

Primitive and Aboriginal Dog Society

Dear members of the Russian Branch of Primitive Aboriginal Dogs Society!

I am happy to greet you on pages of our first issue of R-PADS Newsletter and I hope that our joint activity and joint discussions of topics of our concern will benefit aboriginal dogs.

Being a member of PADS for a few years I was always envious of those people, who found their way to make important decisions, which made positive impact in the preservation of certain breeds.

Now, I am pleased to see that such an opportunity is available to all, who is concerned and interested in Russian primitive aboriginal dogs. In our country there were always people willing to give their talent, energy and time to preserve heritage left to us by our ancestors. I hope that together we will make a difference and solve difficult problems in our important and difficult work.

Yours sincerely,
secretary of the Russian Branch of PADS

Marina Kuzina

PRIMITIVE ABORIGINAL DOGS

Vladimir Beregovoy

As it is known, dog was the first domesticated animal. Comparisons of morphology, physiology, behavior and recent studies on mitochondrial DNA confirm that all breeds of dogs originated from one wild ancestor and it is wolf.

Domestication of wolf took place about 15,000 years ago in Asia. During later time, dogs spread among human tribes of the world with migrations, wars and trade. Presence and assistance of dogs gave people important experience, which facilitated and accelerated domestication of other animals. Further changes and domestication of dogs continued everywhere and the outcome was determined on local geographic conditions and how they were used by people.

Together with people dogs considerably expanded their distribution range and populated all continents and landscapes, from polar deserts to tropical rain forests and in many islands of southern seas, except Antarctic. As a result of this process, aboriginal dogs have been formed.

Word “*aboriginal*” means first of its kind present in the region and often primitive in comparison with more advanced types (Webster’s Dictionary). In our case, this is applied to dogs of certain geographic regions of the world, where they have been discovered and described by travelers, ethnographers and naturalists. Naturally, history of dogs in every region is linked to history of people, with whom they live. Therefore, a considerable part of information about them came from ethnographic sources. Aboriginal dogs have been formed under conditions of primitive form of selection and almost unrestricted freedom. The breeding was free and minimal care of their owners. In some countries these dogs still live like they lived for thousands of years back. When asked where from they got their dogs, local people often answered: “God gave them to us” or “They came from the skies”.

Physical isolation separated tribes of people and this was enough for accumulation differences between local dogs, which became increasingly persistent with time making them looking like different breeds. However, strictly speaking, they have never been breeds in modern sense of this word, because they evolved without systematic selection for a certain purpose and dogs mated free. Differences between adjacent geographic groups sometimes are subtle, pure statistical and there are dogs of intermediate type, especially in regions of old trade contacts between their owners. Differences are greater between dogs of remote regions with most different climates. Usually all dogs had a chance to compete in the mating and puppy mortality was the major factor restricting their population growth. Natural selection was a major factor of selection, but selection for qualities valued by people was also done, for example, when someone fed most valuable bitch or took her puppies inside during bad weather.

Besides primitive methods of traditional methods of keeping and selection of dogs, we can speak of primitive traits of their appearance, character, hunting style and other traits. Among aboriginal dogs, some individuals may carry more primitive traits than others. Most primitive dogs surviving until present are oldest breeds in the world. In general, their appearance is typical in all countries and easily recognizable by their “wild” characteristics, such as nearly square or slightly rangy body format, wedge-shaped head with pointed muzzle, oblique set eyes and prick ears. These are such dogs as Russian Laikas, Dingoes and Basenji-like dogs of Africa. There are other differences in details, such as coat quality and color, proportions of the head, size and position of ears and variations in body size proportions. There are differences in reproductive cycles; most primitive dogs have one cycle per year and at a certain season of year. However, differences among aboriginal dogs are much stronger in their innate reactions to domesticated and wild animals, familiar and unfamiliar people, and ability to hunt, guard, pull sleds and general obedience. There are some ancient aboriginal dog breeds specialized for a certain job, for example the Saluki and Tazy or Caucasian Mountain Dogs, but they also carry certain primitive traits in the character, style of their work and physiology.

Evolution of aboriginal dogs has continued until most recent time. Increase of human population and global spread of cosmopolitan culture became serious threat to the very existence of aboriginal dogs worldwide. Many



Australian Dingo, adult male. Photo provided by V. Beregovoy, USA

unique aboriginal dogs became extinct, became rare or lost their identity because of mixing with imported cultured breeds and their mixes. Those of aboriginal dog breeds, which became recognized by cynological kennel clubs, also lose their original qualities being transformed into ornamental breeds for dog show sport.

In the past, similarity of a dog with wolf, coyote or jackal was not considered as a merit, at least among Europeans. Wolf has been always a negative character in the folklore, literature and superstitions and was not considered as a beautiful animal. Perhaps it was the same in the ancient world. Primitive dogs with their plain wolf-like appearance were most common and numerically predominant everywhere. Nevertheless, they have been faithful and undemanding assistants of plain folks, protectors of family and property of nomadic people. In regions with most fertile soil, mild climate, people settled, civilizations with developed agriculture and cities rose and classes of rich people emerged. Then, selection of dogs for qualities most different from wolf produced many new peculiar looking breeds.

In ancient Egypt, there were several types of sight hounds, scent hounds, mastiffs, sheep dogs, dachshund-like dogs and small toy breeds. At a later time, in medieval Europe, cultured breeds evolved even further in all directions making them least similar to wolf. By early XIX Century, cultured breeds reached their peak numerically and by the number of breeds. Finally, in late XIX Century, dog shows changed entire dog Dom. Now, documents confirming dog's origin become nearly as important as the dog himself. Puppies out of show



New Guinea Singing Dogs. Photo provided by V. Beregovoy, USA

winning parents are sold at a high price. A purebred dog with a peculiar appearance becomes a status symbol, a part of his style like his cloths, furniture or style of his house. Purebred origin of the dog confirmed by papers automatically means noble origin of the dog and assumes other merits of its character. In the past, dog breeders were also hunters and other dog users, who raised puppies for other dog users. Now, so-called professional breeder is raising puppies of hunting and other breeds for making a profit.

Disrespectful attitude to aboriginal not registered dogs is common at present, but there are some educated dog users who know that primitive dogs raised at home and employed to do adequate job are often even better than dogs of old cultured breeds. When comparing aboriginal dogs with their cultured counterparts by their usefulness for practical work, it is important to take into account their diversity, degree of domestication and specialization to serve people.

Traits of cultured breeds of dogs distinguishing them from primitive dogs on many occasions are nothing else but biological anomalies. Excessive changes in anatomy and visible characteristics became "trade marks" of some breeds, but they come at a price in form of inconvenience and sometimes even viability of the dog. Such traits must be compensated by special care on the part of the dog's owner.

Besides, general viability and health of dogs of cultured breeds became weakened during many generations of life under conditions of regular veterinary help preserving genetically inferior animals. Primitive aboriginal dogs remain most perfect biologically and best adapted for survival without human care. Aboriginal dogs used by people for physically active job or living free are built functionally correct, without excesses, their movement is economical, precise, well coordinated and effortless like in wild animals. This has been always maintained by natural selection and unintentional selection directed by people for best performance at work. Other perfect traits of primitive dogs include a full set of large, strong during life and symmetrically positioned teeth, which is a rare case among cultured breed dogs. Primitive dogs can live a longer life remaining active, innate immunity to local diseases transmitted by ticks and bloodsucking insects and even immunity and tolerance to ticks, fleas and intestinal worms, greater endurance when pulling sleds, hunting or herding and guarding herds under harsh climate conditions. They require less food, because their digestion is more efficient.

In regions of the world, where aboriginal dogs are historically used for work, they work hard. They do the best those kinds of service, which they performed in countries of their origin, in their natural environment. During hunting, pulling sleds, herding or guarding property they do not need regular treats for encouragement. Moreover, they often remain hungry for a long time and still keep working. Enthusiasm of a primitive working dog is explained by the fact that the process of work with the master is their best reward.

During hunting, a primitive dog uses entire set of senses given to her by nature in order to find the game, just like it would be done by a wolf. Dealing with a big and dangerous animal, such a dog should be bold, but smart and never forget about the danger. Otherwise it would be killed or injured and his master would lose his assistant. A poor hunter cannot afford a pack of dogs.

Unfortunately, primitive dogs became replaced by cultured specialized dog breeds and began to disappear first in cities, then in whole countries and, finally, by middle of XX Century their extinction accelerated worldwide.

Raise in popularity of cultured breeds is also explained by the fact that they are easier to control and they are more convenient to keep in overcrowded places. Aboriginal dogs were displaced further and further away from economical centers, where human population is sparser and local people still retain old way of life. However, after sometime development brings new people with their cultured breed dogs even there. Everywhere, where people keep dogs according to old tradition allowing them to wander free and mate uncontrollably, aboriginal dogs become mixed with imported cultured breeds and lose their identity.

In some geographic regions extinction of aboriginal dogs takes place as a result of changes in way of life of native people. For example sled dogs of Eskimos are among the best in the world, but they almost died out, because Eskimos do not need them any more. Modern Eskimos do not live in huts made out of blocks of ice (igloo). They live in well heated standard houses with electricity. Now, the Eskimo Sled Dog is recognized as a purebred. It is used for sledding sport and hobby. Canadians value working qualities of this aboriginal dog and want to reserve it as a sled dog breed.

Unfortunately, saving still living aboriginal dogs is often difficult. Typically, zoologists do not study them, because they are domesticated animals and considered artifacts. National and international nature conservation organizations are not concerned about aboriginal dogs, because they do not belong to wild animal species and cannot be given "endangered species" status.

Nevertheless, aboriginal dogs are valuable for dog lovers, because they are unique animals created by nature and people. At present, when they are becoming rarities, interest to them of dog fanciers is on the rise. Aboriginal dogs are valued by different reasons. There is a large category of people moved by a romantic "call of the wild", dream of simple independent way of life like in "old good times" in the environment of unspoiled nature. Undistorted beauty and of primitive dogs is a major attraction to their taste. There is another very important category of people, who like such animals exactly because of their working qualities. They need aboriginal dogs for guarding animal herds against coyotes, wolves or other predators, for pulling sleds or hunting. There are people, who value aboriginal dogs simply because they are dogs of their ancestors, as a part of national heritage. To many, a combination of all reasons listed above is important. Modern dog lovers are not repelled by the fact of similarity of primitive breeds to the wolf. Quite opposite, they often value them exactly because of this. Wolf-like traits of Russian hunting Laikas form an important part of their wild beauty called in Russian "zverovatost".

In 199, in order to unite efforts of lovers of aboriginal dogs, Janice Koler-Matznick organized PADS (Primitive Aboriginal Dogs Society) based in United States of America.

Russia is the richest country in the world by the number of aboriginal dogs, including best in the world hunting, sledding and herding breeds. By historical irony, Russia, being a home country of numerous sled dogs, missed development of worldwide growing dog sledding sport. Worse, in the Soviet era, systematic extermination of dogs of the north was conducted. Evidences of this grim fact are available in every part of the country, where these dogs have been existed. It is still not too late to find and save what is left intact. Recently, it became well known that aboriginal type Laikas of Chukotka and Kamchatka still



Canadian Eskimo Dog, five months old female. Photographer and owner Jill Moore Porter, USA.



Tazy. Photo provided by A. Kovalenko, Republic Kazakhstan.

exist, but some questions still remained unanswered. Is it still possible to find and the unique Amur Laika? If there anywhere in Ural or West Siberia fast aboriginal hunting Laikas of Mansi? Where are “fox-like” hunting Laikas of Evenks? Aboriginal Caucasian Ocharkas, Cnetral Asian Ovcharkas, Tazys and Taigans are unique breeds and we cannot afford losing them.

PADS made a decision to open a Russian branch in Russia (R-PADS) in order to provide a real opportunity for all people of republics of the former Soviet Union and the rest of the world to unite their efforts in the discovery and preservation of aboriginal dogs. Now, everyone interested in preservation and restoration of these amazing dogs can share his thoughts and experiences by participation in discussions of R-PADS. Actual owners of primitive aboriginal dogs and any dog lovers concerned in the status of aboriginal dogs are cordially invited to join.

Russian Psovaya Borzaya (the Borzoi).

Anna Shubkina

Differences between Euro-American and Russian Borzois

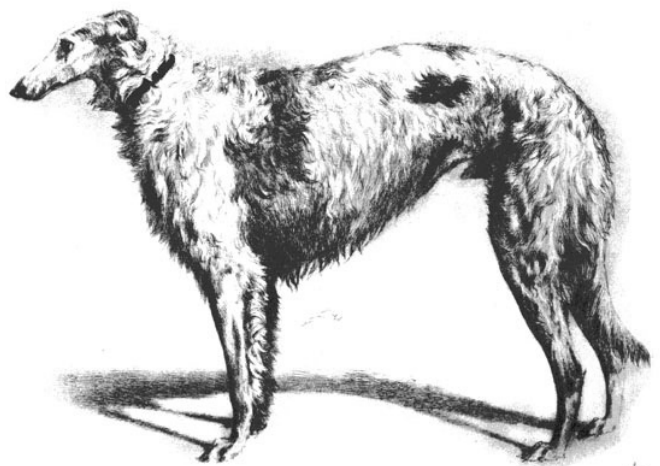
Frequent breeding of Borzois imported from Europe and America in Russia makes it compelling for comparisons of these dogs with Borzois of Russian breeding. to compare the Borzoi of Western breeding in late XX Century. In late XX Century, in the West, the Borzoi became a unique and expensive ornamental dog selected not only for a few other traits then those listed in the breed standard. This is an example of so-called indirect selection slipped out of breeder’s control. What kind consequences it may have for the Borzoi breed?

List of typical traits of the hunting Borzoi include the ability of explosive excitement, independence, strong reaction of chasing and catching small animals and ability to be in motion for many hours. All of these traits are undesirable in the ornamental dog in the Western world. Borzois with these traits intentionally or unintentionally become less valuable for the breeding. The reason of this is simple: a dog demanding for physical activity, with independent character and an hot explosive temperament cannot be kept in the yard with a standard fencing, especially in a situation like a neighbor’s cat walking by, for example. Such a dog has a real high chance to get hit by a car.. Naturally, great majority of Borzoi owners in Europe prefer quieter and less active dogs.

An animal with an explosive temperament, which could be naturally resolved in a investigating the surrounding and coursing wild game, is wasting his energy by stretching arms of his owner holding the leash or, worse, his urgent need for activity can find a wrong exit in the attacking his master, a dog show judge or another dog. This is so-called shifted or readdressed reaction. Accordingly, there is a special statement emerged in the Western version of the Borzoi standard telling us that aggressiveness of the Borzoi is a fault. As a result, selection favors quieter dogs.

Besides this, European dog shows require dogs to spend many boring hours in a state of idle waiting. Then, the walks making two to ten small circles, allows the unfamiliar person (the dog show expert) to inspect his body by touching and then quietly wait a few more hours until return back home to his small yard. With this dog show procedure selection of dogs with a phlegmatic temperament and tardiness becomes predominant and it overrules other qualities in the dog.

Hunting on Russian unlimited open spaces did not allow the Borzoi to have too heavy coat and the dogs shed strictly according to change of seasons. Our Borzois, as a rule, shed by the summer, when they have a short light coat and develop a thicker coat by winter reaching maximum by late January-February. Showing dogs in Europe requires a different kind of coat. Since late 60th of the past Century, dogs with luxurious heavy coat were consistently winning and now, majority of the Borzois in the West retain a heavy coat during most of the year. Concentrated foods with necessary vitamins and other supplements stimulating growth of hairs and changing the shedding schedule also helped this.



Borzoi (Russian Psowaya Borzaya) of 10th, XX Century, "Kiday". Photo provided by I. Shlykova, Russia

Weight and size of the Borzois also changed considerably. Weight of majority of Russian Borzois at the age of two-six years with show rating “very good – excellent” and in good hunting condition varies insignificantly from 35 to 39 kg in males and from 28 to 32 kg in females. However, among Western Borzois, weight over 50 kg is not considered as a deviation from norm and such dogs are used for breeding without restrictions and they are most successful at shows. Moreover, many owners of such dogs are proud with size of their pets. Bitches weighing less than 30 kg and males weighing 37 kg as compared with those giants seem stunted and loose at dog shows. Nevertheless, until present, in Russian standard and FCI standard of the Borzoi limits of size range of dogs are not shown and dogs are never disqualified for breeding because of the size.

Therefore, by late XX Century, Borzois of Russian and Euro-American breeding became considerably different in the size, coat, temperament, behavior and some other traits.

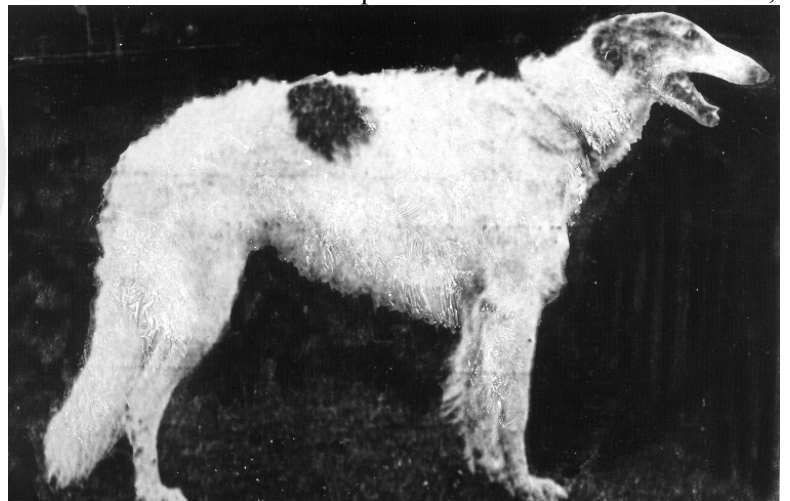
Changes in the dog breeding in Russia in late XX Century

During 90th, Russia joins FCI, which created a formal opportunity for exchange with dogs.

Since mid 80th, importation of Borzois into Russia becomes common and imported dogs are used for breeding more often than Borzois of Russian lines.

Existing permission to travel in West Europe resulted in showing some Russian line Borzois outside Russia. However, only a few dogs could be shown, because the cost of travel is beyond reach for majority of Russians. Owners and breeders of Borzois have to choose between a couple of days at the dog show in West Europe or a good hunting season in field. Those, who enjoy hunting, naturally, rather choose the hunting. Finally, observations at International dog shows led to understanding that show dogs type is significantly differing from hunting dogs and, therefore, chances of winning for excellent hunting Russian Borzois at International dog shows are small.

Organizers of Russian dog shows use rules of FCI and invite Borzoi experts from entire world. However, foreign experts use strikingly different principles for choosing the best dogs. Show is show and a beautiful dog with his elegantly dressed owner must take a place ahead of less well groomed and fashionable looking dog. However, I should mention that no one of now working Western experts had a chance to see how Russian Borzoi hunts in field. Therefore, foreign experts do not have a correct idea about the hunting type of the Borzoi. Best of them make their decisions based only on intuition. At the same time, in mind of a Russian dog breeder the idea about the dog show as a part of organized animal breeding is still alive. Russian



Borzoi (Russian Psowaya Borzaya) of 60th, XX Century, "Shurgai II". Photo provided by I. Shlykova, Russia.

breeders still think that rating dogs at the show is done for analysis of results of pedigree work. Therefore, Russian participants of European dog shows belong to a certain circle of people, who are not interested in any field testing or maintaining best lines of hunting Borzois surviving from XIX Century.

By 2000, all formal obstacles preventing interbreeding of Borzois of Russian lines with Borzois of West European lines disappeared. Now, Russian dogs are shown here and there and exchange with breeding stock dogs is done regularly, although rather one-sidedly. I should mention that now existing Borzoi population outside Russia, in Europe, North America and Australia, is about a few tens of thousands versus two-four thousands of Borzois of original Russian lines. There is a real danger of total dissolution of Russian breeding Borzois.

In early 2000, in the largest center of selective breeding of the Russian Borzoi, in Moscow Society of Hunters and Fishermen, among 172 registered dogs, there are less than five dogs of pure Russian breeding with four generation pedigrees and not more than a dozen of dogs with three generations pedigrees. In 2000, at the show of the National Club of RPB (Russian Psowaya Borzaya), there were only ten Borzois of Russian breeding among total number of 110 shown dogs. These facts do not require any further comments.

Prospects of Russian Borzoi in the Third Millenium

I emphasize existence of significant differences between organization and principles of the dog show expertise of the former USSR, which became inherited by modern Russia, and Western Dog Show of FCI. Show expertise of our country is based on zootechnique as a part of animal science and dogs are rated by visual comparisons. Its major principle is comparison in motion, because Russian dog lovers consider dog as a utilitarian animal, which have to work. In Russia, at the show, dogs are arranged in a sequence starting from the highest rated animals. This may seem cruel to the dog owner, because his dog is like his family member, but it is beneficial for the breed.

Unfortunately, entire structure of dog show in Western Europe hampers selection of Borzoi as a hunting breed. First, show rinks are too small and the judgment is done during a very short time. At the small rink, a dog as big as the Borzoi cannot be shown well and selection in the process of long time movement is replaced by selection in the process of standing. Walking is done only over distance of 5-7 meters in a triangle. Selection based on observation of standing dogs as a basic method of expertise is very dubious, because any not too ugly dog can be easily trained to stand looking pretty. Even a dog with sluggish movement can be easily trained to walk "the triangle" actively enough and without revealing faults of his locomotion. Under such crummy conditions, a dog with free and wide movements and light trotting may have not enough room. Of course, the dog can be trained to walk with short steps and trotting, but this is not a natural movement for the Borzoi. Judging dogs during a prolonged movement allows evaluation its correctness and specificity of the breed. Its lacking deprives the expert of using such an opportunity and forces him (or her) to make judgment based on features of body structure alone. Of course, in case with the Borzoi, general impression and quality of the coat become most important.

Reading descriptions of dogs from pre-Communist Revolution times, one can find very few words, usually two-three words, describing dog's coat. Major attention, four-five long sentences, is given to description of legs, body and type of head and all in connection with dog's field performance.

A Western dog expert without possibility of evaluation of dog's features associated with field performance, being restricted with small dog show rink and need to finish his work within limited time is in a difficult situation. He must choose the best dog without a proper scientific analysis. Naturally, he concentrates on general impression and pay major attention to minute details while the type of dog most suitable for hunting is entirely overlooked.

Finally, until present time, FCI does not use Borzoi standard approved by Russia, which country of the breed's origin. They continue their expertise based on documents created by Western breeders in 1969.

If everything is lost?

We still can save the Russian Psovaya Borzaya, if we admit that the existing system of Borzoi breeding and judging does not help preservation of the original hunting type of the breed. If we believe that the breed deserves life in the future, certain actions should be taken. First, it is important to restore literate methods of dog's rating. Offspring of West European Borzoi lines should not have an advantage at the expense of offspring of hard hunting Russian lines of the Borzoi. In other words, we should return to formerly existing Russian rules. Borzois with fewer then 18 points for origin and particularly originated from dogs without diplomas awarded for field trials for many generations cannot be recognized as champions. We should develop a system giving priority for dogs of Russian breeding and most fit for hunting in field; conduct an inventory of dogs and publish data showing ratio of ancestral blood in dogs. Studies on genetic uniformity of Russian Borzois and well hunting Borzois of West European origin should be done. Borzoi breeders need information on real census and composition of Borzois existing in Russia. We should introduce special awards for breeding of Russian origin Borzois with at



**Borzoi of modern European type.
Photo provided by I. Shlykova. Russia**

least three four generation pedigrees. Of course, it is worthy to restore necessary self-respect and create favorable conditions for those, who run pedigree work with Borzois in our country. It is important to realize that what we breed and what exists in the West is not identical and that our own is not worse at all. With our half-century history of using rules of field trials and several thousands of dogs proven good at hunting, we should realize their value and positive impact on the breed. Selective breeding is not simply breeding of pair of pretty dogs; it is rather creation of a system favorable for preservation of certain types of dogs with real hunting qualities.

Available facts confirm the existence of important differences between West European and Russian lines in the Borzoi. This is why it is important to familiarize Western experts and breeders with real conditions at open field Borzoi hunting. We should invite them to take part and learn at least from field trials. Western Borzoi judges should be provided with an opportunity to participate in field trials organized specifically for them so they could get necessary knowledge and use it as a part of their requirements when judging the breed.

This is linked to another question about acceptance of dogs in “working class group of purebred dogs [Russians encourage owners of purebred dogs to use them for different kinds of work. Dogs that passed officially organized trials in a particular field and, if successful, awarded certificate of “Working Class”, V. B.]. According to rules of FCI, dogs with awards for artificial lure coursing are accepted in “Working Class Dogs”. Borzois with field diplomas earned by talent and hard work of their owners are never accepted as a working class dogs. At most, they are considered equal to dogs with awards for coursing artificial lure. Even leaders of RKF noticed this, but their timid attempts to defend at least something of their own did not succeed, because of generally negative attitude of Europe to hunting. FCI sees nature protection in the fight against “bad hunters” and they are not interested in scientifically substantiated facts of selective nature of hunting with sight hounds. Sight hounds catch less fit animals.

LAIKAS

Marina Kuzina

Laika is among oldest dogs of Eurasia. It is a collective term of a large group of dogs with prick ears with circumpolar distribution and particularly in northeastern Russia. Investigation of origin of these dogs as well as ethnographic history of peoples of Siberia is far from being complete. The fact is that despite Laikas are very old, they remain among most primitive. There are arguments about terms “Laika”, “Spitz” or “northern prick-eared dog”, but discussion of this is out of scope of this review. Therefore, I will use call these diverse dogs Laikas and postpone discussion of the term.

Laikas have been used mainly for three jobs. First job is hunting diverse animals from squirrel to bear and in the Far East also tiger.

The second method of use is pulling sleds. I should emphasize here, that Uralian Mountain Ridge is a geographic border of distribution of ancient form of dog sledding. West of it, only native peoples of Yamal Peninsula sometimes harnessed dogs for pulling sleds and in all other northern regions dogs only assisted people after hunting to pull heavy loads. Tradition of harnessing dogs in sleds starts from Ural and eastward it becomes most rich and diverse among native peoples of the Russian Far East, Kamchatka and Chukotka peninsula and the Yana River, the Indigirka and Kolyma River basins. Evidence of this can be found in publications of ethnographers, travelers and government officials of the czarist Russia.

The third direction of using Laikas was reindeer herding. Herding dogs guarded and herded reindeer. Without a good reindeer herding dog, even several men would become exhausted trying to manage a large reindeer herd. The dogs did it demonstrating great endurance and intelligence. Once a reindeer owner of Yamal Peninsula said: : I value assistance of one reindeer herding dog more then help of two animal technicians”.

Sled dogs were the largest group numerically. This is understandable, because hunting and reindeer herding does not require as many dogs as pulling sleds does. One average family could afford to keep up to 20 sled dogs.



**Kamchatka Sled Dog.
Early 90th, XX Century.
Photo provided by B.
Shiroky.**

Natural isolation protected gene pool of Russian sled dogs for a long time. However, diverse innovations, which have been brought to the north by civilization during past Century, drastically undermined all aboriginal Laika populations in quality and numerically.

Actually, this started since XVI-XVII Centuries, when northern regions became a part of Russia. This was far from being a peaceful process to the contrary what is often said in textbooks on history. Fortunately, small Government's forces, which managed to reach those remote regions, were busy with collecting taxes and did not attempt to change way of life of local people. New acquired Russian territories became cultivated and Russian officials and exiles arrived there in ever increasing numbers. New people brought cultured breed dogs with themselves and they interbred with local Laikas. Such a gene flow hardly improved local dogs, but natural selection and unintentional selection by people helped to maintain a viable dog population.

In early XX Century, the situation became considerably worse. Reindeer herds became collectivized and people lost incentive to work not only with dogs, but also with reindeer. Sistem of boarding schools for children of native peoples cause a blow to traditional way of life of reindeer breeding people and they lost many centuries long skills of life with dogs and reindeer in the extreme north.

In 1947, standards of four hunting Laika breeds based on aboriginal dogs were put together. It seems what could be wrong with this? In this case, in order to increase interest of industrial hunters to new established purebreds, officials began "educating" provincial hunters. Local Laikas were proclaimed as worthless and nuisance on the way of popularization of new established purebreds. Remaining aboriginal dogs were poisoned and shot for pelts as mongrels. Top officials of Russian cynological establishment conducted their agenda and forbid expertise of aboriginal Laikas and those cynologists, who attempted to defend aboriginal dogs and explain their value, were disqualified.

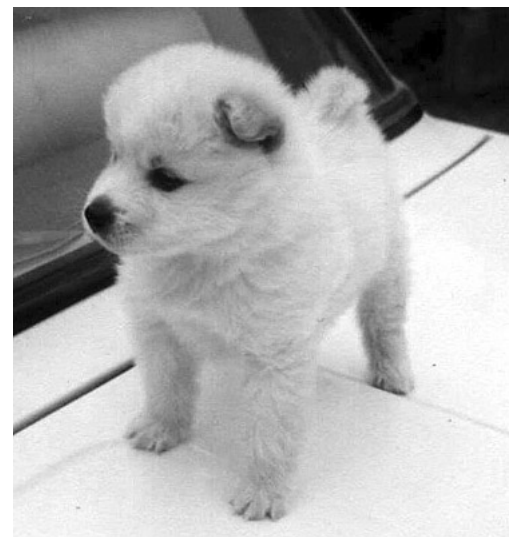
I should give a credit to creators of officially recognized purebred hunting Laikas. They did not let them to degrade to merely show dogs. However, they did understand that they eliminated aboriginal roots of newly established purebreds. As a result, aboriginal hunting Laikas, which had been used for development of purebred hunting Laikas became totally lost or remain at the verge of extinction.

The worse took place in the area of sled dog breeding. New bill ("ukaz") issued by central government considered dog sledding economically unjustified and causing damage to fishery, because in many regions dogs were fed with fish, including salmon species, such as keta, gorbusha, etc. Of course, nobody noticed that dogs were fed with parts of fish not edible for humans, like heads and backbones. Bureaucrats decided to replace dogs with more prestigious forms of transportation, with horses and in the future with cars. Here, I will not describe in details why horse transportation is impossible in Kamchatka and Chukotka and in northern river basins. The decision was made to kill the dogs. Elena Panyukhina described killing dogs in Kamchatka as follows: "In northern settlements dogs were killed barbarically. Dogs were killed not only at night but also in broad daylight, often in presence of children. Blood on the snow, skinned dog's carcasses and dieing near houses injured dogs make a horrible picture without exaggeration. In 1974, I arrived to Palana and watched this with horror. I was a child then and could only cry of pity and, together with other children, hide puppies in houses". Approximately the same was going on in other dog populated regions.

What this intentional and unintentional doggy genocide in the north did produce? As an example, I will offer results of census done in 1926-1927. In Kamchatka, total number of sled dogs was 35,000. According to data obtained by B. I. Shirokiy, in early 90th there were about 300-400 typical Kamchatka type



Chukotka Sled Dog. Early 90th, XX Century. Photo provided by B. Shiroky. Russia



Reindeer Herding Laika. "Kinos Kennel". Photo by M. Kuzina. Russia

Laikas. I cannot tell how many of them exist now. To save the aboriginal breed, a new survey is needed immediately, but it would be a very expensive project, because of high cost of transportation.

In Chukotka, in early 90th, there were about 700 pure type sled dogs. How many of them live now?

In the Amur River basin, a dog country in the past, aboriginal dogs range is reduced to several small pockets. In 2000, according to most optimistic estimate, total number of dogs is not more than 200.

Hunting Laikas, if they still survive, they should be very few in deep remote areas away from railroads and towns. Information about them resemble information about unicorns.

Reindeer herding Laikas still occur in small numbers in Yamal Peninsula, in Murmansk Province and some other regions of reindeer breeding, which now is being rebound. Demand for reindeer herding dogs saved during hard times is on the raise.

There is a chance that the “aboriginal Samoyed”, a big similar to reindeer herding Laika, which became widely known due to the trip of Fritiof Nansen to the North Pole, still survive. This still remains uncertain until new investigation is done.

This is the contemporary state of aboriginal Laikas, capable dogs with many faces of Russian north.

Editors of R-PADS invite submissions of materials for publication..

- ✓ Article, 12-14 thousands of characters plus 4-5 photographs formatted JPG or TIFF, resolution 300 dpi.
- ✓ Review, 5-7 thousands of characters plus 2-3 black and white photographs, IPG or TIFF, resolution 300 dpi.
- ✓ Note, 1.5-2 thousands of characters without picture.

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If some of your friends become interested to join R-PADS, they can send us filled out form by any convenient method.

All questions, suggestions and comments will be accepted with gratitude. E-mail them or send them as snail mail to:

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