

PART 4

# Respectability and Deviancy



## Pigsticking: The ‘Noble’ Indian Boar and Colonial Constructions of Elite Masculinity

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### Abstract

Sport was central to the lives of European officers serving in India. To many, pigsticking, or hunting of wild boar on horseback with spears, represented the pinnacle of elite European sport. This was the result of a number of the sport's perceived qualities, not least of which was the nature of the prey itself. The Indian Boar was portrayed as a particularly “noble” foe—determined and bold in the face of death. Pigsticking came to represent a particular form of masculinity—one that was seen as essential for the ruling elite. The elite pigsticking coterie were particularly well connected socially, politically and militarily. This chapter explores the ways in which pigsticking came to represent an important facet of rule.

**Keywords:** pigsticking; sport; Indian boar; elite masculinity; colonial India; British rule

In regular instalments between 1805 and 1807, Captain Thomas Williamson released the collection that would become *Oriental Field Sports*.<sup>1</sup> Subscribers received billowing folio sheets, with illustrations drawn by Samuel Howitt.<sup>2</sup> These were dramatic, not simply for their imposing size. Each graphically illustrated the various (largely blood) sports which “gentlemen in the East” engaged in. Williamson addressed the preface “not merely to the Sportsman”, but to the broader British reading public, who, he guessed, would be eager for a narrative of adventure in Britain’s newly

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Williamson, *Oriental field sports: being a complete, detailed and accurate description of the wild sports of the East, and exhibiting, in a novel and interesting manner, the natural history of the elephant, rhinoceros, the tiger, the leopard, the bear, the deer, the buffalo, the wolf, the wild hog, the jackall, the wild dog, the civet, and other undomesticated animals: as likewise the different species of feathered game, fishes and serpents. The whole interspersed with a variety of Original, Authentic and Curious Anecdotes, taken from the Manuscript and Designs of Captain Thomas Williamson, who served upwards of Twenty Years in Bengal.* 1819.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* The book was reprinted in 1808, and again in 1819, before being reprinted again later in the century (and indeed again in the twentieth century).

expanding empire.<sup>3</sup> He assured his readers that his work was, “not intended for the ignorant, but for the more enlightened circles of the community...[as his details] may be corroborated by numbers in the first ranks of society.”<sup>4</sup> Williamson promised something for everyone—a description of the chase for the British “Nimrod”; accounts of the Indian landscape for the nature enthusiast; snippets of history and philosophy for the budding Orientalist; and, to catch the rest, an account of customs and general “novelties”. In Williamson’s work and the many memoirs of European life in India which followed over the next century, often the most striking features of India were its “wild” ones: from snarling beasts of the forest, to the white ants who would eat the bed from under you while you slept.<sup>5</sup> This, combined with a presentation of the “novelty” of Indian life stressed to British readers that India was most decidedly *foreign*, but was critically, at the same time, knowable and conquerable.

For Williamson, and the elite Anglo-Indian cadre that he had circulated in, sport was central—the grand trunk from which all other branches of life in India grew. *Oriental Field Sports* was an early example of the sporting memoir—one which showcased the range of sporting activities which an Englishman in India might (or, perhaps more accurately, *should*) enjoy. The Indian sporting memoir, of which Williamson’s was one of the earliest, was an immensely popular genre and an important and formative way through which the broader British public consumed ideas about India. Sporting memoirs asserted that *only* Englishmen truly, or “properly” appreciated sport in India.<sup>6</sup> These texts could help illuminate these sports for the appreciative, enthusiastic reader in Britain. Indians, these texts increasingly posited, found sport to be “a drudgery” and did not fully grasp the framework in which sport might take place, and it was suggested, were incapable of managing India’s flora and fauna.<sup>7</sup> Of course, European “management” mostly entailed bloody extermination, but this was framed as careful, *civilizational* management, moving India a step up the ladder of progress.

As these memoirs and the sporting magazines which followed made clear, there was an imagined hierarchy of prey, which corresponded to a ranking of the varied modes of hunting. Within this, few animals were held in as high regard as the wild

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>5</sup> For an analysis of the ways in which the latter were actors in colonial politics, see Rohan Deb Roy, ‘White Ants, Empire And Entomo-Politics in South Asia,’ *The Historical Journal* 63, 2 (2020).

<sup>6</sup> This marked a change from the eighteenth century, when, as John MacKenzie has noted, Europeans in India mostly participated as observers to Indian sport. See John M. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 170.

<sup>7</sup> While this suggestion was already present in early nineteenth century memoirs, it became a more dominant narrative after the 1857 Rebellion.

boar, and the sport of hunting it, pigsticking. Indian rulers—past and present—from Maharaja Sujan Singh of Bikaner to Fateh Singh of Mewar, hunted wild boar, undermining the notion, highlighted above in sporting memoirs, that Indians were disinterested in the sport.<sup>8</sup> A Rajput school image of an (unnamed) seventeenth century raja dispassionately sliding his saber into a rearing boar even featured prominently in the annual celebration of pigsticking, *The Houghunters Annual*, in 1932.<sup>9</sup> However, memorialists insisted that the rules of “modern” pigsticking were shaped in such a way as to differentiate and perfect the art of the sport. Critically, Indian rulers had preferred hunting with a sword, or saber (thus, somehow nullifying their methods). Modern—British—pigsticking swapped a wooden spear for sword or saber and was, writers insisted, a different creation.

A pigsticking party generally involved three or four men, mounted on horses, supported by a veritable army of rarely-named Indian assistants. The plains and interior were the favored territories for pigsticking (Fig. 10.1), although officers went in search of boar at most stations across India. For seasoned hog-hunters, though, the best hunting grounds aligned with political topographies. The low-lying *churs*<sup>10</sup> of Bengal and the *khadirs*<sup>11</sup> of north central India were within reach of the most important cantonments of Northern and Central India. The sport’s popularity grew exponentially in the years after the 1857 rebellion had rocked these same stations. In the second half of the nineteenth century then, elite celebrations of pigsticking can be read as one way in which the military and civil elite attempted to assuage fears of further upset and prove their unique fitness to effectively control and rule over India.

While high-ranking civil and military officers did not restrict their hunting solely to pigsticking, they were careful to insist that it represented the highest of sports, a sentiment ascribed to the particular “character” of the Indian boar. Writing his Indian memoirs over a hundred years later (but with no less enthusiasm), Robert Baden-Powell assured his readers that, “There is no doubt that pigsticking as a sport far transcends any other.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed, in addition to mentioning it in each of his works on India and sport, he wrote a dedicated ode to the sport, *Pigsticking; Or, Houghunting: A Complete Account for Sportsmen, and Others*.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For Indian rulers and hunting, see Julie Hughes, *Animal Kingdoms: Hunting, the Environment and Power in the Indian Princely States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> *Houghunter’s Annual*, (Bombay: Times of India Press, 1932).

<sup>10</sup> A *chur* is an alluvial, low-lying island, in this instance most closely associated with Bengal.

<sup>11</sup> *Khadir*, or *kadir* are alluvial riverbeds. The Kadir Cup, pigsticking’s Olympics, was held annually outside Meerut starting in 1879. Baden-Powell won the cup in 1883.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Baden-Powell, *Indian Memories: Recollections of Soldiering, Sport, etc* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1915), 37

<sup>13</sup> Robert Baden-Powell, *Pigsticking; or, houghunting: a complete account for sportsmen; and others ... Illustrated by the author* (London: Harrison & Sons, 1889).

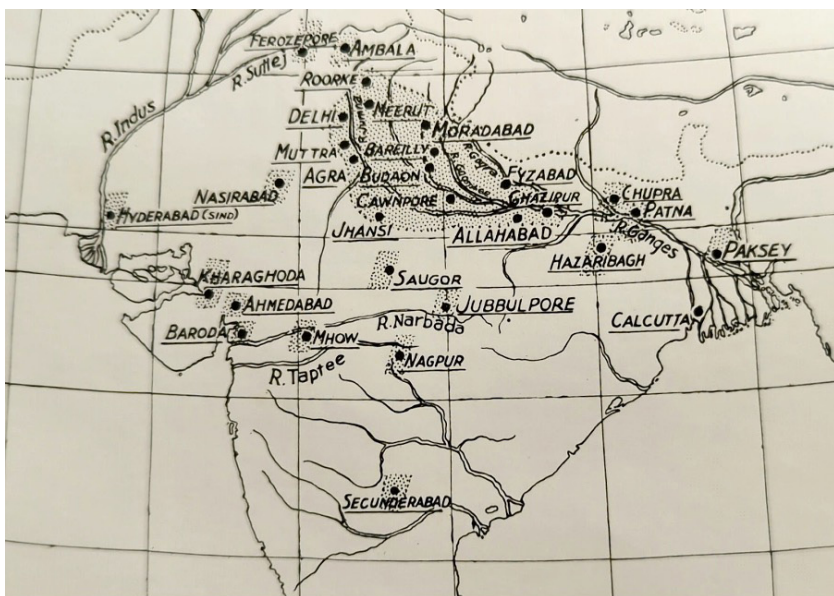


Figure 10.1. Pigsticking map. Source: *Hoghunters Annual*, 3 (1930)

In recent years, historians have examined the myriad ways in which sport, generally, and blood sport, in particular, both shaped and informed understandings of empire.<sup>14</sup> This chapter suggests that the hunt was a significant way in which elite Europeans interacted with, and understood, the *mofussil*.<sup>15</sup> It further suggests the ways in which pigsticking was not a straightforwardly “muscular” sport as such, but was nevertheless understood to be particularly suited to the body of the ruling elite and, moreover, was clearly read as a reflection of rule. The chapter begins to unwrap this association and explores the ways in which pigsticking served to

<sup>14</sup> For the broader literature on sport and hunting, see Joseph Sramek, “‘Face Him Like a Briton’: Tiger Hunting, Imperialism, and British Masculinity in Colonial India, 1800–1875,” *Victorian Studies* 48, Summer (2006); Callum McKenzie and JA Mangan, eds., *Militarism, Hunting, Imperialism: “Blooding” the Martial Male*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2013); Brian Stoddart, “Sport, Cultural Imperialism, and Colonial Response in the British Empire,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, 4 (1988). The literature on pigsticking specifically is smaller, but significant. See, for example Meera Anna Oommen, “Colonial Pig-sticking, Imperial Agendas, and Natural History in The Indian Subcontinent,” *The Historical Journal* 64, 3 (2020); JA Mangan and Callum McKenzie, “‘Pig-sticking is the Greatest Fun’: Martial Conditioning on the Hunting Fields of Empire,” *Militarism, Sport, Europe: War Without Weapons*, ed. JA Mangan: Taylor & Francis, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> The *mofussil* denoted the areas outside the three presidency capitals. The term implies the “up-country”, provincial areas of India. For a more detailed analysis of this understanding, see my *Everyday Empire: Social Life, Spare Time and Rule in Colonial India* (upcoming, 2025).

facilitate a particular elite social network at a time when one's "clubbability" was often determined by sporting prowess.<sup>16</sup> It speaks to the ways in which colonial binaries were muddled by the very elite who so often elevated them.

### The Sporting Memoir and Projections of Power and Adventure

While the disproportionate amount of time spent hunting (rather than "soldiering") which these memoirs reflect might strike the modern reader as unusual, for most of the officer class, this relationship was seen not simply as mutually beneficial, but was believed to make for better officers and rulers, both physically, and more critically, politically. What is striking about the majority of these texts, whether the authors were of civil or military background, is their suggestion of the ways in which particular sports shaped not simply the physical body, but the political one. Sporting memoirs bore titles which combined suggestions of power and adventure while asserting a sense of rational order and rule. Moreover, authors were clear to signal that their authority on the subject came from the positions they held within colonial governance. George Sanderson, whose authority in providing elephant catching tips for his British readers came from his position as Head of the Government's Elephant Capturing Establishment in Mysore, released *Thirteen Years Among the Wild Beasts of India*.<sup>17</sup> Andrew Fraser, a former Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, published *Among Indian Rajahs and Ryots*, which promised armchair readers a Civil Servant's view of the Central Provinces through his encounters with elite and peasantry alike, mediated (of course) through sport.<sup>18</sup>

The number of memoirs which focused on sport and India grew exponentially after the 1857 Rebellion. In this sense, we can read these memoirs as serving a number of important functions. First, they acted as a recruitment lure for service in India through their suggestions of the life of adventure and derring-do which awaited the respectable young man who chose Indian service. Second, in their descriptions of sportsmen who remained calm, if not blasé, in the face of danger,

<sup>16</sup> I am borrowing here from Mrinalini Sinha's arguments on clubbability, access to power and the construction of the colonial public sphere. See Mrinalini Sinha, "Britishness, Clubbability, and the Colonial Public Sphere: the Genealogy of an Imperial Institution in Colonial India," *The Journal of British Studies* 40, 4 (2001).

<sup>17</sup> G. P. Sanderson, *Thirteen years among the wild beasts of India: their haunts and habits from personal observation; with an account on the modes of capturing and taming elephants* (London: William Allen & Co, 1879).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.; Andrew H. L. Sir Fraser, *Among Indian Rajahs and Ryots. A civil servant's recollections & impressions of thirty-seven years of work & sport in the Central Provinces & Bengal ... With 33 illustrations & a map* (London: Seeley, Service & Co, 1912).

whether in the form of a charging boar, or coiled tiger, they reassured readers that such men could just as calmly “manage” any other forms of violence which might emerge in the course of service.

In his *Indian Memories*, Robert Baden-Powell indicated the critical link between “soldiering” and “sport”. He suggested that two sports in particular were the most suitable to equip young officers with the skills needed for successful leadership and imperial service—pigsticking and polo:

It is...an undoubted fact that in pigsticking and in polo...the British officer has the benefit of an exceptionally practical school for the development of horsemanship and of handiness in the use of arms when mounted, and it is a form of training, which appeals to every young officer so much that he learns for himself instead of having the knowledge drilled into him...[Polo and pigsticking] have...altered the lives and careers of many young officers. In addition to the natural training involved, they have completely driven out from the British subaltern the drinking and betting habits of the former generation, and given him in place of these a healthy exercise which also has its moral attributes in playing the game unselfishly; and above all, in the practice of quiet, quick decision and dash that are essential to a successful leader of men.<sup>19</sup>

This connection is perhaps more honest and appropriate than Baden-Powell would have recognized. Both sports were linked by horsemanship, which held its own associations with the upper class. However, pigsticking in particular presents us with an excellent analogy for imperial conquest and rule.<sup>20</sup> It was a blood sport, conducted by a small group of European officers (usually three to four). They often justified the hunt as conducive to the further “civilization” of “wild” India—clearing out the voracious pigs destroying the crops of farmers unable to protect the fields which provided their livelihoods—and thus ‘enabling’ the spread of useful cultivation. In their task, they were assisted by the above-mentioned unnamed (and often unacknowledged), army of Indians, engaged in what was often the most dangerous work of “beating” the fields to flush out the boar. This group was led by a smaller number of trained Indian hunters, the *shikari*,<sup>21</sup> themselves under the “guidance”

<sup>19</sup> Baden-Powell, *Indian memories*., 30–1

<sup>20</sup> Of course, one can draw a similar conclusion with polo. Modern polo had its origins in Manipur, where the game was enjoyed by local elites. A combination of British military elites and tea planters appropriated the game, “refining” and “perfecting” it (in their view) and wrote a formal set of rules. It was quickly adopted by cavalry units across India and exported to England (and beyond).

<sup>21</sup> The term “shikari” itself went through a process of colonial transformation. While originally (in Anglo-Indian understanding) the term implied a lower caste Hindu hunter who made his living trapping animals, it came to mean both the Indian hunter who accompanied Europeans on the hunt (often to track and plan the hunt) and was further appropriated as a general, catch-all term applied

of the European hunt leader. The sport was not overly reliant on physical prowess, but instead “experience” of the Indian landscape and implicit understanding of the intentions of fellow hunters was deemed to be more critical for success.

Pigsticking was seen to not only build certain qualities necessary in an officer, but it also facilitated career advancement through facilitated career advancement through the social network of avid pigstickers and the tent clubs formed to support them. Thomas Gordon, whose India experiences (more unusually) traversed between Civil and Military posts, formed a number of friendships through hunting that would serve his career well.<sup>22</sup> The regular hunting parties that he joined soon introduced him to more senior officers. Through his position in the Poona Tent Club, where he served as Master, Gordon attracted the attention of his higher-ranking officers. Upon his appointment as Commander-in-Chief, General Sir William Mansfield offered Gordon a staff position as Persian interpreter in May 1865. Gordon’s period of staff service was one of duty heavily mixed with leisure. Through pigsticking, Gordon formed friendships with, among others, Lord Mayo (who offered him a staff position) and Sir Alfred Lyall, then Lieutenant Governor of the North-West Provinces.<sup>23</sup> In 1884, after being appointed Brigadier General of the Rohilkand District, he spent the summer months in Naini Tal, where Lyall invited him to meet the Viceroy and Lady Dufferin, during their visit to Lucknow. These social meetings facilitated not just career advancement but supplied Gordon with extra credibility for his proposals for particular reforms within the army.

## Hierarchies of Hunter and Hunted

As Antoinette Burton and Renisa Mawani have argued, human/animal entanglements permeated every aspect of life in the British Empire.<sup>24</sup> Just as there were hierarchies of prey and methods of hunting in Europe which had been, figuratively, shot through with class narratives, so too was this replicated, or fabricated, in India.<sup>25</sup> Both the Indian *shikari* and the lower-class European soldier, when not

to the hunt itself. See Henry Yule, Arthur Burnell, and W Crooke, *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases: And of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical, and Discursive* (London: John Murray, 1886), 827.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Edward Sir K. C. B. Gordon, “A Varied Life: A Record of Military and Civil Service, of Sport and Of Travel in India, Central Asia and Persia, 1849–1902,” (London: John Murray, 1906), 51

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 82, 211

<sup>24</sup> Antoinette Burton and Renisa Mawani, eds., *Animalia: An Anti-Imperial Bestiary for Our Times*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2020), 1.

<sup>25</sup> For a history of class and sport in England, see Emma Griffin, *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain Since 1066* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2007). Similarly, Steinhart argues the

under the guidance of a “gentleman” officer, were often dismissed as dangerous and threatening to the good order of Indian fauna. Both required careful management to achieve what they were “meant” to do.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, ideas of propriety, again linked to class, can be read in the animals which European soldiers were expected or permitted to hunt, when allowed to do so by their commanding officers. In the area directly around the cantonment, a soldier might take aim at squirrels, or perhaps wandering dogs.<sup>27</sup> Wandering further afield (though not too far), William Cairnes suggested that the “sporting” Tommy might find ducks or even snipe to shoot.<sup>28</sup> However, Cairnes was more unusual in this encouragement, as many observers suggested that the European soldier could not be trusted. Incidents where soldiers out hunting for the day had either killed Indian villagers or sacred animals resulted in the introduction of pass systems and the publication of detailed lists of the animals which they were forbidden to kill.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to the wanderings of the amateur soldier-hunter, pigsticking was a more structured affair, most closely associated with the upcountry masculinity of higher-ranking officers and officials. The prolific writer and magazine editor Joachim Stocqueler noted,

Excepting jackals-hunting and snipe shooting, very little field sport is to be enjoyed in the immediate neighbourhood of the Presidency towns...it is the exclusive privilege of the dweller in the interior or among the hills...But those who have lived long in India seldom hesitate to give a preference to life in the Moffusil, for there is endless pleasure in shooting and hunting, and health is promoted by the activity they demand.<sup>30</sup>

ways in which the Black hunter in colonial Kenya was labeled as a “poacher” while elite whites were granted the title of “hunter”. See Edward I. Steinhart, *Black Poachers, White Hunters: A Social History of Hunting in Colonial Kenya* (Oxford: James Currey; Nairobi: EAEP; Athens: Ohio University, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Meera Anna Oommen argues that the relationship between the shikari and European hunter was a fluid, though asymmetrical one and that both groups worked the relationship to their advantage. See Oommen, “Colonial Pig-sticking, Imperial Agendas, and Natural History in The Indian Subcontinent,” 639.

<sup>27</sup> It is telling that these dogs were referred to using a derogatory, caste-based term.

<sup>28</sup> “A British Officer” [W.E. Cairnes], William Elliot Cairnes, and Richard Caton Woodville, *Social Life in the British Army* (London: Harper & Brothers 1899).

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, the Kausauli cantonment handbook for details of the pass system for soldiers and the lists of animals and birds which they were forbidden from shooting. Cantonment Committee Kasauli, *Hand Book of the Kasauli Cantonment* (Kasauli Cantonment Committee 1923), 47–53. For more on the sporting activities of the rank-and-file, see my *Everyday Empire: Social Life, Spare Time and Rule in Colonial India* (upcoming, 2024).

<sup>30</sup> J. H. Stocqueler, *India; Its History, Climate, Productions, and Field-Sports; With Notices of European Life and Manners, and of the Various Travelling Routes* (London: George Routledge & Co,

Hence, those in the city had the pleasure of “society” while the *mofussil* provided more satisfactory opportunities to partake in sport. We can read this dismissive view of Presidency “society” in several ways. First, this was a view heavily informed by understandings of race—that Indians lacked the intellect or wit to contribute meaningfully to “proper” (read: European) society. Second, this was a gendered view which saw the “society” of the cities and larger towns as dominated by and for the wives of higher-ranking officials.

This exercise in ordering also extended to the animal world. In the case of India, three animals ranked at the top of this taxonomy: the elephant, the tiger and the boar.<sup>31</sup> While Europeans hunted elephants for a brief period during the nineteenth century, as Jonathan Saha has argued, they were primarily used as instruments and ornaments: serving in the army and later timber industry, all the while associated with the pomp and pageantry of rule—both Indian and European.<sup>32</sup>

The final animal of this Indian triumvirate, the wild boar, gained its place due to the hunting passions of the colonial elite. Enthusiastic pigstickers layered qualities on the wild boar which secured this ranking. While tigers (slain, or coiled and leaping) and caparisoned elephants featured prominently in sporting accounts and paintings and occupied a particular place in British imaginings of India, in terms of “worthy prey”, the pig outranked both. Perhaps astonishingly, many memoirs dismissed the tiger in a back-handed fashion. While a boar was ‘more daring than any animal in the jungle’,<sup>33</sup> a tiger, though deadly, was “cowardly” sneaking into villages to pick off easy prey, whether cattle or hapless villagers. Alternatively, it

1853), 130. India was administered from its three “Presidency” capitals—the cities of Calcutta (Bengal), Madras and Bombay.

<sup>31</sup> MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting Conservation and British Imperialism*, 178. There is a rich and growing historiography on animals and imperialism. For a cross-animal/cross species examination see Jonathan Saha, *Colonizing Animals: Interspecies Empire in Myanmar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021). On elephants, see Jonathan Saha, “Colonizing Elephants: Animal Agency, Undead Capital and Imperial Science in British Burma,” *BJHS Themes* 2, (2017). Sujit Sivasundaram, “Trading Knowledge: The East India Company’s Elephants in India and Britain,” *The Historical Journal* 48, 1 (2005). On tigers, see Kate Brittlebank, “Sakti and Barakat: The Power of Tipu’s Tiger. An Examination of the Tiger Emblem of Tipu Sultan of Mysore,” *Modern Asian Studies* 29, 2 (1995); Sramek, “‘Face Him Like a Briton’: Tiger Hunting, Imperialism, and British Masculinity in Colonial India, 1800–1875”; Ralph Crane and Lisa Fletcher, “Picturing the Indian Tiger: Imperial Iconography in the Nineteenth Century,” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 42, 3 (2014).

<sup>32</sup> Jonathan Saha, “E is for Elephant,” *Animalia: An Anti-Imperial Bestiary for Our Times*, eds. Antoinette Burton and Renisa Mawani (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2020), 57.

<sup>33</sup> Robert H. Elliot, “Gold, Sport, and Coffee Planting in Mysore. With Chapters on Coffee Planting in Coorg, the Mysore Representative Assembly, the Indian Congress, Caste, and the Indian Silver Question. Being the 38 Years’ Experience of a Mysore Planter,” (London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1894), 154

might “slink” into the jungle or up a tree. More damning still, a tiger might have the audacity to *hide* from hunters. A tiger used its weapons—its teeth and powerful claws—brutishly, while the boar managed its “nimble” tusks with nobility and fearlessness.<sup>34</sup>

In much the same way that European ethnographers applied certain “characteristics” to India’s regions and peoples, so too were boar from different parts of India ascribed different characteristics. The hogs of Bengal, fed largely on sugarcane, were “very large, lusty and savage”<sup>35</sup> while the pigs of the Deccan were more measured, and better able to run over long distances and difficult terrain. Oommen has suggested the ways in which the hunters’ understanding of these boar varieties was later absorbed by naturalists.<sup>36</sup> However, for the purposes of this chapter, what is significant is the ways in which the Indian boar was anthropomorphized—assigned a number of emotional and social characteristics, the most important of which (in the eyes of pigstickers) was its ostensible “nobility”. As opposed to the “common” pig snuffling through the forests of England, the Indian boar was “fine, upstanding, active and courageous.”<sup>37</sup> Indian boar were ascribed an intelligence that other animals were not. Humorous illustrations, such as the one featured in the *Hoghunter’s Annual* of 1939, wryly suggested the parallels between hunter and hunted. (Fig. 10.2) Two boar sit comfortably in a study, wisps from their tusks suggesting cigars, boasting of their exploits. They are surrounded by pictures of the hunt, crossed spears mounted on the wall and, most prominently, two human mounts of their “prey”. The parallels and characteristics even further drew the suggestion of equivalence in the boar / human battle. The boar had the same qualities celebrated by this band of martial elite and was therefore the most worthy “opponent” in battle.

A boar was also valued for its unpredictability. Rather than run in a straight line, it might suddenly “jink”—turn on its pursuer, mid-chase—and make a charge for the man (and his horse). Finally, unlike “lesser” prey, a boar died fighting until the last moment and without a sound.<sup>38</sup> For these military observers, this last point was the most significant in the construction of the boar as a properly worthy adversary. Boar were brave, even in the face of certain death, and this allowed them to rank higher than India’s other, larger, game. Hence the boar’s qualities—of intelligence, bravery and dedication (among others) aligned with the same qualities celebrated by the

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Henry Shakespear, *The Wild Sports of India; with detailed instructions for the Sportsman, to which are added remarks on the breeding and rearing of horses, and the formation of light irregular cavalry* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1862), 35

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 51

<sup>36</sup> Oommen, “Colonial Pig-sticking, Imperial Agendas, and Natural History in The Indian Subcontinent,” 645.

<sup>37</sup> Baden-Powell, *Indian Memories.*, 37

<sup>38</sup> “Varieties of Indian Sport,” *Murray’s* 6, (1889), 64



Figure 10.2. “Snaffles” [Charles Johnson Payne], “I got that one near Meerut,” *Hog Hunters Annual*, 12 (1939).

colonial ruling elite. Thus, ascribed on the boar, he could then be hunted and killed, his numbers carefully managed, for the effective management of the countryside.

For the benefit of readers in England, writers also compared fox hunting with pigsticking. Both were framed as undoubtedly the preserve of the elite, however, the champions of pigsticking assured readers that this sport was far superior in every way—not simply for the character of the prey, but for the way in which hunters interacted with each other. Fox hunting was painted as a more passive sport—a (human) participant could simply enjoy the hunt for the promise of an active gallop through the countryside, or for the stylish clothing one was expected to wear on the hunt. In another paean to pigsticking, *The Sport of Rajas*, Baden-Powell insisted,

“In pig-sticking every man rides to hunt, whereas in fox-hunting the majority (although for some occult reason they will seldom own to it) hunt to ride.”<sup>39</sup> In this assertion, pigsticking required *active* participation from every participant and the true pigsticker was not concerned with such fripperies as clothing. By virtue of the small numbers of men on each hunt, it was also valued for its exclusivity.<sup>40</sup>

The actual logistics of the pigsticking hunt belie this exclusivity. The *shikari* was accompanied by his own assistants. A *puggee*, or trained tracker, was required to detect the pig’s prints, or *pugs*. Coolies carried boxes of tents, guns, ammunition, and other assorted supplies—which stretched beyond the food for meals to casks (and casks!) of port and other imported alcohols. The *shikari* was responsible for arranging the labor of up to 100 villagers as beaters to “beat” the cover in an attempt to force the boar from its hiding place. In some hunts, drummers were employed for the same end. The pay for these men was low—normally two pice per day—and they were required to work from before dawn until mid-day.<sup>41</sup> More worryingly, these men were often the most vulnerable to attack, often gored by the razor-sharp tusks of the boar, with the chase often halted to attend to one of these grizzly gorings.

There was a clear, proscribed set of rules for the hunt. At no point, unless the life of the hunter was in danger, was a gun to be used to dispatch the pig. Instead, the boar was to be impaled with a spear, the length and weight of which varied from region to region. Sows were to be avoided, and pregnant sows especially so. The rules for the Tarra Hog Hunt (formed by officers stationed in Mymensingh, Faridpur and Jumulpur)<sup>42</sup> noted that members who *knowingly* speared a sow were required to pay a gold mohur, and any member who shot a hog (as opposed to using a spear, except in the case of protecting his own life), would be expelled from the club for this “unpardonable and unsportsmanlike offence”.<sup>43</sup> Once the boar was on the run (pursued by the group on horseback), the aim of each hunter was the “first spear”—to be the first in the group to spear the boar and draw blood. This wound was the most highly prized, but it was not usually fatal for the boar. The mechanics of “sticking” the pig were also complex. Instead of throwing the spear at the boar, a rider had to come parallel (or on top of) the boar (putting his horse’s torso and legs at risk) and spear the boar through its shoulder blades (and into the heart). Memoirs made particular note of this proximity. Unlike hunting with rifles, part of the allure of pigsticking was this very closeness.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Baden-Powell, *The Sport of Rajahs* (Toronto George N Morang & Company, 1900), 8.

<sup>40</sup> This counting only included the elite hunters, blurring or barely acknowledging the presence of the many others who facilitated the hunt.

<sup>41</sup> Williamson, *Oriental Field Sports*, 36.

<sup>42</sup> Present day Bangladesh.

<sup>43</sup> J. H. Stocqueler, *The Bengal Monthly Sporting Magazine* (Calcutta: Printed by William Rushton, 1833), March, 225

At the same time that writers proclaimed the boar's innate nobility, it was equally painted as malicious vermin, devouring crops and harassing villagers incapable of preventing an "infestation" of their numbers.<sup>44</sup> Boar often fed or grazed in cultivated fields—mainly rice, sugar or corn. These were typically laid out near villages, and certainly close to human habitation. Sugar cane was widely suggested to be the boar's favorite food. The crop required fertilization with manure and well-tilled ground to flourish and was normally planted near villages with wheat, barley or grains planted around it. Greater numbers of boar took up residence in the fields between November and March when farmers began the harvest.

The season with the greatest number of opportunistic boars was, accordingly, the time when most farmers were occupied in the fields. While some villages turned toward professional *shikari* to rid their crops of boar, others turned to the nearest cantonment. European accounts were careful to portray this relationship as another example of European benevolence, "protecting" India by clearing areas "infested" with boar to allow for the progress of civilization—in the form of cultivation. Many memoirs went further to suggest that pigsticking, and hunting more broadly, was driving forward the march of civilization in India. This, they argued, was due to the fact of lands being cleared of troublesome boar (or tigers), allowing villagers to grow profitable crops on the land. Stoqueler enthused,

While formerly there was a howling wilderness, now villages have sprung up, and the land is cultivated, and the jungle cleared; the march of civilisation has made inroads on the domains lately sacred to the tiger and the bear... The natural consequence of all this is, that the tigers have been obliged to retreat before the approach of civilisation, and where formerly there were hundreds, you now will not find one...<sup>45</sup>

Recounting a similar story of a particular band of hog pests, Major General Burton wrote that the pack were so voracious that "no grain field was safe from their ravages."<sup>46</sup> Ignoring village watchmen sat out to protect the crops (even as they flung stones at them, or chased them with cudgels), the pigs would simply trundle to another corner of the field to carry on eating, or worse, charge the villagers. As suggested above, two themes emerge from these narratives. First, Indian villagers were incapable of protecting their own well-being (and that of their crops) from these aggressive pests of the natural world. Second (therefore), the pigsticker was a benevolent protector and savior of India's villagers, and their crops, doing what

<sup>44</sup> Edmund Francis Burton, *Reminiscences of Sport in India* (London: WH Allen, 1885), 172

<sup>45</sup> Stocqueler, *India; Its History, Climate, Productions, And Field-Sports; With Notices of European Life And Manners, And of the Various Travelling Routes*, 136

<sup>46</sup> Burton, *Reminiscences of Sport in India*, 173

they were “unable” to do themselves. In this way, pigsticking was neatly inserted into ideas of benevolent colonial governance following a narrative which paralleled that of the colonial control of “man-eating” big cats.<sup>47</sup> European rule enabled the “axe and the plough” to reclaim the jungle, forest and wastes of India, while the European sportsman completed this process by holding its wild animals in check.<sup>48</sup> Hence, in this vision, leisure and political power were two sides of the same coin.

For writers such as Stocqueler, the civilizing process of clearance could not be accomplished by an Indian hunter. The caste status of the *shikari* was often remarked on in memoirs. Caste was certainly an enduring obsession for European writers and observers of India, however, the language used around caste in the memoirs repeats a broader pattern which used caste to suggest the one-dimensionality of Indian subjects. Hence, the *shikari* was only able to hunt, the *puggee* only able to track, the *dhobie* only able to wash, and so on. In 1822, Daniel Johnson wrote, “Although there are very few natives in India who sport often for amusement, there are great number whose profession or business is solely to catch or kill animals and game, by which they gain their livelihood; these men [whose forefathers have followed the same profession] are brought up to it from their infancy, and as they pursue no other business through life, they become surprisingly expert.”<sup>49</sup> Countering this image of the ancient Ford Production Line, was the robust, *multi*-talented European sportsman, who not only perfected the art of killing, but, it was implied, more impressively did so as a side-line, a *hobby*.

When not in the employ of Europeans, the *shikari* was often maligned for killing prey around a village to levels which rendered it more difficult for Europeans to find game.<sup>50</sup> Indian hunting activities were also used to make a more pointed political commentary. In the debates over the Arms Act, one Mysore planter suggested that because of more guns being in Indian hands, there were fewer animals available to European hunters.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> For the ways in which the narrative of the maneater was politically crafted, see Shafqat Hussain, “Forms of Predation: Tiger and Markhor Hunting in Colonial Governance,” *Modern Asian Studies* 46, 5 (2012), 2.

<sup>48</sup> Stocqueler, *India; Its History, Climate, Productions, And Field-Sports; With Notices of European Life And Manners, And of the Various Travelling Routes*, 129

<sup>49</sup> Daniel Surgeon Johnson, *Sketches of Field Sports as followed by the Natives of India. With observations on the Animals, etc.* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1822), 1

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Burton’s description of the area around Secunderabad where he dismisses the “poaching natives, of a low and rowdy character, who continually sally forth from the cantonment and shoot any and everything they can get hold of.” Burton, *Reminiscences of Sport in India*, 328

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, the commentary of Robert Elliot, who remarked that due to the “number of guns in the hands of the natives, the game within [the reach of a planter] has been mostly destroyed”. Elliot, “Gold, Sport, and Coffee Planting in Mysore. With Chapters on Coffee Planting in Coorg, the

While lower caste *shikari* were often paid by villages to trap particular animals (for example, big cats or wild boar), those performing this more traditional role were dismissed by memorialists either as “poachers” or unskilled brutes for their use of nets and traps. Writers were quick to note that the Indian *shikari*’s methods of trapping or killing pigs were inferior to the “noble and manly sport” of Europeans hunting on horseback.<sup>52</sup> Instead, *shikari* found their “rightful” place when employed in a servile relationship by British hunters. Major Shakespear insisted, “I never allow my shikarees to shoot. If I did wish to have a man to shoot with me, I would not allow him to carry my rifle.”<sup>53</sup> Instead, the role of his *shikaris*, he suggested, was firmly embedded in the master-servant relationship, a man always ready to hand him a loaded rifle and be able to clean it.

In common with their portrayal of working-class (or poor) peers in England, *shikari* required superintendence, without which they were either portrayed as “low and rowdy” “poachers” who hunted indiscriminately (as opposed to the upper-class European “sportsman” who ostensibly went forth with a sense of selection), or vital but one-dimensional accompaniments to the European huntsman. Memoirs portray the careful organization of the hunt—implying a sense of thought and planning that it was suggested the Indian *shikari* lacked. There are obvious parallels between the way in which the *shikari* and the Indian sepoy were portrayed. The men’s masculinity and knowledge of the task at hand was evident, but both were painted as one-dimensional and unable to truly “lead” or manage. The *shikari*’s sole purpose was tracking and hunting. Thought and forward planning was, on the other hand, the preserve of the European.

## Conclusion

While hunting had long held a place of importance for Indian rulers, the way in which European observers portrayed ruling interactions with the hunt changed by the nineteenth century. Princely hunting was, these memoirs asserted, mere “spectacle”. The prince within this pomp was a passive, if not lazy, participant. In contrast, they asserted the importance of modern, active, and engaged sport, preferably with an opponent who was well-matched. Modern pigsticking fit this bill.

Mysore Representative Assembly, the Indian Congress, Caste, and the Indian Silver Question. Being the 38 Years’ Experience of a Mysore Planter.”, 452

<sup>52</sup> Johnson, *Sketches of Field Sports as followed by the Natives of India. With observations on the Animals, etc.*, 48

<sup>53</sup> Shakespear, *The Wild Sports of India.*, 19

The emotional qualities assigned to the Indian wild boar—fierce, yet noble—meant that it occupied a particular place in the pantheon of Indian animals. Of particular relevance to this volume is the fact that the framing of the boar, and elite engagement with it, continually defied binaries. It was at once the most noble beast of the *kadir* and an aggressive pest whose path of destruction threatened colonial modernity. More critically for the hunter, it meant that it was the most fitting foe for the ruling elite. Through a proliferation of popular sporting memoirs, keen pigstickers were portrayed as multi-talented, active, thinking sportsmen. The qualities which the ruling elite needed to meet and defeat a boar in the field were the same as those needed to manage and control an unpredictable and potentially rebellious landscape.

The rise in popularity of pigsticking came at a particular political moment for the British in India. Lingering anxieties fed ideas about what kind of man was needed to rule an unruly, unpredictable India. The intelligent, sharp-witted officer, who was, nevertheless able to follow the directives of his superiors (whether they be in Calcutta or in a *kadir* in Meerut), was framed as confidently capable, able to manage the approaching tusks of a boar as easily as he could possible political jinks.

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