

# akc gazette

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## Lhasa Apsos

### Why Bother With the Gomba Dogs?

Few breeds have the opportunity to incorporate stock from their region of origin. Basenjis, Tibetan Mastiffs, and

Desert Salukis are a few. The American Lhasa Apso Club has received the AKC's permission to poll its membership on whether to accept Foundation Stock Service dogs, which would include AKC registration for the United Kennel Club-registered Gomba colony of Lhasa Apsos.

Debby Rothman, custodian of the Gomba colony, has offered the following rationale, assisted by Leslie Baumann.

The background of the Gomba dogs is virtually identical to that of the other founders in our breed. Not only do their ancestors come from the largest Tibetan monastery in the Kyi Chu valley, a stone's throw from the city limits of Lhasa, but also, as with all the other "originals," they represent a very special sort of cultural exchange, as well as a leap of faith. The importance of Lhasa Apsos as cultural "gifts" (whether money is exchanged in some way or not) has not always been appreciated or understood. However, it goes without saying that the lives of today's owners and fanciers of the breed in the West have been enriched in countless ways thanks to a few Tibetans who took a "leap of faith" and shared the breed's founders with people from a society and culture totally alien to them.

Nearly a decade ago, 10 Lhasa Apsos, direct and undiluted descendants of imports from monastery stock, arrived on the doorstep of this experienced American Lhasa Apso breeder. She paid not a dime. Family and friends joined the journey, giving time, support, and their hearts to the Gomba dogs. Breeders and fanciers showed faith in the breeding program, leading to current work within the Native Stock committee.

Shortly after their arrival, Debby wrote:

"Under the full moon, with the wind whipping prayers from the flags outward to the universe, I feel connected to earth, space, and time. The connection to something ancient is what motivates me. I do this



because of something within me. I don't do this as a political statement about the

breed. I have never been an advocate for any particular line, pure or otherwise. I have simply bred to the standard, trying to honor that which came from the past. I favor education: a study of Tibetan history and culture, the breed, the standards, an understanding of how our standards were derived, and the political climate in which each was written. I have been given the rare and unique opportunity to relive history, to study the Apso in its 'original' authentic state, never having undergone selection typical of Western breeding programs."

The eyes of the Lhasa Apso are windows to another place, another time, another culture, other wisdoms. Tibetan culture, incorporating Buddhism into every aspect of daily life, revolved around sentient beings. The Apso's value came from his existence, not his type or style. Perhaps that is the greatest lesson this special breed has to teach.

Today we have an opportunity to acknowledge the value of this gift by recognizing these dogs for what they are—true Lhasa Apsos descended from monastery stock, as were our original Tibetan founders.

The final vote will be taken before this column is published. Will the Gomba dogs have the opportunity to gift the gene pool with some diversity?

—Cassandra de la Rosa, Olympia,

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