

Mkobe, Lukius Girabaya (1918–1989)

KOROSSO MUSETI

Korosso Museti, B.A. in theology (University of Arusha, Tanzania), is working on his master's degree at the Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya. He is an ordained minister and assistant lecturer at the University of Arusha. He is married and has four children.

Lukius Mkobe was a teacher and pastor in Tanzania. He translated several of Ellen G. White's books into Kiswahili.

Early Life and Education

In 1918, at Nabihili, a village bordering the Arusha and Mara regions of Tanzania, the long journey of life of a prominent figure in Tanzania Adventism called began. No sooner had baby Lukius Mkobe been born than his parents moved from Nabihili to the Natta village in the Mugumu district, Mara region, Tanzania. They lived there for a short while before both of his had parents passed away. This was a real tragedy and catastrophic to an infant who was still in his early stages of development. This tragedy affected his development physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially. However, God's generosity did not leave this child alone. He had prepared an uncle's wife named Sara Sasamwe to raise the bereaved little boy.¹

In 1922, the foster-mother of Lukius Mkobe heard the everlasting Gospel and accepted Jesus as her personal Savior and Lord. As soon as she commenced leading a new life in Christ, the devil raged tempests against her so that she was expelled from her family for refusing to engage in tribal initiations. As she went away, she fled with her two little girls and Lukius to the Seventh-day Adventist mission at Ikizu, Ushashi, and Nyambitirwa all in Mara region.²

His stepmother enrolled him in the Ikizu Primary School in 1929. This was the mission institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. After completion of standard eight grades in 1936, Lukius Mkobe joined the teaching course in 1937-1938 in the same institution.³

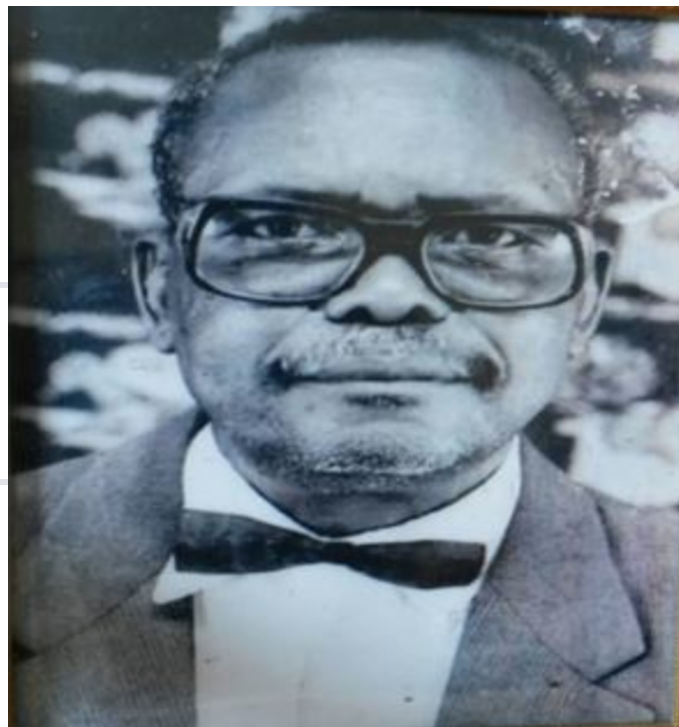
Teaching Ministry

Lukius' first appointment was from 1939-1945 as a teacher.⁴ The Church sent him to the southern part of Tanzania to establish a school at Mbeya. His hard and courageous work of about seven years in Mbeya during the terrifying and discouraging period of World War II resulted in the establishment of an Adventist school in Tukuyu, Mbeya, Tanzania.

In 1946, Lukius was transferred to Ukara Isle in the Mwanza region, where he established another Adventist school. He did not stay long in this isle for he was again transferred to Malegea, Ukerewe, another isle in Mwanza between 1947 and 1948, where he worked as a professional teacher to help upgrading the school teaching staff. Even here, Lukius did not stay long for he was again transferred to Bwasi Primary School located at Majita, Musoma, Tanzania in 1949 where he worked as a school teacher up to 1953.

Marriage and Family

It was at Bwasi Majita where God had prepared a life partner for Pastor Lukius Mkobe. He married Elizabeth Daudi Rubairo in 1953. God blessed this couple with ten children – one son and nine daughters. In the same year he got married, he was transferred to Ikizu as a second master. He served in this position up to 1957 when he was appointed as the Middle School headmaster at the Ikizu Training School.⁵ Lukius had the distinction of being the first known African and Tanzanian to become the Middle School Headmaster.



Pastor Lukius Mkobe Girabaya
Photo courtesy of
Korosso Museti.

Ministerial Work

Lukius Mkobe served as the headmaster up to 1959, when he opted to obey God's call within him to serve as a Gospel minister. This led him to apply for ministerial training at Bugema College in Uganda. The college admitted him on condition that he was to first serve as an evangelist at least for one year and report some baptisms resulting from his labor. To fulfill this condition, he changed his career from a school teacher and, at this time, headmaster to evangelism and witnessing for Christ. From this year, according to the 1959 yearbook, he began to be recognized as a licensed minister by the Tanganyika Mission.⁶

His decision to work as a lay evangelist made him to shift his family to Mwanza where he began witnessing and opened the work of Adventism at Kirumba. His good work enabled the establishment of a church at Kirumba and brought church services closer to some people who then stopped attending worship services at Whole-fare in Mwanza, which was a long journey.

Ministerial Training and Service

Between 1960 and 1962, Lukius Mkobe attended ministerial training at Bugema Adventist College, now University in Uganda. Soon after his completion, he was assigned both as a frontline pastor at Utimbaru Mission Station with its headquarters at Kibumaye, and as the headmaster of Kibumaye Middle School now called Muderspach Memorial at Tarime, Mara, Tanzania, in 1963. He was transferred the next year to Shirati Mission Station in Tarime, where he served for about three years (1964-1966). He was again transferred to the Musoma Mission Station, where he served from 1967-1973. The Adventist Yearbooks from 1965 through 1972 show that Pastor Lukius Mkobe served as an Executive Committee Member for East Lake and East Nyanza Fields. He was ordained into the Gospel ministry in 1966.⁷ Pastor Mkobe started the Adventist work at Changamwe, Mombasa, Kenya, in 1966, the same year he was ordained.

Further Studies and Service

Pastor Mkobe pursued further studies in journalism and book authorship through correspondence from Solusi Missionary College, Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, now known as Zimbabwe. This program of study took him almost five years from 1969 to 1973. After completion of his study at this level, he was assigned the work of translating Sabbath School quarterlies into Kiswahili and sent them to Kendu Bay, Kenya, for printing. He then went to collect them from Kendu Bay and took them to Tanzania Union Mission leaders for distribution. He was also very useful in interpreting into Kiswahili for the English speakers when they visited Tanzania Union mission.

Pastor Lukius Mkobe was not content with the level of a diploma in journalism. He therefore studied at Andrews University through correspondence and earned a degree in Book Authorship from 1975 to 1978. After the completion of his degree, he was appointed to the directorship of Publishing and the Voice of Prophecy of the Union from 1978-1984, working from Morogoro, Tanzania.⁸

Retirement

Pastor Lukius Mkobe retired from his work in 1984. He returned from Morogoro to Musoma where he continued with the translation of various Ellen G. White books into Kiswahili. His life ended on September 7, 1989, when he died at the age of 71.

Legacy

Pastor Mkobe is remembered for many things. He translated several English books into Kiswahili. They include: *The Great Controversy*, as Pambano Kuu; *The Desire of Ages*, as Tumaini la Vizazi Vyote; *Counsels for the Church*, as Nuru kwa Kanisa or Kutayarisha Njia Sehemu ya Kwanza; *Steps to Christ* as Njia Salama; *Acts of the Apostles*, as Kutoka Maonjo hadi Ushindi; and *Prophets and Kings* as Mashujaa wa Imani or Wafalme na Manabii.⁹ The Kiswahili song book of Nyimbo za Kristo was translated by Pastor Mkobe and Pastor Abihudi Mburuja.¹⁰

He also served as a Swahili Tracts Committee member together with R. C. Megera, J. Kuyenga, and F. Martinsen!¹

Pastor Mkobe is also remembered for training people in Church music. Many good church musicians of their time such as Pastor Joktan Kuyenga, Fineas Majura Rubairo¹² and many others whose effort in music contributed to the development of church worship music in the Adventist Church in Tanzania received training in this skill from Pastor Lukius Mkobe.

SOURCES

Lukius Mkobe's Service Record, Northern Tanzania Union Conference archives, Arusha, Tanzania.

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/>.

Tanzania Union of Seventh-day Adventists. "Minutes of the Tanzania Union Executive Committee Meeting." Busegwe, Tanzania: Tanzania Union Mission, September 18-19, 1966, Action Na. 793.

Tanzania Union of Seventh-day Adventists. "Minutes of the Available Members of the Tanzania Union Executive Committee." Busegwe, Tanzania: Tanzania Union Mission, March 15, 1974, Action Na. 608.

Tanzania Union of Seventh-day Adventists. "Minutes of the Yearend Meeting of the Tanzania Union Executive Committee." Busegwe, Tanzania: Tanzania Union Mission, November 19-24, 1974, Action Na. 738.

NOTES

1. Martha Lukius Mkobe, telephone interview by author, March 16, 2020. Martha is Pastor Mkobe's daughter.?
2. Ibid.?
3. Ibid.?
4. Lukius Mkobe's Service Record, Northern Tanzania Union Conference archives, Arusha, Tanzania.?
5. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1961).?
6. Ibid. (1959).?
7. Tanzania Union of Seventh-day Adventists, "Minutes of the Tanzania Union Executive Committee Meeting" (Busegwe, Tanzania: Tanzania Union Mission, September 18-19, 1966), Action Na. 793.?
8. Martha Lukius Mkobe, telephone interview by author, March 16, 2020.?
9. Tanzania Union of Seventh-day Adventists, "Minutes of the Available Members of the Tanzania Union Executive Committee" (Busegwe, Tanzania: Tanzania Union Mission, March 15, 1974), Action Na. 608.?
10. Abihudi Mburuja, telephone interview with the author, March 19, 2020.?
11. Tanzania Union of Seventh-day Adventists, "Minutes of the Yearend Meeting of the Tanzania Union Executive Committee" (Busegwe, Tanzania: Tanzania Union Mission, November 19-24, 1974), Action Na. 738.?
12. Fineas Majura Rubairo, interview with the author at his homestead, Ngongongare, Arusha Tanzania, on March 19, 2020.?

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