

The Aberecheya clan

Though there are some inconsistencies in the traditions of the Aberecheya regarding their ancestor and his original country, there is a unanimous opinion on the rest of their history. During my investigations in this area the one man who was repeatedly mentioned as the authority on the early history of the Aberecheya was Sumba Okumu. Fortunately, I was in possession of the narrative of the history of the Aberecheya which had been recorded earlier by the Regeya Progressive Society. As what he told me was exactly the same as the recorded material, I shall here give a translation of the latter and then go on with the other versions.

“Kusesechere son of Sumba came from the Bagweri who live at Soroti (actually the Bagwere live at Mbale) in Teso in Uganda. His first settlement was at Jinja among the Basoga where he begot a son called Musoga who became the ancestor of the Abasoga. When he migrated from Busoga he settled at Busia where he had a son called Samia who became the ancestor of the Abasamia. Then he moved on once more to Ebusinga where he built a home called Mundika.

He had a son there called Musonga, the ancestor of the Abasonga. Afterwards he went to Ebusenge which is in Yimbo Kadimo. When he saw that there was plenty of water, he moved on to Kanyabol which is now called Lake Gangu. From there he went to Mbaga where he had a son who became the ancestor of the people now called Luo Kamenya.

Later he left Mbaga and came to Ndere Gem where the Gem man called Rading’ found him living. The language of Rading’ was different from the one which Kusesechere spokej-. When Kusesechere later left Ndere he came to Ebukwala Murumba. By this time Wabuti had grown up sons who now dispersed and built separate homes: Wabuti himself and his sons Wambundo, Lwari, Nandera and Omuhandasi went to the Irecheya hill whereas Shibashe crossed the Isika river and settled at Manyala. Wabuti had two wives. His first wife was the mother of Wambundo; the younger one was the mother of Lwali, Nandera (twins), Shibashe and Omuhandasi.”

According to Yona Renja the ancestors of the Aberecheya came from Eshifuyo in Samia. The people who lived at Eshifuyo were Abasamia and the ancestor of the Aberecheya at Eshifuyo was called Shiruka. He was a member of the Abagwere sub-tribe. His son Sumba was the leader of the emigration from Eshifuyo. His great grandson, Wabuti, was the immediate ancestor of the Aberecheya; he was the son of Kusesechere. Gerishom Ongawo also says that Samia was the original country of the Aberecheya; Wabuti was the founder of the clan.

On the other hand Nyangule Wesonga merely says that the ancestors of the Aberecheya came from Buganda; however, he adds in the genealogies that one of the sons of Regeya who was, according to him, their ancestor was called Mugwer and that he remained in Buganda, which seems to tally with the other traditions of a Bagwere origin. The rest of the details regarding the migrational movements are as narrated by Sumba.

People they met along the way:

Bugwere and Busoga: Unknown.

Samia: The Abasamia.

Manyala Mundika and Ebusonga: Uninhabited.

Gendero (near Lake Gangu): The Abanyaudo; they were Abaluyia.

Ebusenge (Yimbo Kadimo): They found here Owiny the brother of Adhola; They were Padhola.

Ndere Gem: The Abamakonje, Abamuswa, and the Abamukonyi. They were all Abaluyia. The ruler of the Gem people found Kusechere (Wabuti) here; they failed to get on well owing to linguistic differences. As a result, Kusechere migrated to Ebukwala from where he went to the Irecheya hill.

Murumba: The Abamuswa.

Ebukwala: The Abamutsuma.

Manyala, Eshihenjera, Mukokwa, Elukanji, and Ebukhokoro: were all uninhabited.

Sanjiro: Kanyakuta Luo and the Abamani who were Abaluyia.

Irecheya hill and the surrounding district: The Abekhole and the Abamukhone. Both were Abaluyia and they also came from the same place as the Aberecheya. They gradually intermixed and became one people.

Their emigration from Bugwere

Kusechere emigrated from Bugwere as a result of a disagreement with his brother over a spear. It so happened that as Kusechere was one day in his home; he saw an elephant eating his potato vines. He therefore took a spear and threw it at the elephant. The elephant, however, walked away and disappeared with the spear in its side. Now it so happened that the spear belonged to the brother of Kusechere.

When therefore the brother returned home, he asked for his spear and, when Kusechere told him what had taken place, he insisted on the recovery of his spear. He rejected Kusechere offer of a compensation which included, among other things, a number of spears. This kind of behaviour astonished Kusechere who kept on appealing to his brother to be more understanding as everything had been accidental. However, his brother remained obdurate.

In the face of all this, Kusechere decided to go out and look for the wounded elephant so that he might recover his brother's spear. Accordingly, he prepared everything for the journey. The following morning he set out on the hazardous journey which took him right into the wilderness. Eventually, he arrived at the place where the elephants dwelt. He found the elephants drinking some beer.

Frightened and dismayed, he stood in the court-yard and supported himself on his staff. Soon the elephants became aware of his presence and one of them asked him what his mission was, saying, "what does this upright being want here?" After his explanation he was immediately led to a place where there were many spears. He soon identified his brother's spear and, also, the elephant which he had wounded. He was then pardoned, warned, and given his spear together with some food and told to go back. When he reached home, he gave his brother the recovered spear.

He then thought it best for him to part with his brother and migrate.

The migration from the Irecheya hill

Their departure from the hill spread over many years. Their loss of that hill was due to the wars between Mumia and the Abageri (Kager Luo). Sande who was the ruler of the Abakami (Gem Luo) at that time allied with the Abageri against the people of Mumia. At that time the Aberecheya were still in possession of the hill. Then the Kager and the Gem Luo drove the Aberecheya, Abamarama, and the Abashieni as far as maya. Mumia then brought the Swahili with fire-arms against them. However, the Kager fought bravely and drove them away.

There then followed a short period of peace. After that Mumia brought Hobilo'6 who succeeded in driving the Abageri (Kager) out of the lands they had wrested from their enemies. And so the Abageri were dispersed and scattered to the four winds. Then the people of Mumia - the Abashieni, the Abamarama, and the Aberecheya returned to their former territories. Later, the Kager trickled back; whenever anyone gave his daughter to Shiundu he was allowed to come back. At that time the Kager were still one united sub-tribe. Among the Kagér of Manyala Odhoji was the first to come back after he had given his daughter to Shitech, Shiundu's son. The other Kager then gradually came back.

When Sande saw all this he went and persuaded Mumia to end fighting. He feared that his people of Gem might be driven out like the Kager people had been by Mumia's people. And so Mumia agreed and "cut a dog" (a ceremony that symbolises end of hostilities) with him at Ebutamanyi and a cow was also slaughtered and both he and Sande lay on its skin to symbolise friendship. Then they undertook to cease fighting and began to draw their common boundary. Mumia wished the boundary to pass through the Khasala River. Then Mr. Archer (Asha) stood on the Irecheya hill and pointed at a certain fig tree at Eshirotsa near Yala and said that the boundary should run from that tree down to the Khasala river; the hill was thus placed on this side of the border and not in Gem.

However, the ruler of the Abasamia (Kisa) called Limiku and Nyangule son of Wamukobole of the Abamarama clan later went and cut down the fig tree because they wished the boundary to pass through Emaliera so that their people might live on this side of the border. This annoyed Archer who therefore decided to move the boundary back to the River Isika as a punitive act against the people of Mumia. Then Obanda and the Aberecheya who were living on the hill refused to live with the Luo and so came this way among their brethren and fellow Abaluyia. And so the Gem Luo gradually occupied the hill.

Genealogies

Sumba Okumu is the son of Okumu son of Sumba; son of Shihwawa son of Wadida; son of Nyandera; son of Kisoni; son of Kusesechere son of Sumba. Nyangule Wesonga is the son of Wesonga son of Ndalo; son of Wakhabale son of Omunyobi; son of Sumba; they all died here; Sumba was the son of Okumu; son of Sumba; son of Watita; they all died at

Gendero near Lake Gangu; son of Wekolia who died at Munanga; son of Makabira who died at Khuluche near Manyala; son of Regeya who died on the Irecheya hill.

Girishom Ongawo is the son of Omurambi; son of Wasendwa; son of Shirulu; son of Wambundo; son of Shibashe; son of Wabuti. Yona Renja is the son of Ong'ongo who died at Manyala; son of Wekoto who died at Shiatsala; son of Eroba who died at Manyala; son of Washiruma who died at Manyala; son of Wamboko who died on the Irecheya hill; son of Wamukhone who also died there; son of Olwanda who died at Manyala; son of Wamukhole who died at Mundere; son of Regeya who died at Mundere; son of Kusesechere; (son of Regeya ?); son of Sumba; son of Shiruka. Shiruka died at Eshifuyo and Sumba died at Gendero near Lake Gangu. Petero Owala is the son of Owala; son of Shisia; son of Shiwani; son of Maloba; son of Likhale; son of Shibashe; son of Lulikho; son of Regeya (Wabuti); son of Kusesechere; son of Muruka; son of Podho.

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