

The photograph of the so-called "Mycenaean" statuette was selected by German author Martin Wilckens to illustrate the 'Pommer or Spitz Dog' in his book on domestic pets. Here is what he had to say – below which is a synopsis of his views in English.

Der Spitz oder Pommer – from 'Grundzüge der Naturgeschichte der Haustiere' by Martin Wilckens. Published in the late 1890s.

Schon aus den Zeiten Griechenlands und aus altrömischer Zeit sind uns vielfache bildliche Darstellungen dieser Hunderasse erhalten, die auch heutzutage noch ziemlich häufig als Wachhund gehalten wird. Der Spitz ist ein meist kleiner Hund, mit kurzen Läufen und aufrecht getragendem, spiralig gewundenem Schwanz. Die spitze Schnauze ist verhältnismäßig kurz, die kurzen Ohren stehen ganz aufrecht. Das Haar ist glatt an Kopf und Läufen, am übrigen Körper sehr lang, mähnenartig am Halse und von rein weißer, seltener gelber, grauer und schwarzer Farbe; die weißen Spitze haben eine schwarze Nase. Durch Kreuzung des Spitzes mit dem Malteser ist der Seidenspitz entstanden, dessen langes, weißes Haar von seidenerartiger Weichheit ist.

There are to be found many representations of this breed in images from the times of ancient Greece and the Romans and nowadays they are still frequently kept and valued as watchdogs

The Spitz is mostly a smaller dog, with short legs and a spiral wound tail carried upright. The pointed muzzle is relatively short, the small ears stay upright. The hair is smooth on the head and legs, and very long on the rest of the body, mane-like on the neck and is pure-white, sometimes tan, grey and black coloured – the white Spitzes have a black nose. Through crossing the Spitz and the Maltese the Seidenspitz originated, their long, white hair is of the silky type and soft. [7]

NOTES :

1 - Pliny the Elder wrote 'Next to these Corcyra, surnamed Melaena; with the town of Guidii, distant 22 miles: between which and Illyricum is Melita, from whence (as Callimachus testifieth) the little dogs Melitaeni took their name' - Note Corcyra is modern day Corfu.



Further evidence of Illyrian origin is provided by Lucius Paulus (229-160BC) a Roman general. He was worried upon hearing some Illyrian tribes were to join the Macedonians in war against Rome. Upon returning to his house he found his young daughter in tears as her beloved, little dog Perseus had died. But he considered this a good omen! – being, like most Romans, very superstitious. Clearly the death of a dog associated with Illyrians portended its people may be equally doomed.

2 - Bryant writing in the mid- 1700s wrote 'The Catuli Melitensis of Callimachus is an Illyrian breed ... very common in Magna Graecia and those places that had any correspondence with Greek colonies in the Adriatic, but, of all others, they were in greatest esteem among the Sybarites, the most languid and indolent people upon earth, who made these animals attend them to the baths, carrying in their mouths the little implements for bathing.'

3. – From – 'Conquest by Man' by Paul Herrmann, published in 1954

4 – I Quattro Libri Della Caccia by Tito Giovanni Scandianese published in Italy, 1554.

5 –Charles Darwin sourced Bechstein in 'The Origin of the Species' in Ch VII on Hybridism he noted, 'For when it is stated, for instance, that the German Spitz Dog unites more easily than other dogs with foxes ...' Aristotle was probably the first person to theorise about Fox/ Dog crossbreeds.

6 - Other names include the Italian Pomeranian, the Italian Spitz dog, the Florentine Spitz (cane de Firenze), the Volpino or Vulpino Romano & the cane del Quirinale. Romano & Quirinale refer to the ancient Roman roots. Victorian authors have also used the term 'lupette' or 'lupettes'- meaning small wolf – the Italians called the Keeshond/Wolfspitz the Lupino. From this name it is possible the French name for a small Spitz 'Loulou' developed. In a 1921 edition of the American magazine Dogdom there is an article about the Florentine Spitz or Pomeranian. For regional names of non-Italian 'Poms' please see FAQ page.

7. It is puzzling why Johann Haller in 1757 considered the Maltese to be the Bolognese dog and usually coloured white or red. Bechstein (1799) also considered the 'dog of Malta' to be the Bolognese, Bichon or Shock dog. He added all types of small Schooshündchen were developed by interbreeding small Spitzes, Pugs and Poodles!

Here is a selection of early images – some are featured in Toy Dogs and Their Ancestors by the Hon. Mrs J Lytton (Lady Wentworth) 1911 – others can be found in C19th Dog or History books. Most breed books as of the 1950s usually feature at least one of these well-known images.

Below: Interesting image dating from the Etruscan era - recovered from a site in Italy's Maremma Tuscany area (west coast) - about 2400 years old. Full of symbolism - note the drawing on the amphora of the same type of dog listening intently to the wise words of an older man. Most likely indicating respect for traditional values of those who have gone before. Image from M Denlinger's book ' The Complete Pomeranian' published 1950. Originally illustrated in the Annali dell Instituto di Correspondenza Archaeologica.