

Midamba, Isaac Okeyo (1886–1981)

MICAH AGALO

Micah Agalo holds a B.A. in Theology degree and currently is pursuing an M. A. in Leadership at the Adventist University of Africa. He taught at Ranen SDA Secondary School before he became a pastor. He is director of Education, Chaplaincy, Music, and Dorcas departments at Kenya Lake Conference. He is married with four children.

Isaac Okeyo Midamba was a pioneer Adventist teacher and minister among the Luo people of Kenya.

Early Life

Isaac Okeyo Midamba was born in the Kakwajuok village, in the North Rachuonyo sub-county, in the Homa Bay County west of Kenya. He was the son of Midamba Onyango, and his mother was called Akech, daughter of Opana. His father was a peasant farmer who also raised animals.¹ Isaac Okeyo was the firstborn who was followed by two sisters. His father was polygamous and had a second wife after Okeyo's mother. As a young, energetic boy, he helped his father look after the animals and also took care of the farm.

Becoming an Adventist, Family and Ministry

When Pastor A. Cascallen arrived in Gendia in 1906, Isaac Okeyo was one of the first to join the new Mission, also becoming an Adventist. He then developed a deep interest in reading and writing through Cascallen and his assistant Peter Nyambo. He soon became proficient, able to read and write quite well. He was baptized in 1911 during the very first baptism held at Gendia.² In 1912, Cascallen gave him the responsibility to teach the young boys and girls at the Mission School. In 1916, he married Leah Memga, and they were blessed with 14 children, namely Samuel Midamba, Reuben Olwoch, William Ogweno, James Ougo, Rhoda Tindi, Elly Odhiambo, Tito Bonyo, David Opar, Polycarp Olonde, Moses Otieno, Doris Awuonda, Hulda Anyango, and Ruth Akech.³

He taught from 1912-1920. In 1920, he left teaching to become an evangelist, a job he did for two years. In 1922, the colonial government employed him as a tax clerk, and in 1926, he resigned from government service to resume his evangelism work. In 1932, he was ordained as a pastor, only the second African to become a pastor after Paul Mboya. Pastor Okeyo was very impressed when he saw the Adventist faith flourishing and spreading to different parts of this country. He worked in various stations until he retired in 1955.⁴

Pastor Isaac Okeyo's elder son became a pastor like his father and died in 2005. His other son, Evangelist Hezron Obunde, became a long-serving literature evangelist who worked and died after retirement in 2017. Several grandchildren of Isaac Okeyo today are serving in various churches in different capacities. One of his great-

grandsons is serving as a pastor in Kenya Lake Conference as a departmental director.

Legacy

Isaac Okeyo Midamba died in 1981 at the age of 95 and was laid to rest at his Nyahera home. He had established a church there called Nyahera Gendia Church.

Pastor Isaac Okeyo left a rich legacy as a minister of the Gospel in many regions in what was then the Kenya Lake Field. He was the second Kenyan to be ordained to the Gospel ministry. He resisted efforts by the Karachuonyo people to make him their chief after the retirement of their former chief, Okoth Ougo. He authored a book entitled *Adventism in Africa*, which was posthumously published in 1989.

Many people embraced the Adventist faith because of his steadfastness and witness. He is remembered as the pastor who refused the prestigious job of being a chief. In his village, there is a pastor who was named after him – Pastor Isaac Okeyo Njoga, who works in Lake Victoria Field based in Homa Bay.

SOURCES

Okeyo, Isaac. *Adventism in Africa: A Historical Perspective*. Kendu Bay: Africa Herald Publishing House, 1989.

NOTES

1. Isaac Okeyo, *Adventism in Africa: A Historical Perspective* (Kendu Bay: Africa Herald Publishing House, 1989), 7.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 119.
4. Ibid., 8.

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring, MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000