

When I was in Turkmenistan in 1998 I saw a stallion with a parrot mouth. Sadly I did not photograph him. Recently I have been researching at the British Museum. The parrot mouth can be seen in the Parthenon frieze. (See right.) One of our greatest racehorses had a parrot mouth - Red Rum (see below), winner of three Grand Nationals and twice second. The great Eclipse had a parrot mouth (see photo of skull, below). St Simon did not. But this genetic fault must occur elsewhere in the Thoroughbred.



I would like to know if it has been noticed by any of the Turkoman owners? I am curious to see just where this phenomenon occurs. It would be helpful to know if other breeds as the Arab, Caspian horse, Persian breeds, or Yomuds, Goklan, or other tribal horses such as the Karabair, Karabakh, Kabardin, or the Lokai retain this odd phenomenon?

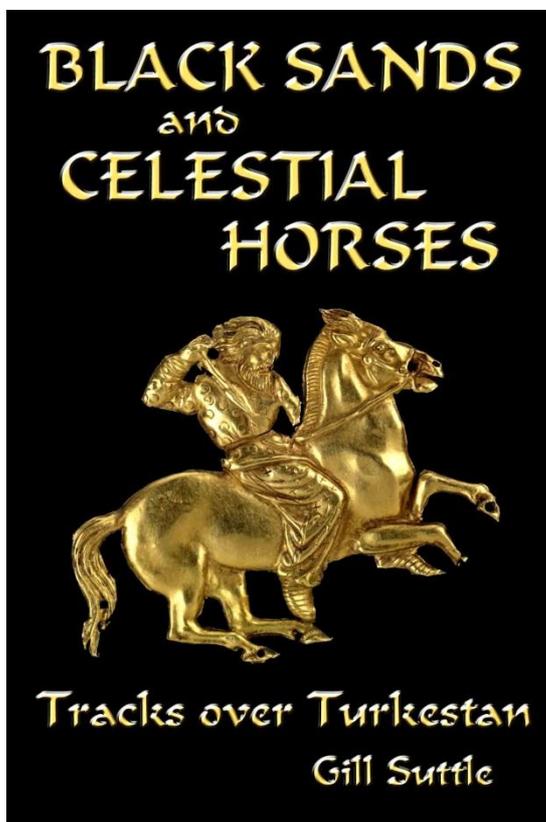
If this genetic peculiarity can still be found in Central Asia, then it may help to suggest that the

Thoroughbred originates from that part of the world. If we can find a strain of Arab with an elite heart syndrome and that racks this will be a clear indicator of origin. We know that the environment in which these animals thrive is most important. Central Asia and particularly Ferghana provided that environment. Louise Firouz called these horses Oriental. I prefer to go along with her wisdom, which if we research this subject further may put more pieces of the jigsaw together so that a real picture can emerge.



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This is a story of the Silk Routes of Western Turkestan, of the deserts through which they were driven, and of the cities which define them; of journeys through space and time, through deserts, mountains and millennia; and of a solo journey on horseback along the fringes of the Kara Kum, or Black Sands, of Turkmenistan.

It is also a story of the Turcoman Horse, whose forebears were Sacred to their early breeders, the Persians; while the Chinese Emperors who desired them called them Celestial.

These two themes cannot be separated; for the second inspired the first, and you may not search out one without stumbling across the other.

One such horse enters the story and makes it his own: a horse who prints his personality deeply upon the journey, a horse ultimately destined to travel further afield than most of his illustrious ancestors.



This story is peopled by heroes and villains, from Alexander the Great via Genghis Khan to players in the Great Game; but its greatest heroes are the ordinary people of Central Asia today. They enable a uniquely unrestricted view of old and proud lands, seen in a brief moment between

the collapse of the USSR and the rapidly closing doors of new, even more controlling regimes.

Details, pictures and extracts on www.scimitarpress.co.uk. Available from Amazon / via website at 7.99 inc. p&p

Turkmenistan 2012

Jenny Rice describes the International Akhal-Teke Horse Breeders Association Conference

At the end of April 2012, ATAA Treasurer and Registrar Amrita Ibold, and myself - Jenny Rice of Sweet Water Farm Akhal-Teke - attended the 2nd annual conference of Turkmenistan's International Akhal-Teke Horse Breeders Association (IATHA). A journey from one side of the world to another, on official invitation from the government of a closed country, is an experience all in itself... but especially, as in Amrita's case, when you are also representing the Akhal-Teke Association of America. This was our third excursion to the *Land of the Heavenly Horse* in only one year... and much like our other two trips, it was a whirl-wind fly-by. We were gone for six days but spent a quick four in Turkmenistan's hot high desert. It's a twenty-seven-hour journey from our home on San Juan Island, Washington... and after a winter under the clouds, spring in white-marble-laden Ashgabat had us squinting and blinking in the most sun we'd seen in a year.

IATHA was founded by Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow with the purpose of uniting Akhal-Teke associations, prominent breeders, and influential professionals from around the globe to not only promote the breed on an international scale... but also to help Turkmenistan preserve and improve their legendary national heritage, The Akhal-Teke Horse, on their own turf. This year, two different conferences were organized: the first followed a general format for guests of the Turkmen Atlary and was held at a conference hall in Ashgabat. The second was specifically for members of IATHA, and took place the following day at the beautiful Ahal Velayat Hippodrome, located just outside the city. Each conference featured a variety of guest speakers from all over the world; delegates who, like Amrita and me, had travelled to Turkmenistan to represent their countries in honour of the Akhal-Teke breed. Of particular prominence was an official address by a representative from the French National Stud, who is assisting the government of Turkmenistan in the organization of their national breeding programme. And from the United States was Milena Stoszek of Idaho who presented a congratulatory note to the Turkmen Atlary on behalf of the North American associations, as well as a speech titled "Akhal-Teke In North America: Past, Present, and The Future." But some of the most interesting speakers were from Turkmenistan itself, including two Turkmen geneticists collaborating with Gus Cothran of Texas A & M University (one of the world's leading experts on equine genetics) to analyze DNA and help breeders maintain and improve genetic diversity for generations to come. The majority of speakers presented discussions directly pertaining to the Akhal-Teke breed, but there were also several presentations that focused primarily on equestrian sports and sport-horse breeding at large.

The IATHA conference coincided with Turkmenistan's national *holiday of the horse*, and the opening day of Akhal-Teke horse racing. Guests of the Turkmen Atlary and IATHA members were invited to celebrate the week's festivities, which included an endurance race, a Turkmen art exhibit, an exciting performance by the Ashgabat Circus, a show jumping competition, an Akhal-Teke beauty contest, and for the grand finale... Akhal-Teke horse racing. Aside from the endurance ride... everything took place at the Ahal Velayat Hippodrome, an expansive equestrian sports complex nestled against the craggy Kopet Dag mountains, a range which Turkmenistan shares with Iran. The day of the races dawned dry, hot, and bright. The opening ceremonies began with the presentation of Akhal-Teke horses as gifts to President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow from their breeders... one of which, to the audience's delight, the President fed a carrot to and mounted for a ride around the pavilion. Following this was an Akhal-Teke beauty contest, voted on by a panel of judges which included Petra Maresova of Akhalteke Tukleky in Czech Republic. Each horse was shown in hand and under saddle and graded in terms of type, conformation, movement, and what I imagine may have been "presence under saddle." The horse races themselves turned into quite an exciting event to reminisce about on the way home. For the first time, guest jockeys from several other countries were invited to ride in the final race, including Francine Anderson of Absolute Akhal-Tekes in Florida, who held the title of leading female Thoroughbred jockey in Canada for many years. Francine rode an excellent race and placed fourth... taking with her an amazing experience that no other woman in the western world can likely lay claim to.

For equestrians like us who specialize in the Akhal-Teke, the conference in Ashgabat was more than just a meeting of minds... but rather, an international convergence of professionals that share a single profound thing: devotion to a very important breed. With another conference in the works for later this year, it's clear that IATHA has hit the ground running and its progress collaborating with other countries promises to continue into the future. And with the greatest percentage of Akhal-Teke horses worldwide currently inhabiting their own homeland... Turkmenistan's success in promoting (and thus, preserving) their national heritage will be felt by us all.

*For additional photos and stories about our trips to Turkmenistan, visit Jenny's blog:
Tekes Tally-Ho!*

<http://eventingakhaltekes.blogspot.com/>

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