

# GUNS of the POACHERS

– LARRY’S SHORT STORIES #218 –



*That's my Nearly Perfect Safari Rifle in the middle of the poacher's guns; quite a contrast in form and appearance. These poachers used percussion guns, designed for caps, black powder and round balls – all of which are apparently handmade in Africa.*

The possession of guns has always been highly regulated in each of the African countries, early on by the Dutch, Belgians, Portuguese, Germans, British and French during their colonization of the continent in the 18th and 19th centuries, and then by the new majority governments formed after independence – mostly in the late 20th century. As one might expect, it's because of these tight gun control policies that there aren't many guns in rural Africa today; otherwise the rural peoples would have killed and eaten all the game and there wouldn't be anything to hunt.

opened for hunting, the outfitters always go into the local villages and inquire as to who the poachers (hunters) are – so they can hire them as trackers.

We discovered these three guns stacked in a corner of the main building of our camp in northern Cameroon, on a recent safari; they had been seized from poachers, caught on the game reserve

**"there aren't many guns in rural Africa..."**

on which we were hunting. The poachers went to jail and the guns were kept at the concession. One of

the PH's advised that the going price for guns like these was about \$40 each. It wasn't clear why these guns hadn't been stolen from the corner and put back into use by the poachers; that would be the way of Africa.

It's also incomprehensible that they are able to build these guns in Africa, from such limited materials and machine capability; and then to come up with the primers, powder and balls to actually use these for hunting – wow!



*Function is the number one requirement for the poacher. Quality of workmanship doesn't seem to be important.*

For most of the native peoples of rural Africa, meat is not typically a regular part of their diet. The lack of domestic production and distribution of livestock and poultry and the general economic conditions of the countries are to blame, as is the longstanding culture of mere subsistence. The populations have always grown much faster than the economy.

There are always a few hunters in every village – men that go into the bush and come back with dead animals - meat. They are known to us as poachers, and poaching is illegal, though not well enforced. Most use only handmade snares that indiscriminately catch everything that comes by. A few poachers, in some countries, have well-hidden, modern guns – especially for elephant poaching. This safari, in northern Cameroon, is the first time we had seen “hand-made” guns. Interestingly, when a new hunting area is



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*These are smoothbores in the 60-70 caliber range; used for close range shooting along trails and at waterholes – generally at night.*