LEVEL: MEDIUM

DECOLONIAL ENCOUNTERS IN GREECE: THE GREEK CITIZENS OF MUSLIM RELIGION AND AFRICAN DESCENT

Some of the critical issues and keywords that the text below includes:

- National identity
- Media discourse
- Critical Discourse Analysis
- The "discovery" syndrome

If English is not your first or second language, avoid using online translations.Your language skills will improve if you use dictionaries!

To Think:

Where do you get your information from?

What is the main source of information that monopolises the way citizens are being informed about current affairs in your city?

Why? Discuss.

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HOW DID AFROGREEKS OR BLACK GREEKS OF THRACE GET THESE NAMES?

AfroGreeks became well-known a few years ago (app. 2014) when mainstream online media and a few newspapers "shed light" on this population as their own discovery. Few of the writings were in support and in acceptance of diversity in Greek populations, however most sources portray a more exotisising and Othering view. By analysing the words and expressions that have been chosen to describe a certain group of people, the reader can establish a more critical view towards mainstream media and be more aware on the political implications behind a source's media exposure.

LEARN TO UNLEARN

Media discourse is the action of oral or written interactions about a third party in the absence of that third party. The words, descriptions and expressions used to explain and analyze a matter that concerns a specific topic, person, or group are used on a public platform, most likely the media, such as newspapers, radio, television, online sources and social media. The overall, summary, or most commonly heard or read sources of "what is being said" about a topic becomes the discourse.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

is theory of critically and sceptically thinking about a topic when seen on the (media) discourse, as it is conscious of the relationship between the micro (the words that are used and the information that is shared in a document) and the macro (the current sociopolitical context that this information is found in) reasons a reader or a listener has access to specific information. CDA is an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates gender and queer theory, race theory, postcolonial theory and more.

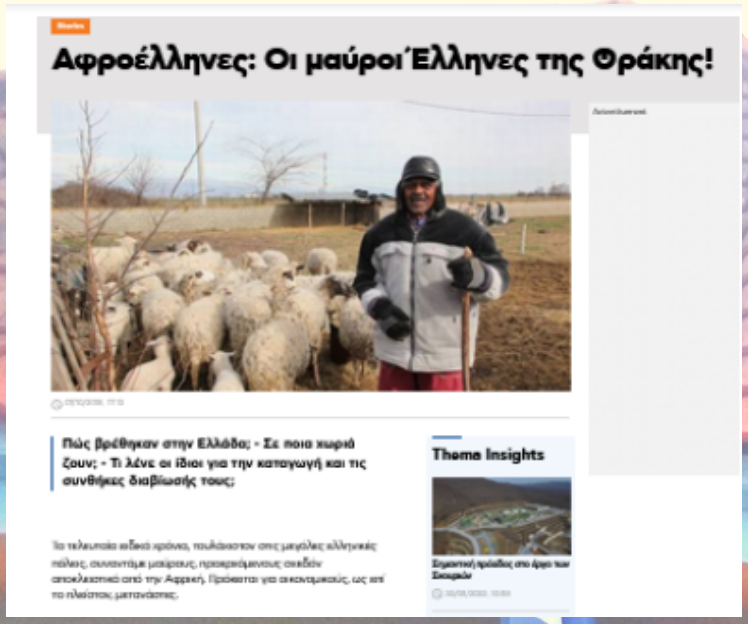
To Think:

Next time you read a newspaper article, question:
what is being left in for you to know and what is being left out?
Who is the writer writing for?
Who is the assigned reader?
Would the writer write differently if the reading audience were from a different social class/race/gender etc?
Why? Discuss.

One of the articles in 2014 uses these sentences:
[african characteristics with a pronunciation from Thrace] would alienate any passerby
[...] far away from the world's eyes
[...] they are slaves of the unknown.
[...] exotic look
[...] they do not know where they came from and when
[...] the mystery behind their presence in Avato
[...] the only connection to Sudan is the afro hair and the big lips.

Another article in 2018 makes the following statements:
...Some of them have integrated, like Giannis Antentokoumpo.
...the use of the word Black is just being used here to determine skin colour and no other racist characteristic.
...AfroGreeks (like AfroAmericans) living here for centuries...

The view from the main road that leaves the Rhodope mountain range, goes past the city of Xanthi and arrives at the plain with sunflowers and corn meadows.
Photo by N.C.--M. (2022)



Title:
AfroGreeks: The black Greeks of Thrace!
How did they appear in Greece?
In which villages do they live?
What do they say about their origin and their conditions of living?



Title:
At Avato of the black Greeks of Thrace:
The descendants of slaves.

OTHER MEDIA REFERENCES:

- *AVATON: The "Black" Greeks of Thrace*
- *The most beautiful and special: The small village of Thrace where exclusively black Greeks live- A special community that deserves everyone's attention. They do not know when they arrived and from where…*
- *Avaton: The small village of Thrace where exclusively black Greeks live (pics)- Even though in the past decade it seems like there has been a larger blend with the Caucasian of the area.*
- *Afrogreeks: The…"Black" Greeks at Avato and other villages of Topiron and Avdiron regions and their... "history".*
- *African-Greeks. Slave descendants in Greece. The minority of the minority!*



Try to evaluate the wordings of these articles from these two pages.
Which do you think use acceptable language?
What alternative words or expressions would you use to better display this information?
What effect does choice of words have on how Others are perceived in the media?
Discuss.

THINKING TIPS

Sign of a kindergarten entitled: Kindergarten of Avato, located on the main road of the village. Photo by N.C.-M.

QUOTES FROM THE FIELD

”

Hey, Black man, bring me a chair to sit !
(non-Black customer to a Black waiter at Evlalo cafeteria)

”

In my youth, I had fallen in love with a White woman, I was ready to marry her, but her family did not approve due to the fact that I was Black.
(Mr. Mohamed, Avato resident)

How to position oneself in a racialised terrain

KEEP YOUR EYES AND EARS OPEN, EVERY LITTLE DETAIL IS IMPORTANT AND CAN OFFER YOU GREAT INSIGHTS FOR EVERYDAY LIFE CONVERSATION STARTERS

LISTEN TO WHAT YOUR INTERLOCUTROS HAVE TO SAY, ECHOE THEIR NEEDS, EMPATHISE WITH THEIR STORIES.

BEWARE OF YOUR BALANCE BETWEEN **PARTICIPATION AND OBSERVATION**. IF YOU GET TOO PASSIONATE ABOUT THE FIELD, YOU MIGHT GIVE THE WRONG IMPRESSION (THE PATRONISING OUTSIDER)

Wong, D. A. (2008). *Shadows in the field: New perspectives for fieldwork in ethnomusicology*. Oxford University Press.



The quiet, central part of fieldwork when everyone has left. Center of Avato/Beyköyü (2022)

AFTER LOOKING AT THE STIMULS MATERIAL AND READING THE TEXT

Set up a discussion group to evaluate and think of the safeguarding of Afrogreek histories, epistemologies, as well as ways to bridge human connection.

Go through your books at home, at school, your local library, or your university. Is there any material that can inform you about communities of Colour in Greece?

Test your history teacher at school or university. Have they heard about the Afrogreeks of Thrace? Was it through the media, oral tradition, bibliography?

4 AN EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE

All the above do not imply that you or your institution should definitely know about the community in question, however, the topic does become a conversation starter on the earliest african history of Greece, as we know it as a nation-state today.

The villages of Avato and Evlalo have become quite a research destination since the Afrogreek community was portrayed on mainstream media in 2014. Various reporters, researchers, and artists have passed by the areas to seek Afrogreeks, have a chat with them, or possibly an interview.

An interesting approach was made by filmmaker Menelaos Karamaghiolis, who was accompanied by Nikos Kabasele, a Greek-Congolese fine artist who had never imagined before that people with his skin color existed in Northern Greece for so many centuries. Menelaos and Nikos's approach was unique: they approached the people of the villages in a very friendly manner and kindly asked if Nikos could draw their portrait. This ice-breaker immediately fostered space for discussion on facial characteristis, skin colour, and later on, generated talks and interviews on natioanal identity and a general sense of belonging. This genuine approach can be qualified as a best practice of using a non--verbal tool to connect with people (drawing) and be accompanied by an extended member of the community with a common trait (african descendence).



On the way to an Afrogreek burial. Photo by N.C.-M. (2022)

Watch the best practice video HERE.

This video is part of the ongoing collective project 'TheAfroGreeks' on african presence in Greece through the lense of the youth who are born and raised in Greece. For more information on the project just go on to Instagram and type : #theAfrogreeks !

SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINERS AND EDUCATORS

LEVEL: MEDIUM

DECODING COLONIAL LEGACIES

COMPLEXITY

This section is meant to engage an audience who is already familiar with minority issues on Black/African populations in Greece and Europe and both history and legacies of colonialism in the region and beyond.

GROUP SIZE & TYPE

8-15 participants, foreigners and locals, ideally university students, activists or practitioners already engaged in the NGO/CSO sector, youth organizations, or collectives.

TIME

90 minutes or 2 hours in case of the need to wrap up and/or set a follow-up activities

OBJECTIVES

- Understand and come to know the difference between Historical Colonies vs. Coloniality as a trace after the colonial project
- Stimulate critical thinking on colonial traces in educational systems, citizenship issues, emigration flows of locals
- (Re)think of decolonial practices in the political history of Greece and its minority groups vis-à-vis ongoing strategies of decolonization worldwide.

MATERIAL

Internet connection, laptop, projector, flipchart posters, handouts, world map

PREPARATION

- Make sure to review the Greek case study before kicking off the different activities.
- Organise activities in two sections of 45 minutes each. Make sure to have enough time to restore participants' attention for the second session.
- Divide participants into small groups in order to initiate critical thinking on the above bullet points and have diverse findings to discuss as a second half.
- Make sure to have a stable internet connection in order to use Google Maps or Google Earth.
- Be prepared to open up the discussion among the participants and related sensitive topics, such as religion, literature, and history. Throughout, make sure that none in the group will feel marginalized or discriminated against.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

- If you are in Greece, visit the northern part, specifically Macedonia and Thrace;
- Try to engage with people on what they know about their region and if they can recall an African history of the area, either old or new.
- If you lead a group of Greeks, reflect on how much or how little the public school system raises the issues of African histories and legacies of colonialism either on a local or global level, national identity, ethnonationalism or ethnocentrism, and cultural homogenization at the expense to minority groups in general, and AfroGreeks in particular.