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Home Movies as Visual Folklore: Reconstructing the "Tavros" Religious Fair in Lesvos through Digitized VHS Collections on YouTube

This paper explores the use of home videos as a vernacular form of audiovisual documentation and focuses on the case of Spyros Koukossis, an electronics shop owner from the village of Agia Paraskevi on the island of Lesvos. By employing a VHS camera, Koukossis recorded local traditions and festivities during the annual "Tavros" religious fair in honor of Agios Charalampos. Captured between 1984 and 2009, these recordings appear at first glance to resemble professionally produced material intended for broadcast or tourist consumption. However, they diverge significantly in intent and aesthetics, thus reflecting an amateur style motivated by the desire to document rather than entertain and embody a unique ethnographic perspective. Digitized and uploaded to YouTube by a local user almost a decade ago, the footage serves as a valuable case study for analyzing how older audiovisual technologies have been used to render and reinterpret traditional cultural practices. The paper adopts a qualitative lens to examine the technologies involved, the ethnographic content, and the evolving nature of Koukossis's documentation over time and assess its contribution to the reshaping of collective memory.

Key words: Home video, VHS, collective memory, visual folklore, religious fair, Lesvos

УРСУЛА-ХЕЛЕН КАСАВЕТИ

Кућни видео као визуелни фолклор: Реконструкција панађура „Таврос" на Лезбосу кроз дигиталитоване ВХС збирке на Јутјубу

Овај рад истражује употребу кућног видеа као вернакуларниг облика аудиовизуелног документовања и фокусира се на случајеве Спироса Кукосиса, власника електрорадње из села Аја Параскеви на острву Лезбос. Користећи ВХС камеру, Кукосис је снимао локалне традиције и прославе током годишњег „Таврос" панађура (религијског вашара) у част Светог Харалампија. Снимци начињени између 1984. и 2009. године на први поглед изгледају као професионално начињен материјал намењен за јавно емитовање или за туристе. Међутим, ови снимци се по намени и естетци значајно разликују и тиме одржавају аматерски стил који је мотивисан жељом да се документује, пре него забави, и представљају јединствену етнографску збирку. Дигитализовани и аплоудовани на Јутјуб од стране локалног корисника пре скоро десет година, ови снимци служе као вредна студија случаја за анализирање тога како су аудиовизуелне технологије коришћене за реинтерпретацију традиционалних културних пракси. Овај чланак користи квалитативни приступ како би истражио све технологије које су умешане, етнографску садржину и променљиву природу Кукосисове документације кроз време и процени допринос ове документације у преобликовању колективног сећања.

Кључне речи: кућни видео, ВХС, колективно памћење, визуелни фолклор, панађур, Лезбос

INTRODUCTION

The audiovisual documentation of ethnocultural groups, individuals, and folkloric events - or their representation in mass media products (films, television shows, advertisements, and video clips) - has long been a central focus of visual folklore. At the same time, beyond what is produced in institutional settings (such as fieldwork documentation or professional productions), there has been an ever-growing and dynamic interest in photography as a medium of vernacular expression and cultural trans-

mission. This dimension becomes relevant when considered through the lens of Richard Chalfen's concept of "home-mode communication" (1987), which includes family photography, tourist snapshots, and home movies - media forms typically created without artistic intent or adherence to formal aesthetic conventions; they rather emerge from everyday practices of remembering, sharing, and expressing identity within personal and familial contexts. To elaborate on this perspective, home movies, i.e., those non-professional films or videotapes that often document everyday routines and cultural practices, seem to offer particularly valuable insights for folklore research. While they are traditionally overlooked in academic discourse as they constitute what Chalfen coins as "cinemanaïveté" (Chalfen 1987, 49), they arguably function as informal, self-authored ethnographies; they are spontaneous visual records that reflect family rituals, seasonal customs, and local traditions. This ethnographic potential was already present even at a time when home moviemaking was becoming increasingly widespread, facilitated by the introduction of lightweight and relatively affordable equipment, such as the Sony Portapak in the late 1960s and VHS camcorders in the 1980s.

Despite various and often misleading misconceptions about the genre, "home movies" could be regarded as an inclusive term that nowadays can contain instances such as "film diaries," "first person cinema," even "avant-garde films" (Russell 1999, 143-144) to name a few. Furthermore, as raw material, their ethnographic qualities are undeniable. In her important work *Experimental Ethnography*, Catherine Russell acknowledges the value of found footage - notably in the form and content of home movies - as a means of producing an ethnographic effect (Russell 1999, 239). These are, along amateur films, the ones to "negotiate between private memories and social histories in a variety of forms and iterations" (Zimmermann 2008, 4).

This framework provides a tool to discuss employing home videos in a vernacular context: home videos shot with a VHS camera by Spyros Koukossis, a local electronics store owner called "Radioilektriki" in the village of Agia Paraskevi on the island of Lesvos (Mitilini, North of the Aegean). His videos, produced on the occasion of a well-known religious fair, the fair of "Tavros" in honor of Agios Charalampos, offer an interesting interpretation of traditional customs through the lens of modern media. At first glance, they seem to be part of a larger corpus of professional videos that can be distributed to various channels, such as the mainstream media or for tourist entertainment. However, the videos spanning from 1984 to 2009 coincide -at least in the earlier video renderings- with the advent

and penetration of VHS technologies in Greece during the 1980s (Kassa-veti 2014). They offer a somewhat different approach to moviemaking, as the latter is exceptionally amateur, and it seems that it is shot for reasons of pure documentation. Koukossis's videos were digitized and uploaded in three or four different parts almost a decade ago on YouTube by a lo-cal platform user, Mpampis Kalamas. By adopting a qualitative approach, the paper will revolve around the role of the audiovisual technologies de-ployed to document and produce home movies with folkloric content, the intrinsic ethnographic qualities of Koukossis's documentation of the fair, and the its transformation throughout the years.

THE PRESERVATION OF FOLKLORIC EVENTS IN THE DIGITAL SPHERE: TOWARDS A NEW LIFE

From its early inception to the present, the Internet has been a transform-ative force that has reshaped the global narrative as it complied with the growing need for a medium of communication and entertainment. Over the decades, it has been the primary shaper of digital culture - a culture deeply rooted in Enlightenment thought. Apart from its economic and so-cial implications, the Internet can be held as a cultural artifact through the production of discourses and identity shaping. Moreover, it often blurs the boundaries between online and offline realities through strategic be-haviors (Blank 2009; Lovink 2009; Castells 2001). Its influence extends to the humanities and social sciences, which have adapted to the digital environment as they learn to incorporate new forms of interaction and produce knowledge. In this light, digital folklore (Katsadoros 2022; Katsa-doros 2013; Blank 2009; Dundes 2004) appears as a challenging aspect to how tradition and folk culture survive and what they could become in the digital realm. As a dynamic field at the intersection of folklore studies and information technology, digital folklore emphasizes the use of digital en-vironments and tools for the production, curation, and analysis of vernac-ular knowledge (Gasouka 2017). In the postmodern era, where technol-ogy permeates all aspects of cultural life, folklorists actively engage with digital media (ranging from simple mobile interfaces to complex virtual reality laboratories), reshape and adapt their traditional research meth-ods accordingly. Besides, digital folklore increasingly focuses on the role of communication, symbolic systems, and community self-identification within networked, evolving digital cultures ("cybercultures"). Aside from recording tradition through audiovisual means, the field redefines the participatory, symbolic nature of vernacular expression within the dem-ocratic space of cyberspace (Bronner 2009; Howard 2008).

One interesting aspect of how folklore and New Technologies interconnect is through the widespread diffusion of various online platforms. The Internet fosters dynamic and interactive communication facilitated through social media, content-sharing platforms, and other digital spaces. As digital culture expands, users engage with diverse cultural expressions that depend on the platform they navigate. YouTube, in particular, has democratized access to a vast array of audiovisual archives, from amateur videos to professionally curated content, which spans various periods and cultural contexts (Snickars & Vonderau 2009). While audiovisual archiving had already begun around 1992 with the widespread use of Apple's QuickTime software (Prelinger 2009, 268), it was YouTube that gained prominence, as it was facilitated by the advent of mobile phones with video recording capabilities, and initially featured amateur user-generated content. Soon, digitized MTV music videos and official concert recordings were added, provided users had the necessary equipment and internet access to upload them. YouTube's content expanded dramatically from 2005 onwards, and the platform rapidly became the third most visited website globally through keywords and official and unofficial accounts. What is interesting, though, is how YouTube reconceptualizes audiovisual archives in digital format. For archivist Rick Prelinger, YouTube's archival status is contested (Prelinger 2009, 270-272): on the surface, it seems to be an "ideal" public repository for most users with unprecedented access and interaction, but it lacks the mandate of preservation, which is critical for an archive to exist. A constant flow of audiovisual information may cause accounts and videos to disappear within seconds, or they may be re-edited and lose their initial form.

Nevertheless, the emergence of digitized personal audiovisual archives on YouTube represents a distinct archival practice closely linked to technological advancements. Such developments have enabled the widespread sharing of forgotten video footage from past decades, from mobile recordings to new editing software and digitization tools. Greece entered this digital realm with some delay, yet has since embraced the trend, with users creating channels to upload both amateur and professionally recorded audiovisual content (Kakampoura & Kassaveti 2018: 36; Kassaveti 2018), not to mention the rise of "YouTubers" as distinct members of the digital community. The characterization "professional" does not imply official state documentation (e.g., newsreels) or on the occasion of a documentary film (whether it is state or individually funded); it applies to relatively high-quality recordings from the domestic video industry, of-

ten rediscovered and digitized from personal audiovisual collections. As a result, YouTube now hosts an expanding repository of digitized home videos from the 1980s and 1990s that offer unique glimpses into cultural memory and everyday life.

In this constantly changing digital landscape, the accessibility of historical and personal audiovisual archives -originally recorded on analog media, such as super-8 film or VHS cameras- has contributed to a more profound understanding of past societies. These archives offer invaluable insights for researchers, because they capture, naively though, overlooked historical narratives and document everyday life in ways comparable to documentary or ethnographic films.

METHODOLOGY

This article will explore the 83 home videos shot by Spyros Koukossis, owner of "Radilektriki," a small electronics equipment store in the Agia Paraskevi village (images 1-2).

Images 1-2. Koukossis always showcases his electronics store to his potential video viewers (1988). It is located on the same road, where the religious litany takes place.

The videos were shot with a VHS camera, span from 1984 to 2009, and document the Agia Paraskevi religious fair, a.k.a "To Panigiri tou Tavrou" ("The Bull's Fair"). Upon being transformed from analog to digital for-

mat and uploaded to YouTube by user Mpampis Kalamas (ΜΠΑΜΠΗΣ ΚΑΛΑΜΑΣ)[1] during the last decade, they were divided into more than three parts. These videos fall within the category of home videos, characterized by their amateur nature -both technically and narratively- their adherence to specific visual routines, and the presence of numerous spontaneous moments. They seem to be shot for reasons of pure documentation and to take advantage of the emergent video technologies involved. One could argue that they appear to be "semi-professional," i.e., apart from documenting the folkloric events, they gradually become, as we will scrutinize below, more elaborate, e.g., they feature digital titles or an on-camera commentary or a voice-over. Still, it is not evident if Koukossis shot the events for personal use, renting, or even selling them to Greek immigrants abroad. Due to their production values, I will perceive them as an instance of home-mode communication. It is also important to note that these videos were not distributed through professional channels to video clubs across Greece, nor were they advertised or made available for rental to a broader audience, as is common with professional productions.

By adopting a qualitative methodology, the article will have a threefold focus: it will explore the ethnographic nature of Koukossis's audiovisual documentation, the technologies involved, and, most importantly, the religious fair's transformation during the next decades. In this frame, visual folklore is a key theoretical starting point, as it encompasses the documentation, representation, and interpretation of folkloric events through photography, film, and video, whether staged (e.g., in fiction film) or as products of in situ fieldwork. This visual perspective of traditional and modern practices and customs with explicit and (in)tangible folkloric content has allowed researchers to provide tangible evidence of how traditions evolve, endure, or are revitalized over the years, decades, and even centuries. Furthermore, mass media play a critical role in producing and disseminating discourses on tradition and folklore while reproducing various folkloric content.

Early theoretical frameworks in visual folklore primarily focused on folk representations in mass media outlets such as television, advertising, and the press – this focus indicated a preference for these media over cinema. Despite their significance, scholars did not show interest in non-ethnographic films as a form of folkloric expression until the 1970s (Danielson 1979). Sharon R. Sherman and Mikel J. Koven's insightful work (Sherman & Koven 2007; Koven 2003; Sherman 1998, to name a few) high-

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[1] https://tinyurl.com/4xrycvnj (last accessed 19/02/2025)

lighted that folklore had always been attuned to cinema, albeit in a limited scope, as it focused mainly on specific genres like *Märchen*, myths, and legends. Unlike ethnographic or fiction films, visual folklore's preoccupation with home movies is another crucial instance. Sherman is the first folklorist to pay tribute to Chalfen and further highlight the significance of the genre, as she argues that "with home movies, the act of watching the films becomes a reflexive event. Likewise, films about the self may give rise to stories about the filming process and create new exhibition modes of behavior" (Sherman 1998, 269-270). Against this backcloth, home movies can reveal different, and sometimes conflicting, ethnographic aspects of the events documented, and they can contribute to another, namely parallel, and much broader understanding of a collective experience through the personal.

THE ORIGINS OF THE "PANIGIRI TOU TAVROU"

From 1984 until 2009, Koukossis's videos capture the essence of the "Panigiri tou Tavrou", a deeply rooted folkloric event in Lesvos, held in Agia Paraskevi. This significant religious fair, in honor of Agios (Saint) Charalampos, or "Geros" ("Old Man"), as the locals affectionately call him, is a testament to the rich historical traditions of the region. Organized by the local Agricultural Union («Γεωργικό Σωματείο») «Η πρόοδος» / "I Proodos" ("The Progress"), which was founded in 1774, the fair's festivities have been moved to late May from its original date of February 10th, due to harsh weather conditions that make reaching the small church dedicated to the Saint difficult.

The focal point of the religious fair is the ritual sacrifice of a bull, a personal offering known as "kourbani" (or "korvan" in Arabic). Megas (1956) argues that such bloody sacrifices were common in ancient Greece and had to be abolished within the Christian Orthodox framework. However, in its establishment, Christianity successfully built upon the older traditions of the national religion and transformed them for its spread. In regards to the fair's earlier audiovisual documentation, I have argued elsewhere that Greek scholars have played a pivotal role in ascribing visual folklore in a vernacular context, primarily in deploying audiovisual materials to document and analyze folkloric expressions (Kassaveti 2022). Prominent figures like Georgios K. Spyridakis, a leading folklorist and director of the Folk Archive of the Academy of Athens, emphasized the importance of visual documentation in folkloric research and advocated for the integration of film and photography into ethnographic fieldwork (Spyridakis 1962). His work, along with his collaborator and pioneer visual folklorist

Georgios N. Aikaterinidis, was instrumental in capturing folkloric expressions at risk of disappearance due to social changes like urbanization and migration (Aikaterinidis 2009).

In particular, Aikaterinidis examined through extensive fieldwork the religious fair of St. Charalambos in his Ph.D. thesis, *Neoellinikes aimatires thysies / Neo-Hellenic Bloodshed Sacrifices* (*Les sacrifices sanglants néo-helléniques*) (Aikaterinidis 1979). His on-site research in 1969 revealed that the fair lasted three days, during which a specific sequence of events unfolded. On the first day, primarily Friday, the bull is led by live music to the grounds of the agricultural association, where it is adorned with flowers, and its horns are painted bold gold. The animal, typically purchased and offered by a resident (or overseas immigrant) of Agia Paraskevi as a vow to Agios Charalampos, roams around the village. In the past, small children would be placed on the bull's back for strength, and parts of girls' dowries were tossed onto it for good luck.

The sacred animal is transported to Tavros, 15 km from Agia Paraskevi. On Saturday, locals and people from nearby villages gather to pay their respects to the Saint. They carry large banners and the sacred icon of "Geros" while horseback riders seek blessings from the priest. After these rituals, everyone united in their reverence for Agios Charalampos, enjoys local traditional dances, as they strengthen the sense of community and shared experience. In the evening, a ritual procession takes place: the bull is led to the sacrificial site, where it is killed through a ceremonial act. It is mentioned that people use the bull's blood to paint small crosses on their foreheads for protection. The bull's meat is then cooked with cracked wheat and onions, a dish known as "keskets" («κισκέτς»). It simmers overnight, and the next day, Sunday, is served freely to participants. At night, the fair showcases a more festive side with a horse-riding competition in Stalos and a large celebration featuring drinks, food, and music in the village square. Since 2015, following the intervention of animal welfare organizations, a significant change has been made to the traditional practice of bull sacrifice. Instead of being slaughtered publicly, the bull is now taken to a licensed slaughterhouse for "humane" butchering. The meat is then transported to the churchyard, where it is cooked in large cauldrons, preserving the communal and festive aspects of the tradition.

Despite the aforementioned interventions, the fair continues to serve as a powerful symbol of communal identity: it sustains and even extends a symbolic and moral community beyond national borders. The latter is evidenced by its reconstruction since 1981 by overseas immigrants from Agia Paraskevi in Melbourne (Ioannidis 1997).

THE "PANIGIRI TOU TAVROU" IN ANALOG MEDIA: PRODUCTION VALUES, DOCUMENTATION ROUTINES AND TECHNOLOGIES

Koukossis's earlier videos offer a vivid yet occasionally confusing portrayal of the fair, with various scenes shot loosely chronologically; the latter seems restored throughout the decades. Videos usually document a richly adorned bull wandering through the village, with women affectionately caressing it as local musicians perform traditional songs. Scenes of village life, such as a butcher's shop, a small ouzo and refreshments distillery, and a farrier crafting horseshoes, are interspersed with images of women on horseback, carrying the icon of Agios Charalampos and drinking spirits. Dawn breaks, men dance in the village square while heavily intoxicated, a priest blesses the food, and the community engages in horse races and nighttime folk dancing (e.g., Zeibekiko) to popular music. The above scenes (images 3-9) are captured in almost every video by Koukossis, who combines folkloric audiovisual content edited with repeatedly recurring scenes from everyday life.

Images 3-9. Koukossis's standard video scenes from 1986 will be reproduced in his later videos. They feature establishing shots from the Agia Paraskevi village, the bull's adornment and its roaming around the village with the banner of Agios Charalampos, the advertising of local companies (Kronos Distillery), the blessing of the "victim" by the local priest (central screenshot), the preparation of "keskets" by villagers and members of the agricultural association.

Over time, the video footage exposes the gradual transformation of the local celebration into a folklorized event. From the very outset, the festivities span more than three days - as already documented by Aikaterinidis. They are rescheduled to late June and early July, as they take advantage of favorable weather conditions and tourism.

Undoubtedly, as the fair evolves, broader social and cultural transformations take place. By 1987, graffiti featuring the names of foreign 1980s pop bands like "A-HA" and references to "breakdancing" had begun to appear on the village walls (image 10), signaling the island's encounter with Western popular culture. From 1991 onward, the agricultural union published special posters for the event, and the village mayor was featured on camera, where he underscored the importance of this "beautiful custom." The horse races, once informal, started to take on the air of a spectacle, with a local announcer advertising cash prizes of 15,000 drachmas. Participants' attire also became more elaborate; horseriders adopted extravagant, carnival-like costumes (in a cowboy style) by 1996 or wore traditional Cretan outfits in 2002 (images 11-12).

Image 10. The graffiti on the wall (1987) signals the village's shift to modernity. In addition to the well-known communist symbol of the hammer and sickle, which also reflects the locals' preoccupation with (communist) politics, the village's walls are sprayed with the names of emerging foreign music genres or music groups.

Images 11-12. Screenshots from 1989 and 1996. Horseriders participating in the religious fair often showcase extravagant fashion tastes and mix tradition with popular culture (e.g., Western films).

Efforts to attract tourists further transform the fair. In the early 2000s, it had become more outward-looking and attracted larger crowds with greater female participation. Traditional venues like the "kafeneia" (coffeehouses) adapted their signage by 1994. By 1996, Italian plastic chairs, a cheap and mass-produced synonym of the old handmade wooden chair, had become ubiquitous, and Roma women began selling flowers during the festivities (images 13-15).

Images 13-15. The transition from the 1980s to the 1990s revealed substantial changes in how traditional entertainment, in the frame of the "Panigiri tou Tavrou," transformed into a spectacle.
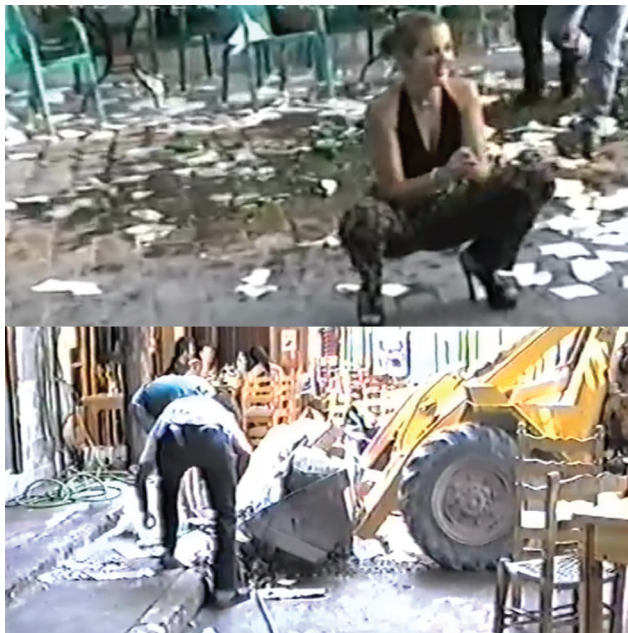
Images 16-17. Screenshots from 1997's fair: extravagance in entertaining tropes and "show-off" routines showcase in the early morning when the music continues to play.

Besides traditional music, musicians perform modern popular songs, such as "Rikse sto kormi mou spirto" ('Throw a match on my body") (1994), to cater to younger audiences. The popping of champagne bottles and the smashing of plates became increasingly common; a shift in entertainment habits stemmed from the big cities, mainly big bouzouki venues, where smashing and popping are synonymous with conspicuous consumption (images 16-17).

By 1999, the old mayor's house featured a new sign, the mayor warmly welcomed attendees, emphasized cultural preservation and promised "better co-ordination for the year's events" (images 18-22). Participants donned silk-screened T-shirts with the agricultural union's logo, and large banners greeted tourists (image 23). As attention to participants is important in any communicative event, we soon see the mayor's efforts to enhance the fair's appeal were evident, with printed posters circulating from 1991 onward and his appearance on camera along with members of the agricultural union.

Images 18-22. The embellishment of the mayor's house and the latter's appearance on the videos are part of complex and initially spectatorial process. The two first screenshots come from 1991 and the others, eight years later.

Image 23. Members of the Union with silk-screened t-shirts from 1999: the religious fair is an outmost cultural event that should be advertised and further empower the sense of belonging to a particular curatorial group, the "Geros'"s one.
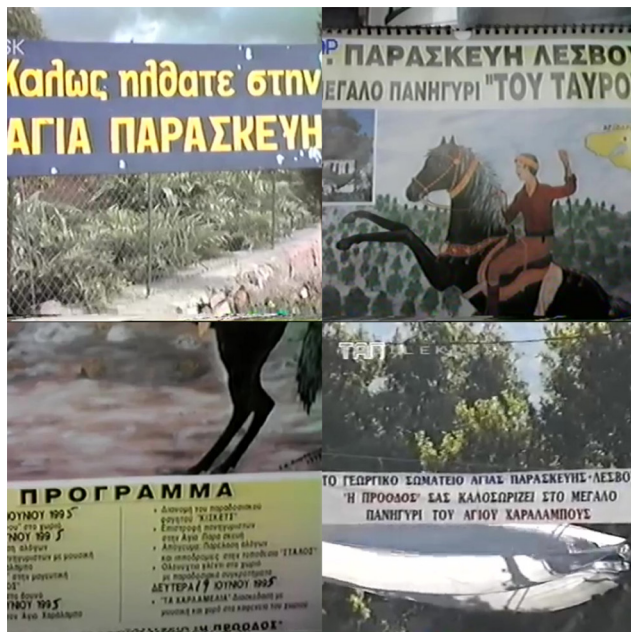
Images 24-27. From 1984 to 1999, the religious feast's self-representation has utterly changed: from a simple welcome banner, a festivities program is published along with posters and specially designed banners to inform visitors or tourists about the fair.

From 2000, Koukossis's filming style evolved: he employed voice-over to explain the ethnographic events and allow viewers to better connect with the fair's time and place. Already by 1990, Koukossis's daughter, Chryssanthi (on the opening titles, she is credited as "Christine") introduced a voice-over and provided clarity about the fair's daily activities, e.g., on the fourth day, "Harlameria" is celebrated that focuses solely on entertainment in honor of Saint Charalampos. During the same time (1989), Chryssanthi offered on camera a brief overview of the island's geography and culture with handmade drawings. By 2002, she assumed the role of a journalist and conducted interviews with older attendees, like transatlantic immigrants. The latter lamented that "the fair had changed"; thus, they urged the youth to preserve traditions and restore it to how it had been.

Images 28-31. Chryssanthi Koukossi greets the viewers and informs them about the island and the fair (1990). By 2002, she had assumed the role of a journalist asking older inhabitants about the fair or overseas immigrants that flew back to Agia Paraskevi for the particular occasion.

Koukossis demonstrated a slow proficiency in home filmmaking, experimented with various techniques (i.e., in his 1988 tape, he edited television footage of the fair, shot by state television with journalist

Argyris Ntinopoulos), and adopted a more professional documentary style. His videos have an unpolished shooting air and modest production values that exude personal authenticity. They appear to target viewers who share the videographer's ethnographic perspective, and they foster a sense of familiarity for those able to identify the sequence of events without additional commentary. By 1994, he had begun employing a new VHS camera, and by 1997-1998, his videos opened with world-acclaimed Greek composer Vangelis Papathanasiou's "Pulstar" (1976). Riding the wave of Greek media deregulation (1989), Koukossis incorporated digital titles reminiscent of those he had been using in the mid-1980s for (images 32-37)."

Images 32-37. Screenshots from 1984, 1989, and 1997's opening credits.
From amateur and hand-made sensibility to higher production values and the founding of an "independent" channel (sic).

Image 38. Agia Paraskevi's independent channel.

These titles credited "Tileorasi Agias Paraskevis" ("Agia Paraskevi Television") as the producer of the footage (image 38). Despite these advancements, candid moments and humorous outtakes, i.e., with children on horses fighting, captured spontaneously on camera, remained a hallmark of Koukossis's work even in 1998 and 2001.

OBSERVATIONS AND FURTHER IMPLICATIONS

All the observations cited in this paper are selected to illustrate how individuals employ visual media as a practice of "mnemotechnics" (Bate 2010, 248). Apart from the dominant and institutionalized media, visual forms such amateur films and videos contribute to the "mediation of memory"; they create a common visual language that reinforces or even reconfigures how communities recall specific moments (Hoskins, 2011). Moreover, in the digital age, the circulation of audiovisual images -including what happens "in our backyard," as Sherman puts it- through social media platforms has intensified this effect, as it allows memories to be revisited, reshaped, and collectively negotiated in real time. Thus, visual media not only record events but actively participate in the construction of collective memory. In that sense, Koukossis's videos serve as a reminiscence of tradition in relation to collective memory, while the videos' non-pro-

fessional nature may resonate with many of us who have tried our hand at home movie making. This nature offers a particularly biased view of a folkloric event, as it acknowledges conformity to one's individual view of certain cultural ideals. Unlike the institutionalized documentation of the Agia Paraskevi fair, as reproduced in various research accounts, documentaries, like *To Tama sto Gero* (Aris Karaiskakis, 1987) shot for state television under the scientific supervision of Georgios Aikaterinidis, or news reports, Koukossis's home movies attain a personal, fragmentary yet critical audiovisual rendering of a well-known religious fair, which emphasizes the personal nature of these home movies. He took a more active role in documenting the fair and made use of newer VHS technology, which almost accidentally led to the production of home movies full of "ethnographic content" (Heider 1976, 5). This resonates with Russell's argument that, from their early days (i.e., the Sony Portapak era), older home movies across formats had the potential to form an alternative ethnographic paradigm -"a fictional document, or an allegory of history" (Russell 1999, 242).

Against that backdrop, Koukossis rendered the fair's more minor or more considerable changes in its core: folklorism that runs big, the locals that try to adhere to a more extrovert version of the fair, as they conformed to tourists' expectations for authenticity. What is very intriguing is that no sacrifice is documented on screen, putting forward a bold hypothesis that this audiovisual material may be intended to be watched by small children. In addition, the deliberate omission of any reference to the bull's sacrifice may reflect a growing sensitivity among fair organizers to animal welfare concerns, as well as an awareness of negative public sentiment surrounding the act of killing the animal. According to Alexakis (2008), since 1980, the bull has been put down by shooting. Nonetheless, the ritual of bidding to acquire "rights upon the bull's blood" (historically referred to as *aimodosia*, i.e., "the offering of blood") persists, though now conducted without the public display of blood.

The digitalization of Koukossis's home movies (and others on different Greek religious fairs and folkloric events), which aspired to be more professional in an instant, infused them with a second life and reframed them (Baron 2012) in a new spectatorial folkloric experience. In a positive sense, these films could also be held as "found footage" and bear a significant archival value, which, however, one should approach in the light of temporal and local disparity.

The previous remarks, particularly those on the archive effect of any digitized collections located on the World Wide Web, could also be seen as

a critical reflection on the nature of audiovisual documentation produced in this specific body of video texts. Their importance lies in documenting events that serve as social performances and highlights how technology can affect our perceptions of tradition. Still, their naïveté does not exclude the ethnographic sense, in which amateurs view the world and salvage some of their most captive aspects, enriching the field of visual folklore and digital folklore as well.

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