

Tibbie or damci?

In the last edition of our magazine (Tiibetinspanielit 1/03) there was a speculation over using tibbies with Bhutanese background in our breeding program. This matter is interesting and there are many sides in it. That is why we should take time to consider these things more. There are many, many breeds that are unknown to the organised kennel world and new breeds have been developed to suit better to various purposes. I am guessing that even at this very moment someone somewhere in the world is developing a new breed for some reason.

Breed or variety?

What is a breed? Is Tibetan Spaniel a variety of Pekingese or is it the other way around? What about Shih Tzus or Lhasa Apsos? Are they all just small, oriental companion dogs, which in different countries, in different regions have just developed so different looking, that people have started to call them different breeds? We know that in some Lhasa apso –litters there sometimes appears short coated, tibbie-looking puppies, prapsos (perhapso, perhaps apso). Are these breeds closely related to each other?

There has not been any organised kennel function, no central kennel organisation, no dog shows and no closed breeds nor written breed standards in Tibet. That is why people have bred different looking dogs according to their own liking in different corners of the country, like shorter muzzled ones in the eastern parts of Tibet and near the frontier of China, and a little longer muzzled ones in the western parts of the land.

Miss Phyllis Mayhew (Mingshang Tibetan Spaniels) writes in her book about the Silk Route, a trade route from Mediterranean to Northern China and Manchuria through The Gobi Desert. This route has been used already hundreds of years before Christ. In caravans, which have travelled along the Silk Route, there have been people, animals and all the merchandise, of course. It has been safe also for other travellers to join the caravans even for short journeys; together it has been easier to defend themselves against wild animals and robbers. During the slow, months taking journey people have used animals as food, but most likely there have also been dogs, man's best friends, travelling with the caravans. That is how dogs have come along the Silk Route from Tibet to China, from China to Tibet and even to Europe, back and forth.

People have also wandered with their dogs to the south through the passes of Himalayas, to Sikkim, to Bhutan, to Nepal, to India. Is Tibetan Spaniel looking dog called damci in Bhutan? Or is damci just a general term for a dog? Or could a damci be a totally new kind of a breed? If, however, a small tibbie-like and silky coated dog is called a damci, we are extremely lucky! We can expand our gene pool with the help of a breed very similar to the appearance of a Tibetan Spaniel.

Threat to breeds

In his article in Koiramme 12/97 (Our Dogs Magazine, published by the Finnish Kennel Club), Tapio Eerola tells about breeders, that have received a special permission from the Finnish Kennel Club to cross the Pinscher and the Schnauzer in order to expand the narrow gene pool of Pinschers. Their breeding after the World Wars is based on five (5) foundation dogs.

Päivi Rantasalo, the breeding consult of the Finnish Kennel Club, refers in her article (Koiramme 4/98) to the same problem within other breeds as well. The article was titled "Where to find more vitality into breeding pure bred dogs?" In Koiramme 9/01 there is an article titled "Where has the aim to breed purely led us?", also written by Päivi Rantasalo. This article is a summary of the Breeding Symposium, which was held in Uppsala, Sweden, and arranged by the Swedish Kennel Club. The lecturers challenged breeders to briskly move to the new millennia, away from the old attitudes of the last century.

The Finnish Kennel Club held a seminary about dogs and their anatomy in 2002. Kaj Sittnikow, a vet specialised in small animals, recommended the prohibition of close in-breeding in order to get rid of hereditary diseases due to the incest. An article "Motion is a medicine for a dog" (Koiramme 3/02) tells more about the seminary.

In the magazine Koiramme 4/03 there is a summary article about the breeding seminary held in February 2003 in Hyvinkää, Finland, titled "Dr. Per-Erik Sundgren: Dog shows are the biggest problem of breeding dogs". I am quoting parts of the article in question, in which this well known Swedish cynology and author of books concerning breeding, dr. Sundgren says: "Most of the breeds have been made less than a 100 years ago. Before that the breeds were not closed and the in-breeding was not a problem. Then people started to arrange dog shows.

Breeds were closed. In-breeding begun to be a habit instead of an exception." And then an example of a catastrophe among a certain breed: "The Clumber Spaniel has it worst; one third of the dogs dies to various diseases and faults before reaching the age of three (3) years. The Clumber Spaniel population suffers from close in-breeding, because the breed was based on eight (8) individuals in England after the Second World War. The only way to try to make the breed healthier again, is to cross it with other spaniels, for example."

Gene pool

The close in-breeding, mentioned by Per-Erik Sundgren, degenerates a breed by weakening the resistance of individuals against many diseases, for example cancer: "The short, monotonic code of genes of closely in-bred animals is easier to break than the long and versatile code of the out-bred ones."

The variation of genes in a dog population, in this case in one breed, is diminished by close in-breeding and also by a continuous line-breeding. This happens also, when breeding bases on appearance, or on colour, or on some other single quality, or if closely related males are used in breeding too much. According to P-E Sundgren no single male should ever have more than 50 descendants in any breed!

“Experienced dog owners and people, who work with dogs, have begun to notice the increase of diseases within dogs. These diseases are thought to be a consequence, among other things, of the exuberant idealising of the appearance in breeding choices and of close in-breeding in order to achieve these ideas”, Minna Leppänen, a vet specialised in small animals, writes in *Palveluskoirat 10/02* (a magazine for working dogs, published by Suomen Palveluskoiraliitto, an association for working dogs in Finland).

If some male inherits strongly his own type, let's say his beautiful appearance, breeders are tempted to overuse or super use him. With many similar looking descendants man can easily have an even group in a dog show. Due to this I have felt, that competing in Breeding Classes at shows and the aim of the most homogenise group of dogs, is only harming the variety and the diversity of our breed and also harms the preserving of the gene heritage of the breed.

The purpose of a dog show, measuring the breeding, has been considered too high in Finland as well as in many other organised kennel countries. In dog shows the appearance of a dog plays too big a role in expense of the other breeding aims. Success in dog shows and a beautiful appearance should not be target number one in breeding!

In breeding choices the temperament and the health of the dogs are to consider at first and then the appearance of the dogs. With a careful and extensive, far-looking breeding plan a breeder makes sure, that in his/her own breeding material and also in the breed in generally could be preserved as wide a gene pool as possible. The tendency of the breeding dogs to work properly according to the aim of the breed is to be considered in working breeds, of course.

Looking for new genes

The purpose to use imported, oriental dogs for breeding is to expand the very narrow gene pool of our breed and by doing so also to maintain the vitality in the breed. In 1969 the first representatives of the new bloodline, siblings Dikki Dolma ja Yasodhara were imported from India to Britain. Dikki Dolma was bought by Mrs Howard Joyce (Northanger Tibetan Spaniels) and Yasodhara was purchased by Mrs Ann Wynyard (Braeduke Tibetan Spaniels) and Miss Helen Forbes (Helfor Tibetan Spaniels). Primus motor for these imports was Mrs Ann Wynyard, thanks to her intensive correspondence and finally her article in the magazine of the Indian Kennel Club.

The first representative of this new bloodline in Finland was NORD CH Braeduke Chung Culi, a grand son to Dikki Dolma. He moved to me from England as a small puppy in 1973. Nowadays this same bloodline has spread wider as Dikki Dolma exists in the pedigree of INT & FIN & SWE CH Zollis Inter-Mez-Zo, who has had a great influence to the Finnish Tibetan Spaniel population.

Siblings Dikki Dolma and Yasodhara were quite near the breed type of today. Yasodhara was even qualified for Cruft's dog show; a great accomplishment for any dog to achieve! Unfortunately her coat was not in show condition in that time and she did not participate. Chotu, born in India from Bhutanese parents and living in Germany, represents more the breed type that was imported to Britain before and after the World Wars.

Variation in breed type

I am looking at the photo about Lama, a black and white male owned by Mrs Wilmot-Corfield. Lama was born in Lhasa and imported to England in 1911. After his death, Lama was stuffed and he is displayed in the British Museum Natural History department. The photo is about that stuffed Lama. I am looking at the photos of Fanthorpe Nanki Poo, whose son Skyid was one of the five foundation dogs in Britain after the World Wars. I also look at the photos of two females, Mughiwuli and Dolma, owned by Lady Wakefield. These were the key dogs for the breeding of Tibetan Spaniels after the World Wars. The breeding in those days started with very close sister to brother or mother to son –combinations. The head and the overall type of the dogs mentioned above bears surprisingly much resemblance to that of this Bhutanese Chotu.

Here in western world the breed type has changed from those days. Still there exists variations in our breed, and I consider this variation to be one of the true riches in our breed. Even in Finland you can find tibbies that differ in type but cover the breed standard. The recent photo about 2 years old Rambo is an excellent example of that variety. Rambo is a registered tibbie and has no connection to Chotu at all. Any of us could create “new breeds”, if only wanted. Luckily the variation nowadays is controlled by our breed standard, on which all breeders can lean steadily.

Chotu-line in Finland

Chotu's descendants, bred by Marja-Terttu Kallio (Cayana Tibetan Spaniels), have achieved CK quality (certificate quality) at Finnish Championship Shows, and even the dogs from the next generation are excellent representatives of the breed; one of these puppies got CC at International dog show in Lahti this year!

A son of Chotu, Moetica Chotu Dasho-La Seduhin, born in Slovenia and owned by Päivi Säviaho (Seduhin Tibetan Spaniels), was best of opposite sex and got CC in Hämeenlinna in 2001. The respected judge was Mr Andrew Brace from Great Britain. In the critic he says: “Although this shaded red is very plain in head, he has many old fashioned qualities, which the breed is loosing internationally. Like the lifting ears, correct chin, good front, correct length of legs & typical coat. He also moves very well. This is the type the breed needs right now.”

His words are given more weigh, when you consider that he has been judging tibbies at CC level since 1970's. He is a very well respected all-rounder, who is listed on “A” list by the Tibetan Spaniel Association (UK). This year he judged

tibbies in one of the most respected shows in the world, Cruft's in England! He has written many books; for instance *The Essential Guide to Judging Dogs* (1994), and he was one author of *The International Encyclopaedia of Dogs* (1995). He also frequently writes columns to *Dog World* and *Hundsport* –magazines. In conversations with Finnish breeders he has shown very good knowledge and interest about Tibetan Spaniels, their history and the origin of the breed type.

Damci or tibble?

Is damci another breed, which just bears a close resemblance to tibbies? Susan Miccio (1995, 35) ascertains simply, that the damci in Bhutanese stamps is the Tibetan Spaniel. In her book there is a photo about two post stamps; a particolored dog facing towards in one, and two dogs in another. Mrs Wynyard (1982, 244) tells about the king of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, who had a particolored tibble called Khomto (= my little child). There is a photo about the king and Khomto in the book.

Mrs Wynyard mentions (1982, 245) Bhutanese dumci, which is very much like Tibetan Spaniel both in colour and in head type, just slightly bigger in size. She also alludes to the dogs in Bhutanese stamps; they do not look in the least bit like the one owned by Mrs M Furst from Assam, India. The mention about Bhutanese damci is also found in internet on the page of molossi type breeds

(address www.moloss.com/001/ptxt/oma.html). So is a damci a big mastiff type of a dog?

Chotu has been called damci by ordinary people in India (*) after they have seen photos about him taken by Martina Krüger. Looking at photos it is very difficult for a layman to figure the size of a dog, so I assume that their definition about the breed of Chotu is a bit wrong. Chotu is though clearly a Tibetan Spaniel, judged by three specialists of the breed. After their recommendation Chotu was taken into the breed and was officially registered.

In Susan Miccio's book (1995, 36) there is a very sweet photo about a tricolor tibble, photo taken in Lhasa in 1993. I just hope that some day I could visit Chumbi Valley, Tibet, and if I were lucky, I'd find that kind of little treasure of my own. And back in Europe, here should be a judicial view about taking him/her into the breed. As a breeder of the breed, I'd identify this dog as a Tibetan Spaniel.

Here in Finland this practice of taking new dogs into a breed has been done many times; breeders of arctic breeds of Lapland were travelling around Lapland in 1960's and 70's. They were looking for unregistered working dogs to give valuable new genes to Finnish Lapland Dog and Lapland Herder Dog. Some other breeds have been open as well, for example Norrbotten Spitz and Jack Russel Terrier.

Not pekingese nor mastiff

With the introduction of Chotu we have received new blood, new genes into our breed. This is a sensible, long term job for the future. The aim is to preserve this lovely breed as the strong and long living breed it is now! A great credit is due to Mrs Wynyard, who since 1969 and also afterwards courageously has been looking for new bloodlines to introduce to our breed! When she was judging here in our special show in 2000, she took very much interest in Chotu-line and also met some of his descendants. We also owe Mr Primož Peer (Rombon Tibetan Spaniels) from Slovenia a debt of gratitude, as he did a great job to get Chotu officially registered as a Tibetan Spaniel!

Using a primitive type of dog in the breeding programme will perhaps leave its own marks on the descendants, as would the cross breeding of two different breeds do, too. The change of the generations of dogs is however so quick, that man can quite soon fade out the perhaps not so wanted changes in type. I am very much agreeing with Mr Brace as he says, that the pekingese type has spread wider and wider out in Tibetan Spaniel population, especially in head type. More and more often muzzles are short and wide, there are wrinkles under the eyes and also too much lips. Also the whole breed has changed here in Finland towards bigger and heavier dogs – in other Scandinavian countries the type is smaller and lighter.

In 1930's Doma of Ladkok, living in Britain, was the model for the first breed standard of Tibetan Spaniel. The experts from India of those days said, that she was the best tibble ever obtained from Tibet. They were wondering, how it is possible, that such a little gem had ever been allowed to leave Tibet. Doma's owner, Dr. Greig has told, that Doma was brought to her in a basket in the middle of the night just before she was returning to England from Northern India, near the border of Tibet. She was sure, that Doma was stolen from some Tibetan monastery. Photos about Doma can be found in books of Miss Mayhew and Mrs Wynyard (1980 and 1982).

Summa Summarum

Perhaps using Chotu and his progeny for breeding will help us to reduce the unwanted signs of Pekingese, or hinders our tibbies to become too heavy, even molossi type ones. Every breeder has to make decisions and also compromises, all targets will not be reached at the same moment and for sure there are no perfect dogs. Sometimes breeders can give more consideration to the gene pool and its variation than just to the over all look of the dog. Temperament and healthiness of the dog are the points in which responsible breeders will not make any compromises.

Ms Juliette Cunliffe writes in the *Tibetan Breeds International Magazine* about the Tibetan Breeds' seminar, which was held in New Delhi, India in 1970. At present there were five Tibetan born judges, which all had bred and owned Tibetan breeds, and also some other Tibetan breeds enthusiasts. The meaning of the seminar was to find out the differences of Tibetan breeds, names and breed standards. In that meeting they found out, that our breed was called jemtse apso (= scissored apso) in Tibet.

Sir Edward Wakefield said, that their Dolma, one of the most important key dogs for our breed, was a gyakhi; at least that was the name of the dog Sir Wakefield can asked from the Maharajah of Sikkim. So Dolma the gyakhi arrived in 1940's

to New Delhi from Phari Dzong Monastery from Tibet. The photos about Dolma be found in the books of Miss Mayhew and Mrs Wynyard (1974, 1980, 1982). According to the Delhi meeting in 1970, gyakhi (is written also gyaki, gya-khyi, gya-kyi) really means a pekingese (gya=chinese, kyι=dog).

I have always been unfamiliar with the spaniel-ending of the name of our breed. Tibbies have nothing to do with real spaniels; it is not a hunting dog nor does it have large, hanging ears. Difficult are also the Tibetan versions. Is it the time to get a new and better name for our breed?

Pirkko Linnus
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1982www.kokonaisvaltaisenkoiranjalostuksentukiheti.fi(*) There is a mistake. It should be: Chotu has been called damci by ordinary people in Bhutan, not in India.

(**) The name of the book in English means Seven Years in Tibet.

(***) The name of the education material made by the Finnish Kennel Club in English means The Ground Basis of Heredity and Dog Breeding

(****) The yearbook of Tibetan Spaniels made by our Finnish Tibetan Spaniel association, concluding all show critics about all tibbies in that year in Finland. There are all eye-, patella- and hip –examinations of that years, too.

Rambo, a bit different type of a tibbie, came along the street

Photo © Katriina Huhtinen



Chotus's son Moetica Chotu Dasho-La Seduhin, Dudu
Photo © Päivi Säviahö



Dudu's daughter Seduhin Charumati
Photo © Päivi Säviahö



Dudu's son Seduhin Porthos
Photo © Päivi Säviahö

