Imagineering otherness: anthropological legacies in contemporary tourism/Creando la imaginheria de la alteridad: legados antropologicos en el turismo contemporaneo/Imagemhando alteridade: legados antropologicos no turismo contemporaneo
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Abstract:

The role of anthropology as an academic discipline that seeds tourism imaginaries across the globe is more extensive than generally acknowledged. In this article, I draw on ethnographic and archival research in Indonesia and Tanzania to examine critically the recycling of long-refuted ethnological ideas and scientific ideologies in contemporary tourism interpretation. A fine-grained analysis of local tour guide narratives and practices in two popular destinations, Yogyakarta and Arusha, illustrates empirically how outdated scholarly models, including anthropological ones, are strategically used to represent and reproduce places and peoples as authentically different and relatively static, seemingly untouched by extra-local influences. [Keywords: Tourism, tour guiding, imagination, knowledge, representation, Indonesia, Tanzania]

[Palabras clave: turismo, guias de turismo, imaginacion, conocimiento, representacion, Indonesia, Tanzania]

[Palavras chave: Turismo, circuitos turísticos, imaginacao, conhecimento, representacao, Indonesia, Tanzania]

Full Text:

Although it could not be described as an academic anthropology, tourism developed a more popular anthropological interest in social and cultural life. From an initial concentration on classical antiquity, tourism quickly spread, rather like anthropology itself, to peasant and tribal cultures, from the tropical islands of Polynesia to the arctic and desert interiors. As with professional anthropologists, tourists were interested in obtaining material artefacture and homes became display cabinets for their collections. And in the closing decades of the twentieth century, the heritage tourism industry became possible through the extension of this popular anthropology into the material and social cultures of an earlier modernity. --Adrian Franklin (2003:72)

In January 2012, the British newspaper The Observer reported about a "human safari" scandal on the Andaman Islands, Indian Ocean (Chamberlain 2012). The article and
accompanying online video, which quickly went viral through social media platforms, revealed how some half-naked Jarawa women were being bribed with food and bullied by a local police officer into performing for foreign tourists. Although it is forbidden by Indian law, local tourism service providers are ambiguous about visits to the "endangered" Jarawa people. The website of one of the island's resorts, for instance, states the following: "Visitors are allowed; no camera crews, no journalists, no scientists, and no researchers. While the Nicobar Islands are completely out of bounds to tourists, it is also inappropriate, and in most cases illegal for tourists to seek out tribe members of the Andaman Islands." (1) Interestingly, this same tourism stakeholder draws on anthropology to add importance to the islands as a worthwhile destination. The website even dedicates a special webpage to the discipline, stating "the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are considered to be one of the world's unique and most important anthropological sites." The kind of anthropology alluded to is not the contemporary one, which is critical of tourism development on the islands (e.g., Pandya 2009), but rather the colonial version, which depicted Andaman Islanders as "savages" (e.g., Radcliffe-Brown 1922).

The adventurous fieldworker, traveling to remote places, hunting for lost "tribes" and "noble savages," has been part of the romantic imagination associated with anthropological research throughout the 20th century. It is this kind of image that is reified in media productions such as the hugely popular BBC 2 series Tribe or its shorter US version on Discovery Channel, Going Tribal, in which "the world's remotest tribes" are visited to get "a unique insight into their life and customs." As Caplan (2005) notes, several of the supposedly isolated areas filmed for this series are today the site of well-developed international tourism activities. Indeed, rather than helping viewers to understand native life, the series encourages "anthropological tourism," a particular kind of "scientific tourism" (cf. West 2008). Specialized tour operators have drawn upon the stereotypical image of anthropologists to develop a niche market that is located somewhere in between academic and adventure tourism. Many of these agencies even rely on scholars as tour guides or resource people. In fact, the work of anthropology university professors as tour leaders or guides, mainly on study or alumni tours to the locales of their expertise, has been well documented (e.g., Bruner 2005:1-7, 191-210; Kaspin 1997; Little 2004:20). With prices as high as $70,000 USD per trip, in the case of Harvard University's Museum of Natural History Travel Program, this kind of tourism is clearly aiming at an exclusive group of clients.

For those who can only dream about such expensive journeys, there are other ways to "be like Indiana Jones" (Hollon 2002); for instance, as a scientific volunteer for Earthwatch Institute, "the world's oldest, largest, and most respected organization directly involving the public in scientific field research." (2) Yearly, this organization supports more than 130 expeditions in 45 countries, sending some 4,000 people into the field to work side-by-side with leading scientists (including anthropologists). Earthwatch invented this form of participant funding in 1972, and through time, it has involved more than 50,000 people in field research. In addition, the more affordable
forms of what is commonly termed "ethnic tourism" invite tourists traveling to developing countries to play the role of the adventurous anthropologist-discoverer (Van den Berghe 1994). Even at home, there are opportunities to play the anthropologist-for-a-day. In the US, for instance, domestic tourists visiting Colonial Williamsburg engage in participant observation during dramatic re-enactments of an imagined past. In Germany, self-proclaimed "anthropological societies" called the Kolner Stamme (Cologne Tribes) go to great length to re-enact historical cultures as varied as Native American Indians, Vikings, Romans, Huns, and Mongols. The latest development is the commoditization and museumization of the field sites of renowned anthropologists such as Laurence Wylie (Nash 1997), Cora DuBois (Adams 2004), and Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson (Hitchcock 2004).

The above examples illustrate the multiple ways in which anthropology (in the broad sense) and tourism are deeply entangled. In this article, I draw on recent ethnographic and archival work to show that not only has the (imagined) professional role of the anthropologist been commoditized in tourism but also the knowledge he or she produces (Crick 1995). As Douglass and Lacy argue, "the anthropological account is itself vulnerable to co-optation by promoters in their rhetorical creation of a particular people's touristic cachet. It is not just culture that is susceptible to commodification, but also the very anthropological knowledge regarding it" (2005:122). Proving this point are popular culture representations such as Parkin's (1985) Krippendorf's Tribe, which portray anthropology as the invention of indigenous peoples for fun and profit. The notions of culture and ethnography have long been criticized (also within the discipline) for their contribution to (post)colonial essentializations of ethnic entities (Fabian 2002, Thomas 1994). While anthropology has been accused of conspiring in imperialist representations (e.g., Mudimbe 1988), it would be fair to say that anthropologists "have ... contributed, sometimes indirectly, towards maintaining the structure[s] of power represented by the colonial system" or that their analyses have at times been affected by the "readiness to adapt to colonial ideology" (Asad 1973:17-18).

As Howe writes in defense of anthropologists during the colonial era, "None of these ... actively connived with colonialism, but whether they knew it or not their frameworks, perspectives and accounts were deeply influenced by it" (2005:37). Anthropology clearly played an ambivalent role in both supporting and critiquing colonial authority and ideologies (Said 1989). But while anthropology has undergone significant shifts in thinking since it arose as a discipline, ideas of old-style ethnology--objectifying, reifying, homogenizing, and naturalizing peoples--are widely used by all kinds of tourism shareholders (transnational corporations, travel guides and books, government agencies, policy makers, tourism service providers, local communities and individuals, and tourists themselves), staking claims of imagined identity and cultural belonging on strong notions of place and locality. Ironically, this is happening at a time when anthropologists themselves prefer much more nuanced approaches, taking it for granted that cultures and societies are not passive, bounded, and homogeneous
As Franklin (2003:200) points out, "Anthropology, sociology, history, and even the biological sciences have been largely responsible for (inadvertently perhaps) essentializing cultures and environments." (3) Obviously, not only anthropology produces cultural models, and other authors have analyzed in great detail the common historical roots of anthropology and tourism in romanticism, capitalist industrialization, colonialism, and the like (Bruner 2005, Crick 1985, Nash 1996). It is well known that anthropology and tourism are close, in various practical, historical, sociological, and conceptual ways. Tourism as cultural encounter, for example, was described by anthropologists in the 1970s (e.g., Smith 1977), and was later taken up by campaign groups such as Tourism Concern. However, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the fact that archaic anthropological models and ideas are used in the lucrative multibillion-dollar tourism business to provide simplified and historically fixed versions of local natural and cultural heritage. This is even more disquieting given that more and more anthropologists no longer despise tourism—as a social reality (Levi-Strauss 1955) or an object of study (cf. Leite and Graburn 2009, Scott and Selwyn 2010)—but now play active roles in tourism planning and development, as guides, researchers, consultants, analysts, or policy makers (Wallace 2005). Moreover, anthropologists themselves sometimes misuse their anthropological authority in tourism, for example when relying on secondary data while guiding visitors around places they have never been to before.

The fact that ethnographic monographs and other anthropological productions are part of the "circuit of tourism" is something that has neither been widely acknowledged nor researched (Adams 2004, Hitchcock 2004). Adams was among the first to point out that anthropology's role in seeding tourism imaginaries is "a more widespread pattern than we realize, meriting further research attention" (2004:123). Bruner described tourism as "chasing anthropology's discarded discourse, presenting cultures as functionally integrated homogeneous entities outside of time, space, and history" (2005:4). Tilley (1997) witnessed how earlier anthropologists' accounts serve as templates for the invention of cultural performances for tourists in a village in Vanuatu. Much of this is in response to the insatiable tourist demand for novel experiences of "difference" (Skinner and Theodossopoulos 2011). As West remarks in her discussion of scientific tourism to Papua New Guinea, people

want an "authentic" native who lives in an "authentic" and "untouched" nature, and they want the native to fit the stereotypes of "native" peoples that they have been exposed to in undergraduate anthropology classes, on TV programs, in magazines, and in movies.

(2008:598)
But how, exactly, are anthropological ideas, tropes, and narratives recycled in tourism (by non-anthropologists)? This article provides a partial empirical answer to this question by zooming in on the multiple connections between anthropology and local tour guide narratives and practices at two popular destinations in Indonesia and Tanzania. (4)

Guided by Anthropology

While the intellectual and political certainties of colonial-era anthropology have given way to more equivocal critical reflexivity, "tourism" is accused of being unencumbered by self-doubt, continuing to embrace the narratives, confidence, and certainties of earlier anthropological generations, and drawing on ethnographic authority to authenticate its nostalgic versions of colonialism.

--Julie Scott and Tom Selwyn (2010:3)

The rise of the so-called "experience economy" since the 1990s has put imaginative storytelling at the heart of global tourism. Not simply showcasing sites, but being able to narrate about them in ways that are both educational and entertaining has become an invaluable asset, turning local tour guides into key players (Salazar 2010a). Professional guides working in the fields of heritage, cultural, or ethnic tourism heavily draw on ethnological data to nourish their narratives and commentaries. (5) As Scott and Selwyn argue, "while narratives of colonial nostalgia underpin some varieties of tourism experience more explicitly than others, they are, arguably, never entirely absent" (2010:20-21). Tourism, not unlike anthropology, mobilizes a series of metaphors for the "reading" of foreign cultures. Culture must be simplified for tourist consumption, with the culture on display transformed into iconic visuals and accompanied by standardized ethnographic information presented on tour. Local tour guides, being part of the "attraction," need to exoticize themselves, a process requiring them to "present a simplified version of the self that conforms to Western concepts of the Other popularized in television, movies, books, museums, and the marketing efforts of tour operators" (Bunten 2008:386).

There are striking similarities and linkages between cultural tour guides and anthropologists, between interpretative guiding practices and interpretive anthropology (Salazar 2010a). Both involve essentially the same kind of symbolic representations, attempting to fixate the "Other" in a specific way. Whereas anthropologists are traditionally outsiders trying to access and disclose the inner culture of a particular society or group of people, local tour guides do the opposite: using their societal position as (relative) insiders and gatekeepers of what is culturally intimate to establish contacts with interested cultural outsiders (Salazar 2010b). Both are pushed in the role
of culture brokers, translating and interpreting from one language and culture to the other. What is more, the two occupations often rely on one another to grow professionally (especially in developing countries). It is not exceptional for ethnographic fieldworkers, for example, to contract local guides as interpreters or research assistants, particularly in remote locations. Anthropologists with little background in international tourism are often shocked by the narratives they hear from tour guides. On an alumni tour to Kenya, for instance, Kaspin (1997) became involved in a dispute with the accompanying local tour guide over issues of cultural representation. At the same time, academic anthropologists rarely acknowledge that guides get much of their inspiration from what scholars now consider to be outdated ethnological knowledge and theorizing. The ethnographic examples from Indonesia and Tanzania below illustrate how anthropology, together with other scientific disciplines, is used to mold guiding narratives and practices.

The Indonesian city of Yogyakarta gives tourists access to central Java's rich cultural heritage, including the Sultan's Palace and the nearby World Heritage Sites of Borobudur and Prambanan. Provincial authorities and entrepreneurs use the catchphrase "Jogja, Never Ending Asia" to attract international tourists to the region. Local Javanese guides tell visitors mesmerizing stories about the beauty and ingenuity of an ancient Asian civilization, something Edenic in its distance from the tumultuous present. Arusha, Tanzania's "safari capital," is the tourist gateway to nearby national parks (Serengeti, Lake Manyara, Tarangire, Arusha, and Mt. Kilimanjaro) as well as the celebrated Ngorongoro Conservation Area, often referred to as "Africa's Garden of Eden." The town strategically markets the (colonial) imaginary that, being situated halfway between Cairo and Cape Town, it is "the center of Africa." Local guides benefit from the continuing hype surrounding so-called ecotourism, interpreting their natural and cultural heritage in terms of an untouched, wild Eden, where animals and people live in harmony. A combination of historic images, mass media, and individual imaginings of exotic nature and culture draws visitors to both destinations (Salazar 2010a).

Because of the dire economic condition in both countries, the information resources available are not always the most recent, and some of the content resources professional guides rely upon to enhance their stories even date to the colonial era. Yet, being acquainted with colonial views actually turns out to be an asset when working in tourism because culture and heritage are often packaged, represented, and sold in ways that are reminiscent of colonial times (cf. Bruner 2005). The most recent resources are usually not critical academic treatises, but illustrated coffee table books (Meiu 2008) and popular scientific magazines such as National Geographic (Lutz and Collins 1993)--which even has an Indonesian language version--and audiovisual companions such as National Geographic Channel and home videos. While the direct influence of outdated anthropological models on tour guide narratives is hard to demonstrate and anthropology is certainly not the only academic discipline guides draw upon to legitimate their stories, the examples below do give an idea of the instrumental
role anthropological knowledge plays in constructing tourism representations.

Indonesian Stories

Cultural and heritage tourism being central Java's predominant "export" product, most professional guides in Yogyakarta are, to some degree, familiar with anthropology. The fact that Java has been a popular fieldwork site for anthropologists since the beginning of the discipline and that ethnographic studies of Java have profoundly influenced anthropological theorizing is, of course, a facilitating factor. (6) Pak Hardi, the former Yogyakarta chairperson of the Indonesian Tour Guide Association, has a Bachelor's degree in anthropology from the prestigious Gadjah Mada University. Pak Yono, one of the most senior guides in Yogyakarta, tells me how he used to form study groups with other guides in the 1980s to discuss subjects such as anthropology and history. When he shows me his personal library, I see dilapidated photocopies of Geertz's famous The Religion of Java (1960) and Koentjaraningrat's classic Kebudayaan Jawa (1984; published in English one year later as Javanese Culture). (7) Apart from consulting monographs in order to enrich their narratives with interesting ethnographic details, I witnessed how tour guides sometimes take these books along while guiding, as "scientific" legitimation of what they show and tell to tourists, irrespective of whether their narratives and practices are related to what is actually written in the books (cf. Tilley 1997). (8)

Ibu Dyah, who works as a guide at the Sultan's Palace and is considered an insider expert on Javanese culture, exchanges insights with the foreign anthropologists who frequently come to interview her. Junior guide Arifah used to work as a translator--from Javanese or Indonesian to English--for a European anthropologist doing research on Java. A few months after his research was finished, the scholar invited her for a three-month stay in Norway to help him translate the transcripts of the interviews he had recorded (Braten 1995). Finally, one of my own research assistants in Yogyakarta was a bachelor's student in anthropology at the time (and recently an exchange student at the University of Freiburg in Germany) and wants to become a cultural tour guide. Despite these multiple encounters with anthropology and anthropologists, tour guides in Yogyakarta generally demonstrate little awareness of contemporary anthropological work. Most foreign anthropology books available in the library of Gadjah Mada University, one of the prime resource centers for guides, were published before the turn of the millennium. For some areas, there is no other choice but to rely on outdated ethnographic descriptions because there are no newer data. Adams (2004), for example, writes about how Cora DuBois in the late 1930s was basically the last cultural anthropologist to conduct extended research on one region of the island of Alor.

Fieldwork findings from Prambanan illustrate some of the issues at stake when local guides skillfully manipulate anthropological and other scientific knowledge, either consciously or unknowingly. I start with an example of contested history as this provides
the larger context in which local (dis) connections between guiding and scientific
knowledge is situated. The Prambanan temple complex, named after the surrounding
village, is one of the largest Hindu temple compounds in Southeast Asia. It was built
around 850 CE, but one century later the Hindu court and most of the population moved
to east Java and neighboring Bali and the 224 temples were abandoned. The structures
themselves collapsed during an earthquake in the 16th century. The earliest written
foreign report of the ruins is by Cornelis Lons, an officer of the Dutch East India
Company who made an excursion to Prambanan in 1733 and found damaged statues
among the piles of stone.

blocks. Interestingly, most local guides reproduce the alternative version of "discovery"
that is also mentioned on Prambanan's official website:

In 1811, Collin Mackenzie, a surveyor in the service of Thomas
Stamford Raffles during Britain's short-lived rule over the
Dutch
East Indies, came upon these temples by chance. Although
Raffles
subsequently commissioned a full survey of the ruins, they
remained
neglected for decades. Dutch residents carried off sculptures
for
garden ornaments while local villagers used foundation stones
for
construction material. (9)

According to the above account, the Dutch colonizers played no role at all in the
discovery of the temple complex and are even held co-accountable for its decay. As
Pratt notes in her book on the history of colonial travel, discovery claims often rely on
documentation: "The 'discovery' itself, even within the ideology of discovery, has no
existence of its own. It only gets 'made' for real after the traveler (or other survivor)
returns home, and brings it into being through texts" (2008:200). Even though Sir
Raffles, the "Father of Singapore," established only a brief presence on Java during the
Napoleonic Wars (1811-1816), his book The History of Java (1830) turned out to be one
of the most influential colonial writings on Java (helped by the fact that, apart from later
authors such as J.H. Boeke, W.H. Rassers, and J.S. Furnivall, most of the Dutch
colonial writings were never translated). Startlingly, this is what Raffles himself wrote
about Prambanan:

With respect to the ruins at Brambanan, we find, upon the
authority
of a Dutch engineer, who in 1797 went to construct a fort at
Klaten, on the highway between the two native capitals, and
not far from the site of the temples, that no description of its antiquities existed at that period. He found great difficulty in clearing away the rubbish and plants, so as to obtain a view of the ruins and to be enabled to sketch them. The indifference of the natives had been as great as that of their conquerors, and had led them to neglect the works of their ancestors which they could not imitate. (1830:7)

Raffles clearly criticizes the Dutch colonial administration (alongside the local population) for neglecting the region's antiquities, but acknowledges the fact that Prambanan was discovered by the Dutch. (10) As I witnessed on various occasions, tourists visiting the temples occasionally hear guiding narratives about the colonial neglect (not the local one), but guides clearly prefer to associate the discovery of the complex with the positively valued Sir Raffles rather than with the oppressive Dutch colonizers (and not all guides seem familiar with the historically correct version). Ironically, in this particular case of contested history, the older textual sources seem to come closer to the truth than newer (post-colonial) interpretations. What is at stake here is not so much the referential validity of the guiding narrative and its degree of "accuracy," but rather the wider politics of representation in which it is embedded and in which both guides and tourists (with their expectations and imaginaries) inevitably intercede (Skinner and Theodossopoulos 2011, Salazar and Graburn 2014).

The majority of Hindus on Java migrated to neighboring Bali centuries ago and Prambanan is located in what is now a predominantly Muslim area. Many local guides express negative feelings towards Hindus, mainly those living in Bali. They cannot afford to criticize the Balinese openly, though, because they know tourists (and anthropologists alike) generally adore Bali.

Prambanan guide Pak Yusuf commenting on the Hindu rituals sporadically held at the temple complex:

"Here [in Prambanan], the flowers are taken away soon after the festival. In Bali, they leave them up to three weeks or a month.

That is why temples in Bali are dirtier compared to here." After having told a story about
a Hindu friend who lives on the island of Bali:

"All these offerings [they do in Bali] are expensive and take up a lot of time."

Pak Yusuf's negative attitude towards the Balinese is related not so much to religious matters, but to the fierce competition the Javanese guides experience from neighboring Bali, on which Java is highly dependent for incoming tourism (Salazar 2010a). The Balinese Hindus in general are reprimanded publicly for having commoditized and Westernized their cultural heritage, whereas the Balinese guides in particular are accused of being far too shopping-minded and money-oriented, selling everything imaginable to foreign visitors. Of course, the ethnological construct of Bali that pops up in guiding narratives is as ideological as the one of Java itself (cf. Pemberton 1994). The way Javanese guides (and the Indonesian tourism sector in general) imagine and depict the Balinese resembles very much the colonial mapping by ethnologists and administrators of adat communities, culturally discrete areas each with their own defined cultural (and religious) norms. This simplified way of representing culture was taken up by Indonesia's New Order government (1965-1998), seeking to identify one single cultural type for each province, and to play down the extent and breadth of the actual ethnic diversity they had inherited from the Dutch colonial era.

As Howe explains, "Dutch colonial policy, expatriate agents of representation and scholarly anthropological research combined to traditionalize what was in truth a highly dynamic society" (2005:29). Such representations moved anthropology as a discipline from ethnographic particularism to essentialist conceptions, thereby deeply affecting the (self-)image of various Indonesian ethnic groups (Antlov and Hellman 2005). Explaining the image construction of Bali, Picard writes, "More than a simple transcription fashioned from an existing reality, it is the product of a construction; indeed, one could almost say that it is the result of an objective complicity among the colonial government, cultural anthropology, and the tourism industry" (1996:27). This is partly confirmed by Hitchcock, who questions the shaky connection between the latter two sources:

There is a pressing need to incorporate more recent anthropological research on the question of "aboriginality" into the way the upland Balinese are presented to both domestic and international tourists. The designation of mountain Balinese as "aboriginal" is easily understood by some of the key actors--local elites, guides and guidebook authors--but the theoretical base for this perspective is academically outdated. (2004:14)
While tour guides clearly perform scripted roles, having a variety of puppeteers manipulating their moves (e.g., tour operators, authorities at various levels, and law enforcement), they are not like shadow puppets with little or no control over their own performances. Narrating and enacting dominant tourism imaginaries can be liberating because it offers a small window of opportunity to undermine the structures of power while reifying them (Salazar 2010a). And if guides sometimes have to act like puppets, they commonly choose the role of Semar, the Javanese character in wayang plays who acts like the clown servant of the hero of the story, but who is in fact very wise. Humor (including self-mockery) is probably the most common device that guides draw on, among others to reinforce common stereotypes about their own culture.

Provincial tour guide Ibu Sita during a pre-tour briefing of a cultural tour in and around Yogyakarta:

"Our trip will start from here and last four hours, more or less [laughing and stressing], more or less!"

The comment above is a witty form of self-critique of the Indonesian concept of jam karet (flexible time) or waktu gumi (literally "rubber time"), a reference to the continuous uncertainty of scheduled time arrangements. It is an affirmation that Indonesians traditionally do not think in the time-is-money mode common to the societies many tourists come from. The guide uses humor here to inform the clients that, if the planned tour runs a little late, they should consider it part of the cultural experience.

A follow-up interview with the guide in question revealed that the above commentary indirectly referred to the myth of the "lazy native" (Alatas 1977), which formed part of the broad project of colonial ethnography (and racism) in the 19th century that, rather than simply describing human nature, produced it as flawed and sought the means of its rectification. On Java, indolence became a commonsense marker in Dutch colonial discourses of identity and was given authority as an ethnic characteristic by anthropology’s "machinery of truth" (Pemberton 1994). Cultural traits were produced in ethnocentric colonial anthropology and reproduced in Western social science discourses (e.g., Gorer 1936), but they also remained the target of unrelenting post-independence governmental strategies in Indonesia (Alatas 1977). While stereotypes of the Javanese clearly have multiple origins, including colonial ethnological accounts, guides will cite those "original" sources that they expect tourists to accept most easily as legitimate.

The guided tours in and around the Water Castle in Yogyakarta offer a textbook example of how colonial imaginaries (which spread, among others, via ethnographic
writings) are subtly translated in contemporary tourism practices. Tamansari, as it is locally known, was the former pleasure garden of the local Sultan, a complex of enchanting pavilions and mesmerizing swimming pools. Many of the on-site guides (all males) enthusiastically enact the role of the Sultan, strolling with an imaginary girl (when possible, substituted by a willing female tourist), from the women's swimming pool to the Sultan's private pool and adjacent quarters. They convincingly tell tourists stories about how life was organized "back in the days." At the castle's watchtower, the guides invite people to go upstairs and imagine themselves observing the make-believe harem girls around the pool. The swimming pools of the Water Castle are still there (and have been beautifully restored), but the lovely girls bathing have long disappeared. Yet tourists are invited to participate in an entertaining performance that will bring an imagined past back to life, namely that of the oriental harem. This Islamic institution (etymologically linked to the Arabic haram, "something prohibited") exerted a certain fascination on the Western imagination, especially during the Romantic Period (due in part to Richard Burton's [1934] translation of One Thousand and One Nights, which included extensive footnotes on oriental sexual practices). (11)

Many people imagine a harem as a brothel with sensual wives and concubines (including abducted western girls) lying around pools with naked oiled bodies, with the sole purpose of pleasing the powerful man to whom they have given themselves. Although incorrect, much of this erotic imaginary continues circulating through various cultural forms. Making multiple (often playful) references to this harem imaginary, the Water Castle is depicted by tour guides as a Shangri-La or earthly Garden of Eden with guiltless sexuality and freedom from work and want, and the physical structure perfectly lends itself to enact such fantasies.

On-site tour guide Irwan playing the Sultan at the Water Castle's watchtower, observing the make-believe harem girls around the pool:

"[Directed at the tourists] You want to go upstairs? Watch and take pictures!"

"Ah, woman [number] 26, come! ... And on other days he [the Sultan] chooses other women: number 12, 3,..."

One could see the eroticized representations of this cultural heritage site as a form of nostalgia, a kind of mourning for the destruction of an imagined traditional culture by colonial and other imperialist forces. Yet this is not just a sentiment; it is a script, performed and enacted on site. Discourses of the past--orientalism, colonialism, and imperialism--seem to be fertile ground for nostalgic and romantic tourism dreams (Salazar 2010a). The imagery used in cultural tourism is often about fantasies, and about an ambivalent nostalgia for the past--ambivalent because returning to the past is not what people actually desire (Bissell 2005). Local tour guides are not acquainted with
the scholarship that criticizes Victorian era representations of harems. The outdated oriental models they are familiar with serve the purpose of enacting tourism imaginaries well.

Tanzanian Tales

Tanzanian tour guides cleverly capitalize on the world-known iconology of their country’s cultural and natural heritage. Many of the northern region’s wildlife landscapes, especially those of the wide plains of the Serengeti, have become popular icons for Africa as a whole, evoking a perfect romantic and nostalgic vision of an unexplored and time-frozen “wild Eden.” Humans are remarkably absent in these imaginaries, although many of the oldest human remains were discovered in and around the Great Rift Valley and some scholars have concluded that the true “Garden of Eden” or cradle of humankind must have been located in East Africa. Tourism in the region is booming, and some of it is capitalizing on the important archaeological discoveries that have been made. The Earthwatch Institute, for instance, organizes an expedition called the “Early Man at Olduvai Gorge Research Mission.” In addition to scientific work, which involves excavation, screening, washing, and sorting artifacts, this mission involves a sizeable program of tourism activities. Earthwatch clearly uses the stereotype of the adventurous scientist in order to attract tourists. On the promotional leaflet, one reads: “We shall be camping at the picturesque and historic Leakey’s camp. We shall be dining at the same place that the Leakeys used when they worked at Olduvai Gorge.” (12)

Given that most tourists visit northern Tanzania to see the unrivalled wildlife, local guides have traditionally not focused too much on cultural heritage. Nevertheless, archaeological knowledge comes in handy. On the way between the Ngorongoro Crater and Serengeti National Park, the small Olduvai Gorge Museum reminds visitors of the important archaeological finds in the area: a variety of Homo specimens at Olduvai and hominid footprints at Laetoli. Unfortunately, few tourists actually stop at the museum and most of the safari driver-guides know very little about the site.

Commentary from driver-guide Samweli on the archaeological findings in Olduvai Gorge:

"It belongs to the same species as the skeleton nicknamed Lucy, which was found in Ethiopia in 1974. But the name Lucy, which is a joke name for that skeleton, was given because during that day the scientists were listening and dancing to the Beatles’ song 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds.'"

This is a nice anecdote but slightly off-topic because it is not about the archaeological findings at Olduvai Gorge itself. While there are many nice stories to be told about the
local discovery of hominid fossils, Samweli apparently lacks access to resources upon which to build them (even though the small museum contains more than enough material). On-site museum guide Jackson, on the other hand, uses the occasional contact with foreign tourists to redress an important historical mistake.

Plea to use Oldupai Gorge as the correct name for the archaeological site:

"I mention the two names, Olduvai and Oldupai Gorge. The word Oldupai, which is the correct name of this place, is the Maasai word for this plant here [pointing]: wild sisal, sansevieria. But the sisal was mispronounced by Professor Kattwinkel from Germany in 1911, when he came to this place to study butterflies. When he came and asked the name of the site from the local people, and when he heard the name of the site is Oldupai, this professor unfortunately misheard and he wrote Olduvai, so that the word Olduvai remains written in history as an official name of this place, while Oldupai remains a local name. But time to time we're trying to correct this one day."

Jackson is clearly frustrated because so many foreigners wrongly talk about Olduvai, instead of the locally correct Oldupai. The same could be said for Ngorongoro (Ikorongoro), Serengeti (Siringet), and Kilimanjaro (Kilemakyaro, Kilimangare, or Kilima Ngaro), which are all misspellings or mispronunciations of the names used in various local languages. Guides inform tourists about these errors as a way of transculturally diffusing unofficial historical knowledge. In this case, the power to (re)name places becomes a site of intense negotiation, reinforcing the local as a site of expertise over and above globally accepted knowledge (diffused by colonial anthropologists and other scientists). While it makes sense from a cultural point of view to try to restore indigenous names, this is virtually impossible in the case of the Tanzanian places mentioned above because their "wrong" names are circulating globally (in both academic and tourism circles) as markers for the country's most famous attractions.

At the Kondoa rock-art sites in Kolo, only inscribed on the World Heritage list in 2006, local guide Idi is already fantasizing how the UNESCO recognition will change the place in a couple of years. Whereas now you need a 4x4 jeep to get close to the painted rocks, he enthusiastically explains how new roads will be built, pointing to good spots for developing a parking place and tourist facilities such as toilets, a snack bar, and a souvenir shop. This is truly an exercise of the imagination because there is nothing to see for miles around but lush vegetation. While the Kondoa rock paintings are still relatively unknown, Idi proudly reminds visitors that the paintings were "discovered" by nobody less than Louis Leakey himself. This statement, however, is not historically correct. German missionaries working near Bukoba reported the existence of the paintings in 1908 (Leakey was barely five years old then). The first written account was published in 1929 in the Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (Nash 1929). Leakey only explored the site in the 1930s. His wife, though, brought the paintings to public attention through the publication of her book Africa's
Vanishing Art: The Rock Paintings of Tanzania (Leakey 1983). The guide’s (unconscious) "error" here is remarkably similar to the one regarding the discovery of Prambanan in Indonesia mentioned earlier.

As in Indonesia, humor is used in Tanzanian guiding narratives as a strategy that serves various purposes.

Guide Idi pointing to some light-colored figures in one of the ancient rock paintings on a hill near the village of Kolo:

"They look like the Warangi tribe or Wagogo. You know the Warangi tribe? [silence] ... You know the Wazungu tribe, you know [laughing]?"

This is a typical example of code switching, in which the Swahili names of the Rangi and Gogo people are mingled with an utterance in English. While guide Idi mentions these two small Tanzanian ethnic groups, he assumes his European clients have never heard of them. He therefore teasingly asks the tourists if they know the wazungu, the Swahili word referring to whites or, more generally, to everyone behaving like a westerner, no matter the person's race or ethnicity. Of course, this remark is meant ironically, because no Tanzanian would speak of whites in terms of a "tribe"--the way in which most Africans have been categorized by anthropologists and other scholars (Mafeje 1971).

While local guiding in northern Tanzania has traditionally focused on natural heritage, the growing demand from foreign tourists for experiential "meet-the-people" tourism is leading to a growing interest in cultural anthropology on the side of tourism service providers (Salazar 2012). Local guides play an important role in this niche market, where the stress is on actively exposing visitors to local culture and customs. The Maasai, whose global popularity owes much to the way they were (ethnographically) represented during the colonial era, are the main "attraction" in northern Tanzania (Salazar 2009). (13) From 19th century colonial ethnographies to travel memoirs, from coffee-table books to tourist postcards and t-shirts, the image of the Maasai "warrior" has a dynamic historical continuity (Hughes 2006). The Maasai and other indigenous groups are still depicted (and some depict themselves) as savages, not unlike Lewis Henry Morgan (1877) had imagined hunters and gatherers in his unilineal evolutionary model of civilization.

Since the Maasai are often represented as an extension of wildlife, some local tour guides are recycling the colonial imaginary of the African native as a prototype of the "animal" (Mbembe 2001). This often goes hand in hand with the depiction of Maasai and other indigenous groups visited as being "one with nature," thereby playing on archaic notions of savagery, perpetuating a particular myth of indigeneity. To foreign
tourists, the sight of a virile Maasai warrior, dressed in colorful red blankets and beaded jewelry, evokes the romantic image of a modern "noble savage." Capitalizing on this, quite a number of cultural tours to Arusha villages are marketed and sold as visits to Maasai bomas (settlements), while the villages are, at best, ethnically mixed. (14) Villagers benefit from the perceived similarities with the Maasai to attract more visitors and cash more tourist dollars. For example, they hang out red blankets as a recognizable visual marker of "Maasainess." Some of the youngsters who guide visitors around the area will cleverly "play" the Maasai, albeit with varying success (Salazar 2010a).

Tourism has a baleful influence on the way ethnic groups in Tanzania represent one another (Salazar 2012). More often than not, the Maasai are the ones who suffer most from stereotyping and misrepresentation. Other ethnic groups are often frustrated because foreign visitors wrongly assume that all Tanzanians are Maasai (like Javanese are frustrated because tourists only know Bali). During cultural tours in Meru villages, for example, local guides clearly distinguish their ethnic group from the Maasai by denigrating the latter and depicting them as primitive. The guides explain to foreign tourists that only the Maasai wear (red) blankets; the Meru people wear clothes. They are proud to say that the Meru are more developed compared to other "tribes" because they have adapted quicker to modernity (they have traditionally been farmers).

Meru guide Julius commenting on the Maasai:

"The Maasai are really scattered ... It's very hard. They are scattered in east and central Africa. The Maasai in Kenya have relatives in Uganda, and relatives in Tanzania. So they wander around, they don't have permanent settlements, they are nomadic."

Such comments draw on outdated ethnological accounts and confirm the archetype of the noble Maasai warrior as undeveloped and time-frozen, neglecting the fact that many Maasai are now educated and live in urban settings. According to Fabian (2002:31-32), this "denial of coevalness,"--that is, placing the Other in a time frame different from and inferior to that of the commentator (and audience)--is a general feature of modern Western thought and has deep historical roots. While this is a way of thinking now commonly disavowed among scholars, local guides perpetuate the allochronism through their narratives. The (imagined) "ethnographic present" that ethnographers have long abandoned seems very much alive in tourism.

While the tourism tales told by cultural guides in Tanzania may be enthralling, they are certainly not always scientifically accurate. Take the following example:

Cultural tourism guide Eduardo narrating the origins of the Iraqw people:
"The history, according to the migration of the tribes, and the movements of societies in Africa and all over the world, this people they actually migrated all the way from the Middle East, following the Great Eastern Rift Valley. They walked all the way for centuries, down to the center of Tanganyika, around Dodoma and Songea ... At that time, they were known as Wairaki people, the Iraqw tribe."

Stressing the genuineness of his narrative by using the word actually, a "truth marker" common in tourism discourse (MacCannell 1999:137-141), local guide Eduardo reproduces the widespread origin myth of the Iraqw. In this case, a story imagineered for foreign others (during the colonial era) has become accepted by local people as a narrative about themselves. The legend is based on a well-refuted ethnocentric scientific theory, the Hamitic hypothesis, that argued Caucasoid peoples from the north (Iraq or Mesopotamia) were responsible for a number of pre-colonial cultural and technological achievements in Africa, serving to legitimize European intervention and colonization on the continent (Rekdal 1998). While Eduardo does not know the historical origins of the story, his retelling it helps to ensure its ever-widening distribution.

The Hamitic myth also surfaces in tour guide narratives about the Maasai as wandering Jews, another discourse that goes back to colonial pseudoscientific writings. In a work described as of the highest scientific value and great colonial interest, The Masai: Ethnographic Monograph of an East African Semite People (1910), Merker described significant parallels between the Maasai’s myths and customs and those of the biblical Hebrews. He concluded that both the Maasai and the oldest Hebrews originated from the same people. Merker was a German military officer who lived and traveled among the Maasai in German East Africa (later Tanganyika) from 1895 to 1903. His detailed and carefully researched ethnography is still highly respected among scholars, even though it is marred by these untenable speculations on biblical parallels to native custom. Merker's ideas were a reflection of a more widespread ideology circulating in Europe at the end of the 19th century. At that time, the myth of the Lost Tribes developed as a useful channel for understanding unknown peoples and races, as a means of labeling human entities for whom there was no readily available label (Parfitt 2002, Kirsch 1997).

This discourse coincided with a change in the way Jewish people were being regarded in Europe. (15) 19th century anthropologists assumed that Jews had a close racial connection with black people. If in some discourses Jewish people were thought to be black and African, so too were Africans in a vast number of cases thought to be Jews. Ethnographers, alongside missionaries and travelers, repeatedly concluded that African tribes, not only the Maasai, but also the Zulus, the Xhosa, the Hottentots, the Tutsis, the Ashanti, and many more, were of Jewish origin. Situated between the profusely illustrated natural history book and the scientific text of the future, with its more technical and diagrammatic illustrations, books on ethnography (and natural history, travel, and
popular geography) were in fact second only to novels in popularity in the 19th century, and the division between the two genres was not as wide as one might think (Stepan 2001). Ironically, many Maasai tour guides will now happily and proudly tell their foreign visitors that they are one of Israel's lost tribes (and some even refer to recent genetic research in the US to prove their case). (16)

Upgrading the Anthropology-Tourism Connection?

In much the same way that archaeologists have to be mindful about the way the sites that they have worked on become objects of tourist curiosity, should not anthropologists also be concerned about making more up-to-date versions of their theories accessible?

--Michael Hitchcock (2004:14)

In general, contemporary anthropologists are faced with a popular perception of their work as reconfirming the "timeless essences" of the peoples and cultures they study. As illustrated in this article, this perception has partially been fuelled by earlier anthropological work. Di Leonardo captures the current situation (as perceived in the US) very eloquently:

At every turn, the dead hand of the ethnographic present constrains progressive anthropologists from articulating intelligent perspectives on Others'--everyone's--lives. Attempting to counter the horrors of the " RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK" frame, we are forced into unwitting impersonations of technicians of the sacred, and thus into complicity with an essentializing, ahistorical perspective that leads us right back into the global pool hall with the (often sociobiological) human nature experts. Schooled by American Anthropology past, the public sphere cannot "read" scholarly commentators' careful historicizations of Others' lives, and so popular representations of Samoa parallel the "timeless" Kalahari and other fictions of "primitive" human lives ... What anthropologists have done to the !Kung San and Samoans and so many others has been brought home, deservedly, to
Undeniably, global tourism is the quintessential business of difference projection and the interpretive vehicle of Othering par excellence (with many peoples now cleverly Othering themselves). This involves the constant (re)production of stereotypes and categories of ethnic and cultural difference across the globe. Anthropology has been historically implicated in Western constructions of Otherness. As such, it has had an intimate relationship to what Trouillot terms "the geography of imagination of the West" (2003:8). Ironically, these (colonial) images and ideas of culture as homogeneous, bounded, and unchanging are now being recycled, by people "embracing and promoting images of themselves as celebrated anthropological Others, subjects of foreign researchers' books" (Adams 2004:124), in a bid to obtain a piece of the lucrative global tourism pie. The empirical analysis of contemporary tour guide discourses and practices in Indonesia and Tanzania suggests that outdated anthropological (and other scientific) knowledge is widely circulating and that these contested theories are often used strategically in tourism to portray peoples and places as bounded and unchanging. Most guides, however, do not have the conscious intention to misrepresent anthropological methods or ethnographic data. Indeed, many tour guide narratives can be seen as worthy modes of popularizing academic anthropology in which anthropology occurs both as subject matter and as a point of view.

As is the case in fiction, guides usually "portray the collecting of ethnographic information and the uncovering and processing of archaeological data in a manner with which it is difficult to argue" (MacClancy 2005:563). In the same way that writers exploit the figure of the anthropologist in order to "insert anthropological commentary on human behavior into their text" (2005:562), tour guides refer to old-style ethnology of the Other and an overly romantic vision of anthropologists in their narratives as a way of legitimizing what they say and show to tourists. Unfortunately, guides often have little or no knowledge about the latest developments in the discipline. And if they do, they are only inclined to draw upon it if it somehow serves their primary purpose, namely to satisfy the tourist's wish to see and experience the Other (as imagined since colonial times). With few exceptions (e.g., references to Koentjaraningrat in Indonesia), the image of anthropology is a predominantly Western (and colonial) one and there appears to be precious little evolution of this representation, neither in Indonesia nor in Tanzania. After all, tourists and tourism service providers alike rely on a shared frame of reference in relation to ethnic and cultural difference: globally circulating tourism imaginaries infused with outdated scientific knowledge.
Tourism somehow needs anthropology to keep representing the imagined past as (ethnographic) present in a legitimate way. Yet, drawing upon ethnological imaginaries enables global visibility as much as it incarcerates people in archaic and problematic representations. Ironically, tourism is both predicated on and contested by the history of anthropological research, which has in turn been crucial to the development of (cultural) tourism. This highlights the complex setting in which imaginaries of difference are recursively (self-)produced. Anthropologists have a hard time accepting that the people whom they study and have come to understand "actively market primitivism and have absorbed many of its tenets into their own fabric of belief" (Kaspin 1997:53). It was by going "on tour" that Kaspin became aware of the degree to which foreign scientific knowledge can "trickle down" to vernacular forms of cultural representation. Her experience as a tourist-anthropologist in Kenya taught her that "deconstructing the representations of a locality is a risky enterprise in the locality, whatever their historical origin. This does not diminish the value of the interpretation, but underscores the fact that anthropological understandings are not the same thing as local understandings" (1997:57).

While contemporary anthropologists are often very aware of their own use of ideas and theories from other disciplines, it is perhaps less obvious when anthropological ideas travel out to others. Schematized anthropological theories of the 1870-1960 period are very much alive as the dominant popular ethnological models of global publics today, and are particularly in evidence in tourism to developing countries. Anthropologists have been consequential proponents of the great nostalgic narrative of loss and possible contact with a disappearing object that forms a major motivating background to many tourism activities. As this article has shown, however, it is very difficult to disentangle colonial thought, ethnographic stereotypes, and other cultural models of difference that continue to circulate within global tourism. It is not anthropology alone that is to blame, and contemporary anthropological scholarship recognizes that dominant imaginaries and discourses do not reflect the actual situation on the ground and often silence the voice of the powerless. The hard question that begs an answer is how anthropologists should deal with the discipline's deep implication in contemporary tourism and other cultural dynamics around the globe ...

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References:


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Endnotes:


The debate touched upon in this article exists in a much larger frame than just tourism and anthropology. Torgovnick (1990) and Stepan (2001), for instance, have analyzed the discourses of primitivism and otherness embedded in Western thinking about the tropics, while Pratt (2008) has examined the imperialist discourses interwoven in the early Western travel accounts of the world outside Europe. Outdated anthropological and related scientific models show up in other aspects of cultural representation, too. In the context of indigenous identity politics, for example, Kuper argues that many claims "rely on obsolete anthropological notions and on a romantic and false ethnographic vision" (2003:395).

The findings presented here are based on fieldwork carried out over a period of 25 months, 14 months of which I was in Indonesia (July-August 2003, January-December 2006) and 11 months in Tanzania (June-August 2004, January-August 2007). The methodology I used involved mixed methods, characterized by observation (direct or participant) and various types of free-flowing interviews with key informants and other significant actors in the field of tourism interpretation. Ancillary data gathered include secondary sources, audio-visual data, news media information, archives, Internet sites, etc.

One can easily understand the instrumental interest of tour guides in "national character studies," which were very popular in the 20th century under the influence of the Culture and Personality School, spearheaded by psychological anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict, Ralph Linton, Geoffrey Gorer, Margaret Mead, and Gregory Bateson (the latter three of whom did fieldwork in Indonesia).

For a general overview of how Java has been perceived and socially constructed by anthropologists (and other scholars) over the past century, see Pemberton (1994) and Antlov and Hellman (2005). Buskens and Koomers (2007) nicely summarize the era of Dutch colonial anthropology in Indonesia.

Koentjaraningrat (1923-1999), who was trained at Yale University in the 1950s, was the founding father of postcolonial Indonesian anthropology. The widely read Geertz (1926-2006) is also well known in Yogyakarta, the place where he started his ethnographic career in 1952. His theoretical writings, the majority of which were translated into Indonesian, are locally useful because Geertz illustrated many of his conceptual ideas with case material from Java.

Similarly, Adams (2004) describes how an enterprising retired school teacher on the island of Alor heavily relied on Cora DuBois' The People of Alor (1944), which he had received from a foreign tourist, to write a guidebook. In general, the Alorese "familiar with DuBois' work clearly envisioned it as a promising avenue for attracting attention
and potential resources to their little-known island" (Adams 2004:124).


(10) Without explicitly naming him, Raffles was referring to the Dutchman Hermann Cornelius, who made detailed drawings of the Prambanan temple ruins in 1797 (and who, during the short-lived British occupation, became the supervisor and superintendent of historical monuments in the Semarang district).

(11) Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890) co-founded in 1863 the Anthropological Society of London, an organization concerned with the collection of facts and the identification of natural laws that explained the diversity of humankind. This organization later merged with the older Ethnological Society of London to form the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.

(12) The distinguished scientist couple Louis Leakey (1903-1972) and Mary Leakey (1913-1996) spent most of their careers unearthing the remains of an extensive pebble-tool industry in East Africa. Louis had studied anthropology and archaeology at the University of Cambridge while Mary had attended lectures in those same subjects at University College London (as an unregistered student).

(13) The Maasai are a widely dispersed ethnic group who occupy (semi-)arid rangelands in southern Kenya and northern Tanzania, collectively known as Maasailand. Representative colonial ethnological writings on the Maasai comprise The Masai: Their Language and Folklore (Hollis 1905), The Masai: Ethnographic Monograph of an East African Semite People (Merker 1910), and Some Notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony (Leakey 1930).

(14) The Arusha people are originally from the foothills of Mt. Meru. Influenced by Maasai ancestry, they still use the Maasai age system and other elements of Maasai social organization. However, they have different clans and abandoned livestock herding in favor of settled cultivation.

(15) In general, anthropologists (and naturalists) at the time emphasized the differences between, and stability of, racial types rather than the variability and unity of the human species. This remained the dominant discourse about the human species from the 1830s until World War II.

(16) The remarkable continuities between 19th century reinventions of African ethnicities and their presentday deployment have also been described elsewhere
(Mudimbe 1988, Appiah 1992). Indigenous people increasingly draw on these constructed identities, in ethnic identity politics and tourism, as a kind of social capital (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009).

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