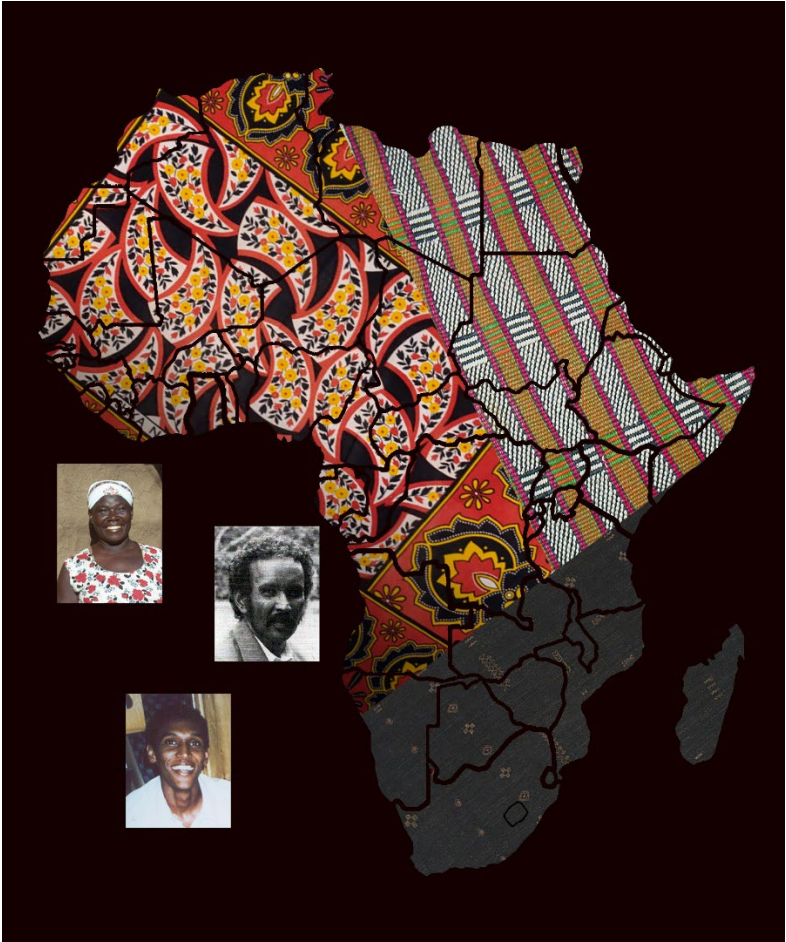


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Introduction: Christian Revival and Survival in Africa

By Michèle Sigg, Editor

This issue of the *Journal of African Christian Biography* explores the witness of African Christians in situations of revival and survival. African Christian history is replete with instances of these two extremes of Christian faith—when God visits his people in power as the church grows and when he bears his persecuted children in his arms as they breath their last.

The East African Revival swept through Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Sudan starting in the 1930s. The effects of the revival were powerful and longlasting in many churches, especially the Anglican Church, and the movement continues even today. One story of its origin comes from someone whose grandmother was alive at that time and became “born again” in the early years of the revival:

In the 1930s, there was a move of God and it started off in Rwanda, central Africa, but it spread to Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania. It became known as the East African revival. It started with (...) a man from Buganda, the kingdom of Buganda, as it was known then, which is more than 500 miles from the border with Rwanda. But he had a dream apparently. And he said in the dream, he heard God tell him, go south to a people who look after cattle and tell them about me because they don't know about me. (...) he packed and started walking south in what was then the Uganda protectorate and he walked as far as the border. (...)

So he went to sleep when he got to the near the border and he had a dream, another dream. And in the dream he said God told him, go further south. So he thought, okay, that's now crossing an international border. So a little before that time, the British Missionary Organization known as a Church Missionary Society, had started its very first mission station in Rwanda [Gahini]. And my grandfather was one of the people who became one of their administrators 'cause he could speak English, he could speak Swahili, which was useful in East Africa.

(...) [the man from Uganda] became a member of their staff and for a number of years, 'cause my grandmother remembers him, they called him “the funny little man from Uganda” because he would just go up to strangers and ask, “Can I pray for you? <laugh> Can I pray for you?” And he prayed with a lot of people, but nothing seemed to happen for years and years. He even went back and got a wife, got married, brought her back. Still nothing happened. But somewhere, after he got a wife, I believe he decided to do a prayer meeting, at the CMS station.

(...) Then one day, all of a sudden in the chapel there was like a commotion. And because the culture of Rwanda is very sort of reserved,

like loud expressions of falling out and yelling is really frowned upon. And so it never happened. But there was this commotion in the chapel and they thought, what on earth is going on? They stopped the prayer meeting, they went to go see what was going on because it was just so unusual. And when they walked in men and women in the chapel, some were crying and praying about their sin, which they were very aware of, separating them from God. And some were singing and dancing because they felt very aware of the blood of Jesus cleansing them from all sin. And they didn't stop, which would've been normal if when someone came in, they just kept going. It was just so strange, like nobody knew what was going on. (...)

And after they'd gone through that experience, they became very active evangelists. They'd go out in groups, men and women...¹

Daewon Moon, in his 2022 book *African Initiative and Inspiration in the East African Revival*² underlines the catalyzing role of Yosiya Kinuka—a worker at the Gahini Hospital—in the early spread of the revival:

Kinuka set an inspiring model for conversion that integrated internal and external transformation. Following his example, restoration of broken relationships and restitution of misappropriated items became the expected outcome of true repentance in the Gahini station. Some people encapsulated atypical conversion process in the Ruanda Mission as “the 3 Rs”: repentance, restoration, and restitution. Once repentance was made in a genuine manner, the revivalist converts emphasized, it should precipitate a visible change in one’s attitude and behavior.

A British doctor who had worked with Kinuka for several years at Gahini Hospital immediately recognized his changed behavior. This devout medical missionary named John E. Church (better known as “Joe Church”) was excited about the positive influence of Kinuka’s conversion. He recognized the feasibility of starting a spiritual renewal campaign for all African personnel in the Ruanda Mission.³

An excerpt from Moon’s doctoral research gives further introduction to the revival and its early leaders, including Blasion Kigozi and British missionary Joe Church. Biographies from the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, mostly from Uganda, further expand the narrative of the revival but the limited selection does not do justice to the wide geographical scope of the movement throughout East Africa or

¹ Annette Mukakigeri, interview by Michele Sigg, New Haven, CT, December 2022. Ms. Kikakigeri is the author of *A Barren Woman Had A Son* (Outskirts Press, 2022).

² Daewon Moon, *African Initiative and Inspiration in the East African Revival*, *Theology and Mission in World Christianity*, Vol. 24, (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

³ Moon, *African Initiative and Inspiration in the East African Revival*, 2-3.

to the role of women in this revival. I have yet to read any full biographies of women leaders in this movement and the stories of the wives of the foremost revivalists remain to be told. Where are the women's stories?

Next, thanks to the research and mission work of Ben I. Aram, this issue offers a fascinating (brief) account of Somali Christian history and the biographies of three Somali Christians. These stories are rare gifts to the global church.

Finally, Marc Spindler's biography of Pastor Albert Zakariasy, a theologian-turned-politician, describes a complex figure in Malagasy history, in FRENCH. Hopefully, the review of Emma Wild-Wood's recent book on *The Mission of Apolo Kivebulaya* and Beth Restruck's Book Notes will whet your appetite for more reading beyond this journal.

Book Highlights: Moon, Daewon. “African initiative and inspiration in the East African Revival, 1930-1950.”

Ph.D. Thesis, Boston University. 2019.⁴

URI: <https://open.bu.edu/handle/2144/37032>

An Exemplary African Teacher: Blasio Kigozi

Blasio Kigozi was arguably the most influential African leader in the first decade of the Balokole Revival. With an outstanding educational background, he was one of the first Muganda missionaries working in Belgian Ruanda. Although his service was quite brief due to his premature death in 1936, the life and ministry of Kigozi exemplified the inspiration and aspirations of the educational work that the Balokole valued and for which they aimed. Just as the conversion of Yosiya Kinuka served as an archetype for conversion that other Africans were expected to follow (discussed in chapter 2), Kigozi set an example as an ideal teacher whose model other African teachers could follow.

The Life and Ministry of Kigozi

Born in an aristocratic family in Buganda, Blasio Kigozi lost his father while a little child and was raised by his elder brother, Simeon Nsibambi.⁵ Nsibambi, who was widely esteemed as a prophetic figure in the Church of Uganda, seemed to exert enormous influence on Kigozi’s spiritual formation. Reflecting later on Kigozi’s conversion experience, Nsibambi recounted: “He was my first fruit in Jesus.”⁶ The two pious brothers earnestly prayed for the revitalization of the Church of Uganda and for the evangelization of non-Christian peoples in the neighboring countries. Of particular impact was Kigozi’s meeting with Apolo Kivebulaya, a Muganda priest and missionary

⁴ Moon’s revised PhD thesis was published by Brill in Fall 2022 in the series Theology and Mission in World Christianity under the title *African Initiative and Inspiration in the East African Revival* (Vol. 24). The pages reprinted here from the PhD thesis correspond to pages 126-134 and 190-196 in the Brill book.

⁵ Joe Church wrote a biography of Blasio Kigozi after Kigozi died unexpectedly from tick fever. As the Ruanda Mission’s first book published about the revival, the biography drew substantial attention from both African and European Christian readers. J. E. Church, *Awake! An African Calling: The Story of Blasio Kigozi and His Vision of Revival* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1937). Brief biographical information about Kigozi is also available at the online *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*. David B. Barrett, “Blasio Kigozi,” *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, accessed August 25, 2017, <https://dacb.org/stories/rwanda/kigozi-blasio>.

⁶ Church, *Awake! An African Calling*, 4. In the biography of Kigozi, Joe Church seemed to make a case that Nsibambi and Kigozi maintained an unusually strong bond with each other. Given Church’s close friendship with Nsibambi, it was no wonder that Church foregrounded the spiritual influence of Nsibambi over young Kigozi. In an unpublished biography of Nsibambi, Joe Church introduced Kigozi as Nsibambi’s “Timothy.” John E. Church, “Nsibambi: The Prophet” (unpublished book, April 19, 1980), Joe Church Collection (henceforth “JEC”) 8/5/a, p. 19

to the Mbuti in the eastern Congo.⁷ During his visit to Kampala, Kivebulaya used to stay at Nsibambi's home, and young Kigozi was profoundly impressed by his selfless service.⁸ Following the example of the respected Muganda missionary, Kigozi dedicated himself for mission work in the Congo forest.

After his graduation from Mengo Central School in 1925, Kigozi decided to study for a schoolmaster's certificate at Bishop Tucker Theological College in Mukono. This was a rather surprising move, because most of his classmates at Mengo went to King's College at Budo, the most prestigious academic institution in the country at that time.

Prior to 1935 (when the British government decided to make Makerere University the center for higher education in East Africa), a degree from King's College guaranteed one's social and economic advancement. Instead of seeking worldly recognition, however, Kigozi was wholly committed to the cause of the gospel. In 1928, he acquired the bishop's certificate in order to serve as a schoolmaster in the Congo.

To his disappointment, however, the way to the Congo was closed due to a diplomatic dispute between Britain and Belgium. However, an alternative soon presented itself. An urgent call came from Ruanda (another Belgian territory bordering Uganda), which was in the midst of a terrible famine. After meeting with the founder of the Ruanda Mission, Kigozi offered himself as a missionary to serve the people in Ruanda. He joined the Ruanda Mission in 1929 as a schoolmaster at Gahini, one of the major food-distributing centers of the Belgian administration. Herbert Jackson, the missionary in charge of educational work at Gahini, was impressed by Kigozi's strong character and sincere dedication. Recognizing the young man's noble origin, Jackson commended his choice to serve in Ruanda: "It is no small sacrifice for a rich young fellow to leave a land of plenty and prosperity like Uganda for this famine stricken area."⁹

Joe Church had already begun his medical work at Gahini earlier in 1928. After his extraordinary spiritual experience with Nsibambi in Kampala in 1929, Church became aware that Nsibambi's younger brother was also serving at Gahini. Renewed with a vision for spiritual revival, Church developed a close friendship with Kigozi. Church and Kigozi shared a common revivalist piety that emphasized moral and spiritual transformation that followed genuine repentance. They started praying together for deeper transformation among African workers in the station, and especially for the medical staff, including Yosiya Kinuka. After a couple of years of prayer by Church and Kigozi, Kinuka underwent a dramatic conversion experience in 1931, and the two African leaders—Kigozi and Kinuka—formed the first Bible Team to spread the message of the revival in the region around Gahini. Joe Church gave several accounts of this unique evangelistic collaboration between the head

⁷ For biographical information about Apolo Kivebulaya, see Emma Wild-Wood, "A Biography of Apolo Kivebulaya," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 38, no. 3 (2014): 145–48.

⁸ Church, "Nsibambi: The Prophet," p. 18.

⁹ H. S. Jackson, *Ruanda Notes* 31 (January 1930): 17.

schoolmaster and a senior member of the medical staff.¹⁰

Though his initial work was as a schoolmaster, Kigozi found himself more enthusiastic in evangelistic ministry. He decided to pursue ordination in the Church of Uganda. This was an unusual decision; qualified African teachers earned four or five times the salary of the ordained clergy.¹¹ It can be inferred, therefore, that Kigozi put a higher value on religious causes than on economic gain. He began his theological studies in 1932 when the incoming bishop of Uganda, Cyril Stuart, opened a small English-speaking ordination class at Namirembe Cathedral in Kampala.¹² After two years of study with the bishop, Kigozi was ordained as a deacon in 1934 and returned to Ruanda to supervise the Gahini schools for boys and evangelists.

Kigozi was particularly passionate about the Evangelists' Training School, which had fifty young African students; the Mission had recently pioneered two new stations in Urundi and the need for qualified African evangelists was more urgent than ever. He shared the conviction of the Ruanda missionaries that "the village church depends upon the African evangelist."¹³ To evangelize the whole country, therefore, it would be necessary to train more evangelists and post them to the areas without village churches.

As a highly educated African leader with a clear vision of mission, Kigozi was the best example of those whom Joe Church regarded as the hidden catalysts of the revival.¹⁴ Working closely with Church, Kigozi was invited to serve as one of the

¹⁰ Joe Church wrote in 1931: "[Yosiya] and Blasio, our head teacher, have been working together on the 'One by One Band' principle and have had several cases of professed conversion during the last few weeks. The move started with a sense of repentance, which is such a hard thing for the African." J. E. Church, *Ruanda Notes* 37 (July 1931): 18. Church also gave this account of the first Bible Team: "[Yosiya] and Blasio became inseparable friends, and this deep love and understanding...was a living example of what was coveted for Gahini, namely, a true cooperation in spiritual things between the different departments of the work." Church, *Awake! An African Calling*, 15.

¹¹ When the British government began its grants-in-aid programs in East Africa in the late 1920s, the teaching profession became increasingly popular whereas the status of the ordained clergy declined. As of 1930, for example, the average monthly pay in Uganda for a catechist was eight shillings, but a qualified teacher earned a minimum salary of twenty-five shillings. Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (London: Longman, 1952), 282–83; A. D. Tom Tuma, *Building a Ugandan Church: African Participation in Church Growth and Expansion in Busoga, 1891–1940* (Nairobi, Kenya: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1980), 164–66.

¹² One of the eight students in the bishop's ordination class later became the archbishop and two others became bishops. Bishop Stuart later recollected that it was a sheer delight to him that his first duty in Uganda was to teach the most promising African church leaders. Cyril E. Stuart, "28 Years of Happiness in Africa" (unpublished autobiography, n.d.), Lambeth Palace Library (henceforth "LPL") MS 3983, p. 6.

¹³ P. J. Brazier, *Ruanda Notes* 66 (November 1938): 31.

¹⁴ Joe Church portrayed the African leadership of the revival as "the English-speaking, highly educated, leaders of the 'revival' in the Uganda Church" who are the trustworthy men of God. Prominent African leaders of the Balokole movement received a good education and were fluent in English. With an excellent command of English, Blasio Kigozi and William Nagenda studied

plenary speakers at larger revival conventions. At the historic Kabale Convention of 1935, for example, Church, Kigozi, and Kinuka served on the leadership team that supervised the entire program.¹⁵

As a teacher and clergyman, Kigozi made a unique contribution in overcoming the departmentalism in the Anglican missions in East Africa. In the 1930s, there was a growing dichotomy between pastoral and educational missions. Many African teachers at mission-founded schools considered themselves to be civil servants, not church workers. This was primarily because teachers were paid by the government whereas catechists were paid (and chronically underpaid) by the church. Highly educated Africans sought employment outside of the church to acquire better salaries. It was often reported that promising African teachers suddenly resigned in order to take more lucrative jobs with the colonial government.¹⁶ It was quite ironic that “the Church which was so keen on promoting education was not served by well-educated men and women.”¹⁷ However, Kigozi made himself a role model to serve the evangelistic ministry of the church, using education as a strategic means. His higher education and spiritual qualities became a source of inspiration for a number of African teachers and students. An increasing number of young Baganda followed in the footsteps of the accomplished leader from a noble family in Buganda who sacrificed worldly success for the sake of the gospel.

The unexpected, premature death of Kigozi in 1936 was a huge loss to both the Ruanda Mission and the Church of Uganda. Many people called him the first martyr of the Ruanda Revival.¹⁸ Deeply saddened by his death, Bishop Stuart wrote a special letter to pay tribute to Kigozi for his exceptional Christian service in Ruanda.¹⁹ The Synod of the Uganda Diocese in 1936 also commemorated his contribution by reading in public the so-called “Three Points” prepared by Kigozi to examine the current spiritual issues in the Church of Uganda. Expressing his full support and appreciation of the revival movement in Ruanda, the bishop invited the Gahini team to conduct a convention at Mukono, the intellectual center of the Anglican Church in Uganda. In many respects, 1936 marked the revival’s heyday in Uganda, and at the center of the movement was Kigozi, an exemplary African leader.

with Bishop Stuart. Yosiya Kinuka received the highest medical training available for African staff members. J. E. Church, *Ruanda Notes* 79 (May 1942): 3.

¹⁵ John E. Church, *Quest for the Highest: An Autobiographical Account of the East African Revival* (Exeter, UK: The Paternoster Press, 1981), 116.

¹⁶ The Ruanda missionaries implicitly characterized this kind of decision as a spiritual failure—giving in to material temptations. L. E. Barham, *Ruanda Notes* 30 (October 1929): 13.

¹⁷ Tuma, *Building a Ugandan Church*, 185.

¹⁸ Derek R. Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent*, c.

¹⁹ In his letter, Bishop Stuart expressed how much he cherished Kigozi and that he had great expectations of him since he taught Kigozi in the ordination class at Namirembe in 1932. Cyril Stuart, *Ruanda Notes* 56 (April 1936): 8–10.

Even after his death, Blasio Kigozi continued to be an inspiring model for African teachers in the Ruanda Mission. It was commonplace for Balokole teachers to be actively involved in evangelism, and some even were ordained to be ministers in the church.²⁰ Kigozi's conviction that education was primarily for equipping men and women for Christian ministry passed down to the next generation of Africans working at mission schools in Ruanda-Urundi. Furthermore, he set an example of an African teacher with the highest moral and spiritual standards, who lived out the virtues of the Balokole piety.

Most importantly, African converts learned from the exemplar of Kigozi that modern education was not only compatible with the revivalist piety but also useful for the dissemination of the gospel and holistic improvement of their lives.

One hallmark for which Kigozi was long remembered was his training and inspiration of young teachers at village schools. Having observed that many educated Africans at mission schools were focused on securing well-paid jobs in the government, Stanley Smith was deeply discouraged by the fact that "so few of the schoolmasters had really experienced the miracle of conversion."²¹ The Ruanda Mission desperately needed an African schoolmaster who could serve as a role model, and who was committed to revivalist spirituality and the grand vision to witness to Christ in Ruanda-Urundi. When Kigozi became the leader of the Evangelists' Training School at Gahini in 1935, Bishop Stuart expressed his great expectations for him and affirmed that the Mission should concentrate on training African teachers and evangelists who would be "the keynote of evangelisation in Africa."²² Kigozi was entirely committed to training indigenous teachers for the sole purpose of evangelism. A vocation as a doctor or teacher was understood as a channel to witness to what Christ had done for sinners. Just as Yosiya Kinuka saw himself as a medical evangelist, Kigozi saw himself as an educational evangelist.

The second important feature of Kigozi's legacy was his key role in development of the guiding principle that in their moral and spiritual lives, African teachers should live out what they taught. Because there was a chronic shortage of African teachers in the late 1920s and early 1930s, most baptized Christians in the Ruanda Mission who were literate were invited to work as teachers at village schools. Learning how to read, in and of itself, opened the door to the teaching profession. As a consequence, many teachers carried out their teaching responsibility "without realizing its true meaning by

²⁰ For example, the first two clergymen from Kigezi (Shem Ndimbirwe and Ernesti Nyabagabo) and the first African Archbishop in the Church of Uganda (Erica Sabiti), all dedicated revivalists, had worked initially as teachers but later pursued ordination for the evangelistic cause as in the case of Kigozi.

²¹ A. C. Stanley Smith, *Road to Revival: The Story of the Ruanda Mission* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1946), 40.

²² Cyril Stuart, *Ruanda Notes* 53 (July 1935): 6.

heart.”²³ This tendency concerned evangelical-minded British missionaries, who considered godly character with high moral standards to be the most important qualification for teachers.

For them, Kigozi was the first fine example of an African teacher with clear awareness of destructive powers of sin. The missionaries highly regarded Kigozi as a truly converted African who made a radical break with his past customs such as drinking, smoking, and adultery.²⁴ His religious teaching was consistent with his life, and he encouraged other teachers to do the same. While training Ruandan teachers who would later work at village schools, for example, Kigozi placed so much emphasis on sin that some of the teachers became annoyed and resentful.²⁵ Criticism of Kigozi on this point gradually abated, however, as it became clear that he practiced what he taught and played a leading role in the revival and its conventions.

The last (and perhaps the most significant) characteristic that Kigozi modeled as an inspiring leader was that modern education and lifestyle was congruent with Christian faith for holistic transformation of life, both spiritually and physically. He made a crucial contribution to overcoming pervasive doubt regarding Western education in Ruanda.

When the Ruanda Mission started establishing its schools in the mid-1920s, indigenous people living around the mission station were afraid to send their children to school. A prevalent fear was that white people would poison the mind of African children by teaching them how to read. A typical misunderstanding that African parents had was like this: “If [our] children went to read, the white men would take their hearts and as a result they would become fools.”²⁶ One informant from the region inferred that the fear of literacy learning might have been related to a traditional taboo of not mentioning the name of a deceased individual: “Those letters on the *ebipande* [catechism in vernacular] are their names and it is a taboo to mention the names of the dead.”²⁷ With a modern outlook and outstanding educational background, Kigozi persuaded African parents that Western education was not dangerous at all and in fact would be useful for the future of their children. Because Kigozi, an educated African, maintained a friendly and collegial relationship with European missionaries (especially with Joe Church), people in Ruanda might have come to realize that it would be possible to coexist with European outsiders in a mutually beneficial way.

²³ Daniel Kajagi interview, September 27, 1971, Uganda Christian University Archive (henceforth “UCU”) East African Revival Interview, folder 2.

²⁴ Following the example of Kigozi, nearly all Balokole converts were expected to abandon drinking, smoking, and adultery to publicly affirm the authenticity of their conversion to Christianity. A typical testimony of conversion’s effect was like this: “In June 1936 I was saved... I had a very big pot of beer which I lifted and poured out. The smoking pipe, I threw it away and other sins which I was doing like adultery.” Zefania Mikekemo interview, September 18, 1971, UCU East African Revival Interview, folder 2, p 1.

²⁵ Church, *Quest for the Highest*, 111–13.

²⁶ Rutagarukayo interview, Oct. 6, 1971, UCU East African Revival Interview, folder 2, p. 2.

²⁷ Gladys Ndyababo interview, Sept. 15, 1971, UCU East African Revival Interview, folder 2, p. 2.

In a profound sense, Kigozi served as a beacon of a new lifestyle in his everyday life, especially in his marriage relationship. His appearance was neat and clean, and he wore Western clothes. This was in sharp contrast with the traditional appearance of African people in villages. One of the revivalist converts described his parents' living conditions as follows: "I found my parents in the skins of goats and sheep. They were building huts, putting beer, and slaughtering."²⁸ The change in children's outlook after going to a mission school was one of the main appeals to other parents, who also wanted their children to be clean and well-dressed.²⁹ In particular, Kigozi's marriage was markedly different from the traditional relationship between spouses in Ruanda. The relationship between Kigozi and his wife Katharine was far from hierarchical; they shared domestic responsibilities and collaborated to maintain a clean and neat home.³⁰ For example, Kigozi enjoyed carpentry and made chairs, tables, and cupboards for his family.³¹ Through family life, the revivalist couple desired to exemplify what a Christian home looked like. A clean house, cooperation between spouses, and economic accountability became important features of the saved ones' family life.³²

The evangelistic and educational ministry of Kigozi aptly illustrates the concerted efforts of the Ruanda Mission when it aimed to penetrate the African traditional society with a new religion and its practical implications. Indigenous people were initially suspicious of what European missionaries tried to bring into their society, but their interest grew as they became aware of Kigozi as a living example of how Africans improved their physical, social, and spiritual life with practical benefits of the new religion. In a convincing manner, Kigozi demonstrated that the relationship between evangelism and education, between the Christian faith and modern lifestyle, was symbiotic rather than conflicting. In the ensuing years, some Balokole converts might take religious motivation more seriously, but it did not mean that they were alienated from social changes that the adoption of the new faith and education precipitated in Ruanda.³³

Two Models: William Nagenda and Erica Sabiti

As the relationship between the Ruanda Mission and the Uganda Church continued to

²⁸ Kamuganguzi interview, September 21, 1971, UCU East African Revival Interview, folder 2, p.1.

²⁹ Rutagarukayo interview, October 6, 1971.

³⁰ It was no coincidence that a predominant number of Balokole converts shared their first testimony with their spouse and asked forgiveness for their previous wrongdoings. It was likely that they heard the message that mistreatment of a spouse was a serious sin against God and became convicted that they must put things right with their spouse.

³¹ Church, *Awake! An African Calling*, 13.

³² For the Balokole perspective of a Christian home, see Jason Bruner, "'The Testimony Must Begin in the Home': The Life of Salvation and the Remaking of Homes in the East African Revival in Southern Uganda, c. 1930–1955," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 44 no. 3-4 (2014): 309–32.

³³ Pages 8-14 are excerpted from Daewon Moon's PhD thesis, "African initiative and inspiration in the East African Revival, 1930-1950," Ph.D Thesis, Boston University, 2019:184-211.

be intricately complicated, many of the Balokole leaders kept their distance from the ecclesiastical structure. Rather than pursuing a position in the organized church, or recognition by it, they endeavored for institutional reform through individual transformation. Some of the African leaders focused on disseminating the Revival message across denominational and geographical boundaries. Others strove to reform the Anglican Church through the Balokole movement. William Nagenda and Erica Sabiti became significant models of these two approaches to evangelistic ministry.

William Nagenda: A Model for Free Evangelists

William Nagenda was arguably the most famous and influential African evangelist of the Balokole movement throughout the 1940s.³⁴ As a renowned evangelist whose influence touched all over the world, he became an inspiring prototype of a full-time minister who was not ordained.

The son of a respected Muganda chief in Kampala, Nagenda attended King's College in Budo and Makerere College in Kampala, which at that time were the two most prestigious schools in Uganda. He had an excellent command of English, and after college he became a clerk in the government office in Entebbe. Nagenda's encounter with Simeon Nsibambi, however, made a profound impact on his life. Nsibambi visited Entebbe to preach in the open air, and his preaching challenged the self-oriented life of Nagenda.³⁵ After his conversion experience, Nagenda decided to leave all privileges behind and offer himself for missions in a remote country.

Bishop Stuart was deeply impressed by the report that several elite young men from Buganda, including Nagenda, dedicated themselves to the Christian cause. Giving counsel to each one, the bishop arranged for Nagenda to serve in the Gahini station as headmaster of the Evangelists' Training School. Nagenda assumed that responsibility at the end of 1936, filling the shoes of Blasio Kigozi, who had died unexpectedly several months earlier. It is important to note that Simeon Nsibambi, Blasio Kigozi, and William Nagenda were all brothers-in-law.³⁶ Their wives Eva, Katherine, and Sala were daughters of Erasto Bakaluba, a devout Christian and one of the first African teachers at King's College in Budo. The three highly educated sisters played significant roles, often behind the scenes, as female leaders of the Balokole movement.³⁷

³⁴ For brief biographical information about William Nagenda, see H. H. Osborn, "William Nagenda," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, accessed February 19, 2018, <https://dacb.org/stories/uganda/nagenda-william>.

³⁵ Years later, Nagenda recalled his conversion and Nsibambi's sermon that preceded that experience: "It was a Sunday morning, when Jesus came and convicted me of one thing after another... That Sunday morning, I came to the end of myself. I know there was no hope for me. I want to praise God that I saw the Lord Jesus Christ—on the cross for me." H. H. Osborn, *Pioneers in the East African Revival* (Winchester, UK: Apologia, 2000), 112–13.

³⁶ Mark A. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, *Clouds of Witness: Christian Voices from Africa and Asia* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011), 101–2; Barringer, "Recording of the Work of the Holy Spirit," 183.

³⁷ J. E. Church, *William Nagenda: A Great Lover of Jesus* (London: Ruanda Mission, 1973), 2–3.

Working closely with African leaders of the Revival at Gahini, Nagenda demonstrated that he was gifted in teamwork and leadership. In particular, he maintained a good balance between reason and emotion, which remained one of his strengths throughout his later evangelistic ministry. For example, at Gahini he provided wise counsel to those who seemed overly fixated on charismatic signs by bringing them back all the time to Christ. Nagenda ardently contended that when the Holy Spirit came, he did not reveal himself but always pointed to Jesus Christ—a principle that was the core theology of the Balokole Revival shaped by Joe Church and Simeon Nsibambi from its very beginning.³⁸ Recognizing Nagenda’s strong character and leadership potential, Joe Church asked him to accompany him to an evangelistic convention in Uganda and Kenya starting in 1938.

Following the advice and endorsement of Bishop Stuart, Nagenda decided to pursue ordination in the Church of Uganda. He left the Ruanda Mission in 1940 to attend Bishop Tucker Theological College. During his studies there, Nagenda endeavored to spread the message of the Revival to his fellow students and formed an informal gathering for prayer with Balokole students early in the morning. He was frustrated, however, by the lack of spiritual vitality and evangelistic fervor among many faculty and students. Nagenda wrote to Joe Church: “Mukono is such a difficult place in every way. One can easily get cold... They wouldn’t even allow us to sing hymns.”³⁹

The Mukono Incident in October 1941 completely changed the course of Nagenda’s life and ministry. He was one of the students expelled from the College for their disobedience to the warden’s recently-instituted rules forbidding unofficial gatherings. The timing was particularly unfortunate for Nagenda, who was just one month short of completing his theological study for ordination. Immediately after his expulsion, Nagenda wrote to Joe Church that he had no intention of leaving the Church of Uganda and would endeavor to prove that he had been working for the benefit of the whole church.⁴⁰ He interpreted the Mukono Incident as an indication that it was God’s will that he serve as a free evangelist: “I feel this has come to show me that I may not become a clergyman, there is a big work to be done by free evangelists. I must lay down my life for my friends and for the Revival.”⁴¹ Despite his remarkable educational background and outstanding leadership qualities, Nagenda was willing to serve as an anonymous worker of the gospel, on an equal footing with numerous other African evangelists in the Ruanda Mission.

³⁸ As heirs of staunch evangelicals in the low Church of England, Joe Church and Ruanda missionaries placed the cross of Christ at the center of their theology and ministry. Joe Church firmly believed that even in remarkable manifestations, “the Holy Spirit glorified Jesus and pointed us to the Blood of Jesus for cleansing when we may have grieved Him on the way.” Osborn, *Pioneers in the East African Revival*, 87.

³⁹ William Nagenda to Joe Church, November 1, 1940, quoted in Church, *Quest for the Highest*, 180.

⁴⁰ Nagenda to Church (n.d., ca. 1941).

⁴¹ William Nagenda to Joe Church, October 27, 1941, quoted in Church, *Quest for the Highest*, 185.

Bishop Stuart was deeply disappointed that Nagenda did not repent of his role in the Mukono Incident. Although Nagenda admitted that he had disobeyed the warden's new rules, he remained convinced that he obeyed God in doing so. The bishop had cherished Nagenda as the most promising African leader of the Revival; he even considered Nagenda as a top candidate to become the first African bishop in Uganda.⁴² Nevertheless, in order to maintain the order and discipline of the Church, Bishop Stuart revoked Nagenda's license to preach in Church of Uganda parishes, which covered the regions of Ruanda-Urundi at that time.

Nagenda became actively involved in evangelistic ministry across denominational and geographic boundaries after his expulsion from Bishop Tucker Theological College. He accepted Lea-Wilson's offer of a place to stay at Namutamba, which became a major center of Balokole activities in Uganda.⁴³ Blocked from official ministry in the Church of Uganda, Nagenda sought opportunities to reach out to people in other countries and denominations. He accompanied Joe Church on a series of international tours to disseminate the message of the Revival. In his autobiography, Joe Church used the phrase "Go ye into the world" to characterize the phase of the Balokole movement between 1943 and 1965. It is evident that after the Mukono Incident, Church and his associates turned their eyes beyond the Anglican Church of Uganda in their effort to spread the spirit and the message of the Revival.

Church and Nagenda were invited to churches in England, France, Germany, and Switzerland in 1947 to testify to what God was doing in the East African Revival. Following the Bible Team principle, Church and Nagenda served together as plenary speakers of the revival conventions in Nyasaland (Malawi) in 1951, in Angola and India in 1952, and in the United States in 1953. Their ministry expanded in denominational terms as well; they collaborated for the revitalization movement with the Kenyan Presbyterian Church, the Tanzanian Lutheran Church, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Church of Scotland Mission, the Zambezi Mission, and the South Africa General Mission. Furthermore, the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade (WEC) funded Church and Nagenda's British tour in 1947 and arranged their American tour in 1953. With the official support of the international mission organization, over six months the two prominent leaders of the East African Revival visited and ministered in New York, Boston, Toronto, Detroit, Chicago, and Minneapolis. The Balokole Revival was no longer confined within the ecclesiastical structure of the Anglican Church of Uganda; it gained a reputation as a remarkable renewal movement at the international and

⁴² Stuart to Church, December 22, 1941.

⁴³ While complimenting Bishop Stuart for his effort to improve the spiritual state of the Uganda Church, Lea-Wilson shared his personal observations of the recent revival's profound transformation of the attitudes of African workers on his plantation. He had no doubt that "the whole movement [was] definitely bringing people out of sin, as no other movement [had] ever done in Uganda [since his arrival in 1907]." Leslie Lea-Wilson to Cyril Stuart, November 22, 1941, JEC 3/5/39.

interdenominational level.⁴⁴

Erica Sabiti: A Model for Ordained Clergy

As an ordained clergyman, Erica Sabiti represented another model of the Balokole who spearheaded a revitalization movement within the ecclesiastical structure of the Church of Uganda.⁴⁵ Born and raised in a Christian family in Ankole in western Uganda, Sabiti was educated at King's College in Budo and Makerere College in Kampala. During his college years, he was profoundly inspired by the history of the faithful commitment of early martyrs of Uganda, and he became determined to serve as a clergyman.⁴⁶ Sabiti was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1935 after theological training at Bishop Tucker Theological College. While in Mukono, he had the privilege of studying in the bishop's special ordination class in English, in which Blasio Kigozi was also included.⁴⁷

With great prospects, Sabiti was posted to lead the church at Bweranyangi, the largest parish in Ankole. His pastoral ministry was successful: The size of the congregation continuously increased, and the local colonial administration respected his capable leadership. Starting in 1936, the church in Ankole felt the effects of the Balokole Revival; two Balokole teachers from Mbarara (thirty miles east of Ankole) visited the church and shared their testimonies of conversion. What was particularly striking to Sabiti was the conversion experience of his wife, Geraldine Sabati, an intelligent, certified teacher. Her testimony about her transformative spiritual experience led Erica to examine his own spiritual state.⁴⁸ Although he himself had not yet had a similar conversion experience, Erica Sabiti became amicable toward the Balokole movement. He associated with the Balokole leaders from the Ruanda Mission. In 1937, Sabiti welcomed and accommodated Joe Church, Simeon Nsibambi, and Yosiya Kinuka for the night during their journey to northwestern Uganda to hold a revival convention. Joe Church wrote in his diary that he was impressed to hear from Sabiti about several astonishing conversion stories in Ankole.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ In 1953, Nagenda spoke at a conference at the American headquarters of the WEC in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania. In addition, he was invited to speak at the mission conference organized by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in the United States. Richard K. MacMaster and Donald R. Jacobs, *A Gentle Wind of God: The Influence of the East African Revival* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2006), 139–42.

⁴⁵ For brief biographical information about Erica Sabiti, see H. H. Osborn, "Erica Sabiti," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, accessed February 25, 2018, <https://dacb.org/stories/uganda/sabiti-erica>.

⁴⁶ Osborn, *Pioneers in the East African Revival*, 228–29.

⁴⁷ Bishop Stuart later commented that it was a great pleasure to him that his first duty in Uganda was to teach the most promising African church leaders. Among the eight students in the ordination class, one became an archbishop and two others bishops. Cyril E. Stuart, "28 Years of Happiness in Africa" (unpublished autobiography, n.d.), Lambeth Palace Library (henceforth "LPL") MS 3983, p. 6.

⁴⁸ Erica Sabiti interview, March 7, 1972, UCU East African Revival Interviews, folder 1, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Church, *Quest for the Highest*, 140–41.

During a visit to Ruanda in January 1939, Erica Sabiti underwent a conversion experience (or more precisely a so-called “second blessing” experience, as he was already a believer). Bishop Stuart had asked him to accompany him on his annual visit to the churches in that country. In this context, Sabiti met with Balokole Christians in Ruanda whom he had previously considered underprivileged and less educated, and discovered they had striking spiritual vitality. This challenged his formal relationship with God. At the Gahini station, an African Christian approached Sabiti after listening to his sermon and said: “You have preached about the Blood of Jesus, but I do not think you have really experienced it in your own life.”⁵⁰ This comment shocked Sabiti as he was genuinely loved and respected by his own people in Ankole. With a broken heart, he prayed for spiritual transformation and went through a second blessing experience.

Immediately after this unusual spiritual experience, Sabiti invited the Bible Team from the Ruanda Mission to hold a revival convention in his parish. In March 1939, Joe Church and William Nagenda came and spoke to African teachers and evangelists about true repentance and holiness.⁵¹ Sabiti’s parish became a major center of the Balokole Revival in western Uganda, and over the years that followed Sabiti spoke regularly at the larger convention in Uganda along with Yosiya Kinuka and William Nagenda.

Throughout the 1940s, Sabiti was one of a handful of so-called “revived clergymen” in the Church of Uganda. It can be inferred that Joe Church included Sabiti as a plenary speaker as a part of his strategic effort to keep the Revival within the organized church by involving ordained clergy who had the right and the license to preach in the church.

In January 1966, Sabiti was consecrated as the Archbishop of the Church of Uganda at Namirembe Cathedral. He became the first African archbishop in the whole Anglican Communion. In a profound sense, Sabiti was the long-awaited embodiment of Africanization of the Church that had been articulated six decades earlier by the first Bishop of Uganda, Alfred Tucker.⁵² One of Sabiti’s important contributions was to maintain church unity in the midst of division and opposition. Because of his cultural roots on the western margins of the country, Sabiti had to overcome the criticism and contempt of those from Buganda, who positioned themselves as the mainstream of Ugandan society. Sabiti later reflected that his experience of the Revival and its controversies early in his clerical career was greatly helpful to him when, as Archbishop, he interacted with those holding on to conservative tendencies as to their social or ecclesiastic traditions.⁵³

⁵⁰ Osborn, *Pioneers in the East African Revival*, 242.

⁵¹ Church, *Quest for the Highest*, 165.

⁵² The Church of Uganda had sought to realize a model of an African Ministry suggested by Bishop Alfred Tucker in which African pastors and teachers would assume full responsibility for directing all church ministries. Bishop Tucker emphasized the training of African Christian leaders to accomplish this aim. Christopher Byaruhanga, *Bishop Alfred Robert Tucker and the Establishment of the African Anglican Church* (Nairobi, Kenya: Word Alive Publication, 2008), 169–75.

⁵³ Sabiti interview, March 7, 1972.

Erica Sabiti left a profound impact on the tenth Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Communion that took place in Westminster in July 1968. The first worldwide gathering of the Anglican Communion after nearly all African nations had achieved independence, the Conference demonstrated a considerable shift in the African churches from Western to African leadership. Representing eleven bishops from the Anglican Province of Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, Sabiti called for renewal of the church in faith: “Renewal means going back to where things are at their best—or at least it does in my country. In all of our technological progress, the sinful mind is still the same... [W]e know there can be no renewal unless we are driven to the cross.”⁵⁴

Thanks to the faithful service of African clergy like Sabiti, the Balokole Revival was able to remain within the institutional church in East Africa, overcoming fierce controversies and opposition of the church authorities.⁵⁵

Pilkington, George Lawrence
1865-1897
Anglican Communion (Church Missionary Society)
Uganda

George Pilkington was a Church Missionary Society (CMS) lay missionary in Uganda. A graduate of the University of Cambridge and strongly influenced by the Keswick movement, he arrived in Buganda (now Uganda) with Bishop Alfred Tucker’s party in 1891. There he found a militarized society, rent by religious factionalism and the conflicts of the colonial scramble. Pilkington’s remarkable linguistic ability enabled him quickly to get alongside the Baganda soldiers and to realize their spiritual hunger and desire for literacy. In 1893, troubled by the confusion of Christianity and politics, he went on retreat to Kome Island, where he had an experience of the Holy Spirit. This sparked off a religious revival that profoundly affected the life of the Ugandan church, an inspiration to the Balokole revival of the 1930s, which looked back to Pilkington as a role model. Pilkington’s other great contribution was his translation of the Bible into Luganda. Ironically, despite his desire for a purely spiritual understanding of Christianity, he was a firm believer in the benefits of British colonialism. In 1897 he accompanied his beloved Baganda soldiers as they went to quell the mutiny of Sudanese troops in eastern Uganda. Pilkington’s death in battle was universally mourned.

Kevin Ward

⁵⁴ James B. Simpson and Edward M. Story, *The Long Shadows of Lambeth X: A Critical Eye-Witness Account of the Tenth Decennial Conference of 462 Bishops of the Anglican Communion* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 109.

⁵⁵ Pages 14-19 are excerpted from Moon’s PhD thesis, “African initiative and inspiration in the East African Revival, 1930-1950”: 284-294.

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Nsimbambi, Simeoni (B)

1897-1978

Anglican Communion, Balokole Movement

Uganda

Ugandan evangelist and leader in the East African Revival.

One of the many sons of a prosperous Ganda subchief, Nsibambi was educated in Anglican schools. During World War I he served in an army medical corps in German East Africa and afterwards became a government health officer. During the 1920s, after a religious conversion, he searched for personal holiness; this was satisfied through a meeting in 1929 with a young missionary doctor from Rwanda, J. E. Church. Giving up his work he became an independent evangelist. Through his personal contacts he built up the group that became the foundation of the Balokole (Saved Ones) in Buganda. He traveled with Church and others to preach at conventions; his younger half-brother, Blasio Kigozi, was a worker with the Church Missionary Society Ruanda Mission. His wife Eva, was sister-in-law to William Nagenda, the revival's leading evangelist.

After 1943 Nsibambi, although confined almost entirely to his home with heart trouble, continued his influence through personal work. His last years were clouded by Nagenda's serious illness and premature death, and by the formation by some of the Revival Brethren around Kampala of another group known as *Kuzuzuka* (Reawakening).

Jocelyn Murray

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Nsibambi, Simeoni (C)

1897-1978

Anglican Communion, Balokole Movement

Uganda

Simeon Nsibambi, father of the former Prime Minister of Uganda, Professor Apolo Nsibambi and co-pionner of the East African Revival, was born in 1897. His father, Sezi Kimwanje sent him to school early to be taught in Christian education. Simeon was saved at the age of twenty two, near the end of his college years.

When he left school, he was appointed a Public Health officer in the government of the Kabaka of Uganda. However, Simeon was more concerned about the state of the church.

After reading Christian literature and the Bible, Nsibambi made a vow: "I have committed myself to God the Father. As from today I desire to be genuinely holy and never unintentionally do anything unguided by Jesus." At the age of fifteen he had already vowed not to drink alcohol ever in his life.

Simeon was disappointed that he was unable to get a scholarship to study abroad. This was when God assured him in a vision that such earthly things were not the most important things in life; rather to receive eternal salvation was the pearl of great price. He had to go to a mountain in Toro to spend time praying before starting ministry. It was here that Simeon heard a voice telling him to take off his shoes.

Nsibambi next took a break to go to Toro for a period of prayer before embarking on the work God was calling him to do. When he arrived in Fort Portal he was given a boy to lead him up to the mountain. Nsibambi stayed there alone, but only after leading that boy to Christ. It was therefore on the mountain that he heard a voice telling him to take off his shoes. Simeon bought two kanzus and told his wife Eva that it was his dress. He also told her that the Lord had called him to be an evangelist; he would not have the time to attend to the many affairs for which a husband is responsible. He went on to explain that all the family responsibilities were going to fall on her.

Nsibambi found the year 1943 a strain and he was confined almost entirely to his house, but God began to use him in a ministry of personal work in his physical weakness. Leaders of Christians work and visitors to Kampala would not leave without a visit to Nsibambi, and would often return home with a new challenge and blessing.

Simeon Nsibambi went to be with the Lord in February 1978.

Eddie Sempala

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This article, received in 2019, was written by Eddie Sempala, an Apostle, author, and church historian studying revivals in Uganda, Kenya, Africa, and Asia. He is the Founder of Generals Ministries International and the pioneer of Africa God's Generals research project aiming a documenting stories of men and women of God which will be helpful in kindling fire for ministry in the next generation of ministers.

Dronyi, Sosthenes Yangu Ayume

1923-1971

Anglican Communion, Balokole Movement Uganda

Sosthenes Yangu Ayume Dronyi was a prominent advocate of the Revival Movement and the Africanization of church music in Madi and West Nile diocese. He is well remembered for his lively preaching, his testimonies, and his advocacy of African church music.

Dronyi was born in 1923 or 1924 to Yangu and Aya. He had a normal childhood, spending most of his time looking after his father's goats and cows. But he quickly earned a reputation as a serious learner when opportunity arose in 1936. In his early days, Dronyi was well known for his extraordinary strength and courage and none of his friends would ever challenge him in a fight.

In 1936 Dronyi began his studies at Arua Primary School. As a student at Arua Primary School he always had the highest score in the term examinations. In 1942 he left Arua Primary School and went to Nyapea Junior Secondary School where he spent only one year. Dronyi felt that Nyapea was not an ideal place for him since it only offered academic and not professional courses. In 1944 he began the program at Boroboro Teachers' Training College. He graduated as a grade II primary school teacher in 1948.

Dronyi's spiritual journey seems to have begun when he was at Boroboro Teachers' Training College. Several students at the college had committed their lives to Jesus Christ and their testimonies during Christian gatherings usually stirred up considerable controversy among the student community. During the meetings, these particular students would attack the moral laxity of the other students. At first Dronyi attended these meetings simply to participate in the controversy. Eventually their

testimonies heightened Dronyi's conviction of his own sin although he did not commit his life to Christ at that time.

In 1949, as a young schoolteacher, Dronyi was converted to the charismatic Christianity of the East African Revival. He began to seriously think of abandoning teaching and forsaking everything to preach the Gospel. He immediately became an evangelist, warning against the dangers of drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco, and practicing witchcraft. Dronyi attracted large numbers of people, some who came to hear the Gospel, others who came out of curiosity, just to hear him preach.

When Dronyi's piety became generally known in Arua, he had the honor of being distinguished by some of the other lay preachers as their leader. His status in society as a teacher meant that he was well respected and admired by the public. From the time Dronyi was saved he began to aggressively evangelize for the Lord. He developed new strategies of open-air preaching. Lusania Kasamba, one of the team leaders in the Revival Movement, described him saying, "Dronyi would preach while moving swiftly from one spot to another, dancing and shouting as if possessed by the Holy Spirit. He would give testimonies of his evil past life and how Jesus Christ had saved him."

This new practice of open air preaching was unknown in Arua. In every village Dronyi visited, he announced his purpose and there the crowds who assembled would be roused anew with proclamations of the evangelical doctrines of hell and heaven which very few indigenous priests and European missionaries were willing to tolerate. Dronyi always told his listeners that God had called him to be an evangelist first to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit and secondly to ask men and women to put their trust in God through Jesus Christ and to accept Him as their Lord and Savior.

In 1960 Dronyi married Lois Adrili. Peter Taban, diocesan secretary of Madi and West Nile diocese, spoke about her role in Dronyi's preaching ministry, saying, "The secret of Dronyi's success in his preaching ministry rested in the happy fact that he had one of God's greatest and best gifts—a godly, praying wife. Adrili's work was to pray for Dronyi and dedicate him to God."

By the 1960s Dronyi was convinced that an evangelist such as himself should never rest or take a break from his task. He resolved to undertake an itinerant journey of lay preaching throughout Uganda, the Sudan, Congo, and Kenya and embarked on missionary journeys to these countries. Simple but extraordinary, Dronyi's message proclaimed that Jesus Christ had conquered the spirits troubling people in Africa through His death and resurrection, that Christ's return was imminent, and that people should therefore prepare for His return by undergoing a radical conversion. Conversion, according to Dronyi, entailed obeying the Ten Commandments, keeping the Sabbath holy, accepting the Bible as the Word of God, and publicly burning the fetishes from African traditional religion which were thought to keep evil spirits away.

Although Dronyi's mode of preaching was humble in nature, it was eventually recognized as a sufficient vehicle at that time for bringing the Word of God to the local people. Kasamba, a team leader in the Uganda Revival Movement, said, "One of the fruits of this lay and out-of-door preaching was the number of people who would come to the Lord during Dronyi's missionary tours. In his preaching he would openly

challenge the European missionaries, the clergy and the laity to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. Through him hundreds and thousands of Christians in Uganda, Kenya, Congo, and the Sudan accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.”

Dronyi challenged whoever accepted Jesus Christ as his or her personal Lord and Savior to be involved in the preaching of the Gospel—a task, he argued, not only reserved for the European missionaries and the clergy. Through his challenge of the status quo, Dronyi freed the proclamation of the Christian message in Madi and West Nile diocese from the monopoly of European missionaries and the clergy. The Madi and West Nile diocese has adopted Dronyi’s strategy of lay involvement in the preaching ministry.

As a saved man, Dronyi considered that Christian care was of paramount importance. In accordance with his natural compassion for the poor and his eagerness to obey Christ’s command to minister to the sick and the widows, he began to pay regular visits to the sick and dying poor, to whom he imparted the consolations of eternal life. He thus became a missionary among the sick in Arua hospitals at a time when such a ministry was most needed because no church had yet taken the responsibility of setting it up.

Dronyi is also remembered in the West Nile region and in the Church of the Province of Uganda as a strong advocate for the indigenization of church music. When European missionaries came to Uganda, they sponsored the translation of missionary hymns into local languages and imposed foreign Christian music on the people. Through repeated singing, foreign Christian music became part of the local people’s collective memory and African music was dismissed as pagan and satanic.

In his sermons Dronyi criticized European missionaries and African church leaders who opposed the use of African music in church services. He argued that music, whether secular or Christian, is a sign of one’s cultural identity and membership in a particular group. On several occasions he condemned the European missionaries’ denigration of traditional rites and customs that were not contrary to biblical teaching. He also attacked their attitudes of racial superiority and paternalism, and their desire to keep the African church in bondage to Europeans for as long as possible.

Dronyi never believed that European missionaries knew better than the Africans themselves what was best for African Christians. He therefore sought to promote an African expression of Christianity through culture and tradition particularly in the area of African music. He always said that as the indigenous expression of the Christian faith meets real and local needs the joy of the Lord overflows among His people. According to Kasamba, Dronyi’s goal “was to see indigenous people use African Christian music in expressing their faithful hearts before the Lord... to see them have the freedom to worship with what came from the bottom of their hearts as African Christians.”

During Dronyi’s time church authorities condemned the use of African musical instruments in the church because of their “primitive,” “pagan,” and secular associations. For Dronyi this was unfair to African culture because Western church instruments were also used for secular functions. At a time when African musical instruments were condemned as satanic, Dronyi saw nothing wrong with using them

during church worship and he composed many African Christian songs which called for their use. In all his Gospel crusades, Dronyi used drums, shakers, and horns. He gathered around him young men and women and taught them to play African instruments. He also encouraged these young African Christian musicians to pass on their new skills to other believers, especially those from other cultures who were interested in the Africanization of church music. On this issue, Dronyi reportedly told his critics that no matter what they did to exclude African instruments from the worship service, one day those musical instruments would find their way back into the church.

Thus in the 1960s, Dronyi led the way in the reclaiming of the African expression of spirituality. Since his time, the indigenization of church music in the Church of the Province of Uganda has long been realized. African Christians in Uganda—especially the younger generation—respond to harmonies and rhythms that they already know from their African culture. They do not have to learn a new musical language in order to worship in the church. Local instruments such as drums and adunggu that were initially forbidden by the Madi and West Nile diocese have become the most widely used instruments in church services, thanks to Dronyi's influence.

Although Dronyi did not have a sure means of income to support himself and his family, his zealous missionary labors introduced him to wealthy men and women of likeminded spirit who were eager to support his efforts in his preaching tours.

Dronyi's preaching style caused some discomfort among Madi and West Nile diocese authorities who thought he was going too far. Many people—especially local government authorities—thought Dronyi was disturbing the peace which had reigned in the area for many years. European missionaries and church leaders in the West Nile region perceived Dronyi's evangelism efforts as spiritual extremism and took him for a fanatic and a lunatic.

Days and weeks of fasting, and all the other severe disciplines to which he had long exposed himself undermined Dronyi's health. He died on March 12, 1971 at five p.m. in Arua Hospital of high fever and severe dehydration.

The Christian Church especially in Madi and West Nile diocese today enjoys the results of Dronyi's sacrificial ministry. His level of spirituality, enthusiasm, and commitment to the Revival Movement has become the yardstick used to measure the spirituality of church workers in Madi and West Nile diocese. Today if one does not give his or her testimony as Dronyi did, that individual cannot easily be admitted to the church ministry in that diocese.

Christopher Byaruhanga

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This article, received in 2005, was researched and written by Rev. Dr. Christopher Byaruhanga, 2005-2006 Project Luke fellow and Associate Professor of Historical Theology at Uganda Christian University, a DACB Participating Institution. He is also the liaison coordinator at UCU.

Otunnu, Yusto

1922-1998

Chosen Evangelical Revival, Balokole Movement

Uganda

Yusto Otunnu was the founder of the Chosen Evangelical Revival movement in northern Uganda.

Otunnu was born on March 22, 1922, in Namokora, Chua county, Kitgum district in northern Uganda. Otunnu's father was called Yona Lucuba Olango of the Kadwong clan, one of the clans belonging to a larger Acholi ethnic group that occupies the current districts of Kitgum, Pader, Gulu, and Amuru. Otunnu's mother was called Aol. The family was Christian but not wealthy.

In his formative years, Otunnu joined the catechumen class after which he was baptized and given the name Yusto. He then attended one of the bush schools but did not go far with his primary studies. But he grew up an energetic and enthusiastic person. He showed great skills and artistic abilities in Acholi traditional and cultural activities.

Yusto Otunnu was recruited into the King African Rifles (K.A.R) in 1940 and served in Ethiopia, India, and Sri-Lanka during the Second World War. That exposure enabled him to gain a good command of Swahili, in addition to Lwo, his ethnic language. He left the K.A.R in 1945.

Yusto Otunnu married Amato Josephine in 1948, and they had thirteen children. Their son Olara-Otunnu later became a prominent politician and the first Ugandan to serve in the United Nations Secretary for Children Affairs in the 1980s. Although Yusto Otunnu was not well educated, he labored hard to educate all his children.

Yusto Otunnu's real Christian vocation began after hearing a sermon by a Muganda medical doctor and evangelist, Dr. Elia Lubulwa, on September 29, 1947. Lubulwa was one of the first converts of the East African Revival movement in the 1940s. Although Otunnu had been baptized and confirmed in the Anglican Church of Uganda, he realized the cold spirituality in the Church of Uganda. He became a member of the new movement known by Luganda term *balokole* ("saved ones"). After his conversion, Otunnu was ever burning with the Holy Spirit to change the life of the church in his area because many people who claimed to be Christians were still rooted in their traditional religious practices, indulging in polygamous living, smoking, and drunkenness.

The zeal of evangelism filled Otunnu's heart and the impact of his message was reinforced by his good command of Swahili and Lwo. On January 6, 1948, he preached a moving sermon that prompted Janani Luwum to convert to the *balokole* (East African Revival) movement. At that time, Janani Luwum was a trained primary school teacher.

Yusto Otunnu, Janani Luwum, and others became great charismatic preachers in northern Uganda and the country at large. Those early converts, filled with great passion to preach the gospel often faced arrest by both local leaders and church leaders whose traditions and practices were greatly challenged by the new and strange message. In 1949, Yusto Otunnu challenged Bishop Usher Wilson of the Upper Nile diocese during one of his pastoral visits to All Saints Church in Kitgum for the cold and dry spirituality in the Anglican Church of Uganda.

Otunnu's companion, Janani Luwum, later joined a theological college in Buwalasi, in Mbale, in eastern Uganda and served as an ordained minister in the Anglican Church of Uganda. Meanwhile, Otunnu remained a charismatic lay evangelist and a great leader of the East African Revival movement in northern Uganda.

Otunnu's preaching drew many Acholi to the new movement. Many of the clergy who served the Anglican Church of Uganda during the turbulent political periods of that time were mostly converts of Yusto Otunnu. The *balokole* movement provided the main thrust for evangelism and church planting among traditional believers in northern Uganda and southern Sudan.

By the 1950s the *balokole* movement had grown tremendously. As it grew a new organization called the Chosen Evangelical Revival (C.E.R) movement was formed on August 28, 1958 in Anaka. Yusto Otunnu (an Acholi) became the chairperson; other members were Obuku Yowaci (an Iteso), Owino Lajaro (a Mudama), and Dronyi Sosthenes (a Lugbara). However, within a decade, the Chosen Evangelical Revival movement split again. Another splinter group led by Lajaro Owino accused Yusto Otunnu of adultery because he had recruited many women into high positions in his group. He also frequently selected young ladies to serve him. Otunnu's group was called *Morokole abor*, an Acholi term that means "adulterous saved ones." Meanwhile, the opposing group, that refused to condone immorality in the church, was referred to as *Morokole adelawang* that means "the wide open-eyed saved ones." The rift between the two groups started as early as 1960s but the actual split took place in the 1970s. Otunnu's followers also gave him a new title, *Baba*, which means "father." From the time of the split, new converts began to identify themselves with the leaders of the

revival movement rather than with Christ, although the factions remained in the Anglican Church of Uganda.

In 1977, Yusto Otunnu fled to Kenya after Archbishop Janani Luwum was murdered by Idi Amin. In Kenya, Yusto Otunnu became an active evangelist and ardent critic of President Idi Amin's military regime. During that time he became known as an international evangelist, much like Bishop Festo Kivengere.

Yusto Otunnu was also famous for the entrepreneurial skills. When he returned to northern Uganda after his exile he started a bus company known as "The Holy Spirit Bus Company," an innovation that put his splinter group in a better economic position. At the same time, it enabled the group to break away from the Anglican Church of Uganda, unlike the members of the East African Revival movement. The separation of Otunnu's group was gradual even though many attempts were made to reconcile them with the church.

On March 29, 1984, the bishop of Northern Uganda diocese, Benoni Ogwal-Abwang, made a last attempt to work with Otunnu's group evangelizing the area but the endeavor failed. As a result, in September 1985, Yusto Otunnu registered his movement that was licensed by the military government of General Tito Okello, one of his kinsmen. In addition, his son Olara-Otunnu was one of the ministers in the government.

When General Tito Okello's government was overthrown by Yoweri Museveni on January 26, 1986, Yusto Otunnu once again fled, this time taking refuge in Oxford in the United Kingdom. At the age of sixty-eight, he enrolled as a student of the English language. Later, he was awarded an honorary doctorate of theology by the University of Taiwan for being an eloquent evangelist and for his mission work.

Yusto Otunnu died on April 12, 1998 at the age of seventy-six. He was buried in Oxford in the United Kingdom, using Acholi traditional burial rites, according to his will.

Wilson Atine

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This article, received in 2008, was written by Rev. Wilson Atine, DACB liaison coordinator at Archbishop Janani Luwum Theological College, Gulu, Uganda, a DACB participating institution. Rev. Atine attended the DACB Oral History Workshop held

at Uganda Christian University in Mukono, October 27-31, 2008, and co-sponsored by Global South Institute.

Kivengere, Festo (B)

1919-1988

Anglican Communion, Balokole Movement

Uganda

Anglican Bishop of the Church of the Province of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Boga-Zaire.

Kivengere was a leading figure in the East African Revival (Balokole [saved ones]) movement. Born in Uganda and trained as a teacher, he was originally rejected for ordination in Uganda; but he was ordained as a deacon in the United States and a priest in 1967 in Uganda. He won a reputation as a preacher and evangelist and launched the work of African Evangelistic Enterprise (a pan-African movement) in East Africa. He was consecrated bishop of Kigezi in 1972 during President Idi Amin's reign of terror and fled the country in 1977 when Amin attacked the churches and Bishop Janani Luwum was murdered. He returned to Uganda when Amin was overthrown but continued to travel widely, attracting large audiences in America, Australia and Britain. He became an international spokesman for the Church of Uganda and courageously denounced the human rights violations that continued unabated during Milton Obote's second presidency. In 1982, when thousands of Nyarwandan refugees were expelled from their homes, Kivengere organized assistance for them although it was unpopular and dangerous to do so. He warned against the dangers posed to the Church of Uganda by the way in which Obote drove a wedge between Catholics and Protestants through favoring the Church of Uganda. In 1983, he ordained three women as priests in his diocese in spite of official opposition but with the support of his own diocese. He died of leukemia at the height of his powers and influence.

M. Louise Pirouet

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Kariuki, Obadiah

1902-1978

Anglican Communion, Balokole Movement Kenya

Obadiah Kariuki was the firstborn son of Ng'ang'a and Wanjiru. He was born around 1902-the exact date of his birth is not known-at Kanjuu, Gikundiko in Kabete near Nairobi. Kariuki grew up observing all the traditional Kikuyu rituals of his tribe that prepared the youth for life in the large society. As a boy, Kariuki learned a lot from his mother, a traditional Gikuyu woman in every respect. Due to the high rate of infant mortality at the time, many of his siblings died in infancy, leaving him the only son of his father.

As a boy, Kariuki was in charge of the calves, goats, and sheep while older boys took care of the cows and larger animals. During this time as a shepherd boy, Kariuki heard about the Church Missionary Society (CMS), from Britain, that was flourishing in his area around 1914. On May 19, 1918, he became attracted to Christianity when his Uncle Thiong'o and Aunt Nyambaara were baptized, taking the names Joseph and Mary. The converts' new names and attires were so attractive to Kariuki that when Joseph asked if he could take him to a mission school, he and his father both readily accepted.

At this time, his family experienced difficulties when the colonial government displaced them and took their land, reducing them to beggars. But his Uncle Joseph did everything he could so Kariuki could study at the CMS mission school at Kabete. Kariuki wanted to learn to read and write in the strange alphabet. While at school, which was also the mission station and the center for both religious and educational activities, Kariuki worked part-time as a domestic worker at the dining table for Rev. Canon Harry Leakey, head of the station. From the Leakeys, he learned to work hard, to be honest, and to make things with his hands, through his own efforts. Kariuki says that, "it was a combination of these three experiences that enabled me to climb the pilgrim road from being a herd boy to becoming a bishop."

He was baptized on November 26, 1922, as Obadiah Kariuki wa Yusufu at Christ Church, Kabete, by Rev. Canon Harry Leakey after taking a baptismal preparation class. In 1923 his zeal for education began to bear fruit when Canon Leakey took him to the noted CMS Buxton School, Mombasa, for training both as a teacher and a church catechist. Many converts educated at Buxton had proved to be renowned teachers.

Buxton, by then, was the highest learning institution run by the Church Missionary Society. Kariuki enthusiastically welcomed this study opportunity.

After his training at Buxton, he returned to Kabete in 1924 as a qualified teacher and soon thereafter became Leakey's deputy, in charge of school matters. He served as Leakey's deputy for one year until he was promoted to deputy headmaster and transferred to another CMS school at Kiambaa. Thanks to his great efforts the school started to perform well. In 1926, his hard work paid off unexpectedly when he was selected to study at the recently opened Alliance High School, Kikuyu. He was twenty-five.

After his two years at Alliance, he resumed teaching at CMS Kiambaa. While still teaching at Kiambaa, he and Lilian Wairimu, daughter of senior chief Koinange were married by Rev. Canon Samuel Nguru on September 3, 1930 at St. John's Church, Kiambaa. God blessed Kariuki and Lilian with fourteen children. Sadly, they lost three of their sons as infants, which left them with only five sons and six daughters. Now their youngest son, Paul Kihara Kariuki, who served for many years as the chancellor for the Anglican Church of Kenya is a renowned lawyer currently serving as high court judge in the Kenyan government (2005).

Kariuki who was interested in providing new leadership for rapidly expanding CMS churches and schools, forwarded his name to the church elders at Kabete who were recruiting young married men for theological training at St. Paul's Theological College, Limuru. He was accepted and in 1935 he resigned as a teacher. In 1936 he enrolled at St. Paul's. There Kariuki learned about the power of the Holy Spirit who began to work in his life. He recalls that "it was during this period that I found refuge in prayer after becoming exposed to the remarkable East African Revival Movement which had begun to penetrate Kenya from Rwanda and Uganda" (*A Bishop Facing Mt. Kenya*, p. 47). He became a strong member of the revival movement despite fierce opposition from both church elders and some clergy. He helped organize the first revival meeting at Kabete in April 1937 and many other subsequent meetings.

In 1940 Kariuki was ordained and posted to Kiambaa pastorate. After serving as chairman of the pastorate from 1944 to 1945, he was transferred to the new St. Paul's Theological College, Limuru as a tutor. In 1951, he was posted to St. Stephen's Church in Nairobi, the largest Anglican Church and parish between Cairo and the Cape at that time. In 1955, he was posted to serve as rural dean in Weithaga in Murang'a (then Fort Hall). At this time violent nationalist movements broke out against the colonial government. Political leaders such as Jomo Kenyatta and Chief Koinange were arrested and subjected to brutal handling, beatings, forced labor, torture, and all sorts of physical violence. Kariuki was courageous enough to minister in Murang'a at a time when people (mostly Kikuyu) were killing each other for refusing to take forced Mau Mau oaths. The Mau Mau forced individuals to swear loyalty to them, taking an oath never to inform on another follower or to sell land to or otherwise assist the Europeans. Mau Mau followers swore to drive out all white settlers and to kill them when ordered to. Initiation rituals included sacrificing a sheep, cutting out its heart, and drinking its blood mixed with the blood of the participants. The Mau Mau began to attack other

Africans (mostly Christians) who refused to join them even under intimidation, or those whom they suspected of being informers.

In 1955, after praying and seeking advice from many people, Kariuki accepted to serve as assistant bishop to Bishop Leonard Beecher in Central province. On May 15, 1955, Kariuki and Festo Olang' were consecrated the first African assistant bishops in the Anglican diocese of Mombasa, covering East Africa. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, consecrated them at Namirembe Cathedral in Kampala, Uganda. Kariuki became assistant bishop of Mombasa in charge of Fort Hall and Olang' assistant bishop of Mombasa in charge of Maseno.

After his consecration, Kariuki moved his headquarters from Weithaga to Murang'a town. His jurisdiction as bishop of Fort Hall, as it was then called, covered Central province which included Kiambu, Murang'a (Fort Hall), Nyeri, Embu, and Meru. At first, he administered the diocese from an empty room (without furniture). He acquired an old typewriter but at the beginning the carbon paper to go with it was too expensive. Initially, he was his own typist, filing clerk, and office messenger. Four months after his consecration, Kariuki and his wife went to England to spend three months at St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, where he participated in theological discussions and seminars. Then he stayed for seven extra months in England, preaching everywhere he went and visiting various bishops in order to gain practical experience in running a diocese.

As assistant bishop and later as bishop, Kariuki opposed taking oaths. He exhorted Christians not to take oaths to join the Mau-Mau movement against the colonial political powers, arguing that such an act called for a spiritual commitment that Christians could only give to Jesus Christ. After visiting Jomo Kenyatta in detention at Maralal in 1958, Kariuki and many others appealed to the colonial governor of Kenya, Sir Patrick Renison, for his release which was granted in 1961. Kariuki encouraged ecumenism between churches in the country. He organized interdenominational meetings to pray for peace and unity in the country during the struggle for uhuru (independence) and afterwards.

In January 1961, four years after his consecration as assistant bishop, Kariuki was enthroned as diocesan bishop of the newly autonomous diocese of Fort Hall in the church of the province of East Africa. Right away, he launched a program to train people from his diocese for church service in order to fill both existing posts left vacant by departing expatriates and new posts created specifically as part of the church's involvement in the reconstruction efforts after the Mau-Mau war. He sent students to St. Paul's Theological College, Limuru and Weithaga Bible School for pastoral training. To supplement formal training, he assigned the responsibility for selecting lay readers to his archdeacons. The lay readers did excellent work in promoting the gospel. With support from churches and Christian organizations in the U.K., India, New Zealand, Australia, and the U.S.A., Kariuki also sent his clergy overseas for training. He wanted clergy in the diocese to be able to relate the Bible and Christ's teachings to modern needs and tensions. He emphasized that training should only be a preparation for service.

In 1963, after Kenya became an independent nation, the name of the diocese was changed from Fort Hall (Murang'a) to Mount Kenya, in remembrance of Kisoï Munyao, a Kenyan mountaineer who hoisted the Kenyan flag on Mt. Kenya on Independence Day in 1963. Kariuki maintained that this was also to remind Christians that they were to hoist the flag of Christ in all communities of the Mt. Kenya region.

Under Bishop Kariuki's leadership, pastoral work in the diocese burgeoned as he worked to establish more archdeaconries, rural deaneries, parishes, and churches. He was very democratic in his leadership and listened even to his subordinates. He discouraged gossip of any kind among his clergy and among Christians. In his administration, he always worked through the established hierarchy of the church. He helped create the Diocesan Mission Association (DMA) in his diocese and recruited many members who felt challenged to spread the gospel beyond their boundaries. With the rapid growth of the DMA the diocese also expanded significantly. Kariuki also encouraged Christians to be self-reliant by working hard to sustain the church instead of depending on foreign donations. He discouraged overseas funding for church constructions and encouraged stewardship teaching, something that enabled the diocese to stand on its own feet, making it the strongest and wealthiest in Kenya today.

On June 16, 1970, Kariuki was one of the candidates in the election for archbishop along with his colleague and friend, Festo Olang'. Although Kariuki lost to Olang', he saw it as God's will and faithfully supported Olang' until his retirement.

During his time as bishop of Mt. Kenya diocese, growth in church membership was enormous. Whereas in 1960 there were 70,000 Christians in the diocese, by 1975 they numbered over 200,000. As a result of mission outreaches, the diocese expanded its territory far beyond its original boundaries. Due to this remarkable growth, Kariuki divided the diocese into the diocese of Mt. Kenya East of which David Gitari became bishop and the diocese of Mt. Kenya South under Kariuki's oversight. As a leader, Kariuki believed that a "bishop is the shepherd of his flock" and not a boss.

In 1976, due to medical reasons, Kariuki retired from church administration. The diocese organized a thanksgiving service and farewell in honor of his good work. It was held on May 15, 1976 at St. James and All Martyrs Cathedral and was attended by thousands of Christians from all walks of life including clergy, government officials, and business people.

On May 6, 1978, almost exactly two years after his retirement, Kariuki died in hospital, leaving behind his wife Lillian, five sons, and six daughters. By then, all his children were married and had jobs.

Alfred Sheunda Keyas

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This story, submitted in 2005, was researched and written by Rev. Alfred Sheunda Keyas, a priest in the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), diocese of Mumias, serving as a missionary in Mwingi, Eastern Kenya Province, and DACB Project Luke fellow (2004- 2005).

A Brief Introduction to Somali Christian History

By Ben I. Aram

Contrary to the frequent misconception that Christianity only arrived in Africa with the arrival of Western missionaries in the nineteenth century, archaeological and anthropological evidence show that Christianity reached Somalia in the centuries after it became established in the ancient Kingdom of Aksum in what is now Eritrea and northern Ethiopia in 356 AD.⁵⁶ In fact, “evidence from three directions sheds light on the pre-Islamic Judeo-Christian influence: written records, archaeological data and vestiges of Judeo-Christian symbolism still extant within both traditional Somali culture and closely related ethnic groups—[who are] part of both the Lowland and Highland Eastern Cushitic language clusters such as Oromo, Afar, Hadiya, Sidamo, Kambata, Konso and Rendille. Together such data indicates that both Judaism and Christianity preceded Islam to the lowland Horn of Africa.”⁵⁷ The historical consciousness that Christianity has been present in Africa from its very beginnings plays a key role in the religious self-understanding of Somalis.

WRITTEN EVIDENCE⁵⁸

Ali Abdirahman (1975: 43-74) begins his comprehensive work by pointing out the earliest record of contacts with coastal Somalia from ancient Middle Eastern civilizations. The first written mention of Somalia as the land of Punt⁵⁹ is from the Egyptian Fifth Dynasty, prior to 2000 BC. Later, Somalia was described in the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (dated as AD 50), again pointing to contacts by Greek, Egyptian and other Middle Eastern sailors and merchants with the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden coasts of northeast Africa. Ali Abdirahman (117) quotes several Arab sources from the 10th (al-Mas’udi), 11th (al-Biruni) and 12th centuries (al-Idrisi) that describe Seylac (Zeila), a port in northwest Somalia, near the border of Djibouti as a Christian city, with only a small minority population of Yemeni Muslim merchants. These Muslims lived peaceably with their co-religionists and paid tribute to the Aksumite monarch.⁶⁰ Later, control of coastal towns shifted to Yemeni Arabs. This situation changed by 1415, when

⁵⁶ Sada Mire, “Mapping the Archaeology of Somaliland: Religion, Art, Script, Time, Urbanism, Trade and Empire,” *African Archaeological Review* 32, no. 1 (March 1, 2015): 111–36. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10437-015-9184-9>.

⁵⁷ Ben I. Aram, “Somalia’s Judeo-Christian Heritage: A Preliminary Survey,” *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 22.2 (2003): 3, note 1.

Full article: https://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ajet/22-2_003.pdf.

⁵⁸ The following sections are excerpted from Aram, “Somalia’s Judeo-Christian Heritage: A Preliminary Survey,” 8-14. See article for a full bibliography.

⁵⁹ The source of highly sought-after frankincense and myrrh.

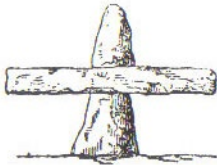
⁶⁰ See also Trimminghams’ quotation ‘of Ibn Hawqal from 978 (1952: p. 51).

the Abyssinian king Negus Yakuno Amlak re-conquered Seylac, killed many Muslims and forcibly converted survivors to Christianity and converted mosques to churches. However, within a few decades, Christianity had disappeared again from the city (Bertin 1983: 9).

How long Christianity lingered elsewhere along the Gulf of Aden coast of northern Somalia is not known, but there is a fascinating account from St. Francis Xavier's visit to the nearby island of Soqotra in 1542 (Freeman-Grenville 1966:135-137). In a letter dated 20 September 1542, he wrote to the Jesuit headquarters in Rome about his encounters with inhabitants of that island. They claimed to be converts of St. Thomas, and seemed to be totally illiterate and without any Scriptures. Their "priests" were also illiterate, but were able to do their daily prayers from memory, despite the fact they were in a language they did not understand.⁶¹ They had totally forgotten the sacrament of baptism, but had Lenten fasts that parallel those of the Monophysite Ethiopian Orthodox Church (hereafter referred to as EOC) in terms of length and severity. St. Xavier remarked several times how proud the Soqotrans were of being Christian, and of their hostility to Yemeni Muslims. In northeast Somalia, there is one Somali clan, the Carab Maxamed Saalax who trace their genealogy to Soqotra.⁶² At present, both the inhabitants of that island and their related clan in Somalia are Muslim.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Richard Burton's Observations



In 1854 the first European explorer to visit Somalia described ruins of what the local Warsangeli clan claimed to be a church in what is now Sanaag Region of eastern Somaliland (Burton 1987: 127-129).⁶³ The Warsangeli nomads told him the ruins were the work of the *Nasraani*.⁶⁴ He also mentioned that the related Dhulbahante clan living to the south of the Warsangeli (Sool Region of Somaliland) still used to make stone or plastered

⁶¹ St. Xavier speculated it was Chaldean, which is a reasonable hypothesis, since Syriac was used as a liturgical language in the Middle East and among the Mar Toma Christians of Kerala in south India.

⁶² CQW. 1999. Personal communication. Nairobi, Kenya.

⁶³ Left: Illustration of a Dhulbahante cross from Burton's book.

⁶⁴ An Arabic term for Christians, somewhat derogatory. It can be speculated that these ruins were the work of what Ehret terms the Ahmar-Dharoor people; he postulates that the modern agropastoral Somali clan of Samaroon (Gadabuursi) are their modern descendants (Ehret 1995:242-247)

wood crosses at the foot and head of their tombs. Other, older graves in the region were also observed to be marked with crosses.

Modern Archaeological Evidence

On 8 September 1991, two European relief workers informed me of a meeting that they had in the previous week with an amateur Somali archaeologist, Cabdi⁶⁵ K. In Muqdisho. Cabdi had received some training either in Italy or the USSR. He mentioned having had some contact with Jewish archaeologists who were searching for ancient Jewish antiquities.

Cabdi showed the relief workers a number of artifacts that he had excavated. He was very careful not to mention the precise location, but showed photographs of various excavation sites. At one site Cabdi located a graveyard and had to pay for permission to excavate. While digging, he found an arrow pointing to a place where he found the engraved stone. This engraved stone was on a stone table four meters below ground surface. It had crosses engraved on it as well as geometric designs. There was a hole bored through one end of this stone. Cabdi also displayed other engraved stones, some in a cursive script that did not appear to be like Arabic or Ethiopic script. In the same location, Cabdi found a stone structure that he believed was a place of worship.

Cabdi also mentioned finding a tomb somewhere in Somalia with a gravestone written in Arabic. The date on the tomb used the Christian calendar even though it dated from within the Muslim era. In 1993 Cabdi approached a European relief agency in Muqdisho with a request for funding in order to do further investigation. He refused to publish his information until he received financial support in order to do further research and publish a book. The relief agency he contacted was not able to assist him and I have not heard any further details about him since then.⁶⁶

CULTURAL VESTIGES OF JUDEAO-CHRISTIAN SYMBOLISM

Genealogical Issues

Somali clan structure is based on genealogy, with many people knowing their genealogy beyond their 20th paternal ancestor. As with other non-Arab Muslims, Somalis link founders of particular clan families (eg. Isxaaq, Daarood) with famous Arab sheikhs who arrived from Arabia many centuries before, married a local girl, and founded a clan. In particular, clan genealogies were rooted in the Qureysh clan of the prophet Muhammad. Abdalla Omar (1995: 117-134) has provided some intriguing analysis of these claims, along with dating Islamization of many clans to the 15th century. Despite the fact they spoke their own language, not Arabic, Somalis used to like to emphasize that they were

⁶⁵ In the Somali orthography, “c” represents the “ain” sound also found in Arabic and Hebrew.

⁶⁶ As a caution, while it seemed these archaeologists had genuine artifacts, the desire for funding may have influenced what the Christian relief workers were told.

Arabs. This distinction was particularly made vis-a-vis other Africans; however, racial discrimination against Somali migrant workers in Arabia, and disappointment with the lack of Arab relief aid and peacemaking help during the current civil war, have combined to severely erode this claim of Arab origin.

There are at least four Somali clans reputed to be of Jewish descent. Throughout various parts of southeast Ethiopia, southern Somalia and northeast Kenya, deep hand-dug wells, ruins and cairns are attributed by modern day Oromo and Somali clans living there as being the work of the extinct Madanle people. Schlee (1989: 96, 226-228) reviews information about their activities in the Wajir area of northeast Kenya. He cites local Somali oral history that refers to the Madanle as “bani-Israel” and that they were wiped out by a confederation of Digil, Reewin and Hawiye clans in the 16th or 17th century. Schlee presents evidence of their possible incorporation into the Somali Ajuuraan clan which now lives to the west of Wajir. Lewis (1969:47) also mentions that the Madanle occupied much of southern Somalia prior to that time. Cassanelli (1982: 92-96) gives additional data on this mysterious clan, based on original sources in southern Somalia; he considers the Madanle as part of Ajuuraan theocracy that ruled southern Somalia in the 16th century. Brown (1989:29-36) gives extensive attention to oral history of both Somali and Borana clans in northeast Kenya concerning the wells and cairns attributed to this mysterious people. However, he quotes an early British colonial administrator, Lord Delamere, that the Madanle were Muslims.

The remaining three clans still exist today. The low-caste magician clan of Yibir is found mainly in eastern Ethiopia, Somaliland and northern Somalia. Some sources consider Yibir to be a corruption of the Somali word for Hebrew, “*Cibraani*.” During the civil war, Yibir refugees in Kenya publicized their supposed links with the Falasha of northern Ethiopia. This was no doubt linked to their desire to find re-settlement in Israel, just as the Falasha had done. Some Yibir claim their early king Bucul⁶⁷ Bacayr⁶⁸ was Jewish and defeated by the Islamic missionary Aw Barkhadle in a contest of magic that took place in northern Somalia.

Somalis refer to members of the clans inhabiting the ancient Benaadir coast cities of Muqdisho, Merka, and Baraawe of southern Somalia as the *Gibilcad*.⁶⁹ Their background is largely Arab and Persian, and they represent the northernmost extent of Swahili culture on the Indian Ocean coast. However Swahili is spoken only in the southernmost city of Baraawe. Lewis (1969: 42) refers to possible Yemeni Jewish origins for some of the coastal city dwellers but does not elaborate. I have heard various accounts of the Begedi (inland from Merka) and Xaatim⁷⁰ (Baraawe) also being of Jewish

⁶⁷ An alternate pronunciation is spelled “Bucur.”

⁶⁸ Also known by a Muslim name of Maxamed Xaniif.

⁶⁹ Literally, “paleskins.”

⁷⁰ In the Somali orthography, “x” represents an emphatic, aspirated “h.”

descent.

Of lesser significance, but still intriguing, is the use of certain Biblical names among Somalis that are not typically used by Muslim Arabs in the Middle East.⁷¹ These would include Isxaaq (Isaac), Eliyaas, Makahiil (Michael), and Daa'uud. Generally, only Arab Christians or Jews would employ these names. The fact that Isxaaq, Makahiil and Daa'uud are found near the beginning sequence of several clan genealogies may indicate earlier use of the names from pre-Islamic Jewish or Christian influence.

Sabbath Observance

While living in the small town of Homboy, Jilib District, in southern Somalia in 1988, I noticed that a significant portion of the population obeyed the injunction of a local religious leader not to cultivate their fields on Saturdays. These people were disciples of Sheekh Ibraahim from the Garre clan, whose father had founded the town in the early 20th century. They believed that farm work on Saturdays would result in various plagues striking their fields. Those observing this Sabbath rest worshipped normally with other villagers at the mosque on Fridays. I have been told of a family from the Baadacade clan in Buulo Burte in central Somalia that observed a similar taboo on Saturday work.⁷² If this issue were to be surveyed, it is likely that more instances would be found.

In terms of Sunday observance, Schlee mentions that the Somali Garre clan of Mandera District in northeast Kenya will not begin a migration on Sundays, nor begin training a young baggage camel on a Sunday (Schlee 1994:55). He himself remarked on finding it unusual to see Muslims more concerned about Sunday than Friday.

Uses of the Cross

As noted by Burton over a century and a half ago, the symbol of the cross is still used in Somali culture. Some use the sign of the cross for a variety of superstitious purposes. In times of extreme danger, a cross may be drawn on the soil for its supposed protective power. Or, in cases where an oath is being taken a sign of the cross may be made. This mark of the cross is sometimes termed *falaad*. This could be related to the root word *fal* which means magic, from which other words meaning magic, bewitched, or wizard are derived, *viz. falaanfala*, *falan*, and *falanfallow* (Zorc & Osman 1993: 132). While Somalis use either *iskutallaab* or *saliib*⁷³ for cross, it is interesting to note that the official name of the Red Cross was translated as *laanqayr* (literally, “branch that is blessed”).

⁷¹ They are found in the Quran, but are not normally used by Muslims in most Arab lands (contrasting with the common usage of Old Testament names like Yuusuf, Ibraahim, Ismaaciil, Muuse, and Sulaymaan).

⁷² ACX. 1997. Personal communication. Nairobi, Kenya.

⁷³ From the Arabic term.

Some sections of the Sheekhaal clan in eastern Ethiopia use the cross as a brand on their camels. They also inscribe a cross on stones marking graves. This mark is called *summaddii awliyo*, meaning, “brand of the saints.” The Sheekhaal are a small priestly clan⁷⁴ aligned with the Hawiye clan family and are famed for their knowledge of Islam. Certain sections of the Karanle (Murusade) Hawiye clan brand their camels with a cross.⁷⁵ The Karanle are located both in central Somalia⁷⁶ and in the Shabeelle valley at Imi within Ethiopia, adjacent to Oromo clans inhabiting the Bale mountains. It is likely that further investigation would reveal that other clans use the cross as a livestock brand.

From several Somali Christians from northwest Somaliland, I learned that pilgrims to the tomb of the pioneer Islamic missionary Aw Barkhadle make a sign of the cross from the white soil from his tomb. They keep this sign on their foreheads until they return to their homes. Three of these pilgrimages are considered to be equal in merit to a pilgrimage to Mecca.

The present survival of the cross as a symbol has no inherent spiritual value, yet it does support the archaeological evidence.⁷⁷ No Somali recognizes any Christian content within the sign of cross. Traditionally, Somalis knew very little about the Christian religion, other than it was something evil.

Islam arrived in the Horn of Africa shortly after the death of the Muhammad and spread rapidly. By the fifteenth century all Somalis had become Muslims. Two theological developments peculiar to the neighboring Ethiopian Orthodox Church prevented the pastoral, camel-herding Somalis from retaining the Christian faith: the following of Levitical dietary laws [which meant camels were considered unclean] and over 200 fast days in which animal products could not be consumed.⁷⁸ Thus, by the time of Western colonial powers arrived in the late 19th century, to be Somali meant to be Muslim. In fact, unlike other Muslims, Somalis do not have a category of “People of the Book” for Jews and Christians. One is either Muslim or “gaal” [infidel]. The approximately nineteen million Somalis are 99% Sunni Muslim.

Modern Christian mission work in Somalia began in 1880, first with Roman Catholic orphanages in Somaliland [British control], later in Italian controlled Somalia in the center and south. Roman Catholic missionaries also began work among Somalis in Djibouti and eastern Ethiopia. The first Protestant mission group was the Swedish Evangelical Mission which began in the southern port of Kismaayo, and eventually built four other stations in the lower Jubba River valley. The Eastern Mennonite Mission began work in Somalia in 1953, with SIM beginning in 1954 [although SIM had worked with Somalis in Aden since 1943 and in eastern Ethiopia since 1947]. Both the

⁷⁴ Their name is derived from the word *sheekh* in Arabic, meaning a religious authority.

⁷⁵ ACX. 1997. Personal communication. Nairobi.

⁷⁶ Ceel Buur district in Galguduud Region and Mgooye District in Lower Shabeelle Region.

⁷⁷ It is similar to the use of the cross as an artistic motif by the Muslim Berber Tamasheq (Tuareg) nomads of the Sahara in Algeria, Mali, and Niger.

⁷⁸ Aram, “Somalia’s Judeo-Christian Heritage,”

Mennonite and SIM missionaries established a number of schools and hospitals in central and southern Somalia. The Marxist-leaning government of dictator Maxamed Siyaad Barre nationalized mission properties in the early 1970s, and arrested local Christians as “Western lackeys.” In light of these pressures, all expatriate missionaries left by 1976. Following the disastrous Ogaden War with Ethiopia in 1977, followed by a massive influx of refugees, the Somali government invited a wide variety of relief organizations, including many Christian agencies, to return in 1981. A small Somali church met in the capital city of Muqdisho from the 1970s to the 1980s.⁷⁹

A low-level civil war began in 1978, exploded into full conflict in the northwest [Somaliland] in 1988 and engulfed the entire country by the end of 1990. After the Barre regime was expelled, Somalia was essentially a failed state until the end of that decade. Currently the weak central government continues to fight *al-Shabaab* jihadists who still control large parts of southern Somalia and carry out terrorist attacks in Muqdisho and other cities. *Al-Shabaab* is violently anti-Christian, beheading or shooting many accused of being Christians. Somalia ranks 3rd on [Open Doors](#),⁸⁰ World Watch List for persecution.

The unrecognized breakaway state of Somaliland is relatively stable with a presence of expatriate Christian workers for several decades. However, nearly 20 local Christians were imprisoned from in 2020 and 2021. Somali Christians in Djibouti and the Somali State in eastern Ethiopia enjoy a greater measure of religious freedom, although societal pressure against leaving Islam remains strong. Technically, Kenya has freedom of religion, but increasing attacks by *al-Shabaab* in the Somali-populated Northeastern Province means that Christians there face a serious threat.

For nearly 30 years, Somalis across the world have developed a deep attachment to the Internet for communication, news, and entertainment. Hundreds of Somali language websites have been launched. YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp are widely used, particularly on mobile devices. This has provided significant access to a variety of worldviews to which most Somalis had not previously been exposed. At the same time, there is evidence of an increasing global trend among Somali Muslims to question their religion. The extremism and violence of *al-Shabaab* provokes a negative response in the minds and hearts of many.

Satellite TV, social media and websites have become very strategic ways to surmount the political, cultural, and linguistic barriers to bring Somalis the Gospel message of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Digital media combined with mobile devices makes it possible for millions of individual Somalis to privately consider the claims of the Good News with little initial risk. A growing number of Somali Christians in their Diaspora are making use of digital media to reach their people within Somalia.

⁷⁹ Haile, Ahmed Ali, and David W. Shenk. *Teatime in Mogadishu: My Journey as a Peace Ambassador in the World of Islam*. Christians Meeting Muslims Series. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2011. Link: <https://heraldpress.com/9780836195576/teatime-in-mogadishu/>

⁸⁰ Link: <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/>.

Marwaale, Tabitha Maria Magdalena

1915-1990

Protestant

Somalia

Xaawo Marwaale was born around 1915 in the village of Moofi, Jamaame District of Lower Jubba Region. Moofi was a village inhabited by the WaZigua people [also called Mushunguli]. Their ancestors came from northeast Tanzania and had been enslaved by Arabs (Omar A. Eno and Mohamed A. Eno 2014, Cabdisaciid Cabdi Ismaaciil 2015) in the early 19th century and sold to Somali plantation owners in the Middle Shabeelle Region. A large number escaped and moved to the lower Jubba valley in the middle of the 19th century where they maintained not only their culture, but also their Bantu language (Omar Eno and Van Lehman, 2003). Compared to the neighboring Shambaara/Gosha/Reer Goleed ethnic group, the WaZigua preserved more of their indigenous Bantu language and culture (Menkhaus 2003). Even in the 1980s, some inhabitants of Moofi were not fluent in Somali.

While still a young child, Tabitha was very sickly. Her parents gave her to Swedish missionaries who came to their village from Kismaayo. The Swedish Evangelical Mission had established their first mission station there in 1898 (Thoresen 20014:51). Initially her mother had refused, but Xaawo's father overruled and said this was a good opportunity for her. He told the Swedes that they could bring her to their boarding school in Kismaayo, and if she died, they were to be responsible for burying her. Herman Lundin and Selma Göransson brought Xaawo to the Swedish Mission School in Kismaayo where they nursed her back to health.

At school, Xaawo took the Bible name "Tabitha" [after an early Christian woman mentioned in Acts 9:36]. She began attending classes taught by the Swedish missionaries in Swahili. As she studied the Bible as part of her classes, she eventually put her trust in Jesus Christ. After graduating from the school, Tabitha married and had two children. However, both her husband and their children died of illness in Kismaayo.

In 1935, Mussolini's Fascist regime in Italy attacked Ethiopia from their colonies of Eritrea and Somalia. Sweden opposed this aggression at the League of Nations, so the Italian colonial government retaliated by deporting all the Swedish missionaries from the Jubba Valley. Since Tabitha had been widowed, and since they knew they were about to leave Somalia, the Swedish missionaries Per Olsson and Herman Lundin brought Tabitha back to her parents and family in Moofi.

Initially, Tabitha faced severe persecution from some of her older brothers who told her that she must remarry and return to Islam. She refused their demands and said that she would not re-marry and that she would remain a Christian. Tabitha was beaten so badly by her brothers that it took her three months to recover. However, her father then advocated for her, and said she could remain in her Christian faith. Before Tabitha's father died, he blessed her. He told her that in the future she would receive

visitors from America, Italy and England, that these visitors would joyfully worship with her. Her father said that Tabitha would remain in her Christian faith until she died.

The next 20 years were very difficult times for Tabitha as she faced hostility from her family and her community. However, she did not retaliate, trusted in her Savior Jesus Christ and showed love in the face of hatred. During the 1950s, Tabitha remarried. She witnessed to her husband Xasan, sharing the Gospel with him and he joined her in faith in Jesus Christ. Xasan died in 1982 or 1983.

From the middle of the 1950s until 1972, Tabitha's life became easier. The Mennonite Mission was active in Jamaame District and she, along with the remnant of local Christians from the time of the Swedish Mission worshipped regularly with these Christians from America and Canada. Victor Dorsch built a grain storage bin of concrete at Tabitha's Moofi home that lasted for the rest of her life.

Missionary doctor Ivan Leaman wrote this recollection of Tabitha: "She made a great impression on us when we first met her on our visit in 1960. We remember her exuberant joyful laugh. In 1960 and 1961, before the restrictions forbidding us to do village visitation, we remember with fondness the trips to her village on Sunday afternoons when we had a worship service with Hassan and Tabitha which included singing Swahili songs. One picture shows Hassan and Tabitha standing outside their house and was taken on one of those visits."

Tabitha practiced hospitality, welcoming other local Christians in the Lower Jubba valley to use her house. They considered her their Macallimad (Teacher) because of her deep knowledge of the Bible and her strong faith in Christ. When other Somali Bantu Christians would travel to her village, their faith was strengthened by her on those visits.

Tabitha strongly opposed the superstitions of witchcraft and dances that were part of the local culture. She did have a good knowledge of medicines from plants growing in the area and helped people in her area as a traditional healer. Her reliance was on local medicines and praying to Jesus Christ. She was one of the few literate women in her village and had a good knowledge of the basics of nutrition and sanitation. In addition to her mother-tongue of ki-Zigua, Tabitha was fluent in Swahili and could also speak Somali and af-Maay.

Tabitha received occasional visits from foreign Christians. This was especially important to her in a second lonely season in her life, the years between 1972 [when the Mennonite missionaries were forced to leave Jamaame Hospital (Leaman and Leaman 2021)] and 1985.

A leader in the Muqdisho church Aadan Jimcaale Faarax had previously lived for a time in Jamaame. He returned in 1985 to introduce some expatriate Christians in the Jubba valley to Tabitha and others of the Christian remnant. Afterwards, some of these foreign Christians made regular visits to Tabitha's home. She would greet them joyfully, usually coming in from tilling her cornfield. After putting her tea kettle on the fire, she would open her house and invite her guests inside. On the wall of her house, she had 1960 calendar with different pictures of scenes from the Bible; she would change these pages regularly. She never knew when her Christian friends were coming to visit, so she did not just put it up to impress them. Then, while waiting for

the tea to brew, Tabitha would get a wooden box out from under her bed that contained Bibles, hymnbooks and other Christian literature in Swahili and Somali.

She would distribute hymnbooks to her visitors. She loved to sing hymns in both Swahili and in Somali and asked her visitors to sing with her. She knew most of the songs by heart. Once, a foreign visitor remarked on the large crowd [mainly children] around her house listening to her sing and asked her if she should not be a bit more careful and not sing so loudly. Tabitha replied, "I have been beaten, whipped and jailed for my faith. I am not afraid." This visitor was ashamed because of his own fearfulness.

Missionary doctor Ivan Leaman wrote of meeting Tabitha after 15 years: "We had the wonderful privilege of meeting her again on our visit to Somalia...in 1987. On that surprise visit we recalled old times as we sang again the Swahili songs ... [she had] a deep exuberant faith which she carried all her life and shared with others."

In her last few years of life, Tabitha would regularly travel to other towns in the region where she could meet for worship with a small group of Somali and foreign Christians. During the times of singing, Bible reading and listening to sermons, Tabitha would often begin to cry. She was both joyful and sad, recalling her past times of worship with other Christians...and looking forward to the time when she be without tears, worshipping Jesus Christ in the New Jerusalem with believers from all over the world (Revelations 21).

When the civil war came to the Jubba Valley in 1990, Tabitha was extremely vulnerable. She was a Christian, an elderly widow and none of her children were still alive to care for her. The Somali Bantu villages along the Jubba River did not have militias or weapons. This area became a battleground for clan militias from the Kismaayo area and places to the north and east. Most of the Somali Bantu villager's food was looted by gunmen from the different factions. A few local Somali Christians sent Tabitha money so she could buy food, but that was also stolen from her. From the most reliable accounts, it seems that Tabitha died of starvation in November 1990.

Tabitha is like the saints described in Hebrews 11⁸¹, a true hero of faith. She was someone looking for a better country, a heavenly one. From the world's perspective, Tabitha was weak and insignificant, a member of a despised minority clan with no political power. Furthermore, she was a member of the tiny Somali church. Yet, we know from 1st Corinthians 1:27⁸² that God has chosen the weak to shame the strong. Tabitha's legacy of faith was a powerful testimony to the grace and power of God.

If you would like to hear Tabitha's testimony and four songs in Swahili, visit this [link](#).⁸³ This recording was made at her home in Moofi in 1986.

Ben I. Aram

⁸¹ Link to Bible text in Somali here: <https://noloshacusub.com/kitaabka-quduuska-ah/axdiga-cusub/warqaddii-cibraaniyada-iyowaraaqaha-guud/cibraaniyada>

⁸² Bible text in Somali: <https://noloshacusub.com/kitaabka-quduuska-ah/axdiga-cusub/waraaqihii-rasuul-bawlos-qoray/1korintos>

⁸³ Link: <https://noloshacusub.com/maqal-muuqal/qasiidooyin/tabitha-qasiidooyin-iyomaraqfurka>

Note: Read Tabitha’s story in Somali [HERE](#).⁸⁴

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This article, received in 2022, was written by Ben I. Aram, who is Director of The New Life Media, a multi-platform social media/website ministry that communicates the Gospel in the Somali language. Ben I. Aram served seven years inside Somalia, then worked in media with Somali refugee Christians in Kenya and Ethiopia for fifteen years. This article was written and translated to Somali as part of the New Life’s website

⁸⁴ Link: <https://noloshacusub.com/qoraallo/taariikhda-kaniisadda-soomaalida/qisoonololeedkii-soomaali-masiixiyiin-ah/tabitha>.

⁸⁵ Link to book on Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/Halgankii-Tukeyaasha-Carabtu-Jileed-Madowga/dp/9966093788/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Halgankii-Tukeyaasha-Carabtu-Jileed-Madowga&qid=1673720851&sr=8-1

⁸⁶ Link: <https://www.masthof.com/products/born-for-a-purpose-a-memoir-from-the-horn-of-africa>

⁸⁷ Link: https://www.persee.fr/doc/ethio_0066-2127_2003_num_19_1_1051

⁸⁸ Link to download: http://www.hartfordinfo.org/issues/wsd/immigrants/somali_bantu.pdf

⁸⁹ Link: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303131283_The_African_Diaspora_within_Africa_and_the_Impact_of_Slavery_and_Stigma_in_the_Islamic_Society_A_Case_Study_of_Somalia

⁹⁰ Link: <https://www.peterlang.com/document/1051431>

“Somali Church History” section, Somali Christian biography subsection, with the aim of encouraging Somali Christians and enlightening Somali Muslims.

Xasan, Liibaan Ibraahim

1968 – 1994

Protestant

Somalia

On 21 March 1994, the *Codka Nolosha Cusub* [Voice of New Life] broadcast office in Nairobi received the news that Liibaan Ibraahim Xasan (born on 12 December 1968) had been shot and killed that morning in Muqdisho, Somalia. After years of correspondence, one of the CNC staff had finally met Liibaan in person in 1993, during a visit to Muqdisho. It is hard to summarize all the memories of this martyr into a few pages. The contact with Liibaan came with a letter he wrote to CNC on 17 February 1990. He mentioned that he had visited a friend who had received a New Testament in Somali from CNC. He requested that a New Testament be sent to him and he closed his letter with the statement: “Please be aware that if you send me [this book] you will be sending me the greatest gift that can be given to a human” .

Several months later, CNC received another letter from Liibaan, thanking them for the Somali New Testament they sent. “This is the most precious gift I have ever received.” He quoted some verses from the Beatitudes [Matthew 5], saying that the CNC staff would be blessed because of the mercy shown him. For the rest of 1990, the CNC office exchanged letters and corrected correspondence courses he had completed. These letters showed that Liibaan was a Christian and that he had a good knowledge of Scripture. In one letter, he asked for the “Christian perspective on inheritance, on doing business, and marriage.

In another letter, he said the following:

When someone wants to believe in a religion, he must know it so that he can answer when questioned. Do not be surprised if I say that I believe that Jesus is my Savior...it is not mandatory for someone to be born in a Christian country to be a real Christian. A Christian is someone chosen by God...Truly I have received faith, talents and joy...do not be surprised that someone who lives in Somalia believes in Jesus, because someone who is really a Muslim cannot dare say that he trusts in Jesus. Truly, the Gospel has enlightened my new path of faith better than anything else has, even if other people do not understand. Truly, I have a thirst to be quenched...please send me a book to teach me about prayer.

In the last letter the CNC broadcast received from Liibaan in December 1990. Before postal service inside Somalia was permanently disrupted by the civil war, he wrote the following request: "There are lots of deceitful people who pretend they want to learn the Gospel. In order that I not be confused with these faithless people, please write me a letter of recommendation to the church of God; it is the only place I can increase my knowledge."

The reply from CNC never reached Liibaan, as Muqdisho was engulfed in four weeks of heavy fighting in January 1991. However, three months later, by a providential meeting with a foreign nurse who was a Christian, contact was restored with Liibaan. Colleagues of this nurse noticed the attitude and behavior of Liibaan was very different from that of the other hospital workers. That attracted her curiosity. When she asked Liibaan about why he was different, he told her that he was a listener to *Codka Nolosha Cusub*. Not only was this nurse able to forward mail between the CNC office and Liibaan, but she was able to introduce Liibaan to some of the Somali Christians who used to meet for worship before the war.

During the next year and a half, the CNC staff was able to remain in close contact with Liibaan. He sent letters asking for extra Scriptures and correspondence courses for his friends. The CNC never asked Liibaan to do this work of spreading the Gospel, nor did he ever once request payment for his labors. From 1992-1994 over 80% of all communication from CNC listeners in Muqdisho came through Liibaan.

Liibaan desired baptism and traveled to Ethiopia in order to be baptized. He returned to Muqdisho by mid-1992. When a CNC staff worker met Liibaan in January 1993, he told of his pilgrimage to faith.

In 1982, Liibaan had been reading Sigmund Freud's book *Dreams* and that disturbed him greatly, resulting in insomnia. Traditional solutions—visits to sheikhs, reading of the Quran, did not cure him. A foreign Christian gave him an English New Testament and suggested he read the first letter of John. During the mid-1980's Liibaan struggled over deep theological and spiritual issues as he read the Bible in Italian and English. He also read devotional books on the epistles of Paul in Italian...and he prayed for God to show him the right path.

Even before this time of spiritual crisis, Liibaan had listened to *Codka Nolosha Cusub*, as well as other Christian broadcasts in English. When the CNC staff worker was invited to his Liibaan's house, Liibaan pointed to the radio in his room and said: "That has been my teacher," he said. The radio was his main link to what he called "the global culture".

Liibaan had become dissatisfied with Islam for a variety of reasons. He wondered why it was necessary to always pray to God in Arabic, a foreign language. "Why do we have to face Mecca when we pray?" Ethical issues also disturbed Liibaan very much. "If God created only Adam & Eve, why then are men allowed four wives in this life and an infinite number of virgins to enjoy in Paradise?" For Liibaan, the Quran sanctioned polygamy and abuse of women and this troubled him.

A fundamental issue in the conversion process was the one of authority. "In 1984 and 1985, I struggled with which was the real revelation of God: the Bible or the Quran?" Finally, in 1985, Liibaan decided that only the Bible could be true. He decided

the first thing he must do, as a follower of Jesus was to practice humility. Liibaan's friends began to notice the change in his life in 1986, and he began to share his new faith with them. Finally, in 1990, he wrote to *Codka Nolosha Cusub* requesting a Somali Bible.

For Liibaan, Christianity had two equally important dimensions--the theological [or intellectual] and the practical. Liibaan was a person who thought deeply about matters of faith and was not easily satisfied by shallow/superficial answers. At the same time, Liibaan was very concerned about putting into practice the commands of Scripture--to show love to those around him.

The civil war provided many opportunities for him to witness. While working in the hospital, the European doctors [who were irreligious themselves] noticed he had a totally different attitude than the other workers. He did not differentiate between patients based on their clan. He showed sympathy and concern for people; working as a nurse's aid in the operating room was not just a job for Liibaan. For example, once he had religious discussions with a sheikh who had been badly wounded. Later, he donated blood for this man, and after he recovered, Liibaan told the sheikh to listen to *Codka Nolosha Cusub*. The CNC office later received a letter from this sheikh asking for Scriptures and a correspondence course.

On the morning of 21 March 1994, two gunmen were waiting for Liibaan on the road near his office. At 7:30, as he walked to work, they ambushed him and shot him at close range. He died a few minutes later. His death was witnessed by his Christian friend Xaaji Maxamed, who was martyred two years later.⁹¹

Only a few people attended his burial. After his death, the CNC broadcast received many letters from listeners mentioning Liibaan and the influence he had on their lives. To see such a young, gifted and faithful believer like Liibaan be killed caused much grief among fellow-Christians all over the world. A Somali Christian refugee in Rwanda remembered meeting him and the encouragement he had been. Another Somali Christian serving a prison sentence in Egypt also sent a letter full of warm memories.

Eighteen years after Liibaan's death, an expatriate nurse who had worked with him wrote:

My life has been forever changed because of some profound interactions with Liibaan. The last time we talked was on the steps of the Waaberi Clinic. He proudly reported that there had been 12 (I believe I am remembering that number correctly) believers at his home the night before. I cautioned him to be careful and he took a step backwards from me and said words I will never forget: "Don't you think I have counted the cost? There is no greater treasure for me than knowing the truth about Jesus!" He went on to talk about how we could not tell which way the wind of Holy Spirit would blow but we know that it will blow.

⁹¹ See: <https://noloshacusub.com/qoraallo/taariikhda-kaniisadda-soomaalida/qiso-nololeedkii-soomaali-masixiyiin-ah/shahiid-maxamed-xuseen-axmed>

I also recall him sharing a dream that he had in great detail. It was a barrel tilted on its side in the sky and droplets of honey were coming out of the holes on the side and falling down to curious, hungry people on the ground. He said to me, “The honey is the Word of Truth. I do not think in my lifetime that it will be tipped over and poured out but I believe in the lifetime of my daughters that it will be poured out on this land.”

I long and pray for that vision to become a reality! Has there ever been any news from his wife or daughters?

Unfortunately, no information is available about the current situation of Liibaan’s widow Ruqiya or their two daughters. The dream mentioned above is also referred to in *Teatime in Mogadishu* by Ahmed Ali Haile and David W. Shenk.⁹²

Ben I. Aram

Note: Read Libaan’s story Somali [HERE](#).⁹³

Sources:

CNC staff member living in Nairobi, Kenya.

Testimony of a Christian nurse from Dronten, The Netherlands.

Information from an expatriate nurse from Richmond, VA, USA.

Letters on file at New Life Media office, SIM Media, Addis Abeba, Ethiopia.

Haile, Ahmed Ali, and David W. Shenk. *Teatime in Mogadishu: My Journey as a Peace Ambassador in the World of Islam*. Christians Meeting Muslims Series. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2011.

“Somali Working for Relief Group Killed.” UNOSOM newspaper *Maanta*, 24 March 1994 (Page 1).

Postscript: Translation of an article from the UNOSOM newspaper *Maanta*, 24 March 1994 (Page 1)

“Somali Working for Relief Group Killed”

⁹² See page 84. English link: <https://www.amazon.com/Teatime-Mogadishu-Journey-Ambassador-Christians/dp/0836195574>.

Somali link: <https://noloshacusub.com/qoraallo/taariikhda-kaniisadda-soomaalida/jidkii-nabaddoonka/u-halgankii-ka-tirsanaanta-bulshada>

⁹³ Link: <https://noloshacusub.com/qoraallo/taariikhda-kaniisadda-soomaalida/qiso-nololeedkii-soomaali-masiixiyiin-ah/shahiid-liibaan-ibrahim-xasan>

Mr. Liibaan Ibraahim Xasan, aged 25 years and a worker for the relief organization *** was said to have died after being shot near his office on 21 March.

Two men shot Mr. Liibaan as he went to work at 7:30 AM. Cali Maxamed, the owner of a small teashop at the site of the shooting, told that two men sat at the shop for about 30 minutes without drinking anything. Mr. Maxamed said that when the two men saw Liibaan, they left the teashop and shot Liibaan.

The family of the dead man took the body and buried him the same afternoon.

The father of the man who was killed, Mr. Ibraahim Xasan, said that his son was killed because of his beliefs. A wife and two daughters survive Mr. Liibaan.

This article, received in 2022, was written by Ben I. Aram, who is Director of The New Life Media, a multi-platform social media/website ministry that communicates the Gospel in the Somali language. Ben I. Aram served seven years inside Somalia, then worked in media with Somali refugee Christians in Kenya and Ethiopia for fifteen years. This article was written and translated to Somali as part of the New Life's website "Somali Church History" section, Somali Christian biography subsection, with the aim of encouraging Somali Christians and enlightening Somali Muslims.

Maxamed Xuseen Axmed "Xaaji" [Haji]

1951 - 1996

**Protestant
Somalia**

Xaaji was born in 1951 at Gar-Adag in Sanaag Region. He was a quiet, thoughtful man who preferred work to leisure. When not teaching, his principal pastime was reading. He consciously [*si ula kas ah*] avoided wasting his time with political debates in teashops. He acquired the nickname "Xaaji" as a child because he was quiet, well-behaved and studious; he never actually visited the city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

As a young adult Xaaji moved to Muqdisho and completed his degree in education at Lafoole College. He began teaching in northern Somalia, and then later taught in schools in the south, at Qoryooley and Kurtunwaarey. After more than 10 years working as a teacher, Xaaji was chosen to pursue a master's degree at the University of

Saskatchewan. When he first arrived in Canada in 1980 Xaaji was full of doubts about whether any religion was true.

However, while studying at the University, Xaaji met some committed followers of Jesus Christ. Though their witness, he began to read the Bible and he placed his trust in the Messiah. Upon returning to Muqdisho in 1984, Xaaji became a professor of education and curriculum development at Lafoole College. He also attended the weekly worship of the small Somali Believers Fellowship that met in Muqdisho in those days. Xaaji also shared his faith with some of his family.

After the civil war broke out in 1991, Xaaji did not return north to his home region but rather remained in Muqdisho. He worked for various humanitarian organizations, particularly in the area of education. In both 1993 and 1994 Xaaji went to Nairobi, Kenya for training courses, and both times he returned back to Muqdisho to resume his work in education.

During the first two months of 1994, Xaaji often spent his afternoons with Liibaan Ibraahin Xasan, discussing topics from the Bible. Their offices were in the same part of Muqdisho. On March 21, Xaaji had arrived early for work and was sitting in a teashop near this compound when he saw Liibaan coming. Suddenly, as Xaaji watched horrified, masked gunmen shot Liibaan dead in front of him.⁹⁴

When Xaaji returned to Nairobi at the end of 1994 for another seminar, he mentioned that he was greatly concerned for his safety as activities of jihadists had increased in Muqdisho. On 3 April 1996, Xaaji Maxamed Xuseen was kidnapped. His body was found the following day in an abandoned building near his house.

After his death, at a memorial service in Nairobi, one Somali Christian remembered him in this way: “There were times that I have been tempted to cover up my faith. The last time I saw him, he challenged me never to deny my belief in Christ. Now, after his death, I want to be as brave as him and, if need be, to die rather than pretend I am not a Christian.”

At this memorial service, another friend also remarked that he noticed that Xaaji was more concerned about threats from jihadists in the last months before his death. At the same time, in terms of his spiritual life, he had been more open in witness and fervent in prayer. Another friend found a new position for employment for Xaaji—but this was found the same week that Xaaji was martyred. Xaaji was the sixth Somali Christian to be killed in Muqdisho after the death of Liibaan Ibraahim Xasan on 21 March 1994.

Xaaji was a dedicated Somali patriot who did not allow the disease of clan-ism to dominate his thinking or his actions. He even undertook a very sensitive research project on inter-clan relationships in 1987 with five graduate assistants. Their findings provided a clear warning to the dangers that clan-ism [*qabyaalad*] would have to bring disintegration to the Somali nation. After 25 years, the recommendations Xaaji wrote at the conclusion of his report are still as valid and useful as when he wrote them. If

⁹⁴ Here is the biography of the martyr Liibaan: <https://noloshacusub.com/qoraallo/taariikhda-kaniisadda-soomaalida/qiso-nololeedkii-soomaali-masiixiyiin-ah/shahiid-liibaan-ibrahim-xasan>

they were to be implemented, they would be very helpful to heal and rebuild Somali society.

In his academic work, Xaaji showed how he followed the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ who told his disciples to love their neighbors as much as they loved themselves, and even to love their enemies. [Matthew 5:43-46]. Furthermore, he demonstrated how his faith in Christ made him a good citizen, even when the government had disintegrated [Romans 13:1-7]. Xaaji was definitely a peacemaker as described by the Lord Jesus Christ in his Sermon on the Mount [Matthew 5: 9-12]. Xaaji was humble and frank about his own shortcomings. He also believed that it was important for teachers to influence people when they were young in order to see significant changes in belief and behavior.

Ben I. Aram

Note: Read Xaaji's story in Somali [HERE](#).⁹⁵

Sources:

Information from a family member of Xaaji living in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia who was led to faith by him. This person translated his biography into Somali and reviewed it for accuracy.

Information from an expatriate from Norway who knew Xaaji very well and was in and out of Somalia a lot in 1990s.

This article, received in 2022, was written by Ben I. Aram, who is Director of The New Life Media, a multi-platform social media/website ministry that communicates the Gospel in the Somali language. Ben I. Aram served seven years inside Somalia, then worked in media with Somali refugee Christians in Kenya and Ethiopia for fifteen years. This article was written and translated to Somali as part of the New Life's website "Somali Church History" section, Somali Christian biography subsection, with the aim of encouraging Somali Christians and enlightening Somali Muslims.

⁹⁵ Link: <https://noloshacusub.com/qoraallo/taariikhda-kaniisadda-soomaalida/qiso-nololeedkii-soomaali-masixiyiin-ah/shahiid-maxamed-xuseen-axmed>

Section Francophone

Zakariasy, Albert

1926 – 1993

**Église Réformée de Jésus-Christ À Madagascar (FJKM)
Madagascar**

Un théologien entré en politique.

Le 13 octobre 1993 est mort à Moramanga (Province de Tamatave, Madagascar) le pasteur Albert Zakariasy, à l'âge de 67 ans ; il s'occupait ces derniers temps avec sa femme du Centre créé par eux pour la sauvegarde et l'entraide à l'enfance.

Grande figure du protestantisme malgache, mais figure contestée, il a disparu trop tôt pour que le temps apaise les passions politiques suscitées par son identification avec le régime déchu auquel il avait apporté sa foi, son soutien actif et sa caution théologique. Il était en effet très lié à l'amiral Didier Ratsiraka qui lui faisait confiance au sein du Parti AREMA (Avant-Garde de la Révolution Malgache). Avant la chute du régime et l'écroulement de ses institutions, il avait été pendant trois législatures successives élu député d'Anosibe an'Ala (Province de Tamatave) et dans la foulée, vice-président du parlement malgache, l'Assemblée Nationale Populaire sous la IIe République de Madagascar. Les élections de l'été dernier ont porté d'autres députés au nouveau parlement. L'Union des Parlementaires de Madagascar a été la seule institution, à ma connaissance, qui ait fait paraître dans le quotidien *Midi Madagasikara* (samedi 16 octobre 1993) un faire-part du décès de leur ancien collègue.

Depuis une quinzaine d'années Albert Zakariasy n'exerçait plus aucune fonction officielle dans l'Église réformée (FJKM) dont il restait cependant pasteur et qu'il a servie avec vigueur et efficacité pendant de très nombreuses années comme enseignant, pasteur et théologien. Ses options politiques et finalement son engagement apparemment sans faille sous le drapeau ratsirakiste l'ont opposé à son Église qui dès 1980 avait perdu confiance dans le régime et pris, en 1991, officiellement position pour le renversement du Président Ratsiraka avec le succès que l'on sait. En 1993 un nouveau régime et de nouvelles institutions ont été mis en place à Madagascar, laissant sur la touche l'Amiral Ratsiraka, ses amis et son parti, mais aucun procès politique n'a été intenté à l'ancien personnel politique malgache, à la différence de ce qu'on a connu par exemple en Roumanie ou, plus anciennement, en France même.

Un chrétien de la première génération

A Madagascar on est souvent chrétien de père en fils depuis des générations, depuis le temps des martyrs au XIXe siècle. Mais cela n'est pas le cas dans toutes les régions de l'Île. Albert Zakariasy était un chrétien de la première génération, qui avait décidé dans son jeune âge de rompre avec le paganisme, qu'il savait décrire avec une brûlante émotion, sans les atténuations que les intellectuels d'aujourd'hui se croient tenus d'utiliser dans ce domaine. Ce n'est pas Zakariasy qui aurait parlé du "génie du

paganisme” (Marc Augé) !

Mlle Geneviève Barnaud, amie des Zakariasy depuis une cinquantaine d’années, m’a raconté les premières années d’éducation de Zakariasy et je suis heureux de pouvoir citer son récit :

Zakariasy ne fréquenta l’école que tardivement. Ses parents, paysans et illettrés, l’envoyaient garder les bœufs. Tous les jours il voyait les enfants passer pour aller à l’école, mais n’obtenait jamais la permission de les accompagner. Un jour enfin il abandonna les bœufs et les suivit.

L’instituteur informé le ramena lui-même après la classe et obtint des parents qu’il devienne élève régulier. Il travailla si bien qu’il fut désigné pour continuer ses études à l’école régionale d’Ambatomanga [de la Société des Missions Évangéliques de Paris] où il arriva un beau jour amené par le pasteur Raymond Delord. Il avait déjà 16 ans [en 1942] mais il rattrapa vite ses camarades car il fit deux classes par an!

A Ambatomanga il devint catéchumène. Au début d’un mois de vacances (ce devait être en 1944), il décida de retourner chez ses parents qu’il n’avait pas vus depuis deux ans. N’ayant pas d’argent il ferait le voyage à pied avec deux camarades betsimisaraka comme lui. Munis d’une bonne provision de riz qu’ils pouvaient faire cuire en route, ils partirent et, arrivés à Moramanga, firent une bonne halte. On leur offrit du « laoka » [mot qui désigne tout ce qui s’ajoute au plat de riz: viande, légumes, poisson, etc.] pour accompagner leur riz. Aubaine! Mais dans ce bouillon il y avait de l’anguille, justement l’aliment interdit [*fady*] pour la famille de Zakariasy. Il n’hésita pas longtemps. « Je suis chrétien, je n’ai pas peur. » Et il en mangea comme les autres.

Lorsqu’il parvint à la maison de ses parents, celle-ci était close et de l’intérieur les parents lui dirent « Va-t-en, tu n’es plus notre fils, tu as violé le *fady* familial. » Il ne parvint pas à les convaincre et trois jours plus tard il était de retour, bien fatigué à Ambatomanga. Il alla passer le reste des vacances chez un pasteur des environs. Il ne revit ses parents que beaucoup plus tard.⁹⁶

Au service de l’Église Réformée

Après ses études secondaires à l’école régionale protestante d’Ambatomanga, Albert Zakariasy fréquenta l’École normale d’Ambavahadimitafo (Tananarive), devint instituteur des écoles de l’Église Évangélique de Madagascar qui s’acheminait vers l’autonomie, proclamée en 1958 par la Société des Missions Évangéliques de Paris. Zakariasy exerça son métier à Majunga, avec un grand amour pour l’Église. Il épousa Mlle Raharimanana, cheftaine d’éclairuses *sihanaka*, et entra à l’École Pastorale d’Ambatomanga, toujours dans le cadre de l’Église Évangélique de Madagascar. Il

⁹⁶ Témoignage de Mlle Geneviève Barnaud, amie des Zakariasy.

devint pasteur. Ce passage de l'enseignement au ministère pastoral était un itinéraire très courant à Madagascar : les années d'enseignement étaient pour ainsi dire une étape très appréciée par les paroisses.

Albert Zakariasy put poursuivre ses études de théologie à la faculté de théologie protestante de Montpellier où il soutint le 27 juin 1961 un mémoire de licence (on dit aujourd'hui maîtrise) sur *La Parousie chez Saint Paul*, sous la direction de Philippe-H. Menoud et Jean Cadier.

Ses dons et qualités, la solidité de ses positions théologiques et la nécessité d'enraciner l'Église dans les différents terroirs de Madagascar, déterminèrent la suite de sa carrière dans l'Église. Zakariasy obtint une bourse de doctorat et laissant sa famille sur place, partit à la Faculté de théologie protestante de Paris où le professeur Georges Casalis l'accueillit comme un frère. On était à la veille de mai 1968 où Georges Casalis se convertit en quelque sorte à l'idéologie révolutionnaire qu'il développa ensuite dans son grand livre *Les idées justes ne tombent pas du ciel*. Les engagements politiques et les nombreuses obligations du directeur de thèse ne laissaient malheureusement pas beaucoup de temps pour des consultations privées, et Zakariasy s'est plaint de n'avoir pas profité davantage de la grande compétence de son patron. Quoi qu'il en soit, Zakariasy revint à Madagascar pour la rentrée universitaire de 1970 en qualité de professeur de théologie pratique au Collège Théologique d'Ivato, qui avait ouvert ses portes en 1966 pour l'ensemble des futurs pasteurs des trois Églises protestantes unies en 1968 sous le nom d'Église de Jésus-Christ à Madagascar (FJKM). C'est à Ivato, de 1970 à 1973 que j'ai eu le privilège d'être le collègue de Zakariasy. En 1972, le doyen du Collège, le pasteur Joseph Ramambaso, devint président de l'Église FJKM et dut quitter son poste. C'est Zakariasy qui fut nommé le nouveau doyen, malheureusement dans des circonstances pénibles. On réclamait alors la fin des accords de coopération avec la France et le départ des étrangers, l'agitation dans les écoles ne faisait que croître depuis les événements sanglants du 13 mai 1972. Les étudiants en théologie finirent par se joindre à la grève scolaire et ce n'est qu'en novembre 1973 que Zakariasy put organiser une rentrée pour ainsi dire normale au Collège d'Ivato.

Entrée en politique

Il ne devait pas rester longtemps à ce poste : en février 1975 il fut nommé ministre des Affaires étrangères dans le gouvernement du Colonel Ratsimandrava. Conformément à ses principes quant à l'incompatibilité des fonctions pastorales et des fonctions politiques, Zakariasy démissionna de son poste au Collège Théologique d'Ivato.

Il ne devait rester ministre que pendant huit jours. Le 11 février 1975, le Colonel Ratsimandrava était assassiné dans des circonstances encore non éclaircies, et le Capitaine de frégate Didier Ratsiraka forma un nouveau gouvernement. Zakariasy était en mission à Paris quand il apprit le drame. Mais il était entré en politique et ne devait plus en sortir.

Le professeur Raymond Ranjeva, actuellement Juge à la Cour Internationale de Justice à La Haye, m'a raconté les premiers pas de Zakariasy dans la vie publique. Tous deux, avec d'autres universitaires malgaches, ont participé à la création du premier

Comité malgache des Droits de l'Homme en 1971. C'est à ce titre que le pasteur Zakariasy fut invité à prononcer l'homélie, lors du service œcuménique qui suivit les massacres du 13 mai 1972, sur le thème: "Ne tuez pas l'espérance".

En décembre 1972, lors des massacres de Tamatave perpétrés contre les Merina, Zakariasy essaya de raisonner ses compatriotes betsimisaraka et appela à la réconciliation.

Durant la période transitoire 1972-1975, le pasteur Zakariasy siégea au Conseil National Populaire pour le Développement, organe consultatif sur les questions économiques et sociales, en même temps que d'autres ecclésiastiques, comme l'archevêque de Diego-Suarez et un autre pasteur de l'Église FJKM, Michel Fety, qui fut élu président de ce Conseil jusqu'à l'avènement du régime Ratsiraka.

Pendant la période de crise qui a entraîné la démission du Général Gabriel Ramanantsoa, le pasteur Zakariasy a fait partie du comité de conciliation qui s'est chargé de rapprocher, en vain, le Colonel Ratsimandrava et le Capitaine de frégate Didier Ratsiraka avec l'issue que l'on sait. Au cours de la IIe République, le pasteur Zakariasy a été vice-président de l'Assemblée nationale populaire, président de la Commission des Affaires sociales, membre du bureau politique du parti présidentiel AREMA.

Le professeur Ranjeva, qui était alors recteur de l'université de Tananarive, témoigne que le pasteur Zakariasy, qui avait été chargé en outre de la direction de la jeunesse étudiante du parti présidentiel, avait fait montre de compréhension politique des termes du problème de l'assainissement de l'Université, les cités universitaires étant envahies par des non étudiants. L'assainissement, à terme, servait les intérêts bien compris de la formation des étudiants défavorisés sur le plan social et "côtiers". Mais sa bonne volonté politique ne trouva pas d'échos auprès de certains responsables gouvernementaux.

Une thèse prophétique

Zakariasy était retourné à Madagascar en 1970 sans avoir achevé sa thèse. Sur les instances de ses amis, il réussit cependant à mettre au point un texte intitulé *Les divers aspects du protestantisme malgache à travers son histoire* (430 pages dactylographiées, inédit) qui malgré ses défauts évidents et en dépit de toutes sortes d'irrégularités fut approuvé en 1974 par la Faculté de théologie protestante de Paris pour l'obtention du grade de docteur ès sciences religieuses. Je faisais moi-même partie du jury que présidait le professeur Georges Casalis. Comme Zakariasy était empêché de se déplacer en raison des circonstances politiques, la soutenance se fit *in absentia*.

Je cite un extrait du rapport de thèse rédigé par Georges Casalis. Après avoir déploré les graves insuffisances de la thèse, il s'exclame :

Et pourtant! il se dégage de l'ensemble une tonalité aussi joyeuse que sérieuse, aussi engagée que convaincante (...). Nous avons affaire à un homme sensible et fervent qui aime son pays, l'église et l'évangile, et qui souffre profondément de voir que celle-ci dérobe à son peuple le vrai

message salutaire et libérateur. Alors, de toutes ses forces, contant l'histoire de son peuple et de la mission chrétienne en son sein, il appelle à une conversion de cet instrument, à ses yeux devenu tellement infidèle à sa vocation. Avec un réel talent et une conviction profonde, il décrit la misère spirituelle de son peuple et pose le diagnostic radical : malade par défaut d'évangile; ceux qui ont reçu mission de le lui attester vont-ils le redécouvrir et redevenir crédibles? Tel est l'enjeu historique face à quoi les Églises malgaches doivent se situer.

De fait Zakariasy avait entrepris un combat donquichottesque contre les vices et les abus qui dénaturaient son Église. Je cite par exemple son rapport au synode national de 1973 qui devait décider de l'ouverture de la Faculté de théologie (qui ne se mit en route qu'en 1979 à l'initiative du pasteur Michel Fety). Une injustice radicale règne dans l'Église : les paroisses riches font ce qu'elles veulent, les paroisses et les régions pauvres sont abandonnées, le témoignage commun au niveau régional et national est le parent pauvre de l'Église. Ainsi une œuvre commune et vitale pour l'avenir, la formation des pasteurs ne jouit pas du soutien absolument nécessaire. Zakariasy pense ici aux bourses des étudiants et étudiantes, et aussi aux traitements misérables des enseignants, qui ne sont même pas payés régulièrement et qui ne permettent pas à une famille de vivre décemment. Zakariasy lui-même devait avoir recours à toutes sortes d'expédients. Bref, l'injustice sociale au sein même de l'Église était pour Zakariasy, et pour d'autres aussi, une véritable écharde dans la chair.

Recevois ce cri de détresse, qui 20 ans après, n'a toujours pas reçu de réponse satisfaisante :

L'Église malgache traverse une crise terrible. Il est vrai que pendant plus de 150 ans d'existence, elle a subi diverses crises qu'elle pouvait chaque fois surmonter (...). Mais ce qui différencie la crise actuelle de toutes celles qui la précèdent, c'est qu'elle rend l'Église étrangère à son Seigneur : l'Église est devenue très différente de Jésus-Christ à cause de son manque de charité, de son indifférence envers les pauvres et de son attachement aux richesses et à la gloire temporelle (...). Un proverbe betsimisaraka dit: "Quand on se dit fils d'un tel, mais qu'on n'a aucune ressemblance avec celui-ci, il faut bien se dire que c'est une fausse prétention." Il en est de même pour l'Église ; lorsqu'elle se dit "Église du Christ" mais qu'elle ne ressemble nullement à Celui-ci, il est difficile de la reconnaître pour une vraie "église."

Là où le Seigneur ordonne [aux églises riches] de servir, elles cherchent à être servies. Là où Il les appelle à partager la misère des pauvres, elles se complaisent à vivre dans l'opulence. Là où Il les attend pour annoncer la bonne nouvelle du Royaume, pour envoyer des évangélistes dans les régions païennes, elles dépensent tout leur argent pour embellir leurs temples et pour y vivre heureuses. Et là où le Christ les invite à vivre dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, la communion fraternelle, elles

s'enferment dans leur égoïsme et leur hypocrisie" (p. 369-370).

Marc R. Spindler

Source originelle:

Marc R. Spindler. "Albert Zakariasy (1926-1993): un théologien malgache entré en politique." *Mission*, n° 39, 169 (janvier 1994) : 23-26.

Annexe :

A. Zakariasy, "Rapaoro momba ny Kolejy Teolojika Ivato" [taom-pianarana 1972-1973], *Ny Fihavanantsika*, 4, 1974, n°10, p.309-312. Annexe. Il parle des enseignants, partis – Marc Spindler, Jacques Pons, Georges Raveloarison - en fonction: Ratovonarivo, Jochen Winckler, Rakoto Arianala, AZ (théologie pratique, psychologie, 'Tale'). Pas un mot des grèves de l'année ! La rentrée est fixée au 26-11-73 ! Il se lamente sur le manque d'argent pour l'achèvement des travaux de construction d'Ivato et l'inauguration de la Faculté de théologie prévue à Ivato et note:

Les Églises savent réunir des fonds importants pour faire les choses qu'elles veulent faire, mais pour ce qui est de l'essentiel, dont dépend leur vie selon l'évangile [*fahavelomany ara-pilazantsara*] elles manifestent de la faiblesse et de l'indifférence pour les œuvres communes [à toutes les Églises]. Nos Églises devraient réfléchir à cela. En effet, de toute façon, l'Église a besoin d'avoir des pasteurs bien formés, nous avons donc besoin d'élever le niveau des futurs pasteurs de demain, et c'est pourquoi il faut mettre en place la faculté de théologie. Prions donc et travaillons à la réalisation de cette œuvre au moment où Dieu veut que nous l'accomplissions.

Cette esquisse biographique est le fruit des recherches de Marc R. Spindler, qui est professeur émérite de missiologie et d'œcuménisme aux universités de Leiden et Utrecht, Pays-Bas. Auparavant, il a servi avec l'Église Réformée Unie de Madagascar pour le compte de la Société des Missions Évangéliques de Paris et de la Communauté évangélique d'action apostolique (CEVAA).

Book Review

Wild-Wood, Emma. *The Mission of Apolo Kivebulaya: Religious Encounter & Social Change in the Great Lakes c.1865-1935.* James Currey, 2020.

Emma Wild-Wood's masterful volume, *The Mission of Apolo Kivebulaya: Religious Encounter & Social Change in the Great Lakes c.1865-1935*, ticks all the boxes of the new historiography of World Christianity: it prioritizes the stories of indigenous agents both as subjects and informants, it focuses on social and cultural contexts to recast the story from an African perspective, it interprets and critiques Western sources in a global light, and it documents in detail the role of named women. Furthermore, the author ensured that her work was disseminated equitably to a global audience by first publishing it as a paperback in East Africa.

Wild-Wood describes her work as a "biography of Apolo Kivebulaya (...) written as a social history of religious change. (...) that re-conceptualizes the historiography of African agents in spreading religious change by examining a single individual who demonstrates the impact of macro-movements of social and religious change at the micro-level and the intrusion of small-scale change on wider historical processes." (4) The book tracks both Apolo's life and his networks, thus documenting the indigenous missionary movement, precursor to the East African Revival, that was already transforming East Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Wild-Wood's rich source materials from the living memory of Apolo, and the mission and local church records, make this book a fascinating read. My only criticism, if it is one, is that the dizzying amount of detail in naming specific people and places (nonetheless essential in creating compelling historical accounts) is that the reader sometimes struggles to keep up with the constant movements of Apolo Kivebulaya, the barefoot evangelist. This modest review will only outline a few of the major points.

Chapter one summarizes Apolo's extensive legacy in the Great Lakes area as a church founder in the DR Congo; a Muganda clergyman very much at home with his faith as both an African, a Christian, and a friend of expatriate missionaries; a proto-revivalist, and an exceptional pioneer missionary. The next chapters trace his history using his various names to mark his growth. Chapter 2, "Waswa," describes his modest origins in the Baganda kingdom, his birth as a twin, and his emancipation from traditional practices after his conversion. Chapter 3, describes his initial calling described as "the greed to become a man of God" (95) following his service as a soldier (hence the name "Munubi") and in Kabaka Mwanga's court, and the early influence of Kitakule Henry Wright Duta, foremost translator of the Bible into Luganda. His brief marriage and decision not to remarry after his wife's death, contrary to Baganda custom, marked him as an exceptional, devoted man of God. Other names that shed light on his evolving identity include "Apolo," the name he took when he was baptized as part of the Pilkington revival.

Chapter 4 elaborates on his work in Toro (western Uganda) as an itinerant teacher "from Europe"—hence the name "Kivebulaya" ("the one who comes from

Europe”) because of the jacket he always wore. He struggled due to his poverty and because of local opposition to his teaching. He was seen as a subversive figure because of his influence on women, younger men, and slaves. He protected women and advocated for them, calling for mutuality in the marriage relationship and for the education of girls. Prominent female figures mentioned here include Queen mother Nyina Omukama Kahinju, baptized Viktolya, Queen Damali Adyeri Tibaitwa, and Hana Kageye. These women promoted education for women and girls while also encouraging female church leadership.

In 1896, Apolo was sent to Mboga in eastern Congo. He preached a message of power, equality, and universal liberation for all, which impressed the widely reviled forest peoples. His criticism of the enslavement of pygmy children from the Ituri forest gained him local enemies. A power encounter involving rainmaking pitted him against Chief Tabaro but Apolo and the praying church came out victorious. He was falsely accused of an accidental death and languished in prison for four months. He underwent a second conversion in prison after receiving the visit of Jesus in a dream that deepened his faith. Later Chief Tabaro was baptized. There was also huge growth in Toro in the number of baptized believers and teachers.

Chapter five details Apolo’s inculturated ministry, now well established in Toro, and his desire to become a naturalized resident. In this period church growth continued. A Women’s Church Council was established in 1904 led by prominent women who promoted girls’ education and employment. At this time, many new schools were built, with twice as many girls in school as boys. Apolo advocated for Bible translation because he believed it was important to bring the Bible to all people in their heart language. Apolo’s teaching extended to social reform, temperance, and rejection of witchcraft practices.

Chapter six and seven recount Apolo’s last mission from 1915 to his death in 1933. Grieved at the news that the Mboga church was failing, Apolo traveled there in 1915, during his sabbatical year to revive the community. Elizabeti Ruhubya, a widow, aided Apolo in evangelistic visits. In 1917 he moved there and made Mboga his permanent home, adopting many forest children, some who became translators and evangelists with him to the seven people groups in Ituri. In 1921, another vision from Jesus solidified his calling to the Wambutu—hunter-gatherers in the Ituri forest—thus making him the first missionary to the pygmies. He preached a message of universal kinship and global Christian unity among all peoples, Wambutu and British missionaries alike. Wild-Wood underlines Apolo’s fourfold role as a mediator: in his itineration, in his work as a prophet-healer, in the mending of race relations, and as a Bible translator among the Wambutu. Apolo died just as the East African Revival was getting underway in the 1930s. His burial instructions—that he be buried with his head facing west, towards Ituri, his adopted home—cemented his message of kinship for all peoples and all races.

Wild-Wood’s penetrating portrait of Apolo Kivebulaya describes a powerful legacy that includes a staggering number of new churches and schools, an enduring spirituality in the region where he ministered, and a missionary calling that continues to inspire, even today, young East Africans to follow in his footsteps. In her words,

“Kivebulaya has represented an ideal African missionary for African Christians and European missionaries” (277-278). Without a doubt, Wild-Wood’s biography has successfully “disaggregated notions of western hegemony by focusing on African actors” (277). Her book is a beautiful labor of love towards African as well as global Christians who have much to learn from it.

The Mission of Apolo Kivebulaya: Religious Encounter & Social Change in the Great Lakes c.1865-1935 should be required reading for all scholars of World Christianity because it is a pioneering model of how western and African historical methodology can combine to create a biographical and contextual narrative that delves deep and wide into the heart of African Christianity, while showing at the same time its intimate connection to other forms of Christianity beyond Africa. May Apolo Kivebulaya’s dream of a “borderless Kingdom of God” (204) continue to inspire the world church for decades to come, especially in this time of trouble and division.

Michele Sigg

Recent Print and Digital Resources Related to Christianity in Africa

Compiled by Beth Restrick, Head, BU African Studies Library

Bruner, Jason. *Living Salvation in the East African Revival in Uganda (Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora, 75)* Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2017. \$55.00 (hbk, used) www.amazon.com. ISBN-10: 1580465846, ISBN-13: 978-1580465847

Description: “This book uses missionary and Colonial Office archives, contemporary newspapers, archival collections in Uganda, anthropologists' field notes, oral histories, and interviews by the author in order to reexamine the first twenty years of the East African revival movement (roughly, 1935-1955). Focusing upon the creative, controversial, and remarkable efforts of the ordinary African Christians who comprised the vast majority of the movement, it challenges previous historical analyses that have seen in the revival the replication of British evangelical holiness spirituality or, alternatively, a manifestation of late colonial dissent. Instead, this study argues, the Balokole revival was a movement through which African Christians articulated and developed a unique spiritual lifestyle, one that responded creatively to the sociopolitical contexts of late colonial East Africa.” (www.amazon.com)

Eby, Omar. *Fifty Years, Fifty Stories: The Mennonite Mission in Somalia, 1953-2003*. Cascadia Publishing House, 2003. \$14.95 (www.cascadiapublishinghouse.com) ISBN: 1-931038171

Description: “*Fifty Years, Fifty Stories* is a narrative history of the Mennonite Mission in Somalia, 1953-2003. Narrated through both text and photos, in coffee-table format, is the interplay between two worldviews: of the Islamic host culture and of its Christian missionary guests. The book's understated vignettes reveal the challenge the Mennonite Mission presented to Somali culture and religion and the cost of restraint, commitment, and personal sacrifice on the part of missionaries and believers.” (Cascadia Publishing House)

Erlich, Haggai. *Islam and Christianity in the Horn of Africa: Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 2022. \$65.00 (www.rienner.com) ISBN: 978-1588267139

Description: “Can Christianity and Islam coexist? Or are Muslims and Christians destined to delegitimize and even demonize each other? Tracing the modern history of the region where the two religions first met, and where they are engaged now in active confrontation, Haggai Erlich finds legacies of both tolerance and militancy. Erlich's analysis of political, military, and diplomatic developments in the Horn of Africa since the late nineteenth century is combined with an exploration of the

ways in which religious formulations of the nearby “other” influenced policymaking and were also reshaped by it. His work demonstrates in a compelling way how initial Islamic and Christian concepts remain directly relevant in the region today.” (www.rienner.com)

Moon, Daewon. *African Initiative and Inspiration in the East African Revival (Theology and Mission in World Christianity, Vol. 24)*. Brill, 2022. \$62.00 (pbk) (<https://brill.com>) ISBN: 978-90-04-52023-3

Description: The East African Revival is a fascinating historical example of the significant role indigenous agency can play in creating a new Christian spirituality. African revivalists initiated the spread of the movement, employing creative practices such as public testimony and fellowship meetings to sustain the effects of conversion experiences. Daewon Moon integrates theological and sociological analyses of conversion with interviews and personal narratives that express insiders’ perspectives. As active agents in the multiethnic and multicultural movement, African revivalists articulate through their words and changed lives what it means to be ‘saved’. (Brill.com)

Vigen, James B. and Sarah Hinlicky Wilson. *Nenilava, Prophetess of Madagascar: Her Life and the Ongoing Revival She Inspired*. Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2021. \$24.00 (www.amazon.com), (<https://wipfandstock.com>) ISBN: 9781725273276, 9781725273283.

Description: “Before she was baptized or knew anything about Christ, young Nenilava was called by Jesus to preach and exorcise in his name. At the age of twenty, newly married to a Lutheran catechist, she heard Jesus prompting her to intervene in a case of demon possession, and from there her ministry spread like wildfire. She spent the next sixty years of her life traveling around her native Madagascar, proclaiming Jesus’ victory over sin, guilt, and evil, and bringing countless people to faith. In this book, her firsthand account of her early ministry, as told to a Malagasy pastor, appears for the first time in English. Complementing the immediacy of her narrative, former missionary in Madagascar, James B. Vigen, recounts the last thirty years of Nenilava’s life and describes the extraordinary impact of this illiterate peasant woman on African Christianity. Sarah Hinlicky Wilson concludes the book with a far-reaching exploration of demon possession, healing from illness and sin, emergent offices of ministry, and the relevance of Nenilava for Western Christianity” -- Back cover” (wipfandstock.com)

Open Access Resources

Ali, Aweis. *Understanding the Somali Church*. KENPRO (self-published), 2022. Openly accessible via Kindle (www.amazon)

Description: “Writing about the Somali Church has been both challenging and rewarding at the same time. I found the whole process to be surreal since this church is little known compared to the churches in Ethiopia and Kenya. This is strange since

the history of the modern Somali Church goes back to 1881 when the first Western missionaries settled near Berbera, British Somaliland. Hence, this is a book like no other. Despite its 140 years history, very little has been written about the Somali Church. Subjects covered include the religious heritage of the Somalis (Waaqism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam), mission work, missionaries and their fruits, the benefits of denominationally based ministries, challenges and blessings of persecution, the relationship between persecution and church growth, utilizing the Somali clan system for the glory of God, and the role of poetry in the Somali ministry.” (www.amazon)

Moon, Daewon. **“African initiative and inspiration in the East African Revival, 1930-1950.”** Ph.D. Thesis, Boston University. 2019. URI: <https://open.bu.edu/handle/2144/37032>

Abstract: This dissertation examines the early history of the East African Revival in the 1930s and 1940s with careful attention to the way in which Christian beliefs and practices were appropriated and shaped by African revivalists in colonial Uganda and Ruanda-Urundi. With the sympathetic support of the evangelical-minded missionaries of the Ruanda Mission, the African revivalists (widely known as Balokole, Luganda for “saved ones”) played an indispensable role in the expansion of the revitalization movement beyond geographic, social, and cultural boundaries. In addition, the African revivalists made significant contributions to the creation of a distinctive African Christian spirituality that precipitated moral and spiritual transformation of numerous individuals.

This study shows how the Balokole Revival gained adherents and spread into nearby regions through the involvement of African evangelists, teachers, and hospital workers. The “Bible Team” of itinerant evangelists who served voluntarily in remote villages was key to the rapid expansion of the movement. To sustain the effects of their conversion experiences, the African revivalists employed creative practices such as public testimony and fellowship meetings. In schools, Balokole teachers spread new moral values by living out the virtues of the revivalist piety; in hospitals, converted workers led daily prayer meetings and engaged in personal evangelism. All these efforts built up a strong indigenous Christian community based on common experience, belief, and liturgy.

This dissertation contributes to the existing scholarship of the Revival by tracing its social and theological roots in the Ruanda Mission, and by foregrounding the pivotal role of the African revivalists in the shaping of the unique spiritual character of the movement. Particular attention is given to the causes, nature, and effects of religious conversion in the colonial context. An important feature of this study is its integration of social scientific studies about religious conversion with insider perspectives in the form of interviews and personal narratives. As active agents in the multiethnic and multicultural movement, the African revivalists articulated through their words and changed lives what it meant to be “saved.” ([OpenBU](https://open.bu.edu))

Kamuha, Musolo W'isuka. **“Encountering the Mbuti Pygmies: a challenge to**

Christian mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.” Ph.D. Thesis, University of South Africa (UNISA), 2013.

URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/10500/11863>

Abstract: This thesis explores the Mbuti Pygmies, a sub-group of the Pygmy peoples, one of the main ethnic groups of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The Mbuti Pygmies are settled mostly in the Ituri rainforest, and are, with regard to Christian mission, still unreached and unchurched. The oversight of the churches vis-à-vis these people is highlighted, through this thesis, as a challenge to Christian mission. This challenge is a result of the way Christian mission is understood and undertaken in DRC, namely in the selective and exclusive way of missioning, according to which some peoples are targeted and others forsaken.

Churches in the DRC shy away from the Mbuti Pygmies probably because, on the one hand, these forest dwellers belong to the group of Pygmies whose existence as full human beings is enigmatic and very controversial. Because of the uniqueness of the Pygmy peoples in terms of physical features, culture, and way of life, on the other hand, the non-Pygmy peoples, including Christians, suffer from a kind of complex of superiority that creates in them a spirit of discrimination against the Mbuti Pygmies. As the Mbuti Pygmies are discriminated against even by Christians, it is very difficult for them to be taken into account within the mission agendas of the churches. This challenge to Christian mission is highlighted by two facts. Firstly, Christian mission is designed for all the nations to which the Mbuti Pygmies belong. Secondly, the churches, with their missional mandate to all the nations, shy away from the Mbuti Pygmies as if these people were outside the scope of Christian mission and, thus, unworthy of God’s grace and love. To remedy this challenge, with the aim of implementing Christian mission in the DRC, this study suggests a missional encounter as a way forward to addressing the Mbuti Pygmies. In practice, this may be implemented through the missionary conversion, the right perception of the Mbuti Pygmies as being fully made in the “image of God” and fully part of the “all nations”, promoting formal education among the Mbuti Pygmies, and sustaining the churches by an integrated theological education. (Source: [UNISA repository](#))