

To cite this article: Konstantinos Dimopoulos (2022). IS IT POSSIBLE TO DANCE THE SAME DANCE IN DIFFERENT FORMS WITHIN THE SAME COMMUNITY? THE EXAMPLE OF THE DANCE “KARAGOUNA” IN MEGALA KALYVIA (TRIKALA, GREECE), International Journal of Education and Social Science Research (IJESSR) 5 (1): 121-134

IS IT POSSIBLE TO DANCE THE SAME DANCE IN DIFFERENT FORMS WITHIN THE SAME COMMUNITY? THE EXAMPLE OF THE DANCE “KARAGOUNA” IN MEGALA KALYVIA (TRIKALA, GREECE)

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.37500/IJESSR.2022.5111>

ABSTRACT

It is a fact that a single dance can appear in different forms, from region to region. However, there are also cases in which the same dance is danced in a different manner within the same community. During my research in Megala Kalyvia I have realised that the dance “Karagouna” can be danced in several forms. The collection and processing of data is based on the principles of ethnographic research. The analysis and description of ethnographic data was carried out through notation of the dances by use of the Labanotation system, whereas for the interpretation of ethnographic data the Geertz’s “thick description” model was used. To sum up, it can be concluded that the “Karagouna” is presented not only from one region to another but also within the same community, the one of Megala Kalyvia in this case. The variety of the forms of this dance shows the cultural and creative richness of the community, through which various forms of the dance have “sprung up”.

KEYWORDS: Dance, Megala Kalyvia, Labanotation, fieldwork research, variety of dance forms

INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that a single dance can appear in different forms, from region to region or even from one community to another (Dimopoulos, Tyrovola, & Koutsouba, 2016a, 2016b). Such examples are numerous, such as Tsamiko, Zonaradiko dance in Thrace, syrtos dance in the Cyclades, etc. The above fact is a result of many factors and circumstances, which have contributed to the creation of the various forms of the same dance. The factors that lead to this variety of dance forms should be assessed in each case.

However, there are also cases in which the same dance is danced in a different manner within the same community or wider region, due to the coexistence of the masculine and feminine version of said dance. Such example is the Tsamikos dance on the island of Lefkada (Koutsoumpa, 2000). Moreover, the same dance can be danced differently under different circumstances, and the context, the place, or even the circumstances are decisive elements that lead to such a result (Koutsouba, 2015).

During my research (2012-today) in the municipality of Megala Kalyvia (Trikala), I came across the local dance of the region, known as “Karagouna”, among other dances. Throughout the whole research period, I have realised that this dance can be danced in several forms. The difference from all the above-mentioned dances is that, while the context is identical, the forms may vary. That made a big impression on me, as it is rather uncommon to dance a specific dance in different manners within the same community. Moreover, while editing or looking for videos and archives on YouTube, I stumbled upon another form of “Karagouna” dance, which I had never documented before on field during my research. All above elements made me reconsider, which motivated me to document all forms that appear within the community.

Following the above, the aim of this paper is to document all forms of the dance “Karagouna” in the municipality of Megala Kalyvia (Trikala) in order to highlight the variety of performances of a single dance within the same community.

METHODOLOGY

The collection and processing of data is based on the principles of ethnographic research, as applied in the case of dance, drawn from primary and secondary sources (Buckland, 1999; Dimopoulos, 2011, 2017; Felföldi, 1999; Giurchescu, 1999; Koutsouba, 1991, 1997, 1999; Loutzaki, 1989; Mpoulamanti, 2014; Niora, 2009, 2017; Sarakatsianou, 2011; Sklar, 1991; Tyrovola, 2008; Filippidou, 2011, 2018; Fountzoulas, 2016; Charitonidis, 2018). Primary sources refer to data that derives from field research in the form of an interview (open-type questions for a semi-structured interview and unstructured interview) and the participatory observation with simultaneous audio and video recording of the inhabitants of said community. Secondary sources refer to the review and use of the existing literature, based on the principles of archival ethnography (Gkefou-Madianou, 1999) and historical research (Adshead & Layson, 1994).

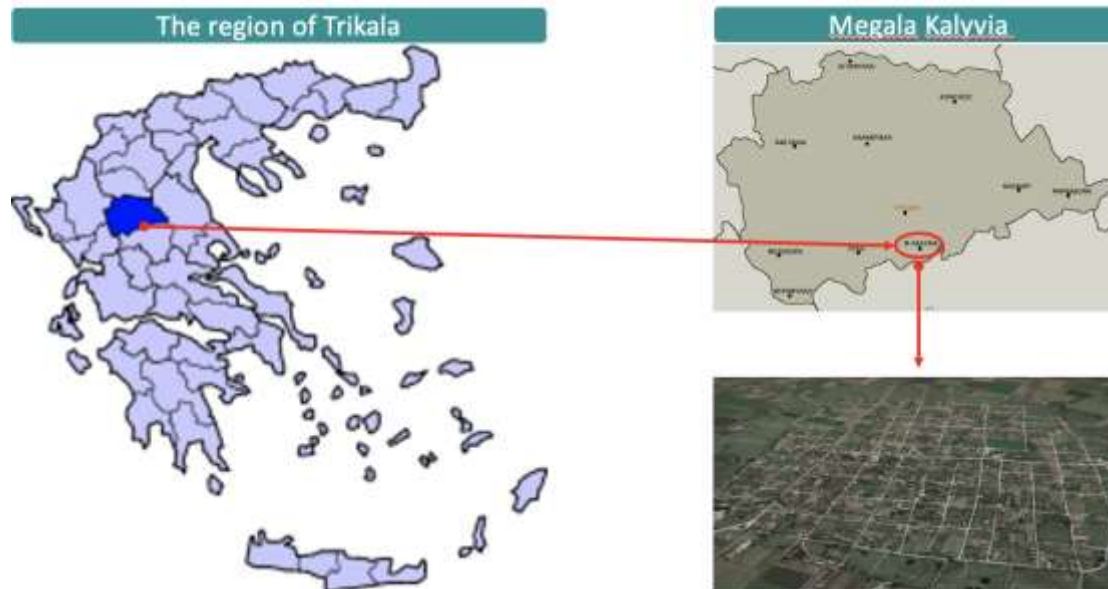
The analysis and description of ethnographic data, namely the forms of the “Karagouna” dance within the community of Megala Kalyvia (Trikala) was carried out through notation of the dances by use of the Labanotation system (Hutchinson Guest, 2005; Koutsouba, 2005, 2010). Last, Geertz’s “thick description” model (2003) was used for the interpretation of ethnographic data.

Ethnographic data

The community of Megala Kalyvia lies in the lowland region of Thessaly, Greece, and precisely, in the southwest part of the prefecture of Trikala. It used to be the administrative center of the community named after the village under Kapodistrias Reform Law¹ (together with the communities of Glinos and Agia Kyriaki), whereas it now belongs to the municipality of Trikala city. It is 8 km away from the city of Trikala and it is the last community before reaching the province of Karditsa. With a population

¹ . Kapodistrias reform is a common name for the Greek Law 2539, which reorganized the country’s administrative divisions.

of 1.849 inhabitants (according to the census of 2011) it occupies an area of 2.900 hectares and has an altitude of 105 metres.



Its initial name was Kalyvia. In the beginning of the 19th century, there used to be several settlements, such as Paschaliori, Kavoures, Logarakos, Kyrazoi, Marmaras and Kalyvia (Chiotis, 1997:13). This can also be proven by the script number (prothesi)² 39 of the monastery of Dousiko (16th-17th century). Moreover, the settlement of Paschaliori is dated back to 1592 (Ntoulas, 2011: 472). The definition “Megala” (Great) appears to have been introduced at a later stage, when all above settlements were unified, apparently around 1810. The name “Kalyvia” is documented for the last time in 1838. According to earlier oral narrations of two locals, F. Papanikolaou (1881-1967) and P. Karalis (1892-1967), “...Mpeis, the representative of Ali Pasha of Ioannina, asked the Kotsampasis³ (local Christian notable) how they could create a big village such as Megalos Palamas in Karditsa. The Kotsampasis replied that that would be possible by unifying all above settlements...” (Chiotis, 1997:21). Hence, around 1810 all settlements were unified and the community was renamed to Megala Kalyvia.

The inhabitants of Megala Kalyvia belong to the ethnic group of Karagounides and they are really proud of their identity. Their main activity is mostly agriculture, while animal husbandry is mainly used to satisfy family needs. Mixing with other populations was rather scarce. The “foreign” elements appear to arrive mostly after 1900, and they came mainly for Karagounides communities. The ethnic

² . Monastery script, in which pilgrims-donors are listed.

³ . Kotsampasis: it comes from the Turkish word kocabaşı (koca = great, big, old + baş = head, first). They were the local Cristian notables, on a province level, during Ottoman period.

group of Vlachs also settled in the community: they would stay there during the winter months and they would leave in summer (Chiotis, 2005: 240). They mainly came from the Vlach communities of Gardiki or Moutsiara, and their arrival is dated around 1900. Their main activities were animal husbandry, trade and dressmaking. No agricultural holding was conceded to them, they only received a parcel and 0,5 hectares of arable land (Chiotis, 1997: 66). It is worth mentioning that the Vlach population abandoned the community and moved either to the nearby town of Trikala or to Athens (Chiotis, 2005: 240).

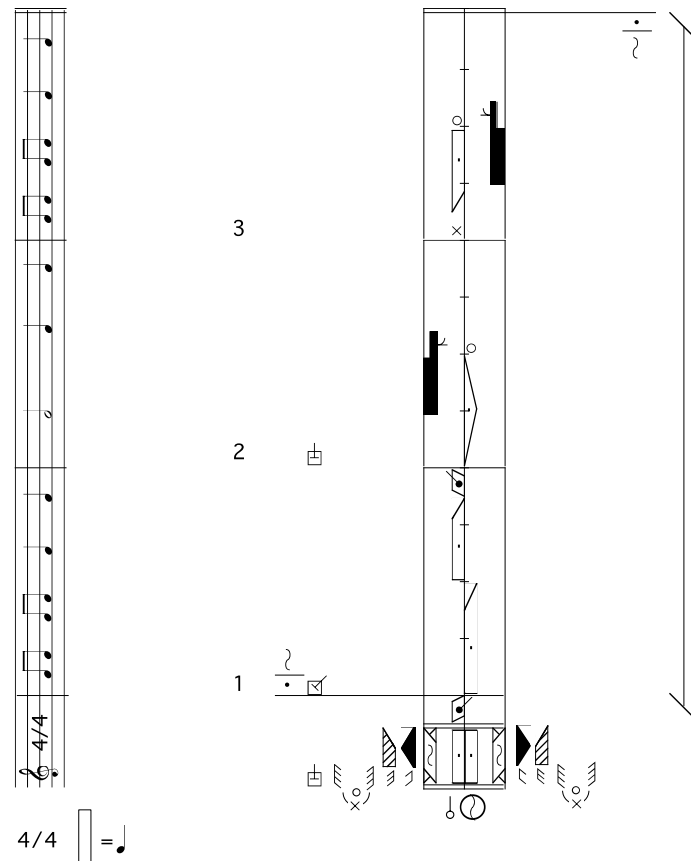
The “Karagouna” dance

As mentioned above, the inhabitants of Megala Kalyvia belong to the population group of Karagounides. Their most typical dance, danced by all Karagounides communities with no exception, is the “Karagouna” dance, which constitutes a mark of their identity. This dance is the most popular one and it is performed in practically any customary and dance occasion, in weddings, local fests, family celebrations, etc. Moreover, on a second level, the level of the second existence, it is unthinkable for any dance group to do a special dance tribute to Thessaly (and especially lowland Thessaly) without including “Karagouna” in its dance repertoire. Fieldwork research and study have shown that every “Karagounides” community or subcommunity performs that dance in its own way and under a different form (Gratsiouni, 2015; Dimopoulos, etc., 2016a, Karfis & Ziaka, 2009).

Within the community of Megala Kalyvia, this dance constitutes an integral part of its festivities and customary occasions. Throughout the research I have been carrying out since 2012 until the present time, I have come across with this dance in many occasions. However, what really impressed me was the observed fact that this dance is presented in various manners and under different forms. I started documenting the dance in several customary and dance occasions, namely in different fests and celebrations of the community as well as family celebrations. Eventually, I documented three different versions of the “Karagouna” dance.

Following that, I documented a form of “Karagouna” dance I observed on YouTube. On the related video, the local cultural association (E.L.O.K.) performed a version that had never been documented before in a fest or celebration. That specific form was a choreography, created by the dance teacher in charge at that moment, which was also presented during the show “To Dimotiko Tragoudi” (The Folklore Song, in English) broadcasted by the public television. On that show, the cultural association did not present any of the versions that were observed and documented during fieldwork research; it presented a different version, which obviously bore the stamp and signature of the dance teacher in charge at that moment. That video was therefore documented, as ever since the 1980s, the use of video is considered a “fundamental means of documentation, analysis and promotion of the dance” (Gratsiouni, 2015:55).

The three forms documented during fieldwork research are the following:

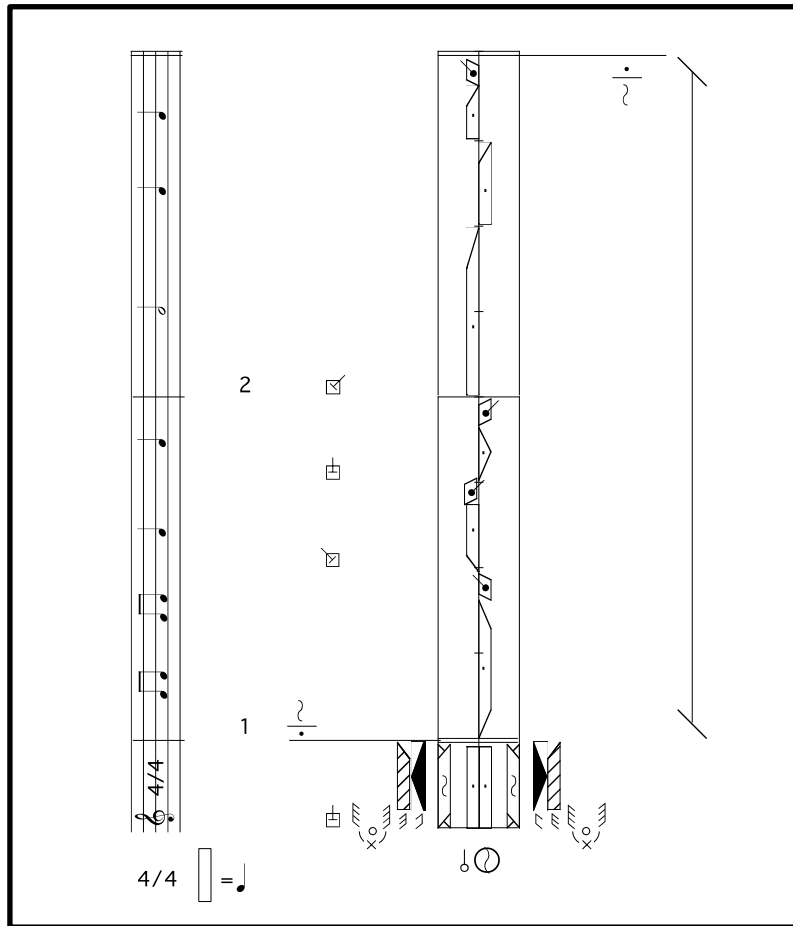


Schema 1: The first form of “Karagouna” dance in Megala Kalyvia



Image 1: The dance “Karagouna” in my fieldwork research (2/7/2021)

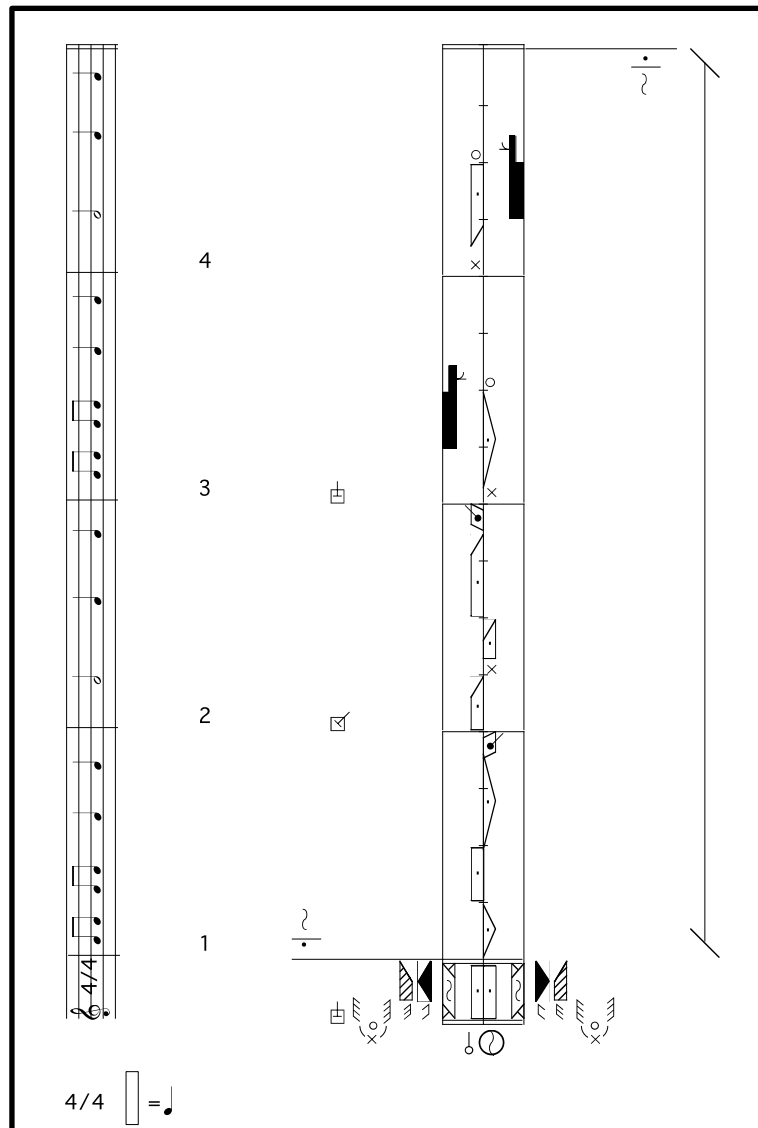
(Source: Konstantinos Dimopoulos personal archive)



Schema 2: The second form of “Karagouna” dance in Megala Kalyvia



Image 2: The dance “Karagouna” in my fieldwork research (22/12/2019)
(Source: Konstantinos Dimopoulos personal archive)



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3

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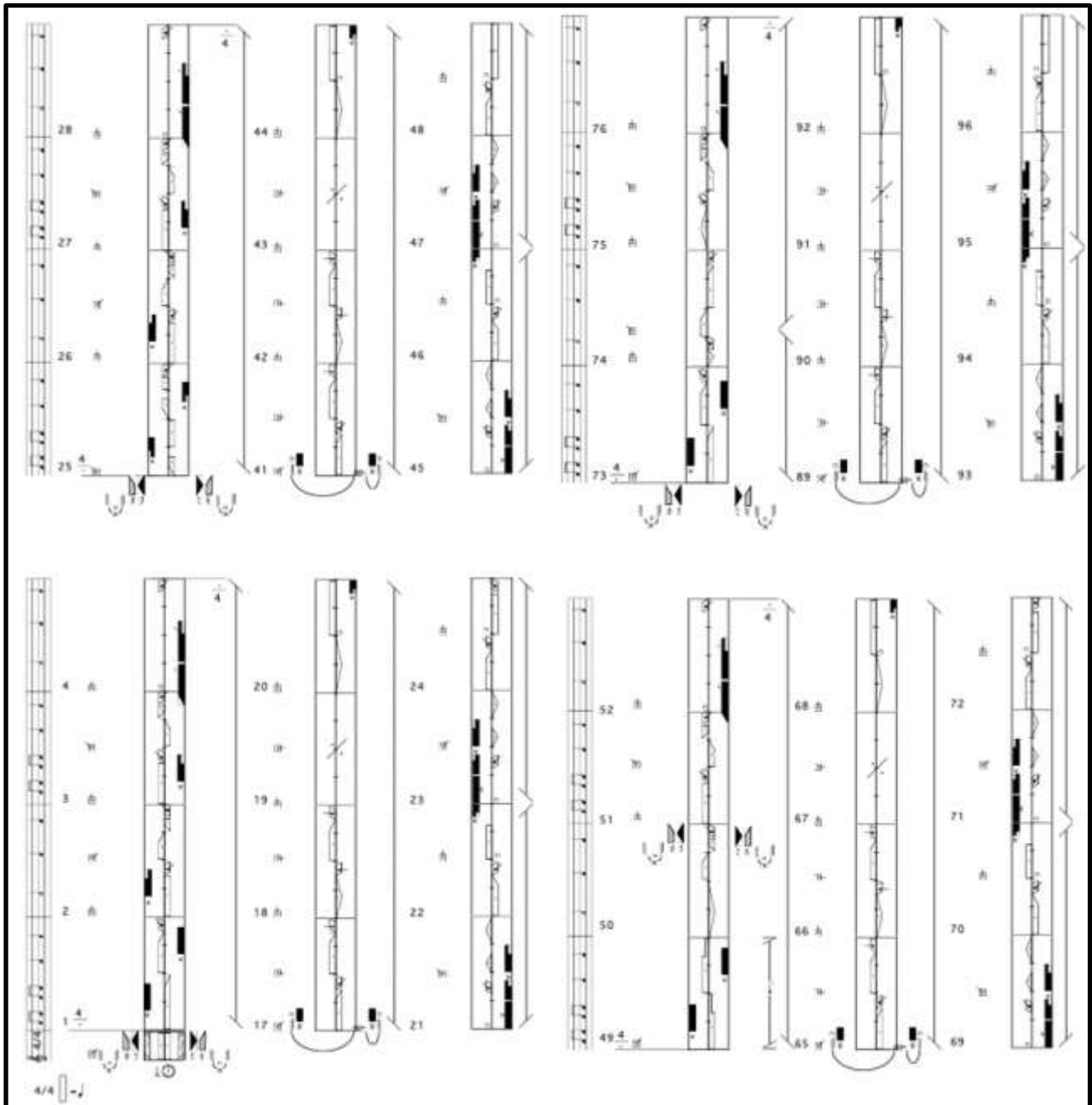
4/4 □ = ♩

Schema 3: The third form of “Karagouna” dance in Megala Kalyvia



Image 3: The dance “Karagouna” in my fieldwork research (29/4/2019)
(Source: Konstantinos Dimopoulos personal archive)

The form documented on YouTube is the following:



Schema 4:

The fourth form of the “Karagouna” dance in Megala Kalyvia, as it appears on YouTube. The dance is divided in dance phrases, which appear in the dance choreography



Image 4: The dance “Karagouna” on YouTube
(Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsxZbTZzS4I>)

CONCLUSIONS

The documentation of the aforementioned forms of the “Karagouna” dance as it appears in Megala Kalyvia come as a product of fieldwork research documentation. In the context of that research, the dance was not performed in specific dance occasions or customs, but rather on the occasion of celebrations within either the community of Megala Kalyvia or the local cultural association (E.L.O.K.), or even during at-home celebrations. Therefore, the context of the dance is always the same (celebration) and what changes is its organiser (community, local cultural association, family). In other words, no differentiation is observed as regards the context in which it is performed. On the contrary, there are differences in the ways the dance is performed: it is not always danced in the same manner, and what is more, even the same female dancers may perform it in a different manner. Moreover, one version of the dance in the specific community comes from a YouTube video, in which the local cultural association presents the “local” version of the dance according to a specific choreography prepared by the dance teacher of the local cultural association (E.L.O.K.) (Dimopoulos, 2021).

The above findings show that the “Karagouna” dance appears in a variety of forms not only amongst the Karagounides communities or amongst wider regions, but they can also present such a variety within the community itself. Popular creativity “pushed” inhabitants into performing the dance in various forms. Therefore, we observe the phenomenon (rather uncommon for the Greek reality) of having four (4) different versions of the same dance, the “Karagouna” dance, within a single and only community, the community of Megala Kalyvia. The three (3) versions are a product of fieldwork research of the author of this paper and the fourth (1) (on YouTube) is a product of choreography prepared by the dance teacher of the local cultural association.

In any case, the above data reveal the great diversity in which the “Karagouna” is presented not only from one region to another but also within the same community, the one of Megala Kalyvia in this case. The variety of this dance performance shows the cultural and creative richness of the community, through which various forms of the dance have “sprung up”.

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