

## WORKING DOGS IN SIAM

By

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Working dogs are all those dogs which render useful services to their human masters. They are distinguished from "toy dogs", which may be lovable companions but are without any particular usefulness. Working dogs ("Arbeitshunde") or they are also called "utility dogs", ("Gebrauchshunde") are subdivided into three main groups, namely "gun dogs" ("Jagdhunde") "guard dogs" ("Wachhunde") and "service dogs" ("Diensthunde").

"Gun dogs," as the name says, serve the man with the gun, that is the hunter. They track, point, quest, drive and retrieve game. Some breeds get their names from their particular speciality such as the "Golden Retrievers", of which we have some very fine specimens in Siam, and the "Pointers". To the gun dogs also belong the sturdy "Labradors", the special pets of the late Prince Rajada Bhisek Sonakul, and the deservedly well known and popular "Spaniels".

Spaniels are right at the border of the working dog group, because there are "working" strains and toy dogs among them. The latter, with wavy hair and ears so long that they almost

can step on them, are bred for fanciers and exhibitions only, whereas the working variety looks less foppish, is wonderfully adaptable to all sorts of work, and according to my experience among all foreign dogs best suited for tropical climate. Working Spaniels in Siam, once imported by famous sportsmen like Prince Bhanubhan and Freiherr von Ahrenschildt, drive game out of the shrubs, track down wounded game infallibly and retrieve small game and birds from land and water without ever getting tired before their master does. They are so courageous that they hold wild cattle or a big stag by jumping up and biting them on the nose, and are very watchful. My renown bitch "Tupfelchen" for instance successfully caught three nightly intruders, two whom turned out to be policemen.

"Guard dogs" are those dogs which are mainly restricted to the house and its compound. Since watchfulness is a common denominator in the talents of all working dogs, all those breeds which do not show any other outstanding special usefulness are counted as "guard dogs".

"Service dogs" (German: Diensthunde) show this outstanding usefulness and



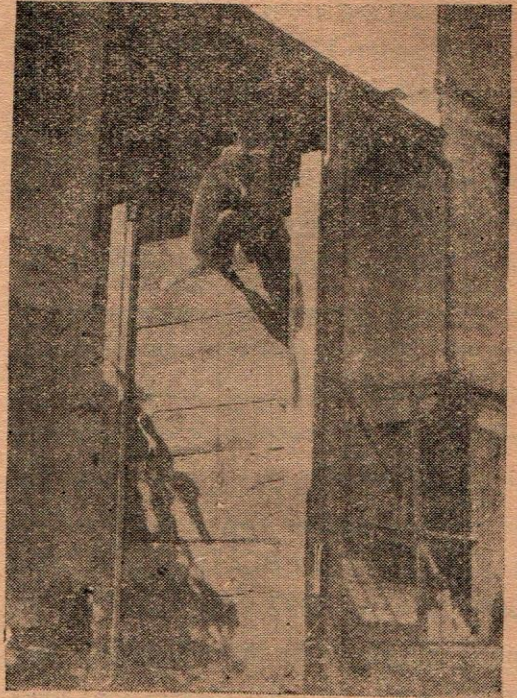
*"Mha Si Savath"  
and his owner*

therefore are employed by the armed services as the name says. To this group belong the "German shepherd dogs" ("Alsatian" as they are called here rather misleadingly), who are—probably due to the canine filmstar "Rin Tin Tin"—the most famous and popular of all imported dogs in Siam. But in this group also are the modern breeds of "Dobermann pinscher", "Airdale terriers" Giant Schnautzer", "Rottweiler" "German Boxer" the Hungarian "Kuvash" and many other fine and noble dogs, all of which are very little known out here, and with the exception of "Boxers", "Airdales", "Dobermann pinchers" and Schmutzers, as far as I know, not represented in Siam. In spite of growing mechanisation in the armed

forces, dogs hold their own as recognised and useful helpers on the battlefields, as messengers, mine-detectors, guards and rescuers of the wounded. Only those countries do not avail themselves of the services of canine soldiers, where a cynical calculation shows, that human lives are cheaper and not worth risking valuable animals for, or where general backwardness has not enlightened the the decisive brains behind the general staffs. That Siam does not entirely belong to this latter group is shown by the great interest which some of the higher police and army officers are beginning to take in trained dogs. But there is no doubt that the public still fails to understand how many useful purposes dogs could be applied to also in this country. Though several persons are advocating the organization of a "Society for the Breeding and Training of Dogs in Siam," this plan has not yet materialised, Thus every effect in this direction is an isolated and individualistic endeavour. Every breeder has to start right from the beginning again and gather experience the hard and costly way. There is no club, where success and failure could be discussed, help and encouragement given, breeding supervised, pedigrees compared, valuable dogs registered, shows and trials organised etc. There does not exist any periodical either, where gained experience could be communicated to others, advice extended to

correspondents and subscribers, and the public informed and taught how to handle their quadruped companies.

This is all the more regrettable as the average Siamese are dog lovers by nature. Their fondness of animals could be easily directed towards purposeful breeding and selecting their dogs. Why is it, that something which seems so easy, desirable and obvious has not yet been done? Because according to my observation the native dogs here do not show at once all those good qualities, which have made dogs of other countries such useful amiable and faithful servants of man. Dogs here, as almost every other animal, still show the characteristics of semi-wildness. People do not know yet how to break them off disgusting habits and how to train them to general usefulness. They are mostly left to themselves. Without proper care, regular feeding and a minimum of bathing and grooming even the nicest puppies must turn into mangy rowdies. That is true not only of Siamese dogs but also of European dogs if they are neglected, of which they are often only protected by the owner's fear of losing an animal for whom he once had paid a considerable sum. But native dogs are cheap as dirt and therefore left to themselves and their diseases just in that moment when attendance and medical care might save them and turn them into useful house-



*Siamese Dog  
trained by Dr. Klein*

companions and working dogs. My experiments with Siamese dogs, of which I usually have quite a number on my farm, have shown that they can be trained, though it takes much longer time than training European dogs. But once trained, they are as useful as their imported comrades. My red coloured "Lum-pi", picked up once in the University campus, bites at command, is a very reliable watchdog, jumps over a 2.50 m. scale and very often serves as assistant trainer by telling unexperienced puppies in plain dog's language how they should behave. "Pim", a black and white Siamese bitch of unknown ancestry, was such an exceptional dog, that I bought her at first sight in Trad from a customs official. Left entirely to herself she

caught fish and crabs on the seashore in shallow water, killed monkeys and pigs, stole poultry and retrieved it as if she had been trained for it and, best of all, killed snakes by biting them fast on the neck throwing them up in the air at the same time and biting them again before the stunned serpent had a chance to turn round. Great patience succeeded in turning this half-savage animal into an affectionate pet and very clever hunting dog. Unfortunately she came into my hands too old to be broken entirely from her greediness and thus she fell an easy prey to a tempting piece of poisoned meat thrown in by spiteful neighbours. These and many other observations have shown me that the native dogs do not at all deserve the contempt with which they are often treated. Closer investigations may reveal that our dogs here, generally summarised as "pariahs" have some common features, which might allow us to think that there existed an indigenous breed of Siamese dogs, perhaps or even probably, descended from and related to the "Mha Pa" or Siamese jungle dog.

That the particular strain of so called "Mha Si Savath" found several patrons in Bangkok and upcountry is very praiseworthy. Also the so-called "Siamese Ridge-back," which may or may not be a relative of the Rhodesian Ridge-back, according to a theory forwarded by Clifford L. Hubbard, the famous

English cynologist, deserves a closer study. The "Mha Haw" of the north, which may turn out to be a cousin of the Tibetan mastiff, would also be worth some money if clever breeders would take care of these alert and watchful dogs.

I still hold the belief pointed out in previous articles published in "Science," and elsewhere, that our native dogs could serve as outcrosses for European dogs and that both sides might gain from it. Without wanting to repeat myself I am now convinced more than ever before, that after only five generations of purposeful cross breeding and selecting, we could attain the almost ideal tropical working dog. This ideal would be a dog of the size of an Airdale terrier, the docility of an Alsatian, the gameness of a Dobermann pinscher, the faithfulness of a Labrador, the resourcefulness of a Retriever and the general health and sturdiness of a Siamese countrydog.

Today this is still an ideal. In ten years it can be a reality, if either the army or the police established a "dogs training centre" as is done in other countries, with the view of recruiting their canine soldiers and policemen from there, or if about 30-60 enthusiastic members of our "Society for the Breeding and Training of Working Dogs in Siam", which has to be established some day, would paint this ideal on their flag and breed up to it.