

Nature of Cypriots in the Light of 19th Century Travel Literature

La naturaleza de los chipriotas a la luz de la literatura de viajes del siglo XIX

Natureza dos cipriotas à luz da literatura de viagens do século 19

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Abstract

This study explores the impressions of the 19th century travelers on the nature of Turkish and Greek Cypriots by focusing on their relationships with each other, their personal characteristics, and their attitudes towards foreigners and visitors. Since the focus of the study is the nature and culture of the Cypriots, Cypriots' characteristics, distinctive features, attitudes towards travelers, moods and mindset are presented comparatively in the light of travelers' reflections in their written accounts. The data were elicited from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources in this context refer to the published books of the 19th century travelers to Cyprus while secondary sources constitute the studies on the issue in the relevant literature. All books written by travelers to Cyprus in the 19th century were perused to find the data related to the nature of Cypriots and their characters over a period of a year. The collected data were then coded and classified to reveal the themes, namely hospitality, friendliness, family loyalty and docility. Being a type of content analysis, conceptual analysis was conducted in data analysis. Since almost all studies on the 19th century Cyprus travel literature are related to the political and religious dynamics of 19th century Cyprus, this study is thought to fill a gap in the relevant literature by shedding light on the socio-cultural aspects of Cyprus. The results revealed that the Cypriots were quite hospitable towards the travelers since the travelers acknowledged that they felt properly welcomed. Friendliness, helpfulness and docility were found to be other

Resumen

Este estudio explora las impresiones de los viajeros del siglo XIX sobre la naturaleza de los turco y greochipriotas al centrarse en sus relaciones entre ellos, sus características personales y sus actitudes hacia los extranjeros y visitantes. Dado que el enfoque del estudio es la naturaleza y la cultura de los chipriotas, las características, los rasgos distintivos, las actitudes hacia los viajeros, los estados de ánimo y la mentalidad de los chipriotas se presentan comparativamente a la luz de las reflexiones de los viajeros en sus relatos escritos. Los datos se obtuvieron de fuentes primarias y secundarias. Las fuentes primarias en este contexto se refieren a los libros publicados de los viajeros del siglo XIX a Chipre, mientras que las fuentes secundarias constituyen los estudios sobre el tema en la literatura relevante. Todos los libros escritos por viajeros a Chipre en el siglo XIX fueron examinados para encontrar los datos relacionados con la naturaleza de los chipriotas y sus personajes durante un período de un año. Los datos recopilados se codificaron y clasificaron para revelar los temas, a saber, la hospitalidad, la amabilidad, la lealtad familiar y la docilidad. Al ser un tipo de análisis de contenido, el análisis conceptual se realizó en el análisis de datos. Dado que casi todos los estudios sobre la literatura de viajes de Chipre del siglo XIX están relacionados con la dinámica política y religiosa del Chipre del siglo XIX, se cree que este estudio llena un vacío en la literatura relevante al arrojar luz sobre los aspectos socioculturales de Chipre. Los resultados revelaron que los chipriotas eran bastante hospitalarios con los viajeros, ya que los viajeros

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features exhibited by Cypriots in the traveler accounts. The other highly praised characteristic was found to be devotion to home and family.

Keywords: character, culture, national stereotypes, national traits, temper.

reconocieron que se sentían bien recibidos. Se descubrió que la amabilidad, la amabilidad y la docilidad eran otras características exhibidas por los chipriotas en las cuentas de los viajeros. Se descubrió que la otra característica muy elogiada era la devoción al hogar y la familia.

Palabras clave: carácter, cultura, estereotipos nacionales, rasgos nacionales, temperamento.

Resumo

Este estudo explora as impressões dos viajantes do século 19 sobre a natureza dos cipriotas turcos e gregos, concentrando-se em seus relacionamentos, suas características pessoais e suas atitudes em relação a estrangeiros e visitantes. Uma vez que o foco do estudo é a natureza e a cultura dos cipriotas, as características, características distintivas, atitudes em relação aos viajantes, humor e mentalidade dos cipriotas são apresentadas comparativamente à luz das reflexões dos viajantes em seus relatos escritos. Os dados foram obtidos de fontes primárias e secundárias. As fontes primárias neste contexto referem-se aos livros publicados dos viajantes do século 19 para Chipre, enquanto as fontes secundárias constituem os estudos sobre o assunto na literatura relevante. Todos os livros escritos por viajantes para Chipre no século 19 foram lidos para encontrar os dados relacionados à natureza dos cipriotas e seus personagens durante um período de um ano. Os dados recolhidos foram posteriormente codificados e classificados de forma a revelar os temas, nomeadamente hospitalidade, simpatia, lealdade familiar e docilidade. Por ser uma espécie de análise de conteúdo, a análise conceitual foi realizada na análise dos dados. Uma vez que quase todos os estudos sobre a literatura de viagens do Chipre do século 19 estão relacionados à dinâmica política e religiosa do Chipre do século 19, este estudo é pensado para preencher uma lacuna na literatura relevante, lançando luz sobre os aspectos sócio-culturais de Chipre. Os resultados revelaram que os cipriotas foram bastante hospitaleiros para com os viajantes, uma vez que estes reconheceram que se sentiram devidamente recebidos. Simpatia, disponibilidade e docilidade foram outras características exibidas pelos cipriotas nos relatos dos viajantes. A outra característica muito elogiada foi a devoção ao lar e à família.

Palavras-chave: caráter, cultura, estereótipos nacionais, traços nacionais, temperamento.

Introduction

Although scholars have been well studying the political and religious dynamics of 19th century Cyprus (Cassia, 1986; Cevikel, 2001; Hill, 1952; Roudometof & Michalis, 2010) socio-cultural aspects of the period incomprehensibly received less attention. This is probably due to the geo-strategic importance of the island that attracts more attention among the modern scholarship. The same holds true for the 19th century European travelers to Cyprus. Almost all of the travelers who visited Cyprus during the 19th century allocated at least a chapter to a discussion on the political and religious issues of the period. On the other hand, 19th century traveler accounts also provide us with important hints about the main characteristics and values of Cypriot society associated with their culture. However, this aspect has not received much attention by the researchers. This study was designed to address this void in the relevant literature.

Travel writing generates information as to how the locals of a country are perceived by the travelers who are completely foreign to them. Although the accuracy of the impressions of the travelers may at times be disputed due to short stays and unfamiliarity with the culture of the country visited, these impressions are worthy of investigation because they may reflect issues that are inconspicuous to the local eye. Based on the accounts of 19th century travelers to Cyprus, the nature of Cypriots as reflected in travel literature was investigated in terms of hospitality, friendliness, devotion to homes and family and docility in the current study.

Theoretical framework

Cultural Historical Activity Theory informs the current study. In order to discuss the research findings this theory is chosen to be effective since it brings together history and culture in interpreting human behavior. This theory poses

that human behaviors are shaped by the culture, history and social structure of the community in which they interact socially (DeVane & Squire, 2012). In this respect, different nations living in the same social unit can mutually shape one another.

Methodology

The data were elicited from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources in this context refer to travel literature written by travelers to Cyprus in the 19th century. All books written by travelers to Cyprus in the 19th century were perused to find the data related to the nature of Cypriots and their characters over a period of a year. Secondary sources, on the other hand, refer to the studies on the issue in the relevant literature.

Content analysis was employed in analyzing the books. The books were all perused to be coded into certain codes which were then categorized to obtain code categories. Content analysis was thought to be effective in this study since such an analysis has been used to identify the common trends and behavioral responses to reveal international differences (Weber, 1990). Between the two types of content analysis which are conceptual analysis and relational analysis, conceptual analysis was adopted. In employing conceptual analysis, we chose nature of people as our concept for examination. Then, we employed qualitative methods to reach certain themes. Once we decided on the themes, the text was coded for the existence of a concept related to the themes (Hodder, 1994; Kracauer, 1952). To illustrate, in order to code the data, the appearance of the concept at least once in the data was enough for us. In order to ensure validity of the coding process, both researchers coded the texts separately first and in case of disagreement, standardization sessions were held (Emden & Sandelowski, 1999; Koch & Harrington, 1998; Ryan-Nicholls & Will, 2009).

Results and discussion

Hospitality

Hospitality is considered a valuable virtue unique to great souls who value the ties of humanity (Jaucourt, 2013). Hospitality is a virtue that is deeply imbedded in the local culture of the Cypriots. Being reflected in the accounts of travel literature, hospitality customs were a vital part of the culture of the locals in Cyprus. The locals followed these customs both as codes of conduct and out of curiosity and respect to

visitors. Scott- Stevenson (1878) was pleased with the way she was welcomed by Turkish Cypriots. She praised “Mussulmans” for their hospitality towards visitors by saying that they could eagerly provide visitors with the best accommodation they could offer. As reported by Scott- Stevenson (1878):

Another characteristic of the Turk is his hospitality to strangers. Wherever we went on our many expeditions, we were always offered the best house contained. If we refused to alight, women would come out offering us refreshment and water. (p. 299)

As illustrated by Scott- Stevenson (1878), the locals of Cyprus were eager to show hospitality to visitors. They were ready to provide the visitors with the best accommodation in town and when the visitors declined the accommodation offer, they still felt obliged to provide them with refreshment and water.

Unlike Scott- Stevenson (1878), Baker (1879) avoided making a distinction between Turkish and Greek Cypriots in terms of hospitality. In a similar fashion with Scott- Stevenson, Baker (1879) reported how they were welcomed by the locals in Phyni village. Baker (1879) recounted the way they were treated and shown hospitality:

We halted at the first decent looking dwelling and rested beneath the shade of an apricot-tree within a small courtyard. The people at once assembled, and the owner of the house brought us black wine and raki of his own make. (p. 306)

As reported by Baker, it was obvious that when a visitor arrived at a village in Cyprus, the locals of the village got together to greet and see the visitor and did their best to welcome their visitor. The host offered refreshments, such as wine and raki, which was justified by Scott-Stevenson (1879) and Brassey (1880) as well. Brassey (1880) reported that they were served sweetmeat, cold water and Turkish coffee by the locals.

It was also common convention to invite visitors to lunch or dinner in Cyprus in the 19th century. When Smith (1887) arrived at Pantelemoni, a Greek convent, the bishop offered lunch. Due to the fact that she was not feeling well she had to decline the bishop’s offer. Still she was given presents as a sign of hospitality:

Next day I did not feel very well, so we remained at Pantelemoni. The bishop kindly invited us to lucheon, but this we were obliged respectfully to decline. He and Father Iakobos called after dinner,

and we had a long discussion on homoeopathy. During the day we received many presents from him in the shape of wine, cheese, and honey. (p. 169)

Contrary to Smith, Joyner (1878) had the opportunity to dine with a Cypriot. Joyner (1878) mentioned that she was served a wide variety of food, which is an indication of the fact that she was lavishly welcomed. Obviously, this attitude of the host symbolizes the acceptance of the stranger and the urge to show hospitality. That she was served strange dishes informs that she was served regional cuisine native to Cypriots. Joyner (1878) wrote "That evening I dined at the table of my worthy friend the bishop, whose liberal hospitality had made me acquainted with a great variety of strange dishes" (p. 173). On the contrary, Bramsen (1818) asserted that the people of Larneca were poor in general but even the wealthier Greeks were selfish, which was contrary to the generousness of their ancestors towards the visitors (p. 307).

Friendliness

This study poses that the travelers were overwhelmed by the friendliness of Cypriots towards travelers. Friendliness is taking an interest in other people. In this respect, the locals of Cyprus paid special attention to the travellers and they did not exhibit hostile behaviors towards them. Friendliness requires making others feel welcome or making a stranger feel at home as well. Smith (1887) wrote about how they were greeted by the locals of Cyprus:

In the morning, when we came out of our tent, the village people had again assembled to greet us. Some presented us with bouquets, one fumigated us with incense, and one poured over our hands a fragrant water made from the wild roses of the country (p. 183).

The locals took an interest in this visitor and to indicate their goodwill they brought bouquets of flowers picked from their gardens. That one fumigated them with incense can also be interpreted as a goodwill gesture since the locals practised this to keep them from evil. The practice of burning olive leaves is still a widely utilized tradition in Cyprus. By doing this, the locals believe that they drive away the evil eye through smoke. Further, pouring over visitors' hands rose water and sprinkling guests with rose water serve as signs that they are welcome.

When Smith (1887) was riding, she saw peasant women greeting her. The school master, on the

other hand, sent them a bottle of Commanderia, sweet Cypriot wine, as a present, which was indicative of their friendliness:

As I rode along the narrow way betwixt the chasm of the stream and the houses, white-robed peasant-women greeted me from every doorway. The schoolmaster sent us a bottle of Commanderia wine. (pp. 180-181)

In a similar fashion with Smith (1887), Baker (1879) was greeted in a friendly way by the locals:

We again entered a village, where a large plane-tree formed the center of a small open space, faced on either side by a cafe; the situation being attractive during summer from the dense shade afforded by the spreading branches. There were many people sitting in the open shed, who as usual rose and made their salutations as we passed. (p. 71).

In another account Baker (1879) recalled joyful peasants rushing towards them to greet:

We took a different route upon leaving Lithrankomi by keeping upon the high plateau instead of the lower valleys through which we had arrived on our way from Volokalida. We accordingly left this village some miles to the South, but as we were passing through a broad cultivated plain, a portion of which had recently been ploughed, we observed a crowd of women and girls who were engaged with baskets in collecting wild artichokes, which the plough had dislodged. As we approached a sudden rush was made in our direction, the baskets were placed upon the ground, and a race took place over the heavy soil to see who would be the first to greet us. (p. 144)

Based on the travelers' accounts, it can be posed that the locals of Cyprus were not afraid to approach foreigners. They looked at the travelers with curious eyes and they wanted to get to know them. Seeing people in attires different from their own and listening to people speaking a language different from their own must be catching their attraction. Another reason could be that it was not something common to see a foreign visitor frequently in Cyprus since Cyprus was not a favorite destination for travelers in the 19th century.

While Smith (1887) and Baker (1879) avoided making a distinction between Turkish and Greek Cypriots in terms of friendliness, Scott-

Stevenson (1878) adopted a discriminatory approach. More specifically, she observed that Turkish Cypriots were more friendly towards British people than Greek Cypriots. She posed that Turkish Cypriots were well contented with the British rule and that they liked and trusted British people. However, she felt that Greek Cypriots did not like British people in Cyprus. Notwithstanding the fact that it was not worded by any Greek Cypriot, she thought Greek Cypriots disliked and thus were unfriendly to British people. She added that she believed they would prefer Russians to the British:

The Turks like us; they trust and believe in us, in the justice of our Courts, and in our wish to befriend them; whilst the Greeks, on the other hand, seem to have an instinctive though unspoken dislike to us. They are invariably antagonistic; they look upon us with jealousy mingled with fear, and never fail to try and compare us disadvantageously with the Russians. (p. 300)

Supporting Scott- Stevenson (1878), Bramsen (1818) believed that Turks in Cyprus were friendly towards the Christians (p. 317).

Helpfulness can be defined as a friendliness evidence as well and hence travelers' accounts in terms of friendliness are covered under this heading. Helpfulness requires doing useful things for people and assisting them whenever they are in need, which is an indication of good intention. In addition, helpfulness is practised to make other people's life easier.

The 19th century travelers to Cyprus were impressed by the helpfulness of the locals. Baker (1879) recalled an event that while they were in a valley they were lost. They met two Cypriots on donkeys who headed the opposite direction of the way they were supposed to go. That these two men offered help took Baker (1879) by surprise since they were going the opposite direction. Yet, they readily offered help, changed their way and guided them on their destination. This helpful act of these two Cypriots was interpreted as a sign of civility by Baker (1879):

We left this village on March 4th, a heavy but welcome shower on the preceding day having laid the dust and freshened the vegetation. The route lay through a hilly and rocky country covered with the usual evergreens. We quickly lost our way and arrived at a complete cul-de-sac in the corner of a narrow swampy valley. Retracing our steps we met two men mounted on donkeys, who with extreme

civility turned from their own direction and became our guides. (p. 109)

Devotion to homes and family

One thing that travelers observed and found remarkable concerning Cypriots was that they were devoted to their homeland and families. Most travelers praised this quality of being devoted to their homes, their villages and their children. Scott- Stevenson (1878) contemplated that the locals attached importance to their homes and villages more than anything else and they would never leave them even if they were provided with pecuniary advantages elsewhere. She found this carelessness about money surprising. Another feature possessed by the locals which Scott- Stevenson found worthy of praise was peoples' devotion to their children. What she valued most was Cypriot fathers' fondness for their own children. She elaborated that fathers shared all their wealth among children when they were grown-up and that fathers were very protective towards their children.

Like Scott- Stevenson (1878), Joyner (1878) found Cypriot families' commitment to their family members worthy of praise:

One of the most pleasing features of the island is the everyday domestic life of its inhabitants. The members of every family cling inseparably together, and share among themselves whatever good or evil fortune awaits them. To pay for the education of a son or brother, parents and children will suffer both want and hunger. Brothers will not marry until their sisters are provided for. (p. 155)

As illustrated above, Joyner (1878) clarified how supportive and self-sacrificing Cypriot parents were as far as the education of their sons was concerned. Both brothers and sisters were also devoted to each other and hence self-sacrificing towards each other.

Lang (1878) found Cypriots' love of home and family admirable and remarkable. Lang (1878) believed Cypriots looked satisfied with their ways of living and did not wish to leave their native villages for pecuniary gains. He found the continuous support parents provided their children with exemplary. As soon as their children reached maturity parents divided all their wealth among them excluding themselves. That they did not take a share meant that they were so giving towards their children that they

did not hesitate to leave themselves at the mercy of their children in terms of financial matters.

Lang (1878) argued that parents' dividing wealth into children was so common that creditors urged both the father and the son of age sign the bond knowing for sure that the son was going to inherit the money (p. 203). In a similar fashion with Joyner (1878), Lang (1878) admired parents' sacrificing their individual existence for the good of their children (pp. 203-204). He also praised the domestic affection of the husband towards his children. Lang (1878) implied that the wife was a helpful companion to a Cypriot husband but his children gave his life meaning.

Docility

With regard to docility, Scott- Stevenson (1878) described Cypriots avoiding a distinction between the Turkish and the Greek. She portrayed them both as submissive creatures. Scott- Stevenson (1878) asserted that Greek Cypriots lacked Hellenic aspirations unlike their ancestors in Greece:

At the same time, one ought not to confuse the Cypriotes with the true Hellenes, for in many characteristics the two people are essentially different, almost, indeed, forming a distinct race. The Cypriotes are dull and lazy, they have no ambition, nor the patriotic longings of the Greeks. They are frugal and careful in their habits, sober, and fond of hoarding their money; they do not care about making it, but like saving what they have. As I have said before, they are good parents, and devoted to their homes and villages. They are docile and extremely easily governed. (p. 300)

Notwithstanding the "fearful, ignorant and cowardly" people of Cyprus in general, El Abbassi (1816), who was himself Spanish, described the Greeks as having their ancestors' wit and as "men of good sense" (p. 272). El Abbassi (1816), unlike Scott- Stevenson, adopted a differential attitude while reporting his impressions of the people of Cyprus. As stated by El Abbassi (1816), Turks were very well known for their laziness of their character (p. 274). Hence, they did not stir, save that there was an opportunity to insult a Greek. El Abbassi (1816) blamed the Turkish in Nicosia for being disrespectful to the property rights of the Greeks. El Abbassi (1816) elaborated that this was usual among the Turks unless the Greek proprietor was "the richest or the most protected" (p. 272).

Light (1818) wrote of Cyprus as a safe place for travelers unlike Constantinople and Smyrna (pp. 249-250). This is likely to illustrate that the locals of Cyprus were amiable and congenial people who stayed away from crime and theft. Thus, he believed travelers to Cyprus were not prone to dangers or insults due to the good-natured people of the island.

Lang (1878) wrote about the Greek in Cyprus as "docile in the highest degree, industrious and sober" (p. 203). Scott-Stevenson (1878) was in agreement with Lang (1878) concerning the docility of the Greek Cypriot. Scott-Stevenson (1878) wrote "I have already expatiated on the docility of the people and on their love of their homes. The Cypriote, too, does not appear to have the revengeful nature characteristic of most natives of southern countries" (p.155). More specifically, Lang (1878) believed that the Greek people of Cyprus were unlike Greeks in Greece in terms of liveliness and engagement in nervous activity. The Greek nation of Cyprus were free from Hellenic aspirations. Lang argued that fanaticism was not prevalent among the Mohammedans and they got along with their Christian counterparts in an agreeable way (p. 204). Lang (1878) thought that due to the fact that they were good-natured, it was easy to govern the people of Cyprus (p. 206) compared to the people of Crete. Lang (1878) described Cyprus as a secure place free from any act of plundering by brigands (p. 206). As a proof, Lang (1878) argued that there was hardly any efficient military force in the Sublime Porte and that most of them had not fired a shot (p. 206). Another proof was that Lang sent bags of money which he trusted native muleteers without getting a receipt. Although they were not escorted either, the muleteers had not experienced any brigandage. Despite this, Lang recorded a few murders and highway robbery among the Mohammed population in Pyla. Lang proposed that once they were employed in his farm in Pyla, the act of robbery was stopped (p. 208). However, sheep-stealing was common among the shepherds in Pyla. Again this had stopped when they were employed in Lang's farm in Pyla.

Lang (1878) cited one occasion during the summer of 1870. Due to the drought and ravages of locusts, the locals hardly found any food to eat but roots of plants only. Still they were submissive to the Divine will and accepted their fate without any complaints or curse. As reported by Lang, they only said "May God have compassion on us!" (p. 253), which illustrated the fatalistic attitude of the people of Cyprus. Lang described the joy they had with the first

drops of rain with the words “child-like gratitude” (p. 254) which showed how simple minded the Cypriots were and that they were not rebellious.

Conclusions

The main focus of the study was to examine the major attributes which described Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots through the lenses of the 19th century travelers. The results indicate that the travelers have employed distinct approaches in reporting their accounts of the locals of Cyprus. As indicated by the results of this study, while Scott-Stevenson employs a comparative approach comparing Turkish and Greek Cypriots, a great majority of the travelers avoid such a distinction and refer to both groups as locals. Among all the travel writers included in this study, only Scott-Stevenson distinguishes Turkish Cypriots in a positive sense in terms of hospitality and friendliness. The results display that there is a high degree consensus in terms of the distinctive features of the locals of Cyprus. In almost all travelers’ accounts covered in this study hospitality, friendliness, devotion to family and docility are identified as the defining features of Cypriots in the 19th century.

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