Chapter 1

Introductory Thoughts: Shifting Perspectives

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Introductory Thoughts

The goal of this chapter is to dismantle the major myths surrounding the Saluqi yet retain the mystique of the breed. The myths obstruct us in our ability to understand and appreciate Eastern hounds and prevent us from making wise decisions in the areas of registration, breeding, and judging in the West.

There are four major “mythical” themes analyzed here. The first theme is that there is more than the vaguest shred of authenticity in the common breed-creation stories or that tribal people, or any people for that matter, keep accurate genealogies for thousands of years. The second major theme deals with the idea that classification systems are absolute. The third is that the concept “purebred” has a genetic foundation. And the final theme is that of isolation: people and animals encapsulated, suspended in an Eden-like vacuum from the beginning of time. It is critical to the future of the Saluqi in the West that we arrive at a better, more accurate, or if I may presume, truer understanding of our breed, in an historical as well as a current Eastern context.

Though at times abstract and demanding of the reader’s full attention, I have chosen to demonstrate by quoting the sources directly, how I have built my arguments and conclusions. The myths have persisted for so long because they are so simple and appealing. Reality is much more difficult to deal with. Attempting to understand how a hound has endured for thousands of years in apparently the same form it exhibits today in all Eastern lands is a fascinating and challenging task. I hope the ideas presented here prove stimulating, provocative, and finally, exciting.
Identifying with the Past: Creating a Context

Where does it all begin? When was the relationship established and how did it happen? And once we have a grasp of the beginning, we inevitably ask what it has meant to those who hunted with the Saluqi throughout the ages, those who enjoy and benefit from it today, and those who will be enchanted and enhanced by this hound in the future. These are the questions. The answers form our celebration of the Saluqi, coursing hound of the East.

Like the nomad’s migration, like the explorer’s adventure, we must keep in mind that sometimes the object is not a destination, but a journey. “When you’re on a journey and the end keeps getting further and further away, then you realize that the real end is the journey.”1 Our goal is to trace the path travelled by the Saluqi from then to now. We wish to draw a map of many routes. We will leave you free to travel it as you choose, as we continue our own journeys. The search is not for ideals but for essences.

Where did it all begin and how was the relationship established has engaged scholars and dog lovers alike. Most of us are fascinated by the idea of owning an ancient breed, a breed which in the shape we know it existed in the shadowy past of shadowy people whose paintings appear in caves, whose artifacts are uncovered in ancient tombs or deep under the surface of the earth, displayed in museums in half-lights inspiring awe.

Abundant evidence of our desire to associate ourselves with dogs originating in the distant past is found by simply leafing through the National Geographic Book of Dogs (1958). Each group seems to be vying with the others to place at least some of its members in the “most ancient” category. We willingly accept shreds of evidence as irrefutable proof. The same shreds of evidence or art may serve numerous breeds, but we are convinced it is our breed and no other. National Geographic presents a comprehensive survey of the generally accepted “evidence,” passed down from fancier to fancier, generation after generation.

From the section sporting dogs, Born Hunters, the Bird Dogs we read that in the beginning all dogs were hunters while today only a small part of the canine population still hunts, man having reduced size and changed temperaments “to suit his tastes and mode of living…but certain breeds, among them the pointers, setters, spaniels and retrievers have remained man’s hunting allies through the centuries. Old English prints of two and more centuries ago picture hunting dogs almost identical with our modern pointers, setters and spaniels.”2 The spaniels fare very well in vying for ancient origin and association. “The spaniels—whose name derived from their supposed origin in Spain—were trained to hunt in England and France almost 600 years ago. The Springer no doubt gained his first field experience working with Greyhounds, falcons, and huntsmen armed with nets. Since then, generations of sportsmen have lost their hearts to this ‘dogge of perfit and good scent…naturally addicted to the hunting of feathers.’”3

“Hark to the Hounds” begins with the Bloodhound, “a hound of extraordinary scenting power and determination described in Roman times. But the Bloodhound’s known lineage begins in the eighth century with the black and tan hounds of St. Hubert used to hunt stag in the Ardennes and a strain known as the Talbot Hound.” Norman conquerors brought the Bloodhound ancestors to England where the clergy “guarded the breed’s purity giving rise to the name ‘blooded hound.’”4 Suprisingly for some of us, we learn that “when Stone Age man hunted in the wooded mountains of Scandinavia, Norwegian Elkhounds padded be-

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2 National Geographic, Book of Dogs, pp. 77–78.
3 Ibid., p. 98.
4 Ibid., p. 150.
side him. These robust northern dogs left skeletons in a stratum that dates from 4000 to 5000 B.C. . . . The Elkhound has changed little since then."

On to our sighthounds; here the average “ancientness,” according to National Geographic, is 5,000 years as man’s companion, evidenced most frequently by Egyptian artists regardless of where the hounds were rediscovered in modern times. The Basenji is a typical example: “Egyptian carvings of 5,000 years ago depict the proud little dog with his perky ears and tightly curled tail.” Our Saluki “through countless centuries with nomad masters has coursed deserts from Sahara to Caspian Sea . . . No other dog sleeps in his Arab master’s tent; no other’s pedigree has been handed down in song and chant for perhaps a thousand years . . . This high regard appears as old as the breed itself. Sumerian and Egyptian murals and carvings 5,000 years old or more immortalize the lithe Saluki figure.” However, the Greyhound, the best known of the long-dog coursing breeds, “Swift as a ray of light, graceful as a swallow, and wise as Solomon” oddly shares the Egyptian coursing spotlight; lean and leggy, its fame was “first written on the hot sands of Egypt. The Pharoahs maintained great kennels for royal sport. One of the breed’s earliest pictorial records, discovered in a 5,000-year-old tomb, depicts dogs of Greyhound type (though oddly ring-tailed) running down deer—and goatlike prey. Through Persia, Greece, Rome, northern Europe—wherever bounding hare or other swift game was found—Greyhounds followed history’s course.”

Probably most surprising in this proposed Egyptian panorama is the Afghan Hound. A crumbling papyrus and pictographs on tomb walls survive to tell us that the “monkey-faced hound” of ancient Egyptians originated in the Sinai Peninsula and coursed game in the Nile valley 5,000 to 6,000 years ago. As if this were not old enough, tradition holds that a pair of Afghans represented dogdom aboard Noah’s Ark!

5 Ibid., p. 166.
6 Ibid., p. 167.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., p. 174.
Desert sheiks kept the rangy breed pure through centuries, but no one yet has bridged the gulf in history that placed it in Afghanistan, whence comes the Afghan’s name. There this regal member of the Greyhound family has hunted since 2200 B.C., rock carvings show, though he was little known outside that land until the present century.\(^9\)

From Sinai to Noah’s ark to the same hot sands of Egypt coursed by the oddly ring-tailed Greyhound and Saluki, this hound whose “heavy standoff coat shields him from the intense heat and cold in rock-strewn plains and mountains”\(^{10}\) appears to be the oldest of our absolutely purebred coursers remaining unchanged through the centuries.

Not to be outdone by the hounds, we have the ancient and noble working breeds. Herding dogs have guarded and moved flocks since man first domesticated livestock. Dogs have hauled sleds and travois for North American native peoples over frozen hunting grounds or open prairies. “Watchdogs like our modern Mastiff guarded Assyrian palace and medieval manor. Romans and Greeks, Celts and Gauls had courageous battle dogs in spiked collars or armour. . . .”\(^{11}\)

From the large and fierce we move to the small and amusing. None of us is free from the allure of speculation, from the desire to know the ancient past of our canine companions. Even respected zoologists indulge in fanciful flashbacks. The Pekingese, bred in the imperial palaces of China reached “a height of perfection probably never reached with any other breed” according to Richard and Alice Fiennes. “No other, not even the Saluki, has been consistently developed over so long a period representing so many generations of canine lives...No student of Chinese art could doubt that the driving force in the development of these small creatures was the Chinese near-pathological love of perfection in all things artistic.”\(^{12}\) The Fiennes continue their speculation on the development of the Pekingese stating:

In very early days the Chinese started the cult of miniature “sleeve” dogs, which they carried in the sleeves of their gowns (probably partly in order to keep themselves warm). Originally

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9 Ibid., p. 180.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., p. 214.
12 Fiennes, Natural History, p. 58.
too, large and fierce dogs were kept as watch dogs and later the dogs became the guardian of the household and symbol of the family’s well being. The ivory, jade or porcelain Fó dogs were also a religious symbol; they were Buddhist lion dogs…the cult of the Pekingese began for the odd reason that there were no lions in China; and so the Chinese with characteristic persistence, developed a lion dog with which to honor the Lord Buddha…After nearly two thousand years of breeding in terms of human generations, perhaps two hundred thousand years in canine generations, the little lion dogs made their entry to the Western world.13

The Fiennes’ description of the Pekingese having the matchless quality of the finest Chinese art is a recurring theme. They contrast the breeding of the Pekingese as symbols and works of art to the breeding of dogs, small dogs in particular, for useful or commercial ends, i.e., food for people, use as sacrifices, or feed for menagerie (zoo) animals. Saluqi lovers, reading those lines about a dog most of us would probably never think to describe as having the matchless quality of any civilization’s art, confront the adage form follows function almost ironically. The function of the Pekingese, according to these zoologists, has always been symbolic and artistic. Are we hearing an ominous warning? Is this what we can expect from those who wish to transform the Saluqi from an athlete to a living work of art? In this vein, T. Veblen’s treatise written in the early 1900s on the material relationship of dog to man is relevant:

Even those varieties of the dog which have been bred into grotesque deformity by the dog-fanciers are in good faith accounted beautiful by many. These varieties of dogs—and the like is true of other fancy-bred animals—are rated and graded in aesthetic value somewhat in proportion to the degree of grotesqueness and instability of the particular fashion which the deformity takes in the given case. For the purpose in hand, this differential utility on the ground of grotesqueness and instability of structure is reducible to terms of a greater scarcity and consequent expense. The commercial value of canine monstrosities, such as the prevailing styles of pet dogs both for men’s and women’s use, rests on their high cost of production, and their value to their owners lies chiefly in their utility as items of conspicuous consumption. Indirectly, through reflection upon their honorific expensiveness, a social worth is imputed to them; and so, by an easy substitution of words and ideas, they come to be admired and reputed beautiful.14

13 Ibid., pp. 58–64.
It would seem that work has been transformed into “show” and the grotesque, due to its rarity, becomes expensive, desirable and therefore beautiful. Brief reflection on some of the so-called rare breeds brings to mind characteristics of great or diminutive size, hairlessness, cords, wrinkles, pushed in faces, pop-eyes, dwarfed legs on large bodies, extreme attenuation of limbs, inability to give birth naturally, all exemplifying this commentary very well. Does the whole edifice of “shows” rest upon this principle: an easy substitution of words and ideas, of unstable or exaggerated features becoming desirable, admirable, and necessary to meet breed standards?

From ancient origins in essential service to symbolic and artistic creations by “sophisticated man” to monstrosities reputed beautiful, the histories unfold. Whether based on fact or fanciful fiction, we seem to need them and believe that they are true. We believe these histories because we want to. We have forced time to stand still and arrested change. From the plethora of ancient breeds we are certain, though many called by names we can neither pronounce nor forms recognize have vanished or transformed into different names and shapes, our breed, without doubt, has journeyed from the beginning of time to the present genetically and physically identical to the way we know it. In the case of the Saluqi, with its rich history of artistic representation, since we see the same dog today as depicted in ancient times, we know for certain—in the beginning, there was the Saluqi.

Pedigrees and Genealogies

The image of the Saluqi and the reported tradition of a pedigree, sung and chanted for perhaps a thousand years, are constant. Our breed alone is part of a tradition, a culture which sings or chants lineages. Whenever Western writers mentioned the Eastern greyhound, as well as the Eastern horse, they mentioned the tradition of known lineage, or, as we call it, pure breeding. Hence, it is critically important to the understanding of Saluqi history to understand the process of creating lineages. Why would writers speculate that the pedigrees were “known” as far back as a thousand years? What would give them that impression?

We must assume that the process of creating lineages is constant and ancient. A traditional cultural conceptual framework or world view allows Eastern tribal peoples to create lineages for themselves, their livestock and their Saluqis. Anthropologist William Lancaster
has used the term “generative genealogies” to describe the lineages. He found that the Rwala Bedu generative genealogies were anchored in a suprastructure of major family and clan groups, reflecting stable, unchanging membership. This “ancient” lineage was recited in 1914 and recorded by Alois Musil, recited almost identically and recorded again by Lancaster in 1973. What is critical to understand is that what is unchanging is the memory of ancient ancestors (or founding fathers) and affiliation, not the recitation of actual distant, recent, and current relationships between clan members. With regard to livestock, the concept of “pure” or asil breeding originated in Eastern lands and is practiced today, according to tradition—the same tradition that created the genealogies. This tradition paints with a broad brush leaving the details sketchy—open to lengthy discussion, negotiation and manipulation.

Lancaster describes the Rwala as concerning themselves primarily with their interactions in the Arab world. For them, the Arabs are divided into two groups, Bedu and non-Bedu, considering themselves closer to all Bedu, but

the exact genealogical relationship is ignored beyond the confederation level; for the Rwala this is the Aneze confederation of tribes…. As political and economic motives change with time, so the genealogy must change to accommodate changing assets and new options and so there is no true genealogy—truth is relative to the pragmatic needs of the group involved. Thus a society that appears to be constrained by the past (for this is how we see genealogies) is in fact generating the very genealogy through which it ‘explains’ the present…using that genealogy to generate the future…. The more distant genealogical relationships are largely forgotten and so the genealogy can be reordered to fit pragmatic reality. This reality is then ‘explained’ in genealogical terms and ‘proved’ by hindsight.15

Can it be otherwise for the thousand year pedigrees (genealogies) of the Saluqi, horse, and camel? And just possibly, by writing these genealogies we have disrupted a vital and vibrant process which has operated successfully, allowing the fluidity necessary to maintain health and vigor in tribes and communities of people and livestock and at the same time maintain continuity with the past: thousand year genealogies, thousand year pedigrees, sung and chanted, never written down!

In-depth study leads us to understand why early or even modern travelers in Eastern lands said what they did with regard to pedigrees, as well as other customs, but it also reveals that much of what they thought they were seeing was misinterpreted, was Eastern behavior interpreted through Western cultural perceptions. In other words, a nonexistent sameness (they are just like us) was assumed. Lancaster describes how unintentionally observers misinterpret things, and how essential extended periods of observation are for accurate records to be made of real behaviors contrasted to behaviors people report or “put on for outsiders.”

The long-drawn-out nature of the research has conferred two main benefits. First, if I had relied on the observations and material from the first eighteen months, my analysis would have been very different and, I can now see, wrong. Later in the fieldwork we were taken for granted and had become part of normal life, so we could be fairly sure that what we were seeing was spontaneous and not put on for our benefit. This material has enabled me to reinterpret my earlier observations…. Secondly, such a long period has enabled us to observe changes taking place. This is particularly important in the relationship with, and reaction to, the non-Bedu world.16

15 Lancaster, Rwala, pp. 24, 32–35.
16 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
Asil Saluqis, unrelated yet so alike, reflecting the constancy of the process of generative genealogies and hunting in arid lands, which created and recreates the breed generation after generation.


C: Sarab, Saudi Arabian descent.

Most of the information we have on the Arab and his Saluqi was the impression of Western observers who did not speak the local language or dialect and who spent very little time among the tribes. Whirlwind tours to buy horses, subdue Bedouin raiders, or spy were the major interests of most Westerners who wrote a few lines and made superficial observations of the Saluqi in native lands. Pedigrees were consistently mentioned, but the actual process of creating them was never understood. It was this process, these generative genealogies and hunting in arid lands, the desert, which created, maintains, and recreates the asil Saluqi century after century.

Islam and the cultural concept of asil set the Eastern Saluqi breeder apart from non-Moslems, but certain attitudes are probably held in common worldwide by hunters. Again, with reference to genealogies, which are critical to our understanding of Saluqi breeding in Eastern lands, Lancaster points out that Eastern and Western viewpoints diverge:

We see a genealogy as starting in the past and coming down to the present; the Rwala see it as starting in the present and receding into the past. They are firmly ego centered. For them the main point of a genealogy is to provide a framework for legitimizing present political relationships between groups. This does not mean that they seek to ratify a relationship by reference to the genealogy, but rather that an existing or proposed relationship is an inevitable result of a mutually agreed genealogy. It is not the genealogy leading to a relationship, but rather the relationship leading to a genealogy: the relationship is active, the genealogy passive. This comes out clearly in the discussion of the generative genealogy where the ‘must have been’ argument is considered.... The truth of the genealogy is irrelevant; what matters is the present and the future, so the past has to accommodate itself.17

We must study the above passage carefully. It reveals an attitude totally different from our own. It permits an open system which remains, at the same time, securely anchored in a traditional conceptual mental framework. It relates the thinker to the past while accommodating the present and the future. “The truth of the genealogy is irrelevant; what matters is the present and the future, so the past has to accommodate itself.”

A perfect example of how this works with regard to Saluqis and the concept of asil was provided by an Englishman taking leave of Saudi Arabia, Mike Ratcliffe. He traveled through the Peninsula during the summer of 1989, sightseeing as well as attempting to gather information on falconry and Saluqis. He comments that he met few men who could recite their Saluqis’ pedigrees for even four generations, but this in no way inhibited them from pronouncing their dogs asil. He wrote, “In the large majority of cases, the fact that the dog performs in the expected manner and conforms to the general appearance of Saudi coursing hounds is good enough.” In one specific case of pedigree discussion Mike went so far as to point out that the granddam of a particular Saluqi was not of Arabi asil ancestry. The owner, a hunter of fine reputation, responded that the granddam may not have been Arabi asil, but his Saluqi is irrefutably asil!18 And the hunter is absolutely correct in his assertion. Who are we to assume otherwise? His Saluqi was bred in the same tradition as those of his fathers before him, and their fathers before them. Their breeding practices produced the asil Saluqi; his Saluqi is part of that tradition. All of the Saluqis in the world descend from Eastern, traditionally bred hounds. Asil is what an Eastern breeder says it is, no more, no less.

I believed the “myth of perfect descent” myself for many years. I simply knew too little

17 Ibid., p. 151.
18 personal correspondence, 6/22/89; Arabi asil was the term used to indicate all ancestors were from the Arabian Peninsula. Some Saudis accepted Saluqis bred in other countries (karj, foreign) as asil.
about hunting dogs, the attitudes of hunters, and factual history to doubt it. It never occurred to me, because my early experiences with the breed were limited to dog shows, that the myth could not possibly be true. The Saluqi has an ancient, definite, well recorded role in the affairs of man, rich and poor, humble and noble, cosmopolitan and rural. As my knowledge and experience expanded, I realized that the principle applied in generative genealogies (an open registry so to speak) was and remains essential to the Saluqi’s ability to fulfil its role as swift, hardy, courageous hunter over punishing terrain after ever scarcer, ever more wary game and at the same time remain asil.

If we wish to call our Western hounds Saluqis, they must retain their Eastern look and behavior. Those who disregard the Eastern bred hounds of today are turning their backs on the wisdom which created our breed. We must all learn to respect the Eastern breeder at least to the degree that Mrs. Danah Al Khalifa of Bahrain has. She comments, “I have learned so much from the Arabs, and adopted many of their ways regarding horses—but—one should remember that although I am a part of the Arabs, I am still a Westerner. I am, perhaps, in some ways more critical than they are and in other ways more flexible.”

Before we can make any judgements, we must understand what the Saluqi is to the Eastern breeder and hunter. The Saluqi is an Eastern hound and must be understood in an Eastern context.

19 from an article appearing in Your Pony magazine (n.d.).
Heredity, environment, and culture emerge as the main themes impacting on the development of dogs, as well as on human societies. Knowledge like all living organisms evolves. The numerous theories regarding the origin, original form and proliferation of dogs testify to our continued fascination with the past of *Canis familiaris*, and possibly through our search into our companion’s history we may encounter our own. The fossil record of dogs will be considered with expertise later in this volume.

At this point, however, we must briefly touch upon the issue of classification. This of course brings us to breeds of dogs, selection for particular characteristics, and the Western idea that by restricting a gene pool we create something unique, something pure and different from all else. Problems of classification begin with the discovery of the first canid bone, tooth and skull. The Saluki has been viewed and classified very differently by the Eastern hunter and the Western show fancier. In the East, there is one and only one *asil* breed, the Saluqi; it is seen as such and all strains are interbred. The West has attempted to create three breeds (Saluki, Sloughi, Azawakh) from one by separating animals on the basis of color, coat pattern, or structural variation which falls well within the range of “normal” for a single breed population.

The classification of Canidae has engaged scholars for centuries. Richard and Alice Fiennes, in discussing evolution, state that Canidae (dogs, wolves, jackals, foxes) possessed physical attributes as well as distinctive behavior patterns which assured their survival as predators. Strength, speed, ferocity combined with good sight, hearing and scent were physical characteristics functioning in tandem with the ability to organize into packs to hunt their prey, raise their young and defend their territory.\(^{20}\) The Fiennes continue:

A further characteristic which has gone hand in hand with these developments is the lack of uniformity which is so obvious even in a single canine family. Even in inbred lines, there are puppies of different shapes, colors, and other physical attributes, and also with markedly different characters [temperaments]…

Canidae have the largest number of chromosomes of any known mammalian species, seventy-eight in all. Whether the great polymorphic genetical variability of these animals is connected with the large number of chromosomes they possess can only be a matter of conjecture. It is certain, however, that this great variability, adaptability, and ability to form social links with man has endowed dogs with the useful qualities which have made them so valuable to him.

These same powers of variability have also led to the segregation of Canidae into the main groups: *Canis* and related genera on the one hand; and the different species of *Canis* itself—the wolves, jackals, foxes and domestic dogs—on the other. It must be emphasized again that these animals have no basic differences in either physical or mental attributes…

The psychological and anatomical features of the various canid species were already present before man began to select wolves with special characters to serve his own purposes. By selective breeding, man has intensified certain characteristics; but he has not created anything that was not there in the ancestral animals.\(^{21}\)

The Fiennes conclude that not only could they not discover “hard and fast characters which could differentiate between dog, wolf, and jackal” but that in studying skulls and teeth of wild and domestic Canidae, attempting to discover typical features, all they found was “a series of variables shading from one group into another.” They remind us that “no criteria have ever been established by which skeletal material can be differentiated.”\(^{22}\)

\(^{21}\) Ibid., pp. 168–69.
\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 162.
Zooarchaeologist Professor Stanley J. Olsen states, however, that there are accepted taxonomic rules and procedures, but stresses that “acceptable limits of individual variation within living species” must be taken into account when dealing with even complete skulls and skeletons. Olsen continues, reiterating the Fiennes’ observation:

Range of morphological variation of the genus or species under consideration is, at times, not considered in the apparent rush to establish a new genus or species or even higher taxonomic category. At times, assigning a new name to a small fragment of jaw or single tooth was based on individual judgement alone, rather than on quantitative considerations. A great many of these errors in classification were made within the genus *Canis* as well as in establishing the earliest geological (archaeological) presence of *Canis*...

What degree of slight morphological variation is acceptable in a visual analysis that establishes a canid genus or species if only fragmentary bones or teeth are present? The answer can, in all probability, never be specifically stated, since the interpretation will be based on the powers of observation and experience of the person who is recording his or her observations and comparisons.\(^{23}\)

Olsen concludes that whether the person doing the classification believes in taxonomic splitting or “lumping forms into fewer genera or species, based on broader morphological characteristics” will determine whether the skeletal remain is viewed as a new genus or species or belonging to an already established one.\(^{24}\) In other words, at the level of prehistory, at the level of teeth and bones, classification, though guided by “standard, accepted taxonomic rules and procedures” is deeply influenced by the researcher’s point of view.

Whether an archaeological find is an early domestic dog or local wild species of the same genus is complicated by “the close osteological resemblance of most similar-sized species of *Canis* to each other.”\(^{25}\) Another problem is the close resemblance of the dentitions of similar-sized recent forms to each other as well as to fossil canids. Olsen states that “the dentitions of present day canids have not changed drastically from those of their fossil ancestors that date back to the Miocene epoch at least 15 million years ago.”\(^{26}\)

Returning to the earliest evidence of the existence of domestic dogs, Professor S. Olsen comments:

Some (perhaps the majority of) classifications of early *Canis familiaris* that were based on very fragmentary material were really just clutching at straws in an attempt to establish the presence of the earliest domestic dog. There seems to be competition among faunal workers for the “first” domestic canid from sites the world over. This apparent haste to record a new, and older, domestic dog has sometimes led to uncertainty regarding the taxonomic assignment of dog remains and to the use of zoomorphic representations, interpreted as “dogs,” to bolster the scanty skeletal evidence that was being used.\(^{27}\)

Professor Olsen states that lack of sufficient archaeological canid material has “resulted in several changes of opinion concerning the same site and, at times, the same specimen, depending on who is doing the analysis.”\(^{28}\) This situation is understandable and researchers, as mentioned, sometimes resort to artistic representations to substantiate their claims. For example, archaeologists in Khuzistan, southwestern Iran, concluded that the domestic dog was probably present in 5500 B.C. “and that these dogs were probably descendents of the local wild wolf, *Canis lupis pallipes.*” The difficulty of separating the bones of the local wolves from those of the domestic dog “due to the small size of the wolf and the wide range of its

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\(^{24}\) Ibid.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., p. xii.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., p. 2.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., p. 74.

\(^{28}\) Ibid.
osteological variation” is mentioned and the researchers correctly caution against drawing zoological conclusions based on “representations in prehistoric art.” Yet, “they then depicted shards decorated with zoomorphic representations and referred to them as evidence for the appearance of the early dogs of Khuzistan.”25 Evidence or intuition, it is clear that aspects of scientific classification depend upon interpretation of the data rather than anything absolute.

It is no wonder there are problems classifying prehistoric bone fragments when we realize that worldwide there are 32 subspecies of Canis lupus recorded. And in keeping with our labyrinth of problems classifying:

Criteria used for separating and establishing these many subspecies [of Canis lupus] are based mainly on body size, form, color of pelage, and geographical distribution. Whether these many listed races or subspecies constitute valid taxonomic distinctions is certainly open to question and discussion.30

So, not only are dogs giving us trouble, we have not agreed on wolves yet either! A perfect illustration of this is a story a young man from Dubai, United Arab Emirates told me. Some years ago a Dutch zoologist was doing a survey of the wildlife of Dubai. He and the young Arab would go out together looking for indigenous creatures. They saw several foxes and the foxes were all different colors. Well, the zoologist wanted to classify each color as a subspecies. The local youngster told him, “No, you’re wrong, these are all the same, they’re all the same fox simply different colors.” Our meticulous, Western trained zoologist would not believe his Arab companion and in total frustration the young man asserted, “These are all the same fox, I’ll prove it to you.” He found a den with three pups in it, brought them home, raised them by hand and, lo and behold, when mature, they were all different colors!31

So, if we cannot distinguish from bones or teeth whether we have a wolf, coyote, jackal, fox, or dog, ancient or modern, cannot rely on visual analysis alone for accurate classification, surely the invisible genes must be the bearers of certainty. The irrefutable evidence must be in the genes! However, rather than relief from arbitrary decisions and variables shading from one group into another, we learn to our astonishment, according to John Patton, evolutionary biologist, “as far as we can tell from our genetic analysis, Canis familiaris, the dog, doesn’t exist. It’s Canis lupus. They hybridize freely and their offspring are fertile.”32 From speculation to invisible with the flip of a gene! Despite the fact that genetically only Canis lupus exists, veterinary pathologist and geneticist Joe W. Templeton, at a workshop where issues of breed identification based on genetic analysis were discussed, stated that:

Right now, looking at chromosomes and genetic fingerprinting, we cannot distinguish between breeds,...in fact, in a comparison of two American Staffordshire terriers with a whippet, one terrier appeared more closely related to the whippet than to the other terrier. Genetic differences between breeds and even between dogs and wolves are apparently very subtle. Probably just a handful of genes expressed in various combinations account for the different phenotypes we see.33

John Patton adds that “a lot of these breeds are more heterogeneous than we thought.”34 Hence, though Canis familiaris does not exist genetically, though we cannot distinguish breeds by looking at chromosomes and genetic fingerprinting (though we can distinguish between individual dogs this way), nevertheless, Donald Patterson, Chief of Medical Genet-
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ics at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine tells us that, “while the differences between breeds are genetic, the determination of when a breed becomes a breed is a human one.” This is a critical point: the determination of when a breed becomes a breed is a human one.

Classifying bones, teeth and genes may be problematic for scientists, but determining when a breed becomes a breed is not problematic for dog fanciers. Mark Derr writes that “by some estimates as many as a thousand distinct breeds of dog have existed during the past ten thousand years, 400 to 440 of which are alive today.” The American Kennel Club recognizes 134 breeds, with 10 breeds in miscellaneous class; the Kennel Club of England recognizes more than 180 breeds and the Fédération Cynologique Internationale in Belgium recognizes 300. And it must be clear to everyone, these are all pure breeds. How do we know? According to I.L. Brisbin, wildlife ecologist and often called expert witness for the American Kennel Club, “The only way you can tell whether you have a purebred dog is by examining its papers.” We are freed from bones, genes, and even dogs! All we have to do is examine the papers. The epitome of reductionism, names on paper.

Clearly science has not yet answered our questions. We have learned that osteological classification is influenced by visual analysis and the personal preference of the researcher regarding broad or minute morphological criteria. There are standard, accepted taxonomic rules and procedures, but these are not rigid. The Fiennes state that even after study in detail of skulls and teeth of wild and domestic Canidae attempting to discover features typical of the various groups, all they found was a series of variables shading from one group into another. Yet, Professor S. Olsen expresses the conviction that anyone who has compared the skulls of Canis “for any length of time has noticed obvious features that seem to separate wolves, coyotes, and domestic dogs.” Olsen asserts that if multiple characteristics

36 Ibid., p. 58.
37 Ibid., p. 51.
are considered, measurements taken on more than fragmentary specimens, accurate determination can be made.\textsuperscript{38} He was not referring to breeds of dogs, only whether the remains were of wild or domestic Canidae.

What must be abundantly clear is that whether accurate, absolute, or true, people need to classify. We classify items as tiny as bone fragments and teeth, building species or breeds from them. We admit \textit{Canis familiaris} does not exist according to genetic analysis, yet on the same page we read that the differences between breeds are genetic. We will classify because we must. However, our process is as generative as the Rwala genealogies. We work around general principles or scientific procedures, filling in the blanks, moving the pieces of the puzzle, discovering new pieces, discarding ones that do not seem to fit, only to find we need them later. It is obvious that openness and flexibility are essential to the growth of knowledge and the health of social systems—as well as animal breeding practices.

Why has it been necessary to present all of this for consideration? It has been necessary to demonstrate that most of what we “believe,” most of what we blithely tell people when they ask us about our dogs (all so-called ancient breeds), is for the most part based not on science at all, but on myth. Many Western purebred fanciers accept the motto “never let the facts get in the way of the truth.” We have created answers to questions of origin (specific time and place) and descent (pure from the beginning of time to the present) that meet our needs. Where science falls short, even fails us, imagination, conjecture dauntlessly fill all gaps in knowledge. What we cannot tolerate is uncertainty. This appears characteristic of the Westerner and Easterner alike. We all need a sense of continuity from the past to the present. We use different “proofs,” but the end result is the same: we are certain. We know where we and our dogs come from.

Through the ages scientists as well as dog breeders have explained the phenomena associated with and classification of Canidae differently. Even today, we see the major kennel clubs recognizing different numbers of pure breeds. The purpose of this volume is not to tell people there is one and only one way to classify, evaluate, view or discuss the Saluqi. The purpose of this volume is to present the best information and studied opinion currently available for your consideration. As Professor S. Olsen pointed out with reference to osteological remains, some scientists prefer broad categories, others prefer more numerous discrete categories. It is more a matter of preference than right or wrong. The same holds true for the classification of domestic dogs. That the various world kennel clubs recognize different numbers of pure breeds is not a matter of right or wrong. It is a perspective of what constitutes a breed—the criteria for recognition of “a type” as a breed—a decision about how to divide the series of variables shading from one group into another.

With regard to the Saluqi in native lands, native breeders accept all types or strains as one breed, Saluqi, coursing hound, and this appears to have been the case throughout history. Hunters (and the Saluqi is a hunting dog, a coursing hound, a working animal, not a pet or work of art or even a symbol in most native environments) do not indulge in taxonomic splitting. There is only one \textit{asil} coursing hound of the Eastern lands, the Saluqi, a single breed, seen as such by native people. If Western fanciers have chosen to split the breed into strains or types, calling each type, strain, variety by a different name, concocting a creation myth for each and restricting the gene pool, in many cases to a dangerously small number of individuals, based on morphological minutiae and color, this is merely a point of view regarding classification. It is absolutely not more valid than the Eastern breeder’s

\textsuperscript{38} Olsen, \textit{Origens}, p. 92.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p. 96.
Criteria for classification clearly differ...

decision to consider all types, strains, varieties as a single breed. To the Eastern breeder, his
is a Saluqi and it is *asil*. His Saluqi hunts and “even if the quarry were to pass beyond the
‘Ayyuq star’ The hound would bring it down...”40

Criteria for classification clearly differ, in part depending on the use to which the hound
will be put. In the East, if the hound’s behavior and general conformation are that of an *asil*
Saluqi, it must be one. To the pragmatic hunter, this “must be” argument is extremely
strong. As Lancaster pointed out with regard to tribal genealogies, “there is no true geneal-
ogy—truth is relative to the pragmatic needs of the group involved.”41 It would be both
ignorant and arrogant to assume that Western perceptions or classifications are more useful
or more valid than Eastern. It is the Eastern hound which still resembles in all its propor-
tions and abilities the ancient depictions, not the Western show Saluqi.

The ideas here may cause some readers discomfort. I have struggled to reconcile every
piece of information presented. Since I have been fascinated by these hounds for so many
years, even though new insights contradicted my previous understanding, I love the Saluqi
enough to want to understand what it really is more than I need to cling to charming myths.
This desire enticed me to read more, study more and continually question people who have
contact with Eastern breeders. What I have learned has been impossible to reconcile with
dog book lore or even Saluqi lore. There would be no point in compiling a new book of
nonsense.

Reflections: The Myth of Pure Breeds

There is something marvelously romantic in the notion of a breed of dog, the Saluqi, if
not the oldest, then one of the very oldest recognizable breeds, moving from the shadowy
past to the spotlight of ring-center unchanged. Why would anyone wish to disturb such a
fantasy? As Jay Kappmeier put it, “I agree with your link idea of me—Saluki—timelessness. I
very much enjoy having a breed which is ‘ancient’ in my home. In addition, I like to think of
other people who have looked into those lovely faces and found comfort.”42 How could
anyone wish to disrupt such a marvelous myth? The identical animal from then ‘til now—
the same lovely faces. And it is clear, artistic representations, later sculptural images and still
later photographic evidence reveal what absolutely appears to be the same hound, the
Saluqi. From the earliest evidence of existence to the present, an uninterrupted journey for
our lithe, powerfully structured, long distance running hounds.

What’s wrong with this single moment origin, single gene thread from shadows to
spotlight? It’s static, it’s monochromatic, it’s dull and it’s impossible. The reality is so much
more exciting—the actual histories of those who hunted and their attempts to breed the
finest hound they could possibly produce are riveting. Is the Saluqi less noble if the genes of
the great lion hunting mastiffs of Assurbanipol the Assyrian are buried within its makeup? Is
the Saluqi less noble if a Roman general’s Celtic hound was bred to a Bedouin sheikh’s bitch
when opportunity arose? Do you assume that the courage and size of the mastiff, the speed
and muscle of the *vertragi* would be scorned by a fellow hunting man? There are no isolated
Saluqi strains. All have had infusions of “outside blood” from time to time throughout
history—real history.

When we read that in A.D. 1092, after returning from a day’s gazelle hunting, Malik

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40 Abu Nuwas, translated by Professor G. R. Smith.
41 Lancaster, *Rwala*, p. 35.
42 personal correspondence, 5/6/90.
Gail Goodman

Shah, under whose rule the Seljuq empire reached its pinnacle of greatness, took ill with a high fever and ten days later died. We know his Saluqis responded with mournful howls; we hear the soul wrenching cries in our imaginations. The same howls, the same faces, dynamic not static. Before us unrolls a panorama of color and texture, sounds and smells, the passion and cruelty of war, conquest, intrigue, trade, travel—and with the warriors, the conquerors, the traders, the migrating peoples—the Saluqi. We may dismantle the myth, yet the mystique remains intact.

Let us return to the facts as we know them today. Scholars and writers throughout the ages call what they know “the facts,” knowing full well that as new discoveries are made, their views may become obsolete. Joseph Campbell, referring to understanding the great myths, cites a verse in Sanskrit which also appears in the Chinese Tao-te-Ching: “He who thinks he knows, doesn’t know. He who knows that he doesn’t know, knows. For in this context, to know is not to know. And not to know is to know.” The Saluqi is both enduring and ephemeral—varied yet constant.

Prehistoric dogs and local wild species of Canis often bear close osteological resemblance to one another; there is a wide range of morphological variation within a species and even within the identifiable dog remains at a particular site. And finally, “by the time we encounter depictions of the various breeds of dogs they are quite late and have little bearing on the beginnings of the breeds.” With specific reference to Greyhound and Saluki skeletons, Professor S. Olsen writes that the skeletons are “too similar to each other to distinguish among the collected individuals...also, the total sample of bones is too small for any meaningful comparisons.” As Saluqi fanciers, we may be satisfied that the earliest skeletal remains may not be precisely identifiable as Saluqis, but artistic depictions unequivocally represent lop-eared Saluqis, with not at all oddly ringed tails. The Saluqi, not the Greyhound, was the earliest arid lands courser.

Though Professor S. Olsen reminds us that by the time we encounter artistic depictions of the various breeds we are well beyond the shadowy beginnings, we insist upon using these images as windows into the past. The Fiennes comment, reiterating the point:

By the time that written history appears, all the main groups of dogs were in existence and can be recognized from representations in stone and pottery from Egyptian, Assyrian, and Greek sources. Dog breeding is an ancient art and modern breeders have contributed little to what was already done by the end of the Neolithic period.

43 Glubb, Short History, pp. 133–34.
45 Professor S. J. Olsen, personal correspondence, 10/30/89.
46 Ibid.
47 Fiennes, Natural History, p. 4.
They refer to Linnaeus and Buffon who both attempted to classify domestic dogs into different species on the basis of conformation and color, but these efforts were rejected because: “The main basis of classification within a genus of animals must ultimately rest not on such superficial differences, however striking, but on anatomical differences, which can be recognized not only in recent types, but also in fossil specimens.” The Fiennes conclude that “modern dogs are so interbred that to divide them into species would, in any case, not be feasible.” They distinguish between artificially created features and those which developed by natural selection and adaptations to environment and they stress that many modern breeds would be unable to survive under wild conditions. The apparently striking differences in conformation among dogs, when studied in detail, are not so fundamental as supposed. However, current research rejects a single stock origin for all domestic dogs. It tentatively supports the probability of cross-species breeding (wolf, jackal, fox, coyote, dog) at various points in the development of the domestic dog.

Nevertheless, and with the certitude we have come to expect from our kind, we shall classify! The Fiennes decide that “…in spite of these difficulties and despite the crossings between different groups which have occurred, we propose that modern dogs can be classified into four main groups, indicating four separate origins.” They then refer to four main varieties or races of wolves and state that their domestic dog groups correspond to these: “namely the northern (including the spitz) group; the dingo group, including the pariahs; the greyhound group; and the mastiff group.” They then go on to in-depth discussion and

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48 Ibid., p. 6.
49 Ibid., p. 5.
50 Ibid., p. 13.
speculation about the origins and development of ancient and modern breeds. The Fiennes candidly admit that the various characters on which one attempts to trace distribution of one basic breed type or another “are so tenuous that they can plainly have no final validity,” yet with the optimism of scientists, they speculate that “possibly the study of canine blood groups could enable some more precise estimates to be made of the extent to which the different parent stocks have contributed to the breeds today.”

Whether the study of blood groups is more precise than the study of genes, I cannot ascertain, but remember how far along we are in that domain: the dog does not exist. Limited European research on blood groups of closely bred individuals or family groups (consisting of as few as eight foundation hounds) has revealed “differences” between the tested individuals and other individuals or family groups; this was to be expected. It is not proof of “breed.” It is proof of family group relationship. Research on European populations gives us absolutely no information on the breeding practices, the occurrence of outcrossing, inbreeding, or crossbreeding in the countries of origin. Blood-typing gives no information on the cultural practices of dog breeding. Some people, however, are distorting the European data to support a genetic-theory of breeds, attempting to align the concept of *breed* with the concept of *species*. Recall evolutionary biologist John Patton’s words: “a lot of these breeds are more heterogeneous than we thought.”

Clearly if the genes cannot reveal whether a dog is one breed or another, they cannot reveal whether it is purebred or not. As a matter of fact, our whole notion of purebred is being challenged. Genetic research has been conducted and has demonstrated that a dog can go from a purebred to a crossbred to a purebred in five generations. Nearly a decade ago, Robert H. Schaible, geneticist, conducted an experiment at Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis to free Dalmatians from a recessive genetic defect (associated with deafness, a skin problem and urinary stones) that could result in death or excessive veterinary expense.

He crossed a Dalmatian with a closely related English Pointer which was unaffected, and then immediately bred back to Dalmatians.

The A.K.C. board approved registration of the back crossed dogs in February of 1981…But members of the Dalmatian Club of America objected that the purity of their breed was being compromised and forced cancellation of the registration. John Patton says “The Dalmatian Club action shows the ludicrous politics of the A.K.C. in which dogs suffer. They’d rather have their animals die than get rid of a disease. Genetically, you couldn’t tell the difference between those dogs and Dalmatians.”

The notion of purebred does not, from a scientific perspective, reside in genes. So it would appear our Eastern hunter’s perspective is very much in line with the findings of Western science. How is it then that we look into the same lovely faces, walk with the same lithe hounds through the plains and deserts and wadis of timelessness? We must look to the nomads, their wanderings, their way of life, their history, and their culture. It is they who have that same Saluqi and it is we who are their beneficiaries.

51 Ibid., p. 81.
52 Derr, “Politics,” p. 52.
53 Ibid., p. 72.
History: The Myth of Isolation

Throughout this volume coverage is given to the prehistoric as well as recorded history of Eastern lands and the waves of peoples who have inhabited them. Here we will take a brief look at some small pieces of an enormous mosaic thus preparing ourselves for the diversity of Saluqi type we encounter today. Cultural and economic records enable us to relive past ages and the travels of our Saluqis.

Internationally, Western Saluqi fanciers seem to cherish the idea that there are various pockets of tribal peoples throughout the Middle East, North Africa and the sub-Sahara regions who have been, from the beginnings of human wanderings to the present day, encapsulated with their belongings, beliefs, livestock and Saluqis, intermingling with no one, their animals inbred, therefore pure, from “the creation.” This idea is so easy to grasp,
so absolute, so pleasing that most fanciers would never think of testing it by reading archae-
ology or history or anthropology. All one has to do is read a few chapters of any scholarly
work on any part of this vast region and the myth vanishes like a mirage. In place of the
mirage rises the most fascinating, stimulating interplay of human events one could possibly
wish for. We lose nothing by studying history, nothing. We retain the marvellous mystique.
The myth is empty compared to the reality.

Though the tribal and nomadic peoples of Eastern lands do not live in technological
societies, this does not mean that they are or have ever been “isolated” from commerce or
ideas. Their livestock and their dogs have never been isolated either. I cannot speculate as to
the frequency of contacts of nomadic peoples with settled peoples or other nomads in their
migratory ranges, nor is it within the scope of this chapter to give explicit accounts of each
of the tribal groups maintaining Saluqis. I can say with certainty, however, that the notion of
hundreds of years of isolation is ridiculous. Unequivocally there have been infusions of
outside blood throughout the ages everywhere. At the same time we read and hear of the
practices for preventing prized bitches from unacceptable matings, i.e., rings inserted into
the vulva, the vulva stitched closed, harnesses, a leg tied to the collar, a coat over the entire
body, etc. all demonstrating that breedings were planned. We have also heard or read that
native breeders would travel great distances to use a stud dog renowned for his hunting
ability. The intention would be an infusion of outside blood—an outcross.

I imagine that hunters the world over share some basic attitudes. David Hise, breeder of
quality longdogs\textsuperscript{54} to hunt coyotes and jackrabbits, and I were talking about winning and
losing at an open-field coursing meet in Roswell, New Mexico some years ago. I said I loved
winning but if I didn’t win I still felt I had the best Saluqis. David’s response jolted me, “Oh,”
he said, “I never mind getting outrun by a better dog; then I know where to go to breed my
bitch.” I thought, “I’d never react that way. I’d go home and try to figure out how to breed a
better dog from my own line.” Then it dawned on me, the values of a hunter would never be
constrained by “pedigree,” the vanity of breeding one particular, perfect-on-paper blood-
line! A hunter will always go to the best hunting dog, regardless of pedigree. David (who is
also a National Open Field Coursing Association judge) would analyze a particular hound’s
performance into strengths and weaknesses and consider that, too, when planning a breed-
ing. What he would never think of basing a breeding on is “show type” or color. Pedigree in
the context of hunting means: breed the best to the best—performance.

In another conversation, this time with Weldon Haney (who is also a N.O.F.C.A. judge,
longdog breeder, and Saluki owner) the topic was possible future mates for his Saluki bitch.
Though the bitch was running extremely well and could catch both jackrabbits and com-
petitive hunt placements, Weldon felt her performance lacked intensity, or as he put it, “She
doesn’t run like she really wants that rabbit.” Weldon had seen a male “desert bred” (im-
ported sire and dam, whelped in the U.S.A.) run and though the hound did not have raw
speed, Weldon felt the dog had real desire, he wanted that rabbit. We started to talk about all
the nuances of type and structure available through the various desert lines being bred in
the United States. Actually, I talked, Weldon listened. After describing this Saluqi and that,
I asked, “What do you think? Which type would be best for your bitch?” There was a pause,
then Weldon answered, “The type that can catch jackrabbits.”

Longdog breeders build reputations by producing fine performance hounds. The same
has been reported for Eastern Saluqi breeders. We have read repeatedly that hounds from a

\textsuperscript{54} “Longdog” is the term used to designate a sighthound x sighthound cross; lurcher is a sighthound x any breed cross.
particular area, person, or tribe were “known to be good.” The dogs are then identified or labelled with the name of a person or place. This becomes their genealogy, their pedigree. Listening to David and Weldon, it is easy to imagine the Eastern hunter setting off with his bitch on the long trek to the tent or courtyard of the owner of a renowned stud. Hunters have been selecting breeding stock this way for as long as legends have been told around coffee hearths or camp fires. I propose that the basic beliefs and practices of Eastern Saluqi breeders today are the same as they have been throughout the ages and have much in common with the attitudes of hunters worldwide. Traditional Eastern breeders are hunters. Rich or poor their Saluqis are bred for one purpose only: to catch and kill game.

Though we live in technological societies, have all of modern science at our fingertips, like native peoples, we too use “must have been” and “must be” arguments to validate our points of view. It is this rationale which allows me to propose that because we see the same Saluqi today as was depicted thousands of years ago the breeding practices, attitudes, and influences on our hounds “must have been” the same then as they are now. This same perspective is alluded to by Mike Ratcliffe. Though a long-term resident of Saudi Arabia, living in an urban center he remained unaware, like so many Western visitors past and present, of the depth of variety and quality of Saudi Arabian hounds. His study and survey of
Saudi hounds and breeders’ opinions, conducted during the last months before his departure, enabled him to make the following insightful comment:

Is it not possible that in their unique long history, Saluqis have, due to their extremely wide and very long-standing geographical spread, built up what is in effect an immensely broad genetic resource center which is housed generally speaking in the Middle East. Through the history of the varying peoples who owned them there have undoubtedly been periods of social and economic stagnation and periods of great change. The greatest quality of the breed is that within its own resource center lies the wherewithal for quite startling changes to meet the challenges of changing environments.\(^5\)

\(^5\) personal correspondence, 6/22/89.
Let these reflective words open a brief review of moments and places in Eastern history. Readers may be familiar with the spread of Islam, but may not realize how cosmopolitan the ancient world was.

For example, it is hard to imagine that the dusty, remote sub-Sahara city of Timbuctoo, now in the country of Mali, was ever a thriving metropolis. But from its founding as a summer camp for the nomadic Tuareg tribes circa A.D. 1100, it grew to a mythical place, a center for trade and learning famous throughout the Sudan (or Sahel), the sub-Sahara area extending from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. By 1300, the city had become extremely prosperous and though the original founders, the Tuaregs, periodically raided and robbed, control was seized by the Songhoi people whose origins remain legendary, though variously ascribed to the Yemen, Egypt, and Abyssinia. By 1496, Timbuctoo was a sparkling city in a vast, rich region forming the Sahara caravan gate. The black Songhoi became Moslem and established a great empire lasting for three dynasties with thirty kings.

Timbuctoo reached its greatest fame in the Arabic speaking world during the reign of Askia the Great, at the beginning of the 16th century. Scholars from Morocco, Tunis, Egypt and Arabia came in droves to study at the University of Sankore. It is believed that through these scholars word of the wealth and beauty of Timbuctoo reached Europe. The Sultan of Morocco, as early as 1545, began sending official missions to investigate the legends and quickly decided conquest was in order. The Songhoi were defeated and Moorish reign began. The Tuareg recaptured the city in 1800, but they were defeated as rulers by the French in 1894.

The economy of the region relied heavily on camel caravans as it still does, in part, today. Wealthy individuals who had hereditary control of the oases had palaces in the oases as well as in the north, somewhere in Morocco. The largest caravan (azalai) arrived in the area of Timbuctoo around December. The major goal was the transport of salt and there

56 Seabrook, White Monk, p. 222.  
57 Ibid., p. 223.  
58 Ibid., p. 224.  
59 Ibid., p. 168.
were nearly ten thousand camels for that purpose alone, with thousands of others to carry goods from Morocco. The salt camels belonged to many tribes and merchants scattered in the oases of the southern desert; they all came together at Bou Djebeha a few days north of Timbuctoo. The whole history of this region is fascinating and even in 1934 big-league Moorish robber barons swooped down from strongholds in the Atlas mountains to plunder the Niger basin and the rich Sudan. Camel stealing still goes on today.

Remember, it is this sub-Sahara Niger basin region that is the point of origin of our most recently Westernized Saluqi strain, the Azawakh-Oska. Though Europeans have concocted all sorts of fantastic stories about the origins of these hounds to substantiate “breed” status, according to Danish researcher Johannes Nicolaisen, “The Ahaggar Tuareg speak of a tradition, according to which the greyhound (oska) was introduced fairly recently through contacts with Northern Arabs.” Nicolaisen speculates that the greyhound-like dogs may have originated in prehistoric Egypt, however he confirms the Tuareg tradition stating “the
true greyhound, or *Sluki*, was introduced to North Africa by the Arabs. The Azawakh-Oska was no more isolated than any other Saluki strain. Its breeders controlled the great trade routes of the Sahara.

During the same period that the Tuaregs were using Timbuctoo as their summer camp, a new era was opening for the Arabs with rival Khalifates, the Fatimids and the Abbasids vying for power. The seat of the Fatimids was Egypt and the Abbasids was Baghdad. The period of peace and prosperity being enjoyed in North Africa from the departure of the Fatimids to Egypt in A.D. 972 was broken in A.D. 1048 when the Sanhaja ruler of Ifriqiya [North Africa] Muizz Ibn Badees, in his desire to show independence, ordered public prayers be offered to the Abbasid Khalif in Baghdad, rather than the Fatimids.

It happened that, at this time, two bedouin tribes from Arabia, Beni Hilal and Beni Sulaim, had migrated across Sinai and camped on the Nile south of Cairo, where their depredations caused anxiety. The Fatimid Khalif, to revenge himself on the Sanhaja and rid Egypt of these marauders, urged them to invade Ifriqiya. In 1054, the bedouins took Tripoli. Beni Sulaim settled in the vicinity, while Beni Hilal went on, taking Qairawan in October 1057. The Sanhaja took refuge in Mehediya, while the nomads spread anarchy over Ifriqiya.

The Arabs conquered Spain in 711–712, and though there was periodic unrest, Andalus was extremely prosperous. Industry was active and weapons, wrought iron, enamel, jewelry, goldsmith’s work, textiles and pottery were all manufactured. The ships of Andalus were to be seen in every Mediterranean port. Great attention was paid to irrigation and agriculture and the Spanish Muslims were splendid cultivators.

Science and art were fostered no less than commerce and industry.

When Christians of the North needed medical care, they came to Arab specialists in Cordova; the University of Cordova was world famous and Christians from western Europe came to study there. “The Arabs of Andalus were far in advance of western Europe in all forms of knowledge.”

To insure domination, peace and prosperity the Khalifs maintained large armies of foreign mercenaries because the turbulent individualism of the Arabs, according to Sir John Glubb, resulted in frequent mutinies and disturbances. A specific example of their strategy is seen with the second Almoravid ruler, Yusuf (1106–1143), who was a Berber.

From his twin capitals of Marrakesh and Seville, Yusef was able to organize an effective empire early in his reign. In Al-Andalus he used his Toureg tribesmen to keep the aggressive northern Spanish Christians in check and to overawe the cultivated Andalusians...At the same time he relied upon stern Malakite Ulemas to curb the Spanish Moslem upper class who were unsympathetic to Berber masters whom they regarded as both brutal and uncivilized. In African domains, on the other hand, the Almoravids used a Christian bodyguard and Andalusians manned their bureaucracy and built fortresses in many parts of Algeria and Morocco. They constructed a powerful fleet which operated out of ports on both sides of the Straits of Gibralter...recaptured the Island of Majorca and kept the naval forces of the Norman Kingdom of the two Sicilies on the defensive.

Anyone reading this can easily and unmistakably recognize the Galgo-Sloughi-Azawakh-Saluki connection running throughout so clearly as to be irrefutable. Can anyone doubt that the generals, the scholars, the wealthy intermingled, themselves and their hounds, for excursions of diversion and hunting? Gifts were exchanged and the hounds that got disori-

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62 Ibid., p. 323.  
63 Glubb, Short History, pp.147–48.  
64 Ibid., pp. 149–50.  
65 Ibid.  
66 Lewis, Nomads and Crusaders, p. 114.
mented or injured or old fell into the hands of local peoples everywhere, and from them arose local strains. And with new waves of traders, conquerors, even travelers came more gifts and new hounds and infusions of new strains.

Whether familiar with the ancient history of Africa and the spread of Islam or not, most readers recognize the names Phoenicia, Cappodocia, Mesopotamia, Sumeria, Babylon, the Indus Valley. The words stir school-day memories, more or less vague depending on how interested we were in ancient history. Dates may no longer be associated with these ancient places; who the people were may be a blurred memory. Our lack of knowledge obscures the realization that as early as 5000 B.C. communities of people were trading along rivers, seacoasts, and land routes in the East. In many cases, trade connections which were established in prehistoric times have continued into the present. Archaeological exploration of the Arabian Gulf, the islands, and the eastern province of Saudi Arabia is revealing ancient
and continuous settlement, colonization, cultural and trade development from the late Paleolithic to the present. The eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula was as busy a trade network as the western coast, so famous for the incense caravan trade routes.

Sometime between 14,000 and 7,000 years ago, groups of Paleolithic hunters and gatherers adapted themselves to living along coastlines and utilizing the resources of the sea. It is believed that these populations, clustered in four geographical centers, were predominantly responsible for the evolution of seacraft. The evolution of knowledge and the techniques directed towards controlling the sea and its resources emanated from: the North Sea, the Mediterranean, the Erythraean Sea and Insulindia. Historians propose that a major impetus for the development of seacraft was the demand for exotic goods from distant lands.

Of the four areas in which prehistoric seacraft developed, the Erythraean Sea which with a ring of water around the Arabian peninsula connects the great centres of eastern civilization between Egypt, Mesopotamia, southern Iran and the Indus valley, is naturally the first to be seen in history, documented already in the cuneiform texts of the third millennium B.C. A continuous chain of settlements along the whole coast of the Arabian Peninsula permitted communication between Africa and India thousands of years ago. Oman was a strategic point for both land and sea travel. The region “historically played a dual role, acting as a

67 Tosi, “Early Maritime Cultures,” p. 94.
68 Ibid., p. 95.
hinge between Asia and Africa as well as the oases of inland Arabia and the Ocean." As early as 4500 B.C. the process "of functional integration of the two axes of north-south communication, the Nile and the Red Sea, between the Mediterranean and the countries of the Horn of Africa" had begun. There is evidence of contact between Mesopotamia and the Arabian coasts from as early as 5000 B.C. A grave in the Ras al-Hamra area, a promontory situated east of Muscat, Oman has yielded a jawbone of a dog, "the most ancient so far confirmed in the scanty archaeological documentation of the Arabian Peninsula."

It appears that power in the ancient world was linked not only with the ability to acquire raw materials for local necessities and industries, but from earliest times prestige items were also coveted.

. . .ornaments of exotic metals and stones, rare plants and animals were for the protostatal societies of the Middle East as important as the resources for primary production. It was not so much a demand of consumption as a sign of prestige. Ceremonial pomp assured the continuing aggregation of a population around the dominating elites. It was therefore the supreme responsibility of the sovereigns to remain guarantors to their people for the availability if not the submission of distant lands which produce such goods.

Expeditions were sent all over the ancient world to gather treasures. These exploits were documented in great detail in bas-reliefs and texts.

Incense was essential to the practice of cults in both Egypt and Mesopotamia. A text dating from 2300 B.C. compiled by Sargon, founder of the Akkad dynasty of lower Mesopotamia, expresses his pride in his new capital city and the benefits of commerce overseas with exotic lands. Mesopotamia’s principle source of copper and diorite, a preferred stone of Mesopotamian artists around 2200 B.C., was the Oman Peninsula. “Oman, Iran and Syria were soldered together by a great trade circuit which for two thousand kilometers conjoined the course of the Euphrates to the entire length of the Gulf.”

Modern trade and communication leaves a paper trail, ancient interactions left tablets and seals which served as records and verification of goods sent or received. Even the seals themselves, the images represented on them, shed light on the cultural origins of ancient merchants. It is proposed that shell seals may be the prototypes for the flat circular chlorite
seals. Even these earliest seals share subjects represented similarly on seals from Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, Syria and Cappadocia (i.e., Anatolia) or even Egyptian scarabs, however, some of the shell seals also reveal independent artistic and intellectual qualities distinctive to the Gulf environment. Study of the seal motifs of Dilmun, the ancient name for the area of the Arabian Gulf, reveals the same influences found in the earlier shell seals. It is proposed that the relations between the Levantine area, Syria, and Anatolia were so strong as to transcend trade and sporadic personal contacts and to reflect shared religious and spiritual ties. The seals seem to indicate there may even have been movements of population groups from Mesopotamia and Levantine cultural backgrounds into the Dilmun area around 2000 B.C.

The oldest clearly identified Saluqi skeleton discovered to date was found in Mesopotamia, buried during the Akkadian period (circa 2000 B.C.). Hounds from Mesopotamia certainly accompanied their migrating masters. These hounds just as certainly intermingled with those already present in Dilmun. This ancient tradition of north-south interbreeding and transfer of hounds continues today.

The inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula controlled the “incense cartel” which was in full operation by the reign of Hatshepsut (1490–1468 B.C.), Queen of Egypt during the eighteenth dynasty. Queen Hatshepsut sent a large expedition to the land of Punt to gather the incense tree. “The whole civilized world craved incense for their altars” and south Arabia controlled the source. The peak of influence of the incense cartel was reached in the 2nd century A.D. with Arabia sending more than 3000 tons of aromatics to Greece and Rome.” Arabia’s frankincense trail is a 2,400 mile caravan route along the western coast of the Arabian Peninsula beginning in the green mountains of the Dhofar region, a narrow strip of Oman’s desert plateau. Here incense is gathered and carried down the mountains and transported by sea to the Hadramawt port of Qana. It then moves overland into northern Arabia through numerous ancient city states and kingdoms. The trail ends in Petra, Nabataean capital of the last Arabian Kingdom on the route. For centuries the Nabataeans served as middlemen for Arabia’s incense trade with the Roman empire. “Petra was a major caravan crossroad. . six routes converged on this fortress city. From here the incense travelled on to Gaza, across the Sinai to processing plants in Alexandria, north to Palmyra and Damascus, east to the Euphrates.” It is believed that the great and beautiful buildings of Petra date from Hadrian’s time, early in the 2nd century A.D.

Though the demand for frankincense was far greater, the darker, richer aromatic myrrh originates in the same region. It was used to perfume “the royal mumies of Egypt and was a main ingredient specified by the Old Testament in the sacred anointing oil of the Jews.” The land of Punt, source of the “perfume of the gods,” was already mentioned in the fifth dynasty Egyptian texts (2700–2500 B.C.). Incense had become an essential element of temple rites as well as a base for perfumes. Queen Hatshepsut had her expedition to the land of Punt recorded in great ethnographic detail in the Der el Bakhri temple at Thebes. In 450 B.C., with Athens at its peak, Herodotus wrote, referring to Arabia’s aromatics, “The whole country is scented with them and exhales an odor marvelously sweet.” Incense perfumed Roman cremation rites, the Magi bore gifts of frankincense and myrrh to the Christ child, and along the famed frankincense caravan route a succession of kingdoms prospered for nearly two millennia.

As mentioned, the incense caravans began at the port of Qana, “probably the same Canneh mentioned in Ezekiel 27:23”; in the Middle Ages Al Mukalla replaced Qana as the chief port. “From the sweltering coast the incense road led inland to Shabwah—ancient Sabota, capital of the Hadramawt Kings who for centuries controlled the trade.” Shabwah lies in the area that is today where Yemen and Saudi Arabia border each other. The rubble of this once powerful city reveals 2,000 years of continuous occupation, ending with a fire around the third century A.D. The city covered 500 acres and housed probably 5,000 people who were in part supported by produce from fields watered by sophisticated irrigation.

“The next major stop for the caravans was Timna, capital of the Qatabanian kingdom, second of five powerful city-states along the prosperous route.” Around Timna’s south gate were found “scattered, half-buried stone inscriptions that proclaimed laws of the city in 200 B.C. . . . Other fragments list a dozen trade laws promulgated by one King Shahr Hilal of the period.”

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79 Ibid., p. 487.
80 Ibid., p. 488.
81 Ibid., p. 492.
bushes, extracting the dyestuff from the leaves and dying cotton cloth. Indigo has been used for forty centuries and was one of the luxury goods travelling north with the incense. Until a few decades ago dark blue indigo loincloths were preferred by the tribes of “blue men,” the Bedouin of southern Arabia. Even during the chilly highland winters, they claimed a mixture of indigo and sesame oil rubbed on their naked chests and legs kept them warm.82

Could the descendants of this very King Shahr Hilal, whose laws governed the tribes of blue men of southern Arabia in 200 B.C., be the same Beni Hilal who in the eleventh century A.D. moved up the incense trail to Gaza, across Sinai into Egypt and from Egypt into Africa to become the blue men of the Sahara? And their Saluqis “. . .brought by kings from Saluq” immortalized in poetry. We are in the land of Saluq, the Hadramawt, ancient Yemen.

From Bayhan Al Qisab the caravans climbed a zigzag path up the 5000 foot Mablaqah Pass, possibly a control point on the ancient incense road. From Mablaqah the caravans skirted the southwest edge of Arabia’s Empty Quarter, the way marked by now ancient ghost towns: Haribat, Al Jubah, Al Masajid. They moved toward Marib, largest of the ancient incense route cities, capital of Saba (biblical Sheba).

Scriptures testify that, in husbandry as much as trade, Saba prospered. The Koran (XXVII: 20-44) tells how King Soloman, who spoke with all God’s creatures, dispatched a bird—a hoopoe—with an invitation to the famous Queen of Sheba. The Bible (I Kings 10:2) lists tribute the queen brought to the Hebrew king: “spices and very much gold, and precious stones.”83

Silt building up over centuries in the dams that provided water from distant mountains doomed Saba. However, “legend has it that an ancestor of Sheikh Zayed al Nahayan, ruler of Abu Dhabi, migrated to the Persian coast from Wadi Nahayan, near Marib, after the great dam failed 1,400 years ago. Sheikh Zayed is personally sponsoring a 90-million-dollar reconstruction”84 of the ancient dam which will double the area the ancients cultivated as well as make electricity. The power of thousand year genealogies, sung and chanted. . . .

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82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., p. 495.
84 Ibid., p. 496.
As the caravans plodded north from Saba, the ancient kingdom of Main took control. Continuing up Wadi Jawf ten walled Minaean cities once thrived. In the high mountains and cool fertile valleys of the fairest province of the Saba, to the west, are the green slopes today covered with ripening coffee beans. Moving northwards past Sana and Sadah, an enormous open market “the liveliest emporium...encountered in Arabia, or anywhere else for that matter, the Suq alTalh...[a] mile wide festival to free enterprise materializes on the sands...” every Saturday. In these lands where change is so slow and some things seem not to change at all, the same sands have probably served traders for as many centuries as the incense caravans plied the route.

The caravan continued north to Najran (today in Saudia Arabia) which remains a busy rest stop for modern caravanners and carrier-merchants. Trips that required 135 camels and a march of 50 to 60 days are now made in two days by big Mercedes, adorned with paintings and symbols to deflect the evil eye. This particular area has hosted an unusual array of events. In Najran, near the ramparts of Ukhdud, there are ruins of a South Arabian temple that may once have served as a church. Christianized during the sixth century, Najran was briefly the seat of a bishopric. An Arabian ruler converted to Judaism, a King Yusef, destroyed the town and massacred its inhabitants in 523.

Some 60 miles north at Bir Hima, ancient caravanners, passing the time, left thousands of inscriptions on the sandstone outcroppings that shelter the ample well. They date from 900 B.C. to A.D. 500. Mostly the simple graffiti of rustics, some are illustrated with scenes of camel herds, a date harvest, ibex, hunters wielding spears, and female dancers with long plaited hair. From Najran, one could follow the desert camel route to Mecca, a major religious center long before Islam, attracting “ancient caravans with trade fairs and a pantheon of 360 idols housed at the Kaaba. They included al Uzza—the Arabian version of Aphrodite—and celestial gods from ancient Sheba: the sun, the moon, and the morning star. The Prophet Muhammad cast out the pagan idols forever.” Moving north from Mecca lies the oasis and caravan town known as Yathrib. It was here Muhammad “founded his small Islamic nation that soon burgeoned across the medieval world, from Spain to the doorsteps of China. Yathrib became known as Madinat al Nabi—City of the Prophet—and finally, simply Al Madinah, ‘The City.’... Under Ottoman suzerainty for centuries, Medina is sprinkled with jewels of Turkish architecture.”

The caravan route, reaching north through the Hijaz, was well traveled even before the incense trade. Moving north, the black basalt and gravel landscape gives way to reddish sandstone as the domain of the Nabataeans, whose southernmost outpost, Madain Salih, once a flourishing town of consequence, is entered. Located in this last Arabian kingdom of the frankincense trail, as it moves into today’s Jordan, are Wadi Rum and Wadi Musa. Wadi Musa, legend holds, is where the sacred stream which began to flow when Moses struck the stone with his staff begins. This ancient watercourse led down to Petra, the capital of the Nabataean kingdom, and the end of the 2,400 mile caravan route. From the six routes converging in Petra, goods were dispersed to international traders and caravans reloaded to return southward with luxury goods, as well as necessities, for the kingdoms of Arabia.

The frankincense trail, beginning in the sacred groves of Oman, is one of the most ancient and most famous caravan routes of the Arabian Peninsula. The Peninsula was dotted with lush agricultural areas, natural oases, varied terrain and, certainly, abundant wildlife. Rock carvings, as well as formal inscriptions in stone, frequently depict ibex, gazelle...
and hunters. With no implication as to the site of origin of our breed, we can easily understand how the kings of Saluq could send “hounds of perfect conformation” to the Pharaohs of Egypt, along with the frankincense, gold, and myrrh.

The Empty Quarter (Rub al-Khali), “a great blank on Arabia’s maps almost the size of Texas,” is a favorite hunting area even today. The tents and villages around the edges of the Empty Quarter remain strongholds of Saluqi breeding. Arabs from the Gulf States who wish to hunt often go there. And the wealthy, who still hunt gazelle with Saluquis, go annually to the Sudan or Morocco, Pakistan, or today even Kenya. How closely current practice reflects ancient tradition we can only speculate. The land is so much drier, game so much scarcer, Saluqi breeding has also probably decreased and become localized to areas where men can still go out with their hounds and hunt. Though the hunting areas may be fewer, many are probably still reached from ancient routes, with offshoots to lush oases, visited today only by Bedouin and archaeologists.

89 Ibid., p. 493.
90 Mike Ratcliffe, personal correspondence.
Tazis from the border area between Russia and Turkey, used for racing; Saint Petersburg, Russia, 1992. Photo: H.V. Williams.
As has been clearly documented, from as early as 5000 B.C., everywhere there is civilization there is trade. By the 10th century, as we have seen, there were extensive, well travelled international trade routes. By the 12th century, even Western European economy had become integrated with that of its Islamic and Byzantine neighbors. These civilizations, though distinct, began to mingle; Genoese and Venetian merchants began making use of contracts and partnerships similar to those used by their Moslem and Greek competitors and began to live in overseas colonies. Italian artists began depicting Saluqis regularly in their paintings, tapestries, and sculpture. Clearly, the Saluqi was a trade item of prestige.

We have explored a few moments of Arabian, North African, sub-Saharan, Andalusian history. Now we will look briefly at the vast commercial linkages throughout Islamic territory by the 11th century. There were regular exchanges of primary raw materials and industrial wares. Northern Syria, Egypt, the Maghreb and Sicily regularly exported surpluses of wheat to distant markets. Besides foodstuffs and raw materials, animals like the camels of North Africa, the Arab steeds of Syria, the great horses of Iran, and the ponies of Turkestan were prized and traded throughout the world of Islam.  

Two main routes linked the center of the Moslem world with its Western provinces. One was a sea route from Alexandria to Tunisian ports and Sicily and then on to Spanish shores, either by way of the coast of the Maghreb or by way of Sardinia and the Balearics...A generally parallel route went by land from Cairo to Southern Morocco by way of Wargla. Wargla and Sigilmasa were also the termini of caravan trails that crossed the Sahara to Bornu and Kanem near Lake Chad or to Ghana and the bend of the Niger which was the source of much of the gold greatly prized by the Moslem world.

On the other side of Egypt, traffic either went by sea to Syrian ports or followed caravan routes to Jerusalem, Damascus, and Aleppo where they joined those leading to Mosul and Baghdad...

A second great complex of routes originated in Baghdad where a number of caravan routes had their termini. One of these led north to Trebizond by way of Hamadan and Tabriz. Still another went from Hamadan across northern Persia, either all the way to Bokhara and Samarkand or branched off to reach northern India by way of Afghanistan. Still a third went southeast from Baghdad to Shiraz and Kirman. Equally important were maritime routes reaching Baghdad. Deep water ports in the Persian Gulf located at Siraf and Kish and the island of Kish were connected by small boats with Basra and lower Iraq. At Siraf and Kish...
larger vessels were to be found which traveled by sea to Sind and India’s western shores and Ceylon along coastal routes or with monsoon winds sailed directly to Malabar and beyond or to East Africa. From the Turkestan termini of the great Iraqi trade, a number of routes fanned out, also. Several went northwest to Itil on the lower Volga and to the land of the Bulgars. Others went to China by way of Mongolia and the Kingdom of Hsi Hsia.²²

So many familiar sounding places, so many outposts for the imagination, so much activity, travel, vitality. This is the 11th century, a thousand years ago. Even if time stood still, this was a vibrant active world. Yes, some populations were certainly on the fringes of all the hustle, bustle, wealth, and sophistication. However, repeatedly, throughout these centuries it was nomadic people who assaulted, invaded and conquered the urban centered civilizations. And the conquering leader certainly had tribesmen who continued to tend the flocks and herds and to whom he sent gifts and spoils of fine hounds, horses, camels, and falcons!

May we finally lay the single moment in history, isolated from the beginning of time theory to rest for all strains of the breed Saluki?

Conclusion

It is hoped that the reader has followed the major themes developed above. First we looked at the superficial, simplistic, fragmentary, but ever popular, purebred dog “creation myths.” A common thread throughout was our pleasure in associating ourselves with antiquity via our canine companions. Somewhat surprisingly, numerous breeds lay claim to great antiquity and uninterrupted descent “from then to now.” Among the sighthounds, the Afghan, with the least amount of substantiating evidence, is assigned greatest antiquity. Pressing the creation myth we ventured into the shadows and substratum, the world of skeletal fragments stripped of all clues of flesh and fur. In this domain of great precision in measurement, we also find great speculation. The data are certainly more complex than our creation myths, more intriguing, and what is scientific, though subject to continual review, is
factual. However, with the candor of solid scholarship, problems of classification are openly discussed. Data must always be interpreted. Our picture puzzle of the past has large blank spaces. Our understanding of the Eastern cultural collage is equally as vague.

We moved from what is visible, dogs and bones, into the realm of the microscopic, only to watch what we thought we were looking at vanish altogether! Though we can identify various loci of disease on gene strands, we cannot identify breeds of dogs. The current state of genetic research on Canis reveals one species only: Canis lupus. However, with the customary certitude of science, it is speculated that once the subtle genetic differences which determine the various species of Canidae are isolated, we will also discover the genetic markers for breeds. It is clearly stated, however, that the criteria for defining a breed are set by people, not genes. The breed Saluqi as well as the term asil are Eastern cultural concepts. Western science can never define the Saluqi because science cannot predict human behavior, it can only attempt to interpret data, speculate on the past and theorize about the future. The Saluqi is what the Eastern breeder says it is. Asil means what the Eastern breeder says it means. Certainly opinions vary in the East as in the West, hence, we have returned yet again to the theme of classification and definition.

Since we have heard of pure and ancient ancestries attributed to groups of tribal peoples, genealogies going directly back to Abraham of the Old Testament not at all uncommon, we looked at the process of preserving genealogies from an Eastern perspective and compared it to a Western perspective. We found diametrically opposed interpretations: the Eastern being generative, dynamic, beginning in the present; the Western static and past oriented. The Eastern is remembered, chanted and sung, the Western written and immutable unless lost or miscopied! The obsession with “blood” and relationship in the East was clear to all Westerners who ventured there. What has caused Westerners so much trouble in understanding Eastern peoples, politics, and animal husbandry (horses, camels, Saluquis) is the assumption that records were created and used in the same way in both cultures. The pronouncement of asil by the Eastern breeder and “purebred” by the Western breeder serve the same purpose conceptually, though the basis for the pronouncement may not be the same. For the Eastern breeder the evidence is as much behavioral—ability to do the job of an asil animal combined with the general look expected—as a known lineage. Oral pedigrees do exist in many areas today as they have for centuries. Some hunters and breeders can recite ten generations, some four, some only where they got their hound. The lack of genealogy, however, does not make an obviously asil Saluqi “doubtful” in an Eastern context.

The Western breeder relies totally on pedigree, which once recorded is supposed to be an authentic record of descent. The January, 1989 Secretary’s Page of the American Kennel Gazette reports that 158 litter registrations involving 268 individual dogs were cancelled due to false representations and failure to comply with record keeping and identification practices required by the American Kennel Club. This same publication posts monthly notices regarding individuals who are suspended for varying lengths of time due to false certifications regarding whelping, transfers, and individual registrations. Nevertheless, it would not dawn on us to question whether our pedigrees and our dogs have actually moved through history together; we believe in our system for determining asil. Even if we realize there may have been separations, interchanges, replacements of individual hounds and pedigrees, we remain fascinated by the study of names on paper and committed to their ability to reflect genetic history and predict future outcomes. The animal remains purebred as long as its papers are intact, even if it can no longer do its work. As a matter of fact, it appears that the less work an animal has to do, the more obsessed breeders become with genetic purity,
A: Sarona Shem ca. 1927.
B: Grevel Saluki, 1941.
C: Tarabin, Sinai, 1960s. Photo: I. Sella.
paper-purity. The Eastern hunter would have no use for such a Saluqi with or without papers!

The notion of encapsulated tribal groups, families, people who inhabit the fringes of the Eastern universe, who never themselves or their livestock intermingle with any other people, never go to market, never meet a hunting party from another area, never give or receive gifts, never send their leaders to an urban center to solve a problem, seek help—whatever nomadic people do—has been dealt with. If people were not encapsulated in A.D. 1000 they are less so today regardless of our desires to fossilize them.

These themes are the major contributors to Western Saluqi mythology. The myths are all inadequate to explain how it is that we do, we absolutely do see the same lovely faces, enjoy the same lithe, powerful hounds today as hunted for the Egyptian Wazir in 1500 B.C. and Malik Shah in A.D. 1092. But at the same time and with ever increasing strength we hear the echo of Abbas Pasha’s words, though with regard to Arabian horses: “Never for a moment must you believe that the horses born in your countries are genuine Arabs, for the simple reason that the Arab Horse can scarcely retain its quality and characteristics for which it is renowned unless it breathes the desert air.” The value of performance, the “quality and characteristics for which it is renowned.” We in the West have no chance of perpetuating Saluqis with the qualities and characteristics for which the breed is renowned if we do not understand the evolution and perpetuation of the breed in Eastern lands.

An attempt has been made to diffuse the issues of classification and pedigree by demonstrating that in Western science as well as Eastern tradition there is a sense of relativity, fluidity, recognition of the potential for growth and change. The Western purebred dog fancy, however, has disrupted the ancient Eastern traditions of dog breeding and frozen gene pools at a particular moment in history, closing studbooks with a resounding thud. In so doing, Western fanciers believe they have embarked on the arduous journey of breed improvement. What constitutes improvement, just as what constitutes accurate classification, is open to broad interpretation. Surveying Saudi Arabian hunters for their opinions of Saluqis, Mike Ratcliffe showed them numerous photos and searched for the rumored evidence that Arabia is full of Western hounds. He wrote, “Believe me, I have looked for the evidence of Western Saluqi blood here. I am sure it exists, I just haven’t been able to put my hands on it. Amongst the people that I meet with their Saluqis (not the rich and fancy you’ll remember) I don’t see any interest in Western Saluqis. Not one person has looked at my pictures and said ‘I’d like that one’ of a Western Saluqi.”

How is it then that we see the same Saluqi today in Eastern lands that we have seen for centuries and centuries and that we see even in the skeletons? The desert, the hunt and the continued, constant, unbroken chain of breeding the Saluqi by those who molded it from dogdom before all history: EASTERN HUNTERS IN EASTERN LANDS. The Saluqi has never left its cradle of origin. It has been forged and fired and shaped and tested in the crucible of the desert, over the vast plains of arid lands, in the rock strewn wadis and granite mountains. Everywhere it has run, everywhere it has hunted, everywhere it has given its utmost to bring down its prey, even at the expense of its life. And everywhere, throughout history, the Eastern hunter has respected his hound. The natural selection process was merciless, compounded by the demand for competent performance in the chase; these forces created a peerless rough terrain, arid lands courser.

Hence, we do have an unbroken thread from the dawn of mankind to the present but it is a thread of performance not paper! It is the tenacity for survival of the strongest pups in a litter, their willingness and ability to run, and their service to their owners that have placed

93 Forbis, Classic, p. 135.
94 personal correspondence, 6/22/89.
Through the wadis of timelessness...the essence, Saluqi... Top left: Sinai/Jordanian/American descent, photo: G. Goodman. Top right: central Anatolian import to Germany, photo: E. Berghaus. Above Bahrain Saluqis in Spain, photo: J. Manlove.
them so prominently in the caves, shelters, tents, and courtyards of the East from our shared beginnings. The fire, the sun, the spirit of the Saluqi…

I will sing the praises of a hound who cannot be outstripped, of perfect conformation, he courses over all types of terrain. He was brought by kings from Saluq, as if on a long, flexible leash. When he charges forward like someone who cannot be deterred, coursing over plain and wide, wind-blown deserts A hare, jinking and obstinate, like a lad of the tribe chasing around playing the game of ḏabbūq; And curing by his hunting the passion of him afflicted by it. Even if the quarry were to pass beyond the ‘Ayyūq star, He would bring it down, bloody at the throat; this is his most solemn duty Towards every man of the chase sustained by him.

Abū Nuwās
translated by G. R. Smith

Musdiy. Photo: S. Schroder
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