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**DARK TOURISM, HATE AND RECONCILIATION: THE
SANDAKAN EXPERIENCE**

by

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Abstract

The authors call on the experiences of their families to demonstrate how tourism can contribute to reconciliation in the aftermath of war and colonialism. They note the importance of commemoration in ensuring that we do not forget the circumstances in which large-scale acts of inhumanity occur, but emphasize the provision of opportunities to express remorse and forgiveness.

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DARK TOURISM, HATE AND RECONCILIATION: THE SANDAKAN EXPERIENCE

Richard W. Braithwaite and Yun Lok Lee

Introduction

If done well historical tourism is broadly and importantly therapeutic.

Tourism based on past conflict is an emerging form of cultural tourism. It deals with places where past conflict has been severe, and therefore gives them a contested history, and a special significance. Examples include tourism based on slavery in North America and on the Jewish Holocaust in Europe. In Sabah, Malaysia the colonial era was marked by a particularly brutal period of Japanese occupation during World War II.

Such tourism appeals to people concerned about a more troubled and uncertain world. Like ecotourism, it appears to attract strongest interest from the better educated and more affluent part of the market. Also, as with ecotourism, if done well it is broadly and importantly therapeutic.

This chapter describes a case study of the Sandakan area of eastern Sabah, Malaysia. There is no one history of any area, but perhaps there are four for the Sandakan area: those of the Bumiputera, Chinese, Anglo-Australian, and Japanese. It is not so much that they differ with respect to truth, but the emphases, what is interesting, and certainly what is sensitive, do. The development of historical tourism in Sandakan is a challenge that requires not that there be agreement on the history, but agreement on the approach to tourism based on it.

In addition there is an underlying element of residual hate. While hate may be adaptive in helping people survive extreme situations, it is maladaptive outside those narrow circumstances. Many people do not realise they still have it. Others see its maintenance as a duty to the dead and wounded. Still others do not know how to get rid of it.

This paper is also an exploration of using tourism designed to help in the healing of psychological wounds from World War II in both residents and visitors and to lead to a reconciliation with the past and between former enemies. While the initial motivation for this community to develop historical tourism was clearly economic, the social benefits of psychological healing and reconciliation emerge from the process, and have come to be valued by the community.

Issue in focus: Historical tourism

At first glance nostalgia is a longing for a place, but it is really a yearning for a different time – the time of our childhood perhaps (Boym, 2001). Members of all societies are nostalgic about the past. As people grow older there is an underlying feeling that things were better in some ways when they were young. Nostalgia is essentially history without guilt. It is something that fills us with pride rather than shame (Kammen, 1991). In recent

times, nostalgia has turned an ailment that soldiers endured to a disease of the modern age. It seems more widespread and more acute than in the past. It now has more to do with the changing conception of time than dislocation in place (Boym, 2001).

Historians have long argued about the use and abuse of history. Lowenthal (1998) claims history is about the pursuit of truth while heritage is not. The argument is that heritage serves the interests of particular interest groups and is an opportunity to make money from historical subjects through the development of tourist attractions. While heritage appears to be “anything you want” it to be (Hewison, 1987), its value lies not in its analytical precision but in its psychological resonance (Davison, 2000).

However, any history is written from a particular point of view and while historians might eschew deliberate fabrication and distortion, the pasts they portray reflect as much of themselves as their subjects. The distinction between history and heritage, therefore, is largely an illusory one based on style.

But what is historical tourism really about? Davison (2000) attributes an interest in historical tourism to the following:

- A sense of disorientation, stemming from concerns about elements of the present such as the speed of change, mass production and planned obsolescence, and a desire for spiritual moorings.
- A sense of decline, with heritage offering a glorious, if largely fictitious, past to a nation in the midst of a painful present.
- National immaturity, and the use the past to help build a national identity and answer the questions: Who are we and where have we come from?

One or more of these may apply in any region. However, special labels have been given to tourism that focuses on places with a particularly troubled period in their past, for example, dark tourism (Lennon & Foley 2000), thanatourism (Seaton, 1996; Dann & Seaton, 2001) and contested heritage (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996).

Dark tourism has been described as visiting sites which are connected in some way to death (eg, murder sites, death sites, battlefields, cemeteries, mausoleums, churchyards, former homes of now-dead celebrities) and this has long been an important part of tourism in many societies. Lennon & Foley (2000) suggest that, just as ecotourism is a response to global concern about the environment, dark tourism is a response to people’s concerns about an increasingly troubled world. While most tourists would avoid Iraq and Israel-Palestine because of current dangers, the sites of earlier conflicts are of growing interest to tourists.

Fascination with places with a troubled history and a nostalgic hankering after the olden days seem to be about a person’s youth, perhaps a desire to better understand it and its historic context. The suggestion is that yearning for the joy of youth with its energy, strength, health, sex, and limitlessness, is mixed with puzzling over the major conflicts of the era and that immediately preceding it.

As a result of their family history, some tourists have an affiliation with a particular place. A visitor may be a veteran of the conflict there (in military or civilian capacity), a friend or relative of a veteran, have been associated with similar experiences elsewhere, or merely a compatriot familiar with the story. These people may have specific needs with respect to their visit.

The Sandakan historical context

While only a small part of the Japanese wartime empire, Sabah was perhaps its most terrible part.

British North Borneo was administered by a Chartered Company from 1882 until January 1942 when the Japanese invaded. The largest ethnic group was Chinese, particularly Hakkas (Wong 2000). They had a pro-British disposition and had supported the British war effort through the Spitfire Fund and also sent funds to China in support of China's war against the Japanese invaders (Evans 1991). Most British were interned, initially on Berhala Island off Sandakan and, from later in 1942, in Kuching, Sarawak (Keith 1948). In July 1942, the first of two groups of Allied prisoners of war arrived from Changi in Singapore. While most of their colleagues were employed building the Burma-Siam Railway, a total of about 3,000 Australian and British prisoners of war (POWs) and 3,000 Javanese were used to build two airstrips near Sandakan on the east coast of the northern tip of Borneo. Six Australians escaped almost immediately and joined guerrilla fighters in the southern Philippines for the rest of the war or until they were killed (Richardson 1957, Wallace 1958).

Over the three years, conditions in Sandakan Prison Camp became progressively more harsh. By mid-1942, Borneo was far from the fighting and lightly garrisoned, but the surrounding waters were heavily patrolled by American submarines because of the oil routes back to Japan. As a consequence, Borneo was relatively isolated from fairly early in the war. This situation led to much anxiety and a fairly brutal style of control by the Japanese. In 1943, there was a revolt in Jesselton (now Kota Kinabalu) by the Chinese community and some Bumiputera ("native") groups (Moffat 1989). About 50 Japanese were killed and the town was held briefly before its recapture. The retributions were brutal. Entire village populations were killed and finally a group of 376 were executed at Petagas just south of Jesselton, where a large monument now marks the place.

A second insurrection at Jesselton was discovered in planning. More executions followed. Around Sandakan, an underground was established with local people and POWs (Silver 1998). Arms caches were established and radios were built. The planned insurrection was discovered in 1943. There was torture and executions of locals and POWs, and almost all the POW officers were sent to a camp at Kuching in Sarawak.

From October 1944, there were regular Allied air raids on Sandakan. Rations were further reduced in the POW camp and the death rate steadily increased. By January 1945, the Japanese ceased repairing the airstrips. With this cessation of work, the rations were reduced to next to nothing (rice issues ceased). All knives and scissors were removed from the POWs. The death rate rocketed. The first death march commenced in this month. Four hundred and fifty-five of the fittest were sent on foot over a very rough trail to Ranau at the foot of Mt Kinabalu some 250km to the west. At Ranau they were worked carrying rice between Japanese bases until they died of disease and exhaustion. They died in the most appalling conditions.

The Allies had special forces operating in Borneo and had received faulty information that the Sandakan Camp was abandoned. On 27th May 1945, a massive bombardment of Sandakan occurred. Sailors from the Japanese ships sunk in the harbour came ashore and killed any local people they could find. People hid in caves but some were betrayed by crying children and the occupants killed. Twenty-eight of the remaining leaders of the Chinese Community were arrested that day and taken to the Cemetery where they were beheaded. A memorial stone marks the mass grave.

Throughout the war, local men were taken for labouring tasks. Many died from the harsh conditions, some just disappeared, and others were arrested and executed. For families, the loss of the father and breadwinner meant great hardship for the whole family. They were often evicted from their homes and forced to live rough in the jungle and harassed whenever encountered by Japanese soldiers. Many children died of starvation under such circumstances. It is estimated that 16% of the population of Sabah were killed during the three years of Japanese occupation (Tregonning 1965). While only a small part of the Japanese wartime empire, Sabah was perhaps its most terrible part. The whole community descended into hell.

Finally on 29th May, with the Allied forces closing in, the camp at Sandakan was burned. The five hundred and thirty-six fittest POWs set out on the second death march to Ranau. Whereas the first group were on a “march to death”, this group were on a “march of death” (Silver 1998). As they were accompanied by retreating military units, they were well guarded. This time the pace was relentless, food was non-existent, Allied air attacks were persistent, and anyone who fell behind their sub-group of 50 prisoners was shot.

In all, only six prisoners escaped from the death marches, the Sandakan camp and the camp at Ranau in 1945. Of the two hundred and eighty-eight remaining at Sandakan, some were sent on a third death march never to be heard of again and the rest died at Sandakan. In late June, when 183 of the second march arrived only six from the first march were still alive. The relatives of the 1,787 Australian and 641 British dead were given little information after the war. The Australian Army had botched a planned rescue mission using paratroops because its intelligence network on the ground in Sabah had been compromised and information coming out of Borneo was unreliable. So the Australian government and army were not keen to make too much information available to the Australian public. Some have called it the greatest tragedy in Australian military history (Smith 1999).

Until recent times, many of the relatives have remained ignorant of what had happened to their loved ones. Many still have unresolved grief and in some cases, hate.

While it is a terrible story, there were many stories of triumph of the human spirit (e.g. Braithwaite 2004). The heroic Australian story is only part of the tragedy of wartime Sabah. There was also great heroism shown by the local people. They helped the POWs in every way they could, and they suffered mightily for it.

The Australian Ninth Division was the liberator of Sabah in 1945 (Long 1963) and local people were very grateful. Three major seaborne invasions at Tarakan, Labuan, and Balikpapan, involving a total of over 80,000 Australian soldiers, led to the relief of the island of Borneo in 1945. Many Japanese refused to surrender and the killing of POWs continued weeks after the end of the war (Silver 1998). In fact, the fighting with irregular forces deep in the interior of Borneo continued until almost the end of 1945 (Harrison 1959).

Much retribution was exacted. For example,

The 6,000 Japanese in Pensiangan duly heaped their weapons and set out on the long trek northwards (to Beaufort). Along the 150 mile route the oppressed Muruts waited to exact a long contemplated retribution. Only some scattered and terrified hundreds reached safety, as old head-hunting ceremonies were revived in the interior villages” (Tregonning 1965).

Killings with blowpipes in rough country and drownings on waterways were common. There was considerable rough justice from the soldiers also. This included individual actions like forcing surrendering Japanese superior officers to place their swords on the ground instead of accepting them by hand. There were hasty war trials in Labuan and executions carried out at Rabaul before the main Tokyo War Trials (Moffat 1989). Some Japanese lawyers brought in for the war trials were clearly shocked by what had gone on in wartime Borneo (Moffat 1989). The Commandant of the Sandakan Prison Camp, Hosijima, bit the hand of the hangman just before execution at Rabaul.

Many Japanese soldiers also perished of starvation and disease in the jungle. In the latter half of the Pacific War, Japanese troops were chronically undersupplied. In order to preserve their fighting effectiveness under such conditions, individual soldiers who were no longer effective were given a day’s rations and cast out of their military unit and told to fend for themselves. Many turned to cannibalism.

Japanese military discipline was harsh (eg, Tasaki, 1950), with severe punishment (up to court martial) meted out to soldiers who were late due to illness in meeting objectives (eg, Watanabe, 1995). The soldiers fighting in Borneo were given impossible tasks by a high command whose field experience was in Manchuria. Eight battalions of the 25th Independent Mixed Brigade of the Japanese 37th Army were ordered to move from the east coast to the west to concentrate for a grand battle in the Brunei Bay area. They left from various locations and traveled various distances. The two battalions who traveled the longest distances were not accompanying prisoners of war and experienced 87 and 57% mortality (Tanaka, 1996). The relocation of military units from one side of Borneo to the other, such as on the death march route, was something that generated much resentment among the Japanese soldiers (Tanaka, pers. comm.2004). This resentment was no doubt taken out on others, including POWs and local people. The remains from Japanese suicides were found hanging in the jungle for many years after the war (Harrison, 1959), silent reminders of this terrible time. Of the 25,000 Japanese soldiers based in the Sabah part of Borneo, very few returned to Japan.

All modern infrastructure was destroyed in Sabah during 1945. The Chartered Company handed North Borneo over to the British Crown and it remained a colony, with little in the way of economic recovery, until the formation of Malaysia in 1963 (Tregonning 1965).

The significance of Sandakan in Australia

Sandakan represents the cruel waste of war and the need to acknowledge and repair what has been done.

After the war, the former officer POWs from Sandakan began “The Old Sandakans”, a group which met in Sydney for a dinner each year. In the 1990s, they initiated “The Sandakan Trust” which collected donations used to build six memorials in Australia at Sydney, Brisbane, Tamworth, Wagga, Maitland and near Perth. In the mid 1990s, another group began meeting in Sydney at Burwood. This group was facilitated by Lynette Silver who tracked down relatives and got them involved in what became known as “The Sandakan Family”. A third group formed around an annual ceremony at the Australian War Memorial on the 29th May. It was begun by Hubert Gault, the nephew of a Sandakan victim, in the late 1990s. Another group meet at Boyup in Western Australia. The latter three groups have expanded rapidly over the last decade, with ceremonies involving 200-300 people. A national monument will be opened in Canberra in 2005.

In the early 1990s, Jonathon Mills wrote *Sandakan Threnody*, an oratorio-style work for tenor, choir and orchestra. This was based on his father’s memories of Sandakan, from where, as a POW medical officer, he was transferred out to Kuching in 1943. Performed by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and Chamber singers, it was well received. Mills wanted to make it more multicultural and invited collaboration with Singaporean Ong Keng Sen to expand it into a full theatre production. Ong involved a Japanese kabuki performer and a Japanese butoh dancer as well as other Asian and Australian performers. Premiered at the Singapore Arts Festival in 2004, it was then presented at the 2004 Brisbane Festival. Mills says that “we need to understand what went on at such death camps before we can heal and move on with a greater understanding” (Kelly, P., 2004).

In Australia, Sandakan is achieving symbolic status, representing the cruel waste of war and the need to acknowledge and repair what has been done.

Developing a strategy for historical tourism at Sandakan

**A goal that is yet to be widely appreciated
is the elimination of hate and the
achievement of reconciliation.**

The development of a historical tourism strategy was seen as a means of focusing the community energies on desired goals. For most people, these goals were initially about growing international tourism and the economic benefits associated with it. However, during the process most people have come to realise that identity-building for a community in rapid transition is also important. A goal that is yet to be widely appreciated is the therapeutic one, the elimination of hate and the achievement of reconciliation. These goals were not explicit at the beginning but are outcomes that evolved with the process. The economic goals were clearly easy to sell, whereas the social goals would have sounded like unimportant waffle to many hard-nosed business people.

The Sandakan Tourism Committee is a set of people from the tourism industry, community, State government and local government, appointed by the President of the Sandakan Municipal Council who is also a strong participant in the meetings. The

authors, from a foreign university, look like consultants. However, they have volunteered their services to the region because of personal associations with it.¹

This type of relationship with the community seems to have two effects. First, local people, industry and government, offer accommodation and other hospitality most generously. Second, the authors appear to be accepted as members of the community rather than outside experts. In other words, our background connection with Sandakan meant that a relationship of trust developed quickly and easily with the community. The key leadership of the process was in the hands of the President of the local government (like Mayor of the city), Datuk Adeline Leong. Without her authority and vision, nothing would have happened. The authors were recognised for their expertise, exercised in provision of suggestions, praise and encouragement for the actions of the locals.

During initial discussions in June 2002, the authors suggested to the Tourism Committee that the successful nature-based tourism should be complemented with product based on historical tourism. Public lectures on the war history were presented by the first author in Sandakan and Kota Kinabalu, and this helped raise interest in the project. These and a visit by the President to Australia helped to establish the working relationship.

Two major workshops were then held. The first was a large inclusive one of about 80 people and was opened by the Assistant Minister of Tourism for Sabah in January, 2003. A smaller more select one of about 50 people with fewer formal talks was held in October of the same year. The participants were from government departments and industry. The authors proposed the agenda for each workshop and this was then carefully negotiated with the Committee through the President.

The first workshop identified the issues associated with the broad area of historical tourism. Discussion groups examined the following questions. What do we know about the potential market from Eastern countries? What do we know about the potential market from western countries? What do we need to do to develop new tourism product? What do we need to do to sustainably manage existing historical tourism resources?

While the wording changed, there were six broad issues considered with the development of historical tourism in Sabah at the second workshop. What exactly do the tourists want from historical tourism? What historical resources are available? What needs to be done to develop such resources into tourism product? What management systems are going to be most effective in the conservation of these resources? How can historical tourism be incorporated into the tourism systems of Sabah? What implications are there for the way Sandakan and Sabah are marketed?

The workshops began with great formality. There were many speeches of welcome and many, mainly senior people, were acknowledged. To the authors, this seemed like a lot of time spent on formality, but it was probably an essential part of gaining consensus within the community.

A half-day meeting of 25 people was held in August, 2004. This was chaired by the first author and took the form of a review of what was happening. There was a combination of public and private projects:

- improvements to the Memorial Park (Sabah and Australian governments);

¹ The father of the first author was one of the six Australian prisoners of war who escaped from Sabah in 1945. The second author and his wife grew up in Sabah but have lived in Australia for about thirty years while regularly visiting relatives in Sabah.

- a new museum based on the former house of author, Agnes Keith (Sabah Museum);
- a new heritage museum (Sabah Museum);
- commercialisation of a local landmark, Batu Sapi (private);
- development of both walking and driving heritage trails (private with Sabah Tourism money);
- an oral history book project (private);
- establishment of a walking trail along the POW death march route (Sabah Society – NGO); and
- a memorial stained-glass windows for the old Anglican church (public donations from Australia).

While the emphasis was on the development of new and existing attractions, other elements of the tourism system were discussed. In particular the improved airline connections (direct flights to Kota Kinabalu from Australia) have seen the numbers of Australian visitors treble from 5,000 to 15,000 in two years with strong indications of further growth. Much effort from Sabah has gone into promotion of Sabah in Australia (Charuruks, pers comm.) with government and industry delegations to Australia and participation in Sandakan memorial services in Australia. Inbound numbers to Sabah have risen by 25% from 2003 to 2004. The hotels are full and consideration is being given to new hotels and resorts.

Another issue discussed was the rejuvenation and beautification of the old town area. Sandakan was located on a narrow coastal strip backed by attractive cliffs. As a small colonial town this was a most attractive location, but post war reconstruction was of poor quality, and as prosperity returned new growth went inland. However, the old town has the historic sites and is the most attractive site for a tourist precinct. The first stage of this redevelopment has been planned for the foreshore and includes a five-star hotel. A need for greater public cleanliness was also discussed.

The meeting was held in conjunction with a Sandakan Day Commemoration Ceremony in August, 2004. This was the second such ceremony organised by the Sandakan Municipal Council. Further ceremonies are planned for April and August, 2005. While there have been occasional memorial ceremonies organised by the Australians over the years (eg, 1982, 1986, 1995, 1999), the locally organised ones are a special new development. They represent shared ownership of the shared tragedy. Held at the former POW camp site, the August ceremony was extraordinarily moving. Perhaps the most powerful speech was by the leading Sandakan lawyer, Alex Khoo, who lost his mother and sister in the Allied bombing in 1944 and whose father was beheaded in 1945. Such ceremonies at these special places appear to be a therapeutic mechanism which will take us towards reconciliation.

The problem of the sacredness of war memorials

The separation of the sacred from the profane is achieved by ritualised transitional space and behaviour.

Not knowing where the remains of loved ones are located can exacerbate anxiety and sense of loss among those left behind. The death of numbers of people in one place often

evokes a community response in the form of ceremonies and memorials, and these can provide some comfort through the shared experience. Commercial tourism can help provide and enhance such comforting experiences.

However, war memorials have come to be regarded as sacred places (eg, Winter, 1998; Inglis, 1998). As a consequence, any hint of commercial exploitation is regarded by some as inappropriate. The Shrine in Melbourne explicitly states in granite: "Let all men know that this is Holy ground". This raises a tension between those who represent different interests. It is probably more useful to think of tourism as providing a contemporary vehicle for the preservation of memorials. Further, well managed tourism presents attractions in a way which relates to the need for tasteful and sensitive presentation of war memorials.

Gunn (1998) has outlined three elements of an attraction: a nucleus, with an inviolate belt and a zone of closure in concentric circles around it. The nucleus is the principal attracting force. The inviolate belt is the essential setting, crucial to presenting the nucleus sensitively and attractively. The zone of closure is further out and is where the support elements for refreshment, parking, accommodation, etc, are located, well hidden from the nucleus. In other words, the inviolate zone is the key to quality. Its job is to help enhance the nucleus, giving it atmosphere and maintaining its attractiveness. It contributes to presence and a sense of place. This is the key to the resolution of possible conflict between sacredness and exploitation.

There are also more subtle dimensions to preserving the reverence due to such a site. Scholars have considered these issues with respect to, for example, tourism in ancient cathedrals. Shackley (2002) observes:

The cathedral as heritage attraction is also sacred space, identified as such by the majority of visitors even if they do not know the correct means of behaviour and are unable to articulate its seeming immutability as a component of their experience. It becomes important that the cathedral appears to be untouched by the modern world, even if in practical terms this is romantic but impossible as the building will have been continually modified since its construction. The tourism industry, however, sees it as a space to be preserved rather than used, to be gazed upon but not changed (Urry, 1990). Thus, when attempts are made to radicalise the use of that space, whether by the physical modification of the site or by the introduction of charging, a dissonance arises. ... Ritual space, "sensu stricta", should divorce the participant from his/her surroundings so that space becomes complete on its own, achieving a sense of timelessness (or perhaps timefulness) in which all sense of time is collapsed into a particular timeframe. It is sense of timefulness that visitors to sacred places remark on but are unable to describe, which creates a powerful "spirit of place" that affects visitors and is affected by them.

The French philosopher, Foucault (1986: 15) developed the term "heterotopia" for such ritual places. He says there exist, for all cultures,

... real and effective placeswhich constitute a sort of counter arrangement of effectively realised utopia, in which all the real arrangements, all the other arrangements that can be found within society are at one and the same time represented, challenged and overturned: a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable.

Gatekeepers control access to such heterotopia. Activities such as paying for admission can be seen as violating the established rules and thus threaten its integrity. The separation of the sacred from the profane (after Durkheim, 1911), is achieved by ritualised transitional space and behaviour, which must be preserved. This is not inconsistent with Gunn's (1998) tripartite model of attractions discussed above. Such ideas can also be seen in ICOMOS UK (2001).

Multi-cultural tourism

Historical tourism should not be about avoiding the unpalatable truth.

There are effectively four groups strongly associated with what happened in Sabah during World War II: Anglo-Australian, Chinese, Japanese, and Bumiputera.

The British (including numbers of Australians) were the former colonial masters and the Australians were the liberators. The attitudes and values of the colonial masters and the liberating soldiers were very different, with the soldiers more egalitarian, and a Sabahan thanked one of us as an Australian for the sacrifice of Australian lives in the liberation of Sabah. However, while the local people of Borneo might view them as very different people, the two groups and their descendents have very similar interests. The British and Australian tourists are both interested in the colonial period and the war period. Others Westerners, Americans and Europeans, share these interests, but less strongly. Currently, most visitors come for the ecotourism product (Sabah Tourism, pers. comm., 2003).

The wartime Chinese were generally pro-British but possibly only because they faced a common enemy. The Chinese diaspora remained strongly connected with China and its cultural heritage. They sent money to China to help fight the Japanese and they also sent money to the Spitfire Fund to aid wartime Britain (Evans 1991). The dominant group numerically, they were never afforded the opportunity to be part of the short-lived Greater Asia Co-prosperity Zone, and were treated as enemies by the Japanese. However, unlike most of the Europeans, they were not interned. Today, the biggest group of international tourists are the Taiwanese (Sabah Tourism, pers. comm., 2003) and some Chinese Sabahans visit China by preference over other international destinations. Chinese people remain very interested in Chinese sites like temples, and other locations connected with Chinese culture. In Sabah, Chinese culture is maintained much more strongly than by people of Chinese descent in Australia.

The Japanese visit Sabah for a variety of reasons, but the main two appear to be to see wildlife, particularly orang utans, and to visit war places. The war-related visits may be solo, in small groups or occasionally large groups. They are usually connected with a visit to a place of importance to a now-deceased relative. The relative may have died or

spent a considerable time there. Veterans also come, though in decreasing numbers now. They also visit places of personal significance, particularly those where comrades died. Their prayers in these places are believed to assist the deceased to find their way in the afterlife. Most Japanese also visit some graves of Japanese comfort women from the 1920s and 1930s. They were made famous by a popular book (Tomoko, 1999) and film, *Sandakan Brothel No. 8*.

Japanese visitors are not highly visible in their tourism. They are uncertain about how welcome they are. Trusted tour guides who specialise in Japanese inbound tourism are regularly asked if the local people “still hate them”. Old Sabahans refer to them as a fierce people and many do still hate the Japanese. The younger Sabahans, while respecting their old people, do not appear to concur with this hatred. One tour guide told his grandfather he was guiding some Japanese tourists, and his grandfather mischievously asked if he would have an opportunity to kill any. Occasionally a Japanese visitor apologises to a tour guide “for what his ancestors did”. One Japanese veteran regularly returns to express his gratitude for having survived that terrible time when so many of his comrades died.

Many Japanese visit the Memorial Park. One 40-year old we spoke to after he left the Park, reported that he did not believe the interpretation provided at the Park. He could not believe his beloved grandfather was capable of such inhumane behaviour. However, it is clear that historical tourism should not be about avoiding the unpalatable truth but should involve different cultural packagings. While there is a need for different cultural interpretations, all visitors need to be made to feel welcome at any attraction. This is surely a major pathway to mutual understanding.

The Bumaputera, the various indigenous groups, also suffered during the war. They were pressed into service as labourers under harsh conditions, the Japanese soldiers stole their food, and the women were molested. The Kadazan people adorned their houses with an ornament that was meant to show their hatred of the Japanese, who remained unaware of its meaning (McHugh-Kittingan, pers comm., 2003). When Australian Special Forces set up guerrilla groups in the interior from 1944, the Bumiputera readily enlisted and fought bravely (Harrisson, 1957). Today, this part of the population remains the least affluent and does not strongly participate in the tourism industry.

Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome

Some of the veterans of wars have suffered terrible experiences involving acute stress for prolonged periods. While the physical impacts are often cured relatively quickly, the psychological effects last much longer and never completely disappear. While there have been many names for these psychological effects, the one used today is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). After exposure to a recognisable stress or trauma, people display the following signs and symptoms (American Psychiatric Association, 1980).

- *The re-experiencing of trauma through nightmares, flashbacks or intrusive memories;*
- *Emotional numbing or withdrawal from the external environment;*
- *Changes in personality and adaptive behaviour that include memory impairment, survivor guilt, sleep disturbance, and hyper-alertness.*

More specifically PTSD may be diagnosed in a person exhibiting at least two of the items below after the trauma :

- *Hyper-alertness or exaggerated startle response;*
- *Sleep disturbance;*
- *Guilt about surviving when others did not, or about behaviour required for survival;*
- *Memory impairment or trouble concentrating;*
- *Avoidance of activities that arouse recollection of the traumatic event;*
- *Intensification of symptoms by exposure to events that symbolise or resemble the traumatic event.*

It is thought that the severity of PTSD is related to what might be called combat intensity which is thought to be related to the degree of exposure to the following (Elder & Clipp, 1988):

- *Exposure to killing and death either by observation or action;*
- *Exposure to combat fire either through use of weapons or receiving incoming fire;*
- *Duration of time in combat.*

Obviously these criteria can be applied to soldiers, prisoners of war, and civilians. Because of the conflict experience of the people of Sabah during World War II, the whole of the population of Sabah would have been expected to display symptoms of PTSD in 1945. Further, bad cases of PTSD are passed on to a second generation and possibly even a third (Burgmann & Jucovy, 1982; Wardi, 1992).

For the POWs of the Japanese and some other groups like Holocaust victims, there was additional stress on the mind and particularly the body. Usually for years, they were fed a diet poor in quality and very small in amount. Vitamin deficiency symptoms such as beri beri (Vitamin B) were common. Diseases of the alimentary tract like dysentery, and those of the tropics like malaria were common and went untreated. A survivor (father of the first author) reported that a person with only one of the three major diseases - malaria, beri-beri and dysentery - usually survived. However, if they contracted two or three together, they usually died. Tropical ulcers, sores which eat away flesh and bone, were a constant problem. The POWs were worked extremely hard building an airstrip in the hot tropical sun. Those too ill to work were required to collect firewood to run the power system and for cooking. Beatings were commonplace, and some endured long periods in a cage for punishment.

Such a total assault on the body does not ever heal. The medical opinion is that these POWs lost 10-15 years of life span. This would also apply to numbers of local people who were severely mistreated and few local people from that time are still alive.

Case Study: The story of the authors' families

James Richard Braithwaite was a prisoner of war of the Japanese from 1942-45 at Sandakan in northern Borneo. He was in a camp where he was one of only six out of nearly 3,000 Australian and British prisoners who survived the war. After he had escaped, this gentle intelligent man was emaciated and ill, but managed to summon the anger from his hatred to beat a Japanese soldier to death. After some days in the jungle he was taken in by local people who took him to the coast where they hailed down a passing American PT boat. Although in very poor physical and psychological condition, he survived and gradually recovered.

In a television interview the surgeon on the Burma-Siam Railway, the late Lt .Col. “Weary” Dunlop, described how he lost his hate. This occurred shortly after VP (Victory in the Pacific) Day and the defeated Japanese Army from Burma were transiting through Thailand. A very ill and filthy member of the former enemy was being neglected by the other Japanese prisoners. Weary picked the man up and as he did so, he felt the hate drain from his body. Symbolic acts are likely to be a key part of the relinquishing of hate. Weary discovered his symbolic act early and by accident. My father needed to develop a ceremony many years after the war.

The grandfather of Yun-Lok Lee was a hospital administrator in Beluran when the Japanese Army arrived in 1942. He failed to be at the door to greet the invaders but continued with his hospital work. For this he was beaten to death and his body was hung at the hospital as an example to others. The young pregnant aunt and uncle of Szu-Hann Chin, the wife of the second author, were bayoneted to death by Japanese sailors who ran amok in Sandakan town on the 27th May 1945. The family is still obviously and strongly affected by their memories of these deaths.

Hate

It is argued that appropriate tourism experiences may help resolve both grief and hatred.

Many people associated with such experiences, veterans of the experience and their relatives, retain hatred for the former enemy. The philosopher, A.C. Grayling (2002: 86), tells us that hate is "... dislike and antipathy inflamed to a high degree and inspired by beliefs which stimulate a set of other emotions in the hater, chief among them fear, ignorance, anger and disgust.' He suggests 'that someone truly contemptible does not merit the energy that stronger emotions require.' Further he opines that 'the blanket impulse of hatred, so deep and negative ... reveals nothing so clearly as the hater's own emotional inadequacy' (p.87).

To most people these views would seem to be quite reasonable, but to a biologist they ignore the evolutionary origins of hate. Throughout most of human history hate has probably been of great survival value. It gives us the energy to face great danger and survive. However, today, most of us are not tested in this way and do not require hate in our repertoire, and when it does emerge it is inappropriate and maladaptive as Grayling suggests.

Hate is an individualised emotional rejection which leads to group hatred (Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1972). Further, in war, leaders have found hate to be useful in persuading soldiers to do the unthinkable, legitimised murder. In these days of a globalising world, most people realise that the enemy’s soldiers are not so dissimilar to themselves. Nonetheless, fanaticism generated by poverty, ignorance, and purported religious doctrine, can still inspire the hatred that facilitates the capability in a considerable number of people to behave in extraordinary ways.

Table 1. Hate-forgiveness scale.

INTENSE HATE	Violent
HATE	Frequent angry thoughts
REPRESSED HATE	Anger elicited by strong stimuli
HOSTILE HATELESS	Uncomfortable around target group
NEUTRAL HATELESS	No feelings either way
UNDERSTANDING	Have good and impartial understanding of the factors which caused conflict
EMPATHETIC	Empathise with the position of the target group
THEORETICAL FORGIVENESS	Have stated position of forgiveness without practical implications
PRACTICAL FORGIVENESS	Show forgiveness by actions

However, hate is adaptive only in a very narrow range of extreme circumstances and it is clearly not healthy to retain it in the long term. It is argued that appropriate tourism experiences may help resolve both grief and hatred.

The intensity of such extreme experiences as war leaves a complex of effects on individuals and society. Survivors manifest a range of intensities of hate and appear to gradually move down the scale of hate as healing takes place (see Table 1). This process of healing seems to be facilitated by ceremony. For example, Amerindian people have for hundreds of years used healing rituals 'embedded within a meaningful cosmology and group identity' (Silver and Wilson, 1988). As noted above, labels have been attached to tourism that focuses on places with a particularly troubled period in their past - 'dark tourism' (Lennon and Foley, 2000), 'thanatourism' (Seaton, 1996; Dann & Seaton, 2001), 'contested heritage' tourism (Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996) and, more colloquially, 'war tourism'.

In Borneo, we talk with people whose civilian fathers were executed or disappeared while working for the Japanese. The families often suffered great hardship as a consequence, with children dying of starvation. It is clear that some have lost their hate and others have not. Generally those who have not cannot even answer when asked if they still hate the Japanese, but their feelings are obvious. Others mutter some acceptable but unconvincing phrase with considerable distress and awkwardness. In Australia, children, siblings and other relatives of dead POWs still hate the Japanese. Most are

sensitive, loving, well-educated people, but they continue to hate. To speak of reconciliation seems tantamount to a betrayal of their dead relative. They seem to fear that to extinguish their hate of the old enemy would also extinguish their love of their departed beloved.

Reconciliation

The Japanese government built a Peace Park at Labuan at Surrender Point where the Japanese 27th Army occupying Borneo surrendered to the Allies in 1945. A memorial plaque reads:

“Peace Monument.” This monument is erected by the Japanese South Pacific Friendship Association in September 1976 to preserve the memories of all the soldiers who fought and fell on this island during the Second World War and the memories of all the civilians who perished with them. May it stand as a lasting monument of human courage and devotion to duty and may it symbolise the fervent hope of every man, woman and child on this island that never again will this island be a witness to such sufferings and miseries.

Another, erected a few years later, reads:

In memory of all those who sacrificed their lives on land and at sea in and around Borneo during World War II and in dedication to world peace. Constructed by the Government of Japan in cooperation with Government of Sabah 20 September 1982.

It is a pleasant but remote seaside location. Unfortunately relatively few go there. It would have had more impact if it were located at Sandakan.

However, it is one of a number of indications of the desire by Japanese people to deal with World War II. British and Australian ex-servicemen groups push for the Japanese government to “apologise” for what they did in World War II. They define apology in their cultural context while the Japanese continue to appear to be trying to apologise in a range of ways.

Contrary to widespread Western views, surveys of Japanese from the 1980s indicate 'there is a general awareness in Japan of the actions that have generated widespread condemnation, and people expressed considerable remorse for the wartime behaviour of Japanese forces; more than 80% of those responding to a government questionnaire agreed with that proposition' (Kratoska, 2003).

Reconciliation after colonialism

In essence, the goals of the Japanese empire were no different from those of the British empire.

For most people who were not in the dominant European group, the memory of colonialism is painful, as they were treated with arrogance and disrespect during that time. For many too young to remember, the association with those times, transmitted by older relatives, is very negative.

For example, it is hard for contemporary Malaysians to appreciate the humiliation of the British Colonial times. People greatly venerated in Chinese and Bumiputera society were treated as insignificant subhuman fodder for the economic machine of empire. An old Chinese saying from colonial times was, 'The taipan treats us like dogs'.

The experience of Singapore is illustrative. After a couple of decades of rapid post-colonial economic growth, citizens began to consider their built heritage (Henderson, 2001). Among the most difficult to deal with were the symbols of privilege and exclusion like the Raffles Hotel, 'a venue for the privileged few, ... indicative of the divided and unequal society which colonialism engenders' (Henderson, 2001:12). Even among the colonial masters it was exclusive. For example, 'other ranks' in the military were excluded.

While the presence of such buildings adds 'dignity, constancy and history to a fast changing city' (Gretchen, in Henderson, 2001), it is employment by the residents and government to help define and assert national identity which seems most important. The relationship is no longer one of subservience but has become one of partnership in the global economy and tourism industry (Henderson, 2001). Perhaps there is also a sense of having *made it*, of having transcended humble origins and being comfortable, without post-colonial feelings of low esteem, in the modern world. It may be a confirmation of success.

In essence, the goals of the Japanese empire were no different from those of the British empire. In fact, they were modelled on them. An understanding of what colonialism was really like for the under class would be valuable for the British and Australians. It also would take some of the moral high ground from them over World War II. It may help make them more open to reconciliation.

Conclusion

A person's sense of history is the history of their family and friends and may involve a number of places. Periods of trauma, particularly war experiences, characterize most such histories. These periods are usually suppressed and often involve hatred of another group. Perhaps during periods of increased global conflict, such as at present, there is greater reminder of these suppressed traumas. So, in the same way that concern about the environment generates interest in ecotourism, concern about the state of human affairs in the world generates interest in what we call historical tourism. Such tourism can be highly emotional, but may be therapeutic if handled well. The places discussed here are potentially loci for reconciliation between past enemies where tourism can act as mediator. Visitors and residents are both patients and therapists.

So what is such war tourism about? The following appear to be part of it:

- Resolving grief;
- Understanding how these terrible things could have happened;
- Empathising by relatives with the lives of the deceased;
- Sharing with and learning from those who had similar family experiences;

- An unselfconsciously emotional experience;
- Increasing intercultural understanding;
- Learning about how horrific and ineffective war is as a means of resolving international problems.

While it is clear that full reconciliation is some way off, very real progress is being made with the Sandakan project. Tourism is providing both impetus and structure to help healing occur.

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Action agenda: Peace museums²

The first peace museum was established in Philadelphia in 1798, and was designed by a physician to encourage the abolition of war by demonstrating the horrors associated with it. Similar objectives were apparent in the International Museum of War and Peace (Lucerne, Switzerland in 1902) which emphasised the increasingly destructive power of modern weaponry. Other peace museums, notably the First International anti-War Museum in Berlin (1925), sought to communicate the lessons of World War 1 by exhibitions which contrasted the 'official' representations of honour and glory with the realities of destruction and human misery.

The obliteration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atomic bombs in 1945 is commemorated in Japanese museums and parks dedicated to those who were killed and urging an end to nuclear disarmament. Some now incorporate materials relating to Japanese militarism and promote discussion of atrocities committed by Japanese forces and related issues. Those in Germany were developed primarily during the Cold War period, and often have peace-building and reconciliation messages. Location is important, and the most popular museum was established in West Berlin, near Checkpoint Charlie. Originally focusing on attempts to escape from East Berlin, the museum now contains information about human rights and nonviolent resistance to violations of these.

A number of peace museums recognise the work of individuals, and combine a commemorative function with promotion of the relevant values. Some are concerned with well known personalities such as Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi and US President Woodrow Wilson, while others provide information on local heroes such as Franz Jagerstatter (an Austrian conscientious objector) and Yi Jun (a Korean diplomat during the Japanese occupation). These demonstrate that peace has heroes.

² This review is based on van den Dungen, P. (1999), Peace Education: Peace Museums, in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict*, Volume 1, Academic Press.

International organisations are also recognised because of their potential to provide alternatives to war in resolving conflicts. Geneva is home to the Museum of the League of Nations and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum, both focusing primarily on the ideals of the initiatives and historical records.

Can war museums be regarded as peace museums? Where they are merely displays of weapons and commemorations of battles, the answer would be negative. However, there has been, in recent years, a decline in the glorification of war, and many now recognise the cost in lives on both sides of a conflict and a desire to engage in reconciliation. An example is the Historial of the Great War at Verdun (one of the World War 1 'killing fields'), designed by British, French and German historians.

In addition to peace museums, there are those concerned with related matters such as the pursuit of freedom and justice. Some of these document the evils and mourn the victims of tyrannical regimes such as those which prevailed in Cambodia and the former Soviet Union. There are more than 100 Holocaust centres dedicated to ensuring that the extermination of Jews by the Nazis is not forgotten. Such places allow for mourning and remind us of our capacity for evil and the dangers of intolerance.

Some museums deal with the aftermath of colonialism and slavery, and are especially represented in North and South America, Australasia and South Africa, where the focus is on 'humanity's striving for freedom and dignity'.

Japan remains the only country with a substantial peace museum movement, but further growth appears to be likely as travellers seek to become more informed on the places they visit. As van den Dongen notes (pp12-13):

Museums are well-established and highly regarded vehicles for the preservation, transmission, and development of knowledge and values, thus contributing significantly to the education of their numerous visitors. Peace museums, likewise, are potentially powerful instruments for the dissemination of a culture of peace.

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