ABSTRACT. As the sport that purportedly enhanced martial conditioning of the ‘dominant’ race, pig-sticking assumed critical importance for the survival of the British in India. When numerous local insecurities and large-scale anxieties threatened the empire, hunting pursuits involving the wily Indian pig, it was said, made soldiers out of boys; the attendant spectacles of masculinity aimed to exert symbolic dominance over the restive Indian masses. The sport also served as an avenue for upward mobility for the subaltern soldier attempting to upstage aristocratic hunting performances in England and India. While masculinity and symbolic governance have been analysed repeatedly in critiques of hunting, sportsmen’s contributions to natural history have seen limited analyses. Here, I show that the local intricacies of pig-sticking motivated a superlative understanding of the Indian wild boar, a tricky, unpredictable customer with a vile temper, and a ready propensity to attack its pursuers. Pig-sticking entailed a multi-faceted immersion with both land and people, incorporating hybrid knowledge-making, shaped within the contact zone of indigenous and colonial encounter. Further, while agreeing with post-colonial critiques on sport and imperialism, I propose looking beyond colonial exceptionalism to situate big-game hunting within the larger scholarship on costly signalling and hunting for prestige among human societies.

For Lord Robert Baden-Powell, doyen of pig-sticking in India, the wild boar was ‘King of the Jungle’, a ‘habitually crusty’ beast ‘always peeved about something or the other’.† He added that the boar is ‘the only animal that will go after you without first being roused’, who ‘seems to think that the crops which the natives raise...are meant for him to devour’, and ‘if the native objects, he knocks him down and tries to disembowel him with his murderous tusks’.‡ The boar’s...
courage and obstinacy, however, were considered a godsend for the colonial officer who could showcase his woodcraft, horsemanship, administrative, and military skills, while indulging his schoolboy hunting fantasies. Pig-sticking reinforced the bonds of brotherhood among a band of men simultaneously trying to uphold imperial expansion and to exert dominance over the native. Fervour with the spear was only matched by the sportsman’s pen, producing reams of prose and verse calculated to foster imperial ambitions and improve status by impressing the metropole. The pig, symbolically associated with warfare and primeval hunting, was a central actor in this endeavour.

Here, I explore pig-sticking through three interlinked themes. First, I begin by looking at this distinctive tradition from the broad vantage point of big-game hunting and imperialism. Although not a charismatic predator, and despite being a scourge of agriculture, the pig escaped being demonized as vermin, a label all too easily conferred on numerous species of less dubious reputation. Instead, its pluck was celebrated as being worthy of its equally courageous pursuers. Its ‘killing’ was prohibited. It was only to be ‘hunted’ in the manner of a complex, codified performance that was designed to showcase the martial superiority of the English soldier subaltern. In doing so, it signalled a show of strength to unruly native subjects. As revealed by recent animal studies literature focusing on a number of other species, we find that pigs too were intimate actors in colonial power politics. Second, hunting transported sportsmen to far-flung reaches of the subcontinent, each different from the other, in the character of its terrain, the nature of its people, and the fierceness of its pigs. Therefore, the same literature can be read as a series of lively natural histories that illuminate its growth as an open-air science and its eventual contribution to formal disciplines such as ecology and ethology. Though attributed to pig-sticking sportsmen, incorporated within such narratives is co-produced knowledge borne out of intercultural encounters—with indigenous mediators derived from within the subcontinent’s unequal caste pyramid—who were part and parcel of this unique hunting collective. While many of these encounters reinforced the problematic social relations of the imperial era, some overlooked convention by favouring a closer communion with the lower castes and hunting tribes than with those higher up in the caste hierarchy. Together, these explorations take us beyond a ‘monolithic reading of the hunt’ to an

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3 A subordinate officer of the British Army below the rank of Captain.
5 Parallels can be found in colonial medicine, surveying and cartography, botany, and numerous other subjects that are characterized by heterogeneous negotiations; Kapil Raj, Relocating modern science: circulation and the construction of knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900 (New Delhi, 2006); S. Sivasundaram, ‘Sciences and the global: on methods, questions and theory’, ISIS, 101 (2010), pp. 146–58.
understanding of heterogeneous, context-specific entanglements that disrupt conventional notions of knowledge-making and power relations. The third perspective that I touch upon relates to locating the history of this sport within the larger scholarship on big-game hunting and its links with status, dominance, and prestige as contributed by other disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, evolutionary biology, and psychology. This broader, multi-disciplinary perspective serves to illuminate how imperial big-game hunting and associated male behaviours can be treated beyond the framework of colonial exceptionalism, and placed along an evolutionary spectrum with extensive cultural and biological antecedents that combine to reinforce problematic asymmetries of power and dominance.

This study is supported by significant scholarship following John MacKenzie’s landmark publication, *The empire of nature*, which interrogated imperial agendas in big-game hunting.\(^7\) In India, Mahesh Rangarajan’s work emphatically established this relationship.\(^8\) The Indian historiography can be divided into two broad streams, the first focuses on hunting as an overarching instrument of power and subjugation, and the second, which by examining specific indigenous communities, subaltern groups and regional complexes, emphasizes nuances and heterogeneity within the colonial hunting project.\(^9\) This study also draws on scholarship on performance, which reveals the role of sport as a cultural activity with transformational import for a range of political and social relations. Garry Marvin’s work on fox-hunting in Britain and the *corrida* (bullfight) in Spain are key examples, as is the recent contribution by Karen Jones, who represents North American sport as an extended cultural performance with transatlantic impacts via an influential ‘afterlife’ (constituted by trophies and memoirs).\(^10\)

This article offers an extended natural history situating the landscapes, the pigs, and the people who hunted them. An effort is made to recreate the


\(^8\) Mahesh Rangarajan, *Fencing the forest: conservation and ecological change in India, 1860–1914* (Delhi, 1996).


typical style of narration, and a number of direct quotations from the source material are deliberately retained to capture the form and flavour of this genre of performative storytelling. For source material, this study depends primarily on memoirs and manuals written by sportsmen, the flag bearers of this distinctive subculture. Nested within them is an attempt to locate the motivations behind their articulations as performances that are reflective of the ascendant socio-cultural context. At the outset, it is pointed out that sportsmen’s accounts are themselves problematic as they are complicit with respect to the colonial project, reinforcing racial prejudice and superiority, gender stereotypes, hierarchies, and patriarchy of the times, and can be broadly classified as what post-colonial scholars such as Gayatri Spivak term as the ‘epistemic violence’\(^\text{11}\) associated with imperialism.

I

He was not a large boar..., though long, lean, and muscular; but what a gallant heart beat within that bristly body! What other animal except the wild hog of India would exhibit such indomitable pluck? Speared no less than nine times, many of the wounds being in almost vital spots,...he yet disdained from the first to seek safety in the flight that would probably have saved his life, but preferred to stand and fight like a hero, and ‘die as a boar should die’.\(^\text{12}\)

It is no surprise then that the wild boar of India, an animal of exceptional fighting spirit, was matched with the Briton’s own self-proclaimed courage and fortitude. For several generations of men, brought up on the patriotic and masculine ideals of Victorian and Edwardian England, hunting and soldiering went hand in hand.\(^\text{13}\) This patriotic militarism was propagated along with an underlying ‘ruthless “rational” Darwinism’\(^\text{14}\) that was also extended to human societies. As pointed out by J. A. Mangan and Callum McKenzie, ‘the many imperial wars, expeditions and skirmishes of the late Victorian period offered numerous opportunities, of course, for military men to switch swiftly from hunter of men to hunter of animals, and vice versa’.\(^\text{15}\)


\(^{12}\) Tribute to the ‘Waree boar’ in James Moray Brown, *Shikar sketches with notes on Indian field sports* (London, 1887), p. 25.

\(^{13}\) J. A. Mangan and Callum McKenzie, ‘“Pig-sticking is the greatest fun”: martial conditioning on the hunting fields of empire’, in J. A. Mangan, ed., *Militarism, sport, Europe: war without weapons* (London and Portland, OR, 2009); J. A. Mangan, and Callum McKenzie. ‘Blooding the martial male: the imperial officer, field sports and big game hunting’ (London and New York, NY, 2009).

\(^{14}\) Mangan and McKenzie, ‘Blooding’ the martial male, p. 11.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 125; eventually, less bloody forms of entertainment would replace bloodsports, but would continue to be characterized by ritualistic, ornamentalist elements. Actual hunts were also replaced by hunting with the camera, e.g. Frederick. W. Champion, *With camera in tiger-land* (London, 1927).
In India, the appetite for organized hunting picked up after (what the British coined) the Mutiny of 1857 (India’s First War of Independence), and other uprisings which challenged imperial supremacy. It afforded a display of power in a fractious landscape, given the skirmishes along the north-western front (the Anglo-Afghan Wars and related campaigns), and the intensifying rivalry of the Great Game between Britain and Russia. African campaigns such as the Anglo-Zulu War, the Anglo-Ashanti Wars, the Boer Wars, and the wars in Matabeleland also exerted influence with the participation of prominent officer-hunters of the British Indian Army such as Robert Baden-Powell.

In the light of looming anxieties, the army viewed pig-sticking favourably, endorsing activities enhancing both physical fitness and mental fortitude, hoping that these would translate to superlative performances in the defence of imperial frontiers. Gen. Henry Shakespear, a veteran sportsman, equated pig-sticking with military training, as its student gained endurance, ‘an eye for a country and a familiarity with danger’. In a rhetoric that privileged both honour and heroic defence, to Capt. J. T. Newall, the tenacious performance of the wounded boar evoked a picture of ‘fierce, impetuous courage and dogged determination’ along with a ‘mental vision of many a foughten field’. Readers were reminded that great Eastern soldiers, including Alexander the Great, and prominent British military heroes were indeed hog-hunters.

Baden-Powell was the most vociferous proponent of pig-sticking. He labelled it the ‘premier sport of India’ and one which tended to give a man ‘what is called a “stalker’s eye”, but which, par excellence, is the soldier’s eye’. He argued that the sport benefited officers and civil servants alike, keeping them in fine spirits and fitness, and enabling a sound knowledge of both country and people. An ardent believer in racial superiority, Baden-Powell pronounced pig-sticking to be ‘invaluable to our prestige and supremacy...at once proving and preserving our rightful claim to superiority as a dominant race’. Maj. A. E. Wardrop, himself a decorated pig-sticker, demanded that ‘if a man is to keep young and active he must fall’ and that ‘there should be an entry

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16 A British Army officer closely associated with the Boy Scouts movement, and a controversial personality who figured significantly in the Matabeleland Rebellion and the Siege of Mafeking.

17 The late nineteenth century was characterized by anxieties about masculinity in the context of military preparedness, particularly physical enfeeblement of the English race as a consequence of emerging industrial urbanism (of which advanced firearms were a product), M. Brown, ‘Cold steel, weak flesh: mechanism, masculinity and the anxieties of late Victorian empire’, *Cultural and Social History*, 14 (2017), pp. 155–81.


20 Moray Brown, *Shikar sketches*.


22 Ibid., pp. 4, 208.
in each senior officer’s report as to how many falls he has taken in the past twelve months’. Though we do not know if the major’s advice was followed, soldiers were given time off to channel their martial energies on pigs. Hunting for empire complemented the heady appetite for war and was transformed into a necessary pastime with practical and performative import. This overlap between hunting and militarism, predicated on older vestiges of Eurasian history (including the claim of hunting pigs as being especially beneficial to warriors), was cemented through the practice of pig-sticking.

Within the British establishment, the pursuit of dangerous game was a valuable conduit for upward mobility, providing opportunities for those of lower rank to upstage traditional hunting practices of the privileged class. English public schools nurtured a martial turn among the middle classes with far-reaching consequences for the imperial project. Hunting was encouraged as a significant form of peer-based male socialization, enabling the creation of a contingent of patriotic middle-class men ‘who may not have “shot at home”’ but were eager for the opportunity to make their mark hunting and soldiering in the far-flung reaches of the empire. To the impressionable young subaltern, whose boyhood education was supplemented by a daily fare of local sport (albeit deficient in dangerous game), circulating imperial narratives unleashed dual desires of colonial conquest and sporting adventure.

As pig-sticking gained ground, aristocratic pursuits, be it fox-hunting in England or tiger-hunts in India, began to be scrutinized from a distinctly subaltern martial masculinity that hunted the boar on more equal terms. Pig-hunters renounced the imperial era’s development of firearms, especially express rifles and ammunition specifically aimed at large, dangerous colonial game. A clean, efficient kill was not the purpose; rather, the intent was to showcase coolness and courage in the face of extreme, unpredictable danger, which the wounded boar supplied in ample measure. Reverting to the older tradition of edged weapons, and acceding to the notion of archetypal warriors, sportsmen opted out of technological innovations that they considered emasculating.

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25 This has been referred to as the ‘muscular Christianity’ of English public school education in which sport, athleticism, and faith combined to form a single potent ideology that fuelled the quest for empire, Charles Kingsley, *Two years ago* (London, 1857). See also Richard Grove, *Nature and the Orient: the environmental history of South and Southeast Asia* (New Delhi, 1998); William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and empire* (Oxford, 2007).
26 Mangan and McKenzie, ‘Blooding’ the martial male.
27 Fairness in hunting was produced and imagined as a symmetrical opposition between equals possessing similar qualities and masculinities, K. Wonders, ‘Hunting narratives in the age of empire: a gender reading of their iconography’, *Environment and History*, 11 (2005), pp. 269–92.
28 Advanced weaponry (e.g. the Martini–Henry breech loading rifles and Maxim guns) did not sit well with the British, fuelling anxieties about emasculation, Brown, ‘Cold steel’. African martial groups such as the Zulu viewed the gun as a coward’s weapon and considered firearms subordinate to the *assegai*/Zulu spear, Jones, Macola, and Welch, ‘New perspectives’. The
As suggested in other imperial contexts, ‘gunlessness’ was used as a route to ‘martialness’.29 In India, the privileging of traditional weaponry by martial classes such as the Rajputs provided existing blueprints for pig-sticking.30 Through ornamentalist engagements that borrowed from older Eurasian and existing local practices of spectacle and ritual, pig-sticking reinforced and remade social hierarchies.31

While subaltern sportsmen opportunistically participated in elaborate tiger hunts, their remarks about them reflect disdain for questionable masculinity and the lack of fair play. To Col. Fitzwilliam Pollok, even if one had ‘slain hundreds of tigers’ or ‘a hecatomb of big game’ in Africa, ‘if he had not followed the mighty boar, he had not tasted the delights of the most fascinating and invigorating sport in the world’.32 Sportsmen also dedicated space to the ‘old boar’ and his tendency to stand up to tigers. Several memoirs outlined instances when a tiger was ‘killed by his own dinner’,33 which came in the form of an insulting, defiant boar. The ultimate arbitrator of sport, Baden-Powell reinforced this position, claiming that the boar possessed the nastiest temper among all living animals, and was wont to attack anything which stood in his way, be it his youngest son or an elephant.

Pig-sticking enabled officer subalterns to lay claim to a hardy masculinity which also set them apart from their fox-hunting contemporaries. Sporting memoirs exported back to the metropole frequently contrasted the extreme danger involved in pursuing pigs with the lack of it in the English fox-hunting. Sir Thomas Seaton, an Indian veteran, ridiculed fox-hunting as ‘a mob of pretty dogs yow-yowing musically after a poor little beast’ and challenged the superiority of the fox-hunter, stating:

The hypocrite! Let him go to India and try a turn or two at hog-hunting...Let him hear the elephants coming trumpeting, and...beaters giving their warning cry, let him see the sounder break cover...; then let him gallop after them...single out a

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30 For the Rajputs, wild boars were royal prey, ostensibly mirroring in their animal nature, the fierceness and nobility of the rulers themselves, Julie Hughes, Animal kingdoms: hunting, the environment, and power in the Indian princely states (Cambridge, 2013).
33 Baden-Powell, Pigsticking, p. 72.
big boar...If the boar is a good one...and if he finds he can't escape, will stop at once, turn, and charge down like lightning...He may perhaps stop the brute's rush, but he won't kill him, and then when he turns and tries for second spear, the really dangerous one, he will see what a devil the wounded boar is.34

Despite numerous similarities and obvious differences, both pig-sticking and fox-hunting were ‘passionate pursuits’ bringing human and animal actors together. They were complex cultural performances keenly attentive to the roles of their participants, and also of import for power relations and status hierarchies. For sportsmen, their respective pursuits carried deep emotional significance, whether it was played out in the rolling English countryside or the treacherous Indian plains.

II

'If there is a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this’ is how Wardrop described the Meerut Kadir.36 Borrowing a well-known couplet from the great thirteenth-century poet Amir Khusro, he displayed the original Farsi lines at the entrance to the famed hunting camp. He added, ‘Surely it is a paradise, this land at which you look as you stand in the noble bagh (garden) with the water at your feet, and the yellow grass stretching far as the eye can see; full of pig, the heart of the Meerut Kadir.’37 According to Wardrop, the kadir's (the flat exposed bed of a river) magnificent winter views, with its smell of cold weather and sport, and excellent riding country, invariably cast a charm on anyone who beheld it. The Kadir Cup, the ‘blue-ribbon of pig-sticking’, was held here. This location was more than symbolic as Meerut was the epicentre of the Indian Mutiny. Most northern Indian tent clubs (Delhi, Agra, Mathura, Jhansi) also held their events in the kadir's of the Ganga and Jumna, which doubled as home to the cantonments and cavalry stations that dotted the vast Indo-Gangetic plain. The sport was primarily enacted on the spaces of the Mutiny.

As pig-sticking pursuits served multiple purposes, the military looked beyond the kadir lands for sport. Wardrop, a veteran of over 700–800 boars, enticed prospective disciples with the assurance that ‘nearly all over India, except in Madras and the Punjab, pig are at your door if you will but look for them’.38 Eastwards, in the Bengal Presidency, though riding was difficult, pigs more than made up with their ferocity. Vaughan, hunting in the Forbesganj district of Purneah vouched for their quality, saying they 'were very independent customers when we first arrived, and several times when we met pig coming towards us

34 Thomas Seaton, From cadet to colonel: the record of a life of active service, 1 (London, 1866), p. 103.
35 Marvin, ‘A passionate pursuit’.
36 Wardrop, Modern pig-sticking, p. 194.
37 Ibid., p. 194.
38 Wardrop, Modern pig-sticking, p. 5.
at a walk or trot – not hunted pig – they cocked their ears and went straight for us. In Lower Bengal, the watery *churs* (temporary swampy sand bars / islands that periodically undergo inundation) and *jheels* (lakes) of the Ganges Delta housed an abundance of hogs, as did the surrounding *khor* (thatch grass) tracts, *patials* (mat grass), mustard, and sugarcane fields. During a beat in the Moiscoondie *chur* in 1906, a participant observed a moving ‘jungle alive with pig’ which turned out to be a sounder of 300 animals with ‘20 grand boar’. Further east, on his posting to Pegu in Burma (a region not conducive to the sport), Lt.-Col. Pollok made desperate attempts to ride for boar in Prome and Tharawaddie districts. He yearned for the time when Upper Burma with its open country and large boars with splendid ivories could be part of the British empire. Instead, Pollok finally found near perfect pig-sticking grounds in Dhoobree in neighbouring Assam, in the Brahmaputra *churs*, home to the largest and fiercest boars in the world.

Sportsmen reiterated the ubiquity and plasticity of this generalist species. In the peninsula, hogs were hunted in the Bombay and Madras Presidencies through the prominent tent clubs of Poona and Ahmednagar. The Central Provinces saw a great deal of pig-sticking in the *bheer* (thorny grasslands), the *sindhi-bunds* (*Phoenix farinifera* groves), *toor* (lentils), and *cholum* (corn) fields. The treacherous black cotton soils of the Deccan, and the grasslands of the Banni and the Ram of Kachch, were targeted by the Guzerat and Salmon Cups. Here, *jow* (tamarisk), *babul* (*Acacia nilotica*), and *bair* (*Zizyphus* sp.) tracts, and prickly pear hedges, all held pigs. Owing to the scattered jungle interspersed with open country, pig were exceedingly crafty, prompting Meldicott to comment, ‘in no part of India is a day’s pig-sticking such a match between the brains of the hunter and those of the hunted as in Guzerat’.

Knowledge of pigs was critical for hunting. Sportsmen turned to their *shikaris* for classifying regional pig varieties on the basis of morphology, habitats, and temperament. Baden-Powell identified four composite types: the moderately sized *tatainya* (tätira/ mooghun), the coarse, fat *meilier* (muckna/ gâgas), the small fierce *kookunnee* (tâana), and the *sooeur*. Fast, nimble, and ‘exceedingly fierce, the latter were the most respected combatants in sport’. The age of the pig and the habitat dictated its size. In the plains, where foraging involved a great deal of rooting around, pigs grew larger tusks. Forest pigs with their

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39 Ibid., p. 127.
40 Ibid., p. 142.
43 Functional classifications via indigenous assessments were a recurring feature of colonial knowledge-making, for example, for elephants, see S. Sivasundaram, ‘Trading knowledge: the East India Company’s elephants in India and Britain’, *Historical Journal*, 48 (2005), pp. 27–63.
44 Moray Brown, *Shikar sketches*. 
diets supplemented by fallen fruit were less endowed.\textsuperscript{45} Sportsmen concurred that the biggest boars were to be found in the Nagpur and Behar jungles though on average animals were larger in Bengal and the low-lying \textit{terai}.\textsuperscript{46}

For many sportsmen, the day began with an early morning ‘\textit{ghoom}’ (reconnaissance) of the environs. Outlying bushes near the jungle and crop-field coverts were preferred by solitary boars. The latter were eclectic in their selection of residences, especially if favourite food was close by. Baden-Powell recounted seeing a pig’s lair in a melon patch within twenty yards of a watchman’s hut. An isolated bush or thicket without any apparent merit (as judged by sportsmen) frequently yielded one boar after another. Baden-Powell ‘killed three fine boar within four months, all from the same little bush’.\textsuperscript{47} Wardrop warned compatriots to ‘not confuse cover with food, the latter comes first every time’ and that ‘a pig will go many miles for his food, but not a yard farther than he needs’.\textsuperscript{48} Sugarcane fields were preferred haunts due to constant irrigation, cover and succulent food, but it was difficult to flush boars out of cane.\textsuperscript{49}

Breeding habits were observed carefully. Sows favoured grass and sugarcane patches for building nests which old boars subsequently took over as lairs.\textsuperscript{50} Williamson pronounced sows to be attentive mothers who ‘never quit their young pigs without completely shutting them up’.\textsuperscript{51} Wardrop considered it a great mistake to harry coverts during June, and explained, ‘the old sows bolt…the little striped squeakers, of all sizes from that of a rat up, running in every direction…are lost and are never collected by their mothers again’. He urged instead to target outlying coverts for solitary boar as ‘the old gentlemen are no more fond of a squealing family than we are’.\textsuperscript{52}

Enterprising sportsmen reared piglets for observation. Baden-Powell kept a young boar and ‘spent many a half hour watching him jinking from, and charging at, an old tree stump with most active and untiring energy’. He claimed to have seen ‘little “squeakers” having a set to together, while their mothers, sisters, cousins, and aunts formed an admiring crowd to watch their quick rushes and rallies, just as one sees two boys pitted against each other in a match at lawn tennis’.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{45} Wardrop, \textit{Modern pig-sticking}.
\textsuperscript{46} Moray Brown, \textit{Shikar sketches}; Wardrop, \textit{Modern pig-sticking}.
\textsuperscript{47} He compares this to site fidelity for tussocks occupied by jacksnipe, or the repeated occupation of good pools by salmon, Baden-Powell, \textit{Pigsticking}, p. 52.
\textsuperscript{48} Wardrop, \textit{Modern pig-sticking}, pp. 36, 57.
\textsuperscript{49} Baden-Powell, \textit{Pigsticking}.
\textsuperscript{50} Thomas Williamson, \textit{Illustrations of Indian field sports} (London, 1807); Frank B. Simson, \textit{Letters on sport in Eastern Bengal} (London, 1886).
\textsuperscript{51} Williamson, \textit{Illustrations}, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{52} Wardrop, \textit{Modern pig-sticking}, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{53} Baden-Powell, \textit{Pigsticking}, p. 77.
Contrasting with the (typically) unobtrusive practice of hunting for the pot, a pig-sticking event advertised its presence in the countryside. The beat involved a line of coolies advancing across a pre-selected patch of cultivation, grassland, or jungle, with the intention of flushing the boar for the benefit of the mounted sportsmen who remained concealed at a distance. The beaters used sticks, drums, and “all manner of music” calculated to make the most discordant din, whose purpose, according to James Moray Brown, was to ‘rouse any decent-minded boar to a sense of the necessity of seeking safety in flight’.\(^54\) Shikaris armed with matchlocks or shotguns further induced the boar to reveal itself. When faced with the approaching clamour, experienced boars tended to move quietly to the opposite end of the cover and steal out with a peculiar gait resembling ‘a carpet bag tumbling along end over end’.\(^55\) Once flushed, pigs typically made a run for it using every scrap of available cover. In this, the boar’s own intelligence and familiarity with the landscape would become evident as he would ‘sometimes make so wide a deviation from his direct line that the pursuer will almost think the pig has got out of his reckoning, till some thicket or other opportunity of concealment comes in sight and accounts for the detour’;\(^56\) Wardrop advised sportsmen to anticipate on the basis of ‘pig-craft’ their quarry’s point (intended destination for cover).

At the beginning of the chase, even over rough ground, a boar was capable of running about a mile on equal terms with the best horse. Almost every sportsman pointed out the significance of water to a boar, and hunters would go to extreme lengths to prevent a fleeing boar from reaching a water source. In Douglas Hamilton’s words, ‘even one roll in the water will refreshen a hog’;\(^57\) During the chase, the carriage of the tail was key to predicting a charge and critical for the sportsman’s safety. At the start of the chase his tail would be up, but according to Wardrop, ‘the gradual drooping of his tail showed that his wind and temper were failing…he will then no longer jink, but will charge’;\(^58\) Regional peculiarities, including the fierceness of the Bengal boars, were noted, ‘the chur boar was a gallant beast and seldom jinked, and no sooner was his tail down than in he came like lightning’;\(^59\)

The race for first spear defined the chase. To the rider who drew first blood went the tusks, regardless of who killed the boar. Baden-Powell warned that a closely pursued boar when “he sees the spear point being lowered in his direction in anticipation of a prod,…will “jink”, or suddenly turn sharply to the right or left, almost divining at the moment to which hand the rider is least prepared.

\(^{54}\) Moray Brown, *Shikar sketches*, p. 18.
\(^{55}\) Baden-Powell, *Pigsticking*, p. 65.
\(^{56}\) Ibid., p. 67.
\(^{59}\) Ibid., p. 144.
to turn. On occasion, a boar’s lightning jinks and feints ended up throwing several men off course in quick succession. Wardrop outlined the typical consequences of a jink in the Meerut kadir where ‘hog, horse, and man fly headlong’ landing in a heap. Pigs were also known to perform disappearing acts. Unsubstantiated anecdotes abound of desperate fleeing boars attempting to smuggle themselves off in herds of water buffaloes, nilgai (Boselaphus tragocamelus), sounders of fresh jungle pig and even domestic swine.

Exceptional ferocity and repeated charges were on display when the boar was brought to bay. Newall described how with ‘glaring eyes, foaming mouth and bristles erect’ the boar is ready to face all comers and fight to the gallant death. Its performance was anticipated, analysed, and judged. Wardrop condoned outliers, and constructed the pig as an almost principled beast, stating, when at bay and attacked on foot, I have never once known or heard of a boar who did not face any number of spears, and charge and die with utmost desperation…An ordinary pig – I do not mean your suffragette extremist—will, as a rule, spar less in thick cover and grass country… in the open or in patchy country he knows that all that remains is the stern joy of a fight.

Old boars and barren sows were particularly awkward customers. In the Kalentar at Sonaticree, a ‘contemptuous’, forty-inch Bengal boar, grandiously christened the ‘Resurrection of Outram’, attacked the local nawab’s brother. A participant described the ensuing ‘spectacle of the boar standing at bay in a perfectly open bit of country with nine riders, mostly well-mounted, not daring to meet him’. The savage boar eventually escaped after killing a native tracker, leaving the unfortunate man’s body with no less than twenty-three gashes. In Gujarat, Newall’s party awaited khubber (news) of the lungra-wallah (the lame one), who had killed several villagers. Sportsmen eagerly anticipated rematches with boars that previously outwitted them. Meldicott documented that ‘in the year 1892 a famous pig, called the Phantom Boar (christened thus on account of the number of occasions on which he disappeared when apparently his pursuers had him “stone cold”), was killed by Captain Darley’. Caton Jones paid tribute to an elusive fugitive in Gujarat: ‘Hats off to the old boar of Bithur, our “Alphonse”. May he still be going strong. Many a good run did he give us in his rocky jungle home.’

60 Baden-Powell, Pigsticking, p. 69.
61 Moray Brown, Shikar sketches.
62 Wardrop, Modern pig-sticking, p. 98.
63 Baden-Powell, Pigsticking.
64 Newall, Hog-hunting in the East, p. 2.
65 Wardrop, Modern pig-sticking, p. 28.
66 James Outram known within the British military establishment as the ‘Bayard of India’ was a legendary hunter and hero of the Mutiny. Raoul, Reminiscences of twenty years of pigsticking in Bengal (Calcutta, 1893), p. 14.
67 Newall, Hog-hunting in the East.
68 Wardrop, Modern pig-sticking, p. 183.
69 Ibid., p. 168.
While desperate attacks by wounded boars abound in literature, there are also accounts of unprovoked charges. A certain Maj. Gough claimed that a boar once charged him from three miles away. ‘He saw the brute come as a mere speck over the distant horizon, it came on and on nearer and nearer faster and faster, until it rushed right on his levelled spear!’ On another occasion, ‘at a grand field-day at Delhi, in the presence of all the foreign delegates, in 1885, a boar suddenly appeared upon the scene and charged a horse artillery gun, effectually stopping it in its advance at a gallop by throwing down two of the horses’. The irascibility of pigs was well known. Tracking a rogue elephant in the Anamalai jungles, Arthur Pollock wrote, ‘pigs on these occasions, gave much trouble, being full of curiosity, and distinctly hostile in manner; and with old boars it was awkward work, as one did not wish to disturb the forest by firing’.

A limited historiography on pigs outside sportsmen’s accounts precludes a formal validation of their natural history. However, many ecological and behavioural traits pointed out by sportsmen or recounted from the details provided by shikaris and helpers have been directly incorporated into naturalists’ accounts. Richard Lydekker’s Great and small game of India, Burma and Tibet is perhaps the closest derivative of this nature, incorporating considerable information from pig-sticking memoirs. For instance, Lydekker turned to Frank Simson and Moray Brown for morphological and behavioural comparisons of the Bengal pigs and those of the Deccan and the Punjab. While the latter were of lighter build (enabling speed and quick escape), the massive Bengal boars tended to stay and fight instinctively. The ferocity of pigs also found strong endorsement across indigenous and historical accounts; contemporary analyses confirm unprovoked attacks. Though it goes without saying that a wounded boar is a formidable enemy by any standard, sportsmen’s descriptions are also reflective of the construction of their quarry as an opponent that was emblematic of their own self-proclaimed heroism. Harriet Ritvo’s description of a ‘rhetorical animal’ fulfilling cultural and socio-political aspirations, and Rohan Deb Roy’s comments about co-constitutive processes between animals and colonial power come to mind.

IV

As pointed out in other regional contexts, despite its profile as an imperial activity, hunting was a multi-cultural and multi-sensory project. Its ‘colonial vision’ was dependent on ‘native eyes’ and was an embodied practice involving many

70 Baden-Powell, Pigsticking, p. 76.
71 Ibid., p. 70.
groups. Though asymmetrically favourable to the colonizers, the relationships on the ground were complex and fluid, making pig-sticking a site of multifaceted interactions, and reflecting tensions between colonial control and resistance on the one hand, and collaboration and knowledge-sharing on the other.

The upper echelons of society comprised native rulers and their subordinates whose good will and co-operation was often necessary. Some, especially the Rajputana royalty, were avid pig-stickers, and were greatly respected by colonial sportsmen. Rulers such as Sir Pratap Singh, maharaja of Idar, were proficient in both traditional and colonial formats of pig-sticking, serving as role models to sportsmen who aspired to imitate his unique boar-slaying prowess with the traditional short sword instead of a (safer) spear. As recounted by Julie Hughes, the maharaja’s cautionary advice to the future monarch Edward, prince of Wales (‘I know you are the Prince of Wales and you know that you are the Prince of Wales—but the pig doesn’t know that you are the Prince of Wales’) was perhaps more suggestive of self-perceived Rajput heroism than concern from a submissive ruler.

English officers kept a close eye on the proficiency of the Indian aristocracy, questioning their ideals of sportsmanship and deriding their blunders. Sportsmen recounted how the debauched Guicowar (Gaekwad) of Baroda, on a grand birthday hunt, while intending to showcase his hunting skills to the assembled officers and the ladies of the zenana, shot an unfortunate jungle cat which he mistook for a hare. In Bengal, Simson engaged in a long-standing battle of wits against the Zamindaree Ranee of Noakholly, whose practice of keeping an army of shikaris to suppress hog infestations, infuriated him. To outwit her, he befriended and bribed her agent. He complained about the excesses of the nawab of Moorshedabad, whose ‘reckless’ invasion of the jungle included ‘more than two score of elephants and a large army of tagrag and bobtail that shot everything and spared nothing, but were especially fond of shooting wild sows just before young pigs should have been born to them’. This distaste blossomed into friendship as his subsequent descendants became favoured compatriots on account of their immense wealth and ready hospitality. Nevertheless, their mediocrity as sportsmen was highlighted. Nawab Soubha Saheb had to be rescued from the cruel intentions of the refractory old ‘Resurrection of Outram’ by Archie Hills, the legendary veteran from Patkabaree.

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77 Others too attest to the tendency of British officers to refer to hunting by the local elite as chaotic, wasteful, and uncivil. For example, Sivasundaram, ‘Trading knowledge’.
80 Raoul, *Reminiscences*.
Cultivators were routinely employed in beats; their co-operation depended on numerous factors including the availability of pigs (great numbers prompted enthusiasm to rid the jungle of them) or the state of the crop-fields (villages resented ripe crops being trampled, or declined to participate when gainfully employed during the harvest season). Subversion, resistance, and negotiation were common. Baden-Powell staunchly believed that pig-sticking brought in remunerations and a lull in crop-raiding, and offered the natives close communion with the Europeans (enabling them to experience first-hand the pleasant, superior, and honest nature of their rulers). He urged that jungles and wastelands be reserved and restocked with pigs for the profitable enjoyment of both races (although only Englishmen would hunt!). Wardrop too displayed paradoxical views, vacillating in his impressions of wretchedness and godlessness of the villagers, at the same time entreating young civil servants never to forget that they too were human beings.\(^8\)

Native casualties were frequent and fatalities not uncommon during beats. Villagers and livestock ended up being cut violently by fleeing hogs as did the beaters. During a beat near Bangalore, Pollock accidentally shot and wounded a *shikari* who had moved ahead of the formation, mistaking him for a wild boar.\(^2\) Sportsmen tended to treat such incidents casually, though their demands for compensation were often met. Trickery and deception were cautioned against. The Bania caste was universally reviled for its propensity to shirk work, avoid manual labour, and usurp others’ earnings.\(^3\) Wardrop lamented the fate of a young pig he had secured to train his horse:

> My syces came to me; they said that one of their ambitions had been to own a little wild pig, it would make a charming pet. Would I give it to them? I did. A week later, not seeing the little pig, I asked where he was. They had eaten him.\(^4\)

For sportsmen, the most enjoyable local interactions were with the native *shikaris* and trackers. Despite overarching racial prejudice, many sportsmen routinely fraternized with local mediators, including members of the notified criminal tribes.\(^5\) However, their tendency to ‘poach’ was decried by all. Experienced *shikaris* were invaluable assets, sometimes bettering the sportsmen at their art. Though a master–servant relationship was firmly in place, both tried to work the other to its advantage. Yet, despite cultural differences, bonds between hunters were strong. Wardrop fondly stated,

\(^2\) Pollock, *Sporting days*.
\(^3\) Wardrop, *Modern pig-sticking*.
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 114.
\(^5\) Colonial policies perpetrated a hugely problematic categorization of several itinerant groups as the ‘Criminal Tribes’. Low on the caste ladder and branded hereditary criminals, they were persecuted by colonial authorities and Indian caste communities. However, centuries of wanderings over the subcontinent endowed these enigmatic groups with superlative skills in hunting and tracking and natural history.
I cannot quit this subject without a word of tribute to the *shikaris* of the Meerut Tent Club… Old Lutchman, Napoleon of scoundrels, master of men, long pensioned, and now hunting in the lands of ‘le grand peut-être’; Purun, patient, silent, and wise; Baboo, an Indian D’Artagnan; *Aherias* (hunters) all, they will ever hold a warm corner in my heart.86

Close communion with *shikaris* and their ilk had interesting cultural consequences. The cry of the beaters announcing breaking boar ‘*Woh jata hai*’ (There he goes!, the local equivalent of *Tally-ho!* was adopted by sportmen. Sportsmen picked up classically local and fatalistic phrases. On one occasion Wardop observed, ‘Bad luck on the boar, but, to use the touching Indian phrase, “*Uska wakt aya tha*” (His time had come).’87 Newall reported an ‘agreeable discursiveness’ with the *shikaris* on varied subjects: from why so powerful a country as England was not better supplied with camels (a local symbol of wealth), to the lack of deference in Englishwomen for their husbands.88

The collusion between sportmen and *shikaris* sometimes resulted in skirmishes with local villagers. In the environs of the Nagpur Hunt, Moray Brown recalled how they ‘were met by old Manajee, the Hunt *shikari*, with a very long face, as he said that lately the villagers, “may dogs defile their graves”, had been shooting the pig’ since ‘this involved a loss to Manajee’s pocket in the shape of fewer pig, ergo, less “*inam*” [reward], …the said villagers’ female relations, mothers, sisters, cousins, and aunts, were favoured with a shower of abuse, whereby their own virtue, and that of all their relations, was called in question’.89

While the beat *shikaris* were the masters of the jungle, in the open sands of north-western India, pigs had to be found by pugging (tracking footmarks/*pugs*). Baden-Powell attributed the origins of this unique blend of science and art to villages maintaining trained trackers (*puggees*) for tracking down thieves, stating

if they fail to account for the further movements of a runaway whose footmarks show him to have crossed into their land, their village has to pay ‘damages with costs’ in restitution of the property lost. It is, therefore, not surprising to learn that there exist numerous professors of the art who are trained to it from childhood.90

As ‘woodcraft’ was a valued skill, sportmen tried to emulate the *puggees*. Baden-Powell temporarily discarded his racial disdain admitting that an Englishman could never match a professional *puggee* at his game. Yet, in another deeply coloured pronouncement, he attributed it to ‘inductive reasoning which is almost

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87 Ibid., p. 105.
90 Baden-Powell, *Pigsticking*, pp. 52, 53.
innate in the savage. To the child of the jungle the ground with its signs is at once his book, his map, and his newspaper.\textsuperscript{91}

The most celebrated exponent of this art form, who appears in several memoirs, was Natta, the great Cutch \textit{puggee}. In addition to his consummate skill, Natta was adept at working any situation, bargaining diplomatically for both financial reward and meat, showing as in other colonial contexts that, native agency, despite being played out as seemingly submissive performances, exerted itself and was alert to opportunities. It was said that a genuine Cutch \textit{puggee} could on favourable ground distinguish the \textit{pug} of the morning from that of the previous night, and gauge the pace of the animal from the length of the stride and the differential pressure on parts of the \textit{pug}. Newall claimed, ‘So much is the comparative amount of pressure by certain portions of the foot recognisable that a good \textit{puggee} is, it is said, in soft ground, able to ascertain if a woman be with child.’\textsuperscript{92} However, even an expert such as Natta was on occasion fooled when the boar they were pursuing turned out to be a lanky, hard running, barren sow, with a considerable display of tush [tusk]. Her solitary and unsocial habit of lying by herself had deceived old Natta, though the greater narrowness of the \textit{pug} had struck him as unusual... ‘I couldn’t make it out, sahibs’ he said; ‘the \textit{pug} resembled that of a sow’s, but the habits were those of an outlying boar. I was deceived, but the old she devil has paid for her unusual liking for solitude.’\textsuperscript{93}

Pig-sticking interactions cut both ways, reaffirming and questioning native and colonial stereotypes. The sport was thus an important site of resource exchange, human relations, and knowledge-making. It served as an interesting hybrid of colonial and native parentage that was enmeshed within the symbolism of power and prestige for the British, but which at times constituted symbiotic engagements between subalterns (i.e. subaltern British soldiers and native subalterns such as \textit{shikaris}), and confrontational entanglements with other sections of society. Complicit in these narratives are the prejudiced imperialist and racial binaries of the time (e.g. civilized vs. primitive; the dominant, masculine self vs. the inferior, effeminate, other) that differentiated groups on the basis of essentialized, orientalist stereotypes. It also goes without saying that the sport was an unequal exercise in which the asymmetry of power favoured the British, and notwithstanding interesting cultural exchanges, contributed to the exploitation of indigenous groups while reinforcing their marginalization.\textsuperscript{94} Regardless, as shown by Angela Thompsell in Africa, ample everyday resistance and strategic negotiation from native participants and idiosyncratic behaviour from the sportsmen themselves is evident. Imperial hunting on the ground

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., p. 53.
\textsuperscript{92} Newall, \textit{Hog-hunting in the East}, p. 234.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., p. 293.
\textsuperscript{94} See also Rashkow, ‘Making subaltern \textit{shikaris}’. 
was thus a complex affair, and can be read beyond the dominant narrative of sport as a one-sided instrument of colonial conquest.

V
Declining numbers of pig induced protective action. According to Robert Sterndale, ‘the shooting of a boar in riding country is deservedly looked upon as the crime of vulpecide would be in Leicestershire’.

In Gujarat, Newall lamented the passing of the ‘halcyon days’ and the arrival of the ‘degenerate days of boar-scarcity’. Sporting rules and scientific caution demanded only boars and barren sows be speared. Institutions such as the Calcutta Tent Club imposed heavy fines (‘a dozen of champagne’) on sportsmen who killed ordinary sows. By the early 1900s, the sport transitioned into a more ‘scientific’ one: hunted boar had to be at least twenty-seven or twenty-eight inches at the withers.

No amount of colonial verse, sentimentality, and adulation on any species can match that showered on to this truculent muse. Nearly every sportsman penned a few lines, set old tunes to new songs, or plagiarized from classics. Schoolboy bonds, campfires, and free-flowing liquor likely facilitated the heady intoxication for such dedications. However, as the imperial era drew to a close, pig-sticking more than other colonial bloodsport faced criticism from urban radicals and animal welfarists. While tiger and cheetah hunts by the prince of Wales, Albert Edward (later Edward VII) were condoned (on account of their dangerous nature), his ‘victories over pigs and tame elephants’ were criticized by a section of the media which nicknamed him ‘our piggish and pig-sticking Prince of Wales’.

Baden-Powell, cognizant of the growing hostility, retorted unapologetically, ‘You who sit at home will naturally condemn it. But again I say, like the drunkard to the parson, try it before you judge...Yes, hog-hunting is a brutal sport—and yet I loved it, as I loved also the fine old fellow I fought against.’

VI
Analysing the accounts of soldier-sportsmen, one is left with several impressions: the bloody nature of the sport, the craftiness of the Indian pig, the diversity of engagements with people and landscapes, and the multi-faceted nature of the imperial project. Within these accounts, pig-sticking can be read as a deeply

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98 Baden-Powell, *Pigsticking*, p. 44.
performative exercise that was enmeshed in the attainment of social status, prestige, and power at several levels: imperial conquest and oppression of Indian communities, gendered domination via masculine displays, and upward mobility for its practitioners. With its elaborate performance and prolonged, bloody engagement with the animal, pig-sticking deviated distinctly from the emerging sporting ethic that favoured a clean kill. Instead, it served as a site for the questioning and revision of imperial masculinity from the peripheries. In an era which saw an explosive growth of firearms, the adoption of edged weapons (e.g. spears) as symbols of masculinity harked back to older Eurasian honour traditions and encounters with the martial races of India and Africa. The predominance of subaltern sportsmen also offers opportunities for comparison with sporting spectacles such as the corrida (bullfight) which are considered arenas with performative potential for upward social mobility. In the context of hunting and imperialism, British sportsmen perhaps due to their prolific writing attracted greater criticism, but imperialism produced a diversity of actors, ranging from hunters to missionaries, who subscribed wholeheartedly to the idea of racial supremacy. The pig-sticking gentry constituted a subclass that embodied these prejudiced sensibilities. Therefore, I argue that the generic underlying thread of imperialism, problematic as it is, is likely to characterize most colonial literature of the period. At the same time, even military men were hardly automatons of empire, but a heterogeneous group with diverse sensitivities. Just as they identified multiple native subjectivities, we can also argue for multiple constructed mentalities among this group being variously motivated by educational influences, military training, masculine ideals, and class- and race-derived prejudices. The variety of actors and geographies involved also hinder easy stereotyping of interactions. Their shared experiences of hunting with diverse indigenous actors ranging from the Rajputana royalty to the itinerant tribes of the Indo-Gangetic plain are reflective of heterogeneous, fluid entanglements. Moreover, though pig-sticking epitomized the power differentials of European colonial hunting, it also served as a platform where both colonial and native subalterns negotiated benefits through significant (albeit unequal) material and cultural exchange. Paraphrasing Thompsell’s analysis of colonial Africa, here too hunting was a site of intersectionality in which indigenous systems and outlooks mingled with imperial culture and practice. Such ‘intercultural encounters’ that witnessed negotiation and collaboration

99 The disruption of the diffusionist centre-periphery framework and the role of intermediaries in mediating such practices is outlined by Raj, Relocating modern science.
100 See also Jones, Macola, and Welch, ‘New perspectives’.
101 Marvin, Bullfight.
102 ‘The success of the British empire has been attributed to ‘the Englishman going through the world with rifle in one hand and bible in the other’, James G. Cotton Minchin, Our public schools: their influence on English history (London, 1901).
103 Angela Thompsell, Hunting Africa: British sport, African knowledge and the nature of empire (Basingstoke, 2015).
between colonial and indigenous interlocutors have been shown to be a feature of ‘contact zones’ within the Indian subcontinent in varied fields ranging from survey and mapping, botanical explorations, medicine, and hunting. A question that remains is whether sportsmen contributed to scientific understandings of the natural history of the Indian wild pig. Natural history can be considered a broadly constituted theme dealing with ‘all quests for systematic understanding of natural objects’ and is a discipline whose practice, theories, and institutions included entanglements with a variety of other practical, social, and political enterprises. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century natural history had its own set of distinctions and contributed elements to the ‘new alliance of disciplines called “science”’. Natural history in India, during this period was a knowledge-making endeavour that was co-constitutive with the British East India Company (EIC), i.e. it was simultaneously reflective of the commercial interests of the EIC.

With their long-term immersion with the land, their first-hand experiences, and the danger pigs presented to inexperienced hunters, it would be fair to assume that veteran sportsmen would have been sufficiently attuned to the natural history of pigs. Excluding agriculturalists (to whom pigs were a persistent menace) and traditional hunting communities, sportsmen were perhaps the only group which paid close attention to this species. Their knowledge, along with that of their indigenous counterparts, was therefore a participation-based one with elements of embodiment which were developed in the process of hunting. Methodologically, this could be considered ‘science as practice’ or the ‘production of knowledge in everyday social and public life’.

Moreover, being at the vanguard of territorial expansion meant that British officers were in an ideal position to identify and incorporate new forms of knowledge on several broadly constituted themes ranging from natural history to knowledge of the terrain and communities. With respect to natural history, this conclusion concurs with recent work on the diffusion of knowledge in colonies in general and the fauna of British India in particular.

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Sportsmen’s accounts themselves tend to converge on morphological classifications, habitat preferences, and behaviour. Though independent accounts of indigenous subalterns (e.g. shikaris, beaters, puggees) are largely missing from natural history writing, ethnographic accounts of traditional communities portray the wild boar in a similar vein. Descriptions in at least three major contemporary natural histories—R. A. Sterndale’s *Natural history of the mammalia of India and Ceylon* (1884), W. T. Blanford’s *Fauna of British India* (1888), and Richard Lydekker’s *Great and small game of India, Burma and Tibet* (1900)—acknowledge, corroborate, and are in part derived from sportsmen’s accounts. Lydekker turned to sportsmen like Simson for record measurements of trophies and sourced directly from their memoirs to comment:

Even the lordly tiger cannot attack one of them [boars] with impunity, there being several instances on record where ‘stripes’ has come off worst in an encounter of this description. But it is not every boar that displays the same amount of boldness and courage, nor indeed of speed; and it is stated that while the comparatively lightly-built and ‘leggy’ animals characteristic of the Deccan and the Punjab possess the greater capacity for speed, the heavier and more massive boars from the swampy districts of Bengal display the best fighting powers.\(^{111}\)

For further reading, Lydekker referred readers to works by Simson and Moray Brown.

Sportsmen depended extensively on indigenous input, occasionally admitting that they envied the superlative abilities of their shikaris and puggees and their intimate knowledge of animal behaviour. Their accounts therefore present hybrid, co-constituted knowledge that is in good part informed by local knowledge and practice, and characteristic of ‘open-air’ contexts.\(^{112}\) Nevertheless, as in the case of other colonial mediators, colonial sportsmen and naturalists too remained gatekeepers of information that eventually made their way into texts, serving as intermediaries who transported knowledge from the contact zone, across the network.\(^{113}\) Often, they supplied both novel information and specimens to museum-based taxonomists and specialists who were far removed from natural habitats or had never laid eyes on most of the species in the wild. Kapil Raj refers to this form of knowledge-making as a ‘triangular relationship between Europeans at large, their indigenous interlocutors, and their armchair metropolitan colleagues’.\(^{114}\) As pointed out by him, this dispels the myth of the diffusionist centre-periphery model of knowledge

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\(^{112}\) Raj, *Relocating modern science*, refers to these as open air practices or heterogeneous domains characteristic of the non-metropolitan context. Examples include natural history, surveying, map-making, forestry, medicine, etc., which were unlike the socially homogeneous enclosed spaces of subjects such as pure mathematics, and the natural and experimental sciences, and involved negotiations between specialists, practitioners, and others.

\(^{113}\) Sivasundaram, ‘Sciences and the global’; Mathew, ‘To fashion a fauna’.

\(^{114}\) Raj, *Relocating modern science*, p. 56.
transfer, highlighting instead the significant role of practitioners in the development of a co-constituted natural history of the species from below. At the same time, the wild pig (Sus scrofa) is a native to much of Eurasia (the Indian wild boar, Sus scrofa cristatus, is a subspecies), and one that has been pursued widely in Eurasian hunting and martial traditions throughout much of recent human history. This contributes to the difficulty in separating many aspects of natural history knowledge as European or indigenous, or as distinctly local or generic. This too has been noted in other thematic contexts by others in fields such as surveying and botany.115

When analysed through contemporary politically correct lenses of moral outrage and animal abuse, imperial memoirs and practices that deal with bloodsports are likely to be labelled aberrant behaviour and extensively vilified.116 Scholars evaluating this literature perhaps being less familiar with natural history, lacking disciplinary breadth, or first-hand experience of hunting, occasionally reinforce this position through anachronistic and ecologically flawed portrayals.117 A lack of understanding of animal behaviour is displayed when the pig is erroneously portrayed as a non-carnivorous, docile animal, reflecting a Disneyan outlook that is at odds with reality.118 Arguments that equate human and non-human victimhood are frequently adopted, resulting in radical positions that are untenable. Despite widespread evidence for male display-oriented hunting among diverse societies and millennial time frames, contemporary scholarship has begun to argue for the moral inappropriateness of trophy hunting by conveniently situating it only within a ‘Western cultural narrative of chauvinism, colonialism, and anthropocentrism’.119 Since male display-oriented hunting of dangerous game is not unique to colonial situations, its motivations beg exploration outside imperial contexts. When multi-disciplinary inputs are explored, a distinct picture emerges. Across Eurasian societies, archaeological remains, historical, literary, and mythological narratives point to a political role for big-game hunting – for securing status via costly displays of prestige and dominance.120 Even among hunter-gatherers, a large scholarship

115 Ibid.; Sivasundaram, ‘Sciences and the global’.
116 For example Shefali Rajamannar, Reading the animal in the literature of the British Raj (New York, NY, 2012); This has been pointed out by Lorimer and Whatmore, ‘After the “king of beasts”’. American environmental historians have been urged to ‘leave individual ideological baggage behind, and to study hunters in their own words and in the context of their times’, T. L. Altherr and J. L. Reiger, ‘Academic historians and hunting: a call for more and better scholarship’, Environmental History Review, 19 (1995), pp. 39–56, at p. 53.
117 There is also greater opposition from the urban demographic to practices such as fox-hunting, Emma Griffin, Bloodsport: hunting in Britain since 1066 (New Haven, CT, and London, 2007).
118 For example Rajamannar, Reading the animak for unprovoked attacks by pigs, see Mayer, Wild-pig attacks.
120 Allsen, The royal hunt.
supports this argument: though meat from large game contributes only relatively little to nutritional provisioning, men still spend inordinate effort honing skills and adopting risky (costly) strategies to hunt big-game, indicating support for a possible hunting handicap. This hypothesis posits big-game hunting as an exercise in costly signalling, whereby men hunt dangerous game to advertise their prowess, i.e. to secure mates, deter competitors, or secure allies.\(^\text{121}\) When we place the soldier-hunter in the generic context of why men hunt co-operatively and go to war, multi-faceted leadership exercises – that use both prestige and dominance cues to secure benefits and exercise control – seem to be widespread.\(^\text{122}\) Placed along these axes, colonial big-game pursuits are likely to be situated within the ethics of normal killing, violence, aggression, and co-operation long-accommodated within human societies. Such a finding does in no way absolve colonialism of its problematic legacies, but helps to understand some of the ways by which societies appropriate power, and how embedded practices such as hunting reinforce societal asymmetries.

A number of caveats are also in order. Hunting for prestige and upward mobility among subalterns often resulted in the portrayal of a favourite species as the most difficult, dangerous, or devious. Pigs were no exception, necessitating the readers of memoirs to be mindful of exaggeration and aggrandisement (of both the hunters and the hunted). While pig-sticking was a performance aimed at peers and assembled indigenous audiences, re-enactments through the typical colonial fare of erudite sporting memoirs and creative storytelling contributed a vivid ‘afterlife’ of the hunt.\(^\text{123}\) Though written with characteristic understatement, these narratives had performative import for its consumers, playing up the role of heroic sportsmen as authorities on natural history, and simultaneously creating and reinforcing imperial imagery in which fact and fiction were somewhat blurred.

The reading of sportsmen’s narratives is also complicated by the use of anthropomorphism. A common element of human interactions with nature, anthropomorphism appears frequently in hunting narratives. Despite arguments that such portrayals are irreconcilable with modern scientific claims, anthropomorphism tends to be a basic human tendency that is difficult to eliminate even from formal animal behaviour research. Its portrayal in pig-sticking


\(^\text{123}\) Jones, *Epiphany in the wilderness*. 
literature need not invalidate an understanding of natural history, as long as we treat animal behaviours as adaptive, instinctive decisions and refrain from attributing conscious intent, humanistic morals, or motives as occasionally implied by sportsmen. Finally, it needs to be kept in mind that hunting narratives were also performances to catalyse readership and public interest in Britain. They were meant to be read as high adventure and hence contained exaggerations and sensationalism. Anthropomorphism was integral to securing public attention.

VII

Spearing animals on horseback was tried out on India’s most troublesome trio of animals, the bear, the buffalo, and the boar. While the former two were equally ill-tempered, it was the wild boar, with its ubiquity, fecundity, and fierceness that checked all the boxes in the making of imperial sport. It proved to be absolutely the right animal in the creation and reinforcement of colonial masculinity. Further, colonial sportsmen contributed perhaps the only articulated natural history of the pig. This contrasted with the post-Independence period, which witnessed a great deal of scholarship on numerous charismatic species, but pigs were once again relegated to a lowly position. Following the decline of cavalry regiments and the departure of the British, wild pigs – despite over a century of persecution – have bounced back in numbers, metaphorically emerging victorious to feed on the ruins of empire. Maybe the end of empire and pig-sticking imperialism can be read in the desperate yearning of a soldier long retired to the Shires, who wrote to Wardrop stating ‘I long for a fighting boar.’

124 In certain contexts, sentience and consciousness are valid propositions (e.g. deception in apes).

125 Wardrop, Modern pig-sticking, p. 78.