

THE ABASHIENI CLAN”

Their migratory movements

The Abashieni originally lived in the Sudan”. They migrated from there and travelled as far as Lira, Ngora, and Sorokho near Mbale in Uganda. Then they moved on once more to the Manava river in Uganda and thence to Kolanya in Kenya”. After reaching Kolanya, they turned backwards and walked towards Mount Elgon. Once here, they went into the caves of the mountain and lived there”. Later, they left Elgon again and came to Bungoma and thence to Nebaale.

They they walked down the River Nzoia and came to Shiamanyinya (Mumias). Nebaale was the place of their separation from the Abatachoni; the Abatachoni remained there whereas they (Abashieni) proceeded this way. Prior to their separation at Nebaale, the Abashieni and the Abatachoni were one people. At that time they called themselves Sawiny (i.e. Sabawiny/Sebeyi).

When the Abashieni left Shiamanyinya (Mumias) they passed through Mumia’s at Imanga and went to Ibokolo in Marama. Once here, they separated and dispersed: One party came this way under Nduluma. When this group left Ibokolo they went to Ebukotse (near Butere railway station), Ebumukuluyu (near the Sub Chief’s camp at Eshibembe), and then to Emusunu which is near Shiatsala School. Then when they left this place they moved to Ebushieni, their present country where Nduluma died. Another group remained at Ematubira in North Marama under Wekoye and the third one (Abamweche) went to Emaleka in Butso under Mambala.

Reasons for migrating:

Sudan: Not known.

Lira, Ngora, Sorokho, Manava river, and Kolanya: Again not known.

Elgon: They are crowded and, also, fed up with the mountains.

Bungoma: They simply felt like doing so.

Nebaale: The same.

Shiamanyinya (Mumias): The war between the Abawanga and Abamuhima was the reason for their migration. They had allied with the Abamuhima against the Abawanga. However, owing to the fact that their side was always losing, they became suspicious and concluded that their misfortunes were due to the fact that Muhima, the ruler of the Abamuhima, had committed a blunder by employing Wanga, a fellow ruler, as a cleaner of his cow-shed when he came disguised to his village from Tiriki. Accordingly, Chitinde migrated with his family and people.

Ibokolo: It was not big enough.

Ebukotse. They did not like to live together with the Abakotse.

Emusunu. They did not wish to live together with the Abanyukhu.

The Abashieni came into Marama Location ahead of the Abamarama, Abatayi, and the Aberecheya.

People they came in contact with

Sudan: The Acholi, Lang'o, Aluru, and others. The Abashieni came from the Sudan along with the Abang'oma. They had the same customs and language. On the other hand, the Abashieni and the Abatachoni were actually related, being one people.

Lira and Ngora: The Teso and the Nandi.

Sorokho: The Karamojong.

Manava: The Abagishu.

Kolanya: The Abagishu and the Teso.

Elgon: Uninhabited.

Bungoma: The Ababukusu. The great majority of the Abang'oma remained here but a few of them went to Nebaale. One section, however, managed to reach Imanga ahead of the Abashieni. They lived there with the Abamuima. Wanga had not come to Wanga in those days.

Nebaale: Uninhabited.

Shiamanyinya (Mumias): Uninhabited; the Abawanga had not yet arrived.

Ebukotse: The Abakotse and the Abamako; they were Abaluyia.

Ebumulukuyu: The Abaseta and the Abamulukuyu who were also Abaluyia.

Emusunu: The Abanyukhu who are now extinct; they were Abaluyia.

Ebushieni: They found here the Abamahaya, Ababayi, Abakuche (Abalukhobe), Abashikusie, and the Abasabo. The Abasabo and the Abamahaya are now largely extinct. The Abalukhobe were living in their present territory at that time. The reason for the migration of the Abashikusie from this place to their present country was the frequent fighting between the Abashieni and the Abamukhula.

[N.B. The original language of the Abashieni was Oluyobo, i.e. the Nandi (Kalenjin) language of the Bok and other Nandi-speaking people of the Elgon district.]

Food

Their chief food was blood, milk, and meat. Later they adopted maize, millet, and eleusine meal.

Genealogies

Their earliest ancestor was called Amurwa. He was the father of Sawiny; father of Shieni who was the founder of the Abashieni. The branch of the Abashieni who live in Wanga were descended from Shieni but these who are here at Ebushieni and the ones at Tingale were descended from Chitinde's sons : Nduluma son of Chitinde and his descendants were the forbears of the Abashieni who live here at Ebushieni in south Marama.

Wekoye son of Chitinde was the ancestor of the Abashieni who live in north Marama. The Abamweche who live in Butso are the descendants of Mambala son of Chitinde. Yohana Obiero is the son of Alubokho; son of Okusimba; son of Wakhutu; son of Muyinda; they all died here (Ebushieni). Muyinda was the son of Safu; son of Wekulu; son of Chibunyani; son of Ndiri; son of Nduluma; they also died here. Nduluma was the son of Chitinde who died at Shiamanyinya (Mumias); son of

Mung'oni who died at Sang'alo; son of Amurwa who died in Elgon; son of Shieni who died in Elgon; son of Mahero who died at Nebaale near Sang'alo; son of Sawiny who died in Elgon; son of Amurwa who died in Elgon.

Warfare

The war with the Abamarama: When the Abamarama came here they brought the Abakhobole to help them with their wars against the Abashieni. The Abashieni drove them away. The Abageri (Kager of Manyala) and the Abakami (Gem Luo) fought with the Abamarama and the Abashieni and drove them as far as Mwilala near Bukura⁴⁰. However, by that time the Abashieni had already migrated to Shiamanyinya area following the death in battle of their leading warrior called Omumu. The Luo therefore drove the Abamarama to Mwilala. Then Omumia brought the Abasebe (Wakwavi Masai) to fight with the Luo. Later the Abashieni and the Abamarama returned to their former homes.

Governmental System

The Abashieni were ruled by the "Omwami Omukhongo", i.e. the great ruler. He was elected by the elders on the basis of his ability to settle quarrels and his kindness. The elders had the power to dismiss a bad Omwami. The functions of the Omwami were to protect the people, to judge cases, and to keep the peace. He settled quarrels and stopped fighting and he was assisted in judging cases by the elders.

The Omwami was assisted in the work of governing the country by his elders. These elders were elected by the elders of the whole community. They governed the various sub-clans and clans. The Omwami received the legal proceeds; he also got a cow from any person (or the members of the person's family) that committed murder or hanged himself. In addition, the Omwami was given some beer whenever it was prepared.

The Investiture

The new Omwami was anointed with sim sim mash after which he sat on a skin while holding a spear in his hand. He was also dressed in a skin cloak and a cowry-shell head-dress adorned with beads was placed on his head. He wore a copper or brass bracelet on the wrist. The Omwami was buried in the house when he died. The Abashieni and the Abawanga observed the same burial customs excepting exhumation which the Abashieni did not observe.

Source: Gideon Were: Western Kenya Historical Texts, EALB, 1967