

Chapter Title: Dogs, Nomads and Hunters in Southern Siberia

Chapter Author(s): Francesca Lugli and Galina B. Sychenko

Book Title: Dogs, Past and Present

Book Subtitle: An Interdisciplinary Perspective

Book Editor(s): Ivana Fiore, Francesca Lugli

Published by: Archaeopress. (2023)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.14638137.21>

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



This book is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.



*Archaeopress* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Dogs, Past and Present*

## 3.4 Dogs, Nomads and Hunters in Southern Siberia

Francesca Lugli<sup>1</sup> and Galina B. Sychenko<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associazione Italiana di Etnoarcheologia, Via Principe Umberto 41, 00185 Roma, Italy.  
luglifrance@gmail.com, phurdok@gmail.com

Corresponding author: Francesca Lugli, luglifrance@gmail.com

### Abstract

The article discusses some of the results of the research project supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation – Italy MFA from 2013 to 2017, and focuses on the observation, documentation, and analysis of the relationships between man and dog in many pastoralist and nomadic cultures living in different ecosystems (steppe, *taiga*, mountains, mountain *tundra*, rivers and so on) in Southern Siberia. All of these societies are characterised by the presence of dogs which are always considered crucial and often indispensable. Different kinds of relationships between man and dog were observed and rich materials (photos, videos, audio recordings and drawings) were collected. On the basis of the complex methodology, proposed in Lugli (2016) and improved during the project, the authors analyse different aspects which characterise the existence of dogs and their relationships with humans in different ecosystems as well as in economic and cultural contexts.

**Keywords:** dogs, southern Siberia, pastoralism, hunting, methodology.

### 1 Introduction

In 2013, the Italian Association for Ethnoarchaeology with sponsorship from Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation – Italy MFA started the project ‘Siberian nomads and their dogs’. From 2013 to 2017 a collaboration took place with Novosibirsk State Conservatory, Institute of Philology (SB RAS, Novosibirsk), Institute for Humanities and Kyzyl College of Arts (RT) and Institute of Altaistics (RA). The research project focused on the observation, documentation, and analysis of the relationships between man and dog in many pastoralist and nomadic cultures living in different ecosystems (steppe, *taiga*, mountains, mountain *tundra*, rivers and so on) in Southern Siberia.

Since 2013 five expeditions have been conducted by the authors with various participants: 2013 - Republic of Tyva (RT), Erzin district (A.Kh. Kan-ool, A.A. Khertek, A.S. Khertek); 2014 - Republic of Altai, RA (E.L. Tiron, A.V. Zolotukhina); 2015 - Kemerovo, K (L.N. Arbachakova, A.N. Arbachakov, K.A. Sagalaev); 2016 - RA (V.Ja. Sumachakova); 2017 - RT (A.Kh. Kan-ool, E.L. Tiron, Ch.T. Achity) (Figure 1).

During the missions, the authors managed to observe several different ethnic groups in southern Tuva (2013, Erzin Tuvas), central Altai (2014, Altai-Kizhi), southern Kemerovo (2015, Shors), northern Altai (2016, Chalkans) and north-eastern Tuva (2017, ‘Taiga’ Tuva-Tozhu, ‘River’ Tuva-Tozhu). All of them belong to the Turkic linguistic group, but from a cultural point of view, they represent different economic types.

Four main kinds of pastoralisms were documented: steppe nomadism, transhumant pastoralism, mixed pastoralism economy and reindeer breeding.

The Erzin region in southern Tuva is crossed by the Tesiin Gol river and is characterised by cold desert, dry steppes, desert steppes and meadow steppes (Golubyatnikov *et al.* 2020: 5). It is part of the ancient Uvsnuur lake basin that in 2003 was included as a world heritage site, representing one of the twelve protected areas that are the major biomes of eastern Eurasia.<sup>1</sup> The climate is dry continental, with cold winters.

It is a region of intense cultural exchange between Tuva and Mongolia and the Tore-Khol lake between the Russian and Mongolian borders is a crucial element of the local economy, such that Mongolian and Tuvian herders are allowed to move along the border without particular restrictions.

Tuvian steppe pastoralism went through important changes during the last century which modified its traditional social and economic organisation, especially concerning the property of livestock and the role of the households, but it maintained the main traditional crucial features of Central Asian steppe culture: the use of the traditional felt tent (*ger* in Mongolian, *yurta* in Russian taken from Turkic languages and *öz/ög* in Tuvian), the sheep, goats, bovines, camels and horses breeding, the seasonal roaming, the use and reuse of the same *stoianka* (herders’ camp) during the cold months.

<sup>1</sup> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/769/>

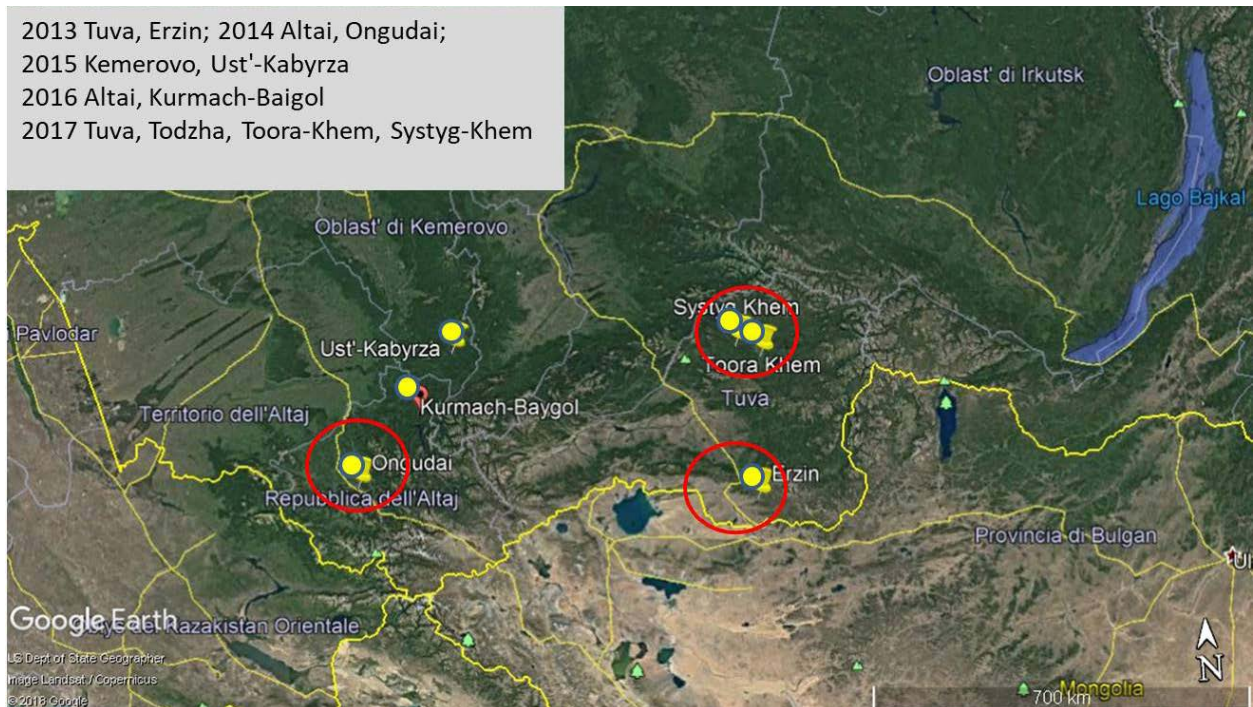


Figure 1. Southern Siberia: locations of the field research (from Google Earth).

Thanks to good pasture, water and salt availability that is abundant near the lake and in the mountains, nomads move only 3–5 times a year and the camps are usually around 18–25 km from each other.

Winter camps are not located close to the river or the lake, the traditional felt tent is often replaced by a wooden structure with two sloping roofs. The camps are not in the mountains where they used to be in the past, they are bigger than the traditional ones, with between two and six households living there, and may have covered and protected wooden structures for ovines and bovines.

Herders move to the lake in the warm season where they meet their Mongolian neighbours.

The complex mountain system of Altai is a crucial region for the study of dog domestication. In fact, the remains of a 33,000-year-old dog skull with evidence of domestication were found in the Razboinichya Cave in the western area of the Republic of Altai (Ovodov *et al.* 2011).

From a geographical perspective, these mountains are a natural interruption between the Siberian *taiga* and the steppe and arid lands of Mongolia and Kazakhstan. The Russian Altai mountains which can be more than 4000 metres high are extremely verdant with thousands of lakes and irregular steep rocks. The climate is severely continental with long cold winters and short warm summers.

In the Altai, herders mainly breed sheep and bovines, they spend the warm season in the mountains and the cold months in the valleys, the opposite model compared to the steppe model. In the Ongudai district (central Altai) the authors have observed the summer camps start from around 1200 metres above sea level and are essentially at an altitude between 1880 and 2100 metres. Pastoralism here has changed during the last century. In the past, families moved depending on the seasons. Nowadays, herders move with their livestock but have their own houses in the villages where their wives and children live all year long. Sometimes all the members of a family also move to the mountains. The livestock transfer usually takes no more than a couple of days from one camp to the following one.

The camps are usually of one family and there is only one housing structure. It is more and more uncommon to find the beautiful traditional hexagonal wooden *ail* that was covered with bark. The current lodges are usually quadrangular, sometimes pentagonal, and often covered with modern commercial materials.

The Todzha district (north-eastern Tuva) is situated in a wide basin surrounded by mountains, rich in dense forests, wide valleys and lakes. The area is characterised by a mixed economy that includes the coexistence and interaction of: reindeer breeders who lead a nomadic life; herders - essentially cattle and horse breeders - who usually have fixed camps for the various seasons; sedentary herders who live close to the villages and move the livestock to the pasture when necessary.

In the herders' camps, more than one family can live together. The current houses are usually wooden quadrangular structures.

Reindeer herders live nomadically in the northeastern *taiga* and mountain *tundra* where they continuously move in search of good pasture for the reindeers. Sporadically, they come to the villages or their vicinity to obtain necessities, and to exchange or sell reindeer skins, antlers or meat. They live in the traditional cone-shaped tents made of branches and bark and are currently covered by tarpaulin.

This socio-economic model is consistently supported and complemented by the activity of hunting, mainly for fur-bearing animals, which is carried out both by professional hunters, non-professional hunters and by shepherds who may be hunters as well and be away from their camps for months at a time, obviously leaving some family members behind to look after the livestock.

The coexistence in a single territory of different activities, characterised by varying degrees of mobility and the use of dogs, is one of the most interesting features of this region which, thanks to its isolation, presents remarkable lines of continuity with a more or less distant past. Furthermore, what makes the area even more interesting are the contacts that shepherds, especially reindeer herders, have had over time with the Tsaatan, the reindeer herders who inhabit northern Mongolia in the Khovsgol region, so much so that, in some cases, it has been reported to us that the dogs have been proven to be from the Tsaatan.

The village of Kurmach-Baygol in the Turochak district of the Republic of Altai is located in the north-east of the Republic of Altai, on the border with the Altai *krai*, Kemerovo *oblast'* and the Republic of Khakassia. It appears to be a typical settlement of the northern Altai, which differs significantly from its central and southern regions. This part of southern Siberia geographically includes the northern foothills of Altai, Kuznetskii Alatau and the upper reaches of the River Abakan. It is characterised by a *taiga* landscape and snowy winters that contribute to the development of a special type of economy. Small-numbered Turkic-speaking groups - among them, the Chalkans and Shors we visited - have developed a rather complex type of economy consisting of hunting, fishing, gathering, cattle- and horse-breeding, farming, as well as a variety of ancient crafts (Sychenko 2021).

The Chalkans represent a typical model of the culture of the *taiga* zone. Hunting has been their basic economic activity since ancient times. Scientists assign hunting to have a paramount role in the traditional economy

(Belgibaev 2001). Horse-breeding was also known amongst them even before colonisation by the Russian empire. The importance of the horse in traditional Chalkan culture is regarded as evidence of the nomadic past of their remote ancestors (Belgibaev 2001). Scientists believe that the Chalkans adopted cattle-breeding from the Russian settlers no earlier than the middle of the XIX century. It had become predominant among them in the XX century, due to the abundance of grass in the summer and feeding hay in the winter. Such husbandry is not subject to migrations; moreover, simple herding has no special needs: in many cases the cattle move freely in search of food, fairly close to settlements, with impassable *taiga* and rivers serving as a natural barrier (Belgibaev 2001).

Hunting in a *taiga* area includes several periods of different lengths. In the spring and summer periods, hunting is occasional and for some species it is forbidden. September is the month for hunting large ungulates (*maral*, deer). Most important is the one-month late autumn period of hunting with dogs for fur-bearing animals: squirrel, kolinsky, ermine, and sable in particular, as well as a longer period of winter hunting for different animals without dogs. The winter hunt for bears, which were fat and beautifully skinned, had a special and sacred significance. It was considered particularly prestigious among hunters. Our informants mentioned numerous small and medium-sized animals and birds, among which roe deer, fox, hare, grouse, hazel-grouse and others were considered most valuable.

In mountain areas of Altai, the hunting of wild goats, rams and other ungulates was important. In the steppes of the Altai and Tuva, cattle breeders hunted marmots, whose meat is considered a delicacy and has medicinal value.

Hunting wolves depends on a specific situation. In steppe and mountainous areas wolves are predators who prey on livestock, and are therefore to be exterminated. In addition their hides are used (although they are not considered very valuable), and various body parts have applications in folk medicine. In the *taiga* zone wolves are considerably fewer in number and do not cause much trouble. In general, the type of hunting is determined by the ecosystem, the type of economy and the presence of certain commercial animals.

Hunting is practised by professional hunters, amateurs and herders as well. Small animals are even hunted by children. During the Soviet era, many hunters were officially employed, such as Shor hunter S.I. Kurtegeshev from Kabyrza village, Kemerovo *oblast'*, or many informants from Systyg-Khem village in Todzha district. But nowadays, people hunt mainly for themselves, for meat, and also to sell their furs on the

	Nomadism	Semi-nomadism	Transhumance	Settled way of life
<b>Pastoralists</b>	'Taiga' Tuva-Tozhu	Erzin Tuvas	Altai-Kizhi	Chalkans, Shors, 'River' Tuva-Tozhu
<b>Hunters</b>	'Taiga' Tuva-Tozhu		Chalkans, Shors, 'River' Tuva-Tozhu	

Table 1. Types of economic activities of observed ethnic groups.

free market. Therefore, many of our informants were professional but not official hunters. Hunting is strictly protected and regulated by governmental legislation.<sup>2</sup> It is typical for hunting communities to use dogs in certain types of hunting, especially for fur-bearing animals as well as bears. In rural settlements, 'other', 'regular', 'village' dogs perform guard duties, i.e. there is a specialisation in which hunting dogs constitute an elite.

In Table 1 we have attempted to present a typology of the hunter-gatherer communities we surveyed, depending on the predominant type of economic activity.<sup>3</sup> It should be stressed that economies are always complex and include many additional options to make better use of the resources of the areas they occupy (Table 1). All of these societies are characterised by the presence of dogs which are often considered indispensable. On the other hand, each observed case is characterised by a different kind of relationship between man and dog (Lugli and Sychenko 2018: 65–66).

## 2 Methods of the research

The research was based on the interdisciplinary approach previously elaborated in Mongolia (Lugli 2016) where the ethnoarchaeological mission 'The camps of Mongolian nomads - an ethnoarchaeological perspective' was conducted by G. Capitini and F. Lugli since 2005 (see Capitini and Lugli in the volume)<sup>4</sup> and where the study of the importance of dogs in Mongolian nomadism has become a crucial point of the research since 2012. In the missions, Ethnoarchaeology was used as a research strategy which analyses archaeological and historical problems from a diachronic and interdisciplinary perspective.

The presence of dogs must be analysed based on the economies, cultures and ecosystems that are taken into account. In Southern Siberia, different pastoralisms in the Tuva and Altai regions and different types of hunting in Tuva, Altai and Kemerovo were observed (Table 1). Consequently, the methodology previously elaborated in Mongolia was modified and enriched depending on the different contexts that were observed.

The authors believe that an interdisciplinary perspective is indispensable to address the importance of dogs in human history. Therefore, ethnoarchaeological, anthropological, ethnomusicological, folklore and ethnographic methodology were used.

Nomads' camps and also hunters' houses in their villages were georeferenced, observed, with a particular focus on dogs' spatial presence from an ethnoarchaeological perspective. The sound signals that the owners use to communicate with their dogs were recorded. The daily life of dogs was documented in herders' camps and hunters' villages, when possible.

The interview was a crucial part of the research and it aimed to investigate tangible and intangible aspects of the topic with special attention to differences and regularities in the various cultural, economic and geographical situations which were observed.

After preliminary geographical information, the first part of the interview was dedicated to the general information about the dog or dog's master and his/her family (names, surnames, patronymics, clan, birthplaces, ages, education etc.). Immediately after, economy, mobility, type of pastoralism or hunting, use and spatial organisation of the camp, the *yurta*/shelter/house were considered.

The second part of the interview was especially focused on dogs. The interviewed person was always free to talk about his/her dog but fixed questions were always posed:

How many dogs do you have?

For each dog: Name? Birthplace? Breed? Age? Sex? Colour? Size? How old was it when you took it?

<sup>2</sup> 'Legislation of the Russian Federation in the sphere of protection and use of the wildlife and its natural environment is based upon the provisions of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the federal laws on environmental protection and it consists of this Federal law, laws and other normative legal acts of the Russian Federation adopted in relation thereto, and also by laws and other normative legal acts of the subjects of the Russian Federation on protection and use of the wildlife' (<http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/rus22375E.pdf>).

<sup>3</sup> Table 1 was elaborated on the basis of models proposed in Fabietti and Remotti (2001).

<sup>4</sup> The mission was promoted by AIE with the sponsorship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation – Italy MFA.

Where and how did you take/buy the dog? Does a tradition or a special acquisition procedure exist?<sup>5</sup>

Are there special breeds in the area? Do you know if there were different breeds in the past?

Do you prefer female or male dogs? Why?

Do you prefer a particular colour? Why?

What are the choice criteria to select a puppy?

Do you have special traditions about puppies?

How do you choose the name?

What are the qualities of a good dog?

What are the dog's tasks (guarding, hunting, herd control, sledge dog, companion, other)?

Can you describe a dog's day and a day with your dog?

How is a dog trained?

What words do you teach the dog?

What signals do you teach the dog?

Why and how do you punish a dog?

Does the dog enter the tent/house/shelter?

Is the dog free or tied in the camp?

Where does the dog sleep?

What, where and when does the dog eat?

Is the dog free to mate whenever he/she wants?

What do you do with the puppies?

What do you do if a dog has health problems?

Can you tell me a special event that you experienced with your dog?

Do you know any local traditions about dogs?

Do you know any legends, epics or tales about dogs?

Do you have funeral rites and funeral formulas for a dog's death?

Is a dog a humans' best friend?

What is the relationship between dogs and wolves?

What about dog/wolf hybrids?

What do you think about dogs?

To conclude, is life possible without a dog? And, why yes, or why not?

Dogs were photographed with or without their owners, and when it was possible, dog's hair samples were taken to analyse their mitochondrial data (see the article by Daria Sanna *et al.* in the volume) to provide better knowledge and understanding of the dog's presence and its evolutionary process in Central Asia.

### 3 Materials and Results

The dogs' daily life, their tasks and the relationship they have with humans can considerably vary,

depending on different economies, cultural contexts and ecosystems. Traditions are sometimes altered, modified or replaced above all by television and/or social media, depending on the internet connection availability. So, it is often possible to observe recent and unusual breeds and behaviour among herders and hunters.

#### 3.1 Criteria of choice of puppies

The choice of puppies is an important consideration for both herders and hunters. All respondents named several selection criteria - at least two or three. All the criteria they mentioned can be divided into different categories. The first category is the qualities of the puppy that will determine its success in future use. The second category is the puppy's gender, the third is the puppy's appearance and the fourth is the breed.

##### 3.1.1 Qualities of the puppy

Our informants were almost unanimous in stating that the choice of dog was very important for its future use. Many said that dogs differ in their qualities according to their use. If a family's economic activity is limited to a single sphere - for example, traditional nomadic herding - then the choice of a puppy is conditioned by this. In other cases - such as the Kurmach-Baigol or Kabyrza hunters - hunting dogs are considered to be special, they do not serve as guard dogs in the village: there are other dogs for that purpose. Consequently, it can be assumed that the puppy's qualitative characteristics will be judged from these perspectives.

In fact, we found that on the one hand for both nomads and hunters of different types, the qualities of the puppy that are evaluated when choosing are roughly the same. These are courage, strength, intellect, and, in particular, having a low pain threshold. For example, a common selection method to establish a dog's pain threshold is to take the puppy by the tail (sometimes - withers) and lift it up. If the puppy remains silent, then this is considered a good sign.

On the other hand, there are also differences. Thus, Tuvan steppe nomads believe that a good dog should have a calm temperament, resting during the day and guarding at night. Therefore, when selecting a puppy, its character is assessed (Figure 2).

Vitality and willpower are very important for hunting dogs. They are tested in the following way: puppies, whose eyes have not yet opened, are carried a distance away from their mother, and whoever returns is considered to be the best. This puppy is seen to be smarter, faster and more tenacious. A similar method is to take the pups away from the kennel, and whoever crawls back first is considered better (Ongudai).

<sup>5</sup> E.g. for Mongolian nomads a dog cannot be bought, it cannot be a present, it must be simply taken (Lugli 2016).





Figure 2. Two puppies near the yurt. Erzin, 2013 (Photo by G. Sychenko).

A bark can be a valid sign to understand if a puppy will be a good hunter. If it barks at people it will be able to take on big wild animals like bears and boar, the opposite means that it will have a sweeter temperament and that it will hunt small animals (M.V. Irbilig Tuva 2017). Aleksei Dyganchi (Tuva 2017) said that he immediately understood that his dog was a hunter when he listened to it barking.

We haven't noticed any significant difference, except that strength and a well-balanced character are more important for nomads, but for hunters - speed and intelligence are the priority.

### 3.1.2 Gender of the puppy

When choosing a puppy, both shepherds and hunters look primarily at the mother. Already at the stage of selection, the qualities of the female are important. Some bitches that have produced good offspring have become famous.

Normally, neither nomads nor hunters neutered or spayed their dogs, so their gendered characteristics have relevance in use and preference. Thus, nomads and shepherds in the southern Tuva and central Altai tend to keep mainly male dogs near their yurt or shepherd's huts. The phenomenon is so consistent that of the twenty-five dogs we observed and sampled in the Erzin area, only five are female. In fact, owners argue

that managing the female dogs' cycle is complicated because of the oestrus of the bitch and therefore the dog's removal from the camp for more or less prolonged periods, the arrival of male dogs fighting each other for her, ultimately, also pregnancy and the birth of puppies.

In the central Altai, this tendency manifests itself not only among shepherds, but also among hunters. We were told that the whole litter is never saved, only the best puppies are taken and females are eliminated first, although some are kept for good breeding and later become famous. 'Bitches are not liked here, they try to get rid of them. Only if she produces good puppies, which are taken away by hunters, they are valued, but often only the first litter is good, and then not. Unwanted puppies are killed or left in the village near the school, children pick them up' (A.A., Ongudai).

Quite the opposite is true for hunters. The prevailing opinion among the hunting communities (Kurmach-Baigol, Kabyrza, Todzha) was a preference for females as a hunting companion dog. In reality, both sexes are used, but it is universally believed that when hunting, bitches 'work better', are less tired and don't run away.<sup>6</sup> Also, females begin to hunt earlier than males. The male dogs lose interest in the work faster and can run away

<sup>6</sup> This opinion is shared by hunters from many different regions. For example, many Italian hunters believe that females are better for hunting because they are more serious, disciplined and sometimes also more intelligent (personal communication).



Figure 3. A hunter with his dogs. Todzha 2017 (Photo by F. Lugli).

for considerable distances. The opinion that bitches are more agile was expressed also in the Ongudai district.

In the communities we surveyed, if shepherds prefer male dogs, it is only because there is no shortage of good bitches in the surrounding villages and settlements who can produce healthy, hard-working offspring. The hunters themselves live in such settlements.

### 3.1.3 Appearance of the puppy

The puppy's external qualities include colour as well as individual physical characteristics. Regarding colour, most informants consider it unimportant, although some owners prefer dogs of a certain colour. In Erzin, a special emphasis is noted on black matted dogs with red spots and 'four eyes', i.e. light spots above the eyes. These traits are typical of Mongolian and Tuvian sheepdogs which are rarely seen nowadays. If a puppy has even a purely outward resemblance to a traditional sheepdog, it is more highly valued.

It has been noted amongst Tozhu deer breeders and hunters that the most desirable colour for a dog is white, as this makes it less visible in winter (Figure 3).

It should be noted that northern Altai and Shor hunters do not use dogs during winter hunting, which involves deep snow cover and makes it difficult to move the dogs. Among the Tozhu people, a dog follows its master

and reindeer all year-round, and in winter, which lasts several months, a light-coloured coat plays a crucial role. It is interesting to note in relation to this, one of the informants from Erzin had a white male dog, taken from the Tozhu of Kungurtug (eastern Tuva).

Even though one of the shepherds said that it is better if the dog does not look like a wolf in colour, most of the dogs we observed in the steppe area were of greyish and reddish colours.

Other external criteria are strong wide paws, a long bent tail, a scarlet tongue, 'antennae' whiskers, a bump on the skull, and transverse folds on the palate. Most of these criteria were listed by hunters.

Wide paws are indispensable for moving in the snow, so this criterion was particularly noted by Tozhu reindeer herders and hunters. The long bent tail has also been largely noted by hunters. It is used as a kind of 'rudder', allowing the hunting dog to manoeuvre better when chasing the beast. A scarlet tongue mentioned only once, demonstrates the healthiness of a dog, whereas long antenna whiskers are associated with a heightened sense of smell, which is essential for a hunting dog. 'A good *laika* doesn't need any training, it picks up the trail straight away. The main thing is a good sense of smell, then it will find it without a trace. Most of us hunt by trail, that's when the first snow falls' (P.D. Pustogachev, KB).





Figure 4. A Tuvan dog near the entrance of a yurt. Erzin 2013 (Photo by F. Lugli).



Figure 5. An old dog playing with children. Erzin 2013 (Photo by F. Lugli).

The presence of a bump on the skull is widely regarded as indicative of a dog's intelligence. 'When there are long whisker-like hairs near the ears - called 'antennae' - they are good at sniffing. When there is a bump on the head - 'cerebellum' - the dog has good coordination and is smart. The teeth are also checked - they should be healthy and the claws should be good' (Yu.P. Pustogachev, KB).

Another custom, which is quite common, seems strange at first glance. 'You open puppy's mouth, look - there should be dark stripes on the palate, the more the better' (S.I. Kurtegeshev, K). Many hunters insisted that the number of the folds of the palate should be odd and a minimum of 7 (9 or 11 is better). No explanation was given for this, the general motive being that this was the way older people did it. It can be assumed that this criterion, which was repeated very frequently, is related to the size of the dog's cranium and, therefore, higher intelligence, too.

### 3.1.4 Breed of the puppy

In all of the communities studied, there are notions of pre-existing local dog breeds. We particularly noted this in southern and north-eastern Tuva. In Erzin, local shepherd dogs that were very similar to the Mongolian *bankhar* were repeatedly mentioned. Some informants believe that Tuvanian dogs differed in their smaller size. One of the most characteristic features of Tuvanian sheepdogs was a strong build, long shaggy hair and a characteristic colour - black or black with red spots, including light dots above the eyes (Figures 4 and 5). In Tuva itself and Moscow, special breeders try to revive this breed<sup>7</sup>, some of which can still be found in Tuva. According to our informants, such puppies are very rare and are of great value.

In Todzha, many informants reported a local *laika* breed, which differs from the modern *laika* in being smaller, with shorter but broader paws, thick fur and a distinctive light (white or light-grey) 'collar'.

Actually, local dog breeds in Southern Siberia have long been supplanted by the western-Siberian *laika*, well adapted to various conditions and quite versatile in their qualities.<sup>8</sup> It is currently the predominant canine breed (Figure 6). It is absolutely prevalent in all hunting communities as it perfectly suits the needs of hunters. They carefully select these dogs, and can travel especially to quite distant places to get them and will pay considerable sums of money for them. *Laikas* make up the 'elite' in hunting societies and do not mix with so-called 'village dogs', which are tied up on a lead outside the house and guard the dwelling.<sup>9</sup> Village guard dogs are most often mongrels, hybrids of different breeds.

Currently, some other breeds are also imported from the outside, such as the Caucasian shepherd dog, the East European shepherd dog, and the Siberian husky as well as decorative breeds for home keeping. Quite good qualities were noted in mestizos with hounds.

However, some dog breeds have not proved to be satisfactory. In the Erzin district we met a wolfhound called Masha, but she didn't do a good job as a guard. The Caucasian shepherd dog is considered overly aggressive, which is not a desirable characteristic of a sheepdog. In general, we haven't noticed any desire at all for breeds with pronounced fighting qualities neither among nomads, nor hunters.

<sup>7</sup> See for example <http://mongun.ru/> (viewed 2 April 2021).

<sup>8</sup> Very informative article about this breed which gives precise ideas about its story and qualities can be found in Wikipedia.

<sup>9</sup> *Laikas*, even in the village, are generally not tethered.



Figure 6. *Laikas* of the village Kurmach-Baigol. 2016 (Photo by G. Sychenko).

### 3.2 Acquisition of the puppy

It is common for both nomads and hunters to have several dogs of different ages to ensure continuity of their service. We are repeatedly told that it is better to take puppies from different parents, and by no means siblings. This is apparently motivated by concern for healthy offspring.

Nomadic pastoralists, who prefer male dogs, usually take their pups from relatives and acquaintances who live in nearby villages where they regularly come to stock up on food, clothing and fuel, and where their children often attend school. They usually just 'take' the puppies, sometimes for a symbolic fee. A puppy can also be 'given', but such a gift is not considered valuable. The custom of stealing a puppy is not practised by adults, but theft is a fairly popular method of getting a puppy by children. Naturally, this is not a criminal act, but a custom that has been going on since olden times. It is usually practised by children who 'steal' the chosen puppy and bring it to their parents or grandparents. There are very few cases when a stray dog associates itself with the *yurta*. In the cases we have been told about, this adaptation has been successful. Nowadays, puppies can be brought in from more distant places (for example from the capital of the region), of different breeds, but so far this trend is too exotic and does not always pay off.

Hunters, we have observed, are constantly on the lookout for opportunities to acquire a good hunting dog. They generally use the same methods, but their

geographical acquisition is wider than that of nomads. Thus, they are willing to travel to another region, purchase a dog from kennels and even pay decent money for it. This may have to do with economics, as a good hunting season provides good financial support for the hunter's family.

### 3.3 Names of dogs

The choice of a name for a dog is, on the one hand, very important; on the other hand, it often seems frivolous and even ironic. Dogs are given a wide variety of names - linguistically and semantically. We have grouped the names encountered into several tables (Tables 2-5) according to expeditions, distributing them according to the linguistic principle (in the native language or Russian) and providing a semantic translation. The colour highlights correspond to the different semantic categories analysed below.

The pastoral nomads of Erzin have Tuvian and Russian names for their dogs with approximately equal frequency. The semantic categories in the two groups partially overlap. They are: a natural object or place (light blue cell); colour in general (green cells) or some body parts (light green cells); the name of a bird (blue cells) or an animal (dark pink cells). The name *Laika* is polysemous. This category is associated with a specific type of dog (peach cell). The right side of the table also highlights typical Russian nicknames whose meaning is unlikely to be fully understood by dog owners (lilac cells) (Table 2).

The colour highlights of Tables 2–5 correspond to the different semantic categories: a natural object or place (light blue); a name of a bird (blue) or an animal (dark pink); a body part or some physical bodily characteristic (grey); some qualities of a dog (light yellow); colour in general (green) or some body parts (light green); specific type of dog (peach); Russian nicknames (lilac).

Table 2. Names of dogs by Tuvian steppe pastoralists.

Authentic Tuvian names		Loan names	
Name	Translation or significance	Name	Translation or significance
Taiga (2)	Forest / High mountain	Laika (3)	Popular dog-breed; derives from <i>лаять</i> 'to bark'; name of famous 'cosmic dog'
Ezir (2)	Eagle	Sharik (2)	Ball (dimin.)
Khartyga	Hawk / Falcon	Tuzik	Ace (dimin.)
Arzylan	Lion	Chaika	Seagull
As	Ermine	Belyi	White
Shangyr	Youthful (?)	Ryzhyi	Red-haired
Mel'der (2)	Bay	Rex	King
Kara	Black	Tarzan	Hero by E.R. Burroughs
Akkol	White arm / hand (paw)	Mishka	Masculine name (dimin. of Mikhail, or <i>Misha</i> 'Bear')
Moinakh	Neck (dimin.; usually white)	Masha	Feminine name (dimin. of Maria)
Tabak / Tavak	Plate, dish (in Tuv.), or Tobacco		

Table 3. Names of dogs by Altaian pastoralists.

Authentic Altaian names		Loan names	
Name	Translation or significance	Name	Translation or significance
Taigyl	Special kind of a grey-hound, <i>borzaia</i> (rus.); Enormous dog (myth.)	Mukhtar	Dog-hero of a Soviet movie and serial
Argut	Name of river in southern Altai	Marsik	Dimin. of Mars
Ak kol	White arm / hand (paw)		
Moinakh (2)	Neck (dimin.; usually white)		
Nai	Probably from Mong. 'friendship, friend'		

Table 4. Names of dogs by Tuva-Tozhu pastoralists and hunters.

Authentic Tuvian names		Loan names	
Name	Translation or significance	Name	Translation or significance
Taiga (2)	Forest / High mountain	Tungus (2)	Ethnic name or particular kind of <i>laika</i>
Koigunak	Hare	Sharik	Ball (dimin.)
Küske	Mouse	Chernyi	Black
Kaldarak (3)	Diminutive of <i>kaldar</i> - variety of bay	Belka	Derives from Rus. <i>белая</i> 'white' or squirrel; name of famous 'cosmic dog'
Saryg (4), Sagygbai	Yellow / light bay	Ukho	Ear
Shokarak (2)	Diminutive of <i>shokar</i> - spotted	Pal'ma	Palm-tree, or bladed weapon (?)
Kuuran	Light grey	Argo	Argo [ship]
Ak kol (4)	White arm / hand (paw)	Evro	Euro
Ak tösh	White breast		
Moinakh (4)	Neck (dimin., usually white)		
Chürek	Heart		
Köstüg (5)	With four eyes; particular kind of a dog		
Düktügür / Düktüg	Hairy		
Taskarak	Bald		
Cherlikpen	Wild		
Borbak	Small ball (= Rus. <i>Sharik</i> )		
N'azyi	From Mong. 'humble, small, nondescript' (?)		

Table 5. Names of dogs by Altaian hunters

Authentic Altaian names		Loan names	
Name	Translation or significance	Name	Translation or significance
Altai (2)	Name of the region, sacred area	Belyi	White
Taiga	Forest / High mountain	Lapka	Paw (dimin.)
		Okhotnik	Hunter
		Smelyi	Courageous
		Dama (2)	Lady, Dame
		Strelka	Arrow (dimin.); name of famous 'cosmic dog'
		Pal'ma	Palm-tree, or bladed weapon (?)
		Rex	King
		Pirat	Pirate
		Mukhtar	Dog-hero of a Soviet movie and serial
		Tata	No exact meaning
		Sh'ita	No exact meaning

In pastoralists and hunters of the central Altai we find more national names of the already met categories (but not all of them). A noteworthy feature is the presence of mythological majestic names (Table 3). A great variety of names has been recorded for the Tuva-Tozhu people. Interestingly, they are dominated by national dog names and new categories appear: a body part or some physical bodily characteristic (grey cells) and some qualities of a dog (light yellow cell). Some exotic names (Argo, Evro) are present, too (Table 4).

The hunters of the northern Altai, on the other hand, have predominantly Russian names for their dogs. There are some fairly original female names (Dama, Tata, Sh'ita) (Table 5). Finally, we have recorded only two Russian dog's names (Naida and Sharik) among Shorian hunters.

### 3.4 Tasks

Evidently, hunters and herders use dogs for different puposes and there are significant differences among the various pastoralist and hunting cultures that we could observe and that are essential to recognise.

The main task of dogs among the herders is usually to guard and alarm against predators and thieves. Therefore, dogs are essentially watchdogs and they are not requested to fight, their assignment is to bark in order to raise an alarm. But a few informers said that strong brave adult dogs can confront the wolves.

All the informers agree that their dogs are crucial because there are many wolves which can be extremely dangerous for humans and their animals. But in the

southern Tuvianian steppe, dogs are always considered indispensable whereas in the eastern mountains they are deemed useful and crucial but not a hundred per cent indispensable.

#### 3.4.1 Tasks. Tuvianian Steppe pastoralism

In the Tuvianian steppe – as in the mountains – dogs are never used as shepherd dogs. To guide the animals, dogs should grow up with them to feel part of the livestock. This tradition was never documented among our informers. Dogs usually remain in the camp but sometimes they go with the herders and/or with the animals. It is not a constant rule and it depends on the relationship they have with their master and on their own temperament.

Dogs are generally requested to be quiet and not aggressive with their family and many people agree that 'A good dog is quiet during the day and does its work during the night' and also 'It must frighten potential predators and bad-intentioned people and attack only when indispensable'. They are generally free and consequently very self-controlled. Their freedom lets them be part of the family and sweet companions of children (Figure 5).

But they are never allowed to enter the tent. Only in one case, a herder tied up Masha, a poor *volkodav* dog<sup>10</sup>, with a very short rope. She was also subject to cruel treatment to make her mad and aggressive. Her ears had been cut. But this is not a local tradition. Masha

<sup>10</sup> The *volkodav* dog is a Central Asian breed that can guard livestock, be watchdogs and also fighter dogs.





Figure 7. Sharik 'smiling'. Erzin 2013 (Photo by F. Lugli).

was specifically bought to face wolves. The owner said that a female was chosen because males are too aggressive. He added that Masha did not do her duty well because she only barked at people who arrived on foot or riding horses, but she did not bark at cars.

Sometimes dogs can have different and facultative tasks which depend on their own 'personality' and 'talent'. For example, in southern Tuva, the dog Sharik was a good friend of horses and loved to stay with them also far away from the camp, without the herder. His master said that nobody had taught him to stay with the horses but he had grown up with them and for that reason, Sharik considered himself to be also part of the horses' family. He thought that it was a good feature and Sharik could also 'smile' if requested (Figure 7).

In the same family, Tusik was good at communicating with the herders and the other dogs. He used different barks depending on the situation and it was deemed a particular talent of Tusik. But this family loved its dogs in a very peculiar and specific way that was not common to the other families. It was the only family that neutered the dogs to make them quieter.

Many nomads told us that dogs often venture far from the camps to hunt little animals on their own because they have a special or peculiar temperament and love hunting.

The most important things that dogs are requested to carry out are: to be a quiet and good friend, especially for the children and to bark to warn that a danger is arriving.

#### 3.4.2 Tasks. Todzha and Altai mountains pastoralism

In Todzha dogs also are requested to be good watchdogs and not aggressive but unlike in the steppe, they are almost always tied up during the day. Sometimes they can go with their masters but it is more frequent to find them chained in the *stoianka* than with the herders. During the night, they can be free to do their duty. Certainly, they can be good friends of their family but it seems not to be a crucial task of theirs as they do not live in close contact with their masters as dogs do in steppe pastoralism.

Herders sometimes use dogs to hunt in winter to take the fur and to improve their diet. But not all dogs are hunting dogs (see following chapter). Generally dogs do not have other tasks and even if they have particular talent and personality this is not considered important by their masters and they do not have the chance to choose what they like to do.

In the Ongudai region of Altai, dogs are 'multi-tasking' and live in very close contact with their masters whom they are always with. Dogs are universally recognised

to be crucial and indispensable loyal friends. They are requested to guard against predators - especially wolves - to control and guide the animals even when the herder is not there and to hunt. The dogs are also members of the family and can be important for children too.

They do not have a particular specialisation and everyone of them can and must be able to do anything. Dogs bark when there are wolves but usually do not fight. Only when they are many dogs and the wolf is a solitary one.

Herders said that it is very difficult to manage the sheep without dogs and that they allow their master to be absent and not to stay with the livestock all day long. For example N.T. Topitonov said that 'In summer, early in the morning I send the sheep to the pasture and they come back in the hottest hours. Without dogs, I should be with the sheep all day long, but the dogs stay with them in my place'. 'Dogs are particularly indispensable when the herder and his animals move from one camp to another one depending on the season' (A.A., Ongudai).

A dog must be sweet and never aggressive, extremely obedient and understanding and they are never neutered. They are free when they are in the camps but they can be tied up when they are in the village. They are never admitted into the house.<sup>11</sup>

Reindeer breeders consider dogs to be indispensable but not to guard against wolves because they are not regarded as dangerous for the animals as they are in the steppe. A family usually has 3–4 dogs which are always nearby with the reindeers with whom they sleep on a fur that herders put to keep them warm. They are watchdogs and shepherd dogs as well. They warn when a predator such as a wolf or a bear arrives and they bark in a different way depending on the danger. The reindeer-breeders being at the same time good hunters also use a dog as a helper in hunting. The same attitude is typical for transhumance kind of hunting, both traditional and professional.

### 3.4.3 Tasks. Hunting

For hunters, dogs are useful but not always indispensable even if they are usually described as man's best friend. They are used when the snow is not too high and hunters usually go in the *taiga* with 2–3 dogs. Hunting dogs can have different specialisations (Tuva 2013).

A hunting dog must be brave and must not be afraid of fighting the sable (M.V. Irbilig). It must not bite and damage the prey and must not fidget when its master starts skinning the killed animal (Altai; Tuva). It must be quiet waiting to receive the meat from its master (Tuva 2013).

All the informers said that a good hunting dog must use various howls to communicate with its master. A specific task was documented in Ongudai where our informant Arman Anatolievic said that 'A good dog can find fish, spawning grounds, comes running with a special bark'. That is very important as it concerns the role that dogs have in aquatic contexts which has always been neglected by scientific studies (see Lugli in this volume).

### 3.5 Training

Both in Tuvinian steppe and mountains, dogs don't have special training and all the herders say that 'they know on their own what to do'. It is not necessary to teach them how to behave in the camp and they usually learn when they are puppies from adult dogs.

In the mountains of Altai, a puppy grows up with the animals and learns how to control and guide them when it is around six months old. 'When they are puppies it is like a game, it is important to teach them how to maintain the sheep all together without leaving anyone behind' and also 'A puppy must be trained not to chase sheep and not to be aggressive with them' (N.T. Topitonov). Many informers agree that 'If a puppy is intelligent it will quickly learn. If it is stupid it will never learn'.

All the herders say that dogs should not accept food from strangers, above all when they are absent. But dogs are not often trained for that and in our experience, it was possible to feed herders' dogs even without their master.

All the informers agree that training is indispensable for hunting because even if dogs' instinct is appropriate they need to learn to help their master, to follow and/or drive out the animals and last but not least, not to eat or damage the prey. Only a few hunters think that dogs do not need specific training (Altai 2016). But generally, hunters say that an 'apprenticeship' is necessary and that the best way to teach a puppy is having an adult dog as a model to imitate. There is not general agreement on the age to start training a puppy. Six months, at least 7/8 months old for some hunters and after the first year for others. If its parents are good hunters it will be a good hunter too and it will learn quickly (Tuva 2017).

It is also possible to understand if it will be courageous by shooting a sable at its paw to force it to fight. After

<sup>11</sup> During our visit in 2014 a particular law had been enacted whereby all dogs, except those accompanying shepherds in their work, had to be kept tied up. But, we were told that it was not part of the local tradition.

that the dog will be a splendid hunter or it will be afraid for all its life.

It is important to find the footprints of the animals (especially the sable) and to show them to the puppy (Tuva 2017). In Altai one of the hunters said that it is important to let a puppy lick the blood of a squirrel to teach it to hunt this animal.

Many hunters think that female dogs are better because males are lazy. But they indifferently use females and males and there is not a different training depending on the sex of the dog.

Hunters often say that it is important to respect the nature of the dog. Sometimes it learns rapidly, sometimes it needs a longer time. For example, one of the informers said that his last dog did not understand what it was requested to do for the first three years, but it eventually became an excellent dog.

Hunting dogs are never tied up (only when they are in the village if necessary) because they must know what they may and may not do.

### 3.6 Food

All the herders say that dogs eat the leftovers of their masters (bones, meat, milk scraps and others) but sometimes a special food with an addition of flour can be prepared for them, both in Tuva and Altai. Industrial dry food is often used for puppies to let them grow up strong. Bones are considered crucial following weaning (Figure 8). All the bones are given even if sometimes they can wound the throat.

But there is not a general rule about dogs' food among the herders. For example, it is possible to document that 'dogs can eat everything' and also that 'it is important to give good food to the dog to let it be an affectionate friend who offers protection. Otherwise it is worthless to have dogs'. Or 'dogs are fed three times a day. It is better to feed them constantly. If the dogs are hungry, they walk away and run wild and even die' but also 'dogs must not eat in the evening. In the night they must be hungry to be aggressive'.

Herders often do not give water to their dogs even when they are tied up during the day. They are supposed to find it on their own, or they can drink the frost on the grass in the morning or the evening. For that reason, we always provided water for the dogs, and frequently we were able to quench the thirst of deprived dogs.

Reindeer herders prepare the food for their dogs in specific pots. They give them reindeer bones. Dogs must eat well because they work very hard. Hunters say that it is crucial that dogs eat properly, well and enough

in order to let them be strong enough for hunting and not to induce them to eat the prey. Even if the hunters also say that dogs must know very well that they are not allowed to eat the killed or the wounded animal. In the *taiga*, the hunters give their leftovers and the remains of the killed animals which are usually cooked and mixed with wheat, flour and other ingredients. The hunters who are also fishers, when the hunting season is 'closed', also give fresh fish to their dogs. In Kurmach-Baygol the hunters explained that they prepare special dry fish which can be conserved for a long time for their dogs that they can also eat in winter.

### 3.7 Care and health

Herders and hunters usually agree that dogs rarely get sick and that they know on their own which are the curative plants.

Dogs are currently vaccinated everywhere because it has been obligatory since the Soviet times, but there are different attitudes towards dog sickness.

Normally dogs are never gelded but in a few cases, it was possible to document castrated dogs in the Tuvianian steppe where B.A. Mandap, the owner of four dogs (Sharik, Tuzik, Kara and Tabak), said that it is necessary to make the dogs less aggressive.<sup>12</sup>

All the herders that we met said that traditionally dogs are not nursed at all when they get sick. As in Mongolia when a dog has health problems, it should not be cared for because that can bring bad luck to its family. In fact, the dog takes the disease in place of its owners (Lugli 2016) and if it has been cared for, somebody of the family will die. Some herders said that they were sorry for that tradition but that it is better to respect it. A few herders say that they think that it is a superstition and they care for their dogs and do call the veterinarian when it is necessary.

In the Altai mountains, herders say that dogs know how to take care of themselves. They usually do not nurse them but they do it if it is necessary and call the veterinarian if a dog has important health problems.

The tradition that prohibits dogs' care as in the Tuvianian and Mongolian steppe culture is not widely spread but it exists and a few people reported the same custom. If a dog is mortally injured it must be killed to not let it suffer, usually, it is suffocated.

The hunters from Tuva and Altai (2016) also say that dogs rarely get sick and that they know how to take care of themselves. Some hunters from various regions said that their dog had been bitten by a snake and that it

<sup>12</sup> In Mongolian pastoralism dogs are not gelded.





Figure 8. Tuzik eats a bone. Erzin 2013 (Photo by F. Lugli).

was cured because it knows how to manage that. They nurse dogs when necessary. For example, in one case injections of penicillin were done and a dog was nursed when it had been attacked by a boar.

### 3.8 Funeral of a dog

In all observed communities, it is believed that when death approaches, the old dog senses this and takes itself away from the people and disappears. Sometimes old dogs are killed with a shotgun or hung from a tree limb. However, when it comes to a 'good dog',<sup>13</sup> it is customary for both nomads and hunters to perform something resembling a burial ritual. Such rituals have first been found among the Mongols (Lugli 2016). In southern Tuva the ritual of burying the 'honourable' dog goes as follows. His tail is cut off, laid on his side, something like a pillow is put under his head and a piece of the sheep *kurd'uk* (rump) fat is put in his mouth. They are not buried in the ground but left in a secluded place on the surface of the ground. When saying goodbye, they say farewell words. Cutting off the tail, according to traditional beliefs, is connected to the Buddhist idea of reincarnation: the dog has a chance to be reborn as a human in the next life.

<sup>13</sup> That is, a dog playing a significant role in the owner's life, having special relationships, etc.

Describing the 'honourable death', another of the informants in central Altai believes that there is no single form of ritual, everyone has their own ritual. He personally saw a funeral performed by his grandmother's older sister. She took off the skin as it is a very powerful remedy for sciatica. The dog was put on a sledge and taken towards the cemetery, where a place was found. They threw stones in an old *kurgan*, put the dog on it, put a piece of bark on it and then threw stones on it again. And then a whole ritual was performed.

The hunters of the northern Altai and Shoria buried a hunting dog that died of old age or as a result of a fight with an animal (wolf, bear, wild boar) like a human being. They would take it to the forest or the *taiga*, find a secluded spot under a tree or bush, put it on its side and cover it with branches or bark to prevent predators from getting at it. They did not put anything in their mouths. When saying goodbye, the dog was called by name, his merits were listed, he was thanked, regretted and farewells were said.

In Todzha it was also said that not all dogs are buried, but only the best ones. It should be placed in a good place, laid on its side and covered with stones so that birds won't find it. It was customary for hunters to put bread or breadcrumbs in their mouths and for cattlemen a piece of fat. Here is an example of saying goodbye to a dog:



Эки ыдым чораан  
 Ам канчаар?  
 Чоруур черинге чоруп чор, - дээш.  
 Алгап-йөрээп чор мен, - дээш.  
 Дыштан! - дэпкаар.  
 My dog was good  
 What to do?  
 Go there where you need to go, - says.  
 I will glorify and remember you with good wishes, -  
 says.  
 Have a rest! - have said.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4 Discussion. Relationships with dogs

Everywhere traditional customs regulate dogs' lives and the relationships they have with their masters their whole life up until their death. But they can considerably vary depending on the different regions.

In the southern Tuvian area of Erzin dogs usually live a free life in the camps with their masters who consider them crucial for their tasks against predators but also as good companions and loyal friends. Dogs are used to staying in the camps and they are not requested to move with the livestock. In summer they usually lay down in the shadow of the *yurta* and in winter they stay close to it to take advantage of the warmth coming from inside. Traditionally, adult dogs are not admitted inside the *yurta*, only puppies can sometimes enter, but in very few cases dogs were documented in the *yurta* for a short time.

Three situations are traditionally considered prohibited for the dogs in the camps. It is strictly forbidden to jump on the covering of the *yurta* and nomads kill the dogs who break this rule. Dogs can also be killed when howling too much. A bitch, as well as a whole litter could be killed if she had mated with a wolf. But except for these exceptional situations, a dog does not have particular restrictions and duties and above all, they are requested to be respectful and to obey when necessary. Nomads generally do not teach them many specific orders.

Dogs live in close contact with their masters and their family and often they spend a long time with children, especially when they are young. Nomads think that dogs have specific and exceptional features. They can perceive earthquakes but also inauspicious events and start howling to warn that something is happening. Sometimes they emit strange noises and that is because they can see or feel things that humans cannot detect. Dogs can be respected and considered close to a supernatural world (see Sychenko in this volume).

Dogs have a special place in the life of nomads and the complex traditions that articulate their life are a mirror of their importance. Dogs are usually respected. Nomads are the masters but dogs are not their slaves. They help their family to manage the dangers from possible predators (also humans) and nomads feed them in return. It is a mutual relationship. They have their place in their world, a different place that maybe will be better in the next life.

Dogs usually live their lives freely and are allowed to pursue their personal talents and nature which are esteemed by nomads as long as they are not counter-productive for the family or the livestock. On the whole it would appear that steppe nomads are usually well-balanced and live a good life.<sup>15</sup>

Sometimes they can be abused and suffer, depending on the families, but it is not a constant and that is a characteristic of the dichotomic relationships between dogs and humans almost all over the world.

In the region of Ongudai (Altai) dogs are also considered crucial by the herders but they are not only watchdogs like in the steppe, they also control and guide the livestock, they are good and assiduous companions for their masters and their families and sometimes they can also hunt.

The life of dogs is not so strictly regulated by the traditions as in the steppe, for example, there are a variety of funeral rites as well as various beliefs about dogs. Thus, if it jumps on a hay barn it means that there will be good weather; if it lies down on its back scratching its head, it means that somebody will die soon; it is not good if a dog howls in a camp, etc. A dog should not jump on the roof of the *ail*, it is a bad thing and it could be killed for that but this is not as strictly forbidden as it is in the Tuvian steppe.

Like in the steppe, they are not allowed to enter the house or the shelter, it is traditionally forbidden and they 'must learn that when they are puppies'. Dogs are always free, but not so free as to move too far from their masters or the camp. In 2014, a new law that imposed that all dogs had to be tied in the villages was respected, but not agreed upon by the herders.

The dogs of Ondugai have plenty of duties and are not allowed to live their particular inclinations if they are not being useful to their master and his family, even if there is no danger involved. Dogs must be the 'shadow' of their masters who usually claim that they love them not only for being useful but above all for being good and loyal friends, even if some families can be unkind

<sup>14</sup> Performed by R.T.-o. Dupchun (Todzha district, Een-sug). The text was transcribed and translated in Russian by A.Kh. Kan-ool.

<sup>15</sup> See also Capitini and Lugli in the volume for dogs in the steppe pastoralism.

to their dogs. Herders are the masters and dogs are their assistants who must obey like soldiers. So, the relationship between dogs and herders in this region looks more complex than in the steppe but at the same time it is simpler: the herder commands and the dog executes.

In the north-eastern Tuvian mountains the semisedentary herders who live along the rivers certainly consider dogs to be crucial even if not a hundred per cent indispensable. They are guard dogs who are requested to bark if a danger moves close to the camp, they are never shepherd-dogs and do not have special training. Sometimes they can help their master in hunting. Here the dog's life is not traditionally regulated and there are no special customs and beliefs about it. During the day dogs are always tied up in the camp and sometimes can be free during the night, depending on the families. Dogs do not have special tasks or commands that they must learn. They are regarded as simple instruments to help the herders in their work. The dogs' talent and nature are not particularly considered and respected. Sometimes dogs play with children or have a place in the family's life but this is not the norm.

Todzha reindeer herders mostly combine reindeer husbandry with hunting. They move with the reindeer and their dogs accompany them throughout the year. For the winter season, the dog's special qualities, such as wide paws that allow movement in the snow, are important. According to informants with reindeer husbandry experience, wolves are not a source of great danger to reindeer. In this sense, we have not recorded anything similar to the nomads' claims about the crucial role of the dog for *taiga* reindeer husbandry, although a dog always warns of the presence of predators. The function of protection against strangers, thieves, etc. is also irrelevant in this area, due to their absence in the highland areas of the Sayan Mountains, where the population is extremely sparse.

The dog is primarily a companion, as well as a hunting tool, going hand in hand with reindeer husbandry. A dog in the *taiga* has a great deal of freedom and is not kept on a tether. It is treated as a member of the nomadic unit, which needs to be fed like any member of the family, including reindeer bones which are leftover after a human meal, in order for it to work well. The dog is trained, but the owners rely more on its innate qualities and intelligence. In contrast to the nomads of the steppe, there have been cases where reindeer breeders allow the dog to mate with a wolf. These offspring are treated ambivalently and the litter is not destroyed, though it is said that such pups are less docile. It seems that this model of interaction demonstrates a true symbiosis of man, dog and deer in the high mountain *taiga*.

Hunters in different parts of Southern Siberia show a very similar type of relationship with a dog. A dog as a companion is important to them, although they may be in the *taiga* without a dog. This is especially true during winter when there is deep snow. However, for hunters, the working qualities of a hunting dog are of great importance, chief among which are intelligence and tirelessness. A dog shelter made of twigs has been built for dogs near *taiga* huts, and some hunters may allow a dog to be inside their dwelling in case of severe frost. Hunters always have several dogs of different ages with them, because their training is also done with the help of a more experienced dog. A good hunting dog is highly valued, kept until old age and not killed. After death, which is often the result of a collision with a wild animal, the dog is buried with honour, calling it 'a faithful friend, a true companion'. Among hunters, stories of hunting incidents, including those involving a dog, are popular; in some cases, the dog has saved the life of its owner.

In the hunting community, it is not considered to be a bad sign if a dog jumps on the roof of a hunting hut, but the howling of a dog is considered to be a bad omen here as well. However, we have not come across any references to killing a dog for such reasons. The mating of a dog and a wolf is also not considered unacceptable.

In addition to hunting dogs, there are yard dogs in villages that guard modern houses by sitting on chains. Many informants said that these are different dogs, and that not every dog can hunt. A hunting dog is usually free in the countryside as well, and if it is, it is tied up so that it is not stolen.

It can be assumed that the hunting dog is seen as an equal partner of the hunter, who seeks not to dominate it, but to develop cooperation that often develops into a particularly close trusting relationship.

## 5 Conclusions

(1) The relationship between a human and a dog in Southern Siberia in its complexity had not yet been studied in the ethnographic literature. Therefore, an elaborated approach which could serve as a model of this kind of research is of great importance. Good results could also be achieved using a crosscultural perspective which allows to observe both the similarities and diversity of different types of society (see authors' model). We hope that this kind of research can have relevance and importance from an historical perspective.

(2) As our research shows, a dog is an inseparable part of the life for both pastoralist and hunter societies. The fundamental difference between them is that for

pastoralism a dog is indispensable whereas for hunters it seems to be more crucial but non indispensable. Reindeer-breeders, who are at the same time hunters, have a particular attitude towards a dog which should be studied more.

(3) The 'Human - dog - wolf' relationship is an important indicator which distinguishes the observed cultures. It can be seen as an absolute enemy, like in southern Tuva and Mongolia, but is not so rigid in central Altai. In reindeer-breeders / hunting societies this relationship demonstrates the proximity between wolf and dog, which allows their hybridisation.

(4) An important aspect which in our opinion should be better studied is the gender one. As we noticed, the true relationships with a dog in all observed localities are almost exclusively the male's privilege. Females are very often rather indifferent, they may not even know the name of dogs, and they cannot answer many details about them. Children, in contrary, are closer to dogs, especially with puppies, with whom they very often play and spend their time.

## References

- Belgibaev, E.A. 2001. *Traditsionnaya material'naya kul'tura chelkantsev basseyna reki Leb'ed' (vtoraya polovina XIX - XX veka)*. Бельгибаев Е.А. 2001. *Традиционная материальная культура челканцев бассейна реки Лебедь (вторая половина XIX - XX века)*. Candidate of History diss. Omsk State University.
- Fabietti, U. and F. Remotti (eds) 2001. *Dizionario di antropologia*. 5 edizione. Bologna: Zanichelli.
- Golubyatnikov, L.L., I.N. Kurganova and V.O. Lopes de Gerenyu 2020. Estimation of C-CO<sub>2</sub> balance of natural steppe ecosystems: Khakassia and Tuva (Eastern Siberia, Russia) case studies. *IOP Conference Series Earth and Environmental Science* 606(1): 012013
- Lugli, F. 2016. Mongolian Nomads and their Dogs, in S. Biagetti and F. Lugli (eds) *Intangible Elements of Ethnoarchaeological Research*: 125–140. Springer.
- Lugli, F. and G. Sychenko 2018. Dogs, nomads and hunters in Southern Siberia, in I. Fiore and F. Lugli (eds), *Dogs, Past and Present: an Interdisciplinary Perspective*, *Annali dell'Università di Ferrara. Sezione: Museologia Scientifica e Naturalistica* 14: 65–66. Ferrara: Università degli Studi di Ferrara.
- Ovodov, N.D., S.J. Crockford, Y.V. Kuzmin, T.F.G. Higham, G.W.L. Hodgins and J. van der Plicht 2011. A 33,000-Year-Old Incipient Dog from the Altai Mountains of Siberia: Evidence of the Earliest Domestication Disrupted by the Last Glacial Maximum. *PLOS One* 6(7): e22821
- Sychenko, G.B. 2021. Migration of People and Melodies in the Taiga Area of Southern Siberia. *European Journal of Musicology* 20/1: 39–62.