

MY THOUGHTS ON THE AKITA DOG
pp. 88-102, 1975, Shin Journal-sha, Tokyo Japan

By **Naoto Kajiwara**

My Thoughts on The Akita Dog

My discussions on the history of the development of the Akita dog has turned out briefer than expected, because duplications of information from our Akita dog pioneers, who granted me permissions for their use, were avoided. Questionable data were also omitted. Lack of research data in certain areas was another factor. Conclusions based on inconclusive data on the Akita dogs of the past, can lead to confusion and not contribute to the progress of the Akita dog.

I have attempted to present in sequence, a few theories on the development of the Akita dog. I will also further discuss the Meiji Period (1868-1912), which widely swayed the ideology on the origin of the Akita dog. Fighting dogs seem to have dominated the Akita dog world during the 1910s with almost no mention of regional or matagi (*hunting*) dogs.

The following article, which is not on the Akita dog or the Tohoku area, is referred to because common dogs of the Meiji Period (1868-1912) are mentioned. The quotations to follow are from that article, "Mura no Inu. Okuri Okami" (The Village Dog and The Accompanying Wolf") in the Nihonken Kento-go (Studies on Japanese Dogs) by **Mr. Kunio Yanagida**, a folklore scholar.

"I have loved dogs since my childhood days. I grew up in a farming village in the Nakaban area in the prefecture of Hyogo. About fifty years ago (The Nihon Kento-go was published in 1935. Therefore fifty years prior to this time would be about 1885) a stray dog lived in this village. This was very common then. This dog and I often played together. I did not teach the dog any tricks, but took this dog to neighboring villages to engage him in dog fights.

These were large dogs with short legs, small erect ears, thick tails, black coat with a white circle on the chest. They resembled a bear. The claws were black, the dangling tail reached the middle of the trunk. The anus was somewhat round, the face was full, the nose was blunt like that of a cat.

Today, no such dogs are seen in my old home area. Western dogs, referred to as **kame dogs**, were introduced when I was thirteen or fourteen years old, and local dogs began to develop pointed noses, droopy ears and slender bodies. I doubt the type of Japanese dogs I saw lasted four generations.

A well-known whelping site was under the floor of the Buddhist temple. Word of new arrivals quickly spread among the school children. We could hardly wait for school to be out, so we could see the newborn puppies. As soon as school was out, we ran to the Buddhist temple and lifted the floorboard to peek at the newborn puppies. The familiar odor of newborn puppies still comes to mind.

We would lift the yelping puppies by their tails with our fingers and examine their claws. Puppies with any white claws were washed down the river. Stronger puppies were saved as pets or fighting dogs."

Thirty years ago, someone said that Japanese dogs were extinct, while today, others claim that Japanese dogs have been revived. Those with the former view claim that the so-called Japanese dogs of today are mongrels with features of Japanese dogs. This may be a reasonable assumption.

Actually, few pure Japanese dogs are probably seen today. Many dogs from foreign countries were introduced during the Edo (*Tokugawa Period of 1615-1867*) Period, and during the earlier Ashikaga (1392-1568) Period. Therefore, although much information from the ancient past is unavailable, one could assume for now that crossbreeding resulted in impure breeds during the Middle Ages. Crossbreeding between different looking breeds often results in offsprings that are noticeably different from their parents. However, crossbreedings between similar breeds may not show any outstanding differences in the offsprings. I believe that "Japanese dogs" are relatively pure dogs with mixtures of similar bloodlines.

A mixed breed may have been created during the Middle Ages, but crossbreedings were probably not as extensive then. My main interest is in the crossbreeding sequences. This should be an interesting study of cultural development related to the opening of a remote area. Some of these crossbreedings may have been planned and were not accidental."

Mr. Yanagida also discusses "the Okuri-okami" (*"the accompanying wolf"*). He differentiates the jackal, wolf and webfooted dogs. Since these topics are not pertinent to the Akita dog, I shall now discuss "the Mura-no-inu" ("the Village dog") of the Meiji (1868-1912) Period, to describe the environmental and living conditions of those days.

I grew up during the Taisho Period (1912-1925) in a remote village with about thirty homes and about five dogs in the mountains of Northern Kyushu. Although these dogs were supposedly owned by someone, each dog, however, usually had to fend for themselves by eating leftovers of house guests that were put in large bowls and set outside for the dogs and cats. These dogs were used to hunt by village hunters.

Mr. Yanagida's descriptions of the changes in dogs from crossbreeding of Japanese dogs seem similar to mine. Thus, some of the answers to questions on the origin and habitat of the Akita dog may be understood more easily in a similar way. For example, Mr. Yanagida has stated very few pure Japanese dogs are available. The prevailing opinion is that Japanese medium and small dogs are pure breeds, while the Akita dog is a mixed breed. This is not entirely true, because reportedly western dogs began to arrive in the Nakaban area in the prefecture of Hyogo around 1887.

An article by **Mr. Yutaka Oura** entitled "Nihonken no Kenkyu" ("A Study on Japanese Dogs") states that crossbreeding also affected other Japanese dogs. Mr. Oura studied Japanese dogs in a remote settlement in Miomote in the district of Iwafune in the prefecture of Niigata. According to newspaper and magazine reports, this settlement of refugees from the defeated Heike Clan is located in the northeastern region of the prefecture of Niigata, and borders along the southern part of the Bandai Asahi National Park. In 1932, in order to reach this Miomote settlement, one got off the train at the Murakami Station of the Uetsu Railway Line and went by auto along the Miomote River upstream for 16 kilometers (*about 10 miles*) to the settlement of Numo. From there one had to walk 30 more kilometers (*18.8 miles*) on steep mountain paths to reach this remote enchanted land. The Miomote Settlement had about thirty homes then with a population of about 160, a temple and a school. This settlement had only three family names of Koike, Takahashi and Ito. The village had about ten dogs. Excluding two dogs of the Koike family, the rest were mongrels of low value. This was a great disappointment. How did these Japanese dogs become so impure in such a remote area? Reportedly, about ten years before, a villager, out of curiosity, brought back from the town of Murakami, that is located downstream, a dog with droopy ears and bred this dog with almost every dog in the settlement. After receiving such reports from the people of Miomote, Mr. Oura went to the remote Okuaizu region the following year to study the settlements of the surviving members of the Heike Clan. The two settlements were Tsunoki in the village of Minamihara in Okitama District in Yamagata Prefecture and Wasezawa in the village of Hinokihara in the district of Yama in the prefecture of Fukushima. Studies of Japanese dogs in these two remote settlements showed similar situations as the dogs in Miomote. In Tsunoki, the last dog was an eighteen year old hunting dog which died in the Spring of 1932. Only a ten year old akagoma (red sesame) male dog and an eight year old light red bitch with few offsprings were found in Wasezawa.

This decline may also be due to the strict enforcements of dog licenses and control of strays. Also, during the slack farming season in the Tsunoki and Wasezawa areas, many settlers made getas (wooden clogs) with dog hides for the toe holders. Reportedly many dogs were clubbed to death indiscriminately, without any regards to the dog breed. Dogs were also used for other purposes until only recently. I remember seeing dog hides hanging in front of shop windows in the town of Hanawa during my first visit to the Kazuno area. Undoubtedly, they were used for winter clothing.

Japanese dogs began to lose their purity more rapidly after the Meiji Period (*1868-1912*) with the development of remote areas. These dogs were crossbred intentionally or unintentionally and allowed to multiply. This may also be true of man. For example, one is not sure whether the Japanese race is pure. Their ancestors are believed to have come from various places. According to the late **Dr. Kotondo Hasebe** (Professor Emeritus of Tokyo University), some of these studies on the origin of the Japanese people are based on human skeletons from the Jomon (straw-rope pattern) and the Kofun (old grave) Periods. People from the Jomon (8000 B.C. to about 200 B.C.) are believed to be the original Japanese, since their body form with the development of their civilization are related to the Japanese of today.

An article in 1970 in the Mainichi Shinbun (Daily News) by **Dr. Ohama**, Professor Emeritus of Osaka University states:

"The Japanese may be divided into two regional types, based on head size, shape of the face and body proportions. One is the Kinai type around Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe, including the coast along the Inland Sea and Southern Kanto area. The other type is the Tohoku Ura Nihon type based on regions from the Tohoku area along the northern coastal areas including Northern Kyushu. The Kinai type resembles the Koreans, while the Tohoku Ura Nippon type resembles those Ainus who are impure."

According to the writer, **Mr. Tarusu Kim** in his book, Nihon no Naka no Chosen Bunka (Korean Culture in Japan), many Japanese are of Korean origin. From a standpoint of purity of the Japanese people, this is probably true, and this may also be true of dogs.

Crossbreeding of dogs probably occurred readily when they migrated with man in ancient times. The extent of this crossbreeding is unknown. Therefore, the effect of these crossbreedings on the Akita dog of today is unknown. Compared to Akita dogs of the past, the Akita dog of today is not inferior to other Japanese dog breeds of today and has become a fine Japanese dog.

However, one should not ignore the past either. References to points in time are of utmost importance. I am referring to the period when our predecessors did their research and reports on the Akita dogs during the Taisho Period (*1912-1926*) and the early (*1926-1945*) Showa Period. The Akita dog as a breed was in its greatest decline then, and it was probably very difficult for one to write with much surety. As for me, I probably would not have been able to write with much confidence in the past. **By seeing the fine Japanese dogs of today and by knowing more about the Akita dog today, I am strongly convinced that the Akita dog came from a Japanese dog.** I often wonder if I would have been able to make such a statement ten years ago.

I have personally raised a Shiba dog for about nine years. I owned Akita dogs before this and saw faults in the body and facial appearances in almost all of the Akita dogs at the dog shows. I also studied and observed the medium and small sized Japanese dogs. Soon, I was able to notice features of the Japanese dog in the small dog, and finally acquired a Shinshu Shiba dog. One could be generally proud of this Shiba dog's facial appearance, body form and coat color. However, my Shiba dog is not a show dog due to three missing teeth probably due to close linebreeding. **However, I still have this dog as a research guide for my Akita dog. I would compare this dog with several of my Akita dogs as to facial appearance, body form and coat color from the standpoint of the image of a Japanese dog. This dog has indeed been an excellent source of reference of a Japanese dog and**

in a few short seven to eight years, the necessity for this has almost disappeared. Although differences between the large and small types are evident, the qualities of the Japanese dog image are very comparable.

On what is known so far, it seems that the living and breeding conditions of the Akita dog from ancient times to the Meiji (1868-1912) Periods did not differ much from other Japanese dogs. It seems that the Akita dog, after going through the period of decline from the late 1860s to the mid 1940s, improved rapidly within a few years. **In retrospect, it seems that quality of the dog was not emphasized immediately after the war, except to increase the number of Akita dogs. This was followed by the emphasis on producing dogs with show dog quality.**

However, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, the Akita dog breeders then, in general, had not fully grasped the essence of the Akita dog. Although the goal was to improve the breed, their breeding seemed to lack any definite objective. Breeders in the dark met many difficulties. Meanwhile, either by plan or chance, **Ichinosekigoma**, the main dog of the Ichinoseki line, was bred to **Futatsuigoma** of the Matagi line and produced **Goromaru-go**. **Arawashi**, of the same line as Ichinosekigoma, was bred with **Sansho** and produced **Tamakumo-go**. This was followed by some offsprings with excellent facial features and body. This has finally resulted in the understanding of the proper appearance of the Akita dog, enabling one to set a course toward a specific goal. However, not all of the Akita dogs breeders had this understanding from the beginning. Many Akita dog breeders still emphasized the appearance of dogs from the dog fighting era. Thus, the Akita dog's appearance did not improve markedly from 1945 to 1955. These differences were not easily resolved. However, owing to the great efforts of some intellectuals, and to enlightenment from dogs seen at dog shows, views of many dog breeders were gradually revised. They began to understand the heredity of different bloodlines, and follow a definite course of breeding. This resulted in the gradual breeding of finer animals.

However, this does not mean that the goal has been achieved with the Akita dogs' temperament and appearance. My next topic of discussion will be the transition of the different Akita dog bloodlines after the Second World War.

o o o

The purity of the Akita dog was greatly affected from the early 1870s until about 1945. During the Meiji Period (1868-1912), some Akita dogs in the Odate area were bred with western dogs. During the 1890s, Tosa fighting dogs were bred with the regional (Akita or Odate) dogs and this continued until the Taisho Period (1912-1926). When the Akita dog was designated as a natural monument in 1931 to be restored, some Akita dogs were bred with the Matagi dog, the Koyasu dog from neighboring Yamagata, the Kishu dog and the Hokkaido dog. Reportedly, soon after World War Two, some Akita dogs were also bred with German Shepherd dogs that were outstanding military dogs.

However, the impurity of the Akita dog after the 1910s was probably due mostly to crossbreedings with the Tosa fighting dogs. Since the Tosa fighting dog is a product of much crossbreeding, further crossbreeding with other breeds may not reveal any significant differences in the offsprings. The Tosa fighting dog had a great influence on the bloodline of the Akita dog.

According to one dog article, the Tosa fighting dog is a recent product of crossbreeding after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 between the Tosa (*Shikoku or Kochi*) dog from the island of Shikoku and western dogs to produce a powerful fighting dog. Reportedly, the Tosa dogs were also crossbred with some fierce dogs from Nagasaki around 1848. According to reliable sources, a teacher of English from England living in Kochi during the 1870s, introduced the Bulldog. A Mastiff was introduced by a German physician around 1873. A Boston Bull bitch owned by a Mr. Myer from England was also used for breeding around 1880. According to another report, Bull Terriers and Saint Bernards were also used, but this is not confirmable.

Mr. Hyoemon Kyono of Akita used a Great Dane from Germany and Mastiffs owned by Mr. Matsunaga of Tokyo and Mr. Ohara of Okayama Prefecture to produce some outstanding fighting dogs. According to records of fighting dog breeders from the Tokyo area, Akita fighting dogs during the 1910s and 1920s were called the "Shin Akitas" ("New Akitas") which were produced by crossbreeding Akita dogs with the Tosa fighting dog, the Tosa Bull (produced from the mating of the Tosa fighting dog and the Bull dog) and the Tosa Bull Terrier (Tosa fighting dog crossbred with the Bull Terrier). Thus the Tosa fighting dog was a product of much crossbreeding with many dogs of different body forms. Although the Tosa fighting dog of today closely resembles the Mastiff, the Tosa fighting dogs I saw in Osaka area soon after the war had many different forms.

A phrase in genetics says, "Ontogeny begets phylogeny" (*Biological development of an individual produces the evolutionary development of that individual*). This is true in crossbreeding, when parental features appear in the puppies. Therefore, crossbreeding the Akita dogs with the Tosa fighting dogs raises the question of how many different breeds were introduced into the Akita dog bloodlines. While this may not be applicable to all Akita dogs during and soon after the war, many Akita dogs then had appearances of a different breed. However, these features are difficult to recognize in newborns and puppies usually before ten months of age. In the past, some Akita dogs with other good features were winners in dog shows. Dogs of much crossbreeding will reveal their true features as they mature, so that by the time they are in the Seiken (*30 months or older*) class or older, results of crossbreedings of previous generations are seen. Although not used commonly today, the following terms were used often about ten years ago, referring to Akita dogs with crossbred features: "kusai" (smelly) or "suspicious appearance"; "tempura inu" ("tempura dog" meant Akita dogs with good structure, but lacking appearance of a Japanese dog); "yake aka" ("burnt red" referred to rusty red).

How were these crossbred Akita dogs purified? A discussion on this topic to find answers to many of the questions from the past is very important. It seems very few fine Japanese Akita dogs were available just before and soon after the Second World War. Old photographs of some of these Akita dogs are occasionally seen in dog magazines

today. They are the following: **Shiro-go** of **Mr. Kitayama** of Odate around 1907, **Okido-go** of **Mr. Kurimori** around 1915, **Dewa-go** (*not the ancestor dog of Kongo*) of **Mr. Kokichi (pen name: Hiroshi) Saito** (*see photograph of Dewa-go in the chapter on the Taisho Period*) from the 1920 to the 1930s and **Take-go** of **Mr. Kometani** of Morioka City around 1937 (*see photograph*). Another dog was **Genzoshiro-go**, which survived the war and died at seventeen years of age in October 1951. Only one photograph is available of this fine Japanese dog. No additional records or photographs of other known Japanese Akita dogs are available. These dogs were used in the gradual restoration of the Akita dog.

As mentioned before, the success of the bloodlines of **Goromaru-go** and **Tamagumo-go** soon after the war was mainly due to breedings with good bitches from Southern Akita. Such programs of breedings had its small beginnings in the mid 1920s. **Mr. Yaichiro Tayama** and **Mr. Sadakichi Tayama** of Odate bred their female Akita dogs with **Matagi dogs** such as **Maru-go** and **Aka-go** to improve the Akita dog. Photographs of these dogs are available. Also **Mr. Kyono of Yuzawa in Southern Akita**, who was the chairman of the Nihon Keito Hanshaku Kenkyukai (Japan Lineage Propagation and Research Society) started the "**Akita Nikkei**" **bloodline**, which also contributed to a phase of the restoration process. As mentioned in the chapter on the Early (1926-1945) Showa Period, Nippo originally classified the Akita dog into the medium and large dog classes just before the war. Their official pedigree includes the Hokkaido and Kishu dogs in the Akita dog bloodline and, therefore, one may say that the restoration of the Akita dog to the original state of a Japanese dog was assured.

Only a few relatively pure Akita dogs are said to have existed even during the dark declining periods of the 1910s and 1920s. Akita dogs of purer quality are said to have existed prior to these periods. The course set soon after the war to restore the Akita dog to its pure state was met by difficulties. Lack of a clear guidance toward restoration, and the difficult availability of relatively pure Japanese dogs for a planned breeding program, were some of the obstacles. Pure Akita dogs were very few. Also, some Akita dogs were bred according to one's personal ideas with no understanding of the true goal of the restoration process. These caused delays until the late 1950s, when gradual improvements in the quality of the Akita dogs began to occur. This was partly due to the showing of some outstanding dogs. This often resulted in planned breeding programs toward restoration among some breeders, leading to rapid improvements in the quality of the Akita dogs recently.

However, some now say that only the conformation of the Akita dog has improved, while the temperament has become "sweet" and lacks the spirit and primitive characteristics of the Akita dog. Although this is not completely deniable, my opinion on this matter is as follows: Environmental changes and living conditions of the Akita dog since the end of the war may be a factor. The Akita dog is rarely used today for hunting, guarding or fighting as it was during the Tokugawa (1615-1867) to the Taisho (1912-1926) Periods. Akita dogs are raised almost exclusively as show dogs today. Therefore, it is possible for these Akita dogs to lose the keen senses of the hunting dog or the power and energy of fighting dogs. Also, the "shibusu" (*conservative, simple and refined*) and "soboku" (*simplicity, unsophisticated, pristine*), which refer to the original naturally beautiful form of the Japanese dog with no gaudiness, may change with changes in habitat, living conditions and breeding programs of the Akita dogs. The Kanto region west of the Pacific Coast of Japan rarely has a heavy snowfall, except for regions along the coast of the Japan Sea (Ura Nippon). The climate there is also warmer and not as severe as the Tohoku-Odate Region. Breeding and raising of dogs in cities differ considerably, where dogs are practically raised in a "box" with lack of adequate exercising areas. This is not natural. The city dweller does not have easy access to fields and mountains to allow the Akita dog to run. When I first visited the Odate region in Akita about seventeen years ago, I saw the leisurely and natural ways of raising dogs that are not easily duplicable in cities.

In general, animals adapt themselves to their habitat and living conditions. The following discussion about horses living in the same northern area is from a TV interview of the essayist, **Mr. Hajime Shu**:

"Several theories on the origin of the so-called Hokkaido horse are mentioned in reference to animals native to Hokkaido. My studies seem to indicate these horses originated during the Tokugawa Period (1617-1867) when Hokkaido was called the Ezo-chi (*Ainu Territory*). Hunters from the Tsugaru and Mutsu regions (*Aomori Prefecture*) went to Hokkaido to fish salmon and trout. They took horses and used them during the hunting season from Spring to Fall of each year. The amount of game caught often left no room for horses on their ships on the return trip. Horses often left behind in Hokkaido were later called 'geta uma' (*wooden clog horses*).

This practice of leaving horses behind after each trip resulted in larger numbers of horses wintering in Hokkaido. Some of the hunters returning the following spring with new horses also used these stray horses again for hunting. After the Meiji Period (1868-1912), these horses that were allowed to graze all year round were called 'nozarashi' (*weatherworn*) horses."

Another theory states that horses from the Tsugaru and Nambu Regions were of different origin from the Hokkaido horses, based on their differences in form and size. However, according to a friend of mine, the form of the Nambu horse, which was originally similar in form to that of the Hokkaido horse, has improved in recent years. I do not know which theory is correct. However, growth may have been stunted in these horses in the intense winter cold in Hokkaido after several hundred years. This could be a result of their adapting to the environment. The Japanese who were born in Japan after the war are about 5 to 6 cm (2 to 2.4 inches) taller than those born before the war, due to changes in diet and way of life. Similarly, the Akita dog living in distant places for several generations from their place of origin may undergo noticeable changes.

I believe that the Akita dog of today is worthy to be classified as a large Japanese dog of the natural monument established in 1919. As previously mentioned, the history of the path to restoration first involved crossbreeding with

fighting dogs during the 1890s to the 1910s. This was followed by a period of decline during World War Two, which was a period of much confusion and meandering. One must not deviate from the goal of Dr. Kaburagi, who designated the Akita dog as a natural monument in 1931.

Faults in the head and feet in the Akita dog as pointed out by Dr. Watase's first survey in 1920 have been corrected appreciably. One should also follow the advice of Dr. Kaburagi in his article "Nihonken Hozon no Igi" ("The Importance of Preservation of Japanese Dogs"):

"Time should not be wasted on questionable methods, but preservation should be the first priority."

We should follow his advice. This advice has been followed by the continuous deep studies by some scholars and the untiring efforts of some informed dog breeders. Thus, within the past twenty or more years, it was possible to produce some Akita dogs closely resembling the classical Akita dog that may have existed several hundred years ago.

The Akita dog of today may be similar to the relatively pure Akita dog of the Meiji Period (1868-1912), but this is not easily confirmable. First of all, no records to verify or compare are available. Also, changes may have occurred in these dogs due to differences in environment, their uses and from crossbreeding. **Therefore, even if one claims that restoration is complete, this is not to say that the Akita dog of today is exactly identical to the dog that lived over a hundred years ago.**

Eventually, one must narrow down to as to whether the Akita dog of today is the Japanese Akita dog or the Akita dog of mixed breeding. I believe that the Akita dog of today may no longer be considered a mongrel. When the Akita dog is compared with other Japanese dogs such as the small Shiba dog or the medium Kishu dog, the Akita dog has the appearance of a Japanese dog, nor is it inferior to them in form. However, as Mr. Yanagida has stated, one cannot say that all of the Japanese dogs are pure. Therefore, if the medium and small Japanese dogs are considered as fine Japanese dogs, then the Akita dog of today, which has improved markedly, should also be considered a fine large Japanese dog.

This also applies to breeding. The difficulty of producing an Akita dog from dogs of another breed is understandable, but it is also difficult to produce an Akita dog of today by using medium Japanese dogs. Reportedly, some have tried various breeding methods, but even after two or three generations, appearances of non-Japanese Akita dogs are often detected by the more informed true Akita dog breeders. To produce higher quality large Akita dogs of today, one must follow a similar course taken by Akita dog breeders of the immediate postwar period.

Not all of the Akita dogs of today have improved to the same degree. When compared to Akita dogs of ten years ago, one sees improvements in the quality in some of the winning Akita show dogs as outstanding large Japanese dogs. However, one may still occasionally see in regional shows, dogs with the 'kusami' ("unpleasant odor," features lacking the characteristics of a Japanese dog). Some of these "kusami" dogs are considered as being truly magnificent and are often placed high in regional shows and occasionally in headquarters shows.

The purpose for the establishment of the various Akita dog organizations is to propagate, improve and preserve the breed. As mentioned previously, with more than the adequate number of Akita dogs available today, more must be done to improve the quality and preserve the breed of the Akita dog. The preservation of any animal is said to be maintained by continuous breeding of animals of high quality. Dog shows are, therefore, very important for this reason, and Akita dog fanciers must work together to produce better Akita dogs. When the Akita dog becomes devoid of features lacking the characteristics of a Japanese dog, the pure Japanese dog is produced, and one may then be able to say that the goal of the preservation of the natural monument, the goal of the intellectuals of the Taisho Period (1912-1926), has been attained.

I believe that the Akita dog of today has reached at least the first rung of the ladder. This progress is similar to a large group trying to return home just beyond the mountains. They are hampered by a large, long and pitch dark tunnel through which they must grope until they reach the other side. Being aware that it is passable, they stumble from right to left in the darkness, due to lack of adequate guidance, although being aware that they are making progress. Finally, with a glimpse of light from the exit, the pace quickens and they all rush forward to get ahead of others. The comeback of the Akita dog of today is similar to the "satogaeri" ("the bride's first homecoming").

For those breeders who were unable to visualize the true quality of the Akita dog at the beginning, remarkable progress in the improvement of the breed has been made once they were able to see the 'shishin' ("pointer") or the "hikari" ("light"). However, this is not to say that the goal has been completely attained for the Akita dog. We must still all strive to find our way to produce the Akita dog as a distinct breed of the natural monument.

Even in today's era of advancing mass communication and reconstruction in the Japanese Islands, it seems the goal of producing a distinctly pure Akita dog is not easily attained. However, I believe every Akita dog fancier and Akita dog organization has the responsibility to work toward that goal. (Summer of 1973)

Note: **Bold** types and *italics* were supplied by the translator.

kajiw8 10/11/96, 07/31/97.