



COCOA, CONSERVATION AND TOURISM Grande Riviere, Trinidad

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Abstract: Following a review of tourism in the Caribbean and studies of communities affected by it, the focus of this paper is Grande Riviere, Northeast Trinidad. The history of the village from the mid-19th century is given, and its economic and social characteristics during extended fieldwork from 1971 to 1972 are described. Tourism to the village started in the 90s, prompted by the emergence of Grande Riviere as a major nesting site for Leatherback turtles, and visits were made to the village in 2004 and 2006. Changes over the 30-year period are described and assessed, the impact of tourism is discussed and analyzed and placed within the wider theoretical context. **Keywords:** ecotourism, Caribbean, turtles, conservation, impacts. © 2007 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Résumé: Cacao, sauvegarde et tourisme à Grande Rivière, à la Trinité. Après un bilan du tourisme aux Antilles et des études des communautés affectées par le tourisme, l'article porte surtout sur Grande Rivière, dans le nord-est de la Trinité. On présente l'histoire du village à partir du milieu du 19e siècle, et on décrit ses caractéristiques économiques et sociales pendant des recherches approfondies sur le terrain de 1971 à 1972. Le tourisme au village a commencé dans les années 90, suscité par l'émergence de Grande Rivière comme un site important de nidification pour la tortue à carapace molle, et on a visité en 2004 et 2006. On décrit et évalue les changements sur la période de 30 ans, et l'impact du tourisme est discuté, analysé et situé dans le contexte théorique plus large. **Mots-clés:** écotourisme, Antilles, tortues, sauvegarde, impacts. © 2007 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

International tourism was already established in parts of the Caribbean before the second World War, most notably in Cuba and Jamaica (Schwartz 1997:68–69; Taylor 1973 and 1975). However, it was really only after 1945 that it became important throughout the Caribbean. By the beginning of the 21st century it was making a major contribution to the economy of the wider Caribbean and in 2004 accounted for some 14.8% of the region's GDP and for 2.4 million jobs (15.5% of total employment). By 2014 it is expected to account for 16.5% GDP and 17.1% of employment in the region (World Travel and Tourism Council 2004:4).

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Tourism in the Caribbean is reportedly the most intensive in the world (WTTC 2004:1). However, in Trinidad and Tobago, when compared with other Caribbean island states, it is relatively unimportant. In 2002 it contributed only 4.3% of its GDP and in 2003 the country attracted fewer than 6% of all arrivals in the wider Caribbean (WTO 2005; WTTC 2004:20). That said, it is the most important industry in Tobago and, as indicated below, in some parts of Trinidad.

Social anthropologists have produced a wealth of data on tourism's impacts (Kousis 1989; McGibbon 2000; O'Reilly 2000; Peake 1989; Tsartas 1992; van den Berghe 1980, 1994; Waldren 1996), but scholars remain divided on its impact in small communities. Debates on whether or not it contributes to "development," which underpinned the earliest studies of international tourism (deKadt 1979; Smith 1978), remain relevant and, with the added dimensions of "sustainability," the issues have become even more complex (Harrison 2001:7-8).

While residents in many destination areas have coped with influxes of tourists without "losing" their own culture (Baumgartner 1992; Boissevain 1996; Brandes 1988; Connolly-Kirch 1982; La Flamme 1979; Rogers and Aitchison 1998; van den Berghe and Ochoa 2000), there are real problems, as Pearce, Moscardo and Ross indicate, with "*post hoc* descriptive accounts based on a tradition of single ethnographic case studies" (1996:18). Intensive focus on the ethnographic "moment" makes comparison of destinations difficult. Little comparative work has been done and few longitudinal studies carried out. Indeed, such studies over the years by van den Berghe and his co-authors of Cuzco, Peru (van den Berghe 1980; van den Berghe and Ochoa 2000; van den Berghe and Primov 1977) and San Cristóbal, Mexico (van den Berghe 1994) are exceptional. Despite the tendency of many academics to denigrate tourism's social impacts, the overall conclusions were that in both Cuzco (van den Berghe and Ochoa 2000:22-23) and (especially) San Cristóbal (van den Berghe 1994:147-156), it had been largely beneficial, though the "trickle-down" effects were reportedly greater in the latter than the former. Similar conclusions have been reluctantly reached by others. When Greenwood and Pi-Sunyer, for instance, revisited destinations of their initial research, they revised their initial impressions, swallowed hard, and entered pleas of *mea culpa* (Greenwood 1989:181-185; Pi-Sunyer 1989:196-199).

In the English-speaking Caribbean, international tourism has undoubtedly exacerbated tensions deeply rooted in societies with a history of slavery, and reservations about its economic and sociocultural impacts have been voiced for decades (Bryden 1973; Cole 1974; Gray 1974; Kaufman 1985:36; Levitt and Gulati 1970; Taylor 1973, 1975; Thomas 1988:145-167; Zinder and Associates 1969). They were especially prominent during the "black power" disturbances of the early 70s (Forsythe 1971; McKay 1987; NJAC 1971; Oxaal 1971; Thomas 1988:183-324) and, a decade later, in Grenada (Ferguson nd; Payne and Sutton 1984; Sandford and Vigilante 1984). Indeed, policies towards tourism have often vacillated according to the ideological hue of the government in power (Chambers and Airey 2001; Mitchell 1972). Academics and other commentators added their criticisms

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