

Sports-hunting, Fairness and Colonial Identity: Collaboration and Subversion in the Northwestern Frontier Region of the British Indian Empire

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Abstract

This paper examines the place of hunting in the construction of identity for both British colonial sportsmen and indigenous hunters on the north-western frontier region of the British Indian empire, illustrating how their competing moral orders are placed in tension in the colonial encounter through the shared experience of hunting. I show that the British sportsmen generally used ideas of fairness in hunting to mark themselves off from the indigenous hunters while colonial frontier officers specifically, through their adeptness in hunting, differentiated themselves from other colonial officers. I argue that ideas of fairness had a different place in the indigenous hunting practices, and often clashed with the 'moral ecology' of the colonial hunters. Using the example of 'palming off', I show how unlike the clash of moral ecologies in relation to hunting practices, the process through which the identities of colonial hunters were constructed was a precarious and contingent one in which indigenous collaboration played a crucial role.

Keywords: sports-hunting, colonial identity, frontier officers, moral ecology, Gilgit-Baltistan

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INTRODUCTION

During the nineteenth century, the north-western frontier region of the British Indian Empire was the site of an intense geo-political struggle between the Russian and the British empires. During the height of this rivalry, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the British feared an imminent Russian invasion from the mountain passes north of the independent state of Kashmir. The country north of Kashmir stretched across the immense mountain ranges of the western Himalayas, the Karakoram and the Hindukush, into Chinese Central Asia, and was under the control of about half a dozen resource-poor and sparsely populated states of Ladakh, Baltistan (divided into Skardu and Khaplu), Hunza, Nagar, Astor, Chitral, Yasin and Gilgit. Of these states, Skardu and Khaplu in Baltistan, and Ladakh, had already come under the suzerainty of the Kashmir government, which, until 1846 – the year the Princely State of Kashmir was born – had been part of the Sikh Empire of Lahore.

After the defeat of the Sikh Empire of Maharaja Ranjit Singh at the hands of the British army, the British sold Kashmir to the Dogra general, Gulab Singh, as a reward for supporting

the British against his own Sikh ruler, under the Treaty of Amritsar of 1846. With the Treaty, the British negotiated for themselves the role of guardian of the mountain passes in the northern region of Kashmir. From the perspective of the British, the small mountain states on the northern frontier of Kashmir occupied the most strategic position for the defence of India. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Kashmir State and the combined forces of the British empire and Kashmir State, in a series of military campaigns, brought all the small mountain states, on their side of the Central and South Asia watershed (at the northern boundary of Hunza), under their control and established a dual administrative machinery of Political Agencies, in the British case, and Governorships in the case of Kashmir state. In 1891, the last of these mountain states, Hunza, fell to the combined forces of the Kashmir state and the British army.

Once the region was 'pacified' and its boundaries with Russia fixed and stabilised in 1895, its representation among British and other Europeans began to undergo a transformation, from battle ground for the control of the mountain states by the early twentieth century, to a sporting ground for the big game hunters of the British Raj. The British, and even other Europeans

on occasion, shot a large number of ungulates, mainly ibex, markhor and Marco Polo sheep, and relied heavily for their hunting success on the support and services of the indigenous hunters and guides.

Hunting as a symbolic governance

The social history of hunting in South Asia has mostly been analysed in the light of its symbolic role in the governance of society. Among few notable exceptions is Paul Greenough (2001) who argues that the nature of pre-colonial India was not a peaceful and harmonious realm, rather, the danger of wild predators had given rise to a variety of methods of hunting them down. Looking at the colonial practices in elephant hunting, Natasha Nongbri (2003) shows that in the nineteenth century, as the British realised the economic value of a *live* elephant (as a means of transportation), the hunting of elephants was transformed into a colonial state monopoly of capturing live elephants. Nongbri (2003: 3,189) shows that this monopoly over hunting was incomplete and tenuous and hunting and capturing of elephants by indigenous populations existing side by side.¹

Focussing particularly on organised hunts or, the *shikar*, as practiced by the ruling elites, a large amount of literature on hunting focuses on its symbolic political significant, in which a sovereign displays his ability and legitimacy to rule to his people (Pandian 2001, Mackenzie 1988, Allsen 2006, Storey 1991). Medieval rulers, in both Asia and Europe, had kept large hunting preserves which were tied to the politics of state-making and governance. We find many similarities between the earlier period European and Asian royal hunts in terms of their symbolic meaning and material form (Beaver 1999: 191, Allsen 2006).

In sixteenth century England, the royal hunt was under the overall authority of the monarch and “formed a microcosm of the polity, a hierarchy of nobles and commoners defined by a clear division of labour and rank among courtiers, butlers, cook and huntsmen” (Beaver 1999: 191). Similar accounts exist for royal hunts by the Mughals (Pandian 2001, Divyabhanusinh 2005) and local Indian princes (Sramek 2006, Ramusack 2004, Rangarajan 2001, Drew 1875) in which the ritualistic aspects of hunting depicted a hierarchical political and social order² and an invitation to its affirmation.

The literature shows that both the indigenous rulers of colonial India and the British colonialists utilised hunting as a cultural means to display their power as sovereigns. In pre-colonial India, tiger hunting was considered a symbol of kingship by the local society. When the British came to India, they appropriated the symbolic meaning of the tiger hunt to assert their authority over the local society, but in the process imbued it with a different significance (Pandian 2002, Sramek 2006). Within the context of colonialism, hunting represented a different configuration of power than that previously reflected in the relationship between a king and his subject. William Storey argues that for the British sportsmen in India hunting became an indirect way of domination of western cultures

over restless ‘natives’, which also represented the victory of European culture over nature (Storey 1991: 137, 147). Anand Pandian (2001) argues that the British signified tiger hunting more with the display of their caring attitude towards the Indian society, than with the display of their disciplinary powers, as the Mughals had done. This literature also explores the ways in which hunting became for the British colonialists a modality to display and assert a masculine self-identity, over the local society and some fellow country men, an identity which was then articulated with triumphant nationalistic rhetoric (Sramek 2006, Mckenzie 2000, Wonders 2005). Others have argued that big game hunting was not only a way of displaying the superior character of the colonial hunter over that of the local population, it was also a way in which English gentlemen defined their status with respect to the members of their own society. (D.K. Lahiri-Choudhury 1999 cited in Nongbri 2003:3190).

This article briefly discusses these themes as they are relevant to the overall governance of India by the British and the constitution of the identity of British sportsmen. The main focus of this article, however, is on the idea of fairness in hunting, which was introduced in colonial India by the British towards the end of the nineteenth century in the form of hunting codes and game laws, and was an important factor in the making of the British colonialist identity and their governance of India. I start with the assertion that the insistence of the British sportsmen on following fair hunting codes was part of the wider movement of liberal political ideas of the enlightenment era into every aspect of the British social life; ideas based on equality, justice and fairness (Mehta 1999, Metcalf 1997). Within the context of hunting, these ideas were also often influenced by romantic sensibilities associated with the hunting experience. I show that the liberal ideals of fair conduct in hunting were often suspended and violated in practice, and reveal the tenuousness of these ideals in constructing the hierarchical identities of the colonised and the colonisers.

I organise the discussion of this paper into two main sections: the first section pertains to the ideals and identity of British sportsmen, based on the concept of fairness. I argue that the idea of fairness in hunting, along with masculinity (Sramek 2006, Wonders 2005, McKenzie 2000) and mastery over nature (MacKenzie 1988, Storey 1991, Nongbri 2003) was central to the making of the sportsman identity. I focus on two types of sportsmen who hunted in the region: the first type includes those British civil and army officers who came to the ‘hills’ on leave from other regions of the British empire to shoot big game. Most of these hunters came only once on the ‘trip of a lifetime’ though some made several trips over the years. These hunters identified themselves as sportsmen, looking for the biggest trophy head for their personal collection, and hunting for the thrill of adventure and an experience of wild nature. The second type of hunters included the colonial frontier officers, serving in the region, who hunted in the interstices of establishing the rule of empire at its margins. They hunted while surveying the area, meeting

local chiefs or paying routine visits to the frontier region; they generally hunted year round and whenever game was nearby. Both of these hunters, ideally, adhered to certain codes of fair hunting behaviour. I show that the British sportsmen deployed the ideas of fairness and hunting prowess to mark themselves off from the indigenous hunters and advocated protection of game and securing it for their exclusive hunting privilege. Likewise, the British frontier officers, too, through their adeptness in hunting differentiated themselves, not only from the indigenous hunters as most sportsmen did, but also from the fellow British officers, who worked in the office-based administration of the Empire.

In the second section, I look at the role and position that hunting played within the indigenous society. I argue that certain ideas relating to the moral ecology (Dove and Kammen 1997) of hunting such as reciprocity, renewal and regeneration were part of a local cultural economy and were clearly missing in the hunting ethos of the British sportsmen. Ideas of fairness, in particular, such as those emphasised in sport hunting by the British sportsmen in general, such as size of a trophy head and methods of killing, had a different place in indigenous hunting practices, and often clashed with the moral ecology of the colonial hunters. I show that the idea of fairness in indigenous moral ecology was socialised differently than in the British sportsmen culture: the latter represented fairness as a contest between two equal players, while the former represented it as an exchange between two un-equal players.

I then use the example of 'palming off' heads as trophies by indigenous hunting guides to the colonial hunters to show how, unlike the clash of moral ecologies in relation to hunting practices, the process through which the identities of colonial sports hunters were constructed, was a precarious and contingent one in which native collaboration played a crucial role. I argue that the indigenous efforts to profit from these European sportsmen's fetishes or obsessions with trophy heads, as both a marker of their hunting prowess and affirmation of their fair character, made a mockery of the hierarchy of distinction being crafted in the rules of trophy hunting and display.

FAIR HUNTING AND THE MAKING OF THE SPORTSMAN IDENTITY

Ideas pertaining to fairness in hunting practices became popular among the English upper classes at the turn of the eighteenth century when hunting was rendered as a sport. The hunting practices that had been common among upper classes in England during the eighteenth century, such as 'battue', the practice of driving game to the shooters using beaters (Kirby 1993: 244), came to be seen by some as unfair, and not the type of behaviour that 'real' sportsmen would engage in. The increasing use of synthetic and artificial methods in hunting had literally domesticated the experience of hunting³ for this emerging category of sportsmen. As a response to these changes, guide books written in England by gamekeepers started to provide instructions to sportsmen emphasising the

fairness of the chase and authenticity of a natural experience (Daniel 1801, Mayor 1819) as the key elements of hunting. These instructions slowly, over time, became hunting codes which made a clear distinction between hunting as a sport, which built personal physical and moral character, and as a subsistence activity, a base and hence inferior use of the animal, which the lower class practiced.⁴ The pursuit of the animal became more important than the animal itself.

Sport in general means any physical competition between two or more parties who mutually agree to a set of rules by which their relative success will be determined. Of course, in the case of hunting as a sport, the animal which is hunted cannot lay down, or agree to, a set of rules under which it could be hunted. So what is considered as fair game is then imposition of hunting ideals, in the shape of rules, of one class of hunters over another. The contest between the animals and the hunters was as much sport as a struggle between different social classes over their respective ideals and meaning that they attached to hunting and the animals. Through its everyday practice and representation, sport hunting thus compounded the separation of the elite classes from the commoners, and also distinguished individual hunters within elite classes. Hunting was beginning to be associated as much with physical and moral character as with social status, and the control of land among the English upper class (Beaver 1999: 191).

India and the true hunting experience

John Mackenzie states that the colonial encounter provided the opportunity for the British and Europeans to engage in hunting that was not as artificial as it had become in England. He states:

The rediscovery of forests and mountains, particularly those in the genuine wild, brought human beings face to face with, and forced them to participate in, nature in the raw. (1988: 27)

In addition to acquiring trophy heads, one of the main attractions of and motivations for hunting for the sportsmen, at a personal level, was the promise of its unique and aesthetically pleasing experience. However, hunting also became a means for the sportsmen to display nationalism which, in the colonial context, intertwined with ideals of a masculine identity of the British hunter (Mckenzie 2000:71). The Shikar Club, established in 1908 in England at the high noon of imperialism by men from Eaton and Rugby, viewed hunting in the colonies as a 'real sport' with its "pursuit of wild animals on their own 'primeval and ancestral ground, as yet un-annexed and un-appropriated in anyway by man'" (Mckenzie 2000: 75, quoting Prichard 1910). Callum Mckenzie states (2000: 70) "...personal and national regeneration through hunting underpinned the ideology of the Shikar Club" (2000: 73). Indeed it was within this context of regeneration of a masculine national identity that British hunting came to the colonies as an adventure sport. As Selous writing about his hunting experiences in India states:

to find true wild pagan sport, such as stirs the blood and brings to the top the hardest and manliest instincts in human nature, one must go to the hills of Northern India... (Selous 1893: 91 cited in Mckenzie 2000:75).

Metaphors of hunting were also used by British sportsmen in colonial India to signify at once a symbolic conquest of the physical geography of India and attainment of a political and moral destiny (Storey 1991:147, Mackenzie 1988: 10). A. J. Stone, a colonel in the British Indian army and a regular visitor to the north-western frontier region, writes, referring to British colonial officers;

Until he has shot his tiger in the hot and steaming forests of the plains, and his *Ovis ammon* at 15,000 feet above sea level, he considers that he has not accomplished his manifest destiny (1896: 129).

Such articulation of hunting and imperialism by the British, however, was not always the case. In the initial years, especially during Company rule, the British hunted with the indigenous ruling classes, often emulating their methods, which according to the English hunting code could not be considered as fair. Sivaramkrishnan (2004) notes that British attitudes towards indigenous Indian hunting changed dramatically in the second half of the nineteenth century. Sramek (2006) also shows that in the first half of the nineteenth century the British officers of the East India Company, serving in the various Indian states, regularly hunted with the local princes and rajas using *their* methods and techniques. Hunting thus provided, argues Sramek (2006:661), a constant avenue of collaboration and interaction between the colonised and the coloniser. After the 1870s, argues Sramek (2006: 663), three important changes occurred that separated colonial hunting from that of the Indian practices. Firstly, the development of new technology, meaning fire arms; secondly, the Forest Act of 1878 that made the forest inaccessible to the indigenous population; and thirdly, the pomp that came to be associated with the Raj. During this period, the British sportsmen, especially those hunting tigers, started to view the hunting methods of the local princes and rajas with disdain because they lacked the sporting element so crucial to their new hunting experience (Sivaramkrishnan 2004: 371). These distinctions were emphasised in the aggressive nationalistic discourse of the British Raj of the late nineteenth century.

The sportsman and the frontier officer

Due to its immense size there existed various ecological systems in Kashmir. The area of Kashmir, which is the focus of this paper, lies to the north of the main Himalayan barrier in the valley of the Indus, to the north and east of which runs the Karakoram range. The region consists of the valleys of Baltistan, Astor and Gilgit. Much of the area lies in a rain shadow. However, higher elevations may receive up to 2,000 mm of snowfall annually and snow melt provides a permanent

water source, feeding rivers and streams. Habitat types are determined by both altitudinal and climatic factors, in turn influencing the distribution of plants and animals. The main habitats include the Dry Alpine and Permanent Snowfield Zone, the Himalayan Moist Alpine Zone, and Dry Temperate Coniferous Forests. The flora and fauna of the region is diverse with several globally significant species represented, including the Snow Leopard (*Uncia uncia*), Markhor (*Capra falconeri*), Himalayan Ibex (*Capra ibex siberica*), Blue Sheep (*Pseudois nayaur*), Musk Deer (*Moschus moschiferus*), and a range of avifauna.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the independent princely state of Kashmir had become a paradise for big game hunters of the British Raj. Colonial army and civil officers swarmed into the hills in the Vale of Kashmir and the mountains beyond to the region today called Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan, stalking the wild game. Count Hans von Koenigsmarek, a major in the General German staff based in India, wrote in 1910:

There is scarcely a single young officer or official who does not make an expedition to the Himalayas as soon as he can after getting to India. Each one of them hopes to make a record...they are filled with the one desire to bring back the best head or to shoot the rarest animal at the greatest height (1910: 94–95).

The British sportsmen shot Kashmir stag, snow leopard, brown and black bears, ibex, blue sheep and the two most sought after prizes, markhor and Marco Polo sheep. The visitor's guides to Kashmir, as far back as 1884, mentioned the area for its potential for big game hunting of such charismatic species as markhor and Kashmir stag.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, hunting for trophies – hunting specifically for body parts, mainly the horns, to be displayed – became a central feature of a new hunting experience in England, reaching the height of popularity in the late Victorian era (Peck 2003: 14). The experience was furnished by the vast hunting opportunities in the colonies, such as India, where the main motive of the British sportsmen was to obtain the biggest trophy of the rarest species. In the north-western frontier region of their Indian empire, the British sportsmen competed for the biggest trophy of the mountain ungulates – ibex, markhor and Marco Polo sheep. John Collett, a British army officer and sportsman, reported that “the country around Gilgit is said to abound with markhor, which here are very large animals with remarkably fine horns” (1884: 141). Von Koenigsmarek, writes about the British hunters in the region:

They do their stalking with a yard-measure in their pockets. They only lie in wait for the longest antlers – every extra inch forming an addition to their triumph. Thus every spring and autumn a regular competition takes place in the Cashmere mountain-world, and not only there, but also at the capital, Srinagar, and all over the valley thoughts are given up to big-game shooting and records (1910: 95-96).

These British sportsmen came to the region for shooting for a period of between two to five months at a time; in the initial years hunting within the valley of Kashmir, and later, in the early twentieth century, travelling as far north through the regions of Baltistan, Ladakh, Gilgit and Hunza, on the Chinese and Russian frontiers.

Srinagar was the starting point where all major logistical arrangements for the hunting trip were made. Sportsmen acquired a suitable *shikari*⁵ – or professional hunting guides – food, and relied on local villagers to accompany them on the shooting trips. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the *shikaris* were regularly serving in the emerging shooting ‘industry’ driven by the British sportsmen. The experience and local knowledge of the *shikaris* played an important but under acknowledged role in the success of British sportsmen, a point I discuss later in the article. The hunting parties usually consisted of a single officer, accompanied by a cook, a second *shikari* and somewhere between 3 to 20 porters.

The British sportsmen planned their shooting trips carefully. They stayed in a canvas tent furnished with a camp-bed, a chair and a table. On hunting expeditions, the sportsman sahib’s tent was always pitched on the most favourable ground, usually away from the sleeping places of the porters, marking off a distinction between the hunter and his staff. The sportsmen directed all camp activities, including sometimes the menu. Most of the food items consisted of both tinned English food and alcohol, and locally available material such as rice, flour and dry milk, and tobacco. The sportsmen kept notes and made sketches while stalking or sitting in their tents which they often put in a book form. Hunting in the wild and high mountains of the northern frontier had a distinctly British Victorian colour to it; sportsmen often recounted stories of lighting up a pipe after eating a dinner of roast beef and vegetable soup to reflect upon the glory of day’s shooting.

Game laws, fire power and fair hunting

During the early 1890s there were no game laws in Kashmir and the code of conduct for fair hunting practices was more of a gentleman’s agreement within the British sportsmen community than a set of formally laid down rules. In general, when it came to ibex and markhor, it was considered fair to shoot the biggest head only; and hunting while stalking the animal, rather than driving them with the help of beaters to shoot them. The sportsmen shot large numbers of wild game; some shooting as many as 30 trophies in one season (Darrah 1898: 2). By the end of the nineteenth century intense hunting pressure had driven the Kashmir markhor to local extinction in the Pir Panjal range around the Vale of Kashmir (Lawrence 1895: 113). The markhor, a goat endemic to the region, was one of the most sought after species of big game hunters for its unique trophy. A member of the *Caprinae* family, it is a wild goat with flaring horns that can reach a staggering length of five feet. The markhor remained of particular attraction to the sportsmen who preferred it over its cousin, the Asiatic ibex.⁶ It was found in the Vale of Kashmir and north of the Burzil

Pass in Astor, Baltistan and Gilgit valleys.

Throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century, the sportsmen hunted markhor of all sizes with relative impunity: a small head was better than no head, was the un-stated policy of the sportsmen. So popular was markhor hunting among the British sportsmen in this era that every small valley, or a *nallah*, of markhor habitat used to get occupied at the beginning of each summer season. Markhor had been hunted out in the Vale of Kashmir as early as the 1890s and was now meeting the same fate further north in Baltistan and Bunji (Darrah 1898: 200, Neville 1903)⁷. In the late 1890s, for example, all major hunting grounds in the Astor and Skardu region used to get occupied by sportsmen during the onset of the summer season (April–November). For example, Stone writes:

I heard today that Dichal valley was not likely to be vacant for some time, or indeed at all. Every one of the usual Markhor valleys was occupied (1896: 42).

A major factor in successful hunting by the British sportsmen was technology. The ever-improving technology – guns and bullets – rendered hunting too easy. Kirby (1993) states that by 1750, shooting on the wing (shooting a bird in flight) which was unheard of only 50 years before had become universal practice. The Mannlichers and the Henery-Martinis brought a previously unheard-of fire-power to the north-western frontier region. Local ancient matchlock guns were inaccurate and had a pathetic range of 50 yards. By contrast the modern English weapon could pierce the heart of a markhor from 300 yards. The local *shikaris*, who accompanied the sahibs as guides, envied these guns and frequently pleaded with the sahibs to leave the guns with them, as a form of payment or gift, after the hunting trip was over (Kennion 1910: 42).

Once a sportsman had occupied a valley, he stayed there until the end of the summer or until he had ‘shot out’ the game therein. In some cases some desperate but amusing tactics were deployed to reach the favoured markhor valley. In one documented case, a sportsman devised a plan to secretly take over an advanced hunting party in the veil of darkness, but later decided to revert to a toss of coin to decide who would get to choose first the valley of his desire (Darrah 1898: 234). As it became more and difficult to bag a good head of a markhor, the size of those animals which were shot became smaller and smaller. This decrease in the size of the head and declining numbers of other animals gave rise to a movement among sportsmen to conserve some species from going completely extinct (Lawrence 1895: 116). In the late nineteenth century the Kashmir Game Preservation Department (KGPD) was set up by Colonel Wigram, an avid sportsman himself, as its first secretary. The purpose of the Department was to decrease hunting pressure by introducing a set of rules under which ‘game’ could be shot. The ideal hunting code which the sportsmen had adhered to, thus far had failed to give the prey a fair chance in practice; rules of fair hunting practices had to be institutionalised formally through the introduction and enforcement of law.

Koenigsmarek describes some of the elements of the newly introduced game laws:

Each aspirant receives a clearly defined district, and may only shoot a certain number of heads of game. For every sixty rupees one is entitled to shoot two markhors, two ibex, two barasinghs, two black bears, and one red bear (1910: 94-95).

During the first decade of the twentieth century, the demand for hunting far outstripped the supply of the hunting areas, especially that of markhor. The drive to bag a record size trophy of the 'patriarch' resulted in the shooting of many not so magnificent heads. Bairnsfather, who hunted in Astor and Gilgit in the 1913, looked for a "really good head" of markhor and wrote the following:

Many attempts I made to add really good head of Markhor to my collection, but somehow fate always seemed against me.... True I soon bagged several of medium size without much difficulty, but, though I toiled by hardest, searching out every possible corner, my time was within three days of expiring before I even set eyes on one of the right sort." (1914: 36).

Despite the game laws being in place the local markhor populations continued to suffer considerably after the first decade of the twentieth century.⁸ In 1913, the KGPD revised the Game Laws to put a complete ban on markhor shooting in the Bunji valley in Gilgit and Rondu valley near Skardu, which harboured one of the biggest populations of the Astor markhor. Game Law Notification 1913-14, Sambat 1970 stated: "Killing of Markhor is prohibited in all nallahs flowing into Indus above Rondu in Baltistan" (Houghton 1913: 316).⁹ Hunting which started as a recreational activity was now becoming part of the imperial administration.

Some elements of fair hunting and the liberal influence

The sportsmen viewed the wild animals under chase as deserving of fair play, of being given an equal chance in an encounter. I argued earlier that fairness could only be conceived in this way because of a wider social context in Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in which liberal ideas, based on justice, equality and fairness, became popular. I am not claiming to show how these liberal ideas actually infiltrated into the minds of the sportsmen, rather I am making an assertion that a look into the making of the fair hunting code, say for ibex and markhor, could illuminate the influence of liberal thoughts on it. I will now look at the main elements of fair hunting conduct in ibex and markhor shooting, and discuss how each one of them could be shown to be reflective of liberal ideals of work ethics, equality and individualism, and self discipline.

First, the size of the trophy head: sportsmen were allowed to take the biggest males only. This criterion was based on the fact

that because the biggest male ibex or markhors stay at higher altitudes than juvenile males and females, they are thus relatively difficult to reach and kill. Karen Wonders (2005: 272) looked at the social forces that lie behind the motivations for collecting trophy heads and the symbolic meanings that are reflected in hunting for trophies and their display. Using visual analysis of hunting iconography, from the Rocky mountain of British Columbia, Canada, Wonders states that the inaccessible and dangerous habitat of the prey is always emphasised in the visual representations of hunting which helps construct the image of the sportsmen as one who dares and takes risks¹⁰. Thus experiencing hardship and risk in the way of attaining ones objective, a good trophy head in the case of sports hunting, was constituted as fair play. Indeed such a meaning of fairness was part of the bourgeoisie capitalist ethos of the nineteenth and early twentieth century which emphasised virtues of hard work, and presented a rational and unambiguous relationship between actions and consequences, stripped of their immediate social context.

The second element of fair hunting practice was the prohibition of driving the game to shoot. As we shall see in the next section, the communal hunting practices of the indigenous societies, which were primarily driven by subsistence, were seen as unfair because they did not give a fair chance to the prey to escape. A fair hunt, in the British sportsmen conception was a contest or competition between two equal individuals. The sportsmen often represented the large trophy size ungulates as counter-part to the hunter in nature. Trophy size markhor were often referred to as a 'patriarch' or 'king of rock' by the British sportsmen. As Colonel Von Koenigsmarek, a sportsman, writes:

In the width and thickness of its antlers and branches the barasingh of Cashmere is not far behind the wapiti. And where is the sportsmen whose heart will not beat harder when stalking a markhor, at the sight of this king of rocks, with his majestic, spreading, twisting horns, peculiar to himself! (Von Koenigsmarek 1910: 72).

There are deep gendered undertones in these appreciations for the wild ungulates. The prey is considered as having an equal masculine status in nature as the hunter, thus it deserved the ethical and fair treatment that the hunter might himself deserve.¹¹ Once the hunter and the hunted were imagined as being equals, hunting itself could now be imagined as a fair sport, as the players in the sport were imagined to possess symmetrical powers. It was this imagined equality between the two that both constructed and produced hunting as a (fair) sport. For example, Stone writing about shooting an ibex and how it represents a 'fair' hunt states:

But the ibex is a gentleman in his manners and customs as compared with his spiral-horned cousin lower down mountain; he gives you all the chances that a fair-minded animal should give an honest foe. He is nevertheless "all there" when reading his ancestral hills, and, after you have circumvented him, you feel that he has been a worthy opponent (1896: 27).

Indeed, as we shall see later, sports hunting was far from a contest between equals, the European hunter and the local fauna, rather the local *shikaris* and guides played an important role in it. The emphasis on individual contest, rather than communal effort, also helped discard ambiguity that must certainly creep in, over who actually shot the animal and thus lay claim to the ownership of the trophy head. Unlike in the case of indigenous hunting practices in which meat, the prime focus of the hunt, could be divided up amongst the participants, the trophy heads were indivisible and un-sharable.

The third element that constituted sport hunting as fair was the restriction of timing and the limit on the number of animals that could be shot. This concern was based on the fast rate of depletion of the game species, and the logic of the newly emerging ecological sciences. The restriction of time and quantity was part of the larger shift towards routinisation and bureaucratisation of every aspect of life through work hours, legislation and administration in the European societies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This third element of fairness in hunting was then reflective of the much praised liberal virtues of disciplining and restraining the self. The hunting practices of the indigenous people by the sportsmen were denigrated because the former did not show restraint in hunting, and hunted year around. The indigenous people hunted opportunistically. Even the big battue organised by the local rajas were response to an opportunity, such as presence of a big herd of ibex or markhor at a suitable hunting location. Individual hunters hunted opportunistically when herding their livestock on high pastures during the summer months.

Hunting and the frontier officers: The Gilgit Agency

In the early twentieth century the Gilgit Agency became one of the most sought after stations by the sporting officers of the Raj. During this era the British colonial officers combined their routine surveys of the northern passes with big game shooting expeditions.¹² Colonel L. R. Kennion was a British military officer stationed in Gilgit during the early part of the twentieth century. He wrote:

I had in the meantime been almost continually employed on duty in the best shooting-grounds in the further Himalaya, and had shot many ibex, and good head among them too" (1910: 29).

About his hunting experiences in the region he further writes:

Ibex and Markhor were, of course, our main interest, and though the cares of a district prevented me being always on the wander, it was rare that we had not news of existence somewhere in the neighbourhood, of a mighty old buck of one or other of the wild goats (1910: 30).

Raleigh Treveleyen whose father, Walter Treveleyen, served as the military Advisor to the Political Agent in Gilgit in the 1920s

recounts a similar story about his father, hunting and chasing game while surveying and patrolling the frontier of the empire:

There was no danger from the Russians in our time, though one of Walter's jobs was to visit the northern passes occasionally. His military obligation could hardly have been all that exciting. Indeed I know that for him it was an ideal life. He played polo, tennis, fished, went on shoots and stalked snow leopard... In the drawing room we have skins of two black bears he had shot, and dotted round the bungalow were heads of markhor and ibex... (1987: 8).

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, hunting had become an institutional practice of the Gilgit Agency where the office of the British Political Agent began to keep a record of animals shot by the Agency staff. This 'Big Game Register of Gilgit Agency' contained record head sizes of markhor, ibex and Marco Polo sheep shot every year between the years 1910 and 1970 by the Gilgit Agency staff (Khan 1970:351).¹³ The frontier officers used hunting to mark off their difference not only from indigenous hunters, as the sportsmen did, but also from fellow British or Europeans colonial officers. There were two ways in which they differentiated themselves.

Firstly, the frontier officers demonstrated their adeptness at hunting, and resulting familiarity with local geography and knowledge of social and cultural system, to lay claim to authority within the imperial bureaucracy. Hunting accounts in which the author displayed knowledge of the geographical location of mountain passes, the availability of natural resources, and temperaments of the local communities, served to bolster his own authority over matters such as how the frontier region should be governed (Younghusband 1982). Other colonial departments, such as the military establishment or the foreign and political departments, were handicapped by the fact that they did not have first hand knowledge of these places and thus had to depend on the authority of the frontier officers.

Secondly, the frontier officers constructed certain idealised notions of themselves as being more masculine than other colonial officers, because they hunted regularly. As Durand, the political agent of Gilgit in the 1890s writes about his new assistant in Gilgit:

My assistant, Lieutenant J, Manners-Smith, had been appointed from the Political Department and joined a few days before we left Srinagar. I was delighted to get him, for he was a wonderful man on a hillside, *a good shot*, [emphasis added] a hard rider, absolutely fearless, and most cheery... You want men on the frontier, not machines to grind out files of paper (1900: 123).

They juxtaposed the vitality of the frontier region, as represented hunting opportunities, with the decay of center, as represented by the British bureaucratic system of governance to mark off two distinct ways in which colonial officers served the empire. The frontier officers disliked the grinding procedures

of a large bureaucracy which they thought was more concerned with official decorum than real work which they were doing out on the frontier. For example, writing about his disdain for the administrative system of Calcutta's centralised bureaucracy Durand wrote:

I went down in January 1889 to Calcutta to await developments. It was a good opportunity to see something of the working of the Government mill, which, at the moment I got to Calcutta, was grinding exceedingly slow, so far as my business was concerned (1900: 118–119).

It is in this context of liberal ideas of real and hard work, in the outdoors, that hunting becomes a modality for a frontier officer to indirectly prove his superiority over other imperial officers who worked in the offices pushing papers.

MORAL ECOLOGY OF THE COLONIAL AND INDIGENOUS HUNTERS

Inspired by Jim Scott's work on moral economy, Michael Dove has introduced us to the notion of moral ecology (Dove 1996, Dove and Kammen 1997). In his study of rice and rubber producing Dayaks in Indonesia, Dove states that the two production systems are recognised by the Dayaks as being governed by two different moral or transactional orders (1996). He argues that rice production is mediated through a transactional order which is based on the long-term reproduction of a social and cosmological order, whereas rubber production focuses more on the short-term maximisation of personal benefits and profits (1996: 49). Using this point as a theoretical insight, I argue that hunting as a 'production system' belonged to different transactional orders for the British and the indigenous hunters, and thus the element of fairness – essentially a moral question – in hunting played out differently in the two systems.

The poverty of the indigenous states

The literature on the social history of Indian hunting, both colonial and indigenous, has focussed the attention on the symbolic meaning of hunting to the colonial and indigenous rulers. Because of this attention to symbolic meaning, the comparative analyses of hunting practices of the British colonialists and the indigenous elites, the local rajas and princes, have looked for correspondence between the hunting methods of the two. For example, if there was a hierarchy of game animals to be shot in the European context then there existed a similar hierarchy within the Indian context (Ramusack 2004: 158, Sramek 2006: 662). Likewise, if the European rulers used the hunting campaigns as military and political campaign, then, some Indian rulers, especially the Mughals, did the same (Pandian 2001).

These comparative accounts, important as they may be, were not necessarily representative of the general situation of colonial encounters in hunting in the British Indian Empire.

At times there were more than 500 indigenous states within the British Indian Empire, and their size, wealth, population, resources and courtly style and pomp varied immensely. Some states were almost as big as England itself (Kashmir and Hyderabad for example), and had rulers who were some of the richest persons in the world, and for whom hunting was a royal sport. In these states the prevailing social hierarchy could be reflected symbolically in the arrangement of the hunting methods. Tiger and lion hunting by the rulers of some of the western and central India states was more about their symbolic ability to rule than merely a show of their hunting prowess.

But what about hunting by rulers of small and resources-poor indigenous states, which were so poor that they were considered an economic burden on the Empire. The rulers of the small mountain states on the north-western frontier region – in late nineteenth and early twentieth century British India – lacked the minimum required economic resources to engage in hunting as a show of their power. There were other economically less draining sports, such as polo, which fulfilled that function. As mentioned earlier, the Kashmir forces had captured the frontier regions of Ladakh and Baltistan region in the first part of the nineteenth century. The small states of Skardu, Khaplu, Astor, Gilgit and Hunza were effectively ruled under three tier systems. They had their own rulers, now only enjoying ceremonial powers, mainly to collect taxes for the Kashmir State, then there were the Kashmir Governors, and then there were the Political Agents. Some of the states, for example near Gilgit valley, were small enough to be ruled as one combined unit with one Political Agent and one Governor, but with multiple local rajas and mirs.

One can imagine the economic condition of these states by comparing the size of their areas, populations and revenues with the Kashmir State itself, of which they were a part. For example, at the turn of the twentieth century, the total area of Kashmir was 222,000 km² and had a population of about 1.5 million people. Of this total area about 170,000 km², belonged to the conquered states of Ladakh, Baltistan and Gilgit. The total area of these indigenous states represented more than 70% of the total area of the Kashmir State, but had a population of 100,000 people, or around 7% of its total population. Moreover, out of the total revenue of the Kashmir State of Rs. 5.7 million, these states contributed about Rs. 60,000, or around one percent of the total revenues in 1896 (GoI 1890: 543). The harsh climatic conditions because of the immense mountain landscape meant that the region and its states were extremely poor and grain deficient. The poverty of the region's natural production was also reflected in the style and status of the local rulers. In some ways, the term raja or prince was a misnomer when applied to the ruler of these indigenous states, especially when they were compared to rulers of some of the wealthy and truly princely states of India.

For example, Jane Duncan, one of the few female British travellers who passed through the region in the first decade of the twentieth century was hackled by the raja of Khaplu, with whom she stayed, over his demand for a 'chit,' or a letter of

recommendation, and five rupees, as *bakshish* and a bar of soap for the rani. This prompted Duncan to say the following:

“No so very long ago I imagined a rajah to be gorgeous and quite unapproachable individual in a gold coat wreathed with pearls, with a diamond aigrette a foot high in his cap, and to think that I should live to be asked by one for a chit’ (1906: 263).

We know that almost similar state of economic prosperity existed in Hunza where in 1891 the Mir Safdar Ali Shah became upset at the British Political Agent because he did not leave his tent for him as a gift (Durand 1900).

The point I am trying to make here is that in such economically harsh conditions and resource poor states, hunting and its control by the local rajas and rulers was a more a matter of controlling and appropriating refugee resources in the environment than deploying it as a tool of symbolic governance. True, the local rajas had developed methods of hunting which were different from the common villagers, but these differences were driven primarily by the need to capture resources, and the symbolic aspect was only its after effect. For example, the battue or large scale ‘slaughtering’ of the animals through the method of driving the game, organised at the orders of the local rajas in which they sometimes participated, was more to do with its efficiency as a means of harvesting and appropriating resources from nature, using organised labour, than to do with either threatening a recalcitrant subordinate elite, or showing support to an allied ruler. In other words, if hunting by the princes of rich Indian states was undertaken mainly for its symbolic value, then for the indigenous rulers of the north-western frontier region, hunting represented what it seems to represent, that is, killing animals for subsistence.

Sportsmen view of indigenous hunting practices

As debates over conservation of markhor and other game species of the north-western frontier region started amongst the British sportsmen at the turn of the twentieth century, the ubiquitous ‘native’ and his hunting habits began to be implicated in the degradation discourse. Perhaps predictably, indigenous hunting practices, which competed with the British demand for sport, became an object of criticism mostly on the grounds of fairness: the indigenous hunters did not follow a fair hunting code which the sportsmen followed. Such deprecating views of indigenous hunting practices were popular despite the fact that the British sportsmen were aware that the indigenous population did not hunt for sport, as their primary motive. This awareness of the difference in motivation between the indigenous hunters and British sportsmen is well reflected in the following quote from Stone:

The keen-eyed goatherd, not many degrees less wild than his quarry, always takes his matchlock when his flocks mount to the grassy uplands for their summer pasturage. In a few days he has marked down all the game within reach.

He bides his time, and when a certain opportunity occurs, he bags the biggest markhor or ibex on the hill. But he has not been mentally measuring the splendid horns, or stroking the flowing beard of the patriarch of the flock; his one idea is meat, accordingly he singles out the largest animal. He may become possessed of the most splendid trophy, but his first act is to smash the horns with his hatchet, split open the skull, and throw the brain on the blazing logs of his camp fire...the remains of the head – to be picked up years after, perhaps, by the casual Saxon, who sighs over the lost splendour of “the largest horns he ever saw” (1896: 23-24).

The indigenous hunters, the British sportsmen complained, disregarded the seasons and the gender and age (trophy size) of the animals; they also often engaged in driving game with dogs and men and then engaging in ‘slaughter’ or ‘butchery’ (Stone 1896, Houghton 1913). For example, describing native hunting practices in Kulu district in Ladakh, Stone writes:

In severe winters, when the snowfall is heavy and animals cannot escape, they are surrounded by gangs of villagers, driven into deep snow, and then clubbed to death: a few years ago, when there was an unusually severe winter, the slaughter was immense (1896: 137)

The game laws introduced in the late nineteenth century by the KGPS, while they limited the hunting of the colonial officers and sports hunters, rendered hunting by the indigenous society as illegal or out of their reach. The laws, for example, required that licences be purchased for hunting, and set high licence fees well out of the reach of the indigenous hunters.

The British sportsmen’s emphasis on fairness codified hunting differently from the indigenous representation of hunting: the former saw it as a sport, a form of entertainment; while the latter saw it as subsistence.¹⁴ There was a general failure of the code as far as the indigenous hunters were concerned. Stuart Hall has stated that a general failure of code occurs when a concept fails to convey the encoded message or meaning across a different culture because in that culture there is an absence of such a concept (2001: 25). Building on this idea, I argue that it is true that for some indigenous hunters, the thrill of hunting was as important as the attraction of obtaining the meat, but hunting purely for the thrill of it, and not associated with subsistence, did not exist. This was true for both the indigenous rulers and the local villagers. Or to put it very starkly, the indigenous hunters always used the meat, as the compared to the sportsman, who almost never utilised the meat. Thus fairness in hunting, when hunting is conceived of a sport, did not exist in the indigenous hunting practices. This however did not mean that the idea of fairness, and the importance of trophies, outside the concept of sport hunting was not present in the indigenous hunting practices. Rather, the meaning of fairness and the significance of trophies for the indigenous hunter was set within a different set of beliefs about nature and the relationship between society and nature. In the indigenous belief system, hunting did not acquire a

competitive and an adversarial mode between nature and society, or between two individuals, as it had in sport hunting. Whereas in sport hunting the aim was to win (as conquest) *over* nature through the process of fair and healthy competition, in the indigenous hunting the aim was to win (as breadwinner) subsistence *from* nature through the process of fair exchange. These two conceptions of hunting reflect two different types of relationship between society and nature and hence two different types of moral ecologies. In the light of almost no first hand account from indigenous hunters about their hunting experience and motivation, I have relied on an opportunistic readings of the colonial text, contemporary literature on the topic from the region, and my own ethnographic data from the region to fill in this gap.

Kennion (1913) recounts a prayer said by an indigenous hunter before he set out on his trip, which might reflect how the native hunting practices incorporated elements of fairness. Kennion states that before setting off the hunter offered the following prayers:

“Oh guardian of this golden glen, this slave has approached thy abode. Look on him with kindness. I have come under thy silken sleeve and the hem of thy shirts. Of thy flocks, grant me but one beast. Let him be such as has no wool, has no milk, and is unable to keep up with the herd, that is thin weak, lame, and even blind. Give keenness to my eyes and power to my limbs, so that I may slay one animal. Safeguard me from all danger.” (1910: 119)

The above prayer reflects indigenous ideas of fairness in hunting and shows how the relationship between nature and society is perceived in hunting. In the indigenous conception, nature is an animated entity with its own agency. The code of fair conduct in hunting is to follow the culturally permissible norms of asking. When the indigenous hunter hunted he asked not for the best, rather for the weakest, the lamest, even the blind. Such asking made it easier for the giver to reply positively. The hunter asked for safety, for protection from the same nature from which he was taking.

The sportsman on the other hand just took, taking what he thought he deserved. What he deserved was determined by his own abilities rather than the agency of nature in the indigenous hunter's case. The indigenous hunter considered nature and its bounty, such as success at hunting, as variable and as ever-changing over which he had little control. For him any bounty or gift that he received was fair, even the 'blind'.

Contemporary research from the region shows that in the world views of indigenous societies, the non-habitable physical environment, what we may call wilderness or nature, is considered as a parallel universe. For example, my own ethnographic research from the village of Shimshal in Hunza region shows that the local people believe that the high mountain areas, where game is found, is under the control of *mergich*, super-natural beings to whom the wild ibex and markhor are the same what domestic sheep and goats are to the people: their livestock. For the Shimshali hunters then hunting

means an exchange based on the idea of reciprocity and fair conduct. It is here that trophies of hunted game animal comes to play an important role in the indigenous moral ecology. The Shimshalis believe that success in hunting comes from propitiating the *mergich* through their own personal conduct and by offering them trophies of the animals that they shot. Rather than on the walls of the hunters' homes, to show off to their guests, these trophies are found placed on rocks throughout the region on high mountain passes, testifying to the unique relationship between society and nature in this part of the world. Similar belief has been reported by Almuth Degener (2001) from the Nuristan area of north-eastern Afghanistan.¹⁵ Colonial hunters and explorers (Visserhooff 1926: 152-153, Houghton 1896, Kennion 1910, Stone 1913) recount stories of coming across these large boulders in the wild on which were hung horns of ibex, markhor and blue sheep. They often described these horns as offers to the 'fairies' whose 'livestock' the local hunters used for their own subsistence. The indigenous hunter, then, left the trophies as a token of thanks and their contribution to their side of the exchange. In contrast, the British sportsmen took the trophies as a symbol of their skills and prowess.

John Mock's (1998) work on the songs and poetry of the Shimshalis shows that one of the most popular local songs depicts a local hunter asking for forgiveness from a baby ibex whose mother he had just shot. Ken McDonald's (2004) study of indigenous hunting practices from Hushey village in Baltistan shows that according to the local beliefs, the mythical ruler of Ladakh-Baltistan region, Kesar, could intervene in one's hunting trips without warning. McDonald claims that he and his hunting party were put to sleep by Kesar for three days and two nights when they were hunting ibex in the valley in the 1990s. According to the local explanation, McDonald argues, Kesar himself wanted to hunt in the valley and did not want to be disturbed (2004:71). In such a belief system success of hunting is dependent not only on the skill and character of the hunter, but also on the external forces of nature, which can be fickle and unpredictable. In such a view then, fairness is considered as an essential characteristic of nature, rather than of the hunter. Rather than applying fair hunting codes to animal as did the British sportsmen, the indigenous hunter asked nature to be fair to him.

Like the special status of sportsmen in the British culture, indigenous hunters, too, held a different position in society. Contemporary accounts from local sources describe a *shikari* (not the same as those who went with British hunters as a guide, rather a person who hunted in the village and provided meat) as one who had super-natural powers that he acquired through the experience of hunting (Hunzai 1998, Esaar 2001, Mock 1998). These special powers often translated into special social status in the indigenous society. For example, Beg (1935) states that some of the best hunters in the local society were often exempted from taxes and *begaar*, corvée labour. The indigenous hunter is seen in his society as someone who mediated the relationship between society and nature for the benefit of the former. The sportsmen, on the other hand, is

seen in his society as someone who competed with nature for the benefit of the self.

In the transactional order of the indigenous moral ecology, hunting was viewed as an exchange of flow and benefits, in two directions, between independent and unequal agents. In the transactional order of sportsmen's moral ecology, hunting signified an internal exchange process in which the sportsmen conducted fair hunting behaviour to experience thrill and acquire improvement in his moral character.

Trophies, colonial identity and credibility: A local response

We saw in the previous section that sportsmen clashed with the indigenous hunters over issues of moral ecologies and fairness. Yet, ironically, it was the collaboration and assistance of indigenous *shikaris* – their knowledge about the animals and their habitats, dealing with the local populations – which contributed to the success of sportsmen hunting, and to the construction of their identity as superior to the indigenous hunters. I show here that the collaboration of the indigenous *shikaris* in the construction of the sportsmen identity went beyond their obvious role as helpers and guides. I particularly look at the ways in which indigenous *shikaris* subverted the colonial fetish for trophies/heads to their own advantage.

Kopytoff (1986: 69), writing about exchange systems in different cultures has argued that certain things/objects gain uniqueness through cultural systems of classification, while others lose this uniqueness and become fully exchangeable articles. Calling the former singular and the latter common, Kopytoff's main point is that even within a capitalist system certain things retain "a special aura of apartness from the mundane and the common" (1986: 69). According to this definition then a trophy can be seen as a singular thing, a thing associated with particular experiences and memories. I show how the *shikaris* subverted the meanings of the trophies to their own ends by systematically moving the identity of trophies between the poles of singularity and common.

Trophies represented a special place in sport-hunting and became the defining feature of sportsmen's identity. This identity was contingent upon the possession and display of trophies and the experiences of travails and dangers that they signified. Each trophy head represented a certain singularity, a particular story of the chase which sportsmen cherished. Writing about such moments, Taylor who had just shot an ibex, states:

And I fell a-thinking how his head would look in the hall of our home in England, and how many people would prize it; of the way it would be pointed out to our friends when they came to stay with us; of the yarns I would spin, believed by some, and pretended to be believed by others (1903: 42).

As hinted in this quote, the link between a trophy and what it signified, that is an identity based on ideas of fairness, courage, and physical endurance, was a tenuous one, even from the

western hunter's point of view. The credibility of stories woven around trophies was always subject to social scrutiny thus casting doubts about the authenticity of even the genuine trophies. Sportsmen often lamented the fact that many of their colleagues (not real sportsmen) passed on picked-up trophies as the ones that they had shot to boost their claims to sporting prowess. For example, Stone states:

The picked up heads are often passed off in the plains, by the sportsman who uses the silver bullet, as trophies that have been acquired by him after going through unheard-of hardship. The old heads are even set-up, sometimes with the skin of smaller animals that have really fallen to his rifle, and thus a greater air of verisimilitudes is given to the story. The cunning taxidermists of Srinagar city are unapproachable in this kind of forgery. Who has not heard the rotund warrior holding forth after dinner to an attentive and admiring group of youngsters, filling them up with the wonderful incidents of that difficult stalk on the stony plain beyond Hanle (1896: 162).

I suggest that the social doubt in trophies represents the actual doubts in the identity of the displayer of those trophies. This doubt arose from the complex origins of trophies, their availability in local markets, and also the pivotal and often in fact deceptive role played by *shikaris* in helping the British hunters obtain them, both through the market and as 'genuine' hunters, as I discuss below.

The British sportsmen and the indigenous *shikari*

By the first decade of the twentieth century a *shikari* had to be registered with the KGPD. The skilled *shikaris* were often very highly sought after by the British sportsmen who often relied on each others' recommendations for employing a *shikari*. The sportsman's relationships with the *shikaris* was ambivalent, to say the least. Sramek (2006: 673-675) states that most of the *shikaris* employed for tiger hunts in India by the British were from the tribal communities, such as Bhils and Gond, who were considered as lazy and disobedient in their daily lives, yet skilful and adept in tracking tigers. We see similar sentiments amongst the sportsmen who hunted in the north-western region of the empire in the early twentieth century. Authors who considered themselves genuine sportsmen often reviled the way certain 'gentlemen' treated these *shikaris* and recommended kinder attitudes (Stone 1896: 176, Taylor 1903). For example Taylor writes:

The hill-man is a most charming fellow if taken properly. He is delightful to work with, keen, devoted to his business, hardy and faithful, but he must be handled judiciously. If a man is not prepared to take his fair share of the necessary hardships and, above all, to be absolutely just and kind withal, he will probably return from Cashmere to swell the numbers of those who think that ibex shooting is an over-rated sport (1903: xi).

Others however complained profusely about the lazy and deceptive character of the indigenous *shikaris*, warning fellow British hunters not to trust their judgement. Darrah (1898), for example, throughout his hunting expedition in Baltistan, scorned the various decisions of his local *shikaris* and lamented that he would have been better off had he followed his own instincts rather than the advice of the *shikari*. The indigenous *shikaris* mimicked the hunting codes of their colonial masters to get their approval. Taylor recounting a dialogue between his head *shikari* and his assistant about an incident when he let a small animal go so that he could shoot a big head, writes:

There then occurred a rather lively altercation between Lasso and Muksooda. The latter was very disappointed at what had occurred, and remarked that it would have been much better to have got a smaller one than none at all. This incensed Lasso. He said that a man who did not try to get the very pick of a herd wasn't fit to be a shikari, and that Muksooda had better go and be a bear hunter if he had such low ideas. Lasso, of course, had my support. (1903: 74).

The local *shikaris* who accompanied the sportsmen soon learnt the importance and value that sportsmen attached to trophy heads. The demand for good heads of trophies resulted in the development of trophy markets in north Indian cities. Srinagar and Rawalpindi became the major markets for all sorts of animal trophies by early twentieth century. Houghton reports:

In Baltistan, Haramosh, and elsewhere there is regular poaching going on, for the local people know that they can get very good prices for good heads... Anyone who has sufficient money at his disposal and is in no hurry for his heads can purchase a better specimen of almost any Himalayan game in Rawal Pindi than he is likely to shoot (1913: 308).

The *shikaris* regularly supplied trophies to these markets to cater to the demands of colonial hunters and other collectors of heads. In addition to development of a market, the rise in demand for trophy heads by colonial hunters resulted in a much more elaborate and profound response from the *shikaris* on the hunt itself. Indeed one of the major problems that arose for the British sportsmen in their management of the hunts under the guidance of the *shikari* was that of "palming off." The practice of palming off an unsuspecting sahib is wonderfully described by Jane Duncan who had traveled to Baltistan in the late 1890s. She reports:

A sportsman shoots at a herd, say of ibex, which are always on difficult ground; his shikari says he has killed one, and advises him to give some of the nearest villagers five or ten rupees to go and look for it. In the meantime an old head, which has been brought up for the purpose, is steeped in water and dressed with the raw flesh of a sheep or goat, and in a few days is shown as the one found by the villagers,

who, of course have never been sent, the shikari pocketing the backshish and buying for a fraction of the sum a head as like the old one as possible from the first skinman he meets, and palming it off on the unsuspecting sahib as the trophy of his skill. Aziz Khan said he knew a Kashmiri shikari who had been taking the same ibex head up country every year for six years, so that it was like a small annuity to him (1906: 124).

'Palming off' became such a prevalent problem by the early twentieth century that the 1913 Kashmir Game Laws included a whole section on how to avoid the problem and what kind of penalty should be levied in case of its occurrence. Section 20, Clause (a) of the Jammu and Kashmir State Game Laws Notification 1913–14 read:

The practice of palming off on sportsmen old heads or heads that have been killed by native shikaries being largely on the increase, sportsmen are asked to be very careful about accepting heads as their own, unless they have been gathered by them, or can be absolutely verified as the identical animals they may have wounded. In all cases the head and jawbone should be complete, with actual decaying flesh adhering to the bones, and sportsmen should insist that other bones, skin, and feet should be produced with the head (cited in Houghton 1913: 324).

Notice that this practice not only involved the accompanying *shikari* of the sahib, but also the local skinman. There is no information on who this local skinman is, but judging from the prevalence of 'palming off' it seems that this character was the village hunter who was the primary producer of the trophies which began to circulate in the Indian markets.

Thus trophy heads of ibex and markhor were generally viewed by sportsmen and others as markers of hunting prowess of the sportsmen, and were imbued with a certain 'singularity.' The local *shikari*, by 'palming off' trophies to the colonial hunters, indirectly, through the market or directly through palming off, jeopardised the singular nature of trophies, rendering them rather as commodities. The authenticity of the trophy heads, whether they had been secretly bought by the sportsmen, or they had in fact been shot by the sportsmen, became suspect. The desire of the British sportsmen to acquire trophy heads, on the surface, set a distinction between the British and the indigenous society based on ideas of fairness. Ironically, the expression of this difference as represented by display and possession of trophies was possible through the collaborative work of the indigenous *shikaris*, but at the same time as the *shikaris* helped to construct British claims to superiority, their role in palming off and commoditising the trophies served to undermine the British claims of superiority.

CONCLUSION

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, hunting became a popular means for the British for claiming a superior self identity, based on liberal ideas of fairness. The

British sportsmen, who hunted in the north-western frontier region of the British Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, lamented that the sophistication and refinement in hunting techniques in their home societies had rendered the hunting experience as inauthentic, and the entire sport as unfair. Codes of fairness were introduced to re-enact danger in hunting and trophies became an expression of the elaboration of those codes and sportsmen's identities. But the specific struggle over authentic trophies illuminates how contingent colonial hunters' reputation and identity were on the cooperation of the indigenous population in constructing the narratives of hunting success and prowess.

The fair hunting codes, based on liberal ideals that were introduced in colonial India, however, proved of little success in making hunting a fair sport in reality. The ideals of liberalism, as enshrined in fair hunting codes of the sportsmen, tended to undermine the agency of nature as they rendered hunting as a competition between nature and society, illuminating and projecting the agency and identity of the sportsmen on society. This view clashed with the moral ecology of indigenous hunting practices in which hunting was socialised as an exchange between nature and culture with both having unequal agency.

By the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century the population of many game animals had suffered considerably from the brutal onslaught at the hands of British sportsmen. The establishment of laws and preserves, that were introduced to regulate the hunting practices of both the British sportsmen and indigenous hunters, did contribute to the recovery of the local wildlife populations. But when the game animals recovered, as protected species within their habitats, they emerged under a different governance regime in which indigenous population's access to hunting as a subsistence practice, albeit mediated by culture, was curtailed. Thus the colonial hunters' insistence on adherence to fair hunting codes and practices had a wider, unfair, impact on the local society. Like other colonial cultural projects, colonial hunting was fraught with internal inconsistencies and contradictions that could only be resolved through perpetuating and creating unfair, and hence unjust, social relations in the wider society.

Notes

1. Other notable exceptions are those pertaining to conservation literature exploring contemporary and historical hunting practices.
2. Fredrick Drew describing some of the earliest hunting practices of the Maharaja of Kashmir, who hunted with all his courtiers and noblemen, states that in such a crowd 'it was difficult to discern how can he (the Maharaja) enjoy the actual sport' (1875: 73-75). Of course here Drew shows his ignorance about political aims behind hunting and judges it on purely sporting basis.
3. We know that both wild and tame rabbits were hunted (Daniels 1801, Mayor 1819: 126). Game-keepers trapped and eradicated fox litter to propagate pheasant populations which became popular with some sportsmen in England in the eighteenth century.
4. Pandian, however states that within the colonial context the 1857 mutiny catalysed a radical transformation 'and elaborate codes of sportsmanship were develop to distinguish refined British hunting practices from cruel

native practices' (2001:83). I however show here that elaborate codes of sportsmanship had earlier developed in England during the 18th century to distinguish hunting practices between privileged and low classes. These codes were then brought to the colonies and perhaps reinforced after the 1857 mutiny, but they were not developed anew in the colonies.

5. *Shikari* is an Urdu word which simply means a hunter. The professional *shikaris* who assisted the colonial officer were mostly themselves current or ex-hunters, who used their skills in the existing commercial opportunities.
6. For example Count Koenigsmarek wrote: "The horns of ibex are perhaps more handsome, making as they do such a charming arched line in profile; but every sportsman in Asia puts a higher value on the majestic, snake-like, slender antlers of the markhor." (1910: 105).
7. Markhor did not come under fire only from those British sportsmen and indigenous hunters, the soldiers of the military garrisons stationed around Bunji, one of the most fertile habitats of the so called Astor markhor, hunted the goat for meat. Writing about the markhor population in Bunji area, Stone states "Probably they have been entirely cleared out since the occupation of Gilgit by a British garrison" (1896: 34).
8. By the end of the nineteenth century, nine *rakhs*, or reserves, had been re-established throughout the Kashmir valley under the KGPD (Collett 1884, Houghton 1913, Hornaday 1913). These *rakhs* were only open to British sport hunting with special permission granted by the Kashmir Durbar (Lawrence 1895: 106). In addition to these *rakhs* ten game sanctuaries had been established throughout the state, including one each in Ladakh and Baltistan. It was rather easier to get special permission to shoot in these sanctuaries, granted by the Secretary, Game Preservation Department, who was usually a British officer under the Kashmir state service (KGPD 1913). In addition to the *rakhs* and sanctuaries, new game laws designated princely shooting grounds for the various petty rajas north of the valley in Skardu, Astor and Gilgit valleys.
9. Sivaramakrishnan rightly states that this kind of policy of open versus closed blocks, in this case "nallahas" was predecessor to protected areas formation (1999: 106). For more detail see Rao (2002).
10. Within the existing British (masculine) nationalist discourse, the British national character was built through exposure to real and physical danger in the frontier region (Wallis 1976: 303, Windholtz 2000: 632).
11. Karen Wonders states that the display of trophies symbolised hunter's appropriation of some of the character and qualities associated with the species and its habitat (2005: 282).
12. These kinds of hybridisation of official duties with personal interest were a norm rather than the exception throughout the colonial history (Sivaramakrishnan 1999: 35).
13. It was a British Game Warden of the Kashmir state, Wigram, who issued the license till the partition. After partition, the authority shifted to the Political Agent and later to the Commander of the Gilgit Scouts (Rasool 1973:42).
14. In this section the 'natives' to whom I refer are those people living in what is now the Northern Areas of Pakistan - then the Northern frontier of the British Empire.
15. Almuth Degener (2001:329) writes, 'The hunters' folklore told in Nuristan is characterised by a strong emphasis on fairies and supernatural events. The fairies, who are believed to live in high mountains, are of special importance for hunters, because they are said to be keepers of the wild mountain goats (markhor), the Nuristani's favourite game animal' (2001: 329). Degener goes on to state that a hunter must propitiate these fairies in order to succeed in his hunting expedition.

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