

Taquile: A Peruvian Tourist Island Struggling for Control

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Lake Titicaca, located in the Andean altiplano at an elevation of 3,815 metres above sea level on the border between Bolivia and Peru, has become an increasingly popular tourist destination. Visitors to the region can make excursions to various small islands that are inhabited by indigenous peoples. A sought-after and widely advertised tourist trip consists of a two-day journey by motorboat that can be booked in Puno, the largest Peruvian city on the lake's shore. Normally, the tourists who take this trip first visit the floating islands of the Uros people, which are built from totora reeds. The tourists are invited to learn about the indigenous peoples' daily lives, and to buy handicrafts. The trip then continues to the island of Amantani, where the tourists are offered a meal and a bed in the house of a local family. If they are lucky, they are allowed to dress up in local indigenous clothing and participate in a festival. The second day of the trip is spent visiting the island of Taquile. The tourists disembark at the western part of the island. Within two to two and a half hours, they are expected back at the dock, where the motorboats are waiting to take them back to Puno. During their walk on the island, the tourists face a steep climb up 538 stone steps, but their endeavours are rewarded by the magnificent view of the lake and the many Inca terraces on the island that are still used for farming. The tourists have time to eat a quick lunch and gaze at the men who are knitting while standing at the plaza dressed in their typical indigenous clothing, or perhaps visit the community store to buy the beautiful textiles for which Taquile is famous.

In the debate on sustainable tourism, the need to include and involve local people in the tourism development process is increasingly being recognized. This inclusion is often defined as participation in processes initiated by external institutions such as national and regional governments or development agencies. (Mowfort and Munt 2003, 212-217). Local participation has become a new buzzword among tourism planners and scholars who intend to alleviate poverty through tourism development. The importance of local participation is being increasingly recognized in the effort to make tourism sustainable and responsible. Behind this line of reasoning lies the assumption that tourism is initiated by external actors and that the local population is passively waiting until outsiders present their plans. The case of Taquile is interesting in this respect for two reasons. Firstly, Taquileans initiated development tourism on their island themselves, and, secondly, just participating in tourism is not sufficient for them – they strive for control.

Tourism to Taquile started in 1976, at a time when backpacking tourists began to travel to South America in large numbers. In those early days especially, Taquileans managed to control the tourist trade, and they have reaped its economic and social benefits. Besides textiles, Taquile became known for its community-based development model that served as an example for development projects worldwide. However, in the 1980s and '90s, Taquileans slowly started to lose con-

trol of tourism to their community. They are increasingly being pushed aside and into the role of participants. The trip described above exemplifies this development, since most tourists nowadays only visit the island for a few hours, while in the past they stayed for one or more nights, in what is now referred to as 'residential tourism.' The islanders are currently engaged in a serious struggle to regain and maintain their control of tourism to their island community. Very recently, Taquile may have entered a new stage in its tourism development. At the end of 2005, UNESCO registered its textile arts as *Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*. Will this designation offer new possibilities for self-control?

The ethnographic data on which this article is based was collected starting in 1976 when Elayne Zorn travelled to Taquile for the first time to study weaving. Since then, she has returned to the island regularly to keep track of its developments. In October 2005, Annelou Ypeij joined her on a visit to Taquile. Ypeij has included Taquile in her study on tourism in the region.¹

A model for communitarian tourism development²

Taquile as a tourist destination forms part of a tourist route that goes from Cusco in Peru, via Puno and Lake Titicaca, to La Paz, Bolivia's capital. The journey then goes further south to Sucre, Potosí and the salt lake of Uyuni near the border with Chile (Ypeij and Zoomers 2006). Tourists travel this route in both directions, starting in Chile, Bolivia, or Peru. The main tourist attraction is Machu Picchu, the world famous Inca ruins near the beautiful Inca city of Cusco, as well as the Inca Trail (*Camino Inca*). Both Machu Picchu and Cusco are registered on UNESCO's list of world heritage sites. This makes them tourist destinations in their own right, and has led to the mass character of tourism in the Machu Picchu area. Currently, half a million tourists visit the area every year and this number is rapidly rising.³

Though Machu Picchu may be the main reason for tourists to come to the region, once they are there they often wish to visit other tourist destinations as well. In this light, Puno, at six to eight hours by bus from Cusco, is a popular choice, especially because of the proximity of islands such as Taquile. One could say that Puno and the islands are not tourist destinations in their own rights, but derivative or secondary destinations. This means that their development may be in the margins of and subordinated to mass tourism in Cusco and Machu Picchu. In general, these derivative destinations receive less attention from policy makers and investors, and subsequently less funding. Considering local control and self-government, such neglect by policy makers and entrepreneurs should not always be considered negative. This neglect may in fact offer opportunities for local populations to develop tourism under their own conditions.

Taquileans are peasant farmers who grow potatoes, tubers, and other subsistence crops using rainfall agriculture on their intensively terraced island. They also fish from Lake Titicaca. Taquile's 1,900 inhabitants speak Quechua (the Peruvian Spanish spelling of the Inca language); an increasing number also speak Spanish, and a few speak Aymara. Taquile is one of the few communities in Peru where all residents continue to create textiles and wear typical indigenous clothing on a daily basis. This is significant because cloth was the pre-eminent Andean cultural product for 3,000 years, and in this region women create the most important textiles (Zorn and Quispe 2004, Zorn and Farthing 2006). Furthermore, as a result of mod-

ernization and urbanization, the number of communities where people create and use hand-woven dress is declining as indigenous people switch to western-style dress, but Taquile remains an exception to this general trend. Though all Taquileans are peasant farmers, they recognize three socio-economic strata in the community: those who are well off or powerful, those who have enough, and those who are poor. Governance is organized through a dual system of rotative, unpaid authorities (traditional and national), and tasks are done by *ad hoc* committees and through public work parties. Taquile appears to be the essence of indigenous Peru: Quechua-speaking potato farmers, wearing beautiful clothing, set high in the Andean mountains.

In 1976, following the publication of a brief report praising Taquile in the popular traveller's guide *South American Handbook*, tourists arrived on the island. Taquileans quickly responded by creating tourism-related infrastructure that formed a model of indigenous control of tourism (Zorn 2004, 12-13). Three important Taquilean assets supported this process of self-control: their tradition of textile production, a strong communal organization, and ownership of their own land.

Weavings

In 1968 then-U.S. Peace Corps volunteer Kevin Healy persuaded Taquileans to sell their hand-made textiles for the first time in a U.S. sponsored co-operative in Peru. In the cash-poor *altiplano* this represented an unusual opportunity, and the first sale was a stunning moment, as Taquileans realized they could earn money for something that they valued, which before had always been despised by their immediate outside world (textiles were made by indigenous people, who were discriminated against in Peruvian society). The first co-op collapsed, but a handful of young Taquilean men became textile merchants, selling their extended families' fabrics to foreign exporters, scholars and tourists in Peruvian cities. Cash income, albeit modest, was significant given previous alternatives. The connections this core group of Taquilean men established with the national and international handicraft markets and their experience interacting with foreigners were to prove crucial when tourism began (Zorn and Farthing 2006). It was the textile-derived income that enabled Taquileans to develop tourist services in a community-controlled and independent way (Zorn 2004, 92). Most important was the availability of capital to fund boat construction and the purchases of used motors for their boats. Already in 1977, the Taquileans were able to pool their savings and buy second-hand truck engines to power their sailboats. Less travel time between the mainland city of Puno and the island (down from twelve to three-and-one-half hours) increased tourist traffic.

Communal organization

Taquileans have preserved 'Andean forms' of collective labour and social organization. Their tourism management model is based on long-term social and political structures, which are organized by the principles of community-wide reciprocal exchange and participation of all community members, producing a fairly equitable distribution of benefits (Zorn 2004, 114). This strong communal spirit can be found in the pooling of income and the formation of cooperatives to operate the motor-boats that transport tourists between Puno and the island. In 1978, new sailboat

cooperatives were formed, with groups of thirty to forty families ordering vessels from local boatwrights. A grant from the U.S. Inter-American Foundation enabled the Taquileans to purchase spare parts and boat motors for six additional groups. The Peruvian Coast Guard and the Ministry of Tourism licensed Taquileans to carry travellers, and issued regulations and tariffs to regulate fares. The islanders proved to be competitive with the private boat owners in Puno. Eventually the islanders displaced the boat owners and, in 1982, Taquile obtained a Peruvian government-sanctioned monopoly on transport. By then, the number of cooperative transport groups had expanded to thirteen. Besides the motorboat cooperatives, they also created communal businesses that included a billeting system offering overnight stays in Taquilean homes by rotation, and a cooperative crafts store where all islanders can sell textiles (Zorn and Farthing 2006). The Taquileans also established a Tourism Committee and subcommittees. Officers and members of these committees are elected to their post for one year and are unpaid, which is characteristic of the Andean model of rotative traditional authorities. An important drawback of this apparently communal democratic model is the fact that to date only men have held elected community offices. Nevertheless, women are increasingly active in the work of committees in terms of the tasks they perform, such as serving turns in the cooperative store. In 2002, men as well as women were anticipating the election of women to committees and community offices, but this still had not occurred in 2005.

Land

In the 1930s, far in advance of any other peasant community on the Peruvian side of Lake Titicaca, Taquileans began a long court battle to purchase and then legally confirm title to their lands that were then owned by *hacendados* (Matos Mar 1951, 1964, 1986). After twenty years of struggle, harassment, and prosecution, Taquileans gained title to most of their land. They obtained the rest by 1970. Since most Taquilean land is family-owned, it can not be considered as communal property (though there are some communal areas). Nevertheless, communal pressure did force the richer families who became the owners of large plots of land to sell small plots to poorer families. Importantly, Taquileans have always steadfastly resisted selling land to outsiders, or even allowing outsiders to rent land or build on the island. This ownership of land and the commitment to controlling their land has proven of great importance in the development of tourism. It has ensured that all the island's tourist-related enterprises are owned by Taquileans. The 'Community Law of Peru' that gives indigenous peoples in Peru the right to absolute control over their land forms the legal context for land ownership on Taquile. Other examples in the region confirm the importance of the ownership of land. On the nearby Bolivian Island of the Sun (Isla del Sol), inhabitants did sell land to outsiders. Because of the investments on the island by people from the Bolivian capital of La Paz and foreign companies, tourism development on this island is far less community-controlled than on Taquile. Experiences on the Peruvian island of Amantani, Taquile's neighbouring island, make clear that textile (artisan) production, community organization, and ownership of land are important assets that may form the basis of Taquile's model of tourism development, but that other variables have also played an important role. In a comparison between the developments on Amantani and Taquile, Gascón (2005) concludes that Amantani tried to imitate Taquile's

success, but in part failed to do so. In the early days of tourism, the supply of tourism, landownership, and local governance on both islands were comparable. However, from the beginning onwards, on Amantaní local participation has been far less egalitarian than on Taquile. Especially in tourism's early days, some Taquilean families may have benefited more than others, but in general all families profited from tourism in one way or the other. Amantaní has a much larger population than Taquile. The number of tourists was too little for all families to profit from. Also, Taquile was the first to start with tourism, so it could develop tourism without competition. Taquile is located closer to Puno than is Amantaní, it was less acculturated (and thus retained more traditions including weaving and festivals), and it received early and relatively extensive favourable publicity from tourists and some media sources, reasons for which Amantaní always has faced serious competition from Taquile. All of these factors have contributed to the fact that on Amantaní, only a minority of the population has benefited from tourism, and this minority has managed to establish a monopoly on the transport and accommodation of tourists. This has led to severe conflicts on the island and disunity among its population (Gascón 2005).

Neo-liberal challenges

During the first years of Taquilean tourism development, Peruvian law supported Taquileans' taking self-control. The Community Law of Peru and the officially authorized Taquilean monopoly on transport between the mainland and the island have been important in this respect. Nevertheless, the Community Law of Peru is concerned with land and dock areas, not with waterways (Healy and Zorn 1994, 146). Private tour agencies and boat owners countered that national laws granting the ownership of all waterways to the Peruvian State supersede indigenous rights based on the Community Law. The rapidly increasing tourism to the region that started in 1993⁴ roused the interest of businessmen, tour operators and travel agencies, who became increasingly aggressive in developing their businesses and competing with Taquileans. Simultaneously, in Alberto Fujimori's neoliberal Peru of the 1990s and thereafter, the shrinking state took a non-interventionist stance that was not willing to maintain earlier policies of protectionism (Manrique 1996). The Taquileans were no longer able to press the rights they had obtained based on their status as Peruvian citizens and as members of a recognized indigenous community. For example, they had obtained a decree authorizing them to collect a docking fee, granted by the regional authority of the Puno Harbour's Captaincy. The Taquilean Municipal government also obtained the right to charge a small entry fee to all visitors to the island. However, the enforcement of these rights became increasingly problematic, and Taquileans could not find legal support or protection to aid them. The national government left such problems to be solved by unfettered market forces. In the 1991, the Fujimori administration adopted an antimonopoly law (Legislative Decree 701), which ended the Taquilean monopoly over transportation and weakened the position of Taquileans even more (Zorn and Farthing 2006; Zorn 2004, 133).

By 2001, of the 83,000 annual visitors to Puno, nearly half went to Taquile. During our last visit to the island in October 2005, local leaders told us that they expected over 80,000 tourists in 2005, an astonishing number given the rustic remoteness of the island. But less than one tenth of the tourists spent the night. The

Regional Director of Tourism in Puno, Gamaliel de Amat, reported that some 125,000 tourists visited the Uros, Amantani, and Taquile Islands during the period of January-October 2005, equivalent to a 16 per cent increase compared to the same period the previous year (*TNews Bolivia* 2005). Though statistics for that period are not yet available, it appears that fewer than five percent spent the night on Taquile.

Mass day tourism, as already discussed in the example of the two-day trip by motorboat to the islands of Uros, Amantani and Taquile, provides significantly less income to Taquileans. Despite the revival in tourism, Taquileans have basically lost the transportation battle, which is key to controlling tourism on the island, including use of docks, time of arrival and departure, quantity of boats (and tourists), and so on. In 2000, they sent a delegation to Lima to ask for an investigation by then-President Fujimori of what Taquileans termed abuse by tour agencies and guides. Taquile's symbolic and economic importance was demonstrated when they were granted a visit by high-ranking advisors to President Fujimori. The resulting report demonstrates some sympathy towards the Taquileans, but – as Contorno and Tamayo (2000)⁵ argue – in the business climate initiated by the Fujimori regime and continued under the presidency of Alejandro Toledo, the state was only willing to remind tour agencies of their responsibilities, and would not compel tour agencies to pay local fees. During our visit in October 2005, Taquileans were still complaining about the rude behaviour of the overwhelming majority of the Puno tourist guides that accompany tourists to the island. The guides decide how much time the tourists may stay on the island. They pay the required entrance fee reluctantly, if they pay at all, for which reason the Taquileans do not receive greatly needed income. Guides tell negative stories about the Taquileans, such as that the Taquileans are greedy and overprice their weavings, and that the tourists should not buy textiles on Taquile but rather in shops outside the island. Also, private tour agencies prefer to take tourists to Amantani for an overnight stay, because they consider the prices the Taquilean charge for lodging and other tourist services far too high. We have calculated that the fee charged on Amantani for a night's lodging and three meals does not even cover the cost of foodstuffs.

Furthermore, it appears that mass tourism to Taquile and the other islands does not cause problems solely for the host communities. Much or most of the tourism to Taquile can be characterized as cultural or ethnic tourism, where tourists seek interaction with local people, not just views of ruins, landscapes or flora and fauna. Without romanticizing the early phase of tourism to Taquile, we argue that the Taquilean communitarian model facilitated the kinds of interactions that tourists sought. Mass tourism, however, limits such interactions, and frequently makes them impossible, which is resulting in increasing tourist dissatisfaction. The negative turn in tourism to Taquile, which has moved from communitarian to mass day tourism (and mass tourism that is not controlled by locals) therefore is a cautionary tale for both communities and other stakeholders, both private and public. For the Taquileans themselves the effect of all this is that they are not just losing control over the tourism development on their islands. The danger is real that they are being turned into participants who are allowed to be present but in an increasingly passive way, as objects of the tourist gaze without a political voice.

The Taquileans are trying to face these new challenges and to maintain their agency in various ways. They have tried to compete directly by setting up their own travel agency in Puno. From 2002 to 2004 it functioned intermittently. In ad-

dition to the difficulty of competing with other agencies with far deeper pockets and much greater experience and networks, staffing has been a challenge. Taquileans are busy farming, weaving and attending to tourists, so it has been difficult to get Taquileans to staff the office all day, every day, since workers in the office are volunteers serving rotative turns (Zorn 2004, 135). Because of the rotative system, many people need to be trained in the specific tasks for a travel agency, which has turned out to be difficult. In addition, the distance between Puno and the island, which in Taquilean motorboats still is a journey of three to four hours each way, also creates a challenge.

Very recently, the Taquileans started to cooperate with the Danish NGO Ibis/Axis/DIB and have developed new tourism plans. A travel agency will be opened. A new kiosk selling tickets began operation in 2006. An information office is being built at Puno's harbour. A website will be constructed, and Taquileans are being trained as local guides. Yet as Taquile's first class of guides graduated in November 2006, they faced opposition from outside tour operators and tour guides, who have attempted to block certification of Taquilean guides. The efforts of these outsiders accords with the need for increased professionalization of Peru's tourism personnel, but requirements for a four-year university degree in tourism have the effect of blocking the training of more than a handful of community guides (though this may change in the future as at least some indigenous people complete high school and attend university.)

The decision of UNESCO to declare Taquile's textile arts as an intangible heritage of humanity has been greeted by the islanders with great enthusiasm. Taquileans express pride that their cultural traditions are so noteworthy. In an email written by one of the island's leaders to Elayne Zorn the day after UNESCO's decision was made public, he stated: 'Celebration, enjoyment. We are the second Machu Picchu of Peru'.

The listing of Taquile textile arts on UNESCO's heritage list has potentially far-reaching consequences. It may attract even more tourists and aggressive competition from outside tour agencies. Nevertheless, the outside guides who speak about the Taquileans and their arts in a condescending way are now muted. UNESCO's listing may be an important tool for the Taquileans to further strengthen their indigenous identity, self-esteem and agency

Discussion

As the early day of Taquile's tourism development shows, the Taquileans should be considered as full agents, knowledgeable, informed and capable of making decisions about the directions of the economic development on their islands. Instead of the often-promoted 'local participation', from the early days onwards the Taquileans have sought to control tourism on their island. In the last decade, they have been losing this control because of the liberalization of markets, the booming character of tourism growth and the new actors who have appeared on the scene and who are willing to struggle with the Taquileans over tourism's benefits.

Taquile increasingly is being integrated in processes of globalization. The registration of the islands' weaving art on the UNESCO list of Heritage of Humanity is yet another expression of this trend. In the global era, Taquileans are facing ever-increasing challenges. If Taquileans intend to win the battle over the control of tourism and successfully confront outside competition, they must train experts in

specific tasks such as guides, and the management of the website and the travel agency. The tasks within tourism are so technical and specialized that they may only be feasible for a small group of young people working full time in tourism. Is it possible to maintain the community organization and labour if only a small number of Taquileans are engaged in tourism? Or does this mean that in the era of globalization and neo-liberalism, communal work and the rotation system are no longer workable in community enterprises?

People working full time in tourism may become very important to the community, earning (far) more than the average island inhabitant. This may create a new entrepreneurial class and socio-economic differences may increase. This will challenge community organization even further. Mitchell and Reid have already observed a trend 'towards individualism, consumerism and globalization' (2001, 134). They add that this has also impacted on communal ownership: in 2001, only four boats were cooperative, as most were owned by nuclear families (2001, 130). The result of this process has been a diminished income for the majority of Taquileans. According to numerous interviews with them, increased wealth and particularly its concentration have caused participatory decision-making structures, and community organization to decline (Quispe, Huatta and Machaca 2005), a finding echoed by Kottak (2006).

And what would happen if tourism would again decrease? Other studies have shown that tourism may offer income possibilities to the local population only when they are able to maintain their multiple livelihood strategies (Steel and Ypeij 2005). But will the tourism experts on the island be able to combine their tourism activities with weaving, fishing and agriculture? It is our point of view that to cope with the fluctuations in tourism, local people need to maintain multiple livelihood strategies as well as their community organization. The problem, however, is that tourism brings the danger of destroying both. The indigenous ethnicity of the Taquileans also is being increasingly challenged. The net effect of tourism can be seen to undermine traditional indigenous cultural forms. Paradoxically, it has also served to make indigenous identity more salient to Taquileans themselves.

UNESCO's listing of Taquile's weaving art has marked a new phase in the tourism development on the island. In the present era of unavoidable globalization, Taquileans not only wish to participate in tourism development, but they strive to control it. Despite the major challenges they face, Taquileans have not given in and remain as positive as ever, as they reconsider their strategies, and experiment with modifying their tourism model. They are extremely proud of UNESCO's listing of their weaving art. This has given them yet another impetus to continue their struggle for control with renewed energy.

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Notes

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2. Communitarian tourism development is a concept increasingly used to describe tourism development that involves and includes local communities, that is, locally developed, owned, and managed tourism with community-wide distribution of benefits (see for example Maldonado 2006).
3. In 2004, 546,920 national and international tourists visited the city of Cusco (Dirección Regional de Comercio Exterior y Turismo Cusco, 2004, Boletín Estadístico de Turismo 2004, Cusco).
4. In the second half of the 1980s, tourism to Peru was down due to the undeclared civil war between the terrorist organization *Sendero Luminoso* and the Peruvian state. The capture of its leader, known to his followers as Presidente Gonzalo, in 1992, was a very serious blow to the organization's activities. In 1993, tourism started rising again rapidly.
5. Contorno, Elena, y Lucia Tamayo Flores. Informe de viaje a las islas Taquile y Amantaní. Email dated 16 May 2000.

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