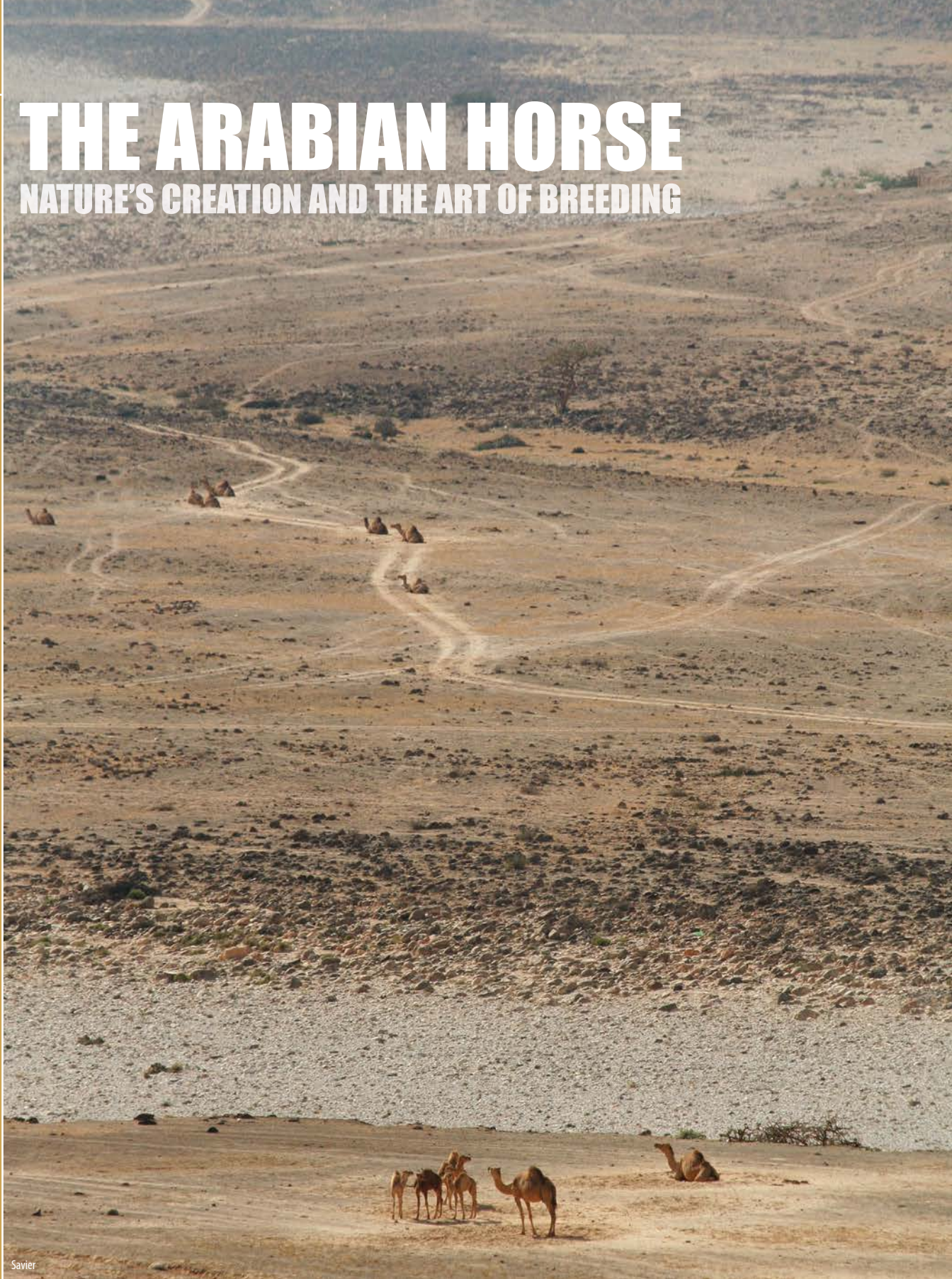


THE ARABIAN HORSE

NATURE'S CREATION AND THE ART OF BREEDING



Savier

The Arabian desert was at all times a great attraction for travelers, scientists and adventurers. The differences in culture and nature were an enormous inspiration. Most of it is impressively documented in many spectacular reports and colourful illustrations.

ARABIA - THE HISTORICAL HOMELAND

by HANS JOACHIM NAGEL

from the book "The Arabian Horse. Nature's Creation and the Art of Breeding"

It is well understood that the term "Arabian" will immediately make people think of Arabia, the country of origin of this horse. Since the Middle East has opened to the Western world, and Europeans and Americans have increasingly explored the exotic, colourful and often mysterious culture of the Orient, the Arabian horse, one of the region's most original creatures, has come within their focus. Western people have been magnetically attracted by these noble animals, and this fascination has consistently grown until today. Whoever travelled through Arabia in the 19th century, be they scientists, archeologists or just adventurers, somehow these horses appeared in all of their reports and documents.

Could these unique horses still be found in their countries of origin in Arabia? Maybe even in their original type, under the same living conditions as they have been kept in the course of thousands of years. Regrettably, the original horses no longer existed in the cradle of their origin, the Nejd region, an area located in the centre of today's Saudi Arabia; even the environment of this region has changed over the years. One part of the Nejd has remained a very unfriendly, meagre desert land; in the other part, where once animals – sheep, camels or horses – were living and grazing, today one finds huge modern agricultural operations, mostly cultivating wheat and barley. Here and there, one comes across large cattle farms with a stock of more than 5.000 cows, and is surprised to see huge poultry production operations and prosperous plantations watered by spray-irrigation systems and tube wells.

Substantial subsidies granted by the government were responsible for these enormous and certainly visionary changes.

Less than fifty years have passed since the old towns of Riyadh and Qassim could be considered as a relict left over from past centuries, with their dusty streets and alleys, the houses mostly made of dried mud bricks and with only a few scattered concrete buildings of a later date. Now, they have been replaced by impressive modern cities, such as can be found everywhere in Europe or in the US. Very little of the once oriental life has been saved, and the exotic flair of adventure and mystery has gone. Only 50 years ago, one came across small grainfields in late spring which were cultivated by half-settled nomads or farmers. One could enter these fields without bending any plant, due to their sparsity. The soil was too poor to carry any rich harvest. At that time, Bedouins could be seen passing by at a distance guarding either their camels, sometimes numbering more than one hundred, or their 400 – 500 sheep. The search for horses was in vain: instead one noticed donkeys, ridden by old or young people, men or women. Only in a few, mostly dark stables of some Sheikhs or Princes in the vicinity of Riyadh, there were still kept some of these noble horses, carefully hidden from any unauthorised eyes and only reserved to very few distinguished visitors.

When, at the end of the 19th century, Lady Anne Blunt, an English woman of an old and noble family, advanced to the Northern border of the Nejd, she was disappointed, and her search for good Arabian horses in this region had been in vain. She only



A litograph by Hippolyte Laisse, *Koulely Arabian*, 1855. Dr. Karin Thieme Collection.

found “pieces of memory” of the legendary small fine horses of the Nejd, which Palgrave had seen when he reached Riyadh during his travel to the Peninsula of 1862 – 1863. He described them as follows, with a convincing accuracy, as the noblest creature to be found in Arabia: these were the Southern type Arabian horses.

“... never had I seen or imagined so lovely a collection. Their stature was indeed somewhat low; I do not think that any came fully up to fifteen hands; fourteen appeared to me about their average; but they were so exquisitely well shaped that want of greater size seemed hardly, if at all, a defect. Remarkably full in the haunches, with a shoulder of a slope so elegant as to make one, in the words of an Arab poet, “go raving mad about it:” a little,

a very little, saddle-backed, just the curve which indicates springiness without any weakness; a head broad above, and tapering down to a nose fine enough to verify the phrase “drinking from a pint-pot,” did pint-pots exist in Nejed; a most intelligent and yet a singularly gentle look, full eye, sharp thorn-like little ear, legs fore and hind that seemed as if made of hammered iron, so clean and yet so well twisted with sinew; a neat round hoof, just the requisite for hard ground; the tail set on or rather thrown out at a perfect arch; coats smooth, shining, and light; the mane long, but not overgrown nor heavy; and an air and step that seemed to say “look at me, am I not pretty?” (W. G. Palgrave, 1867-68).



The region of Nejd was, according to multiple older reports as well as considering its natural conditions, the cradle of the Arabian horse breed in its original type, a region with manifold kinds of landscape and land qualities: stony and sandy desert areas, and again some fertile land and framed by surrounding mountains.

A view of the desert and mountains on the Eastern side of the Nejd, most times of the year dried out, sun-burnt during the day and cold at night.

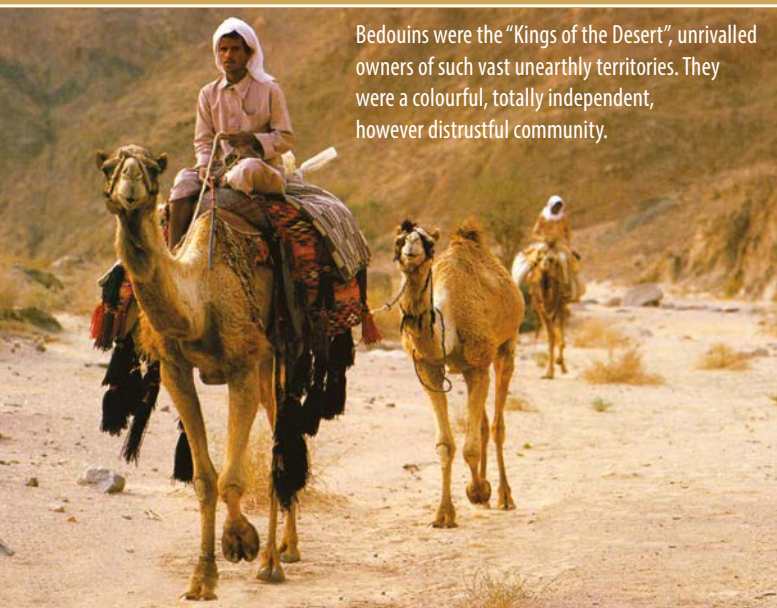


Lady Anne had made an epic journey, but she had come too late. The Egyptian Pashas had already taken most of these horses. Before Lady Anne's journey into the Nejd, a few other Europeans had travelled around in these regions, curious, adventurous and they had also reported about their findings in this unfriendly region. They had all documented or pictured what had attracted them, and it is to those people that one owes a glance under the grey curtain which had covered the mysterious, secretive and highly dangerous Arabian Peninsula for centuries.

Even earlier, the Wahabit War, at the beginning of the 19th century, was a turning point in Arabian horse breeding. The defeat of the Wahabit movement in the early part of that century, a strict sect which worshipped the traditional Islamic religion, had improved the situation slightly. In a military action, the Turks had sent their ally in Egypt, the Khedive, Mohammed Ali the Great of Egypt, into Arabia to maintain order and to bring this movement under control. He returned home to Egypt as a victor and conqueror and took with him as the spoils of war all of the noble horses he could find and sent these back on the long journey to Egypt. The majority of these horses did not reach their destination and perished during the 500 km long route as a conse-

quence of exhaustion and shortage of water. Only a small part of this valuable group reached Cairo. The oldest breeding area of Arabian horses was virtually denuded of its precious horses, a disaster for the whole indigenous breed.

A second catastrophe, this time at the whim of Nature, followed. A serious drought took a firm grip on the Nejd region in the latter part of the 19th century, and this lasted for several years. In large numbers the people were forced to migrate, many heading for the North of the Peninsula, others in the direction of the Gulf. Shepherds and nomads turned into traders and fishermen. Others wandered alongside of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in the direction of the North and Syria. Major parts of the mighty Shammar tribe found a new home in Northern Iraq or in the Gezira region of Syria. Another part moved from the Western border of the Arabian Peninsula in the direction of Damascus and settled down in this region. They migrated with all of their animals, mostly camels and with some of their precious horses. In their new home breeding continued on a larger scale, spurred on by the rich, favourable environment. Cross breeding with the horses of the existing North Arabian tribes often took place, and a different, also elegant, but clearly stronger and more athletic horse appeared over time: the Northern type.



Bedouins were the "Kings of the Desert", unrivalled owners of such vast unearthly territories. They were a colourful, totally independent, however distrustful community.



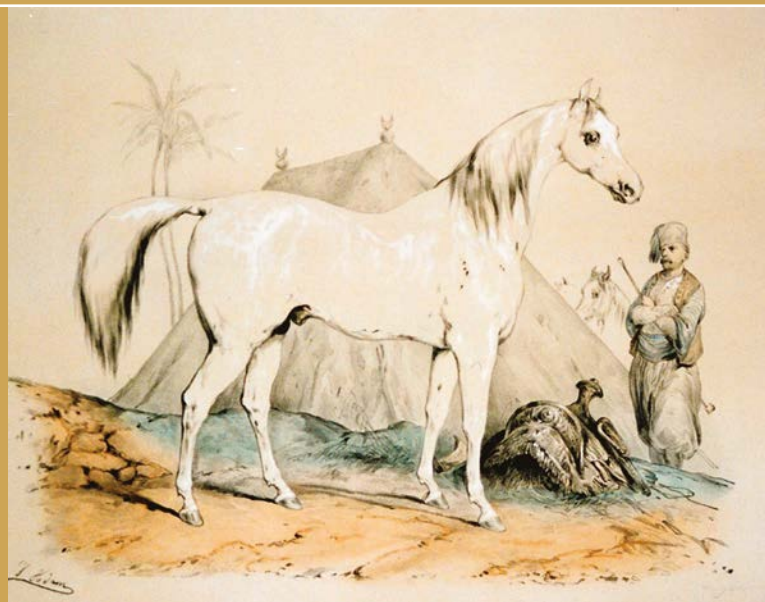
Different breeds of sheep are grown all over Arabia. A bigger type in the Northern part, the so-called "Hamdani", a medium one in the middle of Arabia, the "Awassi", and a native one in the South of the Peninsula, the "Arabian sheep" or "Nejdy", a finer, delicate and boney type.

Savier

This is the way that the oldest and historical Nejd population of Arabian horses was torn apart. A small part of them ended up in Cairo under the control of the rulers of Egypt, and another part were found high up in the North of Arabia, a great number of them under the control of the Shammar tribe. There is no doubt, however, that the cream amongst these precious horses had been acquired by the Egyptians. Being the victors, they took the opportunity to make their choice carefully and thoroughly. It was a lucky chance of history that, just at this time, the Egyptian Viceroy, Abbas Pasha 1, was besotted with horses in general, and he became passionately attracted by these noble Arabians. He collected the remaining Arabians in Cairo, brought them into his sumptuous stables and continued to search throughout the total Arabian territory for the Arabian type of horse which satisfied his personal taste. In the Nejd region around Qassim, his missionaries were constantly alert to trace these special horses. They rode on horseback up to Syria, to the emigrated tribes and families, and when they came across anything they knew would please the Pasha, they just bought it. Price did not matter, as Abbas Pasha was generous and extremely wealthy. Details about how exactly they researched

and which kind of horses they were prepared to acquire can now be read in the precious "Abbas Pasha Manuscript" (J. Forbis / G. Sherif, 1993). Cairo thereafter, became the Mecca for Arabian horses of the Southern type. Other travellers in this region, whose paths crossed those of Abbas Pasha's emissaries, were surprised and intrigued about the type of horses that these emissaries sought to purchase.

As a result of the richer and more stable climatic and geographic conditions in the North of Arabia, in Syria and Iraq, a significantly different type of Arabian horse developed among the local Bedouin tribes. The breeding in the North of Arabia was enriched and strengthened by the valuable immigration, and, due to such new blood and the crossing with local breeds, this fostered in many cases positive changes in animal breeding. This region was easy to access and relatively safe for Europeans, so it is not hard to understand why the fame of this area, as a source for precious Arabian horses, rapidly spread all over Europe. Especially for those buyers who were looking for the Arabian based on European precepts, their preference was for solid horses with sound strong legs, well formed joints and of an acceptable size. In this respect, all the buyers shared the same opinion. In addition, they should have a certain



For proper understanding of the Arabian, it has to be placed in its proper position, in the middle of its surrounding environment as a true native creature of a desert area with all its different facets, just as it applies to all other livestock existing in such regions. It took about 2000 years for the horse to adapt itself and to be fit to live in such a harsh environment together with its master, the man. It shared the same fate like all the other flora and fauna which had to obey to the same tough rule: survival by all means!



The desert and its different kinds, sandy, semi-dry, all stony and its flora, bushes, flowers and plants. All living entities, the flora, which is fixed on the ground and not able to escape from their harsh environment, and the fauna which had much more and easier means; they all developed hundreds of different ways to adapt, enabling them to survive, including the people and the Arabian horse.



Villodas

The Hubbara, the biggest bird in the desert and the common and welcomed object of falcon hunting.



Handwritten signature or mark.



Scott

A young cheetah and a small gazelle; still a play or already a serious hunt?



Gazelles of the desert, the dorkas, closely related to the indigenous "Arabian gazelle", which is nearly extinct.



The falcon and his prey, a Hubbara.

elegance, and to combine all this together was apparently a difficult task. Among hundreds of horses they could only find very few of this kind. Such a horse would be the perfect one, since it was their idea to use them as an improver of their heavier and less spirited European breeds. Nearly all noble Warmblood horses trace back to such ancestors.

Thus two important breeding areas remained as a source for the historical Arabian: Firstly, Egypt – which evolved into today's Egyptian State Stud, El Zahraa - where the remains of the Pashas' collections were gathered together in the early 20th century, and where a kind of breeding regime continued in accordance with the pomp and splendor loving upperclass, and secondly, the large, rich, breeding areas in today's Syria and Iraq. Many expeditions from Hungary, Poland, Italy, England and France travelled in the second half of the 19th century to this latter region, were successful in their findings and brought hundreds of beautiful Arabians to Europe.

After World War I, ties with the Arabian countries were terminated and silence governed for a long time. Then, finally, after the end of World War II, both a blessing and a miracle occurred for the Arabian countries: the discovery of immense resources of oil and its growing importance to the Western world. This discovery has grown into one of the greatest political issues at the present time. First, only a few foreign groups showed interest and until the nineteen sixties political and commercial life continued in the Middle East in a relatively normal way. On one side, there was enough of this valuable resource available to secure an endless supply and the world's demand for petrol was still modest. The price for 1 barrel of oil played out around US\$ 1 to \$ 2, yet after 1970, there was a sudden rush for oil and prices exploded. Today, 40 years later, these prices have climbed up to \$ 100 per barrel and even higher.



In old times little land plots were irrigated by small water channels, letting the water flow into each section.

Al Kamaan



Large areas of several hundred hectares each are now supplied with water by the so-called "pivot system", allowing the growth of barley, wheat, green alfalfa and other crops for people and livestock.

Steinmetz



Babelli

Old villages and towns were replaced by modern architecture, communication and traffic rapidly improved; a new way of life replaced many old traditions. The great time of adventures and discoveries is over.

At that time, there was not a lot of interest in the Arabian horse, either in the East, or in the West. Europe was saturated with horses of all breeds and in its homeland the horse had lost its significance. Engine power made them dispensable. Yet the Arabian horse still existed and was found in smaller or bigger groups, rarely in Saudi Arabia, but more often in Syria, Iraq, Turkey and Persia. It was not until the nineteen eighties, that the sons and grandsons of the old local breeders woke up and remembered their past treasures. Trade, traffic, general communication and journeys brought them abroad and they discovered the enormous appreciation for the Arabian horse in Europe and in the US. The few remaining breeders in Arabia had kept these horses



Babelli

either as a heritage of their ancestors or, to a certain extent, in order to participate in local racing events. Now a period of renaissance was ushered in and began to boom. Today, the whole Arabian world is again involved in breeding the horses of their ancestors and the Arabian horse is currently



The Arabian horse breed, born in the Nejd region, cannot be found any more in its motherland. Drawings and descriptions of travelers about 200 years ago are the only sources to imagine its historical features. These horses were under the same influence and pressure of nature like all the other surrounding life, from domesticated to wild animals and from fauna to flora.

enjoying a higher esteem in this area than anywhere else in the rest of the world.

Important studs in Europe and in the USA as well as in Egypt as the only Oriental country have held these horses strongly in their hands for the past 100 years. They kept them according to their principles and desires, fostered their development or tried to preserve them in their original form as a heritage of a great past. In the large studs in these countries these Arabian horses are available in an appealing quality. However, there are differences in

type according to each stud's particular breeding aim, but they are all the genuine offspring of the far distant history of their ancestors.

To answer the initial question: Arabian horses can now be found worldwide, and also, again in their countries of origin. However, the Bedouin time is gone. What is left from this historical time is mostly overlaid with colourful and romantic stories or poems which have changed the true history into a fairytale-like world and far removed from reality.

ARABIA - THE HISTORICAL HOMELAND

These are the closing thoughts of this chapter written at the time when Hans Nagel published his book. Even now, just three years later, some aspects have changed due to developments in science, as new techniques and possibilities have emerged. So to keep things up to date, Hans Nagel would like to add to his writing some more thoughts:

Among all these stories and sayings about traditional habits and beliefs, only one item has gained an overwhelming importance by our times: The belief in a “purity of the Arabian breed”. All official studbooks, the whole justification for the particularity of this breed are based on this principle and huge volumes of literature have been written by serious persons, but also by some charlatans, partly based on proper research, partly on doubtful sources. Breeders have created exclusive societies and clubs worshipping this specific feature of the Arabian breed. However, the vast majority of all such historical data, well guarded and mostly presented in impressive documents, vanished away in the obscurity of the simple Bedouin society during the beginning of the 19th century. Before that time, nothing was written. Communication between the Bedouins was on an oral basis only.

Now a time has begun when newly developed biological tools are applied to verify such existing documents and the once so much worshiped historical approaches have lost their high importance in favor of a morphological and biological diagnostical procedure in breeding Arabians. On one side, an Arabian in its descent, backed up by a properly established 5-generation-pedigree and by one or more well-proven tests which the biological industry has developed on the basis of DNA findings; and on the other side, a morphologically well-built correct horse displaying the appreciated Arabian type – the latter is the horse that has gained the most favored place in the Arabian horse world today.

200 years lie between the beginning of Arabian horse breeding when this animal was discovered, with all its values, in the Arabian countries and when so many of them left their original Oriental homeland - and its present status and importance within the Arabian breeders' scene of today. In spite of all kinds of interference, by human preference, in selection and management, justified or not, the basic traits and characteristics of this horse are still present the way they were developed for many centuries by the simple Bedouin breeders and under the pressure of a harsh environment. These two powers combined have stamped this breed until today with its unique appearance.

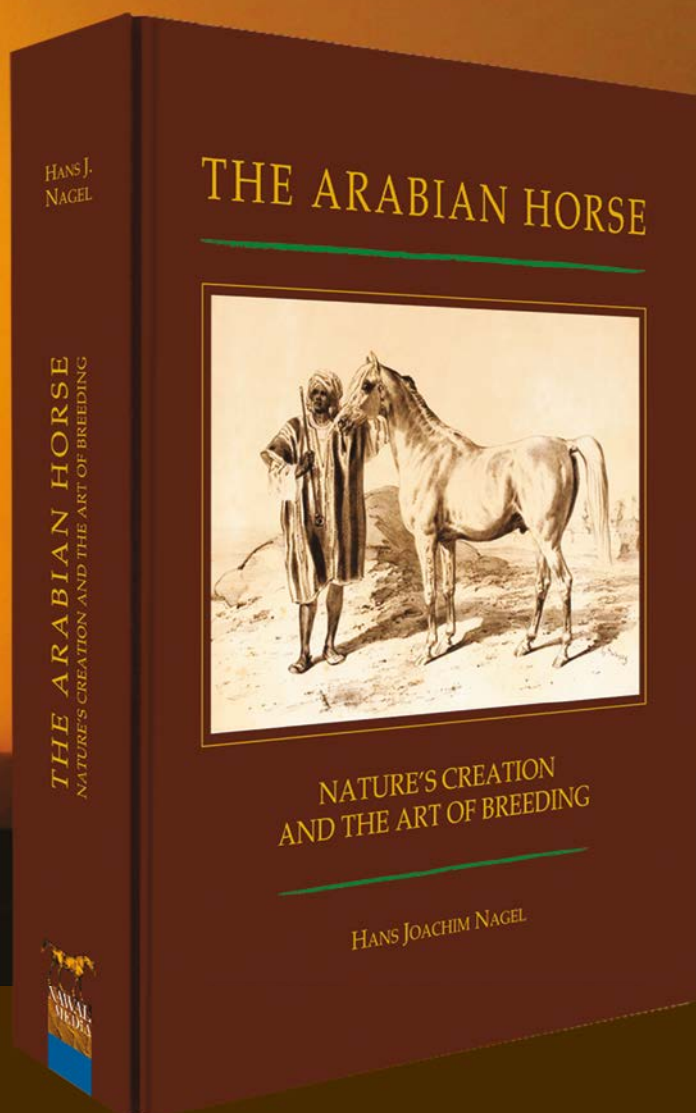
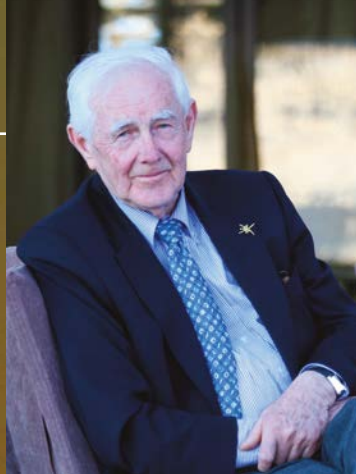
Hans J. Nagel

PHOTO: JOANNA JONIENTZ

MONIKA SAVIER, EDITOR
MARIO BRUNETTI, GRAPHIC DESIGNER

The Tales of your Passion. THE BREEDER'S MANUAL

by Hans J. Nagel

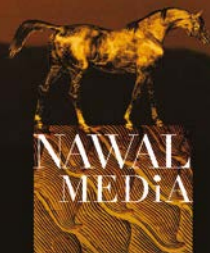


Comprehensive and Informative
for Every Breeder

- ANCIENT AND MODERN BREEDING
- HIGHLY EDUCATIONAL
- 540 PAGES, 400 ILLUSTRATIONS

PRINTED IN ENGLISH, GERMAN AND ITALIAN

Available at
www.amazon.com
www.nawalmedia.org
www.tuttoarabi.it
and selected online bookshops.



RESEARCH, PRESERVATION, PROMOTION
AND PUBLICATIONS OF
THE ARABIAN HORSE CULTURE
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

www.nawalmedia.org