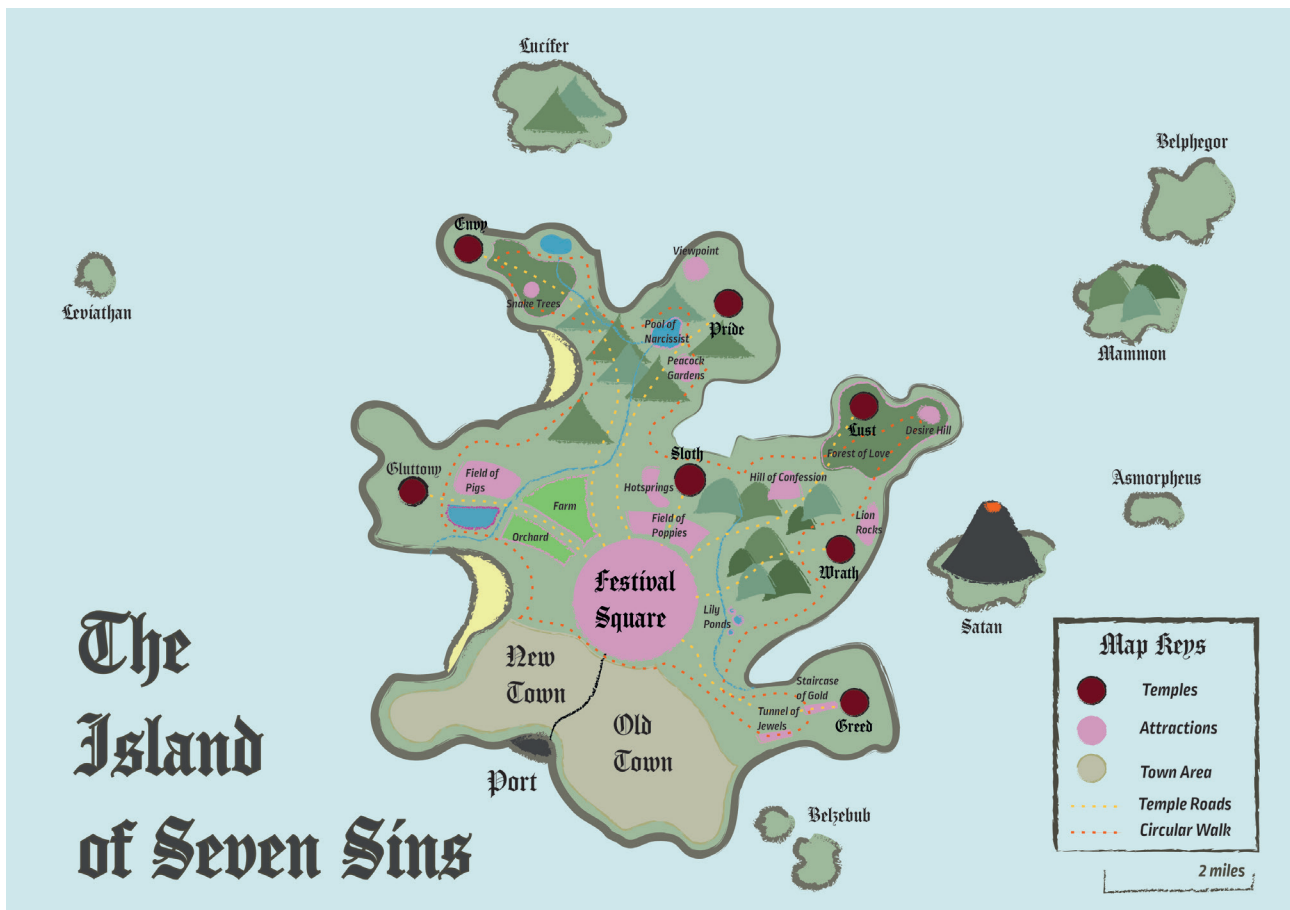

Society and Cultures

Inspirations for The Temple of Seven Sins
&
The Impact of Tourism on Culture

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The map of the Island of Seven Sins

In the Cowboy, Cults and Coney Island project, my group got ‘Evil is Good’ as a belief. From this root we created a fictional religion called ‘The Temple of Seven Sins’ (TTSS for short) which is a nontheistic religion that uses the Christian Seven Deadly Sins as a basis for their teachings. While in Christianity they are considered evil characteristics, in TTSS they are seen as characteristics that make us human. Rather than seeing them as evil they perceive each sin as having a spectrum. The aim of TTSS is to help people find their own form of balance with each sin and in doing so will find enlightenment and happiness. The sins and their spectrums can be seen on the image on the following page. TTSS is located on a fictional island called ‘The Island of Seven Sins’ (TISS for short). The island is fictional but is located in the real world. We set it on a fictional island because we felt that such a religion could not thrive in mainstream culture but could be a dominant religion in a small community.

There are two areas of exploration which will be covered in this essay:

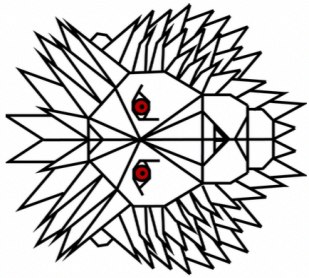
Insirations for The Temple of Seven Sins

- The Satanic Temple
- The Seven Deadly Sins and Virtues
- The Chinese Zodiac

The Impact of Tourism on Culture

The Temple of Seven Sins

The dominant religion on the island is known as 'The Temple of Seven Sins' it is a non-theistic religion (meaning they don't believe in god or superstition) that has been around for a few centuries and was formed on the island as a response to the Christian Seven Deadly Sins. Islanders believe that the sins aren't evil. Instead the seven sins are a human characteristic. They believe that the sins can be viewed as a spectrum and that each person must find their own relationship and balance to each of the sins. Each sin is represented by an animal and a colour.

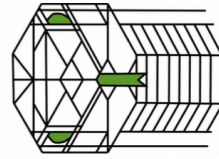
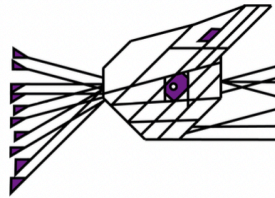


Temple of Wrath

Colour : Red
 Animal : Lion
 Positive Spectrum : Love, Courage, Happiness
 Negative Spectrum : Anger, Grief, Depression

Temple of Pride

Colour : Purple
 Animal : Peacock
 Positive Spectrum : Self worth, self confidence
 Negative Spectrum : Arrogance



Temple of Envy

Colour : Green
 Animal : Snake
 Positive Spectrum : Self content
 Negative Spectrum : Jealousy, Longing

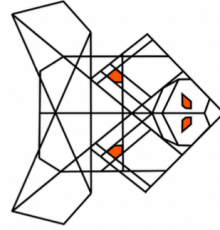
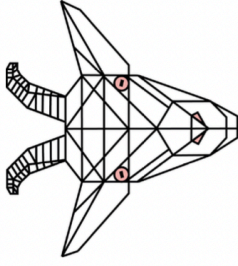


Temple of Sloth

Colour : Light Blue
 Animal : Snail
 Positive Spectrum : Rest, relaxation, sleep
 Negative Spectrum : Lazy, overworking, illness

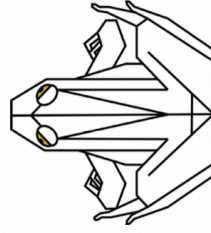
Temple of Lust

Colour : Pink
 Animal : Goat
 Spectrum : Sex, Love, Relationships



Temple of Gluttony

Colour : Orange
 Animal : Pig
 Positive Spectrum : Restraint, moderation
 Negative Spectrum : Overconsumption, addiction



Temple of Greed

Colour : Yellow
 Animal : Toad
 Positive Spectrum : Charity, generosity
 Negative Spectrum : Selfishness, greed

Part One

Inspirations for The Temple of Seven Sins

The Satanic Temple



The statue of Baphomet outside of the Arkansas State Capitol building in protest of the erection of a statue of the 10 commandments.

In the beginning we looked to The Satanic Temple (TST for short) for inspiration. TST are a nontheistic religious organisation that primarily operates in the United States. It is easy to mistake them as a devil-worshipping cult but they actually have a noble cause. Their mission is ‘To encourage benevolence and empathy, reject tyrannical authority, advocate practical common sense, oppose injustice and undertake noble pursuits’. Satan is used because they view him as “a symbolic embodiment as the ultimate rebel against tyranny” (The Satanic Temple, 2019b)

The group was founded in 2013 and they see themselves as being “on the front lines on the war against encroaching theocracy”.

One campaign involved the proposal of a Satanic Statue to be erected on a State Capitol’s grounds to protest the erection of a 10 commandments statue. The US considers itself a secular nation with religious plurality and a Christian monument being erected on government property would break the first amendment.

Like Christianity with its Ten Commandments, TST has their own seven tenets. The tenets include rules like “One should strive to act with compassion and empathy towards all creatures in accordance with reason.” This is their first tenet and shows TST’s good intentions. Tenets such as “One’s body is inviolable, subject to one’s own will alone” and “The struggle for justice is an ongoing necessary pursuit that should prevail over laws and institutions” suggests that TST is more of an individualist group than a collectivist one. The former shows this in an individualistic way; a person should have the right to choose what they do to themselves. The latter shows this on a societal level; TST are willing to go beyond a society’s laws and institutions in the fight for what they believe is right.

One question that reoccurred is why does TST consider itself a religion when they don’t believe in god(s) or superstition? A couple of the answers were:

- In the US, religious groups have rights in accordance to their teachings/beliefs. As a religion this consideration applies to members of the TST too. This is one of their strategies against the anti-abortion laws though so far attempts have been unsuccessful.
- Some members said they don't believe in god/superstition but they still want to follow rules and have rituals and have a community of people that they can be a part of. (The Satanic Temple, 2019b)

For the creation of TTSS we took inspiration from TST in several ways:

- It is a nontheistic religion but uses religious imagery, symbolism and ritual.
- The religion uses 'evil' imagery despite having a good cause.
- TTSS has an individual oriented belief system. Community still exists but at the centre of it is the aim of finding balance in oneself and the community is built around this.

The Seven Sins and Virtues



S Y M B O L S



PEACOCK
PRIDE



SNAKE
ENVY



LION
WRATH



TOAD
GREED



SNAIL
SLOTH



PIG
GLUTTONY



GOAT
LUST

Illustrations depicting the animals associated with the Seven Deadly Sins.

Despite being a non-theistic religion, TTSS uses the Seven Deadly Sins within their belief system. It was only after the project that I discovered the Seven Virtues, but they also correspond with TTSS's view that the sins have a spectrum, albeit it is not as black and white as the Christian sins and virtues.

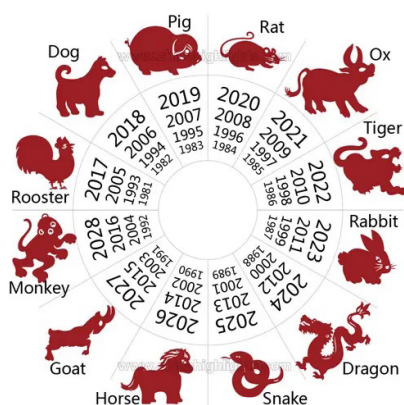
In the fourth century a Christian monk named Evagrius Ponticus wrote down 'The Eight Evil Thoughts' which consisted of gluttony, lust, avarice, anger, sloth, sadness, vainglory and pride. He was an ascetic monk in the Eastern Christian Church and his writings were meant for fellow monks and not a general audience. However, one of his students brought these ideas to the Western Church where they were translated from Greek to Latin and after several iterations became the Seven Deadly Sins that we know today. (Little, 2021) The sins are referred to as 'mortal' or 'deadly' because "Committing one of these mortal sins and not confessing, not doing penance and so on, will result in the death of the soul and then your soul will be in hell for all eternity" (Little, 2021). Each of the sins can be overcome with seven corresponding virtues. There is a variety of different wordings of the virtues (and the sins too) but they are prudence, temperance, fortitude, justice, faith hope and love. The former four are referred to as 'The Cardinal Virtues' and predate Christianity. To this, Christianity added the latter three out of which love is the most important. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019)

In some medieval literature (including a French Manuscript called ‘Bibliothèque Nationale de France MS fr. 400’) “The personified sins, whose animal mounts are apparently walking across the page, take up more visual space and draw the viewer’s eye more forcefully than the slender motionless, rather isolated virtues.” (I couldn’t locate this image but it is cited). The authority of the virtues is indicated by ‘Each virtue speaking before its corresponding vice’ but the vices benefit from ‘stronger, more concrete imagery’. (Wheatley, 2013)

This strong imagery meant there was already a strong foundation with which to build TTSS onto. Among this imagery includes animals and colours that are associated with the sins. Each sin has several animals associated with them. For example snakes, dogs and rats are associated with envy and foxes and toads are associated with greed. For TTSS’s animals we took direct inspiration from the images on the previous page.

Animal imagery is common in the bible and it was interesting to see how some animals are associated with both virtuous and sinful qualities. For example the lion is associated with courage but is also associated with wrath, the peacock is associated with pride but also immortality and the snake is associated with envy but also caution and prudence. (New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2022) This ties in nicely with TTSS’s belief that each sin has a spectrum of positive and negative qualities.

Chinese Philosophy



The Chinese Zodiacs and their corresponding years.

The idea of finding balance, and the cyclical nature of TTSS was partly inspired by ancient Chinese Philosophy.

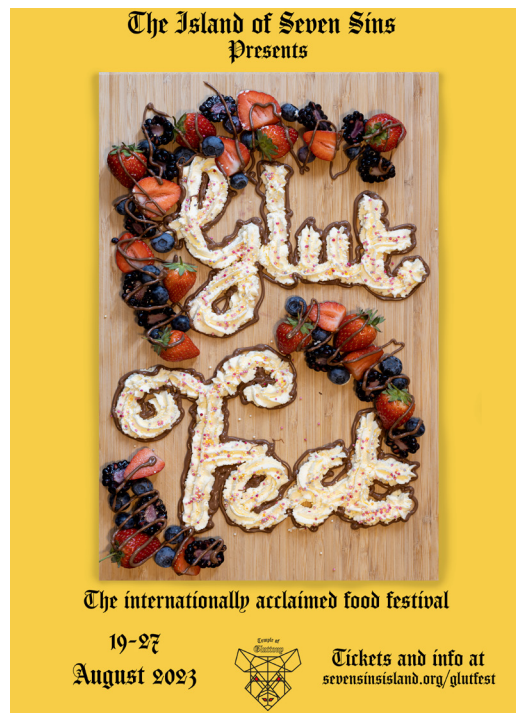
A simple definition of Yin and Yang is “Two halves that together complete wholeness” (Personal Tao, 2019). Man (Yang) and Woman (Yin), Night (Yin) and Day (Yang). This idea of two halves creating balance is somewhat similar to TTSS idea of finding balance.

The Chinese Zodiac and the Five Phases (Wuxing) which are metal, wood, water, fire and earth also inspired TTSS. The Chinese Zodiac consists of twelve animals. Each year is associated with an animal and this rotates on a twelve year cycle. Each cycle is then associated with an element of the Five Phases. 2022 is a Water Tiger year (which occurs once every sixty years). In a similar way, TTSS also has a cyclical calendar. Each year is associated with a sin creating a seven year cycle. Each seven-year cycle is also associated with a sin creating a 49 year cycle. As there are seven days in a week, each day is also associated with a sin.

Creating a fictional religion and imagining the culture around it has given the opportunity to consider the cultures that exist in our world and the complex nature of how cultures intertwine and perceive one another. What Christianity perceives as being good and evil is not agreed by all and as a result groups like TST are formed who in turn are perceived as being evil by many people. In reality the boundaries of cultures are blurred and TTSS is an interpretation of this. Perhaps what makes them unique is the way they perceive good and evil as a spectrum rather than a clear-cut definition.

Part Two

The Impact of Tourism on Culture



Glut Fest promotional poster

Another area which we explored was how an island like TISS could be incorporated into the real world. Due to it being an island and having a unique culture, it is likely that TISS would rely on tourism to sustain itself. We explored the idea that TISS had launched a new tourism scheme involving the construction of several large hotels and the commercialisation of some of their religious festivals including ‘Glut Fest’, a food festival incorporated into The Temple of Gluttony’s festivities.

The tourism scheme is deployed by the island’s government to boost the economy and in doing so encourage the younger generation to stay on the island. An increase in tourism would have positive and negative impacts. Below are some real-life examples of potential impacts:

Acculturation is the process of adaptation and adjustment. ‘When local people entertain tourists they adopt tourists’ needs, attitudes and values and this can impact the culture at large’ (Shahzalal, 2016) An example of this can be seen in the Pokhara-Ghandruk community in Nepal where the traditional fashion, behaviour and lifestyle of young Gurungs have been severely affected by tourism. For example young people are wearing western modern dress instead of traditional Nepali cloths’ (Shahzalal, 2016).



Modern building and Restaurant of Sauraha



The Tharu women in non-Tharu dresses

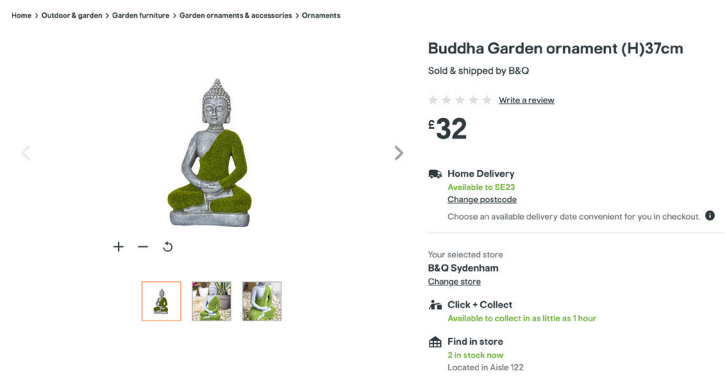
This can be seen as both a positive and negative impact. For the local culture this could be seen as a loss because the younger generation are choosing not to follow in the local traditions and the construction of modern buildings would have an impact on the landscape and environment of the place. However, it is also a positive thing as the locals are introduced to new cultures, technologies and ways of thinking.

On TTIS the construction of new hotels leads to the destruction of farmland and the struggle of smaller local guest houses.

Cultural Commodification results in the ‘transformation of value-from sacred to profane and from real to the unauthentic’ (Shahzalal, 2016). An example of this is Buddhist statues. If you visit temples in Buddhist countries you will see these statues as religious emblems and yet you can also buy a Buddha statue as a garden ornament from B&Q.



A Buddha statue in a Japanese Temple.



A Buddha statue sold on B&Q's website.

In TTIS objects associated with the religion such as the Gold Coin and Statues of the sins would probably end up being sold as souvenirs for tourists. The commodification of such objects could prevent them from becoming obsolete.

Gold Coin

Gold coins with the Temple of Greed's emblem are given to islanders when they are born. The coin's are made of solid gold and have embossed on them the full name and date of birth. In recent years the person's blood group is also included in case of a medical emergency. Islanders take pride in these coins and most will hold on to them until the day they die. Many wear their coins around their neck like a dog tag. As a last resort some people will pawn their gold coin if they are in financial struggle though islanders will often help struggling islanders to prevent them from having to give up their gold coin.



Toad Statue

Statues of animals representing the temple of sins are found in homes. Many traditional homes have a little shrine area with all seven animals displayed. Materials of the statues vary but wood and marble statues are common. the eyes are often enorusted with gem stones. People would meditate in front of the statues or talk to them if they've got things on their mind.



Illustrations and depictions of traditional objects from TISS.

Cultural Preservation is a positive impact of tourism because it ‘provides funding to preserve and conserve cultural heritage, gives back cultural pride, revitalises customs and traditions and opens doors for cultural sharing and learning’ (Shahzalal, 2016) Examples of this can be seen in Egypt where “The world Heritage Centre arranged training for studying environmentally-friendly creative embroidery, and so 200 Egyptians learned to produce and sell eco-friendly handmade palm leaf branch items. This contributed to an increase in the number of jobs, growth of incomes, and the development of new craftsman community. (Culture and Creativity, n.d.).

On TTIS the increase in young people staying and economic incentive would help to preserve the cultural traditions on the island.

If TISS were a real place there is a good chance that the community would be misunderstood or their culture misinterpreted similar to how The Satanic Temple is easily misidentified as a devil worshipping cult. Its association with evil could lead the outside world to assume that TISS is a place where immoral activities take place thus risking attracting tourists seeking immorality.

As an extreme example it could end up like Koh Phengen in Thailand which is renowned for the Full Moon Party. It boasts being the largest beach party in the world and occurs once a month attracting 20,000-30,000 tourists every month. 'A mess of drunken foreigners cramming onto a once-beautiful beach to celebrate nothing more than the party itself'. The water used to sparkle with phosphorescence under a blue moon light but now it is full of 'rejected paraphernalia: thousands of plastic straws, bags, blinking Minnie Mouse ears, bracelets and empty cups' (Hunwick, 2014) The festival has a reputation for its literal buckets of alcohol and drugs. Alongside environmental devastation, It has also become infamous for incidences of rapes, fatal accidents, suicide and gang-related murders.' (Hunwick, 2014)



The Full Moon Party



The Aftermath of the Full Moon Party.

We explored TTIS's own concerns with tourism and highlighted the complexities of differing opinions within the island through writing a transcript for a radio broadcast in which different locals voice their opinions on the new tourism scheme. There were five characters. A middle-aged farmer, a retired guest-house owner, a young man in his early twenties, the politician responsible for the new scheme and a representative of the TTSS. The farmer talks about the positive impact because young people want to stay (including her son) and the economy is booming but how overcrowded the island has become and how the peace and tranquillity of the island is dwindling. The retired guest-house owner talks about how his guest house (which had been in the family for generations) went out of business because of the new hotels and how 'unsavoury' tourists vomit on his doorstep. The young man talks about how thanks to the new tourism he has been able to save money and set up his own business. The politician talks about the success of modernising the island. The temple representative talks about having to adapt to the influx in tourism but ultimately how their culture can be preserved and shared with the rest of the world.

Culture is ever evolving and in the globalised world of today communities need to adapt in order to preserve their traditions. The traditions that aren't adapted often die out. Tourism plays a huge roll in preserving traditions through economic incentives and in turn a thriving economy helps to maintain cultural pillars such as historic buildings, rituals and traditional objects. Tourism also helps to spread the knowledge of these traditions which also helps to preserve them. The downside of tourism and the economic incentives is that it can also threaten to destroy local culture as it is adapted to suit tourists. It has been interesting to explore these complexities by considering them through TISS.

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