MULTILINGUAL GLOSSARY OF HORSE TERMS: LINGUISTIC AND HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The present research originates from our passion for horses. We have to admit that this passion is quite recent so, in an attempt to make up for lost time, we started reading very much, including books, articles, magazines, website pages, reviews, veterinary researches and humorous blogs, basically trying to learn quickly everything we could about the complex world of horses, from useful tips to funny curiosities.

For eager learners in modern times, the first source of information to consult is the web. And, when surfing the net, the first source of (more or less) reliable information is Wikipedia. Most of the times, the best way to satisfy your need for information is to visit websites in English. Statistically, English is the most studied language in the world and it is the mother tongue of some large and important countries like USA, Canada, Australia, UK and Ireland. That is of course why there are so many websites available in English. So, in one of our early attempts to find information about horses, we decided to surf Wikipedia in English. Considering our linguistic and veterinary medicine backgrounds, we were immediately struck by the number of terms referring to horses in English. And we mean terms referring to horses as individuals, not words related to wider fields like anatomy, sports, equipment, saddlery or farriery. Just simple words used to define horses according to some specific criteria.

Led by curiosity, we decided to try and collect other horse-related terms in other languages and to compare them, to verify if other idioms too have the same amount of terms used in modern English. The results were pretty curious and they allowed us to draw some interesting conclusions.

We should also add that this research, in its early version, first saw the light of day at the 46th International Congress of the World Association for the History of Veterinary Medicine in León, Spain. On that occasion we compared English to Italian, French and Spanish, which are the only languages we are familiar with. After the Congress, several people accepted to help us broaden this research and provided us with the terms used to describe horses in their own native languages. Of course we were very happy and grateful for the unique opportunity to add more languages to our research so we happily started working on a sequel but, not speaking personally any of those languages, in some cases we could unfortunately only add some very superficial linguistic comments. We hope you will be lenient when you meet them in the next few pages.

1. English and Romance Languages

Here is a table (or glossary) of terms used to define horses in some of the most common European languages: English, Italian, French and Castilian Spanish.

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ENGLISH	ITALIANO	FRANÇAIS	ESPAÑOL
HORSE	CAVALLO	CHEVAL	CABALLO
STALLION	STALLONE	ÉTALON	SEMENTAL
ENTIRE	(cavallo) INTERO	ENTIER	ENTERO
GELDING	CASTRONE	HONGRE	CASTRADO
SIRE		GÉNITEUR	Macho reproductor/de cría
DAM		GÉNITRICE	Yegua reproductora/de cría
MARE	GIUMENTA	JUMENT	YEGUA
BROODMARE	FATTRICE	POULINIÈRE	YEGUA REPRODUCTORA/ DE CRÍA
FOAL	REDO	POULAIN	POTRILLO/A
COLT	PULEDRO	POULAIN	POTRO/POTRANCO
FILLY	PULEDRA	POULICHE	POTRA/ POTRANCA
SUCKLING	LATTANTE/ REDO		LACTANTE (humans or animals)
WEANLING		SEVRÉ	DESTETADO (humans or animals)
YEARLING	VANNINO/YEARLING	YEARLING	YEARLING (potro de un año)

We started comparing terms from English, so we tried to find foreign words to translate all the vast range of the existing English terms. The first thing that we noticed is that not every word has a translation in all the other languages we considered. The second thing is that most of these words have some common semantic traits, i.e. they normally refer to some recurring features in horses as individuals and in particular **sex**, **age** and **fertility**. So these seem to be the qualities in horses men have mostly been interested in.

Before comparing terms in different languages we need to explain the method we used to analyze them. Semantics is a branch of linguistics that studies the meaning of words. Lexical semantics studies how words structure their meaning and ***semic analysis*** decomposes words into minimal units of meaning, called ***semes***. This is what we tried to do by comparing the terms in the table above. But let's take a closer look at some of these terms, considering semic analysis.

We would like to start by the terms referring to horses at a young age. The first term is FOAL. The Merritt-Webster Dictionary describes it as "a young animal of the horse family, especially**:** one under one year". So the semic analysis would be:

FOAL: /young/ /horse/ /**under one year of age**/

In English it turns out to be a generic word because it does not refer to sex (a foal can be male or female) and, as a consequence, it does not refer to fertility (horses do not show their first sexual instincts before the age of one) but it is quite specific about age. Talking about age, it is very interesting to notice how the very first part of the life of the foal is divided into three sections by the use of three different words referring to the growth of the foal.

SUCKLING: /young/ /infant or animal/ /**still taking milk from its mother**/
WEANLING: /young/ /child or animal/ /**newly weaned**/
YEARLING: /young/ /horse/ /**1 year old**/ or in some cases /a racehorse counted for racing purposes as being 1 year old until the second JAN 1 following its birth/

From these examples it is quite clear that in the first year of life of a foal, what men need is to describe its growth: from a baby horse sucking milk, to a weaned baby horse and finally to a baby horse who made it to one year of age. Curiously enough, YEARLING seems to be so specific that it became a loanword in the other languages: it means that the English word is used in other languages with the same meaning. Italian offers its own translation with the word VANNINO (an old-fashioned word). So, it turns out that the English words referring to a foal in its first year of life make no reference to sex or fertility, but the other languages offer only words with a male and female form, so there is a reference to sex but not to fertility. In English sex and fertility seem to become relevant

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after the first year of age of the animal: again, probably because a foal's sexual instincts first appear around one year of age. That is where we start to meet words like:

COLT: /young/ /male/ /horse/ /not castrated/ /under the age of four/ (sex + fertility + age)
FILLY: /young/ /female/ /horse/ /under the age of four/ (sex + age, no reference to fertility because female horses are never neutered)
(IT) PULEDRO-A: /young/ /(fe)male/ /horse/ /till it reaches sexual maturity/
(FR) POULAIN:/young/ /male/ /horse/ /under the age of 3/ (more specific about age than female term)
(FR) POULICHE: /young/ /female/ /horse/ /hasn't reached sexual maturity/
(ES) POTRO: /young/ /male/ /horse/ /not castrated/ /under the age of four/ (sex + fertility + age)
(ES) POTRA: /young/ /female/ /horse/ /under the age of four/
(ES) POTRILLO-POTRANCA: /young/ /(fe)male/ /horse/ /under the age of three/

As for horses' adult life, it is interesting to notice that, in all the considered languages, the name for the female version of the animal is always different from the male generic one:

(EN) HORSE → **MARE**; (IT) CAVALLO → **GIUMENTA**; (FR) CHEVAL → **JUMENT**; (ES) CABALLO → **YEGUA**

For all these words the semes are: /adult/ /female/ horse/ (obviously "adult" implies a certain age -usually more than 4 years - and consequently fertility)

It turns out the only difference in adult female horses terminology is between a MARE (/adult/ /female/ /horse/ /**over the age of four**/) and a BROODMARE (/adult/ /female/ /horse/ /**kept for breeding**/). So, in all languages, the broodmare is distinguished by a mare by the fact that she is selected to give birth to foals (she must have valuable genetic qualities to pass on).

It is much more interesting to analyze words referring to male horses in adult life.

In English the distinction is made according to fertility and sex of course, but not age:

(EN) STALLION: /adult/ /male/ /equine/ /used for breeding/ (used also for donkeys and zebras)
(EN) ENTIRE: the Merriam-Webster dictionary considers it a synonym for stallion
(EN) GELDING: /male/ /horse/ /castrated/ /any age/

In Italian the distinction is not very precise: an entire horse is just a horse that has not been castrated and a CASTRONE is a castrated animal of any kind, not necessarily a horse.

(IT) STALLONE: /adult/ /male/ /horse/ /used for breeding/ (more precise, used only for horses)
(IT) INTERO: /adult/ /male/ /horse/ /not castrated/
(IT) CASTRONE: /male/ /animal/ /castrated/

In French it is very interesting to see how many pieces of information these words convey: the word ENTIER is opposed to ÉTALON as regards the approval for breeding. This cannot be seen in the other languages taken into consideration.

(FR) ÉTALON: /adult/ /male/ /animal/ /**approved for breeding**/ (used for equines and dogs)
(FR) ENTIER: /adult/ /male/ /animal/ /not castrated/ /**not approved for breeding**/
(FR) HONGRE: /adult/ /male/ /animal/ /castrated/

As for Spanish, the only word carrying many meanings is SEMENTAL, the others are just adjectives used to clarify the general word (*caballo*) or they just express generic information about fertility.

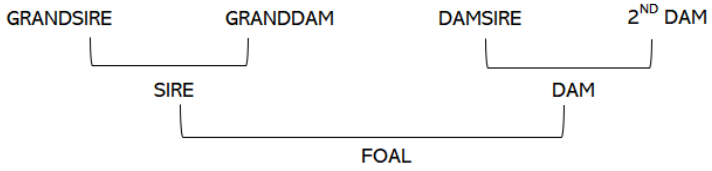
(ES) SEMENTAL: /adult/ /male/ /equine/ /over 4 years/ /used for breeding/
(ES) ENTERO: /male/ /animal/ /not castrated/
(ES) CASTRADO: /male/ /animal/ /castrated/

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There are some other terms in the English vocabulary of horses that aroused our interest.

(EN) DAM: /female/ /parent/ /of an animal (especially a horse)/
(EN) SIRE: /male/ /parent/ /of an animal (especially a horse)/

At first these two words don't seem to convey many pieces of information but, if we consider the word "parent" it is implied that we are talking about a **fertile adult** individual, and that this individual has already **generated another individual,** so these are three pieces of information at a time. The only other language that has similar words is French, where we use GÉNITEUR/ GÉNITRICE (but that is used for humans as well). Moreover, if we consider the family tree of a foal, we can see how these words combine together to create nouns that indicate not only the parents but also the grandparents of a foal, both on its maternal and paternal side[1].



Another very interesting fact is that a stallion is the father of a foal, but he is not termed a sire in catalogued pedigrees until he produces a winner. So not all stallions or parents are SIRES[2].

After all these focusing on terminolgy, it is time to draw some conclusions. First of all we should introduce the **concept of micro-languages**, i.e. languages for specific purposes (LSP) or special languages.

«A special language is defined as a language spoken by a small community of people united by a particular activity; in other words, a language that meets the communication and expression needs of that community»[3].

«The main feature of these varieties is that they have a specialised vocabulary that constitutes a veritable nomenclature, i.e. a set of terms that have a unique and explicit definition within that discipline»[4].

Horse terminology clearly identifies individuals, with no possible ambiguity: each term conveys its meaning in opposition to another one. This considerations leads us to Saussure's theory of linguistic value: «each linguistic term derives its value from its opposition to all the other terms […] Language is a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others»[5]. For example in the dictionary *Real Academia Española*, the definition of the word YEGUA (=mare)[6] is given as a term in contrast with the word POTRA (= filly) (both are female horses, but only distinguished by their age). In this case the word YEGUA has a reason to exist only because it creates an oppostion to the word POTRA: «Within the same language, all words used to express related ideas limit each other reciprocally»[7].

We can also notice how one of the main features that characterizes LSPs is **neology**, i.e. the creation of new lexical units. If a LSP borrows concepts and related terminology from a foreign

[1] Price S.D., Shiers J. (2007). *The Lyons Press Horseman's Dictionary*, Guilford, The Lyons Press, pp. 58, 92, 93, 135, 195.
[2] *OzRace*: https://www.ozrace.com.au/glossary-of-breeding-terminology/ Accessed 1 December 2024.
[3] Vincenzo Orioles, *Le Lingue Speciali*, http://www.orioles.it/materiali/Lingue_speciali.pdf Accessed 19 August 2025.
[4] *Ibidem*.
[5] De Saussure F. (1916), *Cours de linguistique générale*, Lausanne, Payot, p. 88, 114.
[6] Diccionario de la lengua española, Real Academia Española*:* https://dle.rae.es/yegua?m=form Accessed 1 December, 2024.
[7] De Saussure F., *op.cit*., p. 116

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country, this new terminology could frequently «spread in the form of **loanwords** or linguistic **calques**»[8].

We noticed how the English horse terminology is wide, precise and complex. How can we justify such a rich horse vocabulary in the modern English language? Actually there was a rich vocabulary even in old times: from the 5th century, the role of the horse in Anglo-Saxon culture is partly illustrated by the number of words for "horse" in Old English[9]. So, if there are many words to describe something, it is because that "something" must be particularly important. This seems to be the case with horses for the British. «In Britain, horses were not just for work or even for play. They became a symbol of the nation». And also: «For centuries, equestrian culture was a major part of British national identity […] and it remains so today»[10]. All these statements by Erica Munkwitz show how horses have always been important in the UK. But they do not explain why. Why are the British so in awe of horses? There are some records stating that:

> «Horses held religious significance in Anglo-Saxon paganism**.** The first Anglo-Saxon chieftains, in the 5th century, were Hengist and Horsa – Old English words for "stallion" and "horse", respectively. Modern scholars regard Hengist and Horsa as horse deities venerated by pagan Anglo-Saxons, Horses appear frequently in accounts concerning miraculous events in the context of Anglo-Saxon Christianity»[11].

This could be one of the reasons why «While horses were central to work and play in many countries around the world, no nation took them more to heart than the UK»[12].

Last but not least, we should consider the importance of horses as status symbols. Horses represented power at different levels of society: «c'est la hiérarchisation par la possession du cheval»[13]. «The King is always portrayed like a horseman, [as a] representation of power. […] Power is ranked from the top to the bottom and it is through equestrian art that people learn the political order that it spreads»[14]. During periods of economic wealth too, the request for horses increased: those who could afford it, bought more horses also to raise their standard of living in society.

> «Horses had a social as well as an economic value, since at all levels of society, they were regarded as status symbols. At the top end of the market the upper classes could display their wealth by the purchase of costly horses […]. At a lower level too, the purchase of a horse raised the owner's standing in his community»[15].

This high demand for horses of course increased the practice of horse-trading and we can assume that it was exactly in this field that a need for specific vocabulary was mainly required. But despite this need for precise and not ambiguous terms, horse-trading developed a sort of negative meaning:

> «Usually meant with negative connotations, horse-trading became a lexicon of our English language due to the difficulties in evaluating the merits of a horse offered for sale. The sale of horses offered great opportunities for dishonesty, leading to use of the term horse-

[8] Vincenzo Orioles, *Le Lingue Speciali*, http://www.orioles.it/materiali/Lingue_speciali.pdf Accessed 19 August 2025.
[9] Neville J.(2006). *Hrothgar's horses: feral or thoroughbred?, Anglo-Saxon England*, *35*, p. 140
[10] Munkwitz E. (2023). *A Horse, Of Course? Horses in British Culture*, NACBS, https://www.nacbs.org/post/a-horse-of-course-horses-in-british-culture Accessed 1 December 2024.
[11] *Wikipedia*: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Saxons Accessed 1 December 2024.
[12] Munkwitz E. (2023). *A Horse, Of Course? Horses in British Culture*, NACBS, https://www.nacbs.org/post/a-horse-of-course-horses-in-british-culture Accessed 1 December 2024.
[13] Entretien avec D. Roche, *Histoire sociale de la culture équestre*, S. & R., n° 28, oct. 2009, p. 243, https://doi.org/10.3917/sr.028.0239 Accessed 20 August 2025.
[14] *Ibidem*.
[15] Edwards P. (1988). *The Horse Trade of Tudor and Stuart England*. Cambridge University Press; pp.140-146.

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trading [...] to refer to complex bargaining or other transactions, such as political vote trading»[16].

Once again the language of horses becomes a part of our common language, creating metaphors, idioms and similes.

1.2 Brazilian Potuguese

In the previous chapter we talked about Romance languages, comparing their horse terminology with the corresponding English words. After the first draft of the present article, we had the opportunity to add Brazilian Portuguese to the list of the Latin languages.

ENGLISH	ITALIANO	FRANÇAIS	ESPAÑOL	BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE
HORSE	CAVALLO	CHEVAL	CABALLO	CAVALO
STALLION	STALLONE	ÉTALON	SEMENTAL	GARANHÃO
ENTIRE	(cavallo) INTERO	ENTIER	ENTERO	CAVALO INTEIRO
GELDING	CASTRONE	HONGRE	CASTRADO	CAPÃO (CAVALO CASTRADO)
SIRE		GÉNITEUR	Macho reproductor/de cría	REPRODUTOR / GARANHÃO (PAI)
DAM		GÉNITRICE	Yegua reproductora/de cría	MATRIZ / ÉGUA MATRIZ (MÃE)
MARE	GIUMENTA	JUMENT	YEGUA	ÉGUA
BROODMARE	FATTRICE	POULINIÈRE	YEGUA REPRODUCTORA/ DE CRÍA	ÉGUA MATRIZ
FOAL	REDO	POULAIN	POTRILLO/A	POTRO/ (POTRINHO)
COLT	PULEDRO	POULAIN	POTRO/POTRANCO	POTRO (MACHO)
FILLY	PULEDRA	POULICHE	POTRA/ POTRANCA	POTRA (FÊMEA)
SUCKLING	LATTANTE/ REDO		LACTANTE (humans or animals)	POTRO LACTENTE/ POTRO AO PÉ
WEANLING		SEVRÉ	DESTETADO (humans or animals)	POTRO DESMAMADO
YEARLING	VANNINO/YEARLING	YEARLING	YEARLING (potro de un año)	POTRO DE UM ANO/ SOBREANO

As we can see from the table above, all the words in the column of Brazilian Portuguese have a clear latin origin and they are often very similar to their Spanish counterpart. The most interesting word in the list is **garanhão**: it comes form the Spanish *garañón* (= stallion horse, donkey or camel), that could derive from the Proto-Germanic root *wranjo which was also present in old German and Middle Dutch. So, quite surprisingly, this word arrived in Portuguese from Spanish but it has a Germanic origin.

Being able to include Brazil in this research gives us the opportunity to talk, even though very briefly, about horses in this country. Horses were introduced to Brazil during the colonization period. The first horses were brought by Portuguese and Spanish settlers between 1534 and 1549, initially for military use and exploration, cattle ranching and colonial control of territories. «Brazil is one of the world's 'horse giants', listed on FAO records, [...] having the fourth largest equine population on the planet [Brazil follows USA, China and Mexico, according to data registering average stock 1994-2018]»[17].

«Brazil has immense and diverse equestrian heritage. [...] From the early mixture of Arabians, Barbs and Andalusians [...] brought by the Portuguese [...] "native Brazilian breeds" emerged»[18].

Crioulo horses, for example, «originate from stock brought to South America by Spanish and Portuguese colonists beginning in the sixteenth century»[19].

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[16] Gardner M. (2016). *Horse Trading -The Lost Art of Negotiations*, https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/horse-trading-lost-art-negotiations-mark-gardner/ Accessed 1 December, 2024.
[17] Adelman M. (2020). *Equestrian culture and heritage in Brazil: untapped potential for a tourism that favours local development? São Luiz do Purunã as a case study*, Mondes du Tourisme [Online], 18 | DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/tourisme.3161 Accessed 19 August 2025.
[18] *Ibidem*.
[19] Adelman M., Camphora A.L., Guest K. (2019) *The Brazilian Crioulo: Breed as Evolving Tradition*, EQ Breeds: Equine Breeds and Modern Identity. https://eqbreeds.ca/ Accessed 10 February 2026.

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Modern horse breeds were developed for competitive equestrian sports.

Once again we find out how «In early colonial Brazil, horses were associated with social status and nobility. Because access to horses was economically and socially limited, horse ownership placed one among the colony's elites»[20].

2. Germanic Languages

ENGLISH	GERMAN	DUTCH	SWEDISH	DANISH	NORWEGIAN
HORSE	DAS PFERD	PAARD	HÄST	EN HEST	HEST
STALLION	DER HENGST	HENGST/ DEKHENGST	HINGST	HINGST	HINGST
ENTIRE		HENGST	HINGST		-
GELDING	DER WALLACH	RUIN	VALACK	VALLAK	JELK/ GJELDET HEST
SIRE	DAS VATERTIER (generic, used for every animal)	VADERPAARD	FAR		HINGST
DAM	DAS MUTTERTIER (generic, used for every animal)	FOKMERRIE	MOR		-
MARE	DIE STUTE	MERRIE	STO	HOPPE	MERR / HOPPE
BROODMARE	DIE ZUCHSTUTE	MOEDERPAARD/ FOKMERRIE	AVELSSTO/ FÖLMÄRR	AVLSHOPPE	-
FOAL	DAS FOHLEN	VEULEN	FÖL	FØL	FOLE (older than 1 year)
COLT	HENGSTFOHLEN / JUNGHENGST	HENGSTVEULEN (LESS 4 YRS)	HINGST/UNGHINGST	HINGSTEPLAG	-
FILLY	STUTFOHLEN	MERRIEVEULEN	STO/ UNGSTO	HOPPEPLAG	-
SUCKLING	DAS SAUGFOHLEN (=the suckling foal)	JONG VEULEN (<5 MNTHS)			FØLL *(a horse in the first year of life)*
WEANLING	ABSETZER	VEULEN (4-7 MNTHS)			
YEARLING	DER JÄHRLING	JAARLING (1-2 YRS OLD)	ÅRING	ÅRING	ÅRING / VETTLE* (*Regional = a horse that made it through its first winter)

When we tried to add Germanic languages to our research, even with the help and goodwill of some friends, it was not easy to fill in all the missing gaps, and in fact some of them are still incomplete. Even if we can't comment the whole columns because we are not germanists, there are some very interesting words we can observe. First of all, all the Germanic languages still use the word ***hingst /hengst*** to indicate a stallion, so all these languages clearly evolved by keeping a noun that was already in use in Old English (500-1100 AD).

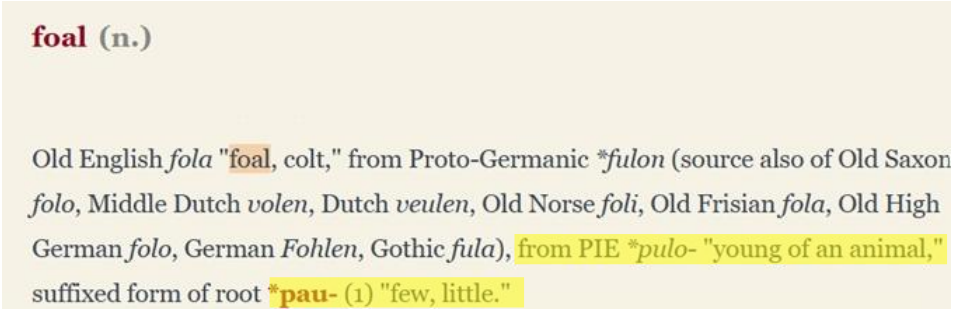
After the Norman Conquest (1066) instead, English was heavily influenced by French (in its Anglo-Norman variety, a French dialect that had considerable Germanic influences in addition to the basic Latin roots) so today the corresponding English noun "stallion" has obvious Romance origins (easily compared to the modern Italian and French words).

Another noun which seems to have a common origin in more than one Germanic language is ***WALLACH***. According to the online etymological dictionary *DWDS – Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* the word is common to German, Swedish and Danish but also to Ukranian[21]. The noun was borrowed in Prussia/Baltics from older Russian волох (*volox*). The Slavic word means "Romance speaker", especially one of Romania, i.e. a Wallachian or Vlach. Wallachian herdsmen are credited with developing a specific method of castration. It is interesting to see how the term derives from a common practice first attributed to people coming from a specific geographic region.

Another very interesting term to analyse is ***FOAL***.

[20] *Ibidem*.
[21] *DWDS* – Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache, https://www.dwds.de/wb/Wallach Accessed 6 August 2025.

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foal (n.)

Old English *fola* "foal, colt," from Proto-Germanic **fulon* (source also of Old Saxon *folo*, Middle Dutch *volen*, Dutch *veulen*, Old Norse *foli*, Old Frisian *fola*, Old High German *folo*, German *Fohlen*, Gothic *fula*), from PIE **pulo-* "young of an animal," suffixed form of root **pau-** (1) "few, little."

[22]

According to *Online Etymology Dictionary*, the original meaning of this word comes from "little", applied to "young of an animal". All the Germanic languages in the table above derive the word foal from the same common Proto-Germanic root.

The word ***MARE*** can be seen in English and Dutch, passing into old English from a Proto-Germanic form that meant "female horse".

Another interesting case is given by **YEARLING**: the same meaning has been transferred in all the Germanic languages we took into consideration simply by translating the word "year" (which has a common Germanic root) and by adding to the translation the same suffix of the original English word "-ling". In linguistics this word-formation process is called *calque (pron. /kælk/)*, a word taken from one language and translated in a literal or word-for-word way to be used in another. In this case it would be more appropriate to talk about *partial calque*: partial calques translate some parts of a compound but not others. As we have anticipated, calques are a very common way of forming new words in micro-languages.

To conclude this linguistic analysis, it is also very interesting to notice how Norwegian has a regional word used to describe a young foal that has managed to survive its first winter. The word is **VETTLE**, from old Norwegian "vetter", a combination of "vinter" and "lide" (lide = heading towards).

After this quick focus on linguistic elements we would like to introduce some interesting historical features. It is quite surprising to see how much the Anglo-Saxon and the Nordic culture have in common when it comes to horses.

2.1 Religious and supernatural features

In Scandinavian mythology horses were very important: they were used for travel, battle, entertainment and farm work but «horses also held many religious, superstitious, and even supernatural connotations, sometimes serving the function of a spiritual medium»[23].

They were also involved in ritual ceremonies where they were sacrificed, their meat consumed, their bones used for black magic and their blood was read to foretell the future[24] (hippomancy). Often, after being sacrificed, they were buried with their owners: «In burials the horse was presumably needed to help the deceased to get to the other world»[25]. According to other interpretations of the habit of burying horses with their owners: «horses in burial are either as a

[22] *Online Etymology Dictionary*, https://www.etymonline.com/search?type=all&q=foal Accessed 20 August 2025.
[23] Sif Einarsdóttir K. (2013), *The Role of Horses in the Old Norse Sources: Transcending worlds, mortality and reality*, University of Iceland, p. 5 https://skemman.is/bitstream/1946/16675/1/Horses%20in%20the%20norse%20sources%20MIS%20thesis.pdf
[24] *Ibidem*.
[25] Loumand, U. (2006). *The Horse and its Role in Icelandic Burial Practices, Mythology, and Society.* In Nordic Academic Press (ed.). Old Norse Religion in Long Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes and Interactions, an International Conference in Lund, Sweden, June 3-7, 2004. Vol. 8. Lund: Nordic Academic, p. 133

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grave good to serve the deceased in their afterlife, or as a psychopomp, helping transport the dead to that afterlife»[26]. So basically horses were thought to be either precious goods that the deceased might need in their next life or animals with supernatural powers, capable of connecting the conscious and unconscious realms. For this reason they were considered psychopomps and, as such, they could act as shamans.

«Horses were also believed to predict upcoming death when they appeared in one´s dreams»[27].

Some of the religious connotations of horses were also important to identify some aspects of paganism: «The adoption of Christianity usually required a ban on slaughtering horses»[28]. «In AD 723 Pope Gregory III instructs the Anglo-Saxon missionary Boniface to ban the eating of horsemeat among the Germans»[29].

For Christians eating horse meat was considered a sin because horses were considered valuable farm workes[30].

2.2 Horses as status symbols

The fact that horses were buried with their owners, together with other precious objects like for example jewels, clothing and weaponry means that they were kept in great value: they represented «a status symbol or [they were] delivering the same comforts in the next life»[31]. Here again we can see how horses were considered a status symbol and possessing one or more horses could define a person's position in society[32].

In Norse mythology horses were often associated with gods and heroes. The most famous horse in Scandinavian mythology is Sleipnir, Odin's horse:

> «Óðinn's steed is grey, has eight feet, is swifter than the wind when he gallops over the sea. […] Sleipnir´s dapple-grey coat colour is a mix of black and white, or light and dark, mirroring the many ways in which a horse could represent both good and bad and light and dark»[33].

2.3 Horses in Art

> «The depiction of horses in Viking art reflects their status as powerful and revered animals. In Norse mythology, horses were connected to the gods and were often ridden by deities […] Horses were commonly featured in Viking carvings, sculptures, and jewelry. […] The symbolism of horses in Viking art can be interpreted in different ways. […] Horses were often associated with freedom, power, and fertility, as well as with death and the afterlife»[34].

Horses had a sort of double connotation: both spiritual and positive but also negative, mainly because they were considered capable of foretelling the future and announce imminent death.

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[26] Evans Tang H.J., Ruiter K. (2023) *The Roles of Horses in Viking Age Ritual Action*, in L. GARDEŁA, S. BØNDING, P. PENTZ (Eds.) *The Norse Sorceress Book Subtitle: Mind and Materiality in the Viking World*, Oxbow Books. p. 214 Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.5699282.22

[27] Sif Einarsdóttir K., *op. cit*, p. 14

[28] Sif Einarsdóttir K., *op. cit*, p. 16

[29] University of Nottingham (2013). *Horses for courses?* https://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/medieval/2013/02/14/horses-for-courses/ Accessed 7 August 2025.

[30] Sif Einarsdóttir K., *op. cit,* p. 17

[31] Sif Einarsdóttir K., *op. cit,* p. 40

[32] *Viking.Style*, https://viking.style/the-norse-horse-symbolism-and-significance-in-viking-lore/ Accessed 7 August 2025.

[33] Sif Einarsdóttir K., *op. cit*, p. 29

[34] *Viking.Style*, https://viking.style/the-norse-horse-symbolism-and-significance-in-viking-lore/ Accessed 7 August 2025.

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It is also very interesting to notice how the runic alphabet had one single rune entirely devoted to the meaning of horse.

ᛖ *eh* 'horse'

«There are several terms for 'horse' common to the old Germanic languages [...] There are two old Germanic terms for 'horse' that seem to be associated with warriors and martial prowess. One survives today in English words like marshal and the feminine description mare, and appears to have originally represented an imported breed of warhorse. The other served as the name of the early English hero Hengist, and in Modern German and the Scandinavian languages today means 'stallion'. Hengist's brother Horsa was also a man called 'horse'. But the term which underlies his name was that used most commonly for the common man's animal»[35].

Early Germanic	Old Norse	Old English	Old German	Modern English	Early meaning
ehwaz	*jór*	*eoh*	*ehu-*		special horse
marhaz	*marr*	*mearh*	*marah-*	*mar-*	warhorse, steed
hanhistaz	*hestr*	*hengist*	*hengist*		stallion, steed
hrussan	*hross*	*hors*	*hros*	*horse*	common horse

[36]

«The use of the word ehwaz on the 'horse' amulets suggests they have some thing to do with kings, gods and the supernatural»[37].

In the table above we can also see the Old German term *hros*, still visible in the modern German "Roß" (=horse) still widely used in southern Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

3. Classical Languages and Old Ottoman

ENGLISH	LATIN	GREEK	OLD OTTOMAN
HORSE	EQUUS/CABALLUS	HIPPOS (ὁ/ἡ ἵππος)	FERES (A.) [فرس]
STALLION	EQUUS/ADMISSARIUS	OCHEION (τὸ ὀχεῖον) OCHEUTES (ὀχευτής)	HISÂN (A.) [حصان]
ENTIRE	-	ATMHTOS (ὁ ἄτμητος)	
GELDING	CANTHERIUS	CANTHELIOS (κανθήλιος)	
SIRE	GENERATOR	-	
DAM	GENETRIX/GENERATRIX	-	
MARE	EQUA	HIPPAS (ἡ ἱππάς) HIPPOS (ἡ ἵππος)	MÂDIYÂN (F.) [مادیان]
BROODMARE	MATRIX	-	
FOAL	PULLUS/PULLUS EQUI/ EQUULEUS/ ECULEUS/ECULUS	POLOS (HO) (ὁ πῶλος)	KÜRRE (F.) [کره] (=baby horse or donkey)
COLT	PULLUS/ EQUULEUS/ ECULEUS/ ECULUS	POLOS (HO) (ὁ πῶλος)	
FILLY	(male form only)	POLOS (HE) (ἡ πῶλος)	
SUCKLING	LACTENS/ lactentis (noun, male and female)	APOMASTIDION (τὸ ἀπομαστίδιον)	
WEANLING	DEPULSUS (adj., from the verb "depello")	-	
YEARLING	-	ETEIOS (ὁ ἔτειος)	

[35] MacLeod M., Mees B. (2006). *Runic Amulets and Magic Objects*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, p. 106
[36] *Ibidem*. p.106.
[37] *Ibidem*. p.107.

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3.1 Latin

As for Latin, we would like to start our word analysis by the main pair: **equus**/ **caballus**. Even if the main latin word for horse was "equus", all the Romance Languages taken into consideration derive their general word for this animal from Vulgar Latin "caballus", which actually meant "workhorse". The word "equus" instead referred to high quality horses and it was mainly used in written erudite contexts.

The most interesting word we can observe in this table is **foal**. We have already mentioned it in the Germanic languages section, where it was possible to observe how basically all the Germanic words have the same origin. It was quite surprising to learn how several romance languages too derive their word for "foal" from the same root as the Germanic languages. According to *Online Etymology Dictionary* this is the history of the word foal:



foal (n.)

Old English *fola* "foal, colt," from Proto-Germanic **fulon* (source also of Old Saxon *folo*, Middle Dutch *volen*, Dutch *veulen*, Old Norse *foli*, Old Frisian *fola*, Old High German *folo*, German *Fohlen*, Gothic *fula*), from PIE **pulo-* "young of an animal," suffixed form of root **pau-** (1) "few, little."

[38]

The same Proto-Indo-European root ***pulo-*** that means "young of an animal" could be the same that we find in Latin (pullus) and also in Greek (polos), still preserving their meaning "young of an animal".

The Wikipedia etymological page actually seems to consider the idea that Latin, Greek and Proto-Gremanic could all go back to the same Proto-Indo-European root.

- From Proto-Italic **polnos*, from Proto-Indo-European **polH-on-* ("offspring, (animal) young"); compare Ancient Greek πῶλος (*pôlos*, "foal; young girl"), Proto-Germanic **fulô* ("foal"), Albanian *pjellë* ("child") and *pelë* ("mare"), Old Armenian ոլ (*ul*, "kid, fawn"). The verbal root is likely found in Albanian *pjell* ("to beget"), which implies a connection to *pellō* ("to drive, push"), from Proto-Indo-European **pelh₂-* with a semantic shift of "to push (out)" > "to beget", if not a distinct root **pelH-* ("to give birth").

This root evolved in indicating both young horses and young birds, which leads us to consider that it is the same etymology of the modern Italian words for foal and chick: **pul**edro and **pul**cino (same root, conducting to the idea of "young of an animal").

If we consider acceptable the theory of a Proto-Indo-European root that gave origin to all these words, which then evolved differently in each language, we may state that all the words below (but maybe more) could come from the same common root:

ENGLISH	ITALIANO	FRANÇAIS	ESPAÑOL	BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE	GERMAN	DUTCH	SWEDISH	DANISH	NORWEGIAN	LATIN	GREEK
FOAL	PULEDRO	POULAIN	POTRO	POTRO	DAS FOHLEN	VEULEN	FÖL	FØL	FOLE (older than 1 year)	Pullus/pullus equi/	POLOS (HO) (ὁ πῶλος)

[38] *Online Etymology Dictionary*, https://www.etymonline.com/search?type=all&q=foal Accessed 20 August 2025.

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There is almost no need to talk about the relationship between the Greek and the Roman Empires and horses: it is very well-known and somehow it still influences our contemporary age. «The glories of Greece and Rome were indestructible. Elements of these classical cultures survived to provide inspiration for future generations, right up to our own times»[39].

> «The Romans were reluctant horsemen, although chariot racing was a popular sport and horses were in general use. […] Chariot racing was also a national sport, arousing fierce passions in the amphitheatres of Rome. […] Rome used chariot racing as a political tool. […] Originally there were four chariot groups […] Each was supported by a political faction and the rivalry was intense, with the day often ending in ugly street riots»[40].

It is also very interesting to mention a rite which took place during a horse-racing festival held in honour of Mars, the Roman god of war. The "October Horse" (in Latin *Equus October*) was a horse sacrificed to Mars on October 15th, at the end of all the military and agricultural season.

> «It is the right-hand horse of a winning pair in a chariot race. There used to be an intense struggle for its head between the inhabitants […] and the tail of the same animal is conveyed to […] the hearth, for partaking a divine service. […] The horse selected for the sacrifice is felled with a spear. […] The head of the animal, presumably after the sacrifice, was garlanded with loaves»[41].

The meaning of sacrificing a horse to the gods is still uncertain: the Romans considered horse meat distasteful, horses were considered profane animals, horse sacrifice was offered by people that the Romans considered barbarians and the importance of a horse for the war god is not evident because the Roman Army was based on infantry. Moreover, other cultures offered horses to the war gods to ask for success in battles, meanwhile the Roman horse sacrifice closed the season of the military campaign. Considering that the head of the offered horse was surrounded by bread, probably «the sacrifice was performed on account of a successful crop of grain»[42].

3.2 Ancient Greek

The word **hippos** is very well-known even nowadays, mainly because it is often present in modern words that still preserve their Greek origins and their (sometimes hidden) meaning of horse (e.g. hippopotamus: it means "river horse"). It was really very interesting to discover by surfing the net that, in this case too, more than one language could share the same origin for the word "horse". According to *Online Etymology Dictionary* all these words could descend from the same common root:


*ekwo-

Proto-Indo-European root meaning "horse." Perhaps related to *ōku- "swift."

It might also be the source of: Sanskrit *açva-*, Avestan *aspa-*, Greek *hippos*, Latin *equus*, Old Irish *ech*, Old Church Slavonic *ehu-*, Old English *eoh*, Gothic *aihwa-* all meaning "horse."

[43]

[39] Edwards E.H. (1994). *The new Encyclopedia of the Horse*, Dorling Kindersley, London, p. 38
[40] *Ibidem*, p. 44
[41] Bennet Pascal C. (1981) *October Horse*, Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, Vol. 85, p. 289, https://doi.org/10.2307/311177
[42] *Ibidem.*
[43] *Online Etymology Dictionary*, https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=ekwo Accessed 23August 2025.

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In Greek the word that means **entire** comes from the verb "temno" (=to cut) preceded by alpha privative. The final meaning of the word is therefore "uncut".

Another very interesting word is **CANTHELIOS** (κανθήλιος) that, like its latin counterpart CANTHERIUS, translates the term "gelding". That word meant "horse of poor quality", and a horse that didn't have any desirable qualities to be preserved for breeding was generally gelded.

> «From the earliest times horses were central to Greek life, and they occupied a special prominence in Greek mythology. […] Specially honoured […] was the god Poseidon. As well as being god of the sea, he was credited with the creation of the horse»[44].

Horses of course appeared in art too, like bronze statues, marble decorations for temples and vase decorations, to name but a few examples.

As in modern times, horses were also used for sports: horseback races and above all chariot races were very popular and enjoyed high prestige.

When talking about Ancient Greece, the most famous horse we can think of is of course Bucephalus, Alexander the Great's mount. The legend goes that Alexander, at 12, was the only one who could tame this unruly horse who then he rode to victory in his greatest battles. When Bucephalus died, at 30, he was buried with all military honour[45].

3.3 Old Ottoman

Old Ottoman, which is also reported in the table above, deserves a small chapter of its own. Old Ottoman was the language of the Ottoman Empire from 13th to 20th century (but as a standardized written language it became prominent from the 15th century onwards) and it was a Turkish language (it does not belong to the Indo-Europen family) that «gradually absorbed a great many Arabic and Persian words and even grammatical forms and was written in Arabic script»[46].

> «Ottoman Turkish, […] was a mixture of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. […] The multiple linguistic influences on Ottoman Turkish caused difficulties in spelling and writing. The constituent parts--Turkish, Persian, and Arabic--belong to three different language families--Ural-Altaic, Indo-European, and Semitic, respectively--and the writing system fits only Semitic»[47].

The only comment we can attempt considering such a complex language, so far from our own native Indo-European structures, is that we noticed that the Old Ottoman words are still the same in modern Arabic. The word **"faras"** is used by the Arabs for both male and female horses. When specifically referring to a stallion, they use **"ḥiṣān".**

English	OLD OTTOMAN	ARABIC
HORSE	feres (A.) [فرس]	
STALLION	hisân (A.) [حصان]	(ḥiṣān) حصان
MARE	mâdiyân (F.) [مادیان]	
FOAL	kürre (F.) [کره] (=baby horse or donkey)	

[44] Edwards E.H. *op.cit*., p.39
[45] *Ibidem*, p.40
[46] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Turkish language". Encyclopedia Britannica, 13 May. 2025, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Turkish-language. Accessed 11 August 2025.
[47] *Country Studies*, https://countrystudies.us/turkey/25.htm, Accessed 11 August 2025

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This confirms how Old Ottoman was heavily influenced by Arabic words.

The Ottoman Empire was very well-organized in its military structure and everybody was involved in war business, that is the reason why breeding horses was very widespread: people didn't even do it for money, but just to help provide animals for cavalry[48].

As horses were considered very valuable animals, caring for them and treating their diseases became very important:

> «A sizeable literature grew up on horsemanship and the medical treatment of horses. […] Ottoman horse medicine relied on knowledge coming from the Greco-Roman period and augmented by Persian and Indian culture»[49].

4. Modern Turkish

In the previous chapter we have mentioned that Modern Turkish is a non-Indo-European language that replaced Old Ottoman. After the end of World War I, the Ottoman Empire came to an end and in 1923 the Turkish Republic was officially proclaimed. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk became the first Turkish President and he started a series of reforms aimed at transforming Turkey into a more modern state. One of these reforms was related to Language.

As previously stated, The Language of the Ottoman Empire was dominantly composed of Arabic and Persian terms and it was written in Arabic script.

In 1928 the Latin alphabet was officially adopted and «On January 1, 1929, it became unlawful to use the Arabic alphabet to write Turkish. The new Latin alphabet represented the Turkish vowels and consonants more clearly than had the Arabic alphabet»[50].

«During the language reform of the 1930s a good deal of Arabo-Persian loan words was deliberately replaced by (often newly created) Turkish words»[51].

«The aim of the Turkish language reform was to eliminate the Arabic and Persian grammatical features and the many thousands of Arabic and Persian borrowings that had long been part of the language»[52].

Considering all the above information and quotations, some linguistic remarks about the table here below should make more sense.

[48] *Hürriyet Daily News*, https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/the-ottomans-and-their-love-of-horses-65556, Accessed 17 August 2025
[49] *Ibidem*.
[50] *Country Studies,* https://countrystudies.us/turkey/25.htm, Accessed 17 August 2025
[51] *The University of Chicago*, https://mes.uchicago.edu/languages/ottoman-turkish, Accessed 17 August 2025
[52] Lewis G. (1999), *The Turkish Language Reform - A Catastrophic Success*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 2

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ENGLISH	TURKISH	
HORSE	**At**	
STALLION	**Aygır**	
ENTIRE	**Damızlık** Erkek	*Breeding Male [erkek=male]*
GELDING	**Hadım At/ beygir/ iğdiç**	
SIRE	**Baba At** (ERKEK at)	
DAM	**Ana At** (Dişi at)	*[dişi=female]*
MARE	**Kısrak**	
BROODMARE	Damızlık Kısrak	*[Damızlık = breeding]*
FOAL	**Tay**	In horses, the term "foal" covers a long period of time and is called a "tay" until about the age of four. (Tay = horse's offspring)
COLT	Erkek **Tay (male)**/ colt	Unsterilized horses between the ages of 1-4 are called "colts".
FILLY	Dişi **Tay (female)**/ fills/ biye	
SUCKLING	**Emziren Tay**	*[breastfeeding foal]*
WEANLING	**Sütten Kesilmiş Tay**	*[Weaned Foal]*
YEARLING	**Bir Yaşındaki Tay (yearling)**	*[One Year Old Foal]*
weanling (?)	cabağı	Horses aged 6 to 12 months
NAG (?)	**yaşlı at**	Horses over eight years old (=old horse)
-	**kulun**	newborn horse
	hergele	A horse that wanders around
	ılgı/ yılkı	A horse that grazes in groups

If we compare Old Ottoman and modern Turkish, it is immediately clear that the words to say "horse" in the two languages are totally different. We have already stated that the Old Ottoman word had Arabic origins but: «Although there are opinions that the word "at" is based on a hypothetical Mongolian root, there is strong evidence that it is Turkish»[53].

This would confirm that the words of Arabic descent were promptly substituted by words with a corresponding meaning but with a strictly Turkish origin.

It is also very interesting to observe how Turkish seems to have more words than English to describe horses according to age: **kulun** means "newborn horse" and **cabağı** (also spelled *cıbağı*) means "horse aged 6 to 12 months". The latter word could be used to to indicate a weanling, but the focus seems to be different: the Turkish word seems to focus on a specific age of the foal, the English word focuses on the evolution of the animal in being able to feed itself.

According to a research study about names given to the horse in Turkish, it is amazing to find out how many terms actually exist to describe horses according to several features. The large number of names used for a single animal «reveals the place of the horse in Turkish society and its importance to Turkish people»[54].

In this study:

> «Horse names are classified under eight main headings according to their Age, Coat, Gender, Breed, Speed and Walking Style, Physical Characteristics, Character and Other

[53] Perçin-Bostan, B. (2024). *Tarihi ve Modern Türk Dillerinde Ata Verilen Adlar*. Journal of History School, 69, p. 1046.
[54] *Ibidem*, p.1080.

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Features, respectively. […] A total of 225 names given to horses in Turkic languages were determined»[55].

It is always very interesting to notice how important things in our culture occupy a special place in our language too, with a large presence of nouns that refer to them. This seems to be what happens in Turkish as well:

> «The fact that such a rich vocabulary belongs to a single animal is one of the important features of our language. The rich word heritage of a nation that tamed the horse and was associated with it at every stage of life has undoubtedly been transferred to many languages»[56].

This rich terminology might also be connected to the fact that the Turkish people are considered those who first tamed the horse and for them, being nomadic, «there was no better means of transportation than horses»[57].

4.1 Religious and supernatural features

It is very interesting to notice how in history several countries had some common beliefs about horses: for the Turks horses had magical and symbolic features too. The Altaic people thought that horses had celestial origins and shamans also used horses as intermediaries between the human and spirit realms.

> «In Turkish fairytales, jokes, legends, and traditional stories horses are narrated as supernatural beings and they are an indispensable element that accompanies the characters and heroes. […] The horse had an important effect in many aspects of cultural life and traditions in Turkish and Kurdish tribes, including magical rituals, funeral ceremonies, epics, stories and myths»[58].

The connection of horses with religion was also visible in early Islamic veterinary studies, which usually contained a mixture of religious and cultural elements: «The cult of the horse is also seen in early horse medicine books and books about breeding and training horses called […] baytarnâme»[59]. These books derive their name from the old Ottoman word used for "veterinarian" (baytar) and they were often made of rational remedies derived from written and oral culture but they also contained religious, unscientific, irrational and magical elements which were different from the newly established vet science.

The love for horses went beyond their use in fields like war, agriculture and sport: «the cult of the horse was not only limited to the admiration of its strength, beauty and character, but people also formed emotional bonds with them, wrote poems and built tombs for their deceased horses»[60].

A very moving example is given by Sultan Osman II: when his beloved horse Sisli Kır died, he was buried in the garden of Kavak Palace in Scutari and a gravestone was erected in his memory[61].

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[55] *Ibidem*, p. 1080
[56] *Ibidem*, p. 1081
[57] *Daily Sabah*, https://www.dailysabah.com/life/2018/05/23/horses-the-wings-of-mankind, Accessed 17 August 2025.
[58] Halaçoğlu, C., *Revitalizing Ottoman Equine Heritage: Transformation Of 19th Century Horse Breeding Practices And Their Impacts On The Ottoman Empire*, PhD Thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2023, p.38.
[59] *Ibidem*, p. 46
[60] *Ibidem*, p. 50
[61] Genç, S.V. (2019) Article from the Turkish History Commission Journal regarding Veterinary History written in Ottoman called "Inscription from a horses gravestone", The Veterinary History Society Summer Meeting, Özet bildiri, Elektronik, Edinburgh, p.5.

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4.2 Horses as status symbols

In the Ottoman society too horses were a clear example of status-symbol. They symbolized wealth, power, leadership, nobility, and also military and political power. Moreover «they brought an immense prestige to those who own them; the more horses one could afford to have, the more prestige they got»[62]. As horses were considered superior to other animals, owning a horse gave prestige to its owner, who identifeid himself with the attributes possessed by the horse. «They were also hard to afford, so owning horses signified wealth and power»[63].

4.2 Horses in Art

Another interesting common trait of the Ottoman Empire and the European tradition is the role of horse in visual representations: «In visual narratives monarchs of the early modern era often appear on horseback»[64]. Several artist, among whom the German painter Zacharias Wehme «chose to depict the later sixteenth-century sultans on horseback. […] This genre of royal portraiture, celebrated in post-Roman European sculpture and painting, but also popular in Persian or Mughal miniatures, was adopted by Ottoman artists as well»[65].

Another very common subject in Muslim miniature paintings was Al-Burāq, the winged horse with a human face that, according to the legend, transported the Prophet Muḥammad to heaven. Al-Burāq is just another example of how «the status of any hero, whether historical or mythical, is enhanced by a horse, best of all a named, individual horse regarded as the hero's constant partner»[66].

The attitude of people towards horses began to change around the period of the Industrial Age, when horses lost their supernatural aspects and started to be perceived like "living machines":

> «While baytarnames contained scientific elements, they were mingled with religious, mystical and irrational elements. The rise of modern veterinary science discarded all these elements, which reduced the mystical element of the horse. Eventually, with the advent of industrial age and rational understanding -even though the cult of the horse was retained in certain aspects- they transitioned from being mystical, admirable and noble animals that aid its rider in many ways, to an animal which was likened to a machine»[67].

Horses began to be compared to the new technologies and their bodies needed to be improved to keep the pace with new necessities, which urged the "creation" of new breeds.

In the early 19th century animals were increasingly considered like creatures who could suffer and feel emotions; this recognition led to the first animal rights movements.

> «Over time, there were increasing concerns about the welfare of animals, including horses, as people began to recognize their ability to feel pain and suffer. Laws and regulations

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[62] Halaçoğlu, C., *Op. Cit.,* p.60

[63] *Ibidem*, p.62

[64] Artan T. (2010), *Ahmed I and 'Tuhfet'iil-muh1k ve's-seliitin': A period manuscript on horses, horsemanship and hunting*, in S. Faroqhi (Ed.) *Animals and People in the Ottoman Empire,* Istanbul, Eren, p.235

[65] *Ibidem*, p.235

[66] Johns C. (2006). *Horses: History Myth Art*, Harvard University Press, p. 23.

[67] Halaçoğlu, C., *Op. Cit.,* p.68.

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were established to protect animals from abuse and neglect, and modern veterinary science emerged to improve their health and well-being»[68].

This explains how horses underwent many transformations during the history of mankind: for centuries they were considered status symbols and essential partners for war, agriculture and transport. When the Industrial Age began, horses were considered like machines, only useful to move people or heavy objects. When working horses were totally substituted by machines, they disappeared, with some rare exceptions, around the 21st century. From that moment on they were mainly used for sports till the present day where they are sometimes also considered domestic animals and beloved companions. «With the decline of the need for its power, the view on horses started to shift from "a living machine" toward "a sport horse" and then to "a pet" until today»[69].

This new role that horses have acquired with time still plays without any doubts a vital role in social life. In recent years, for example, horses have been included more and more often in successful projects like Equine-Assisted Therapy, which might take place both in conventional places (like farms and barns) or in unconventional environments like hospitals, retirement homes and sometimes prisons.

Conclusions

After all these linguistics observations, historical comments and cultural curiosities, we would like to summarize what we have noticed so far in analyzing so many different languages and cultures. What surprized us most are the many similarities we found in comparing several peoples in different geographic areas and different eras, which underlines how horses have always been perceived similarly by all humans at all times.

Here is a short list of these common features we found:

- Horses always had magical or supernatural features (shamanism, hippomancy…);
- Horses were always considered status symbols;
- Horses were always present in art: paintings, decorations, tapestries, sculptures, etc.
- In all cultures we could find myths involving winged horses (Pegasus, Sleipnir, Al-Burāq…)
- Famous military leaders are often well-known together with their horses (Alexander the Great and Bucephalus, Napoleon and Marengo, Wellington and Copenhagen…)
- After the Industrial Revolution, horses progressively lost their magical apects and their main role in fields like war, agriculture and transport. After that, they mostly became men's companions in equestrian sports.

Notes

For footnotes no. 3,4,5,7,8,14 translation by Helga Mazzucco.
For footnotes no. 19 and 49 translation by DeepL Translator.

[68] *Ibidem*, p.238.
[69] *Ibidem*, p.69.

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