

AÏNO KCHUME (AH'EE-no k-CHOO-may) = black eyes

OTHER NAMES:

Ben aïnakh kchumnayeh = first line of the song

Sheikhani II

BACKGROUND:

For background on Assyria, see the article "Assyrian Folk Dances," elsewhere in this book. In spite of their presence in America with similar refugee groups such as Armenians and Kurds, international folk dancers never documented Assyrian dances until:

Rickey Holden collected among the Assyrians about a dozen dances, most of which also have many variations. Sheikhani, for instance, has 12 dance variants plus Sheikhani for a couple, and as Rickey remarks, "which should delight the Californians no end!" -Vyts Beliajus, *Viltis*, December 1962.

Oliver "Sonny" Newman engaged Holden to teach the Assyrian dances in New York in early 1963. Newman then moved to the Pacific Northwest, and *Aïno Kchume* moved throughout Levantine and international folk dance communities in America, more popular even than *Sheikhani* (described elsewhere in this book).

I speculate that every village in Assyria had its own specific but related version of *Sheikhani*. Assyrian performance ensembles in Asia and in North America put together sequences of these versions to present to their audiences a more interesting and representative example of Assyrian dance. Some even choreographed couple versions, such as this *Aïno Kchume*. Holden documented in 1961 the first three figures presented here; all others appeared later.

We folk dancers enjoy (and sometimes confuse) two very common rhythms found around the world:

1 **Dactylic**, from the Greek *dactulos* (finger -- I guess Greek fingers had one long and two short joints), best described as long-short-short, or slow-quick-quick.

2 **Anapestic**, from *anapaistos* (struck back), best described as short-short-long, or quick-quick-slow.

The step patterns of most variations of *Aïno Kchume* use the dactylic rhythm. A few use anapestic. Is one more authentic than the other? I don't know, but I have my suspicions!

SOUND RECORDINGS:

Rickey Holden recorded a number of melodies played by the Shemiram ensemble and produced Folkraft LP-4 with band B-1 being *Aïno Kchume*. I know of no other recordings and suspect that most folk dancers danced to pirated 45 rpm records and, later, cassette copies.

FORMATION:

Circle of couples, all facing CCW around the room. Woman stands diagonally forward to R of man. Join L hands in front of man's waist and R hands high above woman's R shoulder. Stand erect.

BARS ACTION

2/4 Introduction.

4 cts No action, as you ponder your partner's "Gesundheit!" when you mentioned the name of the dance. You may also wait an additional 18 counts and start dancing when the singing starts.

1 Kick. Facing and moving diagonally forward to L and a bit into center:

- 1 Step forward toward center heavily onto L foot (ct 1), step forward onto R foot (ct 2), step beside R foot onto L foot (ct &).
- 2 Step forward onto R foot (ct 1), swing L foot forward shortly and sharply with L toe pointed up and a bit to L (ct 2).
- 3 Dancing diagonally backward to R and a bit away from center, step backward onto L foot (ct 1), step backward onto R foot, turning to face to R and CCW around the circle, (ct 2).
- 4 Turning to face diagonally forward to L, step forward and a bit into center onto L foot (ct 1), without letting go hands, turn in place more than 90° CW to face to CCW around the circle and diagonally outward. Shift hands to place joined L hands above woman's L shoulder and joined R hands in front of man's waist. In this position, step forward onto R foot (ct 2), step beside R foot onto L foot (ct &).

(continued on next page)

Aïno Kchume (continued)

- 5 Step forward onto R foot (ct 1), step forward onto L foot (ct 2), step beside L foot onto R foot (ct &).
6 Step forward onto L foot, turning in place and shifting hands to resume original position (ct 1), step heavily, but don't stamp, beside L foot onto R foot (ct 2).
Note: Once you learn this step, you will count it much more easily as:
Step, 1-2-3, kick, back, step; step, 1-2-3, 1-2-3, step.

2. Double the dose.

- 1-6 = 1-6, above.
7-9 = 4-6, above.

3. Woman turns.

- 1-6 = 1-6 of first figure, but woman turns once CW under joined R hands during the "two-step" of bars 5-6.

3a. Woman turns.

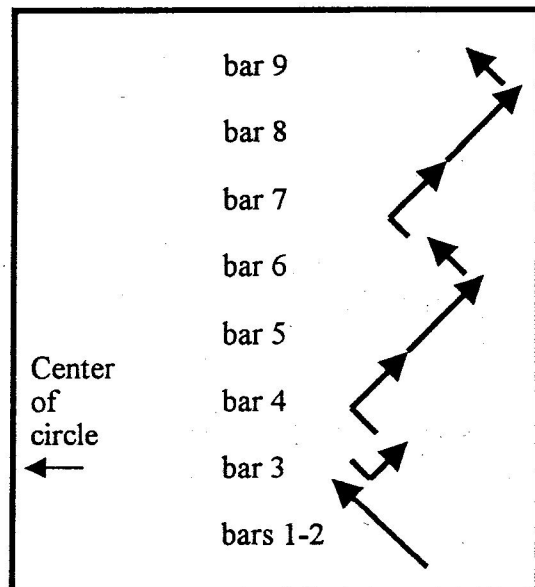
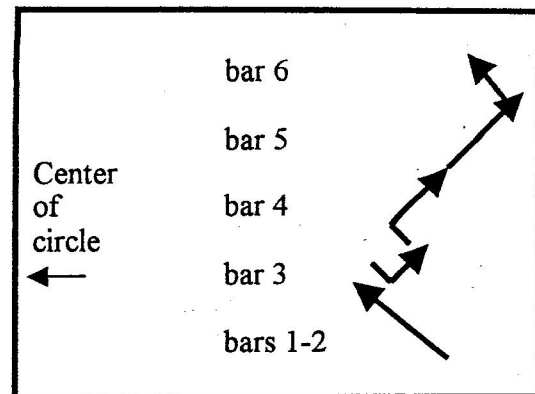
- 1-6 = 1-6 of first figure, but woman turns once CW rapidly under joined R hands during bar 6.

4. Double turns.

- 1-6 = 1-6 of figure 3, but adding a second CW turn during the "two-step" of bars 4-5.

5. Triple turns.

- 1-6 = 1-6 of figure 4, but adding a third CW turn during bar 6.



Rather important note by Gary Lind-Sinanian:

...when we demonstrated it to Assyrians they all loved the dance (none had seen it before, of course), but all felt that figure 3 (woman turns under man's arm) "looked wrong" (e.g. un-Assyrian). They suggested that the woman turn under the man's arm CW with four simple walking steps (R,L,R,L) rather than using a "two-step" (R-T-R, L-T-L). The resulting figure had more dignity for the woman and was "more Assyrian" (whatever that means).

6. Sideways two-steps.

- 1-6 = 1-6 of first figure, but dance sideways instead of diagonally forward during bars 4-6:
4 Step toward center onto L foot (ct 1), step sideways to R and away from center onto R foot (ct 2), step behind R foot onto L foot (ct &).
5 Step sideways to R onto R foot (ct 1), step sideways to L and toward center onto L foot (ct 2), step behind L foot onto R foot (ct &).
6 Step sideways to L onto L foot (ct 1), resume original position and step beside L foot onto R foot (ct 2).

7. Knee buster.

- 1-6 = 1-6 of first figure, but replace the step-close-steps with slow walking steps:
4-5 Drop to a full knee-bend as you step diagonally forward to L and CCW around the circle onto L foot (ct 1), step or waddle diagonally forward onto: R foot, L foot, R foot (cts 2,1,2).
6 Stand up and resume original position as you step onto L foot (ct 1), step beside L foot onto R foot (ct 2).
Note: figure 7, the Knee-buster, became the most common variation among folk dancers, but without the heavily bent knees.

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Aïno Kchume (concluded)

8. Hops and lunges. Facing center:

- 1 = 1 of first figure (step, step-close).
- 2 Step forward onto R foot (ct 1), hop on R foot 3 times, kicking L foot: diagonally forward to L, back to R shin, and diagonally forward to L (cts &, 2, &).
- 3 Step back onto L foot (ct 1), lunge diagonally back to R, turning to face to R and CCW around the circle (ct 2).
- 4 Lunge diagonally forward to L onto L foot (ct 1), lunge diagonally forward to R onto R foot (ct 2).
- 5 = 4 (lunge to L and R again).
- 6 = 6 of figure 1 (step-close to face center).

9. Hops and turn.

- 1-3 = 1-3 of figure 8.
- 4-6 = 4-6 of figure 4 (but the woman turns twice CW under joined L hands, not R hands).

10. Hops and yemenite-grapevine. Facing center, woman to man's R:

- 1-3 = 1-3 of figure 8.
- 4 Step to L onto L foot (ct 1), step behind L foot onto R foot with knees bent a bit (ct &), step to R (not L) onto L foot with knees straight (ct 2).
- 5 Step to R onto R foot (ct 1), step behind R foot onto L foot (ct &), step to R onto R foot (ct 2).
- 6 Step in front of R foot onto L foot (ct 1), step beside L foot onto R foot (ct 2).

SEQUENCES AND REFERENCES:

Figures 1-3 from Holden's *Report*, in the Society of Folk Dance Historians Archives, 13 February 1962, and Frank and Dee Alsberg, 1974, citing Holden, suggesting each figure twice.

Figures 1, 3a, 4, and 5 were documented in San Francisco in 1979 by Duygu Demirlioglu. He says: "Couples dance independently, men calling the figures."

Figures 8-10 were taught by Newman in Washington state from 1963 to 1971. Originally, he suggested each figure 3 times and the sequence of 3 figures twice to fit the recording. Later notes say: "Do each figure as often as desired. Dance builds through a natural progression to the final step. Sonny Newman said that it was against his feelings to go from the final step back to the beginning."

Lyrics and general information on Assyrians from Vyts Beliajus, *Viltis*, December 1962.

*Ben aïnakh kchumnayeh gyashik djopati
djoshita Khadiaha basela gati.
Gutyeleh omidi ou kheli govati
bes gam let garboni zalum chaporta.*

Look at my face with your black eyes
even though it be but once a year.
I have lost my hope and my strength
why don't you come near me, cruel girl?

*Ben aïnakh kchumnayeh bdo komerkh daika
minder dakh moblintervat merkh deeyah djivanta.
Imen takhrin shimakh ulekh ditelka.
Khemtu nadj vudli chara myatevin.*

At the thought of your trim figure and your black eyes
I'm pained and thin, a young man like me.
Just remembering your name I lose myself.
Just thinking of a girl as lovely as you.

*Pluta vut lukhdara byomane de ida
aino gnivo kehume gomo rakiduh...
Kheli kha munshukta bhaliba kitelka.
Khemta nadjep vhdi chara myatuh vundj.*

You went walking one holiday
your black eyes and eyebrows, your trim figure...
beautiful girl, help or I die.
Give me one passionate kiss.

*Pluta vut lukhdara amkhavar takh
embikyukh kyertani raprope lepatakh,
bwili khakhobra tanouye gatakh
ina sdeuili men eh Kyapurta khatakh.*

When you went walking with your sister
your hair trickling over your eye,
I wanted to speak to you
but I was afraid of your sister.

End of AÏNO KCHUME.