



Fig. 24. Terracottastatuette eines Spitzes aus mykenischer Zeit von Kittion (Cypern).

AN EVALUATION OF EARLY SPITZ /POMERANIAN DOG IMAGES IN GREEK, ETRUSCAN AND ROMAN ART

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AN EVALUATION OF EARLY SPITZ /POMERANIAN DOG IMAGES IN GREEK, ETRUSCAN AND ROMAN ART

Article by Vivienne Peterson B.A. Copyright March 2011

As many of you will know Victorian/ Edwardian era breeders in Britain and North America considered all the breeds now classified by the FCI as European Spitz as Pomeranians - viz. all 5 sizes of German Spitz (including the Pomeranian) and the Italian Volpino. The modern Pomeranian was developed by inter-breeding the smaller types with a little infusion in some lines of pre-existing dogs previously imported at an earlier time. Additionally as the Seidenspitz is known to have been sometimes shown as a Pomeranian in Britain it may have been incorporated in some lines.



There are many examples of small Spitz dogs in existence, depicted on vases, funerary steles, frescoes and small statuettes dating back to the ancient Greek, Etruscan and Roman civilizations. Most examples date from after 500BC but there is one little figurine, (left) identified by Lady Wentworth and displayed in the British Museum, that apparently dates from about 800BC or earlier.

The photograph, at the top of this page, is of a terracotta statuette of a small Spitz Dog and the original can be found in the Louvre Museum in Paris. It was found in the ruins of Citium in Cyprus (modern day Larnaca) and was attributed in Wilckens' book (late 1890s) as dating from Mycenaean Greek (Mykenischer) occupation in Citium between 1300BC to 1100BC. Unfortunately, stylistically the little model appears to be about 600 years younger - and this is probably apparent by comparing it to the dog figure above from 800BC.

Lady Wentworth (Judith Lytton) presented a strong case in her 1911 book 'Toy Dogs and Their Ancestors' for the development of smaller (European) Spitz dogs - Pomeranians - in Greece and Italy. Her case, substantiated by references to the Classics and Antiquities, is in my view further strengthened by evaluating archaeological finds and in recent times by the results of various genetic studies on the origin, early domestication and inter-relationship of dogs.

The European Spitz is believed to have descended from the Turbary dog of central Europe. Ludwig Rüttemeyer used the term *Canis familiaris palustris* (Torfspitz) to classify dog remains found while excavating various sites of early Swiss Lake Dwellings (Pfahlbau). By careful examination of the remains it was decided some were comparable in size to the fox or jackal. Although there is no evidence of coat or colour it is thought they