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TRADITION OF HOSPITALITY, TAKEN AS A QUALITY ELEMENT OF TOURISM

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Subject review

Research shows hospitality to be one of the attractive elements of a tourist destination, which therefore makes it one of the key quality elements of tourism and hotel industry. Hospitality and amiability belong to important definers of the particular system envisaged to measure and evaluate how satisfied guests are with the hotel services offered, that is what is the quality of experiencing a tourist destination. Hospitality is particularly important for a sustainable development of any tourist destination since it favours all the key elements of a destination system: the visitors, the natives, the investors. Many hotel firms resort to training and other systematic forms of education in order to “teach”, that is to “drill” their employees into acquiring a higher quality level when communicating with their guests, into displaying a higher level of hospitality and amiability. However, is hospitality something one can learn or acquire? To what measure can the employees be drilled and so learn to be hospitable? Are there parts of the world where hospitality “just goes without saying”? Can the various regions, nations and mentalities be distinguished by the level of hospitality they manifest? The authors of the present paper try to shed light upon the phenomenon of hospitality by inquiring into its origins and tradition. They delve into the importance of hospitality in ancient civilizations, the religious dimension of hospitality, examine the phenomenon of hospitality as an important component of our notion of the Balkans and sketch the power relations within the phenomenon of hospitality, in the light of the current postcolonial theory. To round up the survey is a conclusion on the positive ethical and political potential of hospitality, as well as of hospitality understood as an exceptional tourist potential. It is the wish of this paper to stimulate further research of the phenomenon of hospitality, as a specific sociological phenomenon of a tourist destination that considerably marks it.

Key words: hospitality, hospitality in the Bible, tradition of hospitality, hospitality as a quality element of tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Hospitality is a major element of tourist output, which makes it a significant quality element of tourism, both in tourist destinations and single segments of tourism, particularly in catering industry.

The population of a given host community is not to be disregarded when considering the tourist destination system as manifesting itself at the tri-border point consisting of the populace itself, the visitors and the tourist professionals (Jafari 1998).

Research results indicate a strong connection between how much the visitors are pleased with a given tourist destination and how hospitable the local populace is.¹

Whoever travels for tourist purposes expects their destinations to welcome them and offer a pleasant stay, cosiness leading to a feeling of happiness.²

Is hospitality inherent to certain geographical areas? In what ways does hospitality relate to the mentality of a given population? Is it connected with its conceptions, religion, morality, social changes? Does hospitality rather concern individuals or the society as a whole? Is hospitality an acquired or learned category? Can hospitality be 'trained'?

The authors of the present text aim at shedding light on some of these questions so as to re-examine the phenomenon of hospitality as a concept very much talked of, but at the same time only scarcely clarified. The authors delve into the origins and tradition of the phenomenon, relating it to catering industry and tourism.

1. HOSPITALITY AS A PART OF TOURIST CULTURE

Jadrešić (2000) defines culture as a specific and applied form of culture *'containing elements and values of subjective and objective culture in the sphere of emission and, especially, reception tourism and tourist area.'*³ Among the levels of tourist culture there is one enveloping the sociological/psychological/pedagogical aspect, where man becomes the focus of the tourist phenomenon, that is man's *'traditions, habits, feelings, knowledge, motivations, tendencies and purposes.'*⁴

In this context, tourism also implies anthropogenic values, humanist personalities, cultural identity and so forth, just as equally as it does natural values. It is in this way that we can relate the concept of hospitality to the following areas: tourism as interaction of culture and personality, entities of culture and tourism, tourism as a socio-cultural phenomenon, socio-cultural phenomena in tourism, tourist cultivation, local populace culture, tourist employees' culture, emissive populace culture in tourism, cultural contacts and realization of values by means of tourist encounters, communication with tourists, impact of irrational factors in tourism etc.

It is also true that we can relate the phenomenon of hospitality to certain contradictions and negative phenomena in tourism, like the occasional fact of tourist employees – and even local populace – being unkind and conflictive (the same applies at times to tourists themselves). Trying to explain away similar phenomena, Dann and Cohen (1991) point out that 'there exists in tourism a potential tension between the industry and its client, between a highly routinized and impersonal establishment and

¹ Krajnović, Aleksandra, 'Ispitivanje stavova i potrošnje turista u Novigradu Istarskom', in *Turističke privlačnosti Novigrada Istarskog i mogućnosti njihove kvalitetnije valorizacije* (M.S. thesis), Opatija, 2000.

² Avelini Holjevac, Ivanka, *Upravljanje kvalitetom u turizmu i hotelskoj industriji*, Opatija: Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, 2002, p. 473.

³ Jadrešić, Vlatko, *Turizam u interdisciplinarnoj teoriji i primjeni* (research proceedings), Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2001, pp. 42-50.

⁴ Jadrešić, *ibid.*

the quality of expected touristic experience. Perhaps more than on any other formulation, the contradiction is best described in the notion of tourism as "commercialized hospitality" (Cohen 1988). Social exchange between hosts and guests, based on principles of hospitality characteristic of the gift, now becomes largely replaced by economic exchange and the profit motive, often masquerading behind a phoney front of friendliness or even servility.⁵

2. HOSPITALITY AS A QUALITY ELEMENT OF TOURIST AND HOTEL INDUSTRY

In one of its manifesting forms (kindness, populace culture, attitude towards tourists), hospitality considerably adds to the attractions of a given tourist destination (Gearing, Swart and Var (1974), Ritchie and Zins (1978), Gunn (1988), Haaht (1986), Shih (1986), Weber, Mikačić (1995)).⁶

Besides being a quality element of tourist destinations, hospitality considerably adds to the quality of hotel industry itself, particularly within the following groups of quality elements (Avelini Holjevac 2002):

1. behaviour and clothing standards among caterers and hotel staff – their kindness, helpfulness (and efficiency), personalization of services (every guest deserves full attention), the measure of trustworthiness the guest attributes to the staff; the helpfulness and attention of the catering staff participates with no less than 27% in the overall satisfaction with the services provided;
2. ethical standards.⁷

Research work done on tourist market has shown that visitors are keen on positively or negatively judging manifestations of (in)hospitality found at their respective destinations by means of answering the so-called open questions (questions with no ready-made answers). In opinion polls we thus come across praises and critiques as the following: very agreeable people, discrimination against foreigners, staff unkind and slow etc.⁸

The kindness shown by the staff is part of the positive regulations governing the quality of services in Croatian catering industry. The *Regulations on Classifying, Minimum Conditions and Categorization of Catering Facilities* make it obligatory for all catering staff to 'act hospitably, professionally, competently and correctly'.⁹

Hospitality has become part and parcel of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, enacted by the World Tourist Organization. The Code makes that clear very early in the text (Article 1, Subsection 3):

⁵ Dann, Graham and Cohen, Erik, 'Sociology and Tourism', in *Annals of Tourism Research*, 18: 155.69, 1991.

⁶ Weber, Sanda and Mikačić, Vesna, 'Determinante atraktivnosti turističkih destinacija – županija u Hrvatskoj', in *Turizam*, no. 3-4, 1995 (Zagreb: Institut za turizam).

⁷ Avelini Holjevac, *ibid.*

⁸ Krajnović, Aleksandra, 'Ispitivanje stavova i potrošnje turista u Novigradu Istarskom', in *Turističke privlačnosti Novigrada Istarskog i mogućnosti njihove kvalitetnije valorizacije* (M.S. thesis), Opatija, 2000.

⁹ *Regulations on Classifying, Minimum Conditions and Categorization of Catering Facilities*, NN, 1995.

'The host communities, on the one hand, and local professionals, on the other, should acquaint themselves with and respect the tourists who visit them and find out about their lifestyles, tastes and expectations; the education and training imparted to professionals contribute to a hospitable welcome.'¹⁰

The question to be asked is: where are the roots, the origins of hospitality?

3. HOSPITALITY AND ITS RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE

Hospitality is an aspect of man's living within a community; the history of hospitality is therefore inextricably bound to the system of values at a given historical moment of a community, to its political and economic relations. There was a time when one of the indications testifying to the interior strength of a community was the diffusion and deep-seatedness of the custom of hospitality – for members of such a community, the sense of mutual relatedness and safety was the cornerstone of social mobility and communication. Accordingly, we should not be surprised at the fact that ancient civilizations developed a very sophisticated cult of hospitality, or that the great world religions have always paid considerable attention to cherishing it.

'In the East, hospitality is deemed a holy duty. It is shown to everybody, even to beggars and slaves. Its roots are religious. By honouring a passing guest one honours the passing and hope-bringing God. To receive a guest brings solemnity, joy, inner fulfilment...To partake of food and drink at the same table stands for life communion and is a sign of protectedness and safety...At the time when Jesus lived hospitality was still regarded a consecrated and religious act. One welcomes the guest with the words "Peace be with you!" and a kiss. His feet are washed in water and the host applies aromatic oils onto the guest's head.'¹¹

In Christian religious practice, hospitality gains new symbolic momentum. Entertaining a guest indirectly follows the numerous instances we find in the New Testament of Christ entertaining others. Inhospitality, too, acquires a more profound meaning and is symbolized by the character of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-58), who entertains Christ with open suspicion.

'He is conceited, self-sufficient, in no need of the grace of forgiveness. He takes himself to be justified by his own acts. He needs no Saviour.'¹²

In this way hospitality becomes a manifestation of awaiting the Saviour, of the readiness to receive Him, to put an end to the history of suffering and pave the way to the paradisiac community.

'To be alive with hospitality – to animals, children, old people and foreigners – is a possible way of opening Heaven.'¹³

On the other hand, it was again hospitality, in its various forms, to play the cornerstone role in both strengthening and spreading the early Christian community (Acts 2:42-47). Crucial in furthering hospitality as a value of Christian civilization was a rule established by St Benedict, founder of the oldest monastic order. It says:

¹⁰ Source: WTO, 1999, quoted from: Avelini Holjevac, *Upravljanje kvalitetom u turizmu i hotelskoj industriji*, p. 497.

¹¹ Tomić, Celestin, 'Gostoprinstvo', in *Veritas: glasnik sv. Antuna Padovanskog*, no.9, 2004, Zagreb.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Orth, Gottfried, 'Ohne ihr Wissen haben manche schon Engel beherbergt: theologische Überlegungen zur Gastfreundschaft', in *Christ und Sozialist*, no. 4, 2001, Aachen.

'All guests are to be received as Christ himself, for it was he who once said: "I was a foreigner, but you received me"...The superiors are to stop their regular fasting for the sake of the guest...Particular care is to be taken of receiving a poor man or a pilgrim, since it is through them that Christ himself is received.'¹⁴

Martin Luther, founder of Protestantism, takes hospitality to be a synonym for the Church:

'Wherever there is the Church, there is hospitality.'¹⁵

The most abstract way to characterize hospitality as a religious ideal is by using the concept of unconditionality. Hospitality understood as such is best illustrated in II Kings (4:8-16a), in the part describing the hospitality shown by a woman from Shunem (a place near Nazareth) to prophet Elisha: she saw him to be a 'man of God', she received him without asking or expecting any sort of miraculous redemption. It is this hospitality of hers, unconditioned¹⁶ and unburdened by any idea of counterfavour, to earn her a reward from God.

Hakim Bey (his true name is Peter Lamborn Wilson), one of the most controversial American theoreticians of nowadays, is extremely provocative in describing his own ideal of hospitality, and in doing so he draws on Islamic tradition and esotericism. His account equally attaches great importance to the unconditionality of hospitality, which he sharply contrasts with tourism.

'The tourist is a parasite, because no money can pay hospitality. The true traveller is a guest, thus fulfilling a very real function, even today, in societies where the ideal of hospitality has not yet faded out of "collective mentality".'¹⁷

The issue of the ideal unconditionality of hospitality and its true performative context is also a paramount issue in contemporary philosophy, that is in ethics – we will revisit the issue in the chapter dealing with the political and ethical relevance of hospitality.

4. NATIONAL REPRESENTATION AND THE EXPERIENCE OF (IN)HOSPITALITY

Besides the just described religious tradition of hospitality, there is another, much longer tradition, the one that religion actually relies on. We mean hospitality that has been manifesting itself since times immemorial, and in very concrete ways, too – Gottfried Orth, professor of Evangelical theology already quoted in these pages, presents the following list: the travelling stranger is offered water for washing his feet; he is served a meal; his freight or riding animals, if he has any, are taken care of; he has free use of the host's house, as if it were his own haven and shelter.¹⁸ It is through such hospitality that the sense of *life communion* is expressed, in its elementary aspect, by means of sharing anything a home can offer one: shelter, food, water and warmth.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Martinić, Ivo, 'Opredjeljenje za neprolazno', in *Glas koncila*, no. 26, 2005, Zagreb.

¹⁷ Bey, Hakim, 'Prevladati turizam', trans. Larisa Petrić, in *Libra Libera*, no. 10, 2002, Zagreb.

¹⁸ Orth, Gottfried, 'Ohne ihr Wissen haben manche schon Engel beherbergt: theologische Überlegungen zur Gastfreundschaft', in *Christ und Sozialist*, no. 4, 2001, Aachen.

The longevity and strength of this tradition in some regions, ethnic groups and, taken even wider, in social classes and nation-states, is historically conditioned and oscillates in proportion to fluctuations of various political and economic factors. Generally speaking, we can say that this strength is more conspicuous in communities with no clear-cut status hierarchy and property relations, as well as in communities not subject to unremitting murderous or plundering raids.

To stick only to our region, we notice that rhetorics of national representation is unthinkable without hospitality. The natives of the Balkans take pronounced pride in their hospitality. It is the same in Croatia, Bosnia or Serbia. Things do not change if we move to the Slovenians or Hungarians: the first speak of *tradicionalno slovensko gostoljubje*, the traditional Slovenian hospitality, while the latter like pointing out *a híres magyar vendégszeretet*, the glorious Hungarian hospitality! The relativity of such representations of national 'qualities' is sufficiently corroborated by the public opinion in our own country, especially over recent years, characterized by constant grudges against our first neighbours, not to mention the still fresh traumatic experience of the latest war!

In any analysis of this discrepancy between the various national representations, but especially in any analysis of the way the West has been 'imagining' the Balkans, which is to say of the way the Balkans have been used as a political token in the political discourses of the West, the principal source to be used is Marija Todorova's book *Imagining the Balkans*¹⁹. In it we find no mention of the hospitality of the Balkans, but rather of the reasons making a Westerner feel uncomfortable in the Balkans. *The Balkan Road*, a travel book written by Archibald Lyall in 1930, gathers witty descriptions of Romania, Istanbul, Greece, Albania, Montenegro and Dalmatia. Its pages display sober accounts of Balkan mentality, which has remained unchanged:

'...certain lack of comfort, indifference to rules and timetables, some sort of *je-m'en-fichisme*²⁰ in regard to the usual everyday routine, which, depending on your temperament and circumstances, can either drive you mad or strike you as blissfully sane.'

Granting it is difficult, nowadays, to talk with no ironical touches of hospitality as a feature of the nations in our region, we still must make our discussion of the matter concrete and related to the present, pointing out the conditions and the aspect of everyday life that currently favour hospitality. Even more, our attention should be focused on those everyday phenomena in which lack of hospitality represents a burning issue calling both for immediate discussion and action.

5. POLITICAL AND ETHICAL RELEVANCE OF HOSPITALITY

Although tourist hospitality takes place within a network of precisely defined catering activities – activities with concrete contents and an even more concrete price-list, so that usually no party in the interaction feels wronged – this entire system of supply and demand still preserves a dimension that cannot be calculated or mastered in the manner of a skill: it has to do with the attention the host pays to the visitor as a

¹⁹ In referring to Maria Todorova's book, published in English in 1997, we rely on the Belgrade translation of the study, published in 1999 and entitled *Imaginarni Balkan*.

²⁰ This French expression sums the general behaviour of those people for whom life is bereft of anything really serious or significant.

unique personality unfamiliar with his new social environment that inevitably makes him feel disorientated and in need of help. This dimension is much more obvious in extreme situations of having lost one's own home and familiar landmarks, which is precisely the situation of immigrants and refugees. The current world events, accompanied by mass migrations of endangered and impoverished natives to better-off and economically/politically more stable countries, have turned the issue of hospitality into a major political one.

A prominent role in theoretically articulating such importance of hospitality belongs to the University of Leeds (UK), more precisely to its branch known as CATH, Centre for Cultural Analysis, Theory and History. In the period between 21 and 23 June 2002 a conference was held in Tawn Hall, entitled *Translating Class, Altering Hospitality*, with over two hundred participants – prestigious artists and theoreticians – and introduced by a workshop *On Hospitality*, from 2 to 4 March.

Of particular appeal were the contributions of Zygmunt Bauman, renowned anthropologist and sociologist, professor at the host university. In his paper 'Living together in the full world'²¹ he describes two strategies adopted by nation-states in their undeclared war against immigrants: the first is forced assimilation, whereby a nation-body 'digests' foreigners; the second is 'regurgitating' foreigners, when these are gathered and banished – either from the state in question or from the world of the living. Especially poignant is his description of refugee camps with people that cannot go 'back' because all their belongings have been sacked or burnt, but can neither go 'forth' because no government will gladly receive into its territory a million homeless people. Unlike temporary stays in a tourist camp, a refugee camp is characterized by its paradoxical 'permanent temporariness', existential indecisiveness, even by an existential impossibility of re-establishing a home for the encamped ones. This, in Bauman's view, makes hospitality an urgent issue: the concept of hospitality must nowadays be a 'natural yearning' of every human being.

The crucial question raised by the Leeds conference tackled a possibility of substituting an acceptance of the Other, with no blackmailing references to property relations, for the haughty kind of hospitality based on property and law.

Theoretical articulation of this question – just as, speaking in more general terms, the very introducing of the phenomenon of hospitality among major issues of today – has most vehemently been encouraged by one of the most influential philosophers in our days, the recently deceased Jacques Derrida. A good many participants of the conference referred to his Paris lectures from 1996 – concentrated on hospitality – as well as to his text written with the purpose of starting a programme for refugee towns, initiated foremost by the International Parliament of Writers.

The currently commonplace syntagms like 'culture or hospitality' or 'ethics of hospitality' are taken by Derrida to be mere tautologies, since, in his own words: 'Hospitality is culture itself and it is not one ethic among others. Insofar as it touches or ??'²²

²¹ Bauman, Zygmunt, 'Living together in the full world',
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/cath/events/2002/0302/bauman.html>.

²² Quoted from the conference paper: Kamuf, Peggy, 'The Ethics of Hospitality: Another Step',
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/cath/events/2002/0302/kamuf.html>.

Derrida distinguishes between conditional and unconditional hospitality. The first entangles the foreigner, understood as a legal entity, into a game of rights and duties, while the latter stands for giving away and presenting gifts, opening one's own door to the foreigner regardless of any pact and legal economy.²³ Accordingly, Derrida differentiates the history of hospitality from the Law of hospitality (understood as an unconditional law), as well as from all laws tending to its bounding and conditioning by inscribing it into a given judicial system.²⁴

The latter way of expressing hospitality was discussed at the conference by the esteemed culturologist Martin McQuillan, too. In his argumentation, the modern everyday world is unambiguously labelled 'poorness of hospitality', not in the quantitative sense, naturally, but semantic. The issues he focuses on are: how to restore the gift of giving and the gift of receiving? how to enact an encounter between the host and the guest without necessarily thinking within rules set by the law? In fact, here we find hospitality as a poetic convention, an innovative act that becomes authentic only by radically accepting the Other and the otherness, with no second thoughts.²⁵

Directly building on Derrida's arguments concerning hospitality, Peggy Camuf proposes in her paper on hospitality²⁶ a different approach to elaborating the ethicality of hospitality, an approach that does not aim at making its unconditionality absolute, neither does it wish to make its law sacred. She claims that history of hospitality is inseparable from history of breaking its law, and then goes on to say that, paradoxical as it may be, it is precisely this historicity to keep in life the ideal of pure hospitality.

Even more 'down-to-earth' in his thinking is Bobby Sayyid, who holds pure hospitality to be a mere abstraction: the oppositions inherent to the visitor-host encounter happen to be incoded in advance and make part of an unwritten contract, presupposing property and ethical relations that cannot be abridged just like that. While in the case of the host we talk of property, the guest should have moral responsibility towards the host. This is why hospitality is much more than a pure ethical gesture: it always concerns property, power and territory.

From the political standpoint characteristic of the West-European state scenario, as suggested by Sayyid, that means the kind of hospitality to the Others including not only tolerance and acknowledgment of the Other, but also sharing vantage points with no reminding of the 'property relation', as well as a readiness to accept whatever seems inconceivable to the overbearing European hospitality. This implies making our own experience provincial and marginal, so as to enable hospitality at all.

As Gayatri C. Spivak points out in her exceptionally compelling paper, being with other means imagining and acting by following the pattern of a risky kind of practice. It means 'dancing on the string of chance, not practicing compassion'.²⁷

²³ Hartle, Johan Frederik, 'Eine kleine Lektüren über die Gastfreundschaft', in *Literaturkritik*, no. 4, 2002, Marburg.

²⁴ From Kamuf, Peggy, 'The Ethics of Hospitality: Another Step'.

²⁵ Quoted from Biljana Kašić's review of the conference: 'Može li bez granica?', in *Zarez*, no. 84-85, 2002.

²⁶ Kamuf, Peggy (University of Southern California), 'The Ethics of Hospitality: Another Step'.

²⁷ Quoted from Biljana Kašić's review of the conference: 'Može li bez granica?', in *Zarez*, no. 84-85, 2002.

CONCLUSION

The concept, significance and origins of hospitality – taken as kindness to the guest, both generally and as applied to tourism – have not been duly investigated. The origins and tradition of hospitality as a human feature have not been sufficiently explained. A multidisciplinary approach to the phenomenon should help towards a better understanding of this important concept. The present paper represents a small step in that direction.

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