



Theme 7: ORAL TRADITION

Report of Greece

Cultural & Social Digital documentation Laboratory

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INTRODUCTION

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Sharing and communicating traditional events and rituals is an important factor in promoting social cohesion and sustainable quality of life, especially for remote mountain and island communities in Greece.

The Greek *panegyria*, i.e. summer feasts and celebrations in communities all over Greece are practices that, following a regular time sequence in the year's calendar, contribute to additional socio- economic relations and various forms of collective action, aiming at improving life quality and social cooperation.

Indeed, value is accumulated through institutional cooperation and networking for the preservation and documentation of the specific place's cultural and social history. One can cite as characteristic examples various local Diaspora communities from all over the world, cultural heritage associations, as well as environmental groups that want to safeguard the landscape's natural and aesthetic value.

In this context, it is important to cater for the **documentation and preservation of both individual and collective memory events**, as they play a significant role in the emergence and formulation of a communal and solidarity attitude, not necessarily subjected to exclusively individual socio-economic interests, but dictated more by a common reference to local culture, the community's symbols and administrative or symbolic boundaries. As a consequence, **social ties and social cohesion** are strengthened and deepened - which is particularly true for Diaspora communities or *transcultural* relations among of youth groups and local inhabitants.

Chapter 1

The Past

1.1 Ancient Myths



In Greek Mythology **Pan**, the demi-god of shepherds and flocks was depicted as a man with the horns, legs and tail of a goat, and with thick beard, snub nose and pointed ears. He often appears as a reveller in the retinue of Dionysus, alongside the other rustic gods. He wandered the hills and mountains of Arkadia playing his pan-pipes and chasing Nymphs. His unseen presence aroused feelings of panic in men passing through the remote, lonely places of the wilds.

Since his bizarre appearance scared people away, he was quite lonely; only in the company of Satyrs he felt accepted and welcomed enthusiastically by them, as they, too, loved singing and dancing.

This representation of Pan has a lot of similarities with the lonely life of a shepherd, as he, too, lives in solitude, accompanying his reveries with music, as he plays the flute.

Pan spent most of his life wandering in the wild nature, among rocks, mountains, rivers and streams, playing with his *souravli* melodies that were carried far away. The god was a lover of nymphs, who commonly fled from his advances. It is he who first made the *Syrinx* (or *souravli*) and the myth goes like this: One day Pan was chasing a beautiful Nymph, named Syrinx, across the mountains of Arcadia. As she was trying to escape, she found herself on the banks of the river Ladonas. Unable to cross the mighty river Syrinx begged the god of the river to spare her: He took pity of her and as Pan reached out to embrace her, she was transformed into a clump of reeds, out of which the god Pan crafted his famous pan-pipes.

Pan is depicted holding on one hand his *Syrinx* (what is called the pan-pipe), and on the other hand a crook. He was the patron god not only of shepherds but of all those who fight for a just cause, as they thought that with Pan's help they would make their enemies flee in panic (Pan). Music was also an important characteristic, as the god could enchant with his music not only animals and birds, but also the forest's Nymphs

and fairies. His songs accompanied dancers and revellers, as they celebrated along with god Dionysus.

1.2.Cosmogony

Cosmological narrations include several traditions that refer to man's creation, his contract with the Devil, the creation of certain animals, the constant conflict between good and evil etc. These are two examples:

The creation of goat:

The Devil created the goat but was not able to make it sit; consequently, goats, being unable to bend their front knees, died of exhaustion. When the Devil met Christ he told him: "I created an animal but I cannot make it sit so it dies from exhaustion". As soon as he heard that, Christ put his seal on the goats' knees and they were able to sit down. That is why goats have this round mark on each front knee, the mark of Christ. Of course, the goat is a creature of the Devil, as it has horns and a goatee (pointed beard), unlike the sheep that has a different appearance. The goat does not graze the green grass but climbs on branches and eats the tender shoots, thus destroying forests. Worst of all, the goat is shameless, because while sheep and other animals have their tail hanging in order to cover their genitals, the goat has a small upright tail, shamelessly revealing her genitals.

Good and Evil

The conflict between good and evil spirits is constant in the world. One such occasion is represented in the myth about the creation of the pastoral *avlos* (reed), called *tzourlas* and the flute, called *tzamara*.

The Devil created the *tzourla* and Christ, wanting to humiliate him, created the *tzamara*, an instrument that has a much stronger and clearer sound. The Devil, being extremely jealous, secretly made another hole at the bottom of the *tzamara*, to destroy its sound, but...in vain: the *tzamara*' came out even better! The Devil burst from his anger. So this small hole at the bottom of the *tzamara*, where the musician puts his thumb on, is Devil's doing. In Epirus, the Zagori villages they call it "Satan's hole" and on the island of Samos "Devil's hole".

Another variation on the same theme of this folk tale:

Tzamara is the favourite musical instrument of the *tselingas* (shepherd) who prides himself for playing it well; his musical talent is an asset for the whole *stani* (the shepherd's household and livelihood) gaining in prestige and honour. The *tzamara* looks like a flute but it is longer (0,60-0,80cm) and has eleven holes. It is never made of reed but always out of good quality wood, namely olive tree, fir, oak or dogwood tree – or even bone or iron (in the past it was made from the rifle's barrel). The best instruments are made of vulture's bone, which is the right length, needing only the perforation of holes by the shepherd. The *tzamara* is blessed by Christ and, the story

goes, he opened one of these holes. There is a tale that goes like this: Once Christ was being persecuted by the Jews and he managed to hide himself in a Sarakatsani stable. While in hiding the sweet sound of the *tzamara* came to his ears and he was so gratified that he opened another hole to improve the sound.

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Key words

Ancient Greek mythology, the god Pan, Syrinx, flute, reed, traditional musical instruments, tzamara, tzourla

Chapter 2 **The Language**

2.1. Bucolic (pastoral) language

The term **bucolic language** is defined as the every day language used by shepherds, animal farmers, farm workers) when they want to communicate among themselves and with their animals. It is a lively and vibrant expressive tool of rural people, especially pastoralists, its point of reference being natural environment, wilderness, open spaces and living creatures. It is a language of utmost simplicity and beauty, a means of continuous revival of pastoral life in mountainous villages and communities preserved though the passage of time as an invaluable vehicle of tradition and heritage.

Its **vocabulary** reveals its close connection to the natural world: sounds, voices, shouts, sheep bells, bleating, whistling, dog barking, howling of wild beasts, bird singing, water running from creeks and streams, wind blowing through tree foliage, animals trampling the ground, shepherds singing and playing the flute. It is the breath and pulse of the countryside, embracing all living creatures of this natural world.

Sound and image become intermingled in their rich variety and beauty revealing life as it is experienced by pastoralists. The sorrowful cry of the owl accompanies harmoniously the wind's whistling through ravines and gorges, while the sweet sound of the shepherd's flute intermingles with the water running from the stream.

The bucolic language does not use so many nouns, but prefers the **noun-attribute**. To give an example, when the shepherd calls his goat "*galaro*" (*gala*=milk), he means the specific goat that gives abundant milk, i.e. the attribute becomes noun. There are numerous similar examples of this linguistic phenomenon in everyday parlance, for instance: "*agali*": barren goat, without milk (a-gala), "*velastra*: the constantly bleating goat (*velazo*=bleat), "*galanis*": a blond man with blue eyes (*galanos*=light blue), *kalamolalis*: he who plays the flute (*kalami*) etc.

2.2. Proverbial Myths

Proverbial myths are allegoric proverbs that have as a theme a myth of event that is expressed succinctly as a narration or as a description, as a dialogue or as an emblematic phrase. The real meaning is found in the myth that lies below the surface of the proverbial phrase or tale. In other words, these short texts develop around a myth.

On the surface these proverbial myths are ironic and funny. However, one is called to search for a deeper philosophical meaning hidden in the tale. We have different kinds of proverbial myths, such as narrations, descriptions, dialogues, proverbs etc.

Some examples of proverbial myths:

i/ In the guise of proverb

“Whenever the ewe wants to be punished (beaten) she goes and rubs her back on the Shepherd’s crook”

This is a descriptive proverbial phrase that means the following: whenever someone wants to cause trouble he provokes it.

It also applies to women that are justly punished for their naughty behaviour (they ask for it).

(descriptive proverbial myth from Peloponnesus)

ii/ In the guise of dialogue

-Goat, where are you going?

- I’m going to Polis (Constantinopolis)

-Well, if they let you go, why don’t you go even further!

It is said of those who naively believe that there is indefinite freedom of movement at any time, or undertake – mistakenly- grandiose tasks.

(dialogue in proverbial myth from Crete)

iii/ In the guise of proverbial myth

“He acts like the goat who, after filling the bucket with her milk, she kicks the filled bucket away (Spilling the milk)

It is said of those whose bad behaviour undermines their own reputation

(Proverbial myth from Crete)

2.3. Proverbs

“Revival of winter, tears of the shepherd”

Sometimes, during the month of March, there is severe cold weather, a “revival ‘ of winter, which is considered as extremely damaging for the flocks. There is also a folk tale that talks about an old woman’s flock that was annihilated by cold weather during the last days of March, that is why they sometime call these last days of March, as the “old lady’s days”. This proverb expresses the shepherds’ fear for cold weather in March.

“The sheep is used to be shorn in May”

Traditionally, shepherds move their flocks, from lowland pastures to the mountain, on Saint George’s day and they start shearing in may. So they are used to the hard work that lays ahead of them.

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Key words

Bucolic language, Proverbial myths, Proverbs

Chapter 3 Soundscape

3.1. Traditional pastoral music- songs (see Annex)

3.2. Bells

THE BELL

“...The bell is not only a tool. It is a special *communication code*. I can make out its sounds as with human voices; to me, it’s my life. That’s why I regret it so much that this craft is going to fade away, to become extinct for ever”. Christos Papademas, “the last bell maker”, adds characteristically: “I need at least 3-4 hours to make a bell; it is not an easy job. First we take a metal sheet and we cut it to the appropriate dimensions. Then we put it in the furnace and after cooling we put it again in the furnace. This process is repeated about 10 -12 times, till the bell acquires its final shape. Last, but not least, we add the finishing touch which is a special veneer with a bronze solution (*chalcopotisma*)”.



(Christos Papademas, “the last bell maker from Amfissa”, in an interview to Nea newspaper, 4/8/2010)

IDIOPHONES¹

The bell (*koudouni*) was a well known musical instrument in most ancient civilizations (China, India, Egypt, Ancient Greece); originally it was a talisman for animals and sacred sites. Later, it lost its protective power and became a pastoral tool, indispensable for shepherds, not only because of its utilitarian value, but also for its aesthetic beauty. Selection and combination of appropriate bells for the flock is of utmost importance for the shepherd. Indeed, it is a craft that requires know-how and sensitivity, namely the art of harmonizing the flute’s sounds with the bells’ sound. Greek bells (*koudounia*) are either hammered (sheet metal) or cast (bronze). Shepherds “give them sound” (they “scratch” them) either by special forging, namely scratches at the bottom (forgings), or by shaping the outer surface around the lips (cast).

Big bells constitute a necessary accessory to zoomorphic disguises during the Carnival (*Apokries*) and the period of Twelve days before Christmas, pertaining to customs and rituals for fertility and good fortune. They are made of metal, sheet

¹ <http://www.instruments-museum.gr/products6.php?wh=1&lang=1&the1id=&the2id=3&the3id=5&the4id=26&theid=26&open1=&open2=3&open3=5>

metal (zinc) or bronze (brass). Shepherds used to believe, and still do, that if one adds silver to the alloy then the sound will be more melodious. *Koudounia* (bells) are hung on sheep and *Kypria* on goats, mules and dogs.

Use of bells

“Animals leading the flock wore big bells that could be heard from afar. Thus the shepherd, could identify his flock whereabouts by the sound, at any moment. This was the case when the flock grazed on the mountain pastures; however, when the animals descended to lowland pastures, shepherds used to remove them so that their flock was not easily traceable»,’ as Mrs. Kamilaki explains². Another interesting fact is that in Crete, bells were used for punishing disobedient animals! A researcher of the Greek Folk Centre, back in 1890, wrote: “The “*sclaveri*” (slave) was a big heavy bell that they used to put round the neck of the disobedient animal, for disciplinary purposes”.

Shepherds use their own “distinctive” bells, so that they can easily recognise their animals, even if they become intermingled with another flock; thus, separating them was an easy task, since each shepherd identified his animals on the basis of their distinctive sounding bells. Shepherds used a specific device to hang bells on the animal, called “*provatozygos*”; it was a wooden coil, made of “clear” wood. Another necessary accessory was a long piece of leather, called “*psidi*”, that they placed inside the bell, when they inserted the clapper, so that the two iron surfaces would not rub on each other and the sound would be clear and metallic.

Bell types³

Bells, called “*kyprokoudouna*”, animate the flock and are of great help to the shepherd in his everyday tasks, namely when they graze, when he calls or whistles at them, when he has to take them back to the stable, or when they are lost and he has to go and search for them.

Kyprokoudouna can be classified into three main categories:

- 1) Bells (usually hung on **sheep**)
- 2) *Kypria* (usually hung on **goats**)
- 3) *Trokania* (usually hung on **big animals**)

² <http://users.sch.gr/vaxtsavanis/voskoi.swf> photos)

³ Michalis Meraklis, Honorary Professor of Folklore at the University of Athens

<http://users.sch.gr/vaxtsavanis/koudounia.swf>



ΑΡΝΟΚΟΥΔΟΥΝΟ



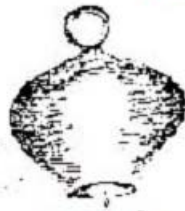
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ΜΙΚΡΟ ΚΥΠΡΑΚΙ



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ΠΡΟΒΑΤΟΖΥΓΟΣ



ΤΣΟΚΑΝΙ ή ΤΡΟΚΑΝΙ



ΓΙΟΣΤΕΦΑΝΟ



ΤΣΟΥΚΑΝΑΚΙ

Chapter 4

Festivals – Rituals

4.1. Saint George: the patron saint



In most parts of Greece, **Saint George** is celebrated as the **patron saint of shepherds and farmers**. In the old times, animal farmers used to slaughter sheep on his name day “so that sheep and cows are always healthyⁱ”. They also organized a big feast offering to the people milk and cheese from their animals. The rural calendar established that on the 23d of April, , the patron saint’s name day, the beginning of the summer semester was launched, for animal farmers would considered hiring shepherds for the next six months: from April 23d to October 26th, the day of celebration of Saint Demetrius. Business was done during this period of time, as it was time to leave the lowland pastures and lead the flocks to the mountain pastures.

4.2. Kourbani

Animal sacrifice, the ritual killing of an animal for religious purposes, has been a universal practice in almost all civilizations. Devoted people sacrificed animals to placate gods, change the course of fate, secure health and wealth, or even avert the evil eye from them and their families.

Traditionally, ritual blood sacrifices were the highlight of the Calendar Festivals, the *kourbani* (the word denotes both the sacrificed animal and the sacrifice itself) being one of the most important public rituals.

In Macedonia and Thrace, **private sacrifices** of sheep and rams formed an integral part of the population’s religious sentiment. On the day of the Saint’s celebration, the person who had made a vow (usually asking for an illness to be cured, fertility, prosperity and so on) would pick a ram and stick lighted candles on the ram’s horns. Then he would bring it to the local church, so that the priest would bless it. Coming back home, he would slaughter the animal near the house foundations or near the house well. After collecting the sacrificed animal’s blood in a pot, he would paint with it the sign of cross on the house doors. The meat was cooked and then shared with neighbours, friends and the community as a whole. The right shoulder of the

carcass was kept by the host for divination purposes: if he found it thin then the year would yield abundant harvest, while if he thought that it was thick, then the opposite would happen. If the shoulder presented a dent, then death would fall on the household.

In public animal sacrifices, for the general welfare of the community, the Kourbani was prepared in an atmosphere of general enthusiasm and festival spirit. In Macedonia and Thrace the *kourbanatzides* collected offerings from the community, such as wheat, corn or money, so that they would purchase the sacrifice animals. On the festival's eve they would put big copper cauldrons in the Churchyard, ready to receive the meat to be cooked. Next day, early in the morning, the animals were led to the sacrifice place, where, after being blessed by the priest, they would be slaughtered. The meat was cut into pieces and then put in the cauldron to boil; it was usually accompanied by bulgur (cracked wheat) that was also cooked in the meat broth. After Mass, the *kourbanatzides* would distribute the meat to all the participants of this communal feast. Traditional music and dances would follow at the village square, all day through till late at night. Newly weds were supposed to dance so that fertility was assured by the saint. At the village of Volax, in Drama, people use to say: "At Saint George's celebration we slaughter goats, the *kourbania*, that we have vowed to offer to the saint; then we distribute the meat to households, all over the village. We organize *kourbania* for other saints also. If, for example, you have vowed an offering to a saint, begging for his blessing and help, then the day of his celebration you have to offer the *kourbani*. Every year you repeat this practice, because that is how you show your respect to the saint, and the saint will reciprocate it".

It is true that occasionally the Church has tried to ban the *kourbania*, but with no practical effect, since they represent a characteristic example of deeply rooted popular religious sentiment with deep roots in ancient rites and customs. As it is shown by numerous testimonies and descriptions, in both private and public sacrifices, the local priest is usually involved, since he is also a member of the sacrificing community; indeed, the priest considers it as an important expression of religious piety and he blesses the animal with a special blessing. Furthermore, the sacrificed animal's blood is collected and used to paint a cross on the attendees' foreheads and on their children's, as well as on the house entrance, or they keep it as a talisman. Because of the fact that the *kourbani* meat has been blessed, the remains – bones etc – are buried properly so that they are not defiled in any way.

Nowadays, this custom is in decline, as most of traditional practices all over Greece. However, it is still practiced in some parts of Northern Greece, as well as on the North Aegean island of Lesbos.

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Key words

Saint George festival, kourbani

4.3. Goat-like Disguises





Preparation for the disguise: Monastiraki, Drama, Carnival 2001





Disguised men with sheep hide, bells and headgear: Monastiraki, Drama, Carnival

The zoomorphic disguises of the Twelve Days of Christmas, as well as the Carnival, are forms of popular worship marking important moments in a year's cycle. Their purpose is to appease supernatural forces that men believe to govern their life and destiny. Rituals, connected with such events, gather groups of performers who represent these demonic creatures, through prescribed costumes, movements, theatrical elements, dance, music, and oral narrative.

They are more common in Northern Greece, namely North Thessaly, Macedonia, Thrace and the North Aegean islands. Similar rituals with disguised performers are quite common all over the Balkan Peninsula and other European countries. A wide range of names are given to these disguises, such as Rogatsia, Rougatsaria, Goats, Babougeri, Old men, Tzamalides etc. The most characteristic features of the disguise costume are the mask (with two openings for the eyes and one opening for the mouth) which is made of goat skin – goat being Dionysus animal, and the special head gear.

Additional fixtures of the disguise are sheep hides, blackened faces, belts of heavy pastoral bells that make a deafening noise, wooden clubs and swords, as well as a stock filled with ash with which they hit passers-by. These groups of masked men run around, dancing, teasing, stealing, and scaring people. They join other groups and perform theatrical happenings. The violent nature of visual expression along with traditional sounds, remnants form a primordial past, reflects aspects of a pastoral culture that appeals greatly to modern visitors.

Dressing those who are to be disguised is a ritual of transformation that has an intense initiatory character. Attending persons are specially selected for this task, either

bringing food and drinks or helping with the dressing itself. The elders, as well as those who have been disguised in the past, give instructions and supervise the whole process so that everything follows the proper order: matching the different parts of the costume, ornaments, matching and hanging the bells around the waist, good fit of the mask, blessing and singing.

For instance, in Soho, a town northeast of Thessaloniki, these disguises are given the name of ‘Carnivals’, starting on the first day of the three week period before Lent (*Triodion*) and culminating on the last Sunday of the Carnival. The mask and the bells are the most important features. Indeed, the mask is extended so as to cover also the head. In our days it is made of a black woolen fabric (called *sayaki*), while in the old times it was made of the raw hide of a black goat. The part covering the face is decorated with colourful geometrical designs, narrow braids and small beads. The rest of the headgear is covered by pieces of coloured paper and on top they place colourful ribbons, as well as a fox tail. In order to support it in an upright position, they put a piece of wood from the inside, filling the rest of the empty space with hay. For moustache they use hair from a horse’s tail. Dressing is a ritual in itself, with the help of friends and relatives. First they put on the *tsarouchi*, usually made of cow or pig skin, worn with thick woollen socks. Then they put on the pants, made of black goat’s hide, along with a vest of similar material. They attach the bells on a red sash that folds crosswise around the shoulders. Finally, they put on the mask with the headgear, applying it precisely on the bearer’s face, sewing it carefully at the back.

As for the origins of this custom, people of Soho narrate that at some point, in the old times, Saint Theodore with forty soldiers was besieged and had to slaughter forty goats in order to subsist. The saint had then the idea to dress his soldiers with the black goat hides, thus inspiring panic to the enemy.

Zoomorphism and the relevant rituals, involving goat hides, masks, bells and headgear, as well as ritualistic performances, go back to times of primal magic and religious ideas, very common in Dionysian cult, popular especially in Macedonia and Thrace. The Romans, in imitation of Ancient Greeks, organized similar religious festivals, such as the Saturnalia and the Brumalia that persisted even after Christianity prevailed completely. Indeed, during the Twelve days of Christmas, Christian religious festivals have not succeeded to erase completely the memory of the above described rituals.

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KEY WORDS

Zoomorphic mask, disguise, goat, bells, Carnival, Twelve Days of Christmas

ⁱFor the same reason, shepherds in Chalkidiki, Macedonia, used to slaughter sheep on the 23d of April and make an offering of their skins to the church.

Chapter 5

The Past meets the Present

5.1. Ikaria: A case study - Conclusion

Sharing and communicating traditional events and rituals is an important factor in promoting social cohesion and sustainable quality of life, especially for remote insular Greek Communities. We would like to present a *case study*, as a conclusion, of the island of Ikaria, an account of our experience in integrating traditional cultural practices with modern information technology and representation systems.

The **Island of Ikaria** seems to present a significant example in the Aegean Archipelago of Social-Cultural Capital Creation. In Ikaria, an extremely isolated and poor island, culture and collectivity seem interwoven and intrinsically linked. In Ikaria, it is the island's cultural associations that organize the **annual *panegyria***; in the past, it used to be local churches, but this changed and now it is the cultural associations all over the island that they have taken over the taskⁱ. This change coincided with the need for the construction of basic infrastructure in the communities. Money collected from *panegyria* usually finances road construction and repair or similar works, and is managed by the community's chairman and the association's managing board. Right after the *panegyri* is over, a chart representing income and expenditure is presented, for all villagers to see what the overall benefit for the community was. If they have not already predefined what they are going to use this money for, they have to decide right then. Moreover, there have been cases that *panegyri* funds have been spent on social purposes, namely a sick person's treatment expenses. The community, as well as the cultural associations' members is all very proud for this tangible expression of collective spirit and they consider that this is what makes Ikaria such a special island.

Preparations for the annual village *panegyri* run throughout the year, specific tasks and responsibilities being distributed to the association's members and managing

board. However, this does not mean that people feel burdened by heavy responsibilities or obligations. During the last month of preparations, catering provisions are made. Meat being the main course served, **goats** and **sheep** have to be bought from the community's animal breeders or from individual householdsⁱ. Farming produce that is not consumed by household members will find its way to the *panegyri*, because this is considered as the village market; further more, a **collective decision is needed for the provision of meat**. An important *panegyri*, such as the one at the village of *Raches*, will need approximately 500 kilos of meat, sometimes more, if there is enough money and more visitors to place their ordersⁱ. For the purposes of the *panegyri*, rather large animals are slaughtered, which would not have been sold in the market or exported outside the island. These animals roam freely on the island's mountainous slopes and are only gathered in summer, when the *panegyri* date approaches. **One has to understand that the community's economy depends significantly on the organization of the *panegyri*, as both producers and animal breeders benefit significantly**. This small local production makes food preparation for the *panegyri*'s visitors easier. Meat is simply boiled in large cauldrons, while a part of it is roasted, following preferences expressed by more recent visitorsⁱ.

In relation to music, the village's cultural association undertakes to select the musician who will perform at the *panegyri*. It does not seem that there is a specific preference for local musicians to perform; nowadays selection is rather based on economic criteria, namely, the appointment will be given to the musician who will give the most advantageous offer for the community. Local people told us, in many interviews, that in the past it was different: special preference was given to local musicians not only because of transportation problems – it was difficult to bring artists from far away - but because people had become accustomed to a specific musical style of such and such musician and did not want to hear anything different. In some *panegyria* a musician is selected because he is famous for creating a festive ambiance and thus attracts more visitors. Naturally, in these cases one cannot avoid hard feelings and bitterness from those who were not selected, especially if it involves their own villageⁱ.

***Panegyri* as a village symbol and more**

The village *panegyri* is an event of paramount importance: a lot of people say that all year through they live for the big moment, when all together they are going to celebrate this collective eventⁱ. It is quite difficult, however, to discern why is it so, since each one will mention his or her own reasons: for some it is the coming together and the all night dancing, for others listening to the special *ikariotikos* rhythm and the sweet abandon to its constant rhythmic beat, or meeting friends and acquaintances from all over the island and most importantly seeing again their beloved relatives coming back from abroad, from all the countries they have emigrated in the past. Each and every *panegyri* has acquired its own special identity

and character, according to local and visitors' expressed views: "The *Agia Irini panegyri* is very lively, and the other one at *Stavlos* is small, but with a very pleasant ambiance..Or the other one attracts a lot of people, etc." Each community is judged by the characteristics of its *panegyri* and attracts fans not only from Ikaria but from all over Greece. To the tune of the special *ikariotikos* rhythm, the *panegyri* becomes a central symbol of a vibrant community, around which sustainability and continuity are constructed.

Organizing and participating in such an event enhances and expands the community's potential, through networks of friends and relatives, family descendants, active Diaspora members. Reviving *panegyria* in more villages, along with the creation of more active associations in villages with small population, such as *Stavlos*, offers tremendous empowerment to local inhabitants pushing them to rebuild their local communities.ⁱ

The dynamic presence of *panegyri*, as a cultural symbol, seems to compensate for significant lack of social and institutional capital on the island's communities, due primarily to massive emigration, in the '50s, which led to sparsely populated and ageing villages. A common characteristic all over Ikaria's villages and communities is the evident absence of young people. In all our discussions there was no reference whatsoever to any other form of collective activity or solidarity among local inhabitants, as there is neither the opportunity nor sufficient time to prepare anything else. On the contrary, the *panegyri* emerges as the natural **link** among the village's primary sources of collective ideas and symbolism, without imposing the need for the inhabitants' physical presence and collective action at all times.

Musically speaking, the special *ikariotikos* beat, as a symbol, is always performed in the framework of the *panegyri*, but, noticeably, it also functions as a precursor of a series of phenomena that cannot be deemed as exclusively artistic or aesthetic, but are strongly social and political. The *panegyri*, as organized by the village's cultural associations, creates a social context, clearly visible to all visitors and Diaspora Greeks, who feel that Ikaria and its communities offer an alternative life model, beyond financial contingencies, or utilitarian everyday practices. The *panegyri* and its special *ikariotikos* music seem to constitute a wider pole of attraction not only for Ikaria's youth, but for young people from major urban centres, who strive for a more alternative way of life, beyond conventional practicesⁱ. In some *panegyria* having a good time becomes a political event, emphasising more alternative ways of entertainment. Tradition here functions as a haven, *vis a vis* the painful clamour of globalization and urban alienation.

Although both organizers and participating artists approach and conceive the *panegyri* as a traditional event in the context of their local community, they leave enough margin for urban youth to express themselves through their own artistic, social and

even political ways. **One could say that a dialectic relation is created between the local and the supra local, a natural communication between two apparently so different socio-cultural contexts.** More specifically, one can observe that the so called “antisocial” behaviour of these unruly young people, as it is manifested, sometimes violently, in the urban context, becomes joyful fun and creative expression throughout the *panegyri* festivities. At the same time, social control and public order forces seem to leave the revellers in peace, with minimum intervention.

At times, concerns have been expressed, however, by local community leaders and some associations members about the image Ikaria and their village convey to visitors, namely, as a summer meeting point of alternative, albeit “marginal”, youth. Politically speaking, these concerns are voiced both by conservative circles as by traditional left parties; generally speaking, however, organizers and young people pay no heed to this kind of criticism. In stark contrast to other islands of summer revelry and “party tourism”, namely Mykonos and Rhodes, **Ikaria becomes a summer pole of attraction for alternative youth, who want to enjoy themselves, live together with local people this amazing experience of the *panegyria*, outside the constraints of mass consumer tourism.**

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The **University of the Aegean Lab for Social and Cultural Digital Documentation** has carried out extensive research activities, part of which we present here, involving mainly **research material that has been collected and documented in an electronic data base system on the subject of “Traditional music and Biographical Accounts of musicians in the Aegean”.** This material, that will be distributed as books and electronic media to all stakeholders, has been collected in duration of **fifteen years of research** and it will support preservation and redistribution of many important elements of our cultural heritage.

Furthermore, it will promote the **revival of cultural representation and performance and the accumulation of local social cultural capital.** The objective of this work is not only to carry out musical recordings and documentation, but furthestmost the creation of a tool which will enhance local cultural and social capacity, through the preservation of collective memory. In this way, the community’s cultural sustainability is safeguarded leading to a socio- economically sustainable community. This happens mainly through activation and mobilisation of external factors, such as Diaspora communities, as well as visitors’ participation in local events and other activities. In this case, information networks and the Internet can serve as vehicles of social cohesion preservation, not as an instrumental extension of system rationality, but as a parallel public sphere which leads to a self regulated reproduction of Social Cultural Capital.
