

Arabian Horse World presents:



THE EGYPTIAN INFLUENCE

by Betty Finke

WHAT EXACTLY IS IT THAT MAKES EGYPTIAN ARABIANS SPECIAL?

To many breeders and lovers of Arabian horses, they are almost a breed apart, to the point where, in the shape of the Pyramid Society, they even have their own breed society that defines just what exactly may call itself “straight Egyptian,” and runs its own shows. Yet at the same time, they are very much a part of the global Arabian scene as a whole, with a significance that extends far beyond the confinement of their own gene pool.

WHAT IS EGYPTIAN, AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The term “Egyptian” itself carries with it an aura of antiquity; it conjures up visions of pyramids and pharaohs and mysterious beast-headed deities, and of chariots drawn by horses that look very much like Arabians. As indeed they do, if one takes a look at ancient Egyptian art. Yes, the pharaohs of antiquity appear to have had horses with refined little heads, arched necks, and high tail carriage, as shown in paintings and reliefs from as far back as 1400 B.C. It certainly looks very much as if they bred such horses in ancient Egypt. But did they get their foundation stock from the Bedouins — or could it have been the other way around? We really don’t know, and most likely never will, but it makes for interesting conjectures.

We do know that, as romantic as the notion may be, today’s Egyptian Arabians cannot be traced back to the horses of the pharaohs; though we may enjoy the idea that somewhere back in the mists of antiquity, they probably are related — in the same sense as we, ourselves, are related to the ancient Egyptians somewhere along the way.

Yet, speculation aside, there are certain objective facts that set the straight Egyptian Arabian apart. Proximity to the desert, for one thing. Mind you, the Arabian horse bred at El Zahraa and at a steadily increasing number of private stud farms is, strictly speaking, as far removed from the Bedouin horse as any other horse acknowledged today as purebred Arabian. Except for two decisive factors. One is simply a matter of geography: the dry sand paddocks and indeed the climate of Egypt are a lot closer to the desert than the verdant pastures of Europe; and the



World Champion Mare, the straight Egyptian GELGELAH ALBADEIA (Imperial Madori x Anhar Albadeia).

equally “dry,” i.e. refined, look of the Egyptian Arabian certainly has something to do with that, just as the Arabian horse originally was very much a product of its environment. For many, this alone makes the Egyptian more authentically Arabian than others, and it was definitely what initially attracted European and American breeders to these horses. The other defining factor is that straight Egyptians can be



Above: World and U.S. National Champion Mare *EL DORADA PASB (*Sanadik El Shaklan x Emigrantka).

Left: Sire of champions around the world *SANADIK EL SHAKLAN (*El Shaklan x *Mohena).

traced in every line of their pedigree to original desertbred horses, often within just a few generations. Whatever significance one may or may not attach to that fact is another matter; but it's there.

The Egyptian Arabians we know today have their roots, like all our present breeding stock, in the early 19th century, more precisely in the breeding program first established by Viceroy Mohammed Ali the Great and further developed by his grandson and successor Abbas Pasha I. That particular period of time actually contains enough warfare, political intrigue, backstabbing, and plain bloody murder to rival any tales of the pharaohs; but in this case we do know that Mohammed Ali and Abbas Pasha got their foundation horses from the Bedouin tribes (though not always because they willingly parted with them). This was not quite the oldest breeding program outside the Arabian desert; but it had the most direct access to original foundation stock. And we do know where the foundation horses came from in all cases, which is at the bottom of the claim of a greater authenticity.

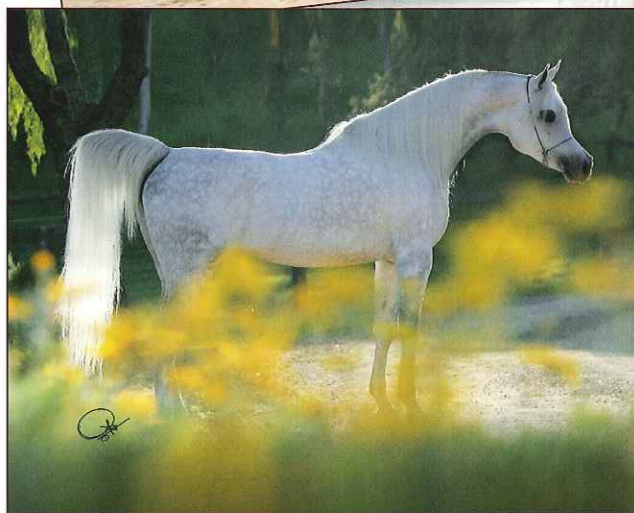
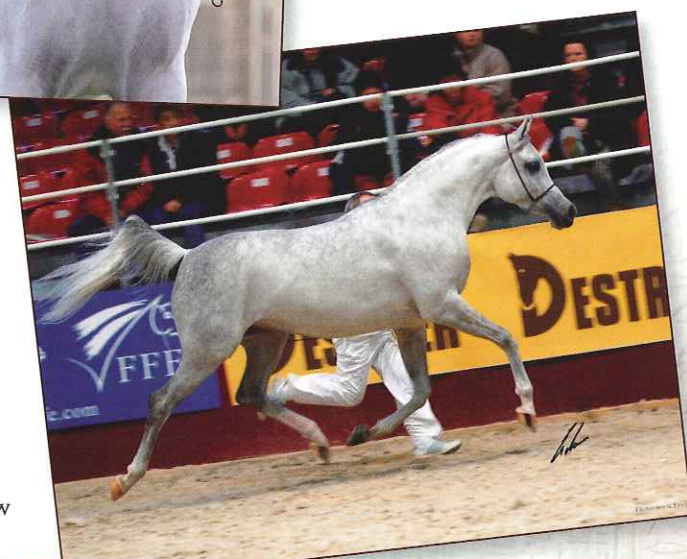
Beginning with Abbas Pasha, whose breeding program was continued by Ali Pasha Sherif, and culminating in the Egyptian Agricultural Organization (EAO), Egypt established a breeding program that became highly influential. In the late 19th, early 20th century, there was a period of intense mutual influence between Egypt and Crabbet Park in England. The Blunts famously purchased some of the remaining Abbas Pasha/Ali Pasha Sherif stock at the final dispersal in 1897, which became foundation animals in England (and thus, through the immense influence of Crabbet Park, all over the world); in addition, Lady Anne Blunt in 1906 established a second farm in Egypt, Sheykh Obeyd, with a number of these horses. In return, some of them were later integrated into the emerging Egyptian state breeding program, as was a group of horses imported from Crabbet Park in 1920. These were horses partly of Egyptian (Abbas Pasha) descent, and partly tracing to other desertbred lines unique to Crabbet such as Rodania, Queen Of Sheba, or Azrek,



Top: Sire of multiple National Champions *LAHEEB IASB (Imperial Imdal x AK Latifa).

Middle: Polish National Champion and World Champion Mare GALILEA (*Laheeb x Georgia).

Bottom: World Champion Stallion AL LAHAB GASB (*Laheeb IASB x The Vision HG).





Top left: U.S. National and World Champion Stallion, and sire of multiple National Champions *GAZAL AL SHAQAB (Anaza El Farid x Kajora).



Top right: U.S. National and World Champion Stallion, and sire of champions *MARWAN AL SHAQAB (*Gazal Al Shaqab x Little Liza Fame).

Bottom: U.S. National, World, and European Champion Mare *PIANISSIMA (*Gazal Al Shaqab x Pianosa).



whose claim to authenticity was fully equal to that of the Abbas Pasha horses. The EAO breeding program arguably reached its peak under General Tibor von Pettkö-Szandtner, who discovered Nazeer and made him chief sire at El Zahraa; a quantum leap that was to cause waves throughout the Arabian horse world. Beginning in the mid-1950s and continuing throughout the 60s and 70s, horses were exported everywhere, after a slow start also, and in increasing numbers, to the United States. Stud farms like Gleannloch and Ansata were established with breeding programs that reflected that of the Egyptian state; followed by Bentwood, Imperial, and others. The U.S. even had an advantage over Egypt: the horses imported by W. R. Brown and Henry Babson from Egypt in 1930s, which had markedly different bloodlines from the “modern” Egyptians and provided outcross possibilities no longer available to the Egyptians themselves. In Europe, Egyptian imports marked the beginning of a new area. Germany in particular, beginning in 1955, began importing steadily increasing numbers of Egyptian horses. Egyptian lines have dominated German breeding ever since, and at any stallion registration show during the last few years, straight Egyptian horses have formed the obvious majority.

EXTENDING THE INFLUENCE

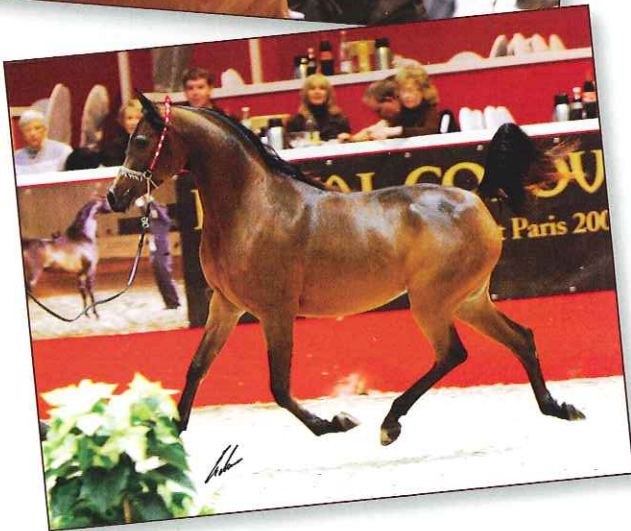
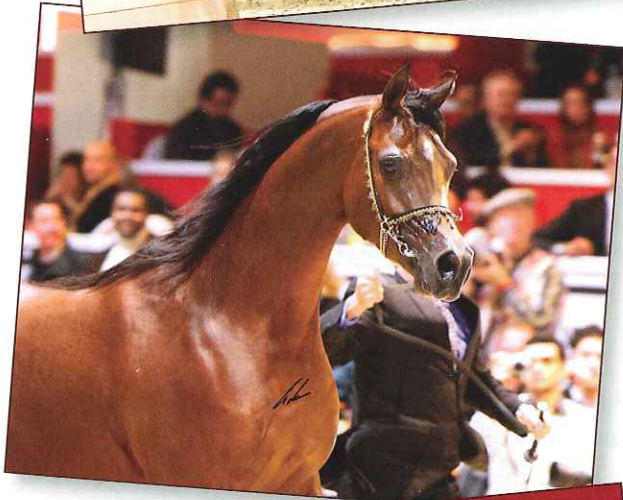
It is perhaps not surprising that Egyptians proved so popular; there is no denying that they had a certain refinement and exotic look not often found in domestic horses in those days, which had begun to take on the characteristics favored in their countries. Not everyone thought this was a good thing at the time; in some circles, these extremely refined horses were initially regarded with caution, if not suspicion. Early Egyptians also had a tendency toward certain conformation problems. Strictly speaking, these “problems” were a direct legacy of their desert heritage and very much part of the original



Top: International Champion Colt BAANDEROS (*Marwan Al Shaqab x HB Bessolea).

Middle: U.S. National Reserve Champion Colt and multi-champion QR MARC (*Marwan Al Shaqab x Swete Dreams).

Bottom: World and European Champion Filly *ABHA PALMA (*Marwan Al Shaqab x Abha Gazali).

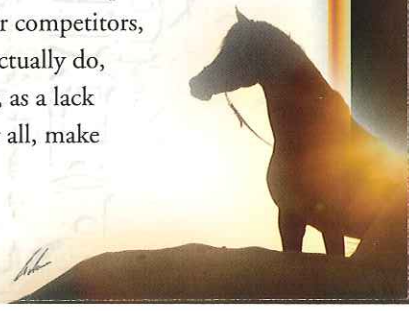


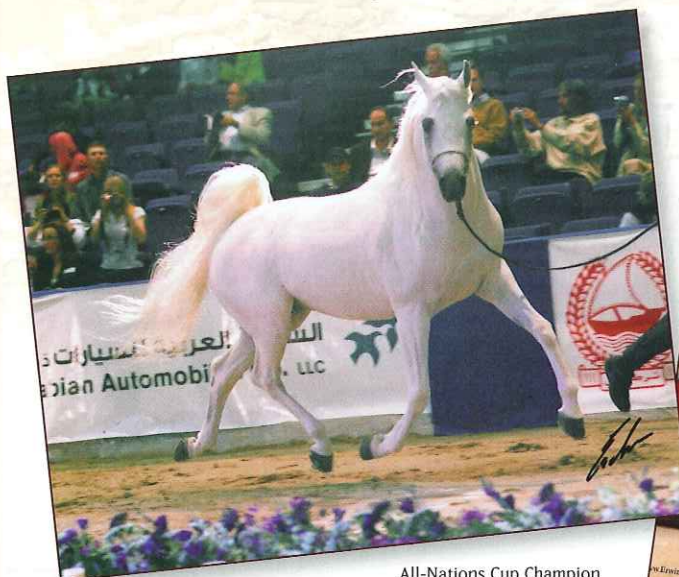
Arabian horse, such as short necks and high, angular croups. Selective breeding took care of these matters within a few generations. Other pre- (and sometimes mis-) conceptions claimed that they had difficult temperaments, no trot, and were not only too delicate, but also too small. Such prejudices can easily be laid to rest by experiencing these horses themselves. The temperament issue translates to the fact that Egyptians are

both intelligent and sensitive and, as trainer Emma Maxwell once put it very succinctly, do not suffer fools gladly. In other words, they are more likely to react strongly to the wrong treatment, which in the past gave several stallions an unjustified reputation of viciousness. The lack of movement was probably a generalization based on certain horses and their descendants (Hadban Enzahi, great sire that he was, was definitely guilty on that account); some bloodlines have and transmit better movements than others, just as anywhere else. Let us not forget that some famous park horses have been straight Egyptian, even direct imports. As for the size, this is quite simply wrong. Quite a few of the 1970s imported stallions have stood 15.3-16 hh, as have some later straight Egyptians, for example Crusader.

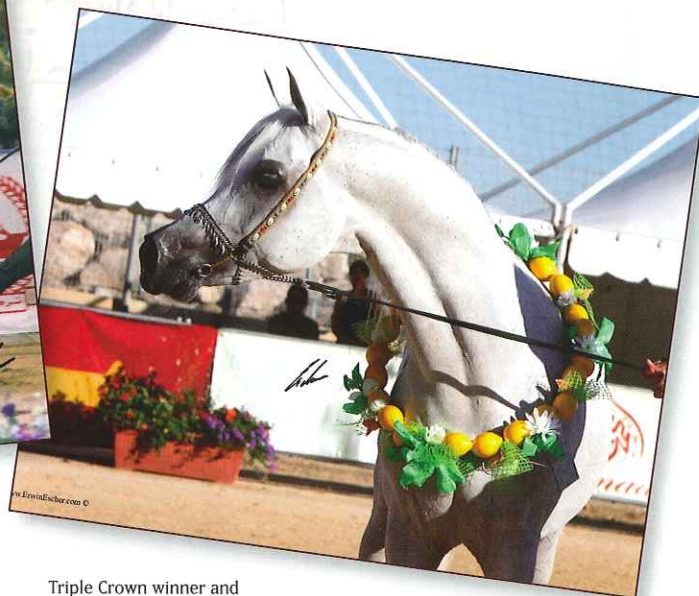
But it was that refinement, that dry, “deserty” quality, that ensured their long-term success, because, straight Egyptian breeders aside, others began to realize that these horses were perfect for adding that extra refinement their own stock lacked. Sometimes, this happened by lucky chance. The Egyptian stallion Aswan was a gift to the Russian government and ended up at Tersk, which was then the state stud. He almost single-handedly revolutionized Russian Arabian breeding, and the Russian conquest of Arabian breeding around the world is very much Aswan’s achievement. Poland secured its own part of the magic by importing Aswan’s son Palas, a three-quarter Egyptian who took Polish breeding a huge step further. Hadban Enzahi, Ghazal, and Kaisoon, all Nazeer sons like Aswan, changed the look of Arabian breeding in Germany and, through proximity, the neighboring European countries. Australia also caught the bug, initially through imports from Germany and Britain. The new, more refined horses might have been a bit slower to catch on there, but they eventually did.

Success, for better or worse, is of course largely measured in terms of show wins. Straight Egyptians have come a long way since the days when they were primarily showcased in their own shows; today’s straight Egyptian horses are as capable of winning major titles as any of their competitors, and the fact that fairly few of them actually do, reflects not so much a lack in quality, as a lack in numbers. Straight Egyptians, after all, make





All-Nations Cup Champion
Stallion and sire of champions ETERNITY IBN
NAVARRONE-D (Ansata Sinan x Navarrone P).



Triple Crown winner and
European Champion Stallion NIJEM IBN ETERNITY VI
(Eternity Ibn Navarrone-D x Naravna DE).

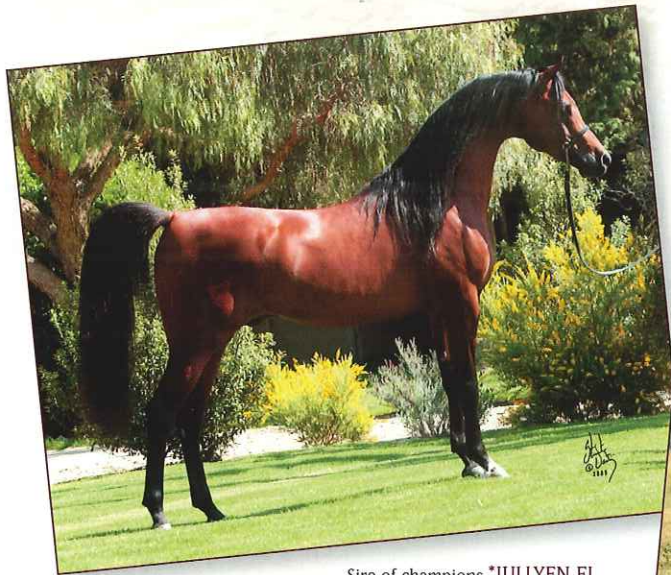
up only a very small percentage of the overall Arabian horse population; consequently, they also provide a very small percentage of show horses. And the fact is, those few that get shown also often win.

The first straight Egyptian to win a National Champion title in the U.S. was the *Morafic son Al Metrabi, who won the Futurity in 1970, nearly ten years after the first imports. Then, in 1971, came a truly unique "Egyptian year," in which all four major halter titles went to straight Egyptians: Ansata Ibn Sudan and *Serenity Sonbolah were the senior champions, Dalul and Il Muna won the Futurities, and to top it all off, *Nihal won the Western Pleasure title. Nothing even remotely comparable ever happened again. During the 1970s, there were usually one or two straight Egyptian title winners per year, with a noticeable drop during the 80s and 90s. In nearly half a century of U.S. Nationals, there have only ever been three straight Egyptian National Champion stallions — Ansata Ibn Sudan, *Asadd, and *Simeon Shai — and only two National Champion Mares, *Serenity Sonbolah and Fa Halima.

Looking at the major European titles, the numbers as such are not much higher, but the percentage is greater, since the European show circuit is a lot younger than the American one. Straight Egyptians have fared best in the World Championships at Paris. Looking at the senior title winners only, of 28 World Champion stallions,

six were straight Egyptians, and of the same number of mares, five were straight Egyptians. Intriguingly, the first senior straight Egyptian World Champion was Imperial Imdal in 1986, from the U.S., and in fact with only two exceptions (the mares Tiffaha and Gelgelah Albadeia) all the straight Egyptian senior world champions had an American background. At the All Nations Cup, we have three champion stallions and two champion mares out of 26 title winners each. The European Championships have the lowest score, with exactly three straight Egyptians out of 28 European Champion mares. There has, to date, never been a straight Egyptian European Champion stallion. But there have been plenty of Egyptian-related ones.

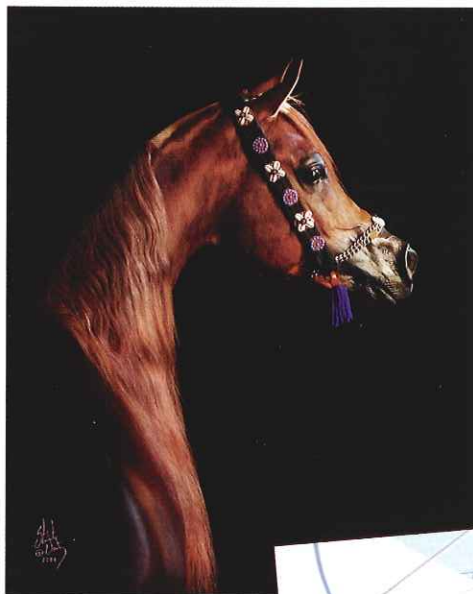
In other words, these numbers in no way reflect the actual Egyptian influence on the showring, which is in fact enormous. At this point, many of the leading U.S. sires, and *all* of the leading European and Middle Eastern sires, carry some degree of Egyptian influence. The biggest influence of all is of course the sire line of Nazeer, which dominates worldwide Arabian breeding today to a greater extent than any sire line has ever done before. In particular the Nazeer sons Aswan, *Morafic, and *Ansata Ibn Halima between them are responsible for most of the leading sires today, and we're talking about the global scene here, not just one country.



Sire of champions *JULLYEN EL JAMAAL (Ali Jamaal x Jullye El Ludjin).



U.S. National and Canadian National Champion Stallion ALI JAMAAL (Ruminaja Ali x Heritage Memory).



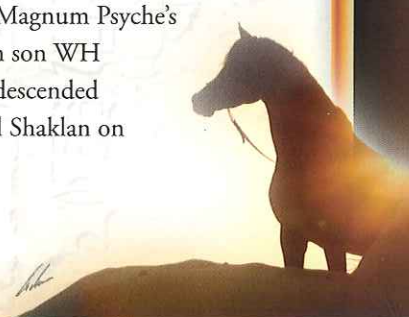
Above: U.S. National and Canadian National Champion Stallion and sire of champions MAGNUM PSYCHE (Padrons Psyche x A Fancy Miracle).

Right: Champion and sire of international champions WH JUSTICE (Magnum Psyche x Vona Sher-Renea).



Let's take a look at a few of those influential lines of Egyptian origin. The horse that set the mold for this type of influence was, as is often the case, *El Shaklan (1977), son of the Egyptian stallion Shaker El Masri (by *Morafic) out of Spanish mare *Estopa. *El Shaklan, the first "global" sire, established a worldwide dynasty. The obvious heir to his throne, the recently deceased *Sanadik El Shaklan, was himself 50 percent Egyptian and has winning descendants all over the world, and they are increasing. Recent winners include horses like U.S. National Champion *El Dorada, international winners Om El Extrem, and many more.

The Egyptian stallion Aswan's influence on Tersk was enormous, as was his son Palas's influence in Poland, both of which are still very much in evidence. The great *Padron was the grandson of Aswan in tail male line, so Padrons Psyche (with another line to Aswan through his dam) and Magnum Psyche and all their descendants also ultimately belong to this Egyptian sire line. This includes Magnum Psyche's European son WH Justice (descended from *El Shaklan on



his dam's side), in recent years the most popular and successful sire of show winners in Europe.

*Ansata Ibn Halima's influence is certainly more prevalent in straight Egyptian breeding than in the overall population, with Ansata Halim Shah having single-handedly revolutionized Egyptian breeding in Europe and Imperial Imdal following in his footsteps. Both are beginning to branch into the general population, especially Imdal through his son *Laheeb, who was used in Poland with considerable success and sired, among others, World Champion Mare Galilea. His son, World Champion Al Lahab, is following suit, and his lease to Om El Arab International has extended his influence beyond the straight Egyptian gene pool as well. His impact is only just beginning to make itself felt.

*Morafic's branch is currently certainly in the lead globally, through several sources. *Morafic sired The Egyptian Prince, who is currently the highest-ranking straight Egyptian stallion on the all-time leading sire list. His grandson Ansata Sinan was leased to Europe for several years and left a huge legacy there that includes major title winners and successful sires like Eternity Ibn Navarrone-D and his son, Triple Crown winner and 2009 European Champion stallion Nijem Ibn Eternity VI; AS Sinans Pacha with several successful sons; and *Mishaal HP.

The *Morafic grandson Ruminaja Ali (by Shaikh Al Badi) has the distinction of founding equally influential branches in both straight Egyptian and general Arabian breeding. Looking at the latest U.S. stud book analysis, there are no less than four stallions of this branch among the Top Ten sires, including Thee Desperado as the most used straight Egyptian sire in tenth place. In sixth, we have *Jullyen El Jamaal, by Ali Jamaal, the Ruminaja Ali son out of a domestic (mostly Crabbet) mare who is another global phenomenon as a sire.

And, most significantly, we have the incredible father/son act of *Gazal Al Shaqab and *Marwan Al Shaqab, both of them World Champions, occupying the fifth and first place respectively on the list — in *Marwan's case, for the second



World and European Reserve Champion
Stallion KHIDAR (Ansata Sinan x Elizja).

consecutive year. *Gazal Al Shaqab is by Ruminaja Ali's straight Egyptian son Anaza Al Farid, making him 50 percent Egyptian. With the success of horses like *Pianissima, not to mention *Gazal's and *Marwan's clean sweep of last year's world championships, we are likely to see their influence increase during the next few years. *Marwan Al Shaqab is currently the youngest sire — and the first one foaled in the 21st century — to appear on *AHW's* All-Time Leading sire list, just about to squeeze into the Top 80.

Horses like *Sanadik El Shaklan, Ali Jamaal, Magnum Psyche, WH Justice, Eternity Ibn Navarrone-D, *Gazal Al Shaqab, and *Marwan Al Shaqab are all prime examples of the kind of alchemy that happens when you blend Egyptian bloodlines with other sources, whether it's Spanish, Polish, Crabbet, or domestic. The foundation breeders in the 19th century were well aware of the need to add, from time to time, a new infusion of authentic desert blood into their breeding programs, and in their search for such blood, which was difficult to get in the desert, they increasingly turned to the stud farms of Abbas Pasha I and Ali Pasha Sherif. This legacy is still with us, continued both in Egypt itself and by many dedicated private breeders around the world; and this is where other breeders, including the master breeders of Poland, look when they feel the need to add a little bit of that elusive, Old World desert magic. Obviously, they've been getting it right.

Designed and produced by

Arabian Horse World

1316 Tamson Drive, Suite 101 • Cambria, CA 93428 • 800.955.9423 • 805.771.2300
www.arabianhorseowrld.com • info@arabianhorseworld.com