



Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

Keyword reflection

To the descent and domestication of the dog



The desire to experience more about domestic animals probably rises from the natural connection of humans to its environment. For the early men the animals of its environment were not only suppliers of food and raw materials, but they were also parts of its conception of the world.

A good textbook “A history of domesticated animals” written by Frederick Everard Zeuner (1967)

Publisher: Hutchinson (1963); Language: English; ASIN: B0007J97NU

The begin of domestication of the dog probably lies in the pluvial period around 18.000 BC. (peak of the last ice age) and goes back phylogenetically on three wild dog forms, which lived at the beginning of the prehistoric epoch in Europe: a dog of wolf size (*Canis falconeri*), a medium sized form (*C. etruscus*) and dog in size of a jackal (*C. arnensis*), therefore see the pictures below, from left to right.

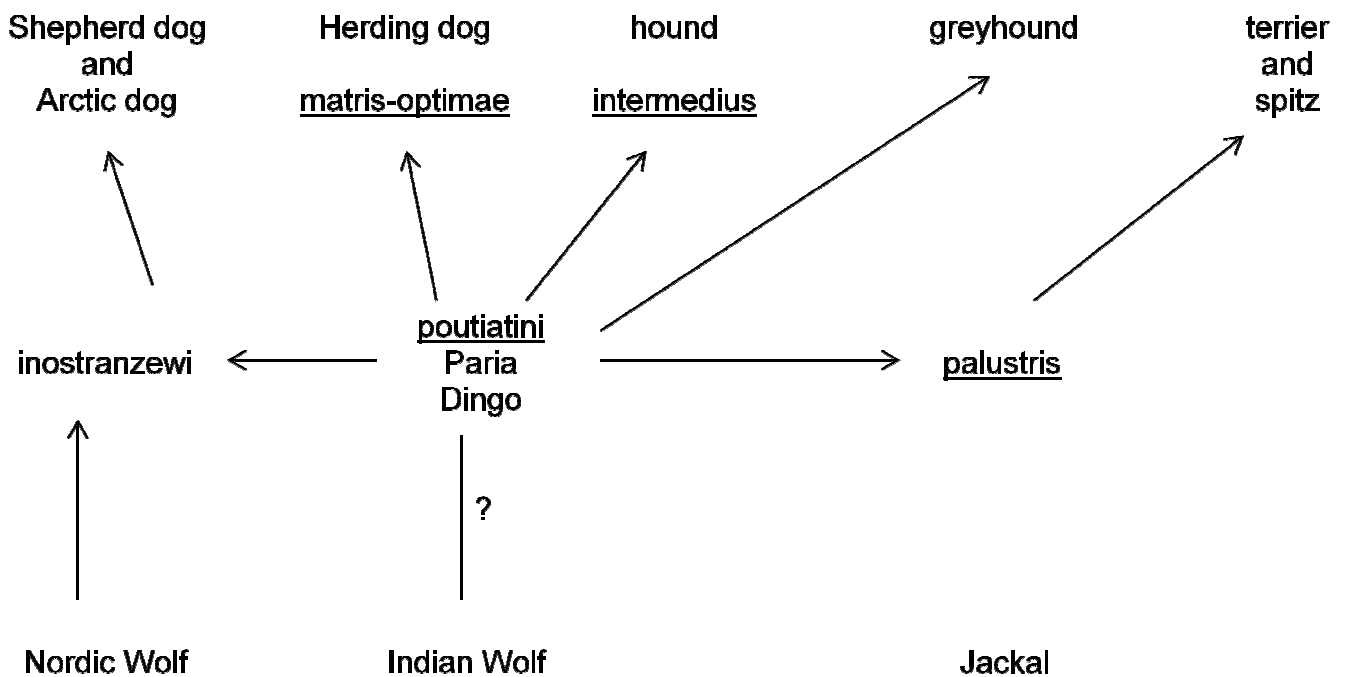


At the end of the Pleistocene the spreading of the wild dogs must have corresponded to their current occurrence. Fossil representatives of the family *Canis*, which is closely related to our house dog, show clearly that humans of the past were surrounded by wild dogs everywhere and during the whole duration of its occurrence. This point of contact will not have been alone the basis for friendly relations or the starting point of the Domestication, but without a doubt the condition of their living together with humans lies in the life habits and some characteristics of the wild dogs. The earliest paleontological datable finds of domestic dogs originate from the Mesolithic Age in the Mediterranean area. The following illustration shows a terracotta board from Babylon with the representation of a „blood dog“. Such animals were bred in the old Mesopotamia

as war dogs. Based on HERODOT the taxes from 4 cities where used for the maintenance of the dogs of the king [LAYARD, 1853].

Today there are too many dog races, in order to be able to enumerate and to discuss it all, while in early-historical times only some races were bred, usually as „customs dogs“.

It can be stated recapitulatory that the dog probably descends from a subspecies of the wolf. Whether it acts thereby about a meanwhile completely in the domesticated dog risen form of the dingo remains questionable. However it must have been a very closely related form of the Indian wolf. In any case the Mesolithic dogs of the northern Europe were introduced there. They were similar to the Dingo (*C. f. poutiatini*) and mixed themselves in their new homeland with Wolves (*C. f. inostranzewi*). They were large dogs, to which the Eskimo- and other Arctic dogs go back and which held themselves through the Neolithic Age. From *C. f. poutiatini* the development leads (see the following board, based on ZEUNER, 1967) to the herding dogs (*C. f. matris optimae*) and to the brackes and hunting dogs (*C. f. intermedius*)



A smaller dog already appeared in Mesolithic Age, perhaps already a “house dog“ in the actual sense of the word. The turf-dog (*C. f. palustris*) of the Neolithic Age developed, which is still alive in many of today's races, like the Terrier, Spitz and others.

Today one knows apart from the 34 still living kinds of dogs altogether about 180 fossil kind of dogs; more about the dog can be found at: [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canis>]

From the beginning man and dog formed a connection to mutual benefit, a companionship for the most part always respected.

Nevertheless today the animal protection (in particular the dog protection) in south Europe is essential; if you have questions about this, in particular to Crete, than please get in contact with our NLUK animal-welfare commissary for and on Crete, *Stephanie Krips* [stephanie.krips@yahoo.gr]; for Germany *Barbara Blöchinger* [barbara.bloechinger@gmx.de].

More information about animal welfare on Crete can be found with our info-leaflet # 354-11/E at: [http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter_en/354-11E.pdf].