



Kamagambo students in 1933 with C.J. Hyde.

Photo courtesy of British Union Conference.

Kamagambo Adventist School and College

GODFREY K. SANG

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*.

Kamagambo Adventist Schools and College is a premier educational institution in Kenya offering Christian education from the elementary to college level. It is a co-educational institution founded on the Seventh-day

Adventist philosophy of education. Kamagambo lies on the border between the Migori and Kisii counties of south-western Kenya.¹ The school itself is in Migori county, and right across the road is Kisii county. Several institutions are housed within a single campus. These include a primary school, a high school, a teacher training college, and a ministerial school.

History

In 1908, pioneer Adventist missionary Arthur A. Carscallen received German evangelist and missionary Ludwig R. Conradi at Gendia. Together they scouted for a new mission site, a journey that took them to a place named Kamagambo, 40 miles away. They were greatly enamored by what they saw. "This is the country!" said Carscallen as they sat with Conradi at the top of the Kamagambo hill, admiring the sweeping views of the country below. Conradi agreed, "Yes, it is, and I think the Lord would like us to take possession of it for Him."²

Kamagambo, which lay on the boundary between the Abagusii and the Luo, was an ancient battleground between the two communities. It was a sort of no-man's-land, and nobody lived within the separation line. The next five years saw the rapid establishment of new mission stations, including Wire Hill, Rusinga Island, Karungu, Kanyadoto, and Kisii. It was not until 1913 that Carscallen entered into negotiations with the colonial administration for the Kamagambo land. The administration was willing to grant them the land, if only to bring calm to the communities living in that area.

Shortly afterwards, Carscallen constructed new buildings and moved the headquarters of the mission from Gendia to Kamagambo. In 1914 the First World War began, and it could not have come at a worse time. German forces from Tanganyika briefly took nearby Kisii town and had to be forced out through a short but fierce battle by British forces. The people around went on a looting spree and attacked the mission, and when word reached Carscallen (who was at Gendia) that Kamagambo was about to be attacked, he sent his cook Barnaba, who put his wife and children on donkeys and led them overnight to safety in Gendia.³

But Carscallen's troubles had just begun. When the British authorities discovered that the Adventist Mission was under the European Division headquartered in Hamburg, Germany, Carscallen was immediately taken into custody and accused of being a German sympathizer. It did not help that another missionary, Alfred Matter, who had established Kanyadoto in 1913, was himself born in Germany, together with his wife.⁴ Carscallen, together with all the European missionaries, were interned at Kaimosi 100 miles from Gendia. They remained interned for close to two years. The work at Kamagambo, and indeed all the other mission stations, came to a virtual standstill. Despite the cessation of hostilities in the area, the colonial administration was reluctant to return the Adventist missionaries to South Nyanza. B.L. Morse, also interned in Kaimosi, made a direct appeal to General Jan Christian Smuts, Commander-in-chief of British forces in East Africa. When Smuts learned of this, he instructed the authorities in Nairobi to immediately release the Adventist missionaries. In August 1916, Carscallen and his fellow missionaries were released to return to their respective stations.⁵

Upon release, Carscallen realized that not much evangelistic work had happened while he and the other missionaries were away. African staff had taken charge of the missions in the absence of the Europeans, and Petro Oyier had been left in charge of Kamagambo.⁶ It became apparent to Carscallen that now, more than ever, there was a need to train African workers with the right skills to carry out the evangelistic mission of the church. He gathered all the African workers at this time to Kamagambo and from towards the end of 1916, began to train them. This was the start of the Kamagambo Training School. The ongoing war made it difficult to obtain provisions, and even money, from Europe, greatly slowing down the progress of the new school. Even with the difficulties, the school continued. When the war ended in 1918, six persons were ready for baptism from the work at Kamagambo.

Carscallen then left for Europe on a long-awaited furlough. His assistant at Kamagambo, D.E. Delhove, had left for the Belgian Congo. On return, Carscallen was to hand over to the new superintendent, W.T. Bartlett, who arrived in July 1920. In the team that arrived with Bartlett was Spencer Maxwell and his wife Constance, who were sent to Kamagambo. Maxwell worked hard to expand the education program at Kamagambo, both he and his wife teaching or supervising three sessions of class every day.

In 1921 E. Roy Warland, having been briefly posted to Kanyadoto, arrived to take charge of the school at Kamagambo.⁷ That same year, a fresh batch of missionaries arrived, one of them a Bible instructor named Ms. Grace A. Clarke. She had been posted to Wire Hill before Kamagambo, where she established a school for girls. It was not easy getting pupils. Clarke traveled to villages to convince reluctant parents to send their daughters to school. She even had to offer them pieces of cloth to make clothing so that they would agree to go.⁸ Before long the school began to pick up, and after the success of the first girls there, parents themselves brought the other girls.

Kamagambo Training School

In 1928, E.R. Warland was able to convince the colonial authorities in Kenya to grant him a license to operate a training college for teachers. The institution now offered a two-year course for those who had completed their early education. By 1929, Kamagambo Training School had graduated 23 teachers, while some 40 were in class.⁹ There were three buildings in the school, with three tutors training.¹⁰ Kamagambo was directly funded by the Northern European Division, and was one of only seven learning institutions managed by the division, and the only one in Africa.¹¹ Teachers from Kamagambo were soon highly sought after. The colonial administration was in great praise of the quality and standards from the institution.

The primary objective of the mission at that time was to deploy the teachers to mission schools across Kenya. The Adventist schools soon gained a reputation for quality education and highly competent teachers. In 1933, for instance, a teacher, freshly qualified from Kamagambo named Silvano Achia, was sent to Kaigat in Nandi, then an area under hostile attack from those opposed to the Adventist faith. Achia made his mark on the school,

and even though it was closed down by authorities after just two years, those opposed to the faith concluded that Nandi would lose a competent teacher as a result of their action. They allowed him to stay, and the school remained open for a while longer.¹²

Thousands of teachers have been trained and deployed from Kamagambo since 1928. Many served at Adventist schools and even more at government schools. The Teachers Training College is mandated to offer educational courses at certificate and diploma levels in various disciplines. The college integrates Adventist principles into its curriculum. The college mainly produces middle level human resources, well equipped with Christian and professional educational skills required in the educational sector in Kenya and beyond. The institution produces graduates who are known to play a major role towards attainment of the great gospel commission and the national objectives of industrialization of Kenya by 2030.

The Teachers Training College has three colleges: Early Childhood Development Education, for preschool level teachers; Primary Teacher Education, for primary level teachers; and the Diploma In Teacher Education, for secondary level teachers.

In the mid-1990s the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, established in 1978, began using Kamagambo as an extension center. In March 2008 Kamagambo officially became an extension campus, offering the Bachelor of Education (primary option). This was an important milestone, as it now offered teachers a defined path to a university degree. They also offered the Post-Graduate Diploma in Education from Kamagambo.

Pastoral Training at Kamagambo

In November 1929, E.R. Warland held a training institute for African evangelists at Kamagambo.¹³ This was the birth of pastoral training in Kamagambo. Plans were made the following year to have evangelists working among the Kisii attend the same institute. These were short courses designed for those already deployed in the field.

In 1939 the ministerial training began to offer full-time courses. This was the first time a full-time (two year) ministerial course led to a certificate in theology. Sixteen students were admitted to this historic class. They included Elisha Arunga, Timotheo Otega, Malaki Osoo, Josiah Ngare, and Stephen Ngaw, all of whom were from Ranen. Thadayo Nyabwa, Thadayo Nyang'anga, Nathaniel Ochieng, Charles Masio, and Samuel Omondi attended from Gendia. From Kisii were Ariel Muturi, Nemuel Olang'o, and Nathaniel Misati. From Central Kenya were Justus Kang'ethe and Benson Ngatia, and from Mombasa was David Dena.¹⁴

Today, thousands of Adventist pastors and lay persons have been trained at Kamagambo and deployed to many parts of East Africa and beyond. The training program offers certificates and diplomas in pastoral training. When the University of East Africa Baraton was established in Nandi county, many of the diploma holders were able to upgrade their degrees.

Kamagambo Adventist High School

Kamagambo Adventist High School was established in 1957. The first principal was F.O. Martinsen, who had previously worked in the Belgian Congo. He left in 1959, and in his place D. Agutu was appointed. The high school offered much needed education for Adventist students facing Sabbath conflicts at other institutions.

Kamagambo Adventist Primary School

Kamagambo Adventist Primary School was founded in 1997 to provide a Christian education to the children of the staff and the surrounding community. It has also served as a demonstration school for our teacher trainees, adhering them to adequate exposure which is a total value advantage. The first pupils sat the Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination (KCPE) in the year 2002. The school has continuously presented candidates since then - with excellent performance which has steadily improved.

The school is both Day and Boarding handling learners of different backgrounds. The school operates as a Sabbath school of the Kamagambo church participating in outreach programs, nurturing children for responsible adolescent and life beyond school, continuing the noble tradition of excellence in education founded over a century ago.

Kamagambo Principals

Principals: A. A. Carscallen 1916-1920; E.R. Warland, 1920-1936; S. W. Beardsell, 1936-1947; V. E. Robinson, 1948-1953; R. G. Pearson, 1954-1956; F. E. Schlehuber, 1957-1958; W. W. Oakes, 1959-1960; R. A. Marx, 1961-1965; Timothy Gorle, 1965-1967; F. N. Chase, 1967-1973; J. N. Kyale, 1973-1982; G. Y. Mgeni, 1982-1986; L. M. Dull, 1986-1987; G. O. Ang'ienda, 1987-1991; E. E. Njagi, 1992-1995, G. S. Agoki 1996-2000, A. S. Sang 2001-2001, M. W. Yaola 2001-2007, D. O. Juma 2008-2011, G. O. Oromo 2012-2018, W. O. Ateng 2019-.

Girls school: Grace Clarke, 1922-1934; J. Schuil, 1935-1950; Jessie Hawman, 1951-1957 (thereafter the school became co-ed).

SOURCES

Okeyo, Isaac. *Adventism in Kenya: Historical Perspective*. Unpublished manuscript, August 1989.

<https://africansdahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Adventism-in-Kenya-by-Isaac-Okeyo.pdf>

"Report of the Educational Institutions for the Year 1929." *The Advent Survey*, May 1, 1930.

Robinson, Virgil E. "Kamagambo, Then and Now." *The Southern Africa Division Outlook*, December 15, 1955.

Sang Godfrey K., Kili, Hosea K. *On the Wings of a Sparrow: How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Came to Western Kenya*. Nairobi, Kenya: Gapman Publications, 2016.

Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia. Second revised edition. Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996. S.v. "Kamagambo" and "Matter, Alfred."

Warland, E.R. "Evangelists' Institute Held at the Kamagambo Training School, East Africa." *The Advent Survey*, December 1, 1929.

NOTES

1. Google-maps places Kamagambo in Migori county, but across the road is Kisii county.
2. Virgil E. Robinson, *The Southern Africa Division Outlook*, December 15, 1955, 4. Robinson was at that time the principal of Kamagambo Adventist School.
3. Ibid.
4. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996), s.v. "Matter, Alfred."
5. Ibid.
6. Isaac Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya: A Historical Perspective* (unpublished manuscript, August 1989), 14, <https://africansdahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Adventism-in-Kenya-by-Isaac-Okeyo.pdf>.
7. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996), s.v. "Kamagambo."
8. Ibid.
9. "Report of the Educational Institutions for the Year 1929," *The Advent Survey*, May 1, 1930, 5.
10. Ibid.
11. The other institutions run by the Northern European Division were the Baltic Union School in Latvia; Naerum Mission School in Denmark; Norway Mission School in Onsrud, Norway; Polish Mission School in Slaskie, Poland; Stanborough College in Watford England; and Swedish Mission School in Nyhyttan, Sweden.
12. Sang Godfrey K., Kili, Hosea K., *On the Wings of a Sparrow: How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Came to Western Kenya* (Gapman Publications, 2016), 50.

13. E. R. Warland, "Evangelists' Institute Held at the Kamagambo Training School, East Africa," *The Advent Survey*, December 1, 1929, 8.

14. From the obituary of Pastor Elisha Arunga Odera, who died in November 2005.

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