



Moses (Mose) Segatwa in 1962.

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Segatwa, Moses

BIRIKUNZIRA JEROME

Birikunzira Jerome

Moses Segatwa was one of the first five Rwandans to be baptized in Rwanda and the first Rwandan to be ordained as a pastor in 1934. He also worked with David Elie Delhove, the pioneer founder of Gitwe, the first Seventh-day Adventist Mission Station in Rwanda.

Segatwa was born in the Western Province of Rwanda.¹ He met Delhove when he appeared at Kirinda, an abandoned Protestant Mission Station during the First World War (1914-1918). Delhove had been granted permission by the authorities to occupy this mission station. Moses Segatwa became responsible for the Kirinda

Mission Station when the German missionaries left. Unable to differentiate between the former and the new missionary,² he welcomed Delhove and worked with him. Delhove started teaching him the Adventist faith. Together they rehabilitated the mission station, taught people how to cultivate vegetables, plant trees, and worship on Sabbath instead of Sunday.

Unfortunately, after one year, Delhove learned that the former owners of Kirinda were coming back and he was asked to leave the mission station. With Segatwa's assistance, he searched for land where they could build their own mission station. They traveled toward Nyanza³ where they met with the king of Rwanda. As a result of this meeting Gitwe Hill was gifted to them.⁴ The hill was to host the first Adventist mission station in 1921. Segatwa helped Delhove build the first house at Gitwe after living in a tent for a while. Segatwa and others from Kirinda were taught by missionaries how to read and write. They were also taught Bible doctrines. Finally, in 1922 Segatwa and four other Rwandans, most from Kirinda, accepted the message and were baptized.⁵ The missionaries trained them how to do evangelism. Segatwa, a zealous and hardworking man, became the right hand of Delhove.

In an article Segatwa wrote in 1958,⁶ he described how their task was not easy: "It was very difficult for people to accept our message because it was not common. We preached the Sabbath instead of Sunday, asked them to abandon tobacco and alcohol. This was difficult for them." It was also not easy to get pupils. He recorded: "The parents were traumatized by the idea of sending their children to school. They even hid them very far from home so that we might not take them. Parents were ready to give us bribes as a substitute for their kids." Parents sometimes agreed to give them only the unloved children because they believed that they would die.

Delhove opened a dispensary at Gitwe and rendered medical assistance to the needy. It was easy to communicate the Word of God to people after healing them from diseases, which were abundant. Finally, the Adventist message was accepted by people in spite of the difficulties mentioned. According to various oral sources, natives loved Delhove. Patiently, he continued to build and preach the gospel. The membership of this mission station increased rapidly. People understood that being a Christian meant a radical change, not only being baptized. In 1929, Delhove was asked to go to pioneer the work in Congo while Segatwa continued his work at Gitwe, welcoming and working with new missionaries until the work was handed to natives.

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. Segatwa's birth date is not known. His first name is also reported as Mosa or Mose in various publications.
2. Moses Segatwa, "Umwaduko w'Abadiventsiti mu Rwanda," *Huguka Ibihe Bih'ibindi*, 1958, 3.
3. The residence of the king and capital of the Kingdom of Rwanda.
4. Gitwe is a hill between Nyanza and Kirinda. The land was unoccupied according to history became one time the king was passing by and was caught by rain. Since he was unable to find a shelter there, he cursed the land. Believing in the king's curse, the people feared to approach the hill. See Jean Cripps, "Time Out of Mind," *Trans-African Outlook*, July 15, 1971, 5-8.
5. J. B. Cooks, "From Mustard Seed to Tree," *ARH*, June 27, 1963, 14-15.
6. Moses Segatwa, "Umwaduko w'Abadiventsiti mu Rwanda," *Huguka Ibihe Bih'ibindi*, 1958, 3.

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