

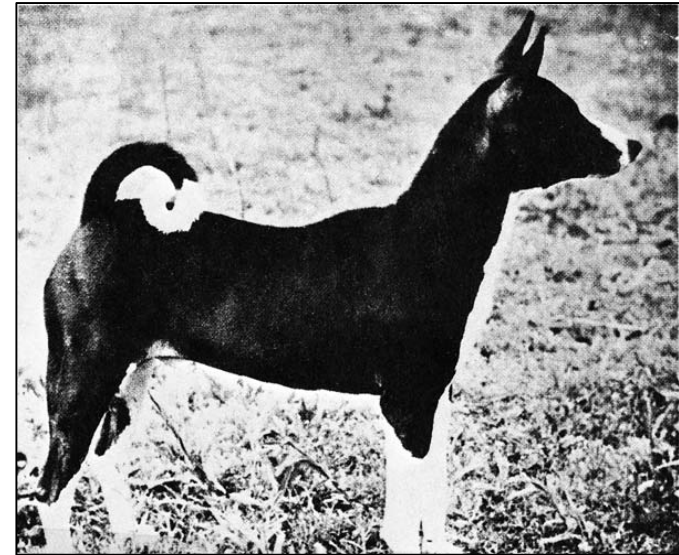
Elspet Ford’s Taysenji African Imports

In 1973 Elspet Ford did a write-up about her start in Basenjis. Part of that story is reproduced here.

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... In 1953 we went out to Northern Rhodesia accompanied by two small sons and, of course, Jenny the Smooth Fox Terrier. The story of our life in Africa with Jenny and all the other Fox Terriers doesn’t really come into the story of the Taysenji Kennels, so I will skip over that part.

One day, while walking in the main street of Kitwe, I met an American lady with two little dogs – one red and white; the other black and white. Though I had never seen a Basenji in the flesh before, I immediately knew what these two prick-eared, curly-tailed dogs were. We got talking, and Mrs. Sadler told me that she was a missionary’s wife and how the tribe they had been connected with in Liberia used Basenjis for hunting and as meat. On hindsight, I don’t remember knowing much about the breed at the time, but I must have read



SA Ch. Taysenji Tahzu

something about them somewhere—at least enough to create a fair degree of interest in them. I was fascinated by Mrs. Sadler’s stories and the dogs. Then, just after that meeting, there was an advertisement in the local paper: “Basenji dog looking for good home.” I couldn’t get to the address quickly enough, and I brought Zambi home with me.

Zambi of Andersely was, I think, bred in Africa by the sister of Mrs. Anderson of Andersley fame, but unfortunately I no longer have his pedigree. It seems to have gotten mislaid sometime during our travels. Anyway, he was a very handsome tir-color dog, and I now realize he was a very good specimen indeed. His previous owner’s reason for getting rid of him was that he would lie in the middle of a busy crossroads and let the cars find their way around him! That may well have been the truth,

but it was only half the story because it didn't take us long to find out that he had every evil habit that a Basenji ever thought of – and a few more that belonged to himself.

Editor's Note: In the pedigree database Zambi is shown as: Zambi of Lindsey (Tricolour M) S. Africa Andersley Antony (of Lindsey) x Andersley Awaal (of Lindsey)

He would tear the curtains, doors, walls and house to shreds if anyone was stupid enough to shut him in. As for kennels, they were demolished in a night, in between the screams and howls of rage and loneliness. He would have your hand as a tasty extra snack should you put it near his food while he was eating or if head something you wanted to take away from him. It was "sudden death" if you tried to dislodge him from your favourite chair, and he would fight to the end anything that was male with four legs, which, as we ran a boarding kennel and always had strange dogs about the place, was a bit awkward to say the least. The dislike of his own sex was the end of poor Zambi, as he tried to finish off one of our Alsatian boarders one day.

Strange to say, he was badly missed, as he was a dog of great character – hardly any of it good, but like all Basenjis, a great charmer in spite of his failings. I can remember him benched at dog shows howling the place down and other exhibitors shouting over the nose that they had always thought that Basenjis were noiseless!

Before he met his unfortunate end, we had mated him to Mrs. Sadler's black bitch, Miliku, (*Editor's Note: She was a native African*) from whom we got a litter of four pups. At this stage, Mrs. Sadler and I went into partnership, and the "Taysenji" prefix was born: "Tay" being Loma for "black" and the "senji" part is self-explanatory.

The best of the black dogs that Sambi sired was booked to go to South Africa to Mr. Bert Blewett of the Bessemer Basenjis, and in exchanged I was to get a red bitch of his breeding. As often seems to happen, the black dog Taysenji Dopa had an accident just before he was due

to leave for the Union. He ran into a thorn bush and badly injured one of his eyes. As he was the very best of the litter in spite of his injury, we decided to go ahead and send him down to Mr. Blewett. He was badly needed as a stud dog. The Basenji population of South Africa as very small, and a great deal on inbreeding had, of necessity, taken place.



Bert Blewett with black/white Basenjis, in 1965.

Bert Blewett with his Basenjis in South Africa in 1965
Photo from Elspet Ford's book: **The Complete Basenji.**

Mr. Blewett did well with Dopa (means “hunter”) and only needed one CC for his championship when the judges decided that he had lost sight in the injured eye and withheld the award. A lot of the South African dogs being shown today are descended from Dopa, a Coptokin bitch who was litter sister to my Coptokin Copper Beautique and a couple of Fula dogs that were imported by an American couple who were employed on the first American satellite tracking project.

In return for Dopa I got back a little red bitch, Timsha of Bessemer, who mated to Mrs. Sadler’s red male, Kogi, and gave me my first ever champion, South African Champion Tassenji Titema.

Kolgi means “stomach” in Loma, and if ever a dog was well named, that one was. He loved his stomach and the things that went into it – he was a real fat Basenji. Roslyn tells a lovely story of how when they got him first in the Liberian village where the Sadlers were missionaries, Kogi was a really fat little puppy, and one day he went missing. Roslyn feared the he might end up in someone’s cooking pot, as the Loma people were one of the tribes that ate Basenjies for meat. So she called the local witch doctor, threatened him with a lot more magic than he was capable of if anything should happen to the pup and sent him to warn the villagers. I due course, the pup was returned home, and ever after that there was a very bewildered puppy in the village. He couldn’t understand that nobody wanted to talk to him when he went visiting their fires. The Africans were taking no chances!

Around this time Rosyln and I decided it was time we got some more Basenjies, so we arranged to get two puppies from Miss Mary Miller in Monrovia. The two dogs that arrived were Tahzu the black one and his red brother Kopagi. Tahzu went on to become the first black Basenji dog champion in the Southern Hemisphere – he obtained his championship on 4 August 1963.



Tahzu above and litter mate Kopagi below.

Miss Miller, who is attached to the Lutheran Mission in Liberia, had been interested in the little dog for many years and had been breeding them for some time. Thought the dogs were not registered with any kennel club, she did keep pedigrees. She kept Basenjjs because she loved them.

About a year after Tahzu's arrival, we had his father, Fisibu, flown down to us. Tahzu had impressed us so much with all his good qualities, temperament, coat, length of leg and his wonderful independent nature that we had thoughts of breeding Fisibu to one of our bithces. But as things turned out, that was not to be. Fisibu was a small, stocky little red dog with a beautiful coat and nature. He accepted the change in his environment without a qualm, and his yodel was a joy to hear; but while he was with me in Kitwe, he had a most amazing escape.

In those far off days, all of ten years ago, we had no electric light on the farm, only Tilley lamps. One night after we had all gone to be and the lamps were out, Fisibu dashed out from his sleeping place under my bed and there was the sound of a terrible dog fight. Grabbing my torch, we found Fisibu and the Doberman from the next farm in the middle of a ding dong fight with Fisibu getting by far the worst of it. The Basenji tore himself free of a throat hold and fled inside the blood pouring from him. I dashed after him in pitch darkness.

I tied the first piece of material I could find round his throat and picked up his limp body; and then we drove like mad over bush roads for ten miles to find the one and only veterinary surgeon. We woke him and held a very shaky lamp while he examined the dog. He found the jugular vein had been completely severed, but somehow when I had put the bandage round his neck I had bent over the end of the vein that was nearest the heart, thus stopping the blood from pumping out. It was more than a million to one chance.

After that, as soon as Fisibu was fit to travel we sent him home. We felt we might be taking a chance keeping him any longer. As it happened, he did die about a year later – in a dog fight!

During 1963, I had a lot of correspondence with Mrs. Stannich of the Coptokin Basenjjs in America, and she sent out two of Ch. Andersley Atlantic's daughters: one, Coptokin Copper Beautique, to stay with me; the other to go to Bert Blewett in South Africa.

Beauty became my pride and joy. I was always distressed that we left Africa before I could make her up. She actually won enough CCs, but two of them were while she was still under nine months old and therefore could not be counted. She died about three years ago, but most of my present Basenjjs are descended from her and Tahzu.

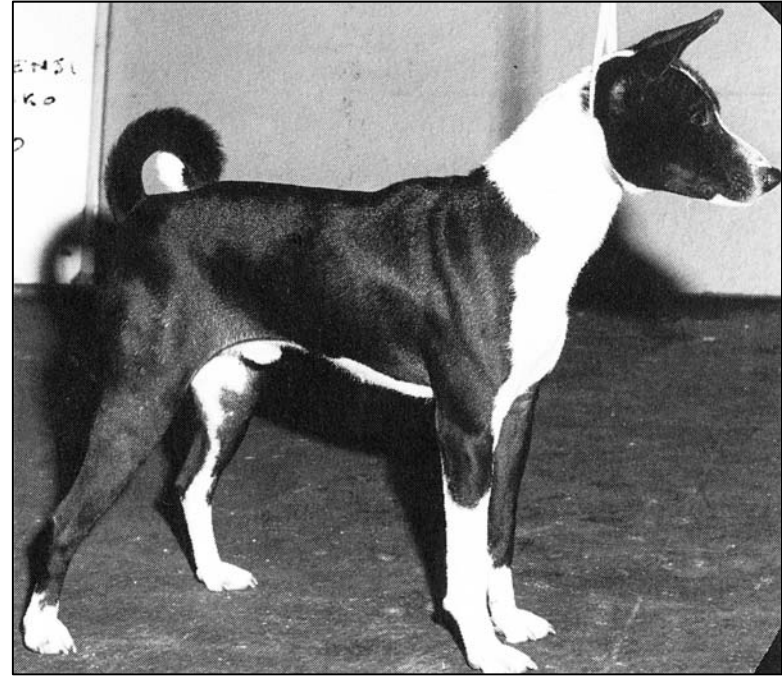
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In 1965, we thought it better that we bring the children back to England to complete their education. The family had now grown to four boys, and we did not consider that Zambia was the right place for us any longer. I mated Beauty to Taysenji Tigee, a black son of Tahzu and Titema, and sent Tahzu, Beauty and Titema back to England and their stint in quarantine. Beauty's pups were allowed to leave the kennels at ten weeks old. That was the litter that produced Samogi and Miss Campbell's Tuyey. The two blacks in the litter went to Gwen Stannich in the States.

If you go to the pedigree database website you will find how many African native dogs are woven in the Taysenji pedigrees.

Taysenji Tahzu

As written by Elsept Ford from Veronica Tudor-Williams 1976 book: *"Tahzu was a proud upstanding dog, with long fine-boned legs, well set-on tail with a single loose curl. Straight in stifle, loaded in shoulder ... Fine velvety coat, dark almond eyes and a reasonable frown. Ears well set, and medium sized. Excellent movement with a long swinging stride; temperament first rate."* Sire of first black and white Basenji in Western Hemisphere in his son, Eng. Ch. Taysenji Yoko.



*Eng. Ch. Taysenji Yoko
was the first black and white champion outside of Africa.*