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"Tennenkinenbutsu to shite no Nihonken"

("Japanese Dogs as Natural Monuments")

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The Importance of Preserving Japanese Dogs

Dogs belong to the genus *canis* with round pupils and forty-two teeth. Its origin is as unknown as that of the sphinx. The dog was one of the first animals to be made domesticated from an economic necessity. The dog being instinctively affectionate to man, migrated with man since the days of the Late Stone Age. Because of this, one can trace the migration routes of different races, by studying the distribution of different dog families that we see today.

Skeletal remains of the earliest domesticated animals were found in mounds from the Stone Age in enmark. Historical remains from a far more advanced civilization from the Swiss Lake Dwelling Period have yielded dog skulls together with the skeletons of pigs, horses, goats, sheep and cows. These dogs were probably kept as guard dogs or pets.

Dog skeletons have also been found in shell mounds in Hokkaidou in the north and as far as Kyushuu in the south. According to the findings of **Dr. Kotondo Hasebe**, small, medium and large dogs had already existed during the Stone Age.

The distinguishing features of ancient Japanese dogs were their standing ears and a curled or sickle tails. Since no dog mummies have yet been found, one must only rely on dog images that are seen on earthen figures, shell mound findings, cave dwellers' relics, bronze earthenware from prehistoric times, designs on bronze bells, images of dogs, dogs in picture scrolls and good luck charms from the Fujiwara Period (1086-1185). These dogs had erect ears with curled or sickle tails. Many of the picture scrolls, story books and coins from the later periods also show dogs with sanding ears. Dogs with droopy ears begin to appear from the Kamakura (1185-1382) and the Ashikaga (1392-1568) Periods.

Thus, the foregoing findings seem to strongly indicate that the ancient Japanese dogs had erect ears with curled or sickle tails.

However, this does not imply that only one type (page 9) of a dog with standing ears with the curled or sickle tail came with our ancestors from overseas. Crossbreeding occurred to some extent prior to this time. From the Ashikaga (1392-1568) to the Meiji (1868-1912) Periods more crossbreeding occurred with western dogs that were introduced into Japan in large numbers. Furthermore, as one saw the senseless clubbing of dogs to death, the possibility of these old Japanese dogs becoming extinct came to the minds of many compassionate intellectuals.

In order to preserve the old Japanese dogs that have survived to this day, identifying pedigrees and classifying scientifically could be of much value. However, this will not be an easy task.

On one occasion. Dr. Shouzaburou Watase indicated that Japanese dogs could be divided, at the least, into three groups after studying them in Honshuu, Shikoku and Kyuushuu [*Note by translator: This classification was later refuted by Dr. Watase. According to Hirokichi Saitou* (Saitou, H, *Nihon no Inu to Qukami* (Japanese Dog and Wolves)), pp.295-297, 1964, Sekkasha, Tokyo].

The first group of dogs are from the northernmost type in the northern part of the Eurasian Continent, which crossed over to a part of China and were raised by the Para-Siberian people. These were probably large dogs that came to Japan and are presumed to have had an influence on the Akita dog.

The second group of dogs are the northern type that came to Japan from Korea with the Neo-Siberian? people that came after the Para-Siberians. It has been said that medium dogs from the Hokuriku districts seem to be of this type.

The third group is the small Southern type from the eastern part of India that came to Japan via the Philippines. Their influence is seen in the Shiba dogs. Within the different types of Japanese dogs, we are now able to divide them into three groups: the large, medium and small.

Although I felt that we needed to carry on more scientific research program before declaring them as Natural Monuments, due to my concern of people becoming lackadaisical, and in order to preserve these Japanese dogs and expedite the process, I decided to choose a few dogs with what I felt were the representative type for preservation and begin the designation of natural monuments.

A legislation for preserve historic relics, scenic beauty and Natural Monuments was established in 1919 (8th year of Taishou). Among the important domestic animals, the first Japanese dog to be so designated was the large Akita dog in July of 1931 (6th year of Shouwa). The next group of Japanese dogs to be designated in successions were the medium and small dogs. Among the medium dogs, the Kai dog was so declared in January of 1934 (9th year of Shouwa), the Kishuu dog in May of that same year, the Koshi-no-inu (that resembles the Jinduu dog from Korea), which is now almost extinct, in December of that same year, the Tosa {Shikoku} dog in June of 1937 (12th year of Shouwa), and the Hokkaidou dog in December of that same year. The small Shiba dog was designated in December of 1936 (11th year of Shouwa).

When the legislation to preserve domestic animals peculiar to Japan took effect, the Chin (the Japanese pug) was also mentioned with the Ushiuma {cow horse). The ushiuma was unique to Japan, but has been extinct since 1947 (22nd year of Shouwa). As for the Japanese Spaniel (Chin), due to an incomplete investigation into this breed at this time, no further work toward their designation is being considered.

The Cultural Properties Protection Act of 1919 (8th year of Taishou) which called for the preservation of historic relics and scenic places was reviewed after the war. They were to include both tangible and intangible cultural assets. Through continuous study, we must strive to preserve our nation's valuable natural monuments, according to the designated criterion, in their natural settings.

The criteria for animals designated as natural monuments are as follows:

1. Famous native animals and their habitats.
2. Famous animals not native to Japan, but their preservation is of importance and their habitats.
3. Animals and herds in their natural environments.
4. Domesticated animals native to Japan. (page 10)
5. Wild animals other than domestic animals that were brought to Japan and their habitats.
6. Animal specimens of special value.

How to Preserve Japanese Dogs

The Nipponken Hozonkai (Nihonken Hozonkai, Nippo, Nichiho, NiH) grew into a nationwide organization not long after the Akita dog was declared as a natural monument in July of 1931 (6th year of Shouwa). Nippo now holds regular dog shows for Japanese dog to encourage producing of excellent dogs, to which the Ministry of Education grants trophies. Japanese dog standards were based on dogs seen in urban and rural areas that were thought to be near the ideal. Each winner received a document and a photograph of that occasion. The Prefectural Governor was also authorized to confer the Minister of Education Medal (Excellent Dog Award) with public approval. This policy was continued until the end of the war. However, this does not mean that the granting of such medals have abolished. I believe that the Cultural Properties Protection Committee is still in the welfare of the Japanese dogs and may reinstate the granting of medals in the future.

Japanese dogs are becoming popular again and some of the prefectures have passed that favor the promoting of these dogs. Nippo has created a registry to promote the preservation and production of many excellent Japanese dogs. They now have a network of about thirty branches nationwide. Although there are 2 or more Japanese dog organizations besides Nippo, and are breeding the same types of dogs, one should not be easily influenced by individual opinions, but should set aside any minor differences and should devote one's efforts in producing excellent Japanese dogs through a cooperative effort.

Due to the recent popularity of Japanese dogs, some are breeding indiscriminately without careful studying of the pedigrees beforehand. We should also strive to preserve the bloodlines of dogs that are peculiar to each region.

(The author is a Doctor of Science and the chairman of the Nipponken Hozonkai.)