

“Inns” (*kataluma* or *pandocheion*) in the Bible and Greco-Roman texts (from van Eck and van Neikerk 2018)

Older scholarship distinguished a *kataluma* as a “non-commercial inn” based in the obligation of hospitality and a *pandocheion* as a “commercial inn” and thus “low class” because of taking money for something that “should” be a gift, and thus frequented by those who had nowhere else to go. But this has been challenged by the ancient texts themselves.

Kataluma

various meanings in texts from 275 BCE to 138 CE

“lodging as hospitality, lodging provided for free, lodging paid for, a dwelling or house, or a room or quarter in a dwelling or house or a stable for animals.” (p. 3)

In the Septuagint (14 times): some examples

Exodus 4.24	On the way, at a place where they spent the night
Exodus 15.13	"In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode ."
1 Samuel 1.18	Then the woman went to her quarters
Jeremiah 32.38 (LXX; 25.38 English)	Like a lion he has left his covert
Jeremiah 40.12 (LXX; 33.12 English)	be pasture for shepherds resting their flocks
Sirach 14.25	he will pitch his tent near her, and will lodge in an excellent lodging place

In Luke (not in Acts)

2.7	And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn ."
22.11	say to the owner of the house, 'The teacher asks you, "Where is the guest room , where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"'

Pandocheion

-)] Very rare in Roman texts, but used neutrally or positively to refer to inns and innkeepers.
-)] Josephus and Plato use it negatively.
-)] Strabo equates them with brothels.
-)] Not in the Septuagint

Van Eck and van Neikerk conclude: “we do not have enough evidence to make a clear-cut distinction between non-commercial inns (*kataluma*, based on the obligation of hospitality, and commercial inns (*pandocheion*), based on payment for services rendered.” (p. 8)

“These texts do not only confirm that Jews frequented inns, but also show no evidence of inns being dangerous places or that scrupulous Jews frequenting [sic] inns.” (p. 9)

Travel options in Jesus’ time

Government workers stayed in facilities maintained by the *cursus publicus*

Well-to-do folks often had other homes or friends with homes

Those with less money could pack a tent or seek a *pandocheion*

Some of these were deemed *hospitum* (“place of hospitality”) or *deversotium* (“place for turning aside”)

The lower class could stay in *caupona*, catering to slaves, sailors and carters.