

MEMBERSHIP OF THE CLAN

All members of a family had responsibilities towards one another. Several families like that made up a sub-clan; and several sub-clans made up a clan.

(i) The clan was the most important family unit in the tribe. There are nearly 750 clans in Luhyaland. Each clan has a totem; that is, they have an animal or bird or plant which they do not eat, or which they do not touch. Here are examples of clans and their totems:

Abashitsetse (Wanga):	A bushbuck (imbongo)
Abamulembo (Bunyala, Busia District):	A palm (olukhindu)

Each clan swears by its totem. This was done when the person swearing wanted to prove that he or she was not telling a lie. You could not swear by your totem if you knew you were telling a lie as it was believed that the totem would thereby bring you bad luck, or kill you.

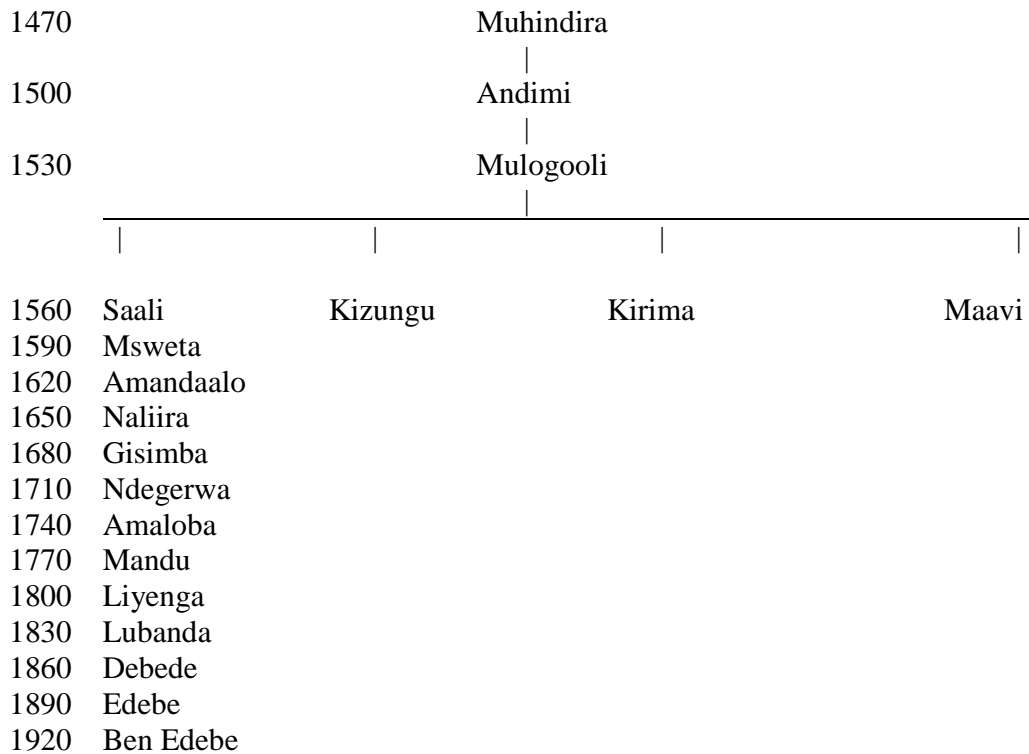
In Luhyaland, members of one clan do not intermarry. That is why when a Luhya boy meets a Luhya girl, the first thing he asks after knowing the name, is what clan the girl belongs to.

Some very big clans with sub-clans, however, sometimes allow inter-marriage between the sub-clans. Also, if there was a serious quarrel between the two sub-clans in the far distant past, then no one bothers very much if they intermarry. Cases of this type are very rare. One example is in Maragoli, where the four major sub-clans intermarry, although they all descend from Mulogoli.

Most Luhya clans have family lines which go back more than twelve generations. Some go back as far as thirty generations. You get your family tree if you count yourself, then your father, then his father, and so on backwards till you come to the last person that your old men can remember. Each person in that list will represent a generation. If you give each generation thirty years, you can find out when the first person lived.

(ii) Here is the family tree of the Maragoli. In it you can see several sub-clans and family divisions and how they are connected. The Maragoli's first clan goes back seventeen generations, including the child of one born in 1920. That means that the first person, Muhindira, was born about 500 years ago.

MARAGOLI ANCESTRAL TREE



In the family list we have only followed the lineage of Saali. After the death of Mulogooli, his sons began to spread gradually to where their sub-clans are to be found today. Saali, Kizungu and Kirima are now found in North Maragoli. Maavi stayed on where his father died, which is now South Maragoli.

Saali had four sons of his own. These four founded the following clans which bear their names: Avamumbaya, Avabuzuzu, Avasweta and Avamageza. The first two, Mumbaya and Buzuzu, were sons of one wife while Msweta and Mageza were sons of another wife.

Kizungu had two sons, Gisemba and Aliero, the founders of Avagizembwa and Avaliero. Other families which are said to belong to this sub-clan are: Avasuba, Avasaniaga, Avayonga and Avakebembe.

Kirima had four sons: Maseero, Saki, Masingira and Gamuguywa. They too founded the clans which bear their names: Avamaseero, Avasaki, Avamasingira and Avagamuguywa.

Maavi, the youngest child, also had four sons: Nondi, Logovo, Nagonda and Mutembe. Nagonda was the youngest of the four. Mutembe was an illegitimate child. The clans founded by these four children are Avanondi, Avalogovo, Avagonda and Avamutembe.

The four main clans of Maragoli, namely Avasaali, Avakizungu, Avakirima and Avamaabi, intermarry. That is because they separated such a long time ago that close

family connections do not exist. But the family groups in each do not intermarry, because they still have strong family connections.

(iii) Here are some of the largest clans among the more than 750 clans in Luhyaland.

CLAN	WHERE FOUND
Abashitsetse	Wanga
Abakolwe	Wanga and Marama
Abakhoone	Bunyala, Bukhayo, Bugwe (Uganda), Bunyole (Uganda), Marama, Bukusu, Mfangano Island, etc
Abamulembo (or Abamulembwa)	Bunyala, Wanga, Marachi, Ugenya and Samia
Abamilonje	Isukha
Abashiimuli	Idakho
Abayirifuma	Bunyala (Kakamega)
Abamukhula	Marama
Avamaavi	Maragoli
Abamuteete	Bunyore
Bakitwika	Bukusu
Abafofoyo	Marachi
Abaguuri	Bukhayo
Abakhuulo	Bukhekhe
Abatabona	Samia
Abongonya	Butsotso

MEMBERSHIP OF THE TRIBE

The Luhya have many sub-tribes. Membership of each sub-tribe depends on where one's clan lived. In other words, each sub-tribe is a union of several clans living in continuous territory. The clans need not descend from a single known ancestor. There are some clans which have branches in different sub-tribes (e.g. the Abakhoone). These branches belong to the sub-tribes where they are found. For instance, the Abakhoone in Bukusu are Babukusu, and those in Bunyala are Banyala.

A sub-tribe was and still is distinguished by language (dialect) and its special customs. Also, whenever it was necessary to defend the sub-tribe by going to war, all the members of the clans making up the sub-tribe were willing to defend their sub-tribe.

The following are the sub-tribes of Luhya grouped according to common linguistic and customary closeness:

Babukusu, Kabras, Abanyala ba Mayero (Busia), Abanyala ba Ndombi (Kakamega), Abawanga, Abamarama, Abatsotso, Abisukha, Abitakho, Abalogooli, Abatiriki, Abanyole, Abakisa (Abashisha), Abamarachi, Abakhayo, Abasamia, Abanyole (Uganda),

Abagweru (Uganda), Abasamia (Uganda), Abasonga (Nyanza Province), Abagisu (Uganda).

Adapted from: Life in Kenya in the Olden Days: The Baluyia, By John Osogo, Oxford University Press, 1965, ISBN 0 19 644012 2