livelihood.

Stylistically, there are some similarities between the ivory carvings of Sri Lanka and Malawi, especially in wild animal sculptures which are fatter and more round than those carved in Malawi's neighbouring countries. Moreover, both Sri Lankan and Malawian ivory carvings are made using comparable hand tools, not electrically powered instruments as in Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa.

In 1954 when Vivian Wilson, former Director of the National Museum of Rhodesia, visited Malawi, there were only about twelve ivory carvers in the whole country; they were all Yaos, located mostly at Nkhotakota, not in Limbe or Blantyre. Nkhotakota is the largest traditional town in Malawi, and Vivian Wilson went there to see some of the ivory carvers. He found them housed in simple thatched huts. He remembers that almost all the work consisted of carving elephants onto medium-sized tusks of fourteen to sixteen kilos each, and was told by the carvers that they had purchased their raw ivory from the Wildlife Department in Limbe.

When Vivian Wilson went back to Malawi in 1970, he visited Blantyre which had in the mean time become the ivory carving centre. He noted that tusks with elephants carved onto them were then being sold for between \$32 and \$36 each (personal communication with Vivian Wilson).

In the late 1960's and early 1970's almost anybody could walk into the office of Forestry and Game and purchase ivory from the Game Ranger. In 1971 the price of a kilo of ivory was \$2,64. Although most of the carvers at that time were Africans, according to David Anstey, financial assistance towards the industry was provided by resident Asians and Europeans.

The first major government policy on the ivory carving industry of Malawi came about in 1973, following the meeting of the Director of the National Parks and Wildlife Department, David Anstey, with President Banda to discuss the sales of raw ivory. It was decided that the locally registered ivory carvers should have first call on all raw ivory, but any surplus could be sold by the Department for foreign exchange. The Department would hold sales of ivory specifically for licensed trophy dealers, and the ivory would be priced roughly the same as on the world market. Thus, the priorities of the Malawian ivory carvers were to take precedence over exports of raw ivory. A directive was initiated on 31 March 1973 also stating that ivory sold to local trophy dealers could not be exported in raw form. Since then, President Banda has continued to support the local carving industry as a legitimate enterprise based upon legal acquisition of ivory from the country's elephants. There is no other head of state in southern Africa who has taken such a strong position in favour of a domestic ivory carving industry.

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife (part of the former Department of Forestry and Game) held its first official sale to the trophy dealers in December, 1973, when 283 kilos of ivory were sold. From 1974 to 1978 there were two or three sales annually, and the average amount of ivory sold per year was 1,187 kilos. Beginning in 1979 the number of sales was increased to a minimum of four sales a year because some trophy dealers complained that they were too far apart.

Over the ten-year period from 1974 to 1983, an average of almost exactly one tonne of ivory was annually sold at these government sales. However, a marked decline in purchases came about after 1976 when the record amount of 1,641 kilos was sold, and by 1983 only 497 kilos were bought by the trophy dealers. The average weight of each tusk sold also decreased sharply: from 9.45 kilos in 1978 (the first year for which I have specific statistics) to 4.45 in 1982, although there was a slight rise in 1983 to 5.18 kilos.



Foreign tourists like to purchase heads made out of ivory. (Esmond Martin)

A rational conclusion based on these two sets of declines (in the amount of ivory bought by the dealers and almost a halving of the average tusk weight) is that quantities of illegal ivory increased in Malawi, and that the trophy dealers were buying a higher proportion of their raw material from illicit sources.

In order to protect the smaller ivory dealers from the richer, larger ones, the Department has never allowed a true auction. Instead, it has set prices for various sizes of tusks, roughly based on those of the international market, and has limited the amount of ivory that any single dealer is allowed to buy. At the February, 1982, sale ivory under ten kilos was priced at \$43,50 per kilo, 10-17 kilo tusks \$54,30, and tusks weighing 18 kilos and above were \$65,20. If a rich dealer wanted to purchase too much of the ivory available, the Department would simply request him to buy the larger pieces (which the smaller dealers could not afford) or stop him completely from buying. However, the Department was unable to sell most of the ivory it offered from 1981 to 1983 to the trophy dealers because they were obtaining their supplies from ivory illegally imported from neighbouring countries and from elephants which had been poached in Malawi.

By 1979 the Head of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife and senior customs officials were aware that the country was full of illicit ivory (personal communication with David Anstey). There was field evidence of illegal killings of elephants, and there had also been a series of major confiscations of illegal consignments coming in from Zaire and Zambia. These confiscations led to special export sales: a dealer from southern Africa purchased about two tonnes of this ivory from the Customs Department (personal communication with the Managing Director of the company). Also, another southern African company purchased two lots from the Customs Department for export; one was 660 kilos with an average tusk weight of 5.89 kilos for \$54, 50 a kilo in 1979, and the other was 1,087 with an average tusk weight of 7.5 kilos for \$64,80 a kilo in the following year (personal communication with the Managing Director of this company).

In accordance with the 1973 directive, still today the only Malawians permitted to purchase ivory from the Department's sales are registered trophy dealers who are not allowed to export it in raw form. On the 1983 list there were thirty-two individuals or firms which were allowed to buy the raw ivory. Of these, three were European-owned ivory businesses: one Greek (now the largest consumer of ivory in the country) and two of British origin, one of which also has the largest wood carving industry in Malawi. In addition, there was one Indian who had a shop in Blantyre and one Kenyan, also located in Blantyre, the commercial capital of Malawi. Of the Malawian-controlled ivory businesses, about half were owned by Yaos and half by non-Yaos, and they generally worked at their own homes and did not have separate retail establishments in city centres.

Of these thirty-two registered ivory trophy dealers in Malawi, ten are in and around the new capital Lilongwe (the majority are located in the suburbs of Old Lilongwe), ten are in Blantyre (the largest city in the country), three in Limbe, two in Zomba and seven in other areas. The main reason that the majority of the trophy dealers are located in Lilongwe and Blantyre is that these are the places where most expatriates work and foreign tourists visit, and they of course are the main purchasers of carvings, accounting for at least ninety per cent of all the sales. The remainder is bought by Indians and Malawians, mostly in the form of jewellery. There has not been much of a demand by Malawians for ivory products, however, because they are more expensive than products made out of bone, wood and, more recently, plastic.

Most of the smaller ivory trophy dealers have their workshops in the suburbs of either Old Lilongwe or Blantyre. Usually, the workshop is part of their residential compound. The carvers sit around a large table or on a work bench, surrounded by many different hand tools: rasps, drills, files, hammers, chisels and awls. Except for one trophy dealer, B.J. Sadiki, no electrically powered tools are used by Malawi's carvers, although in Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Af-



Dr. Richard Bell, Senior Research Officer of Malawi's Department of National Parks and Wildlife, examines some tusks which are being offered for sale at public auction in Old Lilongwe, March 1984. (Esmond Martin)

rica almost all the carving is carried out using electrically driven band saws and dentist drills. The Malawians give three main reasons for keeping to hand tools. First, they say that they are used to them and do not want to change their techniques. Secondly, they claim that individuality is maintained by not producing identical items with electric machines. Thirdly, they admit that there would be economic constraints against importing machines and spare parts for them.

Some of the carvers work for a specific trophy dealer, while others work for several dealers, changing back and forth, according to who has a supply of raw ivory. None of the carvers (except those who are also trophy dealers) are registered by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife, and because so many carvers move around from one dealer to another, it is not possible to state exactly how many of them there are. In early 1984 there were an estimated 80 to 100 different carvers (all men), but the majority were not working full time in ivory. During the month of February, most of those who were residents of Old Lilongwe were not working in ivory at all, due to the shortage of the raw material. Some of these were unemployed; others were carving wood or had other part-time work.

The ivory carvers are not generally paid a salary, but are paid for what they produce. The maximum a carver can earn in a day is about \$21, although the average amount of money earned by an ivory carver is much lower. The Sadiki family, with considerable numbers of hired carvers in Blantyre, claims that their carvers earn from \$30 to \$40 a month and are provided with free accommodation and water. The largest single employer of ivory carvers in Malawi is John Demetriou, a Greek and the owner of Safari Curios, the largest curio shop selling ivory products in the entire country. He has fourteen carvers working for him at his factory at Mangochi, north of Blantyre, almost on the lake. When his carvers spend a full day working on ivory, they earn about \$5. At other times, when his ivory supplies have run out, they carve wood.

In addition to his skilled carvers, Mr. Demetriou employs two assistants for polishing ivory. They earn only \$1 1,50 as a basic wage, and \$23 maximum in a month, yet this is still higher than what an unskilled farm worker earns in the area. There are probably between fifty and seventy ivory assistants in all Malawi; they earn on average about \$15 per month. In contrast to carvers and polishers in other southern African countries, the Malawians earn relatively little, but it must be remembered that salaries in general are much lower in Malawi and that the cost of living is considerably less.

Malawi's ivory products fall into two categories: statues (of wild animals and human heads) and jewellery. The elephants, rhinos and other animals carved in ivory are distinctive in that they are rather primitive in design and each one is slightly different due to the fact that it is hand carved. Larger pieces of ivory are often carved into human heads, but these are not particularly unique. A craftsman will spend about two days sculpting a head; then he will hand it over to an assistant to finish the work, scraping, sandpapering, washing and finally polishing it. The Malawians, unlike any other southern Africans, use "Brasso" to polish ivory. This metal polish works very well and produces a bright finish.

Aside from bangles, most jewellery can be made from small pieces of ivory, including off-cuts and waste from sculptures. One of the few modern tools used in the Malawian carving industry is B.J. Sadiki's electric drill for making holes in beads. More ivory jewellery is sold in Malawi than ivory sculptures. Necklaces, brooches, bangles, rings, pendants and earrings are all very popular.



Malawian ivory carvers make good quality chess boards.
(Esmond Martin)

The average mark-up on an ivory piece after the cost of the material, labour and other expenses are included is about 60%. Since trophy dealers usually sell carved items directly from their own premises, there are few middlemen involved in the carving industry. The most expensive items are carved tusks which can sell for over \$2,000 each. Plain polished tusks are also in demand, and the most expensive one sold recently was a 22 kilo tusk for \$2,280. A carved head sells from \$60 to \$300, depending on its size, quality, and from whom it is purchased. Chess sets, with only the "white" pieces made out of ivory (since the craftsmen never dye or add colour to raw ivory), retail for \$55 for a crude set with wooden pieces for "black" and \$270 for a better finished set with malachite pieces for "black".

More profit is made by the trophy dealers selling ivory jewellery than from carvings, which is the case in most countries with ivory industries. However, the ivory jewellery made in Malawi is unattractive. Dealers in South Africa and Zimbabwe are especially disparag-

ing, and they criticize quite rightly the very rough workmanship of it. Some rings in Malawi retail for only between \$1,25 and \$3,80; obviously one cannot expect quality at these prices. It seems that often small pieces of ivory left over from larger carvings are made into jewellery for the express purpose of using up the ivory. Little imagination or creative skill is put into this work; consequently, it is not just the workmanship but also the designs which render Malawian ivory jewellery inferior. Neither are Malawi's ivory bangles comparable to those from other southern African countries, even though the more experienced and proficient carvers work on these, which must be carved from expensive tusks, weighing over ten kilos. A bangle can be bought for as little as \$6 on the street and thicker types in shops are usually no more than \$23.

On the other hand, Malawi's ivory carvers excel in their animal sculptures. Elephants are the most popular, followed by rhinos and hippos. These are usually more suggestive than realistic and have a certain pleasing quaintness. They are cheap (about \$2,50 for 2.5 centimetre hippo) and are often sold in sets of a dozen in slightly varying sizes and poses.

However, since a lot of Malawi's ivory items are not as sophisticated as those produced elsewhere and the workmanship on them is not generally of high quality, few pieces are exported wholesale. The Malawi trophy dealers also give other reasons for the lack of exports. They claim that all their items can be sold within the country, so why bother trying to sell them elsewhere? Besides, the trophy dealers, who are mostly Africans, simply do not have the contacts in South Africa, Europe, the United States or Japan to market their items in these major ivory consuming countries. Many of them do not even have outlets to curio shops in Malawi's towns, and potential buyers must somehow find their way to their workshops which are often on back roads several kilometres away from commercial centres.

A further impediment which limits exports to South Africa, one of the largest markets on the continent, is that Zimbabweans are dumping their carvings and jewellery at 50% discounts on South African wholesalers in order to circumvent the exchange controls of their own country (Martin, 1984). While some South African dealers may well turn a blind eye to the illegality of Zimbabweans who do this, they are more reluctant to deal with Malawian carvings. After all, they are in sympathy with Zimbabweans who are under economic constraints due to the policies of that government, and some of the Zimbabwean carvings are of high quality and different from what is produced locally in South Africa. Malawian carvings, conversely, are not up to South African standards, and what is even more serious is the fact that dealers in South Africa know that now much of the ivory used in Malawi comes from poached elephants. They do not want to encourage such sources which can only hurt the ivory business in the long run.

Within Malawi, sales of ivory carvings are increasing now that foreign tourism is once again on the upswing. In 1981 there were 24,776 tourists and in 1982 22,422 who came to Malawi for holiday purposes (**National Statistical Bulletin**). This has compensated for the loss of many European expatriate residents who have left the country since 1979 when their jobs were handed over to Malawians, It has also brought about another interesting development—the use of substitutes for elephant ivory.

Hippo teeth and cow bone are much cheaper, and items made from them can be sold at higher profits. The Department of National Parks and Wildlife sells hippo teeth for \$9,25 a kilo (in March, 1984) and 785 kilos have been sold by the Malawian government at the ivory sales between 1978 and 1983. Although carvers find it much more difficult to work than elephant ivory because the enamel has to be removed from it first and what remains is much harder and more brittle, elephant bridges, crocodile sculptures and pendants can be made from it which vaguely resemble real ivory carvings. Some dishonest dealers in Malawi sell various cow bone and hippo teeth items to unsuspecting tourists more easily than they could to expatriate resi-

dents, which is one reason why they are now doing this. However, there is another reason, completely different, which also explains why they are using bone and teeth. Theoretically, every tourist who buys an item made from ivory must obtain an export permit for it from the Department before leaving the country. There are notices displayed in all the curio shops and in the hotels explaining this. Some tourists do not want to be bothered with the bureaucracy this entails and so refrain from buying ivory. Street hawkers take advantage of their feeling, and tell them very glibly that permits are not required for carvings made from hippo teeth. In fact, many of their sales are conducted using this argument. However, it is not true, and actually anything made from hippo or elephant ivory in Malawi is supposed to have an export permit.

The tourists who go to Malawi and buy ivory jewellery and carvings are either unaware or do not care that some of the ivory now used comes from illegal sources. Although the average Malawian carver consumes only about a third the amount of ivory which a Zimbabwean uses in a year because he does not work full time in ivory and uses only hand tools, the approximately 90 carvers are consuming about 2,250 kilos a year, or 25 kilos per carver. The amount of raw ivory sold by the Department from 1980 to 1983 dropped by over 50%, but during that time the ivory industry did not significantly decline, according to evidence supplied by the ivory trophy dealers themselves. It is probably correct to say that from 1981 to 1983 about twice as much ivory was bought illegally than what was purchased from government sales. Extensive interviews with traders and evidence from poaching incidents, both inside and outside Malawi, indicate that it is likely that some 1,500 kilos of illicit ivory annually supplemented the industry's yearly average of 668 kilos from the Department during these years.

The raw ivory officially offered for sale to the trophy dealers in Malawi comes from elephants killed on control, elephants which die from natural causes and from tusks government officials have confiscated. Between 1977 and 1982, 299 elephants were shot for crop raiding and other related causes; over half of these elephants were killed in Central Region (Clarke, 1983), especially just outside Kasungu National Park where elephants are particularly prone to go during the rainy season in search of maize on small farms. As for the ivory collected by the Department from elephants which die either naturally or from poachers' bullets, most of this comes from within the national parks and game reserves. There are approximately 2,350 elephants in Malawi; about 800 inhabit Kasungu National Park, 400 the Nkhotakota Game Reserve, 300 the Vwaza Game Reserve, 300 the Liwonde National Park; only about 550 are elsewhere.

Over the past decade there has been a lot of ivory moved into Malawi from the neighbouring countries of Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania. With the partial collapse of the economies of these countries resulting in shortages of food and essential consumer items, Zambians, Tanzanians and Mozambiqueans have moved almost anything of value outside their boundaries in order to exchange it for necessities they cannot buy at home. There was an annual per capita negative growth rate of .9 of one per cent in the economy of Zambia from 1970 to 1978 and an appalling minus 5.5 per cent in Mozambique during this same period (1980 World Bank Atlas). Consequently, it is hardly surprising that Malawi, with its annual growth rate of 3.1 per cent per capita, is an attractive market for ivory smugglers who can sell their tusks there at reasonable prices and pick and choose from imported and locally produced consumer items available in the shops.

The amount of Tanzanian ivory entering Malawi now is considerably less than it was a couple of years ago, due to the convenience of "the Burundi Connection" for Tanzanian smugglers, but it is noteworthy and so is that which comes in from Mozambique, mainly via Nsanje and Dedza. However, by far the largest proportion of Malawi's illegal ivory imports are presently of Zambian origin. Some 140 kilometres from Malawi's western boundary is one of the largest populations of elephants in the world, in the Luangwa Valley. There are no reliable figures on

how many elephants are poached each year, yet a comparison between a census of elephants made by Caughley in 1973 and a somewhat similar census carried out by Douglas-Hamilton in 1979 indicates a forty per cent decline in the Luangwa Valley's elephant population in that almost seven-year period. Serious commercial poaching started there around 1974, and it continues today. On the eastern side of the valley, poachers (who are mostly Zambians) sell ivory to Malawians for about \$9 a kilo; they in turn transport it by foot and vehicle out of the valley into Malawi (personal communication with Phil Berry, former Warden of the Save the Rhino Trust Luangwa Anti-poaching Unit).

Elephant poaching in Malawi became much more serious in 1977, partly due to the sharp increase in the international price for raw ivory. Very quickly, the number of animals known to have been illicitly killed in Kasungu National Park jumped from sixteen in 1977 to 55 in 1981 (Bell, 1984). Most of the poachers in Kasungu were Malawians using muzzle-loading guns. After killing an elephant for its ivory, they usually removed and dried the meat on the spot. Then they carried it to the villages for local consumption and sale. As in most rural parts of Africa, there is a high demand for meat in Malawi,

The villagers around Kasungu National Park sold the ivory to middlemen for between \$4 and \$8 a kilo; they offered it to trophy dealers in Blantyre and Lilongwe for between \$11 and \$19 a kilo. These middlemen were neither as wealthy nor as sophisticated as their East African counterparts, and were more susceptible to prosecution.

Once strong leadership and discipline were re-introduced to Kasungu Park, matters changed. When Matthew Matemba was appointed the Warden of Kasungu in 1981, he learned that there were about 250 people living around the park, who were involved with the illicit killing of elephants. Of these, between twenty and thirty were habitual offenders. Gradually, he collected information on them and also began confiscating illegal firearms in villages surrounding the park. While he was only able to pick up six firearms in 1981, the following year he collected forty-eight (Bell, 1984), and also was able to arrest several people suspected of having poached elephants. He methodically interrogated these men, obtaining from them names of additional suspects. Matthew Matemba also cultivated good relations with his own staff by holding regular meetings with them and encouraging their anti-poaching efforts. He increased their foot patrols which were more effective than vehicle or aircraft surveillance in the thick vegetation that covers most of Kasungu, and by getting his men to walk around the park more and to spend nights in secluded areas, the amount of elephant poaching decreased remarkably. In 1983 only seven elephants were illegally killed (Bell, 1984). Wisely, Matthew Matemba also made a strong appeal to the Malawi Congress Party officials in the area, urging them to hold



Ivory carvers in Malawi often work together, seated around wooden tables in the sunlight, using hand tools. (Esmond Martin)

public meetings to condemn poaching, arguing that the wildlife of the country was an invaluable heritage and should be strongly protected.

Although poaching is not now a serious problem in Kasungu, demand for ivory from illicit sources has not decreased, and it appears that perhaps partially on account of Matthew Matemba's success in Kasungu, the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve has now become the centre for elephant poaching in Malawi. About 25 were illegally killed there in 1983 (Bell, personal communication). Another area where some elephants were illegally taken in 1983 was Nkhotakota Game Reserve, but the overall picture over the past year or so is that poaching is now on the wane; the Department believes it now has better control of the situation.

Some, but not the majority, of the officers of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife would like to see the country's ivory carving industry stopped entirely. They seem to feel that their efforts to protect elephants would be easier and more successful if no ivory carvings were made in Malawi. However, banning the industry might well cause more problems rather than solving those that presently exist.

For more than half a century ivory carving has been a livelihood for Malawians. It is they, not foreigners, who run and operate most of the ivory businesses. In so doing, their work is more truly African than that of South Africa, Botswana or Zimbabwe, giving it an added appeal to tourists. Moreover, the government earns a substantial amount of hard currency from the sale of ivory items to tourists. If the government closed down the industry, not only would it lose this revenue, it would be directly responsible for depriving several hundred people of employment, for it is not only the carvers who make money from ivory, it is also their assistants, the polishers, the salesmen in curio shops and others who are involved in the ivory trade.

It cannot be said that the ivory industry is reducing the elephant population of Malawi, for that has remained more or less stable since 1977, and it is capable of producing a sustained yield of ivory for the carvers. The carvers rightly believe that ivory is a renewable resource; they would not accept being prohibited access to it, and would probably continue to make ivory items anyway, thereby driving the industry underground and complicating the means of monitoring and controlling it.

Therefore, instead of contemplating banning the making of ivory jewellery and carvings, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife should take a realistic view of the present situation, study the abuses and rectify them. One of the most important things the Department could do to remove from trophy dealers the temptation of buying illegal ivory is to hold ivory sales more often. As it is now, according to some trophy dealers, few potential buyers know until a week or so beforehand when an ivory sale is going to take place, and it may be months between sales. Trophy dealers are caught unprepared and more often than not they are without the necessary capital at the time. Therefore, they claim that they have little alternative other than buying on the black market when they want to replenish their supplies.

Although every tusk sold by the Department is registered with a number and no raw ivory can legitimately be acquired except from the Department's sales, it is easy for dealers to declare that their carvings are made from legal tusks when they are not. All a dealer has to do when he sells an ivory item to a tourist who wishes to obtain an export permit for it is to state on a receipt the number of any tusk he has recently bought from the Department as being the source of raw ivory for it. The Department almost automatically then issues the export permit; there is usually no check on how many items have reportedly already been made and exported from a particular tusk, and because of this practice the Department itself is inadvertently legalizing many items from poached ivory. However, in the past few months, according to the Director of the Department, there has been more checking and some dealers have actually had their ivory pieces confiscated.

The making of ivory items from illegally obtained tusks would also be discouraged by requiring all ivory carvers to register their names

and addresses with the Department. Their premises could then be inspected from time to time, as in Zimbabwe, and tusks in their possession which have not been bought from the Department could thereby be confiscated. Furthermore, the carvers should be required to keep records listing each item they have made from a tusk.

The Department, with the assistance of the police, should enforce the law prohibiting all street hawkers from selling ivory items. It is well known that their sources are, for the most part, illegal. The presence of the hawkers is a constant irritant to the legitimate ivory trophy dealers who point out that since hawkers have no overheads, the prices for their ivory items are cheaper than those in the shops and attract tourists. They rightly believe that most tourists who buy ivory in the streets are not about to bother with obtaining an export permit for it. Moreover, even the most conscientious of the visitors to Malawi is going to wonder why there is so much fuss about the necessity of export permits when ivory can be openly sold in the streets in front of shopping centres by the least reputable type of salesman.

The need for stricter controls on the ivory carving industry is not however, due to lack of proper management of elephant populations by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife now. Indeed, Malawi's elephants are far better conserved than in most countries of Africa, thanks to constructive measures taken, especially during the

Table I. Raw Elephant Ivory Sales by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife to Malawian Trophy Dealers

Date	Kilos	Value in U.S.\$	Average price per kilo	Average tusk weight
1973 December	283	n/a	n/a	n/a
1974 April	337	n/a	n/a	n/a
August	439	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total:	776	n/a	n/a	n/a
1975 April	383	n/a	n/a	n/a
July	392	n/a	n/a	n/a
September	469	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total:	1 244	n/a	n/a	n/a
1976 February	426	n/a	n/a	n/a
June	647	n/a	n/a	n/a
September	568	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total:	1 641	n/a	n/a	n/a
1977 February	633	n/a	n/a	n/a
March	225	n/a	n/a	n/a
September	500	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total:	1 358			
1978 February	605	20 661	34.15	10.25
September	311	19 585	62.97	8.41
Total:	916	40 246	Average: 43.94	9.54
1979 February	227	16 728	60.39	5.77
April	244	15 295	62.68	10.61
August	209	12 713	60.83	n/a
December	205	11 426	55.74	6.83
Total:	935	56 162	Average: 60.07	7.19
1980 February	252	12 694	50.37	4.20
April	301	16 437	54.61	7.72
September	387	18 521	47.86	7.17
November	278	12 922	46.48	6.32
Total:	1 218	60 574	Average: 49.73	6.18
1981 January	243	10 230	42.10	6.75
April	179	9 119	50.94	5.767
June	154	8 318	54.01	4.81
September	161	8 810	54.72	5.03
November	58	3 419	58.95	4.83
December	197	6 006	30.49	
n/a Total:	992	45 902	Average: 46.27	5.56
1982 February	67	3 107	46.37	3.72
July	129	6 054	46.93	5.38
September	120	5 180	43.17	6.00
November	144	6 156	42.75	4.00
December	56	2 324	41.50	3.11
Total:	516	22 821	Average: 44.23	4.45
1983 January	79	3 904	49.42	3.29
June	43	1 808	42.05	1.79
October	375	17 777	47.41	7.81
Total:	497	23 489	Average: 47.26	5.18

Source: unpublished reports from the Department of National Parks and Wildlife, Malawi.

past two years. Nevertheless, in the neighbouring countries where economic constraints are grave, the temptation to poach is rife and as long as there is an easy means of disposing illegal ivory onto Malawi's market, people will continue to do so. There is the possibility, also, that because money can be earned this way, Malawians may in turn sometime follow suit more readily. It would not entail much expenditure of funds nor manpower to close the loop-holes that permit the forementioned irregularities in Malawi's ivory trade. If the Department were to do this, it would have a positive effect on elephant conservation.

Table II. Hippo Teeth Sold at Regular Ivory Sales by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife

Date	Weight in kilos	Value in U.S.\$
1978 February	66	852
September	311	3 724
Total:	377	4 576
1979 February	27	514
April	73	1 359
August	20	356
December	30	559
Total:	150	2 788
1980 February	75	1 218
April	41	693
September	5	43
November	2	12
Total:	123	1 966
1981 January	23	205
April	9	92
June	14	132
September	4	48
November	5	45
December	8	72
Total:	63	594
1982 February	22	193
July	10	110
November	2	21
Total:	34	324
1983 January	12	131
June	18	186
October	8	81
Total:	38	398

Source: Unpublished reports from the Department of National Parks and wildlife, Malawi.

Table III. Elephants Killed in Malawi on Official Control

Year	Northern Region	Central Region	Southern Region	Total
1977	16	31	8	55
1978	15	22	31	68
1979	9	16	7	32
1980	8	31	10	49
1981	5	23	12	40
1982	4	31	20	55

Source: John E. Clarke, **Principal Master Plan for National Parks and Wildlife Management**, Vol. I, Malawi Government, Department of National Parks and Wildlife, Lilongwe, September 1983.

Table IV. Estimated Numbers of Elephants in Malawi in 1984

Location	Estimated Numbers
Kasungu National Park	800
Nkhotakota Game Reserve	400
Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve	300
Liwonde National Park	300
Majete Game Reserve	200
Nyika National Park	100
Mangochi-Namizimu Forest	100
Phirilongwe	100
Thuma Forest	50
Total:	2 350

Source: Richard Bell, personal communication.

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