

SYRTOS AGIAS ELENIS
(Greece)

On the 21st of May, the birthday of Sts Constantine and Helen is celebrated by certain groups of refugees who left Bulgaria during the population exchanges which took place in the Balkans during the early 1920's. They came to live in Macedonia and perform certain rituals in honor of their patron saints, which includes dancing bare-foot across hot coals in a state of religious ecstasy. Two days later, these people, who are called the Anestenaria, perform a ceremony of blessing the homes of their adherents, during which they dance from house to house. The dance is a Syrtos which I have called "Syrtos Agias Elenis" after the village where I saw it.

SOURCE: The Anestenaria of Agia Eleni in May 1974.

MUSIC: 4/4 played in the village on lyra and daouli. Since no such recording is available, any slow Syrtos is suitable, especially two from Macedonia on:
Music Box, MB x 33 14001-B, Band 2 or 3.

FORMATION: M and W together in line, hands joined at shldr ht.

MUSIC 4/4

PATTERN

Meas.

- 1 Facing somewhat to LOD, step on R fwd in LOD (cts 1-2), step on L fwd in LOD (ct 3), step on R fwd in LOD (ct 4).
- 2 Repeat meas 1 with opp ftwk (cts 1-4).
- 3 Now facing "center", step on R ft bkwd (cts 1-2), step on L ft bkwd (ct 3), step on R bkwd (ct 4).
- 4 Step on L ft bkwd (cts 1-2), step R ft next to L, turn and face LOD (ct 3), step on L ft fwd (ct 4).

NOTE: This Syrtos is danced flat footed and without bouncing. Some of the teenage dancers substituted a "delayed pas-de-basque" R and L for meas 3 and 4. Occasionally the lead dancer would surrender leadership by joining on to the last dancer and releasing his/her handhold with the second dancer, dancing sometimes in a circle for a few minutes. Some of the leaders did an occasional turn on the first two measures either to the R or L, sometimes employing a scarf between him/her-self and the second dancer and changing it from hand to hand during the turn.

This dance was presented at the 1974 San Diego State University Folk Dance Conference by David Henry.

Presented by Chris Harris

San Diego State University Folk Dance Conference Institute
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