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# DISSERTATION / DOCTORAL THESIS

## **Mediating the Post Colony of Mainland Southeast Asia from Henry Mouhot to Lonely Planet and Contemporary Online Accounts**

An Exploration of Geographies of Identity, Power and Imagination in Exploration Writing, Popular Guidebooks and Travelblogs

verfasst von / submitted by

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Für Albert und Annemarie.



Junger Augenblick!

Was betrübt dich, junger Augenblick?

Du willst nicht Teil sein der tristen Wirklichkeit,  
nicht Erbe des Leids und der Traurigkeit  
vergangener, dunkler Zeiten?

Willst die Qualität der Gegenwart  
zum Guten, zum Besten wenden?

Du willst ein anderer sein, als du bist?

So sprich deinen Wunsch offen aus,  
dass er sich erfüllen mag.

Fürchte dich nicht, mach dich frei  
für die Verwandlung, änder dich als Erster -  
viele Momente werden dir folgen -  
und der Geist der Zeit wird verändert sein.

Sag es, dass du in Freude leben willst.

Bestimm es, dass du gut, gerecht und weise bist.

Zeig dich in Schönheit,  
wenn du schön sein willst.

Gib zuerst, womit du beschenkt sein willst.

Wähl für dich den Aufenthalt im Paradies.

Lächle, lach und ruf das flüchtige Glück,

gib ihm Heimat und Zeit,

sodass es bleiben kann,

und wünscht es sich mal im Regen Sonnenschein,

zögere nicht,

zünd für das Glück die Wolken an.

Annemarie Bergmeister





## 1. General Introduction

Browsing the internet or walking through a local bookstore will likely confront one with colourful images that represent foreign parts of the world in the seductive sign-economy of the holiday destination. One can observe inclined palm trees framing golden sandy beaches, picturesque medieval towns that seem to melt harmoniously into a landscape out of which they might have been born, and although geographically even further away but nevertheless within arm's reach, depictions of exotically stylized faces enticingly smiling into the sunset of what should appear as the beginning of another happy day's night in paradise. The messages are clear, and the symbolic persuasion is difficult to resist: you can be part of this; you can experience the world in the same carefree way as it is presented to you.

As Urry (1990: 10) has suggested, such observations would indicate that in much tourism the obligations of every-day life are inverted or suspended. Presented is a type of Otherness one can playfully indulge in. There is license for permissive and non-serious forms of interaction that promise to open a liminal zone, where social conventions are reversed, and ludic behaviour is encouraged. In tourist brochures, an often-observed example of this is the rear-view of a tanned female in a swimsuit, decoratively facing the ocean that stretches out from a tropical beach. As Jenkins (2003: 317) has pointed out, this specific pose functions both as a voyeuristic impulse and an invitation to let one's (male?) gaze linger over the female body and the exotic environment.

As this illustrates, tourism generally takes place within a spatial context that is meaningful in a wider historic and cultural sense and entails performative conventions that normalize distinctive ways of seeing and touring specific parts of the world (Edensor 2001: 63). Tourism thus 'writes' the realities of our earth by inscribing meaning onto countries and cultures via the communication of narratives, myths, and dreams that effectively construct the destinations tourists consume (Crang, 2014). Wilkes (2013: 33) points out that such travel-related imagery of places and cultures reaches beyond the realm of tourism itself. They draw from productive frameworks of collective intelligibility and imply certain ideas about the self and the 'Other'.

In the post-colonial setting, this relates to questions of power, authority and displacement. Such displacement can include matters of space, mobility and identity and is usually facilitated by the deployment of authority, most notably through language. In that way, language can function as both a source of authority and as its medium, imposing authoritarian discourse on people and the categories that relate to them (Labaune-Demeule 2015). The dialectic relations between

dominant and dominated in the post-colony are therefore characterised by structures of dependence that have developed over the centuries. As Loomba (2005) points out, the post-colonial order does not follow the colonial state of affairs in a purely chronological way. In many cases, it rather transforms the contours shaped by the imperialist agenda into a neo-colonial project by establishing economic and cultural dependencies that carry on the legacies of domination.

Following Clark (1999: 32), it is impossible to read the signifying economy of contemporary international tourism outside the frame of post-colonialism: “[i]n many cases now, travel is regarded as a sub-story of the grand narrative of imperialism; in others travel is the key operation through language and fact that makes the colonial adventure possible”. This entails that un-reflected tourist views of the world may eventually be taken as natural and applied to people and cultures in a universal way (Wilkes 2013: 34). My doctoral thesis will take this as a point of departure and investigate how the Western (tourist) gaze has discursively constructed mainland Southeast Asia over the last two centuries. The region was selected because it combines the experience of a (semi)colonial past with an outstandingly stable tourist development over the past decades.

To account for the historic specificity of post-colonial Southeast Asia, two early 20<sup>th</sup> century guidebooks (Murray 1904; Harrison 1920) and Henri Mouhot’s (1864) seminal exploration account *Travels in the Central Parts of Indo-China (Siam), Cambodia, and Laos During the Years 1858, 1859, and 1860* form the basis of the analysis. Once the relevant discursive background of the region has been established, it is put into relation to contemporary tourism texts. By considering Lonely Planet’s comprehensive bestseller *Southeast Asia on a Shoestring* (2014) vis-à-vis independent travel blogs from the website [travelblog.org](http://travelblog.org), I explore how popular travel destinations in mainland Southeast Asia are represented in terms of difference and Otherness to gain a better understanding of the (re)configuration of power relations in a post-colonial setting.

First, I investigate how particular destinations are represented ‘top-down’ by Lonely Planet. The brand is significant in this respect because it has become the world’s market leader for tourist guidebook, with 650 titles, 118 countries and an annual sale of more than 6 million copies (Friend 2005; Brennan 2013). The global popularity of Lonely Planet suggests a wide international acceptance and hints at its cultural power to shape ways of seeing and travelling the world. Consequently, I treat Lonely Planet as an extensive repository of contemporary travel

discourse that can reveal a better understanding of existing and developing power-differentials between visitors and visited (Bhattacharyya 1997).

Second, independent travel blogs are included in my analysis to better understand how tourist experience is negotiated by bloggers as they share their thoughts and experiences online. Essentially, blogs are personal online diaries used to publish travel stories and to keep in touch with families and friends at home. Typically, travel blog entries relate to general topics such as climate, cuisine, transport and regional specific stereotypes (Schmallegger & Carson 2008: 101-102). Through blogging, tourists are empowered as independent media producers capable of reproducing and challenging more established forms of travel discourse. As their blog entries can mobilise both hegemonic and counterhegemonic patterns of interpretation, the inclusion of travel blogs promises to provide a more comprehensive view of the relationship between place, self and Other in the world of tourism and beyond.

To investigate the complex historical interplay between discourse, spatial identities, and power, the method of this study is Critical Discourse Analysis as conceptualized by Fairclough (2003); KhoshraviNIK (2010) and (Wodak 2001b) vis-à-vis Said's (1978) notion of *Orientalism* as a conceptual framework for the discursive construction of regional inequalities. This allows for a comparative reading of different texts from different genres and times to trace possible instances of discursive transformation and convergence (e.g. how do discourses change over time, how do they translate to different tourist practices and how are they negotiated in guidebooks and blogs). This process is guided by the **main research questions of this thesis:**

**How do historical and contemporary texts negotiate notions of 'destination', 'Western self' and 'Otherness' in terms of power and identity?**

- Which main discourses can be identified in the media under review?
- How do these discourses relate to the socio-economic conjuncture of their time? (e.g. colonialism, consumerism)
- Which problematic ideological assumptions are manifest? (e.g. imperialism, racism)
- Which discursive transformations between old and new texts can be traced and how are they propagated? (e.g. civilizing project, responsible travel)

- Which power-relations / models of identity do result and privilege whom from what perspective?

A detailed outline of methodology and heuristic framework follows further below. The next sections begins with a review of central theoretical foundations and the research literature that has pointed the way ahead for this project.

## 2. Perspectives on Tourism – Concepts, Disciplinary Concerns and Current Issues

This section explores several critical issues that are central to the study of modern (individual) tourism in an interdisciplinary context. I will begin with an acknowledgement of the growth and growing importance of international tourism in an increasingly globalising world and discuss some of its effects in terms of wider economic, political, environmental and socio-cultural concerns. This will be followed by an attempt to offer several definitions of tourism and a provisional conclusion (really a compromise) of how tourism might be defined and analytically approached for the purpose of this work. Emphasis is put on an interdisciplinary perspective. This is particularly important since much work on tourism has tended to abstract it from the wider social and spatial relationships and thus neglected to investigate how it has been shaped by and contributed to shape the wider socio-cultural political and economic realities that comprise our modern world (Franklin 2008; Shaw & Williams 2002; Lew, Hall & Williams 2014).

### 2.1. The Dimensions of Modern Tourism

Any academic account on international tourism should acknowledge at its outset the importance and continued growth of the global tourist industry. Despite some setbacks during the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which included the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the invasion of Iraq and the SARS virus in 2003, the Tsunami in 2004 and the global monetary crisis between 2008-2012, the tourism-market complex has most likely achieved a higher recognition in public consciousness than ever before (Hall, Williams & Lew 2014: 3).

Although most of the statistics relating to the global growth of international tourism are by now well-known and freely accessible via the UNWTO's (United Nations World Tourism Organization) webpage, it is worth reviewing them at the beginning of this dissertation to provide some necessary orientation. Tourism has been growing uninterruptedly over the past six decades, demonstrating high levels of resilience against occasional global and regional

shocks. International tourist arrivals have shown an increase from a global 25 million in 1950 to 278 million in 1980 and 1.18 billion in 2015 (UNWTO 2016: 2). Given this rapid development, it is not surprising that tourism has become one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world, contributing 1260 billion US\$ in international tourism receipts earned by destinations worldwide. In addition to the incomes related to international receipts, tourism is also a major category of the international service trade, generating 211 billion in exports through the transport of international passengers in 2015. Overall, this amounts to a total value of tourism exports of 1.5 trillion on a recent annual basis (ibid). Due to these impressive figures, tourism accounts for 6 per cent of global trade and nearly 10 per cent of the world's GDP (Gross Domestic Product), creating one of eleven jobs in the world (UNWTO 2014). As a worldwide export category, it furthermore ranks third after fuels and chemicals, staying ahead of food and automotive products (UNWTO 2016b: 3).

In terms of international tourist arrivals, 2015 was notably successful, marking the sixth consecutive year of above-average growth. On a global basis, this reflects a plus of 4 percent, or an increase of 50 million tourists, compared to the previous year (UNWTO 2016a: 14). By region, in 2015, Europe led growth in relative and absolute terms and recorded an increase of 5 percent growth overall, which was supported by a stronger US-Dollar compared to the Euro. Northern Europe and Southern Mediterranean Europe were leading with a plus of 7 per cent, while Western Europe fell below the average with an increase of only 3 per cent. The Middle East and Africa could also secure positive results. Both reached a below average increase of 3 per cent. Asia and the Pacific recorded a strong overall increase of 5 per cent, with Oceania (+7%) and Southeast Asia (+6%) especially doing well (UNWTO 2016a: 15-16). Behind Thailand (+20%), the regional leader of growth in absolute terms, Myanmar deserves special mentioning as it recorded a plus of 52 per cent, although from a much lower base. Also, Laos (+12%), the Philippines (+11%) and Indonesia, with an increase of 10 per cent enjoyed a double-digit growth (UNWTO 2016: 7). As a long-term outlook, global tourism is expected to remain on its path of growing importance. International arrivals are expected to increase by 3.3 per cent a year, reaching 1.8 billion by 2030 in total. During this period, arrivals in emerging tourist destinations are expected to grow twice at the rate of those in more developed countries (UNWTO 2016: 3).

Taking these global trends into account and considering the positive economic perspectives for developing tourist destinations vis-à-vis the rapid growth of tourism in several Southeast Asian countries in particular, the regional focus of this dissertation is well founded and promising.

This work will focus on a region of rapid growth and strive to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the historical, social and cultural processes that have made and continue to make Southeast Asia the popular tourist brand that is. It should be reiterated that the goal is not to provide an economic analysis or historical description of the development of tourist sites in the region (even though economic and historic aspects will be discussed for framing purposes where this is instructive), but a *critical reading of constitutive discourses* in travel-related texts that have been shaping the region in the eyes of the world for the past 200 years and that will continue to do so. In that vein, Judith Adler (1989) has compared tourism to a performed art, one that is learned over the decades and one that produces a context specific form of stylized interaction, demonstrating the boundaries of selfhood and also the formative power of its past.

Stating the critical focus of this dissertation from the outset is important, because tourism has often been decontextualized from the wider social, spatial and cultural relationships that it shapes / by which it is shaped (Shaw & Williams 2002: 3). Tourism studies have tended to favour production or supply-side oriented research approaches that generally neglect the interrelation between supply and touristic consumption as well as the broader socio-cultural, political and environmental context in which tourist practices are situated (Lew, Hall & Williams 2014: 5). Consequently, a more comprehensive conceptualisation of tourist related activities requires a wider, interdisciplinary focus that goes beyond the economic view. On the one side, it is important to consider the relationships between tourism and other social practices such as leisure and recreation (Lew, Hall & Williams 2014: 5), and on the other side, there is a need to locate tourism processes within a much wider discursive framework of meaning making, deeply imbedded in complex cultural, social and historical systems (Franklin 2008; Pritchard 2000: 245). The theoretical and methodological framework for this task will be developed further down below. Next follows the effort to provide a working definition of ‘tourism’ and an attempt to locate the present work in the current scholarly field.

## 2.2. Definitions and Approaches to Tourism in Current Research

As the section above suggests, there are several competing notions over the use of approaches and definitions in the study of tourism. Williams (2014: 27) has named tourism studies a diverse melting ground of overlapping and discordant theoretical and methodological perspectives that are in constant flux, varying their foci over time in response to larger paradigm shifts in academia and the dynamics of socio-economic and political change. Notwithstanding – or rather because of – their multifaceted and protean orientation, tourism studies is well institutionalized in the academic field. Lew, Hall & Williams (2014: 9) relate the development

and academic embedding of tourism studies to Johnston's (1991) three requirements of a scholarly discipline: firstly, a clear presence at universities in the form of research and professorship; secondly, formal structures of academic institutions and thirdly, the advancement of knowledge by means of publications. As Lew, Hall & Williams (2014: 8-9) point out, these minimum characteristics fully apply to the academic field of tourism research. Many universities have professorial positions in tourism studies, offering undergraduate courses and degree programs; institutional structures are firmly established in many countries (such as the Council for Australian University Tourism and Hospitality Management), providing a platform for academic conferences and professional exchange; and finally, there is a substantial number of topic related publications, with around 230-260 English language journals that devote substantial parts of their content to tourism related topics (idem 10). Since there are substantial differences in terms of how different scholars research and understand the complex phenomena related to tourism, it is necessary to explicate where in the epistemological flow this study ought to be located. In this respect, Williams & Shaw (1988: 2) have observed that "the definition of tourism is a particularly arid pursuit". This may be so because of the non-serious nature that is associated with much tourism, but it is certainly so because of the level of complexity that is involved when tourism is related to practices of mobility and leisure in our modern world.

To illuminate some of the shortcomings, chances and perspectives of definitional matters in this respect, I will begin with the early technical classifications of tourism proposed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the 1970s, discuss Jafari's (1977) holistic approach and then turn to more recent definitions provided by the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). I will then emphasize the 'cultural' orientation of this study and explicate the need for a definition and research approach that acknowledges tourism as a social practice that is shaped by and capable of shaping tourism discourse. As such, the phenomenon of tourism can be studied to better understand how our modern world is organized in terms of power and knowledge.

Since the 1930s, governments have attempted to monitor the size and the development of international tourist markets. To do so, defining tourism became necessary to differentiate it from other types of mobility and to create a globally shared base for the collection of statistical data. The first definition was proposed by the League of Nations Statistical Committee in 1937, referring to the foreign tourist as somebody who "visits a country other than that in which he habitually lives for a period of at least twenty-four hours" (OECD 1974: 7 quoted in Leiper



1979: 393). This early statistical definition served as a basis for others, which generally included the three elements *travel distance*, *trip duration* and *purpose* (Leiper 1979: 393). These concepts provided a justified framework for the collection of quantitative data; however, they were not able to grasp the actual complexity of tourism in a wider sense. For this, more holistic definitions were needed. One of the earliest holistic definitions of tourism was presented by Jafari (1977:8), holding that:

Tourism is the study of man away from his usual habitat, of the industry which responds to his needs, and of the impacts that both he and the industry have on the host's socio-cultural, economic and physical environments.

While this definition already accounts for aspects of industry, needs and impacts, Leiper (1979: 394) points out that the sub-definition of tourist as 'man away' is too broad and that it also ignores the factors of distance, duration and purpose.

More recently, the United Nations and the World Tourism Organization have released a set of recommendations for international tourism statistics (UNWTO 2010) to provide a comprehensive methodological and definitional framework for the compilation and publication of tourism data around the world. Their general definition of *tourism* is that of "a social, cultural and economic phenomenon related to the movement of people to places outside their usual place of residence pleasure being the usual motivation" (UNWTO 2010: 1) More specifically, tourism is defined as the activity of visitors, considering factors such as duration and purpose:

A visitor is a traveller taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited. These trips taken by visitors qualify as tourism trips. Tourism refers to the activity of visitors. These are individuals, whose trips include "an overnight stay, or as a same-day visitor (or excursionist) otherwise" (ibid: 10).

Furthermore, the activity of *tourism* is differentiated from mere *travelling*, since travel would refer to the activity of moving between geographical locations for any duration and purpose (ibid:9). It follows that tourism is a subset of travel as much as visitors are subsets of travellers.

As (Lew, Hall & Williams 2014: 5) point out, industrial interests have strongly influenced tourism research, leading to an economically informed set of definitions that either consider a supply- or demand-side perspective. To facilitate these efforts, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat have formulated a common conceptual

framework (Tourism Satellite Account, TSA) that allows for an integration of the measurement of tourism-related economic phenomena into macroeconomic statistics (UN 2010). The goal is to better prepare private and institutional actors for the analysis of all relevant aspects of demand for services and goods that relate to the activities of visitors and to better understand how this supply interacts with other economic activities on a national and international level (UN 2010: iii). Accordingly, the TSA definition sees “[t]ourism [either] as a demand-side phenomenon [that] refers to the activities of visitors and their role in the acquisition of goods and services” or, if viewed from the supply-side, “as a set of productive activities that cater mainly for visitors” (UN 2010: 1).

Definitional issues greatly matter in this context. They set the parameters of how the defined activities may be measured in terms of economic impact and perspectives (Candela & Figini 2012: 25). From an economics perspective, a standard type or representative tourist can typically be defined as “an individual who, for leisure or other purposes, temporarily leaves the place of residence for being hosted in a destination, activating successive economic effects that are worth investigating” (Candela & Figini 2012: 18-19). Identifying both the objects of enquiry and the cause / effect relationship that is to be investigated, the choice of definition sets the premises and parameters for the model of further investigation. Scientific theory relies on such models as they provide abstract representations of reality that can be used for explaining past events and using empirical evidence for making predictions for the future (idem 23). The following example shall briefly demonstrate the interplay between definitions, theoretical models and the conundrums in terms of resulting research perspectives.

One of the early and still influential models of the economy of tourism was provided by Neil Leiper (1979). It distinguishes between five interrelated elements: firstly *tourists*, secondly three geographical elements that comprise the *source region of individuals*, the *transit route* and the *destination region* and finally the *tourist industry* that consists of all the infrastructures and supplies that cater for the demands of the tourists (Leiper 1979: 390-400). Essentially, the Leiper model was devised to be used in research for business and impact studies, for purposes of tourist industry management and as a framework for governments to national tourism policy (ibid 405). It has so far been used in variety of contexts and seen some further development. For instance, Hing & Dimmock (2000) used the model to investigate the impacts of the Fijian military coup in 2000 on the island’s tourism development and Lamont (2009) adapted Leiper’s whole-system approach towards research on independent bicycle tourism. Lamont proposes a multidimensional concept of *destination region* to adapt the original model to unconventional

forms of individualized overland travel. Since bicycle tourists spend much time between destinations, inter-regional strategies would have to be devised to attract riders to larger networks of routes (ibid).

While the research of Hing & Dimmock (2000) and Lamont (2009) underscores the practical need to focus on regionalized economic activities, critics have argued that the preference of the economic perspective carries with it the danger of removing the phenomenon of tourism from its wider real-world context. As Rojek & Urry (1997:2) point out,

[a]nother response to the problematic character of tourism is deliberately to abstract most of the important issues of social and cultural practice and only consider tourism as a set of economic activities. Questions of taste, fashion and identity would thus be viewed as exogenous to the system.

As this suggests, economically oriented research models (e.g. Leiper 1979 and adaptations) as well as the above presented definitions of tourism are not ideal for the purpose of this dissertation. While the UN (2010) definition can be ruled out for its rather narrow focus on economic matters, the UNWTO (2010) definition goes further than this and recognizes tourism as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon. Despite the holistic character of the second definition, it has the shortcoming of being based on the duration of a trip. The concept of trip duration is at best a controversial point. It arguably remains unclear whether there are any objective criteria for setting one year as the maximum vacation time.

Bell & Ward (2000: 88) offer a helpful alternative by placing all forms of population movement in a continuum, implying that arbitrary classifications do not function as precise boundaries between the various forms of short-term or long-term mobility that exist in our modern world. In their definition, “Tourism represents one form of circulation, or temporary population movement. Temporary movements and permanent migration, in turn form part of the same continuum of population mobility in time and space.” According to Bell & Ward (2000: 104) this is so because the distinction between permanent and temporary moves is becoming increasingly blurred due to accelerating technological and socio-economic change. Permanent mobility and temporary mobility may work in a complementary relationship (e.g. working migrants make regular visits to relatives in their home countries), temporary moves may predate permanent moves (e.g. holidays as a precursor for retirement migration) or short-term circulation may even substitute permanent relocation at all (e.g. short long-haul business trips that are carried out on a regular basis). Ultimately, locating tourism within the range of mobilities and conceptualizing it as a form of temporary movement is generally useful,

however, for this dissertation, it will not suffice. Since I am concerned with the cultural construction of destinations and associated tourist practices, there is the need to find a definition that acknowledges the link between tourism and the wider cultural processes that make tourism practices meaningful.

As to that, it is helpful to consider Dick Hebdige's (1979) research approach on subcultures in post-World War II Great Britain. To better understand the meaning of style displayed by Punks and Teddy Boys, Hebdige (1979: 80-84) distinguishes between the concepts of *conjuncture* and *specificity*. Conjuncture thereby denotes the wider societal constellation in terms of politics, economics and social developments, whereas specificity describes the particular form of a subculture's reaction to the normative cultural force of the former. For example, the Punk's appropriation of safety pins in their style subversively eroded the notion of cultural normalisation by challenging the promises of social cohesion, unity and consensus under Thatcher's neoliberal reign (idem 18). From this perspective, the analysis of a particular specificity cannot be fruitful, if the overall context is ignored. In a similar vein, the individual touristic event in its widest sense (a cultural performance of local tradition, the imagery of a postcard, even Byron's famous lines from the poem *Manfred* – I stood within the Colosseum's wall, 'Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome) only become sufficiently meaningful when their wider context is considered.

In this respect, MacCannell (1999: 1) has identified the tourist as one of the best models for modern man in general, pointing out that the study of tourism can illuminate how the contemporary (Western) conjuncture of fragmentation, alienation and privatised mobilities is negotiated. For MacCannell (1999: 3), modernity is very much based on instability and inauthenticity, with its opposites, reality and authenticity being somewhere in the distance: "in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles" (ibid). In this view, tourism provides an antidote to the 'drama' of modernization, allowing people to temporarily step out of their alienating condition and experience what they feel they might have lost. While MacCannell's argument should be read with caution for its structuralist tendency to oversimplify the complexity of possible tourist motivations, it illustrates the importance of considering the interplay between what tourists do and the (assumed) circumstances under which their actions take place.

In a different way, Urry's (1990:11) concept of the "tourist gaze" sees tourism as a "result from a basic binary division between the ordinary / every-day and the extraordinary". From this perspective, people desire holiday experiences that are different from those encountered in their

daily lives at home. What matters here for exemplary purposes is not so much the truth value of Urry's (1990) or MacCannell's (1999) premises in terms of correctly interpreting the modern conjuncture, but what matters is their acknowledgment that touristic 'doings' only make analytical sense if they are read against the social settings concerned. To bring a more recent example, Franklin (2003: 4-5) argues in a radically different way, namely that one should not fall into the trap that tourism is by definition something that lies outside everyday life, quite to the contrary, everyday life has increasingly been integrated *into* the global flows of the touristic world as we spend much of lives alongside tourists, doing what they do and often doing it in a touristic manner. While Franklin's position seemingly contradicts the perspectives of MacCannell (1999) and Urry (1990) for ontological reasons (part of everyday life vs. different from everyday life), all three do agree on epistemological grounds. That is, they share the common heuristic assumption that tourism is deeply implicated in the realities of the world and therefore can tell us something important about it: while MacCannell (1999) defines the tourist as perfect model for modern individual and its desire to return to pre-modern authenticity, Franklin (2003: 5) emphasizes that

the tourist has become a metaphor for the way we lead our everyday lives in consumer society. So rather than being an exceptional or occasional state of being in modern societies, or even as some have said an escape from it, the manner of the tourist has come to determine a generalised stance to the world around us. In a globalised world, our stance as consumers of it is modelled and predicated by the tourist.

As this suggests, MacCannell (1999), Urry (1990) and Franklin (2003), recognize tourism practices as specifically stylized performances that respond to a particular conjuncture in a particular way, depending on factors of time, people and place. As such, the observable instances of much tourism function in comparable ways to Hebdige's (1979: 81f.) subcultural punks and teddy boys. As any set of social affairs, tourism is necessarily situated against the background of larger cultural, political and economic conjuncture and thus represents a specific response to the circumstances that apply. It is important to note, though, that the necessary abstraction of this concept involves actors, practices and encounters that are constantly being negotiated and reshaped in analytical and ontological terms themselves. This relates to the functioning and evolution of (scientific) knowledge in a more general sense, since

[s]cientific knowledge examines only that reality it has previously created as knowable and defined as its object. It limits itself and restricts the possibility of gaining knowledge of what cannot yet be known because it is beyond the legitimated ways of

knowing. Its institutional control operates throughout research development and reaches not only researchers, by determining their options, but also their objects of analysis, by specifying what is "valid" to be known (Vasilachis de Gialdino 2006: 3).

Taking this into account, knowledge presupposes the existence of an object that is to be known. This fundamental heuristic implies that objects-to-be-known are necessarily objects-already-assumed, or at least objects-permitted-to-be-known, so that further knowledge about them can be henceforth created. This raises two problems. Firstly, the objects that are not yet known fail to deliver the identity or status that is necessary to qualify as known parts of the universe, and secondly, the objects that are already known are part of a knowledge-force-field that guides the way for further knowledge seeking. As Vasilachis de Gialdino (2006: 474f.) points out, this leads to a fixing of research objects from a researcher-centred perspective that ignores the complexity of agency, resistance and identity creation. This *modus operandi* effectively silences types of knowledge that are not yet known and neglects to explore meanings, situations, perceptions and actions that lie outside the field of accepted perception. It is, however, precisely this 'new' perspective that is needed to gain a better understanding of the social, cultural and economic complexities of tourism in our globalizing world.

### 2.3. A Cultural Economy Lens

As this suggests from the point of view of this thesis, tourism should be conceptualized as a set of social practices that are shaped by and capable of shaping tourism discourse, and that specifically relate to concerns of the respective social, political and economic conjuncture (e.g. questions of identity, globalisation and unequally distributed power). This way, tourism research is no longer limited to its role of observing tourism as an isolated mode of production, consumption and modern-day mobility, but it becomes possible to regard it as a "significant modality through which transnational life is organized" (Franklin & Crang 2001: 6-7). This shall serve as the working definition of tourism that informs the research carried out in this dissertation. Following Franklin & Crang (2001: 7) quoting Löfgren (1999: 6-7) this invites us to accept the

[view of] vacationing as a cultural laboratory where people have been able to experience with new aspects of identities, their social relations or their interactions with nature and also to use the important cultural skills of daydreaming and mind travelling. There is an arena in which fantasy has become an important social practice.

As Salazar (2012: 864) reminds us, the cultural force of such ‘tourism imaginaries’ is politically significant because they operate on both an individual and a collective level. Often, shared fantasies about other people, cultures and countries are structured by dichotomies that shape the perceived ‘realities’ of the world according to paradigmatically linked binominals. In this way, imaginations of the Other delineate the borders of selfhood (e.g. modern vs. premodern) and make more obvious the hierarchical structures along which our world is constructed. Besides these political implications, it should be mentioned that the socio-economic merger of the culture industry and the tourism industry is more firmly established today than ever. As Crang (2014: 66) points out: “Tourism is now at the forefront of the cultural economy, where both the economy takes cultural processes and practices as resources, but also economic activities are worked through cultural practices”. Particularly for these reasons, most suitable for this dissertation is a ‘cultural’ approach to the study of tourism that does not lose sight of the political, the social and the economic. It will guide the further development of the theoretical and methodological framework that is rendered below. Next, travel discourse and travel writing is addressed.

### 3. Tourism Discourse, Travel Writing and the Discursive Construction of the Other

In an age of increasing global connectedness, personal mobility becomes more central in a wide range of human affairs (Urry 1990). Considering the scope of this dissertation, it is therefore instructive to determine how the concept of travel and the accounts it produces can be comprehensively understood with regard to questions of selfhood, identification and concepts of delineation in terms of perceived ‘Otherness’. According to Thompson (2011: 9), travel is characterized by two main aspects. Firstly, it is a movement through space and secondly, it involves an encounter between the ‘self’ and the ‘Other’, unsettling an “interplay between alterity and identity, difference and similarity” (ibid). From this perspective and in its broadest sense of definition, travel writing can be delineated as a record of the encounter between self and Other vis-à-vis the negotiation of the potential cultural tensions that might arise. It is in this function that travel records are both experiential accounts of the places and cultures encountered on route and revelatory documents of the traveller’s own values, assumptions and preoccupations that result from the respective processes of enculturation in terms of individual background and target audience (idem 10). Accordingly, the traveller will always approach and perceive foreign places and cultures with a preformed cultural mindset. Tourism phenomena

and their associated representations are therefore always rooted in wider discursive frameworks that have emerged out of complex social and historical systems (Pritchard 2000: 245).

Focusing on the West and its century long imperial legacy, travel writing is inevitably one-way traffic, because Europeans mapped the world rather than the world was mapping them. Travellers,

merely through their greater access to technology of transportation, implicitly belong to a more developed culture, and the strong historical connection of exploration with exploitation and occupation, justifiably make them figures to be feared and shunned [...] Their texts promote, confirm and lament the exercise of imperial power; and that this ideology pervades their representational practices at every level (Clark 1999: 3).

This mapping of the world played a crucial ideological role during the colonial era. As Pratt (1992: 4-5) points out, one important goal of early travel texts was to convince continental / metropolitan readerships of the assumed necessity of Europe's expansionist endeavours and to produce Europe's (superior) conception of itself against the rest of the world.

In this respect, Edward Said's highly influential piece *Orientalism* (1978) explores the causes and effects of the social construction of geography in terms of dominant political and economic interests. At the starting point of its symbolic construction, the place known as the "Orient" could only come into existence by virtue of an arbitrary epistemological distinction from the Occident (Said 1978: 2), so that henceforth [the discourse of]

Orientalism can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient [...] European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and underground self (idem 3).

The resulting narratives of the Orient were typically based on notions of Oriental despotism, sensuality, cruelty and splendour (Said 1978: 4), told in a variety of accounts such as "works of literature, political tracts journalistic texts, travel books, religious and philosophical studies" (idem 23) and produced by individuals as diverse as poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists and imperial administrators" (idem 2). The goal of this discursive deployment was to construct a type of 'Otherness' that could henceforth be known (particularly



to safeguard against its assumed dangers) and thus be firmly controlled by colonial forces (ibid 11).

Said uses numerous examples to illustrate the Western construction of a deviant Orient in terms of fundamental narratives that aim to naturalize the assumedly inferior status of the region. A case in point is Cromer's two volumes and more than 1200 pages long account *Modern Egypt* (1916) that was first published in 1907. The Earl of Cromer was British Consul General of Egypt between 1882 (the year of Britain's occupation of Egypt) and 1907, which marked the turning point of British presence in the region (Said 1978: 35). In a somewhat lengthy but revealing reflection on the mental and moral attributes of Orientals and Europeans, Cromer notes the following:

Accuracy is abhorrent to the Oriental mind. Every Anglo-Indian should always remember that maxim. Want of accuracy, which easily degenerates into untruthfulness, is in fact the main characteristic of the Oriental mind. The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural logician, albeit he may not have studied logic; he is by nature sceptical and requires proof before he can accept the truth of any proposition; his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism. (Cromer 1916: 146-147)

As can be seen, there is a clear contrast drawn between the mindset of the Oriental and that of the European. In the case of the 'Oriental', which is a generic definition of all people from the Orient, accuracy is defined both as missing and compensated by untruthfulness. This quality of untruthfulness can therefore be no longer excused as a weakness of character of some individuals but rather becomes reified as a natural effect of a cognitive predisposition that supposedly affects the entire population of the region.

Quite to the contrary, the European is described as a natural thinker who is endowed with the faculties of scepticism and reason. These abilities make his / her intelligence work like an efficient mechanism designed to evaluate factual evidence. As Said (1978: 38-39) observes, for Cromer this seemingly secured knowledge of the Oriental had practical value that developed along a teleological trajectory. It was inherited from over a century of Orientalist scholarship and legitimized the view that British rule was the only viable way to deal with the dangerous lands and people it purports to know. More specifically, Cromer writes: "I am only a diplomatist and an administrator, whose proper study is also man, but from the point of view of governing him rather than from that of scientific research into how he comes to be what he is" (Cromer 1916: 164). As this suggests, the colonial subject was not of interest because of its individual

history, agency and perspectives. Rather, it was established as a 'knowable factor' that could and should be dominated.

In this respect, it is important to note that the wide societal consciousness of what the Orient supposedly was and how it should be dealt with did not only stem from official documents, political doctrines and scholarly works. As Said (1978: 192) cautions his readers, Oriental myths could be traced back to a vast number of reports, stories and accounts, notably comprising "[e]ven the most innocuous travel book" (ibid), since the latter could equally contribute to the knowledge production of the colonial project and thus help legitimize its expansive agenda.

Said's inclusion of the seemingly trivial travel book is significant. This is so because it is essentially an instance of representation that functions like every other cultural text. As such, the ideas presented in a travel book are charged with larger cultural meanings and therefore quite capable of shaping our perceptions of other places and people (Thompson 2011: 24-25). Besides, considering Paul Fussell's (1980: 203) definition of the travel narrative as a "sub-species of memoir in which the autobiographical narrative arises from the speaker's encounter with distant or unfamiliar data, and in which the narrative – unlike that of a novel or romance – claims literal validity by constant reference to actuality" suggests that the genre's powerful impact may also come because of its superior credibility. As Thompson (2011:16) remarks in this regard, travel writers never have the same freedom as novelists to tell fictional stories, simply because this would imply the risk of their narratives being classed as hoaxes. The Scottish 18<sup>th</sup> century traveller James Bruce, for instance, became one such victim of incredulity. As he reported from his travels to Abyssinia, he claimed that Abyssinians ate raw meat cut from living cattle. Commentators and readers in Britain regarded this as preposterous and gave him the name "MacFable" (idem 66).

It is important to note that Bruce's failure to convince his readers may not have been entirely on his side. It also implies a 'problem' with the audience to understand and envision cultural practices as genuine and real that were radically different from their own. Especially earlier pieces of travel writing had to grapple with this issue. As Thompson (2011: 66f.) argues in this regard, confrontations with the unknown frequently involve a twofold reaction: first, the 'state of wonder', where one is emotionally baffled and intellectually unable to make sense of an unknown situation and second, the 'principle of attachment' (Pagden 1993) where travellers use familiar concepts, images and ideas to describe the new in the terminology they have at their disposal to make sense of the world. A good example is William Dampier's description of

a tropical fruit he came to observe during his *New Voyage Around the World* (1697): “[The guava fruit] grows on a hard-scrubbed Shrub, whose Bark is smooth and whitish, the branches pretty long and small, the leaf somewhat like that of a Hazel, the fruit mush like a Pear” (Dampier 1697: 222 qtd. in Thompson 2011: 68). As can be seen, Dampier makes use of intelligible concepts of his time to ensure that readers would be able to grasp what the fruit he saw looked like.

Similarly, the well-known 13<sup>th</sup> century merchant and traveller Marko Polo profoundly shaped Europe’s early understanding of the world. As John Masefield argues in the foreword to his English edition of *The Travels of Marco Polo the Venetian* (1908: xi):

The wonder of Marco Polo is this – that he created Asia for the European Mind [...] When Marco Polo went to the East, the whole of Central Asia, so full of splendour and magnificence, so noisy with nations and kings, was like a dream in men’s minds. Europeans touched only the fringe of the East. At Acre, at Byzantium, at the busy cities on the Euxine, the merchants of Europe bartered with the stranger for silks, and jewels and precious balms, brought over the desert at great cost, in caravans from the unknown. The popular conception of the East was taken from the Bible, from the tales of old Crusaders, and from the books of the merchants. All that men knew of the East was that it was mysterious, and that our Lord was born there. Marco Polo, almost the first European to see the East, saw her in all her wonder, more fully than any man has seen her since. His picture of the East is the picture which we all make in our minds when we repeat to ourselves those two strange words the East and give ourselves up to the image which that symbol evokes.

As this implies, Marco Polo became one of the earliest messengers of European discourse in terms of envisioning the Eastern Other against a background of uncertainty and myth. The plausibility of these early accounts was usually determined in relation to the worldview of then establishes authorities such as the bible or the works of classical philosophers (Thompson 2011: 72f.). Polo’s narratives then, precisely reify the experienced ‘world of wonders’ as something that was supposedly miraculous indeed. Here is an example: when in Sumatra, Marco Polo happens to encounter a then unfamiliar breed of animals, the Rhinoceros. To give his readers an idea of what they look like, he refers to common shapes of domestic animals and elements of mysticism that his audience would understand:

Their hide resembles that of the buffalo. In the middle of the forehead they have a single horn; but with this weapon they do not injure those whom they attack,

employing only for this purpose their tongue, which is armed with long, sharp spines, and their knees or feet; their mode of assault being to trample upon the person, and then to lacerate him with the tongue. Their head is like that of a wild boar, and they carry it low towards the ground. They take delight in muddy pools, and are filthy in their habits. They are not of that description of animals which suffer themselves to be taken by maidens. (Polo 1908: 340)

In the last sentence, Marco Polo alludes to the figure of the unicorn to frame his story with a background of common European knowledge. As Thompson (2011: 69) argues, this implicit strategy of referencing indicates less an allusion to the romance genre but firmly anchors Polo's observation in medieval natural history. By then, the existence of unicorns was widely assumed, and many bestiaries of the time prove this. Polo's strategy of attaching the unknown to the familiar thus relates the perceived strangeness of the Rhinoceros to available ideas of cosmology, being and existing. The 'new' is thus effectively shaped by the terminology of the familiar self, with the consequence that "perverse collages" (Campbell 1988: 70) of the unfamiliar Other are created. This strategy of description is however problematic since the alien subject is deprived of its own natural coherence and reproduced from the outside to create an image that is perceived as 'proper' by the audience addressed (ibid). As the following extract from Marco Polo's account shall demonstrate, this locating of the Other within the known scope of the self may have severe consequence regarding value assumptions and moral judgements. After the encounter with the Rhinoceros, Marco Polo journeys on and travels to the Sumatran kingdom of Dragoian. It is there, where he observes what he calls a horrible custom:

DRAGOIAN is a kingdom governed by its own prince, and having its peculiar language. Its inhabitants are uncivilized, worship idols, and acknowledge the authority of the grand khan. They observe this horrible custom, in cases where member of the family is afflicted with a disease: The relations of the sick person send for the magicians, whom they require, upon examination of the symptoms, to declare whether he will recover or not. [...] If the decision be that he cannot, the relations then call in certain men, whose peculiar duty it is and who perform their business with dexterity, to close the mouth of the patient until he be suffocated. This being done, they cut the body in pieces, in order to prepare it as victuals; and when it has been so dressed, the relations assemble, and in a convivial manner eat the whole of it, not leaving so much as the marrow in the bones [...] If they have it in their power to seize any person who

does not belong to their own district, and who cannot pay for his ransom, they put him to death, and devour him. (Polo 1908: 343).

This entry is significant because given its date of publication, it is arguably one of the first widely circulated references to *Cannibalism* in Western travel writing. The reported event begins with a value assumption that describes an observed (and supposedly fully understood) custom as horrible. This is amplified by the general description of the kingdom's inhabitants as uncivilized and superstitious, ending with the assessment that any travellers to the region would face the severe danger of being overwhelmed and eaten.

As Motohashi (1999: 86) explains, in later centuries this became a key strategy of justification for the violent colonial enterprise of many European nations. By constructing the Other as dangerous, cannibalistic and savage, the project of Western conquest suddenly appeared mutually beneficial. The Europeans thus effectively crafted the narrative of protection rather than coercion. The benign and cooperative natives in distant lands were not coerced but 'liberated' from the dangers of cannibalism and savagery in general terms. Under the disguise of a mutually beneficial civilizing project, colonial nations effectively self-fashioned themselves as good willing stewards of the world. We find in Hakluyt's ([1600] 2008) 17<sup>th</sup> century collection of travel accounts (more detail follows below) a report of the colonialization of America by Sir George Peckham's that precisely details that strategy:

That the Sauages generally for the most part, are at continuall warres with their next adioyning neighbours, and especially the Cannibals, being a cruell kinde of people whose foode is mans flesh, and haue teeth like dogges, and doe pursue them with rauinous mindes to eate their flesh, and deuoure them. And it is not to be doubted, but that the Christians may in this case iustly and lawfully ayde the Sauages against the Cannibals. But also by their franke consents shall easily enioy such competent quantity of Land, as euery way shall be correspondent to the Christians expectation and contentation, considering the great abundance that they haue of Land, and how small account they make thereof, taking no other fruites thereby then such as the ground of it selfe doeth naturally yeelde. And thus much concerning the first sort of planting, which as I assuredly hope, so I most heartily pray may take effect and place. (Hakluyt [1600] 2008: 8-9)

The extract is significant since it outlines the intentions and self-justifications of imperialist expansionism in a single passage. There is a distinction between Christians and savages, denoting the binary between the European self and an imagined form of devilish existence.

Furthermore, there is a second distinction between the ‘general savages’ and the cannibals who are said to threaten the more peaceful and cooperative native population. Consequently, the Biblical ideal of helping the weak is evoked. According to this logic, it becomes a ‘responsibility’ of the good Christian colonizer to protect the less savage beings from the more savage threats, certainly based on a definition that is entirely European. Once this type of appeasement is achieved, European hegemony can be installed. Considering the abundance of land available to native populations and the colonizers’ assumption that it is not properly perused, the consent to colonialization is expected from all sides, so that adequate planting and rural exploitation may take place once the cannibals have been removed.

As the examples above show, the earlier configurations of the travel narrative frequently featured elements of wondering and making sense of the world by strategies of attachment and religious references. Since journeying was and is a business that engages with the unknown, it was typical for pioneer travel writers to flaunt exotic wonders and mysteries by reference to intelligible symbols and mythologies of their time. While their reports clearly had the cultural power to set the ideological compass of later travellers and explorers, the fantastic framing of the world of early travel writers stood in stark contrast to (early) modern travel reports from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The latter insisted upon precision and actuality to gather important geographic and naturalistic information for Europe’s general expansion vis-à-vis its military pursuits. This ‘scientific’ period of travel writing had in common one typical feature, namely to painstakingly stick to the plain style of what is now known as the scientific report. It is therefore not surprising that the modern documentation of research experiments had its origin in the travel logs of the early explorers, merchants and seafarers (Cribb 1999: 104). The following section illuminates how the history of travel writing is intrinsically linked to the history of science in the service of European imperialist expansion.

### 3.1. The Scientific and Ideological Mission of Travel Writing – Shaping the Colonial World

Typical for the transition into the early-modern period of travel writing was Richard Hakluyt’s oeuvre *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, written in three volumes and published in 1598, 1599 and 1600 respectively (Hakluyt 1884: vi). The elaborate collection is essentially a compilation of travel reports, navigational charts and journals that are organized according to the principles of time and place. The southern voyages first, since they occurred first, then come the northern and eastern journeys, and finally the

western discoveries to the new world. The structure chosen by Hakluyt resembles the technique of the scientific protocol (Cribb 1999: 104), which Hakluyt affirms in the foreword of his second edition: “by the helpe of Geographie and Chronologie (which I may call the Sunne and the Moone, the right eye and the left of all history) referred each particular relation to the due time and place” (Hakluyt 1884: 23) As this suggests, each narrative is part of a more extensive structure, which is not determined by individual preferences or genre conventions but by the overruling principles of time and space. These new rationalities then became essential elements of the emerging episteme of empiricism, implying the promotion of precise accounts of individual experience as the only acceptable and verifiable source of knowledge. This pattern for the documentation of voyages was then replicated by Hakluyt’s successors and eventually became a standard recommendation by the British Royal Society, which was founded in 1660 to advance the enlightenment principles of rationalism and empiricism (Cribb 1999: 104-106).

In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, The Royal Society issued numerous directives to travellers requesting them to document rather than merely describe their experience and systematize their methods of observation. Consequently, the fairly standardised structural and stylistic template of the protocolar travelogue was developed. This form gained in general popularity and was eventually reproduced by most travellers of the time, so their texts would appear trustworthy, serious and reliable (Thompson 2011: 74). As Thompson (ibid) points out, one of the best examples of this new protocol style is provided by the 17<sup>th</sup> century explorer William Dampier. The following extract is an exact description of the island of Timor. It exemplifies the empiricist decorum that guided much travel writing in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century:

The Island Timor, as I have said in my Voyage around the World, is about seventy Leagues long, and fourteen or sixteen broad. It lies nearly North-East and South-West. The middle of it lies in about 9d. South Lat. It has no Navigable Rivers, nor many Harbours; but abundance of Bays, for Ships to ride in at fome season of the Year. The Shore is very bold, free from Rocks, Shoals or Islands; expecting a few which are visible, and therefore easily avoided. [...] It is a pretty even Shore, with Sandy Bays and low Land for about three or four Mile up; and then ‘tis Mountainous. There is no Anchoring but within half a League or a League at fartheft from the Shore; and the low Land that bounds the Sea, hath nothing but red Mangroves, even from the Foot of the Mountains till you come within a hundred and fifty of two hundred paces of the Sea; and then you have Sand-banks cloath’d with a fort of Pine; so that there is no getting Water on this side, because of the Mangroves. (Dampier 1709: 54)

As can be observed, the focus of the account lies on geographical and nautical data. There is a clear description of possible anchoring spots for further expeditions to arrive and some information about potential navigational hazards. Following the key directives of the Royal Society, Dampier's report ensures that the new epistemological demands of information gathering are met. As Thompson (2011: 75f.) points out, this included the need to record observations while they were still fresh in memory or while still in sight of the traveller. This disciplined manner of notetaking ensured that published narratives of the time largely resemble on-the-spot observation in the journal format. Besides, writers were also advised what they should observe and record. The focus was mainly on measurable natural and material phenomena, while personal interpretations and feelings were to be avoided. Reports such as Dampier's also exemplify the great level of observation skills and attention to detail that would have been required to produce such exact descriptions.

Eventually, the travel protocol became the style of choice for European explorers journeying across the globe. It became the foundation of a new scientific paradigm that stood in the service of European expansionism. Its goal was to define and categorize the world to satisfy the increasing demand of geographical and naturalist knowledge that was deemed essential for legitimizing and planning further political and economic pursuits. As Pratt (1992: 15ff.) points out, the year 1735 marked two key events in this regard, leading to a new type of European "planetary consciousness" (ibid). First, the La Condamine Expedition to the Arctic and to South America and second, the publication of Carl Linne's *Systema Natura*, a scientific compendium in which the Swedish naturalist sought to systematically categorize all plant forms on the planet.

### 3.2. Carl Linne's *Systema Natura* – Writing the Story of Nature

The Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus, with his precise documentations and classifications of nature, represented the nouvelle scientific explorer of the time. Different from Dampier's nautical interests and ways of conquering and representing the world from a seafarer's point of view, Linnaeus sought to supply the micro-knowledge that was deemed necessary to define the planet and make it usable for further colonial exploits such as planting and agriculture. In his treatises, he details a new type of precise in-land knowledge that consequently had the power to evaluate the previously discovered lands in innovative ways. The focus thus shifted from the conqueror to the scientifically minded naturalist who gathered the information deemed necessary for imperialist prosperity abroad. After the land was discovered by the explorer, it had to be perused and the travelling naturalist paved the way. This led to an 'army' of botanists fanning out around the globe collecting and documenting plants and insect to compile them into



books and natural history collections (Pratt 1992: 24-25). From this moment, travel writing – or at least parts of it – became increasingly sophisticated. While the list or the protocol remained valuable instruments for documenting individual observations, it was the discourse of natural science that guided the newly emerging type of the European abroad:

Alongside the frontier figures of the seafarer, the conqueror, the captive, the diplomat, there began to appear everywhere the benign, decidedly literate figure of the ‘herborizer,’ armed with nothing more than a collector’s bag, a notebook, and some specimen bottles, desiring nothing more than a few peaceful hours alone with the bugs and flowers. Travel narratives of all kinds began to develop leisurely pauses filled with gentlemanly ‘naturalizing’. (idem 27)

The gaze of the herborizer was rather one of scope than of scale. It no longer focused on navigational charts and finding places for potential harbours but tried to understand nature in a more comprehensive way. Despite this new orientation on detail, the ongoing race for scientific discovery of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries did not come to a halt on a continental scale. It rather shifted from the outside to the insight, giving rise to the inland expedition.

### 3.3.Charles de La Condamine – Measuring the Planet

Charles de La Condamine was a French geographer and the main leading figure in an international scientific expedition that set out to determine the exact shape of the earth by conducting measurements at the equator and the northern pole region. This was done to solve the dispute between French geographers, holding that the earth was a sphere and British scientists, who thought that the planet was rather spherical and flattened at the poles (Viana 2011). As the scientific mission was completed to prove that the French were indeed right, La Condamine praises his undertaking in the preface of his travel account:

Whilst his Majesty’s [King Louis XV, my remark] armies flew from one end of Europe to the other [...] his mathematicians, dispersed over the surface of the earth, were at work under the Torrid and Frigid Zones, for the improvement of the sciences, and the common benefit of all nations. (La Condamine 1748: Preface qtd. in Pratt 1992: 18)

As the quote suggest, La Condamine celebrates the triumph of modern empirical science, linking it to the military and political achievements of the French sovereign. However, he also gives birth to a vision of Eurocentric knowledge production that would be so powerful in itself that it was no longer limited to national interests but able to build the scientific basis of

European expansionism – a project that was to shape and control the world by creating the categories by which it was to be perceived. As a matter of fact, the international scientific enterprise became Europe’s most prestigious and probably most effective vehicle of expansion that changed the profile of both, European self-perception and its global relations (Pratt 1992: 24). While La Condamine’s reports clearly marked a milestone in the documentation of scientific discoveries – after all, their goal involved measuring the planet – they also exemplify some more dramatic configurations of the exploration writing genre, akin to the *heroic survival theme*. La Condamine makes use of the main elements of early travel writing and survival literature, namely astonishment and curiosity on the one hand and danger and hardships on the other. Narrating his South American adventures, he fashions himself in the tradition of a heroic explorer, makes mythic associations to prior 16<sup>th</sup> century expeditions of Raleigh and Orellana and speculates about the location of El Dorado (Pratt 1992: 20). Much of this rhetoric was meaningful in a symbolic way and related to the aspirations and fears of their time. As the next section will show, the narratives of early explorers gave birth to powerful myths of imperial self-understanding – some of which may likely be relevant for the analysis of modern tourist practices.

### 3.4. Henry Morton Stanley – The Self-fashioning of the Imperial Action Hero

As Thompson (2011: 53) points out, early explorers played a key role in supplying their governments with highly demanded geographic, ethnographical and naturalistic information; however, they also came to be regarded as the ideals of imperial masculinity, science and Christian civilization. As a matter of fact, the emblematic figure of the explorer effectively crafted the storylines that led to a proliferation of fantasies of a heroic and superior Western self that actively defined and legitimized its own civilizing mission to embark upon and enlighten the ‘dark fringes’ of the world.

Who comes to mind in this respect – and with lasting metaphorical authority – is, of course, the Welsh-American explorer Henry Morton Stanley and his account *Through the Dark Continent* (1890). The then very popular book (with maps and illustrations) is an exploration narrative that reports of Stanley’s nearly three-year expedition from Zanzibar in the east of the African continent to the mouth of the Congo river in the west. The book largely contributed to building the imperialist and racist myth of the ‘Dark Continent’ and is characterized by vivid depictions of sometimes violent encounters with natives amidst descriptions of the geography, nature and

people of Central Africa (Murray 2016: 6). The aim of the expedition was to explore the waterways connected to the big East-African Lakes Victoria, Albert and Tanganyika and to determine if the Lualaba River (the upper reaches of the Congo River) was connected to the Nile as Dr. Livingston proposed (Stanley 1890: 13-17). Stanley opens his book with an account of him receiving the message that the famous explorer Dr. Livingstone was dead and that his body was on the way back to England. He writes:

Livingstone had then fallen! He was dead! He had died on the threshold of Lake Bemba, on the threshold of the dark region he had wished to explore! The work he had promised me to perform was only begun when death overtook him! The effect which this news had upon me, after the first shock had passed away, was to fire me with a resolution to complete his work, to be, if God willed it, the next martyr to geographical science, or, if my life was to be spared, to clear up not only the secrets of the Great River throughout its course, but also all that remained still problematic and incomplete of the discoveries of Burton, and Speke and Grant. (Stanley 1890: 1)

As this implies, Stanley locates himself in the traditions of one of the most established scientific wayfarers of his time. Not only that he was personally acquainted to Livingstone after he rescued him from the African jungle some years before, he also envisioned himself as the person capable of solving the last riddles of Geography, even if it meant that he would become a martyr himself and die for the imperial pursuits of empiricist science. According to his plan and supported by the *New York Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph* newspapers, Stanley departed to Zanzibar and hired a party of 230 native porters packing eight tons of especially designed collapsible boats, rifles, ammunitions and scientific instruments (ibid 40-41). Upon departure, he provides insights into the continental mindset that informs his voyage, reflecting on the Christian ‘burden’ of bringing civilization to the unenlightened parts world. Modernity’s virtues are contrasted with the perceived deficiencies of the native population (ibid 31):

Being, I hope, free from prejudices of cast, colour, race, or nationality, and endeavouring to pass what I believe to be a just judgement upon the negroes of Zanzibar; I find that they are a people just emerged into the Iron Epoch, and now thrust forcibly under the notice of nations who have left them behind by the improvements of over 4000 years. They possess beyond all doubt all the vices of a people still fixed deeply in barbarism [...] it is, therefore, a duty imposed upon us by the religion we profess [...] to help them out of the deplorable state they are now in.

It is interesting to observe, though, that Stanley introduces his statement with a qualification of his own persona. He describes himself as free of prejudice in terms of colour and race. This description increases the authority of his assessment of the population of Zanzibar by rendering it supposedly neutral. As this implies, his judgements about the supposed primitivity of the native people are not derived from speculation or hearsay but solely from his own unbiased observational efforts. Passages such as the two above point out the significance of travel writing in the high colonial period. They show how literary productions such as travel writing, journalism and scientific disseminations constituted an important part of empire building, constructing a discourse that brought together the taming of the environment and the subordination of local people (Murray 2016: 7-8).

Through many parts of *Through the Dark Continent*, Stanley (1890) continues in the style of a semi-detached narrator who, on the one hand, attempts to keep a protocolar distance to what he observes, frequently including maps, lists and sketches of artefacts and wildlife and who, on the other hand, is prepared to switch to a more dramatic mode of imperial storytelling. About three quarters into the trip, Stanley describes his experience navigating the Congo River. In a chapter indicatively named ‘A Running Fight’, we learn that 24 armed controversies with native tribes have so far occurred. Stanley (1890: 493) reports of

savages that were hideously be-painted for war, one-half of their bodies being white, the other ochreous [...] shouting their war cries –: ‘Ya-Mariwa! Ya-Mariwa!’ they rushed on [us] like a herd of buffaloes [our man] Muftha Rufiji was killed, a broad spear-blade sharp as a razor ripping nearly eight inches of his abdomen open; another man received a wound from a spear, which had glanced along his back.

Consequently, Stanley’s crew has suffered many casualties and is morally depressed. He renders a monologue, in which he dramatically describes the perceived plight of his mission (idem 495):

We were getting weary of fighting every day. The strain to which we were exposed had been too long, the incessant, long-lasting enmity shown to us was beginning to make us feel baited, harassed, and bitter. Dared we but das down by night? Ah, but who could tell us what lay below! Whom could we ask, when everything in shape of man raised his spear and screamed his rage at us as soon we were observed!

On the next day, when Stanley’s expedition floats down another stretch of the Congo River, his lookouts spot several settlements. The boat crews are alarmed by drums and horns that blow

deafening blasts, seeing natives board their canoes and paddle into their direction. As Stanley's men occupy a suitable defensive formation, they observe what they believe to be a massive attacking force gathering in front of them. Facing overwhelming manpower, Stanley sums up his perceived predicament in the most dramatic words: "it is 'neck or nothing.' We have no time to pray, or to take sentimental looks at the savage world, or even breathe a sad farewell to it. So many other things have to be done speedily as well" (Stanley 1890: 498). Implying that wondering and praying would no longer help in this 'pre-modern world of savage atrocities', he recollects himself and feels called upon the enlightenment rationalities of calculation and reason. He continues his narrative:

As the first foremost canoe comes rushing down and its consorts on either side beating the water into foam, and raising their jets of water with their sharp prows, I turn to take a last look at our people, and say to them: – 'Boys, be firm as iron; wait until you see the first spear, and then take good aim. Don't fire all at once. Keep aiming until you are sure of your man. Don't think of running away, for only your guns can save you.' (ibid 498)

As the battle erupts, however, the mode of narration dramatically changes from rational to eruptive. The seemingly calm tactical assessment of the scientist-cum-strategist turns into a war story full of emotion, violence and aggression.

For five minutes, we were so absorbed in firing that we take no note of anything else; [...] Our blood is up now. It is a murderous world, and we feel for the first time that we hate the filthy, vulturous ghouls who inhabit it. We therefore lift our anchors and pursue them up-stream along the right bank, until rounding a point we see their villages. We make straight for the banks, and continue the fight in the village streets with those who have landed, hunt them out into the woods [...] having returned the daring cannibals the compliment of a visit. (ibid 499)

As the above extracts imply, the adventurer Stanley is invested by superior firepower and 'modern' scientific knowledge to shuttle back and forth between his self-fabricated double role as geographer and imperial action hero. By the virtue of his scientific mission, he feels licensed to undertake geographical research and naturalistic observations, thus deriving at supposedly scientifically founded judgements on local populations. Besides, however, he is also an imperial conqueror. As he journeys through Africa, his survival is not limited by the affordances of the scientific equipment he carries and the geographical knowledge he possesses. He is outfitted with sufficient means of fire-power to gun through his way if that option is required. He has no

hesitations to switch to the mode of warrior poet to bemoan the hardships and atrocities he and his men face. Certainly, there is no place for local voices or different opinions in Stanley's account.

It is noteworthy that the cruel fighting passage with the 'savages' has found its way into the training program of contemporary education students, encouraging them to use a variety of primary sources to arrive at a more complete understanding of past events. In Benoit's "Death on the River: Solving the Mystery Through Analysis of Primary Sources" (2004), a second description of the lethal confrontation between Stanley's crew and the villagers is presented. We hear King Mojimba's version of the encounter, which emerged some decades later from an interview with the Catholic missionary, Father Joseph Fraessle. According to this, Chief Mojimba was not attacking but the leader of a welcome party that wanted to greet Stanley and his boat crew:

When we heard that the man with the white flesh was journeying down the Lualaba [Lualaba-Congo] we were open-mouthed with astonishment. We stood still. All night long the drums announced the strange news—a man with white flesh! That man, we said to ourselves, has a white skin. He must have got that from the river-kingdom. He will be one of our brothers who were drowned in the river. All life comes from the water, and in the water he has found life. Now is coming back to us, he is coming home....

We will prepare a feast, I ordered, we will go to meet our brother and escort him into the village with rejoicing! We donned our ceremonial garb. We assembled the great canoes. We listened for the gong which would announce our brother's presence on the Lualaba. Presently the cry was heard: He is approaching the Lohali! Now he enters the river! Halloh! We swept forward, my canoe leading, the others following, with songs of joy and with dancing, to meet the first white man our eyes had beheld, and to do him honor.

But as we drew near his canoes there were loud reports, bang! Bang! And fire-staves spat bits of iron at us. We were paralyzed with fright; our mouths hung wide open and we could not shut them. [...] Some screamed dreadfully, others were silent—they were dead, and blood flowed from little holes in their bodies. "War! that is war!" I yelled. "Go back!" The canoes sped back to our village with all the strength our spirits could impart to our arms. That was no brother! That was the worst enemy our country had ever seen. (Fraessle qtd. in Schiffers 1958: 196-197)

As this suggests, Stanley's account of Africa largely exhibits the tendency of colonial figures and travel writers to elevate themselves at the expense of their encounters with the other. Such accounts establish a strong imbalance in the power of representation which contributes to sustain significant socio-economic and political inequalities between their supposedly heroic selves and the Others, they purposefully degrade (Thompson 2011: 120). A typical feature of this rhetoric of exploration is what Pratt (1992: 201) calls the "monarch-of-all-I-survey-scene". This narrative device was frequently used by British explorers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and had the function to turn geographic discoveries into visions of expansionist possibilities "won" for the British Crown. While, as shown above, the actual 'discovery' was usually facilitated by extensive recruitment of local knowledge and help in the form of porters, translators and pathfinders, the discursive victory was eventually won by turning a foreign locality into European systems of knowledge intertwined with European colonial ambitions and formations of power (ibid: 202). In this logic of discovery, foreign cultures, resources and landscapes were brought into being mainly through strategies of media representations. Typical texts included maps, publications for the Royal Geographical Society, reports to the Foreign Office and the travel book.

This discursive making of the world (Pratt 1992: 204f.) features three common strategies which assign quantitative and qualitative value to the discovered place. First, the landscape is *estheticized* and often contrasted with the hardships the explorers supposedly had to endure to find the places they describe. Second, a *high density of meaning* is sought to add both a symbolic and emotional aspect to the account. Typical is the use of adjectival modifiers such as 'emerald green' and 'snowy foam' to bring the unknown land into context with the recipient's imagination and make it comprehensible as a distant home abroad. Finally, a *relation of mastery* is constructed between the explorer and the explored. The scene that is observed is thus evaluated and brought into perspective through the ideological setting of the looking glass held by the explorer. As Thompson (2011: 120) suggests, the following description of Stanley's (1890) 'Africa' exemplifies this moment of discursively seizing the newly discovered land and appropriating it for imperial usage. Somewhere in Uganda, he climbs a hill and looks upon the land that stretches in front of him (Stanley 1890: 142-143):

It is a spot from which, undisturbed, the eye may rove over one of the strangest yet fairest portions of Africa – hundreds of square miles of beautiful lake scenes ... hundreds of square miles of pastoral uplands dotted thickly with villages and groves of banana. From my lofty eyrie I can see herds upon herds of cattle, and many minute

specks, white and black, which can be nothing but flocks of sheep and goats. [...] Secure on my lofty throne, I can view their movements, and laugh at the ferocity of the savage hearts which beat in those thin dark figures; [...] how long shall they remain unvisited by the teacher! What a land they possess! and what an inland sea! [...] How steamers afloat on the lake might cause Ururi to shake hands with Uzongora, and Uganda with Usukuma, make the wild Wavuma friends with the Wazinza, and unite the Wakerewe with the Wagana! A great trading port might then spring up on the Shimeeyu, whence the coffee of Uzongora, the ivory, sheep, and goats of Ugeyeya, Usoga, Uvuma, and Uganda, the cattle of Uwaya [...] and furs and hides of Uganda [...] might be exchanged for the fabrics brought from the coast; all the land be redeemed from wildness, the industry and energy of the natives stimulated [...] and all the countries round with the nobler ethics of a higher humanity. [...] Oh for the hour when a band of philanthropic capitalists shall vow to rescue these beautiful lands, and supply the means to enable the Gospel messengers to come and quench the murderous hate with which man beholds man in the beautiful lands around Lake Victoria.

Stanley conquers his 'throne' and details the richness and beauty of the land in highly estheticized terms. Emphasizing the security of his position also implies the dangers that he supposedly has endured to reach his vantage point. The density of language is relatively high, transporting an emotional appeal as he imagines and classifies the world in front of him in the best imperial fashion. As Youngs (1994: 108) remarks, in his perceived mastery, Stanley assumes the rationale that technology will function as a force for pacification and unite hostile populations by stimulating trade, which will eventually lead to civilization. According to this logic, the capitalist enterprise would eventually save the newly discovered land of plenty from presumably ugly native creatures that excel in murdering each other as much as they do in neglecting their fertile land. By invoking the power of Gospel messengers, divine blessing for the civilizing project is assumed, effectively locating it beyond the reaches of criticism of its time.

It should be noted that the cultural force of such assumptions was massive and had a strong influence on many 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century tourists who increasingly wished to explore themselves the new routes the colonial infrastructures had created. 'Stanley's Africa' became meaningful beyond its scope of being an individual account about regional travel. Rather, it helped establish and naturalize the representational binary between cultured traveller and uncultured local with all the consequences that were and have since been involved. In no way do Stanley's



mechanisms of othering only pertain to Africa but rather serve as a blueprint for how the ‘big-ideas’ of the early explorers informed the mental maps of later European travellers to other parts of the colonial world from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

By then, the world had largely been discovered and measured by the explorations discussed above. The industrial revolution and the expansion of railway networks and shipping lines made large-scale and transcontinental travel possible and feasible. Tourism developed as a new past-time activity that began to extend downwards from social elites. It was no longer only the ‘Grand-tourists’ who could travel but also the emergent middle classes and working classes (Hunter 2004:30). Much of this development was due to Thomas Cook, who may rightfully be called the founder of modern tourism. Cook offered first domestic excursions to English clients in the 1850s and organised a first continental tour to Holland, Belgium, France and Germany, arranging hotels and routes himself (ibid). By the year 1897, Cook’s enterprise had already stewarded some 20,000 tourists per year, relying heavily on steam ships and trains to offer first international package tours to India, America and the Far East (Poon 1993: 31).

Initially as a side-line, the Thomas Cook Company also entered the emerging market of guidebooks, selling as many as 10.000 copies per year in 1875. Cook concentrated on the Middle East and North Africa but also published a guide to Burma (MacKenzie 2005: 22). This time, ranging from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, can roughly be described as the infancy period of mass tourism, meaning an organized form of travel that was brought about by newly emerging technologies of transport, changes in the means and organization of industrial production and new forms of management (Sezgin & Yolal 2012: 73-75). In the following section, I discuss the transformation from colonial travel to modern tourism and outline some of the discursive implications of this process by reference to a then newly developing genre: the tourist guidebook.

### 3.5. The Birth of Modern Tourism - From Imperial Adventures to Elegant Power

At this point, I wish to address a key point of counter-Eurocentric criticism that may in part also pertain to this doctoral thesis. From the perspective of Western scholarship, many histories of tourism have produced accounts that tend to focus on the documentary records of the wealthy and powerful, including letters, journey and diaries (Towner 1995: 340). As Towner (idem: 339) points out, this has led to the general acceptance that ‘the’ history of tourism is

essentially a history of western cultural experience, beginning with the leisured elites of ancient Greece and Rome, the re-emergence of tourism in the Renaissance, and the development of spas and Grand Tours in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The story continues with the seaside resorts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the spread of tourism through the agency of Thomas Cook and his successors. From the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the whole movement is accelerated by the jet aeroplane and charter flights.

As this suggests, historians have mainly treated (international) tourists as a European phenomenon that has begun to spread out to eventually ‘conquer’ the rest of the world, comparable to the expansion of European Empires. Yet, this ‘colonial’ view on tourism is clearly supported by evidence. Hunter (2004: 28) rightly contextualizes the birth of modern tourism with the rise of industrialization and the appearance of organized tourism practices such as the first Thomas Cook excursions (1841) and the first Baedeker guide (1843). He argues that through the spread of global Western influence, tourism became implanted in colonized places like Africa and Asia, making it virtually inseparable from economic and political strategies of Western conquest. MacKenzie (2005: 18) shares this view and points out that “British and other empires, were not only empires of war, of economic exploitation, of settlement and of cultural diffusion. They were also increasingly empires of travel”.

There is, however, also much truth in the argument that academic accounts on the subject may have tended to overlook important aspects, participants and media types that influenced the history of tourism and that might help us arrive at more adequate interpretation of the situation now and in the future. In this respect, Towner (1995: 341-341) suggests several strategies to derive a more differentiated understanding of tourism in a specific historical context. These include looking at various sources of material such as oral histories, works of fiction, photographs, paintings and all sorts of materials that can provide a better understanding of the relationship between tourist practices and the mentality of cultures. One such example is provided by Hansen’s (1995) study of the development and function of Mountaineering discourse in mid-Victorian Britain, arguing that it became a vehicle through which members of the professional middle classes could express values of masculinity and gentlemanliness that very much reflected the rhetoric of the supposedly heroic pursuits of imperialism further abroad. As this suggests, mountain discourse was essentially appropriated as imperial exploration discourse. It thus served as a context-specific and available medium that could construct the (British) self in a specific way, telling us much about hopes and fears of British national identity at the time.

Thus, this dissertation takes Towner's (1995) warning serious and aims for a comparative reading of different texts from different periods. That is, I look at 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century texts to better understand the roles and practices that were allocated to individuals at the time. Thus, I become able to establish a general western mindset of the time, mainly by showing how early travellers fashioned themselves in terms of interaction with their supposed Others. Colonial travellers (doctors, administrators, traders & tourists) very much followed the footsteps of the early explorers discussed above.

Like the exploration narrative, colonial spectacles had a performative and perlocutionary force: they enacted and enforced the imperial fantasies they claimed to represent. By naturalizing the 'primitive' nature of African culture [and others, my remark], the modernity and maturity of European civilization was enshrined and vindicated (Murray 2016: 15).

As MacKenzie (2005: 18-20) points out, early guidebooks captured the imperial agenda of their time very well. The first copies were published as 'imperial guides' and mainly written for the emerging middle classes. They inter alia addressed tourists, sportsmen and settlers and had the goal to provide first complete descriptions to the territories to which they were devoted. However, the early guidebooks never received the scholarly attention they would have deserved, given that they can illuminate some of the discursive practices that were deployed to put imperialist hegemony into practice. This includes anchoring particular versions of historical 'truths' in the collective memories of travellers and the local population (e.g. through declaring national monuments) as well as communicating cultural tips and value assumptions in terms local cultural practices and recent socio-economic developments:

[i]n all these ways, the Handbook was more than a guide to travel. It was a relentless textualization of dominion and control, expressed through the places and incidents and forms of both past and present through which that imperial power was supremely expressed. (MacKenzie 2005: 21)

Importantly, colonialist discourse in travel writing has not vanished. Some of its underlying assumptions remain hidden in modern texts and sustain the West's ongoing economic and political dominance over the rest of the world (Thompson 2011: 136). As Clark (1999: 32) shows in this regard, it is indeed very important to keep an eye on the colonial past when analysing modern accounts of travel writing. Since the ability to travel is a prominent sub-story of the grand narrative of imperialism, it is a key organizing principle in symbolic and material terms, that made the colonial project possible. Against that background

[t]ravel writing is one of the main archives for investigating colonising processes, providing rich source material on the formations of western subjectivities out of the encounter with imagined others. The travel book can also expose transactions of cultural and political power; a power supposedly always purchased at the expense of those imagined others who constitute the zone called 'elsewhere'. (Clark 1999: 32)

In many cases, today's 'elsewhere' was yesterday's colonial 'somewhere'. Implicated in imperial networks of power, places like Stanley's (1890) 'Dark Continent', for example, had a meaning and a purpose in political, commercial and cultural terms. With the dismantling of the colonial system and after the horrors of the Second World War, figures like Stanley became increasingly unpalatable and the 19<sup>th</sup> century cult for the explorer began to decline (Thompson 2011: 59). The slaughtering in the wars and the holocaust made clear that European moral superiority was a myth but the impact of the narratives it had created still lingered on. It is therefore important to note that images of the undeveloped Other are still produced to assure Western recipients that it is their description of the world which counts and that they have the moral right to do so (ibid: 155). A case in point is volunteering in development aid. In this context, Gronemeyer (1992) has deconstructed the notions of "helping" and "development" as problematic, pointing out that their rationale has always been shaped by the discourses of those in charge of global power, re-enacting a colonial logic of the noble benefactor and the 'helpless' Other. Other than Stanley's forceful coercion described above, this is a more sophisticated and 'elegant' form of power, which has discursively and practically transformed a colonialism that takes into one that supposedly gives (idem: 57).

As this section has argued, travel writing has undergone significant changes over the past centuries. While medieval texts largely focused on exotic wonders and the curiosities of foreign lands, early modern explorers sought after gathering viable information and intelligence for scientific and strategic purposes. Somewhat later, high imperial accounts portrayed the heroics and superiority of their protagonists to ideologically sustain their visions of colonial grandeur, while more recent texts explore the post-touristic pleasures of negotiating some of the older and problematic categories of us vs. them in new symbolic terms.

The next section will discuss the social construction of space and its interplay with discourse, representation and language. It will set the theoretical foundation for the further project and review relevant literature that narrows down the broad scope of travel writing to the media under review: guidebooks and blogs. Subsequently the methods of enquiry are introduced.

## 4. The Social Construction of Space: Discourse, Hegemony and Language

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said (1994: 7) insightfully remarked that

the earth is in effect one world, in which empty, uninhabited spaces virtually do not exist. Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.

Arguably, what Said intimates in this passage – drawing from Foucault’s (1972: 49) understanding of discourses as “practices that systematically shape the object of which they speak” – is that geography functions as an apparatus of spatial intelligibility. It thus lies at the heart of cultural classifications and political divisions that have come to constitute our perception of the modern world. Because of this spatialized power-knowledge deployment, individual sites and places are woven into ensembles of imaginary geographies that are associated with commonly shared value systems, oscillating inter alia between contempt and appreciation (Shields 1991: 29). As Shields (1991: 30) hereof observes, Winston Churchill’s coinage of the Iron Curtain clearly implied a spatial separation between capitalist Europe and communist Russia, effectively entailing the connotations of good vs. evil from a western point of view. The material boundary that was set between a supposed binary pair of political systems and clusters of nations thus sustained the framework of cultural intelligibility of the then divided world order. One “knew” where one could go and where one would better not venture, and one was also relatively certain about what to expect in terms of cultural exchange with the Other, even though such exchange would probably never take place, other than in the hypothetical case of mutual nuclear annihilation.

Spatial imaginations and ascriptions therefore matter. Places and regions are not naturally given and unchanging (as the example above implies), they are socially constructed at their time and by particular actors in relation to their interests, desires and concerns (Norton 1996: 357; Mui Ling 2003: 258). In this regard, *discourses of place* function as sources of knowledge that are necessarily constitutive of *power-relations* (Yeoh & Kong 1996; Glasze & Matissek 2009). Foucault (1977: 27) theorized the relevant workings of power and knowledge in the following way: “power and knowledge directly imply one another, [so that] there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not

presuppose and constitute at the same time the constitution of power relations”. Discourses of place therefore produce and legitimate ways of thinking and modes of action regarding differently appropriated geographic entities and localizable cultural settings:

For Foucault, the production and circulation of discourse are simultaneously mechanisms of social power. Corollary to this, he asserts that those who wish to exercise social power must use discourse to do so. The regulation of discourse deals with who is allowed to speak on a given topic, as well as which forms of knowledge are subjugated in the production of truth (Stoddart 2007: 205).

It follows that power is rather productive than oppressive. In discourse theory, matters of ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ are never absolutes but the temporary outcomes of specific power and knowledge configurations that may and will change over time. In different contexts, the meaning attached to people and places may change and make way for alternatives ways of imagining and speaking about the world (Glasze & Mattisek 2009: 12). Consequently, there is never one ‘final’ discourse that determines what is and what is not, but rather a symbolic struggle between hegemonic and non-hegemonic bodies of knowledge that compete for temporary acceptance at a certain place at a specific time. As Storey (2006: 102) puts it, discourses produce the ‘truths’ we live by in terms of supplying the knowledge that is necessary to make sense of ourselves and the rest of the world. Knowledge thus functions as a “weapon of power” (ibid), since – following Foucault (2006: 352) – “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together”. Discourses therefore “exercise power as they transport knowledge on which the collective and individual consciousness feeds. This emerging knowledge is the basis of individual and collective action and the formative action that shapes reality” (Jäger 2001: 38).

The joint-venture of power and knowledge is precisely what makes possible the organisation of intellectual and material control. Gramsci’s concept of hegemony is useful to better understand the social mechanisms of the discursive struggles that underlie this process. It describes the process of establishing dominance within a culture by seeking to establish voluntary consent rather than by force and oppression. Hegemonic power attempts to ‘convince’ individuals and groups to subscribe to the norms and values of a system that is inherently exploitative. It relies on cooperation and voluntarism by providing the ‘common sense’ that guides our understanding of the world (Stoddart 2007: 201). As far as resistance is concerned, hegemony does not ‘fight’ opposition. It rather attempts to incorporate it into its own system by finding a compromise that does both (supposedly) empower the subordinate class or people through options of participation and secure the position of the dominant group.

An obvious example from the world of tourism is the Hippie Trail to Goa, India. What started out as an anticapitalistic adventure for some alternative-minded youths of the 1960s and 1970s later became a powerful holiday and lifestyle brand. Now, there is large tourist infrastructure in Goa, there are Goa parties all around the world and there has developed a music style named Goa Trance. All this now cleverly incorporates the ‘original’ myth of a subcultural escapist venue into a multifaceted package ready for capitalist consumption.

It is crucial to understand that hegemony is never simply power imposed from above. It is always the result of a negotiation process between more and less dominant social groups and constitutes a mix of what comes from ‘above’ and from ‘below’ (Storey 2006: 63-64). As such, hegemony theory guides our understanding of culture away from a stable bloc towards a shifting balance of competing forces that is always in the making but never finished. Paired with discourse theory, a suitable framework for this study can be developed. Following Stoddart’s (2007: 206f.) reading of Laclau & Mouffe (2001), the two authors provide a model that shows how competing social forces seek to establish hegemonic consent via the mechanisms of *discursive construction*. They hold that hegemony is mainly won over through the successful temporary articulation of subject-positions within an open and complex semiotic network that is in constant flux:

The general field of the emergence of hegemony is that of articulatory practices, that is, a field where the ‘elements’ have not crystalized into ‘moments’. In a closed system of relational identities in which the meaning of each moment is absolutely fixed, there is no place whatsoever for a hegemonic practice. A fully successful system of differences, which excluded any floating signifier would not make possible any articulation [...] and there would be nothing to hegemonize. It is because hegemony supposes the incomplete and open character of the social, that it can take place only in a field of articulatory practices. (Laclau & Mouffe’s 2001: 134)

The upshot of Laclau & Mouffe’s (2001) work is that it broadens the scope of Gramsci’s concept of hegemony as a ‘soft’ form of domination by introducing the cultural mechanisms by which the battle over hegemonic acceptance is fought out. Hegemony is therefore “a political type of relation, a form, if one so wishes, of politics” (idem: 139). Given the scope of this thesis, it is precisely the specific modalities of articulation that will be explored. While hegemony theory directs the focus of attention on the constant shifts between forces of resistance and incorporation vis-à-vis paying attention to their temporary consensual outcomes, a discourse framework helps to explore the semiotic mechanisms of construction, seeking to expose the

contingency of the supposed realities that make up our world and to uncover interests that stand behind it. In a nutshell, the goal is to explore the relationship between the cultural production of knowledge and the reproduction and or distribution of social power with regard to practices of (touristic) spatialisation.

#### 4.1. Tourism and Spatialisation

Shields (1991: 46) refers to the social construction of space as *spatialisation* and points out that the power relations involved in spatialisation are sustained via hegemonic systems of knowledge that operate in terms of fundamental spatial divisions such as inclusion / exclusion, subject / object, near / far and civilised / uncivilised, etc. These spatial suppositions then establish performative codes which relate a geographic location to specific practices and forms of interaction. For example, as the discussion in the previous section has shown, Stanley's (1890) imperial (mis)adventures have shaped the image of Africa as the dangerous and uncivilized 'dark continent' to a very large extent. The metaphor of darkness exemplifies the deployment of binary spatial divisions as a prequel to material intervention. The supposedly enlightened European explorer Stanley imagined himself as a luminous figure paving the way through a new found land of obscurity and horror. He crafted the 'terms of imagination' for other self-styled agents of civilization so effectively that they felt both capable and entitled to conquer the land hidden under the cloak of darkness that the title of Stanley's book suggests. It is therefore not surprising that spatialisation becomes most visible in the spatial practices and connotations that people associate with particular places, cultures and regions:

For example, one can trace the rise and fall of a specific conception or image of a place partly through the record of the number of people who visited it and a knowledge of what activities people engaged in when they were there. Such place-images come about through *over-simplification* (i.e. reduction to one trait), *stereotyping* (amplification of one or more traits) and *labelling* (where a place is deemed to be of a certain nature). [...] Traces of these cultural place-images are also left behind in the litter of historical popular cultures: postcards, advertising images, song lyrics and in the setting of novels. (Shields 1991: 47)

As this suggests, places and spaces are transformed from their material existence to the symbolic realm of significations in several types of media. Any place, region or localized cultural setting that exists in terms of knowledge necessarily mirrors a constellation of networks of meaning. These can appear so natural that they are held as signifiers of the essential qualities



and character of the phenomenon and / or human condition in question (ibid). The cultural force of travelling and travel related media should be reiterated at this point. It will be of interest to investigate how particular destinations are brought into relations to each other via discourses of place and under which authority this spatialisation takes place.

Tourism plays a key role in this context. Tourist practices rely on sets of imaginary anticipations that shape real-world destination as desirable / not desirable places to be visited and perceived (Norton 1996:358). As Löfgren (1999: 7) points out, tourism is “an arena in which fantasy becomes an important social practice”. Similarly, Salazar (2012: 864) remarks that already the act of planning a vacation involves the cognitive capacity to enter in a thorough imagining of the ‘Other’ vis-à-vis the ‘self’. However, tourist fantasies are not simply floating around, they are carefully crafted and refined. Images of places and stories of exoticised Otherness are marketed as profitable dreams about an ever intriguing far-away world. They are brought into the orbit of everyday life by what David Harvey (1989: 289f.) calls the “image production industry”. In that vein, Salazar (2012: 864) defines tourism imaginaries “as socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with people’s imaginings and are used as meaning making and world shaping devices”. That is, tourism involves specific ways and practices of mediating and understanding the world, and these are significant as they provide a window on how the cultural understanding of societies is organized within our increasingly globalizing lives (Wilkes 2013: 34). Following Robinson (2013: 158), the term *mediating* describes “the way in which people relate to information about a destination, and the way in which they use information from a range of sources to develop an idea or perception about the destination”. This process has been usefully described by MacCannel (1999) in terms of a triangular relationship between a *tourist*, a *site* and a *marker*, with the marker being the information about the site supplied in the form of guidebooks, travelogues and other representational edifice. It follows that preparatory and / or accompanying information plays a significant role. It educates visitors about particular sites, countries and cultures, ensuring that what is seen and how it is seen coincides with hegemonic assumptions that have already been established.

## 4.2. State of the Art and Conceptual Foundations

In the following, I will review studies on tourist preparation literature that deal with the complexity of the mediated holiday destination. I begin with Bhattacharyya’s (1997) influential post-colonial analysis of *Lonely Planet India*. As her paper suggests, the guide book functions as a carrier of colonial discourse, placing strong emphasis on the “glorious past” and “exotic present” of the country. India is thus represented as a beautiful but dangerous and somewhat

backward place that still ‘benefits’ from its imperial heritage of railroads, mining sites and agricultural irrigation, things which are described in the guide book as outcome of “a better organised, more efficient and less corrupt administrative system” (idem 377). The quintessential image that is presented of India in *Lonely Planet India* is the following:

India’s not an easy country to handle and more than a few visitors are only happy to finally get on an aircraft and fly away...India is far from the easiest country in the world to travel around. It can be hard going, the poverty will get you down, Indian bureaucracy would try the patience of even a Hindu saint, and the most experienced travellers find themselves at the end of their tempers at some point in India. (idem 378)

In addition to providing this image, the guidebook also offers guidelines for the interaction with local inhabitants. Elsewhere, these are either described as “middlemen”, whose sole purpose is to provide service for the traveller, or as “picturesque others” that one should capture by means of the photographic gaze. This simplified tourist-local relationship suggests not only a significant power difference between the local population and the tourist, it also sends tourists the implicit message that they have the right to be served and pampered, since they are on top of the ‘naturally’ existing hierarchy that supposedly structures the country (idem 383-386).

Bhattacharyya’s study is especially valuable for this thesis as it outlines the relationship between discourse (shared bodies of knowledge) and the representational practices of the guidebook (language in use). A guidebook is both constituted by and constitutive of the respective discursive framings of a country. As people read the book, they too draw from a shared discursive background and interpret the representations presented in the book according to these Western bodies of knowledge. As the dominant discourses about self and Other are reactivated every time the book is used, and its advice is put into practice, the entailing power relations between visitors and visited are legitimised in a circle of constant reproduction (Bhattacharyya 1997: 375).

In his semiotic analysis of *Lonely Planet Cambodia*, Tegelberg (2010) takes a similar approach to that of Bhattacharyya. He argues that guidebooks play an important role in shaping people’s ideas about emerging tourist destinations because they select a suitable range of iconography and narratives that eventually combine as a *pars pro toto* for the whole country. In the case of Cambodia, tragedy, authenticity and affordability are the three major themes that emerge in Tegelberg’s (2010: 496) analysis of the narrative structure of the guidebook. Since the guidebook only provides a ‘dramatic’ selection of historic and present events, the country’s

diversified and multifaceted present is discursively ‘reduced’ to its main tourist sites, its presumably cheap touristic offers and the legacy of the genocidal Khmer Rouge.

Besides investigating the representational practices of the contemporary *Lonely Planet Cambodia*, Tegelberg’s study follows a discourse-historical strategy – similar to the model applied by Wodak & Forchtner (2014) in their important analysis of right-wing populism in Austria – and traces the discursive context in which Cambodia has been framed over the last centuries. It thus becomes possible to link current imaginaries of the country as “cheap & nasty” to older discursive “archives” of colonial conduct, where Western superiority over representation and control of resources firmly subjugated non-Western societies. The colonial discourse of legitimated exploitation thus undergoes a transformation and becomes rearticulated in Lonely Planet’s contemporary strategy of representing a commercialised image of Cambodia that foregrounds affordability and authenticity without any significant inclusion of local voices.

It is interesting to observe that Lonely Planet’s tendency to avoid telling stories about ‘hidden sights’ (other life-worlds that may exist besides the images that tourists envision) strongly contradicts the company’s self-defined agenda of responsible travel (Tegelberg 2010). As Lisle shows in her study about “Humanitarian Travels: Ethical Communications in Lonely Planet Guidebooks” (2008), Lonely Planet claims to promote the notion of responsible independent travel as a sustainable alternative to mass tourism by cultivating the myth of a community of morally sound adventure travellers. These people vigorously define themselves against the supposedly harmful mainstream tourist. Paradoxically, however, such ‘real travellers’ understand themselves as responsible and self-sufficient cosmopolitans, while they nevertheless obey the authoritative advice of a guide book, which in fact creates passive followers, docile local subjects and exoticised spaces for tourist consumption.

What I find particularly helpful in Lisle’s study (2008) is that she scrutinizes the notion of independent and responsible travel as promoted by Lonely Planet and so exposes several problematic assumptions that will serve as a useful basis for the research in my doctoral thesis. Firstly, she argues that Lonely Planet offers the ethical vision of pro-development travel to overcome global inequalities that have resulted from colonialism and the neoliberal economy. This, however, assumes the prevailing capitalist logic that “there is always a privileged subject who extends a helping hand to an already subordinate and victimised Other, and in the process entrenches the very inequalities s/he is trying to alleviate” (idem 158). As an effect, the divide between the passive victim and the ‘noble benefactor’ may rather be intensified. At the same

time, travellers clear their conscience as they see themselves rather as aid workers than tourists, feeling that they spend their money where it is terribly needed. Second, this implies that local people, customs and cultures are not represented on equal footing with the tourists. It is the tourists who make the journey and it is the tourists who instigate many cross-cultural encounters by means of the currency they spend (idem 165). While this obviously has a helpful side, the question is arguably to which degree local actors can benefit from such encounters and the money that is being spent. Taking into account Lonely Planet's second important agenda of 'travelling on a shoestring', I argue that it remains at best questionable if local communities can profit from budget travelling that is taken to the extreme. Third, Lisle (idem 165) demonstrates the contradiction that sits uncomfortably between the guide book and the notion of the independent traveller: "*LP* users think they are making active and independent decisions, but in fact those decisions have already been framed in advance by *LP*'s ethical vision". That is, the cultivation of free choice is ultimately a way of narrowing down individual options to suit the commercial agenda of the world's largest publisher of guidebooks.

At this point, it is instructive to make a brief excursion and relate the phenomenon of mediated touristic choice to the conjuncture of contemporary consumer culture. As Zygmunt Bauman (2012) has convincingly argued, the Western world has undergone a shift from a society of producers to one of consumers, which has effectively led to a situation where the whole 'life policy' of our time is derived from the principles of shopping. Desire is created by endless purchase lists that appear to include all options but one: the option to opt out of buying (73f.). This suggests that modern tourist practices could and probably should be viewed against the background of what Bauman (2012) and Beck (1992) have described as a condition of uncertainty and risk – a conjuncture in which "the world becomes an infinite collection of possibilities: a container filled to the brim with a countless multitude of opportunities yet to be chased or already missed" (Bauman 2012: 61). It is therefore not surprising that Bauman's (1996) essay on "Questions of Cultural Identity" sees the tourist as a central metaphor for the late-modern way of life. In that sense, the tourist is a constant seeker of new experience, who is no longer committed to a strenuous and sometimes life-long journey like once the pilgrim, but free to roam the world in a constant series of short trips that are structured along aesthetic criteria and the liberty to be amused, pleased and excited (Bauman 1996: 29f.). Arguably, the 'perfect holiday' that is insinuated in this vision of late modern culture is not only one that shall suit a brave? new world of supposedly independent individuals, it is also one that is mediated as pleasingly aesthetic and conducive to the tourist's carefree gaze. Most importantly, it is a trip

that shall not differ from the expectations that are created in advance and the power relations these expectations imply.

The logic of this pattern has been taken up by John Urry's seminal work *The Tourist Gaze* (1990) and the more recent 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the book, co-authored by Jonas Larsen *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (2011). The gaze, in its simplest sense, is a learned way of looking that puts any perceived scene into the perspective of discourse. Individuals thus gaze upon the world through filters of prior knowledge, education, expectations, hopes and fears. These "lenses" of conscious and unconscious socialisation are both individual and collective and their particular activation and combination eventually lets the 'reality' before someone's eyes appear as exotic, dangerous or beautiful (Urry & Larson 2011: 2). According to Larsen (2006a: 245), this puts into operation hierarchically structured power relations: "[o]ur eyes are socio-culturally framed and gazing is a performance, that orders, shapes and classifies, rather than reflects, the world". Gazing can thus be identified as a crucial technology of world making that contributes to the struggle over geography, insinuated by Edward Said and discussed further above.

As this would imply, tourist attractions are either visited or not because there is a strong anticipation of feelings that might be associated with them. Often, such anticipations are warm and fuzzy and most notably, they are sustained by the tourist media, including promotional texts, literature and TV (Urry 1990: 3). In terms of the lens-metaphor employed above, this means that tourists in the field attune their visual settings to the cognitive structures that a particular place discourse activates. As Urry (1990: 140) suggests, a certain ritual of citation can thus not be avoided. Because,

[i]nvolved in tourism is much of a hermeneutic circle. What is sought for a holiday is a set of photographic images, as seen in tour company brochures or on TV programmes. While the tourist is away, this then moves on to a tracking down and capturing of those images for oneself. And it ends up with travellers demonstrating that they really have been there by showing their vision of the images that they had seen originally before they set off.

Following this model, tourist would be exposed to media representations of a destination prior to their journey and thus learn what is worthwhile to visit and what is not. Sights would then be selected accordingly, and pictures of these places would be taken as evidence for the "perfect" trip. Since this 'quotation principle' naturally relates to travel stories and oral episodes about visiting countries too, the likely outcome is a relatively homogenous chain of signification that relies on common practice and understanding.

The notion of Urry's hermeneutic circle, or "circle of representation" has been applied by Jenkins (2003) as a referential framework to explore whether international backpacker tourists reproduce the tourist industry's iconic representations of Australia in their personal photographs. As her results suggest, there is evidence for a circular process by which visitors reproduce "typical" images of Australia in order to document their trips (Jenkins 2003: 324). In a similar way, Bell (2013) has drawn from Urry's (1990) and Jenkins (2003) model in her study about perceived and projected images of Gloucester. The aim of her study was to show whether participant generated photographs loaded to the internet were similar to those used in the official marketing strategies of Gloucester. While her evidence supports the circle of representation in terms of similar depictions of 'master themes' like heritage, culture and shopping, her findings further suggest that tourists construct deviant forms of the gaze that seek out different aspects than those that are mediated by the official tourist bodies (Bell 2013: 115).

Bell thus proposes a research perspective that is less restrictive and allows for individual reflection of experience and alternative production of representations in the context of being a tourist: "[w]ith the use of ubiquitous social media tools such as Facebook, it is no longer the power of the tourism professional and academic that directs the knowledge and understanding of tourism, but a reciprocal process with the tourist of joint knowledge mediation" (idem 118). Nowadays, such an open perspective appears both empowering and necessary. There has been a proliferation of markers that promote tourist sights, places and gazes via the ever increasing and diversifying channels of the participative media. Much of today's tourism structures would be unthinkable without the rapid developments in the field of the new media, transforming hitherto predominantly top-down information flows into complex networks of communication that allow for multiple directions of image projection (Scherle & Lessmeister 2013: 96-97; Scarles & Lester 2013: 1). As both media consumers and producers, tourists are no longer confined to the role of obedient followers of established discourses but emerge as active agents with the potential to shape representations of places in idiosyncratic ways (Larsen 2006b: 79).

New web 2.0 technologies such as travel blogs empower tourists to mediate destination images themselves and thus afford them with the opportunity to either enforce or subvert dominant imaginations about the self, the Other and the world as their contents become publicly explored and re-evaluated (Bell 2013: 116f.). As user-generated web contents are presumably based on actual experience (post travel) and not implicated in the tourism industry's economy, they are increasingly conceived as more sincere and unbiased sources of information for fellow travellers (Urry & Larsen 2011: 59). Blogs and are now widely used by travellers to share their

holiday experiences with friends, family and the general public (Chandralal, Rindfleish & Valenzuela 2015). This is important for this dissertation since blog entries offer insights into travellers' anticipations, aspirations and emotions, providing clues on how individuals actually interpret a destination when they are vacationing abroad. Accordingly, a more comprehensive understanding of destination images can be gained by comparatively investigating the joint knowledge production and negotiation between professionally projected images and tourist's reflexive accounts (Bell 2013: 116-118). Taken together, the issues outlined above suggest the need for a multi-perspective approach that can grapple with both: frames of touristic understanding as they are circulated (e.g. in guidebooks), and tourists' capacities to negotiate these in the field / the new media along the axis of interpretation, experience and reproduction (e.g. in travel blogs).

Such a perspective not only appreciates the above described shift from content control by institutional media producers to individuals as independent mediating agents, it also offers what Mansson (2011: 1848f.) sees as an important research aim, namely to analyse whether tourist do actually challenge the dominant perceptions of tourist sites and holiday destinations, or whether this is an illusion. For this, the independent travel blog could provide a viable research basis. Pointing at such possibility, Crang (1997: 369) describes the act of recording travel impressions as integrative part of the travel experience and suggests to analytically harness such recordings to better understand traveller's relations to places and landscapes. What Crang more specifically assumes about the video diary may arguably be transferred to the modern travel blog:

The video diary, for instance, offers the potential for allowing tourist a familiar mode of self-expression that highlights the aspects of self-presentation, and allows the confessional exploration of understanding, the recording of activity and motion, the interaction of people as well as what they see, and the enjoyment of each other's company. The format may allow participants to explore their own ways of constructing the world (ibid).

As this literature review suggests, the recording and representation of travel experience is a way of making sense of the world by relating the self mentally and physically to the (mediated) geography of places. Even though any tourist recording is necessarily selective, the individual's choice of action and interaction and the way of its depiction still reveals meaningful practices through which people seek to negotiate the 'realities' they perceive. Paying analytical attention to the *pris en scence* of the self and Others by observing individual recordings therefore

promises to be rewarding for this research project. I will analyse contents from guidebooks and blogs and treat both of these tourist practices as repositories of travel discourse. I follow Salazar (2012: 866) in that these tourist texts are social practices which can help reveal underlying imaginaries by paying close attention to what people say and do. While the guidebooks function as authorial material that shall provide a “cognitive framework” for the tourist (Bhattacharyya 1997: 372), the independent travel blogs are experiential accounts of a journey that has taken or is taking place. It will thus be interesting to see, whether there is evidence of convergence between independent blogs and guidebooks, or if blog entries point at tourist practices that critically negotiate the relationship between the self and the world abroad. In order to account for the historical context of the regional situation, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century texts are included in my study as well. Once the discursive background of the region is established, my focus shifts to contemporary representational strategies (guidebooks and blogs), so that a more thorough understanding of implicit and explicit references to colonialism and historical conditions can be gained. By this, I follow Mike Crang’s (1997: 366) important call that: “geography needs to take seriously the techniques of seeing and how they are embedded in particular space time configurations of observation that complicate simple models of subject and object, representation and reality, image and process”. The next chapter discusses the epistemological orientation, the methodology and the objects of this study, followed by a rationale of my choice of Southeast Asia as a regional context

## 5. Methodology and Research Design

A fundamental assumption of this thesis is that communication in society functions on the basis of mediation between people and texts<sup>1</sup>. As texts are produced and circulated, they draw from the ideas of other people and other texts, while at the same time, they constitute the material from which other texts and people draw (Förnas 2002: 104). Such *passages* in and through texts and people function as sites of productive interpretation and therefore constitute the locations where meaning is being made. That is, they are places where subjects and texts meet in context and harness the potential of communicative agency by means of textual interpretation and production (idem 102). To meaningfully account for communication, one should therefore follow the traces that passages leave in various texts and try to uncover possible hidden meanings and processes of articulation, paying close attention to the contexts that apply (idem 99). The advantage of this poly-dimensional perspective is that it allows for an interrogation of

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<sup>1</sup> Text is conceived here in a wider sense, meaning communicative practices that include language both written and spoken, images, body language and any other form of meaningful interaction.



complex cultural phenomena *archeologically* as well as *teleologically*. Since culture relies on communicative encounters between people and texts in a context, every phenomenon has causes and effects in at least two different dimensions: *roots and routes*. On the one hand, *roots* point towards the past, towards the institutional conditions, the material forces that have shaped and are shaping a particular conjuncture, the subjective competences and the discourses and rules in which the entirety is immersed. On the other hand, *routes* point towards the future and thematize concerns about current developments, social relations, identity and identification (Fornäs 1995: 3). Cultural phenomena have always two important ‘ends’ and it would therefore not be sufficient to analyze a particular instance without considering the causes and forces that have come to shape a text vis-à-vis the consequences it might create.

The approach that I have suggested for my thesis very much follows this call. I regard tourist practices as communicative acts that are constitutive of how people make sense of the world in a particular context and with possible effects. In short, tourist practices are treated both as outcomes and causes for particular orderings of the world, but never as sole reflections of an order that might be solid and already there. So is, for example, the notion of a developed nation vs. an underdeveloped nation both an outcome of tendencies of fragmented economic development and a discourse of ordering that implies a specific future direction into which development aid should flow. If this conjuncture is correlated with the practice of volunteer tourism, selected subjects from selected parts of the world would participate in specific forms of interaction. So firstly, without the material and the discursive framing of the dichotomy developed vs. underdeveloped, the event of volunteer tourism would probably not take place. Secondly and more importantly, if volunteer tourism is carried out in the spirit of development aid, and when it is assumed that development aid fosters development, then the dichotomy that gave birth to this specific constellation would eventually cease to exist. What I am pointing out here is that practices have causes and consequences in terms of how we come to live in the world. To a better understanding of such processes and orderings, my thesis would like to contribute.

In this vein, John Law (1994) wonderfully argues for a research tradition in the social sciences that should become able to look beyond the notions of the fixed order or firm substance. As he holds, the assumption of an order in the form of a *noun* is inherently flawed for the reason that orders are never as complete as nouns would suggest. Instead, he argues that it would be better to trust in *verbs*, as they are able to grasp processes rather than entities. That is, verbs can safeguard against the stasis of reifications which one might not be able to put into context, after

all (idem 1f.). What comes to mind is, of course, the far-reaching predicament of the “Länderkunde”, which used to haunt German geographical thought until 1969. The landscape (Landschaft) was taken as the discipline’s sacrosanct object of enquiry, with the sad consequence that nothing useful could be observed. The reason for this was that the landscape was reified as a substance, with the severe implication that the relations between its several constituents could not be taken into account (Fachschaften der Geographischen Institute 1979: 164ff.).

A theoretical framework that *is* very useful to account for contemporary global complexity is Appadurai’s (1990) model of the *new cultural economy*, which “has to be understood as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models” (idem 296). Appadurai therefore proposes an alternative framework that comprises five different but interrelated dimensions of global cultural flows: *ethnoscapes* (tourists, migrants and people in motion), *mediascapes* (creation of images of the world via the media), *financescapes* (dispositions of global capital), *technoscapes* (global configurations of technology) and *ideascapes* (concatenations of ideas into master narratives). Arguably, tourism can be located in each of Appadurai’s scapes, so I would suggest that certain ‘master narratives’ about the world may be better understood when the traces of tourist practices are followed and correlated with the context the model supplies. This means, I will use Appadurai’s framework as a corrective ‘lens’ to keep focus on the complexity and fluidity of the phenomena I seek to understand. This focus on complexity and movement has recently been rejuvenated by the *New Mobilities Paradigm*. As Sheller & Urry (2006: 212) point out, “social science has been static in its theory and research” and it has neglected to examine how people, images and communications are on the move and how these movements contribute to structure and organize social life. This clearly demands interdisciplinary research that is able to recognize the role of the symbolic without analytically separating out discourse from materiality, text from history and people from practice and discourse, especially with regard to the parameters of ethnicity, class and gender. Such a model is outlined by Aitchinson (1999: 30) in terms of a “new cultural geography [that] has merged with sociological and cultural studies analyses which are now combining to investigate the multiplicity of behaviors, meanings, consumption trends and identities constructed in and through leisure and tourism”. To this tradition, my thesis seeks to contribute. I will attempt to account for some of the socio-cultural complexities that embed matters of mobility, representation and making sense of the world in leisure and more serious affairs.

## 5.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

To investigate the complex interplay between discourse, spatial identities, and power, the method of this study is Critical Discourse Analysis as proposed by Fairclough (2003); KhoshraviNiK (2010) and Wodak's (2001b) discourse-historical approach vis-à-vis Said's (1978) notion of Orientalism, which is used as a conceptual framework for the discursive construction of regional inequalities. In addition, Laclau & Mouffe's (2001: 139) understanding of *hegemony* as "a political type of relation" is considered to account for the social dimensions of the otherwise semiotically carried out struggle over spatio-cultural meanings and acceptance.

Accordingly, social power and the lack of social power are conceived as a function of access to discourse, so that specific social conditions can either be legitimized and sustained or challenged through the communication of ideas, ideologies and commonsensical beliefs via systems of representation (Van Dijk 1993: 256). Language plays a central part in this process. As Weedon (1997: 21) points out, language is the productive site where our subjectivities and forms of social interaction are formed and negotiated. Cameron & Kulick (2003: 102) define language as a social semiotic that can be employed to creatively construct specific social positions and identities. Consequently, language is not a passive medium that mirrors a social reality that always already exists, it rather functions as a productive system that communicates a specific perspective with the potential of political consequences (Gee 2005: 3-4). In discourse theory, language is accepted as the central element in the construction of meaning, so that a reality outside semiotic representation is not tenable (Glasze & Mattissek 2009: 26). In this respect, Stuart Hall (1997) has comprehensively investigated the role of representation as a central semiotic practice which essentially produces culture, arguing that:

culture is about 'shared meanings'. Now language is the privileged medium in which we 'make sense' of things, in which meaning is produced and exchanged. Meanings can only be shared through our common access to language. [...] In language, we use signs and symbols – whether they are sounds, written words, electronically produced images, musical notes, even objects – to stand for or represent to other people our concepts, ideas and feelings. [...] Representation through language is therefore central to the processes by which meaning is produced (Hall 1997: 1).

The paragraph sums up several basic assumptions that illuminate the potential of critical semiotic analysis as a tool of emancipatory social enquiry. Firstly, meaning is always culturally *contingent* and works as a shared set of resources within a smaller and / or larger group sharing

a set of common semiotic and semantic resources. Secondly, without a *mutually intelligible* system of communication, meaning could not be exchanged. And thirdly, representation or the specific act of language use constitutes the *creative moment* where shared signs are used to create meanings capable of defining the consciousness of people, relations and things that we accept as real. As Hall (1997b: 7-8) argues, there is never anything meaningful *outside* of representation. Representation is the constitutive of the event since it makes conceivable and ‘real’ what it purports; it is the system that allows discourse to shape the world via our consciousness and resulting actions. It is therefore “not reality that is reflected in consciousness, but consciousness that relates to reality, as discourses provide the application concepts and all the knowledge for the shaping of reality as well as further reality concepts” (Jäger 2001: 39). Therefore, if the concepts and forms of knowledge contained in a discourse change, its ‘objects’ will essentially change at least some parts of the identities that are assigned to them too (idem: 43). This process of ‘world making’ is traceable through *language in use*, since it carries out the discursive struggle on a semiotic plain. As Scollon (2001: 140) points out, this summarizes the basic assumption of CDA, which is “founded on the idea that the analysis of discourse opens a window on social problems because social problems are largely constituted in discourse”.

By implication, the here proposed text-analytical framework demands a more specific definition of the relationship between discourse and language. As I have argued previously (Bergmeister 2014), this first and foremost necessitates a distinction between two interdependent concepts of discourse. Firstly, there are discourses in the Foucauldian (1972: 49) sense as I have discussed above, denoting “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak”. This means they “exercise power as they transport knowledge on which the collective and individual consciousness feeds. This emerging knowledge is the basis of individual and collective action and the formative action that shapes reality” (Jäger 2001: 38). Secondly, there is a definition of discourse that relates more to a ‘applied linguist’ or ‘sociolinguist’ perspective. This comprises matters of speech acts and how language is being used in daily interaction to enact social life (Gee 2005: 6-7). For practical reasons, I borrow Gee’s (ibid) way of differentiating between the two as Discourses with a ‘capital D’ and discourse with ‘small d’. As he points out, it is important to note that the latter is always in a co-constitutive relationship with the former. As we put language into use (small d), we draw from the meaningful categories to which that language applies (capital D), challenging or reproducing what is considered as shared knowledge or common sense via mechanism of representation (idem 7). Since both versions of discourse are relevant for this paper, I will henceforth distinguish between *text* (language in use) and *discourse* (shared bodies of knowledge).

Accordingly, in critical discourse studies, language is understood as a *social practice* that is always entwined in social power (Fairclough 2003, Scollon 2001). It indexes power, makes power function in social life and is involved in the struggle over power and meaning that is fought out between various actors and social groups via the control over discourse. In that sense, language is constitutive of power since it can be employed to manifest or challenge power structures in the short or long term (Wodak 2001a: 11). The field of CL (Critical Linguistics) and CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) owes this its orientation. It can be defined “as fundamentally concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifest in language” (Wodak 2001a: 2). The primary focus is on the role of discourse in terms of constructing, legitimizing or challenging dominance. Dominance is broadly defined as the deployment of power by elites over superordinate groups, which results in various forms of social inequality including matters of politics, race, class and gender (Van Dijk 1993: 250). Accordingly, this thesis seeks to contribute to the emancipatory tradition of CDA critique, exploring how particular destinations, cultures and people are represented in terms of difference and Otherness, and what forms of unequal power-relationships maybe involved. The required analytic framework is developed in the next section.

## 5.2. Analysis and Heuristics

As stated above, the here proposed analytical framework is based on the basic assumption that power involves a type of control that pertains to action and cognition. Influencing the mind of others is therefore a critical mechanism of dominance and heavily relies on the function of textual mediation. As Van Dijk (1993: 257) points out, this involves the influencing of knowledge, understandings, ideologies and beliefs via a variety of subtle, everyday forms of text that appear so natural and acceptable that they are not further questioned. The core task of critical discourse analysis is therefore to uncover, explain and critique the ways in which dominant discourses are put into practice via various forms of text and talk.

Central to this process is the encoding of social *macro-structures* (e.g. ideologies of colonialism and Western hegemony) into textual *micro-structures* by means of strategic linguistic choices. These strategies include the in- or exclusion of actors in the text, the ways these actors and their actions are put into perspective, and the arguments that are used for or against them (KhoshraviNiK 2010).

### 5.2.1. Ideologies and Topics

To begin with textual relations to larger and hegemonic macro structures, *discourse topics* are of immense importance. In a society's shared systems of communication, these topics determine what is spoken about and what is not. They essentially set apart the 'sayable' from the 'unsayable' and function as major gatekeepers, carrying out ideological manipulation via the selection and strategic deployment of discourse (KhoshraviNiK 2010: 61).

At this point, it is useful to define the relationship between *ideology* and *discourse* as far as it is necessary for this thesis. Discourse is the semiotic mechanism that produces and naturalizes ideologies over time. Ideology in that sense is always discursive, whereas discourse must not necessarily be ideological (Stoddart 2007: 193). If we take, for example, a larger macrostructure like *racism*, it operates as an overarching ideology in which networks of communication are situated. Racism can be expressed in and through a large variety of *discourses* that serve as the location for its expression. In that sense, a particular ideology constitutes the problematic macrostructure the analyst is interested in, whereas discourse is the location where it is either propagated or challenged (Jäger 2001: 52).

It is important that in general societal communication, many conflicting discourses co-exist. Some of them are thematically related and occur in so-called *discursive strands*. These bundles of knowledge can be further broken down into related *discourse fragments* that in their entirety roughly comprise the sayable and unsayable in terms of the nexus between a specific phenomenon and the ideological stance that is involved (Jäger 2001: 46-47). This is, of course, always contingent on time, people and place. For instance, racist ideology can overshadow many discursive strands including asylum, refugees, immigration, citizenship, sports, sexuality, tourism and international development, just to name a few. Each of these fields can thus be negotiated from a racist or non-racist perspective – and of course from many other perspectives too. Perspectivity marks what Jäger (2001: 49-50) defines as *discourse position*, or the type of ideological stance from which a text is produced or received. The choice of *topics* is usually revealing in this regard. Strategies of backgrounding specific social actors and groups (e.g. via discursive absence or negative representation) feeds into a biased macro-structure and helps control the available texts (KhoshraviNiK 2010: 62). For example, when rural African communities are presented to Western holiday-makers as pre-modern, these discursive topicalization privileges and sustains racist or imperialist ideology. While the selection of topics is a primary indicator of how certain ideologies may influence individual texts, there are other mechanisms at work as well. One important aspect is *perspectivization*.

*Perspectivization* refers to linguistic (micro) mechanism that operate on a textual level. These are essentially choices that are made over other possible choices in terms of representing certain ideas, groups or news through three interrelated levels: *social actors*, *social actions* and *argumentation*. The proposed analytical framework addresses each of these levels and asks the questions of *what* and *how*: what is present in the text (and what is not), and how is this presence negotiated in terms of value assumptions and attributions (KhoshraviNiK 2010: 63).

### 5.2.2. Social Actors

The task here is to analyze the representation and the qualities assigned to social actors by means of text. This comprises their discursive inclusion or exclusion and various linguistic mechanisms that perspectivize their presence in the text (KhoshraviNiK 2010: 63). Fairclough (2003) broadly refers to these strategies as *intertextuality* and *framing*. Intertextuality describes the quantity of voices or social actors that are allowed into a text by means of reporting, quoting or assertions (idem: 47), while framing involves how these voices are qualitatively put into context in terms of guiding the recipient towards a preferred interpretation (idem: 53). The relationship between *social actors* and *texts* is mutually constitutive. I follow Fairclough (2003: 21-24) and define texts as *social events* in which and through which people can meaningfully interact. Hence, social actors should be understood as individuals capable of shaping texts in specific ways, while at the same time, they are not entirely free to do so as their identities and scopes of action are shaped as well. They are typically constrained by *social structures* (general sets of possibilities that determine one's actions, e.g. nationality), *social practices* (control and selection mechanism that govern the distribution of possibilities in and between social structures, e.g. tourism), and *social events / texts* (any mode of communicative interaction that can assign and circulate meaning, e.g. tourism brochures). In texts, which are our main concern at this level of analysis, the following linguistic devices are commonly used to represent people (adapted from KhoshraviNiK 2010: 65 and Fairclough 2003: 145-146):

- *Inclusion / exclusion* (e.g. strategies of oppression and backgrounding actors)
- *Naming* (e.g. how certain actors are referred to)
- *Pronoun / noun* (e.g. when social actors are realized as pronouns or proper nouns)
- *Euphemism* (e.g. the concealment of a harsh stance via mild and indirect expressions)
- *Functionalization* (e.g. referring to individuals and entities by their function)
- *Aggregation* (e.g. the collection of individuals into a whole)
- *Assimilation* (e.g. absorbing social actors into larger cultural concepts)

- *Determination* (e.g. ascertainment of positions, values and ideas usually from an outside perspective)
- *Individualization* (e.g. foregrounding the individuality of actors, often to create empathy)
- *Collectivization* (e.g. foregrounding large numbers of individuals and/or putting forward generalizing arguments)
- *Impersonalization and Dehumanization* (e.g. referring to actors as ‘non-humans’ to legitimize negative attitudes and harmful policies)
- *Grammatical role* (e.g. the social actor is realized as a participant in clause or as possessive noun or pronoun such as ‘our local guide’)

### 5.2.3. Actions

The second level of analysis is concerned with the qualities of social actions that are attributed to the actors represented in the text. This again involves a selection of particular actions from a field of possible actions, which may hint at ideological tendencies in a specific text. In that sense, it is important to ask which actions are (not) associated with the actors and how the actions are associated that are included in the text (KhoshraviNiK 2010: 64). Characteristic linguistic mechanism can include (idem 2010: 65):

- *Mitigation and hyperbole* (e.g. when used to play down or exaggerate certain actions)
- *Hedging and modality* (e.g. when used to mitigate the potential or actual outcomes of certain actions by foregrounding possibilities instead of ‘definite’ answers)
- *Factuality* (e.g. referring to ‘facts’ to support an argument related to action)
- *Quotation patterns* (e.g. noticeable tendencies of textual inclusion that privilege a certain perspective)
- *Nominalization* (e.g. backgrounding of the quality of the action by a nominal construction)
- *Passivation and Agentivation* (e.g. the foregrounding or backgrounding of actors in terms of the effect of the action that is referred to, often employed to create a dichotomous victim vs. offender constellation)

### 5.2.4. Argumentation

This level of analysis is concerned with argumentative strategies that point towards preferred ways of making sense of a text. It is important to determine what arguments are put forward in



a specific text and why some other possible arguments may have been left out for strategic reasons (KhosraviNiK 2010: 65). The analyst wishes to trace what Cortazzi & Jin (2000: 103) have described as the *evaluation* of a text, meaning the way in which the point of the narrative may and probably should be understood. As they (idem 2000: 118-119) point out, processes of evaluation decisively influence how we understand ourselves and the world around us. In this regard, Howard Gardner's (1995) seminal work *Leading Minds* has convincingly demonstrated that the successful communication of narratives about group identities, value systems and shared meanings is a vital component of social leadership facilitated through the manipulation of the human mind (idem: 42-43).

It follows that it is in the interest of ideological manipulators to narrow down ways of reading and understanding a text by guiding recipients towards a preferred evaluation via several linguistic devices. In the most obvious cases, these strategies consist of evaluative statements that make explicit assertions about desirability, usefulness or importance (Fairclough 2003: 172). In less clear cases, however, they may also allude to metaphors and value systems that are more implicit. As Fairclough (2003: 55) argues, this may be realized by the following devices: *existential assumptions* (assumptions about what exists), *propositional assumptions* (assumptions about what is or will be the case), and *value assumptions* (assumptions about what is good or undesirable). These mechanisms of implicitness are crucial since they constitute the common ground upon which social cohesion and communication depends. In texts, they typically appear together with more explicit strategies of argumentation, which may include the following (KhosraviNiK 2010: 66):

- *Mitigation and hyperbole* (e.g. when used to play down or exaggerate the power of an argument)
- *Factuality* (e.g. referring to generally accepted 'facts' to support an argument that might be biased)
- *Inductive vs. Deductive* (e.g. either presenting arguments as based on observation or general rules)
- *Paradoxes* (e.g. challenging other perspectives by pointing out inconsistencies and contradictions)
- *Metaphors* (e.g. alluding to symbols and emblems to suggest a specific resemblance that privileges a particular ideological stance)

The analytical categories that I have proposed here are geared towards accounting for an unevenly distributed power of representation with regard to contemporary tourist (preparation) media and historical travel texts. Representations of self-identity and Otherness are treated as formative social practices that are capable of shaping ideas and concepts about the world. Relevant texts are examined in terms of *topics*, *actors*, *actions* and *arguments* to establish the ideological stance their preferred ‘messages’ may convey. To reiterate this: *may* convey! The use of the modal verb ‘may’ is mandatory here. As Stuart Hall (1980) points out in his influential essay “Encoding / Decoding”, meanings are never ultimately fixed by the sender but actively negotiated by the recipients depending on their frameworks of knowledge and (technological) affordances. This means the readers have a ‘relative autonomy’ in terms of decoding a specific text, but this autonomy is constrained by their idiosyncratic capabilities and socio-cultural embeddedness. It is therefore not likely that a text is evaluated in a way that is totally beyond a shared cultural understanding between senders and recipients – of course, only if that common ground exists – but the model also indicates that senders do have some amount of control in terms of how their texts might be interpreted. They basically need to consider the commonsense world of the reader and structure their arguments accordingly. In this respect, the concept of *Topoi* should briefly be explained.

#### 5.2.5. Topoi

As KhosraviNik (2010: 58) explains, “Topoi are the content-related warrants or ‘conclusion rules’ which connect the argument(s) with the conclusion – the claim. As such, they justify the transition from the argument(s) to the conclusion”. That is, they constitute either explicit or inferable premises that must be logically and structurally consistent with the conclusion the argumentation strives to promote. Wodak (2001b: 74) offers some examples of possible topoi that may apply to a wide variety of texts. Given the focus of this dissertation, the following topoi from her list could be relevant (ibid):

- *Usefulness / advantage* (e.g. a conclusion is preferred because the argumentation suggests positive effects)
- *Danger and threat* (e.g. a conclusion is preferred because the argumentation suggests negative outcomes)
- *Humanitarianism* (e.g. a conclusion is preferred because the argumentation stresses ethical concerns)
- *Justice* (e.g. a conclusion is preferred because the argumentation implies legal concerns)

- *Responsibility* (e.g. a conclusion is preferred because the argumentation alludes to social values)
- *Reality* (e.g. a conclusion is preferred because the argumentation backgrounds alternative perspectives as ‘fake news’)
- *History* (e.g. a conclusion is preferred because the argumentation foregrounds historic continuity or employs history-based predictions)
- *Culture* (e.g. a conclusion is preferred because the argumentation alludes to common ideas about ‘culture’)
- *Abuse* (e.g. a conclusion is preferred because the argumentation implies unjust and dehumanizing outcomes)

As this necessarily incomplete list of topoi suggests, sets of shared concepts are very important in terms of meaning making. If they stand at the end of the argument, they function as decision makers from a supposedly rational point of view. Since neither discourse nor topoi develop out of nowhere, their roots should be traced to get a better understanding of their genesis and possible future direction. To this, the next section will turn.

### 5.2.6. Historicity of Discourse

A basic assumption is that all discourses are historical. They do not appear out of nowhere but always relate to and develop from a specific historic context. Critical Discourse Analysis therefore considers a diachronic approach on extra-linguistic factors such as ideology, society and culture. It traces the historic specificity in terms of how power relations are negotiated in the signifying economies of their times (Meyer 2001: 15). Wodak’s (2001b) discourse-historical approach utilizes the principle of *triangulation* to correlate a specific text with other empirical data as well as relevant background information. When analyzing particular texts and topics, other useful sources and findings are integrated to gain a better understanding of the political developments and social changes in which these texts are situated. In this regard, the context is investigated and related to the text under review by means of the following four context levels (idem: 67):

1. The first level of analysis looks at the *manifest content* in the text. This includes the language that is used and the linguistic choices that are made (e.g. hyperbole, individualization, impersonalization). The goal is to determine how these choices might affect the interpretation of the text from a linguistic point of view.

2. The second level is concerned with establishing *intertextual and interdiscursive relationships* between the text under survey and other texts, accounting for relations between texts, genres and discourses. A typical post-card, for example, would likely reflect a shared set of popular linguistic choices vis-à-vis a visual imprint that is constrained by the aesthetic conventions of travelling and vacationing.
3. Thirdly, the *extra-linguistic context* is considered. At this level, the sociological variables and institutional situations are explained that influence the making and interpretation of a certain text. This can include public memories of places and social groups as well as the specificity of the development of discourses that exist in a given societal context. An example would be the domestic skiing holiday. Since warmer winters have necessitated the employment of snow-guns, discourses of environmental concern have discouraged many tourists from opting for these types of holidays.
4. Finally, the broader *socio-political and historical context* is determined to better understand how discursive and material structures come into being at a certain point in time. For example, following (Urry 1990: 18-21), the notion of ‘modern’ mass tourism as a popular past-time developed out of the conjuncture of organized and industrialized labor in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As factory owners began to acknowledge that regularized periods of holidays contributed to the efficiency of their enterprises, the discourse of beneficial recreation eventually developed. At least in Britain, this gave rise to the development of the seaside resort as an affordable holiday place for the public. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, workers and peasant were not permitted to spa towns since bathing was reserved to the upper gentry and mostly done for medicinal purposes. With the rise of resorts and holiday makers, an improvement of transportation became necessary, making mass mobility a central theme of tourism and its development. Since coach travel was rather expensive in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, many people walked from Manchester to Blackpool in a single day. With the expansion of the train network, travel became more affordable. By 1848, it was estimated that over 100000 tourists rode from Manchester to Blackpool during Whit week. This, of course, gave rise to criticism that had an effect on the social tone and the attitude towards holiday makers: “[u]nless immediate steps are taken, Blackpool as a resort for respectable visitors will be ruined.... Unless the cheap trains are discontinued of the thousands who visit the place, Blackpool property will be depreciated past recovery” (Walvin 1978, qtd. in Urry 1990: 21). As this shows, the several discursive layers that have emerged in the example of the development of British mass-tourism are interrelated with wider economic, social

and cultural concerns. Early recreational tourism was shaped by green-shoot discourses of welfare and economic efficiency. Its proliferation led to the development of sea-side resorts, which again were and still are made meaningful through the discursive domain of the seaside holiday. This gave rise to new discourses of mobility; new transport infrastructures were developed, and even more tourists would come. Counter-discourse was called upon, the negative affirmation of mass tourism was born.

As KhosraviNiK (2010: 67) points out, all these four levels of context are necessary to contextualize the textual findings with the discursive and social factors that surround a text under review. That way, it becomes possible to understand a text as *situated discursive event*, link it to its historic specificity and read it in relation to its social, political and cultural embeddedness. For this purpose, this dissertation uses a body of discursively and geographically relevant historical travel texts for triangulation. Besides, texts are considered as discursive building blocks of Benedict Anderson's (2006) imagined community. A rationale is presented in the sub-section below.

#### 5.2.7. Census, Maps and Museum

MacKenzie (2005) has made the important observation that guidebooks (just as any form of travel literature) illuminate crucial mechanisms of the cultural construction and hegemonic grounding of Anderson's (2006) concept of the *Imagined Community*. First and foremost, MacKenzie (2005: 21) argues that the guidebook is based on what Anderson (2006) calls *print capitalism*. This can be understood as the material and ideological grounding of the power-knowledge economy that is required for collective imaginations. As Anderson (2006: 36) points out, print capitalism "made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others in profound new ways". Secondly, MacKenzie (2005: 21) identifies the imperial guidebook as a carrier of discourse, which illuminates the ideas, hopes and fears that shape the lived experience of the imagined community of a colonized state, celebrating a white and colonial way of imagining the world, which was global in its extent. Finally, so MacKenzie (ibid), the guidebook combines some of the technologies Anderson (2006) has described as *Census*, *Maps* and *Museum*. Following Anderson (2006: 163ff.), these mechanisms have crucially shaped the ways in terms of how the colonial state imagined its dominions by providing the identity categories, geographies and histories that henceforth should apply:

- *Census* (e.g. the representation of (local) identities in a context)

- *Maps* (e.g. the territorial markings rendered in terms of places to visit and routes to follow)
- *Museum* (e.g. the version of historicity that is implied in the ideational content of the text)

Accordingly, Anderson's (2006) three main discursive mechanisms of the imagined community are integrated in the heuristic model of this dissertation. *Census* signifies the inclusion of identities and their hierarchical ordering. Integrated in the above proposed CDA framework, it comprises the enunciative categories of *actors* and *actions* (KhoshraviNiK 2010). *Argumentation* (ibid) is then subsumed under *museum*, which denotes the grand-narrative of existence and interpretation. By adding up linguistic elements in the relevant discursive slots, comprehensive ideological landscapes can be modelled and more easily compared. Textual perspectivization (e.g. the inclusion of actors, actions and arguments) can thus be transparently integrated into a more comprehensive, superordinate discursive framework that reveals the greater socio-culture scheme the imagined community implies.

### 5.3. Corpus

In this section, the corpus under review is introduced. It includes a major historical travel report to the region, imperial guidebooks, Lonely Planet's contemporary pocket-companion to Southeast Asia, and entries from the independent travel-blog provider [www.travelblog.org](http://www.travelblog.org). The entirety of this material will likely provide a diachronic research perspective on travel discourse over the centuries. Emphasis is put on both the historicity of discourse (Wodak 2001b) and its formative potential as a function of time. As Jäger (2001: 44) points out, "reality is meaningful and exists in the form in which it exists only as long as the people, all of whom are bound up or 'knitted into' the (socio-historic) discourses and who are constituted by them, have allocated and will continue to allocate meaning to it". This is essentially what tourists do. They allocate meanings to people, cultures and countries as they read up on their destinations before they go and decide where and where not to go. They do so as they get into contact with foreign people and cultures and perceive them / praise them / ridicule them in numerous ways, and they communicate their ideas in their accounts, journals and blogs as they stay in contact with their families and friends. This involves past ideas that linger on and new ideas that are already in the offing. The cultural theorist Raymond Williams (1977: 121-127) has identified these flows of experiences, meanings and values between past, present and future as *residual* and *emerging* elements of culture that operate dynamically together with and against the *dominant* categories of their time. In this thesis, the materials under review have been selected with this important

assumption in mind. My goal is to better understand the complex and dynamic ways in which tourist discourse (pertaining to mainland Southeast Asia) has been sustained or challenged between the 19<sup>th</sup> century and now.

### 5.3.1. Historical Texts

Through the inclusion of historical texts, it becomes possible to read contemporary tourist texts against a background of colonial dependency and subordination, so that possible discursive transformations (e.g. changing ways of negotiating established power-differentials) may become more obvious. With respect to the postcolonial focus of this thesis, this appears relevant. It is a guiding principle of post-colonial scholarship that the dialectic relation between dominant and dominated occupies a privileged position (Labaune-Demeule: 2015: 3). Determining the meaning and implications of the concepts of colonialism, imperialism and post-colonialism, Loomba (2005) instructively brings these three together as *stages*, *remnants* and *perspectives* of European expansionist strategies. She points out that colonialism ushered in the architecture of domination that characterizes modern post-colonial affairs, mainly in economic terms:

[c]olonialism did more than extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries that it conquered—it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own, so that there was a flow of human and natural resources between colonised and colonial countries. (idem 8)

As this suggests, 19<sup>th</sup> century colonialism has paved the way for the post-colonial conjuncture by establishing the infrastructures of global dependencies that are prevalent today. Labaune-Demeule (2015: 3) observes that Loomba (2005) makes an important distinction between the politically effects of colonialism and its hegemonic economic potential:

[i]n the modern world, then, we can distinguish between colonisation as the takeover of territory, appropriation of material resources, exploitation of labour and interference with political and cultural structure of another territory or nation, and imperialism as a global system. However, there remains enormous ambiguity between the economic and political connotations of the word. If imperialism is defined as a political system in which an imperial centre governs colonised countries, then the granting of political independence signals the end of empire, the collapse of imperialism. However, if imperialism is primarily an economic system of penetration and control of markets, then political changes do not basically affect it. (Loomba 2005: 11)

Therefore, the term post-colonial is more complex than it may seem. It is not only to be used with a temporal meaning (literally “after colonialism”), but also in a constitutive and transformative sense (Labaune-Demeule: 2015: 3). In this way, post-colonial settings can have neo-colonial characteristics: “[a] country may be both postcolonial (in the sense of being formally independent) and neo-colonial (in the sense of remaining economically and/or culturally dependent) at the same time” (Loomba (2005: 11).

Transferring these assumptions to my current research, I expect to establish that the colonial discourse of ‘legitimate’ political and military control of foreign dominions may likely have undergone a discursive transformation into the direction of neoliberal governance of regional activities, including the commodification of tourist destinations by means of backgrounding the presence and agency of local actors. The following historic texts have been selected to better understand the discursive mechanics of this transition with respect to the signifying economy of mainland Southeast Asia:

- Mouhot, Henri. 1864. *Travels in the central parts of Indo-China (Siam), Cambodia, and Laos during the years 1858, 1859, and 1860*. London: John Murray. Vol I & II.
- Murray, John. 1904. *The Imperial Guide to India, Including Kashmir, Burma and Ceylon, with Illustrations, Maps and Plans*. London: John Murray.
- Harrison, Cuthbert Woodville. 1920 [3<sup>rd</sup> impression]. *An illustrated Guide to the Federated Malay States*. London: Malay States Information Agency.

Main criteria for selection of the three texts are thematic, discursive and geographic relevance regarding the mechanisms of representation addressed by this thesis. Essentially, the historical corpus includes the earliest popular guidebooks to the region vis-à-vis the naturalistic and geopolitically motivated writings of early explorer Henri Mouhot. The number of texts is limited to three key resources since my aim is to identify general *discourse topics* at the peak of colonial expansion – a time when Europeans (notably the British and the French) clearly felt themselves in a superior role.

Essentially, I will deal with the respective discursive frames of what was and what could be said in the relevant historic period. By this, I become able to better understand how what is said and what can be said in the contemporary sources under review reflects continuities and transformations of historic discourses. As Jäger (2001: 52) explains:

[h]istorically oriented analysis can proceed by conducting several diachronic cuts through a discourse strand [e.g. travel to Southeast Asia, *my remark*] – based on



discursive events for example – and subsequently comparing them with each other. Such analyses provide information on changes to, and continuities of, discourse processes through time.

As this suggests, for this thesis, diagnostically conclusive historical texts would be framed by *discursive key events* such as the colonialist expansion to Southeast Asia and the need for strategic knowledge in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but also the rise of individual tourism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century that was accompanied by the release of the popular guidebook. Besides, exemplary instances should ideally have a *slogan character* of the judgments and prejudices that were considered normal at the time (Jäger 2001: 50). So is, for instance, Harrison's (1920) *Illustrated Guide to the Federated Malay States* a classic example of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century guidebook (see Hall & Page 2000: 34-35) because it instructs tourists how to perceive the protectorates abroad through a British imperial lens (MacKenzie 2013). Likewise, Murray's (1904) *Imperial Guide to India, Including Kashmir, Burma and Ceylon* prides itself of having been "compiled to meet the want of a brief reliable guide to our Eastern Empire" (idem: preface). Thus, both hand books are discursively relevant in terms of how the tourist gaze appropriated the countries under survey through an imperial state of mind. About half a decade before the guidebooks were published, Henri Mouhot's (1864) self-styled 'discovery' of the ruins of Angkor and other places firmly attached Eurocentric discourse to the new eastern end of the colonial world (Edwards 2007). Mouhot's text thus mirrors the key event of early knowledge generation that preceded later exploitations.

### 5.3.2. Lonely Planet & Independent Travel Blogs

The modern media under review – the contemporary guidebook and the independent travel blog – elucidate how contemporary tourism discourse is linked to practices of consumption and production. The reason for this is that guidebooks and travel-blogs relate to the travel experience in different ways. Whereas the guidebook is normally studied before or during a trip, bloggers write about what they have done in retrospect. Their posts thus offer insights in personal interpretations.

To begin with **guidebooks**, they serve as the first pillar of analysis in my study of contemporary texts. A focal point is their cultural force in terms of mediating the relationship between tourists and hosts as they offer a cognitive framework of what tourists should expect and how they shall interpret it (Bhattacharyya 1997: 372). Besides, guidebooks are significant because they are characterised by a collective authorial voice that is mainly identified by the (ideological)

orientation of the publisher (Lisle 2008: 161). For this reason, the decade-long market leader *Lonely Planet* was chosen as a representative example that is capable of illuminating contemporary travel discourse. The company is the world's largest publisher of travel books and markets more than 650 titles, with 120 million guide books sold in total (Friend 2005; Brennan 2013). The number of available titles and the popularity of *Lonely Planet* thus suggest that *Lonely Planet's* guidebooks offer readers a view of the world that might be more accessible and accepted than images presented in other sources.

To be economically successful, guidebooks cater both for practicality and fantasy. Besides offering hands-down travel information such as advice on transport and accommodation (Lew 1991), they essentially follow the strategy of listing popular and widely anticipated "sites and signs that have little genuine historic or living connection to a culture but that exist simply as markers in the touristic universe" (Crick 1989: 328). As a consequence, the mediation of sights is less about the 'reality' of a host culture than about communicating stereotypical country images packaged for (Western)consumption (Wagner 1977 qtd. in Crick 1989: 328; Crick 1989: 329). To gain a better understanding of how Lonely Planet contributes to the discursive construction of Southeast Asia, the *Southeast Asia on a Shoestring* edition (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014) has been selected. The advantage of this comprehensive edition is that it includes all countries of Southeast Asia (which makes it more useful to travelers), comprising general information on administrative matters, historical sites, tips regarding health care, a survival guide, interpretations of local cultures, and recommended itineraries and places one 'must' visit. In this way, the overall structure of Lonely Planet's recent publication is similar to the historical guidebooks under review. This simplifies the comparison of old and new guidebooks to trace the persistence or transformation of identity categories, geographies and associated histories. As argued above, the resulting ideas are essentially building blocks of imagined destination communities.

However, destination images can be more fully understood when both professionally projected images (e.g. guidebooks) and tourists' reflexive accounts (e.g. blogs) are considered (Bell 2013). As Jenkins (2003:15) reminds us, it is not sufficient "to locate meaning in texts and to leave the interpretation of that meaning to one recipient: the analyst". McGregor (2000: 28) further explains the limitations of doing discourses analysis without considering the reactions and interpretations of media consumers; namely that it

reifies the idea of the 'objective' researcher, a person who is somehow beyond the influence of his/ her own personal ethnography, an idea that textual analysts

themselves would reject. Instead consumers of media texts must be approached to see how they, rather than highly-educated and critically trained academics, make sense of and create meaning from the narratives.

Following this line of argument, **individual travelblogs** constitute the second form of modern tourism media that is analysed in this thesis. Puhlinger & Taylor (2008: 179) define travelblogs as

individual entries which relate to planned, current or past travel. Travel blogs are the equivalent of personal online diaries and are made up from one or more individual entries strung together by a common theme (for example, a trip itinerary or the purchase of a round the world ticket). They are commonly written by tourists to report back to friends and families about their activities and experiences during trips.

Like guidebooks, travel blogs can be regarded as powerful repositories of travel discourse that have seen a rapid proliferation over the last couple of years. By the end of 2011, Nielsen/McKinsey (2012) tracked 181 million blogs worldwide, which is an increase of 145 million blogs from 2006. What decisively distinguishes the blog from the guidebook is that personal travel blogs report of an individual, non-commercial journey that either takes or has taken place (and probably will take place). Besides, the content management in independent blogs is not controlled by an authorial organisation. Entries are directly loaded to the internet by the users to share their personal travel stories, experiences and evaluations, as well as to stay in touch with their relatives and friends (Schmallegger & Carson 2008: 100f.). From an analytical perspective, travel blogs can thus offer valuable insights into actual tourist practices and perceptions that would otherwise be inaccessible to the researcher (Banyai & Glover 2012: 268). Furthermore, blogs point towards what Jenkins (2003) has termed 'media convergence', that is confluence of older and more recent systems of information, discourses and technologies in new hybrid forms of cultural texts. Blogs, for example, simultaneously combine practices of consumption and production. They can thus illuminate how consumers make sense of the various other media representations they have been exposed to (e.g. popular fiction, movies, etc.) and the effects of these on their perception as they negotiate encounters in the (touristic) world (Mansson 2011).

### **Purposive sampling**

Volo (2010) investigated the utility of individual travel blogs as data source and confirmed their usefulness as an unobtrusive research method to investigate the tourist experience. She proposes

*purposive sampling* to collect the blogposts to be examined. Purposive sampling is a research method that falls under the larger family of non-probability sampling methods. Contrary to probability methods – where each element of the population has a non-zero chance to be selected – purposive sampling does not attempt to select a random sample from the total population under survey but rather uses subjective methods (such as expert knowledge) to decide which elements are to be included (Battaglia 2008: 523-525). The obvious caveat of this method, when compared to probability sampling, is that inferences to the entire population cannot be made (Williamson 2003). However, in the qualitative field, the use of purposive sampling can be viable and justified for various reasons. It is particularly useful when the population is either a group of ‘hidden’ social actors (see Barratt, Ferris & Lenton’s 2015 online survey on drug addicts), or when it is so large and elusive that randomization is impossible (as is the case with travel blogs). Purposive sampling can also be warranted when limitations in resources, time and workforce preclude more extensive probability methods and when the researcher does not aim to create generalizations pertaining to the entire population (Ilker, Musa & Alkassim 2016). Taking into account the objectives of CDA, the latter point is particularly valid. Since discourses are productive and do not ‘stop’ at people, the goal is not to make assertions about populations under particular discourses but rather to explore how discourses pertaining to tourism and Othering are actually negotiated in the necessarily limited window to the blogosphere this thesis can open.

Taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of purposive sampling, the method is warranted for this thesis for the following reasons: first, there exists a potentially infinite number of travel blog entries, which is constantly expanding. This size and elusiveness of the population would make probability sampling impossible. Second, critical discourse analysis attempts to trace the workings of ideology in texts. Ideologies are generalized and generalizing bodies of knowledge that operate at an over-individual level, aiming at the interpellation of subjects (Althusser 1971). In this environment, analysis seeks to uncover the ‘slogan character’ of particular ideological schemes (Jäger 2001: 50). This necessitates a corpus of texts that are purposefully chosen for their discursive relevance rather than a large number of random samples.

In this vein and with reference to the historical chapter, this thesis looks at discursive formations that pertain to the colonialist/imperialist ideological complex. Its scope is limited to investigating how this ‘bloc of ideas’ may have transformed over the past two centuries and influenced tourist imagination and behaviour in the region under survey. Thus, only blog-posts

that ‘test’ positive for colonialist logic will be scrutinized more closely to examine how the problematic assumptions that underlie them are negotiated in present tourist experience. As mentioned, the goal is not to make inferences about the entire population of tourists and bloggers, but to chart out ‘modern’ manifestations of (post/neo?) colonial discourse and / or re-interpretations thereof.

Blog-entries are selected for analysis exclusively from travelblog.org. The main reason for this is the site’s popularity and the fact that personal profiles are attached to every blog, offering information about the travellers and the journeys they make (to avoid professional blog writers with commercial interests). Thus, it becomes possible to see where travellers come from, where they went and how long their trips lasted. Relevant entries are identified through extensive reading over the whole research period (2015 - 2018). Following Volo (2010: 302), a non-restrictive set of keywords is devised for the target-oriented use of the blog provider’s search engine. Accordingly, keywords are divided in *three major sets* with the results of the historical chapter in mind. This strategy is used to formulate contemporary search terms that can help investigate if and how older *discourse topics* might emerge in modern texts. First, there is a *nominal set* with names of popular sights (e.g. Angkor Wat; Killing Fields), regions and countries (e.g. Golden Triangle, Thailand), towns and destinations (e.g. Luang Prabang, Singapore), ethnic markers (e.g. Hill Tribes) and Western markers (e.g. travellers, tourists, holiday, experience, colonialism). Second, a *positive attributive set* is included with positive evaluative markers (e.g. authentic, real, traditional, modern, developed, friendly, great, amazing). Third, there is a *negative attributive set* with negative evaluative markers (e.g. primitive, noisy, annoying, chaotic, drunk, shitty). All three sets of keywords include items identified in the Lonely Planet guidebook under survey (e.g. the full *nominal set*) as well as some strategic rephrasing to guarantee that they reflect the language many travellers actually use. (e.g. Nam for Vietnam). My search strategy follows this pattern of combining keywords:

1. Search for a *nominal set /combination of nominal sets* (e.g. Thailand + hill tribes). This example yields approximately 850 results (16.7.2018), with the first 30 being examined by the researcher. If no relevant posts can be identified in the neutral search mode, the evaluative filter is applied.
2. Search for the combination of one or more nominal sets with either one / more *positive* or *negative evaluative* sets (e.g. Thailand + hill tribes + primitive), which yields the following result on the first page:

Jul 4, 2011 ... We went to different shops but buying things in Thailand is a pain in the ass. .... I wanted to do a one day trek (including hill tribe village, elephant riding, lunch, ... We took some pictures and watched their primitive lifestyle. (De Nijs 2011)

This extract qualifies as discursively relevant because it resonates the colonial narrative of primitive tribes appropriated for the exoticised commodification of local people and cultures. On the other hand, the positive combination of keywords (Thailand + hill tribes + modern) brings this entry to attention:

Nov 4, 2009 ... Quiet day in Chiang Rai, Thailand 11/4/09 ... Most hill tribes are moving into the 21st century with modern clothes, customs, Christianity, and Buddhism (traditionally they are Animists). (Strickfaden 2009)

As can be observed, the post acknowledges that most Hill Tribes are modernizing, however, the concept of modernity that is implied is based on a Western model / the concept of Thai mainstream society. While this argument carries more positive connotations than the one above, it nevertheless reifies the idea of essentially backward Hill Tribe people (animists) who eventually become Westernized in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and integrate into Thai society.

As this illustrates, the use of evaluative key-terms does not automatically elicit evaluative results. It is rather used to open up a discursive field in a more dialogical way, so that moments of declarative tension and transformation can be identified more easily.

Further criteria for the selection of blog-entries include English writing language, a sufficiently detailed account of the experience at a sight / destination with a sufficient length of genre-typical elements that lend themselves for the ‘mediation of Otherness’, such as descriptions of customs & manners, landscapes, encounters, notions of the heroic quest and emphasis on rituals of departure (see Kerridge 1999; Pratt 1985). Second, geographical relevance in terms of countries visited and sites explored is of additional concern. Third, since I seek to perform a diachronic investigation of Western travel discourse of mainland Southeast Asia, blog examples are included based on thematic / topical relevance. That is, they must contain topics that bear on my research focus. For instance, the utterance / blog title ‘primitive Hill Tribe village’ would qualify as useful, whereas ‘strange lady at the cat café in Bangkok’ would probably not.

Finally, with the full corpus presented, a word on methodology is due. In order to elucidate the persistence and / or transformation of discourse in the old and modern texts under review, the following three steps are carried out.

1. Determine the overall discourse-historical context from a Western point of view by shuttling back and forth between the selected historical texts and relevant research publications to identify specific discourse positions, discourse topics and discourse strands that pertain to the region.
2. Identify recent discourses that relate to modern tourism to Southeast Asia and tourism from a hegemonic point of view (Lonely Planet) and interpret them against the findings gained from the historical perspective.
3. Search blog entries on *travelblog.org* specifically to locate individual entries that might relate to these topics. These posts are then scrutinized to better understand how individual tourists interpret their actual experience against the discursive background that my analysis of the other sources suggests.

In the next sections, the methodological part of this dissertation is finalized. Firstly, critical perspectives towards CDA are addressed. This is followed by a short rationale explaining the regional focus on mainland Southeast Asia and finally, a comprehensive outline of the entire heuristic framework for the subsequent analytical part is produced.

#### 5.4. Critical Discourse Analysis and Critique

Many researchers are comfortable with Critical Discourse Analysis and embrace the heuristic potential of relating text to discourse and discourse to relations of power (Janks 1997). The main advantage of the method is that it enables researchers to explore language related social issues on all levels and account for the negotiation of power-relations in systems of representation (Wodak 1999: 187). Even though Critical Discourse Analysis is by now a widely established interdisciplinary approach that has brought forth several dedicated academic journals, including *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines*, *Discourse and Society*, and *Critical Discourse Studies* (Poole 2010: 138), the concept has received criticism too.

Widdowson (1998: 136), one of the more persistent critics of the concept, has accused CDA of being overly eclectic and inconsistent in its combination of cultural theories and linguistic methods. However, by pointing out the absence of one overarching framework of CDA Widdowson overlooks that the concept is intended as an interdisciplinary research program that

is open to the problem-specific (re)configuration of theoretical and methodological elements. Following Gee (2005: 6), CDA is neither a closed concept nor a linear approach with a step-by-step recipe towards guaranteed results. In order to be as flexible as required, CDA must constantly adapt its tools so that they can be applied to the specificity of the problem and the context of the study. For instance, given the focus of this thesis, the combination of concepts such as *value assumptions* (e.g. whether something is good or bad), *dialogicality* (e.g. the inclusion or exclusion of voices in a text) and *evaluations* (preferred ways to interpret a text) will be particularly helpful.

Widdowson further finds fault with the concept's practice of data selection and interpretation, arguing that the choice of texts and textual features is always subjective and thus prone to researcher bias, so that "all [critical discourse analysts] can do is interpret other discourses on their own terms" (Widdowson 149). According to Wodak (1999: 187), such argumentation ignores that there is never one 'right' interpretation of a given text but a multitude of possible ways of reading that are contingent on time, people and place. CDA can illuminate how texts can be understood in specific circumstances, correlating discourse, ideology and social practice in a way that makes sense. As in any form of social research, the principle of viability and the research focus determine which questions are asked and which are not (Fairclough 2003: 14). There is no "right" CDA strategy of collecting research data either. After the first phase of data selection (here historical texts and guidebooks), topics and concepts are identified, and further data will have to be gathered in the blogs to test the initial hypotheses. This is called theoretical sampling (Wodak & Meyer 2009: 27-28). Poole has aptly summarized the criticism of Critical Discourse Analysis noting that "CDA can further any cause" (Poole 2010: 149-50). While this is arguably true, it only discredits the concept if one pursues the fantasy of research findings that are immune to alternative interpretations.

Accordingly, I consider CDA as a useful method to expose plausible ways of reading and understanding the texts and discourses under survey. It is not my goal to discover one 'right' interpretation but to suggest how historical texts, guidebooks and blog entries might shape the readers' understanding of countries, cultures and people. In the next section, the regional focus of this dissertation is discussed.

## 5.5. Mainland Southeast Asia

This section explains why the mainland countries of Southeast Asia were chosen for this study. One reason is increasing popularity and rapid touristic development despite a series of major



shocks in the last two decades, including the World Trade Centre terrorist attacks in 2001, the Bali bombing incidents in 2002 and 2005, the SARS epidemic in 2003 and the devastating tsunami in 2004 (Parnwell 2009: 236). Asia and the Pacific Region have experienced their fourth consecutive year of tourist growth. 2013 brought the region 248 million international tourist arrivals and exceeded the almost equally successful year of 2012 by 15 million. The revenue of this rapid development amounted to US\$ 359 billion in 2013, which is an up of US\$ 30 billion from the year before. Southeast Asia was in 2013 again the fastest growing sub-region both in Asia and in the world, experiencing an overall increase of arrivals by 11 per cent. While well-established destinations like Thailand still reported a robust growth of 19 per cent, newly developing tourist countries such as Myanmar and Cambodia recorded an extraordinary increase of 52 and 18 per cent respectively (UNWTO 2014: 7).

Second and besides this recent popularity, the subregion of mainland Southeast Asia is particularly interesting for this study because of its mostly shared colonial past. Except for Thailand, which was never a Western colony, all other countries were drawn into the orbit of European influence and control between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tourism to the region is essentially a product of the period of ‘high colonialism’, when infrastructures and security in the areas of imperial control made individual travel possible and desirable (Hitchcock, King & Parnwell 2009: 7). Apart from the Belgians and the Italians, all major colonial powers were present. The British controlled Burma, Malaya, Singapore and northern Borneo; the French ruled in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam; the Spanish and the USA in the Philippines; the Portuguese in eastern Timor and the Dutch in Indonesia (with the latter three countries not being part of this study). Thailand remained independent but largely had the function of a puffer state, securing a neutral space between the conflicting interests of the British and the French (Chia & Perry 2003:1). As the authors of the recent anthology *The Ambiguous Allure of the West -Traces of the Colonial in Thailand* (Harrison & Jackson 2010) collectively show, even though Thailand was never *formally* colonized, it was still constrained by French and British imperialism insofar as these countries could impose trade treaties – most notably the one made by Sir John Bowring in 1855. Thailand was thus affected in similar ways to other colonized nations. As Chakrabarty (2010: iv) points out: “[t]he history of modern Thailand can thus be seen as a chapter distinctive but not exceptional in its historical specificity, in the history of European imperial domination of Asia”. Addressing the question how identity, culture and knowledge have been shaped in modern Siam/Thailand against the dominance of the West, Jackson (2010: 41) proposes the concept of ‘semi-colonialism’ (keung-meuang-keheun in Thai) to describe the qualified forms of colonialism that characterise Thailand’s relation with (former) colonial powers. The concept

of ‘semi-colonialism’ is not a mere historic description of the *non-sequitur* state of Thailand but adopts a critical / postcolonial lens to account for the complexity of the Thai-Western relationship vis-à-vis the impact of European power in the region (Jackson 2010: 37-40). This justifies the investigation of ‘never’ colonized Siam/Thailand from a post-colonial perspective.

Next, it is noteworthy that the term ‘Southeast Asia’ is relatively young as an overarching regional label. The name was assigned to the region by the British military command under Lord Mountbatten, referring to large areas between the east of India and the south of China that were occupied by Japan in the Second World War. First efforts to unify the region were undertaken during the Cold War, notably by the Americans, who directed military and economic aids to the region to facilitate the development of strong capitalist economies against the perceived threat of communist satellite states and insurgencies in the Indochina states (Chia & Perry 2003:1-2).

The main event that made Southeast Asia a geopolitical ‘reality’ was the creation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967. With the expansions that followed, ASEAN today comprises all countries of the region except Timor Leste. This has also given rise to the development and promotion of an officially recognized tourist region known as ‘Southeast Asia’ (Hitchcock, King & Parnwell 2009: 4). As Richter (2009: 132-133) explains, (touristic) unifying attempts have never been straightforward for the reason that Southeast Asia is characterized by diversity rather than similarity, being incredibly varied in political, economic, geographical and cultural terms. Politically, systems range from communism in Laos and Vietnam, to ‘Asian-style’ democracies in Singapore and Malaysia. Economically, there are state controlled economies like in Myanmar, and advanced capitalist markets in other parts of the region. With respect to geography, there are stark differences too. Southeast Asia comprises large archipelagos (e.g. Indonesia and the Philippines) and also the small landlocked country of Laos. There are also great cultural variations. The mainland of Southeast Asia is mainly Buddhist while Islam is the dominant religion in the maritime region but also in Malaysia. There are, however, exceptions. The Philippines are mostly Roman Catholic, with an Islamic minority in the south; and a syncretic form of Hinduism is practiced on the Island of Bali.

Against a background of former conflicts and regional disparities, state planned tourism took off in the 1970s. Most countries built their early strategies on their inherited colonial-based resorts (e.g. hill stations) and decided to focus on wealthy Western tourists rather than on Asian or domestic tourist for economic reasons (Richter 2009: 135-136). Consequently, and as of today, many Southeast Asian countries have relatively well-developed tourism infrastructures,

though Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar, Brunei and East Timor can still be identified as emerging markets. The growing prosperity of the region has promoted domestic tourism to a considerable extent too and attractions for local inner-Asian tourists are increasingly being developed, notably gambling and golf; however, international tourists remain a priority. Besides the well-established ‘mass tourism’ market, countries now also cater for niche markets. These include Ecotourism, spa and luxury tourism, health-related tourism (especially to the Philippines) and more recently cruise tourism (idem: 140-141). As Hitchcock, King & Parnwell (2009: 14-15) point out, issues of representation, identity and culture have been central to such tourism practices and government planning processes. As they hold, it is therefore worthwhile to investigate the politics of identity construction that are at play in the region and how these relate to national tourism development policies in cultural processes and the possible effect on local communities. Much of this discussion on identity is also linked to problematic assumptions of ethnicity and authenticity and the question if identity models are ‘genuine’ and can be put into practice by recourse to tradition, history and the commodification of Otherness.

As I will demonstrate in chapter 7 of this dissertation, modern tourism discourse cleverly commodifies many of the region’s cultural and environmental assets and presents them as authentic under the guise of modern *tourism myths*. These include the notion of the unchanged and timeless destination, the myth of unrestrained indulgence in entertainment and nature and the more rugged frontier experience (see Echtner 2002; Echtner & Prasad 2003). It is through these myths that the old ideas from 19th century travel find their way into modern tourism practice and are widely accepted as unproblematic.

Taking this into account and considering the critical orientation of this thesis, matters of identity, authenticity and colonial legacy can suitably be traced by focusing on tourism in the countries of Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and Burma / Myanmar. The, “East” – in which the region is located from a European point of view – has long been a Western construct that relied on the mythology of the dangerous, exotic and mysterious to establish a type of Otherness from which the western self could safely differentiate itself (Douglas & Douglas 2000: 29). As mentioned, Said (1978) has convincingly argued that this strategy established a relationship of power that legitimized Western intervention and control over what became known as the *Orient*. What should be reiterated at this point is that the construction and transformation of national and local identities may often have dominant drivers but is never static or final in its outcome. It is always dynamic and open to change. As Wood (1997: 66) points out, people should be seen as

active and strategic users of culture, participating in contexts where no single set of cultural interpretations has an inherent claim to truth and authenticity. [What therefore matters is not] tradition but its ongoing symbolic reconstitution; not authenticity but its attribution, not inherited identities but relational, improvised and contested ones; not internalized values as much as available templates and strategies of action; not culture but cultural invention and local discourses – the central question to be asked are about process, and about the complex ways tourism enters and becomes part of an already on-going process of symbolic meaning and appropriation.

Taken the above outlined aspects into account, the geographical context I intend to survey promises to be revealing for mainly two reasons: firstly, mainland Southeast Asia is the world's fastest developing tourist region and secondly, as part of the 'Orient', it is firmly situated in Western discourses of discovery and colonial exploitation. This suggests both sufficient agency for discursive change as well as historic potential for the persistence of imperial ideas. Observing tourist practices in the light of these two aspects will therefore likely produce meaningful results! Next, the complete framework of analysis is presented in the form of a table.

## 5.6. Framework of Analysis

Table 1 - Framework of Analysis

Structural Analysis	Textual Selection and Analysis
<b>Social Analysis of available conditions / regulations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of <b>Socio-economic and Political Conjuncture</b> (past / present)</li> <li>• Identification of relevant <b>Ideological Macrostructures</b> (e.g. imperialism, colonialism, racism, modern tourism myths)</li> </ul>	<b>Identification of text types and genres that represent social actors and social practices</b> (e.g. people, cultures, countries and travelling as a domain of action) that are <b>relevant to the research question</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Historical Sources</b> / ‘imperial guides’</li> <li>• <b>Modern Guidebooks</b></li> <li>• <b>Independent Travel Blogs</b></li> </ul> <b>Identification of relevant discursive strategies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Census</b> (e.g. selecting identities and ordering them in hierarchic structures)</li> <li>• <b>Maps</b> (e.g. spatial ordering of entities and people)</li> <li>• <b>Museum</b> (e.g. historic narratives of identity)</li> </ul>
<b>Identification of Discourse Topics and Discourse Positions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of <b>Discourse Topics</b> (what is spoken about, what is sayable in terms of identities, orderings and histories)</li> <li>• Identification of <b>Discourse Positions</b> (the type of ideological stance from which a text is produced or received)</li> </ul>	<b>Strategies of discursive production of people and places</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which actors feature in the texts?</li> <li>• Which topics are articulated with which actors?</li> <li>• Which practices are associated with specific actors?</li> <li>• Which models of identity are possible, which are not?</li> </ul>
<b>Perspectivization Processes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Actors</b></li> <li>• <b>Action</b></li> <li>• <b>Argument</b></li> </ul>	<b>Identification of micro-linguistic mechanism</b> <b>Actors:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Inclusion, exclusion</i></li> <li>• <i>Naming, Pronouns</i></li> </ul> <b>Action:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mitigation and hyperbole</i></li> <li>• <i>Hedging, modality, Factuality</i></li> <li>• <i>Quotation patterns</i></li> </ul> <b>Argument:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Metaphors, Assumptions, Inferences</i></li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation of Topoi</b>	<b>Conclusion Rules:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Usefulness, advantage, disadvantage, Humanitarism</i></li> </ul>
<b>Discussion and contextualization of findings</b>	<b>How does a specific text relate to a specific macro-structure (reproduction / subversion)?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Intertextual and interdiscursive relationships</i></li> <li>• <i>Extralinguistic context</i></li> <li>• <i>Socio-political context</i></li> </ul>

Table 1 presents the main analytical framework and heuristic of this dissertation. To account for the specificity of modern tourism discourse (e.g. modern tourism myths), an expansion is

introduced when Lonely Planet and blogs are investigated. The analytical part follows below. The subsequent chapter begins with the examination of the historical corpus.

## 6. Analysis of Historical Texts

Before empire could expand past its familiar coasts and shires, the new world had to be discovered, explored and politically organised. Colonial infrastructures were implemented, so that the further peruse of foreign dominions and people could be facilitated by the European powers. In the case of Southeast Asia, the 16<sup>th</sup> century marked the beginning of the gradual establishment of Western dominance. Fishers (1966) seminal study *Southeast Asia – A Social, Economic and Political Geography* identifies three main stages in this process. In the earliest phase, major footholds on strategically placed insular coast-lines were established. The intervention was then mainly peripheral and did not touch the mainland. Later, towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Dutch pushed further across Java and the northern parts of the Philippines, whereas the Spanish built settlements at central islands of the Philippines. It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the growing demands of the European economy for raw materials and colonial goods that Britain, France and the United States extended their firm control over the region. The process was accelerated by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the invention of the steam ship (Fisher 1966: 126). As transport times were shortened and ships could carry more goods at higher frequencies, the economic exploitation of Southeast Asia was achieved to a vast extent.

Importantly, the material deployment of modernity's expansionist rationalities would not have been completed without the productiveness of its complicit language realm. Colonial expansion and imperial oppression vitally relied on the control over meaning, language and text, establishing a signifying economy that shapes and is shaped by both the hierarchical structures of power and the normative assumptions their mode of signification purveys (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2002; Hall & Tucker 2004: 6). In that sense, language plays a dual role. It acts

both at the level of simple utility (as propaganda for instance) and at the unconscious level, where it leads to the naturalizing of constructed values (e.g. civilization, humanity, etc.) which, conversely, established 'savagery', 'native', 'primitive', as their antitheses and as the object of a reforming zeal. (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2002: 3)

It is this ‘language aspect’ of the colonial period that this chapter will address. To do so, three instances of colonial representations of mainland Southeast Asia are discussed. First, *Travels in the central parts of Indo-China (Siam), Cambodia, and Laos during the years 1858, 1859, and 1860*, written by Henri Mouhot and published by his relatives in 1864 after his death; second the two guidebooks: Murray’s (1904) *Imperial Guide to India, Including Kashmir, Burma and Ceylon, with Illustrations, Maps and Plans* and Harrison’s *Illustrated guide to the Federated Malay States*, published in 1923. All three selected sources are relevant to grasp the specificity of the respective historic settings they discursively relate to. While Mouhot’s work negotiates the outset of European colonialism in Southeast Asia, Murray’s and Harrison’s guidebooks are set in a later period where the gaze and protocol of the explorer had already made way for the visions and tales of the tourist and sightseer.

### **Mouhot**

As remarked, accelerated global mobility was still in the offing when the Anglo-French explorer Henri Mouhot arrived at Singapore in a sailing vessel after he had embarked in London more than four months earlier (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 37). His seminal account on mainland Southeast Asia comprises two volumes and approximately 700 pages. It had been written in a time before large scale travel to the region became possible and viable for many. Accordingly, the next chapter explores which role Mouhot’s narrative played in the discursive construction of Siam and Indochina – today known as Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. His 19<sup>th</sup> century book is highly significant in this respect. It has endured as a primary source of information and interpretation, furnishing the student of the period and region with important data (Tinker 1967). Specifically, Mouhot’s text can help us trace how particular versions of history became more powerful and hegemonically perseverant than others. As Kellner (1997: 136-137) points out in this regard, “[h]istory is not about past as such, but rather about our ways of creating meaning from the scattered, and profoundly meaningless debris we find around us”. Adopting this view, I am interested in the implicit and explicit assumptions Mouhot’s account lays claim to and the ideological work it performs at the outset of the high colonial period. In this respect, Mouhot’s representational edifice is not treated as a simple account of a journey, but rather as a repository of potentially relevant discursive formations associated with colonial ideology and European expansionist policies at the time under survey. As Mills (1991:68-69) argues in this respect, texts are never discursively homogenous but constrained by a variety of conventional, political and socio-economic forces that both dictate what can be said or written and that lead to the utterances being understood in particular ways. Exploring these constraining factors (e.g.

from a historical, cultural and economic perspective) parallel to analysing linguistic features promises to help better understand the reality effects of the symbolic formations of colonial discourse that can be traced in the works of Mouhot (1864), Murray (1904) and Harrison (1920).

### **Murray and Harrison**

Subsequently, two popular, early 20<sup>th</sup> century guidebooks to mainland Southeast Asia are discussed. Murray's (1904) *Imperial Guide to India, Including Kashmir, Burma and Ceylon, with Illustrations, Maps and Plans* is a revised and expanded edition of the 'original' version from 1859. The book then published was Murray's first guide to India, being delivered to the shelves only a year after direct Crown Rule was imposed on the colony in 1858. By that time, it mainly included the presidencies of Bombay and Madras; however, with further imperial expansion, Burma and Ceylon were included (MacKenzie 2005: 22-23). Given the focus of this dissertation, only Burma will be discussed in detail whereas relevant observations on the guidebook's overall structure and authorial stance will be considered too.

Next, Harrison's (1920) *Illustrated Guide to the Federated Malay States* focuses on the Colony of the Straits Settlements (British territory), the Federated Malay States (British protected and administered) and the Other Malay States (British protected and advised) (idem: 23-24). Like Murray's (1904) handbook, the publication falls into a time when colonial control had already been firmly established. Tourist infrastructures had largely been developed and large numbers of recreational travelers felt attracted to the wider region. The guidebooks under review are thus expected to expand the discursive repertoire of Mouhot's explorational narrative of the 'East' and refine it towards a mythology that shall promote a newer era of colonial self-understanding and mobility. Notably, the up-market travelers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were the forerunners of international tourism to Southeast Asia (Hitchcock, King, Parnwell 2009:7), with their discourses arguably laying the foundation for modern-day tourist perceptions, desires and practices.

## **6.1. Women Writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

In the historical section of this thesis, Henri Mouhot's seminal account on Southeast Asia is analyzed to better understand the discursive making of the region at an early point of its colonial integration. Subsequently, two popular guidebooks are discussed, which cater for the first waves of tourism to the region. While the guidebooks feature sections on and for women travellers and offer them some advice (notably by a male author), the first text has a male first-person narrator / protagonist and is devoid of the female perspective. Over large parts, the self-



fashioning of Mouhot (1864) exemplifies the heavily masculinized ideal of the 19<sup>th</sup> century explorer who fights through thick and thin and is prepared to maintain his ‘stiff upper lip’ even in times of extreme danger. There are no female actors included, other than the mentioning of letters he writes to his wife and the comments he makes on the local population.

While the discourses of empire were essentially crafted by men (Stott 1989: 70 qtd. in Mills 1991: 77), women travel writers of the colonial period can provide additional insights in terms of how they represented the world negotiating both their gender constraints and their privileged status in a colonized nation (Russell 1986; Mills 1991; Mercer 1999, Thompson 2011). In verification of this and in default of a prolonged discussion of the discursive impacts of 19<sup>th</sup> century women writers on Southeast Asia, the remainder of this subsection examines some of the conventional and social intricacies of the genre. This is done in exemplary reference to Ida Pfeiffer, an Austrian world-traveler of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

From a conventional and performative point of view, women’s travel writing is a well-researched area, with feminist critics such as Mills (1991), Pratt (1992) and Trollope (1983) showing how 19<sup>th</sup> century women travellers have been marginalized by an overtly masculine imperialist discourse (see also Simmons 2004: 44). Mills (1991) demonstrates how imperial women travelers were constrained by the discursive hegemony of a supposedly heroic male colonialism in combination with non-compatible discourses of femininity that were dominant at the time. For example, the building of the colonized nation relied on strategies of signification that inter alia comprised the discourse of racial superiority, the discourses of the natural sciences and ethnography, ideas about distant savage tribes and the notion of the noble savage (idem: 72). Problematically, however, these discourses were mostly associated with men and thus not easily exploitable for women travel writers. As Worley (1986: 40) explains, male travel writing heavily relied on characteristic such as courage, energy, intellectual power and independence. These concepts had (and sometimes still have, my remark) strong masculine connotations that effectively reify male travellers as heteronormative ideals of the colonial project par excellence. For women travellers, on the other hand, the situation was different. Their actual and discursive space was largely limited to the domestic sphere, so that “[a] woman attempting to write an account of her travels would sense that her activities were diametrically opposed to those of the nineteenth century ideal [of] the ‘selfless angel of the house’” (ibid).

While male travellers were expected to be matter-of-fact and given the license to live out independence and adventure, the feminine ideal of the time was associated with domestic affairs and required the continuous presentation of a well-managed self. In discursive terms, this often

limited the scope of female travel writers to elaborate comments on the right choices of clothes, correct behaviors and the obeying of societal norms (Mills 1991: 72). As Joanna Trollope (1983: 156) puts it in *Britannia's Daughters: Women of the British Empire*: “Plants – as long as they were not too grossly tropical – were a safe subject, just sufficiently aesthetic without any dangers of being intellectual, and properly sexless”. As the quote aptly sums up, taboo topics for female writers included subjects such as sex, the description of (grossly) otherness beyond common imagination and claims to intellectual capacity in more general terms.

A prominent example for the negotiation of such discursive constraints and contradictions can be found in the account of the Austrian traveller Ida Pfeiffer *A Woman's Journey Around the World*, which was published in 1850. Pfeiffer travelled around the world twice in a time when large scale expeditions were predominantly the occupation of seafarers, naturalists and continental explorers. Especially in the 19th century, it was incumbent on male travellers to be able to prove that their observations usefully contribute to political, scientific or economic concerns. Those men who could not fulfil these expectations were often dismissed as intellectually shallow, trivial or clownish; attributes that were construed as emasculate and dominantly associated with the writing style of women. The resulting stereotypical binary of ‘highbrow’ male travellers versus ‘trivial’ women travellers functioned in a highly authoritative manner, influencing both the ways women and men wrote their texts and how their texts were received by their audiences (Thompson 2011: 175). Women texts that appeared too masculine for their time risked being disapproved or were simply not published. This precarious positioning of their writing frequently prompted women writers to include disclaimers that made their texts appear rather amateurish, denying academic or literary merit (Mills 1991: 83). In the pre-face of her book, Pfeiffer deals with this issue as she describes herself. She writes:

I have been called, in many of the public journals, a “professed tourist;” but I am sorry to say that I have no title to the appellation in its usual sense. On the one hand I possess too little wit and humour to render my writings amusing; and, on the other, too little knowledge to judge rightly of what I have gone through. The only gift to which I can lay claim is that of narrating in a simple manner the different scenes in which I have played a part, and the different objects I have beheld; if I ever pronounce an opinion, I do so merely on my own personal experience. (Pfeiffer 1850/2004:1)

Pfeiffer makes intelligible her position as a woman traveler by cleverly dissociating the discursive location of her own writing persona from the supposedly natural masculine endowments of rationality and sophistication associated with her male counterparts. By

foregrounding the simple manner of her narrating style and her supposed deficit of knowledge, wit and humor, she does not only differentiate herself from the masculine genre conventions of travel writing of her time; effectively, she opens a discursive space for her own adventure account, positioning herself unoffensively against the hegemonic force of a masculine narrating tradition that she must epistemologically avoid in order to be published and read.

On the road and elsewhere, woman travellers certainly have experienced pretty much the same physical and psychological ordeals as their male counterparts. However, they had to be much more circumspect in terms of how they reported of their dramatic experiences, crafting their reports with more or less feminine undertone (Thompson 2011: 176 & 180). Imperialist discourse was essentially the discourse of powerful white men; nevertheless 19<sup>th</sup> century women travellers assumed a significant enunciative role, perpetuating, naturalizing and broadening the signifying economy of the colonial project in their own gendered terms (Mills 1991). As Russell (1986: 213) argues,

[women] became observers, not of places but of people and we owe them eternal debt, for their records of sights and happenings complemented the scientific data remitted by male explorers. Used to the minutiae of the household, they observed the trees within the wood, but because of this, their observations were often dismissed as trivial.

The following quote is illustrative of this. When in Brazil, Ida Pfeiffer offers the reader intimate insights into the effects of the tropical climate on her physical well-being, foregrounding the themes of friendship and social relations in combination with bodily sensations of weakness and fatigue – all topics that would have been considered adequate for a bourgeois woman in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She writes:

[i]n the month of November, I was seriously indisposed for a considerable period. I suffered, especially in the town, from an oppressive feeling of fatigue and weakness; and to the kindness and friendship of Herr Geiger, the Secretary to the Austrian Consulate, and his wife, who took me with them into the country, and showed me the greatest attention, do I alone owe my recovery. I ascribed my illness altogether to the unusual dampness of the atmosphere. (Pfeiffer 1850/2004:20)

Arguably, the quote hints at the notion of the weak and helpless woman in a hostile environment. In addition, we might even trace allusions to the figure of the *chaperone*. According to the Oxford Dictionary (2018), the current sense of the term dates to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, denoting an adult person (usually a woman) who was supposed to accompany a young

unmarried woman through public places to protect her from unwanted (sexual) attention. As the text suggests, it was only by the kind intervention of Mr. Geiger and his wife that Pfeiffer could regain her health in the damp atmosphere. Through this strategy, the text appears both overtly feminine and unthreatening to the masculine order of the travel writing genre at the time.

Besides such gender constraints regarding choice of topics and strategies of self-presentation, white women writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century assumed a complex role in the colonial knowledge production. Initially, however, their texts were of little academic interest. In the signifying economy of travel writing and empire, more traditional (literary) criticism has either tended to implicitly glorify the bravery of the male explorer; or, from the post-colonial era onwards, to identify him as discursive mode of subjugation, preparing the road to exploitation via the provision of knowledge and imagination (Mercer 1999: 147). In early feminist criticism, women travellers / writers began to receive proper scholarly attention. Their position in the relationship between colonizer and colonized has often been compared to the oppression of women in patriarchal societies, assuming that women, through their generally subordinate position to men, will tend to identify with suppressed groups and people they encounter elsewhere more readily and closely (French 1985; Steinem qtd. in Mercer 1999: 147). In this vein, Mills (1991: 99) argues that female writers were less afraid of interaction in the *contact-zone* (Pratt 1992) and reported on interactions with local people in a less generalizing and more favorable form. The key assumption in this argument is that 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century women travellers would have opposed the injustice of empire at least implicitly and thus can be seen as potential (or actual) proponents of anti-imperialist counter discourse (Thompson 2011: 191).

We find evidence for this in Ida Pfeiffer's account of her travels through South Asia. Arriving from Ceylon (Sri Lanka), her steamer anchored at Gardenrich, a small town just four miles below Calcutta. Facing the tedious business of arranging transport and accommodation, Pfeiffer is assisted by an engineer, about whom she writes: "[he] interested himself so far in my behalf as to land with me, and to hire a palanquin, and direct the natives where to take me" (Pfeiffer 1850/2004:105). It should be mentioned that a *palanquin* is essentially a chair with a rain cover carried on poles by a number of servants. Upon entering this human-powered means of transport, Pfeiffer reflects: "I was overpowered by feelings of the most disagreeable kind the first time I used a palanquin. I could not help feeling how degrading it was to human beings to employ them as beasts of burden" (Pfeiffer 1850/2004:105). As the quote suggests, Pfeiffer has empathy with her porters, describing their employment as degrading and non-human.

Nevertheless, Pfeiffer's counter-discursive reflection on the colonial division of labor does not seem to have any effects on the course of action she describes. As a women traveller, she is assisted by a male engineer, he instructs the local servants and she boards the palanquin to carry on her trip. While there certainly is some amount of sympathy for the colonized, the standard colonial script of procedures is not really challenged.

Accordingly, Mary Russell (1986) critically reviews the overly enthusiastic view of the counter imperialist woman traveller, cautioning that "it is one of life's small ironies that women – their own position in society not unlike that of a colonized country – were themselves able to take a ride on the great wave of colonization that burst outwards into the unclaimed world" (idem: 38). Ghose (1998) is even more specific in pointing out the complex and ambiguous relationship between women travellers and the colonized places they visited, arguing that they were "colonized by gender, but colonizers by race" (idem: 5). The palanquin episode in Pfeiffer's book is particularly indicative of this.

Finally, it should be pointed out that a large number of woman travellers wholeheartedly approved of colonialism and the benefits it offered them, implicitly or explicitly defending its ethnocentric, political and economic rationalities (Thompson 2011: 192). To better understand the enormous cultural force of and behind colonialist logic, it is helpful to investigate travel accounts that depict the reality-effects this ideology brought along. In this respect, the following example illustrates how racialized and supremacist assumptions can enter the realm of common knowledge in such profound ways that their inhumane rationality goes unnoticed and is even deployed to make a supposedly critical statement on European colonial practice. When in Calcutta, Pfeiffer writes:

[i]n some European families I visited there were from sixty to seventy servants, and from fifteen to twenty horses. In my opinion, the Europeans themselves are to blame for the large sums they have to pay for servants. They saw the native princes and rajahs surrounded by a multitude of idle people, and, as Europeans, they did not wish to appear in anyway inferior. Gradually the custom became a necessity, and it would be difficult to find a case where a more sensible course is pursued. (Pfeiffer 1850/2004:105)

To begin with the obvious, Pfeiffer is decidedly critical about some of the European gentry in India. However, she does not hold them liable for having large numbers of servants, remarking that the native princes and rajahs are surrounded by a multitude of 'idle' people too, and pointing out that the European residents emulated this custom in order to avoid an inferior

appearance; but rather, she reproaches them for their ‘mistake’ of driving price via demand by creating a servant market they can no longer control. Her argument reflects a core rationality of the colonial economy, namely that access to the market is limited to the colonizer and that the colonized is not supposed to have a say. Therefore, the colonized is not a trade partner but a means of production or even a commodity, as in the case of servants. Her critique of extravagant individuals buying over-priced slaves can thus be read as an ideologically motivated warning call, probably stemming from, operating at and addressing the level of the unconscious, insinuating what might happen if the colonial economy loses the power of control.

As this subsection was to show, the role of white women writers in the imperial era was complex. While they were constrained by the gender order of their time, they were often members of the colonial elite and placed in hierarchy above the local people of the dominions they visited. The writing samples I have discussed serve exemplary purposes. While they cannot cover every discursive instance and possibility of female travel writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the extracts I have chosen illustrate the oscillating role of women writers between classic colonial discourse, more compassionate accounts of interaction with local inhabitants and strategies of presenting a feminine authorial self, so that their texts do not subvert too overtly the conventions of gender and travel writing. The strategies of relating the female self to the colonial Other happens under the same discursive umbrella and conventions as it is the case with men’s texts, with the main difference being that “the discourses of femininity undercut many of the statements that they make” (Mills 1991: 94). The following section will build on what has been written so far and investigate some specificities of (colonial) discourse that has come to shape the region under review. Henri Mouhot is discussed next.

## 6.2. Henri Mouhot Vol I & II

Tracing travel discourse over distinct types of media from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to today necessitates further methodological considerations. A key issue involves reading the texts under survey in the light of their historical, economic and socio-cultural background, acknowledging that ideological constraints of their time give rise to specific interpretations and ways of relating the travellers’ views to their respective audiences (Mills 1991: 68-69). Diachronic analysis then requires the search for common *discursive strategies* and *conventional elements*, which make old and new texts comparable in terms of how they encode their implicit or explicit ideological stance. In terms of discursive strategies, I have proposed above the three mechanisms of *census*, *maps and museum* (Anderson 2006, MacKenzie 2005). These provide the relevant identity categories, geographies and historical narratives that henceforth can shape collective

imaginings of space. The second task, finding conventional elements that apply to different text types of the travel genre, is of equal importance. We remember that all ideology is discursive, whereas not all discourse must be necessarily ideological (Stoddard 2007: 193). This naturally begs the question which conventional regularities in travel texts may be ideologically problematic in terms of being consistent with an imperial logic of representation. Tracing such conventions will help uncover the discursive mechanics of unequal power relations in different travel texts from different times. Over the decades and centuries, there may be (problematic) ideological overlap, but this overlap will likely appear in a discursively transformed form to be ideologically effective in its respective political, economic and cultural conjuncture. Following Said (1984: 226), “ideas and ideologies must be reworked to adapt to new cultural conditions”, and precisely these moments of “reworking” can be illusive and difficult to trace.

It is therefore promising to begin with an investigation of those rhetoric and conventional elements of travel writing that have been employed consistently and became characteristic for the genre. Many of these elements are interwoven with colonial relations and are likely indicative of sensibilities formed in the imperial era. Inter alia, these include the *freedom of movement* enjoyed by the traveller, the *rituals of quest and departure*, and the *mediation of Otherness* to the reader at home (Kerridge 1999: 164). Especially the latter is of interest because of the politico-ideological labour it performs.

In periods of imperialism, ‘Othering’ is one of the ways in which the conquering nation organises thoughts and actions towards the colonised nation, but each colonial context develops a specific range of colonialist discourses dependent on the type and length of colonial relations. (Mills 1991: 88)

At a textual level, the above categories are further differentiated in *manners and customs* descriptions that fix the Others and homogenize them into a collective they; descriptive sequences of *landscape* that verbally depopulate the land and discursively appropriate it for whatever purpose; and, finally, the *sentimental voice* that appeals to the audience in a more intimate and less scientific way, rendering the world familiar and accessible through the mediation of personal experience and imagination (Pratt 1985). Taking this into account, the remaining section discusses Henri Mouhot’s (1864) posthumously published two-volume account *Travels in the Central Parts of Indo-China, Siam, Cambodia and Laos* against the outlined discursive and conventional strategies.

Alexander Henri Mouhot was born at the French town of Montbéliard in 1826. He first studied philology in France but later developed an interest in the natural sciences. He began his professional career as a teacher. Through the influence of Daguerre, a painter and pioneer in photography, Mouhot eventually became an artist, devoting himself to travel, the arts and natural history. After he had toured much of Europe together with his brother, both moved to England as they had married English ladies who were relatives of the well-known British explorer Mungo Park. There, inspired by an English book about Siam and assisted by the Geographical and Zoological Societies of London, Mouhot made the decision to embark on a scientific expedition to mainland Southeast Asia – a journey from which he would never return (Belinfante 1864: 18-22):

M. Mouhot dedicated the last four years of his life to exploring the interior of Siam; he first travelled through that country, then through Cambodia, and afterwards reascended the Mekong as far as the frontiers of Laos; visited one of the savage and independent tribes inhabiting the district between those two countries and Cochin China; then, after having crossed the great lake Touli-Sap, he explored the provinces of Ongcor and Battambang, where he discovered splendid ruins, especially the Temple of Ongcor the Great, which is nearly perfect, and perhaps unparalleled in the world. (idem: 24)

This initial description of Mouhot's journey exemplifies much of the heuristic I have proposed above. First, there is the notion of the *heroic quest and departure* as the protagonist sets out to dedicate the last four years of his life to the exploration of the interior parts of Siam, Cambodia and Laos. To grasp the discursive significance of Mouhot's journey, it is necessary to read the extract in its historical context. At the time, Europe developed what Pratt (1992: 9) has called a "planetary consciousness", meaning the rise of the natural sciences as the most trusted source of knowledge besides a shift from coastal explorations and trade towards the interior parts of countries (for a more detailed discussion see chapter 3 of this dissertation). This was propelled by the economy's rising demand for raw materials and the perceived necessity to bring under control overseas territories to prevent them from being seized by other European nations. Against this background, the laudatory description of Mouhot and his journey exemplifies the hope that was vested in emblematic figures like him. Second, the legacy of Mouhot's itinerary is presented in the form of a linear narrative structure. The adherence to a strict chronological order foregrounds the mission character of the journey and cleverly reifies *freedom of movement* as both a natural privilege of the traveller and a necessity to accomplish the trip. Finally,



*Otherness* is mediated as either savage (the tribe Mouhot visited) or superb (the ancient remains of the Temple of Ongcor the Great). It is noteworthy that the past of the region is portrayed in a more favourable way than the present. Construed is a sharp contrast between the splendid ruins of a bygone time, alluding to a (lost) civilization, and the present state of the region which involves savage tribes and the dangers of negotiating uncharted land. This dichotomy is amplified by a foreshadowing of the death of the traveller and the credit he is given for the discovery of Angkor. As (Edwards 2007:20) has pointed out, this double-sided rhetoric of ancient discovery and present decline effectively functioned to legitimize France's colonial ambitions in Indochina, foregrounding the moral responsibility of the colonizer to preserve the grandeur of the past for all humankind. This is further exemplified by the following two quotes:

(1) The present state of Cambodia is deplorable, and its future menacing. Formerly, however, it was a powerful and populous country, as is testified by the splendid ruins. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 274-275)

(2) [R]uins of such grandeur, remains of structures which must have been raised at such an immense cost of labour, that, at the first view, one is filled with profound admiration, and cannot but ask what has become of this powerful race so civilised, so enlightened, the authors of these gigantic works? One of these temples—a rival to that of Solomon, and erected by some ancient Michael Angelo—might take an honourable place beside our most beautiful buildings. It is grander than anything left to us by Greece or Rome, and presents a sad contrast to the state of barbarism in which the nation is now plunged. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 274-275)

It is instructive to observe the dichotomy of a 'good' past and 'bad' state of present affairs in terms of an active / passive divide. The past is expressed in terms of a dead 'race' and insensate matter (relicts), whereas the articulation 'barbarism' and 'present age' logically relies on the imagination of acting individuals (see also Bergmeister 2015). By a discursive merger of the mechanisms of *census and museum* (Anderson 2006) 'barbarism' is effectively reified as a human process over time that assimilates local people into a larger concept of terror, savagery and societal decline. According to this logic – much like the decade-long imperial instrumentalization of the signifier 'cannibal' described by Motohashi (1999) – European conquest stands against its construed 'barbaric Other' and is thus reified as mode of regeneration that will save the local population from its supposed demise and install the colonizers as saviours of ancient glory and future opportunities.

Besides, Mouhot's strategy of negative othering frequently involves accounts of indigenous slavery. Even for contemporary research, explorers like Mouhot still play a key role in highlighting the existence of slavery in Indochina before colonial annexation. While their texts communicate Euro-centrist subjectivities and prejudices, they too permit insights into indigenous customs and let us gauge how the indigenous slave phenomenon in Indochina was politically appropriated in European expansionist discourse (Delaye 2003). In terms of statistic evidence, there is no complete census data offering an exact indication of the number of slaves in French Indochina. Comparisons of estimates can range from somewhere below one third of the population to slightly above that mark. However, these figures may be underestimates because the upper-classes and slaveholders of the respective countries had no interest in declaring their slave numbers to a French colonial administration that attempted to abolish slavery (Delaye 2003: 131-132). In 1848, France banned slave work in all its territories, declaring it as their mission to fight its persistence in Indochina. This was used as a justification for the expansionist politics of the European nation, contrasting their negative interpretation of the local situation with the concept of liberal and egalitarian statehood that France wanted to project (idem: 129). The following extract from Mouhot exemplifies how this agenda operated on a discursive level:

European conquest, abolition of slavery, wise and protecting laws, and experience, fidelity, and scrupulous rectitude in those who administer them, would alone effect the regeneration of this state. It lies near to Cochin China, the subjection of which France is now aiming at, and in which she will doubtless succeed: under her sway it will become a land of plenty. I wish her to possess this land, which would add a magnificent jewel to her crown; but it is also my earnest desire that she may make a judicious choice of governors, and that the name of France, my dear and beautiful country, may be loved, respected, and honoured in the extreme East, as it should be everywhere. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 275)

As this suggests, Mouhot is fully absorbed in the larger cultural concept of the imperial 'civilizing' mission, making use of the *topoi* of 'responsibility' and 'humanitarianism'. As discussed further above, *topoi* function as content-related conclusion rules that privilege a particular interpretation of an utterance over other possible evaluations (KhosraviNik 2010: 58). In this case, the phrase 'abolition of slavery' in combination with 'European conquest' and 'rectitude' guide the recipient towards a positive evaluation of France's imperial pursuits. By contrast, as the next quote exemplifies, the current lack of integration into the colonial economy

is represented as a fault of the local leadership and their refusal to accept the European vision of progress.

The mountains contain gold, argentiferous lead, zinc, copper, and iron, the last two in some abundance. One is astonished to find these fertile lands furnish so little for exportation; but the sovereigns and mandarins enrich themselves by spoliation and extortion, and every abuse which can ruin a country and retard its progress. If these dominions were ruled wisely and carefully, with probity, and with a regard to the interests of the working classes, the whole aspect of affairs would be changed. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 276-277)

Raw materials are mentioned, and the possibility of exportation is articulated with prosperity and progress. This is amplified by foregrounding the supposedly wise and careful administrative capacities of the European powers, effectively stimulating the problematic and enduring myth that colonialism was largely a humanitarian project. In reality, as Fisher (1966: 161) explains, the European powers viewed their colonial dependencies of Southeast Asia as “Ergänzungsräume” for their economic expansion. Westerners were mainly concerned with making profits for themselves and not so much with developing the countries for the benefit of the local populations. In fact, the European trade model severely hampered the development of indigenous business cycles by excluding local peasants from the fertile economic land, forcing them into a marginal economic role from the beginning (Raben 2014: 31). In line with this historic assessment of the colonial intrusion in Indochina, Mouhot reveals the economic and political dimension of his agenda in the following quote:

[t]he chief productions of Cambodia are tobacco, pepper, ginger, sugar, gamboge, coffee, silk, and cotton. The latter important article of commerce thrives here admirably; and as, according to report, America is menaced with civil war, it is a question whether we can henceforth calculate on that country for the supply it has hitherto furnished. If that supply were even partially to fail, and thousands of workmen to be in consequence thrown out of employment, what a vast field might be opened on the banks of the Mekon and of Touli-Sap for European activity, industry, and capital. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 276)

At the time of Mouhot’s writing, America was on the brink of civil war (1861 – 1865), where the southern slave states formed the Confederate States of America to declare secession from the northern Union (McPherson 1988). During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, America became the world’s most rapidly growing nation. It’s gross national product increased sevenfold, with

slave-grown crops sustaining both the era's territorial expansion and economic growth. Cotton from American plantations dominated the world market and accelerated the unfolding of industrial progress in England (McPherson 1988:6-7). Since a civil war would potentially cripple transatlantic trade, Mouhot saw an opportunity for alternative supply in Indochina. As he insinuates that failing supply of American plantation products might push entire Europe into recession, he arguably tolerates – at least implicitly – the slave-labour principle upon which American plantations relied until the civil war to be able to furnish the necessary supply for Europe.

Analysing the logical implications of his rhetoric strategy, there are two hypothetical arguments to be made. Firstly, had he pointed out the slave economy of the American South in a passing comment, the justification of English and French colonial expansion into Southeast Asia would have been more successful from both a moral and a geopolitical point of view. For instance, he could have established the myth of France liberating Indochina from slavery by proposing the development of a new and more “humane” market that would henceforth be founded upon an ethic understanding superior to that of America. Second, there is discursive wisdom in not mentioning Europe's decade-long dependence on the American *slave* economy. By opting for the exclusion of American slavery, Mouhot achieves a valuable rhetoric feat: he deprives the economic concept of supply of its human dimension, effectively absolving Europe of its responsibility for profiting from a slavery-based economy for decades. This is cleverly done because it does not explicitly contradict Mouhot's agenda of ‘civilizing’ discourse followed through his writing, but it establishes a rationality of market and trade that is relatively immune to critique over its own past but *ex ante* ingenious and supposedly morally sound.

To sum up the above: by considering the historical context of a new ‘planetary consciousness’ developing in Europe (Pratt 1992) vis-à-vis the need for resources for an ever-growing economy, this section has so far suggested that Mouhot's text exemplifies some important discourses of the increasing assertion of colonial powers in Southeast Asia. Mouhot's text discovers, conquers and surveys unfamiliar territory with naturalistic industriousness, charting out both the geographical and moral coordinates for European expansionist policies. Discursively, it constructs the double-binary ‘past’ vs. ‘present’ and ‘culture’ vs. ‘barbarism’. According to that myth, the past of the region was civilized, whereas the presence is characterised by despotism, slavery and general decline. As a solution, European conquest is offered and justified in terms of progress, prosperity and humanitarian concerns. The actual

economic agenda of the colonial “Ergänzungsraum” is thus cleverly masked as a project of civilisation and Christianity.

The following passage in the text illustrates how religion is appropriated in this respect. When in Cambodia, Mouhot meets the French missionary Father Guilloux. As the cleric advances from the jungle, with his legs covered with wounds, Mouhot exclaims: “All honour to thee, noble son of our dear and beautiful country! — thou who bravest poverty, privations, fatigue, suffering, and even death, to bring to 'these savages the blessings of religion and civilization!’” (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 239). As Phillips (1999: 64) has observed, through the motive of the (religious) person in distress, threatened by unpredictable contingencies and radical geographic and cultural differences, the mythical ideal of a steadfast European self is evoked. The protagonist must respond to his surroundings in consistent and ‘enlightened’ ways and integrate all new experience within a stable cultural frame. Otherwise, the discourse of the European self would cease to exist as distinct within its self-imposed dialectic scheme. Consequently, the stability of the essentialist self is strengthened as it is challenged, implying that the narrator does not give up his symbolic control over the dichotomy he accepts as foundational for his own existence. The next section dives further into strategies of self-representation. The discursive construction of Mouhot’s persona is investigated in more detail.

### 6.2.1. The Self-fashioning of Colonial Mouhot

Construing Mouhot’s persona as one classic imperial hero required the setting of an adventure story that was (indeed) impossible to survive. As Martin Green (1980: xi) has observed, there is a strong connection between the adventure story and the hopes and dreams of the imperial project, so that adventure nourishes “the energising myth of empire” in the form of

a series of events, partly but not wholly accidental, in settings remote from the domestic and probably from the civilised [...] which constitute a challenge to the central character. In meeting this challenge, he performs a series of exploits which make him a hero, eminent in virtues such as courage, fortitude, cunning, strength, leadership and persistence. (Green 1980: 23)

In the memoir of Henri Mouhot, written by Belinfante (1864) and printed as an introductory chapter to his posthumously published two-volume account *Travels in the Central Parts of Indo-China, Siam, Cambodia and Laos* (1864), we find evidence for this. The Anglo-French explorer is presented as a

man of merit [who] quitted his wife, brother, and all his friends and every advantage of civilization, in order to visit, in the cause of science, regions little known, but where, through much fatigue and danger, the prospect of a glorious future opened itself before him. He was already well prepared for the life, active, strong, and blessed with an excellent constitution, his physical strength was beyond the average – a result of his gymnastic sports [...] and he resisted for four years the effects of a tropical climate, bad food, and nights passed in forests, without any apparent loss of health or strength, which is doubtless to be attributed to his never taking spirits, and wine only very sparingly. His intellectual and moral qualities did not seem less to promise success, both a savant and an artist, he was also an indefatigable hunter, and had a degree of kindness mingled with his courage which was sure to gain the goodwill of the uncivilized people among who he had to live. (Belinfante 1864: 22-23)

As can be seen, there is a strong emphasis on the binary ‘civilized’ vs. ‘uncivilized’, which functions here as both an ontological and geographical marker of difference. On the one side, there is the supposedly cultured self of the European naturalist and on the other side, there lurks the savage / uncivilized Other the traveller is expected to encounter and to observe in ‘regions little known’. The construed departure from civilization for the ‘cause of science’ and ‘through much fatigue and danger’ to places where survival would merely depend on the ‘goodwill of the uncivilized people among who he had to live’ foregrounds the themes of the *ordeal* and the *heroic quest*. The arc of suspense that is thus intimated cannot be resolved in average human terms but requires the creation of an outstanding protagonist who is larger than life. Not only is Mouhot described as being prepared to suffer personal hardships in the name of science, he is also assigned superior physical, intellectual and moral qualities, attributed to an exceptional level of self-discipline and a healthy and sober way of life. As Clark (1999: 21) remarks, this is characteristic for the colonial traveller who typically placed importance on asceticism to embody a preferred vision of European culture and to foreground his submission to the imperial mission of observing and categorizing the world.

During a sojourn through the jungle of Cambodia, Mouhot (1864 Vol I: 255) confirms this agenda accordingly: “[m]ost readers prefer being amused to being instructed; while my sole aim has been to paint faithfully, and to the best of my poor abilities, what came under my observation”. Noteworthy is the shift in tone from enthusiastic to modest when compared to the heroic description of his persona above. As Mouhot describes himself, he must occupy the seriousness of the subject position required by his mission. The explicit goal of his journey is

information gathering, so logically he must assume the role of medium rather than that of a principal performer who is constantly occupied with moving himself into the centre of action. We can thus observe a strategy where the writer backgrounds himself from the frontstage of representation and plainly describes what he sees. Mary Pratt (1985) refers to this as ‘self-effacement’ of the author. The narrator thus slips away behind an invisible eye that merely acts as an “innocent conduit of information” (idem: 126) and “commands what falls within its gaze” (idem 124). Ultimately, this lends greater authority to the report.

To achieve this credibly, the traveller must never abandon the enunciative privilege of his subject position, that is, he must never get too close to the Other he observes or franchise the power of his gaze. This is illustrated somewhat comically by the following episode. Mouhot visits a splendid Siamese funeral festivity and writes:

[t]his fete, which lasted for three days, had nothing at all in it of a funereal character. I had gone there hoping to witness something new and remarkable, for these peculiar rites are only celebrated in honour of sovereigns, nobles, and other persons of high standing; but I had omitted to take into consideration the likelihood of my being myself an object of curiosity to the crowd. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 171)

Driven by his desire to witness ‘something remarkable’, Mouhot disappointedly maintains in his report that a funereal character could not be observed. Importantly and perhaps less obviously, he admits his failure to consider the likelihood of himself becoming an object of a gaze thrown at him by the ones he intends to observe. As he walks on and visits the pagoda, he hears the loud exclamation of “Farang! Come and see the farang” (ibid). Suddenly a thick crowd gathers around him. To his discomfort, they appear “already drunk either with opium or arrack, many, indeed with both” (idem: 172) and follow him wherever he goes. Mouhot decides to quit the pagoda and just as he walks outside, the senior of the celebrating party invites him into a large wooden hut. He writes:

[m]y hosts overwhelmed me with attentions, and forced upon me pastry, fruit, and bonbons; but the crowd who had followed me forced their way into the building, and hemmed us in on all sides; even the roof was covered with gazers. All of a sudden, we heard the walls crack, and the whole of the back of the hut, yielding under the pressure, fell in, and people, priests, and chiefs tumbling one upon another, the scene of confusion was irresistibly comic. I profited by the opportunity to escape, swearing—though rather late in the day—that they should not catch me again. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 172)

While the passage has undeniable humorous qualities, it is particularly noteworthy for matters of declarative agency and the struggle over its distribution. The traveller's mission is to observe. This implies focusing the objective gaze on the object and preserving the sanctity of the observer's position. As the roof collapses and the onlookers tumble over each other, and over the otherwise de-contextualized explorer too, the mechanism of re-signification gets dangerously close to Mouhot's body vis-à-vis his project of unfranchised knowledge production, leaving him no other option but to escape.

In a more general context, Richard Kerridge (1999) has investigated the interplay between the heroic traveller, who emphasizes the difference and impenetrability of the places he enters, and the anxiety of never letting the Other get too close. As Kerridge (1999: 166-167) argues, the chronology and itinerary of a journey already dictates that encounters with Otherness have only a certain amount of space to occupy since the ultimate goal of the traveller is to return home. In that sense, the travel writer functions as a proxy, offering insights into foreign cultures and countries to domestic audiences by means of converting 'Otherness' into a language that is understandable and familiar. To do this, travellers must avoid absorption into the world they are visiting – they must stay distinct from what they describe to be able to return themselves and their stories home. If travelling writers relinquish their status as subjects (the ones who see) and become objects instead (someone who is seen), their self-construed subject position of observer would cease to exist, and with it the declarative force of the supposedly truthful reports they send home.

### 6.2.2. Constructing Territory – From Bangkok to the 'Others'

As I have illustrated above, categorizations and classifications of people, land and culture are frequently shrouded in value judgements, hinting at Mouhot's implicit or explicit ideological agenda. I begin with Mouhot's more favourable description of Siam / Thailand and its people as a point of departure. I then consider his less sympathetic comments on adjacent ethnicities and tribes in territories less explored and economically integrated. I will argue that Mouhot projects a hierarchical civilization scheme onto the region that differentiates between the supposedly more assimilated Siamese and the Others around.

#### **Siam**

To recall the relevant historical frame, unlike Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, Siam / Thailand had never been *formally* colonized but nevertheless came under the influence of political and economic treatise imposed by Britain and France. Siam felt the impacts of



imperialism like other colonized countries in and beyond the region, so that Thai history is distinctive but not exceptional in the history of colonial domination in Asia (Chakrabarty 2010: iv). In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Burney Treaty (signed in 1826) allied Siam and Britain in their war against Burma and gave the Siamese suzerainty over its southern border states Kelantan, Trengganu, Kedah and Patani. The treaty also granted Britain freedom of trade in Trengganu and Kelantan, around which they established the Federated Malay States. In its new territories, Siam implemented a colonial administration that was in parts even harsher than that operated by the United Kingdom. Like the British, they allowed the existing Malay rulers to remain in position as Raja or Sultan, but they removed their political and fiscal autonomy. In contrast to the British, Sultans were not replaced when they died, and they were not allowed control over law (Loos 2010: 83). The British Empire, so Winichakul (2000: 543),

was not entirely dissimilar to the premodern policy of overlordship and empire that Siam was. For the Siamese elite, the traditional empire and modern colonialism were in certain ways compatible. As a result, the latter was comprehensible through the conception of the former with which they were familiar.

Jackson (2010: 42) has accordingly proposed to use the term ‘semicolonialism’, which acknowledges the specificities of Siam’s colonial exposure and own activity, *inter alia* including the notions of ‘cultural imperialism’, ‘informal empire’, and ‘crypto colonialism’ (see also Herzfeld 2002). Part of this specificity of Thai semi-autonomy was pathed under King Mongkut (Rama IV), who reigned from 1851 to 1868. With a major trade agreement negotiated with Sir John Bowring in 1855, links with Britain were consolidated. The British annexations in Burma / Myanmar were welcomed by the Siamese because they weakened their most feared rival. However, the French expansion into Cambodia posed a potential threat to the sovereignty of the Siamese Monarchy and ended their hope to gain power over that part of the region themselves. This strengthened their resolve to intensify ties with Britain. With the Bowring treaty in effect, extra-territoriality was granted to British subjects, freedom of trade was guaranteed, and import duties were set at a flat rate of three per cent (Fisher 1966: 489-490).

Upon his arrival in Bangkok in 1858, Mouhot was familiar with the situation and writes: “the English Government, desirous to establish friendly relations with the Eastern monarch, despatched Sir John Bowring to Bangkok, with instructions to arrange a commercial treaty, which he effected in 1855” (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 103). He further explains: “Siam has been much talked of in Europe; and, relying on the faith of treaties of peace and commerce, several French and English houses of business have been established there” (*idem*: 45). At that time,

Bangkok was already a major economic hub preferred by European merchants. As maintained in the Bowring treaty, British citizens were granted the right of permanent residence. Regulations were in place so that foreign trade could theoretically prosper. However, Mouhot's observations of the state of commercial affairs in Siam is less optimistic. He writes:

[u]nfortunately, there was much deception on the part of the native authorities, which has given rise to general and well-founded complaints from the merchants. The fact is, that they have dangerous competitors in the mandarins and even in the princes, who monopolise the greater part of the trade in rice and sugar, their chief articles of commerce, which they despatch in their junks and vessels. Moreover, the people were not prepared for the change which had taken place in the laws, and had scarcely cultivated more than enough for home consumption; add to this that the population is far from numerous, and, the Siamese being an indolent race, most of the agriculture falls into the hands of the Chinese, who flock to Singapore, Australia, and California. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 45)

Three years before Mouhot's comments, in 1855, the population of Siam was five to six million people (Fisher 1966: 493) and the small export trade was largely organised by a comparatively small but powerful community of Chinese merchants. The Bowring Treaty eventually marked the gradual decline of Chinese influence in Siam after China had already been weakened in its defeat against the British in the Opium Wars of 1842 (Harrison 2010: 10). Thereafter, the influx of Western manufactures and textile stimulated Siam to become the world's greatest exporter of rice, raising its annual exports from 200,000 tons in the 1870s to 1,500,000 tons in the 1930s (Fisher 1966: 493). Notably, these figures are from later years. While it is clear that they cannot provide a historic frame for Mouhot's journey, they are nevertheless indicative of the period of opportunity and change in which the narrator's trip falls. There was a transition from a localized commerce dominated by China and Siamese authorities towards economic integration managed by European powers. Arguably, in this setting a powerful discourse was urgently needed to justify the new European trade system over the old, and to raise it beyond all doubt in terms of effectiveness and moral integrity. Accordingly, two main scape-goat actors can be identified in Mouhot's text: profit-seeking Chinese Mandarins and deceptive native authorities.

First, regarding the Chinese, Mouhot opens his text up to specific external voices and refers to an influential publication of his time, stating:

[i]n 'Les Annales du Commerce Exterieur' we find the following account: —" The greater part of the commerce of Siam, Laos, and Cambodia is in the hands of the

Chinese, who are much more active and intelligent than the natives. Their mercantile transactions are generally characterised by dishonesty, and we cannot too strongly warn our traders against the frauds of every kind common in this country, such as mixing diverse qualities, adulteration, and saturating various articles with moisture to increase the weight. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 99)

As the reference to *Les Annales du Commerce Extérieur* shows, there has already been a discourse in circulation that seeks to reify the binary of supposedly dishonest Chinese wholesalers and ‘rightful’ European traders. Rhetorically, this is amplified by an active / passive divide between natives and Chinese. By this strategy, China is represented as a threat to both the supposedly more passive and less intelligent natives and the entire colonial project. We further learn that “[m]ost of the Chinese merchants are addicted to gambling, and to the use of opium” (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 99) to top the rhetoric of negative othering.

To fully understand the negative attitude against the Chinese, a closer look at the historical relations between China and Southeast Asia is helpful. Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, China, by the virtue of its military might and economic strength combined with its size and uncompromising worldview, constituted the undisputed hegemonic power in the region (Stuart-Fox 2003: 6). Southeast Asian States were tributaries to China, that is, they could conduct trade with China over official trading ports but only under the terms set by the Chinese. This involved paying taxes and sending envoys to the Chinese court who were required to perform the *kowtow* (three kneelings and nine prostrations) to signify submission to the emperor (idem: 96-96). For the Europeans, there existed no exception. China equally considered them as barbarian tributaries and required them to obey to the Chinese world order when they were operating in the region.

In 1793, Lord Macartney, the first official envoy of the British Crown to the Chinese Emperor, famously refused to perform the kowtow as he handed over a letter of King George III to negotiate liberalisation of trade and make the point that Britain was indeed not a ‘barbarian kingdom’ that one should consider inferior to China (idem: 115-116). At any rate, no concessions were made, and China kept up its strict policies until the two Opium Wars (1839-1842 and 1856-1858 respectively). Upon having failed to curtail British and French opium trade, China realized how firmly the European powers had already established their control in the region. They eventually opened more trading ports and withdrew the ban on the movement of overseas workers. Southeast Asia then followed the typical path of the colonial economy, exporting mainly primary goods and importing consumption goods from Europe and other developed countries (Booth 2008: 27).

Besides Mouhot's unfavourable depiction of the Chinese, Siam's political leadership is equally portrayed in a negative way. In classic Orientalist fashion, the kingdom is linked to the topics of slavery and despotism, with a specific reference to the ranks of administration:

[d]uring a ten years' residence in Russia, I witnessed the frightful effects of despotism and slavery. At Siam, results not less sad and deplorable obtruded themselves on my notice; every inferior crouches before a higher in rank; he receives his orders kneeling, or with some other sign of abject submission and respect. The whole of society is in a state of prostration. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 46)

Two aspects of this quote are particularly noteworthy. First, Mouhot implicitly underscores his liberal stance, relating his ten-year experience in absolutist Russia to his observations in Siam. Thus, he provides the intended European recipients with a frame of orientation and lays credibility to his 'documentation' of a dysfunctional social system that is not beneficial to his vision of progress. Second, it is implicitly hinted at a top-down strategy to resolve the current state of affairs. By pointing out that 'every inferior crouches before a higher rank', the text effectively suggests that agency and change could only be implemented from above. This logic becomes obvious in the comparison of Mouhot's description of the First Siamese King to that of his deputy king (the so called Second King).

The first reigning monarch, King Mangkut, is portrayed as a cultured and well-educated man, who had gained mastery over the Western natural sciences, politics and philology. He is said to be familiar with all local languages of Siam and Indochina, but also with old Sanskrit, Latin and English. However, according to Mouhot: "[h]is language testifies to his education and intelligence, though it more resembles the phraseology of books than that of ordinary conversation" (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 50). This description of the First King (who signed the Bowring treaty) exemplifies Bhabha's (2004) comments on the Western interpretation of colonial *mimicry*. While the overall evaluation of the non-Western subject is positive and to some extent transgresses the classic colonizer / colonized divide (Jackson 2010), it does still not allow for equality. Instead it reifies an "almost the same but not quite" mode between the Western self and its perceived Other (Bhabha 2004: 127). Interestingly, this subtle but decisive distinction appears to be dissolved in Mouhot's representation of the Second King, Pin-Klau Chan You Hona, the brother of the First King and his intended successor. In his view:

[h]e is a perfect gentleman, of a cultivated mind, writing and speaking English, and leading in his palace—which is arranged and furnished in our Western fashion—the life of a rich, noble, and learned European. He is fond of books and scientific

researches, and familiar with all the improvements of modern civilization; he possesses in a higher degree than his brother the capacity for government and statesmanship, and deplores more than any one the sad condition in which his country languishes. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 53)

As can be seen, the Second King is represented as a ‘perfect gentleman’ with a ‘cultivated mind’, ‘speaking and writing English’ and in possession of a ‘palace arranged and furnished in Western fashion’. Notable is the use of stative verbs instead of comparatives. By making absolute statements about the Second King, his persona becomes ideationally indistinguishable from the European self by which it is described. Of course, there remains a difference in representational stance. Mouhot does not franchise his power over interpretation and representation to other agents in the text, only his voice is present and only his assessment available. This becomes particularly obvious in the last sentence of the quote. By anticipating the second monarch’s opinion (the argument that he regrets the sad condition of the country) without offering evidence for its authenticity, Mouhot achieves two discursive twists. First, he reifies the existential assumption that the country is in terrible disorder and second, his report of the king’s familiarity with the improvements of modern civilization promotes the propositional assumption that Pin-Klau Chan You Hona would be the best suited leader from a European point of view.

### **Siwilai and Farang**

To attempt a contextualisation of Mouhot’s encounters in Siam from a non-Western perspective, it is instructive to explore the Siamese concept of *siwilai*, which roughly translates to ‘civilized’ and was introduced during the reign of King Mongkut (Harrison 2010: 17) – that is, at the time of Mouhot’s journey. *Siwilai* is not only important to better understand the hierarchical structure of Thai society but also useful to reflect upon some hegemonic Western perceptions of Siam / Thailand and larger parts of the region. Winichakul (2000: 529) provides us with a definition of the concept, explaining:

Siam *siwilai* ranged from etiquette to material progress, including new roads, electricity, new bureaucracy, courts and judicial system, law codes, dress codes, and white teeth. This list could be much longer. But unlike the European experience, the Siamese quest for *siwilai* was a transcultural process in which ideas and practices from Europe, via colonialism, had been transferred, localized, and hybridised in the Siamese setting.

*Siwilai* was essentially a mechanism by which Siamese elites could claim parity with the West in various political and social domains. King Chulalongkorn's state visit to Europe (1897) serves as a prime example. While the trip had no real effect on Europe's foreign policy agenda on Siam, it helped strengthen the power of the monarchy in the eyes of the local population, who henceforth perceived their leader as an influential political player on the world stage (Harrison 2010: 17-18).

Of similar importance is the Thai notion of *farang* – a floating signifier of Western Otherness that has been appropriated differently over the centuries and functioned as an important factor in the discursive construction of 'Thainess' (Kitiarsa 2010). Epistemologically, the making of *farang* ties in with Tamara Wagner's (2005) concept of *Occidentalism* as a "re-representation of the West in the terms of the east" (Kitiarsa 2010: 58). Essentially, Occidentalism "function[s] as an expression of desire that relegates objects of longing elsewhere through its stereotyping of the 'other'" (Wagner 2005: 6). This process strategically creates a stereotypical vision of the West that is useful from an Eastern perspective. In Siam, the resulting ideas of *farang* became powerful bodies of knowledge that cleverly countered the West by opening the country's horizon towards hitherto unbeknown versions of modern cosmopolitanism. This effectively deprived the West of its self-imagined distinction by making the very criteria of this distinction part of the Thai self (Kitiarsa 2010: 59). As Winichakul (1994: 3) points out, the notion of *farang* has been incorporated populistically into Thai nationalist discourse over the centuries, according to which the Thai leaders only adopted the good and useful things from the West and preserved all traditional values of 'authentic' Siamese culture at the same time.

While the concept of *siwilai* and the *farang*-influenced demarcation of (elitist) Thai self-perception relies on its 'Other' outside, a parallel mechanism of inner-ethnic differentiation can be traced at roughly the same time. As Winichakul (2000a) points out, the Siamese elites travelled extensively through the interiors of their territories in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century to obtain first-hand information about their subjects. This gave rise to ethnographic classifications within the geo-body of their country that strongly echoed the colonial binary of empire and 'Hinterland', with Bangkok being appropriated as superior metropolis against which the Others were defined:

[t]he two principal categories of people, of 'Others Within', are the *chao pa*, the forest wild people and the *chao bannok*, the multi-ethnic villagers under the supremacy of Bangkok [...] creating a new linear (progressive, temporal) cosmic order called civilization. (Winichakul 2000a: 41)

The distinction between the *chao pa* and the multi-ethnic *chao bannok* had far reaching consequences for Siamese identities. While the former were considered untameable and wild, the latter were seen as docile and capable of domestication. It is important to observe that the distinction was not based on ethnicity. It was neither based on the peoples' state of civilization but on the *civilizable / uncivilizable* dichotomy, which supported the political agenda behind the discourse. Even though the *chao bannok* were multi-ethnic and less modern than the ruling class, they could still be accepted as part of the Thai society, if they honoured their role as subjects to the monarch (idem: 49).

Thus, considering the notions of *siwilai*, *farang* and the *Other within* helps better understand some of the socio-cultural dynamics that were likely at play when Mouhot travelled to the region. Given the parallel mechanisms of external and internal differentiation propagated by Siam's elite, the indigenous population must have been under the influence of two discursive regimes in terms of nationhood. Firstly, a sense of Siamese superiority and national pride was invoked against the Europeans and expressed by their leaders; and secondly, a place in the hierarchies of Siam's society was not precluded by ethnicity but dependent on a docile attitude and loyalty to the king.

From this two-fold point of view, Mouhot's comments on the common Siamese can be interpreted as an involuntary appropriation of elitist Thai discourse through the supposedly corrective lens of an imperial mind that seeks to replace the prevalent mode of ingenious subjugation by its own powerful forms of colonial mastery. Justifying his own agenda of domination by means of denouncing 'despotism', Mouhot (1864, Vol I: 110) writes that:

the gaiety and light-heartedness of the people, in spite of the yoke which weighs on them and the exorbitant taxes they have to pay [this being due to] the native gentleness of the race; and the long duration of their servitude from generation to generation, have made them oblivious of the bitterness and hardships inseparable from despotism.

Arguably, the colonizer cannot condone the subjugating practice of his predecessor, but he implicitly acknowledges the effects of his precursors' rule on the dominated population by describing them as happy and docile, which effectively objectifies the Siamese as 'ideal' colonial subjects. This is amplified by a patronizing and romantic description of the country's simplicity, in which people are likened to "spoilt children" of "bountiful nature", in a land where "[m]an has but to sow and to plant; the sun saves him all further trouble" (all Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 115). As Mills (1991: 89) points out in this regard, the strategy of describing the populace of a nation as children functions as a powerful means of temporal distancing. This

reifies that nation's culture and ways of life as pre-modern and primitive and thus different from the perspective of the writing agent. Such child-like portrayal of the Orient has remained perhaps the most significant feature of its discursive re-construction in tourism today (Pritchard 2000: 256-257). To this I will turn again in the discussion of contemporary sources. Subsequently, I discuss Mouhot's assessment of Cambodia.

## **Cambodia**

Similar to the making of the 'Other' within Siam (Winichakul 2000a), Mouhot employs the discursive marker of civilization to differentiate between the various indigenous groups he encounters in the region, frequently comparing them to the Siamese. As Mouhot travels from Siam to Cambodia, he arrives at the port town of Komput, then the only international port in Cambodia. He complains about the smuggling business run by Chinese merchants and argues that "under a better system of government, this country might supply a great number of articles" to European markets (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 180). Stating that taxes and duties are comparatively moderate in comparison to Siam, he expresses his disappointment with the situation and provides the reader with a personal judgement: "[a]lmost every vice seemed prevalent at Komput—pride, insolence, cheating, cowardice, servility, excessive idleness, are the attributes of this miserable people" (ibid). Mouhot no longer praises the supposed light-heartedness of the people and the gentleness of their race but resorts to a description that is deeply deprecatory. From a discursive point of view, this exemplifies the often-employed imperial strategy of assigning ugliness and filth to the Other to underscore one's own supposed racial and moral superiority (Mills 1991: 90). In this vein, summarising his experience in the country, Mouhot (1864, Vol I: 218) plainly states: "[i]t is the story of Appius and Virginia reproduced in the east. Corruption and barbarity are general in Cambodia".

Digesting the unpleasant encounters with Otherness in Cambodia, Mouhot is discursively and emotionally unable to offer a more favourable description of country and people. Having no other place to resort to, he finds consolation and comfort in the company of Father Hestrest, the head of the foreign missions in Komput. Alluding to the trope of the worn out and desperate traveller in foreign lands, he directly addresses his audience in an eloquent and lengthy passage:

[r]eader, have you journeyed in foreign lands? Have you ever for a time, more or less long, been separated from your friends and relatives—shut out from civilized society? Have you been tossed about by tempests or buffeted by your fellow-men? Have you narrowly escaped some great danger? Have you been unhappy? Have you lost some one very dear to you? In one word, have you suffered? If you have, you will appreciate



the feelings with which the solitary wanderer welcomes the divine cross, the heart-stirring emblem of his religion. It is to him a friend, a consoler, a father, a brother; at sight of it the soul expands, and the more you have suffered the better you will love it. You kneel down, you pray, you forget your griefs, and you feel that God is with you. This is what I did. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 181-182)

Mouhot invokes the blessing of god as his discourse oscillates between the perceived hardships of his mission abroad and his desire to arrive at a place where he can feel at home. Since he is not able to find actual refuge in the region he visits, he regresses to the symbolic place of faith and invites his readers to do so with him. Being out there in the tempest, shut out from civilization and in constant danger, nothing can energise his unwavering soul more than the company of god. Arguably, the quote is discursively very powerful because it promotes the existential assumption that no real ‘worldly’ force of change has so far been strong enough to affect the salvation of a nation that is already lost beyond hope. This essentially sends the reader the message that Mouhot’s voyage of discovery in the name of France and the British Empire must carry nothing less but the burden of a divine undertaking.

As the historic context suggests, the often-invoked divine connotations in Mouhot’s text were politically highly relevant. The year 1859 saw the French occupation of Southern Vietnam (Cochinchina) and in 1863 a protectorate was imposed on Cambodia, which had been a tributary to Siam until then (Willmott 1967: 68; Stuart-Fox 2003: 120). While Siam gravitated towards its ally Britain for protection against further French incursions, Vietnam established closer links with China, who primarily wanted to secure its own interests in the neighbouring country, facing the breakaway of its former tributary states and being confronted with European imperial powers on its borders (Stuart-Fox 2003: 120-121). In this conjuncture, the colonial intervention of France was reluctant and characterized by indirect rule. From the outset and unlike the British conquest of Burma, French interests in Southeast Asia were not entirely driven by prospects of profit but by Napoleon III’s quest for a prestigious share of the region and the protection of the Catholic Missions in Vietnam. This was an issue since missionaries had been threatened heavily by local dissidents and Chinese mandarins who resented the presence of Christian priests in the region. It was only after heavy struggles over four years that Cochinchina was brought under French control and turned into a full colony (Raben 2014: 27-28). Witnessing that period of turmoil, Mouhot writes:

[t]he French missionaries in Cochin China [...] hunted as they are like wild beasts, they could not long escape the vigilant eye of the mandarins, nor continue, in spite of

the most terrible persecutions, to reside in the country. It is death for any one to be caught sheltering or assisting a priest. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 259)

With the historic context in mind, it becomes clear that the religious emphasis in Mouhot's text serves a political purpose. As he invokes god and foregrounds the plight of Catholic missionaries, he in fact invokes the military might of France, underscoring the nation's supposedly divine mission to protect the workings of 'holy men' and the spreading of enlightenment in the region. In some places, this was achieved by brutal force and Mouhot gives us an example. In his text, there is an indirect account of the French capture of Saigon in 1859. During his visit to Phnom Penh, he reports that the war in Cochinchina was the subject of all conversation. The narrator is infuriated that stories of Chinese and Annamite observers, who had supposedly witnessed the siege of Saigon in 1859, "were not flattering to the pride of a Frenchman" (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 227). He recounts:

I had not seen the glorious bulletins of our Admiral, but had the pain of hearing our enemies stigmatise us as barbarians, and, describing the burning of the market, and the conduct of the soldiery towards defenceless women, speak of it as "the behaviour of savages." [...] and our whole nation judged of by isolated acts, all but inevitable in time of war, especially in a country where the soldier suffers from the climate and privations of all kinds (ibid).

As the quote suggests, Mouhot is unhappy with the shift of declarative agency he is forced to observe. Instead of having access to the 'glorious bulletins' of the French admiral, he hears reports of his enemies, denouncing the French and Spanish occupiers and their conduct in battle as 'barbaric'. It is interesting to observe that Mouhot does not fully reject these stories as bogus but that he goes so far as to acknowledge 'isolated acts' of terror, referring to them as 'all but inevitable in time of war, especially in a country where the soldier suffers from the climate and privations of all kinds'. As this implies, Mouhot is ready to allow some collateral damage to occur in the making of the expansionist program he defends as humane and divine. Clearly, the extract above is illustrative of the imperial mindset that underlies much of Mouhot's writing, according to which the closure of a narrative is necessarily both its only conceivable reality effect and a teleological consequence of the singularity of its declarative structure. In other words, there is no space for Derrida's (1973) *jeu de différences* in a closed ecology of signification that ontologically precludes any discourse other than the enunciative echo of its own. 😊

## **The Annamites and the Savage Stiens**

The Annamites are the inhabitants of Annam / South Vietnam. Annam was only turned into a French protectorate in 1883 (Raben 2014: 28) and at the time of Mouhot's journey, the Annamites were considered as enemies to France for their persecution of the Catholic missionaries (see above). Accordingly, Mouhot does not spend time in South Vietnam / Annam but describes the Annamites through a quote from the missionary father Gagelin. "All sensibility," says he, appears deadened among them; they are very proud however, and great cheats" (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 256). Some pages later, framed by an episode on tiger hunting, Mouhot gives us another, strongly evaluative description:

[f]rom my own experience and that of others, I believe the Annamite to be lively, adroit, intelligent, and courageous; but obstinate, vindictive, a dissembler, a liar, and a thief; slow to get into a passion, but terrible when he does so. His dirtiness surpasses anything I have ever seen, and his food is abominably nasty. Rotten fish and dog's flesh are his favourite diet (idem: 260).

As can be seen, Mouhot acknowledges his lack of personal experience with the Annamites and makes an unspecific reference to the accounts of others, most likely Catholic missionaries. In typical Orientalist fashion (Said 1978), the Annamites are portrayed as malicious, fraudulent and surreptitious. Besides, their 'savage' side is foregrounded by mentioning general dirtiness and 'nasty' eating habits. As this suggests, the Annamites rank in Mouhot's 'hierarchy of civilizations' below the Cambodians and the Chinese.

As Mouhot travels on through Cambodia, he prides himself with the 'exploration' of an isolated native community he labels the "savage Stiens". Studying their habits, he spends three months with them. The Stiens inhabit a mountainous region between the kingdoms of Siam and Cambodia and that of Annam (South Vietnam). Approaching their habitat leads Mouhot through a forest "infested with elephants, buffaloes, rhinoceros, tigers and wild boars" (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 240). He writes: [w]e live almost in a besieged place, every moment dreading some attack of the enemy, and keeping our guns constantly loaded" (ibid). As the register of this utterance suggests, Mouhot opts for a less factual mode of narration that almost reads like the beginning of an adventure story. He thus cleverly sets the stage for the ethnographic survey he is about to conduct over the next three months, driving home the point that the price for imperial knowledge is the endurance of uncertainty and danger.

What follows then is a typical manners and customs description, which functions as “a normalizing discourse, whose work is to codify difference, to fix the other in a timeless present where all ‘his’ actions and reactions are repetitions of ‘his’ normal habits” (Pratt 1985: 120). Essentially, the gazed-upon Other is reified in a specific way as it enters the discourse of the observer and is eventually shaped and shorn in the way it is described. In a protocollary manner, Mouhot’s text states that “the savages are strongly attached to their forests and mountains so that to quit them seems almost like death” (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 243). They are different from Europeans in many ways, so that “we use words; they act” (idem 244). They are skilled artisans who “work admirably in iron and ivory”, cultivating “rice, maize, tobacco, various kinds of vegetables, and fruit-trees, such as bananas, mangoes, and oranges”, with community members of higher standing possessing their own slaves and fields (idem 244-245).

From a declarative point of view, these introductory comments clearly construe the Stiens as premodern. Subsequently, Mouhot describes some of their daily practices in more detail. For medical problems, for example, the general remedy is “an iron heated in the fire and applied to the pit of the stomach” (idem 249), a comment that underscores the supposed backward position of the people involved. Besides,

“[their] manners are hospitable, and a stranger is always certain of being well received and feasted. They either kill a pig or fowl, and offer you wine, which is not drunk out of any sort of vessel, but sucked, through a bamboo cane, from a large jar; it is made from rice, fermented, but rarely distilled. To refuse a pipe when offered is considered a great rudeness, which more than one savage has paid for by a knife-thrust. It is also It is also etiquette to eat the whole of the food set before you. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 249-250).

While the Stiens are portrayed as hospitable, there is a warning that one should never underestimate the unpredictability of their arcane rituals and stick to their etiquette as becomes. In this regard, the choice of the word ‘hospitable’ deserves some attention. In general, it conveys positive connotations of being welcome and welcoming, foregrounding interaction and mutual respect between parties and individuals. In the case of the extract, such ‘civilizatory’ associations with a ‘savage’ tribe would potentially appear contradictory. To circumvent this and to prevent the ‘savages’ from becoming too civilized in the readers’ eyes, Mouhot discursively creates what I will term *savage hospitality*. He depicts the Stiens as hospitable, but he makes clear that they are not so in a European way. Readers are thus sent the message that the Stiens’ ways of welcoming their guests are parts of primitive rituals rather than refined

hospitality in a cultured sense. This is underscored by the juxtaposition of ‘not drunk’ against ‘but sucked’, with the former connoting refined behaviour and the latter hinting at savagery and underdevelopment.

Next, the Stiens are described as superstitious, believing in demons and supreme beings (idem 251). This manifests in their pagan worshiping and offerings: “[s]ometimes the sacrifice of a pig or an ox is required, often a human victim; in this later case they pitilessly seize upon a slave and offer him up to the evil genius” (ibid). It is further reported that they are skilled marksmen and hunters who are rarely met without a cross-bow or a knife, with their cross-bows being highly effective weapons, especially when shot with poisoned arrows (idem 252-253).

As this implies, the Stiens have a dangerous side that can become very real for anybody coming close. By foregrounding the Stiens’ superstitions and supposed savagery, Mouhot creates a Southeast Asian variant of ‘Columbus’ cannibals’ described by Hulme (1995). This variant of the dangerous savage is clearly more benign than that of Columbus but it is still not to be underestimated and a potential source of colonial concern. Finally, Mouhot comments on the intellectual faculty of the objects of his ethnographic survey. He argues:

[t]heir memories are bad, and they have great difficulty in learning to calculate. If a hundred ears of maize are to be offered for sale, they are arranged in tens, to make sure that the number is correct. Their notions of geography are very limited; they imagine that white men inhabit only a few obscure corners of the globe, and, judging of them by the Catholic missionaries, doubt much if they have any women among them. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 254).

It is interesting to observe that from a logical point of view, the argued superiority of European people and Western knowledge is portrayed in a self-defeating way. Mouhot goes to great lengths to visit the ‘savage Stiens’ and describe their manners and customs. As he finds this remote community supposedly untouched by his ideas of civilization, he notes that their mathematical skills are inefficient, probably due to their bad memories. While this is somewhat consistent with the supreme gaze he commands elsewhere in his book to produce the inferior Oriental for the European imagination, the next argument diminishes his self-styled authority through a comical effect. As Mouhot points out that the isolated Stiens’ ‘notions of geography are very limited’, he taunts them because of their deficient knowledge about the ‘white man’, noting that precisely this knowledge is inductively derived from their observation of Catholic missionaries. Two things are particularly interesting with regard to the supposedly decontextualized position from which Mouhot observes and writes: first, by making the point

that the Stiens lack geographical insights, he ignores that geography was (is?) a science of empire, with many of its insights gathered through explorations such as his own – so that it would be rather counterproductive to blame the explored for not having the wisdom of the explorer, other than in jest; and second, by stating that the Stiens' lack of knowledge was empirical (derived from watching missionaries), he effectively grants the Stiens the faculty of observation and inference, the rationalist principle upon which his own naturalist endeavours are based.

There arguably is a discursive tension in the delineation between the observer and the observed. As Mouhot describes the Stiens, he employs a language that is familiar to his (educated) audience. He effectively mixes the enunciation of Otherness through his own gaze with an interpretation of the Other's imagination through his own language. By the latter, he unwittingly grants the Other 'a right' to speech through his own voice, equipping it with a consciousness he is otherwise not prepared to franchise. While the quote clearly serves as an example of explicit negative othering, it also brings to attention the difficulty to preserve the hierarchical aloofness between colonialist subjectivity and colonised people in the act of interaction and description (Kerridge 1999: 167). In the example, the effect is less a construction of 'Otherness' as other to the speaking European self, but the Other's (limited!) enunciative uplift in terms of being less different than the concept of Otherness would suggest. Next, Mouhot travels on to Laos, as reported in the second volume of his book.

## **Laos**

Mouhot makes clear that travelling through Laos is not as straightforward as his journeying through Siam and Cambodia. He writes:

[t]o consult any existing maps of Indo-China for my guidance in the interior of Laos would have been a folly, no traveller, at least to my knowledge, having penetrated into east Laos, or published any authentic information respecting it. To question the natives about places more than a degree distant would have been useless. My desire was to reach Louang-Prabang by land, to visit the northern tribes dependent on that state, and then again to descend the Mekong to Cambodia. (Mouhot 1864, Vol II: 119)

As Mouhot's assessment suggests, Laos was largely uncharted at the time of his visit. He claims to be the first credible traveller to the region and thus effectively frames his accounts as geographically and ethnographically ground-breaking. After having travelled into Laos via Khao Khoc, a retreat chosen by the Kings of Siam in case of an European invasion (Mouhot

1864, Vol II: 89), he comments on the Laotian population in some sparsely populated areas: “the children are repulsively dirty; they are covered with a coating of filth, which makes them resemble little negroes, and the greater number of them are shaking with fever” (idem 91), further writing “were they not so dirty, they would be nice looking; but I am afraid of touching them, lest I should again catch the itch” (idem: 95). As can be observed, the racist diminutive ‘little negro’ is employed to implicitly convey a racial discrimination between the people of Southeast Asia and those with black skin. Accordingly, the ‘little’ negro is not the real ‘negro’ ontologically but nevertheless has become ‘negro-like’ in a performative way. So, by stating that the children ‘would’ be nice looking if they *were* clean, that is, if they no longer looked like ‘dirty little negroes’, Mouhot effectively reifies black people as archetypes of dirtiness, with the supposed virtues of white cleanliness as their civilized Other.

Since Mouhot must overcome several logistic challenges during his trip, he often depends on local officials to secure the necessary means and permits for his progress. Describing such encounters, he makes several negative comments on the Laotian mandarins. In a letter to his wife Annette, he complains:

I had in fact reached Laos. I arrived at Korat after a tedious and troublesome journey, for I had only a few oxen for my baggage, and was forced to walk myself. From there I went to Chaipume, and here an animal of the mandarin species made himself great, and under the pretext of having no elephants refused me the means of going further, and was so rude and impolite to me that I determined at once to return and protest against the very insufficient protection which had been granted to me. Indeed, I could do nothing else, not being able to go on. (Mouhot 1864, Vol II: 258)

As Mouhot arrives in Laos, his baggage is too heavy for his oxen to carry. He must walk until he reaches a local official who is not prepared to equip Mouhot’s party with elephants, effectively refusing him the means to go further. Describing the non-benevolent official, Mouhot uses the noun phrase ‘animal of the mandarin species’. He then raises the complaint that the public servant was rude, impolite and not offering adequate protection. This is illustrative of Mouhot’s imperial worldview. He prides himself of being the first credible traveller to the more remote parts of Laos, but he expects perfect service and assistance along his way, so that he can travel under as much protection as possible. While this somewhat contradicts his secondary role as a self-styled adventurer, it should not be overlooked that the colonial explorer did not so much have to rely on the voluntary support of local services but in many cases resorted to the option of bringing ‘unhelpful’ officials to heel. The next example

shows how stories about playing tricks and enforcing local cooperation tie in with the Oriental adventure theme followed throughout much of Mouhot's writing.

When in Chaipume, Mouhot receives the assistance of the viceroy to procure elephants and servants and is handed a letter of introduction to the governors of the provinces he would travel across. He shares his home with a Chinese business man, who gives him the following 'advice' for his trip:

[b]uy a tam-tam, and, wherever you halt, sound it. They will say, 'Here is an officer of the king;' robbers will keep aloof, and the authorities will respect you. If this does not answer, the only plan to get rid of all the difficulties which the Laotian officials will be sure to throw in your way is to have a good stick, the longer the better. Try it on the back of any mandarin who makes the least resistance and will not do what you wish. Put all delicacy aside. Laos is not like a country of the whites. Follow my advice, and you will find it good. (Mouhot 1864, Vol II: 120)

Interestingly, Mouhot does not hesitate to reproduce the advice of a Chinese man, the people he otherwise condemns for their supposed treachery and corruption. Like the protagonist of a robber ballad, the otherwise serious naturalist considers deceiving Laotian officials with a tam-tam, so that they let him pass, thinking he is an officer of the king. If that is to no avail, a second option is on the table, namely to beat an uncooperative mandarin with a stick to make him comply. Clearly, the animal metaphor is mobilized here again, so that the mandarin is dehumanized and Mouhot remains in total control of his mission and every encounter along the road. The inclusion of the utterance 'Laos is not a country for the whites' underscores Mouhot's dominant position and sanctions it at the same time. Since the term 'whites' discursively equals civilization in this context, Laos as a whole is dehumanized and represented as primitive. For that reason, the injunction 'put all delicacy aside' temporarily suspends all humanitarian considerations and grants Mouhot the discursive liberty to proceed with his imperial incursion regardless of anything else.

Venturing on and observing the population, Mouhot describes the Laotians "as superstitious as the Cambodians and perhaps more than the Siamese" (Mouhot 1864, Vol II: 95), arguing that they "see in any matter that goes wrong the fault of a demon" (ibid). Furthermore, their behaviour is described as more tempered. In terms of language, he reports that "[t]he Laotians much resemble the Siamese: a different pronunciation and slow manner of speech being all that distinguishes their language" (idem: 134). Following this strategy of comparison, Mouhot helps along the imagination of his readers, probably assuming that they have already become more



familiar with the Siamese people through Mouhot's own descriptions and that they can thus benefit from the frequent cross references made in the text. He continues with a classic manners and customs description:

[t]he dress of the Laotians differs little from that of the Siamese. The people wear the langouti and a little red cotton waistcoat, or often nothing at all. Both men and women go barefoot: their head-dresses are like the Siamese. (Mouhot 1864, Vol II: 145)

To this depiction, evaluative comments are added. Mouhot continues, "[t]he women are generally better-looking than those of the latter nation: they wear a single short petticoat of cotton, and sometimes a piece of silk over the breast. Their hair, which is black, they twist into a knot at the back of the head" (ibid). This rather positive evaluation is however limited by Mouhot's imagination of accelerated indigenous aging. At a later point he adds: "I saw some pretty young girls with intelligent faces; but before the females attain the age of eighteen or twenty their features become coarse, and they grow fat. At five-and-thirty they look like old witches (idem: 159). As this suggest, Mouhot's comment is informed by raciologist & Darwinist logic that assumes that 'inferior' races show a more rapid bodily decay than others.

This scientifically rather worthless observation dates from the 3<sup>rd</sup> September in 1861 and was recorded when the narrator had already become sick of Malaria. On the last pages of the second volume of his report, Mouhot desperately attempts to symbolically revive his physically fading persona of naturalist-cum-adventurer, engaging in hunting, shooting tigers and rhinoceroses. Much of his descriptions become more monotone, reporting on distances between waypoints, latitudes and landscapes. His final entries reflect his deteriorating condition before he passed away at November 10<sup>th</sup> in 1861:

15th October. 58 degrees Fahr.—Set off for Louang Prabang.

16th.—

17th.—

18th.—Halted at H . . . .

19th.—Attacked by fever. \*

29th.—Have pity on me, oh my God . . . . (Mouhot 1864, Vol II: 160)

At the beginning of the second volume of his travel report, Mouhot foreshadows his death in a quote and extols the joys and pleasures he derives from being in the wilderness. He writes:

I candidly confess that I have never been more happy than when amidst this grand and beautiful tropical scenery, in the profound solitude of these dense forests, the stillness only broken by the song of birds and the cries of wild animals; and even if destined here to meet my death, I would not change my lot for all the joys and pleasures of the civilised world. (Mouhot 1864, Vol II: 37).

The quote exemplifies much of what Worley (1986: 40) has remarked about masculinity and male travel writers. As they were expected to embody characteristics such as independence, energy and courage, their adventures had to be set in the remote world, well outside the domestic sphere and its connotations of femininity and benign civilization. Besides, the degree of discomfort and danger involved in an adventure has often been a common yardstick to measure the manliness of an explorer (Thompson 2011: 176). To better understand Mouhot's quest for a masculine self in his texts, it is helpful to recapitulate some of his itinerary and his remarks on the nature / city divide he frequently alludes to in his book. This is done in the section below.

### 6.2.3. Mouhot's Protean Civilization Frontier

Mouhot arrives in Singapore but his actual journey through mainland Southeast Asia begins in Bangkok (Mouhot 1864, Vol I). To capture the imagination of the readers, he describes the city in a language that is likely to be understood: "Bangkok is the Venice of the East, and whether bent on business or pleasure you must go by water" (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 42). Bangkok is regularly revisited by Mouhot during his trip. After the completion of individuals legs of exploration, he returns to the city to collect his mail and to send the specimen he has collected back to Europe. After his discovery of the temples of Angkor Wat he writes: "[o]n the 4th April I returned to the capital, after fifteen months' absence. During the greater part of this time, I had never known the comfort of sleeping in a bed; and throughout my wanderings my only food had been rice or dried fish, and I had not once tasted good water" (Mouhot 1864, Vol II: 44). As he walks through the city at daybreak and gazes at the ships lying at anchor in the middle of the stream, he has no doubts that Bangkok will become an important capital, but he still views the place with mixed feelings: "I thought that Bangkok had never looked so beautiful. However, life here would never suit me, and the mode of locomotion is wearisome after an active existence among the woods and in the chase" (Mouhot 1864, Vol II: 46).

Having found his active life again in the mountains of Nephaburi and Phrabat – where he arrives a couple of days after leaving Bangkok – he writes in a romantic, almost Thoreauvian / Wordsworthian fashion:

[a]t Bangkok I felt stifled and oppressed. That town does not awaken my sympathies. Here my heart dilates, and I could fancy I had grown ever so much taller since I arrived. Here I can breathe, I live, amid these beautiful hills and woods; in cities I seem to suffocate, and the sight of so great a number of human beings annoys me. (Mouhot 1864, Vol II: 80)

The delineation Mouhot draws between town and wilderness deserves attention. As remarked above, it has been a common theme for the travel writing and explorations genre of the imperial era to remove the adventure story “in settings remote from the domestic and probably from the civilised” (Green 1980: 23). There, the traveller can perform his exploits and demonstrate his abilities that fashion him as heroic. In the case of earlier explorers like Marco Polo or Christoph Columbus, that was a rather straight forward matter. Since their journeys let them into uncharted territory, their adventures were automatically delimited from the domestic and the civilized. In Mouhot’s case, the situation had already become more complex. There still was uncharted territory he could properly explore but there was also Bangkok, which by then had long become a centre of (Western) civilization and which could not be constructed in opposition to the European paradigm. So, being abroad and physically away from Europe was no longer a guarantee for Mouhot and his readers that he was indeed on an adventure beyond the fringes of civilization. However, such setting is required for his label ‘explorer’ to be credible. In response, Mouhot cleverly employs the symbolic device of a ‘floating civilization frontier’ that he can put between Europe and Southeast Asia; the Catholic missionaries and the ‘savage’ tribes; or simply between the hills and woods of the hinterland and Bangkok, if needs be. Occasionally, this protean frontier is deployed through allusions to metaphors and bodily sensations. As the following examples illustrates, much of the warm and friendly image that tourists associate with Southeast Asia today already existed discursively in passages like this:

[w]hat a contrast between the subdued tints and cold skies of Europe, and this burning clime and glittering firmament! How pleasant it was to rise in the early morning before the glowing sun had begun his course; and sweeter still in the evening to listen to the thousand sounds, the sharp and metallic cries, which seemed as though an army of goldsmiths was at work. (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 114-115)

When Mouhot alludes to a glittering firmament and a glowing sun, he becomes absorbed in the atmosphere he seeks to convey. At such times, he gives up the self-effaced position of the decontextualized observer and enters emotionally and instinctively into the world he describes. In one instance, the world he otherwise perceives as ‘primitive’ even becomes a source of identification for his disillusioned European mind. He writes: “[m]an has but to sow and plant; the sun saves him all further trouble; and he neither knows nor feels the want of all those articles of luxury which form part of the very existence of the European” (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 115). Notably, Mouhot’s discursive deployment of the concept ‘civilization’ is ambiguous in this instance. As Johnson (2002: 60-61) has observed, such declarative conundrum highlights the ambivalence over identification with Otherness. On the one side, it challenges the integrity of the supposedly distinct European subject and on the other side, it subverts the assumptions upon which this distinct integrity of the traveller is constructed. Accordingly, whenever the traveller’s identificatory effort becomes threatened by the absolutism of its own distinction, the binary between self and Other must be reinforced. This is illustrated by an episode where Mouhot praises the exquisite tastes and etiquettes of the upper classes of Siamese society, stating that they are:

fond of elegance and luxury. Very imitative in their ways, they feel a pride in putting on a European dress; and some of those made after the fashion of Louis XIV.’s reign are still preserved, especially among the descendants of the Portuguese, who are numerous. The uniforms of the soldiers are copied from those of Europe; and the whole nation has a great taste for our Parisian furniture, cotton, silk, and woollen fabrics, porcelain, china, glass, bronzes, cutlery, ironmongery, and toys. (ibid)

While the Siamese are described as cultured, their culture is represented as a mimicry of the European way, so that there is no danger to the perceived cultural superiority of the traveller. As this implies Mouhot is licensed to temporarily retreat from civilization to admire the simplicity of those he perceives as less civilized by alluding to the myth of the noble savage (Thompson 2011: 150-151); however, in the end of the day, both maintaining his supposedly distinct position and furthering the advance of European ‘civilization’ is the ultimate goal.

#### 6.2.4. Discourses at Play

When Mouhot arrived in Southeast Asia in 1858, the colonial expansion to the region was about to start and Bangkok had already been firmly established as a European trading port. At the same time, parts of Laos were largely uncharted and South Vietnam was perceived as potential

threat to French colonial interests due to hostilities against Catholic missionaries – a situation which spurred Napoleon III's intervention in Cochin China. The mountainous areas between Cambodia and Annam (South Vietnam) were largely beyond European control or influence. In Mouhot's view, they were populated by savage tribes and some French missionaries here and there, who attempted to 'civilize' them.

Siam was the only nation in the region that has never been formerly colonized. After the Bowring treaty came into effect in 1855, the country gravitated more strongly towards England and could thus strengthen its position in international trade. Consequently, the Chinese, who had controlled most commerce for centuries, lost their influence. However, they remained powerful traders in Cambodia and thus stood in the way of France and its colonial ambitions.

Against this historical background, Mouhot's account is investigated. Speaking with the voice of the imperial explorer, he often reports on the riches of the region, foregrounding raw materials and favourable agricultural conditions. He makes comments on climate and landscape and characterizes the inhabitants hierarchically according to their *manners and customs* (Pratt 1985). Quite regularly, Mouhot envisions how trade with Europe could be set in place and he repeatedly praises the 'devine' work of the missionaries in the region.

To recapitulate theoretical and methodological considerations, I have proposed Anderson's (2006) discursive strategies of *census*, *maps*, and *museum* to identify which identities, spatial orderings and historic narratives are construed in Mouhot's text. Text passages under review were chosen for their discursive relevance, meaning only those were included which contain themes that pertain to the discursive construction of Otherness. Such themes typically include the *freedom of movement* of the traveller, *rituals of quest and departure*, and the *mediation of otherness* in descriptive or evaluative ways. This particularly concerns *manners and customs* descriptions of local inhabitants, *descriptive sequence of landscape*, and the *sentimental voice* of the narrator.

On a more detailed linguistic level, extracts were analysed in terms of the inclusion or exclusion of *actors*, the *actions* that are either associated with them, or not, and the *arguments* that are deployed to privilege a particular evaluation of the text over other possible ones (KhosraviNiK 2010). The categories *actors* and *action* (KhosraviNik 2010) are subsumed under Anderson's (2006) superordinate discursive strategy of *census* because they effectively select the identities that are included in the text and put them into a hierarchical perspective. The category *Argumentation* (KhosraviNiK 2010) then largely comprises the hypernym *museum* (Anderson 2006) as it reifies the historic narratives of identity together with their preferred interpretation.

Subsequently, *discourse topics* and *discourse positions* are integrated into the model. The outcomes of this chapter are presented in the following form: the *census, maps and museum* approach is used as basic frame and filled with the insights derived. Subsequently, *discourse topics* and *discourse positions* are deduced.

#### 6.2.4.1. Census

Census refers to the representation of actors / identities in a given context and is derived from the categories *actors and actions*. In terms of Mouhot's journey, the context comprises Europe's colonial expansion to Asia and its newly developing "planetary consciousness" (Pratt 1992) that was demanding more detailed knowledge about the interiors of countries. The narrative projects a protagonist who embodies masculinity and perseverance combined with rationality and moral qualities. Mouhot's adventure is set at the fringes of the known world and beyond the frontiers of accepted civilization, with the narrative projecting the protagonist as the steadfast European self, whose argued persistence and fortitude is matched against the Others he observes. In his courage, he is only surpassed by the Catholic missionaries, who's plight has been to suffer from the atrocities inflicted to them by the savage tribes and hostile people in the region. That way, Mouhot allies himself with a divine cause, stressing frequently that only the intervention of the missionaries would eventually civilize the savages and bring sustainable development to the region. France and Britain, which Mouhot portrays as great colonizer nations, have the moral duty to defend the working of the missionaries. The extension of their control is thus justified as moral obligation.

Opposed to the self-designed 'triangle of enlightenment' (Mouhot, Europe and the missionaries) stand the indigenous inhabitants of the region. Siamese upper-classes and nobility are on top. While their absolutism is criticised, they are represented as almost as cultured as the Europeans, but not quite. The notions of *farang* and *siwilai* have been discussed to better grasp how Siamese discourse could further Western notions of identification from an intrinsic point of view. Siamese ordinary people, and all those who cannot embody much *siwilai*, fall into an inferior category. They are characterised as benign, servile, gay and light-hearted despite the supposed corruption and despotism they have to endure from their leaders. Mouhot thus constructs the Siamese as good and obedient subjects that suffer from the economic and political mismanagement rampant in their country. As he observes a Siamese society past the Bowring Treaty (1855), his assessment of the second Siamese King Pin-Klau Chan You Hona as a 'perfect gentleman' with 'a capacity for government and statesmanship' is indicative of the binary identity categories he seeks to construct. On the one hand, the modernist Siamese elite

leaning towards the British, and on the other hand, the inefficient and corrupt apparatus of administration that precludes the proper management of a 'good and happy' people, their land and resources. With regard to the representation of the general population in Siam, descriptions range from 'indolent race' to gay and light-hearted', and 'spoilt children' of 'bountiful nature'. Mouhot even praises the 'pre-modern' Other for its perceived simplicity of life, alluding to the notion of the *noble savage*. Overall, the Siamese are reified as a friendly, harmless and simple people who suffer mainly from their despotic leaders. The message is that they would benefit greatly from the country's further integration into the European economic scheme.

Similar to what (Winichakul 2000a) has described as othering within Siamese society, Mouhot equally establishes a socio-ethnic gradient between the countries and ethnicities he observes during his trip. Cambodia is associated with (more) corruption than Siam and a 'general state of barbarity'. It is described as a country that was once great, as testified by its ruins, but also as one that is facing a menacing future. By this strategy, Cambodians are represented as the responsible agents for their perceived decline and European conquest is presented as the solution to the problem.

In areas that are even more remote, Mouhot reports of his encounters with 'savages'. He spends three months with the 'savage Stiens', an isolated community inhabiting the mountainous areas between South Vietnam and Cambodia. The Stiens are described as backward, superstitious and with a lack of formal knowledge and intellectual faculty. They are said to practice peculiar forms of pagan worshipping during which their slaves are killed and offered up to demons. Effectively, Mouhot constructs the Stiens as a kinder version of the 'cannibals'. They are not as dangerous as the 'real' cannibals that supposedly haunt other parts of the world, but the message is that they might still constitute a formidable threat to empire. Overall, the Stiens are described as hospitable but with a dangerous side. If one makes the mistake to misinterpret their arcane customs and manners, this might be 'rewarded' with an instant knife thrust. In a similarly ambiguous way, the Stiens are given credit for their hunting skills but it is cautioned that they shoot their bows with poisoned arrows. Neighbours to the Stiens, the Annamites are the inhabitants of Annam (South Vietnam) and are blamed for the hostilities against the Catholic missionaries. They are described as more sensible than the Stiens and courageous but also as liars and thieves, with a dirtiness surpassing anything else. Effectively, both the Stiens and the Annamites are constructed as the uncivilized Others in the region, with much hope vested into the missionaries and the intervention of France to bring them what was considered enlightenment and civilization.

Laos is represented as the largely uncharted country in Mouhot's account. Accordingly, the Laotians are described as more superstitious than the Siamese. Laotian women are said to be good looking, however, only until the age of 18, when they supposedly grow fat and start to look like old witches. The text furthermore denotes Laos as 'a country that is not for the whites', representing its mandarins as 'animals' that are annoying and corrupt. The advice is given to either deceive them with a tam-tam, so that they might mistake the cunning traveller for an official of the king, or to simply beat them with stick to force them into cooperation. This clearly underscores Mouhot's white supremacist point of view.

Finally, there is rarely a good word said about the Chinese. They are represented as corrupt, treacherous and well organised. Their capacity to broker business is said to be much higher than that of the local people and they are described as more active and intelligent than the natives. In summary, the Chinese embody the archetypes of dishonesty with all of them supposedly being addicted to opium and gambling. The subject positions and identities that are thus created in Mouhot's account have a geographical dimension through which they appropriate space in preferred interpretative ways. This is discussed in maps.

#### 6.2.4.2. Maps

Maps refers to the spatial ordering of identities and people. Against the background of colonial expansion, the centres of civilization and influence were represented by the European metropolis. Beyond that, sub-centres and trading ports such as Bangkok were established that connected the colonial 'Ergänzungsräume' with the international market. In Mouhot's account, this logic is discernible when one observes the role of Bangkok. Mouhot's shuttles back and forth between this city and the interiors of the countries he visits, sending back to Europe the specimens he collects and the information he records in his scientific reports. Thus, Bangkok becomes the sub-centre of civilization at the fringes of a world that is supposedly uncivilized. This civilized / uncivilized binary is deployed in several ways in Mouhot's book. While Bangkok is represented as a civilized and thriving 'Venice of the East', Mouhot complains about feeling 'stifled and oppressed' in the big city, longing for his adventures and the pure qualities of the active life he experiences in remote jungles and mountains. As this suggests, the fashioning of Mouhot's persona as an audacious explorer conflates with the capital's connotation of civilization and domesticity. We can therefore observe a *geography of the untamed*, stretching out from Bangkok and becoming more adventurous the further one gets away. Siam is thus portrayed as reasonably cultured, with its people described as happy and benign.



Cambodia already lies in the outer circle of Mouhot's Southeast Asian civilization continuum. It is perceived as a place of corruption with European intervention presented as the only viable solution to the country's problems. Even further away from civilization lie the mountainous areas between Cambodia and Annam. These are represented as the home of the savage tribes, scarcely penetrated by the allegedly brave and noble forerunners of civilization in the person of Catholic missionaries. Mouhot's stressing of the scattered dispersion of the missionaries in Cochin China metaphorically renders the geography less civilized by implicitly foregrounding that civilization has not arrived yet. In the case of Annam (South Vietnam), the region is portrayed as hostile to France. Laos, then, is depicted as a country that is still largely uncharted, implying that all sorts of encounters are possible when one ventures there. Specifically, Laos is associated with particularly corrupt officials and depicted as a land that is not for the white people, implying that it is an obscure spot on the map, where humanitarian considerations can be brushed away and the traveller must not feel any constraints to force through his will.

In terms of riches and raw materials, Mouhot integrates the region in a geography of exploration. In Cambodia, he extolls mountains that contain gold, zinc, copper and iron, and he praises the fertile lands and the favourable climate of all the countries he visits. On many occasions, the possibilities of trade are foregrounded, and the region is imaginatively integrated into the networks of global commerce. Pratt (1992) has identified this teleological-utilitarian strategy of representation as 'monarch of all I survey' dramaturgy.

As this suggests, Mouhot integrates his representation of identities and subject positions into a network of spatial coordinates, appropriating the countries and regions he visits within an imperial geography of conquest and exploitation. Besides this spatial fixing of meaning, a temporal dimension can be observed too. This is addressed in the following sub-section on museum.

#### 6.2.4.3. Museum

Museum refers to the historic fixing of narratives of identity and hierarchical ordering in a way that alternative interpretations are disparaged. Museum is mainly derived from the category *argumentation*. To begin with Mouhot's account on Siam, the state is represented as a country that is open to modernization. Because Siam has signed the Bowring treaty, it is classified as a nation on the right way to progress and prosperity. The narrative Mouhot tells about Siam is thoroughly Eurocentric. Voices and actors are included so that his representational strategy of juxtaposing mechanisms of negative othering against more favourable 'reports' on already

achieved ‘paths of progress’ promote his ultimate goal of complete discursive control. Siam is thus conveniently integrated into the European scheme of signification by a selection of a specific discursive configuration over possible alternatives that remain silenced in the text.

In the case of Cambodia, Mouhot follows a similar strategy with the main difference that stories about local ‘success’ and cooperation are not included to the same extent as it is the case with Siam. Cambodia is thus essentially represented as a living museum. The temples of Ongkor function as a universal signifier of its great past, whereas the present state is depicted as deplorable and corrupt. In this context, Mouhot appropriates the temples as part of the European civilizing mission, pointing out that appropriate documentation and conservation could only be achieved through European intervention. The reader is thus sent the message that colonial expansion will stimulate multi-level regeneration of the country. Mouhot constructs himself as a pioneer of that undertaking, implying that without his discovery, the great temples of Angkor would have been lost forever and that without France’s colonial pursuit, the nation would be forever lost. The preferred evaluation of this narrative is that France has the moral obligation to help the country and save its future.

Clearly, the riches of Cambodia are not entirely located in the past. Mouhot acknowledges the nation’s raw materials and selectively combines his stories about the country’s economic potential with accounts of barbary and corruption. By frequently referring to the work of Catholic missionaries and reporting about their distress in difficult and hostile territories, he effectively calls for the help of France to further the ‘noble’ task of civilizing the dark fringes of the countries he explores. This strategy is even more pronounced in the case of Annam (South Vietnam), where the attacks on missionaries both discursively spurred and justified Napoleon III’s military intervention in the region. The overall discursive strategy that can thus be observed is a justification of European imperialism by reifying its supposedly good and noble cause combined with a foregrounding of underused economic opportunities. Accordingly, local populations are represented as unfit for self-government, with the key assumption that they would greatly benefit from European control. Next, relevant discourse topics and discourse positions are discussed.

#### 6.2.4.4. Discourse Topics and Discourse Positions

*Discourse topics* refer to instances of speech and thought that are available and sayable at a given conjuncture of time and space. *Discourse positions* denote the ideological stance they occupy. Discourse topics are contingent on time, people and place. They encode specific

power-knowledge configurations and appear particularly important when texts from different periods are compared. Even though discourse topics may and will change over time, these transformations are indicative of how power relations develop over time. This leads to the notion of discourse positions, or the type of ideological stance from which a text is produced or received. As discursive mechanism alter, discourse positions may stay relatively stable over time. For example, the notion of heritage tourism to developing countries depends on articulations of place with narratives from the past. When the past is given greater appreciation than the present, the discourse of a ‘living museum’ is created. This frequently precludes indigenous development, denouncing it as unwanted intrusion (Falser 2014). Such strategy revives imperial power relations in the post-colony, leaving the binary between colonizer and colonized at least structurally intact, with a powerful external industry shaping the economic and cultural horizon of a given community. A diagnostic post-colonial critique would therefore point out the prolongation of imperialist power in the form of economic coercion (see Galtung’s 1971 seminal discussion of multiple modern imperialism and Loomba 2005). I therefore determine the ideological stance of *discourse topics* and the *topoi* (conclusion rules) that promote their reification. This shall lay the foundation for further comparative analysis of texts from later periods.

In Mouhot’s text, imperialist assumptions play a significant role. The ideological regime of imperialism was powerful at the time and justified much of the colonial expansion of Europe’s central powers. However, to become practically effective, the ideological sphere cannot exist on its own. It is too abstract to become reality and needs discursive mechanisms of ‘truth production’ in order to isolate and naturalize itself as the only ‘truth’ to be existent (Stoddard 2007), and to become what Foucault (1972) terms ‘regimes of truth’.

To a large extent, Mouhot’s signifying economy of ‘truth’ relies on the strategic deployment of discourse topics through the mechanism of the *binary pair*. The most salient of these include civilized / savage, disciplined / idle, modern / premodern, corrupt / lawful, slavery / personal freedom, despotism / democracy, rational / irrational and superstition / religion. Mouhot cleverly utilizes these dichotomies in a constant confrontation of ‘worlds’ that invites the basic *topois* of good vs. bad and morally justified vs. morally corrupt. The primary message is that European standards are superior on all cultural, economic and political accounts, that indigenous manners and customs are always marked categories and therefore problematic (with the exception of some instances where he praises the supposed simplicity of the noble savages’ lifestyles) and finally, that the comparatively desperate state of the present in the region can

only be regenerated by concerted European intervention that aims at civilizing and integrating cultures and economies into the European scheme of interest. The ideological stance / discourse positions involved comprise imperialism, colonialism and a raciologist conception of human evolution that is bolstered by the absolutism of religious faith. The following table summarises the discourse analysis I have conducted on Mouhot's report.

*Table 2 – Results Henri Mouhot*

Actors	Action	Argumentation	Census (actors & actions)	Maps	Museum (Argumentation)	Discourse Topics
<b>Protagonist</b>	explores researches writes	Mouhot is a heroic explorer in the service of science & empire	Mouhot braves dangers and penetrates uncharted land	Empire Siam Cambodia & Cochin China	legacy of discovery & vanguard of European intervention	discipline religion masculinity science adventure
<b>Catholic Missions</b>	civilize	missionaries enlighten the savages	missionaries are noble, virtuous and in danger	Cochin China	civilizing mission is divine cause and moral obligation for whole Europe	ethics religion civilization
<b>Europeans</b>	civilize control manage	Europe shall control countries with under-developed people and corrupt leaders	modern states have a moral obligation to effect regeneration	Empires global	trade & civilizing mission brings prosperity to all countries in the region	economy politics military technology free trade
<b>Siam</b>	partly civilized but neglect their resources	Siam's future depends on European intervention; Bowring Treaty is a step in the right direction	spoilt children of nature that are friendly and cooperative but ineffective	Siam local	despotic Siam is in deterioration and only a deepening cooperation with Britain will bring mutual prosperity & welfare	oppression trade resources development integration noble savage
<b>Cambodia</b>	great past corruption neglect their resources	Cambodia needs European control very urgently	corrupt barbaric declined ruins	Cambodia local	European conquest is necessary for regeneration & recovery of a great past (ruins)	decline resources heritage past conquest
<b>Fringe Areas (Stiens, Laotians &amp; Annamites)</b>	savage or hostile or corrupt	must be civilized	savage superstitious hospitable dirty	partly uncharted	Savages must be civilized & tamed for the sake of god and humankind	primitivity superstition handicraft hospitality
<b>Chinese</b>	criminal & corrupt	must be pushed out	treacherous liar thief	dense regional networks	danger for European trade & development of local economy	drugs crime corruption gambling

Mouhot's discoveries largely ended the period of explorations in Southeast Asia but the discursive power of his account lingered on. As tourism began to develop by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reliable travel advice was needed. The guidebook was born and to this the next section will turn.

### 6.3. Imperial Guidebooks

Colonialism and social change in Europe played a key role in the development of Southeast Asian tourism. In all cases (except Thailand), the industry had colonial origins (Hitchcock, King & Parnwell 2009: 5) and especially the high colonial period, roughly between 1870 and 1940, with its improved infrastructure and security, paved the way for the first recreational travellers (idem: 7). At the same time, socio-economic change was in full swing in Europe. The colonial economy became more efficient and profitable. This coincided with an overproportionate pace of industrial growth and the rise of social democracy, all of which created conditions that gave birth to the new social species of the tourist (Douglas & Douglas 2000: 35-36). As Nash (1989: 41) explains from a social-science perspective, the development of Western (overseas) tourism can be explained by an increased economic productivity that created leisure, a psychological mobility associated with the broadening of individuals' cognitive horizons in terms of what they could imagine doing and what not, and finally the improvements of transport and communication. For the first time in history, a demography of affluent people could afford to travel abroad and visit the more remote places of the world in a fashion that was reasonably safe, pleasant and fulfilling. While the exclusivity of the early-day explorations was gone, their declarative superiority largely persisted. Tourists and travellers of the time were inspired by the myths of their heroic predecessors and many had the desire to re-enact such adventures themselves (Thompson 2011: 53). In that sense, empires were not only empires of war and economic exploitation. They increasingly became empires of travel where professionals and members of the middle classes could comfortably indulge themselves and celebrate notions of a supposed European distinctiveness, the spread of Christianity and the onward march of modernism (MacKenzie 2005: 19-20).

As mentioned, this proliferation of physical and imaginary mobility created a new demand for practical information, leading to the introduction of a new genre of travel writing, namely the tourist guidebook. Exploring the development of the modern guidebook, Margarita Dritsas (2006) traces its evolution back to the high imperial era, exploring the relationship between the older travelogue or report and the commercially oriented 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century handbook. Her argument is that the shift from one to the other is both indicative of how individual travel was

replaced by the rationalities of mass mobility, and the way in which the developing tourist industry began to culturally appropriate the ‘big ideas’ from early exploration writers, turning them into commodities for mass consumption and teaching tourists what to see and how to either appreciate it or not (idem: 30). As MacKenzie (2013) points out in his analysis of empire travel guides from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, imperial powers have always sought to produce a sequence of myths that justifies their existence and ideological configuration. These have included notions of personal freedom of their subjects combined with allegedly superior standards of civilization, the entitlement to unfettered movement and the control of ‘inferior’ Others. In the form of the guidebook, these myths could be codified and printed in large numbers so that the pocket-sized companions functioned as ‘imperial tutors’ for the growing numbers of tourists.

In the high colonial period, two institutions dominated the emerging guidebook market. The publisher John Murray from London and later Karl Baedeker from Leipzig. The latter survived well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a European authority on preparatory travel literature, while the former does not compete in the guidebook market anymore. However, besides offering guide books throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Murray specialised in the publication of the work of explorers, publishing inter alia David Livingstone’s *Missionary Travels and Researches in Southern Africa*, which was one of the great 19<sup>th</sup> century bestsellers, and Mouhot’s (1864) seminal report analysed above. Also, Murray is credited for producing the first standardized guidebooks to Europe and the Middle East from the 1830s onwards (see MacKenzie 2005: 22; Dritsas 2006: 33). Special attention deserves his *Imperial Guide to India, Including Kashmir, Burma and Ceylon, with Illustrations, Map and Plans* (Murray 1904), which largely set the conventions for the overseas genre and served as an inspiration to every other travel guide to Asia (Douglas & Douglas 2000: 36). Considering the discursive relevance and conventional similarity of the guidebooks covering the greater region of colonised (Southeast) Asia, Murray’s (1904) section on Burma, and Harrison’s (1920) *Illustrated Guide to the Federated Malay States* (published in three impressions between 1910 and 1920) are chosen for analysis and examined in the remainder of this section.

Before I continue, some further methodological considerations are sensible to account for the specificity of the guidebooks genre. Above all, it is instructive to reiterate the workings of the *tourist gaze* and ask the question how that foundational concept relates to the practical functions of the guidebook. Essentially, the gaze operates as a body of knowledge that guides and (re)produces the tourist experience and its various encounters through ways of seeing, thinking

and acting (Urry 1990; Urry and Larson 2011). Bhattacharyya (1997) has taken a similar approach and argued that the tourist guidebook essentially utilizes three main mechanisms to put hegemonic travel discourses into practice and to naturalize particular destination myths. These processes include the *selection of sights* (and activities, my remark), the provision of *information about these sights* and the inclusion of *guidelines for the tourist-local relationship* (idem). These strategies are crucial elements of the tourist gaze since they determine what and whom tourists should look at and what they should think. Therefore, they deserve special attention. Once identified, the three strategies of the guidebook can be usefully combined with the *actors, action* and *argumentation* framework (KhosraviNiK 2010) that has already been applied to Mouhot's text.

The reason for this is that in the case of the guidebook, Bhattacharyya's (1997) *sights and activities* largely determine KhosraviNiK's (2010) *actors* and *actions*, while the resulting *argumentation* of the text translates to what Bhattacharyya's (1997) has termed the cognitive guidelines for the *tourist-local relationship*. *Sights, activities, actors* and *actions* can further be subsumed under the superordinate discursive strategy of *census* (Anderson 2006) because they select identities for discussion and put them into a hierarchical order. *Argumentation* and guidelines for the *tourist-local relationship* largely comprise Anderson's (2006) hypernym *museum* as they reify the historic narratives of identity and their interpretation. With these adaptations to the basic heuristic model, the discursive specificity of the guidebook is adequately taken into consideration. Extracts selected for discussion are scrutinized for genre specific declarative constituents that meaningfully condense into larger enunciative schemes. Thus, it becomes possible to relate supposedly harmless practices of sightseeing to the more serious ideological entanglements of the imagined (destination) community and beyond.

To begin, largescale guidebook publishing started at a time when exploration had ended, and long-haul individual travel became increasingly popular. In the opening paragraph of Harrison's (1920) guide to the Malay Peninsula this is acknowledged.

It has become nowadays so easy and so common a venture to cross the world that the simple circumnavigation of the globe "merely for wantonness" is very rapidly ceasing to be in fashion. But as the rough places of the earth become smooth to travellers, and they no longer fear "that the gulfs will wash us down," there is growing amongst them a disposition to dwell awhile in those lands whose climate and inhabitants most differ from ours. The more completely such places are strange to us the more do they attract



us, and the more isolated they have lived hitherto, the more do we feel called upon to visit them now. (Harrison 1920: 2)

Clearly, the guide book begins with an exaggeration, claiming that travel has become so easy and thus implying that everybody had the time and could afford to travel. In reality, early guidebooks essentially addressed a bourgeois market and this strategy was adopted by all imperial guides, identifying their audience as tourists, sportsmen, settlers, or even invalids to underscore the comfortable nature of the trips they advertised (MacKenzie 2005: 19). Secondly, the 'rough places' of the world are mentioned. They are represented as becoming increasingly smooth, so that they might be enjoyed without the fear that was associated with them in the time of the early explorers. Third, there is a reference to 'strangeness', which is presented as the driving force behind the travellers' decisions to either visit a place or not. The stranger places are, so the argument, the more the tourist will feel called upon to visit them.

This resonates Urry's (1990: 2-3) conviction that the tourist gaze is preferably directed upon features of landscape and townscape that are significantly different from everyday experience and whatever is considered ordinary at home. According to McKenzie (2005: 20), this obsession with difference, combined with a desire for security and comfort, lead to a situation where travellers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century essentially engaged in a schizophrenic undertaking. On the one side, they travelled abroad to faraway colonies to gaze upon other cultures, landscapes and climates, but on the other side, they embraced the comfortable experience of what they acknowledged as their own culture's achievements in terms of modernist extension into the countries they visited. Essentially, their attempts to get 'away from it all' reinforced their (imperialist) conviction that 'it all' is really the most favourable and advanced way of live (Bhattacharyya 1997: 383). For example, modern achievements in the Malay States are described as a "matter for very profound satisfaction" for the traveller and include "thousand miles of railway two thousand five hundred miles of road" (Harrison 1920: 2). Upon these introductory comments, Harrison (ibid) addresses the reader in a jovial tone and states:

we travel nowadays far more often than our ancestors, but we do not, as they say they did, hanker for hardships. We like to see new countries, new peoples and new ways of living, but we shall be as reasonably safe in person and property as may be. In the Federated Malay States, we are sure of all these things, and the country does not lose attractiveness from that fact. We are not so sure of other Oriental lands in these times. There is no unrest in Malaya. The country is perfectly quiet, and the people contented.

As this suggests, the myth of the ‘ordeal’ experienced by the earlier figure of the explorer or conqueror still emerges prominently in travel discourse of the time and functions as what Raymond Williams (1977) has termed a *residual category* of culture, meaning the influence of old cultural categories on more recent ways of thinking. The readers are thus sent the message that they follow in the footsteps of travel pioneers but that all the discomfiting gruesomeness these figures had to endure is no longer an issue. This, so the text, is not a problem since none of the attractiveness of the destination is lost thereby. Furthermore, the notion of attractiveness is legitimized by the comparison between the Malay States and other places in the East. The reader is reminded that not all destinations in the ‘Orient’ lend themselves to carefree travel. By foregrounding the discourse topic of ‘unrest’, other places in the greater region are effectively labelled as unsuitable for the tourist, with the hint that the well contended people of the Federated Malay States are the result of proper colonial management by the British empire. This sustains one of the most powerful myths identified in Mouhot’s (1864) text, namely that colonialism was eventually ‘the best’ that could have possibly happened to the ‘underdeveloped’ world. To drive the point home, tourists are invited to see with their own eyes how great the supposed achievements of their mother nation are and how ‘well’ they function in practice.

Resonating this, Murray’s (1904) Burma is represented as a once “disturbed state” before the British took control in 1897. The traveller is thereupon assured that “the various bands of dacoits” operating in the region “were accounted for” and that the province is now “as peaceful as any other portion of the Eastern Empire” (idem: 194). Accordingly, Murray (1904: 192) depicts Burma as a ‘frontier’ country of the empire, pointing out that “[it] has, up to the present time, been comparatively little visited by the tourist. The communications, though improving, are not good, and, except at Rangoon, the hotels leave much to be desired”. As this suggests, European intervention is on its way (e.g. public security and improving communications) and about to fully set the country’s course towards modern civilization. This legitimizes the deterritorialization of Europe’s self-appointed blazon of progress and its forceful reterritorialization elsewhere in the world.

With regard to the Malayan states, both the reasons and the effects of introducing ‘modern civilization’ in the eastern parts of Empire can be traced in the following quote:

[Malaya] is a very rich country, full of valuable mineral deposits, and also one of those gardens of earth which when tickled laughs itself into harvest. The people in it are either connected with the tin industry or the planting industry. If they are foreign to

the soil their object is to make a fortune from it and retire home; if they are native Malays, their object is to continue in that state of peasant proprietorship in which they have always so far found a sufficient happiness. (Harrison 1920: 3)

Basically, summing up the imperial agenda in a concise paragraph, the extract foregrounds the economic chances associated with the Federated Malay States and highlights the distinction between the colonizer and the colonized. We learn that the former is there ‘to make a fortune from it and retire home’, while the latter’s object is to continue in a state of peasant proprietorship, in which he is said to ‘have always so far found a sufficient happiness’. The underlying assumption is clearly indicative of European supremacist ideology. It assigns the role of slave or servant to its perceived Oriental Other and effectively denies the Malaysians any agency by reifying them as a ‘race’ that naturally requires management and control. The qualifier ‘sufficient happiness’ furthermore promotes the logical implication that the foreign dominated course of action is in the best interest of the colonized. This strict division of labour is inescapable. Individuals wishing to migrate to the Federated Malay States for professional reasons are sent the following message:

[a] word of advice is necessary to a would-be immigrant, and that is, that the Federated Malay States do not offer opportunities like Canada and Australia for the manual labour of the European. All manual labour is done by Asians, and the part the European takes is that of ordering labour and superintending operations, but unless the would-be immigrant has the knowledge to superintend and the capacity for controlling labour, the Federated Malay States are a closed door to him. (Harrison 1920: 280)

As this clearly shows, the British protected and administered Federated Malay States were no place where European immigrants could expect to find manual work such as in Canada and Australia. Rather, they were supposed to assume positions of control, so that they could direct the indigenous work force. It is therefore no coincidence that the guidebook contains a full chapter on mining. Its second major purpose besides tourism was to provide hands-down information for the newly arriving ranks of administration.

Unlike Harrison (1920), Murray’s (1904) whole guidebook, including his single chapter on Burma, contains no such detailed information on mining and commerce. Overall, the book appears to be directed more profoundly towards the sight-seeing tourist than the professional traveller. There is, however, a paragraph on the scenery of Burma, describing it as “utterly unlike that of India” (the actual focus of the guidebook) and “oriental” (idem: 192); with further information about the countries resources and raw materials. The reader is instructed that:

[t]he chief crop in Lower Burma is rice, mingled with cotton, tobacco, and sesamun, while in the northern parts maize, wheat, millet and pulse are also cultivated. A large part of Burma is overgrown with dense forest – the teak tree predominating – the wood of which forms one of the chief exports. Gold and silver are found in small quantities, and the ruby mines are the most famous in the world (ibid).

Arguably, the colony is presented as one that is worthwhile to possess. While the commercial incorporation of the region is not addressed in detail or in dedicated chapters, Murray's (1904) readers are still implicitly reminded that the expansion of the Eastern Empire to Burma has happened for a 'good reason'. The (British) tourist can thus identify himself or herself with what MacKenzie (2013: 116) has described as the phantasmatic idea of a British Empire that is so incomparably advanced that it must rule the whole world.

Formal education played a key role in this regard. In Harrison's (1920) guidebook, the topic of education is deployed as the main marker of difference between the English and the Malays. Harrison (1920: 64) writes: "[t]he Malays are a very acute people, and even if they were not it does not require any excessive intelligence to realise that the governing Englishman is what he is by virtue of the tradition he has received". From an indigenous perspective, this motto quickly gained popularity among the Malayan upper classes. Since they had a strong wish for self-government, they welcomed the introduction of the English public schooling system. Kuala Kangsar was then the first school in Malaya that was based on the original model (idem: 63-64), emphasising "[s]elf-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control [since] these three alone [could] lead life to sovereign power" (idem: 64). Harrison further explains:

[s]ome such system as this is imperative if the Malays are to join in the modern administration of their country to a greater extent than they now do. As things at present stand, a whole army of alien subordinates fill places which there are no Malays qualified to fill, both in business and official circles. In time there will be Malays ready for these places and the first to fill them will be boys from the Kuala Kangsar school. (Harrison 1920: 65)

Education marked one of the most powerful instruments of control in the colonial project. It aimed at achieving the Gramscian effect of domination by consent, so that firstly, the colonized would acquire the (false) consciousness that their ways of life are inherently inferior to the normative claims of knowledge and culture made by the imperial powers, and secondly, they would likely wish to adopt these ways to be able to become integrated into the colonial apparatus (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1995: 425). In that sense, the boys from the Kuala

Kangsar school were to become the first subsidiaries of the colonial regime. Their future leadership in business and official circles would eventually ensure that the entire fabric of the Malayan population could henceforth be set on course by proxies from within rather than by masters from the outside.

Besides education, Harrison's (1920) guidebook frequently praises the history of British colonialism. In the 122-page-long introductory chapter 'Through the Malay Peninsula from North to South', there is information about the early history of the Malayan peninsula and a section about the institution of British control. Affirming British dominance, the guidebook states that "[i]n 1826 the British had defeated the Dutch and were firmly seated in Singapore, Penang, Malacca and the Dindings" (Harrison 1920: 13). This way, a particular choice of historic events – in Raymond Williams (1980) words a "selective tradition" of a significant past – is transmitted to determine how history is eventually remembered (see also Laderman 2002: 89). The following example illustrates how specific myths of superior Britishness are woven into supposedly neutral historic accounts. In a section on Malaya's coastal belt of plantations, it is reported that coffee was once the commodity of choice. Eventually, however, with global overproduction of coffee and prices in the dumps, alternatives had to be found. Harrison (1920: 101) states:

[t]his unfortunate collapse in coffee might have been the ruin of the English planting community, but these gentlemen were not devoid of grit, not lacking in energy, not spoiled by prosperity. They sought for some other product with which to replace their coffee bushes and they found *Hevea Braziliensis*, the Para rubber of commerce.

As this shows, the economically required shift from cultivating coffee to planting rubber is presented as a glorious story of Britishness and empire. 'These gentlemen not lacking in energy' and 'not spoiled by prosperity' arguably represent what Green (1980: 3) has termed the "energizing myth of British imperialism" in that they encourage imperial self-identification and probably incite (mostly) young men to travel abroad and realise imperial deeds of equal quality and importance (see also Thompson 2011: 140).

With these authorial assumption about history and Britishness resonating in the background, the traveller is guided through the Malayan territories from the north to the south by several sub-sections that eclectically combine general travel information with landscape descriptions, listings of available tourist activities, comments on commerce and politics, and romantic descriptions of the mystic and exotic scenery. Through the device of the implicit narrator, the reader is sometimes addressed with second person pronouns, so that a more intimate

relationship between traveller and author can be sustained (Bhattacharyya 1997: 375). Thus, with the narrator slipping into the consciousness of the reader, asking rhetorical questions such as: “[a]ll very well,’ you say, ‘but how do we get [to Malaya]’” (Harrison 1920: 25), the guidebook achieves the effect of an informal conversation. Since the reader cannot actually answer, the implicit voice in the text immediately assures the traveller in a casual tone that ‘getting there’ can be achieved “[e]asily enough, for numerous lines run to Singapore and Penang from London, Marseilles and many another port” (ibid). In the section on resthouses and hotels, a similar strategy is employed: “[i]s there good accommodation?’ is the first question we ask about a country new to us. ‘What are the hotels like?’ ‘Can we bring a lady?’” (Harrison: 1920: 114). Here again, the authorial voice establishes itself as a trustworthy interlocutor who supposedly shares important concerns with the intended male reader. The he-traveller is thereupon informed that

[a]s long ago as 1911 there were 940 white women in the Federated Malay States and there must be many more [and assured that] no one need hesitate to bring his feminine belongings with him, nor need the ladies expect to be called to rough it. (ibid).

The example combines colonialist and patriarchal assumptions in a strategically sophisticated way. By counting on the common knowledge of the time, namely that conquest and empire were predominately male domains (Mills 1991), the reader’s expected heteronormative and imperialist orientation is bolstered by the injunction ‘to bring his feminine belongings with him’. This is both justified by and promotes the argument that an essentially man-controlled foreign dominion will provide enough ‘secure containment’ for women in a double sense: firstly, they don’t threaten masculine entitlements as they are represented as ‘belongings’ and secondly, women must not fear the ‘loss’ of their femininity because the countries they visit have largely been turned into sufficiently ‘civilized’ places by their powerful men.

In terms of representing an idealized version of ‘civilization’ as a marker of difference and identification, both Murray (1904) and Harrison (1920) put strong emphasis on the distinguished appearance of Western travellers to assure that their behaviour was in sync with the supposed moral superiority of the colonial project. Murray (1904) reminds his readers that his “suggestions are intended to meet the requirements of persons making a tour of three or four months, in which they wish to include a certain amount of social life, with the actual travel and sightseeing” (idem: 4), assuring tourists that much hospitality will be shown to them if they are properly prepared and dressed, “particularly if they have letters of introduction, for dinner parties and dances” (idem: 5). Harrison (1920) advises his readers too to bring essential items

to the tropics, emphasizing suitable and decent clothes, canvas shoes, a solar topi and light underwear. The male traveller is addressed specifically and reminded that it constitutes

almost a social crime, certainly a social misdemeanour, to wear a white linen suit two days in succession—one day one suit (and even more if one gets soiled) should be the most absolute rule [because] [n]othing looks worse in the tropics or is nastier in itself than a soiled or crumpled linen suit, unless perhaps it be unsuitable European clothing. (Harrison 1920: 180-181)

Here, the tourist is informed about the strict dress code that must be observed in the tropical territories controlled by Britain. He, who is discursively located in the upper echelons of the colonial society, is expected to act as a British gentleman. Suggested activities thus include socialising with fellow expats in exclusive clubs. In case ‘the gentleman’ does not yet know, he is informed that “[t]he social centre of the English quarter of a town in Malaya is always the recreation ground and the club overlooking it” (Harrison 1920: 45). The social distinction that is involved when visiting a club is stated upfront: “[a]ny one bringing introductions will find no difficulty in being received as a visiting member of any local club” (ibid).

The practice of enclosed Western socializing advocated by Murray (1904) and Harrison (1920) effectively sends readers the message that they are part of an elite establishment that is not supposed to interact with ordinary and local people due to supposedly irrevocable assumptions of class and racial superiority. According to Simmons (2004: 51), this imperial self-understanding had widespread ideological effects that are still relevant today. It has been fundamental in locking (modern) travellers into an old discourse of colonial distinction that essentially reconfigures the past into the present by limiting the role of many modern tourists to that of the (neo-colonial) sightseer. This figure essentially revives the myth of the decontextualized white ‘gentleman’ or explorer who is unable or unwilling to make contact with local populations other than through the *gaze*.

Next, the selection of sights and activities in the guidebooks is largely determined by the means of infrastructures available in Burma and Malaya. In Murray’s (1904) chapter on Burma, several pre-arrangeable tours offered by Thomas Cook and Sons are recommended (idem: 199). These multi-day trips largely follow the main routes of transport, involving river traffic on the Irrawaddy and the thus far existing rail network. British Malaya, on the other side, possesses a road system of about three thousand miles (Harrison 1920: 204) and 732 miles of railway in the Federated Malay States (idem 25). A chapter with ‘hints for motorists’ is included in the guidebook. Travellers are advised to either hire cars in advance upon arrival in Singapore and

start driving from Kuala Lumpur or, if they wish to stay for a longer period, ship their own cars from Europe. One recommended highlight is a 12 day motoring holiday through the Malay States. For each day, waypoints, expected road conditions and information on banks, hotels and sights are enclosed. Typical places of interest include tin mines (Harrison 1920: 211), rubber plantations (idem 215) in the countryside, and the “magnificent jungle scenery” (idem 214) that can be observed. Suggested activities comprise “doing a little shopping, the Museum, Public Gardens, Golf Links, Government Buildings, Polo Grounds, Schools” when in Kuala Lumpur (ibid), or a “visit to the club in the evening [that] will bring the travellers into touch with their fellow countrymen who live and work in this part of the world” (idem: 210). Clearly, all these selected places and events primarily represent the lived realities of empire abroad and cater for the upmarket travellers.

These individuals, at the time, had a disposition for hunting. For that reason, both Murray (1904) and Harrison (1920) provide information specially dedicated to avid ‘sportsmen’. In the general section of Murray’s (1904) handbook, the keen hunter is reminded that “[t]here is no license to shoot required by the European” (idem: 10). There is further advice that shooting should be avoided close to villages, temples or mosques; with the hint that “care must be taken not to shoot villagers working in the fields or tending cattle” when stalking up the Indian antelope or the black buck (ibid). Since imperial hunting involves hiring Coolies, the reader is warned that overpaying them would be “a fatal mistake” (Murray 1904: 11). Only under favourable circumstances, that is “if the men have worked particularly well, or if sport has been good” (ibid), unskilled labourers such as porters and spotters may be given some ‘Baksheesh’. Furthermore, the reader is left in no doubt that “servants are indispensable” (idem: 9) for most outdoor pursuits. Needed are a cook, a table servant, a sweeper and a dedicated water carrier (ibid).

With a similar focus, Harrison (1920) includes a full chapter on ‘Big Game Shooting’ in his guidebook to Malaya. He states:

[t]here is a certain fascination about the expression " Big Game Shooting " which appeals to most Britishers, and a country which provides such shooting will invariably be sought after by a certain section of the sport-loving community from our island home. (Harrison 1920: 221)

In both sources, the myth of adventurous Britishness is clearly alluded to, with Malaya being represented as a place that the high-class, sport-loving community would appreciate. Throughout the remainder of Harrison’s (1920) chapter, the ‘sportsman’ is advised about which



rifles he should bring and what his camp equipment should consist of. There is further advise that all required rations and provisions should be secured in medium-sized boxes that do not weigh more than 30 pounds apiece “for in the event of one having to transport these cases through the jungle with Malay coolies, 30 pounds a man will be found to be about their limit” (Harrison 1920: 224). Implicitly, the Malayan coolie is dehumanized in this quote because his ‘maximum limit’ is taken as a reference point for loading the baggage. Like a ‘beast of burden’, he is employed rationally according to his maximum output but not taken into consideration ethically or compassionately for his sensations or well-being.

In a similarly contemptuous way, Harrison (1920) portrays the Malayan as to be in a process of constant human deterioration. While the hunter is advised to find a Malay tracker, he is warned that finding a good one “is a most difficult business. The older generation of Malays is passing on, and the younger generation are not the men their fathers were where hunting and wood craft is concerned” (Harrison 1920: 225). This way, the positively evaluated Other is consigned to a different time-sphere which is not the present. Usually this strategy of negative othering is used to reify the other as pre-modern and backward (Mills 1991: 89), but here, it additionally denies the contemporary population future agency and acceptance by effectively implying that the contemporary Malayan is both a ‘worse’ premodern than his father and not a modern-man-proper on any accounts. This is confirmed by the following statement of the text. The reader is advised to

[a]lways remember in dealing with Malays that they have made a fine art of indolence, that they must be treated like children; make up your mind to put up with both these serious drawbacks, and even a stranger in the land will be able to manage them. (Harrison 1920: 227)

Like in Mouhot’s (1864) discourse discussed further above, we find the comparison of local inhabitants to ‘little children’. As explained there, this strategy reifies indigenous people as not abreast with expected ‘adult’ standards. Consequently, colonial ‘management’ is justified as a good and necessary cause.

Murray’s (1904) description of the Burmese much resembles Harrison’s (1920) depiction quoted above. Accordingly, “[the Burmese] are of a cheerful and careless temperament, fond of gay silks and colours, and greatly addicted to cheroot smoking” (Murray 1904: 190). Elsewhere the country is reduced to a set of sights that Murray considers representative and worthwhile. He makes a sweeping statement on Burmese architecture, writing that “[the] monasteries and pagodas comprise almost all the buildings of any architectural of historic

interest in Burma” (idem 193). The reader is thus sent the message that indigenous achievements can be reduced to particular artefacts and/or relicts of the past selected by a Western author. As discussed in the previous subsection, this conveys a message similar to that of Mouhot’s (1864) assessment of Cambodia. The overall present condition is either ignored or depicted as deficient, while some selected elements and sights (often from the past) are discursively constructed as some illusionary *pars pro toto* for a romanticised image of place that caters well for European self-distinction and associated travel fantasies. Communicated in guidebooks, such ideas can turn into a powerful cultural force which may endure over centuries without being significantly challenged. As Laderman (2002: 91) points out in this respect:

[t]ravel guidebooks’ synopses convey versions of the past that, through repetition over time, can become a collective memory of an event. Thus is memory of the ‘significant’ past or ‘selective tradition’ shaped, and thus conventional knowledge of events evolves.

The important insight of this is that the guidebooks discussed here likely played a pioneer role in this process. The meaning they attached to objects, peoples and places shaped the memory of the ‘significant’, so that subsequent publications could repeat it and turn it into ‘conventional knowledge’ again and again.

On other occasions, local people and their customs are either ridiculed or presented in a derogatory way. In a sub-section on ‘Varieties of Race’, Harrison (1920: 127-128) describes the experience of hailing a rickshaw on the street and makes comments on the potentially multi-ethnic backgrounds of rickshaw drivers, asking:

[w]hat is he? He is Chinese, of course, but that explains nothing. He may belong to any one of the eight different varieties of Chinese which appear on the census list, except perhaps Straits-born, for Chinese born in the country are not given to such violent exertions as rikisha pulling. But whether your puller be Hokkien, Cantonese, Hainan, Kheh, Teo-Chiu, Kwong Hsi or " other Chinese " matters little to you, so it be that he can pull. (idem: 128)

One assumption in this statement is of course that the European traveller may but must not occupy him- or herself with gathering ethnographic details during encounters with local inhabitants. While such ‘scientific’ labour was expected from the original pioneers and explorers (Thompson 2011, Pratt 1992), tourists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century are leisurely licenced to ‘gentlemanly’ naturalise along their path, more for entertainment than for anything else.

More problematically, however, the quote transmits a second assumption. In a pseudo-rational, unethical and utterly racist way, the reader is reminded that the only thing that actually matters for the tourist is that a coolie can properly pull. This clearly is another example of dehumanizing discourse that reduces the value of local people to the output of their work efforts. Finally, the rickshaw puller is presented as a being that exists beyond the faculties of language and rationality. In a supposedly humorous tone, the traveller is told the following:

[r]unning you through the town at the breakneck speed or the slow crawl for which the differing physiques of him are infamously famous, he will pay little or no attention to your directions so long as you attempt to speak to him in any known tongue. But as the first and most necessary accomplishment of the traveller is to speak the universal language of grunts and signs, you will merely grunt at each corner you wish to turn and at the cross roads add a sign with your hand as an indication of the desired direction. (Harrison 1920: 128).

Essentially, the Chinese coolie is represented as a creature beyond signification. He is not meaningful in the European discourse in which he is represented (other than for his muscle-power) and he is not able to make himself heard or meaningful for his supposed lack of a declarative faculty. As such, he emerges as an individual that can neither speak nor meaningfully inhabit discourse along what (Butler 2004) named “terms of recognition”.

Similar to the Chinese coolie, who is located outside enunciative agency, the general Malayan is deprived of his symbolic control over history and future. Illustrative of this are the following extracts from a section named ‘Place Names’. Harrison (1920: 117) points out that “there are not more than five places with English names” in the Federated Malay States. Discussing local nomenclature in a casual style, he notes that indigenous names used to refer to some natural objects or lore. However, he argues that most of the history and knowledge about these original meanings “has long been lost amongst these gentle and indolent people, who live for the happiness of to-day, and recking not of the future, equally inquire not of the past” (idem: 120). As this suggests, the Malaysians are not only located outside (their own) history by a discourse that is imposed on them, they are also denied future control over it by the same declarative force.

Besides denying the Malaysians enunciative uplift, the guidebook features the typical dualism of negative othering in terms of portraying the Other as primitive vs. celebrating supposedly authentic and traditional ways of life. Concerning the negative aspect, a typical manners and customs description (Pratt 1992) – in a section on ‘Hospitals and Institutions’ – describes the

Malayan health system, reporting that most hospitals are owned by the state and have a fairly modern standard. The observer will note, so Harrison (1920: 121) that there is a high ring fence of wire around each hospital, which is “not to keep the patients in, for everyone is free to leave whenever he will, but is intended to prevent well-meaning friends from passing food through to the patients from outside” (ibid). The ‘reason’ for this, so the text, lies in the Malayan’s supposedly primitive understanding of medical treatment: “[t]he Oriental is still in that stage of thought on medical subjects which is found amongst the lower and more ignorant classes of Europe. He believes in food and plenty of it at all times. The very idea of dieting a patient is strange to him” (ibid). As should be observed, the use of the adverb ‘still’ is indicative of the negative representational agenda that is aimed at. While ‘still’ foregrounds that an allegedly deficient situation continues to exist in Malaya, it paves the way for the negative comparison ‘where else’ (amongst the lower and more ignorant classes in Europe) and the positive implicit evaluation ‘where not’ (in civilized Europe). This is clearly indicative of the guidebooks effort to preserve a positive image of Western progress combined with elitist ideas about social class. As already discussed, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century guidebook mainly catered for the bourgeois market and their task was to represent an imperial taxonomy combined with a narrative of corresponding subject-positions. This facilitated both charting the implementation of European rationalities within what was considered pre-modernist space and reifying the idea that the imperial project was essentially one of the white (upper-class) male (MacKenzie 2005: 34).

In contrast to the negative othering of local populations by means of the modern / premodern binary, we also find instances of admiration of the Malayan way of life. In a section on ‘Malay Food’, there is a description of local farming. Harrison (1920: 197) reports that many Malaysians grow their fruits and vegetables around their houses. With the advantage of the climate, one or the other fruit will thus always be in season and ready to harvest. He writes:

[e]verything is quite self-contained, quite senang, and a Malay family can live very healthily, happily and long without ever being indebted to any other race, except, as said above, for a little salt, for clothing, and for implements of iron. The natural increase of goats, fowls and cattle and the surplus of the rice and fruit harvest, when sold in the nearest Chinese village or large town, at once provide money to pay for these. Those familiar accompaniments of Western civilisation, want and misery, wretchedness and degradation, sodden profligacy, and alcoholised unhappiness do not exist for this Malay people. (Harrison 1920: 197)

Represented is a supposedly self-contained world of plenty and simplicity in which everybody can live happily and healthily. In this essentially pre-modern environment, there is no dependence on other 'races' other than on those necessitated by requirements of trade. On the other side, and in contrast to this world, there are positioned the 'familiar accompaniments of Western civilisation'. These are associated with 'misery', 'degradation' and 'alcoholised unhappiness'. Effectively, through this strategy, the reader assumes two subject positions. On the one hand, he is located in the flow of discourse of his own degrading West; and on the other hand, he is symbolically liberated from this discourse by being offered a romanticised vision of an alternative way of life. This is augmented by the function of the guidebook, namely to render a vision that can supposedly be experienced by any individual who becomes a tourist.

It is instructive to explore the historical context of this quote to better understand the cultural developments and concerns that overshadowed the time. In late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe, there was growing (academic) awareness about a supposed cultural decline. The increasing speed of industrialisation, the spreading of urbanisation and the concentration of the working-classes in particular town areas were considered by many as threats to manners and society. For instance, 19<sup>th</sup> century elitist Matthew Arnold saw working class neighbourhoods as "outposts of civilization in a dark continent of working-class barbarism" (Storey 2006: 15-16), which had to be civilized where they were in place (Arnold 1973: 39). Later in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, F.R. Leavis and the Leavisites were equally afraid of what they perceived as a looming cultural decline, identifying as threats in particular the popular press, advertising and the development of a supposedly addictive, standardized mass culture" (Storey 2006: 17-18). As a remedy, they either postulated traditional 'high culture' or what they termed as the 'organic community'. The latter shall serve as a reminder of an 'organic lifestyle' that supposedly existed once upon a time:

[w]hat we have lost is the organic community with the living culture it embodied. Folk songs, folk dances, Cotswold cottages and handicraft products are signs and expressions of something more: an art of life, a way of living, ordered and patterned, involving social arts, codes of intercourse and a responsive adjustment, growing out of immemorial experience, to the natural environment and the rhythm of the year. (Leavis & Thompson 1977: 1-2)

As (Storey 2006: 20) explains, the underlying assumption in the Leavisites' argument is that the quality of work and life has deteriorated through a shift from 'organic' conditions of production to the alienating experience of industrialization. To compensate for this loss,

essentially ‘meaningless’ pursuits of leisure grew in importance. These provided workers with a dull sense of bitterness rather than with actual recreation and compensation for the loss of their authentic lives, leading to the ‘drug habit’ of passive distractions. Thus, a meaningful recollection of life in the *organic community* would have offered a glimmer of hope.

In much tourism, the ‘organic community’ has not lost its influence. Following MacCannell (1999), it is precisely the desire for a meaningful recollection of ‘authentic’ life that drives and motivates tourism. Pointing out that modernization is connected to a sense of instability and inauthenticity, he argues that modernists essentially seek out other cultures to find a purer and simpler way of life (idem: 3). However, in Harrisons’ (1920) (early modern) guide-book, the laudatory mentioning of the Other’s simplicity is rather the exception than the rule. One plausible reason for this is that guidebooks of the time were almost entirely free of topics that implicitly or explicitly addressed issues of degeneration in imperial Europe. Facing the rapid industrialization of the USA and Germany, the British Empire was already in comparative decline. There was a fear that the vision of empire might eventually not work out as intended.

In the guidebook (and elsewhere), this fear was strategically repressed by a hegemony of content, extolling the empire’s supposed superiority in progress, virtues and victories (MacKenzie 2005: 35). Harrison (1920) is illustrative of this orientation as he uses a combination of the following three strategies: first, a negative othering of local populations; second, a tendency to value their past over their present and to portray them as decayed; third, some instances of positive appraisal of their supposedly simplistic and authentic ways of life. Taken together, this discursive constellation typifies what (Bhattacharyya 1997: 383) has termed “ambivalence towards modernity”. On the one hand, it offers a supposed escape for the modern from the modern; but on the other hand, it symbolically inscribes the potential failures of becoming modernized on the *Other*, rather than the *self*. That way, the represented culture is split in two, a pre-modern part and a modernizing part. The premodern part is then reified as authentic and the modernizing one is discursively halted for its alleged failure and corruption. Essentially, the own sense of failure is projected onto another culture and people, so that the narrative of Britain’s (Europe’s) own superiority can be maintained. This ties in with the discussion that is now to follow.

As established above, the archetype of the imperialist project was the educated white gentlemen abroad, with the stiff upper lip, a ‘good’ sense of humour and some license for ‘regulated’ pleasure. After the explorer, that person was mainly a tourist, so some relaxation of the strict moral code of the former was permissible. In a subsection on ‘Opium, Morphia and Alcohol’,

the visitor is encouraged to visit a licensed ‘Chandu Shop’, or opium den. To state upfront that this is not illegal, the traveller is assured that “[h]ere in Malaysia the trade is licensed by government, like the liquor trade” (Harrison 1920: 134). This is followed by the affirmative remark: “[y]ou need never be afraid to do so, for this little town is not one of the world’s Babylons, and you will not be drugged, robbed, murdered, or even insulted in an opium shop” (ibid). Inside the den, the tourist observer (notably not the participant, as which the traveller is never constructed in the text) will see hollow-cheeked Chinese in physical deterioration. These “mild-eyed melancholy lotos-eaters reckon little of [the tourist and...] do not alter their attitude” (ibid). As a legitimizing conclusion, the travellers are offered the following interpretation of the ‘sight’ they have just observed: “[t]he vast majority of smokers indulge to an extent that may properly be called moderate, and there has been no increase in the prevalence of the habit during the past decade (Harrison 1920: 136). This rather positive evaluation is supplemented by advice in a more personal tone, as if given by a more experienced friend: “[y]ou leave the opium den with the dominant idea in you that they are very harmless people, and that opium smoking is at least a self-contained vice” (ibid). As this shows, the traveller is essentially told what he or she should make of the experience, so that he or she can feel reassured that the spectacle was nothing but a ‘proper’ tourist sight.

Next, besides the inclusion of such light-minded excursions, the guidebook features romantic descriptions of landscapes, jungles and phenomena of nature. In a description of a ‘typical’ sunrise in Malaya, the tourist is reminded that these represent a constant struggle between the sun and the mist:

By nine o'clock on a bright morning [the moistures] are all gone —  
 “‘The charm dissolves apace;  
 And as the morning steals upon the night,  
 Melting the darkness—’  
 the mists get them up from their oozy beds and take strange shapes.  
 ‘Sometime we see a cloud that’s dragonish,  
 A vapour sometime like a bear or lion,  
 A lowered citadel, a pendent rock,  
 A forked mountain or blue promontory  
 With trees upon’t, that nod into the world  
 And mock our eyes with air-“” (Harrison 1920: 31)

This poetic celebration of nature alludes to the notion of paradise. Such emphasis on the romantic and picturesque largely expressed the popularisation of travel accounts during the period under review and cleverly produced destination images that kept with the intellectual fashion of the time. Besides, these images were encouraged by (colonial) administrations because they could be put to utilitarian ends, namely by inciting travel, spurring settlement in the colonies and communicating a positive attitude towards political expansion (Hall & Tucker 2004: 9). As this suggests from the discourse-historic perspective of this thesis, most strategies of representation in the guidebooks follow either implicitly or explicitly the totalizing logic of the imperial mindset. As such, the texts point towards the discourses I will discuss in the following subsection.

### 6.3.1 Discourses at Play

Following largely the heuristics applied to Henry Mouhot's (1864) work, this subsection begins with methodological considerations and subsequently summarizes the main discourses and discursive topics identified in Harrison (1920) and Murray (1904). Considering the historical context, I have argued that Harrison's and Murray's guidebooks were published at a time when large scale tourism to the region only began to develop. As any handbooks of the period, they function as rewarding sources that can offer unique insights into the negotiation of imperial thought in the increasingly touristy colony (MacKenzie 2005: 34). So, while earlier travel accounts to the greater region (such as Mouhot's) fabricated the 'big' ideas (Dritsas 2006) about mainland Southeast Asia, the succeeding guidebooks performed the discursive work to put these into touristic and economic practice.

Theoretical and methodological strategies from the previous chapter have been specifically adapted to suit a guidebook analysis. Accordingly, the findings of this chapter are put into the perspective of *census*, *maps* and *museum* (Anderson 2006). This is achieved by analysing the text according to Bhattacharyya's (1997) three main categories by which a guidebook turns travel discourse into a tourist practice: first, *selecting sights and activities*; second, providing *information* about them; and third, providing *the cognitive guidelines for the tourist-local relationship*. These three categories were combined with the *actors*, *action* and *argumentation* framework (KhoshraviNiK 2010) and integrated in Anderson's (2006) *census*, *maps* and *museum* model. The results are presented in the table at the end of this sub-section.



### 6.3.1.1. Census

*Census* refers to the representation of identities in a given context and is derived here from the analytical categories *actors*, *action*, *sights* and *activities*. In the colonial world, the overseas guidebook mainly addresses tourists, sportsmen and settlers. The *activities and sights* associated with them, such as big game shooting, golf, polo, museums and social clubs indicate that the intended audience / tourist actors are mainly from upper-class Europe or the United States. This is underscored by the strict emphasis on dress code communicated in the books. The representation of the subject position ‘tourist’ furthermore involves adventurous connotations such as big game shooting and motoring tours across the Malayan peninsula. The intended traveller can be bent for business or pleasure. There is a warning for non-qualified would-be migrants though. He or she is reminded that there is no place for European labourers in the Malay States since manual work is exclusively performed by a locally recruited workforce. Accordingly, only personnel with administrative experience are considered for employment. These individuals generally comprise the resident Western gentry and they can be met socialising in their Hill Stations or exclusive clubs. While invitations or recommendations are required for the tourist, the guidebook makes sufficiently clear that these can be obtained easily enough among fellow citizens of the imperial nation. The well-established colonial elite is resolutely distinguished from the indigenous population by the markers of race and education. The English public-school system, however, is gradually franchised to the Malayan elites. The British rationale behind this is that the country’s leading classes shall eventually become able to participate in the colonial administration in ways intended by the colonizers and conducive to their aims. Besides this more serious and class-conscious orientation of early Malayan tourism, there is also space for adventurous and hedonistic pursuits. There is included a chapter on motoring, there is advice on organizing hunting trips and the guide even encourages readers to visit an opium den. In the latter case, specific instructions are given in terms of how to interpret the experience and relate it to the socio-political conjuncture, which suggests that the imperial tourists had to understand their ‘adventures’ in a way that was thought to be appropriate by the publisher.

The Western traveller to Burma shares most of the attributes assigned to the Malayan tourist. He or she is an educated and mobile member of the European upper-middle to upper-classes, taking it more or less for granted that the whole country is potentially and practically at the foreign traveller’s disposal.

The Malaysians comprise the subject-position of the colonized and are deprived of an active voice. They are compared to little children and / or represented as indolent and gentle people that are supposedly happy in their state of peasant proprietorship and thus require 'proper' management by the British. The Malaysians are portrayed in a state of societal deterioration, where they allegedly lose the skills and morals of their forefathers and forget about the history and meanings of their place names. Effectively, this reifies the Malaysian as both a human who is less capable, traditional and authentic than his ancestors, and one who is not properly modern either. Malaysian workers are furthermore dehumanized by assessing their usefulness primarily in terms of the output they can deliver. Through totalizing descriptions (e.g. in relation to the field of medicine) the Malaysian is classified as a typical Oriental with a supposedly primitive state of mind that can only be found amongst the lowest and most ignorant classes in Europe. Notably, there is a reference to Europe, but Britain is not mentioned explicitly to include such classes. Finally, in rare instances, the purportedly traditional and simple lifestyle of the 'ever happy' Malaysians is praised and compared favourably to the darker sides of the modernist project in Europe (misery, degradation and alcohol). However, such appraisal of 'organic Otherness' can be regarded as an exception in the imperial guidebook since its focus is to celebrate the empire's supposed superiority over the 'pre-modern' (Oriental) Other and other nations around the world.

Like the Malaysians, the Burmese are represented as the colonized inferiors. Their country is not as 'developed' as the Malaysian States. Burmese are not given an actual voice in the guidebook and their history is essentially crafted from a European point of view. The people of Burma are described as cheerful with a careless temperament and an unhealthy disposition to cheroot smoking. In their country, the only artefact worthwhile seeing comprise Buddhist monasteries and pagodas.

Finally, the Chinese are represented as traders, proprietors of opium dens and rickshaw pullers. The latter are deprived of active speech. The coolie is portrayed as someone entirely outside language with his means of communication limited to signs and grunts. The tourists are basically free to command the coolies as they wish. The guidebook even incites travellers to ridicule them and find their performance grotesque. In a pseudo-scientific comment on ethnographic history, the author casually assures the reader that all that matters practically and historically is that a coolie can pull. This arguably alludes to the 'ethnographic' discoursing of early explorers like Mouhot. What was their supposed intellectual currency is now turned into semi-serious but racist tourist entertainment.

### 6.3.1.2. Maps

Maps refers to the spatial orderings of people and identities. The guidebook falls into a period where European powers reached their high of global mobility both overseas and overland. When drawing the cognitive map, Murray (1904) and Harrison (1920) follow a binary strategy of geographic ordering that discursively distinguishes between global centres and colonial peripheries. Britain, on the one hand, is represented as the metropolitan centre. It has made Burma part of its Eastern empire and protects and administers the Federated Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang, whereas it protects and advises the Other Malay States of Kedah, Kelantan, Tringganu, Johor and Perlis. Britain controls the system of commerce and provides education for local elites.

Malaya is represented as both, an isolated and rough place that is becoming increasingly smooth and a colonial 'Ergänzungsraum', which is ideally suited for travel and exploitation. The guide reports on valuable mineral deposits and the country's suitability for agriculture, remarking that people there are either connected to the tin industry or planting. In this respect, there is a full chapter on mining that provides detailed information for professional travellers. In terms of touristic pursuits, the country is portrayed as ideal. Unlike other places in the Orient, there is no unrest and the people are contented. Besides polo, golf, shopping and visits to colonial Hill Stations, the more daring sportsman finds ideal conditions for motoring trips and big game shooting. Essentially, Malaya is constructed as both, an ideal country for business and for pleasure.

Burma is geographically and politically part of the British empire and as such accessible for tourists. As a young British 'province' at the time of writing, it still lacks key tourist infrastructures such as communications and the quality of hotels. It is described as an Oriental place (more so than India) and associated with large rivers and dense forests. It is constructed as a fringe state of the Eastern Empire, just off the main imperial hub of India.

Finally, there is mentioning of the Chinese. In terms of geography, the Chinese are represented as a generally inferior migrant community that is scattered across the territories of the Malay States. The coolies come last in the hierarchy of people, which is underscored by foregrounding their diasporic position. Thus, the guidebook narrates a geography of imperial control. It sustains and is sustained by discourses of racial, cultural and economic differentiation which privilege the empire nation over those it symbolically and spatially controls.

### 6.3.1.3. Museum

*Museum* denotes the reification of narratives of identity and hierarchical ordering in terms of a historic dimension with the effect that alternative interpretations are discouraged. *Museum* is derived from the categories *argumentation, interpretation & guidelines for tourist / local relationship*.

To begin with the tourist, he or she is represented as an educated, upper class individual who is free to travel the world. The tourist originates from the imperial states of Europe or some other places in the 'West'. He or she is discursively constructed as a successor to the 'heroic' ancestors who charted out and conquered the 'dark places of the word'. Being allocated the role of tourist rather than explorer, the tourist is entitled to enjoy a combination of adventure, comfort and security – all of which the Malay States are reported to offer. Furthermore, the tourist is either bent for business or pleasure and assumes the top of the social hierarchy implemented by the British administration. He can tour the country in a carefree way or contribute to its colonial exploitation by joining the ranks of management. In both cases, he benefits from the material effects of the expansion of empire, celebrating his or her sense of possession and / or gauging commercial options.

Britain (the imperial nation) symbolizes the historic continuity of imperial success, signifying supposedly unique British values and traditions. Britain controls Burma and it administers and advises its territories in Malay, being firmly seated in the region after defeating the Dutch enemies. Infrastructure and commerce have been established by the British, and in their perspective, this has greatly helped both Burma and the Malayan states towards progress and development. This is supposedly resonated by the Malayan elites' acceptance of the English public-school system, which would finally enable them to support the colonial administration.

Common Malaysians, on the other side, are inferior to the British on racial and cultural grounds. They inhabit a country with rich mineral deposits and favourable conditions for agriculture; nevertheless, they are allegedly indolent, immature and pre-modern, neglecting their endowments vis-à-vis the supposedly more authentic traditions of their ancestors. Malaysians are portrayed as a society in (traditional) decline that is sufficiently happy in the state of peasant proprietorship. Generally, the Malayan past is evaluated more positively than the present. The supposed simplicity of (rural) Malayan life is even praised over the negative effects of industrialization in Europe. This combined strategy of honouring imaginations of an 'authentic' past vs. disparaging supposed societal decline in the present has two main discursive effects:

first, it offers a vision of escape from modernity to the modern tourist, and second, it denies the Malaysians access to indigenous paths of modernisation in that it associates them with a state of present decay. By declaring them unfit for modernity and associating them with the potentially negative effects of development, their ‘glory’ essentially lies in the past and their future is better taken care of by the British. Accordingly, this promotes the evaluation that it is only the Malaysians’ own interest to be governed by the British.

For the Burmese, the above assessment mostly applies. Their history is essentially presented as one that is determined by Britain. They have endured decades of unrest and trouble, which their incorporation into the British empire could eventually end. Accordingly, foreign rule is in their best interest too.

Finally, the Chinese are represented as diasporic traders and unskilled workers. They form the lower social end of the British taxonomy of indigenous groups. For the tourist, they are relevant for trade and service, which is the main purpose assigned to them in the guidebook. Accordingly, they are not given a voice and their value is determined by the output of their labour.

#### 6.3.1.4. Discourse Topics and Discourse Positions

Discourse topics refers to instances of speech and thought that are available and sayable in a specific historical and spatial context. Discourse positions denote the ideological stance these utterances occupy. Similar to Mouhot (1864), Murray (1904) and Harrison (1920) deploy discursive topics in the form of dichotomies. They include modern / pre-modern, rational / oriental, colonizer / colonized, industrious / indolent and educated / non-educated. Invariably, the more powerful part of these binaries is occupied by the tourist and those who belong to the empire, whereas the other part is assigned to local inhabitants. Furthermore, the tourist is given the freedom to enjoy domains such as sightseeing, hunting, shopping, socialising and motoring, whereas the indigenous is at his or her disposal, performing whatever service that is requested. The same goes for professional travellers and members of the colonial administration. Their subject position requires the management of local resources, trade and the labour force. The indigenous subject, on the other side, is discursively split in two. On the one hand, positively evaluated topics such as tradition, courage, authenticity and hunting skills are located in the past. On the other hand, negatively connotated topics such as the ‘oriental state of mind’, underdevelopment, non-productivity and societal decline are associated with the present and the future. The preferred evaluation of this symbolic juxtaposition is that western expansionism

will be beneficial to all parties involved. The tourist too will mainly profit from this, finding in colonial Malay excellent opportunities for business and leisure and finding some adventure off the not yet beaten track in Burma. As this suggests, the ideological stance of the text is imperialist, colonialist, Eurocentric and capitalist. Table 3 presents the discourse analysis conducted on Harrison's (1920) guidebook.

Table 3 - Results Imperial Guidebooks

<b>Actors</b>	<b>Action sights &amp; activities</b>	<b>Argumentation interpretations &amp; guidelines for tourist / local relationship</b>	<b>Census actors, action, sights &amp; activities</b>	<b>Maps</b>	<b>Museum argumentation, interpretations &amp; guidelines for tourist / local relationship</b>	<b>Discourse Topics</b>
<b>(Western) Tourist</b>	polo, golf, hunting shopping motoring clubs business	Colonial subject, wealthy & superior to locals, activities range from shooting to visiting opium shops	mobile traveller can witness greatness of empire abroad	Europe, British Empire, Malaya Burma	Sportsmen / lady bend for business or pleasure, freedom to command locals & take advantage of the country	freedom adventure sightseeing hedonism sport commerce
<b>British</b>	colonize manage teach protect trade planting	Governing Englishman manages naturally rich country with under-developed people	colonizer in charge of politics education protection & commerce	British Empire, Malaya Burma	The empire protects, advises and administers Malayan states for the sake of development and economic benefits	education development military victory trade agriculture
<b>Malaya / Malayan</b>	colonized indolent childish resources	Like children & in need of British management, good middlemen for all sorts of touristic pursuits	Indolent peasants who neglect their land; enjoy work under Brit. control	Malaya, British Empire	Malaya benefits from its economic integration and is ideal for tourism since it offers all amenities of the colonial world	integration resources development present decline authenticity tourist sights
<b>Burmese</b>	colonized happy careless resources pagodas	cheerful, with a carefree attitude and in need for development; unexplored tourist destination with great monasteries and pagodas	Pre-modern country under British control; gradual touristic opening	Burma, British Empire	Burma benefits from Britain, which brings it development and peace. The country is well suited for tourism even though not many tourists go there yet	simplicity tourist sights development frontier nation Empire
<b>Chinese (Coolie)</b>	labour street coolie opium grunts comic addicted	lowest class, can be used and abused as the tourist wishes, no voice / language (only grunts)	diasporic (opium) trader, poor but hard worker & rickshaw puller	Malay States	Diasporic trader and low skill worker who pulls tourist in the rickshaw and guarantees comical relief, not to be trusted	drugs trade strangeness inferiority

#### 6.4. Resulting Historical Discourses

Discourses construct ways of seeing the world and reading the past (Laderman 2002; Pritchard & Morgan 2001). Travel & exploration writing, in a more general sense, functions as a powerful depository of travel discourse (Thompson 2011). It is indicative of the specificity of social consciousness of a period (Pratt 1992) and offers insights into how the Western self relates itself to its perceived others (Pritchard 2000). The relation between travel writing and the hopes and aspirations of empire have extensively been researched by Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin (1995). Tourism as a successor of empire (MacKenzie 2005) relies much on the negotiation of images and their wider social, economic and political meaning and context, putting into operation power-relations that shape the world as we know it (Morgan & Pritchard 1998). As this implies, both exploration accounts and imperial guidebooks contributed significantly to the proliferation and naturalization of imperial ideology in terms of how to perceive the colonial world and how to interact with it. Accordingly, the historical corpus under review comprises Mouhot's (1864) seminal exploration account on Siam, Indochina and Laos vis-à-vis Murray's (1904) and Harrison's (1920) early guide books to the region. All three texts illustrate the functioning of the imperial mindset at the times and places under review. The European subject is considered mobile, educated and superior to the 'others' he or she might encounter at the fringes of empire. While initial contacts were made by early explorers like Mouhot, tourists were soon to follow. From a declarative point of view, destination images were created and gradually refined. Mouhot (1864) fabricated foundational ideas about the places he visited and discovered, and he made their 'otherness' comprehensible to his readers in recourse to discursive fields that were available at the time (such as economy, medicine, geography, politics, phrenology, raciology, continental philosophy, religion and mythology). Murray (1904) and Harrison (1920) cater for the emerging tourist market, helping along the supposed differentiation between Western self and Oriental other in a more practical sense.

In Mouhot (1864), the protagonist is a rational and masculine explorer with the legacy of discovery in the name of empire and science. He charts the land and he envisions European intervention as an economic opportunity and a moral responsibility, justifying it as a civilizing project. His homelands, France and England, are called upon to understand the urgency to occupy, enlighten and economically integrate parts of the region. Mouhot represents – much of what comprises today's mainland Southeast Asia – along an ethnic gradient or a hierarchy of civilisation. On top comes the port city of Bangkok and the Siamese upper classes, who have adopted many of the European ways and cooperate with Britain. The common Siamese are



relatively civilized. Siam is a country with rich natural deposits, but these are not adequately exploited. The people are oppressed and mismanaged by despotic leaders, but they are generally happy and benign. Occasionally they are described as spoilt children of nature. Cambodia comes next. Its main value lies in its past and some natural resources, but its current state is described as barbaric and decaying. Agency for Cambodia's own future is precluded since only European powers can affect its regeneration. Last come the fringe areas populated by the Stiens, Laotian and Annamites. These are either savage, corrupt or hostile. Accordingly, they must be civilized, and Europe has the moral obligation to do so. Finally, the Chinese are represented as diasporic community of illegitimate traders who are corrupt and mischievous. They threaten European interests of economic integration. For that reason, they must be pushed out.

Discursive topics that are involved in Mouhot's (*idem*) account are deployed through the rhetoric mechanism of the binary pair of civilized vs. not civilized: The 'Europe - traveller - civilization' complex is assigned topics such as civilization, discipline, religion, masculinity, rationality, ethics, technology, mobility, economy, trade and development. The 'uncivilized' Other is represented through topics that range from resources, heritage, past, superstition and simplicity to oppression, hostility, barbarism, conquest and occupation (see table 2). Associated discourse positions include imperialism, racism, modernism, capitalism, eurocentrism.

As guidebook writers, Murray (1904) and Harrison (1920) paint a brighter picture of the destination they represent. The traveller is a sportsman, a professional or a lady. He or she comes from a Western country and engages in leisure or commerce. Preferred activities include big game shooting, motoring, shopping, socialising at clubs or hill stations, sightseeing and the experience of the 'great' achievements of empire in the region. The tourist is from the upper social classes and essentially an imperial subject. As such he or she is licensed to enjoy and command all the colony has to offer, with the understanding that local inhabitants are at his permanent disposal. Britain is the great empire nation. It has won the region from its Dutch adversaries in conflict. Through the provision of infrastructure, technology, administration and protection, it has successfully integrated the Malay States into the world economy and brought prosperity and development to the native population. As Britain is gradually franchising its public-school system, the upper classes of Malay society will soon be able to assume administrative functions and support Britain's economic goals. The general Malayan population is likened to children and portrayed as indolent, simple and sufficiently happy to work under British supervision. Similar to Mouhot's description of Cambodia (1864), the Malayan's are represented as in a state of societal decay, with a past that was supposedly greater and more

authentic than their presents and their future. Finally, the portrayal of the Chinese is as unfavourable as in Mouhot's account. (Usually) Chinese are represented as members of the lowest classes, trading good, opium or working as coolies.

In terms of discourse topics and similar to Mouhot (1864), Murray (1904) and Harrison (1920) employ the strategy of the binary pair, invoking the image of a confrontation of different worlds. In terms of Britain, we find topics such as education, development, military victory, infrastructure, technology, commerce, administration. The Western tourist is topicalized by freedom, adventure, mobility, sightseeing, hedonism, sport and business. On the other side, the colonized 'Oriental' is represented through the topics resources, underdevelopment, traditional manners & customs, simplicity, indolence, great past and present decline. This is indicative of the following discourse positions: colonialist, orientalist, imperialist, modernist, hedonist and capitalist.

To consolidate the results of the historical corpus and to bring them into a form that is easier comparable to the contemporary format of the Lonely Planet guidebook and travel blogs, the multifaceted category of *actors* has been condensed to four more general discursive constructs: first, 'Traveller'; second, 'Imagined (Western) Source Communities'; third, 'Imagined Destination Communities'; and four, 'Other Imagined Destination Communities'. Furthermore, *census* and *maps* have been combined in one category and *argumentation* has been integrated into *museum*. Discourse topics remains a distinct category and is important for the interpretation of the modern texts in the next chapter. The results are presented in table 4.

*Table 4 - Condensed and Combined Historical Results*

<b><u>Census &amp; Maps</u></b> <b>Actors, actions, sights &amp; activities in spatial setting</b>	<b><u>Museum</u></b> <b>Historicity of argumentation offers interpretations &amp; guidelines for encounter with Otherness</b>	<b><u>Discourse Topics</u></b> <b>(the resulting ‘sayable’ at a time)</b>
<b><u>Explorer, tourist</u></b> Modern European bend for science, business or pleasure in the East	<b>Legacy of Western discovery and representation; Christian civilizing mission; Early tourists witness “greatness” of empire, morally supreme.</b>	Discipline, rationality, religion Freedom & adventure
<b><u>Imagined Western source community</u></b> European nations with a superior level of development and vital interest in resource-rich pre-modern countries in the East	<b>European expansion &amp; civilizing mission brings prosperity to the world; tourists are part of the imperial project and licensed to travel the world as they wish, profiting from colonial infrastructures</b>	Education Development Military victory Commerce, mining, agriculture Civilizing mission
<b><u>Imagined (Destination Communities)</u></b> <b>- European Control &amp; Aspiring</b> Great past vs. present decline, indolent and naïve peasants but happy to work under foreign control; helpful hosts (porters, scouts, servants)	<b>The political and commercial integration of pre-modern countries serves the moral duty of furthering civilization, commerce and education; European intervention preserves cultural heritage and improves local livelihoods</b>	Trade Resources Development Simplicity & authenticity Greater past than present
<b>- Uncivilized Fringes</b> Primitive savages (Stiens, Annamites) - China	<b>- The uncivilized fringes threaten the spirit of humanity and must be civilized</b> - Corrupt Chinese traders exploit local economy and threaten European interest in the region	- Primitivity, superstition, barbarism - Corruption, drugs

## 7. Travelling the Post Colony – Modern Sources and Conceptual Issues

This chapter takes its point of departure from the historical texts discussed in the previous section. I have argued that the accounts of Mouhot (1864), Murray (1904) and Harrison (1920) are illustrative of distinct stages of the colonial expansion into (mainland) Southeast Asia, with Mouhot claiming the legacy of an exploration account and Murray and Harrison providing the first guidebooks for a developing tourism market. All texts under survey have been considered comprehensive discursive depositories of their respective time-frames, offering insights into the development of Western understanding and colonial organisation of the region under survey.

The focus of this chapter shifts to modern texts. Analysing contemporary tourism discourse against the background of a (shared) colonial past can offer insights into how the ‘big ideas’ of early explorers and first tourists have found their way into modern and often region-specific tourist practices (Bhattacharyya 1997; Buzinde 2010; Edensor 2001; Hall & Tucker 2004).

Post-colonial theory (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1995) provides a theoretical framework for the interpretation of phenomena imbued with a discursive delineation between the West and the (post/neo?)-colonial rest. Specifically, it can provide an epistemologically critical perspective that interrogates the power differentials concerned vis-à-vis the (touristic) narratives and practices that naturalize them (Echtner & Prasad 2003: 666-667). In this respect, scholars have argued that colonial discourse has been particularly perseverant. Surviving past the dismantling of empires, it has continued to dominate strategies and policies of representation that keep alive the myth of distinction between a ‘Third’ and a ‘First’ World (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1995, Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2002; Bhattacharya 1997; Echtner & Prasad 2003; Hall & Tucker 2004; Mui Ling 2003).

Modern tourism plays a key role in signifying countries outside the ‘Global North’, as it is embedded in and reinforces (post)colonial relationships (Laderman 2002; Hall & Tucker 2004: 2). Former colonies from the Pacific Rim to Africa and South America have become favourite tourist destinations, combining an amalgamate of ‘exotic & erotic’ landscapes and people, colonial artefacts and lifestyles with selected histories and narratives of (indigenous) heritage (Craik 1994; Prideaux et al. 2004; Simmons 2004). In this respect and as early as in the 1970s, Matthew (1978) has explored the link between colonialism and tourism, comparing the modern tourist industry to a *plantation economy*, where metropolitan centres exert their influence on

the indigenous tourism market. The main characteristics of the neo-colonial leisure industry have already been identified in the 1960s. They include:

1. Local tourist infrastructures are owned by an overseas consortium;
2. Management and legal control are franchised to local elites;
3. No transparency regarding the flow of values (Best 1968, qtd. in Hall & Tucker 2004: 4).

In today's global tourism environment, these aspects manifest frequently in the operational structures of air services, hotels, transportation providers, tourist development projects and other assets in less developed countries that attract foreign interest and investment (Jaakson 2004). The consumer of these services is necessarily implicated too. As Cohen (1972: 82) sees it, "the easy-going tourist of our era might well complete the work of his predecessors, also travellers from the west—the conqueror and the colonialist", with Biddlecomb (1981:37 qtd. in Crick 1989: 324) asking "what if anything has changed in the West's way of relating to the third world", when colonialism and tourism (continue) to perpetuate the same models and thought patterns about seeing and dealing with the world.

Accordingly, tourism to developing countries is connected to the wider rationalities of modern imperialist governance, including *political*, *economic* and *cultural* forms (see also Galtung 1971 on the various manifestations of modern-day imperialism). For Van den Abbeele (1980), nobody in tourism is exempt from that scheme, with the individual tourist playing an ambiguous role. He argues that

institutionalist tourism establishes a double-edged imperialism since it involves just as much an imperialism over the foreign culture turned into a sight, an object of cultural consumption, as an imperialism over the tourist himself who in practicing tourism unwittingly contributes to the modern state's power both over its own and over foreign populations (idem: 1980:5).

From that perspective, the modern tourist assumes the role of an 'imperialist agent' of the second order, putting into practice older imperialist narratives of the first order, which have discursively turned the foreign culture into a sight / object of the gaze centuries ago. As already mentioned, Salazar (2012) has described such objectifying discourses as *tourism imaginaries*. What makes these narratives powerful is both, their socio-performative function as "socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with people's personal imaginings and are used as meaning-making and world-shaping devices" (idem: 864); and their reactionary

enunciative force in terms of propagating “historically inherited stereotypes that are based on the colonial myths and fantasies that form part of [such] an imaginary” (idem: 871). The term *tourist imaginary* is, as semantics suggest, more closely related to the realm of the hypothetical and the illusionary than it is to describing the actual circumstances of the countries concerned.

As Robert Britton (1979) has observed regarding the developing world, the tourist industry crafts its myths in a harmonic way. It only succeeds in portraying places as ‘desirable tropical paradises’ by means of backgrounding many of the harsher conditions that might locally prevail. For that reason, tourism is less about exploring the ‘other’ culture than satisfying once own precast ideas about the *Other* (Thurot & Thurot 1983). A solid body of research has corroborated this view. Ira Silver (1993), for instance, points out that most general travel literature tends to portray indigenous societies as more authentic and purer to avoid unsettling the hegemonic ideas about them in Western (tourism) discourse. Mohamed (1988) investigates the discursive construction of Morocco in travel brochures and shows that these media spin the *Oriental* narrative of an archaic and picturesque ‘real’ Morocco, which consequently silences actual developments. In this setting, Moroccans do not assume active positions in local life but are represented as *picturesque Others* whose sole purpose is to please the tourists’ gaze. Focusing on brochures too, Selwyn (1993) investigates tourist images of Southeast Asia. His study reveals how Southeast Asian journeys are often discursively staged as mythical quests, where the traveller (in the fashion of Peter Pan) starts out in the modern world and then transcends into a mystic and pre-modern world of temples and exotic nature. When there, he or she rejoices over the careless ease of the exploration.

Taking this as a point of departure, this thesis now turns towards the specificity of modern tourism discourses and explores the historical dimension of the phantasmatic images and myths that tourism has attached to the post-colonial setting under review. Leading into the forthcoming discussion, I open the chapter with a structural account of contemporary travel discourse and relate it specifically to Lonely Planet’s signifying economy of independent responsible travel. Then, two popular forms of contemporary tourism media are investigated: the guidebook (Lonely Planet Southeast Asia on a Shoestring) to chart out the discursive frame, and the travel blog (relevant entries on [travelblog.org](http://travelblog.org)) to trace individual interpretations of what the former symbolically purports. I open the chapter with a structural account of contemporary travel discourse and relate it specifically to Lonely Planet’s signifying economy of independent responsible travel.

## 7.1. Lonely Planet: From Ethical Adventures to the Discovery of the 'Real'

It is instructive to begin this section with a definition of 'modern' travel discourse as opposed to ideas from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In a comprehensive study of popular travel magazines, Simmons (2004) traces the discursive historicity of actors, practices and identities in modern-day tourism to better understand how they negotiate post-colonial power relations in terms of race, class and gender. Simmons demonstrates that Western travel practices and associated relations of power mainly imbricate and specifically appropriate the four discursive elements of *privilege*, *desire & longing*, and *sightseeing & fanciful play*. They are henceforth explained.

*Privilege* presumes that Western tourists occupy an advantaged position in terms of mobility, affluence and education. As 'superior subjects' they are entitled to roam the world and have access to both luxury and unspoilt nature (Simmons 2004: 46). Privilege is discursively supplemented by the notion of *desire & longing*. To be desirable in the touristic world, destinations are constructed in three dominant ways. First, they are represented as nirvanas of hedonism, escape and pleasure, where the tourist can wind down from what is perceived as the daily grind. Second, they are fashioned in terms of a nostalgia for a pre-modern past (e.g. an 'organic community' untainted by modernity). And third, desire is promoted by alluding to a problematic longing for a rediscovery of Western / colonial influence in places far away from the travellers' origin (idem: 47). On a performative plane, privilege and desire are turned into practice by means of *sightseeing & fanciful play*. For the tourist, sightseeing is presented as the only viable option to get to discover a destination. It relies on concepts of *Otherness* that render local inhabitants and places exotic and picturesque (Simmons 2004: 47-48, see also Urry 1990). Finally, the notion of *fanciful play* draws from all three prior categories, implying notions of freedom and escapism, effectively constructing the subject position of 'traveller' by means of offering the illusionary vision of breaking out of the constrictions of organized mass tourism (Simmons 2004: 48). In summary, much contemporary travel discourse communicates the idea of journeying from modernity's paradise-lost to a lost paradise overseas that is waiting to be explored and enjoyed.

### **Western privilege and moral obligations**

The conviction of *Western privilege* has been immortalised in Lonely Planet's decade-old motto: *Just Go!* (Friend 2005). As Debbie Lisle (2008: 155) explains, the *Just Go* slogan has been considered the most important advice printed on every Lonely Planet guidebook for more

than thirty years. First and foremost, it positioned LP travellers as autonomous decision makers. They should not be constrained by the pre-set itineraries of mass-tourism and package trips but rather plan their own adventures and travel-routes individually. This simplistic vision of (Western) freedom, privilege and entitlement is still one of the 'big' ideas in independent tourism; however, it has increasingly come under fire for its opinionated 'me first' attitude. This has led Lonely Planet to replace it with the corporate motto 'Attitude and Authority' (ibid). As a result, the roaming nomads of the Lonely Planet creed are now combined under a more comprehensive ethical vision of travel. With their profound aversion for mass tourism unchanged, they are convinced that independent travel has the power to overcome most global inequalities created by capitalism and the colonial heritage on which many of these are based. Accordingly, Lonely Planet seeks to alleviate the colonial echo of 'Third-World' tourism by creating a vision of responsible and independent travel and putting it under the larger umbrella of humanitarianism (Lisle 2008: 156-157). Summing this up aptly, Lisle (2008: 164) narrows down Lonely Planet's agenda to two main principles: first, there is one *right* way to travel (responsible and independent travel) and second, this is beneficial to everyone involved.

Accordingly, in Lonely Planet's, *Southeast Asia on a Shoestring* (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014) one finds a full section dedicated to responsible travel. The reader learns that

[i]n Southeast Asia, tourism brings blessings and curses. Small-scale tourism fosters family owned businesses and one-on-one cultural exchanges that broaden people's perspective and help preserve cultural and environmental assets. But tourism also puts environmental and cultural pressures on the host country. To ensure that your trip is a gift, not a burden, mind your manners, be green, learn everything you can about the host country and be a conscientious consumer. (idem: 930)

Upfront, the potential effects of tourism to the region are described as either good or bad. This binary is subsequently articulated with two categories of tourism. The first one is advocated by Lonely Planet and presented as the 'gold standard', favouring small-scale family business and one-on-one cultural exchange. Notably, this 'good' tourism can allegedly contribute to the preservation of cultural and environmental assets. Next, there is an unspecific reference to other 'tourism', which is blamed for supposedly achieving the opposite. The traveller is ensured that his or her trip can be a 'gift' to the host culture, if he or she observes the ethical vision Lonely Planet supplies.

Further on into the guide book's feature on responsible travel, the reader is reminded that deforestation, environmental degradation of coastal ecosystems, and habitat loss for wildlife



comprise the most pressing environmental concerns the region faces by now. Blamed for this is a local “culture of corruption” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 931) that is said to be widespread in the entire region. As a ‘solution’, tourists are given the following advice:

[l]ive like a local: opt for a fan instead of an air-con room, shower with cold water instead of hot. [...] Volunteer with a local conservation or animal-welfare group [...] Dispose of your rubbish in a proper receptacle, even if the locals don’t. (ibid)

While it should be acknowledged that the quote communicates sensible environmental advice to foreign travellers in general terms, one should also note the binary that is constructed between hosts and guests. On the host-side, we have the ‘local’, who is envisioned to have neither air conditioning nor hot water. On the other side, the guest is encouraged to refrain from precisely these amenities, which implies that he or she would consider them as normal in his or her respective culture. This, however, is based on the problematic assumption that the tourist’s home culture is necessarily more advanced and modern than that of the people visited and described. So, from this perspective, the encouragement to ‘live like a local’ is effectively an utterance grounded in the ideologic residuals of colonial self-perception of European superiority. This is further underscored by the next two sentences in the quote. Travellers are reminded that to be responsible will also mean to *not* act like a local (e.g. disposing of rubbish in proper receptacle, even if the locals don’t), which foregrounds the dichotomy prudent Westerner vs. rash *Other*. The reader is effectively constructed as a moral role-model, similar to the explorers and travel pioneers of the Victorian era. Furthermore, there is encouragement to volunteer for local projects, which implies the tourists’ expertise and skills (for which no requirements are specified) would automatically suffice to sort out local matters. The (ideo)logical implication here – namely that Western knowledge can be universally employed for good – arguably resonates what Pratt (1992) has termed ‘planetary consciousness’ of the eighteenth century. Science was to dominate the world knowledge-wise so that it could be exploited and controlled.

In the guidebook, the related *discourse topic* of ‘foreign-led development’ emerges through the theme of *volunteering*. For instance, readers are advised to consider volunteering as an English teacher and reminded that “education is an important tool for economic success” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 932). By locating ‘education’ outside the domestic, the local is deprived of academic and intellectual capacity, which privileges the evaluation that ‘helpless’ local actors can only overcome their supposedly inadequate situation by means of foreign intervention. Like the heroic explorer in the self-aggrandizing colonial fantasy of the ‘civilizing

project', the tourist is constructed as a messenger of rationalist discourse, acting as a humanitarian 'conquistador' who implants a Western vision of progress into the societies and countries he 'benevolently' journeys through.

Investigating the potential intricacies and inconsistencies of Lonely Planet's responsible agenda, Lisle (2008) demonstrates how the publisher's humanitarian vision hiddenly resuscitates a neo-colonial agenda in many cases. In her article, Lisle (idem) draws from the insights of Marianne Gronemeyer (1992), who argues that under the disguise of humanitarianism and development aid, the expansionist logic of the colonial project has essentially remained the same over the last centuries, undergoing a notable transmutation from a colonialism that overtly *takes* and suppresses to one that allegedly *helps and coaches* countries towards outside-determined development goals. For this form of neo-colonialism, Gronemeyer (ibid) coined the term 'elegant power'.

In the Lonely Planet universe, much of this logic is reproduced. The ethical vision of the guidebook necessarily depends on its *Other* to be relevant. There is always a privileged 'helper' (the responsible traveller) and a supposedly helpless or victimized party towards whom the efforts of the travelling benefactor can be directed (Lisle 2008). The privilege of the visitor to help does not require its opposite's consent, it is directed from the outside and limited by the choices offered by responsible tourism providers (Caruana & Crane 2011: 1509). Accordingly, Lonely Planet readers are encouraged to "[p]atronise businesses with ecotourism models (designated with a sustainable icon in this book)" (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 931). As this suggests, the book claims a de-facto monopoly in terms of deciding which activities and initiatives its readership shall support.

In this respect, it should be pointed out that Lonely Planet's responsible agenda is sometimes heavily contradicted by self-opinionated travel advice. At this point, it is instructive to sum up LP's responsible tourism credo: "[s]taying longer, travelling further and avoiding package tours is obvious advice. For those on shorter stays, consider spending money in local markets and in restaurants and shops that assist disadvantaged locals" (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 79). Besides, Lonely Planet encourages readers to visit the website [www.responsible-travel.org](http://www.responsible-travel.org) (idem: 930) to learn "how to be a 'better' tourist regarding environmental issues, begging and bargaining, as well as ethical holidays" (ibid). With the guidebook being so overtly on record on tourism ethics, it is somewhat striking that quite un-ethical tips are given on several occasions. One main issue involves drug advice. While the hint to 'be subtle when partaking in

a little spliff’ may sound rather harmless (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 367), the reader is briefed on more serious matters too:

be wary of buying ‘cocaine’. Most of what is sold as coke, particularly in Phnom Penh, is actually pure heroin and far stronger than any smack found on the streets back home. Bang that up your hooter and you’ll be doing impressions of Uma Thurman in Pulp Fiction. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 145)

The phrase ‘be wary of buying cocaine’ logically implies that readers will actually buy cocaine. There are warned that they would be offered horrifically potent heroin instead and reminded that this far stronger than any substances marketed back home. Again, this privileges the assumption that readers buy and consume drugs at home. As a semi-comical closure, a reference to a Hollywood movie is made, where the female protagonist almost suffers a fatal heart attack from drug abuse.

On the same page, there is also advice on what to do when caught by the police for a drug-related offense. The reader is cautioned that there have been reports of police set-ups, involving planted drugs, and advised to “pay [officers] off before more police get involved at the local station, as the price will only rise when there are more officials to pay off” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 145). Effectively, the tourist is encouraged to bribe the police to get away with an offence he or she might or might not have committed. The problematic message that is thus sent is at least two-fold. Notwithstanding that corruption is a reality around the globe, the universal tone of the advice reifies the idea of a corrupt foreign country in which the (Western) privilege of paying off the locals can solve problems that would otherwise and elsewhere see one in jail.

In relation to this and equally contradictory to ethical travel, the guidebook’s *budget guide* extols how the superior financial means of the intended readership would go a long way in Southeast Asia. The reader is told that:

Western currencies enjoy a favourable exchange rate in Southeast Asia, giving you greater purchasing power. The cost of living is also cheaper in Southeast Asia and shoestringers can skimp their way to a budget of about US\$30 to US\$40 a day. This covers the basics: food, shelter, local transport and a few beers. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 41)

As this suggests, one main reason to visit the region is superior Western buying power over local currencies and life standards. Notably, the ‘covered basics’ for 30 US\$ solely focus on the

traveller's needs and assure that he or she has a pleasant time. This arguably contradicts Lonely Planet's further above outlined vision of empowering local communities.

### **The preferred Lonely Planet travellers and their quest for 'authenticity'**

To better understand why the Lonely Planet project obviously finds it difficult to turn its vision of supposedly ethical adventure travel on a shoestring into practice, it is helpful to investigate the sociology of the preferred Lonely Planet reader. This figure embodies the supposedly *independent traveller*, who shuns organized tourism but rather relies on the trusted guidebook and its proven advice (see Caruana & Crane 2011; Fürsich 2002; Lisle 2008). In this regard, the modern Lonely Planet traveller still can partly be integrated in Cohen's (1972) seminal category of 'noninstitutionalized' Western tourists, which he further divides into *explorers* and *drifters*. Both types arrange their trips alone and avoid mass tourism; both focus on 'unique' experiences and try to exit the socio-cultural bubble of their origin, immersing themselves in the host societies so much and as long as they like (idem: 168-169). Nowadays, the independent LP traveller is more typically personified by the *backpacker* (and more recently, the *flashpacker*). He or she is often well educated, comes from either a Western country or from some of the more affluent periphery states (e.g. South Korea, Japan, etc.), embarks on extended vacations, opposes mass tourism facilities and seeks to discover the 'real' and 'authentic' aspects of the host culture (Fürsich 2002: 211).

In the Lonely Planet world, the alleged authenticity of 'real' travel is not only associated with visiting specific destinations and people, but also with a travelling-lifestyle that involves an escape from civilization and consumption, combined with a refocusing on the basic needs of life (ibid). The main desire is to experience a supposedly adventurous and more authentic way of life; and, if possible, make some positive impact while on the go. This is illustrated by the following quote, in which Lonely Planet editor China Williams explains why she loves Southeast Asia:

[p]eople have always time for a chat in Southeast Asia. Be it a political brainstorm or personal expose, this is a region where people will eclipse the common tourist attractions. All of my memories involve wandering around some city, making friends. I was the pied piper of a parade of kids in Penang, adopted by a bored civil servant in Sumatra, invited to share a picnic in Thailand and escorted around town by a Hanoi uni student. I've posed for a million pictures with strangers, mostly as a prop, but sometimes we were temporary besties. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 7)

The quote begins with the assertion that people in Southeast Asia always have time for a chat and that their ‘character’ will even outshine common tourist attractions. Besides sustaining the racist 19<sup>th</sup> century myth that people from the ‘Global South’ are not as productively employed in the economy as those from the ‘Global North’, the extract effectively sends readers the message that they are always welcome. This reifies the people of the region as responsive objects to the tourist gaze and implies that they will stand ready and ‘interact’ with the tourists at their will and request. This active / passive divide is underscored by a mentioning of the editor’s personal memories, which involve wandering around some unspecified city, making unspecified friends. From this point onwards, the experience of the authorial ‘I’ is foregrounded. From the first-person perspective, local actors are interwoven in a narrative of adventure travel, in which they have no actual voice but assume the discursive roles of touristic supporters. As this suggests, the tourist is free to enjoy the entirety of the region, with local people being generally supportive and happy. Finally, the extract assumes a generally positive impact of tourism, implying that posing for pictures with (local) strangers is all that is required to strike a friendship on the go. In a nutshell, the overall message offers a vision of touristic freedom and license projected onto a supposedly welcoming world of simplicity and authentic fascination. Logically and literally, by means of the guidebook the reader holds in hands, this world becomes accessible, promising the traveller to get away from modernity’s complexities and the associated regimes of the ‘daily grind’.

As Caruana & Crane (2011: 1506) point out in this respect, the idea of ‘getting away from it all’ by means of a guidebook is naturally flawed. First, by shaping the traveller’s knowledge about the destination, the guidebook narrows down the tourist’s options as an independent decision maker and second, it is through the guidebook’s advice that the tourists learn what they should appreciate and what not. The result of this process materialises in the form of a *desire* to go and see particular things over others vis-à-vis the delusionary self-conviction of having planned the perfect holiday as an independent decision maker.

### **The performative dimension of sightseeing & fanciful play**

Finally, desire is put into meaningful tourist action through the practices of *sightseeing* and the liberating notion of *fanciful play*. Tourist practice has a performative function in that it is not a mere reflection of tourist discourse but the very act that puts such discourse into practice (Adler 1989). Following Edensor (2011), tourism can be regarded as a *normalising discourse* turned into specifically scripted and diversely habituated performances that (re)produce tourist space and practice through their constant reiteration. From the viewpoint of the performativity

approach, the perceived reality of tourism is therefore a series of performative acts, a ‘doing of things’ that constitute a reality-in-becoming again and yet again (Cohen & Cohen 2012). Sightseeing is the main draw here.

The following extract is indicative of how desire is selectively created in the Lonely Planet guidebook and how it is turned into specific tourist practice by scripting and appropriating the geographies and actors involved. The guidebook includes a section named ‘The Best of Southeast Asia’, which shall help readers “hit the highlights” of the region (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 30). The advertised itineraries have a duration of between six and eight weeks and cater for relatively affluent and mobile travellers with enough time and funds at their disposal. The ‘menu’ offers a list of activities and sights that are considered must-sees and must-dos. The guidebook virtually takes the travellers by their hands upon arrival and leads them through a world of exotic wonders and thrill:

[m]ost international airlines fly to Bangkok, a chaotic but fantastic city filled with fun and food. Take the direct bus to Siem Reap to see Angkor’s magnificent temples. Bus to charming Phnom Penh to study Cambodia’s tragic no-so-distant past and on to Vietnam’s bustling Ho Chi Minh City, a study in resiliency. Work your way north in adorable Hoi An, for bespoke fashions and atmospheric strolls, and on to the antique streets of Hanoi. Air-lift out of Vietnam to laidback Luang Prabang, Laos world heritage city filled with temples and French colonial fragments, and then fly to chic Chiang Mai for elephant and hill-tribe adventures, Thai cooking courses and loads of temple-spotting. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 30)

Notably, the journey starts at home, where the traveller boards an airplane heading to Bangkok. Regarding Bangkok, the guidebook even stresses the supposed link to the home culture of Western travellers by suggesting elsewhere that “it will be a needed dose of civilization after weeks of dusty backroads” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 13). The proposed journey then progresses geographically onwards to the temples of Angkor but back in time to a world of ancient civilizations. As (Echtner & Prasad 2003: 669) argue, this is a common strategy of representing a larger *Oriental* country cluster, where travellers are channelled through a main gateway city and encouraged to explore the supposed authenticity of an exotic and pre-modern world. Logically, this implies that the ‘essence’ of a destination is located in the past and thus outside local people’s agency and development. To amplify this ancient passivity, most sites and places are put into perspective by the heavy usage of adjectives and / or short evaluative descriptions (e.g. magnificent temples, atmospheric strolls, laidback Luang Prabang). By this

strategy, the reader is not only advised what to see but also educated what to think (see Bhattacharya 1997). What results is an image of Southeast Asia that is mythical and exiting, combining modernity with secret escapes, nature, indigenous historical artefacts and colonial flair. This is topped with Hill Tribe adventures at the fringes, elephant riding and culinary art.

To summarize the above, I have argued that Lonely Planet communicates a modern travel discourse that hinges on the freedom to travel independently and supposedly responsibly, mixed with a desire for exotic landscapes, historical artefacts and supposedly authentic ways of life. While tourists are reminded to tread lightly and assured that putting into practice Lonely Planet's ethical vision is mutually beneficial to hosts and guest, there is somewhat contradictory travel advice that foregrounds hedonistic pleasures (e.g. drug taking) and Western superiority (e.g. the tourist buying power). In a nutshell, much of this contemporary travel discourse communicates the idea of journeying from modernity's paradise-lost to a lost paradise overseas that one is entitled to explore and to enjoy. This is aptly summarized by the general description of Southeast Asia given by the guidebook:

[f]riendly and intense, historic and devout, Southeast Asia is a warm embrace, from its sun-kissed beaches and steamy jungles to its modern cities and sleepy villages (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 6).

As this suggest, Lonely Planet's Southeast Asia is constructed as a multifaceted travelling 'Eldorado' that welcomes travellers with a wide array of interests and predispositions. From a discursive point of view, this involves the geographical reification of three modern tourism myths.

## 7.2. Three Contemporary Tourism Myths in Lonely Planet

In their extensive work on 'Third World' tourism marketing, Echtner (2002) and Echtner & Prasad (2003) have convincingly demonstrated how essentializing discourse (tourism myths) shape *tourism imaginaries* in key advertising materials. Investigating 115 brochures from 12 developing tourism countries, they have illustrated how three distinct *country clusters* overlappingly relate to three distinct *tourism myths*. Echtner (2002) focuses on the representation of attractions, actors, action and atmosphere. Her analysis of this inventory suggests that Third World tourism marketing divides countries in three main categories that cater for different touristic activities and experiences. First, the *Oriental cluster*, second, the *Sea-sand cluster*, and third, the *Frontier cluster*. Echtner & Prasad (2003) have taken this as point of departure to illustrate how these clusters are discursively (re)produced through three

recurring tourism myths that reify them as natural and desirable. These include, the *myth of the unchanged* (mostly Oriental country cluster), *myth of the unrestrained* (mostly Sea-sand cluster), and *myth of the uncivilized* (mainly frontier cluster).

In the following, the relationship between these myths and country clusters is related to the representation of mainland Southeast Asia in the Lonely Planet guidebook under review as well as in the blogs. It will facilitate the understanding of how old, imperial belief systems may have transformed into modern tourist practice. Furthermore, by this strategy, modern tourism discourse can be integrated in the *census, maps and museum* model (Anderson 2006) and KhosraviNiK's (2010) *actors, actions and argumentation* framework. Since the imagined destination community of mainland Southeast Asia has become more diverse than in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a particular tourism myth can legitimize particular ideas about one part of the destination, whereas another one can assign credibility to discursive practice in an entirely different way.

### 7.2.1. Oriental Cluster – Myth of the Unchanged

The *Oriental country cluster* has already been introduced above. It relies on the imaginary of a journey of discovery to an opulent past, inviting tourists to travel back in time and discover ancient artefacts and exotic cultures (Echtner 2002: 430). This also ties in with the representation of indigenous people in the Oriental cluster. The Oriental people are frequently depicted as smiling bystanders that largely function as (silent) props to underscore the tourist's exotic experience (ibid). In Lonely Planet's section on 'People and Culture' this is reflected. Southeast Asia is represented as

[a] culturally rich region that encompasses most of the world's religions with a special tropical flair. Colourful artistic traditions date back to a period of regional empires, when kings and sultans were cultural patrons. Akin to the region's personality, each country's cultural chest is generously shared with curious outsiders. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 922)

As I have argued in a previous publication (Bergmeister 2015: 204-205), the image of 'colourful artistic impressions' from a bygone time of kings and sultans, who allegedly doubled as patrons of the arts, privileges the partial message that Southeast Asia's cultural richness is essentially located in a bygone time. Furthermore, by linking relics to the local population (those who generously share them) and reifying both as *the* 'regions personality', tourists are assured that their forays of discovery will be appreciated and welcomed.



On a semiotic plane, the Oriental country cluster largely, but not exclusively, relates to the *myth of the unchanged*. Discourse strategically, the Oriental destination is represented as extravagant and exotic. It is entrenched in an aura of past opulence and threatening decline, which implies that one should discover it before it is forever lost. People and culture are characterised by a happy-peasant simplicity, essentially functioning as silent props to the landscapes and artefacts the tourist is instructed to admire. Problematically, it is through such contrasting depictions of past opulence and present simplicity that the myth of the unchanged necessarily implies local idleness, decadence and deterioration (Echtner & Prasad 2003: 669). Furthermore,

the myth of the unchanged reinforces several binary relationships between the First and Third World. These binaries include changed/unchanged, modern/ancient, and advancing/decaying. As a result, there are necessary and significant silences surrounding any aspects of change, modernity and advancement. (idem: 671)

Frequently, the general character of Southeast Asia is represented as timeless, historic and devout. According to the introductory chapter of the guidebook, Southeast Asia “bathes in spirituality” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 6). This lexical choice foregrounds a pre-modern and pre-rationalistic theme. To that effect, life in the entire region is presented as simplistic and largely determined by religious practice:

[w]ith the dawn, pots of rice come to boil and religious supplications waft from earth to sky. Barefoot monks collect food alms from the faithful; the call to worship bellows from mosques summoning devotees to prayer; family altars are tended like thirsty house plants. And the region’s monuments were built for the divine, from Angkor’s heaven incarnate to Bagan’s temples. (ibid)

The described scenery of barefoot monks and ubiquitous worship alludes to a living museum of traditions, relics and monuments that is by now somehow out of touch with the ‘real’ world. On the same page, however, this is contrasted by the remark that Southeast Asia is nonetheless “a marriage between the old and the new” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 6). Interestingly though, that ‘marriage’ appears to be one that has not been consummated yet. The guidebook states that “Southeast Asian cities grabbed on to the future long before it became the present” (ibid), which logically implies that modernity is still confined to metropolitan centres, whereas the rest of the region remains locked in a ‘present’ that is essentially not up to date. There is Ho Chi Minh City, which “is in a race to the top of the commercial heap” (ibid) contrasted with “rickety wooden villages filled with yawning dogs and napping water buffaloes, where the agricultural clock measures out the seasons” (ibid). In this juxtaposition, the notion of desirable

modernity is clearly limited to that of a Western capitalist perspective, since being ‘in a race to the top of the commercial heap’ is taken as an indicator for ‘good’ modern development.

Besides the portrayal of an ‘authentic’ past vis-à-vis selected positive modern developments in the region, negative side-effects of modernisation are emphasized. Readers are warned that while “the region is moving towards a more urban and industrialized way of life” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 923), “Southeast Asian cities, except for Singapore, are studies in disorder and dysfunction, and are fascinating places for their faults” (ibid). The double-binary that is constructed here articulates problematic vs. unproblematic with the historic dimension of past vs. present, casting a poor light on indigenous development (Bergmeister 2015: 205).

In this regard, the greater enunciative enterprise of the guidebook (and any promotional material) is at stake. Since the main occupation of such texts is to ‘sell’ a world that is sufficiently unchanged to correspond to visitors’ desires for authenticity, they cannot easily abandon the narrative of an unspoilt and pre-modern world. As the next quote proves, the imagination of the present state of affairs is effectively encouraged via recourse to an idealised fictional past. When in Mandalay (Myanmar), the reader is reminded that “[f]or those who haven’t been – and that includes *The Road to Mandalay* author Rudyard Kipling – the mention of ‘Mandalay’ typically conjures up images of Asia at its most traditional and timeless” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 509). The text continues:

[t]he reality is instead a sprawling city where dusty streets teem with traffic and there’s a construction project on every block. In spite of this, it’s impossible not to be impressed by the golden Buddha of Mahamuni Paya, or the sunset view across the flat landscape from stupa-studded Mandalay Hill. (ibid)

As can be seen, the ‘authentic’ Asia is that of Kipling and the past. The sprawling city of today (where dusty streets teem with traffic) is not quite in-sync with this romantic vision of a ‘most traditional and timeless’ Asia. However, the reader is assured that he or she will still be sufficiently impressed by the remnants of history framed by the timeless spectacle of sunset. This privileges the evaluation that local transformation is an interruption to a supposed mythical continuity imposed by foreign discourse.

Finally, in the Lonely Planet world, the living museum of an ‘unchanged’ Southeast Asia is not limited to ancient artefacts and relics. Throughout the book and throughout the countries (with the exception of Thailand), there is an emphasis on the presentation of the region’s colonial heritage and their supposed comforts tourists can still enjoy. Luang Prabang (Laos) is described

as “a traveller’s dream, with affordable, top-class cuisine and French colonial buildings” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 330). Besides being assigned the overtly positive label ‘traveller’s dream’, Luang Prabang’s colonial heritage is praised as a real asset for today’s visitors since [t]he stamp of the French lives on as freshly baked croissants send out aromas from Gallic-style cafes” (ibid). As a result, the French colonial legacy in Indochina is not only played down but actively reified as a positive foundation of modern-day Laos.

Likewise, Penang (Malaysia) is presented as perfect result of European expansion. The small island is referred to as “‘Pearl of Orient’ [that] conjures romantic images of trishaws pedalling past Chinese shophouses, blue joss smoke and a sting of chilli in the air” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 405). Upon this invitation on a mystic Oriental journey, the reader learns that “Penang was the waterway between Asia’s two halves and the outlet to the markets of Europe and the middle East” (ibid). Essentially, this means that Penang occupied a strategic location between the two Asian parts of the British Empire, that is India and the Malayan States. Interestingly though, this is cleverly masked by the choice of the expression ‘Asia’s two halves’, which is geographically correct but ignores the constellations of foreign powers that were involved in its making. Consequently, the utterance makes Asia appear to be on equal foot with Europe, supposedly benefiting from having access to the markets of Europe and the Middle East.

On the next page, this implicit understanding is reified as true. The reader learns that “[t]oday the culture of this region, forged over decades of colonialism, commercial activity and hosting tourists, is one of Malaysia’s most tolerant, cosmopolitan and exiting – particularly when it comes to food” (idem: 406). The message that is thus being sent is that colonialism was a cosmopolitan force that ‘helped’ indigenous societies to become tolerant and successful, laying the foundation for its supposedly logical successors, international commerce and tourism. Arguably, this clearly resonates the capitalist / imperialist logic that I have identified in the historical texts in the previous chapter.

In summary, the myth of the unchanged promotes an Oriental country cluster that is mystic, pre-modern and essentially located in the past. The tourist is constructed as an explorer, who is invited to discover the remains of an opulent past within a present he is licensed to reject or to ignore. What counts as worthy past is determined by the guidebook. As discussed, relicts of ancient kingdoms and colonial artefacts feature prominently. Both are essentially reified as the countries’ main characteristics and must-sees. Accordingly, modernization is rather evaluated as intrusion than transformation.

### 7.2.2. Sand and Sea Cluster – Myth of the Unrestrained

The second country cluster is based on the theme of *sand and sea*, offering carefree indulgence in a tropical paradise populated by amiable and welcoming hosts. The tourist is either addressed with active or passive labels, being invited to take part in sportive activities (e.g. snorkelling) or just to enjoy sunbathing and to relax (Echtner 2002: 431). Numerous examples can be traced in the portrayal of coastal and insular Thailand. First and foremost, there is the Andaman Coast. The guidebook states:

[t]he Andaman is Thailand's turquoise coast, that place on a travel to paradise poster that makes you want to leave your job and live in flip flops. White Beaches, cathedral-like limestone cliffs, neon corals and hundreds of jungle-covered isles extend down the Andaman Sea from the border of Myanmar to Malaysia. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 457)

As this illustrates, representation of this destination cluster largely focuses on beach life and other leisurely pursuits, so that more rugged landscapes, that would naturally not fit into the carefree world that is constructed, are discursively tamed by adjectival phrases such as 'cathedral-like limestones cliffs' (see also Echtner 2002: 431).

Discourse-wise, sand and sea destinations relate to the *myth of the unrestrained*, meaning that the tourist is taken to a place of natural beauty, where nature is never harsh and where there are fully functional infrastructures and submissive and happy local hosts. The main difference to the *myth of the unchanged* is that tourists do not primarily enter a world of ancient discovery but a present paradise they can temporarily take in possession (Echtner & Prasad 2003: 672). Thus, "the myth of the unchanged perpetuates the idea of colonial exploration, [whereas] the myth of the unrestrained, in many ways, presents a romanticised version of colonial exploitation" (ibid). Perpetuating the colonial fantasies of coming, seeing and conquering, both myths face the problem of diminishing credibility in the post-colonial world. With the myths being credibly attached to destinations, an increase of visitors will ensue. By this, the mythical quality of the destination will start to decline so that neither the thrilling vision of exploration nor the more comfortable idea of playful occupation can credibly be communicated any longer. After all, who fancies visiting a 'paradise' which is overcrowded?

In Lonely Planet, the island of Ko Pha-Ngan (Thailand) serves as a prime example for this conundrum. It is well-known for its Full Moon parties and represented as a tropical paradise with "[s]waying coconut trees, brooding mountains, ribbons of purple water" (Williams,

Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 746). However, readers are warned that they would not be alone on the island, which, however, should not really matter, since “nobody really wants a really lonely planet” (ibid). Besides the comical aside that hints at the impossibility of finding unspoilt ‘paradise’ by means of consulting the pages of one of the world’s most popular guidebooks (especially when travelling to a well-known ‘party island’), the extract also intimates that the vision of unrestrained (neo-colonial?) exploitation has gone beyond control as it has discursively materialized in the Lonely Planet community’s collective dedication to the pursuit of hedonist ambitions.

In the Lonely Planet world, nemesis logically appears as the anti-climax of paradise. Thus, the observation that “Ko Pha-Ngan’s Full Moon parties transform the island into a college campus of drunken abandon” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 746) can be interpreted as a cathartic attempt without perlocutionary effect. Simply put, it can be read as an implicit warning that is uttered but never heard, because if it actually was heard, the travelling revellers would seize to pour in and turn the island into what even Lonely Planet dismisses as ‘drunken abandon’.

Clearly this is not the case. Given the island’s notorious reputation in the backpacking scene, the publishers of LP have opted to include a section named “The 10 Commandments of Full Moon Fun” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 750), likely hinting at the right-of-passage character of the Full Moon parties. The guidebook states:

[o]n the eve of every full moon, tens of thousands of bodies converge on the kerosene-soaked sands of Sunrise Beach for an epic trance-a-thon. Though people come for fun, having a good time is a serious business. There is a 100B entrance fee that is charged to help with beach clean-up and much-needed security. Visitors need to secure their valuables and be vigilante about their physical safety. Thefts, assaults and injuries are common. (ibid)

This is supplemented by the following 10 commandments:

- Thou shalt arrive in Hat Rin at least three days early to nail down accommodation.
- Thou shalt double-check the party dates as sometimes they are rescheduled.
- Thou shalt secure valuables, especially when staying in budget bungalows.
- Thou shalt savour some delicious fried fare in chicken Corner before the revelry begins.
- Thou shalt wear protective shoes, unless ye want a tetanus shot.
- Thou shalt cover thyself with swirling patterns of neon body paint.
- Thou shalt visit Mellow Mountain or The Rock for killer views of the heathens below.

- Thou shalt not sample the drug buffet, nor shalt thou swim in the ocean under the influence.
- Thou shalt stay in a group or more people, especially if thou art a woman.
- Thou shalt party until the sun comes up and have a great time. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 750)

As the above warning and extensive list of precautions imply, there is a ‘dangerous’ side to the Full Moon party in Ko Pha Ngan, so that having a ‘good time’ might actually turn out to be an illusion, if Lonely Planet’s ‘survival guide’ is not followed. Portrayed is a nocturnal world of liminal existence, where theft, drugs and rape lurk behind a façade of ‘paradise’ that is ultimately deferred until sunrise. The tourist no longer wears standard clothes but is decorated with ‘swirling patterns of neon body paint’.

Given the tribal connotations of ‘heathens’ covered in paint, the hedonist vision of Full Moon transforms the island into a liminal zone or Augean (1995) ‘non-place’, where the tourist is beyond known cultural navigation and can participate in all sorts of otherwise forbidden pursuits (Diken & Laustsen 2004). Moreover, the extravaganza goes beyond just taking possession of what is perceived as ‘paradise’ in a playful manner. In a more complex way, it relies on a context-specific construction of pre-modern ‘frontier-space’ through a discourse of freedom that promotes the hedonist vision of escape and recreation. In that sense, “freedom for the hedonist is primarily presented as an escape from the ennui of normal life, providing echoes of the common representation of the vacation as liberation from work and other forms of oppression” (Caruana & Crane 2011: 1503). Specifically, with regard to Ko Pha-Ngan, this is underscored by the ‘ritual’ and essentially ‘uncivilized’ character of the Full Moon spectacle.

Geographically and chronologically, the party de-territorializes the travellers, dislocating them in space and time. In full body-paint, in an ecstatic state and at a tropical beach, revellers are licensed to re-invent themselves beyond the constraints of the otherwise thinkable. As they indulge in alcohol and sound, they escape the discursive realm they normally occupy, taking temporary possession of a liminal space envisioned as evanescent merger of audaciousness, exoticism and mythical past. By undergoing ‘primitive’ rituals and braving the dangers associated with them, they performatively bring into existence a neo-colonial frontier that hails the promise of ‘liberating’ participants from the social constraints of ‘civilization’. This setting offers the supposedly playful experience of going ‘beyond’ civilization under the ambient light of the tropical moon (just as explorers like Mouhot (1864) have prided themselves to do).

Interpreted that way, the Full Moon festivals can be seen as reincarnations of colonial fantasies that reify the tropics as a pre-modern playing ground for Western self-fashioning. In his influential reading of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the Nigerian critic Achebe (2016) points out the dehumanizing consequences of such performative spatialisation in an African context. What results is

Africa as setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril. Can nobody see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the breakup of one petty European mind? But that is not even the point. The real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world. (Achebe 2016: 21)

As this points out, the shaping and staging of post-colonial subject positions (really in any geographical context) strongly draws from the discursive archives of the colonial world. As in the stories of Morton Stanley and Henry Mouhot, the protagonists master a world of danger and uncertainty. In the process, the European self is matched against its savage Other to prove itself and to prevail. Necessarily, such encounters are set at and beyond the (imperial) frontiers of civilization because otherwise the assumed binary model 'civilized vs. uncivilized' could not be upheld (Mills 1991; Pratt 1992). Since our globalized world cannot credibly sustain the vision of grand frontiers of civilization any longer, supposed dividing lines are discursively re-enacted in travel writing (see Thompson 2011: 5) and, more generally, in tourist imaginaries that impose an imagined past on other people, countries and cultures (Salazar 2012: 869-870).

Regarding the full moon party, the very same mechanism of discursive re-enactment is put into practice – with a notable difference though. Unlike the foraying colonial explorers, the partygoers stay mostly among themselves. Encountered are no 'savage' natives, wild animals or unforgiving jungles, but rather masses of tourists, beach bars with cooperative local providers and cheap liquor. Since this setting logically contradicts the notion of a civilization frontier, the age-long travel myth of going 'uncivilized' is staged almost exclusively within the travelling community. Without meaningful reference to 'natives', the backpackers distribute all necessary roles for their pre-modern adventures among themselves. The sphere of mayhem that is thus discursively produced reminds of a Morton Stanley exploring the Congo River. There are figures covered in war paint, dancing and ravaging the shore. And indeed, much of the danger is real. It is warned that drug-fuelled swimmers may drown, women may be raped if they don't

stay in bigger groups, and that valuables will be stolen (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 750). Devoid of meaningfully ‘savage’ local subjectivities, the ‘modernists’ stage their own pre-modern world to experience the mythical and challenging voyage they desire. Escaping from civilization thus requires becoming uncivilized temporarily, so that the imperialist vision of ‘civilized vs. uncivilized’ can be theatrically projected onto the geography of Ko Pha-Ngan.

From dusk till dawn, a neo-colonial action plot appropriates the island as backdrop for Western fantasies, eliminating its indigenous residents as human factors. What results is a new discourse that combines instant hedonist gratification with heroic connotations. The reader is ultimately sent the message that the lavish tropical paradise he or she visits is totally accessible, pleasant and, if desired, potentially dangerous at the same time. This finally brings me to the country cluster of the frontier and the myth of the uncivilized.

### 7.2.3. Frontier Cluster – Myth of the Uncivilized.

The third country cluster provides the ultimate frontier experience. It promises adventurous expeditions through uncharted countries, pristine nature and dangerous environments. Hosts are frequently depicted as tribal people with an unpredictable attitude, so that the traveller can never be certain if they are friendly or potentially hostile. Places are characterized by simplicity and a lack of sophisticated (wo)man-made features, which transmits the message that ‘civilization’ does not exist in the frontier world (Echtner 2002: 431). At the level of myth, this is reflected by the assumptions that the tourist neither journeys back to the past (as in the Oriental case) or enjoys the luxuries and pleasant climes of tropical resorts (as with the sea and sand destination). Rather, the traveller relocates to a ‘land at the limit’, where he or she embarks on a penetrating journey of discovery to encounter untamed nature and natives (Echtner & Prasad 2003: 675). For example, in the chapter on Eastern Cambodia, Lonely Planet states:

[i]f it is a walk on the wild side that fires your imagination, then the northeast is calling. It’s home to rare forest elephants and fresh-water dolphins, and peppering the area are thundering waterfalls, crater lakes and meandering rivers. Trekking, biking, kayaking and elephant adventures are all beginning to take off. The rolling hills and lush forests provide a home to many ethnic minority groups. Do the maths, it all adds up to an amazing experience. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 127)

This aptly sums up the scope of experience at the frontier: wild people, wild nature and wild animals. To begin with the people, Lonely Planet carefully distinguishes between the dominant cultures of Southeast Asia and some “minority groups that remain in isolated pockets or cultural



islands” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 922). For instance, in the case of Thailand, the general populace is described as “laid-back, good-natured people whose legendary hospitality has earned their country a permanent place on the global travel map” (idem: 778). Beyond that ‘global travel map’, a world of pre-modern outsiders is sketched. The reader learns that “[h]igh up in the mountains that run through Myanmar, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, a diverse mix of minority groups, collectively referred to as hill tribes, maintain ancient customs, speak their own tribal languages and wear traditional clothing” (idem: 922). These groups can be visited as part of organized trekking tours (many of which are recommended throughout the guidebook), and tourists are reminded to follow a particular village etiquette. This includes to “ask permission before taking photographs, especially at private moments inside dwellings” (idem 779). While this advice reiterates widely shared ideas about respectful behaviour, the reader is given a reason for why he or she should refrain from using the camera without asking, which points towards a more problematic undertone. The ‘reason’ that is given is that “[m]any traditional belief systems view photography with suspicion” (ibid). Elsewhere in the guidebook, this is further explained. Readers are advised that “[s]ome hill tribes believe the camera will capture their spirit” (idem: 134). This promotes the idea of a supposedly pre-modern state of mind of the village hosts.

Assuming fundamental differences between host and guests, travellers are advised to “[a]void cultivating a tradition of begging” in the villages (which assumes that such tradition equally exists in all villages), they are warned that they should always “[s]mile at villagers even if they stare at you” and are reminded that neither alcohol nor drugs should be taken together with the villagers because “altered states sometimes lead to culture clashes” (all Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 779). Tourists are further reminded not to make individual gifts since they “create jealousy and expectations” and are warned not to “buy village treasures, such as altar pieces or totems, or the clothes or jewellery they are wearing” (ibid). Partly, the text resembles a ‘user manual’ or an ethnographic instruction on how the tourists should interact with their local hosts vis-à-vis the socio-cultural assumptions they should make. Bhattacharya (1997) has identified such mediation of the tourist-local relationship as a core function of the post-colonial guidebook and pointed out that it’s binary logic can dangerously reify imperialist points of view.

The guidebook’s following passage is illustrative of this. In a section offering advice on hill-tribe trekking in Chiang Mai, Thailand, readers learn that a trekking group’s social dynamic is something to be aware about and that camaraderie among hikers will be one of the unexpected highlights of any trek: “[f]or this reason [they are reminded], try to team up with travellers you

enjoy hanging out with as you'll spend more time with them than the elephants or the hill-tribe villagers" (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 689). As this suggests, tourists are sent the message that they will necessarily have to stay in their bubble and merely gaze upon the exotic attractions, which happen to include animals and local people. On the next page, the guidebook becomes more specific why tourists should rather stick with their fellow travellers and hired tourist guides. They are warned:

[d]on't expect any meaningful connections with the hill-tribe villagers; in most cases, the trekking tours stay in rudimentary lodging outside the village and travellers have reported that the village hosts were most unwelcoming. Instead a trek is a good time to get to know Thailand through the Thai guide, who is usually young and charismatic (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 690).

In a classic Orientalist fashion (Said 1978), the villagers are depicted as exotic and untamed Others, who exist without a (meaningful) voice and are thus always in need of representation and interpretation from the outside. The tourists are encouraged to visit hill-tribe villages; however, they are warned that the locals may be unhappy about what they may perceive as intrusive presence of outsiders. Nevertheless, the guidebook reassures the travellers that appropriate steps are taken by the tour companies, so that visitors are sufficiently protected from unwanted local sentiments. Readers are advised to make the best of their time, socialize with fellow Western travellers and take the opportunity to learn about (mainstream!) Thailand by a 'young and charismatic' Thai guide in the middle of a marginalized group's environment.

This discursive silencing of the Hill Tribe communities in Lonely Planet deserve further critical attention. To 'explore' the Hill Tribes, local guides, so called middlemen (Bhattacharyya (1997: 383), are required. In a section on responsible trekking in Cambodia, tourists are explained why this is the case: these guides "speak the local dialects, understand tribal taboos and can secure permission to visit cemeteries that are off-limits to Khmer guides. Their intimate knowledge of the forest is another major asset" (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 134). The local guide is constructed as a competent cultural intermediary and valuable tourist asset. The guide is thus committed to the traveller in terms of facilitating his or her entry into the pre-modern world. This is underscored in a further description of the indigenous guides and the remote villagers they represent:

[t]hey have neither a phone number nor an email address so you'll just have to rock up. They can take you on an exclusive tour [...]. You can observe weavers and basket makers in action, learn about animist traditions and eat a traditional indigenous meal

of bamboo-steamed fish, fresh vegetables, ‘minority’ rice, and of course, rice wine (ibid).

The indigenous guides are addressed through the pronoun ‘they’. This unspecific reference depersonalizes the individual and reduces the guide to the function of his role, namely to present to the tourist gaze a particular set of attractions and traditions that the guidebook labels as authentic and worth observing. Besides, the statement that the guides have neither telephone nor e-mail further underscores the assumed difference between hosts and guest. Effectively, it locates both the local guides and their communities outside communication.

It should be pointed out that recent research on hill tribe communities in northern Thailand points towards a different reality. As Trupp (2011: 273) points out, especially young villagers strive to learn foreign languages to connect with tourists in meaningful ways. This is reflected in the following quote:

I like to learn language very much, I like to learn many languages. Now I learn English and French language in high school, this is a last year for me too. So I am very happy and so glad to see tourist coming to visit our village. (ibid)

As the quote suggests, there is interest in cultural exchange from the side of the villagers and schooling is available too. From that point of view, Lonely Planet’s construction of an essentially pre-modern and speech-less Hill Tribe population is a totalizing myth. Structurally, it relates to a colonial logic that automatically claims for itself the privilege of representation.

From a post-colonial studies standpoint, the control over communication is one of the most powerful strategies of empire. As Tzvetan Todorov (1984) demonstrated convincingly in his major work *The Conquest of America*, any enduring form of colonial dominance rather depends on the full seizure of and control over means of communication rather than on mere military submission and coercion. Most notably, Cortez’s successful campaign against the Aztecs involved the implementation of a system of writing through which the authority of Spanish control, their several (sub) functions, their mechanisms and their future agenda could be codified, organised and shared. In the extracts discussed above, we can trace such a strategy of seizure of communication in various instances. The natives cannot represent themselves by means of a language shared with tourists, so local guides are required to interpret their systems of communication, including spirituality, totems and traditions. This further relates to Todorov’s (1984) case. As Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin (2002: 78) explain,

Todorov's contention is that, as a result, when Aztec and Spanish culture met they constituted nothing less than two entirely incommensurable forms of communication. Aztec communication is between man and the world, because knowledge always proceeds from a reality which is already fixed, ordered, and given. On the other hand, European communication [...] is between man and man.

While the notion of a conversation between 'man and world' implies a fixed knowledge continuum that is neutral and dependent on pre-existent reality, a conversation between 'man and man' appropriates reality in the form of the sign and shapes it purposefully to suit its discursive agenda. While Spanish conquest entailed the enunciative necessity of a discourse of conquest and an agenda for local submission, the Aztecs neither had words nor concepts for the Spaniards' sinister design. The Spanish arrival was outside the Aztec realm of signification, it was not meaningfully dangerous until the danger was felt (ibid). What this shall illustrate is that Lonely Planet's agenda of representing the Hill Tribes as essentially speechless follows a similar strategy of controlling communication. As the indigenous guide interprets from 'man and world' (the Hill Tribes' realm of spirituality and belief systems) to 'man to man' discourse, the world of the 'silent Other' is actively shaped and controlled. The scope of this reality-shaping is entirely beyond the reach of the local communities but rather dictated by the comments and assessments communicated through the guidebook.

In a somewhat disconcerting way, this is illustrated by the following example. The guidebook states that in the Ratanakiri area (Cambodia), "multiday forest treks taking in minority villages are the big draw" (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 134). Thus, the minority village experience is presented as one item on the travel agenda among several others. Tourists are encouraged to further enjoy elephant riding and visits to the nearby waterfall. Another highlight is identified as 'The Real Gibbon Experience', where "[y]ou stay at least one night in the jungle sleeping in hammocks or in a community-based homestay, rising well before dawn to spend time with the gibbons" (idem: 135). As this suggests, the Hill Tribe communities are integrated as attractions into an adventurous sightseeing programme that includes typical elements of the frontier cluster such as wild animals and untamed nature.

In summary, the frontier cluster and associated myth of the uncivilized emerges prominently in Lonely Planet's sections on Hill Tribe tourism. The remote communities are essentially constructed as pre-modern and outside discourse in terms of not being able to meaningfully represent themselves. They are depicted as parts of an adverse mountainous environment that is populated by wild animals and they are thus reified as human props to the frontier experience.

Finally, as the analysis of Lonely Planet's representation of mainland Southeast Asia has so far suggested, there is no clear-cut delineation between country clusters and associated myths. Depending on the itineraries and interests of visitors, countries and destinations will usually offer a diverse 'menu' to attract as many tourists as possible. The following section will thus explore the country specific construction of Southeast Asia with regard to the three clusters and myths I have introduced, pointing out how the actual cultural and natural diversity of mainland Southeast Asia is strategically appropriated and 'authenticated' by narratives that have existed over centuries and been transformed into modern tourist discourse. For each country, Lonely Planet (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014) and blog entries (travelblog.org) are scrutinized.

### 7.3. Countries at a Glance: Tracing Modern Tourism Myths in Lonely Planet and Blogs

To begin this section, it is instructive to explore why Southeast Asia appears to have a less clear-cut country-specific distinction of travel myths than other regions in the world (e.g. sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean; see Echtner & Prasad (2003)). One reason for this has been the specificity of the regions' discursive construction from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Unlike colonial Africa, the 'East' was appropriated as the remnant of an earlier and superior civilization that eventually succumbed to decay. Unlike African populations, who were perceived as entirely primitive and outside meaningful history, European scholars of Sanskrit and Chinese Studies admired the level of sophistication Oriental philosophy and artwork had achieved. Whereas Africa exclusively represented the uncivilized Other beyond the white norm, the Orient provided a way to further assert the self-image of European superiority by offering the vision to absorb and even surpass its 'ancient' achievements (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 2002: 157).

Arguably, many of these assumptions can be traced in imaginaries of international tourism. Frontier destinations like Kenya or Namibia focus more prominently on nature, wildlife and adventure, while tropical islands like Fiji or Jamaica typically promise sea, sand and entertainment (Echtner & Prasad 2003: 664). In their summary of patterns of representation from Third World tourism marketing, Echtner & Prasad (2003: 664-669) further demonstrate that some countries assume a 'crossover' position, offering more than just one 'big idea' to tourists. Costa Rica, for example, 'softens' its frontier atmosphere with occasional sea and sand additions; and Thailand combines the omnipresent oriental myth (temples, religious sites) with hedonist attractions (beaches, females and smiles).

In the remainder of this section, I discuss Lonely Planet's depiction of the countries of mainland Southeast Asia under review (Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia & Singapore, and Myanmar) and determine the specificity of their cultural construction in terms of dominant myths and/or their cross-over status. In a first step, the guidebook's section "Countries at a Glance" (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 46-48) is analysed. It lists all countries of the region, including catchwords and short text blocks that entice and advice travellers why they should come and what they should expect. Then, the entire chapter on each country is examined, including the subsections on history, the country today, and people and culture. In a second step, blog entries from travelblog.org are discussed. Entries are chosen for discursive relevance (e.g. they relate to one or more of the three tourisms myths under survey), their exemplary character (they point at a particular slogan character / discursive direction that emerges in other entries too), and third, they illuminate how a particular tourism myth is negotiate (e.g. sustained or challenged). For a detailed discussion of selection criteria and methods see pages 66-69 of this thesis.

### 7.3.1.a. Thailand (LP)

In Lonely Planet, Thailand is presented as an ideal place to experience culture/history, beaches and food (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 46). Answering the question why tourists should go, the guidebook states:

Lustrous Thailand radiates a hospitality that makes it one of the most accessible destinations on earth. Its natural landscape is part of the allure: the blonde beaches are lapped at by cerulean seas while the northern mountains cascade into the misty horizon. In between are emerald coloured rice fields and busy, prosperous cities build around sacred temples. It is a bountiful land where the markets are piled with pyramids of colourful fruits and the rot khen (vendor cart) is an integral piece of a city's infrastructure. You'll suffer few travelling hardships, save for a few pushy touts, in this land of comfort and convenience. Bangkok reigns as an Asian superstar, Chiang Mai excels in liveability and the tropical islands are up all night to party. It is relatively cheap to hop around by plane and the kingdom provides a gateway to everywhere in the region. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 643)

As the extract suggests, a trip to Thailand promises the quintessential experience of Southeast Asia by combining (almost) all three travel myths discussed above in one country. The myth of the unrestrained is underscored in terms of hospitable hosts and 'tropical islands up all night to

party', accompanied by a sexualized tone that celebrates a 'lustrous' country with 'blonde beaches' and 'cerulean seas'. Such gendering of space privileges the male, heterosexual gaze combined with the masculine fantasy of taking possession. As such, conquering the feminine landscape plays out the patriarchal and colonial fantasy of taking control of foreign dominions (Pritchard & Morgan 2000). This is further underscored by representing Thailand as a 'bountiful land where the markets are piled with pyramids of colourful fruits'. Literally, the reader is invited to exploit and enjoy, being assured that there are 'few travelling hardships'. Next, the myth of the unchanged materializes through 'prosperous cities build around ancient temples', which transmits the message that the past is still in the centre of modern affairs. Modernity thus becomes a by-product that offers advantages to the tourist (cheap connecting flights), while it does not actually tarnish the supposedly authentic Oriental experience. Finally, the frontier experience is hinted at by mentioning the 'northern mountains cascad[ing] into the misty horizon'. While Thailand is clearly not represented as a typical frontier country, the glimpse of primordial nature offers a discursive overture to the more 'adventurous' Hill Tribe treks advertised by the guidebook on subsequent pages.

In terms of negotiating the potential inconsistency between modernity and tradition, Lonely Planet opts for the strategy to present Bangkok as an 'Asian superstar' or elsewhere in the book as a "needed dose of civilization" (idem: 13). This resonates Mouhot's (1864) 19<sup>th</sup> century discourse in terms of presenting the major trading port of Bangkok as just that. From there, further journeying becomes possible. Further recommended destinations in the country comprise Central Thailand, Northern Thailand, Western Thailand, North-eastern Thailand and the Eastern and Southern Coasts.

*Central Thailand* is represented as a cultural heartland that "birthed the country's history-shaping kingdoms of Ayutthaya and Sukhothai and crafted the culture and language that defines the mainstream Thai identity" (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 671). The region's main city, Ayutthaya is described as "[t]he fabled city, the fallen city [which] has crowned the pinnacle of ancient Thai history and defined the country's ascendancy to regional domination" (ibid). The reader then learns that much of Ayutthaya's bygone glory is still observable if some modern 'distractions' are ignored: "[t]oday, the ruins of the old city survive with many battle scars amid a modern provincial town, a slight distraction for imagining what Ayutthaya once was" (ibid). As this suggests, modern development is interpreted negatively, and the 'authentic' Thailand is one of the past. This resonates the myth of the unchanged, which dominates the

representation of Central Thailand in the guidebook. Suggested activities and sights (e.g. temples, historical parks and museums) mirror this orientation.

Next, *Northern Thailand* is described as “a mountainous region loved for its lush forests and unique cultural and natural attractions” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 685). Of particular interest to the visitor is the regional capital “Chiang Mai, which retains its connections to the past” and is described as a “cultural darling” with the historic temples being its main attraction (ibid). Furthermore, Chiang Mai is described as an ideal access point to other main attractions of the north, including Hill Tribe treks, national parks and the Golden Triangle. While the city itself relates to the myth of the unchanged, its more adventurous surroundings tie in with the frontier notion. With regard to the Golden Triangle, the reader is told that the northern region has become infamous for its opium production and warned that even though the illicit business has been stamped out in Thailand, the area is still potentially dangerous because of “the porous border and the lawless areas of the neighbouring countries [that] have switched production to the next generation’s drug of choice: methamphetamine and, to a lesser extent, heroin” (idem: 702). Pertaining to Lonely Planet’s strategy of depicting the whole of Thailand as a safe country, the frontier myth is mitigated in the next sentence. The reader learns that “much of this illicit activity is invisible to the average visitor and the region’s heyday as the leading opium producer is now marketed as a tourist attraction” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 685). This effectively communicates the message that the frontier can be explored in a safe way. Proposed activities and sights in northern Thailand include temples and museums; However, underscoring the alleged frontier character of the region, more adventurous options such a Thai Boxing Camp, quad biking, abseiling, trekking, white-water rafting, elephant trekking and Hill Tribe tours are advertised too (idem: 685-690).

The representation of *Western Thailand* equally caters for the frontier myth. The border region to Myanmar is described in the following way:

[t]all rugged mountains rise up from the central plains to meet Thailand’s western border with Myanmar: Though the distances from population centres are minor, much of the region remains remote and undeveloped with an undercurrent of border intrigue. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 711)

A main feature of the ‘fringe’ area is its mountainous character. Even though population centres are not far away, the region is described as remote and undeveloped with a tendency for unrest. Besides, one of the main tourist attractions advertised is the Death Railway Bridge in Kanchanaburi which was made famous by the movie *The Bridge Over the River Kwai*. Tying



in with the adventurous notion of Western Thailand, tourists are reminded that “[d]uring the last week of November and first week of December a nightly sound-and-light show marks the Allied attack on the Death Railway in 1945” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 711). At that time, Thailand was occupied by the Japanese who forced prisoners of war to build the bridge and railway as part of their supply route to Burma / Myanmar. Arguably, the invitation to experience the re-enactment of an Allied attack underscores the notion of an experience ‘at the limit’ that is thrilling but nevertheless entirely safe. Further suggested activities and sights include the Allied War Cemetery, the WWII museum, Hell Fire Pass Memorial, Erawan National Park and a Hill Tribe Learning Centre (idem: 711-715).

The introduction of *North-eastern Thailand* plays with a combination of the myth of the unchanged combined with modified frontier discourse. The reader learns that “Thailand’s other regions have natural beauty, but the northeast has soul” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 717). ‘Having soul’ then translates to the population and its supposed simplicity. The text states that the northeast is Thailand’s most rural and agricultural part, so that “[t]he main event in this undervisited region is the people, friendly folks, who might invite you over to share their picnic under a shaded tree” (ibid). In this allegedly premodern world, “[l]ocal festivals display the region’s unique fusion of cultures, and magnificent mini-Angkor Wats were left behind by the Khmer empire” (idem: 718). Besides emphasising the remnants of a mythical past, the region is also presented as marginal and undeveloped. It is pointed out that “[t]here is little in the way of guesthouse culture and few English speakers. Indeed, this is the end of the tourist trail and the beginning of the Thailand trail” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 718).

As this implies, when the tourist sets out to explore this non-touristy region, he or she must also negotiate the margins of the tourist experience. These porous borders are not so much located at the frontier of ‘all’ civilization but rather at the end of the tourist bubble and the beginning of local every-day life / the beginning of the Thailand trail. Activities suggested by Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. (2014: 718-725) include monuments, pottery manufacturers, Khao Yai National Park, Phanom Rung Historical Park, which is located on the top of an extinct volcano, an Elephant Study Centre with volunteer options, craft villages and several local festivals.

The *Eastern and Southern Coasts* of Thailand mainly relate to the myth of the unrestrained. Essentially, their representation in Lonely Planet typifies the sea-sand country cluster. Besides the examples I have already discussed when introducing the hedonist theme (see pages 177-178 of this dissertation), places are typically described as stunning “beach jaunts” or “beachy backyards” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 730). So-called “all-purpose beach resorts”

(idem 741) like Ko Samui are depicted as overly touristy because of the great influx of package tourists, while other place like the east-coast beaches of Ko Pha-Ngan are labelled Robinson Crusoe retreats that will elicit sedate smiles, offering yoga and relaxation (idem: 749). For those who prefer even more remote island destinations, Lonely Planet recommends Ang Thong National Park:

[t]he 40-some jagged jungle islands of Ang Thong National Park stretch across the cerulean sea like a shattered emerald necklace – each piece a virgin realm featuring sheer limestone cliffs, hidden lagoons and perfect peach-coloured sands. These dream-inducing islets inspired Alex Garland’s cult classic *The Beach*, about dope-dabbling backpackers. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 744)

The extract exemplifies how the myth of the unrestrained articulates emotions with geography and action. The idea is held out in prospect that travellers will be able to ‘synchronize’ fantasy and experience in this ‘virgin realm’. To guarantee that fictional reality and landscape indeed match, there is a reference to a popular movie. It is thus assumed that readers are familiar with the film and that its supposedly collective impact on the backpacking community might offer enough hints about what to expect. Essential, the natural park is thus reified as a mere backdrop of the ‘sea and sand’ mindset communicated in the book.

Furthermore, unrestrained tourism involves activities such as partying, diving and snorkelling. Ko Tao is accordingly described as “*the* place to lose your scuba virginity” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 751), with the choice of language hinting at the overly sexualized connotations that usually characterize the sea and sand cluster. In a semi-comical way, this is illustrated by the following example. The readers learn that

[t]he island of Phuket has long been misunderstood. First of all, the ‘h’ is silent. Ahem. [...] Phuket’s beating heart can be found in Patong, a ‘sin city’ that is the ultimate gong show where podgy beachaholics sizzle like rotisserie chickens and go-go girls play ping-pong without paddles. (idem: 763)

In summary the third cluster completes the overall presentation of Thailand, positioning the country as an ideal destination for travellers with diverse interests. While the oriental theme features prominently through most of the Thailand chapter (e.g. temples, museums, architecture), the myth of the unrestrained is heavily played with in the depictions of beaches and night life. Finally, particularly the norther border areas offer at least some degree of frontier

experience such as Hill Tribe trekking, adventure tours and monuments relating to the history of war.

### 7.3.1.b. Thailand (Blogs)

In the blogosphere, the negotiation of travel myths can be traced on an individual level. To begin with the *myth of the unchanged*, tourist accounts do reflect the notion of the Oriental destination combined with fantasies of fashioning themselves as early European explorers. After leaving the modern hub of Bangkok for the ancient city of Ayutthaya, one blogger writes:

Ayutthaya has been the ancient capital of the kingdom of Thailand for many centuries until 1767, but most of the temples have been destroyed due to the past wars and conflicts and now only a few of them still stand gloriously. However, I feel more awestruck when I explore the collapsing structures than the restored ones. It makes me feel like an early explorer. Ayutthaya is probably one of the most culturally and historically interesting towns nearby Bangkok, worth of a visit, if you are heading up north, which I really recommend it and I believe it is much better than the southern part which is just packed with bloody masses of tourist [sic] that go there for fun only and uninteresting. (Solotraveller, 2009)

In the extract, the temple city of Ayutthaya is integrated into a personal narrative of adventure and exploration. The tourist visits the city and emphasises its role as ancient capital of Thailand. He admits that most of the temples have been destroyed (in unspecific conflicts) but stresses that he feels more awestruck exploring the collapsing structures than the restored ones. The topic of exiting discovery sustains the idea of a place that is essentially located in the past. This is confirmed by the label ‘one of the most culturally and historically interesting towns nearby Bangkok’ and the juxtaposition against the ‘southern part’, which is argued to be uninteresting and packed with mass tourists.

In another blog entry on Ayutthaya, the orientalist phantasy of a timeless place is stressed even more clearly. It states:

[t]he elephant kraal here houses about ninety rescued elephants and to support their upkeep, tourists can ride around the old city on an elephant. We didn’t do so but enjoyed seeing them go by; they add such a colourful and authentic touch, dressed in gold and scarlet with fringed parasols to shade passengers from the sun, they look most regal amongst the palace ruins, lakes and parkland. Lakes, rivers, frangipani and

orchids, little bridges and shady seats, stilt houses, elephants and the mighty Chao Phraya River, this is Thailand at its most luscious. (Cussell, 2009)

As can be observed, the experience is presented through a heavily orientalist composition of imaginaries that communicates the vision of a colourful and authentic Southeast Asia. There, the authentic sides with the harmonic, so that relicts and customs are framed by an exotic spectacle of welcoming but silent human props. As the landscape comes alive through the tourist gaze, a phantasmatic cosmological order of timelessness is carefully orchestrated and reified.

With regard to the *myth of the unrestrained*, some bloggers perceive Thailand as a typical sea and sand destination, which is well known for its notorious Full Moon parties. Two bloggers describe their experience in a casual tone:

[s]o we partied on.. more buckets.. more dancing... more buckets... more dancing. About midway through the night people had already started to pass out, laying anywhere on the beach, and people started covering them with sand and building breasts on them. Ha! Imagine waking up on the beach covered in sand with new breasts. Ha!!! So before we headed home we decided to take photos of everyone that was passed out on the beach. Immortalise the memory! So we had a great night, headed home to fall asleep, and spend our hangovers in the hammock on the beach outside our bungalow. Is there anything better than that? [...] It's all part of the experience! (Erin, 2006)

The narration describes an overnight journey through a dystopia of carnivalesque abandon that viscerally extends beyond the capabilities of mental consciousness. Taking revealing pictures of the event and passed-out people on the beach is justified by a reference to the Full Moon party's cognitive *Other*, namely human memory. The injunction: 'immortalize memory' is significant here because it functions to reify the legendary status the parties occupy for many in the younger travelling scene. This is confirmed by the last sentence 'it's all part the experience!'. However, there are more critical reflections of the full moon party too. A travelling couple writes:

Koh Phangan, once an idyllic island famed for its amazing turquoise waters sitting in front of a backdrop of white sand beaches and lush jungle. It was the destination of choice for long term backpackers and hippy ex-pats [...] It is now however more unfortunately known for its party scene and the monthly full moon parties. [...] As a

traveller, you occasionally meet people on the road who you stop and wonder why they are actually travelling in the first place, they usually have zero interest in the culture, have no intention of even trying anything other than a pizza and chips and seem to have the sole mission of just going out, getting drunk every night and maybe looking for a bit of trouble. Now if you went the World over and rounded up all these ‘special’ travellers and then multiplied that number by about 7, you would get somewhere close to the clientele at the New Years [sic] Eve Full Moon Party. [...]

...All said and done, the north, east and west sides of this island are still picture postcard pretty, the people are friendly and if you steer clear of Haad Rin you will find part of the real Thailand here. (Scott/Victoria 2013)

Presented is a narrative that describes a transition from good to bad. Pristine nature and the myth of Shangri-La at the end of the Hippy Trail are matched against the modern party scene which is held responsible for supposedly having destroyed much of the island’s charm and authenticity. The bloggers, who self-identity as travellers, recommend readers to actually steer clear of the parties and rather enjoy other parts of the ‘picture postcard pretty’ island, which they describe as ‘real Thailand’. The critical view of the tourist enclave of Haad Rin therefore seeks refuge in another vision of authenticity that is essentially based on the notion of an exotic Otherness which remains sufficiently different from and untouched by the tourist masses it might eventually attract. Of course, this paradox can of course not be resolved from the chosen perspective in the text. To better understand the notion of ‘real’ Thailand, local voices would have to be included in the account and prefabricated concepts of authenticity would have to be given up.

Finally, the *frontier theme* can be traced in the following bloggers’ accounts about their experience with Hill Tribe treks in the north of Thailand. A 28 year old female blogger writes:

[w]e reached the top, then descended into a beautiful valley in the jungle to stay with the Karan Tribes. They welcomed us with cold beer and water, and a delicious meal with green curry, and another sort of stir fry. Living in the jungle is an experience in itself. The hill tribes are being assisted by the local governments in the attempt to sustain the hill tribe culture. The local government assists in building pipes for water, and also provides the hill tribes with solar panels to give them electricity. The electricity consisted of one light bulb in the eating area and one light bulb in our bedroom. All 20 of us slept in the same room, on the floors with no mattresses. [...]

...In the end, I do not regret this trek at all. It was an amazing albeit physically draining experience. It was beautiful to see first-hand how the tribes people are living deep in the jungles of Northern Thailand, and how they are sustaining their culture. There are no roads anywhere, the only way to get in and out is trekking by foot or using the river. Sometimes it's a good thing to get out of your comfort zone and live the simple life. (Anita in Southeast Asia 2011)

Akin to *myth of the uncivilized*, the Hill Tribes are presented as a premodern community inhabiting a land at the limit where roads do not exist, and the government can only provide them with the most essential blessings of modernity to guarantee their physical and cultural survival. This clearly is a romanticised narrative that sustains the Thai government's decade-long strategy of marginalization and control of minority groups. As the central government established a discourse of 'bringing under control' the mountainous fringes for reasons of tightening border security (e.g. against communist insurgencies and drug trade) and dealing with ecological concerns (e.g. banning slash and burn agriculture), much of the programme materialized under the banner of resettlement, education and aid. Among other things, this 'Thaification' has led to dramatic socio-cultural changes where Hill Tribes are put on display as 'wild people' that have transformed from a 'hazardous Other' to a commodified 'exotic Other' within the nation-state of Thailand (see Winichakul 2000: 56 and 2000a for a comprehensive discussion of the topic). Furthermore, the blogger's praise of escaping the comfort zone towards a supposedly more simple and adventurous Hill Tribe life is indicative of the required distinction between the frontier experience and civilization.

This mechanism of discursively creating a temporary space for adventures at the limit can be observed in another blog post about Hill Tribe trekking in Thailand. A travelling couple writes:

Phew! What an adventure the past three days have thrown our way. We've traversed King Cobra infested paddy fields at night, slept with snakes, forged across torrential rivers thigh deep in monsoon mud and had our blood almost sucked dry by leeches. We reckon we're lucky to be alive .... and even luckier to have a good story to tell afterwards. [...]

...Settling down for the night in primitive bamboo huts, we wiggled and squirmed through a fitful sleep laced with exotic jungle bugs and snorting wild boars. [...] Our group bonded that night out of sheer terror. Leeches kept appearing on mattresses, possibly crawling from dripping clothes decorating the hut. A green snake dropped from the ceiling and slid down a hole in the floor. [...] The guides went up in opium

smoke and we all crashed, exhausted, awoken by the startling crow of a rooster at dawn. Strapping on soggy shoes and damp clothing, we trekked for two hours in the sun, bamboo-raftered down a calm river, ate some more rice then returned to civilisation with a newfound respect for hilltribe trekking in Northern Thailand (Cannan & Nikotin 2008)

Presented is a voyager's tale full of hardships and dangers. Alluding to the form of the great expeditions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the travellers heroically undertake a penetrating journey through an unforgiving environment and brave the terror of the night in 'primitive bamboo huts', with the jungle creatures slowly closing in on them. In that moment of danger, they are 'abandoned' by their opium smoking guides and have to rely on their own wits. Finally, in order to return to 'civilization' they escape the from the wild and discover 'a newfound respect for hilltribe trekking in Northern Thailand'. The last sentence is particularly noteworthy because it contains the value judgement 'newfound respect'. A plausible explanation for the use of this utterance can be found at the beginning of the blogpost. They write:

[t]o be honest, we were a little cocky, considering ourselves far too experienced in phenomenal world renowned and challenging treks (such as Peru's Machu Picchu, Hawaii's Kalalau Trail and Tassie's Cradle Mountain), to be at all inspired by a lame stroll through some Thai hills. Our hiking companions stroked our egos further as they squeezed their inexperienced feet into stinky plastic hired walking shoes & crammed their belongings into ragged borrowed backpacks. At least we showed up to a trek with the right gear. (Cannan & Nikotin 2008)

The bloggers devise and deploy a 'yardstick' of adventurous trekking performance by referring to three acknowledged treks from around the world. This underscores the travellers' credibility and also functions as a strategy of attachment that helps readers better gauge the extent of hardships they must have endured to return home safely. Thus, 'newfound respect' refers to the quality of the frontier experience they have had. Essentially, it acknowledges that they have gone far beyond civilization.

In contrast to such picaresque depictions, other accounts critically reflect on the Hill Tribe spectacle. One blogger, who travels with his friend, writes:

Rich and I debated about this type of trip because it felt like a human zoo. I wasn't too keen on just walking to the village and just starting but looking back on it, without tourists they tribes would be able to afford any necessities they may need. The do not

have passports and are guests under the Thai government [sic] so they can't work anywhere, not they would be able to get high paying jobs anyway; so they [sic] only thing they can do it show tourists their traditions and sell crafts. Once we went through the experience we felt better we could help support their traditions and exsistance [sic] in Thailand. (Jefferson 2008)

The village is described as a 'human zoo' and the minority groups as 'guests' to the Thai government without equal civil rights and access to the labour market. It is then 'logically' inferred that in such a situation, tourism is the only way for the villagers to make a living. This evaluation is related to the posters' emotional state after their visit. The gained conviction that they could help support the minority groups' traditions and existence mitigates their initial impression of moving through a human zoo. Effectively, taking part in the commodified spectacle of Hill Tribe tourism is thus reified as humanitarian act that preserves the groups' survival. This arguably resonates Lonely Planet's agenda of responsible travel in terms of communicating a supposedly ethical vision of tourism that neither represents Others on equal footing with authors and readers, nor inquires more closely about the complex socio-political and cultural specificity of circumstances on the ground (see Lisle 2008). Through imposing basic assumptions from the outside perspective and basing them on necessarily limited situational knowledge, the century-old discursive delineation between the West and the (post/neo?)-colonial world stays in place.

The following post illustrates how such discursive reconfigurations of the colonial past (see Simmons 2004) materialize in contemporary tourist's accounts. A piece named 'What I learned about Thailand' states the following:

[t]hey are not critical thinkers. The proof of this is everywhere. They just lack common sense! They study the facts and think the way to travel between a and b is only a straight line. They don't imagine a back way, a snake like route or any other possible letters like c or d. If it isn't a straight line it can't be done. [...]

...They have no fear of lawsuits! The planks on the pier are missing bolts and even planks! There are so many dangerous things around! Power lines that touch the ground, huge holes in the roads, stairs with no rails, skinny paths where falling is critical, narrow walking over deep water, etc...This is an American lawsuit lawyers dream! [...]



...[A]nother thing is they are blunt about things very often and they say things we would mistake as rude. An example is a lady at the street market knew Nichole and had not seen her for a while. She said hi to her and then said you look fat! Although Nichole is anything except fat, she defended it by saying the Thai people think of fat as wealthy and healthy and it is a compliment to say someone is fat! Who would have thought? (Hogan Taylor, 2015)

The first part resonates the common colonialist binary of immature and irrational indigenes vs. civilized and sensible Europeans (Motohashi 1999: 90). The supposed consequences of the natives' alleged lack of reason and knowledge are then presented in the second part of the quote. Depicted is a chaotic world devoid of reason, where doom and corruption lurk everywhere, and no one is able to provide solutions. The reference to the topic of legality furthermore privileges the evaluation that the place is essentially beyond the rule of (Western) law. Finally, the last paragraph illustrates the individual process of negotiating perceived cultural differences. The poster is disconcerted when a seller at the street market calls her friend 'fat', a statement that would probably be considered rude in her familiar cultural setting. Notably, as the blogger goes on to further explain the situation, she opens up the text dialogically for the local woman in question. Letting in her voice cancels out the negative interpretation of 'fat' and offers a more hybrid vision of transcultural contact. The question 'who would have thought?' acknowledges the complexity of tourist encounters in cultural terms and opens up discursive space so that the represented Others can eventually speak for themselves.

In summary, the discussed blog posts offer a window on how tourists feel about their travel experiences in Thailand. In the blogposts I have discussed, the three myths of tourism (myth of the unchanged, myth of the unrestrained and myth of the uncivilized) emerge and are negotiated in two basic ways. They are either reproduced and /or amplified by means of hyperbolic narrative strategies (e.g. for the sake of telling a thrilling story), or they are treated more critically in terms of pointing out visible and possible implications of the massification of individual tourism and the perceived impacts of cultural and environmental commodification. However, the own actions of the more critical bloggers are typically not questioned. They generally consider their trips socially and environmentally compatible and emphasise their quest for authenticity and role as low-level local supporters.

### 7.3.2. The Former Indochina States – Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam

Unlike Thailand, which was never politically colonized, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam share the experience of colonial submission. Most of the three countries' tourist infrastructures have been derived from colonial infrastructures, resulting in more or less well-developed tourist routes and hotspots that have attracted travellers over many decades (Douglas & Douglas 2000), with mass tourism taking off in the 1970s (Hitchcock, King & Parnwell 2009: 8). As emerging nations, especially Cambodia and Laos are undergoing massive changes. The states have been devastated by decades of civil war (and other conflicts) and are now seeking economic growth through opening their economies and the promotion of tourism (Hall & Ringer 2000). Given the historic specificity of the former Indochina States, strategies of representation and negotiation are expected to differ from those identified with regard to 'touristy' Thailand.

#### 7.3.2.a. Laos (LP)

The Lao's people republic (LPD) became independent from France in 1949 and emerged in the 1970s after a lengthy period of war and unrest, being heavily drawn into the conflict between the United States and Vietnam. Laos is a landlocked country that shares borders with Thailand to the west, China to the north, Vietnam to the southeast and Cambodia to the south. It is a largely mountainous country with fertile planes and river valleys (most notably the Mekong). The population amounts to 6.2 million and is ethnically mixed, comprising probably more than 131 ethnic minorities and various sub-groups. After following a strict Communist policy until the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country has since been moving towards a market-oriented system (Harrison & Schipani 2009: 165 – 168). Laos officially welcomes international tourists since 1989 (Hall & Ringer 2000: 183).

In Lonely Planet, 'leafy Laos' is presented as a 'sleepy paradise' with an abundance of wilderness, royal temples, colonial architecture and deep-rooted superstitions (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 47; 370-371). Answering the question why tourists should visit the country, the guidebook states:

This landlocked country lays claim to incredibly genuine people and the chance for your inner adventure to let rip. The 'Land of a Million Elephants' oozes magic from the moment you spot a Hmong tribeswoman looming through the mist; trek through the mist, trek through a glimmering rice paddy; or hear the sonorous call of one of the countries endangered gibbons. But it is also a place to luxuriate, whether by pampering

yourself like a French colonial in a spa, or chilling under a wood-blade fan in a delicious Gallic restaurant. ‘Old World’ refinement is found in pockets across the country, especially in languid Vientiane and legendary Luang Prabang. [...plus] excellent treks and tribal homestays operated by eco-responsible outfits. Be it flying along jungle ziplines, elephant riding, exploring creepy subterranean rivers caves or motocross adventures, Laos will burn herself into your memory. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 311)

Arguably, two main tourism myths are alluded to, with a third one resonating in disguise. Prominently features the *frontier theme*, with a country depicted as largely characterised by untamed nature and a superstitious indigenous population. Such a place is explored rather than visited. For this purpose, several types of adventure sports are offered, ranging from trekking to remote Hill Tribe communities to elephant riding and motocross. Then, there is strong emphasis on the past too. The imagination is spurred that when the traveller emerges from the mist covering the uncharted land, he or she can indulge in a more pleasant kind of frontier experience, namely that of a privileged (neo)colonial lifestyle. As the text reassures the reader, these ‘old world refinements’ can still be found in some pockets across the wilderness of the marginal province. Thus, there is a mix between the frontier experience, a longing for some unrestrained holiday fantasies and some meaningful (European) anchor-points that locate the country within the *myth of the unchanged*.

Indicative of this orientation are the following two examples. First, in the description of Savannakhet, a small town in norther Laos, the reader learns that

[t]he best [the town] has to offer is the historic quarter with its staggering display of decaying early 20th-century architecture. These grand old villas from Indochina’s heyday now lie unwanted like aged dames crying out for a makeover. There’s little to do in town but amble the riverfront and plonk down in one of a clutch of stylish restaurants and bijou cafes. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 357)

Basically, the extract communicates the message that the entirety of the present reality is characterised and circumscribed by colonial artefacts which nobody bothers to conserve. This privileges the evaluation that modern Laos is not only less interesting or worth seeing than the museum of bygone European grandness (Indochina’s heyday), it further constructs the tourist as a culturally superior connoisseur who should take time and appreciate the ‘real’ beauty of a foreign place.

Second, in a travel warning titled ‘Bad Trips’, travellers are warned about the potential hostilities they might expect in the Laotian part of the ‘Golden Triangle’, once Indochina’s centre of opium trade. The text states:

Muang sing was once at the heart of the infamous Golden Triangle, and though Lao Government programs to eradicate poppy fields have been largely successful, opium is still grown here, and you may well be offered some. Not long ago a falang imbibed more than he could handle and ran naked and screaming into a ban (village) in the middle of the night – he was beaten badly by the villagers who presumed he was an evil spirit. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 47; 350)

Despite the supposedly humorous tone of the episode, the choice of the topic ‘superstition’ hints at the more problematic *myth of the uncivilized* that appears to underly Lonely Planet’s depiction of timeless and sleepy Laos. One could imagine numerous plausible reasons for why a person would receive a harsh treatment when running naked and screaming through any populated area in the world. In the text, however, these possible explanations are narrowed down to one assumption, namely that the superstitions of essentially primitive villagers may lead to violent actions against visitors. Since it is implied that the falangs (foreigners) should moderate their (drug taking) behaviour, they are assigned the capacity of agency. The villagers, on the other side, are deprived of their rational agency and reified as ‘creatures’ driven by the fear of evil spirits.

Drawing from this notion of the ‘authentic savage’, a discursive proximity is construed between adventure sports, frontier areas, ethnic people and wild animals. The designated visitor to Northern Laos is directly addressed by the guidebook and learns:

[w]hether you’re here to trek, ride an elephant, zipline, kayak, cycle or try a homestay, a visit to Laos’ mountainous north is unforgettable. Bordered by China to the far north, Vietnam to the east and Myanmar (Burma) to the west, there’s a fascinating cast of ethnic peoples here. Hidden amid this rugged simplicity is Southeast Asia’s premier Shangri La, Luang Prabang, and, beyond it, unfettered, dense forests still home to a cornucopia of animals. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 47; 326)

The mountainous north of Laos is presented as unforgettable place at the limit, offering action and rugged simplicity. Underscoring the notion of authentic Otherness, ethnic peoples are depicted as fascinating cast, which suggests that they are mainly there to please the tourists’ gaze and desire for exotic and unique experiences. Bhattacharyya (1997) has termed such

‘human props’ as *tourees*; and McWha, Frost, Laing & al. (2016: 91) have demonstrated that the promise of such supposedly authentic ‘travel’ experience mainly relies on combining images of sufficiently exotic alterity with the notion of the hard-gained experience. What the North thus offers is a unique combination of wilderness (cornucopia of animals in the dense forest), action sports and a befitting human backdrop that underscores the conceptual map of the myth of the uncivilized.

By combining the frontier theme with the trope of timeless colonial flair, Laos is represented as a pastiche of European and local influences. This discursive constellation reifies the country as essentially pre-modern but shaped to the better by the intervention of European powers. In Lonely Planet’s section ‘Understand Laos / Laos Today’, the political logic behind this discursive positioning becomes evident. The text states:

[u]p until early 2008 it was all going extremely well for Laos, with record figures of foreign visitors; newly built hydroelectric power dams, copper and gold mining concessions; and largely foreign investors keen to climb into bed with Laos’ natural resources. Then the economic axe fell on the US and those subprime mortgages started impacting on every aspect of Laos attempt by 2020, to escape its status as one of the 20 poorest nations. Suddenly the foreign investment pulled out because of their own lack of liquidity, and mining concessions collapsed as the price of copper was slashed. Fewer traveller were arriving, too. Through no fault of its own, Laos looked to be heading back to the dark days of stagnation. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 369)

Foreign investment is identified as the crucial factor for the development of Laos ever since. As such, it is logically assigned positive valence. With the advent of the economic crisis (an outside shock), the country’s return to the ‘dark days of stagnation’ is intimated. As this reasoning suggests, there is no alternative path of development for Laos than dependence on more powerful global actors and economic developments beyond everyone’s reach. The human agency behind the occasional ‘economic axe’ is thus logically acquitted on the technicality of crisis being an inevitable risk. By this strategy, neither the West nor Laos are blamed for the text’s existential assumption of economic downturn.

Interestingly, though, it is intimated that Laos’ more recent association with non-Western state actors should be viewed with suspicion:

China, ever the opportunist, has moved in to grab what it can in return for improving Laos’ transport infrastructure. Beijing’s Southeast Asian rail network will eventually

connect the red giant with countries as far afield as Pakistan, India and Singapore, and to achieve this the network will pass directly through Laos. [...] travellers will be able to travel at speeds of up to 400km/h through this beautiful green country. How this will impact the sleepy paradise is anyone's guess, but it's all the more reason for you to visit right now. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 370)

China, which follows the same strategy as the West, is condemned as an opportunist actor. It is caricaturized as a threatening 'red giant' that will usurp small Laos and literally bury it under a massive network of infrastructure. In this this 'last-minute' narrative plot, the 'sleepy paradise' is represented as still largely authentic. However, its very existence is threatened by technology from ruthless China. This implies that everyone should visit now to see what the guidebook identifies as worth visiting, namely Western colonial heritage in backward Laos.

In summary, Lonely Planet's Laos is presented as 'sleepy paradise' that happens to be located at the frontier. While it is touristically not fully exploited yet, it offers both luxury and adventure. Luxury mostly relates to representations of the region's 'significant' past, most notably the remnants of colonialism. Adventure relates to wilderness, action sports and supposedly exotic and premodern tribes. Lonely Planet privileges the evaluation that the country offers a more authentic experience through combining uniqueness and exotic otherness with both, a frontier character and splurge-worthy French bistros or Spas. This reifies the country as passive and essentially pre-modern. Tourists are sent the message that they should visit soon before the country is destroyed by 'scrupulous' China.

### 7.3.2.b. Laos (Blogs)

In the case of Laos, it is interesting to observe that Lonely Planet's comprehensive label of 'sleepy paradise' has found its way into the brief introduction travelblog.org includes for each country section. This overview part is meant to give readers an idea about what they might have to expect in a particular country, offering some historical coordinates and mouseover navigation to selects highlights, hints and tips and the country specific board, which lists all the entries tourists post. When clicking on Laos, users are directly addressed in the following way:

[y]ou might've already heard, but in case you haven't - everything in sleepy Laos happens sloooooowly. And when we say slowly, we mean that some things can take pretty much indefinitely to happen [...]. So, if you're planning on paying Laos a visit - you should, it's beautiful - then flick your mobile phone off (it probably won't work anyway), put your watch in your backpack, and just don't worry yourself about that

pointless concept we know as 'time'. Time is of no consequence in Laos. (Laos Introduction)

Assuming that the 'sleepiness' of Laos is common knowledge in the universe of travel, the website intensifies the rumours prospective visitors might have heard or read elsewhere. It is suggested that Laos is a place devoid of modern technology and the associated concept of time. This clearly communicates the idea of a pre-modern and backward place. The assertion 'time is of no consequence in Laos' furthermore resonates the Orientalist myth that people from the East lack rational cognition and discipline (Said 1978). Thus, the introduction alludes to the *myth of the unchanged* and effectively sets the stage for a journey away from modernity. In the following two blog entries, this is reflected:

1. For a capital city, Vientiane has a sleepy feel. There are no tall buildings at all, just the odd 4-5 storey one. No flash skyscrapers or gleaming shopping malls here. There aren't too many sights to see in Vientiane either. Wat Si Saket is a lovely low-key temple complex but has nothing on the ones I saw in Chiang Mai and Bangkok; Phra That Luang is iconic and resembles Angkor Wat in shape if not size (it is painted gold); Patuxai is the Laotian Arc de Triomphe modelled after the famous Parisian arch and has some nice local designs carved into it. (Seto 2017)
2. Trees were covered in red dust. [...] children playing in the red dust, old ladies sitting patiently on the doorstep of their rickety wooden shack watching the world pass by, surrounded in red dust. This is the real Laos, it's a world away from life we westerners are used to. As we snaked around the mountains on our bus heading south to the capital, Vientiane, we watched men and women of all ages toiling in the fields, using primitive farming methods to harvest the grain. (Woolley & Woolley 2010)

Confirming the notion of sleepiness, the first post juxtaposes modernity against history. On the one side, skyscrapers and shopping malls are declared absent. On the other side, a small number of sights of interest is selected and associated with the past. By employing the strategy of discursive attachment, Vientiane's sites are compared to other popular monuments and ruins, so that their 'attraction value' can be determined by the evaluative interplay between bloggers and readers. In the second post, the signifier 'red dust' arguably serves the purpose of a *pars pro toto* for uncontrollable nature. What is covered in red dust is labelled 'real'. Laos is depicted as a 'world away' from the life of Westerners. The subsequent statement that local people use 'primitive farming methods to harvest the grain' thus sustains the idea that the country's rural

character is rather helpless than competent. This sends the message that because of its lack of technology, ‘real’ Laos is primitive and probably forever at the mercy of the red dust.

Next, the colonial theme surfaces regularly in online travel accounts on the country. This is very similar to Lonely Planet, where the colonial background is presented as a place to fall back to when the actual journey gets physically demanding and stressful. In that sense, the following example is indicative of the historicity of discourse and the cultural force it carries on to the present. The post is titled ‘A French Protectorate’ and reports on a visit to Luang Prabang (Laos):

Luang Prabang is an old French Protectorate and so you can find many old Colonial buildings here along with many bakery’s and other little stalls beside the road selling the best French baguettes we’ve had since we left home, and also very cheap. (Feast & Francis 2013)

The use of ‘is’ in the first sentence may be accidental; however, the present-tense marker is further intensified by the noun phrase ‘French Protectorate’ used in the title. Effectively, the text privileges the idea that modern-day Luang Prabang seamlessly emerged out of French colonialism, leading mainly to aesthetic and culinary enjoyment for 21<sup>st</sup> century visitors. At the level of individual experience, this colonial façade is animated by selected indigenous traditions. Specifying these, the blogger continues:

[w]hilst here, we did manage to get down into town bright and early on one of the mornings (about 5 am!) for the Alms, probably what Luang Prabang is most famous for, this is when all the monks come out to get their food for the day and walk in a long line holding there [sic] pots receiving food from the locals who line the streets beforehand. (Feast & Francis 2013)

Presented is an ancient world of timeless spirituality, where in everyday life monks still serenely wander through the break of dawn and hope to receive their alms. Essentially, Luang Prabang is construed as an *organic community* (Leavis & Thompson 1977), where local authenticity can be witnessed against the backdrop of a fantastic colonial state of affairs. In this aloof Laos, ‘reality’ is perceived as real when it is pre-modern, devout and undisturbed.

However, the narrative of sleepy, colonial and authentic Laos is sometimes inconsistent with traveller’s individual expectations and desires. Reflecting on the discrepancy between aspiration and experience, bloggers raise at least three significant issues. First, Laos is criticised for being not as cheap as desired. One blogger complains:



[a]ctually, in comparative terms, everything in Laos costs a small fortune. In Vietnam and Cambodia bus journeys worked out roughly at 1\$ per hour. So an 8 hour trip would cost about 8\$. In Laos, it is double. Food and accomodation are also a bit more pricey than elsewhere, and Tuk Tuk drivers won't start their engines for less than 3\$ no matter how far you want to go. There is a double economy in Laos, with officially recognised prices for locals and tourists. Essentially I have nothing against such a system; Laos is incredibly poor and tourists by comparison are rich. I don't mind paying a bit more than the locals every now and then provided the money is used wisely. I do object to paying 10 times the price though, and although it sounds like I am being an inconsiderate, whingeing Falaang (foreigner in the local lingo), I don't expect to pay European prices for Asian goods and services. (Clayton 2011)

Prices in Laos are compared to those in other countries in Southeast Asia and in Europe and found to be overly steep. This is traced back to the concept of a 'double economy', where tourists pay more than locals for the same goods and services. Even though the poster mitigates his complaint of paying too much by describing Laos as 'incredibly poor' and tourists as comparably 'rich', he nevertheless states that he is just prepared to pay 'a bit more than the locals every now and then, provided the money is used wisely'. While it can be reasonably argued that constant overpaying may eventually lead to an overall lift in prices in a regional context, it appears difficult to quantify 'paying a bit more' for services and goods in the region without asking local providers. From this point of view, the outside assessment of 'acceptable' prices naturally lacks a deeper understanding of the local economy (e.g. commodity prices, cost of living, cost of labour) and the specific dynamics of supply and demand in the tourist industry at a particular time and place. Without that information, the poster's assessment of being 'ripped off' may still hold true (and most travellers would probably agree); however, as it stands, the argument runs the danger of sustaining the century-old myth of the treacherous and deceitful Oriental that has been comprehensively discussed in the historical part of this dissertation.

Second, the supposedly tranquil atmosphere of Laos is reported to be increasingly disturbed by tourists from the East. An entry states:

[t]he only downside to this was there is what seems like hoards [sic] of Chinese tourists with their massive cameras and they all seem to find us fascinating! So on many occasions we've found ourselves being ambushed by a few Chinese all trying to get the best picture of us, which I don't think Jade appreciated as one lady found it really fascinating that we were using chop sticks to eat and so waited for Jade to have a mouth

full of noodles before she began snapping away! On another occasion I found myself turning around to have a giant camera lens pointed at my head while he waited for me to turn, so if you come here don't be surprised if you become a local celebrity to the Chinese! (Feast & Francis 2013)

As can be observed, the bloggers find it noteworthy and possibly even disturbing that they are turned into objects of an opposing gaze. As they become 'attractions' for the Others, they have to franchise their declarative agency and accept that they will be represented by another party that is equipped with equally powerful technological affordances. As a result, it is humorously hinted at the possibility of becoming a 'celebrity' in some Chinese tourists' accounts. The comic relief of claiming the celebrity role mitigates the mechanisms of resignification and the loss of enunciative control. Even though the gaze is inverted, the objectified Western subject still stands out discursively supreme.

Third, Laos' assumed pre-modern authenticity is in an uneasy relationship with the country's more hedonist offerings. Describing the popularity of party tourism in Vang Vieng, one blogger recounts:

[t]he main draw is the tubing, which has become almost infamous on the South East Asia backpacking circuit. This is when you hire a big inner tube and get dropped 3km's upriver and just float back to Vang Vieng. This alone would be a fun way to spend the day, just chilling, watching the beautiful scenery float by. However the Laos people have made it a lot more fun, by setting up bars along the way with rope swings at each bar, so you can jump into the water. As you go further down the river, the rope swings seem to get higher and higher. The bars also sell lots of BeerLao and buckets (this is a sandcastle bucket full of whisky, redbull and a soft drink like Sprite) and give you free shots of Lao Lao (the local moonshine). (Ansell 2007)

This more enthusiastic depiction of alcohol infused river-benders in Vang Vieng is counteracted by other bloggers. Building on the theme of destructive mass-tourism, another poster insinuates the discourse of perceived organic decline and refers to Vang Vieng as a 'spoilt paradise'. He states:

My way from Luang Prabang to Vang Vieng was a stunning bus ride in the lush vegetation of Laos. One of the aspects that I appreciated most during this travel were: passing through sleepy farming towns, fishing villages, amazing landscapes, noisy bus

packed up with local people and a good amount of westerner travellers as well, great ambiance and above all being utterly surrounded by nature. [...]

... Excessive tourism is a gloomy mien especially in the developing countries and one of the many instances was this place. Throughout town there were hotels, guesthouses, bars and restaurants by the Nam Song river. I stopped a moment trying to view this place without this massive development of tourism, drunk people, alcohol, drugs, smoke and so on. It would have been a place where someone would spend the rest of his/her life being surrounded by sublime karst hill landscape, forest, exploring caves and the beautiful Nam Song river. (Solotraveller 2009)

Presented is the imaginary of a complete and premodern world (sleepy farming towns, fishing villages, etc.) that is supposedly destroyed by the incursion of irresponsible party tourism and its negative side effects. Akin to the myth of the unrestrained, the tourist enters a present paradise (Echtner & Prasad 2003: 672) but falls for its hedonist traps, turning it into paradise-lost. The underlying argument is that ‘paradise’ can only last if it remains inaccessible and widely out of touch. This reifies ‘paradise’ as a place located in the past and beyond global reach – it effectively depopulates the landscape of Laos by discursively offering it only to the select few that qualify as worthy connoisseurs. In the end, the country is stripped off its human aspect as it is romantically delineated from the rest of the world and frozen in this discursive state.

In summary, many bloggers do accept the notion of Laos as a timeless and sleepy place where remnants of the colonial world frame authentic local traditions. However, this narrative is challenged by three fundamental issues: first, higher prices than in other countries in Southeast Asia; second, the influx of irresponsible tourists from the East (e.g. China); and third, the impact of party- and mass tourism and associated negative effects.

#### 7.3.3.a. Cambodia (LP)

In the guidebook, Cambodia is presented as a place to experience “Culture/History, Outdoor Activities and Beaches” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 47). It combines “mighty empire” with “modern tragedy” and offers both “activities for a cause” and “beaches better than Thailand” (ibid). Accordingly, much of the representation of Cambodia resonates Lonely Planet’s quintessential theme of (responsible) adventure holidays. In the opening section *Why Go?* tourists are encouraged to:

[a]scend to the realm of the gods at Angkor Wat, a spectacular fusion of spirituality, symbolism and symmetry. Descend into the darkness of Tuol Sleng to witness the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. This is Cambodia, a country with a history both inspiring and depressing, a captivating destination that casts a spell on all those who visit. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 64)

The first line addresses the overarching *myth of the unchanged* which overshadows much of Lonely Planet's representational strategy of the country. Cambodia is depicted as a reflection of the magnificence of Angkor Wat against the horrid backdrop of the Khmer Rouge genocide. As such, it is described as a country that offers touristic inspiration and disillusionment at the same time.

To begin with Angkor, it is lauded as the greatest "concentration of architectural riches anywhere on earth" (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 94), "matched by only a few select spots on earth such as Machu Picchu or Petra" (idem: 95), and labelled as "the Khmer's national symbol, the epicentre of their civilisation and a source of fierce national pride" (ibid). While this clearly reflects the Orientalist fantasy of travelling back in time to rediscover the great moments of the history of mankind, it also conveys the idea that the present state of the country is less authentic and important than the phantasmatic past that is imagined (Tegelberg 2010). More specifically, the guidebook follows the strategy of representing Angkor as quintessential moment in Cambodian history, from which things allegedly began to deteriorate:

[t]he good, the bad and the ugly is a simple way to sum up Cambodian history. Things were good in the early years, culminating in the vast Khmer empire, unrivalled in the region during four centuries of dominance. Then the bad set in, from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as ascendant neighbours steadily chipped away at Cambodian territory. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century it turned downright ugly, as a brutal civil war culminated in the genocidal rule of the Khmer Rouge (1975-79), from which Cambodia is still recovering. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 138)

It is noteworthy that French colonialism is not mentioned in this historical sketch. There is a stunning gap between regional rivalries of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the Khmer Rouge regime of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A page later, the French period is addressed, and French colonialism is cherished as "[a]n exception in the annals of colonialism [because] the French presence really did protect the country in a time when it was in danger of being swallowed by its more powerful neighbours" (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 139). This overly positive evaluation of French rule communicates the message that the imperialist agenda was entirely good and in the

service of the local population. From an economic perspective, this claim can be refuted since the export-led growth model over the decades from 1870 to 1930 did not lead to an improvement of living standards for the majority of the people including the indebtedness of smallholder producers to foreign money lenders and a reduction of the per capita consumption of basic staples such as rice (Booth 2008: 51). From a socio-cultural perspective, the positive evaluation of the colonial period vis-à-vis its location outside the good-to-bad-to-ugly continuum presented above, resonates the discursive agenda of 19<sup>th</sup> century France.

As Edwards (2007: 2) points out: “the French Protectorate (1863-1954) had used the trope of fallen race and the lodestone of Angkor to indicate what heights the Khmers could achieve with the correct (French) tuition”. As I have demonstrated in the historical chapter, this is clearly reflected by Henry Mouhot’s words. He writes: “the present state of Cambodia is deplorable, and its future menacing. Formerly, however, it was a powerful and populous country, as is testified by the splendid ruins (Mouhot 1864, Vol I: 274-275)”. Mouhot then continues in the self-aggrandising fashion of the supposedly omniscient and benevolent imperialist, suggesting a solution to the current state of affairs: “European conquest, abolition of slavery, wise and protecting laws, and experience, fidelity, and scrupulous rectitude in those who administer them, would alone effect the regeneration of this state (idem: 275). It might come as a surprise, but a very similar logic is assumed and discursively deployed in the guidebook. Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. (2014: 137) write:

Cambodia is at a crossroads in its road to recovery from the brutal years of Khmer Rouge rule. Compare Cambodia today with the dark abyss into which it plunged under the Khmer Rouge and the picture looks optimistic but look to its more successful neighbours and it’s easy to be pessimistic. Cambodia must choose its path: pluralism, progress and prosperity or intimidation, impunity and injustice. The jury is still very much out on which way things will go.

As the quote suggests, Cambodia is again at a potential low that only looks optimistic when it is compared to the period of the genocidal Khmer Rouge, arguably the worst period the country has experienced in more recent history. This phrasing logically implies that the current situation is highly critical. In an entirely positive way, the achievements of ‘more successful’ neighbours are foregrounded. Arguably, this unspecific reference points towards the free enterprise system of Thailand and more powerful economic players in the region. Western economic integration thus discursively emerges as the most desirable future goal. This is strengthened by the injunction ‘Cambodia must choose its path’ and the juxtaposition of ‘pluralism, progress and

prosperity' against 'intimidation, impunity and injustice'. Thus, the Western way is matched against a supposed local way, with the logical implication that Western intervention is in the best interest of everybody. This clearly reflects the colonial mindset.

Besides the praise of historic Angkor and the negative evaluation of the present state of the country, the people of Cambodia receive considerable praise: "Cambodia's greatest treasure is its people. The Khmers have been to hell and back, but thanks to an unbreakable spirit and infectious optimism they have prevailed with their smiles and spirit largely intact" (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 64). This exemplifies the myth of the unchanged, which presumes that the indigenous populace of a historically significant place is equally unfaced by history, warm-hearted and simplistic (Echtner & Prasad 2003: 669). Thus, Cambodia is construed as a timeless place with timeless people who stoically endure the worst of hardships.

This image is underscored by a romantic narrative of the land. Cambodia's landscape is described as being characterised by the two main geographic features of the Tonle Sap and the Mekong. These two are then geo-deterministically related to everyday life, with the guidebook stating that the "low-lying alluvial plain is where the vast majority of Cambodians live, fishing and farming in harmony with the rhythms of the monsoon" (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 142). As a discursive consequence, the people of today's Cambodia assume the subject position of light-hearted peasants. Their 'innocent but authentic' life is synonymous with being in-sync with nature.

As might be expected, and similar to Laos, this idyllic vision is represented as increasingly threatened. The guidebook states that

[a]ncient forests are being razed to make way for plantations, rivers are being sized up for major hydroelectric power plants and the south coast is being explored by leading oil companies. Places like the Cardamom Mountains are in the front line and it remains to be seen whether the environmentalist or the economist will win the debate. (ibid)

While the quote resonates the notion of last-minute tourism and implicitly encourages tourists to visit before it is too late, the extract also brings to attention and appropriates the debate over environmental interests. The binary environmentalist / economist (in the last sentence) automatically dissociates economic development from environmental protection and assumes that the former should be put in check by the latter. While this explanation is arguably too simplified and narrow, it suffices to promote Lonely Planet's agenda of marketing responsible travel. Once the discourse is established that nature is under threat, the narrative of the positive

impact of volunteer tourism can be more credibly deployed. For instance, in Chi Phat, at the south coast – described as Cambodia’s “Wild West” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 111) – tourists are encouraged to contribute to environmental protection and are sent the message that their stays can make a difference in an ecotourism project. Lonely Planet states:

[o]nce notorious for its loggers and poachers, Chi Phat [...] is now home to a pioneering community-based ecotourism project offering hardy travellers a unique opportunity to explore the Cardamom’s ecosystem while contributing to its protection. Visitors can take day treks through the jungle, go sunrise bird-watching by boat, mountain bike to several sets of rapids, and look for monkeys and hornbills with a former poacher as their guide. Also possible are one- to four-night mountain-bike safaris and jungle treks deep into the Cardamoms. In the village, visitors can relax by playing volley-ball, badminton or pool with the locals” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 113).

Interested readers are addressed as ‘hardy travellers’ and offered the opportunity to explore and protect the vulnerable ecosystem. Although it is not explained how the mentioned activities might actually contribute to environmental protection, eco-tourists are proffered an adventure program ranging from jungle trekking, animal watching and mountain biking to volleyball and playing badminton in local villages. The emphasis on adventure and wilderness protection relates to the frontier myth. Nevertheless, relaxing and participating in fun-sports points towards more hedonist pursuits. This hybrid characteristic of Cambodia being ‘an adventure as much as a holiday’ is revealed in the ‘Why Go?’ section:

[f]ringed by beautiful beaches and tropical islands, sustained by the mother waters of the Mekong river and cloaked in some of the region’s few remaining emerald wildernesses, Cambodia is an adventure as much as a holiday. This is the warm heart of Southeast Asia, with everything the region has to offer packed into one bite-sized chunk. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 64)

As this aptly summarizes, Cambodia is represented as a condensed ‘miniature’ version of whole Southeast Asia. On a discursive plane, it thus caters for the sea and sand cluster as well as for the Oriental theme (Angkor) and the frontier myth. To better understand the specificity of the latter, the country’s dark tourism sights merit a more detailed discussion.

*Dark tourism* describes any form of tourism that is related to crime, tragedy, death or other atrocities on various scales (Light 2017: 277). Travellers’ motivations to visit dark tourism sites

may include an interest in out-of-the-ordinary experiences (Urry 1990: 11), the desire to visit must-see sights (Isaak & Cakmak 2016), a fascination with evil or horror (Lennon 2010), empathy with the victims (Hughes 2008), questions of collective identity (Slade 2003), and gaining peer-group prestige through ‘mastering’ the often upsetting and violent nature of the sight (Buda & Shim 2014). Dark tourism has been on the rise in Cambodia and the country is frequently presented as a ‘dangerous’ destination. The ‘Danger: Land Mines Sign’ with the skull and crossbones motive has become the most recognizable souvenir of tourists in the country and travellers are even offered the opportunity to fire weapons at Phnom Penh’s rifle range (Hughes 2008: 321). Relating this to current tourist practice, Winter (2006: 45) points out that

the allure Cambodia holds as a place of insurrection and danger. Sales of T-shirts emblazoned with images of military ordinance or the words ‘I survived Cambodia’ illustrates how this framing is communicated to and thus circulated across, the broader touristic community.

Historically, the myth of Cambodian ‘darkness’ draws extensively from two main discursive archives. First, the imaginative geography of exotic adventures created by the signifying economy of French imperialism, and second, the legacy of tragedy associated with the Khmer Rouge (Hughes 2008: 321). This is mirrored in Lonely Planet’s portrayal of Phnom Penh:

Phnom Penh: the name can’t help but conjure up an image of the exotic. [...] this is the Asia many dreamed of when first imagining their adventures over-seas. Once the ‘Pearl of Asia’, Phnom Penh’s shine was tarnished by war and revolution. But that’s history and the city has risen from the ashes to take its place among the ‘in’ capitals of Asia with an alluring café culture, bustling bars and a world-class food scene. Whatever your flavour, no matter your taste, it’s all here in Phnom Penh. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 68)

As can be observed, the exotic image of Phnom Penh reverberates the topics of tragedy and commodification. Even though the last sentence primarily relates to the local cuisine, it illustrates the Phnom Penh package that is presented over the guidebook’s next few pages. Tourist are encouraged to visit the Royal Palace, take cooking classes, have a massage and visit the two main dark tourism sites of the country: the Tuol Sleng Museum and the Killing Fields of Choeung Ek (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 68-71). Interestingly, the museum is not included in the Tourism Ministry’s publications. Also, the Killing Fields are seen as undesirable



for international promotion to avoid creating the impression that Cambodia might not be a ‘friendly’ holiday country (Hughes 2008: 321-322).

Lonely Planet nevertheless includes the Killing Fields with a brief historical comment. This is supplemented by an interpretation that shall help visitors cope with the upsetting experience:

[i]t is hard to imagine the brutality that unfolded here when wandering through this peaceful, shady, former longan orchard, but the memorial stupa soon brings it home, displaying more than 8000 skulls of victims and their ragged clothes. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 69)

As the quote suggests, a visit to the site may be somewhat difficult to reconcile with the more typical and hurtless holiday experience. It is noteworthy that Lonely Planet does neither provide much in-depth information (which is of course typical for the guidebook genre) nor take any steps to screen its readership from the ensuing emotional turmoil that might come as a result of visiting the site. Rather, the handbook encourages travellers to experience the Killing Fields as part of a schedule of other activities and attractions. As a consequence, the genocide is inappropriately incorporated in a set of commoditized tourist activities, and the enormity of it cannot be fully understood. As Lennon (2009: 38) points out, this is further augmented by the limited interpretation offered by the Cambodian providers at the sites.

Negotiating the humane abyss, tourists are thus left in an ambivalent space of grief, repulsion and voyeuristic aspiration (Hughes 2008; Lennon 2010). As research on dark tourism has suggested, a desire for recognition and prestige can also play a role when tourists visit dark sites. In accounts thereof, travellers frequently boast about their abilities to brave a state of exception or ‘survive’ in a hostile territory (Buda & Shim 2014: 3-4). With regard to Lonely Planets practice of including a ‘Survival Guide’ chapter in its guide books, the dangerous or upsetting destination is certainly not meant to deter the hardy travellers. Readers are advised that a visit to “Tuol Sleng is not for the squeamish” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 69), which can rather be understood as an encouragement than a warning if travel is something to be survived (see also Hughes 2008: 323).

Taking this into account, Cambodia’s dark tourism sites can be associated with the myth of the uncivilized. There, travellers can encounter the end of civilization either in a dutiful way, demonstrating sympathy for the victims (Hughes 2008: 328) or, as Stone (2011) as intimidated, they can escape contemporary sanitised society, negotiate mortality and contemplate the final frontier between life and death through gazing at the traces of a cadaveric spectacle. And, they

can do so in a relatively safe and organised way, which differentiates the frontier experience of dark tourism from more dangerous pursuits of the type. For instance, as Driver (2014) reports, in Ukraine, tourists were offered tours to active war zones for 400 Pounds – which includes a flack-jacket and an armed guard.

In summary, Lonely Planet's Cambodia combines all three of the tourist myths. Angkor functions as a blue-print for the Oriental theme, overarching the whole region. Cambodian people are represented as forever optimistic, simple and benign. Drawing from the colonial notion of timelessness, positive aspects of Cambodia are overwhelmingly associated with the past. The present state of the country is presented as the outcome of general deterioration involving corruption, environmental exploitation and political mismanagement. Claiming the power over interpretation, the guidebook presents 'responsible travel' and volunteering as 'solutions' to the modern problems it identifies. Tourists are thus sent the message that their trip can make a difference when it is organised in the right way – that is the way suggested by the guidebook. Thus, quite typically for the Oriental cluster, hosts are deemphasised as 'the people' (Echtner 2002: 422) and deprived of their voice and agency. Besides catering for the myth of the unchanged vis-à-vis offering a rather negative evaluation of recent local development, Lonely Planet alludes to the myth of the unrestrained as well. Cambodia is presented as both a holiday and adventure with beautiful beaches and a thriving entertainment scene in the capital. Finally, visits to dark tourism sites are recommended. Tourist can experience the frontier theme as they reimagine the terror of the Khmer Rouge as part of their holiday programme. Thus, they can safely immerse themselves in the old colonial myth of Cambodia as a land of adventure and the legacy of darkness associated with the Khmer Rouge.

#### 7.3.3.b. Cambodia (Blogs)

Given the great popularity of Angkor, it is not surprising that the *Oriental* theme features prominently in blog posts on Cambodia. One blogger remarks:

'Breathtaking' is not an over statement when attempting to describe Angkor Wat. In fact, there are not enough words to describe the gob-smacking magnificence of Angkor Wat & all its surrounding temples. When the French naturalist, Henri Mouhot, first discovered it in the mid 1800's, after centuries of being hidden in the jungle, he described it as, 'A temple that would rival Solomon, erected by some ancient Michelangelo. It is grander than anything left to us by Greece or Rome'". (Shakespeare 2014)

As I have argued elsewhere (Bergmeister 2015: 206-207), in the extract, the magnificence of Angkor is inter textually corroborated by a verbatim reference to the 19<sup>th</sup> century explorer Henri Mouhot. This has three implications: first, an interpretation of the present state is validated by recourse to a colonial knowledge base; second, the temples are drawn into the orbit of Western cultural hegemony by locating them alongside European history and mythology; and third, the rethoric of discovery suggests a present state of decline vis-à-vis the conservatory and documentary obligation of the Western project, without which Angkor would neither have been discovered nor appreciated and preserved. Taken together, this creates the imaginary of a greater Cambodian past than present and sustains power differentials associated with the Western portrayal of supposedly authentic Otherness. It is this vision of the 'real' that is revealed in the continuation of the post cited above:

[e]very temple in the area is unique & well worth the visit. Climbing around like Indiana Jones in the Cambodian heat can be exhausting. [...] Over a million people a year are now visiting Angkor Wat. Eventually tourism will have to be restricted to protect the temples. Erosion of the stairs due to so may [sic] feet passing over them, and touching of the sculptures are destroying the art. Unfortunately like many ancient sites worldwide, Angkor Wat is being loved to death. (Shakespeare, 2014)

As suggestive as the image of an exploring Indiana Jones may be, Angkor Wat has gone far beyond the stage of 'exploration'. It is rather visited by millions and said to be in danger of 'being loved to death'. The *memento mori* of a bygone civilization is threatened by the desire of millions not to discover it before anybody else but to go see it just like everybody else. That way, the footprint of the tourist gaze is more powerful in the end than the image it seeks to construct. Since gazing entails the performative consequence of bringing an object close enough to the human eye, the material effect of this practice becomes even more dominant than its reifying force. As the eye closes in, it engulfs its object asymptotically, but not without leaving its ultimate trace. Thus, as a direction for future research, Angkor could serve as a viable point of departure for conceptualizing and exploring a new 'material dimension' of Urry's (1990) tourist gaze. That would entail looking beyond the gaze's potential of shaping the 'reality' it observes towards the effect gazing actually has on what it aligns in its sight.

Contrary to more affirmative representations of the temples, a blogger who is less enthusiastic about the Angkor Wat spectacle writes:

I opted for the day pass to Angkor Wat, which Lonely Planet calls "a crime", but Lonely Planet's way too dramatic. Angkor Wat is Disneyworld for fat, middle aged

package tourists. They're dreadful! All day long they stepped on my fingers and pushed me around and did not apologize. So Angkor Wat is the largest religious structure in the world (or so I've heard), and THE tourist destination of south east Asia, and part of Tomb Raider was filmed here. It's dozens of enormous gorgeous ruins in the middle of the jungle and its absolutely swarming with tourists. And rich ones, too. You should see the posh resorts they pack into this tourist town in a third world country. (Hildebrand 2006)

Referring to Lonely Planet but disagreeing with the guidebook's advice, the traveller opts for a shorter visit and labels Angkor Wat as a 'Disneyworld for fat, middle aged package tourists', which is regarded as 'THE' tourist attraction of Southeast Asia, a Hollywood filming location and a posh resort for rich tourists. The blogger goes on:

Siem Reap's messed up. My motorbike driver pointed out the massive resort that is owned by the guy who is the sole profiteer of the millions of dollars tourists spend for Angkor Wat passes. He told me how the motorbike drivers have to fight for tourists to drive around and how he was not looking forward to low season, where he might only get 3 jobs a month, and how the Angkor Wat authorities are planning on phasing out motorbike drivers entirely and only allowing official guides in air conditioned cars in the complex. 99.9% of the populace of Siem Reap is in the tourist industry and that's going to hurt, oh of course, the poor people of Cambodia. (Hildebrand, 2006)

In the account, the local voice of a motorbike driver is included. This allows for an alternative narrative of the Angkor spectacle in terms of relocating the focus of interest from the temples to the socio-economic conjuncture in which the entire tourist system around Siem Reap is embedded. Indeed, as Dara's (2014) piece on the transport situation in Siem Reap confirms in *The Cambodia Daily*, private taxi drivers do not only struggle with high fuel prices but with organized pick-up schemes that consume most of their business:

'[t]he revenue from Angkor Wat is not falling to the tourist-focused tuk-tuk and motorcycle-taxi drivers and other small businesses. Most of the money goes to big businesses,' Von Pao, the president of IDEA, told the rally. 'Therefore, today, we demand the Apsara Authority get rid of the electric cars so that [motorcycle-taxi and tuk-tuk drivers] can earn some profit to support their family.' (Dara 2014)

Takin this into account, the often found tight focus on the narrative of ‘gobsmacking Angkor’ disregards Cambodia’s troubling economic status and the situation of those local workers who facilitate tourism on the ground.

Next, in a blog post titled ‘Cambodia - Paradise beaches, landmines and temples’ a traveller writes about his sea and sand experience at the island of Koh Rong. After having arrived from Phnom Penh via Sihanoukville he writes:

[o]ur room had neither air condition nor fan. There were no other people nearby except for a few local fishermen from time to time. We could listen to a symphony of the sounds of the jungle and that was basically it, in terms of entertainment. The beach was fantastic with a sandy bottom far out and with coconut trees right down to the edge of the water. However, there were snakes in the paradise. Already on day one, Christian almost sat on a beautiful green snake and later he saw a big fat black snake. But there were other types of snakes in the paradise, in form of a veritable mosquito invasion every afternoon around dusk. [...]

We had 5 full days on the island and enjoyed snorkeling and finding small stuff. Amongst others we found a small black seahorse in really shallow water. It was very special to get out of bed at 7 am and go for a swim in the morning light with no one around. After the swim we were spoiled with a good breakfast in the open restaurant with a view to the ocean and the palm trees. It was with mixed feelings we said goodbye to Lonely Beach. It is a very special place and the owner, Dani, will do almost anything to make you feel at home. But the lack of activities, especially in the heat during the day, and the many mosquitoes and sand flies, means that we won’t return. (Nielsen 2012)

Drawing from the *myth of the unrestrained*, the presented destination is characterized by pristine nature, fantastic beaches, leisure activities, culinary delights and welcoming hosts. However, in the account, the post-card paradise is represented as not ‘perfect’. As the title suggests, Cambodia is perceived as a land of ambivalence and it has generally been associated with tragedy and danger (Winter 2006). Lonely Planet portrays the country “as an adventure as much as a holiday” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 64). Into this discursive framing, the described beach holiday seamlessly fits. While many elements allude to carefree indulgence, the emergence of the frontier stays within enunciative and physical range. Contrary to the much used and more sanitized ‘bathing stations’ of Thailand, nature is still broadly intact. This involves sea horses as well as snakes and mosquitoes. Obviously, the latter are not conducive

to ‘paradise’, which is expressed by the use of the signifier ‘snakes’ as a metaphor for nature’s ‘intrusive’ side. It would go too far to suggest that the above discussed discursive framing of Cambodia would have found its way in the extract intentionally. Nevertheless, considering the myth of Cambodia as a land of danger and intrigue, dating back to French colonial reports and the legacy of the Khmer Rouge (Hughes 2008: 321), the blog entry sustains the notion of rough place with a charming exotic side.

This finally leads to the *frontier myth*. As discussed in the Lonely Planet section directly above, Cambodia has dark-tourism sites. There, visitors can witness catastrophe either in a responsible-minded way, demonstrating their empathy for the victims (Hughes 2008: 328), or they can safely negotiate mortality and contemplate the final frontier between life and death through gazing at the traces of what Stone (2011) has described as a cadaveric spectacle. In that sense, the following extract is illustrative. Upon visiting the Killing Fields, a blogger recounts:

The first stop we made was a rifle range. This place was something else. They seat you, as a waiter would in a restaurant. We actually thought they wanted to take our order. When they handed out the menu, we were stunned for a second. The menu contained weapons and magazine prices. There were AK47, M16, M60, M30, Uzi, Colt 45 and Revolvers, most cost \$30 a mag but it was possible to opt in for the grenade launcher which was \$50, and for \$400 you were taken out the base of the mountains where you could fire a bazooka. We stuck to the guns and split a mag on the AK47 and the K50 pistol between 3 of us giving 10 shots on the AK47 and 2 on the handgun. I was volunteered to go first by the others which I didn’t argue about, we only got one target and that way I could see measure accuracy. I was pretty chuffed with myself. My first time shooting a handgun and both the pistol rounds were kill shots, the AK sight was off because all 3 of us took shots to the left side of the target but I did get a couple of shots on the torso of the target and a kill shot. (Bulloch 2010)

First and foremost, the account integrates the visit to the Killing Fields into the time frame of a ‘standard’ vacation day. It is basically experienced as part of other tourist activities. For those interested, the programme can begin with a stop at the rifle range. The setting there compares to a restaurant where patrons can choose their weapons of choice, ranging from small arms to rocket propelled grenades. After the shooting, the poster jovially reflects on the experience of shooting a handgun for the first time. The accuracy of his firing performance fills him with pride, particularly the placement of a ‘kill shot’. After this foretaste of what is to come, the party returns their guns and moves on to the next stop. They write:

[n]ow that we had had some fun it was time for some history and culture. We arrived at Cheong Ek, the Killing Fields. As soon as you go through the gates directly in front of you is Wat Thmey Pagoda which houses the bones of victims taken from the surrounding mass graves. There are 17 Tiers all containing different bones, in total 5000 people's remains are contained within it. We spent some time in the small museum/hut which explains small parts of the history of the area, brief bios of the party leaders, Angkar's mission and how the killing fields came about. When you walk around there are 2 famous trees, one is the "Magic Tree" from which a loudspeaker was mounted which drowned out the screams of the people being executed, and the other tree is the one the babies were smashed against. This was for insurance, a dead enemy will never grow up to resent or fight the party for revenge [...]. (Bulloch, 2010)

The initial phrase frames the transition from the shooting range to the Killing Fields. The former place is labelled 'fun', the latter 'culture & history'. Subsequently, a description of the memorial site is rendered in a plain and unembellished prose style. This replicates the principle of the log-book, which became the standard for exploratory travel writing from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Cribb 1999). Writers had to prioritise the observation of measurable phenomena and keep personal thoughts and emotions to a minimum (Thompson 2011: 76). The strategy can be observed in the text and appears disconcerting in the context of a travel blog entry on genocide. The lack of empathy and emotion becomes particularly obvious in the noun phrase 'Angkar's mission'. Historically, Angkar refers to the movement of the Khmer Rouge but the noun adjunct 'mission' deserves particular attention. Since 'mission' is rather neutrally connoted and implies a target-oriented process, it normalizes and belittles the genocide committed by Pol Pot and his followers by discursively muting its horror. In a similar vein, the blogger represents the tree that was used to kill babies. Instead of emphasising the sheer horror that most would feel when witnessing such place, he offers the 'rational' explanation that the children were killed so that they could not take revenge on the party. That way, the perversion behind the genocidal act is backgrounded and effectively disguised behind a discourse of cause and effect. As the day wears on, the blogger leaves the site and relocates to a restaurant. He states:

[d]inner was a much cheerier affair. I wanted to eat Cambodian food since I was out voted the previous night. We found a nice little restaurant where we all enjoyed our meals. Khmer food is fantastic; I had the national dish, Amok. As we were getting ready to leave Ali quietly informed me there was a cockroach that had crawled from my right shoulder to my left hip by the time she'd finished the sentence I felt the thing

on my knee and shot bolt upright and stood to attention in the process the cockroach flew through the air onto Emma's foot, she almost ended up on the ceiling. Fun times. (Bulloch 2010)

Upon return from the Killing Fields, the narrative switches back to a more casual tone and topic. The poster praises Khmer food and recounts an episode about a cockroach, which functions as a comic relief at the end of a vacation day. This is confirmed by the coda 'fun times'. Overall the three extracts illustrate an emotionally decontextualized visit to one of the world's most horrid sites, where the traveller's story revives a bygone nightmarish spectacle of death in the painstakingly unadorned tone of a protocol. Then it is back to fun.

Quite to the contrary, the next post exemplifies a more empathic way of describing a visit to the Killing Fields. An Australian student on an eight month exchange program writes:

[a] torrent of emotions therefore rushes within my [sic] on this return journey: I feel shattered, yet reinvigorated; utterly harrowed, yet filled with hope. If you'll forgive the romanticisation [sic], I can't help but feel as if I've just straddled the space between past and present, death and life. [...] And yet, from the midst of this darkness, has come light, healing, and hope for the future. It's one of the most beautiful things the human race has done and continues to do as best we can: to see the light at the end of the tunnel, pave the way for future hope and change, but not forgetting to respect and reflect on the darkness that brought us here. This is manifested in many shapes and forms, and I found a visit to the Killing Fields to be one of the most poignant and precious of these, for which I am truly thankful. As we look towards the future, may we never forget to look back at the past with upmost respect and a contrite heart. But as we dwell on the past, may we also have the strength to look towards the future with eyes that are older and wiser, but simultaneously filled with a fresh, and youthful hope. (John 2015)

In the extract, the writer recounts a 'frontier' experience, stating that she feels as she has 'just straddled the space between past and present, death and life'. Having witnessed this place at the limit of humanity and mankind, she ascends from an emotional abyss, leaves behind humanity at its worst and directs her gaze from past darkness towards future hope. Following Hughes (2008: 328), the story appears indicative of the global humanitarian theme around dark tourism, expressed in a dutiful comportment of travellers and the conviction that being haunted by the ghosts of others ultimately serves a higher purpose.



Finally, and equally akin to the theme of tragedy, bloggers were found to engage in volunteering as part of their trips. In Cambodia, such assignments frequently include English teaching and / or volunteering in one of the country's many orphanages. While some tourists stay for several months, others only visit the sites for a few hours and donate money or goods. In the following blog post, the more typical, short volunteering experience is described:

We managed to spend some time at the Lighthouse Orphanage where we played and chatted with some of the 75 children aged 1-17 at this open and friendly orphanage 7km out of the city. The owner was welcoming and explained everything about the day to day running of the company and how they are growing their own vegetables because they do not have enough money, and rely on bags of rice from tourists like us. (Saxon 2008)

The post recounts a visit to the Lighthouse Orphanage in Phnom Penh. The bloggers spend some time there, play with the children and are reassured by the owner that the project relies on tourists like them. This resonates the logic of Lonely Planet's responsible travel agenda, where the tourist makes a difference while on the go. While this may be a noble cause in many instances, it should be noticed that the helping tourist – at least on a discursive plane – relies on his or her 'helpless Other. In a post-colonial context, this can be problematic since it reinstates a power-differential that is essentially colonial (see Gronemeier 1992). Next, the second sentence features two adjectival adjuncts (open and friendly) that are noteworthy because they appear communicatively more relevant than the actual head of the noun phrase (orphanage). The reason for this is that they convey alternative meaning, which reverses the saddened connotations of the proper noun. By this strategy, the children in the orphanage are symbolically freed from their plight. As the visitor benevolently intervenes, her language mirrors the intended helping effect, so that in the text the tragic situation finally appears resolved. This clearly privileges the assumption that the visitor has made a difference, even though she probably has not.

In the continuation of the blogpost above, the complex interplay between enjoying a holiday and contemplating moral obligations becomes obvious. Akin to Lonely Planet's model-traveller, mobility and Western privilege are assumed while mass tourism is despised, and responsibility is praised:

[a]s we fly out of Cambodia to Bangkok for three days of sunning ourselves in Koh Samet (making the most of a ticket mix-up and topping up a last minute tan) I am definitely sad to be leaving this country and my travels. But it makes me want to travel

again, to north Vietnam which we didn't have time for, as it was for northern India and perhaps to another orphanage in Cambodia. I have had the most beautiful time on the most fabulous holiday I could ever wish for, and realise how lucky I was to experience it. Although the tourist trail gets more worn every year, awareness of responsible tourism via the environment, poverty, village life and the sex trade is growing too. I can only hope that some of my words might encourage you to fly to these wonderlands and further to indulge, help out and inspire you wherever you decide to tread. (Saxon 2008)

As this suggests, there is the assumption of one 'right' way of travelling. This involves sunbathing, the occasional visit to an orphanage and the promise to travel again. The ability to do so is labelled the 'most beautiful time on the most fabulous holiday' and foregrounded by the epiphany-like assertion 'realise how lucky I was to experience it'. The notion of 'being lucky to travel' sets the stage for a main further assumption. In the following sentence, the detrimental effects of mass tourism, sex tourism and environmental degradation are insinuated. Thus, the actual force of Western privilege and mobility in the post-colony is asserted. Logically, this would challenge the blogger's own trip. However, by foregrounding the notion of being lucky to travel the world combined with the above discussed vision of making a difference, her travelling style is discursively differentiated from that of the unreflecting mass tourist and inconsiderate sex tourists. As a matter of fact, it is no longer a contradiction to address likeminded travellers and to encourage them 'to fly to these wonderlands' to further indulge, help out and get inspired. As this last sentence illustrates, it is eventually all about the traveller. He or she decides where to go, where to help out or to indulge and where to get inspired. This underscores the nonbinding nature of Western privilege in supposedly responsible travel.

In summary, bloggers describe visits to Angkor Wat, the coast, orphanages and the Dark Tourism sites of the country. This largely resembles the list of must-sees recommended by Lonely Planet. Like in the guidebook, Angkor is praised for its gobsmacking grandeur; however, entries point towards bloggers' concerns over over-visiting and mismanagement at the temple sites. Akin to the myth of the unrestrained, Cambodian nature is presented as pristine. However, some underscore its rougher nature, complaining about snakes and mosquitos. With regard to the frontier theme, accounts about the Killing Fields oscillate between compassion with the victims and the morbid exhilaration of firing guns at the adjacent shooting range. Finally, stories about orphanages underscore the theme of responsible travel against a

background of tragedy. As these visits are integrated into the normal holiday planning, they can justify the whole trip as a noble cause.

#### 7.3.4.a. Vietnam (LP)

In the ‘Countries at a Glance’ section of the guidebook, the Vietnam experience is summarized by the terms “culture/history, beaches and food. Vietnam is represented as a “small country” with a “big history” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 48). The guidebook states: “[b]e it neighbouring China, colonial France or anti-communist USA, foreign powers couldn’t keep their hands off Vietnam” (ibid). The reader further learns that highlights in Vietnam include “imperial Hue”, “entrepreneurial Ho Chi Minh City”, a “voluptuous coastline and a young sociable vibe” against a background, where the “legacy of colonialism bestowed chewy cups of coffee and crusty baguettes” (all ibid). In this introduction, foreign intervention is foregrounded, implying that much of Vietnam’s history (except that of ancient empire) was beyond local control. To be fair, some 900 pages later, the history section gives a more detailed account of Vietnam’s history, emphasising for instance that the almost 1000-year period of Chinese occupation was characterised by struggles and eventually ended in independence when emperor Ngo Quyen successfully revolted against the Chinese in 939 (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 902). Historically, this is of course correct, however, it is not mentioned that the resistance to Sinicization had a significant impact on cultural assimilation at the time, meaning that the Annamites were largely successful in preserving their traditional ways of life during the occupation. This was done so effectively that over centuries, they were considered much less sophisticated than the Chinese, particularly in agriculture (Fisher 1966: 532). This assumption of a ‘race’ less sophisticated than the Chinese can be traced in Mouhot’s (1864) account of the Annamites discussed in the historical chapter.

In terms of Lonely Planet, arguably, when tourists only read the ‘Countries at a Glance Section’, a rather incomplete picture of Vietnam’s history is generated, foregrounding the narrative of influential foreign powers over that of local agency. This may significantly influence the tourists’ ways of imagining Vietnam because more detailed historical information can only be found at the end of the book. What is more, it is likely that tourists pay more attention to the more practical and anecdotal information that fills the pages of the chapter. For instance, in the section ‘Why go?’, readers are given reasons why they should visit the country and they are told what they might expect there. Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. (2014: 812) state:

[a]stonishingly exotic and utterly compelling, Vietnam is a kaleidoscope of vivid colours and subtle shades, grand architecture and deeply moving war sites. The nation is a budget traveller's dream, with inexpensive transport, outstanding street food, good-value accommodation and *bia hoi* - perhaps the world's cheapest beer. Nature has gifted Vietnam soaring mountains in the north, emerald-green rice paddies in the Mekong Delta and a sensational curvaceous coastline of ravishing sandy beaches. Travelling here you will witness children riding buffalo, see the impossibly intricate textiles of hill-tribe communities, taste the super-fresh and incredibly subtle flavours of Vietnamese cuisine and hear the buzz of a million motorbikes. This is a dynamic nation on the move, where life is lived at pace. Prepare yourself for the ride of your life.

As can be observed, all three tourism myths emerge in the text. There is the notion of a worthy and unchanged past, presented in terms of 'grand architecture'; there is a curvaceous coastline alluding to the playful ambitions of the sea and sand cluster; and there are soaring mountains, hill-tribes and war sites to cater for the frontier theme. Besides, the country is presented as a budget traveller's dream with inexpensive transport, good-value lodging and the world's cheapest beer. As Echtner & Prasad (2003: 672) have noted, such strategy of representation resonates the idea of colonial exploration mixed with a romanticised vision of colonial exploitation. The tourist is invited to marvel at the exotic and the remnants of history, he or she can explore nature, witness endogenous customs, and enjoy a solid holiday in the sun on the cheap. The imperial logic that is sustained here is that the tourist is licensed to take full possession of land and people through gaze, mind and body, profiting from various sensations disproportionately to their comparatively cheaper prices.

So far, the quote strategically employs the classic binary of more active and modern guests vs. rather passive and pre-modern hosts. However, the last sentence does not agree with this. We learn that Vietnam is a 'dynamic nation on the move, where life is lived at pace'. This does clearly challenge the Orientalist notions of picturesque others acting mainly as silent human props devoid of change, modernity and advancement (Echtner & Prasad 2003: 671). To further trace this apparent discursive anomaly, the Lonely Planet's depiction of Hanoi is discussed next:

Showcasing sweeping boulevards, tree-fringed lakes and ancient pagodas, Hanoi is Asia's most atmospheric capital. Just don't expect a sleepy ambience; it's an energetic city on the move; and Hanoi ambitious citizens are determined to make up for lost

time. [...] Hanoi has it all: ancient history, a colonial legacy and a modern outlook. There is no better place to untangle the paradox that is contemporary Vietnam. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 816)

The abstract begs the question what in particular might be the ‘paradox’ of Vietnam? Is it the lack of ‘sleepy ambience’ for a Southeast Asian country as compared to Laos that is presented as a ‘sleepy paradise’ (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 370); or is it the determination of ‘ambitious citizens’ who embrace a ‘modern outlook’ and try to ‘make up for lost time’ versus, for instance, Cambodia’s supposedly more precarious future perspectives (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 137)? To answer the questions, it is instructive to look further into the representation of ‘Vietnam today’. The guidebook states:

Vietnam’s had a good couple of decades: a period of rising, sustained growth has benefited most. The standard of living has risen markedly, as cities have been transformed, education and healthcare have improved, and the tourism sector continues to thrive. Yet a growing disconnection between a heavy-handed state and its people is evident, with widespread resentment regarding rampant corruption and evidence of growing, if limited, political dissent. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 901)

As this implies, the ongoing socio-economic upswing is threatened by a heavy-handed and corrupt (communist) government. The reader learns that with the development of political dissent, the state has cracked down on internet communication, establishing a ‘bamboo firewall’ that restricts all use of online social media including Facebook and others. In this context, it is warned that “[b]loggers are particularly vulnerable, with 46 sentenced to prison for ‘anti-state propaganda’ in 2013, including Le Quoc Quan, a democracy activist and prominent Catholic” (ibid). The juxtaposition of Western / Christian values and democratic progress towards the benefits of a liberal economy against reactionary communist ideology sets the stage for Lonely Planet’s ultimate argument, namely that the current situation in Vietnam is unsatisfactory and ripe for change. It is argued that:

[t]he Vietnamese are battle-hardened, proud and nationalist, as they have earned their stripes in successive skirmishes with the world’s mightiest powers. But that’s the older generation, who remember every inch of the territory for which they fought. For the new generation, Vietnam is a place to succeed, a place to ignore the staid structures set in stone by the communists, and a place to go out and have some fun. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 904)

The extract confirms the liberalist / communist dichotomy identified above by linking the binary to supposedly factual age-related assumptions. We thus have an older generation that fought and died for a communist regime and we have a young generation that eventually overcomes the threats of communism by embracing Western values and turning the country into a place to go out and have fun. Effectively, this sends the message that Western (American) hegemony has eventually prevailed and will manage to ‘liberate’ Vietnam from the grips of communist mismanagement and terror. Despite America’s lost war, its goal will be achieved by Vietnam’s younger generation. It is therefore no coincidence that on the same page, the Hollywood blockbusters *Apocalypse Now* and *Platoon* are listed among the ‘best films’ to watch and understand Vietnam.

Having discussed the ‘special’ discursive role of Vietnam’s young urban population against the country’s historic background, I now turn to the spatial dimension of contemporary tourism myths. In terms of grouping specific sights and activities, the country can be divided into three geographic clusters: the rugged north of Vietnam, the World Heritage Site of Hue and the Southeast Coast. To begin with Northern Vietnam, it is described as the “roof of Vietnam”, delivering “spectacular scenery and outstanding cultural interest”, including “trekking and exploring minority villages” (all Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 831). There is Cat Ba Island, a “[r]ugged, craggy and jungle-clad” insular that has become the Mecca of northern Vietnam’s adventure sport scene and there is also the possibility to explore the Far North on a rental motorbike, riding from Hanoi to the battle site of Dien Bien Phu, where highways are described as hell (idem 837).

Besides the frontier experience in the north, tourists are promised a great Oriental spectacle in the ancient City of Hue:

[p]alaces and pagodas, tombs and temples, culture and cuisine, history and heartbreak – there’s no shortage of poetic pairings to describe the graceful city of Hue. A World Heritage Site, the capital of the Nguyen emperors is where tourist come to see opulent royal tombs and the grand, crumbling Citadel. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 848)

Much in the tradition of the *myth of the unchanged*, the representation foregrounds a past that is enshrined in a World Heritage Site. Arguably, the ‘crumbling’ citadel under international protection might be understood as an emergence of colonial logic, which would assume that in the present situation, the continued existence of architectural artefacts is no longer guaranteed by local authorities. This interpretation relates to Said’s (1978: 35) assessment that colonial

discourse reifies the Oriental as always being beyond its golden age, implying that “[t]heir great moments were in the past; they are useful in the modern world only because the powerful and up-to-date empires have effectively brought them out of the wretchedness of their decline” (ibid).

Finally, the sand / sea theme prominently features in representations of the *Southeast Coast*. Employing feminizing language, it is described as “curvaceous” and “defined by sweeping sands, towering cliffs and concealed bays” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 868). Tourists are jovially addressed and encouraged: “[i]f your idea of paradise is reclining in front of turquoise waters, weighting up the merits of a massage or a mojito, then you have come to the right place” (ibid). The myth of the unrestrained is thus clearly underscored.

To summarize the above, Lonely Planet’s representation of Vietnam combines all three tourism myths in a unique way. The guide book achieves this by keeping them separate from the country’s energetic urban centres. There, people are depicted as young and pro-liberalism, as opposed to an older generation of pro-communist fighters and the powerful centralist government that is described as despotic and reactionary (e.g. bamboo firewall). All over, the evaluation is privileged that the modern generation will liberate the state and lead it towards a Western model of progress, implying that America’s efforts of bringing Vietnam under control are finally about to succeed.

#### 7.3.4.b. Vietnam (Blogs)

In the blogosphere, Vietnam is represented as a hybrid between a timeless and historic place, a hedonist mecca and the home of numerous war sites that promise an action loaded experience. To begin with the sand and sea theme, Vietnam is frequently praised as the perfect holiday destination. After a long night out, one blogger admits that the vibrant entertainment scene can even make a ‘real’ traveller tumble. He writes:

OK, I am pathetic. In a matter of a few days I have managed to go from being a traveller to being a hardcore tourist. It is 1:30 in the afternoon and I am just now lifting my heavy head off the pillow. I am sunburned and hung-over...I can still taste the Vodka Red Bull and I am trying to piece together last night. [...]

...I guess I should explain where I am. I am in Nha Trang, Vietnam, a beach town that reminds me of many other places. It has the beaches of Maui, the bars and clubs of PB, the beautiful crowd of Ibiza, and the local people trying to sell you anything and

everything like Cabo. There are \$500 a night resorts on the beach, but for \$13 a night you can get a proper hotel with all the amenities you'd need. It is an absolute hedonistic paradise. I love it! I love Vietnam! (Martinico 2006)

Arguably, the extract resembles an inversed account of what Fussell (1980: 209) termed a "displaced quest romance". What Fussell (ibid) means by 'displaced quest romance' is the transformation of a mythical quest for romance and adventure into a journey that is actually taking place. On a journey, the protagonist turns the realm of fantasy into reality as he or she performs the traveller's role. In the extract, however, the displaced quest is inversed, meaning it is transformed into a *hyperreal* (Baudrillard 1983) mix of corporeal indulgence and imagination. As the protagonist manages 'to go from being a traveller to being a hardcore tourist', he essentially retreats from his *displaced quest* through a more tangible 'reality' (being a traveller) to a phantasmatic pastiche of temptation and illusion that 'has the beaches of Maui, the bars and clubs of PB, the beautiful crowd of Ibiza' – all reified in the form of 'an absolute hedonistic paradise'. Essentially, the place that is thus constructed denotes the end of travel and odyssey. It reconfigures *the displaced* into an infinite loop of hyperreality that empowers the mythical form beyond the capabilities of 'real' life.

Of course, Disneyworld comes to mind. In the blogosphere, the notion of a symbolically overdetermined Vietnam is also negotiated as a place that is in danger of being too artificial to appear real. Upon visiting Hoi An, a blogger writes:

[t]here may not be a more picturesque location in Vietnam than Hoi An's Old Town - too bad it doesn't really feel like Vietnam! Good or bad, Hoi An's Old Town feels extremely foreign compared to our previous stops - it seems almost too perfect, too manufactured, to be the Vietnam we've come to know. [...] Hoi An is Disneyfied Vietnam - even though we never came across Minh Mouse, Donald Duc, or Nguyen the Pooh, it still should be called Disney-Nam! (Vagabond Voyagers 2016)

In the text, Hoi An is dissociated from 'real' Vietnam and labelled as a Disneyfied version that seems too perfect when compared to the rest of the country. In contrast to the previous blogpost, the notion of the 'displaced quest romance' is not inversed but defended. As the protagonist feels betrayed by a hyperreal spectacle (Disneyfied Vietnam), he ceases to attribute credibility to it and dismisses it as 'Disney-Nam'. This is an important observation to better understand the cultural leeway that can be assigned to certain tourism imaginaries and myths, and the range of interpretations that may occur.



This ties in with the *myth of the unchanged*. In order to trace this narrative in blogger's accounts, the imperial city of Hue is a useful place to start. A 'typical' blogpost on Hue states:

[t]he imperial city is amazing and a surprise highlight from the trip... dating as far back as the 14th century it was a key place of government for this region for many years right up until it was mostly destroyed during recent wars. Between what remains that is original and restored elements you can get a feel for the grandeur and scale of the place – we spent a good 1.5 hours wandering the grounds and looking at the beautifully decorated buildings and gates. (Wick 2016)

Noteworthy is the informative pretension of the extract that is betrayed by unspecific references such as 'many years', 'recent wars' and '13 or so kings'. In the second sentence, for instance, a rather complex syntagmatic phrase structure is chosen to allow for the insertion of more specific pieces of information; however, the specificity of these infobits is 'casualized'. By this, the cultural site is seemingly digested in a culturally and historically competent manner but nevertheless in a leisurely way. Relating this to questions of social status and veracity in contemporary travel reports, modern travellers still have at their disposal most narrative devices and conventions of earlier texts of the genre (Thompson 2011: 86). For example, if they want their reports to appear truthful, they can opt for the protocollary style of exploration writing; if they wish to ground their narrative in personal experience, they can insert humorous anecdotes and, if the goal is to appear adequately educated and cultured to appreciate an ancient historic site, that can be achieved by the 'casualized protocol' strategy identified above.

Another way to negotiate the myth of the unchanged is the ultimate denial of a touristic experience that would normally be scheduled. In the following post, a popular 'oriental' site gets a mention but is not actually visited:

As I mentioned earlier Hue was home to the Nguyen Dynasty and the big draw here is to see the tombs of the old emperors on the banks of the Perfume River and to also visit the old Imperial City known as The Citadel. I'm kind of "tomed out" at this point so I gave these a pass. (McComas 2017)

Akin to the hybridized forms of touristic sign-play in a social media environment, the extract is illustrative of how contemporary 'post-tourists' engage in a symbolic struggle over re-coding tourist places and practises, emphasizing the de-differentiation between tourism and other aspect of social life. More specifically, in their accounts, they constantly negotiate the boundaries of tourism towards social capital and discover new, creative ways of social

distinction (Jansson 2018: 102). In that sense, the ‘tombbed-out’ traveller might be interpreted as post-modern ‘tomb raider’ pastiche, who playfully decides to skip the raid.

In terms of delineating imaginaries of modernity vs. premodernity and authenticity, some blogposts on Vietnam point towards a country and city divide. For instance, one blogger states:

[w]e started in Ninh Binh, which is a small town surrounded by amazing countryside. There were mountains, winding rivers and rice paddies all mixed in together and it was a great place to see some ‘real’ Vietnam. (Blower 2010)

As can be seen, there is emphasis on the ‘organic community’ of a supposedly real and premodern Vietnam that is essentially rural. Addressing the counterpart of this setting, the following entry exemplifies a frequently found negative evaluation of modern city life in Vietnam. Shortly after arriving in the country, the bloggers recount:

Bloody Norah! We have been Hanoi'd! After a short flight from Vientiane, capital of Laos, to Hanoi, capital of Vietnam, we experienced a total culture shock. From the laid back attitude and extreme poverty of Laos, to the intense energy and chaos of north Vietnam's capital city on the red river, the contrast over 1000km or so was striking. If we thought Bangkok drivers were maniacs, they had nothing on these bad boys. There are no rules, no lanes, no stopping for red lights, policemen, pedestrians or sod all, in fact. [...] We have never seen driving like this. Chaos is an understatement... (Dunlappie 2014)

Referring to the authority of personal travel experience, and to make the claim appear more credible, Hanoi is depicted as chaotic cultural shock beyond the rule of law. Supposedly devoid of order, responsibility and reason, it is represented as the culmination of what may be called ‘otherness out of control’. Essentially, its modernizing localities and mobilities are dismissed as dysfunctional from the outside perspective. This view, however, is challenged by another blogger, who describes the city and much of Vietnam as increasingly similar to the rest of the Western world. The blog states:

[a]lthough still firmly under the red flag of communism, Vietnam is a country that in many ways seems unaware of the fact; HCMC is a baby Shanghai or Hong Kong, Hanoi is awash with independent businesses, western brand names and foreign investment and the other places we saw - even in the remote hills of Sapa or Dalat - bear witness to the spread of a capitalist mentality of consumerism, not unlike that found in the west. I am not for one minute suggesting this is a positive step, nor indeed

a negative one. It is merely interesting to note as a traveller and visitor that the preconceived ideas we have of such economic systems do not always hold true. (Clayton 2011)

Intimated is the rapidity of transition from a centrally planned economy towards open-market consumerism. As the blogger observes and analyses the state of local affairs, he does not make value judgements but challenges common assumptions of what communist countries may be like. In the following entry, the notion of the supposedly untypical communist place is emphasized too, although this time from a more Eurocentric perspective:

Ho Chi Min City (Saigon) – Ho Chi Min City was a pleasant surprise. The former French colony of Indochina had clearly left its influence. Ho Chi Min City has large boulevards, has high rises, is clean, and has great architecture. It literally felt like a European city in the middle of a communist country. (Anderton 2012)

In the post, Ho Chi Min City is described as pleasant. This assessment is based on a positive evaluation of the remnants of French colonial influence and the argued similarity to a European city that is perceived by the poster. Notably, the represented modern Ho Chi Min City is dissociated from both its communist government and local agency. It is labelled ‘pleasant’ because its heteronomous aspects are foregrounded. Arguably, this resonates Western expansionist discourse that took root in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and culminated in the Vietnam War. Vietnam was constructed as a matter of foreign interest by empire, it became a proxy at the frontier of the ‘Western world’ during the Cold War, and after military and political loss, it is discursively regained in tourist discourse. This is achieved by the positive assessment of foreign influence and a selective dismissal of indigenous evolutions. In a nutshell, this drives home the message that the West has ultimately won the struggle over Vietnam.

That the symbolic struggle over Vietnam may indeed not be over yet is illustrated in the following examples. This ties in with the *frontier myth* since Vietnam is still heavily associated with the Vietnam war. Tourist accounts further point towards a desire to experience the debris and vestige of this long bygone era of conflict. Today, the Cu Chi tunnels is a tourism site where this can be done. In a blogpost titled ‘Doing a Rambo at the Cu Chi Tunnels...’ it is stated:

[w]e arrived at a firing range: for just over a quid per bullet we could fire a minimum of ten shots. There was a choice of weapons, but we went for the top gun, the AK47. [...] It was loud and I've no idea if I hit a target, I was just happy to shoot. We spotted a machine gun mounted on a army vehicle and though we couldn't fire it, we all got to

pose Rambo style for photos to the bemusement of the staff. The base of the gun was buried deep in empty shells of which Andy managed to swipe a few, sharing them out later. (Wade 2015)

As can be observed, the tragedy of war is playfully negotiated through action and recourse to popular culture. To make the event at the firing range meaningful, it is related to a popular Hollywood movie. The travellers appropriate the fictional character of the American warrior in their participative action. As they pose with the machine gun, they symbolically enact a “monarch of all I survey” dramaturgy (Pratt 1992), in which they take complete control over their surroundings, its history and its future. This sustains the idea of a foreign intervention that has yet to succeed.

Although not as obvious, this assumption can be traced in the next example too. After a visit to the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City, one blogger writes:

[i]t is hard, when you look around and read the details, not to judge the soldiers and some of their awful actions but even harder to read about the American governments unethical and illegal tactics with which they fought this war without feeling a sense of dismay. The Vietnamese, however are a race of people who have faced 100 years of war and repeated attempts to invade them and yet they are still a happy, friendly and hardworking people and although they will never let the memory of the war and their experiences die they are willing and able to move onwards and leave the past behind them without bitterness or self-pity.

...HCMC appears much more developed than anywhere else in Vietnam. It has modern shopping malls, coffee shops, fast food restaurants (it does not to have a MacDonald's) and many people peddling their wares day and night. We even watched all of the famous Vietnamese being photographed on their way into a Gucci product launch. (Jack & Kate 2010)

In the first part of the extract, the American action during the war is dismissed as unethical and illegal. Juxtaposed are the Vietnamese, who are described as ‘a race of people who have faced 100 years of war’, and who are labelled as ‘happy, friendly and hardworking’. In addition, they are represented as ‘willing and able to move onwards and leave the past behind.’ The logical consequence of this orientation is presented in the second part. One modernizing centre of Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City) is foregrounded for its supposedly emblematic status of development including shopping malls, coffee shops and designer products. All-over, this

promotes the evaluation that modern Vietnam is essentially a westernized place where copying with the past culminates in the cultural and economic appropriation of the West. In that sense, Saigon was lost to the Vietcong in 1975 but is being reconquered through tactics of bricolage and cultural appropriation.

In a nutshell, Bloggers construct Vietnam as a hybrid holiday destination that combines the remnants of a supposedly timeless history with the tragedy of war and the sand and sea theme. For the lack of inclusion of local voices, the struggle over interpretation of the ‘real’ Vietnam is pre-dominantly foreign determined. Interpretations vary from an ‘authentic’ Vietnam that is essentially pre-modern and rural to an urban one that is essentially dysfunctional and chaotic. In between emerges the ‘good’ westernized Vietnam that is supposedly driven by the energetic desire to leave behind its communist past and that takes pride in becoming a cultural victory for the West, most notably the United States.

#### 7.3.5.a. Malaysia and Singapore (LP)

In the rubric ‘Countries at a Glance’, the former British colony Malaysia is described as a “multicultural success story” with diversity being evident in all walks of life (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 48). In the main section on Malaysia, the tourist learns the following:

Malaysia is like two countries in one, cleaved in half by the South China Sea. The multicultural peninsula flaunts Malay, Chinese and Indian influences, while Borneo hosts a wild jungle of orang-utans, granite peaks and remote tribes. Throughout these two regions is an impressive variety of microcosm ranging from the space-age high-rises of Kuala Lumpur to the smiling longhouse villages of Sarawak. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 848).

In a way, the representation of modern Malaysia resonates the logic of Mouhot’s (1864) ‘protean civilization frontier’, which I have identified and discussed in the historical chapter. The traveller can thus conveniently shuttle back and forth between wilderness and civilization, justifying the frontier experience by spatially and discursively delineating it from the nearby centres of (colonial) development. What appears is a mental map that reifies the colonial civilized / uncivilized binary within a dual geographical scheme.

At the heart of the modern side of the geographic divide lies Kuala Lumpur. The guidebook gives a brief account of its development, beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

[o]ne hundred and fifty years since tin miners hacked a base out of the jungle, KL has evolved into an affluent 21<sup>st</sup>-century metropolis remarkable for its cultural diversity. Ethnic Malays, Chinese prospectors, Indian immigrants and British colonials all helped shape the city, and each group has left its indelible physical mark as well as a fascinating assortment of cultural traditions. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 381)

Presented is a linear narrative of mutual development that culminates in the successful development of a multicultural metropolis. Special attention deserves the use of the verb ‘help’, which implies that Ethnic Malays, Chinese and Indian immigrants and British colonials acted in league. In fact, the first wave of migration to Malaysia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was facilitated by the infamous ‘indented labour’ model of the British, where prospects from India and China could sign up in order to work in mining and agriculture and pay back their sponsorship to British enterprises (Husa & Wohlschlägl 2011: 83). The ‘indelible mark’ that each group made was thus arguably not one of equal opportunity and extent.

Nevertheless, Malaysia is praised as a post-colonial success story. In a description of Penang Island, named “Pearl of the Orient” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 405), the reader is instructed that “[t]oday the culture of this region, forged over decades of colonialism, commercial activity and hosting tourists, is one of Malaysia’s most tolerant, cosmopolitan and exciting” (idem: 405-406). Arguably, this communicates the idea that colonialism was the driving force behind the multicultural success story the guidebook seeks to transport. In this vein, Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. (2014: 848) state that “the beauty of Malaysia lies in the fusion of it all into a country that is one of the safest, most stable and manageable in Southeast Asia. This statement resembles Harrison’s (1920:2) assessment of the Federated States of Malaya, assuring travellers that they will be safe in person and property because “there is no unrest in Malaya. The country is perfectly quiet, and the people contended”. As the comparison of old and modern discourse suggests, the positive assessment of colonialism is still privileged. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century specificity of a ‘quite country’ with ‘contended people’ has transformed into the 21<sup>st</sup> century labelling of Malaysia as one ‘of the safest, most stable and manageable’ countries in Southeast Asia. The discourse topics of security and political stability legitimize foreign intervention in terms of foreign investment, commerce and tourism and vice versa. As Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. (2014: 393) imply in a description of Malaysia’s West Coast, one great advantage of this is that “the convenient shipping route [Strait of Melaka] has, over the

centuries, created a cosmopolitan populace, well-schooled in English”. Malaysia is thus reified as a model post-colony that shall forever be indebted to Britain’s civilizing mission.

The same holds true for the city-state of Singapore. The little city state ranks as one of the wealthiest countries in the world and Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. (2014: 613) assert that

[a]long with that wealth comes a rich culture borne of a multiracial population [where you can] get lost in the mad swirl of skyscrapers in the central business district (CBD), be transfixed by the Bolly beats in the streets of ramshackle Little India, hike a dense patch of rainforest in Bukit Timah, or just give yourself up to the air-conditioned retail mayhem of Orchard Road. There is something for everyone here. [...] In short, Singapore makes for a perfect pit stop to recover from the rough-and-tumble of the rest of Southeast Asia.

Singapore is presented as the centre of modernity and development in the region. The comparison to a ‘pit stop’ further promotes the idea of a traveller taking shelter from the storm, retreating from the hardships endured in the less modern parts of the region.

This image of pleasant modernity is cleverly associated with the colonial past. When in Singapore, the rubric ‘Don’t Miss’, reminds the readers that “[t]he Colonial District and Marina Bay are the heart of Singapore and the former seat of British power” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 614). In connection with this historic assessment, the ‘Singapore Highlights’ section encourages tourist to “[h]ark back to the days of the empire as you stroll through the colonial architecture in the Colonial District” (idem: 617). Similar to the imperial guidebooks of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, tourists are encouraged to witness the greatness of empire abroad and marvel at its supposedly positive outcomes (see Douglas & Douglas 2000: 36). In the specific case of Singapore, this tendency might have been augmented because the country has, in contrast to Malaysia, pursued a policy of technocratic cleansing and removed most material manifestations of its history. Thus, cultural heritage and ethnic enclaves have largely been erased from urban space, leading to a (politicised) re-enactment of heritage in museums and in the form of a sanitized city scape oriented towards consumer culture and a ‘disneyfied’ colonial theme (King 2009: 66; Wood 1997: 21). For a more detailed discussion of heritage and commodification in Singapore see Leong Wai-Teng (1997). The visual signifying economy of modern Singapore thus appropriates the re-envisioned architectural artefacts of the colonial period as ‘stepping stones’ towards a modern townscape, in which they are integrated under the narrative of being foundational. Since public space lacks alternative witnesses of history, colonialism is necessarily assigned positive valence.

On the other side of Malaysia's modern/pre-modern divide is the East Coast. In the guidebook, it is described as:

[r]efreshingly Malay, the peninsula's east coast is an entirely different experience from the more Westernized, traffic-clogged west coast. Headscarves, skullcaps and the hauntingly melodious call to prayer are as ubiquitous here as the white-sand beaches that fringe the sunrise-drenched coasts and jewel-like islands. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 415)

As this metaphorically suggests, the more authentic East – described as refreshingly Malay - awaits those who are prepared to leave the West(ernized) Coast. In the East, they are promised to find supposedly timeless and Oriental ways of life combined with the pleasures of the sea and sand holiday theme.

For those who prefer the more adventurous side of Malaysia, Taman Negara National Park (Peninsular Interior) illustrates the notion of frontier tourism:

Taman Negara blankets 4343 sq. km in shadowy, damp, impenetrable jungle. Inside this tangle, trees with gargantuan buttressed root systems dwarf luminescent fungi and orchids. Trudge along muddy trails in search of elusive wildlife (tigers, elephants and rhinos can hide better than you'd think), balance on the creaky canopy walk or spend the night in a 'hide' where jungle sounds make you feel like you have gone back to the caveman days. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 430)

Foregrounded are allusions to the heroic quest and the voyager's ordeal. The jungle is described as 'shadowy, damp and impenetrable' and full of exotic and potentially menacing excesses of nature. This gloomy atmosphere is augmented by references to physical hardships (muddy trails) and the presence of elusive wildlife (tigers, elephants and rhinos), which – to complete the traveller's 'misery' – are masters in hiding despite their size. Arguably, the image that is created reminds of Henry Mouhot's journey through the region in the 19th century. This 'frontier' vision of braving a savage world is amplified by the phrase 'make you feel like you have gone back to caveman days'.

In the representation of Malaysia's remotest region, Borneo, the *myth of the uncivilized* is further emphasized and also juxtaposed against trends of modernisation. In the chapter 'Understand Malaysia', the guidebook addresses the reader in a second-person casual tone, stating: "[i]n Malaysian Borneo you'll be fascinated by the communal lifestyle of the tribes, who still live in jungle longhouses (enormous wooden structures on stilts that house tribal



communities under one roof) [where] hospitality is a key part of the social framework” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 471). In the extract, Malaysian Borneo is presented as a place that is inhabited by pre-modern people (tribes), living together in close-knit communities (longhouses). This setting is portrayed as positive by a reference to hospitality vis-à-vis the linguistic choice of ‘still’, which implies the notion of loss. On the same page, the topic of growing Westernization is addressed by means of matching old vs. new. The text states:

[t]he rapid modernisation of Malaysian life has led to some incongruous scenes. In Sarawak, some ramshackle longhouses and huts sport satellite dishes and have recent vintage cars parked on the rutted driveways out front. And almost everywhere you go people incessantly finger mobile phones as if they’re simply unable to switch them off. (ibid)

The extract does not only suggest that there is a clash between the old and the new, it also makes use of a negative value judgement by asserting that this has led to ‘incongruous scenes’. Such would involve ‘traditional’ building structures equipped with modern technology (satellite dishes), people owning cars (even though they are vintage), and the use of mobile phones, which is supposedly leading to addiction. While Western tourists are certainly licensed to benefit from ‘their’ modern technologies when touring or at home – bringing an iPhone is actually recommended in the guidebook (see Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 45) – the supposedly pre-modern world they visit is not.

In summary, Lonely Planet’s Malaysia is characterised by a modern / pre-modern divide. Kuala Lumpur and the modern West Coast is pitted against the less modern and supposedly more traditional eastern parts, central parts and Borneo. Malaysia’s multiculturalism is presented as the continuum of a supposedly mutually beneficial colonialism that brought about cosmopolitanism, prosperity and security. This resonates Harrison’s (1920) assessment of the country discussed in the historical chapter. Finally, modernisation effects on the ‘pre-modern’ side of the country are negatively evaluated. This reifies ideas about an organic and authentic community beyond civilization, which is commodified as timeless and unchanged, and thus effectively excluded from modernisation. Singapore, on the other hand, is represented as the modern continuation of European expansion, with a sanitized cityscape that features a selective tradition of rebuilt colonial artefacts next to a high-tech silhouette.

### 7.3.5.b. Malaysia and Singapore (Blogs)

Similar to Lonely Planet, the myth of a timeless and unchanged Malaysia can be traced in bloggers' posts. After visiting traditional longhouses in the province of Sarawak, a traveller gives an account of his impressions. Referring to the ethnic group of the Iban, he writes:

They live on basic plantation, livestock, hunting, ritual dances and etc.

Traditions and ceremonies are fundamental in their life. [...]

They pay respect to their gods believing to bring good harvest and long life.

Ritual dances were performed by the warriors to guide them in the battle with no fear. [...]

I took the chance to explore a bit the surroundings and I felt excellent and seemed to be back in time in this secluded place hidden in the forest where people still live like a long time ago. (Solotraveller 2010)

As can be observed, the Iban are framed by means of a classic manners-and-customs description that functions as a normalizing discourse, working to fix the Other in an unchanged and timeless presence where particular actions are reified as normal habits (Pratt 1985: 139). Illustrative of this is the last sentence. It is concluded that visiting the Iban is a fantastic experience because it is like travelling back in time to a pre-civilized state.

Akin to the *frontier myth*, such primordial Otherness is not only located beyond 'civilization' and the modern world. In order to be sufficiently differentiable from familiar surroundings, it is often cast at the limits of geography. In the following example, two bloggers write about their impressions visiting Gunung Mulu National Park in Sarawak and their encounter with the Penan ethnic group:

[u]p until 1977, Mulu and the local Penan Indians were completely cut off from the rest of the world, until a British Geological Society team ventured there. [...] The surrounding jungle is vast and dense and the Penan settlements have changed little in millennia. The arrival of a small airstrip and a small lodge-style Marriot hotel hasn't changed their way of life much (but they are hoping soon to get mains power)! The only way to get to Mulu is by plane or a gruelling 4 x 4 overland journey. Fortunately, this will NOT change, because the whole vast area of rainforest here is a World Heritage Site. How wonderful is that! No threat of deforestation at Mulu. Fefi comes from a village downriver where the forest has been destroyed by logging. However, there are more animals there, because they have not been hunted so much. It is now

illegal for native Penan to use guns to hunt the wildlife; they can, however, still make use of the blowpipe! (Cussell & Cussell 2018)

The spatial and chronological delineation between the Penan people and the ‘rest of the world’ is underscored by crediting the British Geological Society (cave explorers) for the coincidental discovery of this ‘lost tribe’ and emphasising that their ‘settlements have changed little in millennia’. Even though modern infrastructures such as an airstrip are mentioned, readers are reassured that the anticipated experience of ethnographic discovery is not threatened. This is so because the only access route to the National Park leads through protected rainforests and can thus not be built out. Represented as organically included (National Park) and spatially excluded (modernity) at the same time, the Penan are reified as part of the conservation area and thus discursively precluded from change. As hunters, the Penan face the prohibition of hunting with guns as part of the overall conservation plan. Consequently, they are forced to adapt counter clockwise. Essentially, they must retreat to the past and use the blowpipe in order to survive.

In contrast to the supposedly unchanged and uncivilized frontier areas of Sarawak, Singapore is generally represented as a modern, vibrant and cosmopolitan city. The following post is illustrative of this:

Singapore is a fascinating place whose development really started in 1819 when Sir Stamford Raffles (who lends his name to the world famous hotel) set it up as a trading post of the East India Company. The British obtained sovereignty over the island in 1824 until, after being occupied by the Japanese during World War II, it declared independence from the United Kingdom in 1963. Since then, Singapore has developed rapidly and is recognised as one of the four Asian Tiger economies [...]. It has the fourth biggest financial centre in the world and is one of the top 5 busiest ports.

...Although a very modern city packed with incredible skyscrapers and hundreds of expensive shopping malls [...] Singapore has its own unique way of doing things and is never, ever dull. It’s almost like collection of small countries merged into one entity – Chinatown, Little India, Arab Town to name but a few and it can be quite confusing to find your way around. (ACDC World Tour – On The Road Again!! 2014)

In the first part of the extract, the story of Singapore is told in the form of a selective listing of historical events. Included events foreground the presence of the British over the centuries, independence and Singapore’s stellar rise to a global financial centre. The account is continuous

and free of contradiction, which privileges the evaluation that modern Singapore is the unproblematic and direct result of British colonialization. This is confirmed in the second part of the extract. Singapore is presented as a cosmopolitan and mundane success story, where countries and cultures merge into a highly modernized and harmonic whole. Arguably, this points towards a romanticised view of post-colonial Singapore, in which key goals of the colonial project, *inter alia* to civilize and to economically integrate, have finally been achieved. This relates to the following post. Upon landing in the city state, Singapore is described as

a good place to start a trip to Asia. It's Asian without any chaos. There are many things I like and appreciate about Singapore: The streets are clean. It is illegal to litter. English is the common language. [...] Cars obey all traffic laws, wait for pedestrians at crosswalks and I have yet to hear a horn honking. [...] There are no signs of any economic downturn. Construction sites are everywhere, people are shopping at malls and there are no empty store fronts that we have seen. (The Castellones 2009)

As I have argued (Bergmeister 2015: 206), there can be observed an implicit reference to Lonely Planet when Singapore is presented as 'Asia without any Chaos' and ideal entry point to the region. The topicalization of 'chaos' furthermore implies that chaos is widespread everywhere else in Asia. By foregrounding clean streets, traffic laws and economic prosperity, the text communicates the image of a 'civilized' Western enclave in Asia, where civilization equals Western lifestyle. This argumentation is indicative of the cultural-imperialist discourse traced in the historical texts.

Finally, and with regard to the hedonist theme, blogposts on Malaysia and Singapore equally differentiate between the urban and the rural experience. In respect of the former, luxury and exclusivity are frequently foregrounded. A prime example is the Marina Bay Sands hotel. A blogpost states:

[t]he hotel tag line is "Never Settle." It is a completely accurate line - this hotel is ridiculously luxurious!! Our room is on the 48th floor overlooking the Marina Bay Gardens and the Straight. It is breath taking. The highlight of the hotel is the infinity pool on the 57th floor. It is the largest elevated Pool in the world. The view and effect of the infinity pool is simply amazing! We were lucky enough to get lounge chairs on the edge, in the middle of the pool. We enjoyed the afternoon sunshine, a poolside drink and people watching. (Bernard 2015)

Part of the indulgence at MBS is gazing and being gazed upon in a fast-paced and superlative world of simulation, where the slogan ‘never settle’ reifies the holiday as an ephemeral event of signification with the ‘real’ and the imaginary falling into each other. On that lofty hill-top of hyperreality, the signified replaces the signifier and the simulation becomes more actual than the real thing (Baudrillard 1983). Going one step further than Pratt’s (1992) “monarch-of-all-I-survey” setting, where the protagonist eventually ‘colonizes’ what he or she observes from a mountain top, gazing from and at Marina Bay Sands takes place in a post-colonial setting. In this environment, the signifier ‘post-colony’ is not tied to a final concept but re-signified again and again, leading to what Derrida (1973) has described as an endless play of difference. As the Westerner’s gaze protrudes from an infinity pool high above the post-colonial ground, declarative action reifies enunciative control *ad infinitum* so that the apposition ‘post’ is ultimately rendered irrelevant. While semiosis is forever open to reconfiguration, the material structure from which it is employed fortifies neo-colonial power differentials. Simply put, the super-luxurious Marina Bay hotel offers a perspective on how the mechanisms of the colonial gaze may have adapted to a hyperreal (Baudrillard 1983) and liquid post-modern condition (Bauman 2000), where power relations are challenged, transformed or sustained and a pastiche of old and new practices and discourses is in a constant struggle over interpretation and reformulation.

In contrast to the ultramodern Marina Bay Sands hotel, the rural type of sea and sand holiday is represented as retreat to paradise. A case in point is the island of Pulau Redang. The following extract recounts the ‘discovery’ of paradise beach:

[t]he track leads us up a hill and then down the other side through very thick jungle. We see a smaller track off to the side through the jungle, which looks like it leads down towards a beach. It does. We emerge onto a wide powder white sand beach with palm trees and thick jungle at the back of it. There are about half a dozen rustic shelters with palm fronds for roofs scattered along it. As far as we can see there are only two other couples on this whole beach, plus a local family renting snorkels and selling coconuts from a small and very rustic shelter in amongst the palm trees at the back of the beach. We set up camp in one of the shelters and one of the local people brings us a large rug for us to sit on. This place seems too good to be true. Soon after we arrive the other two couples leave, so we have now got what looks to us like the world’s best beach more or less completely to ourselves. (Sheehan & Sheehan 2017)

In this ‘Robinson Crusoe’ narrative, ‘the world’s best beach’ is discovered after a jaunt through the jungle. Alluding to the imaginary of the quest, the protagonists are rewarded for their perseverance. As they arrive, they happily find out that ‘their’ beach is both ‘lonely’ and well-equipped with basic amenities such as snorkelling gear and coconuts. As this illustrates, the sea and sand theme in Malaysia mostly differentiates between rural paradise and super (urban) luxury. The more excessive party theme around the myth of the unrestrained (such as the Full Moon Party in Thailand) could not be identified.

In summary, bloggers represent Malaysia as a destination characterised by a strong rural-urban divide, offering both tradition and super-modernity. As a consequence, modern change is assigned positive valence as long as it takes place in modernizing environments, that is in urban spaces. In ‘traditional’ regions (e.g. Sarawak), such developments are viewed with suspicion, with the consequence that certain ethnic groups are discursively limited in terms of what they can and should do. Finally, the theme of colonialism emerges in reports on Malaysia and Singapore, often with an emphasis on a supposedly unproblematic continuity from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present state.

#### 7.3.5.6.a. Burma / Myanmar (LP)

In the ‘Countries at a Glance’ section, Myanmar is characterized by the three key-terms ‘Culture / History’, ‘Outdoor Activities’ and ‘Festivals’ (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 47). Lonely Planet then introduces the destination to the reader: “[t]he new government in this once cloistered country has made peace with its political enemies and now welcomes outsiders. The old sites are just as marvellous, but the new-found optimism is history you can touch” (ibid). By this, tourists are sent the message that visiting Myanmar is no longer an issue and also appreciated by the new government. That has not always been the case and Lonely Planet played a controversial role in promoting individual tourism to the country over a decade of political turmoil. In 1990, Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD) won the election by 82 per cent but the military junta retained the power and put the democrats’ leader under house arrest. At that time, Myanmar had already become a relatively popular destination among backpackers and individual tourists. With the growing influx of visitors, the democratic opposition made a request that tourists should not come to Burma because doing so would supply the military government with foreign currency and support further human rights abuses linked to tourism such as forced labour to build infrastructures and hotels (Lisle 2008: 167). In 1999, Suu Kyi even appealed to guidebook publishers specifically, pointing out that

[g]uidebook writers should listen to their conscience and be honest about their motivations. Profit is clearly their agenda. It's not good enough to suggest that by visiting Burma tourists will understand more. If tourists really wanted to find out what's happening in Burma – it's better if they stay at home and read some of the many human rights reports there are (Suu Kyi qtd. in Lisle 2008: 167).

Following this call, other publishers withdrew their guidebooks. Lonely Planet nevertheless insisted that promoting tourism to Burma would ultimately bring the country closer towards democracy by supposedly facilitating cultural exchange, generating small incomes and making it more difficult for the military junta to commit human-rights abuses in the presence of visitors (Lisle 2008: 167-168). Infuriated by Lonely Planet's implicit message that they think they know better than the people in the country, Suu Kyi responded:

[t]hat's so patronizing! Burmese people know their own problems better than anyone else. They know what they want – they want democracy – and many people have died for it. To suggest that there's anything new that tourists can teach the people of Burma about their own situation is not simply patronising – it's also racist (Suu Kyi qtd. in Lisle 2008: 168).

Ignoring this, Lonely Planet continued to publish guidebooks to the country. In later editions, however, the discourse of humanitarianism was mobilized more strongly. As Lisle (2008: 170) points out

LP travellers can now satisfy themselves that they are not supporting the junta when they travel to Burma; rather, they are putting much needed hard currency directly into the hands of needy local people and therefore strengthening grass-roots democracy. By visiting Burma, LP travellers are not just responsible, independent and ethical, they are also helping the Burmese people fight for freedom. This suggest that the key protagonists in restoring Burmese democracy are not the NLD or even Suu Kyi herself – they are young Western backpackers going into Burma with their LP guidebooks, dispensing their wealth and coming out again to reveal its horrors to the rest of the civilized world.

The quote is reproduced in full length to illustrate the problematic agenda Lonely Planet communicates on a discursive plane, resonating the colonial ideal of the 'civilizing mission' and effectively reifying it in the form of its preferred mode of travel. This orientation can still be traced in the recent guidebook's chapter on Burma / Myanmar. LP states that while the

country has meanwhile begun its transition towards democratic statehood, many problems are still evident. These include current acts of violence against the Rohingya minority group and other abuses of human rights as well as biodiversity and wildlife threatened by deforestation by the timber industry (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 536-539).

As one ‘solution’ to these problems, Lonely Planet offers responsible travel. In a textbox specifically dedicated to the theme, visitors are encouraged to travel independently rather than in tour groups, support small independent businesses, spread their money and purchases / activities over the country and contribute to local charities (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 544). As this suggests, the idea of responsible travel as form of development enterprise is manifest. Interestingly though, the agenda of furthering local development is frequently abandoned in favour of communicating imaginaries of Oriental simplicity and authenticity. Tourists are encouraged to travel to Myanmar and advised that:

[n]ow is the moment to visit this extraordinary land, scattered with gilded pagodas, where the traditional ways of Asia endure, and previously off-limits areas are opening up. As the country makes tentative steps towards democracy, sanctions have been dropped and the world is rushing to do business here. Thankfully, the pace of change is not overwhelming. Travelling in Myanmar remains a chance to swap the hubbub and electronic demand of modern life for the spirituality of sacred temples and hushed monasteries. Enjoy slowly unfolding journeys through serene landscapes, including meandering rivers, lush jungles, ethnic minority villages and pristine palm-fringed beaches. Best of all, you’ll encounter locals who are gentle, humorous, engaging, considerate, inquisitive and passionate. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 480)

Employing the binary timeless tradition vs. modern change, Myanmar is presented as a historic place, where supposedly authentic traditions are still intact. On the other side, it is acknowledged that the country is modernizing. This is linked to democracy, the lifting of sanctions and foreign investment. Effectively, Myanmar is thus constructed as a fast changing / westernizing country that becomes modern as quickly as its traditional ways cease to endure. For this reason, travellers are reminded that the time to visit is *now* and reassured that the pace of change is (still) not overwhelming. Furthermore, by stating that the country ‘remains a chance’ to withdraw from modern life, (Western) travellers are constructed as more advanced and encouraged to embark on a mythical quest through an exotic wonder land, where they appropriate ‘reality’ through a gaze informed by phantasmatic discourse. This ‘Peter Pan’ style adventure has long been a common narrative trope in the representation of whole Southeast



Asia (Selwyn 1993). In the case of Myanmar, however, this motif is frequently mixed with the frontier theme (e.g. off-limit areas that are opening up) and the myth of the unstrained (e.g. pristine palm-fringed beaches).

To begin with the Oriental theme, the depiction of Mawlamyine is illustrative of the myth of the unchanged. The guidebook states:

[w]ith a ridge of stupa-capped hills on one side, the sea on the other, and a centre filled with mosques and crumbling colonial-era buildings, Mawlamyine is a unique combination of landscape, beauty and melancholy. Indeed, the setting inspired two of history's finest writers of the English language – George Orwell and Rudyard Kipling (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 500).

Besides the portrayal of an exotic landscape dotted with historically significant artefacts, advertised attractions include 'crumbling colonial-era buildings' vis-à-vis 'a unique combination of landscape, beauty and melancholy'. The semantic relatedness of the set logically favours the interpretation that 'melancholy' results from witnessing crumbling remains of grandeur, implying that Mawlamyine is both past its prime and trapped in an unsatisfactory present. This is underscored by a reference to George Orwell and Rudyard Kipling, who are identified as 'two of history's finest writers of the English language'. With the authors being worthy contributors to a cannon of the past and their inspiration being located in a foretime, tourists are sent the message that they should marvel at a spectacle of yesterday through a 'surface layer' of present reality. This 'effect' of travelling back in time to encounter a more organic world is foregrounded in the guidebook's description of Inle Lake and Shan State. Tourists learn that

[s]licing the crystal, placid waters of Inle Lake in a boat, trekking among Pa-O and Danu villages outside Kalaw; feeling like you have travelled back in time at a remote hill-tribe market. What do some of Myanmar's most emblematic experiences have in common? They can all be tackled in the country's east in Shan State. (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 503)

Shan State thus offers the 'essential' Myanmar experience, combining tradition, simplicity and nature. In stark contrast to this, Mandalay – the country's second largest city – is presented as "economically booming and culturally vibrant" and "worth a stop if only to use as a base for visiting the surrounding former royal capitals" (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 509). The reader is further told:

[f]or those who haven't been – and that includes *The Road to Mandalay* Author Rudyard Kipling – the mention of 'Mandalay' typically conjures up images of Asia as its most traditional and timeless. The reality is indeed a sprawling city where dusty streets teem with traffic and there's a construction project on every block. In spite of this, it's impossible not to be impressed by the golden Buddha of Mahamuni Paya, or the sunset views across the flat landscape from stupa-studded Mandalay Hill. (idem: 509-510)

As already mentioned in less detail further above, the extract explicitly foregrounds the Orientalist notion of a 'traditional' and 'timeless' Asia. This is discursively corroborated by a reference to Kipling and the cultural force behind his work. Against this imaginary setting, modern Mandalay is juxtaposed. The present state is described by negative adjectives such as 'dusty street' that 'teem with traffic' and construction projects, with the guidebook assuring the tourists that 'in spite of this, it's impossible not to be impressed' by the golden Buddha and the stunning sunset views. The use of 'in spite of this' is revealing here. Effectively, it pits advancement against tradition so that advancement is assigned negative valence with the effect that the construct of 'tradition' cancels out the modernity effects and reduces the actual place to history, landscape and nature, effectively depriving it of any type of human agency.

Even further removed from 'modern civilization' are the supposedly real frontier regions of the country. These include areas in the West which have only recently been made accessible for tourists. The guidebook states: "[e]ven as more of Myanmar's remote areas become 'open' and tourist numbers increase, Rakhine State remains staunchly untouristed" (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 532). There, adventurous travellers are encouraged to get off the beaten track and visit the Chin Villages. To get there, "[d]ay boat excursions along the Lemro River to traditional Chin villages can be arranged in Mrauk U" (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 534). Reflecting on the experience of the trip, Lonely Planet continues:

[i]t's a long day, but we just found the Chin villagers a hoot – let's just say that having a web pattern tattooed on their faces (a dying culture practice) had done nothing to diminish the sense of humour of these old ducks. Typical trips [...] include an hour or so at a couple of villages" (ibid).

Underscoring the nature of the frontier experience, the remote Chin villages can only be explored by boat. The villagers are described as 'a hoot', which in this context can be interpreted as a patronizing way of ridiculing Otherness from a prejudiced Western perspective. This is underscored by the semi-comical parenthesis that having facial tattoos does not diminish the

sense of humour of the villagers, jovially described as ‘old ducks’. Finally, potential travellers learn that they will typically spend ‘an hour or so at a couple of villages’. Thus, representation and organization of the tour sustain the problematic idea of an exotic human spectacle that can be safely consumed as part of the adventure holiday package.

Finally, and in a more general sense, it should be noted that the ‘Survival Guide’ section of the Myanmar chapter cautions travellers about potential difficulties and hardships they may encounter. Burmese toilets, for instance are described as “squat jobs, generally in a cobweb-filled outhouse that is reached by a dirt path behind a restaurant” (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014: 544). In the ‘Safe Travel’ rubric, readers are warned that “[a]reas around the Myanmar-Thai border, home to the country’s notorious drug trade, can be dangerous (and off-limits) to explore” (idem: 543). This cements the imaginary of the frontier theme, where travellers embark on a penetrating excursion and brave a land at the limit and beyond the tourist trail.

In summary, Lonely Planet’s Myanmar is located within the frontier cluster but also firmly attached to the oriental theme. The country is represented as an adventure, as historic and as unchanged. Against this background, development towards modernization is selectively portrayed as intrusion threatening to ‘destroy’ what is considered emblematic. When historic artefacts, pre-modern simplicity and timeless landscapes are foregrounded over people’s voices, readers are sent the message that they visit a living museum full of gentle and welcoming hosts. In the border areas of Western Myanmar, tourists are encouraged to make short trips to minority communities and gaze at their supposedly primitive originality. This contradicts the guidebook’s agenda of furthering local development through responsible travel.

#### 7.3.5.6.b. Burma / Myanmar (Blogs)

Burma / Myanmar has only recently begun to attract larger numbers of tourists. Blog entries reflect on this and underscore the ‘pure’ tourist experience in a country that as a whole is considered somewhat under-travelled:

Myanmar (Burma) is fairly new to tourism, 2010, & the culture is raw, real & old. Buddhist monks wander the streets, looking peaceful & serene as they go about their business. Perhaps they have attained a state of mind I may never know about. After walking, observing, buying & looking, we set off for the People's Park which led us to the main attraction, the awe inspiring Buddhist monument, Shwedagon Pagoda, a golden pinnacle in which everything else revolves. (Cookie 2018)

In the extract, 'new to tourism' is associated with a culture that is 'raw, real and old'. The supposedly timeless and premodern aura of the place is discursively reinforced by allusions to religious mythology, including monks going about their business in an 'enlightened' state of mind and religious monuments in the centre of everyday life.

For many bloggers, the perceived authenticity of Burma / Myanmar is characterized by the absence of modernisation. One traveller writes:

Myanmar. What a country! It will not stop surprising you!! Perhaps because it is one of those countries where almost no signs of modern influence is visible. And the modernity I refer to starts with the Industrial Revolution. Just sit for 15-20min on the street of any city, town or village (in a shady spot, if possible!) and you will immediately understand why. (Armesto 2011)

Essentially, the extract depicts Myanmar as a backward country where industrial influence is still largely absent. This strategy of representation communicates the message that Burma / Myanmar is both unchanged and less developed than the industrialized Western world. (Material) progress is thus reduced to a linear Western model in which the visited country supposedly scores low. Spiritual progress, on the other hand, is foregrounded. In their joint effort, the two discourses of 'untouched' and 'devout' construct a place that is backward, spiritual and benign. A journey through such a destination alludes to flying on a carpet through an orientalist mirage, where the laws of nature and the concept of time lose validity and make place for the mythical and illusive. This is reflected in the next quote:

[a]s we slowly made our way along narrow sandy tracks on a horse and carriage we watched Stupa after Stupa pass serenely by and occasionally a special dazzling golden pagoda would be spotted in the distance. We would stop at occasional temples where 13th Century Buddha Statues would be found within small central chambers. (WorldWideWanderers 2018)

The extract alludes to *One Thousand and One Nights* with its dramatic visualization of surreal travel through oriental space. The 'spellbound' traveller thus becomes absorbed in a vastness covered in sand and fading sunlight, occasionally stopping for the epiphany of a religious shrine. In some cases, however, the emphasis on spirituality leads to conflicts of understanding. As illustrated in the following example, this particularly happens when bloggers attach their world of experience to the phenomena they observe and attempt to draw viable 'intercultural' conclusions:

[s]itting on the beach, I also thought about the importance Buddhism has here. You can hardly walk a few hundred meters without seeing a stupa or a small temple, and there are over 500.000 active monks in Myanmar. At the latter, locals would often donate a significant portion of their monthly income (say, a quarter). Driving along the roads, I have frequently seen locals holding pots asking for donations to, for instance, build a new temple or stupa. From my (atheist) point of view all this is very hard to understand: The poor people here are donating the little money they have rather than spending it on something that could improve their life, like a rainproof hut, electricity supply for their village, a tarmac road, food etc. I am aware that this is probably a very western approach to things, but foregoing a better, certainly possible life today in the hope of reincarnation in a better next life seems a strange approach to cope with the hardship the people are facing. (Beiske 2009)

As the traveller contemplates his journey through a Buddhist country, his cultural presuppositions come into conflict with the observed practice of local people donating money to monks. In his view, in a land where poverty is supposedly widespread, the giving away of money for religious reasons must be 'irrational' because of the opportunity costs that are involved (e.g. a rainproof hut, electricity, tarmac roads). An attitude perceived as 'traditionally' religious is juxtaposed against Western rationality, with the consequence that the former is labelled as 'a strange approach'. This has two implications: first, local people are discursively deprived of a realistic attitude; and second, their alleged failure to modernize is led back to precisely that lack. This constructs the orientalist image of superstitious people who fail to sustain commitment to common-sense goals. Notably, modernization is not portrayed in a negative way but the locals' supposed incapability to modernize is.

To the contrary, focusing on the trope of 'destructive modernization', there is growing recognition among bloggers that Myanmar's increasing openness to the 'modern' world may be detrimental. In particular, the influx of tourism is viewed critically:

Myanmar was as S.E. Asia used to be before we came en-masse. A younger, unblemished and at times a haughty S.E. Asia. Yes, S.E. Asia was certainly seductive before we soiled her. [...]

...Tourism I feel isn't a mixed blessing at all, I think it is a downright curse. Or let me put it this way, mass tourism is a curse. It brings along cultural and moral degradation to the host country. Mass tourism is like a swarm of locust: it devours and leaves a trail

of destruction in its wake. Mixed blessing my arse, as the British would say. (Kreuze 2012)

In the first part of the quote, present-day Myanmar is compared to Southeast Asia in the past, which is labelled as younger and unblemished before being 'soiled' by tourists. The juxtaposition of good past and present decline communicates a warning that Myanmar will eventually end up like the rest of Southeast Asia. In the second part, tourism (especially mass tourism) is named as the culprit. In the author's view, it is not a mixed blessing but a destructive to the cultural and moral integrity of a host country. This privileges the assumption that a purer and more authentic location must have existed before the advent of visitors and thus reifies the 'uncharted' and the 'unexplored' as the only authentic places. While countless observations could be named to corroborate the author's view, the problematic in the argument lies in the exclusion of local voices. What matters is the perceived authenticity from the outside, not from the inside.

Finally, akin to the *myth of the uncivilized*, Burma / Myanmar is sometimes also presented as a typical frontier destination. One blogger points out:

[y]ou learn the true meaning of getting away from it when you visit Mrauk U. The greatest competition for viewing temples is with the goat herders and their flocks. They sit on crumbling ruins picking the fleas out of the coats of inquisitive kids who are desperate to get back to their climbing games. (Lock 2010)

The notion of 'really' getting away is territorialized by a reference to the ancient city of Mrauk U. Emphasized are temples, which connotes 'timelessness' but among these, so the blogger, are goat herders sitting on 'crumbling ruins picking the fleas out of the coats of inquisitive kids'. The message is both overbearing and racist: in order to get away, you must leave civilization and go back in time. There, you'll essentially find 'stone-age' people picking out fleas.

In summary, bloggers treat Burma / Myanmar as a frontier destination located somewhere back in time. This 'backwardness' is conveyed through heavily orientalist imaginaries and a strong emphasis on the theme of spirituality. Modernisation and the increasing influx of Western tourists is negotiated in mainly two ways. First, it is viewed with suspicion and regarded as destructive to supposedly authentic local culture and second, the failure to modernize is led back to an alleged inability of the local population to think rationally instead of spiritually.

## 7.4. Discussion of Modern Discourses in Lonely Planet and Blogs

To reiterate the steps carried out so far in this chapter, Lonely Planet's guide book (Williams, Bloom, Brash et al. 2014) and selected blog entries (travelblog.org) were analysed. As in the historical chapter, KhosraviNiK's (2010) framework was used to trace the three enunciative categories *actors*, *action* and *argumentation* in the corpus. These textual functions were integrated in Anderson's (2006) key construction elements of the 'imagined community'. Furthermore, to specifically account for reconfigurations of modern travel discourse against the declarative background of the historical texts (table 4, page 154), Echtner's (2002) and Echtner & Prasad's (2003) model of Third World tourism country clusters and myths was applied. By this method, the dynamics of the modern (re)appropriation of tourism imaginaries (Salazar 2012) could be located within a wider set of 'big ideas' from the past. The tourism myth approach thus facilitates the unmasking of colonial ideologies within seemingly 'innocent' tourist practices along the three dimensions of *unchanged* (e.g. discovering a timeless and historic wonderland), *unrestrained* (e.g. romantically taking possession of a tropical paradise), and *uncivilized* (e.g. exploring wild people, nature and animals).

By this strategy, modern tourism discourse could be investigated from a postcolonial perspective (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2002) that allows for the uncovering of discursive continuation and/or transformations. The *unchanged* destination signifies the colonialist concept of timeless and backward *Otherness*; the *unrestrained* romantically revives the expansionist dream of taking into possession; and the *uncivilized* alludes to the 'heroic' quest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century explorer. Once these myths have attained the status of dominant geographical associations, they assign credibility to further discursive practice and experience. To make the subsequent presentation of results more concise and reader-friendly, and to account for the country specific and media specific differentiation in the analysis of modern texts, countries are discussed individually, with the other relevant analytical categories applied in combination. For instance, *census*, *maps* and *museum* (Anderson 2006) is applied to every country to better understand the specificity of its discursive embedding. First, I refer to Lonely Planet, then I compare perceptions from the blogosphere. Finally, I draw general conclusions and present the results in a table.

### 7.4.1. The Preferred Western Traveller

Before I begin with the countries, a discussion of the Western self / traveller is mandated. Lonely Planet functions as a global media text that addresses affluent and mobile individuals

from a (mostly) Western background. These individuals have been described as ‘un-tourists’ because they envision a supposedly morally sound travelling style that favours authenticity and despises the mainstream tourist trail (see Fürsich 2002). As I have demonstrated, Lonely Planet indeed advocates a preferred way of travelling that hinges on Western privilege and moral obligations. With the old motto ‘Just Go!’ being replaced by ‘Attitude and Authority’, Lonely Planet has created a vision of independent and responsible travel that is supposedly good for everyone involved (see also Lisle 2008). Travellers are thus sent the message that their trips can and will make a difference if they observe Lonely Planet’s ethical agenda (e.g. through volunteering with organisations mentioned in the book and favouring one-on-one cultural exchanges to supposedly broaden local people’s perspectives). Problematically, local voices are generally not included, so that the guidebook alone determines who needs help and why. This supposedly humanitarian notion involves the binary ‘helpless’ versus ‘helper’ and envisions the reader as a voyaging philanthropist who teaches the backward Other. Pointing out structural similarities to the 19th century civilizing project, Gronemeier (1992) has termed this foreign directed intervention ‘elegant power’.

Notwithstanding Lonely Planet’s ethical agenda, the guidebook offers somewhat contradictory travel advice that foregrounds hedonistic pleasures (e.g. drug taking), Western economic superiority (e.g. the tourists’ greater buying power) and travelling on a shoestring (e.g. spending as little money as possible). Besides supposedly aiming for a positive impact on the go, Lonely Planet advocates the (paradoxical) vision of independent travel out of a guidebook. It differentiates between travellers and mass tourist and promises the former more authentic experiences. This is achieved by the selective creation of *the* Southeast Asian itinerary that combines history with an exotic scenery and adventure. Activities, regions and people are thus located within three distinct clusters and myths, so that the ‘independent’ tourist can piece together a diverse and sheer endless holiday programme that may but must not cover the whole region.

As the blog survey suggests, this is what most online accounts reflect. Long-term travelling bloggers rarely visit only one country in Southeast Asia but rather combine various sights and activities in a way that largely mirrors Lonely Planet’s suggestions and routes. Some bloggers predominantly report of hedonistic experiences (e.g. partying), whereas others affirm Lonely Planet’s responsible narrative and condemn the supposedly detrimental effects of mass tourism. Notably, they rarely question their own ways of travelling, especially if visits to orphanages or



other ‘dutiful’ activities are included. At least implicitly, these stops function as a legitimization for trips that essentially follow the mass tourism trail (e.g. Angkor Wat).

#### 7.4.2. Thailand – Census, Maps and Museum

To begin with Thailand, Lonely Planet identifies the central parts of the country as the heartland of its *Oriental* appeal, with museums, historical parks and temples touted as the main attractions. There, tourists are encouraged to discover a mystic and timeless ‘wonderland’ of the past. Travellers are typically referred to as explorers, who discover ancient relics and simplistic ways of life. In the ‘land of smiles’, the ethnic Thai (Buddhist) population is portrayed as welcoming, spiritual and obliging.

This is not necessarily the case with the more marginalized ethnic groups in the mountainous North (collectively referred to as Hill Tribes), who are depicted as pre-modern and potentially unpredictable. Akin to the frontier theme, Northern Thailand is mainly associated with trekking tours, adventure sports and discovering supposedly backward and authentic minority cultures. Lonely Planet’s representation of Western Thailand is similar to this. The border region to Myanmar is described as undeveloped, remote and potentially rife with conflict.

North-eastern Thailand then combines frontier discourse with more benign imaginaries of the timeless and unchanged. It is presented as undeveloped but authentic, as undervisited but unspoilt, so that readers are sent the message that once they have arrived at the end of the tourist trail, they will experience the beginning of the ‘authentic’ Thai way. In contrast, Bangkok is depicted as a main financial centre, modern megacity and even as a much-needed ‘dose of civilization’. This resonates the notion of the protean civilization boundary I have identified in Henri Mouhot’s (1864) seminal exploration account. The main idea is that a modern travel-hub serves as the convenient gateway to more strenuous explorations in a distant and less modern region. If the traveller feels exhausted or overwhelmed, he or she can always safely retreat to a more familiar way of life. As a consequence, the 19<sup>th</sup> century binary ‘civilized’ vs. ‘uncivilized’ is cemented.

Thailand’s other major appeal evolves around the myth of the unrestrained. It is represented as a tropical postcard paradise, with stunning beaches and roaring parties. The infamous Full Moon parties are a case in point for the hedonist theme. Through their legacy and associated turmoil, the parties serve as rite of passage for (younger) backpackers. This is unconfirmed by Lonely Planet’s inclusion of ‘Ten Commandments’ as a survival guide through the Full Moon cataclysm. As I have argued, the party re-enacts the myth of the uncivilized destination by

creating an atmosphere of chaos and archaic mayhem. In the absence of local savages, young tourists themselves stage a spectacle beyond civilization. From that perspective, the Full Moon party equally caters for the myth of the uncivilized.

**In the blogosphere**, Thailand is negotiated as a multifaceted and touristy country that offers a plethora of experiences and activities. Bloggers indulge in the fantasy of the Oriental destination and praise the image of a colourful and authentic country. They write about their hedonist adventures (e.g. Full Moon party) and they engage in more exerting activities such as Hill Tribe treks. In all cases, they integrate their activities in personal narratives of adventure and exploration. In this, they either (implicitly) reproduce Lonely Planet's discourse by exaggerating their adventures (e.g. surviving dangerous trekking tours) or they point out the detrimental effects of tourism and backpacking and thus further differentiate themselves from other less responsible individual travellers. In the case of Hill Tribe tourism in Northern Thailand, bloggers refer to the spectacle of a walk-through village as a 'human zoo'. However, this critical assessment does not prompt them to reconsider their trip. Their initial unease is gradually superseded by the conviction that tourism is the only source of income the villagers have. Consequently, their trip is justified by a worthy cause.

Overall, these findings resonate Cohen's (2001: 156) assessment that "Thailand has enjoyed, in the West, the image of an enchanted Oriental kingdom throughout much of modern history", in which three main tourism sectors have developed since the 1970s, namely hill tribe treks, beach tourism and sex tourism (idem). As my analysis suggests, these three are symbolically reworked in recourse to the overarching *myths of the unchanged, unrestrained and uncivilized* to appear more authentic and historically coherent. If Cohen (2001) is right and Thailand is indeed shifting the focus of its imagining from 'exotic' and 'erotic' to 'amazing', then the three myths help negotiate the amazing exoticism and eroticism (e.g. of landscape) Lonely Planet seeks to advertise and Bloggers seem to enjoy.

#### 7.4.3. Laos - Census, Maps and Museum

In Lonely Planet's representation of less touristy Laos, the Oriental theme is frequently associated with the remnants of colonialism. Travellers are invited to gaze at them and reflect upon the French 'achievements' they supposedly symbolize. The French cultural impact is described as worthwhile and pleasant, with the occasional splurge in a bistro or spa being recommended. Most notably, however, Laos is represented as a 'sleepy paradise' where sleepiness translates to backwardness and lack of industriousness. Laotians are depicted as

friendly and incredible genuine. Implicitly, the local population is ‘blamed’ for their perceived failure to preserve architecture from the days of the French protectorate. In contrast, the mountainous North of the country is associated with the frontier myth. It is praised for its rugged simplicity and ‘fascinating’ cast of ethnic people. These people, however, are not portrayed as welcoming as the general Laotians. Lonely Planet’s discursively associates the ethnic groups with the notorious frontier region of the Golden Triangle and depicts them as superstitious and potentially unpredictable.

All-over, by combining the narratives of ruggedness, simplicity and positive impact of the protectorate, Laos is reified as a place that has been shaped to the better by European influence. This is amplified by references to the ‘red giant’ China. In a last-minute scenario, it is insinuated that scrupulous China will eventually usurp ‘sleepy’ Laos and destroy it with its economic projects. This clearly resonates Henri Mouhot’s (1864) assessment: European intervention is desirable, whereas Chinese meddling is destructive.

**Blog entries** confirm the notion of ‘sleepiness’. The blog provider travelblog.org even states upfront that everything in Laos supposedly happens very slowly. In the posts, Laos is presented as a world away from ‘typical’ Western life with primitive farming methods, no skyscrapers or shopping malls and plenty of rice fields. Besides, Laos is depicted as an exotic paradise dotted with the remnants of the colonial influence. In general, these are positively evaluated, particularly in combination with the French cuisine. As my analysis suggests, bloggers are nevertheless at unease with the imaginary of timeless and ‘perfect’ Laos. This is so for mainly three reasons: First, Laos can be more expensive than other countries in the region; second, Chinese and other Asian tourists become more noticeable and ‘disturb’ the gaze of the Western travellers with superior camera equipment; and third, the impact of irresponsible party tourism / mass tourism is perceived as cultural danger for the country. In essence, this reifies Laos as paradise for the select few (responsible travellers) and intimates that it should be romantically severed from the rest of the world and frozen in its symbolic state.

#### 7.4.4. Cambodia - Census, Maps and Museum

Cambodia’s Angkor Wat is not only the most recognizable sight in Southeast Asia, it functions as a ‘blueprint’ for the myth of the unchanged which extends far beyond the region. As blog entries confirm, there are basically no bloggers who travel to Cambodia without paying their visit to the temples. While most describe their experience as breath-taking in one or the other way, there is recognition that Angkor Wat may fall victim to what I have termed the new

material dimension of (Urry's 1990) tourist gaze. As the masses approach and stare, their physical footprints eventually erode the material structures of the temples, with the consequence that there might be nothing left to gaze upon in the future. Other bloggers are less fascinated with Angkor and shun overly extensive visits for the Disneyfied nature of the place. From a more critical point of view, one blogger questions the Siem Reap & Angkor commercial complex. By including the voice of a private taxi driver, the text becomes more dialogical and offers insights into the local perception of high fuel prices and big-enterprise competition. In Lonely Planet, local perspectives are generally not included. The landscape is thus essentially depopulated with hosts being reduced to (exotic) bystanders without agency.

With regard to Cambodian history, the guidebook presents Angkor as the central moment of positive culmination. It then spins the narrative that after that glorious 13<sup>th</sup> century period, the country gradually fell in decline, going from 'bad to ugly', facing almost total obliteration under the genocidal Khmer Rouge. On its way to recovery, Lonely Planet suggests that modern Cambodia must embrace a Western vision of progress over impunity and corruption. This resonates Mouhot's 19<sup>th</sup> century assessment that only European intervention can resurrect the place. In Lonely Planet, responsible travel and volunteering with selected organisations is presented as a solution to Cambodia's problems. The tourist thus discursively emerges as gamechangers towards development and progress.

Besides the historical theme, Lonely Planet foregrounds the myth of the unrestrained as well as the frontier theme. With Cambodia being presented as a holiday and an adventure, readers are promised pristine nature, entertainment and other, more hair-raising activities. Most notably, these include the Dark Tourism sites. As part of their regular holiday programme, tourist can safely experience the frontier of civilization as they are led through the remains of the genocide. This further echoes Mouhot's (1864) perception of a Cambodia that is dangerous and hostile.

**In the blogosphere**, Cambodia's reputation of adventure, tragedy and history is affirmed. Tourist admire its largely intact nature but complain about mosquitos and snakes. Upon visiting the Killing Fields, entries either point towards compassion for the victims or foreground the perverted 'fun' of life-firing automatic rifles at the adjacent shooting range. The latter reaction may however be motivated by peer-group prestige supposedly awarded for braving an upsetting experience (see Buda & Shim 2014). With regard to the theme of tragedy, Cambodian orphanages are popular sights too. As they are part of the regular itinerary, they are integrated in a narrative of responsible travel that can serve to justify the long-haul trips bloggers

undertake. The notion of making a difference while on the go furthermore serves as a marker of difference between inconsiderate mass tourists and supposedly responsible travellers.

#### 7.4.5. Vietnam - Census, Maps and Museum

Lonely Planet's Vietnam is a discursively contested kaleidoscope of vivid colours, historic events and political assumptions and aspirations. Vietnam is depicted as utterly exotic and described as a budget traveller's dream. It is associated with a sensational coastline, great colonial heritage, emerald green rice fields and war sites. The history of the country is depicted as largely foreign determined (at least in the more prominent sections of the guidebook) and Vietnam's present situation is described as both simplistic and modern. In order to reconcile this contradiction, the guidebook carefully differentiates between modern urban space and the supposedly simplistic rural areas. While this would not be out-of-the-ordinary in comparison to other countries, Vietnam is a special case. There, the guidebook associates the thriving urban centres with a young and pro-liberalist crowd and praises them for their alleged adoption of Western ways of life. On the other side, the communist government is presented as reactionary and hostile against progress and the freedom of expression (e.g. internet censorship). Lonely Planet thus privileges the evaluation that young urban modernists will overcome the communists and establish a Western style democracy. As I have argued, this cements the idea that Western intervention will ultimately be beneficial to the country. With the war in Vietnam being lost, the country will be won over by its own younger generation.

**Blog accounts** largely mirror Lonely Planet's overall presentation of the country. They extol Vietnam's vibrant entertainment scene, its natural beauty and gaze upon the ruins of the imperial city of Hue. With regard to Hue, three strategies of negotiating the myth of the unchanged (e.g. temple tours) could be observed. One blogger decided that he was 'tombbed out' and skipped the experience completely. This points towards a post-tourist (Jansson 2018) strategy, where the traveller engages in a re-coding of tourist places and practices. In that sense, the 'tombbed-out' traveller can be interpreted as a post-modern 'tomb-raider' pastiche who playfully decides to skip the raid. Another poster adopts a protocollary language in the description of the ancient city. As I have argued, this resonates the 19<sup>th</sup> century convention of the logbook, which writers utilized to appear serious and trustworthy. However, in the account under review, the protocol is filled with unspecific references rather than factual information. As I have argued, this 'casualized protocol' may convey the impression of an educated and prepared traveller, even though when this might not be the case. Finally, Hue is identified as a

‘hyperreal’ version of Vietnam. For the traveller, it thus loses credibility and is discredited as Disney-Nam.

Besides, a country / city divide can be observed. While Bloggers generally perceive Vietnam’s countryside as authentic and ‘real’, they frequently describe the big cities as chaotic and lawless. Urban space thus emerges as ‘modern otherness out of control’, where local mobilities and living environments are labelled dysfunctional, irresponsible and devoid of order. One blogger uses the wordplay ‘Hanoi’d’ to describe the allegedly annoying experience of arriving in the city. From that point of view, Vietnam is reified as a pre-modern country, with modern city-life being its intrusive Other. However, this perspective is not unreservedly shared. Blogs also reveal the image of the untypical communist country. For some travellers, Hanoi and other popular destinations bear witness of a consumerist attitude similar to that found in the West. For instance, Ho Chi Min City is described as a pleasant surprise and termed a European city in the middle of a communist country. As this suggests, more favourable interpretations of Vietnam’s modern evolution anchor their value judgements within a Western scheme of interpretation. This implies that foreign intervention has ultimately set the country on the ‘right’ course. In a nutshell, this promotes the idea that the West has ultimately brought Vietnam under control.

On a performative plane, the notion of taking Vietnam under control can be observed too. Blog posts with explicit titles (e.g. Doing a Rambo at the Cu Chi Tunnels) negotiate visits to the firing range at the Vietcong tunnel site. Posing with heavy machine guns, bloggers playfully negotiate the (unsatisfactory) outcome of the Vietnam War in a Ramboesque manner. They essentially stage a ‘monarch of all I survey’ scene (Pratt 1992), in which they take full control over their surroundings and symbolically bring to an end what the West has failed to do so far.

#### 7.4.6. Malaysia and Singapore - Census, Maps and Museum

Lonely Planet’s Malaysia is characterised by a modern / pre-modern divide and described as two countries in one. On the one side, there is peninsular Malaysia with its high rise buildings (e.g. Kuala Lumpur) and multiple cultural influences. On the other side, there is Borneo with its deep jungles, wild animals and remote tribes. This strategy of representation mirrors Henri Mouhot’s (1864) ‘protean civilization frontier’ and reifies the colonial civilized / uncivilized binary within a modern geographical scheme.

Accordingly, Lonely Planet describes the modern peninsular as a ‘multi-cultural success story’. Rendered is a linear narrative of mutually beneficial colonial and post-colonial development

that supposedly has reached its point of culmination in the multicultural metropolises of Kuala Lumpur and Singapore and has made Malaysia the ‘safest, stable and most manageable country in Southeast Asia’. Likewise, the disneyfied colonial theme of Singapore’s waterfront is foregrounded as a symbol of the might of empire abroad and its supposedly desirable outcomes. In that respect, Lonely Planet’s assessment of modern Malaysia and Singapore resembles Harrison’s (1920) appraisal of Malaya’s safety, stability and ease of travel. Omitted in this description is of course Britain’s ‘indented labour’ model which facilitated the influx of bonded workers from India and China to the Straits Settlements (Husa & Wohlschlägl 2011).

On the other side of the modern / pre-modern divide lies the peninsula’s east coast and Borneo. In the guidebook’s depiction, these locations cater for the myth of the uncivilized. They are likened to trips back to ‘caveman days’ and praised for their ‘authentic’ ramshackle longhouses (Borneo). The local populace is constructed as a silent and simple backdrop to the scene, whereas wilderness, wildlife and tribal artefacts are reified as the actual highlights of the region. As a consequence, modernization (e.g. satellite dishes, use of mobile phones) are classified as intrusive.

**Bloggers** largely reproduce this scheme and attest Malaysia a strong modern & urban versus pre-modern & rural divide. Their posts essentially juxtapose timeless authenticity against super-modernity. Even with regard to the sea and sand theme, bloggers generally accept the ‘civilization frontier’ I have discussed above and differentiate between the super luxurious urban experience (e.g. Marina Bay Sands Hotel) and the Robinson Crusoe paradise. Akin to the myth of the uncivilized, the Iban and Penan of Sarawak are framed in typical manners and customs style descriptions (Pratt 1992) and presented as primordial Others located far beyond civilization. Singapore, on the other side, is described as ‘Asia without Chaos’ and the colonial influence is generally appreciated. This promotes the idea that modern Singapore is the direct outcome of British colonialism and therefore a pleasant holiday destination.

#### 7.4.7. Burma / Myanmar - Census, Maps and Museum

Lonely Planet played a controversial role in promoting tourism to Burma during the era of political turmoil. It insisted that tourism would make it more difficult for the military junta to commit human rights abuses and sustained the vision of young Western backpackers travelling to the country, helping the local economy and educating the world about human rights violations. This view was rejected by the local democratic opposition who pointed out that tourism rather works in favour of the military dictatorship (see Lisle 2008). Against this

background, Lonely Planet still promotes its vision of responsible travel as one solution to Burma's current problems (e.g. environmental decline, acts of violence against minority groups) and encourages tourist to travel independently, spend their money wisely and support local charities.

Besides, Burma / Myanmar is represented as a last-minute destination. It is depicted as a place of oriental simplicity and authenticity that is increasingly threatened by modern influences and mass tourism. Local people are described as gentle, humorous and passionate. Effectively, they discursively complete Lonely Planet's portrayal of a timeless wonderland. Further removed from timelessness and tradition lies the 'real' frontier of the country. Rakhine State in the West is presented as decidedly untouristed and inhabited by primeval tribes with tattooed faces. This depiction and Lonely Planet's recommendation to book a typical short trip to spend a couple of hours in the villages cements the image of a human spectacle and contradicts the publisher's responsible agenda.

**In the blogosphere**, one finds evidence that Burma has only recently opened its borders to larger scale tourism. The country's culture is frequently presented as raw, old and real. Common is a *One Thousand and One Nights* visualization of travel through a surreal wonderland full of stupas, monks and mythology. A main discursive strand is that Burma / Myanmar is the Southeast Asia that Southeast Asia used to be before the advent of mass tourism and modernity. It is the isolated and untenable paradise that is forever deferred by the declarative voice that seeks to present it, automatically rendering it a paradise-lost.

## 7.5. Discourse Topics and Discourse Positions – Old vs. New

Discourse topics encompass what is 'sayable' about what and whom at a particular time and place. Discourse positions identify the ideological stance these utterances privilege. Similar to the historical texts, Lonely Planet and bloggers frequently employ the strategy of the binary pair to communicate discursive topics. These include inter alia independent traveller / package tourist, responsible tourism / mass tourism, modern / pre-modern, authentic / spoilt, rural / urban, democratic / despotic, central / remote, old / young and developed / undeveloped. As in the historic texts, the dichotomies are frequently combined and the independent traveller (not the mass tourist though) occupies the more powerful and desirable of the two. In contrast to the historic texts, the labels 'modern', 'hypermodern' and even 'civilized' are assigned to selected parts of the destination far more frequently (e.g. Singapore and Bangkok). This arguably entrenches the notion of Mouhot's (1864) 'protean civilization frontier' (e.g. his shuttling back



and forth between the port city of Bangkok and the savage Stiens) and inscribes it more extensively on the physical geography of the post colony.

Related to this is the implicit and explicit re-appropriation of Mouhot's civilization gradient in the guidebook and the blogs, that distinguishes between more and less advanced subgroups within the local population. For instance, like Mouhot, Lonely Planet places the ethnic Thai mainstream society high, whereas minority groups from the mountainous fringe areas are represented as more backward and superstitious. While the difference between a Hill Tribe village and a mid-sized Thai city cannot be disputed, Lonely Planet and bloggers include totalizing descriptions of minority groups that neither include the view of local voices nor the fact that there is no such thing as the homogenous figure of the underdeveloped Hill Tribe in Southeast Asia (see Trupp 2011). Furthermore, typical domains associated with travellers usually have more action-oriented characteristics. These include mobility, freedom, responsibility, technology, education (e.g. volunteering), sightseeing, sports, adventure, partying and shopping. Local people, on the other side, are more often associated with passive topics such as friendliness (e.g. smiling), compassion, helpfulness, spirituality and superstition.

From a chronological perspective, the traveller's privileged subject position has remained relatively stable over the centuries. Notwithstanding the transformation from the 19<sup>th</sup> century 'civilizing project' to supposedly responsible travelling, volunteering and foreign led development, the underlying power relations between hosts and guests have essentially remained the same. With regard to hosts, however, the pool of discourse topics has become larger in the modern media. While we can already trace the hegemonic narrative of *Oriental* and *uncivilized Otherness* in the historical texts, there have emerged four newer local subtypes of discourse topics in the modern texts. First, an '*Otherness* out of control' that subsumes supposedly annoying and irrational forms of local evolution (e.g. the 'lawless' traffic in Hanoi), second 'intrusive modernity' that supposedly destroys organic authenticity (e.g. satellite dishes) and third, a 'Westernized *Otherness*' that adopts preferred Western ways and implements them to achieve hegemonic Western goals (e.g. Vietnam's energetic and fashionable urban scene as opposed to the country's communist government).

Finally, there can be observed a new local form that does not fall under the category of *Otherness* for the reason that it does not qualify as such from a Western point of view. Meant is for instance the hyperreal cityscape of Singapore and the ultra-modern business and entertainment districts of other mega cities in the region. There, one looks in vain for the myth of the uncivilized or the unchanged (other than in simulation and disneyfied re-enactment). In

this environment, such as in the experience of the Marina Bay Sands Hotel, the real falls into the hyperreal (Baudrillard 1983) with post-colonial actualities being both negotiated and endlessly deferred. As these venues (e.g. spas, shopping malls, record holding skyscrapers) are built in post-colonial space, they essentially resemble a fragmented insertion of Western sameness that caters for an affluent cosmopolitan crowd. To legitimize their physical appearance, they are incorporated in local success stories that either praise the supposedly solid foundations laid by colonialism or the specificity of local talent that they allegedly represent (e.g. Singapore's waterfront).

In terms of the analytical frameset I have devised for this dissertation, these observations warrant discussion. While oriental Otherness, Uncivilized Otherness, Otherness out of Control and even Intrusive Modernism can be explained in recourse to the myth of unchanged and the uncivilized (see Echtner 2002; Echtner & Prasad 2003), the hyper-modern tourist hotspots of some countries in Southeast Asia cannot be satisfactorily integrated into the model. Partly, luxury attractions do relate to the myth of the unrestrained (e.g. Marina Bay Sands Hotel), however, these venues are symbolically complex and do not solely allude to taking romantic possession of a post-colonial land. Rather, record-holding architecture (e.g. Petronas Towers) and fancy shopping malls communicate the implicit narrative of local empowerment and success. Janis Powers (2014) has a piece in the Huff Post in which she explores the cultural message behind the evolution of the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur. After they were built, they held the record for the world's tallest building (1998-2004), were awarded architectural awards and featured in Hollywood blockbusters. With their immense popularity, they did not only put Kuala Lumpur on the stage of ultra-modernity, they sent the world the message that Malaysia is highly developed country with a bright economic future. In reality, there is a discrepancy between the vision of modern empowerment that is represented by the towers and the living situation for most people. Almost half of Malaysia's foreign debt is owned by other countries (Harjani 2014), the ratio of household debt to GDP amounts to 87 per cent (Oxford Business Group 2014), and the country's healthcare and education system is in dire straits. As Powers (2014) intimates on that score:

[i]t cost \$1.6 billion to build the Petronas Towers. That investment helped establish Malaysia as a potential global player. Maybe the Malaysian government should [...] use it instead to build the world's biggest school. Bragging rights and an educated populace? That may be Malaysia's ticket out of the muddy confluence and into the shiny new future that was promised by a gleaming, landmark skyscraper.

Arguably, in a post-colonial context the symbolic uplift of a country through ultra-modern markers of difference goes beyond the socio-economic implications voiced in the quote above. Their powerful signifying economy (e.g. Hollywood productions) silences alternative interpretations and thus privileges the myth of a mutually beneficial colonialism that had created the basis for a local success story. As the following blog post confirms, places like the ultramodern Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur emit indeed a symbolic message that goes beyond the unchanged, the uncivilized or even the unrestrained:

[a]fter the adventure and general remoteness of Sumatra, it was a complete contrast to arrive in the Space Age city of Kuala Lumpur - with Malaysia being the most prosperous nation in S.E. Asia, and their stated aims of becoming fully industrialised by 2020, they are full steam ahead on the road to capitalist nirvana. The gleaming skyscrapers, the plush shopping malls and carefully crafted city gardens all give the impression of a 1st world nation, and sometimes you need to look down a back alley to remind yourself you're in Asia. (Lewsey 2005)

Taking this into account, I propose to expand the Echtner's (2002) and Echtner & Prasad's (2003) model by an additional cluster with a new tourism myth. By applying Hebdige's (1979) approach of *conjunction* and *specificity* (see page 11 of this dissertation for a detailed explanation), it becomes possible to read the new cluster / myth as a specific response to the wider historical and societal constellation in which it emerges. Thus, the new cluster is located in a post-colonial environment that is characterized by multilateral relations on a socio-economic and cultural plane. Specifically, it responds to the material and ideological effects of a historic power imbalance between colonizer and colonized by aligning the post-colonial with a hyper-modern narrative for the present and the future. By this strategy, the post-colonial is supposedly empowered through a monolithic trope of preferred development. However, the unilateral and 'cosmopolitan' nature of such interventions privileges a Western model of development and declares it achieved through the symbol's enunciative might. By this, the myth of distinction between a 'Third' and a 'First' World (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1995) is not only sustained, the outcome legitimizes Western intervention under the disguise of praising local ingenuity. Accordingly, the name '**Mall and Highrise Cluster**' is suggested. Associated to this is the '**Myth of the Unchained**', which foregrounds post-colonial empowerment in a symbolically powerful way.

Finally, modern *discourse positions* are derived from Lonely Planet and blog posts. Since both media generally renounce local voices (with the exception of some blogs), the observed

discursive stance is mostly Western. This is similar to the historic corpus, where the discourse positions colonialist, orientalist, imperialist, modernist, hedonist and capitalist have been identified. In the modern texts, orientalist, modernist, hedonist and capitalist still feature prominently. The 19<sup>th</sup> century civilizing aspect is backgrounded and transformed into a humanitarian position (e.g. development, volunteering, responsible travel).

Lonely Planet and bloggers generally employ the same discourse positions, with bloggers either viewing popular tourist activities more critically than the guidebook or exaggerating them in an essentializing way to present a thrilling adventure story (e.g. Hill Tribe trekking). The results are presented in the following table (table 5). The three columns to the right depict the results of the contemporary texts. The three columns to the left reproduce table 4 (page 154) with the combined historical results for an easier comparison.

*Table 5 - Combined Results Old (left) vs. New Texts (right)*

<u>Census &amp; Maps</u>	<u>Museum</u>	<u>Discourse</u>	<u>Census &amp; Maps</u>	<u>Museum</u>	<u>Discourse</u>
Actors, action, sights & activities in spatial setting	Historicity of argumentation offers interpretations & guidelines for encounter with Otherness	Topics (the resulting 'sayable' at a time)	Actors, action, sights & activities in spatial setting	Historicity of argumentation offers interpretations & guidelines for encounter with Otherness	Topics (the resulting 'sayable' at a time)
<u>Explorer, tourist</u> Modern European bend for science, business or pleasure in the East	Legacy of Western discovery and representation; Christian civilizing mission; Early tourists witness "greatness" of empire, morally supreme.	discipline, rationality, religion, freedom & adventure	<u>Individual traveller</u> Modern traveller journeys to exotic place, is on adventure as much as on a holiday and can make a difference while on the go	Western travellers have explored SEA for centuries and their impact has shaped the region in a positive way. Mass tourists have had a detrimental effect on cultures and societies. Responsible travellers / volunteers are needed to regenerate communities	mobility, freedom, responsibility, technology, education, development, stress
<u>Imagined Western source community</u> European nations with a superior level of development and vital interest in resource-rich pre-modern countries in the East	European expansion & civilizing mission brings prosperity to the world; tourists are part of the imperial project and licensed to travel the world as they wish, profiting from colonial infrastructures	education, development, military victory, commerce, agriculture, civilizing mission	<u>Imagined Western source community</u> West with superior development, but stressful life; in need of place to escape; moral imperative to tread lightly on local cultures & help	European empires have formed the basis for the success-story of some countries in the region; the West has the power and moral duty to support local countries and communities and help them toward liberal democracy and open market economy	education, development, escape, lack of authenticity, daily grind

<b>Imagined (Destination Communities)</b>	The political and commercial integration of pre-modern countries serves the moral duty of furthering civilization, commerce and education; European intervention preserves cultural heritage and improves local livelihoods	trade, resources, development, simplicity & authenticity, greater past than present	<b>Imagined (Destination Communities)</b>	'Real' SEA is timeless, historic and devout – expressed in ruins, (colonial) artefacts and happy hosts	history, spirituality, authenticity
<b>- European Control &amp; Aspiring</b>	Great past vs. present decline, indolent and naïve peasants but happy to work under foreign control; helpful hosts (porters, scouts, servants)		<b>Oriental Cluster</b>		
			<b>Sea &amp; Sand Cluster</b>	Exotic landscapes and pristine nature invite sunseekers to offer unforgettable experience in paradise	hedonism, escape, indulgence
			<b>Frontier Cluster</b>	Adventurers explore land at the limit and (e.g. Hill Tribes, Dark Tourism Sites) and get away from civilization	adventure, primitivity, danger
			<b>Mall &amp; Highrise Cluster</b>	Downtown business districts and luxury malls offer hyperrealist vision of modernity and signify progress	luxury, progress, development
<b>- Uncivilized Fringes</b>	- The uncivilized fringes threaten the spirit of humanity and must be civilized - Corrupt Chinese traders exploit local economy and threaten European interest in the region	primitivity, superstition, barbarism, corruption, drugs	<b>- Others (Asian tourists, mass tourists, China)</b>	- mass tourists will destroy authentic SEA	corruption, environment, decline, social & cultural decline, loss of paradise
<b>- China</b>			<b>- China usurps local economy, mass tourists</b>	- Asian tourists become rampant	
			<b>have negative environmental &amp; cultural impacts, Asian tourists overcrowd sights</b>	- China (red giant) has posed a traditional danger f. development of local economy and continues to do so (land grabbing)	

## 8. Conclusion

This conclusion begins with a consolidation of the key findings in a chronological order and with regard to the main research questions. Then, I turn towards the four modern country clusters / tourism myths and close with a reflection on similarities and differences between Lonely Planet and blogs.

To reiterate the main research concerns, this thesis has investigated how historical and contemporary texts negotiate notions of 'destination', 'Western self' and 'Otherness' in terms of power and identity. This focus has necessitated an examination of the main discourses on identity formation in the media under review. Following a Discourse Historical Approach (Wodak 2001b), results have been related to the socio-economic conjuncture of their time to understand the ideological orientation of analysed texts. Finally, questions of Western privilege and power over interpretation have been considered and compared between texts. A

chronological perspective on different media from different times is thus provided to answer the questions of this thesis in the remainder of this subsection.

To begin with the historical sources, the corpus included Mouhot's (1864) seminal exploration account on Siam, Indochina and Laos vis-à-vis Murray's (1904) and Harrison's (1920) early guide books to the region. The three texts are illustrative of the imperial mindset at their times, covering specific periods of the discursive shaping of the region. Mouhot (1864) shaped foundational assumptions about the places he 'discovered' and made the whole region 'comprehensible' with recourse to knowledge that was available at his time. This *inter alia* included the discursive domains of empire, geography, commerce, raciology, medicine and religion. Murray (1904) and Harrison (1920) fall into a later period and cater for the emerging guide book market, building on Mouhot's (1864) ideas in a more practical sense.

Mouhot (1864) presents himself as a rational and masculine explorer in the service of empire and science. He charts out the land and envisions European intervention as an economic opportunity and a moral responsibility, justifying it as a civilizing project. Accordingly, Mouhot employs an 'index' of civilisation in his representation of the region. On top of that foreign hierarchy is the port city of Bangkok and the Siamese upper classes, who have adopted many of the European ways and cooperate with Britain. The common Siamese people are depicted as benign, indolent and mismanaged by despotic leaders. Cambodia comes second. It is portrayed as barbaric and past its prime, with Angkor Wat bearing witness of its bygone glory. European intervention is thus foregrounded as the only viable option to manage the country's present state of affairs and also to conserve the remnants of its past. Last in Mouhot's order come the mountainous fringes populated by the Stiens, Annamites and Laotians. These are represented as savage, corrupt and hostile. Since they are also labelled as threats to the Catholic missionaries, Europe has the moral obligation to civilize them by force. Finally, the Chinese are depicted as mischievous and corrupt drug addicts. They must be pushed out because their trade networks threaten Europe's commercial interests in the region.

Mouhot's (1864) deploys discourse topics mainly through the dichotomy civilized / not civilized. The privileged 'Europe-explorer-civilization' complex is associated with rationality, diligence, religion, mobility, moral, trade and development, whereas the 'uncivilized' Other is represented through topics that range from resources, heritage, past, superstition and simplicity to oppression, hostility, barbarism, conquest and occupation. Associated discourse positions include imperialism, racism, modernism, capitalism and eurocentrism.

In their guidebooks, Murray (1904) and Harrison (1920) advertise their exotic destinations in a more upbeat way. Their preferred travellers are sportsmen, professionals or ladies. Typical activities include big game shooting, motoring, shopping, socialising at clubs or hill stations, sightseeing and the experience of the ‘great’ achievements of empire in the region. When abroad, the tourist essentially becomes an imperial master with the local populace at his or her command. Local people are depicted as indolent, simple and generally happy to work under British supervision. Similar to Mouhot’s (1864) portrayal of Cambodia, the Malaysians are represented in a state of societal decay, with a past that was supposedly greater and more authentic than their present and their future. Finally, the Chinese are described as unfavourably as in Mouhot’s account. They are associated with the lowest social classes, illicit business and opium consumption.

Murray (1904) and Harrison (1920) frequently communicate discourse topics through binary pairs too, alluding to a confrontation of different worlds. Empire is associated with military power, administration, development and education. Since tourists are part of empire, topics that represent them are more action-oriented and include mobility & freedom, adventure, sightseeing, sport and business. On the other side, the colonized is represented through the rather passive topics of underdevelopment, natural resources, traditional manners & customs, simplicity, indolence and present decline. This suggests the following discourse positions: colonialist, orientalist, imperialist, modernist, hedonist and capitalist.

In Lonely Planet and the blogs under review, similar strategies of topicalization can be observed. To begin with Lonely Planet’s preferred traveller, he or she is portrayed as mobile, free and responsible. As the publisher’s old motto ‘Just Go!’ was replaced by ‘Attitude and Authority’, Lonely Planet has created a vision of independent and responsible travel that can supposedly make a difference in some of the less affluent parts of the world. Readers are encouraged to engage in volunteering and community based tourism activities. However, this vision of one-on-one cultural exchange is flawed for the guidebook’s failure to including local voices and its emphasis on the must-sees and must-dos along the mainstream tourist trail.

Much like in Murray (1904) and Harrison (1920), the traveller is licensed to do as he or she pleases and invited to engage in ‘meaningful’ work abroad. Whereas the imperial guidebooks included advice on sport, entertainment and the management of the local economy, Lonely Planet praises exoticism and adventure under the umbrella of a humanitarian vision. In this narrative, the power differentials have not shifted since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The old binary civilized

vs. uncivilized has transformed into the dichotomy helper vs. helpless, with the consequence that the ex-colonized is still overdetermined from the outside (see also Gronemeier 1992).

Besides, Lonely Planet's image of the independent and morally superior traveller on a serious mission reinstates the 19th century ideal of the masculine explorer. Similar to the 'civilizing project' of empire, Lonely Planet's domains of volunteering, helping and development are located beyond the frontiers of Western civilization. As a result, these undertakings require a protagonist who embodies characteristics such as independence, energy and courage (see Worley 1986: 40). In the guidebook, this ideal cannot be sustained since there is a constant conflict between moral obligation, hedonist desire (e.g. drugs), and budget travel (e.g. tourists' superior buying power). Taking this into account, the Lonely Planet project combines a quest for authenticity and adventure with the occasional splurge and the responsible theme. Discourse topics for tourists thus include freedom, adventure, responsibility, sightseeing, partying and discovering. These are widely shared in blog posts too.

In terms of its imagined host communities, Lonely Planet's modern travel discourse is more nuanced than in the historical texts. The 19<sup>th</sup> century assumption of superior imperial subjects is no longer sayable in mainstream tourism discourse, however, its cultural force has retained its grip on much tourism and is nowadays manifest in distinct country clusters with distinct tourism myths (Echtner 2002; Echtner & Prasad 2003). As I have shown, these can be applied to countries throughout (mainland) Southeast Asia, with each country offering a unique combination of experience and symbolic attachment.

### **Oriental Cluster (Myth of the Unchanged)**

First, the Oriental country cluster relies on the imaginary of a journey to an opulent past, where the tourist discovers ancient artefacts and exotic cultures (Echtner 2002: 430). Where the myth of the unchanged applies, Lonely Planet promotes a pre-modern world that is fully accessible, mystic and exotic. Frequently, the local populace is constructed as a silent but welcoming backdrop to the scene, whereas temples, ruins and colonial artefacts are reified as the actual highlights of a country. Therefore, modernization (e.g. satellite dishes, building of infrastructure) is often evaluated as intrusive. Artefacts of the colonial period are reified as 'stepping stones' towards modern success stories, in which they are integrated under the narrative of being foundational.

Bloggers negotiate the myth of the unchanged in several ways. While many appreciate temples and colonial remnants as supposedly authentic characteristics and essential experiences, others



are more hesitant to accept that vision. For instance, the notion of being ‘tombbed-out’ serves as a case in point why ‘post-tourists’ (see Jansson 2018) skip typical must-sees and rather engage in a symbolic struggle over re-coding tourist places and practises in an out-of-the-ordinary way. Arguably, the ‘tombbed-out’ traveller embodies a post-modern ‘tomb raider’ who can no longer be bothered with the raid. This relates to the notion of the hyperreal spectacle where the traveller feels betrayed by a disneyfied sight and ceases to attribute credibility to it (e.g. Hoi An) and to a new material dimension of the tourist gaze (Urry 1990), where the spectator becomes aware that the physical dimension of seeing a sight with thousands of other tourists eventually leaves eroding traces on the objects gazed upon (e.g. Angkor Wat) and may lead to their destruction.

Another main discursive strand involves the narrative of transition from lost paradise to paradise lost. Within this plot, two sub themes can be identified. First, there is ‘Otherness out of Control’ which subsumes supposedly annoying and irrational forms of local life (e.g. the ‘lawless’ traffic in some of the region’s big cities). Second, there is the notion of ‘Intrusive Modernity’ that threatens to destroy an organic paradise that once was authentic and timeless (e.g. mass tourism and technology). These discourses problematically reify ‘paradise’ as a place located in the past and beyond global reach, preserving it only for worthy connoisseurs (e.g. like-minded responsible travellers). As a consequence, the country is deprived of local agency as it is romantically delineated from the rest of the world and discursively frozen in a passive state. Finally, and ostensibly in a more open-minded way, there is the appraisal of ‘Westernized Otherness’ in a country that is supposedly reactionary or despotic. From that perspective, preferred Western ways can help achieve hegemonic Western goals (e.g. Vietnam’s young urban scene as opposed to the communist government). As I have argued in the case of Vietnam, the latter functions to legitimize foreign intervention vis-à-vis the fantasy of eventually gaining control. While Vietnam was lost to the Vietcong in 1975 it is being reconquered through tactics of bricolage and cultural appropriation (e.g. playing Rambo at the shooting range).

The main problem with transition discourses is that they tend to exclude local voices. What matters in this signifying economy is how authenticity / preferred developments are perceived from the outside and not from the inside. In a piece in the Huff Post, David Sze (2015) cautions against the assumption of an unchanging and homogenous culture that is supposedly trapped in a pre-modern past and encourages readers to acknowledge the developing, modernizing and globalising aspect of any culture that are equally representative of what a country is ‘really’ like.

### **Sea and Sand Cluster (Myth of the Unrestrained)**

Next, the sea and sand cluster promises carefree indulgence in a tropical paradise with pristine nature and welcoming hosts (Echtner 2002: 431). In contrast to the Oriental cluster, tourists do not travel back in time to a world of ancient discovery but take possession of what they perceive as present paradise. Consequently, the myth of the unchanged alludes to colonial exploration, whereas the myth of the unrestrained wonderland sustains a romanticised vision of colonial exploitation (Echtner & Prasad 2003: 672). In *Lonely Planet*, the sea and sand cluster is mostly associated with tropical beaches, a vibrant (urban) entertainment scene and the local cuisine. Like the myth of the unchanged, the myth of the unrestrained suffers from the problem of diminishing credibility in the region under survey. The mass marketing of lonely beaches and timeless lands eventually leads to overcrowding and dissatisfaction.

Accordingly, bloggers negotiate the sea and sand destination similar to the myth of the unchanged. While some share the hedonist idea of finding the ultimate party scene (e.g. Tubing in Vang Vieng), others point out that irresponsible party tourism supposedly has destroyed the cultural integrity of many destinations. They further hold that hot-spots of mass tourism should be avoided and intimate that ‘real’ authenticity can still be found beyond the mainstream tourism trail. In more remote places, however, bloggers suggest that too much of untouched nature may not be in their interest either. Creeping creature such as snakes and mosquitoes stand as a metaphor for nature’s ‘intrusive’ side that is not conducive to the fantasy of a carefree paradise. A hyper-real vision of such sanitized indulgence can be observed in the super luxury offerings of the region (e.g. Marina Bay Sands Hotel).

Finally, I have argued that the extravaganza of the Full Moon party in Ko Pha Ngan mobilises discursive archives that go beyond the typical fantasy of taking possession of tropical paradise. In a more complex way, the ‘ritual’ and ‘savage’ character of the spectacle relies on a context-specific construction of a pre-modern touristic ‘frontier-space’. As the revellers mask as heathens and brave ‘primitive’ rituals (e.g. jumping over fire ropes), they escape civilization and reinstate the colonial civilization boundary on the post-colonial ground. In the absence of actual savages, they must stage the savage part themselves so that they can ultimately experience the mythical and challenging adventure they desire. What results is a new discourse that combines instant hedonist gratification with heroic connotations.

### **Frontier Cluster (Myth of the Uncivilized)**

This country cluster promises penetrating expeditions through uncharted countries, pristine nature and dangerous environments. Hosts frequently lack basic modern features and are depicted as tribal people with an unpredictable attitude (Echtner 2002: 431). Contrary to the Oriental cluster, the traveller does not discover a land of the past. Unlike the sea and sand cluster, the tourist does not enjoy a carefree vacation. Rather, he or she locates to a land at the limit and braves wild animals, people and nature (Echtner & Prasad 2003: 675). In Lonely Planet, the distribution of the frontier cluster partly follows the geographical pattern of Mouhot's (1864) civilization hierarchy. Frontier places are mostly located in the mountainous areas of the region and in Sumatra. Besides, Lonely Planet distinguishes between the dominant cultures of Southeast Asia (e.g. ethnic Thais) and minority groups along the border areas of Burma / Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. The latter supposedly maintain ancient customs, are superstitious and do not speak any other language than their own. As recent research has suggested (see Trupp 2011), such construction of an essentially pre-modern and speech-less hill tribe population is a totalizing myth. Structurally, it reproduces a colonial logic that lays claim to the privilege of representation. Finally, I have argued that Dark Tourism sites can also be subsumed under the frontier theme for the reason that they allow travellers to safely experience places of tragedy and disaster. A case in point are bloggers who pose with automatic rifles at the shooting range near the Cu Chi Tunnels in Vietnam.

Regarding the myth of the uncivilized, Bloggers frequently re-enact Mouhot's (1864) encounters with savage tribes and Lonely Planet's implicit re-appropriation of it. Some reproduce or even exaggerate their Hill Tribe trekking adventures by foregrounding the dangers and hardships they supposedly have had to brave in order to return to civilization safely. Emphasis on the picaresque theme can thus help gain peer group esteem. By contrast, others point out the notion of the 'human zoo' (e.g. visitors gazing at locals in walk-through villages) but nevertheless come to believe that only through tourism these communities can survive in the modern world. This justifies exclusion and sanctions the role of the traveller. In that sense, the own activities of the more critical bloggers are usually not questioned. They consider their trips more compatible for a number of reasons and emphasise their quest for authenticity and role as low-level local supporters.

Finally, the negotiation of the myth of the uncivilized in the blogosphere resonates the logic of Mouhot's (1864) 'protean civilization frontier', which I have identified and discussed in the historical chapter. Bloggers can thus conveniently shuttle back and forth between wilderness

and civilization (e.g. Bangkok), legitimizing their frontier experience by spatially and discursively delineating it from the nearby centres of (post-colonial) development. The resulting mental map reifies the colonial civilized vs. uncivilized binary within a dual geographical scheme. As the example of the Penang minority group (Sarawak, Malaysia) illustrates, this privileges the discourse of counter clockwise adaption. Since hunting with rifles is forbidden in the Penang's native area, inhabitants are only allowed to fend for themselves with blowpipes. Essentially, they must retreat to the past in order to survive in the present.

### **Mall and Highrise Cluster (Myth of the Unchained)**

In the post-colony, the notion of Otherness carries forth the colonial distinction between civilized and uncivilized through the supposedly more innocent differentiation between a 'Third' and a 'First' World. Through that binary, the ex-colonial subject is reified as pre-modern and less developed (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1995). In modern tourism, this problematic assumption is less clearly articulated but symbolically negotiated in recourse to the three tourism myths summarized above. Encounters with Otherness playfully resonate imaginaries of the unchanged, unrestrained or uncivilized. In this configuration, the tourist takes the more active part and pleases his or her touristic desires through narrative alignment and enactment. The hosts, on the other side, assume a more passive position. As they are absorbed by the tourist gaze, they mutate into a voiceless human backdrop that makes the phantasmatic setting of the exotic destination complete. In terms of power relations and enunciative agency, the tourist is clearly advantaged.

As I have argued, this is not necessarily so in the new 'Mall and Highrise Cluster' that has been identified. There, tourists are confronted with cutting edge technology (e.g. award winning architecture) or super-modern luxury (e.g. shopping malls) that may easily dwarf their home culture's level of development and sophistication. Such experience does not fit into the three mythical frames of Otherness that are more generally associated with the post-colony. To a greater degree, they reflect an emphasized 'sameness' of Westernization that often surpasses its original model and communicates the image of a hyper developed destination characterized by multilateral relations. Symbolically, the Mall and Highrise Cluster responds to the historic power imbalance between colonizer and colonized by supposedly empowering the post-colonial through a hyper-modern narrative of preferred development. This privileges a Western model of development and declares it achieved through the symbol's enunciative power. By this, the myth of distinction between a 'Third' and a 'First' World is not only cemented, Western

intervention is legitimized through the story of local empowerment. This I have called the ‘Myth of the Unchained’.

## 9. Resume and Outlook

With the results discussed and a new tourism myth established, I end this dissertation with a concise resume. Approaching tourism to mainland Southeast Asia from a post-colonial and discourse studies perspective, I have asked if and how modern tourism discourse reflects or challenges imperial ways of seeing the world. To account for the appropriate historical framing of the countries under review, I have examined historical texts that relate to key events in the exploration and exploitation of the region in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Modern texts were read against that background to establish discursive proximity / difference in terms of power-relations between imagined source and destination communities. I have suggested that modern tourism discourses pertaining to mainland Southeast Asia still embrace many ‘big ideas’ from the past and I have illustrated how different media types contribute to this signifying economy with regard to the countries under review.

It was the goal of this study to combine a Cultural Economy approach on tourism (Crang 2014) with a post-colonial framework (e.g. Said 1978) and insights and methods from the field of Cultural and Linguistic Studies (e.g. CDA). Accordingly, tourism has been conceptualized as a set of social practices that are shaped by and capable of shaping tourism discourse, and that specifically relate to concerns of the respective social, political and economic conjuncture. Particularly, this involved questions of identity, globalisation and unequally distributed power of representation between and within societies and cultures.

This thesis has contributed to a large body of post-colonial research that has combined some of the theoretical and methodological elements I have proposed. It has illustrated how mainland Southeast Asia, a region that largely combines the experience of a colonial past with fast-paced touristic development, is still under the discursive influence of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since actual colonial discourse is no longer sustainable for political and ethical reasons, a transformed version of imperial ideology has found its way into contemporary holiday practice under the disguise of modern tourism myths. As I have demonstrated, these myths naturalize and legitimize the perception of popular destinations as unchanged, unrestrained or uncivilized.

This thesis has contributed to the theory of tourism myths proposed by (Echtner 2002) and (Echtner & Prasad 2003) by widening its framework and identifying a new myth of Western sameness rather than of Oriental Otherness. This new ‘Myth of the Unchained’ relates to a

super-luxurious ‘Mall and High-rise Cluster’ that reifies the post-colony as modern and progressive, legitimizing Western intervention while silencing actual concerns about fragmented and uneven development that affect the majority of people outside the cosmopolitan bubble. Besides, this thesis has attempted to account for ‘discursive effects’. Through the inclusion of individual travel blogs, frames of understanding could be translated into actual experience, so that discourses identified in authorial accounts or discursive repertoires (e.g. Lonely Planet) could be examined for their actual performative power / material effects in the world of touristic experience and interpretation.

Future post-colonial research on tourism appears particularly promising in terms of investigating issues of the non-Western gaze in the post-colony and elsewhere. This might include questions of the technologically enhanced counter-gaze direct at Western tourists or the newer phenomenon of mass tourism from the East to the West. Furthermore, a ‘new’ material dimension of the tourist gaze has been identified in this thesis. As tourists gaze upon their objects, they leave material traces which can and sometimes will eventually erode the structures they admire. As I have argued, Angkor Wat might be a suitable location for such a study.

Finally, the joint venture of post-colonial scholarship and critical discourse analysis outlined in this dissertation points towards promising directions in the field of critical media literacy and civic education in a classroom context. From the perspective of subject didactics of geography and economic education, it appears mandatory to empower learners to understand geography and identity as contingent, culturally specific productions that are based on the interplay of discourse, representation and power. With the recent proliferation of fake news and echo chambers in the new media, pupils should be encouraged to question oversimplified explanations of complex social problems and reflect on their everyday practices of media consumption and production more critically. In the media saturated world of today, the interrogation of discourse is more than an academic tool. It has become an essential life skill to participate in the democratic society.

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## 11. German Summary

Diese Dissertation vereint einen regionalgeographischen Fokus (Südostasien) mit Theorien der Post-Colonial Studies und Methoden der Cultural Studies. Zugrundeliegend ist ein konstruktivistischer Raumbegriff, der Räumlichkeit als medial vermitteltes soziales Konstrukt mit realen Konsequenzen erkennt und entsprechend die Untersuchung der politischen, kulturellen und historischen Hintergründe bestimmter Raumkonstruktionen ermöglicht. Somit wird es auch möglich versteckte Machtstrukturen zu enttarnen, die in scheinbar natürlichen Raumvorstellungen versteckt sind. Meine Doktorarbeit beschäftigt sich mit der „Problematik“ konstruierter Räumlichkeit in Bezug auf Festlandsüdostasien und Tourismus und untersucht die diskursive Konstruktion der Region in Reisetexten über die letzten knapp 200 Jahre. Dazu gehören historische Entdeckerschriften des 19. Jahrhunderts, erste Reiseführern aus dem frühen 20. Jahrhundert, der aktuelle Lonely Planet Reiseführer und persönliche Reiseblogbeiträge auf [travleblog.org](http://travleblog.org).

Der Fokus auf Tourismustexte begründet sich wie folgt: Tourismus wird nicht als bloße Freizeitaktivität oder Form der temporären Mobilität gesehen, sondern als soziale Praxis mit drei wesentlichen Eigenschaften. Erstens unterliegt der Tourismus historischen und performativen Konventionen. Das bedeutet, dass TouristInnen bereits vor ihrer Abreise ein klares Bild von den Kulturen und Ländern haben, die sie bereisen und damit auch bereits konkrete Vorstellungen über Art und Weise der Interaktion mit Menschen vor Ort in sich tragen und ausleben. Zweitens stellt der Tourismus ein machtvoll globales „Ordnungssystem“ dar, das Menschen, Umwelt und Kulturen spezifisch verortet und dabei in hierarchischer Weise kategorisiert. Aus dieser Perspektive fungiert Tourismus als Macht-Wissenskomplex der bestimmten Machtverhältnisse etabliert und dabei überlegene Verwertungsinteressen privilegiert. Drittens eröffnet Tourismus aus diesen Gründen eine wichtige Forschungsperspektive. Die Analyse touristischer Praktiken und Erwartungen ermöglicht daher einen diagnostischen Rückschluss auf versteckte Diskurse, die mitunter weiterhin problematische Ideologiekomplexe des Kolonialismus propagieren und zementieren können.

Ergebnisse weisen auf ein Deutungsgefälle zwischen Reisenden und Bereisten hin, dass sich über zwei Jahrhunderte strukturell nicht verändert hat. Untersuchte Reise- und Tourismustexte üben Deutungsmacht über Länder, Menschen und Kulturen aus indem sie diese benennen aber dabei benannte AkteurInnen nicht selbst zu Wort kommen lassen. Auf textueller Ebene werden durch den Einsatz expliziter und impliziter Dichotomien (z.B. modern / vormodern; authentisch / nicht authentisch) klar trennbare Subjektpositionen reifiziert. Reisende werden als aktiv,

modern und mobil dargestellt; Bereiste häufig als vormodern, traditionell und freundlich-passiv. Destinationen werden mit bestimmten Hauptaugenmerkern verbunden. Dazu gehören Exotik, Landschaften, Authentizität, Tradition, ausgewählte geschichtliche Ereignisse und damit assoziierte Tourismusaktivitäten. Lokale Kulturen werden oftmals implizit als jenseits ihres „Höhepunktes“ dargestellt. Dies geschieht durch die durchwegs positive Artikulation von Geschichte, Tradition und Kultur mit Bauwerken und Artefakten aus der Vergangenheit, sodass der Eindruck einer „authentischen“ Vergangenheit gepaart mit einer weniger zufriedenstellenden und für das Land weniger repräsentativen Gegenwart entsteht.

In Hinblick auf das Untersuchungsgebiet lässt sich das Konzept der großen Tourismusmythen von (Echtner & Prasad 2003) räumlich verorten. Diese drei Themen transformieren westliche Deutungsstrategien und ungleiche Machtverhältnisse aus dem Kolonialismus in kommodifizierte Sichtweisen und Praktiken der Gegenwart. Erstens, der Mythos des „Orientalischen“, der sich in der argumentierten Historizität der Region begründet und dabei Relikte aus der Vergangenheit (z.B. Tempel) als den „wahren“ Charakter der entsprechenden Destinationen festschreibt. Dadurch werden Einheimische zur exotisierten Zierde einer stummen historischen Kulisse, in der moderne endogene Entwicklungen als kulturell disruptiv evaluiert werden. Zweitens, der Mythos des „hedonistischen Paradieses“, der das Motiv der Alltagsflucht betont und in Hinblick auf die Destination günstige klimatische Bedingungen, landschaftliche Schönheit und sexualisierte Körperlichkeit in den Vordergrund stellt. Bereiste werden als Teil dieser lustvollen Welt dargestellt und stehen den Reisenden zur Erfüllung ihrer Bedürfnisse zur Verfügung. Drittens, der Mythos des „Unzivilisierten“, der bestimmte Bevölkerungsgruppen als vormodern bezeichnet (z.B. Hill Tribes), undurchdringliche Naturräume und wilde, gefährliche Tiere in den Vordergrund stellt oder durch die dramatische Inszenierung von Dark Tourism Sites ein „Land am Limit“ konstruiert, durch das der oder die Reisende explorativ vordringt. Betroffene Bereiste werden durch diese Strategie dehumanisiert und als unzivilisiertes Beiwerk einer gefährlichen und exotischen Landschaft reifiziert. Zu diesen drei in der Literatur verankerten Tourismusmythen konnte in der Arbeit noch ein vierter nachgewiesen werden: der Mythos des ‚Entfesselten‘ (Myth of the Unchained) zielt auf ultramoderne City Scapes ab (z.B. Singapore, Kuala Lumpur) und vermittelt den Eindruck von Westlichem Fortschritt in der Post-Kolonie. Dadurch werden Narrative der kosmopolitischen und ökonomischen Emanzipation verallgemeinernd vermittelt, die lokal und sozial sehr begrenzt sind. Wie gesamt in der Arbeit gezeigt wird, vereinen die untersuchten Repräsentationen der meisten Länder des postkolonialen Südostasiens eine Kombination der

vier genannten Tourismusmythen. Dadurch werden mehrschichtig koloniale Interpretationsregime in scheinbar harmloser moderner touristischer Praxis verankert.

### 11.1. English Summary

This thesis traces the discursive construction of mainland Southeast Asia over the past two centuries in exploration writing, (historical) tourism guidebooks and travel blogs. To account for the historic specificity of post-colonial Southeast Asia, two early 20<sup>th</sup> century guidebooks (Murray 1904; Harrison 1920) and Henri Mouhot's (1864) seminal exploration account *Travels in the Central Parts of Indo-China (Siam), Cambodia, and Laos During the Years 1858, 1859, and 1860* form the basis of the analysis. All three text mirror historic key events of the exploitation of the region. While Henri Mouhot's (1864) report of discovery firmly attached Eurocentric discourse to the new Eastern end of the colonial world, the two early 20<sup>th</sup> century handbooks illustrate how the imperial tourist gaze appropriated the countries under survey. Subsequently, the discursive background of the region is related to contemporary tourism texts. By considering Lonely Planet's comprehensive bestseller *Southeast Asia on a Shoestring* (2014) vis-à-vis independent travel blogs from the website [travelblog.org](http://travelblog.org), I explore how popular travel destinations in mainland Southeast Asia are represented in terms of difference and Otherness to gain a better understanding of the (re)configuration of power relations in a post-colonial setting. The Method of this study is Critical Discourse Analysis. This allows for a comparative reading of different texts from different genres and times to trace possible instances of discursive transformation and convergence (e.g. how do discourses change over time, how do they translate to different tourist practices and how are they negotiated in guidebooks and blogs). Results suggest that modern tourism discourse still draws on problematic 19<sup>th</sup> century binaries (e.g. civilized / uncivilized; modern / timeless) and re-appropriates them in the form of distinct tourism myths (Echtner & Prasad 2003) to promote cultural, hedonist or action-oriented tourist activities. Mainland Southeast Asia is thus reified as a diverse holiday region where one can experience historic artefacts, exotic nature and entertainment, and pre-modern tribes vis-à-vis hypermodern cityscapes. With the latter rather signifying Western sameness than Oriental Otherness, they point towards a new tourism myth of 'unchained' development and emancipation in the post-colony. Finally, blog entries generally confirm the discourse topics communicated in the guidebooks. They either reproduce them, exaggerate them for the sake of a thrilling story or treat them more critically. However, in the latter case, bloggers' own ways of travelling are rarely questioned.

## **Eigenständigkeitserklärung**

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig und ohne Benutzung anderer als der in der Literatur angegebenen Quellen angefertigt habe. Alle Stellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß aus veröffentlichten und nicht veröffentlichten Publikationen entnommen sind, sind als solche kenntlich gemacht. Die Arbeit wurde in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form weder im In- noch im Ausland (einer Beurteilerin/ einem Beurteiler zur Begutachtung) in irgendeiner Form als Prüfungsarbeit vorgelegt. Diese Arbeit stimmt mit der von den BegutachterInnen beurteilten Arbeit überein.

Ort, Datum

Unterschrift