
The Origins of Hospitality and Tourism

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Classical Rome

From the time of the earliest Hellenic civilisations, hospitality has been religiously sanctioned, with particular gods watching over strangers and travellers; this is also true of the Roman Republic. In the same way as Zeus presided over hospitality conducted by the Greeks, Jupiter was thought to watch over the *ius hospitia* (law of hospitality) in the Roman Empire. Similarly the violation of hospitality was also as great a crime and impiety in Rome as it was in Greece. This chapter explores the origins of hospitality to be found in Classical Rome, from its foundation, through considering domestic, civil and commercial hospitality.

5.1 Founding of Rome

Virgil's (c.40 BC) epic poem the *Aeneid* charts events from the fall of Troy (c.1200 BC) through to the establishment of the City of Rome (c.753 BC); in the first part of the poem the hero Aeneas flees from Troy to found a new home for his people. During the journey Aeneas and his people depend on the hospitality of Dido, Queen of Carthage (North Africa). Gibson (1999) notes that in the *Aeneid*, Virgil includes five major hospitality scenes: Dido and the Trojans; Aeneas and Helenus in Epirus; Aeneas and Acestes in Sicily, Latimis and the Trojans; Aeneas and Evander. To this may be added a number of minor episodes, such as Anchises and Anius on Delos and the Trojans and Achaemenides. Virgil will have been aware of the status of the hospitality episode in Homer as a type-scene with conventional elements as previously identified by Reece (1993). Wiltshire (1989) investigates hospitality in the *Aeneid*; highlighting five ways in which hospitality has an effect on the characters in the poem:

1. *Admitting a stranger may be disastrous to the public realm because they bring change and innovation;*
2. *Hospitality may provide a haven for those who can travel no further;*
3. *Hospitality may collapse in the wake of irrational behaviour on the part of the host or the guest;*

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4. *Reception of newcomers may foster political alliances; and*
5. *Meeting strangers may free people to behave publicly in a new and more effective way.*

(Wiltshire, 1989, p. 89)

The hospitality that the main characters experience, either as guests or hosts, breaks down their isolated private world. Then they open their personal space to others and this enables the creation of shared public spaces, where the new community can evolve, or not, as the case may be. The effect of generous hospitality being freely offered and accepted is the creation of a world which at its best will turn all strangers into guests, however when hospitality is abused it can have devastating effects.

Ovid was the other epic poet for the Romans – his work *Ars Amatoria* also narrates the foundation of the city of Rome. Gibson (1999) observes that in the opening section of *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid records that Aeneas broke of the rules of *hospitium*. For the Romans, *hospitium*, like *xenia* for the Greeks, contained the ideals of duty, loyalty, and reciprocity (the reciprocal exchanges for hospitality). Gibson (1999, p. 184) confirms that *hospitium* included the idea of *pietas* ‘a reference to the guest’s sense of, or actual fulfilment of, the duty to pay a proper return on the hospitality received’. Throughout Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Aeneas had a formidable reputation for doing his duty as a *hospes* (as someone who was conscientious about their reciprocal duty).

The erotic relationship between Dido and Aeneas in Book IV of the Aeneid evolves out of the hospitium relationship established between them in Book I. When Aeneas leaves Dido he asserts that their relationship is that of host and guest rather than of husband and wife, and that he has acted and will act well in this hospitium relationship (Aeneid 4.334–9). Dido, for her part, even after she has been forced to drop the argument that she and Aeneas are married (Aeneid 4.431), continues to attack Aeneas and the Trojans as bad or faithless hospites (Aeneid 4.538–41, 4.596–8), and ends by renouncing hospitium with them (Aeneid 4.622–9)

(Gibson, 1999, p. 186)

In Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria*, however, the reciprocal gesture made by Aeneas for the hospitality he received from Dido was to give her a sword and a reason for her to kill herself with it. Ovid presents an Aeneas who failed in his solemn duty to provide Dido with suitable reciprocity for her hospitality to him.

Gibson (1999, p. 185) argues that Virgil sets a problem for the reader of the *Aeneid*: ‘how have Aeneas and Dido acted in the light of the values of

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