

THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON THE HILL TRIBES OF NORTHERN THAILAND⁺

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Dedicated to the memory of Eckehard Kulke

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a process and not an isolated event (Forster, 1964: 217): it is a sequence of events, the consequences of which are both cumulative and interrelated: some of these, like the generation of employment or income are foreseen, or indeed, intended. Others are unexpected and often not desired. It is these unintended consequences for the ecology, economy, society and culture, and the manner in which these are mutually related, which are of principal interest to the sociologist and anthropologist.

The study of the impact of tourism on less developed areas, has recently become a major focus of development research¹. Our knowledge of the manifold repercussions of this long-neglected factor has thus increased considerably. Yet, despite the increase, or perhaps because of it, the field is in a state of crisis: serious doubts are raised concerning the quality and significance of the findings, which were most succinctly summarized in Boissevain's (1977: 524-5) recent list of six systematic biases in the literature on tourism. I shall here utilize some of his insights and add some points of my own, not primarily to criticize the work of colleagues, but rather to indicate the kind of strategy appropriate to finding a way out of the crisis. I shall then demonstrate the advantages of this strategy in a brief presentation of some findings of my study on the impact of tourism among the northern Thai hill tribes.

To begin with, as Boissevain (*ibid.*: 524) noted, "most 'research' on tourism, is in fact a spin-off dividend" of studies which were not intended to study tourism *per se*. The data on tourism have not been systematically collected and the researcher might easily have missed relevant points which occurred to him only when, as an afterthought, he set out to write about tourism in his area of study.

+) This paper is based on a preliminary anthropological study of tourism among the hill tribes of northern Thailand, conducted in the summer of 1977 under a grant from the H. S Truman Research Institute at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Thanks are due to the Tribal Research Center in Chiang Mai for its kind assistance in the realization of the project. The general findings of the study are summarized in Cohen (*in press*).

Secondly, tourism is a controversial issue; the controversy concerning its advantages and disadvantages for developing societies is tainted by some general ideological positions, whether professional or political. The UNESCO report on tourism has noted that "... the socio-cultural impact of tourism has been analysed diversely by both economists and sociologists (hereafter to include anthropologists)" (UNESCO, 1976: 75). The sociologist or anthropologist is said to "... unconsciously view matters from a Rousseauist angle", or as Boissevain (1977: 524) puts it, in terms of the "noble savage syndrome", according to which, "Traditional society is seen as finer, simpler, better before the introduction of western institutions and technology and especially, capitalist market orientation" (ibid. : 524-5). In such a view, "... the last precious traces of [man's] lost paradise [are] now being threatened by tourist-oriented commercialization" (UNESCO, 1976: 75-6). Concomitantly, sociologists often uncritically accepted the social critic's negative view of the tourist (e. g. Boorstin, 1964), which caricatures him as a superficial nitwit. Hence, tourism "... stands condemned before serious analysis is even attempted" (Boissevain, 1977: 525).

The economist, according to the UNESCO report, "... just as unconsciously adopts the opposite point of view: the golden age lies somewhere in the future and economic development is the only road by which it can be reached. Tourism as a means of development, helping the natives to advance along this road, is therefore regarded with favor..." (UNESCO, 1976: 76). This, however, is not wholly correct, since development economists are themselves professionally divided on the question of the effective contribution of tourism to development (Economic Intelligence Unit, 1973: 53).

The professional controversy intersects with the political: while tourism may be, at least in principle, acceptable to development theorists, it is vehemently rejected by dependency theorists (e. g. Pérez, 1973/74). Radicals thus reject tourism as much as conservatives are willing to embrace it.

Most researchers, then, approach the subject with some bias; and since, as Boissevain (1977: 524) noted, "... much of the literature is a secondhand digest of spin-off research..." conducted by others, the authors are often "... compounding an existing bias with a bias of their own".

The dissatisfaction with the treatment of tourism in the sociological and anthropological literature has recently occasioned a re-evaluation: MacCannell (1973) the most prominent representative of a novel realization of the cultural significance of tourism, and, more recently, Graburn (1977), discovered in tourism a religious dimension, a new form of pilgrimage or of the "sacred journey". Though their approach may be an overreaction, which I attempted to rectify in my own typology of various modes of touristic experiences (Cohen, 1979), it still opened new and fruitful ways of looking at the phenomenon of tourism. Similarly a more discerning approach can also be found in a group of recent reviews of the literature on tourism (e. g. UNESCO, 1976; de Kadt, in press; Noronha, 1975), as well as in a series of studies evaluating the impact

of tourism on individual communities or culture areas (e. g. Greenwood, 1972, Redclift, 1973; Pi-Sunyer, 1973 and 1977 on Spain; Boissevain, 1977 on Malta; Stock, 1977 on Israel; Universitas Udayana and Francillon, 1975 and McKean, 1976 on Bali; Leach, 1973, on the Trobriands; and Nunez, 1963, on Mexico). Some of these have indicated that "... mass tourism does not necessarily bring with it the systematic destruction of everything that is beautiful" (Boissevain, 1977: 524), though it certainly introduces new strains and conflicts into the community.

However, even if the newer literature presents a less biased and more even-handed appreciation of tourism impact, I find other difficulties with it: while some of the recent reviews are so general in nature, that they fail to discuss systematic differences between types of tourists or types of communities, the community studies mostly relate specific local findings, without relating them to similar studies in the field. What is missing, then, is the middle range of systematic comparative studies which are specifically designed to examine the differential dynamics and impact of given types of tourism under different sets of conditions. Except for a few Ph.D. studies (Packer, 1974; Reiter, 1973) I am unaware of comparative work on tourism impact. I argue, then, that at the present juncture, the optimal strategy for sociologists and anthropologists of tourism is to carry out a series of unbiased, specifically designed, comparative studies of tourism under systematically varying conditions. By this strategy, the crisis in the study of tourism can be overcome. My own study of tourism impact in the hill tribe region of northern Thailand is a modest contribution in this direction.

Studies of the impact of tourism on tribal and simple societies are few in number (e. g. Forster, 1964; Leach, 1973; Aspelin, 1977). The only major work in the area, Graburn's (Graburn (ed.), 1976), relates solely to the impact of tourism on folk arts. To the best of my knowledge, mine is the first systematic comparative study of the impact of tourism on tribal society.

A comparative study involves two distinct levels of comparison: (1) external - a comparison of the findings with those of other studies in different settings; (2) internal - a comparison between the findings in the different social units under investigation. To facilitate an external comparison, I will first spell out the general conditions prevailing in northern Thai hill tribe tourism, which account for the over-all type of impact the industry had upon the tribes. I will then turn to the examination of the differences in the impact of tourism upon a series of communities chosen for their differential locations on the tourist system in the region. I wish to stress, however, that only the findings of the preliminary stage of the study can be reported; these will relate primarily the more superficial impact of tourism; the profounder consequences have to await the analysing the data of the second stage, conducted in 1978.

TOURISM IN THE HILL TRIBE REGION: GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS²

The hill tribe region embraces the hilly and mountainous jungle areas of Northern, North Eastern and North Western Thailand³. The total "tribal" population - i. e. members of non-Thai ethnic groups - is about 300,000. The major tribal groups are the Karen, Meo, Lahu, Yao, Akha, and Lisu⁴. These are dispersed in small communities over this vast area (see map in LeBar et al. , 1964); communities of several tribes are sometimes located in close proximity; such areas are especially attractive to tourism.

The tribal people are traditionally swidden agriculturists, a form of ecological adaptation which necessitates periodic migration of communities owing to the exhaustion of the soil. In the past there was little contact between the tribal people, particularly those like the Meo and Lisu who built their villages on inaccessible ridges, and the lowland population. The highlands came under governmental control only after World War II; even now, central control is merely nominal in outlying areas. The region, however, is being slowly incorporated into the national society. Population pressures have recently begun to threaten the traditional subsistence basis of the tribal society: natural increase and the penetration of the highlands by Thai lowlanders have made arable land ever scarcer. As tribal communities descended to lower altitudes, they were progressively incorporated into the national economic and political system. Facing the problems of deforestation and the need to find a substitute for the major cash-crop of several tribes, namely opium, the government engaged upon a policy of sedentarization and crop-substitution, but as yet with limited success (McKinnon, 1977). New roads serving motorized traffic during the dry season penetrate successively ever more remote areas. Though many villages are still, quite literally, off the beaten track, those in which tourism is at least of some significance are fairly accessible⁵. Tourism is both a consequence of the process of incorporation as well as one of the forces through which this process is accomplished⁶. This is an important point, since, as Boissevain (1977: 524) has pointed out, "... there is a failure in the literature to distinguish the social and cultural consequences of tourism from other developments taking place in the society concerned...". We thus face the difficult task of isolating the impact of tourism from other kinds of impacts on the tribal communities emanating from the wider society.

Though the area had been previously visited by missionaries, scientists and other travellers, tourism as a business proposition was started in the early 1970's, and grew progressively in volume ever since, though it did not yet develop the massive proportions found, e. g. in Bali (Universitas Udayana and Francillon, 1975), on Malta (Boissevain, 1977) or in Fiji (International Tourism Quarterly, 1977), to mention just a few regions which have recently become popular with international tourists. The hill tribes are an important attraction of northern Thailand, but are not, as yet, a major international attraction.

Most tourists, particularly the younger ones, are attracted by the tribes for the contrast between modern civilization and the tribal way of life, which is promo-

ted in the tourist brochures as "primitive" or "semi-primitive", "unspoiled" and "colorful" (Cohen, in press). Many visitors, one study found, "... expressed an almost academic interest in the tribal culture and traditions" (Maneeprasert et al., 1975: 9). Though such an attitude motivates many visitors to visit remote, "typical" tribal villages not yet penetrated by other tourists, few in fact are determined enough to realize their desire, owing to difficulties of access, inconveniences and exertions involved by lengthy jungle trekking, limited time at their disposal, real and imagined dangers in the jungle, and other factors. Though most tourists to northern Thailand visit at least one tribal village on an excursion trip by motorboat or car, or several villages on a trekking trip, the bulk of hill tribe tourism is concentrated in a handful of villages. The majority of tourists, in fact, visit a single village, namely, Meo Doi Pui in the vicinity of Chiang Mai (which is included in our study). It should therefore be emphasized that, whatever the impact of tourism on the few villages regularly visited by tourists, its aggregate impact upon the tribal region as a whole, consisting as it does of several a thousand settlements, is negligible⁷. Tourism, however, is a centripetal force (Christaller, 1955) in the Thai highlands as elsewhere, and is penetrating ever deeper into the interior (Cohen, in press). An examination of its impact on the tribal economy, society and culture is thus none too early.

My research in 1977 was in fact motivated by a visit to the area in 1973, when tourism just started to penetrate the highlands. At the time, I feared that the impact of the industry on the tribal people was going to be disastrous. My premonitions, based on prejudices of the anthropologist discussed above, found support in early analysis of the consequences of tourism on simple societies, such as Forster's work in the Pacific, in which he drew attention to the disruptive effects of tourism on underdeveloped economies (Forster, 1964: 219). There exists very little comparable work on the impact of tourism on simple societies, which enables one to judge the wider applicability of Forster's conclusions. There are, however, strong reasons to assume that, even though the general negative evaluation of tourism is not warranted, its impact on simple societies will be more pernicious than elsewhere, since the integration of these societies depends on a delicate equilibrium between culture, social structure and environment, which will soon be disrupted by tourism. Nevertheless, one cannot assume that tourism of whatever nature will have the same impact on all different kinds of simple societies. There may be differences in the relative "brittleness" of simple societies under the impact of exogenous forces of change - thus it may well be that corporate tribal societies, e. g. the Bedouin and oasis populations of the Middle East and North Africa, will suffer more severely from the coming of the tourists than the non-corporate tribes of northern Thailand. However, my data are as yet too crude for a detailed analysis of the relation between traditional tribal social structure and tourism. More obvious are the differences in impact, related to the manner in which tourism impinges upon simple societies. Generalizing from the available information it appears that the impact of tourism will be the more severe, as tourism becomes the principal sector of the economy, as it is rapidly introduced by strong external economic factors and as the

native people are precipitously exposed to an encounter with large numbers of strange visitors.

A prediction of the nature of tourism impact on the northern Thai hill tribes will then be contingent upon the conditions under which tourism developed in the region. In accordance with the foregoing argument, I shall examine three sets of conditions:

(1) The place of tourism in the economic and social life of tribal communities

Like in Kirivina, Trobriand Islands (Leach, 1973) or in the Brazilian rain-forest (Aspelin, 1977: 154-5), tourism in the hill tribe region has not been initiated by the tribal people but is promoted by travel agents and small jungle tour operators located in cities, primarily in Chiang Mai. Most communities affected by tourism are not particularly eager to develop a tourist industry, but relate to it as an important, though secondary source of cash income. Since the scope of tourism is as yet limited in most villages, it has not yet developed a disproportionate relative importance (Forster, 1964: 219).

(2) The structure of the tourist industry in the region

Tourism expanded "organically" in the area and was not induced from the outside by large-scale entrepreneurs (Cohen, 1972: 180); so its growth has been slow, in response to increasing tourist interest and not precipitous as in some other areas, e. g. in Hawaii (Fukunaga, 1975). Moreover, tourists to the region are sightseers and not vacationers: they come for short visits, ranging from less than half an hour to at most one or two nights, to see and experience rather than to engage in leisure activities as they do in resort areas with "paradisiac" qualities in outlying localities of the Pacific (Cohen, forthcoming, b) or the Caribbean (Turner and Ash, 1975; *passim*). Their trips are managed by local operators with limited capital who neither feel the need, nor possess the means, to introduce large-scale tourist facilities, such as resort hotels owned and operated by outsiders as has been the case in many other simple and traditional communities which were invaded by tourism (e. g. Fukunaga, 1975; Forster, 1964; Greenwood, 1972; Desplanques, 1973: 161). Indeed, the only "hotel" established in a tribal village is the one in Meo Mae Sā Mai, serving the guests of a large international travel agency, Neckermann, and is owned by urban Thai entrepreneurs. But this is the exception, rather than the rule. Hence, though outsiders bring tourists to the village, they do not own or operate any tourist oriented facilities in them - a factor which significantly lessens the potentially disruptive impact of tourism.

(3) The nature of the encounter between tourists and the native people

Most tourists visit the villages in small organized parties, led by a guide. A wide cultural gap separates the tourists from their hosts - precluding in fact any meaningful dealings between them, for lack of a common language; most interaction flows through the guide who, rather than the tourist, becomes the carrier of cultural innovation in the villages (Cohen, forthcoming, a).

On the strength of our analysis of the conditions under which tourism developed in the region, one can predict that its impact on the hill tribes is unlikely to be destructive, contrary to my initial intuitive assumption. However, even if the impact is found to be moderate, a basic problem still remains: are we merely witnessing an incipient stage in the development of tourism, so that, when the industry gains momentum, the above conditions will change with pernicious consequences; or whether there are different types of dynamics of tourism development, so that while in one case tourism is essentially destructive, in others its introduction is accompanied by a continuous and creative accommodation between the industry and native society and culture? I shall come back to this point after an examination of the data in my comparative study.

Tourism in the highlands, as I pointed out above, affects only a limited number of villages; even these, moreover, are differently affected as a consequence of differences in such factors as the frequency of tourist visits, the types of tourists and the nature of the visit. In my study I have distinguished, in terms of these and similar factors, two principal touring systems in the region, each of which consists of a narrow, distinctly discernible core area which is intensively visited by tourists, and a wide, indistinctly delimited periphery, less frequently visited by tourists. A four-fold typology thus emerged (Cohen, in press):

1. Tribal Village Tour - encompassing a group of villages relatively easily accessible by boat or car on a short trip from a major urban center; the tour does not necessitate an overnight stay in a tribal village. The Tribal Village Tour consists of two sub-systems:
 - (a) Town Tour: the core area, encompassing the villages on regular one-day coach tours departing from Chiang Mai: it consists of a few, easily accessible villages, close-by to the city. These are visited regularly by up to a few hundred tourists a day, most of which come in parties organized by the larger travel agencies.
 - (b) Excursion Tours: the peripheral area, encompassing more remote villages accessible by either motor-boat or car; these are typically visited on one- or two-day excursion tours from Chiang Mai or Chiang Rai. Excursion Tours are organized by the same agencies as the Town Tour, but are much less frequent: any single village does not average more than a few dozen tourists a day during the busy season.

2. **Jungle Tour:** encompassing a group of outlying or not easily accessible villages, which must be reached by trek; the tour necessitates staying overnight in a village. The Jungle Tour also consists of two sub-systems:
 - (a) **Standard Jungle tour:** the core area, encompassing a cluster of villages on the route of a routine, three-day trekking tour to the north of the Mae Kok river, offered primarily by about a dozen small jungle tour operators in Chiang Mai. During the season, daily about 30-40 young tourists take the tour, usually in parties of 4-10, led by a guide.
 - (b) **Special Jungle Tours:** the peripheral area, encompassing the rest of the tribal highlands; tours, in parties similar to those on the Standard Tour, depart on 5-15 day trip to remote localities in this very extensive area. Not more than 3-4 parties visit any particular village in a month.

There are considerable differences between the two touring systems and their sub-systems in several respects. The Tribal Village Tour is the domain of the sedate middle-class tourists, who do not venture far beyond their protective "environmental bubble" (Cohen, 1972:171). For such tourists the tour is ordinarily an interesting side-trip but not of much personal significance. They are not deeply concerned with the authenticity of their experiences and have no particular desire to interact with the native population⁸. The great majority of these tourists pay only a short visit to one or two villages on the highly commercialized Town Tour (1a) circuit; only a few venture further afield to the much less frequently visited villages on the Excursion Tour (1b) circuit. The Jungle Tour is the domain of the young, more enterprising tourists, for many of whom a visit to the tribal area is one of the chief purposes of their visit to northern Thailand. These tourists desire to experience the authentic life of the natives and to interact with them. Nevertheless, owing to the constant stream of such youthful tourists, who want to experience the jungle in a few days, the Standard Jungle Tour (2a) is already quite a routinized affair, even if it may not look so to the unsuspecting new arrival. Though still fairly segregated from the national tourist establishment, the Standard Jungle Tour circuit is already an area of emergent "staged authenticity" (MacCannell, 1973; Cohen, forthcoming, a). In fact only the Special Jungle Tour, taken only by a few hardy souls, enables the traveller to experience authentic tribal life in remote villages.

The underlying assumption of this paper is that the impact of tourism will differ according to the touring sub-system on which a village is located, since that location largely determines the frequency and length of tourist visits, the types of tourists who visit the locality, and the kinds of activities which tourists and locals engage in. Accordingly, I have selected, for purposes of comparison, one or two villages from each sub-system - altogether five villages from more than a dozen that I surveyed in the summer of 1977. In the following, I shall compare the impact of tourism on the following five villages:

- (1) **Doi Pui:** a large Meo village on the mountain overlooking Chiang Mai, located on the route of the most popular Town Tour, in the vicinity of the renowned Buddhist monastery of Wat Phra Doi Suthep. Doi Pui is the

- best-known tribal village of northern Thailand; it was the first village to be regularly visited by tourists, and has far the largest number of visitors: about 150 a day, according to a study of the Tourist Organization of Thailand (TOT), of which about 90 are foreigners and the rest Thai. It is the only tribal village visited by Thai tourists. Most tourists arrive in small guided parties and stay in the village less than one hour.
- (2) **Lao Tha**: a small Lisu village on the foothills to the north of the Mae Kok river; this village is one of the two focal points on the Standard Jungle Tour; here most tourists sleep the first night of their three-day trekking tour (the other focal point is the Chinese Kuomintang village of Muang Ngam). Tourists visit Lao Tha regularly from its very inception about four years ago. The number of visitors during the busy seasons is about 30-35 a night. Most tourists arrive in small guided parties, but a minority are single individuals or small groups without a guide. Tourists usually arrive in the afternoon, spend the night in the village, and leave the next morning, eating two meals and lodging in one of the tribal households.
- (3) **Kho Ae**: a large Akha village on a steep hill to the north of the Mae Kok river. This is a marginal village on the Standard Jungle Tour, visited only by some of the guided parties and guide-less individuals, while the others prefer the more remote but more easily accessible village of Akha Yapa. Tourists have been visiting the village for the last seven years, but whereas in the beginning some parties used to stay overnight, in the last few years they come only on fleeting visits of an hour or so, preferring to sleep in Kuomintang Muang Ngam. On a busy day 3-4 parties would visit the village, usually during the afternoon hours.
- (4) **Nong Wen**: a small Akha village in the vicinity of Mae Chan, a town on the main road between the city of Chiang Rai and the border town of Mae Sai; it is located on the route of one of the most common Excursion Tours, originating in Chiang Rai. Tourists first visited the village only about four years ago; regular tours started about two years ago. Visits are common mainly during the dry season, when the village is accessible by car. During that period several parties a day may arrive in the village, for very short visits - not more than half an hour.
- (5) **Sam Sao**: a big Lisu mountain village on the Burmese border, north of Lisu Lao Tha. It is located on the route of the most popular Special Jungle Tour. Tourists apparently visited the village first some six years ago, and come regularly since then, but in very small numbers - not more than 30 tourists a month reach the village during the busy season: two to three guided parties and several guide-less individuals. The tourists stay overnight in one of the households.

These, then, are the villages in our comparative study. We shall now examine in some detail the impact of tourism on each of them.

MEO DOI PUI

Meo Doi Pui is the tribal village most frequently visited by tourists; it is also the one which has been most thoroughly affected by tourism. The study of the tourism impact on the village, however, is complicated by the fact that it is close to Chiang Mai, the major urban center of northern Thailand; even in the absence of tourism the village would be affected by influences emanating from the city. It is therefore difficult to gauge the precise impact of tourism among the other forces impinging on the village.

Doi Pui is a mature village, located in its present site for over a generation. It is a large village of more than 80 households. In-migration has contributed to the growth of the village in the last 10-15 years, though Cooper's (1976:170) contention that the population doubled in 1972-5 owing to the accretion of migrants who were attracted by the opportunities offered by tourism is exaggerated. Most of the in-migrants are Meos who come from more outlying localities, but about a dozen are Chinese. Some of the recent migrants may have been attracted by tourism, but in-migration would probably have occurred even in the absence of tourism, since there is a general migratory trend among the tribal people from the interior towards localities with better access to urban centers.

Tourism effected a bifurcation of the village into two sectors, which can be observed in all the spheres of local life: ecology, economy, society and culture. It is the only village in our comparative study so divided.

The bifurcation is most obvious in the ecological sphere: the village is located on a mountain slope with a sole access road entering its lower section by which all tourists must arrive. This is the "front" region (Goffman, 1959: 144-5; MacCannell, 1973: 590) of the village. Most of it is overt "tourist space", expressly designated to serve tourism and easily recognizable as a tourist area; part of it, however, is covert "tourist space", a front area insidiously camouflaged as a "false back" (MacCannell, 1973: 599)⁹. The upper section of the village is mainly residual and not intended for tourism: it is the "back" proper.

The chief attraction of the lower section are a few dozen shops and stalls along the main road, selling handicrafts and souvenirs. The dress and conduct of the inhabitants in the public sphere, whether they sell crafts or hang around to be photographed, is quite obviously influenced by the presence of tourists.

The apparently private, residential sphere of the lower section also serves the tourist business: guides, and even guide-less individuals enter freely and uninvited into houses, while the members of the household used to the visits go about their activities at least apparently unconcerned with the tourists. This lack of concern gives the impression of "authenticity"; in some cases, however, the authenticity is "staged" (MacCannell, 1973), and the residences converted into covert "tourist space".

Some inhabitants have learned to play the role of "professional natives", and to extract a benefit from the tourist: thus one old man sits motionless in his home, smoking a pipe, while tourists take pictures; but he comes very much alive when they are about to leave, asking for his remuneration. Another obligingly smokes an opium pipe in front of tourists and even lets the more courageous in the party inhale a few puffs; upon which he offers them newly made opium pipes and miniature water-pipes for sale; the tourists, feeling obliged after having accepted his hospitality, are thus induced to buy. The purchase of an opium pipe accomplished, the guide hastens to make sure that no residue of opium is left in it.

The fact that the upper section of the village is non-touristic, in fact attracts some tourists who, eager to see how the Meos "really" live, desire to have a glimpse of their "back" region (MacCannell, 1973: 593-5). However, while the inhabitants of the lower section of the village are fairly permissive towards tourists, those in the upper section are less tolerant: I have observed a woman at a water-point breaking into wild shouts upon being photographed by a party of tourists; in the lower part, I would have expected her to react differently: considering her work a "performance" she would complete it quietly and then ask for her remuneration. It appears that, like elsewhere (e. g. in Bali) the Meos of Doi Pui, bothered by ever-present tourist cameras, are learning to draw a line between tourist and non-tourist space.

The main tourist-oriented business of Meo Doi Pui is the souvenir trade. Tourists, arriving usually in small guided parties by the access road, enter directly into the touristic lower section. Their arrival is greeted by a bunch of Meo women and children peddling souvenirs, which they offer aggressively to the tourists even before these have disembarked from the *silor* (pick-up truck) by which they arrived from the main road. They engage mainly in sightseeing and photography and make an occasional purchase at a shop.

Except when negotiating a deal, they interact very little with the villagers. In fact, the villagers are for the tourists primarily objects of interest belonging to the landscape, rather than potential partners of interaction; the villagers tend to accept that role, obligingly dressing themselves or their children in traditional garments, playing the native role, posing for pictures and quietly collecting their rewards¹⁰.

Tourists are not obliged to spend a penny in the village; there is no entrance charge, no need to stay overnight or to take meals in the village. In fact, there are no lodging or eating facilities, of the kind available in some Jungle Tour villages. All tourist expenses are thus incidental. The villagers however learned how to extricate the tourist penny and applied themselves so single-mindedly to this pursuit that eventually all contacts with tourists have become motivated by little else than an expectation of financial gain.

By far the main source of income derived from tourism is the production and sale of handicrafts and souvenirs. The importance of these activities expanded to such proportions that one observer (Cooper, 1976: 172) concludes that it be-

came an alternative and even more lucrative source of income than the traditional cash crop, opium (which, in any case is not such a lucrative crop as is popularly imagined).

Doi Pui is unique among the Meo villages in that, in response to the growing volume of relatively well-to-do Town Tour tourists, during the past 5-6 years, about 30 stalls and small shops popped up in the "public" sector of the village, whereas in other Meo villages, "... a single small shop is still a rarity" (Cooper, 1976: 170). An even more recent development is the further expansion of these trading activities of the villagers beyond the confines of the village: they established a couple of stalls in front of three other Town Tour attractions: at the entrance to the nearby Puping Palace (the king's summer palace), on the road beneath Wat Phra Doi Suthep and at the entrance of the Huai Kaew waterfall on the outskirts of Chiang Mai. The most recent development is their penetration into the Chiang Mai night market, where they cater not only to tourists but also to the Thai urban population: whereas even in 1976 hardly a Meo hawker could be seen in that market, in 1977 I counted up to a dozen Meo stalls in one night.

The handicraft and souvenir trade embraces a large and growing section of the local labor force. Doi Pui is the only tribal village in Thailand where tourism is a fulltime occupation of a substantial part of the population: according to a TOT survey, 37 % of the people engage exclusively in trade, while an additional 27 % combine trade with agricultural work. Trade, which is the major but by no means the only source of tourism-related income, thus provides at least partial employment for 2/3 of the labor force.

I have taken a census only of the trading activity within the village itself. On one occasion I counted 25 stalls and shops, on another - 29. Of the latter, 18 were shops adjoining habitations. Eleven were stalls, located primarily close to the village entrance. Twenty of 29 premises were tended by women, a finding which indicates that men still work in the fields, while women engage in trading. Whereas all the shops are Meo-owned, the 11 stalls are owned by the Chinese who migrated into the village; some of these, however, are married to local Meo women. Whereas Meos whose houses adjoin the main road profited by installing shops in them, the non-Meos thus put up stalls on the road at the entrance to the village, to engage the attention of the arriving tourists.

Not only did the number of establishments and the volume of trading activity increase greatly in Doi Pui in recent years, but the choice and variety of goods offered expanded considerably. Production of handicrafts for sale to tourists, either directly in the village or indirectly through the urban souvenir market¹¹, is a common activity in many tribal villages. In Doi Pui, however, the trade reached a level of specialization and diversification unmatched anywhere else. Initially the villagers offered tourists only their own products - such as batik, embroideries, tribal clothing and bows and arrows. Even now women sit in front of their shops and engage in embroidery or in batik-painting on the main road, while male storekeepers prepare bows and arrows; these activities are

probably as much intended as a show to advertise the "authenticity" of their wares to tourists, as they are of intrinsic economic benefit. In fact, however, the Meos of Doi Pui became increasingly involved in middleman activities: in addition to their own products, they turned to selling the handicrafts of other highland tribes, such as the Yao and Lahu, the work of Meo and Yao refugees from Laos, as well as Thai work and even objects imported from Taiwan and Hong Kong.

This diversification, however, is not equally characteristic of the two major trading groups in the village, the Meo and non-Meo: whereas 7 Meo shops still sell exclusively Meo products, and 10 both Meo and non-Meo ones, most stalls, all of them owned by non-Meos, sell exclusively non-Meo products. Like in similar situations elsewhere, it is the non-indigenous element in the local population which contributes most to innovation¹².

The commercialization of crafts, of the Meos and of other tribes, provoked their gradual debasement: as tourist interest in their products grew, the people of Doi Pui began producing them in increasing quantities. However, since most tourists know little about folk-arts and seek small, relatively cheap products to bring home as souvenirs or gifts, their mass production was accompanied by a sharp decline in quality. Nowadays, "The Hmong (Meo) of Doi Pui openly fabricate the crudest copies of Hmong material culture" (Cooper, 1976:170), such as crossbows, batik skirts, water-pipes, etc. Meo textile products are mass-produced on sewing machines, instead of hand-made as they have been traditionally. The silver-content of locally produced silver objects has been substantially reduced. The stage of outright falsification was eventually reached as the production of some items, such as tobaccopipes, moved to the city of Chiang Mai, whence they are brought to Doi Pui for sale.

The crafts of other tribes fared similarly: whereas originally the Meos bought the products of less accessible villages, they soon realized that the undiscerning tourists buy equally willingly the cheap imitations of tribal crafts mass-produced in Chiang Mai, so they started to peddle these instead of the genuine products. As the souvenir trade grew in scope, the shops and stalls of Doi Pui came to resemble increasingly, in terms of quality and selection of goods, the less exclusive souvenir shops of Chiang Mai; only the prices are still lower.

The souvenir trade in Doi Pui thus went through three phases: at first, the villagers sold their own products; as their business grew the village became a locale for the sale of crafts produced in more remote villages and by refugees; presently, however, the village becomes ever more an outlet for products either originating in the city or distributed through it. Elements of all three stages at present co-exist in the village; but the trend appears to be toward an increasing incorporation of the souvenir trade in the village into the city-dominated production and marketing system. This is one form in which tourism leads to the incorporation of the local economy into the national economic system.

Whereas the souvenir business is widely spread and entirely owned and managed by the inhabitants of the village - though some are non-Meos - it is not parti-

cularly profitable if looked upon in absolute terms. According to the TOT study, the average daily receipts of 7 shops in the village during the low season averaged only 100 Bath (U. S. \$ 5); with an assumed 40 % profit the monthly net income of a shop would be only 1200 Bath (U. S. \$ 60). This is a little bit above the average salary of a Thai urban laborer. However, it represents a considerable monetary income for a tribal household in a village in which, until recently, the subsistence sector still predominated. The fact that growing numbers of villagers abandon agriculture, even opium, and opt for trading, attests to the attractiveness of the latter as a source of cash¹³.

The souvenir trade is by far the most important tourism-related occupation in the village. The only other such occupation is transportation: several people own *silors* (pick-up trucks) with which they shuttle tourists from the main road to the village for 10 Baht (50 U. S. cents) a head and transport traders from the village to their stalls at the tourist attractions and the night market. This is probably a more lucrative source of tourism-related income than a souvenir shop, though it necessitates a much larger capital investment.

In addition to fully-fledged touristic occupations, tourism is also a source of incidental income, mainly in the form of payments for photography or opium. Photography, yielding only tiny amounts, is the domain of children and older people. These hang around on the main road in festive traditional dress, or apparently engage in traditional pursuits but in fact wait to be photographed for a small compensation of 1-2 Baht (5-10 U. S. cents) - though I was told of a Meo woman who is prepared to expose herself for a half-nude picture for 20 Baht.

Though heroin as well as opium is apparently available in the village, drugs are not a major tourism-related business. Most tourists interested in opium are not addicts, or regular users, but are out for a one-time kick or experience. They smoke a pipe or two and only seldom buy small quantities to take along. While guides usually condone the smoking of the drug, they generally strongly discourage its acquisition. The available information indicates that the production of opium in Doi Pui has declined with the coming of tourism and that presently the Meos grow the poppy just for their own consumption. Paradoxically, however, since the use of opium is an important element in the touristic image of the Meos, "... the encounter with tourists ... increases rather than decreases the image of Hmong (Meo) association with the drug market" (Cooper, 1976: 172).

The case of opium is only one instance of a general trend, found in many tourist settings, towards a growing divergence between touristic image and reality; a trend which eventually leads to the bifurcation of the community noted above and the emergence of "tourist space". I shall wind up my discussion of Doi Pui with an analysis of this problem.

The crux of the issue is that tourism projects a fixed and attractive image upon a locality, thus inducing in prospective visitors certain expectations; however, at the same time the introduction of tourism changes that locality, removing its physical appearance and way of life ever more from the touristic image. The

people's lives are thus progressively torn apart by contrary forces emanating from tourism: on the one hand, aware of the necessity to live up to the touristic image, they "play the natives" and create an ever more artificial "tourist space"; on the other hand, contact with tourism and the income generated by it, both induces and enables them to adopt new lifeways and to modernize the village—thus ever more increasing the divergence between image and reality. People find it increasingly harder to live up to the image: though some "dress up" for the tourists, others neglect to do so. Though tourists expect to find native huts in the village, many inhabitants, at least partly with money earned from tourism, changed the appearance of their habitations: they constructed wooden houses in place of traditional Meo huts, changed leaf-roofs into corrugated iron, introduced electricity (fed by a generator) into the village and otherwise modernize living conditions. The external appearance of the village was thus changed, so that presently it matches poorly the preconceived image of a "typical" Meo tribal settlement as disseminated in the travel advertisements¹⁴. Thus, while their lives are bifurcated into a touristic and non-touristic sector, the bifurcation is not complete: many alien elements penetrate the touristic sector, imperilling its attractiveness. Indeed, the changes provoked disappointment and resentment on the part of tourists and complaints on the part of travel agents that the village is too "spoilt" to remain the most popular tribal attraction in northern Thailand. Agents are looking for other suitably located villages. The establishment of the Neckermann "hotel" in Meo Mae Sā Mai instead of Meo Doi Pui is a symptom of the receding popularity of the latter.

The deterioration of Doi Pui led to the intervention of the TOT, which evolved a plan for its "rehabilitation". The most interesting feature of the plan is the proposal to reinforce, streamline and formalize the bifurcation of the community by creating in fact two separate villages: a tourist village, in which traditional Meo life will be demonstrated to tourists and all modern conveniences, such as electricity and corrugated roofs will be camouflaged; and a modern village, where the Meos will be free to introduce any innovations they like. People will not be forced to live in the touristic village: but if they want to work there and sell their wares there they will have to don the traditional Meo dress during visiting hours¹⁵. The inhabitants appear to have agreed to this plan; even the Chinese traders, eager to retain their business, agreed to dress up as Meos. My informant remarked that the only remaining difference will then be that the Chinese do not speak Meo, but the tourists, being ignorant of both languages, will not notice it. A fee will be charged at the entrance to the tourist village.

TOT officials explained that they have been misunderstood when accused that, in the interest of tourism, they propose to revert the village to a "primitive" stage. In fact their aim has only been to present a "primitive" face to the visitor to the touristic village. However, while that village will be brought in tune with the expectations of tourists by artificial purification and by the removal from it of any vestiges of "real" village life, the villagers will be free in their modern village to live as they like - or even to move to Chiang Mai if they so wish.

The TOT plan amounts to the constitution of a full-fledged, formalized "tourist-space" in Meo Doi Pui - the first of its kind in the tribal highlands; it is, however, an overt "tourist-space", since the planners intend to present the touristic village as a demonstration of traditional Meo life as found in more remote villages and do not wish to mislead the tourists into believing that they are witnessing authentic village life¹⁶. The planners are aware of the fact that their actions reinforce the trend towards artificiality in the appearance of Doi Pui - but claim that there is no other way to rehabilitate the village.

If the TOT experiment is found to be satisfactory, other "spoilt" touristic villages will be submitted to a similar rehabilitation. In the meantime, however, Doi Pui serves as a negative rather than positive example to other villages with a strong influx of tourists: while they generally appreciate the benefits of tourism, the villagers are quick to stress that they do not want their village "to become like Doi Pui".

I am not yet in a position to evaluate the deeper effects tourism has had on the outlook and motivation of the villagers and the social structure of the community. It is obvious that tourism had an impact on traditional values; in particular it engendered a preoccupation with the making of money and the evaluation of everything in monetary terms. I am not able as yet, however, to state whether this preoccupation penetrated relations between the villagers themselves, substituting economic for social forms of exchange in the village; or whether, under the pressure of new circumstances, social entities are falling apart, individualism and social inequality increasing, and new foci of strain and conflict emerge. Such developments have been reported from other situations of massive tourist penetration (e. g. Greenwood, 1972, Redclift, 1973). The extent to which they occurred in Doi Pui has been a focal problem in the second stage of my study.

LISU LAO THA

Lisu Lao Tha is a focal juncture on the Standard Jungle Tour and the only tribal village in the highlands where tourists regularly stay overnight in relatively large numbers. In contrast to Doi Pui, the village is remote from any urban center and not accessible by car. It is a small village, settled by people who descended from the mountains to the north, whose agriculture is in the process of conversion from the traditional swiddening system with dry mountain rice as the staple crop, to a system of permanently irrigated rice fields. Though tourism is not the only extraneous force impinging upon the village it is a most important one, even if its importance, in absolute terms, is far smaller than in Doi Pui.

The ecological and social impact of tourism in Lao Tha is much less apparent than in Doi Pui: no bifurcation of the village into two sectors had occurred, though tourists are accommodated in a cluster of bigger houses, all of which are located in the upper part of the village. The coming of tourism did have an ecological

impact on the village, primarily through the emergence of some rudimentary tourist facilities: though almost all tourists stay overnight, no specially constructed hotels or hostels have emerged since the tourists are accommodated in village households. But the ecology of the tourist-hosting compounds has changed in subtle ways, to make the stay of the guests more comfortable and to enable the household to function normally despite the presence of a large number of strangers. Spatial and functional differentiation between a tourist and a domestic sphere has occurred within the confines of the compounds: a large table and benches have been provided on a roofed platform on the compound, intended as a dining and resting place for tourists. Better-off traditional Lisu households also had such platforms for entertaining visitors, but without the tables and benches which are an addition for tourists. Within the house, a substantial area has been set apart by partitions as sleeping quarters for tourists. They sleep on traditional bamboo platforms and not on beds - but are provided with blankets and square pillows. In front of the house a dancing ground has been prepared where Lisu songs and dances are performed for the tourists in the evenings.

Few ecological changes occurred on the level of the village: there are no souvenir shops or stalls in the village; the single small Chinese shop does not sell crafts, but it does carry an assortment of soft and alcoholic beverages, which the thirsty trekkers consume upon arrival or in the evenings. A toilet has been built some distance from the village and a simple shower constructed on the stream adjoining the settlement.

Despite the scant external changes wrought by tourism in the village, there is nevertheless quite marked activity segregation between the tourists and the villagers within the household. In 1973, when I first visited the village, I ate with my hosts and slept in their quarters. In 1977, the tourists slept separately, spent most of their free time on the platform and ate there, while the hosts ate in the kitchen and did not mix much with the visitors. Hosting of tourists thus developed into a kind of "cottage industry", resembling the "bed-and-breakfast" facilities in popular excursion areas in Britain and Ireland (e. g. Armstrong, 1977: 139), or "agritourism" in Italy (Desplanques, 1973: 151).

Though the economic role of tourism in the village expanded, the village economy by no means revolves on tourism, and will probably not do so in the foreseeable future. Income from tourism is modest, though not insignificant. The Jungle Tour is generally not a very lucrative project even for the small tour operators and guides who run it. In 1977, the operators charged 250 Baht (U. S. \$ 12.50) for an all-inclusive three-day-two-night Standard Jungle Tour. After expenses for travel, food and lodgings are deducted, the profit, usually split between the operator and the guide, is very small indeed, amounting to at most 40-50 Baht (U. S. \$ 2.00-2.50) per tourist. Guides generally entertain friendly relations with the tribal hosts, which are a condition *sine qua non* for the orderly operation of the tours. Nevertheless, the profit of the guides and the operator depends upon their ability to exploit the hosts. At the early stage of jungle tourism, hosts

were reciprocated only by gifts. Later, monetary payments for hospitality became customary; on the Standard Jungle Tour these came to be fixed at 5 Baht (25 U. S. cents) for a meal of rice and the preparation of food (brought along by the guide) and 5 Baht for a night's lodging. The host thus usually receives 10 Baht per visitor (50 U. S. cents). The relative share of the tribal host in the tourist pie is very small, as can be seen from the following hypothetical example:

Let us assume that an individual who comes to Thailand primarily to see the hill tribes will spend at least a few hundred dollars for his air-fare to Bangkok. His return trip from Bangkok to Chiang Mai by bus will cost him at least 200 Baht (U. S. \$ 10) or 1100 Baht (U. S. \$ 55) by air. He will have to stay a few days in Chiang Mai in preparation of his trip, and spend about 100-300 Baht (U. S. \$ 5-15) a day for food and lodging. Finally, he will pay 250 Baht (U. S. \$ 12.50) for the Standard Jungle Tour, of which only 10 Baht (U. S. \$ 0.50) will be paid to his host in Lao Tha. It should be pointed out that this is the single largest expense in a tribal village on the Standard Tour. The tourists may spend nothing or at most 2-3 Baht (10-15 cents U. S. \$) for photos, trinkets or as alms to beggars in the other villages through which they pass. True enough, there are some other payments which villagers in Lao Tha receive, such as remuneration for folkloric performances and payments for beverages, drinks or opium smokes, but these do not essentially change the picture. Of the several hundred dollars which our hypothetical tourist spends to see the tribes, less than U. S. \$ 1. - a day will accrue to his tribal hosts, and even this is not a net profit. The picture remains essentially the same if our tourist departs on a longer Special Jungle Tour.

Given the miniscule income from any individual tourist, the aggregate income from tourism of the village as a whole could still be significant. This of course depends upon the frequency of tourist visits. The number of tourists in Lao Tha during the busy season averages about 30-35 a night. The maximum number I encountered under exceptional circumstances was 53. The average income of the village from hospitality is thus about 300 Baht (U. S. \$ 15) a night and the maximum about 500 Baht (U. S. \$ 25). The village as a whole makes about U. S. \$ 450-500 a month from hospitality during the 4-5 busy months and probably half that sum during the rest of the year - a total of about U. S. \$ 3500-4500 a year. To this has to be added the income from other services, such as payments for folkloric entertainment, the sale of soft drinks and opium, and portorage. Though this is a small amount of money in terms of the scale of operation of the tourist industry, it is still a tidy sum considering that few expenses and little work is involved; even more, tourism in Lao Tha does not interfere with agricultural work: the two busy tourist seasons come during slack agricultural seasons; moreover, catering to tourists occupies the household during the evening hours when there are no urgent agricultural chores to perform. Tourism thus does not reduce agricultural productivity, but is a supplementary source of income, as it is e. g. in some Spanish villages (e. g. Redclift, 1973: 7).

While they were still living in the high mountain, the Lisus of Lao Tha grew opium as their major cash crop. They have remained involved in the opium trade even

after they moved to their present location. The fact that this trade has been discontinued and that the headman is nowadays much opposed to opium and makes every effort to present a "clean" image to the outside world attests to the importance and attractiveness of tourism as a major source of cash for the villagers.

How well spread are the benefits of tourism among the villagers? Let us first examine hospitality. When tourists first arrived in Lao Tha in 1973, the year the village was founded, they lodged only in the house of the headman, as they even now usually do in outlying villages on the Special Jungle Tour. By 1977, 6 of the 28 households (i. e. about 20 %) in the village regularly played host to organized touring parties. Each of these households is associated with one or several jungle-tour operators in Chiang Mai whose guides bring their guests exclusively to that household (guide-less tourists usually stay in households which do not play host to regular parties, so that about a third of the households in the village are associated with tourism).

The households regularly hosting tourists are all concentrated in the upper part of the village: three of them belong to the headman's sisters¹⁸. All six are apparently somewhat better off economically than the rest of the villagers: their houses are larger and better built than the rest; they possessed the necessary minimal capital to acquire the blankets, pillows and other articles necessary to host parties of tourists. Most households are able to accommodate about 15-20 tourists a night, though they rarely have a full house. There are also significant differences between households in the intensity of tourist visits: while the headman is associated with the largest jungle tour operator and almost every night plays host to a party, other households are associated with smaller operators and often do not average more than 1-2 parties a week. The heads of households, however, express indifference to tourist visits and abhor the idea of competition for tourists. In sharp contrast to Meo Doi Pui, the tourist business is not yet their major economic concern. Hospitality has not yet become a touristic occupation.

While income from hospitality to tourists reaches, albeit to a varying degree, about a third of the households, the benefits of tourism are further spread by the fact that other forms of tourism-related income are received by additional persons. The most important of these is folkloric entertainment: there are usually one or two performances a night, depending upon the number of tourists. A performance is led by a single musician-dancer, who leads a group of children in dance and song. He receives 20-60 Baht (U. S. \$ 1-3) a night from the guides, depending upon the number of visitors; the children receive 1-2 Baht (5-10 U. S. cents) each. In principle, every villager can lead the dance, but in fact the performance rotates among half a dozen younger individuals, most of whom do not regularly play host to tourists.

Though many of the Jungle Tour tourists are eager to experiment with opium, opium is not a major source of income in Lao Tha. Its sale is limited to three

elderly "smokemen", who sell it at 5 Baht (25 U. S. cents) a pipe. Tourists rarely smoke more than 1-2 pipes each. Since smoking is clandestine, it is hard to determine the exact number of smokers a night, but I estimate it at no more than 2-3 among members of guided parties. Most guide-less individuals, however, smoke opium.

The sale of soft drinks is not an important source of income, though the Chinese shopkeeper exposes water-cooled bottles at the entrance to the village to attract the thirsty trekkers, and children busy themselves hustling drinks in the evenings. Portage of food and private baggage pays 25-40 Baht for a day's trip; the Lisus are reluctant to exert themselves for so little, so they leave the work to members of other tribes, particularly the Lahu, sojourning in the village.

The most important difference between Doi Pui and Lao Tha, however, is the almost total absence of the crafts and souvenir trade in the latter. This is to be ascribed primarily to the type of tourists visiting the village: they are mostly young, shoe-string travellers, many of whom are on the way for a long time and travel light; they are less interested in collecting souvenirs than in immediate experiences. Moreover, the guides, afraid that their money will be stolen, urge them to leave it at the hotel in Chiang Mai. Most tourists thus are neither motivated nor do they have the means to buy folkcrafts or souvenirs.

Though it did not change the structure of the local economy as it did in Doi Pui, tourism in Lao Tha has nevertheless some secondary economic effects: it puts ready cash at the disposal of the villagers, which is apparently partly used to acquire wet-rice fields or appliances and materials associated with wet-rice production. Tourism thus plays a part, though not necessarily a major one, in the sedentarization process. Tribal hosts contribute rice to the tourists' meals; occasionally, this puts strain upon their reserves, and they are forced to buy rice in the market. Contact with tourists also helped to develop new tastes for foods and commodities, while earnings from tourism enabled the villagers to satisfy old ones. Tourism thus contributed in different ways to an increase in the involvement of the village with the market economy. It is, however, only one among several factors which helped to incorporate this once remote village into the national economic system, whose precise weight is hard to evaluate.

Despite the spread of the economic benefits of tourism between a number of households, tourism has probably augmented the economic differences in the village. I have not yet been able to determine whether the traditional social structure of the village has thereby come under strain or whether new types of conflict have developed. *Prima facie*, however, this hardly appears to be the case: the Lisu do not have strong corporate groups; their villages are a collection of fairly independent households composed of nuclear or extended families (Rashid and Walker, 1975: 159). This structure appears to be more able to absorb the differential economic impact of tourism than does a society with strong corporate groups. Moreover, the egalitarian and non-competitive spirit of the Lisu works to spread the benefits of tourism among a growing number of house-

holds. Nevertheless, the headman of the village has recently attained to a position of economic and political prominence unmatched in other Lisu villages in the area; tourism has not been the only factor in this process, but it certainly contributed. The repercussions of this process upon the social and political structure of the village will be examined in the next stage of my study.

Tourism has as yet had little impact on the appearance and the behavior of the villagers. People do not "dress up" for tourist visits, nor do they generally act differently in the presence of the tourists; in fact adults interact directly very little with the tourists, contacts being mostly mediated by the guides. The younger generation, however, tends to communicate with the tourists and to pick up their language, though only very few as yet know a couple of English or French words. While their elders are still genuinely involved with traditional lifeways, the next generation may well gradually become partly acculturated to the youth tourist culture; they may then see their own culture in a different light than their elders: as a resource to be exploited rather than a meaningful way of life.

Tourism has had a yet little impact on the material culture of Lao Tha: the form of the houses and the materials with which they are built have not changed; only the headman's house is different, but he received his house as a gift from the King. Tourism has not had any impact on crafts, since tourists buy very few handicraft products. Dances and songs performed for the tourists are obviously taken out of their religious context - they are ordinarily performed just once a year, during the New Year festival (Young, 1962: 33). The version presented to tourists is shortened and impoverished (only one adult performs instead of a large number), but otherwise unadulterated; and since children learn the steps of the dance as they perform for the tourists, the performances may in fact help to conserve tribal culture, like they do in Bali (McKean, 1976: 244). Since guides tell their guests that the performance is just a "demonstration" of Lisu culture, no outright fabrication is involved.

In contrast to Doi Pui, no overt "tourist space" has emerged in Lao Tha. There are however signs that an incipient, covert "tourist space" is developing. Paradoxically, its emergence is manifested in the self-conscious striving of the villagers, and particularly the headman, to preserve the authentic, "primitive" appearance of the village, and not to permit any changes which could "spoil" it and thus reduce its attractiveness for tourists. The villagers usually refuse to admit doing anything expressly to accommodate tourist needs: the owners of the big houses which host tourists claim that these have not been constructed for the tourists; rather, they have had customarily big houses and thus happened to be able to host tourists (they admit though that the dining platforms were constructed for tourist use). The headman is especially keen on preservation and anxious that tourists continue to come. For this very reason he vehemently opposes the construction of a hostel in the village, claiming that it will spoil its appearance. The case of Doi Pui is always held forth as a negative example in such conversations. However, the effort to preserve "authenticity" in fact generates covert "tourist space": signs of modernity which could spoil the

appearance of the village, such as a rice-husking machine, or a tape-recorder, are kept hidden from tourist eyes. We see here in nuce the emergence of processes which, on a much larger scale, enrouted Doi Pui on the process of bifurcation: the emergence of signs of material modernisation, induced in part by involvement with the tourist industry, "spoils" the village for tourism; to preserve a touristic appeal, the disturbing signs are hidden away, introducing a divergence in the lives of the villagers and eventually splitting the village itself. In Lao Tha, the problem is compounded by the fact that jungle tourists are usually more sensitive to inauthenticity and prevarication than their more sedate middle-class counterparts on the Tribal Village Tour, so that the camouflaging of modernity has to be more thorough. The process of bifurcation in Lao Tha, if it takes place at all, will hence be different in nature from that which occurred in Doi Pui: less pervasive and more subtle, it will create a covert "tourist space", rather than an overt one. The effectiveness of the cover-up will depend largely on the readiness of the jungle guides to collaborate with the villagers in the presentation of a "false back" (MacCannell, 1973: 599) to the tourists. At the moment, at least, this collaboration is only half-hearted, while the guides and jungle tour operators complain that the village is getting "spoilt" and engage in a search for new destinations for their authenticity seeking guests.

AKHA KHO AE

The remaining three villages in our comparison are all marginal to highland tourism; the impact of tourism in these villages has been slight. They will thus be submitted only to a brief consideration.

The most interesting and instructive case among these villages is that of Akha Kho Ae. Perched on a steep hill, it is reached quickly but not easily by about half the Standard Tour tourists who climb to it from the Kuomintang village of Muang Ngam. It is thus a village marginal to the main Standard Tour circuit. In contrast to Lisu Lao Tha, however, tourists just come on brief afternoon visits and do not stay overnight. As in Lao Tha, the young tourists are not much interested in buying crafts or souvenirs, nor do they have much money on them. The village is thus subjected to a daily invasion of one to two dozen sightseers eager to see the natives but unwilling to spend any money.

Reacting to this type of touristic penetration, the inhabitants developed an extreme form of predatory behavior: they hawk aggressively soft drinks and small souvenirs, such as Akha tobacco pipes and bracelets costing only 2-3 Baht (10-15 U. S. cents) a piece; they insist vehemently on payment for photos, and they beg stubbornly for trinkets such as cigarettes, matches and soap, or for small coins. These activities, however, are conducted solely by women and children; adult men stay away from them. The benefit seems to be miniscule: according to the estimate of one guide, a tourist leaves only 2-3 Baht in the village, which adds up to a total of about U. S. \$ 2-3 a day for an assumed average

of 20 visitors. Nevertheless, under the conditions of poverty prevailing in the village, the arrival of tourism causes a lively commotion: dozens of children and women surround the arriving tourists, hawking and begging. Children follow individual visitors, pestering them for coins. Several women have made hawking of souvenirs a part-time occupation, descending from the mountain to the Kuo-mintang village beneath, where tourists are more numerous, and pursue them with their wares.

While tribal villages generally receive but a thin slice of the total tourist cake, Akha Kho Ae represents the extreme case in which a poor marginal village stands to gain nothing from the industry; aggressive hawking and begging thus represents a last resort of the inhabitants to extract a minimal benefit from the tight-fisted intruders.

While the economic effect of tourism on Kho Ae is negligible, its social effects seem to be serious: tourism under the conditions prevalent in the village leads to degradation and demoralization of the inhabitants. The headman of the village is aware of this fact and has complained that the begging and cajoling of visitors by the inhabitants causes him a personal "loss of face", but he has failed to persuade them to stop pestering the tourists. Traditional social controls appear generally to be loose in Kho Ae, for reasons which have probably nothing to do with tourism. However, tourism reinforces the already existing disintegrative tendencies and is thus clearly a destructive force in this village.

AKHA NONG WEN

Tourism has wrought little change in the other Akha village in our comparison, Nong Wen. In contrast to Kho Ae, Nong Wen is visited by better-off Excursion Tour tourists, usually on a morning trip which departs from Chiang Rai and also includes the border town of Mae Sai. The visit is very hurried, since the party is pressed for time - they have to catch the plane from Chiang Rai to Chiang Mai before noon. The visitors have a quick look at the village, take a few photos and inspect and buy some handicrafts. Since the village is not far from the town of Mae Chan, tourists do not ordinarily sleep in the village - in fact only three parties stayed overnight since the inception of tourist visits.

No ecological differentiation whatever due to tourism has taken place in the village. There are no souvenir shops or stalls; women offer their wares in front of their houses. Since tourists are not hosted in the houses, there has been no impact on household structure. The economic impact of tourism is not great: the only sources of income from tourists are the sale of handicrafts and of an occasional pipe of opium. The villagers are reluctant to sell ornaments and handicrafts which they actually use, often coveted by tourists, except for very high prices. The handicrafts for sale, such as Akha women's headdresses or bamboo tobacco-pipes, are usually of inferior quality produced by the women who sell them and represent a small source of cash income. Opium smokes are offered

by elderly men, at the relatively high price of 10 Baht (50 U. S. cents) a pipe; but owing to the short stay of the tourists it is questionable whether many make use of that opportunity. No payments are as yet asked for photos, and there is very little begging. Since the village is visited by tourists only during the dry season and only by a few parties a day, the total tourism-generated income of the village probably does not exceed a few hundred Baht a month for only 2-3 months a year - hardly a sum which could have a significant impact on the local economy. The added income may however be of some significance in the family household, in that it puts some disposable cash in the hands of the female members. But I was not able to detect any more pervasive cultural or social impact of tourism in this village.

LISU SAM SAO

Lisu Sam Sao, on the Special Jungle Tour circuit, is the most remote and least frequently visited village in our comparison. However, the few parties that do visit the village, usually during the few busy months of both the dry and the wet tourist seasons, usually stay overnight - in the large house of a trader who is also a brother of the headman of Lao Tha¹⁹. Payments for hospitality are the same as in Lao Tha, which amount at most to a few hundred Baht a month, accruing to a single household in the village. The village derives few other economic benefits from tourism: occasionally, tourists are entertained by song and dance, the main dancer receiving only 10 Baht (50 U. S. cents), the children one Baht (5 U. S. cents) for their trouble. Opium is cheap, about 3 Baht (15 U. S. cents) a pipe, and is sought particularly by the few guide-less individuals who reach the village. No handicrafts are offered to the tourists. There is no hawking of souvenirs or begging; visitors are left alone by the inhabitants, who show little concern for their presence. Tourism thus appears to have no impact whatsoever in this village, whether economic or socio-cultural. The same will essentially be true of the many other Special Jungle Tour villages, which are only lightly touched by tourism.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have reported some preliminary findings on the impact of tourism on five tribal villages in the highlands of northern Thailand. Unlike most other anthropological and sociological studies of tourism, the study was intended specifically to examine tourism's impact in a comparative framework; though its original impetus came from a concern with the possibly inimical effects tourism may have on tribal life and culture, I have been aware of my own bias and strived to control it. In fact, my findings show that my concern has been at least premature.

Tourism is as yet of modest proportions in the tribal highlands: at peak season there are no more than a few hundred tourists visiting the area on any one day; less than one hundred stay in the area overnight. The tourist system comprises only a few dozen out of more than one thousand tribal settlements; in only a handful of villages, those most intensely penetrated by tourism, has the industry had anything more than a passing influence. Even in these cases, tourism was not the only innovative exogenous influence, though it was probably a most important one"; its exact weight, however, is difficult to establish.

The most important general finding of my comparative study is that, although some of the villages may have been "spoilt" by tourism, and hence are not any more as "authentic" as they used to be in the past, intensive penetration of tourism has not had a markedly disruptive impact on the economic and social life of the villagers. Indeed, the only village in our comparison where tourism did have an evidently demoralizing effect, Akha Kho Ae, is one which has not been particularly thoroughly penetrated by the industry.

Tourism, however, did effect changes in the different spheres of life of some tribal communities, which are located in the focal areas of both major touring systems. We have examined two villages, each of which represents one such area: Meo Doi Pui, representing the Town Tour (1a) and Lisu Lao Tha, representing the Standard Jungle Tour (2a). The villages in the peripheral areas of the two touring systems have not been much affected by the industry. I will hence restrict my concluding comparative remarks primarily to the two most thoroughly affected villages.

Tourism has wrought much more radical changes in Doi Pui than it has in Lao Tha. In Doi Pui there is a much more advanced separation of the ecological sphere of tourism from the life of the community, of the kind reminiscent of areas of advanced tourism (Cohen, 1972: 172-3). In Lao Tha, tourism had principally a conservational impact on the appearance of the village, but its ecological impact is limited to the internal organization of the hosting household. In Doi Pui tourism became a full-time occupation for a substantial and growing part of the labor force. Like in Kiriwina (Leach, 1973: 359), and other places, people move out of agriculture and into tourism. In Lao Tha, tourism is still a supplementary source of income and has not yet become an occupational sphere. Doi Pui is also the place where the cultural impact of tourism, as manifested in the style, quality and manner of production of handicrafts, has been most far-reaching; no parallel development was noticed in Lao Tha. Considering the sphere of social relations in the community, our findings are as yet too scant to permit a serious comparison.

We can, then, conclude that tourism effected a substantial bifurcation of life in the community of Doi Pui: the inhabitants act as natives within the staged "tourist space" and return to being themselves outside of it, "Tourist space" in Doi Pui, however, is predominantly overt, the tourist as well as the native being aware of it. Indeed, this overt "tourist space" will become even more pronounced and formalized when the present plans of TOT for Doi Pui materialize. A similar

bifurcation did not take place in Lao Tha or, for that matter, in any other village in our comparison. However, we discovered the incipient formation of a principally covert "tourist space" in Lao Tha.

The marked differences between Doi Pui and Lao Tha are probably due to a large extent to the difference in the frequency of tourist visits: several times more tourists visit the former than the latter. However, other factors are also of at least secondary importance: Chief among these is the difference in the type of tourists who frequent the Town Tour on which Doi Pui is located, and the Standard Jungle Tour, on which Lao Tha is a focal point. Another factor is the length of stay and type of activities in which the tourists engage during their sojourn in the village. Doi Pui tourists are usually middle-class and middle-aged mass tourists, who come for a short sight-seeing visit. Those in Lao Tha are primarily drifter-type tourists, who come for an overnight visit. The relatively wealthy tourists in Doi Pui are interested in buying crafts and souvenirs, and the village was able to turn this into the principal source of income from tourism. The largely impecunious tourists in Lao Tha do not buy much, but wish to experience "living as the natives live". Hosting thus became the principal source of revenue from tourists. Where neither crafts are sold because the tourists have no money or interest, nor is hosting possible since tourists come only on a fleeting visit, as in Akha Koh Ae, the inhabitants fall back upon hawking of trinkets and begging as a last resort.

The stronger development of a "tourist space" in Doi Pui is partly related to the sale of crafts: the multiplication of shops and stalls has created an ecologically distinct area. However, the fact that "tourist space" is largely overt in Doi Pui but covert in Lao Tha is related to the type of tourist: middle-class mass tourists usually care little about authenticity and are thus willing to put up with the obviously artificial attractions of Doi Pui. Drifter-type youth tourists, however, seek authenticity and tend to complain whenever they deem that it has been even slightly infringed. The careful preservation of authenticity in Lao Tha, leading to the emergence of covert "tourist space" is thus as much a response to tourist demand as the overt ecological transformation of Doi Pui.

Though the impact of tourism on hill tribe villages has been found to vary generally from negligible to moderate and has almost nowhere - not even in Doi Pui - been destructive, the basic question raised above still remains: are we witnessing only an incipient stage of a process which, as it gains momentum, will have more problematic consequences, or a different type of dynamics of tourist development? We can only speculate regarding this problem; only a longitudinal study could give us a well-founded answer. Our speculation, however, is an informed one, based on some observable trends in the region and in a comparison with similar situations elsewhere.

I have formulated above three sets of conditions which moderate the impact of tourism in the highlands of northern Thailand and prevent it from disrupting the social tissue and the lifeways of the inhabitants: these are: (1) that they

do not view tourism as the sole, or even chief, source of cash revenue; (2) that tourists are sightseers on short visits and there are no touristic facilities of the "resort" type owned by outsiders in the villages, and (3) that tourists and natives are not able to interact owing to the cultural gap between them, so that their encounter is chiefly mediated by the guides. These conditions hold, more or less, for all villages in our study, with the partial exception of Meo Doi Pui where tourism is increasingly viewed as the primary earner of cash. If the nature of tourism in the region is contingent upon these conditions, then we have to look into the possibility that these may change in the foreseeable future.

(1) Traditional leadership and even traditional governments may change their minds concerning tourism, as it happened in several Pacific island territories, such as Western Samoa and the Cook Islands, which after a period of reluctance plunged into the tourist business as a major avenue to development. I believe, however, that there is little chance that the hill tribe communities will suddenly "discover" tourism; contrariwise, the changes wrought by involvement with tourism in Doi Pui had a deterring effect on other villages. The Thai authorities do not as yet have a clear policy concerning tourism in the highlands. It appears, however, that they do not consider tourism to be a serious substitute for opium as a chief cash crop; in any case, tourism does not figure in any of the crop-substitution programs (McKinnon, 1977). The authorities are unsympathetic to jungle tourism and concentrate their efforts in the "rehabilitation" of a small number of Town Tour villages, while they strive to control and possibly restrict tourism to the more outlying areas. With governmental support, tourism may come to dominate the economy of a few selected villages and transform their social and cultural life, with possibly pernicious consequences; but tourism will not come to figure prominently in the economy of the region as a whole.

(2) Studies in other regions have shown that an early stage of endogeneous tourist development is often followed by the penetration of powerful outside economic interests which have the initiative and the means to develop an intensive tourist industry (e. g. Greenwood, 1972). Does the outsider-owned hotel in Meo Mae Sā Mai, serving Neckermann tourists, foreshadow a future trend? There are some signs that the big travel agencies are developing a growing interest in the hill tribe region and are expanding their operations there. Their efforts are facilitated by the expansion of the network of roads, which enables them to transport tourists by car to ever more remote localities. The big companies, however, plan only to expand sightseeing tourism. None plans for resort tourism. Expansion of big company tourism will hence not bring increased outside investments and ownership to hill tribe villages. Rather, like in Bali, tourists will probably remain stationed in hotels located in the cities, and continue merely to take tours of the more accessible villages. Unlike the Pacific Islands, there are no signs of a future development of resort tourism in any of the tribal villages.

(3) It has been demonstrated in studies of other regions that mutual isolation of natives and tourists tends to break down as natives learn how to deal and communicate with the visitors; as the foreigners become a meaningful reference group, selective borrowing of foreign cultural items and aping of foreign ways takes place. Indeed, I have found some evidence of the inception of such processes in

hill tribe villages, even though they were sometimes only recently exposed to tourists²⁰. It is doubtful, however, whether as long as tourists will arrive primarily on fleeting visits in guided parties, the introduction of foreign items will amount to much more than merely superficial innovations, such as the development of a taste for canned food or for some plastic gadgets. The principal acculturative effect of tourism will probably be, rather paradoxically, "Thaisation" - since the primary agents of cultural change are not so much the tourists, but rather their local guides²¹. It remains to be seen whether the younger generation in touristic villages, exposed to tourists from early youth, will attempt to break through the language barrier and, adopting partially and superficially some of the ways and values of the tourists, will become a marginal group, suspended between a native culture which they reject and a tourist culture to which they do not belong.

We are now in the position to give a qualified answer to the question concerning the dynamics of tourist development of the hill tribe region in the future: no imminent radical change is to be expected in the conditions which presently shape the tourist industry in the region. It hence seems that tourism in the region will continue to grow slowly and its character will not change dramatically, at least not in the next few years. The slow growth of the industry will permit the affected villages to accommodate to the industry and as new villages enter the tourist circuit, they will be able to learn from the experience of those already involved. Hence, barring a radical change in governmental policy, tourism in the hill tribe region, though it might be of problematic consequences in some localities, is not expected to have a destructive impact on the tribal region as a whole in the foreseeable future. The hill tribe region of northern Thailand may well prove to illustrate a different, and altogether more beneficent type of dynamics of tourism than the one originally described by Forster (1964) on the basis of his observations in the Pacific Islands region.

Footnotes

- 1) See the summary reviews by UNESCO (1976), de Kadt (in press) and Noronha (1975) and the general surveys by Sessa (1972), Jafari (1973), Economic Intelligence Unit (1973), Sadler and Archer (1975), Edelman (1975), and Turner (1976).
- 2) For a general analysis of tourism in the hill tribes region, see Cohen, (in press). Here only the points pertinent to the study of tourism impact will be referred to.
- 3) For a general description of the region see Walker (ed.) (1975).
- 4) For descriptions of these tribal groups see Walker (1975), Young (1962), TRC (1969) and LeBar (1964).

- 5) For another example of a situation in which the construction of new roads facilitated the penetration of tourism into hitherto remote areas, see Aspelin (1977: 143).
- 6) On the process of incorporation of traditional communities into the wider society, see Cohen (1977); no comparable study of that process in the hill tribe region of northern Thailand has yet been carried out.
- 7) I am here referring only to the effects tourist visits have on the tribal villages, not to the effects of handicraft production for the tourist market, which, though it does not involve direct contact with tourists, may be of considerable significance, as Aspelin (1977) has shown.
- 8) For an analysis of types of tourist experiences, see Cohen (1979).
- 9) While the term "tourist space" is taken from MacCannell (1973), the distinction between overt and covert tourist space is my own.
- 10) Similar behavior has been reported from other tribal areas, cf. Tavener's (1973:453-4) description of the Karajá Indians in central Brazil living in S. P. I. villages: "Some S. P. I. villages have the air of a row of dressing rooms as the Karajá, hearing a boat or a jeep approach, rapidly don their showiest clothing and emerge ready to play some appropriate role".
- 11) The impact of tourism on hill tribe handicrafts will be dealt with in a separate paper.
- 12) Thus, e. g. in Bodrum, Turkey, the Cretan Turks (i. e. those who came to the town in the wake of the exchange of population with Greece after World War I) rather than the indigenous Turks, made the greater use of the new investment opportunities offered by tourism (Mansur, 1972: 27).
- 13) Contrary to popular opinion, opium is not a particularly profitable crop; the replacement crops however, intended by the authorities as a substitute for opium, are even less profitable (See McKinnon, 1977: 6-10).
- 14) A similar transformation of the external appearance of native or traditional settlements under the impact of tourism has taken place in other regions, e. g. in Fiji and other Pacific Islands. For a general discussion of the impact of tourism on the physical environment, see Cohen (1978).
- 15) For a description of a similar situation where people don traditional dress during visiting hours and change back to "normal" once the tourists are gone, see Mitford (1959: 6).
- 16) The development of Meo Doi Pui in this respect parallels closely similar processes in other regions where native life and custom is a major touristic attraction, e. g. in Fiji or Hawaii: as modernization "spoils" native localities easily accessible to tourists and relegates "authentic" native life to remote areas, "model villages" for tourists are established, often in close proximity to "real" but changing native villages.

- 17) The three-day Standard Jungle Tour costs 250 Baht (U. S. \$ 12.50) per person; the Special Jungle Tours of 5, 7, 10 or 15 days cost an additional 100 Baht (U. S. \$ 5) a. day.
- 18) Among the Lisu, "Marriage involves a substantial bride-price and normally one or more years of brideservice", during which the husband stays with his wife's family, but afterwards normally returns to his parents' village" (Dessaint, 1971: 331).
- 19) The village of Lao Tha split off from Sam Sao in 1973.
- 20) I will examine the micro-processes of cultural change through tourism in the hill tribe region in a separate paper.
- 21) The Thai government pursues a deliberate policy of Thaisation; the guides play an unconscious, and probably minor, role in that process.

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