

History of the Abakhayo

Migratory movements:

Like Other Luhya sub tribes, the Abakhayo settled in their present land via Uganda. After the Abaguri and their three companion clans had first come in, the Abakhabi and the Abakhone clans were the next settlers to arrive. The other eleven clans came much later. Originally, they lived near the Lake at Ibanda in Busoga. After leaving Ibanda, they travelled until they reached Khaenderesi in South Iteso in Busia District. They next moved to Sirabale in Bukhayo.

People they came across

Ibanda: The Basoga. Before their migration, they used to be one people with the Basoga. While there, they used to speak Lusoga.

Khaenderesi: Uninhabited and full of wild animals.

Siribale: Uninhabited.

The reasons for migrating from:

Ibanda: They emigrated from there because there were many elephants which always destroyed crops and ate people. In addition, the place was full of sleeping sickness. They did not migrate as a result of a quarrel. Even their fellow Basoga who stayed behind also moved farther away till much later, after things had improved, when they returned there. When they were still there they used to grow sweet potatoes, bananas, cow-peas, monkey nuts, eleusine, millet and vegetables. They also kept cattle.

Khaenderesi: Overcrowding and family quarrels caused them to migrate. The Teso had not yet come to Khaenderesi when they were there. So that when they later came there from Tororo, the Abakhayo had already moved out; they then settled.

The Abakhayo saw the Teso for the first time when they were moving out and the Teso were just approaching. The Teso used to come one by one to exchange their cattle for hoes. Then when they had become many, the Abakhayo felt they were becoming too crowded and, accordingly, they moved out and left the Teso there. The Abakhayo saw the Joluo only recently here in Bukhayo. The Abamarachi and the Abakhayo used to be one people when they were at Ibanda. But when they emigrated, the Abamarachi went to Mareba whereas the Abakhayo came this way.

The Other Clans

The Abamenya, the Abachimo, and the Abachabe too were originally Basoga before their emigration. They came with the Abaguri from Ibanda. They belonged to some of the clans of the Basoga.

The Abakhabi came from Sang'alo Hill. Mbuori was their leader from there. They broke away from the Nandi at Sang'alo. They spoke the Nandi language when they came. They migrated from there due to frequent internecine quarrels and cattle disputes. The Abakhone came from Mukhono (Mukono) in Busoga. They too were originally Basoga. They first went to Bunyala (Port Victoria) before coming here.

The Abahamani also came from Bunyala (Port Victoria); they broke away from the Abamulembo clan. The Abarunga broke away from the Nandi of Kolo and Nyang'ori,

Tiriki and the Kipsigis country. The Abakhabi were also originally Nandi. The Abamakunda were formerly Nandi; they came along with the Abakhabi. The Abakangala also came from the Mount Elgon area; they used to live on the Bukangala Hill. They were originally Abagishu.

The Abamudiru were also originally Abagishu. The Abakhadonyi came from Bunyala (Port Victoria). The Abakholo came from Bukholo. The Abatura originally came from Tiriki from the clan of ex-chief Amiani. The Abatsohe are the pure Abatura: The Abatsohe, the Abakhibe, the Abamwaka, the Abadiru and the Abamukwe are the other clans of the Abatura.

Governmental System

The clans of Busoga origin used to be ruled by an “omwami”. Cases were judged by his elders. The “omwami” never went to war. He simply gave the orders and instructions to his men. He was the sacrificial priest of the clan and ruled all the Abakhayo. The “omwami” had his assistants in all various clans. He was neither a medicine man nor a rain-maker. He was usually nominated by the elders, though they merely confirmed the nominee of the late “omwami”.

In the days before their migration from Busoga, the “omwami” wore bark cloth (“omuruba”). However, when they came here, he wore the cloak of the skins of various animals, because bark trees were not available here. He also had the “Olusimbi” (special feathers), the “eshimwata” (crown), brass bracelets, a copperbracelet, and a fly-whisk. These insignia were heritable.

The “omwami” was usually buried in a cowhide in a lying position. The hide was that of a cow which had been specifically speared for the occasion. No beer pot was put in the grave.

Warfare

They had some fighting with the Abasamia, the Abanyala, and the Abageri Luo because of cattle disputes. The Abakhayo were the aggressor. They used to raid their cattle. They also fought with the Abetakho for the same reason.

Genealogies

The Abaguri: Their ancestor called Kintu died at Busoga. His son Were Mukhayo died at Ibanda. Were Mukhayo was the father of Mudoro who died in Bukhayo. Mudoro was the father of Khachio; father of Dindi I; father of Ndubi; father of Dindi II; father of Okwara. They all died in Bukhayo. Okwara was the father of ex-chief Hezekia Wamurwa; father of N. Nekesa.

[N.B. Mudoro was the one who led the emigration from Ibanda.]

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