

REVIEW ESSAY

Resplendent Sites, Discordant Voices: Sri Lanka and International Tourism by Malcolm Crick. Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers.

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As its sub-title suggests *Resplendent Sites, Discordant Voices* is a book on international tourism in Sri Lanka. It is both a historical sketch outlining the development of international tourism in Sri Lanka in general, and an ethnography of tourism in the informal sector focused on unregistered small scale guest houses and street guides in the city of Kandy. In the pages of the book one could hear the voices of those who directly benefit from such informal sector tourism, including owners of guest houses, businessmen, street guides and so on. In addition, Crick also brings into focus the views of those who oppose tourism *per se* or aspects of it for a variety of reasons. From the perspective of tourism related literature in Sri Lanka, Crick's contribution is an important one in the sense that he makes an intervention into an area of knowledge generally marked by technical and statistical analyses stressing on such things as tourist arrivals and infrastructural development in the tourist industry as well as polemical tracts concerned with issue such as 'cultural pollution.' On the other hand, in so far as the anthropological discourse on Sri Lanka is concerned, it seems to me that *Resplendent Sites, Discordant Voices* is the only ethnography of tourism in Sri Lanka, where the ethnographic discourse is mostly dominated by themes such as kinship, caste, Buddhism and more recently ethnicity and political violence.

After a brief introduction to the study of tourism in general, research methods, and ethics in Chapter One, Crick presents a detailed description of the development of international tourism in Sri Lanka in Chapter Two, which includes the political and economic dimensions of the trade and a brief analysis of such issues as 'cultural pollution' and neo-colonialism which often manifest as local concerns in the popular discourse on tourism. While much of the information presented here is not new, and culled from secondary sources, its usefulness lies in the fact that it is presented here as an anthology of events and processes which helps one understand the dynamics of tourism planning, politics of tourism, expectations of the tourist industry as well as its failures. In this manner Crick brings into the discourse of Sri Lankan anthropology certain aspects of knowledge hitherto restricted to the rather technical and unimaginative writings often directly linked to the tourist industry itself.

Chapter Three is a historical and contemporary portrait of the city of Kandy where Crick carried out his fieldwork in 1982. Here he attempts to place Kandy in its religio-historical context as well as in the context of modern growth of tourism in the city. Due to the relative absence of quantitative data from Kandy to sketch this process Crick has opted for the more imaginative method of compiling biographical descriptions of individuals who were, or continue to be involved in the tourist trade at different periods in history

(1994: 87-93). While this gives a certain sense of the growth and dynamics of the industry as well as its politics, one cannot help but feel that there is a certain lack of ethnographic depth in this section, perhaps partly due to Crick's relatively brief stint of seven months in the field. But at the same time he makes some pertinent observations which could have easily disappeared over the margins of scholarship. For instance, he makes it abundantly clear that despite rivalries and antagonisms, the formal and informal sectors of tourism "do not operate according to completely different systems of rules" (1994: 85). He also convincingly writes about the manner in which the images of tourist guides or 'touts' (1994: 101-103) are created, and how the lay officials of the Temple of the Tooth, get involved in the tourist trade using their influence to control aspects of Kandy's main ritual attraction, the *Perahera* or Buddhist procession which parades the streets in July/August. Crick's descriptions helps in part to deconstruct some of the aura of traditionalism that is still linked to the organization of the *Perahera* and to place it more realistically in the context of the contemporary tourist economy and local politics.

In Chapter Four Crick presents a series of images and representations of tourism in Kandy from the perspective of different points of view which includes the official views from the Municipality, the Police and representatives of the formal tourism sector, the views of young people from selected schools in the area and the opinions from the street. In addition, he also offers brief biographical sketches of selected street guides in order to understand how they perceive and explain what tourism means to them (1994: 138: 157). The most interesting section in this analysis is Crick's presentation of what local people — particularly those involved in the informal tourist trade — think of tourists themselves. Crick suggests that locals have different and elaborate perceptions of the behavior, personalities, dress codes etc. of tourists from different countries (1994: 116-122). Clearly then, locals engage in 'reverse ethnography' while the tourists themselves construct images of locals. According to Crick, other than these specific stereotyping there are also general stereotyping in which many tourists are seen as always in a 'rush' or 'sex mad' (1994: 116-122, 181). It seems to me however that given the particular interest of this section as a local cultural critique of tourism, it should have been dealt with in more detail and analytical rigor.

In Chapter Five, Crick attempts to offer more details on the informal tourist sector by specifically focusing on a number of related issues. For instance, he explains the socio-economic contexts in which selected unlicensed guesthouses emerged while also describing the rather problematic behavior of some tourists in these establishments

which one cannot find in the mainstream tourist literature (1994: 165-177). He also spends some time in detailing and discussing the relationships and conflicts between street guides, shop keepers and owners of guesthouses which offer a certain glimpse into some of the less visible but intricate dynamics of the informal tourist trade. Some of the dynamics that Crick places in context include competition among street guides over 'catching tourists' and the conflicts over commissions from tourist purchases between guides and shop assistants.

Chapter Six titled 'Tourism in Troubled Times: 1982 to the Present' is rather an unsuccessful attempt to bring into focus the complicated socio-political upheavals of the decade between 1982 and 1993. It seems to me that much of the complexities of that period and their impact on tourism have disappeared beyond the margins of the nine brief pages in this section. Another obvious lapse in Crick's book

is his lack of interest in the formulation of theory as opposed to detail. However, a more involved interest in theory would not only have benefitted this book in particular, but also anthropology of tourism in general. On the other hand, the large temporal gap between fieldwork (1982) and publication (1994) poses some practical problems as some of the political contexts in which Crick's analysis is placed have been overcome by others.

But despite some obvious short-comings *Resplendent Sites, Discordant Voices* is a useful addition to the anthropology of Sri Lanka, particularly since its specific focus is so different from the traditional anthropological interests in Sri Lanka. One hopes that this would indicate a less-travelled path at least some future researchers in Sri Lanka may consider taking. Internationally on the other hand, this book will add to the growing corpus of literature in the relatively new field of anthropology of tourism.

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PROTEST AGAINST MISSILE TESTS

The Sri Lanka Forum for Nuclear Disarmament strongly condemns the latest round of missile tests carried out by India and Pakistan. It also condemns these governments' cynicism and indifference to the protests of civil society from all over South Asia, including the thousands of people in India and Pakistan who took to the street in marches against nuclear proliferation in the region.

The aim of the Agni 2 and Thrishul tests on the Indian side and the Ghauri 2 and Shaheen missiles on the Pakistani side are to demonstrate that these countries are capable of targeting each other's most populous cities with nuclear missiles. It is also suspected that the latest Indian test is in line with expanding the range of the Agni 2, currently at 2000 kilometers, to a range of 3000 to 5000 kilometers with the capability of targeting China.

Engaging in nuclear rivalry with China can only bring China and Pakistan closer, affecting the balance of power in the region considerably. Sri Lankans, given their geographical proximity to India, view with concern these developments. Nuclear fallout does not respect national boundaries. If a nuclear bomb were to be dropped on either India or Pakistan, Sri Lanka will suffer serious environmental harm for decades to come and be affected by the economic and political instability in the region that will ensure.

The Lahore declaration signed by India and Pakistan in March this year only agrees to warn each other of impending nuclear and missile tests. In doing so, this agreement paradoxically legitimizes the development and testing of their respective nuclear arsenals. The deterrence argument too feels hollow in the light of South Asia's appalling record on safety mechanisms and political instability. Once nuclear weapons are in place, they can be used for political opportunism (that the BJP government tested the Agni and Thrishul missiles just as it was set to fall is no coincidence). The militant rhetoric has returned, and the latest events show the fragility of the so-called India-Pakistan strategic equation while also making reconciliation between the two countries all the more difficult.

The Sri Lanka Forum for Nuclear Disarmament states that a country's real security can only be a democratic society in which people have the right to education, shelter, health care and political choice. In a region where so many live below the poverty line, the vast sums of money spent in developing and maintaining missile and nuclear arsenals is abhorrent. It calls for an immediate halt to the missile and nuclear arms race of India and Pakistan and for negotiations that would lead to nuclear disarmament and a peaceful and secure South Asian region.