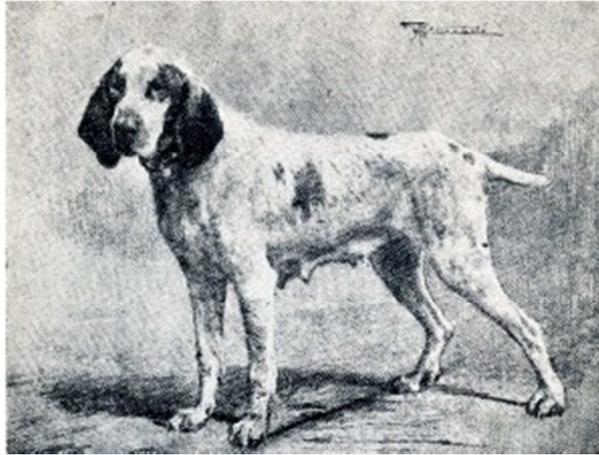




" On July 31, 1906, the eve of the opening of the hunting season for quails , I found myself under the huge and crowded lobby of the old station of Milan, with rifle and bag over my shoulder and Sansone a big white and orange bracco piemontese on the leash, who weighed exactly ... forty-eight kilos . " So Paolo Ciceri wrote in his book "The Italian Bracco ", a conceptual summary of a life dedicated to the breeding of noble local pointer . The first consideration that comes to mind refers to the adjective " Piedmont " . Why Ciceri felt the need to specify this describing the dog he was talking about ? Only history can give the answer. Bracco italiano,as breed officially holding one standard , was born in 1923 . Until then , although it is always bracco italiano , the dogs were identified by the characteristics of the ethnic strains where they came from . Without going back over a history of over a thousand years old , we focus our interest on which of these genetic groups were existing at the rising of the dawn of the twentieth century . Substantially we were able to distinguish three strains: the Bracco of Lombardy , Piedmont and the Bracco from Piacenza , in which it is included, for geographical reasons , the famous " Bracco Ranza."



Bracco from Piedmont

While the Bracco Lombard , already greatly appreciated by Medici in the sixteenth century , it appeared mostly brown roan , heavy, with abundant dewlap and skin, wide head with ears sometimes rounded at the tip , significant size and strong bone structure , the bracco Piedmont was instead white and orange , leaner and with more elongated head , despite still having a size definitely above average . For braccos Piacenza instead , it requires few more words .

Around 1850 , Giovanni Ranza , a wealthy landowner of Carpaneto , rural town of Piacenza , became the mastermind of an event that had a great influence on what would have been seventy years later identified as bracco italiano. He was an avid hunter and in his activity he used local braccos natives of the province., which could be derived from either Lombard or Piedmontese.



Bracco type of so-called “leggero” (light)

It happened that in the area settled a family of acrobats who performed with some trained animal , including a dog of great intelligence and , since the lack of food that the head of the family - a certain Micheletti - would give , an even more impressive thinness. It was a white and orange bracco, his

master said he had bought in Spain, but more likely had grabbed in some district of north-west using it as a circus animal. The dog was spotted at the show by a farmer, who bought it for a considerable sum and took it away. The bracco, however, not being accustomed to the life in a kennel, managed to escape to the fields but was eventually spotted by a farmer Ranza, who brought it back immediately. Exactly in that period, a bitch from Ranza "Flora" was in heat, a great bracco brown roan with extraordinary hunting skills, which could boast a truly unique origin: the kennels of Charles III of Bourbon, the last lord of Parma and Piacenza before unity of Italy. Ranza sensed something in that vagabond undernourished, and decided to perform the experiment before returning the dog to its rightful owner. Born a litter of white brown, brown roan and almost brown unicolor among these pups; among them a male roan attracted the attention of the farmer, who gave him the name Pluto. Growing up, the animal turned out to have wonderful hunting skills making it rise as progenitor of those which, in a short while, would have been the most desired braccos of Italy. Soon, in fact, complicit the studs of Ranza, dogs of Carpaneto spread throughout the province and then throughout the Lombard-Venetian, thus allowing many small farmers and private hunters to take pride in owning a dog with that blood. The "Ranza" are smaller in size compared to the braccos of Lombardy and Piedmont, although in the latter there is a current, the "Aschieri", whose representatives are much smaller and lighter structure than the other. Often with a brown roan coat and a beautiful chiselled and slightly ram-like head, even more embellished by a facial mask which must always be symmetrical, otherwise would be discarded. Beautiful dogs good-natured, easy to train and quick trotters, aided by a high withers, the "Ranza" will provide the genetic basis for all the braccos of Piacenza and, subsequently, to the best Italian braccos.



Bracco of Piacenza

In 1901, Luigi Betti, direct grandson of John Ranza, presented "Hock", one of his braccos, at the dog show in Milan, largely winning and arousing considerable excitement among dog fanciers of the time. The following year in Turin he repeated the success of Milan, dominating the entire dog show with "Lampo", judged by none other than Ferdinando Delor. In those years, field trials were dominated by "Weiss", majestic bracco of Piedmont belonging to Marquis Ildelfonso Stanga which continued for fifty years to breed braccos "pure Ranza" as he said and even though, in 1904, Senator Camillo Tassi of Piacenza, chairman of the Italian Hunters Club won with his "Thiers" all the dog shows of the year, in 1906, "Ras 5<sup>th</sup>" belonging to the lawyer Toselli won the first place in Milan. That achievement started officially the "bracco career" of its owner, who, three years later,

together with the engineer Chiappini and Count Marazzani , founded the kennel " Della Trebbia " with the sole purpose of raising the Bracco Italiano type of Piacenza . They weren't the only one: in the meantime, the dogs of the lawyer Rombo , "Lorik" , "Senna" and "Bill" from the kennel " Placentiae " , would beating off all competition on the field trials and exhibitions overperforming dogs of other breeds , including sometimes even the British pointers, which at this time were beginning to rise in such field. The bracco then , despite being in numerical inferiority in the competitios , wasn't declared dead and buried as a bit ' hastily some dog-lovers had stated years before and also despite what the great Delor , despite loving them , stated that was needed to use a pointer blood to lighten the bracco, simplify it and modernize it. The great teacher expressing those opinions demonstrates, despite the unquestionable competence, to be the result of an era still with poor knowledge of genetic , as well as having been influenced by other famous, even more than him , as Hegewald and Korthals with whom he was in contact by letter . But while they had just finished shaping new races, Delor pretends not to notice that he had before him a genetic heritage , the "blood" they used to say , that cannot and should not be mixed in any way to others. Not even with the sublime blod of the the great British pointer .



Tell dell' Olona

The dogs of the " Trebbia " kennel are extraordinary subjects. Since 1911 they dominated show ring and field trials all over Italy to reach the peak in '14 with the field trial in Anzio, where "Dir" and "Milan del Trebbia" won the first and second place respectively, ahead of pointers and setters . The handler is a "the wizard" himself: Gianni Puttini from Verona . Unfortunately, like any great adventure , even that of our bracco , is tainted by danger. The first of these broke out in 1915: the First World War , the Great War . The tragedy, with the tribute of men and resources that requires through continuous recruitment and the rationing of the basic necessities , made dog breeding impossible. As it happened in Britain, almost all large kennels are dismantled , the animals are sold to individuals or, in the worst cases, left to themselves . A whole heritage of sacrifice, heart and intellect, is dismembered without mercy.



Raduno of braccos before the war

But, to quote Eduardo (Eduardo de Filippo - translator note), each "night", also that of the war is destined to end. In 1918 families gather again, work starts and it starts to grow timidly those activities that conflict had frozen. A young Milanese guy, remained wealthy despite the war, chooses the hills of Trebbia for his hunting days. It's called Giulio Colombo and seems to possess a good eye for dogs and an unparalleled insight. Passing next to a barn He noticed a beautiful dog with bright roan coat, sadly tied to a tree with a sturdy hemp rope. It belongs to a war widow who, like a good mother, tries to keep it at her best but can not let it free to avoid the bracco devour the few hens left. Colombo buys it immediately took it with him in Milan in his kennel "Olona", where, within a few months will be gathered many more braccos adventurously escaped the years of conflict and allowing the Milanese gentleman to rebuild a core of exceptional genetic importance. Even Giulio Colombo, however, has his misfortunes and its tribulations and at a certain moment is having to give up its entire kennel to Cavalier Vittorio Necchi of Pavia, the king of sewing machines. A man accustomed to thinking big, Necchi decided in less than no time to establish a rational breeding of exclusive Italian braccos, placing it within its beautiful reserve, the "Portalupa", an authentic natural paradise.



Group of braccos Adda

The successes came quickly, but the fate continues to rage on the noble Italian pointer, and a series of outbreaks of heartworm, in parallel with a swing of economic ups and downs, forced even the intrepid knight to give the dogs in the hands of few enthusiastic. Among them is Paul Ciceri, a wiry farmer in the province of Pavia, longtime estimator of bracco and adviser of the then Kennel Club of

Italy. Ciceri, recommended by Gastone Puttini (son of Gianni's brother Ernesto Puttini) buy from Vittorio Necchi the dog with whom he began his journey to the rebirth of the race, the great "Giulio della Portalupa", white orange bracco with extraordinary hunting skills .



Giulio della Portalupa

The Italian bracco , after all the hardships he had to endure, seems to have found the true , definitive protecting deity . Ciceri, comforted by his experience as a farmer, he set up a kennel of braccos channeling most of the best blood type inheritance remained in Italy , thus forming the breeding of Ronchi , the most important in the history of the breed , devoted mainly to the production of subjects white and brown roan , despite its ancestor (Giulio della Portalupa) . At the same time , his uncle Luigi , gives life to the kennel "Adda" , which instead will focus mainly on Italian white and orange bracco deriving from Piedmont , with some smaller subject clearly from the line " Aschieri " , counting among its "pearls" the great champion Adda dell' Adda , that even now, after eighty years , is a model of remarkable morphological and functional .



Adda dell' Adda , belonging to the Cavalier Luigi Ciceri , Uncle of Paolo

1923 is a year of particular importance for the bracco: Bosisio , Cerrone, Silva and none other than Giuseppe Solaro compiled the new breed standard, submitting it even to the approval of men like Cajelli , Pastrone, Dehò , Trebbi , the Ciceris , Necchi , Valentini , Griziotti and Zacchini . The bracco of Italy, officially, finally becomes one and only. The first and the most contested of the changes introduced with the standard of '23 is certainly the question of size. The technical wording prescribes a size that ranges from a minimum of 55 to a maximum of 67 cm in height with a weight that can vary from 25 to 40 pounds. If on the one hand, as rightly demonstrate the same Solaro in his valuable comments to the standard, this will help to make things easier for breeders and to meet the right need to combine the different blood strains ranging from large bracco Lombard to chiseled and compact bracco Ranza , but on the other hand masterminds of the two types of braccos , one heavy and one light that in the dog show had so far “travelled” on two separate tracks , unleashed a controversy that will subside only after many years .



Bice Ronchi , world champion

In 1934 , Italy was invited to participate in the ' World dog show in Frankfurt. At that time it was not like now, and the competition was managed entirely at the level of central association. The Italian association, the former Kennel Club, which has meanwhile become thr Enci directed by Rino Radice, decided to present a lot of dogs obviously giving priority to Italian breeds . Radice entitles Paolo Ciceri to accompany our delegation , and he , in one of the sixteen wooden crates departing from the central station of Milan, brings with him Bice dei Ronchi , roan bitch and expression of magnificent proportions. In Germany it is a triumph : Bice , a first time for an Italian dog , returns home as world champion . The news was reported by all the newspapers , even the non-specialist , and this revived the bracco Italiano : Il Duce (Mussolini) wanted as many as six in his park of Villa Torlonia and for all breeders is a healthy injection of adrenaline.



Raduno of braccos in Lodi after World War II

The Second World War repeats the torments and the havoc of the first. But even this, thank God , finally ends. But unlike in the first postwar period , when the breed had not yet been fully “recultivated” , now the "material" is well established , both in quality and , ultimately, in quantity. 1949 is another year of fundamental importance: November 27 of that year, the Society of amatorial of Bracco italiano (SABI) was formed in Lodi. Around the table of the founders, sit Nino Ferrari , Felice De Mattia , Camillo Valentini , Luigi and Paolo Ciceri , Giacomo Griziotti and Leone Lorenzoni. The goal is not to disperse the forces and the blood finally reunited after many dangers, and to promote the extraordinary quality of our national bracco among the hunters , at that time more and more oriented towards the fast British breeds. The lot of dogs presented to a Raduno of Lodi is magnificent : the "material" , despite everything, is still there.

The post-war period and the fifties , sees the rise of many important Kennels . In 1958 , an outsider breaks the hegemony of the blood of dogs " Ronchi " : “Luchino di Silvabella” an extraordinary roan that besides being beautiful becomes even working champion.



Violinista delle Forres

But kennels that count are other: the braccos “delle Forre" belonging to Edmondo Amaldi who in “Napoleone delle Forre”, beauty champion in 1959 , saw the first heir of an illustrious family that will produce samples for the next decade ; the braccos of the " Crocione " belonging to Ettore Ziviani

who with "Tina del Crocione" rose in 1961 to the Absolute championship (beauty + work), then repeating with the "Cia" in 1963 ; braccos of " Maseca " belonging to Lagana , greatly admired champions in 1964 and 1965 with "Rol" and "Ril del Maseca" ; braccos "del Vergante " of Ermanno Medana , in which "Banco del Vergante" owned by Giacomo Griziotti , found an unforgettable heir



Heros and Gea delle Forre

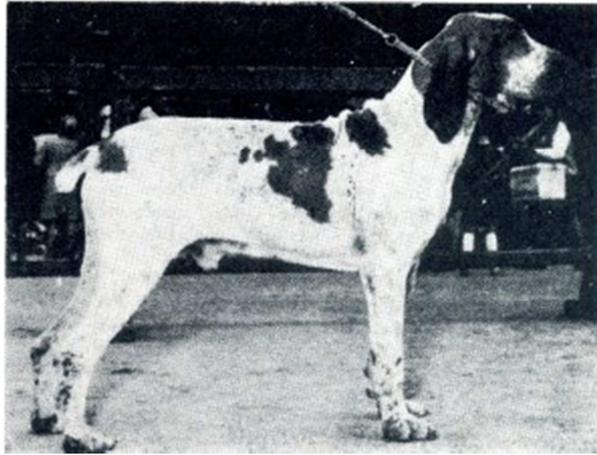
this exceptional dog , born in May 1961 , became Italian champion of beauty at seven years of age in 1968 , and what is even more extraordinary , it becomes overall champion at age of nine , in 1970 , proof of an excellent blood. 1967 is the year of another unforgettable champion: it is Lir 2<sup>nd</sup> dei Ronchi , who becomes the absolute champion and unparalleled sire.



Lir 2nd Ronchi

The seventies , with the solid genealogic primacy more or less constant of the dogs of Ciceri , start with a disputed supremacy between three large kennels. The first is that "delle Bandite" of Carlo Carlevarini , which drew much from the blood of "delle Forre", and that was able to produce a sample of beauty per year for four years in a row from '71 to '74 . Famous names are : Capo, Asso, Aster and Smit delle Bandite . Then there is the kennel of Montepetrano , of Mario Buroni with Nana, Reno and Rubina di Montepetrano , daughter of the great Lir 2<sup>nd</sup> , then again the kennel "

Salvetta " of Gioria , among which the splendid Dada , Italian champion in 1973 . In field trials distinguished " Zerbio " belonging to Tansini and meantime were facing the bracco scene other important families, the " Valgrisanche " of Renato Candiotto , the " Dell'Asolano " of Bergamin and " Sanchi " , homonyms brothers of Morciano di Romagna .



Capo delle Bandite , one of the great stud of the fifties

These kennels , along with other big names in the dog world of bracco arisen later, such as " Monte Alago " , the " Boscaccio " , the " Cascina Croce " , the " Monte Benedetto " , the " Cascina Merigo ," the "della Croccia " have continued , and continue nowadays , to produce samples of beauty and work throughout the eighties and the nineties , as easy to imagine, it would be too long and unnecessary to examine in detail.

It 's time to draw the conclusions and let rest the horse that got us in this fast gallop through the last hundred years of Italian bracco. I hope for you who have read , that these notes have been somewhat interesting , although burdened by the limits set by the space of a single article



Foco della Croccia : retrieving a pheasant at three and a half months

To me that I have written , and I've had to deal with over two hundred dogs, I confess that I was an exciting experience . I did discover a breed that I had touched only sporadically, sometimes hunting with friends, and I had read many things about but always with the “technical” eye and “theorist” mind. Only recently I was approached in a more active way thanks to Santo Laro , a great breeder on the bank of the Stretto forges in his kennel authentic hunting machines, who gifted me with Foco Croccia (above) , which I will talk about soon .

Italian Bracco is our stuff. Let's keep it among the most precious things, let us love him like a brother, respect him like a teacher who taught for hundreds years to generations of men how to hunt, and that explained the mysteries of nature forgiving missed shots and omissions . Even those in good faith , unworthy of your reporter.