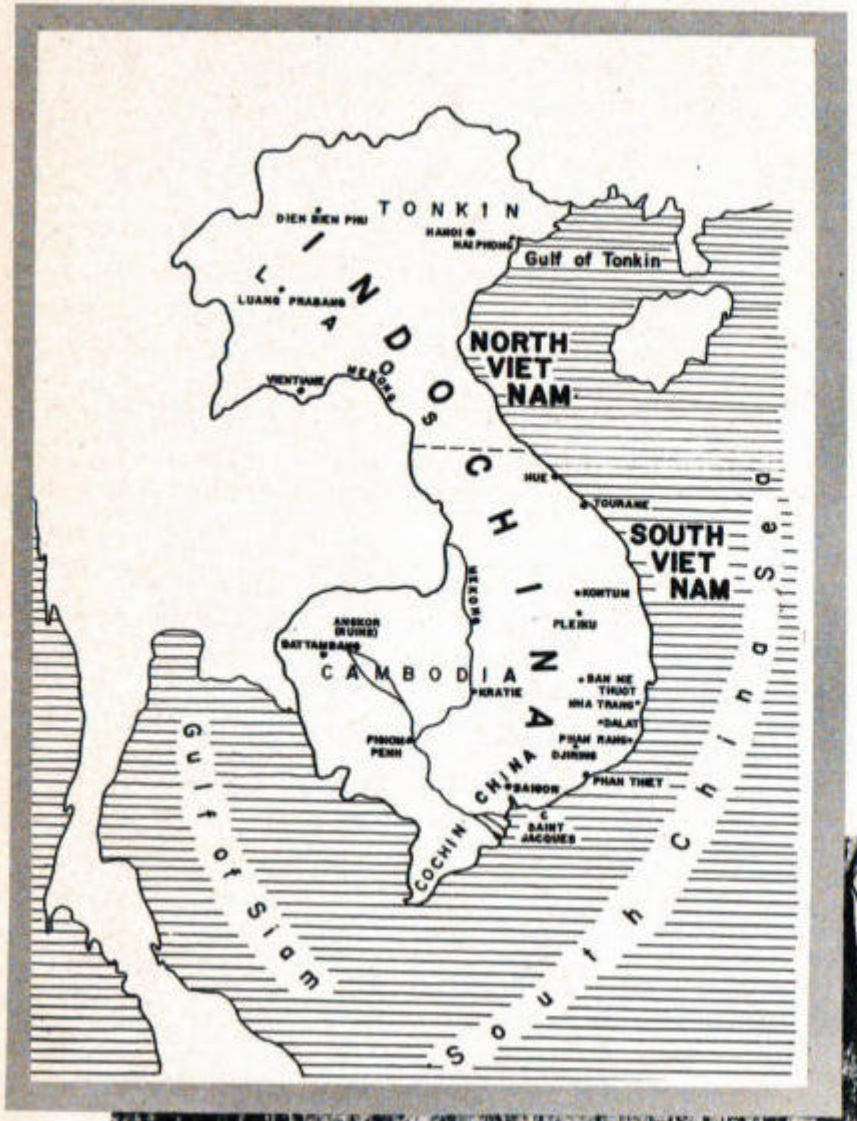
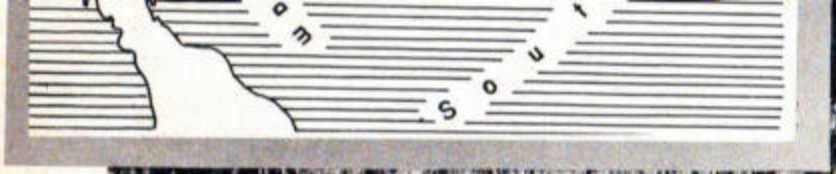
GAME FIELDS OF *Indo-China*





Another Sports Afield exclusive is this first thorough report on the unparalleled big-game hunting available now in the Far East

In Indo-China, contrary to the practice in India, tigers aren't shot from relatively safe treetop machans. Instead, the hunter is posted in a brush-and-fern blind built on the ground and located within 30 feet of the bait. This is known as a mirador. Believe me, you get your full money's worth when Old Stripes stands only ten paces distant and all that separates you from him is a latticework of thin sticks garnished with a light dressing of dao leaves.

The French guide Plas wrote in his fascinating book *Big Game Hunting in Indo-China* that a tiger pounced squarely atop his mirador one night (a mirador, incidentally, that must have been much stronger than the ones I shot out of), and shooting by sound he killed the great feline as it thrashed about scant inches above his head.

As a matter of fact, as a curious sidelight on tiger hunting, what I remember is not so much the nights I waited in the mirador, fighting a losing battle against the mosquitoes and leeches. What chills me even thinking back on it are the nights I said to hell with it and trudged the couple of miles back to camp through the jungle.

Especially if there is a man-eater in the area,

a walk like this is guaranteed to do a marvelous job of loosening up the neck muscles. Your head will spin at every jungle sound!

I guess I'm the American authority on hunting this neck of the woods. That's no great honor, particularly. Maybe I'm the only American who has ever thoroughly explored Indo-China hunting. I spent a full year out there hunting all kinds of game in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. After that year, I'm convinced this area in particular and Southeast Asia in general probably has more to offer the big-game hunter with a thirst for adventure in his veins than any place on earth. I shot elephant, gaur, banteng, sambar and the big boy, Old Stripes. It isn't an easy hunting grounds, but I'd never miss the chance to go back there again.

The great Asian cat is certainly a prize sportsman's trophy in that area, maybe in the world. It may be hunting you *to eat* when you're hunting it. A man-eater knows humans and their ways and often senses that it is being hunted. Not uncommonly it sets about removing the hunter menace in the grand old traditional way—a quick spring from nowhere.

Man-eaters are surprisingly easy to find in this country. They take a dreadful toll of the jungle natives. An accurate tally is not to be had, but any time the natives stir from their villages they are in immediate and real danger, and it sometimes happens that the man-eater invades the compound itself.

During my last shikar, I had made camp within a pistol shot of a tiny village, of some ten or a dozen Moi (a race of jungle aborigines) huts. A shack of the inevitable bamboo, perched on eight-foot stilts, was pointed out. It was explained that only the week before the Moi inhabitant and his brood were eating the evening meal, preparatory to mounting to the quarters above, when a tiger crossed the clearing in a series of bounds, slapped wife and kids to right and left and made off with the head of the household, a poor devil named Li. He was dragged into the jungle barely out of sight of the village and there devoured.

In the same village, and undoubtedly victim of the same tiger, was an old woman who had been attacked but had survived the onslaught not, however, without scars. She had gone to the village watering place, a pool in the nearby creek, and was in the act of filling her water gourds when the man-eater seized her. She had fought back strongly and the other women at the pool had courageously come to her rescue. They beat on the tiger with water gourds and packbaskets and so confused the beast that it had retreated to the edge of the jungle, grumbling dangerously, of more than half a mind to return to its victim. Even though beaten off, he had bitten the old woman's left arm so horribly that it hung by a thread of flesh. It was amputated in the village without benefit of any medical assistance whatever. When I saw her, only a few days after the ordeal, she was suffering great pain. I had no narcotics to give her but did provide two liters of alcohol from the stocks we regularly provided our trackers and carriers. The Moi are much addicted to alcohol, and the bottle of colorless "white mule" brought a spark to the sufferer's eye.

Old "Ong Ba Mui" is a jungle gangster, ruth-

An Indo-China shikar has none of the luxury of an African safari. This shows one of our campsites, adequate but not fancy. The boys are scraping down ivory here.

Considered the prize trophy by Asians is the gaur, the wild ox of the Far East. Old solitary bulls are cunning, alert and always menacing. Notice darkness of jungle.

I pose with an average elephant. Asian elephant is bigger than African, but ivory is smaller. Note tortuous cover. Elephants are shot at 10- to 20-foot ranges here.

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Indo-China contains both the royal Bengal and a smaller coastal tiger. Man-eaters are common. Every time a native stirs from his village he is in immediate and real danger.

less and deadly, a grim specter in the lives of the mountain people. His numbers are legion and his enemies, with the exception of man, nil.

The best tiger shooting in the world today is to be found in Indo-China. There has been little hunting for the past 17 years. Even before that those sportsmen who elected to make the long ocean voyage for a go at the Bengal were few indeed.

The occupation of the French Union of Associated States, as France elected to call her Indo-Chinese territories, by the Japanese and later the eight years of war which the French waged so unsuccessfully against the Communists, culminating in an armistice which holds today, has put a damper on any great deal of big-game shooting.

Today, Indo-China is divided into South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam. This latter entity—North Vietnam—is concession to the successes of the Commies who fought to establish their totalitarian regime throughout the entire peninsula, compromising finally on the acceptance of Tonkin and portions of old Annam in northernmost Vietnam.

This portion, North Vietnam, under the professional Communist, Ho Chi Minh, is just as strongly entrenched behind the Iron Curtain as Red China itself. North Vietnam most certainly is not to be considered as a hunting possibility!

Happily, South Vietnam is staunchly anti-Communistic and under the stable government of Ngo Dinh Diem, provisional president and backed by the United States Government, offers infinitely better shikar possibilities anyway.

Laos and Cambodia, bordering Vietnam and formerly members of the French Union, offer excellent big-game possibilities. Of the two, Cambodia is the more attractive. It is the more promising for the reason that its government is oriented toward the West, hunting spots are more accessible and facilities in the shape of communications, transportation, hotel accommodations and guides are better.

Laos is at present actively infiltrated by Commies from both North Vietnam and Red China, and while ostensibly Western as to governmental complexion is actually teetering on the brink of Communistic envelopment. These considerations, plus the primitive conditions of communications, sanitation, living accommodations and lack of hunting organization, preclude serious consideration of this particular part of Indo-China as a shooting potential.

South Vietnam, consisting of the former states of Cochin China and Annam, offers hunting a notch or two above that of any part of Indo-China and from the important standpoint of a friendly government, freedom from Communist elements, hotel accommodations, road net, native huntsmen who are acquainted with the game and accessibility is the best bet by a margin.

The country contains the royal Bengal tiger, the largest of the striped cats and assuredly the most handsome. While the Bengal ranges the length and breadth of the country, he prefers the higher central plateau, shunning the coastal regions. These lowlands he leaves to a smaller cousin. This coastal cousin is a tiger to his last stripe and claw, although he is not the true Bengal. His coloration is not that of the greater cat and on the score of size he is definitely a smaller version.

Besides the two tigers there is a leopard, a feline resembling his African relative so patently as to make it virtually impossible to distinguish between them. If this were not enough there are four smaller species of cats, including the not uncommon mutation of the leopard which turns out jet black. He is referred to as the black panther and is striking indeed.

I was jeeping down a jungle road one day, traveling the six hard and rough hours from Ban Methuot to Plei Ku, when not one but two of the handsome blacks stalked into the trail. I slithered the Land-Rover to a halt and wrestled to free the .358 from its sheath. By the time the rifle was free the leopards had nonchalantly strolled into the shoulder-high co-grass. Ever after that I traveled with the rifle unsheathed but got no second opportunity.

While incoming sportsmen class the tiger as the prize game, the local shikaris (and I include not only the handful of French colonials who have elected to remain but those Vietnamese who are big-game hunters) are all rather contemptuous of Old Stripes. The premier game, they will tell you, is the gaur.

The gaur, in India called seladang or simply "sladang," and down the Malay Peninsula referred to as bison by the British who hang on there, also sometimes erroneously dubbed gayal, or mithan (a domestic relative but smaller), is the world's largest bovine. He dwarfs the mighty African Cape buffalo, ranging in weights well above a ton, stands nearly seven feet at the shoulders and runs to a length of ten feet. He resembles in some small measure our own bison in that he possesses a mighty dorsal hump, a great fin of bone, muscle and sinew that rises forward of the ropy tail and reaches its apex at the shoulders. It is this pronounced hump that gives the creature its great height.

He is a devil's black for color with a tawny, yellowish stocking gracing each leg and extending almost to the hock. Between his horns is a boss of the same hue. The horns rising above this dark apparition sweep outward and upward and in the trophy class will attain a spread of almost four feet. Massive as to structure and handsome trophy withal, yet the horns do not attain the massive proportions, especially at the base, of the African buf.

The gaur displays a ferocity of expression that is infinitely more savage than the trapped tiger. There is an utter savagery, a devil-incarnate mask of viciousness about the beast, an appearance of pure meanness and a made-up-his-mind-willingness to kill you that is without parallel in the realm of wild things. His truculent disposition does not belie his poisonous exterior.

It is claimed that a gaur, without any more provocation than the knowledge that a hunter is on its trail, will lie in wait and charge from close quarters. This is probably an exaggeration. What is not exaggeration is the fact that a wounded gaur is an exceedingly sticky proposition.

Wounded, he will bush up and await his pursuers, launching a vicious close-or-die attack from yards. It is a well-authenticated happening that when crippled the critter will circle around and striking his back trail stalk the hunter attacking the party from behind. The gray matter below that boss of tawny mane is as cunning as that of an old rogue elephant and infinitely more hate-impelled.

Fewer than two score American sportsmen have killed the gaur.

A relative of the gaur, not nearly so dangerous but a valued trophy for all that, is the banteng. The critter is another bovine and like the gaur runs mightily to thyroid. A trophy bull will scale 1,500 pounds. The animal is yellow-red in color and against the verdant greenery

Tracker and myself hold huge buffalo horns shot by my partner George Parker of Amado, Arizona. Some call wounded buffalo Asia's most dangerous animal.

of the jungle is visible for long distances. Horns are smaller in diameter, especially about the base, than the gaur's, although the spread many times equals that of the large beast.

The banteng is exceedingly difficult to come by. The species is doubly endowed with keenest sight, smell and hearing. Ranging in herds there is inevitably an old cow on guard while the herd feeds, waters, rests or moves. Despite the coloration, which as I have said makes the animal easy to pick out of the jungle, stalking a band is a tough chore.

The banteng has a twin called the kuprey. This beast looks very much like the more common banteng except that the body conformation differs somewhat and the color runs more to a drab yellow not nearly so conspicuous. What's really interesting about the kuprey is its horns. These brow decorations "broom" out at the ends. That is, they split and shred at the tips and present a tassel-like appearance. The kuprey is found above the village of Ban Don along the Vietnamese-Cambodian frontier.

In a class with the kuprey but possibly even more rare is the Asian one-horned rhino. The Asiatic variation of this truculent holdover from the Stone Age comes armor-plated, the "plates" overlapping to form sections of the epidermis. This plated effect is absent in the African species. It has been almost a generation since rhino have been found in any numbers in Indo-China. The animals were decimated by professionals who hunted the species to virtual extinction because of the staggering prices paid by Hong Kong Chinese for the horn. The old Oriental believes powdered rhino horn (it is compressed skin and not true horn) has marvelous powers as an aphrodisiac. This fantasy has written the death knell of the rhino.

During the 12 months I hunted Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, I heard countless tales in the Moi villages about the last remnant of the rhino herds. Sometimes the survivors numbered five, other stories fixed the total at seven, but always my informants located the vanishing behemoths in the same general area.

I am inclined to accept these stories as whole cloth. That there are a few of the great beasts still roaming the jungle is reasonable to assume since hunting pressure as a result of the Japanese occupation and the subsequent eight years of Franco-Communist warfare brought their persecution to a standstill. In the interim, a period of almost two decades, the surviving rhino have had the opportunity to build back.

The rhino country, like that of the kuprey, is five days by elephant above the village of Ban Don in the province of Ban Methuot. Ban Methuot Province is in central Vietnam, some 220 miles northeast of the capital city of Saigon.

Deep in the jungle along the Lagna River and more precisely on the Plain of Vo Dat, which lies in a great southern loop of the river, is some of the best buffalo hunting in Vietnam. The distance from Saigon is something less than 100 miles and fully three quarters of the distance is over an excellent paved road. The Asiatic water buffalo in the wild state attains a size considerably larger than his domestic counterpart. As well, his horns grow much more massive, his head assumes a slightly different shape with a muzzle that is broader and shorter, the ears are longer and most certainly the disposition is infinitely more evil. Plas says a wounded buf is the most dangerous game in Asia, and he rates the beast thusly despite the fact that he killed more than 80 gaur and twice that many elephant.

A man named Ngo Van Chi, who is undoubtedly the greatest shikari in Indo-China today, carries the same wholesome respect for this water dweller. Chi on one occasion shot a buf with a .470 Express. The shot did not kill the bull and he charged. The Tonkinese gave the bovine his second barrel but this still did not bring him down. By that time the buf was so

close there was no time to reload. Chi was shooting in water up to his thighs, running was altogether out of the question. The hunter dropped in the water and completely submerged himself. The beast threshed about trying to find his tormentor. When Chi was sure the wounded bull was at a little distance he would raise his head and gulp down a few breaths of much-needed air. Finally the buffalo left off the search and commenced to move away. The Tonkinese cautiously raised to his feet, shook the water out of the double Express, dropped in a fresh pair of cartridges and proceeded to kill the bull.

My partner George Parker shot a buf last spring with a horn spread that measured ten feet and seven inches from point to point around the outside curve of the horns. Such a head will heft more than 200 pounds and accounts for the terrific muscular development of the buffalo's neck. It takes some strength to carry such horns.

For my money the most exciting game animal in Africa is precisely the same in Asia, the elephant. In India and Burma the lordly pachyderm has been decimated but this is not the case in Indo-China. There you will find elephants, and in numbers. Herds range from Cap San Jacques at the very southern terminus of the jungle north to the 17th Parallel—the 17th, that inflammable dividing line between the Republic of Vietnam (anti-Commie) and the Peoples Democracy of Vietnam (Red). So abundant are the tuskers that many a Moi village watch their rice crop consumed in a matter of days when a passing herd invades.

This had been the case last spring when we pitched camp hard by a Moi village. The savages had cleared about 100 acres of the jungle for their vitally needed rice. The crop had been planted and the rains had come. The crop was prospering handsomely. Then like a scourge of grasshoppers the elephants descended. Three herds in succession came and in a matter of days the rice had been despoiled. The chief of the village, in desperation, had rallied the village and placed every man, woman and child about the limits of the field with orders to build and tend fires and keep them going day and night. He had hoped through this stratagem to frighten the tuskers away. The elephants walked between the flames and calmly gobbled up the succulent sprouts.

When we arrived upon the scene the Moi were faced with the prospects of semistarvation.

These people have no firearms, not even trade muskets. The French, when they were in the saddle, sternly restricted guns, and with the new government under the Vietnamese there have been no indications of a relaxation of the ban. The Moi has a crossbow, a short stabbing spear and a two-handed knife. With these weapons he is ill-prepared to cope with the elephant.

The first morning we had hardly trekked a good pistol shot from the village when the sign indicated that a veritable hurricane of elephants was in the area. The 20-foot grass behind the encampment was trampled until it was a criss-cross of trails, wallows and stands. Dung lay on every side and most of it was fresh.

"Are there good bulls?" I looked at the chief and Ngo Van Chi talked for me.

"Yes. Many bulls but one great one with teeth like this—he extended his arms to full

Parker with very good marsh deer. Notice the long hair. Deer are used both for food and tiger bait.

Barking deer (muntjac) shot with new Smith and Wesson .44 Magnum. Notice the hit in upper part of neck.

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Outstanding sambar head. Gun is .358 caliber Savage 99, my medium rifle. My heavy weapon was the new Winchester .458 Magnum.

length—he comes only every fifth day."

"When will he return?"

"In two, maybe, three days."

The next morning we climbed the ridge behind the village. Trekking through the Moi huts the dogs went wild at the evil smell of Parker and myself. The tame buffalo, close-tied by the huts to keep them safe from the tiger, snorted and lunged at their tethers, eager to get at us and hating us for our smell.

Above the village we plunged into the 20-foot grass. Working our way forward and continually testing the wind, we listened for sounds of the game. A feeding elephant is as noisy as a bulldozer in a growth of jack pine; not only does he trample brush, vines and small trees but his digestive apparatus is continually putting off burps, rumbles and small avalanches of sound that are audible from distances of 100 yards.

We picked up the unmistakable belly growlings of an elephant. An instant later came the sounds of heavy movement.

There is one simple way of catching a moving tusker and that is to travel faster than he does. We broke into a run and threading through the interminable trails sought to close with the tuskers before they moved out of the country. The wind was in our favor, and jogging along we caught first sight of the great grayish backs just as the last of the band quit the cane and entered the forest.

The herd paused and we worked among them seeking trophy ivory. This is a tedious chore but may be the best part of elephant stalking for it is guaranteed to provide a thrill a minute. Sometimes you pass so close to the game it would be simple to reach out with the gun barrel and scratch a huge belly. It is sporting, for no matter how favorable the wind may have been when you worked into the herd, by the time you have penetrated some distance a faint whisper will arise and give your position away.

This may stampede the herd, or it may result in an old cow poking silently—and dangerously—into your bamboo clump to root you out. Particularly if she has a calf. An elephant cow with a calf is ten times more dangerous than a bull and she is ever a hazard when you go aprowling to locate a tusker with takable teeth.

Our band had halted. But the wind was shifting, the powdered tobacco our tracker Kim cast upward indicated that, so we withdrew as quickly as we could and at the run, swung about the left flank and dropping into a brush-choked nullah aimed to face into the drifting game. At the very brow of the defile we met the tuskers head-on. As a matter of fact we were almost trampled.

Quite unknown to us a noisy group of Moi had walked into the elephants from behind. The natives chatter more than the little Gibbon apes that climb into the very topmost branches of the 125-foot dao trees and whistle at their compadres three quarters of a mile away. The savages talk as they move through the forest to keep up their courage. Whether the yak-yak frightens old Ong Ba Mui—his Royal Bengal Highness—or attracts him will ever be a moot question. Suffice to say in this case that the clatter of a dozen tongues had stampeded our tuskers.

We had barely gained the lip of the nullah when we found we were staring right down the throats of 20 rapidly advancing elephants. They were headed for us as if locked on a radar beam, and any idea we might have had of backing gracefully out of the line of advance was entirely out of the question. They were upon us.

It was a touch-and-go thing, and by standing stock-still we might have escaped unscathed. I elected to split the herd and shot a small bull that was barging down directly on top of me. A Cambodian bull at his side fell to the bullets of all three of our guns. The herd split around the little island thus formed and streamed away. I caught a glimpse of a lunker bull with trophy

ivory on the flanks of the herd but too many cows intervened for a shot.

Our day's work gave us scant satisfaction but the Moi of our tiny village were overjoyed. They swarmed out and commenced to butcher the carcasses while yet warm. In a trice their desperate economic plight had been resolved.

Before nightfall some tons of red meat had been sliced into long strips of jerky and the drying racks about the village were as garish with splashes of crimson-hued elephant steaks as a Chicago slaughterhouse.

The next day every man, woman and child and all the dogs in camp had a full-blown case of dysentery. Unaccustomed to a diet of meat, the Moi when he can get the food promptly

Kim, our tracker and friend, a good man to have on a shikar.

Moi crossbow. Using poisoned arrow it will kill big game.

Gi served as tracker and gun bearer. I never saw him afraid.

makes a pig of himself. He will build a fire beside the carcass of an elephant and stay right there until he eats himself into a state of belching insensibility. Then he carts the remainder of the flesh home.

Invitations were sent out to all the surrounding villages to bring their rice. A lively barter went on for days. The elephant meat of our village was traded for the rice of the neighbors. We were benefactors, God-sent, to relieve the plight of the impoverished.

That afternoon a bull elephant trumpeted on the ridge above camp. In a few minutes he

grumbled again, and again. Kim stalked him. His rifle was an old 8mm Mauser filled with a French-loaded, full-metal jacketed round. Kim, who has been at the kill of more than 200 elephants, did not know that the puny 8mm is too small for an elephant. Or maybe he had been reading about Karamojo Bell, an Asian who killed 1,100 tuskers with nothing more lethal than a 7mm.

My Moi poured eight shots into the bull, all of them into the heart. It was enough. After this latest windfall the village ordained a fiesta.

Kim was the man of the hour. The hero. He was offered his choice of the most comely maidens of the village (the offer extended for only three nights!) and the alcohol jar in every hut was proffered him. The Moi are two-fisted tipplers; while the Vietnamese are very abstemious and threaten a total prohibition throughout the country, the Moi convert great quantities of their rice into wine and guzzle it with a lusty goodwill. Occasions large or small are seized upon as capital excuse for a bout with the jug. The return of a village member, the departure of another, the planting of the rice, the harvest, propitiating the evil spirits—and most especially the death of three elephants that had been eating the rice—called for a double-barreled, ring-tailed tooter of a bust.

The elephant carcasses we converted to tiger baits. The small bull and the Cambodian bull had fallen within a few feet of each other. The Moi fashioned a mirador in a spot which commanded both baits. Kim's bull also had its mirador. Between the several tons of meat fallen to the natives, plus the utilization of the carcasses for tiger lure, the tuskers had served us well.

Two days later, approaching the two-bait mirador just after daylight, I bumped squarely into the great bull I had seen on the flanks of the herd the day of the shooting.

My first bullet was too low in the head—a frontal try—to fetch him down. Kim and I took the trail and he immediately pulled us into a towering stand of 20-foot grass. He elected to the cane with the intention of laying a trap, I suspected. After something less than two kilometers of touch-and-go in the upstanding cane, the bull swung in a half-circle back to the jungle.

We entered and had scarcely pushed forward a long rifle shot when we came upon our game. The shot had not made him sick, only angry.

At the sight of us he made no sound but pointed his trunk in our direction like a javelin thrower and charged. The noise of rendering trees and crashing brush, the shadow of his great bulk as it loomed closer and closer in the denseness of the rain forest to finally burst into the tiny clearing where the Moi and I waited were seconds of the most exhilarating suspense.

At 20 feet the first bullet missed the brain but it brought the bull crashing down. He no sooner struck the ground than he planted his front feet and commenced to haul himself up again. I closed in and circling his thrashing trunk delivered a second solid that completely penetrated his head. The distance was 12 feet.

The most popular rifle in Vietnam today is the Model 70 Winchester .375 H & H Magnum. It is rather amazing how this rifle has penetrated this remote frontier, especially in view of the vicissitudes that have befallen Vietnam these past two decades. The .375 kills and does an efficient job. It sometimes requires more than one shot, and on such species as gaur, buffalo and elephant, and occasionally on banteng, it can be anticipated that few if any one-shot kills will be made. Sometimes it fails altogether and the game escapes wounded. This is not wholly the fault of the cartridge. The greenish-purple half-light of the rain forest, especially during the monsoon season, con-

tributes little to the accurate placement of the shot, and this hazard sometimes makes the gun look bad.

The 270-grain bullet in the .375 has little popularity, and as a matter of fact the long-odds choice of the shikaris is the 300-grain solid. Penetration is vital and only with this heavier bullet in the solid-jacketed projectile can the vitals be reached. The ammunition preferred above all others is Winchester, even though it is extremely hard to come by. The government will not permit the importation of cartridges of any kind, so the few shells that trickle into the hands of the shooting men are for the most part contraband.

Besides the Model 70 there is a sprinkling of Mausers in 8mm, 9.3mm and 10.75mm calibers. The French were hard pressed for rifles after World War II, and with the Commies making faces at them they gathered up all the loose Model 98s on the Continent and shipped them to Indo-China. Many of these weapons have gotten outside the military and are now in the hands of shikaris.

Among the French planters you will see a good many double Express rifles—almost invariably without cartridges. These guns run to .450, .465, .470 and .475 calibers. I saw, too, a Rigby .416 but it had been long neglected and was in poor condition. Members of the U. S. Army military mission are bringing over a number of Weatherby Magnums in .270 and .300 calibers. The Vietnamese sportsman La Qui Dac used a .300 Weatherby with excellent results.

Indo-Chinese hunting unlike the situation on the African veldt does not lend itself to the use of two rifles. In Africa the hunter has along two rifles, his heavy gun and his lighter caliber, the first for buf, rhino and elephant, the second for all the lesser species. This seems to work quite satisfactorily but in the jungle it isn't done. Mostly, because it is unwritten law that when stalking gaur, banteng, buf or elephant you will not shoot at other game. If you are tempted to drop a sambar for camp meat the shot may very well spook the primary target.

On the other hand, if the gunner goes afield with the avowed intention of stalking deer, there are seven in the local family, ranging from the tiny mouse deer, a lilliput of five to six pounds, on up through muntjac, hog deer, axis, marsh, barasingha and finally the massive sambar. If the hunter's rifle is of medium power, say the .270, 7mm, 8mm, or .30-06, he is hubbing trouble if he tackles something in the one-ton class.

As a result Indo-China is a one-gun country. The huntsman, if he elected, could pack along a second rifle with no strain since he invariably hunts with his Moi, and one of these chaps makes a fine gun bearer. But he does not. He selects one rifle and he chooses a gun that in his opinion is big enough for anything he may encounter. At times this sort of a selection sees him badly overkill his game, but it also has the obvious advantage of never leaving the hunter undergunned regardless of the target.

In the beginning I attempted to get along with a wildcat, a .450 lever-action. The cartridge was the .348 Winchester blown out to .45 caliber. The load was 63 grains of No. 4895 behind a 400-grain Barnes bullet. I shot this load in the Model 71 lever-action Winchester. A thorough trial on gaur and banteng convinced me that there simply was not enough *oomph* in gun and cartridge. I abandoned the .450 and turned to the new Winchester .458 African. I killed everything with this latter gun from the 35-pound muntjac to elephants, and found the larger the game, the better the big gun performed. On sambar it looked anything save sensational, sometimes a buck hit squarely behind the shoulders would run 50 yards before dropping. On species like gaur, buffalo and elephant it piled up a record that was consistently good. My hunting mate Pope, grandson of the im-

mortal Harry, shooting the .458 last spring accounted for what he conservatively estimated to be 13,000 pounds of meat—gaur and buffalo and banteng—during a five-day shikar. He has largely abandoned the .375 in favor of the larger gun.

Chi expressed a strong interest in the new Weatherby .378 Magnum. After he got one he killed six elephants, all with one-shot kills. He is delighted with the performance of this, the latest of the Weatherby Magnum family. Chi was formerly a .375 man. The big Norma case around which Weatherby designed the .378 will hold a hatful of powder. It is much larger than the .375 case, and is so large it somewhat dwarfs the 300-grain bullet. While Ngo Van Chi's performance with the gun and load indicates it is lethality itself, always bear in mind that this man is a very extraordinary elephant hunter. I well remember when he stalked and killed a walloping big rogue bull when his total ammunition supply for the .375 amounted to four cartridges. He killed the bull with one shot. When Chi shoots it is usually from a distance of two rifle lengths or some such range. As for the .378, I'd prefer a 370-grain or even possibly a 400-grain bullet despite the performance of my Tonkinese friend and his six-bulls-with-six-shots record.

Weather conditions—it rains 300 inches annually—place a high premium on iron sights. Lack of even passably fair light, plus the extreme denseness of the cover which permits the hunter to get within scant yards of the game, pretty well rules out the scope. Gaur are shot at 20 yards and buffalo the same. Elephant are caught in the bamboo thickets and must be taken at ranges so close you sometimes must literally back up to get a fair whack at vital body areas. Banteng, by choice, inhabit more open country and sometimes shots are as long as 100 yards.

These conditions pretty well dictate open sights or apertures with a peep big enough to toss a cat through. When light conditions are worse than deep twilight and the monsoon has brought its 24-hour downpour, the simplest sight combination is to be preferred.

I first tried the factory open sights on the .458 Winchester. These were okay in most of the cases but occasionally I'd get a shot when the bead would not settle into the notch distinctly. I swapped for the Lyman 48 receiver sight. Once the 48 was in place I took out the target aperture and dropped it in the Song-Ky River. The big peep, located as it is close to the eye, was just the medicine.

Ammunition for the most part wants to be solids. Penetration is what you are seeking and the steel-jacketed bullet will grind through muscle, sinew and bone to reach the vitals. I tried the soft-nose bullet in both the .450 and the .458, and while I got kills the opportunity later on to compare results with the performance of the solids persuaded me the latter were preferable.

As for the medium caliber, I had with me a Savage Model 99 for the new .358 cartridge. The 99 was equipped with the Weaver 1X scope. Viewed from a distance of 10,000-plus miles I felt this rifle-and-scope combination would be excellent in the jungle, and the cartridge suitable for such species as tiger, leopard, banteng, sambar, bear and wild boar. I'd never been in the jungle but it seemed to me that the light-gathering properties of the 1X glass, together with its complete lack of magnification, should be excellent. As for the .358, it seemed to be the perfect medium caliber for that part of the world. The big .36 caliber bullet, weighing a full 250 grains and driven at 2,250 feet per second, should deliver all the smash I'd need, I thought.

I first tried the load on a variety of deer: muntjac, axis and barasingha (the latter weigh over 500 pounds) and on up to sambar. It killed

with remarkable effectiveness. The 1X Weaver was excellent if it was not raining. In the downpours it had to be continually wiped dry before the shot was taken.

One hot afternoon during December I stalked a herd of banteng and smacked the herd bull at not a peg over 75 yards. The 250-grain upended him but he lunged to his feet an instant later and wheeled into the jungle. My follower shot a miss. I spoored him the remainder of the afternoon and concluded from the frothy blood spoor that the bullet had gone too high to hit the heart. I never got the big yellow bull.

Later I tried the rifle on other banteng and it invariably required more than one shot to anchor the game. On wild boar it killed with a degree of lethality that outrivaled the .458. But on a tiger I had a most dismal experience.

A Nung farmer had lost a fine young heifer to a prowling coastal tiger. The killer had boldly entered the tiny cow pen hard by the Nung's hut, killed the heifer with a single powerful crunch of his jaws, and then dragged the lifeless bovine through the corral fence. The farmer, an ex-soldier, had driven the big cat off with a fusillade of shots.

I came next morning. The Nung was obdurate and would not furnish the cow as bait. He intended to butcher her to retrieve, at least in part, his loss. I cast about and bought a nanny goat for a few piasters. Next I cut sign all about the area and found that old Ong Ba Mui had been using a trail that ran behind the Nung's hut, near the river.

As the shadows lengthened I tethered my nanny on a postage-stamp terrace hard by the pug-scarred trail. I backed up the slope 50 feet and hunkered comfortably my back against a dao tree. The sun had scarcely dropped into the jungle when the moon, a great, yellow ball arose and flooded the area with a glow quite as bright as on the desert. Glancing through the scope, I found I could pick up the goat very distinctly although, of course, I could not define the cross hairs.

I had been in position probably three hours, quiet but inwardly vastly bored with the monotony of the waiting, when I glanced down at the nanny who had quit her confounded blatting and was now strangely silent. One instant I looked at her and she was quite alone on the tiny terrace; the next instant she had company!

The tiger had followed the trail just as I thought he would and had come abreast of the goat and stopped. He paid her no attention whatsoever. He had stopped and was staring up the trail. He was a big tiger and looked huge in the moonlight. He was about 50 feet from my position. As the big cats do not have a strong sense of smell, I knew very well he had not sensed my presence as I sat in deepest shadow. I propped both elbows on my knees and leveled the .358 on the big feline. All the scope showed in the field of view were stripes, nice big, lovely and flowing stripes. From top to bottom and side to side there was nothing to be seen but tiger.

I could not see the cross hairs but I held just behind his shoulder and squeezed one off. At the report the cat reared straight in the air and either fell into the nullah directly behind him or turned in the air and leaped into it. His departure sounded like a platoon of Abominable Snowmen outracing a Himalayan avalanche.

I cut sign with a feeble torch but could find no blood. The next morning I quested for the better part of half a day and found no evidence that the tiger had been hit. Neither could I find any evidence of where my bullet had struck in the dense clump of bamboo immediately behind the spot where Old Stripes had stood. That dismal exhibition, although so obviously my fault, soured me on the .358 and the non-magnification scope. I confined the gun and sight to deer-taking after that.

An Indo-China shikar has none of the luxury of an African safari. This shows one of our campsites, adequate but not fancy. The boys are scraping down ivory here.

Considered the prize trophy by Asians is the gaur, the wild ox of the Far East. Old solitary bulls are cunning, alert and always menacing. Notice darkness of jungle.

I pose with an average elephant. Asian elephant is bigger than African, but ivory is smaller. Note tortuous cover. Elephants are shot at 10- to 20-foot ranges here.