



THE HORSE IN THE LIFE AND CULTURE OF NORTHERN NOMADS

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ABSTRACT

The Sakha people (Yakuts) made an invaluable contribution to the world civilization, not only preserving the heritage of steppe culture in the North and the Arctic, but also developing new strategies of Northern horse breeding, adapted to extreme natural and climatic conditions. With the development of the vast Northern expanses of the Yakuts the Arctic space have become an oasis of horse breeding herd, breeding place Yakut horse breed, and it is this "horse" world today gives Yakutia its uniqueness. As noted by the participants of the First International Congress (September 4-7, 2006, Yakutsk) "Sustainable development of head horse breeding" from Japan, France, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Russia, the horse has played a major role in the development of human civilization. The experience and knowledge gained over many centuries by the peoples engaged in horse breeding are the national heritage of the peoples, the priceless wealth of the modern world. It's the great importance in the development of culture and art, the migration of nomads in search for new lands and the birth of new ethnic groups. Many traditions, customs and rites, associated with special reverence for the horse, have formed a kind of religious ideology, which is still active today.

KEYWORDS: Yakut mythology, culture of Northern nomads, the origin of Yakut horses, genetic characteristics of Yakut horses, horse breeding, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

INTRODUCTION

The Yakuts, being surrounded by migrants of different ethnicity in the world, has managed to preserve the core of the nomadic culture of horse breeding, and to develop special strategy of the North nomadism. Openness and constant movement in space created the Genesis code of the horsemen of North Asia. The idea that the Lena Valley was the Northern version of the Great Steppe develops the idea of the ecological culture adaptability of the Eurasian nomads [8]. The movement of nomads from the South to the land of eternal ice and snow is the beginning of the legendary history of the Yakut people. The complex interweaving of historical narrations and mythological stories about the "horse" people make up the main cycle of ancient legends about the *migration of the Yakuts from the South northward*. In general, the archaeological materials show that the territory of modern Yakutia was not isolated from the processes taking place in the Great Steppe. In the Bronze and the Early Iron Ages, various cultural traditions coexisted here, which arose both based on the autochthonous Late Neolithic basis and at the expense of alien tribes. The cultural

impulses of the horse breeding process have reached the Arctic territories, where already in the middle Ages, in addition to the crops with appropriating type of farming, there was a cattle-breeding cultural and economic type. This is reflected in the materials of burials of the XVII-XIX centuries, excavated in the Arctic and subarctic regions of Yakutia, where both human burial with a horse and accompanying equipment associated with horse breeding and cult of the horse were found [5]. In the cultural model of cattle breeders-the Sakha, which forms the principles of the organization of the developed space, the marking of its territory is distinguished by the nomination of localities and natural objects (rivers, lakes, mountains). So, economic adaptation to a new landscape of thought and its verbal sanctification by "naming" landmarks of the characters of space: At Haya (Loshad-Gora, Horse Mountain), At Eryus (Loshad-Reka, Horse River), At Kuelyuiea (Loshad-Ozero, Horse Lake), At Yuraeh (Loshad-Ruchey, Horse-Stream), At Balagan (Loshad-Dom, Horse-House). The toponyms associated with the spiritual world of nomad cattle breeders are distinguished, in

particular, with the cult of the horse, which remains fully and at the present time, [4]. Ritual actions to consolidate "their" landscape, markers of which were "parts of the horses", were made into toponyms with a mythological content: At Baha (Horse's head), in the Northern region At Maieetae, where the word "Maiee", besides the meaning of "head", contains the connotation of a clever animal. Toponymic trace of archaic rituals can be traced in the names of places "Siel yiaabyt" (the ritual of hanging the horse's mane to the tree), "Siel tarpyt" (the ritual of tying the foal to the hair of the horse's thread) "Y'yah yspyt" (the ritual offering of kumys to the heavenly deities and nature spirits), "At arangas" (the ritual burial of horse). The Sakha people's cultural values fund has an ancient history and dates back to the early culture of the nomads of Eurasia. The cult of the Sky and the white color, the sacralization of vertically established objects (Serge), the ritual significance of the vessel-choron, the veneration of the horse, seasonal (kumys) ceremonies, largely "lost" in the culture of other Siberian peoples, were miraculously preserved in the richest and historically inspired cultural heritage of the Sakha people in the Middle Lena.

MAIN PART. The chanting a horse in Yakut mythology. Horse occupies a special place in the beliefs and epic of the Turkic-speaking peoples of Sayan-Altai. According to experts, the cult of the horse among these peoples was the best represented in the Yakuts. "There are many features in it that have either completely disappeared from this cult among the peoples of Sayan-Altai, or they have remained in such a weakened form that they can be understood and restored only with the help of Yakut material." In the Yakut mythology preserved the story that "the first God created the horse, he came from a half-horse – half-human, and only from the last man was born." In the epic there are motives, from which it follows that the earth originated from the divine horse: "the original mother Earth from the very beginning, like a fast horse, glorified and exalted formed-created." It should be noted that the horse of the ancient Indo-Europeans symbolized the zoomorphic image of the whole Universe. It is noteworthy that in the myths of Sakha, the Universe and the Earth were associated with a beautiful stallion – aigyr silik. Similar concepts existed among the ancient Aryans that the night sky was identified with a black horse adorned with pearls [15, p. 24]. According to the ideas of Sakha, the patron-God of horse breeding *Grozny D'ohogoi* gives to people spirited horses and brave men, called in Olonkho *Kun D'ohogoi* toyon ("Solar master *D'ohogoi*"). This epithet points to the close connection of the patron of horse breeding with the cult of the sun, and correlates with the Central Asian

myth of the solar origin of the divine horse. In the Yakut epic tradition, "horses are sent from the Upper World, from the heavenly side, the land of the sun." The Yakuts compared the sun's rays with the tail of a white Mare [15, p. 24]. The Yakuts managed to preserve the system of religious beliefs, which clearly reflected their economic cycle in a new ways of the North. Summer calendar holiday Ysyakh, manifesting the theme of creation of Nature and Man modeled the symbols of life – affirming beginning and was associated with the creative forces of the Upper World – the heavenly deities of aiyy. The horse as a basis of life, and, consequently, the central symbol of culture was the main component of all religious and ritual system of Yakuts. The life cycle of a man and a horse performed in harmonious unity, and this phenomenon was and is the main key to understanding the ethnic tradition of Sakha. In the ethnogenesis of Sakha important are the Yakut-Mongolian contacts that took place in several stages wavelike. This is evidenced by the content in the active vocabulary of the Yakut language of a large number of words of Mongolian origin – the presence of about 2.5 thousand words-Mongolism penetrated into the Yakut language presumably in the XII-XIII centuries. This phenomenon is seen as the result of prolonged interaction between two different structures of languages, not excluding the existence of the Yakut-Mongolian bilingualism of the speakers of both languages at a certain historical period. By the nature of borrowings, they penetrated into the Yakut language at different times and in different territories. Confirmed is the fact that the first layer of Mongolian vocabulary has penetrated into pra-Yakut language, when the ancestors of the Yakuts lived in the territory of the Sayan-Altai. Later, in the middle Ages, when they found themselves in the territory of modern Yakutia, they "encountered there a certain Mongolian-speaking tribe (horo, as evidenced by the Yakut epic)" and assimilated it [14]. In all parts of speech are present borrowings from the Mongolian language, and possibly from several Mongolian languages. A significant number of them are found in terms of horse and cattle breeding. Mongolian borrowings in this part of the vocabulary "associated with the conduct of sedentary cattle breeding in the North", on the basis of which it was suggested, "the first settled cattle breeders in the North, independently created the original terminology of this culture, were Mongolian tribes" [3]. The Yakuts, as the linguistic material testifies, have adopted from the Mongols many elements of material and spiritual culture, including, according to some assumptions, methods of winter keeping of cattle [17].

The history of the origin and the main stages of development of the Yakut horse breeding:

The roots of the Yakut native horse go back centuries, and it is rightly among the oldest breeds. This is evidenced by the remains of a horse excavated by gold miners on the Indigirka River in the 70s of the last century, which, according to the researchers' definition, was still next to the mammoths, and the structure of the skeleton had a resemblance to the modern Yakut horse [12]. It is the only breed in the world which according to many researchers has occurred from wild white tundra horses and has not died out like a mammoth or a rhinoceros, and has remained up to now. According to the hypotheses of V.L. Seroshevsky (1993), M.I. Rogalevich (1941), M.F. Gabyshev (1957), Yu.N. Barmintseva (1963) the modern Yakut horse, especially its Northern types, was formed because of crossing of representatives of the horses brought by ancestors of Yakuts from the South (Baikal) from the wild Late Pleistocene horse which survived from the Ice Age. The emergence of one of the hypotheses about the obligatory participation of the blood of wild tundra horses in the breeding of modern Yakut horses is justified on the impossibility of rapid adaptation to the conditions of Yakutia of steppe horses – the ancestors of the Yakuts. M.F. Gabyshev (1957) considered it obvious that if the steppe horse of the Yakut ancestors appeared on the Lena together with the Yakuts, it would not stand the conditions of the new situation in the North with its long frosts and difficult wintering conditions. N.D. Alekseev (2005) in the article "New on the Origin of the Yakut Horses (biological aspects)" based on the results of his many years of research of the adaptive qualities of the Yakut horse comes to the conclusion about its southern origin. This is facilitated by the high species adaptive qualities of horses – the presence of a highly developed cordate layer in all categories of hair, as well as the ability of horses to exercise and last longer than the other farm animals to withstand intense physical exertion. At the same time, in the new territory horse breeding has preserved the whole technology developed in the more southern regions of Siberia, where the herds of horses were grazed all year round and did not require harvesting forage for the winter. In the more severe climatic conditions of the North, the Yakuts managed to successfully adapt and even bring out a special breed of horses adapted to low temperatures. After the inclusion of the territory of Yakutia in the Russian State, as a result of the yasach policy of tsarism, there was a mass migration of the Yakuts to the North. Thus, the breeding of cattle and herd horse breeding was advanced far in the Arctic, in the Arctic regions of

Siberia. From the second quarter of the XVIII century, the Yakuts began widely involved in public transportation: every year the Yakut uluses supplied thousands of horses with guides to transport food and goods of numerous government expeditions to the Far East and North America. According to calculations of G.P. Basharin, only for 1736 – 1785 and 1796 – 1830 was attracted 373,8 thousand horses [5]. In farms of Yakuts by 1917 there were 135.5 thousand horses, i.e. per capita there were 0.6 heads, twice more than other national groups of pre-revolutionary Yakutia. The horse breeding industry underwent serious tests in the 20th century. The traditional economy of the Yakuts was badly damaged during the Civil War and collectivization. The production and settlement type of Yakut economy was destroyed: the traditional alas-farm was recognized as not meeting the new rates of development and the requirements of the agrarian sector, especially for industrial development areas. Collectivization was accompanied by settlement, a gradual concentration of Yakut settlements, which, in turn, subsequently led to fodder and eco-landscape problems. The agricultural production of the Yakuts became a branch of the state economy, which is subordinate to the organizational structure of the single national economy of the country. During the years of Soviet power the Yakut horse breeding has experienced several periods of sharp contraction and only in the 1980s stabilized their population. By the beginning of the collapse of the Soviet system, in 1991 in Yakutia there were 199, 5 thousand horses [11]. In such a traditional economic niche of the Yakuts as horse breeding all the socio-economic and weather-climatic difficulties of the last thirty years were reflected. During the period from 1990 to 1998, a third of the horse population was lost, after the crisis of the nineties in the country by 2001 only 129.5 thousand heads survived. The urgent measures taken for state support of horse breeding have allowed to stabilize the situation to date. In the period of the 2000s, peasant farms and personal subsidiary plots became the main holders of the herds: their share in the horse-head exceeds the property of state agricultural enterprises and subsidiary farms of various enterprises and institutions [11, 12]. As of January 1, 2018, the number of horses totaled 183,889 heads, which amounted to 104.2% to the level of last year. At present, 99.0% of the livestock of meat herd horses are concentrated in the territory of Yakutia in agricultural enterprises and farms of the Far Eastern Federal district and 27% in the Russian Federation [13]. In 1987, the Yakut horse was approved as an independent breed, bred by the method of national selection, by orders of State Agroindustry Committee of the USSR and RSFSR, from September 2, 1987, №

680 and from October 1, 1987, № 871. Based on the results of laborious and joint work of scientists, breeders and practitioners of horses – Megezhekskaya and Prilenskaya, and 2 types - Kolymskaya and Yanskaya – were approved and registered in the State Register of Protected Selection Achievements of the Russian Federation on February 16, 2011.

Unique and productive qualities of the Yakut horse:

Modern Yakut horse shows a very high level of intra-breed genetic variability. 17 microsatellite loci were studied to assess the control of the Yakut horses origin, among them 145 alleles were identified. The number of alleles in the locus varied from 5 to 17. The greatest number of alleles was observed in autosomal loci ASB 17 (17 alleles). The locus of ASB 17 is characterized by an extremely high level of allele variability in all studied factory and local breeds. The Yakut horse is the ancestor of rare alleles of ASB 17 D, ASB 17 T. In the locus LEX 3, located on the X-chromosome, 10 alleles were identified, including those not typical of the factory breeds LEX3 G [17]. The genetic structure of the Yakut horse is characterized by a high level of genetic diversity of all panel STR-loci ($A_e=4,27$, $H_o=0,734$). For the Yakut horses a typical high frequency allele HTG4M (0,637), VHL20Q 176 (0,205), LEX3M (0,364) and the presence of private allele HMS3K (0,023) characterizes the uniqueness of the genetic structure of the Yakut horses [14]. The high level of in-breed genetic variability determines not only unique adaptive qualities, but also high productivity rates. The main indicator of productivity in herd horses is the indicator of their body weight. The range of vibrations of the live weight of the Yakut horse is considerable and ranges from 380 to 600 kg. Yakut horses have a high slaughter yield and meat yield of the carcass. They, depending on the age, after the autumn feeding, give the carcass on average: at 6 months of age – 106 kg; at 1.5 years – 180 kg; at 2.5 years – 165 kg and full-age – 228 kg, and their slaughter output, respectively, is: 55.9; 57.5; 49.1 and 54.5 %. Depending on the category of fatness, the caloric content of 1 kg of Yakut horse meat varies between 1918 – 2724 kilocalories [1]. In the republic, the production of horse meat is traditionally considered one of the main and priority areas in agriculture. Production of horse meat in live weight for 8 years (2008 – 2016) increased by 107% or from 6 thousand tons to 12.6 thousand tons. During these years, the share of horse meat in the total structure of meat produced in the republic increased from 16% to 36% in 2016. At present, there is every reason to believe that a significant part of meat products will

come from the development of horse breeding, the number of horses by 2030 may increase to 255 thousand heads, and more than 25 thousand tons of meat in live weight will be produced. The world community is focused on healthy food and organic products. In this aspect, horse, foal and milk of the Yakut horse are the most environmentally safe food products. A sufficiently high level of milk productivity of Yakut horse mares has been established. According to T.V. Ammosova (1971) from the average Yakut mares horses can be drunk for 2.5 – 3 months at 300 – 350 liters, from high – milk-up to 500 liters of commercial milk [2]. The first scientific studies on kumys production of Yakutia were held in 1945 – 1947 by the complex expedition, headed by Professor M. F. Gabyshev. Yakut ways and methods for the preparation of kumys and kumys ferments were summarized in the materials of the famous ethnographer A.A. Savvin (1948). In 1998, the technological conditions for the Yakut kumys prepared on natural ferment using the national fermented milk product – Sorat were developed and approved. In 2006, FSBRI "Yakut Research Institute of Agriculture named after M.G. Safronov received a decision of the Russian Agency for Patents and Trademarks to grant a patent for the invention – the method of preparation of Yakut kumys. In recent years, in the republic due to the high social importance of kumys is revival, preservation and development of its production. The horse breeding of Yakutia as an industry for the production of organic food has a great prospect for the supply of products to other regions, regions of Russia and foreign countries. In the world market, there are no analogues of the production of drugs and biologically active food additives derived from the fat and blood of Yakut horses [16]. The Republic has real opportunities to occupy a worthy niche among exporters of meat and its processed products – these are vast pasture lands that allow to reduce the cost of production, the presence of a large Chinese market in the neighborhood and, of course, the existing national traditions of horse breeding. The Yakut horse is our living history, witnesses of deep antiquity and the most interesting page of animal husbandry of the Far North. Studies of the Northern region of Russia show that in these conditions the most economically effective use of such, medium-sized, but mobile and hardy animals, universal in use. In addition, they are less demanding to the conditions of detention and have a high payment for feed. The digestive apparatus of the local Yakut horse is able to digesting a large amount of roughage, so on diets without concentrates it produces much more work than horses of factory breeds. Therefore, none of the specialized factory

breeds of horses can exist and work productively in the conditions of the polar region, practically along with the reindeer. Therefore, it makes no sense to

cross them with other breeds that are not adapted to these extreme conditions of existence.

CONCLUSION

Returning to our topic, it should be emphasized that the horse as the basis of life activity unites us into a single world of horse breeders of Central Asia and the

Arctic and opens up new opportunities and prospects for joint scientific, cultural and applied projects.

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