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Defining the True Hunter: Big Game Hunting, Moral Distinction, and Virtuosity in French Colonial Indochina

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In the opening line of *Note sur le Tir à Balle sur le Grand et Moyen Gibier*, renowned French hunter Fernand Millet wrote, "The true hunter (*vrai chasseur*) is a conservator." In the paragraphs that followed, Millet elaborated on other attributes of the true hunter, such as respecting female and young animals, infallibly pursuing mortally wounded animals, superior marksmanship, and the endurance, calm, decisiveness, and *sang froid* needed to complete a successful kill. For Millet, the true hunter's hunt was difficult, and he criticized those who had "a false conception of the art of big game hunting" as something that furnished easy success (quoted in Tiran 1929: 21). Millet's assertions were significant for two reasons. First, looked at comparatively, they articulated a distinctive sport hunting ethic for other hunters to follow, and second, they staked a set of moral claims that distinguished "true hunters" from those he referred to as "the mass of rifle carriers" (ibid.).

This article's initial purpose is to analyze the "true hunter" sport hunting ethic in colonial Indochina through the examination of texts written about big game hunting in the region. Focusing primarily on French language texts published between 1910 and 1950 by authors who were highly experienced hunters, I will describe the ethic in detail while also contextualizing it with reference to other sport hunting ethics. My closest focus will be on a shared feature of the texts: descriptions of proper and improper ways to hunt and especially kill animals. Within these texts is a hunting ethic in which the hunter's moral identity and worth as a true hunter were contingent upon the manner of hunting and killing the prey. In this discourse, meeting all of these requirements implied that the hunter was behaving in a "sporting" (*sportif*) manner, which was the most important trope for expressing the ideal moral

self. As I will show, the practical attainment of "true hunter" status entailed not simply engaging in hunting as an activity, but instead successfully completing a very difficult and specific type of restrained and almost ritualized killing.

My second purpose is to engage a paradox associated with these texts, their authors, and the ethic. Many of these hunters often criticized the "unnecessary slaughter" of others, yet themselves killed staggering numbers of animals. So many, in fact, that Millet's claim that a "true hunter" was a conservator almost seems nonsensical. Honoré Odérra, referred to as the "king of the hunt in Cochinchina," had apparently killed twenty-five rhinos (Roussel 1913: 6) and by 1925 a record 125 elephants (Bourdeneuve 1925: 32). Millet killed some seventy elephants (Millet 1930: 282), Défosse one hundred tigers and Millet over one hundred, and H. de Monestrol shot around sixty elephants (Demariaux 1949: 129, 133). Perhaps most extraordinary was Omer Sarraut. The son of the former Governor General of Indochina Albert Sarraut, in twenty-five years he killed approximately four hundred large bovids, 150 tigers, one hundred elephants, thirty panthers, twenty bears, and many wild boar and cervids (*Grandes Chasses Coloniales* 2009: 31). Within these texts, such tallies are not portrayed as paradoxical, and the scale of the killing was also visible in photographs that displayed deceased prey on hunting grounds or their processed trophies in domestic settings, which raises the question of why the paradox was ignored. Understanding this, I will argue, requires situating the "true hunters" within the social context of colonial Indochina. These men were not the only hunters in the region. Members of the indigenous groups that supported their hunts and other Europeans also hunted. We will see that, while adherence to the true hunter ethic was an important mechanism for asserting moral superiority over these two populations, the greatest distinction derived from both adherence to the ethic and the virtuosity demonstrated in the hunt. It is this latter virtuosity, I will contend, that dissolved the paradox and legitimized their killing.

THE BACKGROUND TO BIG GAME HUNTING IN COLONIAL INDOCHINA

Sport hunting was a leisure pursuit of French colonists from the earliest decades of colonial rule. Indochina provided a variety of hunting opportunities for small and medium game, but big game hunting was the most celebrated. This latter category included wild buffalo, wild oxen, banteng, kouprey, rhinoceros, leopards, panthers, and bears. The most written about and desirable big game animals, which fit Thomas T. Allsen's category of "heroic game" (2006: 88), were gaur, elephant, and tiger. In the texts, victories over these animals were "widely celebrated and carefully advertised" (ibid.).

Game animals were present throughout Indochina, but the premier locations for big game hunting were the highland areas of northern Cochinchina and southern Annam to the northeast of Saigon. Noteworthy

within these were the Lang Bian plateau, which included the colonial hill city of Dalat, and the area around Djiring (contemporary Di Lình). Other excellent hunting grounds were located in the areas around Phan Rang in Ninh Thuận province, Phan Thiết in Binh Thuận, and places in Haut Donai (Millet 1930: 18). One final region of high repute was the Lagna Valley in eastern Binh Thuận, which William Bazé referred to as "the country of elephants" (1950: 42).

The widespread availability and quality of game informed the opinion of Jean Bourdeneuve and others that Indochina was "a hunter's paradise" (1925: vi). The first tourist hunters entered the high plateaus of Annam in 1911 (Millet 1916: 8). That same year, France's Ministry of Colonies passed an order regulating hunting in its colonies, intended to promote the "conservation and perpetuation of interesting species" and enable continued hunting (Tiran 1929: 105). Among these early hunters, while some could be "sporting," others could be "killers" (*tueurs*), which had led to the "irrational destruction of game" and spurred the development of hunting regulations (Millet 1916: 3). The regulatory system that emerged, and which would undergo modifications through the 1930s, established the basic parameters of permissible hunting through the issuance of permits, the establishment of hunting reserves and bag limits, and prohibitions against killing females of certain species. According to the June 1936 regulations for Indochina, payment of a $40 license fee allowed a hunter to take two male elephants, one rhinoceros, five gaur, six banteng, and four wild buffalos. No limits were set on other animals (Official Bureau 1937: 32). One reason for the absence of limits upon tigers was that, particularly after hunting had reduced deer populations, tigers were entering more human settlements and, as estimated by Bourdeneuve, killing approximately two hundred people from the indigenous population annually (1925: 19; see also Fraisse 2008: 85). This led to a common scene in a number of narratives in which a hunter is asked by a local community to kill a tiger that was preying upon its people or livestock (see De Buretel de Chassey 1998: 9; Condominas 1988: 113).

Organized hunting in Indochina took three primary forms. At the most casual level, hunters living in major cities such as Saigon or Hanoi hunted on short-term expeditions in easily accessible areas. These hunts tended to focus on smaller game and, from the perspective of many of the professional hunters, were at times amateurish, excessively deadly, and even unethical. Given their frequent close proximity to human settlements, tigers were often opportunistically killed on such hunts or by people who simply had a gun in their car (Fraisse 2008: 84). A second, comparatively rarer type of hunting was done by colonial men living in Indochina's remote, highland regions, many of whom were officials in the colonial administration or military. Millet, for example, was a member of the Forestry Service and by the end of the 1920s had served over two decades as a General Forest Guard (*Garde Général des Fôréts*) in Annam (Tiran 1929: 20). In later decades, a small

number of professional hunters took up residence in the hunting regions where they hunted privately and served as guides. The final primary form of organized hunting was the long-term expedition into remote areas. Pierre Bouvard and Millet wrote that, by 1922, private hunting agencies had yet to be founded, but up to that point the colonial government had arranged hunting trips with official guides, with the hunter responsible for provisioning the trip (1922: 63).[1] By that decade's end, the Indochina Tourism Bureau had started promoting big game hunting as a tourist activity (see Tiran 1929). This effort intensified in the 1930s (see Official Bureau 1937; Sarraut 1939) and private hunting operations were established, such as Saigon's Didier and Defosse [*sic*] Safari Service (see Official Bureau 1937). This type of hunting fit the classic image of big game hunting in colonized lands, when a professional European guide led small groups of men, who were occasionally accompanied by women (see De Buretel de Chassey 1998; Fraise 2008), on lengthy hunts in remote areas.

Colonial sport hunting represented a significant break with the types of hunting previously practiced by the indigenous populations in the hunting regions.[2] Its main form, most notable at higher elevations, was subsistence hunting by highland minority groups. Hunter authors usually referred to members of these groups as *Moïs*, a strongly pejorative loan word from Vietnamese. These highland groups were culturally and linguistically distinct from the lowland Vietnamese and their economic systems were quite different since many practiced slash-and-burn cultivation, engaged in animal husbandry only minimally, and relied on hunting as a source of dietary protein. Gerald Cannon Hickey, who comprehensively surveyed the ethnographic record for the highland groups in the pre-1954 period, reported that members hunted with crossbows, spears, sabers, and knives, though this was supplemented with traps, snares, and poisons, sometimes applied to arrows, to kill or stun animals (1982: 444–45). The poisons were important for killing larger game, such as tigers (ibid.: 62, 445). They also traded game meats to lowlanders, though Hickey does not tell us which animals' flesh was involved (ibid.: 443). Hunting was essential to the survival of these groups.

[1] Bouvard and Millet provide an excellent description of managing the logistics of an extended hunt originating in Dalat (1922: 63-75).

[2] Unlike royal hunting traditions practiced in other parts of Southeast and South Asia, there is little evidence that hunting was in the nineteenth- or twentieth-century Vietnam an accepted public mechanism for the assertion of royal status and privilege by the male elite. There are no records of hunting preserves or organized hunts there (cf., Allsen 2006; Trautmann 2017). In the nineteenth century, the Tự Đức Emperor had in fact allowed the stable of war and ceremonial elephants (*éléphanterie*) in the capital of Hue to dwindle (Bazé 1950: 125). Still, Vietnam's last emperor, Bảo Đại, was an avid and apparently quite skilled hunter. According to his hunting companion Bazé, he hunted often and tried to reestablish the *éléphanterie*, notably through the capture of wild elephants (ibid.: 125, 138; see also Hickey 1982: 425). It is unclear whether he simply regarded this as a pleasing hobby or it was a part of his conception of statecraft.

The introduction of colonial sport hunting transformed, and in some cases inverted, the relationship between these highland groups and prey animals. While before they had directly hunted animals, in hunting parties they were given other roles, most notably as porters. Hunting parties generally took with them their supplies, such as tents, food, and alcohol, and indigenous porters were usually employed to transport the gear and trophies. One important legal dimension of colonial hunting in Indochina was that members of the indigenous population were technically prohibited from carrying firearms, though they could carry their traditional weapons (Relton 1939: 160; Roussel 1913: 107). Their roles in the hunts were therefore limited, though in some cases they also served as trackers, bush beaters, or perhaps illegally, arms bearers (*Grandes Chasses Coloniales* 2009: 125). In a sense, their role in these hunts had been transformed from hunter to those who facilitated colonial hunters in finding and killing their prey. Nonetheless, a number of the colonial hunters expressed admiration for their indigenous counterparts. Doctor Sauvel had high praise for his Cambodian tracker, "the brave, the magnificent" Soi (ibid.: 126), while Bazé recalled that one of his trackers was a "veritable magician" at following complex tracks (1950: 96). Bazé concluded of the trackers with whom he hunted, "I nevertheless doubt that a European could attain this degree of perfection, even if he lived exclusively with the *Moi*" (ibid.: 94). Colonial hunters hunted for trophies rather than subsistence, but they were expected to give the meat of the slain animals to their indigenous porters (Bouvard and Millet 1922: 66) or to people in nearby villages (Bazé 1950: 224; De Buretel de Chassey 1998: 10). Therefore, although their hunting role had been supplanted, indigenous participants sometimes gained the nutritional benefits of the meat, of which there could be significant quantities.

SPORT HUNTING, KILLING ANIMALS, AND MORAL DISTINCTION

An examination of the biographical information that exists on the hunter-authors, such as there is, reveals few shared characteristics beyond their love of big game hunting. There were government officials (Bourdeneuve and Millet), military men (de Buretel de Chassey and Condominas, later a government official), doctors (Fraisse, also an Army officer, and Sauvel), diplomats (Suzor), aristocrats (de Monestral, Prince Murat, Sauvaire, and the Duke of Montpensier [see Hickey 1982: 288]), and the son of the former Governor General of Indochina (Sarraut). There is almost no information on other notable figures such as Francois Défosse, Marius Didier, and Tiran, apart from their engagement with hunting and Didier and Défosse's hunting operation. One interesting cultural affinity that many hunters shared was with St. Hubert, the patron saint of hunting. St. Hubert was admired by hunters in France and allegiance to him created something akin to a fraternity among hunters. In their texts they wrote of, "my compatriots, the

fervent disciples of St. Hubert" (Roussel 1913: 6) and the "fervent disciples of St. Hubert like me" (Bazé 1950: 9). Millet dedicated his 1930 book to "my colleagues of St. Hubert." Cheminaud remarked on the orthodoxy of "the colleagues of St. Hubert d'Occident" (1939: 98) and Dr. Veille even gave thanks to "the Indochinese St. Hubert for having so often placed the *seigneur* tiger on my path" (*Grandes Chasses Coloniales* 2009: 181). Although not explicitly elaborated, St. Hubert was an important part of their hunting ethic.

The colonial hunters' invocations of discipleship with St. Hubert point to the important fact that they regarded themselves as members of a distinct social and ethical community. They were not, to use H. De Monestrol's phrasing, "vague disciples of St. Hubert" (1931: 31), but were instead "fervent" in their commitment to their community and its values. Allsen observed, "Hunting defined people in varying ways" (2006: 119), and scholarship on sport hunting has demonstrated the remarkable number of ways that hunting has been symbolically linked to distinct social statuses, identities, and communities. This has taken numerous forms. In several instances, elite status has been linked to hunting. Allsen demonstrated this in impressive detail regarding royal hunting in Eurasia (see ibid.) and it was evident also in Dutch, British, and French history when aristocratic elites forbade commoners from hunting and designated it an exclusive elite privilege (see Dahles 1993; McCay 1987; and Salvadori 1996). Tiger hunting in India, by some Mughal emperors and later British imperialists, was similarly linked to elite status and was an important mechanism for the reproduction of that status, which was also conversely historically reproduced through the ban on elephant hunting in India (see Sramek 2006; Trautmann 2015). Scholars have argued that hunting was more broadly a symbolic marker of imperial domination in Great Britain's colonies (e.g., Cartmill 1993: 136; Hussain 2010: 120; Mangan and McKenzie 2013). National identities have engaged hunting as well, as in Canada and the United States (see Dunk 2002; Herman 2001), while national identities can be still further refined through specific practices of hunting and the prey hunted. In North America, hunting was and remains a critical part of rural (Boglioli 2009) and working-class identities (Fine 2000). In the American south, racial identities were expressed through the African American preference for hunting rabbits and raccoons as opposed to the white preference for deer and birds (Marks 1991: 82), while in Holland "sportsmen" hunters eschewed the hunting of pests, which they left to farmers (Dahles 1993: 176). In these instances, as Stuart A. Marks shrewdly observed, "Each species of game pursued is a marker, a visible bit of social differentiation" (1991: 4). The most deeply researched association between hunting and identity has focused on masculinity. This literature is too vast to summarize here, save to say that in numerous instances hunting can and has played a significant role in the reproduction of diverse

masculine identities (see *inter alia* Anahita and Mix 2006; Boglioli 2009; Brightman 1996; Dahles 1993; Dunk 2002; Fine 2000; Herman 2001; Hussain 2010; Littlefield 2006; Mangan and McKenzie 2013; Marks 1991; McKenzie 2000; 2007; Smalley 2005; Sramek 2006; and Stedman and Heberlein 2001).

Big game hunting in colonial Indochina was almost exclusively a male activity and the ethical categories hunters articulated—the true hunter (*vrai chasseur*) or the very rarely used "sportsman" (*sportsman*)—linguistically were also masculine. Nevertheless, and especially in comparison to the centrality of hunting and masculinity in Britain's colonial territories (see Hussain 2010; Mangan and McKenzie 2013; McKenzie 2000; Sramek 2006), the connection between hunting and masculinity was seldom made explicit. Paul Suzor's assertion that big game hunting was the best of all sports and that it developed all of the moral and physical qualities that are "the base of the virile character" (Suzor 1937: 8) was notable for its rarity. In terms of self-identification, it was the term "true hunter" that was employed and articulated the most. When authors did so, however, they were also conveying what for them were the fundamental ethical features of their hunting. This hunting ethic therefore provides a fruitful frame for comparison with other hunting traditions.

The Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset famously wrote, "Hunting, like every human activity, has an ethic that distinguishes virtues from vices" (1972: 88). His statement provides a useful starting point for contextualizing the concept of the true hunter. The central pillars of his ethic were that the animal needed to have a chance to survive (ibid.: 49) and that the hunter must "keep fit, face extreme fatigues, accept danger" (ibid.: 31). Perhaps most importantly, the hunter had to ensure that the relationship between prey and hunter was not "excessively unequal" (ibid.: 45). Otherwise, the activity was no longer hunting but "pure killing and destruction" (ibid.). Garry Marvin captured the deeper idea behind Ortega y Gasset's thought when he highlighted that, from the latter's perspective, the animal's "death must be won from the animal rather than simply imposed upon it. The wild animal must be able to escape from desires and decisions of the hunter who seeks to kill it; it must be able to refuse to give up or surrender its life" (Marvin 2006: 25).

When comparing sport hunting ethics, several commonalities become apparent. First, similar to the true hunter case, specific names are often employed for the ethic. In American, British, and European hunting traditions, the ethic is usually described in terms of "sportsmanship," of being a "sportsman" or "sporting" (Boglioli 2009: 67; Herman 2001: 153; Hussain 2010: 114; McKenzie 2000: 73). Although the precise requirements of these ethics have varied, one dominant idea that has animated all these traditions, in a manner reminiscent of Ortega y Gasset, was fairness. This

was evident in the "fair" hunt (Hussain 2010: 117ff.) or "fair play" (McKenzie 2000: 73) in hunting in colonial India; giving prey a "'fair chance'" in Alaska (Anahita and Mix 2006: 344) or a "fair shake" in the American South (Marks 1991: 78); the "concern for fairness" in Vermont (Boglioli 2009: 67); or, as perhaps most fully articulated, the notion of "fair chase" employed in American hunting. Norman Posewitz captured the fundamental core of fair chase when he stated that it "addresses the balance between the hunter and the hunted. It is a balance that allows hunters to occasionally succeed while animals generally avoid being taken" (2002: 57). Central to this, therefore, was diminishing the hunter's advantages over the prey (ibid.: 57–62). As in colonial India, a fair hunt was one in which there was a "fair chance" for "the prey to escape" (Hussain 2010: 117).

The championing of fairness led to either criticisms or prohibitions of certain types of hunts. Historically, the *battue*, in which drivers are employed to force game toward the hunter, was perceived negatively by some hunters. Some British hunters in colonial India came to perceive the *battue* as unfair and "not something that 'real' sportsmen would engage in" (ibid.: 114). The use of bait to attract animals, such as bears or others, could be considered either questionable or unacceptable (Dunk 2002: 37; Littlefield 2006: 102). Still other types of hunts were regarded as objectionable, such as hunting from the air (Anahita and Mix 2006: 337; Nadasdy 2011: 145); hunting in "commercial killing areas" or from vehicles (Posewitz 2002: 59–61); shooting birds on the ground instead of in flight (Marks 1991: 46); spotlighting deer (Littlefield 2006: 72); hunting at night (Hell 1989: 98); or taking animals solely for the purpose of display (Littlefield 2006: 102).

Being a sportsman imposed additional ethical demands, many of which were often interlinked. Prominent among these was the common prohibition against shooting females (Dunk 2002: 37; Hell 1989: 54; Marks 1991: 138).[3] In some hunting traditions, this led to a celebration of male animals as the worthiest adversaries (Dahles 1993: 177; Hell 1989: 113; Hussain 2010: 117; Littlefield 2006: 141; Marks 1991: 151), while it also required that hunters demonstrate the necessary patience and restraint to properly identify an animal (Boglioli 2009: 67).

Restraint could be valorized in other ways, such as limiting the number of animals killed (Hell 1989: 161; Herman 2001: 153; McKenzie 2000: 73), but a moment when restraint was most necessary was deciding when to shoot. Some hunting traditions condemned the needless suffering of prey (Herman 2001: 153; Littlefield 2006: 91), a point memorably portrayed by Ernest Hemingway in *Green Hills of Africa* when, in haste, he gut-shot a sable bull.

[3] The hunting of immature animals, such as fawns, can similarly be prohibited (Marks 1991: 138).

The bull escaped and he "felt a son of a bitch to have hit him and not killed him." Later, he "felt rotten sick" over the animal since he knew that intense suffering awaited it (2004[1935]: 185). In order to minimize suffering, therefore, hunters were required to first possess the marksmanship to achieve a lethal shot and then to only shoot when there was a high probability of one. In Posewitz's words, "The ethical hunter will constantly work toward the ideal of making all shots on target and instantly fatal" (2002: 35). Gary Wolfe emphasized the inverse when he stated, "Deciding when not to shoot is the ultimate test of ethical hunter behavior" (1996: 227).

In different hunting traditions, the hunter's ethical obligations did not end with the shot. If the animal was only wounded, hunters were obligated to track it until it could be killed (Boglioli 2009: 69; Hell 1989: 51; Littlefield 2006: 93; McKenzie 2000: 86). In some cases, the hunter was expected to consume the meat (Boglioli 2009: 74; Littlefield 2006: 82). And in eastern France, hunters were expected to gut their kills as a symbol of respect for their prey (Hell 1989: 84). Respect for the prey could also be demonstrated in post-mortem rituals, such as the recitation of prayers over the body in the United States (Boglioli 2009: 75), or the placement of a slain deer on a bed of branches with fir branches placed on its body in France (Hansen-Catta 2007: 393).[4]

The previous examples demonstrate that any discussion of hunting ethics cannot be comprehensive since, the many commonalities aside, there are points of variation between traditions. The broader point to recognize, however, is that, as Ortega y Gasset argued, in each tradition there is an ethic and that ethic creates the possibility for the hunter to succeed or fail at any stage of the hunting process. Achievement of the virtuous category of true hunter or sportsman was therefore contingent, and every hunt presented moments in which the hunter needed to consciously decide whether to achieve or reject the ethic. To more deeply appreciate the concept of the true hunter, we must understand the contexts of these hunts and the prey they hunted.

CHALLENGING ADVERSARIES: THE HUNTING ENVIRONMENT AND HEROIC GAME

As noted in the introduction, genuine big game hunting was by definition difficult, and the successful conquest of these difficulties was an important contextual factor in defining the true hunter. These difficulties included two primary factors: the physical environment and the nature of the prey,

[4] Although not specifically sport hunting, some of the most complicated and interesting examples of demonstrating respect for prey are found in First Nations communities in Canada. They include such activities as, "the observance of food taboos, ritual feasts, and prescribed measures for disposing of animal remains, as well as injunctions against overhunting and talking badly about, or playing with, animals" (Nadasdy 2011: 142).

especially the "heroic game" mentioned earlier—gaur, elephant, and tiger. To begin with the environment, the hunting grounds of Indochina were described as "very insalubrious for the European" (Millet 1916: 1). Hunters faced the threat of dysentery (ibid.), malaria (Chochod 1925: 15; Demariaux 1949: 18), and other diseases (see Demariaux 1949: 18). Other dangers came from insects, leeches, scorpions, snakes, and other reptiles (ibid.: 17). Indochina's heat and humidity also took a physical toll on hunters, especially those who hunted on foot (Chochod 1925: 11). To overcome these challenges, the successful hunter had to "possess iron health" and "be animated with a passion bordering on delirium" (Millet 1930: ii).

The desirability and appeal of the hunt were increased by the characteristics of the prey and the dangers they presented. Sport hunting traditions often exhibit a hierarchy of prey animals and this hierarchy, in turn, is often defined by the attributes ascribed to those animals. In addition to the dangerous "man eating" tigers of colonial India, British hunters celebrated the difficult to hunt ibex, which one author described as a "gentleman in his manners and customs" (Hussain 2010: 117). Dutch hunters preferred animals with strength, keen perception, intelligence, unpredictability, and courage, but most significant was "fighting spirit," a trait that applied to male animals with antlers or tusks and was best exemplified in wild boar (Dahles 1993: 177). Deer hunters in such different traditions as the American South and eastern France preferred hunting bucks. In the Southern States, hunting bucks was more appealing because they possessed "uncanny intelligence" (Littlefield 2006: 141) and were "clever adversaries" (Marks 1991: 160) that were smarter than does (ibid.: 151). In eastern France, the most desirable prey was the old, male, solitary buck, known as a *coiffé.* With this animal, "The experience it acquired over the course of years had refined its mistrust, its prudence, which when face to face with man make it all the more interesting" (Hell 1989: 106). The most appealing big game animals in Indochina were the three "heroic prey." Part of their appeal came from their trophies, but most importantly they were dangerous to hunt, a point that relates back to the distinct characters, dispositions, or even personalities that hunters attributed to them.

The gaur (*Bos gaurus*), with its distinctive upwardly curved horns, is the world's largest extant bovine. Bulls can weigh well over 1,000 kilograms and at the shoulder can reach a height of over seven feet. Prince Achille Murat called the gaur, "the king of bovids" (1930: 271), while for Sarraut the gaur had a "noble character" (1939: 2) and was "the real aristocrat of our jungle" (ibid.: 1). Gaur are also agile, a point affirmed in the statement, "However, it is not only the size of the gaur that makes it remarkable, but also what may be called its athletic qualities; and considering the animal's bulk, they are surprising" (ibid.: 3). Gaur often live in small herds of fewer than ten animals and males occasionally live alone.

Colonial hunters ascribed a number of prominent features to gaur. Cheminaud wrote that "his savagery and his independence are innate" (1939: 102). This savagery was allegedly so great that even tigers would not attack them (ibid.: 104), though Pierre Sauvaire wrote of seeing gaur upon which, "their shoulders were stitched with the claw marks of tigers they had battled" (1930: 7). Other authors described the gaur as, "an extremely ferocious animal" (Tiran 1929: 7); "the biggest and most ferocious of bovines inhabiting our Indo-China forests" (Plas 1932: 144); and "the despots of the jungle" (Demariaux 1949: 110).

The gaur's fearsome character made it a dangerous opponent, but other attributes further enhanced its reputation. They were usually hunted on foot and were difficult to approach to get a shot (Millet 1930: 195). According to Louis Condominas, the gaur "is very mistrustful and when it senses the presence of man, charges at the odor in a compact group, shoulder to shoulder, for a distance of up to 200 meters" (1988: 76). They were also renowned for being difficult to take down. One text observed, "This magnificent animal displays a very great resistance to bullets" (Official Bureau 1937: 4; see also Millet 1930: 195), and Millet wrote that a severely wounded gaur could continue on for great distances in bad terrain (ibid.: 213). Pursuit of a wounded gaur required special care. Millet said it could be as dangerous as chasing an elephant (ibid.: 199), while Jean Fraisse claimed that the "absolutely ferocious" gaur would stealthily circle back to the hunter who had wounded it and "gore him without pity" (2008: 23). Hunters very positively assessed the gaur hunt, describing it as "good sport" (Millet 1930: 195) and "true sport, taking the rank immediately after elephant hunting" (Official Bureau 1937: 4). The hunt of the elephant and gaur on foot was, "the most exciting that I know and—by itself—the most dangerous there is" (Bazé 1950: 93). Sarraut, who questioned how aggressive gaur were while acknowledging they were dangerous if cornered and wounded, concluded, "I wish to add that gaur hunting is a magnificent sport and the most difficult game for those who are out for good trophies" (1939: 7).

The tiger was the most prized trophy among the large cats and was often described with anthropomorphic superlatives. Plas wrote, "The royal tiger is incontestably the most beautiful, and the one which furnishes the finest trophy" (1932: 116). The Tourism Bureau stated, "The tiger, king of the jungle, is the most majestic animal among the Indochinese fauna" (Official Bureau 1937: 12), while in other descriptions it was, "the King of the forest" (Plas 1932: 116), the "master of the forest" (*Grandes Chasses Coloniales* 2009: 157), or the "seigneur of the bush" (De Buretel de Chassey 1998: 36). Certain attributes made the tiger a worthy adversary. It possessed "incredible strength" and was "very agile" (Official Bureau 1937: 12) and had "prodigiously developed muscles" (Millet 1930: 32). A tiger's vision and hearing were good, though its sense of smell did not compare with a dog's (ibid.: 35).

The tiger was regarded as a most difficult animal to hunt. Millet described the tiger hunt as among "the most laborious, most difficult, and most fertile in emotions" (ibid.: 32). This difficulty derived from the tiger's temperament, especially its caution and alertness. The tiger was "very prudent, very thoughtful" (Plas 1932: 117) and had, "never developed the habit of announcing its arrival from afar, it is a silent and extremely circumspect animal" (Millet 1930: 93). Hunters disagreed as to whether this prudence amounted to cowardice. According to Plas, "The tiger is no coward, he is merely prudent, and endowed with a marvelous instinct that foresees danger; he senses danger without seeing the direct cause, and it is this which makes him so difficult to hunt" (1932: 117). Tiran, by contrast, claimed the tiger had an "exemplary cowardice" (1929: 10). Demariaux wrote that "definitively, the tiger is craven and cowardly," to such a degree that it was a "suspicious and sneaky gangster" whose stealthy hunting style involved minimal risk (1949: 131). Hunters were cautioned to take extra care with a wounded tiger, and Murat wrote of hunters who immediately pursued one: "How many hunters have paid with their lives for such imprudence" (1930: 268; see also Chochod 1925: 106). Demariaux provided a fitting summation of hunters' thoughts on the tiger when he shared a friend's statement, "Believe me: the tiger—which is the same with the lion and the panther—has reached a high degree of intelligence among the animals.… The hunter must not forget that" (1949: 186).

The last of the heroic prey was the elephant. The elephants of Indochina are Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*). They live primarily in herds and in the colonial period ranged throughout the region, though the main elephant hunting grounds were in southern Annam and Cochinchina.[5] Of the descriptions of the heroic prey, those of elephants were the most anthropomorphized. First, there was its brain capacity. The elephant was "very intelligent" (Bordeneuve 1925: 31), had an "almost human intelligence" (Suzor 1937: 39), and drawing from the zoologist Buffon, "approaches humans in intelligence" (Demariaux 1949: 91). They also had a "formidable memory" (1949: 94). Elephants were also ascribed human-like emotions. Females were "aggressive from their love for their offspring" (Bazé 1950: 62), and in general, "their anger is terrible, when they feel hounded and tracked" (ibid.: 20). Like humans, it was said, they did not abandon their wounded (Bordeneuve 1925: 35) and guarded and protected a wounded animal in their herd (Sauvaire 1930: 28). It was claimed that they sometimes exercised collective vengeance, a behavior described as unique among animals (Demariaux 1949: 96). Increased contact with humans had made elephants "mistrustful and irritated" (Plas 1932: 154), and if they were disturbed too

[5] Elephants could not be hunted in Cambodia, where they were considered the property of the Cambodian king (Official Bureau 1937: 3).

much, "they become embittered, they become vicious and their fury increases as the pursuit continues" (ibid.: 155). Demariaux said that the elephant "has many human qualities" and "because of its intelligence—is a terribly complicated animal" (1949: 91). He provided an extended explication of this point: "It is that the elephant is a very vindictive, very spiteful animal, which practices the law of retaliation: 'Eye for eye; tooth for tooth' … it knows to simmer its vengeance and dissimulate until the propitious moment for its execution" (ibid.: 96).

An additional complexity of the elephant was its unpredictability. Elephants had a "fanciful disposition and unexpected reactions, particularly from the females followed by their young" (Sarraut 1939: 19). Males also charged during the rut season (Bazé 1950: 62). Hunters had to be vigilant toward the "unforeseen possible reactions of the game," since the elephant, "wounded or not and following its disposition, will flee after a shot is fired or charge in the opposite direction, seeking to reach its enemy, and becomes the most dangerous, without contest, of the adversaries that the sportsman can meet in the Indochinese jungle" (Millet 1930: 131). They might also stampede once a shot was fired (Sarraut 1939: 20). Taken in the aggregate, for many hunters these characteristics made elephants the most dangerous prey (see Plas 1932: 155; Sarraut 1939: 19). Millet summarized this perspective aptly: "I believe that the elephant, because of its intelligence, the suddenness of its charge, and its resistance to bullets, is, in the thick jungle, the animal that is most to be feared and the most impressive" (1930: 282). He concluded, "The elephant would be an adversary against which few hunters would dare to measure themselves" (ibid.: 283).

Elephants and gaur were universally sought-after, but for many hunters the most desirable prey within these species was the "solitary" (*solitaire*), typically an older male that had been forced out of its troop. Solitaries were distinguished by their unpleasant disposition. Roussel wrote of gaur that "the very old and enormous solitaries" were "the most dangerous and aggressive" (1913: 304). Regarding elephants, Demariaux claimed that solitaries were forced out of their troops because of their "irascible character" (1949: 96). Others described them as "cantankerous and aggressive" (Roussel 1913: 6) and "aggressive, and because of that, (they) are excessively dangerous" (Chochod 1925: 64). Guy Cheminaud, who hunted elephants in Laos, may have been the most enthusiastic hunter of solitaries. He argued, "From a cynegetic perspective, only the hunting of old solitaries is sporting" (1939: 41). Of particular concern were some "rogue" solitaries that attacked any animals they encountered, including humans. A wounded rogue was particularly dangerous because it would attack the hunter "like a madman" and try to kill him with its feet (ibid.: 41ff.). Demariaux related another hunter's statement that, "all wounded rogues savagely rush at the hunters to stomp them with rage and reduce them to a pulp" (1949: 102).

The dispositions and dangers of these animals made them appropriate prey for the true hunter. It is worth contrasting them with other animals. Wild buffalo, for example, were considered dangerous and did injure many hunters (Sarraut 1939: 15), including such luminaries as Défosse and Odérra, who was disemboweled by one (Millet 1930: 298). But wild buffalo were sedentary and tended to gather around ponds in hot weather, and for this reason Millet regarded them as of, "mediocre interest … from the point of view of sport" (ibid.: 233) Other animals, such as wild boar (ibid.: 249) or Eld Deer (Chochod 1925: 82), were also unappealing because they were not considered dangerous. For the true hunter, the choice of prey was critical for the proper hunt.

THE TRUE HUNTER AND THE MORAL NECESSITY OF BEING SPORTING

The hunting ethic for colonial hunters in Indochina was encompassed in the term "sporting" (*sportif*). As I will explain in this section, being sporting placed a number of distinct demands upon the hunter, but successfully executing them placed him in the virtuous category of "true hunter" (*vrai chasseur*) (Roussel 1913: 27) who were engaged in "true sport" (*le vrai sport*) (Tiran 1929: 28). Indeed, the ideal goal of the true hunter was the achievement of true sport. One initial requirement for becoming a true hunter and achieving true sport was submitting to and successfully enduring the hunt's physical demands. Roussel summed this up succinctly with his statement, "When he wants to kill bulls, rhinoceros, or elephants, the hunter must give proof of boundless energy, of unremitting physical endurance and patience, in effect he must not allow himself to be broken or tied down by anything, if he truly wants final success. A very limited number of hunters are solidly tempered and fanatic enough, to submit themselves, in the expected way, to innumerable fatigues, to the privations and dangers of this hunt, of which the duration is never determined in advance" (1913: 5).

The true hunter also needed to possess distinct bodies of knowledge. Ideally, he pursued his prey on foot. Chochod wrote, "One hunts by stalking, and by surprise; a genre of hunting that is, according to me, the most sporting and the most moving" (1925: 136). To do this effectively required knowledge of the prey, its habits, its habitat, and the indications of its presence in the area. The French parliamentarian P. Valude, who was the president of the Parliamentary Group on Hunting, somewhat poetically described this as, "Knowledge of the habits of animals is to the cynegetic arts, what anatomy is to surgery" (Bourdeneuve 1925: ii). Tiran remarked, "The most sporting method is without a doubt hunting in the regions that one knows is frequented by the animals that one seeks." An advocate of pursuing animals, he wrote, "The 'tracking' consists in following the animals on a trail, which is to say the traces left on the ground by their feet, or all other traces left by the passage of the 'solitaries' or of troops" (1929: 15).

Other traces that could require interpretation were the blood spoor left by a wounded animal (Millet 1930: 300–4). Sarraut, too, emphasized the importance of tracking and pursuit. After noting that rainy season hunting is preferable, he continued, "Consequently, if a 'decent' track is picked up early in the morning, one has good chances, given experienced trackers, of getting an aim before the day is over. To an enthusiastic and practiced hunter this is the method that means real sport. Is not the whole attraction of shooting in the tracking-down, for all who see something better in this magnificent sport than the actual killing?" (1939: 6ff.).

True hunters also needed the knowledge to select the correct firearm and ammunition. This was, in part, necessary to protect the hunter from injury due to inadequate weaponry, yet the primary reason was to protect the animals from shots that wounded but did not kill. Colonial hunters generally divided firearms into two primary categories: smooth bore weapons such as shotguns (*fusils*) and weapons with rifled barrels (*carabines*). Smooth bore guns can fire either solid metal slugs or shot and are generally used to shoot small game at close range. (In colonial Indochina, one exception to this rule was that some hunters used shot to shoot at tigers on a bait [see Condiminas 1988: 85].) Big game hunters relied on large caliber rifled weapons. These had the advantage of accuracy at greater distances. In many instances, hunters reported shooting game from ranges of 30 to 50 meters, which created a greater demand for accurate shooting, something rendered more difficult since it was done with the rifle's iron sights rather than a magnifying scope. More significantly, these weapons could handle the larger caliber ammunition necessary to quickly and effectively kill the prey. Cheminaud observed, "All of the bovids offer a prodigious resistance to projectiles," thus powerful weapons were needed when hunting them (1939: 119). Plas equipped his clients with large bore, magazine-fed weapons in either a .404 caliber Mauser, a .450 caliber, or the preferred .475 caliber. He also offered a .577 caliber double barreled "express" (1932: 157). The express rifle, which was available in smaller calibers as well, earned its name from the enhanced velocity of its bullets. Another distinctive feature was that it usually had two barrels and breech loaded one cartridge per barrel, limiting the number of shots. Chochod preferred carbine rifles between .320 and .405 calibers over the large bore express rifles (1925: 120), while Prince Achille Murat advocated the double barreled express with a steel bullet due to its "extraordinary force of penetration" (1930: 273).

Murat's assertion as to the advantages of steel bullets highlights the importance of selecting appropriate ammunition. Big game hunters using a rifled *carabine* had a choice between three main bullet types: unjacketed, semi-jacketed (*semi-blindée*), or fully jacketed (*blindée*), each of which had a different purpose. Unjacketed rounds were employed when shooting at soft tissue such as a tiger's heart or lungs, since the unjacketed round would

mushroom upon impact and create greater damage, making a lethal shot more likely. Semi-jacketed and fully jacketed bullets could be fired at higher velocities and were designed for penetration, with the former mushrooming somewhat. But given their speed and energy, they also had the ability, especially when shot into the prey's head, to shock it or knock it out. This often occurred with elephant hunting since the first round, if not lethal, could temporarily immobilize the animal and allow time for a safer second shot. The bullet's weight was also important because 15- to 20-gram bullets were inadequate for such large animals as gaur and wild buffalo and would only severely wound them (Millet 1930: 323). Millet clearly expressed the importance of choosing the appropriate weapon and ammunition when he argued, "The carbine is therefore the only weapon employed by the true hunter. The conventional rules of the sport elsewhere condemn shooting with shot for the reason of the great ease with which one can hit the target and for the numerous cases where one only succeeds in crippling and losing it" (ibid.: 318).

Besides the ideal of pursuit on foot, two other types of hunting were practiced, but they were morally ambiguous. The first was the *battue*, which in colonial Indochina involved members of the indigenous population lining up to beat the bush and drive hidden game toward the awaiting hunter. Roussel criticized the *battue* since, "it often gives the pleasure of killing game, without much effort and without the need for real knowledge of the hunt. By contrast, the true hunters are not at all partisans of it and only stoop to it when it is impossible to do anything else" (1913: 27). Sarraut said that hunters employed the *battue* for tiger hunting, though apparently in Indochina it did not involve the large numbers of beaters and elephants employed in India. He also critically noted, "This type of hunting is undoubtedly spectacular, but offers only small sporting interest except for the beater, who is the only one taking a chance" (1939: 24). Surprisingly, Millet supported using the *battue* to hunt tigers. Although he was aided by beaters who lit firecrackers, he argued that the *battue* placed the hunter in closer quarters with the tiger, and as such, "Tracking a tiger and seeing it emerge from the bush at a small hunting gallop, while holding a carbine, is an unforgettable and passionate spectacle" (1930: 85).

The most common method for hunting tigers and other felines was also morally ambiguous. This involved setting a bait and then shooting the animal from a camouflaged blind (*affût*) or observation tower (*mirador*). The bait was often a large domestic animal, such as a cow, buffalo, or pig killed for this purpose (Plas 1932: 133; Sarraut 1939: 26; Tiran 1929: 16). The bait was secured to a tree or post and left to decompose, and its powerful stench attracted the carrion-loving cats. Displaying their "diabolical prudence" (Fraisse 2008: 66), tigers usually tended to come to the bait after four to five days, often in the early morning hours, making that the best time to hunt them (Plas 1932: 133ff.).

Tiran wrote, "Hunting with a bait is naturally much more effective, when it is used for tigers or all other felines. It is almost the only method that enables one to shoot these cowardly animals" (1929: 16). Baiting and waiting, however, raised questions regarding how sporting the hunt was, since it conferred an advantage upon the hunter by eliminating the need to track and close with the animal. Some hunters justified this with reference to the patience and field skills necessary for a successful hunt. As the Official Indochinese Tourism Bureau commented, "It is a type of hunt where the sportsman must deploy all of his qualities of ruse and patience" (Official Bureau 1937: 14). Others disagreed, particularly when it involved hunting from a tower at night. With this technique, the hunter waited until the tiger was eating the bait and then illuminated it with a flashlight. When the tiger turned to the light, its eyes shined, providing a clear location for a lethal shot to the brain between the eyes. Millet felt that hunting with a bait was, "an easy shot" (1930: 92), but he added that at night, "It is a method to assassinate animals that is little sporting, and a tiger deserves better than that" (ibid.: 94). He did make one qualification on hunting tigers with a bait since it could have "a truly sporting side" only if the animal was wounded and made it back into the bush where the hunter was required to pursue and kill it (ibid.: 84).

The true hunter ideally killed his prey with one accurate shot. This required detailed knowledge of each animal's anatomy and where on its body to place a shot that would lead to instant death, which varied for different animals. Tigers could be killed by a shot between the eyes or in the neck (Plas 1932: 137), but the recommended shot was to the rib cage in order to reach vital organs. Millet recommended this to an anxious hunter as "the classic shot (*le coup classique*) to the lungs … a shot that is generally quickly mortal with an expanding bullet weighing 16 to 20 grams" (1930: 113). Tiran counseled that rhinos, gaurs, buffalo, and wild oxen were usually to be shot in the lungs (1929: 29). Gaur presented other complexities. If the shot was taken from a distance, the hunter was to aim for the heart and shoot immediately behind the shoulder. A close shot necessitated a headshot. If facing the animal, the shot was to be placed on the line between the base of the horns, while a side shot should be aimed just below the horn. Plas cautioned, "Pay great attention to the sighting, for even if the head is large, the brain is small" (1932: 147). Condominas advocated a head shot on the gaur as opposed to a body shot. He had done the latter, but after watching a wounded gaur for some ten seconds before it collapsed, he concluded that such a shot was, "a trick, a sort of sadism of which I do not feel myself capable" (1988: 79).

The elephant was the most challenging animal to kill. Elephants were rarely hit with an initial lethal shot and could often walk for two or three hundred meters even after a good shot (Tiran 1929: 27). Cheminaud argued that body shots on elephants were too imprecise and, even with a grave hit,

the animal would still flee (1939: 43ff.). The only acceptable shot, therefore, was a headshot (ibid.). For Tiran, "*The true sport is to shoot the elephant in the brain*" (1929: 28, his italics). "To do that, the hunter must approach as close as possible to the animal," and then it was necessary to fire "a very judicious shot" in order to succeed (ibid.). The shot's placement was therefore critical, and the three "classic" shots were a side shot through the eye, a shot behind the ear, or a shot to the face (ibid.: 25). Millet spent several pages describing how to successfully shoot an elephant. For him as well, the best shot was to the brain, which he described as, "the most certain, the most elegant" (1930: 145). He then detailed where to locate a "well-placed" shot to the face or by the ear (ibid.: 148–51). He wrote approvingly of his "old friend" J. M. who killed a male solitary with one shot to the ear, which led to its immediate collapse (ibid.: 160). Similarly, Bazé wrote of elephant hunting that, "my preferred shot is to hit the brain, from the side" (1950: 99). Millet and de Monestrol's reputations as virtuoso hunters were affirmed in Demariaux's volume when he wrote that he killed his first and only elephant accompanied by Plas with a shot from a Mauser .404 carbine that hit just below the ear while Plas also delivered a shot to the brain (1949: 98ff.). He said he killed it, "classically, if one can say that, according to the principles promulgated by the great Indochinese hunters named Fernand Millet and de Monestrol" (ibid.: 97).

The ability to place an accurate and instantly lethal shot could earn a hunter the meritorious title of a "good shot" (*bon fusil*), but for the true hunter, that ability also needed to be combined with two more attributes, patience and *sang froid*. Most broadly, patience was required for the overall experience of the hunt since either stalking or waiting for prey could be taxing and time-consuming, especially the pursuit of a wounded animal. Patience became most critical when the prey was in range. The hunter was not to hurriedly or wildly shoot, but instead, even to the point of leaving without firing at all, wait until the animal was properly identified and in the proper position to fire the lethal shot. De Buretel de Chassey on one of his earliest hunts spotted a female elephant, but was told by his companion, "Wait for the male" (1998: 15). He later described how it was "indispensable" to wait and shoot only after one had confirmed that the elephant was male (ibid.: 45). Bazé wrote of his approach to firing a shot at an elephant to hit its brain, "I always wait, to properly adjust it" (1950: 99). In the interest of reducing suffering, Fraisse counseled to only shoot from close range, "if one desires to wound the game as little as possible" (2008: 172). Plas cautioned that when hunting tigers hunters should, "never be in a hurry to shoot." The hunter had to patiently wait for the animal to turn and stand sideways, exposing its flank so that the hunter could take one of the "classic shots" to either the neck or the heart. "The hunter," he advised, "should bear in mind that success depends on the first shot. If the first shot

is a failure, he seldom has a chance of firing a second one. It is therefore necessary to take time over it, to wait until the animal is in an advantageous position for firing" (1932: 137). Plas wrote approvingly of a tiger hunt with a client named Zavodski. After waiting some five or six days on an observation tower for a tiger to come to an elephant used as bait, "the finest royal tiger" Plas had ever seen approached. It first appeared at 12:30 p.m., but its positioning prevented Zavodski from taking an acceptable shot. After waiting for two hours, "The tiger arose and placed himself well in view in front of the elephant; my client did not fail to take the advantage thus offered and killed him with his first shot" (1932: 213–14).

Given the dangers of close and sometimes wounded prey, a hunter often needed to make a quick and accurate shot, a task more easily achieved if he possessed genuine *sang froid* (cold blood). Understood as a calm and collected attitude in situations of great stress and danger, *sang froid* was a highly valorized trait for the true hunter and authors often praised it in themselves and others. Bordeneuve wrote, "The good shooters, masters of their nerves and certain to maintain their *sang froid*, hunt the tiger by aiming the bullet between the two eyes in order to reach the brain" (1925: 16). Millet warmly recalled his friend J. M. as, "an agreeable and dependable companion, gifted with a rare *sang froid*" (1930: 159). Suzor stated of an English tiger hunting companion, "*Sang froid* and courage above the average, very active despite his pallor and his small size, Lyle was an ideal companion for a hunt of this genre" (1937: 22). This trait also had benefits in terms of survival. Bazé noted that "if the animals are aggressive and charge, the hunter must conserve all of his *sang froid*" (1950: 97). Other authors wrote of the necessity of *sang froid* when bovids charged (About 1917: 40; Fraisse 2008: 182) or that dealing with a wounded tiger, likely at only a few meters, required "reflexes, a sharp eye, *sang-froid* … and perfectly chosen weapon and ammunition" (Fraisse 2008: 185). Plas captured this reality in what he said about elephant hunting: "Woe to the hunter who loses his *sang-froid* and who tries to escape in front of the mastodon. There is only one chance for safety, and that is to bring him down. To climb a tree when an elephant charges is only to be seen in comic papers" (1932: 156).

Two final characteristics of the true hunter require mention. First, as with other hunting traditions, the true hunter was expected to pursue all wounded animals. This was recognized as dangerous and hunters varied as to the appropriate timing for it. Tiran wrote, "Falling upon a wounded animal that one has just shot is the greatest mistake that one can commit" (1929: 41). For Sarraut, "As a rule, it's wise to wait for a rather long while before following the track of a wounded animal," especially with tigers (1939: 26). Millet also recommended letting the animal bleed for a while and "cool down." He added, "the longer you wait, the better," and that in instances

when a well-hit animal was lost, it was because this rule was not properly followed (1930: 304). Millet may have been the greatest enthusiast for this aspect of the hunt, writing, "Personally, I always get great pleasure in the pursuit of wounded animals." He then emphasized the morally superlative aspect of the pursuit: "I find true sport largely in the palpitating searches" (ibid.: 298). Tiran, in turn, condemned sloppy hunters: "When a well shot animal is lost, it is always the fault of the hunter, who was too pressed to possess it" (1929: 41).

The final, and most paradoxical, characteristic of the true hunter was restraint in killing (Millet 1930: 199; Official Bureau 1937: 38). In some instances, this took the form of selectivity among the species, such as Dr. Vielle's claim that he only shot attractive males of the trophy animals (*Grandes Chasses Coloniales* 2009: 200), or Sarraut's recounting of an instance in which he chose not to shoot a large gaur bull because it was of reproductive age and would continue to positively develop. He later regretted not taking advantage of such a rare opportunity, but also felt "the satisfaction of having allowed an animal in such beautiful condition to live" (ibid.: 79; see also Bazé 1950: 61). Fraisse provided a fitting description of the importance of restraint in an account of a Laotian prince named Phetsarath. The prince, an avid hunter, would ignore the large numbers of deer or wild boar he encountered when hunting gaur, and once he encountered a gaur, patiently waited to decide whether to shoot, and then would only shoot old males. At first Fraisse found this odd, but after reflection he concluded, "I realized for the first time what a sporting hunter was" (2008: 14ff.).

FAILED HUNTERS

Ortega y Gasset said that hunting, "has an ethic that distinguishes virtues from vices" (1972: 88). While hunters' writings identified the ethical demands on the virtuous true hunter, they also elaborated on what they regarded as possible vices of the non-true hunter. Before describing those, it is important to note that sport hunting traditions often feature a lexicon employed to describe hunters who are regarded as having failed to realize the hunting ethic. These terms can take several forms. In some instances, sport hunters condemn those who hunt not for sport, but for meat or subsistence, such as the American condemnation of the "pot hunter" (Marks 1991: 72; Herman 2001: 154–55) or the Dutch censuring of the "shooter," "skinner," or "pothunter" (Dahles 1993: 175). The poacher, or those who otherwise hunted illegally, was similarly condemned in the United States (Boglioli 2009: 67; Marks 1991: 157) and in eastern France (Hell 1989: 76).[6] Some hunters who killed excessively were condemned, such as a "shooter" (*tireur*) or "flesh hunter"

[6] In parts of the United Kingdom the poacher was celebrated (see Bates 1936).

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(*Fleischjäger*) in eastern France (Hell 1989: 122). Hunters perceived to be insufficiently serious or committed have earned their own appellations, such as "snob hunting" in Ontario (Dunk 2002: 61), the "salon hunter" or "Sunday hunter" in eastern France (Hell 1989: 31), or the mid-nineteenth-century American "dandy sportsmen" (Herman 2001: 153). Colonial French hunters had their own terms to condemn morally questionable hunters, including "city hunter" (Condominas 1988: 110), "tourist hunters" (Cheminaud 1939: 131), "Sunday hunters" (*Grandes Chasses Coloniales* 2009: 191), "half-hunters" (Sauvaire 1930: 45), "occasional hunters" (Cheminaud 1939: 131), and the more general "hot gun" (*fusil chaud*), a term applied to hunters who shot over-aggressively (*Grandes Chasses Coloniales* 2009: 197; De Monestrol 1931: 9).

True hunters' critiques of other hunters took a number of forms. Among the most stigmatized were those who shot from vehicles. Given the abundance of game, it was common for motorists to kill animals on or near roads. Fraisse criticized a French officer in Pleiku who, in six months, killed seven tigers from his jeep at night. Having never really entered the brush or seen other big game, Fraisse stated, "he had never truly hunted" (2008: 84). Condominas wrote scathingly of white hunters shooting a stray female from a car at night with a submachine gun (1988: 53). According to Roussel, such hunts, which involved little exertion or tension, gave "a delicate pleasure of the dilettante" (1913: 44).

Also stigmatized was night-hunting using lanterns (*chasse à la lanterne*), a practice that apparently emerged around 1910 (Bordeneuve 1925: 54). Lantern hunting gave the hunter a near complete advantage because it simultaneously illuminated the animal, particularly its eyes which glowed, and in some cases, such as with deer, froze it in place, creating an easy shot. True hunters were unsparing in their criticism of this technique. As Bordeneuve stated, "hunting with lanterns: it is a massacre rather than a hunt" (ibid.). Lantern hunters were usually portrayed as reckless amateurs, so unskilled that they fired into parked automobiles after mistaking reflections from them for game (Trousset 1929: 16; Condominas 1988: 110). Such recklessness led to the killing of large numbers of does and fawns and sharp reductions in animal populations (De Monestrol 1931: 8–9), such as the deer population around Lagna that was decimated in "shameful massacres by Sunday hunters who come by car and shoot by lantern" (*Grandes Chasses Coloniales* 2009: 191). Starting in March 1926, regulations prohibited lantern hunting (Economic Agency of Indochina 1926: 25), though a 1937 tourist guide noted that it was still widespread and continued to negatively affect game populations (*Guide Touristique* 1937: 32).

True hunters also derided the commercialization of hunting. One criticism was directed toward local markets. By the mid-1920s, the indigenous populations were hunting for meat to sell locally or to Chinese middlemen

who exported it to Hong Kong (Bordeneuve 1925: 55), which again diminished game populations. Commercial rhino hunting was also condemned. By the 1930s, rhinoceros had become scarce, in part due to hunting for their horns to use in traditional Asian medicine, notably in China (Sauvaire 1930: 132). Cheminaud wrote that Chinese buyers would pay 3,000 gold francs for a high-quality horn, while indigenous residents could live on 25 francs per month (1939: 98). He considered it wrong to sell horns for massive profits and those who committed such acts had "fallen into heresy" against "the orthodoxy of the colleagues of St. Hubert d'Occident" (ibid.). Demariaux was also critical of the commercial dimensions of some colonial hunting operations because, "The more one kills, the more the entrepreneur gloats and pockets a fee of 25 gold dollars per day (drinks included), per client" (1949: 212).

The killing of females, too, was criticized. Millet stated that the true hunter "respects the females and the young" and would only choose "the best male" to shoot (quoted in Tiran 1929: 21). He later added, "Destroying a female, when one is not obliged to, is not very sporting and is not a big thing to me" (Millet 1930: 144). Fraisse commented that hunters should not put themselves into a position where they are obliged to shoot a female elephant and "one has no excuse for doing so" (2008: 183). He added more generally, "Shame on you if you find yourself, by your own fault, obliged to shoot an unshootable animal" (ibid.: 185). An "elite hunter" named Maillot spoke of the necessity of eliminating "the odious abuses, such as the continual slaughter of female elephants." He stated disapprovingly, "I have heard hunters—but can one give that name to such individuals?—praising themselves for having killed four female elephants in a single day" (Demariaux 1949: 215).

Unrestrained, unselective, and excessive killing were also critiqued. The common label applied to such hunting was "massacre" (*massacre*), such as Vielle's commitment to only taking trophy males and his desire "to never participate in a massacre" (*Grandes Chasses Coloniales* 2009: 202). Cheminaud objected to the excessive killing of animals, and wrote disparagingly of an Englishman named Rogers who in Burma in the period around 1850 apparently had killed two thousand elephants [*sic*].[7] He did not want that type of slaughter to be allowed in Indochina and asked, "How can one drape oneself in such stupid vainglory which consists of killing animals for the sole pleasure of killing?" (1939: 43). The lack of restraint and excessive killing was also evident in shooting easy prey. Millet condemned those who fired into groups of gaur with a powerful weapon, which for him was "useless butchery and anti-sporting" (1930: 198). Cheminaud criticized "tourist hunters" (1939: 131) who hunted the *karabou sauvage*, a large

[7] Major Rogers actually killed over 1,400 elephants in Ceylon (Trautmann 2017: 15).

bovine. It might charge a hunter, but it was slow to do so or to flee. "It is therefore easy game, that a colonial hunter hardly has to pursue, but which gives joy to occasional hunters" (ibid.). "Tourist hunters" would also sometimes accidentally kill domestic animals they confused for game (ibid.: 133). Condominas wrote that novice hunters had, "the tendency to shoot at everything they could or could not see." They had, "only one idea: to see an animal fall, but it is undoubtable that hunting requires a particular state of grace, without which the sport is nothing more than killing, which is equivalent of taking it to whichever slaughterhouse" (1988: 51).

THE TRUE HUNTER, MORAL DISTINCTION, AND VIRTUOSITY

Condominas' invocation of "a particular state of grace" that distinguished hunting from killing aptly captures the fact that true hunters regarded their manner of killing game as both distinctive and morally superior. Others killed, while they authentically hunted. The centrality of such assertions in their texts raises two related questions. First, what were the social implications of these assertions with regard to how they positioned themselves vis-à-vis other hunters in Indochina? In this instance, the manner of killing game erected moral and symbolic boundaries that excluded these other hunters, both indigenous and European, in ways that asserted the true hunter's superiority. Second, what are the deeper implications of these assertions for understanding the paradox of why their extensive killing was not classified as mere killing or the "irrational destruction of game"? This question especially pertains to their relationship to other European hunters and why, as I will explain, they believed that their killing was different because of the virtuosity they displayed in their hunts.

Marks wrote, "Each species of game pursued is a marker, a visible bit of social differentiation" (1991: 4). This statement holds true with big game hunting in Indochina, but in the case of the true hunter, one can also add that each *type* of hunting was a marker of both social and/or ethical difference. This distinction was manifest in several ways with regard to the indigenous populations who served the hunt, including the type of hunt, the positioning in the process of killing, and the disposition of the slain prey's flesh. At the most basic level, European and indigenous hunters engaged in different types of hunts in pursuit of different results. Indigenous hunters primarily hunted for subsistence and were willing to use poisons, traps, or snares.[8] Their hunting required no direct and dangerous confrontation with the prey. European true hunters celebrated such encounters but would also "limit themselves to bringing back several chosen trophies worthy of featuring

[8] As Hickey noted, there was trade associated with their hunting, though subsistence was paramount.

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honorably in a collection" (Official Bureau 1937: 38). For the European hunter, who hunted for sport, the trophy was the ultimate goal.

When hunting together, colonial hunters and indigenous trackers had distinct roles in the process of killing prey. The tracker led the European hunters to the game, who then reserved for themselves the right to attempt to complete the kill with their firearms. Though they hunted in their own territories, indigenous trackers here became secondary participants one step removed from the act of killing. This was a significant inversion of their relationship to prey animals. Finally, the disposition of the prey's flesh marked an important distinction since colonial hunters generally did not eat the animals they killed, especially the flesh of the "heroic prey." They either left them to rot after taking their trophies or fulfilled the expectation that they would give the flesh to local communities. This was a rupture with previous hunting practices in the region, a transition from subsistence to sport. Colonial hunters in pursuit of a trophy, rather than meat for subsistence, killed for sport with their firearms and left more carcasses on the hunting grounds than the indigenous population ever would. This was both a luxury they could afford and a marker of their superiority.

True hunters also distinguished themselves from other European hunters through their distinct type of hunting. There were similarities in terms of the hunt's desired results and the use of firearms, and the distinction was manifest in terms of how they conducted their hunts. The various pejorative terms examined above provide an exemplary vocabulary for marking these differences and the moral failures they implied; they supported the idea that such hunters failed to achieve Condiminas' "state of grace" and were therefore neither sporting nor true hunters. Indeed, over-aggressive shooting, firing from automobiles, using lights, or shooting females were classic examples of unsporting hunting. That said, there is within the texts an important practical component that is critical for understanding the true hunters. A true hunter, especially a Millet or de Monestral, was a virtuoso at his craft. This virtuosity pertained to the technical dimensions of hunting, such as tracking, firearm selection, and shot placement, but also to the profound mastering and disciplining of the hunter's body in the hunting space, especially in view of the prey. The true hunter endured the hunt's rigors, consistently exhibited patience, and was willing to spare an animal if there was no opportunity for a lethal shot. For these hunters, ending a hunt without a trophy was acceptable and in some cases a source of satisfaction. This sentiment was echoed in Sarraut's pronouncement on "real sport": "Is not the whole attraction of shooting in the tracking-down, for all who see something better in this magnificent sport than the actual killing?" (1939: 6ff.). For him and others, there was in the hunt something better than killing.

Yet the understanding of this point and the ability to realize it in practice were not innate. Instead, the achievement of true hunter status was the outcome

of a process through which the novice hunter acquired the necessary knowledge, experience, discipline, and skill. Millet wrote of this skill set that "one only completely acquires it after years of observation and apprenticeship" (1930: 82). Critical to this was learning when not to shoot, but an important component in this process was learning from mistakes made early in one's hunting career. Many authors provided unsparing assessments of their failures as hunters, such as killing females, causing animals to suffer, or other mistakes (see *inter alia* About 1917: 22; *Grandes Chasses Coloniales* 2009: 162; De Buretel de Chassey 1998: 47; Fraisse 2008: 118, 146; and Plas 1932: 163, 188). Condominas described a suffering-inducing body shot to a gaur as "a trick, a sort of sadism" (1988: 79). Bazé wrote that he initially had committed "several unfortunate massacres," but experience ultimately made him a better hunter (1950: 15). Fraisse was notably reflective on this point. As a novice hunter he had mistakenly shot a young domestic buffalo with a lantern, to which he responded, "Horror!… I was profoundly disgusted" (2008: 9). In a broader reflection on this stage of his hunting career, he concluded, "It was not real hunting (*vraie chasse*) and I tried first off to modify my methods. I especially deplored two things: first, the large number of wounded animals I could not pursue, and then the significant proportion of females and young I had killed" (ibid.: 12). Over time, and inspired by his hunting companion Milliquet, whom he considered a "true sporting hunter" (ibid.: 151), he would come to understand what a true hunter was. Even Millet acknowledged that his first elephant hunt ended distastefully when killing the wounded animal required multiple shots to its head (1930: 132).

The self-criticism of past failures by those who regarded themselves as true hunters affirmed that entrance into the prestigious true hunter category was contingent and had to be earned. To achieve this status, with all of its requisite practical components, the true hunters had embarked upon a path to virtuosity that had made them superior hunters and transformed their manner of killing prey. They engaged in physically demanding and disciplined hunts, renounced reckless killing, and willingly sought out close, lethal encounters with select game animals. For all hunters, however, every hunt brought with it the possibility of moral success or failure, regardless of the hunter's virtuosity on previous hunts. In contrast to others, the true hunter's decisions to kill or spare animals were ideally informed by their hunting ethic. When they occurred, their kills realized this ethic and were therefore by definition sporting. By their own accounts, they hunted and killed prey animals differently, which reaffirmed their claims to moral superiority vis-à-vis other European hunters. It is this latter point that explains the exclusion of their kill numbers from the category of excessive or irrational destruction of game. True hunters respected the lives of their prey; for them, the animals were worthy of life, and to draw on Millet, their lives deserved conservation.

True hunters would end their lives, but only under very strict conditions. On their hunts, they did not simply take the lives of prey, but in a manner reminiscent of Garry Marvin's comment, those lives were legitimately won from them. Just as with the Laotian prince praised by Fraisse, the true hunter would allow numerous animals to pass in front of his rifle and then only shoot when presented with an appropriate animal and opportunity. In this sense, the scale or frequency of killing were secondary to the broader achievement of the proper and virtuoso kill. It was the true hunters' acquisitions and displays of virtuosity that legitimized their killing and distinguished them as a unique ethical community distinct from other colonial hunters. It may be impossible to accurately capture the paradox in the true hunters' attitudes toward killing, but when examined comparatively, it appeared more important to demonstrate restraint when faced with the opportunity to kill rather than to show mere restraint in killing.

CONCLUSION

In his work on elite hunting in Eurasia, Allsen wrote, "Hunting defined people in varying ways" (2006: 119). One purpose of this article has been to reaffirm this assertion, though especially the manner in which adherence to the true hunting ethic, with its emphasis on being "sporting," played a critical role in defining the true hunters as a distinct social and moral community. The true hunting ethic, in a manner similar to other sport hunting ethics, had its virtues and vices, and thus every hunt brought the possibility of either success or failure, and achievement of true hunter status was contingent and had to be earned. This process of definition had deeper implications for situating the true hunters within colonial Indochinese society. First, the type of hunt, especially hunting for sport rather than for subsistence, and the control over firearms, killing, and the disposition of slain animal flesh this entailed, distinguished European hunters from the indigenous populations that served their hunts. On this point, killing animals with firearms for sport rather than subsistence marked a significant break and boundary.

Perhaps more significant to the true hunters was that they distinguished themselves from other colonial hunters by their knowledge and deep understanding of the ethic, their ability to discipline themselves and implement it in the hunting space, and most of all by their ability to achieve the virtuoso kill. As Millet claimed, "the art of big game hunting" was difficult. It placed demands upon hunters that many did not fulfill. Paradoxically, while Millet could assert that the true hunter was a conservator, the reality was often different. However, these kills were presented as being legitimate and not the "irrational destruction of game" because they were regarded as ethically informed virtuoso kills completed with restraint and deliberation. They had been fairly won. Ortega y Gasset claimed, "To the sportsman the death of the game is not what interests him;

that is not his purpose. What interests him is everything that he had to do to achieve that death—that is, the hunt" (1972: 96). That may have been so for him, Sarraut, Millet, and other true hunters, but killing animals for pleasure in sport hunting always involves ethical legitimation. In the true hunter case, this was accomplished through being sporting and the virtuoso kill, an assessment that merits further comparative investigation into other sport hunting traditions.

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Abstract: This article examines the concept of the "true hunter" (*vrai chasseur*) among big game hunters in French colonial Indochina. Drawing primarily on French language texts published by highly experienced European hunters between 1910 and 1950, it first examines in detail the true hunter ethic, which required hunters to hunt and kill their prey in a "sporting" (*sportif*) manner. This ethic involved adherence to an expansive and complicated set of rules related to stalking, marksmanship, knowledge possession, restraint, prey selection, choice of firearms and ammunition, and others. True hunting was regarded as by definition difficult and, as is argued, the practical realization of the true hunter ideal entailed not simply engaging in hunting as an activity, but instead successfully performing a very difficult but specific type of killing. The article's second purpose is to engage a paradox associated with the texts, their authors, and the ethic. While critical of other hunters for "unnecessary slaughter," many killed staggering numbers of animals. This paradox is accounted for by placing the true hunters in the broader social context of colonial Indochina. Both their type of sport hunting and the virtuosity of their killing distinguished them from the indigenous populations that served their hunts and other European hunters. This virtuosity also legitimized the scale of their killing and placed these hunters into a distinctive social and moral community.

Key Words: sport hunting, hunting ethics, human-prey relationship, hunting and distinction, animal conceptualizations, virtuoso hunting, colonial Indochina