



Επιστήμη του Χορού

Τόμος 13, 2022

Ηλεκτρονικό Περιοδικό

Electronic Journal

www.elepex.gr

ISSN 1790-7527

Science of Dance

Volume 13, 2022

Visual Recording of Music-dance Events and Field Research: Analytical and Empirical Considerations on the Occasion of a Collection of Ethnographic Photographs

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Abstract

This article gives a brief overview on the history of ethnographic photography and explains its relationship with ethnographic documentation. The objective of this article is to examine the role of photography as an ethnographic tool that captures visual experience and investigate specific issues of objectivity and subjectivity during the anthropological fieldwork. Subsequently, the article explores the use of ethnographic photography in the context of recording the performance practices of a music and dance event, as well as its connections with collective memory and historical representation. The methodological framework of this study consists of critically analyzing specific photographic examples from the archive of dance anthropologist Rena Loutzaki, in conjunction with interviewing the researcher and highlighting her own commentary. The conclusions emphasize the need to enrich the interpretation of ethnographic photographs through continuous reflection and discussion with the anthropologist and his/her research subjects. In this way, photographic material could function as research evidence as well as a means of fieldwork representation that stimulates both memory and imagination.

Keywords: dance performance, photography, ethnography, fieldwork, documentation