**Cultural "Authenticity"**

No culture sees itself as having one among many possible versions of "reality." Cultural systems create genuine, authentic worlds that are experienced as "real." If this "reality" comes to be questioned seriously, it is a certainty that the culture is on the way to major transformation or collapse.

In contexts of cultural interaction, "realities" often are pitted against one another. The outcome is determined by the relative material power of the two groups. Under these conditions the dependent group usually experiences itself as "objects," of outsider observation, manipulation, and often of derision.

Dean MacCannell nicely captured an aspect of this problem in his concept "staged authenticity." This term refers to the staging of local culture to create an impression of authenticity for a tourist audience.

But not all tourism involves the staging of authenticity (e.g. "sun and sand" tourism) nor does the staging of local culture always lead to alienation among local people. Tourism is not a unitary phenomenon to be characterized in such a simple way.

Equally important, tourism is not the only arena in which authenticity is staged. All societies create traditions, accept elements from outside, invent ceremonies, and reinvent themselves for both sacred and secular purposes. All viable cultures are in the process of "making themselves up" all the time. In a general sense, all culture is "staged authenticity." If this is so, it is useless to argue that because tourism often involves the staging of cultural authenticity, it is necessarily a destructive force. We must come to understand when the staging of authenticity is a destructive force and when it is not.

A review of three cases will reveal how tourism influences cultural change. In each case the role is different, but the causes of these differences are not easily captured.,/P>

Case 1: Tourism as a Destructive Force: The Alarde of Fuenterrabia, Spain

The story told here is simple (Greenwood, 1977). Once a year, the people of Fuenterrabia staged a ritual reenactment of their victory in a siege in 1638. A community ritual carried out within the confines of the walled city for and by local people, it served to dramatize a time when the people of Fuenterrabia stood together despite class divisions and individual antagonisms. The Alarde was an intrinsic part of community life.

Because it was picturesque, the Ministry of Information and Tourism put it on their list of tourist events. The cramped physical structure of the medieval city made it difficult for non-participants to see the ritual clearly. The Ministry, therefore, ordered that the ceremony be repeated twice so more people could see it. This act effectively killed the Alarde. The people of Fuenterrabia had their ritual expropriated and destroyed.