The Story: Kindu and Kasenyi

The story started in the USA with the article on this page in “Life” “Animals” on 22 September 1941, pages 66-67. This is from page 67 while page 66 was a large photo of a single young gorilla.
Summary of the Story of Kindu and Kasenyi

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In 1941 a consignment of gorillas arrived in New York by ship with two unusual passengers aboard. They were Basenjis, one male and one female, later known as Kindu and Kasenyi. The gorillas were imported by Henry Trefflich, a wild animal importer: the dogs had been placed aboard the ship by Mr. Carroll, an employee of Mr. Trefflich. Mr. Carroll had seen Basenjis in the French Congo and thought perhaps American fanciers would be interested in this unusual breed. He had originally collected eleven dogs to be shipped but just prior to sailing seven of the dogs escaped and only these two survived the voyage. Mr. Trefflich exhibited the dogs at the 1942 Westminster Kennel Club Show under the name of ‘Congo’ and ‘Libra’ and they appeared on a poster taken from a portrait by James Montgomery Flagg.

The two were unwanted by Eastern Basenji fanciers, according to Walter Philo, as they were quite different from the dogs imported from England – considerably smaller and more compact. (Kindu – then called Congo – was reportedly 14” square.) Since he had been unable to place them in the East, Mr. Trefflich sent them out to Goebel’s Wild Animal Farm in Thousand Oaks, California.

(Note: These two dogs were probably smaller than the dogs imported from England; however the size differential was quite probably due to their being direct African imports. Amatangazig of the Congo was 14 ½ inches tall and Fula of the Congo was 15 inches. The subsequent generations of imported dogs tended to be more towards our current size range.)
Mrs. John Taaffe of San Anselmo, California became interested in the breed and contacted Mr. Trefflich for further information. He referred her to the two imports at the Animal Farm. Tess Taaffe was at the time a breeder of Gordon Setters under the kennel name of Martinero, and was later approved to judge sporting breeds, Afghan Hounds, Beagles, Bloodhounds, Norwegian Elkhounds and Basenjis. In March 1943 Mrs. Taaffe purchased the two dogs and renamed the male ‘Kindu’ and the female ‘Kasenyi’. It appears that she did not exhibit Kasenyi, possible as she was reportedly an older dog, but showed Kindu at the Golden Gate’s Show, with attendant publicity on the “Barkless Dog from Africa.” She sent him to New York in 1945 where he was placed first in the Miscellaneous Class under Alva Rosenberg, and later he took four Bests of Breed at California shows.

In July of 1945 Kindu was placed second in the Hound Group under Judge Derek Rayne.

Kindu and Kasenyi appeared on the cover of Western Kennel World magazine in February 1946 and an advertisement inside offers one female and four male puppies, sired by Kindu out of Kasenyi whelped December 10th, 1945. The males were 250 dollars apiece and the female was 350 dollars. Although this was the third litter they had produced for Mrs. Taaffe, it was the only one registered. (They may also have a litter – either on shipboard, or shortly after arriving in New York which did not survive; I was unable to verify this.) Kindu and Kasenyi were individually registered in April 1946; both were listed as having been born in 1940, with Mrs. Taaffe as the owner. Kindu was described as “tan and white” and Kasenyi as “chestnut and white.”

The puppies in the litter were all registered as “chestnut and white,” in May 1946. Their names were Kasenyo (for the bitch), Kingolo, Kindulo, Kinsuto and Kintoto – all owned by Mrs. Taaffe. Following the death of John Taaffe (a prominent criminal attorney), his wife sold Kindu and Kasenyi to Helen and Lyle Vaught of Koko Crater kennel in Hawaii. The pair produced another litter on January 5th 1947, from which only one puppy was registered, a male, Akamai of Koko Crater, chest and white. Kindu was killed by a car and Kasenyi died of old age, but I was unable to get any further specifics.

Prior to the move to Hawaii, Kindu was bred to two other bitches. On November 26th 1945, Gayety of Sirrah Crest whelped a litter from which three were registered: Kindu of How Gert, male, fawn with white marks; Baria of Kin-Gay, female, fawn with white markings, and Bombo of Kin-Gay, male, registered as “black.” A litter out of Safari, bred by Frank Gorsuch, was whelped May 6th 1946. Two dogs were registered from this litter: Bandundu, male, dark red fawn with white markings and Safari’s Puella, female, chest with white markings. Of the offspring of Kindu and Kasenyi, this is the only litter I could verify.
Kasenyi (including Kindu’s two other litters) only four had litters registered in the studbook. Ch. Kingolo is behind many great breeding programs and kennels on both sides of the Atlantic. Together with his sister Kasenyo, he produced a litter of seven for Hallwyre Kennels (Forest Hall), many of whom finished their titles.

Kindulo was the only other one of that first registered litter to produce registered offspring. He was purchased by Koko Crater Kennels and together with his younger brother, Akamai of Koko Crater, he produced a line of dogs ancestral to the kennels of Rancho Rest, Tersenji, Story Book and Khajah. The first Best in Show Basenji in the United States (in Hawaii) was Philo’s Blaze of Koko Crater, sired by Akamai of Koko Crater, out of a Kundulo daughter – with Akamai of Koko Crater as a great grandsire on the dam’s side.

In the course of my search for information on Kindu, Kasenyi and their owner, Tress Taaffe, I have compiled some personal comments from people who knew Mrs. Taaffe and Kind (Kasenyi apparently spent her time at home with puppies). According to Eleanor Bird, the dog was capable of quite a scream, and caused problems with Mrs. Taaffe’s neighbours. When I contacted Juliet Rosemount Trissell and asked if she had know Tress Taaffe, she replied that she had known her so well that at one show Mrs. Trissell sneaked up and slipped the lead off Tress’s dog, carrying it away (as a joke.) And the dog – you guessed it – was Kindu.

She describes his temperament as friendly with those he knew, standoffish with those he didn’t. He was fine in the ring, but didn’t really like having his mouth looked at. She explained that he had a coat similar to a Smooth Fox Terrier, very close and a very good rust color like that on a Doberman Pinscher. She also remembered him as having a very good tail. Derek Rayne remembered placing Kindu in the group, but unfortunately was not able to give me a specific critique of the one dog. He mentioned that “the breed was not as elegant as they are today.” He also noticed “the improvement in gait since that time,” but noted “the breed is often lacking in wrinkles and/or breed expression.” He remembers “the earlier dogs were seldom tricolors – mostly red with less white than today.” The movement lacked “the drive of today’s dogs.” He finds “that the Basenji is one of the few breeds that overall has improved since… (he has) been judging 40 plus years.”
A 1941 letter from George Gilkey to Alexander Phemister:

When in New York I called on Trefflich and saw his dogs he still had them all as he sold none. He asks 250 for males and 200 for females. They are a nice lot of dogs but the color runs more to a brown shade about the color of your pups. One old male is small, no larger than the pups which were born on shipboard. I do not know just when but they landed on September 5th. The other old dogs are standard size but all very fat. He keeps them on the third floor of a city building along with a lot of wild animals. They lack exercise. I did not talk with him but with his assistant who said the boss was not a dog man that he was provoked when the agent brought these dogs over. If you know of some one that wanted the lot it would not surprise me if you could buy them cheap. They were all of good dispositions except the small male. If you are exhibiting dogs you might make a deal with him to handle his dogs as he knows nothing about the game and would welcome some help I believe.

I saw a Pygmy group in the museum of natural History that contained a stuffed Basenji of a smaller strain about two thirds size. The account mentioned that they were prized as highly as a wife. This dog had a wooden bell on it.

Phil Carroll’s Story of the Gorillas and Basenjis

Phil Carroll, who had observed the barkless dogs of central Africa on many a journey through steamy jungle as agent for the great zoological gardens, wrote that the Basenjis “is about the size of a terrier, has beautiful short, shiny-brown hair, a little white on its chest, and its tail is like a pig’s tail in that it is wrapped like a doughnut.” Thinking that their unusual and attractive characteristics would appeal most certainly to U.S. dog-lovers, he secured for his next trip to the United States, 11 specimens that he considered typical of their race. He was not aware that a Basenji fancy was already in its toddling stage in the Western Hemisphere. The year was 1941.

Mr. Carroll kept his dogs in Brazzaville, French Congo. Unfortunately for future Basenjidom, seven escaped in a kennel upset shortly before sailing time. Of the four that crossed the Atlantic, a mature bitch and a handsome young male would eventually have a great influence on the Basenji breed in the civilized world. Their travelling companions were eight baby gorillas. Dogs and apes were the best of friends. Two of the gorillas were the famous Makoto and Oka that would soon make their home in the Bronx Park Zoo. Four other were bound for St. Louis and two for San Diego.

The bitch was known as Libra and the young dog as Congo (not to be identified with another African registered as Phemister’s Congo) and as such they were entered “For Exhibition Only” at the Westminster K.C. Show in 1942. A short time after their arrival, the little foreigners posed for a painting by James Montgomery Flagg, which was later featured on a poster of the period.
Ironically, none of the Basenji fanciers who saw them wanted them. It was felt that, even if they were authentic, they were not typical of the larger, rangier and flashier Basenjis that had come into England several years before and whose progeny were now being exported to the United States and Canada. The dog, for instance, was only about 14 inches in height and was considered absurdly square for he was also only 14 inches long.

Unwanted in the East, the two small immigrants were shipped to an animal farm in California, where they were acquired by Mrs. John Taaffe. Mrs. Taaffe registered the male as Kindu, naming him after a town in east central Belgian Congo, and the bitch, Kasenyi for a lake Kivu port in Ruanda-Urandi. However, neither place was within 1,500 miles of the actual habitat of these two Africans.

Until February 1958 nobody in the Basenji Club of America had ever been sure of the general area in which Basenjis of this type were to be found.

For Libra, that became Kasenyi, and Congo, that became Kindu, were not from the Belgian Congo at all but from the deep interior of the French Congo—actually from the gorilla country beyond Makoua Station, which at that time was “the last outpost.” Here Basenjis had gone wild or had always been wild, the usual bond between dog and man (even primitive man) being tenuous indeed. If one wanted a hunting dog, he simply went into the forest, obtained a pup and trained it, and considerable training was required inasmuch as these dogs were omnivorous, a major part of their diet being tropical fruit. Nevertheless, they made excellent hunting dogs.

Mrs. Taaffe sent Kindu back to New York in 1945 to compete at Westminster, where he placed first in the Miscellaneous Class under Alva Rosenberg. He was later entered in four California shows, going best of breed at each one. At Vallejo, in July 1945, he was placed second in Group by Derek G. Rayne, a courageous man ten years ahead of his time. Though Kasenyi whelped several litters by Kindu, only four of her pups were used to perpetuate her contribution to the breed. Her son and daughter, Kingolo and Kasenyo were to be the foundation stock of Forest Hall’s Basenji kennel. Kingolo would have a very successful career, becoming a champion, going BB for two successive years at Westminster and, siring a long line of champions on both sides of the Atlantic, would spend a happy old age with Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Williams at the Syngefiled Kennels in Ireland.

It was not till February 1958 that Mr. Carroll learned that his dogs had become an important part of the Basenji foundation stock. He had never heard of Am. Ch. Kingolo. He did not even know who Kindu and Kasenyi were until I identified them as the Basenjis that he brought from Africa 17 years before.
Breeding Record:

**Kindu** (A984201) x **Kasenyi** (A984200)
- Akamai of Koko Crater {M} H99734 USA 5 Jan 1947
- Kasenyo {F} A987150 USA 10 Dec 1945
- Am Ch Kindulo {M} A987151 USA 10 Dec 1945
- Am Ch Kingolo {M} A987152 USA 10 Dec 1945
- Kinsuto {M} A987153 USA 10 Dec 1945
- Kintoto {M} A987154 USA 10 Dec 1945

**Kindu** was also bred to:

**Safari**
- Bandundu {M} H030150 USA 6 May 1946
- Safari’s Puella {F} H31457 USA 6 May 1946

**Gayety of Sirrah Crest**
- Baria of Kin-Gay {F} H009094 USA 26 Nov 1945
- Bombo of Kin-Gay {Black Tan & White M} H012228 USA 26 Nov 1945
- Kindu of How-Gert {M} H12227 USA 26 Nov 1945

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Above is a clipping from Dog World of Forrest Hall with son of Ch. Kingolo x Kasenyo, Kingolo’s Kan Du.
Photos of 3 additional sons of Kingolo and Kasenyo who were born 8 November 1947: Kasenyo was also from a litter by Kindu and Kasenyi.

Top Ch. Kingolo Kontender
Lower left: Ch. Kingolo Kan Kan
Lower Right: Kingolo Karefree