

Re-Imagining Mission: Early Educational and Evangelical Activities of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church to the Gusii of Western Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Adventism has contributed significantly to the Gusii people. These contributions are wide in range and they encompass the totality of the Gusii community (Nyaundi1997; 221). They range from religion, education, society, economics, and politics, among many others. On this paper we focus more strongly on the contributions in the field of education. However, an attempt is made to analyze other contributions of SDA Church to the people of Gusii.

INTRODUCTION

The Christian church in Africa today manifests itself in many different forms. This is because; Christianity across the world has been split in numerous traditions, denominations and sects. The Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA) is one of those denominations. The origin of the Seventh Day Adventist Church can be traced back to the religious awareness that characterized the United States of America and Western Europe in the mid-19th century (Maangi;2014). The Christian church in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century underwent various changes especially those that allowed humanistic ideas. A series of revivals called for the Christians to base their faith on the Bible. As people read various prophecies, they believed that what they read was to be fulfilled in their lifetime. In the first half of the nineteenth century, precisely in the thirties and forties, preachers and lay people from widely different denominations united in the Adventist Movement in the US around William Miller (1782-1849) (Religious facts,2014). Miller was a self-educated Baptist lay preacher. He was firmly convinced that the greatest of all prophecies was about to be fulfilled (Hachalinga, 2010; 63 Finugane, 2009; 18). On the basis of a number of passages in the prophetic books of Revelation and Daniel, the Millerite Movement came to the conclusion that Christ would return to the world in 1844 (Hachalinga, 2010; 63, Nyaundi, 1997;15).

William Miller was a farmer who settled in New York after the war of 1812. Initially, he was a deist but he converted to be a Baptist after doing considerable private Bible study. Miller was convinced that the Bible contained coded information about the second coming of Jesus Christ and the end of the world. Many Christians, among them Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterian and Christian connection churches gathered around Miller (Wikipedia.org/wiki/history-of-SDA; religion facts, 2014). He predicted that 1843 was to be the end of the world. He based this on the book of Daniel 8:14; “and he said unto me 2,300 days then shall the sanctuary be cleansed”. He believed that 2,300 days meant 2,300 years and that the countdown began in 457 B.C. Therefore, his prediction was that the coming of Jesus Christ and the end of the world would occur between 21st March, 1843 and 21st March, 1844. Unfortunately for Miller and his followers, the year 1844 passed without Christ’s glorious return; thus, the advent movement lost its momentum. This led to what is referred to as the great disappointment. Miller withdrew from the leadership of the group and died five years later in 1849 (Religious facts, 2014; Wikipedia, 2014).

The disappointed followers of Miller did not react the same way, they reacted differently. Some believed that Jesus would not return; others thought that the problem was the date that was incorrect. Yet others would believe that the date was right but the expected event was wrong. This clearly shows that others moved on. Those who remained in the movement called themselves Adventists; later the movement developed into

Seventh Day Adventist Church (Hachalinga, 2010; 64). The group was small but they continued to study the prophecies and other biblical themes. They deduced that 1844 held significance for Christ's ministry in heaven in preparation for his second coming. This is why the Adventists of both earliest and current times regard the church as a movement with a timely message for the whole world. They also believe that the second coming of Christ will occur soon.

From 1844, the movement remained unorganized. The first supporters include James White and his wife, Ellen G. White and Joseph Bates. They officially organized themselves into a church in 1863 with 3500 members. On 21 May, 1863 the General Conference of SDA was established in Battle Creek Michigan (religious facts, 2014). The early Adventists did not conceive their church in global terms. However, in 1874, they sent their first official representative to Europe. In 1885 the SDA reached Australia, in 1888 Hong Kong and before 1890 the first seeds of the Adventist faith were sown on the Islands in the Pacific and South American countries. Before the turn of the century SDA had reached the people of Africa.

Maangi(2014), argues that the origins of the SDA church to Africa can be traced back to the period between 1862 and 1863. During this time, Mrs. Hannah Moore a missionary working in Liberia in the Protestant Episcopal Hospital met Stephen N. Haskell, one of the early Adventist leaders in Furlough in the USA. When she went back to Liberia, she started keeping the Sabbath with a fellow missionary of the Australian origin. Soon some others followed; as a result Mrs. Hannah Moore and Stephen Haskell were dismissed from their employment. Before the turn of the century, the Adventist Church entered a number of African countries. By 1870, Egypt had SDA converts; work was established in Ghana by 1894 and the first missionary activities also begun among the Matebeles in what is today, Zimbabwe. In Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia, the missionaries arrived in the first and second decades of the 20th century. Today only very few African countries are without the presence of the SDAs. The SDAs are scattered all over the continent with a relatively large concentration around Lake Victoria which includes Gusii.

The SDA Church has had a long interest in education (religious facts; 2014). Wherever, Adventist presence was established, schools were built. The Church runs one of the largest education systems in Africa and all over the world. The church's education goal is intellectual growth and service to humanity; their educational programmes are comprehensive and they encompass mental, physical, social and spiritual health. So as to show how the church's education has contributed to the lives of the Gusii people, an analysis on their coming to Gusii, planting of the church and their educational activities will follow.

The Coming of the Sda Missionaries to Gusii

Before the introduction of Christianity the Gusii of Western Kenya believed in one supreme God (*Engoro*) who created the world but who did not interfere directly in human affairs (Maangi, 2011:34). They believed that interference was caused by ancestral spirits (*Ebirecha*), witches (*Abarogi*) and impersonal forces. The Gusii believed that displeased ancestral spirits were responsible for diseases, the death of people and livestock as well as the destruction of crops. The Roman Catholic Church through the Mill Hill Fathers came to Gusii in 1911 and the SDA mission in 1912. Despite the existence of churches in this area some non-Christian beliefs continue to influence the lives of most people. If afflicted by misfortune many visit a diviner (*Abaragori*) who might point to displeased spirits of the dead and prescribe sacrifice. In addition to diviners, various healers exist. Professional sorcerers (*Abanyamesira*) protect against witchcraft and retaliate against witches. The witch smeller (*Omoriori*) seeks out witchcraft articles where they are hidden. Witches can be men or women but they are usually believed to be old women. It is believed that witchcraft is handed down from parent to child (Maangi, 2011:34, [Kisii, 2007](#)).

The first SDA missionaries came to Western Kenya and indeed Kenya in 1906. The missionaries were Arthur Asa Granville Carscallen and Peter Nyambo who was from Malawi (Nyaundi, 2012:3). The two missionaries met at Duncombe Hall Training College (now Newbold College) in England where they were studying. The two missionaries sailed from Hamburg Germany on 1 October, 1906. After what Carscallen describes as an exceedingly hot trip through the Red Sea, they arrived in Mombasa on November 27, 1906. Carscallen and Nyambo opened the first SDA mission station at Gendia (Kendu Bay). Carscallen did not explain why he chose this place, he only said, "We chose the site for Gendia among the primitive African tribe who spoke a

Nilotic language” (Nyaundi, 2012:3).

The new mission station was under the British Union Conference. Kenya at this time was occupied by the British colonialists and received missionaries from England. Gendia is not far away from Tanganyika, but the SDA churches in Tanganyika (Tanzania) were opened by the Germans who colonized the area. Both missions however were under the European division of the SDA, based in Hamburg, Germany (Nyaundi, 2012:4). Possibly the German missionary in nearby Tanganyika, A.C. Enns, assisted Carscallen in choosing the site of the station. Gendia was near the Tanganyika stations near the border. Moreover, Lake Victoria provided an easy means of communication between the stations. This is demonstrated by what E.B Philips wrote in 1912: “Pastor A.A. Carscallen met us at Kisumu and we sailed to Gendia in the mission schooner” (Nyaundi, 2012:4). This shows that the missionaries in Tanganyika played a role in the choice of Gendia as the first SDA mission station in Kenya. Moreover, mission stations were to be ordinarily ten miles apart. No two stations were supposed to be close to each other because of the possible rivalry. Therefore, the decision to settle at Gendia might have followed a suggested pattern of land allocation to missions by the British colonial government.

During the first year, Pastor A.A Carscallen and Nyambo built the mission from scratch and learnt the local language. They were helped by A.C. Enns, the Germany missionary from across the border in Tanganyika who had had a fair knowledge of Kiswahili language. Pastor A.A. Carscallen formed an impression of the local people and he reported this:

On entering this country, we found the people ignorant, naked and living in very low state of civilization, their minds filled with false ideas and superstition. Their customs and laws forbid leaving their old ways for anything new...the place was entirely devoid of food we could make use of, the Kavirondos (South Nyanza) are a friendly tribe, when we arrived in this part of Africa we found people distressful, and many were even afraid of us, and would run and hide when they saw us coming (Nyaundi, 2012:5).

The mission was given nine acres of land that was presented by the colonial government in an official ceremony. Chiefs and herdsman attended and the two missionaries pitched tents. The first house was built with poles, while animal skins were used for the roof. The nine acres of land were later extended into a large compound (Bishop Otunga Historical Society, 1985: 60)

To assist Carscallen and Nyambo more missionaries arrived in Gendia. In 1907, J.D.Baker and Hellen Bruce Thomson arrived in Gendia. In 1908, B.L.Morse and J.H Sparks joined the growing number of missionaries. With the growing number of missionaries, Gendia became the parent mission for a number of other missions. J.D. Baker founded Wire mission as an offshoot of Gendia in 1909, making this the second SDA mission in Western Kenya and indeed, Kenya. Earlier, in 1908, Louis Richard Comradi, the leader of SDA missions in Europe and Africa, visited Gendia. Pastor A.A Carscallen reported in 1910 about their work in Gendia:

Less than four years have passed since we found this place lying in heathen darkness, the People never having had a word spoken to them about the gospel. Not one word of their language had been reduced to writing, now several have expressed a desire to become Christians, and many can read and write in their own language. The future seems bright with promise (Nyaundi 2012:5).

In the first years of missionary activity, the success was not great in terms of converts. The church teachings were not readily accepted by local people; they preferred to keep their own traditional beliefs. However, the Gendia people were not hostile towards the missionaries. The situation improved gradually. Young people especially sought contact with the mission, where they were welcomed by the missionaries and were taught how to read and write. The missionaries were keen on the local Dholuo language; therefore, contact with young locals was necessary. Government officials persuaded people to go to the mission for the laws of the church seemed to concur with government law. They found that those who had embraced the church were not troublesome (BOHS, 1985:62).

The chiefs were sometimes quite hostile, urging people not to associate with the mission. They thought the ideas of missionaries were misleading. However, many parents were won over by their children who received

an education at the mission. The missionaries taught people the Bible and made God and Jesus Christ known to them. They also gave people clothes free of charge to encourage them to convert. The missionaries assigned their converts to different areas to convert others and encouraged them to stay at the sub-chiefs' camps. The chief of the time, Orinda Sibuur, never attended the Sabbath except when important announcements were made to the people. It took nearly five years before the first converts were ready for baptism, an event that marked an important success. In February, Pastor Carscallen reported this:

We are indeed glad to report the first baptism in this part of the Dark Continent. On May 21, 1911 we had baptismal service at Gendia mission, all our workers were present also Brother B. Ohme our superintendent for German East Africa. Sixteen boys followed their Lord in Baptism and in the afternoon joined a partaking of the Lords Supper (Nyaundi, 2012:6).

Some of the boys who were baptised include: Isaac Okeyo, from Gendia village, John Okello from Kanyaluo, Daudi Abuor from Kobila and Daniel Onyango from Konyango. These first converts have since died. A reason why conversions were few in the first fifteen years after the establishment of the mission was undoubtedly the influence of the First World War. Many people especially the young moved from their homes to serve in the British Army (BOHS, 1985:62).

The educational knowledge which the mission provided was literacy based: the so-called 3Rs, reading, writing and arithmetic. This approach imparted skills such as putting letters together to form words and how to add, divide, subtract and multiply numbers. The SDA missionaries at Gendia learnt that mission education was the best strategy to approach the natives (Maangi, 2011:2).

Following the first baptism, the mission continued to spread from the Gendia to their neighboring Gusii, a Bantu ethnic group of Western Kenya. The new mission stations in order of their opening were: Wire Hill (1909), Karungu (1912), Kanyadoto (1912), Nyanchwa (1912), Kamagambo (1913) and Got Rusinga (1913) (Nyaundi, 2012:7). Pastor Carscallen was the first missionary to baptize Adventists in Kenya; he built the first schools where he offered formal education; and he introduced the first measures of dispensing pharmaceutical medicine, applied medicine onto wounds and gave oral medication. He introduced the first measures of commercial farming by introducing the growing of cotton as a cash crop. He embarked on translation of the Holy Bible into the native language with his translation of Matthew's gospel in 1913. He became the first to initiate some form of transport across the lake from Kendu Bay to Kisumu in the mission schooner (Nyaundi, 2012:7).

In Gusii, the Catholics arrived at Nyahururu in 1911 (Maangi, 2011:32). The SDA arrived the following year in 1912. The SDA church in Gusii was established at Nyanchwa by Pastor Carscallen; the first missionary to stay in the mission was Ira R. Evanson, a very hard working man. Apart from these missionaries, the person credited with the entry of the SDA to Gusii is Yakobo Olwa of Karachuonyo who was working at Wire Hill Mission Station. At the time, Wire Hill was supervised by J.D. Baker alongside another local, Mariko Otieno. Records at Nyanchwa indicate that Olwa was accompanied by Ira. R. Evanson who served in Nyanchwa from 1912 to 1914. After building a small camp at Nyanchwa he began converting the locals. He used Kiswahili as the principal language. He had learnt this in Tanzania, where he had stayed for some time. It was not difficult for the Kisii people to understand him because they were a Bantu-speaking people and their language shared many features with Kiswahili. A report which announced the expansion of the SDA church out of Gendia was worded as follows:

We here just started three out schools, and we are planning to open two or more in short time in connection with the Gendia mission. Brother J.D. Baker is now opening his first at Wire Hill. And we must trust others may be started there soon. We also hope it may be possible to begin work at Kisii people by starting out schools among them. The Wire Hill station is near Kisii border and we shall try to get some boys from that tribe (Kisii) to come to our schools. Brother Baker has been teaching several who know that language and as soon as we have a teacher ready we are going to make use of him among the Kisii tribe (Nyaundi, 2012:9).

The first report about the SDA work in Kisii appeared in the Adventist Yearbook of 1914. It appeared as the fifth station of the British East African mission which fell under the European Division. Grindelberg, Hamburg

in German was its headquarters. The Division was headed by Louis Richard Comradi. The list of mission station appeared as follows:

Table: List of mission stations in Western Kenya in 1914

Head Station	Gendia
2 nd station	Wire Hill
3 rd station	Karungu
4 th station	Rusinga
5 th station	Kisi {sic}
6 th station	Kaniadodo {sic}
7 th station	Kamagambo

From the account of the late Pastor Nathaniel Nyanusi, the Adventist church entered Gusii a short while before the colonial government embarked on conscripting young men to clear the forest whereon Kisii town stands today. A large number of young men were given machetes to clear the forest; subsequently, the First World War was known as the war of machetes (*Esegiya Nyamioro*) in the Gusii language. The Gusii people decried the conscription because the young men who were enlisted were away for a long time. The First World War started while the clearing of the forest was in progress. The Germans crossed the border from Tanganyika and came as far as Kisii town (Burgmam 1990:80; Maangi, 2011:39).

The First World War affected the mission work which was taking root at Nyanchwa. During the war, the mission station at Nyanchwa was closed, just like the Catholic mission in Nyabururu (Burgmam 1990:81). The missionaries moved from Kisii to be safe among the missionaries of the Friends Mission at Kaimosi. After the war, Ira. R. Evanson who had started to raise the mission at Nyanchwa did not return. Evanson was succeeded by Leonard Lane who jump-started the mission work which had stalled for about five years because of the war. The record indicates that Yakobo Olwa and Barnabas Okumu together with Lane started the mission activities soon after the re-launching of the work in 1918. Record at Nyanchwa shows that among the first people who accepted the religion were three men, who had studied at Narok under the CMS missionaries. They were Musa Nyandusi, Samuel Omoke and Johanna Kiyondi. They were called to Nyanchwa for further studies. They joined the following boys who were learning there: Paulo Nyamweya, Mathayo Ratemo, Joel Araka, Joseph Simba, and Michael Nyasing`a, Joseph Omboga and A. Obega. Later, they were joined by Shem Kiyaka, Kiyondi, E. Marube, I. Nyabere, J. Sindiga, J. Osoro, Ayubu Aburi and Stephen Orwenyo (BOHS, 1985:65).

In 1919, the first students graduated as teachers: Paulo Nyamweya, who stayed at Nyanchwa; Musa Nyandusi, who was sent to Omaobe, and Samwel Omoke, who started teaching at Gesembe. In 1920, Lane left Nyanchwa and was succeeded by Eric B. Beavon, the most popular of the missionaries who worked in Nyanchwa and indeed, Gusii. He was popularly known as Bwana Bebeni. In the same year, ten people were allowed to enter the baptism class, which would last for two years. In 1922, they were all baptized: Paulo Nyamweya from Nyaribari Mwamoriango, Musa Nyandusi from Bonyamasicho, Ibrahim Ombega from Botondo, Mariko Nyasing`a, Joseph Simba, Daniel Kiyondi, Joshua Omboga all from Bonyamasicho and Samwel Omoke from Mwamonda, Mathayo Ratemo from Bobasi and Joel Araka from Boguche. They were baptized by Pastor Eric B. Beavon. (BOHS, 1985:64; Nyaundi, 2012:10).

Eric B. Beavon worked among the Gusii people for many years. He saw the work begin and grow by the time he left. This is how Beavon reported the progress.

Seven years ago there were no Christians in Kisii, only fifty five raw savages anxious to learn how to read and write at the mission school and out schools. The first Kisii church was organized in 1923, with

nucleolus of ten zealous young men. Today, there are four churches in Kisii with a total membership of 313, eighty six bush schools with 3,286 students enrolled and forty two Sabbath schools with a total average attendance each Sabbath of 3,080.....There were five large baptisms last year. Twenty one Kisiis were baptized in January in a stream which flows through the townships. Thirty eight were baptized near the Maasai border on august 9 and thirty eight of the Nyaribari clan on August 14 (Nyaundi, 2012:11).

Pastor Eric B. Beavon was young man when he arrived. Record indicates that he was married at Gendia mission to former Miss Myrna Campell in 1921. Miss Campell was a daughter of M.M. Campell, the Director of the British Union. Mrs Myna Beavon operated the girls' school at Nyanchwa (*Nyanchwa Rirondo*) and taught at the school until a qualified teacher, Miss Ruth Raitt, arrived in 1923.

In 1921, Pastor A.A Carscallen returned to the US. In the same year his wife, Helen Thomson, died in Oregon. He married Anita Johnson in 1924. Meanwhile, other missionaries arrived at Gendia mission at the time of Carscallen's departure. They include: G.A.S Madgwick, W.T. Bartlett and W.W. Armstrong. In 1924 the Kendu mission hospital was opened by Madgwick (Review & Herald, 2014).

The work in Gusii continued to grow during the time of Eric B. Beavon. The steady growth was due to the first native converts who were sent out as teachers. These teachers spread the SDA faith across Gusii and all the parts of South Nyanza. Mr Beavon occupied himself instructing the teachers on how they should teach the people. According to Elder Israel Monyoro, Beavon and his wife used to travel all around Gusii on bicycle. Gradually more people came to Nyanchwa to be trained as teachers and pastors. From the beginning the SDA missionaries tried not to interfere too much with the native customs but they thought they had to forbid certain customs, which they regarded as anti- Christian. For instance, they disapproved of the Kisii marriages, where the boy and the girl lived together before the actual marriage. The local sacrifices were also frowned upon, such as offering a goat to the evil spirits after meeting a python.

The post-war history of the SDA missionaries revolves around Eric B. Beavon who served from 1920 to 1930. He initiated the idea of mission villages. According to Elder Israel Monyoro (97 years old), the people who were baptized in 1922 went out as teachers. Joel Araka was sent to Matunwa in Nyaribari, a few kilometers from Nyanchwa. In 1924 he established three mission villages (*chilaini*). Those who lived in these mission villages include Nuhu Nyang'ara and his wife, Yunuke Bitutu; Jeremiah Ombariga and his wife, Miriam Keng'aya; Jairo Getanda and his wife, Piliah Gesare; Zedekiah Getenga and his wife, Getogo; Joshua Nyakeriga and his wife, Salome Nyaboke; Micah Momanyi and Bathsheba Keraririia, Chanai Mangoyia and Rhoda Nyaanga. Those who were not yet married include: Wilson Moninda, Jason Marube and Israel Monyoro. The three mission villages (*chilaini*) at Matunwa were for Abamwaboto, Ababasi and Abaguche. Those who were married, excluding three who were not married, were baptized with their wives in 1926.

From Matunwa the SDA Church was able to spread to the whole of Gusii and beyond. In 1927, Elder Monyoro argues that there was clanism in the mission villages in Matunwa. The three villages in Matunwa were divided according to clans; the Ababasi and Abamwaboto were boarding at Boguche village. The three villages could intermarry. The Abamwaboto insisted on moving out of Boguche.

In 1928, Abamwaboto left Matunwa for Ababasi and Abaguche and went to Nyaguta mission station. Musa Nyandusi left the mission to become Chief of the people of Nyaribari. Initially, Paulo Nyamweya was to be the chief but he insisted on remaining a pastor. Eric Beavon greatly promoted Adventism in Gusii. He is a much remembered missionary who helped to create the first Christian impressions among pioneer converts. Adventism spread from Nyanchwa as follows: Gionseri in Bobasi (1919); Bonyunyu in North Mogirango (1921); Matunwa in Nyaribari (1921); Iruma in Bonchari (1921); Sengera in Manga in Kitutu (1922); Nyabioto in Machoge (1922); Nyaguta (1927) and Nyangweta (1927) (Nyaundi, 2012:12).

Many converts were made in quick succession. M.N. Campell, then the Director of the British union reported, "I had the privilege of baptizing 36 natives who had been trained in Mission schools" (Nyaundi, 1997:24). As early as 1923, Beavon described the response as follows:

An encouraging feature about the work for these people is the zeal they manifest in trying to win others to

Christ. Their zeal for evangelistic work seems to know no bounds. A mission boy's ambition even before he has properly learned to read and write is to become a soul winner (Nyaundi, 2012:12).

The factors that led to the constant growth of the SDA Church in Gusii and the whole of Western Kenya can be debated. An important reason was that Adventism presented literacy, which was in high demand. Moreover, the SDA Church was the only Protestant denomination in South Nyanza. The Roman Catholic mission through the Mill Hill missionaries was at nearby Nyabururu mission (Maangi, 2011:34). Beavon mentioned the 'Protestant' factor twice in April 1923 and April 1930 in the Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald. In 1930 Beavon confided, "Adventists are the only Protestant missionaries at work in Kisii and the progress of their work has been phenomenal" (Nyaundi, 2012:13). Around 1930, the work had grown into a company of eight churches, 313 members, 80 schools, 3 286 pupils and 149 teachers. The Catholics only had Nyabururu at this time. Beavon reported:

One hundred and eighteen Kisii converts were baptized and received into church fellowship during the month of the August 1929. The baptism were conducted in swift running mountains and thousands of natives attended (Nyaundi, 2012:13).

According to Elder Israel Monyoro (97 years old), the first Sabbath of the month was conducted at Nyanchwa Mission from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon. The other Sabbaths of the month were held in the other missions. They gathered at Nyanchwa only on the first Sabbath of the month.

Every year there are some important highlights in the life of the church, such as camp meetings. According to Elder Israel Monyoro, the first camp meeting in Gusii was held in 1933 at Nyaguta. Nyaguta was suitable for the camp meeting because it had natural trees and rivers. It could have been held at Kerera but the organizer of the camp meeting Nuhu Nyang'ara preferred Nyaguta. Since 1933 the camp meetings have been held in Kenya every year in the months of August and September.

During the first camp meeting held at Nyaguta, there were about one thousand or so members of the SDA Church, but the number of attendees was over four times that many. People travelled from far to the meeting site and stayed in tents (*Ebigutu*). The camp started on Monday and ended on Sunday. This whole period was devoted to prayer, religious instruction and the teaching of social life. There were talks about how to remain healthy, the use of latrines, the best foods for good health and how to help others. A group known as Missionary Volunteers (MV) kept the whole exercise interesting. The missionary volunteers have continued in the church ever since and entertain worshippers with songs and other performances. This camp meeting was held in the area of Nyaguta village (the Abamwaboto and Abanyakoni linages). According to Elder Monyoro, these people, especially the family of Nuhu Nyang'ara, the Mwanyakondo, did much to make this meeting a success. They helped the guests in building their tents and brought additional food to make up any shortfall. It is still remembered which churches sent representatives. They were: Magwagwa in North Mugirango, Nyangweta in South Mogirango, Mokomoni and Nyaturago in Nyaribari, Sengera and Nyakongo in Kitutu and Matongo in Bonchari. During the camp, the day was spent in a very simple way. In the morning people went to the camp for prayer. Breakfast was followed by the general service which began at 9:00 and lunch was from about 13:00 to 14:30. In the afternoon people were divided into groups: children, boys and girls and parents. They were taught various issues concerning their lives. The service ended at 16:00.

Elder Monyoro and Pastor Peter Chief Mairura note a difference between the old camp meeting and the present ones. In the beginning people came from very far so they stayed in the camps. Nowadays, people have camps near their own homes. Christians during the earlier period of mission activity followed the church rules very strictly unlike today. Previously SDA marriages tried to imitate Israelite marriages. Today a committed SDA follower initiates a friendship with a girl who he has chosen himself. Our informants say that the SDA pastors tried to prevent SDA communities from mixing with the Catholics who opposed the SDAs and sometimes became violent. This information must be regarded with some caution. It is very likely that both SDA's and Catholics shared some animosity.

According to Elder Israel Monyoro, Eric. B. Beavon went to the US in 1930. He was succeeded by Gilbert A. Lewis (fondly remembered by our informants as Bwana Lois). The church continued to grow into these

succeeding years. In 1934, Lewis reported as follows:

Just little about our loyal Kisii church Members. In the Kisii field, we have 627 members and over 2000 attending our Sabbath schools. We also have eighty churches and thirty one out schools. We also have thirty catechetical centers where we have self-supporting teachers (Nyaundi, 2012:14).

By 1937, the pioneer boys who had come to Nyanchwa became pastors: Paulo Nyamweya, Abel Nyakundi, Abraham Oirere, Joshua Nyakeriga, Daniel Nathaniel Nyanusi and Zephania Machoka. Meanwhile eight pioneers who had been baptized at Nyanchwa in 1922 went against the teachings of the church. They became chiefs and married many wives. They include: Musa Nyandusi, Jonah Omboga, Samwel Omoke, Joseph Simba, Mark Nyasing'a, Mathayo Ratemo, Joel Araka and Chanai Mangoyia.

Meanwhile, the purpose of mission villages as discussed earlier proved to be an effective growth strategy. Mission villages as a way of discipling converts was an old strategy many mission organizations used. The practice was not exclusive to Adventists. The main reason for this strategy was to detach new converts from their communities, which were not supportive of the converts' new faith (Ajayi, 1965). In the mission village, the strong in the faith could encourage and strengthen the weak and new in the faith. Thirdly, the missionary could easily meet all the converts in one village without having to visit each believer separately (BOHS, 1985:67; Nyaundi, 2012:17).

The history of pioneer Adventists in Gusii is popularly remembered alongside their distinct lifestyle (Maangi, 2014). The way they lived was so remarkable that those who lived in the villages still remember it vividly and with nostalgia. Elder Monyoro says that the villages were built in straight lines, giving the villages the Ekegusii name *chilaini* (lines). He says that the church grew because of these mission villages. Villagers were taught prayer, hygiene, washing and cooking. A person had to ask for permission from the teacher to leave the mission villages; women asked permission from the teacher and not their husbands. Food was served in the teacher's house and not in their houses. Poor discipline was not tolerated in the mission villages.

The first mission village started at Gendia. The late Pastor Isaac Okeyo remembers how his father, Midemba, assisted the missionaries to build the first houses. When Adventism came to Nyanchwa, the mission village system was already live at Gendia. This strategy was seen as productive in attracting and retaining believers. Judging from what we know today, the life style produced committed Christians without parallel. The first mission village in Gusii was built at Nyanchwa.

In the mission villages, houses were built for the first time differently from the traditional styles. The residents were taught principles of basic hygiene as a means of keeping health. As mentioned earlier, they were taught to cook, different from ways they knew. Women were asked to boil milk and men were taught to avoid what was at the time a popular lifestyle of eating raw meat and drinking milk tapped from cattle (Nyaundi, 2012:21).

Lewis was later succeeded by Thomas who worked at the press in Gendia. Thomas had an opportunity to learn *Ekegusii* (the local dialect) so well that he still spoke the language when he visited in the 1980s. K. G. Webster (Bwana Webster) is remembered for his promotion of the mission villages.

The mission villages were functional up to about the end of 1950's when Webster was in charge of the Adventist church in Gusii. Elder Monyoro argues that the reason for the closure of the villages was demand for land ownership that stimulated the dispersion of the residents. A large number of those who lived in the villages, or were born here, are still alive today in their sixties and seventies.

Educational and Evangelical Activities in Gusii

The pioneer Adventist teachers were referred to as teacher-evangelists. This meant that they performed the duties of teaching and evangelizing (Nyaundi, 2012:16). This means that one had to be a committed Christian before becoming a teacher. Many converts were made in mission schools. Later the teacher-evangelists became ordained church ministers (pastors) and they did evangelism full-time.

As stated earlier the system of using teacher-evangelists continued for many years and remained a firm foundation of Adventism up to about the 1950s. One distinguished teacher evangelist was Ibrahim Ongubo, the first person to write the language premier, *Kwarorire Emiseni, Nyanchwa?* (trans. Have you seen the mission station at Nyanchwa?).

SDA missionaries took education as the most effective tool for evangelization (Maangi, 2011:2). The missionaries opened schools throughout Gusii. Some of the earliest schools are Kamagambo, Nyanchwa, Matunwa, Nyaguta, Bonyunyu, Gionseri, Riokindo, Kebera, Kebirichi, Sengera, Matongo, Nyangweta, Riondig'a and Metembe. These schools were religious schools. The most important doctrine taught was love of God and love of others. People were encouraged to leave their bad ways.

According to Elder Monyoro and Elder Ibrahim Mose Gesimba from Botondo, the Adventist message penetrated the Abagusii through the educational work. They argued that the first converts were made because they wanted the education which the new religion brought. Their decision to convert to the new religion was often a later development. Pastor A.A. Carscallen's report of February 1912 confirms:

We have just started three out-schools and we are planning to open two more in a short time in connection with the Gendia mission . Brother J.D Baker is now opening his first at Wire Hill. The Wire hill mission station is near Kisii border and we shall try to get some boys from the tribe to come to our schools. Brother Baker has been teaching several who know their language; and just as soon as we have a teacher ready, we are going to make use of him among the Kisii tribe (Nyaundi, 2012:15).

Places of learning always proceeded places of worship. Mission buildings were used during the week as classrooms and places of worship on Saturday. The buildings were grass or reed-thatched with mud walls (*rirondo*) smeared to such smoothness that they shone. The centres that started with some amount of professionalism were Kamagambo and Nyanchwa . Kamagambo was started with full missionary supervision by Pastor A.A. Carscallen, D.E. Delhove and Petro Oyier. In 1913 Grace Clarke expanded it to include a girl's school, popularly known as Kamagambo *rirondo* (Nyaundi, 2012:15).

Schools were a strong attraction to young people. Missionaries used schools to good effect. Schools were the catchment area of converts because the young people who came to learn the missionary education were potential converts. People who lived nearby these centres were often Adventists and were most likely educated.

CONCLUSION

The SDA Church education exercised an impact on the people of Gusii in many ways. The SDA introduced western education and translated the Bible to the Ekegusii language; they equally introduced the Bible to the locals. Apart from that they trained elementary school teachers and artisans; improved the standard of living of the people of Gusii, especially in terms of hygienic living. They also contributed and influenced the equality of life through provision of medical services and teaching of health. Therefore, we can argue that in effect a new Gusii has emerged since the coming of Adventist missionaries

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