

Les Lévrier (Sighthounds) by Xavier Przewdziecki

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Chapter I - Origin and genealogy of sighthounds

Translated 2014 by Susan Bamford

Origin of sighthounds

Sighthounds are so different from other breeds that they always arouse curiosity. Where do they come from? How did they become as they are? Since when have they existed? These are all questions that are often asked.

While we know the antecedents of some more or less recent sighthound breeds, the ancient breeds keep the secret of their origins. This is the case with the Egyptian tesem or sighthound, and also with the Asian sighthound – known as "sloughi" when it is completely shorthaired and "saluki" when it is shorthaired with feathers on ears and tail. (Since we lack the possibility of describing the sloughi and the saluki under the same name, even though zoologically they are the same breed and have shared the same history throughout several millennia, the term sloughi, used here for convenience, should mostly be understood to mean Asian sighthound.) Since the tesem and above all the sloughi are represented amongst the ancestors of almost all sighthound breeds, it must be concluded that these breeds will only truly be understood once the mystery behind the origins of the tesem and the sloughi has been elucidated.

Various cynologists have taken an interest in this question. Cornevin, a teacher at the French veterinary college in Lyon at the end of the 19th century, when listing dolichomorphic¹ canine breeds with erect ears, notes that, independently of domesticated podenco type breeds, this group in fact includes two wild species, the dhole² and the cuberow³. Referring to Brehm, he notes that the dhole or cuon "... has some similarities with the domestic sighthound, but not with the wolf, the jackal and the fox. Its height is around 50 cm... Dholes live in Indian jungles where they actively hunt wild animals... A few people have been known to tame and use them for hunting but, despite their speed, they are not recommended for hunting since, if they come across sheep or goats, they will

¹ having a long, thin, asthenic body type

² Asiatic wild dog

³ Ethiopian or Abyssinian wolf

abandon their quarry and attack the ruminants..." Talking next of the cuberow, Cornevin continued: "... while Asia has the dhole, Africa has the cuberow (*Canis Simiensis*) discovered in Abyssinia by Rüppel. Brehm and Mégnin think that this is not the same branch as the Kurdufan sighthound. However, whether or not one adopts this opinion, it is impossible to deny that it forms a neighbouring and parallel branch. Its size and other measurements are as for those of the dhole but slightly more slender. Its head reminds one of the fox..." The dhole (*Canis Pallipes*) is the wolf that Kipling talks of in the *Jungle Book*.

Pierre Mégnin, despite initially thinking that the cuberow could be the origin of sighthounds, subsequently abandoned this theory. In his book *Le chien et ses races*⁴, he finally considers the "Sudanese sighthound" (hasty generalisation of the Kurdufan sighthound) to have been "... the oldest breed, the closest to the specific origin..." We will see in chapter VI that this opinion is debatable.

At the time when the standard of the sloughi in force today⁵ was being drawn up (apart from a few minor alterations), P. Hachet-Souplet pointed out (*Revue Officielle de la Cynophilie*, 1934⁶) that the sloughi was still seen nowadays in its original form. Accepting the wolf as the sloughi's ancestor and without excluding any transitional forms to which the cuberow might have contributed, he saw the refinement of the primitive wolf as being the consequence of climatic variations that made prey scarcer and therefore imposing more difficult hunting conditions, while accentuating leanness and longer limbs. In support of this theory, he evoked texts from Amelin (*Histoire des aventuriers flibustiers*⁷) where it is noted that, in the 17th century, some mastiff dogs that had been abandoned had, in a few generations, produced slender and whippety offspring. Other observations of this sort have been reported in the Congo and Saint-Domingue. P. Hachet-Souplet also made mention of research by Edward Cope, demonstrating that, based on a certain frequency and intensity, shocks received by feet on the ground led to an elongation of the limbs.

Pierre Durel, who was also involved in writing the standard of the sloughi, had been working for a long time on a book about the evolution of sighthounds through the ages. This distinguished and charming man, with remarkable scholarship and a pleasant, elegant manner of speech, who was one of the most brilliant organisers of canine activities in North Africa and a devotee of the sloughi, left us in 1970 without having been able to complete his project. From his notes collected by Yves Lelong, president of the Greyhound Fanciers Club, it appears that the cuberow, similar to the fox and with weaker carnassial dentition than in the sighthound, cannot be included in the sighthound's ancestry. Referring in particular to the work of Max Hilzheimer (who found similarities

⁴ The dog and its breeds

⁵ This probably means Standard FCI N°188b (in French) dated 19 October 1964 on this page: http://www.sloughi-europe.net/standards/standards_fr.htm with translation into English c1975 on this page: http://www.sloughi-europe.net/standards/standards_en.htm

⁶ http://www.sloughi-europe.net/articles_pages/article_revue_cynophilie.htm (in French)

⁷ History of buccaneer adventurers

between the cranium of the tesem and that of *Canis Pallipes*), and to papers written by Dr Gaillard (who notes that the tesem and the wolf both have the femur longer than the tibia), Pierre Durel accepted a relationship between these two canines subject to the name tesem being reserved for the ancient tesem and not its derivative forms. Ultimately, for Pierre Durel, the sighthound did not originate from *Pallipes*, or from *Simiensis*, or from any other contemporary canine, "... it is closer to the pariah dog from which it is separated by a distinct evolutionary tendency under the pressure of a divergent orthogenesis. In addition, its country of origin cannot be centralised either in north-east Africa, dominated by ancient Egypt and the Kingdom of Kush⁸, or in ancient Greece..."

Pariahs, although disregarded by the dog world, are dogs that have been known since the most ancient times. They were still plentiful a century ago in Asia, in the eastern parts of Africa and also around the edges of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. These dogs lived in total freedom, while at the same time seeking out the proximity of human populations. They were long tolerated since, in many places, they gave warning by their barking of the approach of intruders and were also useful at night-time in the garbage heaps. They survived in Constantinople until the beginning of the 20th century and maybe some still exist in Europe.

Drawing up a summary of knowledge relating to the origin of dogs, Dr Dechambre (*Les Chiens, "Que Sais-je?"*, 1971) has no hesitation in declaring that this was one of the most puzzling enigmas that could be envisaged by a zoologist. With regard to the sighthound, it can be deduced that the extreme variability seen in canines, certainly going back earlier than domestication, has led to wild strains of which pariahs are direct representatives. So, the hypothesis of a wild origin for the sighthound is therefore not to be discarded.

Dr Dechambre in fact notes that "... if it is exact that the sighthound is the result of rigorous selection, it is possible that this was a natural process..." More specifically with regard to the tesem, Dr Dechambre admits that the Egyptians must have found this sighthound in the wild in the form of a pariah suited to living conditions in desert regions: "... if we consider wild tesems to be an independent species, such as pariah dogs, we thus acknowledge a particular specific origin to these sighthounds. However such dogs were perhaps simply pariahs that evolved to suit their habitat in a flat and arid land..." This theory, already well covered, certainly lifts a corner of the veil. It may however call for additional examination concerning in particular the origins of the Nilotic populations thought to have domesticated the tesem. If such populations were, as some suggest, among immigrants coming from Asia Minor, maybe the Caspian regions from where some are thought to have moved on towards Barbary⁹, where prehistory records the tesem's existence, one might wonder whether the tesem was not already accompanying such immigrants. The simultaneous domestication, in very distant places, of the same animal by peoples of the same origin, would indeed demonstrate a coincidence that would be worthwhile

⁸ in what is now the Republic of Sudan.

⁹ corresponding roughly to today's Maghreb region (Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia)

elucidating. It would therefore be not so much the process of the pariah's rapid domestication that would be an issue, but more the localisation of its birthplace.

In any case, while some progress has been made towards understanding the tesem, the origins of the second prototype, the sloughi, are yet to be discovered. At the time of the tesem's domestication, which Dr Dechambre does not believe to be very ancient, the sloughi was in fact already a highly evolved sighthound, different in appearance to the tesem and in particular having drop ears. Referring to the teachings of Cornevin, still relevant today, if we consider that most of the tesem's descendants still have prick ears, how many millennia earlier was the sloughi's domestication compared with that of the tesem? It still remains to be determined in what place such domestication took place.

It is not impossible for certain sighthound breeds, as yet little known, to have come from prototypes other than the tesem and the sloughi. However, the present survey will be limited to the latter two prototypes which are in essence the only ones of direct interest to the West, with the sloughi being the main prototype.

It was certainly in the steppe that the birthplace of ancient sighthound breeds was located – this term steppe needs to be understood in a wide sense, encompassing all areas with relatively flat terrain and varying climates, open enough to facilitate the activity of chasing fast-moving prey. As for the reasons having caused the diversification of current breeds, these reside in the animal's adaptation to its end purpose. Through the millennia, peoples of the steppes and deserts maintained their animals within the initial type by using only the best hunters for reproduction: this was the case for the sloughi. The introduction of sighthounds from the steppes into different geographical scenarios led their users to select for types that best suited such new scenarios; this is how the greyhound came into being as a direct descendant of the sloughi. Lastly, in order to increase the sighthound's effectiveness in increasingly specialised activities and in the hope of reducing the time needed for selection of the desired types, man infused foreign blood into the sighthound, which must have resulted in many failures but sometimes a successful outcome, as shown by the borzoi and the whippet.

The sighthound in prehistory

Some ten thousand years ago, at a time when Europe was still a huge ice-covered tundra, the north of the African continent, the countries of the Nile, the Near and Middle East, the Indus valley, with their many alternating deserts, formed a single vast steppe – sometimes a savannah – conducive to the establishment and development of human groupings.

It is mainly in this area that prehistory has been able to record vestiges of the sighthound. None of such vestiges predates the Neolithic age, a time when mankind stopped being simply a consumer of nature's goods, and became a producer, sowing cereals, domesticating animals, shaping the first items of pottery. The start of the Neolithic age varies depending on the regions. For the

area that interests us, this was towards the eighth millennium B.C.

That ancient sighthound vestiges date from the Neolithic age and that the Neolithic age is defined as the time of animal domestication, cannot be assumed to mean that the sighthound's domestication dates from this time. Everything in fact seems to point to the sighthound having been man's companion since far more distant times. Maybe future exploration of prehistoric times will provide elements giving substance to what is still only a theory.

It cannot be a matter of drawing up an inventory here of the sighthound's prehistoric vestiges but simply of quoting a few of the most characteristic and most ancient vestiges. These allow us to say that the sighthound has been with man for at least eight thousand years. These allow us to note that, since ancient times, there were already two sighthound types, one established in Asia – the sloughi – and the other in Africa – the tesem.

Asian vestiges

With regard to the Asian vestiges, we can expect plenty more surprises over the next few years. In the Soviet Union for example, the prospection of prehistoric sites has just been completed and methodical exploration is about to start. According to Miroslav Ksica, five hundred and sixty three prehistoric sites spread between Siberia, the Urals, the Caucasus and the semi-desert regions of Central Asia, will be studied over the next ten years. Just those in the Central Asian Republics adjoining Iran and Afghanistan, which are of more specific interest for our topic, add up to one hundred and ninety eight sites, mostly Neolithic but also some Mesolithic. Some Palaeolithic sites have also been identified in the Caucasus region. In addition, it is known that many sites exist in countries adjoining the Soviet Union, such as Pakistan and Mongolia.

Faced with this immense potential increase in documentation, the rare sloughi vestiges offered to us now by the Near East seem rather tenuous. The few markers that they enable us to place are insufficient for determining the sloughi's evolution in early times, but remain valuable since they do prove its existence. Such vestiges are spread over a strip of land which, since time immemorial, history records under the name of "Fertile Crescent". This covers the area favourable to settlement, contained between the Syrian desert and the crescent shape formed by the landscapes of Iran and Turkey, extending along the edges of the Mediterranean. Irrigated by the Tigris and Euphrates, the Fertile Crescent witnessed the birth of such ancient civilisations as Sumer and Ashur. A country where, according to biblical tradition, "milk and honey flow", a country with the "eternal waters" spoken of by Hammurabi¹⁰, king of Babylon, a country also coveted by the horsemen of the steppe – the Fertile Crescent, so many times invaded, was finally to succumb and become a desert.

¹⁰ referring to Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers

It is there that archaeological searches this century have turned up so many memories of a lost world, it is there that, among the ruins, some vestiges of the sloughi were also discovered.

When approaching the Fertile Crescent by its eastern point, you find the country of Sumer and its great city Ur from where, around the year 2000 BC, Abraham was to leave and undertake the journey that would lead him into Palestine. Not far from Ur was a town called Eridu, where many digs have been carried out and where, according to H. and D. Waters, at the 5th millennium level, was found the skeleton of a saluki-like dog.

Opposite Ur, on the left bank of the Tigris, was the country of Elam¹¹ with its capital Susa, referred to by André Parrot as "The Sèvres of Ancient Times". Among their decorative motifs, Susa's ceramists sometimes make use of the sighthound: "... on one of the great goblets in the Louvre, writes André Parrot, the main theme starts off right in the heart of the container. Enclosed in a trapezoidal frame heavily outlined in black, a stylised ibex is standing... Above, sloughis are galloping, stretched out just enough to fill a narrow band..." The sloughi appears in similar attitudes in various other productions from the same origin. These reproductions of the sloughi date from the first half of the 4th millennium.

Now let us leave the Fertile Crescent for a while and scale the Iranian plateau. Not far from Kashan (or Kachan), R. C. Ghirshman carried out digs on the Sialk site which have made it possible to situate the start of the settling process, for this region, in the 5th millennium. Pottery is starting and painting is to follow very soon. In the 4th millennium, the ceramics of Sialk were to reach perfection. They are often decorated with rows of animals: birds, wild boar, ibex. Although, among the very scarce fragments that we have seen, the sighthound does not make an appearance, maybe more extensive research will provide positive results since the model was available to the ceramists of Sialk. Digs have in fact made it possible to identify the bones of sighthounds and Przewalski horses, at the 4th millennium level.

Returning now to the Fertile Crescent and moving up the Tigris valley, we reach the mountainous region of Kurdistan. Here, as much in Jarmo as in Muallafat¹², they were already modelling animal figurines towards the year 5000 and H. & D. Waters indicate that we can place the domestication of a sighthound-like dog towards the year 6000 in Jarmo. Turning then to the Tell Halaf¹³ culture, H. & D. Waters report having found hunting scenes with saluki-like hounds on leashes, in fragments of pottery from this culture. (Tell Halaf was a large town located on the high Khabur, a tributary of the Euphrates.) The ceramists of this centre made extensive use of animal motifs, as scrupulous observers, accurately portraying

¹¹ ancient civilization centred in the far west and southwest of modern-day Iran

¹² prehistoric site close to Mosul (Iraq), corresponding to a pre-ceramic Neolithic culture (7000-6500 BC)

¹³ north eastern Syria, near the Turkish border

attitudes and movements. No doubt they learned their art from the well-known Tell Arpachiya centre, near Nineveh. The Tell Halaf culture flowered between 5300 and 4300 BC.

To the north of Nineveh, we find Tepe Gawra. Here, Bedrich Hrozný reports that finds at Tell Halaf included seal-stamps, earlier than cylindrical seals, representing hunting scenes with sighthounds. Without any hesitation, we recognise sloughis or salukis, expressed with admirable accuracy and artistic taste. These seals date from the 5th or maybe the 6th millennium.

To the west of the Fertile Crescent, H. & D. Waters mention the Çatal Hüyük site¹⁴, close to Konya in Turkey, where one of the oldest – maybe the oldest – sighthound representations known to date was found. This is a rock painting representing a buck pursued by a sighthound, itself accompanied by a hunter, in a relatively crude image making it impossible to determine the sighthound's breed. Carbon-14 dating shows that this painting dates back to 5800 BC.

Lastly, with these Asian vestiges, we will include certain items originating from Egypt, such as the Gebel el-Arak knife and cosmetic palettes from the Thinite period. These pieces have long intrigued archaeologists, since they are indeed of Egyptian craftsmanship – and therefore catalogued among Egyptian antiquities – but their decoration is unrelated to Egyptian art and borrowed closely from Mesopotamian art. These few items, which show the existence of cultural relations between Egypt and the Fertile Crescent in the 4th millennium, have given rise to many studies. We will simply note that, since the decorative theme is Mesopotamian, it is Mesopotamia that should be credited with the dogs and sighthounds shown on these items.

The Gebel el-Arak knife in the Louvre museum, from the Predynastic period, comprised of a flint blade and richly carved ivory handle, displays dogs with prick ears and curled tails among other subjects. Obviously, since this knife is exhibited in the context of Egyptian antiquities, many people have been encouraged to identify these animals with tesems. We think that in fact they were Asian mastiffs.

The cosmetic palettes from the Thinite period (end of the 4th millennium), which can be seen in various museums around the world, sometimes include, among the mythical representations, sloughis and salukis portrayed with obvious naturalism. Such is the cosmetic palette "animals of the steppe and mythical beings" which was in the Louvre museum towards 1957: several sloughis with clearly defined drop ears and wearing collars are associated with lions, hyenas and bucks that are also portrayed with realism. This palette should not be confused with the "four dogs palette".

¹⁴ a very large Neolithic and Chalcolithic proto-city settlement in southern Anatolia, which existed from approximately 7500 BC to 5700 BC

On the Oxford palette in England, used to illustrate the book by H. & D. Waters, sloughis and salukis that are perfectly true to type and wearing collars, are associated with ibex, portrayed with realism and with other hounds that are extremely stylised.

African vestiges – Egypt

There do not seem to be any vestiges of sighthounds in Egypt earlier than the Predynastic period, which more or less covers the 4th millennium. During this Predynastic period, three civilisations succeeded each other in the Nile valley; Badarian civilisation from 3700 to 3400, Amratian civilisation from 3400 to 3100, Gerzean civilisation from 3100 to 2800, with the latter therefore clearly overlapping the Dynastic period. Amratians and Gerzeans have left us some good vestiges of the sighthound, this being the tesem.

In parallel with these civilisations, other human groups – hunters or nomads – were evolving in neighbouring regions and producing rock art. In his book *Rock drawings of southern Upper Egypt* (1938), Winkler studied a large number of these drawings, among which the sighthound is represented. Unfortunately, rock paintings of the sighthound are lacking in clarity. They would be valuable in the context of a wider survey, in particular identifying the peoples who carved them. We therefore indicate these representations without being able to use them and must limit ourselves to examination of the representations coming from the civilisations listed above, of better workmanship and also in essence contemporary with the drawings discovered by Winkler.

The Badarians, slightly negroid in appearance and small in stature, who had in fact been preceded on the Nile by other peoples, cultivated barley and wheat but were also fishers, hunters and nomads. Their ceramic work is remarkable. The Badarians carved animals onto rocks close by the Nile. However, in their culture, no representation of the sighthound has been found.

The Amratians were most probably the first farmers in Upper Egypt. Hunting also held an important place in their economy. These people were not as small as the Badarians, about 5'3", slender, with small elongated skull, high domed forehead, aquiline nose, and occupied both banks of the Nile in the region that was to become Thebes. We find their traces at Negadah on the left bank of the Nile and also along Wadi Hammamat, which opens the way giving access to the Red Sea. Along this route, the Amratians no doubt traded with Asia. Their pottery was frequently decorated with animal motifs, among which the dog with bushy tail and the sighthound are often represented. Gordon Childe finds similarities between the Amratian dog and the one in certain rock drawings of North Africa and Alpera (Spain). With regard to the sighthound, this is accurately portrayed and is a tesem.

One of the best examples of the Amratian tesem is given to us by Massoulard. On a vase found at Negadah, currently in the Moscow museum, we see a hunter holding a double-bend bow in his left hand and leading four tesems on leashes.

Two of these are wearing bells or amulets at the neck.

The Gerzean period that followed makes its own contribution of these vestiges. H. & D. Waters write that "... a wall painting in a Gerzean tomb at Hierakonpolis¹⁵ (carbon-14, 3200 BC) shows a hunter with a saluki which has a very characteristic long muzzle..." (in this phrase, translated into French from the English, the term saluki seems to be used in a generic sense).

Finally, encroaching only slightly on the historical period, since Menes, the first pharaoh, had just united Upper and Lower Egypt, our prehistoric overview will end with the presentation of an item on the edge of both periods. This is the Saqqara disk. This disk, cut from blue schist and on which remarkably characteristic tesems are chasing gazelles, must have been part of a game. One of the tesems and the horns and hooves of the gazelles have been carved directly in the schist. The second tesem and other parts of the gazelle bodies are pieces of added alabaster. This disk is a work of art and also stands as a zootechnical document. It dates back to around 3400 BC.

African vestiges, Barbary and Sahara

At the end of the 19th century, basing himself on the study of fossils from the Neolithic Age in Barbary (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia), Pomel identified a sighthound which was designated under the name of *Canis Familiaris Getulus* (the Gaetuli were a nomadic Berber tribe, known to the Romans, of whom today's Kabyle people may be the descendants). This *Canis Familiaris Getulus* was subsequently assimilated with the Egyptian tesem. This discovery had limited reactions since, at that time, the prehistoric documentation for North Africa was still basic and, in fact, in the rock drawings of Barbary, the sighthound representations have always proved to be of little significance.

In 1935, in *l'Anthropologie*¹⁶ volume 45, Maurice Reygasse, at that time director of the Bardo museum in Algiers, published a rock drawing found in the Wadi Djerat at Tassili-n-Ajjer (Sahara). On this drawing, a sighthound accompanies a hunter holding a bow in his left hand. His right arm is held away from the body as if the hunter was leading the sighthound on a leash, but there is no leash or collar shown. It seems to be a tesem, however the quality of design does not allow confirmation. This representation dates back to 8000 to 6000 years BC.

It could therefore be older than the painting of Catal Huyuk, but its carbon-14 dating remains to be determined.

Between this drawing from Wadi Djerat and the many far more recent representations from the so-called Caballine period (because the sighthound is either associated with the horse or contemporary with the horse's appearance in

¹⁵ Nekhen

¹⁶ French journal devoted to prehistoric sciences and palaeoanthropology

the Sahara), there was a hiatus that exploration of the Sahara was soon to fill.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, *méharistes*¹⁷ in the French camel corps had reported many rock drawing representations – elephants, hartebeests, giraffes – leading them to think that the Sahara that they were riding across on their camels had not always been a desert. It has now been firmly established that, five or six thousand years ago, the central Sahara consisted of large areas of savannah with flowing rivers populated by hippopotamuses and crocodiles. A few survivors of fauna from that period – degenerate crocodiles, *naja*¹⁸ - of which it would be uncertain today to find other representatives, were even brought back by the *méharistes*.

In the central Sahara then, and since time immemorial, black-skinned peoples have lived, who were hunters and have left rock drawing representations of the wild animals. Then, towards the 5th millennium BC, cattle herders originally from the Nile countries or maybe Asia Minor, came and painted everyday scenes of their existence on the rocks: animal husbandry activities with magnificent herds of cattle, religious or magical scenes, all expressed with an extraordinary sense of artistry.

Among the explorers taking an interest in the Sahara's history, Henri Lhote, who had already devoted several years to Saharan problems, had the possibility in 1956 of organising a true expedition to explore the prehistoric remains of Tassili-n-Ajjer and brought back a wealth of documents, a foretaste of which is in his book *A la Découverte des fresques du Tassili*. Fortunately, the sighthound is represented in these documents. One fragment of a fresco from Sefar, published in this book, shows next to an archer "... a short-tailed dog, seemingly less slender in appearance than the sighthound of the Caballine period..." To our eyes, this image is sufficiently eloquent. The tail is not so much short as curled and examination of the whole image leaves no doubt whatsoever: this is a *tesem*. During an interview in 1972, Henri Lhote says that there were other representations of sighthounds in his documentation, but without waiting for full publication of this documentation one can now assume that the gap between the sighthound of Wadi Djerat and that of the Caballine period is filled by the *tesem* of the Bovidian period.

Towards the end of the 3rd millennium, a period of dryness was beginning in the central Sahara which is continuing today. During the 2nd millennium, the cattle herders abandoned the central Sahara and moved towards the south.

While the *tesem* of the cattle herders also departed with its masters, other sighthounds, coming from the north, were soon to take its place. Rock drawings from 1200 BC inform us of their appearance in the company of a completely new animal in these lands – the horse. On the date of the horse's arrival in the Sahara,

17 soldiers who were camel-riders in the French Camel corps

18 genus of venomous elapid snakes known as cobras

there is some hesitation. On the style of its arrival, without any hesitation, it was spectacular. It was indeed at the gallop, harnessed to a battle chariot, that the horse appeared in its first representations. Why this dramatic entrance? The explanation may be in a text from Herodotus.

In the 5th century BC, Herodotus wrote that among the peoples of Libya, there was one that dwelt in the distant desert regions: "... the Garamantes, a powerful and numerous nation: they spread earth on the salt (of the chotts¹⁹) and sow seed. The shortest route from the Garamantes to the Lotophages or Lotus-eaters (Gulf of Gabès) is a thirty day walk. Among the former, cattle graze while walking backwards because of their horns which are curved to the front and would strike the ground if they wanted to move forward head down. They are in fact no different from other cattle, except for their skin which is thicker and harsher to the touch. The Garamantes hunt Ethiopian Troglodytes in chariots with four horses. These Troglodytes are the most agile of all men at running that we have ever heard speak of. The Troglodytes feed on snakes, lizards and reptiles of all sorts. They have no language like elsewhere but small cries similar to those of a bat."

This admirable text, reproduced in extenso, must be read while imagining Herodotus travelling in Egypt, meeting some nomads and finding out about what was over there, in those lands where the sun sets... and after endless discussions. Herodotus, as one scribbles out a sketch, noting down the basics in terse phrases. Sand on salt, this is still a condition for cultivation in many oases. Today, the cattle have disappeared, but certain rock drawings do show us varieties with long horns curved downwards and beyond their noses. So, would it be wrong to say grazing while moving backwards? This way of saying it is so expressive! A few lines from Herodotus are a world and at the mention of bats, we still hear the guttural cries emitted by the Touaregs, which the echo prolongs in the canyons of the Tassili.

Placing their trust in Herodotus therefore, prehistorians attributed these representations of chariots to the Garamantes. Of course, the sighthounds associated with the Garamantian chariots were tesems. It was indeed this sighthound that the Garamantes possessed, as shown in a text from Yolande Tschudi (*Les peintures rupestres du Tassili-n-Ajjer, A la Baconnière, Neuchâtel*): "... The hunting companion hounds of the Garamantes belong to the sloughi type breed, also known as Hamitic²⁰ sighthounds, the somatic characteristics of which are... pointed erect ears, short raised tail. This dog, probably originating from Ethiopia, is seen for the first time on an Amratian vase (see Caton Thompson²¹) in Egyptian 4th dynasty funerary paintings and shaped from terracotta in materials found at Abydos and Hieraconpolis²²." The term

¹⁹ chott or shebka, a dry (salt) lake in the Saharan area of Africa (mainly in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco) that stays dry in summer, but receives some water in winter

²⁰ historical term for the peoples supposedly descended from Noah's son Ham

²¹ this probably refers to Gertrude Caton-Thompson

²² more commonly known as Nekhen

"sloughi" used by Yolande Tschudi needs to be understood in a generic sense since, as shown in the rest of the text, these are tesems.

The day arrived when prehistorians suddenly realised that the gait of the Saharan horses "in extension" could be a replica of the flying gallop, known in Cretan art. All they needed was to find a link between Cretans and Saharan rocks. Knowing that towards 1200 BC, the Libyans who wanted to attack Egypt had allied themselves with elements that were predominantly Aegean, with Cretans among them, all designated by the Egyptians under the name "Sea Peoples", knowing that the attack went wrong, it was accepted that the Sea Peoples, frustrated of victory (this involved pillaging the Nile delta) were able to find compensation by launching a conquest of the Sahara... As a result, the Garamantian chariots changed hands and the Cretans and other chariot drivers of the Sea Peoples took up the reins. As was only logical, the sighthounds that accompanied the horses at their flying gallop also became Cretan.

This scenario of survivors among the Sea Peoples after the Piriou massacre in 1229 BC – if indeed there were survivors, since the pharaoh Merneptah "Sun that frightens away the clouds" was far from good-natured – throwing themselves into a Saharan adventure, leaves us perplexed. It is hard to imagine such hypothetical remnants lining up under the Cretan flag for a raid towards the unknown without the hope of some sort of profit. As for the analogies of the flying gallop that were the prelude to this theory, it must be borne in mind that the Cretans did not have a monopoly on this style and that, in very different places, artists of the past as well as of today who wanted to show horses at the gallop have often sacrificed accuracy for expression: Rodin, Degas, accepted this artifice.

In any event, the story line of these "Sea Peoples", through its boldness, was not without usefulness since it awoke the desire to delve further into the problem of the chariots and, in passing, of the sighthounds.

It was in this manner that Henri Lhote, fascinated by the epic of these mysterious chariots, made every effort to discover as many representations of them as possible. Soon, the geographical position of these rock drawings was to reveal to him the existence, a thousand years before our time, of a road suitable for vehicles, linking the Mediterranean to Niger.

From this information, what should we think of the breed of sighthounds in the Caballine period? Representations from this time are situated between the end of the 2nd millennium and the 5th century BC. The oldest representations are paintings. Overall, these representations are extremely simplified. Certainly, among the sighthounds that we have seen in Ahnet, to the west of the Ahaggar²³, where they hunt mostly ostrich, some have heavy shoulders and prick ears. However, only a methodical inventory of all these rock

²³ or Hoggar Mountains

drawings would maybe allow identification.

In fact, it is above all by reference to the human elements that underlie these drawings or paintings that we may be able to surmise the breed of these sighthounds. If they were introduced by the Garamantes, it has to be accepted that these are tesems. If the theory of the Cretan chariots prevails, it is impossible to say. In ancient times indeed, the Cretans did have the Egyptian tesem. However, in the course of the 2nd millennium, the sloughi made its appearance in the Aegean world. The sighthounds associated with Cretan chariots can therefore be either tesems or sloughis. And if the latter, might not this road for chariots from the Mediterranean to Gao, inaugurated by adventurers from the sea peoples, be the way the sloughi was introduced into the Sudanese regions?

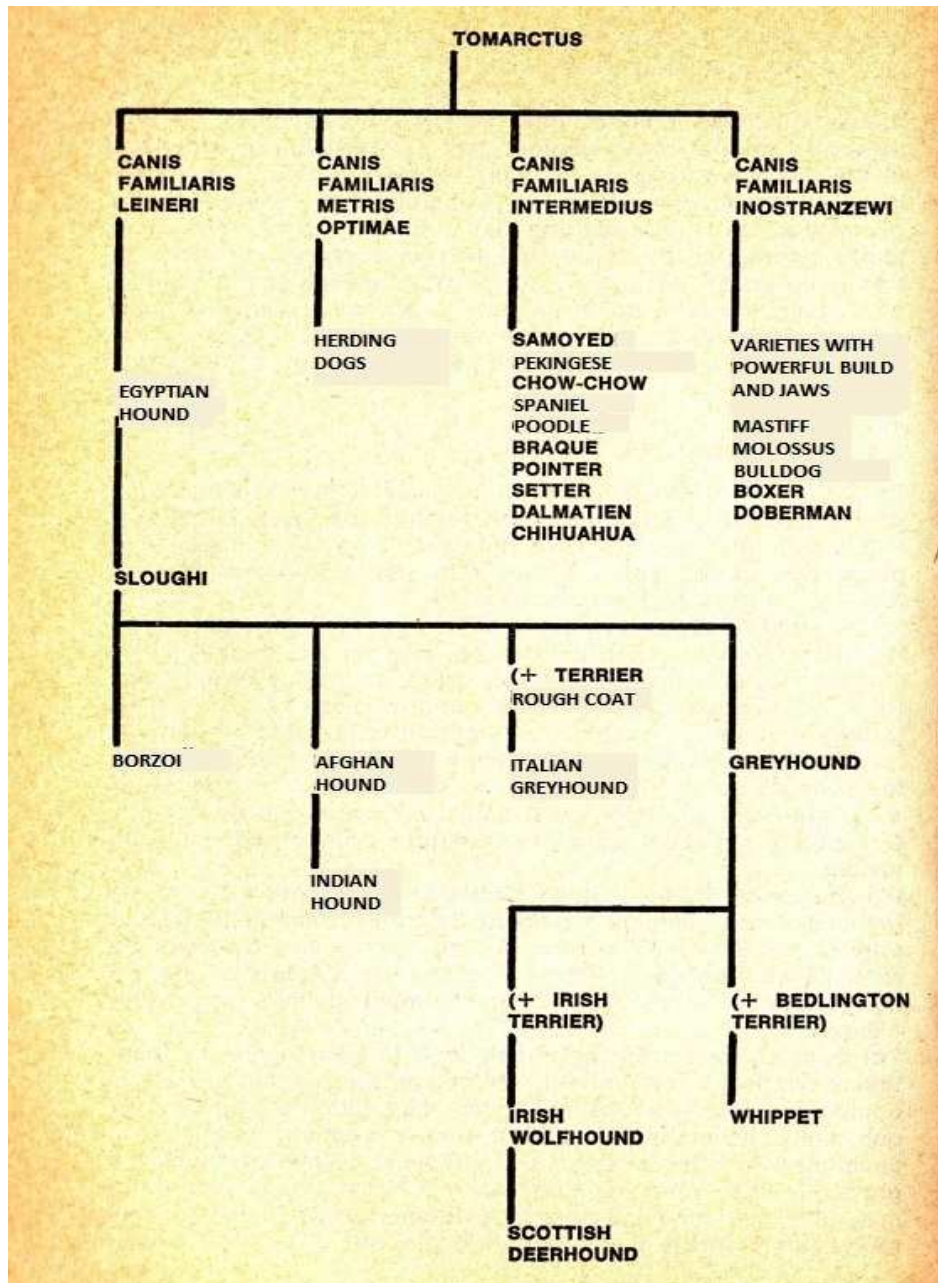
Prehistoric exploration of the Sahara is not completed. While the discovery of the Tassili frescos has considerably expanded our knowledge, it should be noted that other explorations have been undertaken since the work of Henri Lhote. For example, the Italian scholar Fabrizio Mori is currently pursuing an exploration of regions around Tassili, for which we can anticipate a documentation comparable to that on Tassili. Perhaps indeed, the history of the Garamantian kingdom which so worried Rome and succumbed to its blows, will re-emerge from the sands of Fezzan.

We therefore need to wait a little longer before obtaining the pedigree of the sighthounds which, for three thousand years, have persisted in pulling out the feathers of ostriches in Ahnet.

Over the past few years, explorations carried out to the south of the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, particularly in the Drâa regions, have revealed representations of sighthounds associated with animals of the savannah such as antelopes and elephants. These rock drawings may be contemporary with the period of cattle herders. Certain sighthound representations have their match in the lovely mouflon hunting scene described by Frobenius at Fezzan (*The Voice of Africa*, figure 28). Here we find the tesem once more, less distinguished than the Egyptian one, more powerful and with a slightly heavy forehead, but nonetheless a tesem...

Genealogy of sighthounds

In 1970, Time Life published the French version of Ruth Moore's book *Evolution*, with a preface by Jean Rostand of the *Académie française*. This book includes in particular a genealogical table of dogs according to which the genealogy of sighthounds would be (*see table on next page*).



N.B. From *Canis Familiaris Leineri* also come: bloodhounds, Saint-Hubert, scenthounds, terriers, dachshunds.

This genealogy calls for comments that we will formulate in the statements specific to each breed.

On the other hand, this table does not show the galgo, or certain sighthounds from central Asia, or the podenco²⁴-charnigue²⁵ group; lastly, since the term saluki is not mentioned, one might wonder whether this was an omission or whether saluki is synonymous with sloughi. These points therefore call for a few

²⁴ Ibizan hound

²⁵ charnigue or charnaigre (similar to the Ibizan Hound), formerly used for hunting in parts of southern France, but no longer exists

clarifications as below.

It is possible that the galgo was not mentioned because this sighthound is currently in the process of transformation (see chapter V). Perhaps the genealogy of the book *Evolution* has already assimilated it with the greyhound. As for the sighthounds of central Asia, it has to be said that they are not well enough known to be listed.

However, it is very regrettable that this genealogy does not mention the podenco-charnigue group. By giving the sloughi as prototype of all sighthounds, the book *Evolution* should have pointed out that this assertion contained an exception, specifically that made up by the podencos-charnigues. Numerically, this group may seem insignificant. However, from a cynological point of view, it has an obvious importance, since it is the only direct representative of the Egyptian hound that *Evolution* considers to be the sloughi's ancestor. This last point is in fact debatable.

With regard to the term saluki, which is not shown in the genealogy, we must acknowledge that current terminology often leads to confusion. From the beginning of this book, we have indicated that saluki and sloughi were zoologically two varieties of the same breed. Many misunderstandings result from the similarity between the names given to these two varieties, a similarity due to the transcription, as much by the English as by the French, of the word in Arabic "Slougui", in fact designating in this language without differentiation both the smooth-haired sighthound (sloughi) and the short-haired and feathered sighthound (saluki). In the interest of accuracy, the dog show world thought it necessary to add to the term sloughi the expression "or Arabian greyhound", and to the term saluki "or Persian greyhound". However, the sloughi is no more of Arabian origin than the saluki is of Persian origin.

In brief, it was no doubt at the time of introducing the Syrian stallions into England that were destined to create the thoroughbred horse that the saluki, forgotten since the crusades, made its reappearance on British soil and attracted attention. From the 17th century, the saluki was therefore the subject of selection extolling its features, emphasising in particular the distinction of its head, refining its silhouette. The sloughi, arriving much later in France, was to come up against an indifference, which had opposing effects to those of selection. A superficial examination of the two subjects can lead to emphasising the differences rather than finding similarities and also the dog world has distinguished between a saluki "breed" and a sloughi "breed". From this, many might deduce that saluki and sloughi come from different origins. This is not the case. The historical realities demonstrate that, for thousands of years and up until the present day, the destinies of these two sighthounds ran together. A comparison of their anatomies – except for details resulting from selection or recent mistakes – would in fact be enough to prove their morphological identity. This explains how, from a cynological point of view, it makes no difference whether one writes saluki or sloughi on the genealogical table of evolution.