

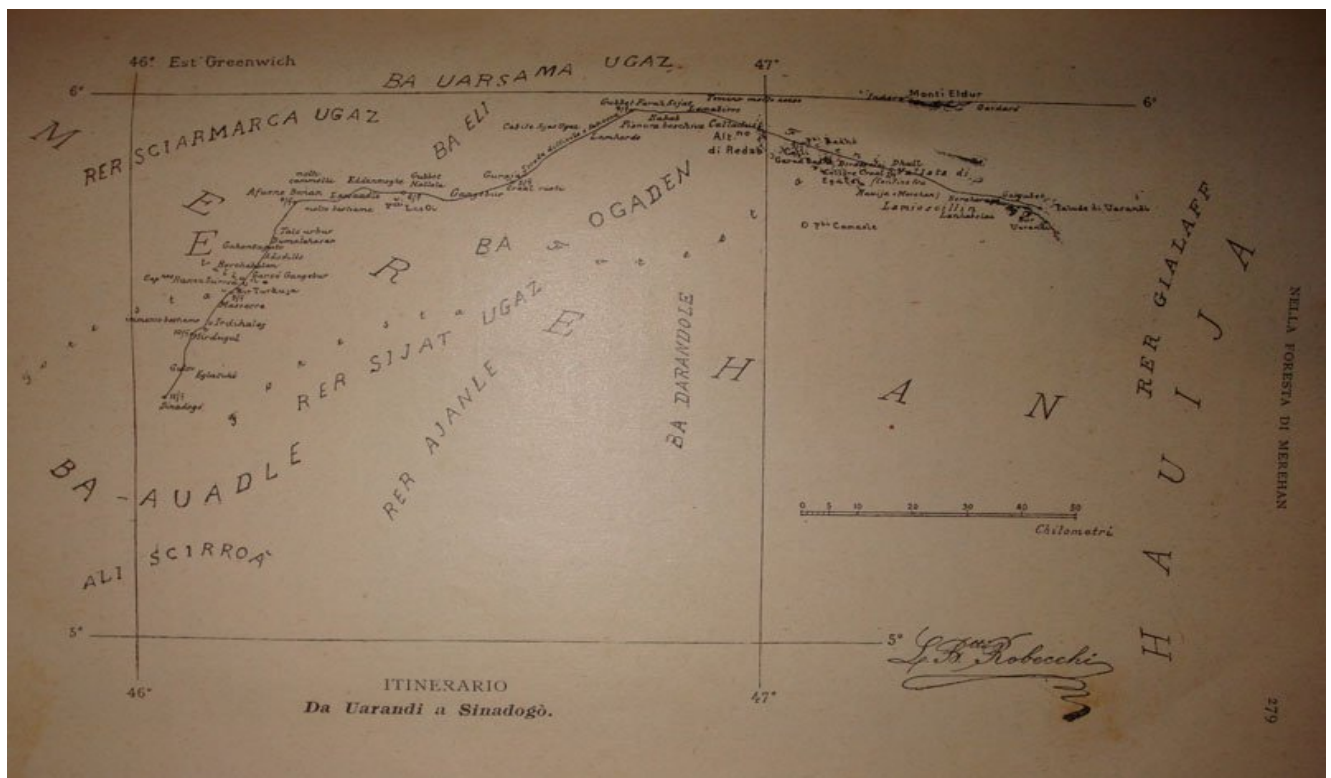
L. Bricchetti Robecchi's journey through Himan (Ximan) in 1890

By Mohammed Ibrahim Shire (Warsame101)

Who was Luigi Bricchetti Robecchi?

Luigi earned a footnote in the history of world exploration by becoming the first European traveller to cross the Horn of Africa. Through his journeys, he became acquainted with many Somali locals, both commoners and chiefs, young and old. As it was the norm and conduct of past famous explorers, he documented the natives' way of life, their cultural rules, and their interaction amongst each other as well as potential outsiders.

Since I have presented a clearer picture and captured the basic core of his purpose in the land of the Somali, I would like to focus on the main topic of this article, namely his journey through the region of Himan (Somali: Ximan); a region he documented in his book (Somalia e Benadir. Viaggio di esplorazione nell'Africa Orientale, 1899) through illustrations and descriptions. For those who are reading this word for the first time, Himan, in the pre-1960 Somalia, this name was allocated to a region that encompassed both the present-day Mudug and Galgadud regions in addition to certain sections of the Somali Ethiopian Region. It was a region, dwelled by various Somali clans, where the Marehan Somali clan formed the majority.



Map of Uarandi to Sinadogo - year 1890 (p.279)

His encounter with the local Marehan tribes

On the 2nd of July, 1890, Luigi and his hired guide embarked on this planned journey with one purpose in mind, meeting the Somali Marehan tribes. He writes (p.278):

“Procedetti traverse le prime terre dei Marehan lungo una serie di pianure leggermente ondulate, varie di arbusti spinosi e di acacia name a ventaglio, che danno a quella localita il nome di Derdere; oltre la quale lascio a sinistra i monticoli di Bhado, massa grigiastra che va man mano assottigliandosi sino a sfumare verso il pianoro di Egalej. Feci sosta ai pozzi di Bhado ove trovai una quantita di gente, la maggior parte della cabila Bah-Ogaden, una delle tante tribu Somali dei Marehan che abitano questo sito.

I dintorni di Badho sono occupati da Marehan della famiglie: Bah-Darandole, Rer Uarsama Ugaz, Ba-Eli sparsi dal Nord al NE, e dai Rer Osman e Siyad Ugaz verso Ovest

Il Sultanato dei Marehan comincia con Sultan Mohamed Daud conosciuto sotto il nome di Mahat il quale lascio quattro figli: Ahmed, Osman, Ali, Isaak. Il primo figlio Isse Ahmed Mohamed genero Jusuf Matan padre di Hussein che fu il primo Ugaz.”

Translation (roughly):

“After proceeding to the land of Marehan, I came across a site full of thorny shrubs and acacia named Derdere. Beyond these plains, I took left-turn to Bhado, where the ground fades towards the plateau of Egalej. I halted at the wells of Bahdo where its home to a section of the Marehan, the Bah-Ogaden.

The surrounding of Bahdo is occupied by several sections of the Marehan: the Bah-Darandole, Rer Warsame Ugaz, Eli who inhabit the North to North-East, Rer Osman and Rer Siyad Ugaz to the West.

The Sultanate of Marehan started with Sultan Mohamed Daud who had four sons, Ahmed, Osman, Ali and Isaak...”

He further describes the landscape of the Bhado area until he departed again the next morning to an area called Garad Badho. According to Luigi, it was an area anciently inhabited by the Gallas (Oromos). Their ancient tombs still marked the place and served as an indicator of their old presence. There he met the chieftain of Bah-Ogaden (pictured left), a man he described as a strong leader of a warlike tribe assuming responsibility for all his warriors. A man he eagerly wanted to add to his array collection of portraits. After much deliberation and initial reluctancy the chief himself, he finally consented and approved the drawing of the sketch portrait.



Capo dei Ba-ogaden (Merehan).

Chief of Bah-Ogaden (name unknown) p.285

The time came to depart. After exchanging goodbyes, he set his sight on moving further inland where they arrived at a place he referred to as Lamabulscio. It was home to the Rer Abdulle Siyad section of Marehan. It was in vicinity to a place called Gubet Farah, named after the sub clan Rer Farah Siyad.

He writes (p.280):

“Pernottai a Gubbet, altrimenti conosciuto per Gubbet Farah Siyad dal nome della cabila. Fu in questa localita che incomincio il supplizio delle corse dei cavalla.”

He continued his journey and met with several local tribes. There he encountered the Fiqi Yusuf branch of Eli tribe. A tribe observantly described as a clan of wadado (religious leaders).

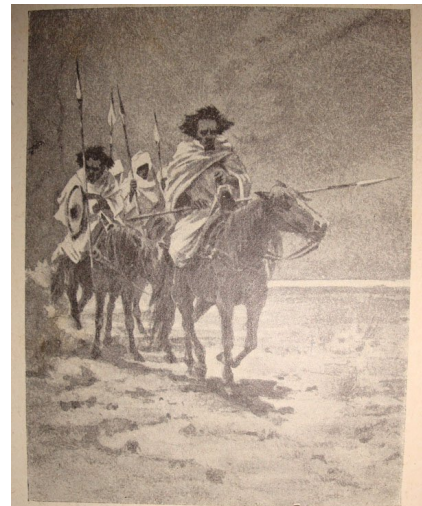
He writes (p.281):

“La cabile dei Rer Eli, conosciuta comunemente col nome di Rer Fiqi Yusuf componesi di numeroso famiglie, che vivone sparse fra le altre tribu menzionate, esercitando esclusivamente per tradizione la professione di wadad (prete).”

Translation (roughly):

“The sub clan of Eli known as Fiqi Yusuf is composed amongst numerous of families. They live scattered amongst the other tribes of Marehan and their main profession are wadado (religious leaders).”

He was pleasantly surprised at the level of hospitality. He even remarked that the level of hospitality was so overbearing that he was forced to depart early. He headed to the West where he encountered a vast forest and villages inhabited by Rer Siyad Ugas. Preceding his arrival, he encountered a corps of warriors belonging to the Rer Siyad Ugas. Suspicion dawned on their leader after noticing the European standing out his batch of bodyguards and guides. Calm prevailed once the hired guides worked their magic and explained the purpose of Luigi's visit. They asked whether he could stay and observe the tribe and vicinity they populated to which the corps leader agreed. This provided him with the opportunity to take notes of the flora and fauna surrounding him.

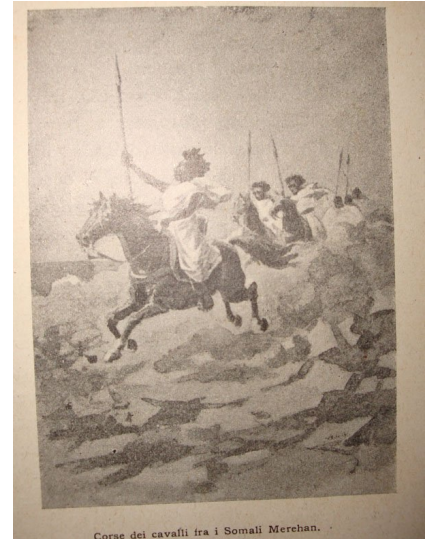


Rer Sijat-Ugaz (Merehan).

A Corps of Warriors from the Rer Siyad Ugas
Branch of Marehan (p.284)

He continued further where he came across an area inhabited by the Rer Ali Shirwa Ugas Sharmake. Up to 300 horse riders of the Bah Dhulbahante branch of Rer Ugas Sharmake were getting geared up for a horse-race contest with other sections of Marehan. Tribes gathered and the skilled riders demonstrated their pride by galloping their horses, watching warriors making guttural cries whilst lifting their spears as a sign of support to their fellow tribesmen. Whilst these races resembled the Arab variant of horse-racing, the only dissimilarity that struck Luigi was the treatment of the horses.

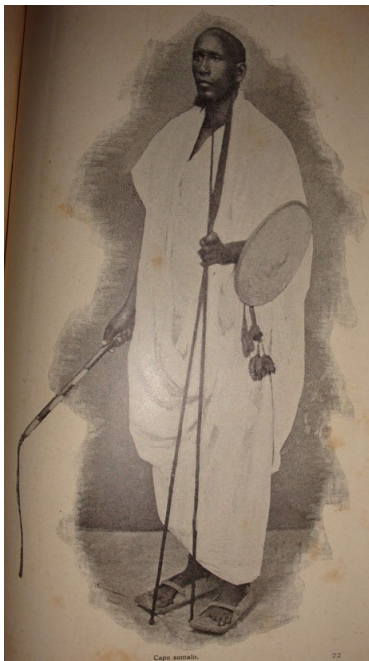
The Somalis, unlike the Arab Bedouins, lack the compassionate method of controlling their horses whilst trotting. An observation that stood out and uncomfortably unbearable to watch for the average horse lover.



Corse dei cavalli fra i Somali Merehan.

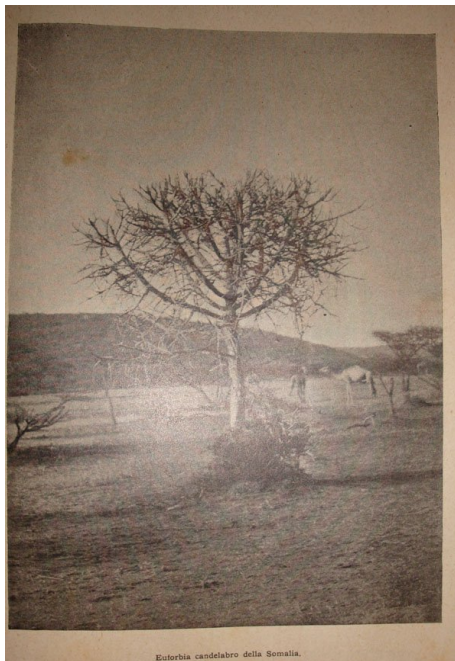
Horse-racing amongst the Marehan Somali
p.281

After concluding the horse-racing, Luigi managed to have a sit-down with a powerful chief of the Marehan, the chieftain of the Bah-Darandole, from him he obtained valuable information and insight pertaining the Somali etiquette, how conflict is resolved, war is waged and ties are forged. Upon noting the last bit of information, he headed back to Mogadishu until ultimately returning to Italy.



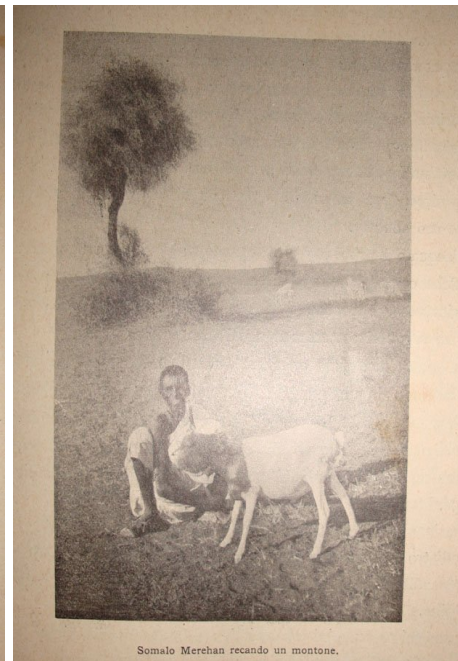
Capo somalo.

Somali Chieftain (name unknown) (p.291)



Euphorbia candelabro della Somalia.

Euphorbia candelabrum in Himan Somalia
(p.289)



Somalo Merehan recando un montone.

A Marehan Somali with a Somali sheep (p.293)

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