

The Anthropology of Tourism

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conferences

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF TOURISM

Social anthropologists have a special *professional* purchase on some sectors of human experience. One of these sectors is the acquisition and dissemination of learning, so that the study of clerisy is thus privileged; and no one could complain that anthropology has neglected to examine the social importance of sages and savants. Another professional activity of anthropologists is making trips, and Nelson Graburn has not unfairly characterized anthropology as the highest-status form of tourism.¹ But here anthropologists were slow and reticent to claim their special interest, almost as if the prevalence of tourism were censored out of their ethnographies. An anthropology of tourism has, however, been building up over the last ten years, its development cemented by conferences and publications. As is anthropology's way, this development resembles a ribbon of guest-houses rather than a pretentious marina, but so much the better.

The first British conference on the social anthropology of tourism was organized by Tom Selwyn for GAPP (Group for Anthropology in Policy and Practice) at the Froebel College, Roehampton, south-west London, on 22 and 23 April, and was well attended. It is clear that tourism is still an unusually fresh and stimulating subject-area ('saturation' has not yet set in at this intellectual resort), and also that there are a good many opportunities for applied consultancy work.

Sandra Wallman pointed out that as in the field of development studies, anthropologists have tended to be more negative about tourism than have economists; but this may be changing, and such a formulation would be rejected by many as too crude. We were reminded at this conference that for many small communities (especially islands, mountain villages or other places with limited natural resources or defunct industries) policy-makers claim that tourism is the only realistic way to bring prosperity today. In many other places it is simply too attractive an option for governments to ignore. Anthropologists are in business to question critically such notions of inevitability and 'realism'; to draw attention to unintended consequences of policies; and to show that the interests of governments and people are often in conflict. But if a measure of inevitability is accepted on pragmatic grounds, the problems then are to minimize 'leakage' to powerful economic interests, especially hotel chains and tour operators; to enable the local people to retain as much as possible of what they really value in their way of life; and to prevent tourism from itself spoiling the tourist attractions.

In one respect, the conference broke new ground with its extensive coverage of questions of sexual and befriending behaviour, which are given new urgency by the need to arrest the spread of the AIDS virus. Sophie Dick's paper on child prostitution in the Philippines described the kind of sex tourism which is widely known about and deplored, though as discussion developed it seemed unlikely that it would be extirpated by anything short of a political revolution such as happened in Cuba. Child prostitution has long existed in Malaysia and Thailand as well as the Philippines, and prostitution in general was apparently aggravated since World War 2 by the United States military presence. But it is not clear why it is so widespread in South-East Asia and not in many other regions of mass poverty. According to Sophie Dick, the feelings of adult female Filipino prostitutes towards their clients are quite different from those of European prostitutes to theirs; European prostitutes tend to distinguish strictly between clients and boy-friends, but the Filipinos often fall in love with their clients, waive payment after a few days, and are heart-broken when they are abandoned. By contrast, the boy prostitutes are more manipulative.

While the predatoriness of male sex tourists, heterosexual and homosexual, is already notorious, the conference heard in no fewer than four papers about the erotic relations between young males in Third World 'host communities' and white female tourists of middle to late middle age. Neville Mitchell, a delightfully candid Caribbean economist, spoke of the gigolos or 'beach bums' in Barbados, St Vincent and other islands who trade on the stereotype of black males' sexual prowess. Mitchell, whose formal approach to tourism is in general optimistic, claimed—without, it must be said, producing firm evidence—that Caribbean people in general are easy-going about such matters, recognizing the pressures of island economics, and do not mind, with the exception of a few nostalgic intellectuals. The Caribbean islands have no problem attracting visitors in the winter, but in the summer months when there is plenty of sunshine elsewhere they have to offer extras. This, he said, may all change with fear of AIDS. A string of joking asides and anecdotes by Mitchell suggested that in fact his people pay a heavy toll for the benefits of tourism, in the damage to their self-respect.

Robert Peake spoke of a similar phenomenon in Malindi Old Town on the coast of Kenya. This is specially patronized by Europeans who have low status in their own countries but temporary high status while on holiday—a dissonance which occurs

in many tourist sites. In a society dominated by Islamic fundamentalism and a romantic interpretation of the Swahili past, a new social grouping of beachboys has emerged. They are privately described as 'hustlers', in which role they compete ruthlessly to satisfy the fantasies of elderly women wanting authentic experience. In public the term 'playboy' is used, and they compete to buy consumer goods, dress well and show generosity to their peers. Thus the means are private, the display public. Tourists are rarely blamed for sexual deeds: local concern focuses on their indirect effect on the community. For instance, beach-boys don't contribute to ritual expenditure, and the fishing industry is almost defunct. Meanwhile, those males of their age-group who do not become beach-boys are often employed in office jobs based on the tourist industry. These are puzzled by the apparently high status of the European tourists who at home do similar or even lower-status work.

In the Gambia, according to Bawa Yamba of the University of Stockholm, tourism from Sweden and the friendships resulting therefrom have actually resulted in a migratory counterflow, so that the largest grouping of Africans in Sweden consists of the 1,500 or so young Gambian males who have been befriended by Swedish female tourists: this amounts to about 0.5% of the male population of the Gambia. The boys concerned may be as young as 17 or 18, eager to travel to acquire higher education and benefiting from Sweden's good bilateral relations with the Gambia and generous welfare provisions. A substantial age difference between partners of opposite sex is frowned on in the Gambia, when the older partner is female. The lady, sometimes a dignified grandmother, sends her young friend an air-ticket and installs him in her flat in Sweden. But the young man soon goes out to Gambian-oriented night-clubs, finds a younger woman friend (often a nurse, for in Sweden nurses all have their own flats), tells his sugar-mummy 'you are too old for me, and this is against the norms of my society', is told he is ungrateful and is thrown out into the street, often very inadequately clad for the Swedish winter. Bawa Yamba concluded by asking rhetorically why Scandinavian tourists in London take care to abide by local norms (for instance, learning to ask a taxi-driver whether he is willing to take them, rather than just getting into a cab and leaving him to load the luggage), whereas they can be so insensitive when in a Third World country.

Glenn Bowman rounded off this quartet of papers with one on the sexual fantasies of young Palestinian shopkeepers in the tourist markets of East Jerusalem. Pride in getting

the better of bargaining with tourists extends to telling tales in the street about late-night rendez-vous with foreign female tourists, preferably married and affluent; these meetings lead to prolonged sexual intercourse and finally to the self-defeating humiliation of the woman by the youth ('I'm sure you do this in every country you go to...') These narratives, the currency of everyday conversation, were contrasted by Bowman with a confession made to him, privately and shamefully, by one of his informants about an episode when the informant and a female tourist were caressing one another behind a closed door at the back of his shop. She put a finger in his rectum and caused him to ejaculate, which he found deeply humiliating as the act and the orgasm reversed the male: female / dominant: subordinated relationship the shopkeeper was making great efforts to effect. Bowman sees ultra-aggressive machismo as a reaction to the political and economic feminization of shopkeepers in the tourist markets. It was speculated in discussion that similar patterns may be found in other heavily toured societies: dependence on tourist populations leads those most affected and humiliated by that dependence to compensate for it with often enacted fantasies of sexual power. Bowman's research method seems to have as much in common with neo-Freudian psychoanalysis as with ethnography, but he assured his audience that the narratives which he recited were typical rather than aberrant.

In discussion, Jeremy Boissevain reported that in Malta the only really serious negative effect of tourism was to do with sexual morality. Malta is a strictly Roman Catholic society, and there is particular resentment among the local women about the sexual opportunism of the young men and the temptations that excite it. Some of the conference participants felt uncomfortable about the number of papers on sexually active female tourists, and indeed a stray observer might have formed an impression of the profile of world tourism which was seriously skewed. Caroline Moser pointed out that all the reporters on this phenomenon were male anthropologists. However, the emphasis was justified: in drawing attention to a neglected aspect of tourism—presumably correlated to some extent with the emancipation of European women—and one which is of considerable relevance to the campaign to control the AIDS virus. More generally, the conference was successful in drawing attention to the connections between the exotic and the erotic.

I unfortunately missed the session on rural tourism, in order to attend a parallel session on tourism and nationalism. Tom Selwyn gave a paper on the ideological content of the movement in Israel to conserve, and develop appreciation of, the natural heritage. This meshed well with a later paper by Deborah Golden on the Museum of the Diaspora, one of the main tourist attractions in Tel Aviv.

Selwyn described how tours in the countryside, mainly for domestic tourists, aimed to present the link between contemporary (Jewish) Israelis and the land as being eternal and part of nature itself, the message being 'one people, one land'. Golden, by contrast, argued that the central message of the Museum of the Diaspora is that an essential part of 'being Jewish' involves being part of a people widely dispersed all over the world.

The most sophisticated paper of the conference was given by Mary Bouquet, 'All Modern Conveniences: Properties of Home Comfort in English Farmhouse Accommodation'. By contrast with what she calls 'marked' nationalism (of which Israel or Indonesia would be extreme examples), she elected to look a form of 'unmarked' nationalism as expressed in tourism; by which she means something apparently very colourless, namely English 'bed and breakfast' accommodation. '*Le B et B*' in west-country farmhouses is advertised to travellers on the Brittany Ferries which ply between Roscoff and Plymouth. 'The mundanity of B and B renders it almost imperceptible as an expression of Englishness as compared with the England solidified into ancient monuments or John Julius Norwich treasure-houses.' Bouquet's trick is to try and catch such an image off-guard, and it leads her to consider the peculiar connotations of the notion of 'home' in English as a shrine to femininity. Taking a holiday in England is regarded by the English as second-best to taking a trip abroad; and according to Bouquet doing anthropology 'at home', as she does, is also of low esteem in the academic pecking order.

The session on nationalism was so stimulating that one forgot that the context of the conference was one of 'policy and practice', which is often associated quite unnecessarily with a relatively pedestrian approach. Gerald Mars then gave a clever account of some 'quickie' anthropology which he did with his wife during a fortnight as bored members of a packaged tour in Tunisia, whose English promoters (to reveal the solution before stating the problem) had made the mistake of advertising it in both the posh and the popular press. Mars found that whereas the professional men were able to talk to one another in the bar about travel, work and politics, and the small businessmen about work and cars, the working-class men had time on their hands and no role (for unlike the middle-class men, they left looking after the children to their wives). This resulted in flashpoints of stress and urgent demands to be repatriated. Mars contrasted these uneasy gatherings unfavourably with the Blackpool of his youth where tourists brought their own 'reference group' from industrial towns which virtually closed down for the holiday period; everyone knew just how to behave. As another example of anthropology applied to tourism, Mars analysed the delicate problem of 'back of the

plane' airline cuisine on international flights, where food must combine being bland to the taste, distracting to the eye, and symbolically neutral.

David Brown and Cris Shore discussed some of the burgeoning anthropological literature on the ritual, myth and semiotics of tourism. I thought that Brown, who talked entertainingly on the contrast between the fake and the genuine, was a little quick to dismiss Graburn's model of tourism as a 'sacred' state away from home and normal time. Admittedly many anomalies can be found to upset the model (e.g. the many people who make their living by travelling, others to whom a distinction between work and leisure is inapplicable, etc.), and there was once a tendency to overdo the analogy between tourism and pilgrimage; but Graburn's model, being based on structural oppositions, can surely accommodate any amount of inversions and is still one of the best products on offer. The neat paradox presented by Brown was that tourists may find something genuine among all the fake experiences they engage in, whereas pilgrims may encounter a fake at the centre of their journey into 'authenticity'.

Lola Martinez spoke on how rural Japanese beach resorts identify their urban Japanese visitors as gods in the Shintoist tradition, invested with the power of the stranger. The holidaymakers are addressed in honorific language and given the best, freshest food, but the transaction is centrally economic and instrumental. Rural Japan is not yet prepared for *foreign* tourists, who are still largely channelled into what Joy Hendry calls a 'gift-wrapped' Japan consisting of three cities where English is widely used and understood.

Kevin Meethan presented a careful study of the history of Brighton, which superficially seems to be merely an example of successful conversion from a run-down resort to a successful conference town. According to Meethan, the notion of things 'behind the facade' not being what they ought to be runs right through the history of Brighton: the mismatch between raffish image and seedy 'reality' is chronic, but regularly rediscovered.

Jeremy Boissevain's fieldwork in Malta dates back some twenty years and his conclusions on tourism offer a good example for future research in this field. Malta used to be a NATO- and Europe-oriented naval base, but now is economically almost wholly dependent on down-market tourism, and politically looks towards North Africa as a result of much manipulation of opinion through radio and television. He avoids pat conclusions about the direct effects of tourism—except, as mentioned above, the effects on sexual norms—and in particular rejects the views of the 'commodification theorists' according to whom traditional Maltese ritual, which on the whole is growing rather than dying out, has been

degraded and gaudified by tourism. Boissevain said that religious processions do not make money but cost money, and they are still conducted largely for the benefit of the local people; the principal effect of tourism has been to make the originally working-class rituals more acceptable to the middle-class. Maltese intellectuals used to prefer British Council concerts and Shakespeare plays, but now accept religious pageantry as an important national asset. The reason for the increase in festivals, according to Boissevain, is that they express people's desire to re-establish their identity and the peace of *communitas* when buffeted by rapid social change.

Kadir Din, a Malaysian specialist in tourism, gave a useful overview of models of the development of tourist industries, arguing that some of the vocabulary still used—e.g. 'hosts' and 'guests'—is too crude to be of analytical use. He also contrasted the popular enthusiasm in Malaysia for the government's policy on tourism with the lack of local control over and lack of local benefit from that policy. The period when applied anthropologists as a rule specialized in pointing out negative facets of tourism is now yielding to a more subtle position. Even economists impressed by foreign-exchange inflows can easily be persuaded that tourist 'saturation' is likely to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs—not that 'saturation' is a concept that anthropologists are very happy with. One temptation for consultants may be to assist tourist authorities in finding ways of upgrading tourist industries, i.e. high pricing to discourage cheap packaged tourists or backpackers, and investing in luxury hotels and facilities. This may lead to impressive

financial profits but will also tend to cut out small businesses, and to lead to a deferential and eventually a resentful attitude on the part of service providers. Host populations, Boissevain said, tend to change, as their new tourist industry develops, from euphoria through apathy through hostility to overt antagonism. An unwelcoming population can spoil a tourist resort just as much as too many tourists or too much rubbish on the beaches.

Peter Shackelford, a representative of the World Tourist Organization, spoke of the need to raise sights a little and revert to older ideals about the power of tourism to improve international relations. Probably anthropologists can be effective and useful as consultants on tourism; but they are more likely to be if the study of tourism comes to be more accepted as a valid and important subject for straight research. This is already widely accepted in North America, and GAPP's innovative conference will have done much to promote the anthropology of tourism here.

Jonathan Benthall

1. For a lively essay on a similar theme, see Malcolm Crick, "'Tracing" the Anthropological Self: Quizzical Reflections on Fieldwork, Tourism and the Ludic', *Social Analysis* 17, August 1985; there is a useful list of references. Nelson Grabum's recent 'The Anthropology of Tourism' is in *Annals of Tourism Research* 10: 9-33, 1983. The Department of Sociology at the Roehampton Institute will (subject to final validation by the Senate of the University of Surrey, with whom it is academically affiliated) be offering an M.A. degree in the Anthropology of Travel and Tourism next academic year. Enquiries may be made to the Secretary, Sociology Department, Froebel College, Roehampton Institute, Roehampton Lane, London SW15.

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TOOLS COMPARED: THE MATERIAL OF CULTURE

To what extent is the use of tools a solely human characteristic? What about the design and making of tools? What about object-use in other living forms? What about the origins of tool-use in ontogeny and in phylogeny? What can be inferred from artefacts about the abilities of their makers? What makes an object a tool? Could a tool be alive? Could it be non-material? Are human beings the only technological species? What might tool-kits tell us about the evolution of material culture? Answers to these and other questions seem to lie in comparative studies within and across cultures and species, and so are of interest both to social and to biological anthropology.

These were the sorts of questions tackled on 6 January 1988, in a one-day seminar held at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, and convened by myself. It was the second such one-day meeting to be sponsored by the RAI's Joint Committee on Biological and Social Anthropology, which is co-chaired by Tim Ingold and Vernon Reynolds. The Committee's terms of reference are: 'To explore theoretical and conceptual areas of overlap between biological and social anthropology, and to

investigate ways in which biological and social anthropologists can collaborate in the context of empirical field research'. The first aim was addressed here.

To cast the net as wide as possible in seeking to answer the questions posed above, a heterogeneous group of ten speakers was assembled from a variety of disciplines: social anthropology (A. Gell, London School of Economics; M. Hitchcock, Horniman Museum; T. Ingold, Manchester), archaeology (J. Gowlett, Liverpool; R. Torrence, Sheffield; P. White, Sydney; T. Wynn, Colorado Springs), primatology (T. Nishida, Tokyo), ethology (M. Hansell, Glasgow), and developmental psychology (K. Connolly, Sheffield). In fact, most speakers had feet in more than one camp, and this provided useful 'bridging' from the outset. For example, White's film of a New Guinean highlander crafting a bow from raw materials to finished product started the meeting with some striking visual images.

Tool-use by other species was presented by Hansell and Nishida, with both talks abundantly illustrated by colour transparencies and videotape. Hansell concentrated on insects and was able to go

beyond the descriptive to the analytic in making sense of a rich array of examples. For example, some colonial forms show an apparent correlation between complex social organization and technological capacity. Nishida summarized the impressively accumulating data on differences in tool-use across populations of wild chimpanzees. Some of this, for example the leaf-clipping display of Mahale's apes, seems to function purely as symbolic communication.

Wynn used the ethnography of chimpanzees to make point-by-point comparisons of the tool-use of these living hominoids with that of early hominids of Oldowan age. He concluded that there was little difference between the two in terms of the intellectual substrate needed to produce the artefacts. Gowlett continued the prehistoric theme by focusing on a non-material form of tool-use, which, like behaviour, leaves no direct traces: fire. He used profuse illustration to exemplify the problems of inferring the use of fire in its earliest recognizable forms in the archaeological record.

The actions of tool-use and the minds behind those actions were dealt with in three