

True Tibetan Terriers?

by Mark James

This article was published in the Tibetan Terrier Association's journal.

True Tibetan Terriers?

At the last Tibetan Terrier World Congress weekend we were treated to talks, pictures and breed club shows and on the whole we saw Tibetan Terriers of a type that we could all recognise as typical Tibetan Terriers and in general they displayed many valued breed points.

It will take me a little while to get to where I want to go with this article as I feel it necessary to explain some points.

Within the breed there are many enthusiasts worldwide who still follow the breeding of Dr Grieg, the originator of the breed in the UK, and world famous for her 'Lamleh' Tibetan Terriers. The Tibetan Terrier Association protects the affix 'Lamleh' in the UK. In many countries such as The Netherlands and Germany these enthusiasts use the 'Lamleh' affix on all their puppies as part of their registered names.

Personally I feel that this is disrespectful to the name of Dr Grieg and her breeding.

There are some so called 'Lamleh' lines that are similar to the type that Dr Grieg first imported into the country. I am not sure if this is just due to the lack of grooming and conditioning or not. I have also seen many so-called 'Lamleh' TT's that are very beautiful indeed. I have judged them and given them top honours.

Grateful Tibetan people gave the original imports to Dr Grieg as a thank you. At the time there would have been many Tibetan Terrier type dogs around in Tibet, as well as Lhasa Apso's and Tibetan Mastiffs. I have seen photographic presentations of people's trips to Tibet and the speakers all said that apart from the Tibetan mastiff it is very seldom to come across any other Tibetan breeds. The dogs they have seen in Tibet are generally in very poor condition, I would imagine even in a poorer state today than in the days of Dr Grieg. The original imports did resemble the dogs we have today.

Many breeds have developed through the years with the help of grooming aids and products and the development of pet food and supplements etc.

Some dogs today may just be winners in the show ring due to a glamorous coat but on the whole it is the construction and movement that will help them to win and the coat is the icing on the cake.

Getting back to the congress in 2007 we were given a presentation on the importation of a male Tibetan Terrier from Tibet. This dog was found wandering the streets and he has some resemblance of a Tibetan Terrier. Three well-known Tibetan Terrier enthusiasts, from three countries, imported the dog. I don't know if they imported this dog as some sort of trip down memory lane or a going back in time 'experience'? Or have they have imported him as new (very mixed) blood for the breed. Most Tibetan Terrier lines have some sort of hereditary problem such as Lens Luxation and PRA. On the whole most breeders have their breeding stock annually eye checked. The Tibetan Terrier is one of the few breeds that have this information printed on their KC registrations. The Tibetan Terrier Association was responsible for this. We also have NCI/CCI in our breed and most breeding stock is checked for HD. Is this dog

we also have FCI/ CCE in our breed and most breeding stock is checked for FIE. Is this dog to be the saviour of our breed? Or its demise as we know it?

The dog is called 'Kanze' and lives in Slovenia. In this country he has been assessed by three judges to be a TT and can be shown and bred from! Even though he has no pedigree! I am aware that this is similar to the situation that the breed faced many years ago in the UK, however we have surely moved on since then. This dog has been used at stud several times and his offspring has filtered into Europe and Scandinavia. In these countries I am sure that his progeny will be accepted into the stud book. I am convinced that at some point some of his progeny will be seen in the UK if it is not already here. I would personally rather work with a



Kanze, an import from Tibet

pedigree that I believe to be true, with its possible genetic faults that are known to me than play with a dog that the breed cannot possibly be sure is a real Tibetan Terrier. I really do object to them using the dogs name i.e. 'Kanze' on all his offspring. So instead of these breeders, who have for years used the protected Lamleh affix on all their breeding, are they now all going to use the name 'Kanze'. Are they now creating their own breed?

A very well respected UK all round judge judged the dog recently and said that he had been rather generous in awarding the dog a 'good' grading. The dog has a very untypical coat pattern as he has very short terrier type coat on his front legs and on the front of his

hocks. I have only seen photographs of some of his offspring and they all seem to be very light in bone, which is easy to see because of their short coat, small feet and very untypical expressions. Some are just extremely ugly. They are pictured on several web sites along with what we would call typical TT's. I would like these people to tell us what they are hoping to achieve.

There have since been further imports from Tibet including another male called 'Gyantso'. The owner states that it has been her dream to follow in the footsteps of Dr Grieg and import a dog from Tibet. Sorry but these are just pipe dreams as this dog is very untypical in head and expression, very light in bone etc etc.

I am only writing this out of concern for this wonderful breed. Some will say I should leave well alone and let them do as they wish. I do hope that they are not trying to create a separate breed, which has been rumoured. For years the 'Lamleh' camp have claimed that all other Tibetan terriers are mongrels so why are they going down the road of breeding with dogs with **NO** pedigree or any kind of background information such as health checks etc?



A good example of a TT is a dog called 'Gyantso' who is a

At the recent Tibetan breeds specialty in Sweden, in conjunction with the 'World Show', several offspring from these imports were either entered or on the show ground. I really had to do a double take to see if they were Tibetan Terriers as they were very tall, they had very heavy heads with a totally alien expression. They had very heavy low set ears. They had very long thick tails. Their hocks were very high and they had poor angulation. Several also had the strange lack of coat on their front legs, I could go on !!

The judge of the bitches on the day came over to me after the judging. She had placed both of the import offspring 4th in two quality classes. These two bitches stood out for their total lack of quality and breed type.

The judge proceeded to open a folder and show me a photo proclaiming this to be her new dog; I put my head in my hands. This poor dog that I admit resembles a TT was totally matted and chained to a wall. I was informed that he has the best hips her vet had ever seen, however it was impossible to check his eyes 100% as they had been damaged by the sun!



Gyantso, a recent import

I had to ask the question WHY ? She told me that her beloved original TT had developed NCL, a horrible disease I agree and she was totally devastated in the way that her dog had died. However I do not agree with her that it was totally the fault of the breeder of her dog that this particular TT had contracted the disease. I was devastated when one of my dogs developed cancer and died I certainly did not blame the breeder. Many many more TT's die from cancer related illness than do those who develop NCL.

I was told that the reason that these dogs are being imported is to strengthen and develop the Gene pool ! These people are totally unaware of what lies behind these dogs. As far as I can see these dogs have come in through the back door.

Three FCI judges and specialists of the breed are involved in the importation of these dogs from Tibet. I feel that they have a very great responsibility on their shoulders. As it was clear from the Swedish show that they are going to show under each other and look favourably on



A Kanze daughter

these dogs when placing them and grading them to be typical specimens of the breed.

I was totally horrified to see these untypical dogs at such a prestigious show and I worry even more about the future of the breed with these dogs in it than I do HD, LL, PRA and CCL.

At another very prestigious show is Sweden 'Tibethund', the judge, Mr Glenn Davies, UK, was faced with a puppy class of 5, 4 of which were by the Tibetan import 'Kanze' I felt great sympathy for Glenn having to judge these untypical dogs. One was so tall and heavy that he was unable to stand square on the table. The judging system in Sweden is based on grading, these 4

dogs did not receive a grading as they were not worthy, however as they were puppies they were placed with the only typical and graded dog being first and the 'Kanze' offspring being 2, 3, 4 and 5. These dogs did not receive any grading and they did receive a very comprehensive critique. However even before the judge had returned home these dogs were on a couple of breeders web sites saying that they had been placed by a respected UK breed specialist. These dogs should not have been at the show. If these breeders are determined to follow this path they should continue to do so without showing them until they have established a recognisable type! Unfortunately however most European countries require all breeding stock to have received some show grades i.e. excellent or very good. It is often the case at some shows that the judges are not so familiar with the breed and in some instances all the dogs present regardless of quality are given an excellent.

I would very much appreciate a response and hope this creates discussion and I would like this issue to be raised at the next TT World congress in Norway in 2009.

Mark James



Another Kanze offspring