

**W**HILST northern European man was still living in caves in a very primitive stage of development, the golden valley of the Nile was teeming with the activities of a relatively advanced civilisation, the land was tilled and irrigated, great temples built and speech preserved by a form of writing in signs and pictures. From this picture-writing we have been able to learn a great deal about the hunting dogs of Ancient Egypt, many of the pictures depicting hounds or hunting dogs very much like the Basenji, Saluki and Great Dane of today. For several thousand years before Christ, when the Khufu Dog and Bahakaa, the white hound of Antefa II, were so prized, the countryside, flora and fauna of Egypt was vastly different from today. Lush vegetation in which game abounded was the order of the day and it is quite incorrect to depict ancient Egypt in stark desert conditions, as some modern breed historians do.

The naturalist, Keller, considers that all greyhounds descended from a common source and identifies Ethiopia as the seat of its formative years. This theory develops to show the greyhound spreading first to Egypt and from there to Europe and Asia during the Pharaonic period and thence evolving into different breeds and regional varieties. Another expert, Kallmeyer Belin, considers Assyria as the geographical area of origin for the greyhound, relying on the pictorial representations discovered there by archaeologists reaching back 7,000 years. Certainly, two thousand years before Christ, in Babylon, Phoenicia and both lower and upper Egypt, hunting dogs built like modern greyhounds but usually with high-carried curling tails and bat-ears, were utilised by man in the fertile valleys of the Tigris, the Euphrates and the Nile. In the subsequent commercial development and climatic changes in these areas, the Basenji-type hunting dogs disappeared but were retained in the upper Nile, the Sudan and across the trade routes to the Congo. Called variously the Congo terrier, Bongo, Nyam-Nyam and Zande dogs, they have been linked in skull formation, ear and tail carriage and coat and colour inheritance with the hunting dogs of Ancient Egypt, as Professor Thomas Noack's writings for the Zoological Society have shown. A barkless hunting-dog, the Basenji does however have a coat, unlike the African hair-less dogs and so-called Abyssinian "sand-terriers", introduced into Britain some sixty years ago.

Buffon has claimed that all breeds have either preserved their primitive characteristics or not, according to their environment, the role given to them by man, the climatic conditions and, in particular, their degree of isolation. The contrast between the Basenji, for

(continued on page 20)



Cirneco Dell' Etna . . . The "Lurcher" of Sicily.

## Hunting Dogs of the Mediterranean

by David Hancock



Modern Basenji.



Photo: Garwood A contemporary Ibizan Hound. Photo: Garwood