

KAN YA MA KAN SALUKI - Roberto Forsoni

When I did some research about Italy, that is, the Saluki Dabka's Italy, and not the country, I found the breeder and judge Roberto Forsoni. I found this interview made some years ago, and I started to e-mail Roberto, also knowing that this breeder will come to Sweden 2015 to judge our well known Saluki Show in July at Tammsvik. He was positive to update the interview with some new questions from me and sending me photos, a lot of interesting photos.

A good Saluki is a typical example of what is beautiful to see, and Roberto's words to breeders and judges are - focus on moderation, grace and symmetry.

His love for Saluki started in 1990 and now, after 12 litters, he will tell us the story of the KAN YA MA KAN SALUKI.

What did you find so charming about Saluki that made you choose them as your favorite dog breed?

My passion for dogs started a long time ago, I may say it was almost inborn. My love for the Saluki breed started in 1990 when I was 23 years old and I participated in my first dog show. In 1991 I had my first Saluki, Atash. He wasn't a good show dog, but he really changed my life.

A great passion for this breed started, for its origin and for everything it represents but above all for its special temperament and for the elegance the breed expresses.

I started to inform myself in the usual ways: buying some English and American magazines and contacting (by mail) the most important breeders. Unfortunately, but as well luckily, internet wasn't easily available at that time. The net gives you a great amount of information but most of it is superficial information; if you want to study an uncommon breed as the Saluki the best way is reading specific and old books and magazines.

How did you choose the name for your kennel?

In 1996 my wife Stefania and I decided to go to the Middle East for our honeymoon hoping to see some Salukis in their country of origin, and among all the trips offered there was one called "Kan Ya Ma Kan", which was explained like this: "Kan Ya Ma Kan is the way Arabs start to tell fairytales to children, as we say 'once upon a time'...To be honest, the Arab version has a really untranslatable meaning, which reminds of things made in a kind of old style way, as if our historical memory is still in our present and we can't live without it"

It was a lucky coincidence, and that name had to be my kennel name, since it really meant what I considered to be the essence of the Saluki, a very ancient breed that is still preserved today as it was "a long time ago". When the FCI accepted my name I was really happy.

In your opinion, what is the best thing in breeding dogs?

The satisfaction in planning a breeding, making an evaluation of parents; the miracle of birth and the delight when I see them growing up is something incomparable. The most interesting thing is seeing the litters again after



Ch Mata Salamata Mahali "Cindy" with Roberto

one year, and be able to check if my previous ones were right.

Can you tell us something about your first Salukis?

My first show dog was Mabrooka Sariyah, Italian Champion, Reproducer Champion and mother of 5 Italian Champions; she arrived to Italy from Scotland in 1996 thanks to Anne MacDonald. Breeding was already in my plans and I just wanted to start with a typical English Saluki.

The English blood lines were to me the true classic Saluki, I loved so much Ch Saklawi

Bishah of Mabrooka ("Bambi"), Ch Mabrooka Miraya and many English Salukis of the 70's and 80's.

My own Ch Mabrooka Sariyah ("Sari") wasn't perfect but she had an extraordinary breed type, that allowed her to get a RBIS in a national allbreed show when she was only 13 months.

From the beginning my goal was working with a typical Saluki, as English dogs quite often were, this harmonized with a good movement and a charisma that often come with the American origins.

The choice of my second blood line was the Baghdad Kennel, by Ron Chato and Paula Bockman, Australian with American origins. In 1997 we imported, the never forgotten, "Ambi" (Baghdad Ambassador), son of the marvelous Ch Baghdad Talk of the Town.

Ambi was a Saluki with a presence you have rarely seen. Mated to "Sari", he gave me my first litter, which was among the best I have ever bred and from which we got the multi champion Al Lu Lua Min Layla.

Which are the blood lines you based your breeding on?

My breeding plan is essentially based on the-

se two blood lines, which are obviously compatible, as Anne MacDonald used the Baghdad line for the J litter some years after. That litter consisted of wonderful Salukis, among them the famous Ch Mabrooka Jayid, who was BOB at Crufts in 2002 and 2005, and in 2002 he also won the Best of Group.

Jayid is the father of my D-litter, from which I got "Dighli" (Ch Kan Ya Ma Kan Deglet Nour). "Dighli" was Top Sighthound 2005 in Italy and father of my E- and J-litter, and he was also father of the J-litter of the Mata Salamata kennel in Germany and of the I-litter of the Dabka's kennel in Sweden.

For my F-litter another line was introduced, a line which I have always admired for its typical elegance and grace, the Mata Salamata. In 2009 I also imported Ch Mata Salamata's Mahali. She is the mother of my recent litter born in 2013.

In 2003 my friend Ombretta Casazza and I imported "Zimmo" (Ch Aziim Alfora Noble Kan Ya Ma Kan), grandson of "Bashir" (Ch Clarinda Sunna Sarea Bashir).

"Bashir" was already in my breeding, as in 1999 I used one of his sons, living in Sweden, at Baklava's, "Tyler", Ch Sundown Shamshi Adad (brother of the American record girl Ch Sundown Alabaster Treasure), for my B-litter. "Zimmo" gave us only one litter of one puppy, "Ghibli" (Ch Kan Ya Ma Kan Gale). Generally I use my best specimen one or maximum two times. There are two reasons for this: the first is that in a quite rare breed as the Saluki the gene pool is restricted, so using a male many times could pauperize the gene variety.

The second reason is that I would like to use a male more times when I will find my ideal male to give my kennel a strong imprinting, but this hasn't happened yet. Maybe it won't happen, because as time passes, I've become more critical and demanding with my own dogs.

It's impossible to breed the perfect dog

Do your initial choices satisfy the results you have achieved so far?

Absolutely they do, I mean, the benefits more than outweigh the disadvantages. Well, if you ask me if I got the ideal Saluki, luckily I have to say no, because this is my goal, and once I have achieved it my work will end. We breed for an ideal and this has to be forever. In my opinion, it's impossible to breed the perfect dog for two reasons: the goal is hard to reach and the more years that pass, the more critical one becomes.

Clearly, I've never met the ideal Saluki, I saw and I had some extraordinary dogs, but they were never ideal nor perfect. Just close to ideal.

How did you use inbreeding, line breeding and outcrossing in your breeding plans?

When people start breeding it is normal to use outcrossing. Everyone has a different own personal idea of how a Saluki has to be. We breed because we have the 'illusion' that we can add something positive to our breed and because we think we can achieve the perfect Saluki using specific dogs from specific kennels. That's why a breeder is born.... We use line breeding to work with what we introduced. When it comes to inbreeding, today I have a different idea, but years ago, for my C-litter, I used two half-siblings, and, for my E litter, nephew and grandmother. I was very lucky because I have not encountered any genetic problem and I did not keep any puppies from these litters. Inbreeding was once a fairly common practice to test health problems and to fix type, but today I think we need to minimize the risk of giving birth to dogs with problems. Therefore, although in Italy there is no restriction, I avoid to make close breeding.

In your opinion which is your best Saluki? "Ghibli" (Multi Ch Kan Ya Ma Kan Gale) ow-



**Ch Kan Ya Ma Kan Deglet Nour, 3 years.
Father of Ch Dabka's Italy.**



**Ch Al Lu Lua Min Layla, grandmother to Ch Dabka's I-litter,
mother to D- and F-litter.**

ned by Mr And Mrs Panizza, he is by Ch. Azim Alfora Noble Kan Ya Ma Kan x Ch. Baghdad Let's Dance. A correct male with a great movement and with something special that only the best have.

Which results have satisfied you most?

Every breeder achieves some goals during the years. In 16 years as a breeder I've produced and/or owned 53 Salukis, they won 65 championships, among them 20 Italian champions; so far no other Italian breeder has achieved so much. During all those years there are some victories I consider very important: the BOB in Donaueschingen in Germany in 2009 and 2008 with "Gale" - that time Mata Salamata's Jade (Deglet Nour's daughter) got the BOS - and the BIS with "Gale" in a Specialty Sighthound Show in 2008 in Italy, and certainly the BIS Puppy this year at the Goteborg My Dog shows in Sweden that "Assisi" (Kan-Ya-Ma-Kan Luqmaan) achieved both days.

But what satisfied me the most was when important and estimated European breeders used Kan Ya Ma Kan males to enrich their breeding program. This is, in my opinion, not comparable to a single victory, but means more, being a highly valuable appreciation of my long term work as a breeder.

The hunting ability is more a mental attitude than a physical one

The Salukis and lure coursing, their job, talk about your experiences.

In 1993 I founded the Baraka Club, a club whose mission is to organize Racing and Coursing. The Baraka Club organized the first official lure coursing in Italy and the first one with CACIL. I believed, and I still believe in

the sport activity of our Sighthound, but I do have my own opinion about the functionality of these tests. I think these tests cannot give definitive information about our dogs' ability to hunt, so we cannot consider them as a work in the real meaning of the word; they can give us information about the "run after ability", about their skills, about their endurance and speed, but they cannot give us indications on the abilities to catch the prey in the best way, and this is the difference between a Sighthound and other dogs, so what we would like to know and we cannot do using these tests: all the dogs can learn how to run after, many dogs can be agile or fast, but only the Sighthounds have the inborn skill to chase running after the prey, and it won't be easy to keep this inborn ability.

We know that if we don't bred for a character we lose it in few generations. The hunt ability is more a mental attitude than a physical one and is not easy to maintain also because chase is banned in most countries.

If this is your belief, why do you take part in lure coursing?

Because the dog enjoys itself, because it helps to keep it in good shape, because I observe the physical strength, the body strength, the skill to change course in very little space and the ardor it expresses.... but I'll never know if it will be a good hunter. So I attend sometimes lure coursing because it gives me all these informations without being decisive.

Are there any Salukis of the past that you will be proud to produce and why?

I have admired many Salukis of the past I saw in a picture or in a video, but in my opinion making a good evaluation needs to see a dog live. So among all I've seen live I would say

that Ch Mata Salamata's Jadaan Khan is the one who impressed me most, for his type and beautiful movement. He was better in real life than on photos, as every dog with charisma is.

The type, the structure and the movement

What are the characters (male and female) you based the choice of your breedings on?

In my opinion, in the evaluation of a Saluki we must consider 3 categories: the type, the structure and the movement.

First there are, at the same level, type and movement, and then structure. I mean I can tolerate some little lacks in structure, but it's hard for me to tolerate lacks of type and poor movement; a good movement implies a good structure.

I love to see an elegant movement, as elegant as every Sighthound should be, proper as a proper movement expressed by a proper structure has to be, and above all, proud as a dog with very good temper has to be.

A dog who is vigorous in the ring will be more vigorous in a hunting field, and on the contrary, it's well known, that a dog who is very lazy in the ring could be indolent to external stimulus, outside the ring, as well.

How important for you is temperament in comparison to the functional beauty?

Temperament is obviously very important. According to the standards Salukis are reserved with strangers, but this doesn't mean they are neither shy nor aggressive with people. In their origin countries Salukis are reluctant but



Roberto with Loristan at the airport going in Sweden.



Ch Kan Ya Ma Kan Gale, father of the I- and L-litter.



Dual Champion Kan Ya Ma Kan Inaya on lure coursing

absolutely not fearful. In the past I had some dogs with a little less friendly (outgoing) character, so I worked on this feature, and now, I have to say, that the “risk” is that my dogs are too friendly.

That happened especially after my children were born. I have to say, children make a perfect socialization for puppies; better than any training.

Do you think that Salukis still follow the standard in Italy and abroad?

The standard is not so restrictive, so it allows a huge variability, a variability we look for because of the wide area of origin. But the problem is not the respect of the standard, but lack of type. For example, the standard doesn't say anything about head planes, so if you have a Saluki with very divergent head planes you are not out of standard, but surely you have no more the typical expression of a Saluki so, lack of type.

As all the Sighthound and Salukis are great hunters, do you think there are dogs able to excel both in their job and in shows?

Yes. Where live hunting is allowed (this is the only “job” to consider) there are dogs which are champions in both specialties.

For years you were publisher of a Sighthound magazine. How did you develop the project and why, unfortunately, did this experience end?

The Baraka Book was born in 1995, from a need for knowledge for me. For years I had been in touch with other breeders, to whom I used to ask many questions, and I was sure that, because nothing similar existed at that time in Italy, many others were in my situation. So I opened the magazine to all Sighthound breeds in Group 10, and the Baraka was born. I still want to thank all of the collaborators for the wonderful adventure.

The name came from an Arab word they used to call Salukis, this means “the blessed”.

The magazine needs an important commitment and dedication, things I couldn't longer keep up with after 9 years.

How many litters do you have produced?

In 16 years I have produced 12 litters.

How do you choose the most promising puppy?

This is a “sad” subject. It's always difficult to choose a puppy, so I really appreciate those who are able to make an evaluation already when the puppies are born, without hesitation. Anyway, at 8 weeks I love to see smooth lines, and attitude, at 12 weeks movement. From my experience, a puppy with a faulty movement at 12 weeks doesn't improve with age.



Ch Mata Salamata's Mahali - the future for Kan Ya Ma Kan breeding!

The BOB only is important, the rest is show!

Do you think that the Show World has changed since the day you started?

Not so much, but now the new generations are more superficial and especially more arrogant. They claim to become experts in little time, after having seen photos on FB....

If you see yourself in the future, how do you imagine your kennel's development?

I'm not looking for striking results, that's why my presence at national and international shows occurs mainly when I have to finish Italian championship.

Collecting championship titles before the name of a dog has a very poor meaning for me, maybe I am ... old style. The real difference is between a champion dog and a dog which does not have the characteristics to become champion, but what makes the difference between a champion and a multi champion is only the kind of investment we are ready to make.

I may "sound extremist", but I can say that in dog competitions the BOB (Best Of Breed) only is important, the rest is show but has nothing to do with the breeding affair.

A good breeder has to know when to change direction

My goal is high quality constantly over time, and all this, working with small groups, at the moment I'm living with 6 Salukis. I give a special attention to health as well. A good breeder is not one who ignores problems, but neither one who gives up when there's a problem. A good breeder has to know when to change course in the right direction when there's an obstacle.

You have been in contact with the Swedish Salukis; using Monika Nilssons, Baklava's, import Ch Sundown Shamsi-Adad, exported Ibrahim (born 2008-05-28) to Dabka's kennel and now this year the litterbrothers Luqmaan, owner Elisabet Levenskog and Loristan, owner Anna Morsing (born 2013-06-22). But I think the most impact your salukis have done to our genepool up to today are through Dabka's I-litter (born 2008-03-15), when Liz-Marie Seiholm Persson and Anders Persson choose Deglet Nour to their Dabka's Cassandra. The litter includes the Salukimale of the Year in Sweden 2012 and 2013 Italy, Ikaros and the championbitches Ishana, Izzie and Isis. Please tell us something about these relations to Sweden.

I have a good connection with Sweden's Salukis as I consider them among the best. I visited Sweden many times over the years and admired many of them.

Also for my K litter I used a Swedish dog of American origin (Multi Ch. Shiraz California Dreamin') but I am following also some pure Swedish lines to possibly include them in my breeding program.

When Liz and Anders contacted me to use Deglet Nour I was very happy. I don't give my stud if I don't like the female and the blood-



Kan Ya Ma Kan Jericko, exported as puppy to Croatia.



Ch Baghdad True Charisma at 1 year, mother of the I- and J-litter.

line behind (also new owners know I have to approve of eventual matings) but I truly loved Cassandra and her pedigree. In that case my goal was fully reached, as the entire litter is of very high quality. Unfortunately, at that time I was not able to keep a puppy...

Do you have had some health problems through the years as a breeder? Something you would share with us?

I had few problems to note, a lymphoma on a male at 4 years, fertility on a female; none of these subjects and the littermates left progeny in my breeding. Gale's father died at over 9 years of age for heart disease, so therefore we check Gale frequently, and he is completely free at over 8 years. Adamantea died at 5 because of meningitis. Adad Ghair Munthadir died at over 10 for pulmonary emphysema.

I think every breeder must be honest and admit every problem he has, to improve the strength of the breed, but you can act in this way only if you truly love the breed and its preservation. Saluki breeders form a very, very good community, but unfortunately some in the show scene today follow only personal success...

I think that if we want to go back to a healthier dog-love, we should not consider the dog-love as a business or a way to achieve personal success. We must let the dog hold the spot light, the health of dogs would benefit by that.

How do you rear and place your puppies? You have sold puppies outside Italy and recently two males to Sweden. Some other countries you have exported puppies to?

I rear puppies in strict contact with my family, with my children always around them. I have exported to Sweden, Croatia and USA. I place puppies mainly in family, and far from us only if I know the new owner or if I have good references from friends of mine. I take great care to place puppies as I think it's terrible to re-home them, so I try to avoid that situation at the beginning.

Why did you decide to become a Saluki judge?

I started my procedure to become a judge to have the chance to better see and know Salukis. If you observe dogs from the ring side you will get less information than what you can get

as a judge who can touch them.

I judge Salukis since 2007 and now also Greyhound, Afghan hound, Italian Greyhound, Borzoi, Whippet, Irish Wolfhound and Azawakh.

What kind of experience is judging to you? Could you compare judging experiences in the different countries you have judged?

I have judged Saluki specialty shows in Italy, Australia, Finland and USA. I have to say that generally our breed is in very good hands; we have many very responsible breeders, especially compared with other breeds; in every country I found more than few very nice examples of the breed; in every specialty I jud-

ged Salukis to die for, and I have to say that there are not so big differences in type as some years ago. Probably AI and the facility to move has contributed to more uniformity and quality.

Please tell us something about your last litter.

I am so satisfied with my last litter, not only because at 6 months of age some of them have had great results in the show ring, but first of all because they are all of great quality, temperament and type, and they are so loved by the new owners, and this is the most wonderful result for a breeder, in my opinion.

Do you have plans for the future?

I plan another litter from Cindy (Ch. Mata Salamata Mahali) in 2015, and from then and on I work with our creams girls, Kan Ya Ma Kan Khaleesi (Ch Shiraz California Dreamin' x Ch Kan Ya Ma Kan Inaya) and our very young Kan Ya Ma Kan Laily (Ch Kan Ya Ma Kan Gale x Ch Mata Salamata's Mahali); they represent the synthesis of my best work as breeder up to now; but since I breed one litter every 1 or 2 years we can say that this is my plans for the next five years.

Focus on moderation, grace and symmetry

Is there something that we missed and that you would like to tell us?

I would urge judges and breeders to focus on 3 fundamental words of the standard: moderation, grace and symmetry.

"Anyway, without talking at length, we will define beauty as the harmony of all the limbs, in the unity of which they are part of, based on a specific law, so that you cannot add or remove or change anything without worsening it"
Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472 Italy)

A perfect quote to describe Salukis.



Socialization; children and puppies - the best combination.



**Two friends meet again after some months!
(Kan Ya Ma Kan Karadjah)**



Ch Mabrooka Sariyah

If we use this quote literally we will eliminate the excesses and extremism that we sometimes see in some victorious Salukis.

Salukis have a basic and simple beauty that comes from the oldest form of appreciation: harmony. A good Saluki is a typical example of what is beautiful to see.

We Saluki breeders are fortunate to have chosen a breed that has no equal in the world of dog breeds; rarely other races have been preserved over the years as the Saluki. If today we had Bedouin Caliph in the rings he would be as successful as 50 years ago, if we look at other breeds 50 years ago they would be almost unrecognizable. We have a precious inheritance to preserve. All our efforts must go towards preservation of type.

Roberto judging at the Finnish Salukispecialty 2009

photo by ©Pasi Soinen



Robertos future, his bitchpuppy in the last litter; Kan Ya Ma Kan Laily at 6 months



A Harley daughter; Kan Ya Ma Kan Khaleesi (Ch Shiraz California Dreamin' x Ch Kan Ya Ma Kan Inaya) as puppy 4 months old?



Ch Kan Ya Ma Kan Jezebel