Buticha, Wako Orisa (1923–2002)

ABRAHAM TEKA

Abraham Teka is the executive secretary of the South Ethiopia Field of SDA.

Wako Orisa Buticha was an Adventist Bible worker and church elder who contributed to the establishment and growth of the Adventist church in Tula and other places in Ethiopia.
**Early Life**

Wako Orisa Buticha was born in 1923 in Tula, Hawassa, Ethiopia, to Orisa Buticha and Dureti Buticha. He married Kayite Yuna around 1948 and they had 13 children (nine daughters and four sons). All except three daughters are members of the Adventist church.²

Wako accepted the Seventh-day Adventist message after intensive Bible study and he was baptized by Teklehaimanot Kelicha in 1959.³

**Service**

Wako was a church elder in the Tula Seventh-day Adventist Church, and he was a fervent volunteer worker. Many people in Tula joined the church as a result of his efforts. He was an honest man, generous, faithful in returning tithe, and an exemplary in Christian living. He was known in the community as the “father of faith.” Wako was highly accepted by the community because of his positive influence. He is credited with negotiating with the Muslim leaders in Tula to leave their own land, which was provided to them by the government for construction of their mosque, because the prospective building would completely block the entrance of the Adventist church. This was not because he was a government official, nor a rich man in the community who used his influence to oppress them, but because of his reputation as a godly person.⁵

Another example of his influence was shown when he persuaded the town community of Tula to change the market day from Saturday to Friday, because Saturday is the Sabbath day of the Lord. Still today the market days in Tula are Tuesdays and Fridays.

Wako was known for feeding all guests who came from different places to attend the annual spiritual revival program, a public meeting conducted by Tula Seventh-day Adventist Church. For the duration of the meetings, his house was open to all people who were hungry and needed food.⁶

Wako sent his daughters to school and, by so doing, he violated the local culture that did not allow girls to go to school. Wako was known for avoiding conflicts. One evidence everybody knew about and witnessed was when he solved a serious conflict between a foreign couple through the use of a translator.⁷

Wako was a deep thinker who analyzed situations in depth. He had a positive influence in society. He had some engineering knowledge which he used to plan roads in the town. He believed that personal prosperity gave no joy to anyone. Thus, he was known as the father of the Tula community.⁹ Wako specialized in humanitarian aid, feeding the hungry, dressing the naked, and generally helping the poor. He did this work as a matter of a life principle.¹⁰

Wako was one of the founders of Tula Primary School. He organized the community to develop the school. In order to encourage the youngsters, he provided learning materials for anyone who came to school to learn. He made a plan through which community members contributed to work together in order to build descent houses roofed with iron sheets, which were a rarity in the community.¹¹ He was responsible for making electricity available to Hawella Tula sub-city by collecting money from the surrounding people for this purpose. Even when he was on his death bed, he worried about arranging electricity for his community in Tula.¹²

Once, when his son in-law, who was the administrator of Sidama zone, visited him when he was sick and wanted to take him to the hospital, he refused. When he was asked why, he said it was more important for his people to get light and be emancipated from darkness than for him to go to the hospital for medical treatment. Accordingly, the government began to collect tax from the market users as advised by Wako. Consequently, birr 60,000 was collected and the town got electric lights.¹²

Wako secured clean water for the dwellers of the town by drinking impure water to show the problem of the shortage of clean water when the late emperor of Ethiopia, Hailesilassie, visited Tula.¹³ Wako believed that actions speak louder than words, and so he touched the hearts of the community and won many to Christ.¹⁴

Wako did not discriminate against people because of tribalism, because he believed that all human beings are equal. A good example of this is when he refused a scholarship assigned to his family so that Pastor Lukas Adde (President of SEF), who was not from his tribe, could attend school even though he had failed to raise the necessary funds.¹⁵

Wako Orisa Buticha passed away at the age of 80 in 2002.

**NOTES**

1. Chonisa Oyicha, interview by Abraham Teka, Tula, Hawassa, Ethiopia, September 25, 2019. The interviewee is Wako’s cousin.⁷

2. Kayite Yuna, Danse Hordofa (layperson) and Yoota Lekana (layperson), interview with the author, Tula, Hawassa, July 9, 2018.⁷

3. [Original text continues.]
5. Adera Abite (ordained pastor), interview with the author, Teka, Hawassa, Ethiopia, August 12, 2018.
11. Agaro Abite (retired gospel minister) and Danse Hordofa (layperson), interview with the author, Tula, Hawassa, Ethiopia, June 29, 2018.
13. Kayite Yuna (wife of Wako Oriso), Danse Hordofa (layperson) and Yoota Lekana (layperson), interview with the author, Tula, Hawassa, Ethiopia, July 9, 2018.