



Evolution of Arabian Strains: Part One

by Christie Metz

photos by Stuart Vesty, Gigi Grasso, Judith Forbis, Jerry Sparagowski, Johnny Johnston & Richard Bryant

It is my intention to walk you, the reader, through the historical aspect of strains (types and families) of Arabian horses; how this came into being and how it blends into a pedigree today. Hopefully you will decide how if at all this has an influence or any importance in breeding Arabian horses today. History has a way of contributing to our lives with the past woven into the present and why should this be any different for the Arabian horse? We humans on a global basis are connected through this passion and love for the Arabian horse; creating a link or a continuum of breeding Arabian horses.

For centuries the Bedouins (nomadic tribes) traced the pedigree (ancestry) of their mares via an oral history in order to establish provenance. All pedigrees were initially traced through the very last line of the female's side of the pedigree; this was the practice for approximately 350 years before pedigrees were recorded in writing. Testimony was given for this oral tradition and witnessed by tribal members in order to insure accountability and was taken very seriously.

The Bedouin tribes from the desert, renown for breeding pure Arabians came from Syria, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. They included other Arabian Gulf States such as Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Yemen, and the U.A.E. (United Arab Emirates made up of Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm al-Quwain situated in the southeast of the Arabian peninsula. There were Arabians in northern Africa and Egypt as well. As industrial progress continued the art of breeding Arabian horses became unnecessary for the Bedouin. Cars and other forms of travel along with new forms of communication made horses obsolete to the Bedouin way of life. The tribes became less and less migratory settling near cities and as their way of life dwindled so did breeding the Arabian horse. The tribes formed alliances with city leaders and became a part of confederations. Fortunately, the culture was rich in oral tradition so the breeding history of the Arabian was not lost. Breeding was continued by leaders of the confederations and rulers in those areas as well as a few tribes.



Names of the strains or families of the horses came about through several varied means; still very complicated and confusing to the average person today. Often the name of the tribe was attached to the mare or stallion; then a branch of that family added another name. To further complicate the naming of the strain there was often a specific characteristic noted about a horse; then this too was added to the strain name. As the horses were traded, sold or taken as prizes of war the changes in provenance were added or not.

Tribes often chose to breed for certain physical characteristics and as a result the horses began to have a defined look or "type". This created a distinctive and recognizable Arabian horse which then came to be associated with a specific strain or family. Branches are the progeny referring to the line as it ascends through the dams. After years of breeding intensely through the dams this was an obvious result but also due to the close line breeding. To-

day we would call this homozygous breeding; choosing genetically to intensify specific traits and qualities.

For purposes of this article I chose to concentrate on five strains established as pure or "Asil". They all have a masculine as well as a feminine form plus there are multiple spellings, however, the pronunciation is similar. The masculine form of the strain is the one being used for discussion. At one time there were many more strains; some are now extinct and others very rare but maintained through the dedication of preservationist breeders today. Following are five common strains within the straight Egyptian community that I will be referring to in this series of articles (please note the color assigned to the strain for reference within a pedigree). There are references to as many as twenty plus and the Manual of the Straight Egyptian in the United States published by the Pyramid Society refers to eleven so please understand this could be a project without end!

Evolution of Arabian Strains

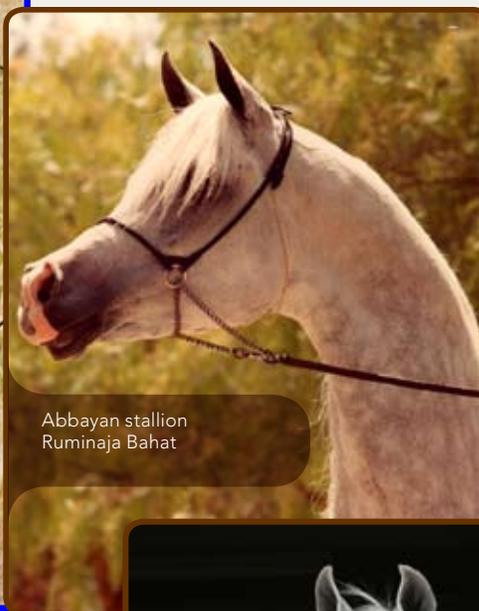
continued...



Kuhayla/Koheila mares
Hi Fashion Hitesa and
Hi Fashion Tesareekh

Of course today we have mitochondrial DNA to add even more confusion to the subject of strains (again typically traced through the tail female side of a pedigree)!

Today we are fortunate to have these scholarly viewpoints recorded in various books, articles and interviews available on the internet to draw upon for our own knowledge. As references I have utilized the writings of the following authors; Judith Forbis, Charles Craver, Lady Anne Blunt, Carl Raswan, Joe Ferris, W.R. Dickinson, Homer Brown, Henry Babson and a myriad of others. Many thanks to all of you have dedicated yourselves to recording in writing, photos, and videos the traditions and history of the Arabian horse.



Abbayan stallion
Ruminaja Bahat

Kuhaylan/Kuhayla

(also spelled Koheilán/Koheila)

The word Kuhaylan derives from the black skin that Arabian horses have around their eyes; "marks which give them the appearance of being painted with "Kohl or Antimony"; substances used to outline eyes. They were thought to be the original strain type and that all Arabian horses came from this strain with the sub types (additional crosses) originating from combinations thereof.

Notable characteristics are strength, masculine, muscular, wide across back, croup, deep heart girth, wide forehead, and broad across forearm and gaskins. Even the mares are muscular and more masculine. They may often be bay in color with fine silken hair coats and large dark eyes (some texts claim they are often grey in color). Their bone is heavier but not coarse.

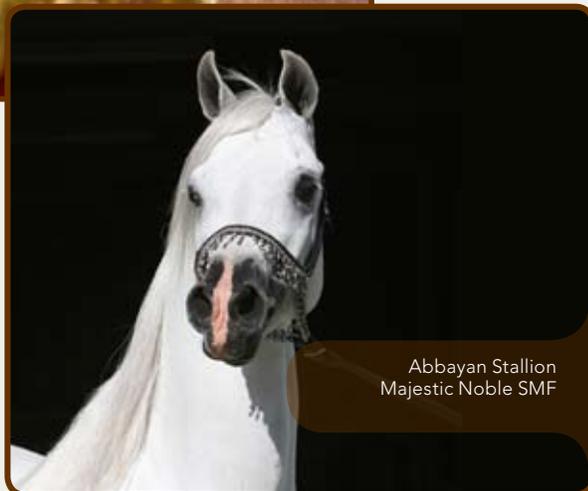


Abbayan/Abayya

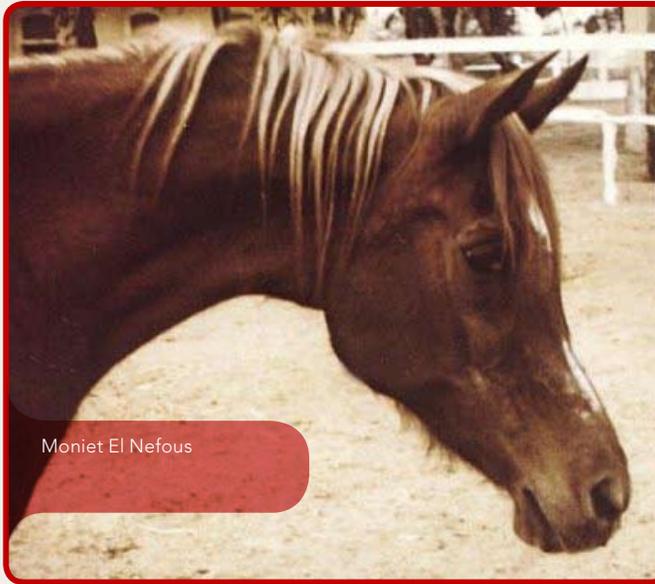
(or Abeyyan/Abeyya)

The very likely origins of this name came from a story that says a Bedouin during a raid threw off his 'Beyyah' (cloak) to lighten his mare's burden. After he finally had out distanced his pursuers he looked back and found his Abeyyah had been carried on the high-borne tail of the mare. Thereafter the strain was named Abeyyah - for the mare that carried the cloak on her tail.

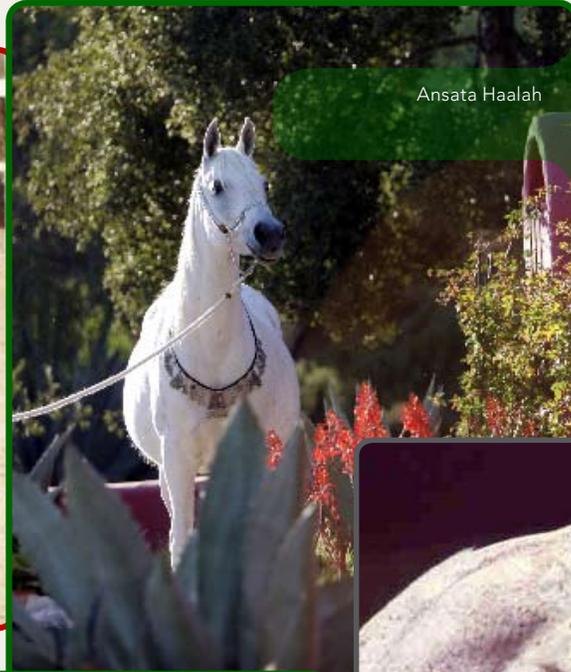
Characteristics include a linear form more on the feminine side of the scale, somewhat fine boned with very fine features. May have a longer back and usually has good movement.



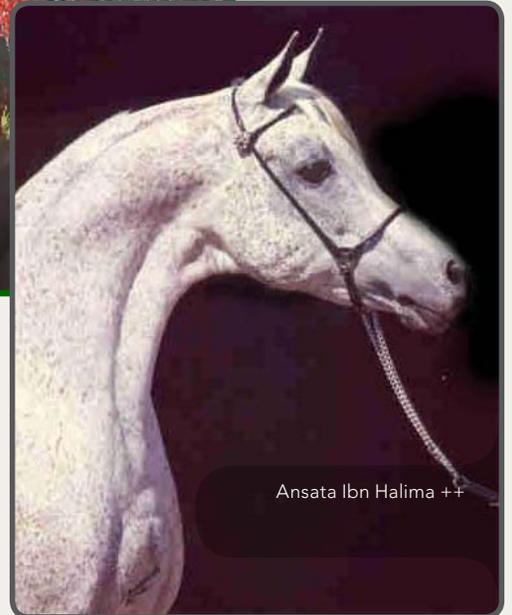
Abbayan Stallion
Majestic Noble SMF



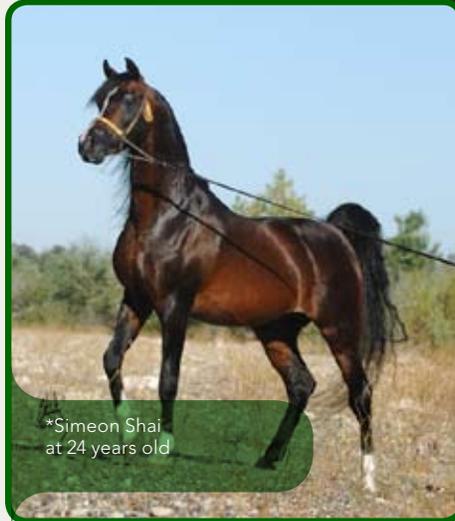
Moniet El Nefous



Ansata Haalah



Ansata Ibn Halima ++



*Simeon Shai
at 24 years old

Saqlawi/Saqlawiyah

(or Sekalwi/Seklawiyah)

Probably came from the word "saqla" meaning a kick. The story was told like that there was an old mare of the Kuhayla Azuz (branch), this "a saqla mare" who when galloping liked to kick her heels in the air so the strain was named after her. This mare's history goes back to the Shammar" who are still in Saudi Arabia and Iran. In the presence of the majless of the sheiks of Shammar, and in the presence of Nasr al-Sohaymi, the Sheik of Onayzah of the people of Al Qasim, and in the presence of a large number of people, Talal Ibn-Rashid and Obeid Ibn-Rashid questioned Talal Ibn-Ramal about Al Saklawiyat, his horses.

Distinguishing characteristic attributed: feminine grace and elegance. The ideal Saqlawi represents beauty and refinement in the extreme. Feminine in appearance, they are of equal endurance to the Kuhaylan strains. Although you may note that this strain are usually lighter in weight and leaner in frame than the Kuhaylan. They are not as strong in the hind-quarters, tending to be a bit "light behind," with a tendency to stand under them self slightly. They are very high-spirited and make natural show horses. Many have succeeded admirably on the race track too. The crossing of the two strains, Kuhaylan and Saqlawi is considered a "golden" cross: the best combination of the ideal Arabian traits.

Hadban Enzahi

(Hadbah Enzahiyah)

Most distinguishing characteristics: Very handsome horses with elegance of carriage. Great endurance and strength are among the Hadban trademarks. They are very good all around horses; having perhaps the finest blood to produce cavalry horses as well as excellent race horses. Known as the "blend strain"; many famous stallions have bred forward the characteristics associated with this strain as well as famous mare lines through Venus to Bint Samiha, her daughters and granddaughters. Also passed via producing sons and grandsons that passed forward these unique traits via the sire line.

Dahman/Dahmah

(Dehman/Dehme)

Reputed to be the horses of King Solomon

The name "Dahman" means the "dark or black." Originally it was a substrain of the Saqlawi and represented an ideal blending of the Kuhaylan and Saqlawi type. The Dahman crosses exceptionally well with the modern Saqlawi strain and is known as the Dahman Shahwan strain.

They are noted for being a harmonious and symmetrically balanced horse. Typically they have the elegance of the Saqlawi and the strength of the Kuhaylan. Their heads noted for having exceptional beauty, very wide between the eyes, relatively short but appearing to be "dished" more than other strains. Primarily they were bred by the Al Khalifas of Bahrain.