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*of the International Society for
Preservation of Primitive
Aboriginal Dogs*

From the Publisher...

Dear members of PADS and readers of our Journal,

In this issue of the Journal of PADS International we start publishing a series of articles presented at the Second International Conference of PADS, which took place from 7th to 9th of September, 2014 in China. The first article of this series is by Andrey Poyarkov. In subsequent issues, we will give you further details, including the program of the Conference and its resolution.

In this issue, we also draw to your attention an article by Alberto Bertelli about Italian sighthounds and primitive dogs of the Mediterranean region. Both types of dogs derive from the oldest breeds of this ancient cultural center of the world. Their history is closely intertwined with the history of migrations and trade relations of peoples of different cultures in the region.

Sincerely yours, *Vladimír Beregovoy*

Secretary of PADS, International

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The Second International PADS Conference

A. D. Poyarkov

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I will start by recalling that the first scientific and practical conference “Aboriginal Breeds as Elements of Biodiversity and Cultural Heritage of Humankind” was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from 10 to 15 September, 2007. It was made possible by an initiative of associations and businesses in Kazakhstan: the Institute of Ecological Investigations, the Club of Hunting Dog Breeding, the Ecological Association of Businesses of Kazakhstan “Tabigat” and the Primitive & Aboriginal Dogs Association International (PADS). Thirty two specialists from 13 countries participated in the work of the conference and many interested guests from Kazakhstan also attended. Specialists and enthusiasts interested in aboriginal dogs from Australia, Great Britain, Germany, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Portugal, Russia, USA, Tajikistan, Turkey, Sweden and South Africa gathered in Almaty to participate in the work of this conference.

After this First International Conference in Almaty in 2007, some of the most active members of PADS, Vladimir Beregovoy, Gautam Das and others tried to find another opportunity to hold the second international conference, first in Europe or in America. However, in western countries, because of economic recession, no sponsors were found. In 2013, a possibility seemed to emerge in South Africa, but it failed to become a reality. Suddenly, Mr. ‘Luke’ (Mr. Luik Xu-Lei) kindly responded to an inquiry from Colonel Guatam Das to the effect that Mr. Zhang Hui-zhong), Chairman and Managing Director, Zhongchen Real Estate Developing Co. Ltd., Changzhi, Shanxi Province, Peoples Republic of China was ready to pay expenses for the organization and accommodations for a PADS international conference. Mr. Zhang is owner of the largest kennel of aboriginal Tibetan Mastiffs in China. As the entire conference was conducted in the hall of the kennel, I will write first about this kennel and the very friendly and hospitable atmosphere created by our generous hosts.

The Tibetan Mastiff kennel is located in the foothills of the mountains in the vicinity of Changzhi. Its area is about 10 hectares, most of this area is occupied by dog pens and spacious (not less than one hectare each) exercise plots. The

majority of the dogs live in individual enclosures, each of at least 20 square meters under cover and at least 50 square meters in the open. The exercise plots are arranged in even rows. The total number of dogs of both sexes is about 100. The dogs are taken into large exercise areas, 4-6 dogs at a time. Personnel, employed in the kennel, know, which combinations of dogs can be taken together to avoid fights. Groups of dogs, released for exercise, are taken to alternating plots to diversify their surroundings for better psychological comfort. One of the exercise plots contains many large rocks to imitate mountain terrain.

All dogs in the kennel were obtained from mountain livestock owners or are their descendants. Most of the dogs in the kennel originated from southwestern Gansu Province on the border with Tibet. A major objective of the work of Mr. Zhang's kennel is to return puppies born in the kennel back to their home pastures to maintain the quality of the population of Tibetan Mastiffs. The orderliness, cleanliness and exceptionally good organization of the entire work of the kennel is striking. In the kennels and exercise plots it is virtually impossible to find dogs' excrement and there is no bad odor. After feeding, the dogs are taken to exercise plots, where they are left to their own devices. Some dogs are exercised on

the leash. Everything proceeds without noise and stress, like a well-adjusted machine. The dogs are fed on the meat of Yaks brought from Tibet and cooked grain: millet, barley, rice and other cereal grains. Every dog is also given one egg a day. One day a week the dogs fast are not fed at all, which perfectly fits the physiology of *Canidae*. In brief, the kennel makes a very pleasant impression.



Tibetan Mastiff in the kennel of Mr. Zhang

In Changzhi, I had my first opportunity to become familiar with true aboriginal Tibetan Mastiffs. These dogs leave a strong and particular impression. These heavy and short legged (at first glance) dogs are capable of running fast and jumping out of a fenced enclosure 2 meters high, with the

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top 60-70 cm of the fence tilted inward. Mr. Zhang showed us one male, which had escaped four times out of such an enclosure. Other dogs also manage to escape occasionally.

Prior to the conference, besides the visit to the kennel, all guests were taken on an excursion to a huge sculpture of a god, the father of crops and an active temple. Both constructions are in mountains covered with *Cryptomeria* trees, among which we saw blue magpies (*Cyanopica cyanus*), which also occur in the Russian Far East. Thus, our first day prior to the conference turned out to be very interesting and pleasant, but this was only a prelude.

The conference lasted for 3 days, from 7 to 9 of September and, as I already mentioned, it took place in a hall of the kennel of Mr. Zhang. The hall was very convenient and equipped with everything necessary for holding such events. Perhaps, it was too large for the relatively small number of participants.

Representatives from China, Kazakhstan, Russia, USA, Taiwan and Turkey took part in the conference. During the preparatory period before the conference, over 22 participants had signed up with presentations. Then, some of them dropped out for a variety of reasons (L. Latifi, Ilya Zakharov-Gezekhus, A. K. Mihalskaya, Lynette Watson, Edith Gallant, Dr. Roeder,

Sir Terence Clark and a few others); and each of them had informed the hosts about their inability to participate in advance. However, there some participants, who were expected to make presentations, simply did not arrive at the conference and never informed the hosts about their decision not to come. This very sad omission was very frustrating for me, not because these people did not participate, but rather because it was extremely impolite to the hosts and organizers of the conference. I suggest putting together a PADS ‘black list’ of their names as unreliable participants and punishing them by denying them sponsors’ help next time at PADS Third Conference. Now, I will return to the conference in Changzhi.



Participants of The Second International Conference PADS

Mr. Zhang opened the conference, welcoming the participants and wishing them successful work. Then, speeches by Gautam Das and Rafael Balgin followed, thanking the organizers of the conference.



Rafael Balgin is handling a valuable present to Mr. Zhang

Guatam Das made the first presentation. It was about the sighthounds of India. To me, personally, his presentation was extremely interesting and exciting. His main ideas included the fact that India historically had several important trading ties with neighboring countries. The Silk Road connected the northern regions of India with Central Asian countries, Afghanistan and Iran; whereas the southern part of

the peninsula maintained intensive trade relationships with the Arabs by sea. These trading relationships determined the relationship between the dogs of southern India and Arabian dogs; whereas in the northern regions the hunting sighthounds of India were formed under the strong influence of Central Asian and Irano-Afghan breeds. Gautam Das illustrated his report with photographs of such dogs as Carwani (erroneously named in the West as Caravan Hounds), Mudhol and Pashmi. According to him, they are all nothing more than insignificantly differing forms of a single Indian breed closely related to the Saluki and Sloughi.

It was precisely this point that determined the most interesting and important line of the following discussions. Actually, this line of discussion had been initiated, but not completed, at the first PADS conference. Briefly, the problem can be summarized as follows: where are the borders between breeds in the context of aboriginal and primitive dogs? The same question was discussed at the first PADS conference and the answer was not found. According to a broader view of a breed (in this case, according to Gautam Das), the functionality of working dogs and the sufficiently inclusive similarity of their appearance is most important. With such a broad understanding of an aboriginal breed, we can distinguish

several different types within one breed. The opposite point of view maintains that the borders between breeds should be defined more rigidly and the appearance of the dogs, their exterior, is of principal importance in defining a breed. Tatyana Desiatova expressed this point of view. During the discussion, after the presentation of Dr. Gertrude Hinsch (USA), most participants agreed that genetic investigations can bring a solution. Gautam Das was also asked what kinds of sighthounds of India belonged to the northern branch of sighthounds? G. Das answered that the lands of the northern parts of India are heavily developed, which affected the state of the hunting dogs very negatively, because they require uncultivated not arable lands. Besides, according to G. Das, it is precisely in Northern India that we can witness the strongest influence of the Greyhound on aboriginal sighthounds. This comment immediately reminded me of the situation with Hortaya hounds in southern Russia, where crossbreeding with Greyhound is most pronounced. I have to add that this crossbreeding, in the long run, does not lead to anything good, but only compromises the breeding stock of the Hortaya.

After the presentation by G. Das, there was a discussion of traditional foods and their role in preserving aboriginal dogs. Possibly, this kind of discussion would never have started, if

the conference had been held in a different place, but in this kennel, where Tibetan Mastiffs are fed with yak meat brought from Tibet, it could not be ignored.

The following presentation about work of editorial board of PADS was made by Tatyana Desiatova. It prompted a long discussion with numerous questions. This was because it touched the most important part of the organization of PADS. Most participants agreed that the new website designed by Ms. Rajashree Khalap (<http://padsociety.org>) should become a major platform for consolidating information for the entire society. The decision was made that the website would post a Russian version of all materials in addition to the major English version and materials published in other languages, such as Chinese or Spanish, would also be posted there.

The third presentation by Andrew Poyarkov was dedicated to contemporary theories on the origin of the domesticated dog and the problems of early domestication. He emphasized that according to all recent genetic studies only the wolf, *Canis lupus*, is considered to be the ancestor of the domesticated dog, although, the dog can interbreed with the American red wolf, coyote and Ethiopian wolf, as well as with the jackal (*Canis aureus*). Maps of the distribution of wolf

races were shown and the theory of the origin of the wolf in Southeastern Asia was discussed. The interspecific variation of the wolf and the possibility of the involvement of now extinct ancestors in the origin of the domesticated dog were also discussed.

At this point, the discussions of the first day came to an end and a magnificent dinner awaited participants in the restaurant of the kennel of Mr. Zhan. We all sat at a huge round table and enjoyed the Chinese cuisine, with more than 20 different dishes. After dinner, guests were taken to our luxurious hotel, where we continued informal discussions.

The next working day began with a presentation by Isik Guvener about the inappropriate use of Turkish livestock protection dogs (Kangal and Alabai) in the USA and Europe. I should say that such a presentation could be made by only a few people in the entire world, and possibly only by Isik Guvener, because he has such a unique experience, including knowledge about the life of livestock owners and their dogs in his home country of Turkey as well as experience of life in the USA, UK and other European countries. In his report, he described some very interesting aspects of the life and work of big livestock protecting dogs in the process of developing from puppy to maturity in adulthood. For me, the process of

socializing dogs at different stages of life and particularly the role of children in this process was most interesting. This report raised several very interesting biological and socio-cultural questions. It was followed by a discussion about using livestock protection dogs in different regions of the world, such as Anatolia, Central Asia, Tibet and the Himalayas.

The next presentation was given by Rafael Balgin about the Kazakh Tazy. He considered the traditional role of the Kazakh Tazy and also described the contemporary situation of this unique breed in Kazakhstan and present breeding and working practices. Thus, the tradition of giving away puppies versus selling them was discussed. At present, both ways of disposing of puppies are used in Kazakhstan. The coat colors of the Tazy and the differences between the Kazakh and Turkmen Tazy were considered during the discussion.

The second part of working day of the conference (after some exceptionally tasty and diverse dishes at lunch) began with a spectacular presentation by Peng Lyang-Wei on the aboriginal mountain dogs of Taiwan. The presentation demonstrated the work of a large team of specialists and enthusiasts of this amazing breed. Interesting long video clips showed the very impressive athletic and psychological capabilities of these dogs. Indeed, the ability to jump, and the

agility, locomotion skills and coordination of the dogs of Taiwan were absolutely stunning and defying imagination. Mr. Peng Lyang-Wei clearly described the different types of dogs, living among different aboriginal tribes of Taiwan and their capabilities as hunting and guarding dogs. It appears that these excellent dogs can be used in such capacities as search-and-rescue dogs, working dogs, and sporting dogs and it seems their abilities surpass most of the cultured breeds commonly used for these purposes. It is sad that at the present time the remaining number of these amazing animals is very small.

The second working day of the conference was concluded with the second presentation by Tatyana Desiatova about the East Siberian Laika. Tatyana started her talk by emphasizing several parallel features of the East Siberian Laika and the Taiwan Mountain Dog. Both breeds are typical representatives of aboriginal dogs, with immense physical and physiological endurance, good health and excellent working qualities and both have one reproductive cycle a year. Besides the general characteristics of this wonderful dog, T. Desiatova also focused on the problems of its preservation. The author thinks that using dogs of unknown origin brought from different regions of East Siberia is a major threat to the breed, particularly because Laikas in those regions are already mixed

genetically with imported dogs of various breeds. A tendency to distinguishing breeds out of East Siberian Laika by “national trait”, such as Yakutian Laika or Evenkian Laika is another danger. Distinguishing of Yakutian Laika is particularly detrimental, because a considerable part of East Siberian Laika is concentrated in Yakutia. This artificial subdivision of, in fact, identical dogs on an administrative geographical basis will result in the drastic reduction of gene pools of separated populations and will certainly harm the viability of the breed.

The third working day of the conference opened with a presentation by Dr. Gertrude Hinsch about the aboriginal dogs of Southeastern Asia with special reference to the dogs of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. It had been shown that throughout these vast territories, from the Indian subcontinent to Australia’s shores and the islands of Indonesia, remarkably similar Dingo-like dogs occur. These dogs possess an amazingly constant phenotype, live in association with people, but can hardly be considered as domesticated animals. Actually, they breed independently of human assistance and the dogs themselves are very independent of humans. G. Hinsch raised questions about the possible role of these animals as ancestors of other aboriginal dogs of Southeast Asia and about the origin of these obviously very ancient dogs. In the followed

discussion, A. Poyarkov commented that in many cities, including Moscow, it is possible to find dogs which lead a way of life independent of humans. Among such dog packs, it is possible to observe the incipient stages of stabilization of appearance and the emergence of a typical appearance among offspring.

Then, a presentation by Mr. Lui Xu-lei ('Luke') about Chinese aboriginal Mastiffs of Tibet and adjacent provinces of China followed. He showed very convincingly the existence of different types of Tibetan Mastiffs and their characteristic regions of distribution. This excellent presentation showed that several of the types are essentially transitional forms from the Tibetan Mastiff to other large livestock protecting dogs, for example the Central Asian Ovcharka or the Mongolian Ovcharka. Special attention was paid to the differences between aboriginal Tibetan Mastiffs and the so-called commercial Tibetan Mastiffs recognized by the FCI. Indeed, the differences between these two lines are striking and the hypertrophic ugliness of commercial mastiffs is quite depressing.

Lui Xu-lei presented a second very interesting report about other aboriginal dogs of China. It was one of the most interesting accounts, full of fascinating pictures and

descriptions of remarkable aboriginal dogs in China. Unfortunately, this report was compressed into a limited period of time and it included a great many breeds (at least 20). I will not be able even to list them all, but will mention only the different forms of Xigou (Chinese sighthounds), Mahugou (Chinese scenthounds) and Tibetan Shatkhi. This report aroused interest in the great diversity and richness of aboriginal dogs in China and also raised several questions and warnings, because many of these interesting animals are virtually on the verge of extinction. Lui Xu-lei said: "People still need dogs very much. Aboriginal dogs are exactly real dogs necessary in our world".

The next presentation was by Sergey Desiatov with a report from Marina Kuzina about breeds registered with the Russian Association of Hunting Dogs (Rosokhotrybolovsoyuz - RORS). He spoke about the groups of hunting dogs recognized by this Association, the principles of pedigree work and the complex evaluation of the quality of breeding dogs. This organization has developed a unique method of evaluating the quality of dogs selected for breeding based on the complex of the traits of their appearance and working qualities. All dogs, except Laikas and Sighthounds brought from regions of their origin, have at least 4- generation pedigrees, evaluated by their

appearance at dog shows conducted by local branch organizations of RORS. The basic differences between the work of the Association (Rosokhotrybolovsoyuz) and the branch associations of the FCI were discussed, including such topics as the number of registered dogs and the different criteria of their evaluation.

Gautam Das gave the last talk at the second PADS Conference. His second presentation was dedicated to the aboriginal dogs of India, or Indogs. He emphasized the similarity of the animals he described to the Dingo-like dogs discussed by Gertrude Hinsch and traced their several parallel features. He considered the early migrations of humans and the distribution of dogs of this type over large territories in Southeast Asia. He showed several interesting pictures, illustrating the life of pariah dogs of the Indian subcontinent.

In closing the conference, all participants represented by Gautam Das expressed their deep gratitude to Mr. Zhang Hui-zhong and to Mr. Lui Xu-lei for the excellent organization of the Second International Conference of PADS and the creation of an exceptionally friendly working environment. We left the beautiful kennel of aboriginal Tibetan Mastiffs and Shanxi Province, Peoples Republic of China, with very pleasant impressions and memories.

Sighthounds and Primitive Dogs in Italy and the Mediterranean Basin

Alberto Bertelli

Italy

Abstract

Genetics studies have confirmed that the so-called Primitive Dogs and the Sighthounds are the first breeds - or the first groups, genotypically and phenotypically homogeneous, that helped man in the period before 5000 B. C., during the passage of mankind from the state of hunting/gathering to that of agriculture/livestock breeding. The geographical area, in which over the millennia the symbiosis was developed between man and these two groups of dog breeds, stretched between the Fertile Crescent and the Iberian peninsula, comprising part of Eurasia and North Africa.

In this article some Mediterranean breeds are presented, the most representative ones of the Italian territory, direct descendants of the first Mediterranean Primitive Dogs and first Sighthounds.

The most recent genetic studies (Lynch, D. & J. Madeoy 2004, see web references) have confirmed that the properly called "Sighthounds" and the group generically named

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"Primitive Dogs" (e.g. "Pariah-dog type") corresponding to sections 6 and 7 of the 5th FCI group, are the most ancient breeds: the first real dogs different from wolves. Deborah Lynch (Canine Studies Institute - Aurora, Ohio) and Jenny Madeoy (Fred Hutchinson Cancer Institute - Seattle, Washington) through the comparison based on mtDNA (mitochondrial DNA: inherited by the matrilineal path and characterized by very low recombination) have identified 10 families of breeds and the relative typology of their ancestors, crossing the results, obtained from data of historical and iconographic origin, to determine the chronological/evolutional order.

This study confirms in particular that the ancestors of these Sighthounds appeared in about 5000 B.C., in the Mesopotamian area.

Starting from the area of the Fertile Crescent, Sighthounds have spread radially across the whole Eurasian region, in the retinue of human migratory waves or as objects of trade.

The Mediterranean basin, in particular, is one of the main theatres of the "story" of the Sighthounds. Before getting into the heart of the argument, it is pertinent to highlight the distinction between the properly called

Sighthounds and "primitive" dogs. It is useful to compare two images of a typical Sighthound (English Greyhound) and a typical primitive Mediterranean dog (Kritikos Ichnilatis or "Cretan Tracer"), already described widely in N° 36 of the PADS Journal by Perikles Kosmopoulos and Evangelos Geniatakis (photo 1).



Photo 1: Comparison: on the left, typical English Greyhound (from a pet magazine of '90); on the right, a young female Kritikos Ichnilatis (champion Ifigenia); by Evangelos Geniatakis courtesy

In addition to the evident morphological/structural differences, the Sighthounds and Primitive Dogs also differ in hunting technique.

The English Greyhound is considered the Sighthound "par excellence" and its formidable athletic qualities, due to its peculiar physiology, are well known; these qualities generally characterize all Sighthounds: increased muscle mass - 57% of the total mass, while, on average, other dogs have only 44%;

the biggest heart: 1.2% of body weight, while for other breeds, the proportion is 0.8%; increased blood mass: 11.4% against an average of 7.2% of other dogs; arteries more elastic to withstand the sudden increases of pressure: under strain, the heart of a greyhound can beat over 300 times a minute; also with regard to other blood values, Sighthounds differ from the average of other breeds (photo 2).

	<i>Greyhound</i>	<i>Other Breeds</i>
<i>Muscular Mass</i>	57.00%	44.00%
<i>Hearth Mass</i>	1,5%	0,8%
<i>Blood Mass</i>	11,4%	7,2%
<i>Red corpuscles</i>	7.4-9.0 (thousands/uL)	5.5-8.5 (thousands/uL)
<i>Haematocrit</i>	55-65%	37-55%
<i>Haemoglobin</i>	19.0-21.5%	12.0-18.0%

**Photo 2: Comparative table of physiological parameters
Greyhound/average other dog breeds**

The original habitat of Sighthounds consisted of vast and low grasslands, open and windy (Przezdziecki, 1984): as all predators evolved in this kind of habitat, Sighthounds have primarily developed the sense of sight and identify the prey by exploring the territory with their eyes, paying attention to every

smallest movement, instead of following the scent. The Sighthound's technique of hunting is consequent on the open and flat environment: visual exploration, identification of prey, very fast pursuit, adapting the course to sudden changes in direction by the prey itself.

The running Primitive Dogs are slower than the Sighthounds, but they compensate with an extraordinary agility that allows them very fast movements on uneven and mountainous terrain, where a Sighthound is significantly disadvantaged; also their sight, sense of hearing and sense of smell are highly developed, so they use at the same time all these three senses in the hunting activity.

The Kritikos Ichnilatis is the oldest purebred in the Mediterranean basin: because we can recognize, in general, its morphological/functional characters also in other Mediterranean primitive breeds - as we shall see later -, it is allowable to think that this race represents the main ancestor of them all.

However, not all cynologists agree: some suspect that various primitive breeds have evolved independently and that the similarities are due to a phenomenon of convergent evolution occurring in different geographic areas characterized by similar environment (insular regions, hot/dry climate,

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mountainous terrain); and in evolutionary terms, the first hypothesis would support the monophyletic origin, while the second would support the polyphyletic origin. Indeed the monophyletic hypothesis seems the most plausible: the artistic and archaeological traces lead in this direction; and the oldest depictions of dogs similar to the *Kritichos Ichnilatis* go back to the Neolithic, as evidenced by the rock paintings of the Tassili n'Ajjer plateau - Algeria, dating back to 7000 B. C. (Photo 3).

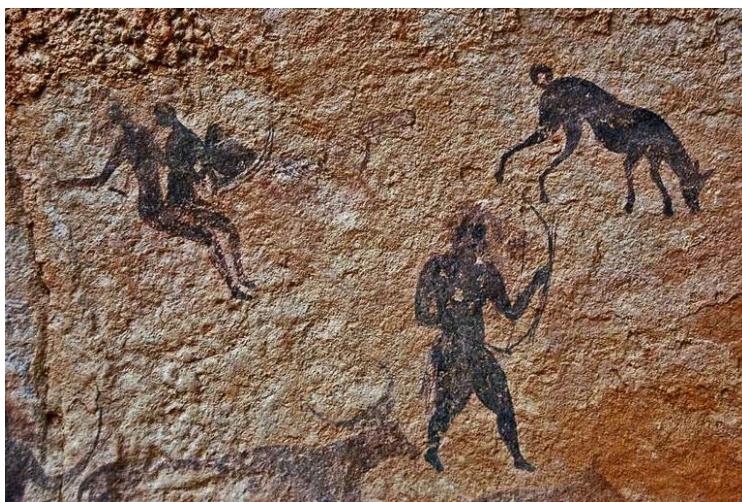


Photo 3: Rock paintings of the Tassili n'Ajjer plateau - Algeria, 7000 B. C. (<http://www.inognidove.it/viaggilevi-algeria/travel/sefarocce2.shtml>)

Moreover, in the same cave paintings appear large hunting dogs in greyhound shapes, that suggests a functional difference between already distinct hunting breeds (Photo 4).

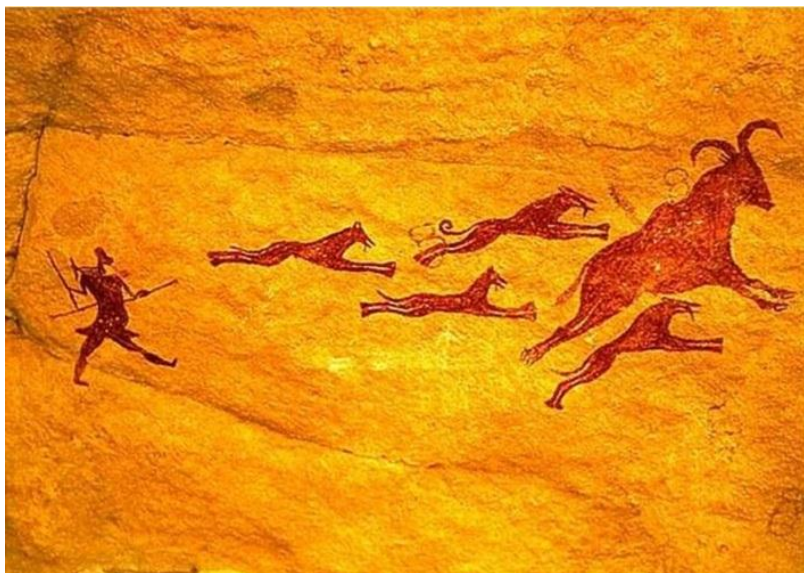


Photo 4: Rock paintings of the Tassili n'Ajjer plateau - Algeria, 7000 B. C. (<http://www.wiedzaokulturze.cba.pl/prehistoria.pdf>)

In summary, North Africa is probably the original area of Mediterranean primitive dogs, while the plains of the Fertile Crescent represent the original area of the Sighthounds. The similarity between the ancient North African Primitive Dogs and the actual Kritikos Ichnilatis - and other primitive breeds of the Mediterranean basin - is understandable: the most developed and important ancient North African civilization was

the Egyptian and the contacts between it and the Minoan world were numerous and significant from 2000 B. C. (Fantuzzi, 2007).

In the mastaba of Ptahhotep (vizier and city administrator who lived between XXV and XXIV century B.C.) are visible dogs engaged in hunting: the proportions, in relation to the prey, suggest that the size of these Egyptian dogs was very similar to that of the current Cretan Tracer (Photo 5).

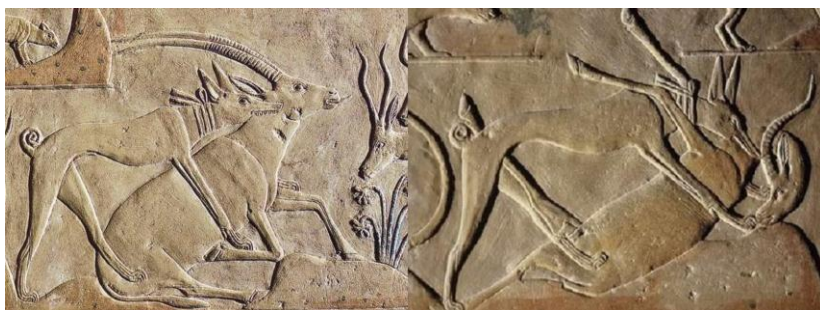


Photo 5: On the left: Tesem dog engaged in hunting on the Oryx (Oryx gazella); on the right Tesem dog engaged in hunting on Gerenuk (Litocranius walleri). Figures in bas-relief from Ptahhotep's mastaba, Saqqara, Egypt (fifth dynasty, 2686 - 2181 B. C.)

This ancient Egyptian breed was so widespread and stable to be designated with a specific name: "Tesem." The proper name of a dog, belonging to the "Tesem breed", has come down to us: Abuwtiyuw (pronounced "Aboutiou") and this is the oldest pet name that has survived until today (Reisner

1938): the evidence is represented by the discovery, in 1935, of the following inscription (Photo 6), placed in the tomb of an important unknown person from the late VI Dynasty (2345 - 2181 B.C.), in the necropolis of Giza: "The watchdog of his majesty. Abuwtiyuw is his name. His Majesty ordered that he should be buried and that he should be placed in a coffin from the royal treasury, (with) fine linen aplenty and incense. His Majesty placed a fragrant ointment and (ordered) that the tomb should be built by teams of its builders. His Majesty ordered that he should be honoured in front of the great god Anubis"



Photo 6: Original inscription, late VI Dynasty (2345 - 2181 B. C.), necropolis of Giza; detailed description of the inhumation ceremony to the Tesem dog named Abuwtiyuw.

The first term of the inscription, in the original language, is "tsm" that is "Tesem": a clear reference to the

breed to which it belonged (Photo 7).

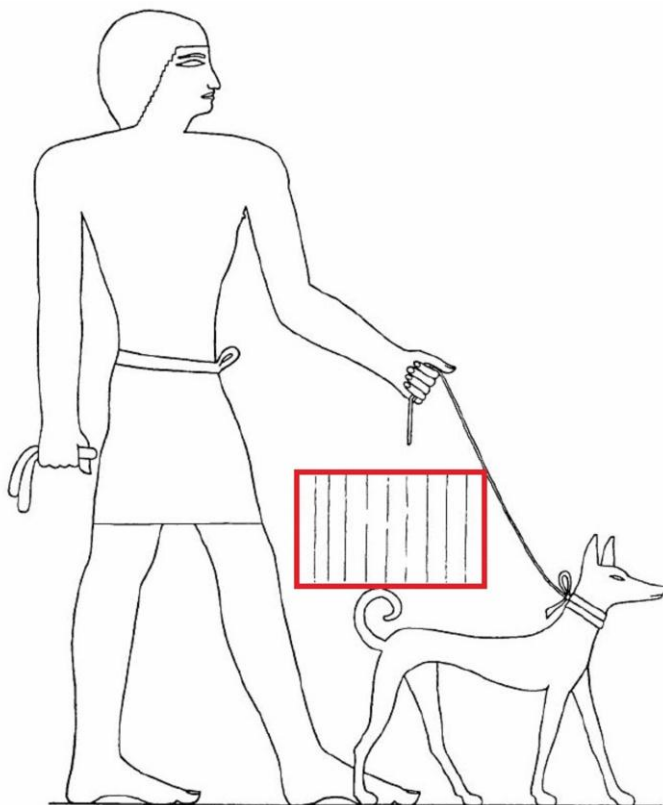


Photo 7: Suggested reconstruction of the position of the inscription dedicated to Abuwtiyuw and of relative the bas-relief. (drawing by Reisner G. A. modified by the author)

Other pictures confirm the homogeneity, the diffusion and the importance of the dogs belonging to this breed (Photo 8,9).



Photo 8: Drawing from the bas-relief from the tomb of Khafraankh, IV dynasty - 2620 BC to 2500 BC; by Reisner G. A



Photo 9: Particular of fresco (hunting scene with nets) painting from the tomb of Amenemhat, necropolis of Beni Hasan, Twelfth Dynasty XX century B. C.

It is not possible to quote this type of dogs without mentioning a singular but significant question, worthy of investigation: it is known that the important god Anubis, protector of the necropolis and lord of the Egyptian afterlife, was represented by a canine-looking image. From time to time, Anubis is identified with a dog, a wolf or a golden jackal (precisely the subspecies *Canis aureus lupaster*). What is the correct interpretation? Generally, the image of the jackal seems more akin to a deity with nocturnal features and relating to the afterlife; also the tail of the statues of the god seems to be as hairy as that of a jackal and it should not be forgotten that the golden jackal can interbreed with the dog (they have the same karyotype 48). A recent study (Rueness E. K. et al. 2011) based on comparisons, both phenotypic and genetic (mitochondrial DNA) between wolf, jackal and other representatives of the genera *Canis*, *Cuon* and *Lycaon*, revealed a surprising particular: the Egyptian jackal is not a jackal but a wolf (*Canis lupus lupaster*).

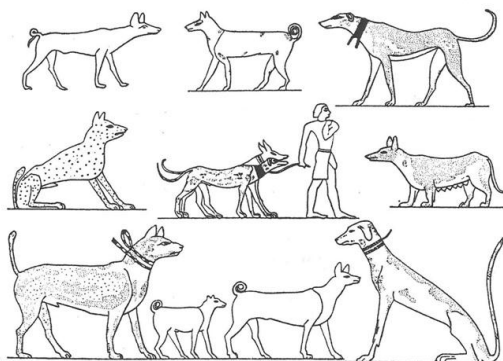
If the appearance of the Egyptian god Anubis is partially lupine, the evocative works of art bring us back unmistakably to the Mediterranean primitive dogs, especially regarding the details of the head and the ears; also the ancient

Greeks believed that Anubis was a dog, as Plato has handed down to us in the dialogue Gorgias.

So it is plausible that through the images of Anubis it is possible to recognize a dog and that, probably, *Canis lupus lupaster* has played a role in the evolution of Mediterranean primitive dogs, either as an ancestor or through eventual crosses.

The Tesem was clearly distinct from other Sighthounds: in this case, Egyptian art has handed down to us detailed iconographic information.

The Ancient Egyptian civilization recognized various distinct dog breeds, derived therefore from non-random selection. Also in this case we have real iconographic, extremely accurate "catalogs" (Photo 10).



**Photo 10: Reproduction of fresco from the necropolis of Beni Hassan
2200-2000 B. C.; from Ash, Dogs, Their History and Development**

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Sighthounds, clearly distinct from Tesem, also played an important role in Egyptian society, both as big-game hunting dogs and as guard-dogs, especially against predators. A golden flabellum, part of the famous Pharaoh Tutankhamun's treasure (1341 - 1323 B.C.), shows a scene of hunting the ostrich with the aid of a Sighthound: the length of the tail, the position and shape of the ears and the employment in the hunt of fast prey, leave no doubt about the type of breed (Photos 11 and 12).



Photo 11 Golden flabellum from Tutankhamun's treasure (1341 - 1323 B.C.) showing a hunting scene to the ostrich with the aid of a sighthound



Photo 12: particular from the Photo # 11

Although ethnologists dispute the attribution of characteristics that can anthropomorphize, it is difficult not to attribute courage to these Sighthounds: these fast Egyptian dogs - as the images tell us - did not hesitate to accompany their owners to hunt lion or to drive away effectively even the fearsome hyena (Photo 13)



Photo 13: Ostrakon from Ramesseid period XIX - XX dynasty, 1292-1186 B. C.; Metropolitan Museum in New York



**Photo 14: Pre-dynastic Egyptian petroglyph fragment, 3000 B. C.:
Sighthounds chasing a hyaena. Louvre Museum, Paris**

Besides the already mentioned Kritikos Ichnilatis, other Mediterranean breeds can also boast an ancestry, more or less directly, from Ancient Egyptian dogs. In the Italian area, we can find the Cirneco of Etna, a native of Sicily, and the Pharaoh Dog, a native of Malta.

The Cirneco dell'Etna (Cirneco of Etna)

The Cirneco dell'Etna (Photos 15, 16) is undoubtedly an endemic breed of Sicily. The origin of the name is a matter for discussion: according to some authors, it derives from the Latin verb cernere (= to sift), referring to the care with which the dog explores the territory in search of prey while hunting. In fact, it manifests the typical hunting skills of the primitive dog: it

follows the scent with its acute sense of smell, simultaneously it listens to any sound caused by the presence of rabbits - its main prey - and it employs its sharp sight to find them. The most credible theory about the origin of the name is the one that refers to the geographical origin of the breed: it derives from the name of the ancient city Cyrene, therefore from the Libyan Cyrenaica region, which through various linguistic deformations, would give the name "Cirneco". An observation by Aristotle is significant: "(...) elsewhere also hybrid animals are born from parents who belong to different groups, so in Cyrene the wolf and the bitch mate giving offspring."



Photo 15: Male exemplar of Cirneco dell'Etna: Italian-Champion and World-Champion 2000, from dog-breeding "Del Gelso Bianco"; owner and breeder Giuseppe Aiello; photo by Nerina Aiello courtesy

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Photo 16: Female plural-Champion exemplar of Cirneco dell'Etna from dog-breeding "Del Gelso Bianco"; owner and breeder Giuseppe Aiello; photo by Nerina Aiello courtesy

The recent discovery quoted before that the so-called Egyptian jackal is indeed a wolf (*Canis lupus lupaster*) confirms the note of the Greek philosopher/scientist: North Africa may have been the cradle of Mediterranean primitive dog breeds with the additional contribution of genes from the Egyptian subspecies of wolf.

The hypothesis about the North African origin of the Cirneco is undoubtedly supported by the similarity with Ancient Egyptian dogs, however there is no certain and reliable information about the exact historical moment and the way in

which the Cirneco arrived in Sicily. It is widely believed that the Phoenicians have spread, throughout the Mediterranean basin, the ancestors of the Cirneco and of the Sighthounds from Egypt and from Middle East.

The ability of the Phoenicians, as traders and sailors, is well known; for example, Herodotus (484 - 425 B. C.) tells about the circumnavigation of Africa by a Phoenician fleet in 550 B. C.

It is also plausible that the Phoenicians, foreseeing the foundation of colonies or during seasonal pauses in their navigation, had found in the fast dog of Egyptian origin an ally against the incursions of rabbits into their crops (Perricone, 1989). According to this theory, the Cirneco - or its direct ancestors along with some Sighthound breeds - would not be a trading object but a valuable friend of the settlers.

But before the Phoenicians, another people ploughed, with great skill and frequency, the Mediterranean, to create an important commercial and political network: the Cretans. Crete can be considered the main original centre of Mediterranean civilization: an island as wide as Corsica in the middle of the eastern Mediterranean and equidistant from all the other coasts, including those of Sicily.

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The Cretans were the first to build strong ships with a keel, two rudders and side rails, and appropriating the Egyptians' inventions for navigation on the Nile they traced, thanks to them, routes throughout the Mediterranean Sea between 2000 and 1400 B. C.

From the close relationships between the Egyptian and Minoan civilizations - as mentioned in the previous paragraph - and the power of the Cretan navy, it is possible to assume that the Cretans, in the course of the more archaic phases, have played a main role in the spread of Primitive Dogs and Sighthounds in the Mediterranean basin (photo 17, photo 18).

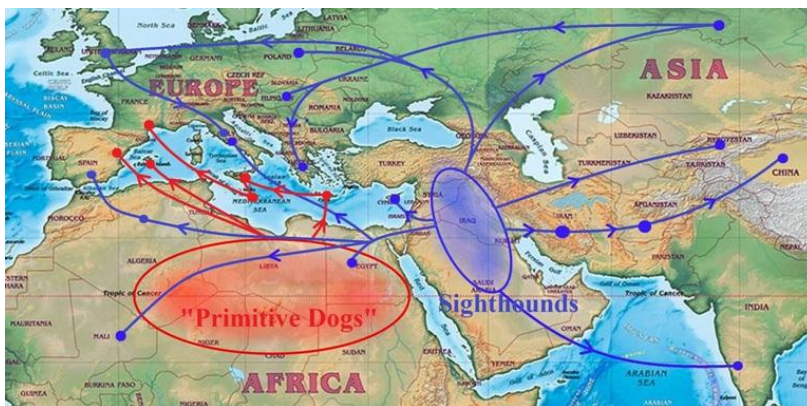


Photo 17: Schematic map representing some of the most probable trajectories along which, over the millennia, the Mediterranean Primitive Dogs (in red) and the Sighthounds (in blue) have spread from respective original areas; the filled circles represent the presence of breeds detected in the present or in the past (elaborated by the author)



Photo 18: Wall painting fragments with a representation of a wild boar hunt. From the later Tiryns palace XIV – XIII centuries B. C. National Archaeological Museum of Athens

(http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Minoan_frescos_in_the_National_Archaeological_Museum_in_Athens_01.JPG). On Crete island were also bred strong and combative Sighthounds for big game hunting

Referring to later ages, since the VIth century B. C., Sicily has become part of the area known as Magna Grecia (Μεγάλη Ἑλλάς = Great Greece) (Photo 19), consisting of a set of Greek cities/colonies and including a large part of the extreme south of the Italian peninsula; and the evidence of the Cirneco's presence in Sicily derives mainly from the images reproduced on Greek coins found on the island, dating back to the VI - III century B. C. (Photos 20, 21, 22, 23) In addition to the numerous iconographic examples, the literature also describes this breed deeply rooted in the historical and cultural context of Greek Sicily. Claudius Aelian (165 - 235 A. D.) in the literary work "ΠΕΡΙ ΖΩΩΝ

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ΙΔΙΟΤΗΤΟΣ", translated into Latin as "De Natura Animalium", gives two lively descriptions of the sacred dogs of the island, referring to the work of another author, Ninfodoro, who lived in the Vth century B. C.



Photo 19: Map of Ancient Greece (IV century B. C.). The main centers are reported from which we have received information about the past of the Ciriaco or about its ancestors. (Elaborated by the author)



Photo 20: Coin from Segesta, Sicily 430 - 409 B. C.; private collection



**Photo 21: Coin from Syracuse, Sicily, 214 - 212 B. C. On the right:
Artemis goddess of the hunt (Diana in Latin tradition) armed with bow;
all the hunting dogs were attribute and symbol of this goddess
(private collection)**



Photo 22: Particular from photo 21: the hunting dog of the goddess Artemis, here, reminds clearly a Cirneco



**Photo 23: Coin (Didracma) from Segesta, Sicily 480 - 410 B. C.
(private collection)**



Photo 24: Coin from Adrano: on the left the profile of the eponymous hero Adranos; on the right one of the sacred dogs engaged to guard the temple in the homonymous town. These dogs seem very similar to the Cirneco: it cannot be excluded that they might be the ancestors of the current Cirneco.

It is significant that the excavated coins are contemporary with the written description of the sacred dogs and have been found mainly in the area between Catania and the site where there were supposedly Aitna and Adrano, cities of the temples guarded by the same dogs (photo 24); and Adrano was probably built on the ruins of the older Aitna or nearby.

Liber XI, caput 3: In Aetna Siciliae sacra est Vulcani aedes, et circa eam muri et arbores sacrae; ibidem ignis perpetuus et inextinctus adservatur. Sunt et canes in templo

lucoque sacri, qui modeste ac decenter in templum et lucum accedentes blande et adulantes excipiunt, et, tanquam familiaribus, illis se benignos ostendunt; at si quis sceleratus aut manibus impurus adeat, illum et mordent et laniant; illos vero, qui libidine aliqua turpi se contaminarint, fugant solum et persequuntur.

Book XI, Chapter 3: "In the city of Aitna (Etna), in Sicily, a temple, dedicated to Hephaestus, is the object of a special cult; here there are an enclosure, sacred trees and an unquenchable fire, never turned off. Around the temple and the forest there are sacred hounds which, wagging their tails, welcome joyfully those entering the temple and the sacred wood with a humble and respectful appearance, and, as if they knew them, they seem benign towards them; but if someone impious and with hands stained with abominable actions comes in, they bite and tear him to pieces; however, they merely chase out and pursue those that are contaminated only by indecent assault."

Liber XI caput 20: In Sicilia Adranus est civitas, ut ait Nymphodorus, et in ea Adrani daemonis vernaculi templum, quod omnino insigne ac splendidum esse ait. Sed quae de hoc deo refert cetera, quamque sit clarus, et in supplices prompte facilis ac propitius, alias dicam; nunc aliud explicabo. Canes ei

sacri sunt, qui et ipsi colunt eum atque inserviunt, Molossis canibus tum forma tum magnitudine superiores, numero non pauciores quam mille. Hi interdum blande et adulantes tum peregrinos, tum indigenas, qui templum lucumque ingrediuntur, excipiunt. Nocte vero iam ebrios et titubantes, tamquam viae duces et comites, egregie deducunt, ad suam usque domum quemque antecedentes. Ceu contumeliosos, ut par est, puniunt: insiliunt enim, et vestes eorum lacerant, et eatenus castigant; eos vero, qui furari praedarive moliuntur, crudelissime dilaniant.

Book XI, Chapter 20: "In Sicily, as Ninfodoro said, there is a town named Adrano, and here there is a temple dedicated to the indigenous deity Adrano, that is said to be absolutely beautiful and magnificent. But with regard to the other news that he tells us, about how the god appears and his benevolence and good disposition towards those who pray to him, we will speak at another time. Now I want to describe another thing. There are sacred dogs which respect and serve the god; they are superior to the mastiffs both in their beauty and their height, and they are not fewer than one thousand. During the day they welcome by wagging their tail joyfully both pilgrims and the natives that enter the temple and the sacred wood; however during the night they accompany with

great kindness, as guides and guards, those already drunk and those who do not hold up along the way, bringing each of them back home.

However they punish, as is right, the impious drunk ones: they assail them, they tear their clothes, and so they make them come to their senses; while cruelly they tear to pieces those who try to steal other people's clothes. "

The Cirneco is a vigorous hunting dog but it is very kind and loving at home; and it is remarkable that the descriptions of Ninfodoro - apart from the symbolic/religious aspects – give the image of aggressive dogs; There are artistic works from which we can note that the ancestors of the Cirneco were, if necessary, combative dogs, as can be seen on the famous vase of Cuma, (an archaeological site near Naples, Campania region) and were (photo 25) therefore also fearsome guardians of temples.

The presence of the Cirneco - or of closely related dogs - is testified in the entire Magna Grecia, not only in Sicily: and in addition to the painting of the vase of Cuma, the Cirneco was also immortalized in the forms of the rhyton (ῥυτόν, pronounce "rhütòn"; plural = ῥυτά, pronounce "rhütà"), a typical greek jug, often zoomorphic, designed for ceremonial libations) and also found in other regions of southern Italy (photos 26, 27).



**Photo 25: Diana and Actaeon, Attic Vase by Painter of Pan 470 - 460 B.
C. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, from Cuma**



**Photo 26: Rythion from the workshop of the Patera Painter,
period Late Apulian, Puglia region about 340 - 320 B. C., Museo Poldi
Pezzoli in Milan**



Photo 27: Rython from Late Apulian period, about 350 - 300 B. C., Apulian Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The modern history of the Cirneco of Etna began in 1939, the year in which the breed was recognized by ENCI (National Italian Cynophilist Society). Before that, the breed was rare, almost in danger of extinction; but the enthusiasm of Agatha Paternò Castello – a Sicilian noblewoman from the Dukes of Caraci family – a scholar and breeder who established the name "of Etna", and the interest of the zoologist Giuseppe Solaro - author of the first standard - allowed the breed to survive and thrive.

The name "of Etna" refers to the ability, peculiar to the breed, to move quickly and with extreme agility on the typical volcanic rocks of the slopes of the homonymous volcano and

the surrounding areas, resisting the hot weather, the harshness of the terrain and the perils of dense and thorny drought-resistant vegetation.

The basic difference between the so-called Sighthounds and the Primitive Dogs is evident from observing the hunting method and movement of a Cirneco: it is able to hunt and catch a wild rabbit like a Sighthound, but it employs all the senses - not only sight - and shows its speed especially in the way it jumps and runs over steep ground.

The Cirneco expresses the versatility typical of Primitive Dogs because it is also able to play the role of a typical scent-hound or of any breed specialized in this sense. Its physical appearance is essentially strong and agile but is distinctly different from the typical profile of Sighthounds with their retracted abdomen and deep chest. Its expression and the structure of its head are typical of Mediterranean Primitive Dogs, with its elongated and straight snout, thin lips, amber eyes with their sweet but careful expression, and large and rigorously erect ears. The coat is very short, close to the skin, vitreous, the colour is always tawny more or less intense or blended with similar colours (e. g. sand or blond).

The size is small-medium, height at the withers: males,

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46 - 50 cm (18 – 20 in); females, 42 - 46 cm (16 – 18 in); weight: males, 10 - 12 kg (22 – 26 lb); females, 8 - 10 kg (17 – 22 lb).

On the whole, the breed is genetically very strong, long-lived and healthy; the temperament is typical of the primitive breeds: wary and suspicious of strangers, deeply affectionate with the owner and the family.

The qualities of the Cirneco have always been considered extremely valuable in Sicily so that, in the past, the best subjects were kept hidden to prevent theft or unwanted crosses (source: Society of Cirneco of Etna Amateurs <http://www.societaamatoricirneco.it/>).

The Cirneco, officially recognized by the FCI, has spread outside the territory of origin: curiously, despite coming from a Mediterranean habitat, it is also bred in generally cold climate countries, such as Russia or Scandinavia, demonstrating an excellent capability of adaptation. The only one danger is represented by breeders, outside the Italian territory, favouring "greyhound-like" morphological characters which absolutely are not in line with the history, the morphology and the attitudes of the Cirneco, the typical primitive breed away from the greyhound model. It is interesting to note that the number of Cirnechi in Sicily is

higher than that of the examples registered at official level and treated mainly for show purposes; and the reason is purely linked to the still working aspect of the breed that determines the existence of an aboriginal population, rustic, perfectly in line with the FCI standard, but destined to carry on the same tasks that it has done always for thousands of years in the Sicilian rural context (source: Nerina Aiello, from personal interview).

Pharaoh Hound – Kelb tal-Fenek

The island of Malta does not belong politically to Italy, however, from a bio-geographical point of view, can be considered part of the Italian area. The typical breed of the island is the Pharaoh Hound (Photo 28) known in its homeland as "Kelb tal-Fenek" (Kelb = "dog"; tal-fenek = "for rabbits").

The indigenous name is descriptive of its employment: hunter of rabbits, similar to the Cirneco dell'Etna and other primitive Mediterranean breeds.

The Anglo-Saxon name, "Pharaoh hound", although evocative and suggestive, seems to have no historical basis: there is no evidence of the presence of the breed on the island of Malta before 1647, the date on which was published the

work "Della Descrittione di Malta isola nel Mare Siciliano con le sue antichita ed altre notitie" (On the Description of Malta Island in the Sicilian Sea with its antiquities and other information) by Francesco Giovanni Abela.



Photo 28: Pharaoh Hound or Kelb Tal-Fenek
<http://it.wikipedia.org>

In this literary work the dogs are defined as “Cernechi molto stimati per la caccia ai conigli” (Cernechi highly valued for rabbit hunting) and it describes their export to France. The

first detail seems to indicate that the Pharaoh Hound is a descendant of the recent Cirneco dell'Etna; and the second detail reveals the presence of primitive dogs also in France, specifically in the Languedoc, Provence and Roussillon.

Indeed, in France these dogs are completely extinct, perhaps outnumbered by Scenthounds (gundogs) for hunting with the rifle and, with regard to this, it is significant that in France Sighthounds were not widespread. The only remaining traces of these French primitive dogs are engravings dating back to the XIX century (Photo 29 - Photo 30) where the name is specified as "Charnigue", an evident deformation of "Cirneco".

Genetics have finally provided the definitive evidence about the recent origin of the breed (Parker et al., 2004): in spite of its appearance, according to the authors, the Pharaoh Hound is the result of a relatively recent series of crosses aimed at restoring an archaic-looking breed. This result, however, does not exclude that the breed may have an ancient origin, since it is difficult, resorting exclusively to recent crosses between breeds, to get a breed with such remarkable primitive features. It is plausible that the original lineage might be older, represented for example by Cirnechi exported to Malta from Sicily or by a population of native

primitive dogs .

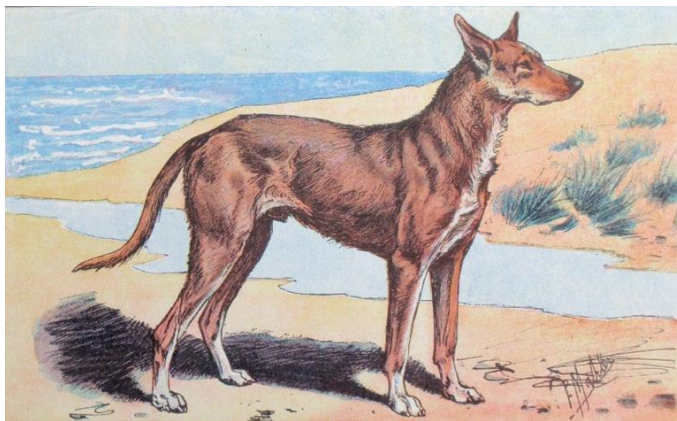


Photo 29: Charnigue, extinct primitive French breed; engraving by P. Mahler, XIX century (private collection)

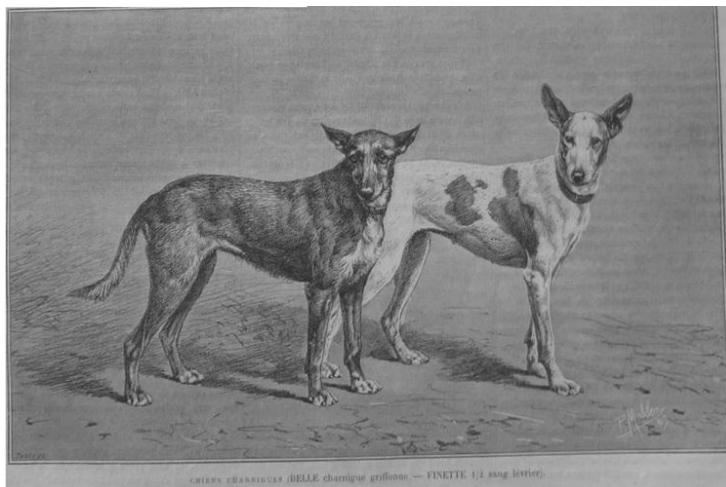


Photo 30: A couple of Charnigues, from the magazine "La Chasse Illustrée 1889", engraving by P. Mahler (private collection).

The Pharaoh Hound is very similar in appearance to the Cirneco, apart from its slightly higher size - males: 56 - 63 cm (22 – 24,8 in); females: 53-61 cm (22 – 24 in) - but a careful examination points out some differences, in particular the general appearance of the head (Photo 31).



Photo 31: Comparison between the heads of the Cirneco (on left the female Champion "Gina of the Gelso Bianco", see also photo 16, by Nerina Aiello courtesy) and of the Pharaoh Hound (on the right a picture from the pet-magazine "Cani" of '90)

Xarnego Valenciano

In the large group of primitive breeds of the Iberian Peninsula, generically named Podencos and by significant differences from region to region, the Xarnego appears as the oldest and the presumed "father" of the primitive Iberian breeds (Photo 32).



Photo 32: Xarnego Valenciano by Javier Puchades courtesy

The name "Xarnego" is kindred to "Cirneco" or "Charnigue", therefore a further variation of the Latin Cyrenaicus and an indication of an historical and geographical continuity between these breeds.

However, there are some interesting - even if less

credible - alternative theories about the etymology of the name. For example, some dictionaries suggest the term lucharniego, resulting from nochrniego: terms designating dogs trained to hunt at the night. Another interesting interpretation takes into account the Catalan word "charnègo" meaning "foreigner", referring in particular during the XVIth century to the French immigrants. Also the Xarnego is a skilled hunter of rabbits and its hunting technique has always been based on the use of all its very acute senses and on its extraordinary agility. Physiologically the Xarnego is perfectly adapted to the warm and dry environment of the south of Spain. The standard states textually: Tiene una resistencia legendaria para soportar el calor extremo y es capaz de cazar en ambiente seco (It has a legendary resistance to extreme heat and it is able to hunt in a dry environment).

It is also typically versatile so that it can, in some cases, confront large prey such as wild boar. The general structure of the Xarnego repeats the same general pattern of Mediterranean Primitive Dogs: essentially agile and quick, but also strong and muscular, with a conical head, with large and erect ears; and the average size is large: males: 55 - 61 cm (21 – 24 in), 20 kg (44 lb); females: 50 - 57 cm (19 – 22 in) 18 kg (39 lb).

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The colour of the coat, unlike the Cirneco and the Pharaoh Hound, shows a greater variability, with wide patches of cinnamon, fawn, black or brown, always accompanied by large white areas; and the coat may be smooth, rough or semi-long.

Piccolo Levriero Italiano (Miniature Italian Greyhound)

Among the breeds of the Sighthounds group, the Italian Greyhound is the only Italian breed officially recognized at present (Photo 33).



Photo 33: Typical Miniature Italian Greyhound: a champion from Breeding "Vertragus", by Aldo Cerletti courtesy.

The term "Levriero" comes from the medieval vulgar Latin "leporarius", deriving from the classical Latin "Lepus" (= hare, Italian = "lepre"), therefore meaning "hare-hound". In the name is enclosed its function since ancient times. It is important to underline that the correct Anglo-Saxon name "Miniature Italian Greyhound", sometimes shortened to "Italian Greyhound", refers exclusively to this typical breed. Unfortunately it happens sometimes that some authors, especially in web sites, attribute the name "Italian Greyhound" to the Cirneco dell'Etna, making a serious mistake. As mentioned earlier, there are basic differences between Sighthounds in the strict sense of the word (e. g. Italian Greyhound) and Mediterranean Primitive Dogs. The remote origin of this breed is difficult to fix. Many texts refer, in a general way, to the mummies of small-size greyhounds found in Egyptian tombs and it is assumed that, as analogously happened to the primitive breeds, the Phoenicians facilitated the distribution of these greyhounds, especially in Greece.

From Hellas, following on the expansion of the Roman Empire and trade, the small-size Sighthounds - presumably ancestors of the current Italian one - reached the Italian peninsula, becoming the favourites of the Latin nobility.

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At the present moment there is no genetic evidence to demonstrate definitively this sequence of steps and we cannot be certain that the Italian Greyhound has as its only direct ancestors the Egyptian Sighthounds.

However, it is possible to outline a historical picture awaiting future confirmation by genetic analysis. It is traditional to denote Greece as the cradle of the lineage of the Sighthound. The same name - "Greyhound"- derives from the contraction of the two words "Greek" and "Hound". The presence is also ascertained, until the XIXth century, of an indigenous Sighthound breed called "Grecian Greyhound" (Walsh, 1859) (Photo 34).



Photo 34: the extinct "Grecian Greyhound", from J. H. Walsh, The Dog, in Health and Disease 1859

Indeed, the most recent analyses (Lynch & Madeoy, 2004) have brought to light the ancient Middle Eastern (Fertile Crescent) origin of Sighthounds. It is therefore more correct to indicate Greece as an important area for the spread of Sighthounds, rather than as a source.

Before the IVth century B. C., the typical Greek dog breeds, according to literary and artistic works, were similar to the previously mentioned Kritikos Ichnilatis. Xenophon (430/425 - 355 B. C.) and Aristotle (384 - 322 B. C.), though they widely describe certain hunting breeds, never describe dogs recognizable as real Sighthounds but rather hunting dogs trained to drive the prey into the nets of hunters. The art forms handed down to us show the existence in Greece of dogs vaguely greyhound-like - or molossus/greyhound - in the Vth century B. C. (Photo 35).

It is plausible that Sighthounds entered Greece from the East during the period between the IV th and V th centuries B. C., without replacing completely the original primitive indigenous breeds.



**Photo 35: Ancient Greek rhyton in the shape of a dog's head with "molossus-graoid" characters, made by Brygos, early 5th century BC.
Jérôme Carcopino Museum, Department of Archaeology, Aleria
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brygos>**

Lucius Flavius Arrianus (95 – 175 A. D., the Latinized Greek author) is the author of the first detailed description of dogs recognizable as true Sighthounds and their hunting technique on the hare. The most interesting aspect is the fact that Arrian describes them as the hunting dogs of the Celts, proving that his predecessor Xenophon could not have known fast dogs as Celtic ones:

Cynegeticus, Chapter II: Now, he (Xenophon) did not know the breed of dogs that was equal to the Celtic one as to speed. Here is the sign: "the hares - he says - are not caught (by the dog) by natural speed but by chance...." However if it is in good physical condition and generous of spirit, this type of hound never fails to catch the hare.

Cynegeticus, Chapter III: The Gauls hunt (the hare) without using nets.... The fastest Celtic dogs are called *vertragi* in the language of the Celts: they do not have a name as coming from a place, as the Carians, the Cretans, the Laconian ones do, but, as among the Cretans, some dogs are called "*faticanti*" (labouring) from loving their labour, others "*rapidi*" from their speed, so these also are called "*vertragi*" because of their speed. The shape of some of the nicest is very beautiful as are the eyes, the body, the coat and particularly the colour: in the variegated ones, the shades of colours are pretty and in those uniformly coloured, the colour is so bright as to be a pleasant sight for the hunter".

The words of Arrian and the traditions from the Celtic area (Britain, Ireland, and Gaul) about dogs with legendary speed allow us to infer that the typology of the Sighthound was already widespread in these areas before Roman domination. Presumably the Celts, during their spread into Europe from

Asia Minor since the first millennium B. C., also brought their Sighthounds and introduced them gradually into North-West Europe.

The name "Vertragus" (from which is derived the Latin "veltrus") is purely from a Celtic-Gallic root as other Latin authors recognize, deriving from the term "traig" = foot and the intensive particle "ver", therefore meaning "fast foot". It is probable that the Romans found out about the Sighthounds especially from the Celts. The clearest and most "modern" fine art reproductions of Sighthounds belong to the period of maximum activity, both commercial and military, of the Roman state: between 200 B. C. and 200 A. D. approximately. (Fig 36) (fig 37)



Photo 36: Roman coin: denarius of Caius Postumius, 64 B. C



Photo 37: Greyhounds playing, II century B. C. ; statue from Vatican Museum, Animal Room, <http://upload.wikimedia.org>

The origin of the Italian Greyhound could be defined as Celtic-Mediterranean, implying that the breed, although with Celtic roots, was formed and evolved in its morphological and behavioural characteristics finally on Italian territory. Sighthounds and Mediterranean Primitive Dogs share a peculiar condition in that, since the time of the Pharaohs to modern times, they have enjoyed the status of "noble dogs" or "of the aristocracy" par excellence. The reasons can be many: from their indisputably elegant and statuesque appearance or from their suspicious temperament

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defined - consequently but inaccurately – as "haughty". Is it credible to assume that the "nobility" of these breeds is a consequence, since ancient times, of their enormous value as "hunting weapons", therefore as a source of livelihood for the human family and thus, indirectly, of the whole of society? In these terms we can understand how in many cultures - from the Greeks to the Arabs, for example - Sighthounds are referred to as "divine gifts".

The Italian Greyhound has also largely enjoyed the favours of the aristocracy and it has been featured several times in the arms of the nobility, allowing us to see how the race was well established in Italy since the Middle Age (Photo 38). Some consider the Italian Greyhound a fragile pet dog and, unfortunately, in the past a few breeders have favoured bloodlines that carried a minute and frail phenotype, thus distorting the breed.



Photo 38: In particular during the Renaissance, in Europe, the Sighthound become one of the most represented "animal-symbols" on the noble-arms

Even if it is the smallest of the "Sighthound family", it has always played the active role of hunter and it is still able to stand out as a strong athlete, showing all the physiological characteristics typical of Sighthounds. (Photo 39) In general we can distinguish historically three "golden ages" of Sighthounds in Italy: the aforementioned Roman period; the Renaissance (XIV - XVIth centuries); the period between the end of XIXth century and the second half of XXth.

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The period known as the Renaissance that began in Italy was characterized by the extraordinary flourishing of the arts. The elegant lines of Sighthounds have always been a model for painters and sculptors and it was a natural consequence that these dogs become real protagonists of the fine arts. Renaissance art testifies to the existence and spread, both in Italy and in Europe, of the Italian Greyhound, which was perfectly defined as a breed in that period.



Photo 39: Despite the Italian Greyhound is the smallest one in the "Sighthound family", it holds the same athletic skills of the bigger Sighthounds: it would be a serious mistake to consider it only a "toy-dog". Three Champions from dog-breeding "Vertragus" engaged in a racing trial. By Aldo Cerletti courtesy

In Morenberg castle, located in Non Valley - Trentino region, Northern Italy - dating back to XVIth century, there is a fresco depicting some Italian Greyhounds identical in their proportions to present examples, engaged in a rabbit hunt (Photo 40).



Photo 40: Fresco in Morenberg Castle, - Trentino region, Northern Italy -: here the presence of the Miniature Italian Greyhound is clearly documents since XVI century; the proportions of the exemplars depicted are the same of the current ones.

The Italian Greyhound was also immortalized by the most prestigious names in art also outside Italy. (Photos 41, 42)



Photo 41: The Italian Greyhound in XV century by the Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch (1453 - 9 august 1516), particular from Adoration of the Magi (1499), Metropolitan Museum, New York.



Photo 42: The Italian Greyhound in XV century by the German painter Hans Memling (1430 – 11 August 1494), particular from the St. Ursula Shrine, Hans Memling Museum of Bruges

During the XVI – XVIIth centuries the existence is confirmed of two distinct Sighthound breeds in Italy: the noble scholar Francesco Birago (Milan 1562 - 1640) in "Trattato Cinegetico ouero Della Caccia" (Cynegeticus treatise about the hunt) provides an accurate description of the "Turkish Sighthound" and the "National Sighthound that is Italian".

The author states that the reason for the name "Turkish" is not clear but it was probably a synonym referring generically to "Oriental". In fact, the description is reminiscent of the Saluki: large size, long hair on the tail and the pendant ears, running very fast and aloof by temperament. It is likely the greyhound sculpted by Benvenuto Cellini (November 3, 1500 - February 13, 1571) was just such a "Turkish Sighthound" described by Francesco Birago (Photo 43).



Photo 43: Levriero (= "Sighthound", 1545) by Benvenuto Cellini (1500 – 13 February 1571), National Museum of Bargello, Florence

The description of the "National Sighthound that is Italian" corresponds exactly to the modern Italian Greyhound, the only difference being that the size is slightly larger: "(...) Il Levriero deve essere alto onze quatordecì fino in quindici, lungo dalla punta del petto fino al principio della coda l'istesso; ma la cagna più dell'altezza, un'onza deve esser lunga." (Photo 44)

· Ouero della Caccia. 17
*più bassi dinanzi, che di dietro . Il Leuriere deve es-
sere alto onze quatordecì fino in quindici, lungo dalla
punta del petto fino al principio della coda l'istesso;
ma la cagna più dell'altezza , vn' onza deve esser
lunga.*

Photo 44: Original text of the first "standard" of Italian Greyhound, by Francesco Birago, from *Trattato Cinegetico ouero Della Caccia* (Cynegeticus treatise or about the hunt), 1626

"The Sighthound has to be between fifteen and fourteen inches long, from the extreme of the chest until the beginning of the tail; but the bitch has to be one inch longer"

The inch in northern Italy corresponded approximately to 1/12 of the Italian foot (about 40 cm – 15,7 inches), so it follows that the Italian Greyhound in the XVIth century had a height of between 46 and 50 cm (18 – 19,6 inches), the height

of the modern Italian Greyhound is 32 cm - 38 cm (12,5 – 15 inches) at the withers.

After the Renaissance, the Italian Greyhound became the favourite of some royal houses, especially during the XVIIIth century; and its name at the time was reported in the French version "Levrette".

The "Levrette" was one of the favoured breeds in the royal courts of Europe. In particular two famous monarchs tied their names to this breed: Catherine Alekseevna II of Russia (April 21, 1729 - November 6, 1796) (Photo 45, 46) and Frederick Hohenzollern II (January 24, 1712 - August 17, 1786).

Especially Frederick II of Prussia was an admirer of Italian Greyhounds and he kept close to him throughout his life some examples that, the chronicles tell, always accompanied him even on the battlefield (Photo 47, 48).

Between the XIXth and early XXth centuries, Italian Greyhounds, cloaked in noble fame, became the favourite dogs of ladies, intellectuals and writers (Photo 49). Unfortunately, during this latter period, the Italian Greyhound, identified as a companion dog, underwent a selection aimed at emphasizing the physical characters expressing grace and lightness, moving the breed away from the type of small but

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athletic fast hunting dog.



Photo 45: Catherine Alekseevna II of Russia (April 21, 1729 - November 6, 1796) strolling in the Park at Tsarskoye Selo, oil (1794) by Vladimir Borovikovsky, Tret'jakov Gallery, Moscow



Photo 46: Particular from the previous painting: the Sighthound depicted with the Russian Empress is clearly a Miniature Italian Greyhound.



Photo 47: Statue of Frederick Hohenzollern II (January 24, 1712 - August 17, 1786) with his Italian Greyhounds, by Johann Gottfried Schadow (1764–1850), Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin.
Fredrick II was the most famous enthusiast of the Italian Greyhounds: often some of them accompanied him also on the battlefield going through several adventures.



Photo 48: Frederick Hohenzollern II and the General La Motte Fouque, by Adolph Friedrich Erdmann von Menzel (1815 – 1905); the Italian Greyhounds accompanied Frederick II until he was elderly.



Photo 49: The poet Alphonse de Lamartine (1790 – 1869) depicted with his Italian Greyhounds, by Henri Decaisne. Between XIX and early XX century, the Italian Greyhounds, cloaked in noble fame, became the favorite dogs of ladies, intellectuals and writers

Also today, it is possible that the name of the Italian Greyhound is associated with the concept of "toy breed": a serious error that does not do justice to this ancient and sporty breed.

The Second World War was almost fatal to the breed - as for other breeds moreover - and only since the 50s did the true renaissance of the Italian Greyhound begin with the founding of the Italian Greyhound Club (21 November 1956). Today in Italy there are some very good breeders and the breed is in good health, but, oddly enough, it is not widespread in its own country: in the English Whippet is more numerous. The Whippet is the youngest breed in the Sighthounds family: it was born in about the XIXth century and it was selected by the workers and miners in northern England by crossing Italian Greyhounds, Terriers and Greyhounds.

The wider distribution of the Whippet causes outside the Italian borders and sometimes even in Italy the misunderstanding that the two breeds are one and the same and the two names Whippet and Italian Greyhound are interchangeable. One detail distinguishes the two breeds: in addition to the size, higher in the English one, the colour of the coat, which in the Italian Greyhound is always uniform and never brindle, a distinctive ancient original characteristic of the breed.

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