

Ng'etich, Benjamin Chepkwony araap

(1919–2003)

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Benjamin Chepkwony araap Ng'etich, a pioneer Adventist worker in Kenya, was born in 1919 at Nyabangi village in Belgut in Kericho's Location 1, Kiptere.¹ He was the fourth child of Kipng'etich araap Kerich and his wife Taparterit. His father took to habitual drinking and staying too long in the drinking houses, often neglecting his family. It was probably from his father's habits that Benjamin chose to be serious early in life and developed a strong sense of duty, vowing never to touch alcohol or tobacco, even when he was not a member of the Adventist church. Benjamin grew up like any normal Kipsigis child, herding his father's animals in the Ng'ororka area of the Bureti Reserve of Kericho district. In 1940 he moved to the settled areas to look for work. He found work at Cecil Hoey's vast farm Segero, 30 miles north of Eldoret. Ironically, Cecil Hoey's farmhouse would eventually belong to the Adventists when the Segero Adventist Secondary School was established there in 1976.

In 1945, just after the war, he returned to his home and settled at Mwebe at the top of the hills overlooking Kebeneti where the Adventist work had started six years earlier. That year he married Anna Taptuei Cherogony in a traditional Kipsigis ceremony. In 1949 Ngetich and his wife Anna became foundational members at Kebeneti. In 1950 they were baptized into the Adventist church at Kabokyek by Pastor Paul Nyamweya and became members at Kebeneti by transfer. They were baptized on the same day as Joshua Chematim araap Chumo and his neighbor Timoteo araap Yebei. At the earliest opportunity Benjamin solemnized his traditional marriage to Anna at the church in Kabokyek. They were blessed with 11 children and his eldest son, Wilson Chepkwony, would become the first head teacher at the Kebeneti Adventist School.

After worshipping at Kebeneti for a while, Benjamin took the church up the hills to his home village of Mwebe overlooking Kebeneti. Together with his neighbor, Timoteo araap Yebei, Benjamin established what is today Mwebe Seventh-day Adventist Chuch. He tirelessly worked to develop the church in Kericho and became one of its strongest pillars.

In 1945 Benjamin established a hides and skins business which allowed him to care for his young family. His business was quite successful and he expanded it by opening a general store at Kebeneti. Besides doing business, Benjamin also farmed extensively. Benjamin proved to be a man of great principle when doing his

business and soon gained a reputation as an honest dealer, a fact that saw many people desiring to do business with him. He also never hesitated to share his faith with anyone whom he met. He was much sought after as an advisor, for he gave unequivocal biblical advice. People with troubled marriages and all manner of issues often sought his help. He became the trusted arbiter in disputes that had become unmanageable and always shared his Christian faith with the disputants first before hearing what their problem was. He led an exemplary prayerful life and no matter where he went, he had his Bible tucked under his arm in a small pouch that was always with him.

Benjamin was also instrumental in the establishment of the churches at Marumbasi, Roret, and Kamaget, and he served as the chairman of the Church Development Committee in various churches including Chepnagai, Chemamul, and Kaplelartet. He was a sought-after camp meeting speaker and was invited to speak in various churches. He generously contributed funds for the construction of the churches and often rallied members to contribute as well.

Benjamin's wise counsel resulted in his election as the vice chairman of the Kipsigis Council of Elders, a cultural group that sought to preserve the ancient culture of the Kipsigis people. Even there, he chaired the meetings only after starting with a word of prayer and a message from the Bible. In the late 1950s Benjamin was asked by the British authorities if he could find some people willing to settle in Chepkumia in southern Nandi. Seeing this as an evangelism opportunity, he chose men of faith from his local church at Kebeneti and personally led the men to their new land. These people would form the core of Kabaskei Seventh-day Adventist Church in Chepkumia in Nandi and build on the work of Musa araap Sino who was a pioneer at the Kaigat Church in northern Nandi.

For a good 25 years he served as the chair of the Kebeneti SDA Primary School Board, and he served as the chair of Kebeneti SDA Dispensary Board for a record 20 years. He was also a member of the board of Sigowet Health Centre which is a government facility, and he was chair of the Kebeneti Market Center and the Mindililwet Secondary School. He also served as the chair of the Kabokyek Adventist Secondary School Board, and his tenure saw the tremendous growth of the school.

To run his hides business, Benjamin acquired a pick-up truck which he also used for his various other projects. He was a great believer in education and saw that his children got the best. Benjamin was a healthy active individual who often scaled the steep hills of Kebeneti to his home, leaving his car outside his shop so he could walk. His healthy lifestyle allowed him to avoid all forms of medication and healthcare through much of his life. His health began to deteriorate in August 2002, and he had minor surgery at Kendu Adventist Hospital. He recovered well and returned home. In mid-January 2003 he developed abdominal discomfort and was diagnosed with abdominal cancer. He died on April 1, 2003. His funeral was attended by thousands of people from many places whose lives he had touched one way or another. He was survived by his wife Anna and their children.

Source

Sang, Godfrey K. and Hosea K. Kili, *On the Wings of a Sparrow: How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Came to Western Kenya*. Nairobi, Kenya: Gapman Publications Ltd., 2017.

NOTES

1. Note

Information in this article has been adapted from the following book coauthored by the author of this article: Godfrey K. Sang, and Hosea K. Kili, *On the Wings of a Sparrow: How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Came to Western Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: Gapman Publications Ltd., 2017), 203-205.

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