

KOCHISAR BIJO  
(Armenia)

BIJO refers to a large class of different dances performed by the Armenians of Sepastia. A variety of different steps and melodies existed in different districts. KOCHISAR BIJO is characteristic of the villages to the northeast of the city of Sepastia (Sivas), the province's capital. These villages (e.g. Kochisar, Zara, Horsenar, Kotni, Govdoun, etc.) all did variants of the dance described here. The similarities of this dance with the Trebizond dances OMAL and SIRENITSA suggests a possible Black Sea origin. During the late 19th century, thousands of Armenians and Greeks fled from Trebizond into Sepastia (particularly the northeast section) to escape Circassian brigandage. These immigrants introduced their dances into the area (e.g. ZARATSI LAZ BAR).

KOCHISAR BIJO is also known as the "New England Bijo," to distinguish it from the better known "New York Bijo" (KHORODTSI BIJO). A generation ago it was popular in most Armenian communities in New England, due to the large Sepastatsi population in the region. It can still be found today in some of the smaller more isolated Armenian communities

**Pronunciation:**

**Source:** Carnig and Murad Peligian, Barkev Kaligian.

**Music:** Songs and Dances of Armenian People Vol 3 by Tom Bozigian.

The music presents a problem because no satisfactory recording of the correct melody is available. The original music slowly accelerates and features long pauses and changes in tempo. The steps change as the tempo changes. The "Detroit Bijo" is a related but much simpler dance, and the melody is uniform in tempo. This melody can be used for KOCHISAR BIJO if the dance is kept at a uniform tempo throughout.

2/4 meter

**Style:** Originally a men's dance, the style is strong and aggressive. The circle should contract and expand explosively, reflecting the strong competitive element as the dancers try to "out do" each other.

**Formation:** Closed circle of 6-10 individuals. Hands are held at shldr level, grasping the hands of the people on either side.

Meas Cts

Pattern

Note: The dance has a skip-step onto the L throughout the dance.

1	1-2	Hop on R and slide/lunge fwd into ctr with L, while thrusting hands/fists low into the ctr of the circle (ct 1);
		step back on R, and draw L and arms slightly back (ct 2).
2-3	3-6	Repeat meas 1 twice (cts 3-6).

KOCHISAR BIJO (Continued)

- 4 7-8 Hop on R and slide/skip bkwd on L, while swinging arms down to sides and crouching (ct 7); step back on R, still in crouch (ct 8).
- Note: When dancers lunge fwd, their fists should almost strike together in the ctr (ct 1). As dancers slide out (ct 7), the circle increases dramatically in size. In some villages (e.g. Kochisar), the men would "bark" ("arf") as they lunged fwd. In other villages (e.g. Kotni), the men would shout "Hopa Bijo" on the lunge.
- 5 9-10 Moving to the L, hop-step L to L (ct 9); step R beside L (ct 10).
- 6 11-12 Repeat meas 5 (cts 11-12).
- 7 13-14 Moving to the R, hop-step L over R (ct 13); step on R to R (ct 14).
- 8 15-16 Repeat meas 7 (cts 15-16).
- Repeat entire dance until circle's leader lets go of joined hands.

DZAP ("clap)

All dancers let go of joined hands. When lunging into ctr (cts 1,3,5) clap hands at knee level. Do not clap when backing out.

When moving to the L, and then back to place, clap each time you step on L ft (cts 9,11,13,15). Hands are held and clapped at eye level when moving to sides.

These claps should be executed strongly.

Note: When moving to the side during the second part (DZAP), travel (cover a wide area when moving).

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