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# CLASSICAL AND MODERN HOSPITALITY: THE BENEDICTINE CASE

Dr Kevin D O’Gorman  
Strathclyde Business School  
University of Strathclyde  
Glasgow

[kevin.ogorman@strath.ac.uk](mailto:kevin.ogorman@strath.ac.uk)

## INTRODUCTION

The development of the anthropology of tourism is anchored in the anthropology of hospitality. Interdisciplinary research further highlights just how closely these are related to other disciplines; in this case history and theology. Benefits are also to be gained from multidisciplinary analysis of hospitality and tourism.

When investigating contemporary hospitality sometimes there is the opportunity to contextualise the investigation in the past in order to more fully understand the present; this opportunity to explore the historical dimension is often ignored, overlooked or misunderstood by some hospitality researchers resulting in flawed rhetoric, and work with little or no empirical research. However, recent advances in hospitality research have included the development of the hospitality conceptual lens (Lashley et al. 2007) that offers a potential framework for organising and presenting data. It has also provided the basis for the development of the dynamic Host-Guest Transaction Model, which allows the hospitality transaction between the host and the guest to be illustrated and explored. More importantly the model also assists with the understanding of the underpinning complexity within hospitality relationships.

An overview of the approaches to investigating biblical hospitality highlight the problems associated with this type of research. The example of monastic hospitality shows that contemporary monastic hospitality has its foundations in much earlier practices and anthropological accounts. This is partly achieved by tracing hospitality back to one of its classical roots: the Judeo-Christian Bible. This chapter then is not about the evolution of commercial hospitality; it focuses on the hospitality phenomenon as it subsists within the monastic environment.

## EVOLUTION OF BIBLICAL AND RELIGIOUS HOSPITALITY

In biblical anthropology, hospitality in scripture has only been investigated during the last two centuries: mainly due to the development of Humanism. Prior to the Renaissance, biblical texts were treated as sacred and inviolable. With this new movement history became a discipline in its own right rather than a branch of theology. Later, one of the first writers to combine biblical anthropology and hermeneutical analysis was Robertson Smith (1927) who was trying to find, in contemporary Bedouin Arab practice, reflections on the notion of biblical hospitality portrayed in the behaviour of ancient Israel/Judah. He identified aspects of the hospitality encountered:

“The *ger* [stranger] was a man of another tribe or district, who, coming to sojourn in a place where he was not strengthened by the presence of his own kin, put himself under the protection of a clan or a powerful chief. From the earliest times of Semitic life the lawlessness of the desert has been tempered by the principle that the guest is inviolable. A man is safe in the midst of his enemies as soon as he enters a tent or touches a rope. To harm a guest or to refuse him hospitality is an offence against honour, which covers the perpetrator with indelible shame... The obligation thus constituted is one of honour, and not enforced by human sanction except public opinion, for if the stranger is wronged he has no kinsmen to fight for him.” (Robertson Smith 1927: 76)

Biblical hospitality was embedded in the culture of the community. Hospitality must not only be freely offered to strangers, but to enemies as well. Hospitality brought protection from enemies, even to the extent that enemies sometimes had to offer hospitality.

Malina (1985) identified that the biblical material is presented to show a discernible pattern to the provision of hospitality: testing the stranger (when one must decide if the stranger's visit is honourable or hostile); immediately followed by a transition phase, normally including foot washing. Only then is the stranger seen as a guest; the guest enjoys a full expression of welcome, and becomes a part of the household. Then the day comes when the guest must leave and in departure, the guest is transformed once again into friend or enemy. Developing this, Koenig (1992) argued culture is a distinctive element in biblical hospitality, where God and/or Christ is often identified

as the host or guest. He also postulated that Luke in his writings seems particularly interested in hospitality, since he alone, includes the stories of: the Good Samaritan; the Prodigal Son; the Rich Man and Lazarus; Zaccheus; and the Emmaus appearance of Christ, all of these passages have significant hospitality perspectives. Riddle (1938) in a hermeneutical study of early Christian writings, proposed that biblically mandated hospitality was a central factor in the spreading of the Gospel amongst the early Christian community; through households offering hospitality to the travelling disciples.

Other authors have tended to over simplify the concept of hospitality. Smith (1986: 277) for example observed “the term means taking in strangers and travellers” and then proceeded to interpret Old Testament examples of hospitality simply as acts of kindness. Similarly Field (1994) developed the somewhat romantic view of hospitality as being kind to strangers, going on to argue that the reference in Isaiah 58:6–7 to “offering shelter to the homeless poor” is not connected to the traditional practice of hospitality, but is included in the duties of the restored post-exilic community.

Hobbs (1993, 2001), Malina (1986) and Matthews (1991; 1992) each carried out an in-depth hermeneutical analysis into the concept of hospitality within particular pericopes or books of the Old Testament. Hobbs (2001) presented a summary of Matthews’ (1991; 1992) research into hospitality that is contained in the books of Genesis and Judges. This is summarised here as:

1. There is a sphere of hospitality within which hosts have the responsibility to offer hospitality to strangers. The size of the zone varies.
2. The stranger must be transformed from potential threat to ally by the offer of hospitality.
3. The invitation can only be offered by the male head of a household, and may include a time-span statement for the period of hospitality, but this can be then extended.
4. Refusal could be considered an affront to the honour of the host.
5. Once the invitation is accepted, the roles of the host and the guest are set by the rules of custom. The guest must not ask for anything, but is expected to entertain with news, predictions of good fortune, or gracious responses based on what he has been given. The host provides the best he has available, and must not ask personal questions of the guest.
6. The guest remains under the personal protection of the host until he/she has left the zone of obligation of the host.

Malina (1986: 181) also attempted a detailed protocol of hospitality “Hospitality is the process by means of which an outsider’s status is changed from stranger to guest... [It] differs from entertaining family and friends.” The appearance of a stranger is regarded as an invitation from outside, and a local person takes on the role of testing the stranger. From the test three types of danger emerge: one who is recognised as better than the best of the community so that there is no problem with his precedence within the community; one who is vanquished by the local person and thus owes life and continued presence to their local patron; one who has no friends/kin within the community and is therefore treated as an outlaw – “he could be destroyed or despoiled with impunity, simply because of his potential hostility” (Malina 1986: 184). Finally, Malina (1986: 185) concluded by noting that when the stranger is transformed into a guest, “The stranger will rarely, if ever, reciprocate hospitality”, thus they are forever indebted to the host.

When biblical anthropologists make comparisons they have tended to use the biblical writings as the basis of comparisons to modern day practices; for example, De Vaux (1971) observed current practices among the desert Bedouin of southern Israel and Jordan indicating that hospitality is a necessity of life in the desert, but among the nomads the necessity has become a virtue, and a most highly esteemed one. The guest is sacred. The honour of providing for him is disputed, but generally falls to those of highest status. Whereas Pitt-Rivers (1971: 59f) highlighted the element of self-interest for the host:

“There is no doubt that the ideal behaviour is very much opposed to closed-fistedness, but lavishness in one direction usually implies restrictions in another. Here people like to make gestures of generosity toward the friend, the acquaintance and the stranger, and they like to make a show of their generosity... it is more than a matter of individual disposition but a requirement of the system of friendship. The accusation of meanness is very damaging to a person’s reputation, for such prestige as derives from money derives not from its possession, but from generosity with it.”

The use of the notion of prestige or honour is extremely important to the phenomenon of hospitality. The idea of hospitality subsists in and is characteristic of many ancient and biblical societies. This brief review demonstrates that biblical hospitality is not a simple concept; the phenomenon is founded in deeply rooted cultural norms that are

not readily transferable from one culture to another, or across time divides; defined by Hobbs (2001) as the teleological fallacy. To illustrate this complexity further the hospitality relationship within modern monastic hospitality is reviewed having first summarised the history and evolution of it.

## BACKGROUND TO MONASTIC HOSPITALITY

The teachings of the New Testament provide the basis for the western monastic tradition. There are also parallels to be found in early Buddhist and Hindu writings, and it is known that there was considerable contact between India and Alexandria, which was, at that time (c 200AD), the principal commercial and intellectual centre in the Mediterranean. St Clement noted at that time Hindu merchants had formed a permanent and prosperous colony in Alexandria (Clement of Alexandria 1857). Other forms of monasticism such as the Syrian and strictly Oriental monasticism, were to have no direct influence on that of Europe.

The growth of Christian asceticism (self-denying way of life) coincided with the last of the great Roman persecutions of Christians to take place in Egypt; when many Christians fled from the cities to avoid martyrdom. The followers of St. Anthony were purely eremitical (Christian hermit like), whilst those who followed the Rule of St. Pachomius more nearly approached the coenobitical (communal living within a monastery) ideal. Under the Antonian system, the austerities (regime of self-discipline) of the monks were left entirely to their own discretion; under the Pachomian system though, there was an obligatory rule of limited severity, and the monks were free to add to it what other ascetical practices they chose. In addition, the prevailing idea in both sets of followers was that they were spiritual athletes and as such they rivalled each other in austerity. In the 4th Century AD, when St. Basil organized Greek monasticism, he set himself against the eremitical life and insisted upon community life, with meals, work, and prayer, in common. With him the practice of austerity, unlike that of the Egyptians, was to be subject to control of the superior of the community. His idea of the monastic life was the result of an

amalgam of the ideas existing in Egypt and the East, together with European culture and modes of thought.

St Benedict established the Rule of monastic life that was later to be adopted by most Western monasteries. The monks distance themselves from the distractions of the outside world as much as is possible; their life is one of solitude and separation that should lead to spiritual enlightenment. By leaving the secular society, Böckmann (1988) notes that the monks set up an alternative world in which people from the secular world might wish to share. Within St. Benedict's Rule, Western monastic hospitality takes its direction from Chapter 53 which is entitled '*De Hospitibus Suscipiendis*' – 'The Reception of Guests' (The appendix gives the Latin and translation of Chapter 53). This foundation was also to become the basis of all western European religious hospitality. It would influence the monastic approaches to caring for the sick (hospitals), the poor (hospices and charities) and the provision of education (the establishment of the first universities), all of which were originally part of the monastic tradition. The Rule, which stressed communal living and physical labour, was also concerned with the needs of the local people, and the distribution of alms and food to the poor. During the lifetime of St Benedict, his disciples spread the order throughout the countries of Central and Western Europe. As Vogüé (1977) and Regnault (1990) noted the Benedictines were also to have wide influence both within the Roman Catholic Church and later within the secular society.

During the mediaeval period hospitality offered by monasteries was comprehensive. It included lodging for travellers, accommodation and treatment for the sick, and charitable services for the poor. The usual period, during which hospitality was freely provided, was two complete days; and some similar restriction, against the abuse of hospitality, seems to have been prescribed by most of the orders, friars, as well as monks. Lenoir (1856) observes the guesthouse had prominence in all monastic buildings, however Holzherr (1982) states that monks have historically not always been completely faithful to Benedict's demand that all guests be accorded full respect. Society was much more sharply stratified in medieval times, and it was virtually impossible to host nobles and peasants in the same manner: a clear example is given in Horn and Born (1979) when they demonstrate that the plan of the



monastery of Abbot Adalhard (c760AD) shows completely separate guest quarters for rich and poor.

The monasteries have always been peaceful retreats for scholars and were the chief centres of Christian piety and learning. During the Middle Ages the monasteries (as well as being the custodians of civilisation, knowledge and learning) had provided detailed and formalised rules for religious hospitality. Wolter (1880) shows that they were also centres for the care of the sick and the poor, and had responsibilities for refugees. The Middle Ages was also the period of intellectual and cultural development. New educational institutions, such as cathedral and monastic schools, were founded, and universities were established with advanced degrees being offered in medicine, law, and theology. When there were few urban centres, the monasteries represented the most stable and well-endowed institutions in the countryside. The spread of Western monasticism (primarily based on the Rule of St Benedict for monastic life) together with its influence on religious life generally, and also throughout society, led to generally accepted and well-understood principles of hospitality. These principles were to become the foundations of the provision of hospitality that were later to be adopted and modified within the nation-states and by secular organisations as they took over greater responsibilities for the full range of hospitality activities.

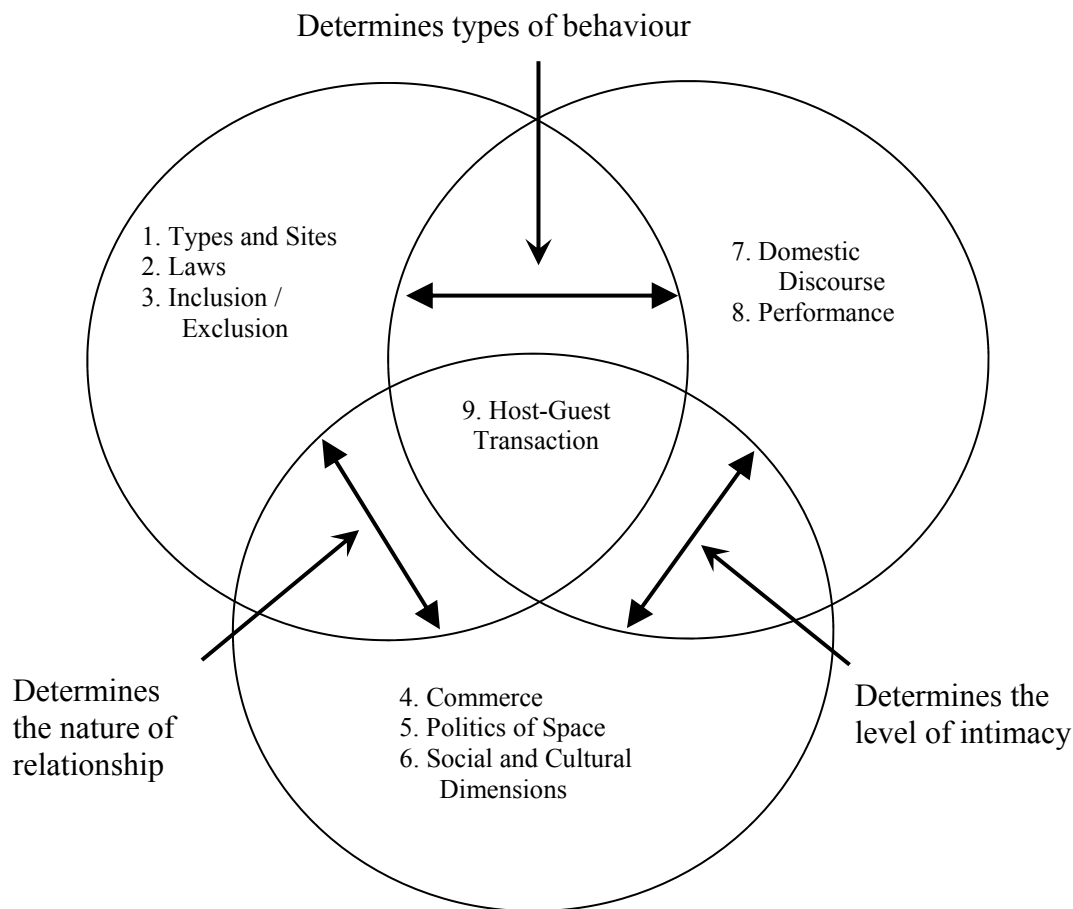
## RESEARCHING THE MODERN MONASTIC ENVIRONMENT

Lashley et al. (2007) present the hospitality conceptual lens as a framework for research into the phenomenon of hospitality. This 'lens' contains nine robust themes with the host-guest transaction seen as the central focus of the hospitality phenomenon. The 'lens' can be "employed to examine social situations where hospitality is involved in order to understand aspects of the society in which the hospitality act occurs". The content of these themes are presented in summary form in Table 1. However after the first two visits it became clear that themes as originally presented in the 'lens' needed to be reordered for the purpose of this research so that data could be gathered and presented in a logical order and this is the order presented here.

| Theme                             | Descriptive Summary  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Types and Sites                | Differentiates between and acknowledges the multi-manifestation of forms and locations for experiencing hospitality and the host/guest transaction.  |
| 2. Laws                           | Socially and culturally defined obligations, standards, principles, norms and rules associated with hospitality, that define the duties and the behaviours of both host and guest.                                       |
| 3. Inclusion/ Exclusion           | Symbolism of the host welcoming of an ‘other’ (guest) across thresholds to signify inclusion: the converse is the exclusion or leaving unwelcome ‘others’ on the outside.  |
| 4. Commerce                       | Commercial hospitality where the host/guest transaction explicitly contains economic dimensions alongside those of the social.   |
| 5. Politics of Space              | Concept of boundaries and meanings of a social, spatial and cultural nature that denote inclusions/exclusions, and defines the level of intimacy/distance within the host/guest transaction, once across the thresholds. |
| 6. Social and Cultural Dimensions | Hospitality provides the opportunity for the host and guest to construct a temporary common moral universe; involving a process of production, consumption, and communication that defines the host/guest transaction.   |
| 7. Domestic Discourse             | Reflects the domestic roots of hospitality and symbolic connotations of practices, language and gendered roles relative to the host/guest transactions.  |
| 8. Performance                    | Host/guest transaction interpreted as actors performing their respective roles on a stage to convey symbolism and meaning; thus highlighting authenticity.   |
| 9. Host/Guest Transaction         | The extent to which a host takes responsibility for the care and management of a guest and the guest’s acceptance or rejection of the authority of the host.   |

**Table 1: Framework of the nine themes in the hospitality conceptual lens (based on Lashley et al. 2007)**

Although the ‘lens’ proved to be a useful framework for the critical analysis of the data, for the presentation of the findings and also to summarise the conclusions, it is not a dynamic model. The new Host-Guest Transaction Model constructed in Figure 1 has been developed from the framework. It reconfigures the presentation of the nine themes to allow for the comparison and contrasting of the themes of the ‘lens’ and to draw conclusions on three specific dimensions: types of hospitality behaviour; nature of the hospitality relationship and the level of intimacy; all of which define the Host-Guest transaction.



**Figure 1: The Host-Guest Transaction Model**

## CONTEMPORARY MONASTIC HOSPITALITY: INVESTIGATION

The information on present day monastic hospitality summarised in this chapter is structured according to the themes of the ‘lens’ (Table 1) and based on empirical studies in Europe, which included: participant observations; interviews with the Monks and of course guests; and documentary evidence. This took place in eight different monasteries for about five days at a time. The empirical data was gathered by living in the monastic cloister with the monks themselves, sharing their day, their life, and their work. These experiences and the contacts allowed privileged access in order to gather information and for familiarity with the environment as well as a level of access that would not otherwise have been available.

### TYPES AND SITES

All the eight monasteries visited were different, some receive no more than 100 day visitors a month whereas others can welcome in the region of a million visitors throughout the course of the year. Monasteries are all different, and the hospitality relationship within the modern monastery exists on many levels and locations, for example there are day visitors who do not stay, there are people who stay in the separate guesthouse (often women, families and groups) and those that stay in guest rooms within the monastic cloister normally only men.

The hospitality relationship that the monks have with the guests that are resident the monastic cloister is the most intimate and the summary of the monastic hospitality being presented is focused on that. The guests are male and live in similar accommodation to the monks. They eat in the monastic refectory and normally have open access to the library and to some of the areas that are closed to other guests. These male guests also have a separate lounge, normally a small kitchen with tea and coffee making facilities and a fridge full of items such as homemade bread and jam, free range eggs and milk.

Guests are formally welcomed by the Abbot, although this normally takes place after the first meal. On arrival the guests are greeted by the guest master, one of the monks, who is often the first monk that many of the guests have ever met. The guest masters were very welcoming but some guests felt that they holding back. One guest observed that a monk-host spoke in a normal voice but “you felt that he was not normal”; they were perceived to be of this world but not in the world. From the guest masters felt they knew what their guests were experiencing but perceived that normally the guests were not immediately at ease as they were in a strange environment.

## LAWS

The life of the monastery is governed by the Rule of Benedict, adapted to the modern age. Fifteen hundred years ago when the rule was written there were no public run faculties for the sick or the homeless; now things are different. Various guest masters noted that it is not uncommon for the local police to drop off people with social problems such as drug addiction or homelessness. If they arrive at the monastery, they are given soup and sandwiches and are invited to sleep in a lodging in the

grounds just a few minutes away from the monastic cloister and main guesthouse. It is “simply not practical to the running of the monastery...we are not here to be saints; we are monks, that is the path we have chosen”. The monks tend to be very practical and hard working men, working in the buildings and on the land, often the monasteries have active farms attached to them, run by the monks.

One guest master said “there are no ground rules here, do whatever you want, just change the bed and clean the room when you leave.” This of course was not entirely true. Although there were very few written rules within the monastery, guests on the whole know how to behave by following the behaviour of other guests. Guests are not expected to help out with the daily duties although it is very much appreciated. Roughly a quarter of the guests offer to help with daily chores but only a quarter of that number again actually do any work. Silence is observed in the Church, refectory and other monastic areas; guests are also encouraged to keep silence in the individual rooms. In some of the monasteries the monks, with the exception of the Abbot and the guest master, are not permitted to talk to the guests. One monastery had a sign indicating that this does not imply rudeness but was a means of allowing the monks to carry on their daily life.

#### INCLUSION/EXCLUSION

All guests are invited to join in the religious celebrations throughout the day; often they observe that prayer in the monastic church is a very profound experience that seems to gain greater significance at daybreak or during twilight and darkness. As one guest commented:

“One of the things I will always remember from my visit is sitting on a church pew at 4:45 in the morning smelling sweet incense and watching the rising sun caress the stained glass windows and project jewelled colours through the smoke onto the church walls; I felt welcomed and relaxed”

Guests are neither forced nor obliged to attend the services. None of the monks will even notice if they are there or not and guests are free to come and go as they wished. Attending was considered useful because it removed guests from what they normally did and allowed their daily life to be put into perspective. When actually attending,

guests tended to feel included and at ease and often happy during the services, but liked knowing when it was going to end.

The monks' day is centred around Mass and eight other choral services (often all in Latin) starting as early as 4:00 in the morning and continuing at intervals throughout the day until about 8:30 at night; a typical monastic day is given in Figure 2.

| Time    | Activity   |
|---------|--|
| 4.45am  | Rise   |
| 5:00am  | Vigils and Lauds (Prayers during the night and at dawn)              |
| 7.00am  | Prime (1st prayer of the day); Pittance (Breakfast); Private Prayer. |
| 8:30am  | Mass and Terce (Prayer during the morning)                           |
| 9.45am  | Work, and Classes for Novices  |
| 12:45am | Sext (Midday Prayer)   |
| 1:00pm  | Lunch  |
| 2:15pm  | None (Afternoon Prayer), followed by work                            |
| 4:30pm  | Tea  |
| 4.45pm  | Private Prayer   |
| 6:30pm  | Vespers (Evening Prayer)   |
| 7:00pm  | Supper, followed by Recreation (can include conversation)            |
| 8:30pm  | Compline (Prayer before bed)   |
| 9:00pm  | Retire   |

**Figure 2: Typical Monastic Timetable**

Everyone is welcome in the church, but women are not allowed inside the monastic cloister. This means that there is no opportunity for woman to eat with the Monks in the monastic refectory. The male guests who are allowed within the refectory are set a place at table, normally with name card placed on top of a napkin; before the meal is served there are short prayers (often in Latin). The meals are typically simple and wholesome, giving the monks enough calories to keep healthy so that they can continue in their daily work. There is not too much and there is not too little. The majority of meals in the monastery are vegetarian but on feast days and Sundays, as a celebration, meat is served. On major feast days on the Monks take particular joy in the high quality of food provided. The guest table is served immediately after the Abbot, as required in the Rule. All the food is served on trays in serving dishes and

the guests merely help themselves. The guest has to do nothing but eat during the meal; the individual does not even have to wash up. Guests often perceive that normal interaction time with the monks would be during the meals. However, despite sharing the same space any interaction is removed by the silence. Some guests commented on feelings of isolation and an obligation to keep their head down and eat quickly, despite being surrounded by some 40 other people.

#### COMMERCE

The monks make no charge for staying in the guest monastery, however common courtesy should dictate that a donation would be appropriate. This is a difficult issue for some of the guests, as the monks do not seem to care about what is left. Some monasteries did have signs suggesting donations, always with caveat that it was optional; deed of covenant envelopes were always available to allow the tax to be claimed back.

On the whole guest masters did not keep detailed statistics of how many people had stayed the total number of guest nights, as this information may have been interesting but of no real relevance to them. That said, the monasteries did operate at the commercial level in other areas, for example: conference facilities; apiaries; brewing and distilling; public commercial restaurants; stained glass window manufacturing; printing and publishing; illumination and illustration; farming and agriculture; and retail. The vast majority of these activities were run by a paid professional staff who reported to the monastic bursar on their commercial activities. All monasteries were however very careful to make sure that these distinct and separate activities did not encroach into the hospitality offered to their guests.

#### POLITICS OF SPACE

In the public areas of the monastery there were signs that clearly stated where visitors were not allowed to go: parts of the church, access to the monastic cloister and gardens were restricted. However different guests have different levels of access. Those who were living in the monastic cloister had privileged access and it is often not clear to others as to why they are going to particular areas and that they had keys (sometimes electronic swipe cards with different levels of access) that allowed them

to open doors that were off limits to the day visitors. Limitations in access also meant that many day visitors could pass through the monastery and not even see a monk.

Of course, it seems innate within human nature to be curious: the day visitors wondered what happened in the cloister and the resident guests were intrigued as to what a monk's cell looked like. As one guest stated:

“I know I am just been noseey but just as I want to open all the old books in the library and try and read the Latin on the pages, I want to open all the doors and see inside too”

The guests and the monks have a shared environment, but limited shared space, they pray together in separate parts of the church and dine together, in silence, at separate tables in the refectory. Some guests commented that although they enjoyed joining with the monks at meal times and at prayer, they would also like to have seen them at their daily duties and jobs; they gained great solace and comfort from their interactions with the monks. Another guest stated:

“I've been to many places travelling over the past 20 years... I've slept in the church of the Nativity at Christmas time but nowhere compares to these guys... there is nothing like this place they are so accommodating”.

#### SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

The monks welcome Roman Catholics, other Christians and indeed all people of Good Will and do not differentiate between them. The guests are welcomed into the monks' domain, however the monks live within an ordered hierarchy and a strictly controlled culture dimension, but they know that their guests do not normally live this way. As long as the guest behaviour does not disturb the life of the monastic community, the Monks keep their own council. On one occasion some guests went out in the evening to watch a football match in the local town, the following morning the monks sought out these guests to find out what the score was! The guests were embarrassed that the monks had realised they had gone out, but quickly realised that the monks did not mind, and a greater understanding of their hosts was realised by the guests.



## DOMESTIC DISCOURSE

Throughout the Middle Ages monasteries were often the major source of employment for the local community and this still happens with some of the larger ones today. Gendered roles however do not play a major part in monastic life, as all the monks are male and the Abbot is the principal host and the head of the community. Bells, not the Abbot, control everybody's behaviour, as one monk wryly observed, "we live in God's house and the bell is the voice of God, it wakes us up in the morning, calls us to prayer, meals and work and then tells us it is time to go to sleep at the end of the day". With the assistance of paid staff, the monks fulfil the different jobs (cook, cellarer, guest master, gardener, bursar etc.) within the monastery for periods of at least a year, and all the monks who are able serve each other at table on a weekly rota with the Abbot serving on Good Friday.

## PERFORMANCE

In the bigger monasteries the monks are often confused with paid guides / actors dressed as monks who are there to enhance the tourist experience. One monk recalled being reprimanded by an objectionable day visitor who complained about the monk's lack of name badge. When the monk patiently explained to the tourist that this was actually his way of life, the tourist was stunned, amazed and then genuinely moved. In most of the monasteries the services are conducted in Latin and intoned in Gregorian Chant. During the day the monks could often find a congregation behaving more like "an audience at a pantomime." This does not bother the monks: "if we reach out and touch even one person's life, that has made a difference, if not we are still serving God." In the guesthouse, one guest commented, "I don't like it when the services are conducted in English, it sounds better in Latin. I know it's silly but I can't help thinking that God hears the prayers better when they are in Latin and there is a lot of incense."

The resident guests rarely question the monks' sincerity. Time and lived experience within the cloister brings much greater understanding. One guest, who found the lack of conversation at meals difficult at first, found each meal got easier. Every week a monk is given the task of reading throughout the meal. In some monasteries this reading is the only source of news and world affairs that the monks hear. During one

of the meals, a guest who had just arrived was surprised that instead of some religious work, they were listening to an article discussing the blossoming opium trade in Afghanistan and the effects it is having on the West.

## REFLECTIONS ON CONTEMPORARY MONASTIC HOSPITALITY

From the results of the investigation in modern monastic hospitality, the dominant themes of hospitality are summarised in Table 2, using the framework of the hospitality conceptual ‘lens’ created by Lashley et al. (2007).

| Theme                             | Descriptive Summary of Monastic Hospitality  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Types and Sites                | The hospitality relationship that the monks have with their resident (male) guests within the monastic cloister is area under investigation, however other guests can include day visitors, couples and families.                            |
| 2. Laws                           | Monastic hospitality is governed by the 6 <sup>th</sup> Century Rule of St Benedict, adapted for the modern age.   |
| 3. Inclusion/ Exclusion           | Interaction and full welcome in the daily life of the monastery is as much dependant on the guest seeking it as on it being offered by the monks. The guests can accept or reject the different hospitality offered.                         |
| 4. Commerce                       | Commercial activities exist within the monasteries, but the prime purpose of monastic hospitality is not commercial, hospitality is offered as part of the monastic vocation.  |
| 5. Politics of Space              | Boundaries, delimited by St Benedict 1500 years ago, are necessary for the smooth running of the monastery.  |
| 6. Social and Cultural Dimensions | The monastery as well as being the House of God, is also the monks’ home. Guests are welcome to visit or stay but not to interfere with the running of the monastery.  |
| 7. Domestic Discourse             | The monks, sometimes with employed staff, fulfil all the roles required in running the guesthouse  |
| 8. Performance                    | The sincerity and strength of purpose of the monks is manifest and often has a profound effect on the guests.  |
| 9. Host/Guest Transaction         | The monks provide for both the spiritual and temporal needs of the guests. Hosting take places at various levels with different people (the Abbot, the guest master or other guests) taking the role of host depending on the circumstances. |

**Table 2: The nine themes hospitality conceptual lens applied to monastic hospitality**

By applying the Host-Guest Transaction Model (as shown in Figure 1) conclusions are drawn on three specific dimensions of hospitality: types of hospitality behaviour; nature of the hospitality relationship and the level of intimacy and then overall conclusions on the Host-Guest transaction.

#### NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP

The Rule of St Benedict is clearly evident in the running of the modern monasteries, older and more solid than even the buildings. However, as with the buildings, an element of change has been necessary to ensure the continuing survival of the monastery and its way of life. During the Middle Ages the monasteries had provided detailed and formalised rules for religious hospitality, the care of the sick and the poor, and responsibilities for refugees. However monasteries no longer need to look after the sick as there are state hospitals, nor should they be expected to look after refugees or those with drug or alcohol problems, as other agencies exist for this purpose. All the monasteries, to a greater or lesser extent, engage in commercial behaviour that generates income for the monks. However the provision for guests to stay in the monastic cloister is motivated by their monastic vocation.

During the research it became clear that the monastic environment is extremely complex. There were different layers of the commercial home within the monastery and differing levels of hospitality provision. Areas of investigation included the use and division of space for the monks and their guests, levels of accommodation and hospitality rules and rituals. Within the monastic guesthouse the hospitality that is offered to meet the guest's physical and metaphysical needs is not a simple concept. It exists and is offered on many levels and it is up to the guest how much they wish to engage with the hospitality on offer.

#### TYPES OF BEHAVIOUR

The fundamental rules of behaviour are governed by the Rule and the monks have no real opportunities for incidental interaction with the guests, and as the monks proceed through their daily life there is no impression given that they are interested in interaction. However, any guest wishing to talk to a monk is welcomed and accommodated; interaction with the monks is dependant on the guest seeking it rather than it being offered by the host. Defined thresholds are necessary in a monastery,

especially for one with thousands of guests, in order to protect the privacy and the peace of the monks, who quickly become exhibits for garrulous visitors.

#### LEVELS OF INTIMACY

The monks continually managed to confound the inhibitions and expectations that an average individual may have of them, their authenticity is rarely questioned. Sometimes the guests, at first, claim that they feel pressured to conform at first by attending all the services, however they quickly realise that no one cares if they do. The monks believe they are carrying out God's work on earth and hospitality an integral part of this work so it would be true to say that a visitor to a monastery is not just the guest of the monks but a guest in God's house. Through the behaviour and personal integrity of the monks, everything that the guest experiences within the guesthouse and beyond is a symbol for how guests should be treated. The creation of a shared space for hospitality does allow the host and guest to construct a temporary common moral universe. For example, when a guest can be a 20 year old agnostic student and the host is a 70 year old monk, they would normally inhabit very different moral universes. Although welcoming, the monks gave definite suggestions of otherness, not least by wearing their monastic habits; one guest expressed disappointment that they did not find a habit on the back of their bedroom door that they could wear for the weekend! Acceptance as a guest in no way suggests equality with the monks or membership of the monastic community.

#### HOST / GUEST RELATIONSHIP

Making God the ultimate host, the Rule of Benedict makes it clear that the Abbot is the host responsible for meeting and welcoming the guests, however there are two other different levels of hosting within the monastery. There is the guest master who has hour-by-hour care of the guests making sure they are in and seated for communal meals at their place and in their particular place in the church. There is also other guests already staying in the guest house who take responsibility for hosting newer guests, showing them where to be at certain times and making them coffee on arrival, washing up after them and in general helping them to relax and feel welcome. Guests asked questions of each other and learned from their experiences, serving as mutual sounding boards to check what they should be doing.

## CONCLUSIONS

In biblical times hospitality was an extended system of friendship, delimited by clear zones of obligation or hospitality thresholds. These hospitality thresholds were underpinned by the idea that the guest was held to be sacred and, when receiving hospitality, inviolable. Often however the guest was made aware they are on the territory of the host; this was not always designed to make the guest feel at home and could also be a way to show the moral superiority of the host. Biblical hospitality had an ethical component difficult for modern western readers to appreciate in its full weight and significance, without first being able to comprehend the complex and deep-rooted cultural norms that underpin the hospitality relationship at the time. Biblically mandated hospitality was also a central factor in the spreading of the Gospel throughout the early Christian community.

The monastic illustration of hospitality explores the holistic hospitality relationship within the context of the societal norms of the monastery rather than trying to transfer and juxtapose deeply rooted cultural and religious contextual norms from the monastery to another context. Admittedly the hospitality conceptual lens is only recently developed as well as the dynamic Host-Guest Transaction Model that has been created from it. However applying these approaches to the study monastic environment sharpens our comprehension of religious hospitality whilst increasing our understanding of the phenomenon of hospitality as a whole.

There are many striking similarities between biblical hospitality and that offered in contemporary monasteries. Like biblical hospitality, the monastic process of welcome transforms the stranger into a guest who is under the protection of host. Rites and rituals of symbolic and actual welcome are all part of the process by means of which an outsider's status is changed from stranger to guest. The guest in the monastery, like the stranger in biblical times, will rarely, if ever, reciprocate the hospitality that they have received; it is the very act of giving or receiving hospitality, often for a limited period of time, transforms relationships. The welcoming the sojourner has always been and still is one of the bases of Christian hospitality;

welcoming the stranger is a moral virtue. True hospitality is offered with the appropriate ontological orientation, the host must be fully disposed when providing hospitality; it is a personal duty and cannot be delegated.

From the investigation into monastic hospitality it is clear that the prima-facie purpose of a monastery is not to offer hospitality, it is to house the monks in a community environment so that they can dedicate their lives and live their vocation to the service of God. The separation of the monks from their guests (and by definition the separation of the monks from the world in general) is not an act of inhospitableness; rather it is mandated by the Rule and necessary for the monastery to function. Therefore, the ritual reception of guests and the provision of hospitality play an important role by being both the bridge and the barrier between the monastic and secular worlds.

Analysing texts from a different time or culture, then looking for examples of similar practices in traditional cultures in the world today, whilst being illuminating, can have its difficulties. However the approach adopted deliberately seeks to avoid the danger of considering any hospitality relationship out of its proper time or context and comparing it to any other hospitality relationship from another time or context, in other words avoiding the teleological fallacy. The organic and spiritual qualities that subsist within the monastic context, and indeed also sometimes exist within those individuals offering hospitably in the commercial context, have not been replaced by the contemporary commercial industry; the contexts are simply different.

However, what is remarkable is that reconnecting with the past highlights significant relevance to the modern world of hospitality management. But, the purpose of this type of research is not to be able to replicate the past, but to provide meaning, context, and greater understanding of the phenomenon of hospitality not previously realised, for example the monasteries themselves needed to change and adapt their hospitality provision whilst staying true to their original mission; the original Rule has obtained over 1500 years. Importantly, for contemporary graduates of hospitality management, this form of research allows for the intellectual pursuit of social and cultural dimensions that transcend artificial disciplinary boundaries.

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### The Reception of Guests

1. All guests who arrive should be received as if they were Christ, for He himself is going to say: "I came as a stranger, and you received Me"; 2. and let due honour be shown to all, especially those who share our faith and those who are pilgrims.
3. As soon as a guest is announced, then let the Superior or one of the monks meet him with all charity, 4. and first let them pray together, and then be united in peace. 5. For the sign of peace should not be given until after the prayers have been said, in order to protect from the deceptions of the devil.
6. The greeting itself, however, ought to show complete humility toward guests who are arriving or departing: 7. by a bowing of the head or by a complete prostration on the ground, as if it was Christ who was being received.
8. After the guests have been received and taken to prayer, let the Superior or someone appointed by him, sit with them. 9. Let the scripture be read in front of the guest, and then let all kindness be shown to him.
10. The Superior shall break his fast for the sake of a guest, unless it happens to be a principal fast day; 11. the monks, however, shall observe the customary fasting. 12. Let the Abbot give the guests water for their hands; and 13. let both Abbot and monks wash the feet of all guests; 14. after the washing of the feet let all present say this verse: "We have received Your mercy, O God, in the midst of Your church".
15. All guests should be received with care and kindness; however it is when receiving the poor and pilgrims that the greatest care and kindness should be shown, because it is especially in welcoming them that Christ is received.
16. There should be a separate kitchen for the Abbot and guests, so that the other monks may not be disturbed when guests, who are always visiting a monastery, arrive at irregular hours. 17. Let two monks who are capable of doing this well, be appointed to this kitchen for a year. 18. They should be given all the help that they require, so that they may serve without murmuring, and on the other hand, when they have less to occupy them, let them do whatever work is assigned to them. 19. And not only in their case but a similar arrangement should apply to all the jobs across the monastery, 20. so that when help is needed it can be supplied, and again when the workers are unoccupied they do whatever they are required to do.
21. Responsibility for the guesthouse also shall be assigned to a holy monk. 22. Let there be an adequate number of beds made up in it; and let the house of God be managed by wise men and in a wise manner.
23. On no account shall anyone who is not so ordered associate or converse with the guests, 24. but if he should meet them or see them, let him greet them humbly, as we have said, ask their blessing and pass on, saying that he is not allowed to converse with a guest.

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### De Hopitibus Suscipiendis’

Omnes supervenientes hospites tamquam Christus suscipiantur, quia ipse dicturus est: "Hospes fui et suscepistis me"; et omnibus congruus honor exhibeatur, maxime domesticis fidei et peregrinis.

Ut ergo nuntiatus fuerit hospes, occurratur ei a priore vel a fratribus cum omni officio caritatis, et primitus orent pariter, et sic sibi societur in pace. Quod pacis osculum non prius offeratur nisi oratione praemissa, propter illusiones diabolicas.

In ipsa autem salutatione omnis exhibeatur humilitas omnibus venientibus sive discedentibus hospitibus: inclinato capite vel prostrato omni corpore in terra, Christus in eis adoretur qui et suscipitur.

Suscepti autem hospites ducantur ad orationem et postea sedeant cum eis prior aut cui iusserit ipse. Legatur coram hospite lex divina ut aedificetur, et post haec omnis ei exhibeatur humanitas.

Ieiunium a priore frangatur propter hospitem, nisi forte praecipuus sit dies ieiunii qui non possit violari; fratres autem consuetudines ieiuniorum prosequantur. Aquam in manibus abbas hospitibus det; pedes hospitibus omnibus tam abbas quam cuncta congregatio lavet; quibus lotis, hunc versum dicant: "Suscepimus, Deus, misericordiam tuam in medio templi tui."

Pauperum et peregrinorum maxime susceptioni cura sollicitate exhibeatur, quia in ipsis magis Christus suscipitur; nam divitum terror ipse sibi exigit honorem.

Coquina abbatis et hospitem super se sit, ut, incertis horis supervenientes hospites, qui numquam desunt monasterio, non inquietentur fratres. In qua coquina ad annum ingrediantur duo fratres qui ipsud officium bene impleant. Quibus, ut indigent, solacia administrentur, ut absque murmuratione serviant, et iterum, quando occupationem minorem habent, exeant ubi eis imperatur in opera. Et non solum ipsis, sed et in omnibus officiis monasterii ista sit consideratio, ut quando indigent solacia accommodentur eis, et iterum quando vacant oboediant imperatis.

Item et cellam hospitem habeat assignatam frater cuius animam timor Dei possidet; ubi sint lecti strati sufficienter. Et domus Dei a sapientibus et sapienter administretur.

Hospitibus autem cui non praecipitur ullatenus societur neque colloquatur; sed si obviaverit aut viderit, salutatis humiliter, ut diximus, et petita benedictione pertranseat, dicens sibi non licere colloqui cum hospite.