

# التاريخ والديناميات الاجتماعية

متنوعات مهداة إلى الأستاذ  
حسن حافظي علوي



تنسيق :  
محمد رابطة الدين ومحمد الأكلع

الجزء الثاني

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## Cultural Geography Discourse in Friedrich Gerhard Rohlfs's Journey to the Oases of Draa and Tafilalet

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**Abstract:** This article aims to probe into the cultural geography discourse deployed by the German explorer and pseudo-renegade, Doctor Friedrich Gerhard Rohlfs, in his account, *Adventures in Morocco and Journeys through the Oases of Draa and Tafilalet*. In the latter, Rohlfs combines both informational and experiential discourses during his exploration of and penetration into the oases of Draa and Tafilalet. The author does some cultural geography investigations into Moroccans' ways of life, customs, manners, governance, and cultural values. That is, Rohlfs is artistically adept in combining both physical and cultural geography. The job of Rohlfs, whose discourse is imbued with a nationalist-cum-imperialist tenor, is to explore and represent less-explored parts of Morocco. Hence, the tracks he beats in search of the exotic, the mysterious, and the picturesque, and the geographical, ethnographic, historical, and sociological pieces of information he records in passing, are important as these pieces and itineraries are the very rich fount of the Royal Geographical Society and of Germans' imperialist would-be ambitions in Morocco. Rohlfs' account was one of the most influential texts whose repercussion contributed to triggering the colonialist rivalry between Germany and other imperialist nations in late-nineteenth-century, the era of the so-called «Scramble for Africa.» This paper tries to bring to a sharper focus different rhetorical strategies of cultural geography discourse deployed by Rohlfs in his depiction of the oases of Draa and Tafilalet and their inhabitants, and how this type of discourse practically contributes to the rise of the German colonial discourse.

**Keywords:** Cultural geography, discourse, German-Moroccan relations, representation, Oases

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A group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond,

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which they call «the land of the barbarians.» In other words, this universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is «ours» and an unfamiliar space beyond «ours» which is «theirs» is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary.

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 54

## Introduction

History, social anthropology, sociology, ethnography, journalism, and geography, *inter alia*, wed and intersect with travel writing as a hybrid and protean genre. In the light of the current debates in postcolonial studies, all these fields of knowledge in the nineteenth century in particular contributed to spreading and bolstering imperialist enterprise. Postcolonial theory, and its complex articulation with Marxism, post-structuralism, postmodernism, and cultural studies, was used to raise important questions about what constituted a «critical» human geography. Within Said's project of Orientalism, the concept of knowledge of the Other enables and legitimizes power; and inside the institutionalized practices of Orientalism, the knowledge of the Orient is completed through the reinforcement of negative and bipolar distinctions that rely on arbitrarily imagined geographies. Said believes that «this universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space which is 'theirs' is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary [...] it is enough for 'us' to set up these boundaries in 'our own minds'; 'they' become 'they', and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from 'ours.'»<sup>(1)</sup>

Since travelogues necessarily portray moments of cross-cultural interactions, they are often highly revealing of the so-called «imaginative geographies» that operate not only in the individual traveller's mind, but also in his or her culture more generally. Thus travel accounts often illuminate the mental maps that individuals and cultures have of the world and its inhabitants, and the larger matrix of prejudices, fantasies, and assumptions that they bring to bear on any encounter with, or description of, the Other. Said's work has been doubly important to geographers because of his insistence

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(1) Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conception of the Orient* (London: Routledge, 1978), 54.

that imperialism and colonialism should be conceptualized geographically – as constellations of power that are intrinsically concerned with land, territory, displacement, and dispossession. In a formative collection of essays, Anne Godlewska and Neil Smith noted that while «geography has always pursued a wide range of intellectual agendas simultaneously and ... not all of these can be traced directly to the concerns of empire,» it is clear that «the very formation and institutionalization of the discipline was intricately bound up with imperialism.»<sup>(1)</sup> For others, too, geographers «were the essential midwives of European imperialism. They provided both the practical information necessary for overseas conquest and colonization and the intellectual justification for expansion through their increasingly elaborate «theoretical» writings on geo-politics and the impact of climatic and environmental factors on the evolution of different races.»<sup>(2)</sup>

According to Daniel Clayton, imperial geography covers geographers' attempts to:

«(1) show that the discipline of geography, and a broader set of geographical discourses and practices, played a critical – or vital – role in empire; (2) criticize these vital geographies and move the discipline beyond their binds and conventions; (3) treat the links between geography and empire as symptomatic of the relations of power that inhere in the production of geographical knowledges; and (4) give geography a niche in wider postcolonial debates about colonialism and western dominance.»<sup>(3)</sup>

Cultural geography discourse focuses in one way or another on landscape, a term which typically conjures up a variety of meanings. Landscape refers to a form of representation, both as an art and as a complex system of meanings. And as a representation, landscape is also an ideology; it is a specific way of seeing. Geography, anthropology, and archaeology all have their roots as established academic disciplines in the second half of the nineteenth century,

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(1) Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1993), 1-8.

(2) Morag Bell and Cheryl McEwan. «The Admission of Women Fellows to the Royal Geographical Society, 1892-1914: The controversy and the outcome.» *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 162, no. 3 (November 1996): 295-312.

(3) Daniel Clayton, «Critical Imperial and Colonial Geographies,» *Handbook of Cultural Geography*, Sage (2003): 354-368.

a period of intense colonial activity on the part of their main practitioners: Britain, France, Spain, and Germany. The field of geography has been central to projects of nation building, colonization, imperialism, and just about any other political development that has involved the systematization of knowledge about people and places. In order to conquer others it is necessary first to know about them: What are their habits? How do they live? Where are they located? Thus all three disciplines share a keen interest in the material culture of human civilizations, and – at least early on in their development – an extensive effort to collect and catalogue those cultural differences deemed significant.

European travel writers who journeyed into Morocco in the second half of the nineteenth century aimed to discover it and to write geographical explorations, reports and records that may contribute to the knowledge accumulated by the Royal Geographical Society. Yet, these travel writers do not stop exploring the Moroccan geography, but they do certain cultural geography investigations into Moroccans' ways of life, customs, manners, governance and their cultural values. They engage in the exploration of Morocco, its flora and fauna as well as its people's mores. The work of explorers, cartographers, surveyors, missionaries, philanthropists, field scientists, geographical societies, and professional geographers, which has long played a prominent role in narratives of the history of the discipline, have all been brought under the critical spotlight. Felix Driver argues that geographical exploration should be understood as «a set of cultural practices» that involved the mobilization of a wide variety of material and imaginative resources (equipment, guides, patronage, publicity, authority, texts, scholarship, myths, and so on).<sup>(1)</sup> Driver charts also the formation of a Victorian «culture of exploration» that centered on Africa, and revolved around a gentlemanly network of scholars, politicians, and philanthropists who made the Royal Geographical Society an authoritative site for the promotion and dissemination of geographical knowledge. The travel account of the German travel writer and explorer, Friedrich Gerhard Rohlfs, *Adventures in Morocco and journeys through the Oases of Draa and Tafilalet* (1874), is a pertinent instance to be probed into in this article.

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(1) Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire* (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2001), 54.

Friedrich Gerhard Rohlfs (1831-1896) is a German cultural geographer, ethnologist, explorer, and adventurer. He became a medical student at the universities of Heidelberg, Würzburg and then Göttingen; but his natural inclination was for travelling, and in 1855 he went to Algeria and enlisted in the Foreign Legion. He took part in the conquest of Kabyle, Algeria, and was decorated for bravery as Chevalier of the Legion of Honour. Having made himself master of Arabic and gained a thorough knowledge of native customs, Rohlfs, garbed in Moorish clothes and adopted their religion, journeyed to Morocco in 1861. Presenting himself as a Muslim, and entering the country as the surgeon of the Sultan, he gained the favour of the Grand Shareef of Wazzan, Hadj Ahmed Ben Abdessalam, and was thus enabled to journey through the country, entering the Sahara and traversing the entire extent of the Wad Draa and its oases, being the second European (the first being Auguste René Caillié)<sup>(1)</sup> to visit Tafilalet. On leaving Tafilalet, he was robbed by his guides and left for dead, but two marabouts charitably saved him and he was able to reach Algeria. When scarcely recovered from his wounds he started once more for the Sahara (August 1862) by way of Algeria. Compelled by tribal disturbances to turn back, he went to Tangier and thence in March 1864 made a fresh start. Crossing the Atlas by an eastern route, he arrived at the city of Taroudant:

«I left Tarudant for the oasis of Draa, in the company of a rather large caravan, consisting of twenty men and thirty laden mules and asses. I had been recommended to these people, who lived at Draa, by the Thaleb of the Kadi, and was therefore well received by them. This description of caravan usually performs the journey in eight days, but it is hard marching and the animals are driven on as fast as possible from sunrise to sunset.»<sup>(2)</sup>

Rohlfs visited many regions not before traversed by Europeans, and the value of his work was recognized in 1868 by the Royal Geographical Society, which bestowed on him the gold Medal.

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(1) Auguste René Caillié is a French explorer and the first European to return alive from the town of Timbuktu. He worked for a few months in the British colony of Sierra Leone to save some money, then he travelled by ship to Boké on the Rio Nunes in modern Guinea. From there, he journeyed across West Sahar in April 1827. A year later he arrived in Timbuktu and stayed there for two weeks before heading across the Sahara Desert to Tangier.

(2) Friedrich Gerhard Rohlfs, *Adventures in Morocco and Journeys through the Oases of Draa and Tafilalet* (London: Sampson Low, 1874), 337.



Discourse, in Stuart Hall's words, is «a group of statements which provide a language for talking about... a particular type of knowledge about a topic,» in particular within the context of ideological discourses.<sup>(1)</sup> For Homi Bhabha, the discourse of colonialism is also an «apparatus of power» that creates cultural difference in the service of discrimination and authoritarianism while purporting to reflect reality. Colonial discourse has one chief objective, according to Homi K. Bhabha, and this is to create a fixed and stereotyped image of colonized populations as inferior and «degenerate types on the basis of racial origin» in order to justify conquest. It produces the colonized people «as a social reality which is at once an «Other» and yet entirely knowable and visible.»<sup>(2)</sup>

In the light of these definitions of the notion of discourse, this article aims to examine the cultural geography discourse deployed by Friedrich Gerhard Rohlfs in his account, *Adventures in Morocco and Journeys through the Oases of Draa and Tafilalet*. In the latter, Rohlfs combines both informational and experiential discourses during his exploration of and penetration into the oases of Draa and Tafilalet. The author does some cultural geography investigations into Moroccans' ways of life, customs, manners, governance and cultural values. That is, Rohlfs is artistically adept in combining both physical and cultural geography. The job of Rohlfs, whose discourse is imbued with a nationalist-cum-imperialist tenor, is to explore and represent less-explored parts of Morocco. Hence, the tracks he beats in search of the exotic, the mysterious and the picturesque, and the geographical, ethnographic, historical, and sociological pieces of information he records in passing, are important as these pieces and itineraries are the very rich fount of the Royal Geographical Society and of Germans' imperialist would-be ambitions in Morocco. Rohlfs' account was one of the most influential texts whose repercussion contributed to triggering the colonialist rivalry between Germany and other imperialist nations in late-nineteenth-century, the era of the so-called «Scramble for Africa.» This paper tries to bring to sharper focus different rhetorical strategies of cultural geography discourse deployed by Rohlfs in his depiction of the

(1) Stuart Hall, «The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,» in Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert and Kenneth Thompson (eds), *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1995): 185-227.

(2) Hom K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 70.

oases of Draa and Tafilaleet and their inhabitants, and how this type of discourse practically contributes to the rise of the German colonial discourse.

### **Cultural Geography in German Colonial Discourse**

Considering himself epitome of the latest developments in Western knowledge and its attendant technological achievements, Gerhard Rohlfs represents the early, «scientific» explorer. Most histories of German imperialism and colonialism began in about 1880, or perhaps the late 1870s, at about the same time as the rise of racist doctrines, and at least a couple of decades before the first episodes of modern genocide. Some scholars, however, have attempted to trace the history, or pre-history, of German imperialist thinking back into the early decades of the nineteenth century. Following its 1866 wars of unification, Germany developed an urge to fulfil its nationalist ambitions for matching other great nations of Western Europe. Thomas Pakenham has described the unification as a single *gargantuan ego* at the heart of the Reich, whose imperialist inclinations were widely shared within the ranks of the ruling political and economic elites. He cites the «real fever of colonizing mania» that grabbed the German public and media, which led to the establishment in 1882 of the *Deutscher Kolonialverein* (German Colonial Union) in Frankfurt.<sup>(1)</sup>

From the late nineteenth century, Germans were still looking for new opportunities for overseas expansion, while the French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch were becoming less active; Belgian interest in the Congo was largely a personal enterprise. Although Germany's time as a colonial power was brief, its quick and extensive entry into the «Scramble» made the British take an increased interest in the progress not only of Germany but of other colonizing nations in relation to its own ambitions. This interest was strongly substantiated during the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm II (r. 1890-1918). Indeed, colonialism was central to Wilhelminian discourse on national identity and to the country's understanding of itself as a world power.

Cross-cultural encounter between Germans and Africans in nineteenth-century exploration writings is characterized by a dialectical combination of impulses: first, an interest in alternative regions of human experience and

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(1) Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa* (London: Abacus, 2011), 202.

appreciation of cultural heterogeneity, and, second, expansionist aspirations fueled by growing German nationalism and inter-European rivalry.<sup>(1)</sup> The incorporation of these contradictory tendencies in travel writing reflects and influences not only the authors' understanding of their own identity, but also, on a wider scale, Germany's evolving national identity and the nature of German colonial experience. The travel narratives have often been misconstrued as mere scientific reports, devoid of literary substance and critical merit. They are in reality, however, a melange of scientific data, adventure novel, autobiography, and poetics which documents German–African encounter throughout a turbulent political era.

Travel is the movement in space; it is also the journey to embrace the exotic, the impenetrable, and the mysterious. Once crossing borders, the travel writer encounters the difference in terms of a space which is permeated with a set or sets of ambivalent images that signify otherness in its different dimensions and aspects. Rohlf crossed the Algerian-Moroccan border with the help of the French colonizers; but after he got robbed by his guide in the region of Tafilalet, he tried again from the city of Tangier as the gate of Western Barbary, a microcosm to the interior of Morocco, to places that are described by most European travellers as peripheral, impenetrable, anachronistic, repulsive, attractive and sometimes liminal. Constructing space and place by and through a Western eye is by no means a way of empowering the imperial discourse; it may be considered as a space clearing gesture to render the real imaginary not the opposite. The geography of native lands, in a word, is fictionalized within a hegemonic ideology which seeks to serve its own particular agendas – to remap the exotic landscapes, and to use Steven Clark's words, to face a «deracinated cultural identity.»<sup>(2)</sup>

The itinerary Rohlf's beats can be visualized as maps in words that make the explorer take narrative possession of Moroccan territories, and this kind of possession is purely for narrative reasons in the wait for actual colonization

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(1) Tracey Reimann-Dawe «Time, Identity and Colonialism in German Travel Writing on Africa, 1848-1914,» in *German Colonialism and National Identity* Edited by Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer (London: Routledge, 2011), 21.

(2) Clark, *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit* (London: Routledge, 1999), 66.

that would inevitably follow. Since Rohlfs interacted with Moroccans as a culturally, socially and religiously different other, and since space is the signifier of otherness, he represents Moroccan space in certain images that reflect his attitude towards Moroccans. He provided the geographical knowledge as it was shaped by the heroes of the colonial landscape «the explorer, the hunter, the soldier, the missionary, the administrator, the gentleman,» who provided «moral models for generation of empire builders.»<sup>(1)</sup> Cartography and geography seemed to have provided consummate models for the imperial ideal of masculine domination.

Once he goes beyond the city of Taroudant, Rohlfs arrives at the Draa valley, giving us a description of the valley and the oasis, a rendition which soundly mesmerizes the explorer:

«Fed by the eternal snows of the Atlas, the Ued-Draa, the longest of the streams of Morocco, gives rise to one of the most charming oases to be found in the Sahara. For it is only where running water is present that such luxurious vegetation and productive fruit-trees spring forth. And then, after long day's marches through the stony and vegetationless burning desert, the fresh, cheerful green under the shade of lofty palm-trees, meets the view, one almost forgets the difficulties and pains of such a journey, and seems to have reached a bit of paradise.»<sup>(2)</sup>

As we will see in due course, Rohlfs mostly adopts a negative and stereotypical view in his interactions with Moroccans and with their space; still, his discourse, which is colonially-inflicted, is fraught with ambivalence and contradiction. He gives us the impression that this part of Africa is unexplored and a «bit of paradise,» a fact which would prod other explorers to follow on his steps. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, Rohlfs's exploration of and penetration into these oases was very significant as it undoubtedly sparked off the German nationalist awareness and contributed to generating the colonialist rivalry between Germany and other imperialist nations in late-nineteenth-century. For instance, the rivalry which prevailed between Britain and Germany during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when

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(1) Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*, 27.

(2) Rohlfs, *Adventures*, 343.

the two powers inexorably sought to expand their spheres of influence across the globe, is a concrete example of an incessant «struggle over geography.» As Edward Said confirms, «Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.»<sup>(1)</sup> Rohlf's text is part of a generation of macrotext which documents German academic explorers' passage through «Barbary» on scientific expeditions of discovery.

Morocco «opens up» before Rohlf's as a newcomer, as does the turbaned indigenous bodyscape. At the same time, Rohlf's eye seems powerful to act or interact with this landscape. Heroic, particularized, self-centred, with interest, or desire of its own, Rohlf's eye/I seems able to do everything and gaze from a perspective of its own creation, like the self-centred, interventionist eye/I that scans the Other's body. The following passage, which is worth citing in its entirety, is a good example:

«The most fruitful and thickly populated portion of the Ued-Draa is the valley it forms in its course from the mountains in a southerly direction; for as soon as it turns to the west, i.e. about the 29° N.L., it becomes uninhabited and sterile. The reason of this is that it is only up to this point that it has a continual flow of water, and it is only once a year, after the snow melts on the mountains, that its waters reach the sea. As soon as it diverges from the singular independent mountainous district south of the Atlas, the Draa river pursues its southerly course through a more or less wide valley which it itself has formed. Standing at the water's edge it seems as one was looking up at two parallel ranges of hills, one on either side the river, so lofty and curiously formed is the land along its banks.»<sup>(2)</sup>

This discursive configuration, which centres landscape, separates people from place and exteriorize them, and foregrounds the speaking self, is characteristic of a great deal of European nineteenth-century travel writing, particularly the literature of exploration. This construction is predominant among European explorers-cum-travellers. The explicit project of the latter

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(1) Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1994), 6.

(2) Rohlf's, *Adventures*, 343-344.

is to produce what they themselves refer to as «information.» Their task, in other words, is to incorporate a particular reality into a series of interlocking information orders – aesthetic, geographic, sociological, agricultural, economic, ecological, ethnographic, and so on. To the extent that it strives to empower itself, the travel writer's visible «eye»/«I» endeavours to make those informational orders natural, to find them there commanded and asserted as the products/producers of European knowledge or disciplines. In scanning prospects in the spatial sense – as landscape panoramas – Rohlf's domineering «I»/«eye» knows itself to be looking at prospects in the temporal sense – as possibilities for the future, resources to be developed, landscapes to be (re)peopled by Europeans and as a prelude to deterritorialization. These prospects are one of the main criteria of relevance in the landscape descriptions.

As an exploration writing on «the imperial frontier», to borrow Pratt's expression, this discursive configuration perpetuates Rohlf's presence and textually splits off indigenous inhabitants from habitat. It is a configuration which, in (mis)recognition of what was materially underway or in anticipation of what was to come, verbally depopulates landscapes. Indigenous people are, hence, «relocated in separate manners-and-customs chapters as if in textual homelands or reservations, where they are pulled out of time to be preserved, contained, studied, admired, detested, pitied, mourned.»<sup>(1)</sup>

Rohlf's *Adventures in Morocco* is a combination of two discourses: informational and experiential. In addition to reporting information as an explorer, the author recounts his experiences about Morocco in a precolonial time when it was still perceived as the «Land of the Moors». In his exploration text, self-dramatization predominates and heroic paradigms are retained. The explorer is the protagonist of the journey and the primary focal point of the account. This experiential discourse constitutes its authority by mooring itself not in informational orders but in situated human subjects, notably Western protagonist. By spotlighting his exploration account, Rohlf becomes explicitly a unified, authoritative speaking subject, playing the role of both a protagonist and a narrator. In the following passage, the writer gives us more information on the region of Draa and its oasis; he tries to punctuate the

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(1) Ibid.

evidence that he is the only authority on this space as he tries to cull from those who visited the place before him, either confirming his observation and giving the reader the idea that what he portrayed is totally accurate, or maintaining the idea that his «eye»/«I» is more commanding than the one of the other explorers he certainly read and mentioned:

«About the Draa district there is very little trustworthy information, though its existence was known in the middle ages. Its name, and perhaps a few places in it are mentioned by travellers, but that is all. Leo only mentions the palace of Beni- Sabih, evidently the Beni-Sbih, and important place in the southerly province Ktaua, which I visited. Marmol notices the town Quiteoa (evidently Ktua) and also Tinzeda, which is most probably my Tanzetta. He further mentions the places Taragale, Tinzulin (my province Tunsulin), Tamegrut, Tabernost, Afra, and Timsequit (probably Mesgeta). Delaporte also mentions Quiteoa. Monetto mentions a mountain, the Lafera or caravernous mountain, which Marmol calls Taragale or Taragalt, and this must be the mountain which the natives pointed out to me as the Dj-Sagora.»<sup>(1)</sup>

In tandem with offering us physical geographical information on the oasis of Draa and its inhabitants, the author skilfully brings to the fore the political and religious aspects of the Draa district. Rohlfs stresses the anthropological relations between the people of Draa region and confirms that the secret of continuity and solidarity of its community lies in its social and political organization which is based on a stratum that is deeply-rooted among «Draoui people»: the community is governed by a *Sheik* with the help of a group of the most revered and oldest people (*Jmmaa*), an indication that demonstrates that this district was populated mostly by Amazigh people:

«In the Draa district each place is independent of the other, and each community is ruled over by its Schich [Sheik], aided by the Djemma (a body of the oldest and most respected men). Even the separate provinces are without a general government. Tamgrut may be considered the chief place or town of the Draa district, but its importance is chiefly due to a celebrated religious body.»<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Rohlfs, *Adventures*, 345.

(2) *Ibid.*, 346.

From a panoramic vista, Rohlf's, as if he were a camera-man, moves from the external part (the community, its oasis and its valley) to the heart of the matter, from a long shot to close and close-up shots, the purpose of which is to shed light on «Draoui people» and internal details of their space. In spite of trying to lower the people of this region in his description, the author unconsciously gets enthralled by their highly-organized houses and the scrupulous manner in which they are founded: «Each village and town is surrounded by a high clay wall and some are also further defended with more or less numerous ditches. All have at least one mosque, and some of the larger places have several. The houses are built of stamped clay and usually have spacious courtyards in the interior. They are all flat-rooted and consist of but one story above the ground-floor.»<sup>(1)</sup> Writing from a colonially-inflected standpoint, European explorers who journeyed into Morocco in the nineteenth century accented the rhetoric of ruin, decay, and waste that characterized Moroccan cities; Rohlf's, still, evidences that streets in Tafilalet and Tuat have a clean system, which is, to some extent, better than Europeans'. To quote Rohlf's: «The streets in these towns are generally narrow, dusty, and full of refuse, although here, as also in Tafilalet and Tuat, there are numerous open sewers. The palm gardens, which are all enclosed by high clay walls, are watered by the ever-running Ued-Draa, and as the water is very plentiful to regulations controlling its supply for irrigation purposes are necessary.»<sup>(2)</sup>

Rohlf's stated that the population of Draa oasis numbered about 250, 000 souls; the district is characterized by a richly mosaic of population, including Amazighs, Arabs, and Jews, all live in harmony with each other.<sup>(3)</sup> Arabs, mainly Shurfa, lived in «Ksours.» The Beni Mhammed, of pure Arab origin, lived in palm huts, scattered throughout the Draa valley in small communities of two or three families. Besides, some of Amazigh tribes also lived in palm huts. According to Rohlf's, «whereas the Arabs, who live in this oasis, are principally

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(1) Ibid., 347.

(2) Ibid.

(3) «The Jews in the Draa district, who are principally collected in a few Ksors, are not so oppressed and ill-used as in Morocco... They are here less employed in trading than manufacturing, principally as gun-smiths, tinkers carpenters, tailors, and shoemakers. And it is simply because they have become indispensable to the natives through these crafts, that they are less oppressed» 349.



Schurfa, Marabouts, and of the Beni Mhammed tribe, the Berbers belong to the great Ait-Atta branch.»<sup>(1)</sup> In the light of the informational discourse the author deploys in his representation, he follows a representational strategy regarding his approach to the Other. This strategy is what Pratt refers to as «manners-and-customs description.»<sup>(2)</sup> This method is an ideology in itself used by European Orientalists to normalize, pigeonhole, and objectify the Moroccan Other. The latter is historicized as fixed and unchangeable in a textual narrative heritage.

In addition to providing us with information about the places he visits, Rohlf's mentions also his experiences as a «hero» in the heart of Moroccan desert. Mary Louise Pratt indicates that there are two types of travel writing, each with its own narrative figure: the first is what she terms the «manners and customs» figure that is mostly impersonal and the narrator is absent. The second figure is the «sentimental» one where the narrator is foregrounded. Rohlf's adventure narrative, as has been postulated by such critics as Martin Green, is «the energizing of myth of empire.»<sup>(3)</sup> Green also writes that «To celebrate adventure was to celebrate empire.»<sup>(4)</sup> Adventure enables the sentimental-cum-experiential hero like Rohlf's to perform a series of exploits and to accent a variety of feats like courage, fortitude, cunning, strength, leadership, and persistence.

Though he is positioned at the center of a discursive field rather than on the periphery, Rohlf's as the sentimental protagonist is constructed as a noninterventionist European presence. Things happen to him and he endures and survives. As a textual construct, his innocence lies less in self-effacement than in submissiveness and vulnerability, or the display of self-effacement. One of the most self-evident but crucial features of travel writing as life writing is that it tends to concern the self when away, abroad, elsewhere, focusing on encounters more than relationships. This spatial dislocation has a temporal counterpart.

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(1) Ibid., 348.

(2) Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 149.

(3) Martin Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), xi.

(4) Ibid., 37.

On his way to Tafilalet, he made a rest in the great mosque of Abuam oasis, telling his hard experience there as a hero: «Tired out with the journey, I had lain down to sleep but was unpleasantly awakened by a kick. A Sherif stood before me, and asked me who I was, my name, my business.» He continues on to state that a group of «Tholba» (religious people) were summoned: «With fanatical howlings I was now dragged by these Zealots to Rissani, the official chief town, where the Sultan's Kaid resides, and I quite thought my last our had come, for what can one do against fanatical religious zeal? They kept bawling, «He is a spy; he has been sent by the Christian Sultan» (meaning the Emperor Napoleon of the French).»<sup>(1)</sup> The purpose behind this experiential discourse Rohlf deploys in his account is to win the sympathy and empathy of the reader so that he and the reader can place their own culture at the top of a scale as the most advanced. Moroccan culture, Rohlf's maintains, is equated to a past era of Western history and consequently represents an inferior level of cultural development. The following instance is worth quoting:

«When I regained consciousness next Morning, I found myself alone, with mine wounds; for, after I had fainted, these ruffians ad shot and slashed me, to make sure of me as they thought. They had robbed me of everything but the **Bloody clothes** I had on. Although the water was close to me, I could not get to it; I was too weak to get up. I tried to roll myself to it, but all in vain, and burning thirst was added to my agony.»<sup>(2)</sup>

After traversing Morocco disguising as a Muslim Arab, Rohlf's reaches the oases of Draa and Tafilalet and perceives them as a place of relief, freedom and familiarity. Finally able to remove his disguise, Rohlf's metamorphoses back to his European, Christian self. When he escapes the torture he underwent, he strongly yearns to embrace civilization and freedom. Rohlf's scientific instruments as a doctor are stripped of all function and power, as he finds himself equal to his entourage in the face of an omnipotent Other.

### Conclusion

Rohlf's travel text contributes a lot to accumulating valuable information about Morocco as a space and about its people, their culture and ways of life.

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(1) Rohlf's, *Adventures*, 355-56.

(2) *Ibid.*, 362.

That is, the author adeptly combines both a physical and cultural geography discourse. He explores different parts of Western Barbary. Hence, the tracks he beats in search of the exotic, the mysterious and the picturesque, and the geographical, ethnographic, historical and sociological pieces of information and accounts he records in passing about Moroccans and their space are important as these pieces and itineraries are the very rich fount of the Royal Geographical Society. The job of Rohlf's is to explore, represent and disclose geographical-cultural and ethnographic details about this part of Barbary as a less-explored space and its inhabitants, and these details and pieces of information are an invaluable source for the soon-to-be- colonizers to enrich their knowledge about both geography and cultural geography.

Rohlf's *Adventure in Morocco* as an information-oriented branch of travel writing contributed to producing the domestic subjects of nineteenth-century European, and mainly German, capitalist expansion. We would be justified in calling it the hegemonic form of othering at the time, at least on the imperial frontier. But its hegemony was much contested because this informational kind of writing suffered from two serious pitfalls: it is very boring and it is replete with long digressions. Rohlf's is an authoritative producer of information in the era of «high imperialism»; his informational and experiential discourses on the oases of Draa and Tafilet as less-explored parts of Morocco must be associated with that critical sector of the bourgeois world, the private sphere, home of the solitary, introspecting individual. Rohlf's voice, too, seems innocent, though its innocence lies in its egotistical presence and invulnerability.