
The Origins of Hospitality and Tourism

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Published by Goodfellow Publishers Limited, Woodeaton, Oxford, OX3 9TJ

<http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com>

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Design and setting by P.K. McBride

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Historical Perspectives

In contemporary hospitality literature the history and philosophy of hospitality seem to have been largely overlooked areas for investigation. In particular, the portrayal of the historical evolution of the phenomenon of hospitality has often been based on random conjecture rather than historical fact. Through exploring classical history and philosophy, and contemporary hospitality literature, it is clear that modern hospitality has its foundation in the culture of Classical Antiquity. In addition, the analysis of texts requires an understanding of evolution of language and how the modern words associated with hospitality have evolved.

1.1 The phenomenon of hospitality

Investigating the genesis and the evolution of the phenomenon of hospitality has suffered from relative neglect. However the importance of the historical perspective is supported by O'Connor (2005, p. 267) who states that: 'only once an understanding of hospitality's origins and its place in human nature is achieved can one expect to discover what hospitality means today, and more importantly what it will mean to those entering the industry in the future'. This recognises hospitality as a broad concept alongside hospitality as a profession, with historical literature contributing to informing industry practices of today and tomorrow: awareness of the past can always help to guide the future.

Going back in time to primitive and archaic societies, hospitality in its broad sense was seen as essentially organic, as a vital and integral part of such societies revealing much about their cultural values and beliefs. Muhlmann (1932, p. 113) notes that the principles which governed the peoples' attitudes towards hospitality in these societies were: religious practices and beliefs; the advancement of trade and commerce; transactional expectations; social status and the household; a system of communication, and the fear of strangers.

From an initial review of the history and evolution of commercial hospitality, two basic approaches are to be found within the current literature. The first is declarative and the second is judgemental.

Chapter extract

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