



Namba Mission School.

Provided by Alexandre Justino.

Namba Mission

ANTÔNIO BAMBI

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Namba Mission is one of the pioneering mission stations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the central region of Angola, popularly known for its falling of manna.

Origin of Seventh-day Adventist Work in the Area

Namba Mission is situated 180 kilometers (111.8 miles) north of Huambo city, in the Central Adventist Mission of the South Western Angola Union Mission. The mission station is situated on a 10,000 acre plot of land, in the Kuanza-Sul Province.¹ It was founded in 1928 by James Delmes Baker, one of the American Adventist missionaries to Africa.²

The decision to start the work in the area was made December 5, 1927, according to Paulo and Justino. There are two opinions held by Angolan Adventist historians with regard to which board took the decision authorizing the purchase of land. Paulo attributes this decision to the Angola Union Mission Board,³ while Justino correctly credits the South African Union Conference executive committee.⁴ According to the latter, Pastor Anderson and

Dr. Archie Tonge, who were leaders of the Equatorial Union, visited the location to ascertain if the property, then belonging to Ernest Johann Meyer, would be suitable for a new mission.⁵

The final concession of the land to the ownership of the Adventist Church was published in the Official Bulletin, Series III, No. 13, March 29, 1924, under process No. 47/914 - Ernest Johann Mayer, by the provincial decree No. 990, August 29, 1913. In accordance with this decree, the extent of this mission land was 4,327 hectares or 4,093 square kilometers, according to Justino.⁶ Elder M.S. Nigri, a former General Conference vice president, reported that “at Namba[,] one is impressed with the vastness of space and the beautiful mountains on the horizon. It is refreshing to the soul”⁷.

Organizational History of Namba Mission

In 1928, James Delmes Baker, after returning from his holidays, was sent to open the mission.⁸ Like other Adventist missions, Namba Mission had a school, a church, and a medical dispensary. The school was built in 1956 by Pastor Manuel J. Lourinho’s sponsorship, according to Paulo.⁹ The school, according to Nigri, who visited in 1973, had “300 African students, 170 of whom [were] boarding students”.¹⁰ The General Conference vice president was pleased with the classroom building, but not with the cafeteria and dormitories.¹¹ Nigri reported 1,250 head of cattle.¹² Justino states that by the time of its total destruction by the Angolan civil war at the end of the 1970s, the mission had more than two thousand head of cattle.¹³

On the other hand, the mission’s church building was inaugurated in 1961, while Pastor Vitorino Chaves was the director of the mission.¹⁴ Although the mission’s dispensary was autonomous, it sometimes sent difficult medical cases to Bongo Hospital.¹⁵ During the second part of the 1970s, Namba Mission suffered total destruction during the Angolan civil war.

Falling of Manna at Namba Mission

One of the interesting features at Namba Mission is the story of falling manna. One of the first things that surprises visitors who arrive at Namba Mission is its geographic location. After spending some days there, the biggest surprise is undoubtedly the falling of manna.

The story of the presence of manna at this mission has an interesting history. According to *Signs of the Times*, the Namba area experienced a severe drought in 1939, and the inhabitants of that area began to suffer from famine. The native mission director was away for some weeks visiting distant mission schools. The director’s wife called the community to join her in prayer for a solution. The community accepted the invitation. She began by reading the promises of God, and told them of the manna which God sent to His people in the time of Moses.¹⁶

At the end of their prayer session, her five-year-old daughter went outside the house and saw a carpet of white stuff which looked like popcorn. When she returned into the house, her mother asked what she was eating. She

replied, “Out there I saw six European [white] men, and they said: ‘The Lord has answered your prayer and has sent you manna; take it up and eat it.’”¹⁷ When the mother and the community members went out, the six men had disappeared. The community residents began to gather large quantities of this food. When the director of the mission returned and found the people eating manna, he packed a quantity in a small box and sent it to Cape Town, where the founder of the mission was by then residing.

Carlos Sekeseke, the native mission director, wrote a letter that accompanied the package, stating: “It was on the 19th of March 1939, even on the same day, that our God performed a miracle at Namba, for God caused to rain from heaven the bread of heaven which is called ‘manna’. The people of Namba ate and filled plates with it. There ate of it many men and women and young children.”¹⁸

Laboratory tests were carried out on the product sample at Unicamp. A report says that “a sample was sent to the mass spectrometry laboratory at unicamp for analysis. The result is that the sample consists mostly of sugars (oily cerides), as well as small amounts of nitrogen compounds and oxides of metallic elements suitable for food. The study also concludes that the food can be a source of nutrients for the human diet, thus favoring expectations for a true sample of manna”.¹⁹ To this day, it is reported that manna continues to fall on Wednesdays and Fridays, and people gather it and eat it.²⁰

Future Outlook

The Central Adventist Mission leadership has relaunched livestock farming at Namba Mission. Pastor Moraes Lucas, the Mission President, reports that currently Namba Mission has 63 head of cattle, which they hope will grow to reach a total of 300. They have already started preparing the soil to sow maize and beans.²¹

List of Directors/Principals

James Delme Backer (1928); Nelly (1953); Manuel Lopes Paiva (1953-1957); Victorino Chaves (1957-1962); Joaquim Miranda (1962-1968); Antônio Valente (1968-1974); João Corda Tavares (1974); Pedro Matapalo (1974-1977); No Director due to civil war (1977-2007).

SOURCES

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ntadn2DHRGQ>.

NOTES

1. M. S. Nigri, "Adventism in Angola Yesterday and Today," *ARH*, June 28, 1973, 16-17.
2. Angola, *75 Aniversário: Factos da Presença da Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia em Angola*, 1997, p. 7, unpublished manuscript, in the author's private collection.
3. Isaac Paulo, *Guiados Por Deus- a Obra Médica e Missionária Adventista em Angola, os Parsons e a Missão do Bongo* (Portugal, 2013), 126.
4. Alexandre Justino, *Pregoeiros da Verdade Presente- História da Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia em Angola 1924-2004* (Portugal: Relgráfica, 2007), 130.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. M.S. Nigri.
8. Paulo, 126.
9. Ibid, 127.
10. Nigri, 15-17.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 131.
14. Paulo, 127.

15. Ibid.

16. E. L. Cardey, "Manna Falls in Africa," *Signs of Times*, March 4, 1947, 5.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Marcos N. Eberlin and Marcos A. Pudenzi, Laboratório Thomson de Espectrometria de Massas, Instituto de Química, Relatório Técnico de Análise, Campinas, June 2011, p. 10, <https://noticias.gospelmais.com.br/files/2013/11/analise-mana-relatorio-unicamp.pdf>. See also, Gerson Pires de Araujo, as he reported to Richard Davidson this finding of the Laboratory of Mass Spectrometry, Institute of Chemistry, University of Campinas (UNICAMP), Campinas, Brazil, June 2011, quoted in Richard M. Davidson, "God's Sabbath Stamp," *Adventist Review*, December 3, 2018, note 16, <https://adventistreview.org/magazine-article/gods-sabbath-stamp/>.

20. SID Media, "Miracle Manna Story from Angola," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ntadn2DHRGQ>.

21. Morais Lucas, Central Mission President in the Year-end Southwest Angola Union Report of 2021.

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