

Preface:

In March 2008, I was asked by the BOBA (UK breed club) if they could reprint my article, **Reflection** in their upcoming newsletter. My only request was a courtesy copy of the finished newsletter to which I received mid April 2008.

Once I perused the entire newsletter, I sent the following email (**note**: I gaffed on the contact name – it should have read Catherine – to which I apologized later):

Christine,

I received my copy of the BOBA News Letter, thank you for remembering to send it.

I was surprised to see my article included in the March 2008 edition erroneously critiqued by Mary Lou Kenworthy's previously written article: **Reflect A Little Deeper** – *Let's get down to the gray matter and think*. I appreciate the opportunity to clarify and correct numerous inaccuracies in her article. My hope is that you will afford me the page space in your next edition of the BOBA News Letter, of which I would once again appreciate a copy.

Thinking: The truth of the matter is. *sinbajé basenjjs ©2008*

Mary Lou Kenworthy (heretofore referred to as MLK) writes:

"The earliest history was in hieroglyphics on the Egyptian tombs and in cave drawings."

Quoting Forrest Bryant Johnson, MLK also writes:

"In comparing many drawings and carvings, it was determined that the colors of the Egyptian Basenjjs were red, red and white, black and gray, and black and white."

*"Of literally hundreds of records examined, these were the **only** colors mentioned or used for the Basenji-type dog. (Emphasis mine.)"*

We cannot take Egyptian hieroglyph literally, or factually as MLK would have us do, since the vast majority of basenji like dogs found in cave drawings, as seen in Mr. Johnson's book, are not meant to be exact breed representations; how could they be when they are often depicted as tall, or taller, than the humans with whom they hunt? Rather cave drawings are meant to be abstract; animals and humans alike are not always drawn anatomically correct; many were without spots, stripes, hair, or clothing. Their absence, in such primitive times, should never infer they do not exist; a point Mr. Johnson himself recognized on page 16 of his book:

Basenji: Dog From The Past:

*"In various scenes in a number of areas, one type of dog appears...a small, pricked-eared dog with a tightly curled tail. **His exact size and color, of course, is impossible to determine from the sketches because of the primitive form of outline drawing used.**" [Emphasis mine]*

MLK writes:

"The first dominant blacks were bred on the Firestone Plantation in Liberia... These breeders were American and European and some were native workers who liked to cross breed their dogs with the bigger barking dogs brought in from the outside world. This provided the most likely source of the dominant black that infiltrated the native canines."

However she previously quoted Mr. Johnson as saying:

"In comparing many drawings and carvings, it was determined that the colors of the Egyptian Basenjjs were red, red and white, black and gray, and black and white."

We can not have both arguments being used by the author: either the black color, be it recessive or dominant, has been known since the ancient Egyptian period as documented in the hieroglyph's, a most likely scenario, or the color comes from the Firestone Plantation due to their alleged cross breeding practices. Which is it; a naturally occurring color found on Egyptian tombs or a product of impure breeding?

MLK writes:

"Reflections further states that, however, the first recorded brindle basenji was Tiger, brought to England with Fula in 1959, thirty years before the 1987/1988 imports and that amorous whippet." First of all there was no date given for the fling of the amorous whippet so we don't know exactly when that was."

This is an artful obscurement on MLK's part. The following quote is from MLK's BCOA Bulletin (Jan/Feb/Mar 2007) article, pg. 39 regarding her conversations with Marie Knight, a basenji fancier/breeder of 12 years who resides in Africa:

"When asked what she thought about the most recent dogs brought out of Africa, this was her reply:

"You asked me to comment on what I thought of the most recent collection of basenjjs out of Africa. I do not believe that even the previous collection was pure basenji. It is well known that a missionary working in the area had his brindle whippet with him.""

Many seasoned basenji breeders and fanciers have always believed that the brindle pattern was first seen as early as the 1930s, via black and white Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Dogville movie clips, which stars a brindle basenji whose tail has been docked (a common recorded practice in native hunting villages); combine this with the possible brindle patch on the otherwise white basenji stowaway of 1941, "Congo" and we have further evidence that the pattern possibly existed long before VTW brought Tiger back in 1959.

Sure, anecdotal proof but no more incongruous than the conspiracy theory put forth when MLK states:

*"Second, there was no claim that he was the **first** or the **only** brindle dog to introduce stripes. This particular whippet was just one incidence that was known by someone who actually lived in Africa."*

MLK quips:

"Drawing stripes is so easy a cave man could do it!"

To imply that a lack of stripes in cave drawings means the pattern did not exist would also infer that a lack of drawn demarcation means basenjis once upon a time were without the required white markings, a serious fault in our breed standard. Not all cave drawings show the stripes of zebras nor the spots of giraffes; we do not surmise these animals did not/do not exist because of any lack of detail. Why would we do so in the case of basenjis?

MLK wrote:

*"Tiger-striped Basenjis have been seen by experts in the Southern Sudan and the Belgian Congo, and are **possibly the purest color** there is in basenjis, - - - is another quote from **REFLECTIONS**."*

Correction: The proceeding quote was made by Veronica Tudor-Williams (VTW) and not, as implied, by myself the author of *Reflections*.

MLK states:

*"Now I've heard that English is a most difficult language but still it should be taken literally. Doesn't **purest color** mean **purest color**? It doesn't translate to purest basenji. "*

VTW's quote was well written and clearly stated:

*"Tiger-striped Basenjis have been seen by experts in the Southern Sudan and the Belgian Congo, and are possibly **the purest color there is in basenjis...**"*
Emphasis mine]

The argument has always been whether or not brindle is a natural occurring pattern in native basenjis. VTW, having personally been to Africa and traversed the remote areas looking for native stock, apparently felt that it was.

MLK wrote:

*"I was shocked but thought the basenji community should know the truth so I wrote, **HARK! HARK! THE DOGS DO BARK**. After this incident I received reports of brindles barking all over in their homes, at shows, etc." [Emphasis mine]*

Truth was, and still is; numerous reports came in at the time of the 1992 HARK! article, and continue to come in to this day; these reports state purely domestic lines bark; be it the rifle shot bark, the fox like bark or the automatic revolver gun rapid-fire bark. The truth is despite constant assertions to the contrary; neither the black color nor the brindle pattern introduced barking to the breed. The trait was already in the breed courtesy of at least one known original breed progenitor Bungwa of Blean, born 1937. To ignore these facts is a disservice to the novice reader who may be relying on the author for their education. I am not justifying, nor excusing, or even saying barking is a good thing, or desirable thing; these are just the facts as recorded by VTW and owners of purely domestic stock that bark. Obviously barking alone cannot, and should not, be used as a basis for breed purity when it has been in the breed since Western inception.

MLK writes:

"As to the health issue there are many healthy American basenjjs and lines in this country that are rarely used because they are not recognized as big conformation winners owned by prominent people. Wouldn't it have been better to investigate some of these domestic basenjjs than to go to unknown, untested dogs of questionable origin? Or was the call of the greener grass on the other side more important to profits and fame?"

The assumption is folks did not do this, or while doing so found these domestic dogs lacking in, for example, recorded health testing. As stated in my earlier article - out of 260 basenjjs with the Avongara prefix, I found 173 with health entries recorded in the OFA database (as of April 2008 the numbers have increased to 284 Avongara prefixes found in the Wallis pedigree database with 245 OFA entries or 86% having at least one publicly recorded health test). For comparison, using the kennel name Kenset, there are 167 pedigree database entries bearing the Kenset name (either prefix or suffix) with only 29 health entries recorded with OFA, or 17%, having at least one publicly recorded health test. **

The cost of properly health testing foundation stock, in addition to paying to have it accessible to the general population via OFA is a tremendous sum, which seriously cuts into any perceived profits. And since most native foundation stock is not destined for the show ring, fame is nothing but a four-letter word to serious native aficionados. The argument that importing and incorporating native stock is a moneymaker and/or a fame maker is without merit.

MLK finally states:

"It is our responsibility to the basenji breed to keep it as pure as possible."

Why then, has MLK, who continues to imply brindles, nor dominant blacks, are purebred basenjjs, on more than one occasion breed to both of these colors/patterns? Despite MLK's assertion in the BCOA Bulletin (Jan/Feb/Mar 2007 pg 37-40) of *".... what are the odds of finding pure basenjjs in Africa today?"*, her current male is descended from Esenjo, another post 1960 import, a dog who, by her written accountings, must also be impure.

If actions speak louder than words, just what is MLK really saying?

**** Clarification July 2008:** It was brought to my attention that I worded this paragraph incorrectly creating an unintentional implication of 245 individual Avongara and 29 individual Kenset dogs with OFA tests results; this is not correct as some individual dogs had multiple tests. The correct figures, using current (July2008) OFA entries is: 255 tests representing 112 individual Avongaras (or roughly 39% of the 284 total dogs bearing the Avongara prefix in the Wallis database). The Kenset numbers are still 29 total tests, but only represent 14 dogs bearing the Kenset name (or 8% of the 167 total dogs bearing the Kenset prefix in the Wallis database).