



THE ANTIQUITY OF THE BASENJI by Dr. David A. Schreiber, P.O. Box 366, Zephyrhills, Florida 33599

Accounts in pamphlets about Basenjis generally refer to his antiquity; a favorite phrase stating he was the companion of the Cave Man. I regarded this as probably true, but did not have pictorial or archeological evidence upon which to base such an assumption until now.

In the June 5th issue of the New York Times (Section 10 - page 1) there appears an article by David B. Ottawan about "Algeria's Stone Age Paintings." These frescoes were first made famous by the French Archeologist, Henri Lhote, who published a book about them in 1958. On the walls of the cliffs and caves of the Tassili N'Ajjer Mountains, the ancestor of present day man depicted for posterity the life they led, the gods they worshiped and the animals they raised and hunted and hunted with. The frescoes indicate that the Sahara was once a land of pastoral peoples, a land where giraffes, hippopotamuses, elephants and ostriches roamed and where the domestic dog existed. The inhabitants tilled gardens and made pottery, herds of cattle grazed everywhere and fish abounded in streams and rivers.

The paintings, dating back 6,000 years and probably much more, are of a beauty and finesse previously unsuspected of Stone Age Cave-dwellers. The red and yellow ochers have survived the centuries amazingly well, thanks to the Sahara's dry, rainless climate.

A photograph of one of these frescoes is presented in the article, with the caption "Hunter & Dog - Wall painting dating back 6,000 years indicates dogs were domesticated even then." The dog depicted by the Stone Age Artist, has pointed ears, long gazelle like legs and a curled tail. No great imagination is necessary to see our Basenji trailing game for his prehistoric master. Thus we have incontestable evidence of the existence of the Basenji in a Savannah like topography before the dawn of history.

Approximately 1,500 miles due East of the Tassili N'Ajjer Mountains, lies Egypt. It remains to be seen whether these ancient people of West Africa, did not bring the Basenjis to the court of the Pharaohs, instead of the first specimens being brought from the headwaters of the Nile, as is so popularly believed.

Section 10 of the New York Times (Sunday Edition) is devoted to "Travel". Precise directions are given on how to reach this now desolate region of the Sahara. Safari anyone!