

LA CARAVANE DU LIVRE 2011 - IMPRESSIONS. 21.-24. April "The Caravane in the Salt Country"



Dear Friends,

This year, the Caravane reached its destination, Imarighen, a village in the High Atlas Mountains, after just an hour's journey. The idyllic region of Ouirgane provided wonderful scenery during our entire stay. The weather was changeable, with heavy rain now and again.



Everyone in the lively and heterogenous group had travelled here with the desire to pass on their own experiences and to take new impressions and impulses back with them. For some, it was the first Caravane, whilst others had joined us several times before or knew Jamila from cultural events or book presentations.

We drove in two mini-busses to the Collège of Ouirgane, where we were welcomed by school children and teachers to the sound of their national anthem.

The school is spaciouly built, a little outside of the centre of the village, and was opened just two years ago. There is a boarding-school directly next to it, for those pupils who live too far away to travel to school each day.

Not only the pupils come a long way, this also applies to the teachers. As often the case, they come from different regions and have to move here to work. Not the best state of affairs for families! Several teachers were not present during the Caravane, because they were in the capital Rabat, protesting against these conditions.

During our stay, we also noticed that there is an agitation moving throughout the country, perceptible also in the schools. The pupils were very conscient of what happens in the Arab States, Changes that will lead to a better development, also in Morocco.



After our reception, pupils, teachers and guests spread out rapidly into several groups in order to assist to the workshops in their classrooms.

Lively discussions took place in all the workshops. The boys and girls were very interested to know what their guests from other parts of Morocco, from France, Switzerland, Italy and Germany think about the current political developments in the Maghreb. There was a lively exchange of thoughts and experiences between teachers and the Caravane participants. The Caravane's success in Skoura (2008), Figuig (2009) and Tighmert (2010) prove just how important this interchange is.



Nathalie Erny chose for her theme the history of writing materials and talked about the production of parchment, papyrus and paper. The pupils asked many questions, but were mainly interested in the employment and possibilities of "new" instruments such as mobile phones, DVD, CD, USB. These have not only revolutionised the way in which we write, but also the methods of communication and transmission of knowledge. In these remote regions too, the new media are strongly influencing daily life.

Asmaa, Monia, Reda and Asna from the Caravane Group are students who originate from Morocco and live and study in Italy. In their 2-day contribution, they talked about salt and its uses. Thanks to their video, they were able to involve the pupils and the classroom was soon converted into a small kitchen, where mountains of spaghetti were cooked in a relaxed atmosphere.

In the classroom next door, the pupils were busy drawing. The Moroccan illustrator Aziz Oumoussa had asked them to draw fantasy figures out of their dream world. This workshop lasted for two days and the drawings were exhibited afterwards in the classroom. A long queue of pupils waited in front of Aziz, to let him draw their portraits at high speed.

Stéphane and his daughter Justine spontaneously stood in for a teacher who was protesting in Rabat. With their group, they developed a kind of “Carnet de la Caravane“, a booklet in which the pupils have recorded their thoughts in words and pictures.

Pia, Giuseppe, Mino and Patrizia motivated a class to take up Patrizia’s suggestion and write about their anxieties – quite a sensitive theme and a challenge for people who have not learned to talk about their problems. Afterwards, everything was read out to the class. Both pupils and adults were very satisfied with the result and thought that this workshop could be very promising for a future Caravane.

In the afternoon, everyone went on a trip to the salt-works of Imarighen. Salt – *m’lah* in Arabic and *tissn’t* in Azazigh (a Berber language) – is won by water vaporization. The water is transported from an underground well to the surface and vaporizes in the open air. The remaining salt then lands e.g. on streets too, when no more salt is available for strewing on icy roads, as in the harsh winter 2010-2011 in Germany.

We were particularly enchanted by the interaction of light and colours of the salt-works, in the heart of this beautiful scenery.



On the second day, Annie Lombard, a librarian, told a class about the history of the salt-works in her home town Hyères, in the South of France. With her fascinating story and with the aid of an impressive video, she showed the differences between “her“ salt-works and those in Imarighen.

Nathalie, her colleague, had organised an exciting workshop, in which she and the pupils collected Arabic words, which have become part of the vocabulary of other languages over the centuries and therefore belong to our daily linguistic usage. Did you know that if the **Admiral** is **checkmate** after a **caraffe** of **alcohol**, falls onto his **matress** and has a **macabre** dream about a **giraffe**, that those are all Arabic words?

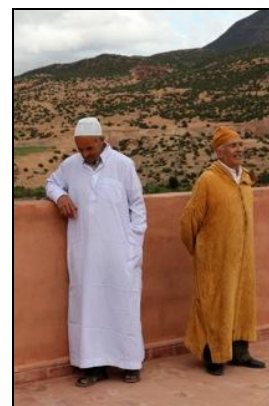
Julie Klear Essakali told a class of older pupils about a book that she had written and illustrated and tells a story which takes place in this region. Afterwards, they discussed the book and illustrations, but also the reality of the youths in the story. The pupils also expressed their own dreams and plans for their future, both here and far away.



Halima Ouilami's workshop was very lively. Who can be surprised at that? The theme was "marriage". Mino Vianello, Rabéa Filali, Patrizia Rigoni and the pupils had the reforms of the "Moudawana" explained to them, the new family law, a very complex subject-matter. The pupils were invited to actively take part and to talk and write about their ideas.



In Asni, the Caravane was awaited by the "Association du développement social". During a walk through the village, we were informed about the particularities of their agriculture, visited a sewing shop and an "ecological" Hamam. The walk terminated in a wonderful orchard. This association has a training program for now thirty farmers, informing them about effective ways to cultivate their land, renouncing of pesticides. The Hamam is energy-saving(a lot of wood is used). In cooperation with other partners, a modern day-nursery was built and there are plans for the construction of a dormitory for young people, coming from far away to the coranic school. The buildings are modern and the infrastructure is good.



On Saturday there was a meeting with an association of youths from Imarighen, who live and study or work in Marrakech. The debate carried out between them and some regional politicians concerns a variety of problems which determine the lives of the young generation – a generation forced to leave their homes when searching for work. The young men expressed their wish of finding a perspective in their own region, also for helping children who, till now, must leave school because of the distance to their home. For the first time, these youths had the opportunity to present their projects and to express their wishes and their problems, during a discussion in an international circle. Henryane de Chaponaye, an expert on Morocco and strongly involved both here and in South America in development projects in the agricultural area, contributed to the discussion with many reports on her experiences in this field.



The central theme of this morning was “Emigration and Immigration“. Using video material, with words and pictures, the contribution of the Caravane was to relate the story of 25 years of emigration in Italy. The most important points of this lecture were the altered Italian immigration laws, the criminalization of illegal immigrants, growing racism and the fear of foreigners from North Africa, which is felt in Italy and in other European countries. Afterwards, there was a smooth transition to the current socio-political situation in the Maghreb.

In the afternoon we took a trip to the mosque of Tinmel, an historical building by Abdelmoumem, built in the 12th century in memory of Ibn Toumert, founder of the Almohaden dynasty, who is buried here. This was restored 15 years ago and captivates with its harmony of colours and shapes.

On the return journey, we drove through Ijoukak, the village in Christine Serfaty’s novel “La femme de Ijoukak“. This was a memorable visit for Christine, who accompanied us.



In the evening, the Minister for Islamic Affairs visited us, as programmed. Ahmed Toufiq, author of several novels himself, such as “Abu Musas Neighbours“, which was also filmed, congratulated Jamila on her work and praised the Caravane du Livre projects. He was born and grew up in this village. There were many questions from the audience concerning schooling problems, the infrastructure and transport to remote places such as Imarighen.

The evening was concluded with music and dancing by a group of musicians from the area.

On Sunday morning, on the road to Marrakech, we visited a former casualty ward, which could be transformed into a library. Nathalie, Annie, Rachid Baghor of the Goethe-Institute and others, have

made several proposals for this building, situated in front of a coranic school and an important mosque, that we visited before.

The idea is to found a modern library with access to books for children and pupils of the coranic school as well as for all the children and the youngsters of the village.



That was the end of our journey to the Salt Country. We were back in Marrakech around midday.

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