

YAKUTIAN LAIKA

Yakutian Laika breed history

Stanislav Gorodilov, RKF-FCI Judge

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

- * Yakutian Laika breed history
 - * “From ancient ages”
 - * “Beginning of the Way”
 - * “Yakutian Laika today”
 - * “Dogs of Yakutia”

From ancient ages

The friendship of man and dog on the territory of modern Yakutia arose a long time ago. This is confirmed by archaeological finds on the banks of the Salah River near the village of Tumat in Yakutia, where the mummified remains of three, monthly puppies of a dog with a fixed age of 12,500 years old were discovered.

At the beginning of the 90s of the XX century, a hunting site was discovered on the Zhokhov Island (the Novosibirsk Islands archipelago in the Arctic Ocean, Yakutia), which was examined by the Russian archaeologist Vladimir Pitulko. He found the remnants of sledges, dog harnesses and well-preserved dog bones. Dating by the radiocarbon method showed that the age of the finds lies in the range of 7800-8000 years. It is the oldest station in the high-latitude Arctic. The world scientific journal Science recognized it as the very first evidence of the use of a dog for the transport of goods and, in general, the first evidence of a person's use of a dog for any purpose.

This find was proof that on the coast of Northeast Asia the dog was the first animal that the man tamed and began to use as a hunting and riding dog. This is explained by the fact that in the tundra and coastal Arctic there were no other animals suitable for the carriage of goods, but it was possible to get and prepare food for dogs for a long winter. It is very likely that the remains found belonged to

the ancestors of the Yakutian Laika, about which the world-famous scientist V. Yokhelson wrote, as a Yukaghir dog living on the Yana and Kolyma rivers, which served as a means of transportation for indigenous to go to islands in the Arctic Ocean when hunting wild deer and search of mammoth bone.

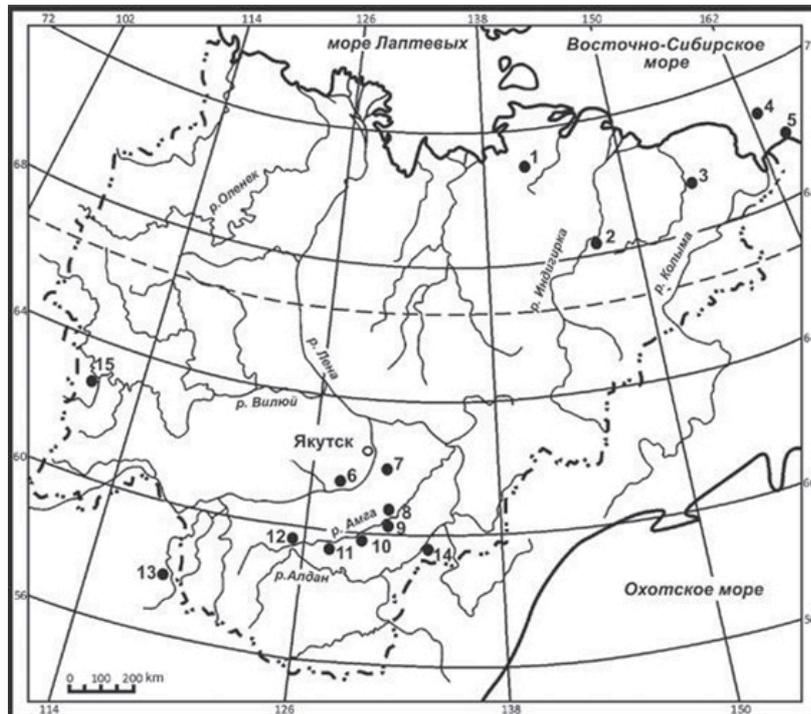


Hauling a boat with dogs, Siberia, 1895. Publisher American Museum of Natural History Library. Expedition Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897-1902). Geographic Location - Siberia, Russia. Subject- Arctic regions. Original Photographer - Bogoras, Waldemar, 1865-1936.



A Yukaghir wandering family on the Korkodon River, Siberia, 1900. Publisher American Museum of Natural History Library. Original Photographer Jochelson, Waldemar, 1855-1937. Expedition Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897-1902).

Ethnographers M.G. Levin (1946), A.V. Smolyak (1978) and others note that from ancient times to the present day for the aborigines of the North and Far East sled dogs have always been universal animals: they were driven and transported cargo, and from skins they sewed winter clothing, the dog was a cult animal - they were sacrificed and other religious rites were performed.



Location of residues and images domestic dogs on the Yakutia:

While the technology of sledding dogs in the peoples of North America remained at a rather primitive level, the indigenous peoples and Russian old-timers of the North, Siberia and the Far East of Russia achieved great success in sledding techniques, training dogs and managing them. R. Amundsen, having visited Koren Juhon in the Kolyma (Russian Ystie, Pokhodsk, Nizhnekolymsk) in 1920, wrote: "... these Russian and Yakuts stand above all those I have seen on sleddogs."

A special achievement is the northeast narta, called Kolyma. Lightweight, assembled without a single nail, only on the belt links - shock absorbers, it has great elasticity and strength and is best of all other structures suitable for driving on uneven terrain, among stones and hummocks. It is believed that this narta originated in the Neolithic era and exists without much change today, as before, in two versions - cargo and speed.

Beginning of the Way

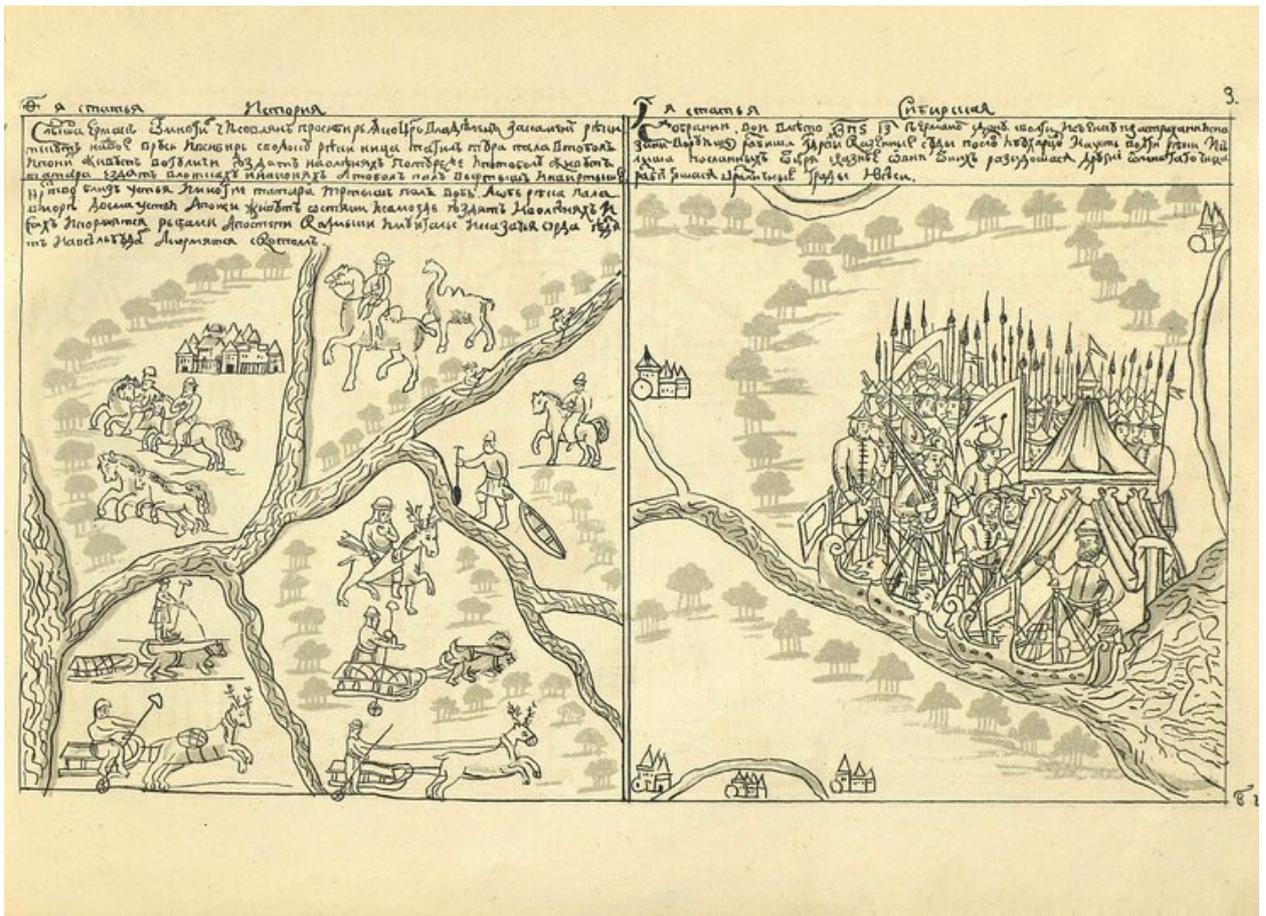
Thanks to sled dogs, many geographical discoveries and human exploration of the Arctic and Antarctica were accomplished. So, both poles of the Earth are conquered by dog sleds: in 1907, F. Cook and in 1909 - R. Pirie reached the North Pole with their help. And in 1911, Amundsen hoisted the flag of Norway in the South, passing 2980 km on dogs in the most difficult conditions of Antarctica in 99 days.

"Give me winter and a dogsled team, and take the rest!" Who said these words, the famous traveler Knud Rasmussen made the most grandiose trip in the history of mankind on dogs. Eighteen thousand kilometers passed the Danish ethnographer with his companions from the Hudson Bay to the Chukotka Peninsula. Recalling the "Great Walk in the Sleigh", he later wrote: I feel a warm feeling of gratitude to our patient, unpretentious dogs. We worked hard, exhausted ourselves, at the same time, worked together - as soon as living beings can work, helping each other..."

In Russia, starting with the Great Northern Expedition (1733-1743) sent by Peter I, until the 70s of the XX century, not a single Arctic trip was without sled dogs. And they were used later, despite the wide distribution of modern technology.

The first written references to dogs living in the territory of Yakutia belong to the year 1633. This year the first sea voyage from Lena river was made. At the head of the detachment, consisting of the commercial and industrial people, the Yenisei and Tobolsk Cossacks, was Ilya Perfilyev. As a result of this campaign, a number of geographical discoveries were made. In particular, the Olenek, Yana, Indigirka rivers were opened, on which two fortresses were founded - Zashiversk and the Russian Ustye, thereby initiating the development and settlement of the Indigirka-Kolyma Territory. A new stage of maritime campaigns in the Arctic seas began in 1642. The first Russian polar mariners from industrial, commercial and Cossack people Dmitry Zyryan (Yarilo), Mikhail Stadukhin and Semyon Dezhnev reached the mouth of the Kolyma River in 1643. Climbing up on it, they built winter huts, calling this place Kolymsky.

The Kungur Chronicle, created at the end of the 16th century, tells about the Siberian rivers, people living along them, and the main means of transport, in particular, riding on the deer and dogs (article 9). The Remezov Chronicle (end of the 17th century - 1703) also shows the means of movement of the Arctic peoples.

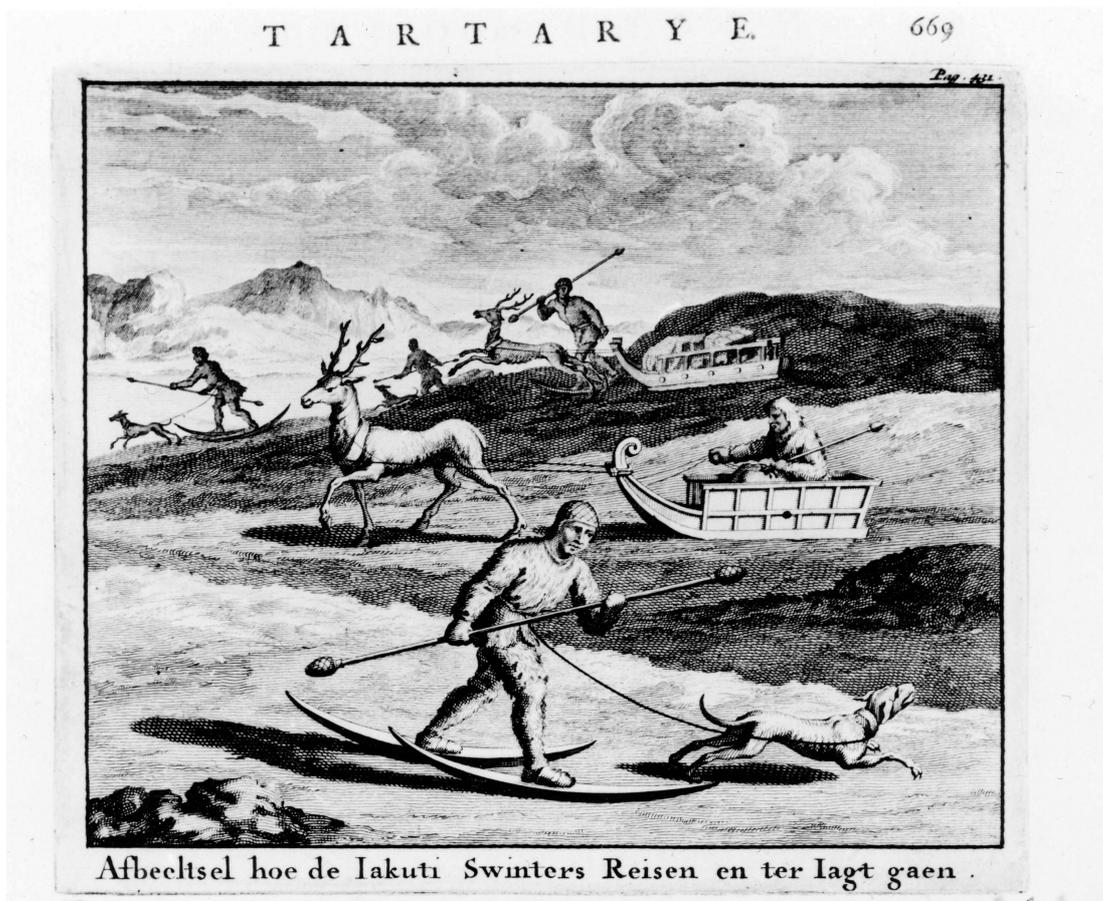


The Kungur Chronicle, end of the 16th century, article 9.



Remezov Chronicle, 17th-century illuminated manuscripts. end of the 17th century-1703 y.

In the documents of that time, the rivers Olenyok, Yana, Indigirka and Kolyma were called “dog rivers”, this term has its own explanation. In Siberia, the rivers in the north-east are divided into "dog" and "deer". Rivers rich in fish, where can easily cook yukola, dried fish for dogs, such rivers were called the dogs rivers . In the same place where there is no fish or it is not enough, it is difficult to walk on dogs, deer are used there for transportation, and such rivers were called deer rivers. Dog service was more difficult, as people had to constantly get food for dogs — to fish and hunt.



«How do the Russians travel with dog sledding in Siberia» Engraving from «North and East Tartarye, Often Concise Design Of any animal Landen en Volken Which foresight has been known. Apart from the unknown, and even never before described, Tartersche and Neighboring Regions, Regions, Cities, Rivers, and Places, in the northern and eastern parts of Asia and Europe, divides into two pieces, with the more self-evident landmarks: Distinguished Pictures of Cities, Drachten, etc. Zedert accurate examination of many years, designed, described, signed, and given in light by own experience». (Amsterdam MDCCV. First print: Amsterdam, 1692;

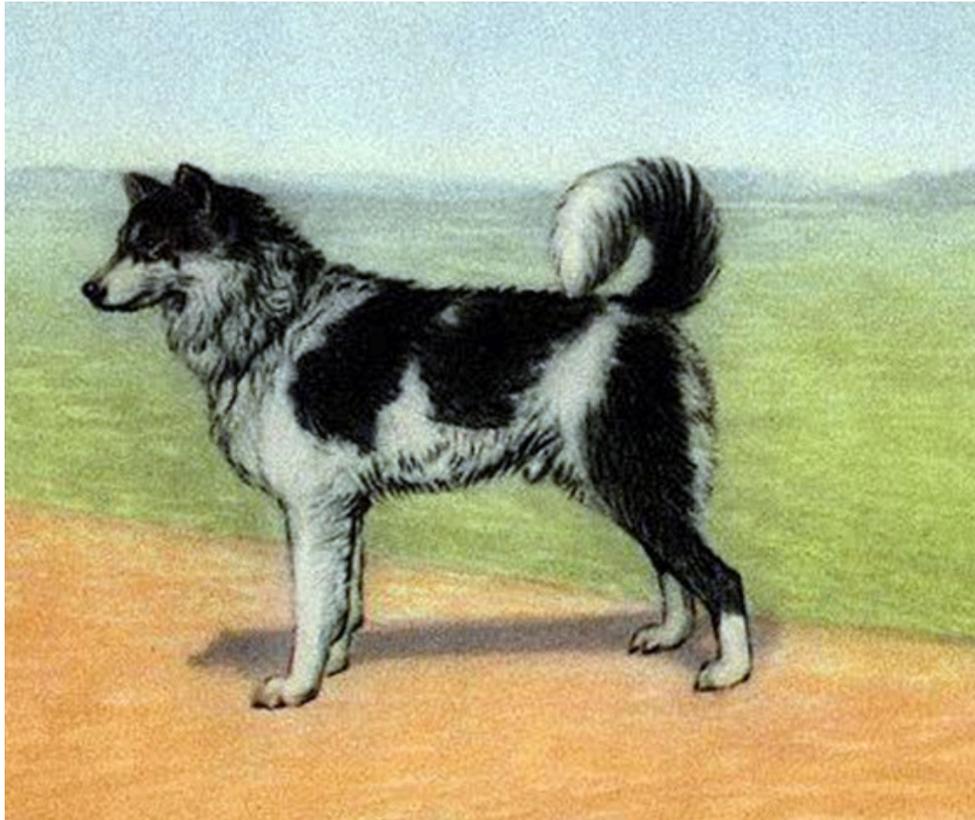
The first published picture of the Yakutian dogs was titled “The ways of travelling by Yakutians in winter” which was included in the book “Northern and Eastern Tartary” by Nicholas Witsen (Amsterdam, 1692).

French polar explorer Paul-Émile Victor in his book *Sled Dogs - Friends of the Risk*, claims that Scotland's Mac-Klintok was the first to use a dog sled in polar research in 1850. But this, of course, is wrong. **The first use of dog sleds in polar research** was carried out in 1742 by the navigator of the Russian fleet, Semyon Chelyuskin, making an unprecedented journey on dog sleds. Having passed about 4 thousand (!) Versts from the territory of Yakutia to the Taimyr Peninsula, for the first time he reached the northern tip of Asia - modern Cape Chelyuskin. Thousands of miles were passed on dogs by his comrades Khariton Laptev, Nikifor Chekin (Lena-Yenisei detachment (1735-1742)).



Watercolor *Traveling in Eastern Siberia I.* Bulychov 1856

In 1843, part 1 of Ivan Pavlovsky's book "Guide to the Geography of the Russian Empire" was published, **where the Yakutian Laika was first described as a "special breed"** that "is a necessary pet used for sledding and hunting". In the same book it is reported that the Yakutian Laika were used for the "postal intercourse". In 1839, in the Yakutsk region, in the winter period, up to 20 sledges (sledges) were used to send messages from Yakutsk to Okhotsk and then to Kamchatka, "which were used to carry heavy loads. In the sleigh harnessed, usually 10 dogs: 2 in a row on a long strap, with an advanced eleventh. So they carry loads from 25 to 35 poods, running up to 80 versts a day, and on a light ride, these same dogs ran up to 140 versts a day. "



*Watercolor
1896 from
Russian
materials
Geographical
Society of the
Siberian
Expedition*

According to the materials of the ethnographer V. Tugolukov about the Kolymo-Indigir sleds of the middle of the XIX century, their average speed on impassability of roads at long distances was up to 10 km / h, on the roads of winter roads 200-250 km long - up to 15-17 km / h. Lightweight sled could walk 250 km in 15 hours, 750 km in 3 days. On a good road, a team of 12–14 dogs carried up to 1 ton of cargo for an unlimited time, on an impassable road — no more than 500 kg.



Hauling wood with dog sled, houses in distance, Siberia, 1901. Publisher American Museum of Natural History Library. Cultural Context Arctic peoples. Original Photographer Bogoras, Waldemar, 1865-1936. Expedition Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897-1902).



Boy bringing water on dog sled, Markova, Siberia, 1901. Publisher American Museum of Natural History Library. Expedition Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897-1902). Geographic Location - Siberia, Russia. Original Photographer - Bogoras, Waldemar, 1865-1936.

The first mention of the number of Yakutian Laikas can be found in the book "Statistical Tables of the Russian Empire", published by the Ministry of the Interior of the Russian Empire in 1856, edited by A. Bushchev: "In the Yakutsk region 15,157 dogs used there for sledding are shown".

In 1862, the Imperial Russian Geographical Society published the Geographical-Statistical Dictionary of the Russian Empire, 1st volume, compiled by Peter Semenov. According to this publication in Verkhoyansk Ulus, "to pets, very important for residents, are dogs: they are kept in large numbers by residents who use them for hunting and riding on the tundra: there are up to 4,000 dogs".

The first description of the content and use of Yakutian Laika is available in the «Review of Economic Statistics of the Russian Empire for 1847» (St. Petersburg, 1849), compiled by Professor I. Y. Gorlov: «Yakuts are used by dogs for ride and carry weights. Dogs spend the whole year outdoors; in the summer they dig a hole in the ground for coolness or lie in the water, getting rid of mosquitoes. In winter, they seek refuge under the snow and, curled up in deep snow pits, cover the face with a shaggy tail. Yakuts feed a large part of some males, and the females are thrown.

The feeding and training of dogs for sledding is the the most important work of the fisherman. The most agile and intelligent dogs are harnessed in front. On the road across the vast tundra, in dark, foggy nights, or severe blizzards, when the traveler, not seeing before him, is in danger of freezing or perishing under the snow, a trained advanced dog often saved from death and led to the povarnya (a hut in the tundra for rest and overnight hunters), where she was at least once, or to

another refuge. This alone makes dogs necessary; their intuition and instinct in the deserts replace the compass. "



Feeding dogs, Russia, 1901. Publisher American Museum of Natural History Library. Original Photographer Jochelson, Waldemar, 1855-1937. Expedition Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897-1902)

"In 1821, a strong epidemic exterminated most of the dogs on the banks of the Lena, Indigirka and Kolyma, so that one family is left out only 2 puppies of 20 dogs : hostess nursed them her chest on a same level with the baby - to the extent dogs revered necessary. Thus, two puppies became the ancestors of numerous subsequent generations.

The first researcher who **described the Yakutian Laika in detail** was Vladimir **Jochelson**. In the years 1894-1896. V.I. Jochelson worked in the Siberian Expedition organized by the Russian Geographical Society, he studied the peoples of the Kolyma district and the northern part of the Verkhoyansk district. The writings of these years are the result of extensive, varied work of V.I. Jochelson on the study of various aspects of life of the Yakuts, Chuvans, Chukchi, Evens, Evenks, Russians, especially the Yukagirs.

In the book of Jochelson, we read: "The livestock of the Yakut is a horse, the stray nations are a deer, and the river inhabitants and the so-called "sedentary" are exclusively a dog; but all these animals adapt to helping a man hunt. However, about the dog following the man under all latitudes, it is necessary to add that for

each of the ethnic groups of the district she is the most reliable comrade during the hunting of animals. While the horse and deer are passive, irresponsible and involuntary helpers, the dog, as an intelligent predator, is an active and conscious hunter, often leading another predator - a man. ”



Political exiles, east Siberia, 1900. Publisher American Museum of Natural History Library. Expedition Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897-1902). Geographic Location - Siberia, Russia. Cultural Context Russians. Original Photographer - Bogoras, Waldemar, 1865-1936.



Dogs, Siberia, 1901. Publisher American Museum of Natural History Library. Cultural Context Arctic peoples. Original Photographer Bogoras, Waldemar, 1865-1936. Expedition Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897-1902).

“A sled dog,” Jochelson writes, “composed working livestock not only of non-deers nomads and“ sedentary ”river inhabitants, Russians and Russianized indigenous people, but also of the majority of Yakut cattle breeders. With the exception of the southwestern part of the district, in each Yakut yurt you will find 5-4 dogs, which carry firewood, ice and perform other chores.

The polar dog is small in height, its height in the shoulders is 50-60 cm. It can be a little higher, but many sled dogs, especially among the Yakuts, amaze you with their small stature. The small height of working dogs can, however, be explained by the same reasons why our peasants have small horses: on 5-6-month-old puppies, which are almost not fed, poor people already carry firewood and water. Wealthy dog owners who have the best care are always larger.



Dog team, in the middle, Siberia, 1901. Publisher American Museum of Natural History Library. Expedition Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897-1902). Geographic Location - Siberia, Russia. Cultural Context - Arctic peoples. Original Photographer - Bogoras, Waldemar, 1865-1936.

Outwardly, a local sled dog with its erect ears, slanting eyes, thick hair, a wide and relatively large head, a pointed muzzle and a lowered (when it is out of sorts, tired or eating) fluffy tail is very similar to a wolf.

Vladimir Jochelson first described the Yakutian Laika and identified its difference from the rest of the dogs of Northeast Asia.

The prevailing color of the Kolyma dog, according to Jochelson, is “gray, gray-yellow, variegated, that is, white with gray or black spots”, “legs are relatively thick and short; the thorax that pulls the sled is well developed; The neck is thick and short. The muzzle is unusually sly, with a melancholic or sullen expression.»

The sled dog, according to Jochelson, is at the same time hunting dog, “with a well-developed sense of smell, but with better hearing and sight. Almost all year round on a leash, but left to themselves, they are perfectly able to find food in the form of mice, partridges, ducks and other birds and small animals. In a society, deer and a cow can be devoured, and the hungry attack a horse. ”

Interestingly, “Kolyma dogs become fierce while riding and are even dangerous for the oncoming person ... As for hunting, they are useless for the bird: they interfere and disperse the forest bird and swamp bird”. “However,” says Jochelson, “the very hunt for birds, for which dogs are not used, has a completely different character there than ours. In general these dogs no one teaches. A good hunting dog is an independent talent. Strictly speaking, each of the local dogs is able to find the trail of the beast and chase it, but not everyone has enough excitement and courage to bring the pursuit to the end. ”

Often in old photos we see laikas with cut tails. This was done from the evil eye and bad spirits (shamanistic beliefs). Although most likely it was a fact of necessity, and only then different beliefs and traditions. After all, the main method of treating infectious diseases in dogs in those years was “tail cutting”. If a puppy got sick, they removed his tail as an unnecessary option. Dogs often froze their tails, and they broke off - now this is still there, they also received various injuries during fights and lengthy transitions, it all began to rot, and the mushers treated this simply by chopping off the leftovers.

A special contribution to the description of the Yakutian Laika breed was made by M. G. **Dmitrieva-Sulima**, describing the Yakutian dogs and hunting with them in his book “Laika and Hunting with Her” of the 1911 edition.

“This dog, by its qualities, belongs to the breed of northern dogs - writes M. G. Dmitrieva-Sulima - and inhabits the Kolyma district, or rather the r. Kolyma with tributaries. Historically it is known that for three or four hundred years it is forced mainly to bear the duties of an sledding animal that has not yet destroyed its hunting instincts. And hunting instincts, without being developed or supported by

man by training and hunting education, still being preserved, enable him to position the animal as a hunting breed, a minority of them are suitable for hunting large animals, almost all bark squirrels, most bear the duties of hunting dogs for foxes and arctic foxes, that is, the beast that is known to be most common in the area and constitutes the main object of hunting for local residents. And here the northern dog became what the person wanted from it.”



For the development of Alaska by the Americans until the 20-ies of our century have taken dogs from the Kolyma river.



Dogs on deck of ship, Siberia, 1900. Publisher American Museum of Natural History Library. Subject Arctic regions. Original Photographer Bogoras, Waldemar, 1865-1936. Expedition Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897-1902).

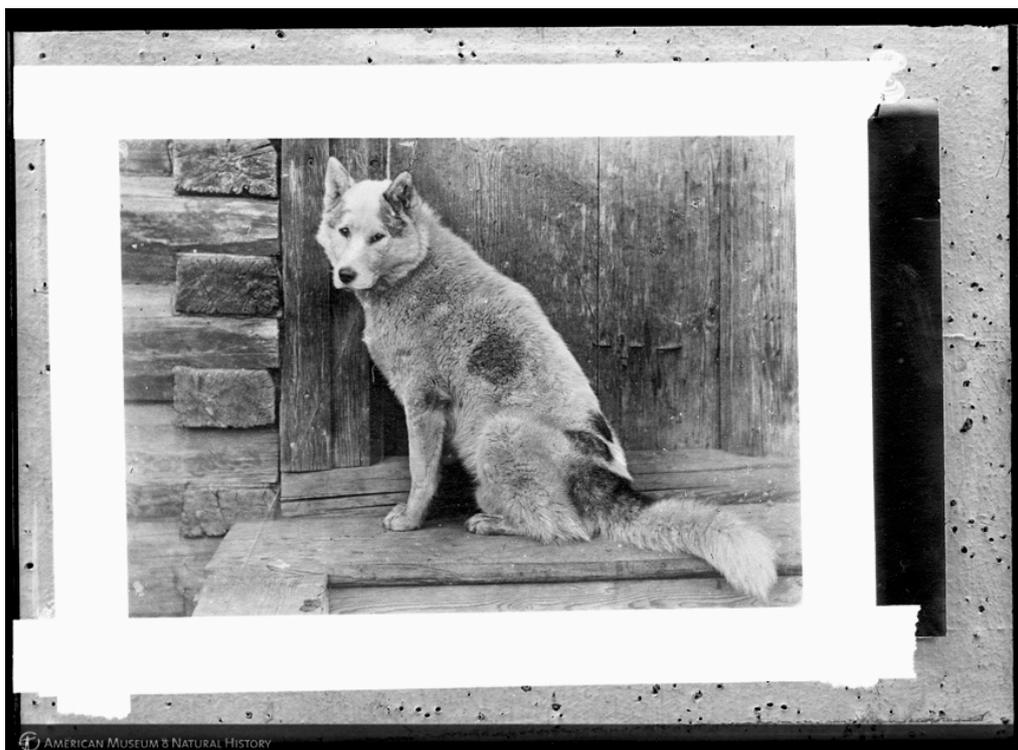
We have to say about one more outstanding dog expert. - Edmund Iosifovich Shereshevsky. In 1946, hi has published book "Sled dog breeding", this book combined all previous experience of sledding dog breeding in our country. Shereshevsky conferred interesting information about the dogs of the North, their use and maintenance. In this book, the standard was first published - a detailed description of the Northeastern Sled Dog of the USSR, E.I. Shereshevsky united in this concept sled dogs of the lower reaches of the Yenisei, Yakutia, Chukotka, Anadyr, Kamchatka, Sakhalin and Amur.

Photos of Arctic natives Yukagirs with dogs:



Winter block house of the River Yukaghir, family outside in the snow, Siberia, 1900. .Publisher American Museum of Natural History Library. Original Photographer Jochelson, Waldemar, 1855-1937. Expedition

Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897-1902).



Yukaghir dog, Russia. Publisher American Museum of Natural History Library. Cultural Context Arctic peoples, Yukaghir. Original Photographer Jochelson, Waldemar, 1855-1937. Expedition Jesup North Pacific Exp (1897-1902).



*Yukaghir man with dogs at entrance to summer tent, Siberia, 1901
Publisher American Museum of Natural History Library. Cultural Context Yukaghir Arctic peoples.
Original Photographer Jochelson, Waldemar, 1855-1937. Expedition Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897-1902).*

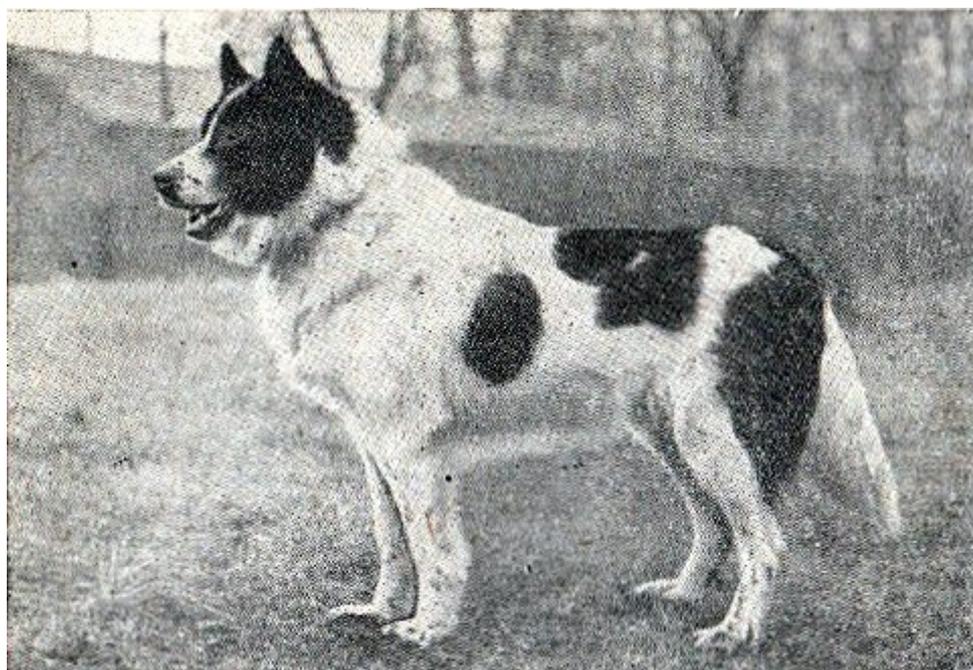


*Yukaghir children with play tent, Siberia, 1900. Publisher American Museum of Natural History Library.
Original Photographer Jochelson, Waldemar, 1855-1937. Expedition Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897-1902).*

Yakutian Laika today

Until the 1960-ies sled dogs were important and somewhere even the only kind of winter's transportation for North regions of Russia. They were used by not the only local residents but the all public services including border force, post service and scientific expedition. Archive data says there were up to in the Yakutia at the end of the 50th year of the XXth century there were at about 33000 dogs. The end of sled dogs breeding in Russia was in the last 30 years of the XXth century. Spread of snowmobile technology, decline of fur hunting and local fishing cause to about extinction of the Northern dogs.

In 1958, the 1st All-Union Exhibition of Service and Hunting Dogs was held in Moscow. At this exhibition, eight North-Eastern sled dogs were represented, belonging to the state kennel of the Krasnaya Zvezda service dog breeding. DOSAAF USSR, the Main Administration for Hunting and Reserves at the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR, on March 6, 1959, published Standards for breeds of service, hunting and indoor dogs, including the standard of the Northeastern Sled Dog, based on research by Shereshevsky E. I., Petryaeva P.A., and Golubeva V.G. This standard became the first officially approved and published standard of the breed of dogs from the North-East of Russia. This Standard formed the basis of the standard of the Yakut Laika, published by the RKF, in 2005.



Northeastern Sled Dog, Catalog 1 All-Russian Exhibition of Hunting Dogs, 1959

In 1993, The State commission of Russian Federation for testing and protection of breeding achievements brought the breed Yakutian Laika in "The

state register of breeds of animals admitted to use" (number of register 9358072, breed for hunting (Laika), service (sled) dog).

In 1998, a group of enthusiasts V.Z. Dyachkov, G.P. Arbugaev, S.V. Gorodilov and L.I. Sidorova decided to revive the breed of the Yakutian Laika and brought the first dogs from the Far North, which became the modern population of the Yakutian Laika. Together with the Yakut Republican Association of Dog Breeders, the cynological work to increase the quality and number of dogs and the formation of a breed standard lasted for some years. In 2004, The Russian Cynological Federation has reviewed the standard and adopted it.



First dogs from Arctic region in Yakutsk, 1998

In 2004 the famous Yakutian local historian Chikachev A.G. devoted his book "The Sled dog breeding in Yakutia" the Kolyma and Indigirka Laikas, which are called "Yakutian Laika" now. The book is a unique document, been fixated the original and reliable information that is usually called "first-hand author", stored in the researcher's memory and archives. The author is a native of The Russian Ystie, which is the heart of the "Dog country" and the son of a hereditary musher.



G.Arbugaev,2012

In 2013, was the first Arctic expedition in the XXIst century called "The Pathways of pioneers" on the team of the Yakutian Laikas sled dogs, which was organized and headed by Herman Arbugaev. The length of the route to the Novosibirsky Arhipelag (Anju islands) was 1500 km., and it lasted 36 days.

There wasn't any special accompaniment/escort, which is usually arranged for such expeditions of brave man. The travelers overcame the silent ice space blocked with ice hummocks, giving their destinies in the paws of four-legged friends. They all returned back. Maksim Lubavin the participant of the expedition says: "Each of us who were standing on the sledge could spend hours in an the endless Arctic vacuum. The only thing that not left the right to consider himself forever lost, were dogs. The dogs weren't only the dogs. They were our brothers. We didn't just put harnesses on them, harnessed them to sledge and rode where the wind blows. We entrusted them our lives and the final outcome of the event. They were the ones who, silently and hour by hour, day by day did their work without thinking that they were fulfilling someone's lifelong dream. And this dream came

true thanks to the huge work done by the little dog paws. Dogs dogs do not know the weakness of the soul. Their devotion and productivity are affecting and sometimes it even seems that they have two hearts. It is hard to imagine how such a little furry ball has so much will and strength."

The territory of Yakutia was and is now huge - 3 million square kilometres - it's forests, plains, mountains, tundra, deserts, swamps with a harsh climate.

The habitat of the Yakutian Laika is the Northeast region of Yakutia. Various researchers have indicated the names of this breed, which were formed from geographical places or from the names of nations living in this region: Yakutian, Kolyma-Indigirka, Anadyr, Alazeya, Anyui, Arctic, Yana, Okhotsk, Polar, Pohodsk, North-Eastern Sled dog, Ystie (Russo-Ystie), Even (Lamut), Evenk, Verkhoyansky, Yukagir (Chuvans) – laika, etc.).

By the end of the 19th century, there was a strong understanding that this group of dogs possessed all the features of the breed, and in 1910, Dmitrieva-Sulima described the external characteristics (standard).

Currently, this breed is registered by RKF and Standard РКФ specifies three historical names of breed:

Kolyma-Indigirka Laika are names it was used in the majority of descriptions of breed till 1958.

Northeast sled dog - under such names has been published the first standard of breed in 1958.

Yakutian Laika - this name was fixed to breed in the end of 20 centuries and used in all documents of the Russian Cynological Federation.

We consider possible to include all three names as they are connected with the same breed in the standard and were used in descriptions of breed throughout more than 150 years. Inclusions of the given names will exclude not understanding resulting studying of history of breed.

S. Gorodilov, RKF-FCI judge

