



Ranen Conference office.

Photo courtesy of West Kenya Union Conference.

Ranen Conference

BERING NGORE, AND GODFREY K. SANG

Pastor Bering Ngore is currently the president of Ranen Conference.

Godfrey K. Sang is a historical researcher and writer with an interest in Adventist history. He holds a B.A. in History from the University of Eastern Africa Baraton and a number of qualifications from other universities. He is a published author. He is the co-author of the book *On the Wings of a Sparrow: How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Came to Western Kenya*.

Ranen Conference is a part of West Kenya Union Conference in the East-Central Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Its headquarters is 25 miles from Kisii on the main Tanzania Road, Kenya.

Territory: Migori County.

Statistics (June 30, 2020): Churches, 589; membership, 97,149; population, 1,135,690.

Early History of Ranen Conference

Ranen Conference has its roots in the establishment of Kanyadoto Mission Station in 1913. In November 1906 the first Adventist missionaries to British East Africa, Arthur Carscallen and Peter Nyambo, established the first mission station at Gendia. They began to scout the nearby country for other suitable sites for mission stations. In 1909 they established a mission station at Wire Hill. In 1912 they opened a third station at Karungu, and a fourth at Rusinga. These were followed in quick succession by Nyanchwa and Kanyadoto.¹

In 1911, lay worker Herbert James Sparks camped at a large fig tree at Kanyadoto and began preaching to the Luo people. Sparks was a South African entrepreneur dealing with hides and skins. A Seventh-day Adventist, when he heard of the presence of his denomination in Gendia, he made his way there and connected with Arthur Carscallen. The two became close friends. He then moved to the Kanyatodo area, which was teeming with wildlife. Sparks shot game for the skins and sold the meat to the local people. Sparks began teaching the people who had gathered at his camp. Soon a congregation began to meet in one of the sheds he had constructed. The congregation grew rapidly, assisted by a man named Mariko Otieno, whom Sparks had brought to the faith.² The vibrance of the gospel work at Kanyadoto made a good case for the establishment of a substantive mission station.

In 1913, Alfred Matter was posted to Kanyadoto as the first missionary.³ He built on the work of Sparks, who had left the area by that time. When the First World War broke out in 1914, Alfred Matter, together with all the missionaries in the other stations, was interned in Kaimosi. The work at Kanyadoto came to a virtual standstill. In 1916 the work resumed at Kanyadoto. After the war, the Karungu Mission station failed to reopen, and in 1920, the decision was made to relocate the mission to Kanyadoto. The buildings at Karungu were torn down and materials sent to Kanyadoto.⁴

First Baptisms and New Churches

The first baptisms at Kanyadoto took place in December 1917. Twenty seven people whom Matter had prepared joined the Adventist church.⁵ The first churches organized under the Kanyadoto Mission were Rapedhi, Sori, Langi, and Lala. The first baptism at Kamagambo Mission took place in July 1917. The number of those baptized could not be traced. New churches organized under Kamagambo Mission were Sare, Manyatta, and Kadika.

Kanyadoto continued to flourish, and when Matter left, he was replaced by W.W. Armstrong, who was part of the first batch of missionaries that arrived at Gendia on July 4, 1920.⁶ They came to relieve the old guard who were long overdue on furlough or needed to proceed to new stations. Matter, for instance, proceeded to the Belgian territory (Ruanda-Urundi), where he remained for many years. Armstrong presided over the growth of Kanyadoto over the next eight years. A new church was constructed, as well as a new school. L. Gabrielsen oversaw the mission from 1928 until 1932. F. H. Thomas took over in 1933, and served for a year before Matthew Murdoch replaced him in 1934. Murdoch left in 1937 for Chebwai, to pioneer a new mission in Luhya

country. In his place came H.A. Matthews, who had been in charge of the Highlands Mission in Eldoret. In 1940 C. J. Hyde took over from Matthews, who proceeded to Karura in Nairobi. Hyde remained until 1944. In 1945 he was replaced by T.F. Duke, a South African.⁷

Closure of Kanyadoto

The missionaries struggled with the climate at Kanyadoto Mission Station. The average stay for each missionary was between two and three years. In 1945 a decision was made to close down Kanyadoto Mission. T.F. Duke scouted for a new mission site, settling for Ranen Hill, and the new station was established there in 1946⁸ Ranen Hill is situated 25 miles from Kisii town, along the main route towards the Tanzania–Kenya border. Duke oversaw a major construction program at Ranen. By 1947 Ranen had one African minister, two district leaders, 12 evangelists, 25 village schools, and 59 African teachers.⁹

Duke split Ranen into East Ranen and West Ranen. East Ranen Mission evangelists were: Jeremiah Oigo (leader), Nicolas Opiyo, Malaki Osoo, and Mordecai Ating'a. West Ranen Mission evangelists were Elisha Olero (leader), Gershon Kungu, Isaac Ojwang', Sylphano Ayayo, Thomas Nyarwanda, Silfano Acholla, Clement Kotonya, Timotheo Otega, and Nicanor Agonda.¹⁰

Duke remained at Ranen until 1952, when R.G. Pearson took over.¹¹ Pearson also served as the inspector of the Adventist mission schools and remained only briefly before handing over to F.E. Schlehuber.¹² Prior to coming to Ranen, Schlehuber was in charge of Ikizu Mission in northern Tanganyika. Schlehuber left in 1955, and in his place came F. H. Smuts. A South African by birth, Smuts had taught at Helderberg College near Cape Town prior to coming to East Africa.¹³ At Ranen, Smuts was assisted briefly by D.L Ringering, before his position was taken over by J. Odero. Schlehuber went to Gendia, while Ringering left to take charge of the mission work to the Europeans of Kenya.¹⁴ Over the years Kamagambo Mission Station progressively changed into a training school, while Ranen remained as one mission station under Kenya Lake Field.

Ranen: From Mission/Field to Conference

The work of the pioneers was remarkable and the growth phenomenal. On December 28, 1961, Ranen Mission was organized into the Ranen Field, set apart from the Kenya Lake Field. By this time Ranen Mission Station had 46 organized churches, with 6,479 members.¹⁵ The inaugural president of Ranen Field was Pastor Christopher Odero, who had deputized Smuts for some years. Odero became the first African in the entire East Africa Union to run a local field. The secretary-treasurer was B. Aseno, and the Executive Committee included C. Odero, B. Aseno, S. Ayayo, E.J. Gregg, Magdalon E. Lind, R.A. Marx, S. Mbeo, E. Nguru, T. Nyarwanda, E. Olero and W.W. Oliphant.¹⁶ On February 15 and 16, 2010, Ranen Field was organized into a conference under the leadership of Pastor S. Omolo Ayugi. In 1961, when Ranen Field was founded, there were only six campmeeting centers, Awendo, Koderobara, Suna, Kuria, Pala and Sori. By 2018, Ranen had over 250 campmeeting centers.

Membership had also grown to 161,619, in 866 churches, by 2017.¹⁷

In 2017, the Ranen Conference was split to form the Lake Victoria Field (LVF), under President Samson Okwach. As of 2018 the LVF had 509 churches, with 74,331 members, while Ranen Conference had 508 churches with 108,952 members.¹⁸ Presently, the conference has six stations, with a territory covering the following government districts: Rongo, Uriri, Migori, Nyatike, Kuria East, Kuria West, and part of Suba District. It has a membership of 93,703 out of a population of 2,335,177, distributed in 514 churches.¹⁹

Present State of Ranen Conference

Today, the Ranen Conference headquarters is situated on an 11.8-hectare campus. It has a newly constructed conference office with a mini guest house. The conference also has three health facilities, Nyabikaye Health Center, Oyani Health Center, and Ranen Health Center. Ranen Conference sponsors many high schools, and owns two of such schools, Ranen High School and Nyabikaye High School. The conference also operates Ranen Adventist Primary School. The conference has a radio station dubbed Tarumbeta FM, which has proved to be a great tool in evangelism and has greatly helped in educating and informing the local region about the love of God.

Presidents

Ranen Field: C. Odero (1961-1966); E. Maobe, (1966-1967); H. Kenani (1967-1968); C. Odero (1969-1971); D. Odula (1972-1980); J. Maiyo (1981-1984); E. Oloo (1985-1990); J. Othoo (1991-1995); P. Ombwayo (1996-2000); D. Mumbo (2000-2005).

Ranen Conference: S. Omolo Ayugi (2006-2015); Bering Ngore (2015-).

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914).
2. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996), s.v. "Kenya."
3. Virgil E. Robinson, *Third Angel over Africa*, unpublished manuscript, Helderberg College of Higher Education.
4. *Ibid.*, 85.
5. Mission Records.
6. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1920), 208.
7. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1946), 167.
8. *Ibid.*, 226.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Isaiah Oyoo and Godfrey K. Sang, "Kanyadoto Mission," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, accessed November 8, 2021, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=DJAN&highlight=Kanyadoto|Mission>.
11. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1953), 431.
12. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1954), 183.
13. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1953), 248.
14. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1956), 157.
15. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1962), 182.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2018), 68.
18. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2019), 74.
19. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (2020), 68.

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