

# Historical and pedagogical experience in national *khapsagai* wrestling and its implementation in modern physical education practice

## Authors' Contribution:

- A Study Design
- B Data Collection
- C Statistical Analysis
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- E Funds Collection

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## Abstract

### Background & Study Aim:

National sports are an integral part of ethnic culture, which must not only be preserved but also, through the prism of modern science and practice, transformed into a modern socio-cultural environment, taking into account regional and national factors. The coldest region in the Northern hemisphere is the Republic of Sakha, which totally lies within permafrost zone. Extreme climatic conditions, historical events filled with wars, as well as traditions and customs of the Sakha people, placed special demands on men, as manifested in their desire to be agile, strong, fast, and resilient. It was the national *khapsagai* wrestling that ensured normal body activity in everyday life, hunting, and work. *Khapsagai* is a humane sport, there is no striking technique, no pain moves, no fuss. But at the same time, it is more about agility and requires technical and tactical actions without injuring the opponent. All this makes it possible to engage in *khapsagai* wrestling from childhood and contributes to sporting longevity. *Khapsagai* wrestling as a national sport has gained international recognition after its inclusion in the United World Wrestling (UWW) – Committee of Associated Styles.

**Key words:** combat sports • ethno pedagogy • hand-to-hand combat • martial arts • psych emotional

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**Khapsagai** – (Sakha: Xapsagai) *noun*, a national wrestling of the Sakha people. Stand-up wrestling, the main goal of which is to force the opponent to touch the ground with the third point. Any contact of the wrestler with the ground other than the feet is considered a defeat [6].

**Yhyakh** – (Sakha: Yhyax) is a summer festival of the Sakha people. It is a spring-summer festival in honor of Aiyy spirits and the revival of nature, accompanied by a prayer ceremony, abundant food, kumys drinks, dances, folk games, horse races, competitions of strong and agile guys [21].

**Sakha** – (Sakha: Saxa) the Sakha people have been living in the territory of the present-day Republic of Sakha for many centuries. Their language and oral history indicate that they came from the south. Unlike the ancient reindeer-breeding communities, the Sakha, in addition to hunting, raised horses and cattle which they brought with them [15].

**Bootur Training** – (Sakha: Bootur wuoreqe) is an ancient military science of the Sakha people of the 12<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, where the “khapsagai” wrestling was the main tool for evaluating motor skills and abilities, endurance, agility and strength of young men [25].

**Mesocycle** – *noun* a training cycle that typically lasts for a few weeks [56].

**Technique** – *noun* a way of performing an action [56].

**Tactics** – *plural noun* the art of finding and implementing means to achieve immediate or short-term aims [56].

**Martial arts** – *plural noun* any of various systems of combat and self-defence, e.g. judo or karate, developed especially in Japan and Korea and now usually practised as a sport [56].

**Combat sport** – *noun* a sport in which one person fights another, e.g. wrestling, boxing and the martial arts [56].

**Main relationship between combat sport and martial arts** – “every combat sport is martial arts but not vice versa” [57, p. 18].

## INTRODUCTION

The entire international community is now concerned with preserving the historical traditions, self-identity, ethnic identity and culture of minority nations. Ethno-cultural diversity of sports is now becoming an institutional norm for the promotion and development of traditional forms of physical activity of peoples [1]. National sports, in turn, are an integral part of ethnic culture, which must not only be preserved, but also, in the light of modern science and practice, transformed into a modern socio-cultural environment, taking into account regional and national factors [1-3].

The persistence of ethno cultural traditions and customs, including in the area of sports, is one of the main responses to the process of worldwide globalization [4, 5]. One of the national sports is the Yakut national *khapsagai* wrestling, which, as part of the Sakha people’s life activities, contributes to the improvement of the physical conditions of the population and to the expression of an ethno cultural identity, its competitive component attracts not only Yakut experts, but also international experts, which makes it necessary to address the peculiarities of formation and development of this sport [6]. To date, however, there have been no focused studies on the establishment and development of the Yakut national *khapsagai* wrestling or on the issue of preserving it as a historical tradition, identity or ethno cultural heritage. To date, the centuries-old history of the Yakut national *khapsagai* wrestling has not been studied, all of this naturally hinders its development. Addressing the past is always valuable, because analysing is the best school for understanding the present and for anticipating the future.

### Preconditions for Sakha national *khapsagai* wrestling

The Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) is the coldest region of the Northern hemisphere, which totally lies within permafrost zone. It occupies almost the entire North-East Asian mainland, extending 2,000 km from north to south and 2,500 km from west to east. It occupies an area of over 3 million sq. km, and more than 40% is located above the Arctic Circle. The air temperature varies from +40°C in summer to –60°C in winter. The Pole of Cold is located in Verkhoyansk, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) (–68°C) [7, 8]. The Republic has a sharply continental climate: winter is characterized by strong frosts, and summer is short with warm and intense sunlight [9]. In the north of the

Republic, the polar night and the polar day have a significant influence on the human body. The harsh climate, specific photoperiodicity, instability of barometric pressure, the state of magnetosphere and the level of radiation are not the only distinguishing features of the extreme conditions of the Sakha Republic. As a result, persons living in the Far North experience asthenia, hypoxia, stress of the body’s regulatory systems, psych emotional instability, etc. There is an increase in sympathetic adrenal effects on the autonomic nervous system in the tundra under the influence of cold stress. Instability of atmospheric composition by partial O<sub>2</sub> pressure negatively affects not only the effective functioning of the cardio-respiratory system, but also the entire body as a whole [10, 11]. Experts note that in such conditions, there is a significant increase in the amount of stress hormones in the blood, a pronounced increase in oxidative stress, and as a result, metabolic disorders in the human body. Maintaining health in such extreme conditions for the longest time directly depends on the individual characteristics of adaptation of the human body and the characteristics of motor activity [10].

From ancient times, the Sakha people have shown great interest in the struggle of rivals, practically excluding the interaction of a large number of people [12-14]. The development of elements of unarmed combat in primitive antiquity was influenced by hunting, which places the highest demands on the development of various physical qualities. Along with successful hunting, the head of the family in the primitive system often had to protect his own and the lives of his relatives using the strength of his hands and feet.

In the history of the Sakha people, there is a period called “Kyrgys wujete”, which means “the age of battles and massacres”. This period left a significant mark on the folklore of the Sakha people. Martial arts that are part of the people are traditionally associated with their cultural traditions. Many written sources contain memories of them [15-19.] Oral folk art has preserved stories and legends about battles, wars, bloody clashes between clans, heroes and participants of tragic historical events. Inter-clan wars were caused by the seizure of livestock, the abduction of women, various personal insults, and blood feuds. Often such wars ended in martial arts of warriors, and as a result, the acceptance that one is superior to the other: “aat ylyy” – “to steal one’s name and glory”. Such battles

were managed by “tojons” – “chiefs, ancestors”. Warriors were trained from an early age, teaching military affairs [20-23]. The boys were taught the art of the warrior by experienced, elderly warriors. During the training of dexterity and at the same time courage of the young warriors, they threw hot coals at the undressed boy, and when he grew up, they shot arrows at him [24]. The result of such training was a high level of reaction of the warrior, reaching its perfection. Legends often describe the special dexterity of warriors, who not only dodged arrows shot at them, but also caught them on the fly [25].

In the age of “battles and massacres”, the Sakha people improved in conducting military operations and protecting their territories. Even in ancient times, hand-to-hand competitions were a traditional means and method of socialization, education of the younger generation, physical training, as well as its control. With the evolution of society, the struggle for the best host territories has become much more acute. Mutual processes of assimilation affected the formation of the Sakha people, affecting the spiritual and material component of the culture of the peoples as a whole. The population that came to the territory of Sakha turned out to be diverse from different points of view – cultural, ethnic, and economic. The main reason for the bloody clashes during the development of a new geographical region was the acquired vital land – haymaking, pasture, hunting [25].

In the system of education, competitive games gradually appeared, contributing to the development of motor skills and motor qualities necessary for effective life in military conditions. For hundreds of years, people have been searching for and finding practical ways to use rational hand-to-hand combat techniques that ensure victory with less energy. Gradually, such techniques, actions passed down from generation to generation, formed into a system. The struggle for survival in difficult climatic and geographical conditions, constant dependence on nature, difficulties in everyday life, contributed to the fact that in the deepest antiquity a magical meaning was attached to the competitions held. The key was to increase fertility, the birth rate of children, and initiation to feats by shedding blood, which had a ritual meaning. Often among the Sakha people, the chiefs were warriors of the clan, military leaders, who were dedicated to the feat by the shaman, solemnly putting on military armour on

the warrior, offering a sacrifice to the god of war Ilbis Kyyha, in form of a cattle, in some cases the victim was a captured enemy [26].

In the conditions of looting and wars, there was an urgent need to unite the efforts of clans by organizing and participating in joint festivals. To this day, such a clan celebration called Yhyakh has been preserved, which was organized and gathered members of the clan not only at certain times, but also on the occasion of the need to discuss any important issues together. These meetings were organized in the event of weddings, during the conclusion of peace, in honour of joyful events. Games and competitions, horse racing and archery were a mandatory component of yhyakhs in the old days [12, 13, 27].

Every Yhyakh festival necessarily ended with *khapsagai* wrestling competitions, which attracted a large number of spectators. It was not just a competition, but a real ritual with its own customs, features of the competition beginning and the conduct of the wrestling during the bout. Like the Olympic champions in Ancient Greece, the winners of *khapsagai* wrestling tournaments were poetically sung during the Yhyakh festivals, which was reflected in oral folk art. There is scientifically confirmed information that has come down to our days about the solemn and unusual rituals associated with the conduct of matches. Before matches participants of such competitions, *khapsagai* wrestlers were thoroughly hidden from each other, bringing them to the place of wrestling secretly. The wrestler himself was covered with animal skin, hiding him from prying eyes. Thus, the wrestler did not know who he would have to compete with until the start of the match. Competitions began at the command of the “judge”, after throwing off the skin from the head and rushing out into the middle of the circle. The famous researcher of the history of the Sakha people G.V. Ksenofontov, in his book “Ellejada” describes the Yhyakh festival, which was organized by the Yakut king Dygyn Toyon [21]. During this event, along with strong famous warriors, the legendary strongman – Majaqatta Bert Xara tested his strength. The story of the victory in the *khapsagai* wrestling competition of this famous warrior was passed down from generation to generation, overgrown with mystical details [22, 23, 28].

Gradually, to ensure the necessary standard of living and defence, physical and military-applied exercises began to take a leading place for the Sakha people. Also, wrestling was an integral

**Neo-gladiator** – a person who trains mix martial arts (MMA) and similar forms of hand-to-hand fighting that do not meet the definition of sport according to the Olympic Charter [58].

**Brazilian Jiu Jitsu** – is a type of fight in which a uniform or gi is used; its main purpose is to project or take your opponent down. Once on the ground, you must seek to control your adversary with different techniques (immobilizations, chokes, joints locks). In the absence of submission at the end of the fight, the winner is declared by the number of points won [59].

**The United World Wrestling Committee of Associated Styles** – is the pillar of the Associated Styles. It was created to discuss about all Associated Styles and a representative of each style is part of the Committee.

component in the upbringing of younger warriors. In his work "The military art of the ancient Yakuts (based on the materials of legends)" V.M. Nikiforov notes that the warriors had to be able to use any type of weapon, as well as protect themselves from it, develop endurance, acquire martial arts skills without weapons, and so on. According to Syrovatskiy [18] in the system of martial arts without weapons among the Sakha men, individual methods of wrestling and fist-cuffs were present. The author notes that separated from working conditions and wars, this system is defined as the main means of military physical training and education of the male half of young people, performing other social functions at the same time. However, gradually the competitions were divided into two parts, one included fistfight, the second wrestling. With the growing number and complexity of techniques, for effective competitive activity in hand-to-hand competitions, warriors already needed special training in each of the types of hand-to-hand martial arts. Separated from hand-to-hand combat, initially the wrestling almost had no restrictions on grabs of the opponent's body and clothing. Over time, men's wrestling competitions, which had already become traditional, separated from the utilitarian expediency that gave rise to them, expanding the scope of their functioning.

### ***Khapsagai* as a traditional sport**

The national *khapsagai* wrestling, which originated on the territory of the Republic of Sakha, has come down to us from antiquity and is very popular today. According to the translation from the Sakha language, "xapsagaj" means "competition in dexterity". However, there are several other interpretations of this word. In the "Phraseological Dictionary of the Yakut language", "xapsagaj" consists of two syllables, where: "xap" is the root of the words "xap", "xabys", "xapsar" and "gaj" is a suffix related to the old Mongolian language [29]. At the same time, in the "Explanatory Dictionary of the Yakut Language" it is indicated that "xapsagaj" is translated as – "agility", "speed", "strength" and "endurance", that is, it means almost all physical qualities. Regarding the exact translation, the word can be divided into two parts with the following meaning: "xap" – catch; "sagaj" – throw [30]. In the "Brief Yakut-Russian Dictionary", "xapsagaj" again denotes the same motor qualities as dexterity, speed, and also characterizes a person engaged in *khapsagai* as agile. This is one of the sports, in particular wrestling, a competition in dexterity. In this source, the

word "xapsagaj" is considered inseparably [31]. In the "Dictionary of the Yakut Language", the word "xapsagaj" comes from the old Turkic "kapchagaj", "kapshagaj", which also means agile, fast, "gabshagaj" – agile, grab, dodge [32]. Analysing the above versions of the interpretation of the concept of the word *khapsagai*, we come to the conclusion that "xapsagaj" contains the meaning of a competition in speed, dexterity, as well as "seize the moment and act".

The main goal of this martial art is to force the opponent to touch the ground with the third point. Any contact with the ground by a wrestler other than the feet is considered a defeat. It should be emphasized that the "three-point rule" is found in many types of traditional wrestling of indigenous peoples of Mongolian and Tungus origin. Based on this, it becomes possible to assume that there are some common historical and cultural roots in the formation of traditional types of wrestling. According to a number of authors who have studied the historical aspects of the origin and development of *khapsagai* wrestling, there is no consensus on the origin of this traditional sport. As N.V. Nikiforov notes: there is no generally accepted date for the appearance of *khapsagai* wrestling as a type of wrestling, and its development is closely related to the evolution of the Sakha people themselves [33, 34, 28]. Based on the results of his research, Syrovatskiy [18] suggests that this traditional sport can be considered the basis, the foundation of an original system of physical education in the traditional culture of the Sakha people.

Many historians and ethnographers have pointed out that the occupation of the Northern regions of the Russian Far East by the Sakha people was a result of population migration due to the military expansion of Mongols and Buryats. This version was proposed by V.F. Miller as a result of his ethno cultural materials collected during an expedition to Siberia and the Far East in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century [35]. Thus, the very way of life of the indigenous Sakha people laid the foundation for the upbringing of strong, hardy young men. And wrestling is the main tool that allows to evaluate motor skills and abilities, manifestations of endurance, dexterity and strength. Ksenofontov [15] in his works indicates that the Sakha people moved to the borders of their homeland at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD. Our ancestors settled the territory through wars. Losing in battles with the invaders, they

left their home places, but continued to migrate further, conquering new territories from weaker opponents – the local tribes. Consequently, being in a state of constant wars, among the ancient Sakha people, military science has developed well. Over time, the professionalization of military skills contributed to the formation of a separate cohort of the Sakha people who supplied warriors for service – the military caste.

This phenomenon has had a positive impact on the development of *khapsagai*. Subsequently, as L.A. Afanasyev notes, the development of physical exercises among the Sakha people is carried out in two ways: “Teris” and “Alaas xamsanyyta”. The first includes outdoor games and competitions, which include “khapsagai”, the second – military skills – “Bootur wuoreqe”. *Khapsagai* wrestling was used as a means of improving military skills [21, 35, 36].

The first information that we find in Russian about the *khapsagai* wrestling was in the work of the ethnographer, historian G.F. Miller, where he describes Yhyakh in detail. The festival was organized by the Yakut prince on 31.05.1737 in 14 km from the city of Yakutsk, during which competitions in *khapsagai* were organized [36].

The *khapsagai* wrestling is reflected in the ethno pedagogy and culture of the Sakha people, which can be seen in the way of life and folk art, but there is no documentary evidence of its presence in different periods of time. Some experts believe that the first description of *khapsagai* wrestling as a type of wrestling was made by V.F. Miller during the second Kamchatka expedition. Experts assume that before the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *khapsagai* wrestling as a traditional type of wrestling did not have a mass distribution [36]. There is also information that in the “Essay on the life of the Yakuts in 1912” Infantiev [37] describes the rites of weddings, during which young people organize wrestling competitions, as well as participate in various games.

According to Mandzyak [38], the wrestlers wore only shorts, and they went out to a match after greasing the body. Describing the impressions of an eyewitness who watched the competitions in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, he focuses on the fact that the wrestlers, naked to their pants, joined each other with a run, beat the opponent on the sides, intertwining their legs, and threw the opponent to the ground. The author also

notes that the participants of the *khapsagai* wrestling competitions were not divided into weight categories. It happened that the opponents had to compete with each other being significantly different in weight. However, the miniature wrestlers have also been able to win huge strongmen. Also, a distinctive feature of the wrestling of those times is the absence of restrictions on the time of conducting a fight, which could last more than an hour, but it also happened that the competitions lasted throughout the day.

From the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a growing interest in *khapsagai* throughout the Sakha Republic. Up to the 1920s, competitions in national *khapsagai* wrestling were held mainly during the celebration of *yhyakh*. A significant leap in the development of wrestling was its approval as a national sport in 1927. Since then, national wrestling has become not only an element of the culture of the Sakha people, but also a component of physical education [39-40, 28].

In the 1930s, the active development and popularization of national wrestling continues throughout the Sakha Republic. The 1<sup>st</sup> All-Yakut Spartakiad of 1932 included the *khapsagai* wrestling in its program. In the same year, the first official competitions in this national sport were held [42-44, 34, 45]. Since 1932, this type of wrestling has been included in the All-Union, and then in the All-Russian sports classification [46-50]. During the *khapsagai* wrestling competitions, weight classes were not considered. According to the first rules, which were set by the Yakut Council of Physical Culture, athletes could do leg grabs and tripping. The winner was a wrestler, whose actions made the opponent to touch the ground with his chest, back, or torso. However, if the opponent was kneeling or standing on all fours without touching the ground with his torso, the defeat was not counted. The match lasted for 10 minutes [49].

In the 1970s, representatives of the Sakha people, freestyle wrestlers, made themselves known in sports arenas not only in the Soviet Union, but also in the world. Those years were remembered by sports fans as the dawn of free-style wrestling in the Republic of Sakha, which is inherently associated with the names of outstanding athletes Roman Dmitriev, Pavel Pinigin, Alexandr Ivanov. In the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich Roman Dmitriev, a Sakha wrestler,

won the highest award. The most significant were the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal, where Pavel Pinigin won the gold medal, while Roman Dmitriev and Alexander Ivanov won the silver medal. It should be noted that all three athletes attended a sports school run by an outstanding teacher, trainer, and coach Dmitry Petrovich Korkin, who merged the components of *khapsagai* into a freestyle wrestling, which became the basis for further development of athletes [51, 52, 48].

As a sport, *khapsagai* wrestling was recognized in 1992, to which the main contribution was made by the Association of National Sports and Games of the Nations of Yakutia “Sakhaada-Sport”, on whose application the International Federation of Associated Wrestling Styles (FILA – fr. Fédération Internationale des Luttes Associées) recognized national *khapsagai* wrestling as an official sports discipline. However, only 11 years later, in 2003, *khapsagai* wrestling was included in the All-Russian Register of Sports and registered with the Ministry of Sports, Tourism and Youth Policy of the Russian Federation by Order No.546 of 16.07.2003. On October 23, 2010, a cooperation agreement was signed between FILA and “Sakhaada-Sport”. This led to the European Championships (Šiauliai, Lithuania, 19-23-.07.2011) and Asian Championships (Puna, India, 19-23.12.2011) and the World Cadet Championships (São Paulo, Brazil, 18-22.04.2012) [40].

In modern *khapsagai* competitions only male athletes participate. Athletes begin to compete at the age of 10, as junior boys age category. Weight categories vary according to age, and the duration of the bout depends on the age of the athletes and the level of competition, ranging from 0 to 4 min. The exception is absolute championship, where the duration in the adult category is 6 min in the semi-final and 10 min in the final (Table 1).

*Khapsagai* athletes’ outfits include sports shorts not covering the knee of a red or blue colour, and wrestling or soft-soled sneakers. According to the competition rules, the wrestlers can compete barefoot. Competitions are held on a standard 9 m diameter wrestling mat, which is marked with a red circle of 1 m diameter, which is the centre of the mat. A red strip outlining a circle with a diameter of 7 m, highlighting the area for wrestling – the central surface. On the outer edge of the mat circle, a 1 m wide red stripe is applied, which indicates the zone of passivity.

The main goal of the wrestlers is to unbalance the opponent and make him to touch the surface of the mat or ground with any part of the body. The bout is held only on standing position. In case of a clear victory, the bout is stopped automatically, without regard to the athletes’ scores, but in the event the bout ends after a lapse of time, the referees determine the winner by the number of scores earned. Also, scores are awarded for passive wrestling, for getting off the mat with two feet (Figure 1-3).

**Table 1.** Weight categories and duration of bouts in accordance with age groups in Yakut national *khapsagai* wrestling [53].

Age category (years)						
junior	middle	cadets	juniors	men	veterans (40 and older)	
10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17	18-20		
Weight category (kg)						
30	40	45	50	55	55	55
35	45	50	55	62	62	62
40	50	55	62	70	70	70
45	55	62	70	80	80	80
+45	+55	+62	+70	90	90	90
				+90	+90	+90
Bout duration (minute)						
2	2	2	3	4* 3**	4	3

\* at national and all-Russian level competitions; \*\* at international competitions



**Figure 1.** Implementation of the “throw” technique for wrestling *khapsagai*  
[photo Aleksander Poselsky, <https://sportyakutia.ru>]



**Figure 2.** Khapsagai wrestling competition during the Yhyakh national holiday  
[photo Aleksander Poselsky, <https://sportyakutia.ru>]

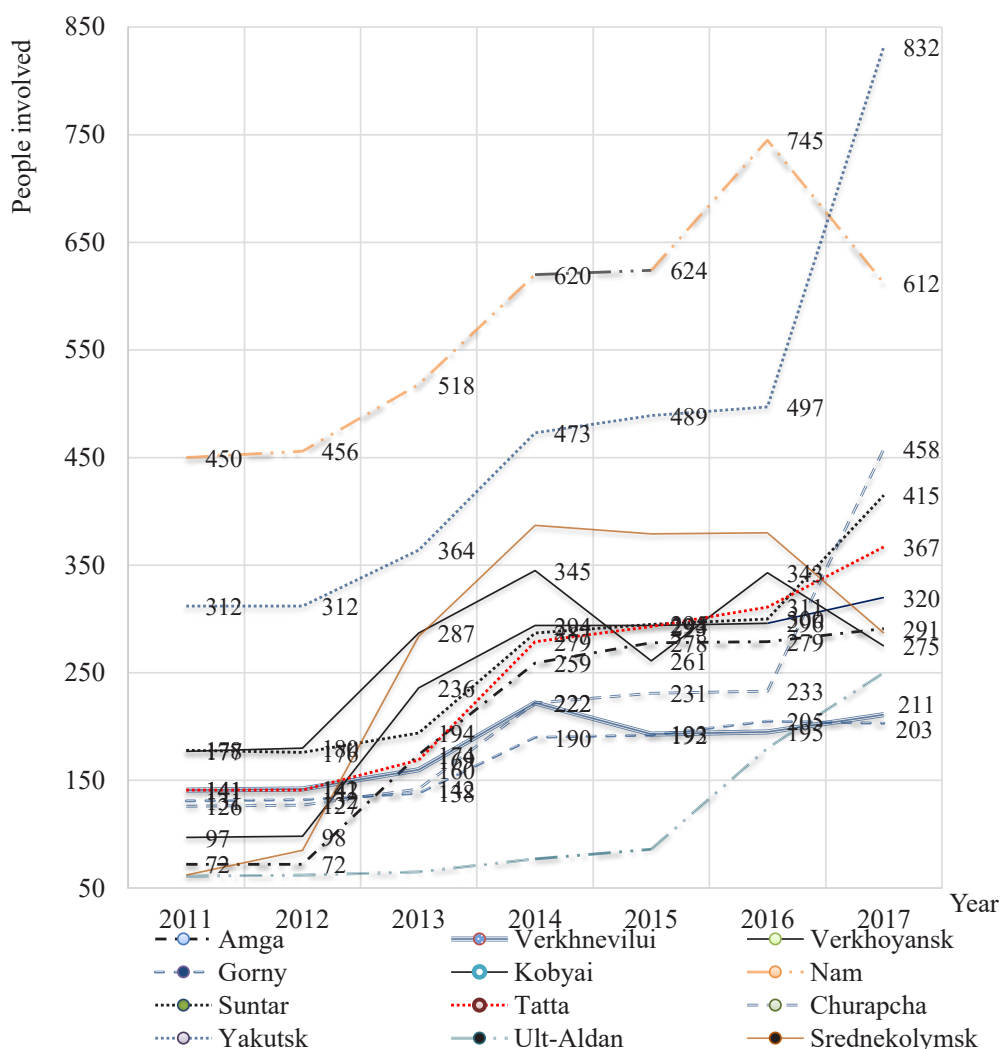


**Figure 3.** Modern competitions in wrestling *khapsagai*  
[photo Aleksander Poselsky, <https://sportyakutia.ru>]

During a controversial move or throw, if both wrestlers touch the mat simultaneously, a score is awarded to the attacking wrestler. In the event that the attack was counterattacked by the opponent and as a result the athletes touched the mat, the counterattack wrestler receives the score. At equal number of scores, the winner is an athlete who performed a move or counter-move in case of both fall (except for the absolute championship, during which the winner is awarded a lighter weight). In the absolute championship (*khapsagai* wrestlers of any weight category participate without restrictions in age and weight) the number of scores in the semi-final and final matches is not limited [54].

### Development of the Yakut national *khapsagai* wrestling in modern socio-economic conditions

A significant impetus to the development of *khapsagai* wrestling was the creation of the regional public organization “Khapsagai National Wrestling Federation of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)” (December 24, 2010). The official status of the federation was acquired a year after its registration in January 2011. During the period of its operation from 2011 to 2017, the Khapsagai National Wrestling Federation organized and conducted 179 republican-level competitions, 6 All-Russian and 9 international competitions [5].



**Figure 4.** The number of *khapsagai* wrestlers in different districts and cities of the Republic of Sakha in the period from 2011 to 2017 (a group of districts and cities where by 2017 attended by more than 200 persons) [6].



At the present stage of development, the *khapsagai* wrestling is very popular among the population of the Sakha Republic. This is confirmed by the ever-growing number of people involved in *khapsagai*. Between 2011 to 2017 there was an increase in the number of people of different ages engaged in national *khapsagai* wrestling in the Republic (Figure 4).

An indicator of the number of people engaged in *khapsagai* wrestling in youth sports schools, sports clubs organized by the Republican Center for National Sports named after V. Manchaary, republic and district sports federations of *khapsagai* in different cities and villages of the Sakha Republic in 2011 amounted to 2,400 people (men 1,632, boys, juniors 768), by 2017 it increased by 221.5% and amounted to 5,316 people (men 2,727, boys, juniors 2,589). The number of people engaged in *khapsagai* wrestling in 17 youth sports schools of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) for the 2017-2018 academic year was 655 people, including 89 in sports and recreation groups, 331 and 235 athletes in primary training groups and training groups, respectively.

There was an increase in the number of athletes taking part in *khapsagai* competitions of various levels between 2011 to 2017. The lowest number of participants, 2097 was in 2011, the highest was 5632 in 2016. Veterans and boys regularly competed alongside men, the number of whom varied between 240-578 and 229-2672 persons per year, respectively [5].

*Khapsagai* national wrestling appeared in the international movement in 2010, after its inclusion in the International Federation of Associated Wrestling Styles – FILA. The history of the national *khapsagai* wrestling includes one European championship and two Asian championships, held in 2011-2012. Every year since 2011, the International Junior *Khapsagai* Wrestling Tournament has been held as part of the International Freestyle Wrestling Tournament in memory of Olympic champion R.M. Dmitriev. Moreover, *khapsagai* wrestling competitions are included in the program of the International Sports Games “Children of Asia”, which are held every four years. It should be noted that in these Games, *khapsagai* competitions were held three times (in 2000, 2012 and 2016). Outside the Republic of Sakha, *khapsagai* wrestling found its fans in Mongolia, where the national *khapsagai* wrestling championships of the country were held for several years in a row [5].

There is evidence of a positive influence in motivating the participation of *khapsagai* students in sports by talks about the history of development and emergence of the Yakut national *khapsagai* wrestling. As shown in the studies, the pilot group was interviewed once a week for 20-25 minutes at the end of the training sessions for 12 weeks. They aroused great interest among the students, and they listened with interest to legends about the *booturs* (warriors), how the *khapsagai* wrestling was part of the physical culture of the Sakha people and how it penetrated into the modern sports movement of Russia and the world. Control group students trained in the same training programs without any talks about the history of formation and development of the national sport at the end of the training sessions. Two psychological tests were carried out with the application of A.V. Shabolts methodology “Motives of sport practice” [54] before and after the pedagogical experiment. It was shown that, unlike the control group, changes in the motives for sports were observed among the pilot group at the end of the pedagogical experiment. Students’ priorities changed 37% of them became motivated in achieving success in sports, a motivation of social self-assertion increased from 19 to 25%, and motive of emotional pleasure, the social-emotional motive was replaced by civic-patriotic motives, which amounted 25% of respondents, while the number of persons favouring the motive of physical self-assertion remained unchanged (13%).

The control group found that after the experiment, more students were engaged in national *khapsagai* wrestling, as they liked to participate in competitions, and 44% of the respondents of this group chose the social and emotional motivation to engage in sports. Before and after the experimental mesocycle, the motives for sports activities in this group have not changed - more students consider the achievement of success in sports, social self-affirmation, emotional pleasure as the second motivation for the national *khapsagai* wrestling. Consequently, they engage in sport in order to achieve the goals set in sport, they enjoy physical activity that inspires them, improves their mood and they wish to enhance their own prestige through sports. However, unlike the students of the pilot group, at the end of the experiment they have no motives such as sports-educational, civic-patriotic, social-moral [55].

The steady increase in the number of people engaged in national *khapsagai* wrestling has had an impact on the advisability of opening departments for training experts in this national sport, which opened in two higher educational establishments of physical culture and sports of the Republic of Sakha. During the 18 years of activity of the departments of national sports, 87 qualified experts in national *khapsagai* wrestling were trained.

## CONCLUSIONS

Originated in the coldest part of the Northern hemisphere, the *khapsagai* wrestling contributed not only to the development of physical qualities and the improvement of motor actions, but also to survival under harsh climatic and geographical conditions. The ethno pedagogical value of the national *khapsagai* wrestling lies in the manifestation and preservation of ethno cultural traditions and rituals, which contribute to the harmonious

development of the individual. Today, in the world of martial arts (combat sports), such as Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, as well as neo-gladiatorial forms (MMA – mix martial arts; hard core etc.) which are injury-prone and have a high risk for life are becoming increasingly popular.

Compared to these and other martial arts, *khapsagai* is a humane sport, in this wrestling there is no striking technique, no pain moves, no fuss. But at the same time, this type of martial arts is more about agility and requires technical and tactical actions without injuring the opponent. All this makes it possible to engage in *khapsagai* wrestling from childhood and contributes to sporting longevity. This is evidenced by the active participation of men aged 40-65 in various levels of competitions. The *khapsagai* wrestling as a national sport has gained international recognition. In the international movement, the national *khapsagai* wrestling emerged in 2010, after its inclusion in the United World Wrestling – Committee of Associated Styles.

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