

An Expert's Guide to the SHIH TZU

By Juliette Cunliffe



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CREDITS

All photos by Carol Ann Johnson
www.carolannjohnson.com
and from the Author's archive collection

INTRODUCTION



As many readers of will perhaps know, I am already a well-established author with over 50 dog books published in hardback, many of them also with editions in different languages. There are several in German and Spanish, and one of my Shih Tzu books has even appeared in Russian, so it may come as some surprise that I have decided to publish this, my first EBook. Let me explain why...

I am a Championship Show judge and often when officiating abroad people have asked if I have any of my books with me for them to buy. The answer is generally "No" as books are heavy to carry and I rarely keep a stock of them at home. In some countries I know dog lovers simply thirst for books, but they can be difficult to get hold of in countries where canine titles are low on the scale of publisher's priorities.

But in these days of internet technology, most things seem possible, and I hope that through this book, and others that will follow in the series, I am able to share my knowledge with fellow dog lovers throughout the world. In an EBook there is no weight, and therefore no high postage cost, and with no printing fees costs can be kept to a minimum, so it is a 'win win' situation for all of us.

Even in countries where dog books are readily available, often the book you want is not in stock. You can order it, yes, but that takes time and if you are trying to forge ahead with research about the breed you wish to obtain there is great benefit in buying on-line and receiving your book without delay.

This also means that this EBook is a perfect purchase for those who have just acquired their new puppy. Obviously owners should have read as much as possible about a breed before reaching that stage, but they may have just borrowed books from a library and it is essential always to keep breed information readily at hand.

In no way am I suggesting that having an EBook means that you should not also have at least one hard-back book about your breed. Nothing, in my view, can compare with the feel of a book as you lovingly turn the pages, year after year. But

then I am a book collector, and I realize that not everyone feels the same way as I do. I now live in Nepal and brought almost my entire library over here by air-freight—that's how much I love books!

But compiling an Ebook gives an author total control over its content. I have worked with some great publishers over decades, but sometimes they are not 'dog people', so although there is never any issue with verbal content, there can sometimes be differences of opinion as to the photos my books contain. In this respect I am fortunate enough to work with one of the world's most renowned canine photographers, Carol Ann Johnson, whose photos will pack the following pages. Added to these will be a few from my own personal archives, including some extremely rare images you may not have seen before.

So here I leave you to absorb the pages that follow. At the close of the book you will find a list of some hard copy books that you may like to obtain in the future.

Enjoy!

Juliette Cunliffe - 2011

A Peep into the Shih Tzu's History

The Shih Tzu is an attractive long-haired Asian breed, its ancestors hailing from Tibet and later from China.

Although China and Tibet have rarely lived in harmony, there have been times when the Chinese and Tibetans have co-operated with each other. Tibetan nobles sometimes took Chinese brides of royal rank, largely for diplomatic reasons, so it is logical that gifts were exchanged between people of these two great cultures. Tibet is considered the earliest ancestral home of the Shih Tzu, because dogs were given at tribute gifts for safe passage from Tibet to China, the long journey by caravan taking eight to ten months.

In centuries gone by, the Tibetan Lhasa Apso, believed to be the reincarnation of a monk that had erred in a previous life, it was never sold but was sometimes gifted to the Chinese.

The ancestral homes of both the Shih Tzu and Lhasa Apso have been steeped in Buddhism, in which the mythological snow lion plays an important part. The white snow lion, considered the king of animals, is believed so powerful that when it roars seven dragons fall out of the sky. It is with this remarkable creature that

both breeds have long been connected.



Snow Lions painted on the wall of a monastery in Tibet

Tibetans have always drawn a clear distinction between the 'true' lion and the 'dog' lion, but have not been so clear about the naming of their breeds. Undoubtedly some crossing took place between the various Tibetan breeds; even today it is possible to breed together two fully coated Lhasa Apsos or Shih Tzu, and to produce one or more puppies looking like pure-bred Tibetan Spaniels, a breed with a much shorter-coat and distinct structural differences. This may come as something of a shock, but is clearly a throwback to earlier days and still crops very occasionally.



Pekingese from a Chinese scroll

So we know that the Shih Tzu goes back to dogs of Tibetan origin, but we must also now look at the dogs which were then in China and with which these dogs were crossed.

CHINESE BACKGROUND

Tracing the Shih Tzu's formative years in China is no easy task.

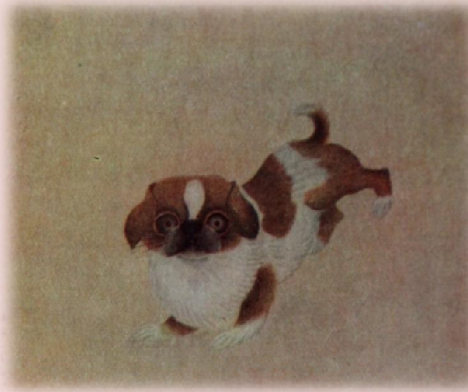
The 'square dogs' which were accepted by a Chinese Emperor in 1760 BC, are believed to have been of Chow Chow type, although we do not know their size. However in 500 BC, there are known to have been not only dogs which followed their masters' chariot, but others with short mouths. Because they were carried in the carts we can safely assume that they were fairly small. It has been said that the nasal bones of puppies in China were broken with chop sticks to shorten them, although the skull of an early short-nosed dog housed in the British Museum has naturally short nose, the bones unbroken.

By the end of the first century AD, Chinese Emperors took an interest in small dogs, and the Pai dog was kept under the very low Chinese tables. Such tiny dogs were given great honours and high literary or military rank was bestowed on them. They slept on carpets and ate the choicest meats, even having soldiers to guard them.

As the centuries progressed dogs believed to resemble lions were commonly bred in people's homes, and there is a story of one emperor loving them so much that he stole them from his subjects. There were, though, various small breeds of dog in China, amongst them the Pekingese and the Pug, and by 1820 we know that the cult of the lapdog reigned supreme. The tiniest dogs were known as 'sleeve dogs', and these were kept in people's voluminous sleeves. Their growth was stunted by artificial means; their food supply restricted and they were kept in cages until maturity.



Chinese Pug painted 1686 - 1766



Pekinese dog painted 1686 - 1766

DOWAGER EMPRESS TZU HSI

Dowager Empress Tzu Hsi was a great dog lover, and thankfully objected to artificial dwarfing, so these tiny dogs fell out of fashion. She kept over a hundred Pekingese, fed on an extraordinarily fastidious diet for she liked them to be 'dainty in their food'. Their diet consisted of such delicacies as sharks' fins and curlews' livers, antelope milk, the juice of custard apple, rhinoceros horn and the clarified fat of sacred leopard. In an

effort to stub their noses, the Empress stroked and massaged the olfactory organs of her dogs, and they chewed on leather tightly stretched on a frame.



Dowager Empress Tzu Hsi

In 1908 His Holiness the Dalai Lama presented her with several dogs from Tibet. These were similar to the breed of 'lion dog' then seen in Peking; she called them her 'Shih Tzu Kou'. The Empress did not breed them with her Pekingese, but following her death soon after, the palace eunuchs continued to breed and it is likely that some crosses then took place. It is generally believed that the eunuchs bred three types of short-nosed dogs, the Pug, Pekingese and another long-haired dog known as the Shih Tzu.