

La Chasse En Indochine

Hunting in Indochina

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Chapter II

Hunting dogs

Summary: Indigenous or Annamese dogs. - Dogs imported from Europe. - Benefits of creating a new breed

I. - Indigenous or Annamese dogs.

This book would seem incomplete to me if I did not now say a few words about native dogs and dogs imported from Europe, these precious auxiliaries of the hunter.

Annamese dogs can be classified, in my opinion, into four breeds, or rather in four varieties, which are quite clearly distinguished from each other, either by size or by the color of the coat.

The breed or, if you prefer, the most widespread variety is that of "yellow or black dogs", with short tawny or very black hair, both having identical characteristics. These dogs have a rounded (domed) head, a fairly pointed muzzle, short and straight ears, thin and sinewy paws, short hocks, small feet with medium-length nails, a tail that is most often quite short with medium-hair, the eyes very lively, black or dark chestnut. Finally their jaws, well-furnished with teeth of medium size but very sharp, are provided with solid muscles. Their necks are round and stocky, their body is slim and lean.

They are not very interesting (for hunting), apart from a few subjects. However, they render service to the Annamese as a guard dog.

There is, in the peninsula of Camâu (southern cape of Vietnam), a beautiful breed of very powerful dogs, a sort of mastiff that is extremely willing to bite¹, tenacious and *very fast*, which hunt successfully on sight and fight deer or wild boar with fury. But these Camâu dogs are wild and fierce and often very mean. They give little or no voice in the hunt. They might be susceptible to improvement by crossing.

Another breed of large and beautiful dogs, the size of which is smaller than that of the Camâu dogs, is a breed called "Phu-Quoc Island" dogs. These animals, very robust and biting¹, have a remarkable, characteristic broad band of hair about four to five centimeters wide on their back going against the hair. Above all, they are good watch dogs. This breed is getting lost more and more.

Finally, a breed of blackish gray and fawn short-haired dogs, whose coat is striped or variegated. Of medium size, rather small, these aforementioned animals have broad and robust chests, sinewy legs. Lean but muscular in body, they are admirably cut, without showing the exaggerated and gangly characteristics of greyhounds. They have a cautious (timid)², shrewd and slyly pugnacious³ (sassy) temperament. Intrepid and tireless hunters, the most inextricable thorny bush does not stop them; they have very strong teeth, and caught prey⁴ will be restrained and strangled if it is not first killed by the hunter.

Some subjects of this breed have an exceptionally all-black coat. From all points of view, this breed provides the best native hunting dogs, the only ones who follow a trail well, bring together, then chase and catch⁴ (prey) satisfactorily, baying regularly, like good hunting dogs of Europe. We must however reproach them for having in general a thin and weak bark. This breed of dog resembles the wild dog by the general conformation of the body and especially the head, but differs completely by the coat. Its representatives, like all native adult dogs bred by Asians, can not stand Europeans. I would even say that, more than any of the dogs of other local breeds, they are fierce and dangerous to him. It is therefore essential for the European hunter, who wants to use them and make them manageable like our dogs in France, to breed them himself from a young age. They will thus get used to the hunter quickly, which will allow them to make the most of what the dogs can provide, with rational training⁵.

These dogs, thus far little known or disregarded, have very appreciable advantages over dogs imported from Europe at great expense. They cost little, are acclimatized (to the country) and fear neither heat nor tropical rains; in addition they are very energetic, they resist fatigue admirably. Very sensible⁷ and easy to feed, they are content with a meager rice porridge cooked in water and slightly salted. Finally, they instinctively know the danger of wild predators, they know how to avoid them in the forest with skill, which a good European dog cannot do. By fasting the dogs the day before the hunt, one can be sure that they will course valiantly on the game they hunt.

⁶For the European who wishes to use native dogs, the best method is to train young Annamese (Vietnamese) puppies (from well-selected natural hunter parents), using good French hunting dogs with short hair and roughly equal footing, experienced and well trained.

The natural valour of the Annamese (dogs) will work very well to keep up the morale of the French (dogs), which the heat destroys; these (French dogs), in turn, will develop in the native dogs the excellent qualities which they possess, through observational learning⁸; Annamese (Vietnamese) puppies will gradually assert themselves, to the great satisfaction of their patient breeder. After a few months of training given at the appropriate age, we will be amazed at the

ground gained by the Annamese (Vietnamese) puppies. It is then that their remarkable qualities of speed, energy, endurance and tenacity will be appreciated as they deserve.

1 mordant : translated literally as “biting” but may be better described as willing to bite, which may be good trait for hunting and not exclusively aggression

2 craintive : can be translated as “fearful” but within the context seems more accurately intended as cautious or timid (lacking in courage or confidence)

3 sournisement batailleuse : literally “slyly pugnacious” or quarrelsome; essentially meaning sassy

4 pièce levée : literally “piece lifted” but given the context, I have interpreted as caught prey

5 The writer includes after this a phrase that means “the first principle of which the Annamites ignore” in regards to training dogs properly for (European style) hunting. I have omitted this from the general translation for its condescending nature.

6 The writer includes here the phrase “I said above that the natives very rarely and very imperfectly know how to train their dogs for hunting.” I have omitted this from the general translation due to its unnecessary nature and condescending tone.

7 sobres : translated literally as “sober” but more likely meaning clearheaded, sensible, serious

8 par contagion et par exemple : literally “by contagion and by example” but rather just describing that the dogs will learn on their own by watching the others

Source: Internet Archive

<https://archive.org/details/lachasseenindoc00rousgoog/page/n110/mode/1up>

Translation by Dan Khanh Tran