



**Les Lévriers (Sighthounds) by Xavier Przewdziecki**

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**Chapter IV - History of Sighthounds**

**Translated 2018 by Susan Bamford**

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## CHAPTER IV

### *History of sighthounds*

After the information from prehistory summarised in chapter I, we will now move on to the history of all Western sighthounds.

Except for the podenco<sup>1</sup> and charnigue<sup>2</sup>, both descended from the tesem (African prototype), all sighthounds recognised by the Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI) are descended from the sloughi. So, before establishing their specific grouping as sighthounds, we will now look at what they have in common, sketching out the main lines in the history of their ancestry.

In this chapter, the term sloughi needs to be understood in the broadest sense since it symbolises the Asian prototype during its odyssey towards the Atlantic. Its arrival in the West came about via two main routes – one direct route Asia-Europe and a longer route Asia-Africa-Europe. On the direct route, sloughi and tazi-saluki share the stage while on the Asia-Africa-Europe journey, the smooth-coated sloughi travels alone.

### *The silence of the steppe*

As we have seen in the overview relating to the sighthound in prehistory, it was the archaeological exploration of ancient Mesopotamian cities which, albeit very parsimoniously, has revealed the sloughi's oldest vestiges to us. Such vestiges can be considered to be the effect of a happy coincidence, since the sighthound's presence in towns is always unpredictable with its normal place being among rural and above all pastoral populations. Indeed, the chances of bringing together a collection – however rudimentary – of such vestiges have never materialised.

While the Egyptians have shown themselves to be less exclusive than the Mesopotamians in their portrayal of canine breeds (there are some dozen breeds to be seen, including the sighthound which they held in high esteem) the Mesopotamians confined themselves to the mastiff.

To date, therefore, the sloughi's evolutions in the East, from its traces in prehistory

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<sup>1</sup> Spanish Podenco type hounds are currently in FCI Group 5 section 7 "Primitive type – Hunting dogs"

<sup>2</sup> The French Charnigue or Charnaigre (similar to the Podenco) no longer exists

through to its appearance during the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium in the Mediterranean regions of Egypt or Phoenicia, remain unknown to us. Archaeological research has indeed been confined to urban civilisations, of which we know a great deal, but did not explore the back country where sloughis would have lived, and the steppe still remains silent.

Stretching from China to central Europe and an area much favoured by Mongol, Aryan and many other tribes, always on the move, firstly for hunting, then later on for pasturing their herds – the steppe, while surrounding and often menacing the islets of civilisation in ancient times, nonetheless created a link between these different peoples. At the whim of the currents and eddies that moved across it, goods produced by the various civilisations were conveyed to the most unexpected locations, alongside the spread of ideas and beliefs. The steppe itself had its own religion and cults, its own centres for assembly and defence, its own craft and art forms.

Unfortunately, due to its vastness, the mobility of its peoples and their still rudimentary installations, the steppe remained difficult to explore and its civilisation is only very partially known to us. There is however no need to despair. We have explained the reasons for this in chapter 1 ("Asian vestiges"): exploration is only just beginning. In a while, the sloughi's past will no doubt re-emerge as clearly as that of the tesem.

### *The sloughi in Egypt in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC*

In Egypt, at the start of the Middle Kingdom, the sloughi was as yet ignored in texts and in art. If it did exist, it must have been extremely rare, since it has not been included in drawings by animal artists. Its delayed appearance indeed seems to coincide with another celebrated arrival – the horse – itself linked to an event with huge repercussions – the Hyksos invasion.

We still do not know much about these invaders. Indo-Aryans, coming out of the steppe, more or less related to the Scythians, are believed to have formed the initial nucleus. During their peregrinations across high Mesopotamia, Syria, Phoenicia – peregrinations punctuated with violence and pillage – these Hyksos people merged with some very varied ethnic elements. When they established themselves in Lower Egypt, towards 1860 BC, the Semite element was dominant.

The horse therefore first appeared in Egypt with the Hyksos who asserted their superiority through their use of horses harnessed to battle chariots and their possession of sophisticated weaponry such as the composite bow and bronze sword. For close to three centuries, the pharaohs, after withdrawing to Upper Egypt, were forced to endure the occupation and frequent encroachments of the delta by these nomads. The introduction into Egypt by the Hyksos of animals such as horses and humped zebu cattle from the steppe, leads us to believe that the sloughi, also a child of the steppe, may have accompanied the Hyksos as well, especially as it was exactly at this time that it first began to appear in artistic portrayals.

The irruption of the Hyksos into the Fertile Crescent and then Egypt constitutes an event in Ancient Times of which we are still unable to measure the precise political, social, religious or cultural consequences. The Hyksos aristocracy, seduced by Egyptian civilisation, exhibited a lifestyle and behaviour inspired by the world that they were subjugating without, of course, adopting its way of thinking and pursuing its objectives. (The biblical episode of Joseph being sold by his brothers, explaining dreams and able to

become the pharaoh's minister, can only be placed in the time of the Hyksos.) Obviously, this occupation of Lower Egypt facilitated the introduction into the Nile countries of many new things that would no doubt have remained unknown in the days when the pharaohs watched jealously over their borders. Even if the sloughi was maybe not introduced directly by some Hyksos tribe, it was however due to the Hyksos occupation that it must have arrived in Egypt.

After three centuries of vassalage, having at last succeeded in ridding itself of the Hyksos and inaugurating the New Kingdom, the Egyptian monarchy felt the need to regain its former glory.

Armies were sent onto the Euphrates and the Blue Nile and they also thought of the old countries on the Red Sea where, for centuries, they had lost the habit of going. "The Chief among gods, Amon of Thebes, who loves the queen Hatshepsut more than all other kings having reigned in this land" therefore suggested to the queen to send an expedition to the Land of Punt.

Back in the days of the Old Kingdom, Egypt was in contact with that distant country from which came herbs, spices, ivory, wood and precious minerals and from where certain ethnic elements of the Egyptian population no doubt originated. Towards the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium, for reasons that are not known, all relations with the Land of Punt ceased. The Egyptian people nonetheless retained the memory of long voyages in times gone by and the Land of Punt, by then legendary, was often mentioned in literature or folk tales. One such tale involves one of the pharaoh's officers being shipwrecked on an island in the Red Sea where he became the guest of a huge bearded and gold-coated serpent. Full of gratitude towards the serpent, the shipwrecked man promised to speak of him to the pharaoh who would send him treasures from Egypt and also "incense for temples with which one delights all the gods". At these words, the serpent burst into laughter and said to the officer: "Don't you know then that I am the king of Punt?" Finally, a boat arrived and the shipwrecked man, going to take his leave of the serpent king, received from him a cargo of precious items, myrrh, incense, ivory and.... sighthounds.

So what was this Land of Punt where one could find so many beautiful things and in particular sighthounds? Many theories have been formulated, some going so far as to locate Punt at the mouths of the Zambezi. François Daumas identifies Punt with the city of Opone, already known to Greek geographers, to the south of Cape Guardafui in Somalia. It seems that the Land of Punt was not so much a territory or city as a group of regions adjacent to the Gulf of Aden (Somalia, Yemen, Arabian coast) where ships calling in at different ports could diversify their cargoes.

So, in 1491 BC, a fleet of 5 sailing ships, each one also carrying thirty rowers, sailed towards Punt, the country of incense. The sea-farers were welcomed by a generation that had lost all memory of previous visits by the Egyptians. The Leader of Punt and other dignitaries of God's Land, their arms raised as a sign of peace, greeted those sent by the Ruler of the Two Kingdoms, asking them: "With what intention do you come towards this country, that is unknown to men? Have you journeyed on the roads of heaven or by navigating on the water? ..." On their return to Egypt, the sea-farers came in procession bearing green branches, with "the country's Leaders behind them", to offer their gifts to Queen Hatshepsut. Among the marvels brought back from the Land of Punt were sighthounds. This was carved on the walls of the Queen's tomb, together

with many other details.

We did not check the term under which sighthounds are denoted in the story told of this voyage. Had they used the hieroglyph devoted to the *tesem*, we would nonetheless have seen sloughis among them. If the sloughi had been found to the north of the Arabian Peninsula as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC (cf. chapter I), how, two thousand years later, would it not have reached the south of this incense coastline where boats were accustomed to slacken their sails... Even more convincing is the fact that such sea-farers, careful to take only rare and precious items on board so as to amaze their compatriots, would hardly have wanted to encumber themselves with *tesems* that were already so common in Egypt. However, by the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC, if the sloughi was no longer unknown, it was still rare enough to be noticed and a gift worthy of being offered to the queen.

As for the sighthounds offered to the shipwrecked sea-farer by the Serpent King in the folk tale, reminiscent of the sighthounds brought back from Punt in the days of the Old Kingdom, these must also have been sloughis for the same reasons that were valid centuries earlier. Why were these sloughis not shown in art of that period? We do not know the answer.

Thutmose III succeeded his half-sister to the throne, married Hatshepsut and reigned until 1447. A famous warrior and builder, this pharaoh interests us mainly for having enlisted the collaboration of a minister named Rekhmire, whose memory friends of the sloughi have a duty to honour. Indeed, on his tomb there is one of the most beautiful representations of a sloughi in Egyptian art: a hunter is seen carrying a gazelle on his shoulders, holding a hare in his hand, accompanied by a sloughi – slightly out of breath after its chase, vigorous and racy. This painting is not among the very earliest representations of the sloughi, since it dates from the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC, but it corresponds approximately to the time when the *tesem* was disappearing and only the sloughi was represented.

If it is now pointless to enumerate the representations of sloughis later than that on Rekhmire's tomb, we still cannot omit to add that the sloughi does not appear only on monuments, but is also part of the decoration on precious objects.

We find an example of this in the embossed gold patera from Ras Shamra (Ugarit) in the Louvre museum, listed as Canaanite art and that we would wish to be of Egyptian inspiration for this example to be acceptable in this paragraph. This 14<sup>th</sup> century BC patera represents a wild bull hunt with war chariot. A sloughi runs beside the chariot.

Since the above example is maybe not a happy choice, here is another example which is incontrovertible.

A few years ago, an exhibition was held in Paris, devoted to Tutankhamen. Among the items on show was a flabellum (large fan of feathers mounted on a handle, to be waved by a servant no doubt as much for circulating air as for keeping flies away) the palm of which represented the pharaoh in his chariot, hunting ostrich with a sloughi.

No doubt wanting to emphasise that this flabellum was fitted with ostrich feathers, the goldsmith showed ostriches stripped of their feathers on the decorative flange and then, pleased with his cleverness there, botched the sloughi. Fortunately, the palace's

painters compensated for this oversight. In the young pharaoh's funeral chapel, even though the hunting theme had given way to the war theme, sloughis nonetheless accompany Tutankhamen in an expedition against the nefarious Kushites. While the pharaoh goes to shoot an arrow, alongside superbly caparisoned horses, sloughis are bringing down Nubians. Similar paintings exist showing sloughis.

### **The *Canis Graïus* of Linnaeus<sup>3</sup>**

In ancient times, the Greeks did not live only in Hellas. They were established widely across the Mediterranean basin, around the edge of the Black Sea and, long after Alexander the Great, their culture and commercial dealings continued in the Middle East.

Most sighthounds coming from the East therefore transited via the Greek network and it is understandable that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a time when people had far less knowledge of the world than today, the naturalist Carl Linnaeus should have considered Greece as the birthplace of sighthounds. When choosing a generic term to designate sighthounds, Linnaeus therefore used the name *Canis Graïus*, (Greek dog) from which comes the French word "Graïoïde"<sup>4</sup> (maybe greyhound-like in English).

Greek sighthounds therefore seem to have originated from Asia. Must we see an exception in those "swift hounds" from Laconia of which Aristotle was to say one day that they were descended from the dog and the fox? Laconia was the southern region of the Peloponnese. Maybe this was an indigenous breed. However, at the time when these Laconian hounds were vying with Cretan tesems, the Hyksos period marking the arrival of the horse and the sloughi in the Aegean world was already close and these Laconian hounds were perhaps simply an early arrival from Asia.

The first representations of the Asian sighthound in Hellas are those of the saluki which appeared towards the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC in Mycenaean art. Whether depicting a "wild boar hunt" or the "start of the hunt", artists painting the frescos in the palace at Tiryns<sup>5</sup> were above all trying to achieve a decorative effect – however, in the speckled sighthounds on which they have carefully shown feathered tails, it is possible to recognise salukis.

After the Dorian invasion, with the arts flourishing once again, sloughis and salukis were to be portrayed many times over, especially on pottery. In this respect, Greek vases are of uneven quality. Due to expanding market opportunities in the Mediterranean basin at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, ceramic artists intensified their production, although artistic value did not follow the same pace. From then on, sighthounds were often equine in shape, with dipped backs and heads reduced to a dagger shape... However, it is only fair to add that there were still workshops maintaining good traditions. A large amphora, signed Nicoxenos (500 BC, Louvre, Euphronios room) known as "the departure of the warrior" is proof of this. In this same room, a lekythos known as "warrior with his horse" shows a talented portrayal of a

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<sup>3</sup> Carl Linnaeus, Swedish botanist, physician, and zoologist, who laid the foundations for the modern biological naming scheme of binomial nomenclature.

<sup>4</sup> This word has no real equivalent in the English language but may possibly be the origin of the "Grey" in Greyhound (Greek hound). Defined as greyhound type / longilinear

<sup>5</sup> Alongside Mycenae, Tiryns was one of the two greatest cities of the Mycenaean civilization dominating the eastern Mediterranean world from the 15th to the 12th century BC

saluki. Prior to this period of expansion, a Protocorinthian black-figure aryballos (Louvre CA931) shows warriors in battle, while sloughis are galloping on a narrow strip; no stencil here, the artist had his own outlines. There is also an 8<sup>th</sup> century BC Analatos hydria in the Athens museum (17-457) on which three sloughis are chasing a fox. Listing all sighthound portrayals in Greek art would fill a complete book.

In short, the saluki and the sloughi must have reached Greece towards the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. Their plentiful portrayals cannot however presume a plentiful existence and it seems that their use in fact remained extremely limited. Xenophon, who certainly knew of them, does not mention them in his treatise on hunting and this silence was to be remarked on one day by Arrian. The sighthound must have been above all a luxury possession with a price dictated by its rarity, which would seem to corroborate the anecdote on Alcibiades who, because he wanted to be talked about, spent a small fortune on purchasing a saluki – "this dog's beauty lay in its tail", wrote Plutarch – and then had its tail cut off to reignite the stories.

Greece was not the cradle of the sighthound nor a region where it was bred. It was necessary for Rome to extend its empire across the Near East and Egypt, towards the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, before a few sloughis from the East arrived in Italy or the Roman provinces. At that time, however, sloughis were no longer a novelty in Italy. Julius Caesar's veterans had also brought some back from their campaigns in Gaul and Britain because, unknown to the Mediterranean world, the sloughi had already been living for several centuries in countries along the Atlantic.

### **The sloughi in the Celtic world**

One might wonder by what process, well before our era, the sloughi had become integrated into the Western world. The events that first brought the sloughi into these Atlantic countries took place in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC. At that time, except in its Mediterranean prolongations, Europe was still at the prehistoric stage. That is to say that, while these events are close by, we can still only have an approximative understanding of them.

During the 9<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, there were nomadic horse-riding tribes – the Cimmerians – roaming the steppes around the Caspian Sea and Black Sea, of whom we know very little. At this same time, on the edge of the steppe, other horse-riding tribes – the Hsiung-nu<sup>6</sup> (the Huns from our history books), were evolving in the regions around the Yellow River. Already proving a nuisance, they were driven back towards the West by the Chinese emperor Suan. By encroaching on others and forcing them in turn to push aside their neighbours, the Hsiung-nu were thus the cause of a transitory (knock-on) movement all along the steppe. At the Western extremity of the steppe were the Cimmerians with the Scythians as the last but one link in the chain. The Cimmerian territory was then invaded by the Scythians, who hunted down and exterminated the Cimmerians, before taking their place – this movement came to an end at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.

Bearded and wearing pointed bonnets to protect their ears from the terrible wind on the steppe, with their recurve bows slipped into their broad quivers, well filled with arrows and hanging at their hips, the Scythians, forever on horseback, were watching over their

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<sup>6</sup> The Xiongnu or Hsiung-nu were an ancient nomadic people who formed a state or confederation centred on current Mongolia

herds, hunting, waging war, pretending to flee only to turn and fire deadly arrows, launching raids on people who lived on the steppe, sealing good relations with the strong while ransoming any who were weaker.

The Scythians, who were of Iranian origin and referred to themselves as Saka, are well known to us. We have already encountered them in the Nile delta during the Hyksos era, mingled with other peoples. They already wore beards but were not yet on horseback. Here, the Greek colonies around the Black Sea traded with them and Greek craftsmen had adapted their work to the tastes of these powerful customers. The Scythians were great connoisseurs of gold or silver items, but only appreciated decorative motifs based on animals, inspired from life on the steppe and always portrayed in a style often expressing realism with cruelty, surrounded by surprising decorative effects. Despite its originality, Scythian art remains closely related to the art of the steppes.

There are very few texts on hunting used methods among the Scythians. Herodotus, who had travelled in their country, speaks of hunting procedures among neighbouring peoples, where the horse and the hound have their roles. He also tells us that, among the Scythians, wood is so scarce that, in order to cook what they have caught, hunters are obliged to debone the animal and burn its bones to cook with. On several occasions, Herodotus emphasises the Scythians' passion for hunting, but never actually describes it. This gap, which can only really be explained by a partial loss of texts, can fortunately be filled in by various other data establishing that the Scythians were indeed involved in hunting with hounds. The expression "hunting with hounds" must not be understood in the modern sense of hunting with a pack of scent-hounds, with all due ceremony. In ancient times, it involved taking up the chase of deer, onager, hare, etc. - for which the participation of sighthounds was essential.

Although there is nothing in writing to specifically state that the Scythians possessed sloughis, their art nonetheless shows us that they did. We see the sloughi, for example, on a gold medallion applied in decoration by 5<sup>th</sup> century BC Greek artists onto a Scythian's shield. This was a sighthound portrayed with great realism, which is not very consistent with the pure Scythian style deer making up the main decorative motif. One might imagine the sloughi's presence in this manner: a Scythian goes to see a blacksmith-artist and orders a shield. The blacksmith-artist notes down the order, asks what decoration is wanted and shows him a collection of models; "here, Sir Scythian, I think the best model... a magnificent reclining stag, so much in the traditional style of your noble people! His antlers are evenly spaced to allow secure fastening to the shield!... - You have my agreement on this model, Sir Greek! answers the Scythian, but I want you to add my faithful sloughi, faster than the wind on the steppe!

In vain, the Greek searches through his boxes to try and find a sighthound, "in distorted Scythian style". So he calls over his best apprentice and tells him: "Go take the Scythian lord's sighthound, make a quick sketch and then you can add it to the appliqué..." And without worrying about conventions or styles, the apprentice simply added the sighthound, just as he had seen it, onto the gold plaque, without even giving it ears since it must have already been customary in those days to crop them.

And so, this appliqué which, from an artistic point of view, is a heresy provides a historical record that any sloughi fancier will contemplate with great delight. In order to balance his work, which he probably thought imperfect with this poor little solitary

sloughi nestled under the stag's neck, the apprentice then added... here a lion, there a hare and even a griffon. The Scythian lord must have been pleased since he kept his shield with him for 2,400 years at Kul Oba, in Crimea.

After this length of time, archaeologists then sent this shield to the State Hermitage Museum in Leningrad<sup>7</sup>.

The sloughi is also on a silver vase representing Scythian horsemen on a lion hunt. The injured lion seizes a horse's leg with its claws, with a very characteristic sloughi seeking refuge underneath, while the horseman brandishes his lance to spear the lion. This vase, created by Greek artists at the end of the 5th century BC, was found at Solokha, near Nekopol, on the left bank of the Dnieper.

When excavating the Tchortomlyk tumulus, near a woman's burial chamber, they discovered a gold ring the bezel of which contained a sloughi, remarkable for its stance, its morphology and its extreme muscular leanness. Tchortomlyk is located in the neighbourhood of Solokha and corresponds to the same era.

No doubt less artistic, but how much more touching is the image, somewhat faded over time, of a sloughi painted on the boards of a sarcophagus in Kul Oba, at a slow canter, its head up seeking to find someone...

Such artistic productions prove that the Scythians did indeed possess sloughis and since their presence assumes their use in particular for hunting with hounds, one might leave it at that. Let us add however that hunting with hounds among the Scythians is implicitly admitted through prehistory from data based on examination of the Illyrian culture.

The territory of the Illyrians back then corresponded to what is now Yugoslavia<sup>8</sup> plus the Hungarian regions on the right bank of the Danube. The Illyrians, during the first iron age (800 to 600 BC), were the people who attained the highest cultural development of those times in central Europe. It was among them that hunting practised as a sport first appeared in Europe. Having lengthily studied a number of the Illyrian artistic productions, with the infinite caution of a true prehistorian, Kurt Lindner<sup>9</sup> wrote as follows: "The oriental influences make themselves noticed in the art, not only through their joyfulness in the illustrated representation, but also through the love for this animal-shape sculpted with its undeniable similarities to Sino-Siberian works of art. The Illyrians produce items that could just as well have come from the vast land spaces located between the Urals and the Far East coastline. All elements of these horse-riding cultures may have contributed towards shaping the Illyrian culture. Not only did it bring to Europe an art that was essentially foreign and related to Sino-Siberian prototypes but it also preserved its styles of activity. Hunting with hounds was one of those traditions most likely to have originated among the horse breeders of the Asian steppe."

Ultimately, at the time when the Celts were about to launch themselves on their oriental venture, hunting on horseback with sloughis was practised not only among

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<sup>7</sup> Now St. Petersburg

<sup>8</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yugoslavia>

<sup>9</sup> Kurt Lindner -German entrepreneur, bibliophile and hunting enthusiast (born November 1906, died November 1987)



the Scythians but also among their Illyrian emulators. (One shouldn't forget to say that the Thracians also knew the sloughi. However, the Thracians do not seem to have played a significant role in the sloughi's spread among the Celts who only seem to have come into contact with the Thracians somewhat later, above all in the 3rd century BC when they occupied their country in order to settle there and found a Celtic kingdom.)

Over the past few decades, historians have made the Celts and their civilisation more widely known. It does not therefore seem essential to introduce them. The Celtic expansion towards the East took place along two routes: one Rhine-Dniester, the other Rhône-Balkans, passing to the south of the Danube. (It is worth remembering some of the equivalent terms for "Celt" - Gaelic, Galician, Galatian, Gallic, Gaulish... and others.)

In the 5th century BC, some Celtic elements were moving across Bohemia before settling in Galicia (which still carries their name), while others continued towards Transylvania, crossing the Carpathians and reaching Dniester where they were welcomed with open arms by the Scythians. A Celtic-Scythian people is even known to have existed. In this area of Celtic settlement, the Scythian sloughi was to find its first means of access towards the West.

Also in the 5th century BC, some Celtic tribes had settled to the south of the Danube, in Noricum and Pannonia. There was little love lost between these tribes and the Illyrians who controlled the Balkans as well as any access from the Adriatic. After the Antariates - the most powerful people of Illyria and perpetually at war with Macedonia - had succeeded in dethroning Alexander the Great's grandfather in 393 BC, Alexander's father Philip came to an agreement with the Celts in order to contain the Antariates. Gold from Macedonia - Philip's gold staters<sup>10</sup> - even reached as far as Gaul. Celtic troops arrived at the Danube to help their brothers continue their hostilities against the Antariates, while others enlisted in the armies of Alexander, who dreamed of conquering the world. It was during these negotiations that the Celts told Alexander that they were afraid of nothing except the sky falling on their heads.

Finally, in 310 BC, the Celts encountered the Antariates for a final time in a great battle in which the Antariates were defeated. The Celts then occupied Illyria, thereby gaining the cultural heritage of the Illyrians, including in particular the practice of hunting with hounds and the use of sighthounds.

The traditions recorded by Hugh Dalziel, relating to the introduction of the Celtic sloughi to the British Isles in the 5th and 3rd centuries BC are therefore in agreement with this chronology of events and this is even more remarkable since, at the time when he was writing, Hugh Dalziel would not have had access to documentation comparable to what is available today.

As if their contact with the Scythians and possession of the Balkans did not already provide the Celts with enough sloughis to satisfy their Western brothers, while at the same time remaining within the context of the 3rd century BC as accepted by British tradition, another source of sloughis was now about to emerge:

Shortly after the Celts settled in Illyria, one of their leaders, Brennus II (to distinguish him from the other Brennus who took Rome in 386 BC) had the idea of conquering

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<sup>10</sup> stater = ancient coin used in various regions of Greece

Greece. Using eloquence and deception – promising sparkling treasures for looting, showing Greek prisoners of small stature, easy opposition for brave Celts to overcome - Brennus II succeeded in recruiting a military force of 150,000 foot-soldiers and 2,000 horse-riders from among his compatriots as well as the recently subdued Antariates. He passed through Thermopylae, pushed aside a Greek army and started off towards Delphos to go and plunder Apollo's temple. After adventures that had nothing to do with sighthounds, the Greek gods became involved, forcing Brennus II to retreat before taking his own life. Part of the army entered into service with the king of Bithynia, at that time at odds with the king of Persia. Our Celts therefore crossed the Bosphorus to go and wage war for a good number of years in Asia Minor.

Towards 270 BC, once the Celtic cavalry had been crushed by the king of Persia's elephants and the infantry had grown weary of travelling on foot, the survivors of this epic venture then set their sights on quieter places. They invaded Phrygia and Cappadocia, and raised them to the status of Galatian empire. Galatia is located on the Anatolian plateau that extends from the steppe and Anatolia<sup>11</sup> was certainly a country that knew sighthounds since it has one of its own<sup>12</sup>. This sighthound did not yet exist here in Galatian times but, fortunately for everybody, the sloughi was present. And to boost the Scythian and Illyrian headcounts, Galatian sloughis also joined their march towards the West, along the long roads of the Celtic empire.

Weakened by its expansion and by tribal rivalries, eaten away by Rome, the Celtic empire was soon to fall into decline.

At the beginning of the 1st century BC, the Galatians were forced to surrender to Rome and, shortly after, in the West, Gaul was conquered by Julius Caesar. The Celtic world was to continue crumbling away under this twofold pressure - to the north from the Germanic peoples and to the south from the Romans who, intent on barring the way to the Germanic peoples, were strengthening their holds on the Rhine and the Danube.

So it was into this Celtic world, heir to a celebrated civilisation and still adorned with its shining halo, that an official of the Roman empire arrived at the start of the 2nd century BC. His name was Flavius Arrianus - known to us as Arrian - and he was of Greek origin, born in Nicomedia (Bithynia) at the end of the previous century. Arrian used his free time to write an essay on the teachings of Epictetus, under whom he had studied.

We do not know if, back then, officials were desperately keen to take up vacant posts in such a barbaric country. So maybe Arrian, placed here automatically, was not terribly enthusiastic about his assignment. Fortunately, his first contacts with the Celts were good. The Celts invited him to participate in their hunts. He was won over by the sloughi and so surprised by how the Celts saw its role in hunting that he considered it useful to take notes. Subsequently, Arrian was to collate these notes into his *Treatise on hunting*. This book will be examined in another chapter, we would just point out here that, among the Celts, hunting had lost any utilitarian aspect and had become a pastime for the privileged classes. Maybe this view was inherited from the Illyrians. As Arrian himself had written: "... it is not to catch the hare that true hunters bring their hounds to the hunt, but to see them show their prowess at the chase..." Arrian was also

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<sup>11</sup> Now Turkey

<sup>12</sup> The Greyhound of Anatolia or Turkmen Tazi: <http://www.anatoliandog.org/isik-003.htm>

very interested in the morphology, breeding and behaviour of sighthounds and talks about this as a knowledgeable connoisseur. From various remarks that he makes, it is possible to conclude that the Celts possessed sloughis and saluki-tazis.

With the *Treatise on hunting*, the sloughi made its entrance on the historical scene. Since his treatise involved a certain degree of accuracy, it might seem surprising that we cannot indicate exactly where Arrian discovered the Celts and their sloughis. In fact, several volumes of the history of Rome by Cassius Dio, including one that contained Arrian's biography, have been lost. We can only hope that some historian may try to reconstruct the curriculum vitae of this high-ranking official and tell us more about him. Arrian became consul in 130 and, shortly afterwards, the emperor Hadrian put him in charge of governing Cappadocia where the Celts were still very much remembered. Since there was much that he wanted to write about, such as *Anabasis / Expeditions of Alexander* which was to be the main source for posterity of this great conqueror's history, Arrian retired relatively early from his public career, remaining simply as a priest of Demeter, and continuing to write until a very advanced age.

One might hope to find portrayals of sighthounds in Celtic art, marking out the sloughi's progressive journey towards the Atlantic. Such a hope is maybe unattainable or premature. Celtic art, enriched by various Mediterranean or oriental influences, is in fact extremely complex, even before seeking out such pictorial expression that would be so precious to us. We shall therefore limit ourselves to pointing out the sloughi's presence on a few pieces of European craftsmanship that are more or less contemporary with the Celtic oriental adventure. It is above all in the decorative motifs on *situla* - bronze vessels first seen in Europe towards the 6th century BC - that one comes across hunting scenes where the sighthound is portrayed.

One of the most interesting of these is the Nijmegen *situla* (Holland) although we don't know how old it is, with some people saying it only dates back to Roman times since, among other topics, it shows a hare hunt using nets. On its own, this reasoning would not be enough, since the method was not specifically Roman. Three centuries before the occupation of Western Europe by the legions of Julius Caesar, Xenophon was already writing about this method of hunting, long used in Greece, and it is certain that Hellenising or orientalising influences were at work in Europe much earlier than any Roman influence. In any case, the Nijmegen *situla* also shows us a stag hunt with hounds and a boar hunt with spears. In the hare hunting motif, there are two sighthounds making the hare jump into a net. These are followed by a heavier dog, no doubt some sort of scent hound (known to Arrian as "segusius"<sup>13</sup>). In addition, the stag is being held at bay by two sighthounds who are now waiting for back-up from a massive "segusius". As for the boar, attacked with a spear, this is being held in the jaws of a "segusius" and another unidentifiable dog.

Some very typical sighthounds chasing hares can also be seen on a goblet from the 2nd century BC or beginning of the 3rd century BC, produced in Cologne as shown in the book by Kurt Lindner, *Die Jagd der Vorzeit (Prehistoric Hunting)*<sup>14</sup>. A 4th century BC engraved glass goblet, originating from Cologne's glass industry, portrays a horse-rider having thrown his assegai onto a stag being chased by sighthounds. Kurt Lindner explains: "... Stag hunting, as portrayed here, is indistinguishable from what is seen

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<sup>13</sup> Celtic beagle, or Segusian hound

<sup>14</sup> *Die Jagd der Vorzeit, (Geschichte des Weidwerks, Band I)*, Berlin und Leipzig 1937

among the eastern Germanic tribes, the Illyrians and the Scythians. It would be interesting to explore the route followed for this style to reach Cologne; hunting with hounds is not specific to the Romans and was unknown in the capital."

We can also mention the Gundestrup caldron (Copenhagen) with its mysterious motif that nonetheless shows Celtic inspiration. Dating for this cauldron is controversial, it may be from Roman times. In front of a god to whom a human victim is being sacrificed, we see a very typical portrayal of a sighthound.

In France, we find the sighthound on Gallic pottery dating back to earlier than the Roman occupation. The sighthound is also seen in Gallo-Roman mosaics, such as the remarkable sloughi of Sorde-l'Abbaye. A systematic assessment of all these remains needs to be carried out.

The word sloughi that we are using today was unknown in Celtic times. Maybe the Celts knew their sighthound as Ouertragoi, a term used by Arrian in the 2nd century, written as Vertragus in Latin. When the Celts, who were then occupying part of Spain, made the sloughi known to their Iberian neighbours, these then gave it the name of Galgo, i.e. Gallic sighthound.

The Latin word vertragus, from which comes "vertrage" in old French and other derivatives such as veltre and viautre, still exists in French venery terms such as "vautrait". Bavarian law (Capitularies of Dagobert, 7th century) laid down that "whoever has killed one of these "veltre" hounds which does not track a hare's trail but catches it through its speed of running, shall compensate with a similar worth three "sous<sup>15</sup>" (gold sous)". Pierre Megnin notes that this compensation was the same as for killing a mare, while the compensation for killing a scenthound or a great sighthound used for hunting "black beasts" was twelve sous, the same as for a stallion. The great sighthounds for hunting black beasts (bear, aurochs, wild boar) must have been wolfhounds. A few centuries after good king Dagobert, Canute (the son of the king of Denmark) who had just gained the submission of the Anglo-Saxons, also had occasion to legislate on the subject of sighthounds. The forest laws, enacted at the beginning of the 11th century, prohibited anyone below the rank of gentleman from owning a greyhound. This is expressed in an old Welsh proverb: "You may know a gentleman by his horse, his hawk and his greyhound".

### **The sloughi in the Far East**

In the days when the Celts were living their Asian adventure on the dreary plains of Anatolia, at the other edge of the steppe, in China the sloughi was hunting deer. And no doubt had been hunting it for a considerable length of time.

We can recognise it, set in bronze, associated with stags in the Warring States period. The fragments in the Cernuschi museum are from the 3rd century BC. The depiction is crude. In compensation, during this same century, a brick from the Tsin dynasty offers a very realistic hunt: backed by a horse rider armed with a recurve bow, a sloughi at a flying gallop is chasing the stag. This brick was among the treasures of Chinese art exhibited at the Petit Palais in Paris in 1973.

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<sup>15</sup> The sol, later called a sou, is the name of a number of coins dating from Antiquity to today, derived from the solidus, a coin made of 4.5 g of gold created by emperor Constantine to replace the aureus.

In this same exhibition, a slender brownish coloured cylinder, catalogued as a "chariot ornament" hardly attracted any attention. However, when observing it more closely, one could see that this was a piece of bronze inlaid with gold and silver, forming a decoration so dense that it was indistinguishable at first sight. Lost among the magnificently expressed lines and tracteries, a sloughi was pursuing a stag and a finely feathered saluki was chasing a hare. This piece dates from the Former or Western Han dynasty.

The Han dynasty also offers various other portrayals of the sloughi, on carved stone, on brick, all with an admirable realism; sloughis chasing the stag, the wild boar, sometimes working under the wings of a falcon.

### **The Arab invasions of the 11th century**

At the time of the thousand and one nights, a wrathful Caliph of Bagdad drove out two intolerable Bedouin tribes and enjoined them to seek refuge in Egypt. A mundane enough event in itself and it needed an exceptional set of circumstances for the Beni Hilal and Beni Soleim tribes to pass into posterity.

History records that these Bedouin numbered 200,000. Based on that figure, specialists would be able to calculate the number of their horses, hawks, camels, sheep, goats, donkeys and hounds. As far as the sloughis are concerned, let's say eight thousand tents and one sloughi per tent.

So, our Bedouins packed their bags, the men mounted their horses, the women draped their children on their backs and, in short stages, the caravan was finally able to quench its thirst in the Nile.

Then, travelling up the river, through the pasturelands, plundering and looting on the way, these nomads finally reached Upper Egypt.

At this juncture, Egypt escaped from the Caliph of Bagdad. A group of Berbers from the Maghreb had in fact repudiated the doctrine and authority of Bagdad, given itself its own Caliph, undertaken to dominate the whole of the Maghreb and even succeeded in conquering Egypt. The new Caliph of the Maghreb then delegated his powers to an Emir and went off to settle in Egypt. There, he soon began to receive complaints about the Bedouins inherited from Bagdad, as execrable as ever. Convinced of the need to free Egypt from this new scourge, the Caliph was seeking an opportunity. This came from the place he least expected. In fact, the Emir who represented him in the Maghreb, circumvented by emissaries from Bagdad, had just celebrated Friday prayers, no longer in the name of his overlord, but in that of the Caliph of Bagdad.

Rather than raise troops to go and re-establish order in the Maghreb, the Caliph of Egypt - in the second half of the 11th century - was crafty enough to involve the Bedouins. Counting on the fact that their old resentment against the Caliph of Bagdad would be easily deflected onto his partisans in the Maghreb, he was able to dazzle them with images of the Maghrebi Eldorado and gave them free rein to bring the peoples of the Maghreb back into the way of truth.

And so the great caravan moved off once again. Perched on camel back through the heat of the day, the Asiatic sloughi crossed the Libyan desert in order to reach its

promised land and supplant the ancient African sighthound, which still had upright ears, like its ancestors in Thebes and Luxor.

Historians have cautiously assessed the number of Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaym at 200,000 – a figure which no doubt corresponds to the number of Bedouin initially chased out of Arabia. However, the number arriving in the Maghreb was significantly higher. Indeed, the news that the Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaym were leaving for the Maghreb spread across the whole Arab world and many other tribes – from Egypt, Syria, Hejaz and even Iraq – also wanted a share in the cake. Because of this, the so-called Hilalian invasion seems to have been assessed at one million nomads. The arrival of these invaders was in fact spread over several decades, maybe even as much as a century.

In any case, the Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaym did not disappoint the Caliph of Egypt's expectations. In 1057, after having laid waste to all that was left of former Roman colonisation in Ifriqiya (Ifrikiya)<sup>16</sup>, they then ransacked Kairouan, before spreading across the whole of the Maghreb, giving over plantations and trees to be eaten by goats, transforming what was once forests into desert, burning, pillaging and similar pastimes.

Ibn Kaldun once wrote: "Any country conquered by Arabs is ruined." Independently of their depredations, these nomads also provided local rulers with troops that were always ready to give battle. By putting themselves at the service of one prince or another, the Banu Hilal procured advantages that could only be gained to the detriment of previous populations.

But they can be pardoned for much... since these nomads were also the best-known importers of sighthounds in history and, thanks to them, North Africa was to become the promised land of the sloughi.

### **The sloughi in contemporary times**

#### *In Europe*

While the sloughis, brought there by the Bedouin, were spreading out across the Maghreb, the Sahara, and even into Spain (to meet up with their brother galgos), other sloughis coming from the Levant at the time of the Crusades were about to discover the fortified castles of Western Europe.

It would be interesting to draw up an inventory of portrayals of the vertragung / veltre<sup>17</sup> (Asian sloughi) prior to the 12th century, with a view to determining what influence the arrival of sloughis brought back from the Holy Land might have had on the existing Western type. From that time on, there is often much doubt on the origin of sloughis that have inspired the different artists and any documentation guaranteeing that artists could not have had access to models other than the Celtic sloughi must indeed be relatively hard to find.

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<sup>16</sup> In medieval history, Ifriqiya or Ifriqiyah (Arabic: إفريقية) was the area of the coastal regions of what are today western Libya, Tunisia, and eastern Algeria. In modern Arabic, the term simply means "Africa".

<sup>17</sup> French/Provençal veltre, Italian veltro:- popular Latin veltrum, corruption of Latin vertragung (nom. -us) greyhound, a Gaulish word, formed on Celtic ver- intensive prefix + root trag- to run.]

One of the most recent examples, just before the Crusades, assuming the Celtic sloughi to be authentic, is the Bayeux Tapestry by Queen Matilda (11th century) in which hounds can be seen chasing a roe deer at the feet of the Duke of Normandy, while a huntsman holds two others leashed and ready to slip. Sighthounds are also shown in other scenes, associated with the presence of the falcon.

There is yet another artistic portrayal of what may be a Celtic sloughi – on a capital in the abbey at Vézelay that shows a horse rider holding a beautiful sighthound on a long leash. Knowing that certain capitals in this abbey were sculpted at the beginning of the 12th century, at a time when the Crusades had not yet brought sloughis back from the Holy Land, maybe checking the date of this capital would make it possible to authenticate a Celtic sloughi.

After this and over several centuries, sloughis from the Crusades or the Islamic world, with which relations were at that time being established, were to blend in with the Celtic sloughi, with only minimal details making it possible to identify the new arrivals.

After more than a thousand years of presence in the West, the Celtic sloughi has changed somewhat, but is still a long way away from the greyhound. The refinement of its outline is developing. However, it often retains the curled tail and drop ear, as in the stained-glass window in Chartres cathedral showing Saint Eustace hunting<sup>18</sup> (beginning of the 12th century) – assuming our judgement concerning the sighthounds in this stained-glass window to be correct. However, other examples may yet be found.

The sloughi from Islam, not yet fully amalgamated with the western version, has drop ears but above all a pronounced skeletal structure, as is seen in certain engravings by Durer (1471-1528). It is sometimes recognised by its feathered saluki coat, or its nomad-style cropped ears, as in the painting of the hunt at the Castle of Torgau (Saxony) in honour of Charles V, painted by Cranach the Elder (1472-1553). This canvas is at the Prado Museum in Madrid.

At that time, England was already renowned for the quality of its sighthounds. French hunts were obtaining them from across the Channel and the hunting pack of Henri III was made up entirely of English sighthounds.

Towards the end of the 16th century, the merging of the old and the new sloughi became complete.

While the galgo (Gallic sighthound) was to remain very close to the ancestral model in Iberian countries, the sloughi began its evolution towards the greyhound type from the 13th or 14th century. When John II (John the Good) was beaten at Poitiers and imprisoned in England, his chaplain Gace de la Bigne accompanied him and dedicated several verses of poetry to the heraldic device of the "beautiful sighthound". This device was also to inspire the prioress of Saint Albans, Juliana Berners, in the description that she gave of the greyhound in her Book of Saint Albans 1485: "headed like a snake, necked like a drake, footed like a cat, tailed like a rat, backed like a beam, sided like a bream". Wasn't the interest shown in the chaplain's "beautiful sighthound" an early

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.vitraux-chartres.fr/vitraux/43\\_vitrail\\_vie\\_st\\_eustache/scene\\_02.php](http://www.vitraux-chartres.fr/vitraux/43_vitrail_vie_st_eustache/scene_02.php) Saint Eustace, also known as Eustachius or Eustathius - prior to his conversion to Christianity, Eustace was a Roman general named Placidus whom legend places in the 2nd century AD.

indication of the practice of coursing? The selection and development of the sloughi was in any case spread over a lengthy period of time. Starting in the 16th century, which saw an extensive rise in coursing, this transformation of sloughi into greyhound was speeded up to become the model that we know today.

The Western world became accustomed to the greyhound's silhouette and completely forgot the sloughi among its forebears. When the saluki was to make a timid appearance in England in the wake of the first Arabian stallions imported from Syria in the 18th century, it was considered to be a new sighthound. It became known as "Persian greyhound" and was to keep that name until the 20th century. And when Africa was opened up to Europeans in the 19th century, the French in their turn were to discover the sloughi or "Arabian greyhound".

At the end of the 19th century, Cornevin<sup>19</sup> considered that the Arabian greyhound mainly occupied North Africa but could also be found on the European side of the Mediterranean. Pierre Mégnin<sup>20</sup> already had a somewhat broader perspective: "... the sighthound with its short fine hair, companion to highborn ladies and so often portrayed in old carvings or paintings, held on leashes by pages or at the feet of a lord and his lady lying on their tomb, is only known with any certainty through these monumental works of art and it is highly probable that it was brought back during the Crusades. This supports the theory that this breed still exists in a pure form in Greece and Syria."

The sloughi was therefore returning once again to the Western world in its ancestral form, jealously preserved by the Islamic peoples among whom any misalliance was punished by death. Its genealogy, written on parchment alongside that of the horse, was a treasure for the nomad who made room for it under his tent and shared the milk from his flocks between it and his children.

It came above all from those interminable African plains which, on the other side of the Atlas Mountains, stretch from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, where the summer wind parches the poor pasture lands. This was its adopted homeland.

It was these pre-Saharan regions that served as background for the books by General E. Daumas: *The Horses of the Sahara* and *The Ways of the Desert* (translated from the French by Sheila M. Ohlendorf<sup>21</sup>). At the time when these books were written, French colonial penetration had gone no further than the Atlas and these regions were known as the Sahara.

The Barb horse was the main topic of this book. After the Barb, the only animal worthy of the General's pen was the sloughi. For example: "... If there is still need of demonstrating how very aristocratic the customs of the people of the Sahara are, how their tastes are the tastes of great gentlemen, I shall give a very simple proof of it. Certain people might find it puerile, perhaps. It is the affection shown to the saluki..."

"In the Sahara, as in other Arab lands, the dog for man is nothing but a scheming rascal, importunate, rejected, notwithstanding the usefulness of his task, be it that he guard the

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<sup>19</sup> Robert Cornevin, French colonial administrator and historian, born 26 August 1919 and died 14 December 1988

<sup>20</sup> Jean Pierre Mégnin, French veterinarian and entomologist, born 16 January 1828 and died 31 December 1905.

<sup>21</sup> The translator has translated slougui as saluki: text can be seen here:

[http://www.sloughi-europe.net/articles\\_pages/articles\\_general\\_daumas\\_en.htm](http://www.sloughi-europe.net/articles_pages/articles_general_daumas_en.htm)



*douar* or watch over the flocks. Only the saluki has the esteem, the consideration, the watchful tenderness of his master. That is because the rich, as well as the poor, regard him as a companion of their chivalresque pastimes in which they take such pleasure. For the poor, the saluki is also the purveyor who keeps them alive..."

Having spoken of the attention paid to the choice of genitors, the care provided to the dam and little ones, "... the women themselves sometimes give them their own milk ...", of the sloughi's breeding, education, hunting, intelligence and self-esteem, the author also mentions the status that it holds in the nomadic family. While the dog is always kept outside of the tent, "... the saluki, he, himself, lies in the room reserved for the men, on the carpets at his master's side or even on his bed. He is clothed, protected from the cold with blankets like the horse; it is well known that he is very sensitive to the cold. It is one more proof of his being purebred. Pleasure is taken in adorning him, in putting shell collars on him..."

When General Daumas wished to know the origins of the sloughi, he asked the best-known person of that time, the emir Abd-el-Kader. Here is an extract from the text written by the emir: "... These sighthounds are called "slougui" (sic). They get their name from Slouguiïa, the place where they were born, we are told, from she-wolves coupling with dogs."

According to tradition, the sloughi has a number of different canids in its ancestry. Aristotle thought the fox was one, Emir Abd-el-Kader mentioned the wolf. Aside from that detail, the fact of accepting a geographical etymology for the word sloughi is an interesting concept. In ancient times, there was a town in the Yemen called Saluk or Saloug which, according to historians, was famed for its coats of mail and its sighthounds. It has been suggested that there are similarities between the name of this place and the Chillouk people (see chapter VI).

In the Middle East there are also names that recall the memory of Seleucus (one of Alexander the Great's generals and founder of the Persian dynasty of the Seleucids). Not far from Bagdad, we find Seleucia. Taking into account the evolution of the Arab peoples, some tribes may have adopted sighthounds from the Seleucia region, since the word sloughi does not appear to be very old. However, the field of linguistics has its mysteries and the SLG root contains many derivatives, one of these even designating the "Eastern wolf".

One point is certain: the French transcription of "sloughi" is a heresy; it would be more correct to write "slougui".

We will end these references to General Daumas's books with a final extract concerning in particular the "standard" of the sloughi according to the nomads of North Africa in the middle of the 19th century:

"... The saluki who feeds a family is never sold, sometimes he is given away at the supplications of women, relatives or venerated Marabouts.

The saluki who easily takes the *sine* and *ademi* (these are gazelles from the semi-steppe semi-desert regions, probably *Gazella Dorcas Neglecta*) is worth a beautiful she-camel; he who overtakes the *rinne* (sand gazelle, slightly bigger, *Gazella Dorcas Leptoceros*) is rated as being worth a prize horse...

The saluki of the Sahara is much superior to that of the Tell; he is of a tawny color, tall, with a long narrow muzzle, wide forehead, short ears, muscular neck, very pronounced haunch muscles, no belly, clean legs, tendons prominent, hocks close to the ground, sole little developed, dry, the upper forelegs very long, the palate and tongue black, the hair very soft. Between the two ilia, there should be room for four fingers; it is necessary that the tip of the tail, brought under the thigh, reach the bone of the haunch.

Ordinarily five lines of fire are applied to each foreleg to consolidate the joints. The most renowned salukis in the Sahara are those of the Hamyâne, Oulad-Sidi-Chikh, the Harrar, the Arbâa and the Oulad-Naïl..."

In his description of the sloughi of the Sahara, General Daumas specifies that this is a tall sighthound, but does not give any measurement. In 1897, Cornevin indicated an average height of 0.75 m. We have indeed previously seen a few big sloughis, maybe taller than the height indicated by Cornevin. However, it seems that this type no longer exists. We have not seen any again since the 1950s.

The custom of branding the sloughi's forelegs was common practice among most nomads and extends – or used to extend – to the horse, or possibly the other way around. General Daumas does not mention that the ears were often cropped. In the Middle East, it would be almost impossible to find a sloughi with natural ears. The purpose of this mutilation was, so it is said, to avoid the sloughi being caught by the ears in the event of battling with a wolf or jackal and therefore being overcome by its adversary. This is acceptable, but what is less acceptable was forcing the patient that was being operated on (or at least in the East) to swallow the strips of its own ears so as to make it bolder...

To the list of nomadic tribes possessing renowned sloughis, it now seems possible to add the Chaamba (tribe mainly specialising in raising camels) whose usual area of travel was located to the south of the tribes mentioned by General Daumas. This tribe was still relatively unknown at the time when the author was writing his book; it was the first to provide camel corps soldiers when the first Saharan companies were formed at the beginning of the century. According to legend, the Chaamba tribe, of Arab origin, took its name from the sloughia Amba who hunted with the tribe's ancestor. This ancestor used to encourage her by shouting "Ich! Amba!" (In the 19th century, according to Sihlwald and Schaeck, the Arabs of Zanzibar were from the Chaamba tribe.)

Throughout the winter in those regions of the northern Sahara where the horse-riding tribes were living, the sloughi would hunt ostrich and gazelle. It would then move with the nomads towards the northern plains, where the summer is milder and the hares and jackals in the esparto grass, tillage and stubble still provided it with a healthy activity.

This Edenic life was unfortunately not the same for all sloughis. Some were living further south in purely Saharan areas, where vegetation is sparse and necessitates frequent movements of flocks, where game is increasingly scarce, where the problem for mankind is not so much living as surviving. Whatever the starving nomad's affection for his sloughi, how can he give it more than he has? And it is hardly surprising that the sloughi's format in such harsh regions should be reduced and streamlined until it seems almost frail, while nonetheless retaining the qualities of the

breed.

Among the European countries that introduced the highest number of sloughis were Holland and France. Most of these sloughis originated from North Africa. The sloughi's breed standard was drawn up in France at the beginning of the 20th century, and then reworked in 1935. It is currently owned by the Moroccan kennel club.

Shortly after the Great War, when England and France were mandated to organise the countries of the Levant that had been detached from the Turkish empire, Mesopotamia, Iraq, and the Syrian desert provided the Western world with a new source of sloughis and, for around fifteen years, many boats coming from Beirut brought sloughis onto the quaysides of Marseille.

This source of sloughis from the Levant came at just the right time to boost the contribution from Africa which was already dwindling in recent times.

For a long time in fact, across the North African countries, the ban on using sighthounds for hunting had put a brake on breeding sloughis. But, above all, the growing popularisation of guns and the introduction of European dogs made hunting more efficient in other ways. And little by little the number of sloughis was dropping.

After the 1939-1945 war, when the French mandate in the Levant had come to an end, in the eyes of many people North Africa still seemed to contain a sufficient stock of sloughis. However, the repercussions of war had already changed the character of these countries. The proliferation of forms of transport was shrinking old boundaries, transforming its former more traditional atmosphere, speeding up the scramble towards towns and boosting the many contacts with what can be called civilisation. Young people lost touch with the family environment, new activities were created, new aspirations were awakened, only accepting as worthwhile what was seen as up-to-date on the radio, and soon the television.

At the end of the day, it was far less the changing circumstances (hunting guns, criss-crossing of large areas by roads and tracks, proliferation of cars) that were to strike a fatal blow to the sloughi, than the radical overturning of people's way of thinking - switching, virtually without any transitional phase, from patriarchal age to atomic age. With their fascination for catchwords such as progress and new ideals, the new generations were about to throw out as obsolete this thousand-year-old code which had previously governed yesteryear's life with its tribal conceptions, customs, traditions. The use of sloughis for hunting was part of this. And so, the sloughi ended up disappearing from the North African stage. When the "Société d'encouragement aux courses de sloughis et autres lévriers"<sup>22</sup> was set up in Algiers in 1952, the race-track was initially aimed at greyhounds and galgos since, despite searches throughout Algeria and even venturing into Morocco, the number of good quality sloughis brought back to Algiers remained insignificant. A few sloughis (males) were formed into a symbolic team while the sloughias were kept back for reproduction purposes.

New and more homogenous generations were added to the team. Unfortunately, meanwhile, the racing association was forced to move its race-track onto land where it was only possible to limit the distances to 450 metres, which was not nearly enough for

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<sup>22</sup> Association for encouragement of racing for sloughis and other sighthounds

sloughis.

Nonetheless, the activity provided by the race-track made it possible to bring together a nucleus of sloughis as wanted by this breed's enthusiasts, for whom the race-track was a means rather than an end. The intended result (evoked moreover in a study on the racing sloughi published in 1956) was to have enough good quality sloughis available in order to organise Celtic style coursing on live game, similar to the Spanish "carreras en campo" or British "coursing".

Before any application for exemptions from the provisions of the 1844 law on hunting, Pierre Durel advocated an intermediate stage, easy to effect within the legal framework and which was expected to stand as a running-in period. During this period, the sloughis were only to be slipped on jackals. The first courses were planned in north western Algeria, where the practical conditions for implementation (land, horses) were virtually completed.

Events were to decide otherwise.

Over recent years, we have seen a generalised reduction of the sloughi, in terms of both number and quality. This reduction has been noticeably faster in North Africa, where the sloughi headcount must be around five per cent of what it was at the beginning of the century. In Europe, where sloughis have never been numerous, the headcount of viable subjects is numbered at most in tens. Overseas sources, which formerly provided a few sloughis to introduce new blood into European stocks, have more or less dried up. Unless exceptional methods are put in place, it is rather unlikely that the sloughi will still exist in Europe by the end of this century.

Hopefully this brief overview of a long history will, among those who have the possibility, awaken the desire to contribute towards providing the sloughi with the right to survive in a world that is so very different from the one in which it first appeared, in order to offer humankind the support of its talents and the warmth of its friendship. As living proof of early times, the sloughi has journeyed through time, evoking in its thousand-year-old silhouette the past of peoples with whom it has shared its destiny.

As the habitual occupant of a nomad's tent, and guest in a prince's palace, forever the same, it brings us today a message from those who were here before us and who, in their long journey towards the future, never ceased from showing their affection. In this atomic age, can their message still be heard?

(Footnotes added by Susan Bamford in clarification of certain comments)