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## **An Investigation of the Ivory Market in Taiwan**

Prepared by

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TRAFFIC East Asia-  
Taipei

August 2002

# TRAFFIC



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**Front cover photograph:** Carved whole ivory tusk.

**Photograph credit:** Chris Shepherd/TRAFFIC Southeast Asia.

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Joyce Wu and Marcus Phipps

**TRAFFIC East Asia-Taipei**

*August 2002*

*Credit: Joyce Wu/TRAFFIC East Asia-Taipei*



**Weekend jade market, Taipei, where small ivory carvings and jewellery were the most commonly encountered ivory pieces**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* was listed in Appendix I and the African Elephant *Loxodonta africana* in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) at the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP1) in 1976. Since that initial listing, the Parties to CITES have invested a great deal of effort into regulating the trade in African Elephant ivory. Throughout the 1980s, a series of resolutions were adopted by the Parties, including an international marking system and a comprehensive ivory export quota system, in an effort to improve international trade regulations for ivory. In spite of these efforts, many elephant populations continued to suffer substantial declines. Consequently, the African Elephant was listed in Appendix I of CITES at CoP7 (Lausanne, 1989). Accordingly, international commercial trade in African Elephants, as well as in their products and derivatives, including ivory, has been prohibited since January 1990.

Under Taiwan's *Wildlife Conservation Law* (WCL), which came into effect in 1989, the commercial importation and exportation of elephants, and their products and derivatives, is prohibited. Domestic commercial trade in ivory was temporarily prohibited, from 1989 to 1995, pending the introduction of a comprehensive domestic management system. The system - the *Supplementary Regulations for the Management of Ivory Stocks* (unofficial translation) - was developed in 1995, and was in force at the time the surveys described in this report were conducted. The system restricts sales to specially designated ivory only.

In 1997, TRAFFIC East Asia-Taipei conducted a study focusing on the relevant local government agencies responsible for the ivory management system. The purpose of the project was to review the structure of the ivory management system and its ability to regulate the domestic ivory trade. A Chinese-language report on the subject, *An Evaluation of Taiwan's Domestic Ivory Management System*, was produced in 1997.

In order to better to understand the state of Taiwan's ivory market, TRAFFIC East Asia-Taipei undertook a series of market surveys in 1999. During the investigation, a total of 22 curio/souvenir shops, 17 seal-carving shops, and six stalls selling ivory at four jade markets were surveyed in three major cities (Taipei, Taichung and Kaohsiung) and in selected towns in Taipei County. The investigators presented themselves as potential consumers in order to research the attitudes of shopkeepers selling ivory products, and to gather data and anecdotal information concerning Taiwan's ivory market.

In comparison with the situation in 1997, the retail market for ivory in Taiwan was found to have declined, although it still persists. Ivory seals for engraving, small ivory carvings and jewellery were found to be common in seal-carving shops and curio shops in 1999. Curio shops also carried a number of medium-sized ivory carvings. In jade market stalls, small ivory carvings and jewellery were the most commonly encountered ivory pieces, while medium-sized ivory carvings were very difficult to find. Ivory products made from whole tusks (>30 cm) were found in Taipei and nowhere else. While a few shopkeepers took the initiative of stating whether or not their ivory stocks were legal, most shops did not offer any indication of the legality or otherwise of their ivory merchandise.

As domestic sale of ivory in Taiwan was permitted under strict regulation since 1995, many people think that the elephant is a completely protected species and that ivory cannot be bought and sold freely. However, it is still possible to find people engaged in the smuggling and illegal sale of ivory. From the results of the current survey, it is clear that many people, whether they are legal retailers, illegal retailers or the general public, do not fully understand the current international or national regulations governing trade in ivory. A number of misconceptions related to the regulation of ivory products were often passed on from ivory retailers to consumers.

Further, some retailers were clearly aware that international trade in ivory was illegal, but were willing to find ways to smuggle ivory to fill specific orders. The result is that people break the law, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Therefore, this report makes the following recommendations to improve Taiwan's domestic management system for ivory:

- Strengthen law enforcement efforts at ports of entry to prevent smuggling of ivory through increasing the inspection of postal and courier packages to detect possible illegal trade in cut pieces as well as air passenger luggage coming from and going to specific countries.
- Improve the capacity of Customs, police, and other law enforcement officers to identify ivory and ivory products in various forms and colours, and to understand the various means used to smuggle ivory including methods of concealment.
- Create a national wildlife products database centre to monitor the domestic market for ivory and other wildlife products.
- Issue an identification label for ivory shops legally registered to sell ivory to allow for easy identification by prospective customers.
- Encourage customers to buy only legal ivory and to always request a formal receipt.
- Develop public education and awareness materials on wildlife trade issues in different media (such as print, broadcast, and electronic formats) including annual updates on international conservation and trade regulations concerning elephants and products derived from them. The international regulation of trade in ivory and other wildlife products can also be communicated to the public through travel agencies and with displays in Taiwan's two international airports.
- Intensify efforts to monitor and regulate the jade markets at the county and municipal levels. Inspections aimed at detecting illegal vendors also should be increased, both to discourage illegal trade and to support the activities of legal vendors.
- Carefully monitor and review the effectiveness of the new ivory trade management systems introduced in each municipality and county.
- Create and actively maintain regular communications channels between municipal/county governments and the central government to monitor ivory trade flows and effectiveness of the ivory trade management system since decentralisation came into effect in 2000.
- Although not directly related to the management of domestic ivory trade, further research into the distinctions between white and vermilion ivory would help to better understand the marketplace and may benefit regulation.

### INTRODUCTION

The Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) have invested a great deal of effort towards regulating the trade in elephant ivory since the Convention's establishment. The Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* was listed in Appendix I and the African Elephant *Loxodonta africana* in Appendix II of CITES at the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP1), in 1976. These listings meant that commercial international trade in Asian Elephants and their products was halted altogether, while trade in African Elephants could take place with the appropriate permits. During the 1980s, the Parties to CITES approved a succession of resolutions designed to help regulate international trade in elephant ivory. At the same time, the demand for ivory on the international market increased steadily, contributing to the unsustainable and uncontrolled harvest of elephants in many Asian and African range states. Because this trade threatened the survival of many wild elephant populations, at CoP7 (Lausanne, 1989), it was decided that, from January 1990, both species of elephant would be listed in Appendix I and that all international commercial trade in elephants and elephant products and derivatives would be prohibited (Nash, 1997).

At CoP10 (Harare, 1997), three countries in southern Africa (Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe), all with stable or increasing elephant populations, proposed to transfer their elephant populations back to Appendix II, and to export a one-off experimental shipment of ivory to Japan. This proposal caused heated debate during the meeting, but was finally passed, subject to certain conditions. The transfer to Appendix II for elephant populations within the three States was effective 18 September 1997, while elephants within the other 34 African range States remained in Appendix I. On 17 July 1999, the single experimental shipment of ivory from Africa to Japan took place.

The monitoring of levels of poaching of elephants and illegal trade in elephant products under existing CITES controls continues in range and consumer States in order to try and understand the impact of trade such controls on the survival of wild elephants. The surveys documented in this report were undertaken to support this objective.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE CURRENT STUDY

The principal survey on which this report is based was conducted in 1999. It followed, and built on, a survey of ivory shops in Taipei carried out by TRAFFIC East Asia-Taipei in February 1997. The purpose of the 1999 survey was:

- to investigate possible changes in ivory prices and in the structure of Taiwan's ivory market since 1997; and
- to examine the effectiveness of existing regulations used to control the ivory trade in terms of reducing/stopping smuggling and illegal transactions.

### METHODOLOGY

Between 1995 and 1997, TRAFFIC East Asia-Taipei conducted two studies of Taiwan's domestic ivory markets. The first study focused on legislation and trade (Nash, 1997). The second study reviewed Taiwan's ivory management system and its ability to regulate the domestic ivory trade (Chen, 1997a). This study focused on the local government agencies responsible for implementation of the ivory management system. A Chinese-language report, *An Evaluation of Taiwan's Domestic Ivory Management System*, was produced in 1997. The



current study builds on the previous two and includes developments between 1997 and 2000. This study focuses primarily on retail markets in four major urban centers around Taiwan.

Seventy-six per cent (216 out of 285) of all merchants registered to sell ivory legally in Taiwan are located in Taiwan's four major metropolitan areas: Taipei, Taipei County, Taichung and Kaohsiung (Chen, 1997a). As a result, it was decided to target these areas for investigation. In order to make a comparison with the 1997 study, the 14 shops in Taipei visited in the initial investigation were re-visited during the current survey. Additionally, a decision was made to focus on other major commercial areas frequented by tourists and to ask local residents where ivory retailers might be concentrated.

In October and November 1999, TRAFFIC investigators visited ivory retailers posing as potential customers. Investigators attempted to collect information on the following: the geographical distribution of ivory shops and vendors; the legality of the ivory being sold; the range of ivory products being sold; ivory products as a percentage of overall merchandise being sold by a shop/vendor; the type of customers; and the price of ivory. Before undertaking visits, investigators were trained to distinguish elephant ivory from mammoth ivory and from artificial ivory substitutes.

Prior to publication of the report in 2002, TRAFFIC East Asia-Taipei also conducted a search of Chinese-language websites to determine if ivory products were being traded domestically through the internet.

The currency used in the report is the New Taiwan Dollar (TWD), with the US Dollar (USD) equivalent also included. The average exchange rates used were USD1:TWD27.5 (February 1997), USD1:TWD31.8 (October-November 1999), and USD1:TWD35.03 (March-April 2002). The exchange rates were obtained from <http://www.oanda.com/convert/fxhistory>. The TWD declined against the USD by approximately 14% between 1997 and 1999 and by approximately 10% between 1999 and 2002.

Prices have not been adjusted for inflation which increased by 2.6% between 1997 and 1999 ([www.jfc.nasa.gov/buz/inflate.html](http://www.jfc.nasa.gov/buz/inflate.html)).

## LEGAL CONTROLS ON IVORY TRADE IN TAIWAN

Taiwan's *Wildlife Conservation Law* (WCL), enacted in June 1989 and amended in October 1994, states that:

- both species of elephant are protected under domestic law (they are Category I species, afforded the highest level of protection);
- trade in elephants and elephant products, including ivory, is strictly controlled and these cannot be traded internationally for commercial purposes.
- domestic commercial sale is possible only if those who possess ivory products and wish to sell their ivory products have registered and applied for a permit from their local government.
- registered whole tusks are to be marked with a non-transferable sticker for the purposes of identification.
- a receipt with a clear description of item(s), quantities, per unit prices, and total value, should accompany each commercial transaction involving ivory.
- ivory dealers are required to report sales volumes to the relevant local government agency on a quarterly basis.

These were the legal restrictions on ivory trade in Taiwan which were in force of the time to the surveys conducted in 1999. The WCL is still in place today, but the regulations supporting the ivory management system, the *Supplementary Regulations for the Management of Ivory Stocks* (unofficial translation), were discontinued from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2000 as part of an overall move towards government decentralisation. Under the process of decentralisation, local municipal and county governments now are required to put in place ivory management systems within their individual jurisdictions. Several local governments chose to adopt temporarily the previous guidelines while developing their own local guidelines. Taipei, Taipei County and Chiayi introduced their own local ivory market guidelines prior to the publication of this report. For the most part, the new guidelines are based on the previous measures, but the reporting period for merchants changed from quarterly to twice yearly.

### REGISTRATION AND PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS IN 1999

Article 31 of the *WCL* (as amended in 1994) and *Proclamation 84* of the Council of Agriculture (COA), *Nung-ling-tzu-ti 4030323A* (23 June 1995), stipulated that those in possession of whole tusks, whether held for commercial or non-commercial purposes, must register or make a record of their possession with the relevant local government authorities (Chen, 1997a). The registration period was set from 1 August to 30 September 1995 for the registration of whole tusks, from Asian or African Elephants, regardless of whether tusks were held for commercial or non-commercial purposes and regardless of whether tusks were worked or un-worked. Holders of such tusks were required to mark them and to register their stocks with local authorities (Chen, 1997a). Because the number of applications to register stocks was very high, the COA subsequently extended the ivory registration period to 20 October 1995 (*Proclamation 84 Nung-ling-tzu-ti 4030672A*, 29 September 1995) (Chen, 1997a).

According to the *Supplementary Regulations for the Management of Ivory Stocks*, issued in 1995, merchants who held a business licence for operating a seal-carving shop, carving shop, handicraft store, or auction house had to apply for a permit from their local county or municipal government between 1 October and 30 November 1995, in order to sell ivory legally (Chen, 1997a). Of a total of 296 applicants, 285 businesses received a permit, including 155 shopkeepers in Taipei and Kaohsiung, 31 shopkeepers in Taipei County, and 30 in Taichung (Chen, 1997a). Of the 285 permit holders, 129 were seal-carving shops, 22 were curio or souvenir shops and six were carving shops or auction houses, while the nature of business of the remaining 128 permit holders was not known (Chen, 1997a).

Under the management system, the cutting of whole tusks and the sale of resulting ivory pieces was not allowed (Nash, 1997). Further, merchants had to provide legal receipts to buyers with a description of the products, quantity, price and total value of the purchase (Nash, 1997). Buyers of ivory products were legally required to ask for such a receipt and the name and address of a purchaser had to be recorded on the receipt if products were whole tusks (Nash, 1997). Merchants also had to submit records of their quarterly sales volumes to the relevant authorities on a quarterly basis (Nash, 1997). Involvement in illegal trade in ivory products was punishable by prison sentences of between six months and five years, or fines of TWD300 000 to TWD1.5 million. Those local governments which have announced new ivory management systems have, for the most part, incorporated the basic elements of the *Supplementary Regulations for the Management of Ivory Stocks* into their new management systems.

### COMPATIBILITY OF TAIWAN'S REGULATIONS WITH CITES

At CoP10 (Harare, 1997), the Parties to CITES passed *Resolution Conf. 10.10 Trade in elephant specimens* which was subsequently amended at CoP11 (Gigiri, 2000). *Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev)* includes the following recommendations on the control of internal or domestic ivory trade:

- (i) that all importers, manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers dealing in raw, semi-worked or worked ivory products be registered or licensed;
- (ii) that recording and inspection procedures to enable the Management Authority and other appropriate government agencies to monitor the flow of ivory within the State be introduced.



Credit: Joyce Wu/  
TRAFFIC East Asia-Taipei

An old Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* in Taipei Zoo

Although Taiwan is not able to become a Party to CITES for political reasons, the government has undertaken to implement CITES-compatible controls on international trade in CITES-listed species. Under the terms of Taiwan's ivory management system as introduced in 1995, only registered ivory stocks carried by licensed dealers may be sold legally in the domestic market and dealers are required to submit regular sales reports to relevant local government

agencies. In turn, local governments are required to submit reports to the Council of Agriculture, which functions as the equivalent of a CITES Scientific Authority in Taiwan, for inclusion in a national database of ivory trade. The framework of Taiwan's domestic ivory management system fits well with the recommendations of *Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev.)*.

### CHANGES TO THE IVORY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

#### A legal challenge

Eleven ivory merchants convicted of violating the *Wildlife Conservation Law* in October 1994, subsequently appealed their case to the Taiwan High Court which overturned the original ruling in June 1995. In October 1995, two of the eleven ivory merchants appealed to the Grand Justices of the Judicial Yuan for a ruling on the constitutionality of the *Supplementary Regulations for the Management of Ivory Stocks*. *Interpretation Shi-tzu-ti No. 465* was released on 25 September 1998. It stated that, because trade in wildlife and wildlife products (including parts and derivatives) that were legally imported before the WCL came into effect (23 June 1989) had been prohibited, "citizens have been limited in exercising their property rights". It also required that "the authorities concerned should ascertain the actual degree of limitation to property rights, then, review, discuss and revise the regulation in question with reasonable redress in accordance with the constitutional will of protecting the property rights of citizens." To date, the relevant principal authority - the Council of Agriculture - has not responded formally to the ruling of the Grand Justices.

#### Decentralisation of the management system since 1999

In early 1999, as part of a package of measures to curb government spending and increase administrative efficiency, the government in Taiwan announced a series of broad reforms to decentralise responsibility for

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implementation of numerous national laws to the local government level. This included responsibility for developing regulations to implement the ivory management system as outlined in the WCL.

The *Supplementary Regulations for the Management of Ivory Stocks* were provisionally set to expire on 31 December 1996, but were subsequently extended to 31 December 1998, and again to 31 December 1999, before their validity finally expired at the beginning of 2000. Since then, the ivory trade in Taiwan has not been regulated directly by the Council of Agriculture, but by each individual municipal and county government. In Taipei, this body is the Taipei City Council, which passed the *Taipei City Guidelines Governing Trade in Ivory Stocks and Worked Ivory Products* (unofficial translation) on 19 April 2000. The Guidelines entered into effect on 1 May 2000, making it illegal to conduct trade in ivory in Taipei without permission from the Bureau of Business Management, Taipei City Government. During the five-month transitional, period - 1 January to 1 May 2000 - the Taipei City Government continued to regulate the ivory trade market according to the *Supplementary Regulations for the Management of Ivory Stocks*.

Credit: Michael Song,  
TRAFFIC East Asia-  
Taipei



Ivory seized by Customs authorities in Taiwan

The *Taipei County Guidelines Governing Trade in Ivory Stocks and Worked Ivory Products* (unofficial translation) came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2000. The Taipei County guidelines are similar to the *Supplementary Regulations for the Management of Ivory Stocks*.

Kaoshiung City was still preparing its guidelines for trade in ivory products at the time of publication of the current report. In the interim, Kaoshiung continues to regulate trade in ivory products through the *Supplementary Regulations for the Management of Ivory Stocks*.

Chiayi, a city in southern Taiwan, introduced the *Chiayi City Autonomous Guidelines Governing Trade in Ivory Stocks and Worked Ivory Products* (unofficial translation) on 16 February 2002. The Chiayi City's guidelines are similar to the *Supplementary Regulations for the Management of Ivory Stocks*. Chiayi was not included in the TRAFFIC East Asia – Taipei survey in 1999.

TRAFFIC East Asia–Taipei was unable to confirm the management system in place in Taichung.

### SEIZURES OF IVORY IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN TAIWAN

Since the passage of the WCL, Taiwan's Customs agents have made a number of significant seizures involving raw tusks or ivory seals. **Table 1** illustrates several of the larger cases, but is not a comprehensive compilation. It is important to note that increased seizures in recent years may be a result of Taiwan's increased efforts to stop wildlife smuggling and the government's general willingness to publicise seizure information. While the scale of these seizures suggests that Taiwan has continued to be an important destination for ivory in the post-ban period since 1990, the findings of the current study suggest domestic markets are declining (see **Results** section). Low (1991) first documented the nature of wildlife smuggling across the Taiwan Straits between China and Taiwan, but no significant cases of ivory smuggling by fishing boats have been identified.

Table 1

## Examples of ivory seizures by Customs authorities in Taiwan

Date	Ivory type and quantity	Origin of Shipment	Enforcement agency
Jan. 1994 <sup>a</sup>	109 raw/16worked (995.5 kg); 2370 semi-worked pieces (35.5 kg)	Nigeria	Customs
Oct. 1994 <sup>b</sup>	411 raw tusks (2040 kg)	Yemen	Customs
Jul. 1996 <sup>c</sup>	461 raw ivory pieces (1107 kg) 430 semi-worked ivory pieces (21 kg)	Nigeria	Customs
Apr. 1998 <sup>d</sup>	190 raw tusks (1127 kg); 383 worked pieces	Nigeria	Customs
May 2000 <sup>e</sup>	248 raw tusks (1878 kg); 84 raw chops (311 kg)	Cameroon	Customs

Sources: <sup>a, b</sup> Nash, 1997; <sup>c</sup> WPU; <sup>d</sup> Customs; <sup>e</sup> Customs press release

## RESULTS OF MARKET STUDIES

### TAIPEI'S "IVORY DISTRICT"

An area in downtown Taipei, off Chungshan North Road and Changan East Road, has the highest concentration of ivory shops in Taiwan with 12 ivory shops within a radius of several blocks. These are comprised of four seal-carving shops and eight curio shops. These 12 outlets, together with two other shops, a seal-carving shop and a curio shop, not within the immediate vicinity of the 12, were included in TRAFFIC East Asia-Taipei's 1997 survey. When investigators again visited these 14 shops in October and November 1999, the following changes were noted:

- one seal-carving shop had closed or relocated and was replaced by a convenience store;
- one curio shop was planning to close permanently by the end of the year and all merchandise later would be commissioned to others for sale;
- a second curio shop planned to relocate to Taichung early in the new year; and
- the owner of a third curio shop complained of a marked decline in ivory sales.

In 1999, therefore, only 13 of the 14 original shops could be re-visited, namely nine curio shops and four seal-carving shops. The nine curio shops did not specialise in ivory products and ivory accounted for anywhere between 3% and 50% of the merchandise in these shops. A wide variety of ivory products in varying sizes was on display, including cylindrical and square seals, seals carved in the shape of animals from the Chinese zodiac signs, bracelets, necklaces, brooches, chopsticks, cigarette holders, pen holders, multi-layered ivory balls and various carvings of different shapes and sizes. The carvings were mostly Buddhist statues, although a few animal and fruit carvings as well as ivory vases were found. The shopkeepers did not know the species of elephant from which their ivory products were sourced. They distinguished only between "vermilion ivory" (literally "blood" ivory in Chinese) and "white ivory" (hereafter referred to by these names without inverted commas).

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One of the shopkeepers had a carving made from mammoth ivory and claimed that it was a product of the Ming dynasty (AD1368-1643) or Qing dynasty (AD1644-1911). Most of the ivory products were reported to be carved in Hong Kong or China, and only a small number were reported to be carved in Taiwan. One shopkeeper remarked that carvings from China were crafted according to the particular features of each piece of ivory, whereas in Hong Kong more standardised ivory products were first designed and then mass-produced. The same shopkeeper also added that, during the time when ivory could still be legally traded in and out of Taiwan, a number of carvers from Hong Kong came to Taiwan, but that these craftsmen were inferior to those in mainland China.

Many shopkeepers claimed that all the merchandise in their shops had been legally registered and that the buying or selling of ivory pieces would pose no problem. They also claimed that, if ivory products were well wrapped, taking them out of Taiwan would not be a problem. However, they added that ivory products might be confiscated when a tourist went through Customs in his or her own country.

Almost all the shopkeepers, when asked about carrying ivory through Customs as a personal item, responded that ivory products should not be sold to tourists from North America or Europe. Shopkeepers said that ivory seals with the personal name already carved could be taken into Japan and that well-wrapped, small and medium-sized ivory products should also pose no problem, but that large ivory products were not suggested for Japanese tourists. One shopkeeper stated that individuals were permitted to carry ivory products in and out of Japan, because Japan recently had imported ivory from Africa and was a country where international ivory trade was allowed.

The price of ivory seals differs depending on size and whether a seal is vermilion ivory or white ivory. White ivory seals were lower in price ranging from TWD1900 to 4200 (USD60-132). Vermilion ivory seals ranged from TWD3500 to 20 000 (USD110-629). Ivory bracelets ranged from TWD5000 to TWD6500 (USD157-204) and an ivory bracelet was approximately TWD1000 (USD32), while ivory necklaces ranged from TWD1500 to 4000 (USD47-126) and an ivory brooch was approximately TWD1500 (USD47). White ivory chopsticks ranged from TWD2000 to 3500 (USD63-110), and vermilion ivory chopsticks were approximately TWD18 000 (USD566). Small ivory carvings (10-15 cm) ranged from TWD9600 to 45 000 (USD302-1415), medium-sized ivory carvings (15-30 cm) were between TWD17 500 and 50 000 (USD550-1572) and a large carving (>30 cm) was approximately TWD300 000 (USD9434). Carvings in the form of whole tusks ranged from TWD65 000-190 000 (USD2044-5975). There were also carvings of over 30 cm that were not priced according to size because they were made up of small pieces of ivory. One shopkeeper had kept the invoice of a large carving he purchased in Japan ten years previously which was worth JPY1 000 000 (USD7246 at the 1989 rate of JPY138 to the USD). Near certain tourist hotels were curio shops whose main customers were foreign tourists; these shops offered a 30-50% discount to local Taiwanese customers.

Because the 1997 and 1999 market surveys were not conducted by the same investigators, price comparisons can be made only in terms of broad product categories (**Table 2**). Overall, it appears that there was no significant change in the retail prices for ivory seals, but the prices for other ivory products appeared to decline in Taipei's ivory district between 1997 and 1999.

In **Table 3**, the first four shops were seal-carving shops that carried very few ivory statues and little jewellery. Shops number 5 to 11 were carving and curio shops that carried items made from different materials, including ivory. Shop 12 specialised in ivory statues and carried a large quantity of ivory statues in various sizes, as well as a small quantity of statues made from other materials and very few ivory seals. All shops that sold ivory

Table 2

Comparison of ivory prices (TWD and USD) in Taipei's ivory district between 1997 and 1999

Ivory items	Oct/Nov 1999		Feb 1997*	
	TWD	USD@	TWD	USD#
White ivory seal	1900-4200	60-132	2500-3500	91-127
Vermilion ivory seal	3500-20 000	110-629	4500-15 000	164-545
Chopsticks (white ivory)	2000-3500	63-110	1000-2000	36-73
Chopsticks (vermilion)	18 000	566	---	---
Miniature carving (<10 cm)	---	---	2600-40 000	95-1455
Small carving (10-15 cm)	9600- 45 000	302-1415	---	---
Medium carving (15-30 cm)	17 500-50 000	550-1572	60 000-200 000	2182-7273
Large carving (>30 cm)	300 000	9434	200 000-3 000 000	7273-109 091
Whole tusk carving	65 000-190 000	2044-5975	250 000	9 091

\* Source = Nash, 1997; @ at an exchange rate of USD1: TWD31.8; # at an exchange rate of USD1: TWD27.5

carried ivory seals, the price generally varying according to the size and the type of ivory. As **Table 3** indicates, however, the pricing in speciality shops generally is higher than in other shops, as with Shop 5 and Shop 9.

Although the price of ivory had not changed significantly since 1997 (see **Table 2**), **Table 3** illustrates a great difference between the price of vermilion ivory and white ivory in 1997 and 1999. There was no apparent link between this distinction and the species of elephant that the ivory was sourced from. Those dealers who were asked whether their ivory was from Asian or African Elephants claimed not to know. The distinction between white ivory and vermilion ivory was not noted in ivory markets in other parts of Asia as profiled in Nash (1997). Many of the shops visited by investigators did not display vermilion ivory seals, but once an investigator enquired about vermilion ivory seals, the shopkeepers would bring them out or said that the seals could be ordered. According to some shopkeepers, vermilion ivory is taken from an elephant immediately after or soon after its death, and the ivory is fresher, the quality better, and ink can be absorbed more readily, so that the impression of a vermilion ivory seal stays red even after long usage. Some shopkeepers suggested that vermilion ivory would inevitably turn into white ivory with time. Other shopkeepers believed that vermilion ivory was the middle part of the tusk and would not deteriorate in quality even with time. Further research is necessary to identify differences between the two types of ivory.

#### TAIPEI: OTHER AREAS

In Taipei, nine shops outside the “ivory district” were visited. These comprised:

- three curio shops on commercial streets near tourist hotels;
- two curio (gift) shops in tourist hotels;
- two seal-carving shops near tourist hotels that also sold small and medium-sized statues; and
- two seal-carving shops (selling seals only), situated in a commercial district.

Three out of the five curio shops used to sell ivory products, but have not done so since the controls on ivory came into effect. One of these three shops had applied for a permit to sell ivory, but this had not been granted. A fourth shop had only a single piece of ivory, a small ivory statue (of approximately 30 cm), wrapped in see-through plastic with a registration tag marked with a price of TWD65000 (USD2044). The fifth curio shop specialised in ornaments imported from Russia and mammoth ivory in original or carved form. Some of the mammoth ivory pieces displayed obvious signs of fossilisation. One piece of mammoth ivory in original form

Table 3

The price (TWD &amp; USD) of ivory products in Taipei's "ivory district" in 1999

Products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
White ivory seal	2200/2800 (69/88)	-	3000 (94)	-	3000/4000 (94/126)	2500/3000 (79/94)	-	1900/2200 (60/69)	3900/4200 (123/132)	2000-2200 (63-69)	2000 (63)	2500 (79)
Vermilion ivory seal	10 000 (315)	10 000-20 000 (314-629)	5000-8000 (157-252)	-	6000/8000 (189-/252)	3500-4000 (110-126)	4000/4800 (126-/151)	-	15000 (472)	-	4000 (126)	-
Chinese Zodiac seal	2500 (79)	-	-	2800 (88)	-	-	2000/2800 (63/88)	2800 (88)	4500 (142)	-	-	-
White ivory chopstick	-	-	-	2000 (63)	-	-	3500 (110)	2800 (63)	4500	-	-	-
Vermilion ivory chopstick	-	-	-	18000 (566)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bracelet (chain)	-	-	-	-	-	1000 (32)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bracelet (band)	-	-	800 (25)	-	6500 (204)	5000 (157)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Necklace	-	-	-	-	-	-	4000 (126)	2000 (63)	-	1500-3500 (47-110)	-	-
Brooches	-	-	-	-	-	-	1500 (47)	-	-	-	-	-
Miniature statue	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Small statue	-	-	-	-	45000 (1415)	18000 (566)	10000 (315)	-	-	9600/15000 (302/472)	21000 (660)	-
Medium statue	-	-	-	-	35000 (1101)	17500 (550)	-	27000 (849)	50000 (1572)	-	28000 (881)	35000 (1101)
Large statue	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	300000 (9434)	-	-	-
Whole tusk statue	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	190000 (5974)	65000 (2044)	-



had a list price of TWD12000000 (USD377359). Various other mammoth ivory statues ranged in price from tens to hundreds of thousands of New Taiwan Dollars. Mammoth ivory seals were priced between TWD8000 and 18000 (USD252-566); chopsticks were approximately TWD5500 (USD173); and pendants measuring about three centimetres square cost between TWD1500 and 3000 (USD47-94).

In the two seal-carving shops which sold seals only, white ivory seals were TWD2000-3200 (USD63-101) and vermilion ivory seals were TWD4500 (USD142). The two seal-carving shops with statues had an ivory carving in the shape of a twenty-level spherical tower worth TWD100000 (USD3145); several carvings of approximately 15 cm, some priced between TWD7000 and 8000 (USD220-252) and others within the range of TWD20000-30000 (USD629-943); miniature carvings at TWD2500 (USD79) each; white ivory seals at TWD2500 (USD79) and vermilion ivory seals at TWD4000 (USD126).

**Table 4**  
**A comparison of the retail prices (USD) for ivory in Taipei’s “ivory district” with prices in other areas of Taipei**

Ivory items	Price		
	“ivory district” (n=12)	Other areas (n=12)	Mammoth ivory products
White ivory seal	60-132	63-101	252-566
Vermilion ivory seal	110-629	126-142 —	
Chopsticks (white ivory)	63-110	—	173
Miniature carving (<10cm)	—	79	47-94
Small carving (10-15cm)	302-1415	220-943	—
Medium carving (15-30cm)	550-1572	3145	—
Large carving (>30cm)	9434	—	—
Whole tusk carving	2044-5974	2044	377359

**Taipei - jade markets**

In Taipei, other outlets for ivory are the weekend jade markets where jade, rock minerals, coral, amber, antiques and all types of curios are sold. One jade market in Taipei is made up of a collective of vendors situated along Jianguo South Road between Jenai Road and Chinan Road. The market is open every Saturday and Sunday and is filled with several hundred stands each assigned an individual registration number. Ivory products were identified at only five stands. At one stand, 40% of the merchandise on display consisted of ivory products and the remaining 60% were crystal products. Of the remaining stands, only four had a limited number of ivory products. Vendors at these stalls added that the few pieces were all that they had in stock and that there would be no more in the future because they were now afraid to sell ivory. An ivory Buddhist rosary was on sale at approximately TWD1000 (USD32). A string of ivory Buddhist beads was approximately TWD2000 (USD63). Ivory bracelets were TWD2000-3000 (USD63-94). A small ivory teapot (5 cm high) was approximately TWD3800 (USD120).

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The stall that specialised in crystal and ivory had three Buddhist statues in ivory, two of which were approximately 15 cm in height and were priced at TWD12800 (USD403) each. The third was approximately 20 cm high and priced at TWD68000 (USD2138). The vendor claimed that the week before he had sold a 30-cm high Buddhist statue. This stall also had vermilion ivory (priced at approximately TWD2500 (USD79)) and white ivory (approximately TWD1000 or USD32), an ivory seal that had absorbed red ink (approximately TWD1800 or USD57), and a TWD1500 (USD47) ivory bracelet. The Jianguo weekend jade market had one stall that specialized in vegetable ivory made from Tagua nut (a hard-shelled dry fruit from South America) carved into the shapes of different animals and Buddhist statues, selling at TWD190 (USD6) each. Unpolished or uncarved Tagua nut pieces were TWD100 (USD3) each. Another two stalls at the jade market had what the vendors claimed were strings of Buddhist beads made from elephant bone, priced at TWD600-1000 (USD19-32) each.

In addition to the relatively new Jianguo weekend jade market, a smaller, older weekend jade market, the Guanghua jade market on Bade Road, was visited by TRAFFIC investigators in 1998 and 1999. Ivory products were sold in varying quantities at many stands and stalls at this market when it was visited in 1998. In 1998, the vendors selling ivory were probably not registered with the proper authorities and were selling ivory illegally. However, they did not seem to be concerned about the law and, when asked about the legality of the ivory, they said that there is no problem as long as one did not bring too many ivory pieces into Taiwan at a time. They claimed that Customs officers did not question ivory worn on the body, such as a bracelet. When the Guanghua jade market was visited again, in late 1999, there were no stalls with large quantities of ivory products, but there were many stalls selling a few small ivory items each. These included ivory seals, cigarette holders, snuff bottles, necklaces, pendants, Buddhist carvings, small carvings and writing brushes. There were also several stalls selling products which vendors claimed were made from elephant bone. These included Buddhist rosaries, Buddhist beads, circular and gourd-shaped pendants, folding fans and bone-shaped carvings. There were three or four stalls selling products from other protected species including what were claimed to be Tiger teeth and musk-Tiger-bone plasters (labelled as containing Leopard bone). Many vendors had unusual accents and said that they were from mainland China and that, therefore, their merchandise was also from China. One vendor said she was from Guangzhou in Guangdong province.

### TAIPEI COUNTY

#### Tamsui

Tamsui, a historic town situated on the northern tip of Taiwan, is one of the most populated urban areas in Taiwan. An established tourist spot, it has become even more popular since the inauguration of a rapid, mass transit system made it easily accessible from central Taipei. On weekends and holidays, the narrow roads of Tamsui are packed with tourists.

Many antique shops were found on Tamsui's main street, Chungcheng Road, among which four had various quantities of ivory and elephant bone articles. One of the four shops had a pen holder (15 cm) that the shopkeeper claimed to be from the Ching dynasty (TWD16 000; USD503). The second shop had three ivory products: two snuff bottles at TWD3800 (USD120) each and one necklace pendant at TWD5000 (USD157), which the shopkeeper said had been bought at a floating market in Guangzhou. He stated that he had brought back seven ivory pieces altogether, including seals for private use. All the pieces had been made recently and roasted until a brownish-yellow colour, in order to resemble antique pieces. The third shop sold mainly amber, but had three ivory seals, priced between TWD1600 and 3000 (USD50-94), as well as a Ching dynasty ivory seal with a

Buddhist image at TWD1000 (USD32), an ivory carving of a laughing Buddha at TWD22000 (USD692), a Ching dynasty Buddhist rosary made from elephant bone at TWD1000 (USD32) and an ivory pendant at TWD12000 (USD377). The fourth shop had more variety in ivory products, including an 18-carat gold knife with an ivory handle measuring 10-15 cm. This item, the handle of which was reportedly made from a Japanese short sword, was on sale at TWD35000 (USD1101). Also on sale in the fourth shop was a Chinese carving of a Buddhist statue, originally intended for export to Japan (TWD38000/USD1195); a Ching dynasty Kuanyin statue for TWD25000 (USD786); a pair of birds carved in Japan for TWD12000 (USD377); a Chinese statue of a girl for TWD7000 (USD220) and two antique seals with names already carved on them, selling at TWD2000 (USD63) each.

**Table 5**

**Retail value (USD) of ivory products in antique curio/souvenir shops in Tamsui, Taipei County**

Item	USD
Vermilion ivory seal	94-236
Miniature carving (<10 cm)	63-377
Small carving (10-15 cm)	503-692
Medium carving (15-30cm)	220-1195
18K gold knife with an ivory handle	1101
Elephant bone rosary	32

**Chungho and Yungho**

The old cities of Chungho and Yungho are two of the most highly concentrated residential areas in Taipei County. The cities are made up of old-style communities with a mixture of residences and commercial establishments. There are no tourist hotels. Curio shops with ivory products could not be found and there were significantly fewer seal-carving shops than in Taipei.

One seal-carving shop, which was also a locksmith’s shop, had ivory pieces for engraving. The pieces were not displayed and were only brought out after enquiry. The shopkeeper claimed that the ivory pieces he had were of superior quality, that ivory which was too white crumbled easily and was difficult to keep and, as a result, not many customers were interested in ivory pieces. His pieces were priced at TWD2500-3600 (USD79-113) each, but he added that better quality ivory could be ordered on request. The shopkeeper stated that ivory was difficult to sell and he could offer a discount on his ivory stock.

**TAICHUNG**

**Taichung shops**

Shops selling ivory were found in various areas around the city of Taichung. Many of them were located in the commercial centres of old communities or near cultural and university districts. Five seal-carving shops and three curio shops carrying ivory products were visited.

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Three of the seal-carving shops did not display their ivory products, but brought them out of a drawer or safe upon enquiry. White ivory seals were TWD2500-3000 (USD79-94) and vermilion ivory seals were TWD5000-20000 (USD157-629) and above. These were higher prices than those noted for vermilion ivory in other shops. The two seal-carving shops that displayed their ivory seals had white ivory seals at TWD1500-6000 (USD47-189), vermilion ivory seals at TWD10000-15000 (USD315-472) and a few cigarette holders at TWD2000 (USD63) each. The shopkeepers selling vermilion ivory maintained that, in order to bring good luck, the “propitious seal” engraved for one’s business must be of vermilion ivory and, if white ivory were used to make the “propitious seal”, it would bring bad luck. By contrast, shopkeepers at another seal-carving shop and at two curio shops in Taichung explained that it was meaningless to distinguish between vermilion ivory and white ivory because vermilion ivory would eventually turn into white ivory. They added also that white ivory is capable of absorbing ink and becoming thoroughly red after long usage.

Of the three curio shops visited, only one was registered, according to the shopkeeper. This shop carried ivory necklaces at TWD1800-5000 (USD57-157), miniature carvings at TWD3000-5000 (USD94-157) and medium-sized carvings, of approximately 20 cm high, at TWD16000-50000 (USD503-1 572). This shopkeeper stated that most of his customers were local residents and, if an established customer asked for ivory, he would arrange for the desired ivory piece to be brought into Taiwan. The two other curio shops did not have much variety in ivory products - a few bracelets (TWD800-2000/USD25-63), cigarette holders (at approximately TWD600/USD19), Buddhist statues and Buddha’s head carvings (TWD800-18 000/USD25-566) and seals (TWD1000-1500/ USD32-47).

### Taichung jade market

The weekend jade market of Taichung was situated between Kungyuan Road, Pingteng Street and Kuangfu Road. Close to the jade market were two cinemas to the south, Taichung Park, a commercial district and government buildings. Most of the stalls were set up inside a plaza and a few were set up in the arcade outside.

**Table 6**

**Comparison of ivory prices (USD) in Taichung’s retail shops with those at the jade market**

Item	Retail price	
	Shops (n=8)	Taichung jade market
White ivory seal	32-189	28
Vermilion ivory seal	157-629	41-57
Cigarette holders	19-63	-
Miniature carving (<10 cm)	25-472	63-472
Small carving (10-15 cm)	566	-
Medium carving (15-30 cm)	50-1572	2516-4088
Necklace	57-157	32-120
Buddhist beads	-	19-38

Inside the plaza were two stalls with a large number of ivory products on display. Eighty per cent of the merchandise on one stall was ivory, including two statues of 20-30 cm in height on sale at TWD80000 (USD2516) and TWD130000 (USD4088); several five centimetre-high statues priced at approximately TWD2000 (USD63); white ivory seals at TWD900 (USD28) each; vermilion ivory seals at TWD1800 (USD57) each; and bracelets at TWD1800 (USD57) each. Thirty to forty per cent of the merchandise at the second stall was ivory, including two snuff bottles, two small flat-shaped teapots (approximately five centimetres) and bracelets and seals (the seals were priced at TWD1300/USD41). A number of other stalls had a few pieces of ivory, such as necklaces (TWD1000 to 3800; USD32-120), Buddhist beads (TWD600-1200; USD19-38), cigarette holders and an ivory Buddhist statue from Nepal (TWD10000-15000; USD315-472). More stalls carried merchandise made from elephant bone than carried ivory goods. Elephant bone products included rosaries (TWD1000/USD32) and snuff bottles (TWD400-600/USD13-19).

### **KAOHSIUNG**

Most of Kaohsiung's curio shops and shops offering ivory products for sale appeared to be in the old part of the city, near tourist hotels, and in the jade market. The amount, scale and diversity of merchandise in Kaohsiung's shops were not as great as in Taipei.

Four seal-carving shops were visited in Kaohsiung. The owner of one of these claimed it was registered. One of the shops carried ivory seals that were reportedly brought into Taiwan by a friend of the shopkeeper. White ivory seals were priced at TWD1000-2000 (USD32-63) and vermilion ivory seals at TWD2000-8000 (USD63-252).

Two curio shops located near tourist hotels were visited. In one of these shops, the shopkeeper said that the shop used to stock ivory products, but that this was no longer the case. He explained that the sale of ivory products was prohibited by law and that his customers used to be mainly Japanese tourists but that they were now afraid of having their ivory confiscated upon re-entering Japan. He added that his friends and family all said that the elephant was a protected species and that sale of ivory was prohibited by law and that one should not buy ivory products. The other curio shop had a window display of what the shopkeeper claimed to be imitation ivory products, made from fish bone, and a small ivory carving with a price tag of TWD6000 (USD189). After some enquiry, the shopkeeper brought out a few ivory seals and an ivory necklace, the latter priced at approximately TWD2000 (USD63). The shopkeeper told the investigators that ivory could not be bought or sold, asked the investigators several times whether or not they were inspection officers, but, at the same time, was actively trying to sell his ivory merchandise to the investigators.

### **Kaohsiung jade market**

Kaohsiung's jade market was situated inside a large indoor plaza at the north-west corner of Shichuan Road and Tzuli Road. The stalls of the market were neatly lined and every stall had a sign showing its designated number. The arcade outside the plaza was also packed with stalls but they did not have numbered signs. There were two stalls in the arcade with large quantities of ivory products, but the vendors were not selling enthusiastically.

The scale and organisation of the Kaohsiung jade market was comparable to that of Taipei and the variety and quantity of ivory at the jade market was much higher than in the shops of Kaohsiung. Ninety per cent of all ivory products were at three stalls, although about six other stalls had a few ivory products on display. One vendor

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declared that he was registered with the proper authorities and could legally buy and sell ivory. The most common ivory products found were seals and bracelets, followed by cigarette holders, and the least common were necklaces. Ivory seals were priced at TWD900-3000 (USD28-94) each. Carvings on sale were priced at TWD35000 (USD1101) for a specimen 15 cm high and TWD85000 (USD2673) for another of 20 cm, but few carvings were seen at this market.

**Table 7**

### Comparison of ivory prices (USD) in Kaohsiung's retail shops and jade market stalls

Item	Retail price	
	Shops (n=8)	Taichung jade market
White ivory seal	32-63	28-57
Vermilion ivory seal	63-252	41-94
Miniature carving (10-15 cm)	189	1101
Medium carving (15-30 cm)	--	2673
Necklace	63	--

### IVORY ON THE WEB

Although a web search for information on ivory found many sites, most sites were not of a commercial nature and described pieces held in museum collections. Only one website that specialized in name seals was found in Taiwan. The site included ivory seals and prices in its product catalogue. The website listed ivory seals carved into figures from the Chinese zodiac (TWD 2600; USD 74), vermilion ivory seals (TWD 2800; USD 80), white ivory seals (TWD 2400; USD 69), imitation ivory seals (TWD 1200; USD 34), and non-ivory seals (TWD 900 – 1800; USD 26-51).

Other offers for sale involving ivory products were found on a general auction website. Ten ivory items were offered for sale at the auction site of which five had sold in March 2002. The remaining five items were being offered by the same individual and were awaiting bids. Ivory products found on the auction website included one large carving (TWD 60000; USD 1713), six small carvings (TWD 2800–30000; USD 80-856), two bracelets (TWD 1800/5500; USD 51-157) and one necklace (TWD 5000; USD 143). Most of the ivory products on offer were described as antiques.

## DISCUSSION

### AN OVERVIEW OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF IVORY RETAILERS IN FOUR MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS

Research for this report suggests that the sale of ivory products in Taiwan in 1999 was taking place primarily in the tourist and commercial areas of the major cities of the island, or at curio or antique shops in recognised tourist spots, such as Tamsui in Taipei County.

In the major cities, ivory retailers were concentrated mainly around tourist hotels (such as in Taipei's "ivory district"), and their customers were mostly overseas tourists, especially Japanese tourists. Generally speaking, shops that carried ivory products within Taipei's "ivory district" were larger and had more merchandise and variety than shops elsewhere. Shopkeepers in the "ivory district" placed emphasis on the historical period to which a piece belonged and to the style and special sculptural features of individual pieces. Retailers in other



Credit: Joyce Wu/TRAFFIC  
East Asia-Taipei

**Bade jade market, Taiwan**

areas (whether at shops, stalls, or stands) carried mainly carvings and ornaments, placed less emphasis on the style or craftsmanship and more on the quality of the ivory, as well as whether the ivory was hollow or solid. Seal-carving shops paid particular attention to whether the ivory was vermilion ivory or white ivory.

Most of the ivory curio shops in Taipei and Kaohsiung were found on older streets or in older parts of the city. Many of the larger curio shops carried ivory products acquired 15 to 20 years ago, prior to the prohibition on

international trade in ivory. It is unlikely that new entrepreneurs are entering the ivory retail trade in any significant numbers.

Every major city visited had a jade market. Most vendors set up stalls regularly on specific days every week at the same spot. For example, the Taipei and Taichung jade markets were on Saturdays and Sundays, while the Kaohsiung jade market was on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The jade markets attracted large crowds of local consumers and a smaller number of foreign tourists and residents.

### THE QUALITY OF IVORY AND CONSUMER PREFERENCES

The ivory seal was found to be the most common ivory product offered for sale. Ivory retailers and consumers were generally aware of the distinction between white ivory and vermilion ivory and understood that vermilion ivory was more expensive, but opinions varied when it came to the source of the two different types of ivory and whether one or the other was inferior or superior. In addition to the claims that vermilion ivory was taken from an elephant soon after its death, or was formed from the middle part of the tusk, were assertions that vermilion ivory was from tusks that were "alive". In this case, it was claimed, the more the ivory was used, the more beautiful it would become, accounting for the greater demand for vermilion ivory.

Others believed that there was not much difference between vermilion ivory and white ivory and that vermilion ivory eventually would become white ivory. Still, vermilion ivory was found to be more expensive and was considered to be rarer. Some shopkeepers combined the idea of bringing luck and prosperity with seals and advertised the advantages of having a "propitious seal" made of vermilion ivory in order to bring good luck. However, the distinction between vermilion ivory and white ivory, with the exception of several pairs of chopsticks found in one shop in Taipei's "ivory district", was applied only to seals. All other carvings and ornaments seen were made from white ivory. It is possible that the distinction between vermilion ivory and white ivory is simply a marketing strategy to justify significantly higher prices for better quality ivory seals.

Although ivory still attracts consumers, ivory substitutes such as bone and Tagua nut were found to have claimed some market share. Several curio shops had such imitation ivory products on display, but claimed to have no

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ivory for sale. The investigators, who were trained to identify ivory, found that most shopkeepers and vendors stated honestly whether their merchandise was real ivory or not. Investigators did not encounter any products made from hippo teeth or walrus ivory, other types of ‘ivory’ also sourced from protected species.

### THE PRICE OF IVORY

In Taiwan’s retail ivory market, the price of ivory products in a shop was influenced by the size of the piece and the quality of the carving or craftsmanship. The quality or type of ivory was also relevant. The price of a vermilion ivory seal was much higher than that of a white ivory seal, regardless of the size and carving of the seals. Generally, the more ivory products a shop stocked, the more standardised its prices were. If a shop had only a few token pieces of ivory, the prices tended to be higher or lower than average. **Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6** indicate that, outside Taipei, the price range for ivory seals tended to be much wider. The price range for other ivory products was also more standardised in Taipei than in other areas. The standardized price range for ivory in Taipei may be explained by the higher number of consumers and resultant competitiveness of the market in Taipei, where items cannot be easily be over-priced.

Credit: Michael Song/  
TRAFFIC East Asia-Taipei



The weekend jade market in Taipei

According to the price data collected, the price of white and vermilion ivory was higher in Taipei and Taichung than in Kaohsiung and Taipei County (see **Table 8**). The difference in price range could be a function of the local cost of living, consumer preferences and habits, and/or the relative quality of the products on sale in the different locations. **Table 8** is based on data included in **Tables 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6**.

Changes in the retail price of ivory between the 1997 and 1999 surveys are noted in **Table 2**. In terms of ivory seals, whether vermilion or white, the price range was wider in 1999. Whether the reason for this is increasing product variation, stronger competition among retailers, or other economic factors is unclear. However, the wider price range for seals could attract a greater variety of customers, as they would have more choice in terms of price. Other products had lower price ranges in 1999 than in 1997. With the exception of shopkeepers who claimed that they were selling pieces on consignment (i.e. for someone else), almost all shopkeepers and vendors were willing to bargain. However, the trend of falling prices is not only limited to ivory products. It is possible that fewer people are buying ivory, not only because ivory is a controlled commodity, but also because of the general state of the economy.

**Table 8**

The range of retail prices for ivory seals in the survey areas

Items	Higher price <span style="font-size: 2em;">➔</span> Lower price			
Vermilion ivory seal	Taichung	Taipei	Taipei county	Kaohsiung
White ivory seal	Taipei	Taichung	Kaohsiung	Taipei county



### CONSUMERS AND THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF IVORY TRADE REGULATIONS

Since most of the curio shops selling ivory products in Taipei and Kaohsiung were located near tourist hotels, it may be assumed that shopkeepers have a thorough understanding of the items favoured by tourists from different parts of the world.

A number of shopkeepers mentioned that they had sold ivory products before the *Supplementary Regulations for the Management of Ivory Stocks* came into effect and that, in the past, many of the ivory consumers had been foreign tourists. In recent years, however, they claimed, the ivory business had lost a sense of legitimacy. Many foreign tourists had become less enthusiastic about ivory and some reacted negatively to ivory. As a result, ivory products were no longer sold in some shops. Some shopkeepers mentioned that tourists from Europe and North America felt strongly about conservation and did not like ivory products, but tourists from Japan remained quite fond of ivory. Some seal-carving shops displayed ivory seals already engraved with Japanese names for Japanese tourists or Japanese-style ivory carvings. Although not quantifiable, the above anecdotal information suggests that, as international conservation trends become more widespread, potential overseas consumers of ivory products either are increasingly careful or are decreasing in number.

In all survey areas, a substantial number of shopkeepers stated that very few customers asked for ivory, that ivory was very difficult to sell and, as a result, they did not have a fixed price for their ivory products. Although the primary aim of these shopkeepers was to sell off their ivory merchandise, there were others who maintained fixed prices in order not to sell at a loss. While demand remained for ivory seals, jewellery and ornaments, there appeared to be no increasing trend in ivory consumption. It also appeared that many customers mistakenly believed that all commerce in ivory products was prohibited and therefore were unwilling to buy ivory items.

Ivory shopkeepers in Taichung remarked that their consumers were mostly local.

### AN ILLEGAL MARKET ON THE FRINGES

The jade markets in Taipei, Taichung and Kaohsiung were all very large. According to observations made by the investigators, municipal governments appeared to exercise a stronger degree of control over the jade markets in Taipei's Jianguo jade market and Kaohsiung's Shichuan jade market than in Taichung. The Jianguo and Shichuan markets appeared more orderly and organised than Taichung's jade market: more than 90% of the stands and stalls in the Jianguo and Shichuan markets were registered and had posted registration numbers.

Even though the jade markets are controlled by their respective municipal governments, the stands and stalls in the arcades surrounding the jade markets were not numbered and the legality of these businesses was open to question. In addition, there were stands, whether with registration numbers or not, in operation at the different jade markets in different cities or stores on different days of the week, which would create complications for the authorities in charge of monitoring product registration and sales. Greater co-operation and information sharing between the municipal governments and the central government is necessary to monitor these inter-municipal business activities.

The Guanghai jade market in Taipei's Bade Road was the least ordered of the four jade markets. In order to attract customers, the stands were set up in the north-west corner of Guanghai Bridge and Bade Road and, unlike the other three jade markets where stalls were all assigned a designated space, the stalls at the Bade Road market were crowded into small spaces and narrow alleyways.

## An Investigation of the Ivory Market in Taiwan

At the Guanghai jade market, unlike at the other jade markets, there were no stands or stalls displaying large quantities of ivory products. The total volume of ivory products being offered for sale at Bade Road appeared to be less than the stock of one of the larger art shops in Taipei. However, of the four jade markets surveyed, the Guanghai jade market did have the most stands selling alleged elephant bone products and other wildlife products. Based on their accents, many of the vendors were clearly from outside of Taiwan and one said that she was from the province of Guangdong. Given existing restrictions on travel between China and Taiwan, the legal status of these vendors was highly suspect. It is possible that they represent one of the main distribution channels for wildlife products smuggled from China to Taiwan.

## CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the regulation of domestic ivory markets in the areas surveyed has been maintained since the move to decentralisation in 2000. Several local governments continue to use the previous *Supplementary Regulations for the Management of Ivory Stocks* and, where new regulations have been introduced, they are, for the most part, based on the earlier guidelines. One potential problem area for the decentralised management system is management of the trade data information. The twice-yearly trade reporting system may not detect trade problems in a timely fashion and may not allow municipal governments to follow the ivory flow among cities and counties as this would require a centralised database.

In general, Taiwan's ivory market appeared to be in a state of inertia in 1999. Restrictive regulation of the ivory trade prohibited the manufacture of ivory products, limited the establishment of new retailers, and limited the resale of any ivory products purchased after introduction of the regulations. However, research for this report indicated that illegal ivory products still flowed into markets in various ways.

The operators of more established (and often more law-abiding) shops were clearly more aware of the obstacles facing the ivory industry under the existing management systems. In contrast, those who were not registered, were illegally selling ivory and perhaps involved in smuggling ivory products, seemed to be more confident and willing to guarantee to customers that they could obtain whatever item the customer desired. Illegal vendors could be undermining the sales of legal businesses through offering a greater range of products or offering products at lower prices. This, in turn, could shift a greater portion of the ivory retail business underground, resulting in even greater difficulties for the authorities in implementing existing market controls.

This is not to say that all legally registered shop owners operate completely above board. The survey indicated that some registered shop owners supplemented existing ivory stocks with smuggled products when a customer had a specific request, sometimes asking friends or acquaintances to bring in specific items.

From a consumer perspective, as domestic sale of ivory in Taiwan was banned for a period and then permitted only under strict regulation, many people think that the elephant is a completely protected species and that ivory cannot be bought and sold freely. From the results of the current survey, it appears that many people, whether they are legal retailers, illegal retailers or the general public, do not fully understand the current international or national regulations governing trade in ivory. A number of misconceptions related to the regulation of ivory products were often passed on from ivory retailers to consumers. The result is that people break the law, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

In the light of the results of these market surveys in Taiwan, ongoing seizures by Customs of relatively large shipments of ivory are puzzling. Under the *Supplementary Regulations for the Management of Ivory Stocks* and

the new guidelines of different municipal governments, the cutting of whole tusks and manufacturing of ivory products are not allowed. Many established retailers expressed the view that the local market for ivory products had declined. With Taiwan having no legal carving industry and an apparently declining domestic market, what incentives exist for attempting the illegal import of ivory? At the same time, with the number of well-publicised Customs seizures, individuals involved in illegal trade would be unlikely to risk transiting smuggled ivory through Taiwan if it were not an end market. The correlation between domestic market trends and ongoing smuggling of large quantities of raw ivory needs to be investigated further.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Taiwan introduced a strict system for the regulation of domestic and international ivory trade in late 1995. Although regulations completely prohibited international trade, and restricted domestic trade only to registered ivory stocks, this was not sufficient to prevent illegal ivory products from entering the market. TRAFFIC made several recommendations in Nash (1997) and Chen (1997b) on how to improve the ivory regulation system in Taiwan. Building on the recommendations of the two earlier reports, this report makes the following recommendations to improve Taiwan's domestic management system for ivory:

- Strengthen law enforcement efforts at ports of entry to prevent smuggling of ivory through increasing the inspection of postal and courier packages to detect possible illegal trade in cut pieces as well as air passenger luggage coming from and going to specific countries.
- Improve the capacity of Customs, police, and other law enforcement officers to identify ivory and ivory products in various forms and colours, and to understand the various means used to smuggle ivory including methods of concealment.
- Create a national wildlife products database centre to monitor the domestic market for ivory and other wildlife products.
- Issue an identification label for ivory shops legally registered to sell ivory to allow for easy identification by prospective customers.
- Encourage customers to buy only legal ivory and to always request a formal receipt.
- Develop public education and awareness materials on wildlife trade issues in different media (such as print, broadcast, and electronic formats) including annual updates on international conservation and trade regulations concerning elephants and products derived from them. The international regulation of trade in ivory and other wildlife products can also be communicated to the public through travel agencies and with displays in Taiwan's two international airports.
- Intensify efforts to monitor and regulate the jade markets at the county and municipal levels. Inspections aimed at detecting illegal vendors also should be increased, both to discourage illegal trade and to support the activities of legal vendors.
- Carefully monitor and review the effectiveness of the new ivory trade management systems introduced in each municipality and county.

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- Create and actively maintain regular communications channels between municipal/county governments and the central government to monitor ivory trade flows and effectiveness of the ivory trade management system since decentralisation came into effect in 2000.

Although not directly related to the management of domestic ivory trade, further research into the distinctions between white and vermilion ivory would help to better understand the marketplace and may benefit regulation.

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**ANNEX I**

Map of Taiwan showing the four major cities with ivory markets



TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, works to ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature. It has offices covering most parts of the world and works in close co-operation with the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

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