
Management of Language Boundaries: Autoethnography in a Film Documenting an Arvanitika Language Community in Greece

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Abstract

Arvanitika is a threatened language that is spoken in very few areas of Greece. Greece's Arvanitika-speaking communities scattered in suburban areas, mainly in southern mainland and island Greece, were founded in the Late Middle Ages during the Byzantine and Frankish conquest of Ottoman rule in the Southern Balkans, and merged in the new Greek nation by virtue of the Greek Orthodox faith and the struggle for liberation from the Turks. Arvanitika is a branch of the South Albanian Tosk dialect characterized by a phenomenon of pidginization from Greek of various historical periods. During the period of language isolation, the language contact with the official Albanian language continued in the early 1990s after the massive Albanian migration to Greece. The era of Albanian immigration finds the Arvanitika language, a low-status language, in a phase of linguistic change and transition from the bilingual (Arvanitika-Greek) to the monolingual (Greek) situation, mainly by the younger generations, but also the larger Arvanitika communities in a phase of urbanization of their rural populations. The need to delineate the Arvanitika language as articulate from the official Albanian language and the negotiation of the Albanian ethnic identity leads the Arvanitika-speakers to attempt a symbolic affirmation of the

differentiation between the two languages. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in language recording and salvage, particularly at the folklore level through the revival of tradition.

The present paper constitutes an approach to linguistic autoethnography, the focus of which is the participation of the referent person speaking in a documentary film about an Arvanitika village. In the film, the referent person plays a dual role, that of the researcher and that of the indigenous community member, while attempting to negotiate between science and domestic linguistic ideologies.

Keywords: *Arvanitika, Albanian, Greece, autoethnography, language ideology, language boundaries*

Introduction

The address 'Arvanite' describing an Albanian, notes Skoulidas (2002), appeared in the 19th century C. E. together with the forms 'Arvanitis,' 'Alvanos,' and 'Vlachos,' sometimes even for peasants. It is suggested that the Arvanite people originally came from Northern Albania where people speak the Gheg dialect (Trudgill and Tzavaras 1977; Tsitsipis 1998; Bintliff 2003), as mercenaries for the Venetians several millenia ago (Bintliff 2003), and prior to then as peasants.

The present study is an autoethnographic approach to a documentary entitled 'Sta Arvanitika' (producers Katerina and Clark-Lambrini Pagoni), filmed in 2019 in an Arvanit-speaking village. The writing researcher and also the main narrator of the documentary, through two roles, attempts to project herself as a scientist, and presents herself as a member of the language community, to progress towards constructing scientific discourse on Arvanitika. Here, the researcher attempts to balance between science and popular perceptions of language and identity in dialogue with indigenous language ideologies. For the present analysis, I draw on my own primary data in the form of interviews, discussions, and dialogues, to highlight the ways in which the Arvanit identity is performed by the participants in the film through traditional events, through narratives in Arvanite, and through images in general life. As such, the research seeks to focus on the various versions of Arvanitness as they appear in historical documents, narratives and anecdotes, the aesthetics of the landscape, and people.

As such, my interest includes an observation and discussion of the ways in which the participants negotiate dividing lines and linguistic boundaries among the languages that are summoned and applied, that is, Arvanitika, Albanian, and Greek.

To this, the structure of the paper is as follows: In the second section, I discuss literature on Arvaniti, and I attempt to create a coherent description of the community, In the third section, I discuss the methodical framework. In the fourth section I apply the methodical framework to discuss the data. In the fifth section, I conclude the paper with possible ways forward.

History and the Sociolinguistic Situation

Our information about the Arvanites of Greece who appeared during the late Middle Ages (14th and 15th centuries C.E.), comes mainly from Byzantine chroniclers.¹ Their establishment is connected with the spread of the Ottoman conquest in the Byzantine territory, and the need to reinforce sparsely populated areas and strategic points of the Empire with groups of soldiers. These strategic points would be defended and settled in exchange for special privileges from the respective authority groups, such as the Byzantine, the Frankish, the Catalan, or the Venetian (Biris 2010).²

The Arvanitika language is subsumed under the medieval Tosc-Albanian subdialect, but today is an endangered language (Botsi 2008). The long-term coexistence of various ethnolinguistic groups led the Arvanitika language to absorb wider linguistic features, such as the borrowing from the various stages of the Greek language until today.³ Under the Ottoman rule, the Arvanites forged a 'Willensgemeinschaft' with the dominant Greek-speaking population,⁴ in which the Arvanites joined in a national imaginary from the early establishment of the Greek nation in the 19th century (Barth 1969).⁵ Much anthropological and sociological research has been directed toward the study of Arvanitika-speaking communities, particularly focused on kinship structures (Alexakis 2006), wedding ceremonies, the economy and traditional professions (Oikonomou 2008), and ethnomusicological recordings of traditional Arvanitika songs and dances (Moraitis 2011), to name a few.

Arvanitika occasionally arises from obscurity, on television or radio broadcasts, with tributes to the Arvanitika folk songs and dances of regions mainly in Southern Greece with the main characteristic being the folklorization of Arvanitic culture, in the context of a return to roots and tradition, and the shift to locality and sustainability. In the same context, this advertisement campaign assigns to agricultural products a protected designation of geographical origins that refer to the Arvanite-speaking areas of the peri-urban zone of Athens (goat's milk from the Kithaironas estate, Erythres Attica wine). As such, a distinct Arvanite culinary and cultural identity (pies, djolia, carnivorous activity) is developing, through the generalization and stereotyping of an Arvanite way of life, and through the exoticization of these Arvanite communities.

Today there is a move to revive Arvanite ethnic identity by its younger generations. The resurgence of interest in Arvanite culture after the 1980s and the flourishing of ethnic clubs in the big cities, appear prominently in social network discussion groups and forums among urbanized Arvanite users. Similarly, websites of historical insight are appearing on the Internet, often with nationalistic content, and drawing on publications of rather doubtful scientific validity.

The aforementioned documentary was set in this context of the revival of the Arvanite culture, and which aspires to provide folklore and local patriotism services to a wider audience. Here, the film director Katerina Clark suggests that this is owing to the fact that "our beloved people pass away and so the linguistic aptitude fades away with them too."

Theoretical Perspectives

The Arvanitika-speaking regions of Southern and inland Greece are today limited to individual linguistic niches and functions that operate within Greek-speaking environments, while the number of fluent speakers or those with sufficient communicative competence is constantly decreasing. The linguistic shift from bilingualism (Greek, Arvanitika) to monolingualism (Greek) increased in intensity after the 1980s, with the increase in internal migration, rapid social modernization, social mobility, and successful integration of the Arvanites into the urban environment.

Scholars focusing on the extinction of the Arvanitika language suggest that extinction is largely predicated on linguistic ideologies associated with the language (Tsitsipis 1995). According to this view, in the case of Arvanitika (as with other dying languages), language change is primarily attributed to 'internal' factors related to speakers' attitudes towards their language, in contrast to other cases of language change, which are attributed to 'external' factors (e.g., genocide, mass migration, demographic changes, etc.).

Yet, the theory of linguistic ideology also locates an ideological gap between 'fluent' and 'terminal' speakers,⁶ and affects language use and structure (Tsitsipis 1991). The ideological position of the speaker sits between notions of its origin, which appear in the speaker's affiliation to Arvanitika and its community, and to modern society, which appears in the speaker's use of (standard) Greek while using the Arvanitika language.⁷

The linguistic competence of the Arvanitika speaker is also limited to 'slim texts,' i.e., stereotyped phrases, exclamations, funny expressions, and greetings, while at the phonological level, the neutralization of allophones towards Greek is pronounced (Tsitsipis 1991). Yet the prevailing category of these speakers is those with a passive bilingualism, that is, B-A speakers (Haarmann 1979). As such, these speakers only exhibit a passive knowledge of the local Arvanitika language, thus mediating their participation in Arvanitika conversations and language communities, where they are able to construe the context without an ability to engage in independent and cohesive speech.

Methodology

The documentary 'Sta Arvanitika' was shot in 2019 in Vilia (54 km from Athens) by Corrupt Corporations, an artistic group whose main members have an origin relationship with the village. Residents of the village were recruited for the filming, including the researcher who also had the role of the main narrator. Filming took place in Villia, and some additional filming was also conducted in the neighboring village Kriekouki (Erythres). The initiative was embraced with interest and enthusiasm by the residents, while the film was presented at the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival and was screened in the cinema Studio, in Athens.

The main objective of the current analysis is to seek out some ways in which the film constructs an Arvanite ethno-linguistic identity through the negotiation of linguistic boundaries and the role of the writer in this negotiation. For the analysis of the material of the film, I draw on two methodological tools, autoethnography and Video analysis-videography.

a) Autoethnography

The complex word 'Auto-ethno-graphy' suggests the description and analysis (writing) of a culture (ethno) through the personal experience (auto) of that culture (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2010). Researchers of autoethnography employ elements of autobiography and ethnography, where the tool is both a methodological process and a product of research, where the autobiography becomes an object of study. In modern ethnography, the role of the researcher is at the center of the analysis, in contrast to the ethnographer-observer of naturalistic ethnography (Denzin and Lincoln 2000).⁸ Autoethnography was developed in the 1980s following on from the postmodern crisis with confidence, and the questioning of grand narratives.⁹ The tool was developed during the heyday of qualitative research methods in the spirit of reflexivity and self-referentiality, yet, does not identify with the inflated term of self-referentiality, but rather, constitutes a distinct methodological approach (Mruck 2003).

Data analysis through the autoethnographic approach becomes a performative one, and corresponds to an interpretative approach to the understanding of qualitative data. The performative research process of autoethnography affects and co-creates researched reality, and hence the result of the research (Sergis 2018).

Autoethnography has received criticism, both for ethical issues (personal data), and for its methodological process, that is, reliability, generalizability, and validity, which is guaranteed in conventional qualitative and quantitative research. Autoethnographers respond to this concern by noting that the obsession with quality criteria is due to the insecurity of qualitative methodologists vis-à-vis quantitative methods. The methodological trial is transferred from the interviewee to the addressee, and the 'artistic' and 'narcistic' character of autoethnography does not obscure its ability to formulate scientific hypothesis, to form theories, and analyze

empirical data. Despite this, autoethnography is widely recognized, satisfying the need for more introspection, self-observation, and recognition of the researcher's role in the field, and the researcher's influence and reactions that co-shape the research field (Adams et al 2010).

In our study, autoethnography is more than a methodological choice, and hence a necessity, given that the researcher and the researched object coincide as the same person. The autoethnographer is on the one hand a member of the community, and on the other hand, she is a field researcher and analyst of the documentary. As part of the culture, she works within a specific socio-cultural position, she draws on her personal experience to understand broader aspects of this culture, and she compares her socio-cultural position with those of the other participants.

b) Videography

The second methodological tool selected for the analysis of the documentary is video analysis or videography. The growing significance of video analysis is part of the new condition of digitality and multimodality in the social sciences, yet this is enhanced through the increasing visualization of culture (visual culture), the development of technologies (video cameras, mobile phones) and the expansion of social media, a phenomenon which intensified during the COVID pandemic. The great theoretical preoccupation with the visualization of our culture and the consequences in our everyday life have led to the development of new methodological tools, and hence with the establishment of new fields in social sciences.

Interpretive video analysis is also referred to as 'videography' in the literature, as it follows the methodological principles of ethnography and the theoretical assumptions of methods such as cognitive sociology. The ethnographic perspective of videography appears when the researcher exhibits an interest in knowing the context during the collection of the data and the unfolding of the events during their execution.¹⁰

Videography constitutes a data-gathering-intensive and data-analysis-extensive process, and consists of the transcription of the visual material with all the aspects of the image, verbal and non-verbal elements, movements, looks, body postures, description of the location. This detailed transcription assists in the analysis of the relationship and interaction of these elements, which are recorded through textual protocols. Some passages are significant for the response to questions that the researcher asks in advance, or which emerge in the field. The analytical value of such sections repeated within the material corresponds to the theoretical saturation of a grounded theory approach and the hermeneutic cycles of the hermeneutical sequence method (Soeffner 2004). These ensure the reconnection with the overall material and a foundation in theoretical generalizations.

Data Analysis

During the process of analysis of the documentary film, in addition to many others, the following four questions emerged:

	Questions
1	Which genre does the film belong to for both the director and the audience (documentary, ethnographic, journalistic, artistic, political act to raise awareness)?
2	To what extent do the actors of the film and especially the scientist contribute to the construction of an Arvanite identity, who does the film ultimately belong to?
3	Which characters are represented in the film (the shepherd, the local, the foreigner), which versions of Arvanit ethno-linguistic identity?
4	What is the relationship between the scientific discourse, the perceptions, and attitudes of the producers of the film and the indigenous views?

The type of material that I analyze within the documentary exhibits a strong autobiographical character, and hence evidencing the intentions of the producers and the ‘scientist,’ who manages the narrative thread of the film. Despite the fact that the film showcases several elements that fall within the boundaries of these genres, I suggest that this particular film is not purely ethnographic, journalistic, artistic, nor folkloric. In the analysis of the video, I have been mainly concerned with the dialogue that develops between the actors, the director, the inhabitants-protagonists of the film, the wider community, the local scientist, and finally, the scientific community; each of these parties exhibits a unique perspective, be it at times slightly unique. The structural elements that I chose to analyze, which were produced by these parties both individually and in interaction with each other, are the shot, the image, the faces, the speech genres (song, dance, stories, courtships, and dialogues), and the language (Greek, Arvanite, verbal, extra-verbal strategies, ambiguities, disagreements, and agreements). Although the analysis focuses on the final part of the film, and more particularly the use of language use in this section of the film, I consider it most appropriate to present the whole analytical codification, in order to place each specific excerpt within the general context of the film.

1. *Holy Places*

The film begins with scenes from the litany on the feast day of Our Lady of Goura (August 23). In the courtyard of the church, under the other pilgrims, the researcher introduces herself with a short biography. In the second shot we hear an Arvanite song from two local shepherd brothers who are both near to their fold in Paliohori [2.30’], and hence among the ruins of the original village, which constitutes a sacred place for the Viliotes. It is at this point that the feast of Saint

George takes place every year with the Arvanite dance of the day and the song "Lule Sigerjianjote" [12'] (Oikonomou 2012). The feast of Saint George captures the collective memory of the move from the old to the new village, while hearing the song always evokes nostalgia in the residents of the village. The collective performance of the traditional dance by all of the inhabitants, even the younger urbanized and more remote ones who have made the effort to learn the Arvanitika verses, with or without their own explicit and intended volition, builds a community, and cultivates the language in the traditional context.

2. The Arvanit Woman's Role in Tradition

The camera view then moves to return to the fest of Gura, a festival containing the women's Arvanite dance and song that follows the function [13']. At this point, the position of women in the Arvanite society is thematized and the image of the Arvanite woman is built through the mocking lyrics of the song. These lyrics are designed so as to mock the men and the men's mothers-in-law. Here, the women appear to both challenge and subvert the patriarchal Arvanite order, asserting a kind of matriarchy (cafe scene, 12'). This view and effort are reinforced by the presence of family scenes with women gathering to prepare food or to rest with songs and stories, in which the researcher also participates. This constitutes a process of sprawling while also propagating the local ethnic Arvanit cuisine (one which is at times predicated on the standards of the national cuisine, e.g., the tzoziles or tjolia, the pitastes, and nso forth), while also stereotyping the Arvanit culture [shot 27, 28].

3. The Arvanit's Role in Greece's National History

The next topic of the film that I selected is the Greek Revolution of 1821, and the contribution of the Arvanites to the National *Paligenesia* with historical information, both from the supposedly native scientist and from younger residents who also participate in the documentary (6'). Many names of heroes with Arvanit origin are discussed in this context. However, the historical information is interrupted by scenes of the custom of Saint George where the horsemen cross the village, symbolizing the heroism and patriotism of the Arvanites, thus building the image of the shepherd-warrior, ultimately in an idiosyncratic view of history [10.17'].

With reference to the settlement of the Arvanites in Greece, information I derive information both from researcher and from residents. The Arvanites appear to the scientist as 'friends and guardians of the Byzantine Empire,' while the geographical regions of Albania and Epirus are suggested as the starting point. Religious identity is non-negotiable for Arvanites and the 'Turkish' common enemy. The field of convergence appear in the common orthodox doctrine, with the Greeks being framed as a people in contrast with the Turkish Muslims (Barth 1969). Emphasis is placed on the time distance from the removal of the Arvanites from the original cradle in Albania (13th century C.E. - 15th century C.E.) and at the same time on the spatial

proximity to Greece. This widespread perception marks the negotiation of the space-time distance and proximity at the ideological level of geography and language respectively, a phenomenon which has a significantly decisive influence in the formation of the ethno-cultural identity of the Arvanites.

4. Arvanit Identity

The historical image of Arvanit is complemented by the actual figure of the villager living a traditional lifestyle. The inhabitants-protagonists of the film (breeders, butchers, builders) are in dialogue with the external observer enacted by the cameraman, and reproduced or sustained by accepting or rejecting ethnic stereotypes. Traditional professions, such as that of the shepherd and the resin collector, acquire an ethnic character, shaping ethos, lifestyle, and character. The negative stereotypes are reversed by building a positive image for the Arvanites in an attempt to restore the 'worn' identity, in Goffman's words, following the words of a young woman:

[shot 44, 24']

The Arvanite head is our pride, it is the besa. The Arvanite is straightforward and besa means speech without a signature until death and those who did not understand it or did not accept it called us Arvanitiko head, hairless head. For me, it is the most precious thing that Arvanitis has, and you will not see it in any other light.

[shot 44, 24']

The Albanian head is our pride, it is the besa. The Arvanite is straightforward and besa means speech without a signature until death and those who did not understand it or did not accept it called us Arvanitiko head, hairless head. For me, it is the most precious thing that Arvanitis has, and you will not see it in any other light.

Arvanite stereotypes, within which the symbolism of the big-head is central to the Arvanite temperament, are reproduced in anecdotes, toponyms, and nicknames. One such example is the story of a young resident which describes a craftsman from neighboring Kriekouki (meaning red head, while the Greek name is Erythres) who slipped and fell. When asked if he was injured, he replied "luckily I fell on my head and didn't break any hand."

[shot 35, 40']

Atie tsë sërben skau edhe ra përden alla otan ska nuk ra me bithë alla me krie, edhe pa djelm mastor ishen atje edhe ithan, vre chë psove, psove gjë? s'psova gje eftihos tchë u ra me krie ede s'tchaj no një dor».

[shot 35, 40']

Where they were working somebody fell to the ground but when he fell, he didn't fall with his ass but with his head and some carpenter gyes who were there said to him, what happened to you, did anything happen to you? and he said, I didn't get hurt because luckily, I fell on my head and didn't break any arms.

5. Language and Language Boundaries

The Arvanitika is performed in the film (the last part [28.40'-56.55']) through short dialogues, songs, fairy tales, stories, and anecdotes. There, younger and older members demonstrate their linguistic abilities with narratives of old stories, which they have heard from the elders. The understanding and reproduction of a few Arvanitika linguistic fragments is a 'rite de passage' for young people, assisting them to join the world of men, acquiring the codes of communication in the male groups of the coffee house and at public gatherings. Arvanitika demarcates the inside from the outside, and functions as a defense against the outsider. The main means of communication for inclusion is the joke that constitutes a community, owing to the fact that only the insiders appropriately understand it.

Question

- | | |
|---|--|
| a | by the degree of understanding as result of communication with the Albanians:
<i>"We understand them / we don't understand them,"</i> |
| b | from the similarities and differences as a result of observation of the Albanian speech:
<i>"They don't look like ours / we have small differences,"</i> |
| c | from the positioning of Arvanitika between Greek and Albanian language:
<i>"Ours are bastardized, they also have Greek elements", "they are similar to what the people of North Epirus speak", "ours is a dialect of Albanian, not exactly Albanian but something similar."</i> |

The final question raised by the film is the relationship and comparison of Arvanitika with the Albanian spoken by the Albanian immigrants settled in the Arvanitik communities. The lines dividing the two languages are at times less and at times more pronounced, a phenomenon predicated on the context and the speaker(s). The boundaries between Arvanitika and Albanian seem to be significantly determined by the following elements: Speakers agree on the existence of differences as well as on the similarities between their Arvanitika and Albanian language(s), but they estimate the degree of intelligibility with Albanians differently, as the following excerpts indicate:

[shot 69]

- | | |
|---|---|
| a | You can't understand the Albanians, our Arvanitika is also mixed with Greek, you can call someone with 'hajde', which means go, come on, 'do ves do vis', you are confusing it, while with them... we say we work 'sërbenjë', they say 'pënojëme', so we can't understand them, you must put so much attention with people Vorioepiotes, who speak a little like us so that you can understand them, now if they are in Deep Arvanitiacountry, how can you understand them? |
|---|---|

[shot 70]

- | | |
|---|--|
| a | The Albanians have a different dialect, and the Arvanites have another dialect, Arvanites and Albano-Albanians are distinguished. |
| | Do you understand Albanians? |
| b | Yes! Yes, many, even when they came in 1991, had names from a nearby area from LakaSouli, let's say they came here with the same names, Gikas, Giokas. |

The speakers are demarcated linguistically and culturally (common names) through observation and daily interaction with Albanian immigrants, where they consider the version of Albanian of Southern Albania to be the closest to their own language contexts. Speaker A's political correctness is expressed here by the term 'Vorioepiotes' (Greek-speaking minority (of Albania)) in Katharevusa (the old pure Greek language). Purity and mixture are respectively reflected in the ethnonyms 'Alvano-Albanos,' in contrast to 'Greek-Albanian,' which is not explicitly mentioned, but also by the term 'inside Arvanitja,' in contrast to 'outside Arvanitja,' which is also not explicitly mentioned. Here, 'inside' refers to the Albanian hinterland. In documenting the understanding and ability to communicate, about which is Arvanitika, and which is Albanian, the inhabitants recruit a varied vocabulary with the most frequent pairs, /krie/ /kok/, /sherben/ /punon/, as in the following example:

Example

Arvanit head does not move easily, kok thon Alvanot, marënnjëmonopat e vete.

The difficulty in understanding, especially by the new residents, even forgotten Arvanitika words, is valued with high Albanianess: A young schoolgirl playfully mentions some well-known Albanian words such as 'buk' (bread), 'che bon' ('what are you doing?'), while for Albanian expressions she does not know, such as the word 'poul' (hen) and heard from a classmate of Albanian origin, she considers Albanian:

[41.36']

OK that's Albanian, I don't know how to pronounce it.

6. The Researcher and the Boundaries

The researcher appears in the documentary, at times in a private space and at times in a public space. Here, the researcher provides historical and linguistic information. From the position of mediator between the community and wider society, the researcher attempts to combine the native theories of language and identity, her personal experience, and her expected notions of official Greek society and scientific knowledge. Through the definition of Arvanitika that the film seeks to develop, the limits that the researcher sets in agreement with the residents' point of view towards the 'significant other' languages, Albanian and Greek, become apparent.

[37']

Albanian is divided into Gegika and Toskika, Arvanitika, the Arvanitika of Lower Italy, that is, of the diaspora, the Chamika of Paramythia, all these are southern versions of the Albanian language, medieval Toskic, Albanian with Greek, if we want to give a definition.

The language ideology represented here by the researcher, that of the mixed language ('bastarduar'),¹¹ on the one hand, creates a proximity to Greek, and on the other hand, a distance from Albanian. At the same time, the language ideology attempts to create an autonomous and distinct space for the Arvanitika language.

Regarding the linguistic mortality of Arvanitika, different opinions are expressed by the film's protagonists, which the researcher attempts to combine in a common place. For some, it constitutes a normal development that is related to modernization and globalization, that lacks exchange value in the market of languages, as the younger shepherd of the film says ("this language has no past"), or that is unable to survive largely owing to objective conditions, as states another participant ("It's not that they didn't let us speak it, because we have a thick head, but we moved away, we changed our lives and that's how we neglected the language").

From a human-rights perspective, the abandonment of the language is the result of the restriction and assimilation policy of the state, which is indirectly expressed in some jokes, such as the story of a resident from the neighboring Kriekouki, which at the same time sets distinct boundaries from Greek. The story refers to a fellow villager who is in military service, and is questioned by his sergeant as to which language he speaks. He responds with an element of irony, "Arvanitika and a little Greek." The funny side of the story lies largely in the breaking of a taboo; a) it is two different languages in the one country, and hence a country that officially disputes the language; b) its soldiers do not know the official language of the country well; and c) the soldiers admit to not knowing the language well and even to the representative of a predominantly national institution that symbolizes uniformity and discipline, such as the army.

Regarding the issue of linguistic mortality, the researcher, victimizing Arvanite speakers, seeks to combine three holding opinions expressed in the film, as presented below:

[37']

a) the rational view of the voluntary choice due to interest or objective conditions which reflects the adaptive image of the Arvanite ('if it offers nothing let's leave it', 'we left, we changed our lives')

b) the reactionary view of the involuntary choice, due to repression that reflects the spiteful image of Arvanitis ('they didn't let us speak it', 'we wanted to forget Arvanitis, and we changed the words, we became modern, we made from Kriekouki Erythres')

c) the human-right-view of the voluntary choice, due to the psychological pressure from the national stress, a view expressed by the researcher which harmonizes with the heroic image of Arvanitis

Quote: When a language is in use and suddenly the users, the speakers make the decision, in order not to spoil and ruin their nation, their own prestige and their own reputation as patriots, to stop speaking the language, this has been called actually linguistic suicide.

Such an autoethnographic analysis highlights a politics of linguistic and cultural boundaries, and an ethics of responsibility expressed by the researcher's rightful discourse in combination with the image of Arvanitis, which is strongly elaborated on in the present documentary.

Conclusion

This study has purported to seek answers to the questions posed by the documentary 'Sta Arvanitika' by Katerina Clark, through the application of the methodological tools of autoethnography and videography. More specifically, the analysis has attempted to focus on some ways in which the film's participants (producers and director, villagers, and the researcher) have quite successfully attempted to contribute to the formation of an ethnolinguistic Arvanite identity. In the light of her autoethnographical techniques, and through her dual role, that of a native and scientist, the researcher negotiates the indigenous linguistic ideologies, as well as with the expectations of its producers' film and the scientific community. She attempts to maintain a balance, outlining the historical image of Arvanitis on the one hand, and the boundaries of Arvanitika with the 'significant other' languages, which are Albanian and Greek, on the other hand. The distances between the languages acquire, at a symbolic level, both for the researcher and for the inhabitants, a geographical and cultural mental content in relation to the national center, Greece, the Albanian hinterland ('Deep Arvanitja') as the borderland, the common names, and the possibility of understanding (with) the 'other.'

The documentary stylizes an image of Arvanites predicated on local traditions, personal experiences, and national stereotypes. These stereotypes are reproduced through ritualistic and repetitive types of speech, such as storytelling, routine expressions, nicknames, and toponyms. The construction of linguistic boundaries occurs by overemphasizing the dialectical differences between Arvanitika and Albanian, and by claiming a separate linguistic space for Arvanitika.

The politics of the film, fueled by linguistic mortality, appear through an aesthetic of emotion that dramatizes language loss; the shepherd sings in a language that is fading and with it an entire world. The film follows the post-modern shift of social indexicality from the class level ('Greek is spoken by the upper class and Albanian by the lower class')¹² to the ethnic level ('Greek is the national language and Albanian is spoken by the minority'). This position of language protection as cultural heritage expressed by the researcher, the producers, and the younger residents, is not necessarily shared by all residents, for whom language change "is a normal development."

In conclusion, the boundaries of languages emerge as a continuum of reinterpretation in each context defined by the communication with the Albanian immigrant group, as well as with the wider Greek-speaking public discourse. In this process the native researcher, the producers, the journalists, and the indigenous, interact in a wider context, to fulfill a role of generators for an Arvanit ethnolinguistic identity, which is increasingly constituted on a supralocal, digital and global level.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Komnene, Ataliates, Skylitsis, Akropolitesect.
- ² Interesting historical-linguistic studies have been prepared from the German-speaking area during the 19th and early 20th centuries, for relevant bibliography see Botsi 2004.
- ³ That is a case of pidginization of the Arvanitika (Trudgil 1976).
- ⁴ As a result of the German Romanticism movement of the 19th century. it should be considered the search for the continuity of the younger Greek nation with the ancient Greek roots with which the origin of the Arvanites should also be connected. Indicative of this ideology are the historical-linguistic studies popular among Arvanites that resort to para-etymologies and controversial theories about the origin of Arvanites from Pelasgian, an almost unknown language which is considered the ancestor of Ancient Greek or Illyrian which is considered the ancestor of Albanian. See Kollias, A.
- ⁵ Unfortunately, these terms and processes have not been sufficiently studied by the social and historical sciences. On the occasion of the anniversary year (2021) of the 200 years of the Greek Revolution (1821), reference is made in individual cases to the Arvanites and their role in the Revolution.
- ⁶ The so-called fluent speakers have full knowledge of the language and are more represented at older ages, while the terminal speakers have incomplete knowledge of the language and are usually represented by younger age groups or urbanized people who have moved away from the community and the traditional way of life. In this particular theory, the category of 'final speaker' is not based solely on his linguistic abilities but also on his ideological attitudes.
- ⁷ That is a meta-pragmatic awareness, Tsitsipis 1997.
- ⁸ The naturalistic view was challenged for reasons not only methodological, but also critical, since it was seen as a colonialist, ethnocentric, 'white', patriarchal, western attitude towards the cultures it studied, ignoring the point of view and experience of the researched and the relationships with them. The role of the researcher, his relationship with the field and the way he influences the research process, but also the performance of personal experience by the researcher had not concerned naturalistic Ethnography.
- ⁹ The special relationship between author, reader and text was established by the postmodernists Derrida, Barthes, Radway to be among the most important representatives of this trend.
- ¹⁰ This type of Video Analysis differs from the standard coding and image analysis performed by behaviorism, prevalent in the field of Psychology, or market analysis that observes the behaviors of consumers or patients or other individuals.
- ¹¹ See Dorian 1981.
- ¹² See Gumperz 1958.

