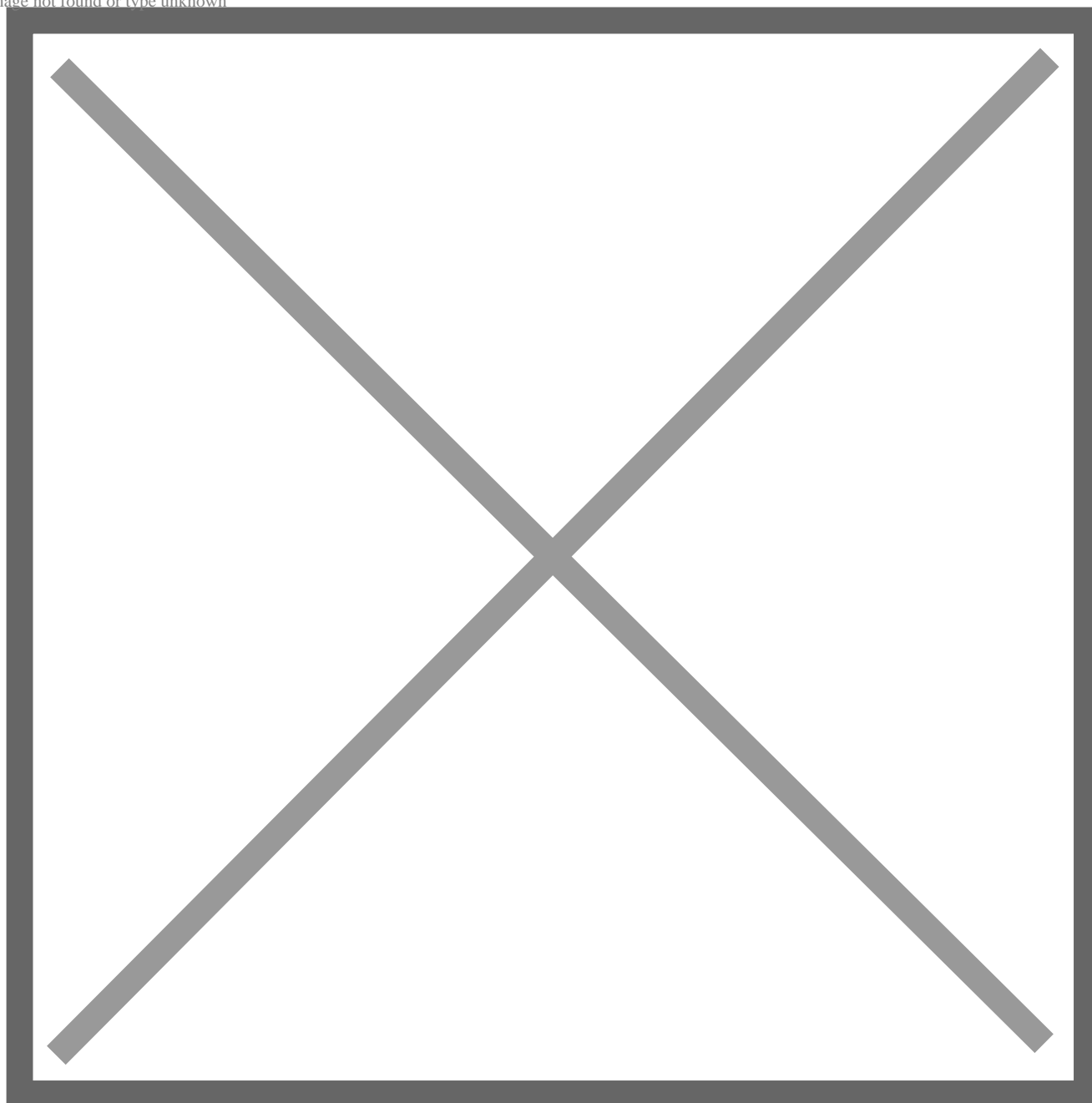


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**Ohme, Bruno Otto (1880–c. 1944/1945) and
Helene Emma Wilhelmine (died c.
1944/1945)**

MATTI NEUMANN

Bruno Ohme was a pastor, missionary, teacher and administrator in Germany, Tanzania and Indonesia.

Early Life and Marriage

Bruno Ohme¹ was born on August 11, 1880 into a Protestant family in Leipzig.² His parents were Paul Otto and Helene Marie Ohme.³ After Bruno joined the Seventh-day Adventists through baptism,⁴ he attended the Mission Seminary in Friedensau from 1901 to 1902, where he also worked as a nurse, and then settled in Magdeburg.⁵ There he also fulfilled his military service and served the local church on a voluntary basis.⁶ In preparation for his later mission field, he attended the School of Oriental Languages in Berlin together with his fellow missionary Ernst Kotz.⁷

Shortly before beginning his missionary service, Ohme married Helene Schlemvoigt in Magdeburg on May 4, 1905.⁸ Two children were soon born to them in the mission field: Gertrude was born on October 30, 1906 in Kihurio. She was followed by Alfred Bruno in Kihurio on October 1, 1908.⁹

Tanzania and Internment

After their move to then German East Africa¹⁰ on May 15, 1905, the Ohmes settled at the Friedenstal Missionary Station, and soon afterwards opened the station in Kihurio together with Ernst Kotz.¹¹ Initially sent out as a nurse,¹² Ohme was appointed director of the German East Africa Mission as early as 1905. By 1906, Helene started a school project in Kihurio with 12 to 14 girls, which grew over time and established itself within the school work of the Advent Mission in East Africa, so that soon every mission station ran its own school for girls through the initiative of the missionary women.¹³ In 1912, 289 girls and women attended the Adventist schools in the Victoria-Nyanza area 828 and in the Southern Pare, where this project had begun.¹⁴ The school work of the Adventist Mission under the leadership of Ohme had such a social impact that Ohme was often asked by public authorities to establish further schools in other places.¹⁵

After his ordination in 1908, Ohme was allowed to harvest the first fruits of his previous work and was able to baptize the first six persons in the East African mission field.¹⁶ After serving as director of the South Pare Mission (south of Kilimanjaro), the Ohmes were transferred to the Victoria-Nyanza area on the southeast coast of Lake Victoria in the fall of 1910, where Bruno again served as director.¹⁷ Here too, missionary activities grew considerably under Ohme's management. Through the establishment of new stations with affiliated schools, the influence on women and children also reached those people (men and tribal elders) who at first appeared reserved toward Advent mission efforts.¹⁸ In 1914, shortly before the end of Ohme's ministry, 60 people were baptized in the Victoria-Nyanza area, 12 mission stations had been established, and over 2,000 students attended the Adventist schools. Besides evangelistic literature, especially the New Testament was sold in Kiswahili.¹⁹

In 1914 the First World War reached the Victoria-Nyanza area, damaging the missions, and hindering missionary efforts. Ohme became a prisoner of war and was interned in Ahmednagar, India.²⁰ As a result, the family was separated for four years.²¹

Indonesia – Friedensau – Indonesia

When Bruno Ohme was able to return to Germany from India in 1920 after four years of detention and the family was reunited, he served congregations in the East German Union and was responsible for the Leipzig area.²² After only one year of local pastoral work, the Ohmes followed the call to the then Dutch East Indies (i.e. today's Indonesia)²³ and took up work in the Batavia region.²⁴ However, this ministry lasted only briefly, since Ohme and his family returned to Germany in October 1922, following a decision by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Ohme subsequently worked as president of the North-East Saxony Conference until 1925.²⁵

Ohme sought a new challenge from 1925 to 1928 by returning to his old training school and using his rich experience in missionary service and pastoral work as director of the Friedensau mission school to train missionaries and pastors at a time when Friedensau was at its highest level of student numbers after the First World War,²⁶ and a mission boom in German Adventist world mission activities shaped the work of the Adventist Church in the country.²⁷

After some years of teaching in the mission school, the Ohmes moved back to Dutch India in 1928,²⁸ where they were able to work until 1933. Here Ohme served as president of the Dutch East Indies Union Mission, a mission territory assigned to Germany from January 1929.²⁹ He constantly traveled throughout the entire island-rich area and took care of his field in a responsible manner. He visited nearly every church and was present at many baptisms.³⁰ Due to the geography of the country, Ohme spent considerable time traveling. On South Borneo there was also a mission among the Dajak, a people who were still head-hunting in the interior of Borneo at that time.³¹ However, most of the Dajak reached by the Adventists had already become Protestant. In order to reach the people in this area, Ohme and the Adventist mission relied primarily on education, so that through the ability to read, the Gospel could be communicated in written form. At that time, only 6 percent of the population was literate.³² From 1930 onwards, the

Adventist mission under Ohme's leadership was able to lead about 500 people to baptism each year. Thus the Adventist Church in this area grew from about 2,000 to over 3,300 members from 1930 until the end of Ohme's work (1933).³³

Later life

When the Ohmes ended their missionary service and returned to Germany, Bruno Ohme took on the responsibility as president of the Silesian Conference during the unrest of the Nazi era and the Second World War until 1945.³⁴ The war years were ultimately fatal for them, as the Ohme family, as far as is known, died in one of the air raids on Dresden in 1944/45.³⁵

Contribution

Although the First World War left its traces in the areas of what was then German East Africa, the Ohmes and other missionaries were able to lay more than a foundation on which new missionary efforts could later be built from the 1920s onwards.³⁶

During his time as director of the Friedensau Mission School, Ohme played a significant role in the training of those missionaries who left Germany in droves during this period, serving in the world mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and contributing to the rapid growth of the denomination throughout the world.

The Ohmes also contributed to denominational development in the then Dutch East Indies by taking on a busy ministry and ensuring that the missionaries, pastors, and other co-workers in his mission area were successful and that the Adventist Church experienced considerable growth. Today Indonesia has over 220,000 members (as of 2017) and the North Tanzania Union Mission alone has over 500,000 members. Pioneers such as the Ohmes were needed for this. They sacrificed in their ministry for the welfare of their fellow human beings and for the Gospel, even in the dangers of war.

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- _____. "Auf Missionsreisen in Niederländisch-Ostindien." *Der Adventbote*, June 15, 1929.
- _____. "Reisebericht aus Niederländisch-Indien." *Der Adventbote*, December 15, 1929.
- _____. "Reiseberichte von Sumatra." *Der Adventbote*, March 15, 1930.
- _____. "Unter den Dajaks in Südborneo." *Der Adventbote*, June 15, 1930.
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NOTES

1. Originally born as Otto Bruno Ohme. This name appears on his marriage certificate of 1905. In Germany, second names are also considered possible first names. See Personenstandsregister, Heiratsregister, 1874-1903, 1905 [Register of births, marriages] Nr. 375, Stadtarchiv Magdeburg, Germany. His father's middle name was Otto, which he gave to his son as his first name according to tradition, and Bruno himself gave his second name to his son Alfred.?
- 2.

- Ibid.; *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, (1976), s.v. "Ohme, Bruno." The year of birth 1881 in the encyclopedia (1976) is, therefore, not correct.
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3. See Personenstandsregister, Heiratsregister, 1874-1903.?
 4. "*Seventh-Day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1976), s.v. "Ohme, Bruno."?
 5. "Missionsschule Friedensau, Liste der Friedensauer Schüler der Jahre 1899-1943" [List of Friedensau Students of the Years 1899-1943], Historical Archives of Seventh-day Adventists in Europe.?
 6. M. Bäse and W. Stanischewski, *100 Jahre Gemeinde Magdeburg, 1895–1995: Festschrift zur 100-Jahrfeier der Gemeinde Magdeburg* ([Magdeburg:] self-published, 1995), 17.?
 7. "Ohme, Bruno," *Seventh-Day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1023. Both were to benefit from this in East Africa, since they, especially Ernst Kotz, endeavored to record the languages there and to translate parts of the Bible, as well as evangelistic writings into the languages of the peoples living in their mission area.?
 8. Personenstandsregister, Heiratsregister, 1874-1903.?
 9. Both attended the Mission School in Friedensau from 1925, when their father took office as director. Gertrud, a trained kindergarten teacher, attended a Bible course and then moved to Rabenstein, whereas Alfred attended the seminary and then worked as a pastor at Marienhöhe (Darmstadt). Cf. Alfred Bruno Ohme, Anmeldeschein zur Aufnahme in die Missions- und Industrieschule Friedensau [Registration form for admission to the Friedensau Missionary and Industrial School], July 3, 1925, Historical Archives of Seventh-day Adventists in Europe; Gertrud Ohme, Anmeldeschein zur Aufnahme in die Missions- und Industrieschule Friedensau [Registration form for admission to the Friedensau Missionary and Industrial School], July 12, 1925, Historical Archives of Seventh-day Adventists in Europe; "Liste der Friedensauer Schüler der Jahre 1899-1943," 76. They died together with their parents in an air raid on Dresden in 1944/45.?
 10. Bruno Ohme, "Reisebericht vom Bord des 'Kanzler'." *Zions-Wächter*, June 3, 1905, 159. German East Africa is the name of the German colony of that time, which extended from 1885-1918 over the territory of Tanzania as well as Burundi, Rwanda, and a small part of Mozambique. This area could be called the "favorite colony" of the German Adventist mission because of the immense missionary efforts done there. See Stefan Höschele, "The German Adventist World Mission until World War II," in *Adventhoffnung für Deutschland: Die Mission der Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten von Conradi bis heute*, eds. Daniel Heinz and Werner E. Lange, (Lüneburg: Advent-Verlag, 2014), 113-126, 117-121.?
 11. L. R. Conradi, "Mission in German East Africa," *ARH*, June 14, 1906, 14. But towards the end of 1907 he returned with his wife and his newly born daughter to the moderate climate of Friedenstal. See Bruno Ohme, "Friedenstal-Kihurio-Friedenstal," *Zions-Wächter*, June 7, 1909, 191-192; "Aerztliche Mission," *Zions-Wächter*, April 20, 1908, 156.?
 12. Guy Dail, "German Union Committee Meeting," *ARH*, May 18, 1905, 16.?
 13. "Our sisters give special attention to the girls, and we have a girls' school at each mission station, where they learn to read and write, and are instructed in the Word of God." See *The Story of Our Mission for 1909: As Told by Missionary in All Lands* (Takoma Park Station, Washington, D.C., 1910), 40.?
 14. Bruno Ohme, "Aus Afrika," *Zions-Wächter*, March 18, 1907, 92. See also L. R. Conradi, *Missionsbericht der Europäischen Divisionskonferenz der S.D. Adventisten* (Hamburg: Internationale Traktatgesellschaft, 1913), 30, 33.?
 15. *The Story of Our Mission for 1909*, 39.?
 16. Guy Dail, "First Fruits from German East Africa" *ARH*, May 28, 1908, 349.?
 17. "East African Mission: South Pare Mission, German East Africa," *ARH*, Special Edition, no. 24 (1910): 39-40, 39; General Conference Committee Minutes, April 4, 390, accessed December 3, 2019, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1911.pdf>; L. R. Conradi, "Progress in the European Division," *ARH*, November 10, 1910, 6.?
 18. Bruno Ohme, "Victoria Nyanza Mission," *European Division Conference Review* 2, no. 2 (1913): 38; Bruno Ohme, "Unser Werk am Viktoria-Nyanza in Deutsch-Ostafrika," *Zions-Wächter*, October 18, 1911, 370-371; Bruno Ohme, "General Conference Missions: Victoria Nyanza Mission," *Annual and Quarterly Report of the European Division of the General Conference of S.D.A.*, March 1912, 73, 74.?
 19. Bruno Ohme, "The Third Angel's Message on the Shores of the Victoria Nyanza," *Australasian Record*, January 18, 1915, 7; Ellsworth Olson, *A History of The Origin and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Takoma Park Station, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1926), 513.?
 20. L. R. Conradi, "News from German East Africa," *ARH*, June 3, 1915, 12, 13; A. H. Williams, "Here and There," *Eastern Tidings* December 1916, 12.?
 21. Bruno Ohme, "Abschiedsgruß," *Zions-Wächter*, November 1921, 181?
 22. Ibid.?
 23. Ibid.?
 - 24.

"Appointments and Notices," *ARH*, November 24, 1921, 24. Batavia was the capital of Dutch India until Indonesia's independence. Since then it has been the capital of Indonesia under the name Jakarta.?

25. Bruno Ohme, "Von Nordostsachsen nach Friedensau," *Der Adventbote*, October 1, 1925, 258.?
26. Siegfried Lüpke, *50 Jahre Friedensau 1899–1949: Festschrift zum 50. Bestehen des Missionsseminars Friedensau* (Friedensau: Missionsseminar, 1949), 21.?
27. Ohme, "Von Nordostsachsen nach Friedensau," 258–260. In the 1920s and 1930s at least 75 missionaries were sent abroad by Germany, most of whom were trained in Friedensau. See Stefan Höschele, "Die Deutsche adventistische Weltmission bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg," in *Adventhoffnung für Deutschland*, 122.?
28. E. Kotz, "How Shall They Hear Without a Preacher? Workers Sent to Foreign Fields During 1928," *ARH*, January 24, 1929, 3.?
29. Bruno Ohme, "Gute Aussichten in Java," *Der Adventbote*, March 15, 1929, 96; H. F. Schuberth, "En Route to the Dutch East Indies," *ARH*, March 7, 1929, 14. When the Central European Division (essentially Germany) was founded in 1928, the denomination in this region got mission territories of their own again after losing them during World War I. See Johannes Hartlapp, *Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten im Nationalsozialismus, Kirche - Konfession - Religion 53* (Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2008), 164.?
30. Bruno Ohme, "Reiseberichte von Sumatra," *Der Adventbote*, March 15, 1930, 86–89; Bruno Ohme, "Reisebericht aus Niederländisch-Indien," *Der Adventbote*, December 15, 1929, 374–376; Bruno Ohme, "Auf Missionsreisen in Niederländisch-Ostindien," *Der Adventbote*, June 15, 1929, 181–183; Bruno Ohme, "Erfahrungen aus der Missionsarbeit," *Der Adventbote*, December 15, 1930, 379, 380.?
31. Bruno Ohme, "Unter den Dajaks in Südborneo," *Der Adventbote*, June 15, 1930, 186–188.?
32. Schuberth, "Highlights of the Central European Division," 81.?
33. Bruno Ohme, "Netherlands East Indies Union Mission," *ARH*, April 30, 1931, 25; Bruno Ohme, "Rückblick auf das Jahr 1933," *Der Adventbote*, June 15, 1934, 190.?
34. "Silesian Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1945), 76.?
35. Also noted in *Seventh-Day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1976), s.v. "Ohme, Bruno." This scenario is plausible in any case. With the onslaught of Soviet troops, almost all Germans fled from the eastern territories. Many of them arrived in Dresden with their families and sought protection and shelter there. Several tens of thousands of people were killed in the waves of attacks on Dresden, and all published figures are based on estimates only, which differ widely. At least there is no death announcement or death certificate etc. of the Ohmes. The church magazine *Adventbote* had been suspended at that time (from 1941 to 1949) and the many who died in the war could never be recorded in writing.?
36. J. C. Raft und W. H. Merideth, "Among Our Missions in East Africa," *ARH*, July 12, 1928, 13.?

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