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Nationalism and Tourism since the Eighteenth Century

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Abstract

Serious study of the relationship between nationalism and tourism is only about thirty years old. Today, most historians realise just how connected the two are and that the relationship can reasonably be described as symbiotic. From at least the late eighteenth century, tourism offered a way of presenting nations to members and non-members alike. Technologies such as tourist guidebooks told visitors 'what ought to be seen', pointing the way toward specific sites, memories, and traditions. Many nationalists saw this utility and strove to use leisure travel to bolster the legitimacy of nation-states. Nations proved equally useful to tourism developers, providing 'difference' that was attractive to travellers keen to experience the exotic. This article suggests that study of the nationalism/tourism relationship must not be left there. Recent scholarship shows that the story of nations is transnational, so we need to ask how tourism facilitated that spread. We need to better understand the transnational flow of ideas between national groups. At the same time, scholars also need to examine the evolution of the relationship. How did tourism function in differing national contexts? Was there an evolution over time? This essay provides an outline of that evolution. Using Eric Hobsbawm's distinction between proto-nationalism, liberal (state-building) nationalism, exclusionary (ethnic) nationalism, and separatist (anti-colonial) nationalism, it traces the ways in which tourism served the needs of various types of nationalists, some of whom were actively competing with one-another for the soul of a given national community. Nations must be understood not simply as imagined communities, but as perpetually re-imagined ones. Tourism provides a useful way for exploring how that process played out over the past 300-or-so-years.

Introduction

The close, even symbiotic, relationship between nationalism and tourism now seems self-evident. A long and ever-growing list of scholarly publications attest to the relationship and to the vibrant study of it. This was not always so. Present interest dates, with a few exceptions, only to the late 1990s and early 2000s. Prior to that, nationalism scholars took little interest in tourism and vice-versa, even if the two phenomena did turn up together in various books and articles. Tourist flows, the need for suitable infrastructure, and the potential economic implications of leisure drew scholarly comment at least from the 1930s, sometimes in reference to national development projects.[1] At various points it was noted that tourism might pose a risk to national patrimony and distinctive culture.[2] Following the famous conference which spawned Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's hugely influential edited collection, *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), scholars occasionally mentioned the notion that tourism might play a part in the project of invention.[3] Sustained and serious consideration, however, was largely absent.

There is little surprising about this. Until about 25 years ago, tourism history was largely confined to consideration of the English seaside and offered a means of exploring the evolution of working-class identity.[4] Most scholars did not take it terribly seriously. Likewise, while there was certainly a lot of exceptional work on nationalism prior to 1989, it was a relatively minor field compared to what it was to become.

The 1990s changed things for both subjects. When the Eastern Bloc splintered and the Soviet Union collapsed, nationalism studies quickly emerged as a serious field in several disciplines with multiple new scholarly organisations, journals, and conferences not to mention a proliferation of new monographs.[5] Tourism history emerged as a popular field of study only a few years later. It was buoyed by dramatic tourism industry growth[6] and increasing academic interest in consumption, memory and commemoration, mobility, and borderlands among other topics.[7]

Sustained exploration of the nexus of nationalism and tourism arguably started with John F. Sears's *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century*. The book flew well beneath the radar of nationalism scholars, but it should not have done. Sears detailed how tourism functioned as a means of creating a national identity for a nascent United States. Tourist sites, whether impressive natural features such as caves, cataracts and mountains, or reimagined institutions such as prisons and asylums, distinguished the new country from Europe at a time when most American elites still looked to the Continent as their cultural North Star. Tourism developers recast American sites/sights, presenting them as the personification of national difference.[8] Only a few years later in 1995, Marguerite S. Shaffer completed her dissertation, 'See America First: Tourism and National Identity', about a slightly later period in which tourism not only served to promote travel to the US West, but to create a sense of unified

national identity following on the shattering experience of civil war. 'See America First' was not just a slogan, she demonstrated, it was a national rallying cry, an obligation of citizenship.[9]

Yet it was probably historian Rudy Koshar's essay '"What ought to be seen": Tourists' Guidebooks and National Identities in Modern Germany and Europe' that spoke most overtly to the connection. Koshar, fresh off projects exploring monuments, memory, preservation, and urban renewal, for which guidebooks were a significant source, and thinking about his own experience of guidebook-driven travel throughout Europe,[10] merged theory, growing scholarship on consumption, and careful primary research. Like all great arguments, while the gist probably should have been obvious, it proved revelatory. Tourism could 'promote national identity' by offering a venue to search for 'meaning beyond the marketplace'. Developers could highlight specific messages, pointing visitors toward 'what ought to be seen', a project that ultimately meant deciding upon narratives to celebrate, while sidelining others deemed less desirable.[11] The implications were significant. Koshar's argument suggested an opportunity to explore not so much the creation of nations by a handful of nationalists, but the very mechanics of national imagining. Tourism provided a means for exploring *who* was picturing nations and exactly how they went about doing so — politically, socially, economically, and culturally — while also providing a window on the consumption of national myths, sites, traditions, and memories. In other words, tourism provided a way of studying *process*.

It is difficult to know whether Koshar's article directly spawned the sudden proliferation of articles and books examining connections between national identity and tourism. Perhaps related scholarly discussions and the mushrooming size of the tourism industry just happened to coalesce. Whatever took place, before 1998 there were but a handful of publications that took the tourism/nationalism relationship seriously. Afterward, there were hundreds. Studies of the presentation of identity through cultural icons and their use in the promotion of national imaginaries,[12] of nationalist-driven tourism development efforts,[13] and the creation of national sites/sights were popular subjects.[14] What emerges from this work collectively is a complicated picture of politics, culture, and concerted efforts to create and re-create nations in various contexts.

Although the scope of tourism history is expanding to explore formerly neglected places and topics, the study of tourism and nationalism, while vibrant, remains focused on discrete time periods and the activities of specific groups. In other words, we are learning a great deal about more places, but generally without a sense of how cases relate to one another geographically, temporally, and thematically. Without discounting the importance of the local or regional, or unjustly critiquing the wonderful work being done, this article makes the case for considering both a longer durée and the role of much wider transnational exchanges in the process of imagining and re-imagining the nation through tourism. This sort of long-term thinking does at least three things. First, it illustrates that nationalism and tourism grew up together, bolstering each other

virtually from the start. Second, it starts us looking at and for transnational connections — even if that work needs more scholarly development. If nothing else, the shear similarities across cases ought to get us thinking. And third, it prompts us to consider the different shapes that the relationship takes vis-à-vis different contexts. It expands the scope of how we might interpret the past.

Methodological Nationalism

The idea of methodological nationalism entered nationalism studies in the early 2000s. It essentially means that, as Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller put it when introducing the idea back in 2002: 'nationally bounded societies are taken to be naturally given entities of study'. Consequently, scholars stay within the 'boundaries of the nation state'.[15] The geographical bias of our professional training in which we are usually taught to study specific places rather than thinking across borders or oceans compounds this tendency. We miss a lot as a result.[16]

First, unsurprisingly, we end up thinking that both nations and tourism develop within clear borders. That we can think about discrete stories defining the evolution of nationalism in a place, and that we can talk about the story of tourism in these places as though it is entirely self-referential. It isn't, in either case. As historian John Breuilly points out, 'the history of nationalism is transnational. A nationalist idea used to good effect in one place can be taken up somewhere else but, given a different set of conditions, will work in a very different way'.[17]

The same should be said of tourism. Tourism is, by definition, border crossing. It's defined by mobility and its producers always very consciously seek ideas, policies, and products found elsewhere that can be adapted to their own requirements. It is also no accident that early Irish tourism developers, for example, called for people to 'See Ireland First', borrowing 'See America First' language from American developers — something that Orvar Löfgren drew attention to years ago.[18] Or that at least one South Asian guidebook author, as well as Māori guides in New Zealand, used the term 'Wonder-land' to describe sites in their own countries, taking the term from the first guidebooks to Yellowstone in the States.[19] American developers, of course, were drawing from European ideas about place and aesthetic taste; the 1885 Swedish idea that one ought to 'Know your country' predates the widespread adoption of the idea one should 'See America First' by at least twenty years.[20] This cross pollination, this transnational discussion, is integral to the story of tourism and nationalism.

Second and not unrelated, we tend to read primarily the historiography of the place we are researching. This means that we tend to miss similar developments elsewhere. Our training, and our laudable attention to localised context, leaves us leery of moving much beyond our immediate expertise, especially as doing so opens us to criticism. The result is that scholars often spend far too much time reinventing the same ideas to

explain what they find instead of pushing our understanding in new directions based on earlier foundations that might prompt inventive questions. Taking big comparative and theoretical risks, understanding much broader relationships, will fundamentally transform how we think about individual case studies. It will spark debates that cross borders, prompting engagement between area specialists who usually do not know each other, or read one another's respective work. The results will undoubtedly prove important for the histories of tourism, nationalism, and, indeed, the regions or states being studied.

There's another predisposition that we might file under the term 'methodological nationalism'. Scholars have long recognised that we cannot take nationalist stories about the past at face value. And yet, there's a tendency to talk about national identity as a singular thing: there's *a* Scottish national identity, *an* American national identity, *a* French national identity, and so on. Certainly, nationalists want there to be consensus, total agreement, about a singular national group. But that's just not how it is. Nations are never actually unitary. There are always differences of opinion, sometimes very stark ones. What you find are conflicting ideas about the national interest, about interpretation of national myths, and about what ought to be seen. The groups involved tend to take different lessons from nationalists elsewhere. We need to actively engage with these debates and divisions. We need to recognise and embrace messiness.

In a wonderful article, published about ten years ago, nationalism historian Eric Storm suggested that tourism may well be the ideal subject of study for cutting through methodological nationalism.[21] He's right. If we embrace thinking across borders, looking for broader connections, and accept a certain amount of chaos, we can rise to the challenge he sets for us.

Evolving Relationship[22]

A useful approach for both escaping methodological nationalism and for examining the close relationship between tourism and the nation is attainable by thinking in terms of larger chronological and geographic contexts. To this end, this article adopts Eric Hobsbawm's taxonomy of nationalisms: proto-nationalism, liberal nationalism, exclusive (or ethnic) nationalism, and separatist (or anti-colonial) nationalism.[23] These terms are adequately descriptive and highlight important differences between groups and approaches.

Proto-Nationalism

While there is obviously disagreement, there is also a lot of evidence to suggest that both modern tourism and modern nationalism emerged at roughly the same time. They are products of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Of course, there was a link between travel and identity that extends well into prehistory.

Whether or not we call it tourism, the travel narratives found in the ancient world, or the Middle Ages, illustrate people thinking about themselves and those they encounter while traveling. These people reflected on their own sense of belonging and identity, as well as upon what made others different.[24] This fact might easily connect with earlier national-like identities which the late sociologist Anthony D. Smith calls ethnie.[25]

Modern tourism is different because it introduces consumerism to travel. This merger took place during what sociologist Colin Campbell identifies as a 'consumer revolution' beginning during the eighteenth century. That revolution is defined by what he calls 'self-illusory hedonism'. Consumption was increasingly imagined to be the path toward self-improvement.[26] Although our understanding of the Grand Tour has changed a lot in recent years, and while there were differences between the English *Grand Tour* and the Dutch *Groot Tour*, for example, not to mention a lot of evolution over time,[27] we still find people consciously consuming sites, spending money, and imagining that they were made better by doing so.

This development occurred at a time when at least some Europeans were challenging well-established hierarchies. New money started to supplant old. Enlightenment philosophers engaged in a fierce dialogue about the role of government and the ways in which people should relate to one another and the world around them. The status quo was under threat. Divine right monarchy was a target. At least some philosophers argued for the necessity for individual political expression for just about everybody. It was what historian Jonathan Israel calls 'a revolution of the mind', a 'radical enlightenment' and the potential implications for existing elites were dramatic.[28]

The Grand Tour was largely about elite identity. The trip was about creating a sense of elite belonging. It was about defining behaviour, developing a specific set of tastes, and making connections with others of a similar status. The reality was often less constructive. While English Grand Tourists were *supposed* to do one thing, they often spent their time gambling, drinking, and visiting prostitutes instead. This created genuine concern among many British elites that sending young men abroad might undermine the collective identities it was meant to bolster.[29]

Russian tourists also found the Grand Tour fueling reflection, and often a sense of ambivalence. For them, touring Europe inspired what literary scholar Susan Layton calls 'existential envy', a sense of cultural backwardness and inferiority. The sculptors and painters whose work was on display in Italy and France had no Russian equivalents; Russia wasn't on par with Western Europe in terms of the arts and sciences, these tourists feared.[30] And yet, many found something to be proud of. They felt homesick. They missed their native cooking. Above all, they took note of being better behaved than the 'spleen-afflicted, recreational, profligate, and discourteous' British tourists. Russians seemed intellectually and morally superior, better equipped for 'pleasurable learning on the Enlightenment high road'.[31]

Most eighteenth-century travellers were members of the elite. Debate about their identity is therefore best described as 'proto-national'.[32] By contrast, modern national identity is distinguished by the idea that it represents 'a deep, horizontal comradeship' and is more important than social class.[33] The stakes were high. The expanding number of tourists could easily be transformed by travel, either internalising a sense of real national belonging or possibly 'going native' and moving in the opposite direction.

Liberal Nationalism

While the origin of nations is debatable,[34] it remains fair to say that their modern equivalent is different from what came before. Clearly delineated by borders; by leveling class divisions modern nations offered membership to more people.[35] They were fueled by increasingly horrific working and living conditions, and a developing sense of collective social identities among ordinary people that increasingly butted up against political and economic elites. The result was what Hobsbawm terms 'liberal nationalism'. Its goal was to mobilise the *volk*, uniting the public behind the state and its objectives. This version of nationalism rose above narrow self- or class-interest, erasing the divisions of social status, wealth, or regional identity. For it to work, there had to be distinctly national histories, sites and landscapes which gave the nation-state tangible form, cultures, and traditions. Even more than this, the nation had to permeate *everything*. Even the mundane trappings of daily life were nationalised: cooking, architecture, clothing....[36] The nation became so central to thought that it could go unquestioned and unremarked, what Michael Billig calls 'banal nationalism'.[37]

Having said this, nations are not simply the results of the effort of nationalists, they are the product of widespread effort:

> ... the bottom-up or top-down debate [among nationalism scholars] is little more than a straw man. Elites could not have imposed a new culture on the masses if there had not been a receptive audience. Likewise, subalterns undoubtedly adapted earlier identities to match new state-defined demands. It is simply not possible to understand the creation of nations if either group is written out of history.[38]

Print-capitalism was certainly important, telling people 'what ought to be seen', but corporeal experience represented an even more powerful tool.[39] There was no substitute for *actually* experiencing a place: landscape, food, architecture, historical places, and so on. Viewing historic sites reveals, as anthropologist Catherine Palmer puts it, 'a past that people can recognize as belonging to them' and that embodies 'the essence of nationhood'.[40] Much the same can be said for national landscapes: 'To imagine a nation is to envision its geography'.[41]

The dawn of a new century yielded ways of bringing leisure travel to more people and of facilitating a corporeal experience of the nation. This, of course, is what most of

the scholarship on tourism and nationalism addresses. Transportation was now faster and cheaper. There were guidebooks, maps, and artwork available to point the way. By mid-century, package tour operators even took the legwork out of planning a journey. Of these technologies, and as Koshar highlighted over 25-years ago, guidebooks are arguably among the most important in terms of the relationship between tourism and the nation. Once their format was worked out — by Murray and Baedeker among others — they took much the same form wherever they appeared, working in much the same way. Guidebook authors in Poland, thus, knew exactly what authors in Germany or Britain were up to. They made little changes as suited, but still stuck mostly to formula.[42] Writers everywhere told tourists what to see, how to see it, and even how it was meant to make them feel. They recounted historical narratives, offered information about local geography, and interpreted culture. They used graphics in much the same way and generated similar language. Ultimately, guidebooks assured that 'leisure travel promoted and crystallized the "national orientations" of tourists'[43] and it did this virtually everywhere. Even if the author of the guide was not from the country celebrated in the guidebook, the act of drawing attention to specific sites and stories meant that the language of tourism was essentially the language of national distinctiveness. It was also an exchange and a process of discussion and presentation both inside and outside the nation.

The implications were profound. In Scotland, Sir Water Scott used a royal visit to Edinburgh, and a carefully authored guidebook, and invented traditions designed to appeal to outside visitors, to transform Scotland into a Highland nation.[44] In Mexico, tourism was a useful tool for rebuilding the country following a civil war, the same mediation technologies very much in evidence. Important cities were promoted, noteworthy historical sites restored, and a conscious effort made to banish a sense of postcolonial inferiority by stressing a long and distinguished history dating back to the Mayans and the Aztecs.[45] Nationalists in Guatemala[46] and Peru[47] did much the same, as did those in China,[48] Lebanon,[49] and other places besides.

What took place in each country noted above often closely resembles developments elsewhere. The Irish case tells us why. After the Irish Civil War, tourism developers engaged in an extensive tourism development effort that had the effect of creating a strong sense of Irish identity that was not premised on explicit reference to English colonial rule. Groups from across society — West Coast housewives to Dublin bureaucrats — engaged in a project of determining what history to celebrate, how best to present Irish land and townscapes, and what cultural traditions were worthy of celebration.[50] What is important to keep in mind is the extent to which Irish developers keenly studied what others were doing. They visited Nazi Germany to learn about the efforts of Kraft durch Freude, the Nazi's leisure organisation. They travelled to the United States to study hotels. They paid keen attention to tourism efforts in France and Britain. What emerges is that

> the story of Irish tourism is one of extraordinary horizontal discourse within Ireland, but that discussion involved actors and ideas drawn from across Europe, North America, and possibly even further afield. ... Irish planners ... actively sought out ideas wherever such ideas might be found. In so doing, they placed Ireland into a substantial transnational framework of tourism development — a framework that has yet to generate adequate study.[51]

Tourism certainly worked, in many places and contexts, to bolster nation building and to celebrate new nation-states. What scholars need to do now is not so much to report this fact. We know it is true. Instead, delve into the hows and whys. We need to know more about the transnational dialogues, about where various groups got their ideas exactly and about how they altered them to suit in their unique contexts.

Exclusionary Nationalism

In Hobsbawm's taxonomy, a new iteration of nationalism arrived during the second half of the nineteenth century. While not wedded to his timeline, it is certainly the case that the more 'exclusionary' nationalism that he describes was widespread at that time. It gave primacy to ethnicity, language, and race.[52] Instead of seeking to create a community, this new ethnic nationalism was premised on who was a member of the nation and, more important, who was *not*. While not restricted to colonies, exclusionary nationalism was vital to the imperialist endeavour.[53] Meanwhile in Europe, possibly borrowing from ideas created abroad in colonial contexts, some nationalists adopted similar notions to distinguish themselves from their neighbours.

Colonialism depended on notions of difference[54] and tourism traded easily in this way of dividing the world.[55] Now, that idea could be used to new purpose and regimes looked to one another for ideas and models. According to Manu Goswami, tourism soon became 'a significant practice in the generation and reproduction' of national identity 'grounded by the imperial state'. Tourism ultimately 'constructed the identity of touring' Europeans,[56] celebrating the accomplishment of imperial regimes. The British government was keen to promote the practice because 'Patriotic Britons' could 'witness the effects of British rule'.[57] Tourism mediators helped to cast Britain as 'a universal equivalent against which other cultures and identities were measured'.[58]

Other imperial states took notice, adopting and adapting the idea that tourism was a useful tool to sell the imperial enterprise. Belgium, for example, seems to have picked up the idea and altered it slightly in an effort to revise international perceptions of the Belgian Congo by highlighting their accomplishments there — or, at least, their less abhorrent ones.[59]

For many colonial regimes, the goal was erasure of native culture and its replacement by that of the coloniser. This is visible in the creation of European 'hill stations' built in the image of colonial metropoles and hotels where locals were not welcome.[60] And it

was visible in places such as Mozambique, where Portuguese authorities laboured to create a tourism industry that downplayed indigenous culture and history in favour of a more 'Latin' worldview. By stressing their superiority, they were able to communicate 'indigenous inferiority'. Portuguese food, music, dress, and pastimes were given priority, while indigenous art, music, dance, and the like were denigrated.[61]

At the same time, as in other East African countries such as Tanzania and Kenya, safari tourism was elevated. It was an opportunity to demonstrate the masculinity of European men through the act of killing (or, slightly later, conservation) of big game.[62] Even animals were curiosities in need of coloniser intervention, capable of showcasing coloniser national and racial superiority.[63]

Exclusionary ethnic nationalisms emerged outside of colonies as well, possibly a revised and re-imagined version of what was happening in them, especially the creation of those spaces where indigenes were not permitted. Back in Europe, in Austria, for example, German nationalists used tourism to reinforce 'particularistic loyalties' — very likely borrowing ideas from colonial contexts when doing so. Guidebooks directed tourists to suitably nationalist businesses, encouraging visitors to avoid spending money at hotels or restaurants operated by 'the enemy'. Tourists had a '*völkish* obligation to fulfill', said the guides, and they had to be careful of being misled by unscrupulous business owners who might try to appear German, but who advocated for Italian or Czech nationalism. The stakes were high, and tourism needed to ' "awaken" a sense of national identity that lay dormant among all potential members of the German nation' in Austria.[64]

Separatist Nationalism

It should hardly surprise that nationalisms premised on defining who did *not* belong fueled nationalists keen for separation and independence. Anti-colonial, separatist nationalisms that pitted 'oppressed peoples' against established states were the result. Versions appeared in more and more soon-to-be former colonies, but also in 'stateless-nations' such as the Basque country, Catalonia, Flanders, Quebec, and Scotland. European nationalists often consciously adopted the language of anticolonial nationalists in Africa or South Asia.[65] According to Partha Chatterjee, this brand of nationalism 'creates its own domain of sovereignty, an area of self-expression'. It allowed for self-assertion, a separate territory, and refused to 'allow the colonial power to intervene....'[66]

Once again, tourism played a significant, although perhaps more varied role. *Sometimes* it was something to rail against, a symbol of outside oppression. *Sometimes* it promised a means of asserting difference, bolstering demands for independence, and promoting the cause abroad. And, *sometimes*, it provided sites for more militant action, a place to hit a colonial power both symbolically and financially. Significantly, it was possible to find multiple ideas about how to use tourism in a single national group, showcasing the reality that nations are as much about disagreement as they are consensus.

In Scotland, nationalists of two very different stripes viewed tourism as a useful tool for forwarding calls for independence although in diametrically opposed ways.[67] For mainstream nationalists, the Scottish National Party (SNP), tourism is a source of economic strength, as well as a way to showcase Scottish identity. When a Scottish Homecoming event was planned in 2009 that would bring people of Scottish descent back to Scotland, the SNP was active in planning it. Not only would Scottish-Americans, for example, bring their dollars to Scotland, they might also be sources of foreign support: a useful lobby abroad that might influence US policy in favour of Scottish independence.[68]

By contrast, Scottish Watch, a more extreme ethnic nationalist group active in the mid-1990s, took a very different view heavily informed by anti-colonial groups elsewhere. They used plenty of imagery drawn from the colonial experience in Africa, evidently forgetting that Scots were active participants in the British Empire: among the whitest of white settlers. Scotland, they argued, was a victim of 'ethnic imperialism' and 'GENOCIDE by SUBSTITUTION'. 'Anglo-Saxon mercantilism', of which tourism was a prime example, was an existential threat. Tourism was both a product and a symbol of this evil force. According to the group, the industry exploited Scottish people by paying low wages, then forced them to transform their homes into B&Bs before buying them out. Tourism 'brings in foreigners who are better-off, prices increase to maximise profit, and the locals are squeezed out. Tourism changes our Scottish way of life', they argued. But it was worse than that. Tourism also relied on a 'tartan-touristy image of Scotland', little more than a collection of stereotypes 'manufactured by the English media' and 'a by-product of English racism'.[69] In short, tourism was a symbol of English exploitation and derision that undermined Scottishness, potentially threatening any viable resistance. By drawing attention to this interpretation, they used tourism as a means of arguing for independence *and* against more mainstream nationalist ideas.

In early twentieth century India, nationalists used tourism in a more nuanced way, drawing on established ideas about leisure travel as a way to present often widely differing interpretations of Indianness, highlighting debate within a national group. As early as the 1860s, Hindu nationalists used European travel models and travel writing to create a ' "welded nation" not within but "throughout the empire", extensive with rather than subordinated to, a British framework'.[70] This effort persisted. Indians wanted to be tourists. When Thomas Cook and Son launched the first organised package tour in India, from Bombay to Poona, Indians drawn from the 'artisan and middle classes' comprised the tour group.[71] This was the same social class that would seek to create an 'all-India' national identity a short time later.[72]

Mid-century use of tourism evidently inspired later writers. During the early twentieth century, a number of Indian authors — whose nationalist ideas ran in many, sometimes conflicting, directions — wrote guidebooks about travel to major hill towns including

Mahabaleshwar, Simla, Mount Abu, and Darjeeling. In form, they were little removed from guidebooks published anywhere else.[73]

The nationalist narratives presented in these guidebooks are often subtle and the authors' goals are varied. By selecting particular language or emphasising one thing over another, they exhibit a diversity of opinion about English rule, India, its people, and the road ahead. In his guide to Mahabaleshwar, Rao Bahadur D. B. Paranis, an Indian archaeologist, is full of praise for the Raj because it brought education to India, yet he very much complicates that opinion. By telling a much longer story anchored in the thirteenth century and offering only scant mention of sites associated with British rule, the author effectively renders the colonial experience a footnote, a moment in time.[74] India was much more than British colonial rule.

K. C. Bhanja's guides to Darjeeling are even more striking. Like all guidebooks, they celebrate the places they cover, but the author adds a loaded, and coded, phrase to his account: 'Mother India'.[75] This is a term associated with Hindu nationalism.[76] He goes further. When talking about the various ethnic groups living in the region, he critiques the Indian caste structure by drawing a distinction with the Nepalese who lack a 'false sense of aristocracy which often debars the people of the plains to hold free communion with the less fortunate members of society'. He even notes that the Nepalese women are emancipated.[77] Bhanja is, quite simply, invoking the ideas of Mohandas Gandhi and his Indian National Congress, offering 'an argument for a unified and independent India, packaged in a seemingly benign tourist guidebook'.[78]

In New Zealand, Māori tour guides used tourism in a similar way, constructing an alternative narrative to that presented by English colonisers. They offered a 'cognitive map' that ultimately had a greater impact on visitors than did anything produced by the imperial regime, in turn 'undermining the supposed substantive sovereignty of the Crown and the cultural processes of colonization'.[79]

Of course, tourism could be useful for far less complicated reasons: it provided soft targets for violent strikes. Tourism sites could be particularly fruitful for this purpose because they often symbolised oppression. Dark skinned locals were generally unwelcome in many tourist areas. This made such places synonymous with oppressive rule, indicative of who was and was not welcome in the imperial nation.
Hotels were therefore an obvious target for anti-colonial nationalists. 'Black Saturday', the opening salvo of the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, included a grenade attack on Shepheard's Hotel in Cairo that resulted in the destruction of the venerable institution.[80] The Hotel Tivoli, the premier U.S.-owned hotel in Panama, suffered much the same fate just over a decade later.[81]

The tourism industry provided other 'soft targets' as well.[82] In Mozambique, safari tourism was big business and tourists were keen to visit sites such as the Gorongosa National Park. The Frelimo, the anticolonial nationalist group fighting for decolonisation

and independence, thus targeted the park. When a Spanish neurosurgeon was killed, a park employee was kidnapped then executed, and a safari camp attacked and destroyed, it clearly illustrated that the Portuguese regime was failing. Calls mounted to close the park and tourism numbers 'predictably plummeted'.[83]

It is worth exploring the interaction and exchange between such anticolonial nationalists, tracing the flow of ideas between one group and the next.

Conclusion: The Reason Why

A constant throughout this narrative, regardless of the specific type of nationalism in question, is the way in which tourism offers a site of exchange and debate. It offers a place whereby ideas transfer across borders, making use of the inherent mobility involved in leisure travel. It also offers a site of negotiation within a specific national community where debate can happen about the meaning of a nation: its stories, sites, customs, landscapes, and so on.

A critical thing to remember is that Benedict Anderson was only partly right. Nations are 'imagined communities', but this does not capture or adequately foreground the extent to which they are never fixed. If we move beyond seeing nations as singular things, instead recognising that they are actually defined by negotiation and debate, that they are as much examples of ongoing *process* as anything set in stone, then we are better positioned to understand them.

Nations should be defined as 'perpetually *re-imagined* communities'.[84] When we do that, we quickly move beyond a narrow focus on a few individuals or groups, and we instead are able to emphasise process. Perpetual re-imagining requires the interaction of myriad groups, so we stop thinking about nations as top-down or bottom-up entities. They are both. Such narratives require an emphasis on engagement and exchange. It demands dialogue. We quickly see beyond fixed borders and embrace transnational exchange.

Tourism provides a perfect avenue for exploring perpetual re-imagining. As virtually everybody seems to agree, it is about selling difference, about selling a particular image of a place that differs from everywhere else. But what exactly to sell? How to present it? What national landscape, national narrative, national culture, national character should be presented to outsiders? The answers are not obvious or fixed. There is plenty of disagreement.

Not unrelated, it is worth pursuing a taxonomy or typology of nationalisms as relates to tourism. This ought to facilitate comparison, consideration of timelines, and a better sense of how tourism and nationalism interact in various contexts.

In the end, while we need careful and focused studies of tourist boards, government policies, airlines, etc., never forget that they are part of bigger exchanges and write

about them this way. The same is true of nationalists and nationalist groups. It is not enough to tell us what they do, we need to know where they get their ideas, who they are engaging with, and how their ideas evolve. Put them into bigger contexts of discussion and think about the mediators they use. There is only so much you can cover in an article or even book, but if we recognise that discrete groups are engaged in much larger discussions, we are better positioned to understand why they do what they do.

Endnotes

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