

**Dear Members of the Preservation of Primitive Aboriginal Dog Society and readers  
of our Newsletter,**

We ask for your forgiveness for skipped issues of the Newsletter in 2007. The reason was that we were extremely busy with preparations for the first international conference “Aboriginal Dog Breeds as a Part of Biodiversity and the Cultural Heritage of Humankind”, Almaty, Kazakhstan, September 10-15, 2007. Now, we are returning to publishing four issues of the Newsletter per year. There will be slight change in our title by omitting the prefix “R” from our title, because participants in the conference suggested that we should become a fully international society.

Another piece of good news is that we have Mrs. Tatyana Desyatova on our editorial board. Tatyana is a wildlife biologist, Chairman of the Society of Hunters and Fishermen, a professional cynologist on hunting Laika breeds and particularly on the East Siberian Laika and she is well familiar with these dogs in the western half of Russia and in East Siberia. She resides and works in Irkutsk. Her website is here: <http://www.esl-irkutsk.net.ru> Thus, our publishers are based in Moscow and in Irkutsk.

This issue includes the Resolution of the conference in Almaty, a polemical article by Sir Terence Clark about Saluki/Tazy breed status, which is a continuation of our discussions at the conference in Almaty; Vladimir Shakula writes about his first-hand experience with the hunting behavior of the Taigan and Konstantin and Anna Plakhov write about the Tobet.

Respectfully,  
Curator of PADS  
Vladimir Beregovoy

RESOLUTION

Of the first international scientific conference «Aboriginal Breeds of Dogs as Part of Biodiversity and Cultural Heritage of Humankind»

THE HUNTING BEHAVIOR OF THE TAIGAN (the Kyrgyz Sighthound) IN THE TIAN-SHAN MOUNTAINS OF KAZAKHSTAN

**Vladimir Shakula**  
(Translation by Vladimir Beregovoy)

THE KAZAKH TAZY – FACT OR FICTION?

**Sir Terence Clark**  
THE KAZAKH TOBET – MYTH, REALITY AND NECESSETY

**K. N. Plakhov & A. S. Plakhova**  
(Translation by Vladimir Beregovoy)

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**From Editorial Board:**

Editors of R-PADS invite submissions of materials for publication..

- ✓ Article, more 12-14 thousands of characters plus 4-5 photographs formatted JPG or TIFF, resolution 300 dpi.
- ✓ Review, 8-12 thousands of characters plus 2-3 black and white photographs, IPG or TIFF, resolution 300 dpi.
- ✓ Note, 3-8 thousands of characters without picture.

Please, make a note of our address change:

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Old address remains valid until end of the current calendar year.

This is the time to pay membership fees, \$16.00 or 15 Euro, for 2008. Send money to:

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Donations are welcomed.

**Payment details: private transfer for current expenses**

All questions, suggestions and comments will be accepted with gratitude. E-mail them or send them as snail mail to: Marina G. Kuzina mail box 12, Moscow, 115407 RUSSIA

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**FIRST INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE «ABORIGINAI BREEDS  
OF DOGS AS PART OF BIODIVERSITY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF  
HUMANKIND»  
ALMATY, 10-15 SEPTEMBER  
RESOLUTION**

**Of the first international scientific conference «Aboriginal Breeds of Dogs as Part of Biodiversity and Cultural Heritage of Humankind»**

During the period 10-15 September, 2007 the first international scientific conference "Aboriginal Breeds of Dogs as a Part of Biodiversity and [he Cultural Heritage of Humankind" took place in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The conference was organised under the auspices of the Primitive and Aboriginal Dogs Society (PADS) and from Kazakhstan: the Ministry of Culture and Information, the Public Fund "Green House", the Institute of Ecological Investigations and Planning, the National Agricultural University- the Ecological Union "Tablgat", and the Club of Purebred Dog Breeding.

Twenty-two specialists in the study of populations of aboriginal dogs from five continents participated: Australia, Asia. Africa, Europe and North America: Australia, Great Britain, Germany, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Portugal, Russia, United States of America. Tajikistan, Turkey, Sweden and the South African Republic,

Participants in the conference developed a concept of «aboriginal dogs as local populations, which evolved in the process of the development of local cultures and civilizations, according to their needs and determined the importance of aboriginal dogs as important elements of biodiversity and the cultural heritage humankirnd, which demand to be treated as carefully as other general human values.

Participants in the conference confirmed the right of every people and every country to the preservation of their own populations of aboriginal dogs. This flows from the interntional treaty "Economic, social and cultural rights (New York, December 36. 1966). Based on this, every people and every country bears the responsibility before the world for the preservation of aboriginal dogs.

Participants in the conference maintain that present conditions of aboriginal' dog populations in their countries of origin are a cause for concern. It was noted that in the course of the last century many aboriginal dog populations have disappeared from the face of the earth. This leads to the reduction of the biodiversity of our planet. The reasons for the disappearance and diminution of a number of populations of dogs are: the loss of popular traditions of maintaining them, breeding and using them and cross-breeding. Unless complex measures for preserving the remaining populations of aboriginal dogs in the countries of their original drstribution are undertaken with the participation of the international community, these dogs, which are a fundamental part of biodiversity and the cultural heritage of humankind, will be irrevocably destroyed.

Participants turn to governments of countries having populations of aboriginal dogs:

To recognise populations of aboriginal dogs a part of the national heritage of the countries of their origin;

To develop national programmes for preserving populations of aboriginal dogs; and

To breed on the basis of the standards of the countries or origin.

Participants in the conference appeal to all interested intemational organization;

To recognise populations of aboriginal doys as part of their cultural heritage and as elements of the biodiversity of our planet;

To coordinate countries' efforts to preserve populations of aboriginal dog; and

To make use of the standards of the countries of origin when breeding aboriginal dogs.

Participants in the conference noted the importance of convening similar forums in the future and recommend to holding them periodically once every three years. The place of the next forum will be determined later.

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THE HUNTING BEHAVIOR OF THE TAIGAN (THE KYRGYZ SIGHTHOUND)  
IN THE TIAN-SHAN MOUNTAINS OF KAZAKHSTAN

**Vladimir Shakula**  
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I saw a Taigan for the first time in 1988, in the Markakol Nature Reserve, at the border of Kazakhshtan, Mongolia and China. The dog impressed me with its special appearance. It seemed to combine the features of the Greyhound and a shaggy sheep dog. The dog emanated a kind of Asiatic antiquity. It seemed that in its veins was the blood of its wild ancestral wolves, but also a drop of the blood of the eastern dragon. Since that time I have collected information about these amazing sighthounds and I have also had my own Taigans, hunted with them and interacted with Taigans belonging to my friends. These events took place in the Talass Alatau Mountains, the Ugam Mountain Ridge, belonging to the western Tian-Shan, in the mountains of the Southern Altai and in the Syr Darya River part of the Karatau Mountains, where I have lived and worked for 20 years.



Dogs. In the Markakol region I witnessed only one breeder of the Kyrgyz Sighthound. The dogs were a little coarse in appearance, with a black coat, they worked well and their owners valued them higher than the Tazy, possibly not so much for their working ability, but rather for their greater ability to endure the winters, which are quite harsh in Markakol region. In the Syr Darya part of the Karatau, 10-20 years ago Taigans were not rare, but most of them were mixes with Tazys (Vyrypaev, 1990). Most of the Taigans bred in the foothills of the Talass Alatau during 1990s originated from one female. A. A. Vyrypaev was her owner. He brought it from the Talass District, Kyrgyzstan, when she was 4-5 years old. This dog had a huge rib cage, a very deep chest, about a palm width lower than the elbows, a correct head, and very large teeth, so large that it was a wonder that there was room for them in the mouth! The eyes were brown, large, wide open and convex. She had thick feathering on the ears and well developed feathering over the body, with a well-pronounced saddle and correct position of the legs. Her behavior was interesting. Calm and obedient inside and in the community, she showed unrestrained aggressiveness, great excitement and endurance when hunting. The qualities of the appearance and hunting behavior this female passed to her offspring.

Local hunters pay much attention to the position and shape of the tail. The tail of the Taigan should not be long but rather short; it should not have feathering and should form a ring or a half ring at the end. The tail should be carried high at the level of the back or above the back. As is known, the Tazy often keeps the tail low or even between its legs, but the Taigan never has its tail between its legs. The majority of dogs were black with white markings; a few were gray and a few red. A. A. Vyrypaev practiced inbreeding. His first litter was sired by a working male with excellent appearance from the Kyrgyz Mountains. As a result of inbreeding, the dogs were excellent, but in late 1990s, defective dogs began to appear. For example, one male with black coat and good

appearance was hereditarily deaf. Possibly because of defective hearing, he was shy. Puppies out of Vyrypaev's dogs were usually given away to local hunters. Many of the puppies died, because of parvovirus enteritis. Some dogs were damaged by poor rearing and interbreeding with local guard dogs. There were many puppies, which grew up to be great hunting dogs.



The Taigan at home. All our Taigans, as well as the Taigans of other hunters, lived outside in pens or just in the yard. I should mention that keeping Taigan tethered is very depressing for the dog. We had females, which were impossible to watch without laughing, when they were tethered. Being active and joyful family pets, if tethered, they turned into pitiful creatures. When chained, these dogs assumed a sitting position with the head low, the ears hanging to the ground and the eyes expressing deep grief; the tail was low between the legs and the entire appearance showed depression. Nothing could help to return the dog to a good mood, no tasty bone as a treat, no petting and not even calling to go hunting; the dog does not want to eat and does not listen to any commands. Its entire look tells you: "Without freedom I cannot live, better death than the collar". When the dog was freed, it was transformed in a moment and became a normal, obedient house animal. When in the yard, Taigans are calm, do not trouble other animals and do not run away; usually they rest in some comfortable place.

The attitude of Taigans to people is similar to the attitude of other dogs of aboriginal breeds, such as the Central Asian Ovcharka, the Caucasian Ovcharka or the Laika. The dog is independent and reserved. It is indifferent or mistrustful with unfamiliar people; however dogs that are aggressive to strangers do occur. Generally, in the Taigan, hunting is of prime importance. In human terms, a Taigan is not a servant, it is your friend, which respects you, but can make its own decisions.

Taigans are not afraid of other dogs and can defend themselves even from dogs looking much stronger, but they do not initiate fights themselves. My own bitch is called "Kunduz" and when I walk her in the village (of course, she is off the leash), she never keeps her tail down. When two or three village dogs run barking towards her, Kunduz simply flexes her muscles, seems to become taller, keeps the tail even higher and shows her canines. After she has shown her teeth, the aggressiveness of the attackers subsides and they leave the scene, often squealing in a cowardly way. Another Taigan, a male named "Karabas", does not submit even in the presence of a huge Caucasian Mountain Dog, which was the leader of the village pack of dogs, and only our intervention once saved one of them from death. I could not be sure, which of the dogs would be the winner in the fight.

In everyday life, Taigans seem stupid. However, when necessary, they demonstrate outstanding intelligence. Thus, my own female called “Saiga”, when only half a year old, learned to jump over the wire fence and get free by herself. I increased the height of the fence; then, Saiga went to the corner and climbed up, supporting herself by stretching her legs to the opposite fence panels. To stop these attempts, my son and I constructed an additional cover above the corner of the pen by tying a broad board with a rope. We watched the dog through a window of the house. As usual, Saiga tried to crawl out over the fence by pushing with her legs on the opposite fence panels, but she hit the board with her head and fell back. She was sitting, looking up at our construction. She was looking for a solution and she found it! A long end of the rope, which was keeping the board in place, was hanging down inside the pen. The dog used it. When Saiga climbed the same way to the top, she grabbed the end of the rope, which allowed her to free the front feet and use them to hang over the board, lift her body up and go over the board. Needless to say, we left her free that day, as she deserved it through her wit and physical skill. Many years later, I told this story to a noted big city cynologist, a specialist in working dogs. He laughed and asked: “Maybe this dog ate soup with a spoon?” Perhaps the cynologist knew his working dogs, but he did not know about the talents of aboriginal sighthounds.

Places and conditions of hunting. We hunted with our Taigans in the mountain foothills at an altitude of 1000-1300 meters, where vast open spaces were framed with strips of forest, alternating with ravines and gorges overgrown with thickets of thorny roses and hawthorns. This is the habitat of the steppe wolf, jackal, foxes, steppe wildcat, badger, pheasant, gray partridges and many tolai hares. Sometimes there were small groups of roe deer.

The most suitable habitats for Taigans are the mountains. In the Western Tian Shan the mountains reach an altitude of 4200 m. At 3500-3700 m is the first snow line. Above this, snow is permanent, forming glaciers. The terrain is very complex, with steep rocks, cliffs, fast running mountain streams and rocky and sandy slopes. Sharp rocks and scree are hard on the pads of any dog breed.

We took Central Asian and Caucasian Ovcharkas, Laikas, Great Danes, Tazys, Pitbulls, German Wirehaired Pointers, Afghans, Borzois and other dog breeds and sooner or later they all hurt their pads in the mountains and refused to go there every day. Only Taigans do not hurt their feet there, because they have very hard nails and a brush of hairs growing between the toes. The weather in the mountains is unstable, with heat and dust in the summer and cold, deep snow and strong winds in winter. The mountain slopes are void of any trees, except small shrubs and small deciduous tree growing along the streams. These habitats are difficult for hunting. Here, mountain game animals live, such as snow panther, Tian-Shan brown bear, mountain wolf, northern lynx, elk, Ovis ammon, Capra sibirica, and wild boar. On alpine meadows there are many marmots of two species. At a lower altitude are pheasant, gray partridge, Alectoris graeca and Tetraogallus tibetanus. At the present time, many animals are becoming rare and hunting them is banned. In the Southern Altai I hunted the northern lynx and brown bear with Taigans and will describe these hunts below.

The hunting qualities of the Taigan. Catching any animal, even rabbit, requires outstanding qualities in a sighthound. It is even more so, speaking of the Taigan, which hunts big and dangerous animals, including searching, pursuing and catching animals under difficult conditions in the mountains at high altitude. In the mountains, the Taigan is irreplaceable as a dog. It has enormous endurance and strength, because of its heart, muscles and nervous system. The Taigan follows a hunter on horseback up to 50-100 km per day, running on rocky mountain paths at between 2000-3000 m. The Taigan does not just follow the hunter, but also searches, chases and fights game animals. When searching, the Taigan uses its nose and vision, but it relies mainly on its vision.

Vision. In the literature, one can find that a dog can recognize its master at a distance of 100 m and it can recognize a human at a maximum distance of 200 m. Furthermore, it does not use vision any more. I think that the Taigan’s vision is not less acute than the vision of mountain sheep (Ovis ammon), the vision of which is equal that of a human using X-6 to X-8 binoculars. Once we went to a mountain pass. We sat down and looked over a slope for about half an hour over a radius of about 1-2 km in search of game. Experienced hunters used their binoculars and examined every bush without seeing any animals. The dogs were sitting nearby and also looked at the slope. Because we found nothing, we took out our sandwiches and began eating. My Kunduz looked at me as if to ask: “Did you come here just for eating!?” and she decided to act on her own. She slowly and purposefully began descending; the other Taigans took off after her and after a short time, they flushed a herd of mountain sheep right beneath where we were. The sheep were resting under thick bushes. There was a weak breeze from one side and

the dogs could not smell them. They could use only their vision. Perhaps, Kunduz caught some movement of the animals.

Courage and aggressiveness. This must be seen; otherwise it is difficult to explain it. How could a one-year-old Taigan about of 15-20 kg chase and pull down a mature seven-year-old wolf? I saw it and I am still surprised. After being shot and injured, the wolf could not run fast; it turned on the Taigan and began fighting until we caught up and finished the wolf. The dog was not injured. On another occasion my Kunduz treed a northern lynx. There were three dogs with us: Kunduz, who was 5 years old, her mother, who was 11 years old and a one year old male, Aktos, who saw the animal for the first time. I led both females leashed and the male was running free. Suddenly, I saw about 50 m ahead that Aktos had put up some animal. The animal ran without hurrying across the slope and surprised Aktos who followed it also without hurrying about 5 m behind. At first, I thought Aktos was chasing some stray dog, but in a second, I realised that it was a northern lynx. Our experienced females saw it sooner and they were pulling at their leashes. When I let them free, the lynx realised at once the danger. It ran with big leaps and climbed a tree. I ran up and to shoot the animal in the head, but in my hurry, I missed and the bullet hit it in the front leg. The lynx fell and the dogs pounced on it at once. I heard the squealing of the old dog. When I ran up, I saw that Kunduz held the lynx by the back of the head and the young Aktos took a hold of its hind leg. The old dog was running around, complaining, perhaps because she lacked the strength. The claws of both front paws of the lynx were sunk in Kunduz's head, but Kunduz did not let go. I finished the cat off at close range and then talked Kunduz off, telling her that it was all over and she could stop holding the animal. We ate the lynx all together. The meat of the lynx, as it is written in old books, is very tasty and it is white, like chicken. Interestingly aboriginal sighthounds, such as Taigans and Tazys eagerly eat the raw meat of herbivores and the raw meat of wolves and foxes as well. This is what dogs of any other breed reject. In general, the aggressiveness of the Taigan is greater than the aggressiveness of other dogs.

We also had excellent hunting Tazys. They caught jackals, foxes and bayed wild boar and elk. However, they would give up, if they met a wolf, let alone a bear. They say there were Tazys in the past, which were not afraid of wolves, but I have never met such hounds. There was one interesting case involving bear. One time my friend and I went into the mountains and saw a bear, which was about 2 km from us. The bear did not suspect our presence and quietly crawled under a big tree, growing on the cliff. We had three dogs, two Tazys and one mongrel. The dogs did not see the bear. We decided to test our dogs and planned to sneak closer to the bear, which probably was resting during the day. We succeeded with our plan and came up immediately close to the place where the bear lay. We were standing on the cliff about 2-3 m high and right beneath us was the tree, under which the bear was resting. We had let the dogs loose, while we were approaching this place. Our Tazys ran around the cliff and the tree, sniffed everything around and returned to us. Looking at them, I could be certain to say: "There is no bear here, there is not even a mouse and do we have any business here? Maybe we should go elsewhere?" I was standing on the cliff and thought that the bear would probably run away, when we walked up here. "Listen, - my friend said loudly, releasing the trigger and taking his gun onto his shoulder, - look at the dogs, there is no bear here!" The next second, a huge fat bear jumped from under our feet and run downhill. For about a minute we were watching with open mouths how the bear was running away. What about the dogs? They did not even turn their heads, but lay down biting their fleas. Now, I learned that the dogs knew very well, what kind of animal was under the tree. They were just afraid. I was sure that if I had had my Taigan Kunduz, things would have turned out quite differently.

I will add a few more words about the Taigan's characteristics and appearance. All our Taigans had black mouths (roof of the mouth), which I consider a sign of aggressiveness. The tail, too! Our hunters paid attention to the tail first. It should be small, like in the rat and without feathering at all. Often it has a permanent ring at the tip or sometimes a half ring. When I showed our hunters pictures of show quality aboriginal sighthounds with bushy tails, like in the Saluki, they laughed. It was a mystery, why pay so much attention to the tail? It would seem logical that the Taigan should have a feathered tail for maneuverability. However, our Taigans run with their rat-like tails and achieve excellent maneuverability perhaps by their own acute sense of balance. It is unimaginable for a Taigan to fall in the mountains, even when the dog is chasing and struggling with mountain goats on vertical cliffs. I heard many stories about Laikas, German Wirehaired Pointers and Borzois being injured while running on cliffs. I think that the maneuverability of the Taigan is achieved by its short body, the exceptional resilience of its joints and the strength of its muscles and tendons. I once had to struggle with an unfamiliar Taigan female. My impression was that it was not a dog but a live steel cable with an iron trap instead of a mouth. The flexibility of their joints is noticeable in everyday life. One can see the dog in an unusual posture with the feet turned out too much, which I have never seen in other dogs.

During hunting, the Taigan uses different methods for catching animal. In many literary sources in Russian, one can find literally the same expression: “The Taigan is used for hunting foxes, corsac, marmot, badger, wild cat and hoofed animals. A pair of strong Taigans adjusted to hunt together can stop a wolf” (Pilshchikov and Mazover, 1973; Markanov, 1933; Matveev, 2000). In general, that is true, but I would rather maintain that the major objects of hunting with Taigans are mountain hoofed mammals and wolf. A Kazakh hunter can enjoy watching his sighthound coursing a fox on the open steppe to satisfy his love of the sport. It is very different, when hunting in the mountains. Hunting in the mountains is not just for fun, but rather arduous work for both the hunter and his dog. When hunting in the mountains, regardless of the ethnicity of the hunter, the Kazakh, Kyrgyz or Russian would not make his horse and dog suffer in vain because of a fox or a marmot pelt. Catching a mountain goat or sheep and bringing home 50-100 kg of pure quality meat is a different matter. My opinion is corroborated by the behavior of the dogs themselves. Take a closer look at what Taigans or Tazys are doing when they hunt on the plain. A good experienced hunting dog often plays with the animal they catch. Our Taigans, when they sight and catch a fox, they toss it high in the air or they kill it by breaking the backbone. Sometimes we saw how a fox was laying on the ground after it had been stopped and shaken by the dog and the Taigan was sitting nearby and even looking away from the game. The animal regained consciousness and tried to run away. The Taigan allowed it to run as far as 20 meters and then in a powerful dash it tossed the fox up again. This resembles the way a cat plays with a mouse it has caught and condemned to die. Our three Taigans treated jackals in a similar way. Unlike with the fox, they did not toss jackals but stopped them by biting their hind legs hard and killing them by biting the throat. I have never seen such playful behavior among Taigans in the mountains.

When hunting hoofed mammals, the Taigan uses its vision and scent and is capable of tracking on the ground. When excited, young Taigans often track backwards. Perhaps for a sighthound, seeing the game is more important. The Taigan is fast enough to catch a mountain goat, a sheep or an elk in their natural habitat. Usually one or several dogs separate one animal from the herd and chase it to the cliff, where they hold it at bay. Usually this is by a small steep cliff, a big rock or even on a flat plateau somewhere in a dead end under a steep wall. Here, Taigans hold the animal at bay by barking until the hunter comes up for a sure shot. There are Taigans, which can catch and kill an adult mountain goat alone. In such a case, they act like wolves. First, they stop the animal by hard bites in the rear and between the legs and then go for the throat. When hunting wild boar, the Taigan acts like Laika, circling around the animal, holding it at baying. This is impossible for one dog to do; a team of two – three dogs is needed. The Taigan is fast enough to avoid the charges of wild boar; the dogs I knew never had injuries caused by wild boar.

The wolf is a different matter. To a mountain hunter with his shaggy sighthound dog, the wolf is always a very desirable and challenging prey. The wolf is the enemy of any herdsman and to him, killing a wolf means the preservation of livestock, the gratitude of neighbors, the satisfaction of vengeful feelings for livestock killed in previous years. He also kills for fear of losing every night a favorite cow, a horse or even for the fear he felt when he was a child. When the hunter was still a baby in his cradle, crying, behind a flap covered the entrance to his yurt (felt tent), his mother used to whisper to him: “Stop crying or the wolves will come...”. Therefore, the hunter and his four-legged friend pursue the wolf. The wolf is a very smart, strong, bold and shrewd animal. There are very few dogs of other breeds capable of engaging a wolf in the open and only a few animals out of thousands can overcome it. First, the wolf does not fight and does not wrestle, but it kills. The wolf is highly efficient and it cannot afford a prolonged fight with its victim, because it can be injured and lose its ability to obtain food. The wolf must kill efficiently, which it does. The strength of its jaws and its hard teeth are remarkable. My friend, a ranger, told me how he had once caught a wolf in a trap. When he dismounted and walked with his rifle towards the wolf, it snarled and pressed its back into a bush. The trap held the front leg of the wolf. The hunter had a loaded rifle in his hands and felt his complete power over the wolf. He came up closer and poked the wolf with the barrel and the wolf charged and snapped; the rifle and the hunter flew in opposite directions. It was only the trap that prevented the wolf from finishing his foe. When my friend had picked up his rifle and killed the wolf, he wiped his forehead with trembling hands and noticed some dents in the steel barrel of his military rifle. The wolf’s canines remained intact.

A couple of years ago, I bought a 3-month-old wolf puppy from some local people and kept it penned at home. I am not a livestock owner and I like wolves; I felt sorry for the wolf puppy, when I saw how cruelly he was treated. I kept the wolf until he was 1.5 years old. When he was one year old, he showed me the strength of his teeth. One morning I was in a hurry to go and noticed that my wolf was thirsty; his water bowl was turned over. I decided to give him water through the fencing mesh, without wasting time on opening latches. The fencing was

pretty sturdy, with 10x10 cm mesh. I filled the aluminum bowl with water and brought it closer to the fencing, hoping he would drink through the hole. However, the wolf decided otherwise. He poked his pointed muzzle through the hole and grabbed the bowl. The bowl with a diameter bigger than the gap in the fence was simply rolled like a sausage. This was done by a one-year-old wolf raised in captivity.

On Markokol Lake high in the Southern Altai Mountains, I witnessed several wolves hunting elk. The attacking wolf caught an adult elk, running at full speed, from the rear and between its legs and pulled out its entrails. This is how powerful a wolf is. Is there any dog capable of withstanding the wolf's iron jaws? There are such dogs among aboriginal dogs. These are not only to be found among livestock guarding breeds, such as the Central Asian Ovcharka or the Caucasian Mountain Dog, but also the modest Taigan. When hunting wolf, the Taigan uses its speed to advantage. Here are some examples. We are driving horses. There are two points ahead. One is gray; this is a wolf running away from death. The other is black, this is a Taigan. The Taigan is catching up with the wolf and the latter stumbles in the snow, then stands up on his feet and runs again. The Taigan catches it again and the wolf, like a ball, flies in the snow. The wolf stands with its tail between its legs and snarling awaits the charges of the Taigan, ready to die. Woe to the wolf, if two or three Taigans are attacking it. There are quite a few Taigans, which do not hesitate to fight a wolf on their own. Of course, this is always dangerous for the dog, because it could be severely injured even if its master intervenes quickly. We could not understand for a long time how the Taigan forced the wolf to fall because it was done so quickly; was it using its feet or just hitting it with its chest? Eventually, we saw that while running at full speed, the Taigan hits the wolf with its canines.

Besides hunting hoofed mammals and wolves, the Taigan hunts marmots and never misses a wild cat. Both cats and marmots are easy game for the Taigan. It kills cats by breaking their backbone, when it catches them in thickets in the ravine. Cats run slowly and, if there are no trees nearby, the Taigan catches them. When a cat is treed, the Taigan barks and attentively watches it. When hunting marmots, the Taigan uses the features of the terrain. When marmots walk as far as 10-20 meters from their holes, the dog is crawling up as close as 40-50 meters before making a quick dash. The marmot is a slow runner and usually the Taigan catches the animal before it can reach its hole. The Taigan often hunts marmots on its own, which make a natural supplement to its diet.

Conclusions. Comparing aboriginal sighthounds with other hunting breeds, involuntarily a doubt emerges. Do we raise and keep purebred dogs correctly? Maybe we are losing some of the essential qualities of aboriginal dogs, their primitive, but rational adaptation to life? We are becoming more and more detached from our natural wild environment and side by side with us fat bulldogs, distorted toy breeds, German Shepherd Dogs plagued with hip dysplasia, psychologically abnormal Dobermans are marching on, dangling with their dubious medals, all are victims of human vanity and delusions. The existence of Taigans, Tazys and Salukis still gives cynologists a chance to preserve and multiply a part of our cultural heritage, which primitive breeds of dogs are. For millennia, the dog accompanies the human, sharing his joys and troubles. Friendship and loyalty do not weaken and, who knows, our association may be in anticipation of our future fate? Maybe humans will have to go back to caves and the dogs will protect them from saber-tooth tigers?

## THE KAZAKH TAZY – FACT OR FICTION?

Sir Terence Clark



In the period 10-15 September 2007, the first international scientific conference “Aboriginal Breeds as Elements of Biodiversity and the Cultural Heritage of Humankind” was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, under the auspices of the Primitive Aboriginal Dogs Society (PADS) and a variety of public and private institutions in Kazakhstan. Twenty-two specialists in the study of aboriginal dogs from five continents participated in the work of the conference. (I should make clear that “aboriginal dogs” were defined as “dogs as local populations that have evolved in the process of the development of local cultures and civilisations, according to their needs”.) I attended as a member of the organising committee and as a speaker on the theme – “The origins of the Saluki and its situation in the countries of origin today”. My talk brought me into an unresolved discussion with the Kazakh hosts, who were promoting the Kazakh Tazy as a national breed of hunting hound.

This was not my first visit to Kazakhstan. I was last there four years previously and had an opportunity then to see a small selection of Tazys (the spelling of Tazy differs from the more familiar Tazi because it follows the standard form of transliteration of the word as it is written in Russian). As I was speaking mainly Russian, I was happy at that time to go along with calling them Tazys, even though they looked like Salukis, as these pictures show.

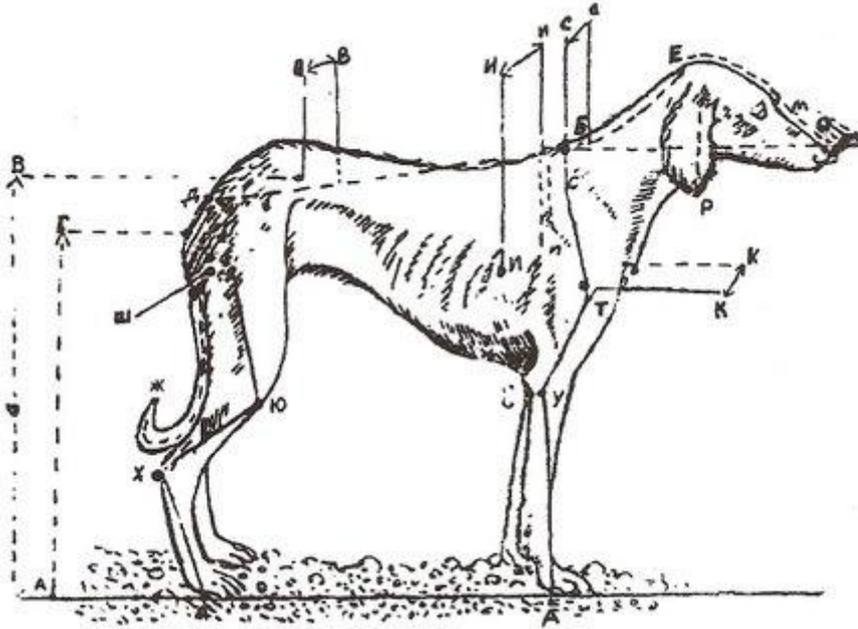
*Tazys in Almaty*



I also started about this time to immerse myself in the Russian literature on these hounds, of which the standard classic is a study by A A Sludsky entitled “The Central Asian Borzaya Taza and hunting with it”, written in 1939 (“Borzaya” means here “Sighthound” and “Taza” is another way of writing Tazy). According to him the Tazy appeared in Kazakhstan at the time of the Arab conquests in Central Asia in the 8th century, although we now know that similar hunting hounds already existed in the area long before. Indeed one archaeologist from Kazakhstan, A G Medoev, maintains that a petroglyph from the 12-10th millennia BC shows a dog similar to a Tazy. However Sludsky writes that these Arab hounds were crossed

with some unspecified local mountain dog to give a more robust hound capable of handling the severe climate of Central Asia. The hound

became popular among the Khans and Begs who ruled the area for centuries. In the Soviet era these hounds were employed in the fur trade as they were shown to be the most efficient means of catching fur-bearing animals, particularly foxes, without damaging the pelt. Sludsky says that in 1938 there were 4,200 registered Tazys working in Kazakhstan, though the real number was probably more like 7,000, not all purebred. Sludsky goes on to give a detailed description of the Tazy, with a table of measurements and an outline drawing, and lays down in great detail how to judge its performance in field trials.



*Outline drawing of a Tazy*

The Second World War had a devastating effect on the whole way of life of the people of Kazakhstan. Commercial hunting with Tazys went into a steep decline from which it has never recovered. The dramatic fall in the worldwide demand for the fur of wild animals was also a major blow and the difficult task of restructuring Kazakhstan's economy after the break-up of the Soviet Union further complicated matters. It has been only in the



last fifteen years or so through the efforts of some dedicated individuals, notably Konstantin Plahov of the Research Institute of Ecological Monitoring and Expertise and his wife Ana Plahova of the Military Institute of the Committee of National Security, that the breed has begun to make a comeback in Kazakhstan. Even so, they say that they have had to contend with a sharp decline in the population of relatively purebred Tazys since the 1980s from about 800-1,000 to only 100-150 at the present time.

*Kazakh Tobet*

Konstantin Plahov revealed at the Almaty Conference that he, his wife and their associates began their work in 1991 and proceeded over the years to measure, photograph and describe over 1,000 Tazys and Tazy-like dogs and made comparisons between them and other Sighthound breeds in Kazakhstan and other countries. They then developed their own methodology for assembling and analysing all available information on these utilitarian

hounds under study and established parameters that they believed could be used for drawing up a standard for any breed. Indeed they have already applied it to create a standard for the Kazakh Tobet, a large shepherd dog like the Central Asian Ovcharka or the Turkmen Alabai. At the same time they set about a rigorous programme to cleanse the Tazy of the effects of crossbreeding and to establish a breeding stock of dogs with a four-generation pedigree. They also worked on the conformation of these dogs to a new working standard and attempted to fix certain coat colours.



### *Tazy at the Conference*

While participants in the Conference generally applauded these great efforts to restore the Tazy to its former status, many of us remained sceptical about the resulting identification of the Kazakh Tazy as a discrete breed. We were concerned about the consequences for these hounds of restricting their gene pool to the already depleted breed stock in the country. We were also concerned about the encouragement it might give to other countries with similar hounds to claim them as discrete national breeds, leading to the creation of artificial divisions where none existed before.

None of us knew at that stage that on 26 January 2007 a new standard had been approved by the Union of Cynologists of Kazakhstan (UCK), which is recognised by the FCI, though its Tazy standard is not so recognised. We were under the impression that the different standard of 2000 approved by the Hunting and Fishing Association of Kazakhstan was still the operative standard for Kazakh breeders. However it emerged subsequently that both standards are in use by rival factions among the Tazy breeders. Thus, formally, the Kazakh Tazy exists, but there appears to be no consensus in Kazakhstan on its standard!

In an unforeseen way the case for the Kazakh Tazy was partly undermined by the sudden appearance in the Conference hall of a local breeder with two of his hounds, which to the chagrin of our hosts all of us with long experience of Salukis immediately identified as such. They

were small and sparsely feathered but definitely like the Salukis to be found in the more desert areas in the Middle East. They were, we were told, Kazakh Tazys of the Turkmen type, which hail from southern Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and northern Uzbekistan, where the winters are appreciably milder, the terrain more desert-like, and the requirement is for a fast and manoeuvrable hound with stamina for the long chase. Although such hounds were clearly identified in the Plahov presentation, the new standard for the Kazakh Tazy does not refer to them specifically as a recognised type. Outside the hall we were to see a number of other Tazys that raised further doubts.

Many of the foreign participants were accommodated in a hostel at the Sunkar kennels and aviary on the outskirts of Almaty. In green and pleasant surroundings a dozen or more Tazys, some with puppies, which were the product of a careful selective breeding programme, were accommodated there. My overall impression was however that these hounds looked even more like the kind of Salukis that I was accustomed to see in their more northerly ranges in the Middle East. The thought crossed my mind that the purification of the breed had been conducted so successfully that it had taken the local hounds right back to their Saluki ancestors! Some of these hounds were actively used for hunting and they served therefore as a good yardstick for what a Tazy should look like according to the standard.



*Sunkar Tazys*

After the Conference our hosts had arranged for the foreign participants an excursion to the village of Nura, about 135 km north of Almaty. Here we would meet a famous hunter with eagles, known as a Berkutchi from the Kazakh word Berkut meaning golden eagle, and with Tazys. We were joined en route by a number of local hunters with their Tazys and I actually drove with one of them and his little black and silver bitch and a West Siberian

Laika (a hunting dog something like a small Husky). We were to see all these dogs running free later on but our attentions was concentrated for the time being on the spectacle at Nura.

*Berkutchi with Tazy & Laika*



*Berkutchi & eagle*



We were greeted by Mukhamed Isabekov, known as ‘Muluk’, his wife and several children in front of a felt yurt in the yard of their property, where Muluk had established a small museum decorated with falconry paraphernalia and dramatic pictures of hunting with eagles and Tazys. Muluk is one of 14 Berkutchis from the Nura area out of total of 40 officially recognised in Kazakhstan. A couple of the local Berkutchis came in dressed in their colourful national costumes to pose for us.

*Kurdish black Tazi*



My eye was however more on an almost solid black, beautifully proportioned Tazy that wandered loose among us, although the gates from the yard to the road outside were wide open.

More constrained was a recently acquired grizzle bitch of the Turkmen type from the Shymkent area that was chained to an eagle perch to familiarise her with the bird. She was still rather shy but she looked to me as if she had great potential and she would have been my choice of all those that I saw that day.

***Grizzle bitch***



Muluk was keen however to show us his top dog, a dark grey, sturdy hound called Kogdalu, who already had an awesome reputation, having killed 48 foxes last season and 36 the season before. His sire had come from the far west beyond the Syr-Darya (Oxus) river, where he was noted for killing jackals. Kogdalu had sired a litter from a rather taller light grey bitch that was in a kennel with two puppies, one like her with dark eyes “like an eagle’s”, said Muluk, and the other identical in colour but with light yellow eyes and ears that stood away from the head, which was sired by Kogdalu by a different dam, that was “not quite pure”, Muluk said. Kogdalu’s litter sister, a slightly smaller mahogany version of him, was also there. He reminded me strongly of a Kurdish hound that I had seen in Iran a couple of years ago, which was possibly a little longer in the leg.

***Similar Syrian bitch with cropped ears***

***Kogdalu***



*Iranian Kurdish Tazi*

But the star of the show was Muluk's little daughter who emerged carrying a 1½-month-old puppy with a strikingly patterned silvery grey coat. With the screaming eagles in the background and Muluk's sons parading their Hobby falcons on their wrists, while enormous Tobets padded about, it was an unforgettable experience.



*Girl with puppy*

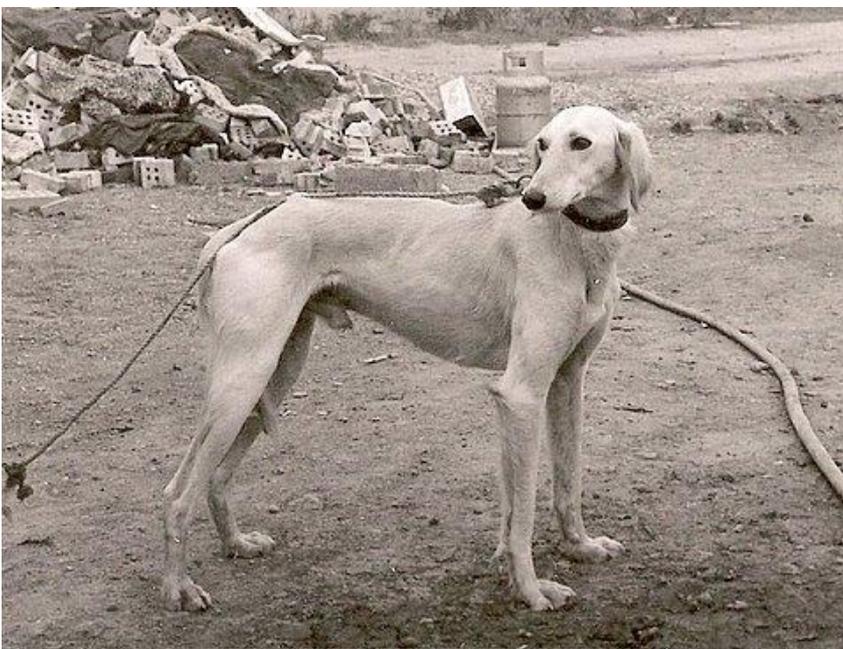
I had hoped to stay with Muluk an extra day to go hunting with him but it was still far too hot. They prefer to go hunting from November to February when the snow is on the ground and tracking the prey in these vast expanses of steppe is easier. Young hounds are trained either on foxes that have been caught alive by the eagles or they simply run with the experienced hounds and learn on the job. Muluk said that not all Tazys were suited to taking fox and he recounted an embarrassing story. An engineer had what he claimed was an outstanding Tazy and Muluk tried repeatedly to buy it. Eventually he succeeded and invited his friends round to see the hound perform on a fox that his son had shot and slightly wounded. The fox was released and the hound pursued it but when it drew level the fox turned on the hound and pursued it all the way back! The hound did not get a second chance.

***Cream Tazy***



of wildlife was a metre-long constrictor snake (*Eryx orientalis*) that we surprised as it warmed itself in the late afternoon sunshine.

However we did at least have an opportunity of seeing the hounds run when we went on to visit the Charyn National Park. The Charyn Gorge is likened to the Grand Canyon and it certainly is a spectacular sight. Although the area is a nature reserve no one seemed bothered about the dogs running loose and we saw how easily they coped with the uneven stony ground. In addition to the two dogs in my car, there were two dark grey hounds, a cream with a rather heavy head and a showy black-fringed sable. They were well trained and after a good run came obediently back to the cars for the long return journey. Apart from a lone falcon that flew up the Gorge, the only sign



***Iraqi cream Saluki***



***Black-fringed sable Tazy***

We stopped again at Muluk's yurt on the way back and enjoyed supper set on low tables inside while he showed video films of his hunting exploits with eagles and Tazys in the snow. The hunting is on horseback and it clearly requires a hound with plenty of stamina to keep up with the horses as they ride out to the hunting area, to course and catch the prey, which could even be wolf, and to trot back home again afterwards.



***Mounted Iraqi hunter***

Of course such exploits were once common with Salukis in the days before 4x4s. Even in more recent times I knew a hunter in Iraq who used to ride and hunt wolves with his pack of Salukis and I met a Kurd in Iran who hunted in similar winter conditions all manner of prey, including wolves, with his Tazys. Facts such as these seemed to surprise our Kazakh hosts whose knowledge of Salukis appeared to be narrowly based on what they had seen and heard of the breed in the West rather than in the countries of origin. They were also surprised to hear that Salukis were perfectly capable of hunting with all their senses, given the opportunity to do so, and were not merely sight hounds. For them it was one of the distinctions between their Tazys and Salukis that their hounds could follow

a scent and flush out game from the undergrowth. However it is quite normal for Arab and Kurdish hunters to give their hounds the opportunity to search for game, though the ensuing chase may be largely by sight. One of the Conference participants related that his Salukis used to hunt deer in dense forests in Scotland where sight, scent and hearing all played a role.

Does it matter that the Kazakhs have decided to establish a separate breed? As Konstantin Plahov said to the Conference, 'to close the Tazy breed completely and focus on the Saluki, which already has international recognition as a breed' would be tantamount to 'a double standards policy'. He recalled that in the West the number of differences between breeds was unimportant: so long as there was a single difference that was justification enough. He believed there were sufficient differences for the Kazakh Tazy to constitute a separate breed and claimed the right of any country or people to determine their own breeds. Several speakers at the Conference doubted the wisdom of this course.

Leaving aside the question whether the claimed differences really exist, the first consideration must be the effect on the hounds themselves and participants in the Conference pointed to the harmful consequences for other breeds of a restricted gene pool. The situation in Kazakhstan was in fact even worse than we were led to believe, as I found later when I read the new breed standard, which further limits the breed stock by listing the following colours as a fault: "brindle, piebald, tricolour". In his presentation Plahov described such colours as "clear signs of past interbreeding with other breeds". Rather confusingly he also added "solid black, brown and pure white" to this list, although the new standard gives the permitted colours as: "All shades of agouti, all shades of red, white, black; small patches of white are allowed on the muzzle, forehead, throat, paws and the end of the tail; ticking on the white patches must be of the same basic colour. A light or dark mask is also allowed. Black and tan and grizzle are allowed but not desired". However we were generally of the view that when starting from what was apparently a small number of hounds defined as purebreds it was preferable to retain hounds which in all other respects were acceptable and to see through breeding how the offspring developed.

At the end of the Conference participants were involved in a long discussion of a resolution that finally we were happy to accept, as it kept to generalities. We could agree that every people and country should have the right to preserve their own populations of aboriginal dogs, as this was on the understanding that they could show that such dogs were exclusively their own. We could also agree on the need to draw international attention to their preservation in view of the disappearance of such populations worldwide.

Since leaving Kazakhstan another paper by the Plahovs and another colleague, M Eleusizov, which was not delivered at the Conference, has emerged. It covers much of the same ground as in their presented paper but makes the specific suggestion that the Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI) should create an additional group of dogs, for example Group 11 – aboriginal breeds, which would initially include those recommended by canine organisations or specialists. For such breeds bodies would be appointed to oversee their management as regards drafting standards, showing and trialling, etc. until such time as the requirements of the FCI were met for their registration as new breeds. However we had already made clear at the Conference that if the Kazakhs wished to seek recognition for their breeds they were already at liberty to make representations through their breed clubs to the FCI. In the case of the Tazy, they would need to show how it differed significantly from the Saluki (compare these images of early Saluki imports with Kazakh hounds of the 1960s).



*Tazys from the 1960s*



*Saluki imports from the Middle East in the 1920s*

The ball was left therefore very much in the Kazakh court. They have established unilaterally the Tazy as a breed of Kazakhstan and now they will have to prove it to the satisfaction of the outside world. It would be interesting to know how this move is viewed in neighbouring countries with Tazy populations. I gather that it has already run into opposition in Russia. It is a pity that the Kazakhs have taken up a fixed position in advance of the publication of the results of the research being undertaken in Sweden by Dr Peter Savolainen and his team into the origins of dogs, for which DNA and mtDNA samples from Tazys have been submitted. The outcome could have spared them embarrassment or conversely strengthened their case. As it is I have heard from other contacts in Kazakhstan that not everyone is happy with the new standard and that some hunters are ignoring it and continuing to breed Tazys according to their own long-established traditions.

## THE KAZAKH TOBET – MYTH, REALITY AND NECESSETY

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Among diverse, historically developed dog breeds of Southwestern Asia and Kazakhstan, until present, only the Eastern type sight hounds and sheep guarding dogs of various types have survived. The Eastern type sight hounds include the Kazakh Tazy, the Turkmenian Tazy and the Kirgisian Taigan, all related to the Persian Saluki and Arabian Sloughi. The sheep guarding dogs are known by different names. In Turkmenistan they are called Kopek or Kopek-si, but most often Alabai. In Tajikistan, they are called Dakhdarma, in Uzbekistan they are called Kopek and Kopek-it and Kazakh-it and in Kzakhstan they are called Tobet-it, Alapar-ot and Arab-it.

Sheep guarding dogs are a rather ancient group of dog breeds used for guarding and escorting sheep herds, caravans and migrating people over vast geographic territories from India and Mongolia to Spain. Over this vast territory, people developed truly effective methods for protection of small hoofed animals by powerful and aggressive dogs working 24 hours per day. Similar dogs were also used as war dogs by Assyrian, Roman and Greek armies and for catching animals during the many months of the roundup hunt of the Great Emperor Khubilai Khan and for fighting in arenas of the Roman circus shows. Some of Central Asian people used these kind of dogs for the, no less thrilling sport, of dog fighting. Dog fights were done until most recent time in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kirgisistan and Turkmenistan.

In the large territory of the former Soviet Union, the peak of cynological work took place in 1930's. During this time, the Red Army was a major employer of cynologists. Thus, the Belorussian Military District was specializing on Riesenschnauzers and Rottveilers. The Kievan Military District was specializing on South Russian Shepherd Dogs, and Transcaucasian Military District was specializing on Caucasian Shepherd Dogs. Central Asian Ovcharkas were less lucky. However, according to "Russian Dog Breeds of Asian Origin", by V. A. Kalinin, T. M. Ivanova and L. V. Morozova, 1992, some work was done with them as well. They wrote: "In 1923, there were Central Classes for Instructors training border troops and dogs organized for specialized border guards. The experience of this school showed that the Central Asian Ovcharka has a good scent and training ability for search and guard service. Moreover, all Soviet Union contests of working dogs held in 1939 showed high utilitarian qualities of this breed. Central Asian Ovcharka won in three categories of trials, search, protection and guarding service. Dogs picked by a chance and properly trained won over well tested imported breeds and took first places on all services involving scent and active protective reaction ..."

During the pre WWII period, in the Soviet Union, there were two official standards for Asian working dog breeds, the Turkmenian and the Kirgisian Ovcharkas. The Kirgisian Ovcharka was exactly what we call the Kazakh sheep guarding dog ("lived in Kirgisian steppes east of Orsk") now. After WWII, using dogs from Turkmenistan and some dogs from Tajikistan, the work on development of a new purebred finally named the Central Asian Ovcharka had began. It is currently being bred in other than Kazakhstan countries and primarily in Russia. Standard of this breed is accepted by FCI with registration number 335. Unfortunately, there was no standardization of the breed types done. As a result, scattered over large territories with many breeding centers, the Central Asian Ovcharka cannot take a uniform breed appearance and results depend on the experience and knowledge of local breeders. As a result, we have several types, such as Leningrad type, Irkutsk type, Novosibirsk and other breed types considerably differing from each other. Differences among them are greater than differences between Belgian Shepherd Dogs. There is no standard appearance and agreement among dog experts in countries of their origin in Southwestern and Central Asia regarding how the dog should look like.

In 1991, in Turkmenistan, work on restoration of the Turkmenian type of breed began. The breed was named the Turkmenian (Asian) Volkodav. Russian name Volkodav stands for "wolf killer". They kept records of breeding stock dogs, wrote the breed standard and approved it by Ministry of Agriculture of Turkmenistan. A male named "Argush", which had been known as a multiple dog fight winner in Turkmenistan was picked up as a model for the new breed standard. Besides this, in Turkmenistan, trials at dog fights became an accepted method for selecting dogs with the best working qualities. Of course, other Central Asian Republics have a right to breed their own breeds for any purpose. Whether they can realize this right, is a different matter.

Now, how is it going in Kazakhstan with our sheep guarding dogs? In Kazakhstan, sheep guarding dogs are extremely diverse by the appearance and they are lacking that uniformity, which is observed among similar dogs in Turkmenistan. Moreover, there are many mixes with other breeds, such as the Tazy, the German Shepherd Dog and the Caucasian Shepherd Dog. These mixes are known under names like the Drok, the Durek, the Duregei, the Kain, the Kain-Kaptal etc., depending on the region of Kazakhstan. In early 1960's, in Kazakhstan, an Expedition

headed by Yu. N. Pilshchikov surveyed dogs of sheep herdsman ("chabans"). They examined 18,425 dogs. Among them, a share of dogs fitting the appearance well enough of the Central Asian Ovcharka was 22%. In Southern Kazakhstan, dogs of similar type, depending on coat color and length and body complexion, are called "arab-it" (white), "alapar-it" (piebald or spotted) and "tobet-it" (black and tan). Currently, the name Tobet-it is most common and it is applied to all types of sheep guarding dogs available in the country. Sheep guarding dogs of Kazakhsan have been little used for dog fights. Their primary purpose has always been the protection of sheep from wolves and protection of villages (auls) and camp sites of nomads against robbers at night. These dogs were also used for hunting mainly wolves and wild boars.

At present, in Kazakhstan, dogs of the Tobet type occur sporadically in Shimkent, Zhambyl and Kzyl Orda Provinces. Their total number, including mixes, does not exceed 200 dogs and their population tends to decline. Now, active kennels do not work on Kazakh type Tobets. This is the time to include them in the Red Book of endangered species, because they are a breed on the verge of extinction, although this action still has not helped.

The extinction of local dog breeds in Kazakhstan was caused by social and economic factors, such as revolution, hunger during the 1930's, transition to settled way of life, loss of traditions, reduction of hunting lands, changes in the hunting industry and its role in the local economy and diminishing of sheep breeding. Biological causes were also important, such as reduction of game populations, importation and raise in popularity of foreign dog breeds, new deadly dog diseases, high mortality among puppies, vermin control of by scattering poison baits, uncontrolled mating, inbreeding and killing of all females in litters. Loss of good dogs because of using them for dog fights also contributed to the demise of the breed. Sheep guarding dogs and eastern sight hounds persisted for centuries, despite droughts, starvation and dangers coming from wolves and robbers and they faithfully served their owners even risking and loosing their own lives. It is sad, that now, in the period of democratization, independence and restoration of historical traditions in the country, they became abandoned by those people whom they have been serving. Worsening economic conditions, loss of traditions and minimal role of kennels threatened existence of aboriginal dogs in Kazakhstan.

#### **Tobet**



Population of the Central Asian Ovcharka living outside his aboriginal distribution reached several thousands of dogs. This resembles what happened in China. Because of Englishmen, who did not loose time and saved some Chinese dogs and now, Chinese can find places where they can see them. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are less lucky. During recent 100 years, three aboriginal dog breeds became extinct, the Gurji, the Javzy and the Karateginka. Which way Kazakhstan would choose, depends on us. Disappearance of any domesticated animal breed is not only impoverishment of biodiversity of the planet, but it is also a loss to our national heritage. Every aboriginal breed is a living monument of national culture of people who created it during millennia. It should be our task to save them and pass to

future generations with their original qualities.

During our expeditions in Kazakhsan, meeting different people, we had a chance to hear a very interesting story. This happened before WWII: "Late one night in winter, one man returned home riding his horse from the neighboring aul (village), where he spent time at big holyday (toi). A blizzard began and, when he approached his aul, both the man and the horse were discovered by a wolf pack. Blizzard, strong wind, darkness and gray predators approaching the man on horseback. The wolves did not need to hurry; their prey would have no chance of escaping. The man holding his whip, the only weapon he had, screamed loudly. Fortunately, he was not far from his aul, where his faithful Tobet heard call his master despite the wind. The dog runs into the blizzard in the darkness to the unknown, because a fight could be fatal to him. The Tobet and the man won the fight. The man was grateful to his dog for saving his life and the dog was surrounded by respect until his last day of life."

This story sounds like a tale with a happy ending. It was told to us by Beket Esentaev. In the story, one thing is noteworthy and this is the man called his Tobet for help, when he got into a trouble and the dog did not hesitate to run to his rescue. The dog did not think of recalling, when his master once kicked him because of bad mood and the children had thrown rocks at him. The man called his dog because he needed his help and the Tobet without hesitating rushed into the darkness of night to fight wolves and rescue his master.

Modern reality and catastrophic state of Kazakh Tobets in their home country, which should be the refuge of this breed, cry out for immediate action to save the breed. Descendants of that remarkable dog, call for our help, and we are the grandchildren of that man. We do not need to rush into darkness risking our lives. We need to be proactive and spend some money. We calculate: “Republic is in a difficult economic situation, the Government does not have money...” We find numerous excuses, while “best friends of man” are on the verge of extinction. Our callousness and disrespect to the memories and traditions of our ancestors are endless.

Survival of breeds of domesticated animals without direct intervention of man is impossible. As we can see, at the certain stage of development of society, problems of preservation of domesticated animals are not in the list of the Government’s priorities, which actually makes them threatened by a complete extinction. Wild animals are somewhat protected by the law about using animal world and in most critical situations wild species are included in Red Book (endangered species list), but this does not apply to breeds of domesticated animals, leaving them unprotected. Breeds important for immediate consumption by humans are in slightly better situation, but so-called “non productive” animals are endangered the majority, including dogs belong to this category.

Now, we have an opportunity to organize and association uniting several kennels involved with restoration of the breed the Kazakh Tobet. This should be done on basis of Republican Club of Purebred Hunting Dogs of Kazakhstan Union of Hunters and Fishermen (Kazokhotrybolovsoyuz). The new leadership of Kazokhotrybolovsoyuz is ready to provide it’s support and this is not just a little help. We already have a model and prepared an interim description of the appearance of breed, the Kazakh Tobet, which is necessary in the initial period of work. We also determined the major direction of the work on the breed the Kazakh Tobet. This is going to be a versatile breed, suitable for use as a guard working dog for guarding, property protection and guarding sheep herds under diverse natural conditions of Kazakhstan.

Working qualities of the breed would be the major criteria for selecting parents. The dogs should pass two kinds of trials; on wolf protection and on general protection and guarding service. Primary purpose of this dog is protection of agricultural animals from wolves. According to census conducted by specialists of Institute of Zoology, during recent years, wolf population grew up to 70-100 thousand, which became a threat not only to agricultural animals, but also to wild hoofed animals of Kazakhstan Republic. The second, but not less important profession of the Kazakh Tobet should be it’s versatility in guarding and protection service. Because this breed has a functionally correct body complexion, this breed should have the endurance to perform many kilometers of daily running trips, tracking criminals and help to make successful arrests of suspects. Males of the Kazakh Tobet are 50-60 kg and females are 45-60 kg. The dog has a well balanced temperament, good vision and sense of smell and capable of explosive, aggressive reaction, which helps in conducting guarding service. The Kazakh Tobet should be a good body guard and a companion family dog. Shortly, by his body size and appearance, the Kazakh Tobet would fit between now bred in Russia Central Asian Ovcharkas and Turkmenian Wolf Killers. Ideally, the Kazakh Tobet should replace the East European Ovcharka. Because it is less demanding for care and better fit to work under climate and agricultural conditions of Kazakhstan. Now, this breed is very much needed in Kazakhstan, including agriculture, the Army, border guard forces, law enforcement, private companies and citizens of Kazakhstan.

For successful implementation of such a program, moral support alone is not enough. Sustainable financing is needed. In 1930’s, Japan began as an economically underdeveloped and politically weak country and was searching for ways of enforcing independence and national rebirth. Among first steps was saving of the national breed of Japan, the Akita –inu, which was picked up as a symbol of “country of raising sun”. The government of Japan took a major role in inspiring and financing such a program. After WWII, the country was rebuilt from rubble, literally. And again, Japan’s Government made every effort for the restoration of national dog breeds of Japan. This program was successfully executed and today, the Akita-inu is a breed recognized by FCI.

Preservation of threatened breeds of Kazakhstan, the Tazy, the Tiagan and the Kazakh Tobet is important not only for saving valuable gene pools and biodiversity of the planet. It is important for filling practical needs of agriculture and entertainment of people of Southwestern Asia. The implementation of such a program is impossible without professional pedigree work based on well funded kennels and Government’s involvement. Otherwise, the fait of these breeds is pitiful. Involvement of the Army and hunting clubs as major consumers of puppies of these breeds would be a decisive factor in their rebirth. Today, nobody, except us, can take charge and do it. Another way is indifference justified by “financial difficulties” and forget about our national heritage and that “the dog is one of seven riches”.