

# Traditional song and dance art of the peoples of the North (on the example of round dances of the Evenks)

Venera Marfusalova  
Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences,  
Associate Professor  
North-Eastern Federal University  
named after M.K. Ammosov  
Yakutsk, Russia  
[marfvenera@yandex.ru](mailto:marfvenera@yandex.ru)

Evdokia Polikarpova  
Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences,  
Professor of the Department of  
Methods of Teaching the Yakut  
Language, Literature and National  
Culture  
North-Eastern Federal University  
named after M.K. Ammosov  
Yakutsk, Russia  
[poliem@mail.ru](mailto:poliem@mail.ru)

Nyurguyana Nikitina  
Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences,  
Associate Professor  
North-Eastern Federal University  
named after M.K. Ammosov  
Yakutsk, Russia  
[nyrgvy@bk.ru](mailto:nyrgvy@bk.ru)

Maya Egorova  
Teacher of additional education  
State budgetary educational  
institution «Experimental boarding  
school «Arctic» with in-depth study  
of the humanities and cultural  
studies»  
Neryungri, Russia  
[egorovamv1975@mail.ru](mailto:egorovamv1975@mail.ru)

**Abstract**—The article considers the traditional dance art as an important historical source that complements and expands the general idea of the culture of the people. It is noted that folk dances continue to exist in modern society, embellishing folk festivals, bringing a special flavor and originality in the cultural life of the people. The traditions of song and dance art historically exist among the peoples of the North, in particular, among the Evenks. They are presented in the form of various round dances, which are accompanied by singing and its varieties. The origins of the traditional Evenk dances go back to antiquity, when dances and dance elements were included in ceremonies, festivals, games. In the very early stages of the history of the Evenks, dance with singing was a hunting pantomime, in which strength, dexterity, quick ingenuity, courage were revealed. In general, the lexical foundation of Evenk dance art differs in content, character, and manner of performance from the traditional dance art of the aborigines of Yakutia (Evens, Yukagirs, Chukchi, Yakuts). Nowadays, the Evenks have survived the following types of round dance *dehvehjdeh*, *gosugor*, *dyalikhehr*, *dyalekhincheh*, *dyakirde* and others. The leading singer - *ikehlehn* is especially appreciated in the Evenki round dance. He is the main initiator of the dance, gives the rhythm of the singing and improvises the words of the song. The authors of the article consider the current state of the Evenks' round dances, systematize them according to different parameters and analyze the characteristics of songs in round dances.

**Keywords**—peoples of the North, Evenks, traditional art, round dance, genre, leading singer, chant, song, vocabulary, improvisation, rite

## I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional dance art is an important historical source that complements and broadens the general idea of the culture of the people [1]. Round dances continue to exist in modern society, embellishing folk festivals, bringing a special flavor and originality to the cultural life of the people. They are an integral part of the national rite, a holiday along with song and dance [2, 3].

**The purpose** of the article is a systematic study of round dances of the Evenks from the point of view of lexical and semantic content, genre originality and peculiarities of performance in local places of distribution of traditional Evenk dance.

The following **research methods** were used: the study of literary sources, observation, analysis of folklore materials and dance vocabulary of the leading singer - *ikehlehn*.

## II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The peoples of the North have a long tradition of song and dance art. They are presented in the form of various round dances, which are accompanied by singing and its varieties. The origins of the traditional Evenk dances go back to antiquity, when dances and dance elements organically entered into rituals, festivals, games. Researchers believe that the dance, possessing cognitive, ritual and magical functions associated with labor, social, family relations. In modern life, folk dances are an important means of communication, expressing the feelings and thoughts

of speakers. The artistic side of ritual, magical actions is of great importance. Dance and song art of the peoples of the North is considered in the scientific works of G.M. Vasilevich, M.G. Voskoboinikova, A.M. Aizenshtadt, A.N. Myreeva, G.I. Varlamova and others. In recent decades, this original genre of folklore has been reviving in many regions of the Russian Federation. More and more people show a keen interest in round dance. There is an active process of revival of circular dances, young leading singers appear, contests between the leading singers are held. Cultural, educational and mass media institutions are making a great contribution to this revival [4, 5].

Researchers classify traditional folk dances into two types: ceremonial and imitative dances [2, 6]. Traditional dance art has a bright ethnic tint. The article considers the features of the Evenk dances, which in Evenk language were called *ikehvun* (ikeh - song, vun - suffix with meaning "to have"). The dancing art of the Evenks was formed and developed in close connection with the song-musical creativity, folklore of the people. They can be divided into ceremonial and imitative. Ritual dances are especially brightly performed in shamanic rites. Round dances are performed with pantomime elements, when the leading singer leads the dance, improvising the words of the song and the rest of the participants repeat after him. They were not particularly complex, but differed in the harmonic combination of dance plastics, pantomime and chants, complementing and enriching each other. Each local group of the Evenks had its own round dance, which was always accompanied by singing. Over a long period, there was an interpenetration and interaction of the Evenk cultures with other peoples with the Yakuts, the Yukagirs, the Evens, the Buryats, during which the dance art was enriched.

In the very early stages of the history of the Evenks, dance with singing was a hunting pantomime and a hunters play, in which strength, dexterity, quick ingenuity, courage were revealed. The hunting rituals included the bear ritual of getting good luck to the hunter (*sinkehlevun*), the ritual of chasing an imaginary deer, killing him and attaching to meat (*ikehnipkeh*), fortune telling on spatula, appeal to the spirits of nature (*sehvehki*). Upon careful consideration and comparison of all round dances, one can come to the conclusion that, despite the different names, Evenki *ikehn*, *ikehvun* is essentially the same for all Evenk groups and has the same historical roots. However, each dance has its own manner, character of performance, vocabulary of movements everywhere are different. The movement of the Tungus is light, often graceful, always impulsive. This impulsiveness, the almost convulsiveness of movements is considerably smoothed out with the change of lifestyle and costumes. Settled Tunguses, herders, in spacious Yakut costumes move as solidly as Yakuts; on the contrary, Yakuts, engaged in hunting along with Tungus, in light Tungus costumes in close-fitting

fashion, acquire to some extent Evenki movements [6].

The analysis of the lexical and semantic content of round dances is carried out on the material of the song art of the following main singers:

1. Avelova Anfisa Pavlovna, a native of the Chita region, the area of Chapo-Ologo. She lives in the village Khandyga of Tomponsky region of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).
2. Enokhova Valentina Stepanovna, lived in the village of Iengra in the Neryungri region of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia).
3. Kirillova Margarita Stepanovna, a resident of the village of Iengra in the Neryungri region of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia).
4. Marfuslov Petr Eliseevich, lived in the village Hatystyr of the Aldan region of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia). He was a beginner singer of the "Gosugor" round dance (Aldan version).
5. Naumova Oktyabrina Vladimirovna, lived in the village of Iengra, Neryungri region of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia).
6. Nikolaev Prokopiyy Egorovich, lived in the settlement of Tyanya of the Olekminsky region, performed "Dehlekhincho", "Dehlekhkehr", "Dehvehjdeh", "Gosigor", "Osoraj".
7. Pudova Nina Prokopiievna, a resident of the village of Iengra in the Neryungri region of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia).

In general, the lexical foundation of Evenki dance art differs in content, character, and manner of performance from the traditional dance art of the aborigines of Yakutia (Evens, Yukagirs, Chukchi, Yakuts). At the same time, the Evenk traditional dance experienced a great influence of the Yakut dance. In some local groups, the Evenki clans began to perform significantly slower, while at the same time, the Yakut round dances acquired the dynamic elements of the Evenki dance movement.

In the modern culture of the Evenks, the following varieties of round dance are preserved: *dehvehjdeh*, *gosugor*, *dyalikkehr*, *dyalekhincheh*, *dyakirde*, *oderaj*, *osoraj*, *ekhor'e*, *ikoleh*, *manchoraj*, *khehdev*, *khehguli*, *goshungo*. Upon careful consideration and comparison of all the above-mentioned round dances, it is possible to come to the opinion that, despite the different names, Evenk *ikehn*, *ikehvun* of all groups of Evenki have the same historical roots. When considering each dance separately, it is easy to notice that the manner of performance, the nature of the melody, the words of the chants, the movements are different. The round dance "Manchoraj" is a tribal dance of the Evenks of Southern Yakutia and is currently performed in the former Timplon district (now the Neryungri district, Iengra settlement) and the Olekminsky district of the village of Tyanya. Also, the following names of round dances were recorded in the Evenks: *osoraj* and

*gosigor* in the Aldan region, *odero* in the Timpton region, *gasigar* in the Olekminsk region.

The leading singer, *ikehlehn*, is especially valued in the Evenki dance – *ikehvun*. He is the main instigator in the dance: he gives the rhythm of the dance, the chant and improvises the words of the song. Sometimes one singer competes with another. According to the existing tradition, the performance of melodies by singers- *ikehlehn* is strictly differentiated. For example, only older men and women (*ikehlehn*) could sing the melody “o-so-roj! O-so-roj!”, the melody “ehgeh-geh-lehj-ej, ehg-geh-lej” - older women, the melody “delike-ehn”, de-le! Leh-ehn” and “do-vehr-dor-ty, do-vehr-du!” performed only by boys and girls. In recent years, this differentiation is not always respected.

The rhythms of singing songs were individual melodies of talented leading singers. Having a constant musical - rhythmic line, the leading singer composed comic, lyrical and epic couplets imbued with one thought during the dance. So, for example, “if it was autumn and the hunters were going to hunt, the song was usually about the upcoming hunt, if it was spring, when the fur trade was already over, the leading singer could sing about the results of the hunt, any incidents in the fishery, etc. d., calving of deer, about the joy of meeting with spring, the upcoming summer. The beauty of the girl is most often praised in the verses. Of course, the lead singer is not always able to compose a song right away, so there are rhythmic “interruptions,” a change in rhythms. Often, there are imitations of bird singing, the tramp of deer, humorous aspects of the event, in honor of which the festive round dance is conducted, can be emphasized; it is all highlighted by the chant of tones, individual chants, and shouts of approval [7].

The singer, who was able to improvise couplets in the course of the dance, was valued highly in *ikehvun*. Over the years, the melodies and lyrics of the songs were gradually remembered, became stable; sometimes they were modified, which most often depended on any events preceding the performance of songs or the mood of the leading singer. However, in any case, the rhythm - the *ikehlehn* song always remained unchanged.

The fact that the Evenks have a “personal song” shows the presence of ancient close ties with other ethnic groups, in particular, with the Chukchi and Eskimos, who still have the custom of creating a “personal song” and “personal dance”.

The same dance in different groups of Evenks has separate options. The table shows a comparison of the chants of round dance songs of the Neryungri (timpton) and Olekminsky Evenks.

TABLE I. COMPARISON OF THE CHANTS OF ROUND DANCE SONGS OF THE NERYUNGRI (TIMPTON) AND OLEKMINSKY EVENKS

| Olekminsky region, village<br>Tyan | Neryungri region, village<br>lengra |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Gosigor – gosigor                  | Gor – gor – gosigor                 |
| Gosigor – gor                      | Gosigor – gor                       |
| Dehlehincho– dehleh –              | Dehlehincho – hincho –              |

| Hincho                           | Hincho                            |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Dehvehjdehjuh –<br>Dehvehjdehjuh | Dehvo– dehvo- dehvehj –<br>Dehjuh |
| Osorajkan- osoraj                | Osoraj-osoraj                     |

The main differences between round dances can be singularities of singing words, differences in melody and dance movement. Different movements in different local groups of the Evenks may accompany the same round dance. For example, leg movements in the dance “Dehlekhincho” are pendulum in the Olekminsky Evenk, and leg movements are jumping from side to side in the Neryungri Evenk. The researcher of the Evenk folklore G.I. Varlamova - Keptuke in her book “Female performing tradition of the Evenks” writes that round dances were held at holidays where relatives usually gathered, then the sign of unity of relatives in the round dance turns out to be dominant, since the word *dyalan* “joint” and *dyal* “relatives, clan” are the same. (2) The genus “Dyal” unites all its members, as the joints of a human skeleton connect. The name “Dyaler” can be interpreted as a dance “joint clearing” (body training). “Dyaler” “stirred up” the clan, uniting it in the general ritual, once again reminding that each participant has a meaning in the skeleton that unites the clan, therefore the words *dyalan* “joint” and *dyal* “clan” is also a single whole. Healthy joints are a healthy person, a healthy person is a healthy generation, a healthy generation is the rebirth of a people (a branch of the gens). Therefore, it can be noted that in the archaic culture of the Evenki people, great importance was attached to the mobility and flexibility of the joints and to the generally rhythmic, dynamic body movement under the beat of a round dance.

### III. CONCLUSION

The results of the study of round dances as a popular folklore genre lead to the conclusion that they are the living embodiment of the archaic culture of nomadic peoples and continue to delight with their peculiarity and beauty at modern cultural events.

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