An Ethnographic Inventory of Cultural Artifacts Found in Martha Nicol's Autobiographical Account of İzmir in 1855

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Bio

Graduating from Hacettepe University's American Culture and Literature BA program and completing master's level courses in the same department without completing the thesis, Prof. Dr. Arikan completed his PhD at Penn State University in the department of Language, Culture and Society in 2002. In 2010, he became an associate professor of English Language Teaching and became a full professor in the September of 2016. He is currently employed at Akdeniz University's Department of English Language and Literature. He continues researching as a generalist in education, literature and culture.

Abstract

Authors of non-fiction construct settings in which the images experienced through their senses remain as legacies of the epochs in and about which such texts are written. A wealth of literature on autobiographical texts perceives such accounts as sources of cultural artifacts although readers tend to take such non-fiction writing for granted without focusing on the cultural richness portrayed. One among many, Martha Nicol's (1856) autobiographical account titled "Ismeer, or Smyrna and Its British Hospital in 1855 by a Lady," narrates a nurse's first-hand experiences in İzmir in 1855. The book posits Nicol's portrayal of various animate and inanimate entities that were mostly foreign to her in İzmir where various ethnic groups, religions, languages, plants and animals coexisted. Nichol's intense devotion to describing what is surrounding her in İzmir through her value-laden opinions enables researchers to use the information presented about İzmir some 160 years ago to compare the past with the present from a cultural, specifically speaking, ethnographic perspective. In this study, I present an ethnographical reading of Nicol's book with the aim of presenting an inventory of all animate as well as inanimate representations mentioned in her autobiographical account to understand the cultural life of İzmir in 1850s. While doing that, Nicol's value-laden dispositions are discussed as the products of Christian missionaries who worked in the region in the second half of the 19th century.

Keywords

Martha Nicol, İzmir, autobiography, ethnography, culture, Ottoman, Christian missionaries.