

Arabiens edle Pferde

# ASIL ARABER



# ASIL ARABIANS

**The Noble Arabian Horses**

# ASIL ARABIANS



## The Noble Horses of the Arabian Desert

*The new documentation ASIL ARABIANS VII is available!*

■ by Monika Savier

12 years after the last publication, *Asil Arabians VII*, a new volume is available. 888 pp, 500 photos and many unpublished historical illustrations. Its noble layout and the texts in English, Arabic and German make this book another popular collector's item in the hands of the Arabian horse lovers all over the world. Some parts of the book are new editions, but the founder of the Asil Club, Dr. Georg Olms, and his colleagues and assistants have once again succeeded in finding and publishing exciting and still unpublished texts, reports, paintings and lithographs from the origin and history of the Arabian horse.

Since its foundation in the 1970s, the Asil Club has had a clear mission: to build a bridge between the cultures of the Orient and Occident and to celebrate the Asil Arabian horse as a world cultural heritage.

For all those who breed Asil Arabian horses, i.e. those who have their origins exclusively in the Bedouin breeding of the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt, it offers a large amount of historical and scientific information.

This is how the Asil Club defines its horses:

*"The term ASIL ARABIAN applies to a horse whose pedigree traces exclusively to Bedouin breeding with no admixture of non-Arabic horses at any time. To be accepted by the Asil Club, the horse must be registered in a stud book recognized by the WAHO. "Asil" means pure, true, noble, genuine. The ASIL ARABIAN horse should have the riding qualities and the characteristics of type which distinguish the Desert Arabian". [ASIL CLUB]*

*Which horses are ASIL?*

*All horses must trace back to the Arabian Desert region (Syria, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia) or correspond in every line of their pedigree with the breeding program of the EAO (Egyptian Agricultural Organization) or those of the private studs controlled by this organization.*

*Today the majority of the horses registered with the Asil Club are pure Egyptian, a line breed that has survived the general show horse mix in the mainstream as a geographical origin breed, coming from Egypt.*

*The book conveys how important it is to preserve this heritage of Arabian Bedouin breeding. Maintaining the pure Bedouin*

*“What ... will never change, is the passion and affection that the Asil Arabian inspires in [us] all. ... All of us who love the Asil Arabian, and the Asil Club is a key aspect in this, are part of the unbroken chain between the past and the future. ... The Asil Arabian is a creature unlike any other and we must strive to keep it so.”*  
Sheikh Mansour Bin Zayed al Nahyan

*“The Asil Arabian’s heritage has been meticulously sustained ... by the people of Arabia since time immemorial. Today this “pure, genuine and noble” breed continues to thrive through the work of the Asil Club and the support ... of breeders and friends throughout the world. ... I also extend my sincerest appreciation and best wishes to the Asil Club for your continued success.”*  
Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

غر اليء الوحيد الذي لم يتغر، بل ولن يتغر مطلقا، هو استمرار هذه الخيل العربية الأصيلة في نيل إعجاب كل من عرفها وشغف بها ووقع في أسر حبها. إننا جميعا، الذين نحب الخيل العربية الأصيلة، ومعنا نادي الأصل الذي يقوم بدور كبر في هذا المجال، نشكل جزءا من سلسلة ممتدة لا تنفصم عراها، بن الماضي العريق والمستقبل القادم ليس للخيول بشكل عام، وإنما للفئة المحدودة التي قد لا تتجاوز ٢٪ من الخيول العربية ذات الأنساب النقية، التي تشكل نخبة الخيول العربية الأصيلة. منصور بن زايد آل نهيان

ورجال جزيرة العرب حريصون على حفظ إرث الخيل العربي الأصيل. وفي هذا العر تستمر هذه السالة الأصلية النقية في الناء والتكاثر بفضل الله ثم بجهود نادي الأصل، وبدعم من مربى الخيول والأصدقاء من كافة أنحاء العالم. ويسعدني تقديم أطيب التحيات لكافة مربى الخيل الداعمين لهذه الخيل بمناسبة إصدار وثيقة. كا أقدم خالص تقديري وأطيب تمنياتي لنادي الأصل لنجاحاته المستمرة. سلطان بن سلمان بن عبدالعزيز آل سعود

*tradition, which never introduces foreign blood, has been a religious dogma in the Arabian desert region for centuries. This original line breeding resulted in a valuable Arabian horse, which the Asil Club and its members try to preserve. In order to achieve this goal, the Asil Club organizes annual general meetings with stud tours, scientific and historical lectures on the subject. In addition, the ASIL CLUB organizes every 2-3 years a breeder’s show for members, where the emphasis on showing the horses is expressly renounced, and the natural behavior of the horses is instead in the foreground. These*

*events have a great success in Europe and have become well-known for the opportunities they create for lively exchange and communication among breeders and Arabian horse lovers from across the world.*

*The new Asil Book also bears witness to the attempt to place the Asil horse at the centre of history and human communication. Do not miss this collection of historical and recent articles, pictures, photographs and drawings, telling about the friendship and the passion and synergetic relationship between people and asil Arabian horses. □*

*Here you can preview an article from the new ASIL book.*

## The Importance of El Zahraa on Asil-Arabian Breeding and Asil Alternatives

■ *by Betty Finke, Germany*

Most breeders of Asil Arabians breed straight Egyptian horses. For this reason, both terms are often thought to be synonyms, but that is a mistake. While it is true that all straight Egyptian Arabians are asil, not all Asil Arabians are straight Egyptian.

The majority of them are, however. And without straight Egyptian breeding, or more specifically, without the Egyptian state stud El Zahraa there would be hardly any

Asil Arabians left today.

The name El Zahraa only dates back to 1952, but the state stud itself was founded in

1914. This is not a particularly long time, but you have to remember that the stud was

not spontaneously created out of nothing. It continues a breeding tradition that has its roots in the early 19th century, making it the oldest Arabian breeding programme that traces in all lines to the horses of the Bedouins. Only the breeding programme at Marbach in Germany is as old, dating back to 1817 and the Royal Weil Stud, but there are only very few asil horses of Weil-Marbach breeding in the world today.

The breeding programme which is continued today at El Zahraa began under Mohammed Ali the Great (1769–1849), who is also known as the founder of modern Egypt. A Macedonian by birth, he came to Egypt with the Turks and, following the Napoleonic wars, rose to power in Egypt, which was then part of the Ottoman Empire. By order of the Ottoman sultan, Mohammed Ali went to war against rebellious Bedouin tribes, in the course of which he and his sons Ibrahim and Toussun came to know and appreciate the Bedouins' horses. They

also captured many of them, and both Mohammed Ali and Ibrahim maintained large stud farms. According to one British officer, Ibrahim Pasha's stud contained "300 mares and horses, the choicest breeds of Arabia".

It was, however, Mohammed Ali's grandson Abbas Pasha son of the prematurely deceased Toussun whose name is inextricably bound to the history of Egyptian Arabian breeding.

Abbas came to know and admire the Bedouins at an early age, including their culture and their horses. He soon had his own stud, though he was also at times responsible for his grandfather's and his uncle Ibrahim's breeding farms. At the time of Mohammed Ali's death in 1849, Abbas was his only heir, as Ibrahim had fallen victim to consumption.

Because of his friends among the Bedouins, which included the leader of the Roala tribe, Abbas was able to secure the best desertbred horses first-hand. It is said that he bought all horses of the Saklawi Jedran strain from the Roala. He built a new stud for his horses and hired only Bedouins to take care of them. The stud soon became famous even in Europe and in 1852, Baron von Hügel travelled to Egypt for the King of Württemberg to buy horses there for the royal stud at Weil. Abbas also collected everything he could find on the origins of the horses and had it preserved in writing. This "Abbas Pasha Manuskript", which was published in 1993 in an English translation, is the most important source we have on the origin of the Egyptian Arabian horses.

As a ruler, Abbas Pasha was less than popular, and his early death in 1854 at the age of just 41 years is thought to have been due to assassination. His son Elhami Pasha





*V. Adam, Ibrahim Pasha mounted. Judy Forbis Collection*

inherited the stud, but cut down on numbers. When he himself died only six years later, the remaining horses – still some 350! – were auctioned off by the Bank of Egypt.

Many foreign buyers attended the auction to secure

precious bloodstock from the stud of Abbas Pasha, but most of the horses remained in Egypt. The largest single group, numbering 40, was purchased by a wealthy landowner, whose name is preserved in the annals of the Arabian breed as Ali Pasha Sherif.



*Lady Ann Blunt on Kasida (Nasr – Makbula), Kuhaylah Jellabyah, \*1891. Collection B. Finke*

Ali Pasha Sherif, a distant relative to Mohammed Ali the Great, carried on Abbas Pasha's breeding programme, whose fame continued undiminished. In 1980 Wilfrid and Lady Anne Blunt visited the stud for the first time. Just a few years earlier, they had founded their Crabbet Park Stud in England with horses they had themselves imported from the desert. In the following years, they purchased some of their most important foundation stock from Ali Pasha Sherif, including in 1889 the stallion Mesaoud who was to become one of the most influential sires of all time. When, following Ali Pasha Sherif's death in 1897, the rest of the stud was finally auctioned off, the Blunts again purchased several horses. In the years following the dispersal of Ali Pasha Sherif's stud, Arabian breeding in Egypt was spread over a

number of stud farms. Various members of aristocracy, all of them from the dynasty of Mohammed Ali, kept their own stud farms which were based partly on Abbas Pasha stock and partly on their own desert imports: Prince Ahmed Pasha Khemal, Khedive Abbas Pasha II Hilmi, his younger brother Prince Mohammed Ali and Prince Khemal El Din, the brother of King Fouad. The King himself kept his own stud which included desertbred horses that had been presented to him by the King of Saudi Arabia. Lady Anne Blunt, too, maintained a small breeding farm at Sheykh Obeyd near Cairo with horses she had bought at the Ali Pasha Sherif dispersal. In 1914, the Royal Agricultural Society (RAS, founded in 1898) opened its own horsebreeding department. Its foundation stock were the horses from the breeding



*Moniet El Nefous (Shabloul – Wanisa), Saklawiyah  
Gidraniyah, \*1946, the Queen of El Zabara at high age.  
Olms Collection*

farm of the Khedive Abbas Pasha II Hilmi, who lost his throne at the beginning of World War I and donated his breeding stock to the RAS. The first director of the state stud, then located at Bahtim, was the Scottish veterinarian Dr. Branch. Several other horses were added to the foundation stock, including three mares presented to the stud by Lady Anne Blunt shortly before her death. Initially, the stallions from the stud of Prince Mohammed Ali were used as sires. In 1919, Dr. Branch travelled to England and purchased two fillies and 18 stallions at Crabbet Park, tracing to Abbas Pasha bloodlines and the Blunt's desert imports. It was the first and only importation of horses from Europe to the Egyptian state stud. In the early 1920s, a larger group of horses from Prince Mohammed Ali's stud was added.



*Kaisoon OA (Nazeer – Bint Kateefa) Saklawi Gidrun, \*1958, was one of the most influential asil-Egyptian sires in Europe.  
Olms Collection*





*El Sareei (Shabloul – Zarefa), Dahman Shahwan, \*1942, was also one of the most influential asil-Egyptian sires.*  
*Bilke Collection*

In 1930, the state stud moved to its present location, which was then on the out-skirts of Cairo, and named “Kafr Farouk” in honour of King Fouad’s son and heir. Two years later, the first horses were sold abroad – two mares, purchased by the American breeder Henry Babson. When Dr. Branch retired in the mid-1930s, the stock numbered 30 broodmares, 60 youngsters, and 40 stallions, most of whom were stationed in the provinces. Dr. Branch’s successor, Dr. Ahmed Mabrouk, introduced several desert bred stallions as sources of outside blood. After travelling to the desert in search of new blood, Dr. Mabrouk had come to the conclusion that there was nothing left there, and resorted to using those desertbred horses already available in Egypt. The state stud’s golden years began in the 1950s under General Tibor von Pettkó Szandter, formerly director of the Hungarian state stud Bábolna. It was he who discovered the great Nazeer in one of the provinces, brought

him back to the state stud and made him chief sire – and one of the most influential stallions of all time. Things did not go quite smoothly, however, as the 1952 revolution led to the deposal of the king and the founding of the Republic of Egypt. The royal stud at Inshass was disbanded and the horses added to the state stud, bringing in precious outcross blood. The state stud itself, however, only narrowly escaped dispersal itself when the new government decided that horsebreeding was an unnecessary luxury. Fortunately, one of the members of parliament was Sayed Marei, himself a breeder, who managed to convince President Nasser of the significance of preserving Arabian horse breeding as a cultural heritage. Under the new government, though, the stud director had to be an Egyptian. The appointment was given to Dr. Mohammed Marsafi, who had worked at the stud since 1941, with Dr. Ameen Zaher as an advisor. Pettkó-Szandtner also remained as



*Bint Kamla (El Sareei – Kamla), Hadba Enzabiyah,  
\*1956, was a half sister of Hadban  
Enzabi who was chief sire at Marbach State Stud. Bilke  
Collection*

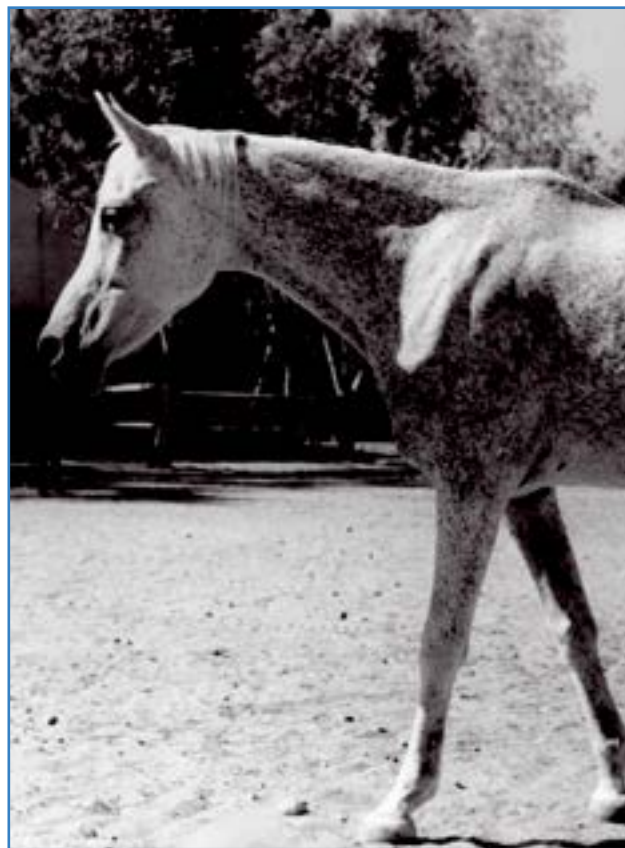
an advisor for a time, if unofficially.

So in the end, only two things changed: the RAS became the EAO, and Kafr Farouk became El Zahraa. From the 1960s to the 1980s, the stud experienced a huge rise in popularity when both the Germans and the Americans discovered the Egyptian Arabian. Horses from El Zahraa were sold abroad in huge numbers. Famous stud farms were founded, beginning with Gleannloch Farms and Ansata Arabians in the USA, more and more people chose to breed straight Egyptians, and international associations were founded, such as the Asil Club. Dr. Ibrahim Zaghloul, who succeeded Dr. Marsafi in 1982, made improvements in feeding and medicinal care at the state stud and represented his country in the executive committee of WAHO (World Arabian Horse Organization), while his successor Dr. Khalil Soliman initiated the Egyptian National Championships and led the stud into the new century.

Many things are different today. There are more straight Egyptian Arabians in the USA and Europe than in Egypt itself and the breeders now buy from each other, not from El Zahraa. Even the private Egyptian breeders – whose numbers have skyrocketed in the last few decades – purchase their breeding stock abroad, and not all of them are straight Egyptian.

Egypt has become a part of the international show circus and show breeders prefer show bloodlines. But one thing has barely changed at all: the Egyptian state stud itself.

True, the management has been exchanged several times in the course of political upheavals, and El Zahraa is no longer located on the outskirts of Cairo, but in the middle of the busy metropolis, surrounded by crumbling apartment towers and the clamour of heavy traffic. But once you step through the gate into the driveway lined by palm trees and sand paddocks in which mares and youngstock wander about, enjoying the early morning



sun, you feel you have stepped back in time. Here you can see it with your own eyes, the living heritage of the princes of Egypt that has come through all crises essentially unaltered. These horses are not bred for short-lived show ring success, and for this reason, El Zahraa today seems to be relegated to the sidelines. This breeding programme is dedicated to preserving a precious heritage, embodied in some 400 asil horses. These horses are not, as some people believe, inferior to their predecessors.

On the contrary, they are exactly the same as they used to be. It is our perception, influenced by the dominance of the show scene and its fashions, that has changed. The horses are timeless, and we should be glad and grateful that there is a stud that preserves this heritage. This article is adorned with historical illustrations of horses from El Zahraa that have written history – and we should not forget that horses like this still exist today. They are only waiting to be discovered.

## Asil Alternatives

While a vast majority of Asil Arabians today are “straight Egyptian”, the remainder are not. These smaller, often overlooked groups need our attention all the more: both to preserve them for their own sake and because they are invaluable for maintaining diversity within the gene pool of available asil bloodlines.

### BAHRAIN

The horses bred by the royal studs of Bahrain are the largest still existing closed group of original desert horses in the world today. This breeding programme has carefully preserved a large variety of families, some of them extremely rare and found nowhere else in the world. Some of these horses have a firm place in the history of Arabian horse breeding: the stallion Kuhailan Afas as a foundation stallion in Poland, the mare Nuhra as a foundation mare in Britain and only source of the Wadnan Khursan strain outside Arabia, and the mare Bint El Bahrain in Egypt.

This breeding programme, maintained by the rulers of Bahrain since the 18th century, may not be endangered, but it does not take part in global Arabian breeding and never sells any horses. True to ancient tradition, stallions may be given as gifts to special recipients, for example in recent times to the Egyptian state stud El Zahraa and to the Polish state stud Janow Podlaski. It is to be feared, however, that these stallions may never be put to use, as they do not conform to the modern ideal of beauty with its emphasis of extremely dished heads. There is one small breeding group of pure Bahraini horses outside Bahrain itself, located at Pearl Island Stud in Britain. These horses were gifts as well, and some of the stallions have a royal owner: they are the property of H. M. Queen Elizabeth II.

### WEIL-MARBACH

The smallest and most exclusive group of Asil Arabians are the asil Weil-Marbach horses of Marbach State Stud in Germany. Their pedigrees are predominantly Egyptian today, but on their dam's side they go back



*Mloshaan Mabrous (Hamdani Shalaal – Mlolesh Shualeh), Bahraini-Mlolesh, B/O.: H. M. Queen Elisabeth II. Collection Betty Finke*



*Presentation of the authentic Arabian Desert Horses of HH King Hamad Bin Isa al Khalifa at the Royal Stud in Al Roudha, and of the King's late uncle, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Khalifa in Umm Jidr, Bahrain. Photos: Monika Savier*



to the breeding programme begun by King Wilhelm I of Württemberg at Weil in 1817 and transferred to Marbach in 1932. The dam line of Murana I is the oldest mare family in the world that still has (very few) asil descendants today. This group also includes the very small number of asil, but not straight Egyptian horses from the Hungarian state stud Bábolna, which also carry the bloodlines of Weil.

### **BABSON**

The so-called Babson horses are in fact straight Egyptian, but their pedigrees are very different from the

horses of the Egyptian state stud. They are descended entirely from one stallion and five mares imported from Egypt to the USA in 1932 by Henry Babson.

Three mares were from the state stud, one mare and the stallion from the stud of Prince Mohammed Ali. This small, heavily inbred population carries concentrated Ibn Rabdan blood and has no lines to Nazeer, making them a great outcross opportunity within Egyptian breeding. Outside of the USA, there are a few Babson horses in Britain, the Netherlands, France, and Germany.



## DAVENPORT und HAMIDIE

At the beginning of the 20th century, the American caricaturist Homer Davenport saw his first original Arabians at the stud farm of Peter Bradley. These were horses from Syria, brought to Chicago in 1893 for the World Fair by the Hamidie Hippodrome Company and stranded in the USA after the event. Bradley owned around a dozen of them. Davenport purchased one of the stallions and, in 1906, with financial help from Bradley travelled to Syria, where he was able to acquire 27 desertbred horses. It was the largest single group of desert Arabians ever imported to the United States. Davenport's breeding programme was continued after his death by Peter Bradley, and there are still some dedicated breeders today that continue to breed these horses pure. There are no pure Hamidie horses anymore, but some asil horses that carry Hamidie as well as Davenport bloodlines. Both groups were hugely influential in the development of pure Arabian breeding in the USA. There are no straight Davenport horses outside the USA;

only one mare came to Europe in the 20th century and has asil descendants alive today.

## DOYLE

The so-called "Doyle Egyptians", named after the family that breeds them still, are not really "Egyptians", but a small, heavily inbred group of asil horses descending entirely from horses imported from Arabia and Egypt by the Blunts. They are the last pure Crabbet horses without any Skowronek blood. Despite being extremely inbred, they are known as tough and athletic and have been very successful in endurance riding. They are found only in the USA, with the exception of two mares that were imported to Britain, where they were bred to straight Egyptian stallions.

## SAUDI

Between the 1940s and the 1960s, around 20 original desertbred Arabians from Saudi Arabia were imported to the USA and registered there. They include single horses such as the mare Turfa, imported by Henry Babson,



*EK Kazeem Ibn Shameer (Shameer – Hamasa Kadir),  
\*2004, Egyptian-Saudi-Davenport, embodies nobility,  
rideability, and the best character conceivable.  
B./O.: El Kadir Arabians, A. Klein.  
Collection Betty Finke*

or the stallion Sunshine, as well as smaller groups. The horses imported by Mrs. Connie Cobb in 1966 were probably the last desertbred horses imported to a Western country. While Turfa was always bred to Egyptian stallions, there is still a small population of "straight Saudi" horses in the USA. Some asil descendants of Turfa with predominantly Egyptian, but also Davenport bloodlines, were imported to Germany by Dr. W. Georg Olms in the 1970s and bred on there. A small group of straight Saudi horses can also be found in Germany, at Ravenstable. □



*C. Kurtz, King William on Bairactar during the great carousel of the Royal Stud of Weil, 1846.  
Olms Collection*

In conclusion it has to be mentioned that there are still asil populations in other Arabian countries, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Syria, and Iraq. Sadly, the world mostly ignores these horses because, like the Bahrainis, they do not conform to modern ideals. They certainly deserve the attention of serious preservation breeders before it is too late. The horses of Syria may well be lost already.

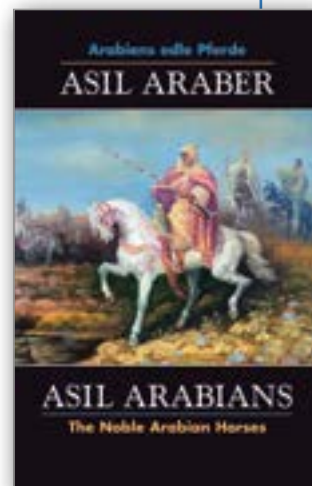
## **ASIL ARABIANS – THE NOBLE ARABIAN HORSES VII**

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# الخيل العربية الأصيلة



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نادي الأصيلة