

ON THE BEDOUINS AND THEIR HORSES
ULRICH JASPER SEETZEN
AS A CONTRIBUTOR TO EUROPEAN JOURNALS (1802–1834)

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Abstract

Ulrich Jasper Seetzen's scholarly contribution to knowledge-making on the Near East remained limited at this time to the articles he published in various European periodicals. Yet it appears that this highly-scattered source material has been neglected in scholarly literature, which tends to focus instead on his diaries, published over forty years after his death. These articles, however, prove an invaluable source in order to analyze not only his contribution to the scholarly debates of his time, but also to explore the role played by European periodicals in the construction of knowledge about the Near East in the early nineteenth century. Accordingly, this article examines Seetzen's contributions on the Bedouin tribes and their desert-bred horses, which were arguably of interest to the scholars of his time who commented on and translated them but have been overlooked by previous research. By focusing on these intertwined topics, this article thus aims to examine the significance of his contributions and assess their contemporary reception.

Key Words

Bedouin tribes; Arabian horses; Arabian Peninsula; European journals; Orientalism



I. Introduction

No other traveller has provided us with more abundant and interesting details on the different tribes of Arab nomads as our respectable countryman, Herr Justizrath Niebuhr. They are not without mistake though; only he who knows, how extremely difficult it is to collect accurate information on this strange class of people, will hold

his information in high esteem and express the fairest thank for his determination in research as well as his love of truth.¹

Thus opening his own piece on Bedouin tribes wandering across the Near East written for the *Monatliche Correspondenz zur Beförderung der Erd- und Himmels-Kunde* [*Monthly Correspondence for the Advancement of Terrestrial and Celestial Science*] (1800–1813), Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1767–1811) was paying a vibrant tribute to Carsten Niebuhr's (1733–1815) *Beschreibung von Arabien* [Description of Arabia] first published in German in 1772, while claiming his ambition to supplement and even to amend this epoch-making book.² The sole survivor of the Danish-German Arabia Expedition (1761–1767), Niebuhr was indeed able to publish most of the expedition's results in several books soon translated in several languages.³ Seetzen, by contrast, died in Yemen in 1811 before even reaching Africa, the ultimate goal of his scientific travel, which prevented him from compiling a single publication encompassing all the information that he had collected in the field.⁴

¹ ULRICH JASPER SEETZEN, « Beiträge zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme in Syrien und im wüsten und peträischen Arabien », *Monatliche Correspondenz zur Beförderung der Erd- und Himmelskunde*, 19 (1809), p. 105–106: « Kein Reisender hat uns mehrere und interessantere Nachrichten über die verschiedenen zahlreichen Stämme der arabischen Nomaden mitgeteilt, als unser achtungswürdiger Landsmann, Herr Justizrath Niebuhr. Sie sind nicht ganz ohne Fehler; allein wer es weiss, wie ungemein schwer es hält, genaue Nachrichten über diese merkwürdige Volksclasse einzuziehen, wird die seinigen im hohen Grade schätzbar finden und seiner Beharrlichkeit im Nachforschen, so wie seiner Wahrheitsliebe den gerechtesten Dank zollen ».

² CARSTEN NIEBUHR, *Beschreibung von Arabien: aus eigenen Beobachtungen und im Lande selbst gesammelten Nachrichten*, Möller, Copenhagen 1772. On the Danish-German Arabia Expedition see HAN F. VERMEULEN, *Before Boas. The Genesis of Ethnography and Ethnology in the German Enlightenment*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln – London 2015, p. 219–267 and MIRJAM HÄHNLE, « Knowledge about the 'Orient' between voice and scripture. Michel de Certeau and the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia Felix (1761–1767) », *InterDisciplines*, 2 (2017), p. 41–68 and « Das Ruinenfeld als 'Merkwürdigkeit' und 'Kontaktzone'. Die Ägyptenberichte der dänischen Arabien-Expedition (1761–1767) », in JOACHIM EIBACH, CLAUDIA OPITZ-BELAKHAL (eds.), *Zwischen Kulturen. Mittler und Grenzgänger vom 17. bis 19. Jahrhundert*, Wehrhahn Verlag, Hannover 2018, p. 93–117. We use the designation *Danish-German Arabia Expedition* coined by Han F. Vermeulen (see *Before Boas*, p. 222) although it is traditionally called the *Danish Arabia Expedition* or *Royal Danish Arabia Expedition* (see HÄHNLE, « Knowledge about the 'Orient' »).

³ CARSTEN NIEBUHR, *Description de l'Arabie faite sur des observations propres et des avis recueillis dans les lieux mêmes, par Carsten Niebuhr*, S. J. Baalde, Amsterdam 1774; ID., *Beschryving van Arabie, uit eigene waarnemingen en in 't land zelf verzamelde narigten*, S. J. Baalde, Amsterdam 1774; ID., *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabia und den andern umliegenden Ländern*, 2 vols., Möller, Copenhagen 1774–1778; ID., *Voyage en Arabie et en d'autres pays circonvoisins*, 2 vols., S. J. Baalde, Amsterdam 1776–1780; ID., *Reize naar Arabië en andere omliggende landen*, S. J. Baalde, Amsterdam 1776–1780; ID., *Travels through Arabia and Other Countries in the East*, R. Morison and Son, Edinburgh 1792.

⁴ On Seetzen's plan to publish his travelogue, see DETLEF HABERLAND, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzen und Afrika – die entdeckungs- und wirtschaftsgeschichtliche Dimension seiner Reise », in ID. (ed.),

Nowadays, Seetzen is best known for his diaries (*Reisetagebuch*), that he kept during his travels to and in the Near East, and which have been the focus of most of the research and edition works carried out on him.⁵ The ongoing (re)edition of Seetzen's diaries understandably spurred this scholarly interest in what Detlef Haberland describes as Seetzen's « life's work » (*Lebenswerk*) while pointing out the variety of his publications and warning against the tendency in the research to mention « always the same titles ».⁶

Seetzen's diaries, however, were not published before the mid-nineteenth century and therefore remained unknown to the learned readership of his day. Indeed, his scientific contribution to the knowledge-making on the Near East at the turn of the nineteenth century remained in fact limited to his articles and letters published in various European journals either during his lifetime or shortly after his death.⁷ Not only were these articles widely distributed among the scholarly community, but most of them were also critically reviewed and translated in other European journals. A rather prolific contributor to some of the most prominent journals of his time, Seetzen thus made a name for himself as a scientific traveller and gained some fame through these publications.⁸ Most of these articles have been, nevertheless, rather neglected in the literature, which,

Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1767-1811) *Jeverander – aufgeklärter Unternehmer – wissenschaftlicher Orientreisender*, Isensee Verlag, Oldenburg 2014, p. 199–224, p. 207.

⁵ The nineteenth-century edition of Seetzen's diaries was reprinted in 2004: ULRICH JASPER SEETZEN, *Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina, Phönicien, die Trans-Jordan-Länder, Arabia Petraea und Unter-Ägypten*, vol. I: *Tagebuch über seine Reise von Halep nach Damaskus, und von dort nach Haurân, nach dem Libanon und Antilibanon, nach Ledscha, nach dem Dschibbal es Schech, Dschaulân, el Gôr, Dschibbal Edschlûn, Belka und um das Todte Meer nach Hebron und Jerusalem* (9. April 1805–10 April 1806); vol. II: *Tagebuch über seinen Aufenthalt in Jerusalem und mehrere Reisen durch Palästina, Süd-Phönicien, die Transjordan-Länder und rings um das Todte Meer* (12 April 1806–12 März 1807); vol. III: *Tagebuch über seine Reise von Jerusalem durch das Peträische Arabien und Theil Unter-Aegyptens* (13 März 1807–23 März 1809); vol. IV: *Commentare zu Ulrich Jasper Seetzen's Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina, Phönicien, die Trans-Jordan-Länder, Arabia Petraea und Unter-Ägypten. Ausgearbeitet von Staatsr. Prof. Dr. Fr. Kruse und Prof. Dr. H. L. Fleischer in Verbindung mit mehreren Gelehrten, Nebst sämmlichen Original-Charten Seetzen's, von ihm selbst zu seiner Reise gezeichnet und auf seinen Wunsch vervollständigt durch Hinzufügung mehrerer Orstnamen nach seinen Tagebüchern, so wie der alten Namen der zu bestimmenden Orte*, von Kruse, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim – Zürich – New York 2004 (repr. of Reimer, Berlin 1854–1859). New editions have been carried out the past years ULRICH JASPER SEETZEN, *Tagebücher*, vol. I: *Tagebuch des Aufenthalts in Konstantinopel und der Reise nach Aleppo, 1802–1803*, ed. VOLKMAR ENDERLEIN, MICHAEL BRAUNE, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim – Zürich – New York 2012 and *Tagebücher*, vol. II: *Tagebuch des Aufenthalts in Aleppo 1803–1805*, ed. JUDITH ZEPTER, CARSTEN WALBINER, MICHAEL BRAUNE, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim – Zürich – New York 2011.

⁶ See HABERLAND, « Die Publikationen Ulrich Jasper Seetzens », in HABERLAND (eds.), *Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1767-1811)*, p. 133–156, p. 133–134 and p. 136.

⁷ *Ulrich Jasper Seetzen's Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina, Phönicien, die Transjordan-Länder, Arabia Petrarca und Unter-Aegypten*, ed. FRIEDRICH KRUSE, 4 vols., Reimer, Berlin 1854–1859.

⁸ As Detlef Haberland notes, Seetzen was mentioned in encyclopedias of the early nineteenth-century, HABERLAND, « Die Publikationen Ulrich Jasper Seetzens », p. 134.

consequently, has so far barely dealt with the reception of Seetzen's work on the Near East by his contemporaries. This relative lack of interest can be well due to the very scattered nature of his journal publications, as underlined by Detlef Haberland, but also to the no less scattered nature of the sources, such as journals, books or manuscripts, in which Seetzen work was discussed, translated or quoted.⁹ While his famous *Reiseplan ins innere Afrika* has been often used in the literature, his following articles have been, by contrast, far less researched. Studies based on Seetzen's journal contributions such as Giovanni Bonacina's work on the European perception of the Wahhabis or Norbert Nebes's article on Yemen are more the exception than the rule.¹⁰ Seetzen's articles on the Bedouin tribes and their desert-bred horses belong to these overlooked contributions, although they arguably constitute an interesting case in point to study Seetzen's contribution on the Near East and its reception, since both articles drew the attention of his contemporaries, who translated, commented and quoted them.¹¹ Both intertwined topics were still the subjects of broad speculations in European scholarship at the turn of the nineteenth century. By focusing on both Seetzen's « Beiträge zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme in Syrien und im wüsten und peträischen Arabien » [Contributions to the knowledge of the Arab tribes in Syria as well as in Arabia Deserta and Arabia Petrea] written in 1806 and published in 1809 in the *Monatliche Correspondenz* as well as his « Letter » on Arabian horses released in 1811 in *Fundgruben des Orients / Mines de l'Orient* [Mines of the Orient] (1809–1818), this article aims to analyze Seetzen's participation in and contribution to the scholarly exchanges informing the oriental studies at a key moment of their development, but also to explore the role played by European journals in the construction of knowledge about the Near East in the early nineteenth century.¹²

⁹ Detlef Haberland underlines their scattered nature and calls for their publication, as a means of bringing them to the forefront of scientific interest.

¹⁰ On Seetzen's views on the Wahhabis, see GIOVANNI BONACINA, *The Wahhabis Seen through European Eyes (1772-1830): Deists and Puritans of Islam*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2015; NORBERT NEBES, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzen im Jemen », in HANS STEIN (ed.), *Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1767-1811) Leben und Werk. Die arabischen Länder und die Nahostforschung im napoleonischen Zeitalter. Vorträge des Kolloquiums vom 23. und 24. September 1994 in der Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek Gotha, Schloß Friedenstein*, Gotha Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek, Gotha 1995, p. 39–52.

¹¹ Apart from an article by Bernadette Lizet on Oriental horse breeds in the work of Wenceslas Severyn Rzewuski, it seems that Seetzen's report on horses and its reception by contemporaries has not been much researched, see BERNADETTE LIZET, « Le cheval arabe du Nejd et le système des races orientales dans le manuscrit de Wenceslas Severyn Rzewuski », *Anthropozoologica*, 39/1 (2004), p. 79–97. As to Seetzen's report on the Bedouins, it seems that it has never been analysed for itself.

¹² SEETZEN, « Beiträge zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme » and Id., « Auszug aus einem Briefe des kaiserlich. Russ. Collegienassessors Herrn Dr. Seetzen an Herrn von Hammer aus Mocha den 14. November 1810 », *Fundgruben des Orients*, 2 (1811), p. 275–284.

Therefore, this paper aims to demonstrate how Seetzen's articles on Bedouins and horses can shed light on the mechanisms of knowledge-making about the Arabias at the turn of the nineteenth century. Accordingly, this article will first focus on Seetzen's integration within the scholarly journals of the time. It will then address Seetzen's ethnography of the Bedouin tribes before analyzing his approach to the Arabian horses in order to better underline his methodology, research outcomes, and critical reception until the 1830s.

II. Writing for Scholarly Journals:

Seetzen as a Contributor to the European Knowledge-making in the 1800s

From the outset of his journey to Africa in 1802 to his tragic death in Yemen in 1811, Seetzen made a name for himself among the European learned readership of his time as a contributor to scholarly journals. The *Monatliche Correspondenz* and the *Fundgruben des Orients*, in which both of his texts on the Bedouin tribes and their desert bred horses were respectively published, were in fact the main journals to which he directly contributed during his journey to and in the Near East. Regularly in touch with the editors of both journals, Seetzen appeared as a reliable correspondent able to fuel the scholarly debate through his field research. It is no coincidence that Seetzen, financed and supported from Gotha, kept the successive editors of the *Monatliche Correspondenz*, namely the astronomers Franz Xaver von Zach (1754–1832) and Bernhard August von Lindenau (1779–1854), updated on the progress of his journey. Established in 1800 in Gotha by Zach, the *Monatliche Correspondenz* was edited by Lindenau from 1806 on until 1813, that is from Zach's departure from Gotha until the year of the journal's last issue. Later on, Seetzen also corresponded with the Austrian Diplomat and Orientalist Joseph Hammer-Purgstall (1774–1856), the joint editor of the Vienna-based *Fundgruben des Orients* along with the Polish count Wacław Seweryn Rzewuski (1784–1831). The latter financed the journal which was published from 1809 to 1818. By keeping the editors of these journals informed about his works-in-progress or by providing them with the conclusions of the investigations that they had commissioned from him, Seetzen delivered them original material for their journals. His contribution proved even more significant in that collecting data in the Near East was a difficult undertaking, which Seetzen himself emphasized while referring to Niebuhr in the opening quotation of the present article. These direct journal contributions soon gave rise to indirect ones, since some of the formers were critically reviewed and translated in other European journals. From this perspective, studying Seetzen's publications in contemporary journals will exemplify the international cooperation within Oriental Studies at the turn of the nineteenth century. Indeed, a closer look at these journals will allow us to underline the particular significance

of exchanges taking place between German and French-speaking scholars in the process of knowledge-making about the Orient.¹³

In this context, the *Monatliche Correspondenz* proved instrumental in spreading Seetzen's research goals and observations and, therefore, in building his reputation as a trustworthy scientific traveller. Whereas the *Monatliche Correspondenz* was by no means the first journal in which Seetzen published, it nevertheless marked a shift in terms of the scope and nature of his scholarly ambitions. Until 1802 his horizon was mainly limited to Germany.¹⁴ The significance of Seetzen's first substantial article published in the *Monatliche Correspondenz*, his *Reiseplan ins innere Afrika*, was highlighted by Detlef Haberland who analyzed the different stakes of this inaugural contribution against the scientific background of his time.¹⁵ Published in four successive issues of Zach's journal from August to November 1802, Seetzen's programmatic article proved instrumental in introducing him both to the learned readership as well as in a scholarly circle prompt to support his enterprise.¹⁶ Indeed, the *Reiseplan* was nothing else but the letter sent by Seetzen to Zach to require his support in his plan. Once convinced by Seetzen, Zach endeavored to draw the attention of his readers on a plan which he deemed promising, while making them familiar with Seetzen's name. Zach therefore authored a detailed foreword to Seetzen's *Reisenplan* in order to explain how he learnt about his project and how his scientific endeavour would be supported in and from Gotha.¹⁷ After introducing Seetzen as a medical doctor (*Doctor Medicinae*) Zach thus pointed out that he was recommended to him by one of the most prominent scholars of his time, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840), professor at the Georgia Augusta in Göttingen and a native of Gotha.¹⁸ Himself a doctor from the University of Göttingen where he studied medicine and natural sciences from 1785 to 1789, Seetzen was a former student of Blumenbach in both medicine and natural history.¹⁹ After mentioning

¹³ PASCALE RABAULT-FEUERHAHN, CÉLINE TRAUTMANN-WALLER (eds.), *Itinéraires orientalistes entre France et Allemagne*, CNRS Editions, Paris 2008, (Germanique Internationale, 7, Special Issue) <<https://doi.org/10.4000/rgi.222>> (Accessed October 2023).

¹⁴ HABERLAND, « Die Publikationen Ulrich Jasper Seetzens », p. 138–143.

¹⁵ HABERLAND, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzen und Afrika », p. 199–224.

¹⁶ ULRICH JASPER SEETZEN, « Reiseplan ins innere Afrika », *Monatliche Correspondenz zur Beförderung der Erd- und Himmelskunde*, 6 (1802), August No. XIII, p. 126–159; September No. XX, p. 201–232; October No. XXX, p. 317–342; November No. XLII, p. 401–457.

¹⁷ SEETZEN, « Reiseplan ins innere Afrika », p. 126–142. It must be noted, however, that the *Reiseplan* was not Seetzen's first contribution to the *Monatliche Correspondenz*. He authored a piece on Africa which was published the same year in March: Id., « Etwas über Afrika. Aus einem Schreiben des Dr. Seetzen », *Monatliche Correspondenz*, 5 (1802), March No. XXVIII, p. 260–262.

¹⁸ SEETZEN, « Reiseplan ins innere Afrika », p. 126.

¹⁹ MICHAEL SCHIPPAN, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzen und die Georgia Augusta in Göttingen », in HABERLAND, (ed.), *Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1767–1811)*, p. 111–132. During his time at the Georgia Augusta, Seetzen

this prestigious scholarly recommendation, Zach further underlined the patronage of the Duc of Gotha who had supported Seetzen's plan as soon as he heard about the goals of his trip as well as his needs.²⁰ Zach had shared with the Duc the details of Seetzen's letter, in which the latter stated the wide spectrum of his interest including « Natural history (...), agriculture, technology, commerce, statistics, political and physical Geography »²¹ as well as his desire not only to acquire knowledge and skills in practical astronomy but also to be provided with the necessary astronomic instruments in order to determine longitudes and latitudes.²² This last request was met with great interest by Zach who greeted an initiative which, he hoped, would allow for significant progress in the geographic knowledge of the territories crisscrossed by Seetzen. Zach criticized, in contrast, the inaccuracy of the information given by some travellers such as the Scottish James Bruce (1730–1794), who also travelled to Africa. Zach deemed his measurements to be generated « at random » and therefore useless for the geographers.²³

One of the main stakes of Zach's introduction and subsequent publication of Seetzen's *Reiseplan* was thus to establish him as a scientific traveller, a trustworthy scholar whose goals were thought through and based on the latest literature and therefore, to compensate for a certain lack of legitimacy from which Seetzen might have suffered in the eyes of the readership of the *Monatliche Correspondenz*. His research, although diverse and regularly published in journals, had been limited so far to the German area, notably to his home region of the Jeverland, and despite his arguably very thorough preparation of his journey to Africa, Seetzen could neither speak yet any of the languages of the lands that he planned to travel nor claim to be a part of a scientific expedition. A doctor from the prestigious University of Göttingen, Seetzen had nevertheless no academic position and his key advantage was the financial backing of the Duke of Gotha as well as the scientific support of Zach, which included the opportunity to be published in the

also attended the lectures of the botanist Johann Andreas Murray (1740–1791) and the mineralogist Johann Friedrich Gmelin (1748–1804).

²⁰ SEETZEN, « Reiseplan ins innere Afrika », p. 132.

²¹ SEETZEN, « Reiseplan ins innere Afrika », p. 128: « Naturgeschichte (...), Landwirthschaft, Technologie, Handlung, Statistik, politische und physikalische Geographie ».

²² SEETZEN, « Reiseplan ins innere Afrika », p. 128–131.

²³ SEETZEN, « Reiseplan ins innere Afrika », p. 138: « auf gerathewohl ». On Seetzen's measurements and his instruments see: MICHAEL GEFFERT, OLIVER SCHWARZ, « Seetzens astronomische Ortsbestimmungen und sein astrogeodätischer Lehrmeister Franz Xaver von Zach », in DETLEF HABERLAND (ed.), *Der Orientreisende Ulrich Jasper Seetzen und die Wissenschaften*, Isensee Verlag, Oldenburg 2019, p. 329–348; EBERHARD SCHULZ-LÜPERTZ, « Die Reiseinstrumente von Ulrich Jasper Seetzen und Alexander von Humboldt – ein Vergleich. Anhang: Seetzens und Humboldts apparative Ausstattung », in HABERLAND (ed.), *Der Orientreisende Ulrich Jasper Seetzen*, p. 349–373.

Monatliche Correspondenz.²⁴ A very detailed piece of scholarship, the *Reiseplan* was meant to forge his ethos as a scientific traveller by emphasizing his scholarly practices which were largely inspired by the high scientific standards developed at the University of Göttingen. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the *Reiseplan* constitutes a key source for Detlef Haberland's claim that « Seetzen verkörpert vollständig den Typus des wissenschaftlichen Reisenden, wie ihn sein Kommilitone Alexander von Humboldt in Idealform vorgeprägt hatte ».²⁵ Indeed, Detlef Haberland tends to distinguish the « modern researcher » from the Enlightenment Era such as, among others, Alexander von Humboldt, Georg Forster, and Carsten Niebuhr from the « travellers from the Early Modern Times ».²⁶ While « die adäquate Wahl der Methoden, die gezielte und umfassende Vorbereitung, die systematische Durchführung der Reise und ihre Auswertung » characterized the formers, the latter, although very knowledgeable about the places that they visited, learned about them mainly during their utilitarian journeys whose goals were not primarily scholarly but diplomatic, missionary or commercial.²⁷ One can argue, therefore, that Seetzen precisely aimed at showing that he meant to walk in the footsteps of his predecessors in the Near East and Africa such as Niebuhr or Friedrich Konrad Hornemann (1771–1801), even if he was quite far from traveling under the same circumstances. Whereas Niebuhr or Humboldt were members of scientific expeditions and selected to take part in scientific projects, Seetzen was pursuing on his own his self-determined scientific ambitions. A well-read and informed scholar such as Seetzen knew about contemporary large-scale field research like the *expédition d'Égypte* (1798–1801)²⁸. Even though he was not the first scholar to travel alone with a research plan in mind, it is a fact that no scientific society endorsed his initiative in the same way that the *Association for promoting the discovery of the interior parts of Africa* did for Hornemann. In his wish to emulate travellers such as Niebuhr and Hornemann who were connected to the scholars of Göttingen, Seetzen also aimed

²⁴ It must be noted that the Duke of Gotha entrusted Seetzen with the mission to acquire manuscripts and artefacts for his collection. Seetzen, see UTA WALLNSTEIN, « 'Ich habe mehr gefunden, als ich erwartete...' – Seetzen und die Ägyptensammlung Gotha », in STEIN (ed.), *Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1767–1811)*, p. 65–73; EAD., « 'Eine schöne ägyptische Antike' – Seetzens Bedeutung als Altertumsforscher und Sammler für den Gothaer Hof », in HABERLAND (ed.), *Der Orientreisende Ulrich Jasper Seetzen*, p. 441–448; MONIKA HASENMÜLLER, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzen als Sammler orientalischer Handschriften », in HABERLAND (ed.), *Der Orientreisende Ulrich Jasper*, p. 459–476. See also SABINE MANGOLD's contribution on Seetzen's mission for the Duke of Gotha (*Eine 'weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft' – die deutsche Orientalistik im 19. Jahrhundert*, Steiner, Stuttgart 2004, p. 43).

²⁵ HABERLAND, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzen und Afrika », p. 207.

²⁶ HABERLAND, « Die Publikationen Ulrich Jasper Seetzens », p. 135.

²⁷ HABERLAND, « Die Publikationen Ulrich Jasper Seetzens », p. 135.

²⁸ ROBERTO A. DIAZ HENANDEZ, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzens Forschungsreise in Ägypten », in HABERLAND (ed.), *Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1767–1811)*, p. 187–197, p. 189.

at differentiating himself from other types of travellers whose contributions were deemed disappointing. It seems noteworthy that throughout his journey, Seetzen kept emphasizing the scientific dimension of his trip in his diaries, while taking every precaution not to be mistaken for an « adventurer ».²⁹

Thus, Seetzen describes himself in the *Reiseplan* as a « litterarischer Reisender ».³⁰ Shedding light on the preparatory work to his field trip, he systematically used and mentioned the previous literature, including specialized books and travel accounts. Claiming that he was unable to live without books, he explained that « über jede Wissenschaft, der ich meine Aufmerksamkeit zu widmen vorhabe, werde ich wenigstens ein gutes Handbuch zum Nachschlafen mit mir führen ».³¹ Obviously well versed in the travelogues of his predecessors in the Near East and Africa, he listed these books and discussed their information to determine his possible itineraries, the potential difficulties that he could face, and the topics which should be further researched.³² Both the systematic review of the latest literature as well as the thorough exploitation of travelogues belonged to the scientific practices of the scholars from the University of Göttingen. Blumenbach, along with other scholars from the Georgia Augusta such as August Ludwig von Schlözer (1735–1809), made a systematic use of travel literature.³³ The no less systematic review of the latest scholarly literature at large constituted the basis of the scholarship elaborated by the professors of Göttingen who thus aimed at emphasizing the originality of their contributions. Detlef Haberland has listed the references used by Seetzen among which notably appear the works of Daniel Albert Wyttenbach (1746–1820), l'Abbé Binos (1730–1803), Constantin-François Chassebœuf de La Giraudais comte de Volney (1757–1820), Carsten Niebuhr, Peter Forsskål (1732–1763) for the Near East.³⁴ The perusing of travel accounts led Blumenbach, however, to point out some of the recurring shortcomings in the genre and, therefore, the necessity of a critical approach when dealing with them.

²⁹ VOLKMAR ENDERLEIN, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzens Reise-Journal als biographische Quelle », in HABERLAND, (ed.), *Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1767–1811)*, p. 157–166, p. 157; MICHAEL BRAUNE, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzens Leben in der Community der Franken in Aleppo (1803–1805) », in HABERLAND (ed.), *Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1767–1811)*, p. 167–185, p. 174.

³⁰ SEETZEN, « Reiseplan ins innere Afrika », p. 147.

³¹ SEETZEN, « Reiseplan ins innere Afrika », p. 147.

³² DETLEF HABERLAND, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzen – Ein Leben für eine Forschungsreise in den Vorderen Orient und auf die Arabische Halbinsel », in JUDITH ZEPTER et al. (eds.), *Ulrich Jasper Seetzen – Tagebücher*, vol. II, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim – Zürich – New York 2011, p. XIII–XL.

³³ HANS ERICH BÖDEKER, PHILIPPE BÜTTGEN, MICHEL ESPAGNE, « Introduction », in HANS ERICH BÖDEKER, PHILIPPE BÜTTGEN, MICHEL ESPAGNE (ed.), *Göttingen vers 1800. L'Europe des sciences de l'homme*, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, Göttingen 2010, p. 7–20. In the same volume, see as well CÉLINE TRAUTMANN-WALLER, « L'atelier de Blumenbach (1752–1840). Comment Göttingen inventa l'unité de l'espèce humaine », p. 285–311 and HAN F. VERMEULEN, « Göttingen et la 'science des peuples': Ethnologie et ethnographie dans les Lumières allemandes (1710–1815) », p. 247–284.

³⁴ HABERLAND, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzen – Ein Leben für eine Forschungsreise », p. xvii–xix.

Blumenbach's criticism was explicitly formulated in his foreword to the 1789 German edition of Adriaan van Berkel's travel account:

So lehrreich mir diese Arbeit an und für sich seyn musste, so hat sie mich doch auch zugleich von der Nothwendigkeit der strengsten Kritik bey dem Gebrauch der Reisebeschreibungen überzeugt; um so mehr, da ich, wie gesagt, das ganze Fach nach der Ordnung durchgieng, folglich die Reisen nach jedem Lande in chronologischer Ordnung hintereinander zu lesen bekam, und nun so oft theils die auffallendsten Widersprüche in den Nachrichten, die verschiedene Reisende von einer und eben derselben Sache geben, theils das blosse Nachbetheu bey solchen, die man insgemein für klassische Gewährsleute hält, und manches andere Verdächtige dieser Art bemerken musste, das zur Warnung beim Gebrauche der Reisegeschichten aufmahnt.³⁵

Such travel contribution against which Blumenbach warned could act as a foil for Seetzen who was eager to distinguish his upcoming work from these mediocre relations. His role model, by contrast, appeared to have been Carsten Niebuhr, with whom he was able to establish a scholarly dialogue through the *Monatliche Correspondenz*. Soon after the publication of the *Reiseplan*, Niebuhr discussed it in a contribution which served as a response to the goals set forth by our traveler.³⁶ Niebuhr's comments and advice regarding his travel plans arguably marked the start of the scientific exchanges between Seetzen and the larger scientific community. From then on, Seetzen's integration to the scientific exchanges taking place among European scholars on the Near East will further deepen. In this context, the publication of the *Reiseplan* and Zach's foreword to it aimed at raising the interest of the European scientific community and learned readership by giving Seetzen credibility based on his scientific method and goals.³⁷ The *Monatliche Correspondenz* thus allowed Seetzen to create his *ethos* as a scientific traveller for an audience that he had seemingly in mind since the beginning of initiative.³⁸ Further establishing his credibility articles after articles, he also came to meet other members of the Republic of scholars in the field.

³⁵ ADRIAAN VAN BERKEL, *Sammlung seltener und merkwürdiger Reisegeschichten. Erster Teil. Mit einer Vorrede von D. Johann Friederich Blumenbach, der Medic. Prof. ordin. zu Göttingen. Beschreibung seiner Reisen nach Rio de Berbice und Surinam. Aus dem Holländischen übersetzt*, Andreas Seyler, Memmingen 1789, fol. 3^r.

³⁶ CARSTEN NIEBUHR, « Über D. Seetzen's Reiseplan. Aus dem Schreiben des königl. Dänischen Justizraths Carsten Niebuhr », *Monatliche Correspondenz zur Beförderung der Erd- und Himmelskunde*, 6 (1802), p. 457–462.

³⁷ On the late eighteenth-century debates regarding the credibility of travel accounts, see YASMINE MARCIL, « Voyage écrit, voyage vécu ? La crédibilité du voyageur, du *Journal encyclopédique* au *Magasin encyclopédique* », *Sociétés & Représentations*, 21/1 (2006), p. 25–43.

³⁸ SEETZEN, « Reiseplan ins innere Afrika », p. 130: « das Publicum ».

Indeed, Seetzen stands out as one of the first contributors to the *Fundgruben des Orients* founded by Hammer and Rzewuski. Published in Vienna from 1809 to 1818 by Anton Schmid, this multilingual journal alternated between notices and letters with original texts in Arab, Persian, and Turkish, as well as their translations sent by scholars from all over Europe and even the Ottoman Empire. While the first volume released in 1809 contained no less than four pieces authored by Seetzen, his name soon became familiar to the *Fundgruben des Orients*' readership since the second (1811) and third (1813) volumes also included extracts from two of his letters to Hammer. The fourth volume (1814) delivered news about his death. In many respects, it appears remarkable that Seetzen belonged to the first scholars contributing to this epochal journal in the field of Oriental Studies. The significance of the *Fundgruben des Orients* in the development of the Oriental Studies in the German-speaking area has been notably highlighted by Sabine Mangold.³⁹ According to her, Hammer made through this journal a decisive contribution to the emancipation of the Oriental studies from theology, thus fostering the « Entstehung der Modernen Orientalistik » which she situates over a period stretching from 1810 to 1840.⁴⁰ As the first successful scholarly journal devoted to Oriental Studies, the *Fundgruben des Orients* aimed to offer a comprehensive vision of the Orient with up to seven main sections respectively dedicated to philology, poetry, history, geography, astronomy and chronology, positive sciences and bibliography.⁴¹ The distance taken from the theology thus seemed to go hand in hand with an enlargement of the research areas of the Oriental studies. In Hammer's own words, the *Fundgruben des Orients* explicitly aimed at the « Erweiterung des Gebiethes der orientalischen Litterature in Europa » and were therefore meant including everything « was nur immer aus dem Morgenland kömmt, oder auf dasselbe Bezug hat ». ⁴² Beyond the four sections which structured each issue, all possible fields of knowledge on the Orient should find place in Hammer's journal, whether « Philologie, Rede- und Dichtkunst, Philosophie, Physik und Mathematik, Medizin und Jurisprudenz, Geographie und Historie mit ihren Hülfswissenschaften, Numismatik und Statistik, Topo-, Ethno- und Bibliographie, Nachrichten von jedem Land und Volk, von jeder Wissenschaft und Kunst des Morgenlandes ». ⁴³ While Sabine Mangold rightly emphasizes the

³⁹ MANGOLD, *Eine 'weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft'*, p. 47–52.

⁴⁰ MANGOLD, *Eine 'weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft'*, p. 42.

⁴¹ The *Asiatisches Magazin* was the first journal fully dedicated to the Orient. Only one issue, however, was published in Weimar in 1802 by Julius Heinrich Klaproth, see MANGOLD, *Eine 'weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft'*, p. 44. On the following publications on the Orient see DANIEL MARTIN VARISCO, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid*, University of Washington Press, Seattle – London 2007, p. 88: « it was not until 1895 that a journal was exclusively devoted to Islam » while « the first International Congress of Orientalists was held in Paris ».

⁴² JOSEPH VON HAMMER-PURGSTALL, « Vorrede », *Fundgruben des Orients*, 1 (1809), p. ii.

⁴³ VON HAMMER-PURGSTALL, « Vorrede », p. iii.

role played by Hammer with the *Fundgruben des Orients* and describes him as « die wichtigste Figur in der deutschen Orientalistik des frühen 19. Jahrhundert », she does not say a word about the Polish count Rzewuski, the co-founder of the journal. An equine expert and Arabist, Rzewuski was a relative of the famous orientalist Jan Potocki (1761–1815) and a contributor to the *Fundgruben des Orients*. Even if Hammer was arguably the main editorial figure, the role of Rzewuski should not be downplayed, especially when dealing as we are with Seetzen's piece on Arabian horses for their journal.

It is a fact that Seetzen was acquainted with Hammer, who he met in Constantinople in January 1803, a few weeks only after his arrival in the city in late December 1802. Based in Pera, the neighbourhood of the diplomatic representations of the European powers, Seetzen immediately strived to get in touch with all the European consuls of the city in order to obtain recommendation letters.⁴⁴ This initiative led him to the Austrian representation, where the absence of the envoy Ignatz Lorenz von Stürmer allowed him to meet the young Legationssekretär Joseph von Hammer who was serving as an interpreter there since 1799.⁴⁵ Hammer notably helped Seetzen at several occasions to assess Oriental manuscripts and overall contributed to Seetzen's connection with other Europeans. It seems noteworthy that whenever it was possible, such as in Aleppo or in Cairo, Seetzen prioritized the frequenting of the consuls, which allowed him to connect with the small European scholarly circles of these cities as well as to keep in touch more easily with the scholars with whom he was communicating in Europe. Visiting the consuls helped Seetzen to be informed about some of the latest European publications. From his time in Constantinople, which he left later in 1803, Seetzen stayed in touch with Hammer who was accustomed to serving as an intermediary between the traveller and the scholars of Gotha by passing on letters and parcels sent by the former to the latter. This connection explains why Hammer was able to publish four of Seetzen's pieces in the first volume of the *Fundgruben des Orients*. It is likely that Hammer had mentioned his editorial project in his correspondence to Seetzen, who interestingly paid an advance homage to the initiative in one of his letters from Cairo. Hammer chose a long extract from this letter for the first volume in which, as his abovementioned quotations demonstrate, he was very eager to put forth the novelty of his editorial endeavour. Written from Cairo on July 10th, 1808, Seetzen's letter epitomizes in many respects the epistolary exchanges that he used to have with Hammer.⁴⁶ The traveller delivered his observations about Egypt, especially about the Fayum, since Hammer had encouraged Seetzen to send him a report about this region, mentioned his

⁴⁴ ENDERLEIN, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzens Reise-Journal als biographische Quelle », p. 157–166.

⁴⁵ ENDERLEIN, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzens Reise-Journal als biographische Quelle », p. 160.

⁴⁶ ULRICH JASPER SEETZEN, « Auszug eines Briefes von Herrn Kollegienassessor Dr. Seetzen, an H. von Hammer, Kahira den 10 Julius 1808 », *Fundgruben des Orients*, 1 (1809), p. 43–75.

other excursions, informed about his quest for manuscripts, referred to the parcels and texts previously sent to Hammer, including an extract from his diaries, and further dealt with the rest of his journey, since Cairo was one of his last stages before setting out to the Arabian Peninsula. The content of the letter thus determined Hammer to publish it in the section « Geography » of his journal. In Cairo, Seetzen received the assistance of two officials of the French consulate in the city, the orientalist Jean-Louis Asselin de Cherville (1772–1822) (vice-consul) and Bernardino Drovetti (consul general) who regularly corresponded with the prominent French orientalist, Antoine-Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838).⁴⁷ Asselin was even entrusted with a mission by the latter to gather manuscripts that were not available in Paris. Asselin thus showed Seetzen the manuscripts which he had copied himself in Paris as well as other manuscripts brought in Cairo and share with him some of the conclusion of his intensive study.⁴⁸ Asselin's work aroused Seetzen's admiration which he communicated to Hammer: « es lässt sich viel Interessantes von seinem Eifer für die orientalische Litterature erwarten, wenn er erst nach Frankreich zurückkehren wird, oder wenigstens wenn die offenen Meerwege die litterarischen Verbindungen mit Europa erleichtern ». ⁴⁹ Last but not least, Asselin allowed Seetzen for having a look at some of the latest work published in Europe, such as Sacy's *Chrestomathie arabe* (1806).⁵⁰ In Cairo, Seetzen could not only carry out a scientific exchange face-to-face but also encouraged his colleagues in Europe in their scholarly endeavour. In the same letter, Seetzen seemingly made a brief allusion to the establishment of the *Fundgruben des Orients*:

In dem beykommenden Aufsatze habe ich den Wunsch geäußert, dass ein geschmackvoller Kenner des Orients eine orientalische Monatsschrift herausgäbe, und den Nutzen davon gezeigt. Die sogenannten orientalischen Bibliotheken, von Michaelis u. a. haben ein zu schwerfälliges, zu gelehrtes Ansehen, und es fehlt denselben meistens an geschmackvoller Darstellung.⁵¹

While supporting the very idea of a new type of orientalist journal, Seetzen tended to criticize previous periodicals whose austerity he probably condemned because he wished for a kind of publication able to catch the interest of a wider audience for orientalist topics. By mentioning the « sogenannten orientalischen Bibliotheken », he had possibly in mind a previous epoch-making journal, namely the *Orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek* [Oriental and Exegetical Library] (1771–

⁴⁷ On Sacy and his role in the development of Oriental studies in France, see ALAIN MESSAOUDI, *Les arabisants et la France coloniale. Savants, conseillers, médiateurs (1780–1930)*, ENS Éditions, Lyon 2015.

⁴⁸ SEETZEN, « Auszug eines Briefes, Kahira den 10 Julius 1808 », p. 54–60.

⁴⁹ SEETZEN, « Auszug eines Briefes, Kahira den 10 Julius 1808 », p. 54.

⁵⁰ SEETZEN, « Auszug eines Briefes, Kahira den 10 Julius 1808 », p. 60.

⁵¹ SEETZEN, « Auszug eines Briefes, Kahira den 10 Julius 1808 », p. 61.

1789/1791) authored and edited by the famous biblical scholar and professor of Oriental languages at the University of Göttingen, Johann David Michaelis (1717–1791) until his death in 1791.⁵² One can argue that Seetzen had in mind the model of a monthly journal such as the *Monatliche Correspondenz* which was designed to spread new geographic findings not only among scholars, but also among learned readers. By doing so, Seetzen seemingly tried to embrace the changes taking place in Oriental studies at the turn of the nineteenth century. It can also be assumed that Seetzen was not only aware of these changes but wanted to play a role in them.

It seems necessary here to dwell for a moment on what these changes were and how the *Fundgruben des Orients* in general, and Seetzen in particular, took a part in them. First, it must be noted that even if the rich literature on Oriental studies generally identifies the turn of the nineteenth century as a key moment for their development in Europe, scholarly opinions may vary when it comes to analyze these changes. In a seminal book on *German Orientalism in the Age of the Empire*, Suzanne Marchand tried to answer the question to know what lies at the heart of German orientalism by writing a critical history of the practice of oriental scholarship in Germany.⁵³ Regarding the changes marking oriental studies in the second half of the eighteenth century, Suzanne Marchand points out the necessity to place them in the long-durée, thus insisting on the continuities which characterized the European study of the East since at least the Christian Hebraism of the Renaissance and the *Bibelforschung* rooted in the Reformation.⁵⁴ Therefore, she refuses the historiographic tradition which claims that the 1780's marked a watershed moment for the oriental studies by giving rise to a new European interest in the Orient. According to this historiographic tradition, oriental studies thus came to be characterized by secularization which caused the disappearance of previous concerns among orientalists, such as biblical criticism. Largely based on Raymond Schwab's idea of an « Oriental Renaissance » occurring in the 1770's, this interpretation also implied that the secularization of Oriental studies and their subsequent distancing from biblical studies meant the beginning of their

⁵² There were, however, other publications with a similar title, such as the *Orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek* (1772–1776) by Johann Friedrich Hirt (1719–1783), which was published in Jena. It was then continued under the title *Wittenbergische neue orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek: mit beygefügeter Anzeige neuer theologischer Schriften und andern Nachrichten*, from 1776 to 1779. <https://zs.thulb.uni-jena.de/receive/jportal_jpjournal_00000098>.

⁵³ SUZANNE L. MARCHAND, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire. Religion, Race, and Scholarship*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, p. xviii–xxi. Interestingly, Suzanne Marchand notes that the question was posed immediately after the publication in 1978 of Edward Said's seminal book *Orientalism*, in which he consciously chose to exclude German scholarship from his analysis to prioritize British and French Oriental studies.

⁵⁴ MARCHAND, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*, p. 1–52.

modernity and scientific rigour.⁵⁵ In the 1980's, Dominique Bourel also used the secularization's narrative to describe the rise of German oriental studies from the Bible studies as a kind of emancipation.⁵⁶ Suzanne Marchand, by contrast, emphasized how much the orientalist working at the turn of the nineteenth century were indebted to « past traditions » which they transformed rather than replaced. Among the transformations highlighted by Suzanne Marchand there are

a shift toward secular, prosaic, and nationally focused histories, an increased willingness to take non-Christian authors seriously – meaning new attempts to translate their texts – a wider distribution and larger number of exotic texts and travel reports in circulation, and finally by the (eighteenth) century's close, a real diminution of interest (especially in Germany) in the cultures of the modern East.⁵⁷

In Suzanne Marchand's own words, the Age of Enlightenment « marks an enormous increase in Europe's pursuit of knowledge about the East » before underlining that

while older traditions continued, the eighteenth century witnessed data collection, on a new scale; it saw the creation of new institutions, or institutional roles, for philological scholars, especially in the place where the study of pagan cultures became more socially acceptable. There were large numbers of new travelogues and translations of nonwestern texts and more armchair readers able to read them.⁵⁸

Suzanne Marchand also notes that a sign of the expansion of « non-theological orientalist knowledge » was the « upswing in the state-financed expeditions to the East », among which the Carsten Niebuhr's expedition of 1761–1767, even if the mission appeared to be « more theological than political » according to her.⁵⁹

This reference to the Danish-German Arabia Expedition to Egypt and Yemen (Arabia Felix) bring us back to the role played by the professor of Göttingen Johann David Michaelis in the development of oriental studies in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁶⁰ This role is strongly emphasized by Suzanne Marchand and

⁵⁵ RAYMOND SCHWAB, *La Renaissance orientale*, Payot, Paris 1950.

⁵⁶ DOMINIQUE BOUREL, « Die deutsche Orientalistik im 18. Jahrhundert. Von der Mission zur Wissenschaft », in HENNING REVENTLOW (ed.), *Historische Kritik und biblischer Kanon in der deutschen Aufklärung*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1988, p. 113–126.

⁵⁷ MARCHAND, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*, p. 14.

⁵⁸ MARCHAND, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*, p. 15.

⁵⁹ MARCHAND, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*, p. 18.

⁶⁰ On the role played by Johann David Michaelis as well as Johann Gottfried Heder, see MARCHAND, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*, p. 38–52. Sabine Mangold tends to underline the significance of Johann Jacob Reiske (1716–1774) who, according to her, « vertrat ein neues Orientalistik-Konzept, das mit dem der Universitäten und der von ihnen favorisierten

Sabine Mangold, who describes Michaelis as « der einflussreichste Vertreter dieser Aufklärung-Orientalistik ». ⁶¹ Initially undertaken in the hope of gaining knowledge for the philology of the Old Testament, the Danish-German Arabia Expedition de facto opened new horizons to oriental studies. ⁶² Planned in Göttingen and Copenhagen and carried out by a multinational and multidisciplinary team of scientists, this expedition aimed to enlighten obscure passage of the Holy Scriptures by focusing on questions relating to literature, history, geography, fauna, flora and religious customs in the East, which for the time led to consider the Orient as an autonomous field of study. The significance of Michaelis' famous *Fragenkatalog* in this development was decisive and understandably inspired Seetzen who refers to it in his *Reiseplan*. ⁶³ Michaelis' journal, of which Seetzen, by contrast, tended to be more critical, played nevertheless an equally decisive role in many ways in the development of Oriental studies. ⁶⁴ According to Sabine Mangold, Michaelis' *Orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek* and Johann Gottlieb Eichhorn' (1752–1827) *Repertorium für biblische und morgenländische Litterature* appeared the most important periodical of their time. By consisting mainly of critical reviews of the latest publications useful to biblical scholarship, Michaelis' journal arguably played a role in synthesizing and spreading most of orientalist works written by his contemporaries. ⁶⁵ Although both periodicals were characterized by theological topics, it was also possible to find some contribution relating to oriental religions, history and poetry. These kinds of publication « beschleunigten (...) nicht nur den wissenschaftlichen Austausch der Orient-Gelehrten, sondern schufen erstmals auch eine nationale und international Öffentlichkeit, die sich über das gelehrte Interesse am Morgenland definierte ». ⁶⁶

Sabine Mangold analyses the birth of the modern oriental studies as a story of their emancipation from theological questions, and therefore, emphasizes its rise outside of the Universities, which tended to harness them to theology. ⁶⁷ This perspective led her to a very interesting point about the self-description of the

Anbindungen an die Theologie nichts mehr gemeinsam hatte » (MANGOLD, *Eine 'weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft'*, p. 33).

⁶¹ MANGOLD, *Eine 'weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft'*, p. 35.

⁶² WOLF FEUERHAHN, « A Theologian's List and an Anthropologist's Prose: Michaelis, Niebuhr, and the Expedition to Felix Arabia », in PETER BECKER, WILLIAM CLARK (eds.), *Little Tools of Knowledge: Historical Essays on Academic and Bureaucratic Practices*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 2001, p. 141–168; HAN F. VERMEULEN, *Before Boas. The Genesis of Ethnography and Ethnology in the German Enlightenment*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln – London 2015, p. 219–267.

⁶³ SEETZEN, « Reiseplan ins innere Afrika ».

⁶⁴ MANGOLD, *Eine 'weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft'*, p. 36.

⁶⁵ SEETZEN, « Auszug eines Briefes, Kahira den 10 Julius 1808 », p. 61.

⁶⁶ MANGOLD, *Eine 'weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft'*, p. 36.

⁶⁷ MANGOLD, *Eine 'weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft'*, p. 37.

contributors of the *Fundgruben des Orients* as a « Gesellschaft von Liebhabern » on the front page of the journal. It seems noteworthy that Hammer himself refused to be named a scholar or even an orientalist and probably hoped to get a certain recognition through the *Fundgruben des Orients*. It is a fact that Hammer had no academic position and no academic degrees, since he was educated at the Orientalische Akademie (Oriental Academy) established in 1754 by Maria-Theresa (1717–1780) for the training of translators and diplomats. The very fact that Hammer refused the word should prompt us to define who the orientalists were. To do so, we will follow Suzanne Marchand who describes them as the

individuals who counted as ‘orientalists’ in their cultural milieux, namely men (and they were mostly men) who invested time and effort in actually learning to read and/or to speak at least one ‘oriental’ language and who could be academics, travellers, diplomats, populariser, missionaries, pastors and rabbis.⁶⁸

This definition interestingly contrasts with Detlef Haberland’s characterization of the scientific travel, which excluded travellers on religious, diplomatic or commercial missions. Suzanne Marchand’s definition interestingly reflects the diversity of the contributors of the *Fundgruben des Orients*, even if some of them, including Hammer, would not have called themselves ‘orientalists’. Chosen by Hammer, they were, at the end of the day, the individuals considered the « most worthy to write and speak about Eastern cultures ». Most, if not all, of the contributors of the *Fundgruben des Orients* were contributing to the Oriental studies outside from the University setting. The journal nonetheless counted among its contributors prestigious figures of orientalism, such as the above mentioned Silvestre de Sacy, Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat (1788–1832) and Antoine-Chrysostome de Quatremère de Quincy (1755–1849) as well as orientalist diplomats who, such as Joseph Rousseau (1780–1831) or Bernardino Drovetti (1776–1852) sent first-hand reports and material from the field.⁶⁹ Mentioned in the long list of the « Herrn Mitarbeiter », Seetzen had already been traveling the Near East for seven years when his pieces were published by Hammer and he had learned Arabic during his stay in Syria.⁷⁰ He was deemed worthy of joining the society of amateurs

⁶⁸ MARCHAND, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*, p. XXIII.

⁶⁹ FRANÇOIS POUILLON (ed.), *Dictionnaire des orientalistes de langue française*, Karthala Editions, Paris 2012.

⁷⁰ JOSEPH VON HAMMER-PURGSTALL (ed.), « Verzeichnis der Herrn Mitarbeiter », *Fundgruben des Orients*, 1 (1809), p. 466. On Seetzen’s skills in Arabic, see HANS STEIN, « Seetzens Bemühungen um Aneignung und Wiedergabe der arabischen Sprache », in ID. (ed.), *Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (1767–1811) Leben und Werk. Die arabischen Länder und die Nahostforschung im napoleonischen Zeitalter. Vorträge des Kolloquiums vom 23. und 24. September 1994 in der Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek Gotha, Schloß Friedenstein*, Gotha Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek, Gotha 1995, p. 53–64; NATALIA BACHOUR, « Arabischlernen in der Aufklärung am Beispiel Ulrich Jasper Seetzens », in HABERLAND (ed.), *Der*

by writing on topics that Hammer considered of the highest interest for his readers. One can assume, however, that Rzewuski probably lied behind Hammer's demand to author a piece about Arabian horses, which interestingly raised great interest among the scholarly community of his time.

It is a fact that Seetzen's contributions on the Arabias published in the *Monatliche Correspondenz* and the *Fungruben des Orients* aroused the interest of contemporary scholars across Europe. A study of the reception of both his articles on the Bedouins and the Arabian horses more specifically exemplifies the significance of the scholarly exchanges taking place between France and German-speaking territories in the field of Oriental studies. Indeed, the analysis of the translations, reviews and commentaries of these articles points out the importance of the scholarly interactions taking place between Gotha, Vienna and Paris. First, it appears that the Dano-French geographer Conrad Malte-Brun (1775–1826) published translations of some of Seetzen's contributions in his Paris-based journal the *Annales des voyages, de la géographie et de l'histoire* [Annals of travels, geography, and history] (1807–1814). A reader of the *Monatliche Correspondenz*, Malte-Brun thus selected the reports he deemed the most noteworthy in the Gotha-based journal to propose French translations to his own readership. In 1810, Malte-Brun edited a French translation of Seetzen's « Contributions to the knowledge of the Arab tribes in Syria, Arabia Deserta and Petrea », printed only one year earlier in the *Monatliche Correspondenz*.⁷¹ Far from being a mere rhetorical flourish, the introduction of Seetzen as 'a famous traveller' (« un célèbre voyageur ») by Conrad Malte-Brun in his *Annales des Voyages* reflected the familiarity of his name among the European readership.⁷² Not only was Seetzen published in specialized journals like the *Fundgruben des Orients* or the *Monatliche Correspondenz*, but he was also regularly mentioned in less reputed journals or at least those targeting a broader audience, like the *Journal politique de Mannheim*.⁷³ No doubt that the geographer Malte-Brun himself was a keen reader of the *Monatliche Correspondenz*, which constituted one of his many sources for translating the latest travel accounts into French. From the *Monatliche Correspondenz*, Malte-Brun selected Seetzen's accounts of the Arabian World, which he probably regarded as the most revealing. Second, Seetzen's report on Arabian horses in the *Fundgruben*

Orientreisende Ulrich Jasper Seetzen, p. 195–232; EAD., « Arabisch in lateinischen Buchstaben. Das Transkriptionssystem Ulrich Jasper Seetzens », in HABERLAND (ed.), *Der Orientreisende Ulrich Jasper Seetzen*, p. 233–263.

⁷¹ ULRICH JASPER SEETZEN, « Mémoire pour servir à la connaissance des tribus arabes en Syrie et dans l'Arabie déserte et Pétrée », *Annales des voyages, de la géographie et de l'histoire ou Collection des voyages nouveaux les plus estimés, traduits de toutes les langues européennes*, 8 (1810), p. 281–324.

⁷² ULRICH JASPER SEETZEN, « Voyage de M. Seetzen sur la Mer Rouge et dans l'Arabie », *Annales des voyages, de la géographie et de l'histoire ou Collection des voyages nouveaux les plus estimés, traduits de toutes les langues européennes*, 22 (1813), p. 309.

⁷³ *Journal politique de Mannheim*, 53 (1809), p. 2.

des Orients triggered even more interest among the scholarly community: commented by Sacy and Rzewuski, and then later used by Karl Wilhelm Ammon (1777–1842), this article remained an influential work among equine experts decades after its publication.⁷⁴ As a matter of fact, it was no coincidence that Seetzen's report was critically reviewed soon after its publication by Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838), one of the most prominent orientalists of that time, for the French journal the *Magasin Encyclopédique* [Encyclopedic magazine] (1795–1816) edited by Aubin-Louis Millin (1795–1816). A prolific reviewer for the *Magasin Encyclopédique* as well as the *Journal des savants* and, to a lesser extent, to the *Journal asiatique*, Sacy authored over two-hundred reviews during his life, which represented a total of over two-hundred and sixty articles.⁷⁵ From 1797 to 1815, Sacy was a regular contributor to the *Magasin Encyclopédique* for which he was in charge, along with Abel-Rémusat and Simon Chardon de la Rochette (1753–1814), of the monthly review of books related to Oriental studies.⁷⁶ In contrast to the *Fundgruben des Orients*, *Le Magasin Encyclopédique* was not a specialized journal. Oriental studies, nevertheless, were well represented in each issue, either through critical review of foreign publications or through the original contribution of orientalists like Sacy, Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832), or Abel-Rémusat.⁷⁷ This particularity led Pascal Rabault-Feuerhahn to point out the role played by the *Magasin Encyclopédique* as a « relais du savoir sur l'Orient ». Through his reviews of the latest orientalist literature, as Sandrine Maufroy notes it, « Sacy introduit ainsi le lecteur français dans la connaissance du réseau des orientalistes germanophones. La plus grande partie de ses comptes rendus est consacrée à ce

⁷⁴ ULRICH JASPER SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe des kaiserlich. Russ. Collegienassessors Herrn Dr. Seetzen an Herrn von Hammer aus Mocha den 14. November 1810 », *Fundgruben des Orients*, 2 (1811), p. 275–284; ANTOINE ISAAC SILVESTRE DE SACY, « Notice du tome second du recueil intitulé: *Fundgruben des Orients, bearbeitet durch eine Gesellschaft von Liebhabern, ou Mines de l'Orient, exploitées par une Société d'amateurs, etc.* Tome II. Vienne, 1811 (Second Extrait) », *Magasin Encyclopédique*, 6 (1813), p. 213–240; WACLAV SEWERYN RZEWUSKI (ed.), « Extrait d'une lettre du savant Seetzen, Assesseur du Collège de Russie, à M^r de Hammer », in BERNADETTE LIZET, FRANÇOISE AUBAILE-SALLENAVE, PIOTR DASZKIEWICZ, ANNE-ÉLIZABETH WOLF (eds.), *Impressions d'Orient et d'Arabie. Un cavalier polonais chez les Bédouins, 1817–1819*, José Corti, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris 2002, p. 633–652; KARL WILHELM AMMON, *Nachrichten von der Pferdezucht der Araber und den arabischen Pferden: Nebst einem Anhang über die Pferdezucht in Persien, Turkomanien und der Berberei*, Riegel und Wießner, Nürnberg 1834.

⁷⁵ SANDRINE MAUFROY, « Silvestre de Sacy auteur de comptes rendus », in MICHEL ESPAGNE, NORA LAFI, PASCALE RABAULT-FEUERHAHN (eds.), *Silvestre de Sacy. Le projet européen d'une science orientaliste*, Éditions du Cerf, Paris 2014, p. 231–247.

⁷⁶ MAUFROY, « Silvestre de Sacy auteur de comptes rendus », p. 231–232.

⁷⁷ PASCALE RABAULT, « Réseaux internationaux de l'orientalisme naissant. Le *Magasin encyclopédique* comme relais du savoir sur l'Orient », in GENEVIÈVE ESPAGNE, BÉNÉDICTE SAVOY (eds.), *Aubin-Louis Millin et l'Allemagne. Le Magasin encyclopédique – Les lettres à Karl August Böttinger*, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim 2005.

qui se publie en Allemagne et en Autriche ».⁷⁸ Among these publications, Sacy focused in particular on the volumes of the *Bibliotheca Arabica* (1799–1806) by his former student Christian Friedrich Schnurrer (1742–1822) as well as the volumes of the *Fundgruben des Orients*.⁷⁹ As for his review of *Fundgruben des Orients*, it should be noticed that Sacy very carefully selected the articles, which he deemed worthy of attention by providing more detailed commentary. Therefore, it appears meaningful that Seetzen's reports on Arabian horses benefited from his special attention.

While this focus was induced by the dynamism of Oriental studies in German-speaking territories, Sacy actively contributed to the French-German cultural transfers taking place at a key moment of the development of this field.⁸⁰ Unlike the other fields of knowledge in the human sciences whose practices became more and more nationally differentiated, oriental studies were then characterized by European exchanges dominated by French, British, German, and Russian scholars. In Paris, Silvestre de Sacy played a major role in spreading knowledge produced Europe-wide on and from the Orient.⁸¹ Once again, discovery and understanding of the 'other' was seen as a European enterprise. Gathering information about the « Orient », be it the Near or the Far East or even the Americas, required the cooperation of a vast community of scholars scattered throughout Europe and indeed the world. This process of knowledge-making on the Orient involved a very small group of scholars who raised cultural awareness throughout Europe. It is within this interaction that Seetzen intended to shed more light on the Arabian World, notably by striving to provide a more accurate description of the Bedouin tribes.

III. Describing the Arab Tribes: *Seetzen's Ethnography of the Bedouins*

It is no coincidence that Seetzen's writings on the nomadic tribes of the Near East as well as their horses found a particular resonance on the editorial stage. First, our traveller sought to provide new information on an area which was generating an increasing and wide-ranging interest among the scientific community and the

⁷⁸ MAUFROY, « Silvestre de Sacy auteur de comptes rendus », p. 245.

⁷⁹ MAUFROY, « Silvestre de Sacy auteur de comptes rendus », p. 245–246.

⁸⁰ MANGOLD, « France Allemagne et retour: une discipline née dans l'émulation », *Revue germanique internationale*, 7 (2008), p. 109–124.

⁸¹ MICHEL ESPAGNE, NORA LAFI, PASCALE RABAULT-FEUERHAHN, *Silvestre de Sacy. Le projet européen d'une science orientaliste*, Éditions du Cerf, Paris 2014.

learned public.⁸² Second, Seetzen, as I will show, did not hesitate to put into question his predecessors' views and to refuse the biblical lens which was sometimes used to study them.

Seetzen's « Beiträge zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme in Syrien und im wüsten und peträischen Arabien » [Contributions to the knowledge of the Arab tribes in Syria as well as in Arabia Deserta and Arabia Petrea] constitutes in fact his first detailed report on the Arabias for the *Monatliche Correspondenz*. Written from Acre in June 1806, it was published two years and a half later, in February 1809, in the *Monatliche Correspondenz*. Around three years and a half after arriving in the Orient, Seetzen thus strived to provide European scholars with new information on the nomadic-pastoralist Arabs tribes that are the Bedouins. By dealing with a topic most likely to spark the interest of the learned readership, Seetzen also placed himself in the position to complete and amend the works of previous travellers to the Arabias while developing his own scientific practices and approach. The choice of this theme was not coincidental since it allowed him to emulate if not rival famous scholars such as Niebuhr and Volney, who wrote extensively about the Bedouins tribes, and thus to contribute to one of the major research topics about the Orient. As a contributor to scientific journals, Seetzen aimed to verify and supplement the information given by his peers who, before him, researched in the field. In this way, he clearly intended to be a central figure in the process of knowledge-making on the Orient at work in Europe. While drawing on other travellers' contributions, Seetzen also tried to distinguish himself from them by concentrating on data and the collection of objects.

Seetzen's ambition to amend and supplement Niebuhr's epoch-making contribution on the Bedouins tribes appears clearly from the outset of his report, where he simultaneously recognizes both its great merits but also its flaws. Published in the 1770's, Niebuhr's book provided the first list of Bedouin tribes, along with data on their customs, language, food, and herds.⁸³ Soon translated into French, Dutch and partly into English, the *Beschreibung von Arabia* served as a reference for any scholar interested in the region.⁸⁴ More than just a mine of information, Niebuhr's book also proposed a new way of investigating an area through scientific travel.⁸⁵ Not only was Seetzen well-versed in Niebuhr's work, but also he proved to be familiar with the latest travel accounts published across

⁸² PASCALE RABAULT-FEUERHAHN, CELINE TRAUTMANN-WALLER (eds.), *Itinéraires orientalistes entre France et Allemagne*, CNRS Editions, Paris 2008, (Germanique Internationale, 7, Special Issue) <<https://doi.org/10.4000/rgi.222>> (Accessed October 2023); HANS ERICH BÖDEKER, PHILIPPE BÜTTGEN, MICHEL ESPAGNE (eds.), *Die Wissenschaft vom Menschen in Göttingen um 1800*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2008.

⁸³ NIEBUHR, *Beschreibung von Arabien*, p. 161–180, p. 379–399.

⁸⁴ NIEBUHR, *Beschreibung von Arabien*, p. 161–180, p. 379–399.

⁸⁵ FEUERHAHN, « A Theologian's List »; VERMEULEN *Before Boas*, p. 219–267.

Europe and relating to the Middle East. Among the several titles he alludes to in his *Reiseplan ins innere Africa*, he notably mentioned the work of Volney, who specifically studied Bedouin society.⁸⁶ It is moreover very likely that Seetzen knew the earlier literature published by travellers such as Arvieux.⁸⁷ This handful of authors proved instrumental in shedding new light on the Bedouin tribes in Europe.

Indeed, Niebuhr's book bore witness to the strong scholarly interest in the nomadic Arabs which characterized the second half of the eighteenth century. As Suzanne Marchand underlines it regarding the development of oriental studies of that time, « one culture the later eighteenth-century enlightened elite did champion, especially against a purportedly degenerate and tyrannical Ottoman state, was that of the nomadic Arabs ».⁸⁸ Even if the Bedouins were by no means unknown to the Europeans in the previous periods, since travelogues had mentioned them since the medieval ages, they nevertheless became one of the main focuses of scholarly attention during the Enlightenment era. This new wide-ranging interest developed in European scholarship proved critical in improving the state of knowledge on the nomadic Arabs who became the object of several speculations. From the perspective of Biblical studies, Michaelis thus counted the Bedouins among the most significant topics to be investigated and documented by the expedition in which Niebuhr took part. Michaelis' attention to the Bedouins was underpinned by the idea that the tribes wandering across the Arabias were the closest people to the ancient Hebrews. The assumption that the Arab tribes were perpetuating the original lifestyle of the biblical Patriarchs made them therefore an invaluable source of information for biblical scholarship and compelled scholars and travellers to document core values of Bedouins societies, such as hospitality or the simplicity of their life. Another scholarly tradition of the time consisted in comparing the Bedouins to the ancient Greeks for the similar purpose to learn more about the protagonists of the Iliad and the Odyssey.⁸⁹ By anchoring the Bedouin tribes in the Ancient Times, both traditions tended to freeze them in time and therefore to decontextualize them. The study of the Bedouins was further fostered by other perspectives revolving around the notions of freedom and equality which were of central importance in the same period. The significance of the nomadic Arabs in these different fields of Enlightenment

⁸⁶ CONSTANTIN-FRANÇOIS DE CHASSEBOEUF VOLNEY, *Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte pendant les années 1783, 1784 et 1785*, Volland – Desenne, Paris 1787, p. 343–383.

⁸⁷ LAURENT D'ARVIEUX, JEAN DE LA ROQUE, *Voyage fait par ordre du roy Louis XIV, dans la Palestine, vers le grand Emir, chef des princes arabes du desert, connus sous le nom de Bedouïns, ou d'Arabes Scenites. Avec la Description generale de l'Arabie, faite par le sultan Ismaël Abulfeda, traduite en françois sur les meilleurs manuscrits, avec des notes. Par Monsieur D. L. R., Cailleau, Paris 1717.*

⁸⁸ MARCHAND, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*, p. 26.

⁸⁹ ROBERT WOOD, *Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer*, printed by H. Hughes for T. Payne and P. Elmsly, London 1775.

thinking tended to shape a rather positive image of the Bedouin tribes which was partly related to the idea that they had preserved a unique bond to their origins.⁹⁰ It goes without saying that the depiction of the Bedouins as free and hospitable people was not only based on European travel accounts but was also rooted in Eastern traditions about them. All in all, the source material about them provided a contrasted and nuanced image of the Bedouins and their way of life.

Well-versed in the European literature on the nomadic Arabs, Seetzen was of course aware of the qualities and characteristics that the latest research tended to underline. Rather than repeating his predecessors, he opted to concentrate on highlighting unknown facts about their society and culture. Prone to amend his predecessors' information, he prioritized data collection, classification, and cross-checking over analysis and opinion. To do so, he chose to resort to local sources to address the various challenges inherent to his topic. One of these challenges was to collect and check data about multiple tribes that wandered across an area almost as large as the Near East itself, that is including areas that Seetzen had not traveled himself yet. Encompassing territories stretching from the Levant and modern-day Iraq to the South of the Arabian Peninsula, his actual field of study seemed extremely large. The second challenge was to study tribes whose traditions relied on orality rather than on written records. The very fact that Bedouins preferred oral traditions to written ones necessitated observations and direct contact for whomever planned to study them. Studying the tribes therefore required to spend time with them and to gather different traditions from and about them. This necessity required from the researcher to understand the Bedouins perfectly, since it was not possible to only collect manuscripts from them and later analyze them or just to send them to Gotha. Seetzen was indeed a strong proponent of local sources when it came to study the peoples of the East. As he wrote in 1805 from Aleppo, that is one year before sending his report on the Bedouins to the *Monatliche Correspondenz*:

Die Orientalische Literatur hat auch ihre Reisebeschreibungen, obgleich nicht in einer so großen Menge aufzuweisen, als es zum Besten der Geographie und

⁹⁰ On the imagery of the Bedouins in eighteenth-century Europe, see ANNE DENEYS-TUNNEY, « Le Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte de C. F. Volney, un discours de la méthode du voyage philosophique », *Corpus*, 34 (1998), p. 153–180; « Voyageurs, 'Sauvages' et droit d'hospitalité dans l'œuvre de C. F. Volney », in ALAIN MONTANDON, *L'hospitalité au XVIII^e siècle*, Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand 2000, p. 191–208; SARGA MOUSSA, « Une peur vaincue. L'émergence du mythe bédouin chez les voyageurs français du XVIII^e siècle », in JACQUES BERCHTOLD, MICHEL PORRET (eds.), *La Peur au XVIII^e siècle. Discours, représentations, pratiques*, Droz, Geneva 1994, p. 193–212; « Le Bédouin, le voyageur et le philosophe », *Dix-Huitième Siècle*, 28 (1996), p. 141–158; « Orientalisme et rousseauisme: la représentation des Bédouins d'Arabie par un voyageur polonais, le comte W. Rzewuski », *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 45/2 (1998), p. 346–356; *Le mythe bédouin chez les voyageurs aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles*, Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, Paris 2016.

Völkerkunde zu wünschen wäre, und es ist in der That zu bedauern, dass man in Europa bisher so wenig darauf achtete, ihre Aufsuchung vernachlässigte und sie nicht durch Uebersetzungen und Auszüge dem Publicum mittheilte.⁹¹

Thus advocating the use of Eastern travelogues in European research in Geography and *Völkerkunde*, Seetzen further justified why he had prioritized the acquisition of such manuscripts for the princely library of Gotha. The language skills of Eastern travellers, their familiarity with the customs of the territories that they crossed as well as their experience of the lifestyle and the climate recommended their writings to European scholars. Last but not least, their points of view differed significantly from European ones on whatever they could encounter during their journey.⁹² While pointing out the need for more translations, Seetzen interestingly underlined the importance of such sources for the *Völkerkunde* that is the « science of peoples », an academic discipline which was taught for the first time at the University of Göttingen by August Ludwig von Schölzer at the beginning of the 1770's.⁹³ While Schölzer coined the word *Völkerkunde* and was the first to teach it as an academic field, Hans Vermeulen has demonstrated that ethnography was not born in Göttingen but took root in the ethnographic works carried out by German scholars such as Gerhard Friedrich Müller (1705–1783) in Siberia at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Even if Seetzen was not one of Schölzer's students, he had nonetheless access during his time in Göttingen to the rich anthropological and ethnographical collection of the University which was curated by Blumenbach. This collection, originally based on the Cabinet of Natural History sold to the University by Christian Wilhelm Büttner, who was Blumenbach's mentor, gradually grew into an anthropological and ethnographical University Museum. The collection of *ethnographia* consisted mainly in objects coming from the second and third trips of James Cook to the Pacific Ocean as well the academic expeditions in the Russian Empire.⁹⁴ It is very likely that Seetzen's initiative to collect objects related to Bedouins' lifestyle was inspired by the remarkable University Museum in Göttingen.

More than the objects' collection, however, Seetzen's data collection proves particularly interesting regarding his scientific practices. First, it must be said that Seetzen did not directly observe the Bedouins nor was in direct contact with them. Second, it seems noteworthy that, even if he did value Arabic written sources

⁹¹ ULRICH JASPER SEETZEN, « Nachrichten von einigen Arabischen, Persischen und Türkischen Reisebeschreibungen, Topographien und andern geographischen Werken und Landkarten », *Monatliche Correspondenz zur Beförderung der Erd- und Himmelskunde*, 12 (August 1805), p. 101–125, here p. 101–102.

⁹² SEETZEN, « Nachrichten von einigen Arabischen, Persischen und Türkischen Reisebeschreibungen », p. 102.

⁹³ VERMEULEN, « Göttingen et la 'science des peuples' », p. 270.

⁹⁴ VERMEULEN, « Göttingen et la 'science des peuples' », p. 258–259.

above all to study the region and its peoples, he does not refer to any Arabic author in his report about the Bedouins.⁹⁵ Interestingly, he instead opted for an oral source for a people whose culture was characterized by orality. Rather than immersing himself in these nomadic groups, Seetzen, who had other goals in mind, chose therefore to turn to third parties to investigate the Bedouin tribes.⁹⁶ He saw himself as playing the crucial role of a go-between in writing his report since he was the one selecting the oral witnesses, assessing their credibility, gathering their statements and probably questioning them on specific aspects he knew were lacking in previous research, and finally writing and structuring his own report as to meet the standards of European scholars. The most significant of these third-party observers was undoubtedly his guide, Juszef el Milky from Damascus. As Seetzen claimed, most of the information in his reports came from him as he had been in contact with these tribes for several years.⁹⁷ By questioning his guide on the tribes, Seetzen was able to gain knowledge about them and then cross-check the information provided by Niebuhr. One could consider Juszef el Milky as a reliable source, a first-hand witness, who shared the life of Bedouins for many years. Seetzen, however, occasionally resorted to other informants in order to deepen his knowledge on a particular point. In any case, all these intermediaries shared the following commonalities: They maintained long-lasting contacts with some Bedouin tribes, lived in the Levant, and were Christians. Juszef el Milky el Mobszûd was a Maronite, while Seetzen's other go-betweens are described as Christian Arabs or Greek Christians.⁹⁸ Never using the direct testimony of the Bedouins themselves, although he had the opportunity to meet with them, Seetzen followed a tradition that designated the Christian Arabs as cultural translators between Europeans and the rest of the Arab world. Seetzen had familiarized himself with this situation since his arrival in the Orient. In Aleppo in particular, he got acquainted with the *dhimmi* who served as translators for the Europeans, the so-called Franks, who offered their services to the merchants and consular employees.⁹⁹

It is noteworthy that this intermediation compelled the German scholar to partly adopt the point of view of these local actors and to limit his investigation to what they knew. It likely determined, for instance, the scale of his research, which excluded, for instance, the Southern part of the Peninsula, which Juszef el Milky was quite unlikely to know. This intermediation appears to be all the more

⁹⁵ On the Western reception of Ibn Khaldun, see SYED FARID ALATAS, *Ibn Khaldun*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015 (first edition 2013), p. 100–116.

⁹⁶ KAPIL RAJ, « Go-Betweens, Travellers, and Cultural Translators », in BERNARD LIGHTMAN (ed.), *A Companion to the History of Science*, Wiley Blackwell, Oxford 2016, p. 39–57.

⁹⁷ SEETZEN, « Beiträge zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme », p. 106.

⁹⁸ SEETZEN, *Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina*, vol. I, p. 313.

⁹⁹ BRAUNE, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzens Leben in der Community der Franken in Aleppo », p. 167–176.

important in that it sheds light on the complexity of the construction of knowledge in European journals on the Orient. The first intermediation of the Christian Arabs was soon completed by Seetzen's own intermediation with European readers of scientific journals.

Underpinning his research that was itself based on a limited number of go-betweens, Seetzen elaborated a critical framework comprised of thirteen main categories. His methodology consisted of a strict organization of the data obtained from his informants. While aiming at collecting information about every aspect of the Bedouin life, Seetzen adopted a systematic pattern of description, which enabled him to check, amend, and complete the authoritative writings on his topic. He started with a detailed description of the main tribes of the region from the most powerful to the least, then he moved on to the Bedouins' character, religion, laws, dogs, onomastics, diet, hunting, herds, medicine, ways to express gratitude, weddings, weaponry, and, lastly, their relations with the cities. In this encyclopaedic endeavour, Seetzen subdivided each of these categories into subcategories to clarify further specific matters. Ultimately, this framework thus allowed him to emphasize the diversity between and within the tribes. For example, Seetzen gave an estimate for each tribe as to the number of Sheikhs and members before enumerating their branches. Sticking to his local sources, Seetzen refused to decontextualize the Bedouins. Anchoring the nomadic tribes in time and space, this German scholar was rather inclined to point out their integration within regional networks of political relations. To this end, he sought to document the links that united each tribe to the Pasha of Damascus as well as to « the successors of (Muhammad ibn) Abd al-Wahhab ».¹⁰⁰ Even though the most powerful tribes could require a tribute from the Pasha in exchange for keeping the Caravans heading to Mecca safe, they still had to pay a tax to their new master once they had embraced Wahabism. Similarly, Seetzen merely equated the money that Bedouins demanded from isolated travellers to a very codified taxation system that was justified by their *de facto* authority over the desert. While confirming the independence of the tribes vis-à-vis the Ottoman sultan, Seetzen thus added nuance to the enlightened vision of a free people living outside of the world and history by pointing to how the tribes had ties to the various political players in the region. These relationships were clearly institutionalized as well as precisely regulated and delineated. Seetzen refrains from describing the Bedouins as 'the genuine Arabs', as Niebuhr did, and does not refer to the Bible or the Patriarchs as their forefathers. A freemason since 1802, Seetzen tended towards a much more secular perspective while a more detailed description of the Bedouins inevitably led him to rethink or add nuance to generalities about them. His attempt to deal statistically with his topic within a predefined analytical

¹⁰⁰ SEETZEN, « Beiträge zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme », p. 112.

framework was probably meant to afford him greater objectivity. Willing to address the possible bias in Juszef el Milky's information, Seetzen chose to remove one zero from the estimate he would give regarding the members of the tribes. Pointing out his guide's tendency to exaggerate, which he allegedly shared with the Bedouins, Seetzen ultimately showed his own prejudice towards his informant and the nomadic Arabs.¹⁰¹

In his classification of information, Seetzen was obviously driven by the thrill of collecting new material on the Bedouins and his goal to correct his predecessors. For example, he expressly drew the attention of his readers to the new data that he was able to provide on Bedouin onomastic practices. Commenting on male first names, he proudly explains that there was a « (...) very specific tradition, which, to my knowledge, has never been noticed by a traveller »¹⁰². This custom consisted in naming a child after the circumstances of his birth, be it the place where he was born or the natural elements surrounding the happy event.¹⁰³ Similarly, Seetzen was very keen on collecting objects that would help Europeans to better picture and analyse Bedouin culture. A case in point is his intention to acquire the typical one-string fiddle played by the Bedouins, the *rababah*, which he called *Erbâbe*.¹⁰⁴ This instrument accompanied poetry singing or recitation, which appeared to be one of the major entertainments of the Bedouins. Aware of the significance of poetry to the tribes, Seetzen therefore elaborated on this matter, relating anecdotes and outlining his desire to collect poems to send them to Europe.¹⁰⁵ Conversely, he also expressed regret that Bedouin culture was rooted in oral tradition.¹⁰⁶ According to him, the poems were thus forgotten after a few generations while the alteration of time inevitably corrupted historical facts. Last but not least, Seetzen strove to check the data given by Niebuhr on the Bedouin tribes. Seetzen completed his predecessor's enumeration by adding new tribes' names and providing more details on their lifestyles, even as he discarded some Bedouin groups mentioned by Niebuhr as irrelevant due to their very few members and lack of significance.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, Seetzen often discussed Niebuhr's reports to alter the latter's conclusions. For instance, after introducing the *Szlèb* (Solluba) tribespeople and their habits, he discussed their possible

¹⁰¹ SEETZEN, « Beiträge zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme », p. 107.

¹⁰² SEETZEN, « Beiträge zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme », p. 214: « eine ganz besondere Sitte, die, soviel ich mich erinnere, noch von keinem Reisenden bemerkt ist ».

¹⁰³ ALEXANDER BORG, GIDEON M. KRESSEL, « Bedouin Personal Names in the Negev and Sinai », *Zeitschrift für Arabische Linguistik*, 40 (2001), p. 32–70.

¹⁰⁴ SEETZEN, « Beitrag zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme », p. 126.

¹⁰⁵ SEETZEN, « Beiträge zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme », p. 127.

¹⁰⁶ SEETZEN, « Beiträge zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme », p. 128.

¹⁰⁷ SEETZEN, « Beiträge zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme », p. 124.

Christian origin, but ultimately concluded that the tribe mentioned by Niebuhr was unlikely to be a Christian one.¹⁰⁸

Seetzen's writings about the Arabian horses in particular epitomizes his approach.¹⁰⁹ Mentioned after camels but before sheep, horses figured prominently in the section that the German correspondent devoted to Bedouin herding activities. This short passage not only illustrates Seetzen's aims in writing about the Bedouins, but also it allows for an assessment of his shifting opinion about these nomadic herders. Here, Seetzen clearly strove to contribute to the classification of Arabian horses while calling into question the stance and information of his predecessors. As in the rest of his ethnography, his intent seems to be to merely supplement and correct the existing knowledge on the desert-bred horses for his contemporaries. His contributions therefore need to be read and understood within the context of the travel accounts of Arvieux and Niebuhr. Indeed, their writings contributed significantly to the shaping of European theories on the excellence of Arabian equine breeds by providing the basis on which scholars could elaborate.¹¹⁰ Decades before Niebuhr, Arvieux had classified Arabian horses into three categories by distinguishing between the noble ones, which he calls 'Kehilan', the mixed ones or 'Aatiq', and the non-noble ones, the so-called 'Guidieh'. According to the French envoy, the Kehilan or Kehilet were descended from an ancient horse lineage whose purity was guaranteed by strict inbreeding practiced before witnesses and subsequently attested by written and sealed certificates. These practices, along with recorded genealogies allegedly kept by the Bedouins, demonstrated the importance of preserving the noble Arabian horse breed purity as well as its significance for the Bedouin economy of honour.¹¹¹ Indeed, Bedouin herders prided themselves on keeping their horses *asil* (pure), which implied that the noble Arabian horses could be defined, in other terms, as purebred horses.¹¹²

More important for Seetzen, though, was Niebuhr's passage on this very same topic. Niebuhr's description of the noble Arabian horse breed, which he calls the 'Kochlâni' (Kohelan or Kehilet), went beyond the mere recognition of Bedouin breeding practices and the remarkable qualities of the breed. Whereas Arvieux

¹⁰⁸ SEETZEN, « Beiträge zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme », p. 119–120.

¹⁰⁹ SEETZEN, « Beiträge zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme », p. 222–224.

¹¹⁰ FRANÇOIS POUILLON, « À la recherche de la race arabe: cheval et voyage en Arabie centrale au XIX^e siècle », *Arabian Humanities*, 8 (2017), <<https://doi.org/10.4000/cy.3321>> (Accessed October 2023).

¹¹¹ D'ARVIEUX, *Voyage fait par ordre du roy Louis XIV*, p. 194–210.

¹¹² CHRISTOPH LANGE, « Purity, Nobility, Beauty and Performance. Past and Present Construction of Meaning for the Arabian Horse », in DONA LEE DAVIS, ANITA MAURSTAD (eds.), *The Meaning of Horses: Biosocial Encounters*, Routledge, London – New York 2016, p. 39–53; CHRISTOPH LANGE, « The Making and Remaking of the Arabian Horse – From the Arab Bedouin Horse to the Modern Straight Egyptian », in KIRSTEN GUEST, MONICA MATTFELD (eds.), *Horse Breeds and Human Society: Purity, Identity and the Making of the Modern Horse*, Routledge, London – New York 2020, p. 234–250.

merely mentioned the noble ancestry of the pure Arabian horses, Niebuhr integrated them in a biblical genealogy that matched the patriarchal descent that was attributed to the nomadic Arabs. In doing so, he was offering a mythology of origin that connected the Bedouins and their horses within a biblical narrative that appealed to Western readers at that time. These noble horses' genealogies had been kept for 2000 years, according to Niebuhr, who related the noble breed to the horses of King's Solomon stables.¹¹³ Niebuhr also provided the first extensive list of the different strains of Kehilan horses and depicted these animals' extraordinary physical and moral qualities. Interestingly, this biblical genealogy correlated with both the scientific expectations that underpinned the project of the Danish-German Expedition to Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula as well as Arabian mythology about Bedouin horses. Dispatched from Copenhagen and financed by the Danish crown, the expedition was organized at the University of Göttingen where it was initiated, and its instructions were formulated by Michaelis. At the initiative of this scientific expedition, Michaelis planned the whole undertaking with the support of the king of Denmark and Norway, Frederik V (1723–1766), and his foreign minister, Johann Hartwig Ernst von Bernstorff (1712–1772). Since the expedition was originally aimed to notably answer questions about the Bible's natural history, Niebuhr probably found it very fitting to pass along the Arab tradition that connected Arabian horses directly to the Old Testament. Correspondingly, among the plethora of myths and legends surrounding this noble breed, Niebuhr chose to mention the one that featured King Solomon. As a result, Western scholars then sought to apply this same biblical lens to both the nomads and their mounts. Once again, Niebuhr's seminal book on Arabia had been instrumental in forming and spreading this idea in Europe. The biblical framing of the Bedouin horses, although partly inspired by the Bedouin traditions themselves, thus reinforced the interpretation of the desert as a pristine territory; not only had a patriarchal lifestyle been preserved here since the time of antiquity, but also the flora and fauna had survived in extant form.

Similarly, Arabian horses were also incorporated into Arab mythology that reinforced the prestige of their ancestry.¹¹⁴ Celebrated in pre-Islamic legends and poems, horses found a place of honour in the Qur'an as well as the Hadith. In Arabia, myths and traditions from different origins associated the Arabian horse with some of the greatest figures of Islam, such as the Prophet Ismā'īl (Ishmael),

¹¹³ NIEBUHR, *Beschreibung von Arabien*, p. 161–164; DE CHASSEBOEUF VOLNEY, *Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte*, p. 372.

¹¹⁴ HOSSEIN AMIRSADEGHI, PETER UPTON, RIK SR & JR VAN LENT, *The Arabian Horse. History, Mystery and Magic*, Thames & Hudson, London 2005² (1998').

Sulaymān b. Dāwūd (Solomon) and Prophet Muhammad.¹¹⁵ While Niebuhr chose the story that connected purebred Arabian horses to the stud farms of King Solomon, Seetzen decided to highlight another tradition, which related them to the five favourite mares of Prophet Muhammad.

Seetzen, who was of course well-aware of Arvieux and Niebuhr's reports, chose not to repeat what was already known about the Arabian equine breeds, but rather to amend their classification by introducing a new tradition which was very meaningful in the Arab world. Once again, Seetzen relied on the account of Juzsef El Milky and the Christian Arabs from *es Szalt*, located on the West side of the Jordan river, rather than on the Bedouin themselves.¹¹⁶ Based on what he learned from his informants, he divided the 'noble races of Arab horses' into two subcategories. The first and most noble of them were descended directly from the five mares of Prophet Mohammed (*Al-Khamseh*). According to this tradition, each of these mares had given birth to a lineage whose genealogy was thoroughly recorded, generation after generation, to guarantee the pedigree of the foals. Arabs and Muslims in general held these five lineages in the highest esteem. They were more than ready to pay the highest price to acquire them even if, as Seetzen emphasised, some of these horses did not distinguish themselves by any particular virtue. Within this first classification, Seetzen identified five noble families that were the Seglawieh jedranieh, Managhieh, Kehilet, Abeyeh, and Jilfeh.¹¹⁷ In doing so, he placed the Kohelan or Kehilet within a larger category that also included four other noble strains. The second tier consisted merely of pureblood Arab horses whose reputation relied on strict inbreeding practices. By refusing to engage in interbreeding, Bedouin herders had guaranteed the purity of this second class of Arabian horses over the centuries. Although these horses were less valuable and more numerous than the first category, they were still highly prized in Arabia. According to Seetzen, the pedigrees of these horses were also recorded in genealogies. By opting to describe this tradition of categorization that firmly connected Arabian horses to Islam, Seetzen helped to establish a new narrative about these horses. Moreover, these accounts also demonstrate how Seetzen was in fact navigating between two perspectives: the one proposed by those travellers who had gone before him and the one offered by his local informants. A few years later, however, it became obvious that Seetzen had in fact separated himself from his peers by presenting his very own views and observations. Freed not only from the intellectual expectations of his colleagues, but also the perspective of local

¹¹⁵ JÉRÉMIE SCHIETTECATTE, ABBÈS ZOUACHE, « The Horse in Arabia and the Arabian Horse: Origins, Myths and Realities », *Arabian Humanities*, 8 (2017), <<https://doi.org/10.4000/cy.3280>> (Accessed October 2023).

¹¹⁶ SEETZEN, « Beiträge zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme », p. 223.

¹¹⁷ SEETZEN, « Beiträge zur Kenntnis der arabischen Stämme », p. 223–224.

traditions, he altered the dominant views of the Bedouins and their horses by offering new observations and assumptions on them.

IV. On Arabian Horses

On November 14th, 1810, four years after writing his report about the Bedouin tribes, Seetzen authored an article for the *Fundgruben des Orients* from his current location in Mocha in which he dealt in detail with the horses bred by the nomadic herders across the Arabian Peninsula.¹¹⁸ Right from the start of this piece, Seetzen recognized the significance of the topic while warning that his observations were going to differ from some of the existing views on it:

In einem Ihrer vorigen schätzbaren Briefe erwähnen Sie der arabischen Pferde, mit dem Zusatze, dass Sie bis dahin keine deutliche Idee von dem Pferdewesen der Araber hätten. Ich gestehe Ihnen offenherzig, dass dies grade auch mit mir der Fall ist. Indessen ist der Gegenstand zu wichtig, als dass er nicht eine genauere Untersuchung verdienen sollte. Ich will Ihnen meine Erfahrungen und meine Ideen darüber mittheilen; vielleicht sind sie etwas auffallend, weil sie von den gewöhnlichen Vorstellungsarten abweichen, und vielleicht finden sie Widerspruch.¹¹⁹

It seems noteworthy, however, that Seetzen had previously showed reluctance to write on the topic despite Hammer's request. Indeed, at least two years had passed since Hammer had first mention the matter to Seetzen. While Hammer had urged him to collect information about the different noble Arab horse breeds for the *Fundgruben des Orients*, Seetzen bluntly replied from Cairo in 1808 that he preferred dedicating his efforts to « the human races », as he had done two years earlier with his description of the Bedouin tribes.¹²⁰ He claimed furthermore that he was rather more disposed to fuel the European debate on Arabian horses by acquiring books on the subject for the library of his patron in Gotha.¹²¹ To him, these animals appeared worth mentioning mainly as a component of the life and culture of the nomadic-pastoralist Arabs. He had thus logically included them in his Bedouin ethnography that was supposed to be published in the *Monatliche Correspondenz*.

In 1810, however, Seetzen felt ready to finally meet Hammer's demand on the matter by sending for the *Fundgruben des Orients* a piece whose conclusions, by his own admission, could surprise the readers, if not possibly spark some controversy.

¹¹⁸ SEETZEN, « Auszug eines Briefes, Mocha den 14. November 1810 ».

¹¹⁹ SEETZEN, « Auszug eines Briefes, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 275.

¹²⁰ SEETZEN, « Auszug eines Briefes, Kahira den 10 Julius 1808 », p. 58.

¹²¹ SEETZEN, « Auszug eines Briefes, Kahira den 10 Julius 1808 », p. 58.

By the time he reached Yemen, Seetzen had travelled most of the Western part of the Peninsula with Medina and Mecca as two of the most significant stages on his journey. Perhaps emboldened to be more provocative in style and reasoning by his accomplishments and experience, Seetzen thus wrote an article which went far beyond an attempt to augment and amend the observations and assumptions made by other travellers and scholars. By questioning some of the widely received ideas on the topic while also trying to answer some open questions by providing new data from Arabia, Seetzen tended in fact to shed new light on animals which were generally held in high esteem in the West as well as in the East. Thus, Seetzen's preliminary remarks to his contribution shows not only that he had a clear idea of the dominant views on Arabian horses in Europe and in the Arabias; it also demonstrates his awareness of the significance of this matter in European scholarship. Indeed, scholars working in fields as varied as Biblical studies, natural history, horse breeding or Arabic literature tended to focus their attention on Arabian horses during the eighteenth century. Michaelis, for instance, published in 1785 a piece on the most ancient history of horses and horse breeding in Palestine and its neighbouring countries, particularly Egypt and Arabia.¹²² At the beginning of his essay, Michaelis reminded his reader that « Unter allen Pferden, die wir kennen, wird jetzt das Arabische für das edelste gehalten, und sonderlich von den Engländern sehr theuer gekauft, um dadurch die Race ihrer Pferde zu veredeln ».¹²³ He also recommended the reading of the contribution on horses made by the French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, count de Buffon (1707–1788) in the fourth volume of his *Histoire naturelle, Générale et Particulière* published 1753.¹²⁴ While dealing with the horse in his *magnum opus*, Buffon pointed out the significance of Arabian horses for European horse breeding. His views reflected the increasing European interest in Oriental horses in general and particularly in horses coming from Arabia since the beginning of the Early Modern Times. Even if it goes without saying that the horse, and, therefore, horse breeding and horsemanship, were central to most pre-industrial societies, it seems remarkable that the Arabian horse lied at the centre of the connected history between the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian subcontinent and Europe since the late fifteenth century.¹²⁵ The cultural, military, commercial and economic dimensions of these

¹²² JOHANN DAVID MICHAELIS, *Mosaisches Recht*, vol. III: *Nebst einem Anhang von der ältesten Geschichte der Pferde und Pferdezucht in Palästina und den benachbarten Ländern, sonderlich Egypten und Arabien*, Johannes Grözingen, Reutlingen 1785, p. 195–270.

¹²³ MICHAELIS, *Mosaisches Recht*, vol. III, p. 199.

¹²⁴ MICHAELIS, *Mosaisches Recht*, vol. III, p. 198. GEORGES-LOUIS BUFFON, *Histoire naturelle, Générale et Particulière, avec la Description du Cabinet du Roi*, vol. IV, Paris 1753, Chapter « Le Cheval », p. 174–376.

¹²⁵ DANIEL ROCHE, *La Culture équestre de l'Occident, XVIe-XIXe siècle. L'Ombre du cheval*, t. I: *Le Cheval moteur. Essai sur l'utilité équestre* (2008); t. II: *La Gloire et la puissance. Essai sur la distinction équestre* (2011); t. III: *Connaissance et passion* (2015), Fayard, Paris 2008, 2011, 2015.

exchanges explained the high stakes related to the Arabian horse in Early Modern Europe. To better comprehend to what extent Seetzen's contribution could have surprised his readers and/or helped them to gain new knowledge on the horses bred by the Bedouins, it appears necessary to highlight both why Arabian horses hold such a significance in the Western eyes at that time and what was the commonplace ideas and ongoing debates about them.

First, the « gewöhnlichen Vorstellungsarten » on Arabian horses to which Seetzen alluded at the beginning of his report probably referred to excellence attributed to these animals in Europe as well as in the East. This excellence mainly relied on what was deemed their extraordinary beauty, lightness and stamina. These three qualities were indeed among the main ones generally attributed to the Arabian breed by European breeders, riders, and scholars. These features were interestingly based on the qualities traditionally attributed by the Bedouins themselves to their best horses. These three characteristics underpinned the European idea of the superiority of the Arabian horses over all others, which spurred the gradual importation to Europe of Oriental horses from the beginning of the Early Modern Period. Along with the Arabian horses, the Barb horses from Northern Africa, the Persian horses and the Turkish horses belonged to the Oriental horses that came to be held in high esteem by Europeans. Although horses were brought from the Orient to Europe during the Roman Empire as well as during the Crusades, the Early Modern Times arguably witnessed the increasing European interest in Oriental horses as well as in Bedouin horse breeding practices. First, the Portuguese discovered at the turn of the fifteenth century that horses were intensely traded between the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian subcontinent. What appeared to have been a very lucrative trade between both regions had been carried out from at least the thirteenth century onward. Arabian horses were indeed in high demand in India where they were very renowned and most needed due to conflicts involving different powers of the subcontinent, such as the Muslim Sultanates of the Deccan or the Hindu Empire of Vijayanagar. While establishing a thalassocracy connecting Europe to the Far East, the Portugal not only became aware of this highly profitable trade happening across the Arabian Sea, but it also started to play a role in it.¹²⁶ Second, changes in military tactics and equine culture taking place in Europe from at least the seventeenth century is another factor to explain why Europeans came to consider Oriental horses as the best to enhance European horse breeds. The need for lighter and swifter mounts compelled European breeders to recognize the qualities of Arabian horses while

¹²⁶ RUI MANUEL LOUREIRO, « Portuguese involvement in Sixteenth century horse trade through the Arabian Sea », in BERT. G. FRAGNER, RALPH KAUZ, RODERICH PTAK, ANGELA SCHOTTENHAMMER (eds.), *Pferde in Asien: Geschichte, Handel und Kultur. Horses in Asia: History, trade and culture*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna 2009, p. 137–43.

developing new conceptions about crossbreeding and inbreeding.¹²⁷ These conceptions led to an increasing European demand for Arabian horses which translated in their higher economic value. At the end of his passage on Arabian horses, Niebuhr specifically pointed out the higher price that Europeans were ready to pay to acquire them:

Die Engländer hingegen kaufen bisweilen zu Mochha Pferde zu acht hundert, bis tausend Species Thalern. Ein Kaufmann versicherte mich dass einer seiner Landsleute in dem vorhergehenden Jahre zu Mochha ein solches Pferd gekauft hätte, dass ihm dafür in Bengalen die Summe doppelt geboten worden, dass er aber nach England abgesandt hätte, in der Hoffnung seine Kaufsummer vierfach zu erhalten.¹²⁸

In the same passage, Niebuhr also pointed out that Bedouins generally preferred mares to stallions, which led them to sell their stallions rather than their mares¹²⁹. The significance of the female lines in Bedouin horse breeding practices was notably stressed by the tradition according to which the noblest Arabian horses descended directly from the *Al-Khamseh*, the five favourite mares of Prophet Mohammed. Even if European breeders would buy both female and male Oriental horses when possible, they tended over the course of the Early Modern times to give more and more significance to the male lines, especially in England. Thus, the mention of English buyers by Niebuhr was no coincidence. English breeders were among the first to most successfully use Oriental horses. Even if other factors explain the English presence in Arabia, the horse trade appears all the more significant between both areas that English breeders through selection were able to achieve results which aroused the admiration among European horse breeders. These results relied on ideas which were in fact widely spread across eighteenth-century Europe.

Mid-eighteenth century, Buffon significantly contributed to synthesize, deepen and spread these conceptions in his seminal *Natural History* which was soon translated in several European languages. It constitutes therefore a very valuable source to understand what lied behind the prestige then enjoyed by desert bred horses. In his study of the horse from the ancient times to his day, Buffon notably emphasized the importance of crossbreeding European horses with Arabian horses to regenerate them. Indeed, Buffon firstly underlined the need to interbreed European horses who were prone to degeneration due to climate and food; second, he pointed out the superiority of Arabian horses, which, thirdly,

¹²⁷ CLARISSE ROCHE, « Appropriating and Re-Appropriating the Arabian Horse for Equestrian Sport: The Complexities of Cultural Transfer », *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, 14/3 (2020), p. 320–338.

¹²⁸ NIEBUHR, *Beschreibung von Arabien*, p. 164.

¹²⁹ NIEBUHR, *Beschreibung von Arabien*, p. 163. This preference is also noted by d'Arvieux.

relied on their pure bloodline. Buffon thus claimed that each species derived from a

general prototype [...] from which each individual is modelled, but which seems in procreation to be debased, or improved, according to its circumstances, insomuch, that in relation to certain qualities, there is a strange variety in the appearance of individuals, and at the same time a constant resemblance in the whole species.¹³⁰

Among these circumstances, climate and food appeared the most decisive to 'improve' or 'debase' animals over the generations. To regenerate altered horses, Buffon recommended interbreeding with horses coming from cold, temperate and hot climates. According to the geo-humoralist perspective of the time, horse breeds were traditionally divided into cold-bloods from northern Europe, warm-bloods from temperate climates, and hot-bloods from the desert. Since optimal interbreeding was purportedly among the opposites, desert bred horses were deemed the best to regenerate European ones from cold and temperate climates. Moreover, Buffon pointed out that the breeding practices of the Bedouins allowed them to keep their horses the closest to the original, that is perfect, prototype by alleviating the impact of climate and diet on them. Even though the French scholar admitted that information was scarce about desert bred horses and that these animals remained rare in his country, he nevertheless deemed that « the Arabian horses are the handsomest known in Europe, they are larger and more plump than those of Barbary, and equally well shaped ». ¹³¹ According to Buffon, their superiority over all other horses ultimately relied on the skills of their breeders since:

the Arabs take care to preserve their [horses] own purity; that if the climate is not of itself the best for horses, the natives have produced the same effects, by the care they have taken, from time immemorial, to ennoble their breed by putting together only the most beautiful individuals, and of the first quality; and that by this attention, pursued forages, they have improved the species beyond what nature alone would have done in the most favourable climate. We may also conclude that warm climates rather than cold, but above all, dry countries agree best with the nature of horses.¹³²

Arabian horses thus came to epitomize inbreeding practices at their best through selection and pure-bred breeding. It seems noteworthy that inbreeding practices

¹³⁰ GEORGES-LOUIS BUFFON, *Buffon's natural history, Volume 5, Containing a theory of the earth, a general history of man, of the brute creation, and of vegetables, minerals, &c. &c. from the French with notes by the translator*, T. Gillet, London 1807, p. 128–129.

¹³¹ BUFFON, *Buffon's natural history, Volume 5*, p. 142.

¹³² BUFFON, *Buffon's natural history, Volume 5*, p. 162.

tended to become more and more popular over the course of the eighteenth century, notably under the influence of English agricultural innovator Robert Bakewell (1725–95). In this perspective, it appears interesting that Buffon recommended crossbreeding of French horses with Arabian horses, or failing that, with Barb or English horses due to their qualities and nobility. The English horse, that is the Thoroughbred, gradually emerged as a new horse breed over the course of the eighteenth century. It resulted from both crossbreeding between English 'local' mares with three Oriental stallions imported to England between the late seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century; it was then perfected through selection and inbreeding during the eighteenth century.¹³³ It seems that some of these founding sires were probably Arabian horse.¹³⁴ The excellence of the new English horse breed for racing and jumping confirmed the benefits of crossbreeding while underlining the excellence of Oriental horses for European breeding endeavours. As Buffon's recommendation suggests it, the English horse thus came to be seen over the century as a relative to Oriental horses if not their latest sub-strain. In a similar vein, Blumenbach, although much more laconic on horses than his French predecessor, underlined in the sixth edition of his *Handbuch der Naturgeschichte* (1799) the significance of the desert bred horses. Blumenbach not only reasserted the superior qualities of Arabian horses; he also shared the view that the differences between horse species resulted from the alteration of an original model. According to him:

Unter den zahmen Pferde-Rassen zeichnen sich die Araber (zumahl die von der Zucht der Annecy um Palmyra herum, und vom Libanus bis gegen den Horeb ꝛc.) durch ihren wunderschönen Bau, so wie durch äußerste Leichtigkeit und Dauerhaftigkeit aus. Ihnen folgen die Persianer und Barben.¹³⁵

Blumenbach further deemed that among European horses, the most excellent horses were the Spanish ones, especially those from Andalusia, then the Neapolitans and the English ones while underlying that these last ones had the advantage of swiftness which allowed them to distinguish themselves in horse races. The best European horses thus proved, according to Blumenbach, the ones related to Oriental horses. Towards the end of the eighteenth century,

¹³³ On the 'local' mares and their origins, see MIRIAM A. BIBBY, « The Royal Mares: Imagining a Race (Part One) », *Cheiron: The International Journal of Equine and Equestrian History*, 3/1 (2013), p. 66–84; EAD., « The Royal Mares: Imagining a Race (Part Two) », *Cheiron: The International Journal of Equine and Equestrian History*, 3/2 (2013), p. 99–112.

¹³⁴ The origins of the three Oriental founding sires, the Byerley Turk, the Darley Arabian and the Godolphin Arabian or Barb are still debated.

¹³⁵ JOHANN FRIEDRICH BLUMENBACH, *Handbuch der Naturgeschichte*, vol. I, sixth edition, Johann Christian Dieterich, Göttingen 1799, p. 106. The first edition published in 1779 did not emphasize as much the significance of the Arabian horses.

Thoroughbreds came to be seen as a new super-breed which could not be improved through outbreeding and could now rely on strict purebred-breeding. A watershed moment for the official birth of the Thoroughbred as a new horse breed was the publication in 1791 of the first official studbook.¹³⁶ By recording the pedigree of English horses descending from the three Oriental founding sires, the *General Stud Book* of 1793 (1791) was intended to guarantee and preserve the purity of the Thoroughbred breed. The Stud Book arguably emphasized ancestry by recording the genealogy of the Thoroughbreds. Understandably, inbreeding practices thus went in hand in hand in England with a specific attention given to reliable genealogical records in a way that was largely similar to the one occurring in the Bedouin horse breeding tradition.

When Seetzen wrote his piece about Arabian horses for the *Fundgruben des Orients*, the European interest for Arabian horses appeared to have been stronger than ever. On the one hand, the French campaign in Egypt and Syria (1798) and then the Napoleonic Wars reinforced the European interest in Arabian horses in terms of imports, breeding and scholarship. First, Bonaparte helped to popularize further Oriental horses by adopting them as mounts after admiring the Mamluk cavalry in Egypt. His equestrian portraits celebrate these horses whose size and origin suit him better than those of the Thoroughbreds. Second, the Arabian horse proved to be a strategic asset for the remounting of cavalries during and after the great European wars happening in the 1800s. The Napoleonic wars had thus increased the need to have well-outfitted cavalries. These efforts to bolster the stock of European horses that were often supported by states thus also reinforced a wider interest in Arabian horses.¹³⁷ Articles and treatises were thus multiplying to provide more information on these horses and further discuss their excellence. Indeed, the reputation of the Thoroughbred breed was then so well-established that equine specialists started to debate the respective excellence of the Thoroughbred and the Arabian horse. This debate aimed at determining which of these breeds was the most appropriate to regenerate the European horses whose number had considerably decreased in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars. In this context, Arabian horses appeared in European eyes as the most valuable herd raised by the Bedouins. This is no coincidence, therefore that soon after the establishment of the *Fundgruben des Orients*, Hammer encouraged contribution on the topic. The founder of the *Fundgruben des Orients* himself, the count Walclav Seweryn Rzewuski, a former cavalryman, showed a very keen interest in Oriental

¹³⁶ The first official studbook (1791) was not without mistake, that is why the second edition tended to provide more accurate information about the equine lineages. It should be noted that before these official studbooks, private studbooks were kept on several horse farms.

¹³⁷ TATSUYA MITSUDA, « The Politics of Reproduction. Horse Breeding and State Studs in Prussia, 1750–1900 », in KIRSTEN GUEST, MONICA MATTFELD (eds.), *Equine Cultures: Horses, Human Society, and the Discourse of Modernity, 1700–Present*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2019, p. 145–159.

horses and one can infer that he probably had something to do with Hammer's suggestion to Seetzen to write about them. Overall, it is possible to say that the topic drew the attention of a broad audience of scholars and connoisseurs who wished to learn more about these horses, who were deemed the purest in the world. At the time Seetzen was travelling Arabia, many questions remained a matter of speculation and therefore needed to be addressed by means of scientific reports and evidence collected *in situ*.

Aware that his own observations served to reverse the dominant perspective on Arabian horses and offered a fresh and innovative approach, Seetzen aimed at countering five views on Arabian horses regarding their quantity in Arabia, their alleged beauty and lightness, and, last but not least, their incomparable virtues as well as their ancient nobility. By tackling these main characteristics which tended to justify the high esteem professed in the West for these animals, Seetzen clearly undermined views on Arabian climate, the physical qualities of the Arabian horses and, finally, the significance of ancestry and pedigree in horse breeding at large. This threefold reconsideration ultimately led him to reinterpret various stakes of Bedouin horse breeding as well as to rethink the special bond uniting the Bedouins to their mounts. To better orchestrate his rebuttal, Seetzen used the artifice of a rhetorical dialogue opposing him to an imaginary interlocutor who conveniently enumerated the assumptions commonly held on Arabian horses.

First, Seetzen called into question the view that Arabia abounded in Arabian horses. This view was notably supported by Niebuhr's statement according to which « es giebt in Arabien Pferde, Esel, Kameele, Dromadarien Kühe, Schafe, Ziegen und anderes zahmes Vieh in Überfluss ».¹³⁸ This general claim tended to depict Arabia as a region seemingly abounding in all possible kinds of domesticated animals, regardless of the diverse circumstances that characterized the various areas of the Peninsula. Seetzen summarized this assumption to better revise it downwards:

Da Arabien wegen seiner Pferde bey den Europäern in so hohem Rufe steht: so sollte man erwarten, dass dies schönste und edelste unter den Saugthieren daselbst in grosser Menge angetroffen werde. Allein nichts weniger als das; es giebt sogar ganze Provinzen, wo man kein einziges Pferd antrifft, z. B. auf der peträischen Halbinsel und in Hadramut.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ NIEBUHR, *Beschreibung von Arabien*, p. 161. Niebuhr refers to Starbo who had a different opinion regarding horses, p. 161: « Strabo sagt im 16 Buch seiner Erdbeschreibung, es sey in Arabien: pecorum omnis generis copia exceptis equis, mulis & porcis. Avium etiam omnium praeter anseres & gallinas ».

¹³⁹ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 276.

As the purported cradle of Arabian horses, Arabia could indeed have been seen as the best place to purchase the purest of them in the largest number. Given the commercial and breeding interests at stake at the turn of the nineteenth century, the question of the best locations to acquire Arabian horses inevitably came to the forefront. Europeans were thus keen to speculate on the untapped equine potential of the vast but still little-known territory. While Niebuhr pointed out the significance the area stretching between Bassara, Merdîn and Syria for the breeding of the noble Arabian horses, he also noted that, even if he had not heard about these horses for the Western part of Arabia, he surmised that they could also be found there, especially in Hejaz.¹⁴⁰ Based on his observations and on the relative fragility of these animals, Seetzen aimed at offering a relatively detailed and nuanced mapping of the equine population in Arabia. As he underscored, desert regions such as those in the Sinai Peninsula appeared unlikely to be prosperous breeding areas for horses. In fact, he declared the Sinai Peninsula and the Hadhramaut empty of horses, while conceding that there were likely 1,000 horses in Hejaz, 1,000 in Yemen, 1,000 in the Nejd, 1,000 in the Syrian desert and on the Southern bank of the Euphrates. In contrast, he estimated that the equine population of Oman to be well below 500, and he deemed the number of horses in Bahrain to be insignificant. Even though his evaluation was based on the reading of his predecessors like Niebuhr to whom he once again explicitly referred, on logic – there was allegedly almost no water in Bahrain –, and his own observations, one can wonder how Seetzen could be so assertive in his estimates.¹⁴¹ That being said, he in fact provided the scientific community with the first key figures in terms of the number of Arabian horses. Quite logically, he attributed this scarcity to the high cost of taking care of such delicate animals in the desert. The Bedouins themselves could barely afford the luxury to own one horse, apart from the Sheikhs, who could provide for their food.¹⁴² This remark offered a major nuance to Arvieux's claim that all Arabs had horses.¹⁴³ Although Arvieux's remark relied on his experience in Palestine, it seems noteworthy that Volney after travelling through Syria and Egypt noted that poor Bedouin households could not afford the maintenance of a mare despite their dearest wish to own one.¹⁴⁴ Horse breeding and ownership were indeed considered as a measure of wealth among the Bedouins, a status symbol, whose their survival in the desert relied on a costly logistical apparatus. Horses were therefore kept mainly by certain prestigious camel breeding tribes and by the Bedouin 'aristocracy' that was generally based in

¹⁴⁰ NIEBUHR, *Beschreibung von Arabien*, p. 162.

¹⁴¹ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 277: « nach des verdienstvollen Niebuhr's klassischer Beschreibung von Arabien ».

¹⁴² SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 276.

¹⁴³ D'ARVIEUX, *Voyage fait par ordre du roy Louis XIV*, p. 194

¹⁴⁴ DE CHASSEBOEUF VOLNEY, *Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte*, p. 372.

an oasis. Seetzen thus noted, for instance, that in Hejaz, only the Sharif of Mecca could afford a significant number of horses, that is between sixty and seventy animals of which it was taken care in his stud farm.¹⁴⁵ In contrast, Seetzen went as far as claiming that no private individual, even the richest merchants, owned a horse in Hejaz; they rather rode mules, probably to avoid any problem with the Sharif.¹⁴⁶ With his total of 6,500 horses for the whole Peninsula, Seetzen could conclude that its equine population, compared to that of Europe, appeared to be somewhat insignificant and, therefore, « that the Arabian horses are not worth mentioning in the description of the Arabias ».¹⁴⁷

Secondly, Seetzen attacked the view that Arabian horses distinguished themselves in terms of their physical qualities. Deemed by naturalist scholars such as Buffon as the purest horses in the world and, consequently, the closest to the original shape of their species, Arabian horses were ordinarily considered beautiful animals, whose lightness thrilled European riders. Arvieux particularly emphasised the beauty of Arabian mares.¹⁴⁸ With the same scepticism that he had already demonstrated, Seetzen argued that the chances of seeing these beautiful horses were low in Arabia, apart from perhaps in Yemen. In a tone that one could well deem sarcastic, he continued his imaginary dialogue on the dominant views of equine experts:

Arabien kann also mit nichts weniger gross thun, als mit der Zahl seiner Pferde. Aber desto mehr mit ihrer Schonheit! sagt man mit vielleicht. Allein, wer dies behaupten darf, muss nie arabische Pferde gesehen haben.¹⁴⁹

Seetzen confirmed this rather provocative statement by adding that even among the very expensive Arabian horses imported to Europe, some lacked beauty such as the one he saw in Vienna in 1791.¹⁵⁰ In his experience, beautiful Arabian horses were scarce. The famous horses from the Najd, which he had the opportunity to see when Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (1748–1814) (r.1803– 1814) and his entourage rode in Mecca, were admittedly characterized by their medium size and lightness. None of them featured, however, any kind beauty, not even the one ridden by the ruler. Yemeni horses, and more specifically not the mares but the stallions, such as the ones he saw in Sana'a appeared to him more beautiful than the horses from the Nejd. Seetzen nonetheless deemed that these horses stood no comparison with European breeds in terms of beauty or lightness. Seetzen even drew a long list of

¹⁴⁵ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 276.

¹⁴⁶ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 276.

¹⁴⁷ « dass Arabien kaum verdiene, der Pferde bey seiner Beschreibung zu erwähnen », see SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 278

¹⁴⁸ D'ARVIEUX, *Voyage fait par ordre du roy Louis XIV*, p. 199.

¹⁴⁹ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 278.

¹⁵⁰ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 278.

European horses that he claimed more beautiful than the Arabian ones, such as Spanish stallions, but also stallions from Holstein, Oldenburg, East Friesland and many more.¹⁵¹ In a similar way, he claimed that the lightness of Arabian horses was not all that remarkable as there were also light mounts to be found Europe.¹⁵² Overrated in terms of beauty and lightness, horses in Arabia could not really be characterized by any special virtues either.

In Seetzen's view, the stamina, the courage, intelligence, empathy, and selflessness traditionally attributed to these horses were to be questioned as well. Niebuhr particularly elaborated on these virtues, so that Seetzen's passage on the same theme appears to be a thorough rebuttal of his famous predecessor. The good qualities listed by Seetzen appeared to be almost verbatim the ones attributed by Niebuhr to the *Kochlâni* or *Kohejle*, that is the horses whose origin could purportedly traced back to the stud farms of King Salomon.¹⁵³ Even if Seetzen do not mention this last point, he clearly denies these qualities to better call into question the significance of nobility for horses. Based on his predecessor's description, Seetzen reminded that Arabian horses were supposed to

dauern die grössten Strapazen aus, haben ganze Tage lang keine Nahrung nöthig, und leben gleichsam von der Luft, sie stürzen mit Heftigkeit auf den Feind los; sind sie in einem Gefechte verwundet und ausser Stande ihren Reiter länger zu tragen, so ziehen sie sich aus dem Gewühle und setzen ihn in Sicherheit; und wenn ihr Herr zur Erde gestürzt ist, so hören sie nicht auf zu wiehern, bis man ihm zu Hilfe geeilt ist.¹⁵⁴

By proposing to nuance these good qualities and put them into context, Seetzen seized the opportunity to directly discuss Niebuhr's report. While remarking that these qualities could also be noted among European horses, Seetzen nuanced the idea that all Arabian horses would display them under all circumstances. Thus, inferred Seetzen, these qualities could not be used to characterize the Arabian breed. In his opinion, these qualities rather resulted from a misconstruction due to the scarcity of horses in Arabia. He rather sarcastically claimed that the great fondness of the Arabs for their horses inevitably biased them when it came to describe their virtues and good qualities. Drawing a parallel between the admiration felt by the Bedouins for their horses and the compliments ladies in the West would pay to their pets, Seetzen concluded that the Arabs praised their horses in the same way that European ladies would celebrate the marvellous

¹⁵¹ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 278.

¹⁵² SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 278–279.

¹⁵³ NIEBUHR, *Beschreibung von Arabien*, p. 161.

¹⁵⁴ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 279.

virtues and understanding of their lapdogs or favourite cats.¹⁵⁵ Thus, Seetzen aimed at discrediting the better judgment of the Bedouins while introducing an analogy that induced their inferiority or lack of judgement. To him, the scarcity of horses in the region explained that their owners would feel a kind of devotion towards them which resulted in the deep bond that they would forge. Indeed, Arabs in general always kept their horses close to them while the Bedouin would even keep the horse under their tent and treat it as a relative, feeding it, talking to it and stocking it.¹⁵⁶ This special bond was a well-known fact, notably emphasized by Arvieux.¹⁵⁷ Based on this good treatment, Seetzen concluded that the best qualities of the Arabian horses were the result of education and not of heredity or climate and that a similar care would help European horses to develop the same qualities.¹⁵⁸ As for the purported calmness of the Arabian stallion, Seetzen argued that it was only due to the scarcity of mares, which were more easily kept away from male horses than in Europe. Finally, Seetzen sharply criticized the belief that an Arabian horse would rescue the rider from a predicament.¹⁵⁹ A last quality that Niebuhr specially associated to « einige Familien unter diesem adelichen Pferdegeschlecht ».¹⁶⁰

By arguing that ancestry counted for nothing in some of the best qualities attributed to Arabian horses, Seetzen also tended to discredit the significance of nobility and, therefore, some of the beliefs and values underlying Bedouin and European societies alike. As discussed above, travellers like Arvieux or Niebuhr highlighted the great attention that the Bedouins paid to the pedigree and genealogy of their horses in order to preserve their nobility. This special attention devoted to maintaining the pure bloodlines of horses appeared to be embedded in the Bedouin economy of honour and, therefore, gave rise to social practices such as the mating and foaling in the presence of witnesses. Horses were thus integrated into the same genealogical systems that prevailed in Bedouin society.¹⁶¹ Nobility of origin or ancestry (*asl*) was of central importance for both the Bedouins and their mounts. The centrality of blood, in the sense of a bloodline, relied on the belief that a person's nature and worth depended on their ancestry.¹⁶² Just as the nobility of origin was supposed to confer moral qualities and character to the Bedouins, it was meant to provide the horse with special virtues that reflected those of its rider. Niebuhr remarked that even if the « Araber haben von ihren

¹⁵⁵ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 279.

¹⁵⁶ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 278.

¹⁵⁷ D'ARVIEUX, *Voyage fait par ordre du roy Louis XIV*, p. 199–201.

¹⁵⁸ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 279.

¹⁵⁹ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 280.

¹⁶⁰ NIEBUHR, *Beschreibung von Arabien*, p. 162.

¹⁶¹ LANGE, « Purity, Nobility, Beauty », p. 42.

¹⁶² LILA ABU-LUGHOD, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1986, p. 41–49.

Kochlâni zwar kein Geschlechtregister von einigen hundert Jahren, sie können aber dennoch von ihrer Abkunft ziemlich gewiss seyn, weil die Stuten immer in Gegenwart von Zeugen, und zwar von arabischen Zeugen belegt werden ».¹⁶³ A possible allusion to the private stud books that existed in the Early Modern Europe, the mention of equine genealogies pointed out the significance of heredity and purity in horse breeding in the East and in the West. They reflected a similar concern for nobility in European and Bedouin societies towards the mid-eighteenth century.

Unlike Arvieux or Niebuhr, though, Seetzen claimed that these equine genealogies were nonsensical and unreliable. He admitted that these genealogical traditions are interesting though and that it was relevant to inquire about the origins of Arabian horses. He added: « Sey dem auch, wie ihm sey, obgleich der Adel dieser Pferderace ihr durchaus keinen wesentlichen Werth verleiht, eben so wenig, als unser erblicher Adel ohne persöhnliches Verdienst: doch eine historische Merkwürdigkeit, welche eine genauere Untersuchung verdient ».¹⁶⁴ Seetzen deemed that the question of their historical introduction in Europe was also pertinent. He nevertheless denied the significance of equine lineages in horse breeding:

Es kann immer seyn, dass Davids, Salomons und Mohammeds Pferde eine Nachkommenschaft hinterliessen, und es ist nothwendig, dass die jetzigen sogenannten adelichen Pferde ihre Vorfahren hatten, denn sonst existirten sie nicht (so wenig als unsere Bürger- und Bauernfamilien, welche eine eben so lange Ascendenz haben müssen, als unsere königlichen und fürstlichen Familien, wenn gleich sie öfters ihren Urgrossvater nicht kennen). Allein wer versichert uns, dass sie gerade von diesen abstammen? Wo ist der Stammbaum, der dies mit Wahrheit beurkundet? Freylich versichert man, dass die Beduinen Alles anwenden, um ihre Race unvermischt zu erhalten.¹⁶⁵

More than sceptical about Biblical and Islamic genealogies which obviously had no special appeal to him, Seetzen also clearly called into doubt the reliability of the Bedouin breeding tradition.¹⁶⁶ On this last point, he once again confronted his views with the seminal text of Niebuhr who was prone to give the credit the Bedouin way of mating their horses before witness. Since this alleged purity of blood allowed the Bedouins to sell their horses for the highest prices, they tended to lie about them and forges fake genealogies in order to scam European clients.

¹⁶³ NIEBUHR, *Beschreibung von Arabien*, p. 162.

¹⁶⁴ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 280–281.

¹⁶⁵ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 281.

¹⁶⁶ On Seetzen's attitude towards Christianity, see GIOVANNI BONACINA, « Ulrich Jasper Seetzen über Jesus Christus », in HABERLAND (ed.), *Der Orientreisende Ulrich Jasper Seetzen*, p. 37–60.

Seetzen further claimed that the Bedouins had a passion for lying and would do anything for money.¹⁶⁷

Perhaps not surprisingly, Seetzen's report provoked diverse reactions among European scholars. Although they published his account, it seems likely that Hammer nor Rzewuski were rather baffled by some of its conclusions. The latter inserted a footnote at the beginning of the article that made his disagreement with the piece plain to readers. After claiming that he had personally admired the most beautiful horses of the Bay in Egypt, Hammer assumed that Seetzen had drawn such harsh conclusions either because he had spoiled his eye contemplating European horses or for another reason. While suggesting that Seetzen proved incompetent in judging Arabian horses or had hidden motives to denigrate them, Hammer reasserted the excellence of these animals whose blood had regenerated the noblest of European horses.¹⁶⁸ Given the significance of the topic, it seems noteworthy that Hammer and Rzewuski went on publishing pieces on Arabian horses in the following issues of the *Fundgruben des Orients*. Thus, the third volume of their journal (1813) interestingly featured a letter from Joseph Rousseau, the general consul of France in Alep, that reinforced the thesis that the most beautiful horses in the world came from the Arabian desert. This contribution was possibly intended to serve as a counterpoint to Seetzen's piece and, as such, increase the data on Arabian horses as well as showcasing the variety of the views shared on them.¹⁶⁹ Although these reports were not ostensibly related, the editorial choices of Hammer and Rzewuski orchestrated *de facto* a scientific dialogue between Seetzen and Rousseau. The fragmentary nature of the knowledge-making in these journals allowed for a confrontation of different viewpoints from one issue to next. By fuelling the scholarly debate with contributions from all over the Near East, Hammer and Rzewuski facilitated the gradual knowledge-building process on the Arabias. Dating from 1808, Rousseau's letter outlined the physical and moral qualities of Arabian horses while reiterating the vision of the desert as a source of superior horses. By suggesting that the harsh climatic conditions allowed for the excellence of these horses to shine forth, Rousseau thus relied on the climate theory. More than theory, though, Rousseau claimed that his report was based on his own experience of Arabian horses. Having been in contact with the Anazeh tribes of Northern Arabia, Rousseau was himself a horse connoisseur and owned several Arabian mounts. Unlike Seetzen, he tended to adopt the perspective of the Bedouins on their horses. As for the famous beauty of Arabian horses, for instance, the consul took as a benchmark the standards recognized by Arab breeders. Rousseau also underscored how they correlated with the opinions of ancient

¹⁶⁷ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 281.

¹⁶⁸ SEETZEN, « Auszug aus einem Briefe, Mocha den 14. November 1810 », p. 275.

¹⁶⁹ JOSEPH ROUSSEAU, « Lettre de M. Rousseau, consul-général de France à Alep, à M. Jouannin, consul-général de France à Memel, sur les chevaux arabes », *Fundgruben des Orients*, 3 (1813), p. 65–68.

writers such as Horace and Virgil.¹⁷⁰ This association implied that the Bedouin taste in horses related in fact to an immemorial tradition dating back to antiquity. By perpetuating standards long forgotten in the West, these nomadic breeders once again distinguished themselves by their ability to perpetuate the same traditions since times immemorial. Last but not least, Rousseau provided one of the Arabic certificates attesting the noble origin of a mare on both the sire and the dam sides across three generations.¹⁷¹ Translated into French, this official document produced for the buyer served to emphasise the Bedouin sense of honour. As a representation of the word given by Arab nomads, this certificate established before God the accuracy of the information pertaining to a horse on sale.

The thematic link between both reports did not escape the careful attention of Silvestre de Sacy when he reviewed the volumes II and III of the *Fundgruben* for *Le Magasin Encyclopédique*.¹⁷² When assessing the contributions made to these volumes, Sacy chose the ones that he thought worthiest of mention. Without a doubt, Seetzen's provocative conclusions from the field intrigued European scholars like Sacy, who considered his writings to be worth disseminating but also worth commentaries that might add some nuance or counterbalance. Sacy therefore focused on Seetzen's points about Arabian horses, underlining that they differed from the common views on the matter. Sacy provided a very detailed summary of Seetzen's contribution, or rather a summarized translation into French, in order to make French readers aware of these discrepancies between Seetzen's accounts and the viewpoints maintained in Rousseau's letter that was published in the third volume of the *Fundgruben*. Interestingly, Sacy did not go so far as to actually refute Seetzen's controversial piece. Although the French orientalist was prone to criticise the contributions of the *Fundgruben* when it came to philology, linguistic and history sharply, including Seetzen's reports on the Berbers, he did not feel entitled to assess an article outside his field of expertise. By reinforcing some of the dominant views on Arabian horses, Rousseau's letter thus proved instrumental in mitigating Seetzen's position. It thus seems noteworthy that Sacy quoted at length Rousseau's article in his review of the third volume of the *Fundgruben*.

After returning from his trip to the Arabian Peninsula (1818–1820), Rzewuski decided to thoroughly confront his views on Arabian horses with those of Seetzen's. Before departing for the Levant, Rzewuski published his « Notice sur les chevaux arabes » in the *Fundgruben* in which he praised the qualities of the horse

¹⁷⁰ ROUSSEAU, « Lettre de M. Rousseau, consul-général de France à Alep », p. 67.

¹⁷¹ ROUSSEAU, « Lettre de M. Rousseau, consul-général de France à Alep », p. 68.

¹⁷² DE SACY, « Notice du tome second », p. 216.

from the Nejd, the *koheilan*.¹⁷³ In this article, he recounts a note sent by the consul general of the Austrian Empire in Cairo, Carlo Rossetti (1736–1820) about Arabian horses and it is quite apparent that Rzewuski longed to take a journey to the horse-breeding tribes.¹⁷⁴ Well-versed in horse riding and breeding, Rzewuski spent two years between 1818 and 1820 among the horse-breeding Bedouins in Syria, Iraq and Palestine. His experience among the Bedouins inspired him a travel account in which he presented and discussed all the information that he was able to gather *Sur les chevaux orientaux et provenant de races orientales* [On oriental horses, and horses from oriental breeds].¹⁷⁵ At the end of his manuscript which he wrote in French, Rzewuski chose to discuss each point made by Seetzen as a conclusion to his own remarks.¹⁷⁶ This thorough discussion demonstrates the significance of Seetzen's report in Rzewuski's eyes while highlighting the scientific debate that continued *post mortem*. In his own words, Rzewuski intended to both spread and amend Seetzen's views by confronting it with his own observations while also referring to Niebuhr.¹⁷⁷ Fully translating Seetzen's equine report from German into French, the Polish scholar confirmed, completed, or corrected each of Seetzen's statements with the calm confidence of an expert who had been immersed for two years among the Bedouins. Unlike Seetzen, Rzewuski did not use intermediaries to gain knowledge about the desert herders and their precious horses, lending him the credibility to assert the superiority of his expertise. A great admirer of the nomadic riders with whom he identified, Rzewuski strove to embrace their worldview while also accumulating a rich collection of materials about them. Possibly influenced by a Rousseauian vision of the Arabian World, this aristocratic traveller also had clear commercial goals that he was pursuing in the region.¹⁷⁸ Commissioned by Catherine Pavlona (1788–1819), queen of Württemberg and sister of Tsar Alexander the First, the Count's goal was to obtain Arabian horses for the royal stables at Weil in Germany. The economic and erudite stakes of his journey compelled Rzewuski to reassert that the excellent qualities of

¹⁷³ WACLAV SEWERYN RZEWUSKI, « Notice sur les chevaux arabes », *Fundgruben des Orients*, 5 (1816), p. 49–50.

¹⁷⁴ CARLO ROSETTI, « Sur les races des chevaux arabes », *Fundgruben des Orients*, 5 (1816), p. 50–60.

¹⁷⁵ Rzewuski died before publishing his manuscript, which is preserved at National Library of Poland: WACLAV SEWERYN RZEWUSKI, *Sur les chevaux orientaux et provenants des races orientales. vol. I & II. vol III Planches appartenant à l'ouvrage sur les chevaux orientaux, dessinées par Tag-el Faher Abd el Nischoane emir et scheick des Arabes Bédouins des déserts du Nejed en Arabie 1820–1830*. Manuscript of the National Library of Poland. Rps 5678 IV t.1–3. The manuscript was edited in 2002, see WACLAV SEWERYN RZEWUSKI, *Impressions d'Orient et d'Arabie. Un cavalier polonais chez les Bédouins, 1817–1819*, ed. B. LIZET, F. AUBAILE-SALLENAVE, P. DASZKIEWICZ, AND A.-E. WOLF. José Corti, Paris, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, 2002.

¹⁷⁶ SEETZEN, RZEWUSKI (ed.), « Extrait d'une lettre du savant Seetzen », p. 633–652.

¹⁷⁷ SEETZEN, RZEWUSKI (ed.), « Extrait d'une lettre du savant Seetzen », p. 633.

¹⁷⁸ MOUSSA, « Orientalisme et rousseauisme ».

Arabian horses were due to the climate as well as the genealogy of the breed.¹⁷⁹ Aware of Seetzen's sarcasms on the topic, which probably hurt his feelings, Rzewuski claimed that « toutes ces qualités, dont Seetzen se moquent, ne sont point exagérées ».¹⁸⁰ Conceding that « (...) education contributed to develop the natural qualities of the horse, but did not create them », Rzewuski aimed at rehabilitating both the nobility of the Bedouins and their horses.¹⁸¹ Defending the Bedouin sense of honour, he tried to explain Seetzen's harsh judgement by highlighting Seetzen's lack of intercultural competence. Rzewuski's criticism mainly relied on the very pointed idea that Seetzen and the Bedouins did not speak the same language. Rzewuski thus noted that Seetzen, although an Arabist, could not necessarily understand Bedouin values and codes, which led him to misinterpret their oral traditions as well as their poetic rendering of the world. By applying Western categories to them, Rzewuski suggested, Seetzen thus lacked the ability to comprehend the essence of the Bedouin culture.¹⁸² More generally, he failed to understand some important cultural characteristics of the places that he crossed. Rzewuski, for instance, refuted Seetzen's observation that the Hadramout was empty of horses by underlining that in cities and villages alike, horse owners tended to hide their mounts lest someone envious would malevolently glare at them, thus cursing them and consequently harming them. The belief in the evil eye, which Rzewuski called in Italian « *cativo occhio* » [sic], partly explained why Seetzen could not see any horses there.¹⁸³ Before Rzewuski, Arvieux also pointed out that this belief compelled horse owners to protect their mounts with talismans and amulets.¹⁸⁴ Overall, Rzewuski claimed that even if Seetzen travelled Arabia, he was no horse expert. Unable to recognize the beauty of a horse, Seetzen had simply no idea of its « mathematical proportions ».¹⁸⁵ Rzewuski sometimes refused to dignify some of Seetzen's assertions with a rebuttal. His praise of Northern Europe horses, for instance, was not deemed worth discussing since « comme l'opinion publique seule est en état de répondre à cette phrase, il est inutile de mettre en avant mes voyages pour la réfuter ».¹⁸⁶ Overall, Rzewuski concluded that « Seetzen n'est ni connaisseur en chevaux, ni cavalier ». A similar assessment can be found in the work of another equine expert who, nevertheless, made an extensive use of

¹⁷⁹ SEETZEN, RZEWSUKI (ed.), « Extrait d'une lettre du savant Seetzen », p. 647.

¹⁸⁰ SEETZEN, RZEWSUKI (ed.), « Extrait d'une lettre du savant Seetzen », p. 646. Bernadette Lizet underlined that Seetzen hurt the feelings of Rzewuski who authored a thorough rebuttal of his views, LIZET, « Le cheval arabe du Nejd », p. 86–90,

¹⁸¹ SEETZEN, RZEWSUKI (ed.), « Extrait d'une lettre du savant Seetzen », p. 647: « l'éducation contribue effectivement à développer les qualités naturelles du cheval, mais elle ne les crée pas ».

¹⁸² SEETZEN, RZEWSUKI (ed.), « Extrait d'une lettre du savant Seetzen », p. 651–652.

¹⁸³ SEETZEN, RZEWSUKI (ed.), « Extrait d'une lettre du savant Seetzen », p. 636–637.

¹⁸⁴ D'ARVIEUX, *Voyage fait par ordre du roy Louis XIV*, p. 207: « les yeux de l'envie »

¹⁸⁵ SEETZEN, RZEWSUKI (ed.), « Extrait d'une lettre du savant Seetzen », p. 643.

¹⁸⁶ SEETZEN, RZEWSUKI (ed.), « Extrait d'une lettre du savant Seetzen », p. 645.

Seetzen's reports on the Bedouins and their desert-bred horses: Karl Wilhelm Ammon (1777–1842).

In 1834, the German equine specialist Ammon, published his magnum opus on Arabian horses, his *Nachrichten von der Pferdezucht der Araber und den arabischen Pferden: Nebst einem Anhang über die Pferdezucht in Persien, Turkomanien und der Berberei* in which he tried to provide some answers on the topics pertaining to Arabian horses. To do so, Ammon dedicated over twenty years of his life to compiling every piece of information produced by travellers to the Near East about the horses of the Peninsula. As part of his evaluation of all books and journal articles on the matter, Ammon compared and contrasted these varied perspectives as well as the array of data gained from field research. In his seminal book, this scholar, who never actually travelled to the East, drew on the accounts of writers such as Arvieux, Niebuhr, Seetzen, Rousseau, Rosetti, Rzewuski and many others. By including all these voices, Ammon significantly contributed to the evolving debates on the noble breed. Often mentioning Seetzen's observations and discussing them, Ammon interestingly noticed that Seetzen was no friend of the Arabian horse, a fact which, by contrast, gave more weight to any quality, even partial, that Seetzen would attribute to the Arabian horse.¹⁸⁷ On the one hand, it seems that Ammon directly discarded some of Seetzen's remarks, such as his claim that numerous Northern European horses were way more beautiful than the Arabian ones. This very claim, which Rzewuski deemed too preposterous to be even rebutted, was due to the fact, according to Ammon, that Seetzen was used to draught horses, high and heavy. Equine beauty, therefore, was tantamount to colossal constitution. Like Rzewuski had done, Ammon reminded his readers that the beauty of a horse relied in fact on the harmony of its proportions. Even though he largely drew his work on the accounts of travellers, Ammon thus distinguished between the ones who proved equine experts, such as Rosetti, from those who were no horse connoisseur, such as Niebuhr or Seetzen.¹⁸⁸ At any rate, Ammon had to deal with discrepant opinions on several matters, which led them to make his own assumptions. On the horses in Felix Arabia, that is in Yemen, Ammon wondered: « What should we believe in the presence of such contradictions in the travellers' reports? ». ¹⁸⁹ Claiming that the truth often lies between diverging opinions, he tried to make sense of the contradictory reports by proposing a contrasted map of Yemeni horse breeding. Whereas pure-blood horses were bred in some parts of Yemen such as in Al-Jawf province, in Najran province and in the

¹⁸⁷ KARL WILHELM AMMON, *Nachrichten von der Pferdezucht der Araber, und den arabischen Pferden: Nebst einem Anhang über die Pferdezucht in Persien, Turkomanien und der Berberei*, Riegel und Wießner, Nuremberg 1834, p. 199.

¹⁸⁸ AMMON, *Nachrichten von der Pferdezucht der Araber*, p. 151 and p. 163.

¹⁸⁹ AMMON, *Nachrichten von der Pferdezucht der Araber*, p. 132: « Was soll man bei diesem Widerspruche der Nachrichten der Reisenden glauben? ».

vicinity of the city of Dhamar, other horses were probably imported from the Najd or from Nubia. In this case, Ammon assumed that Seetzen probably saw imported horses. By contrast, Ammon tended to give more credit to the cultural data provided by Seetzen. It seems noteworthy, that Seetzen's report on the Bedouins, that is his piece based on the information given by Juszef el Milky, is also quoted by Ammon who used it to compare the five lineages described by Seetzen to the names given by Rosetti, Burckhardt and Macdonald-Kinneir.¹⁹⁰ The descendants of the *Al-Khamseh* were thus given different names, which highlighted the various traditions relating to them. Finally, Seetzen helped Ammon to assess the issue of the potential scams buyers could face in Arabia as well as the question of the bond uniting the rider to his mare. In Ammon's book, Seetzen was thus posthumously dialoguing with his fellow travellers on topics to which they dedicated their efforts.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, Seetzen's writings tended to shed new light on the Bedouins and their horses. While contradicting the excellence of Arabian horses with a measure of sarcasm, Seetzen tended to discredit Arabia as a unique place where breeders could find the finest horses able to regenerate the European breeds. Based on his predecessors in the Near East, Seetzen's contribution aimed at discussing their observations and filling the gaps on these topics by writing articles as well as sending artifacts and books to Europe. By putting forth his viewpoint in European journals, Seetzen made a name for himself on the editorial stage and fuelled the scholarly debates going on the Bedouins and their horses.

¹⁹⁰ AMMON, *Nachrichten von der Pferdezucht der Araber*, p. 163–170.

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