The word Sloughi or Slougui, when written in Arabic, is the same combination of letters as, in our Western languages, for Saluki or Saluqi. As far as anybody can tell (although there is no shortage of alternative meanings!), it means sighthound – rather like Lévrier in French, Greyhound in English (not the breed but the type of hound), Tazi in Persian, Galgo in Spanish, or Borzoi in Russian - and the word in Arabic even sounds much the same whether spoken in the Middle East or North Africa.

The North African Sloughi and the Eastern/Middle Eastern Saluki have certainly diverged over the centuries but not so very much that they could be considered completely unconnected breeds. I also believe that, through the ages, the various nomadic Arab tribes would have travelled hugely (Silk Road, Salt Road, hunting trips, etc) - together with their families, horses and hunting dogs - not just in small local areas but right across northern Africa and the Middle East. So there would have been exchanges with other tribes encountered along the way, probably all of them with slightly different versions of the same sighthound type.

Illustration from Hutchinson's Encyclopaedia

For the Arabs of North Africa, the ordinary dog is unclean and beneath notice and known as "kelb", whereas the Sloughi is accepted in close contact with humans and known as "El Hor" (noble or pure).
**Origins and history**

The Sloughi is a sighthound, and has been selected for its hunting ability, speed and stamina through many hundreds of years or maybe more, in areas that could be extremely inhospitable. It is not one of those delicate flashy hounds with striking appearance, long floating coats and exaggerated shape and movement that one tends to see in today's show-rings – to my mind, the Sloughi's true beauty lies in its overall moderation (of type, colour, coat and movement) and amazing functionality in all areas of life.

Alongside other breeds or types in what has come to be known as the Oriental Sighthound group, the Sloughi is the one found most to the West geographically, i.e. right across the Maghreb region of North Africa – principally now in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, although it is Morocco that "owns" the current breed standard with the F.C.I. The Sloughi was also seen in Libya and Egypt until relatively recently and seemed to overlap slightly with its cousin the Saluki along the eastern borders of its territory and with its other closer cousin the Azawakh along a small part of its southern border. In previous centuries or even millennia, of course, the various nomadic tribes had no notion of frontiers or borders as we know them today and must have traversed many of today's different countries in their travels – on hunting trips in different areas, or along the Silk Road, for example. Any barriers to circulation or communication of these nomadic peoples and their animals have mainly been created more recently by other humans - such as borders between different countries, or the Suez Canal, for example.

There are images of these slender drop-eared sighthounds going right back into pre-history with Neolithic age rock paintings and engravings found in various remote areas across northern Africa.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Tassili rock engraving (Algeria)</th>
<th>Images have also been found in Egyptian tombs</th>
<th>and in Roman era mosaics (such as in Tunisia).</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Tassili rock engraving" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Images in tombs" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Roman mosaics" /></td>
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The Sloughi only really began to be known in France from the middle of the 19th century, because of its existence in the French colonies of that time in
Northern Africa. However, curiously enough, the first European attempts at breeding were not in France, but in the Netherlands, where the only coat colour recognized seems to have been sand with black mask. Unfortunately the Dutch Sloughi appears to have completely disappeared during World War Two.

Some images of Dutch Sloughis (or Slouqui as it is named in the book) as shown in the book by Bylandt published in 1904

The first Sloughis to make their mark in the UK arrived in the early 1970s under the Djaeser and Kamet affixes with imports from Algerian origins and then later from the Dutch affix Mumtaz-I-Javanadmi (descended from Libyan and Moroccan bloodlines). Then in the late 90s, Falconcrag imported their first foundation Sloughis, Murad and Taslima both from Schuru-esch-Schams in Germany. It should be remembered that all these early imports arrived in the UK before changes were made to the import regulations, meaning that they were forced to undergo a 6-month stay in quarantine kennels with inevitable effects on health and temperament.
Different types for different environments

To start with, I consider that today's narrow concept of "breed" is very specific to our "Western" civilisation subsequent to the early 1800s. From what I have been able to glean from reading various books and articles, the different types of sighthound (which have been turned into individual breeds by our Western world) all seem to have many areas of similarity and appear to have developed from one (or possibly more) ancient root stocks - gradually changing or evolving in different places to meet local conditions (weather, terrain, game to be hunted, and so on) and forming what we in our Western world now call "breeds" such as Saluki, Sloughi, Azawakh, Afghan, Galgo, Tazi, etc.

People living across Eastern, Middle Eastern and North African countries, on the other hand, and continuing to use their hounds for hunting and coursing game, appear to have bred primarily to type and performance - they were not looking for a static picture postcard of a dog for the show-ring, but a functional hunting hound that would look good, could perform well and catch them their supper. Obviously they would not be mixing true sighthounds with herding or street dogs but on the other hand I don't think they would have been unduly bothered by minor visual aspects of conformation, coat or colour, except maybe in terms of personal preferences, provided it had what they themselves considered to be the proper characteristics of a Sloughi.

The Sloughi’s type, colour and height all tend to vary not only from country to country, region to region (mountainous, desert, local preferences, etc…) but also in line with whatever species of game that its owners intended to hunt with it (hare, fox, jackal, gazelle, boar, etc…) and gradual changes in the flora and fauna of individual regions. Unfortunately for the Sloughi, the three countries where today it is still present in reasonable numbers (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) were forced to adopt certain French laws during their colonization, including one in 1844 which banned all hunting with hounds by sight (live coursing in other words), which led to the Sloughi being decimated by soldiers and European style hunters (with guns) who were authorized and even encouraged to shoot them on sight. In Morocco today, the Sloughi is only allowed to hunt vermin (such as jackals, foxes and wolves) although there is now a Moroccan association recently started up with Mohammed Soujaa at its head, with the aim of protecting and promoting the Sloughi and re-introducing some of the old methods of hunting other game (such as the hare once again) with the Sloughi and the falcon.

Algerian sloughis – (photos courtesy of Joseph Mangelsdorf)
Today, in some European countries, we are seeing the appearance in the show-ring of excessive homogeneity and even “hyper-type” in Sloughis which are tending to become very different from the slightly rustic Saharan hounds that they once were, especially in certain breeder “lines” where inbreeding has been the norm rather than the exception. This is not a good thing for the Sloughi’s genetic health and continued existence over time.

For Morocco, Moroccan veterinarian Dr. Yassine Jamali has this to say: "The increasing rarity of the Slougui in Morocco, the resultant inbreeding plus the crossbreeding with galgos point towards an uncertain future in this, the cradle of the breed. Its selection in Europe using morphological criteria based more on appearance than functionality, together with a more balanced but (over) plentiful diet is leading to an increase in stature - somewhat welcome - but also to an overly heavy bone structure and overly fleshy muscle structure, sometimes a thicker skin, a tail often too short, or lacking a ring at the end. However, this is distancing the Slougui from its true purpose - the chase, based on endurance and speed. Judging requirements, (entirely justified) in terms of ear carriage, silhouette, head shape, etc… should also encompass criteria considered as secondary in dog showing although essential in the choice of Moroccan hunters - skin, coat, neck, tail above all, tissues in general: in particular, the show-ring's "dictatorship of the measuring stick" must cease since it automatically eliminates certain subjects that may be "too big" or "too small" even though they might be excellent hunters and highly appreciated in the country of origin. A male measuring "only" 66 cm can be an excellent stud dog, the same as for a "giant" of 75 cm or more, if in other respects they are harmonious, well-proportioned, in conformity with the empirical criteria of the hunters who use the Slougui. As for inbreeding, this must be the exception rather than the rule, even if it means mating a bitch with a male that has done little winning but is genetically distant, and exchanges of stud dogs and matings need to be encouraged between the different regions of the Maghreb as well as between the Maghreb and Europe."
Appearance

The Sloughi's general appearance is that of a racy and elegant dog, with its bony structure showing visibly through its fine skin and lean muscles. However, despite its apparent slenderness, it is still a tough and active "working" hound that should be able to run all day long on hard and difficult terrain, without being too fine and delicate and therefore prone to injury.

Top-line is appreciably flat and horizontal, with a relatively short back. The loin is lean, wide and slightly arched, leading into a bony and oblique croup is bony from prominent pin bones.

The whip tail is slender, bony, without feathering or long hairs: it shows a definite curve at the end and must reach point of hock when passed under a hind leg. When the dog is in motion, the tail must not be carried higher than the top-line.

Shoulders are flat, lean, moderately oblique.

Chest is not too wide. It is well-developed in depth with the last ribs being fairly long and its lower edge barely reaching the level of the elbow.

Thighs are well let down but fairly flat.

Feet are thin, of an elongated oval shape, or the shape of a hare's foot in many of the lighter type of Sloughis. Nails are strong and black or very dark in colour.

Belly is tucked up but less so than in the Greyhound.

Limbs are lean, as though almost fleshless, with flat bones and tendons showing clearly. Hocks are close to the ground and angled without abruptness.
Head

The skull is flat, fairly wide across, rounded to the rear, sloping harmoniously down on the sides. Eye sockets are only slightly prominent. Without being too being heavy, the head is nonetheless slightly more substantial than in the Greyhound or the Saluki.

The ears are triangular in shape and rounding off slightly at their lower edge, hanging down at the side flat to the head, at the same height as the eyes or slightly above. They should not be too big. Rose ear, as in the Greyhound, is to be avoided.

The eyes are large, dark, well set in their sockets with dark pigmented eyelids. Their expression is gentle, a little sad or nostalgic. Pale ("bird of prey") eyes are not acceptable, although amber is not in fact considered to be a pale colour.

The stop is barely noticeable and, seen from above, the head is an elongated wedge shape, with the muzzle tapering in towards the nose but without exaggeration and jaws should be strong. The cranium and muzzle are the same length. The nose is black with reasonably open nostrils.

The nose, lips and mucous membranes are black.

General Daumas, in his book "The Ways of the Desert" (translated by Sheila M. Ohlendorf) had this to say in 1851 (for saluki in the text, read sloughi of course!). "The saluki of the Sahara is much superior to that of the Tell. He is of a tawny color, with a long narrow muzzle, wide forehead, short ears, muscular neck, very pronounced haunch muscles, no belly, clean legs, tendons prominent, hocks close to the ground, sole little developed, dry, the upper forelegs very long, the palate and tongue black, the hair very soft. Between the two ilia there should be room for four fingers; it is necessary that the tip of the tail, brought under the thigh, reach the bone of the haunch."
**Coat**

The coat is always short and fine, in the following colours:

**Sand** - all shades from palest cream (off-white) to fawn, with or without black mask

![Images of dogs with sand coat colors](image1)

**Brindle** (with or without black mask) - base from pale sand to dark brown with heavy or light black brindling.

![Images of dogs with brindle coat colors](image2)

**Black mantle on sand or brindle points** - black can be extensive or not, but there should always be traces of the paler colour on the points.

![Images of dogs with black mantle](image3)
Overlay (many sand colour pups are born with overlay but this generally fades or even disappears entirely by the time of adulthood)

Dilute colours such as blue or chocolate (even though they exist in the countries of origin, and have probably always done so), pure white (albino) and patches of white (other than a small amount tolerated on the chest) are all considered to be faults under European standards. There must always be good pigmentation of skin, eyelids, mucous membranes and nails, no matter what the base colour is.

**Height**

The FCI gives the following measurements in the English version of its breed standard for the Sloughi (slightly greater top height for both dogs and bitches than that indicated by the UK Kennel Club in its breed standard):

- **Dogs** 26-29 inches (66-72 cm)
- **Bitches** 24-27 inches (61-68 cm)

As recently as the 1964 FCI breed standard, the height shown for both dogs and bitches together was 55-75 cm.

I am told that there are still "giant" Sloughis to be found in Algeria which in some cases are known to reach 80 cm (apparently used rather like Borzois, for example, in the final stages of a boar hunt). Again, it seems to be a case of different types for different game and different environments.

**Temperament**

The Sloughi is naturally aloof, slightly reserved, nostalgic…. with eyes that often seem to be fixed on the open spaces of the desert that it has left behind somewhere in the past. It is utterly faithful to its human family (including children) and their friends, never forgetting someone that it has got to know. However, one must never forget that it is still instinctively the same hunter/chaser that it has always been, capable of bringing down its prey with a single bite. Although it enjoys its home comforts (preferably the best sofa or its owner's bed!!), it also needs good daily exercise and the opportunity from time to time to gallop without restraint across the land.
Activities - Lure-coursing

The Sloughi has always been an efficient and active sighthound, selected over the centuries of its existence for the qualities of speed, stamina, keenness and, of course, prey-drive. Since it is not allowed to hunt (or rather course) any more in most European countries, the closest alternative activity today is lure-coursing, at which it generally excels.

It also performs well on the race-track although this form of short bursts of fast running on a circular track tends, over time, to produce Sloughis with the somewhat bulky muscle mass of a sprinter as opposed to the flat muscles of a marathon runner.

Unfortunately the lure-coursing events currently organized in France, for example, seem to be designed more for smaller breeds such as Whippets since they are far too short and "technical" (with short sprints between sharp angled bends) for distance runners such as Sloughis and even certain of the larger sighthounds because of their size and weight (Deerhounds, Irish Wolfhounds and even Greyhounds).

In conclusion, there is obviously a lot more that can be said to expand on all the above subjects, but I hope that this little article covers most of the essential points!