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THE EGYPTIAN ALTERNATIVE

*In Search of the Identity of the Egyptian Arabian Bloodlines,
Volume II, by Philippe Paraskevas*

BY DIANE WILSON

Philippe Paraskevas makes full use of his immeasurable knowledge of the Egyptian Arabian horse in Egypt in his latest work, *The Egyptian Alternative*, Volume II. He set the scene in Volume I, in which he urged breeders in Egypt to reclaim responsibility for breeding a variety of phenotypes within their heritage of EAO horses. He has bolstered his stance in Volume II.

Volume II discusses the Egyptian Arabian horse on a level that presumes some knowledge on the part of the reader. Nonetheless, even an inexperienced reader will be able to benefit from the author's considerable knowledge of the Egyptian Arabian and from his unique perspective.

Paraskevas admirably recounts a history of the nomadic Bedouin's Asil horse in its alternative first home in Egypt, northern Africa, away from its birthplace in the Arabian Peninsula. He focuses first on the mare lines via the tail female and continues in the later chapters to discuss the sire lines of the founding stock and their ancestral progeny that are being used for breeding today. Throughout, he analyzes how the use of various sires influenced the development of each tail-female line and

how each branch of the female lines has been used to develop contemporary horses. He also describes in great detail both the strengths and the less desirable characteristics he has observed in breeding from the various branches of the few remaining sire lines, with an emphasis on using the strengths within the various male branches. He encourages the review of ancestral elements in a way similar to that of the nomadic Bedouin, as did authors Kees Mol and Colin Pearson in *The Arabian Horse Families of Egypt*.

We learn of the Egyptian Arabian horse through Paraskevas's experience as a breeder and observer of EAO breeding over the past 30 years. He encourages his fellow breeders in Egypt and in turn, breeders worldwide, to reflect on this noble horse in terms of its authenticity. By sharing his immense knowledge with his fellow Egyptian Arabian horse breeders, the author will no doubt continue to educate and entice the world back to the authentic, if not ideal, foundations; the legacy of the nomadic Bedouin, foundations that are available from Egypt's past. He stirs the emotions of the reader so one is ready to share and perhaps expand on his

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passion for not only the Asil desertbred horse itself but also to continue the legacy of the Royal Agricultural Society RAS/EAO Egyptian Agricultural Organization.

The book would have benefited from a table illustrating characteristics that Paraskevas associates with the classic strains. Readers are cautioned that strain names are used both for identity and in association with presumed characteristics, which can be confusing. To the author's credit, he states if an individual is more like or leaning toward another type than the strain name of said individual might suggest.

In an age when it could be thought that there is too much divergence from the original Asil desertbred horse and consequently the Egyptian Arabian horse, Volume II, in tandem with Volume I, is a timely reminder of those original and solid foundations that mirror the Asil itself. Moreover, Paraskevas encourages his fellow Egyptians to embrace the fact that they are in possession of the source, true to its authenticity, and with skill and camaraderie they could, once again, lead the world in Egyptian Arabian horse breeding.

Volume II is written with confidence by an author who has not only his fellow Egyptians at heart but also the broader Arabian horse community. He reviews and challenges his peer authors on their published sentiments about the Egyptian Arabian horse as well as drawing on the detailed experiences of early authors such as Lady Anne Blunt whose documentation of the nomadic Bedouin's Asil desertbred horse has long been the

source of Western understanding. Students of the breed will appreciate Paraskevas's frequent references to other writings and his thorough footnotes. The author shares with the reader detailed information regarding the remaining EAO bloodlines. The only exception from this detail concerns individuals' leg structures; however, their torsos and temperaments are described well enough, which all makes for an enlightening read for any enthusiast, experienced or not. Details about current individuals at the EAO may be considered excessive by some perhaps, although those looking to breed the authentic Egyptian Arabian horse will no doubt embrace the author's candid enthusiasm.

Because the majority of Arabian bloodlines including but not limited to the likes of Russian, Spanish, Crabbet, and CMK stem from the ancestors noted in Paraskevas's two volumes, these books will make a welcome addition to every Arabian horse enthusiast's library.

All in all, Volume II is an invaluable contribution to the Egyptian Arabian horse and the Arabian horse in general and it has been written with a passion and verve that has not been present in recent years.

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