

Kaliardà: the Greek queer cryptolect

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Abstract

In this paper we attempt to explore Kaliardà, the queer slang that emerged in Athens and then in other major urban centers in Greece. With traces going back at the beginning of the 20th century, Kaliardà reached its prime between the 40s and the 70s and actively remained a coded form of communication within the inferior socio-economic LGBTQ+ communities at least until the end of the Colonels' Dictatorship and the following creation of social space available for them. Prior to the structural analysis of Kaliardà per se, we make a short introduction to the social dimension of the linguistic phenomenon according to the idea that language and society are found in a permanent relation of interdependence where we also try to clarify some terminology issues that occur in defining slang linguistic varieties. Our sociolinguistic overview of Kaliardà includes a description and interpretation of its sociocultural coordinates, which we believe will help the reader understand the genesis and evolvement of this marginal idiom better, as it is studied connected with its function as a secret vocabulary that provides security against the hostile social environment while reinforcing the oneness of the group members.

Keywords: sociolect, kaliardà, queer language/slang/cant/cryptolect, LGBTQ+, Greece

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