

How Basenjis Came to the Western World

Basenjis were first mentioned by explorers in the African Continent in the 1800s as small, sandy/red, prick-eared, curly tailed native hunting dogs, which did not bark; instead they wore a wooden bell around their necks or loins so they might be located whilst on the hunt. Basenji is also depicted on the wall paintings in the tombs of the Pharaohs.

The first Basenji exhibited at Crufts Dog Show in 1895, followed in 1912 by a Chinese Dog then in 1913 by Avongara Budwe, a Nyamā. Also in the 1890s a Congo Terrier was to be seen in the Paris Zoological Park. These dogs were all Basenjis. In 1923 Lady Helen Nutting transported six native Basenjis from an area west of Meridi in Central Africa - unfortunately none survived the distemper they contracted on arrival.

1936 saw the first successful importation and the start of a breeding programme when Mrs. Olivia Burn brought six native dogs from an area around Kwenge in the then Belgian Congo. Five of these dogs, namely Bongo (M), Bereke (F), Bashele (M), Bokoto (F), and Bungwa (M), all carrying the B prefix constitute the initial gene pool for all Basenjis in the western world. Bakuma was sent to America on finishing his time in quarantine (later to be known as Phemisters Bois). Bassanga was deemed to be untypical. The pups from her only litter were found good homes - to be bred from.

1939 - Miss Tudor Williams imported Simolo (M) and Choti (F) from the Sudan/Uganda border. Choti proved to be a barker and also went to a good home! Simolo, a large, heavy coated dog, only sired one litter - from which a bitch puppy, Wunda of Breitling replica watches the Congo - features in the pedigrees of some of the Andersley Basenjis.

In 1940, Mr. And Mrs. Arthur Byron were presented with a small red/white bitch by the chief of the Zande tribe. (It is interesting to note that this bitch had a tricolour sibling). Amatangazig was later owned by Veronica Tudor Williams and produced two litters under the Congo prefix. Also in 1940, a freighter carrying a cargo of coffee beans for West Africa docked in Boston, USA. Found aboard was a small white dog with prick ears, a docked tail and brindle patches on one ear and on her side. Mr. Phemister certified that she was a Basenji and registered her with the American Kennel Club as Phemisters Congo. Similarly, a year later, 1941, Kindu (M) and Kasenyi (F) arrived in America among a cargo of Gorillas shipped from the French Congo. These two Basenjis were eventually to produce Am/Ch. Kingolo, a dog who was to have a significant impact in the breed on both sides of the Atlantic. 1952 saw the importation of Wau of the Congo (M) from the Sudan/Congo border.

In 1959, Veronica Tudor Williams, Michael Hughes Halls and John Rybot journeyed to the Southern Sudan in search of new stock to augment the gene pool. They returned with Fula, a red/white bitch and a brindle male, Méa of Laughing Brook. Fula was to have a great influence on future breed type and temperaments. Méa returned to South Africa with Michael Hughes Halls, swiss replica watches becoming a SA Champion. A bitch from his only litter, Masha of Laughing Brook, a red/white was sent back to Veronica Tudor Williams and may be found generations back in some of today's owners.

In 1965 there were two separate importations of black/white Basenjis. Mrs. J. Wilson Stringer brought in Satin and Sheen of Horsley - the result of American breeding from a Liberian born bitch and Mrs. E. Ford returned to Britain from Northern Rhodesia with SA/Ch. Taysenji Tahzu, a dog born in Liberia from native-bred parents. There were no further additions to the gene pool until the American expeditions to the Uele District on the Zaire/Sudan border.

In 1990 thirteen African-bred Basenjis were accepted in the American Stud Book. These were Diagba and Gangura - brindle males, Mazingbi and Mi©«i - brindle females, Wele and Nabodio - tricolour males, Benzi - a red male and Zamee, Nĩ®©i, Kposi, Goldi and Elly - red females. Entered in the Stud Book at the same time was a red/white pygmy bred bitch - Esenjo - owned by Margaret Somers. To date this bitch has been selectively bred in a controlled breeding programme and has not contributed significantly to the general gene pool. Thus it may be seen that the Basenji gene pool worldwide is very restricted - and with a large part of the African Continent suffering from wars and civil unrest it is very doubtful indeed if any more Basenjis will ever come from Zaire or the Sudan.*

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