

Dahomey Basenji

James E. Johannes and Dwight Walters

I met Dwight this year at the Seattle Kennel Club show. He came up to the Evergreen Basenji Club education booth and started talking to Terriann McGlenn about having a Basenji in Dahomey (now Benin). This conversation got my attention. After asking him several questions, he left me his email address so I could find out more. Here is what Dwight had to say about his red and white Basenji and the dogs of Dahomey...

I arrived in Dahomey in June 1969, working as a geologist on an oil exploration project. I lived in the Cotonou, the largest city but not the capital. Cotonou was on the coast and the only port (see map). Shortly after I arrived, I got my first Basenji, a male, from a local French family whose female had a litter. After a couple of weeks, he went missing. I asked a neighbor concerning my missing dog and they laughed. They told me that the native Africans ate dogs and this was probably what happened to my dog. I then got a second Basenji, a female I named "Duster" and put her under the charge of my African cook with the threat of, if she goes, you go. I had Duster until the time I left Africa, which was a year later. I inquired about bringing her back to the US, but the difficulties made that impossible. I placed her with another family that worked on the same project and I do not know what happened to her after that. The other local dogs appeared somewhat similar, but were of mixed breed about the same size with similar colorings. Voodoo was practiced there, but I do not know whether dogs were sacrificed or not, I suspect so. There were several different tribes and I assume they all had different practices. Some local Africans did have dogs that were probably pets. The dogs scrounged for food and were sorry looking.



"Duster" - (Dwight Walters, 1969)



Location of Benin