



On Conceptions of Paradise and the Tourist Spaces of Southern Sri Lanka

“Paradise on earth” is a dominant mass-mediated metaphor of the tourist industry, consisting of symbols, beliefs, feelings, and stereotypes, but it is still most often represented as a particular place (for example a beach or a valley). Although paradise is rooted in different religions and mythologies as a concept of a good (after) life, it inspired medieval explorations of foreign lands overseas, legitimized the Crusades, reinforced Orientalist and colonial discourse on civilizing and cultivating Western imperial lands, and has persisted in present-day media representations and tourism marketing. Many travelers I met in Sri Lanka fueled their travel ideals with visions of unspoiled destinations, but once at the paradise site itself, communal travel interactions and competitive tourist spaces made them blur, forget about, and transfer elsewhere their paradise fantasies. In this article I will first systematize the evolution of different conceptions of paradise, then present them as intertwined in travelers’ practices in the beach villages of southern Sri Lanka.

KEYWORDS: paradise metaphor—Orientalism—tourism mythmaking—travelers—backpackers—Sri Lanka

THE CONCEPT of paradise has served scholars of comparative religion well as a place that is desired because it is thought to be far better than the mundane sphere in which mortals live. The search for it thus becomes a never-ending symbolic quest that endlessly keeps us yearning for a perfect world. This endless quest is often enacted in the world of lived reality through the leisurely pursuit of tourism. Paradise serves as a powerful trope for discovering and then experiencing the perfect place where one can escape from the banal existence we live on a daily basis. Such a romantic vision fueled Orientalists and colonialists, as well as adventurers, who also quested in the pursuit of ultimate happiness and bliss. In this article, I will focus on how paradise as a concept has been formulated and manipulated to suit the needs and fulfill the desires of contemporary tourists who visit the island nation of Sri Lanka, which has itself been a geographical object of fascination with seafarers, merchants, and pilgrims for much of recorded history. Before delving into the Sri Lankan data in the third section of this article, in section one I track the historical trajectory along which the concept of paradise itself traveled and matured. In section two I then turn my attention to how that image was appropriated more recently to suit the needs of the tourism industry to construct cartographies of desire that would entice a range of travelers whose wanderings were fueled by the romantic quest for the perfect and unspoiled place. These two prefatory sections are necessary to tease out the logic that motivates people to travel to the pear-shaped island in the Indian Ocean that is the subject of the latter portion of the article. What I wish to suggest is that a number of forces were at play as the concept of paradise evolved over time. These forces consisted of Orientalists who were often complicit in the colonial enterprise, as SAID (1978) once argued, albeit with a certain amount of tension. Orientalism, however, is not my main concern here, for I rather wish simply to contextualize the ethnographic data that I theorize in the last section of the article. I finally conclude that a variety of forces were at play over the years to bring together an image that has a lasting impression on the minds of travelers today, travelers who visit the southern beaches of Sri Lanka with regular frequency that continued, albeit in a subdued fashion, even during the decades of relentless civil war.

The “paradise on earth” metaphor is often used for the promotion of leisure holiday destinations. In anthropological writings it has been mostly examined through

the analysis of tourist brochures, photographs, postcards, and images (CHALFEN 1979; SELWYN 1996). On the basis of such studies, Graham DANN (1996, 68) established a typology consisting of four types of paradise images: paradise contrived (or a so-called pure paradise without people), paradise confined (images of a tourist ghetto), paradise controlled (locals depicted as servants, vendors, and so on), and paradise confused (closer contact with locals and blurred boundaries between them and the tourists). Peter BURNS (1999) saw the "brochure-paradise" (109) as "just one part of a range of pressures on culture through tourism," but at the same time stated that "the myths of tourism extend far beyond the creation of paradise through brochures" (III).¹

Indeed, if we examine different types of generic paradise through individual tourist practices and meanings, the myths of tourism appear much more diverse and creative than any tourist brochure can reflect. In his ethnography of the iconic Taj Mahal in the Indian city of Agra, EDENSOR divides these particular places into "enclavic" and "heterogeneous" tourist spaces (1998, 149–80). The former corresponds to Dann's tourist ghetto (that is, "paradise confined"), while the latter corresponds to Dann's "paradise confused." However, in Edensor's case the two are not sharply divided. On one hand, tourist enclaves were spreading to non-touristic areas through local development plans, while on the other, engaging in the everyday life of the locals, especially in the romanticized exotic or Oriental streets and bazaars of Agra, was preferred by backpackers. Among what I would call anti-tourist tourists (that is, backpackers, budget travelers, flashpackers, and so on, here referred to collectively as "travelers"), the "brochure paradise" (BURNS 1999, 109) seems either too simple or without any noteworthy connection to travelers' practices at all.

In comparison to "troubles tourism" (CROUCH et al. 2005, 9–11), paradise tourism can only ever represent a small portion of the possibilities that tourism practices can potentially invent today. For many travelers, it is exactly the so-called dangerous paradise (or at least a place that is not overly comfortable and reveals itself as a "true paradise" only over time) that is worth searching for, which then in turn allows it to become a topic of narration to other travelers.²

CROUCH et al. (2005) noted that the actual imaginations of people are not necessarily confined to what is produced and disseminated through media and tourist marketing:

These imaginations beyond public discourse are not limited to the detached observance of a tourist gaze, but an active and also physical encounter with the local and intimate worlds that are the content of tourism. The tourist, in building dreams and arranging practicalities, in making journeys and in being there, and then in space/time reflections, is not identifiable in a tourism "bubble," but in negotiating, perhaps progressing, life (13).

Today, when it is possible to examine every spot on earth and even simulate the "being there" experience through information technology, it is hardly conceivable that "going there" can be fully prompted by the shallow promise of seeing

and experiencing the specific paradise in question. Despite this, the mythology of paradise has persisted in travel discourse ever since the ancient and medieval explorations of the new worlds overseas. These explorations were followed by Western colonialism and its ideal of a Romantic “tropical” Other (TUCKER and AKAMA 2009, 510). Furthermore, when the South Pacific was “discovered” as a region of numerous small tropical paradises, the image of the tropical beach became an all-pervading representative of the whole concept of paradise in modern tourism (LÖFGREN 1999, 213–39).

As WESTERHAUSEN (2002) showed in his research concerning modern travelers on the islands of Koh Samui and Koh Phangan in southern Thailand, the generic paradise is still being sought on earth, but “it is less the search for greener pastures that drives travelers’ seemingly endless quest for novel destinations than an often futile attempt to remain one step ahead of relentless tourism development” (ix). The very act of searching for alternative and unspoiled destinations remains the same, but the contexts have changed, for the search is not taking place only due to travelers’ quest for authenticity, but “more to the lack of suitable sites for such [sub-cultural playground] activities” (167), such as “semiautonomy, personal growth, continuous learning, adventure, anonymity and self-testing at an affordable price” (257).

Based on the assumptions outlined above, budget travelers involuntarily support international mass tourism development. Their alternative destinations are not always in perfect accord with the old Western idea of what paradise should look like, but tourism development operators and competing tourism sectors that target different segments of tourists have a constant lack of new destinations. They not only crowd into different sites that “free independent travelers” (CLARKE 2004) have established for their own ends, but also put pressure on local communities.³ In spite of the criticisms of backpackers with regard to their bargain hunting, the exclusion of other tourists, their culturally and socially inappropriate behavior towards the locals, and so on (SCHEYVENS 2002, 146–48), backpackers can bring economic benefits, especially to remote regions, as they encourage the establishment of homestay accommodation and budget-oriented enterprises. Catering to backpackers and owning, controlling, operating, or managing a smaller-scale enterprise does not necessarily require local residents to have formal qualifications. These travelers’ spaces can thus be socially and environmentally sustainable for both locals and travelers (SCHEYVENS 2002, 151–57).

In order to link the two sources of paradise production—international tourist marketing and actual tourist spaces—I will first examine the conceptions of paradise and their evolution in relation to Orientalism, colonial discourse, and present-day tourist marketing. Then I will outline their importance in the history of the beach in tourism. In the final section of this article, I will present beach and village life in southern Sri Lanka, which I researched during nine months of intermittent fieldwork between 2003 and 2006.⁴

THE PARADISE ISLAND GAZED AT AND EXAMINED

Let us first look at the Biblical image of paradise, which is represented as a timeless virginal place lush with trees, water, and animals; in contrast to this, the devilish snake and the erotic nudity of the couple within the garden represent the gullibility of tempting subjects (MARIT WAADE 2010, 19). The Garden of Eden as the abode of Adam and Eve before the Fall is probably the most well-known idea of paradise in the Western world.⁵ However, there is another form of paradise that is of Old Persian origin. It is depicted as an enclosed estate that belongs to, for example, a king, and defines paradise as an *earthly* dwelling place, a royal park in which there is an abundance of water, plants, and animals. As such, this form of paradise is “more of a political concept rather than its later (religious) derivations” (KHOSRAVI 2011).⁶

Paradise also has many other mythical conceptions around the world. It is often represented as a sacred mountain or a beautiful place with a sacred tree and springs of water (ŠMITEK 1999; KOROM 1992). ŠMITEK (2004, 33 [my translations]) distinguished between “profane utopias” (for example lands “at the edge of the world”) and “cult utopias” (imaginary landscapes). The former are represented in two-dimensional space (length and width), while the latter are three-dimensional, with an *axis mundi* connecting the sky, our world, and the underworld. As this “space of wishes” (ŠMITEK 2004, 33) is described with earthly elements, it can be mirrored in both earthly and heavenly spheres (for example Jerusalem and Heavenly Jerusalem). In Jewish, Christian, and Islamic texts the celestial paradise is promised to righteous and faithful people after their death, but many narratives also offer “geographical codes which indicate some possible historical locations in which the holy garden was actualized” (KHOSRAVI 2011).⁷

This place shown in FIGURE 1 is among the most well-known medieval representations of a terrestrial paradise. The German Jesuit scholar and Orientalist Athanasius Kircher (1601–1680) made the image for his book *Arca Noë*, which was published in 1675.⁸ Here, paradise is located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. It is formed as an enclosed square-shaped garden with four guarded gates. In the middle of the estate the Tree of Life stands where the two rivers meet, and in the bottom-left corner Adam and Eve are depicted by the Tree of Knowledge.

The celestial paradise therefore always has the potential to become enclosed within the walls of paradise. According to this, the terrestrial paradise is “the managerial tool” (KHOSRAVI 2011) for defining some sort of center, which can be embedded in a hierarchy of other centers, while the celestial paradise is a vehicle that inspires, justifies, or allows certain groups of people to actualize and replicate the celestial prototype on earth. The terrestrial paradise thus mirrors the celestial one in a microcosmic fashion, a point often made by the historian of religions, Mircea Eliade (KOROM 1992). Mapping the micro-macro relationship between the two paradises is precisely what Kircher is attempting to do.

In the medieval Christian perception, places that were already enclosed by natural obstacles, such as mountain chains, deserts, and oceans, were especially associ-

ated with the idea of paradise. On the one hand, they excited the imagination, and on the other, the wall was already naturally there. In this ambivalent imagery of a place concurrently beautiful and encircled by hostile wilderness, small tropical islands were prone to Crusades and colonialism to the same degree or perhaps even more than mainland destinations, not to mention that they were also convenient ports of call on trade routes, as Sri Lanka was and continues to be, which made it a desirable possession for European colonial powers. Even though Sri Lanka as we know it today was otherwise simply considered as a land east of Suez that was held in part by Dutch, Portuguese, and finally British colonialists for a lengthy duration beginning in the early modern period (CRICK 1994, 56), the old Lanka⁹ had already been noticed by the ancient Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Chinese, and it was also visited by Marco Polo (CRICK 1994, 21). On medieval maps, Lanka was depicted as big as Madagascar or Sumatra, the same as on the maps made by Claudius Ptolemy in approximately 200 CE, when the island was named Salike, Simundu, or Taprobanê.¹⁰ This disproportion only demonstrates how Westerners and others perceived the island as important, rich, and powerful.

However, the primordial paradise idea would work if the world were a *terra nullius* of timeless natural places (=beauty), the remains of ancient civilizations (=wealth), and wilderness.¹¹ But other active forces and powers located within paradise sites also suggest the so-called dangerous and magical elements that can detrimentally affect the foreign visitor. In Western imagery, these impure forces gain their incarnation in the form of inhabitants of the island. Such “uncivilized” indigenes encountered by Europeans during colonial encounters were most often portrayed as savage, unpredictable, impure, and, above all, “magical” (PICARD 2008). They are thus diametrically opposed to the beauty and splendor of the paradise island itself. Paradise, therefore, has an allure that can also be fraught with danger. It was this sort of ambivalence, one that suggested a pure yet contaminated paradise, upon which Orientalism was founded. SAID (1978) recognized it as the construction of Western knowledge, institutions, and scholarship that caused the so-called Orient to become static and inferior to the West. Orientalism is both a manifest and latent discourse concerning the feminine, sensual, erotic, and intuitive, but also the cruel and despotic nature of the so-called Orientals, who were stereotypically misrepresented within a dialectical framework of a love-hate relationship from the mid-nineteenth century onward. Such accounts concerning the East in general, but also South Asia specifically, caught the popular eye of many European readers during the age of expansionism (BRECKENRIDGE and VAN DER VEER 1993). This style, although based on misrepresentations and essentialism, has persisted in travel literature and advertising as well as in the form of the “everyday Orientalism of tourists and its impacts on material production and class relations” (MCGUCKIN 2005, 77).

Orientalism, however, concentrated more on the Orient’s peoples and their characteristics, while primordial paradise conceptions fed the construction of exotic places to a greater extent. The romanticized confirmations of the discovery of paradise by English and French voyagers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example, amply support this claim.¹² Furthermore, while Orientalism

is an academic construct that played on the popular imagination primarily in the past, the paradise metaphor seems persistently alive and well in a wide range of contexts today. So while Orientalism seems to be less influential today than it was in the colonial past, the basic meanings of the paradisaical concept have not changed or permuted substantially. They are only more and more refined through ever new technologies. Nonetheless, Orientalism certainly was one factor that played into the historical construction of images of paradise.

When the colonies in South Asia were well established, for example, the early colonial conception of “India” was, in the name of science and development, substituted by the category “tropics” (PERERA 1999, 73). “Tropicality,” a discourse as ambivalent as Orientalism, on one hand contained “island Edens,” and on the other the “spectre of the jungle” (CLAYTON and BOWD 2006, 210). The long-term presence of various colonialists, landscape designers, plantation bosses, and traders produced an image of tropical worlds as “bountiful estates” (215), but fear was evoked also due to tropical diseases. In these “enervating and pestilential” tropical environments, “development, climate and disease had long been used as markers of tropical backwardness, inferiority and danger” (215–16). The tropics were thus both alluring and dangerous simultaneously.

The brighter side of paradise was only revived after the colonial regimes dissolved, as many small postcolonial islands of the world, with their new status of “small island states” (BIANCHI 2002, 270–71), have gradually been subjected to tourism development. The prevailing idea during the 1960s was that the launch of tourism did not require much financial investment in such tropical paradises, since all that was needed—sun, sand, and happy faces—was supposed to be available in abundance at them already. This has been proven wrong, since infrastructural investments with foreign aid were costly and left destination countries in debt (CRICK 1989, 314–17). Consequently, most early tourism anthropologists and sociologists embraced the opposite mythical extreme: that tourism was pure evil and the scapegoat for all negative social changes (TURNER and ASH 1975; NASH 1977; DE KADT 1979; BRITTON 1982).

The paradise metaphor is still imagined and reproduced. It is evoked and disseminated through different media, either classical (for example, sacred books, paintings,¹³ novels, and travel writing) or modern (for example, movies, songs, internet products, exchanges, consumer items,¹⁴ or names of particular bars, places, parties, and even cocktails). Such virtual paradises are also used to reinforce the paradisaical quality of the tourist places themselves. But while the terrestrial paradise is reproduced in the form of large tourist resorts, or small-scale travelers’ lounges, the virtual paradise can be disseminated and shared globally, moving in different directions and through different channels. As it implies perfect moods and the flow of milk and honey, it also promotes the celestial idea within the walls of paradise on earth.

To sum up, celestial geographies motivate the search for extraordinary places to confirm ever new earthly paradises. To be sure, the terrestrial paradise idea

is necessary on the ground, so to speak, due to its ability to replicate endlessly on micro-levels real paradises that can be visited by tourists. The virtual paradise reinforces these replications with its symbolism, then spreads it in all directions to create global landscapes of pleasure as well.

Even if paradise can mean different things to different people, especially due to life's pragmatism and the agency of media audiences, the scope of its interpretations can significantly narrow within the context of tourism. Here are two seemingly competing examples from the *Open Travel* blog:¹⁵

There is only one paradise on earth, and that is the island Marco Polo called the “finest island of its size in the world”—The World’s Resplendent Isle—Sri Lanka.

There are so many paradises to choose from! I’m just saving up for my next adventure and the Caribbean is on my mind...

In the discussion above we have seen that paradise refers not only to unspoiled nature and tropical islands, but also to enclosed places and the ideology of pleasure. Paradise’s wild and dangerous surroundings make it remote and not easily accessible. Its central imagery is that of an exotic destination, often represented as a paradise beach. A beach can be either an enclosed place (if it is located, for example, in a cozy lagoon), or a vast and naturally open space. In both cases it can easily be equipped with appropriate paradisaal infrastructure. In the first case, the beach is already naturally walled, while in the second case its natural vastness represents the wilderness that surrounds the walls of paradise, similar to a desert surrounding an oasis. In the next section, I will briefly present the allure of the beach, its early formulations, evolution, and significance in relation to the concept of paradise.

THE PARADISE BEACH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

In his book on the history of vacationing, LÖFGREN (1999) examined the evolution of the “global beach” concept (213–39) as a mass-mediated icon of the tourist industry. In describing “the tropical dream” (216–20), Löfgren states, “the whole concept of paradise relies above all on the romance of the South Pacific and the tropical beach. The global notion of the beach began in the cult of Hawaii and the Waikiki beach next to Honolulu” (216). These first beach resorts remained small until the 1950s and were used mainly by the American elite. After that, their imagery gradually started to develop into the first mass-mediated paradise, which took form as images of palm trees and hula girls with flowers in their hair displayed visually on postcards, as well as sonically in musical tunes created for slack-key guitar. Such popular images were disseminated constantly through various magazines (for example *National Geographic*) and Hollywood productions (such as Elvis’s movie *Blue Hawaii*). Phonograph records also contributed to the popularization of beach imagery by adding an acoustic dimension to evoke paradisaal moods.

These essentialized images and ideas were very soon reproduced in European settings. The ideal construction of paradise gradually became a viable reality in

an actual environment, so that any serious beach had to have palm trees, sand, folding deck chairs, and bathing huts (LÖFGREN 1999, 216). With regular international flights, the generic concept of paradise developed into the holiday beach. On these increasingly populated beaches, playing with sand, bathing in the water, and especially sunbathing became something enjoyable, not to mention healthy, and a tan started to be considered beautiful. The beach became—despite the persistent imagining of it as a place of freedom—a place of what LÖFGREN terms “tight sociality” (1999, 220–23), which requires following certain rules and regulations.

The simulated paradise came to be synchronized perfectly with the production of paradise moods, but that is why the growing feeling of a lack of its “authenticity” emerged (MACCANNELL 1976, 91–107). Again, as in the Middle Ages a few hundred years ago, and also in the era of classical Orientalism that legitimized the colonial expansion of European powers overseas, the real paradise was not imagined in the West, but somewhere in the South or the East, especially in the Pacific Ocean, as a solitary and happy island. Due to a lack of such sites, many natural beaches in the world were subjected to this quest for an authentic paradise. However, the problem of any beach has always been the presence of people. If the beach, however beautiful, is not crowded with tourists that are secretly observing one another (LÖFGREN 1999, 228), then the locals or fishermen might be around (BOISSEVAIN and SELWYN 2004). Beaches are not only interesting for investment in tourist infrastructure,¹⁶ but also for nature conservation, fishing, surfing, partying, selling fruit or accessories, offering massages, and so on. Consequently, it is difficult to find a “pure” solitary beach, and even if one is successfully found, it is questionable how long the actual enjoyment of it can last, since the modern tourist or traveler can also be blasé about a paradise beach, where nothing is actually going on.

South Asian beaches developed along slightly different patterns than the ones described above. If Waikiki beach represents an early model for the “global beach” conception (LÖFGREN 1999, 216–20), then the Goan beach represents an early model for what I term the “travelers’ beach conception,” which typically consists of small-scale, improvised infrastructure, such as house extensions and makeshift shacks and restaurants for a small number of guests that are more or less conducive to interaction with the local population. The West’s 1960s invasion of India with its twisted spiritual tourism (MEHTA 1979) reached its peak in the 1970s, when places like Kathmandu, Pushkar, and Goa became some of the major points of reference for Asia’s overland travelers. The so-called hippie trail, which led from Istanbul over Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to India and Nepal, was brought into the mainstream for a short period of time, but its effect has been at least to cheapen travel, and with its spirit of absorbing and transforming, not only observing, other cultures, to create the foundation for the age of *Lonely Planet* publications (MACLEAN 2007). The flower children of the 1960s and the beatniks before them brought and invented various psychedelic arts in Goa, such as playing with numerous ropes, strips, hoops, and crystal balls, drumming and playing music, taking drugs, doing yoga and meditation, and so on. This new class of tourists

also brought nudism there, and their ideas concerning free sexuality have thereby resulted in an arousal of open sexual interest among local people.

If we examine present-day Goa in broad terms, the tourism industry has successfully separated all types of both domestic and international charter tourists, backpackers, and independent travelers into distinct compartments concentrated in different parts of the region that are relatively isolated from one another. These tourist types have different consumption patterns, but their common interest is primarily in spending their leisure time on Goa's beaches (NORONTHA et al. 2002, 298–99). **The crucial difference between high-budget and low-budget tourist destinations**, however, is in the degree of involvement, participation, and ownership of local residents in the tourism business. In low-budget establishments, which often overlap with village spaces, more locals are involved in a wide range of activities, such as owners and operators of guesthouses, restaurants, shops, and Internet cafés. Locals also provide taxi services and recreational facilities and homestay rentals, while also organizing local tours and arranging for servants and cooks (NORONTHA et al. 2002, 298–99).

However, after decades of development, from catering to hippie groups in the 1960s and 1970s, establishing guesthouses and smaller hotels in the 1980s, and developing high budget facilities, transport services, shopping avenues, and the like from the 1990s onward, Goan beaches have become impregnated with a “politics of location” that divides not only the local population from the “whites,” but also newcomer tourists from “cliques” and “Goa freaks” (SALDANHA 2007). These exclusions have adopted a racist idiom that domestic tourists feel even from local Goans, who refuse to serve them or rent them rooms in white parts of the beach.¹⁷ On the other hand, Goa represents a “pervert’s paradise” for many backpackers (WELK 2004, 90): a place where male package tours, offering the possibility to see topless foreign women, are offered to domestic tourists (WELK 2004, 90).

Apart from this fragmentation, hybridization, and the mixing of different types of beach tourism as well as the maintenance of a fragile compartmentalization in one location, Goa still represents the archetype of a travelers’ beach where the free mingling of hosts and guests is preferred to purely service-oriented relationships. This openness and friendliness, along with the common meals and picnics, budget-oriented accommodation, free of charge facilities and (tran)sport services, close relationships, and the egalitarianism of a small community are presupposed to be the very spirit of the travelers’ beach. In contrast to the global beach concept, this kind of paradise is quiet, easygoing, intimate, and bounded. Rather than wild parties, alcohol, consumer items, Western movies and the like, its symbols are images of the Buddha, books, marijuana, simple huts without electricity, hammocks, the perennial smile of beautiful locals, and a lot of empty space and time. As such, this present-day romantic fantasy somewhat parallels the old celestial paradise conception, which is imbued with numerous small terrestrial paradises. The travelers’ beach myth at the same time minimizes paradise’s virtual version and substitutes it with an all-pervasive aura of authenticity. There is, however, a continuum between the travelers’ and the global beach conceptions: every travelers’ beach is always

under threat of moving toward its global twin sister through development projects. Conversely, every global beach is always under threat of going out of fashion, for mass tourists are also moving towards its travelers' beach twin, which is constantly and sophisticatedly fabricated by tourism marketing as a primordial paradise and attached to ever new destinations.

In southern Sri Lanka the travelers' beach idea is constantly present but never fully actualized. In the beach villages where I worked, many travelers stated that there are local reasons for this failure. The beaches and villages were not crowded at the time, which was an important factor that brought the image of a travelers' beach to the fore. However, there were many other factors that, on the contrary, persistently excluded Sri Lanka's virgin places from travelers' beach imagery. They were primarily understood and explained, at worst in terms of the character of the locals, and at best in terms of Sri Lanka's internal problems, to which these locals were supposed to be subjected. But above all, the people living and working there created tourist spaces with unwritten rules, where different attitudes and practices sometimes separated and sometimes connected the inhabitants of the supposed paradise. How these entanglements were shaped, reproduced, and also contested through the different imaginations, interactions, and practices of the diverse actors of the Sri Lankan tourist space is therefore a question I wish to address in the following section.

BEACHES, TRAVELERS, AND VILLAGES IN SOUTHERN SRI LANKA

It is almost axiomatic that as soon as a place gets a reputation for being paradise it goes to hell (THEROUX 1992, 383).

In Sri Lanka, I initially learned that the imaginary worlds of travelers must have dissolved into a number of incongruities when the world of their perfectly idealized beach met the world of the local village. Moreover, the inhabitants of such local villages must have incorporated the myth of the travelers' beach into their "locality," in the sense formulated by APPADURAI (2005, 178–99), when the world of their village met the world of the foreigners' beach. Both somehow had to find a viable way of interacting with one another, at least when specific situations involving the establishment of deeper reciprocity and even friendship required them to do so, or when one side or the other intentionally sought an opportunity to evaluate the island in general or its particular places.

On the above point, the paradise image of the very place in which the actors were situated was a common and suitable introduction to conversation, mainly initiated by travelers. The locals, on the other hand, were more interested in talking about money and (travelers') time. Both topics of conversation reinforced the deep inequality between the two worlds, which were derived in general from their respective colonial and postcolonial histories. However, the practices of everyday beach interactions also dialogically produced an atmosphere that resulted in nego-

tiated agreements concerning how the common tourist space should function for newcomers and the so-called stupid tourists.

In my fieldwork experience, the locals seemed as if they were always one step behind their traveling companions (and sometimes coworkers) when they believed that Western visitors were fulfilling their paradise dreams in Sri Lanka, while the Westerners themselves treated the paradise discourse as a kind of game, but were in fact occupied with their search for “the unexpected” and “the real” (MACCANNELL 2001, 36). Similarly, the travelers always seemed one step behind their local friends when they believed that they were already integrated into the local community, while the locals were just pretending this was so. Ultimately, the locals competitively sought any opportunity to fulfill their primary interest, which was to improve their material life circumstances. All of this was very apparent in the coastal area where I conducted my fieldwork. In Sri Lanka, the busiest coastal road leads from the capital of Colombo in the west, through Galle in the southwest, and finally to Matara, Tangalla, and Hambantota in the south, where the road heads inland. Along this road are the main centers of Sri Lankan leisure beach tourism, while the south, starting with the town of Galle, is regarded as less touristy. Apart from the above-mentioned popular beaches, villages, and towns, there is an almost continual strip of small villages or neighborhoods with numerous small-scale resorts and guesthouses along this road that served as my ethnographic site.

The tourist space is sliced in half by the coastal road. The so-called beach side has more expensive accommodation than the so-called jungle side. Although travelers usually decide on accommodation in advance on the basis of information in their guidebooks, the owners of jungle-side rooms often approach them as soon as they arrive in the village and immediately want them to come and see the rooms before they start to negotiate the price, which for budget-travelers is by definition a more important issue than comfort or quality. For a local who has a room on the jungle side, however, there is no other way to rent it successfully, as many homestay accommodations within villages are also not advertised on the numerous signs along the main road and village streets. Many of them also do not have their tourist businesses officially registered, so their guesthouses are not presented in, as locals say, the book, which refers to none other than the Bible of low-budget backpackers, *Lonely Planet*.

The book, in any case, is more of a curse than a blessing, not only for these small-scale improvised renters, but also for the owners of guesthouses listed in *Lonely Planet*, for in the descriptions of their enterprises the approximate prices of the rooms are also stated. Travelers are increasingly adopting the habit of openly ordering a room according to the price quoted in the book in the same way as they would order a dish according to a menu. The trouble is not only that the owner cannot bargain over his product, but also that during the time between the last edition of *Lonely Planet* and the moment of demand, the exchange rate might have fluctuated tremendously. In the worst case, the common response of such travelers is to accuse the owner of attempting to cheat them and labeling them as cheats to fellow travelers on the road. In a slightly better case, they use

such confrontations only to promote themselves as experienced travelers when narrating their tales to others.

Backpackers are “experience hungry” tourists, which means that the main benefit of traveling for them is the exploration itself, rather than a specific culture they might encounter (RICHARDS and WILSON 2004, 28–29). Many of those who have already developed their travel careers to a certain extent struggle to establish their social status within the “hidden backpacker hierarchy” (WELK 2004, 80). The most important factors that push them higher in this respect are the current length of their trip and the continents and places they have already “done” on previous trips. Apart from the anti-tourism attitudes that all backpackers share, some of them consider themselves better backpackers than others, stating that one can either be a real traveler or only a mainstream backpacker (WELK 2004, 88).

The backpacker industry is expanding due to the potential establishment of new backpacker trails, but “most who travel do not head for the totally unknown but stay within or near the locations described in their guidebooks” (SØRENSEN 2003, 859). Present-day travelers differ tremendously in their wishes, styles of traveling, and expectations. Only a few of them are devoted to traveling to the extent where traveling means a way of life (COHEN 2011). Even if many travelers already transparently reject *Lonely Planet*, short-term backpackers, that is, “individuals who travel backpacker-like, but within the time limits of cyclical holiday patterns,” are also on the rise. Even if they are not a fixed segment, as many can “switch rapidly into backpacker mode,” they indicate the growth potential of this kind of tourism (SØRENSEN 2003, 861–62).

Sri Lankan entrepreneurs cope with such diversity by mutually cooperating. Their social networks basically consist of relatives and friends but importantly they are also supported by local patrons and influential individuals such as political party leaders, officials, police officers, relatives working abroad, and, last but not least, Western foreigners. The networks are applied also in everyday working practices; for example, when guests agree on a particular leisure activity, which the owners usually suggest to them. Local excursions, in this respect, are rarely organized in advance or in fixed packages. The owners in principle know that travelers do not like to have anything organized. An excursion to a remote local sight or a boat trip to a nearby lake is therefore usually organized ad hoc by mobilizing acquaintances from the network.

Improvisation in general is one of the common points where locals’ and travelers’ preferences meet. Any improvised action means more work for travelers. In fact, the French word *travail* is the root for the notion of traveling (CRICK 1989, 308), which suggests hardship is part and parcel of the experience of becoming a seasoned traveler. Participation in tourism in this way allows travelers to feel self-organized, keen, and experienced. Yet, there is a fine line between the perceived authentic adventure and inconvenience or even mishap, for it is quite possible that a traveler does not know how to step into a boat or which animals should be avoided because they are faster than they look. Organizing improvised excursions

into the wilderness with poor equipment can be a very demanding job that seems more like a private favor than wilderness tourism. However, improvised excursions entail additional income for the locals without much investment into the facilities that are needed to organize them. Furthermore, by intermediating between travelers and their relatives, friends, or acquaintances, the owners gain social capital that reinforces their communal role in other realms of their lives, such as in patron-client relationships.

Another kind of intermediary in the Sri Lankan tourist space are three-wheel taxi drivers. They are connectors between hosts and guests, transmitters of information and gossip among locals, and in some cases watchmen of individual (more often female) travelers. In the local community they are expected to be very loyal to their networks. Upon entering into other local milieus, which they frequently do because of the nature of their job, they are rather careful in interactions. However, this carefulness refers more to informal interactions. Upon bringing newcomers to guesthouses or shops, for example, they on principle claim a small commission from the price the owners negotiate with their guests, especially if the owner is outside of their circles. In this way, they not only widen their networks and the possibilities for additional income, but also widen their business circle of loyalty. This activity therefore often makes their overall position in the community even more demanding, tight, and exposed. Although taking a commission is a well known and obvious practice, at least in South Asian countries, it is by no means a mechanical rule. It is rather the result of either a long-term business relationship or an attempt by the taxi driver to assert himself as an inevitable link in as many monetary transactions between tourists and tourist enterprises as possible.

Locals often want to know which guesthouse a newcomer has chosen, and in general, the question concerning where one is staying is a standard cue to engage in small talk with tourists. Upon getting an answer though, these interlocutors often lead the discussion entirely in this direction and at least provisionally attempt to provide a room to rent themselves or one from somebody in their network. For example, they start gossiping about the owner of the guesthouse the traveler has chosen, and try to persuade the visitor to move into their or somebody else's room instead.

Finding accommodation and negotiating the price can be a nightmare for a traveler because he or she might face competition from within the backpacker community. A problem backpackers often face is that some guesthouses are more popular than others. The main factors regarding such popularity are the cheapness of the rooms and the presence of other travelers there, for word of mouth frequently takes the place of *Lonely Planet* (CLARKE 2004, 503). Even if the real thing (that is, the guesthouse) is presented in *Lonely Planet*, one cannot read lines such as "this is *the* place, exactly for people like you and me," which can be stated verbally with a confident air of authority. As such, word of mouth spreads quite quickly, often making it difficult to find a spare room in the most popular guesthouses that have been recommended orally. The most popular ones also function as bases to which backpackers return from their adventures and explorations of the less visited places on the island.



FIGURE 2. Restaurants and rooms “only for foreigners,” Sri Lanka, 2006. Photo by the author.

As far as domestic tourists are concerned, in travelers’ beach spaces beachside rooms are, as in the case of Goa noted above, out of the question. In some villages at least, the rooms are available only to foreigners (see FIGURE 2).

It is not only money that influences owners’ decisions, but also the risk of bad gossip that could be spread within the island’s networks of acquaintances and cliques if domestic tourists are allowed to stay there. An important factor that is connected with the danger of gossip is also the language: as people actually live, not only work, in many guesthouses, the absence of Sri Lankan guests allows them to speak freely about their private and village affairs amongst themselves, as well as about their guests.¹⁸ Last

but not least, many guesthouse owners are actually Westerners. They also have to be loyal to their local partners,¹⁹ for mingling with other, especially unknown, locals can be accompanied with high suspicion. Such meetings are therefore generally avoided. It is thus expected that distinct circles of acquaintances should be kept closed.

The Sinhalese concept of *irisiyāva* (jealousy), which has received some attention in the anthropological literature on Sri Lanka, for example in the context of village politics (SPENCER 1990b, 169–98), even seems to have become reinforced by the competitive atmosphere of Sri Lankan tourist spaces. In my experiences conducting ethnographic fieldwork, I also noted that jealousy often caused difficult problems in Sri Lankan relationships as well as in host-guest interactions. Many times it even caused unsolvable long-term conflicts. Many conflicts arise out of misunderstandings between hosts and guest, and they are further fueled by the competitiveness that I have described above. The trick in this case is to be able to navigate aggressive behavior without transgressing local codes of moral and ethical behavior, a point to which I will return below.

The coastal tourist spaces of southern Sri Lanka, and especially its budget-oriented settings, are therefore very dense and competitive for both locals and foreigners. They exclude domestic tourists as guests, but they also try to attract small

foreign investors. However, foreigners co-create the tourist landscape in other ways as well: they often jump into business ventures by becoming managers, or by helping to redecorate guesthouse interiors, gardens, and lounges, among other things. Besides creating an atmosphere that corresponds to the tastes of Western visitors, they organize the preparation of what is perceived to be proper food and snacks,²⁰ as well as expensive sporting activities, such as diving and surfing. The establishment of high-speed Internet cafés is another desirable venture. Such foreigners who engage in these activities rarely come to Sri Lanka with the intention of jumping into the tourist business. Most of them start as tourists themselves, or as NGO volunteers, and only there, on the spot, get the idea to start something new or engage in already-established activities.

As cooperation with locals in one way or another is not only the most reasonable way but also an inevitable way of entering into a business, foreigners often become serious players in the power relationships of each local community in which they choose to reside. And this is where the colonial character of Sri Lankan tourist spaces comes to the fore in practice: a foreign investor establishes a business, then allows his local partner to use his own networks to run the business smoothly, while always keeping the property ready for the boss, who occasionally visits to spend some quality time. Meanwhile, the investor arranges for whatever necessities are required to keep the operation functioning smoothly.

Some backpackers find interesting ways of involving themselves in the organization of daily beach life. They readily jump into a closer relationship with a local group, joke, play, buy a couple of giant fish in a nearby market to feed the whole group, persuade the group to go for a trip to some other part of the island, or even to some other beach. Some woman backpackers start summer relationships with (male) locals, which frequently involves traveling across the island with them for a week or two, while older women and gay adventurers are expected to invest somewhat larger sums of money in their lovers and sometimes their lovers' families. This can include investing in properties, paying for boats and three-wheelers, or arranging for overseas work.

In Sri Lanka, which is similar to India in many respects when it comes to enforcing gender roles, highly segregated social spaces are maintained, in which local women are not supposed to interact with the opposite sex in public. Male sexual workers, on the other hand, are much more obvious, although still discrete about their activities (NYANZI et al. 2005 for Gambia), while female sexual work is carefully hidden. Hanging around with local beach boys, who, apart from usually residing in nearby villages, are also potential sexual workers, is a practice that is cultivated by visitors. Cultivating such beach relationships can possibly lead to summer romances (see FIGURE 3), but establishing local ties also expresses the traveling know-how of a backpacker or tourist.²¹

Some restaurants on these travelers' beaches have also specialized in organizing late-night Friday beach parties. At such parties the locals outnumber the tourists. Backpackers, whether alone or in small groups, keep to themselves, while groups of locals take over the dance floor, where either classic roots reggae or the more



FIGURE 3. Hanging around with local beach boys in Sri Lanka. Photo taken by author, 2006.

notorious electro bumping is usually played. The locals do not necessarily dance, but rather observe the scene. Occasionally they try to join the Western dancers, if there are any. Boy-with-boy dancing involving a local with a foreigner is common. The whole scene is, in short, sharply divided into groups of up to ten or fifteen local boys, who in this way or another control the situation. Free mingling is out of the question, and if a foreigner tries to establish contact with a local, it is likely that some others in the group will immediately and eagerly join in. Local boys consider parties to be hunting time, opportunities for establishing or enforcing power relationships, which is very different from the anonymity of the parties with which the holidaymakers are most familiar from their experiences in the West.

However, these groups of boys do not compete for foreigners' attention only for the sake of money—they are also looking for enjoyment and fun. At such Friday parties problems between groups of local boys might arise. A driving force regarding these potential difficulties is, as already mentioned above, *irisiyāva*, which goes together with shame (*lajja*) and fear of shame (*lajjabaya*).²² Even if these sentiments are well known to most of the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, as OBEYESEKERE (1984, 504–508) has shown, they are never openly spelled out. However, the question or issue (*praśnaya*) at stake is very frequently spelled out. Many old and unresolved issues, as well as potentially new resentments and problems among Sinhalese men emerge at parties, especially at the ones where alcohol is consumed.²³

Many travelers engage in friendships with local boys, yet not many of them necessarily understand the concept of Sri Lankan friendship, which is a local form of practice not easily mastered by foreigners. While on one hand friendship is in principle nothing particularly alien to anyone, friendship in southern Sri Lanka seems to emphasize a somewhat tighter relationship between individuals and groups than in Western countries. Once it is established, it should last and it should be imbued with reciprocity and loyalty. Similar to the Gambian beach boys studied by NYANZI and his colleagues (2005, 563–66), even if the motive is hidden, established friendships and love relationships between local residents and travelers can also be a skillful strategy for securing an air ticket to the West, for instance. Many travelers find

themselves in uncomfortably troubling situations just because they do not accept the terms of such demanding relationships after they have been established. Negative feelings, fear, and hatred are emotions that are aroused very frequently in such relationships. Whereas one party is interested in a tight friendship, the other longs for more freedom and detachment. On one side there is shame or fear of ridicule that circulates in gossip, while on the other side paradise, as imagined by travelers, is lost.

The popular idea of finding oneself on a solitary paradise beach in Sri Lanka is also worth pondering briefly before concluding. In southern Sri Lanka, there is plenty of empty beach space. It is quite possible to spend the whole day on a hidden beach, which can be vast and seemingly endless. However, with regard to the density of especially the young population in southern Sri Lanka, and according to the behavior patterns that some young coastal Sri Lankans have adopted towards unknown Western tourists, there is a strong possibility that someone will notice the foreigner's presence there. If he or she is fair of complexion, it is automatically interesting for a local to approach him or her, which occasionally leads to observing him or her secretly. In extreme cases, such voyeurism leads to following the tourist just to explore if there might be an opportunity to exploit the stranger's presence.²⁴

What about the paradise on earth, then? The discussion above should suggest that "tight sociality," as employed by LÖFGREN (1999, 227–28) to describe beach behavior in the West, is even tighter on southern Sri Lankan beaches. If "global beach" behavior is anonymous, South Asian travelers' beach behavior is definitely not. As the locals are sharply divided into groups of friends and acquaintances, having very close and demanding forms of friendship among themselves, the foreigners have two options: either they submit to the hidden protection of their current host and his group, or they may carefully try to engage in those demanding relationships and contribute to the shaping of the respective tourist space. Different kinds of backpackers and travelers I met in southern Sri Lanka often evoked the idea of paradise on earth. If it did not refer to certain parts of Sri Lanka, it referred to other places where my interlocutors had been, or wanted to go. Nevertheless, the context of these evocations rarely referred to the situation we were in at the moment of conversation. Rather, it was either a momentary flash of insight or part of a broader narrative concerning other places.

CONCLUSION

Following the birth of leisure beach tourism in the second half of the twentieth century, paradise on earth was first purportedly discovered in Polynesian settings such as Hawai'i, Tahiti, Fiji, Bora Bora, and other similar exotic locales. Transplantation of these perceived paradises on earth to the West did not work for a long time, as the tourist industry rapidly turned them into beach havens for the masses. However, at those very spots (that is, in different present-day postcolonial countries, especially small island states), the quest for paradise

turned into opportunities to meet the exotic Other long before hippies, travelers, and backpackers invaded the pristine shores, deep valleys, and crystal-clear lakes of such utopian sites.

In this article I have shown how the colonial way of understanding places overseas came massively to the fore with a combination of terrestrial and celestial conceptions of paradise. While the former could materialize in micro-locations, the latter related to specific regions or even entire continents. Due to the late development of interest in tourism among anthropologists, who mostly examined the paradise concept primarily in terms of tourism marketing, these paradisaical conceptions in general were related only provisionally to Orientalism and colonial discourse. In this article I have shown them to be antecedent to Orientalism and to the present-day persistent model of Orientalist production and consumerism. As a dominant metaphor paradise is used for labeling different attitudes, feelings, imaginations, aspirations, and hopes from different groups or individuals in different situations of “alienation” (MCGUCKIN 2005), but it also legitimizes the present-day Orientalist, neo-colonial, and imperial mapping of the world, especially in tourism marketing and development discourses.

The “crisis of representation” (MARCUS and FISCHER 1999, 7–16) is now a massive phenomenon wherein international tourism with its persistent reproduction of the imagery of paradise plays an important role. In addition to this, it is hardly possible to encounter any social milieu in non-Western countries without more or less active connections to foreigners who embody, mimic, and perpetuate Orientalist sentiments. In this article I examined these actualizations of paradise by drawing on paradise beach models. I showed how the global beach conception consists of virtual paradise elements, and how the travelers’ beach conception rather follows the old idea of a bounded celestial paradise in nature, which is minimally equipped with terrestrial paradise elements.

However, when in paradise, the experience can become much more heterogeneous than the simple idea of paradise on earth suggests. Travelers’ and my own experiences in the tourist spaces of southern Sri Lanka during my fieldwork conducted over a three-year period have shown me that the entanglements of everyday life and leisure travel practices are important for comprehending the underlying logic of paradisaical conceptions. Local communities in southern Sri Lanka are not victims of circumstance, but have been actively adapting to tourism. Following their long experience with the presence of a variety of paradise-driven Westerners wishing to civilize colonial subjects, they are not particularly willing simply to allow similar processes to occur once again.

Moreover, present-day travelers’ experiences are not limited to sight, but are first and foremost multi-sensorial, which is to say embodied. The space of tourism is therefore not only a residual consequence of the sociocultural impact of travelers on a local community, but a performance space of contestation and negotiation in its own right. Due to this fact, I can only hope that Sri Lankans will continue

to create good budget-oriented tourist businesses, and at the same time keep the island environmentally sustainable.

In line with the backpacker's motto that I cited beginning the final section of this article, which states that "as soon as a place gets a reputation for being paradise it goes to hell" (THEROUX 1992, 383), I can only add that southern Sri Lanka's travelers' enclaves resemble purgatory more than they do paradise. Rather than being idyllic places of peaceful repose, the enclaves are places of purgation where backpackers' souls are purified until another journey can begin. This image is more reflective of the reality on the ground, where, one would hope, Sri Lanka will never gain the dubious reputation of a paradise on earth among travelers, allowing the island nation to remain between heaven and hell. After all, it is the place where Muslims believe Adam fell when he was cast out of paradise. The peak where he is believed to have landed is coincidentally near the very beaches I have been discussing in this article. Considering the next journey that travelers will undertake after their purification in places like southern Sri Lanka, I can only hope that it will not involve yet another travelers' paradise somewhere else. Instead, idealistic travelers should seek out sites somewhere beyond paradise, if they finally wish to take seriously their own claim that states something similar to the following: when on the road, paradise always fades away on account of the traveling itself.

NOTES

1. In addition to paradise, for example, the "innocence" of folk culture (for example in Scotland), the special spirit of particular places (for example the Grand Canyon, Las Vegas), and a particular way of life in destination areas can all become a part of tourist mythmaking. Last but not least, the politics of the imaginary, iconology, fashions, and value regimes by which the tourist industry in general makes, un-makes, and re-makes locales are becoming more and more complex (HOLLINSHEAD 2004, 26–29).

2. That "many [travelers] actually seek hardship in the Third World" such as a "difficult bus ride, a filthy hotel, or a bout of amoebic dysentery" was revealed, for example, also to MCGUCKIN (2005, 75) during his fieldwork in Dharamsala between 1992 and 1994.

3. As DAVIS (2005), for example, showed in his research of Bikini atoll, which the US military used as a test site for nuclear weapons in the 1940s and 1950s, the isle was easily re-conceptualized as a deserted paradise forty years later. Many Bikinians, who had been moved to other atolls before the testing (DAVIS 2005, 614–15), referred to their lost homeland as paradise as well, only that their kind of paradise was different than that of tourists. To the latter, Bikini was represented as "a generic, deserted, tropical island" (610), and many of them stated that the return of Bikinians would spoil the tourist experience, except if they "could live separated from the tourists" (621). On the other hand, some Bikinians were concerned that tourist practices such as wearing a bathing suit (for example, a "bikini") would offend their sense of appropriateness (621).

4. My fieldwork consisted of participant observation in three villages in southern Sri Lanka. Two of them were developing tourist destinations with popular beaches, while the third had a large and remote beach in the vicinity, without any tourist infrastructure. Within these villages, there were several milieus, such as local groups of boys, beach restaurants, guesthouses, homestay accommodations, and accidental communities of travelers, where I was actively engaged in the daily life. I occasionally conducted semi-structured interviews, the contents of which I noted on the spot or subsequently wrote down from memory. During

each of my three fieldwork periods I kept an extensive diary wherein I described everyday events, stories I was told, the groups with which I was engaged, individual persons I met and their life stories or travel careers, dramatic incidents, and so on.

The three villages were located quite close to one another on a 20 km strip of road, so I not only frequently switched between these milieus, but also acted in-between them, as when I entered into one milieu in the company of a person from another. During such ethnographic moments, I was often involuntarily engaged in gossiping, an important pastime on the island, as I have suggested.

5. This Christian paradise also represents the abode (heaven) or an intermediate resting place before the resurrection of righteous souls after death (limbo) (Luke 23, 43), and it can be seen as a land of milk and honey or the Promised Land for Hebrews (Israel) (Exodus 3, 8; Jeremiah 11, 5), or Zion (utopia). In general, this form of paradise represents “a place of ideal beauty or loveliness” and “a state of delight” (for example, nirvana, bliss, seventh heaven). See <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/paradise> (accessed 1 June 2012).

6. In fact, the term paradise is derived via ecclesiastical Latin from the Greek *paradeisos* (royal park), which is in turn derived from the Avestan *pairīdāēza* (enclosure, park).

7. For example, the Garden of Eden was believed to be on the northern shore of the Persian Gulf, the Island of Bahrain, the city of Tabriz, or Jerusalem. Apart from the Semitic religions, similar claims were also replicated in other beliefs. So-called Adam’s Peak in Sri Lanka is, for example, named after a footprint-like formation at the top of this conically-shaped mountain: while Christians and Muslims believe the footprint to be Adam’s, Buddhists deem it to be Buddha’s, and Hindus believe it to be Shiva’s. The powerful isle of Avalon from the British Arthurian legend was claimed to be in many places of Britain (for example the town of Glastonbury, on Earth’s antipodes, Sicily, Bardsey Island in Wales, and so on). Similarly, the Elysian Fields, the final resting place of the righteous and the heroic in Greek mythology, were claimed to be the fortunate isles in the Western Ocean (for example Madeira, the Canary Islands, the Azores, Cape Verde, and Bermuda). According to legend, Valhalla, the hall of the chosen dead in Norse mythology, was located in other mythical worlds and realms. There were again numerous speculations and claims where they might be located (for example in Troy). See also the list of different lost continents, hidden kingdoms, legendary cities, lands, valleys, sunken islands, and so on, at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_mythological_places (accessed 25 August 2012).

8. See <http://bit.ly/jGT07H> (accessed 25 August 2012, cited in KHOSRAVI 2011).

9. Lanka (land or isle) is one of the pre-colonial names of Sri Lanka, to which was added Sri (meaning resplendent) in 1972.

10. See for example: <http://www.raremaps.com> (accessed 21 December 2011).

11. As ECHTNER and PRASAD (2003) showed, Third World countries are depicted in tourism marketing in a similar vein. By analyzing tourist advertisements, they identified three over-reaching “un” myths: the unchanged, the uncivilized, and the unrestrained (669–79). The first two imply exploration, expedition, and discovery, while the third implies enjoyment in a “present-day paradise” (675), in resorts where inequality between servants and guests is stressed.

12. Peter BISHOP (1990), for example, examined the myths of Shangri-la, a fictional valley, in Western travel writings on Tibet and traced the way Tibet was constructed in accordance with these fantasies, illusions, preoccupations, fears, hopes, and wishes of Victorian Romantic writers and Western missionaries, soldiers, diplomats, and traders. Shangri-la represented a remote paradise on earth, located primarily in Tibet, but was also used for other places in the Himalayas and northern Pakistan (especially the Hunza Valley); on the Hunza specifically, see FREMBGEN (1990).

13. Some of Paul Gauguin’s Tahitian paintings provide good examples of this. Their paradise imagery blotted out the actual life circumstances of the island. Among other figures and ele-

ments, Gauguin indigenized Eve, the Virgin Mary with the Christ child, saints and angels, the devil, and so on. For further information on Gauguin's "primitivism," see STASZAK (2004).

14. MARIT WAADE (2010), for example, analyzed the primordial conception of paradise in advertisements and stated that it is indeed imagined as a specific place, but also as a condition. The latter has been illustrated in lottery and alcohol advertisements, where paradise is associated with "specific moods and bodily conditions the viewer will achieve when buying the good or just enjoying the ad" (16).

15. See <http://opentravel.com/blogs/paradise-on-earth> (accessed 11 July 2011).

16. As KLEIN (2009, 379–98) convincingly demonstrated for the Maldives and Sri Lanka, investment programs had already been made by state economists, politicians, and corporations before the 2004 tsunami. Soon after the disaster, they used it as a convenient reason to clear the best tourist spots by moving village people and fishermen from the foreshore to inland refugee camps.

17. For a short story on foreigner-only offers in Goa, see <http://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2010/01/racism-against-indians-in-go> (accessed 30 January 2012).

18. Two points are worthy of mention here. First, according to my fieldwork experience and the experience of Western owners of different properties who have been continually returning to the island, the locals do not encourage foreigners to learn the Sinhala language—the advantage of having their language not understood by foreigners is precious to them when they want to gossip or cooperate on mutual problems. Second, some of my foreign interlocutors, who had spent a long time in one place, got used to understanding some of the local dialogue. These individuals have knitted deeper relations with some locals. On the occasion of entering into a local group of, for example, fishermen, they gradually found out that the behavior of the *sudu* (white man) was the main topic of their conversations and the main source of their fun.

19. Most owners have local partners because ever since the elections in 2004, when a new government was inaugurated, there has been a 100 percent tax on the price of properties bought by foreign citizens. However, one can legally rent a property for ninety-nine years from the official local owner. In this case, the tax is only 7 percent. The other reason for partnership is simply that Western owners are in many cases present only occasionally, while the local partners run the business and take care of the property and its maintenance during the off-season.

20. In this case, the management is usually advertised along national lines, such as Dutch, Italian, German, Greek, and so on.

21. For similar phenomena among the workers in bars and bungalows on the Had Rin Peninsula and Koh Phangan in southern Thailand, see MALAM (2004).

22. The Sinhala term *lajja* has a fairly broad semantic range covering a spectrum of emotions ranging from shame to shyness, but it can also refer to the social restraint necessary to ward off shame, as SPENCER (1990a, 606–607) has pointed out. OBEYESEKERE (1984, 504) elaborated on the fear of shame in Sri Lankan culture. The concept of fear of shame is also known as "losing face" in the tourist guides covering South Asian countries. It is also frequently evoked among more experienced travelers and backpackers.

23. On revenge, violence, and aggressive expressions of envy among men at large gatherings such as Sinhalese New Year or elections, see SPENCER (1990b, 181–86 and 202–204).

24. CRICK (1994, 192), who did his fieldwork in Sri Lanka in 1982, noted that "for many [tourists], the touts in Sri Lanka were the most annoying they had met anywhere in Asia," but instead of relating this fact to the density and competitiveness of Sri Lankan tourist spaces, many connected this claim simply to "the character" of Sri Lankans.

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