

## The Abamarama

[N.B. Their totem is *Ikhulo* (waterbuck)]

The history of the Abamarama dates back to about two thousand years ago. Its origin is connected with Bukachi who lived at Ebubukachi (Kaugagi in Alego). Bukachi was the father of Wetsochi who was in turn Wamukhula's father. Wamukhula left Ebubukachi and, following the River Lukose (Yala), eventually arrived in Marama at a place called Hebubi. It was here that he got a third son, Mutobera, the other two - one of whom was Bukachi Wesamba - having been born at Ebubukachi.

After a brief sojourn at Hebubi, he came to Shihunya where he found the Abalukhambi. He lived there for a short time and then moved on to Mwikobero which was inhabited by the Abashihongo. From there he moved on again to Mungusi where he found the Abakisiru (Abashisiru?). Once more, he moved on this time to Matsaka Shikanga where he lived for some time with his son Wesamba.

Now, it so happened that while the migrants were still staying here, the local inhabitants called Abaseta plotted to assassinate Wesamba. They even invited his father Wamukhula to the meeting which was designed to make the necessary arrangements for the murder. Somehow, the news of the plot reached Wesamba through a certain woman; as a result, he ran away. When, therefore, his father came wailing (he presumed his son had actually been killed), Wesamba came forth and told him: "Do not kill anybody (revenge) for I am alive."

As a result of all this, Wesamba separated from his father (at Matsaka) and came to Emuyundi where he lived among the Abamufumu Abamangoe. His father Wamukhula stayed behind with his (Wamukhula's) uncle Wangerera who became his elder. In the same way, Wesamba acknowledged the authority of the Abamufumu among whom he now lived.

Later, Wamukhula died at Ematsaka; he was survived by two sons, Bukachi Wesamba and Mutobera. The former was the elder and, therefore, his father's successor (heir?). However, owing to the selfishness of Wesamba, and by contrast due to generosity of Mutobera's mother, the young Mutobera was made the successor. Mutobera was in turn succeeded by his son Alakonya (Walakonya).

Walakonya's daring and strength, which were clearly demonstrated when he recovered stolen cattle from the Abasebe (Masai or Nandi?), won him a bride called Matuli from the Abatere clan. When Wetere (the bride's father) saw that Walakonya had recovered the cattle from the Abasebe, he asked his father Mutobera for "the cow which had one teat and which yielded about three gallons (twice a day?)". When Mutobera told him that he himself needed the cow for its milk, Wetere offered to give his daughter to Mutobera to marry if only the latter would give him the cow.

Mutobera told him that there was nobody to marry the girl since his son was still under seclusion having lately killed an Omusebe (singular of Abasebe). However, Wetere

suggested that the girl should go and stay with Mutobera until the boy's seclusion period was over when they would marry. This suggestion was accepted by Mutobera who, accordingly, took the said girl, "Matuli (daughter) of Mayebeya". But Wetera was not given the cow he had asked for; instead he was given three others. Afterwards Mutobera died.

Alakonya had four sons with Matuli — Matuli, Mukoiwe, Muchelule, and Yinda. His second wife called Wanakambuli was envious of Matuli who therefore thought it best to bring a girl called Wangulu, the daughter of Kifumbi (Shifumbi?) for her husband to marry. Wangulu became the mother of Wandulusia and Nangoye whose descendants all died out.

### **The separation of the Abamarama and the Abatamanyini**

Onihaka-Mwafusi son of Alakonya used to pay frequent visits to the sons of Wesamba he always took his harp with him on these visits. Whenever he went to the home of Shisoka son of Wesamba (who was bent double on account of his extreme old age) and found him seated, he always asked him: "Sir, in which place did it appear? (this is a saying connected with the hunting of guinea fowls. Because the back of the guinea fowl resembles the bent figure of an old man, the question is used derogatively by young people to deride old folk).

After Omuhaka's departure people used to tell the old man that the young man was simply deriding him and that he was obviously referring to his figure and not to the guinea fowls. At this the old man always moaned saying: "I wish I had a son to fight with him." And when the old man's son called Wandanje Olunywenywe heard all this, he decided to fight with Omuhaka Mwafusi the next time he came.

The plan was that the visiting relative would be caught unawares and killed; a cow and a sheep would then be tied close by his body to mislead people into thinking that "the victim was a thief and that he had been caught red-handed". In those days the murder of a thief was the normal practice. And so Omuhaka Mwafusi was murdered as planned.

But some people came from the scene of the murder and told Alakonya, the dead man's father, that in reality the boy had not been caught stealing. The murderers had merely tied the animals near the young man's body to justify their evil deed. Alakonya therefore attacked the people of Shisoka and fought with them; he then returned home with his victorious fighters singing. From that time the two branches of the Abamarama clan, the Abamarama group under Mutobera and the Abatamanyini, began to intermarry although they had a common ancestor, Wetsochi son of Bukachi.

### **Warfare**

Alakonya fought with the Abashieni and defeated them; some fled away. He also fought with the Aberechea and defeated them; some of them fled to the Luo country. The Abatere, Abakuli, and the Abamulukuyu were also defeated by him.

At one time Alakonya and Mukolwe fought with the Abamani and defeated them. A few days later, Litalusia, whose mother belonged to the Abamani clan, and Chibayi, the father of Shirwakha, and Wakhobe, the father of Muchingasia, went to the country of the Abamani to loot property.

While they were thus engaged; a certain old woman told the local people (Abamani) that some of the enemy who had attacked them were in the village drinking beer. And so the Abamani came and killed Wakhobe and Chibayi but spared Litalusia because he was their “grand-child”, i.e. his mother belonged to their clan. However, when Litalusia killed his maternal cousin, the Abamani bluntly told him “We had spared your life because your mother belongs to our clan. Now, however, we have got to kill you.” And so they killed him and the number of the dead now became three. And this is the origin of the saying: “Litalusia died in his mother’s clan.”

In the fighting which took place at Khwikobero Ebutita in the country of the Abamanyulia, the Abakhobole, Abatsotso, Abamanyulie, and the Abamani united against the Abamarama. In this fighting, the Abamarama were defeated twice. The victors then nicknamed them Omukunda mubuse, i.e. meaning that they were as easy to defeat as it is easy to plant crops in a garden that has been previously dug.

When fighting broke out for the third time, Lukoko son of Watsulu from Eshianda killed Eshimeshera of the Abamani and Toboso killed Omuyonga of the Abamanyulia. The Abamarama now subdued the enemy and made them their subjects.

Further fighting between the Abamarama and the Abatamanyini and their allies, the Abakhobole, took place at Khwikobero. In this war, Mande and Namayi killed Murikaye and Namayi son of Wangwe killed Ishieri son of Omwai of the Abamanyulia clan.

Furthermore, Libuyu son of Shikangu killed an Omutamanyini (singular of Abatamanyini) clansman; Omuhaka son of Kutswa from Eshiatsala killed Wambunya the ruler of the Abatamanyini; and Muchelule Atundo killed Nasengo of the Abamalinya (Abamanyulia?) clan. Countless Abatamanyini people were killed in this war.

As against this the Abamarama lost the following dead: Omutobe son of Shianda, Omukote son of Namwendwa (from Emauko) Shireku from Eshikangu, Wandachi from Shishebu, and Ocholi from Shishebu. After they had buried their dead, the Abamarama retreated from the lands they had wrested from the enemy as their people were too few to secure their occupation of the area.

Later, however, Wambuluhli son of Mukungu of the Abang’onya clan of the Abatsotso came to the home of a person called Muroka by night. With him was a freshly made shield on which was tied a banana fibre to symbolise peace. On arriving at Muroka’s, he handed over the shield to him. Next day, the Abamarama conferred with one another as to what to do about the feelers for peace which had been sent out by “the Western Omwami

(ruler)". In the end they resolved to allow the Abatsotso to return and settle at Ebutamanyini. In this way, peace was established.

In the course of time further fighting broke out between the Abatsotso and the Abamarama. The Abatsotso led the Abasebe to the home of Wambaisi, the father-in-law of Toboso, to steal his cattle. When, therefore, the Abamarama heard that a lot of Wambaisi's cattle had been stolen, they attacked the Abatsotso who lived at Imanga. In this fighting, the Abamarama lost Owechenya, Yinda, son of Shikutsi, and Indika son of Wandesho of the Abamuyira clan, dead. Wangulu son of Shisa (of the Abashisa?) who lived among the Abamarama managed to kill one of the enemy.

The next fighting with the Abatsotso took place at Hamanga where Toboso Waswani killed an Omutsotso (singular of Abatsoto) called Mangala and where Nzibule also killed a person called Wamakwa.

In the third fighting, Omulalu son of Washimala killed Omusindobole, the ruler of the Abatsotso who was known as "Omukuteloba son of Elakola". As against this, the Abatsotso killed Omuchunya (of the Abachenya clan?). Omushibanga (of the Abashibalanga) and Omuhaka of the Abashiatsala. However, we managed to drive them from Mumachifu.

In the fourth fighting which broke out later, the Abatsotso killed Omukongolo from Shiatsala. Then when the Abamarama relatives of the deceased went to the home of his mother for the customary fulfilment of the funeral rites (okhuyira eshinini), two of their men called Wakhubula and Olukaka killed an Omutsotso man.

The fifth fighting between the Abatsotso and the Abamarama was marked by the latter's siege of the Ebumamu village of the Abatsotso. Many women and children were captured; one of these captives, called Shitandi, lives among the Abamani where she is married. From then on the Abatsotso were completely subdued. The Ugenya Luo had not yet arrived in the country at that time.

### **The war between the Abamarama and the Gem Luo**

Formerly, the Abashisa lived in the Nyamuninia area (of Gem). Then, one day, a hyena killed some of their sheep and disappeared. This made the Abashisa to go out and kill that hyena. But, as they were looking for it, they came across the Abakami (Gem Luo). Seeing that the latter were starving, the Abashisa attacked them with a view to taking their cattle.

However, they were overpowered by the Abakami and, in the event, fled to Marama where they lived at Itako in the heart of Marama. The Abamarama reacted by attacking the Abakami who succeeded in repelling them. Their dead fighters included Chibole and Namayi's son, both from Shikulu, Washuma son of Walutseshe from Eshibembe, and Shitandi from Shiatsala. The Abashisa therefore left Marama and went to the Eshibinga forest across the River Olukose (Yala).

Next they (the Abakami) attacked the Abasamia and drove them to Ebulakayi. So that the Abakami now occupied Ebuyangayangwe Itatiro. They then attacked the Abamarama and occupied the Eshianda section. The Abashianda (of Eshianda) therefore came to live at Emauko. Then again they drove out the Abatayi, who therefore came to live at Eshikulu and Emahongoyo, and the Abarecheya (Aberecheya) some of whom came to live at Shiatsala while the rest went to live among the Abakami. The Abashieni were defeated next; some of them stayed on at Emuyira in Amwayi's village.

The battle field was next transferred to Mulukusi; here the Abamarama fought bravely and drove away the enemy. They also killed Mwalo of the Abakami. Then Odera of the Abakami brought the stone (supposed to signify the drawing of a boundary) he had fetched from Ebuyoma (Uyoma in the Luo country) and laid it at the scene of the fighting. After we had removed and taken that stone, as a result of being scoffed at by Eliasumi of the Abakhobole, Odera paid a compensation of twenty head of cattle and one girl to the Abayoma (Jouyoma) who had given him the stone and Waburiri from Eshibembe contributed some beads while Wandayi from Emauko offered his daughter called Wamakobe. And the girl took the beads and some food and went (to Gem); she later became the mother of ex-chief Ogada. But apparently, Odera did not stop the Abakami from attacking the Abamarama.

In fact, they attacked them twice. And so the Abamaram asked Odera: "What is the matter now, have we not given you our girl and other presents to end hostilities? What are you up to now?" But Odera replied arrogantly "I will not stop the Abakami (from attacking you)". And so Omunyu son of Nzibule from Shibembe invited a group of Abasebe and led them to the village of Owuoth of the Abakami to raid his cattle. They brought back a lot of cattle. Then again Firotdwa and Wakhubula from Eshiatsala invited the Abasebe and led them to Eburabalo in broad daylight and captured countless cattle from the Abakami. After this, the Abamarama now began to attack the Abakami. They finally succeeded in driving them back to their country at Eshirembe. The Abamarama captured hundreds of cattle from the enemy.

At one time a person called Osale (of the Abakami) from West Alego came to steal from the homes of the Abashisa and, in the event, was caught. Then Wetende of the Abamarama from Indangalasia bound up the thief and then put him into an empty granary. The granary was then set ablaze and the thief was scorched to death.

It was only after all this that the Abashisa and the Abasamia reoccupied their former country and lived there in peace and security. Had the Abamarama been defeated (by the Abakami) the Abashisa and the Abasamia would not have had a place in which to live.

Another war with the Abakami was caused in the following way Inyangala son of Lihwa from Emauko went to see his father-in-law, an Omumani person (singular of Abamani). He carried a present of arrows for the father-in-law. On his way, the Abakami fell upon him and robbed him of the arrows. And so his son called Owate, invited the Abasebe and led them to the home of Okech of the Abakami of Kalanyo and killed him.

That apart, the Abamarama contented themselves with taking the herds of the Abakami and avoided killing the enemy. But fighting soon broke out with the Abakami. By this time, the Abachenya (Ugenya Luo) had already arrived in the country. The war was therefore fought on two fronts, i.e. with the Abakami and the Abachenya. In this fighting the Abashisa gave their support to the Abamarama.

Then the Abachenya came and settled at Mutatira but we fought them and drove them away, killing one of their men called Odhoji. Then again they came to Emukoye where we also fought with them; there were heavy casualties on both sides. They then went to Emurumba where we ran after them and fought with them. They killed Washikobe from Shihaka, Kweyu son of Lukale from Etnurumba, Eshikumo from Eshianda, and Were from Irlanda.

### **The war with the Luo of Ugenya**

The Abagenya (Ugenya Luo) attacked the Abakholo (of Buholo) and the southern Abawanga, i.e. of Mumias and Musanda, and drove them to Emurumba, Emusanda and Emukoye. A boundary was thus marked separating the former from Ebuhungasi. The Abagenya also besieged the Abakholo and Abakana in the village of Namboka, the father of Otsialo.

When, therefore, the Abamarama heard that the Abagenya had besieged the Abakana, Abakholo, and Abawanga, they went to the latter's rescue. They defeated the Abagenya and liberated the Abawanga and their allies. The people whom they liberated then came with them to Marama; some of them later died here in Marama. And so the Abagenya retreated to their country.

After a short interval, the Abagenya came back and attacked the Abawanga at Emusanda. The fighting was fierce and long; when night came, the Abagenya withdrew to the village of the Abawanga and there waited for next day. But the following morning the Abamarama again went to the rescue of the Abawanga. Then Ratito of the Abagenya told Omuhaka (of the Abamarama): "You Abamarama people, why cannot you let me kill these Abawanga?" But Omuhaka told him that he could not do so as, if they were killed by the Abagenya, the victims would haunt him.

Then Ratito suggested that Omuhaka should give him one cow and one sheep (to free him from ritual impurity) and so let the Abawanga be killed by the Abagenya. When therefore Omuhaka refused to comply with this proposal, fighting with the Abagenya started. In this fighting, the Abagenya killed Owande son of Kikhutsi but Omuhaka from Eshiatsala killed one of their men. We then drove the Abagenya away and liberated the Abawanga - the Abawanga themselves did not go to the aid of their kinsmen. We then came back with some of the Abawanga from Emusanda among whom were Olukuru and Wamunyolo; another man, called Werimo, was beaten up by the Abagenya.

One year later, the Abagenya launched another attack on the Abawanga of Emusarida. However, when the Abamarama heard that the Abagenya had again attacked the

Abawanga, they went to the rescue of the latter and found the Abagenya busy digging a hole through the olwashi (the wall of a village surrounded with a trench). They were just about to enter into the village. The Abamarama therefore fought with them and drove them away and liberated the villagers. Some of the villagers, Emihungasi, Emichende, and Eshinabandu, came to Marama with their allies.

After this the Abagenya now made repeated attacks on Emukoye, Emurumba, and Emukhweso. Then when we heard that the Abakami had killed Bukachi son of Omukuyia in Kisa, we went there (to avenge his death). But while we were so engaged, the Abagenya were busy fighting the Abawanga at Emukhweso. And so we went and liberated them for the fourth time.

The fifth war with the Abagenya was fought at Eshikangu in the village of NambwenYa of the Abawanga. Once again, we fought gallantly and drove away the Abagenya and liberated the Abawanga. (On this occasion again the other Abawanga did not go to the aid of their besieged kinsmen.) Thus we liberated the Abawanga on several occasions thrice at Emusanda, once at Ebungasi, and once at Eshikangu. We also liberated the Abawanga at Emurabe from the besieging Abainarachi people; we fought gallantly with them and drove them away. Altogether we liberated the Abawanga six times.

### **The war with the Abawanga**

The Abawanga brought the Abasebe(Wakwavi Masai?) to Ebukale right in the midst of the Abamarama, to kill a madman. The following morning the Abamarama attacked the Abawanga and their Abasebe allies at Shikangu and fought with them gallantly.

At last, Wakhubula from Shiatsala suggested that we should now retreat as we had grown weary. However, as we were thus retreating, the Abawanga began to run after us. As they pursued us, we doubled our pace and so managed to escape without losing a single man. When we halted, Okumali, Manyasi, and Eshikamalwa from Shiatsala killed one Omusebe (singular of Abasebe) and another Omusebe was driven away by Mirikau from Eshihaka. And so we completely drove the Abawanga and their Abasebe allies back and forced them to abandon their village at Eshikangu.

### **The war with the Abatsotso**

The Abatsotso were the original owners of the present country of North Marama. When we migrated to Inaya (in North Marama) the Abatsotso were still on good terms with us. A little later, however, an internecine war broke out between the Abatamanyini and the Abamanyulie. Then the Abamarama sided with the Abatamanyini and the Abasamia supported the Abamanyulie.

Later, however, Toboso (of the Abamarama) said: "As we Abamarama people have strong connections with the Abasamia, what shall we do (i.e. to free ourselves from the resulting ritual impurity) the day our two peoples shall kill one another?" And so the Abamarama withdrew from the fighting. However, the Abasamia stuck to the Abamanyulie and continued to aid them against the Abatamanyini.

One day, however, misfortune befell the Abasamia. One of their men called Kulundu son of Bunaka from Ebulakayi and Nang'ombe of the Abatsotso killed each other. As a result, the Abasamia deserted their allies, the Abamanyulie, and attacked them and the Abatsotso. They killed a lot of the Abatsotso and the Abamanyulie and captured many of their cattle - a situation which was worsened by the action of the Abamarama, who seized the opportunity to loot their cattle!

Thus the Abatsotso, Abamanyulie, and the Abatamanyini allied against the enemy. There then broke out big fighting between the Abamarama and the Abatsotso. However, by that time we had thoroughly weakened them (by destroying their homes with fire).

Afterwards, the Abatsotso again came to Ituti and to Eshimukoko. Then one of the Abamarama people called Omunyu son of Nzibule, who was extremely treacherous towards his own lihanga (nation), and who was against the idea of his people fighting the Abatsotso, betrayed them to the enemy so that the latter might win the war!

Accordingly, the Abamarama lost countless people dead. However, owing to our valour and determination, we fought with them for twenty whole years; then, later, when the Swahili came, they gave us their support and so we managed to drive the Abatsotso from Inaya, Emutondo, and from Shirima; they fled to Shikwata.

Here again we fought with them for a brief period and then the Abakami came to the aid of the Abatsotso. Immediately after that Sakwa of Wanga' came to our aid; this enabled us to drive the Abatsotso out of Shikwata. The Abatsotso then fled to Gem among their Abakanii allies. But the Abakami treacherously turned against them and took all their herds so that the Abatsotso were reduced to the position of serfs among their Abakami hosts! And so the Abamarama now occupied the former country of the Abatsotso (North Marama) and permanently settled there to this very day. In these latter days, we simply lounged about as there were no enemies left to be fought! Our ruler at that time was Toboso.

### **The liberation of the Abawanga of Mukulu under Kweyu**

The Abarebe migrated from their country and came over to Ebukusia in Kweyu's country (Wanga Mukulu). They were led by their ruler called Mahero. They thus lived in Mukulu as the subjects of Kweyu. Now, it so happened that Mahero had a certain bull which frequently destroyed the crops of the local Abawanga and those of his own people. The Abawanga therefore became angry and said "It is most impertinent that a bull belonging to a simple subject of ours should go on destroying our crops in this manner!" Then they caught Mahero's bull at the salt-lick place and killed it by night.

The Abarebe were so incensed by this action that they invited the Abatsotso to come and help them wage war against the people of Kweyu. And so bitter fighting broke out between the two affies and the Abawanga (under Kweyu). The Abawanga were thoroughly defeated. They were then driven out of their country. They fled across the River Lusimu to Elukoko, Eshibanga, and to Ibokolo, in the country of the Abamarama.

On the other hand, their ruler, Sakwa (he had presumably succeeded his father Kweyu), fled to Kabras for refuge in the village of the ruler of the Abakabresi whose name was Tsifwandayi. There, Sakwa laboured as his slave cleaning the cow-shed (he saw to the drying and collection of cow-dung in Tsifwa-ndayi's village)!

Only two villages had survived the attacks of the Abarebe and the Abatsotso. One of them belonged to Nalyanya of the Abawanga and the other to Kundu of the Bamwende. Later, the Abarebe launched another attack on the villagers. Then the Abawanga beat the drum summoning the Abamarama to run to their rescue, according to an earlier agreement. But when the Abamarama went, they found that the war was in its second day! Some of the Abarebe warriors had actually camped just outside the village.

But, most frightening of all, the Abarebe had stationed their men at the Mufunje (suspension bridge) on the Lusimu River where the Abamarama's route to the besieged Abawanga's villages lay! More, they had even killed an Omuwanga (singular of Abawanga) woman, wound a (dead) snake round her neck, and laid her on the Mufunje! (suspension bridge).

Having done all this, the Abarebe then challenged us. But they had blocked the way and the river was also pretty full at the time (so that we could not go across). And so we told them: "Why cannot you come across if you want us to fight?" They simply answered: "Very well, cross over then." When they (we?) therefore had crossed the river, we drove them back past the villages they had besieged; we killed lots of them! Even the villagers they had besieged also came out and killed a few of them.

Consequently, the Abarebe and the Abatsotso migrated and went away for good. We then invited Sakwa to come back from Tsifwandayi's. When he came back, he first settled at Shianderema from where he moved on to Shikumulo. Then we told him that should the Abarebe attack him again, he should simply beat the drum and summon us. From that time whenever, the Abatsotso attacked (the people of) Sakwa the Abawanga always raised the hue and cry saying "Hey, (you) Abamarama! Make haste, (the enemies are killing us)!" And whenever the Abatsotso heard this they always fled back to their own country.

### **The genealogies of the Abamarama**

The origin of the Abamarama: Their ancestry originated in Ebubukachi. It is now upwards of two thousand years since the Abamarama settled in their present country of Marama. Bukachi was the leader of the migration from Ebubukachi; although, he trekked up the River Lukose until he arrived at Hebubi. He had six sons here -Mwichira, Omukhobero, Wangusi, Lisa, Walyuba and Wesamba.

I can recall a few names of some of the Ababukachi (descendants of Bukachi) who were descended from Bukachi and who lived in the remote past. The following are their names; they include some of their ancestors in Egypt. Dola father of Shiusi, father of Tsingano, father of Nalukhoma, father of Khakono, father of Bukachi, father of

Westsochi, father of Wamukhula Marama, father of Bukachi (named after Wamukhula's grandfather) and Wesamba (named after the place?) and of Mutobera, being feeble".

Adapted from: Gidoen S Were; Western Kenya, Historical Texts, EALB, 1967