

THE RENAISSANCE OF ARABIAN HORSES IN

PAKISTAN

An interview with Omer Saleem, breeder of Arabian horses and President of the Arabian Horse Association of Pakistan (AHAP)

by Monika Savier



The country that is called Pakistan today has always been a country of horses. As early as 500 BC, the area was part of the ancient Achaemenid Persian Empire, which was famous for breeding excellent and noble horses.

In 712 AC, General Muhammad bin Qasim of Syria entered Pakistan, bringing 6000 Arabian horses from Mesopotamia and from today's Syria with him. By that, he may have been one of the greatest importers of Arabian horses into Pakistan (see inset). Another great importer was Muhammad Akbar, a Great Mogul of India who brought Arabian horses for his cavalry units in the circa 1500 AC. Later, there were the English with their horses, staying for a long time and exerting substantial cultural influence on India. Racetracks were built and the upper class played polo, while the mostly poor rural population kept horses as beasts of burden.

Pakistan is a part of the Indian subcontinent and by that, has long been an object of desire for various traders and merchants from Europe, with the English foremost and doing everything in their power to establish permanent branch offices on the subcontinent since about 1600, to

facilitate exporting the valuable products of India to England. They founded the British East India Company which became a major factor of power in India in 1757, and was to be the basis of almost 200 years of British colonial rule in that country. From 1857 on, the British government exerted direct power in the area via their privileges and prior claim in the East India Company.

There was increasing resistance from the population, with the conflicts between Hindus and Moslems no longer manageable, until finally on August 14, 1947, the power was handed over to India and the new state of Pakistan was created, merging regions with different population groups, cultures, and religions. This made Pakistan and India independent states and separate members of the British Commonwealth. The English did not only leave their horses, but as a result of their conflict-laden colonial policy, they also left a Pakistan that needed to re-invent itself and is struggling with that heritage up to this day.

Today, Pakistan's vulnerable democracy has reached the point where young, well-educated citizens from out of the civil society are able to take the initiative in various ways in order to live



Muhammad Akbar, Great Mogul of India with his children. © <https://creativecommons.org>



Persepolis ruins of the Achaemenid Empire, Iran

for progress in the country – and to fight for it, if necessary.

One of them is **Omer Saleem**. He is 35 years old, a key player in the world of Arabian horse breeding, and in our interview, he tells us of his varied life and his horse breeding experience with straight Egyptian Arabians.

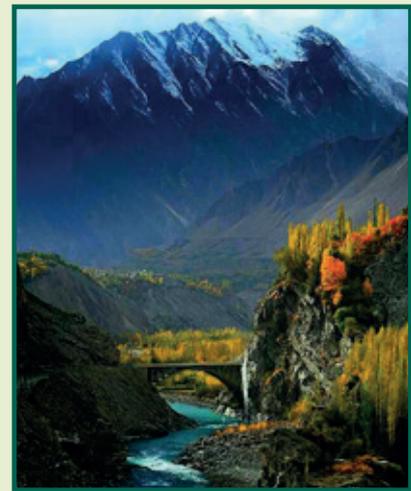
In Omer Saleem's world, Arabian horses with a WAHO passport will not necessarily be issued documents, which is why he founded a registered association that can take over this part. He succeeded in motivating a whole number of breeders into affiliating with WAHO horse breeding, regarding Arabian horses as a part of Muslim culture and maintaining them accordingly. However, the country needs fresh imports of purebred Arabians with WAHO documents. Omer organizes and manages imports, with the horses not arriving by ship as they did in the Middle Ages, but by container flown in by Air Cargo. Omer needs to be able to rely on the honesty of the European breeders, as he buys by phone for himself and his fellow breeders. A big risk for them all – Pakistan is not a country on the Gulf, where the oil wells brim over. Pakistanis in rural areas love horses, but they can't afford to spend lots of money on them. In Europe, on the other hand, horse breeding is an expensive hobby and horses come at a price. So a compromise needs to be found, spanning the extremes of these different markets. Omer shoulders the responsibility towards his fellow breeders and can do no more than hope that the horses leaving the containers on the airport after arrival are healthy and really look like they did on the beautiful pictures that were sent via WhatsApp. Not every breeder in Europe is aware of the responsibility he has here and that you cannot send anything but healthy good breeding



Mubammad Akbar in a battle. © <https://creativecommons.org>

stock to Pakistan, as when dealing with that still emerging horse breeding country, this is what fairness requires. Recently, some more horses from Europe arrived in Pakistan. Omer says they were OK so far – not exactly the sounds of enthusiasm. Next month, another transport is due to arrive. We honestly wish him success for that.

Omer has new productive ideas, too. He aims to organize the first Arabian Horse Show in Pakistan and wants to train more Arabians for the highly



popular horse sport of Tent-Pegging, so as to advertise the breed. On all the horses and his experience with horse breeding in his country, he is just finishing a book due for

publication this year. We are sure to hear more from Pakistan soon on the subject of Arabian horses. Which is a good thing, as these horses will be good for the country - once again. □



6000 Arabian Horses into Today's Pakistan in 712 AD

Without meaning to, General Muhammad Bin Qasim of Syria may have been one of the greatest importers of Arabian horses into Pakistan.

Born in 695 AD, he was the nephew of the governor of what is mostly Syria and Yemen today and what the Umayyad Caliphate was then. His uncle appointed the highly-talented Bin Qasim Governor of Persia while in his teens, and a General after he had crushed the rebellion in that region.

What was more important for horse breeding in Pakistan? With 6000 horses and 6000 camels, Muhammad bin Qasim conquered the Sindh and Punjab regions along the Indus River, which today are provinces within Pakistan, for the Umayyad Caliphate.

Arabs had trade with India and Eastern Asia then, carried out via a sea route, which came to be unsafe due to plundering pirates of Sindh. Therefore, the Umayyad wished to consolidate their rule and to secure the trade route. After a pirate raid on Arab ships, he ordered Muhammad Bin Qasim to attack Sindh.

Bin Qasim led 6000 Syrian cavalry who were, at the borders of Sindh, joined by six thousand camel riders. Muhammad Bin Qasim's army marched along the Indus, defeated the Sindh ruler's forces at Rohri, capturing Daibul and taking control of Sindh in 712 AD. After the conquest of Multan and Gajirat, the young man took his conquering army through Punjab to the borders of the then Kingdom of Kashmir.



Mohammed Bin Qasim – the first Muslim invader who spread the Islam in India

Bin Qasim stayed with his army for three years. Just 17 years old, he established peace and acceptance of Muslim rule by the natives of Sindh and Punjab, in return for non-interference in their religious and cultural practices. When Bin Qasim's uncle died, he was succeeded by a caliph who was a bitter enemy of the Qasim family. The Caliph called Mohammad Bin Qasim back from Sindh and put him to death in 715 AD at the age of twenty.

“ I aim to produce a functional Arabian horse with great disposition and not just a beautiful show piece ”

INTERVIEW WITH OMER SALEEM

Monika Savier: Arabian horse breeding in Pakistan – it is not widely known that this is existing at all. Can you give me some general information? Do you know how many breeders you have there and how many Arabian horses?

Omer Saleem: Since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, only the army attained Arabians from time to time in the form of imports or state gifts from various countries. The Pakistani Army became a member of WAHO in 1997 and their MONA depot in Mandi Bahauddin is now the main authority of Arabians in Pakistan. These horses were not available to the general public and there was a long arduous process of purchasing them which was only possible if one had certain contacts.

In around 2007 the first imports were done by civilians and by now Pakistani civilian owners count a total of about more than 130 imported Arabian horses and their progeny. The vast majority of these Arabian horses are being bred in the province of Punjab.

2013 marked the emergence of the Arabian Horse Association of Pakistan (AHAP), which also started the



Omer Saleem riding Hanaya Karam

much-needed collaboration among civilian owners who have added top Arabian bloodlines (Straight Egyptians and purebred Arabians) to the horse stock of this country. At the beginning and in our first meetings, AHAP had 10 to 12 members, which has risen to around 75 at present.

Savier: Was there a history of breeding Arabians in





Pakistan before that? And if yes, where did the horses come from, do you happen to know that?

Saleem: Arabian horses and the spread of Islam go hand in hand. Before Pakistan was founded as a state, India was referred to as the subcontinent. The first Arabians were brought to the subcontinent as early as the 8th century by the Muslim saint and great-grandson of our Prophet (Peace be upon him P.B.U.H), Abdullah Shah Ghazi, to the port of Karachi when he came here as a horse trader. Also, in the same time period, Muhammad Bin Qasim invaded India in the province of Sindh with a cavalry of 6000 fine Arabian Horses.

From then on, the Mughal emperors, most notably Babur and Akbar, kept acquiring Arabians on a regular basis to maintain their army and to mix them with the local breeds to improve their quality. These Mughal emperors had officers who inspected every horse being brought into the subcontinent by the horse traders and would purchase and send the best ones to the royal stables. Arabian horses always came in by the sea route, while other breeds such as the Kabuli and Central Asian breeds came by land routes. Emperor Akbar even imported 500 Arabian stallions and sent them to different parts of the empire to breed with the local mares and hence improve their progeny for use in the Mughal Cavalry.

Arabians have always been the most expensive breed and were hence reserved for the nobility, while the common person, having no other option, purchased other breeds, which were cheaper. The Arabian horse is still currently the most expensive horse breed in Pakistan.

The native country “desi” (local) horse we see today is a mix of a number of breeds (Kabuli, Persian, Central Asian horses, Thoroughbreds, and Arabian). The fiery temperament is similar to that of the Arabian, however in functionality, disposition and even beauty it is a far way off.

Trade of Arabians increased at the time of the English, as this horse was not only used as a warhorse and a



Omer riding GR Assad in the Cholistan Desert Endurance

long-distance horse but also in races, hunting and Polo. British officers used to visit the stables of Abdul Rehman Minnie, a prominent horse trader from Arabia, to select the best Arabian horses for their own use. Arabian horses that performed extremely well in races and other sports were exported from the subcontinent, to England and also to Australia.

Savier: What role do the straight Egyptians play? Do the Straight Egyptian breeders have a different motivation from that of the other breeders of Arabians?

Saleem: In Pakistan, currently there is more inclination to breed SE Arabians as they are believed to be Asil and hence pure. The dedication to breed pure comes with our religion and out of our love for our Prophet (P.B.U.H) There is a second religious dedication factor which is linked to the horses of the Prophet Suleiman (PBUH).

Yet another factor is that SE horses have proven themselves here at all levels. Initially there were many misconceptions here created by breeders of the country “desi” mixed breed regarding the functionality of the Arabian horse. Believe it or not - over 90% of horse owners, particularly in rural areas, had never seen an Arabian. My Straight Egyptian stallion GR Assad was one of the first SE horses to come to Pakistan and has proven himself in most sports in the country. He has participated in Endurance and has led the Tent-Pegging section of Arabian horses at a major event in Islamabad. The SE is becoming the horse of choice for the people here because it is not only beautiful with an

excellent character, but also has the ability to perform as an outstanding sports horse if bred accordingly. However, once shows start to be held in Pakistan, the breeding of purebred Arabians will also start to gain momentum here, I'm sure.

Savier: After reading about Pakistan, I wonder how this country gets along with the different ethnic groups, languages, and religions. In our context: are there certain population groups that breed predominantly Arabian horses?

Saleem: Pakistan is a country with many languages, just like our native horse is a mix of many breeds. However nearly everyone in Pakistan understands the Urdu language. There are people following different religions, however Arabian horse breeders are all Muslims.

In Pakistan, the sport of Tent-Pegging is a cultural thing, which is why in some areas of the Punjab province there is a horse in every household. There are local events and big events and there are as much as 800 to 1000 horses participating in some events. Punjab is the land of five rivers and has good agriculture, so keeping a horse is not very expensive there. Moreover, due to a high population and few job opportunities the cost of labour is quite low. 90% of all Pakistani Arabian horses are being bred in the province of Punjab. Around 6% of the Arabians are bred in the province of Sindh, and only 4% in the provinces of Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Kashmir combined.



Arabian Horses arriving by Air Cargo in Pakistan



Group Photo - Endurance organized by Saad Masood - 10th from Left

Savier: Is horse breeding highly regarded in Pakistan, or more part of rural agriculture? And are there women in Pakistan who are active as breeders or riders?

Saleem: Well, while the top-quality horses are afforded by the rich, there are commoners keeping horses as well. For now, Arabian horses are only being bred and purchased by the rich due to their high cost. However, some people have started to get their local mares, referred to as “desi”, covered by Arabian stallions, and this has given outstanding results. These “desi” mares already have Arab blood and thus nicked well with the imports, so the quality of this horse stock has been improved.

Pakistan is a very conservative religious country mostly, and there are rarely any good women riders or breeders as far as I can observe. Right now, all Arabian horse breeding is done by men. Riding itself is considered a manly sport by the majority here, although Islam permits riding for women and we have examples in history where Muslim women used to ride their horses and would help men in battle. I hope that times will change and we will see more women learn this sport and get active as breeders.

Savier: What do people in Pakistan mainly breed for: the racetrack, endurance, show, leisure time riding? Do Arabian Horse Shows play a role in Pakistan?

Saleem: In Pakistan, by the efforts of AHAP, Arabians are now being used for the sports of endurance and of Tent Pegging. There was stiff resistance from the

local “desi” people initially where they assumed that the Arabian horse is just a show horse and has no functionality. However, in the course of time and with the increasing number of Arabian horses in sports, everyone is updating their knowledge.

Around five endurance events have been conducted to date by AHAP and the FEI chapter of Pakistan. Endurance was picking up as a regular event until the core person of FEI Pakistan, Mr. Abid Tarin, left and became Deputy Secretary General of the Asian Equestrian Federation, relocating to Qatar.

Tent-Pegging is already the biggest horse sport in Pakistan, and Arabians have shown their presence and participated in these events several times now. Moreover, people are also using them for leisure as they are beautiful and great riding horses.

Showing, unfortunately, is an area we have not been able to work upon yet, and we would need international trainers and judges to support AHAP to harness the immense potential we have here, and make shows possible in Pakistan.

I have several targets for 2021. I plan to get to work with FEI to arrange an endurance event. I would like to get support and guidance in the form of trainers and judges to organize and execute the first Arabian Horse Show in Pakistan. Along with my Arabian stallions Assad and Karam, I would like to be representing Arabians in all major Tent-Pegging events throughout the country.

Savier: You mentioned the sport of “Tent-Pegging” several times now. I admit I’m not familiar with it – what is it about?

Saleem: Tent-Pegging is an ancient cavalry practice sport. It is said to have originated at the time of Sultan Saladin who used to attack enemy camps and pull out the pegs of their tents. The pegs are the pieces of wood that keep the stabilizer lines of the tents’ side walls in the ground. So pulling them out would cause the tents to collapse on top of the sultan’s enemies. There are many other stories that attribute the sport’s origin to the Arabs themselves as they used to conduct raids on neighbouring tribes and knew about uprooting their tents. This sport was later on adopted in the subcontinent and now is the most widely played horse sport in Pakistan.

For the sport version, there is a peg fixed into the ground and the rider has to lift up the peg with either his lance or sword, based on the particular competition, while in a full gallop. Taking the peg out and crossing the finish line is worth 4 points, but if the peg was just touched, or dropped before the line was reached, only two points are given. There are individual awards as well as team awards. Teams are referred to as “sections” and consist of four players.



Tent-Pegging: The peg is picked up by the lance



Pakistan’s First Ever Arabian horse section



Omer leading the Arabian Horse section riding GR Assad

Tent-Pegging has been an internationally acknowledged sport for many years now, also recognized by the FEI, and Pakistan regularly competes at international levels. In 2019 I was fortunate enough to lead the first ever Arabian horse section in the history of Pakistan in a major event of Tent-Pegging in the capital of Pakistan, Islamabad. GR Assad, my SE stallion who is a grandson of Ansata Halim Shah, was the star performer of the event and caught the eye of all participants with his beauty and performance.

Savier: Who or what is MONA that you also mentioned before? They seem to be more than just major horse breeders in Pakistan.

Saleem: The British were the ones who initially established MONA Depot. It is the biggest horse, donkey, and mule breeding facility in Pakistan, operated and run by the Pakistan Army. They breed several breeds of horses such as Thoroughbreds, Anglo Arabians, Percheron, Hanoverian, Arabian etc. WAHO gave membership to MONA in 1997, as at that time MONA owned 99% of all Arabians in Pakistan and registered all the horses existing then, through a series of detailed

DNA testing.

More than 23 years later, meaning now, the ratio of Army-owned MONA horses as compared to horses owned by civilians is nearly 50% to 50%, and hence many problems have cropped up which prompted civilian breeders to found the Arabian Horse Association of Pakistan (AHAP).

Savier: It's not often that in the context of Arabian horse breeding, there is a cooperation of "military" and "civilian" needed. I take it there are problems – have ways of tackling them been found already?

Saleem: Well, recently a very positive meeting took place between MONA and AHAP on the issues that civilian breeders face with MONA. WAHO secretary Katrina Murray was asked to contact the Army for that, and subsequently the first meeting was held at MONA on the invitation of the Colonel who is second in command there.

There were three main issues we talked about: Fundamentally, being an army establishment, MONA is not accessible to civilians, unless they have references or contacts within the army. Hence, there is nearly no



DAA Minerva (Kais Al Baydaa x Hanaya Mira)

coordination between civilian breeders and MONA. The maximum coordination is that the civilian breeders pay an annual fee as per quantity of horses, and can collect the papers of the horses they import when the papers

arrive at MONA from the international registries. Because frequent postings and transfers are normal in the army, any coordination we civilians have with any existing officer or the commandant is finished when a new one comes in, and we have to start all over again. And there is the issue that MONA does collect the WAHO fee that is to be paid every year by every breeder, but is not in the habit of handing over any horse registration or foal registration documents to the civilian breeders who paid the fees. The same with sales and purchases going on - there are no proper transfer documents issued or procedures followed.

Also, the last stud book printing was done 8 years ago. This means that there are foals for which officially payment was made to WAHO annually, but the owners did not get any documents or papers from MONA, and then these foals became stallion or mares and went on to produce foals in their turn.

As I said, it was a very positive meeting where AHAP agreed to sponsor the stud book and to create a system where horse registration is streamlined against a standard fee. Work is in progress and I am very hopeful that we will be able to print the next stud book in 2021.



DF Kaisha (DF Siraj x DF Karimah)



DF Nafisa (DF Malik Jamil x DF Nadeemah)



Hanaya Karam (Kenz Al Baydaa x Hanaya Elissar)

Savier: How do you and your fellow breeders keep informed about Arabian horse issues? Which role do online social media play in your country?

Saleem: The main source of information, videos and pictures, believe it or not, is Facebook. However, Instagram and WhatsApp are also used. A short time after AHAP had been founded, we also formed a WhatsApp group which initially had eight to ten members. Now the number is more than 75. Breeders use WhatsApp mostly to coordinate on an everyday basis with each other and share their horses and their learnings with the group. However, pictures and information are also uploaded on Facebook, where they also attract new members. There is very little use of YouTube but I am looking into it. Print media, however, are non-existent. A lot of effort was invested, in the course of several years, to educate people via phone calls and face to face meetings.

Savier: Tell us something about your own breeding. How did it start to breed Arabian horses?

Saleem: In 2008, after graduating from Engineering College, I started my search for Arabian horses within Pakistan but in vain. I travelled all over the province of Punjab but was unsuccessful in acquiring a WAHO-registered Arabian. I finally started my breeding with the purchase of a WAHO mare that was rejected by the army in 2011. In 2012 I purchased my first Arabians in Germany and imported them to Pakistan in Jan 2013. Since then, I have been importing horses regularly and updating the gene pool that I have. Also, I have been supporting other breeders and newcomers in selecting and purchasing horses and getting them to Pakistan. Founding AHAP was a dream come true for me, as I have been blessed to work in a team of dedicated breeders who have put their all to bring this breed to where it is today.

Savier: This sounds like a long and interesting story cut short. Where is your stud, what is your main profession, and how did you get into breeding?

Saleem: Fortunately for me, my stud, Al Saleem Egyptian Arabians, is located near Lahore. Lahore is also the capital of the province of Punjab and the second biggest city of the country. The crops are great and we mostly use home-grown fodder such as alfalfa and oats for our horses.

My story is not a usual one and I had never planned to be a breeder or breed horses. I had always planned to keep one or two horses and just ride them.

I learned to ride and developed my passion for horses at Cadet College Hasanabdal, where I did my O and A levels. Then I studied Mechatronics Engineering at the College of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering and later on received my e-MBA from the Lahore University of Management Science.

Professionally, I am the founding director of three entities: an engineering company in 2011 (Drakken Pvt Limited), a school in 2017 from preschool to O levels (The Drakken School), and a charity organization in 2012 (Fatima Tuz Zohra Foundation).

Passionately, I am the founding President of the Arabian Horse Association of Pakistan (AHAP). Horses have always been a passion. In 2008, when our father died of liver cancer, me and my brother inherited the family lands. Being the elder brother, I began to look after and manage the livestock and agriculture, in addition to my full-time job in an engineering company, JGC.

I initially purchased local “desi” horses but soon realized their problems of stamina and strength although they bonded well with me. After damaging and ruining many horses, I shifted to Anglo Arabians and Thoroughbreds. While Thoroughbreds were hardy, I found them to have many bad habits like biting and bucking, and I failed to bond with them no matter how many treats I would give. Anglo Arabians were better for me and I managed to get a former army horse, an Anglo Arabian mare they had rejected, and I enjoyed her thoroughly.



2nd Annual AHAP Board meeting at Al Makhdoom stud

In 2009, I met Sardar Ibsar Dogar, who himself owned a few rejected army Anglo Arabians and one low category non-WAHO Arabian. This was the meeting where he showed me Arabian horses in books and pictures off the internet, and shared the knowledge he had. This made a lot of sense to me as I was already enjoying the Anglo Arabian I had. This meeting triggered an urge in me to learn about Arabians.

Savier: So by 2009, you had become fascinated with Arabian horses. How does your story go on? It's apparent that finding Arabian horses in Pakistan at that time was not easy.

Saleem: At the end of 2009, I was sent to work in the JGC office in the Philippines for some time, and then in early 2010, I was sent to JGC Japan for a few months. During this break from everything I kept reading and understanding Arabians and started to keep in touch with international breeders. Returning at the end of 2010, I was again selected and was to leave for Japan for two years. So I sold my collection of a Thoroughbred mare, an Anglo Arabian mare and an Anglo Arabian filly to my friend Ibsar, and for me, it was the end of my stay in Pakistan and the end of my journey with horses.

However, fate had something else in store and six months later, in 2011, I returned to set up my own company at the age of 26. That was when I started on my journey of trying to find Arabians. I remember spending days at a time looking for horses wherever the middle-men or dealers told me. They would nearly always be Arabians

of parentage mixed with “desi” horses or Thoroughbreds. After a lot of hard work and wrong purchases, in 2012 I managed to find a purebred WAHO mare named Pretty Bard born in 2003, and a non-WAHO Arab gelding born in 2009.

I then planned to breed a foal from my mare, but unfortunately, only her half-brother was available, and one other stallion was. Both owners were not easy to approach but while the owner of the half-brother agreed to the breeding after a series of requests, the other one refused. I did have Pretty Bard travel 400 km to Islamabad to get her covered, but as fate would want it, the mare did not conceive and I did not want to request again. In the same month, I tried to purchase a non-WAHO mare but the owner increased the price unexpectedly seeing that I was desperate, and a deal could not be concluded.

These two events forced me to start my search online, to purchase Arabians abroad and breed them here and produce good quality Arabian horses in Pakistan, so that no one would have to suffer like I had.

Savier: Why did you decide that your horses would have to be Straight Egyptian Arabians?

Saleem: One thing I was sure of, and that was to purchase straight Egyptians, as for me, they were closest to the breed of my prophet (PBUH) and were the best of the Arabians that had been

brought to Egypt. The best of the Arabians had been in Egypt from the time of the Prophet Daud (David) and Prophet Suleiman. Later on when Hazray Amr Bin Aas conquered Egypt with a cavalry of Arabian horses, it was a new start, and then the best Arabians were collected there by Al Nacer, Beybers, Muhammad Ali Pasha and Abbas Pasha.

My aim has been to produce beautiful Asil Arabian horses, with an excellent character, which would be beautiful and functional and hence could be used for shows, mounted sports, and leisure riding.

I purchased two stallions and one filly, which arrived in Pakistan in Jan 2013. The filly was co-owned by Sardar and me, and thus began my journey. Since then, I have

gone through the process of regularly updating my stock by breeding, importing, selling and upgrading.

Savier: What is your role in the network of breeders in Pakistan?

Saleem: For one thing, both of my stallions played a huge role in the Arabian scene in Pakistan, as I made them available for breeding. People who had one or two mares started to breed their mares, I started purchasing any Arabian mares I could lay my hands on, and visitors started to pour into my stud to see my horses. This is where I started to educate them on the Arabian horse, as many people had never seen Arabians before. I made a Facebook page “Al Saleem Egyptian Arabians” which showed all my mares and their progeny.

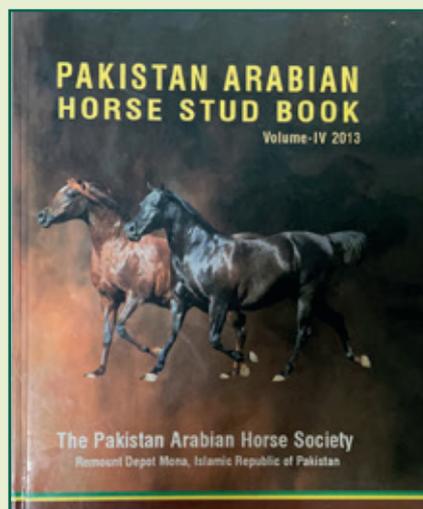
In the same year, I decided to found the Arabian Horse Association of Pakistan, which has as a criterion that only the owner of a documented pure Arabian can join. I am thankful to God for finding very cooperative members and fellow breeders who are extremely passionate about the breed.

I have always helped every breeder who asked for it, even in selection of a stallion to breed, or for horses to import or to buy. I help them buy and sell their horses, and I help them create and fashion a direction for their breeding based on their own ideal Arabian horse dream. Now, since we have a great

team of breeders, the older and more experienced ones are helping the newer ones and so this has become a team effort. Even guidance is being shared regarding keeping, feeding, medication and training of horses.

Savier: What is your goal in terms of Arabian horse breeding?

Saleem: My breeding goal is to produce tall, strong, beautiful Straight Egyptian Arabian horses with a great character that can be used for sports, leisure, or in the show ring. The pedigree of the horse itself should be impeccable. So in short, I aim to produce a functional Arabian horse with great disposition and not just a beautiful show piece.





Mabrooka Al Zaman (Majd KS x Omneyah KS)



Shakyra Star (Shamekh Al Danat x Magic Soraya)

Right now, I am looking forward to seeing the first SE foals of my beloved stallion GR Assad. I imported the stallion Hanaya Karam this year and I will be using him in 2021. Hanaya Karam for me is dream come true, as he possesses beauty with character along with a good build. However, the functionality part of Karam has yet to be assessed and hence he is currently being trained, after which I can judge him based on his athletic ability. At my stud every horse is trained for riding, so that I can assess their temperament and performance, and keep that in mind along with the elements of type and beauty while selecting them for breeding.

I do not keep a lot of horses at my stud. Quality over quantity has always been my belief and I tend to keep just a small number that I can easily manage as my passion and hobby. Moreover, I believe in spreading the breed as much as possible and not hoarding it, and this has been the reason why we have grown so quickly as a community in so short a time.

Currently I have two stallions, which are GR Assad and Hanaya Karam; four pregnant mares which are DF Kaisha, Shakyra Star, DF Nafisa and DAA Minerva; and one filly, who is Mabrooka Al Zaman.

Savier: How do you see 2021 for breeding in Pakistan?

Saleem: 2021 will be a great year for Arabians in Pakistan, with numerous horses imported into the country. Personally, in my function as President of AHAP, 2021 will be a challenging year.

First off, I will be finishing writing a book about the Arabian in Pakistan and get it published. The book will serve to educate people regarding the history of this amazing horse that is not only beautiful but also has great character and most versatile functionality. It is the Arabian horse that was responsible for the spread of Islam, having been ridden by our Prophet (P.B.U.H) and the great warriors of Islam. Moreover, it is the same breed regarding which there are numerous sayings of our Prophet (P.B.U.H). Keeping an Arabian horse particularly for the purpose of its functionality is part and parcel of our Faith.

The book also contains chapters on breeding and keeping the Arabian horse in Pakistan as well as the various stud farms, and pedigrees of all AHAP horses. Secondly, I plan to work with MONA and WAHO to get the new stud book printed and to get a procedure set up and implemented so that in Pakistan passports,

Current Structure of the Arabian Horse Association of Pakistan (AHAP)

Executive Committee of AHAP

1. President – M Omer Saleem
2. Vice President – Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar
3. Vice President – Saad Zaman
4. Treasurer – Arif Gulzar
5. General Secretary Breeding & Registrations – Sardar Ibsar Dogar
6. General Secretary Coordination & Events – Irtaza Dawood
7. General Secretary Media & Promotion – Ahmed Ibrahim
8. Advisor – Sardar Shahzad Dogar

Regional Wardens

9. Warden Punjab – Ali Bin Tariq
10. Warden Sindh – Faizan Shahzada
11. Warden Baluchistan – Tariq Kakar
12. Warden Khyber Pakhtunkhwa & Azad Jammu Kashmir & Gilgit Baltistan
Arif Hameed Afridi

Arabian Horse Records from AHAP Members as of end of 2020:

130 horses (imported and their progeny)

Of these:

imported directly 79 (33 stallions/colts & 46 mares/fillies)

imported in utero 3 (2 stallions/colts & 1 mare/filly)

bred and born in Pakistan, as progeny of these imported horses:

48 (23 stallions/colts & 25 mares/fillies)

microchips, and registration documents of all Arabian horses are finally available. Moreover, buying and selling of horses will be streamlined.

Thirdly, my target is to get to work with FEI to arrange an endurance race event in this year. Moreover, I would like to get support and guidance in the form of trainers and judges to organize and execute the first Arabian Horse Show in Pakistan.

Fourthly, I would like to take a delegation of AHAP members to the WAHO conference and also to visit some countries already established in Arabian Horse breeding. It would surely be a great learning opportunity for us.

And lastly, along with my Arabian Stallions, Assad and Karam, I would like to be presenting Arabian horses in all major Tent-Pegging events throughout the country.

May God help me! □

THE ARABIAN HORSE BREEDING STABLES IN PAKISTAN

by Omer Saleem and Monika Savier



Qaysar Al Jood, Alixir x Rhapsody in Black



AL AAYAT ARABIANS

AL AYAAT ARABIANS

Faizan Shahzada had been keeping Thoroughbred and Desi mixed horses for many years in his stud located in Karachi, which is the biggest city of Pakistan and also the capital of the Sindh province.

In 2016, he founded Al Ayaat Arabians and named it after of his daughter. However, he

then acquired a purebred mare which he named Ayaat (GR Dalman x Adina Al Ghazi). More recently they moved to a newly built stud and Faizan has imported some wonderful Arabians: the show performance SE stallion Qaysar Al Jood (Alixir x Rhapsody in Black); a mare called DAA Miasma (F Shamaal x Hanaya Mira); and another stallion, DAA Tadjir (Frasera Mashar x Tadjira).

In addition, Faizan serves AHAP as warden of Sindh, guiding and supporting new members from his province.

"I am glad that I am a part of AHAP. Arabian horses are miles ahead of the other horse breeds at my stud. My children bond with the Arabians easily and I myself feel a connection. I am thankful to AHAP members for consistently guiding me and supporting me. Al Ayaat Arabians owes a lot to them and I pray that I can continue to work for AHAP with passion and see every Pakistani replace their desi horses with Arabians."



Faizan with Qaysar Al Jood

AL HAQ ARABIANS

Near Khanqah Dogran in Sheikhpura district is where the stud of Sardar Ibsar Dogar – Al Haq Arabians – is located. Founded in 2013, the stud was upgraded over the years.

Despite having a degree in law, Ibsar chose to work as an agriculturist. He was the Riding Captain of Cadet College Hasanabdal but fell in love with Arabians. In 1995, he purchased a horse encyclopedia and has been obsessed with them ever since. From 1998 on, when

internet was quite a new concept in Pakistan, he has been in contact with international breeders.

He is a founding member of AHAP and is currently playing a vital role as General Secretary (Breeding and Registrations).

"Though love for horses is found in my genetics, it is the religious background, their purity, and their historical records which endear Asil Arabians to me. I feel very lucky to be breeding horses of Prophets and Kings.

My most significant contribution to Arabian horse

*Mahhab El Dine,
NK Ezz El Dine x Nayma El Dine*

breeding in Pakistan was to introduce this breed to Omer Saleem and to persuade him to breed them. Initially, I admit that I had doubts about the vision that Omer had for AHAP, but 7 years down the road I am a believer. I have supported AHAP at every step of the way and was always there at each and every endurance and tent pegging event, and at every meeting and even in the recent meeting with Mona. I will always remember our trip to Egypt and I pray God gives a lot of success to AHAP“

The only Abayyan strain SE stallion in Pakistan, Mahhab El Dine (NK Ezz el Dine X Nayma Al Dine), is owned by this stud. Moreover, they also own two mares who are DF Delila (Miad Al Shaqab x DF Djemila) and GR Ashara (GR Nashad x GR Anastacia), and a filly, Arfah Al Haq (Loubajj Ibn Loubna x GR Ashara).



AL MAKHDOOM STUD

An hour's drive from Lahore can take you to an idyllic setting amid green fields known as Al Makhdoom Stud, owned by Sardar Shahzad Dogar. The facility boasts lush green pastures and state-of-the-art stables. A reputable landowner of an area, Shahzad has a keen interest in and love for Arabian Horses. Though involved in his numerous political commitments, he loves to spend as much time as possible with his horses and makes a contribution to AHAP as an advisor. Shahzad purchased his first purebreds in 2017 with a purebred stallion, Murjan Al Naseer (Eden C x Masratta Al Nasser), and a mare, Liv SFQ (Masdar Moniscione x Aqillio by Abakan). Recently he acquired a filly, Lylla Al Haq Al Saleem (Loubajj Ibn Loubna x DF Delila) and has also purchased a mare from Europe, Ase Konooz (Hariry al Shaqab x Stig Ashirafa) and is getting her in foal from RFI Farid.

“My passion with Arabians started from an early age when I was student at Aitchison College Lahore. I had seen two beautiful horses, and was told they were Arabian Geldings from Mona and since then I have always aspired to keep an Arabian. AHAP gave me the

perfect platform to learn and acquire this wonderful horse. My aim in breeding is to produce top quality show horses and I am ready to give my full support in AHAP to make shows a success in Pakistan.”

Murjan Al Nasser, Eden C x Masratta Al Nasser



AL REHMAN ARABIANS

Located 16 km from the city of Renala Khurd, Punjab province, Pakistan, Al Rehman Arabians was created in 2018 by Qasim Rehman and his father.

“Al-Rehman Arabians was a dream come true of my father. After his retirement from the Armed Forces, he decided to make a stud farm of Purebred and Straight Egyptian Arabian Horses. By the Grace of Allah Almighty the first SE filly we obtained was Wardah Al Haq (GR Dalman x Salaa Nadira). Later on, the stallion Oskoub (Aamir El Dine x Bint Montheeqa), a purebred Arab, was also added to the stock. My aim is to breed beautiful Arabian show horses that can also be used as riding horses.”



Oskoub (Aamir El Dine x Bint Montheeqa)



AL SALEEM EGYPTIAN ARABIANS

Al Saleem Egyptian Arabians is located in Lahore. While the stud farm has a limited number of horses, it has the honor of breeding the highest number of Arabians into Pakistan. The stud has a collection of a variety of different Arabian bloodlines, with their goal to produce a beautiful functional straight Egyptian Arabian with a good character.

The Stud currently has two stallions, four mares, and one filly, details of all of which are already shared in the interview. The two stallions are GR Assad (Maheeb x Halims Asmara by Ansata Halim Shah) and Hanaya Karam (Kenz Al Baydaa x Hanaya Elissar by Nader Al



Omer riding GR Assad

Jamal); the four mares are DF Nafisa (DF Malik Jamil x DF Nadeemah by Miad Al Shaqab) in foal to GR

Assad, Shakyra Star (Shamekh Al Danat x Magic Soraya by Ansata Shaamis) in foal to Hanaya Karam, DAA Minerva (Kais Al Baydaa x Hanaya Mira by Nader Al Jamal) in foal to DAA Nairobi, and DF Kaisha (DF Siraj x DF Karimah by Simeon Sadik) in foal to GR Assad; and the filly is Mabrooka Al Zaman (Majd KS x Omneyah KS by Al Saeedi)



GR Assad & Hanaya Karam in front of Al Saleem Stables

AL ZAHRA ARABIAN STUD

The owner, Ali Bin Tariq, formed Al Zahra Arabians passionately and named it after his daughter. Located on the bank of the Ravi river, the stud farm is a perfect country life retreat, a 30-minute drive away from bustling Lahore. Ali is a police officer by profession, a landlord by heritage, and an avid Arabian horse lover by choice.

Ali joined AHAP in 2018, when he fell in love with Arabians for their beauty, their loyalty, and in light of the importance given to Arabian horses in Islam. Ali's passion was the reason he has toured various Arabian Stud farms in Punjab. This enabled Ali to understand the relevant prerequisites for a good Arabian stud farm.

He currently serves as a Warden of AHAP where his primary responsibilities include guidance and coordination with existing and all new members in the biggest horses breeding province in Pakistan.

At present Al-Zahra Arabians have a headcount of 5 Arabian horses: 3 Purebreds and 2 Straight Egyptians. There are two purebred mares: Shaheen Desire in foal to GR Assad and Shaheen Miss, in foal to Duaig Ibn Alixir. There are two fillies, which are Fajr AlZahra (GR Dalman x Shaheen Desire) and SE filly Hadya Al Saleem (Loubajj Ibn Loubna x DF Kaisha) co-owned with Arif Hameed; and an SE colt, Leahaf Al Zaman (Duaig ibn Alixir x Omneyah KS).



Lehaf Al Zaman, Duaig Ibn Alixir x Omneyah KS

"I have been keeping horses for quite some time and started with Desi and Thoroughbreds and even an Anglo Arabian as they were the ones easily available. However, AHAP gave me the platform to learn and to acquire Arabian horses. I must say that AHAP is a group of wonderful dedicated individuals and I am glad to part of the journey to promote this magnificent breed in Pakistan!"



Stables at Dawood Arabians



Irtaza Dawood with GR Imad

DAWOOD ARABIANS

Dawood Arabians is one of the few studs that exist in Southern Punjab, in the city of Sadiqabad. The weather there is much like the deserts of Arabia, which makes it an ideal place to breed Arabian horses. Irtaza Dawood started his journey as an Arabian horse breeder in 2018 and has since contributed immensely to AHAP by serving as a guide and mentor to new people. He is currently the General Secretary Coordination and Events and has the important role of coordinating between the whole body and acting as a bridge between the members and the organization.

Irtaza is a major political figure of his area. Additionally, he is an agriculture landlord and is into the dairy business as well.

“Coming from a family of agriculturists we always had ‘desi’ (indigenous) horses, but since childhood I was inspired by The Black Stallion and due to our religious

affiliation with Arab horses it has always been my dream to keep them. The dream to own a straight Egyptian materialized when I acquired the filly Aidah Al Saleem. This year, I imported the black stallion GR Imad and I aim to breed beautiful functional black straight Egyptian Arabians. Moreover, I am working passionately to promote the breed in Pakistan and share and acquire as much knowledge as we can from breeders around the world, and pass it on to our fellow horse enthusiasts to show them that Arabian horses are the most loving, loyal, intelligent and versatile breed in the world.”

He currently owns two SE mares, Aidah Al Saleem (DF Siraj x DF Delila) and GR Mareefa (GR Moneef x Maria Halima), and a Straight Egyptian stallion, GR IMAD (GR Nashad x Shaylah Bint Iman).

GHAZI ARABIANS

Ghazi Arabians is located 50 km south of the capital of Pakistan, Islamabad, in the picturesque district of Chakwal. Being in the north of Punjab, the weather there is mostly pleasant.

Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar was one of the first civilians to import Arabian horses into Pakistan. His contribution for the breed in Pakistan has been immense as not only has he supported AHAP, as its Vice President, but also printed the last stud book for MONA in 2013. He is the biggest Arabian horse owner in Pakistan and has a collection of over 35 Straight Egyptians and Purebred Arabian Horses.



AJA Valentino in his paddock

Despite his tough routine and a hectic schedule as a Politician and Senator, he manages to find time for his horses and his stud.

“My love for horses started early but faded away in the course of time as I grew up, only for me to discover it again. In 2007, when I decided to buy a few horses for my farm, my first choice of breed was the most treasured and noble one, the Arabian. Considered by the desert Bedouins a priceless possession and cherished for its beauty, loyalty, and stamina. At the time, the only Arabian horse breeding in Pakistan was at the state stud, Remount Depot, from which acquiring horses was a difficult task. To start our breeding program, all of our Arabian horses were imported from overseas. As we expect to grow in the course of time, our goal is to



Mustafa Nawaz (Centre) with his guests at Ghazi Arabians

breed quality Arabian horses proving themselves not only in the show ring, but also under the saddle. “

His Purebred Stallion, AJA Valentino (Vervaldee x AJA Beneja) - one of his first imports - was also used by the state stud, Mona. His SE Stallion, Loubajj Ibn Loubna (Ansata Selman x Loubna) has been used by various breeders.



ISLAMABAD ARABIANS

Islamabad Arabians was founded in 2019 in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. Islamabad Arabians is a beautiful stud surrounded by the Margalla Hills, which gives it a fine view. The weather is pleasant throughout the year. Ahmed Ibrahim, owner of Islamabad Arabians, is a well-known Real Estate Developer of the capital and a lover of Arabian horses who has recently imported Purebred and SE horses into his stud. His main interest is to breed show quality Arabians (both Straight Egyptians and Purebred Arabians) in Pakistan.

His recent addition has horses of various bloodlines such as RFI Farid, Star of Excalibur EA, Wadee Al Shaqab, Alexander PC and Frasera Dubai.

He is working as General Secretary Media and Promotion at AHAP and is very active on social media, spreading the word of Arabians.



Ahmed Ibrahim with Iphar Al Zubi

“Although I have imported Arab horses just a short time back, my love for them has always been there. AHAP opened the avenue and we were able to import these beautiful horses from one of the world’s finest

bloodlines. As Arab horses are a great part of our Islamic history we love them passionately and care for them as our own family. All our horses are housed in a temperature-controlled environment and also get to enjoy the beauty of nature every day in the paddocks allotted to them. Our horses are ridden regularly and have a special bond with us, particularly with my son Raid Ahmed who is a keen rider and Arab horse lover, and plans to participate in national equine events, with his SE Stallion GR Dalman (Authentic Dahman x Dalima Shah), that AHAP is planning to conduct in the coming year. God willing, we plan to breed beautiful show horses that can one day compete in international events.”

Ahmed Ibrahim currently owns 10 imported Arabians and their progeny, so in total he has 3 purebred mares, 1 SE mare, 2 purebred fillies, 2 purebred colts, 1 purebred Stallion and 1 SE stallion. Ahmed Hassan, the younger brother of Mr. Ahmed Ibrahim and inspired by him, has also developed a keen interest in Arabians and is



Raid Ahmed riding GR Dalman

now planning to import more Straight Egyptians to Pakistan and add them to the Islamabad Arabians Family.



Star of Excalibur



Java Pc with colt Bellissimo IA

LAKHANI ARABIANS

Lakhani Arabians is a recent, much-needed addition in Karachi. The owner, Irfan Lakhani, founded this stud in 2020 with the imported SE mare Salaa Nadira (El Salaam x Kab Shah Naala). He has now imported two more SE Arabians – the mare Maaroufah Al Maya (Al Ayal AA x Zandai Jiradah) and the stallion Phaaros Al Masri (Kais Al Baydaa x Flaxmans Pride).

“The Arabian horse had always been a lifelong dream horse of mine due to its very recognizable features, such as the high tail carriage and the dished face, but in my eyes what I admire most about the Arabian is his movement. The floating trot is something that’s very aesthetically beautiful and very unusual as compared to other breeds of horses. As I researched more about Arabians, especially straight Egyptians, I fell more in love with the history they possess. My breeding philosophy is to breed to get straight Egyptians Arabians with ideal features and to bring more refinement by using a vast choice of great pedigree stallions of both classic and modern lines we have now in Pakistan, to produce show quality Straight Egyptian Arabians who can compete on an international level.”

The total number of horses at the stud is currently 3, but they are expecting a foal from their mare by the stallion GR Dalman.

Salaa Nadira (El Salam x Kab Shah Naala)



Irfan in Lakhani Stables



SHEIKH ARABIANS

Arif Gulzar is the owner of Sheikh Arabians which is located in Jhang in the province of Punjab. Two Districts in Punjab, namely Sargodha and Jhang, have a very old equine culture. And to this day, one finds horse-breeding and horsemen in almost every village.

“My passion with horses dates back to childhood days. I have been owning and breeding mixed breeds, Desis, and English Thoroughbreds for a long time. However, my first interaction with the Arabian horse was as late as in 2001, at the Army Depot at Mona, where I had gone to purchase some Polo ponies for my son, a Polo player. It was love at first sight. And from that day onwards, I started on an endeavor to procure and breed

only Arabians. But sadly, I was unable to get Arabians from the Army Depot and ultimately decided, in 2012, to import three Arabians from the UK, which arrived in 2013.

Currently I have an SE Stallion, Aamir el Dine (Qamar el Dine x DHS Halima bint Hawwa) and two purebred mares, Bint Montheeqa (Monther Al Nasser x Misteeqa) and Ameerah Al Justice (Al Justice x HS Mimosa). And have been blessed with three colts by Bint Montheeqa and a colt and filly by Ameerah Al Justice, which have been acquired by other studs.

I recently acquired a beautiful SE filly, Lamya Al Saleem (Loubajj bin Loubna x GR Mareefa). This was done to add variety as well as a long-term breeding program. Hopefully further additions/acquisitions will

be made.

Last but not the least, the best part of the current Arabian horse breeding scene in Pakistan is the tremendous surge in the number of Arabian horse breeders. Best bloodlines have been imported, and equally important is the fact that the breeders have gotten organized under AHAP and hopefully, in cooperation with Mona, will make it easier to buy and sell, register and ensure pedigrees.”

Arif is a long-time WAHO member and always shares whatever is sent by WAHO with the whole group. He is a fatherly figure in the AHAP group and is always there for guidance and advice to everyone. He proudly serves AHAP in the role of the treasurer.



Aamire El Dine, Qamar El Dine x DHS Halima Bint Hawaa

TM FARM

Established in 2017, within Lahore, is located the Stud farm of Nasir Malik. He has a passion for horses and has collected all horse breeds like the Andalusian, Friesian, Thoroughbred and the Desi (Local) horse in addition to his Arabian horses.

“Horses at our farm are provided with best of care and attention and most importantly love. Although founded in 2017, the passion for horses began years ago , with a childhood dream to one day establish a stud farm.

The acquisition of Ul Alonso from Denmark, as a young colt, and transported to Pakistan was the catalyst in achieving that dream. He is now our breeding stallion and has a lot of potential to improve breeding in Pakistan.

Our vision and ideology of the Arabian horse that they aim to produce is first a respectable confirmation, a beautiful head, straight legs and a graceful, correct movement with an overall elegant appearance. The true goal is to produce not only a show horse, but a horse that is a true all-rounder. Allah created the Arabian horse from the south wind and exclaimed, ‘I create you, Oh Arabian’.”

Recently Nasir took over the role for coordinating

Arabian horse shows in Pakistan for 2021 and is now actively helping AHAP. He currently owns six Arabian horses - two stallions; Ul Alonso (EKS Alihandro x Sid Lavanda) and KC Magic Morpheus (Magic Magnifique x Sarangani Aruba Rose), three mares; Waliandra (EKS Alihandro x Walena), Wanikka (Nader Al Shaqab x Wianna), BLA Jewel Walkyria (Magic Magnifique x WCR Black Diamond) and a colt (Ul Alonso x Waliandra).

Ul Alonso at show





ZAMAN STUD

Located within the biggest housing society of Wah, “New City”, lies beautiful Zaman Stud. It is nearly an hour’s drive away from the capital Islamabad towards the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Saad Zaman founded this stud in 2016 when he imported many breeds of horses such as Andalusians, Friesians, and Arabians and added them to his existing stock of thoroughbred racehorses. However, his passion has always been for the Arabian and that has clearly shown in the quality of his imports.

He imported quality SE show horses that have a good record in shows. Among them, the most notable ones are: Zain SM (Nader Al Jamal x Iman Al Kamar), Duaig Ibn Alixir (Alixir x Bint Bint Farsa), and Princess KS (Al Hadiyyah AA x Malukah Belle HGCA) currently in foal to RFI Farid.

Other top horses include Saqallah Al Zaman (Shamekh Al Danat x Whanima ATG), Omneyah KS (Al Saeedi x OEJ Mona Liza), and Majd KS (Al Saeedi x Izara Blue CA).

“Horses have been my passion and I have always admired their beauty. My stud has various breeds of horses, but my focus is always on the Arabian horse. I have always preferred to go for quality and not quantity. For me, it is much better to buy one horse of top quality than to buy 5 of average quality. Breeding is a serious business and you cannot compromise on the quality of the foundation stock of your stud. I



Stallion Stables at Zaman Stud



Omneyah KS (Al Saeedi x OEJ Mona Liza)



Zain SM (Nader Al Jamal x Iman Al Kamar)

believe that Zaman Stud and Al Saleem Egyptian Arabians are one – just having different locations and I am always there to support Omer not only as the Vice President of AHAP but also as a brother. I am looking forward to the start of Arabian horse shows in Pakistan soon.”

More recently, he has developed a taste in top show quality Purebred Arabians and hence he has bred a filly of Excalibur EA, Exaltress Al Zaman. Currently his SE and purebred stock consists of a total of 7 SE mares, 1 purebred Filly, 3 SE stallions, and 2 SE colts.



Majd KS (Al Saeedi x Izara Blue CA)