

Integration of Barwa into other Ethnic Groups in Western Kenya: A Model for National Integration in Kenya

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There is a pressing need to know how Kenya's ethnic groups were formed in order to identify strategies to bring about national integration and cohesion in the country. This study examines briefly the origin of Barwa of western Kenya. Using Barwa as an example, this article describes how people who are adverse in terms of ethnic group are forced by circumstances and continuous interaction to become members of a single ethnic group. Ethnographic research design was used. Interviews were held with samples of old people. In addition the written literature on the people of western Kenya was reviewed. The study showed that the Kalenjin ethnic group came into being as a result of interaction between hunters and gatherers (Okiek or Barwa) who are of Semitic origin and highland Nilotes who are of Hamitic origin. The model used to integrate Barwa into Kalenjin, Luyia and Luo ethnic groups was found to be an appropriate model for national integration in Kenya.

Keywords: Assimilation, interaction, integration

Introduction

According to the 2019 population census, Kenya has a population of 47.5 million people who belong to more than 42 ethnic groups. The largest ethnic groups are the:

Kikuyu (8,148,668), Abaluyia (6,823,842), Kalenjin (6,358,113), Akamba (5,066,966) and Luo (4,663,910). The smallest ethnic groups are: Gosha (685), Kenyan Americans (596), Dahalo (575), Konso (1299) and El-Molo (1,104).

Since the achievement of independence in 1963, Kenya has made several attempts to promote national integration. The purpose of national integration is to promote national unity, peace and cooperation amongst the people of Kenya and sustainable socio-economic development and put a halt to marginalization of some communities. The question is, are Kenyans of different ethnic groups com-

ing together or drifting apart? In other words, did the achievement of independence lead to the national integration and social cohesion that had been expected by the country's founding fathers?

Ample evidence shows that the policies pursued by successive governments since independence have prevented the emergence of a national consciousness. At the heart of the problem is the country's ruling class. Since independence leading political leaders have done everything in their power to advance the interests of their ethnic groups rather than advancing policies that promote national integration. There is a lot of impunity amongst political leaders and bureaucrats. Ethnic kingpins form ethnic-based political parties that represent ethnic groups for their political survival and not policies that promote national cohesion and integration. The problem is not that the country has bad laws... Although the constitution

requires all levels and departments of the public sector to consist of public servants from diverse regions and ethnic groups, the public service has since independence been dominated by members of ethnic groups of the president, cabinet ministers and other top government officials. Because of this, there has been a lot of empty rhetoric about national integration and implementations of laws that promote national unity have been hesitant and shallow.

In addition, weaknesses of institutions that are expected to promote national integration is a major predicament in Kenya. The failure of existing institutions to function well is also linked to greed and selfishness. To a great extent, conflicts between communities, such as ethnic violence during the 1992, 1997 and 2007 elections have links to greed by ruling political elites and grievance on the part of communities that feel excluded from participation in political power and sharing of resources.

Kenya and other African countries continue to look for models that promote national integration effectively. Specifically, they are trying to shift from the obsession with enacting national integration and cohesion laws which lead to short-term models to models that lead to long term outcomes. This article discusses a model of national integration that has been adopted by Barwa of western Kenya to become legitimate members of Kalenjin, Abaluyia and Luo ethnic groups. Barwa are a Kalenjin clan or group of clans.

This article rests on two assumptions:

1. That post election violence has shown that the very survival by Kenya is in jeopardy, and
2. Only implementation of policies and strategies that promote national integration can enable the country to continue its existence as a state.

Distinctions need to be made between integration of members of an ethnic group into other ethnic groups and integration of members of different ethnic groups into a nation state. Integration of members of an ethnic group into a dominant ethnic group normally occurs when members of a given ethnic group adopt the culture and language of an-

other ethnic group. Integration of minority groups into dominant groups can be classified as assimilation of minority groups by dominant groups (“minority/dominant”) and integration of members of different ethnic groups into a nation state can be classified as small/big. Here big means one big nation state.

Integration of members of different ethnic groups normally aims at achieving national unity. Both small and big ethnic groups adopt the values of the country with the aim of safeguarding and enhancing the country’s reputation, unity and sometimes survival prospects. Any multi-ethnic or multi-racial country in the world has at its disposal three approaches to national integration. These are:

1. Using a formal masculine integration model.
2. Using a formal political and constitutional approach based on the constitution laws, bill of rights and political parties.
3. Using a non-formal integration model. Each of these is analysed briefly.

Formal Forceful Model

In this model integration is imposed by the national government or majority ethnic group. People are compelled to adopt an agreed upon culture totally relinquishing their own cherished values or face punishment. Arabs for instance used conquest to integrate people of other ethnic groups into their states.

Political and Constitutional Model

The second model is political and constitutional model which is currently practised in Kenya to integrate the countries diverse ethnic groups into one country. Many conditions that are prerequisite to any integration exist in the country. These include a common colonial heritage, acceptance of and respect for the constitution, the country’s leadership and institutions, loyalty to the country, significant marriages between members of different ethnic groups, inter-ethnic contacts through eco-

conomic activities, education and sports. However, there are also many obstacles to a meaningful integration of people of different ethnic groups into one nation. One difficulty is the lack of a defined homogeneous culture to which assimilation might be effected.

Experiences of other countries have revealed that in the absence of stable dominant culture assimilation is not easy to achieve. Some people, particularly politicians value their ethnic homogeneity. Since the colonial days different ethnic groups have organized themselves politically to elect their representatives in parliament and support candidates who pledge to secure their rights. This model succeeds only in countries where the rule of law and orderly political change is fully accepted.

Non-Formal Integration Model

In this model, people of diverse origins interact peacefully with one another through inter-marriage, economic activities, common institutions, copying aspects of culture from each other and over the years becoming a nation.

Statement of the Problem

The Kenya Constitution puts a lot of emphasis on the need for national integration and cohesion. Unfortunately, there has been very little effort by the Kenyans and the government to promote national integration. Since the achievement of independence, identification along ethnic lines and discrimination against people of certain communities have been the norm. This has caused unnecessary conflicts among the people of Kenya as evidenced by post-election violence of 1992, 1997, 2007/2008.

Relatively few studies of Kenya's ethnic groups in the pre-colonial period have reported detailed information on multi-ethnic nature of Kenya's communities. Moreover, most of the few studies that have been conducted, particularly by foreign historians have yielded contradictory information

with respect of ethnic interaction in pre-colonial period.

Most studies of Kenya's ethnic groups have concentrated on the migration and settlement of communities. Very few studies have focused on their formation. This was emphasized by Mwanzi (1977) when he argued that rather than talk of the spread of the Kalenjin, we should talk of the coming together of the ethnic communities that make up the present Kalenjin groups. Furthermore, the place of Barwa, hunting and forest people of Mount Elgon and Mau escarpment called Dorobo (poor people who do not have cattle) by the Maasai has not been articulated by historians who fixed the origin of the Kalenjin. Indeed, the place of Barwa in the formation of the Kalenjin has not been recognized by historians. Instead, historians have wrongly advanced the theory that Hamites were the main factor in the emergence of the Kalenjin. Previously, Kalenjin and Maasai were classified as Nilo-Hamites and by Hamites meant Cushites (Ehret, 1971).

The study examined relationships between Barwa who are part of Kalenjin, Luyia and Luo communities to determine whether this can be used as a basis for integration of different Kenya's ethnic groups.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Who are Barwa?
2. What is the origin of Barwa?
3. How were Barwa assimilated by Hamites, Abaluyia and Luo?
4. How can the model of assimilation of Barwa be used to promote national integration in Kenya?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was generated :

Kalenjin ethnic group came into being due to interaction between

Barwa (Semites), Highland Nilotes and Bantu speaking people.

Significance of the Study

Writing an account of interaction among people who lived more than 3000 years and who had no written records is a formidable task, but it has to be undertaken if only to correct some of the misconceptions by people that their ethnic groups are pure. Diversity of origin of ethnic groups is often obscured. Secondly, this account is important because it provides a model that could be used to integrate people who live as minorities in major ethnic groups into those communities and Kenyans of different ethnic groups into a Kenya Nation.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theory that interaction between hunters and gatherers (Okiek, Barwa or Batwa) with ancestors of the Kalenjin from the land of Ham (Egypt) gave rise to both Kalenjin ethnic group and language. Chomu and Humphry (2012) have postulated that the Kalenjin are related to ancient Egyptians in the following terms:

According to Nandi oral history, the ancestors of the Kalenjin peoples were warriors in Pharaonic Egypt and stood close to the throne. Support for this thesis is supplied both from similarities between the Kalenjin language and that of ancient Egypt and from consideration of the Kalenjin's ancestral religion. This is essentially monotheistic being based on worship of a supreme deity presiding over a world of spirits. The name of God is Assis who is the source of all things. The symbol of Assis is the sun, though the sun is not itself God. (p.1).

It is wrong to suppose as Ochieng (1975, pp.55-56) did that the Kalenjin "do not drive their origin from outside Kenya, indeed their ancestors have

been living in Kenya for the last two millennia." The Kalenjin are made up of the Nandi, Kipsigis, Keiyo, Terik, Marakwet, Tugen, Pokot, Bok, Bangomek, Kony, Sebei and Okiek.

According to this theory, the key to understanding the Kalenjin history is to be found in the interaction between Barwa (forest people) and ancestors of the Kalenjin who originated from the land of Ham (Egypt).

Thus, the Cushitic theory that Cushites played an important role in the emergence of the Kalenjin language and culture is rejected for lack of adequate evidence. Many western historians have left out the role played by Barwa in the formation of Kenya's ethnic groups. For example (Ehret quoted in Mwanzi, 1977, p.23) said the role of the residual hunter gather groups in these developments, otherwise involving food production societies must be left aside for now.

Method

Research Design

The study used ethnographic research design. That is mainly because the study is based on oral traditions of the Barwa which have been passed on from one generation to another.

The Sample

The sample consisted of sixteen old people (seven Kalenjin speakers, seven Luyia speakers and two Luo speakers). Elders were sampled using purposive sample technique. In addition, several textbooks on the people of western Kenya were analysed.

Research Instruments

Data were collected by means of an interview guide for key informants. In addition, a content analysis guide was used to analyse written accounts supplied by historians.

Validity of Research Instruments

First drafts of the two research instruments were analysed by three experts in African history, revised and pilot tested and revised again.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews were conducted with elders by the researcher and his assistants.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data were analysed using themes and patterns.

Presentation and Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study are presented under the following sections.

1. Who the Barwa are.
2. Assimilation of the Barwa by Hamites in the Mount Elgon area.
3. Assimilation of the Barwa by the Abaluyia and Luo speaking people.
4. How the model of assimilation of Barwa can be used to promote national unity in Kenya.

Research Findings

Who are the Barwa?

Oral traditions and their close links with the Okiek groups on Mount Elgon indicate that Barwa are descendants of hunters and gatherers who according to one informant lived on the following mountains.

1. Ujilani mountain in Cameroon.
2. Nubian mountain in Sudan.
3. Ethiopian mountains in Ethiopia.
4. Mount Elgon.
5. Mount Kenya.
6. Mount Kilimanjaro.
7. Ruwenzori mountain – Uganda.
8. Kimabwindi mountain
9. Busike in Rwanda and Burundi.
10. Drakensburg mountain in South Africa.

In Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, they are called Barwa or Batwa (forest people). Available evidence suggests the earliest ancestors of Barwa or Batwa were among the earliest people to live in Kenya. They were a hunting and gathering community. The word batwa means forest people. According to Curtin et al (1978) the ancestors of the Barwa were either Okiek or looked more like Okiek. "Though larger than the San or pygmies, they were still of slender build, reminding one of the Ethiopian Amhara on a smaller scale." (p.4).

According to Wagner (1956, pp.28-29),

Barwa had an Ethiopian strain which manifests itself in a narrow longish face, a thin slightly aquiline nose and comparatively thin lips.

They were semi-caucasoid peoples rather like present-day Ethiopians (Sutton, 1974). This shows that they were Semites. As Semites, they were related to Amhara and Hebrews. They later interacted with Bantu-speaking people, Sirikwa.

The earliest ancestors of the Barwa lived in Sahara.

According to Loftus and Martin (1976),

From 9000 B.C to 3000 B.C the Sahara was not a desert but huge fertile parkland with heavy rains. It was teeming with game such as elephant, hippopotamus and buffalo and many different migrant peoples lived there. When the Sahara began to dry up the people moved north or south of the desert. (p.8).

It is now generally agreed by many African historians that the origin of the Barwa was the Ethiopian highlands where they were Semites. By 6000 B.C during the Late Stone Age, they had moved southwards and settled in the Mount Elgon region. Migrations from northern Ethiopia were caused by drought, plagues and famine. In the Mount Elgon

region, they survived by hunting, fishing and gathering. They adapted well to the presence of Bantu and later Sirikwa and later highland Nilotes.

During the first millennium B.C. the ancestors of the Kalenjin migrated to western Kenya from the Ethiopian highlands and their first settlement was on the slopes of Mount Elgon. The Kalenjin absorbed the Barwa through intermarriage and assimilation. However, they retained their identity (name) and some cultural practices. Bamulembo clan who settled in the Mount Elgon region where they were assimilated by the Kalenjin later migrated to Nandi South Sub-County and then to Wanga Sub-County, Kakamega county, Marachi, Samia and Bunyala in Busia County.

Members of other ethnic groups who lived in areas where Barwa were in majority were gradually assimilated and became Barwa. On the other hand, in areas where Barwa were minorities, they were assimilated by the largest ethnic groups in those areas. In both cases, inter-marriage was high. Later many descendants of hunter-gatherers are now practicing farming and keeping animals after their ancestors were assimilated by highland Nilotes, bantu and river-lake Nilotes. The Okiek and Kapbachworwa are now Kalenjin speaking while some Barwa are now Luyia or Luo. One of these people are the Abamulembo of Busia, Abamulembwa of Wanga sub-county and Kamulembo of Ugenya Sub-County, Siaya County.

Barwa of Kenya are found among the Kalenjin, Luyia, Kikuyu and Luo. Among the Kalenjin, Barwa are found in Mount Elgon region and other areas where Kalenjin speaking people live. Barwa of Mount Elgon region are Sebey, Kony, Bok, Bongmek and Okiek. Bukusu people call Kalenjin Barwa. The headquarters of Sebeyi district, Uganda is called Kapchorwa and there is Kapchorwa shopping centre in Marakwet Sub-County, Kapchorwa Tea Factory in Nandi Hills, Nandi County and Kapchorwa Village in Kapropita, Baringo County.

According to an informant from Mount Elgon

Barwa are the same people as

Okiek. They were hunter-gatherers. They gave birth to Sebeyi, Bok, Bongmek and Kony. It is the Okiek who gave birth to all Kalenjin communities. That is why Kalenjins call Barwa grandfathers. In fact all Kalenjins are Barwa. Barwa in other Kalenjin communities are called Kapbachorwa. Their totem is the Lion.

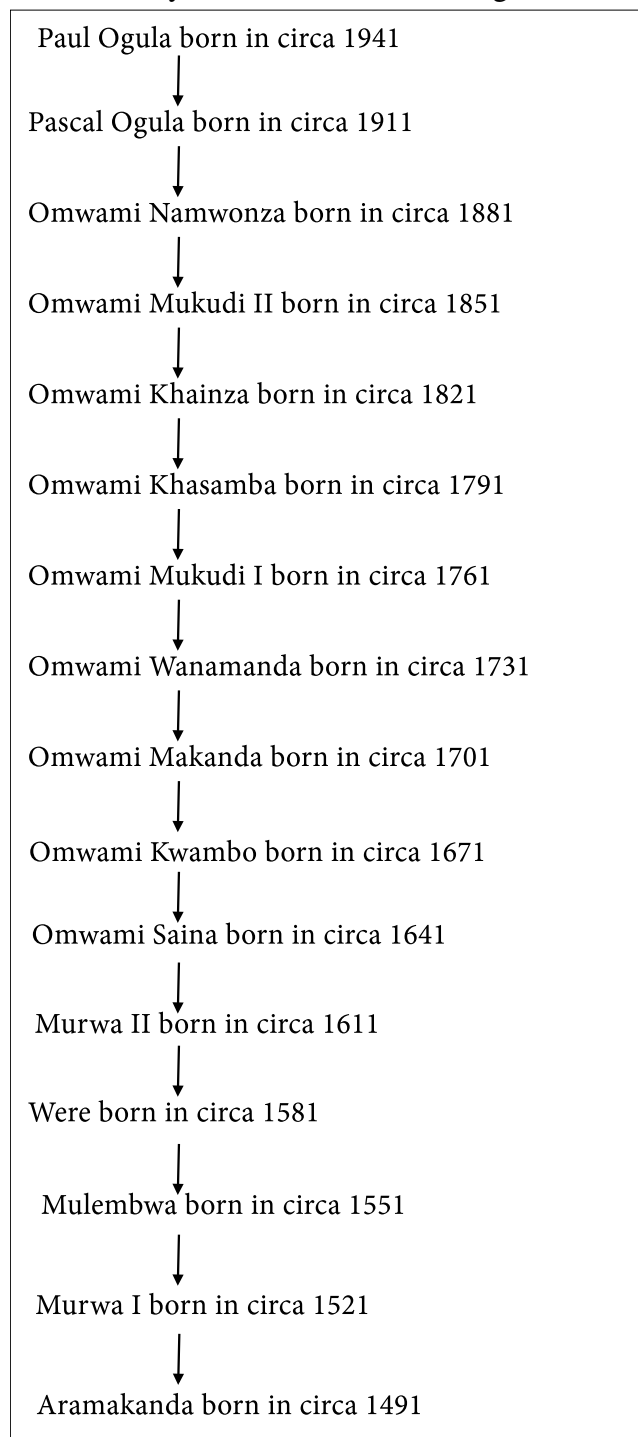
The following are sub clans of the Barwa in those communities.

1. Kapchesasa
2. Kapbochorwa
3. Kaptuwei
4. Kabargony
5. Kapterigeon
6. Kapsiondoi
7. Kapchemitan
8. Kap arap tui
9. Kap arap Moi
10. Kapchebongir
11. Kapkikwai
12. Kapchorwa

According to Cohen (1972), Kintu, a member of the Lion clan, migrated from the region around Mount Elgon and founded the Buganda Kingdom. The Kapbachorwa whose totem is the lion is regarded as a clan of leadership. The pre-eminent Murwa is former President Daniel arap Moi, a member of the Kap arap Moi group of Baringo County.

Barwa who have been assimilated by the Abaluyia are Abamulembo of Busia County, Barwa or Batua of Vihiga County, Abakolati of Bungoma County, Abamulembwa and Abathimba (Abarimba) of Kakamega County. The following genealogical diagram shows the relationship between Abamulembo of Busia County and Barwa of Mount Elgon.

Figure 1. Relationship between Abamulembo of Busia County and Barwa of Mount Elgon



*Omwami is a luyia word for king or chief

The Sabaot call Makanda Mukanda and Aramakanda Armaganda. Armaganda is a generation among Bongmek. The first remembered ancestor

of Abamulembo to whom nearly all Abamulembo, Abamulembwa and Kamulembo trace their descent is Aramakanda who lived in the Mount Elgon area. No wonder the Kolati of Bungoma praise themselves as follows: "I am Omunamanda, Omukolati, Omurwa. Abamulembo later migrated from Busia County and settled in Siaya County where they were assimilated by the Luo are called Kamulembo.

The Abamulembo name Mukudi (Mukundi in Kikuyu) and Kalenjin name, Mutahi among the Kikuyu to some extent show that Barwa lived in Mount Kenya region. However, more research should be done on this. Abamulembo of Tiriki location are called Barwa. According to one informant, they came from Trekk in Ethiopia. They followed the river Nile up to Lake Turkana. From there they moved to Kerio Valley. Years later they moved to Laikipia and Uasin Gishu where they fought and defeated the Sirikwa. After many years, they moved to the slopes of Mount Elgon. They later moved to a place in Vihiga County, which they called Trekk, the name they came along with from Ethiopia. They left some members of the Barwa community on the slopes of Mount Elgon (Mount Masaba). The person who led Barwa from Trekk in Ethiopia was called Aramakanda. Here in Bunyala Aramakanda is Makanda.

The Ethiopian origin of the Barwa is corroborated by the tradition of the Chapbachelorwa clan who claim descent from the Okiek. According to elders interviewed, the Barwa or forest people were predominantly hunters and gatherers and are closely related to the Okiek (miscalled Dorobo). Dorobo is a Maasai word which means poor person that is to say one without cattle (Mwanzi, 1977, p.31). This was corroborated by four elders who claimed that their clans descended from the Okiek who inhabited Mount Elgon.

The Barwa are called Kapbachelorwa by the Nandi. In Nandi County, they are found in Kesogon Village in Nandi South bordering the Terik.

According to (Langat, 1969) Kipsigis claim that their Kalenjin ancestors originated in Egypt

(Misiri) during the Biblical times. In Egypt they adopted circumcision and the worship of the sun, Assis. The Kalenjin were then known as Miotik. Kipkoti Arap Moigoi quoted in (Langat, 1969, p.74) claimed that in Misiri Kipsigis and Ndorobo (Okiek) were brothers. Their father (Isaac) blessed Kipsigis (Jacob) instead of Ndorobo (Esau) and the latter took to the forests. According to a Maasai informant, the Okiek and Maasai were originally the same people.

The Barwa who live in Luyialand are represented by groups such as Abakolati and Abarimba of Bungoma, Abamulembo of Bunyala, Samia and Marachi, Busia County, Abamulembwa or Abamulembo. Abamasaba and Abachimba (abarimba) of Kakamega County and Abarwa or Abalwa of Vihiga County. These Barwa who were originally Kalenjins adopted Luyia language and traditional values. Some Abamulembo of Busia hived off and went to live in Ugenya Sub-County, Siaya County where they are called Kamulembo.

A lot of evidence shows that the history of Abamulembo of Busia and Kakamega counties and Kamulembo of Siaya County is connected with Nandi County. The genealogical evidence suggests that Abamulembo had already settled in Nandi County about 12 generations ago. My own family tree, for instance, shows that Murwa lived in Nandi South 12 generations ago. Evidence shows that about sixty years since independence, Kenya's different ethnic groups are drifting apart instead of coming together. This is mainly because of the behaviour of the ruling elite and failure by state agencies such as the Judiciary and National Commission for Integration and Cohesion to act swiftly in dealing with people who engage in activities that promote negative ethnicity. Successive governments have pursued policies that have encouraged the dominant ruling elite to hold values and ambitions that are far away from those that promote national integration.

All available data strongly suggest the view that Barwa and Okiek are the same people. Among these data are the following:

- Place names such as Murwa Digir near Mau forest where Okiek live.
- A Kipsigis informant said that in their village they call Okiek Marwa.
- Bukusu call all Kalenjin-speaking people including Okiek Barwa Barwamasai.
- There was sufficient agreement among Kalenjin informants that Barwa and Okiek are one and the same people.
- The resemblances between Barwa languages of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi and Okiek languages of Southern Mau forest.

Integration of the Barwa into Kalenjin, Abaluyia and Luo Ethnic Groups

Currently Barwa are a Kalenjin clan or groups of clans; Luyia clan and Luo clan. This section discusses the model used to assimilate Barwa by the above ethnic groups. This integration was divided into three phases during which time new arrivals take on increased responsibilities.

Phase 1 comprised orientation period whereby new comers establish friendly relationships with the host community and study its culture. This phase takes several years. In phase 2 newcomers speak the language of the host community and also practice aspects of their culture under the guidance of original members of that community. This phase spans many years. In the third and final phase newcomers become full members of the host community and are left to run their affairs without being supervised.

Integration of the Barwa into Kalenjin Ethnic Group

According to Sutton (1974),

Archaeological evidence suggests that Mount Elgon region was inhabited during the last century, B.C. by Highland Nilotes who had earlier migrated from Egypt (the land of Ham) and settled in Ethiopia. They migrated to western Kenya from the Ethiopian highlands and then settled in Mount Elgon Region. Relations between the Barwa and

Hamites from Ethiopia seem to have been mainly peaceful. Interaction between Barwa and ancestors of the Kalenjin from Ethiopia, Sirikwa and Bantu led to the emergence of the Kalenjin ethnic group.

One of Kenya's great historians, William Ochieng, emphasised the pre-eminence of the Barwa among the Kalenjin when he wrote as follows:

The Ak(g)iy (or Okiek), however, are at the core of the Kalenjin society. They are the principal group that gave the Kalenjin most of their culture, including language and when we talk of the migrations of Kalenjin clans we are in effect talking about the migrations of the various Kalenjin speaking Okieks. (Ochieng, 1975, p.76).

This view is corroborated by Blackburn's study of the Okiek. He wrote as follows:

The Okiek clan names are the same as those of the Kipsigis and those Okiek identify themselves as being the same as the Kipsigis of that clan (Blackburn, 1984, p.11).

Place names such as ill Marwa in Okiek territory also show that Okiek and Barwa are the same people.

One informant said:

Barwa migrated from the Ethiopian highlands and reached Mount Elgon which was not occupied by another group. Later, people of other ethnic groups came to the region. They lived peacefully with Barwa and borrowed from them circumcision, initiation by removing two lower incisors and age sets. There were seven age sets: Sawe, Korongoro, Kimnyinge, Kablelach, Nyonge, Chuma and Maina.

There is sufficient agreement among Kalenjin informants that interaction between Barwa and ancestors of the Kalenjin brought about considerable social, political and economic interactions in which the Barwa appear to have played a dominant role.

Assimilation of the Barwa by Abaluyia and Luo

When Kalenjin speaking people migrated from Mount Elgon region at the beginning of the sixteenth century some Barwa groups remained behind. Some of these people continue to live there as Kalenjins. Others continued to interact with the Bantu of Bungoma County in a variety of ways. Some Barwa of Mount Elgon area were subsequently systematically absorbed by the Bantu communities. They include the Abarimba (Abachimba) of Bunyala, Kakamega and Bungoma and the Kolati.

Mukolati from Bungoma remarked as follows:

We are Barwa. I am Omunamanda, Omukolati, Omurwa.

Barwa of Vihiga, Kakamega and Busia Counties broke away in small groups from Barwa of Nandi County and were continuously and systematically assimilated by Bantu speaking people. The Barwa who lived as minorities among the Abaluyia were completely Bantuised and lost their language and culture. Later some Abamulembo (Barwa) migrated in small groups to Siaya County where they are known as Kamulembo. They were absorbed by the Luo and adopted Luo language and culture.

The following are the special features of the model of interaction between Barwa and other communities:

1. Multi-ethnicity – People are diverse in terms of ethnic group and are forced by circumstances to live together or near each other.
2. Continuous peaceful interaction between members of different communities through trade and intermarriage.
3. The smaller group is assimilated by the larger group.

4. The interests of the community that is assimilated are catered for in the process of assimilation.

5. Existence of proper governance structure that not only ensures that each community prospers and no person is discriminated against due to ethnic origin.

6. Existence of cordial relations between members of the major ethnic group and people who are being assimilated.

It is obvious that the process of assimilation of the Barwa was characterized by peaceful interaction and commitment by community leaders to values that promoted social cohesion. This means that Kenyans have a lot to learn from Barwa model of assimilation.

How to Achieve National Integration in Kenya Using the Barwa Model

The last research question sought to determine how the model used by Barwa could be used to promote national integration in Kenya. This article shows that it is possible for people of different ethnic groups to be integrated into one nation. This does not mean that clans and ethnic groups will cease to exist. What we need is unity in diversity. National integration is like assimilation.

The existence of Kenya as a nation rests to some extent on the idea that all ethnic groups will eventually speak the same language and have the same culture. There are many Kenyans, of all ethnic groups who feel that belonging to Kenya has not stripped them of their original ethnic identity.

As one elder put it:

My father came from Abanamanda clan Bungoma so I am Murwa and Bukusu. Secondly, because I am a Bukusu I am a Luyia. I am a Kenyan by birth, so I am a Kenyan. When we talk about national integration, we do not mean that clans and ethnic groups will cease to exist. What we need is unity in diversity.

This shows that there are a lot of people in Kenya who are not against the idea of a Kenyan nation but often wonder whether it is possible. This study has shown that assimilation cannot be pursued directly, it can only ensure from a position of harmony and peaceful coexistence. Barwa did not become Kalenjin, Luyia or Luo against their will. They do not feel they had lost their ethnic identity. The Kolati Barwa who have been assimilated by the Bukusu are not struggling for a unification with their Saboat brothers. The Barwa of Vihiga County, Abamulembwa of Kakamega County and Abamulembo of Busia feel that they are part and parcel of the Abaluyia ethnic group. The Barwa of Tiriki are not struggling for reunification with the Kapbachorwa of Nandi County. Similarly, the Kamulembo of Siaya County feel proud to belong to Luo ethnic group. More importantly, Kapbachorwaa and other Kalenjin Barwa groups are not interested in seeing the Barwa who are now Luyia and Luo rejoin the Barwa groups which remained as Kalenjin and thus create a united Barwa ethnic group.

As one elder said:

Reuniting Barwa would be tall order. If the Barwa communities in different parts of western Kenya agitate for reunification, the boundaries of western Kenya would have to be changed, which would lead to total chaos. The rational order is for the Barwa who have been incorporated in Luyia and Luo to feel proud to belong to those communities.

That is exactly what the Barwa have done. It is a model of ethnic harmony. The model shows that ethnic mix is an essential part of national identity. However, national integration can only be achieved if the political elite promotes peaceful coexistence, stops employing people nepotistically and ethnically. It should focus on creating an environment that promotes national integration. The model used by the Barwa if adopted by different ethnic groups

and the national government will lead to national but not tribal identities.

Experiences of Barwa suggest that for national integration to proceed smoothly the following should be done:

1. Dominant migrant communities such as the Kikuyu in Nakuru County, Nyandarua, Laikipia, Lake Kenyatta area, the Luo in Homa Bay County, the Luyia in Lugari Sub-County, the Kipsigis in Sub-County of Narok should systematically and continuously absorb original inhabitants of those areas and other minority groups through intermarriage and assimilation. However, these groups should retain their clans.

2. People who settle in areas where particular ethnic groups are dominant should gradually adopt the language and culture of host groups. However, they should retain their clan, but not tribal identities.

3. Kenyans who live in big towns as Nairobi, Kisumu, Mombasa, Nakuru and Eldoret and counties that are inhabited by large groups of people of different ethnic groups should adopt Kiswahili as their mother tongue and the emerging Kenyan culture as their culture.

4. These groups should systematically and continuously adopt Kiswahili and an emerging Kenyan culture

Discussion

The findings show that similar to the literature on Barwa (Blackburn, 1971, Blackburn (1984); Curtin (1978); Loftus and Martin (1976); Sutton (1974)Freierman, Thompson and Vansina 1978; Luftus 1976 and Sutton 1973) all the traditions of the Barwa suggest that the ancestors of Barwa were long haired people of Semitic origin who entered the forested areas around Mount Elgon from the north. They were Okiek or closely related to the Okiek. They are also related to Amhara.

The ancestors of Barwa moved down through Ethiopia to the forested areas of Mount Elgon. They are related to Amhara of Ethiopia. This means that they belonged to the Semetic group and

belong to Afro-Asiatic language group according to the language they spoke which is spoken by Amhara, Tigre and Hariri of Ethiopia.

Findings also showed that about 3000 years ago the ancestors of the highland Nilotes moved down from Egypt through Ethiopia to the Mount Elgon region. Relations between the two groups seem to have been mainly peaceful so much that it was possible for Barwa to be absorbed by the Kalenjin and the Kalenjin to adopt the language of Barwa and the age set system. Barwa adopted pastoralism and agriculture from highland Nilotes and Bantu. Thus the key to understanding Kalenjin history is to be found in interaction between the highland Nilotes and Barwa. This means that the Kalenjin were originally a multi-ethnic community and systematically evolved into one ethnic group.

The Barwa of Nandi and other Kalenjin groups today pass as Kalenjin, whereas available evidence points to the fact that they are of Okiek hunters and gatherers origin. The findings further showed that some Barwa groups from Mount Elgon and Nandi County settled in other parts of western Kenya and were subsequently and systematically absorbed by Luyia and Luo communities. One of these people are the Abamulembo of Busia, Abamulembwa of Wanga Sub-County, Kakamega County and Kamulembo of Ugenya Sub-County, Siaya County.

Implications for National Integration and Cohesion

Kenya nationalists are divided whether national integration and cohesion should be an immediate or a long term process. Some think that in order to avoid ethnic tensions, ethnic identify should be abolished. Others feel that the best strategy is to use schools, mass media and public forums to educate people about the importance of nation integration. The conclusion to be made from the preceding discussion is that national integration is only possible when the ruling elite implements policies that cultivate national unity.

Policies that promote ethnic identity need to be re-examined since many elders in this sample said

that putting a lot of emphasis on one's background in the long term hinders assimilation of minorities in dominant ethnic groups. The price of survival of Kenya as a nation is clear. It involves basic changes in social, political and economic practices. This calls for implementation of the following strategies. First, civic education should be conducted to change the attitudes of people, particularly politicians and senior public servants who think that it is better to preserve their own ethnic identities including language and culture rather than continuously and systematically adopting the emerging Kenya culture.

Second, the state should on one hand, encourage people of different ethnic groups to live together, on the other hand implement policies to promote socio-economic development in all parts of the country. Third, certain practices such as formation of ethnic political parties and economic blocks must be abandoned. Fourth, the government must tackle poverty, lack of opportunities, gross-income inequality, corruption, nepotism and negative ethnicity. These damage the country's social cohesion. Fifth, the government should commit itself to eliminating economic inequalities by promoting investments in all parts of Kenya, promoting inclusive development, ending impunity and strengthening the rule of law, justice and peace. It is not that Kenya does not have laws that promote national integration; it is rather that the political will and economic prosperity which support implementation of these laws are lacking.

It is not only implementation of existing policies which must change, the Anglo-Saxon neo-liberal economic model whose implementation in the country since the 1980s has led to poverty and inequality must be replaced by an appropriate economic model, Sixth, County governments should from time to time organize social events in ar-

reas that are inhabited by people of different ethnic groups to encourage them to mix and interact freely. Finally, Kenya should use a combination of the current political and constitutional and Barwa models of national integration.

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