

To cite this article: Konstantinos Dimopoulos, Georgios Fountzoulas and Chariton Charitonidis (2022). MAPPING THE VARIOUS FORMS OF THE DANCE “SOUSTA” ON THE ISLAND OF RHODES, International Journal of Education and Social Science Research (IJESSR) 5 (5): 476-491 Article No. 694, Sub Id 1112

MAPPING THE VARIOUS FORMS OF THE DANCE “SOUSTA” ON THE ISLAND OF RHODES

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.37500/IJESSR.2022.5526>

ABSTRACT

A thorough look into the dance tradition in Greece leads to the observation a single dance can appear in various forms from one region to another or even among municipalities. Focusing on the island of Rhodes in Dodecanese it may be observed that one specific dance, called “Sousta”, is danced in different forms among various communities. The aim of this paper is to map “Sousta” dance through its recording, in order to showcase the variety of forms of this dance on the island of Rhodes. Through this mapping, eventual similarities but also differences among those dance forms will arise. Collection and processing of data is based on the principles of bibliographic research. Analysis, description, and interpretation of the forms of “Sousta” dance was carried out according to the Labanotation dance recording system. From the ethnographic data and the comparative presentation of the forms of “Sousta” dance it is observed a variety when it comes to the dance execution. There are common patterns of the “Sousta” dance, which are repeated, modified and transformed and that leads to such a great variety of forms that this dance presents.

KEYWORDS: Dance vocabulary, dance variations, dance ethnography, Labanotation, dance structure

INTRODUCTION

A thorough look into the dance tradition in Greece leads to the observation a single dance can appear in various forms from one region to another or even among municipalities (Dimopoulos, Tyrovolas & Koutsouba, 2016a, 2016b). Such examples are “Tsamikos” dance in continental Greece, “Syrtos” dance on the islands, etc. This occurs due to the existence of a specific movement and dance vocabulary (Giurchescu & Kröschlová, 2007; Dimopoulos, Fountzoulas & Charitonidis, 2021; Dimopoulos, Karfis, Fountzoulas, Charitonidis & Koutsouba, 2021), as a result of various geographical, historic, and economic factors.

In the specific case of the bigger islands, it can be observed that a single dance makes its appearance in different forms from one municipality to another or within one municipality. By focusing on the island complex of the Dodecanese islands, and in particular on its biggest island, Rhodes, it may be observed that one specific dance, called “Sousta”, is danced in different forms among various communities.

The aim of this paper is to map “Sousta” dance through its recording, in order to showcase the variety of forms of this dance on the island of Rhodes. Through this mapping, eventual similarities but also differences among those dance forms will arise.

METHOD

Collection and processing of data is based on the principles of bibliographic research. (Agarwal, 2014; Denney & Tewksbury, 2012; Paraskevopoulos, 2003; Paul & Criado, 2020; Thomas & Nelson, 2003). In particular, five (5) forms of “Sousta” dance were selected as a total, as they are respectively performed in five (5) communities of Rhodes: Emponas, Soroni, Archangelos, Asklipiio and Apolakkia). Following that, we proceeded to the recording of the various forms of “Sousta” dance within those communities, by using secondary sources.

Analysis, description, and interpretation of the forms of “Sousta” dance was carried out according to the Labanotation dance recording system (Hutchinson, 2005; Koutsouba, 2005).

ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA

1.The island of Rhodes

The island of Rhodes is situated in the southeastern Aegean Sea. It is the largest island of the Dodecanese region, the fourth largest Greek island (Epistimi & Zoi Encyclopedia, n.d.: 339) and the ninth largest island in the Mediterranean Sea (<https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ρόδος>). It used to be the capital of the Dodecanese prefecture, with a population of 115.490 inhabitants (<https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ρόδος>).



Figure 1: The island of Rhodes on the map

(Source: [https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ρόδος#/media/Αρχείο:Rhodes_location_\(Greece\).svg](https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ρόδος#/media/Αρχείο:Rhodes_location_(Greece).svg))

Its name derives from the name “rodon” (“rose” in Greek) (<https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ρόδος>). The economy of the island is mainly based on tourism, to a lesser extent on agriculture, husbandry and even less on industry (Epistimi & Zoi Encyclopedia, n.d.: 339). Pindar mentions the following:

When Zeus and the other gods decided to divide the earth among them, they forgot to keep a share for Helios, who was absent carrying out his daily duties. When Helios asked for justice, Zeus was about to order a new casting of lots but Helios did not allow him, for he saw a fertile land growing from the sea. Then he asked Lachesis and Zeus to make an oath that when the island had risen, it would be his own prize of honor for ever, as it occurred (<https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ρόδος>)

Rhodes has been inhabited ever since the prehistoric era and there is a continuity till nowadays. Many cultures have passed by, such as Romans, Persians, Arabs, British, Latins, Turks and Italians.

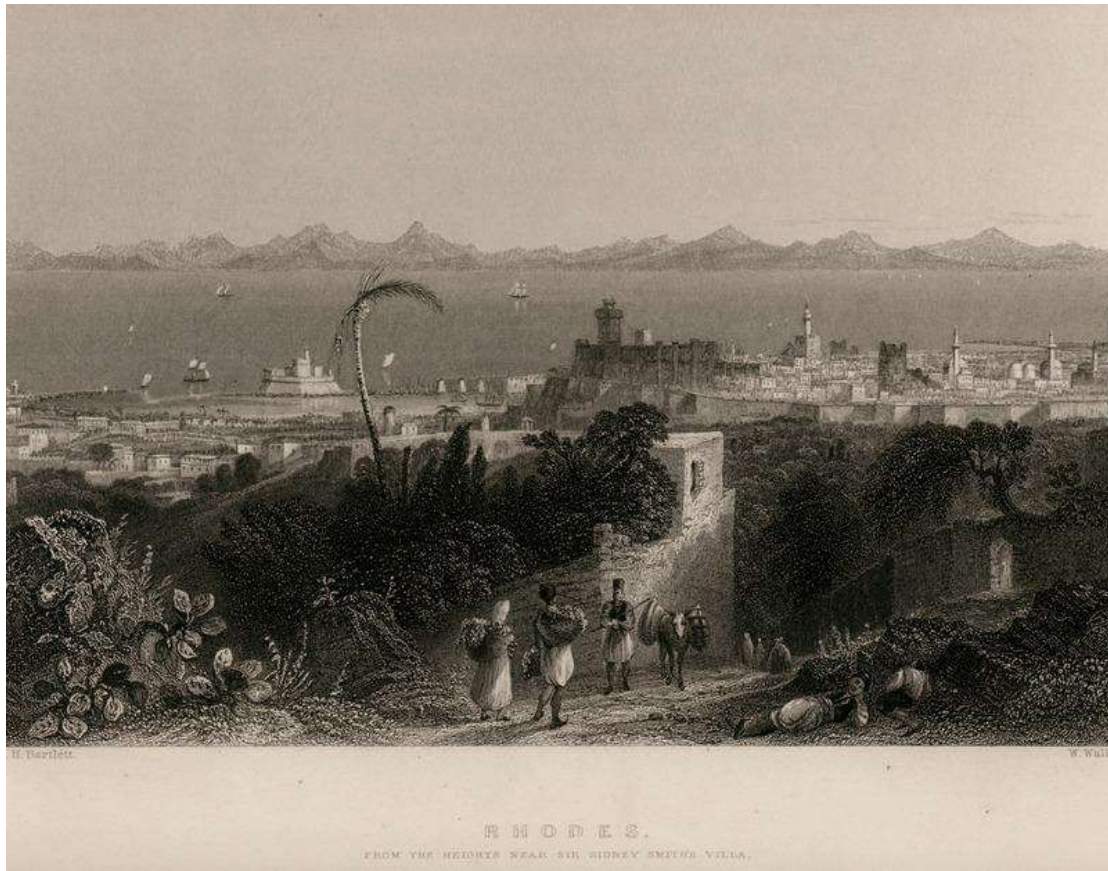


Figure 2: The city of Rhodes in 1836

(Source:

https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ρόδος#/media/Αρχείο:Rhodes,_from_the_heights_of_Sir_Sidney_Smith's_Villa_-_Carne_John_-_1836.jpg)

2. The “Sousta” dance on the island of Rhodes

The “Sousta” dance is generally the most characteristic dance in the wider region of Dodecanese islands, as “the most popular dance performed throughout Dodecanese islands with various local variations is sousta” (Liavas, 2007: 37). This statement is corroborated by sources, according to which “the sousta is predominantly a dance of the southern Aegean, especially associated with the islands of the Dodecanese and Crete» (Riak, 2007:208). Moreover, “the σουστά is central to the culture of the Dodecanesian people and has a central place in formal, civic events and local village rituals” (Riak, 2005:196) and “the sousta from peers was part of the socialization process of bonding in the community” (Riak, 2007:209)

Aegean Region	Dance Families
Dodecanese Islands	<i>Sousta, Isos, Zervos</i>
Crete	<i>Syrtos, Sousta, Pentozalis, Maleviziotikos</i>
E. Peloponese Coast	<i>Syrtos, Balos, Karsilamas, Chassapikos, Servikos</i>
Argo-Saronic Islands	<i>Syrtos</i>
E. Mainland Greece and Euboea	<i>Syrtos, Balos, Trata, Kangelis, Karsilamas, Chassapikos, Servikos</i>
N. Sporades and E. Thessaly	<i>Syrtos, Balos</i>
Thracian Sporades	<i>Syrtos, Balos, Karsilamas, Chassapikos, Zeibekikos</i>
Asia Minor Coast	<i>Syrtos, Karsilamas, Balos, Chassapikos, Servikos, Tsiftedeli</i>

Source: Loutzaki, 1987:59

In particular, one of the various dances performed on the island of Rhodes is “Sousta” dance, where “instrument players would gather and play all together, normally lyre or violin and santouri, while dancing the popular traditional dances called “Sousta”, “Monachiko”, “Syrtos” (Raftis, 2004:106). The dance is also known as “Pano choros (dance)” (Raftis, 2004). As it occurs in the entire Dodecanese region, that particular dance is likewise very important and popular in Rhodes. In particular, “Sousta is the dance that Rhodians prefer” (Raftis, 2004: 110) and “Sousta is the predominant dance of Rhodes, as with no Sousta there is no dance” (Raftis, 2004:23). It is even popular amongst non-locals as “besides the above dances, the dearest one among Rhodians and non-locals is Sousta, which occupies the most predominant position” (Raftis, 2004:91).

The “Sousta” dance on the island of Rhodes is danced in all customary occasions and social events. Special mention needs to be made to the wedding custom, where that dance was performed every day on which the custom would take place, at home, in the street, on the square, or even outside the churchyard, either collectively or in couples (monachikos variation). (Dima, 1970; Dimitras, 1970; Raftis, 2004; Riak, 2003, 2011; Chrisis, 1970).

3. The variations of “Sousta” dance on the island of Rhodes

The “trademark” dance of Rhodes, as seen from the above, is “Sousta” dance. The form of the dance has been described in periphrastic constructions, in an attempt to analyze its dance phrase. In general, it has been said that the dance in question is bouncy and that “the jumping steps described by folklorists have five characteristics: quick, small, halved, raised and light» (Riak, 2005:208). Besides, «the term σούστα means a spring and refers to the up-and-down movement of the dancer, likening it to the jiggling motion of a cart fitted with carriage springs» (Petrides, 1975:94).

As regards the dance movements:

«The three steps of the *sousta* consisted of two jump steps going forward and one jump step going back. A *kavalieros* prepared to dance for longer periods of time because he had to learn to design (*skedhiasei*) his own steps (*tsalimia*) for the lead dancer position (*embros*) in the dance circle (*kiklos*)». (Riak, 2011:394)

However, not only one but various forms of this dance is present on the island of Rhodes, as “each village has its own Sousta” (Raftis, 2004: 23). Each municipality of Rhodes dances to its own “Sousta”, whereas this dance presents special features in every municipality, which differentiate it from other municipalities.

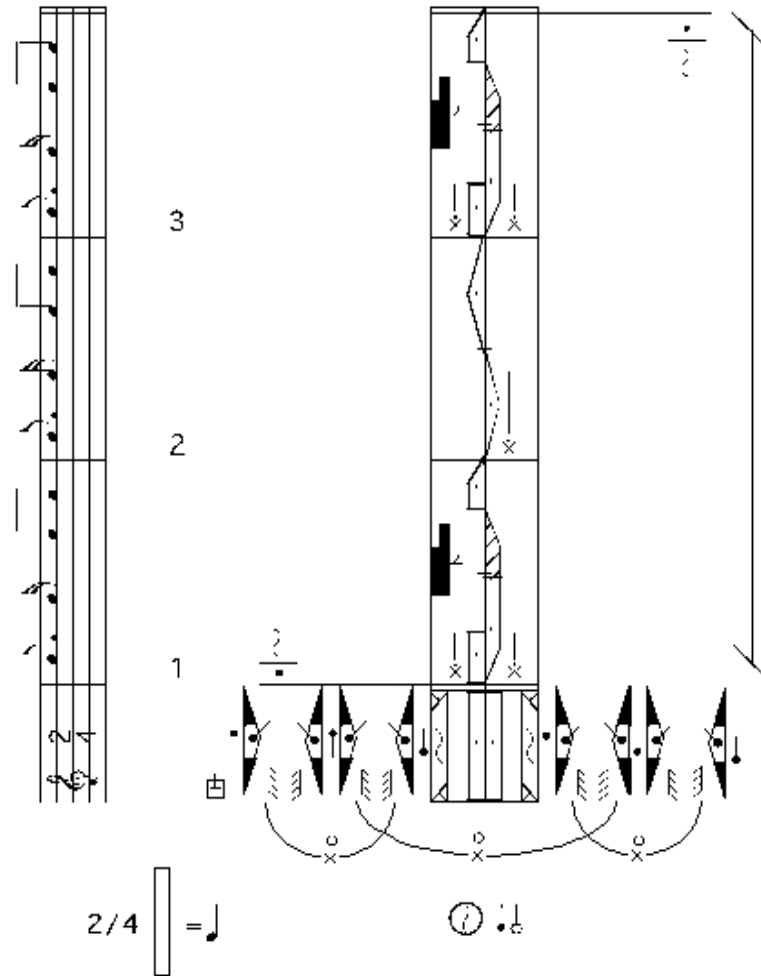
For instance:

Boniatiki “Sousta” (from Emponas) is bouncier but heavier. The most popular one is the emponiatiki “Sousta”, much more than the Sousta in Archangelos or Salakos. The Sousta from Chalki differs in the rhythm. Sousta from Kremasti and Trianta are less bouncy dances. “The best Sousta, the lightest one, is the Sousta from Askiplios; women from Asklipios are aces in Sousta, they step on the ground in one pace (dancing in absolute coordination)”. “Mponiates (Emponas) and Kastellianoi (Kritiniotes, from the village of Kritinia) are the best dancers, whereas the Sousta from Emponas is the Rhodian Sousta by default, and the other Rhodians would simply copy it”. “Only Mponiates jump while dancing Sousta”. “People from Chalki, they would keep dancing even if the instrument player dropped dead”. (Raftis, 2004:23).

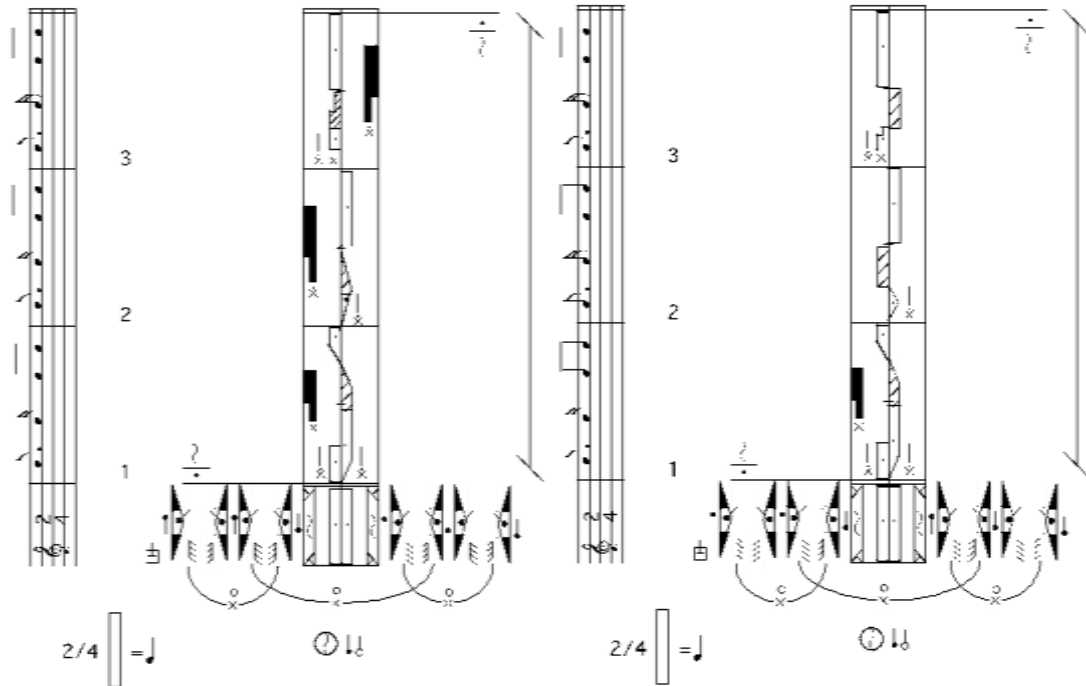
From the above it becomes evident that the specific dance appears in different variations, both as regards its form and the way it would be danced. However, the exact execution of the dance cannot be perceived, as the information provided is too generic. Through this paper, we will make a first attempt to record the various forms of the dance, in order to provide a mapping of the dance. The municipalities selected are the following: Emponas, Soroni, Archangelos, Apollona, Asklipio and Apolakkia, in which dance was recorded as it appears in each one of them.

What is particularly interesting is the fact that although “Sousta” dance is danced in a different manner in each municipality, they do present similarities in their structure. They present a common “movement vocabulary” (Dimopoulos, Karfis, Fountzoulas, Charitonidis & Koutsouba, 2021), which constitutes the “dance tank”, from which each municipality draws its own dance patterns to ultimately create its own “Sousta” dance. For a better clarification of the forms presented, each form in each municipality has been recorded below according to the Laban notation system.

3.2. The dance form in the municipality of Soroni:

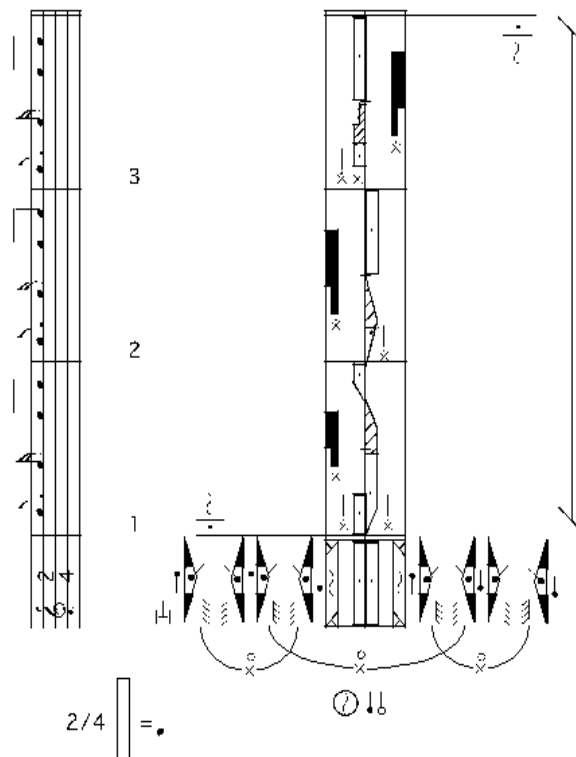


3.3. The dance forms in the municipality of Archangelos:



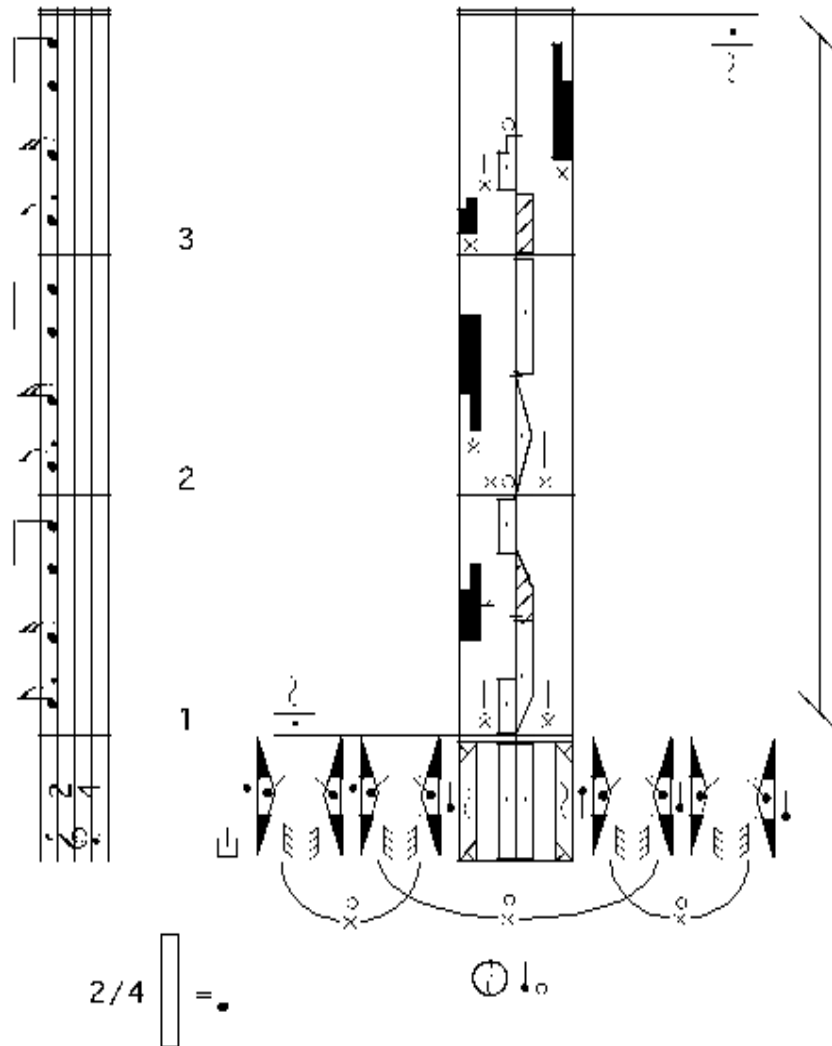
The image displays two musical scores for dance forms in the municipality of Archangelos. Each score is written in 2/4 time and consists of three staves, numbered 1, 2, and 3. The first staff (1) features a series of rhythmic notes and rests, with a question mark above it. The second staff (2) contains a complex sequence of notes and rests, with a question mark above it. The third staff (3) shows a series of notes and rests, with a question mark above it. Below the staves, there are rhythmic diagrams and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first diagram shows a sequence of notes and rests, with a question mark above it. The second diagram shows a sequence of notes and rests, with a question mark above it. The third diagram shows a sequence of notes and rests, with a question mark above it.

3.4. The dance form in the municipality of Apollona:

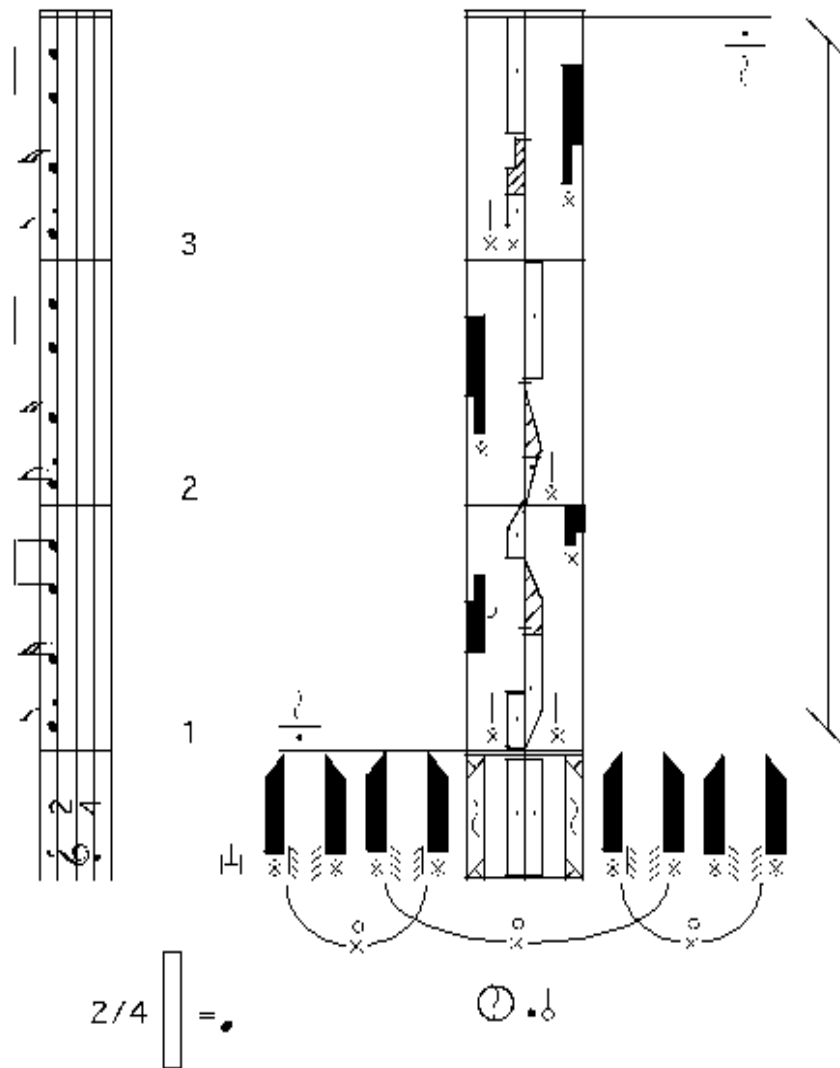


The image displays a musical score for a dance form in the municipality of Apollona. The score is written in 2/4 time and consists of three staves, numbered 1, 2, and 3. The first staff (1) features a series of rhythmic notes and rests, with a question mark above it. The second staff (2) contains a complex sequence of notes and rests, with a question mark above it. The third staff (3) shows a series of notes and rests, with a question mark above it. Below the staves, there are rhythmic diagrams and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first diagram shows a sequence of notes and rests, with a question mark above it. The second diagram shows a sequence of notes and rests, with a question mark above it. The third diagram shows a sequence of notes and rests, with a question mark above it.

3.5. The dance form in the municipality of Asklipio:



3.6. The dance form in the municipality of Apolakkia:



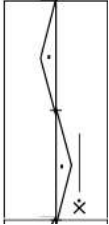
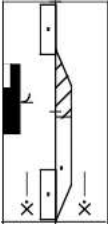
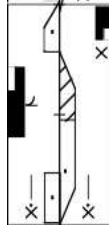
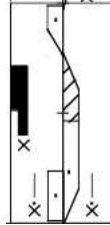
CONCLUSIONS

From the above ethnographic data and the comparative presentation of the forms of “Sousta” dance in certain municipalities of Rhodes with the use of the Laban notation system, we can observe the existence of a variety when it comes to the dance execution. However, beyond the apparent and superficial diversification of the dance in question, and if we take a deeper look at their form, we can conclude that the common elements are numerous.

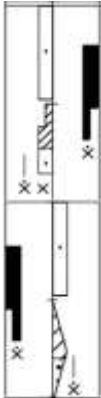
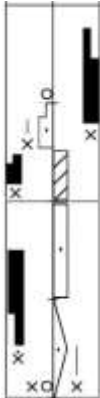
Hence, one basic pattern is the “exchange of one support for the other”, either unaltered (as in Soroni) or with the so-called “spring”, as mentioned by previous researchers (Emponas, Soroni, Archangelos, Apollona, Asklipiio, Apolakkia). Another pattern presented is “the repetition of one support when the weight of the body is lifted from one support”, either on the right or the left foot. This is a common

feature shared by the municipalities of Archangelos, Apollona, Asklipio, Apolakkia. One third shared pattern is the “double exchange of the supports”, as it appears in Emponas and Archangelos.

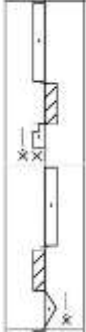
This common “movement vocabulary” which is present in that particular dance is combined with the stylistic element of each municipality, which in turn gives a different “colour” to the dance form performed in each locality. Therefore, for instance, the following table presents the different manners in which they perform the pattern of exchange of one support for the other.

Stylistic variety in the pattern of exchange of one support for the other on the island of Rhodes			
 <p>(Soroni)</p>	 <p>(Emponas, Soroni, Asklipio)</p>	 <p>(Apolakkia)</p>	 <p>(Archangelos, Apollona)</p>
Without spring	With spring		

As for the repetition of one support when the weight of the body is lifted from one support, the same pattern appears in all forms of “Sousta” dance: the right foot moves to the right combined with a lift of the left foot and the left foot moves towards the center of the circle combined with a lift of the right foot. Even in this case though, a small stylistic variation can still be detected.

<p>Stylistic variety in the pattern of repetition of one support when the weight of the body is lifted from one support on the island of Rhodes</p>	
	
<p>(Archangelos, Apollona, Apolakkia)</p>	<p>(Asklipio)</p>

Finally, as regards the double exchange of the supports, we can still see a common pattern with the first double exchange of the supports, being performed with the right foot on the right and the second double exchange of the supports being performed towards the center of the circle.

<p>The pattern of double exchange of the supports on the island of Rhodes</p>

<p>(Emponas, Archangelos)</p>

From the above, we can conclude that there are common patterns of the “Sousta” dance on the island of Rhodes. These patterns are repeated, modified and transformed, which leads to such a great variety

of forms that this dance presents. Each individual municipality studied in our ethnographic examples has created its own “Sousta” dance by using the specific patterns on a discretionary basis. This choice, combined with the common Rhodian identity, namely the common patterns used, reflects their dance distinctness, “coloring” this shared identity with their own local stylistics.

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