

PRESENTING THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK  
THE ARABIAN HORSE - POLAND'S NATIONAL TREASURE.

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# THE ARABIAN HORSE - POLAND'S NATIONAL TREASURE



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THE ARABIAN HORSE - POLAND'S NATIONAL TREASURE

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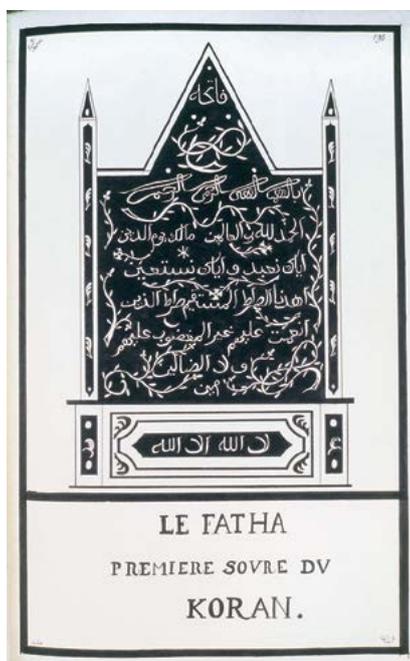
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# ORIGINS of the ARABIAN HORSE

*In ancient Islamic beliefs, the occupation of raising horses was so highly regarded that it earned the keepers the remission of their sins, and money spent caring for a horse was seen in the eyes of God as the equivalent of giving alms to the poor. It was also thought that after their death, horse keepers would be rewarded the same as those who faithfully said prayers all night and fasted all day — heaven's ultimate reward — a winged, ruby horse.*



ABOVE: Cover page from the holy Koran, Le Fatha Premiere du Koran.

In the seventh century, a new era emerged for the horse. Perhaps no where was this more prevalent than in the Middle East, the birthplace of the Arabian horse. In fact, documents from this time proclaimed the Arabian as the bravest, most beautiful horse known to man.

The emergence of the religion of Islam was key to the horse's elevated status. Muslim legend relates that the prophet Mohammed, fled from the city of Medina to that of Mecca and took with him five priceless mares that became the foundation of the most noble Arabian horse breeding families.

In ancient Islamic beliefs, the raising of horses was so highly regarded that it earned the keepers the remission of their sins. Money spent caring for a horse was seen in the eyes of God as the equivalent of giving alms to the poor. After death, those people who raised or kept horses would be rewarded the same as those who faithfully said prayers all night and fasted all day — heaven's ultimate reward — a winged, ruby horse.

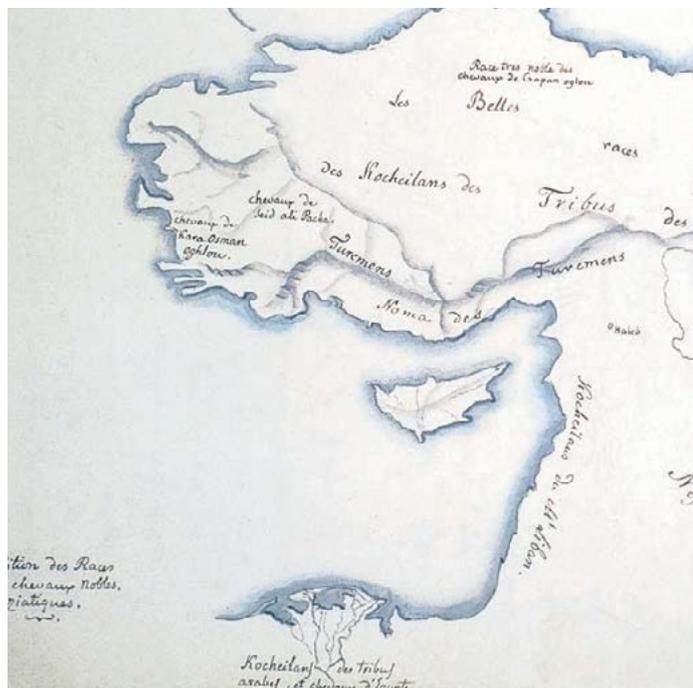
Arab horsemen paid particular attention to the continuity and harmony of a horse's conformation. As breeders, they appreciated the wonderful characteristics of the Arabian horse: a short head, expressive eyes, swanlike neck and short back. One ancient verse even goes so far as to describe the proper conformation of a quality horse. "When a noble horse lowers its head to drink from a stream flowing flush with the ground's surface on which it stands, the horse's neck ought to bow

over with such a length so as not to let any of its four legs bend, and allow it to stand, simultaneously firm, on all four of its legs."

The Bedouins paid even closer attention to the purity of their horses' bloodlines. There was an elite group of horses, called "Asil", which were believed to be direct descendants of Mohammed's five priceless mares. The Bedouins strictly adhered to the rule that these descendants should only be bred to one another.

The Asil horses were divided into groups, known as EL HOLMS (which means five).

1. SEGLAVI (also known as SIGLAVI or SAKLAVI)
2. KOHEIL (also known as KOHEILAN or KUHAILAN)
3. MANAKI (also known as MUNIGHI, MU'NIG or MA'NAG)
4. GILFI (also known as DZILFI or DZILFAN)





# THE ARABIAN COMES TO POLAND

*The Polish people have always had a great love of horses. Situated between Germany and Russia, Poland has had to contend with the volatility of its neighbors for centuries. In the more than 1,000 years of its existence, it is a nation which has rarely lived in peace. With the country's ever-changing borders, the horse has remained a theme and purpose to which the people of Poland could cling when all else fell away.*

The precise date that Arabian horses began to be used as breeding stock in Poland is unknown. Among the most logical explanations for the appearance of the Arabian horse early in Poland's history was the trade business conducted with Middle Eastern countries. Merchants traveled the "Amber Track" to Poland in order to barter goods, including horses, for the beautiful, golden gems.

The other explanation for the early introduction of the Arabian horse into Poland was war. For many centuries, the Turkish Empire ruled large regions including Arabia, Asia Minor, and Egypt. From time to time the Turks also invaded European countries. Due to its location, the kingdom most vulnerable to attacks by both the Turks from the south and the Tatars from the east, was Poland.

Between the 15th and 17th centuries, Poland extended far into the east with its vast territories, known as the "Wild Fields". These almost uninhabited plains were excellent protection for the invading Tatar squads, which on occasion advanced far enough west that they were confronted by the Polish army. Battles raged over the plains and the small, tough, strong horses of Arabian blood that the Tartars rode, proved irreplaceable for both armies.

Muslim tradition dictated that no geldings were to be used in battle. Therefore, the Poles could use all of the horses they captured as breeding stock. They believed these horses were the most useful and surpassed all others with their virtues. When winning a horse from a Muslim, one did not worry about the purity of its blood. It was well known that they would never trust their life to anything but a purebred horse. Thus, for the Poles, the expressions "A noble line horse" or "blood horse" were interchangeable with the terms "oriental horse" or "Arabian horse."

The Poles discovered that the high ranking Turkish military officials often rode exceptionally valuable animals. Thus, when an officer was taken prisoner, his mount was considered a highly desirable trophy. Evidence of this is found in the history of the 17th century Battle of Vienna

when Poland's King Jan III Sobieski captured Ali Pasha and Sillistrian Pasha. Both men rode splendid horses, but Sillistrian Pasha's mare was a particularly important bounty of war. For many years she was considered the most distinctive dam at King Sobieski's stud farm.

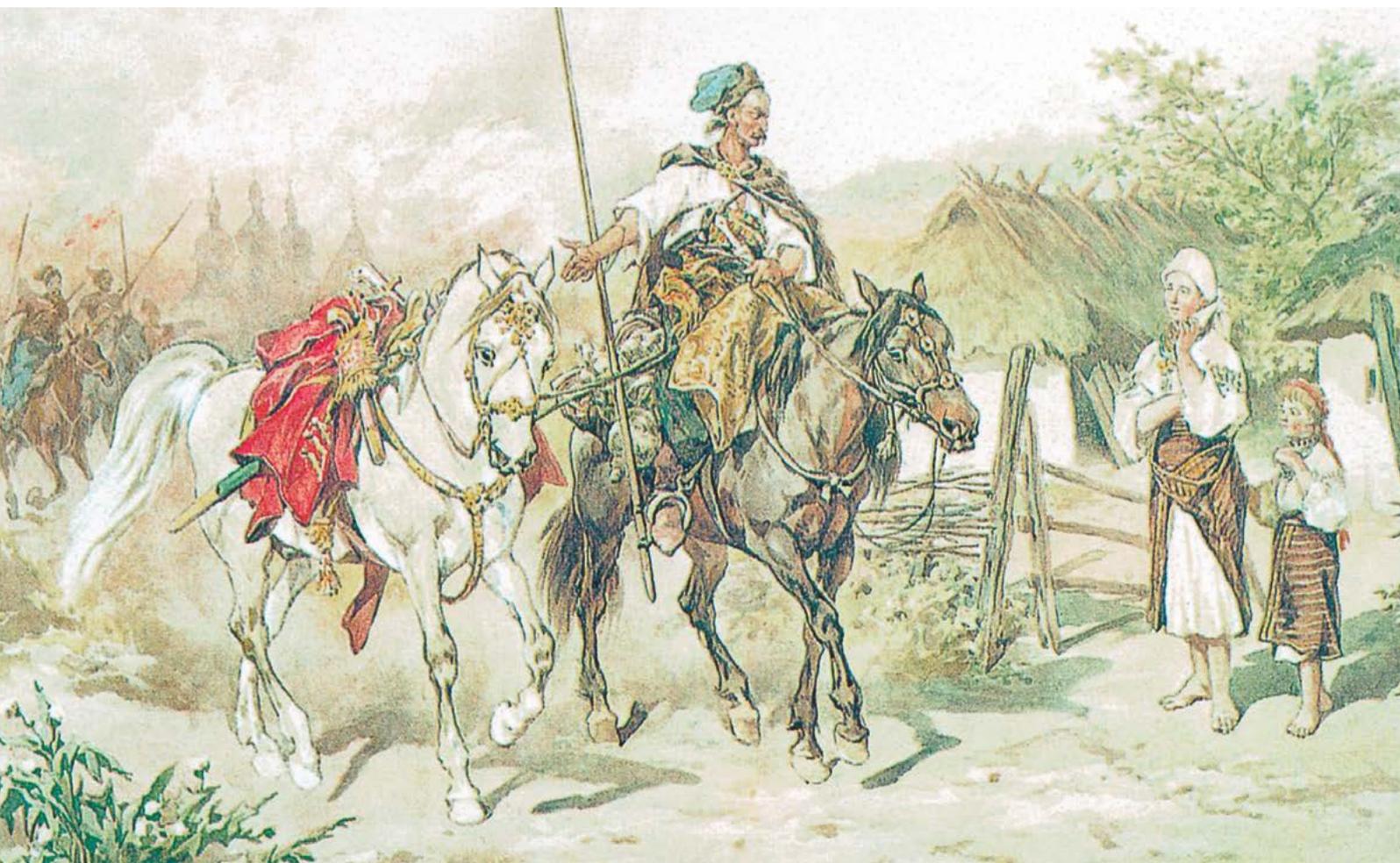
As time passed, certain ideals about the beauty and conformation of the ideal horse began to emerge in the collective Polish mind. Author Krzysztof Dorohostajski wrote the first books on Polish horses in which his remarks included this description:

"The horse can be compared to three animals molten into one: the lion, fox and deer. A horse should be splendid and proud as a lion. Its body must be agile and swift, broad in breast, with strong and well-muscled hindquarters. The horse reminds us of a fox through its light, attractive motion and vigilance. The horse resembles, on the other hand, a deer from the shape of its head, slenderness of neck, length and conformation of legs." Put all of these images together and the mental picture that emerges describes the Arabian horse.

The 16th century was a very important time in European horse breeding. Five stud farms were founded; four of which still exist today.

The first, the Marbach stud in Germany, was established in 1573 by Regentschaft von Herzog Ludwig in order to supply horses for the royal house of Stuttgart. Initially, this stud based its breeding program on Spanish horses. Later, Thracian, Holstein, Warmblood and Arabian horse breeding programs were added. The stud continues with their Arabian lines to the present time.

The Kladruby stud of Bohemia was the second European stud. Founded in 1579 by Kaiser Rudolf II of Habsburg, it was initially stocked with Spanish and Italian horses. The Kladruby stud is famous as the originator of the Kladruby horse, which has a long history as a carriage horse. Today the Kladruby is used primarily for sport driving. The Kladruby stud continues its breeding programs in what is now the Czech Republic.



ABOVE: *The Booty of the War*, by J. Kossak.

A member of the royal Habsburg family founded the third stud, Lipica, in 1580. The Habsburg monarchy controlled both Spain and Austria and it was Archduke Charles, the son of Ferdinand I, who established the stud farm near Trieste, Yugoslavia. The farm originally held Neopolitan, Spanish and Arabian horses. The Lipica stud combined these bloodlines and became famous the world over for the horses they developed which are known as Lippizans. These wonderfully athletic horses continue to be popular and are still used exclusively in the Spanish Riding School in Vienna, Austria.

At the end of the 16th century, the Danish king, Frederick II, established a stud in Frederiksburgh. Horses selected for its foundation breeding program were of the highest caliber and traced to Spanish, Neopolitan, Turkish, Egyptian, Berber and Polish roots.

At about this same time, King Zygmunt August, the last ruler of the Jagiellonian dynasty, established a royal stud.

Ruler of Poland from 1520 to 1574, he was a great lover of horses and housed at his farm Arabian, Spanish, Turkish, Phrygian, and Persian stock. The establishment became famous as the only stud in Europe at the time, to concentrate its primary breeding efforts on the Arabian breed.

The history of King Zygmunt August's Knyszyn stud provides one of the earliest records of Arabian horses in Poland. Accounts from his stud books remark that his horses were of "reliable line" and "certified descent", in other words, Arabian.

The Arabian horse became firmly entrenched in Polish history from this time forward. These courageous and beautiful creatures played a vital role in the development of the country and its culture. The rulers and royalty that followed King Zygmunt August also treasured the Arabian horse, so much so that they would travel to dangerous and exotic lands to find the very best representatives of the breed and bring them to Poland.