

MY THOUGHTS ON THE AKITA DOG

(pp.103-110, 1975, Shin Journal-sha, Tokyo, Japan)

By Naoto Kajiwara

How To Enjoy Your Akita Dog

My history on the development of the Akita dog in preceding chapters was hindered by inadequate research on my part and the scarcity of data on Akita dogs of the past. My unorganized notes often lacked clarity. However, I hope the reader has gained some useful information from what I have presented. I am looking forward to more uniformity in the Akita dog as more information on the Akita dog becomes available.

The Akita dogs were hunting or fighting dogs in the past. Today, a majority of the Akita dogs are show dogs. Therefore, a judge's evaluation of the Akita dog is very important to dog breeders.

Akita dog shows are for the enjoyment of breeders, owners and dog lovers. The judge evaluates and places dogs based on his decisions. However, at today's dog shows, the observing and enjoying of the Akita dog has been almost completely replaced by criticisms of the judge's decisions. This may be due to several factors. First of all, in the past, very few of the knowledgeable Akita dog owners and breeders were at the dogs shows, and the judge's decisions were taken at his word. However, tendencies to question the judge's decisions grew as knowledge on the Akita dog began to increase among the dog owners and breeders. Secondly, opinions began to change on the essentials of an Akita dog among the judges. As one judge evaluated one dog highly, another judge would question that evaluation, and this often led to disputes. Identifying the essential qualities in the Akita dog has been difficult for many in the Akita dog world. This problem may be gradually resolved as one became more knowledgeable about the history of the development of the Akita dog.

The evaluation, selection and breeding of the Akita show dog for improving the breed will be discussed next.

The Akita Dog Organizations

Akita dog organizations have Akita dog standards to point out the plus and minus points of an Akita dog. Proper registration forms with the pedigrees of one's Akita dogs are necessary. One must first become a member of one of the Akita dog organizations, and gain some knowledge of the dog organization, in order to become eligible to show one's dog.

Many types of Akita dog organizations have existed from the fighting dog era. During the 1890s, a fighting dog organization called the **Enyukai** was founded. **The Aiken Kyokai** was another fighting dog organization of the Taisho Period (1912-1926). The **Akitainu Hozonkai (Akiho)** was established in Odate in 1927. The **Nipponken Hozonkai (Nippo)** was established in Tokyo, and includes the Akita dog in the large Japanese dog class. Later the **Akitainu Kyokai (Akikyo)** in Tokyo and the **Akitainu Hozonkyokai** in Odate and the **Ogata Akitainu Hozonkai** were established. There is also the **Akitainu Shogyokaidokumiai**. From among these, three of the incorporated Akita dogs clubs, Akiho, Nippo and Akikyo will be discussed briefly.

Akitainu Hozonkai (Akiho)

Akiho was established in 1927 by **Mr. Shigeie Izumi**, who was the mayor of Odate at that time. However, as mentioned by **Mr. Hirokichi (pen name: Hiroshi) Saito**, Akiho then was in name only with no members until 1934, when it began to function as an organization. Akiho was incorporated on May 28, 1953. Branches were established in various areas around 1949 or 1960 to hold shows and meetings. After the Akiho's Eleventh Nationwide Show of 1947, the name was changed to the Akiho Headquarters Show which was held in Odate on May 3 of the following year, 1948. From 1951, the annual headquarters show had been held semiannually in the Spring and Fall. The Akiho's Nineteenth Headquarters Show was held on April 5, 1953 in Nagoya and was held there subsequently three times. The 22nd show was held in Osaka. The Spring Headquarters Show has been held regularly in Odate since the 28th Show of 1955, while the Fall Shows were alternated between Nagoya and Osaka. The 37th Headquarters Show was held in Tokyo in 1960. Since that time, the Fall Headquarters Show has been held in the Kanto, Tokai, Kansai, Shikoku and the Kyushu regions after the regional headquarters were established. Regional headquarters have now been established in the Tohoku, Hokuriku and Chugoku Regions. Today, the number of Akiho branches exceeds fifty nationwide. Almost all of the branches hold two dog shows each year with periodical meetings.

The Akiho headquarters is located in Odate, the site of origin of the Akita dog. From the beginning, a strong awareness as the place of origin with tendency to the centralization of power at the headquarters existed. However, as more branches are being established, many of the headquarters officers and trustees are being selected from other areas of Japan. The annual general and board meetings are still held at the headquarters in Odate and some inconveniences are encountered by those living outside of Odate. However, the meetings are well attended for now.

The majority of Akita dog kennel and dog shop owners nationwide are members of Akiho and some are on the board of trustees at the headquarters. This may lead to the further growth of Akiho as the Akita dog gains in popularity. The Akiho dog shows may occasionally present a promotional opportunity for some Akita dog dealers. This may differ from the Nippo and Akikyo shows.

Akiho has about fifty qualified judges, who seem to be ever always under the watchful eyes of Akiho fans. These judges were selected mainly through recommendations until about 5 or 6 years ago. Today, judges are selected through examinations. However, the lack of uniformity in evaluating the Akita dog seems evident. Some attribute this to the large number of judges from different parts of the country. This is regrettable from the standpoints of the preservation of a natural monument, improvement of the breed, and the different viewpoints held by those who enter their dogs. Personal preferences of the judges may differ, often resulting in the changing of the ranking of dogs at the Akiho dog shows. Thus, in some cases, the larger the number of entries, the uneasier the atmosphere could become after the final decisions. This could often lead to heated debates. On the other hand, this could also lead to much increased interest among the breeders. The variations in the judges' evaluations could also be looked upon as a broader outlook on the dogs that are shown, and bases for more discussions.

The Akitainu Hozonkai (Akiho) is the largest single Japanese dog breed organization in Japan with more than 30,000 Akita dog registrations and a membership exceeding 10,000 last year (1972). This organization has achieved much and continues to do so. Therefore, it seems that of the three Akita dog organizations, Akiho has the most support and trust from the Akita dog lovers today.

Nipponken Hozonkai (Nippo)

As previously mentioned by Mr. Hirokichi Saito in the chapter on the history of the development of the Akita dog, the pioneers of this organization were **Mr. Hirokichi (pen name: Hiroshi) Saito, Dr. Shozaburo Watase** and **Mr. Kenichi Ono**. Nippo was established on June 1928. After much preparation for the organization's goal of preserving Japanese dogs, the First Nippo Nationwide Show, limited to Japanese dogs, was held on the rooftop of the Matsuya in the Ginza District of Tokyo on November 1932. The Akita dog was the first Japanese dog to be so designated as a natural monument in July 1931. Nippo has sponsored every Japanese dog show for the sole purpose of promoting the Japanese dogs as natural monuments. This resulted in later designations of the Kai dog, the Kishu dog, the Koshi-no-inu, etc. On March 1937, Nippo was given approval to incorporate.

Owing to its central location, Nippo has been blessed from the beginning with many active well-informed members. It is well organized, and this has contributed to the great progress and preservation of Japanese dogs than any other Akita dog organization. They have the largest membership and support from Japanese dog fans nationwide. Nippo deals with all seven breeds of Japanese dogs designated as natural monuments, namely: the Akita dog, the Hokkaido dog, the Kai dog, the Koshi-no-inu (believed to be extinct now), the Kishu dog, the Shikoku dog and the Shiba dog. These dogs are classified into the large, medium and small dogs. If limited only to large Japanese dogs, Akiho has the largest number of Akita dogs. Nippo had the largest number of Akita dog entries about twenty years ago during the eras of Kongo-go and Kincho-go. However, the number of Akita dog entries in the Nippo Headquarters Shows has decreased to only about 5 or 6 entries recently. The majority of entries at Nippo are the small and medium Japanese dogs. The cause for this trend is unknown. It may be due to preferences for a certain type of the large Japanese dog or to lack of entries of Nippo's representative Akita dogs. This may also be due to a sudden interest in small and medium dogs and less interest in the large Japanese dog.

Judges at Nippo are carefully selected and must undergo further studies and training as assistant judges for several years. Their judging methods are quite advanced. Thus, with such a distinguished history and orderly management, Nippo is a step ahead of other dog organizations. It is located in Tokyo with branches nationwide. A revival of the Akita dog in the large Japanese dog class at Nippo is a possibility.

Akitainu Kyokai (Akikyo)

Akikyo was organized in Tokyo in 1948. The First Akikyo Show was held the following year with the Thirteenth Memorial Service for the faithful Akita dog, Hachi-ko. At the beginning, it seems Akikyo was associated with Akiho. According to old Akiho records, Akiho recognized Akitainu Kyokai (Akikyo) in Tokyo in 1948. It shows that **Mr. Katsusuke Ishihara**, an important figure from the beginning of Akikyo, was also an Akiho judge at the Akiho's Fifteenth Headquarters Show of 1951 and at several subsequent Akiho's headquarters shows. The reason for Akikyo's separation from Akiho is not known, but it seems to have occurred around April 1955, when Akikyo incorporated.

Since Akikyo was established later than Nippo and Akiho, its main influence at the beginning was in the Kanto Region with Tokyo as the center. Later, branches were established in the Tohoku, Tokai and Tozai regions. They have to be more concentrated in the Kanto Region with fewer branches in other regions. Therefore, fewer dog shows are being held by Akikyo. In spite of this, Akikyo seems to have a large nationwide following and could expand. However, Akikyo does not seem to be expanding. It seems that Akikyo and Akiho are going in different directions. Akiho has taken a broader view while Akikyo seems to be taking the narrower view at any cost. For a while, Akikyo's emphasis seemed to be on body form and limbs of the Akita dog, while Akiho seemed to concentrate on facial features.

From the beginning, Akikyo has taken the path of a gradual stricter standard and regulations. This is true of coat color, where narrower choices have moved away from the brindles. Therefore, a marked increase in the numbers of the white Akita dog winners is noticed, while dogs with colored coats are being placed lower.

In general, the foregoing policy of Akikyo seems to represent the views of **Mr. Katsusuke Ishihara**, who is chairman, trustee, and head judge of Akikyo. Judges at Akikyo's dog shows tend to follow that trend, since the majority of Akikyo's judges are under the guidance of Mr. Ishihara. The broader evaluation or ranking order seen in the Akiho ring is rarely seen in Akikyo's show ring with a narrower emphasis.

One cannot arbitrarily state which organization is legitimate and which are not. Each Akita dog organization has its own history and characteristics. Akiho shows tend to be lively and gaudy with less control. Nippo has the largest number of entries of small and medium dogs with disorders occasionally. Although smaller than the two other Akita dog organizations, Akikyo's shows are described as being "Sanshou wa kotsubu demo biriri to karai" ("Piquant though small").

Akita dog owners or breeders may join any Akita dog organization. One may join more than one dog organization, unless one intends to hold an office in one of the organizations. It may be wise to inquire about this before applying for membership. For the sake of the Akita dog, it is not fair to change membership in midstream. One should consider his Akita dog's pedigree and coat colors, with emphasis on the bloodline and hereditary factors. Each of the three Akita dog organizations has its own emphasis on the essentials on the appearance of the dog, limits on the coat colors which may differ, and this may influence the evaluation of the Akita dogs in the show. One should also consider where one resides. Since Akiho and Nippo have branches nationwide, availability of membership, dog registration and attendance of the Spring and Fall Headquarters Shows may not be a problem. This may also be applicable to Akikyo's members in the Kanto Region that has many branches. However, many large cities and prefectures are without Akikyo's branches and this may cause some inconveniences for members living in those areas.

However, in general, it is the same Akita dog with no great differences. Before joining an Akita dog organization, one should consider the lineage of the Akita dog and the organization's direction, the region where one lives whether the organization's view matches one's viewpoint of the Akita dog.

Itajiw9

Translated by Mr. Tatsuo Kimura 10/11/96

www.northlandakitas.com
www.deltasteamway.com