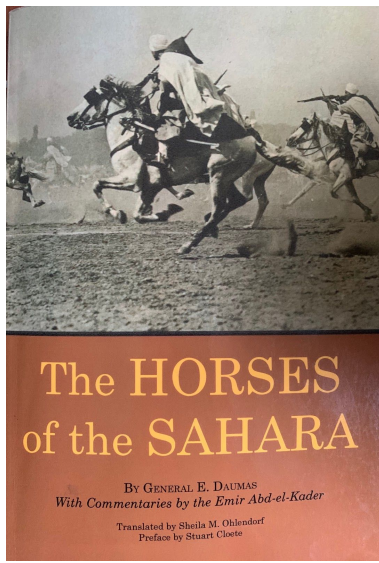


“The Legend of the Horse”



General Eugene Daumas (pictured above right) was a French military officer stationed in Algeria. While there, he learned Arabic and became one of the French army’s top experts on the Arab culture of North Africa. General Daumas and the Emir Abd el-Kader respected one another and became friends. The two collaborated on *The Horses of the Sahara*, published in 1858. The translated version pictured above (left) was first published in 1968 and is still readily available.

“The Arab [Arabian horse] is one of the few, perhaps the only, domestic animal which cannot be improved. It is already perfection and any attempted change is for the worse... Its courage, endurance, intelligence quality and heart put the Arab in a class of its own.”

--Stuart Cloete, South African writer, from preface to The Horses of the Sahara

When I asked the emir about the origin of the Arab horse, he answered with a legend. “God made the horse from the south wind. He said, ‘I want to make a creature out of you —condense.’ The wind obeyed and condensed. Gabriel then appeared and presented a handful of the new substance to God, who said, ‘I call you horse. I make you Arabian and give you the burnt chestnut color of the ant. You shall be as good for pursuit as for flight; you shall fly without wings; riches shall be on your back.’ Then God put the mark of glory on him — the white blaze in the middle of his forehead. No creature save man was as dear to God as the horse.

“The first man to mount a horse was Adam, but it was Ishmael who was the first to call horses and train the most spirited and beautiful ones. Over time, the horses of Ishmael

lost their purity, but one line remained, untainted — that preserved by King Solomon, son of David. It is to this line that all Arabians owe their origin.

“This situation came about when Arabs of the tribe of Azed went to Jerusalem to pay honor to Solomon at the time of his marriage to the Queen of Sheba. When preparing to return home leaders of the tribe came to Solomon with a plea. ‘O Prophet of God our country is far away and our supplies are exhausted. Thou art a great king; give us provisions that we may return home.’ Solomon gave orders that a beautiful stallion be brought from his stables for the Arabs. He told them: ‘This horse is my provision for your journey. When you are hungry, gather wood and prepare a fire. Put your best rider on this horse armed with a sharp lance. You will barely have started your fire when the rider will return with the spoils of the chase.’

“Convinced of the value of their gift from the son of David by the quantity of ostriches and zebras killed, the tribe of Azed devoted the horse to stud. It produced a line which they called *Zad al-Rakib*, or Gift to the Rider, from which all Arab horses today are derived.”

(Retelling of the Daumas/Abd el-Kader story quoted from *Commander of the Faithful: The Life and Times of Emir Abd el-Kader*, John Kiser, 2008.)