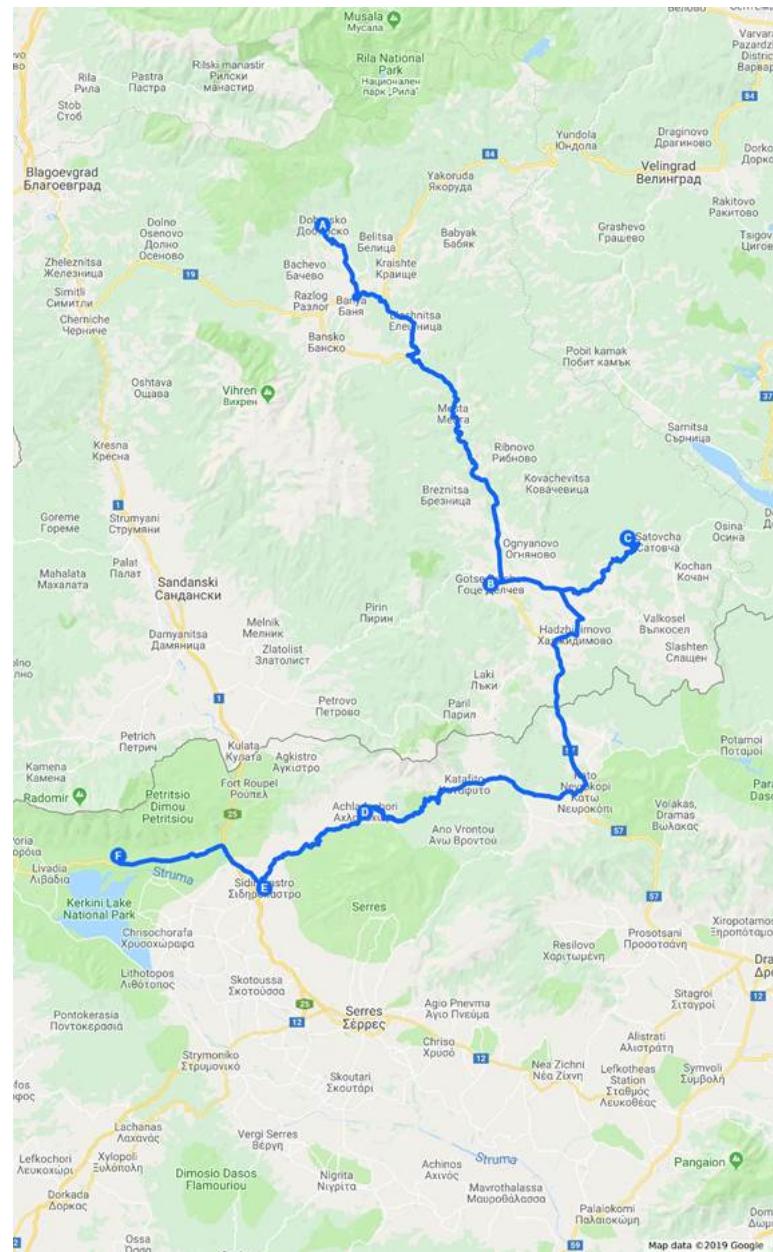


**"THE MUSICAL AND DANCE HERITAGE AT MESTA VALLEY"**

Musical heritage is a system of sacral meanings encoded in the image of music as means of thinking and behavior. In the folklore of different nationalities in Southeast European countries there are similar intonation features, regardless of the historical changes that occur to every nation. Are these common musical elements due to the conservatism of music and its origin? What is the global contribution of the population living in the border region in the field of song, instrumentation, pulsation, tone modes? The answers to these questions are the reason for the realization of numerous field expeditions and scientific works to present the musical achievements of the local population.

There are selected performers for everyone who wants to touch the magic of this eternal art of the region. They carry the authentic musical and dance tradition of the trans-border region Bulgaria-Greece, situated along the Struma and Mesta rivers, from the region of Blagoevgrad, Republic of Bulgaria to the region of Serres, Greece.



Authentic Folklore Group “Dobarski Babi”

The village of Dobarsko is surrounded by three mountains - Rila, Pirin and the Rhodopes. Many legends relate to its past and the curing of the blinded Samuil soldiers by the healing water of the holy spring in the courtyard of the St. Theodore Tyron and St. Theodore Stratelates Church. According to legends, they /the soldiers/ are the founders of the well-known Dobarsko music school, which existed until the beginning of the 20th century. Besides the church, built in 1614, the village is famous for its authentic folklore group Dobarski Babi (Dobarsko Grandmothers).



Photographer Dr. Krum Ivanov

They are keepers of the old Bulgarian traditions in the field of rituals and singing art. The group was established more than 60 years ago and was included in the National System of Living Human Treasures in 2012 as "Dobarski Babi (Dobarsko Grandmothers)- keepers of the traditional Voditsi (Waters) ritual".



Photographer Dr. Krum Ivanov

The “water” songs are unique for the country, distinctive and characteristic of Dobarsko. According to custom these songs are performed by women on Yordanovden (Saint Jordan’s day), Ivanovden (Saint John’s day) and Babin day (Midwives’ day) and express the admiration for the power of water, which fulfills desires and longings for a new beginning, strength, prosperity, love and health. According to the Christian religion, washing with water is the transition from dirty days to purification, the new beginning. The twelve women of the amateur folk ensemble are zealously guarding the lifestyle and spirit of a population which is proud of its traditions.



Photographer Dr. Krum Ivanov

Contacts: Smilena Popova, village of Dobarsko 2799, municipality of Razlog

Nevrokop Folklore Ensemble

The town of Gotse Delchev is located in the southeastern foothills of Middle Pirin. The city is the successor of Nicopolis ad Nestum (translated as "The City of Victory") and was founded in the 2nd century by the Roman Emperor Trajan. Cultural and educational center throughout the centuries, the city has rich musical and dance heritage, which the Nevrokop Ensemble has been presenting in its performances since its formation in 1946 to this day.



Picture: Nevrokop Ensemble Archives

The team of specialists of the ensemble searches, preserves, and performs on stage folk songs, games and customs from the folklore and ethnographic richness of the Bulgarian people from Southwest Bulgaria. In its creative career until now, the ensemble has an asset of 3800 concerts, performed before more than 3.6 million spectators.



Picture: Nevrokop Ensemble Archives

The ensemble has had tours abroad in Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Russia, Latvia, Ukraine, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Canada, Egypt and Germany. It has released 2 long-play records, 1 CD, 3 audio cassette tapes, and many national radio and television recordings. It was given the Order of Cyril and Methodius -first degree and the title "Representative Ensemble" as well as many other state and international awards. The ensemble program is created with the song and dance heritage of the Nevrokop folklore region. Musical works from other folklore regions of Bulgaria are also included in the ensemble repertoire, but they complement the palette of musical colors and emotional experiences of the authentic folklore of the Pirin region.



Picture: Nevrokop Ensemble Archives

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Folklore group for "high" singing in the villages of Dolen and Satovcha

The "high" songs are found only in the villages of Dolen and Satovcha and impress with the uniqueness of the sound atmosphere, the unique manner of performance, which is remarkable for its archaic and original character.



According to a number of Bulgarian ethnomusicologists, the basis of this medieval way of singing are the repeated surprising shouts (called "provikvane") in a high register followed by gradual transition of the human voice into a low register. Actually, these "shouts" give the name of this kind of songs. Typically, they are always performed by a group of women who are involved in some activity (harvest, hoeing) or ritual (at the wedding, at St. George's Day and other spring rituals). The songs are never one-part, but two- or four-parts. The folklore group of Satovcha sings grouped into two threesomes following the model of folk singing typical for Southwestern Bulgaria.



They are winners of the European Prize for amateur folk art of the Herder Foundation in Hamburg, the European Radio Competition for Authentic Folklore in Bratislava, the Pirin Sings Folklore Fest and the Zagreb International Folklore Festival (1972). The folklore group is registered by the Ministry of Culture in the National Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage "Living Human Treasures - Bulgaria".

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Cultural and Educational Association of Achladochori, Serres

Everyone who wants to get acquainted with the Greek song and dance art has this opportunity by visiting Achladochori. In this picturesque village besides visiting the monastery of St. Elijah the Prophet, built in 1870, and the Church of St. Archangels, built in 1812, there is a cultural and educational association which is among the main pillars of preservation of the intangible cultural heritage - local rituals, song and dance heritage, culinary traditions, fairs, festivals.



Photographer Dr. Zhana Pencheva



Picture K. Simeonova

The Cultural Association was founded in 1983. The active performers, children and adults, are more than 60. The Association was awarded a silver medal at the 4th Serres Gourmet Festival. There is a library in the premises of the association and a collection of traditional costumes of the local inhabitants and the "Bafra" Pontic Greeks from the region. The main mission of the association is cultural enrichment of the population of the region, preserving the traditions in the music and dance heritage, and presenting the region's natural resources.

Chair of the association: Strahini Eleni
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e-mail: elenistrahini@gmail.com

Bafray Cultural and Educational Association, Sidirokastro

Sidirokastro is 22 km away from Achladochori. Descendants of the Pontic Greeks live in Sidirokastro and surrounding villages. Their settlements on the shores of the Black Sea (today's Turkey, the city of Trabzon) existed 28 centuries ago, around 800 BC. The Pontic Greeks lived there until the early 20th century, when they were forced to leave and many of them settled in today's Greece. In their language (Pontic language), in the music and dance heritage, and in the costumes, there is a reflection of Turkish, Persian and other languages, musical intonations and elements of clothing; yet the rituals, songs and rites related to them are closely related to the Christian religion.



Photographer Dr. Krum Ivanov



Photographer Dr. Krum Ivanov

Bafra Cultural and Educational Association was founded in 1997 with the main purpose of conservation and transmitting traditions from one generation to another. On the basis of the volunteer spirit, serious efforts are being made to preserve the heritage of the Pontic Greeks, their manners and customs. The association has more than 300 members divided into 6 groups by age which are trained Pontic dances.



Photographer Dr. Krum Ivanov

The annual events of the association are the ball and the three-day fair dedicated to St. Paraskeva in Sidirokastro. In 2014 the Baffrey Association organized a successful festival with the participation of children and adolescent dance ensembles at the Association of Pontic Associations of Central Macedonia and Thessaly.



Photographer Dr. Krum Ivanov



Photographer Dr. Krum Ivanov

Getting in touch with their art is exciting. It inspires admiration for their resilience and their determination to preserve the dignity of a suffering nation. The opportunity to learn one of their songs, to dance with them, to touch and see their peculiar clothing, a combination of fantastic colors and shapes is an opportunity that should not be missed.



Photographer Dr. Krum Ivanov

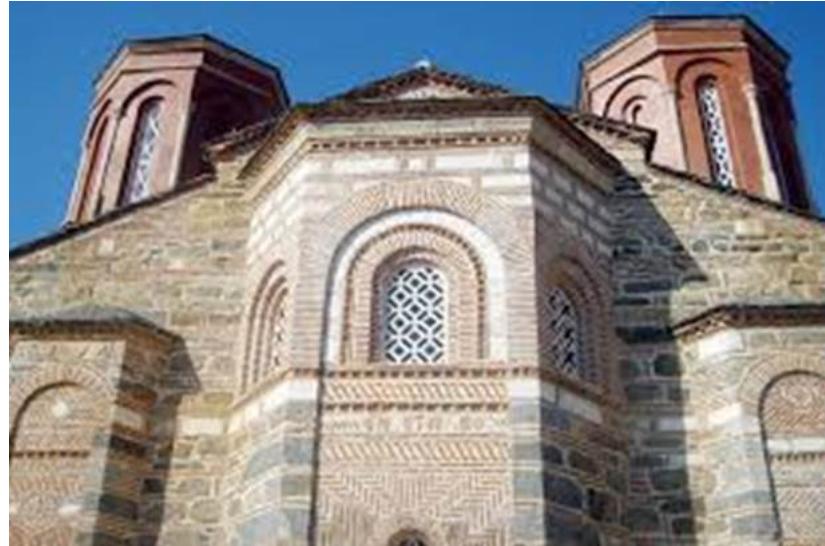
Chairman of the association and contact person: Savvas Lazaridis

Tel: 0030/6976602115

Ecological and Cultural Pontic Association of Acritoxors - Trakiko

"Acrites"

Akritochori is a small village with 300 inhabitants located 24 km away from Siderokastro and 50 km away from Serres. Here, besides the natural site of one of the most beautiful lakes in Greece – Kerkini Lake, you can also visit the monastery of Timios Prodromos, which was built in 1981.



The friendly and cordial attitude of the nuns and the local population will help you to have an exciting experience which can be successfully combined with getting familiar with the local traditions, manners, customs, dances and songs. One of the main goals of Acrithohori Acrites, an association founded in 1993, is exactly the preserving, spreading and popularizing of the traditions in their authentic way as they have been brought by the first refugees from their home country Pontus.



Photographer Dr. Krum Ivanov

There are three dance ensembles (about 60 dancers of all ages), a choir, and a craft club. The dance groups have participated in theatre performances, TV shows and many local events and festivals in Xanthi, Polikastro, Thessaloniki, Mount Karpenissi, Athens and Bafra in Pontus.

The most important and great event organized by Akritochi from Akritochori is the famous "Panoir" (Fair), which takes place every year on 22 July.

Chairperson: Avramopoulos Georgios, Teacher: Kouroudzidis Panagiotis, tel. 0030/6986928120, 0030/6988237815, e-mail: akritochori@gmail.com

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