

## **PON Breed Information by Beata Malecki**

The First PON Specialty Show in Bydgoszcz was a great opportunity to introduce breeders and fans to a few theories on the subject of the origin of the breed, as well as to present fragments of written sources relating to breeding of these dogs.

Since ancient times, tribes of shepherds and breeders kept dogs to guard and herd flocks of cattle and sheep. Larger and stronger dogs protected animals from predators and robbers. Middle sized dogs were used to keep herds within the borders of the pasture, finding lost heads and herding them back to the flock. The group of middle sized European sheepdogs consisted of: Russian, Polish lowland, Hungarian puli, old German (called herding puddle), small Pyrenees, and Picardy. These dogs exhibited long shaggy coats covering the body, head and muzzle, and were bred on mountainous and lowland territories from Caucasus to Pirineos Mts. Their prototype was likely a shaggy, medium-sized, Tibet terrier-type dog, the ancestor of a contemporary Tibet terrier. This dog could possibly have come to Europe with nomadic Asian shepherds migrating west during the Neolithic (V-II BC) era. They migrated from the Middle East to the Balkans and from Central Asia along the Caspian and the Black Sea. The above hypothesis is supported by registration notes collected by a tribe originating in Mezopotamia (Sumers tribe) in the second half of the IV century B.C. Names of herding dogs listed in the Sumers notes still exist in Hungarian dog breeds nomenclature. One excerpt states that in one of the breeding farms of 167 cattle heads were kept (6 kumunder) and in the other farm of 620 heads there were 3 puffs, (Mohr E.: Ungarische Hirtnhunde Luthrstadt 1969). In the IX century, the puli type dog came to the Hungarian plains and the Carpathian Valley from Eastern Europe with the Magyars tribes. Herding tribes from Dunar and Dnepr territories, originating from the Middle East culture, migrated to Polish territory during Neolithic time. Dog bone fragments found in different archeological sites in various regions of Poland suggest that the newcomers kept medium sized dogs. Later there are only a few foreign sources mentioning this type of dog. First notes in the native literature relating to breeding animals in Poland were found in XIII century. They originate from farms keeping a flock of sheep (200-300). Supervision of those valuable, frequently imported flocks was provided by shepherds and dogs. Based on those sources it can be assumed that a native herding dog could have been developed already from the nest of dogs kept for generations with the herds.

The existence of an established and valuable working shaggy polish sheepdog in the middle ages is confirmed in a written note from the XVI century found in a P.O. Wilson book entitled "The Bearded Collie" ( London 1971). According to a document from a trade transaction dated in 1514, there were 6 polish sheepdogs on board of a ship that sailed from Gdansk to Scotland. The merchant Kazimierz Grabski intended to exchange grain for Scottish sheep. The dogs role was to separate the 20 chosen sheep (from a flock of 60) and herd them to the cages. The Scottish shepherd impressed by their working skills offered to exchange more sheep for the dogs. Finally two bitches and one stud dog were traded for a ram and ewe. P.O. Wilson states that shaggy dogs were brought to the British Islands from Western Europe around 2000 BC. The Polish Sheepdogs imported to Scotland in the 16th century contributed to the shaping of the contemporary Bearded Collie (similar to our PONs).

**The first mention in ancient polish literature about shaggy herding dogs comes from the works of a self-taught, XVIII century biologist priest Jan, Krzysztof Kluk. In his 4 volume work "Zwierzat domowych i dzikich osobiwie krajowych historii naturalnej poczatk i gospodarstwo"(t. I W-wa 1779)**

**\*\* he stressed the importance of sheepdogs in a shepherd's work. He noted a need for two types of dogs; larger to protect the flock from predators and "poodles" which were almost able to read a shepherd's mind to assemble the sheep. The author calls the native shaggy sheepdog a "poodle" most likely as an analogy to old German herding dogs Priest Kluk recounting known to him breeds states that \*\* "Poodles", medium size shaggy dogs are exceptionally intelligent and trainable. The same author, in the book "Zoology - animal book for National Schools"- (Warszawa 1789) observes also that people tried to breed**

**dogs according to similar characteristics i.e. short tail, quality of coat and shape of the muzzle.**

Medium size sheepdogs worked on Polesie (region in Poland) pastures own by magnate Anna Jablonowska. In her rules and regulations called "Ustawy powszechne dla dobr moich rzadcow" (1783-85) she orders 3 shepherds, 2 medium and 2 large dogs for 1000 sheep.

It is known that priest J. K. Kluk from Ciechanowiec writing his books used as a source of his information large collection of biological books in Siemiatycze owned by Princess Jablonowska. His practical knowledge of domestic animal breeding is also greatly attributed to observation of agricultural practices used in the farms of Princess of Siemiatycze. It is very likely that clever "poodles" that priest Kluk recommended to keep in sheep-folds were known to him from farms of Princes Jablonowska.

Oscar Kolberg (1814-1890) polish folklorist and ethnographer in the volume devoted to Podlasie and Lublin regions underlines significance of sheep farms in those areas. He describes farm dogs as a medium size, shaggy, wicked and barking a lot \*\*\*. Farmers use them to keep animals and geese off the fields. Sometimes those dogs are trained by peasants to chase a small game.\*\*\* In the IV-decade of XIX century, two authors of guide-books for breeders of farm animals also describe herding dogs. J. G. Wyzycycki (Science of domestic animals breeding - Warszawa 1838) writes \*\* that there is a some variety in the herding dogs. They are usually a medium size, their head is narrow and their ears are pricked. They have a long, soft coat of different colors, most commonly black, black and speckled and less likely white or brown. Pure-bred sheepdogs usually do not need much training..\*\*

S. J. T. Lyszkowski ( Breeding and Veterinary Guide for Farmers - Warszawa 1839) adds that \*\*\* it is important to keep the breed pure to preserve herding instincts and abilities.\*\*\*

**Stanislaw Rewiński in the canine manual (Pies, jego gatunki, rasy, wychow, utrzymanie, uzytki,ukladanie, choroby i ich leczenie, W-wa 1893) describes the sheepdog as \*\*a medium sized dog with a pointy muzzle, small prickly ears and a shaggy or smooth coat. In the case of a long coat, tufts of hair grow at the tips of ears. The tails are either curled up or bob-tailed.** Color of the coat is usually black or dark chestnut, sometimes dapple\*\*. To complete the picture of an early sheepdog one should view a wood carving by Stanislaw Maslowski (1882). **There is a small , bobtailed dog standing by a shepherd boy. The short tail undoubtedly is a natural phenomenon because it is very unlikely that in the past farmers would dock tails of their dogs.**

In XIX century, dog shows were organized as a part of farming animal fairs to popularize the valuable herding sheepdogs. These shows took place on the three annexed territories of former Poland. The first Warszawa show of livestock in 1881, featured only one sheepdog (tarantowaty).The catalog from 1882 lists four Hungarian sheepdogs. In the following years reporters underlined the lack of sheepdogs in exhibitions, although the highest prizes were reserved for their owners. In the early 20th century the downfall of gentry and peasant managed sheep farms began in Polesie. With the decline of farms, the shaggy type of sheepdog disappeared as well. Only a few old shepherds kept shaggy sheepdogs in the twenties.

P.M.J. Czetwertynska-Grocholska from Plata (Radzyn-district) turned her attention to shaggy sheepdogs and bought a few specimens from farmers to start her own kennel. She showed her dogs under the title of polish sheepdogs for the first time in the Warsaw Exhibition in 1924. Her Kennel lasted until 1941. At this time, breeders Wanda and Roza Zoltowska from Milanow started another kennel using dogs bred by Ms.Grocholska. They managed their kennel until 1944. Ms.Roza Zoltowska, in the magazine "Moj Pies" (1939), wrote: "This breed proved to be very strong because in spite of longstanding neglect at the hands of peasants the breed type remained uniform. The puppies in our kennel's 12 year history were always consistent in type and color. The coat is usually white with biscuit markings on the back and ears. In our kennel sheepdogs display various abilities. They are used for herding sheep and cattle as well as guarding. They are also very pleasant house pets. One of our dogs turned out to be an excellent wild boar hunter." Although dogs from Milanow were not registered in the Pure Breed Kennel Club (Zwiazek Hodowcow Psow Rasowych), they were shown in exhibitions in Warsaw. A dog named Fajkus represented the breed at the National Dog Show in Poznan in 1929. Ms.Zoltowska received a diploma in recognition of her breeding achievements. She moved to Warsaw in 1944 taking with her a dog and a bitch. One of her dogs, Eros lived to be 16 years old. Several dogs left behind in

Milanow did not survive WW II. Readers interested in the Milanow kennel will be able to read Ms. Zoltowska's dairy in the magazine "Pies".

Dr. S.Kozmian and Mr.Maurycy Trybulski, canine activists from the between wars period propagated the breeding of polish sheepdogs, especially mountain and lowland varieties, in dog magazines in 1920's. An anonymous author of the article "Polish Lowland Sheepdogs and their breeding" published in "Pies" in 1935 wrote: "Polish Lowland Sheepdog matters do not progress satisfactorily. Beautiful examples of this breed were shown in dog shows in Warsaw by princess M.Czetwertynska. These fine dogs could be used for herding as well as pets."

In the same magazine (1936-2.1) S.Stachowicz wrote "I have found only two essential mentions of polisher Hirten" or "schaf-Pudel in German literature.". The first part of this name (Hirten, Schaft) confirms the utility value of this dog. The second part (Pudel) defines it's appearance . According to Germans any shaggy dog with a curly coat is called "Pudel". There are 2 types of Polish Sheepdogs. One type is the Tatra sheepdog (mountain dog) and the other one is the medium sized lowland sheepdog commonly found in all parts of the country.

The lowland sheepdog is usually small (sometimes medium sized) and of a lighter structure. The head, body and legs are covered by a more or less curly coat, often white. The head is cone shaped, the body muscular, and the back straight. **The tail is docked or bob-tailed. The two Polish types of sheepdogs are known in the native country from ancient times as herding dogs..."**

In following years, multiple articles in dog magazines estimating and propagating Tatra dogs, were also attracting attention toward lowland sheepdogs. The initiative to register Polish Lowland Sheepdogs came from the Polish Utility Dog Society (Towarzystwo Milosnikow Psa Sluzbowego w Polsce) and was announced in 1938. This memorandum was also included in the book "Dog Breeds" by Ignacy Mahn (Warszawa 1939) who encouraged an interest in a country dog not taller than 45 cm, resembling Russian or ancient German Sheepdog of the type between Spitz and Maltese. The memorandum consisted of 6 points. Activists of the Bygdoszcz Kennel Club commenced realization of the plan to register PONs nationwide. PONs participating in the First Polish Lowland Sheepdog Specialty Show in Bygdoszcz are the best proof of the success of Polish breeders.

mgr Danuta Forelle

translation by Halina and Kris Bienkowski

\*\* -The quotations written in the ancient Polish language are omitted from the original text and replaced with approximate translations.

(Article - Summon from " Pies" magazine, March 1950)

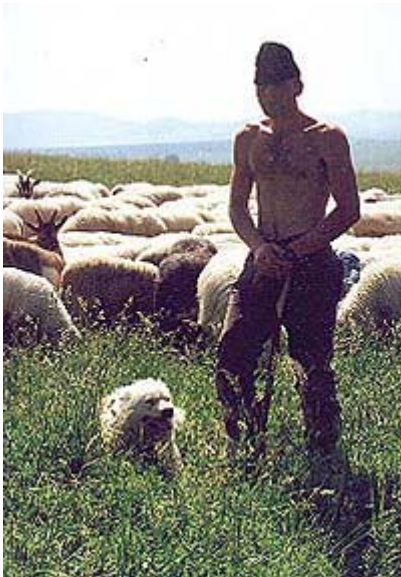
Contribution to the history of Polish Lowland Sheepdog"



fragment of woodcut...



St.Maslowski - woodcut 1882 r.



pasturage of sheeps ...



... from Borys...



our bitches Danuta Forelle ( "Pies" Magazine 1965)

Herding dogs inhabited Polish territory since ancient times. Evidence of this is present in archeological discoveries, written and iconographical sources. With the beginning of Polish literature treatises regarding hunting and herding dogs already appear. Piotr Crescentyn in 1549 wrote that short note ought to be devoted to dogs protecting cattle from wolves.

The type of structure and temperament of the herding dog developed according to the requirements of the various farms. Lowland sheepdog was kept in sheep-folds as a necessary helper for shepherds. In deeds of Zamyski's estate, where sheep farming on a large scale existed since XVI century, first note about herding dogs comes from 1775. From this note we learn that in Stroza village, 7 dogs guarded flock of 934 sheep and in Wilkolazy village 3 dogs helped with 335 sheep.

Between 1830-1843, in the times of the estates greatest flourishing of the sheep farming, herding dogs had to be specially selected due to exceptionally delicate and shy pure-bred sheep. Estates supported sheep farming of the whole Lublin region, no doubt propagating also local type of herding dog.

Jozef Gerald-Wyzycki in his manual (Science of domestic animal breeding-Warsaw 1938) writes about sheep dogs, that they are medium size, their head is narrow and their ears are pricked. They have a long soft coat of different colors, most commonly black, blacked and speckled and less likely white or brown. Author of "Breeding and Veterinary Guide for farmers" -Warsaw 1839 describes the sheep dogs as a medium size, good mannered and helpers for shepherds. The author warns that the dogs should only be white otherwise they could frighten the sheep and bring about procreation of speckled lambs. There are no illustration accompanying the above descriptions.

In " Weekly Illustrated" Magazine from 1882 I have found reproduction of a wood carving depicting a shepherd boy with a small dog, looking like a described above sheepdogs. The view of the dog displays its distinctive mark, short tail. The short tail undoubtedly is a natural phenomenon because it is very unlikely that in the past farmers would dock tails of their dogs. Illustration then fulfilling a task of today's photographer, produced pictures for magazines usually representing natural objects people and animals. It is reasonable to assume that the dog in wood carving executed by Stanislaw Maslowski is a faithful portrait of an early sheepdog.

In the early 20th century the downfall of sheep farms began in Lublin region. With the decline of farms the shaggy type of sheepdog disappeared as well. In 1924 magazine " Polish Poultry"- official magazine of newly formed Polish kennel Club printed an article urging breeders to work on Polish sheepdogs. Author Ludwik from Kleczany (priest Ludwik Kleczynski) wrote that he received as a gift an original sheepdog with the distinct spitz features. Dog named Burus had a very thick, coffee color coat. Burus, as priest pointed out was born without the natural "ornament", that is without a tail. With the downy fur the dog looked like a ball of yarn. In the same year Ludwik from Kleczany (Magazine"Polish Poultry") in his report from dog show in Warsaw states that breeders Czertwertynska and Grocholska exhibited Polish sheepdogs

purchased from farmers in Siedlce area. Ms. M. Grocholska's female dog received silver medal. Couple of presented by Grocholska dogs were born bobtailed and passed this trait to their offsprings.

In magazine "My Dog"- 1937, letter from a breeder of lowland sheepdogs was published stating that " In Podlasie( Lublin region) countess Maria Grocholska was the first to notice herding type of dogs on old farmlands. She purchased a few typical representatives and commenced selective breeding. This breed proved to be very strong because in spite of long standing neglect at the hands of peasants the breed's type remained uniformed. The puppies in our kennel's 12 year history were always consistend in type and color. Typically the height at the shoulders was 30-40 centimeters. Presently with the advances of dog nourishment and after 12 years of selective breeding height approaches 60 cm. The coat is usually white with biscuit markings on the back and ears. In our kennel sheepdogs display various abilities. They are used for herding sheep and cattle as well as guarding. They are also very pleasant house pets. One of our dogs turned out to be an excellant wild boar hunter. They are characteristically faithful, intelligent, brave and vigilant. They also have an excellent sense of smell." Sheep farming in the area of Siedlce was managed between 1808 and 1909 by gentry and peasants. With the early 20<sup>th</sup> century sheep farming began its decline (ource: "Studia do Dziejow Gospodarsta Wiejskiego", 1956) Around the same time the sheep dog disappeared as well and as Zoltowska states: single typical representatives of the breed could only be found in the hands of old shephards.

-----

During our spring mountain trip this year we have found a familliar sight...

Near Nowy Targ on the pasture the flock of sheep was grazing under the supervision of shephard and his helper - a dog. I could not restrain myself from taking pictures. For 200 years nothing has changed, it seems on Polish countryside. In the cities life goes on but in some secluded corners time has come to a halt. Striking similarity of the situation as well as the dog itself to the wood carving executed by Stanislaw Maslowski was hard to miss. Of course we spend some time with the shephard talking and taking pictures. As it turned out Borys (dogs name) was born without a tail. Generations of similar sheepdogs are bred on Podhale. The selection process is aimed toward their utility. Highlanders often exchange the dogs with Slovacks or buy from them promising puppies. The dogs often look like the one on the included picture. Borys reminds PON in size and proportions. His coat is coarse, goaty, long, significantly worn- out on his legs and shorter on the muzzle. Borys's ears are pricked. From the first moment it was obvious that the dog was not there to protect the flock but to keep sheep in order. When we approached with our three PON girls Borys did not let out even one bark but sniffed us over with curiosity. This accomplished, he stepped to the side and observed us from the distance. We were engrossed in a discussion about dogs with the shephard. The shephard was quite amused when he learned that our tenderly caressed furballs are also sheepdogs. He became less sceptical when we told him that this Polish breed used to herd sheep until very recently. We were very proud of our PON girls because they completely ignored sizable flock, as long as sheep moved out of their way. We could peacefully set to taking pictures of dogs and sheep. The first film was very quickly finished and my husband went to the car to pick up another one.

Norma and Wiki followed him. Panda remained with me by the flock. At some point she changed her mind and decided to follow my husband as well. With her nose to the ground Panda did not realize that she was walking into a flock of sheep. Finally 2-3 meters to the nearest sheep she lifted her head. The sheep were very much interested in the lonely dog. Panda and the sheep sniffed each other carefully almost touching noses. Finally one of the ewes, out of tension, stamped her feet (obviously the intruder smelled suspiciously). Surprised Panda jumped off and growled. This irritated the sheep even more and she stamped again... But Panda did not have time to react. Borys suddenly materialized and quickly restored the order, saving his quest from the oppression. I was enchanted by Borys and his reaction. The dog demonstrated an exceptional intelligence and initiative. His owner was standing by, observing and waiting for developments but not reacting. I'm confident, that the shephard had a very good idea how his dog would respond. The shephard summarized the episode stating that Panda

would make a good sheepdog. From this moment the herdsmen started to treat Panda with affection (if pat on the head counts as such...)

This man was not an emotional type but we managed to gain his liking by admiring Borys. The shepherd was obviously very proud of his dog. Neighboring shepherds were also full of respect and admiration for Borys. Their Polish Tatra dog were guarding sheep at night. At the end of our visit (our cameras already packed) we had an opportunity to witness Borys at work with the flock of sheep. Until now we could see this only in the movies or on herding trials of border collies. This visit certainly will stay in my memory. It also inspired some suggestions regarding directions PON breeding should take. Most contemporary specimens of this breed are not fit to work as sheep dogs, at the very least, because of coat that is too long and too soft. Sheep herding dogs in the past as well as presently characteristically have coarse type of coat that does not mat easily. Coat should be softer than GSD's but it should not be too woolly prone to matting. Doubtfully the dogs were groomed in the past. Today's PONs are covered by abundant long, soft coat that requires multitude of grooming measures. It is true that coat like this looks impressive on the show ring but for the owner and the dog it is a great burden.

Often times dogs end up trimmed. Wouldn't it be better to breed dog with shorter, coarser and easier to manage fur?. In the show ring dogs like this are underestimated and often omitted but what a comfort it is for the owners!

There is not many dogs like that around...! I'd like to discuss here one more problem pertaining dogs intelligence. Preoccupation of breeders with an exterior diverted attention away from this important trait. At times also temperament is taken under consideration but intelligence is completely ignored. This feature was in the past the most important during development of the breed. Only selected, very intelligent dogs were able to perform the required tasks. And too bad...It is much more rewarding to have as a friend an intelligent dog able to understand and communicate with you. In our household three PON girls reside with us. Panda is by far more intelligent than the other two. She is a very stubborn doggy and at times arbitrary but uncannily communicative. According to our long standing observation, she would be able to perform many various duties. She understands our intentions in a flash. She performs requested task eagerly, because she hates to be bored. Although as a very respectable PON she does everything in her own way. At times we have a chance to observe a performance of a few border collies, universally known as the most intelligent breed. The crowd gathered around has an opportunity to admire mutual understanding between the owner and his dogs.

I trust, that PONs performans would be perhaps louder but as impressive. Unfortunately, I know some PONs that are simply dull. Such a dog is convenient "couch potatoe" or show dog. However it is impossible to developed a close friendship with this type of dog. Perhaps I am too demanding but I was raised with a very intelligent mixed breed colled Aga. For a long time I believed that all dogs are like her. Only when I acquired subsequent PON girls I realized how exceptionally lucky I was having Aga and Panda for friends. To be honest I am happy with Norma and Wiki because they are not dense. They also have wonderful personalities but I am unfulfilled...