

THE AKITA DOGS OF JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

Discussants: Mr. Junichi Ono
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Mr. and Mrs. Donald W. Lusk are publishers and editor of The Akita Journal. He is also the chairman of the Akita Club of Greater Los Angeles. They requested an interview with Mr. Junichi Ono who is one of the foremost authorities on dogs in Japan. After attending the 71st Akiho Headquarters Show in Odate and before returning to the United States, there was a brief discussion on the comparison of the Akita dogs in Japan and the United States. It is one's hope that the recognition of the Akita dog of Japan by the world will be hastened. If this discussion becomes the beginning of a suspension bridge toward that day, it will indeed be a most happy occasion.

The Akita Dogs of Japan: The Past and The Present

Mr. Ono: Mr. Lusk has asked for my views on this subject. But I must have it clearly understood that I am not a specialist on the Akita dog.

Mr. Lusk: Yes, I understand that. It seems that there is quite a difference in the Akita dogs of the past and the present in Japan. Can you explain this difference?

Mr. Ono: As I have stated before, in my view, the body type of the Akita dog was not uniform until after the war. Therefore, there is obviously some differences when compared with the Akita dog of the past.

Mr. Lusk: However, since they are of the same breed, I would surmise that some Akita dogs of the past and the present should have some things in common.

Mr. Ono: That may be true to some extent, but I believe that there were many Akita dogs of inferior quality in the past. There has been a gradual refinement until we have the well balanced fine looking Akita dogs of today.

Mr. Lusk: Are you saying that there has been a complete change from the Akita dogs of the past?

Mr. Miyahara: Instead of saying a complete change, it is probably better to say they have been improved,

Mr. Ono: Yes, they have been refined. This also applies to the Akita dogs produced soon after the war. For example, if the famous Kongo-go was entered at the recent headquarters show in Odate, I seriously doubt whether he will be able to win.

Mr. Lusk: I understand that. However, what is your opinion on the Akita dogs of the Kongo era?

Mr. Ono: Kongo-go was an excellent representative of the Akita dogs of that era, and thus the Kongo line flourished for a short period of time. However, it seems that it went into an unexpected rapid decline. Mr. Hashimoto who owned Kongo-go lived not too far from me and he often brought Kongo-go to my home during the exercise rounds. Therefore, Kongo-go is a dog very dear to my heart.

Mr. Lusk: when I was visiting Japan last December, Mr. Hashimoto allowed me to visit him for a whole day. I have heard that he has passed away since that time.

Mr. Ono: Mr. Hashimoto was a man of the Kongo era, and left the Akita dog world after that era. Therefore, it seems that he was not involved with the Akita dogs of today.

Mr. Lusk: I believe so.

Mrs. Lusk: Mr. Hashimoto said that the Akita dogs of today were very "smart." (Sumato = smart, stylish, spruce)

Mr. Lusk: It seems that a large number of Akita dogs were introduced into the United States between 1945 and the 1950's. Even now there is a large number of the Kongo type Akita dogs present there. Is the Kongo type of Akita dog of any necessity today?

Mr. Ono: I do not feel that it is necessary to return to that type of the past.

Mrs. Lusk: What really caused the Kongo line to go into a great decline when it was once considered as great during its golden age?

Mr. Miyahara: There was also another main line of Akita dogs existing during the Kongo era. There were only one or two outstanding Akita dogs produced from the Kongo line. No other satisfactory Akita dogs were produced, which caused the Kongo line to almost completely disappear from the scene. At the same time, better Akita dogs were produced successively from the Ichinoseki line to the present time, which are the Akita dogs of today.

Mr. Lusk: Ichinoseki! Goromaru ----.

Mr. Miyahara: Yes. Such as Goromaru and Tamagumo.

Mr. Lusk: Is Kongo-go of the Dewa line?

Mr. Miyahara: Yes, of the Dewa line.

Why The Japanese Akita Dogs Are Not Registerable in The United States

Mr. Lusk: At the present time the Akita dogs that are imported from Japan are not registrable with the AKC (American Kennel Club). what is your opinion concerning this?

Mr. Ono: Conversely, maybe I should be asking you why? (Laughter) At the present time, isn't there an yearly increase in the registration of Akita dogs in the United States? In 1973 there were 1859 Akita dogs registered. However, this number also included the unregistered Akita dogs from the previous years. However, in 1974 there were 1057, 1085 in 1975 and 1218 in 1976. The Akita dog ranked 60th among all the dog breeds. And yet, why is it that the Akita dogs that are imported from Japan, where these dogs originated, are not allowed to be registered? On what basis was this done?

Mr. Lusk: In the United States the AKC is the sole registering body, while in Japan there are multiple registries such as Akiho, Akikyo and Nippo, each with its pedigrees. I am wondering if that is one of the reasons the AKC is not allowing the Japanese Akita dogs to be registered.

Mr. Ono: There is a difference in the system along that line, that is for sure.

Mr. Miyahara: Yes, that is probably true. However, the Akiho and Akikyo registries are very reliable.

Mr. Ono: Both are identical. Many of the same dogs are registered with both Akiho and Akikyo.

Mr. Miyahara: There is an Akiho Branch in Los Angeles which holds a dog show every year. However, almost all of the Akita dogs shown there are of the Akiho type of dogs.

Mr. Ono: It seems that there are two groups consisting of the small Akiho group with Akita dogs that are comparatively close to that of the Akita dogs in Japan, and the overwhelmingly large AKC group. One cause of this division is that the Akita dogs of Japan are classified in the non-sporting group while they are classified in the working group in the United States. Thus, I am wondering if this would lead to basic differences in the view-point and understanding of the Akita dog.

The Akita Dogs of Japan and The United States Should Be Identical

Mr. Lusk: The American Akita dog fans do not know the good qualities of the Akita dogs in Japan. They are under the impression that the old type of Akita dogs with their different body forms are the true Akita dogs. Therefore, if it was possible to show in the United States some of the excellent examples of the present day Akita dogs in Japan, I believe that it may be possible for them to understand the true Akita dog. Then in due course of time, it may be possible for the reopening of the AKC registry to the Akita dogs from Japan. I also believe that an Akita dog, whether it be from Japan, United States or even Europe should be identical. This would be the ideal goal. However, similar to a frog in a well, the American Akita dog fans, while seeing only their type of Akita dogs in the United States, are convinced that theirs are the true Akita dogs. Unless they come over to Japan to see the Akita dogs of Japan, they will probably not be able to appreciate some of the excellent Akita dogs of today.

Mr. Miyahara: Mr. and Mrs. Lusk understands that excellence of the Akita dogs of Japan.

Mr. and Mrs. Lusk: Indeed, we do fully appreciate the excellent qualities of the Japanese Akita dogs. That is why we came to Japan to observe the Akita dogs here. Just before we left home to come over here, many of our friends repeatedly called us on the telephone to say, "You will be quite disappointed, if you went to Japan to see their Akita dogs." (Laughter)

Mr. Ono: There were 25 Akita dogs entered at the American Westminster Show. I believe this was a relatively large entry when compared to those of the past shows. However, they were all of the American type of Akita dog, which was very disappointing. Many of the Japanese living in the United States who attended the show were all disappointed and said, "Those are not Akita dogs."

Mr. Lusk: Yes, I believe that unless some excellent Akita dogs are brought in from Japan, one can expect more disappointments.

Mr. Ono: Each nation has an individual characteristic for certain preferences. For example, it has been pointed out that the Rough Collie from England has increased two inches in size in the United States. At least the outward appearance of the Akita dog should not become markedly different.

Mr. Lusk: However, in the case of the Akita dogs, there are no great differences in the sizes between those in the United States or in Japan.

Mr. Ono: If size is not the problem, one must essentially try to minimize the differences in the type of the dog.

I Would Like To Inform Others About The Truly Great Akita Dogs of Japan

Mr. and Mrs. Lusk: Therefore, we are eager to take some of the excellent Akita dogs from Japan to the United States and say to them there, "Here are the true Akita dogs of Japan," without regards as to whether they be registrable with the AKC or not. The Akita dogs in Japan and in the United States should be identical.

Mr. Ono: I agree.

Mrs. Lusk: While glancing at the photos of the various western dogs living in Japan in Mr. Ono's book, **Dogs, Introduction To The Various Breeds and New Breeding Techniques (Inu. Kenshu No Shokai To Atarashii Shiiku)**. There appears to be only minor differences in the western dogs of Japan and the United States. Almost all of the various dog breeds appear to be similar except for the Akita dogs which are utterly different. (Laughter)

Mr. Miyahara: The Akita dogs living in the United States today are probably the old type of Akita dog of Japan before they were improved.

Mr. Ono: The Akita dogs that went to the United States soon after the war were not of high quality. Since the knowledge of the Akita dog among the military and civilian personnel were very limited, they took Akita dogs of low quality with them. These dogs became the foundation stock of their breeding program. One may assume that after much effort and discipline, they produced what is called today's networking dog.

Mr. Miyahara: It seems that instead of taking what one may call a show dog, they took some Akita dogs of inferior quality with them.

Mr. Lusk: It seems so. I am well aware of this. Therefore, I believe that in order to correct these things, one must take some excellent Akita dogs from Japan and actually compare them with those in the United States. I am also desirous of working toward the day when the registration of the AKC will be reopened to the Akita dogs from Japan. We are also desirous of having those of you in Japan work toward a similar direction by exerting your influence and assistance along this line.

Mr. Ono: I fully understand your point. Many years ago when Mr. Jarman, the president of the Conglomerate Company visited Japan, we introduced him to a first class dog breeder because Mr. Jarman wanted an Akita dog of high quality. However, since the United States is a very large country, it is often difficult for one to keep in contact with each other even if one has some excellent Akita dogs.

Mr. Lusk: In order to solve that problem, we have started to publish The Akita Journal. We send a copy of this Journal to the AKC judges as a courtesy without any fees. Therefore, this magazine is a non-profit venture with the sole purpose of disseminating the information about the true Akita dog. I have ventured into this publication from my private means. This magazine is sent to subscribers not only throughout the United States, but also to Canada and Mexico. I believe that the information from this magazine would soon lead to the appreciation of the excellent Akita dogs that exist in Japan.

Mr. Ono: That is a very commendable thing for you to do.

Please continue your good work. To change the subject, the AKC standard includes a word called pinto. What is the difference between the term pinto and the term markings?

Mr. Lusk: Pinto refers to the markings, each with its respective differences on the left and right sides of the body. Pintos are very popular in the United States.

Mr. Ono: I see. Do you have any pinto ponies in the United States?

Mr. Lusk: A white coat with a third of colored coat are called pintos.

Mr. Miyahara: Since the Akita dogs in the United States are classified as working dogs, there are many Akita dogs over there with good body structures, although the facial features leave a lot to be desired. However, if we did send some excellent Akita dogs from Japan, would they be properly appreciated in the United States? Any good western dogs that are sent to Japan are properly appreciated, and I believe that this would be also true for the Akita dog.

Mr. Lusk: Yes, I believe so. Therefore, we would like to have some excellent Akita dogs. However, even if they are of Japanese origin, we do not want any second or third rate Akita dogs. (Laughter)

Mr. Miyahara: What were your impressions of the Akita dogs at the Akiho Headquarters Show that you saw the other day?

Mr. Lusk: The shoulder angulations seemed to be somewhat straight.

Mr. Ono: In other words may infer that there were dogs with maeyorikata.

Mr. Lusk: Yes.

Mr. Miyahara: Mr. Lusk has a very discerning eye, even in regards to the Akita dogs of Japan. At the Odate headquarters show, Mr. Lusk picked out what he considered as good dogs before the judges' decisions were announced from the yoken (6 to 10 month) class. They placed in second or third places.

Mr. Ono: In any event, please spread the knowledge about the true qualities of the Akita dog. The Japanese Akita dog organizations should also work out a more positive program on the question of the AKC.

Mr. Miyahara: There is quite a difference between an individual effort and an organizational effort. I believe that it is very important to work toward a closer cultural interchange between the Akita dog worlds in Japan and the United States, in order to make rapid strides toward the goal of having the Akita dog recognized by the world.

I thank you very much for your discussion.

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