Alexandros Kapaniaris
Post Doc Researcher,
Department of History and
Ethnology,Democritus
University of Thrace, Greece

Manolis Varvounis
Professor, Department of
History and Ethnology
Democritus University of
Thrace, Greece

Archival Ethnography & Readings in the Digital Environment: "Conversing" with the Archives of People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt: the design of a long-term research.

Alexandros Kapaniaris, Manolis Varvounis

Abstract
This essay presents the planning framework alongside the first steps for the implementation of a long-term research conducted to fill the demands of a postdoctoral research of the Laboratory Folklore & Social Anthropology of the Department of History & Ethnology School of Classics & Humanities of the Democritus University Thrace. More specifically, the aim of the research is to attempt, within the framework of Archaeological Ethnography, an interdisciplinary dialogue in the fields of History, Folklore, Anthropology and Informatics on the basis of the evidence and the relevant testimonies that arise from the archives of people coming from Mt Pelion, the regional unit of Magnesia, that emigrated and became active in Egypt from 1860 to 1960. The core of the research is related to the application of this research method (archival ethnography) to unpublished archival material, coming from different owners and sources, concerning the presence and social activity of people from Mt Pelion in various Egyptian cities, and in addition, is associated with phenomena such as migration, trade, entrepreneurship, benefaction etc. Moreover, one of the important issues that will be discussed in our research within the scope of application of files derived from "People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt", is the reading of these files in a digital environment using technology as a viewing and decryption tool as well as a tool for collecting new data from relatives and/or the owners of the files (e-learning, digital narratives, closed chat groups, blogs, etc.). The research aspires to contribute to the enrichment of both Greek and international bibliography.

Keywords: Digital ethnography, archive, ethnography, folklore, anthropology, interdisciplinary approach, digital ethnography, digital folklore, digital environments, internet, social media, history, discussion, narration, public history, oral history, benefaction, immigration, Greeks of Egypt, People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt

1. Introduction
Prompted by the subject of our research "Archival Ethnography & Readings in Digital Environment: Conversing with the records of People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt, a logical question arises, how is it actually possible for someone to "converse" with a record? As Gomes da Cunha says "documents do not speak and the dialogue with them – when they become focus of experimentation – implies techniques that are not exactly similar to those used in the field" (Gomes da Cunha 2004).

Considering that the approach to archival ethnography can be done by attempting an "interdisciplinary dip in the deep waters of History, Folklore and Anthropology", we must clarify that the relationships between these sciences and archival ethnography (Dalkavoukis 2015).

According to a more general argument, the science of history, folklore and anthropology are associated with archival ethnography. These scientists, both women and men, set up their own records so as to preserve their manuscripts and photos, while historians use records to support and document their research. However, according to Papailias anthropologists have always kept their distance from the archival material, considering it as a privileged field of historical research (Papailias 2005: 7), an interpretation that does not appear to be shared by folklorists.

Correspondence:
Alexandros Kapaniaris
Post Doc Researcher,
Department of History and
Ethnology,Democritus
University of Thrace, Greece

In addition, as Dalkavoukis states, *"... Archival Ethnography is not just the research behind the yellowed papers of the records but rather a whole world that is traceable beyond its quantitative dimension, a world coded with words and numbers, which one can decipher provided that his possess the right "key" in order to bring it closer to the light. This "key", I believe, is nothing but an interdisciplinary approach, either on an individual or group level. It cannot be viewed just as a set of techniques coming from different "disciplines" but rather as a whole of "suspicions" supported by these techniques which ultimately constitute what we call documented assumptions ..."* (Dalkavoukis 2005: 35).

2. Content of the research files
The content of this research is related to dozens of archival records of people coming from Mt Pelion that were active in Egypt from 1860 to 1960. In particular, people coming from Mt Pelion, who emigrated to Egypt during the 19th century, as well as in the early 20th century, were successful in general trade, cotton cultivation, hotel establishments, craftsmanship, beverage companies, pasta, tobacco, as well as other commercial and craft sectors. More specifically, the contribution of Greeks and especially of the people coming from Mt People to the expansion of cotton cultivation and its establishment was catalytic for the Egyptian economy during the 19th century. Prominent Greek families in the community of Alexandria and other Egyptian cities, with striking examples of the Cassavetes, Voltos and Parahimonas brothers from Zagora, Pelion, intervened at all stages of production and were considered to be the most credible organizers and managers of the financial framework of the production, and handling of cotton. Simultaneously, other productive areas were dominated by many families of Pelion, creating important commercial units and evolving the way of production especially in tobacco processing and packaging (Kapaniaris 2014; Konstantinidis 1936).

During the 1920-1940 the Greek community of Egypt, had to show remarkable works on an intellectual educational and cultural level (books, magazines, newspapers, events, etc.) Thus, apart from those involved with their personal financial activities, there were others who left as their legacy, not some generous donation or a bequest, but their literary work. Head of this spiritual movement on the part

of the "People from Mt Pelion in Egypt" were several Zagorians, (men and women as well), such as the poet Konstantinos Konstantinidis known by the artistic pseudonym Petros Magnis, also co-founder of the literary magazine "Serapion" and the scholar and litterateur Apostolos Konstantinidis, who bore the artistic pseudonym of Pelios Zagras. Furthermore, Kostas Tsagaradas who wrote literary works, short stories, chronographs or even novels with topics emerged from the daily life of Egyptian farmers, as well as Konstantinos Lebanos who founded the hellenic association "Hermes". From the area which is nowadays known as the municipality of Zagora-Mouresi and especially from Mouresi, came Constantine Vasiliades, who at the age of 16 published his first chronograph in "Tachydromos". From the same town of Mouresi came as well, Dimitrios Chrysanthis, who is one of the co-founders of the magazine "Serapion", and his uncle Nicholas, whose daughter Eva Chrysanthi - Moschopoulou wrote cinematic scripts in English. Briefly mentioned here are also the names of Stefanos Hripis and Athena I. Pappas from Tsagarada and Maria Voltou (Argan Pelian) from Zagora (Kapaniaris 2014; Konstantinidis 1936).

one of the important issues that will be that will be of concern to us in our research within the scope of application of files derived from "People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt", is the reading of these files in a digital environment using technology as a viewing and decryption tool as well as a tool for collecting new data from relatives and/or the owners of the files (e-learning, digital narratives, closed chat groups, blogs, etc.). Besides, many times the primary research into records and evidence to produce ethnography can be made directly into digital documents rather than in original documents. Besides, primary research into archives and evidence with an eye to producing ethnography can often be done directly in archives in digital format, rather than in the original documents. Investigating a record constituted of real objects (images, publications, manuscripts, forms, items etc.) leads to specific findings, and we gradually form some specific views. "Conversing "with digital files leads us to a new digital reading which requires an experience, another placement in space and time, and a possible correlation with other evidence. Of course this fact itself has some advantages and disadvantages yet to be explored as another subject of the research.

Image 1: The Blog for the scholarly brothers Constantine and Apostolos Konstantinidis

Nevertheless, the role of technology in archival ethnography is important and up to this day all the different dimensions of this subject have not been sufficiently explored and covered. The overall instances investigated in this essay are:

a) technology as a tool in the service of ethnographic research (digitization, databases, search, indexing, digital imprints),

b) the role of the internet and especially distance learning

tools alongside web 2.0 with a special emphasis on social networks (Facebook and blogs) as a "producer" of complementary material (completing fields of research, new oral testimonies in an open or closed environment (closed groups), annotation, enrichment with new evidence),

c) Conversation with digital files and the production of narration, history, and events (digital narration from relatives).

Image 2: The closed group (open after invitation) for" people coming from Mt Pelion" on Facebook that attracted dozens of interested and affiliated individuals who participated in the survey

3. Subject of the research

The ongoing research will try will try to approach the archive ethnography by attempting an interdisciplinary dialogue on the subjects of history folklore and anthropology. At the same time, the relationships between these sciences and the archival ethnography will be explored, as well as the relationship of technology and the different digital readings it can offer. The scope of the archival ethnography will be the program "People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt", along multiple files with multi-read levels.

4. Innovation of the research

The innovation of this proposal lays:

a) In its content, since such multifarious unpublished archives have not been extensively investigated. Moreover, the relationship between archaic ethnography, folklore, history, and anthropology in unpublished archival material, as well as the multiple readings that technology and the Internet has to offer, require further investigation.

b) In the development of methodology of archival ethnography, because even at an international level, not enough scientific investigations have been developed. There are also no relevant doctoral theses that deal merely with the subject.

The results of this research will provide the basis for further exploration of archival ethnography in a multidisciplinary

way on the basis of relevant cultural studies. It is also possible to enrich the theoretical framework of research courses of relevant university departments like the Department of History and Ethnology of the Democritus University of Thrace regarding both the undergraduate and postgraduate curricula. The study of the aforementioned field of archaeological ethnography in the light of interdisciplinary approach, will contribute to the acquisition of the required theoretical knowledge, but also to the practical training of the students in new fields of knowledge so that, after their graduation from the department, they meet the modern requirements of their employment in public and private education. Finally, the production of relevant theory will enrich the existing research orientations of the department.

5. Purpose and objectives of the research

The present research aims to broaden the theoretical framework of cultural studies by including archival ethnography in this field under the light of the interdisciplinary approach and the development of archival ethnography, creating thus new horizons for this science. Its aim is, among other things, to explore the concept of archive in relation to ethnography, the interdisciplinary relationship between the relevant sciences and archival material, the confirmation of archival ethnography as an appropriate method for studying and interpreting the relationships and rules developed within the society and finally the understanding of historical events (content of archives).

6. Methodology

The aim of this research is to attempt to create a methodological framework for archival ethnography through studying relevant methodological frameworks of cultural studies, namely digital - ethnography, urban folklore, feminist ethnography, public history, oral history as well as fieldwork research.

The researcher, based on unpublished archives of the "region in Mt Pelion" community in Egypt from 1880 to 1960, will attempt to interpret how cultural phenomena operate beyond space and time, through the new technologies, the internet and the different digital readings it can offer, contributing this way to the development of a methodological framework in the field of archival ethnography. As it is obvious, the process involves careful reading and analysis of the evidence of each archive and the oral testimonies, as well as, national and international bibliographic research and eventually, the correlation of similar archival material.

In particular, the content of about twenty archives derived from "People coming from Mt Pelion" is going to be investigated. The archives, which have a wide range of topics and are collected from different villages of Mt Pelion, are consisted of manuscripts, contracts regarding dowry, contracts, letters, postcards, diaries, photographs. On a secondary level, these archives are going to be collated in order for affinity relationships and financial partnerships to be traced. At the same time, a comparison will be made with other kinds of archival materials (books, demographics, etc.) and a bibliographic research will be carried out regarding the period to which the archives refer. Additionally a fieldwork research will be attempted in existing places (eg orphanages, church) and archives in Egypt. For each archive, relatives of the people mentioned in them are going to be traced and interviewed. The use of technology to collect new material will focus on the quest for photographs, objects (online auctions) and related books - researches on the internet.

During the phase of recording the results, the researcher will take into account the richness of context, their penetrative, metaphorical and symbolic interpretation and will not solely focus on the mere description but will also formulate interpretative concepts that clarify the description and reveal the internal function of the phenomena in this field of research, answering to research questions.

In the course of the research, ethical principles of ethnography will be respected such as such as respect for the dignity of the participants, their cultural differences, their privacy, their anonymity will be ensured with an absolute respect to confidentiality.

7. Implementation of the first stage of the research: "People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt: Archival Ethnography from the perspective of new technologies and the Internet"

The e- learning program "People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt: Archival Ethnography from the perspective of new technologies and the Internet" was first introduced during the autumn semester of 2018-19, as part of a one year course (two semesters). The program is implemented with the scientific diligence of the Laboratory of Folklore & Social Anthropology of the Department of History & Ethnology School of Classics & Humanities of the Democritus University Thrace. The academic coordinators of the program are Manolis Varvounis, Professor of Folklore, President of the Department of History and Ethnology Democritus University of Thrace and Dr. Alexandros Kapaniaris, Postdoctoral Researcher of the Department of History & Ethnology of Democritus University of Thrace, Lecturer at the Hellenic Open University. Successful completion of the program will offer the learners deep knowledge on the subject through two semesters divided into learning objects. A certificate is also provided. The teaching units offered are 1) Introduction to ethnography, 2) Digital ethnography, 3) Basic principles of archival ethnography, 4) interview as a tool of ethnographic research 5) Digital narrative and collective memory, 6) Workshop on digitization and management of evidence and sources, 7) Social Networking Tools and Collective Memory.

Image 3: *"People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt: Archival Ethnography from the perspective of new technologies and the Internet" in the website of the Academy of Folk Culture and Local History. (http://learn.cultureacademy.gr)*

7.1 Aim of the Program

The training program will try to approach the archival ethnography by attempting an interdisciplinary dialogue on the subjects of history folklore and anthropology. At the same time, the relationships between these sciences and the archival ethnography will be explored, as well as the relationship of technology and the different digital readings it can offer. The scope of the archival ethnography will be the program "People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt: Archival Ethnography from the perspective of new technologies and the Internet", along with multiple files with multi-read levels. This educational program is also concerned with the reading of the files in a digital environment, using technology as a tool for projection and decryption, as well as a tool for collection of new data from relatives (re-narration) of the owners of the files (digital narratives, closed chat groups, blogs, etc.). Besides, primary research into archives and evidence with an eye to producing ethnography can often be done directly in archives in digital format, rather than in the original documents. Nonetheless, this fact itself has some advantages and disadvantages to be explored as another subject of this program. (Kapaniaris Varvounis 2019:7).

7.2 Methodology of the program

Learners, except for the study material for each semester will have to study every fortnight on the platform, they must also complete at the end of the program,: a brief ethnography accompanied by an equivalent archival material for a family or person or group of people regarding Egyptian pilgrims through unpublished material that they should look for in the region of Pelion or from relatives and b) a digital narrative (5 minutes duration). In order for the learners to meet the demands of the program, during the spring semester (2018-19) they are required to physically attend the 2-day obligatory workshop: "Tools of Digital Narrative: Creating a storyboard, sound video and image editing" (8 hours duration). (Kapaniaris Varvounis 2019:7).

7.3 Evaluation of the program

In the foreseeable future, the results of quantitative and qualitative research for the distance learning program "People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt: Archival Ethnography from the perspective of new technologies and the Internet" regarding both semesters, will be presented in a following essay. The evaluation of the e-learning program aims to the evaluation of the readings in a digital environment, using technology as a tool for projection and decryption, as well as a tool for collection of new data from relatives of the owners of the files (digital narratives, closed chat groups, blogs, etc.) and other people interested in the topic.

8 Anticipated results of this research

The present research is anticipated to provide:
The production of theory and the formation of the theoretical framework that governs and interprets the notion of archival ethnography in relation to interdisciplinary communities of humanities so as to enrich the existing international bibliography and fill important gaps in the bibliography of Greece.
The emergence of new fields of knowledge that may be included in university undergraduate and postgraduate curricula

The development of an international dialogue promoting the archival ethnography as an interdisciplinary approach between the sciences of Folklore, History and Anthropology,
The development of a good research practice concerning the application of archival ethnography to unpublished archival material of different owners and sources regarding benefaction migration and the culture of the 20th century in Greece and Egypt.

Conclusion

The research "Archival & Readings in the Digital Environment: "Conversing" with the archives of people coming from Mt Pelion": the scientific framework of long-term research" the first stage of which is implemented in the framework of post-doctoral research, is a long and arduous research. Simultaneously, behind the curtain, lay an investigation which predates the current one and lasted almost three years, and an additional research burden which is expected to last for the next 3 years at least. Up to this date the following achievements have been developed: a) the formulation of the methodology, b) the development of research tools (moodle platform, blog, both an open and a closed group on Facebook, communication through messenger as a digital notebook) c) the collection and digitization of the material; (d) the creation of metadata; e) fieldwork research (relatives, people who lived alongside people coming from Mt Pelion, libraries, institutes, etc.) and documents already recorded on the level of interviews and evidence gathering, f) the design and implementation of an e-learning program with deliverable digital narratives and small ethnographies in accordance to the topics chosen by trainees .
The first research findings emerging from the correlation of archival documents ("conversing with the archives"), the material derived from digital media and other tools used, will provide us with the first result and conclusion of the first phase of the research.

References

1. Dalkavoukis, B. (2005). Writing in between, Ethnographic Trials occasioned by Zagori, Thessaloniki: Epikentro.
2. Konstantinidis, A. (1936). People coming from Mt Pelion, Alexandria: "Zagora Association
3. Kapaniaris, A. (2014). People coming from Mt Pelion, Archive A. & K. Konstantinidis, poets, writers and scholars in the time of the C.P. Cavafy 's (diary), Volos: Society of Thessalian Research.
4. Kapaniaris, A., Varvounis, M. (2019). Design and implementation of e-learning programs in folklore, ethnography and history: Following the Logic of the Mass Open Internet Courses (MOOC), World Wide Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development, Volume 5 ISUUE 1, January 2019, ISSN: 2454-6615.
5. Olívia Maria Gomes da Cunha (2004). Imperfect tense: an ethnography of the archive, Mana vol.10 no.2, Rio de Janeiro.
6. Papailias, P. (2005). Genres of Recollection. Archival Poetics and Modern Greece. (Anthropology, History and the Critical Imagination), New York: Palgrave Macmillan.