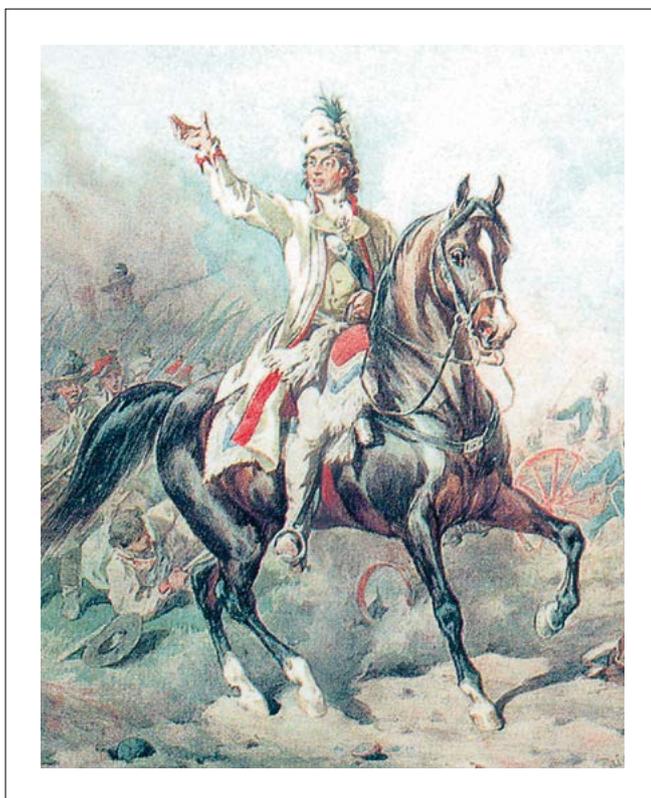


PRESENTING THE SECOND IN A SERIES OF EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK  
THE ARABIAN HORSE - POLAND'S NATIONAL TREASURE.

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# THE ARABIAN HORSE - POLAND'S NATIONAL TREASURE



By Zenon Lipowicz and George Zbyszewski

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# EARLY POLISH IMPORTATIONS

*Arabs never cheat on the pedigree of their horses.*

*Honesty is a religious law that they never break. While asking about a horse's descent, you can always expect a true answer. Such a question should always be asked in the presence of witnesses; should the Arab tell a lie, he would immediately be publicly mocked and beaten with sticks.*

The Napoleonic wars were waged across Europe from the late 18th century through the first quarter of the 19th century. They were long and bloody. Afterwards, Europe was almost completely devoid of horses. The situation demanded immediate attention and governments quickly sought a solution. Many state-owned studs were established and soon thereafter military representatives and private horse breeders traveled to Arabia, and other Middle Eastern countries, to import horses as foundation stock for their depleted herds.

The first proof of the importation of Arabian blood horses into Poland dates to 1805 and comes from accounts of the studbooks of Prince Roman Sanguszko of the Slawuta stud. He writes of an expedition to Arabia by Kajetan Burski, his master of the horse, who returned to Poland that year with five stallions for the Slawuta breeding program. This trip became the cornerstone for the future development of Arabian horses not only in Poland, but all of Europe.

One of the most colorful characters among Arabian horse breeders in Europe was Count Waclaw Rzewuski. Born in 1785, he descended from a wealthy family of landowners who lived near the border of ancient eastern Poland. From this location, the family was able to maintain good trade relations with merchants from the East. Growing up, Count Rzewuski inherited an interest and enthusiasm for Middle Eastern culture from his well-traveled uncles, Count Jan Potocki and Prince Adam Czartoryski. The young Count Rzewuski attended the Vienna University where he learned and mastered the fundamentals of the Arabic language under the famous Syrian scholar, Antun Arida. Later, Count Rzewuski worked with Professor Hammer, a great expert on Middle Eastern culture and a professor of science. Together, Hammer and Count Rzewuski, established the widely-read magazine, *Les Mines d'Orient*, which was devoted to a wide range of topics involving the Middle East.

Count Rzewuski was first introduced to Arabian horses when his services were required by the renowned Austrian cavalry, the Kinmajers. Before long, he wanted to know everything about these wonderful horses. He learned as much as he could from his visits to the important farms of the day including the Slawuta, Antoniny and Biala Cerkiew studs. Count Rzewuski developed a great love for the breed and he wrote several papers on the significance of Arabian horses in Europe.

Count Rzewuski longed to travel to the Middle East. However, it was not until the Congress of Vienna in 1815, that the opportunity presented itself. During the Congress, Count Rzewuski lobbied hard to regenerate horse breeding and replenish European cavalries by importing Eastern horses. Convinced of the importance of the project, the Congress entrusted Count Rzewuski with the task of purchasing horses for the Russian Czar, Alexander I, as well as the King and Queen of Wirtemberg's Royal Stud in Weil, Germany. At the time, Count Rzewuski had already filled Sawran, his estate in Poland, with more than 60 Arabian mares and thus the Congress felt that Count Rzewuski was the right man for the job.

In 1817, accompanied by a score of select people, Count Rzewuski set out for Arabia. He returned a year later with 13 stallions and 14 mares. These horses became the foundation herd for the Royal Stud in Weil, Germany. Among the mares, HASSFOURA, d.b., foaled 1811, her daughter ELKANDA, d.b., foaled 1818, CEYRAN, d.b. and KABRON, d.b., foaled in 1813, all went on to establish some very valuable lines.

In 1819, Rzewuski again set out for Arabia. This time he established a base in the Arabian city of Aleppo, from which he was able to organize expeditions into the desert. In his opinion, horses kept in the desert in their natural state were considered the most valuable breeding stock. He believed tribes that led a sedentary life closer to cities had horses of lesser quality, while horses bred in captivity, in cities, appeared to be of the lowest quality of all.

Expeditions deep into the desert were dangerous and difficult. Nomadic tribes were hard to locate, as were sources of food and water, and Count Rzewuski was constantly forced to contend with the questionable loyalty of the crew he had hired.

The only form of money Bedouins respected was "piastres fortes". This forced the travelers to carry large amounts of cash, making the convoys a great temptation to robbers. However, Count Rzewuski had a distinct advantage over other travelers — he spoke fluent Arabic.

During the course of his travels, Count Rzewuski kept notes. These observations, along with his memoirs, were later written in French and compiled under the title *Sur les Cheveaux Orient et Provenant des Race Orientales*. These documents are preserved to this day in the National Library in Warsaw, Poland.

Count Rzewuski's familiarity with Arabic culture prompted him to include in his works guidelines for those who traveled to Arabia to purchase horses.

"Prior to going to the desert, one has to establish a base for himself by hiring a stable in the city where he can get protection from European states' representatives. The cash he plans to carry must be only "piastres fortes," coins that are free from scratches and other possible defects. Coins with deep scratches or faults are refused by the Arabs. The Bedouin guide usually guarantees absolute safety for the money, but only during a stay among nomadic Bedouins whose honesty is widely known and deserves the best of opinions. There is, however, no guarantee and no one person to guarantee the safety of the money while the caravan is in progress.

Assuming all of these observations have been followed and all such difficulties have been overcome, we finally



arrive at the destination and the ceremony of buying horses begins. Bedouins are in the habit of asking a newcomer thousands of questions in order to learn exactly how much the newcomer knows about horses. During this question and answer period, the Bedouins establish a liking of the prospective buyers. Should the customer fail to be of the Arabs' liking for any reason, or should he speak about horses without respect, the chances for doing good business dwindle immediately.

The worst horses are generally brought before the customer first. By no means can these animals be criticized as they are inspected. The Arabs will see this as a personal

ABOVE: *Tadeusz Kosciuszko*,  
by J. Kossak.

Sante.  
 Geographique.  
 Atmospherique.  
 Historique.  
 Religieuse.  
 Episodique.  
 Interinaire.  
 Mours et usages.  
 des Tribus bedouines.  
 Maladies.



Sur les Chevaux.

Orientaux, et provenant des Races Orientales.

Par

Le Comte Wenceslas Swobin Ryewuski, cidevant officier de Cavallerie.

Membre de plusieurs Académies

et

Connu chez les arabes Bédouins

sous le nom

de  
 L'Emir Taje-el-Faher Abd-el-nischaane.



Dedie' a mes chers Enfants, Stanislas, Leon, (withold), Caliste,

Tome Premier.

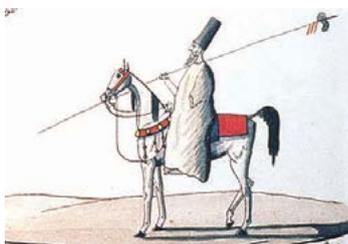
affront and the client will not be able to get what he really wants. Instead, he will hear responses like "booché", which translates to something like "gone mad", or "fabel", which is something like "of no avail".

One must be very observant in looking around the nomad's camp, for it is very often the case that the horses of real value fail to be presented to the client at all. One must also remember that Arabs do not like the meddlesome who tend to look their horses up and down. You must therefore be quick to make your judgment if you want to make a favorable impression upon your Arab hosts.

Should you notice a horse that you want to buy, you can safely ask the keeper whether the horse is for sale or not. An Arab is never offended when you propose to buy his palfrey. In fact, he even likes it. He never says either yes or no, but in reply asks you, "How much will you give me for it?" This is the trap! If the client's price is too low an Arab may be offended and refuse to sell. An Arab never says what price he is expecting to get for his horse. He agrees to the mounting price of the client. He will nod disapproval until the client reaches a price that the Arab owner has marked for the specific horse in his thoughts.

Arabs never cheat on the pedigree of their horses. Honesty is a religious law that they never break. While asking about a horse's descent you can always expect a true answer. Such a question should always be asked in the presence of witnesses; should the Arab tell a lie, he would immediately be publicly mocked and beaten with sticks.

It very often happens that a horse is owned by more than one keeper. This is another complication that may



the victories of the palfrey and its progenitors, but also the merits of the people who might have had any contact with the animal. If asked by the client, the horsekeeper may

sometimes render a transaction impossible. Unequivocal consent of all horse owners is the prerequisite for such a sale. If the horse in question is a mare, you must make sure she is not in foal in advance. An unborn foal may already belong to somebody, and this gives rise to a new situation. A mare cannot leave the herd until her foal has been weaned. Accordingly, no one can buy her while she is still nursing, as this would require waiting in the desert until the foal is weaned.

After all the bargaining is completed and the price is fixed, there follows a long ritual of counting money. The vendor counts first, while seated on a coat spread over the ground. He takes a careful look at each of the coins, counts the whole sum several times, and as soon as he finishes, the act of counting is taken over by his friends and relatives. This may take long hours, as whenever one of them makes a mistake, they all start counting again. You must, nevertheless, show extreme patience and wait until the vendor finishes and hands over the horse's halter string to the client. This means that the sum of money has been found to be correct and the transaction has been completed.

The Bedouin will next pick a couple of hairs from the horse's mane and rub a handful of the desert soil into the palfrey's body. When the ceremony is over, rumors of the transaction travel throughout the tribe. Everybody comes to admire the horse and behaves as if he has never seen it before. There is no end to the praise not only for

*THIS PAGE:*  
Drawings by Count  
Waclaw Rzewuski.

*OPPOSITE PAGE:*  
The title page from  
Sur les Cheveaux  
Orient et Provenant  
des Race Orientales,  
written by Count  
Waclaw Rzewuski.

even reveal a secret word or gesture designed to stir up the horse for speedy galloping during a race.

After the transaction has been completed, the horse should be sent off to the city base as quickly as possible. This alleviates the problem of the Bedouins changing their mind and returning the cash. The man entrusted with the job of escorting the horse to base must be very reliable and provided with a larger sum of money. He will need this money as ransom for those who are likely to stop him on his way, as there are those individuals who are opposed to the sale of desert horses. The money, even if it is not used for ransom, will never be returned. The man accompanying the horses will take it for himself. He deserves this money for all of the hardships he has suffered and for his loyalty to the client.

When the day arrives that the horses are to be led out of the stable, new problems await the horse dealer. Local authorities are often against leasing out horses. However, if you are prepared to pay a specific sum of money, their decision can easily be changed. It also happens that crowds protest in the streets, and here and there a situation occurs where someone wishes to prove the horses have been stolen from him and he wants to get them back. All of this is to try to swindle money. To avoid any troubles, you have to pay exactly what they want without going into any sort of negotiations."

As valuable as Count Rzewuski's memoirs are, his greatest contribution came from his expedition in 1819. He returned to Europe with 137 excellent horses. Among them was a very famous horse purchased from the Waledalego tribe. The horse was said to be a direct descendent from the Prophet Mohammed's mares. This horse's name, OBEIET EL HOMLU NEJDI – KOHAILAN, was spoken with reverence by every Bedouin tribe.

Count Rzewuski was most comfortable living among the Bedouins and he regarded Arabia as his motherland. In the patriarchal and tribal Bedouin system, he saw an ideal expression of the social structure in which no class ruled over others, there was no violence between men, and neither slavery nor serfdom existed. Count Rzewuski participated in the every day tribal life of the Bedouins and together with the chiefs, was involved in religious rites and feasts. Many tribesmen called him Emir Tage El Faher Abdel Rischane, which meant, "The Wreath of Fame". Others called him "The Golden Lion".

Count Rzewuski's popularity in Arabia was verified by the Polish hippologist, Count Juliusz Dzieduszycki, in a story published in 1857 by the Cracovian magazine, CZAS. While staying among Bedouin tribes, Dzieduszycki purchased a few mares and began negotiating for two stallions, KOHEILAN, d.b. and ABIAD, d.b. The Bedouins, tired from long hours of negotiations, finally fixed a date for the termination of the bargaining. On the appointed day, a group of horsemen came into the camp. Leading the way was a Bedouin mounted on a spectacular grey stallion, "...whose hooves seemed out of contact with the earth. This horse was so powerful at the trot that it seemingly hovered above the ground. The stallion's color resembled milk, his mane and tail floated in the air, shimmering with silver in the sun. His wide, open nostrils spit blood and fire and his black, convex eye looked sad and mournful as only the Arabian horse's can. You might have said that the horse had a soul, a soul that knew its stalwartness and superb beauty and was sad that God had imprisoned it in the body of a beast. Every vein was vibrant with life, and each move of the leg was so perfect that it fascinated the viewer's eye and aroused doubt as to whether what he was looking at was dream or reality.

While beholding this splendid stallion, the old sheikh, shedding tears of emotion, spoke from the Koran, "Blessed be the womb of the mother whose son has got such a horse. Allah is great!" The Arabs that gathered around repeated, "Allah is great!"

Count Dzieduszycki asked about the horse whose name was ABU CHEIL, d.b. The generation from which ABU CHEIL descended had carried Mohammed on their backs when the prophet fled the city of Medina on his way to Mecca. The Count was told, "If you got this horse, you would become the richest man in the world! This horse represents a pearl of earth!"

When Dzieduszycki again asked who owned the animal. The reply came, "He is ours! The mare of the prophet Mohammed had been left with our tribe. She delivered a foal, and from that foal came the whole ABU CHEIL line. Our grandfather did not rejoice in him for very long before the Almighty called him to his kingdom. Our grandfather, when dying, left this horse for us, and now we want to sell this horse to you, for you are the brother of the Emir. "The Golden Lion" was our sheikh and Emir. When our grandfather was starving and had nothing except ABU CHEIL's mother, "The Golden Lion" did not take her

from him, for he knew that along with her he would also take the old man's soul. "The Golden Lion" gave food to our grandfather and rejoiced at the look of the old man riding on this splendid mare. She was ABU CHEIL's mother and now only the Emir's brother can get this horse from us. Allah is great!"

Saying this, the Arab riding the magnificent stallion sprang down from the saddle and handed the reins to the Count's servant.

Although Dzieduszycki paid a handsome price for the wonderful stallion, he was so fascinated by the animal that in truth, he was prepared to offer all the money he had. After having sold the stallion, the Bedouins looked at Count Dzieduszycki with sadness in their eyes, jumped onto their horses, and rode into the desert.

The Count's servant realized they had not wanted to sell this horse. He ordered the caravan to pack up quickly, and start the journey home. Almost immediately, crowds of Bedouins blocked the road and demanded the horse's return. The convoy was stopped many times in attempts to either retrieve the horse or kill him in order to prevent him from falling into European hands.

An old sheikh, a friend of Count Rzewuski's, did all he could to restrain the Bedouins. It cost him a great deal in both money and gifts to the other Arab chiefs. When they reached the city of Damascus, Syria the old sheikh, in bidding Dzieduszycki good-bye, said, "Allah has donated you a pearl. Keep it like an apple of your eye. Allah is great!"

In all probability, Count Rzewuski would have remained in Arabia much longer if the revolution of 1819 had not broken out in the city of Aleppo. At the forefront of the uprising against the Turkish government that was in control of the region, was a dear and personal friend of the Count whose name was Hassan. Throughout the conflict Count Rzewuski stood by his friend's side. Eventually, the uprising was suppressed, the Turks regained control and Rzewuski was forced to flee.

Once in Poland, he immediately began negotiations to regain the horses he had left behind in Arabia. In 1821, after lengthy and costly efforts, Count Rzewuski was able



to regain 78 horses for Sawran, his estate in Poland. Upon their arrival, breeders from even the most distant places arrived to admire these desert bred Arabians. While Count Rzewuski kept most of his horses, he sold a few to other breeders and gave some to friends.

From 1820 to 1831, Rzewuski traveled throughout Europe. Wearing traditional Arabian style clothing and observing Middle Eastern customs, the Count became renowned as a mysterious and romantic personality.

In November of 1831, an uprising broke out in Poland against Russian occupation. Even though Rzewuski loved his horses, he offered them up for a cavalry squadron that he organized. While leading his troops, the Count was killed in a battle near the town of Daszow. His body was never recovered. With the untimely death of Count Waclaw Rzewuski, a chapter in the history of Polish Arabian horse breeding came to an end.

Poland had not only gained many of their fantastic desert horses through Count Rzewuski, it had also gained much of its knowledge of the customs and culture of the people of Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries. Count Waclaw Rzewuski was an example of the many individuals who risked a great deal to bring the desert bred Arabian horse to Poland. The results of the many expeditions and sacrifices made by these people are found in Poland's breeding programs to this day.

ABOVE: ABU CHEIL,  
by J. Kossak.