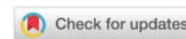# THE MEDIUM TRAVEL GUIDE: SOME ASPECTS OF IT'S STRATEGIES AND GOALS

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Abstract: There is no extensive secondary literature on travel guides, despite their popularity among readers and their status as one of the best-selling genres in bookstores. The medium was more thoroughly researched in the disciplines of geography, tourism and folklore, especially in the late 1980s and 1990s, although different aspects and points were deepened depending on the discipline and thus a "compact field of reliable knowledge and theories" could not be developed. (Wicke 2011: 22). Buhl (2020: 39) concludes that travel guide research is primarily concerned with the historical change in the genre from its emergence to the 20th century or attempts to create a typology of this broad, diverse genre.

However, for the purpose of this research, of particular interest are the publications that refer to the ways in which the target countries are presented from an intercultural perspective; still, the number of these studies has remained insignificant to this day. The most recent and very comprehensive study comes from Gesa Wicke (2011), who fills the research gap with her study of the staging of foreignness in tourist guides to Sicily.

The subject of analysis based on available research for the medium travel guide will be the travel guide form Philine von Oppeln "Nordmazedonien. Mit Skopje, Ohridsee und allen Nationalparks" (2020).

Keywords: travel guide, travelogue, tourism, alterity, North Macedonia
Field: Humanities

1. INTRODUCTION

Perceptions of a different cultural environment are almost always burdened with the load of one's own cultural authority. The process of perception and the organization and processing of information does not occur on a blank slate. It is much more influenced by information categorization and stereotyping, which is not only affected by information from and about the natural living world, but also encompasses the social environment. A central mechanism in the creation of stereotypes exists in the general readiness of people for social categorization, for example, people divide them into members of their own or other groups. In contact with foreign cultures, this categorization and stereotyping plays a decisive role in many cases. The literary staging of foreignness must follow a narrative dramaturgy, which avoids the illusion of understanding, so that the foreign can be evoked as foreign at all. However, at the same time, the staging must be based on known patterns, so that it can present foreignness as culturally understandable. For this constellation of intercultural understanding between the other's and one's own, the literary writing stands paradigmatically, which is addressed "from abroad" to "home" and thus marks the intermediate space of cultural transmission as a distance.

The travel writer has the potential to stage otherness without stereotyping it. For Francis Bacon, Renaissance travelers discovered a "new continent" of truth, based on experience and observation rather than on the authority of predecessors; and it was the travelogues that ensured the implementation of the new information that laid the foundations for the scientific and philosophical revolutions of the seventeenth century. And as a stranger in a foreign land, the travel writer, since he is not bound by his roots to the singular components or to the one-sided tendencies of the local group, takes towards them a unique attitude of objectivity, which does not mean simple distancing and non-involvement, but a special formation from a distance and closeness, indifference and engagement. Nevertheless, in order to be objective, he must not be bound by any predefined obligations, which could prejudice his inclusion, his understanding, his assessment of the givens.

The fact is that the preconditions, which will make the objective perception of the travel writer impossible, are numerous. The forms in which the travelogue describes the foreign are determined by the social status of the travelers and their involvement in the mentality of social groups, and essentially

depend on the technical and organizational standard; and finally they are influenced by the personal dispositions of the travel writer, which are crystallized in his education, prior knowledge, interests as well as his general perceptive abilities. Moreover, of course, a major role in the staging of foreign culture by the Western European author is the tendency to confirm his own "enlightenment progress" and thus his own superiority in relation to other underdeveloped countries.

All these factors play an essential role in the creation of the travel guide as the most modern form of travelogue.

2. THE GENRE TRAVEL GUIDE

It is problematic to label the travel guide medium as a literary genre, as it has remained largely unexplored in literary studies until today and therefore lacks clear definitions and demarcations. The reasons for not paying attention to this genre are, on the one hand, the extremely heterogeneous nature of the text (e.g. informational text, anecdotes, directions, lists of addresses, etc.), which can vary greatly from a tourist guide to tourist guide. On the other hand, unlike other forms of travel literature, the medium does not seem scientifically worthy enough, as criticized by Wang (2003: 581). In isolated works, however, an attempt was made to more closely define the genre of travel guides.

3. THE MODERN TRAVEL GUIDE

Until the 18th century, travel was mainly under the sign of conquests, escapes or migratory movements, but with the beginning of industrialization and the development of an aspiring bourgeoisie, a new form of travel appeared, which was intended to serve for recreation and/or education. Bourgeois trips had to be planned, containing everything worth seeing without spending much time on research. These needs were met by Beadecker in the mid-19th century with the first modern German travel guide, which was to have great success and serve as a model for the further development of the genre across Europe, as Wicke (2011: 86) explains. By awarding stars, Baedeker's tourist guides recommended sights and attracted and increased the influx of tourists (Buhl, 2020: 41). With the emergence of modern tourism in the 1950s and 1960s of the last century, a large number of different tourist guides for different needs and target groups emerged. The one-sided channeling of landmarks in conventional travel guides such as Baedeker was strongly criticized and led to the emergence of so-called "alternative travel guides" in the 1970s and 1980s, which instead focused on the country and its people (Wang 2003: 584). Today, the range of tourist guides, especially for commercial tourist centers, has become extremely large and is characterized by a high level of heterogeneity. Due to the constant appearance of new publishers and the rapid change of detailed data (accommodation prices, traffic routes, addresses), there is a lot of competition and the pressure to keep producing new releases to stay up-to-date is great.

4. THE FUNCTION OF TRAVEL GUIDES

Travel guides serve the traveler primarily to offer him the latest and current information about the purpose of the trip, according to which he will be able to orient himself. They provide guidance on practical matters such as routes, accommodation, opening hours and restaurants, but also provide information on history, religions, nature and culture. On the one hand, they educate their readers, on the other hand, the foreign country to which one travels is ready for consumption by tourists. Gorseman therefore characterizes travel guides as "educational goods and tourist instructions for use", meanwhile "Piper Verlag" published a whole series of travel guides called "instructions for use" (Buhl, 2020: 41).

According to Wicke (2011: 117), this preparation of travel destinations is subject to four basic strategies, which are presented below. Wiecke sees these strategies as closely related to power and hierarchical structures.

First, according to Wicke (2011: 118), the travel guide prepares the destination of the trip in a way that is suitable for tourists and accessible spaces are created accordingly. The tourist guide makes a decision about which places are attractive for tourists, ie. worthy of being included in a text contained in a tourist guide, or should be considered negligible. The starting point for this selection is the needs and expectations of the traveler, not the destination itself. What would seem frightening, ugly or unattractive to the tourist is either not mentioned, or else the traveler will be warned about "problematic" or "dangerous" places, which it is better not to enter or to enter only with great caution. This creates a potential divide

between the tourist and non-tourist worlds.

The second strategy used by tour guides for the preparation of foreignness is the structuring of space and time (cf. ibid.: 124). For a tourist attractive area, the tourist guide presents its users with various tools such as maps, hiking routes, city tours and day trip suggestions with up-to-the-minute weather information to help them design and find their way into the unknown environment. And here, for example, by selecting a certain part of the maps of the city, the new environment is divided into a "center worth seeing" and a "periphery to be neglected" (ibid.: 126). "Thus, cartography serves tourist guide literature as an additional means of domesticating and appropriating the unknown space, whose complex hybridity [...] has to be forced into a predetermined order by means of rigid lines and with known scales and coordinates" (ibid: 126). Chronological structuring takes place through planned daily routines or recommendations for maximum or minimum length of stay in a certain region, city or place.

The third strategy is the construction of alterity (cf. Wicke 2011: 128). Tourism produces cultural difference, because it uses the foreign as a commodity to be marketed. It literally lives of this construction of alterity, because only the constant supply of the new, the unknown and the foreign ensures sustainable tourist demand. And the literature on tour guides as an instrument of tourism also lives on the construction of the other by creating difference. It generates less understanding of the other culture than, by supporting the formation of one's own identity through differentiation and thus, as a mirror image, contributing to the self-definition of the culture of origin in dealing with other cultures. If the foreigner were truly understood, he would no longer be a foreigner and the need to travel abroad would disappear (Buhl 2020, 43). "Cultural difference in tourism [is] necessary for longing to have a projection surface and vacation (as a socially sanctioned opportunity to indulge in longing) can be successful" (Weidemann 2007: 617). According to Wicke (2011: 129), the difference lies on the continuum between fascination and threat. It should encourage the spirit of adventure and excitement. However, a balance is required so that it does not appear intimidating.

Warnings of danger and theft are usually found in the last pages of a travel guide and are pushed into the background by the colorful, fascinating folklore that runs throughout the book.

The fourth strategy for processing foreignness is the visual guide (cf. ibid.: 131). Travel guides want to inform their readers and give them the opportunity to prepare for the destination. In doing so, they act according to the slogan: "We only see what we already know!" (ibid.). The argument for intensive preparation is that: only when we know the relevant aspects of a culture, a place or a building, can they be consciously perceived. The things that the tourist knows nothing about, he will not be able to see - in the short time available to him during the vacation. This 'wisdom' also implies the fact that acquired foreknowledge directs attention to what is already known and thus blocks the view of new knowledge. The trip prepared by tourist guides does not necessarily lead to the expansion of horizons, but rather to the confirmation of the images already created in the head. According to Wicke (2011: 132), the tour guide controls the perception of travelers by providing prior knowledge and directs the tourist's gaze to what is deemed worth seeing. Many travel guides have adopted Baedeker's star system and thus praise the 'highlights'. In doing so, they orient themselves towards the expectations and travel motives of tourists and use the selective view that is already available in advance.

5. PHILINE VON OPPELN'S NORTH MACEDONIA

Adequate to strategies for preparing the purpose of the trip, von Oppeln starts her tourist guide with "The best of North Macedonia" (2020: 12): the architecture in Skopje, Ohrid and Lake Ohrid, the Matka canyon, Bitola, the national parks, the mountain landscapes, Macedonian villages, monasteries, mosques and churches. The selection of what is worth seeing is imposed at the very beginning. Under the title Dorfleben (life in the villages) are listed the villages of Vevcani, Brajchino as well as Galicnik, Lazaropole and Gari, villages that are already well-known tourist destinations related to rural tourism in Macedonia, with streets and houses renovated with financial assistance from international projects as well as villagers who have undergone English language and computer training funded by international non-profit organizations (which the author explains when presenting ecological tourism): something that would be attractive to, for example, a Western European tourist, but will have not much in common with the essence of Dorfleben (in Galicnik's description, it is stated that only one family lives in the village all year round, p. 218). However, remnants of Macedonian village traditions, such as the Galicnik wedding, will often be included in the depictions (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The bride on the way to her parents-in-law

The tourist guide about North Macedonia also abounds with numerous aids that will prepare the tourist for navigating time and space in Macedonia: maps of the cities and surroundings, hiking trails through the mountainous regions, bus lines, taxi providers. In addition, of course numerous photos of the places worth visiting: the tourist should be prepared, already familiar with what he needs to see. The overall structure of the travel guide is aligned with Wicke's preparation strategies: the tourist will be both visually attracted and intrigued, directed to recommended destinations, but also discreetly warned of potential dangers (in the second chapter "The most important things in brief", under "Security" it is briefly mentioned that the German Foreign Office continues to warn of caution in the northern and north-western border areas due to past riots, p. 15).

The map on the back inside cover of the book shows only a small part of Skopje: the city center, to the east to the border with the municipality of Aerodrom and to the west to Karpos 2, the area where the tourist should stay and where he will find all that is worth seeing in the capital (Figure 2).
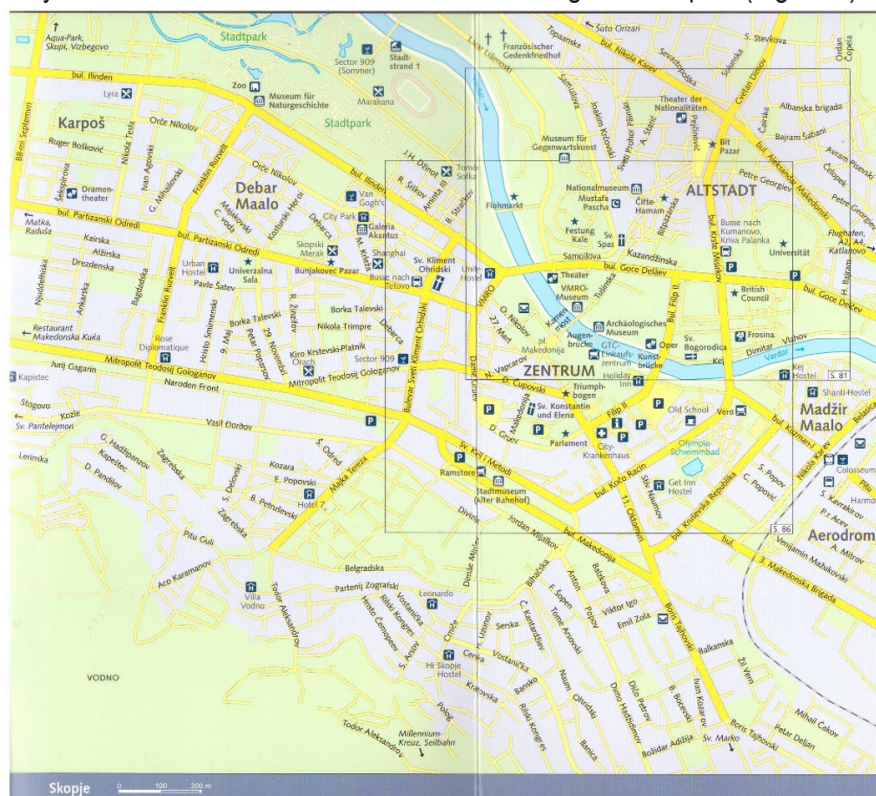

Figure 2: Map of the central region of Skopje

5. CONCLUSION

The main reference point of the travel guide is not the travel destination, but the traveler and his needs. The reasons for this are among others economic in nature. It is not without reason that the

heterogeneity of the medium, in addition to the variety of travel destinations, is particularly due to the different readership. Thus, a distinction can be made between low-budget travelers with little money, a lot of time and a more or less pronounced interest in mutual understanding of cultures, travelers interested in popular science with a lot of preparation time and encyclopedic knowledge, as well as those looking for rest and relaxation with a desire for sun and a vacation-like climate, with no interest in contact with the land and people and many other types of travelers (Buhl 2020: 45).

The individual strategies are closely related and they condition each other. When a travel guide creates a space that can be visited by promoting a place as attractive to tourists, it simultaneously draws attention to this destination and acts as a visual guide. The objectivity of the destination's portrayal is another matter entirely.

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