

***FIJET Congress Casablanca – Marrakech  
Tourism: Dialogue between civilizations  
Morocco 7 -13 September 2013***



Prof.dr.sc. Mario Plenković, President of the International Federation of Communication Associations - IFCA. (Svečano otvaranje FIJET Congressa, Casablanca/ Opening Ceremony FIJET Congress, Casablanca 8.09.2013.)



Dr. sc. Tijani Hadad, predsjednik FIJET-a pozdravlja sudionike FIJET – Congressa / Dr. sc. Tijani Hadad, president of FIJET welcomes participants of FIJET Congress



Salah Attia, Vice President FIJET-a i President of FAJET-a, u pripremi za tematsko izlaganje „The Egyptian Civilisation and its impacts on other Civilisations“/ Salah Attia, Vice President FIJET of and President of FAJET in preparation for a thematic presentation "The Egyptian Civilisation and its impacts on other Civilisations"



Dr. sc. Tijani Hadad, predsjednik FIJET-a, Mirjana Rebić, generalna tajnica FIJET-a i Salah Attia, Vice President FIJET-a i President of FAJET-a / Dr. sc. Tijani Hadad, president of FIJET, Mirjana Rebic, Secretary General of FIJET and Salah Attia, Vice President of FIJET and President of FAJET



Tina Eterović-Čubrilo, predsjednica FIJET-Croatia, u radnom predsjedništvu FIJET – Congress/ Tina Eterović-Čubrilo, president of FIJET Croatia, in working presidency of FIJET - Congress



Radni dio FIJET - Congressa "Dialogue between civilizations"(Casablanca, 8.09.2013.) / Working part of FIJET - Congress "Dialogue between civilizations" (Casablanca, 09.08.2013.)





Izuzetan medijski interes za zaključke FIJET – Congress / Exceptional media interest for the conclusions of FIJET - Congress

## MOROCCO – STILL UNDER FRENCH INFLUENCE

Moroccan Casablanca and Marrakesh hosted the 55th FIJET - World Federation of Travel Journalists and Writers congress from September 7th to 12th. One hundred and fifty three delegates and guests from 17 countries participated, among them 20 journalists, writers and photographers from Croatia. Morocco has a population of over 35 million and an area of 710,850 km<sup>2</sup> (274,460 sq mi). The political capital is Rabat, although the largest city is Casablanca. The oldest of the imperial cities, Fès is the symbolic heart of Morocco. Other major cities include Marrakesh, Tangier, Tetouan, Salé, Agadir, Meknes, Oujda, Kenitra, and Nador. Morocco has a history of independence not shared by its neighbours. Its rich culture is a blend of Arab, Berber (indigenous African) and also other African and European influences. Between 15.000 and 10.000 BC ancestors of the Berbers appear in North Africa. After Phoenicians, Roman, Vandals and the Byzantine rule, between 698 and 740 Berber tribes people embrace Islam (to 98% the main religion in Morocco). In 780 the exiled Arab

ISSN 1333-6371

noble Moulay Idris wins respect of Berber tribes and establishes the first Moroccan state with Fès as its capital. Later, different Berber dynasties move their capital between Marrakesh, Meknes and Fès.

But most influence on today's Morocco is felt from the French protectorate between 1912 and 1956. The official language is Literary Arabic. Since three years ago, only in public schools, Berber language started to be taught too, together with the French. In private schools, the Literary Arabic, French and English are taught. To Europeans, it is almost unbelievable, that all administration and public communication is in French only although French is not their official language. Even all inscriptions on the railway stations are in French only ! For foreign individual tourist it is very difficult to move in Morocco without the basic knowledge of French. In the north of the country, in and around Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, local population speaks Spanish. The French contribution was threefold: France built roads and railways, developed the port of Casablan-

ca virtually from the fisherman harbour and moved the political capital to Rabat. In the French zone, new towns were built next to the old medinas, preserving in this way their original structure. The process of colonisation in the French zone was rapid. From a few thousand people before 1912, by 1929 the number of foreigners living in Morocco rose to more than 100.000. They mainly bought large areas of fertile land, improving the agricultural production. Today main income of Morocco comes from export of phosphates, tourism and agriculture (olives, oranges). Morocco is world third biggest producer of phosphates, coming mainly from the area of the occupied West Sahara (since 1976). Second occasion when the number of Europeans in Morocco virtually doubled, was during the WWII. After Franco came to power in Spain in 1939 and Hitler overran France in 1940, many Europeans, particularly of Jew origin, tried to reach Lisbon with the intention of emigrating to the Americas. The authors of the very famous American film *Casablanca*, with Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman, want us to believe that it was filmed in Casablanca. In fact American actors never stepped on Moroccan soil - everything was filmed in Hollywood studios. And the popular restaurant-bar „Rick's Cafe“ in Casablanca was built many years later, with the interior to look like in the film. In that film, a legendary hero of the French Resistance, who has escaped Nazi imprisonment, and his wife Ilsa, arrive in Casablanca with hopes of getting to Lisbon. Showing up at Rick's Café Américain, a popular nightclub owned by Rick Blaine, an American expatriate, they learn that the person who was going to sell them the proper exit visas, the so called "letters of transit", has been arrested by the Germans. They also learn that Rick, a former lover of Victor Laszlo's wife, possesses these valuable letters of transit. Ilsa, who is torn between her love for her husband and her love for Rick, promises to stay with Rick if he will get her husband safely out of Casablanca. Rick agrees, but in the end provides them both with letters of transit so that they can leave together. The historical facts are that the film was set in unoccupied Africa (under the French protectorate, i. e. part of the Vichy France) in December 1941. Just

before the movie "*Casablanca*" was ready for release, the Allies landed in North Africa and scored a victory in the Battle of Casablanca. The film was released just eighteen days after the Allied landing. Casablanca, with a population of 4 million, is by far Morocco's largest city, industrial, congress and banking centre, the biggest port. For tourists, the most interesting and rising above the Atlantic, is the Hassan II Mosque, the world's third-largest religious monument. It was finished in August 1993 after 10,000 craftsmen worked on it for five years. The mosque can hold 25,000 worshippers and up to 80,000 more can be accommodated in the esplanade around it. It has the highest minaret in the world and at 210 m it is visible from miles around. The interior of the mosque is fitted out with a centrally heated floor, electric doors and a sliding roof. The mosque is said to have cost around USD 600 million and, remarkably, was paid for largely by public subscriptions. From 1912 Casablanca began to grow beyond the old walls of the medina (today of no particular interest). In the 1930s Mauresque architecture developed a blend of French colonial and traditional Moroccan styles inspired by Art Deco. About 1 km southeast of town is the „nouvelle medina“, also known as the Quartier Habous. Built in 1930s, it is a kind of idealised French version of a Moroccan medina with a large collection of bazaars and craft shops. West of the town are some 30 km beaches. The area of Ain Diab is very trendy area, with four-star hotels, up-market restaurants, bars, nightclubs, shopping centres and one has to have a wallet to match. The beaches are wall-to-wall occupied with clubs and swimming pools and charge costly entrance fees. Marrakesh (one million inhabitants) spectacular setting against the snow-capped High Atlas Mountains lingers long in the mind of most travellers, and the famous Djemaa el-Fna square provides perhaps the greatest open-air spectacle in the world. Marrakesh has an entirely different feel from its sister cities in the north. It remains unmistakably more African than cosmopolitan Casablanca and more Berber than proud medieval Fès. Founded in 1062 by the Almoravid sultan Yusef bin Tachfin, Marrakesh was to become one of the Islamic world's most important artistic

and cultural centres. His son Ali, born to the Christian slave mother, commissioned construction of the extensive underground irrigation canals which still supply Marrakesh's gardens. Inside the city's red stone and earthen ramparts artisans from Muslim Spain were busy erecting the first of the refined, Andalusian-style buildings. During next centuries Marrakesh was several times destroyed and rebuilt. Under the French protectorate new city was laid out and the medina (old town) revitalised and resettled. Since then Marrakesh has thrived thanks largely to tourism. Most of the famous hotel chains have built their hotels here. Each looks more like a hotel settlement, with the big pool or several of them between pavilions. In fact hotels here are completely different from the one in Casablanca. There, top class business hotels have indoor pools and spa facilities within the building. The medina walls enclose an enormous amount of open space. It is not until you have penetrated beyond the large and irregularly shaped Djerma el-Fna, the focal point of the medina, that you reach the traditional maze of souqs and twisting alleys. Although it's lively at any hour of day, the square comes into its own at dusk. Rows of open-air food stalls appear, smoking the immediate area with mouth-watering aromas. Jugglers, story-tellers, snake charmers, musicians, acrobats and their spectators fill the area. On the outer edges, kerosene lanterns ablaze, are the juice stalls. Though cheap (a glass of fresh orange juice costs 4 Drh - some 3,5 HRK), it is not recommended for tourists to drink them. Nor to buy any food. The sellers have no facilities to wash the glasses or plates. The tap water, even at the top class hotels, is not safe for drinking. The stroll through medina will be the real start of your journey through time. Here everyone attends to his affairs, as he has for centuries. Thousands of foodstuffs, fabrics and handicrafts shops in the medina and its souqs, smells and odours in the tanners' quarter will carry you away. And for refreshment, take one of the horse-drawn carriages available in the city to the gardens of Ménara or to the Jardin Majorelle, once property of the deceased French couturier Yves Saint Laurent.

From miles in any direction one can see the 12th century 70 metres tall minaret of the Koutoubia Mosque. The most famous of the city's palaces is the Palais el-Badi, built between 1578 and 1602 with the marble from Italy and precious building materials from as far away as India. Of course, there are many other palaces and interesting buildings. The old Jewish quarter, established in the 16th century, now populated mainly by Muslims, still has quite a different look from the rest of the city. But most striking is that all the buildings in Marrakesh, old and new ones, are painted with the same colour - the earth red, like the land surrounding Marrakesh. But, since main interest of the participants of the FIJET Congress was tourism, the author of this articles has had opportunity to visit twice (on the occasion of another congress a couple of years ago and recently) the famous La Mamounia hotel. Built between 1925 and 1929 for the then-French-controlled Moroccan railways, this hotel was the biggest at that time and in 2010 proclaimed the best hotel of the world by The Leading Hotels of the World and the influent travel magazine Condé Nast. The Mamounia was and is the favoured destination of rich Europeans. Six signature apartments carry the names of the most important guests - like Winston Churchill who stayed there for the climate and painting. The overnight in his apartment, for one or two persons, without breakfast, costs 2.500 Euro. The cheapest single room, with street view, costs 500 Euro. Between 10 am and 4pm tourist may visit the halls and lush gardens, but sneakers and shorts are not allowed.

The imperial city of Fès, with 1,500,000 inhabitants, is the capital of traditional Moroccan culture, cradle of knowledge, for which its superb medersas are a flamboyant symbol. A medersa is a school where the Koran is taught along with all the classic subject of learning: mathematics, grammar, history, astronomy, medicine... In Morocco, and especially in Fès, medersas have the important role of integrating students from other regions. Among 420 mosques in Fès, the biggest is the great Kairaouine Mosque and University, built by a very rich lady between 859 and 862. It is one of the world's oldest and a highly regarded centre of Muslim learning. It houses one of the finest

libraries in the Muslim world and there are usually 300 students in residence. As one of the Morocco's most traditional cities, Fès is generally regarded with a certain amount of awe. A disproportionate share of Morocco's intellectual and economic elite comes from there. Even the women are also considered to be most elegant and much sought after as wives. When the news came out that Mohammed V' new bride (even an computer engineer) was from Fès, the locals were not surprised. Fès is divided into three distinct parts: Fès el-Bali (the core of the medina) in the east, Fès el-Jdid (containing the old Jewish part and the Royal Palace) in the centre and the ville nouvelle constructed by the French. Fès was well established by 809. Fès has adapted to modern life without losing its traditions. Its habitants have almost the same way of life as they had in the 13th century. Its cooking has such a fine reputation that several hotels and companies now organize courses of Fès cook-

ing. During these participants visit markets, buy food and put what they have learnt in to practice. You can, also, enrol in pottery, calligraphy, Arabo-Andalusian music courses. The old part of Fès with its numerous souks is a paradise for craftsmen whose timelessness will charm you. You must stroll through its alleys in order to truly appreciate the architectural marvels found there. Adobe and brick walls, pillars decorated with zelliges (mosaic tiling) and climbing patios are among the gems of the medina's refined architecture. Different alley separate souks, each with the different products and smells. The famous cobalt blue is the signature of Fès pottery.

Received: 2013 - 09 - 20

Maja Stanić (MEcon, Zagreb,  
Croatia)

&

Mario Plenković (University of Zagreb, Za-  
greb, Croatia)



Francuski utjecaj na sliku nove Casablance / French influence on the image of the new Casablance