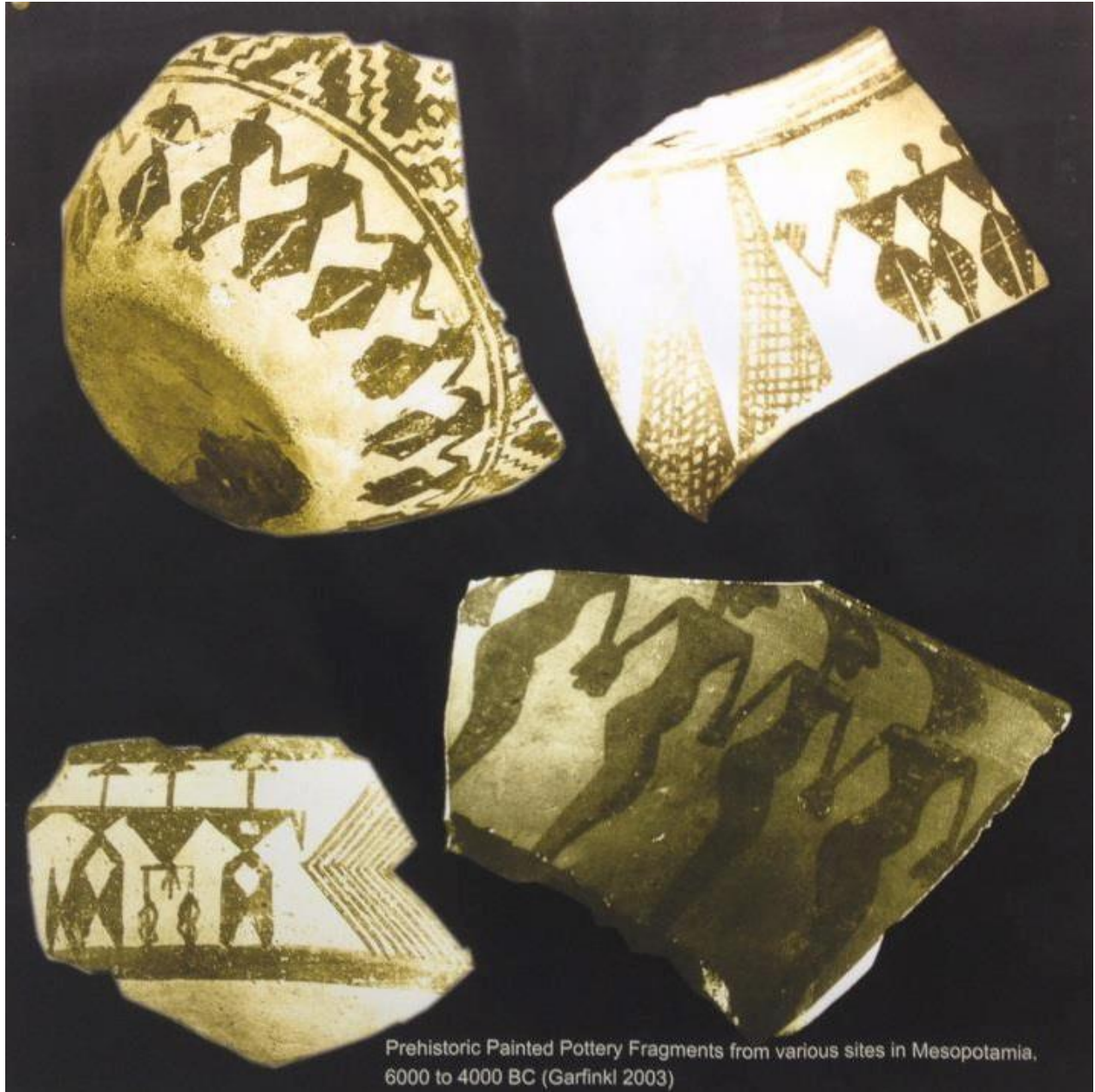


THIRTY ASSYRIAN FOLK DANCES

Peter Pnuel BetBasoo



Prehistoric Painted Pottery Fragments from various sites in Mesopotamia, 6000 to 4000 BC (Garfinkl 2003)

April 30, 2003

The corpus of Assyrian folk dances, much as Assyrian History, is rich and diverse, reflecting a long history and tradition. This paper¹ shall catalog and analyze thirty Assyrian folk dances. It is hoped that this will spur further research into this important area of Assyrian culture.

A folk dance exists in the cultural fund of a nation, has no known author (i.e., is not choreographed), and is widely known and performed by members of that nation (as is true of a folk song). A folk dance has a social context, which can be ceremonial or non-ceremonial, ritual or non-ritual. The most common social contexts of Assyrian dances are the *Khigga* (or *Mishtoota* -- social party) and the *Khloola* (wedding party).

Assyrian dances are learned at a young age mostly by imitation, and children are encouraged to participate in the line dances. Most Assyrians know at least seven or eight dances (*Sheikhani*, *Khigga*, *Toulama*, *Belatee*, *Goobareh*, *Karmaneh*, *Demaleh*, *Arabanoo* and Assyrian Misirlou), and many know quite a few more.

Sources

The primary sources used in this paper are field observations and videotapes of Assyrian social dances and performance troops, as well as interviews with informants. This paper does not attempt to deal with locale, i.e., the geographical source and extent of a dance. Although some information is available, it is beyond the scope of the current research to give a thorough analysis; hence I have omitted this information. This paper shall focus on the choreographic and musical elements of the Assyrian dances.

The material covering Assyrian folk dances is dearth. After much searching, I could only find two works on the subject. The first is a phonograph produced by Folkraft², a Record Label specializing in international folk music. The phonograph contained thirteen songs and choreographic descriptions of Assyrian dances (see table below).

The second source is found in Russia, and it is a book titled *Assyrian National Dance Tradition* (by Lalayan, 1927). I discovered this source through conversation with Vassily Shumanov, an Assyrian from Russia, and head librarian of the Ashurbanipal Library in Chicago. Mister Shumanov informed me that he owns a copy of this book, but it is in Russia. I have not been able to examine this book.

Choreographic Elements of Assyrian Dances

Listed in the table below are the thirty Assyrian dances catalogued in this paper, grouped by Meter, with the Period, Direction and Tempo of the dances.

¹ I wish to thank John Parish for his insightful discussions on the subject of analysis of international folk dances, and Marsden and Sana Longden for their extraordinary support and commitment to international folk dancing. I also would like to thank Immanuel Solomon for many productive discussions on Assyrian folk dances.

² *Assyrian Folk Dances as danced by the Shemiram Assyrian Folklore Group of Tehran, Iran; organized by Mrs. Lili Teimourazi, and described by Rickey Holden, Folk Dance Consultant, International Recreation Association.* Folkraft LP#4; Folkraft Records, 1159 Broad St, Newark, NJ 07114. This LP is available for sale through International Folk Rhythms, P.O. Box 1402, Northbrook, IL 60065-1402 (847/564-2880; <http://members.aol.com/fdccpub/joan.html>).

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Dance	Meter	Period ³	Direction	Tempo ⁴
Khigga, heavy	4/4	1.5	Right	88-104
Sheikhani, traditional	4/4	6	Right	♩=150
Sheikhani, new	4/4	6	Right	♩=150
Demaleh	4/4	7	Right	♩=125
Khazadeh	4/4	9	Right	♩=150
Belatee	4/4	6	Center	120-130
Azia Tamma	4/4	9.5	Right	♩=150
Mamyana 1*	2/4	3.5	Right	68-74
Kochari*	2/4	4	Right	126-132
Tanzara 2a*	2/4	5	Right	118-124
Mamyana 2*	2/4	6	Right	68-74
Toulama	2/4	7	Right	120-150
Zingirta	2/4	10	Forward	120-150
Mamer*	2/4	12	Right	122-130
Tanzara 2b*	2/4	14	Right	118-124
Dimdimma	2/4, 6/8	None	Single file	72-76 (2/4), 118-122 (6/8)
Saber Dance	6/8	None	Free form	84-92
Azrabukeh*	6/8	3	Right	116-126
Hoberban*	6/8	3	Right	130-134
Khigga, light	6/8	3	Right	92-108
Assyrian Misirlou	6/8	4	Right	56-62
Chalakhani*	6/8	5	Right	126-132
Arabanoo	6/8	5	Right	52-66
Two Legged Toulama	6/8	5	Right	120-130
Goobareh	6/8	6	Left	116-126
Karmaneh	6/8	7	Right	120-130
Shara	6/8	7	Left	92-100
Hareigooleh	6/8	8	Right	116-124
Tanzara	9/8	3	Center	88-96
Janiman*	10/8	3	Right	60-66

* Dance found on the Folkraft album.

In addition to the above, the following dances are known but uncatalogued: Sinjiyeh, Barriyya, Khigga d-Alqosh and Bet-Karkhan.

The following analysis of the choreographic elements of the Assyrian dances closely follows Giurchescu and Bloland⁵ in methodology.

I Spatial Arrangement

A dance **Formation** is defined by five parameters: Grouping, Number, Shape, Reciprocal Body Orientation, and Connection.

Grouping determines the spatial relationship of the dancers. Dancers may be grouped (e.g., in a line) or ungrouped (free form). All Assyrian dances, with the exception of the Sabre Dance, are grouped in a line. The Sabre Dance is a trio dance and is danced free form.

Number defines the total number of dancers. Assyrian dances are unlimited in number, with the exception of the Sabre Dance, which requires three and only three dancers.

³ The period is in units of measure.

⁴ Beats Per Minute

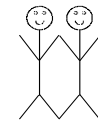
⁵ Anca Giurchescu, Sunni Bloland; *Romanian Traditional Dance*; Wild Flower Press; Mill Valley, California; 1995

Shape is the geometric configuration of a group of dancers. Assyrian dances are performed in lines, which may be straight, curved, or both. Assyrian dances, with the exception of Dimdimma, have no formal shape other than the line (i.e., the line may assume any shape. See Pathway in the Kinetics section).

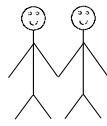
Reciprocal Body Orientation describes the body orientation of the dancers with respect to other dancers: face-to-face, side-by-side, face-to-back, or back-to-back. All four orientations are found in Assyrian dances.

A **Connection** is a way of holding hands. The following connections are present in Assyrian dances: hand-to-hand, hand to shoulder, and hand to hip. The following types of hand-to-hand connections are used:

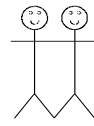
1. The "W" arm hold is the most common hold (13 dances); little fingers are linked together (left over right or right over left), and the arms are raised into the "W" position.
2. The "V" arm hold is the second most common hold (9 dances⁶); the fingers are interlocked (in a clasp), and the left hand is over the right hand.
3. The Sheikhani hold (4 dances). Initially, fingers are interlocked, left arm is bent at the elbow and pressed against the back, right arm held forward against the back of the dancer in front; this then changes to a "V", then returns to the initial position (see *Sheikhani*, traditional).
4. The "T" hold (2 dances); hands are placed on neighbors' shoulders, left in back of right.



"W" arm hold



"V" arm hold



"T" arm hold

II Kinetics

Kinetics is the motions that comprise a dance, and is a broad topic that has been thoroughly treated elsewhere⁷. Here we shall restrict our discussion to kinetics found in Assyrian folk dances.

Kinetic Parameters

Dance movement is described by several parameters: Amplitude, Pathway, Intensity, Accent, Tempo, Locomotor movement, Axial movement, Flexions and extensions, Arm swings and Slaps. The most relevant body parts in Assyrian dance movements are the legs, arms, hands and shoulders.

Assyrian dances range in **Amplitude** (size of movement) from small to large, in correlation with the Tempo and Intensity of the dance.

The **Pathway** is the line along which a group of dancers travel. There are two basic traveling directions: radial and lateral. If one imagines a group of dancers standing side-by-side, then radial motion would be forward or backward, and lateral motion would be to the left or right. Most Assyrian line dances are traveling dances and move laterally. In an open floor space, the lines assume open circular shapes; in a restricted floor space (e.g., with lots of tables), they tend to meander over the room and assume spiral, circular and sinuous shapes as dictated by floor space availability. The exceptions are the Sabre dance, which is a trio dance and has no shape, *Dimdimma*, which is danced in single file, *Zingirta*, which is danced in a forward direction (all dancers in a single file), and *Belatee* and *Tanzara*, which move radially (i.e., into the center, although the *Belatee* has a slight right-lateral component)

Direction	Dances
Left	Mamyana 1, Mamyana 2
Left, Center	Shara, Goobareh
Left, Right	Mamer
Center	Belatee, Tanzara
Right	Sheikhani (new), Khigga (light and heavy), Kochari, Arabanoo, Hareigooleh, Azrabukeh, Hoberban, Janiman, Chalakhan, Tanzara 2a, Tanzara 2b
Right, Center	Sheikhani (traditional), Demaleh, Khazadeh, Azia Tamma
Right, Left	Toulama, Karmaneh, Two Legged Toulama, Assyrian Misirlou
Forward	Zingirta
Free form	Saber Dance
Single file	Dimdimma

⁶ The Sheikhani hold also uses the "V" hold, but only for half the time; for this reason, I have not included the Sheikhani hold in the "V" hold count.

⁷ Rudolf Laban, *The Mastery of Movement*; Boston: Plays; 1950.

The **Intensity** (amount of work expended in moving) of Assyrians dances varies from weak to strong, and depends on the mood and tempo of a song.

Accent is the emphasis (exaggerated intensity) of a particular movement. Many examples of Accent are found in Assyrian dances, and are used freely.

Tempo is the speed of movement, and ranges from slow (50 Beats Per Minute) to very fast (150 Beats Per Minute).

Locomotor Movement is motion with the legs. There are only five ways of moving: Step, Leap, Run, Hop and Jump; all five are present in Assyrian folk dances. A Step may be used for support (with weight) or nonsupport (without weight, as in a touch). Legs are also used to stamp, stomp and kick.

Axial movements and **Arm Swings** are in situ motions (the body does not move in space). Arms are used extensively in Assyrian folk dances, and often move independently of the legs. Arm motions include bouncing, swinging forward and back, moving side-to-side, lifting above the head and clapping. In many dances, the torso, along with the shoulders and arms, bounces up and down rhythmically, often independently of the legs. As with the torso, the shoulders can execute rhythmically independent movements, the most common of which is bouncing. The shoulders also execute a Shimmy, which is a rapid movement of the shoulders in opposite directions (similar to what a belly dancer does). Stomps and Stamps are also present in Assyrian folk dances.

Flexions and extensions are common, and include shallow knee bends, deep squats, plies, and leg extensions.

There are no **Slaps** in Assyrian folk dances.

III Rhythms

Rhythm is the underlying pulse of a dance, and is described by four parameters: Meter, Metric Rhythm (MR), Choreographic Rhythm (CR), and Period.

Meter specifies the number of beats per measure of music. Assyrian folk dances belong to five metric groups: 2/4 (10 dances), 4/4 (6 dances), 6/8 (13 dances), 9/8 (1 dance), 10/8 (1 dance).

Metric Rhythm specifies the rhythmic division of a measure of music. There are nine Metric Rhythm groups in Assyrian folk dances. Analysis of these rhythms reveals six nontrivial⁸ constitutive elements; these Constitutive Metric Rhythmic Elements are combined in various ways with trivial rhythmic elements (♩♩♩) to produce the characteristic Assyrian Metric Rhythms. Here are some examples:

Metric Rhythm	Dances
♩♩♩	Khigga (heavy)
♩♩♩♩♩	Sheikhani (traditional), Demaleh, Khazadeh, Mamyana, Kochari, Tanzara 2a, Mamyana 2, Toulama, Zingirta, Mamer, Tanzara 2b, Dimdimma
♩♩♩♩	Sheikhani (new)
♩♩♩♩	Belatee
♩♩♩♩♩	Azia Tamma
♩♩♩♩	Khigga (light), Dimdimma, Sabre Dance, Hoberban, Assyrian Misirlou, Chalakhan, Arabanoo, Two Legged Toulama, Goobareh, Karmaneh, Shara, Haaregooleh, Azrabukeh
♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩	Tanzara
♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩	Janiman

Constitutive Metric Rhythmic Elements

cmre1	cmre2	cmre3	cmre4	cmre5	cmre6
♩♩	♩♩♩♩	♩♩♩	♩♩	♩♩	♩♩♩

⁸ A nontrivial rhythmic element has at least two rhythmic units.

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Tanzara: cmre2 + cmre2 + cmre2 + ♪♪♪ Azia Tamma: cmre3 + cmre3
 Belatee: cmre4 + cmre4 + ♪ Light Khigga: cmre5 + cmre4
 Azrabukeh: cmre2 + cmre4

While rhythm and meter are closely related, the above clearly shows that rhythmic elements are independent of meter.

The Traditional Sheikhani rhythm group has twelve dances; the Light Khigga group has thirteen dances; together these two groups account for twenty five of the thirty dances documented. Most of the popular Assyrian dances (Sheikhani (traditional), Khigga (light), Demaleh, Toulama, Misirlou, Goobareh, Karmaneh) belong to these two groups.

Choreographic Rhythm, which may or may not be the same as Metric Rhythm, is the rhythm of the movements of a dance. As an example, consider the Traditional Sheikhani, whose basic unit of movement is a two-step⁹ (right-left-right or left-right-left). The rhythm for this step is ♪♪, and this is the one and *only* nontrivial choreographic rhythm in the Sheikhani. Analysis of the choreographic rhythms of the dances yields the following nontrivial constitutive elements:

Constitutive Choreographic Rhythmic Elements

ccre1	ccre2	ccre3	ccre4	ccre5	ccre6	ccre7	ccre8
♪	♪♪	♪♪♪ ¹⁰	♪	♪	♪	♪	♪♪

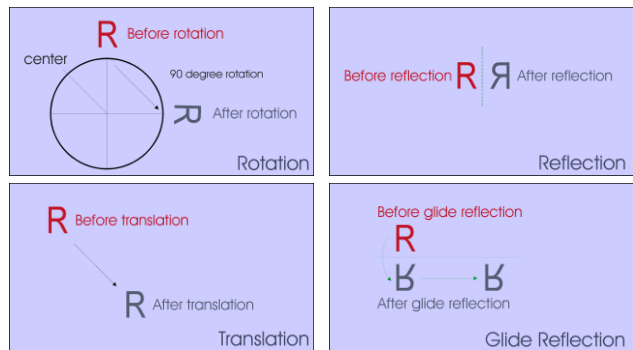
Period is the length of a complete choreographic phrase, in units of measure. If a dance has period of length n , the dance step repeats every n measures. Period is a good estimate of the choreographic complexity of a dance, a longer period indicating a more complex pattern.

Assyrian dances have a diverse set of Periods. The most interesting aspect of Assyrian dance Periods is that they can be *fractional*, which means that a dance can begin its repetition in the middle of a measure.

Period	Dances	Period	Dances
1.5	Khigga (heavy)	8	Hareigooleh
3	Azrabukeh, Hoberban, Janiman, Khigga (light), Tanzara	9.5	Azia Tamma
3.5	Mamyana 1	9	Khazadeh
4	Kochari, Assyrian Misirlou	10	Zingirta
5	Tanzara 2a, Chalakhan, Arabanoo, Two Legged Toulama	12	Mamer
6	Sheikani, Belatee, Mamyana 2, Goobareh	14	Tanzara 2b
7	Demaleh, Toulama, Karmaneh, Shara		

IV Symmetry

There are four types of symmetry: rotation, translation, reflection and glide reflection. To **rotate** an object means to turn it around. Every rotation has a center and an angle. To **translate** an object means to move it without rotating or reflecting it. Every translation has a direction and a distance. To **reflect** an object means to produce its mirror image. Every reflection has a mirror line. A reflection of an "R" is a backwards "R". A **glide reflection** combines a reflection with a translation along the direction of the mirror line. Glide reflections are the only type of symmetry that involves more than one step.



⁹ It is conventionally called a two-step, even though three steps are taken.

¹⁰ An underline denotes a triplet

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Symmetry exists at various structural levels of a dance. It is possible for a dance to be symmetric at one level and asymmetric at another. An example will make this clear. Let us analyze the traditional Sheikhani with respect to its symmetry. The basic unit of movement in a Sheikhani is a two-step. In measure one (page 10) the two-step begins with the right foot (right-left-right) and is then repeated with the left foot (left-right-left). This is an example of glide reflection. In measure two a rotation is applied, the dancer rotating counterclockwise ninety degrees, and the two-step is repeated, right-left-right. Another rotation is applied, clockwise ninety degrees, and the dance begins again. Here is a summary of the Sheikhani:

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|--|
| 1 | right-left-right | two-step |
| 2 | left-right-left | glide reflection of 1 |
| 3 | right, left | rotation ninety degrees counterclockwise, in two steps |
| 4 | right-left-right | two-step |
| 5 | touch left | |
| 6 | left, right, left | rotation ninety degrees clockwise, in three steps |

As can be seen, the Shiekhani contains symmetrical elements, but the *complete* choreographic figure is asymmetrical. Analysis of the Assyrian folk dances reveals a significant characteristic: with the exception of Zingirta and Mamer, *all* of the catalogued dances are asymmetrical at the highest level (i.e., the complete choreographic figure). Zingirta and Mamer exhibit Mirror Repetition (i.e., they have two choreographic halves which are mirror opposites).

Symmetry in Assyrian Dances

Dance	Translation	Rotation	Reflection	Glide Reflection	Mirror Repetition
Khigga, heavy	x		x		
Sheikhani, traditional		x		x	
Sheikhani, new	x		x		
Demaleh		x		x	
Khazadeh		x	x	x	
Mamyana 1	x				
Kochari	x				
Tanzara 2a	x				
Mamyana 2	x				
Toulama	x			x	
Azia Tamma	x	x		x	
Zingirta	x		x		x
Mamer					x
Azrabukeh	x				
Hoberban	x		x		
Janiman	x		x		
Khigga, light	x		x		
Assyrian Misirlou	x		x		
Chalakhhan	x		x		
Arabanoo	x		x		
Two Legged Toulama	x				
Goobareh	x		x		
Karmaneh	x			x	
Shara	x			x	
Hareigooleh	x		x		

Belatee, Tanzara 2b, Dimdimma, Sabre Dance and Tanzara have no symmetry and are not shown in the table above.

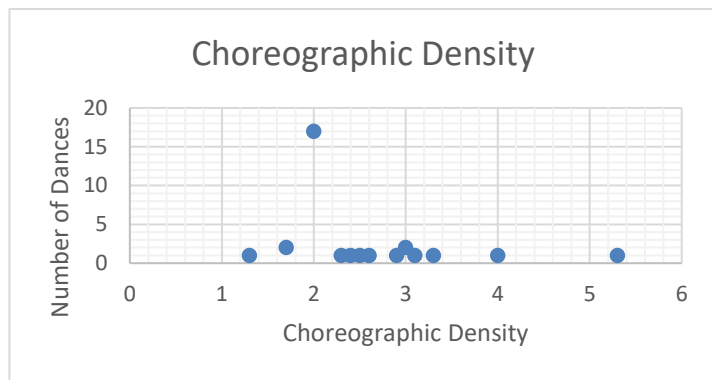
Choreographic Density

The Choreographic Density (CD) is the ordinal count of the Choreographic Rhythm divided by the Period of the dance. For example, the Heavy Khigga dance (page 9) has 8 steps in its choreographic rhythm; dividing this by its period, 1.5, yields a CD of 5.3 steps/measure.

CD	Dances	CD	Dances
1.3	Hoberban (variation 3)	2.9	Azia Tama
1.7	Mamyana 1, Tanzara 2b	3	Sheikhani (new), Assyrian Misirlou
2	Belatee (variation 1), Kochari, Tanzara 2a, Mamyana 2, Toulama, Zingirta, Mamer, Azrabukeh, Hoberban (variations 1 and 2), Khigga (light), Chalakhan, Arabanoo, Two Legged Toulama, Goobareh, Hareigoleh, Janiman	3.1	Khazadeh
2.3	Karmaneh	3.3	Tanzara
2.4	Demaleh	4	Belatee (variation 2)
2.5	Sheikhani (traditional)	5.3	Khigga (heavy)
2.6	Shara		

The CD is an approximate indicator of the choreographic complexity of a dance. Seventeen of the Assyrian dances catalogued have a CD of 2. The dances can be broadly grouped into six CD groups:

CD Group	Dances
1	3
2	21
3	3
4	1
5	1



Conclusion

This paper catalogued thirty Assyrian dances, with detailed dance descriptions. Musical and choreographic analyses of these dances revealed many interesting features, including fractional dance periods, choreographic asymmetry, and rich and varied metric rhythms.

Anecdotal evidence suggests there are seventy-three Assyrian dances, and probably more; these remain to be catalogued. This paper did not analyze the locale and ritual contexts of the dances. Local variations of dances exist from region to region. For example, the New Sheikhani is from the Assyrian community in the Khabur region of Syria. A detailed locale study needs to be undertaken. Ritual context is very important, and the one dance whose ritual context is known, the Sabre Dance, was catalogued; ritual context also needs a detailed study.

Choreographic Descriptions

Thirty dances are catalogued below. For each dance, a header table gives the following basic parameters: Dance Name, Meter, Metric Rhythm, Period, Tempo, Choreographic Rhythm, Direction, Hand hold, Initial position, Symmetries. Following this, a complete choreographic description of the dance is given, as follows



Measure	the measure number
Count	the count within the measure
Duration	the duration of the dance movement
Movement description	the dance movement

Terms Used in the Choreographic Descriptions








<i>Stamp</i>	strike, thrust or bring the foot forcibly or noisily downward, with weight.
<i>Stomp</i>	strike, thrust or bring the foot forcibly or noisily downward, without weight.
<i>Step</i>	put weight on the foot.
<i>Touch</i>	touch the foot to ground, without putting weight on it.
<i>Close</i>	bring feet together.
<i>Hop</i>	move by a quick springy leap.
<i>Jump</i>	spring into the air, usually in place.
<i>Leap</i>	spring into the air in a specific direction.

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances


Khigga (heavy)

Meter	4/4	Tempo (bpm)	88-104
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	1.5	Direction	Right

Hand hold: "V" position
 Initial position: Face center, weight on left
 Symmetries: Translation, Reflection

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Side step with right
	2		Hold
			Cross with left
	3		Step on right
2	4		Touch left
	1		Step on left
	2		Touch right

The dancer's body bounces down and up six times within each measure; this motion originates in the knees and travels up to the head; it is not a motion in the shoulders, it is the entire body from the knees and above moving. The bounces are in quarter triplet time¹¹.

¹¹ Quarter triplet time indicates a three-movement phrase that is executed in two beats, similar to a quarter note triplet in music . Each movement has a duration of .67 beats, with the second movement occurring before the second beat. In this case, the three movements are three bounces.

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Sheikhani (traditional)

Meter	4/4	Tempo (bpm)	♩=140-170
Metric Rhythm	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩	Choreographic Rhythm	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
Period (measures)	6	Direction	Right, Center

Hand hold: Sheikhani hold

Initial position: Face line of direction; left arm at right angle, pressed to your back; weight on left foot.

Symmetries: Glide Reflection, Rotation

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1	♩	Step forward on right
	2	♩	Step and close left
	3-4	♩	Step forward on right
2	1	♩	Step forward on left
	2	♩	Step and close right
	3-4	♩	Step forward on left
3	1-2	♩	Step on right, turning to face the center of the circle
	3-4	♩	Step on left, drop arms
4	1	♩	Into the center, step forward on right
	2	♩	Step and close left
	3-4	♩	Step forward on right
5	1-2	♩	Touch left foot in front of right foot
	3-4	♩	Step back on left
6	1-2	♩	Step back on right, turning to face line of direction
	3-4	♩	Step on left, raise left arm to right angle

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Sheikhani (new)

Meter	4/4	Tempo (bpm)	♩=140-170
Metric Rhythm	♩.♩.♩.♩	Choreographic Rhythm	♩♩♩ ♩♩♩ ♩♩ ♩♩♩ ♩♩♩ ♩♩
Period (measures)	6	Direction	Right

Hand hold: "V" position
 Initial position: Face center, arms down, weight on left foot.
 Symmetries: Translation, Reflection

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1-4	♩	Rocking forward, right-left-right in place (triplet time)
2	1-4	♩	Cross left over right twice (triplet time)
3	1-3	♩.	Step on right, bend right knee slightly
	4	♩	Step on left
4	1-4	♩	Rocking forward, right-left-right (triplet time)
5	1-4	♩	Rocking forward, left-right-left (triplet time)
6	1-3	♩.	Step on right
	4	♩	Step on left

The dancer's body bounces down and up six times within each measure; this motion originates in the knees and travels up to the head; it is not a motion in the shoulders, it is the entire body from the knees and above moving. The bounces are in triplet time.

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Demaleh

Meter	4/4	Tempo (bpm)	63-69
Metric Rhythm	♩♩♩♩	Choreographic Rhythm	♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩♩
Period (measures)	7	Direction	Right, Center

Hand hold: Sheikhani hold

Initial position: Face line of direction; left arm at right angle, pressed to your back; weight on left foot.

Symmetries: Glide Reflection, Rotation

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1	♩	Step forward on right
	2	♩	Step and close left
	3-4	♩	Step forward on right
2	1	♩	Step forward on left
	2	♩	Step and close right
	3-4	♩	Step forward on left
3	1-2	♩	Turn slightly to the behind the line, stomp right foot
	3-4	♩	Stomp right foot
4	1-2	♩	Step on right, turning to face the center of the circle
	3-4	♩	Step on left, drop arms
5	1	♩	Into the center, step forward on right
	2	♩	Step and close left
	3-4	♩	Step forward on right
6	1-2	♩	Touch left foot in front of right foot
	3-4	♩	Step back on left
7	1-2	♩	Step back on right, turning to face line of direction
	3-4	♩	Step on left, raise left arm to right angle


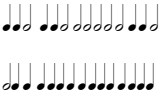
Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Variation for measure 2

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1-2			Same as above
3	1-2	♪	Touch or stomp right foot next to left foot (close feet)
	3-4	♪	Step right slightly to the right
4	1-2	♪	Touch or stomp left foot next to right foot (close feet)
	3-4	♪	Step on left, drop arms
5-7			Same as above

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

























Khazadeh

Meter	4/4	Tempo (bpm)	80-84
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	9	Direction	Right, Center

Hand hold: Sheikhani hold

Initial position: Face line of direction; left arm at right angle, pressed to your back; weight on left foot.

Symmetries: Glide Reflection, Rotation, Reflection




Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Step forward on right
	2		Step and close left
	3-4		Step forward on right
2	1		Step forward on left
	2		Step and close right
	3-4		Step forward on left
3	1-2		Turn slightly to the behind the line, stomp right foot
	3-4		Stomp right foot
4	1-2		Step on right, turning to face the center of the circle
	3-4		Step on left, drop arms
5	1		Into the center, step forward on right
	2		Step and close left
	3-4		Step forward on right
6	1-2		Touch left foot in front of right foot
	3		Leap on left, moving back, raising right leg behind you, sway arms to back, lean forward slightly
	4		Hop on left slightly
7	1		Leap on right, while raising left foot in front of you, sway arms to front
	2		Hop on right
	3		Leap on left, while raising right foot behind you, sway arms to back
	4		Hop on left
8	1		Leap on right, while raising left foot in front of you, sway arms to front
	2		Hop on right
	3		Leap on left, while raising right foot behind you, sway arms to back
	4		Hop on left

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| 9 | 1 | ♪ | Leap on right, while raising left foot in front of you, sway arms to front |
| | 2 | ♪ | Hop on right |
| | 3 | ♪ | Leap on left, while raising right foot behind you, sway arms to back |
| | 4 | ♪ | Hop on left, turning to face line of direction |

























Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Belatee

Meter	4/4	Tempo (bpm)	120-130
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	variation 1:  variation 2: 
Period (measures)	6	Direction	Center

Hand hold: "V" position
 Initial position: Face center, weight on left, shoulder to shoulder.
 Symmetries: None

Belatee variation 1: no hopping

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Step forward on right
	2		Hold
	3		Step on left (in place), lifting right
	4		Hold
2	1		Step on right, lifting left
	2		Hold
	3		Touch left heel
	4		Hold
3	1		Step forward on left
	2		Hold
	3		Step on right (in place), lifting left
	4		Hold
4	1		Step on left heel
	2		Hold
	3		Step forward on left
	4		Hold
5	1		Step forward on right
	2		Hold
	3		Touch forward with left heel
	4		Hold
6	1		Step back on left
	2		Hold
	3		Touch right heel
	4		Hold

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances



Belatee variation 2: hopping

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1	♪	Leap forward on right
	2	♪	Hop on right
	3	♪	Leap back on left
	4	♪	Hop on left, lifting right
2	1	♪	Leap on right, kick down with left foot in the air, crossed over right
	2	♪	Hop on right, kick down with left foot in the air, crossed over right
	3	♪	Hop on right, kick down with left foot in the air, crossed over right
	4	♪	Hop on right, kick down with left foot in the air, crossed over right
3	1	♪	Leap on left
	2	♪	Hop on left, lifting right foot
	3	♪	Leap back on right, kick down with left foot in the air, crossed over right
	4	♪	Hop on right, kick down with left foot in the air, crossed over right
4	1	♪	Hop on right, kick down with left foot in the air, crossed over right
	2	♪	Hop on right, kick down with left foot in the air, crossed over right
	3	♪	Leap forward left
	4	♪	Hop on left, lifting right foot
5	1	♪	Leap forward on right foot
	2	♪	Hop on right, kick down with left foot in the air, crossed over right
	3	♪	Hop on right, cross left foot over right
	4	♪	Hop on right
6	1	♪	Leap back on left, kick down with right foot in the air, crossed over left
	2	♪	Hop on left, kick down with right foot in the air, crossed over left
	3	♪	Hop on left, kick down with right foot in the air, crossed over left
	4	♪	Hop on left, kick down with right foot in the air, crossed over left








Variations 1 and 2 can be done simultaneously by different dancers in the same line.

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Mamyana 1

Meter	2/4	Tempo (bpm)	68-74
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	3.5	Direction	Left



Hand hold: "W" position
 Initial position: Face center; weight on right.
 Symmetries: Translation

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Walk back with left
	2		Walk back with right
2	1		Walk back with left
	2		Point right heel forward, beside left toe
3	1		Face slightly right, walk forward with right
	2		Walk forward with left
4	1		Close and step on right

Mamyana 1 and Mamyana 2 move to the left, although the dancers face to the right.

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances









Kochari

Meter	2/4	Tempo (bpm)	125
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	4	Direction	Right

Hand hold: "V" position



Initial position: Face center, weight on right, arms down, shoulder to shoulder

Symmetries: Translation

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Hop on right, bringing left foot back
	2		Hop on right, bringing left foot forward
2	1		Leap to left, bringing right foot back
	2		Hop on left, keeping right foot back
3	1		Hop on left, bringing right foot forward
	2		Leap to right
4	1		Leaping, cross left over right
	2		Hop on left, landing on both feet

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances











Tanzara 2a

Meter	2/4	Tempo (bpm)	118-124
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	5	Direction	Right

Hand hold: "V" position



Initial position: Face center; left arm at right angle; weight on right foot.

Symmetries: Translation













Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Rock forward on left, bending both knees
	2		Rock back on right foot, in place
2	1		Rock forward on left, bending both knees
	2		Rock back on right foot, in place
3	1		Rock forward on left
	2		Touch right forward
4	1		Turn and face right, step right forward
	2		Step on left, close and step on right
5	1		Step left forward
	2		Turn and face center, close and step on right

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Mamyana 2



Meter	2/4	Tempo (bpm)	68-74
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	6	Direction	Left

Hand hold: "W" position
 Initial position: Face center; weight on right.
 Symmetries: Translation

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Walk back with left
	2		Walk back with right
2	1		Walk back with left
	2		Point right heel forward, beside left toe
3	1		Face slightly right, walk forward with right
	2		Walk forward with left
4	1		Walk forward with right
	2		Touch left foot forward
5	1		Release hands, walk left with left, turning one quarter
	2		Walk left with right, turning one quarter
6	1		Walk left with left, turning one quarter
	2		Walk left with right, turning one quarter, join hands

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances















Toulama

Meter	2/4	Tempo (bpm)	120-150
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	7	Direction	Right, Left

Hand hold: "W" position

Initial position: Face center, slightly turned to the right, weight on left, right foot crossed over left

Symmetries: Translation, Glide Reflection

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Leap to right
	2		Hop on right
2	1		Leap to left
	2		Hop on left
3	1		Leap on right, bring left leg to back
	2		Hop on right, moving to the left (back), and sway left leg to front
4	1		Hop on right, moving to the left (back), and sway left leg to back
	2		Hop on right, moving to the left (back), and sway left leg to front
5	1		Hop on right, moving to the left (back), and sway left leg to back
	2		Hop on right, moving to the left (back), and sway left leg to front
6	1		Leap on left, bringing right leg to the back
	2		Hop on left, swaying right leg to front
7	1		Hope on left, crossing right foot over left
	2		Hop on left

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Azia Tamma

Meter	4/4	Tempo (bpm)	♩=160
Metric Rhythm	♩♩♩♩	Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	9.5	Direction	Right, Center

Hand hold: Sheikhani hold

Initial position: Face line of direction; left arm at right angle, pressed to your back; weight on left foot.

Symmetries: Translation, Glide Reflection, Rotation



Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1	♩	Step forward on right
	2	♩	Close left
	3-4	♩	Step forward on right
2	1	♩	Step forward on left
	2	♩	Close right
	3	♩	Leap to left
	4	♩	Hop on left
3	1	♩	Leap to right
	2	♩	Hop on right
	3-4	♩	Leap to left, closing feet simultaneously; keep weight on left, pause
4	1-2	♩	Pause
	3	♩	Leap to right
	4	♩	Hop on right, facing slightly outward
	5	♩	Touch behind with left toe
5	2	♩	Touch behind with left toe
	3	♩	Leap to left
	4	♩	Hop on left
	6	♩	Leap to right
6	2	♩	Hop on right, turning to face the center of the circle
	3-4	♩	Step on left, drop arms
	7	♩	Step forward on right
7	2	♩	Close left
	3-4	♩	Step forward on right
	8	♩	Touch left foot in front of right foot

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

	3	♪	Step back on left
	4	♪	Hop on left slightly
9	1	♪	Step back on right
	2	♪	Hop on right slightly, turning to face line of direction
	3-4	♪	Close left foot, keep weight on left, raise left arm to right angle, pause
10	1-2	♪	Pause

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances





















Zingirta

Meter	2/4	Tempo (bpm)	120-150
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	10	Direction	Forward

Hand hold: "V" position



Initial position: Face line of direction; left arm at right angle, pressed to your back; weight on left foot.

Symmetries: Mirror Repetition, Translation, Reflection

























Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Leap to right, facing slightly to center, bring left foot back
	2		Hop on right, kick left foot forward
2	1		Leap to left, facing slightly away from center, bring right foot back
	2		Hop on left, kick right foot forward
3	1		Leap to right, bring left foot back
	2		Hop on right, kick left foot forward
4	1		Hop on right, bring left foot back
	2		Hop on right, kick left foot forward
5	1		Hop on right, bring left foot back
	2		Hop on right, kick left foot forward
6	1		Leap to left, facing slight to center, bring right foot back
	2		Hop on left, kick right foot forward
7	1		Leap to right, facing slightly away from center, bring left foot back
	2		Hop on right, kick left foot forward
8	1		Leap to left, bring right foot back
	2		Hop on left, kick right foot forward
9	1		Hop on left, bring right foot back
	2		Hop on left, kick right foot forward
10	1		Hop on left, bring right foot back
	2		Hop on left, kick right foot forward

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Mamer



Meter	2/4	Tempo (bpm)	122-130
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	12	Direction	Left, Right

Hand hold: "V" position
 Initial position: Face center; left arm at right angle; weight on right foot.
 Symmetries: Mirror Repetition

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Moving slightly to left, hop on right, swing left foot forward
	2		Moving slightly to left, hop on right, swing left foot back
2	1		Moving slightly to left, hop on right, swing left foot forward
	2		Moving slightly to left, hop on right, swing left foot back
3	1		Hop on right, swing left foot forward
	2		Close and step on left foot
4	1		Swing right foot forward
	&		Bending right knee, swing right foot across in front of left leg
	2		Straighten right knee, swing right foot diagonally forward-right
5	1		Release hands, step on right, turning to right
	2		Hop on right, completing a quarter turn to right
6	1		Step on left, turning to right
	2		Hop on left, completing a quarter turn to right
7	1		Moving slightly to right, hop on left, swing right foot forward, clap hands
	2		Moving slightly to right, hop on left, swing right foot back
8	1		Moving slightly to right, hop on left, swing right foot forward, clap hands
	2		Moving slightly to right, hop on left, swing right foot back
9	1		Hop on left, swing right foot forward, clap hands
	2		Close and step on right foot
10	1		Swing left foot forward
	&		Bending left knee, swing left foot across in front of right leg
	2		Straighten left knee, swing left foot diagonally forward-left
11	1		Release hands, step on left, turning to left
	2		Hop on left, completing a quarter turn to left
12	1		Step on right, turning to left
	2		Hop on right, completing a quarter turn to left

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances


























Tanzara 2b

Meter	2/4	Tempo (bpm)	118-124
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	14	Direction	Right

Hand hold: "V" position

Initial position: Face center; left arm at right angle; weight on right foot.

Symmetries: None

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Step forward on right
	2		Hop on right
2	1		Step forward left
	2		Close right foot and touch (without taking weight)
3	1		Pause
	2		Step backward on right
4	1		Hop on right
	2		Jump down on both feet, moving slightly backward (jump may be way down, bending knees deeply)
5	1		Jump up to land on right foot in place, place left heel forward
	2		Pause
6	1		Leap onto left foot, in place, swing right foot diagonally forward right
	2		Hop on left in place, swing right foot across in front of left
7	1		Hop on left in place, swing right foot diagonally forward right
	2		Hop on left in place, swing right foot across in front of left
8	1		Jump in place lightly on both feet
	2		Pause, free right foot
9	1		Release hands, Step right, turning to right one quarter
	2		Hop on right, turning to right one quarter
10	1		Step left, turning to right one quarter
	2		Hop on left, turning to right one quarter
11	1		Step right
	2		Hop on right, join hands
12	1		Leap onto left foot, in place, swing right foot diagonally forward right
	2		Hop on left in place, swing right foot across in front of left
13	1		Hop on left in place, swing right foot diagonally forward right

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

- | | | | |
|----|---|---|--|
| | 2 | ♪ | Hop on left in place, swing right foot across in front of left |
| 14 | 1 | ♪ | Jump in place lightly on both feet |
| | 2 | ♪ | Pause, free right foot |

Dimdimma

Meter	2/4, 6/8	Tempo (bpm)	72-76 (2/4), 118-122 (6/8)
Metric Rhythm	2/4: ♪♪♪♪ 6/8: ♪♪♪	Choreographic Rhythm	2/4: ♪♪ 6/8: ♪♪♪
Period (measures)	None	Direction	Single file

Hand hold: None

Initial position: Single file line of at least five dancers; each dancer places his hands on the waist of the dancer in front of him.

Symmetries: None

Dimdimma symbolizes a battle between a shepherd and his flock and a wolf. A single file of dancers represents the shepherd (the first dancer in the line) and his sheep (the remaining dancers). Standing opposite the shepherd is a lone dancer representing the wolf.

Each dancer in the line (except the first) places his hands on the back (hip level) of the dancer in front of him. To make the dance effective, there should be at least five dancers in the line (one shepherd, four sheep).

Part 1: The Stalk (2/4)

In the Stalk, the wolf stalks the shepherd by moving forward towards him; as the wolf moves forward the shepherd retreats, causing the sheep also to move back. The number of steps taken backward and forward is determined by the interplay between the shepherd and the wolf, and is typically determined by the music. The shepherd and the wolf must match each other step for step, moving backward and forward as a pair. The flock must match the shepherd's movement. This backward and forward motion by the shepherd causes the line to contract and expand, much like an accordion. It is important that the followers complete their steps; if the shepherd takes four steps back, the sheep must also take four steps back. If there are many sheep in line, then it is possible for parts of the line to move in opposite directions, as the motion makes its way down and up the line, much like a wave.

The shepherd holds two daggers in his hands, as does the wolf, and they both make stabbing motions at each other. These stabbing motions should be varied and timed to the music.

Part 2: The Hunt (6/8)

The hunt begins when the music changes to 6/8. The wolf attempts to kill the last sheep in line by circling around the shepherd and lunging toward the last dancer; if he is able to "stab" him (a touch with the butt of the dagger is considered a stab), that dancer leaves the line (he has been "killed" and he can no longer dance); if the wolf successfully kills a sheep, he must return to the front, facing the shepherd, before he can make another attempt. When the wolf attacks, the shepherd protects his flock by rotating the line away from the direction of the wolf's approach; if the wolf comes from the shepherd's left side, the shepherd turns to his left, while standing in place; this is an important point: the shepherd turns (or rotates) on the same spot. As the shepherd turns, his flock also matches his movement. It is important that the flock not anticipate the shepherd's movement. Each sheep must move only when the dancer in front of him is moved. If there are many sheep in line, the end of the line will not be able to rotate fast enough to evade the wolf. The wolf can only circle 180 degrees in his attempt to reach the last dancer; if the wolf cannot reach the last dancer before that, the battle is then considered a draw, since the shepherd and his flock are able to evade the wolf.

The music may alternate between the Stalk and the Hunt several times. Extreme care should be exercised when dancing with daggers.

Sabre Dance

Meter	6/8	Tempo (bpm)	84-92
Metric Rhythm	♪ ♪	Choreographic Rhythm	♪ ♪
Period (measures)	None	Direction	Free form

Hand hold: None
 Initial position: See below.
 Symmetries: None

The Sabre Dance (also called Sword and Shield) is performed at weddings, although it is occasionally performed at social functions. The dance represents the symbolic surrender of the bride to the groom and his family. The dance is performed by the closest male relatives of the happy couple (in order of preference: brother, father, uncle, first cousin...). The outcome of the dance is predetermined: the bride's side always loses, symbolizing the surrender of the bride.

The Sabre Dance is a mock sword duel, and this greatly influences the dance motions. As the dance starts, each dancer dances by himself, posturing, waving his sword and holding his shield (a shield is optional, but it greatly adds to the flavor of the dance), taking steps in and around his initial position, and presenting himself to the audience. The rhythm is a pulsating 6/8 duple meter, and this gives a bouncy feeling to the dance; the rhythm is also syncopated, with an accent following the second beat (♩). Lunging toward the other dancer and striking swords is timed to coincide with the syncopated beat (the eighth note).

The Sabre Dance is a free form dance, and as such it has no predefined sequence of figures. However, it does have a vocabulary of figures which the dancers execute in concert; a figure may be initiated by either dancer, and it is the responsibility of each dancer to follow a figure that is initiated by the other dancer. Experienced dancers will choose their figures in a way to make the story unfold; this is a sword fight, and as such, there should be a beginning, a middle and an end.

Dance Vocabulary

Footwork

The 6/8 meter is syncopated and divided into four beats (♩); the dancer's footwork follows the rhythmic division most of the time, as follows: Right (♩), Left (♩), Right (♩), Left (♩). Deviations from the basic footwork occur in lunging figures (described below).

Initial Figures

The purpose of the set of initial figures is to introduce the combatants and the dance. Note, the figures described below are commonly performed by Assyrian Sabre dancers; however, since this is a free form dance, each dancer is free to interpret the music and dance accordingly. In the initial phase of the dance, dancers are not synchronized in their movements. As the music begins, each dancer enters the dance floor, and quickly makes his way to the opposite side, where the opposing side's supporters are watching, and he boldly introduces himself to them, arms held high, sword in right hand, executing the above mentioned footwork to the right and to the left, and in circles (to the left and to the right; a full turn takes eight steps).

A dramatic entrance is achieved if both dancers enter from the outside of the dance circle, with the spectators clearing a path for them. The Sabre Dance is an open, expansive dance with aggressive movements; this requires the dancers to maintain a separation between them (ten to fifteen feet is typical).

After a suitable period of introduction (one minute is typical), the dancers face each other and begin the duel. At this point their movements become synchronized. The following figures are typically used in the duel.

Standing in Place

The dancers execute the basic foot pattern while standing in place, arms held high or to the side. This is usually a preparatory move for another figure.

Circling

Circling is done in the clockwise and counterclockwise directions; in the counterclockwise circle, the right arm (holding the sword) is raised above the head, and the left arm and shoulder is lowered, giving the appearance of leaning into the center. The basic foot pattern is maintained, with larger steps indicating greater aggressiveness. The dancer may complete one half to a full circle, after which it is typical to reverse direction and circle in the clockwise direction, with the right arm and shoulder leaning into the center, and left arm held above the head.

Left Shoulder Pass

The dancers approach each other and pass on the left side, exchanging positions in the process; this is typically followed by a Circle.

Reverse Right Left Shoulder Pass

The dancers approach each other and pass on the left side, half turn to the right and return to their original positions. Note, a half turn takes four steps, a full turn takes eight steps.

Reverse Left Left Shoulder Pass with Sword Strike

The dancers approach each other and pass on the left side, half turn to the left and return to their original positions, striking swords as they pass each other.

Right Shoulder Pass with Sword Strike

The dancers approach each other and pass on the right side, striking swords as they pass each other and exchanging positions in the process.

Right Shoulder Pass with Reverse One and a Half Turn

The dancers approach each other and pass on the right side, striking swords as they pass each other, then the dancers make a full turn to the left, striking swords again when they face each other; continuing, the dancers make a half turn to the left and return to their original positions.

Posturing

The dancers approach each other to within three to four feet and begin performing various figures; circling each other, turning, and waving swords are typical figures.

Right Sword Strike

This may occur at anytime when the dancers come together, but usually follows *Posturing*. Three sword strikes are executed, in the following rhythm: ♩.♩.♩. The sword strikes are synchronized with the right step of the basic foot pattern, as follows:

<i>Measure 1</i>	<i>Measure 2</i>
Right (♩) Left (♩) Right (♩)Left (♩)	Right (♩) Left (♩) Right (♩)Left (♩)
X X	X

Where X represents a sword strike. Initially, the Right Sword Strike (i.e., the two measure pattern shown above) is executed once, usually after the various passing figures with sword strikes have been executed. The Right Sword Strike represents an escalation in the duel. As the dance progresses, the Right Sword Strike may be executed successively up to four times. The pattern always begins on the first beat of the measure, so if it is repeated, the dancers must wait until the end of the second measure before starting again.

Left Sword Strike

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

This is equivalent to Right Sword Strike, except sword strikes are synchronized with the left step of the basic foot pattern.

Measure 1

Right (♩)	Left (♩)	Right (♩)	Left (♩)
	X		X

The Left Sword Strike is one measure long.

Right-Left Sword Strike Combination

This is a Right Sword Strike followed immediately by a Left Sword Strike, as follows:

Measure 1

Right (♩)	Left (♩)	Right (♩)	Left (♩)
X		X	

Measure 2

Right (♩)	Left (♩)	Right (♩)	Left (♩)
X	X		X

The second measure of the Right Sword Strike becomes the first measure of the Left Sword Strike.

Left-Right Sword Strike Combination

This is a three measure combination:

Measure 1

Right (♩)	Left (♩)	Right (♩)	Left (♩)
	X		X

Measure 2

Right (♩)	Left (♩)	Right (♩)	Left (♩)
X		X	

Measure 3

Right (♩)	Left (♩)	Right (♩)	Left (♩)
X			

Left-Right-Left Sword Strike Combination

This is a three measure combination:

Measure 1

Right (♩)	Left (♩)	Right (♩)	Left (♩)
	X		X

Measure 2

Right (♩)	Left (♩)	Right (♩)	Left (♩)
X		X	

Measure 3

Right (♩)	Left (♩)	Right (♩)	Left (♩)
X	X		X

Right-Left-Right Sword Strike Combination

This is a four measure combination:

Measure 1

Right (♩)	Left (♩)	Right (♩)	Left (♩)
X		X	

Measure 2

Right (♩)	Left (♩)	Right (♩)	Left (♩)
X	X		X

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Measure 3

Right (♩) Left (♩) Right (♩)Left (♩)
X X

Measure 4

Right (♩) Left (♩) Right (♩)Left (♩)
X

Sword Lock

The dancers strike their swords and keep them together (locked) for one measure. The Sword Lock may occur at any time; if the lock does not coincide with the beginning of a measure, it will span across the next measure. For example, here is a Sword Lock that follows a Right Sword Strike:

Measure 1

Right (♩) Left (♩) Right (♩)Left (♩)
X X

Measure 2

Right (♩) Left (♩) Right (♩)Left (♩)
X-----

Where the dashed line indicates locked swords. Here is a Sword Lock that follows a Left Sword Strike:

Measure 1

Right (♩) Left (♩) Right (♩)Left (♩)
 X X-----

Measure 2

Right (♩) Left (♩) Right (♩)Left (♩)

In this case, the Sword Lock begins in measure one and ends before the end of measure two.

Other Combinations

The most typical combinations were listed above; the dancers can invent their own combinations.

Free Dueling

This is all out war! The only restriction is that sword strikes occur on one of the beats (i.e., they coincide with foot steps). To enhance its dramatic effect, free dueling should be done sparingly.



Conclusion

The Sabre Dance is usually three to five minutes in length. Although this is, ostensibly, a war dance, it is a happy one, and it does not, fortunately, end in anyone actually dying! The end of the dance is symbolic. Shortly after the dance has reached its climax, the mother of the bride (or the closest female relative) enters the dance circle, executing the basic foot pattern, and waving her babushka from side to side. She makes her way to the dancers and stands in between them, in effect blocking them from approaching each other. The mother then dances over to her son (or the representative of her family, if not her son) and leads him out of the dance circle. The groom's representative does a very brief victory dance in the circle and then exits to his side.







Extreme care should be exercised when dancing with swords.

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Azrabukeh




Meter	6/8	Tempo (bpm)	116-126
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	3	Direction	Right

Hand hold: "W" position
 Initial position: Face center, weight on right
 Symmetries: Translation

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Hop on right, placing left heel forward
	2		Hop on right, placing left heel forward
2	1		Leaping, cross left over right, bring arms back
	2		Side step with right, bring arms forward
3	1		Leaping, cross left over right, bring arms back
	2		Side step with right, bring arms forward







Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Hoberban







Meter	6/8	Tempo (bpm)	130-134
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	Variations 1 and 2:  Variation 3: 
Period (measures)	3	Direction	Right

Hand hold: "T" position
 Initial position: Face slightly to right, weight on left
 Symmetries: Translation, Reflection

Variation 1: Basic

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Moving right, running, step right
	2		Moving right, running, step left
2	1		Turn and face center, step right sideward
	2		In place, hop on right foot, swing left foot across in front
3	1		Step sideward left on left
	2		In place, hop on left foot, swing right foot across in front

Variation 2: Kick heel across

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Moving right, running, step right
	2		Moving right, running, step left
2	1		Turn and face center, step sideward right on right, kick left heel diagonally across in front of right leg
	2		In place, hop on right foot, kick left heel diagonally across in front of right leg
3	1		Step sideward left on left, kick right heel diagonally across in front of left leg
	2		In place, hop on left foot, kick right heel diagonally across in front of left leg



Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Variation 3: Leap and pause










Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1	♩.	Moving right, running, step right
	2	♩.	Moving right, running, step left
2	1	♩.	Turn and face center, leap sideward right on right foot, placing left heel diagonally forward across right
	2	♩.	Pause
3	1	♩.	Turn and face center, leap sideward left on left foot, placing right heel diagonally forward across left
	2	♩.	Pause

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances




Khigga (light)

Meter	6/8	Tempo (bpm)	92-108
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	3	Direction	Right



Hand hold: "V" position
 Initial position: Face center, weight on left
 Symmetries: Translation, Reflection

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Side step with right
	2		Hold
			Cross with left
2	1		Step on right
	2		Hold
			Touch left
3	1		Step on left
	2		Hold
			Touch right

The dancers body bounces down and up three times within each measure; this motion originates in the knees and travels up to the head; it is not a motion in the shoulders, it is the entire body from the knees and above moving.


- 1 Bounce 
- 2 Bounce 
- 3 Bounce 

Assyrian Misirlou
















Meter	6/8	Tempo (bpm)	56-62
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	4	Direction	Right, Left

Hand hold: "W" position
 Initial position: Face center, weight on right
 Symmetries: Translation, Reflection

The Misirlou is not an Assyrian dance¹²; yet, as with so many other cultures, it has become very popular among Assyrians. The basic step, which is well known and has been documented elsewhere, is performed by Assyrian folk dancers; there are many variations unique to Assyrians, and it is these, in addition to the basic step, which I wish to document here.

The most significant difference between the Assyrian Misirlou and other Misirlous is that the Assyrian Misirlou is in 6/8, as opposed to 4/4, which is the meter of the original Misirlou song and that of most other ethnic versions. The 6/8 meter gives a pulsating, ebb and flow flavor to the dance, and it gives rise to variations that are best suited to a 6/8 meter. In addition, as with all 6/8 Assyrian music, the rhythm is syncopated, with the accent on beat 5 () , which also defines the character of the Assyrian Misirlou and its variations.

Basic Step

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Kick left forward and swing it in a circle, counterclockwise and away from the body, returning to slightly behind its original position (in preparation for the next step)
			Continuing the previous swinging motion, step left behind right
			Side step with right
2	1		Swing left leg clockwise, in preparation for the next step
			Cross left over right
			Swing right leg counterclockwise, in preparation for the next step, turning slightly to the left
2	2		Cross right over left
			Step left, keep left behind right
			Pause
3	1		Step on right, begin turning to right
			Swing left leg clockwise, in preparation for the next step
			Cross left over right
3	2		Step on right, keep right behind left
			Pause
			Step on left

¹² The Misirlou dance originated on the campus of Duquesne University in 1945; it was created by Professor Brunhilde Dorsch. See *The Greek American National Anthem*, Steve Frangos; Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora, Fall 1996.

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

	♪	Turn to left and face center, swinging right foot counterclockwise
2	♪	Close right and step on right (feet together)
	♪	Pause

Back-Forward Variation

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1	♪	Kick left forward and swing it in a circle, counterclockwise and away from the body, returning to slightly behind its original position (in preparation for the next step)
	2	♪	Continuing the previous swinging motion, step left behind right
		♪	Side step with right
		♪	Turn right and face line of direction
2	1	♪	Step forward on left
	2	♪	Moving back, step back on right
		♪	Step back on left
3	1	♪	Moving forward, step on right
	2	♪	Step forward on left
		♪	Step forward on right
4	1	♪	Step forward on left, turning left and facing center
	2	♪	Close right and step on right (feet together)

Back-Forward with Turn Variation

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1	♪	Kick left forward and swing it in a circle, counterclockwise and away from the body, returning to slightly behind its original position (in preparation for the next step)
	2	♪	Continuing the previous swinging motion, step left behind right
		♪	Side step with right
2	1	♪	Turn and face line of direction, step forward on left
	2	♪	Moving back, step back on right, begin a one half turn by turning to left
		♪	Step back on left, continuing the left turn (should be facing slightly to the left of center)
3	1	♪	Complete the one half turn (should be facing the rear) by stepping forward on right
	2	♪	Step back on left, begin a half turn to the right
		♪	Step back on right, continuing the right turn (should be facing slightly to the right of center)

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

4	1	♪	Cross left over right, swing right foot counterclockwise
	2	♪	Close right and step on right (feet together)

Forward-Back Variation

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1	♪	Kick left forward and swing it in a circle, counterclockwise and away from the body, returning to slightly behind its original position (in preparation for the next step)
	2	♪ ♪	Continuing the previous swinging motion, step left behind right Side step with right
2	1	♪	Turn left and face rear of line, step forward on left
	2	♪ ♪	Moving forward, step on right Step forward on left
3	1	♪	Moving back, step on right
	2	♪ ♪	Step back on left Step back on right
4	1	♪	Turning right and facing center, step on left
	2	♪	Close right and step on right (feet together)



Rocking Step Variation

The Rocking Step can be combined with any of the variations described above, as it can be substituted at any time for the final count of measure four and the first count of measure one.

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1 to 3			Any of the variations
4	1	♪	The first count figure of the executed variation, swing arms forward
	2	♪ ♪	Step on right Rock back on left, swing arms back
1	1	♪ ♪	Step forward on right, kick left leg forward Swing left leg in a circle, counterclockwise and away from the body, swing arms forward
	2	♪	Continue with any desired variation











Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Chalakh











Meter	6/8	Tempo (bpm)	126-132
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	5	Direction	Right

Hand hold: "T" position
 Initial position: Face slightly to right, weight on left
 Symmetries: Translation, Reflection

Variation 1: Calm



Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Walk forward on right
	2		Walk forward on left
2	1		Turn and face center, close right and step on right
	2		Touch left heel forward
3	1		Close left and step on left
	2		Touch right heel across and in front of left foot
4	1		Touch right heel diagonally forward right
	2		Touch right heel across and in front of left foot
5	1		Close right and stamp lightly on right beside left
	2		Pause, free right foot

Variation 2: Vigorous











Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Running, step right
	2		Running, step left
2	1		Turn and face center, leap on right foot sideward to right, kick left heel diagonally across in front of right foot
	2		Hop in place on right, kick left heel diagonally across in front of right foot
3	1		Leap on left foot sideward to left, kick right heel diagonally across in front of left foot
	2		Hop in place on left, kick right heel diagonally across in front of left foot
4	1		Hop on left foot, kick right heel diagonally
	2		Hop on left foot, kick right heel diagonally across in front of left foot
5	1		Close right and stamp lightly on right beside left
	2		Pause, free right foot

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Arabanoo

Meter	6/8	Tempo (bpm)	52-66
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	5	Direction	Right

Hand hold: "W" position
 Initial position: Face center, weight on left
 Symmetries: Translation, Reflection

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Side step with right
	2		Cross with left
2	1		Side step with right
	2		Behind with left, bending knees slightly, while maintaining erect posture
3	1		Side step with right
	2		Cross with left
4	1		Side step with right
	2		Touch left
5	1		Step on left
	2		Touch right

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Two Legged Toulama



Meter	6/8	Tempo (bpm)	120-130
Metric Rhythm	♪♪ ♪♪	Choreographic Rhythm	♪♪. ♪♪. ♪♪. ♪♪. ♪♪.
Period (measures)	5	Direction	Right

Hand hold: "W" position
 Initial position: Face center, weight on left
 Symmetries: Translation













Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1	♪.	Side step with right
	2	♪.	Cross with left
2	1	♪.	Jump on both feet, keeping weight on right
	2	♪.	Pause
3	1	♪.	Hop on right, moving to the left (back), and sway left leg to front
	2	♪.	Hop on right, moving to the left (back), and sway left leg to back
4	1	♪.	Hop on right, moving to the left (back), and sway left leg to front
	2	♪.	Leap on left, bring right foot back
5	1	♪.	Hop on left, kick right foot forward
	2	♪.	Hop on left, cross right foot in the air over left foot

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Goobareh



Meter	6/8	Tempo (bpm)	116-126
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	6	Direction	Left, Center

Hand hold: "W" position.
 Initial position: Face center, weight on left.
 Symmetries: Translation, Reflection

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Moving into the center, step forward on right, swing arms to right
	2		Step forward on left, swings arms to left
2	1		Step forward on right, bring arms to "W" position
	2		Hop on right, raising left knee, bob arms down and up
3	1		Step back on left, bob arms down and up
	2		Hop on left, raising right knee, bob arms down and up
4	1		Step back on right, bob arms down and up
	2		Hop on right, raising left knee, bob arms down and up
5	1		Side step with left, moving to the left, bring arms down to the sides
	2		Behind with right, swing arms forward
6	1		Step left, bring arms back up to "W" position
	2		Close right, bob arms down and up

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

















Karmaneh



Meter	6/8	Tempo (bpm)	120-130
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	7	Direction	Right, Left



Hand hold: "W" position

Initial position: Face center, slightly turned to the right, weight on left, right foot crossed over left

Symmetries: Translation, Glide Reflection

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Step forward on right
			Close left
	2		Step forward on right
2	1		Step forward on left
			Close right
	2		Step forward on left
3	1		Side step with right
	2		Step behind with left
4	1		Side step with right
	2		Touch left
5	1		Side step with left, moving to the left
	2		Step behind with right
6	1		Side step with left
	2		Step behind with right
7	1		Side step with left
	2		Touch right

For measures 1-4, arms bob down () and up () slightly, beginning with down, on the beat, in "W" position.

For measures 5-7, arms move down () and up (), beginning with down, on the beat.

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Shara

Meter	6/8	Tempo (bpm)	92-100
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	7	Direction	Left, Center

Hand hold: "W" position



Initial position: All dancers are in one line. Each pair of dancers is grouped together, beginning with the first pair on the left. Remember your partner and your position in your pair (first or last).

Symmetries: Translation, Glide Reflection

















Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Left
			Right
2	2		Left
			Right
			Left
3	1, 2		Step back on left, turning to face center
			Step on right
			Right
4	1		Rocking forward, left
			Rocking back, right
			Rocking forward, left
5	1, 2 &		Rocking forward, right
			Rocking back, left
			Close right and squat
6	1, 2 &		Spring up from squat, and both members of each pair face each other closely, the first member turning back to face his partner, raising their hands above their heads (the inner hands, or the hand holding the partner). The hand holding the hand of the person in a different pair remains down.
			Turn away from partner one quarter, bringing raised arms down to waist level
7	1, 2 &		Face partner again, raising hands above head
			First partner, turn and face line of direction, both partners bring arms down

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Hareigooleh

Meter	6/8	Tempo (bpm)	116-124
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	8	Direction	Right

Hand hold: "W" position
 Initial position: Facing center, weight on left
 Symmetries: Translation, Reflection

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Hop back on both legs, keep weight on right, brings arms down to sides
	2		Cross with left, swings arms forward
2	1		Side step with right, swings arms back
	2		Touch left in front of right, swings arms forward
3	1		Step on left, swings arms back
	2		Touch right in front of left, swings arms forward
4	1		Step on right, swings arms back
	2		Tough left in front of right, swings arms forward
5	1		Step on left, swings arms back
	2		Hop on left, kicking with right in air, bringing arms up to "W" position
6	1		Hop on left, kicking with right in air
	2		Leap right while simultaneously touching left in front of right foot
7	1		Touch left to the left of right foot
	2		Touch left in front of right foot
8	1		Step on left
	2		Stomp right in front of left

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Tanzara

Meter	9/8	Tempo (bpm)	88-96
Metric Rhythm		Choreographic Rhythm	
Period (measures)	3	Direction	Center

Hand hold: "W" position.
 Initial position: Weight on left.
 Symmetries: None

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1		Step-hop forward on right, bob arms down and up
	2		Hold
	3		Step forward on left
	4	 	Hold Close with right
2	1		Step-hop back on right, lifting left knee, bob arms down and up
	2		Hold
	3		Close with left, squatting deeply on both feet
	4	 	Hold Rise up from squat with weight on left
3	1		Touch left with right foot
	2		Touch right with right foot
	3		Touch left with right foot
	4		Touch right with right foot

Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances

Janiman¹³

Meter	10/8	Tempo (bpm)	60-66
Metric Rhythm	♩.♩.♩.	Choreographic Rhythm	♩.+♩ ♩+♩.♩+♩ ♩+♩.♩+♩ ♩+♩.
Period (measures)	3	Direction	Right

Hand hold: "W" position
 Initial position: Face center, weight on right
 Symmetries: Translation, Reflection

Measure	Count	Duration	Movement description
1	1	♩.+♩	Touch left heel across in front of right toe
	2	♩.+♩.	Close left and step on left
2	1	♩.+♩	Touch right heel
	2	♩.+♩.	Turn slightly right, close and step on right
3	1	♩.+♩	Moving right, step forward on left
	2	♩.+♩.	Turn and face center, close and step on right foot

¹³ Rickey Holden incorrectly assigns a 3/4 meter to this dance. The correct meter is 10/8; the measure is divided into four units: ♩♩♩♩ (slow-quick-quick-slow). Choreographically, this dance is substantially equivalent to *Khigga Light*.