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**Descriptions of Moroccan Culture
in German Travel Guides**

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**ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE
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in German Travel Guides**

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ABSTRACT

Morocco has been experiencing a prosperous development of tourism during the last three decades. This circumstance also finds its articulation in an impressive enhancement of travel guides dealing with this popular south Mediterranean tourist destination.

More than any other form of mass media, travel guides are embedded into the dialectics of *familiar* and *foreign*. They contribute decisively to the shaping of the image of tourist destinations. From an intercultural point of view one of the central normative demands concerning these publications is to increase understanding of the foreign culture and its people. Therefore, it is crucial that travel guides not only point out sights of the destination, but also impart information concerning the culture and its people.

This article analyses the descriptions of Moroccan culture and its people in recently published German travel guides. Proceeding from a holistic perception of culture, which comprises *mentefacts*, *sociofacts* and *artefacts*, a critical analysis will be undertaken in the descriptions of the following cultural aspects: people and religion (*mentefacts*), history and politics (*sociofacts*), and Moroccan cities along with art and architecture (*artefacts*).

In order to ensure that travel guides can contribute in an active way to the development of intercultural competence among their readers, it is important that they impart information that is highly comprehensive and balanced. That can only be achieved if the authors try to avoid stereotypical descriptions, simplistic reductions, and prejudices. This article gives a critical insight from an intercultural point of view into negative as well as positive descriptions of Moroccan culture and its people.

Keywords: Morocco; travel guides; culture; intercultural communication

INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1960s Morocco has been experiencing a prosperous development of tourism. The year 1998 marks an important statistical date: during this year more than 2 million visiting foreign tourists were registered. With over 24.000 annual overnight stays the Germans are, next to the French, the largest group of international tourists (Sebbar 1999, 29ff.). The popularity of Morocco among German tourists also finds its articulation in an impressive enhancement of travel guides.

Travel guides act as "signposts" into the dialectics of *familiar* and *foreign* (Wierlacher/Wang 1996, 278). Therefore, it is not astonishing that from an intercultural point of view one of the central normative demands concerning this medium is to bring about understanding of the foreign culture and its people (Steinecke 1988, 37). This is an aspect that is especially crucial if the culture – like Morocco for European travellers – differs in important aspects from one's own.

In order to ensure that travel guides can contribute in an active way to the development of intercultural competence among their recipients, it is crucial that they impart information that is highly comprehensive and balanced. For that reason, it is essential that the authors of these publications try to avoid stereotypical descriptions, simplistic reductions, and prejudices.

This applied study provides a critical analysis of cultural descriptions of Morocco in recent German travel guides. A hermeneutic approach by means of text description and interpretation enables the reader to get an insight not only into purely factual information but also into the emotional dimension with its subjective judgements. The article not only seeks to unmask stereotypes and prejudices that impede the understanding of the complex Moroccan culture, it also points out where authors have tried to give differentiated detailed information about the country and its inhabitants.

1. THE CONCEPTION OF CULTURE

Concerning the conception of culture, Germany stands in a long tradition of an elitist perception. The traditional perception of this keyword was merely restricted to the *Beaux Arts*, neglecting popular (everyday) culture. In addition, this rather restricted meaning of culture also neglected spheres of human behaviour. Nowadays most disciplines prefer a holistic perception of culture that includes the constituents of individual life as well as social relations and

dynamic social development. Culture is no longer regarded solely as the product of human beings but also considers their behaviour (Kretzenbacher 1992, 176).

A holistic perception of culture also forms the basis for intercultural communication. It covers, beside visible objects as being reflected in artefacts, also invisible subjectifications, as for example values and norms or mentalities and patterns of perception. Cultures are seen as historically grown, complex and highly differentiated systems which are transformed through dynamic change (Roth 1996, 20). While representatives of the so-called *cognitive anthropology* proceed from a cognitive system in which culture is seen as a mental system (Goodenough 1970), Geertz postulates in his renowned book *The Interpretation of Cultures* culture as a symbol. This article stands for a position that comprises both approaches.

This article also proceeds from a holistic perception of culture as it is proposed by Wierlacher, one of the most renowned German representatives of *intercultural German Studies*: "Hence we define culture (...) as polydimensional conception: it comprises within the meaning of cultural anthropology the *cultura humana*, the macro-culture, which has to be analysed in its complexity including everyday culture(s) and artistic performances, and the field of the personal culture of behaviour." (Wierlacher 1989, 400). This polydimensional perception of culture not only opens access to behavioural sciences and anthropology, it also dissociates itself from the traditional restricted connotation of culture in Germany.

For the content analysis the conception of culture is divided with reference to Huxley into the components *mentefacts*, *sociofacts* and *artefacts* (Huxley 1948/1950). While *mentefacts* always represent abstract and mental structures, *artefacts* stand for man-made objects. *Sociofacts* comprise in particular interpersonal relations, which can take place on the one hand on an individual level, or on the other hand on a collective level. For each of these three components, two cultural aspects will be analysed.

The *mentefacts* "People" and "Religion":

"The most exciting sights for people are still people." (Müllenmeister 1988, 102); this mental attitude also seems to gradually be prevailing among publishers and authors of travel guides. Whereas travel guides from years past restricted their descriptions to material culture and landscapes, they nowadays deal increasingly with the inhabitants of the destination. Meanwhile one can even find travel guides on the German book market which focus on people in order to contribute to the enhancement of intercultural competence among tourists.

2. REFLECTIONS ON INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

One of the most significant characteristics of our present time is the growing intensity of direct and indirect communication among people of different cultural backgrounds. Never in the history of mankind have cross-cultural contacts been as intensive as they are now at the very beginning of the new millenium. The German sociologist Matthes writes in this context: "Our world is growing together. The number of those who have the opportunity to meet with people of far off areas and cultures is nowadays frequently higher than it used to be thirty or fourty years ago. In the time before World War II a personal meeting with a foreigner, especially from overseas, was often seen as an exceptional incident." (Matthes 1993, 5).

The rise of cross-cultural contacts in particular manifests itself in a growing economic internationalism and a rapid development of technology (Thomas 1996, 15). In the economy this development becomes evident considering the increasing orientation to exports of most political economies and – on a private level – taking into account the ongoing entanglement of transnational groups. Multicultural staff – at least in transnational groups – are no longer a rarity; especially global players not only accept cultural differences, they also rate them as strategic advantages in gaining influence in globalized markets (Moosmüller 1997, 38). In technological development one has to mention above all the progress that is being achieved in the fields of traffic, information and communication technologies. As examples one can name air traffic or telecommunication. Modern tourism nowadays, in particular mass tourism, is not imaginable without the innovations being achieved in these fields. In this context one should recall, for example, the development of the airplane into a modern means of mass transport or the considerable progress in developing booking systems.

The processes of modernization characterized have dramatically enhanced the complexity of life. The advanced internationality and interculturality of many societies has led to the circumstance that hardly anyone can be unaffected by these processes. In order to find one's way in these societies, it is highly important to inform oneself about different cultures, to reflect on one's own cultural characteristics, to rid oneself of ethnocentric thoughts and to develop intercultural competence (Thomas 1993, 378).

Let us cast a glance at the scientific field of intercultural communication, which has been experiencing a boom in recent years. Intercultural communication does not simply compare different cultures, but rather analyses interactions among them: cultural contact and conflict or the understanding and misunderstanding of different cultures are the central aims of intercultural

In Islamic Morocco, religion determines to a high degree the mentality and behaviour of the people. Also, the ethnically heterogeneous Moroccan population structure shows the most significant unity in this aspect. Unfortunately, since Islam in Western societies, especially in the mass media, is often associated with religious fundamentalism, this aspect is gaining importance in order to enhance insight into this complex religion and possibly to get rid of prejudices.

The *sociofacts* to be analysed are “History“ and “Politics“:

There are hardly any travel guides that fail to offer descriptions of the historical development of a country; one could even claim that a historical abstract belongs to the standard contents of these publications. The historical aspect is particularly of great significance, as a country without its history and the cultural heritage resulting from this is not imaginable (Thum 1985, XVff.).

Similar to the historical aspect the exposition of politics belongs to the standard contents of travel guides, a circumstance that is not surprising as politics strongly affects the social manners within each society. In consideration of the political system in Morocco, which differs in many ways from Western political systems thus making it so difficult to understand, this aspect is of great value for the recipients.

The *artefacts* “Moroccan City“ and “Art and Architecture“:

The Moroccan city is of special interest due to the circumstance that for numerous tourists visits to Moroccan cities are an essential part of their journey. This applies especially to the famous royal cities of Fez, Marrakesh, Meknès and Rabat, which are praised in nearly every tourist publication as highlights of a Morocco journey. The overwhelming popularity of Moroccan cities is based on a highly differentiated urban tradition and culture, which, as Popp writes with regard to the royal cities of Marrakesh und Fez, evokes “associations of urban culture, oriental splendour and bustling bazaar lanes.“ (Müller-Hohenstein/Popp 1990, 124).

The “fetish sight“ (Lauterbach 1992, 64) primarily pays homage to the art and architecture of a country. Travel guides that want to provide insight into art and architecture not only have to point out the individual “sight“, which is according to Enzensberger the “standardized ground element“ (Enzensberger 1958, 713), they also have to inform readers about fundamentals of the art and architecture of a country.

research work (Roth 1996, 21f.). Intercultural communication implies the constant transgression of cultural boundaries. In the centre of intercultural research stand people living temporarily in a foreign country. These people are called sojourners and include expatriates working for some years abroad as well as tourists spending a few weeks in a holiday resort. From an applied point of view the mediation of intercultural competence among sojourners is a crucial function of intercultural communication.

Participants from different cultural backgrounds have to learn to live with cultural differences. A favourable way to deal with these differences centers on the success of cross-cultural contacts. Casmir and Asuncion-Lande state in this context: "Cultural differences will have a negative effect if they impede the flow of communication between participants. They will have a positive effect if they motivate two individuals to work harder at understanding each other. Thus the crux of the whole process is HOW cultural differences are managed by the participants in any act of communication. It is the phenomenon that is used to further distinguish intercultural communication from other forms or contexts of communication." (Casmir/Asuncion-Lande 1989, 284).

Intercultural communication does not want to level the cultural differences mentioned, but it attempts to overcome monocultural and ethnocentric perspectives (Vester 1996, 102f.). The phenomenon of ethnocentrism is embedded into the problem that humans tend to reduce the complexity and dynamics of unknown cultures. Even in intercultural training programmes, which have been developed in order to prevent ethnocentrism, the problem often remains, as the following quotation shows: "Wherever people with different cultural backgrounds work or live together, ethnocentrism is a problem and practice has shown us that also intercultural training programmes are hardly sufficient to solve this problem. Therefore it is important to comprehend the cognitive and affective aspects of ethnocentrically caused blockages and to transpose them in efficient training." (Moosmüller 1997, 63). What do we know about the relation between tourism and intercultural communication? Does tourism offer adequate presuppositions for intercultural understanding? Characteristic of the appearance of modern tourism is, as Bausinger mentions, its "boundlessness" (Bausinger 1991, 344), which is not only reflected by economic numbers. Thus, the distances of tourist destinations being visited are increasing. Even remote places that not long ago used to be difficult to find on maps grace the colourful folders of the travel agencies. The diffusion of tourism has in particular been enabled by a rapid technological evolution in the fields of traffic and communication systems, which has led to a dramatic shrinking of distances.

In times of globalization temporary changes of place have become normal. It seems that getting in contact with different cultures is no longer a problem. In this context one should draw attention to the word “seems” because often contacts with different cultures – especially those focused on tourism – are based on the repression of otherness (von Gagem 1994, 5). It goes without saying that the understanding of a foreign culture, especially of its people, requires the readiness of the tourist to become actively involved with it. The uncritical assumption that tourism automatically contributes to a better understanding between an indigenous population and tourists cannot be maintained in this way. Many reasons can be mentioned in the context of tourism why intense cross-cultural contacts remain rare: insufficient preparations for the journey, poor language skills, the shortness of most journeys and the dominance of tourist ghettos (BMZ 1993, 36 and Maletzke 1996, 11). Gyr adds that especially pre-travel experiences like reading travel folders and travel guides or listening to travel stories told by friends have a great impact on the perception of the foreign culture (Gyr 1988, 233).

That all might sound rather pessimistic, but there are also case studies which have proved that travelling abroad can have a positive intercultural impact. In this context one has to mention the publications being issued by the renowned German tourism research institute *Starnberger Studienkreis für Tourismus*. In particular the studies of Hartmann show that the more travelling abroad becomes a matter of course, the more the probability of differentiated perception among tourists grows (Hartmann 1981/1982). Naturally, the mere fact of travelling is not sufficient to enable understanding of different cultures; this also requires the motivation to engage oneself with them.

An aggravating problem of many cross-cultural contacts still remains the phenomenon of images, stereotypes, and prejudices. The following explanations give a brief survey of these three keywords, which are of central interest in studies dealing with aspects of intercultural communication.

The scientific consideration of *images* has mainly been influenced by Boulding, who chose this term for the discrepancy between the objective nature of the world and its subjective assessment by human beings. In this context he writes: “Knowledge, perhaps, is not a good word for this. Perhaps one would rather say my *Image* of the world. Knowledge has an implication of validity, of truth. What I am talking about is what I believe to be true; my subjective knowledge. It is this Image that largely governs my behavior.” (Boulding 1977, 5f.).

While images have a much more neutral connotation, *stereotypes*, which Lippmann once paraphrased with the famous words “pictures in our heads” (Lippmann 1964, 9ff.), often imply a negative attitude. Furthermore, unlike images stereotypes are very seldom conducive to change (Wilke 1989, 12).

From an intercultural point of view *prejudices* have the most negative meaning. Symptomatic of them are ingroup-outgroup constellations that impede mutual understanding. Allport has defined the character of prejudices as follows: “A prejudice is an averted or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group.” (Allport 1954, 21).

3. A VIEW OF A TOURIST MASS MEDIUM: TRAVEL GUIDES

The demand for travel literature is booming. For years the development of the German travel guide market has mainly been characterized by high circulations and an increasing diversification of supply. The basis for this popularity of travel guides lies in the prosperous development of modern tourism within the last decades. According to current statistics tourism already today contributes about 10% to the global GNP, and the tourism industry is with an annual turnover of 3.5 billion German marks undoubtedly one of the world's most important branches of trade. Bookshops can offer their clients a broad selection of different travel guides that can gratify nearly any wish. Travel guides nowadays have reached the status of a mass product: “In the industrialized world of tourism, media and intercultural communication, travel guides have already been developing into a mass-produced article for two decades.” (Wierlacher/Wang 1996, 279).

In comparison with the numerical importance of travel guides, research concerning this mass medium is rather negligible. At the beginning of the 1990s one could read in an article: “With regard to scientific consideration of travel guides there is hardly any literature.” (Lauterbach 1992, 59). Unfortunately, this situation still retains validity, although some very interesting articles and monographs have been published within the last few years. In this context one particularly has to mention the studies by Wierlacher and Wang, who have strengthened the importance of travel guides as an intercultural mass medium. Both substantiate their research interest concerning travel guides with the need to improve intercultural communication, the internationality of scientific communication, and the phenomenon of mass tourism. According to them travel guides are – as hardly any other mass medium – embedded into the dialectics of *familiar* and *foreign* and act as “signposts for abroad” (Wierlacher/Wang 1996, 278).

Also Steinecke refers in his survey analysing the German travel guide market to the outstanding significance of this mass medium as an authority to inform readers about different cultures. According to his inquiries especially reviewers have called for travel guides that not only lay their focus on the presentation of sights but which also promote understanding of the foreign culture and its people (Steinecke 1988, 37). In his survey the author classifies – with reference to an article dealing with tourist guides (Cohen 1985) – four types of travel guides, referring to their general functions (Steinecke 1988, 24ff.):

1. The “*pathfinder*“-travel guide

- General function: Orientation for abroad
- Examples: Journey preparations, description of routes, information concerning distances, service stations and overnight accommodations

2. The “*tour-leader*“-travel guide

- General function: Organization of journey, accommodation and food for abroad
- Examples: Addresses of hotels and restaurants; dates of holiday seasons; information concerning entry and departure regulations; travel connections

3. The “*mentor*“-travel guide

- General function: Mediation of knowledge with regard to the foreign culture and society
- Examples: Background information concerning history, geography, economy, history of art, architecture and nature; behavioural hints with regard to customs and morals

4. The “*animator*“-travel guide

- General function: Realization of one’s own (leisure time)
- Examples: Data concerning leisure time facilities (bike renting, discos, boats, surfing); shopping centres; festivals; addresses of like-minded groups (political groups, refuge-houses for women, Third-World-shops)

In the context of this article the claimed normative function of travel guides as “signposts for abroad” which should promote understanding of the foreign culture and its people among readers, is crucial. From an intercultural point of view, travel guides have an active impact on intercultural communication, a function that in particular is associated with mass media. The German communications scholar Hess-Lüttich writes in this context: “Intercultural communication is as subject and as practice a new essential function of mass media, a media-culture of enlightenment.” (Hess-Lüttich 1989, 53).

Thus, the intercultural point of view concerning travel guides is of great significance if they deal with areas in which cultural aspects differ highly from one's own culture (Popp 1997, 175). One can imagine that much more subtle intuition is required from a European author to write a travel guide about a destination in Africa or Latin America than in Europe.

Not only scholars have recognized that it is unsatisfactory if these publications are solely restricted to the descriptions of tourist attractions. Tütting, an author and publisher of travel guides, states: "In order to prevent communication problems, exploitation, pollution and (racial) prejudices in the epoch of mass tourism, travel guides have to express more than just pointing out attractions! Tourism nowadays cannot be described separately from its social environment, the everyday life of people. Someone who still claims that pollution control, world economic structures, "Third-World problems" etc. 'have nothing to do with travelling' thinks irresponsibly and had better quit writing or publishing a travel guide." (Tütting 1990, 108).

Concluding this brief sketch of the mass medium of travel guides, let us have a look at the sample of analysed travel guides. Correlating to the prosperous development of tourism in Morocco in the last decades, the number of travel guides dealing with this popular destination has rapidly increased. The spectrum of publications considered for this study comprises 23 recently published German Morocco guides. The following table registers the most important biblio-graphical data:

Table: The analysed travel guides and their bibliographical data

Travel guide row	Author/Editor	Title	Publisher	Place	Year	P.	Price (DM)
ADAC Reiseführer	J.-P. Roger	Marokko	ADAC	München	1998	144	19.80
APA Guides	D. Stannard (ed.)	Marokko	Langenscheidt	München	1996	320	44.80
APA Pocket Guides	D. Stannard	Marokko	RV	Berlin et al.	1993	93	19.80
Baedeker Allianz Reiseführer	G. Ludwig	Marokko	Mairs Geogr.	Ostfildern	1996	644	49.80
Berlitz Reiseführer	N. Wilson	Marokko	Berlitz	London	1996	136	11.80
DuMont Kunstreiseführer	A. Betten	Marokko. Antike, Berbertraditionen und Islam - Geschichte, Kunst und Kultur im Maghreb	DuMont	Köln	1998	368	44.00
DuMont Reisetaschenbücher	H. Buchholz	Südmorokko mit Agadir und Königsstädten	DuMont	Köln	1997	252	19.80
DuMont „Richtig Reisen“	H. Buchholz M. Köhler	Marokko	DuMont	Köln	1996	319	39.80
DuMont Visuell	B. Lanzerath et al.	Marokko	DuMont	Köln	1996	384	48.00
Goldstadt Reiseführer	D. Höllhuber W. Kaul	Marokko	Goldstadt	Pforzheim	1996	477	34.80
Hayit Urlaubsberater	R. Botzat	Marokko	Hayit	Köln	1995	96	13.80
Marco Polo	I. Lehmann	Marokko	Mairs Geogr.	Ostfildern	1997	96	12.80
Merian live	I. Lehmann	Marokko	Gräfe und Unzer	München	1998	128	14.90
Nelles Guides	G. Nelles (ed.)	Marokko	Nelles	München	1997	254	26.80
Polyglott	I. Lehmann	Marokko	Polyglott	München	1996	96	12.80
Polyglott Land & Leute	W. Knappe	Marokko	Polyglott	München	1994/1995	136	16.80
Rau's Reisebücher	E. Kohlbach	Quer durch Marokko	Werner Rau	Stuttgart	1995	304	39.80
Reise Know-How	E. Därr	Agadir, Marrakesch und Südmorokko	Reise Know-How	Hohentann	1996 a	443	34.80
Reise Know-How	E. Därr	Marokko. Vom Rif zum Antiatl	Reise Know-How	Hohentann	1996 b	921	44.80
„Selbst entdecken“	N. Machelett C. Machelett	Nordmarokko selbst entdecken	Regenbogen	Zürich	1990	167	16.80
Sympathie Magazin	Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung	Marokko verstehen	Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung	Ammerland	1997	51	5.00
Thomas Cook Reiseführer	J. Keeble	Marokko	Droemer Knaur	München	1997	191	19.80
Viva Twin	A. Sattin S. Franquet	Marokko	Falk	München	1998	127	16.90

Source: Scherle 1998

4. CONTENT ANALYSIS: THE DESCRIPTION OF MOROCCAN CULTURE IN RECENT GERMAN TRAVEL GUIDES

4.1 Mentefacts

4.1.1 People

Concerning the first of the two *mentefacts* under consideration here, the most problematic undertaking for authors is to describe the people of a foreign destination. Although some travel guides nowadays concede to the people a more significant role, in many of them they still remain a subject of minor interest. In any case a lot of subtle intuition is required in order to describe people without using stereotypes or prejudices. This in particular applies to those countries whose culture differs greatly from that of the author.

There is hardly any other analysed cultural aspect riddled to such a degree with stereotypes. It would be beyond the scope of this article to unveil all of them. In the *Hayit Urlaubsberater* the reader finds: "In Morocco the fairy-tales of *Arabian Nights* are still alive; there are snake charmers, storytellers and the 'blue people' in the South..." (Botzat 1995, 4). This generalization, which only emphasizes the exotic side of Moroccan Life, is followed by the statement: "Especially the Berbers in the mountains, in the sandy deserts and the hammadas (...) have a strong self-confidence and they are, like all self-confident creatures, touchy." (Botzat 1995, 5). It surely needs no further comment that these quotations can hardly afford an insight into the mentality of the country's people. Another stereotype that only underlines the Moroccan image of *Arabian Nights* can be found in the *Thomas Cook* travel guide: "The Moroccans are proud people. (...) Like all people from the South they are great storytellers and love exaggerations. To elicit from them a precise answer requires the art of haggling." (Keeble 1997, 14). Again generalizations that do not impart any substantial information are being used. One of the most popular features concerning the population is the reputed obtrusiveness of Moroccan dealers. The *Berlitz* travel guide gives a warning example how this delicate theme is sometimes connected with prejudices: "Something more: nepotism is also a great problem at car-hiring services. Someone who takes the advice of a local guide will surely be cheated." (Wilson 1996, 112).

Fortunately, there are also authors who try to impart balanced information. Some even unmask stereotypes and enable understanding of the foreign culture. The *Goldstadt* travel guide is one of the few travel guides that dedicates a rather comprehensive chapter to the customs of the Moroccan people. In this context Höllhuber and Kaul write: "The tourist in Morocco won't find a homogeneous culture or common customs. It depends whether he stays in

the city or in the countryside, among Arabs or Berbers, among young or old people; he will always be confronted with different behaviours and norms.“ (Höllhuber/Kaul 1996, 47). This is a good example in which the authors try, without using generalizations, to give balanced information about the complexity of Moroccan society. One of the most distinguished travel guides concerning the description of people is the *Polyglott Land & Leute* travel guide. Knappe offers a full range of different features that inform his readers about aspects of the everyday life of the population. Just to mention some: hospitality, gestures, sexuality, and taboos. Already in the introduction tourists' illusions are modified: “Morocco does not only consist of dancing Berber girls and wild horsemen... They are only found at large festivals, which are often arranged merely for tourists.“ (Knappe 1994/1995, 1). Another travel guide that tries to impart sensible information with regard to the Moroccan people is the *DuMont „Richtig Reisen“* travel guide. Buchholz and Köhler emphatically point out different values and norms: “You always have to keep in mind that you are a visitor in an Islamic country, in which values and norms strongly differ from European habits.“ (Buchholz/Köhler 1996, 312f.). Both authors intercede for tolerance concerning cultural aspects that are at wide variance from Western ones. In this context they refer, for instance, to Ramadan and the social principle of gender separation.

4.1.2 Religion

Concerning the *mentefact* “religion“, it is important to note that Islam deeply influences the life of a Muslim; this applies to Morocco, too. Among believers Islam has its significance even in aspects of everyday life, which might seem – especially to someone who is not familiar with this religion – incongruous. In order to enable understanding of this highly complex religion, it is essential that tourists are informed about fundamentals. Especially since Western mass media often impart negative stereotypes, the need for enlightening information concerning Islam is increasing.

In contrast to the significance of religion in Morocco, this aspect, in numerous travel guides, only plays a minor role. The *Viva Twin* travel guide limits its descriptions concerning the aspect of religion to religious festivities under the rubric “calendar of events“ (Sattin/Franquet 1998, 116). This rubric enumerates some popular *Moussem*, but does not mention that these festivities mainly have religious roots and characteristics. The careless categorization of *Moussem* in this context under the catchword “public festivals“, at which “plenty of food and beverages“ are offered, can easily create the impression among readers that these festivities are primarily secular ones that serve only to entertain their visitors. Another example of poor description is offered by the *Marco Polo* travel guide, which mainly emphasizes the exotic aspects of Islam

but does not impart any background information: "Wherever you go, from the minarets you can hear five times a day the pitches of the muezzin; in the open air you see Muslims with wiped shoes, their faces turned into the direction of Mecca in the prescribed postures for the ritual prayer. Acoustic and visual allurements plunge you in the countryside and in the city into the foreign atmosphere of the Arabic-Islamic West." (Lehmann 1997, 5f.).

Some travel guides present their readers truly comprehensive and balanced background information with regard to religion. An excellent description of Islam with many of its facets can be found in the *DuMont Reisetaschenbuch* (Buchholz 1996, 68ff.). The author informs his readers in a very detailed way about the development and principles of Islam and mentions characteristic differences between this religion and Christianity. Further topics are the role of women in Islam, *Maraboutism* in Morocco, and the *Djihad*. With regard to the *Djihad* Buchholz has a very differentiated point of view that in particular emphasizes the peaceable interpretation of this term. Thereby this travel guide also differs positively from many other mass media dealing with this delicate subject. The *Sympathie Magazin* is another outstanding travel guide concerning the cultural aspect of religion (Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung 1997, 7f, 20 and 22). This travel guide outlines the close connection between religion and Moroccan dynasties; in this context readers learn that tribes often approved of the religious but rejected the secular power of the sultan. A further topic is "Islamic fundamentalism", which is analysed in a very balanced way. Concerning this problem the *Sympathie Magazin* emphasizes the comparatively trifling influence of fundamentalism in Morocco and backs up its explanations by pointing to the strong state-run control of fundamentalist groups, the lack of sophisticated social alternatives among fundamentalist leaders, and the wide public identification with the king as religious leader. A special section with the title "Dialogue between Muslims and Christians" is dedicated to the work of Catholic nuns, who are very much engaged in promoting a better understanding between believers of both religions.

4.2 Sociofacts

4.2.1 History

As a preliminary note to the discussion of the *sociofact* "history" it should be noted that for several years popular historiography in many ways has been experiencing a noticeable boom. In this context one can mention the great resonance of historical exhibitions, the considerable number of historical films being broadcast on TV, or the great demand for historical novels in the book trade. Since the publishing of the first *Baedeker* in the middle of the nineteenth

century, a history chapter has belonged to the standard repertoire of a quality travel guide. This is a gratifying circumstance if one considers that a historical retrospective can be an outstanding aid in getting a systematic insight into a foreign culture. But it is not enough just to present a chronological list of historical events, which can at best offer only a framework for temporal orientation. To reduce history to dates and names cannot advance historical consciousness; rather, what is required is the description of historical processes and causal connections.

Unfortunately, a lot of travel guides restrict their presentations of history to tables and brief notes. As one can imagine these mainly consist of catchwords that often lead to simplistic reductionism. Lehmann, the author of the *Marco Polo* travel guide, writes about the highly important year 1956, in which Morocco was released to independence: "Declaration of independence. Annulment of the Tanger statute." (Lehmann 1997, 7). The aspect of Islamization, which is exceedingly far-reaching for the development of the country, is characterized in just one sentence: "Collapse of the antique civilization with the invasion of the Arabs" (Lehmann 1997, 7). One can easily imagine that these descriptions cannot afford an insight into the complex history of this country. Even travel guides that do not restrict their descriptions of history to tables tend to reductionism, delivering an incorrect idea of history. The following example, which again deals with the Islamization of Morocco, is quoted from the *Apa Pocket* travel guide: "When the Arabs in the seventh century pushed forward to the West in order to disseminate the ideas of their prophet Mohammed, the Berbers embraced Islam voluntarily." (Stannard 1993, 12). In order to demonstrate to what extent these reductions can create a false impression of history, I want to refer in the context of Islamization to the Islamic scholar Abun-Nasr, who writes about this process: "The Islamization of the Maghribi society is a complex process, involving socio-economic factors which the historian cannot hope to be able fully to explore. Amongst the factors which have certainly contributed to this process was the recruitment of Berber tribal warriors into the Arab army and generally the desire of the Berbers to enjoy the rights of full citizens of the Islamic state. The activities of Muslim merchants in remote parts of the Maghrib also seem to have contributed to its Islamization. (...) The single most important factor in the process which led to the far-reaching Islamization of the Berbers seems, however, to have been that during the eighth and ninth centuries the Maghrib became, partly on account of its geographical location, an area where political fugitives from the Mashriq (Arab East) and *dais* (religio-political propagandists) spreading the teachings of the Kharijite and Shiite opponents of the caliphs operated." (Abun-Nasr 1987, S. 26f.).

The *DuMont „Richtig Reisen“* travel guide offers its readers an unconventional but ingenious presentation of history (Buchholz/Köhler 1996, 23ff.). The authors insert in their history chapter rubrics concerning famous architecturally noteworthy buildings from each historical epoch. This procedure has the decisive advantage that readers can integrate the specific attractions into a historical coherence. What is also remarkable is the circumstance that Buchholz and Köhler are rather intensively preoccupied with the dualism of *Bled al-Makhzen* and *Bled as-Siba*, which has determined the historical and spatial development of the country for centuries. Certainly one of the best descriptions concerning history within the analysed travel guides can be found in the *DuMont Kunstseiführer* (Betten 1998, 10ff.). Betten understands his description of history as a holistic presentation of Moroccan cultural history. In this context he integrates various rubrics dealing with different themes such as religion or the history of art. The author explicitly integrates in his cultural history the people of Morocco and in particular deals with the historical development of individual ethnic and religious population groups. A separate chapter is dedicated to famous persons of the country including, for instance, Ibn Khaldoun, Idrisi and Tahar Ben Jelloun.

4.2.2 Politics

In relation to the *sociofact* “politics“, it should be noted that the theocratically structured political system of Morocco differs in many ways from Western political systems. The constitutional tradition of the country is based on classical Islamic constitutional law, according to which the sovereign as *Amir el-Mouminin* exercises secular and religious power. Nowadays this political system in many ways has been adapted to political pluralism, but this circumstance still does not imply that – from a Western perspective – civil liberties can be guaranteed in all aspects.

In numerous travel guides one gets the impression that the aspect of politics remains just an appendage to chapters dealing with other subjects, usually to the history chapter. Some travel guides even restrict their descriptions of politics to a few catchwords in the practical section. One of the most disappointing descriptions of politics is offered by *Rau's* travel guide (Kohlbach 1995, 13). The only information concerning this aspect consists of catchwords like “national flag“, “head of state“, “representation of the people“ or “form of government“; the corresponding explanations do not impart any substantial background information. To cite just one example: under “form of government“ readers receive the lapidary statement: “constitutional monarchy since 1972, independent since 1956“. It is evident that these cursory descriptions can hardly provide understanding for the complex political system in Morocco. Similar poor quality with regard to the political aspect is shown in the *Hayit*

Urlaubsberater. The author of this travel guide outlines the political system in nine lines. Due to its brevity the whole content can be quoted: "According to the constitution of 1972 – modified in 1980 – Morocco is a constitutional and social monarchy. The king nominates and dismisses the prime minister and the ministers, and he dissolves the parliament, whose power is strongly limited. The government is dependent on the king and to a certain degree on the parliament." (Botzat 1995, 83).

Not all of the analysed travel guides impart to their readers such scanty information as the examples above. One of these examples is the *Reise Know-How* travel guides written by Därr (Därr 1996a and Därr 1996b). Därr informs her readers in different sections in a very detailed way about form of government, head of state, representation of the people, political parties, and trade unions. In addition to that she presents special sections concerning the domestic politics and foreign policy of Morocco. Characteristic of her descriptions is that they offer a critical insight into the political development during the reign of Hassan II. In this context Därr mentions, for instance, several rebellions against the king and the occupation of Western Sahara. Additionally, she does not hesitate to inform readers about problems concerning human rights in Morocco: "Amnesty International has reported time and again on human rights violations among Saharians and in the territory of Western Sahara" (Därr 1996b, 285). With regard to the political aspect the descriptions of this travel guide undoubtedly surpass the usual standard. Another excellent description of politics is contained in the *Polyglott Land & Leute* travel guide, which dedicates three rubrics to this aspect (Knappe 1994/1995, 66f., 72ff and 111f.). Central topics are, for instance, constitution, political parties, and trade unions. In addition to that Knappe thoroughly analyses the former role of Hassan II. In this context the author mentions the dual function of the king as secular and religious leader and the sometimes difficult role of the opposition in Morocco. Knappe does not hesitate to point out domestic problems like the population explosion, unemployment, corruption, and a declining living standard. With regard to the occupation of Western Sahara the author describes the ambivalent consequences for Morocco: on the one hand a domestic stabilization of the king's position, on the other hand increasing international isolation.

4.3 Artefacts

4.3.1 The Moroccan City

Compared to hardly any other Maghribean destination, Morocco can offer its tourists a rich and differentiated urban tradition. Therefore, it is not astonishing that the cities, especially the royal cities of Fez, Marrakesh, Meknès and Rabat, belong to the most popular tourist attractions of the country. This popularity also

finds its articulation in the analysed travel guides, which dedicate numerous chapters to this cultural aspect.

Unfortunately the descriptions concerning the Moroccan city are often influenced by stereotypes transfiguring the oriental world. In the „*Selbst entdecken*“ travel guide one finds the following passage: “A stroll from the new town into the medina, the old town, is like a step into the past. Thick walls, magnificently decorated gates, the glittering mosaics of minarets, oriental mosques and an incredible variety of merchandise give the medina an atmosphere that is reminiscent of the oriental worlds of fairytales.” (Machelett/Machelett 1990, 7). And in the *Berlitz* travel guide: “In the labyrinth of the old towns of Fez, Marrakesh or Meknès the foreign impressions captivate all the senses. In the air there is the fragrance of spices, peppermint, fresh bread, and well-turned timber. Intensive colours enliven the scene and the sound of sledge-hammers resounds in the narrow lanes.” (Lehmann 1996, 7). Another example is quoted from the *ADAC* travel guide: “Moreover, there is the perfume of orange-blossoms in the streets, the harsh fragrances of leather and sandalwood in the markets of Marrakesh, the spicy aroma of cumin and coriander, and the steady bouquet of incense streaming out of the open doors in the medina. Shining colours, enigmatic smells and strange sounds melt into a mysterious world of fairytales, which makes it difficult to realize that this country lies only 20 kilometres away from the European continent.” (Wilson 1996, 5). Not only the cities themselves, but also the people living and working in them cannot be described exotically enough. Especially the inhabitants of the medina are a popular feature. In a chapter in the *ADAC* travel guide concerning the *Djemaa el-Fna* in Marrakesh the author, for example, points out the fortuneteller, the quack, the snake charmer and the indispensable storyteller (Roger 1998, 5).

But there are also examples in which authors try to impart information beyond one-sided stereotypes concerning the Moroccan city. In the *Goldstadt* travel guide, for instance, the authors give a detailed and competent introduction into the structure of an oriental city (Höllhuber/Kaul 1996, 76ff.). In this context they inform their readers about the classical elements of the medina such as the mosque, kasbah, bazaar or hammam. The *DuMont Reisetaschenbuch* lays its focus on the problem of conserving the cultural heritage of the old cities (Buchholz 1997, 110ff. and 122ff.). In this context the author also unmasks stereotypes which one can often find in other travel guides: “Although the medina is often praised as agelessly beautiful, it rots in quiet dignity. One should be careful not to romanticise it and the daily life in it too much.” (Buchholz 1997, 124). Furthermore, the author informs his readers about the UNESCO-project in Fez, which is trying to preserve the medina from decay. But unlike many other authors Buchholz does not restrict his descriptions to the medina, he

also mentions the *villes nouvelles*, which were constructed during the French occupation. Another critical insight into urban life can be found in the *Sympathie Magazin*. In this context the authors mainly outline the infrastructural problems of Moroccan cities such as water shortage or pollution. To quote just one example: "In the middle of the old town flows the *oued* (river) Fez. From a bridge an old man empties a bucket with foul smelling contents... In this way thousands of people get rid of their rubbish daily." (Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung 1997, 24). Due to the fact that these problems often remain hidden to tourists, it makes sense to awaken sensitivity to them.

4.3.2 Art and Architecture

Concerning the *artefact* "art and architecture", destinations which have been influenced by Islam have a great attraction for visitors. Often the fascination of Islamic countries for visitors is especially manifested in their art and architecture. Both art and architecture in Islamic cultures have been strongly influenced by religion; in this context one can mention in particular the abstract image of God, which has led to iconoclastic structures. Travel guides can build a bridge to the foreign culture if they do not solely restrict their descriptions to sights, but impart – at least in the fundamentals – information about the structures and techniques of art and architecture.

One of the poorest descriptions with regard to the aspect of art and architecture can be found in the *Marco Polo* travel guide. The author just enumerates single monuments without explaining them: "On your art journey to the Islamic West you will visit mosques, medersas (...), mausoleums, palaces and civil houses, also wall fountains, town gates and portals." (Lehmann 1997, 16). The following few remarks concerning typical elements of oriental art and architecture such as ornamentation and the cupola remain superficial and are not suitable for an insight into this complex aspect. The quality of the „*Selbst entdecken*“ travel guide is hardly better. In this travel guide the authors restrict the aspect of art and architecture solely to arts and crafts, which are highly popular among tourists (Machelett/Machelett 1990, 48f.). The flowery diction used in this context could have been borrowed from an advertising brochure of a national tourist office: "Morocco can scoop from the treasures of its glorious past and fill its hands. Out of timber, metal, wool or leather, artefacts of extraordinary (...) beauty are created. Carpets from Rabat or the Atlas mountains, furs or leather goods from Fez, pottery from Safi, embroidery from Meknès, bronze and gold products from Marrakesh and the oases of the Sahara reveal the industriousness of the population." It is obvious that these descriptions, which do not impart any background information, can hardly promote any understanding for this cultural aspect.

An excellent insight into Moroccan art and architecture is presented by Därr in the *Reise Know-How* travel guides (Därr 1996a and Därr 1996b). In contrast to many other authors dealing with this cultural aspect Därr remains thoroughly critical, as her statements concerning arts and crafts prove: “Many things that appear to us as arts and crafts are for Moroccans utility articles”. (Därr 1996b, 361). Fortunately, the author does not – as in the previous example – restrict her descriptions to arts and crafts; she also informs her readers in special sections about Islamic art, the architecture of the Berbers, and modern art. In her section about Islamic art Därr mentions important Islamic elements such as calligraphy or arabesques, and she gives an insight into the art-historical development of the country. The architecture of the *ksour*, which are popular tourist attractions, are the focus of the section that deals with the architecture of the Berbers. The most comprehensive and differentiated description of art and architecture is offered by the *DuMont Kunstreiseführer*. This aspect is presented in two chapters: the first deals with the Islamic art of Morocco and the second gives an insight into the art and culture of the Berbers (Betten 1998, 78ff and 109ff.). It would be beyond the scope of this article to discuss all of the viewpoints, therefore I restrict my comments to the first chapter, which is of especially high quality. An outstanding section in this chapter is dedicated to one of the most important features in Islamic art: iconoclasm. In this context Betten points out that iconoclastic structures also used to exist in early Christian times. The extent to which Betten’s descriptions are differentiated is manifested in the fact that he informs his readers that, in the very beginning of Islam, pictures were not forbidden at all. Readers who are interested in architecture will find in the *DuMont Kunstreiseführer* an excellent adviser, as this travel guide imparts excellent information with regard to religious and secular architecture. The central architectural objects described are mosques, medersas, tombs, palaces, urban residential architecture, and gardens. Due to the fact that all of Betten’s descriptions are rather sophisticated and extensive, it is necessary that the reader of this travel guide be highly interested in art and architecture.

CONCLUSION

The central aim of this article is to provide a critical analysis into cultural descriptions of Morocco in recently published German travel guides. To a far greater extent than any other mass media, travel guides as “signposts for abroad” are embedded into the dialectics of *familiar* and *foreign* and contribute decisively to the shaping of the image of a foreign culture. From an intercultural point of view the function of travel guides is not only to point out sights, but also to increase understanding of the foreign culture and its people. An active contribution to the development of intercultural competence among readers can only be achieved if the cultural descriptions within the travel guides are highly comprehensive and balanced. In this context it is essential that the authors of

these publications try to impart realistic information without using too many stereotypes, simplistic reductions, or prejudices.

This article considers descriptions of Moroccan culture with respect to people and religion (*mentefacts*), history and politics (*sociofacts*), Moroccan cities and art and likewise architecture (*artefacts*). The analysis proves that many travel guides present their readers one-sided and unrealistic descriptions of Morocco, which can hardly promote understanding of the Moroccan culture and its people. The negative examples show that several travel guides contain stereotypes and simplistic reductionism: this applies especially to the aspects of *people* and *Moroccan cities*, where often images of the *Arabian Nights* are evoked, which can hardly adequately represent reality. Nevertheless, the analysis also demonstrates in positive examples that there are travel guides imparting differentiated insights into Moroccan culture. This applies in particular to those travel guides which try to present their readers balanced descriptions concerning Moroccan culture that go beyond the “classical” images and stereotypes. As the positive examples show some authors provide critical information and even unmask stereotypes. It remains to be hoped that in the future more authors of travel guides will recognize their important role in mediating between different cultures.

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