

The Lure of the Sahara: Implications of Libya's Desert Tourism

INES KOHL*

Europeans, besides considering the desert as a region of extreme aridness, attach to it associations of mythic dimensions, and this combination of reality and fantasy makes a journey into the desert an alluring prospect. In the middle of the 1970s this fascination with the desert gave birth to a new sector in the tourist industry – Sahara Tourism.

But European conceptions and perceptions of the desert, it must be noted, are one-sided. The Sahara is associated with sand dunes, green and fertile oases, mysterious people and, of course, with nomadic life. These associations have been fostered by travel reports of the first European explorers of the 19th century as well as by memorable films such as "Lawrence of Arabia",¹ "The Sheltering Sky",² or "The English Patient".³ It is tempting to walk in the tracks of Heinrich Barth,⁴ Gustav Nachtigal⁵ or Ladislaus Eduard Almásy⁶ and experience the same impressions of a virginal landscape among its exotic inhabitants.

These are, after all, artificial worlds a tourist will be looking for; he travels with the expectation of finding his speculations fully confirmed. Accordingly advertising slogans suggest these dimensions of an exotic and adventurous experience to desert tourists.⁷

Ninety-eight % of Libya is desert. Sand areas (*Erg* or *Edeyen*), however, cover only small parts of that surface. Regarding the whole Sahara, only 20% consists of sand, the major parts being stone and gravel (*Hamada*, *Serir*). Libya's south-west, *Fezzan*, encompasses widespread sand areas (*Edeyen Uwbari*, *Edeyen Murzuq*), including spots of scenic beauty and some unique and fascinating cultural-historical relics. Among Sahara tourists, the *Akakus-Tadrart* mountain, the *Messak Settafet* and *Messak Mellet*, the *Edeyen Uwbari* with the lakes of *Mandara* and *Gabron*, as well as the oases of *Ghadames* and *Ghat*, rank among the most frequently visited areas in Libya.

The Genesis of Tourism in Libya and Development Goals

Libya's experience in tourism is fairly recent. It was only during the years 1988-1992 that Libya began to open its borders after 20 years of voluntary isolation. Two factors combined to usher in tourism: the unstable economic situation in the early 1990s caused by the sanctions imposed after Lockerbie, and Qaddafi's political

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reforms tending towards some degree of privatization and liberalization. The state tried to support the economy with the establishment of a further economic sector: tourism. In a development plan drawn in 1995 in consultation with the WTO, the World Tourism Organization, it outlined the main aims of the new sector:⁸

Creation and development of a touristic infrastructure
Correction of the negative public image of Libya
Exclusion of mass tourism in order to protect the population from AIDS, and banning of drugs and alcohol, in adherence to Islamic values

Libyan citizens reacted with enormous interest and enthusiasm. The new industry offered welcome opportunities for employment at a time of an economic hardship and increasingly serious food shortages. The expanded liberalization of the private sector begun in 1992, which should have finally eliminated the financial crisis of the 1980s, resulted in enormously rising prices.⁹ Salaries, however, were not accordingly adjusted and, what is worse, civil servants and workers in public enterprises suffered from having their salaries paid late or even not paid at all. This is why most Libyans were forced, and are still forced, to take on several (two to three) jobs to support their families. Tourism, moreover, offers the chance to obtain hard currency. And in the south of Libya, where unemployment is rising sharply, tourism has attracted Libyan youths who have found in the new industry an alternative to migrating northwards. There can be no doubt that ennui with the prolonged isolation from the outside world has also contributed significantly to the speed with which the new industry has established itself in the country.

To illustrate the significant position tourism occupies in Libya, I shall discuss some local strategies that have been formulated to deal with this new economic opportunity. The following four examples, derived from Ghat,¹⁰ reveal typical characteristics of the recent touristic developments and can serve as a paradigm for all of Libya.

Local Tourist Agencies and the Significance of the Tuareg

By 1992 tourist agencies made their presence felt and then began to mushroom and become a regular feature of the tourist industry in Libya. In Ghat all the agencies developed from simple improvised beginnings, with a circle of relatives and acquaintances, largely Tuareg families, organizing journeys into the Akakus mountains, an area declared as a national park. The locals have clearly profited from the protection policy which lays it as a condition that visitors may be permitted here only if they are accompanied by local guides.

In our company lots of Arabs from the north are working, but our guides are Tuareg, because the tourists accept Tuareg only. (Tour leader, Ghat)

We have four guides, old men, Tuareg, they speak English, French and Tamashek. They know the region and the history well and the tourists are quite pleased with them. (Tour leader, Ghat)

These extracts from interviews with workers in tourist agencies in Ghat are typical of the impressions that the Tuareg leave on Western tourists, impressions which are, to a large extent, fulfillment of pre-conceived expectations of the exotic and fascinating life of the desert and its inhabitants. The Tuareg, like the desert they dwell in, are idealized; and the tourist clings to the stereotype even when reality tells him or her a different tale. The aura of glamour and mystery surrounding the Tuareg arises, for the most part, from their being conspicuously different from surrounding communities and social groups. Their social and tribal structure is quite unique, and one feature that makes them immediately fascinating to European tourists is their deviation from the Islamic norm of wearing the *hijab*; in the Tuareg culture it is the men, not the women, who wear the *hijab*, the traditional Islamic veil. Add to this their nomadic mode of existence, with the fascinating associations in the western mind of a roving life and unbridled freedom. European tourists welcome and pay for the opportunity to spend a few weeks in an environment they have so long fantasized about, far from the busy crowds and congestion of cities. They feel that their tour gives them a direct, immediate experience of the desert and its freedom. This is true, but it is reassuring all the same for them to know that, when it comes to the pinch, they call fall back on the devices and facilities that modern technology has on offer: science in the service of romance, technical reality as the handmaid of pastoral dream.

But to be a tourist agent in Libya is no easy job. The red tape and bureaucracy, in particular, make it more precarious than need be. Restrictions on the entry of tourists to the country or to certain areas are arbitrary and may change at any time. Moreover, the quality, and even the availability, of communications in remote area is poor. Worst of all are the restrictions the government imposes on tourist agencies, the questions that often arise on their legitimacy and on what they are authorized to do or not to do. This naturally aggravates the problems this nascent industry faces and complicates the development of local tourist agencies. For the majority of the people of Ghat, and for the Tuareg, tourism offers a chance of survival, the only escape route open to them now away from the ubiquitous and rising unemployment.

The Revaluation of Old Towns

During the 1970s and 1980s Libya saw a "modernization boom" released by Colonel Qaddafi's reform politics. Thanks to an extensive social security system, Libya developed from one of the poorest African countries to one of the richest, and ordinary Libyans abandoned their old mud-houses and moved into state-subsidized modern housing.

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as a world cultural heritage site, the town witnessed a flurry of renovation and restoration. Although other old towns are far less splendid and certainly less preserved, Libya priding itself upon its cultural heritage, has made Ghadames the ideal which it strives to make other cities follow. Many cities and villages are now reconstructing their old quarters, which were abandoned during the 1980s, and are trying to make them accessible to tourists.

The *madina qadima* of Ghat in its current architectural state of preservation cannot hold a candle to Ghadames. Ghat, however, has an immense historical significance as one of the most important caravan bases in the 18th and 19th century.¹¹ A few years ago the local Office for Archaeology and Tourism decided to rebuild the city walls and encouraged resettlements (largely of Tuareg craftsmen from Niger) in order to prevent further abandonment of the traditional mud houses.

Annual Festivals

Local festivals closely associated with the old towns have been introduced. In Ghat, for example, the annual *mahrajan*, first celebrated in 1994-995, is held for three days during New Year. It is during these days that the townspeople decorate and embellish the *madina qadima*, exhibit traditional handicraft (forging, weaving, wood carving, Pottery, etc.), exhibit local customs (birth, circumcision, marriage, death), and stage music and dance performances. The climax of the *mahrajan* is the demonstration of an *iloujan*, a typical and most spectacular ceremony of the Tuareg, a camel race. It is a tough competition in which each camel rider tries his best to gain the tributes and the acclamations that await the winner.

A regular feature of the *mahrajan* is an annual Arabic journal in Arabic (including an English page). In addition to the festival's programme, the Journal contains various articles on historical and cultural aspects of the region. The 2000/01 issue has an Arabic article entitled "Tourism of the Future and the Future of Tourism", in which the author, Atiq Abd al-Qader Dinda, discusses the importance of tourism for Libya, which he describes as the most interesting country in the world. "Libya," he writes "is unique," for here one can find *all* elements of tourism: a long coastline in the north, historic villages in the centre, incredible nature and, above all, the invaluable south.

Tourism and the *Inadan*, the Tuareg Artisan

Increasing aridity and civil war in Mali and Niger (1990-95) destroyed the general economic basis, forcing people to emigrate. Agades, a centre of Tuareg handicrafts, experienced an economic breakdown. Many of its artisans took refuge in Libya and tried to make a living in the growing desert tourism.

Whereas the Tuareg generally, during the period of independence and integration in different national states, lost more and more of their power and influence, the *Inadan*, the Tuareg craftsman,¹² profited from that development. Because of

integration in national states, the subsequent ethnic heterogeneity, and the growing desert tourism in the 1970s (especially in Algeria, Mali and Niger), their employment opportunities increased. The Tuareg were no longer their only employers. Their circle of employers and customers began to encompass Arabs, Hausa, Bambara, and Fulani, as well as affluent tourists.

One young *Ened* from Agades decided to migrate in 1998 with his family to Libya in order to "live under better circumstances and to live in freedom." In the course of the civil war his customers dwindled, his camel herds died, leaving him with a family he could no longer support. Now living in Ghat, he applauds the prosperity that tourism has brought:

Tourism is good, because now we can sell lots of our jewelry. Before, the Libyans did not give us any work. Only few of us found some work in agriculture. Now it is better.

The situation is indeed better, but not easier. The cost of living in Libya is extremely high, and all the income the *Inadan* want to save in order to return to their home country is spent on their living needs. To handle the business in Ghat the artisans have formed a community which serves as a workers' league, but it also serves an even more important purpose: it has provided these artisans with an indispensable social network, making up for the meagre contact they have with native Libyans, which is almost restricted to officialdom.

Implications of the Touristic Development

The strength of touristic impacts in general depends on multiple determinants: the kind of tourism, the predominant touristic interest, the number of travellers and their adjustment to local standards and values, the economic situation and the tourism politics of the host country. These are only some of the influencing factors.

Touristic impact depends basically on the perception of the "host".¹³ If tourism is received positively, the effects will be more far-reaching than if tourism is regarded negatively. The degree of such positive impact will, again, depend on multiple factors, foremost amongst which is the hosts willingness to mingle and have direct contact with the tourists. Several studies¹⁴ have shown an interesting correlation: the greater the number of tourists in a given country the less is the willingness of the population to communicate with them. This reserved attitude ranges from indifference to rejection. Before regarding the specific situation in Libya, it will be useful to consider a theoretic approach, which charts ethnic perceptions and reactions in relation to touristic development. Based on visitor-resident irritations, this causation theory is called "Doxey's Irridex":¹⁵

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Euphoria	Visitors are welcome and there is little planning.
Apathy	Visitors are taken for granted and contact becomes more formal.
Annoyance	Saturation is approached and the local people have misgivings. Planners attempt to control via increasing infrastructure rather than limiting growth.
Antagonism	Open expression of irritation and planning is obvious yet promotion is increased to offset the deteriorating reputation of the resort.

In the beginning, the hosts react with euphoria to tourism. Visitors are welcomed as guests, treated in a friendly way and new sources of income strengthen the positive reaction.

With increasing touristic development, the initial euphoria gives way to apathy, a passive acceptance of tourism as a constant feature of the general scene. The locals get used to foreigners; the element of novelty diminishes and so does the eagerness for closer contact with the visitors.

In the third phase, the culmination of the touristic development, touristic infrastructure and facilities predominate the local scene, increasingly changing original and traditional features. The locals are disgusted and fed up: having seen too much of the tourists' faces, they would not mind now seeing their backs.

Antagonism represents the fourth and the most serious stage of the above paradigm, where aversion may turn to hostility and even open aggression.

On close examination of the specific situation in Libya, I have come to the conclusion that the locals' reaction lies at the beginning of the second stage, where acceptance tinged with a touch of apathy may be noticed. Tourism, having become part of their daily life, the local people's behaviour towards visitors is still courteous and hospitable, but the initial warmth, engendered by novelty, is on the wane. Moreover, the locals have developed some notions about the tourists and begun to pigeonhole them. They can now guess at first sight from which country this or that group of tourists comes and feel adept at ascribing certain attributes and characteristics to the various nationalities. Your Germans, Austrians and Dutch are calm people, preferring unhurried and comfortable journeys. Your Italians and

French are loud, fast and adamant about their routes; they can also be, at times, pigheaded and arrogant.

In general, tourists and locals are as yet on good, positive terms. But recent years have witnessed increasing aversion to the behaviour of tourists. Local women are critical of women travellers; they are not properly attired and thus show little regard for Islamic customs. Men, on the other hand, find that tourists are not considerate enough when it comes to local problems. Many tourists seem to regard the Sahara as a vast playground, forgetting that the desert is a very sensitive habitat whose ecology can become unbalanced quite fast. It is this cavalier attitude of the tourists to what the desert means that make some locals shun visitors.

In the early 1990s the situation was different. At that time in Ghat the euphoria and curiosity about the tourists could be seen in the children's reactions. When in 1992 satellite TV was introduced into Libya, there was great excitement in the village, since one could see western movies for the first time. Primarily synchronized Mexican soap operas and television serials were broadcast, and the children were fascinated by the strange and odd-sounding names of the actors. This coincided with a growing number of tourists visiting Ghat. The children, wishing to know if these foreigners had also hilarious names similar to those they had heard on television, devised a game by which they could elicit from the tourists a response revealing whether one or more of them did in fact have such a name. Kids tried to outdo each other at this game.

Tourism, as can be seen from the above example, is a complex phenomenon. Its effects should never be examined in isolation. The proper context within which to study and weigh these effects is the entire social scene. Account must be taken of the whole matrix of relations, where media, migration and encounters between tourists and locals become interactive factors. In this equation the television plays a decisive role. As the tourist in the preliminary stages of his journey associates certain visions, images and stereotypes with the host country, the locals, thanks to satellite television, have their stock conceptions of what Europeans are like. Because the majority of western channels broadcast American movies, the locals conception of the typical European is, to say the least, based on an unrepresentative image. And thus both host and guest have their share of distorted images and prejudices. Stereotypes, caricatures and clichés are not a peculiarity of the tourist. They exist on both sides.

Tourism is regarded primarily as a stimulus for economic revival and progress. What makes this a rather narrow point of view is that it ignores the fact that economics does not operate in a vacuum. Economic processes and results have tangible social, cultural and ecological effects, and to separate economic from social aspects is to engage in a sterile exercise of hairsplitting.

To assess and illustrate the recent implications of the touristic development in Libya, I shall point out a few salient issues. But I must hasten to note that with only ten years since Libya reopened its tourist industry, much is still in a state of flux, and it is too early to fully recognize many of the relevant effects of this

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development. Some basic consequences, however, are sufficiently conspicuous and I shall discuss these under the following headings:

1. Labour and Migration
2. Cultural Revitalization or the Big Sale of Tradition?
3. Playground Sahara
4. Tourism and the Changing Image

Labour and Migration

The creation of new jobs and possibilities of labour are major socio-economic impulses. In Ghat, for example, *all* consequences and impacts of the touristic development correlate with the limited possibilities of employment. Agriculture has natural limits in all of Libya – more than 98% of the country is not suitable for cultivation¹⁶ – and in Ghat it has stagnated because of several circumstances (lack of rain, desertification, a decreasing ground water level). Handicrafts are no longer significant and have been replaced by industrial products. Public service work and government jobs are also limited.

Tourism and sectors directly or indirectly related to it offer new, encouraging possibilities of labour. The hotel and restaurant industry, camp sites, tourist agencies and tourist guides provide, especially for the Libyan youth and the Tuareg population in the south, interesting chances and fresh opportunities that obviate the alternative of migration to the north. Among the activities that may be indirectly related to tourism one may include agriculture, construction industries and all sorts of handicrafts. In all these activities male dominance prevails, the workforce being composed of native Libyans and migrants from Libya's southern neighbouring countries.

It must be remembered, however, that migration is not new for Libya. The country has known foreign workers since the discovery of petroleum in the 1960s, and their number has been high ever since, although it oscillates at times up and down, and according to nationality, in response to developments in Libya's external relations and foreign policy. In the 1970s foreign labour increased because of a rise in development projects (e.g. irrigation projects in Kufra), which saw Libya develop from one of the poorest countries in Africa to one of the richest. At that time around 40 percent of all inhabitants were foreigners (primarily from Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Palestine and Jordan). Libya's reform politics in the 1980s banned illegal immigration, especially from Mali, Ghana, Nigeria, Sudan and from Chad. Serving as cheap labour, they are thought to have impaired the labour market. The Libyan government, furthermore, blamed them for the rise in crime, drug abuse and prostitution. Libya's attitude towards foreign labour is a sad example of the state's policies towards foreigners. Although these migrants were absolutely necessary for the realization of all the development projects, the Libyan government exploited them for political ends, depending on their country of origin. Libya's bilateral

relations towards Arab and African countries were directly linked with immigration regulations. Deportation was and is often used as a form of reprisal in foreign affairs.¹⁷

Libya's south is the first place of refuge for legal as well as illegal migrants on their journey in search for work (in tourism) and money. Their goal to reach Europe usually remains unattainable, so most of them get stuck in Libya. Ghat, in 2001, was full of such migrants, primarily from Niger, Sudan, Mali and Nigeria, plus a few from Mauritania, Senegal and Ghana.

Cultural Revitalization or the Big Sale of Tradition?

Tourism is always inevitably linked with socio-cultural changes. Industrialization, urbanization, increasing awareness of western economics, improved communication and information facilities, rising social and spatial mobility as well as mass media are, side-by-side with tourism, substantial and effective agents for socio-cultural change.¹⁸

Generally speaking, these phenomena do not necessarily lead to a loss of cultural identity. In fact quite the reverse may happen. Thus when the authorities begin to show a touristic interest in the local culture, this interest, though often superficial, leads in many cases to a revitalization of the cultural heritage. In Ghat, the reconstruction of the old town and the establishment of an annual festival exemplify this process of cultural revitalization.

But the authenticity of this revitalization remains open to question. Is "the culture" lived again because one is convinced of its importance? Or is the life breathed into it in an artificial, attempt to woo the tourists? A critical statement of a 28-year old woman (teacher) in Ghat clarifies the dichotomy between cultural change and revitalization:

Few years ago at festivals we wore traditional clothes; today men buy clothing from Niger or refuse everything except jeans. Also perfume or make-up were inconceivable for girls and unmarried women five years ago. Today pupils come to school with eye-shadow and lipstick. Children and youngsters do not speak Hausa and Targi¹⁹ anymore and everything and everybody models themselves on Europe, on TV and on tourists. I think the old town of Ghat is only saved for inhabitants because the tourists are interested in and pay money for tradition. I believe that in five years our culture, our clothes and our languages will disappear.²⁰

Young people, in particular, enjoy and take delight in tourism, a development which was only to be expected, the country having lived for more than 20 years in self-imposed isolation from the outside world. When, in the early 1990s, this isolation was suddenly broken, other changes took place simultaneously: relative political openness, satellite television and tourism. The new climate is congenial to the young, with the opportunities it allows for youthful ardour, and it is to Western modes of life and Western ideals that they seem to be turning their eyes, seeing in the West an embodiment of what they crave for: freedom, progress, and modernity.

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Tourism is always inevitably linked with socio-cultural changes. Industrialization, urbanization, increasing awareness of western economics, improved communication and information facilities, rising social and spatial mobility as well as mass media are, side-by-side with tourism, substantial and effective agents for socio-cultural change.¹⁸

Generally speaking, these phenomena do not necessarily lead to a loss of cultural identity. In fact quite the reverse may happen. Thus when the authorities begin to show a touristic interest in the local culture, this interest, though often superficial, leads in many cases to a revitalization of the cultural heritage. In Ghat, the reconstruction of the old town and the establishment of an annual festival exemplify this process of cultural revitalization.

But the authenticity of this revitalization remains open to question. Is "the culture" lived again because one is convinced of its importance? Or is the life breathed into it in an artificial, attempt to woo the tourists? A critical statement of a 28-year old woman (teacher) in Ghat clarifies the dichotomy between cultural change and revitalization:

Few years ago at festivals we wore traditional clothes; today men buy clothing from Niger or refuse everything except jeans. Also perfume or make-up were inconceivable for girls and unmarried women five years ago. Today pupils come to school with eye-shadow and lipstick. Children and youngsters do not speak Hausa and Targi¹⁹ anymore and everything and everybody models themselves on Europe, on TV and on tourists. I think the old town of Ghat is only saved for inhabitants because the tourists are interested in and pay money for tradition. I believe that in five years our culture, our clothes and our languages will disappear.²⁰

Young people, in particular, enjoy and take delight in tourism, a development which was only to be expected, the country having lived for more than 20 years in self-imposed isolation from the outside world. When, in the early 1990s, this isolation was suddenly broken, other changes took place simultaneously: relative political openness, satellite television and tourism. The new climate is congenial to the young, with the opportunities it allows for youthful ardour, and it is to Western modes of life and Western ideals that they seem to be turning their eyes, seeing in the West an embodiment of what they crave for: freedom, progress, and modernity.

Playground Sahara

The Sahara is not, as many suppose, a vast sandy playground for fun-seeking pleasure-loving Europeans. It is, rather, a complex and sensitive habitat whose ecological equilibrium can be easily and speedily upset.

It is water that is most susceptible to the negative effects of tourism. The Fezzan is a hyper-arid desert region characterized by extreme weather conditions, where the local population is always confronted with scarcity or even lack of resources. Ghat, although situated at the edge of the fertile Wadi Tanneszouft, has confronted for years an increasingly shrinking level of ground water. Even in the past the agricultural output was not sufficient, forcing the village to be dependent on food imports. But it was water that made Ghat what it was, an important caravan base. Without it, its predestined location on a crossing of several caravan routes, would have availed it little. At the end of the 19th century Ghat possessed 36 sources, of which 15 were artesian wells.²¹ Today all these resources have run dry, and the village is forced to draw on pluvial water from a depth of 400 metres. In 1985 the water consumption in Ghat was 590 litres per person.²² Comparing this figure with water consumption in Vienna, 150 litres only per person,²³ it is easy to conjecture that the bulk of consumption in Ghat represents the water used for artificial irrigation. In the summer months the region around Ghat usually suffers severe shortages in water supply, but at present the water is still sufficient for the local population. But what if tourists continue to increase? Can Fezzan survive increasing water consumption?

Apart from the problematic lack of responsibility for water, there is also a missing consciousness among tourists. It occurs again and again that tourists wash their laundry in gueltas with washing powder, without knowing that gueltas are drinking water resources for humans and animals; that tourists consume complete tree populations for a campfire, without consideration that wood is vital for nomads or that visitors in their collector's mania chisel prehistoric paintings and rock art out of stone and destroy cultural monuments irreparably.

For the future, the question that raises itself is: how can such damage be prevented? Solutions exist in the establishment of national parks and, more importantly, in the creation, among tourists, travel agencies and local guides, of a proper awareness of concerning these problems.

Tourism and the Changing Image

One of the aims stated in Libya's development plan for tourism is the correction of the negative image the country has internationally.

On being asked about their associations with Libya, 500 German respondents gave answers revealing that the country is viewed with rejection and that it does have an image problem which it needs to solve.²⁴ But such associations with Libya are, in fact, one-sided and refer only to the political situation. Despite the

dominance of words with a negative political impact, such as “terror and terrorism”, “dictatorship”, “war”, “fanaticism” or “poison gas” in statements about Libya, it must be said that such associations do not represent the reality. Qaddafi’s name, and character, is the most frequent of these negative associations.

It is clear that Libya is identified first and foremost, and very strongly, with the person of Qaddafi. His media presence and his several political actions seem to shape the picture strongly and have obviously led to the fact that Libya in Germany is dissociated and evaluated rather negatively.²⁵

The Libyan people are aware of this negative view. They hope that with rising tourism, and the direct contacts it entails, a more correct image is bound to emerge. The majority of people in Ghat, for example, are of the opinion that tourism will diminish prejudices, promote tolerance and will finally lead to sympathy with Libya.

It is both interesting and significant to hear the voices of young Libyans on the subject. For it is into the hands of this young generation that the power to make decisions will fall, including decisions on the direction that the tourist industry and its development will take. To reflect their opinions, ideas and conceptions on the current position of tourism, it will be useful to consider the following excerpts taken from essays written by the pupils of *al-madrassa al-thanawiya* (high school) in Ghat on the topic: “Describe your opinion, your impressions and experiences with tourism”.²⁶

Tourism is necessary for the preservation of historical relics and for showing them to the whole world. (Youth of 20)

Tourism is new, interesting and pleasant. Tourists convey knowledge and I am of the opinion that the Office for Tourism should treat them very well. (Boy 18)

Tourism is very important for me but at present I’m very busy with school. But after it, I’d like to work in tourism, because it’s good for Libya and all our historical and archaeological sites. (Boy 18)

If there is a culture and a cultural heritage, tourism is always important. (Boy 17)

Tourism is necessary because tourists, after their visit, know more about Libya and Libyan culture. For tourists it is very important to be acquainted with the tradition of the country they travel in. Back home they report their experiences and so everybody will then know about Ghat. (Boy 17)

Tourism is important for the culture and the income. Tourism is a good thing for a changing cultural behaviour and it is a good way of building relations between Libya and Europe. (Girl 17)

The pupils’ answers clearly demonstrate their conviction that tourism constitutes a positive development, and their views can be summed up as follows:

Tourism provides a new sort of income,
 Tourism protects historical and archaeological valuable sites,
 Tourism conveys knowledge concerning Libya's culture and tradition,
 Tourism may create a relationship between Libya and Europe.

Dependencies of the Touristic Development and Future Perspectives

Tourism, from the tourist's point of view, is generally governed by a number of contingencies and uncontrollable factors relating primarily to the requirements, conditions and policies of the host country.

In the case of Libya, unpredictable factors and contingencies affect both guests (international tourists) and hosts, Libyan communities. The tourist industry in Libya today is closely tied to, and dependent on, the political situation at any given time, with a large array of concomitant implications: arbitrarily open or closed borders, monthly changing entry conditions, varying time scales for the granting of visas and the duration of their validity, changing requirements as to the necessary documents, etc. All this leads to complications that affect not only the entry for visitors but affect, almost in equal measure, the Libyan communities that depend or thrive on tourism. For it must be remembered that the new-found, tourism-based occupations support and provide livelihood for whole villages. With lengthy absence, especially of individual or private tourists (as often happens), families which depend on this class of tourists, and which are not connected with the official infrastructure, will often find themselves on the brink of economic ruin.

The future of tourism in Libya hangs in the balance. Much depends on the direction that the development of tourism will take and on the way Libya will deal with it. Tourism could stimulate change and provide a unique means of communication, a cultural bridge between Libya and the rest of the world. For this to happen, two conditions must be clearly understood and fulfilled, and they both constitute a mutual responsibility with regard to tourism as a human activity and a cultural encounter. On one hand, our western tourists must realize that tourism is more than a pastime for idle seekers of irresponsible recreation and pseudo-adventure. Tourism is a more complex activity and can be a source of intellectual and emotional enrichment, a human experience that deserves careful reflection and responsible attitude. On the other hand, Libya must similarly show a serious and committed attitude to tourism, a commitment that is based on a clearly formulated policy and a full understanding of what it wants. It has to make a bold, unhesitant decision on whether it wants to espouse the cause of tourism and, consequently, to develop it. If, on careful consideration, it decides to take this course, then it must hold to it firmly and not vacillate, changing its rules and bureaucratic requirements from day to-day, leaving both its visitors and local communities at the mercy of the fluctuations of red tape and the vicissitudes of politics.

NOTES

1. Directed by David Lean, GB 1962.
2. Book by Paul Bowles, directed by Bernardo Bertolucci, GB 1990.
3. Directed by Anthony Minghella, USA 1996.
4. 1821-65, German.
5. 1834-85, German.
6. 1929-49, Hungarian.
7. Herbert Popp, *Wüstentourismus in Nordafrika*, in: *Geographische Rundschau* 9/2000, p. 52: "Es sind letztlich Kunstwelten, die mancher Tourist sucht; er reist in Erwartung, sein (Vor-) Urteil über die Wüste durch eine Reise voll bestätigt zu finden. Entsprechend suggerieren die Werbetexte der Reiseveranstalter dem Wüstentouristen diese Dimensionen einer exotischen und abenteuerlichen Erlebniswelt". He further describes how that myth developed. Sand deserts signal that water is stored in them, and lots of oasis are situated at the edge of Erg areas therefore. The first European explorers travelled from one oasis to another, to supply themselves they had to follow human settlements. That is why they were quite frequently confronted with sand areas. Their reports let the impression develop that the greater part of the Sahara consists of sand.
8. Klaus-Peter Kaschke, *Libyen – Ein Land öffnet sich*, in: *Der Arabische Almanach*, Bonn 1997, p. 3739.
9. Dieter Nohlen / Franz Nuscheler (Ed.), *Handbuch der Dritten Welt*, Band 6, 1993. Christian Operschall / Charlotte Teuber (Ed.), *Libyen, die verkannte Revolution?*, Wien 1987. Herbert Strunz / Monique Dorsch, *Libyen. Zurück auf der Weltbühne*, Internationale Märkte, Band 3, Frankfurt am Main 2000.
10. Ghat was an important historic settlement, junction and centre for Trans-Sahara trade (Gottlob Adolf Krause, *Aufzeichnungen über die Stadt Chat in der Sahara*, in: *ibid.*, *Zeitschrift für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, Band 17, 1878. G.A. Krause, *Zur Geschichte von Fesan und Tripoli in Afrika*, in: *Zeitschrift für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, Band 13, p. 188. Paul Borchardt, *Die großen Ost-West-Karawanenstrassen durch die Libysche Wüste*, in: *Petermanns Mitteilungen aus Justus Perthes Geographischer Anstalt* 70, 1924, p. 219-223. Najmi Rihab Dayyaf, *Madina Ghat wati-jara al-qawafil as-sahrawiya*, in: *Journal of Historical Researches* 30, Libya 1999).
The village has around 12.000 inhabitants, composed of Tuareg, Arabs and migrants from Libya's southern neighbouring countries (largly from Niger, Mali, Sudan and Nigeria). The oasis is situated on the border with Algeria, west of the Akakus mountains at the edge of the fertile Wadi Taneszouft.
11. Heinrich Barth, *Reisen und Entdeckungen in Nord- und Centralafrika in den Jahren 1849 bis 1855, Tagebuch seiner im Auftrag der Britischen Regierung unternommenen Reise*, 5 Bände, 1857; Erwin von Bary, *Tagebuch des verstorbenen Dr. Erwin von Bary, geführt auf seiner Reise von Tripolis nach Ghat und Air*, in: *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, Band 15, 1880; G.A. Krause, 1882. Ferdinand Goldstein, *Die Saharastädte Rhat und Agadez*, in: *Globus, Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Länder- und Völkerkunde*, Band 91, 1907, p. 171-175; N.R. Dayyaf 1999.
12. For details to the endogamous group of the Inadan, see among others: Henri Duveyrier, *Les Touaregs du Nord*, Paris, 1864; Gerhard Göttler, *Die Tuareg. Kulturelle Einheit und regionale Vielfalt eines Hirtenvolkes*, Köln 1989; Johannes Nicolaisen, *Ecology and culture of the pastoral Tuareg*, Copenhagen 1963; Joachim Stühler, *Soziale Schichtung und gesellschaftlicher Wandel bei den Ajjer-Twareg in Südostalgerien*, Wiesbaden 1978.
13. With that term, I refer to Smith's concept of "hosts and guests", an ironic solution because tourism is not an unselfish relationship based on hospitality, but rather the fastest-increasing industry. Valene Smith, *Hosts and Guests. The Anthropology of Tourism*, Philadelphia 1989.
14. E.g. Uwe Kievelitz, *Ethno-Tourismus. Ursachen, Formen und Wirkung interkultureller Kurzkontakte*, in: Claus Euler (Ed.), "Eingeborene" – ausgebuht. *Ökologische Zerstörung durch Tourismus*, in: *Ökozid* 5, Gießen 1989; Ursula Biernert, *Wüstentourismus in Südmarokko – das*

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- Beispiel des Tafilalet*, in: *Maghreb-Studien* 11, Passau 1998; Monika Jäggi, *Tourismus und Ressourcennutzung in der südtunesischen Oase Douz*, Frankfurt 1994; Maria Mayrhofer, "How 'they' perceive tourism – another side of the touristic coin: an empirical case study in Goa," Vienna 1997; Martina Fahrnberger, *Mit den Augen der Einheimischen: die Perzeption von Tourismus, dargestellt anhand zweier ausgewählter Regionen unterschiedlichen Erschließungsgrades in Costa Rica*, thesis, Vienna 1999.
15. G.V. Doxey, *A Causation Theory of Visitor-Resident Irritants. Methodology and Research Inference*, The Travel Research Association Conference no. 6, San Diego 1975. Mentioned in: Chris Ryan, *Recreational tourism: a Social Science Perspective*, London 1991, p. 137.
 16. Konrad Schliephake, *Libyen – Natürliche Ressourcen und räumliche Entwicklung*, in: K. Schliephake (Ed.), *Libyen und nordwestliches Ägypten*, in: *Würzburger Geographische Manuskripte*, Band 51, 1999, p. 163-192, p. 163.
 17. Hans-Peter Mattes, *Bilanz der libyschen Revolution. Drei Dekaden politischer Herrschaft Mu'ammars Qaddafis*, in: *Wuqūf* 2001/11-12, p. 13.
 18. Karl Vorlauffer, *Tourismus in Entwicklungsländern. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer nachhaltigen Entwicklung durch Fremdenverkehr*, Darmstadt 1996, p. 201.
 19. Targi is the Arabic equivalent for Tamazight, the Tuareg language.
 20. March 2001, Ghat.
 21. G.A. Krause 1882. N.R. Dayyaf 1999.
 22. Committee for Utilities, *Baladiya Ubari - Ghat, al-Barkat, al-Uwainat, Tahala*, Sebha 1985
 23. Municipal authority Vienna, Austria, MA 31, August 2001.
 24. Dirk Will, *Chancen und Perspektiven eines Tourismus in Libyen*, in: *Würzburger Geographische Manuskripte*, Heft 51, 1999, p. 92-102.
 25. D. Will, 1999, p. 97f. "(Es) lässt sich demnach deutlich erkennen, dass Libyen in erster Linie sehr stark mit der Person Qaddafi identifiziert wird. Seine Medienpräsenz und Aktionen scheinen das Bild stark zu prägen und haben offensichtlich dazu geführt, dass Libyen in Deutschland distanziert und eher negativ bewertet wird."
 26. Topic of the essay: 'ayna takmun 'ahamiyat as-siyaha ladayk wa-ma 'intibauk 'an as-siyaha wa-ma hiya khibratuk fi as-siyaha? Ghat, March 2001.