
WHAT HAS CHANGED THE CLASSIC ARABIAN HORSE?

THE IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ARABIAN HORSES HAS CHANGED: FROM FAITHFUL AND LOYAL FELLOW SOLDIER TO A MAINLY HOBBY ANIMAL TO ADORN HIS HUMAN'S SURROUNDINGS.

THE BREEDING AIM HAS CHANGED ACCORDINGLY.

IT'S NO LONGER STRENGTH AND STAMINA ACCOMPANIED BY A GOOD CHARACTER AND ATTACHMENT TO HUMANS THAT ARE IN THE FORE WHEN SELECTING BREEDING ANIMALS, BUT RATHER THE REPRESENTATIVE ASPECTS SUCH AS BEAUTY AND SPEED.

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Traditionally when choosing an animal, the first consideration is how it will be useful to us, or how it will fit in with our lifestyle and needs.

With horses, they would have originally helped on the land, and then to go to war, and in more peaceful times to travel long distances, racing and then also for leisure riding. Man's competitive nature would have always led to discussions and arguments about each animal's capabilities and usefulness.

As the world achieved more stability, money, time and technology the horse had fewer practical uses, and comparisons have become about the ideals of beauty.

Until 1886 and the invention of the first car, horses were the quickest way for humans to travel, and Arabian horses were the fastest.

Historically, they were mostly ridden by young men, particularly when going to war. A good healthy horse would give a rider a higher chance of emerging from an

attack, of saving his life when fleeing, or avoiding having to make his way home on foot. Campaigns were often fought far from home and returning could be very risky. Can we guess what was considered a 'good horse' in those days?

Character would have been of great importance – intelligence and bravery being a crucial part of the positive and trusting relationship needed between horse and rider, particularly on the battlefield. That trust and cooperation could influence the way the horse was handled, the way it was ridden and the welfare and housing.

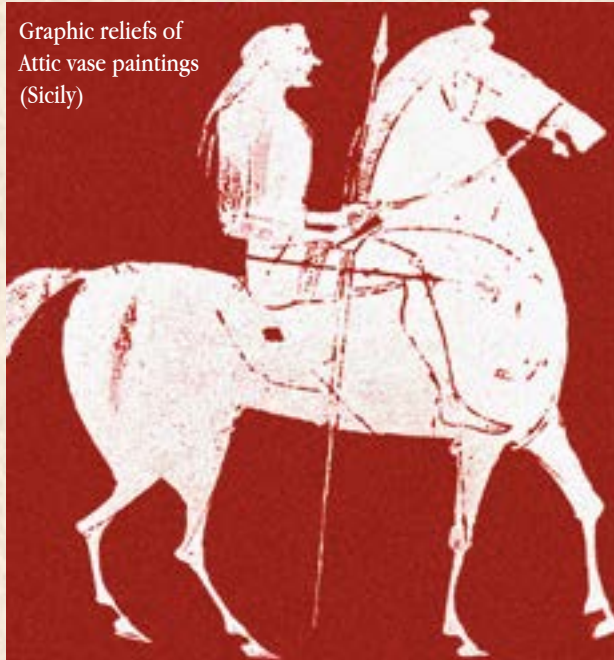
In pre-Christian times a rider who entrusted his horse with his life, or even owed his life to him, would often take him to the grave, so that they could ride together again in heaven.

Occasionally a wealthy ruler would, in gratitude to his horse, have a statue carved in stone, to unite and display the two of them for eternity.

Factually and emotionally, the rider depended on his horse, and there are innumerable romantic stories, poems and historical traditions.



Equestrian games,
graphic relief
from an Attic amphora (Sicily)



Graphic reliefs of
Attic vase paintings
(Sicily)

“As to virtues and beauty of conformation the Kohaylan (desert arab) exceeds all other breeds of the horse in the world. He is of extraordinary docility and absolute loyalty to his master, possesses innate courage and an infallible memory with regard to places where he has been and to treatment he has undergone. He allows only his master to touch and lead him. Even in the most frightening din of battle he retains his coolness and presence of mind and always remembers where he has come from so that even if he is mortally wounded he will make a final effort to bring his master back to his defeated tribe. His intelligence is really outstanding”

Count Rzewusky's memories (1818)



The Arabian horse, the fastest of all breeds, was often given wings in poetry and in folk tales, with the gist of the story being about the horse that saved his rider's life, brought his injured rider home, or made a successful escape possible.

The Bedouins from the Arabian Peninsula, and the original breeders of Arabian horses, rode mares. They loved the character, the loyalty and attachment of their mares, who would often be sheltered in the family's tent in rough weather.

Today we note with dismay, that in most cases, a rider's honour – such as victory in an endurance race, on the racetrack or in an Arabian Horse Show – is rarely the result of a mutually trusting relationship, but of a one-sided instrumentalization. This can be translated as Direct, Organize and Adapt.

This was not always the case: it is easy to visualize how riders, until a hundred years ago, loved their horses, honouring them and treating them as well as possible. They had to be sure they had done everything for their horse, in order to enable him to act loyally and reliably in the heat of battle, or in a 'Jihad', a 'Gazzu', (act

"In disposition the Arabians are gentle and affectionate, familiar indeed almost to the extent of being troublesome. They have no fear of man whatsoever, and will allow anyone to come up to them when grazing, and to take them by the head. If they happen to be laying down, they will not move though you come close to them. They are not to be intimidated by any lifting up of hands or sticks, for they do not understand that you can hurt them. It often amused us in the desert to see the mares come up to their masters and use them, as they would one of themselves, for a rubbing-post. This extreme gentleness and courage, though partly the effect of education, is also inherited, for a colt born and brought up in the stable is just as tame."

Lady Ann Blunt (1879)



Victor Adam, *Arab horseman*, 19th Century



Giuseppe Gabani, *Arab horsemen*, 19th Century

Engraving from "Travels in Arabia Deserta"
by Charles Montagu Doughty





Adolph Schreyer, *Cheik Arabe en Voyage*, 19th Century



Adolph Schreyer, *Arabian attack*, 19th Century



Adolph Schreyer, *Arabian Scout*, 19th Century

of piracy) or some other risky undertaking. They were very much aware that an Arabian horse was a 'one-man horse', which made the personal contact an elementarily important feature.

Badly treated, an Arabian horse was easily hurt mentally, becoming hard to handle and resentful. Using force or violence with him was, therefore, something to be avoided. These are facts written down by Greek horse master Xenophon (426 BC) in his famous works 'Hipparchicus' and 'The Art of Horsemanship', both of which

are often regarded as foundation works of hippology. Sophisticated techniques for getting a horse used to being ridden, such as long reining (to be found depicted on antique coins and amphoras from the Mediterranean more than 2000 years old) were perfected in his time.

'Horse whispering' was probably as commonly used by Greek, Persian, and Egyptian riders as it must have been second nature to the 75,000 riders of Napoleon's cavalry units who made their way from Paris to Cairo



at the end of the 18th century. Their lives hanging by a thread from the well-being and cooperation of their horses.

Good riders used just their voice and the balance of their bodies to move their horses during a fight, as they needed both hands for holding their bow and arrow, their shield and sword, or later, their rifle. A rider who was not in rapport with his horse, or who had to fight his horse as an opponent, was at a disadvantage. More than a hundred years ago, motors were invented for moving people around, but young men on the Arabian Peninsula would now rather steer a high-tech 4WD all-terrain vehicle through the sea of dunes and steppes in order to prove their bravery.

The importance and significance of Arabian horses has changed: from faithful and loyal fellow soldier to a hobby animal to adorn his human's surroundings. The breeding aim has changed accordingly. It's no longer strength and stamina accompanied by a good character and attachment to humans that are in the fore when selecting breeding animals, but rather the representative aspects such as aesthetics and speed.

No longer connected to his archaic role, a horse offers every kind of projection surface that is imaginable and needed by his human.

So horses now, just as they were in ancient times, tend to become real-mythical creatures again, the 'me' that is pictured in their owners' minds – as indicated by



the fact that most of the most beautiful Arabians are usually just owned and admired, but not ridden. After all, Arabian horses are often a projection of unfulfilled ideals. Man offers the horse his passion in return, even his ecstasy, and resulting from that, his jealousy and his need for control, too. This has resulted in today's almost complete domination and control of horses' reproduction and breeding ideals.

If horses are ridden at all nowadays, riding is enjoyed as itself, with the topic of the function of riding no longer valid. A world religion defined as a sports activity, involving an enormous interest in representation, economy, and egocentrism, is what connects the world of horses with the markets of their owners today.

Without this new world and its changed motivation for horse breeding, however, there would now be hardly any Arabian horses left. Although, partner relationships are history today. Ownership and dominance have taken their place, in the saddle as well as on the ground. The fact that riders no longer need to entrust their horses with their lives has resulted in globe-spanning carelessness when handling horses.

This development is most dramatically seen in the world of endurance riding, which mercilessly pressurizes horses to perform, with some horses paying for that performance with their lives. At horse shows, you can also observe quite often how the relationship and contact between horse and handler has long since become



non-existent. Maybe this is because the traditional way of life involving the rider and horse having a unique bond, has been overlooked.

Today the breeder, owner, trainer, rider, handler, transporter, groom may be as many different individuals. The Arabian's traditional character trait of 'one-man horse' is completely lost.

To this day, Arabian horses bring people from the Eastern and Western cultures, languages, and social classes together; the horses are the international basis for social and communicative networks and exchange with other breeders.

In the past, the Bedouins and later the rest of the

world, maintained and even nurtured and further developed Arabian horses in their extraordinary character, features, and qualities, spending lots of efforts and activities on them. At the same time, however, they subdued the horses and continued modifying them, to an ever-growing extent, right up to our times.

Our friendship with and our passion for Arabian horses also mean that we are responsible for maintaining and preserving their authentic features.

These features are the Big Points we owe so much to, in former times as well as today: Courage, Stamina, High Spirits, Vitality, Gentleness and Beauty.



“If you look only to a horse’s beauty, you will never perceive his real value!”

Al Mutanabbi (ca. 950 aC)

In the end, these horses bring everyone to the same table. Breeders worldwide, have preserved the Arabian horse with its outstanding nature and beauty. They have promoted and developed it further, but at the same time it has been subjugated and modified. Our friendship, even passion for the Arabian horse cannot hide the fact that in the 21st century, the original desert horse has been colonized forever.