Unwanted seductions: dealing with the wrong type of tourist at Hopiland

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For nearly 100 years a variety of different tourists have been visiting the small homeland of the Hopi Indians in the desert region of northeastern Arizona, USA. As with many other small, secluded populations there are a number of positive as well as negative discourses surrounding the development of tourism here – economic benefits being just one. However, one of the most recognisable of tourist types at Hopi, and one of the most heavily debated, is the New Age tourist, or spiritual pilgrim. This paper explores the conflicting attitudes amongst Hopis towards these New Age visitors (who many see as the 'wrong type' of tourist), and shows how a reactive, indigenous approach to tourism is linked to global discourses of 'authentic' representation. How do Hopis identify and attract the right type of tourist? And to what extent should anthropological approaches to tourism include any elements of advocacy for indigenous groups?

I met a man at Hopi once, a young Euro-American originally from Minnesota, we'll call him Lawrence. I was there studying the reasons that New Agers have glorified Hopi culture and placed certain Hopi people on a spiritual pedestal. He was there to tune in to the power of the ancients. I wanted to know what it was about Hopi places, people and prophecies that meant that Hopiland had become a place of pilgrimage for spiritual seekers from around the globe. He wanted to learn the secrets of Hopi communication with extraterrestrials. I wanted to find out what Hopis themselves thought about this strange fascination with their lives. Lawrence wanted to know why I was being so curious about him all of a sudden!

Hopi culture has certain kudos within global New Age networks, and this has resulted in a number of people like Lawrence who arrive at Hopi expecting to be initiated into the arcane secrets of the Hopi religious world. It is a strange relationship

between two worlds that rarely understand each other, and it often ends in uneasy silences. In 2002, when I was conducting my research at Hopi I met a number of people like Lawrence and heard tales about quite a few more. This paper seeks to put these encounters into some kind of context, and explain the local Hopi reaction to these visitors who are not exactly unwelcome, but then again, not exactly encouraged.

I am analysing this data in the context of tourism encounters, as it is one of the most public and open examples of Hopi to non-Hopi relations. There are a number of other ways that Hopi culture has been taken out of context, even appropriated, commoditised, or just plain 'stolen'; but I find that tourism at Hopi is interesting as one can actually witness the ways that local Hopi people react to the glorification of their culture - even when it is unwanted or even unfounded.

Lawrence spent a few days at Hopi, much longer than most tourists would spend there. He wandered through one or two of the 12 Hopi villages. He sat in his camper van at the edge of the towering mesas that look out over the plains of the Painted Desert and meditated, or played his flute. He spoke to local people - Hopis and non-Hopis, although he seemed to be more interested in what the Hopis had to say. One couple, storeowners in one of the villages, met Lawrence a few times. The husband, Joe, is non-Hopi from Kansas, but his wife Janice is Hopi. Lawrence was keener to speak with Janice than he was to speak with Joe, regardless of the topic of the conversation. Lawrence was keen to let Janice know about his plans for 'healing the world' using the power of the ancients. Janice admitted to me later that she really didn't know what Lawrence was talking about, he just seemed to be "happy talking with a real Indian, I guess."

Lawrence did not go unnoticed throughout his stay at Hopi. Fortunately he was never discovered walking through the many areas deemed out of bounds to tourists, (though he did reveal to me that he had stumbled across 'a gap in the rocks outside one of the villages where he saw "a load of old eagle bones", and wanted to know what that meant), but the Hopis I met who had encountered him were not entirely sure what there was for him to actually do all day. This was a concept that I was very familiar with. As Hopi people have not been overtly proactive in attracting tourism to

their homes, there is little actual infrastructure there that is targeted towards accommodating visitors. This has changed very recently with the opening of a new hotel and conference centre in the westernmost village of Moenkopi, but whilst I was at Hopi in 2002-3, there was only one motel with an adjoining cultural centre/museum. This museum, whilst beautifully presented and informative, would not in all honesty be worth the roundtrip of a few hours that it would take to get to Hopi from the nearest major city of Flagstaff. Hopi is not really 'en route' to or from anywhere else. One would have to have a reason for going to Hopi, rather than considering it as a stop off point on a trip to the Grand Canyon or other local attractions.

But people do go to Hopi, and Hopis have reacted to their guests in a particularly Hopi way. With a good deal of tolerance, humility, and politeness - to a certain degree. In an interview with a Hopi police officer (from the department known as the Hopi Resource Enforcement Services) I asked my interviewee about how the Hopi police deal with what they see as guest transgressions of behaviour. The officer explained that in his opinion Hopi was a very special place, and if people recognised that and could appreciate that, then there was no reason to stop them appreciating Hopi in their own way. He explained:

"*Hopi philosophy states that anyone can come to Hopi and pray for the general welfare of the world, as long as you are respectful. Generally the seeker types* [New Agers] *are respectful, but those out for profit or exploitation want something valuable. There are so many shrines at Hopi that it is very tempting to just take a feather here or there, without thinking about the consequences*." (Author interview, J.K., April 2003)

This talk of temptations to take without thinking reminded me of a story I had read before I arrived on my research, and I had made it a promise to myself to meet with those involved to verify the tale. It concerns a Hopi geographer called Philip Tuwaletstiwa and his wife Judy. Following a knock at the door, Judy opens up to find a young woman who promptly asks where she can find the Hopi 'power places'. Judy calls back to her husband to let him know what the young tourist is seeking. "Power places?" calls back Phillip, "Tell her that's where we plug in the TV!"

Despite the obvious humour here, which again, is a common cultural trait at Hopi, there is a poignancy to this tale that is often lost in the laughter. You see, the young tourist was in all probability quite innocently seeking something that she had been told that she could actually find. Because there *are* powerful places at Hopi. There are locations in the landscape that hold very potent meaning to various Hopi individuals, or clans, or religious societies. Hopis often negotiate with ancestors and totems, and make pilgrimages themselves to locations they find to be of significance. The resigned humorous response that Phillip offered was not a denial of the existence of these Hopi 'power places', it was directed at an increasingly global assumption that non-Hopis are entitled to access these locations; or the people who know about these locations; or the objects associated with them. In a New Age context, where Hopi-ness has a special significance, it is quite normal for individuals to be encouraged to seek the ancient knowledge of the indigenous people of the planet. And these seekers can become quite upset when they are told that they are not, in actual fact, entitled to this knowledge.

At Hopi, the acquisition of knowledge is often referred to as a right not a privilege. The social, cultural and religious structures at Hopi are complex and interwoven with each other. Certain clans hold information that they will not reveal to other clans, or groups of related clans. Age and gender is also a key factor regarding the type, or degree of knowledge that one may be privy to. In short, no single Hopi knows all there is to know about Hopi, and so keeping quiet about what one knows is a failsafe mechanism that prevents inappropriate information reaching uninitiated ears. But most New Agers, like most anthropologists, aren't immediately aware of these complex threads. Most New Agers feel they have the right to know precisely what they want to know. And that is where the problems arise.

The Hopi Tribal government has a department known as the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office (HCPO). This may be seen as an intermediary between the Hopi and the non-Hopi worlds; a point of reference for those investigating the sphere of interaction between host and guest. When I decided to conduct research at Hopi, it was this department that I had to negotiate with in order to gain access to Hopi individuals. I needed the HCPO to grant me permission to conduct research; and

they even, eventually, provided me with a research permit that entitled me to physically go into the field.

The existence of this office is rooted in the reaction by many Hopis towards the academic intrusion into their lives. It's existence and its effectiveness is testament to the willingness of the Hopi Tribe to exert some control over the representation of Hopi culture in a non-Hopi context. The key reason that I was granted access to a research population that had only recently called for an end to anthropological investigation, was that they too wanted to know what it was about Hopi culture that the New Agers found so appealing. In a sense I was not 'studying the Hopis', which is a concept that they are generally tired of after well over a century of academic intrusion; instead I was studying the New Agers who were assumed to be wanting to take something from the Hopis without offering anything in return.

I got the impression that Lawrence wasn't really sure what he wanted to take from Hopi. He didn't seem to have anything that Hopis wanted from him, and so his presence was tolerated, but rarely encouraged by most folk there. But of course, as with most populations of human beings, there were differences of opinion about Lawrence. To understand these differences and to see why Lawrence's presence was problematic this paper needs a very, very brief bit of context.

To put the case succinctly, there is a long history of political tension at Hopi. Groups on all sides often make accusations toward their opponents of an abandonment of tradition and an increase of inauthenticity. The Tribal Government is, in fairness, not an indigenous form of government, and is not an ideal institution that is favoured by all Hopis. Indeed, the idea of a unified Hopi Tribe is a largely foreign idea that reflects a relatively recent change of context that Hopis find themselves in. Hopi identity is weighted towards a clan, kin and village identification more than a national or Tribal identity. Yes, the recognition exists that there are Hopis and there are people who are not Hopis, but in everyday life family is more important; in politics the welfare of the natal village is paramount; in religious observation, clan identity and level of initiation become the major factors. Rarely does the idea of a Hopi identity come into force. Individuals are for example, tobacco clan from Hotevilla village, or an initiate into a particular religious society from Walpi village, there is little need to

explain to their neighbours that they are Hopis! But there is little doubt that there is a need for a tribal government at Hopi to act as in intermediary between the Hopi villages and the non-Hopi world.

Each of the Hopi villages has remained fairly independent although representatives from most of the villages are involved to some extent in Tribal Government affairs. However, there is a history of opposition to the idea of a Tribal Government, and for many years the instigators of this opposition became popularised within a mainstream non-Hopi counter cultural movement. These self styled Hopi 'Traditionalists' utilised the counter cultural Hippie networks of the late 1960s and 1970s to garner support for their opposition to what they saw as a 'puppet government' that did not reflect the historical structure of village based politics. These Hippies were seen by some 'traditionalist' Hopis to have a common ground in their opposition to US federal government, and were also seen to treat the Indian with a certain amount of significance. The idea of the Indian as symbolic environmental and spiritual icon had become embedded in a counter cultural ideology. Thus, the role of the Hopi within an alternative counter-cultural context was instigated well before Lawrence's arrival. The political activism (and activists) at Hopi was rooted in religious and spiritual themes that most spiritual seekers of the hippie era found appealing, and this appeal has been maintained by subsequent generations of a post-hippie era that I refer to here as the New Age.

So, when Lawrence arrived, he was working on the assumptions that A) there was something about Hopi-ness that he was entitled to extract for his own personal quest, and B) there would be at least some Hopis who would be happy to see him and provide access to this Hopi-ness. Lawrence was following in the footsteps of many others before him; he had read the appropriate books that alluded to Hopi rites and prophecies (all written by non-Hopis). Lawrence was aware of a number of Hopi individuals well known in counter-cultural networks, and was eager to meet either with them (unaware that so many had died) or others like them. And eventually his wishes were granted, as he discovered a family who had Traditionalist connections and who were happy to accommodate Lawrence's presence, and listen to his requests. After which my time at Hopi unfortunately ran out, and I am still unaware

whether Lawrence found either what he was seeking, or indeed if he ever really found out precisely what it was that he was actually looking for.

This story of Lawrence is fairly representative of the picture of New Age tourism at Hopi these days. The independent nature of Lawrence's travels, the sacred aspect of his motivations, the conflicting reactions to his presence at Hopi, and the relative lack of infrastructure to attract tourists to Hopi villages. Because Hopis *react* to tourists, they do not actively encourage or discourage tourism. So far, this plan has resulted in a fairly manageable situation where there are almost no mass tourists turning up in coaches expecting dinner and a show. Those individuals who do take the time and effort to visit Hopi tend to have a pretty good reason for being there, and locals tend to deal with them on a case-by-case basis.

Of course, the spiritual seeker is not the only type of tourism at Hopi; there are others who are visiting with a less problematic agenda. These cultural tourists are the kind of guest that most Hopi hosts would tend to react positively to. And the reason for this positive reaction lies in both the guests' motivations and their behaviour whilst at Hopi. The cultural tourists tend to behave well at Hopi ceremonies, unlike a myriad of tales of New Agers acting inappropriately and disruptively. Cultural tourists tend to be more interested in Hopi arts and crafts rather than the New Age fascination with religious information. This artistic interest has an economic benefit to Hopis that complement the benefits of cross-cultural communication. Cultural tourists tend not to view Hopis as icons of any particular spiritual, political or environmental agenda, but often take the time to sit and listen to what Hopi individuals actually tell them. It seems that the cultural tourist is less keen to put Hopis on a pedestal and admire them, but more keen to figure out a bit more about the realities of everyday life at Hopi. Several people remarked on Lawrence's refusal to take a guided tour of Hopiland, despite the fact that many tours are available that are led by local Hopi guides. The idea of doing something so 'touristy' was out of line with Lawrence's idea of an authentic Hopi experience.

So, Hopi reaction to the different types of tourist can be seen in two very general ways according to the value judgement they ascribe to each tourist. Hopis react to the 'right type' of tourist by becoming very accommodating, by offering information

about Hopi life and culture, and by behaving like good hosts. They offer tips on which roads to take, which artists to visit, whether any particular village has an upcoming dance or ceremony that is open to visitors. Hopis who are confronted with the right type of tourist even open their homes and kitchen tables to many of them, providing food, gossip and laughter. Many Hopis offer to keep in touch with the right type of visitor, in case they ever happen to be coming back this way. On the other hand, the Hopi reaction to people like Lawrence, who never really transgressed any social rules for behaviour, but never really behaved like a good tourist, is one of tolerance. Yes, we understand why you're here, and we appreciate that you are looking for something, but most of us believe that whatever it is you're looking for can't be found here, and as soon as you realise this the better. Hopi reaction to people like Lawrence is one of resignation and wariness. People like Lawrence are not always encouraged to return. But there is a strange twist to this tale.

As part of the process to gain permission to conduct research at Hopi I met with a group of representatives from several Hopi villages who worked alongside the Hopi Tribal government. This Cultural Resources Advisory Task Team (CRATT) grilled me about my research and asked me what it was about Hopi culture that I thought the New Agers found so appealing. At that stage I could only say that it was the kudos that Hopi-ness had within global New age networks, that Hopi had a certain something that New Agers thought they could relate to. Their own response to this was somewhat unexpected, and it certainly took me by surprise. I had expected more antagonism towards the New Age representation of Hopi-ness that I had presented as an unwanted and unfounded appropriation of Hopi culture rooted in imperialist and orientalist rhetoric. What I was told at this meeting was that it was not the New Agers that were to blame; it was the fault of the Hopis for letting this happen. It was Hopis who were to blame for being so open to outsiders, and it was Hopis to blame for allowing these New Agers to disseminate their stories throughout the world. This resignation, that Hopis are bringing this upon themselves, was troubling.

Concluding thoughts:

Hopi individuals and institutions are attempting to assert more control over the representations that exist about them, because these representations affect the type of visitor that arrives there. The reason that I knew about people like Lawrence is that people like Lawrence like writing about their pilgrimages to Hopi. The Internet in particular is rife with tales of visits to Hopi and meetings with sacred Hopi elders and medicine men who were so easy to talk to and so ready to listen to these spiritual seeker's questions. Tales abound of pilgrims to Hopi who have visited the power places of the ancient elders of the Hopi Nation, or who have had revelatory experiences that have set them on the path to self-discovery. The kudos of the Hopi is continuing to expand within a global New Age network, and local Hopis are trying to deal with this continuing admiration.

But the way that they are doing this is by reacting to individual cases, rather than developing a unified plan for tourism management. At first, I thought that this was a crazy idea – how do you stop people like Lawrence, or those that act even more inappropriately, from taking advantage of the good nature of their Hopi hosts. People continue to abuse the good nature of Hopis by selling their stories, or by creating workshop programmes based on a smattering of Hopi prophecy or religion. People even make money from the Hopi name by using the word 'Hopi' on such completely alien ideas such as ear candles, or popcorn. And these are generally people who have travelled to Hopi; met with someone who was kind enough to sit and listen to their tale, and then leave Hopi land with tales of 'sharing knowledge with the indigenous guardians of the planet'. Hopis are giving an inch and the New Agers are taking a mile.

But the ambivalent nature of Hopi tourism is, to a large extent, working to attract the 'right type' of tourist. By remaining 'off the beaten track' and continuing to frame a cultural existence in terms of what is best for Hopi cultural preservation, rather than what is best for tourism, Hopis are able to present their culture to tourists with a certain degree of authenticity. Hopis are happy to allow respectful tourists to observe their lives, but are not interested in making it too easy for them! Do not come to Hopi expecting to be able to hike through the backcountry, or take photographs, or even

sketches. At Hopi you may be told unexpectedly that the entire village is closing to visitors now, or that the dance you had been told to go and see, is now for Indians only. At Hopi, you cannot buy rubber tomahawks in any gift shop.

This ambivalence is Hopi's saving grace. It means that only those people who really want to visit Hopi actually arrive there. The only problem comes when the sources that these tourists have consulted prior to their visit, are the 'wrong type' of data. If you have heard about the Hopi from a website that describes their prophetic encounters with extraterrestrials and the indigenous warnings about the imminent end of the world in 2012, you may be disappointed by your visit. If, however, you have consulted a more balanced perspective of Hopi life in the 21st century, than a trip to Hopi is well worth the trouble!

And what about the idea of academic advocacy when it comes to tourism? Well, there is always one sentence that you wish you hadn't put into the abstract isn't there! When I was granted permission to conduct this research at Hopi, it was on the basis of reciprocity. The Hopi people that I worked with were more than happy to open up their world with me, but in return I have been under the obligation to do something in return. Can I stop the fascination with Hopi culture that exists in these sprawling global networks of alternative spirituality that we refer to as the New Age? No. I can do this about as well as I can stop the stereotypes and misrepresentation of any group by any other group. Hopis are not the only victims of cultural stereotypes. Can I stop all tourists acting inappropriately whilst visiting Hopi, and unexpectedly embarrassing or insulting their Hopi hosts? No, of course not. So what is the utility of my research, what can I do to pay back the good nature of my own Hopi hosts? Well, I completed my research back in 2005 and I am still not entirely sure about the answer to that question, and it is something that may take a little longer yet. But for now, if you are thinking about going to Hopi I'll leave you with this advice. Arrive early, wear a hat and sunscreen, leave the camera in the car, and don't tell anyone that you are there to speak with the aliens.