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## Tourism and Ethnicity in Insular Southeast Asia: Eating, Praying, Loving and Beyond

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## **Tourism and Ethnicity in Insular Southeast Asia: Eating, Praying, Loving and Beyond**

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**Abstract:** The late 20<sup>th</sup> century landscape of tourism and ethnicity studies in insular Southeast Asia has tended to emphasize a set of dominant themes, including ethnic commoditization in tourism and tourist arts; the politics of touristic ethnicity; tourism and cultural development; and the performative dimension of inter- and intra-ethnic touristic encounters. How have these earlier research themes transformed in our current era of intensified neoliberalism, cyber-connectivity and mobility? This article draws from the title of the blockbuster 2010 film *Eat Pray Love* (partially set in Bali) to highlight several emergent 21<sup>st</sup> century themes that bear relevance for our understanding of the interplay between tourism and ethnicity in insular Southeast Asia. Starting with “eating”, I outline how the increasing appeal and rhetoric of the slow and sustainable food movements offers a promising avenue for scholarship on tourism and ethnicity, opening up new lines of research spotlighting the multisensory dimensions of touristic ethnicity, as well as the ties between food, ethno-cultural sensibilities and visions of morality. Turning to the theme of “praying”, the article explores emergent research on religious and spiritually-inspired tourism in insular Southeast Asia. I also discuss the need to better understand how the post 9-11 and post-Bali bombing era of heightened religious identity-consciousness in insular Southeast Asia (as well as on the part of travelers) bears relevance for emergent dynamics pertaining to tourism and ethnicity. Finally, I turn to examine the third component of the film’s title, “love” and its relevance for novel insights into tourism and ethnicity in contemporary island Southeast Asia. I draw on this final term loosely as a springboard for considering the need to better explore the realm of the emotions in our studies of tourism and ethnicity. Here, I underscore the need for further nuanced studies of tourists who take on or celebrate idealized identities of ethnic Others, either through marriage, emulation, or by partaking in festival tourism. I also address some of the complex emotional ambivalence regarding ethnic heritage experienced by Southeast Asian diaspora tourists and return migrant tourists. Throughout the article I illustrate some of the potentials and challenges entailed in these new avenues of inquiry with reference to recent anthropological and sociological work in various parts of island Southeast Asia. I also draw on examples and illustrations from my on-going research on far-flung Toraja (Indonesian) migrants whose recreational returns to the homeland for family visits and international festivals entail varied re-imaginings of identity and ethno-cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Ethnicity, Culinary Tourism, Spiritual Tourism, Tourism and Emotion, Southeast Asia

## Introduction

Much distance has been travelled since Erik Cohen, Linda Richter, Philip McKean and others first directed scholarly attention to tourism and ethnicity in Southeast Asian settings. Until the 1970s, many researchers in my own field of anthropology still tended to think of tourists as irksome beings whose intrusions periodically ruined their photos of “indigenous traditions.” Even in the late 1980s, as the next generation of tourism researchers emerged and our panels started to materialize at Asian Studies conferences, it would have been hard to imagine an entire Southeast Asian journal issue dedicated to imagining current and future directions in the study of tourism and ethnicity.

The late 20<sup>th</sup> century landscape of tourism and ethnicity studies in Southeast Asia emphasized a particular set of themes. These themes included: ethnic creation/commoditization in tourism and tourist arts (e.g. Adams, 1984, 1998a; Vickers, 1989; Volkman, 1990; Cohen, 1993, 2000; Crystal, 1994; Forshee, 2001); tourism, ethnicity and the state (e.g. Leong, 1989; Picard, 1990; Hitchcock, 1998; Adams, 1998b; Yea, 2002); tourism, heritage and cultural transformation (e.g. King, 1992; Hitchcock, King and Parnwell, 1993; Yamashita, Din and Eades, 1997; Schiller, 2001; Ooi, 2003); and the performative dimension of touristic encounters (e.g. Bruner, 1996, 2005; Causey, 2003).<sup>1</sup> On a broad level, in this article I reflect on how these research concerns might be productively adjusted, expanded or reformulated to address nascent third millennium realities. That is, given our current era of intensifying neoliberalism, increased labor-, social-, educational- and recreational- mobilities, and ever-expanding cyber-connectivity, what new, productive avenues of research, might we pursue? Additionally, are there any emergent, seemingly-unrelated directions in tourism research that offer particular promise for enriching our understanding of the dynamics of tourism and ethnicity in this part of the world?

The first portion of this article draws inspiration from the title of the blockbuster 2010 film *Eat Pray Love* (Murphy, 2010). The words comprising this title serve as an organizational framework for highlighting several research avenues that promise to enrich our understanding of the interplay between tourism and ethnicity in 21<sup>st</sup> century insular Southeast Asia. Herein, “eating” serves as our entrée into considering global food movements and their ramifications for tourism and ethnicity, “praying” brings us to the terrain

of religious tourism, and “loving” take us not to sex tourism, but rather to the emotional dimensions of tourism and ethnicity. With regard to this last term, I should clarify that while the word “love” normally implies a narrow focus on the positive affective aspects of travel, my use of this term in the pages that follow entails a modification and expansion of its technical meaning: Herein, I use the term not for its narrow meaning but rather as a springboard for considering the wide array of emotions tourism arouses (awe, contempt, ambivalence, serenity, boredom, disgust, pensiveness, fear, joy etc.). Throughout this article, I also sample pioneering studies in these three “eat/pray/love”-themed directions. In the final portion of this article, I briefly discuss how some of these themes are now animating my own on-going research on Indonesian migrants making physical or cyber-journeys to the homeland for international festivals and funerals.

Before turning to unpack the Eat/Pray/Love themes, I wish to briefly address the metaphor of film as an entrée for reflecting on the theme of tourism and ethnicity. To do so, I share a vignette dating from 1982, when I was a new graduate student at the University of Washington. That year, the university sponsored what may have been the first seminar on the theme of “Tourism and Ethnicity.” Crafted by Charles F. Keyes and Pierre van den Berghe, the pro-seminar featured weekly lectures by many now-familiar contributors to the field (including Robert Wood, Nelson Graburn, and Eric Crystal).<sup>2</sup> To launch the series, Pierre Van den Berghe presented a slide-illustrated account of his work on ‘tourism as ethnic relations in Peru.’ The slides dated from his earlier 1970s-era field research in the Andes city of Cusco. As van den Berghe clicked through his images, viewers soon found themselves playing a kind of “Where’s Waldo” game, hunting for anything akin to a tourist sandal at the edges of the images. Eying our reactions to his slides, van den Berghe lamented that, despite the flocks of tourists in Cusco at the time of his research, he’d grown so adept at framing his shots that he’s successfully excluded all signs of their presence, to the point that he could not find a single slide that displayed more than a tourist elbow. Much has changed since the early 1980s and, as the recent international conference on “Tourism and Ethnicity in ASEAN and Beyond” attests, tourists are now squarely at the center of our lenses as we strive to better understand contemporary dynamics of ethnicity in and beyond Southeast Asia.

I invoke this slide show story to foster reflection on the metaphor of film as an entrée for examining the imag-ing and re-imagining of island Southeast Asian tourism and ethnicity studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. First, however, a brief discussion of the complexity of examining ethnicity in contemporary Southeast Asia (or anywhere for that matter) is necessary. Just as a snapshot offers a simplified, decontextualized image of a broader landscape, the same happens when we focus a lens on the term “ethnicity.” In our discussions of tourism and ethnicity, it is essential to keep in mind the constructed and compound nature of identity, as well as what some scholars have more recently termed “intersectionality” (cf. Anderson and Collins, 2013).<sup>3</sup> Any analysis of Asian tourism dynamics must take into account the fact that each individual has a variety of entwining and sometimes competing ethnic, religious, class, regional, and national identities. Moreover, these identities are not inert, primordial or formed in isolation. Rather, as social scientists such as James Clifford (1988), Roger Keesing (1989) and Richard Handler (1988, 1994) have established, ethnic and cultural identities are dynamic: they are shaped in particular historical and political circumstances and based on constructed “we”/“they” contrasts. Finally, as intersectionality theory underscores, these braided identities intersect in complex ways with social institutions such as tourism, sometimes fostering compound social inequalities.<sup>4</sup>

Let us turn now to *Eat Pray Love*. First, a little background for those unfamiliar with the film, which was based on a 2006 best-selling memoir by Elizabeth Gilbert (Gilbert, 2006). The plot centers on a newly-divorced woman (Julia Roberts) who sets out on a year-long travel-odyssey in search of herself.<sup>5</sup> She spends four months in Italy (the “eat” portion of the film), three months pursuing spiritual enlightenment at an ashram in India (the “pray” section) and her final months in Bali, where she ultimately finds love. The film was tremendously successful not only in the West where it has inspired largely female consumers to seek spiritual growth via first-hand encounters with Southeast Asian islanders, but also within Southeast Asia. For instance, a google search reveals an array of blogs by young Filipina women chronicling their Julia Roberts-inspired trips to Bali in pursuit of cuisine, spirituality and *amour*.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, Singapore-based *Vulcan Post* reports that “more Southeast Asian women are doing an ‘Eat, Pray, Love’, travelling alone” (Goh, 2014). Meanwhile, tourism companies in Bali and

even Malaysia have appropriated the language of *Eat Pray Love* for their own specialized tours catering to both Southeast Asian and Western tourists.<sup>7</sup> As one news headline declared, “*Eat Pray Love* fever has swept Bali” (Cohen, 2010), with a surge of interest in yoga, healers and spirituality, and with new meditation centers, and yoga festivals mushrooming to meet the tourist desire to consume from and commune with spiritually enlightened Others.

Of course, for many who have followed the work of Michel Picard (1990, 1992), Adrian Vickers (1989) and others, it comes as no surprise that this new Balinese yoga-ified, “touristified identity”<sup>8</sup> is an outgrowth of collaborations between local and Western transplants to Bali, as well as a product of the global spread of New Age ideology (what Arjun Appadurai (1990) would categorize as an ideoscape). While the ethnic dynamics set into play by the film *Eat Pray Love* call out for a critical analysis of neoliberal spiritual tourism to Bali (along the lines initiated by Larasati, 2010 and Williams, 2011), this is not my agenda here. Rather, I turn now to appropriate the language of the film’s title in order to highlight several emergent 21<sup>st</sup> century themes that bear relevance for our understanding of tourism and ethnicity in insular Southeast Asia.

## **Eat**

Let us start with eating. I suggest here that the increasing appeal and rhetoric of the global slow and sustainable food movements offers a promising avenue for tourism scholars, opening up new lines of research that spotlight the ties between food, ethno-cultural sensibilities, commoditization, global ideoscapes and visions of morality.

That individuals construct representations of self and ethno-cultural Other via food is a given (Oakes, 1999; Long, 2004). Even academic discussions of tourism draw heavily on metaphors of eating (consumption, etc.), as Tim Oakes (1999) observed. As some have shown in other parts of the world, food tourism can serve to nourish regional and ethnic identities (e.g. Everett and Aitchison, 2008). Yet nuanced, ethnographically-based studies of food, ethnicity and tourism remain surprisingly rare in the Insular Southeast Asian literature. Why surprising? Because, as those familiar with Southeast Asia know all too well, this is a region where food reigns supreme: indigenous

languages draw heavily from food metaphors,<sup>9</sup> greetings in many indigenous languages entail asking if one has cooked rice yet, and local Indonesian, Filipino and Malay customs call for travelers to bring home gifts of characteristic food from the region visited (with local markets catering to these edible souvenir customs).<sup>10</sup> Likewise, tourism marketing campaigns feature food imagery. Consider Singapore's touristic self-presentation as a "food paradise," Malaysia's move to brand itself as a halal food mecca, and Indonesia's new mission (inspired by advice from Anthony Bourdain to the Special Interest Tourism Director) to create a cohesive culinary identity for Indonesia that could be "equivalent...[to] Japan's sushi or Italy's pizza—an instantly recognizable icon" (Mitchell, 2014).<sup>11</sup>

Most Insular Southeast Asian food-oriented tourism research so far has focused on ethnic foods and destination-branding in Southeast Asia, which is certainly useful and valuable for economic development (e.g. Chaney and Ryan, 2012; Henderson, 2004, 2014). Significantly, Erik Cohen and Nir Aveli (2004) have nudged tourism scholars to think more carefully not only about food and inter-group attraction and but also about ambivalences. To date, we have seen only a few delectable forays into the complex interplay between food, ethnic relations and tourism in insular Southeast Asia. For instance, Philippines scholars Guevarra and Gatchalian (2015) have produced an ethnographic study of the so-called indigenous "iconic foods" that are celebrated as emblems of community solidarity and promoted in sustainable tourism in the Sariaya region. Despite community identity coalescence around these dishes, Guevarra and Gathalian underscore how local food preparation and consumption actually feature social exclusions based status, power and authority. They also take pains to chronicle the hybrid origins of these "iconic" indigenous foods, tracing the evolution of these dishes to broader process of culture contact and colonialism. This type of approach enables us to better appreciate the ways in which food can bind groups together and serve as a symbol of group pride in a touristic context, even as its history and production entail social hierarchies and power inequities. Although not emphasized in their work, I might add that this sort of approach also enables us to better appreciate that "sustainable tourism" does not necessarily equate to egalitarian production of iconic ethnic foods, contrary to what idealistic tourists often tend to assume. This is a subject that merits further examination.

A recent study by Claudia Bell (2015) spotlights the experience of tourists infiltrating ‘authentic’ domestic spaces at Balinese home cooking schools. Which much of Bell’s ethnographically-based study focusses on experiential dimensions and economic ramifications of home-based Balinese cooking classes, her article also offers some tantalizing tidbit pertaining to the relations between gastronomic tourism, and ethnicity. As she reports, local cuisine offers a sensory embodiment of Balinese cultural identity. Tourists attending home-based Balinese cooking classes tend to be drawn by the prospect of penetrating deeper into the local culture, savoring a more authentic encounter with a cultural Other. Balinese cooking schools span a range of markets, from upscale to basic, some may be located contiguous to beautifully decorated restaurant courtyards with lotus ponds, Hindu carvings and shrines, while others may be in simple family kitchens, where school children and aged relatives meander in and out of the space. The decors themselves (batiks, rattan walls) as well as familial intimacy convey a powerful sense of Balinese-ness to cooking school tourists-attendees. As Claudia Bell observes, the Balinese home becomes a Goffman-esque stage, and visiting cooking school tourist-students penetrate deeper into the boundaries separating ‘us’ and ‘them.’ Bell’s study of tourist-oriented Balinese cooking schools showcases tourism’s role in cultural commodification, as well as Balinese adeptness at transforming their cultural resources into economic survival strategies (2015, p. 97). But within her ethnographic vignettes, we can also catch glimpses of how these cooking schools foster new sensory-based touristic sensibilities about Balinese ethnicity.

Tourism and ethnicity scholars would also do well to examine the emerging phenomenon of sustainable food tourism more closely (as some researchers are now starting to do). Multi-sited ethnographic work on food tourism and the global flow of Southeast Asian sustainable foods is especially relevant in the current era of increasingly globalized food supplies, and increasingly ubiquitous discussions of carbon footprints, global warming, and genetically modified crops. We might probe more systematically into how sustainable tours of organic farms, or even imported high-end organic foods from Southeast Asia may be fueling (potential) tourists’ sensibilities about a particular host group’s morality vis à vis the planet and their “natural”, “traditional” ethnic lifestyle. Moreover, even when purchased halfway around

the world, sustainably-grown Southeast Asian products may also fuel consumers' and travelers sensibilities about their own personal (or broader cultural) sense of social responsibility, as suggested by Amy Singer's preliminary research findings on the global gourmet commodity trail of Indonesian sea salt and cashews (Singer, 2014). Singer's interviews with both producers and consumers aptly illustrate the role of discursive frames in fostering idealized imagery of authentic yet exotic Indonesian peasants tenderly toiling the land. Likewise, one can also envision how products such as Balinese civet coffee (*kopi luwak*) and aromatic ginger tea make the trajectory from their romanticized spots on Balinese sustainable food tours (tours that play on similarly idealized imagery of Balinese peasants), travelling in tourists' suitcases halfway around the world, to ultimately be served up as distinctive gifts and souvenirs testifying to the return-tourist's connoisseurship, eco-consciousness, worldliness, and cultural capital.

Also, we might ask how ideas about "gastronomic authenticity" relate not only to touristic ideas about local ethnic identity, but also to national political issues, socio-economic dynamics, migration, and even UNESCO world heritage policies. Allow me to address this with a brief example from the Toraja highlands of Sulawesi, Indonesia, where I have been doing research since 1984. In the 1980s and 1990s, culinary tourism was virtually unheard of in the Toraja highlands. Most tourists were drawn to this region by the prospect of witnessing elaborate funeral rituals, exploring indigenous architecture and trekking in spectacular scenery. Likewise, local narratives concerning Toraja ethnic identity seldom mentioned food, beyond a Torajan fondness for water buffalo meat and pork. However, this began to shift over the past decade, due to a number of factors. First, the rhetoric of sustainability began to circulate more widely in the highlands, due to the return of younger, university-educated Torajans who saw their ancestral landscapes with new eyes. Some had experienced sustainable farm tourism in Bali, others were inspired by Facebook memes about eco-consciousness. Around the same time, a set of 'traditional Toraja hamlets' were nominated for candidacy as a UNESCO World Heritage Site status. Thus, local elites in these villages became exposed to the UNESCO language of 'cultural heritage' and 'natural heritage' and began to re-envision their hamlets in these terms, as 'mixed sites' where humans live(d) in harmony with nature. Gradually a new narrative of Torajans as the "original conservationists" has begun to emerge.

For Torajans, this is an appealing narrative, as it lends them moral high ground as exemplars of planetary custodians, worthy of offering their ancestral and ethnic heritage of green wisdom to tourist visitors.

Emerging alongside this new narrative and in tandem with Jakarta-based funds, has been the development of sustainable food tours, coffee tours and tourism festivals featuring “Toraja Traditional Food.” There is an irony here, however, as these intensifying movements of foreign visitors and return migrant-tourists to the Toraja region are increasingly compromising the sustainability of their highland homeland. The swelling population and ever-growing demand for building materials to house both return migrant-tourists and the additional labor force attending to short and long-term visitors has contributed to bamboo deforestation, and the necessity of importing water buffalo, pigs and vegetables from other regions—all at a heavy carbon cost. In this example, then, we see the linkages between the penetration of UNESCO world heritage rhetoric, increasing self-awareness of social class and eco-consciousness, environmental degradation, and the emergence of new ethno-touristic sensibilities pertaining to food and morality.<sup>12</sup>

In short, as the examples above suggest, new lines of research spotlighting the ties between food, ethno-cultural sensibilities, commoditization, global ideoscapes (such as conservationism) and sensibilities concerning morality promise to prove fruitful for tourism studies. Moreover, on a much more fundamental level, further work in the arena of food can offer a corrective to our heavy emphasis on the visual dimensions of tourism and ethnicity. While we have written much about touristic *images* of the Other, we’ve tended to ignore the realm of taste, texture and smell: explorations of food and eating lead us directly into the under-theorized embodied, sensory dimensions of touristic ethnicity.<sup>13</sup>

## **Pray**

Turning now to the theme of praying, one question we might pursue in more nuanced ways is: How do media and cyber images of local religious practices resonate with the spiritual identities and desires of prospective tourists? As alluded to earlier, the movie *Eat Pray Love* helped produced a tidal wave of New Age tourism to the island—a kind of tourism built around yoga,

meditation and “authentic” encounters with Balinese healers and shamans. How do these New Age tourists reconcile their images of serene Balinese meditative religiosity with the reality of today’s congested, commercialized Bali, where tourists’ most frequent daily encounters with indigenous Others are most likely to be with street hawkers? Do they revel in the contradictions? Make distinctions between the “authentic” yoga-practicing Balinese and the “inauthentic” Balinese hawkers? Or do they retreat to a kind of enclave tourist zone, partaking in spiritual workshops and yoga festivals and returning home without ever visiting Bali’s more frenzied commercial zones? Likewise, does the imagery of spiritual Balinese embraced by New Age tourists channel Balinese presentations of self in particular ways? Do Balinese working with these sorts of tourists feel pressured to comport themselves as spiritually evolved beings?

A related realm ripe for additional research is the mushrooming phenomenon of ethno-religious festival tourism. Although some contemporary ethno-religious festivals have evolved out of older, smaller-scale gatherings, others are entirely new and bring together participant-pilgrims from diverse social classes, ethnic, regional, and national backgrounds. Increasingly, the “production” of these festivals has expanded beyond local religious and cultural leaders, and now entails collaborations between local and regional governments, tourism agencies, and even airlines. Filipino scholar Patrick Alcedo (2012a, 2012b) has recently examined one such festival in the Aklan region of the Visayas, known as the Ati-Atihan festival. This festival was once a local Catholic *fiesta* but has now become a highly theatricalized blockbuster event. Dubbed a “Filipino Mardi Gras,” the Ati-Atihan Festival draws tens of thousands of local, national and international tourists and spiritual pilgrims (Peterson, 2011). The festival takes its name from the indigenous Ati group who, according to founding myths, ceded their lands to the first Malays who brought in Islam and Christianity. As part of the festival, Malay non-Atis don their bodies with ash to become “Ati-like” and demonstrate their appreciation to the Atis ethnic group by dancing (Alcedo, 2014). Today, the dancing and pageantry also entail offering thanks for prayers answered by the *Santo Nino*, the Jesus Child (Alcedo, 2012a; Alcedo, 2012b). Alcedo documents the complex relationships between the diverse festival participants, some of whom are return migrants from as far away as Italy and the United States of America, others who are disenfranchised Atis,

and still others who are tourists and dance troops from ASEAN nations. As he demonstrates, the festival is not only an avenue for displaying one's Catholic religiosity, but it is also a venue for inter-ethnic competition, and for transnational bridge-building. Via projects like Alcedo's, we can see the promise of nuanced studies that help us better understand the intersections between religious festival tourism, ethnicity and globalization.

As in the Philippines, other insular Southeast Asian nations have envisioned religious tourism as way to generate income from particular foreign religious communities. Witness Malaysia's recent move to brand itself as an Islamic tourism hub and thereby draw Middle Eastern tourists. Among other things, this has entailed showcasing Islamic architecture, Islamic art museums, and mosques, as well as expanding Arabic signage and developing an Arab Street in Kuala Lumpur where Middle Eastern tourists can "feel at home" (Shafaei and Mohamed, 2015). These sorts of tourism development strategies not only further reify the cultural equation of being "Malay" with being "Muslim"<sup>14</sup>, but they have also successfully increased the number of Muslim tourists coming to Malaysia.

In a similar vein, Thirumaran's (2009) recent research on the growing numbers of Indian tourists travelling to Bali underscores that these Hindu visitors are drawn not by the allure of ethnic difference, but rather by the desire to explore and reaffirm the bonds of shared religious and spiritual heritages. Thirumaran reports that Indian visitors experience a sense of "pride and comfort that their 'national' culture has spread geographically and has long been appreciated by the Balinese people" (Thirumaran, 2009, p. 135). Thirumaran's work not only illustrates some of the ways in which religious tourism can reaffirm broader cultural bridges, but also offers an important corrective for earlier studies that suggested that tourists to ethnic locales in insular Southeast Asia and elsewhere are drawn by ethnic difference and exoticism. More studies examining the ways in which religiously-driven tourism enables inter-ethnic and international bridge-building would further enrich our understandings of the interplay between tourism and ethnicity in Southeast Asia and beyond.

We should also attend more carefully to how contemporary New Ager fascination with indigenous forms of spirituality not only presents

opportunities for additional revenues via religious tourism, but can also result in less desirable outcomes, particularly inter-group political tensions and negative ethnic stereotyping. To illustrate, consider Flory Ann Mansor Ginggaing's (2007) research on the refashioning of the headhunting narrative in Sabah, Malaysia in the context of tourism. As Ginggaing illustrates Malaysia's touristic promotion of indigenous communities in Sabah has centered on the imagery of the long obsolete animist practice of head-hunting. Not only do tee-shirts, and brochures spotlight this imagery, but one popular tourism visitor center has been named for a celebrated ancestral headhunter. Tourism's emphasis on headhunting tales and icons, in tandem with Sabah's promotion of eco-tourism and its accompanying rhetoric of exotic tropical lands, have "contributed to the notion of a wild Borneo" (Ginggaing, 2007, p. 5). As Ginggaing demonstrates, the commercial, touristic emphasis on the headhunting past has cultural ramifications, political dimensions and identity-related implications: Sabah's indigenous communities ambivalently embrace and parody these headhunter stereotypes, using them to negotiate and address threats to their local and regional identities posed by the nation-building policies of Malaysia, which has sought to absorb these indigenous peoples into the broader Malay identity. As Ginggaing's case study suggests, by embracing tourism's animistically-hued ethnic stereotypes, some indigenous groups can find avenues for resisting national political identities in favor more localized group identities.

The current global era of heightened religious consciousness has different reverberations for ethnicity elsewhere in island Southeast Asia. For instance, Andrew Causey (2007) chronicles how Christian Toba Bataks, well aware of western tourist fears of religious violence, are now encouraging tourists to target the hinterland Sumatra Batak homeland for their vacations, since the Batak and their homeland are "safe." In his study we catch a glimpse of an emergent new twist on Toba Batak sensibilities concerning their group identity: Whereas in the past their remoteness and their traditional spiritual practices branded the Toba Batak as "dangerous headhunters," in the post-Bali-bombing and post 9/11 era their remoteness becomes an asset and their Christianity facilitates bridge-building between Toba Bataks and western tourists.

Some of the most interesting research on religion, tourism and ethnicity derives from Bali. The aftermath of the 2002 and 2005 Bali-bombings has prompted tourism scholarship focusing on the complex and sometimes deadly interplay between religious, cultural, ethnic and regional identities and tourism, all of which are in dialogue with state policies and global religious movements. From Picard (1992, 2009) and Pederson (2009) we know that Bali's touristic packaging as a lone Hindu zone in a Muslim nation obscured the actual religious diversity on the island. Moreover, the ubiquitous travel imagery of Bali as an idyllic Hindu island rendered Bali's historic Muslim communities and immigrant Muslims on the island seemingly out-of-place "outsider" ethno-religious groups. Hitchcock and Putra (2007) have shown us how, in the aftermath of the bombings, diverse local and global stakeholders came together to rebuild Bali's devastated tourism-based economy.

Shinji Yamashita (2012) recently offered a fascinating account of the convergence of tourism, spiritual healing and multiculturalism in the form of an annual "Echo of Peace Event" (*Gema Perdamaian*) initiated in 2012 by Bali's tourism business community. Initially a tourism-resuscitation strategy, this annual spiritual festival has blossom into a movement that fosters a new kind of plural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious conception of a broader peace-oriented community. As Yamashita describes, it draws together tourists and locals from different faiths to dance together to Hare Krishna music, each in their own style. Via his fine-grained study, we can see how sites of tragedy can become creative venues for fostering new spiritual identities and for fueling novel "umbrella group" sensibilities.

In sum, spiritual tourism appears to have a diverse array of ramifications for ethnicity in today's era of heightened religious identity consciousness. The varied studies chronicled here collectively point towards the value of developing more fine-grained analyses of the intersections between tourism, religion and various dimensions of collective identity, both on the part of the groups toured, and on the part of the tourists themselves.

## **Love**

Although in the film *Eat Pray Love*, 'love' alluded to the heroine's romantic experiences in Bali (where she found her future husband in the form of a

Brazilian residing on the island), in this paper I use the trope of ‘love’ as a touchstone for the broader emotional realm. That is, this portion is not strictly concerned with amorous sentiments nor sex tourism, the study of which has already been ably pioneered in insular Southeast Asia by Dahles and Bras (1999) and others. Rather, I draw on the term ‘love’ as a springboard for addressing a wider range of emotions, only some of which entail affection and adoration, as noted earlier. In short, in this section of the paper I underscore the need to better understand the *emotional* dimensions of travel and ethnicity, something that the field of tourism studies has only recently begun to address. How do travels unleash powerful emotional sensibilities, and visceral connections, ambivalences or antagonisms between visitor and visited?

Moreover, I also want to bring in and spotlight the theme of living between cultures, linking this to the emotional terrain of travel. Shinji Yamashita’s observations are particularly apt: In discussing his research on Japanese tourists who marry Balinese men, he astutely observed that

This kind of lifestyle can’t be understood using the static equation of ethnic groups with cultures by [earlier] anthropologists, where it was assumed that if a particular people existed in a particular area, so did a particular culture. Rather than living “within” their culture, these people live “in between” cultures, making up their own. This is where we’ll see the forms of living which will dominate the twenty-first century. (Yamashita, 2003, p.100).

These themes of travel, emotion and living “in between” are provocatively explored in Caroline Tie and Tony Seaton’s (2013) fascinating study of Sarawakian-Chinese diasporic tourists who take a package tour to China. As Tie and Seaton chronicle, these Sarawakian-Chinese tourists’ emotional experiences in China prompted a complex mixture of emotions, ultimately leaving them feeling simultaneously connected to and alienated from their ancestral homeland. While on tour, the Sarawakian-Chinese visitors they interviewed often voiced pride in being a part of a 5,000 year old heritage and, in this regard reaffirmed love for their heritage. They also admired China’s modern development, taking pride in being “a progressive race” (Tie and Seaton, 2013, p. 240). In this regard, the “homecoming” tour strengthened

their sense of Chinese ethnic solidarity. But at the same time, their first-hand encounters with everyday life in contemporary China also fostered other less rosy emotions concerning the “motherland.” Some felt disgust observing spitting and begging on Chinese streets, others were disenchanted by the contemporary political reality of China. In short, the tour to China simultaneously prompted feelings of alienation and “destabilized their sense of belonging in China” (Tie and Seaton, 2013, p. 239). In short, emotions about ancestral ethno-racial identity prompted by travel to the homeland were complex and far from uniform.

To further explore these themes of travel, emotion and living “in between” cultures, I turn now to offer an illustration from my own on-going research examining the emotionally-charged experiences of Toraja migrants returning to their Sulawesi homeland for vacation visits and cultural festivals.<sup>15</sup> Let me begin with a 2013 Facebook “invitation” shared with me and other Torajan migrant relatives of my Toraja host family. The invitation was to return to celebrate what has been promoted as “Lovely December Festival.” The annual festival had been initiated by the local Toraja government in 2006 when tourism visits were at an all-time low. Initially dubbed a “Festival of Toraja Yearning,” the idea was to tap the emotion of “longing” in order to entice migrant Torajans home to connect with family, fellow ethnic group members and the ancestral land, thereby boosting revenues and hotel bookings during the tourism off-season. Entertainment, parades and hotel discounts were all part of the enticement and the festival has drawn ever-growing return migrant-tourists yearly.

Torajan migrants returning for the Lovely December Festival not only bond with family, but engage in a great deal of touristic activity. Wealthier migrant Torajans strive to bring their foreign-born children back to the homeland, so that they will “know” their ancestry, which is embodied in ancestral houses. Invariably, their trips include tours to key ancestral houses and retellings of ancestral history. For those Torajans reared away from the homeland, the unique Toraja house-based notion of family infuses their trips with emotional ambivalence, as house membership comes with expectations of financial contributions. Some so dread these demands for cash to support house rituals that they opt to avoid the siren call of “Lovely December” altogether. Instead, they become cyber heritage tourists, perusing the homeland from the safe

distance of Facebook. In short, via these cyber- and actual heritage tourism trips to the homeland, migrant Torajans are nourishing longings, love and even ambivalence for distant family and ethnic heritage (Adams, 2015).

I believe these varied kinds of migrant recreational travel—real and cyber—deserve more scholarly attention. Until now, with the exception of the recent spate of work on Asians vacationing in Asia (work spearheaded by King and Porananond, 2014; Winter, Teo and Chang, 2009), much of the research on tourism and ethnicity in island Southeast Asia has focused on ‘Self-Other’ encounters in travel. Yet, the advent of cheap intra-Asian airfares has enabled growing numbers of first- and second- generation Southeast Asian migrants to return home for recreational purposes. And for those migrants who cannot afford to travel home, smart phones offer virtual voyages via Facebook. These real and virtual travels are not simply ‘Self-Other’ encounters, but something different. They entail (re-)viewing one’s ethnic identity heritage through something akin to a distorted amusement park mirror.

I close this discussion of Toraja migrant heritage tourism by noting that in 2013, a new element was added to the Lovely December Festival, an element that has become so popular that it has spun off into a separate festival: the Toraja International Festival. Organized in part by the same firm that initiated the Indonesia Pavilion at the Venice Biennale and co-sponsored by Indonesia’s Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, this new festival has broadened its scope to spotlight not only Toraja music, carvings, dance and food, but also to showcase global performing artists from Zimbabwe to Italy, all under the banner of a global “celebrat[ion] of the Living Megalithic Culture of Toraja.” Heavily promoted on Facebook and in high-end Indonesian travel magazines, this new festival attracts an audience of local and migrant Torajans, backpacker tourists, and what I term “global cosmopolitan-ethnics”—that is, those under-studied affluent devotees of global, pan-ethnic pride who seek out and celebrate indigenous arts as the heritage of all humanity. Via the verbiage surrounding this new and very successful festival we are seeing a celebration of love and pan or perhaps “meta”-ethnicity...and also a clever tourism marketing strategy.

In short, these examples of Sarawakian-Chinese migrants’ emotionally-complex heritage tourism to Beijing, Torajan migrants’ sentimentally-

ambivalent vacations in the homeland, and Toraja International Festival attendees' amorphous love for humanity's heritage, we see some of the promise of paying closer attention to the emotional realm of travel, and to how tourism-induced feelings relate to sensibilities about self and other, ethnicity, nation and humanity.

### **Final Thoughts**

To sum up, the themes of eating, praying and loving point us toward several new directions that promise to yield insights into emergent 21<sup>st</sup> century dimensions of tourism and ethnicity in insular Southeast Asia. Not only has the landscape of Southeast Asian ethnic tourism transformed substantially since the 1970s, but tourism scholarship have traveled a great distance from that early era of impact studies (where ethnic groups were seen as static entities jostled by the bulldozing forces of tourism). Today's tourism and ethnicity scholars face the challenges and excitement of conducting research in an era where our understandings of the complex, contested and braided nature of identity call for ever more nuanced and grounded work. Yet at the same time, with the global penetration of the internet, with expanding neoliberalism, and with migrants increasingly on the move, the world is no longer a place where once can plant oneself in a single tourist site and fully grasp the dynamics at play. As tourism and ethnicity scholarship continues its fascinating journey into the Third Millennium, we can look forward to seeing more studies that expand our understandings of the culinary, spiritual and emotional dimensions of this global phenomenon. That is, the eating, praying and loving entailed in tourism and identity-shaping.

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## Notes

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1. Other scholars who have reviewed the Southeast Asian tourism and identity-oriented literature have delineated similar trends (e.g. Cohen, 2008; King, 2008; King and Porananond, 2014; King, 2015).

2. Ultimately, this seminar resulted in a guest-edited special issue of *Annals of Tourism Research* focusing on 'Tourism and Ethnicity.' To the best of my knowledge, this was the first volume on this topic (See van den Berghe and Keyes, 1984).

3. Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) is credited with originally developing this concept, which was slow to take root in scholarly discourse. Her conception of intersectionality stressed the ways in which one's multiple identities (race, gender, ethnicity, etc) intersect with social institutions and produce societal inequalities.

4. For fuller explorations of the relevance of intersectionality to policy studies, see Dill and Zambrana, 2009.

5. Malay-speakers might call her travels a multi-country touristic *merantau*. *Merantau* is a Malay and Indonesian concept that refers to an historical

pattern of movement engaged in by young men (and later women). It encompasses temporary movement away from one's homeland with the aim of gaining experience in the broader world, income and/or knowledge. Implicit in the idea of *merantau* is the expectation of an ultimate return home with enhanced social or economic status. In fact, the overlay between contemporary tourism and classic conceptions of *merantau* invite comparison (see Adams, under contract). Although tourism, unlike the concept of *merantau* does not usually entail seeking a livelihood away from home, it does generally carry the promise of enhanced social capital upon return, like *merantau*. A second way in which the concepts of tourism and *merantau* share terrain is that island Southeast Asian tourism laborers are often themselves *perantau* (temporary migrants with ultimate expectations of returning home with enhanced socioeconomic status). Not surprisingly, the concept of *merantau* is inscribed in Indonesian and Malay touristic and culture, as the existence of tourist-oriented lodging like the "Merantau Inn" in coastal Malaysia attests.

6. Based on my preliminary survey of these blogs, more often than not, the "love" expressed in these blogs can be best labeled as a kind of sisterly love for one's female traveling companions, or a newfound love for other parts of Southeast Asia.

7. For instance, see Malaysia Heritage's popular "Eat, Pray, Walk, Love" tour of Kuala Lumpur (<http://www.malaysiaheritage.net/tours/002-kualalumpur-where-it-all-began-tour/>) and Spirit Quest Tours' "Eat, Pray, Love, Bali" spiritual tour of Bali (<https://spiritquesttours.com/eat-pray-love/>). The film also inspired a child-friendly Thai restaurant in Singapore named "Eat, Pray, Love," which has captured the imagination of more than one food blogger (See <http://danielfooddiary.com/tag/eat-play-love-singapore/>).

8. For a discussion of this term, first coined by Michel Picard, see Picard (1992).

9. Perhaps not surprisingly, Philippine scholar Fernando Zialcita's (2005) quest for unifying features of Southeast Asian identity spotlighted food items (shrimp paste, rice etc) as one of the features comprising the Southeast Asian "collage."

10. For instance, Southeast Asians travelling in Indonesia can download maps and consult a phone app for characteristic regional Indonesian foods that are can be purchased as gifts for those at home (See <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/store/apps/makanan-khas-daerah-indonesia/9nblgggzhkjt>).

11. Mitchell sees great potential in the turmeric rice cone, which he proclaims a pan-Indonesian symbol of the “interrelationship between humans to humans, humans to the environment and humans to God” (Mitchell, 2014).

12. As Andrew Causey notes, “Foodies...seem to claim that they are not ‘consuming’ (like people who buy souvenirs), and so it’s O.K. to travel halfway around the world to sample a delicacy...[they think] it’s not part of the consumer culture...and yet they are just as involved in the production of unfair wage labor and overuse of land and trash pollution.” Personal communication, August 5, 2015.

13. A number of tourism researchers have critiqued the heavy emphasis on the visual realm in the tourism scholarship of the 1990s (an outgrowth of Urry’s path-breaking work on the tourism gaze), making interventions to shift the focus towards the body and embodiment (See Veijola and Jokinen (1994) for an early example). For example, Crouch (2004) has pushed for a conception of tourism as an embodied encounter with space, elaborating that “tourism as mediated by our bodies...combines feeling, imagination, and sensuous and expressive qualities” (Crouch, 2004 (2002), p. 207). Several fascinating new studies of tourism, embodiment and heritage/identity have emerged recently in other parts of the world. For example, Kelner’s (2010) nuanced study of Israeli birthright tours illustrates how diaspora tours can foster embodied and emotionally-compelling experiences that “re-ground” young visitors’ process of self-creation, thereby “recreating their understandings of themselves, and of Israel in the meeting of the two” (Kelner, 2010, p.198). The linkages between touristic embodiment, emotion and the development of new sensibilities of self/other merit further examination in island Southeast Asia.

14. See Nagata (1974, 2011) and Hoffstader (2011) for discussions of the complexity of this culturally-constructed ethno-religious equation of “Malay” and “Muslim”.

15. As Maribeth Erb (2009) astutely observed, Indonesian cultural festivals serve not only as generators of glittering domestic tourism revenues, but also as events that highlight ethnic distinctions and routinize ways of thinking about and enacting culture. In partaking in events and tours that showcase local lifeways, both domestic tourists and local groups actively process and absorb their national identities as Indonesians.

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