

A History of the Kongo Line

As seen by Mr. Mutsuo Okada

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Mr. Mutsuo Okada was born in Tokyo in 1937 and graduated from the Keio University in Tokyo.

He is a prolific scholar and writer on Akita dog history and pedigrees. From his middle-school days, he learned much about Akita dogs from the famous late Mr. Hyoemon Kyono of Yuzawa in southern Akita.

He has also been the vice-chairman of the Akitainu Kyokai (Akikyo) since 1988.

I met Mr. Okada for the first time in Tokyo, in the fall of 1992. Naturally, our discussion was on Akita dog history and pedigrees.

He has granted permission to print his articles on the Kongo line found in the August, September and October 1982 issues of the *Aiken Journal*.

Additional photographs with information from other sources have also been used.

My Akita Album (7)

Kongo-go - Heirakudo
Mr. Mutsuo Okada, Tokyo, Japan

Kongo-go was born on July 20, 1947, at the home of Mr. Okuro on the outskirts of Odate, as a product of Mr. Eikichi Hiraizumi's famous Heirakudo Kennel.

The maternal line's foundation is from the Heirakudo Kennel. Kongo-go is known by almost every Akita dog breeder and was the star of the postwar revival period. For a time, someone said, "Unless a Kongo line, tis not an Akita dog." Kongo resembled his dam, Datemitsu-go (Datehikari-go) and was raised under the tender care from the age of one year by the late Mr. Heihachi Hashimoto of Chofu, Denen, Tokyo. Mr. Hashimoto was active at the Nippo show. He coined the catch-word, "The National Treasure Dog, Kongo-go," which spread as far as the United States. U.S. military personnel, including Americans of Japanese line. Reportedly, Kongo is still well known and Akita dogs of his type are revered there.

Baffled by the catchword of "National Treasure Dog," a title that probably did not exist, nevertheless, I went to the national archives and carefully searched for the name "Kongo" in the pages of the thick volume entitled, *Japan's National Treasures*.

On my way home from school, I often visited the Hashimoto Kennel, where I saw Kongo sprawled out, without a leash, on a Japanese cushion in the living room. I was deeply impressed at such a sight.

Before the war, Mr. Heihachi Hashimoto, the dog fancier, was very involved with the late Mr. Sakamoto's Japanese domestic dog organization. The fame of his Hashimoto Kennel spread after he acquired Kongo.

His routine, as dog handler, was his tossing of his cap into the air when he was assured of a win. To many spectators this was similar to the highlight of a drama.

I once asked Mr. Hashimoto if he had any successors to Kongo.

I was stunned, when he replied, "If Go-chan (call name for Kongo) goes, I also go."

Kongo, which received the support of Nippo judge, Mr. Tatsuo Nakajo, produced Kumaso, Bafu, Shoryu and Kincho, Nippo's champions in succession. Their stud services were sought. The stud fee then was 50,000 yen (about \$140 at 360 yen/\$1.00 yen), probably equivalent to seven or eight months' pay of a salaried worker at that time.

Kongo's popularity peaked in May 1952 during the spectacular First International Domestic Dog Show, sponsored by the *Aiken no Tomo* magazine and held at the Gorakuen Stadium. Mr. Tatsuo Nakajo and his team of Nippo judges judged the Japanese dogs, Kongo was chosen as the representative of the large

Japanese do and won the top Japanese dog award over Matsukaze-go of the medium and Kaka-go of the small (Shiba) dog categories. Again, at the second show the following year, Kongo was best in the Japanese dog class and won best in the working dog class, and finally to best in show. Mr. Hashimoto was elated when he said: "Oh, I'm so happy and thankful! My son is the national champion." This was the peak period of the Kongo line.

The Kongo line prospered for a while. However, with the expulsion of Mr. Tatsuo Nakajo from Nippo and the rising of the Ichinoseki line centered around Goromaru, the Kongo line lost its lead rapidly and soon disappeared. Although unfavorable comments have been made about Kongo, I personally do not want to abandon Kongo completely.

Kongo should be credited for the revival of the Akita dog. Kongo and his offspring were often in the news then. For example, Bafu-go co-starred with the movie star, Miss Hibari Misora. Daijo-go made news from a lifesaving episode. Both dogs were mentioned as offspring of the famous Akita dog, Kongo-go.

Kongo was an impressive reference dog at regional dog shows. His fans were spellbound, especially when he was transported in a rental car.

The Kongo line's decline began with increased questionings by intellectual fanciers, and with the rising of die Ichinoseki line, as mentioned previously. Faults of the Kongo line were looseness of skin and structure, wrinkled face and unclear goma coat in many of his offspring. Shoulder angulation on Kongo was nearer to 90 degrees as in the German Shepherd dog than the desired 100 degrees. Thus his neck angulation was also faulty. He had cow hocks. He had a bumpy running gait with side-to-side motion of the back, so that he was unable to run long distances. His handler often had to lead Kongo with the leash during exercises.

However, Kongo was extraordinarily robust, and rich food did not cause skin problems seen in Akita dogs of other lines. His coat condition was excellent.

His strong genes passed on mainly the black goma coat with almost no white coats and a few red coats. Furthermore, with repeated inbreeding, probably owing to the dislike for dogs of other lines or for commercial reasons by their owners, more and more unusual types of Akita dogs were produced. The majority of Akita dog fanciers thus departed from the Kongo line.

Kappei-go (Katsuhira-go), registered with Nippo in the medium dog class as No. 135, is the sire of Mutsu-go of the Tanabe Kennel. Mutsu-go is an ancestor of Kongo.

Before the war, Mutsu-go won the Tokyo Governor's Award.

Mr. Takeo Sato of the Tokyo Daiwa (or Yamato) Kennel raised Kappei-go. Mr. Sato is now elderly, but still in good health.

According to Nippo, Kappei-go was born on January 6, 1934. His sire was Goma-go of Yamagata, a large dog (unregistered). His dam was Wakaba-go (Hokkaido, pedigree unknown), registered as a medium dog, No. 30).

I once asked Mr. Sato about the pedigree of Kappei, since I questioned the purity of the bloodline. His answer: "I bred a Shepherd dog to an Ainu dog (Hokkaido dog) to produce that dog."

As seen in many photographs of Kongo's puppies, I often wonder if the Shepherd dog-like ears standing inwardly are from the prewar crossbreeding with the Shepherd dog.

Kongo-go should not be blamed for faults in the Akita dog's bloodline which were crossbred with many other breeds, including the Tosa fighting dog and the Karafuto dog.

Kongo-go's ancestor, Dewa-go, was of a bloodline of some impurity. Dewa-go's dam: Tama-go and sire: Akidate-go may perhaps be offspring of the huge dog, Tachi-go

My Akita Dog Album (8)
Kongo Series (2) - The Dewa Line
Mr. Mutsuo Okada, Tokyo, Japan

Dewa-go, the ancestor of Kongo-go, and the huge dog, Tachi-go, will now be discussed.

Although the Dewa line may have disappeared, it was one of two main bloodlines with the Ichinoseki line during and immediately after the war. During the early 1950's, the popularity of the Dewa line surpassed the Ichinoseki line for a while.

Dewa-go was born on February 1, 1941 (Nippo Registry No. 1529). Breeder and owner was the late Mr. Yozaburo Ito, a dog dealer from Odate. Successions of males from Dewa were as follows: Dewa - Raiden - Dainidewa Senko on one side and Dewa - Dewawaka - Taishu - Kongo on the other.

Thus, Kongo came from the Dewa line and started the great Kongo line. The Dewa line's reign was brief and over by the mid 1960's. However, very few Akita dogs of today are without the Dewa line in their pedigrees. For example, today's foundation dogs such as Tetsuyuki and Kumomaru contain bloodlines of the Dewa line.

Mr. Ryonosuke Hiraizumi (1970 Los Angeles Akiho Branch Show judge) describes Dewa-go in the following way: "Stately with vigor. Burnt sesame coat, chocolate facial color, large head, and light eyes. Lacks both shibumi (elegant simplicity) and soboku (pristine beauty)." (*From the Nihonken Taikan (A Manual of The Japanese Dog)*, p. 153, 1953, Seibundo Shinkosha).

Reportedly, while in the Canine Corps, Dewa-go was killed in a wartime bombing, while others say he was living at that time.

The Dewa line dogs became larger.

The circumstances under which Dewa-go was whelped are unknown. His pedigree was not accepted by some.

The Ichinoseki line's ancestor, Ichinosekitora resembled the Tosa fighting dog, and was a large dog approximately 69.7 cm (27.4 inches) tall. He was also used widely to increase the size of the Akita dog, as were dogs of the Dewa line.

Almost all of the prewar Akita dogs were approximately 57.6 cm (22.7 inches) to 60.6 cm (24 inches) tall. The famous Tatsu-go was barely 57.6 cm (22.7 inches) tall. Another Kongo-go (sire: Tora-go Ichinoseki, dam: Goma of Kizo Nagai) was about 60.6 cm (24 inches) tall. He was purchased for a high price by Mr. Hanbe Yamaguchi (president of the Yamaguchi Bank) from Mr. Ichiro Takahashi of the Aikuso Kennel. Although Nippo divided the large and medium dogs at 60.6 cm (24 inches) in their standard, very few dogs were 60.6 cm (24 inches) tall. Thus, increasing the size of the Akita dog was favored.

The pedigree of Dewa-go, one of the dogs used to increase the size of the Akita dog, was presented in my previous article.

According to Nippo, Dewa-go's sire, Akidate-go (Nippo No. 1198), was whelped on December 10, 1939. He was 66.5 cm (26.2 inches) tall. He was bred and registered by Mr. Yozaburo Ito. His sire and dam are unknown.

Dewa-go's dam, Tama-go, is No. 1920, bred by Mr. Kanemitsu Kashiwagi of Osaka and registered by Mr. Yozaburo Ito.

The Akiho registry is as follows: Dewa-go (Akiho No. 1110). Sire: Akidate (Akiho No. 832). Whelped December 1940. Registered March 21, 1941. Bred and registered by Yozaburo Ito. Dam: Tama (mentioned in previous chapter).

The date of birth of Akidate by Akiho differs from Nippo. The sire of Akidate (No. 832), is Akagoro (unregistered). The origin and registration number of his dam, Okuzugoma (Akiho No. 36), is questionable. No. 36 is registered to Fusa-go (sire: Datetaro, dam: Shintetsu) and was bred by Mr. Shotaro Funaki and registered by Mr. Eikichi Hiraizumi. Akagoro may be the son of Aikoku-go (white coat, about 60.6 cm (24 inches)) tall, which was once owned by the late Mr. Shinkichi Echizen, a dog dealer from Odate.

Three or four Akidate-go's were registered during this same period, in addition to Akidate-go, No. 832.

The second registered Akidate-go, No. 283 (sire: Tachi-go, dam: Aka-go) was whelped on October 3, 1939 and registered on March 21, 1940. The breeder was Mr. Yozaburo Ito.

The third registered Akidate-go, No. 293 (sire: Tachi-go, dam: Aka-go) was registered on March 25, 1940 by Mr. Yukigoro Kudo.

The fourth Akidate-go, No. 305, has the same sire, dam, and date of birth as the second Akidate. However, the breeder is Mr. Tadatsuna Ishidoya and was registered by Mr. Hideitsu Shobayashi on April 20, 1940.

Thus, before the war, the late Mr. Hirokichi Saito, the founder of Nippo, was quoted: "Dogs from Odate registered with Nippo were either not accepted or put on a separate registry, whenever a blank space for the sire or dam was noticed." After a careful analysis, one often came to that conclusion about the prewar Akiho registry.

Both Tachi-go and Mutsu-go, mentioned in the previous chapter, were whelped outside of Akita as Akita dogs. They won Nippo's highest award, the Tokyo Governor's Award, at the Eighth Headquarters Show. Tachi-go lived in Odate for a time, with approval of the late Mr. Yozaburo Ito, the late Mr. Shinkichi Echizen, both mentioned previously, and the late Mr. Kizo Nagai, also a dog dealer.

The very wealthy Mr. Katsuki Kawanishi of Kobe kept many famous Akita dogs in his kennel. They were: Matsumine-go, Kuma-go, Mutsu-go, Tachi-go and others. According to Mr. Ichiro Takahashi of the Aikuso Kennel, Mr. Kizo Nagai won the confidence of Mr. Kawanishi and obtained Matsumine-go from Akita for Mr. Kawanishi's kennel. Thus Mr. Nagai gained custody of Tachi-go from Mr. Kawanishi to be taken to Odate for a while. However, the huge size and unbecoming appearance of Tachi-go raised some turmoil in Odate. He was called a mongrel and a monster. Some said, "He resembles an offspring from a long-coat male and a small female."

According to Mr. Takahashi, Tachi's legs were too long, ears were large. He had a very short coat with a burnt appearance.

His lips were loose. Tachi was considered an ideal dog to be used to increase height. Akita dogs in the Odate area were about 57.6 cm (22.7 inches) in those days. However, the unpopularity of Tachi-go may have caused many breeders to alter the pedigrees of Tachi's offspring. Because of similarity between Tachi-go and Dewa-go, such as their large size, lack of pristine beauty and their resemblances to mongrels, the name of Tachi-go was removed from the pedigree of Dewa-go. The influence of Tachi-go is very evident on Dewa-go, according to informed breeders. No other dogs were known to be available then to increase the Akita dog's height. The late Mr. Heihachi Hashimoto also clearly wrote that Mutsu's and Tachi's "precious blood" were in Kongo.

In his article, Mr. Ryonosuke Hiraizumi states both Tachi-go and Dewa-go produced only dogs resembling another breed.

He also states that since these bloodlines were in Akita dogs at that time (1953), one should strive to remove these faults. This is indeed true.

My Akita dog teacher, the late Mr. Hyoemon Kyono, who was also familiar with Dewa and Tachi, stated: "Although the Dewa line is impure, it contributed to the increase in height in the Akita dog. Therefore, I am not entirely against it."

However, purification of the Akita dog was not occurring with the increase in height.

What is Tachi-go's origin? This unusually large dog of unknown pedigree is registered with Nippo as follows: Nippo No. 239, whelped May 10, 1937, height: 72 cm (28.3 inches), breeder: Mr. Toyoji Kanari, registered to: Mr. Katsumi Kawanishi, sire: Iwa (from Niigata). No further information is available. Dam: Hatsu (from Tokyo), Nippo No. 873, whelped September 5, 1934, height: 63.5 cm (25 inches), breeder: Mr. Toyoji Kanari, registered to: Mr. Saichiro Tomoda.

My Akita Dog Album (9)

Kongo Series (3) - The Dewa Line
Mr. Mutsuo Okada, Tokyo, Japan

Mr. Takeo Sato, 85, of the Yamato Kennel was involved with Tachi-go and Mutsu-go. We were casual acquaintances for 30 years. However, recently, whenever we met at dog shows, he would invite me to discuss dogs at my leisure. Finally, one evening, we did get together with Mr. Yuichi Ishikawa.

Mr. Ishikawa was much involved with the Akita and Kishu dogs from the mid 1940's to the mid 1950's. Mr. Nobuo Matsuura and the late Mr. Hajime Watanabe of Nippo visited Mr. Sato frequently. Mr. Ishikawa and Mr. Sato recalled some of their old times together. Mr. Sato called Mr. Ishikawa by his informal name, "Yuchan, Yuchan."

I asked Mr. Sato many questions about Tachi-go. According to Mr. Sato, Tachi-go's sire, Iwa-go, was an impure dog with the Great Dane appearance. He was 2 shaku 5 sun (75.8 cm, 29.8 inches) tall and lived at Amanuma in the district of Sugina-mi in Tokyo. His ears were half erect. He was a red goma (sesame) with a short coat.

The earlier owner of Tachi's dam was Mr. Toyoji Kashige of Ikebukuro, an Akita rice agent for the Seibu store in Tokyo. His younger brother purchased a guard dog, 2 shaku 4 sun (72.7 cm, 28.6 inches) tall, called the Dog of Sarashina. This dog came from a cherry orchard farm in Yamagata. Its ears were clipped to let it stand. Tachi came from a litter of more than ten. However, he was the only dog in that litter with erect ears that entered a dog show."

The photograph of this dog 2 shaku 4 sun (72.7 cm, 28.6 inches) tall from Mikado Sarashina, helped me visualize the dog.

A large dog named "Maru of Yaeda," lived in Tokyo. According to Mr. Sato, this dog was brought from Niigata by a dog dealer, and sold to Mr. Yaeda, who was in ironworks.

Some questions came to my mind, after hearing these stories.

Tachi's sire: Iwa-go, whelped in Niigata.

Maru of Yaeda, whelped in Niigata.

Kappei's sire: Goma-go, whelped in Yamagata (refer to earlier article).

Sarashina's dog, whelped in Yamagata.

Oura Dewa-go was a popular large dog of the mid 1920's with a height of 2 shaku 2 sun 5 bu (68.2 cm, 26.8 inches). This Oura Dewa-go is not the Dewa-go, the ancestor, of Kongo-go. According to Nippo, Oura Dewa-go was registered as Large Dog Class, No. 20, with the following data: Sire: Kuro-go (Large Dog Class, Unregistered) from Niigata. Dam: Kuma-go (Large Dog Class, Unregistered) from Yamagata. Breeder: Masakazu Oura of Yamagata. Registered in Tokyo by the breeder. Sixty-eight cm (26.8 inches) tall. Whelped 1932. Coat: black.

During the mid 1920's, Hachi-ko, the representative dog from the place of its origin, Akita, was 61 cm (24 inches) tall.

Why were so many large dogs nearly 70 cm (27.6 inches) tall that came from Niigata and neighboring Yamagata? Tachi-go was 72 cm (28.3 inches). I began to understand the situation, when I asked Mr. Katsusuke Ishihara, director of the Akitainu Kyokai (Akikyo), about this. Mr. Ishihara told me: "Many years ago, a Mr. Nakano, a director of the Nihon Sekiyu Kabushikigaisha [Japan Petroleum Corporation], was a large dog fan. From the late 1910's to the mid 1920's, he purchased many large dogs from overseas, and sent them to his home in Niitsu in Niigata. In those days, Yokohama was the port of entry. Mr. Nakano's dealer was the well-known dog groomer, the late Mr. Sadasuke Nishimura, father of Mr. Taro Nishimura.

Whenever Mr. Nakano heard that a large dog arrived in Yokohama, he often purchased the dog outright. These dogs were probably then sent to Niitsu and bred to the Koshi dog of Niigata, to produce large dogs resembling Japanese dogs.

Thus, I inquired about Mr. Shigeyuki Nakano of Japan Petroleum immediately. Fortunately, a classmate of mine, Mr. Yoshihiro Otsuke, is head secretary of Japan Petroleum. He is a cheerleader with Keio University and Japan Petroleum. As a student, he was a star athlete at the intercity matches between six universities in Tokyo.

He immediately checked into this matter for me. According to available information, Japan Petroleum was organized by a group in the oil industry. The first director was Mr. Kanichi Nakano, a wealthy oil man from Niitsu. He was succeeded from 1929 to around 1932 by his son, the late Mr. Chutaro Nakano. His grandson, Mr. Mitsuharu Nakano, is no longer associated with Japan Petroleum, but lives in Niitsu and in good health (1982). However, I was unable to locate him until I learned that he changed his name to Shigetka Nakano. When I finally contacted him, he seemed surprised at unexpected discussion on dogs.

"I'm almost 60, and do not have any clear memories of dogs of my boyhood. My late father, Chutaro, was very interested in bonsai, goldfish and little birds. I don't believe he was involved with dogs. However, I believe my grandfather Kanichi had dogs. He had a villa at Otsuka in Tokyo. If he had purchased dogs during the Taisho Period (1912-1925), I would not know because of my age at that time. We had a relative by the name of Shingo Nakano in Nagaoka City in Niigata. They were probably friends of the Saito family of Niigata's zaibatsu (giant family trust) who may have had dogs."

Since none of these are on record, huge dogs probably stayed in this family for a generation only, or they kept a foundation dog only.

From the foregoing information, Japanese regional dogs were probably not taller than 2 shaku (60.6 cm, 23.9 inches) then. Yokohama was the port of entry in those days. Yokohama was also the only port of exit.

Descendants of the long-tailed rooster were called "Yokohama" abroad. Huge dogs imported into Yokohama were sent to Niigata. The trend in Japan at that time was admiration of foreign culture.

After the 1920's, huge dogs began to draw much attention in Niigata and in neighboring Yamagata. The Koshi dog was then widely distributed in Niigata. In Yamagata, the Koyasu dog lived in Koyasu in Takahata in the district of East Okitama.

With the foregoing information, which verify the statements of Mr. Katsusuke Ishihara and Mr. Takeo Sato, I would like to discuss the bloodline of Tachi-go, which includes bloodlines from Niigata.

Evaluation of Tachi-go by Nippo is very interesting, and will be presented here:

The Seventh Nippo Headquarters Show Large Dog Section:

Wakainu (10-18 month) group: Second place. Owner: Mr. Katsumi Kawanishi of Hyogo. Head judge was the famous Mr. Yonekichi Hiraiwa, known for his research work, Inu to Okami (Dogs and Wolves), and who is still in good health (1982). His critique of Tachi-go is as follows: "Tachi-go is huge. His coat quality is excellent. However, his legs are too long. It is difficult for me to imagine this dog as a large Japanese dog."

At the following Eighth Nippo's Headquarters Show, Tachi-go's faults were well concealed by increasing his muscle volume and he was awarded the Tokyo Governor's Award.

What are the readers' opinions so far, concerning Kongo-go and his ancestor, Dewa-go, after reading my previous articles on this topic?

As mentioned before, Oura Dewa-go's sire, Kuro-go (black), was born in Niigata. His dam, Kuma-go, was born in Yamagata, but is recorded as being bred by the veterinarian, Dr. Masakazu Oura, a native of Yamagata, who began his practice in Shibuya in Tokyo. Although the proper name for this dog was Dewa-go, with the appearance of Kongo's ancestor, Dewa-go, a few years later, he was called Oura Dewa-go, to distinguish between the two dogs. Oura Dewa-go was reported to be 2 shaku 2 sun 5 bu (68.2 cm, 26.9 inches) tall. As a show dog, he lowered his tail and refused to enter the show ring.

Besides his veterinary hospital, Dr. Oura also advertised his Oura Dewa-go and gathered many large dogs under his Oura Nihonken Kenkyusho Ogata Hanshokujo (Oura's Research and Propagation Facility for the Large Japanese Dog). However, his advice was not accepted by Nippo led by Mr. Hirokichi Saito. Thus, he was isolated and did not have much influence on the dog world in later years. Only the late Mr. Shoichiro Miyamoto and Mr. Sadajiro Oki of Shinagawa were fans of Oura Dewa-go. Fujimaru-go, a female, bred by Mr. Oki, has been reported as being 2 shaku 2 sun (66.7 cm, 26.2 inches) tall. Her sire was Oura Dewa-go, and her dam was Maru-go, born in Niigata.

Bloodlines of these huge dogs were probably strongly based throughout Niigata.

After the war, Mr. Miyamoto tried to establish the Oura Dewa line. However, it has been reported, those who saw the dog, soon returned the puppies.

Oura Dew-go had strong genes for the black coat. Maru of Yaeda had offspring also with similar black puppies. I wondered if this was a common trait in this bloodline.

This was a period when the large Japanese dog was called an impure breed. At that time, the late Mr. Heichachi Hashimoto, the owner of Kongo-go, believed and referred to the "valuable bloodline of Mutsu and Tachi." Such feelings during that period were understandable.

Dogs of the black goma (sesame) line or those with gaudy coat are now on the decline. Akikyo has the white and red coats. Akiho has also added brindles with more uniformity.

In the history of the purification toward the Japanese dog, much advancement and changes are seen today. However, after seeing these changes, some have lost interest. I believe, I am not alone in believing that many questions still remain unanswered.

More efforts by Akita dog fans are expected.

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