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Iranian Hospitality: Embodiment, Experience and Representation

Richard Prentice, Kevin O’Gorman and Andrew MacLaren

Royal Geographical Society:
Geographies of Hospitality 2008

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Relevance 1:

Bazaars / Caravanserais are becoming commoditised and symbolic of Middle Eastern heritage



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Relevance 2
Ethnographic method has changed

Empiricist / Structuralist

↓

Interpretative / New Journalism / Poetics
(Denzin 1997; van Manen 2002)

↓

Expressivism / Expressive Perception
(Rudd 2003)

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Rationale

1. Dissatisfaction with conceptualisations of the origins of hospitality & tourism
 - § Ethnocentricity
 - § Gaps
2. Dissatisfaction with the uses of ethnography in hospitality & tourism discourse
 - § Privileging of the often single ethnographer
3. Need for multiple ethnographies
 - § As historical records have been destroyed and anyway can not convey emotions easily
 - § As people react differently in what is highly interpretative

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Methodological scrutiny of key ethnographers in hospitality and tourism?

	Crang (1996)	Palmer (2005)
Number of citations of paper investigated	19	4
Number of authors discussing foci of method	2	0
Number of authors discussing operationalisation of method	0	0

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Multiple ethnography in hospitality?

- § **Concern 1**
Users of ethnographies are privileging the ethnographers by using individual interpretations as infrequently questioned ‘truths’
- § **Concern 2**
Rarely are ethnographies contested, unlike journalistic interpretations
- § **Concern 3**
Rarely are multiple ethnographies undertaken on the same society or sub-grouping to explore alternative interpretations

Built Environment As Text – Traditional Approaches

The built environment is used as a text by reflecting and analysing the cityscape; the cityscape is "a story people tell themselves about themselves." Geertz (1977: 448)

Historical Architecture Hillenbrand (1994)	Identify the architect, analyze the work, and put the architect's work into the larger context of his time and region
Social Architecture Blake (1999)	The built environment reflects the social system of the time and the ways in which that system is expressed, reproduced, and experienced and therefore reflects the structure of urban life

Built Environment As Text – Building on Past Approaches

Historical Architecture Hillenbrand (1994)	Identify the architect, analyze the work, and put the architect's work into the larger context of his time and region
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Social Architecture Blake (1999)	The built environment reflects the social system of the time and the ways in which that system is expressed, reproduced, and experienced and therefore reflects the structure of urban life
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Interpretative – Expressive Ethnography	The built environment as experienced, inferred and represented by an outsider in time or culture
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Case Study 1: Interpretation in Caravanserais




Caravansarai

'a house for a caravan'.

Sarai - 'large house'
Karban 'one who protects trade'.



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1200 Years of History in Middle East

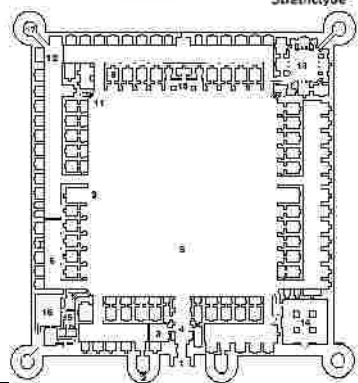
Establish caravanserais in your lands so that whenever a Muslim passes by, you will put him up for a day and a night and take care of his animals; if he is sick, provide him with hospitality for two days and two nights; and if he has used up all of his provisions and is unable to continue, supply him with whatever he needs to reach his hometown.

Samarkand,
Uzbekistan 719A.D.

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Typical Layout Caravanserai at Dayr-I Gachin

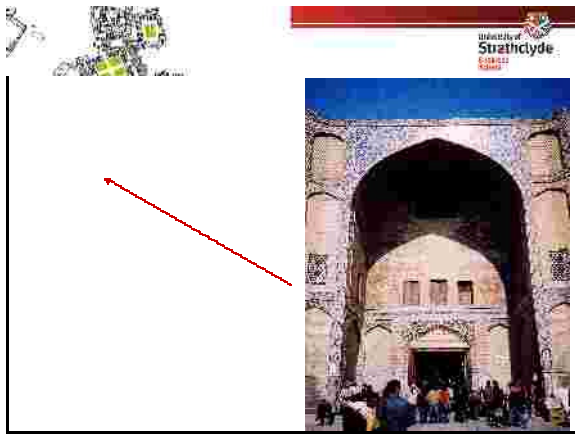
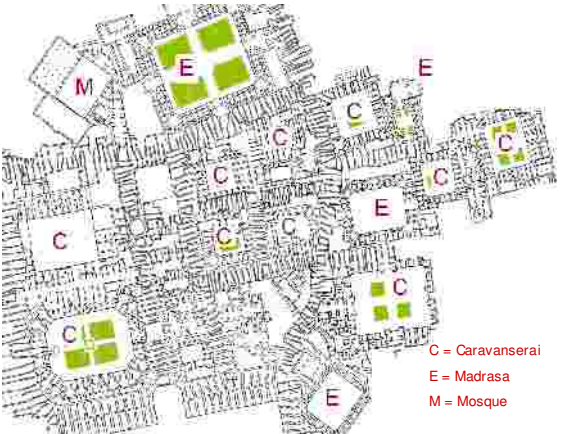
1	Gate
2	Watch towers
3	Office
4	Entrance lobby
5	Courtyard
6	Stables
7	Basic room
8	Standard room
9	Prestigious room
10	Suite
11	Stairs to roof
12	Mill
13	Private courtyard
14	Mosque
15	Bath House
16	Toilets
17	Corner tower room



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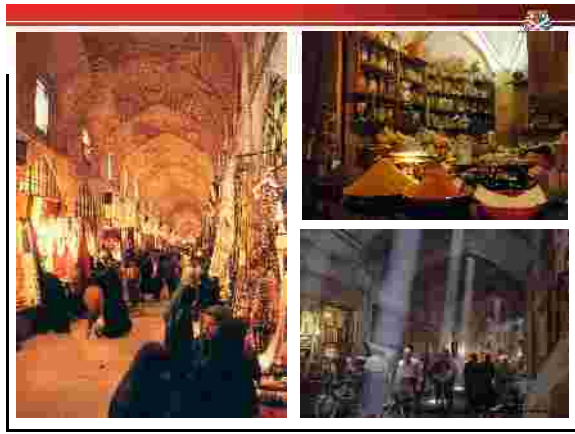
Case Study 2: Interpretative – Expressive Ethnography in Bazaars

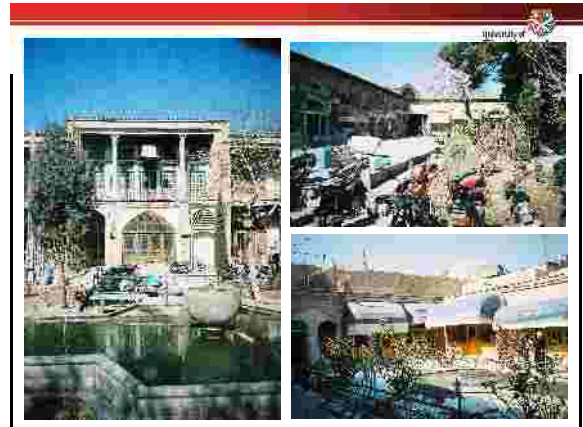
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C = Caravanserai
E = Madrasa
M = Mosque

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Unusual opportunity...

- § Three hospitality academics interested in a similar phenomenon: the development of Islamic hospitality and its relevance for understanding the development of hospitality generally
- § Common purpose of each author's trips: to locate, explore & record the caravanserais associated with the bazaar
- § Number of field trips made: Co-author 1 (2 trips); Co-author 2 (5); Co-author 3 (1)

Why use photographs?

- § Photos were taken by each author spontaneously or as aide memoires; they had not been intended to resource the present analysis.
- § Contemporary form of expression, like blogs
- § Highly personal: in taking, composition, manipulation, and selection

Laddering of interpretation of photographs for present analysis

- § What is the photo of? (content)
- § Why is the photo important to me? (meaningfulness)
- § What does the photo remind me of? (associations)

Each co-author responded for their own photos using up to three levels of significance for each level on the ladder:

Primary	Secondary	Specifics

Analysis and Conclusions

Overview of Findings

Three ethnographers interested in much the same hospitality phenomenon interpret it in quite different ways across:

- § Content
- § Meaningfulness
- § Associations

In particular in terms of:

- § Nuancing
- § Use of hierarchies

Range in number of photo selected for analysis and features identified by each of the three co-authors

	Co-author 1	Co-author 2	Co-author 3
Total Photos	290	68	71
Content	611	68	71
Meaningfulness	471	105	67
Associations	79	16	52

Content features arranged by Co-author 1

Bazaar People	Retailers; Artisans; Shoppers; Worshippers; Resident; Motorist
Imagery	
Commercial Functionality – Artisan Comparison Goods Trades	Basketry; Metal work; Carpet trade; Other workshops
Commercial Functionality – Recreational Consumption	Tourism; Teahouse
Commercial Functionality – Domestic Consumption	Food; Consumer durables; Books
Architecture	Main entrance to bazaar; Bazaar lighting; Bazaar roadways; Former bath house; Former caravanserais; Mosques; Madrasa; Shrine; Other details
Sincerity	
Weather	

Co-author 3
Self
Bazaar
Brickwork
Chamber
Guide
Ladies
Mosque
Old light fixture
Old Zoroastrian symbol
Prayer room
Shop
Skylight
Spice stall
Square
Stall

Content features arranged by

Co-author 2
Bazaar
Caravanserai
Esfahan City
Mosque

Contriving ethnographic commonality?

Mapping content features across levels

	Co-author 1 %	Co-author 2 %	Co-author 3 %
Former caravanserai	43.5	11.8	4.2
Mosques	3.8	26.5	36.6
Bazaar	49.1	58.8	50.7
Sincerity	1.0	-	-
Weather	1.0	-	-
Imagery	1.6	-	1.4
Guide	-	-	1.4
Self	-	-	5.6

Meaningfulness features arranged by Co-author 1

Consumption foci	Form; Colours; Range; Contrast; Animation; Detail; Representation
Emotional consumption: Emotions evoked	Engagement; Beauty; Awe; Escape
Emotional consumption: Cultural imaginings	The exotic; Felt authenticity; Pastness; Continuity; Sincerity
Globalisation	Modernity

Meaningfulness features arranged by:

Co-author 2	Co-author 3
Architecture	Architecture
Colour	Bazaar
Difference	Brickwork
Emptiness	Colour
Environment	Contrast
Light	Faith
Memory aid	Fruit stall
Mess	Handy work
Pastness	People
People	Square
Roof	Stall
Size	Unique
View	

Contriving ethnographic commonality? Mapping meaningfulness features across levels

Main features only	Co-author 1 %	Co-author 2 %	Co-author 3 %
Colours	14.2	20.0	3.0
Contrast/ difference	3.8	6.7	3.0
Animation/ people	2.5	18.1	13.4
Architectural details	2.3	1.0	25.4
Representation	5.7	3.9	1.5
Engagement	3.0	19.0	-
Awe/ scale	6.8	3.8	23.8
Range/ variety	1.1	-	10.5
Form	13.2	-	-
Pastness	4.0	7.6	-
Everyday	8.1	2.9	3.0
Continuity/ faith	16.8	7.6	16.4

Associational features arranged by

Co-author 1		Co-author 2
Places experienced	Iran; Continental Europe; British Isles; Africa; Elsewhere	America
Places imagined	Iran; Near East in general; Europe; Africa; Elsewhere	Pastness
Non-places	Landscapes; Buildings; Artefacts	Spain
		Nazi Germany
		Rome
		Star Wars

Associational features arranged by Co-author 3

American Indians	La Defense	Skills
Books	Limes	Souvenirs
Boybands	Market	St Peter's Square
Camels	Mediterranean	Stadiums
Catering equipment	Mosaics	Star Wars
Churches	Movies	The Holocaust
Films	My grandpa	The Old Friday Mosque
Glasgow	Northern Africa	Third world
Ice cream	School trips	Venice
Iranians	Shops	World War II memorials

Contriving ethnographic commonality? Mapping associational features across levels

Main features only	Co-author 1 %	Co-author 2 %	Co-author 3 %
Places directly experienced	62.0	68.8	23.1
Generic places experienced	2.5	-	21.2
Places indirectly experienced through media	25.2	-	-
Events indirectly experienced through media	-	6.3	5.8
Buildings	7.6	-	19.2
Feelings	-	12.5	-

Conclusions

Origins of hospitality and tourism need to be located in non-European cultures as well as European cultures

The use of an ethnography needs to recognise its inseparability from the ethnographer

Greater attention to methodology is required, not least as ethnographers are embracing their interpretivist – expressive role

Multiple ethnographies are desirable in revealing commonalities and particularities of ethnographic interpretations / expressions

A single ethnography is likely to be misleading, and multiple ethnographies are needed

Or users need to be more circumspect

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