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Legacy of the Steppe: Traces of the Scythian Horse

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ABSTRACT

Research Article

The domestication of the horse and the economic, social, military and cultural benefits from the horse in time, in a sense, is one of the important events in history. Although there are different opinions on this issue, cultural historians agree that the Turks played the biggest role in the domestication of the horse for the first time. The use of the horse as a riding animal by the Turks is essentially a cultural breakthrough. Considering the North China and central Inner Asia, where the Turkish culture emerged, the vast grasslands and wide steppe land, it is obvious that the horse brought dynamism both to itself and to the Steppe Culture over time. The Scythians, who lived in the steppe life in the region that included the east of Europe, the Tian Shan and Fergana Valley between the 8th century BC and the 3rd century AD, and were accepted as the ancestors of the Turks, were the best example of the strong connection between humans and animals at that time. While talking about the Scythians, Hippocrates mentions that they always have a horse with them and that they fight with the enemy on the horse. Ancient historians and geographers such as Herodotos, Strabo, and Xenophon defined them as "equestrian tribes" with the information they brought to the present day. We can also provide this information from Assyrian and Urartian written sources. The Scythians, who taught the world how to use the horse skillfully and were able to show many knowledge and skills about the horse, showed the tribes of the region that the horse could also be used for military purposes in every geography they went. Strabo especially mentioned "horse training" in the information he gave in his sources, and also included the love and respect that the Scythians felt for their horses. In light of archaeological findings and the written sources of the period, this study was conducted to answer the question of how the horse figure is based on cultural wealth in the military, political, social and religious lives of the Scythians.

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Introduction

The horse, which has led many civilizations with a nomadic lifestyle to survive for a long time and thrives in many ways, has the utmost importance in the life of the Turkish steppe tribes. In fact, the horse is one of the most fundamental aspects of the nomadic lifestyle. These nomadic tribes carried all the knowledge and skills they learned, produced or realized, to long distances by taking advantage of the speed and strength of the horse. In truth, they have used the horse to sell and market all kinds of materials produced (Esin, 1997, p. 23-30). Thereby, the horse has a significant role in World History in showing and causing a change in economic and political events. In time, this role of importance showed itself even more and revealed a cultural phase called "horse culture" in social life (Arslan, 1984, pp. 33-34). The noble stance, strength, power, speed, and vigorous nature of the horse have attributed it to be given a unique value in the vast steppe geography. The speed of the horse was an essential element in the war, its agility was a remarkable element in hunting, and its skill, especially in meeting the nutritional needs, led to the breeding of numerous horse herds in the steppe (Klyashtorny and Sultanov, 2003, pp. 65-70). The great benefit of the horse at the point of meeting the basic needs has made it sacred over time. Burying the heroes with their horses when they die, sacrificing the horse in religious ceremonies, or using them as totems are significant in demonstrating this sacredness (Sertkaya, 1995, pp. 167-177).

The Turks, who tamed the horse, benefited from the horse's power and speed and its meat and milk. They mentioned the unique value of the horse in epics, legends, idioms, and proverbs and highlighted that they were in a place too essential to be measured by any other being. During the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods between 12-4 thousand B.C., the activities of steppe Turkish tribes' making their living by gathering and hunting undoubtedly influenced such a strong bond with the horse. At the time, such a lifestyle also strengthened human and animal relations (Ahmetbeyoğlu, 2014, pp. 56-57). The "hunting and gathering" culture left its place in the "nomadic culture" when the domesticated animal species reproduced, rapid climate changes experienced, and the necessity of chasing migrating animals for hunting activities arose. After the formation of this "nomadism," the most fundamental element in its development and becoming a "nomadic culture" was the horse (Radlof, 1976, pp. 88-94). It was the primary factor that created the steppe culture and brought it to the pages of history. The first archaeological findings of the horse unearthed in the kurgans were found in the Keltiminar Culture (5000-3000 BC). It was seen that these archaeological, cultural elements mainly were found in the north of the Black Sea, Carpathian, Minusinsk basins, and northern regions of Mongolia in the 4th millennium B.C. The horse itself and all the things belonging to it were discovered were buried in the kurgans unearthed in Afhanesyevovo -Andronovo-Karasuk- Tashtyk and Tagar culture (Tarhan, 1970b, pp. 20-22). At the same time, it is considered that the figure depicted on the rocks, which the nomadic Turkish tribes made the border stones of their regions, is primarily a horse, and the horse figure used in the paintings is one of the oldest symbols of the Turks. In fact, the Steppe Culture, with all its dynamics, reached a self-characteristic structure between 2500-1700 BC (Roux, 2004, pp. 86-90). Thanks to the horse, in the suitable climate-environmental conditions, the "horse-shepherd" culture, which is the highest stage of the nomadic culture, was developed. Steppe herding continued its development at this time. The size of the geography of the steppe has brought along the formation of large herds along with inevitable consequences. Since this development continued on a horse and in search of green pastures in varying climate conditions, a complete "steppe shepherd" life has arisen (Francfort, 2008, pp. 35-37). At the beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C., this active lifestyle on horses became widespread quickly. In the old Turkish tribes, especially in the Turkish communities living in the steppe

geography, a person without a horse had no value (Durmuş, 1993, p. 1-2). As mentioned above, the horse is an indispensable part of Turkish communities, especially for steppe Turkish. In particular, the fact that horses are buried with their owners to continue their service in the other world (afterlife) proves this situation.

Horse in Scythian Culture

According to the information provided and supported by the archeological materials and finding that has emerged so far, there were communities known as the ancestors of the Turks who made the steppe culture a way of life in the region stretching from the Crimea to China. There is no definite information about when the Scythians, one of these communities, first appeared. The information we have obtained primarily about Scythians belongs to Urartian, Assyrian, and Hellenic sources. There is no doubt that their military, commercial and political relations with these states caused them to be mentioned in the references. Also, Persian, Greek, and Chinese sources mention them. Let's look at the oldest dating point of view. The Greek sources carry the information about the name Scythian and Scythians to the period just after the 8th century B.C. (Durmuş, 2007, pp. 37-38), we see that their names were mentioned for the first time in the annals of Argishti, the king of the Urartian civilization, in 774 BC. (Çilingiroğlu, 1994, pp. 30-38). This community, known as the "işkıgular" in the annuals, moved towards Anatolia from the south of Iran, around the Tigris-Euphrates rivers, and became a feared power in this region (Bokovenko, 1996, pp. 97-101). Notably, the Scythians, whose names are "horse tribes" in the rock inscriptions unearthed around the Kanlıca Village on the Arpaçay side, became the most important representative of this culture (Memiş, 2005, pp. 28-38). The formation and development of their cultures were related to their cultural geography. The active lifestyle they adopted has affected all their cultural elements. Horse breeding, which was the most crucial factor in the formation of this busy life, has increased its importance over time and has become so valuable in the life of this community (Durmuş, 1997, pp. 14-16). The steppe geography is higher than sea level in many places, has caused the mild effect of the sea not to be felt and green grassland land not to appear everywhere. This meant that the Scythians could not always provide the necessary environment for their animals and horses. This is the reason behind why a vibrant "shepherd culture" was needed.

The horse, the essential riding animal in this culture, has become the Scythian society's friend and companion. In the absence of a horse, rapid relocation, searching for pastures, or keeping herds together was nearly impossible (Deer, 1954, pp. 161-163). For these reasons, the most outstanding characteristic of the Scythians was their skillful use of the horse. Benefiting from the horse in every sense required knowledge, skill, and experience. At the same time, it was necessary to have a particular technology to meet the horse's need for stirrups, harnesses, and bridles. The Scythians were a community with this technology, and the written sources confirmed this. They taught using the horse, especially for military purposes, to the communities they were in contact with, and with this, they conveyed a lot of information about civilization to them. (Koppers, 1941, pp. 445-456). It is possible to say that his skills in mining operations were at the point that they could change the military and political balances of that period (Rice, 1957, pp. 57-70).

Horse in Scythian Political and Military Life

According to archaeological and written sources, the Scythians became a significant figure of the Pre-Turkish History and, they were considered in history as a Turkish community. Various studies have revealed that the Scythians are a Turkish steppe tribe in terms of their traditions, customs and the lifestyle they adopted, and the culture they created (Durmuş, 1993, p. 21-23). At the same time, it can be stated that they draw the image of a

tribe of Turkish origin, especially with their art and the geography they come from (Esin, 2002, pp. 133-136).

One of the most fundamental factors for the Turks to establish strong states in the steppe, to bring together disconnected tribes under one roof, to show the same courage against the enemies, and of course, to maintain a strong dominance over the states they founded is the horse (Turchin, 2009, p. 212-216). Most of the Turkish steppe tribes spent their lives on horses; they ate and drank, held meetings, and, of course, fought on horseback. When considering the conditions of the old period, it will not be wrong to say that the battles won and the achievements obtained throughout history are closely related to the speed and power of the horses. It can be understood from the written sources that the Turkish steppe tribes were able to determine foreign conquest policies and spread thanks to their fast horses and raids (Grousset, 1996, pp. 72-75) rapidly. We learn from the information given by Herodotus that the Scythians were a very successful tribe in the military field and that the horse was an essential factor in the conquest policy they implemented. While talking about the Scythians, Herodotus states that anyone who attacks them couldn't be victorious, achieve success, and escape defeat (Herodotus, 2002, p. 46). The most important part of the invincibility of the Scythians is related to the tactics and strategy they applied. It is thought that their most successful tactic is to take the enemy to the vast steppe, quickly surround them and neutralize the enemy in unknown geography (Piotrovsky, 1982, p. 21-25). Thanks to the horses they have, they achieved this speed, agility, and success. The love and trust for their horses made them more self-confident over time, and they continued with the urge to acquire new lands (Rolle, 1980, pp. 18-24). The conflicts they had with different tribes and their military-political successes attracted the attention of many historians and geographers of the period. Thucydides claims that even if other communities in Asia or Europe formed a union, they could not gain success against Scythians. He also describes the skill of the Scythian warrior on the horse (Thucydides, 1975, p. 97-100). This information tells how strong the Scythians were in military terms and provides the interpretation that this power provided a solid ground for a political force.

A large part of the Scythian army was the cavalry, which consisted of horse riders. The use of "saddle" distinguishes them from the cavalry units of their contemporaries, such as the Greeks and Romans. Since the saddle is a material placed on the back of the riding animals and used to ride and stand on the horse more comfortably, it provided a great advantage to the Scythian soldier (Roberts, 2011, pp. 112-124). According to ancient sources and historians, it is understood that the Scythians had a "warrior" mood and a firm side. One of these ancient historians, Aristotle, compared the Scythians with many different tribes and stressed that the Scythians were a "horse warrior tribe" superior to them. He mentions that they ride the horse perfectly, that they frighten their enemies with agility, and that they can shoot arrows on the horse very well (Harmata, 1950, pp. 68-70). He even mentions that they are called "ghost horsemen" because of their fast maneuverability (Tektaş, 1946, p. 57-60). Another piece of information we obtained from Herodotus about the war strategies of the Scythians is the Scythian expedition of the Persian King Darius in 513 BC. In this expedition, the Scythians were quite active on the horse, and they were able to reach the strategic points that needed to be gathered very quickly on the horse in quite a short time. The fact that they can use their weapons, especially their arrows, very well on horseback is one of the pieces of information that has reached us with Herodotus. The rapid growth of the Scythians has occurred with the discovery of learning the iron forging science, and it gained a significant momentum when they realized that they could use the animal in all areas of life, rather than nomadism. Because iron, which was forged firstly for horse-related reasons, later developed and brought about a revolution in agriculture, craft arts, and even battlefield. The Scythians were associated with their superior military achievements after their time, and even especially

the writers of Byzantine strategy-tactics books especially mentioned the Scythians a lot. It is seen that the Scythians never preferred heavy weapons in the wars, as the horse was used as a war tool (Sümer, 1983, p. 32-34). It was using heavy equipment alongside their weight would both tire the horse and slow it down. By attacking the enemies suddenly and retreating, the Scythians created the perception that they left the war to the enemy. With the help of this strategy they implemented, they succeeded in attracting the enemies to the vast lands of the steppe (Ligeti, 1970, pp. 93-96). The Scythians, who could quickly escape on horseback and get inside enough to make the enemy lose their track, could tire the enemy and keep them away from possible support. The enemy could start to struggle with hunger and thirst as well as get lost in this area. Because the Scythians, who were drawn inwards, continued on their way by destroying the water sources and fields on the road. The tired enemy soldier was finally defeated by being surrounded and trapped. The feasibility of these tactics and such practices during the war is directly related to having a vehicle like a horse. Indeed, another important point here is that they could ride horses very well and fight very well on it in addition to owning a horse. Among the information given by the geographers of that period, the horses of the Scythians were quite resistant to cold, heat, rain, and wind (Rasonyi, 2007, pp. 50-52). Perhaps such resistance had to be formed in this geography which has a continental climate type. In Chinese sources, it is written that the horses used by the Scythians sleep very little, and they are generally standing even when they rest. At the same time, these horses can run 300 km a day (Eberhard, 1940, pp. 170-173). It is understood that horses in different geographies are fed with a single type of plant species, but this is not the case in the steppe (Roux, 2005, pp. 46-48). The horse in the steppe could find its food by scraping it from under the snow with its hooves; In fact, even this situation can be considered as an indication that there is a struggle to meet the nutritional needs (Durmuş, 2005, p. 5-6).

Scythians know how to use the horse for military purposes, as stated in their written documents unearthed in Europe and South Asia, including Anatolia (Hildinger, 1997, pp. 78-88). They taught the communities in regions they reached to use horses for military purposes and reshaped the political balances. Apart from the written sources, the archaeological finds prove that the Scythians brought the war equipment, war tactics, and steppe culture to Anatolia (Belek, 2015, pp. 110-113). It is understood that they brought this steppe culture from the west of the Black Sea to the west of Anatolia and even to Mesopotamia and Egypt. Because horse depictions and bird beak-shaped tools were found in the war equipment unearthed around Lake Van and Sardes, which is so important in terms of showing the Scythian trace in the region. Pazırık (3rd century B.C.) and Noin-ula (1st century B.C.) kurgans, which are related to the Turkish communities unearthed due to the excavations, give information about the physical structure of the Scythian horse, as well as many other issues. According to the excavated archaeological material, the length of the Turkish horse is 1.50-1.55 centimeters (Zavitukhina, 1976, pp. 32-35). These horse fossils unearthed revealed that they had large heads, solid nails, short waists but long necks, and horses with leadership characteristics. It can be thought that this horse type was chosen both for its functionality in battles and its maneuverability in a short time. Archaeological data also revealed that the Scythians had a tradition of horse breeding and sacrifice. This tradition, which spread in the steppe geography, was also applied by the Scythians. The vase, which was unearthed in Ukraine around the 4th century B.C. in the 70-centimeter Chertomlyk kurgan where the kumiss was kept, strengthens the idea that the Scythians were very skillful in horse riding and horse breeding (Aksoy, 1998, pp. 38-44). The figures on this archaeological data also reveal the coexistence of horses and Scythian people in all parts of life. A magnificent artistic side emerges with the figures depicted on this silver vase. The pictures of how the horses on the vase are decorated, the details on the harnesses, the horse and human depictions attract attention at first glance (Çoruhlu, 2017, p. 35). The Scythians indicated essential elements

about training their horses as a message for the next generations in these depictions. The figures on this archaeological data are like a living artifact that connects horses and Scythian people in every part of life to the present. Some pictures on the Chertomlyk vase show that many horse species were used as riding animals in the steppe region. Written sources point that there were many horses in the Scythians and that horse breeding was critical. This situation reveals a fact called "Scythian military horse" over time (Herodotos, 2002, pp. 110-136).

Horse in Scythian Social Life

The geography they lived in was very significant in the formation of the Scythian social life. Herodotus says that there is no rainfall, and it is quite cold in the Scythian lands in the winter and spring. He also mentions the difficulty of life in this geography by pointing out heavy rains that never stop in the summer. (Herodotos, 2002, pp. 172-186). He also emphasizes that the horses and their hooves are also quite durable despite being in such a harsh climate. Because among the herbivore animals, the animal with the highest muscle strength is the horse. Especially in steppe geography, the horse has been used in every field as it adapts to all kinds of conditions and climate change. When the Scythians realized the conveniences brought by the horse, they made a rapid and significant change in their lifestyle and social life. This change, which started in the thinking systems first, took place in all parts of life and paved the way for them to dominate this geography (Roux, 2001, pp. 56-60). The horse, which was at the very center of the social life of the Scythians; even today, allows us to encounter many legends, epics, idioms, and proverbs based on horses. The fact that the Scythians were devoted to the horse in the degree of holiness and placed it to a particular position in social life, both materially and spiritually, indicates that the Turks respect the horse as a different entity. The horse motif, frequently mentioned in fairy tales and epics, generally appears with its superior features. For example, the horse flies and takes its warrior to distant lands in a short period. Sometimes it is even mentioned that they have some human characteristics. It is narrated that they are sad, happy, thinking, crying like humans, and some immortal horses are described. (Ögel, 2014, p. 335-345).

Since the Scythians had a nomadic lifestyle, the area they lived in belonged to all communities. Therefore, we can say that there was no social stratification among Scythians and most of the Turan tribes and that there was no sharp class distinction. It is seen that the society was divided only into two parts, those who govern the state and those who are governed. The people, who already had a nomadic life, and those who ruled them had to be alert, careful, and fast (Togan, 1981, pp. 33-38). These harsh geographical conditions and such a way of life, where everyone in the society needed each other, prevented the existence of a social distinction among the Scythian people. Over time, they learned to use the horse and added both dynamism and color to their nomadic life. The search for green pastures and the feasibility of migration over long distances with the help of horses for that purpose has led to the transition to the "steppe shepherd life." From the beginning of the two thousand B.C, with a fast transition to an active life by learning riding and taming horses, it was seen that the society kept up with this rapid change at the same speed. In fact, with the arrival of the Turks on the stage of history, it became clear how their lifestyles would progress and develop. When Hippocrates mentions the Scythians; He says that they rode horses, shot arrows, and fought with the enemy. He also claims that the family and their children live in carts, the small of these carts having four wheels and the big ones having six wheels. Besides, he emphasizes that carts have a sheltered design against rain, land, and wind and are covered with felt on top of it. He states that these carts were pulled by two or three pairs of hornless oxen, women and children lived together in these carts, and men accompanied them on horseback (Durmuş, 2005, p. 7-10). It is understood from the sources that the Scythian men stay on the horse from

morning to evening, and they consider the horse their companion. (Memiş, 2005, pp. 41-46). Indeed, we can say that they were the best representatives of a nomadic lifestyle in the vast steppe geography for the Scythians.

It is seen in the historical documents that horse races are regularly organized during the holidays. Another historical record is that they held a horse competition to express their blessing and gratitude to the Tengri. While giving information about the Scythians, Hippocrates stated that besides the Scythian man on the horse, the Scythian woman was very skillful. He adds that single women especially participate in horse-related competitions and do sports until they get married. The Scythian society, which led a horse-oriented life, was a tribe that frequently organized festivals and entertainments in social life. It is understood that horse races were held in these festivals, and a strong sense of unity was formed by participating in these entertainments. (Togan, 1981, pp. 34-35). The love and devotion to the ancestors brought together solidarity in social life. In fact, the Scythian people had a dynamic, lively character who loved life, enjoyed having fun, and competed. To maintain this vitality and mobility, horses were the best choice to address such a vivid lifestyle. It is because the horse's strength, endurance, speed, and agility attracted the Scythian people.

One of the indispensable values of social life in the Scythians was the institution of marriage. Marriage was always possible with the boys and girls saying yes to each other, as in other Turkish communities. It is known that the girl's family was given live animals such as horses and sheep under the name of "kalin" and these goods were evaluated in the category of very valuable. It is understood that tens of hundreds of horses were given gifts in some marriages (Arsal, 1930, p. 54-58). In fact, since the emergence of the Turkish people and the Scythians, the horse, which is considered the most valuable and given as a gift, has been an indispensable element in gift-giving. The horse, a valuable gift, had been a guide to the khan in difficult times and even a savior in many times (Elçin, 1964, p.145-148). It was also at the top of the list of animals which has a divine origin. Steppe Turkish communities consider the horse, which provided their economic, cultural and political existence, as a gift from God. The fact that the tribes had many horse herds was also a sign of great prestige and wealth. Considering the value and importance given to the horses, their being in good places and the spread of the herds on greener pastures constantly caused problems, and sometimes a source of fierce struggle began (Çınar, 1993, p. 22-25). It is understood from the ancient historians of this period that wars and fights emerged for such purposes, especially in the sharing of these areas. It is easy to say that the Scythian people's determination, courage, patience, and the horse they tamed put their success in Turkish history.

Horse in Scythian Religion and Mythology

The Scythians were nomadic people who spread throughout the Eurasian steppes during the Iron Age and Antiquity. This tribe, known as "equestrian tribes" in Ancient History, spread over a vast area. We learn the historical information about this nomadic community, which extended from East Asia to East Europe to the Eurasian steppes, from their contemporaries, Chinese, Assyrian, Jewish, and Greek historians. Between the 8th century B.C. and the 3rd century A.D., they reached Central Asia, North India, Iran, Anatolia and North Africa; especially Altays continued their nomadic life in Central Asia, the North Caucasus, the north of the Black Sea, Gandhara and the northern regions of India (Tarhan, 1970a, pp. 148-150). Spreading over such a large area naturally brought about being affected by different cultures and influencing different cultures. In particular, within the information we received from Herodotus, the gods worshiped by the Scythians, sacrificial ceremonies, funeral ceremonies, and mythological and divine traditions such as fortune-telling and sorcery. Although the Scythians have a nomadic equestrian culture, they have also been in commercial, political, and cultural interaction with many communities that have adopted a

settled lifestyle. The central communities that have this understanding of settled life are Greeks, Romans, and Chinese. In addition to these communities, the information reached us from ancient sources that interacted with nomadic tribes such as Cimmerians, Sarmatians, and Germanic societies. This mutual interaction was also reflected in the religious traditions of the Scythians over time. In addition to the understanding of Tengri and monotheism brought by the steppe geography and nomadic lifestyle, there was a polytheistic sense with the influence of settled cultures (Esin, 1983, pp. 40-43). There was even the worship of many deities that had become a value. However, an important point to be noted here is that the Scythians' "monotheistic" beliefs, some traditions such as funeral ceremonies and burial of the dead, and the rituals practiced here are of Asian steppe origin. At the same time, Herodotus IV., according to Herodotus' 4th book, "belief in the spirit" is an understanding of the Scythians. This understanding is adopted mainly by nomadic communities (Tarhan, 1970a, p. 153-155). It is understood that they create "good spirits" and "evil spirits" in their minds in some events that they cannot make sense of in nature, as they are in constant struggle with nature. Another vital piece of information given by Herodotus is the effects of Shamanism in the Scythian religion. Herodotus also mentions the existence of shamans, who are primarily described as sorcerers and magicians, and who have extraordinary characteristics (Pamir, 2003, p. 161-164). Most researchers agree that Shamanism was not a religion for them; but it was an important step in reaching religion. It can be said that this shamanistic belief has taken the place of religion in some areas, specifically in the Ural-Altay region

The belief in the "Tengri" and the respect for him is the first thing that appears in the Scythians and the steppe tribes. To show this respect, they sacrificed various animals and performed ostentatious sacrifice ceremonies (Gumilev, 2007, pp. 98-101). The information conveyed by the sources to the present day is that the most sacrificed animal is the horse, and the pig is not sacrificed. It is also reported that the sacrificial was presented to God with prayers and killed by strangulation, and then they cooked the meat by flaying the sacrificial. Scythian rulers also made an excellent fire for themselves from time to time, and a horse was offered as a sacrifice to this fire. Like the horse sacrificed to God, prayers were also sacrificed in the fire burned by the ruler (Herodotus, 2002, pp. 67-68). In fact, according to the color of this great fire, some ideas about how the year would pass were reached. If a green flame reaches up, fertility and abundance; If it is a yellow flame, it is considered as a disease, and white color as a sign of famine (Genç, 1997, pp. 48-55). There are also some rituals in burial and burial processes. The Scythians, who paid great attention to these burial ceremonies, used to build their graves called "kurgan" in the form of piles on the highest places of the mountains or the slopes. Kurgan means "protecting the grave" - "shelter," and it was learned through the sources that the horse was sacrificed during the construction of the kurgan (Belli, 2002, p. 928-931). While describing the burial ceremonies of the Scythian rulers, Herodotus mentions the existence of a region called Gerrhi, which is 30 days away from the end of the Boristen River, that is, where the river reaches the sea, as the burial place of the rulers. According to him, Gerrhi is the longest-range area under his authority. Herodotus also stated that the Scythians mourned after the deceased rulers, and during this mourning, they scratched and cut some parts of their bodies and their hands; He also states that they plucked their hair, tore their noses, and stabbed arrows in their hands. After completing this mourning ritual, the Scythians ensured the implementation of the same practices by circulating the funeral of the ruler tribe to tribe. When one of the people dies, the same process is carried 40 days, after which the body is buried. While the monarch was being buried, they would also bury the woman who was his life partner, the drinker, the cook, the messenger, and the soldier. Valuable items and gold vessels were also placed in the grave (Jettmar, 1967, pp. 78-81). Of course, all of these actions are important because they show us that life after death is believed in. The Scythians would return to this tomb called kurgan 365 days after the ruler's burial, and

this time they would kill and mummify the best 50 servants and 50 horses of the ruler. It is understood that the mummies of horses with iron stakes were hung on the wooden molds prepared earlier. This stake was also placed on the horses bypassing all the spines of the servants (Herodotos, 2002, p. 60). The fact that the horse was kept in a separate place after the departing ruler and hero, buried in a separate place, is one of the most significant indicators that even the need for him in the afterlife is considered.

One of the main reasons the Scythian horse takes such a place in their epics and legends is the struggle with the enemy. The horse is told so intensely because of the thought of the horse as the most helpful being next to the hero. Because the horses of these heroes are always better, stronger, and prepared for such struggles (Roux, 2011, pp. 67-71). In these narratives, it is also told how the horse reared in front of the enemy and how it showed power. In fact, when the hero was injured, the horse drove him away from that area and took care of him. Lipets gives some information about the Scythian horse. He said that the Scythian horse resorted to some tricks and that these tricks were taught by his cavalry (Sertkaya, 1995, pp. 91-95). In these mythological stories, the horse would survive all kinds of challenging conditions, deceive the enemy with its speed and practicality, attack the enemy again by appearing as if he was defeated. This war strategy, which the Scythians defeated by encircling the enemy, is directly related to the high maneuverability of the horse. Especially among the Altai Turks, it is even said that the horse sometimes lies to save itself and its hero, apart from the trick (Francfort, 2008, pp. 38-40). This tactic, which is to distract the enemy by pretending to die to gain time, has always been successful in the stories. Again in myths, a flying feature of horses is mentioned; sometimes, it was considered a bird. Especially the East Turkestan region is famous for its flying horse legends. There are many tales about the horse's feet not touching the ground. If a person wants to ride a horse, he must fly, and only then can he reach it.

Results and Discussion

The Scythians, who appeared on the stage of history approximately in the 8th century BC and continued their dominance from this date until the 3rd century AD, continued their existence with the understanding and lifestyle of the "equestrian tribe" in a wide area stretching from the Great Wall of China in the east to the Danube River in the west. The information we obtained from written sources and archaeological materials about Scythian culture, political life, military structure, religious beliefs, myths, customs, and traditions makes it possible to make comments on behalf of this community. We know that they were in contact with different tribes, and at the same time, they were in the struggle, as they spread over a vast area and formed a place of dominance here. Of course, while making some inferences and comments about them, the works of art that make us think that they were gifts to us have also been a beneficial source in this regard.

The domestication of the horse by the Scythians and bringing it to human life was considered an important development in the history of civilization. The Scythians became an essential factor in the formation and development of the Central Asian steppe culture and the use of horses in every sense, creating the "equestrian nomad" culture in this geography. The Scythian horse was also instrumental in the meeting and mingling societies that live unaware of each other and, naturally, the spread of cultural exchange. The designs developed around the horse figure, which is widely used in epics and legends that form the essence of Central Asian Turkish folk literature, formed the basis of cultural richness. The Scythian horse was the best friend of its hero-owner. This being saved him from all evils, an indispensable helper with his courageous and human characteristics, and had become integrated with the Scythian people over time. The horse had played a role in the development and growth of the Turkish presence throughout history. The horse, which enabled the nomadic people to rise

economically and politically, became indispensable for war and politics in Scythian society. Since the horse gave the Scythian warrior the ability to retreat quickly and attack at the same speed when the time came, it enabled them to defeat the stronger armies. In fact, this tactic and strategy, which the horse captured, became an accepted understanding in the post-Scythian Turkish communities. In religious ceremonies, the horse has always been seen as the most important sacrificial animal offered to the gods. Horse meat has been the meat of choice in religious ceremonies. In fact, horses were sacrificed to the ancestors in May every year, since this community, which had a belief in the hereafter, believed in the eternity of souls. In the Scythians, the horse was the most important sacrificed animal on which holiness was attributed. The deceased statesman or hero was buried with his horses decorated with gold and silver, which he valued very much, his precious belongings, and even graves where only horses were buried were built. A horse; With its strength, magnificence, speed, patience, and humanitarian aspects, had a very important place in the lives of Scythians and many other steppe Turkish tribes. Meanwhile, the horse, which has a special place in tales and legends, is understood from the excavations and researches that it was actively used in marriage, sacrifice, and funeral ceremonies.

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