

This excerpt is the THIRD PART of the article from the dissertation of Miklos Letay, who graduated from the Department of Ethnography of ELTE (Eotvos Lorentz Science University) in Budapest, Hungary. His dissertation advisor was Professor Istvan Talasi. The three-part article was originally published in the Hungarian dog magazine, "A Kutya" in 1970.

It is a good read to learn about the history and development of the Pumi and other Hungarian pastoral breeds.

"The Working Dog" by Miklos Letay "A Kutya" ("The Dog" monthly magazine) 1970

PART 3

Chaining watch dogs was not practiced back in the 19th century. People believed that a tied up dog cannot be useful to do his job protecting his owner's property, especially during the night or while the owners were away from home. For the same reason today, people let their dogs roam free, even though, local ordinances requires dogs to be confined or restrained on the property by law for 60-70 years.

Those who obey the laws and chain their dogs, have a well justified reason for it: The dog might be aggressive, the owner simply obey local dog laws, the area is safe and there is no need to use watch dogs so they have pets. Confining dogs keep them from wandering off, prevents from undesired breeding with strays, eliminates the chance of chasing and killing poultry or other livestock and helps to avoid contracting diseases outside of the property. When a dog is tied up, they might use a rope, leather, wire or a metal collar that is attached to a rope or metal chain of a certain length. The other end of the chain is tied to a tree or an anchor secured into the ground.

By 1920 people started using running lines which gave more freedom to the dog. This new setup, somewhat enlarged the area where the dog could move and provide limited protection of the property.

In part to prevent free roaming livestock guardian dogs from chasing wildlife, lawmakers introduced conservation laws in 1883. The new laws made the owners responsible for injured or killed wild animals by their dogs. As a result, they introduced the "dangle collars" (kolonc - in Hungarian see pictures of the article) that consisted a wooden stick similar in length and thickness to the baton track and field runners use at relay competitions. The shape and material of the dangle could be different throughout the country. In some areas shepherds attached a sizable padlock to the dog's collar, in other regions they installed a bell, perhaps a chain about 6 inch in length. The rope or chain carrying the dangle had to be short enough that the dog couldn't grab it and so preventing the attached object from dangling and as a result enable the dog to run full speed. For dogs that were overly aggressive, they used dangles that were long enough that it reached down to the ground and the dog dragged it between his front legs, slowing him down significantly.

Guardian dogs that could potentially encounter wolves while protecting livestock, the shepherds often helped them directly by intervening in the fight, while for further protection for the dogs, they also installed tick outward facing sharp and pointy tipped spiked collars where the densely installed spikes prevented the wolves be able to grab the dogs' neck and causing serious injuries or death.

There have been a wide variety of spiked collars. Therefore, it is hard to give a uniform description. However, it is worthy to mention a unique type of sheet metal collar, that most likely entered to Hungary from the south, the Balkan region.

These specialty collars were made by gypsies or local blacksmiths not only in Hungary, but all over in Europe. These artisan collars have usually worn the unique craftsmanship and personal handprints of their makers.

As wolves, the primary Apex predator of the region have gradually become extinct, the function of these spiked collars turned obsolete. Its function today is to protect guardian dogs from occasional stray dog attacks. This functional transformation has also been expressed

linguistically. Originally the collar was called as “guarding collar” in different languages, for instance “Garda örv” in Hungarian and “Zgarda” in the Romanian language. As the collars function have changed to protect dogs in dog fights, after the extinction of the wolf, the name, “fighting collar” (verekedős öv) has adapted to the collars’ new function.

Manufacturing and preparation of these specialized collars have also changed overtime. Leather-makers used metal, spikes, or nails pierced through the top layer of leather, that was covered with a second layer of leather covering the heads of the spikes or nails.

The use of these protective collars have been present in Europe for over 100 years, however, in literature and arts it can be found, especially from the Alps region, as early as the 13th century. These type of collars have been found at various archaeological sites across Europe from Portugal to Greece. Interestingly, there are no similar items discovered west of the Ural mountain in the western territories of the Soviet Union. Some studies suggest that the reason for the lack of discoveries is due to different archeological methodology.

Based on Leopold Schmidt’s categorization there are three distinct guardian collar types,

1 butted chainmail collars,

2 interlocking, forged metal collars

3 alternating spike and wooden ball collars

For the development of these collars, archaeologist currently only have hypotheses.

The reason for the difference in collar types is most likely because of the different traditions in craftsmanship and available raw materials that are specific to their respective geographical regions where they were discovered as opposed to the results of chronological evolution.

Collars found in the Mediterranean region in southern Europe is also a testament to trade with North Africa as decorations and materials are clear telltale signs of Egyptian origin in some instances.

Artifacts have also been found in the Balkan. Those collars shows and intermediate stage between the evolution of wide flat to spiked collars.

There are records indicating the sporadic use of muzzles on aggressive farm dogs or on herding dogs such as Puli and Pumi who might frequently damaged the sheep’s wool or broke skin. Using muzzles was a humane alternative to filing down the front teeth of the dogs.

Some dogs herds quietly that might be a disadvantage under certain conditions. For instance, on a hilly terrain the Shepherd might have difficulty to see the herd and the dog and subsequently give the right commands. If the herd must be moved after sunset, a quiet dog can complicate the communication between the dog and the shepherd because the Shepherd cannot see the dog’s position in the dark.

The introduction of the “Pörgö,” a dog collar with a bell attached to it was to provide an acoustic help to the Shepherd to know the location of the dog in the dark. This new type of collar helped to give commands according to the position of the dog.

The “pörgő” is about the size of a walnut shell. It is usually made of copper by gipsy artisan metal workers. It is either cast in one piece or forged by two halves together with a solid piece of pea size round metal object that revolves inside the spherical copper shell while the dog is in motion. (see illustration in attached article).

The author’s sources: Nagy, Gyula, Paraszti Allat Tartas A Vasarhelyi Pusztan 1968, 1-2 Szam 225. p Schmidt, Leopold: Das Taschelhalsband des Hirtelhundes. Deutsches Jahrbuch für Volkhunde, Berlin 1960 154-181. pp. Szücs, Sándor, A Nagysarreti Juhaszat. Debreceni Szemle XI. 1937. 167-173 pp. Talasi Istvan: Bakonyi Pasztorkodas. Ethnografia, 1939 q-2. sz., 9-37. p. Letay Miklos