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- 1 Domestic tourism in the forests of India has increased since the 2000s, integrated into the context of Indian post-liberalisation and the boom of mass tourism (Münster & Münster, 2012; Cabasset-Semedo *et al.*, 2010). Investments in real estate dedicated to tourism are flourishing, as are activities aiming to respond to the middle class and urban elite's newly discovered need for the outdoors and nature. By definition, the tourist experience targets leisure activities, considered to restore the body and the mind (Hauteserre, 2009) through rest, discovery, play (Knafou and Stock, 2003, cited in Sacareau, 2011) and the pleasures of social interaction. The forested mountains of South India respond particularly well to this objective because for urban tourists these areas are a source of unequivocal otherness: these mountainous landscapes covered in dense forests where wild animals roam, inhabited by groups of hunter-gatherers, who are, by virtue of their culture and lifestyle, distant from the social norms of the inhabitants of the plains and cities.
- 2 These so very different populations that live in the Ghat mountains and their foothills are part of the Scheduled Tribes defined by the Constitution of India and today called

the Adivasi (original inhabitants). These populations have been assigned two essentialist visions that continue to influence attitudes towards them: preserved tribes living in harmony with nature in an ecological romanticism approach (Shiva, 1991; Kuper, 2005) and as backward peoples that have remained segregated from civilisation (Ehrenfels, 1952; Philip, 2003). This ambivalent dual approach shapes how these peoples are viewed by tourists, as well as by the small farmers working in the mountains, the inhabitants of the plains, and the civil servants in charge of managing the environment in which they live and the development of tourism within this environment.

- 3 This article analyses these attitudes toward the Adivasi populations in the center of Kerala (South India) and the place assigned to them in the collective imagination regarding forested mountains. Transforming these areas into tourist sites demonstrates the burden of this legacy when considering the mountainous areas and in the relations with the Adivasi living there, but the implications of this new tourism also provide a better understanding of the complex social relationships that exist with the forest society and how the development of tourism perpetuates social hierarchies.
- 4 We will first examine the development of tourism in Kerala's mountain regions and the history of the uses of this mountainous environment, now an object of tourism. We will then provide an interdisciplinary view of the Adivasi so that several examples of tourism development can be analysed in different contexts.

Relating to the mountains: from exploiting the resource to developing tourism

Tourism in the Kerala mountains: reappropriated margins

- 5 Between 2008 and 2014, domestic tourism in India increased 9.6% and arrivals of foreign tourists rose 10.6% (NCAER, 2015). In 2008, Kerala ranked sixth among the Indian states as a destination of domestic tourist flows (coming from the same state or other states in the Union) and ranked ninth if only tourists from other states are considered. In 2015, the number of Indian tourists coming to Kerala was nearly 12.5 million, progressing 6.6% over 2014, and the number of international tourists amounted to more than 977,000 in 2015, a 5.9% increase compared to 2014 (Kerala Department of Tourism, 2016a). In this context of rising domestic leisure travel, the mountains, and most particularly their nature reserves, are attracting increasing numbers of visitors. In their destination choices, tourists naturally favor Kerala's main cities and major pilgrimage sites, but in 2014 the mountain districts nonetheless attracted between 4 and 6% of the domestic tourists.

Table 1. Tourist numbers at a few mountain sites

Sites	Foreign tourists in 2014	Foreign tourists in 2010	Growth rate of international tourists, 2010–2014 (%)	Mean annual growth rate of international tourists 2010–2014 (%)	Domestic tourists in 2014	Domestic tourists in 2010	Growth rate of domestic tourists, 2010–2014 (%)	Mean annual growth rate of domestic tourists 2010–2014 (%)
Thekkady	48,349	27,537	75.6	15.1	304,021	170,857	77.9	15.5
Nelliampathy	569	47	1110.6	86.5	28,955	24,385	18.7	4.4
Wayanad	10,967	6620	65.7	13.4	593,827	406,776	46	9.9
Athirapally	5177	484	969.6	80.8	361,725	58,779	515.4	57.5
Parambikulam	581	-	-	-	46,228	-	-	-
Kerala total	923,366	659,265	40.1	8.8	11,695,411	8,595,975	36.1	8

Source: Kerala Department of Tourism, 2016b, 2010.

- 6 Kerala's mountain sites (Map 1) receive few international tourists (Table 1): 0.06% of the Kerala total in 2014 for the high plateaus of Nelliampathy and the Parambikulam nature reserve (Palakkad district), 0.56% for Athirapally Falls (Thrissur district), 1.19% for the tribal areas in the mountains of the Wayanad district, and 5.24% for the Thekkady hill station¹ (Periyar National Park, Idukki district), which has developed an attractive offer for this market (Appendix 1). Between 2010 and 2014, these destinations nonetheless attracted a growing number of international tourists, even though few had taken up these itineraries until this time (Table 1). The mountainous sites are increasingly visited by domestic tourists, most particularly the Wayanad district, which, in accordance with its reputation as a unique nature destination, brought in 5.1% of the Indian tourists in 2014. The Thekkady nature reserve received 2.6% of the domestic tourists, whereas Athirapally Falls attracted 3.1%. These statistics only take into account visits including an overnight stay, while the fairly numerous day tourists are not included in these statistics. The Parambikulam Tiger Reserve has few visitors with 0.4% of Kerala's domestic tourists. Most of the Indian tourists visiting the sites in Kerala come from the same state (67.7%) followed by neighboring states: Tamil Nadu (13.2%), Karnataka (6%), Maharashtra (3.4%) and Andhra Pradesh (3%) (Kerala Department of Tourism, 2014).

Map 1. Location of the Kerala tourist sites studied

- 7 This influx of tourists to the mountains, even if less than to other destinations, is a factor of major change in the forest regions. Today access to these forests remains difficult and the visitor must negotiate several barriers guarded by forest wardens. Where tourism is accepted, it is limited to restricted areas, overseen by managers and submitted to a program of often fee-paying activities. Nevertheless, these barriers are

opening progressively, allowing tourists to plunge even deeper into a forest that has until now been reserved for other uses.

History of the use of the Kerala forest mountain areas: from timber harvesting to conservation

- 8 Since the colonial period, the natural resources of Kerala's mountain forests have been logged following a productivist tactic, until conservationist measures were adopted (Depraz, 2008). These measures paved the way to the development of tourism and a cautious opening of the massif to the general public. The local populations exploited the forest resources before the British period, gathering non-wood forest products and practicing itinerant agriculture (Pouchepadass, 1990), but beginning in 1856, with the establishment of special forest reserves and the creation of the Indian Forest Department within the Madras Presidency in 1862, logging intensified, progressively penetrating into the massifs (Amruth *et al.*, 2007). At the end of the nineteenth century, large areas were planted in teak and other useful species such as sandalwood in the central mountains of today's Kerala. The forest populations, grouped in villages, composed a labour supply for logging and transportation of wood, and later for the work involved in renewing and preserving the resource. In the same period, rubber trees were planted on the hillsides, and at higher altitudes commercial coffee, tea, pepper and cardamom plantations appeared, radically transforming the mountain landscapes. The interest in the hill stations and these new landscapes on the part of the British and Indian elites contributed to the development of certain sites such as Munnar and Thekkady. The mountains were populated with the arrival of small farmers and labourers working in road construction (Dupuis, 1957) and then for building the large dams at the end of the 1950s. The tribal populations benefitted from the arrival of this source of jobs and consumer products, and some also settled near these activities.
- 9 In the 1970s, the forest and commercial plantations multiplied, particularly in the highlands of Nelliampathy with pepper, teak, cashew, cardamom and eucalyptus plantations. In Parambikulam, the 1973 creation of the Wildlife Sanctuary slowed wood harvesting, until the 2002 Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act banned logging in the nature reserves once and for all. Progressively, the protected areas became preservation areas. The 2004 National Environment Policy also toughened the legislation concerning the populations residing in the nature reserves, and the 2006 Policy confirmed the need to further protect the forests and their wild fauna (elephants, tigers, bison, sambar, etc.) and extend the protected areas. The latter law recommended, however, responding to the socio-economic needs of the local populations and having them participate in the nature parks' spinoff activities such as eco-tourism. The Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary became the Tiger Reserve in 2009, no longer covering 285 km², but spreading over 643 km². This transformation resulted in reinforcement of the legislation in the core area, associated with opening the buffer zone to tourists, although controlled under strict management policies.

Neo-liberalisation of nature and tourism

- 10 The “neo-liberalisation of nature” (Münster & Münster, 2012) corresponds to a new form of exploitation of mountain areas, which goes beyond the restrictions of conservation to open the massif to capitalist stakes other than the traditional exploitation of forest products. The example of the Wayanad district, developed by Münster and Münster (2012), illustrates how a thus far specialised mountain area opened to the public. The tourists who visited these areas, “products of Indian neo-liberalism” from the new urban bourgeoisie and employed in the expanding information and communications technology sector, generally come from Bangalore, Mysore and Kozhikode. The Wayanad landscape is being transformed to satisfy this new economic activity of accommodating tourists. The rice fields and commercial plantations, no longer profitable, are being progressively abandoned, either to build tourist residences or for speculative agriculture (ginger). Once an obstacle to development, the forest and its fauna have become a marketable commodity within the context of tourism, which henceforth includes their conservation in an approach seeking to institute a “natural capital” (Münster & Münster, 2012).
- 11 Neo-liberalisation of nature means that economic issues increasingly interfere with conservation objectives. For example, as in the Wayanad district, the Nelliampathy highlands have undergone a crisis in their plantation economy: already in 2005 several tea tree parcels were abandoned and the Forest Department had begun to take over the management of certain estates at the end of their lease to allow them to reforest naturally. In this context, construction of new hotel accommodations, for example, whittled away at these spaces. Noting this change in forest land use and the subsequent non-compliance with the terms of the leases, the Forest Department initiated proceedings against several estates in 2012, more or less successfully. The media coverage of the trials lasting several years, however, advertised the destination and visitor numbers grew. The diversification of the estates’ activities toward tourism created tension with the Forest Department, while groups of tourists in the area, whose movements are difficult to control, created additional pressure. During the tourist season, traffic jams began forming in the main town, where hotels have multiplied and jeeps take the tourists on excursions. Certain estates with web sites that propose a variety of activities now attract an international clientele whose numbers continue to rise (Table 1).
- 12 The commodification of nature for and by tourism is therefore progressively transforming the objectives of environmental conservation as well as the development policies that have been adapted for local populations. Local visitors go to the mountains to enjoy nature, the clean air, the viewpoints – such as at Seetharkundu on the Nelliampathy borders (photo 1) – and the landscapes, most particularly the waterfalls and tea plantations (photo 2). Residential tourists are looking more for exoticism and diversity, which tourist development must preserve and make accessible.

Photo 1. Tourist admiring the breathtaking view on the Palakkad Gap from Seetharkundu (May 2006)

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Photo 2. Tourists taking pictures at the Chalakudy River rapids at Vazhachal (May 2017). The lovely landscapes are the perfect occasion for a group photo op

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Relations with the mountain Adivasi: exoticising the local populations

- 13 Seeking the exotic, tourists are keen to encounter the Adivasi, these “original inhabitants”, hunter-gatherers, figures of the wild and reminiscent of a by-gone era. “If you wish to see real Adivasi, you should go to Wayanad” tourists are told, making a hierarchal distinction between supposedly real and false Adivasi, the latter being those who do not conform to an essentialised vision of the tribal.

The approach of tourists and outsiders

Twenty-three queens. He’s looking to marry again.

He bathes in the forest rivers, and near the pleasant Bhavani River he meditates, facing the sun and whispering the Vedas. He walks in the forest, crossing the high mountains and the jungle, to the sound of the river’s tumbling water. This is Mudra Moopan, king of the Kurumbas at Attapady, with a black jacket, a white turban on his head and a walking stick. The people speak of his age, saying that he’s 108 years old; others say he’s 120. Whatever his age, the truth is that he reached 100 years of age long ago. Even if he isn’t wearing a crown and sword as expected of a normal king, he has 23 queens, and counting his children and grandchildren, his family adds up to 146 members. (...) Even if he is old, he doesn’t want to depend on anyone. He covers his hair with a white cloth in lieu of a crown and takes a walking stick as a sword. He is still a king of the forest, and intends to remain so.

Extract from the popular newspaper *Malayala Manorama*, Sunday edition, 21.05.06.

- 14 Many clichés surround the Adivasi and structure the collective representations made on these mountain populations. After reading this article on the *moopan* (village chief) of the Attapady Kurumbas (Silent Valley National Park, south of the Wayanad district), my friend’s mother, a widow in Palakkad, asked me if it was true that the Adivasi had many wives, shocked by the idea. The article strongly emphasised the king’s polygamy, contrary to the principles of modern Keralan society, so as to stress the specificity of this “king of the forest”, continually walking through the forest to visit his subjects, a romantic image of a tribal king from times long past.
- 15 The attitudes of the plains and mountain inhabitants towards the Adivasi vacillate between fascination and scorn. In the family that housed me in 2005 in a village located in the middle of the rubber tree plantations, the daughters of the family teased each other with the appellation Adivasi, equivalent to “retarded” or “dirty”. For them this word had a negative connotation, dissociated from what they experienced of the neighbouring Adivasi villagers who came to visit their grandfather and another who worked with their father. Indians seem to have developed a certain pride in belonging to a civilisation that differs from traditional societies that have remained isolated from progress (Sacareau, 2011), and in the eyes of domestic tourists the forest communities reflect the sub-continent’s precolonial past.
- 16 The approach of international tourists to the mountains and their inhabitants varies little from an ambivalent attraction to a culture that has remained both a form of primitivism and a carrier of preserved values of harmony and communion with nature. The otherness observed by tourists takes on special importance when it responds to what they have imagined (Hauteserre, 2009; Goreau-Ponceaud, 2008). Tourists are seeking a heightened sense of the differences that allow them to compare themselves

with the Other. Local populations are close to nature and therefore occupy a place within the natural space, as an integral part of the environment, as protectors of this mountainous area, giving rise to tourists' admiration. By contrast, if their lifestyle even remotely resembles that of the plains inhabitants, they lose the legitimacy gained by living within a natural environment that must be protected from the vices of modern society. In Nelliampathy, tourists are not seeking to meet the Adivasi, whereas in other areas, at Wayanad or Thekkady for example, this population, even resettled outside the park, is included in the tourist experience. The brochures present photos of tribal women with their colourful clothing, ornaments and hairstyles, and certain villages, sometimes partially reconstructed (photo 3), are open to visitors. Tourists can visit homes, meet the inhabitants, discover their way of life and taste their food, in what amounts to "ethnic zoo-villages" (Münster & Münster, 2012), in an "enacted authenticity" (MacCannel, 1993, cited in Vélez Rivas, 2014). Village inhabitants demonstrate their tools and musical instruments, in a living ethno-museum of sorts. In Thekkady, Parambikulam and Wayanad, dance and singing performances, complete with photo sessions, top off the tourism offer of hiking, wildlife observations and adventure sports, placing the populations and their folklorised traditions in a context of tourism viewed through the lens of its landscape and wildlife.

Photo 3. General hall of a village open to visitors in Thekkady (November 2005)

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A dual viewpoint on the mountain peoples

Peoples that need to be integrated into society

O these Kadar! They are much worse than animals! They don't save money, they feel no affection whatsoever for their benefactors from the plains who bring them decent clothing. They know no gratefulness.

Account from a man of the plains, cited in Ehrenfels, 1952.

- 17 In his thesis on the Kadar of Cochin (1952), Ehrenfels noted that the attitude of the inhabitants of the plains towards those of the mountains was relatively hostile and uncharitable, taking on expressions of disgust and superiority toward the “poor and miserable aborigines”. Folk tales relate stories of Adivasi children taken in by families of the agrarian castes, who turn into wild beasts as they grow up and kill their adoptive parents (Freeman, 1998). These stories contribute to and/or are founded on Arnold’s “ecological frontier” (Arnold, 2001) between the plains and forests, between agrarian societies and tribal groups, between civilisation and savagery (Yadav, 2003; Kuper, 2005). By 1780, uncultivated spaces, the jungle, and primitivism are associated in colonial reports: for the British as well as for the Indian middle classes, the forests and tribes were intrinsically and ecologically different from the rest of the country (Arnold, 2001). The colonial classification, preserved at independence, listed the tribes as out-castes, belonging to a different social system². The opposition between nature and culture and the resulting social hierarchy justified the management of “tribal” mountain populations by “superior” colonists, describing the “savage” as “useful if well managed, and dangerous and useless if not controlled” (Philip, 2003)³. The evolutionist theories legitimised forcing the populations to group together in villages, reasoning that settling them provided them access to agriculture, the stage subsequent to hunting and gathering in the evolution of societies⁴.

Whether [the ‘educated’ Indian] subscribe to the caste system or not, intellectually his perception of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was that this was a large uncultured, uneducated, illiterate mass of people (...). This Indian held in his palm the reins of developing the mass of illiterate, economically poor Indians living and breathing in the vast countryside, be it rural India or tribal India.

Kapila Vatsyayan, 1988, cited in Devanesan, 2001

- 18 After Independence, under the guise of social development, the Adivasi populations continued to be forced to live in villages. In the 1950s, the introduction of modern agricultural techniques in Kerala’s forest areas and formal education were encouraged as a means to develop the populations socially and economically, to integrate them into the rest of society (Damodaran, 2006). However, the condescending and resigned attitude of teachers created a feeling of inferiority in Adivasi children and led to academic failure that was considered normal by both teachers and students (Devanesan, 2001). Again in 2005 teachers presented these children as being the reflection of their parents: primitive and backward⁵, lazy and impulsive, incapable of succeeding in school as well as in life.
- 19 This is how colonial evolutionist theories were mingled with the hierarchical vision of the caste system, in an attempt to justify unfair post-colonial situations. The reluctance of successive Kerala governments to apply the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975, requiring the restitution of the lands expropriated from the Adivasi, belongs within this context. It was also not understood why most of the Adivasi in Kerala refused to accept

compensation with other lands in the plains: their attitude, driven by the desire to remain in the forest, was perceived as culturalist and interpreted as a refusal to integrate into society (Sreekumar & Parayil, 2006). This incomprehension resulted in the reconstruction of the image of Adivasi identity as the “negation of modernisation” (*ibid*).

Ecological romanticism

- 20 A major turning point in the perception of the environmental questions and the place of the Adivasi people in society came with the Chipko movement (1973–1981), an ecologist movement led by the populations of the Garhwal Himalayan region (Uttar Pradesh, North India) against commercial logging in the forests they had the use of (Guha, 2005). These mountain people proclaimed the importance of preserving nature as a condition to their own survival as well as their strong attachment to the preservation of their environment. After this declaration of an environmental conscience, India saw the emergence and dissemination of what Paul Greenough called the Standard Environmental Narrative, a standardised discourse on the environment (Greenough, 2001)⁶. This narrative consisted in an academic consensus that postulated that in one hundred and twenty years rural India had shifted from a condition of environmental harmony, distributive equality and material abundance to a situation of ecological upheaval, massive social inequality and generalised misery (*ibid*). The old “ecological wisdom” of the Adivasi became, for example, the pillar of Vandana Shiva’s (1991) argument. She claimed that Indian civilisation was based on a relation with nature and the forest, both sources of life and knowledge: through the millennia, forest conservation had been a “social ethic”. Ramachandra Guha (2005) identified with colonisation an “ecological turning point”, as a rupture of the ecological equilibrium of Indian villages. Chipko held the same point of view: the symbol of the struggle of “primary” or “indigenous” peoples as protectors of nature against “modern” and “industrial” peoples, predators of natural resources (Guha, 2005).
- 21 This version of ecological history can clearly be paralleled with the nationalist discourse on the economic upheaval and the decline of India under the colonial authority (Greenough, 2001). The idea of a people living in an egalitarian system in harmony with their environment was adopted by the nationalist discourse to emphasise the idea of an environmental wisdom fundamental to Indian civilisation (Hardiman, 1996 [1994]).
- 22 Even if the idea erred in its exaggeration of these peoples’ ecological implication and in the manipulation of historical facts, revalorising the Adivasi populations and their potential capacity to preserve their environment provides these long denigrated communities with a true place in Indian society as well as the right to be heard. So these are the “primitive” populations and peoples with an environmental wisdom that tourists come to discover in the forest. They hold a vision of the “kings of the forest” who wander their mountains with nobility, a vision that is necessarily disappointed by the discovery of populations that seemingly differ less and less from their non-Adivasi neighbours, peoples that are often poor and suffering from acculturation or revolted by how difficult it is to survive and preserve their territorial heritage.

Opposition to folklorisation and assertion of identity in the mountains

- 23 The term “Adivasi” today is popular, if not unavoidable, because of the post-colonial taboos associated with the word “tribal”. The name was chosen by the political militants from the Chota Nagpur plateau (eastern India) in the 1930s, fulfilling the objective of creating a sense of belonging and identity in the different “Scheduled Tribes” (Bates, 1995; Soucaille, 2002). Meaning “original inhabitants”, the name bore the Adivasi population’s claims to their rights to the lands they occupied. Adapted to the ideas of property and contract dear to the social hierarchies inherited from the colonial period, this name created a power of negotiation (Bates, 1995). The essentialised image of the Adivasi served a process of “ethnicisation” and created a useful category (Carrin & Jaffrelot, 2002).
- 24 What the name conveys is expressed in its daily use in Kerala: it can be insulting to ask if someone is Adivasi⁷, as the relation between “tribal” and “primitive” still resounds, but this same person can proclaim his sense of belonging when needing to speak of his rights and the spoliations he has suffered, transforming the name into a tool of protest. Then appears a fluctuation of symbolic borders: a population that seeks not to appear different from the rest of society and at the same time that can draw a clear line delineating it from others when it comes to asserting its rights. Certain groups therefore reject any folklorisation of their traditions and all tourist development of their culture, such as in the region of the Chimmony nature reserve (Thrissur district) where the Adivasi political movements asserting a culture-based identity were followed particularly closely.
- 25 Beginning in the 1970s, Adivasi organisations in Kerala were set up to defend their rights to access their land, adapt educational structures, improve housing, distribute public assistance, etc. These organisations were particularly active between 1995 and 2002 in the Wayanad district, which has a large Adivasi population (Sreekumar & Parayil, 2006). Occupation of land, such as in Muthanga in 2003, and government violence (the police fired at the families living in the Muthanga nature reserve) painted a new picture of the Adivasi as militants and combatants for their rights: they rebuilt their identity through this struggle (Kjosavik, 2006). Using the essentialist images associated with the Adivasi to their advantage, these movements asserted territorial rights on the forested mountains that they claimed to be their ancestors’ lands, to which they had a religious affiliation and whose resources were the basis of their way of life (Janu & Geethanandan, 2003). The leaders of the movements in the north of Kerala came to the Western Ghats to rally the different Adivasi groups to their cause. Other actions were undertaken in the northern regions such as Chimmony, then Nelliampathy, at a time when the movement was losing intensity in the Wayanad district.
- 26 Through their politisation as well as their relative acculturation, the Chimmony and Nelliampathy Adivasi were able to oppose development of their cultural environment for tourism. However, in the Wayanad district the tourism industry is growing, promoting a folklorised Adivasi identity that totally sidesteps the struggles between the Adivasi, the Forest Department and farmers (Münster & Münster, 2012), those who seem to have hijacked the mediatization of the conflicts to develop this tourist

destination, thus demonstrating the long-lasting imbalance in the power relations between the protagonists.

The tourist experience in the mountains

Eco-development: which form of tourism is best adapted?

- 27 The main attraction of the Thekkady region is the Periyar Tiger Reserve, a nature park created in 1978 (which followed a Wildlife Sanctuary dating from 1952): visitors are practically ensured of seeing large mammals when they embark on one of the boats that criss-cross the lake behind the central dam. Several tourism offers are proposed by the village eco-development committees: forest camps, trekking, wildlife observation outings, an excursion on the backwaters on a bamboo houseboat, dance and concerts (Shukla, 2012). The number of tourists today exceeds the capacity of the houseboats, resulting in long queues to buy tickets at the reserve entrance (Mathew, 2012). A parallel offer has appeared with jeep safaris, elephant rides, visits to plantations and villages, and cultural events organised by an expanding private sector. The activities organised by these private service providers escape all control by the Forest Department and the eco-development committees.
- 28 The increased number of visitors in the Thekkady reserve is straining the area's conservation goals, and the introduction of eco-development committees has not succeeded in solving the populations' socio-economic problems. The eco-tourism destination that the Thekkady region was supposed to be is turning into a mass tourism destination (Mathew, 2012). Although conservation and the activities generated by the protection of the nature reserve have been a source of employment via the eco-development committees, the tourism industry actually provides little benefit to the local populations (Gubbi *et al.*, 2008). More than a real source of income, the committees are intended to be an alternative to predation on the area's biodiversity (poaching, plant gathering, drug cultures, etc.) and a means to convince populations to adhere to conservation measures. They are not an instrument allowing villagers to obtain better representation in decision-making bodies. Nor have the eco-tourism activities proposed by the committees encouraged long stays: for the most part tourists stay one or two nights and the reserve does not build visitor loyalty (Mathew, 2012). Quite the contrary, visitors seem guided by an "overconsumption of nature for their own sake" (Mathew, 2012). In this context, the impact of tourism is difficult to manage and the local populations are merely spectators of the massification of tourism in their region.
- 29 The observations made above on the eco-development committees' inability to improve both the local population's life and their representativeness can be extended to the Parambikulam Tiger Reserve committees (Dejouhanet, 2010). Yet the context is different because there are relatively few tourists in this area, partly because of the double tariff imposed by the mandatory crossing of the Anamalai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu to reach Parambikulam. The 2005 surveys showed that the eco-development committees provided labour for forestry work and infrastructure maintenance, and provided funding for several guides and the operation of three boats. The creation of the Tiger Reserve in 2009 and the extension of the exclusive protection area led to activities becoming both more restricted geographically and more diversified, as a result of the increase in the number of tourist accommodations (self-

catering cottages, treehouses, lodges) and the proliferation of the activities proposed: rambling with camping, hiking, trekking, nighttime observations, etc. (Kerala Forests & Wildlife Department, 2013). In 2017, 32 Adivasi men from seven of the reserve's villages were working as guides (photo 5). Cleaning the site, transporting tourists in dedicated vehicles, supervising schoolchildren, selling souvenirs and trinkets also contributed to the inhabitants' activities. Although a few years ago the situation of the Parambikulam basin's inhabitants was difficult given the scarcity of jobs, Project Tiger, coordinated by the National Tiger Conservation Authority, seems to have allowed the committees to regain a certain vitality and the populations to recover sources of income. Tribal dancing, once kept secret, is now presented only to the few tourists who reserve a package tour. Delocalising villages beyond the core area has been an old policy from conservation authorities; it seems now to have gained greater acceptance on the part of local populations. But this current strategy regarding inhabitants' eviction from the reserve still illustrates the difficulties local populations have to face living within the protected areas, whether these places are easily accessible to the public or access is much more restricted.

Photo 4. Uniform of the local guides in the Parambikulam Tiger Reserve (June 2017)

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Participatory management: what role can local populations play in tourism?

- 30 Although the eco-development committees sought to be participative but only partially responded to this objective, other participative management structures play an important role in guiding tourists at sites outside the protected areas. The Athirapally

waterfalls are considered to be the largest in Kerala (42 m high, 220 m wide), and tourists can walk on the rocks alongside the falls (photo 5). Tourists can then continue their route up the Chalakudy River to reach the picnic area near the rapids in a village called Vazhachal. Both sites are managed by the village *Vana Samrakshana Samithy* (VSS), participative committees that gather the villagers together. Entrance fees are required and a large wooden gate ensures that the fee has been paid. Whereas the Vazhachal site has a picnic area and a short walk along the river (photo 2), the development of Athirapally Falls included the construction of a wide footpath going to the river and a trail leading to the waterfalls. During peak tourist periods (weekends, holidays), the site is saturated (photo 6). At the entrance one can purchase all sorts of items (photo 7), but at the edge of the river, two stands provide refreshments, one operated by the VSS with little on offer and the other run by employees of the Forest Department with a much wider array of products for sale. Sales of these products contribute to the substantial litter now found on the site, and the monkeys drinking in plastic bottles or finishing cartons of fruit juice are viewed with amusement by the tourists. The members of the VSS are then responsible for cleaning the area, maintaining the trails and ensuring that safety rules are respected. One boutique, called Eco-shop and managed by the VSS, is open on each of the sites selling local products (photo 8) such as mountain honey, sandalwood powder and forest products, but they enjoy limited business.

Photo 5. Below the Athirapally Falls (May 2017)

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Photo 6. Peak tourist day at Athirapally Falls, a Saturday during the school holidays. One must queue on the trails. On these days, development of the site takes on an air of mass eco-tourism (May 2017)

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Photo 7. Entrance to the Athirapally site: a wide range of economic activity is developing around the periphery of the site; long lines of parked cars stretch along the road (May 2017)

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Photo 8. A sign presenting Athirapally and Vazhachal's eco-shops; the products for sale are collected and transformed by the villages' Adivasi (May 2017)

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- 31 Finally, the local populations have very little interaction with the tourists. Already considered to have suffered acculturation because they had been working with the Forest Department for a long time and had settled into a more sedentary lifestyle, the inhabitants of Vazhachal and Athirapally have not been integrated into the tourism offer as examples of ancestral cultures⁸, but as guides who know their environment thoroughly or as workers cleaning and maintaining the sites. It is therefore more their knowledge of the area and their availability than their cultural identity that are put to use in tourism development.
- 32 Using the Adivasi for jobs in their village or for the environmental protection actions distances them, however, from their traditional activities, most particularly gathering plants in the forest, here carried out in a semi-nomad fashion. It therefore transforms both their lifestyle and their relation with their surrounding environment, a part of their culture. Even if it gives poor populations an income, the development of tourism also contributes to the decline of local cultures and what was emphasised as an "eco-culture" (Gadgil & Guha, 1992). In addition, the Vazhachal VSS was supposed to lift the inhabitants of the village "out of primitivism", but in 2009 it organised tribal dance evenings for tourists. The villagers were dressed up for the occasion in leaf skirts, for a very neo-traditional performance.

Conclusion

- 33 Contrary to what has been observed in other regions of Asia, such as in Burma (Hauteserre, 2009), Indonesia (Cabasset-Semedo *et al.*, 2010) and Bali (Picard, 2010a, 2010b), the development of tourism in South India has not allowed a process of revalorisation of local culture to emerge, even a biased one. Tourism instead takes a place in the lineage of different types of forest exploitation and reproduces the forms of a domination of local managers over the populations. Indeed, in the mountain regions where the Forest Department has retained significant power over the lifestyle and work choices of the Adivasi populations, such as in the protected areas, tourism perpetuates this mode of operation, and the so-called participative structures respond most readily to the demand for services. The type of eco-tourism included in most of the management plans of the forest regions (Varghese, 2004; Shukla, 2012; Hussain, 2003) nonetheless needs the local population as much as the natural heritage to continue to develop. In regions where job opportunities are rare or are geographically isolated, economic valuing of local cultures appears to be a solution allowing both the conservation of nature and the survival of populations. This commodification of popular customs and traditions, whose intensity varies with the reputation of the area, perpetuates a biased view of the local populations, who become objects of curiosity and/or admiration for tourists. The Adivasi with their refreshing folklore become relics of a harmonious past, that even the Adivasi's struggles for their rights do not seem to challenge. In contrast, where the Adivasi have merged into the mass of workers on the commercial plantations, where they have lost their very identity as Adivasi, their participation is minimal in the development of tourism, which itself ignores them, since it cannot value them as elements of a tourist package.

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NOTES

1. The hill stations are villages that were developed by the British on the plantations, serving as holiday resorts during the height of the hot season. The Indian elite vacationed there as well.
 2. One of the criteria defining the tribes uses their type of social organisation, distinguishing them from “state-based societies with centralised power” (Amselle & M’Bokolo, 1999).
 3. On the exploitation of this distinction by governments aiming for control and colonisation, see James C. Scott (2009).
 4. The American anthropologist L.H. Morgan distinguished three stages in human evolution: savagery, barbarism and civilisation, with hunting-gathering belonging to the practices of societies of the first stage (Morgan, 1877).
 5. The categorisation of the Adivasi as “backward communities” stems from British legislation, in which the term was used in the Government of India Act, 1918, which asserted that certain social groups were too backward to correctly exercise their right to vote, and thus to cooperate with the authorities (Bates, 1995).
 6. He attributed this discourse to Bina Agarwal, Madhav Gadgil, Ramachandra Guha, Ramila Thapar, Vandana Shiva and Helena Norberg-Hodge (Greenough, 2001).
 7. During our first visit in a village, the forest warden apologised to one man for having to introduce him to us as an Adivasi.
 8. On the sign presenting the Vazhachal and Athirapally eco-shops (photo 8), the local populations’ skills in collecting wild honey, for example, are not shown. Instead, the importance of adopting good behaviours to protect the environment and help the development of “tribes” is emphasised.
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ABSTRACTS

In South India the term “Adivasi” (original inhabitants) designates forest dwellers, defined in the Constitution of India as Scheduled Tribes, who live in the Ghat mountains and their foothills. These populations have been ascribed two essentialist visions: preserved tribes living in harmony with nature and backward peoples who need to be educated so that they can be integrated into Indian society. These two visions coexist in how the mountain-dwelling Adivasi are perceived today by tourists as well as by the inhabitants of the plains and cities. This article underscores just how burdensome this past legacy is when observing these mountain areas and in the attitudes towards their inhabitants. Through several examples of tourist sites in Kerala, this article analyses the place accorded to the mountain Adivasi in the collective and tourist imagination, the role assigned to the local populations in tourist development, and how tourism brings out the hierarchical and inegalitarian social relations existing within forest society.

INDEX

Keywords: mountains, tourism, Adivasi, representations, participation, India

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