

SOCIAL CLASS AND ELITE FORMATIONS

Diplomats At Play: The Tangier Tent Club

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The Tangier Tent Club was established in that city in 1892 by the foreign representatives stationed there. Its sole purpose was the promotion of sport, and the club's founding climaxed several decades of less institutionalized sport. A variety of game was available, however, hunting the wild boar on horseback with a lance -- pigsticking -- became the passion of the diplomatic set and of many foreign visitors. Avid sportsmen and sportswomen enthusiastically proclaimed it the most exciting sport they had ever participated in.

Shooting the wild pig for sport had been practised in the Tangier area as early as 1845, but it was only in 1868 that Sir John Drummond Hay introduced pigsticking. By the latter date the diplomatic corps had persuaded the Moroccan government to provide a preserve near Tangier with the hunting rights reserved exclusively for the foreign representatives and their guests.

This paper concentrates on the formation of the Tangier Tent Club and on its early vicissitudes, and on the techniques and hazards of pigsticking. As befitting an organization of diplomats, the club had well-defined rules and procedures. Provision was made both for pigsticking and pigshooting, and for the hunting of birds in the preserve. Later club members introduced polo and golf.

The pigsticking camps were operations with as many as one hundred Moroccans employed to provide for the party's needs. Both men and women participated in the hunts. The Moroccan pig was a large animal, dangerous when aroused, and a challenge to the hunters. The riders used long lances to "stick" the pig. The glory of the hunt went to the first rider to down a pig. Besides the confusion caused by the beaters, dogs, pigs, and galloping horses, there were other problems. Only a few of the participants understood the sport. Furthermore, the horses usually were untrained. Nevertheless, despite the sport's dangers, it was fatal mainly to the pig.

While the club boasted a prestigious clientele, it often was short of funds. Other problems included shortages of boars and pigstickers, poaching, and arguments about the regulations. In 1894 a hunt arranged for officers of the *USS Chicago* led to accusations of rule violations against the American Consul General.

During the period studied for this paper, that is, through to 1912, club members and their guests delighted in the sport of pigsticking. Thus, the Tangier Tent Club is an outstanding example of diplomats at play. The paper is based upon research in the club's archives in Tangier, memoirs of participants in the hunts, and Moroccan newspapers.