

Primitive and Aboriginal Dog Society

Dear members of PADS and readers of our Newsletter,

In this, the 24th issue of the PADS Newsletter, we publish Part 2 of an article by V. Beregovoy.

In his article Sergei Kopylets shares with us some interesting photographs of the Turkmen Tazi and tells us a story about the renaissance of the breed in Turkmenistan.

We also publish two articles touching on very controversial topics. Vladimir Shakula is writing about the tradition and role of aboriginal breeds and dogs in particular in human society. Isik Guvener is writing about the concept of the “purebred dog” and the tradition of using and breeding dogs in rural Turkey.

We will leave to readers to draw their own conclusions, but the fact remains that the role of the dog in traditional human societies and cultures of the world varies from being simply an animal for butchering for meat to a beast of burden, from a hunting assistant to a property protector and from a companion to a deified, sacrificial animal important for social and religious rituals. It is nothing unusual in many traditional cultures to perceive dogs as a part of the natural resources, which can be used thoroughly in any way or abandoned altogether. This is one reason why aboriginal dogs disappear with change to the modern way of life. The romantic notion of the dog as a companion or “family member” arose from literary fiction and the way of life in urban industrial society. This view then becomes accepted and spread, replacing old traditions worldwide.

Aboriginal breeds are not the same as breeds developed by systematic deliberate breeding with pedigree records. They are always genetically heterogeneous and with naturally variable appearance. Isik Guvener entitles his article “The Purebred Shepherd Dog”, although he realizes that such a dog did not exist in Turkey. In recent years, several different breeds of purebred shepherd dogs have been developed from the aboriginal dogs of Turkey. Meanwhile, in rural Turkey people continue to use and breed their shepherd dogs according to ancient tradition

Sincerely yours,

Curator of PADS,

Vladimir Beregovoy

Evolutionary Changes In Domesticated Dogs:
The Broken Covenant Of The Wild, Part 2
Vladimir Beregovoy

The Turkmen Tazi
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Evolutionary Changes In Domesticated Dogs: The Broken Covenant Of The Wild, Part 2

by Vladimir Beregovoy, USA

Defining a breed

It is agreed that a breed is defined as a group (population) of animals morphologically similar to each other and normally passing those similarities through subsequent generations. Usually this term is applied to populations of domesticated animals of the same species bred in captivity. Animals of different breeds have different appearances and are sometimes called races of domesticated animals. Because of their association with people, they are considered artifacts and therefore not assigned scientific names. However, primitive aboriginal dogs are profoundly different from dogs of cultured breeds because they have evolved by natural selection under conditions of free life and close interactions with people. Each of them is a unique piece of nature, time bound and place bound, most similar to zoological subspecies. At the same time, they are historically associated with ethnic groups and cultures.

Primitive aboriginal dogs are the oldest and the only natural breeds of dogs in existence. I divide dogs into three large groups of breeds, succeeding each other historically: (1) primitive aboriginal breeds, (2) cultured functionally performing breeds and (3) show-pet dogs derived from all breeds during relatively recent time, and replacing them globally.

Aboriginal breeds of dogs

To keep the size of this article within limits, I will describe only major groups of aboriginal dogs. Most specialized for performing a particular job, aboriginal dogs are (1) sled dogs with circumpolar distribution in the tundra and the polar desert zones, (2) reindeer herding dogs of the tundra zone from Scandinavia in the west to West Siberia in the east, (3) spitz-like hunting dogs, known from Scandinavian countries in the west, across the taiga zone of Eastern Europe, Siberia, Korea, China and Japan in the east, (4) rabbit catching sight hounds of the Mediterranean region, (5) lop-eared sight hounds of North Africa, Middle East and Central Asia, (6) livestock guarding dogs distributed from Portugal in the west to Mongolia and Tibet. Six other groups include most wild breeds, feral living or sometimes with people. Some of them are used for hunting or as watchdogs, but most often they just co-exist with people as scavengers. These are (7) primitive aboriginal dogs of Africa, represented by a great diversity of types. They are small to medium size dogs with prick ears and pointed muzzles and some are looking like sight hound mixes. One of these South African dogs became the pedigreed breed known as the Basenji. The history of authentic African dogs has been studied by J. Gallant under the collective name "Africanis". In Africa, common are so-called small village dogs, most of which have lop ears and relatively small teeth. It is hard to tell if they are authentic or recently modified mixes with imported dogs. (8) Primitive aboriginal dogs of India known as Pariah Dogs. Gautam Das suggested calling them collectively INdogs. Large populations of these dogs live as feral, but many of them also live with people as watch dogs and family dogs. Feral dogs of Turkey and the Middle East, where they still survive, are similar to both northern spitz type dogs and INdogs. (9) Dingo populations still survive in Australia and, similar to the Dingo, feral dogs are still abundant in Southeast Asia, many of them kept by people as watchdogs. (10) Dingo-like dogs of Pacific islands are mostly extinct, but some survive, genetically contaminated by imported dog populations. Originally, they had been brought by Polynesians along with pigs and kept for meat. (11) Dogs of pre-Columbian Indians became extinct, except for the hairless Inca dog (the Xoloitzcuintli) and the Carolina Wild Dog, feral living and yet recently established as a



INdog - primitive aboriginal dog of India
photo by/courtesy of: Bulu Imam

pedigreed breed. There were several other unique aboriginal dogs, now extinct, which had been created in extreme environments, dogs abandoned on the Tuamotu Islands for example. They subsisted by learning to catch fish and surviving without fresh water. Captain of the Beagle, Fitz Roy, described them as exceptionally serviceable hard working dogs of the Indians of Terra Del Fuego. (12) A very interesting group of primitive aboriginal dogs of northern Europe, which gave us such remarkable cultured breeds like the Malinois, the Border Collie, the German Shepherd Dog and other related breeds, became lost before it had been studied.

Why primitive?

The term "primitive" is sometimes disputed as incorrect and belittling of aboriginal dogs. The word "primitive", in dog context, means natural, functionally justified and undistorted in appearance, behavior and health. Another reason for calling aboriginal breeds primitive is associated with their free, unmanaged way of life in their countries of origin.

Next, I will describe variations of different biological features among and within aboriginal breeds, which presents additional evidences in favor of their origin by evolutionary process.

Appearance

Volumes are written about the variation in appearance of dogs. However, the range of variation of aboriginal dogs is not as wide as is the range of variation of cultured breeds. In general, diversity of aboriginal dogs increases from north to south, along with the increase of diversity of wild fauna. This is also evidence of their origin by evolutionary process. Thus, sled dogs of the polar desert zone are very similar everywhere around their circumpolar distribution range. Slightly further to the south, in the tundra zone, aboriginal dogs become more diverse, because of the presence of sled dogs, reindeer herding dogs and some hunting Laikas. Still further to the south, in the boreal forest zone, hunting Laikas of northeastern Europe and Siberia are even more diverse in size and details of body structure. They are represented by dozens of breeds and sub-breeds associated with ethnic peoples of northeastern Europe and Siberia. Further to the south, in desert, mountain, subtropical and tropical landscapes of Eurasia and Africa, diversity among aboriginal dogs becomes maximal: Dingo-like feral dogs similar to hunting Laikas of different sizes, sight hounds of several types and livestock guarding dogs. In many areas, several types of aboriginal dogs of different purpose co-exist. Nevertheless, variation of the appearance is still not as great as it is among cultured breeds. A similar increase of variation from north to south can be traced in now extinct aboriginal dogs of the Americas. Aboriginal dogs found on small Pacific islands are similar to dogs of the nearest large islands and continental landmasses. Many of them became extinct, some nearly extinct and some still exist being more or less mixed with all kinds of imports. For example, the New Guinea Singing Dog is an island form of the Dingo, now extinct but for a few specimens bred in captivity. The so-called Telomian is another representative of a Dingo-like island dog. In Indonesia there are some never recognized, but are actually Dingo-like aboriginal dogs. They can be seen in pictures taken by travelers. Nobody cares how pure, or not, aboriginal dogs are. Some island dogs became smaller and obtained peculiar features, which is also in keeping with their origin by evolution.



Australian Dingo.

Photo by Jim Reid, Willaston, Australia

The individual variation of aboriginal dogs within a single population is much wider than would be allowed in a cultured breed. Even dogs used for the same purpose rarely look uniform enough to be recognized as a pure breed. This is why old European travelers often wrote about local "mongrels", which they saw with indigenous people of far away countries. Usually only one or two distinctive types are numerically predominant and seen repeatedly, but a few other less frequent types occur as well among

dogs and are also seen. Numerical proportions of similar type dogs may change in the next population, living miles away in a different river valley, mountain range or village. Some of the variation can be attributed to recent genetic contamination, but variation of the appearance of any primitive breed in its authentic condition far exceeds what is considered acceptable in a show breed. When an aboriginal breed becomes designated as a pure breed in order to be "saved from extinction", the same mistake is made repeatedly: one type, which seems most frequent or most attractive, is selected and the rest of the pre-existing variation is purged. For example, all hunting Laikas currently designated as purebred are supposed to have a tail carried curved over the back, or on either side, and high-set prick ears. Among aboriginal Laika ancestors, even within one ethnic group, these traits are more variable. The tail might be carried low and be sickle shaped and the ears could be high or lower set, with rounded or pointed tips, etc. Native people do not care about details of the appearance of their dogs, but pay much more attention to their working ability. In every community variation among dogs is maintained by exchange of dogs during travels and trading. This is why aboriginal dogs of the same nomadic camp or a village have less uniform appearance than pedigreed breeds do.



Saluki with owners in Jordan.
Picture donated by Sir Terence Clark

Reproductive biology

Primitive aboriginal dogs differ from cultured breeds in their ability to switch to a feral life at least during the most favorable season for breeding and successfully raising puppies. The reproductive biology of aboriginal dogs varies geographically and it depends on their way of life and physical environment. In the Australian Dingo and Dingo-like dogs of Southeast Asia, India and Africa, breeding time is seasonally adjusted to the most favorable time for feeding puppies. Females mature relatively late - after one to two years of age - have one estrus period per year, give birth to relatively small litters, ranging from one to seven, and they can reproduce without protection or assistance of people. However, even feral living dogs differ from the wolf, not sharing the wolf's rigid pack relationships. All mature dogs can attempt to breed. Females of northern sled dogs come in heat two times per year. Among hunting Laikas, females have one estrus per year, usually in February-March, as in the wolf. Other Laika females have one estrus per year regardless of the time of year, and some other females come into heat regularly two times per year. Females of livestock guarding dogs of Central Asia and females of aboriginal sight hounds, such as the Saluki and the Taigan, have one estrus per year. Females of sheep guarding dogs and sight hounds, in their original countries, are capable of making their own dens for whelping and raising puppies by hunting small mammals without assistance of people. The Australian Dingo became amazingly adapted to life in the desert and can raise puppies far away from water, because the mother brings water and regurgitates it into her puppies' mouths. In Dingo society the father and any remaining older siblings will assist in the care of a new litter. Subordinate offspring, if they survive, are driven out of the territory, and other offspring may then stay with the parents and help raise the new litter. In feral living aboriginal dogs of India (Pal, 2005) and the Middle East there are records in which both parents stay together, and males also help to feed and protect puppies. In specialized breeds, living in closer relationship with people, the role of the males in caring of puppies became more or less deteriorated; the job has been passed on to their human masters. However, even among more domesticated dogs, when they are provided with enough freedom during breeding time, some males engage in puppy-rearing behaviors, such as bringing a piece of meat to the mother with puppies.

Behavior

Primitive aboriginal dogs are acutely attuned to environmental changes. This is a survival adaptation. They are independent, freedom loving, somewhat wild and cautious of the unusual. Behavior is more

discriminating and rigid in relationships with other dogs and people, or when choosing a mating partner as well as being protective over the territory where the dog lives. Attachment to a certain territory and to people comes naturally from puppy age and it becomes an important part of the working environment. If the dog is working in its home environment, it easily learns to obey commands by voice and by gestures if they are in line with their natural inclinations, such as pulling sleds, protecting livestock, etc. If they have to work in a new, far from home environment, they need some time for adjustment. Dog trainers accustomed to cultured breeds find aboriginal breeds frustratingly disobedient, inattentive and lacking interest to learn simple tasks. Such a dog is likely to present an impression of being worthless for any work. This may be quite true, if work requires close contact with a human leader and immediate action in response to a sudden command in a setting full of unusual, artificial objects.

Perhaps the wildest of all primitive aboriginal breeds is the Australian Dingo. In the past Dingoes were close companions of Australian Aborigines and even slept with them in caves, huddling together for warmth. It is easy to raise a Dingo as a family pet, but it is very hard, if not impossible, to stop it from killing farm animals. The Dingo makes a wonderful and interesting companion for a family living in a private place, but possibilities for using it for any practical service are limited. Now, when Australian Aborigines obtained cultured breeds of dogs, they preferred to use them rather than their Dingoes for a simple reason: they are better for hunting with and for people. Similarly looking aboriginal dogs of Australasia, Southeast Asia, India, Africa, Middle East and Turkey represent large groups of sub-breeds, having a generally similar appearance. They all have prick ears, a wedge-shaped pointed muzzle and nearly square body proportions, but their coats vary from nearly smooth in the south to the thick, double coat of sleddogs and hunting Laikas in the north. Despite their similarity to the Australian Dingo, most of them are more docile and prone to obtaining their food by scavenging rather than by hunting difficult big animals. In the south, India, the Middle East and Turkey for example, feral dogs live in peace, watching farm animals and, if raised properly socialized, become watch dogs and make great family dogs.

Specialized aboriginal dogs of nomadic peoples became exceptionally important because of their behavioral traits and their physical ability to perform specific jobs. Their behavior, as well as appearance, became considerably changed away from the most primitive generalist type Dingo-like dog. This became their new adaptation to survive, by working for people. The working performance is entirely natural; no stick-and-carrot teaching methods are needed. To them it is as natural as hunting and life in the pack are natural for the wolf. For a correct development of working behavior, the puppy of the aboriginal dog must be exposed to its natural working environment. Some dogs, if they grow up in their home country, may work well even if they had been poorly socialized and never having been taught the simplest things such as sitting, laying down and coming when called. For example, some extremely cautious and independent individuals of Central Asian sight hounds and Taigans live outside most of the time, are never tethered and instead roam free, like wild animals. Many of them would not come up even to the master, if it is not in their immediate interest. They are fed occasionally, but most often obtain their food by hunting marmots and other small animals. To these dogs hunting is a self-rewarding process. They hunt well because they really like to hunt, preferably with their master, returning the captured animal to his feet, if it is not too big and heavy. If well socialized, many of these dogs can be quite outgoing at home, yet still difficult to handle in an overcrowded place because of their natural aloofness and suspicion of new, artificial and unfamiliar things. The Tazi is specialized to hunt hares and foxes in desert and steppe regions. The Taigan is specialized to hunt big game, mountain sheep, goats and wolves in arid, high mountain landscapes. Major elements of working behavior within each breed are remarkably constant, with variation almost nonexistent. In fact, this is a defining feature of each working aboriginal breed. Function comes first and its appearance is determined by the function. All aboriginal sight hounds would chase and catch hares and foxes. All livestock guarding dogs would stay with the herd and fight stray dogs and wild predators in defense of the herd. Likewise reindeer herding dogs would stay with their reindeer herd preventing animals from straying, finding and bringing back lost ones and protecting them from predators. All hunting Laika breeds would find squirrels and other small game and bark at the base of treed prey. All sled dogs pull enthusiastically. Some dogs may work better, than others, but if some of them do not, most likely they do not belong to the breed. Physically intensive and complex jobs

performed by specialized aboriginal dogs in their native countries is hard to call primitive because it is much more complex and sophisticated than it may seem to an observer unfamiliar with those dogs. For example, Laikas use different tactics when handling different game species such as squirrels, grouse, moose, sables or bears. It barks differently and the hunter, listening to barking style of his dog, can tell with a high level of probability what is going on and what kind of prey the dog has found. The dog knows when to use a "soft mouth" approach and when to bite hard. Sled dogs do not just pull sleds, they are running in a team, cooperating with the musher, traveling over areas of thin ice hidden under snow, finding the right direction in blizzard during the polar night, etc. Livestock guarding dogs organize themselves, cruising along the perimeter of the herd and making their own right decisions according to the emerging threat to the herd, etc. In every case, the behavior of an aboriginal dog is natural and it is of primeval origin, evolving for its function just like the dog's physical appearance. Although every element of a dog's behavior can be derived from behavior known in the wolf, performance of dogs became considerably modified, often entirely new, never found in wolves. For example, specialized barking style of a Laika serves for signaling a human partner. Preferential hunting of prey unpalatable as food to the dog, such as animals in the mustelid family, is done, because of the high market value of their pelts. Behavior of dogs, attacking aggressively big and dangerous predators, protecting livestock or their master's life, is another example. Some Caucasian Mountain Dogs are so very much specialized for guarding and being faithful that they cannot be sold or transferred because they would never accept a new owner.



Swaziland Hunter

photo: Johan Gallant, The AfriCanis Society

Early socialization of the primitive dog is crucial, and puppies play an active role in the process. If the litter of puppies is born under conditions of life with people, children take care of the socialization and the process completes easily and unnoticed. However, if the puppies grow being locked up in a pen and see a person taking care of them only periodically, individual differences become apparent by age of six to seven weeks. Some of them run to meet a human, wagging their tails and will eat well, but avoid being touched by hand. Others openly crave to be petted, and will jump on legs, lick hands, enjoying physical contact. Aloof puppies can be easily redirected by gentle handling and petting at each visitation so they also become

well socialized. However, if overlooked, they will remain extra cautious with people and especially unfamiliar people. This can become a problem if the dog is going to be used for hunting or some service.

Way of life and selection

Every dog breed is shaped by its way of life. Dingo-like feral dogs are the oldest, survival is their only behavioral function. Their populations are controlled by natural forces such as shortage of food, predators and epidemics causing high mortality among puppies and young dogs. They live by scavenging and hunting and gravitating to human camps and communities, which makes their way of life different from a wolf's way of life. Australian and New Guinean Dingoes, which can survive very well independently by hunting, can easily switch to life with people if treated well and fed by humans from a young age. Feral dogs of the Middle East make good watchdogs and livestock protection dogs. Feral dogs of India and Thailand, if raised with people, make good hunting dogs. The so-called Indian Spitz, the Santhal Dog, is an important hunting breed of the Santhal tribe of India. Even without any utilitarian use, in some countries Dingo-like aboriginal dogs are valued at least as a source of meat. They also make good companions and watchdogs. Some of the generalist Dingo-like dogs of Africa became very useful hunting dogs; the Basenji is one example. In southern countries with good climate, dogs and people can easily

manage to live without each other, but feral dogs can easily switch to life with people and then back again to a feral life. But since prehistoric times, dogs have been valued and this is why, with the assistance of people, they expanded their range in Australia and then to big and small islands of Australasia and Oceania.

The way of life of dogs had been changed in harsh climates of arid plains, high mountains, boreal forests, tundra and polar deserts. Here their ability to survive was improved through work beneficial to people. Nomadic people use dogs for work and never keep them as pets. There are no long-term breeding programs to improve the breed. People keep useful dogs and abandon or kill worthless ones. In effect, this works like a form of natural selection. Genetic exchange is facilitated by nomadic way of life of dog owners and together with natural selection for function makes them what they are now. While working for people, these dogs remain the same low maintenance dogs and are capable of finding their own food. They will breed freely in the right season, reverting to a feral or semi-feral way of life at least temporarily. In this capacity, they remained members of both local fauna and as well as parts of ethnic culture.

Under original conditions, and in many regions now in Siberia, sled dogs in winter are often harnessed or remain tethered for a prolonged time, and fed regularly. In the harsh winter climate, dogs depend on the care of people. Any lost dogs do not survive, primarily due to predation by wolves. All dogs are turned loose during the warm season and left not fed. They hunted lemmings and other small mammals. Discarded fish or a dead whale drifted to the shore made a feast for local dogs. In the summer, chances of survival of puppies were higher. However, some litters still died if the lemming population was low or the weather too cold and wet. When approaching a village near its shoreline, a traveler was greeted by hundreds of dogs running loose and barking. Dogs would wag their tails, approach closely but not be aggressive, some not minding being petted. But many others stayed away. Most of the dogs were males, some old, with fresh wounds or old scars, missing part of ear or limping, many injuries caused in dogfights. Every dog belonged to someone in the village of hunters and fishermen.

The way of life of a primitive aboriginal sled dog was and remains harsh. If a dog is injured or ill, it either dies or survives, usually without treatment because immediate veterinary intervention is almost never available. But a good sled dog is generally a healthy dog and this is a quality supported by selection, survival of the fittest.

Being bigger and stronger, sled teams are formed primarily of males. Among Inuit Sled Dog society, there is a dominant boss dog (king dog) who helps the musher and controls the entire pack. While he may not start fights, a good boss dog will end them quickly in order to keep the general peace among the group. When the boss dog becomes old, he will be challenged and often killed. Then fighting among lower ranking dogs happens until a new boss takes his place. The boss dog is the one most likely to sire pups. The lead dog in a sled team is never the boss dog.

Females are few, but they are harnessed as well. Females come in heat two times per year. If a female is pregnant, it has to work in harness anyway. If she gives birth to a litter of puppies when on the trail, the puppies die unless the owner wants to save them. He would wrap them in an animal hide and transport them in his sled, allowing the mother to suckle the litter at rest stops.

The worst thing that can happen to a northern nomad is the loss of his mobility. If isolated on a piece of drifting ice, he may resort to killing his dogs for food to save his own life. We can assume that the best dogs would be killed last and thus given a survival edge. To the northern sled dog, pulling sleds is a part of its everyday life. Dogs seldom live to old age and the cause of death is usually violent. Nevertheless, some emotional attachment to the dog is present even in this environment. There are cases reported, when the owner of an outstanding dog protected and fed it well until very old age.

Another example of way of life selection is with hunting Laikas of traditional Mansi families. Mansi keep two to five Laikas per family. The dogs live outside all the time and are allowed to wander loose. Certain pairs of Laikas are prone to wander for a day or two, having fun. During the hunting season, when dogs may be needed for work the next day, they are kept chained near the cabin; only one dog at a time is turned loose for exercise. If the hunting is successful, parts of the carcass unwanted by people are left to the dogs. If a big animal such as moose is killed, dogs have plenty to eat. The hunter

may return home without dogs, leaving them to eat all they want. The dogs return home an hour or more later. When dogs are to be fed during the hunting trip, a Mansi hunter throws pieces of meat to his best/dominant dog first and then to subordinate individuals in a descending order to avoid dogfights. During the summer, dogs are not fed and have to hunt for themselves. The breeding selection is determined based on females proven best at hunting. This is because the female is the only known parent of puppies, although the dominant and best hunting male, running loose, is most likely sire of the puppies. However, other males may arrive from miles away to take part in the dog wedding. When the hunter has enough dogs, unwanted litters are killed. Lazy dogs and ones not very good at hunting are killed for making mittens and moccasins. A small group of Mansi families, living in log cabins in the wilderness is about ten to fifty miles from other such groups. Dogs of one family and group of families may become inbred for a few subsequent generations until the time when an opportunity emerges to trade dogs with neighbors. A good new Laika can be obtained at a trading post or at the regional fair. Mansi, Hanty, Evenks, Nanai and other Siberian people value dogs for their hunting qualities, but ignore variation in details of conformation as long as they do not impair physical performance. Their dogs retain a certain physical type only because isolation by space of roadless lands. Despite dogs being treated harshly by today's standards, emotional attachment between individual Laikas and the hunter has its place. Dogs who had saved their master's life from an attacking bear, received better care. Particularly talented hunting Laikas are remembered and accounts of their skills are told in hunting stories.

The Saluki of the nomads of arid plains and deserts are treated with much greater honor and care than northern dogs described above. The Saluki is considered clean and, unlike other dogs, receives better treatment. It is allowed to live inside the tent or house, and is fed the same food that people eat. In Syria, if dogs have to live outside, they are provided with beehive-like doghouses built of stones. This design provides excellent protection from summer heat and from blowing winter winds. The dogs are covered with lovingly embroidered blankets for protection from weather elements. Females in heat are carefully isolated from other dogs in order to breed them with a male proven at catching hares. Modern writers about the Saluki emphasize the glamorous side of life of these dogs with well-to-do nomads and high status people. However, many of these dogs live a lot harsher life, especially those owned by poor people. Dogs eat leftovers or given one pita bread per day which does not seem enough for a dog of this size. In order to supplement their diet, we can surmise they have to scavenge or hunt to catch small mammals such as ground squirrels, jerboas and marmots. Despite these glorious dogs being so important to the culture of nomadic desert people, most of them do not live long beyond the age of four to five years, after which the dog has passed its peak performance at catching game. However, there are people who will keep their dogs until their last days. There are reports from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan that Tazi, as well as Taigans and Saluki will sometimes switch their loyalty to a different person, a family friend or a relative living nearby, if that person feeds them, treats them kindly and takes them hunting. This part of their way of life is not unlike typical feral Dingo-like or village dogs. A need to survive overrules the love and loyalty to only one master.

In the high mountain zones of Kyrgyzstan, the Taigan is only one kind of dog in the possession of local people. Taigans function is to find and catch big game such as mountain sheep. They also hold at bay or kill wolves. Such dogs are considered very valuable. On the plains the Taigan is replaced by the Tazi, which is better adapted to a hot climate and is used for catching small game such as hares and foxes. In mountain foothills and valleys, there are large populations of both Taigans and Tazis and mixes between the two. Taigans are never chained or tethered and are rarely supplied with doghouses. Females are perfectly capable of making their own whelping dens using suitable natural features, and of raising their puppies by hunting marmots and other small mammals.

Protecting livestock is the every day life of dogs bred for this task. This also requires skills of a feral dog in order to take care of its own wellbeing. The work of these dogs requires endurance and courage. In the Caucasus they are fed one time per day with grain cooked with dairy products. In spring and the early summer season, the dogs eat livestock afterbirths they can find in the field. Also, they catch ground squirrels, marmots and other small mammals. In Tajikistan, when marmots are plentiful, the dogs are not fed at all because they find the food on their own, like feral dogs do. Both males and females are used, but working qualities of males, which are bigger, stronger and more aggressive at work, are particularly important. According to ancient tradition, males are tested for fighting ability. This is done during national holidays and other gatherings for festivities. Two males are allowed to fight in a circle of onlookers. Their fighting performance is judged by respected and experienced villagers. This has nothing to do with infamous pit fighting for money in USA and some other countries. The fight does not last long and it does not end with death of the loser. Dogs stop the fight on their own, naturally, as soon as one of the dogs submits. These kinds of fighting tournaments are necessary for finding out which male is the best dog for a livestock-protecting job. The best fighters have enough courage to confront stray dogs, wolves and even bears. The nomadic way of life of sheep flock owners and especially transhumance (the semi-nomadic method of keeping livestock, usually sheep and goats in Portugal, Spain, Caucasus, Balkans and some Central Asian regions. Owners of livestock live near their herds in valleys and lowlands in winter. In spring they migrate to higher altitude pastures, to avoid hot weather and



Inuit hunters (Aqaatsiaq, Ipeelie Inuksuk, Felix Alaralak, and Uqaliq), with sled dogs, harvesting a walrus. Taken near Igloodik, N.W.T. (now Igluliq, Nunavut) mid-1900s.

Photograph: Reproduced with the permission of Library and Archives Canada. Source: Library and Archives Canada/Credit: Richard Harrington

families from wild predators.

Mediterranean sight hounds, such as the Malta rabbit hunting dog and related breeds, are also selected for best performance in the field. They are not pampered by their owners. Some visitors from the USA were horrified when they saw how the dogs live. For example, dogs sleep on the flat roof of the house during the day and are allowed to roam loose overnight. They are fed cooked potatoes with fish heads. In fact however, this food is much healthier for the dogs than most popular kibbled dog foods.

All aboriginal dogs specialized for particular jobs seek the attention and favor of their owners by competing with each other to determine the best performance in field. The best dogs gain an advantage in the form of protection and food, which may become critical in the harsh season. This increases chances of survival and successful breeding.

When modernization of a traditional way of life brought radical changes into formerly primitive societies, people did not need those natural dog breeds any more. They abandoned their dogs and they were exterminated or genetically diluted by stray imported dogs of man-made breeds and their mixes.

Aboriginal dogs are being replaced by dogs of cultured breeds worldwide. Actually, this process is not new; it began when the first civilizations and overcrowded human communities emerged.

The author wishes to thank Sue Hamilton for editing this article, part 2.

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In part 3: Cultured breeds and show-pet dogs: their appearance, reproductive biology, behavior, way of life and selection

The Turkmen Tazi

Sergei Kopylets

Ukraine

In the territory of the Central Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union, there are at least two aboriginal types of Tazi, the Kazakh type and the Turkmen type, which were artificially united by one standard as one breed. The difference between the Turkmen and Kazakh Tazi is so obvious that they are difficult to compare in the show ring. In body size and power Turkmen Tazis are close to Kazakh Tazis, but in elegance and purebred type they are considerably ahead of them.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the situation of aboriginal dog breeds in Central Asia became pitiful and local shepherd dogs and Sighthounds were on the verge of degeneration. The increase in the fashion of dog fighting during the first years of independence led to the rapid resurrection of the Alabais of Turkmenistan and Tobets (Tubet would be closer to the Kazakh pronunciation of this name) of Kazakhstan, but the situation of the Tazi remained unfavorable for a longer time.

During recent years, because of the efforts of breed enthusiasts in Kazakhstan, Russia and partly in the Ukraine, the population of Tazis of the Kazakh type increased; some went to the USA, where they are successfully used for hunting and breeding. However, the

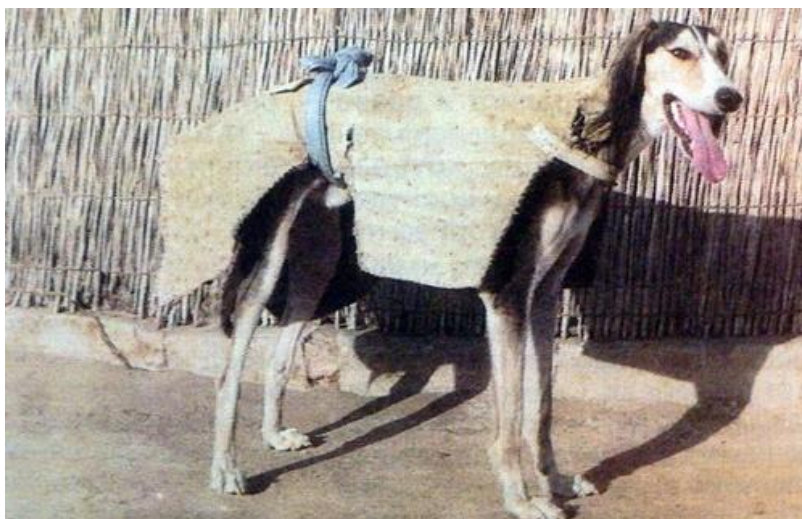


Photo by A. Aeberdyev from “Okhota I okhotnichye khozqjstvo” (In Russian), No. 9, 2003

situation of this kind of Sighthound in Turkmenistan remains unclear. Since the time when Turkmenistan obtained its independence, it became a “closed” country and it is hard to establish contacts with its Tazi lovers. According to some media information, at present in the Falconers Club of Turkmenistan headed

by Ata Aeberdyev, there are about 80 registered Tazis. In hunting publications articles by A. Aeberdyev appear now and then. He writes about the characteristics of the Turkmen Tazi with birds of prey. Turkmen use mainly falcons. He published some very interesting photographs of Turkmen Tazis. Indeed, these unique hounds deserve special attention.

The first publications about the Tazis of the Turkmen by Russian writers, who traveled in Central Asia during the period of colonial expansion, were issued in the XIXth century.

Here are some interesting notes by an author, who used the pseudonym Asiat, published in a monthly illustrated journal "Priroda I Okhota" (in Russian: Nature and Hunting), in March, 1874. The article is called "Across the Transcaspien Province": "After my long and fruitless search, one shaggy Tekinets (Turkmen) brought a purebred Sighthound bitch. I was amazed. It was a living statue made out of iron, the kind which one would never find in any picture. While being generally similar to English Sighthounds, she was more elegant, resembling the Italian Greyhound, but to an extent of utmost perfection, which cannot be found in any sophisticated and expensive boudoir.



Photo by A. Aeberdyev, from "Okhota I okhotnichye khozyaistvo" No. 6, 2003

The appearance of the dog was in drastic disharmony with the appearance of the husky looking Turkmen, it was a contrast between gentleness and coarseness, which made me suspicious of the possibility that the dog could be stolen. No matter, stolen, or not, I gladly paid 25 roubles (big money at that time) for her. The Turkmen explained that he was selling this dog for only one reason and that was because she had mated with a plain male who was unworthy of her and this polluted her

pure breed. Indeed, very soon the bitch gave birth to mongrel puppies of several colors and shades, which I gave away to my friends. My hound endured the heat up to 40 degrees C, chased jackals and hares, but did not tolerate the cold at all. During the entire fall and winter she was sitting near the fireplace, shoving her muzzle almost into the charcoal; she was shivering in the room and it was nearly impossible to call her outside; after a few seconds, she quickly returned inside. Turkmen always dress them in warm woolen blankets and my bitch had her own woolen blanket...

I cannot speak about the working qualities of the pure Sighthound; her agility and endurance were undisputable, but one should not look for particular aggressiveness in it. She easily took hare, corsac and fox and, if used in pairs, could overpower a jackal; they can stop a single wild boar, if they have the luck to find one in the steppe; on this occasion, these Sighthounds produce a kind of hysterical cry. To tell the truth, a good tusker, of course, is more dangerous, than a mature wolf, but the Melekush (Tazi) is about half size of the Psovaya Borzaya."



Photo by A. Aeberdyev, from "Okhota I okhotnichye khozyaistvo" (In Russian), No. 9, 2003

This is what Modest Bogdanov, a noted naturalist, wrote in the same journal, 1878, Vol. II, "Tazi and Kyrgyz Sighthounds": "the Turkmen Tazi Sighthound represents a perfect contrast to the Kyrgyz Sighthound. Unlike the Kyrgyz, the Turkmen is a perfect breeder. The environment of the desert, in which he lives, does not allow him to breed countless herds of animals, but this is compensated by their quality. The best camels, horses and sheep are found in the possession of the Turkmen; their horses, argamaks, deserve their fame and are well known since the old times; their Tazi is a purebred animal. The

Turkmen is similar to the Arab in many respects and, like the Arab, he values and cherishes the pure blood of his animals. Just a glance at a pure Tazi is enough to be sure that you are looking at a purebred animal. Its elegant and well balanced body is amazing. The most demanding hunter would admit that the Tazi is as beautiful as the Saluki of the Arabs, as described by Daume. Compared with other Sighthounds I had seen, the Tazi of the Turkmen, Iomuds and Ata are very small. The head is small and lean and the forehead is rounded and steep. The muzzle is slender, not very long and very fine in shape. Undershot jaws occur as a rare exception. The eyes are big, dark and protruding; its vision is amazing. The ears are



Photo by A. Aeberdyev. From “Okhota I okhotnichye khozyaistvo” (In Russian), No.9, 2003

very long, triangular and set on beautifully, like in a Setter, with soft, silky and long furnishing hair. The neck is slender and flexible, like in a swan. The body is compact, but light and elegant.

The abdomen is tucked up to the limit, but the chest is deep and compressed laterally and slightly elevated. A straight back predominates among Tazis, but the loin and pelvis are broad and with perfectly developed muscles. The tail is very thin, long and forming a ring closer to the end. The legs are amazingly good, with excellent muscles and well defined tendons. The feet are compact, lean and strong and the legs are long. In brief, the entire leg creates an impression of elastic, steel springs (the hind legs

are well angled at the hocks). If they were otherwise, this dog could not gallop on the moving sands of the dunes (barkhans). The hair is thin, soft, and silky. It lies close on the body, although it is long. On the tail and the legs there is some feathering. By the way, on the tail, the Tazi does not have as long feathering as in our Setters. The typical coat color is red, with black tipped hairs on the back and ear feathering; in many dogs the muzzle and the area near the eyes are covered with black hair. Other coat colors include black, black with white, cream with white, light cream and rarely totally white. The Turkmen take as much care of their Tazis as they care of their argamaks. The Tazi receives the best piece of meat. When it is very hot or cold, they



Photo by A. Aeberdyev, from “Okhota I okhotnichye khozyaistvo” (In Russian), No. 4, 2009

cover their favorite animal with a blanket. The selection of breeders is done painstakingly carefully and the Turkmen would never be too tired to travel to a remote camp, as far as two or three hundred verst (a verst is 3,500 feet) in order to mate his bitch with a dog worthy of her. They pay a crazy prices for dogs and a hunter would not hesitate to trade a good Tazi for a pair of camels or several dozen sheep. To buy a good dog from them is very difficult and one should be prepared to pay a high price...

Turkmen hunt with Tazis mainly for hares and foxes. Because of their small size, these dogs cannot handle a wolf singly. However, they say that they can take a cheetah. Among these dogs, there are some individuals, which can take a saiga antelope. However, in order to catch this game, a Tazi must run up to 10-15 verst and even longer...

I am sure that a Tazi, when running long distances, will not find its equal among European breeds... The high quality of this breed is valuable for the improvement of our dogs in a steppe environment and their unsurpassable beauty and elegance is no less important for using it for the improvement of our steppe Sighthounds.”

According to Ata Aeberdyev, the Turkmen use Tazis in a team with falcons and hawks, just as they did it in olden times. The animals get accustomed to each other and cooperate perfectly during the hunt. During hunting, most often the Sighthound finds, flushes the hidden animal and chases it for some time in the conditions of the Turkmen desert; a tolai hare or a fox quickly disappear behind the ridges of the dunes (barkahns). At this point, the initiative is taken by the bird. The falcon chases the game by flying after it and the Tazis watch the falcon for the right direction. If the falcon takes the hare first, the hare can injure and even kill it with its strong hind legs. When the dogs catch up they pick up the game and neither the falcon nor the dogs ever hurt each other. It happens that if the falcon takes off and dies and the Sighthounds remain without their feathered partner, they feel disoriented in the desert and do not know where to run. The Turkmen have an expression “like a blind Tazi”, speaking of a disoriented human. This comparison is related to a Tazi left without a hunting mate, the falcon.



Photo by A. Aeberdyev, from “Okhota I Rybalka” (In Russian), No. 11, 2009



The government of independent Turkmenistan designated their Tazi, along with the Akhal Teke horse, as a national treasure and their export out of the country is forbidden. Turkmen enthusiasts have reclaimed their national traditions and their unique Sighthound. They have a Falconry Club with special section for Tazis.

Let us wish them good luck in this noble initiative!

Traditions of the local people of Southern Kazakhstan in using Eastern Sighthounds

Vladimir Shakula
Kazakhstan

Introduction. Kazakhstan is a huge territory of 2,700,000 sq.km, stretching from the Caspian Sea in the West to the Altai Mountains in the East. Kazakhs call this country the “Great Steppe”. Bordered by the Tian-Shan Mountains in the South and Russian possessions in the north, this vast land has remained a stage in the life of many nomadic tribes. According to archeological and written historical sources, ancestors of today’s Kazakhs lived and died, traded, fought wars, built and destroyed cities.

Here, people's traditions and customs were forged and persisted until the present time. Who were those people? Which ethnic group was predominant?

In southern Kazakhstan, the local tribes were Karluks and Saks and invaders or traders from other lands, such as Scythians, Huns, Chinese, Mongols, Arabs, Greeks and other nationalities. Unfortunately, we do not have enough information about the way of life of the ancient nomads. The available historical data permit us to make not one, but several, sometimes controversial conclusions. Sometimes, the scientific approach to areas of history of countries is being replaced by nationalistic political trends and ambitions. The goal of my article is a strictly cynological analysis to substantiate my opinion on the place and role of the Eastern Sighthound in the life of the Kazakh people. The best proof of my objectivity is my neutral position, because I am not an ethnic Kazakh and am not biased by such things as patriotism, love of the country, national independence, etc. My own observations on the life of the local people and dogs in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, which I visited for the first time in 1973 and in which I am settled permanently since 1983, are most important.

General situation. In several of the new countries of Asia that emerged during the post Soviet period in the 1990s - Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan - two aboriginal breeds, the Tazi and the Taigan, have historically occurred and still live there now. They both are well known and belong to the group of Sighthounds with pendulous ears. There are detailed descriptions of Eastern Sighthounds in publications of the 19th century, for example, in "Hunting Dogs - Sighthounds and Scenthounds" (1899) and in "Hunting Calendar" (1892) by L. P. Sabaneev. There are descriptions of their appearance, origins and hunting characteristics. Here, my major topic of interest is the Kazakh Tazi. Despite the wide distribution range and recognition of Eastern Sighthounds, their population has declined and in the middle of the 1990s they became threatened with extinction. In June, 2008, for two months, I worked as a zoologist in hunting and forest management areas in Tajikistan. During this time, I surveyed more than a half of the territory of Tajikistan and talked with many hunters. Unfortunately, I did not see any Eastern Sighthounds and never heard of them. Possibly, a small number of them remain in the northern part of Tajikistan, next to Kyrgyzstan, which I did not survey. In Uzbekistan, the condition of Eastern Sighthounds was also pitiful. They were mainly in Tashkent, mainly poor show quality Tazy and Taigans. I have little data from Turkmenistan and, therefore, I will not describe them, but will focus on the hounds of southern Kazakhstan and adjacent territories of Uzbekistan.

In early 2000s, because of the efforts some enthusiasts, the situation of Eastern Sighthounds has improved, their population has increased, and breed standards have been worked out; a part of the population has gone to Russia and some specimens have been exported to USA, Germany, Norway and other countries. Educational information in support of the preservation of the national breeds, dog shows, open field coursing trials and even the first international conference dedicated to the preservation of aboriginal dogs have been conducted. Nevertheless, the preservation of aboriginal breeds is in jeopardy. The reason is the subdivision of the dogs into purebred dogs in big cities and local dogs of rural parts of the country far away from industrial centers. The latter ones do not participate in dog shows, are not registered, their numbers and condition remain unknown, but they are hunted.



Taigan. Photo by the author

The latter ones do not participate in dog shows, are not registered, their numbers and condition remain unknown, but they are hunted.

According to my observations, many breeders deliberately add the blood of aboriginal Eastern Sighthounds to their pedigree strains. Despite all propaganda in the local media, the question remains whether the Eastern Sighthound is really part of the cultural heritage of the Kazakh people? The answer to this is not simple. Unfortunately it is tied up with changes in the political and social life of the young Kazakhstan Republic. Let us go back into history and consider what the Eastern Sighthound is, where it came from and what kind of relationships existed between dogs and people in the past and still exist in the present?

Modern publications are euphoric with the newly obtained freedom from the imperial diktat of Russia. They state that the Tazy appeared in the possession of Sak tribes about 2-2 ½ thousand years ago, who then inhabited Kazakhstan. Possibly, the first Tazy arrived with caravans via the ancient Silk Road. Precisely, the country of origin of the Tazy remains unknown (P. Novikov, in “The Tazy- A Centuries Long Road” (in Russian, 2003). Other writers, as well as laymen speak of the Arabian roots of the Tazy. Some writers admit that the Tazy was brought by warriors of Chinghiz Khan. In general, all agree that the Tazy is an ancient breed, it was used for hunting by the ancestors of the Kazakh people and the dogs were valued very much. I want to emphasize exactly how people valued their dogs, according to modern writers. Some of them mention that a Tazy dog was traded for 40 horses, a herd of camels and even a Khan’s daughter, etc. This seems to me a beautiful myth successfully used by commercial dog breeders. Possibly, this did happen, when some Khan, at the spur of the moment out of vanity purchased a good dog for a herd of camels, but this could happen only rarely and taking it as a norm would be a mistake. Evidence of this is in the attitude of the Kazakhs to animals in general and to dogs in particular. Even today, with improvements in living and cultural comforts, the Kazakh’s attitude to animals is purely pragmatic. Animals are for feeding people. This is true, speaking of sheep, cows, horses and camels. While a European or Arab can be fascinated with the beauty of a noble looking horse or a racing camel, a Kazakh would not give it a thought. The Kazakh would touch the neck and sides of a horse. He would say: “This is a very good horse; it will yield three-four fingers of thick fat...” To a Kazakh, a horse is a potential horse sausage “kazy”, which he easily imagines as a favorite meal on his dastarkhan. He will butcher a good horse, bull or sheep for food first, never thinking about selecting for the improvement of the herd. He thinks only about today’s meal. This is particularly indicative with horses. In the past, the horse was extremely important in the life of the people, especially in the life of nomads! Some people tried to maintain a good horse breed. The Mongols have the most undemanding and durable Mongolian horse, the Turkmens have their own magnificent, tame and obedient Akhal Teke horse, the Arabs have unsurpassable Arabians, the British have their fast thoroughbreds, and the Russians have their Orlov trotter and Don horse and so on with the horses of the Germans, Americans, Spaniards, French, etc. What kind of a horse does the Kazakh have? The Kazakh is an ancient nomad, a child of steppe. He has the lowest quality of horse. This is the Kazakh horse called jabe. Was it bred selectively? No, except maybe on the Soviet era collective farms. In the steppes Kazakh horses were a mix of Mongolian horse and all kinds of horses of the Uzbeks, Uigurs, Chinese, Altai and other peoples that were lost and gone feral. Jabe horse was like mongrel dog. They lived by themselves, grazing in hot summer, suffering in winter, trying to obtain food by digging with their hooves in the snow and sometimes dying in whole herds at times of jut (starvation in times of severe drought, or when the snow turns hard after refreezing in winter). Sometimes, Kazakhs stole horses from each other, and butchered them for meat. However, they never built corrals, horse barns, never harvested and stored hay or other feeds for them and never bred them selectively. Jabe is a product of natural selection.

How about dogs? The Kazakhs treated their horses this way, what can be expected, speaking of dogs? The Dog occupies the lowest place in the hierarchy of Kazakh life, because it cannot be eaten. According to the Koran, this is an unclean animal. Of course, the Koran contains an exception concerning Sighthounds. There are many Kazakhs, who say: “My grandfather kept Tazys inside the the yurta”. The yurta is a traditional dome-shaped house made out of wooden poles and skins. The Tazy and the tamed raptor are the only clean animals. There is a rule, so dog breeders say, according to which one part of the yurta was for women, another one for men and guests, one as a kitchen, as a bedroom, etc., and a space next to the entrance was an honorable place for the Tazy. They even show old photographs with Tazys

inside the yurt. However, there are very few of those, who remember the time, when still in 19th century people kept goats, lambs and calves inside the house to protect them from cold weather, if they were born in the cold of early spring. This was very common among different peoples, living in cold northern climates. Even today, a calf or a lamb born early in spring is taken inside by people living in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and northern Russia. Therefore why not let a hunting dog inside along with the livestock? There is nothing remarkable about this. I admit that there are some devoted hunters among the Kazakhs, who took good care of their dogs, but they are exceptions rather than the rule. Look at the total number of dogs of different breeds, which now live inside apartments of cities in Kazakhstan. You will discover that the number of dogs is in proportion to the ethnic composition of the population of city dwellers. The higher the percentage of Kazakhs is, the fewer the dogs living inside. In Almaty there are many dogs, because they are kept by people of European origin, about 30%. There is a different picture in Chimkent. In the south of Kazakhstan, ethnic Kazakhs are numerically predominant and there are very few dogs there. A city with a population of half a million does not have any dog clubs! Who would even think of a dog in yurt? This is just another sales pitch distributed in Almaty. In Chimkent, nobody has heard of this.

Where can we find the truly aboriginal Tazy? They occur mainly in the rural parts of the country. There are relatively many Tazys in the mountain foothills of the upper Syr-Darya River region of the Karatau Mountains, in Tylkubass District, next to the Aksu-Jabagly Nature Reserve, Jambul Province. Tazys live outside in the yard, usually untethered, sometimes without a doghouse; some dogs sleep next to livestock, on a pile of hay, or manure. By the way, decomposing manure provides extra heating for the dog and a lucky dog can sleep close to sheep in the shed. Tazys are fed on tanle scraps, sometimes coarse flour mixed with water or with skimmed milk. During the hunting season, the Tazy is fed with meat, if they hunt foxes. There are many Tazys, which eagerly eat the meat of fox or wolf. Tazys often obtain their own food by scavenging dead animals and refuse near the village. In winter, some dogs starve and even die. During my 20 years in Southern Kazakhstan I cannot recall even one case when a Tazy was traded for a colt, leave alone a camel. However, in Almaty breeders are asking \$1000 for one puppy, although their dogs are not out of hunting stock, with a few exceptions. In the cities, Tazys are well treated. Even in rural areas, some Tazy owners keep their dogs well; usually, those are enthusiastic hunters, who are exceptions among Kazakhs. They value not so much the dog, but rather its ability to catch foxes. As soon as the dog slows down, it is thrown out. Some take care of the Tazy only during the hunting season, after which it is on its own. Mating is usually free in most cases. Stealing dogs is common. My dogs were stolen several times. Here is one case with a tragic end. One spring, during a game with a male goat, I saw a black Eastern Sighthound bitch. She was very skinny, without hair on the ears and with a few other mangy spots on the body. She was emaciated, but I liked the dog. She had the typical head of the breed, good teeth and very deep chest. Moreover, I wanted to feed the poor animal. I found the owner and bought the unfortunate animal. After six months of good feeding and care, she changed. Thick hair grew on her ears and shiny hair covered the body. She turned out to be a Kyrgyz Sighthound, a Taigan. She turned out to be a joyful, bold and eager hunting dog. In the fall fox hunting season she was stolen right from my yard. I was looking for her and promised a reward, but all was in vain. Only in late winter, in February, I got a horrible message, the dog was found dead. Her new "owners" were hunting with her during the entire season. When hunting ended, the "masters" abandoned her and she died of starvation and cold on a pile of manure (she tried to get warm). This kind of action is common among Kazakhs.

Breeding is another problem. There are some hunters, who try to breed their bitches with a purebred dog of the same breed. However, there are Eastern Sighthound owners, who mate them with livestock guarding dogs. They say that these mixes are better, because they are more aggressive. This is correct in part, but mixes are lacking many important qualities of the Sighthound, such as desire to chase and speed. In general, the population of Eastern Sighthounds degenerates. However, despite all the unattractive treatment of dogs, there are many Eastern Sighthounds true to the aboriginal type, especially in Southern Kazakhstan.

Conclusions. Facts and general observations about the life of the Tazy and the native people of Kazakhstan brought me to the conclusion that the Eastern Sighthound with pendulous ears, the Tazy, could not be developed by local people. Maintaining the breed requires knowledge and love of animals and this requires a certain minimum of cultural tradition, which the Kazakhs did not have in the past and do not have in the present. We have no choice but accept that the breed had been imported from elsewhere. Until recently, I accepted the opinion of L. P. Sabaneev that the ancestors of the Tazy were Arabian Salukis. First Sighthounds appeared here over 600 years ago, during the spread of Islam in Central Asia. However, in the summer of 2008, I met Alikhon Latify, an amateur dog breeder, who introduced me to a very interesting fact. In Penjikent, his hometown in Tajikistan, he discovered an ancient fresco, depicting two Sighthounds. Images of these two dogs resemble modern Eastern Sighthounds with pendulous ears and a ring at the end of the tail. The fresco was dated to 2,500 years ago, a time when the Arabs had not yet reached Central Asia. Does this fresco tell us something about a more ancient origin of the Tazy? What kind of dog served as a model for the artist of the remote past?

Pure Bred Shepherd Dog

Isik Guvener

Turkey

As man becomes deeply processed in his new industrial consumptive life, the word “shepherd” becomes more of a verbal burden. When people talk about purebred dogs they mean dogs with pedigrees. When I talk about them, I mean their functional past in relation to their relatives and their current conditions; not historical, numerical and descriptive database.

Imagine we have a pedigree keeping system based on pure function. The criteria we set for the dogs to meet would set the standards, but the standards would stay fluid forever, because the criteria are our performance-related expectations of the dogs.

Dogs that can run 2 miles non-stop, dogs that can reach 30mph; can charge an intruder without any hesitation; can bond with sheep, turkey, or men and feel responsible for their safety from unknown sources; can stand extreme temperatures without needing a soft dogbed, parasite infestation, fatigue and hunger and that are adaptive and low maintenance. Dogs that can mount bitches without help; bitches that can give birth without human interference; bitches that are free to refuse male dogs; puppies that do not need to be bottle fed or warmed up with artificial heat sources; all these dogs that can think independently and make decisions on their own by assessing the situation they are in. These are some of the conditions and definitive standards for a dog to be a “pure bred shepherd dog”.

Thence, a shepherd dog is not a name or an aristocratic pedigree, but a dog that can do mobile guarding of basical livestock under versatile conditions against various threats to the well being of the livestock.

A shepherd dog is a product of selection at every single generation.

Although it can be a pet, and preferably it should not be, it needs to continue performing to prove its capacity. Capacity is not an entity to be sold or transferred and recorded, but it is an article to be actualized in order to be authorized to pass its qualities to the next generations. Even the best stock of any



Caucasian Mountain Dog from Turkey

breed produces a certain percentage of inferior animals. Purebred inferior dogs have a devastating effect on a given breed by being the weakest links of the population. A serious Turkish breeder practices culling, if necessary, for the long-term quality his dogs. The “responsible” breeder is a different kind of breeder in Turkey than he is in the western world. Ideally one of two puppies from each breeding is worth keeping. Turkish shepherds never consider neutering since it has a crippling effect on the guarding instincts. A Turkish shepherd does also not have to cull just because he is barbaric or he does not like the external qualities of the puppies. He culls because either he does not need extra puppies and he needs no inflation of dogs or he prefers to keep the ones that are promising to him. If needed they are all kept and given equal chance to test their skills. This is the best way of selecting the best dogs.

The fundamental need for a shepherd dog and the dog’s way of meeting this need are the keys to reach the roots of the shepherd dog. The ability to fulfill certain tasks is not necessarily inheritable. The quality of an inherited trait must be controlled and verified in order to be certain that it is there without ever skipping this important step. A wine is tasted for its quality and packed and distributed later. It is the same with cheese. Shepherd dog breeding is not a factory cheese making process. It must be artisan under every circumstance. Otherwise, breeders will end up with mediocre results which are not worth labeling “A Shepherd”.

Anatolians are basically regionally crossbred dogs of various shepherd dogs of Anatolia. Crossbreeding different landrace dogs made the dogs hardy and functional. The absolutely pure Anatolian does not exist structure wise, but exists function wise. The original way these shepherd dogs were bred gives us clues about how the breed was developed.

What is shepherd about a dog that needs protection from rain or wolves or ticks or hunger? What kind of distorted mind would call a dog “shepherd dog” when the dog cannot face a challenge, but instead turns its back? How do we know it would face the challenge? A true shepherd cannot afford guesses and forecasting.

A registration paper is a document that qualifies a dog for marketing and comes with an approved historical identification by a parent club. The parent club decides when to close the pedigree book. If closed, only the descendents of the selected dogs can be bred and registered. The members of this gene pool are called the true representative of the breed as opposed to forever open breeding practices in the Anatolians’ motherland Anatolia. Inbreeding surely takes place in Anatolia, but without regulations and registries. As happened in the past, even today dogs breed truly in agreement with the traditions.

Breeding shepherd dogs in the traditional sense requires a culture that has bred the shepherd dog. Contemporary man needs to align himself to the appropriate culture, by revising and re-aligning his values to the original breeding practices in relation to the shepherd dog. Archaic shepherd dogs are the result of a way of life that comes with a Weltanschauung. This worldview would only kindly smile at pedigrees. This culture is engaged in randomness of combinations and probabilities. A true shepherd dog keeping requires a certain set of values, beliefs, and peaceful and pastoral interaction with nature. For shepherding, we must fit the test; a shepherd is as a shepherding does.

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