

ABATACHONI OF KABRAS

Nabwera Obada, the chief spokesman of the Abatachoni of North Kabras, said that their ancestors came from Egypt. Nabwera is the son of Obada who died in Kabras; son of Musimbi who died in Kabras; son of Kachabo who died at Sang'alo near Elgon; son of Weyengo who died in Kisa. Shadrak Namasaka is the son of Murule; son of Mukonambi, they both died here; son of Lulera who died in Bunyala (Navakholo). son of Mukoya who died in Bunyala; son of Sikhole who died at Sang'alo; son of Wande who died at Sang'alo; son of Luseche who died at Shibembe Elisha Shirengo is the son of Ndaba who died at Navakholo; son of Efumbi who died in Bunyala; son of Wekulo who died in Bunyala; son of Nangulio who died at Busia; son of Sikunyo; Son of Malokho; son of Sipemi, they all died at Busia; son of Mafundesa who died in the Congo; son of Nakhabaha. son of Bwire; son of Mulambo, they all died in the Congo.

The migration from Egypt

Their ancestors originally came from Egypt. When they were in Egypt they called themselves Abatachoni. After leaving there they went to Sirikwa in the Rift Valley from where they went to Elgon. At that time the Kony inhabited the section of Mount Elgon close to the country of the Bagishu who were their neighbours. The Kony inhabited the mountains. However, the Abatachoni passed along the lower reaches of these mountains.

When the Abatachoni left Elgon they went to Tororo and found it uninhabited. Only Bugishu and Buganda were inhabited at that time. Then they changed course, and, after sighting the lake (Victoria) in the far south, moved on to Emwalie in Malikisi. They found this place as yet uninhabited although the Ababukusu were living a little farther to the south at Ebwayi near Amukura. After that they went to Mushibembe in South Bukusu where they found the Abakabradi. Then they mixed with them and lived together.

Later, however, the Abatachoni and the Abakabradi separated. The Abatachoni went to Sang'alo where they lived for some years. They found it full of buffaloes and elephants. After leaving Sang'alo' they went to Navakholo, Mwivukha in Bunyala, Mwisivirie at Misi's in Bunyala, and thence to Makhukhuni in North Kabras. All these places were still uninhabited at that time. On the other hand when the Abakabradi left Mushibembe they went to Ematungu, Eshimuli (both in Wanga), Khunderema in Bunyala, Khungotse (Ingotse), and thence to Khulukume in South Kabras.

The separation of the community of the Abakabradi and the Abatachoni at Mushibembe was caused by internecine fighting. A woman belonging to the Abakabradi people saw an Omutachoni man with good milk cows and, accordingly, eloped with him leaving her child behind. Thereupon the Abakabradi attacked the Abatachoni. Then they later thought it best to separate instead of carrying on with fighting. After this split each community lived separately under its own ruler.

When their ancestors left Egypt, they came in canoes up the River Nile. They brought with them cattle, goats, sheep, chickens, and quails. They left Egypt because of a quarrel and, also, because the soil was sandy and poor. Owing to all this and to the

scarcity of rain, there was perpetual starvation. It was because of this that they migrated in search of a better country.

Warfare

The Masai War. They fought with the Purko Masai when they were at Sirikwa over cattle raids. The Purko and the Nandi frequently raided their cattle; the raids often led to fighting. In the final fighting the Abatachoni were defeated. They therefore decided to migrate; they walked down a certain river (Nzoia) and came Elgon.

The Teso War

This was fought at Emwalie in Malikisi Location. At that time the Teso were living far away in Uganda and they were still united with the Teso of Kenya. However, when the Teso saw that the Abatachoni had settled here, they began harassing them. The Teso used to ally with the Abakhayo, Badama, Basoga and the Acholi whereas the Abakabresi, Ababukusu, and the Abanyala supported the Abatachoni. Cattle raids were the usual reason for fighting. The Teso finally defeated the Abatachoni who thereupon crossed the River Nzoia and came over here (North Kabras). A few of them, however, stayed behind at Sang'alo. After defeating the Abatachoni, the Teso retreated to their own country. Then the Ababukusu moved into the lands formerly occupied by the Abatachoni in the Sang'alo area.

The Nandi War

The Nandi raided them several times. On one occasion they came in large numbers and attacked them at Ekulumbeni in North Kabras. Then the Abakabresi appeared from the opposite direction and aided the Abatachoni. The Nandi were defeated and many of them were killed. Some of the few Nandi survivors were rounded up by the Abakabresi but a few of them escaped. Later, however, the Nandi made more raids at Mulombi's and at Sambuli's in South Kabras but they were once again repelled. After these raids and fighting, the Abatachoni, Abakabresi, and the Nandi "ate a dog" and ended hostilities. This was largely due to the initiative of Sifuma and Lumbasi (both of them Abatachoni) and Chisindai and Chetera (Abakabresi).

Governmental System

Iyaya was their ruler when they were at Sang'alo; he was succeeded by Mukoya. However, when the migration took place, Sifuma remained at Sang'alo to rule over the people who stayed behind whereas Lulera crossed over to this place with the migrants. Lulera was succeeded by Mukonambi who was in turn succeeded by Lumbasi, the first Government Headman. Mukonambi was the Omwami when the Administration was established however, he declined to serve under it in favour of the youthful Lumbasi who then became Headman.

The institutions of Government of the Abatachoni are ancient; the Omwami always moved with his people during their migrations. The Omwami wore a leopard skin cloak and the skins of other animals. He also wore a copper bracelet on his wrist, and occasionally, round his neck, and an elephant tusk ornament and a brass bracelet on the wrist. In addition he had a cowry shell head dress and two staffs. These insignia were handed down from their earliest Omwami and they are replaced when worn out.

The investiture of the Omwami

The old ruler could nominate any of his sons to succeed him on the basis of his personal qualities. The elders did not have the power to override his choice. Should, however, the successor be a minor, one of the elders became his guardian until he grew up. On the day of the installation, fresh milk was poured out onto the royal stool and the successor washed his head in it after which the head was shaved.

The shaving was done by the successor's sister-in-law of good repute who also poured out the milk onto the stool. Then the new Omwami sat on a dry cow-hide anointed with butter. A young grand child of the late Omwami then sat between the legs of the successor and held his hand. Then a sister-in-law of the Omwami to-be anointed him with a mash of sim sim, monkey nuts and butter whereupon a woman made the usual ululation cheer.

The woman who shaved the new ruler's head spent the night in his home; she was given a piece of the meat of the bullock which was slaughtered for the installation feast. Thereafter, the Omwami treated the child who held his hand on the installation day with respect and love; under no circumstances might he cane him.

On the night following the installation, the new Omwami, his sister-in-law who shaved his head and the child who held him by the hand at the installation ceremony all slept on the installation hide, with the Omwami in the middle. They then dispersed the following morning. After that the Omwami concealed the hand on which he wore the bracelet under his cloak until he prepared beer for his people; he must not even point at somebody with it thereafter.

The Omwami could not be deposed except when he was guilty of committing adultery. He was usually succeeded by his brother if he did not have a son. The Abatachoni could never invest a cripple or a lame person or anyone who had suffered from an ulcer.

The functions of the Omwami were to judge cases with the assistance of his elders; to keep the peace throughout the country; to give instructions for the people to plant their crops and to encourage them to work hard; and to decide on all matters of war and peace. It was also his responsibility to appoint the war leader of his people. At the end of a successful raid the ruler was usually given one of the captured cows but the rest were distributed among the raiders themselves by one of the elders.

The Omwami never went to war. Again he was neither a rain-maker nor a herbalist nor a diviner. Also, the Omwami could not use a crooked or cracked drinking tube. Furthermore, he had always to be at home by dusk. His subjects gave him beer and meat. He also got a cow whenever he judged cases.

The functions of the wife of the Omwami were to look after the guests and to give them food and to take charge of the royal insignia which were kept in her house. She was called "Omukhaye", i.e. a lady. The mother of the Omwami was also called "Omukhaye Omukhongo" - the great lady. She was also respected.

THE ABATACHONI OF NDIVISI

They originally came from Egypt; the rest of the other people also came from there. After leaving Egypt they went to Sirikwa and thence to Mbayi, Liwa (Sengen near Kapenguria), Kitale, and then to Sibot hill which is one of the Mount Elgon hills on the Kitale side. From Sibot hill they went to Kamukuywa, near Chesabis school on the road to Kitale. So far, they were still moving around the foothills of Mount Elgon's range of hills.

Continuing walking, they eventually arrived at Matiri in Kimilili, about twelve miles from Broderick Falls. Then they moved on once more; they went to Sitabicha (Bokoli), Tulienge (Kavujai) in East Bukusu, and then to Mwalie in Malikisi. After leaving Mwalie they went to Mayanja, Kholera (near Matungu), Mumias, and then to Elukongo in South Wanga. After reaching Elukongo, they again turned and walked back in the direction they had come. A few of them, however, stayed behind at Elukongo.

The group of people who turned back eventually recrossed the Nzoia and went to Akhabukokhe (Shibembe) or Kabula, in West Bukusu. They continued walking and arrived at Sang'alo, Kisuluni (Kitale in East Bukusu), and Musaka in Ndivisi Location. Then they began to spread out all over the Location.

How they separated

When they were still at Sang'alo one group crossed over to Makhukhuni in South Kabras but the rest returned to Sitabicha (Bokoli). The people who were in the latter group now live as far afield as Kimilili. However, some Abatachoni went to Kisuluni and thence to Mabanga and Musaka in Ndivisi Location. These are the Abatachoni of Ndivisi Location. After this group had arrived in Ndivisi, they went to live on Kiribot hill at Broderick Falls. It was at this place that they fought with the Europeans in 1894.

After this war, they migrated to Naitiri, near Kiminini; some went to Lugare. In the year 1914, the Europeans burnt down their homesteads at Naitiri and Lugare and so they came back to Ndivisi Location once more.

The reasons for migrating

Egypt: They migrated from there because the soil was dry and also because there was perpetual starvation. In addition, there was a scarcity of water.

Sirikwa: They migrated because there was a severe drought and, also, because the soil was sandy and therefore unproductive. In addition, they fought with the Uasin Gishu Masai who used to raid their cattle.

Liwa or Sengeri: They also migrated from here because the soil was poor and, also, because of the scarcity of rain.

Kitale: They were menaced here by wild animals - elephants, buffaloes, and many others.

Sibot Hill: There were a lot of scorpions which caused death by stinging.

Kamukuywa: The reason for their migration from here was the death of their cattle. The cattle contracted the disease from buffalo herds and died from swollen lungs (pleuro-pneumonia).

Matiri: They migrated because they wanted to join their brethren who had preceded them to Emwalie.

Sitabicha: They merely felt like doing so.

Tulienge or Kavujai: They migrated because of a small-pox epidemic.
Emwali: The aggression of the Uasin Gishu Masai; they frequently attacked and killed them.
Mayanja: Again the Masai aggression.
Kholera: The hostility of the Abanyala and the Abakabradi.
Mumias: They simply felt like travelling.
Elukongo: The hostility of the Abakabradi was the reason for their migration.
Akhabukokhe or Sibembe: They simply felt like travelling. In addition, game was scarce.
Sang'alo: They had become crowded and so they decided to migrate.

Their food was meat, milk, blood and honey. They have now adopted other foods. The Abatachoni and the Abang'oma were formerly one people and they were also neighbours. They were also one people with the Abalaku (Bok), and the Konyi (Kony). However, they were not related to the Nandi or the Uasin Gishu Masai; neither were they neighbours. They and the other Kalenjin sub-groups separated at Sibot Hill.

The people they came in contact with

Sirikwa: The Elgeyo and others.
Lirwa or Sengeri: We do not know.
Kitale: Uninhabited.
Sibot Hill: They found there a Sabot sub-tribe
Kamukuywa: Uninhabited.
Ematiri: Uninhabited.
Sitabicha: Uninhabited.
Tulienge or Kavulai: Uninhabited; they left the Abang'oma there.
Mwalie: They found here the Abamwalie clan of the Abatachoni".
Mayanja: Uninhabited.
Kholera: Uninhabited.
Mumias: Uninhabited; the Abawanga were still in Tiriki.
Elukoño: The Abakabradi.
Akhabukokhe, Kisuluni, Mabanga, and Musaka were also uninhabited.

Genealogies

Kiborit was the ancestor of the Abatachoni; he was Tachoni's son. Abraham Weramondi is the son of Kibeu; son of Sifuma; son of Yieya who died at Kisuluni; son of Monyeyi who died at Mwalie; called Kony son of Sung'oya who died at Kitale; son of Were who died at Liwa or Sengeri; son of Kiborit who died at Sibot near Kitale, son of Tachoni. It is not known where he died.

Yakobo Sukura is the son of Mulianga; son of Welaluche; son of Cheche; son of Mukoya who died at Mumias; son of Wakwaku who died at Sang'alo; son of Muleke who died in Bukhayo; son of Mukhabi who died at Mumias; son of Tomaywa who died at Sang'alo; son of Mwinami who died at Sang'alo; son of Werandanya who died at Makhukhuni son of Muchani who died at Broderick Falls; son of Wasayi who died at Makhukhuni.

Warfare

The Uasin Gisu Masai came here (Broderick Falls) to raid their cattle. The Nandi fought with them at Lugare and also at Mautuma. They fought because the Nandi came to their country to kill their game. The Abanyala (Navakholo) fought with them at Kholera as a result of cattle raids. The Ababukusu fought with them at Mwiya as a result of insults and counter-insults. When the Abatachoni came into Buluya the other sub-tribes of the Abaluyia had not yet come. The Ababukusu only came in recently from Tororo.

Governmental System

See the information under the section of the systems of government of the Abang'oma and the Abatachoni of Kabras.

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