

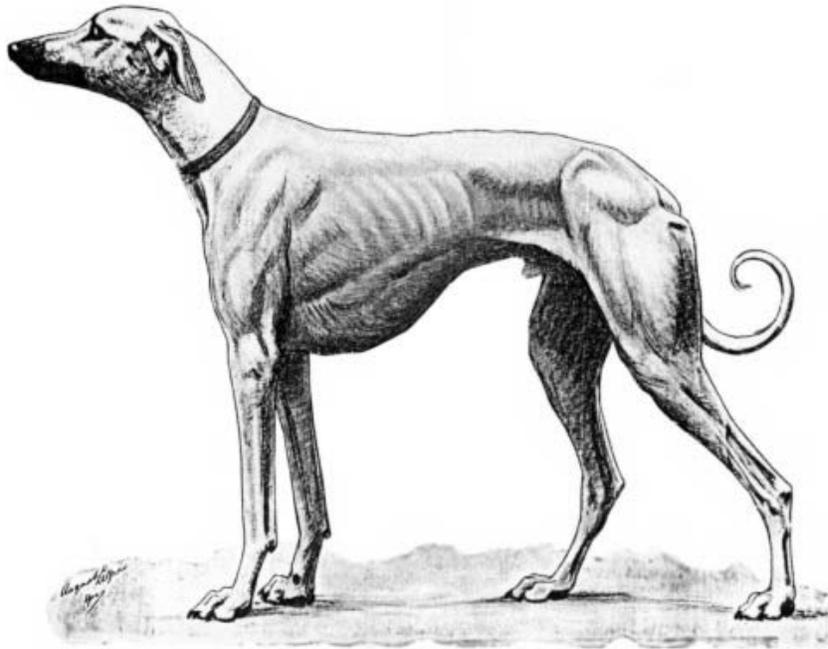
Stolen Sloughis

After almost a half-century, a case of misappropriated breed identity is rectified

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Auguste LeGras' "Ideal Sloughi," 1909.

A little more than a decade ago, while surfing the Net, I happened across a French bookstore online. The store must have gotten hold of an extensive collection of dog books owned by someone involved since the early 1900s in the Sighthound world. Not only did I find a lovely judge's booklet with the early French standards of the Sloughi, Saluki and Persian Sighthound (the last two were separate breeds in the mid-1920s), as well as other very important French books about dog breeds, but I also bought a book for which I had been looking for a long time.

This special book, by the French General E. Daumas, gave Western Sloughi fanciers the first detailed description of the North African, or Maghreb, Sloughi – more specifically, the Algerian Sloughi – and its role in North African society. Next to the 1909 ideal drawing of the ideal Sloughi by the Dutch artist Auguste LeGras, who imported the first Sloughis to the Netherlands from Algeria and Tunisia in the late 1800s and early 1900s, it is the earliest, most valuable North African Sloughi document known.

Titled *Les Chevaux du Sahara (The Horses of the Sahara)*, General Daumas' book was first published in Paris in 1851 by the Imprimerie Schiller Ainé, and contains an historical chapter dedicated to "Le Lévrier (Sloughi)," or "The Sighthound

(Sloughi).” The book I obtained is the fifth edition, by Michel Lévy, Frères Libraires-Editeurs, Paris, 1858. It is entitled *Les Chevaux du Sahara et les Moeurs du Désert (The Horses of the Sahara and the Manners of the Desert)*.

The 19th Century witnessed France’s occupation of the North African countries of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, which constitute part of the Maghreb, the northwestern most region of the continent, west of Egypt. (Italy occupied Libya, and Spain the Western part of the Sahara.) The Maghreb Sloughi, much admired by artists and the military, became, “by right of conquest,” the French Sighthound. At the time, active breeding with countries-of-origin imports took place in Europe.

A French general, Dumas became famous during the Algeria campaign in the 1830s. After studying Arabic, he studied Algerian customs in depth. He became Consul of Mascara with the Emir Abd-el-Kader from 1837 to 1839. Under the French Commander-in-Chief, General de Lamoricière, he became the director of Arab affairs in Oran. Later, the Maréchal Bugeaud nominated him to head the indigenous affairs of Algeria. In 1850, he became the director of Algerian Affairs at the Ministry of War.

Daumas was particularly well known among horse fanciers. His book was translated into English by J. Hutton in 1863. Hutton translated the chapter title “*Le Lévrier (Sloughi)*” as “*The Greyhound*,” omitting the word “*Sloughi*,” but the translation of the text itself is perfectly correct in that the words “*Sloughi*” and “*Sloughia*” used by Daumas are kept, and the word “*lévrier*” translated into “*greyhound*” in the generic sense. However, as we will see, this translation was misused 106 years later.

Comments in newspapers and magazines of the early 1900s reveal quite a bit of tension between the French – who were frustrated by the British lack of understanding of the uniqueness of the North African Sloughi – and their British counterparts. The confusion between Sloughi and Saluki in the United Kingdom held on for the better part of a century. It is difficult to understand why, because engravings of the time show us very different dogs. Why so many British, otherwise extremely good at identifying differences and breeding different dog breeds, failed entirely to see the obvious differences between the Sloughi from North Africa and the Saluki from the Middle East remains an enigma.



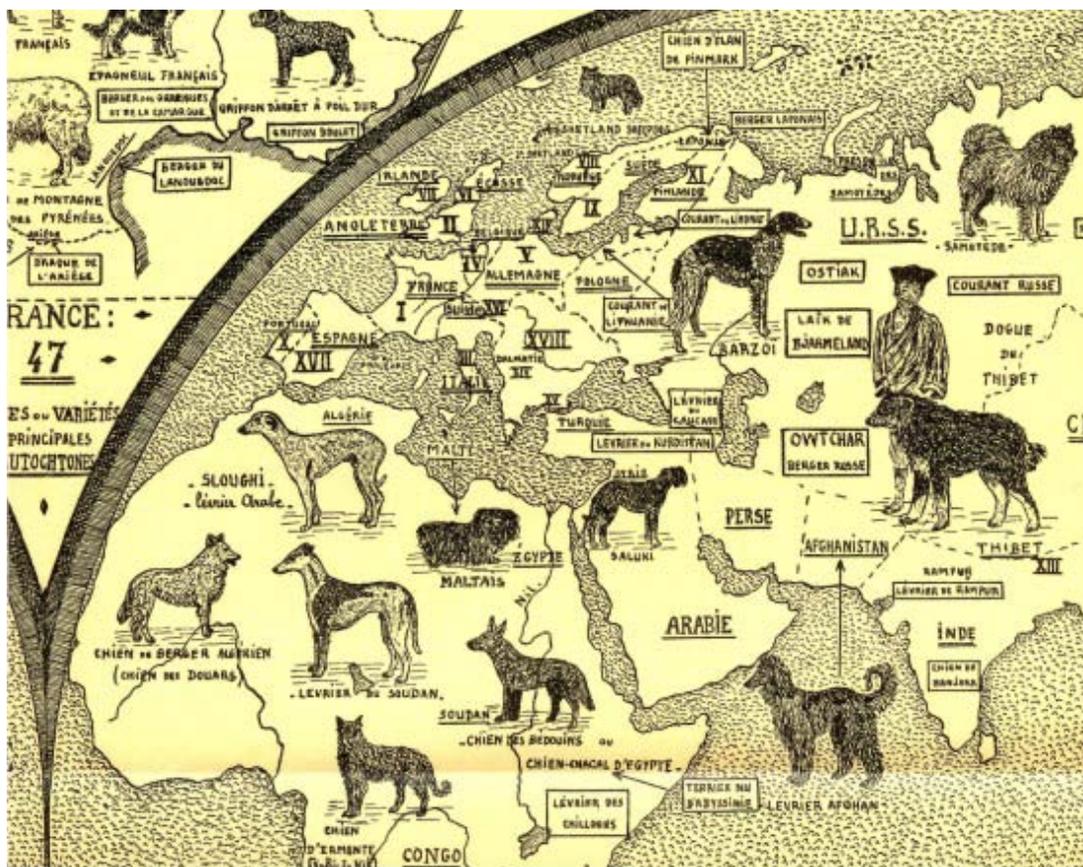
Left: engraving of a Sloughi named “Pipo,” by P. Mahler from *L’Acclimatation*, circa 1880, with the correct ear set at the time. Compare with this engraving of a Saluki (right), entitled “The Black Sighthound of Persia” also by Mahler. The artist did not confuse the two breeds, but later fanciers did.

In the 1930s, not only was the North African Sloughi confused with the Middle Eastern Saluki, but it was also confused with the English Greyhound. Interesting comments by French judges published in magazines of that era describe what they see as Greyhound or Persian crossbreeding in the Sloughis they are presented with.

Even in France, the confusion became complete for some. In 1931, Paul Dechambre, in his book *Le Chien*, wrote: "... The Sloughi, Tazi or Gazelle Hound is not to be found only in North Africa; one finds it in Arabia in the Hedjaz, in Syria, in Mesopotamia, in Kurdistan, etc. In Africa itself, he inhabits Egypt and Abyssinia at the same time as all of North Africa ..."

In 1935, *Hutchinson's Dog Encyclopedia*, describing the Maghreb Sloughi correctly, stated: "In this country [the UK] there is a propensity for confounding the Sloughi with the Saluki. The former is absolutely smooth-coated, whereas the latter, while smooth-coated on the body, has long fringes on the ears and the tail is bushy; the Sloughi resembles our own Greyhound very greatly." Alas, an important mistake was made when a picture of a famous parti-colored Dutch Greyhound, named Alwin, was used to illustrate this text.

However, about four years after Dechambre's book, circa 1935, a geographical map indicating the countries of origin of canine breeds was published by *L'Éleveur*, a project put together by eminent cynologists of the time, Count Henri de Bylandt, Pierre Mégnin and Paul Mégnin. This map placed the Sloughi, the Saluki, the Afghan Hound and the Borzoi correctly in their respective countries of origin. The map consolidates Count Henri de Bylandt's previous published work, a two-volume treatise about all dog breeds famous at the turn of the 19th Century, *Dogs of All Nations*. Needless to say, this book makes a clear distinction between the North African Sloughi and other Sighthound breeds.

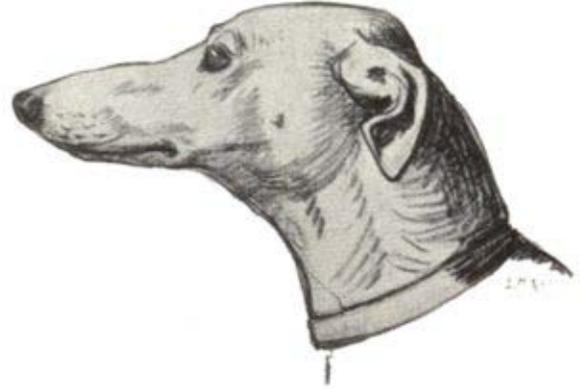


Detail of the map of canine breeds, published in *L'Éleveur*, circa 1935.

In 1937, the description of the ear set in the standard of the Sloughi was drastically modified under the influence of a French breeder, Mrs. Turcat, whose Sloughis were criticized as having Persian blood. **Until** Turcat's dogs arrived on the scene, the ear set was that of an ear folded back larger than the Greyhounds; after the 1937 change, the Sloughi standard described the ear-set as "lop eared" and has required it ever since. The change in the standard resulted in a big outcry from Fanciers in Holland, an important founding country for the breed in Europe.



Arabische Windhondkop.



Engelsche Windhondkop.

(Naar teekeningen van den Heer Aug. Le Gras, Blaricum.)

(Gravuren uit *De Nederlandsche Sport.*)

Circa 1904, the ideal ear set of the Sloughi, left, compared to that of the Greyhound, by Dutch artist Augsut LeGras, printed in *De Nederlandche Sport Journal*. The correct Sloughi ear was folded back and larger than the Greyhound's

These Sloughi lop ears were used later to group the breed together with other Oriental Sighthounds. Had the breed kept its original folded-back ears, as per the previous standard, no such thing would have happened. Until 1973, none of the various versions of the standard mentioned that the Sloughi originated in the Orient. The previous FCI Sloughi standard mentioned an origin in the Orient . This comment was later removed in the current FCI standard (1998), which states the correct origin in North Africa.

Today, Sloughis in North Africa still have folded ears, despite pressure to breed lop-eared Sloughis, particularly in Morocco, where the French standard has been used for many years at shows. The previous standard had described folded ears. As did many engravings, paintings and sculptures of the era, and in Africa many Sloughis still have folded ears, and lop-ears only when at rest. Today, Sloughis with folded ears are penalized at shows when in fact they are very common in North Africa. It is even argued that folded ears in the Sloughi are an indication that they are crossbred to Galgo espanol, when in fact it is not the case.



Algeria 2010. Young Algerian Sloughis playing with an adult. Note lop and folded ears sets. At left is a Pointer-type dog, a breed that hunts with the Sloughi. *Photo: Mangelsdorf*



Algerian Sloughis today, Western Algeria, Note lop and folded ears sets , 2010. *Photo: Mangelsdorf*



A Tunisian Sloughia with puppy, Northern Tunisia, 2011, Note lop and folded ears sets. Photo: Ochi

Later, we find the confusion between Sloughi and Saluki in the British literature continuing even more blatantly in Hope and David Waters' *The Saluki in History, Art and Sport* (David & Charles, UK, 1969). In this book, the description of the North African Algerian Sighthound by General Daumas is blended into the Middle Eastern history of the Saluki with many comments throughout the book. A quote placed under the reference to the first translation by J. Hutton, misleads the reader into assuming that Hutton referred to Salukis when in fact he was not: "The general's sixteen years' experience of the Sahara dated from 1837. He described the Saluki's characteristics and the enthusiasm for and respect of 'the people of the Sahara' for their 'greyhounds.'" A quote on page 37 continues in the same manner: "The greyhound sleeps in the compartment reserved for men," it was recorded of North African Salukis in the early 19th Century ["greyhound" replaced by "Saluki" by the Waterses], "on carpets by his master's side, or on his very bed. He is clothed and sheltered from the cold, like the horse, and is even preferred for being chilly, as that is additional proof of the purity of his race (E. Daumas, *The Horses of the Sahara and the Manners of the Desert*, 1863)."

Even the history of the North African Sloughi in France is taken to illustrate that of the Saluki. One quote is revealing: "A small number of Saluki admirers, besides the pioneers already mentioned, imported hounds in the years before World War I, but when that broke out the breed was still not recognized by the Kennel Club ... Elsewhere in Europe – as in America – the Saluki at that time was virtually unknown. France was an exception, for here officers of the French army returning from Algiers, where the French had been established for half a century, occasionally brought back with them Salukis bred in the Sahara."

Actually, no such thing happened: The Saluki was in fact unknown at the time in France and had nothing to do with the Sloughi of the Sahara. It was only at the time French officers were stationed in the Middle East in the mid-1920s that one

started seeing Middle Eastern Sighthounds in France, whose morphology was quickly found to be different from that of the North African Sloughi. Also, prior to World War I, another country played an important role in the history of the North African Sloughi – namely, the Netherlands.

The confusion between the North African Sloughi and Middle Eastern Saluki became further entrenched in 1973, when the misrepresentation of General Daumas' text about the Algerian Sloughi and its first translation into English reached new heights. Sheila M. Ohlendorf (*The Ways of the Desert*, University of Texas Press, Austin & London) translated the title of the chapter "*Le lévrier (Sloughi)*" as "*The Saluki (Sloughi)*" instead of "*The Sighthound (Sloughi)*." This translation also systematically replaced the words "*Lévrier*" (Sighthound) and "*Sloughi*" with "*Saluki*" throughout the entire chapter. One cannot help but wonder, was the translator influenced by the Waterses' book?

Lost in Translation

In this excerpt from the 1973 translation of *The Ways of the Desert*, by Sheila M. Ohlendorf (University of Texas Press, Austin & London), the words "Lévrier" (Sighthound) and "Sloughi" (here Algerian Sighthound) are systematically replaced by "Saluki."

"A purebred saluki neither eats nor drinks from a dirty vessel, he refuses milk in which someone has plunged his hands. Has he not been trained for delicate disdain? Whereas the common dog, useful and vigilant guardian, is at the most allowed to seek his food among carrion and old bones, whereas he is shamefully repulsed far from the tent and the table, the saluki, he, himself, lies in the room reserved for the men, on the carpets at his master's side or even on his bed. He is clothed, protected from the cold with blankets, like the horse; it is well known that he is very sensitive to the cold. It is one more proof of his being purebred. Pleasure is taken in adorning him, in putting shell collars on him. He is protected against the evil eye by the talismans put on him. He is fed carefully, with concern, also with precaution. Couscous is given to him liberally. In summer to give him strength a 'pâtée,' made of milk and dates with their pits removed, is made for him."

It is a pity Saluki enthusiasts did not pay closer attention to the careful description of the various breeds by Lady Florence Amherst. In 1907, this early British Saluki enthusiast had written some important advice in Cassell's *New Book of the Dog*: "... It should be the object of all those who import the Greyhounds of the East, and breed them in this country, to try to keep distinct the different varieties, which in many cases have been so carefully preserved in their own lands. The historic interest attached to each breed is alone a sufficient inducement to do so."

The Waterses wrote this about Lady Amherst: "... Her detailed description of the points of the Saluki was contained at the beginning of her article under the heading 'The Slughy, Tazi or Gazelle Hound' [the Arabic Classical masculine name 'Saluki' was given in a footnote] but later sections distinguished between 'the Tazi,' 'the North African or Saharan Slughy,' and the 'Ahk-Taz-eet' or 'Khirghiz Greyhound' whereas today the Salukis of North Africa, Arabia, Syria, Persia and the Steppes are all recognized as being of the same breed and of only two varieties, smooth-coated or feathered."

It seems this was at best a case of wishful thinking. The Sloughi and Saluki have always been separate breeds in the FCI system, and recent scientific studies by different laboratories reveal distinct DNA for the two breeds.

Even in the absence of genetics, how could one really confuse these two breeds, captured here by a famous dog illustrator of the time, P. Mahler, and the artist Auguste LeGras? Was it because the Sloughi after 1937 needed to have lop ears that it got confused with the Saluki? Was the glamorous Sloughi's history and revered role in the North African societies so impossible to resist that history had to be rewritten?

At the time, these opinions seem to have been based only on the similarity in the appearance of these breeds: a smooth and lop-eared Sighthound. However, the little that was known then of inherited traits in breeding should have shown that breeds which come in two types of coat cannot produce puppies that are always smooth, hence cannot be North African Sloughis. Any reputable breeder even at that time should have had a basic understanding of Mendelian genetics and population dynamics of recessive traits.

Despite all the evidence to the contrary, the mistaken opinion that these breeds – which live thousands of miles away from each other – are the same breed is still alive in the 21st Century. In Europe, some “Sloughi” breeders have blended smooth Saluki and smooth Afghan Hound with Sloughi lines rooted in North Africa.

Be it as it may, it was indeed through a misrepresentation in 1969 and a faulty American translation in 1973 that a historical document about the North African Sloughi became a historical document about the Middle Eastern Saluki. This description of the North African Sloughi by General Daumas, cherished by Sloughi fanciers across the world, has become so much part of the lore surrounding the Middle Eastern Saluki in English-speaking countries, that it is, today, still found in many Saluki articles and websites.

In all fairness, some 40 years after the publication of the Waterses’ book, it is time to give the story back to the breed to which it has always belonged – the Maghreb Sloughi.

In the meantime, what happened to the Maghreb Sloughi? Thankfully, it has survived through all the political turmoil. Today, the international Association for the Support of North African Sloughis supports national efforts and local clubs in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia (no project yet for Libya), in the form of vaccinations and other veterinary care. It is working toward preserving the authentic Sloughis of traditional breeding, away from the genetic pollution of crossing with other local breeds or the importation of “Sloughis” of dubious ancestry and the misguided dissemination of false information by those who think that Sloughi and Saluki are the same breed ●