

# **THROUGH THE LENS OF NOSTALGIA: PRESERVING CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND IDENTITY IN THE ARBËRESHË COMMUNITY OF PORTOCANNONE, ITALY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**This study explores the profound role of nostalgia in preserving the cultural diversity and identity of the Arbëreshë community in Portocannone, Italy. Through a decade of biannual ethnographic research, the intricate relationship between the Arbëreshë language, traditions, and nostalgic sentiments is examined. Nostalgia, embedded in the language and traditions, acts as a binding force for generations, keeping the community's heritage alive. However, the decline in fluent Arbëreshë speakers poses a threat to this cultural reservoir. This research delves into the community's efforts to revitalize their language through educational initiatives and the cultural significance of festivals like "La Carrese." By analyzing songs, interviews, and personal narratives, the study underscores the importance of nostalgia in cultural preservation. The findings highlight the dual role of nostalgia as both a personal and collective anchor, essential for maintaining cultural identity amidst global assimilation pressures. The research advocates for enhanced linguistic documentation, educational reforms, and the use of technology to preserve and celebrate the Arbëreshë heritage, ensuring its transmission to future generations.**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Portocannone, nestled in Molise, Italy, stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of the Arbëreshë community and their rich traditions. Central to this community's identity is the intricate dance between nostalgia, language, and tradition. Nostalgia, deeply embedded in the community's linguistic and traditional tapestry, acts as the adhesive, binding generations together. It is palpable

in the cadences of the Arbëreshë language, a language carrying whispers from the past and tales of ancestors. But the language is seeing a decline in fluent speakers, causing an emerging threat to this reservoir of nostalgia. Traditions, passed down through stories, songs, and festivals, are equally drenched in nostalgic sentiment, reminding the community of their roots and shared past. The symbiotic relationship between nostalgia and language raises a poignant question: Does the language keep nostalgia alive, or is it nostalgia that breathes life into the language? The dilemma intensifies when considering the potential dissolution of the community's cohesive bond. If nostalgia dissipates, the community risks fragmentation. Hence, understanding this dynamic interplay is not just an academic endeavor but a quest to preserve the soul of Portocannone.

## II. THE ARBËRESHË MINORITY GROUP

Situated primarily in the regions of Calabria, Sicily, Molise, Apulia, Campania, Basilicata, and Abruzzo, the Arbëreshë are an ethnic and linguistic Albanian minority group in Italy. Their roots can be traced back to the 15th century when Albanian refugees, escaping the Ottoman invasions, settled in Italy. Over the centuries, these communities have woven themselves into the fabric of Italian culture, yet they have managed to retain the essence of their original Albanian heritage. A poignant testimony to this vibrant past is their music and songs. Among these regions, Molise stands out, particularly the quaint town of Portocannone, which cradles a unique Arbëresh-speaking community. The linguistic tapestry of the Arbëresh language in Portocannone offers a window to the medieval Albanian language, safeguarded by the migratory Albanians between the 15th and 18th centuries.

The insights presented here come from a decade-long dedication to understanding this unique linguistic landscape based on biannual pilgrimages to Portocannone, with each journey spanning around two months. During these visits, I engaged in extensive dialogues with 20 elderly community members. These conversations, many of which have been archived, gave me a profound understanding of their language's nuances. I also had the privilege to assess and understand the Arbëresh language's reintroduction in local educational institutions, offering a lens to its reception and the efficacy of the methods applied.

The present analytical approach combines linguistic ethnography's essence, allowing an exploration of the interplay between language revitalization, local culture, identity, and historical contexts, with a sociolinguistic perspective, which uncovers how different generational cohorts

perceive and use the Arbëresh language. A phenomenological lens further enriched this approach, enabling me to delve deep into the lived experiences of the community members. This became particularly evident when exploring the personal narratives associated with the celebrated festival, “La Carrese.” This approach stripped away any preconceived notions, letting the authentic voices of the community members shine and offering a genuine understanding of the festival and its cultural significance.

This endeavor is a continuation of previous work on the Arbëresh language in Portocannone. However, the new insights, data, and emphasis on the younger generation’s engagement with the language make this a novel exploration. At its core, it aims to understand the dynamic relationship between the language and the younger inhabitants of Portocannone, especially within educational contexts. At the crossroads of academic linguistics and activism, the present unique vantage point bridges scholarly depth with an empathetic understanding of the community, allowing for a rich and multidimensional exploration of the Arbëresh language and its cultural significance.

Though modest in size, housing just over 2,000 souls, Portocannone holds a wealth of cultural riches. One cannot help but notice the town’s intricate weave of history, culture, and identity, much of which is intrinsically tied to the Arbëreshë community. Walking through the narrow streets of Portocannone is like stepping back in time. Historic edifices stand proudly, bearing testament to the town’s rich past, while local festivals breathe life into age-old traditions. The Chiesa di Santa Maria Assunta is an emblematic symbol that not only offers spiritual solace but also speaks of the profound religious practices of the Arbëreshë people, its walls echoing tales of their ancestors. Yet amidst the joyous celebrations and vibrant folklore, there is an underlying narrative – one of nostalgia. A powerful sentiment, nostalgia serves as both a tribute to the past and a defender of cultural diversity and identity.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This work, grounded in phenomenological and anthropological perspectives, peels back the layers of nostalgia. Its aim is to understand human experiences from a first-person perspective, creating a direct window into the individual and collective consciousness.

The research is enriched with a medley of personal resources – diaries, letters, and intimate conversations. Through these, we see how the community fiercely holds onto their unique traditions and language, even in the face of increasing pressures to assimilate. This tenacity is most

evident during its patronal festival in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Constantinople, the first day after Pentecost. The day begins with a Holy Mass at 08:30, followed by another at 11:00. At 18:00, there is a Solemn Eucharistic Celebration. After this, the statue of the Madonna is taken on a procession through various streets of the town, ending with its return to the church. In the evening, as traditional Arbëreshë melodies fill the air and feet move rhythmically in dance, one realizes the pivotal role of music, not just as entertainment but as a vital thread linking past and present.

Drawing from my own experiences, having grown up in Rome and somewhat detached from the Arbëreshë heartbeat, this article sheds light on the challenges and longings born from being geographically and culturally distant from one's roots. Arbëreshë songs are meticulously dissected, revealed as carriers of collective memory and identity, symbolic bastions against the tide of global homogenization. The study's revelations extend far beyond Portocannone's borders, emphasizing the global implications of preserving cultural diversity. In a rapidly globalizing world, the pressures of assimilation loom large. Nevertheless, through the lens of nostalgia, this research shows how such emotions can be harnessed, serving as potent tools for cultural preservation and identity reaffirmation. In doing so, it underscores the importance of recognizing, celebrating, and championing the myriad cultural experiences that enrich our global tapestry. Ultimately, this article is not just about a community's fight to preserve its identity; it is also a universal tale of the human spirit's resilience and the lengths we go to retain our unique cultural footprints amidst an ever-evolving world. Nostalgia, far from being a passive yearning for days gone by, can be an active champion, defending the rich tapestry of human diversity.

#### IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Nostalgia stands as a cornerstone in the preservation and transmission of the Arbëreshë community's vibrant traditions and language, highlighting its crucial function in safeguarding cultural diversity. It roots the community in its historical origins, fortifying its ties to the present while inspiring resilience for the future. Within this context, songs emerge as poignant vessels of history and emotion. Analyzing them provides profound insights into the enduring legacy of the Arbëreshë language and heritage. These melodies, steeped in shared memories and the community's unique ethos, are the essence of the Arbëreshë spirit. They exemplify nostalgia's powerful role in upholding cultural diversity.

This study delves into the broader sociopolitical nuances of nostalgia, shedding light on its role in

bolstering the Arbëreshë identity and navigating their interactions with neighboring communities. Through nostalgia, the Arbëreshë find a shield against the tides of cultural assimilation, establishing a deep-rooted connection to their past and carving out their distinctive position in the vast cultural tapestry. My personal odyssey, marked by yearning and a sense of detachment from my Arbëreshë heritage, illustrates nostalgia's personal dimensions. This personal nostalgia mirrors and amplifies the collective sentiments of a community, underpinning shared identity and the drive to conserve culture. In the grand scheme of this research, nostalgia rises as a formidable champion of cultural diversity, enabling minority groups like the Arbëreshë to maintain their distinct cultural imprints amidst the challenges of global uniformity.

Nostalgia is far from a mere sentimentality; it is an intricate tapestry woven from emotions, memories, and the psyche's multifaceted roles. Within the vast corridors of psychological understanding, nostalgia emerges as an emotional anchor, particularly during life's storms, offering solace and lifting one's spirit. This profound emotion can mitigate feelings of desolation and isolation, reminding us of our roots and our growth over the years. It reiterates our identity narratives, deepening our sense of belonging and interconnectedness by reflecting on shared events and communal memories. Additionally, in the face of life's existential quandaries, nostalgia acts as a protective shield, grounding individuals in their past and infusing life with purpose and meaning. It is like a bridge that seamlessly connects the dots between our yesterdays and today, allowing us to perceive the flow and unity in our life stories. The glow of cherished memories, cast by nostalgia's gentle light, can be a source of inspiration, propelling us forward with renewed hope and a brighter outlook.

Beyond its personal influences, nostalgia plays a crucial role at the collective level. It is instrumental in passing down values, traditions, and historical narratives through the ages, ensuring that cultural legacies are not lost in the sands of time. And in those moments of sheer monotony or repetition, drifting into nostalgic reveries provides a refreshing mental escape, rejuvenating our spirits. Especially when we are faced with overwhelming changes, either on a personal or societal level, nostalgia offers a comforting haven, helping us find stability amidst the chaos. Nostalgia is often conveyed through songs and the unique language they possess. As Portocannone loses these, it loses not only its sense of nostalgia but also its foundational roots. Some elders lament that the younger generation is more engrossed in the digital world than in their own history, leading to a decline in nostalgia, language, and, ultimately, their identity.

Nostalgia is vividly manifested and experienced through tangible avenues. With its

harmonies and melodies, music echoes the stories and emotions of bygone eras, bringing them to life for contemporary audiences, while art captures moments, sentiments, and epochs in its myriad forms, offering visual representations of what once was and how it connects to the present. Interviews provide firsthand recollections and insights, letting personal narratives breathe life into abstract feelings. Festivals, those grand celebrations of culture and community, are perhaps the most vivid displays of nostalgia, showcasing traditions and histories in a vibrant and collective manner. Together, these mediums act as the vessels through which the profound emotion of nostalgia travels, allowing us to engage with our past, understand our present, and aspire for the future. Through the music that resonates with memories, the art that visualizes our collective journey, the voices that recount experiences, and the festivals that celebrate our shared heritage, nostalgia finds its expression, reminding us of the continuous tapestry of life and culture.

Amid the gentle hum of a café, Lucia, a middle-aged woman with piercing blue eyes, shared her unique source of strength during trying times. The steam from her cappuccino dissipated as she began, “You know, every time I face adversity, I travel back in time – not literally, but in my mind.” Lucia’s ancestors had faced harrowing challenges. They arrived in the Kingdom of Naples after escaping the turmoil and conquest of their homeland. Their journey was not easy. They battled oppression, experienced severe deprivation, and had to start afresh in an unfamiliar land. But they carried with them an indomitable spirit, a fierce resilience that they passed down through the generations. “When the weight of the world feels unbearable,” Lucia continued, her voice unwavering, “I close my eyes and imagine the trials my forebears went through. Their battles, their perseverance, their hope. It gives me a perspective that whatever I’m facing now is surmountable.” The connection Lucia felt to her roots was palpable. She continued, “I believe their strength runs in my veins. If they could overcome the conquests, start anew in Italy, and build a life from scratch, then I can certainly face my challenges. They are my beacon, my anchor.”

Lucia’s story is a testament to the profound impact our ancestors’ experiences can have on our own resilience. By connecting with her roots, Lucia draws strength from her lineage, finding the courage to face any adversity.

The diary of C. M., penned in the tumultuous years following World War II, offers an invaluable glimpse into the life of a young woman navigating a changing world. Meticulously preserved and discovered decades later, the journal paints a vivid picture of mid-20th-century Rome, a city rebuilding itself amidst the scars of war. However, the diary’s significance goes beyond its historical account of post-war Italy. It stands as a testament to the timeless nature of

human emotion, resilience, and the quest for identity. C. M.'s introspective entries echo themes of displacement, adaptability, and the search for belonging, making her experiences resonate with readers across generations.

One of the most poignant aspects of the diary is its documentation of C. M.'s connection to her ancestral roots. As she grapples with the challenges of her new life in Rome, she often finds solace in the stories of her forebears. Their tales of perseverance, as recounted by her father, serve as a beacon of hope for her, illuminating her path during her darkest moments. Moreover, it provides an intimate portrayal of the power of memory and storytelling. The narrative threads she weaves – of her own experiences and those of her ancestors – highlight the role of oral histories in preserving cultural heritage. Through her recounting, she becomes both a custodian of the past and a bridge to the future, emphasizing the enduring bond between generations.

The diary is thus more than a personal chronicle; it is a mosaic of collective memories, cultural reflections, and a testament to the indomitable human spirit. It is a reminder of the importance of staying connected to one's roots, even amidst the whirlwinds of change.

The air in Rome today feels heavy, laden with the weight of my thoughts. The city's ancient streets, so rich in history and tales of grandeur, now echo with the hurried footsteps of the many who, like me, have come seeking a new beginning. Moving here has not been easy. Every corner of this magnificent city reminds me of how much I've left behind, how much I need to learn and adapt to. But today, as I sat on the steps of the Pantheon, feeling lost in the maze of my emotions, I remembered the words my dear father would often whisper to me during times of despair. "C.," he would say, "whenever you feel defeated, remember our ancestors. Their strength, their resilience. They faced wars, famines, and the harshest of winters, yet they persevered, holding onto hope, love, and each other. Their spirit flows in your veins. Harness it, and there's no challenge too great for you." (Excerpt from the Diary of C. M., Rome, June 7, 1947)

During an interview with an elderly gentleman about La Carrese, a pulsating testament to the historical journey and cultural synthesis, I uncovered another poignant fragment of nostalgia. At the heart of this festival is the commemoration of the brave Albanian exiles who, fleeing turmoil in their homeland, found refuge in Molise. This festival's origins are deeply rooted in the memories of that challenging migration. The chariot race, the centerpiece of La Carrese, symbolizes the Albanian exiles' journey, highlighting their endurance and determination. The chariots represent the arduous journey of those ancestors who navigated unfamiliar terrains, both literal and

metaphorical, to establish themselves in Portocannone. Teams from different parts of Portocannone participate, infusing the event with a mix of competitive spirit and communal camaraderie.

There is also a profound spiritual dimension, a quiet reverence for the ancestors' sacrifices. Religious processions often weave through the festivities, blending the sacred with the historical and reinforcing the village's deep connection to its past. As the streets come alive with music, dance, and the aroma of traditional foods, there is a palpable sense of unity. For the residents, it is an opportunity to pay homage to their Albanian roots, express gratitude for the resilience of their forefathers, and strengthen their bond as a community. For visitors, it is an immersive experience of a unique cultural tapestry woven with threads of history, faith, and celebration.

To me, La Carrese is not just a festival; it's a portal that bridges the past and the present. Every cheer of the crowd, every chariot that races, takes me back to a time I never lived in but feel intrinsically connected to. I often imagine the hardships my Albanian ancestors faced when they sought refuge in Molise. Their resilience, their sacrifices, their undying spirit – it's all encapsulated in the essence of this celebration. When I see those chariots racing, I don't just see a competition. I see a symbolic journey echoing the migration of our forefathers, their struggles, their hopes, and their dreams. The chariots, in their resplendent beauty, embody the strength and determination of those who once walked this land, carving out a space for themselves and for generations to come. As the village comes alive, I'm reminded of the stories passed down in my family, tales of courage, of new beginnings, of a community that stood united in the face of adversity. (Reflections on La Carrese by N.)

It's a reminder of where I come from, of the values that have been instilled in me, of the legacy that I carry forward. It evokes a profound sense of gratitude, pride, and belonging. It's a moment to reflect, to honor, and to dream. In the midst of the festivities, as the chariots blaze forward and the crowd roars in anticipation, I often find a quiet moment of introspection. I think of the undying spirit of the Albanian exiles, the sacrifices they made, the life they envisioned. And as I stand there, amidst the echoing cheers, I feel a deep connection to history that shapes my identity, my beliefs, and my vision for the future. (Reflections on La Carrese by P.)

Special attention is given to the profound Arbëreshë songs, which combine the history, culture, emotion, and identity of the Arbëreshë community. Central to the present exploration is the



recurring theme of nostalgia that permeates these melodies. Within them is a palpable longing – a yearning not just for a geographical homeland but also for an emotional and ancestral space, echoing the trials and tribulations faced by the Arbëreshë diaspora over the centuries.

Silvana Licursi, an Italian teacher and singer from Portocannone, performs one of the most heartfelt songs, “La fuggitiva” (The Fugitive). This song tells the story of a young woman dressed in black who leaves her hometown to bid farewell to her land. As she departs, she encounters a black mulberry tree from which she plucks a bunch of leaves. Then she breaks off twigs with fragrant little apples from an apple tree and gathers wildflowers to fill her apron. Amidst tears, she begins to mourn her separation from her land, expressing her sorrow in a poignant farewell:

I salute you, my Land! I salute you as I leave you, and I shall never see you again. I have no place to go, no town to live in, no home to stay in... These twigs and these flowers will wither as soon as I am gone, but they will never be able to tear from my heart my love for you. Farewell, my Land! Farewell, my Land!

The song is imbued with nostalgia because it expresses a deep love and a poignant sense of loss for the singer’s homeland. It reflects the universal theme of leaving one’s roots behind, carrying only memories and a deep-seated love that remains strong even as the physical reminders – the twigs and flowers – fade away. The imagery of the woman collecting pieces of nature symbolizes her desire to hold onto her connection with her home, underscoring the emotional difficulty of departure. The repetition of the farewell underlines a painful, final goodbye, resonating with anyone who has ever had to leave a place they deeply love.

Reflecting on the Albanians’ last migration, Licursi conveyed powerful sentiments concerning “La fuggitiva” in a private interview. Confronted with harrowing images of a ship brimming with beleaguered humans who seemed to have come from another world, she experienced a potent mix of intense emotion and sorrowful disbelief. She witnessed history repeating itself with another vessel traversing the sea under the cover of night, bearing a cargo of grief, fear, and feverish hope. Like many other Arbëresh, she views the incoming people as brothers and sisters. This perspective underscores a profound sense of kinship and solidarity that transcends mere cultural ties, embodying a deep-seated recognition of shared roots and collective destiny. The invocation of “brothers and sisters” embodies an effort to bridge a five-hundred-year divide, reaching out to touch a reality that diverges dramatically from the tales of old. This phrase quivers in the night’s calm, as fragile and hesitant as a newly emerged leaf. Among the elderly, this feeling, steeped in a sense of

common heritage and a longing for reconnection, finds a particularly resonant echo. For many elders, to speak of “brothers and sisters” goes beyond familial acknowledgment; it is a deep affirmation of a lineage that has endured through the ages, traversing a vast landscape of historical quietude and separation. It emerges as a heartfelt declaration of kinship, vibrating with emotion, especially for those who have witnessed the passage and transformation of their lineage across generations.

This nostalgia forms the very core of Arbëreshë identity. It connects the present generation to their historical roots, reminding them of their unique journey and the resilience of their forebears. The songs, with their evocative lyrics and melodies, serve as a bridge between the past and present, encapsulating the collective memories and the shared ethos of the community. These musical narratives offer invaluable insights into the ways in which nostalgia functions as a protective mechanism, safeguarding cultural heritage, fostering a sense of belonging, and reinforcing community ties in the face of external challenges and changing times. They are a testament to the power of music in preserving identity and highlighting the indomitable spirit of the Arbëreshë people.

In Portocannone, the fading of the local language signifies the loss of a communicative tool and a profound erosion of cultural identity and ancestral connection. This language has been a vessel not only for communication but also for transmitting shared memories, values, and histories. Embedded within its words and songs is a profound sense of nostalgia, which is integral to the community’s identity. As the language wanes, so does this unique sense of nostalgia, leading to a weakening bond with the community’s heritage. The risk is twofold: the younger generations might lose a tangible link to their past, and the community at large might find it challenging to express the deep emotions and sentiments once captured by their language. The cultural richness, stories, and knowledge preserved in the language are in jeopardy. As Portocannone grapples with this challenge, the profound relationship between language, nostalgia, and identity is underscored, reminding us of the need to cherish and preserve our linguistic heritage.

The generational gap in the experience of nostalgia becomes evident when delving deeper into the interviews with Portocannone’s residents. For the older generations, language is more than a means of communication; it is a living tapestry of memories, traditions, and historical events. Their words echo with the experiences of their ancestors, and with each phrase or song, they conjure up the rich tapestry of their shared past. This deep-seated nostalgia acts as a foundation of their identity and a bond that ties them to their heritage. On the other hand, with diminishing fluency in

and exposure to the language, the younger generation inevitably experiences this nostalgic connection to a lesser extent. Their relationship with the past is more attenuated, mediated perhaps more by stories than by direct linguistic experience. This divergence not only highlights the risk of cultural dilution but also underscores the critical role of language in the intergenerational transmission of nostalgia, values, and identity. The fading linguistic bond among the youth raises concerns about the continuity of the community's rich cultural heritage and its future resonance.

Many younger individuals do not experience nostalgia in the same way as their parents. They inhabit a different world, shaped by modern influences and experiences, which distances them from the sentiments and memories of the past. As one elderly woman from Portocannone said during an interview:

With every fading word of our language, a piece of our past, our history, vanishes into oblivion. The young ones, their hearts no longer echo with the melodies of our stories, nor do their eyes shimmer with the nostalgia of yesteryear. It's as if, without our language, they drift away from their roots, detached from the very essence that once bound us together. The rich tapestry of memories and traditions, which once thrived in our shared nostalgia, now seems fragile. I fear that as we lose our words, we lose ourselves, and the young ones may never truly know the depth of our collective soul.

In a comprehensive study on the vulnerability of the Arbëresh language, it was discerned that half of the Arbëresh communities in Italy have relinquished their native tongue. Alarming, many dialects and cultural intricacies have disappeared without ever being documented or studied. Even in communities where the language still lingers, the number of speakers has sharply declined, with its use confined to specific scenarios. Some dialects are perilously close to extinction. This decline can be attributed to the pervasive influence of the dominant Italian language as well as the omnipresence of television and other modern media, which often prioritize mainstream languages and cultures. The lack of nostalgia among the younger generation, as the study highlights, further exacerbates the situation.

The Arbëresh language, like many minority languages in Italy, stands at a critical juncture. Communities have consistently reached out to both the Italian and Albanian governments, pleading for support to protect their language and rich cultural heritage. For over 500 years, they have preserved traditions and customs that even native Albanians have overlooked. However, the elder generation is now grappling with the unsettling realization that their successors, who once were bilingual, are now predominantly Italian-speaking. This shift has been intensified by Italian being

the primary language of instruction in schools and the diminishing use of Arbëresh in daily life.

In the heart of Portocannone, I posed a question to the locals: “What do we need to do to preserve the Arbëresh language?” A chorus of voices, young and old, echoed the sentiment that more Arbëresh lessons in schools were essential. They believed the mere two hours allocated were insufficient. But the elderly also emphasized something deeper when they spoke of the need to cultivate a sense of nostalgia and strengthen the bonds of community. For them, the language is more than words; it is the soul of their heritage.

## V. FUTURE SCOPE

The exploration of the Arbëreshë community’s cultural and linguistic heritage in Portocannone presents numerous opportunities for future research and initiatives aimed at preservation and revitalization. One potential avenue for future work involves enhancing linguistic documentation and standardization. Developing extensive archival records of the Arbëreshë language, including oral histories, folklore, and traditional songs, can ensure that linguistic nuances and cultural expressions are preserved for future generations. Establishing and promoting standardized writing systems for the Arbëreshë language will facilitate its teaching and consistent usage within the community and beyond.

Educational initiatives could also play a crucial role in this endeavor. Integrating the Arbëreshë language and cultural studies into the local school curriculum more robustly is essential. This integration can include immersive language programs, cultural workshops, and the use of digital tools to make learning more engaging. Additionally, implementing training programs for teachers will equip them with the skills and resources needed to effectively teach the Arbëreshë language and culture.

Reviving cultural traditions and fostering community engagement are other critical areas to explore. Organizing and promoting festivals, exhibitions, and events that celebrate Arbëreshë heritage can serve as platforms for cultural expression and community bonding. Encouraging greater community involvement in preservation efforts can be achieved through local committees, youth engagement programs, and intergenerational projects.

Technological integration can further support these efforts. Developing digital platforms and archives where the community can access and contribute to the repository of Arbëreshë cultural and linguistic materials, including mobile apps, websites, and social media campaigns, will be invaluable. Additionally, using virtual and augmented reality technologies to create

immersive experiences can bring the history and traditions of the Arbëreshë community to life for both educational purposes and wider public engagement.

Collaborative research and partnerships are essential for sustaining these initiatives. Establishing partnerships with universities and research institutions will enable in-depth studies on the Arbëreshë language and culture, including exploring the impacts of globalization and assimilation on minority languages. Seeking support from government bodies and non-governmental organizations for funding and resources will sustain preservation efforts and advocacy for policy changes that recognize and protect minority languages and cultures.

Interdisciplinary approaches can provide comprehensive insights into the Arbëreshë community. Continuing to employ phenomenological and ethnographic methodologies will capture the lived experiences and personal narratives of the Arbëreshë people, offering deeper insights into their cultural identity. Expanding sociolinguistic and anthropological research will help understand the broader implications of cultural preservation within the context of contemporary societal changes and pressures.

Promotion of nostalgia as a cultural tool is another promising direction. Conducting workshops that explore the concept of nostalgia and its role in cultural preservation can help community members reconnect with their heritage, fostering a sense of pride and belonging. Encouraging the use of nostalgia in the creative arts, such as music, storytelling, and visual arts, will also help maintain and celebrate Arbëreshë identity.

By addressing these areas, future efforts can contribute significantly to the preservation and revitalization of the Arbëreshë language and culture, ensuring that the rich heritage of Portocannone continues to thrive amidst modern challenges.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In the realm of linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, it is paramount to acknowledge and rigorously examine the profound influences of nostalgia, emotional connections, and the human factor on language retention and attrition. The tacit knowledge and emotive power embedded in a language constitute a significant portion of its value to its speakers. When considering the fading vitality of minority languages, one must contemplate the potential psychosocial barriers to language transmission between generations. There is a compelling argument that the guardians of these linguistic traditions – often the older members of the community – may exhibit a certain hesitance,

if not outright reluctance, to pass on their linguistic mantle to the younger generation. This could be attributed to a perceived chasm in the emotional and experiential realms that each group occupies. For the elderly, their language is a vessel for a collective memory, a repository of a shared past, and an expression of identity shaped by time-specific experiences and sentiments.

From this perspective, the language embodies an emotive universe replete with cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and a worldview that the younger generation, seemingly ensconced in a divergent modern reality, may not fully appreciate or engage with. This dissonance can create an emotional and psychological distance where the older generation fears that their deeply held sentiments and the nuanced emotional resonance of the language will not be understood or valued. It may lead them to question the relevance of teaching a language that, in their view, may no longer serve as a functional bridge in an increasingly globalized and homogenized world.

Thus, when addressing the decline of minority languages, it is crucial to probe not just the structural and institutional challenges but also the more intangible barriers of emotional resonance and intergenerational disconnect. Exploring these dimensions can yield insights into how language preservation efforts might be restructured to foster a more profound emotional engagement with a language, ensuring that it continues to be a living, breathing element of cultural identity for all age groups. This exploration is not merely academic; it has tangible repercussions for cultural conservation strategies and understanding the dynamics of human social interactions across generational divides.

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