

The Saluki Standard: from the Beginning

Gail Goodman

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Before we even look at the wording of the Saluki standard, the appropriate mindset will be useful. First we need to reflect upon why a breed standard was drawn up, and secondly we need to consider the general attitudes and experiences of those who constructed the document. Finally we need to consider our responsibilities as conservators of an ancient breed.

Individual studbooks for various types of working dogs existed as the property of individuals and sporting organizations decades before kennel clubs were created. In those early years, the eighteen and early nineteen hundreds, breeding and excellence were both defined by function. Excellent examples of a type of dog were those which excelled in their work. Form truly followed function. Early British studbooks also recorded outcrosses between dogs classified as different breeds from one another. Such crosses were openly recorded in England and are part of the genetic history of numerous breeds. The first dog entered in the American Kennel Register, an English setter named Adonis, had two different pedigrees. Clearly British and American definitions of purebred were more flexible in the past.



Greyhounds, Fermiet (ca. 1896)

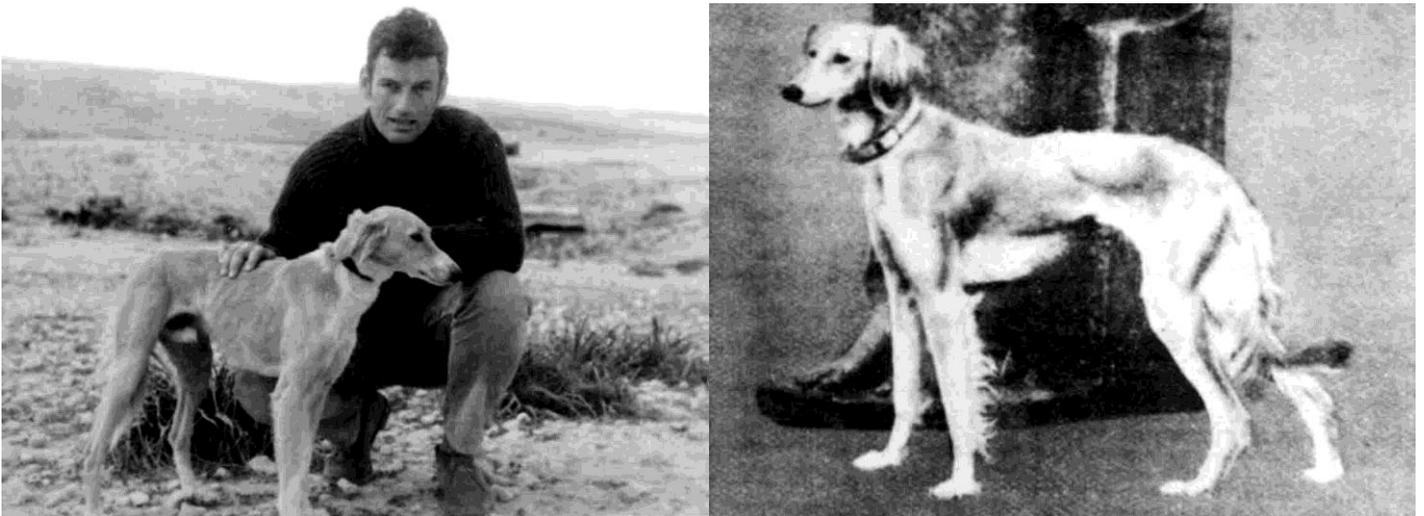
It is only with the advent of dog shows that a breed standard was needed as a means to assess “static” rather than “working” animals. For some breeds, like Rhodesian Ridgebacks, which were initially a highly varied lot of African farm and hunting dogs, the breed standard was created to define how a dog had to look to be considered a Rhodesian Ridgeback. It was a blueprint to create a uniform breed, a means of standardizing a group of dogs that performed a range of functions in a particular

geographic area so they could be identified as “a breed”. The breed standard and the idea of a purebred Rhodesian Ridgeback were created simultaneously.



1) *Egyptian Priestess, 1922* 2) *Ch. Rasim Ramullah of Pine Paddocks, c. 1950* 3) *Israel, 1970s, blended Sinai/Jordanian/Saudi breeding*

The situation with Salukis was very different. Salukis had a long and highly romanticized history. The breed *Saluki* predates by several thousand years both the country and culture of Britain where the breed standard in use in the USA was composed. The Saluki, though initially called by various names, was acknowledged as an ancient and easily identifiable breed. Though British travelers and Orientalists appropriated smooth Saluki origins for what was to become the English coursing greyhound, they left the feathered variety to retain its heritage. Creating a standard for a hound of both ancient and noble lineage was quite a different challenge from creating a uniform breed.



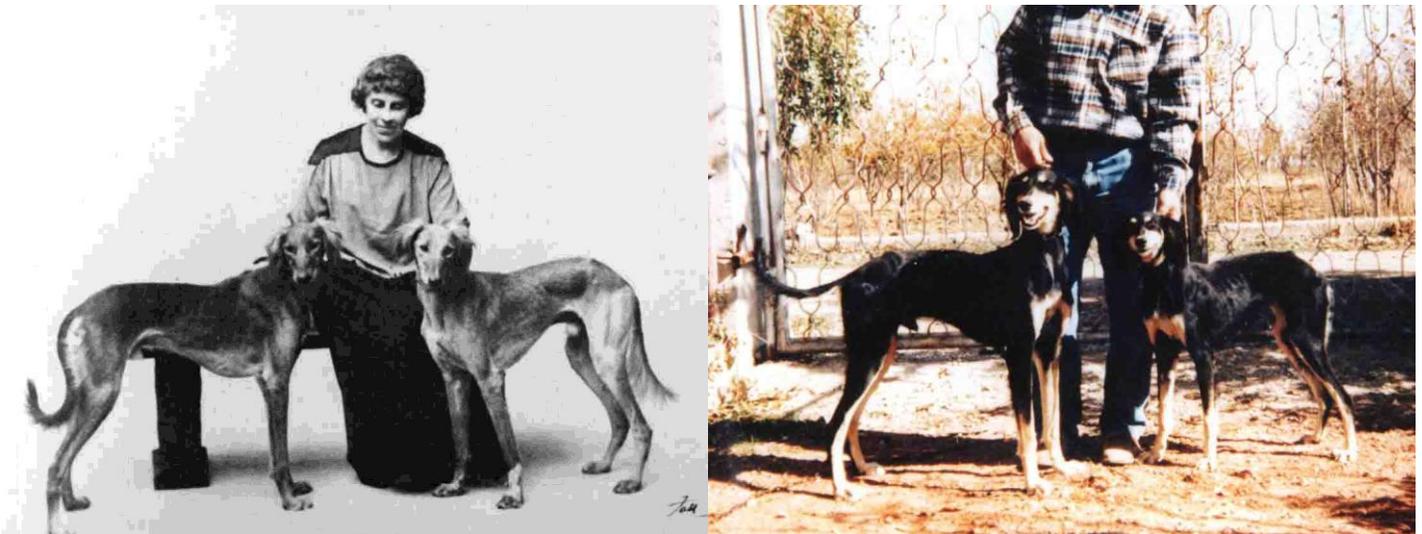
1) *Israel, Negev Bedouin Salukis, 1969* 2) *Amherstia Nafissah, early 1900s*

The framers of the Saluki standard were inevitably influenced by the generally held beliefs about canine structure and gait of their era. They were also cognizant of the

necessity to enforce the distinction between the more recently imported Saluki, in 1923 petitioning the Kennel Club for recognition, and the long established British coursing breeds, particularly the greyhound. Nevertheless, they acknowledged and accepted the wide range of types within the breed. The situation was best described by Vera Watkins in her 1974 *Gazehound* article, “The Importance of Arabian Desert Breeding in Preserving the Saluki”:

When the English Saluki or Gazelle Hound Club was formed in 1923, the breed enthusiasts—and they were few—found themselves in a dilemma. Most of them had seen service or travelled extensively in the Middle East and had had their hounds presented to them personally as marks of respect by Sheikhs, Amirs and other Chieftans. As, according to Arab custom, each gift carried with it the prestige of the donor, each recipient was entitled to consider that his Saluki was of the very best and correct type. So it was—in its area—as we now know. But at the time, there was considerable confusion, because many of these original Salukis differed considerably from each other!! Somehow the standard (which prevails today) was hammered out. This was required by the Kennel Club before the breed could be recognized. Despite the differences of appearance, all the Salukis had a great deal in common but with great variations in height—an extraordinary range of 5 inches—“23 to 28 inches at the shoulder with bitches proportionally smaller”.
p. 117

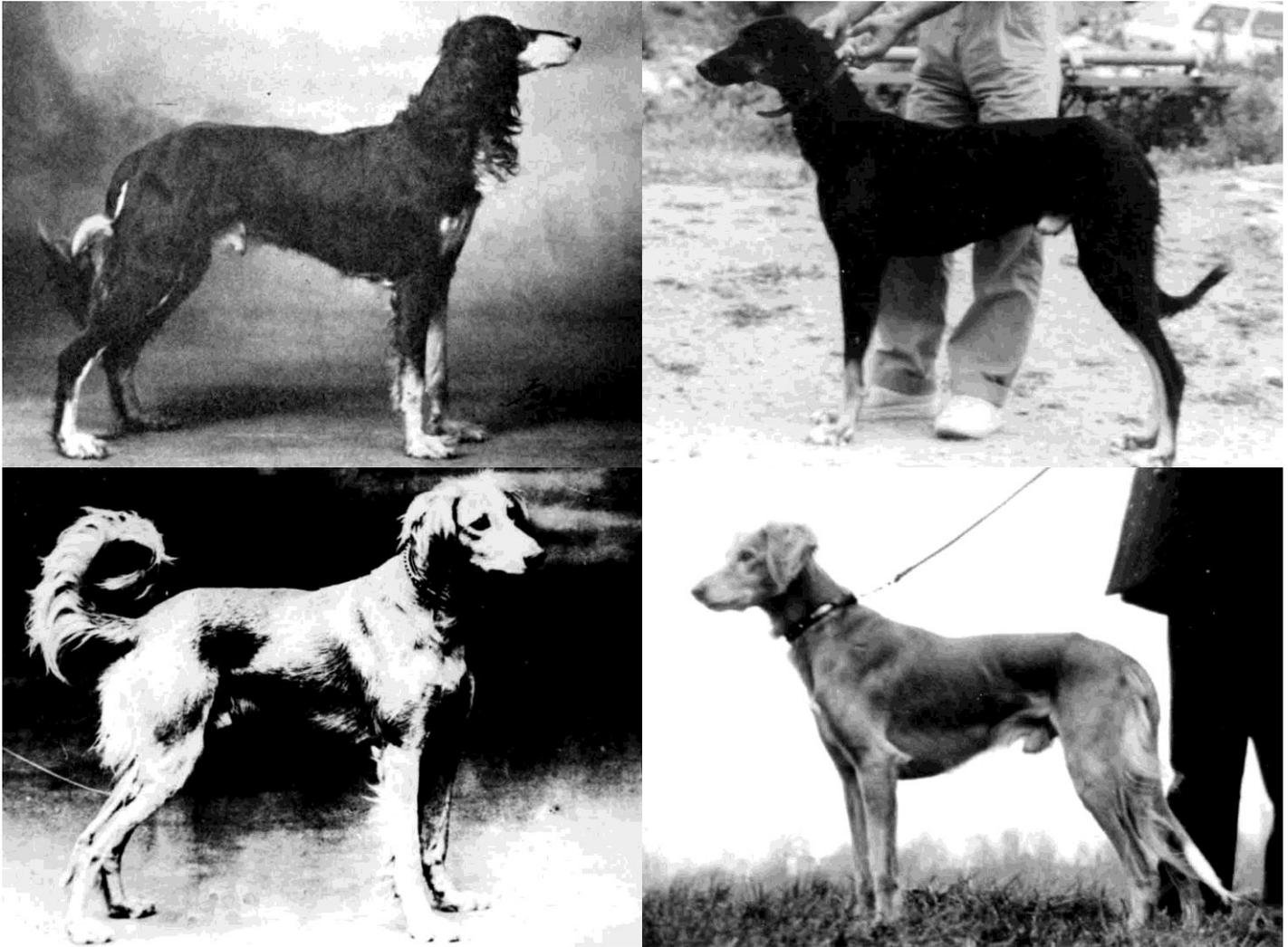
According to Ms. Watkins, though very bitter controversy broke out almost immediately, between those who had focused their breeding on imported hounds from the more southern regions, and those, predominantly Brigadier General Lance (a member of the Kennel Club) whose imports were from the more northern regions, the breed standard weathered the storm.



1) *The Honorable Florence Amherst with Zobied and Farhan, c. 1923* 2) *Syria, 1996. Photo, courtesy of G. Groustra*

The framers of the Saluki breed standard had been forced to include all the varied types because of their “royal and aristocratic association” and we are the fortunate beneficiaries of this decision. Citing Ms. Watkins again, in her worthwhile volume *Saluki Companion of Kings*, she wrote: “It is not often realised that, quite apart from the

question of height..., several individual dogs can conform to the standard point by point and yet not look alike, but they will have the necessary attributes for which the breed was developed” (1974, p.26). This is because the framers of the standard described only those features which appeared consistently in all of their imports and descendants, making no mention of features which either were absent in some hounds, or varied between hounds or family groups.

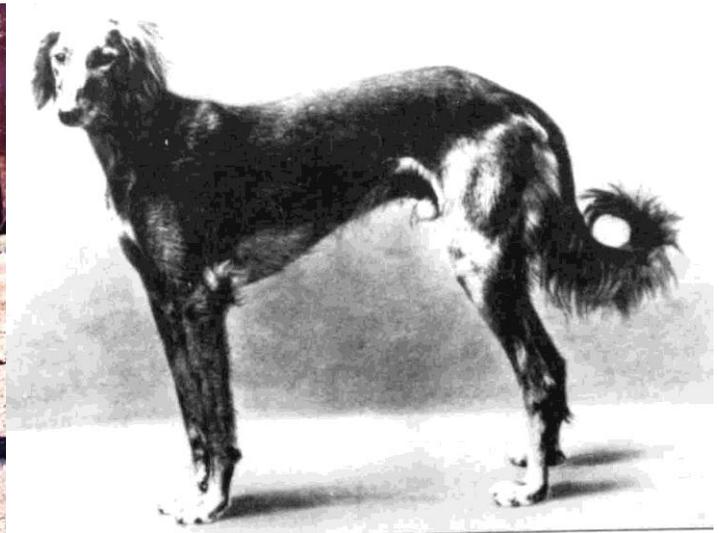


Left to right. Top: 1) *Sarona Kelb*, whelped 1908 2) *Turkish Tazi*, Anatolia, 1980s. Photo: E. Berghaus
Bottom: 3) *Amherstia Sultan*, whelped 1908 4) *Taviton Rumli Sagars*, import from Saudi Arabia, 1970s. Photo: P. Browning

Rather than being deficient due to its openness, making no mention of numerous “details”, these omissions remain one of the great strengths of our standard. It continues to protect variation within the breed. It has also blessed fanciers for almost a century with the endless opportunity to ponder and argue over what is written and what is not.

For dog show judges who crave a rigid word picture of a breed, the Saluki standard is a source of irritation. For arrogant fanciers who believe they are far wiser than those who came before and that dog shows are far more important than 5000 years of evolution to hunt in vast open spaces, those living deserts of shifting interpretation in the standard constantly tantalize them. *Ghazus* for change occur periodically but have thus far been fought off in the USA. For those of us who are fascinated by everything that the Saluki was and remains in its native lands, as well as those hounds in our own lives, the standard remains a source of stimulation, a document which forces even the newest fancier to “decipher” its meaning and to study the past. This is a wonderful thing!

Apart from the unfortunate use of some horse terminology, there is little to quibble with, as far as the general dog beliefs and biases of the 1920s in England influencing the actual wording of the standard. The beliefs and biases are more apparent in the writings, interviews, and judging critiques of influential dog writers or those original members of the Saluki or Gazelle Hound Club who were or went on to become prominent breeders and judges, than in the standard itself. Possibly this is due to the fact that the Honorable Florence Amherst and Brigadier General Lance had very different perspectives of how an “ideal” Saluki should look and carry itself. Their differences insured that extremes in either direction were avoided. The elegance and precision of several phrases of our standard feel as though they were chiseled from discord.



1) Israel, 1999, Saluki bred and owned by R. Darawshe. Photo: G. Goodman 2) Ch. Amherstia Zobied, whelped in England, 1925

It remains essential that today’s fanciers realize that the breed standard was never meant to standardize the Saluki. This seems an oxymoron because the word *standard* implies some uniformity. But, reflecting on Vera Watkins observation, “several individual dogs can conform to the standard point by point and yet not look alike” while still possessing all of the attributes of an arid lands, distance runner, we understand that uniformity is not necessary. Fanciers must deeply understand the value of the wording in the original 1923 British and 1927 American Saluki standards so that this healthy

variation can be preserved. This original western description, because it was such a *general description*, can be applied to *the very many acceptable variations of type* our breed offers.



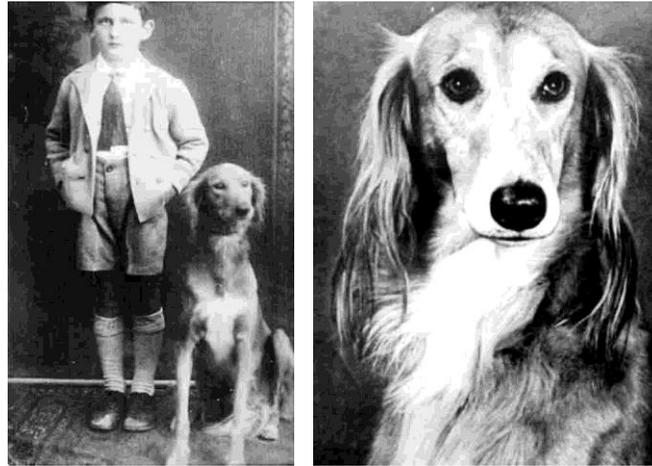
1) Ch. Sarona Kelb, whelped 1919, Syria 2) Multi-Ch. Firouz El-Taschara, 1995, Germany. 50% Iranian-50% Turkish/Iraqi descent. Photo: U. Munder courtesy of A. Soechtig.

However, it is not enough for today's fanciers to understand that the standard was intended to describe varied types, we also need to remember what those varied types described by the framers looked like. This is the basis for interpreting words such as moderate, coarse, broad, narrow, well muscled, and the likes. Words, like canine genetics, are highly malleable. We can't preserve the Saluki unless we study the breed in its original form, the foundation imports from Eastern lands and their direct descendants, the hounds descending from the ongoing Eastern breeding traditions and environments which include those reaching western countries today, and good coursing Salukis everywhere.

It is also essential that Saluki fanciers in the 21st century realize that it is absurd to assess current Eastern imports by comparing them to "show Salukis" bred to western aesthetic preferences in some countries for over a hundred years. Imports from Eastern lands, especially the more remote or less cosmopolitan regions, must be compared to the original, foundation western hounds and their direct descendants and not to the Crufts or Westminster breed winners of the year 2000.

In some cases, in some places, under some judges, as the pages of this volume testify, successful show winners may retain the look of a desert athlete. In other cases the winners reflect 21st century aesthetic preferences. Eastern imports are neither less good nor less valuable as sources of genetic diversity and breed type because of these differences. They are merely less changed from the breed origins, more geared, mentally and physically, to the original function than some of their modern western relatives.

These very attributes make them as highly valued by some fanciers as their foundation predecessors were.



1)Palestine, 1945. Photo courtesy of Z. Sirik 2) Ch. Marjan II, whelped 1936; America's first Best in Show Saluki.

In 1993 Daniel Belkin Ph.D. gave a seminar at the Saluki Club of America National Specialty in Lexington, Kentucky which was taped and edited for publication (Clarke and Belkin, *Field Advisory News*, Nov./Dec., 1993, pp.26-36). During his seminar, “The Functional Saluki: Lessons from the Coursing Field”, Dr. Belkin makes several points that also have enduring relevance to preserving our wonderful breed. Though there is much to question and argue with in the transcript, there is also much to remember.



1)Tel-El-Kebir, whelped 1935, England. Winner of 250 Firsts and many times Best in Show all breeds. 2) Turraq Ibn Shabgard el Riad,1990s, Germany. 50% Iranian-50% Turkish/German/Iraqi descent. Photo: C. Naef courtesy A. Soechtig. 3) Quanmarra Pendragon, Australia, 1980s. Photo: E. Brown.

The seminar opened with the assertion that “things you cannot see are more important than things you can”. Dr. Belkin goes on to discuss the selection for beautiful eyes versus selecting for visual acuity. “Any kind of animal that is not being selected for its eyesight over a long period of time will lose this genetic information through random

mutation and will thus lose the ability to see.... If we just breed Salukis to have pretty eyes in the show ring, soon they won't even be able to see their quarry, let alone chase it". In this vein, there is a wonderful quotation from R. Leighton's July 21st 1923 *Morning Post* in the Watkins' book which describes just how superbly Eastern hounds could see:

The breed possessing the most searching and penetrating eyesight is the Arabian Saluki. In their native land these elegant swift-footed hounds are used for hunting the gazelle. Their power of distant vision is comparable with that of the condor (a South American vulture). They can detect their sand-coloured quarry miles away on the far rim of the desert, and it is interesting to note that their eyes are uncommonly pale with a golden topaz tint in the iris. They are brilliantly pellucid eyes, capable of staring into the fiercest sunlight without blinking. *The Bedouins greatly prefer a light eye in their gazelle hounds.* Italics added by Ms. Watkins, p. 47.

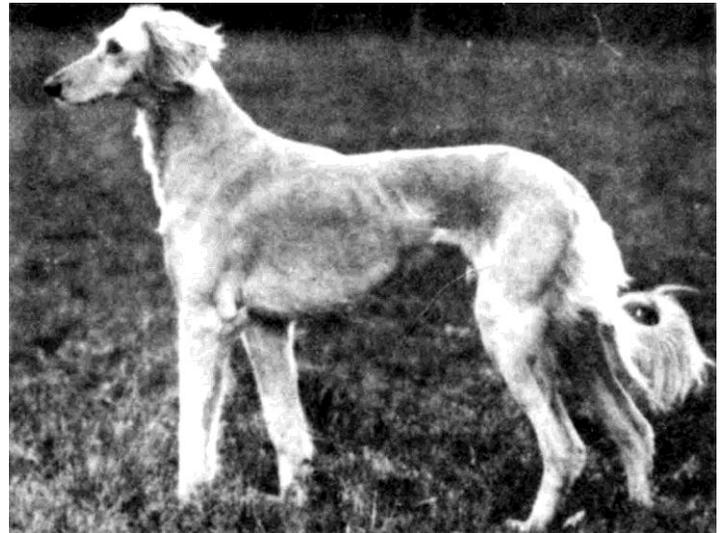
Several other important comments fall under this main point, with the additional caution that "breeding to the standard will not preserve function". For example, Dr. Belkin points out that "the standard says nothing whatsoever about the most important aspect of the head: what's inside it". He goes on to describe a great coursing Saluki whose record in competition was formidable because he never made a mistake in his guess which direction the hare would take to escape and he was always right there to kill it.



1) *Littersisters, Farascha el Mahbub and Multi-Ch. Fatouma el Mahbub, Germany, 1990s. 25% Iranian, 75% German/Turkish/Iraqi descent. Photo: U. Munder courtesy A. Soechtig. 2) Ramla of Iraq and Aswan of Ruritania, England ca. 1933.*

He also discusses lung capacity, stating that "the important thing about the lung is oxygen diffusing capacity: how fast the animal can get oxygen from the air to the blood stream and to the cells.... A Saluki needs a lung that works efficiently. The heart should pump just enough blood to work properly with the lungs.... I think Salukis have tremendous aerobic reserve capacity". Referring to bones, Belkin states that the most important thing about bones is that they shouldn't break. He says there is a genetic component to bone strength, but that when bones are stressed their internal structure changes. "Dogs which are worked have stronger bones".

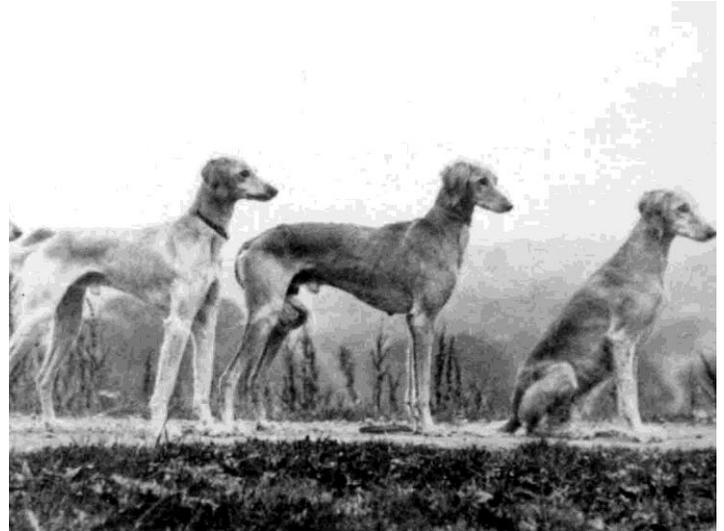
Angulation, according to Dr. Belkin, “is a matter of posture, not structure”. He also discusses the phrase “hocks low to the ground”, and concludes that its use in the Saluki standard is “a mistake”, a carry over from the horse term “hocks well let down”, but not applicable to dog conformation. Though the transcript is full of interesting anecdotes and experiences, Dr. Belkin concludes with the same assertion that he opened with: “if you don’t select for something, you are going to lose it....That’s the way selection works. That’s the way genetics works. ANY CHARACTERISTIC WHICH IS NOT ACTIVELY SELECTED FOR WILL DEGENERATE. It will go away. That’s true throughout the animal kingdom and is true for our dogs as well” (original emphasis).



1) German Ch. Shabgard Az Piran, 1980s, import from Iran. Photo: W. Brandt courtesy A. Soechtig. 2) Sarona Najib, whelped 1922, England. Original caption: Elegance epitomised.

Dan Belkin’s thought provoking comments, reflections and memories of his lifetime coursing, observing and loving Salukis, impress upon us just what a responsibility it is to be the keepers of such an ancient and durable and athletic hound. But, unless we respect both our breed’s history and original function, we can’t preserve it.

The photo collages presented here are attempts to recall the past and refresh our memories so we can better apply the standard to our hounds today. The collages also show us how little Salukis that are being bred today to hunt for Eastern peoples differ from those bred a hundred years ago for the same purpose, with the same variations persisting. They don’t propose “ideals”, only what was and what is. Note the skull shapes, the length and depth of the muzzles in profile, the length and thickness of the necks, the breadth of the thighs, the smooth muscling over the loin and pelvis, the length of the leg bones, and the overall balance of the hounds.



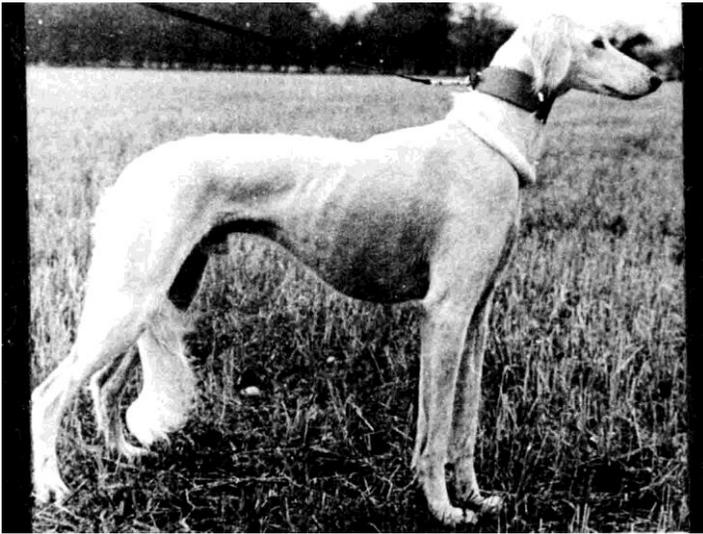
Left to right, top: 1) *Nablous Farhan*, c. 1938, England. 2) *Greval Salukis*, England, c. 1928
Bottom, 3) *Rahat*, Israel. Bedouin bred Saluki belonging to Abd El Magid. Photo: Y. Aharon. 4) Iranian imports to Germany, 1990s, rejected for registration by the German Sighthound Club. *Dastan*, black, *Shayan*, red. Photo: C. Sattarzadeh courtesy A. Soechtig.

Choosing the photos was like searching for identical twins born decades apart; it was exciting. There are more collages than can be printed, there are so many comparisons that can be made. The issue of “purebred” is never even whispered with regard to our foundation Salukis. The striking similarities between individuals over the entire photographic history of the breed should convince everyone that Salukis in their original environments are as purebred as they have ever been.

Dr. Belkin asserted that “breeding to the standard will not preserve function”. Not knowing what the breed looked like when the standard was written will not only not preserve function, it will not preserve the breed in western countries at all!

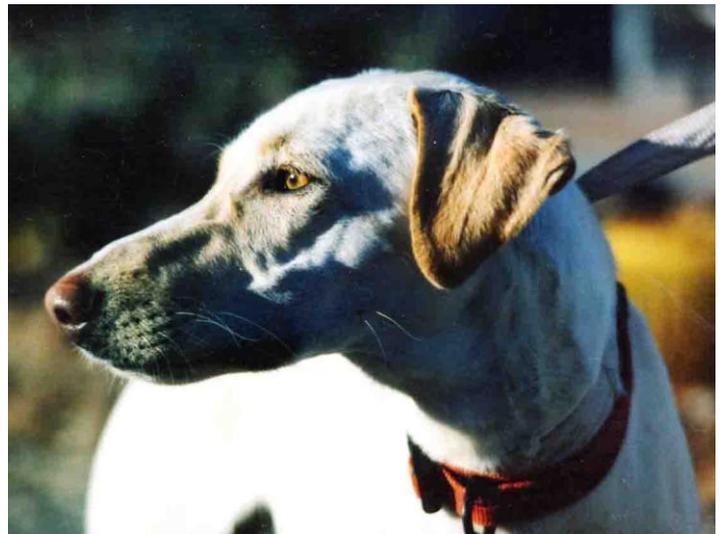
Saluki Lore: Fact and Fancy

Recalling the importance of mindset to interpreting the Saluki standard as well as to applying the standard to assessing hounds past and present, our focus must center on “*general appearance: The whole appearance of this breed should give an impression of grace and symmetry and of great speed and endurance coupled with strength and activity to enable it to kill gazelle or other quarry over deep sand or rocky mountain*”. This text sets the boundaries for both structure and type by telling us that we are evaluating characteristics of a rough terrain, long distance runner that is expected to not only pursue its quarry over varied terrain, but is also able to kill it or hold it for the hunter. Every other section of the breed standard must be interpreted in relation to the Saluki’s perfectly described function.



1) *Ch. Yazid Burydown Yehudi, England, whelped 1969.* 2) *Shayan Tazi Nadjib, Germany. Import from Iran, 1999.*
Photo: D. Balcar courtesy A. Soechtig.

Every hound that is assessed using this breed standard, whether it ever walks on anything but mowed grass, must possess the attributes of its ancestors. Today’s fanciers do not need to be “protected” from the fact that Salukis evolved to course and kill various quarry in a particular region of the world, in particular climate zones, over varied, often extremely rugged terrain. All breeds in western environments are classified and judged according to their historical functions. To deny the Saluki its heritage, as the current European and British revised standards do, deprives both judges and fanciers of an objective basis for evaluation.

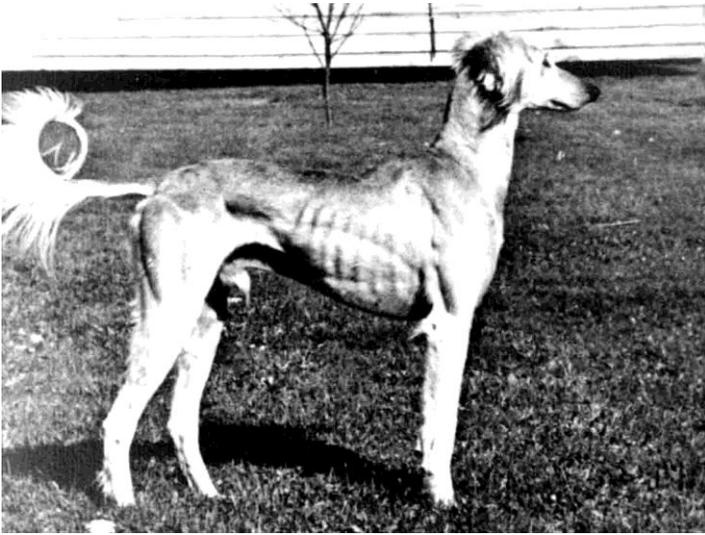


Left to right, top to bottom: **1)** English import to the USA. Photo 1999, G. Goodman. **2)** USA, Sinai/Jordanian/Saudi/American descent. Photo 1995, G. Goodman. **3)** Osjan von Iransamin, Germany, import Iran, 1990s. Photo: C. Sattarzadeh courtesy A. Schoetig. **4)** Judah min Judah, Bedouin bred, Saudi Arabian import to USA, 1990s. Photo: G. Goodman. **5)** Ogaab van Iransamin, Germany, import Iran, 1990s. Photo: C. Sattarzadeh courtesy A. Soechtig. **6)** Askalam Faroah, import England, 1990s. Photo: V. Kaepler courtesy R. West.

Function sets the limits for structure. If we remove the 1923 General Appearance statement or edit it to imply “chase but no kill”, we remove the fact that the chase had to lead to a successful end, capture and often dispatch of the quarry by the hound. Any Saluki can run around and look pretty but may not be able to catch the food dish if it moved. The *whole* general appearance of the Saluki must enable it to run, catch and kill its quarry. Remove this section from the breed standard and there is no objective reason to choose one dog over another in the show ring, only personal aesthetic or sentimental preferences remain. I have never heard of an open field coursing Saluki returning from a course to attack its owner! On the other hand, no one can preserve a breed, no one can judge a breed using a standard which has eliminated the breed’s *raison d’être*.

The general appearance section of the standard also sets the Saluki apart from all other coursing hounds. It is critical to our breed that we understand this. ONLY the Saluki is built to bring down its quarry by running often long distances in arid regions, sometimes in high temperatures, and always over rugged terrain. The Honorable Florence Amherst, in her 1907 chapter “Oriental Greyhounds”, cites several informants who describe how Salukis are used in their native regions. In some regions they course gazelle aided by falcons, in other regions the hounds are used alone. In Sinai the hunters often place the hounds at intervals along a track where game is likely to pass, but, when slipped within 500 yards of gazelle, the Saluki “easily catches the prey. They run over the desert hare almost in a moment’ ...Hunting with the Khan of Kelat they are described as ‘galloping over country that was boulder strewn’, and have been seen in Arabia to course hares ‘over ground that would have broken every bone in an English Greyhound, without hurting themselves’.” Every aspect of conformation and temperament is geared for the Saluki’s grueling work. If we forget this, all judgements become arbitrary.





Left to right, top to bottom: 1) *Tarabin Bedouin Saluki, Sinai, 1960s. Photo: I. Sella* 2) *Multi-Ch. Arkadasch Erkan, 100% Turkish descent, Germany. Photo: B. Krause courtesy A. Soechtig.* 3) *Jacamo Sari Rik CC/CM, legendary USA open field courser. Photo: J. Cogan.* 4) *Bruno of Samara, USA, import from Iraq, 1970s. Photo: K. Sauerman.*

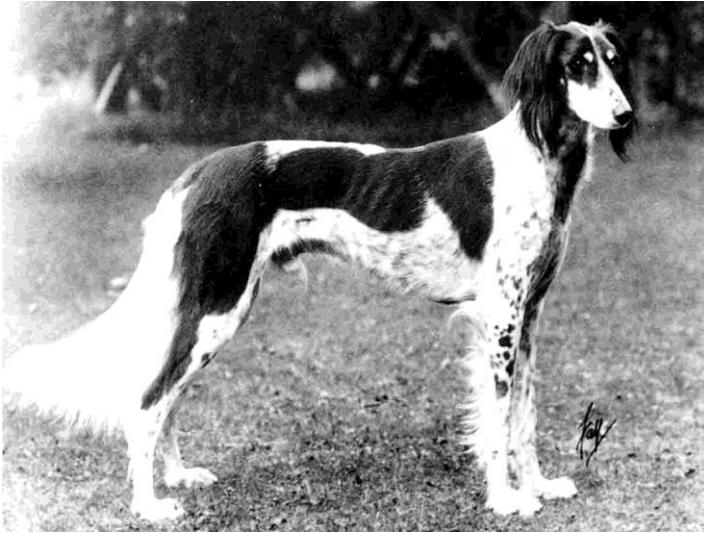
The numerous reports and descriptions of Salukis already available to Ms. Amherst by 1907 record not only the varied hunting practices of the original keepers of the breed, but also give varied descriptions of the hounds themselves. Rich as our breed history is compared to most others, the British perceptions that developed based on the relatively few imports from a few main regions of British colonization and influence, spawned generalizations that today, with a broader data base available, are interesting to reexamine.

The two main generalizations dealt with size and substance, and color. Color was accounted for by attributing color to terrain, analogous to camouflage, I guess. It appears to be correct that there were geographical region color differences, and, from what I saw in the Negev desert of Israel as it descends into the Sinai peninsula of Egypt, pale colored hounds certainly would be better camouflaged in that area than black hounds, but I don't think that was ever the primary reason for the color distribution patterns. It is my perception that the concentration of dark colored Salukis in the northern regions of Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Syria and northern Jordan, and lighter colored hounds in southern Jordan, Israel, Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula has to do with elevation and climate, annual temperature fluctuations, rainfall (dampness) and humidity, far more than the simple notion that breeders choose hounds to match the landscape.



Left to right, top to bottom: 1) Negev Bedouin Salukis, Israel, 1960s. Photo courtesy Z. Sirik. 2) Diamond Hill Salukis, USA, 1940s. 3) Yaffir and Fukara of Shammar and the import Arabic Walad El Kharram, England, 1949. 4) Negev Bedouin Salukis, Israel, 1960s. Photo courtesy Z. Sirik.

Drier, hotter regions favored pale colored hounds while wetter, more northern regions, often at higher elevations, favored darker colored hounds. Whether lighter or heavier in substance, lighter or darker in color, all of these hounds needed strong, dense bones. Actual “sand” composes only about ten percent of the world’s deserts; the rest of the land called deserts is gravel plains, boulder strewn hillsides, gullies, and all sorts of other land formations. The Saluki’s varied quarry lived in all of these places. Salukis remain structural wonders of strength and agility suffering few coursing injuries due to their evolution in such regions.



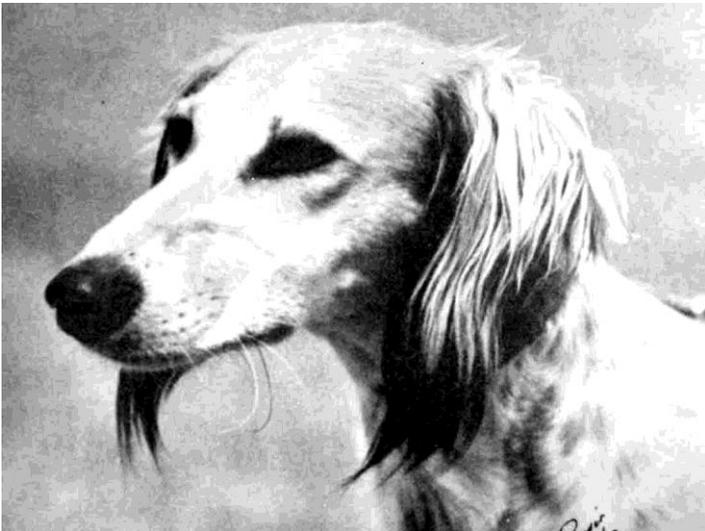
1) *Ch. Orchard Ahmud, whelped 1933, England.* 2) *Ch. Kurosch Marivan, Germany, import Iran 1979.* Photo: I. Sattarzadeh courtesy E. Espedel.

Today, in regions where dark colored hounds were traditionally rare they are no longer uncommon, but this is due to steady importation, not a shift in climatic pressures. Though there has always been trade between ancient Persia and the Gulf region of the Arabian Peninsula, oil revenues have expanded hunting horizons for the wealthy into regions such as Turkmenistan, Pakistan, Morocco, and Kenya. Anywhere there are dogs that hunt, they will be acquired, “brought home” and bred from. Western Salukis have also been imported into the region, black being a favorite color. Whether these imports survive to reproduce or are simply replaced by fresh imports is not known.

The majority of hounds imported into Germany from Iran, Kurdistan, and Turkey are grizzles, black and tans or tri-color, various brindles, a few parti-colors, and dark reds. However, there have always been golden reds and sand colored imports as well. Out of 69 registered imports from Iran only 5 have been cream. Out of 15 registered imports from Turkey, only 1 has been cream. Also of note, several of the earliest recorded imports from Teheran were smooths



1) *Saudi Arabia, 1980s, Bedouin Saluki.* Photo: M. Ratcliffe. 2) *Ch. Del Goscha's Chadidja, Germany, 1990s. 75% Iranian, 25% English descent.* Photo: A. Soechtig.

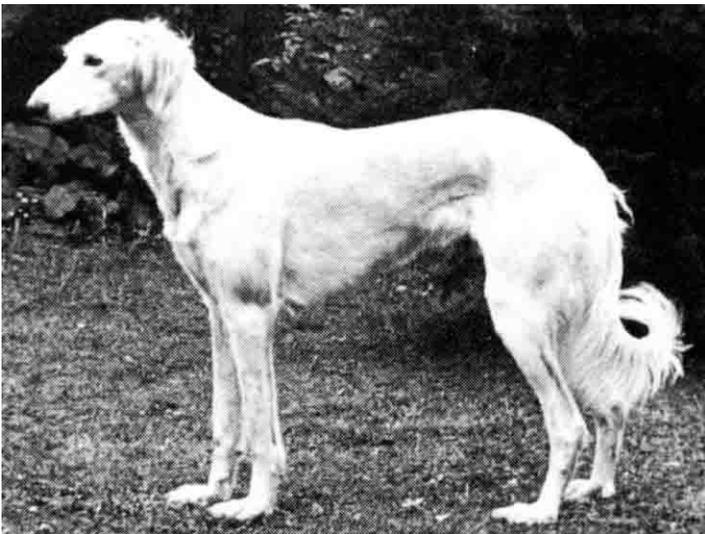


Left to right, top to bottom: 1) *Kangar Iranschahr*, Germany, 100% Iranian descent, 1980s. Note the smooth ears on this feathered dog, a frequently occurring coat pattern in the southern regions as well. Photo: M. Dahncke courtesy A. Soechtig. 2) *Sheikh of Fallujah*, import to England from Iraq, 1929. 3) *Ch. Nal Janzi*, whelped 1932, England. 4) *Nejma*, Sinai/Jordanian/Saudi blend, Israel, 1970s. Photo: S. Shtokelman.

Yet among the Israeli Arabs and Bedouin that I visited in 1999, the darkest color Salukis that I saw were brown grizzles. The majority were creams, reds, pale grizzles, gray or lemon and white partis, and one gray. An Israeli owned a tri-color, the descendant of a Jordanian tri-color, and the same man had acquired a black and white smooth dog from Tarabin Bedouin in Sinai in the 1970s. Only two black Bedouin descent hounds in this region, among so many pale colored ones, not only historically but currently, leads to the belief that there is an adaptive element in Saluki traditional color distributions. Until very recently, only pale colored hounds were imported to the west from Saudi Arabia.

As stated, there have always been a few cream hounds in the northern regions and a few dark hounds in the south, and hounds have always been sent as gifts or traded, records of this dating back at least to the year 1000 CE. This leads us to the second

generalization, that substance and proportions varied significantly from north to south. This is the more difficult historical assertion to examine because there is little hard data available. People, past and present, tend to photograph and remember the hounds that appeal to them. They don't document all of the hounds in a particular area. So, whatever anecdotal data we have is based on personal preferences, which gives us no clue about the range of type actually present. It is also human nature to assume that the hounds one likes best are actually the best ones and certainly the purebred ones.



Left to right, top to bottom: 1) Kurindsch Iranschahr, Germany, 1990, 100% Iranian descent. Photo: M. Dahncke courtesy A. Soechtig 2) Tel-Aviv, Israel, 1970s, Sinai/Jordanian/Saudi blend. Photo: I. Sella. 3) Haredom Cleopatra, whelped 1936, England, from a legendary coursing line. 4) Benta, Germany, import Iran, 1978. Photo: M. Dahncke courtesy A. Soechtig.

Finally, and of great importance, is the British preference for long bodied coursing hounds. It appears that from earliest times short coupled, leggy Salukis have never been attractive to British dog fanciers and breeders. It is equally important to remember that the Arabian horse is short backed, and the camel is upright, so the Middle

Eastern hunter, knowing the strength of his camel and the endurance of his steed, would look for the same structural characteristics in his hound. The fact that he did is well documented. But the British travelers and military personnel either accepted the hounds they were given, or if given a choice, chose those they liked best, brought them home and transformed the breed to fit their own biases. This peculiar preference for long bodied coursing hounds has become a generally held western dog show preference.

To distinguish western aesthetic bias from functional structure, we can only look at the hounds in the Middle East today and compare them to foundation imports, the ancient painted or sculpted images, and the century old photo record. These sources contain the clues to past and present variations in structure and type. The first thing that our investigation reveals is that there is a range of variation in every region. There are larger, heavier hounds in all regions and there are lighter, smaller hounds in all regions, just as there are within a single litter. Color and feathering cause lots of illusions about structure. However, the oft-stated notion is incorrect that in general northern hounds tend to be larger and rectangular in proportion, while southern hounds tend to be smaller and squarer.

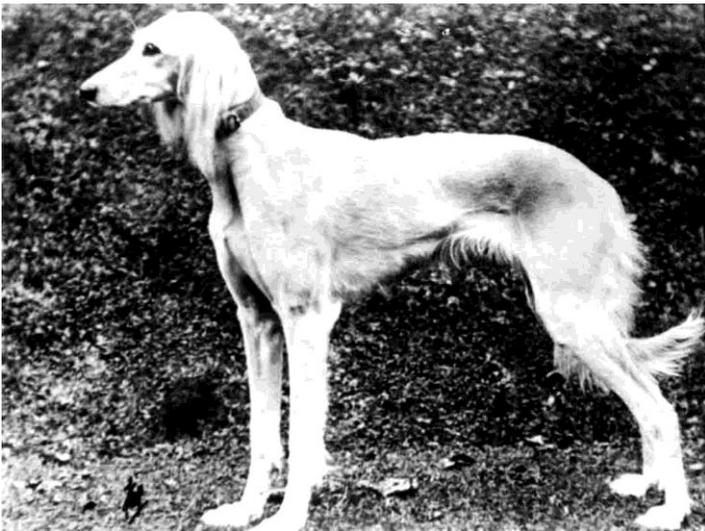
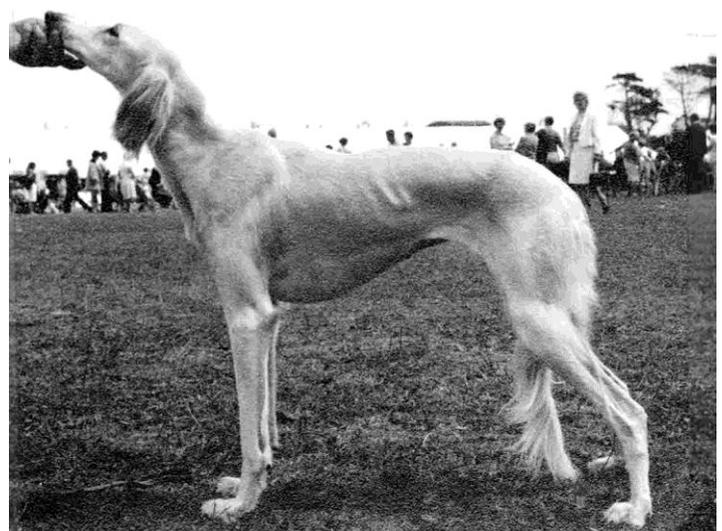
According to Astrid Soechtig, who has been photographing and collecting data on Eastern imports into Germany and their descendants for nearly a decade, the overall impression one gets is that they are generally not very tall. The height range for dogs is approximately 23 inches to 28.5 inches, the average being about 26 to 27.5 inches. Most of the imports are males because, according to one of Soechtig's informants, it is extremely difficult to get good bitches from native breeders. Of the very few bitches that have reached Germany, they range from approximately 23.5 inches to 25.5 inches, with 25.5 inches the maximum height. Though it is rare for an imported dog to be 28 inches tall, "Most male Salukis from German breeding are over 70 cm [27.5 inches] and many bitches are 65 cm [25.5 inches] and taller".

Soechtig describes the overall appearance of the Iranian imports, which she is most familiar with in her region of Germany, as "Very strongly built, muscular, healthy, sturdy bones, strong jaws, powerful and houndy looking animals—they look like real hunters. They are absolutely not rectangular. There is not a single import from Iran that looks rectangular



Sedef, Germany, import from Turkey, 1997. Photo: C. Sattarzadeh courtesy A. Soechtig

Regarding the other imports to Germany, the Turkish imports and those from the Turkish-Iranian border region, Soechtig observes that they appear finer boned and are often more appealing to the show fanciers than those from the interior of Iran. The Turkish Salukis seem to have pointier muzzles, larger eyes, and are smaller and more refined structurally. For example, Sedef, a recent import from the border region, is about 24 inches tall, with a light body type but she is still a keen hunter and very good performer on the race track. Soechtig commented that regardless of speed, all of the imported hounds are great coursers, “They are clever, they are keen, they would never stop chasing for any reason”. However, aesthetically, the Turkish imports appear to be “prettier” to the western eye due to their elegance.



Left to right, top to bottom: 1) Saudi Arabia, 1980s, Bedouin owned Saluki. Photo: M. Ratcliffe. 2) Ch. Tahawi Deidamia, England, 1966. Photo courtesy of L. Weir. 3) Ch. Ramla of Iraq, England, whelped 1928 4) Kambin Iranschahr, Germany, 1991, 100% Iranian descent. Photo: M. Dahncke courtesy of A. Soechtig.

Hence, variations in substance and size are clearly observable even within these two northern populations. Soechtig further observed that although the imports themselves

may not be very tall, often their offspring are much taller. This happens when imports are bred to western lines as well as when they are bred to other imports. In other words, Iranian imported Salukis bred to other Iranian imports have pups that are as large as the pups from litters with western outcrosses. This is also true for the offspring of both northern and southern region imports to the USA. Hybrid vigor as well as the enhanced nutrition available may be contributing to the first generation size increases.

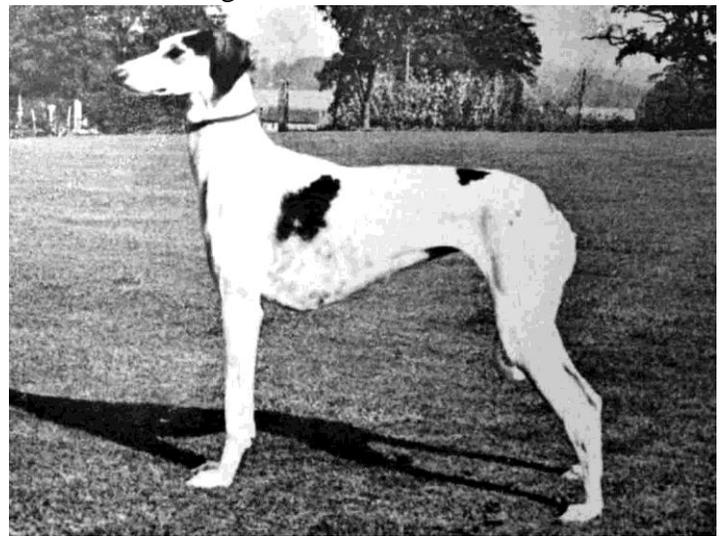
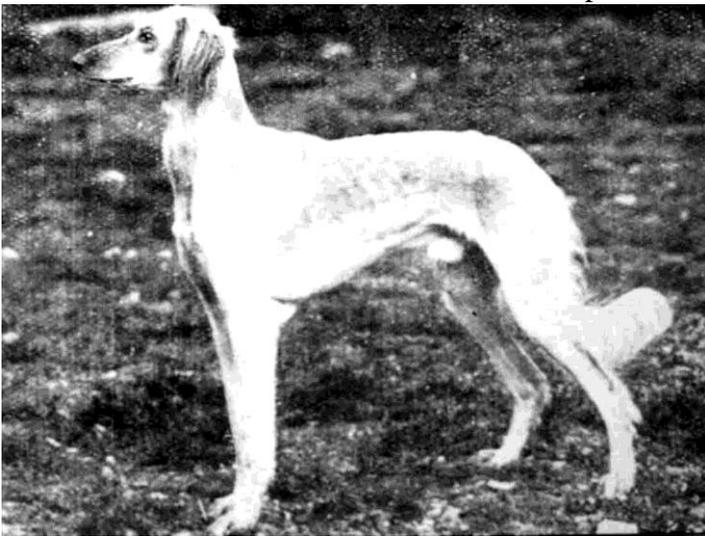


Left to right, top to bottom: **1)** *Ch. Arkadasch Erkan and litter sister Arkadasch Esprii, Germany, 1990s, 100% Turkish descent. Photo: B. Krause courtesy A. Soechtig.* **2)** *Ch. Pine Paddocks D'jou D'Ji CD, USA, whelped 1970.* **3)** *Sinai Peninsula, 1975. Photo: I. Sella* **4)** *English Saluki, 1970s. Photo: H. Williams.*

When we look back at the height proposed in 1907 for the breed, called “Slughi Shami” by Ms. Amherst, she states that the average for dogs is 23 inches and for bitches is 21 inches. The average weight for a dog is 42 pounds and for a bitch is 39 pounds.

These are truly small Salukis. However, there are two important factors we need to consider with regard to these 1907 figures. Ms. Amherst's foundation imports were inbred for many generations. Inbreeding reduces size. If these stated averages were based only on Ms. Amherst's hounds then they represent the average heights for a family group and not for the entire breed.

There is a substantial body of contemporary Saluki measurement data available. Measurements collected in the early 1990s in Saudi Arabia by M. Ratcliffe found that the height range for his sample of 61 dogs was from 23.2 inches to 29.1 inches, and for the sample of 91 bitches the range was from 21.7 inches to 27.2 inches. In the USA, measurements also taken in the early 1990s, of imports and their first generation offspring, the 14 dogs ranged from 24.9 inches to 29 inches, the 14 bitches ranged from 24 inches to 26.8 inches. These imports were from southern regions.



Left to right, top to bottom: 1) *Giafar of Iraq, England, 1 CC, whelped 1924.* 2) *Hasana Sharqi, England, 1960s.* 3) *Tawos, Germany, import Iraq, whelped 1981.* Photo courtesy A. Soechtig. 4) *Ali Baba of Iraq, England, whelped 1924.*

Of the Arab and Bedouin Salukis I measured in Israel in 1999, the range of height for the 19 dogs was 23.5 inches to 27.5 inches and for the 5 bitches the range was 22.5 inches to 24.5 inches. Astrid Soechtig estimates that the height range for male Iranian imports into Germany is 23 inches to 28.5 inches, the range for bitches is 23.5 inches to 25.5 inches. So, using our contemporary data, we can reflect upon Ms. Amherst’s average heights and seriously question their validity as averages, but her assertion that 23 inch tall dogs and 21 inch tall bitches were acceptable is affirmed. We can also reject the idea that Salukis in northern regions are larger than Salukis in southern regions. There are large hounds and small hounds throughout the range of the breed.

Though we can’t know whether or not the original range of height in the standard was based on actual measurements, the actual measurements of Middle Eastern Salukis today validate at least the bottom end of the standard. There seem to be taller dogs than the standard allows, but fortunately we have no height disqualifications. The fact that this size range persists in Middle Eastern populations today is fascinating and reaffirms the value of diversity to the breed. A 23 inch tall dog and a 21 inch tall bitch must have the same working attributes as their larger counterparts. They need the same muscle to bone ratios and the same durability. I have never seen a Middle Eastern Saluki that I would call “fragile”, regardless of size, and Astrid Soechtig described the imports into Germany as “Very strong, muscular, healthy, comparatively large boned, strong jaws, powerful, houndy looking animals—looking like real hunters”. Her words actually describe all sizes and all sizes meet the general appearance criteria of the standard.

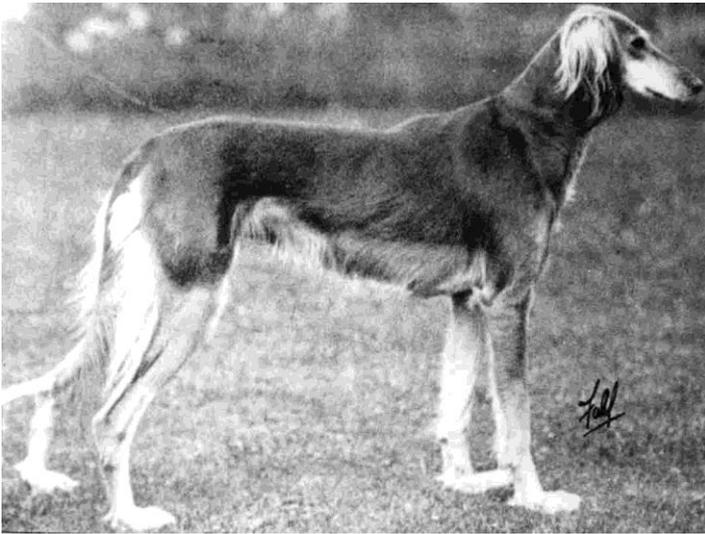
Conclusion

Several topics have been covered briefly here. Fascinating as the Saluki remains, there is plenty of material available for in-depth study of each point touched upon and research continues in many areas. Each of you will follow your own path of discovery.



1) *Dual Ch. Midbar Hafiah Asuwish Tabriz, direct desert descent, USA. Photo: G. Goodman* 2) *Nasrin von Iramsamin, Germany, 100% Iranian descent, 1 CC, 1 Res. CC. Photo: A. Soechtig.*

We began with the difference between a breed standard created in order to standardize a random group of dogs and a breed standard created to describe an easily identifiable group of dogs that varied mainly in size, color, and minor details of conformation. An attempt was also made to reconstruct the point of view of the original framers of the breed standard.



1) Orchard Mabrouk, England, whelped 1923. 2) Kianusch Iranschahr, Germany, 100% Iranian descent, 1990.
Photo: M. Dahncke courtesy A. Soechtig.

A few insights of Daniel Belkin, Ph.D., were remembered, the main point being that if we lose the breed's function, if we no longer select for the physiology, structure and temperament our breed came to us with from the “*wadis* and deserts of timelessness”, our hounds will lose these qualities.

We then examined three further issues: the enduring value of the General Appearance section of the 1923 standard; color distribution; and the idea that in the southern regions of the breed Salukis are small while in the northern regions of the breed Salukis are tall.

The General Appearance section remains the heart of the standard, ascribing purpose and in so doing, setting Salukis apart from all other coursing hounds. The romantic notion that Salukis were bred to match the landscape was questioned, but there is a preponderance of dark colored hounds in northern regions and pale colored hounds in southern regions. This was true in the past and remains true for working hounds in the Middle East today.



1) *Del Goschas Chaman, Germany, 1990s, 75% Iranian, 25% English descent. Photo courtesy A. Soechtig.* 2) *Windswift Soraya, England, 1950.*

Finally size was considered, particularly the Honorable Florence Amherst's 1907 averages of dogs 23 inches and bitches 21 inches. A broad modern measurement data base encourages us to reject these numbers as averages but to retain them as the continuing lower limits of functional size for the breed. Our data also reveal that there is a range of size in all regions, from very small to very tall, though both extremes remain less common than hounds in the middle ranges of size.



1) *Ch. Orchard Rahma, England, whelped 1923.* 2) *Toros, Germany, import Iran, 1995. Photo: A. Soechtig.*

Saluki discussions can and do span centuries and fill volumes. Many of us who have already devoted decades to the study of this “hound without equal”, to use the enduring description of the Arab poet Abu Nuwas, remain as fascinated as newcomers to the breed. I am certainly excited with the new information that is steadily becoming available about the Middle Eastern hounds, and the beliefs and practices of their original

custodians. And, as more people travel, as more hounds reach western countries, as more hounds are measured everywhere, and more photographs taken, the Saluki's ongoing history continues to expand.

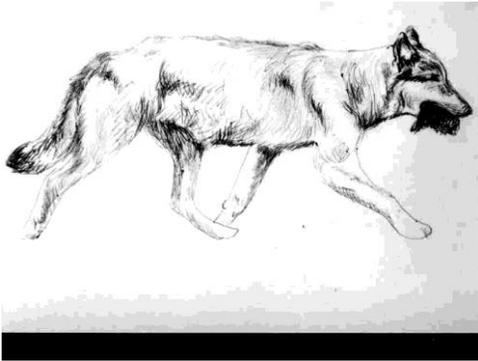
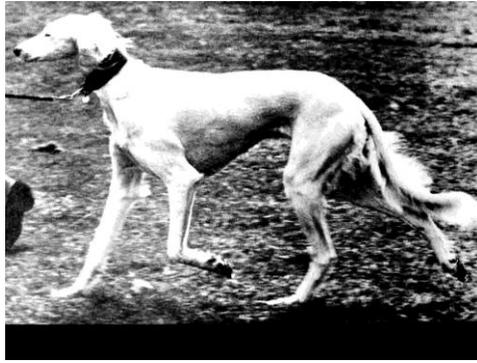
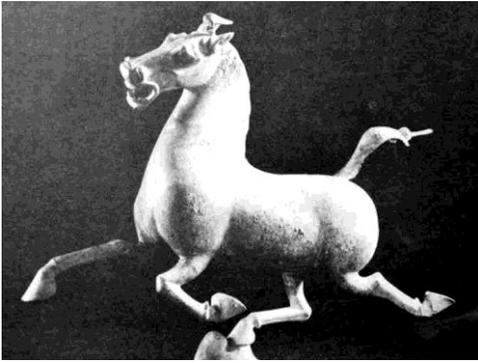
It also remains clear to many of us who have paid particular attention to the historical record of the Saluki as an Eastern coursing hound, and as a western coursing hound as well, that what was not written into the original breed standard was not a general characteristic of the breed as a whole. There was not sufficient uniformity among early representatives to reach consensus, and these details are in no way essential to the breed's purpose.



1) Seyhoun, Germany, import Iran, 1992. Photo: A. Soechtig. 2) Israel, 6 month old Sinai Bedouin pup, 1970s. Photo: I. Sella.

Rewriting the original standard, writing in details which the historical record shows are wrong, such as the need for sloping pasterns or large ear leather or long tails, all characteristics Bedouin and Arab breeders often ignore or even dislike, in no way benefits the breed. Eastern owners often prefer golden eyes and curled, gaily carried tails. Form truly follows function for coursing Salukis. Body proportions, when actually measured (refer to the numerous tables in *The Saluki: Coursing Hound of the East*, 1995, ed. G. Goodman) range from the height at the withers being greater than the length of body from the point of shoulder to the point of the pelvis (often by as much as two inches) as the most frequently occurring shape, with some Salukis measuring square, while very few actually measure rectangular.

What is accomplished by rejecting the aesthetic preferences of the people who gave us this wonderful breed? What is accomplished by imposing unsubstantiated western biases against short-bodied hounds when such hounds have been plying their trade in their original lands for millenium? The European standard changes merely create show ring faults where there are none based on history and performance. Let us hope that American fanciers continue to resist pressure to abandon the Saluki's heritage.



Left to right, top: **1)** *The flying horse of Khansu, China.* **2)** *Ch. Burydown Freyha, England, 1965.* **3)** *Ch. Issibaa's Echo. Photo: L. Hopwood courtesy S. Kinney.*
Left to right, bottom: **1)** *wolf carrying a ground squirrel.* **2)** *Tarabin Bedouin, Sinai, caravan moving through Wadi Watir, 1970. Photo: E. Chen courtesy Z. Sirik.* **3)** *Open field coursing champions searching for hares, USA. Photo: G. Goodman.*
