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Focus: Elizabeth Ruhubya (Uganda);
M. O. Madile (Uganda); S. Otu and P.
Mohenu (Ghana); Cape Coast History
(Ghana)



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‘Two female teachers, Victoria and Elizabeth.’ A. B. Fisher, *glass negatives, c.1900. Box 11, Makerere University & History in Progress, Uganda Facebook page*

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Desperately Seeking Sources: Writing Biography from the Fragments

By Michele Sigg, Editor

In 2006, World Christianity founding mother Dana Robert asked the now iconic question “what would the study of Christianity in Africa, Asia, and Latin America look like if scholars put women at the center of their research”?¹ Over the past few years, this question has fueled the work of many women’s historians, especially in areas of the world where Christianity is growing the fastest, such as Africa. But taking up that challenge is not as simple as changing one’s research focus. How does one begin to draft a more balanced account of the history of Christianity, with women playing leading roles alongside men, when, in many cases, it is impossible to find sources on the lives of women? Are women doomed to be forgotten?

A few years ago, I created a category on the DACB website of “collected memories” (<https://dacb.org/sort/stories/collected-memories/>) defined as “a collection of eyewitness and fragmentary accounts, including eulogies, obituaries, and primary materials, sometimes lacking sources and proper academic verification for accuracy.” In my mind, this is an intentional effort to gather up the crumbs of history, the shreds of the life stories of African Christians, both to signal the need for a fuller biography but also to create a sacred memory of their life of faith—even if nothing else is ever written about them.

In this issue, the leading biography—that of Elizabeth Ruhubya—is a striking illustration of the challenges mentioned above. It is a story that has been constructed out of shreds of sources, mostly about other more prominent figures, mostly men. Emma Wild-Wood wrote this biography *after* her article “Looking for Elizabeth Ruhubya: Women’s Biographies and Problems of archival research in the Great Lakes Region,” which offers creative insights into how one can still reconstruct a biography using fragments but also by drawing from the local collective Christian witness.

The biographies in this issue include Moses Ochwo Madile, a pioneer independent church founder from Uganda, by J. O. Moses Okello, Samuel Otu and Paulo Mohenu, pioneers from the Basel Mission in Ghana, by Emmanuel Anim Nyanteh, and Silas Javan Aggrey Owiti, another independent church leader from Kenya, by Wilson Okonjo Adongo.

Finally, Cosmas Sarbah offers a biographical history of the Archdiocese of Cape Coast in Ghana, starting with the stories of the earliest founders and pioneers of early Roman Catholic missions in the Gold Coast and extending the narrative up to the present time.

¹ Dana L. Robert, “World Christianity as a Women’s Movement,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Oct. 2006): 180-186.

Elizabeth Ruhubya (A Woman's Biography Built from Fragments)

By Emma Wild-Wood²

Ruhubya³ lived in the Boga⁴ area, on the Smeliki escarpment. This is now in North-east D.R. Congo, close to the Ugandan border. She was one of the first members of the Anglican Church in Boga and became a teacher in the Church. Ruhubya had an early and continuous role in women's leadership. Twice she led the small church in Boga through early challenges.

Ruhubya was baptised on April 4, 1897, along with twelve other people, including her husband, Muchwangobe and their son Kaduku. Ruhubya and Muchwangobe took the names of a well-known biblical couple, Elizabeth and Zachariah and their son was named John. They had received catechism from Apolo Kivebulaya (c.1865-1933), a missionary to Boga from Buganda and were baptised by Church Missionary Society missionary from Britain, Rev. John Callis. One of the other women who was baptised, Damali Nyaju, also became a trained church teacher from 1904 to 1914.

In December 1896, Elizabeth Ruhubya had provided food for the Baganda church teachers Kivebulaya and Sadulaka Zabunamakwata, when they first arrived in the village of Boga and helped them tend their gardens. From January 1897 Ruhubya started to learn to read.

Ruhubya, in asking to learn to read, upset her husband who did not want her to act without the chief's permission. The chief, Tabaro, tried to dissuade Kivebulaya from allowing Ruhubya to join the class by saying she was of bad character and may bring him into disrepute. Kivebulaya was undeterred.

Another woman baptised with Ruhubya, Malyamu Tuguita, had a fatal accident in January 1898. Kivebulaya was blamed for the accident and was arrested and beaten. Ruhubya protested about the accusations and treatment of Kivebulaya and was also beaten. She hid two other men who were also accused with Kivebulaya but Muchwangobe revealed their whereabouts. For several months, while Kivebulaya was under arrest, women would meet secretly at Ruhubya's house to pray, slipping out of their houses claiming to look for firewood. In this manner, Ruhubya kept the small church community alive.

² Emma Wild-Wood, co-director of the Center for the Study of World Christianity, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom, is the author of a critical biography, *The mission of Apolo Kivebulaya: Social Change and Religious Encounter in the Great Lakes 1865-1935* (James Currey, 2020). She is professor of African Religions and World Christianity at the University of Edinburgh. Previously she taught in D.R. Congo and Uganda as a CMS mission partner.

³ Ruhubya (Anglican / died 1919 / DR Congo/Uganda)

⁴ Historically, 'Boga' is also spelled 'Mboga.'

In January 1905, Ruhubya became a licensed teacher (or catechist), having trained across the Semliki escarpment in Kabarole (Fort Portal) in the Kingdom of Tooro, Uganda. She may have moved after the death of her husband. Ruhubya was one of at least forty-five women were trained as teachers between 1902 and 1909. She seems to have served the church in Tooro until her death in 1919, although there is only a little information on her work.

From some years Ruhubya acted as housekeeper for Kivebulaya's household. The house was on the CMS mission station, near St John's Church, at the centre of the Anglican church's activities in Tooro. It was the place where church teachers met together and passed the night. Ruhubya had her own room that she shared with female visitors. Other widows lived in an adjacent house within the household. Kivebulaya appeared to have assumed the role of male protector for Christian widows but he was often away on missionary journeys. The smooth running of the household probably fell to Ruhubya. She looked after the children whom Kivebulaya housed and schooled. She was the daily support of vulnerable widows. Since the household was a hub for pastoral care and practical support, she would have been a significant figure on the mission station. On December 13, 1915, Ruhubya accompanied Kivebulaya to her home village of Boga. The Christian group had been depleted and isolated by the colonial boundary between Uganda and Congo established in 1910. Kivebulaya and Ruhubya's visit was intended to encourage and support them. Ruhubya visited the women while Kivebulaya visited the men. Together they organised the rebuilding of the church building: women cleared the site and fetched the water and clay, while men made the wattle, fetched trees from the forest and thatched the roof. For some time, Ruhubya stayed in Mboga to teach the women. In February 1918 Ruhubya became unwell. She died the following year.

Ruhubya lived at a time of religious and social change when women could take modest leadership roles in fledgling congregations. Increasingly, her role was focussed in domestic or female-only spaces.

Bibliography:

- Louise Pirouet, *Black Evangelists: The Spread of Christianity in Uganda 1891-1914*, London: Rex Collins, 1978, pp.53-75.
- Emma Wild-Wood, *The Mission of Apolo Kivebulaya: Religious Encounter and Social Change in the Great Lakes* (Woodbridge, James Currey, 2020), esp. pp.134-5, 138-9, 165 & 192.
- Emma Wild-Wood with George Mpanga, *The Archive of a Uganda Missionary: Writings by and about Apolo Kivebulaya, 1895-1934*, (Oxford, British Academy, 2022), esp. 'Kivebulaya's diaries' p.21; Nasanari Kabarole's testimony,' pp. 164-5. & 167; 'Jacob Tibenderama's testimony,' p.186; 'Erisaniya Munubi,' p.221.

Looking for Elizabeth Ruhubya: Women's Biographies and Problems of archival research in the Great Lakes Region

By Emma Wild-Wood

Women in African Church History

At the turn of the twentieth century women in East Africa were becoming Christians in increasing numbers as missionaries – both African and European - reached their villages. Some women became local church leaders, known as teachers, evangelists or catechists. Occasionally they became missionaries themselves. Yet African women are doubly marginalised in an historical record that was usually written by white men. Although the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* recognises that women were influential in the spread of the gospel and the development of church communities, its collection of women's stories remains limited. There are a total of 2,445 biographies in English, of which only 317 are of women.⁵ This article examines the impediments to telling the stories of women. It discusses sources and their limitations. It considers how wider histories can be enriched by attending to women's stories. It does so by attempting to retrieve the life of one woman. Elizabeth Ruhubya and her contemporaries. They encountered the growing Anglican church in the Toro and Ituri areas of the Great Lakes region as it was spread through the evangelism of many Baganda people who had become Christians with the support of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). The article helps to retrieve the early efforts of women and concludes with some areas for further investigation.

Retrieving Elizabeth Ruhubya from disparate sources

On April 4, 1897 a woman named Ruhubya was baptised along with twelve other people, including her husband, Muchwangobe and their son Kaduku. Ruhubya and Muchwangobe took the names of a well-known biblical couple, Elizabeth and Zachariah and their son was named John. They were the first members of the Anglican Church in Mboga. Eight years later, in January 1905, Ruhubya became a licensed teacher (or catechist), probably after the death of Muchwangobe. To train she moved across the Semliki escarpment to Kabarole in the Kingdom of Toro from where she served the church until her death in 1919. Ruhubya had an early and continuous role in women's leadership. Twice she led the small church in Mboga through early challenges. Yet it is difficult to trace her life and the other lives of women who became Christian teachers.

We know about Ruhubya because she became a colleague of Rev. Apolo Kivebulaya (c.1865-1933). A Muganda clergyman who became internationally

⁵ *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* <https://dacb.org/resources/datasheets/indexes/> accessed 25th August 2024.

renowned during his lifetime for his missionary work to Toro (Uganda) and Ituri (Congo), Kivebulaya left a written record. He kept notes and appears in Church council minutes, registers of church services, correspondence and Church Missionary Society records. He became widely admired by the Baganda and British who wrote biographies of his life. In the 1950s the young people were interviewed about him and their oral testimonies preserved. Historians have more information about Kivebulaya than many other early church workers. I encountered Ruhubya whilst I was writing a book Kivebulaya's life and times, and compiling a sourcebook of his writings.⁶ Ruhubya is mentioned occasionally in Kivebulaya's notes and writings. Oral testimonies name her more frequently as a prominent and admired early convert. The oral testimonies about Kivebulaya's life were collected in the 1950s by two British women who admired Kivebulaya, his biographer Anne Luck and CMS missionary, Lucy Ridsdale.⁷ Had Luck and Ridsdale thought to enquire about Ruhubya herself, rather than accept her supporting role in Kivebulaya's story we might have learned more about the mother of the church in Mboga. Like many other historical figures, we see Ruhubya only as a minor character in someone else's story. This places a responsibility on historians to consider the social context and the gendered conditions within which women were living. How far did particular women - and men – conform to an expected role? How far do the limited sources reinforce societal norms? Can the assumptions of the sources be legitimately interrogated? Ruhubya's story provides examples of how this might be done.

Ruhubya's conversion: problems of the male gaze

Events surrounding conversion and baptism are often highlighted in missionary writing. Kivebulaya recorded how Ruhubya came to be baptised. Since he probably wrote the account sometime after the events, it indicates that Ruhubya had become important in his own ministry. In December 1896, Elizabeth Ruhubya provided food for the Baganda church teachers Kivebulaya and Sadulaka Zabunamakwata, when they first arrived in the village of Mboga (now in north- east D.R. Congo) and helped them tend their gardens.⁸ From January 1897 Ruhubya started to learn to read. This is how Kivebulaya described her interest,

I only found one woman, Elizabeth Ruhubya, who wanted to believe in Jesus. That woman came to me saying, 'I want to be registered to read and to get baptized.' I told her, 'Go and bring your husband.' When she told this to her husband, he came with spears and sticks, saying, 'If you get on to baptizing my wife, I will spear you.' I answered, 'Sir, I do not

⁶ *The Mission of Apolo Kivebulaya. Religious Encounter and Social Change in the Great Lakes* (Woodbridge, James Currey, 2020), and with George Mpanga, *The Archive of a Uganda Missionary: Writings by and about Apolo Kivebulaya, 1895-1934*, (Oxford, British Academy, 2022), 20.

⁷ Luck, Anne. *African Saint: The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya* (London: SCM, 1963).

⁸ 'Jacob Tibenderama's testimony' in Wild-Wood, *The Archive of a Ugandan Missionary*, 186.

baptize but it is the *muzungu* who baptizes. I just register her to study.' When I told him like that, he left and went to the chief, because the chief was his brother. When he met the chief, he said to him, 'You brought that cult, so go and get baptized before my wife is baptized.' The chief then came to me and said, 'Please leave the woman, she is wicked because I know her. I brought the cult, so I will read, because you are a respected man. That woman will spoil you.' I answered him, 'I will go ahead and register her although she is wicked. I'll deal with her wickedness in the future.'⁹

Ruhubya, in asking to learn to read, upset her husband who did not want her to act without the chief's permission. Kivebulaya reduced the threat of physical violence by demonstrating respect for the social framework of male authority. Tabaro agreed to attend reading classes, although within weeks of this incident he chases the readers away. Tabaro tried to dissuade Kivebulaya from allowing Ruhubya to join the class by saying she was of bad character and may bring him into disrepute. Since Kivebulaya was preaching the forgiveness of sin he was undeterred. This story gives us a glimpse into the discussions of four men (including the *muzungu*, a white missionary clergyman) about what Ruhubya could or could not do.

Ruhubya was one of a group of women who were attracted to the preaching of Kivebulaya. She was baptised with Damali¹⁰ Nyaju and Malyamu Tuguita, respectively a wife and a sister of Chief Tabaro of Mboga. Damali Ngaju, who left Tabaro's polygamous household, also became a licensed teacher from 1904 until 1914. Malyamu Tuguita, however, had a fatal accident in January 1898. The accident was blamed on Kivebulaya who was arrested and beaten. According to the oral testimony of Nasanari Kabarole, Ruhubya was beaten too for protesting about the accusations and treatment of Kivebulaya. She hid two other men who were also accused with Kivebulaya but Muchwangobe revealed their whereabouts.¹¹ During an investigation into Tuguita's death, Kivebulaya was accused of fomenting marital strife and persuading women to leave their husbands. Evidence from later in his ministry, shows that Kivebulaya preached the equality of women, the enslaved and all humans. In the early days of the Christian church in Mboga, when people were unsure about the gospel teaching, the appeal of Kivebulaya's message of individual autonomy before God seems to have been particularly attractive to women and young, unmarried men, and those in servitude. It made senior men anxious. For several months, while Kivebulaya was under arrest, women would meet secretly at Ruhubya's house to pray, slipping out of their houses claiming to look for firewood.¹² Perhaps Ruhubya's 'wickedness' was actually a strong-mindedness that senior men disliked but which made her an ideal leader for a clandestine group.

⁹ 'Kivebulaya's diaries', in Wild-Wood, *The Archive of a Ugandan Missionary*, 21.

¹⁰ Damaris is the name of a woman who believed after Paul's sermon Acts 17.34 and became a common baptismal name.

¹¹ 'Kivebulaya's diaries', in Wild-Wood, *The Archive of a Ugandan Missionary*, 164-65

¹² T. R. Buckley, Toro, Nov. 29 1898, *Annual Letters*, London, CMS, 1899, 680.

The supposition that ‘wickedness’ is likely to be a biased male view is an indication that historical sources require interpretation. Researchers are required to consider how far male influence on women’s lives may affect the sources that are available. It is also worth noting that, whilst Ruhubya’s conversion gives her some autonomy with which to challenge expectations of her behaviour, she is effectively choosing between two male-led options: obedience to her chief and her husband, or obedience to the teachings of Kivebulaya. The immediate historical circumstances probably provided few other alternatives. Nevertheless, historians illuminate the power dynamics of gendered relations because they are connected to the limited visibility of women in the record.¹³

The wider social context of these gender dynamics is important. The residents of Mboga were insecure. Mboga had been an important trading post for ivory, rubber and possibly enslaved people. The East African slave trade had unsettled the region, making ordinary women particularly vulnerable to enslavement. Their societal position almost certainly declined as a result. European colonial rule was encroaching, and mutineers from the Belgian colonial forces raided Mboga on several occasions. Mboga’s people, the Wahema, had economic influence over neighbouring ethnic groups. They also recognised the overlordship of the King of Toro who had encouraged Tabaro to invite Kivebulaya to Mboga, since he had rejected other catechists who did not conform to social norms. Discussions about catechism and baptism were also about which spiritual forces might ensure the well-being of Wahema society in a volatile situation. Ruhubya’s willingness to risk personal harm to support Kivebulaya and maintain collective prayers suggests that she believed that Jesus Christ could improve women’s lives.

Senior female leader: re-membering a church mother

Some details of Ruhubya’s life appear in the historical record again in 1910 by which time she had been a trained teacher or catechist for five years. She had been living and working in the Kingdom of Toro in Western Uganda, in Fort Portal. This time her actions are remembered by younger men who she helped and who later became church leaders. The job of the historian is to re-member - or to assemble coherently – the life of a woman from fragmented information.

From the age of ten, Erisaniya Munubi lived in Kivebulaya’s house with Ruhubya. The house was on the mission station, near St John’s Church, at the centre of the Anglican church’s activities. It was the place where church teachers met together and passed the night. Munubi said that Ruhubya ‘had a special position in the home’ having her own room that she shared with female visitors. Other widows lived in an adjacent house. Women were expected to have a male protector and Kivebulaya appeared to have assumed this role. Munubi was interviewed about Kivebulaya, for whom he gives

¹³ For a discussion on changing gendered dynamics and CMS missionaries in the region see, Elizabeth Dimock, *Women, Mission and Church in Uganda: Ethnographic Encounters in an Age of Imperialism, 1895-1960s*. (London: Routledge, 2017).

credit for the good food, the nice furniture and the flowers on the table.¹⁴ Whilst Kivebulaya did care for homely things, he was often away from Fort Portal on missionary journeys. It seems highly likely that the smooth running of the household fell to Ruhubya. She looked after the children whom Kivebulaya housed and schooled. She was the daily support of vulnerable widows. Munubi does not tell us whether Ruhubya had a role beyond the household at this time. Since the household was a hub for pastoral care and practical support it she would have been a significant figure on the mission station.

On December 13, 1915, Ruhubya accompanied Kivebulaya to her home village of Mboga. Nasanari Kabarole, who in 1936 would become the first clergyman from Mboga, was among the one hundred Christians who greeted them.¹⁵ The old chief, Paulo Tabaro, who had since been baptised, was also present. The Christian group had been depleted and isolated by the colonial boundary between Uganda and Congo established in 1910. Kivebulaya and Ruhubya's visit was intended to encourage and support them. Ruhubya visited the women while Kivebulaya visited the men. Together they organised the rebuilding of the church building: women cleared the site and fetched the water and clay, while men made the wattle, fetched trees from the forest and thatched the roof. For some time, Ruhubya stayed in Mboga to teach the women. We next hear about her in February 1918 when Kivebulaya noted that she was unwell. Ruhubya died the following year.

Oral interviews – and, significantly, their preservation in manuscript form - have allowed us to see Ruhubya in later life. Once again, we glimpse her through the eyes of men. This time, the young men she helped to nurture and who became the next generation of church leaders. In attending to the scant references of an influential woman, the historical account of church is made more complete. It gives insight into a large Christian household made-up of people with no strong kinship ties, and one that regularly hosted visitors. Kivebulaya, the senior clergyman, relied upon her as a respected co-worker. Ruhubya has remained in the shadow of a much-admired clergyman. Yet such was the delicacy of the situation in Mboga in 1915 that, without her support of her fellow Mboga Christians, the restoration of the church may well have been less successful than it proved to be.

Female Catechists: the usefulness of registers and photographs

There are many years of Ruhubya's life when she almost completely drops from the record except in the occasional mention of her name. Yet attention to a woman's immediate context can provide wider useful information. In this section, I discuss how and what can be learned about early female catechists and other women in Toro, of whom Ruhubya was one.

Like many mission-initiated churches, the Anglican church in Toro has a good

¹⁴ Erisaniya Munubi, in Wild-Wood, *The Archive of a Ugandan Missionary*, 221.

¹⁵ Nasanari Kabarole in Wild-Wood, *The Archive of a Ugandan Missionary*, 167.

record of baptisms, marriages, Sunday services and a temperance register.¹⁶ Often women have very little further trace in other written records. Occasionally, there are brief comments in church minutes, diaries and missionary records. Some information on women is available because they had married men who became clergymen or chiefs.¹⁷ However, such church documentation can be lost. In some churches it is not recorded at all. Even where documents are extant, the search for women can seem like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack. Such painstaking work means that it is likely that some references to Ruhubya have not yet been found.

In Toro there is also a record of female catechists. The CMS and the Church of Uganda encouraged the education and training of women. The Kingdom of Toro had a particularly strong programme that was encouraged by royal women. Women may have been inspired by the strong models of traditional female leadership at court to volunteer for forms of leadership introduced through the church. The Queen Mother and Queen were supportive of new educational opportunities for women and girls.¹⁸ The considerable authority of royal women was threatened by colonial assumptions that only men could be rulers. Neither European missionaries nor European colonial authorities regarded women as suitable for ordination or political office. While King Kasagama of Toro was required to negotiate with colonial authorities, the political role of the Queen Mother was increasingly side-lined. Nevertheless, royal women maintained significant social power through their involvement in the church's education and missionary programmes. Hanna Kagaye, a senior woman in the royal household became a missionary to neighbouring Ankole, no doubt a role that included political diplomacy.¹⁹ Royal women requested female missionaries from Britain and, from 1900, a number of independent-minded, CMS female missionaries from Britain

¹⁶ Registers can be found at St John's Cathedral, Kabarole and Church of Uganda (CoU) archives, Uganda Christian University, Mukono, Uganda.

¹⁷ Historians have collected this material in Toro. See the short biographies in the appendix of Louise Pirouet, M. 'The Expansion of the Church of Uganda (NAC) from Buganda into Northern and Western Uganda between 1891 and 1914, with Special Reference to the Work of African Teachers and Evangelists.' PhD thesis, University of East Africa, 1968. They have been uploaded to the DACB website, for example see Andereya and Lea Sere, <https://dacb.org/stories/uganda/sere-andereya-and-lea/> (accessed 25th October 2024). From 1964, Louise Pirouet worked with the Universities of Makerere, Nairobi and Dar es Salam to collect historical data from across East Africa. The focus was frequently on church leaders of regional standing, and women were unable to take up those positions. One exception is Yoramu Bamunoba, 'The Life of Julia Kibuburu and the Growth of the Protestant Church in Ibanda', *Occasional Research Papers* 9: 83 (Jan 1973).

Also note a handwritten index of chiefs and catechists in the Prof John Iliffe papers, Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide (CCCW) archive.

¹⁸ Vikitoliya Kahinju in <https://dacb.org/stories/uganda/kahinju-vikitoliya/> (accessed 25th October 2024).

¹⁹ For more on Kagaye see, Wild-Wood, 'Modern African Missionaries: A Reassessment of their Impact in Uganda, 1890s-1920s' In *Exchange: Journal of Contemporary Christianities in Context*. 50.3-4 (2021) 270-288.

arrived in Toro.²⁰

Ruhubya's name was recorded in the Women's Teaching Record 1902-22 once she was licensed as a catechist in 1905.²¹ Her name is recorded as 'Duhabya' and her baptismal name is spelt Erisabeti. Elsewhere it is rendered 'Elisabete' or 'Elizabeth' or other variants. Spellings of names vary a great deal which can be confusing for researchers. Between 1902 and 1909, at least forty-five women were trained as catechists. The notes about many of the women are incomplete. For example, Ngaju is recorded until 1914 but we do not know whether that is the year she died or retired from service. One more woman at least, may have come from Mboga. Yayeri Zabunamakwata was licensed in 1903 and was still a registered catechist in 1922. She was the wife of Zabunamakwata, who accompanied Kivebulaya, and some records say they met in Mboga. Among the list of women are a number who became wives of clergymen, like Zipora Kamuhiigi, Lea Sere, and Rebecca Balikurungi. At least one, Ada Wenkere, left teaching when she got married. The Toro Women's Teaching Record was kept by Edith Pike, CMS Missionary, who ran the catechism course. Edith Pike spent many years in Toro, and entered local oral tradition as caring teacher and practical person, who helped her female students long after they left the school. However, Pike, as she was affectionally known, did not leave a detailed written record of the group of women whose training she oversaw.²²

Where textual sources are limited visual and material sources can be helpful. A photograph by Rev. Albert B. Fisher from 1900 of two women seated on a mat is titled, 'Two female teachers, Victoria and Elizabeth.' We cannot know if this is Ruhubya. It may be Erisaba Mukabadoka Rwabudongo or Erisabeti Kabagenyi. Victoria is a mystery. The Queen Mother, Kahinju, was baptised with that name but I have not found a record of a catechist called Victoria. European missionaries often used only the baptismal name or failed to include names at all - a point of frustration for researchers.

²⁰ Ruth Hurditch and Edith Pike arrived in to work with women in 1900. Hurditch married A.B. Fisher soon after and was no longer required to write annual reports to CMS but did publish two books. Annie Emma Allen arrived in 1908.

²¹ Pirouet, *Black Evangelists*, 73-75.

²² Dimock, *Women, Mission and Church*, 87-89.



'Two female teachers, Victoria and Elizabeth.' A. B. Fisher, *glass negatives*, c.1900. Box 11, *Makerere University & History in Progress*, *Uganda Facebook page*.

The photograph depicts two mature women kneeling in the manner of respectable Toro women on a woven mat. The backdrop is a banana grove, a staple food in Uganda. Their intense stares suggest they are holding still for the slow shutter speed. Their clothes indicate new forms of prestige and modesty. Imported cotton wraps were given to early evangelists as payment. The material was desirable, and worn by royalty, because it was more flexible than bark-cloth or skins and its bright white colour was strikingly, visible from a distance. Coloured scarves modestly cover the women's shoulders. European missionary women introduced desirable clothing and with them moral codes of modesty that were new to Toro. Both women hold a slim book as a sign of their role as teachers of the word of God. The book might be the Runyoro-Rutoro primer from which they taught literacy. Or, hot off the press, it could be the first copies of St. Matthew's Gospel, published in 1900. Even if this photograph is not of Ruhubya herself, it shows how female catechists visibly promoted Christianity as a way of living that accepted new material goods, moral codes and ideas.

In the first twenty years of a Christian presence in Toro, certain women seized upon Christianity as an opportunity to live differently. The church encouraged women to become catechists but they faced a set of competing challenges. Catechists were expected to move regularly from place-to-place, and to have good relations with local male authorities. In contrast, women were expected to marry, make a home, tend a garden and care for children. Only royal women might negotiate with local chiefs. This clash of expectations made the role of female catechists very difficult. Strong-minded

widows, like Ruhubya, who appears to have relinquished family ties, were most likely to continue in the role. As the Anglican Church became more established with its own male clergy and as the colonial authorities developed more control over regional governance, the opportunities for women declined further. The rise in popularity of the Mothers' Union gave women opportunities to organise their own affairs. It also placed women's leadership in a female-only space. It was introduced to Toro in 1903 by CMS missionary Bertha Maddox (née Taylor). The Mother's Union could operate as a 'formidable alternative to the male-dominated structures of the mission church and colonial society,' while it often focused women's energies on marriage, child-rearing and home-making.²³ After the First World War, more African men were ordained and women's catechism training declined. Nevertheless, over the decades, the girls' school produced some excellent school teachers, nurses and clergy wives.

The registers and photographs give us glimpses of women who had less traditional influence than royalty but whose elite patronage provided new ways of obtaining dignity and respect. They show that Ruhubya was active at a time of political and social change when women could take modest leadership roles in fledgling congregations. Increasingly, her role was focused in domestic or female-only spaces. Even so, women like her could be influential within the church. The registers and photographs also demonstrate that Ruhubya was not unique in her role as catechist. There were a group of women who took up a formal role within the church.

Ruhubya's biography and alternative biographical forms

I end this article with a summary of the possibilities of looking for a female church leader in the archives, and with a reflection on whether an approach to biography that focused upon a group of women might use the fragmentary historical material more effectively.

The search for Elizabeth Ruhubya has provided engaging narratives which reveal women as actors in society, navigating both radical and conservative forces. History has often emphasised the 'big men' at the centre of institutions. A paucity of sources can reinforce the view that women merely reacted to circumstances. Alternatively, a careful reading of limited sources and an awareness of the context can provide insights into choices available to women, and enrich our knowledge of Christian communities and the societies in which they operate. Biographies can show the appeal of becoming a Christian, the roles of women in church communities, and how social change promised in Christian teaching did not always come to fruition for women.

In Ruhubya's case, her desire to read and be baptised illuminates wider cultural concerns about the role of men in decision-making for women, and reveals the difference of opinion about Christian preaching within a community dealing with a volatile colonial context. Her return to Mboga in 1915, shows the fragility of the church and the humdrum tasks of construction and teaching that were part of

²³ Elizabeth E. Prevost, *The Communion of Women: Missions and Gender in Colonial Africa and the British Metropole* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2010), 157-8.

establishing its continued presence. In learning about her fellow female teachers, a class dynamic was observed in which royal women patronised the education of Christian women and gave literacy an elevated status. All these women were affected by Runyoro-Rutoro expectations of women, and the new social possibilities and impediments introduced by the church and the colonial state. They often added extra challenges to women which contribute to their invisibility in the historical record.

To conclude, I would like to consider whether the standard form of biography impedes endeavours to retrieve the stories of women. It has been difficult to trace a woman who was a catechist within a mission-initiated church with royal patronage and good record-keeping. It is more challenging to trace women in Christian movements that did not have missionary or elite involvement, or those who led locally-initiated churches where textual records were not considered necessary or desirable.

Ruhubya's contemporaries were mentioned as a way of using limited sources to better understand Ruhubya's life. This approach raises a question of the nature of biography. Biography usually assumes a strong sense of the individual as actor. There is an assumption that, in failing to retrieve the individual, we have failed her memory and failed women more broadly. These notions are reinforced by Christian expectations of conversion, personal testimony and confession. Other cultures and periods of time have possessed notions of personhood that regard collective activities as important. Perhaps the concern about knowing an individual like Ruhubya overlooks the significance of the communal work of a group of early female catechists.

Collective biographies – like those trialed in microhistory and life writing²⁴ – might amplify the life and priorities of women. A study of a group allows for marginal voices to appear by focusing on the life of a community. It does so by investigating little known historical characters of the community, and how and why they appear marginalised. For example, it might consider the female catechists in Toro as a collective. In looking for Elizabeth Ruhubya, I found the names of forty-five other women who trained as catechists. Their lives intersected in Christian commitment to training and in supporting congregations. Even as those women adopted forms of Christian belonging that expected individual adherence, the collective expectations placed upon them from their families and the church require more investigation. Through further research it might be possible to piece together their contribution to the social change that Christianity wrought. As writers of women's biography, we might consider how the form of biography parameters might be widened in order to learn more from historical female church leaders.

²⁴ See for example and discussion Klaas van Walraven, 'Prologue,' 33-34. in Klaas van Walraven (ed) *The Individual in African History: The Importance of Biography in African Historical Studies* (Leiden, Brill, 2020), 110.

Iva Peša, "Narrating Social Change through Multiple Biographies" in Klaas van Walraven (ed) *The Individual in African History: The Importance of Biography in African Historical Studies* (Leiden, Brill, 2020), 110. Pat Caplan, *African Voices, African Lives, Personal Narratives from a Swahili Village* (London: Routledge, 1997).

Moses Ochwo Madile: Balokole, Musician, Evangelist, Pastor

By J. O. Moses Okello²⁵

Early Life and Education

Moses Ochwo Madile was born in 1938 in a little-known village called Mwelo near the main regional town of Tororo in eastern Uganda. Moses was an only child of the union between his father and mother; for, shortly after his birth, his parents separated. He was raised by his father's second wife, who treated him as one of her own, along with her other children. Moses grew up as an immensely disciplined child who was given to education. He went through Uganda's rigorous education system passing through all stages of the school system.

In his time, the education institutions in Uganda were encouraged by the government to monitor the academic performance of students and offer them guidance on how to choose career paths. Moses was interested in becoming a high school (pre-university level) teacher. He developed a liking for the sciences and majored in biology. He secured admission into Kyambogo Teacher Training College, then one of Uganda's most prestigious teacher training institutions before it was upgraded to a university, where he graduated with a diploma in education to teach biology. He was recruited by the Ministry of Education and assigned to Nabumali High School, one of Uganda's early schools that were established at the turn of the 20th century by missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), a body affiliated to the Anglican Church in the United Kingdom. [1]

Involvement with Scripture Union, the Balokole Movement, and Music

As a young man teaching at Nabumali High School, Moses Ochwo Madile became an active member of the Uganda Christian Scripture Union's local fraternity, which was largely comprised of the school's students and others from nearby institutions. The fraternity, which professed to be of born again Christians, was supervised by a group of teaching staff which included Moses, and they too professed to be born again Christians. In essence, this "born again" group was part of the Balokole Movement, which was part of the early 20th century East African revival. In Uganda it was called the Balokole Movement because *Balokole* is a Luganda word that roughly translates as "the Saved Ones." [2]

Some of the prominent members of the Balokole Movement were personalities of high standing, such as Archbishop Janan Jakayo Luwum, [3] who was martyred by Uganda's military ruler General Idi Amin in 1977. Others included the earlier evangelist Apolo Kivebulaya, [4] who died in 1933 and was possibly one of the

²⁵ J. O. Moses Okello is a retired lawyer, career diplomat and former senior official of the United Nations. See full biography at the end of the article.

harbingers of the revival movement; Bishop Festo Kivengere, [5] of the Church of Uganda Diocese of Kigezi; the Reverend Canon Yesero Tebba Olowo, [6] of the Church of Uganda; and many others. Some of these, especially the Reverend Canon Olowo, in whose parish Moses' home village fell, had much influence on him. Moses regularly visited the Reverend Olowo and also helped to conduct youth church services during school holidays. [7]

At Nabumali High School, Moses became one of the main pillars of the local chapter of the Uganda Scripture Union. This included leading members in a number of fellowship activities, such as Bible studies, and sometimes taking the pulpit to preach, with the school's chapel as the center of activities. Gifted in music and particularly the guitar, Moses composed songs and led Christian youth in outreach ministries around the country. He was one of the young Christian men who were instrumental in introducing modern musical instruments other than the piano and organ into worship in church. During school holidays, he and other Christian leaders organized Christian youth conferences, known in those days as Christian Youth Conventions. These gatherings lasted an entire week, took place in a specific boarding school, and were held alternately in one region of the country or another. [8]

Partnership with Evangelist Dr. Joseph (Joe) Kayo and Founding of Deliverance Church

In 1967, Moses Ochwo Madile met a young charismatic preacher from Kenya called Joseph Kayo, whom he invited to preach at Nabumali High School. [9] Evangelist Dr. Joseph (Joe) Kayo, [10] as he later became known, had a huge impact not only on Moses but also many in Uganda. Through the ministry of Moses Ochwo Madile and Joseph Kayo, a number of young men and women became born again as well; with some of them, such the Reverend Dr. Stephen Mung'oma and his wife Rachael (both alumni of Nabumali High School), and many others, becoming preachers and leaders themselves in the wider evangelistic movement, leading many more to Christ.

Through Moses' work in those early days, seeds of a new Christian revival were already being sown in Uganda. Organizations such as the Deliverance Church was started by young Christian men and women including Moses, Joseph Kayo, and others. It began as a fellowship prayer group in Moses' staff house in Nabumali High School, [11] and later evolved into what was known as Young Ambassadors Fellowship, with a declared mission to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As its membership expanded and as students completed their high school training and moved to universities, particularly Makerere University and Kyambogo Teacher Training Institute (now part of Kyambogo University), all based in Uganda's capital Kampala, the operational base of the Young Ambassadors Fellowship (YAF) also shifted to Kampala.

In 1971, the YAF transformed itself into the Deliverance Church, a name that the group took from the biblical messages of Isaiah 61:1 and Luke 4:18, focusing on preaching deliverance to captives and healing the broken-hearted. [12] Later, Deliverance Church was to play a significant role in the spread of the gospel of Christ,

especially among young people in Uganda. During the difficult days of General Idi Amin's brutal rule in the 1970s, it also helped steer the work of the church in Uganda. To date, the results of the ministry of Moses Ochwo Madile and Joseph Kayo can be seen in the continuing work of the Deliverance Church and other Christian organizations in Uganda.

From Teaching to Full-time Ministry

Moses later stepped down from the teaching service and became a full-time ordained minister in the Baptist Church in Uganda. For a while he was based in Uganda's second largest city, Jinja, where he was one of the principal pastors. He later moved to London, England, to pursue further studies in theology before returning to his base in Jinja. After a while, Moses relocated to Kampala, where he continued ministering at St. Andrew's Church of Uganda in the Bukoto suburb. While at St. Andrew's Church, Moses was instrumental in the introduction and leading of a dedicated English language service. Until then, Sunday services at St. Andrew's Church of Uganda were conducted primarily in the local *Luganda* language. He later extended this to St. Peter's Church of Uganda and St. John's Church of Uganda, respectively, thereby playing a key role in expanding participation among the local communities in worship and the work of the church.

Family and Friends

Moses married Rose Ochwo Madile whom he met at Nabumali High School. They had two children, Emmanuel and Joshua. Despite financial hardships and personal struggles, Moses continued in the service of the church, mentoring many more young people struggling to find their way in the Christian faith. During a visit to his home in Kampala in 2016, he declared to this author: "I am still a 'born again' Christian. I hope that you are also still one." Moses suffered a stroke shortly thereafter. He passed away in March 2020 at his home in Jinja town after he contracted what was suspected to have been COVID 19. He was 82. Paying tribute to Moses, one of his close friends, Mr. Clive Lewis, former fellow teacher and Christian leader at Nabumali High School, wrote the following:

Moses Ochwo – a brief memoir: In the five years from 1969 to the end of 1973, Moses Ochwo and I were teaching colleagues at Nabumali High School. We were also close friends and 'brothers in arms', although our weapons were not guns but guitars, music and the Gospel. When I arrived at Nabumali, I was assigned a somewhat dilapidated staff house next to the one occupied by Moses. We soon became friends, and it was mainly through him that I was able to develop friendships with other Ugandans. 'Expatriates' (as we were often called) were treated with undeserved deference, and it could be difficult to bridge the gap between *bazungu* [Europeans] and locals. Moses' friendship made that process, for me, not just possible but natural. We were both young bachelors in

our twenties, and, despite our different backgrounds, we found much in common – not least our concerns about finding a suitable marriage partner! However, my fondest memories are about our shared love of music making in the service of the Gospel. Let me recall one typical scene: I am behind the wheel of my ever-reliable Volkswagen Beetle, and in the front passenger seat Moses Ochwo is seated. He is holding our two acoustic guitars. In the back seat are squeezed two - or even three! - students (plus drums), our 'backing group' for a Sunday visit to a Scripture Union group in a nearby school. We are going to tell the story, with accompanying songs, of a young man who goes to Kampala to live the high life – a life which nearly destroys him. The story is entitled 'The City Kid'. [13] Moses was an enthusiastic exponent of the Christian music that I was composing at that time, including 'The City Kid'. He was a true encourager, as well as being a lively and enthusiastic teacher and Gospel preacher. Although I returned to the U.K. in 1974, we never lost contact and our friendship has been sustained through the decades, even during recent times when Moses has faced various struggles. He will be much missed, but we can rejoice in his music, his ministry and his mentorship of many young people finding their way in the Christian faith. Thank you, Moses, and may you now rest in peace. Clive Lewis.

[14]

Moses Ochwo Madile was laid to rest at his home in Abweli Village, near Tororo town, in eastern Uganda.

J. O. Moses Okello

Notes:

1. The Anglican Church was established in Uganda in June 1877, with the arrival of Shergold Smith and C. T. Wilson, the first European Anglican missionaries to reach Uganda. The Anglican Church, which for a long time was known as the Native Anglican Church, later become known as the Church of Uganda.
2. For further information about the Balokole Movement, see DACB stories: "Tukutendereza Yesu" The Balokole Revival (<https://dacb.org/histories/uganda-tukutendereza-yesu/>)
3. For further information, see DACB biographies A-C of Archbishop Janani Jakaliya Luwum (<https://dacb.org/stories/uganda/luwum-janani/>).
4. For further information, see DACB biographies A-F of Apolo Kivebulaya (www.dacb.org/stories/democratic-republic-of-congo/kivebulaya-apolo/).
5. For further information, see biographies A-B of Bishop Festo Kivengere (<https://dacb.org/stories/uganda/kivengere-festo/>).
6. For further information, see DACB biography of Reverend Canon Olowo (<https://dacb.org/stories/uganda/olowo-yesero/>).
7. Author was an active member of the local Church Parish.

8. As a young student, the author participated in these Christian Youth Conventions.
9. Author was present at the Church service at the Chapel of Nabumali High School when the Evangelist Dr. Joseph Kayo preached.
10. For further information, see biography of Evangelist Dr. Joseph Kayo (<https://dacb.org/stories/kenya/kayo-joseph/>).
11. Author was present and participated at the fellowship prayer group meeting when it was first formed with the Evangelist Dr. Joseph Kayo taking part. Some other founding men and women included Melchizedek Wabuke, Hannah Nabusimba, J. O. Moses Okello (the author), Seth Onyango, and Faith Kibugu.
12. Deliverance Church website](www.dcuganda.org) last seen Dec 22, 2024.
13. Lewis, Clive, *The City Kid*, Fountain Publishers, Kampala, Uganda, 2011.
14. Lewis, Clive, Friend of and fellow teacher with Moses Ochwo Madile at Nabumali High School from 1966-1974. Clive Lewis is the author of 'The City Kid', Fountain Publishers, Kampala, Uganda, 2015; and 'Rebel without a Gun', Fountain Publishers, Kampala, Uganda, 2011.

Sources:

-The author knew Moses Ochwo Madile personally and was present during some of the events recounted in this testimony. He was thus familiar with the life and work of Moses Ochwo Madile.

-Clive Lewis was a friend of and fellow teacher with Moses Ochwo Madile at Nabumali High School from 1966-1974. Clive Lewis is the author of 'The City Kid', Fountain Publishers, Kampala, Uganda, 2015; and 'Rebel without a Gun', Fountain Publishers, Kampala, Uganda, 2011.

This biography, submitted in January 2025, was prepared by J. O. Moses Okello, a retired lawyer, career diplomat and former senior official of the United Nations. J. O. Moses Okello knew Moses Ochwo Madile from early days as a youth and participated in some of the church activities in which Moses was involved. Okello lives in Tororo and Kampala, Uganda. He holds a Master of Law (LL. M) degree from New York University, New York, USA, (1988); a Master of Arts (M.A.) degree in Government and Politics from St. John's University, New York, USA, (1983); a Certificate in International Law and Diplomacy from St. John's University, New York, USA, (1982); and a Bachelor of Law (LL. B) degree from the University of Zambia, (1979). He also attended Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, (1975-1977) as an undergraduate student in the Bachelor of Law (LL. B) degree program in the Faculty of Law and transferred to the University of Zambia in 1977 due to political upheaval in Uganda during General Idi Amin's brutal rule.

Recent Biographies

Otu, Samuel **1870-1900** **Basel Mission** **Ghana**

Samuel Otu was a Ghanaian teacher-catechist of the Basel Mission in the Gold Coast (1870-1900).

Otu was born in Larteh-Akuapem in November 1870. He was born to Theodore Yaw Tweedi and Nana Ama Owiredua. He was baptized by Rev. David Asante in December, 1870. In 1896, he married Sarah Afua Yaago, and the couple had two children, Otubea and Yaw Tweedi. The marriage was blessed by Rev. Esau Ofori at Larteh.

That same year, the Basel Mission in what was then called the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) planted their first church in Asante. As a result of this, many churches were established in rapid succession. It became necessary to send more African workers to Asante. Since the native Asante workers were few in number, trained catechists from Akuapem, Akyem, and Kwahu were the first to work in Asante territories.

Trained in Akropong Seminary, Otu started his work as a teacher-catechist in Abiriw-Akuapem. He also held pastorates at Tutu, Akwamufie, Anum Apapam, Begoro, Ejisu, Asante Agona and Takyimantia. These were mainly preaching treks. He also took charge of small congregations.

He was transferred to Takyimantia in 1899, after working for a while in Asante Agona. This particular transfer was made upon a request from the chief of Duayaw Nkawanta, Kwame Boakye, who wanted a school to be started in his community. At this request, Rev. Fritz Ramseyer sent Otu and his family to Takyimantia.

He was not well received by the people in Takyimantia. He persevered in his efforts to start a mission among the people of Takyimantia without focusing on their excuses. It was around this time that there was tension between the British and Asantes over the golden stool. This led to a war which is commonly known as the Yaa Asantewaa war. The Asantes considered any person allied with Europeans to be a spy or a traitor. The Asantes revolted against the British forces and the people associated with the Basel Mission were persecuted.

Most of the mission workers (Europeans and Africans) escaped with their lives. Even though Otu was notified of the war between the Asantes and the British, he intentionally decided not to escape. He believed that this was the place God had sent him to start a church and a school. The people in Kumase, the Asante capital, were refugees in the Kumase Military Fort Museum for about three months.

News arrived in Kumase that there was an African spy who was taking notes and reporting them to the Europeans. This false accusation later became his charge for arrest. He was arrested on April, 5, 1900 by a delegation from Kumasi. He was tortured and beheaded on a street on April, 10, 1900 [1]. He was likely buried without

his head.

After the execution, it is said that Osei Hwim the executioner could not stay in one place but moved around from place to place. Neither the Basel Mission nor Otu's loved ones sought to retaliate but he feared that he would be killed by someone. One of the other people involved in Otu's death was Akwasi Mmora. Out of guilt, Akwasi joined the Christian community and became a catechumen by 1911. He became a great witness of the faith he once persecuted. It should be noted that within three years, all those who were associated with the death of Otu came to miserable ends.

Otu's wife Sarah Afua Yaago was rescued by the British government nine months later and she returned to Larteh after nine months. She died in 1962, aged 88. Her funeral was attended by delegates from Takyimantia.

A chapel was dedicated in 1931 to Otu's memory at Takyimantia by Rev. Karl Hartenstein, then superintendent of the Basel Mission. This chapel was dedicated at the very spot where Otu was executed. In 2020, this chapel was refurbished and rededicated by Rev. Dr. William Ofosu Addo, presbytery chairman of the Brong Ahafo Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.

On April, 10, 2000, a centenary anniversary was held at Takyimantia in Otu's memory. Samuel Otu Memorial Congregation in his hometown in Larteh-Akuapem has been named after him. Also, the Senior High School and the congregation in Takyimantia have been named after him. There is a museum in his memory at Takyimantia.

Some scholars such as H. W. Debrunner and Emmanuel Braffi have been opposed to accepting his death as that of a religious martyr because they interpret it as the result of a political conflict between the British and the Asantes. Nevertheless, Samuel Otu is still celebrated as the first Christian martyr in Ghana. Even non-Presbyterians celebrate his legacy.

Emmanuel Anim Nyanteh

Notes :

1. It is also possible that he was killed on April, 17, 1900. See F. A. Ramseyer, *Dark and Stormy Days in Kumassi*. London: J. W. Partridge, 1901, 230.

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Primary sources: Narration of the event told by his wife, Sarah Yaago to Rev. N. T. Clerk was issued in *Kristofu Senkafo*, 1911, pp., 6-8, 16-18 and 60. A translation is provided by Fred Agyemang and Edmund Amankonah. For a note on the aftermath of the executioner and those who arrested him, see pp. 64-66 of the 1911 *Kristofu Senkafo*. A museum in memory of Otu is located at Takyimantia.

This article, submitted in November, 2024, was researched and submitted by Emmanuel Anim Nyanteh, a graduate of Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, and a member of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Christ Congregation Afutu-Nsawam.

Mohenu, Paulo

1809-1886

Basel Mission

Ghana

Paulo (Paul, Paolo) Mohenu (1809 - 1886) was a traditional priest who converted to Christianity and later became an evangelist of the Basel Mission in the Gold Coast (now Ghana).

Early Life

His father was Ataa Ayiku and his mother Adukoi, both from Teshie in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. It is not known what languages he spoke, but he must have spoken Ga, his mother-tongue, and possibly Adangbe and Twi. He did not receive any formal education. Mohenu's mother died when he was twelve years old. Mohenu was a farmer and a hunter by profession.

Work as a Priest of the Ga Religion

Mohenu was initiated into the religion by a well-known priest in Teshie when he was about 19 years old. The initiation took place in the bush one night. At the initiation, a concoction of blood from Mohenu and his master was mixed and he drank it. He became very popular in Ga areas. He often performed at functions like funerals and festivals to exhibit his magical powers and incantations. He served a deity called *Dzabaa* and *Atiko*. People consulted him for solutions to their problems as well as invitations to festivals, marriages, and funerals. He also used herbs to heal sick people. He settled at a village known as Gunwuluno, near Abokobi, to serve his clients. Later on, he revealed that his previous life was full of tricks and magic.

Conversion and Baptism

In 1854, the English colonial government burned down Osu in the Greater Accra Region, because of the refusal to pay the poll tax ordinance. Johannes Zimmerman, who was then in charge of the mission station at Osu, and his family moved from Osu to settle and start a new Christian community in Abokobi. A Basel missionary named John Stanger started evangelizing the area of Abokobi and its surroundings. He won two converts at a village called Abladzei, near Abokobi, where Mohenu had moved to reside. One day, his anger was kindled, like the merchants in Acts 16, at the prospect that he might lose all the local people who were converting to the new faith. It has been said that Mohenu was furious when missionaries visited his house one day when he was home.

Mohenu discovered that his farm has been plundered by pigs. He then decided to keep a vigil at the farm during the night to ward off the pigs. But that evening, in a

vision, he saw a dazzling light and a huge headless snake. He tried to fire at the snake with his gun but a voice insisted that he should not. This frightful event caused him an illness that proved resistant to treatment. Eventually, he went into coma and in a vision, he was admonished by an angel to forsake his former life and give his life to Christ.

After he heard street preaching in the neighbourhood of Abokobi, he was touched deep in his unconscious being and was led to apply for baptism. At first nobody took him seriously, but his insistence made people believe him. Along with seventeen other catechumens, [1] he was baptised in October of 1857 at Gunwuluno, near Abokobi. In those days, catechumens were prepared for baptism during at least nine months of discipleship. This proved effective in the life of Mohenu. At his baptism, he received the name of Paul. His traditional amulets and talisman were destroyed by Laissle Smith, a Basel missionary. He learned to read the Bible and became an itinerant preacher. Over a period of almost twenty years, he helped found and build up congregations in Odumase, Ada, and in many small villages on the Accra plain.

Mohenu's conversion is commonly attributed to the Basel Mission missionary, Heinrich Bohner. However, if Mohenu converted in 1857, it can only be said that Bohner strengthened the faith of Mohenu. In fact, Mohenu was already a Christian before Bohner's arrival because Bohner sailed for the Gold Coast in 1863. Because Mohenu was well acquainted with Ga culture and religion, he became a key source for the book *Im Landes des Fetishes*. [2]

Work as a Preacher

He was commissioned in June of 1867 as an itinerant preacher and he toured most of the towns in the Ga-Adangbe areas. He worked at places like Abokobi, Mayera, Sasabi, Ada, Tema, and Yilo-Krobo. He also helped Daniel Saba in Awutu, Central Region of Ghana. [3] He was the instructor for about fifteen catechumen in Mayera who came for even services organised by Mohenu. This was a congregation that he founded. The first converts from Mayera, seven in number, were baptised on March 15, 1868. Mohenu also received some help from Daniel Ablo, his in-law, to instruct the converts at Mayera.

Because he did not receive education at the teacher's training college in Akropong, he remained in the position of an evangelist and a presbyter. This position of evangelist was given to indigenous members of the church who had not received seminary training but were eloquent. He and Peter Hall were the two foremost evangelists of the Basel Mission in the Gold Coast. [4] He was found to be a suitable person for this work. His sermons and preaching were described as fiery, [5] and his speech has been described as having a coarse power of speech. [6] Even though he was not a catechist, he instructed catechumens before their baptism. Right after his commissioning, he was asked to return to the new outstations of Abokobi, which needed special attention.

Contribution to scholarship

It may be surprising that an “uneducated” man like Mohenu would contribute to scholarship. As noted above, Mohenu was one of the sources to Heinrich Böhner’s book, *Im Lande des Fetischs*. This book was a contribution to understanding Ga religion and culture. Even though Mohenu was not the author, Böhner, as an eyewitness, received Mohenu’s input to guide his judgments and conclusions. This book has received some criticism. [7]

Death, Memorial, and Legacy

Mohenu died in 1886 at the ripe age of 77. He was buried in the Basel Mission cemetery in Abokobi. Due to his many travels, it is possible that he contracted plasmodium, which caused his death. In 1986, a special memorial service was held on the centenary of his death at Abokobi, Greater Accra Region of Ghana. [8] On that occasion, I. H. Frempong, moderator of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, presented a shield depicting the picture of Mohenu and an award of ₵3,000 (three thousand cedis) that church groups competed for annually within the Ga Presbytery to encourage Bible studies. The cash was used to purchase books in memory of Mohenu at the Trinity College Library, Legon (now Trinity Theological Seminary). [9] The Teshie high priest Osabu Kodjo narrated the history of the Mohenu family. He also expressed the desire to become a Christian one day as Mohenu had done. [10]

An annual “*Paulo Mohenu Lecture*” has been held in his honour since 2015 at the Paulo Mohenu Congregation in Teshie-Aboma, a congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana also named in his honour.

Emmanuel Anim Nyanteh

Notes:

1. *Feuille Religieuse du Canton de Vaud* (Lausanne: Au Bureau de la Feuille Religieuse, 1889), 314.
2. Heinrich Böhner, *Im Lande des Fetischs: Ein Lebensbild als Spiegel des Volkslebens*. (Basel: Verlag der Missionsbuchhandlung, 1890), 3-4.
3. Abraham Nana Opare Kwakye, “African Initiatives and Sources in Christian History: Paolo Mohenu (1809-1886), a Gold Coast Traditional Priest who Became a Basel Mission Evangelist” in E. Sasu Kwame Sewordor and Anne Beutter, *African History Between Ghana and Switzerland: Essays Honouring Paul Jenkins*. (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2024), 119.
4. Otto Schott, *The Basel Mission on the Gold Coast, Western Africa*. (Basel: Felix Schneider, 1879), 18. Peter Hall was educated at the Seminary. See his *Autobiography* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1965), 22-24.
5. *Nuremberg Missionsblatt*. (Nuremberg: Zentrallausschuss des evangelisch-lutherischen Missionsvereins, 1883) 64.

6. *Der Evangelische Heidenbote*, 1867, 59.
7. See the foreword in Bohner, *Im Landes des Fetishes*, 3-4. Also, Noel Smith, *Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835-1960: A Younger Church in a Changing Society* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1966), 61.
8. "Paolo Mohenu Remembered," *The Presbyterian*, April-June, 1986, 8.
9. "Paolo Mohenu Remembered," *The Presbyterian*, April-June, 1986, 8.
10. "Paolo Mohenu Remembered," *The Presbyterian*, April-June, 1986, 8.

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This article was researched and submitted in December 2024 by Emmanuel Anim Nyanteh, a graduate of Trinity Theological Seminary and a member of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Christ Congregation Afutu-Nsawam.

Owiti, Silas Javan Aggrey

c.1924-2018

Voice of Salvation and Healing Church

Kenya

Family Background

Silas hailed from Kano plains of Kochogo in Kano location, in the western part of Kenya. His father was Jowi Oiko and his mother was Mariam Dede Jowi, from Kodumo in Kabondo, near Kadongo Market in southern Nyanza. Silas was Miriam's third born. His parents lived in a small village called Apondo situated on the southeastern side of Kisumu town and on the eastern side of the Lake Victoria. Jowi was wealthy and honored by ancient standards of living. He was a polygamous elder among his people and was married to five wives.

Owiti was Silas' ancestral name and Javan Aggrey Silas were baptismal names that he received in the church during his dedication. Though the exact date of his birth is not clear even to him, most of his documents suggest that he was born in the 1920s. [1]

Education

During his school days, most of the schools were maintained and run by missionaries. To join one of these denominational schools, one had to be a member of that denomination or possess a Christian name. Children were required to learn Scriptural messages and catechisms in order to gain a pass for baptism.

Silas joined an African Inland Mission (A.I.M) School called Kagimba Elementary School in their home area where he learned basic arithmetic and reading. His brilliance and intelligence convinced his teachers to recommend him for further education thus earning himself a place at Onjiko Primary School where he performed very well in his final examination. This gained him admission at the Maseno School, a prestigious institution in the 1930s that was managed and maintained by the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S). Although he was a member of the African Inland Church due to its dominance in their area, Silas had to change to Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) to enable him to gain easy entrance to Maseno School. At Maseno School, Silas joined the baptism class and was later baptized by the late Archbishop Festo Olang', the Anglican bishop of Maseno Diocese.

Employment

Silas got his first job with the Maize Control and Produce Board in the town of Kisumu as a clerical officer. He was posted to Butere in Kakamega District. Because of his good work, he was later transferred to Bungoma after being promoted to Depot Manager. After about three years, he was again transferred to Kisumu. In

1952, he terminated his services with the Maize and Produce Board of his own volition. [2]

Marriage and Family Life

Silas was married in an African customary way in January 1953 to Phenny. Their first baby was a girl named Edith Akinyi after the nurse who helped during the delivery. Edith is married to Steven Oduor of Gem, Sawagongo. Besides Edith, God gave Silas four other children. Three of these were promoted to glory while they were still young. The last-born, Eva Atieno Owiti, is married to Mahulo of Samia and God has blessed them with six children.

In 1984, Silas and his wife Phenny were involved in a tragic road accident near Naivasha on their way from Nairobi. Unfortunately, Phenny Resley Owiti died in the accident and was laid to rest on December 31. In God's mysterious way, Silas later met another young lady who was a student of agriculture at Bukura Agricultural Institute (1983-1985). Silas married his second wife Winnie Julia in the late 1980s. They were blessed with one son whom they named Tommy Lee Osborn.

Conversion and New Life in Christ

Silas received salvation miraculously. It was his first wife Phenny who wanted to be saved first but Silas was reluctant since he did not understand what salvation was all about. One day, as Phenny was coming back from the ante-natal clinic for their first born, she met some people preaching the gospel of salvation in a market place. She listened to them and longed to give her life to the Lord. However, because of Silas's attitude, she had to go home to ask for his permission. Silas only gave her one condition: for her to be saved they had to get a divorce. [3]

One evening, in their house, Silas heard some people praying in English in the neighborhood. This was from the home of his cousin, ex-chief Washingtone Owiti Omori. Omori had not gone to school hence could not speak English well. Therefore, Silas and his wife argued over this, doubting that it was his cousin praying in English. The following day, as Silas was heading to his work place on a bicycle, he passed by his cousin's place to inquire which guest they had the previous night who was praying in English. His cousin told him that they had not had any visitors. He and his family had been having evening prayers and were praying in the Holy Spirit. It turns out that, by this time, Silas' cousin had been saved and belonged to the Kutendereza movement (East African Revival). Silas inquired if they could have another prayer so that he could join them just to confirm that indeed Omori was able to pray in fluent English. However, Omori told Silas that because it was the Holy Spirit who directed their tongues in prayer, he could not promise him that it would happen again. But Silas insisted that, even at another prayer session, the Holy Spirit would be present. They agreed that he would join them the following evening.

Full of curiosity, Silas attended their prayer meeting. When the prayer session

started, miraculously, this time it was the wife of Omori who was singing a hymn in English. It was number 259 in The Golden Bells Song Book [4]:

Lord I hear of showers of blessings Thou art scattering full and free;
Showers the thirsty land refreshing; Let some drops now fall on me, even
me, even me, let some drops now fall on me.

The sweetness of this illiterate Luo woman singing this beautiful English hymn broke down every barrier in Silas' heart. God is surely in their midst, Silas thought as tears ran down his cheeks. Silas was incredulous because the hymn the woman was singing was exactly the one they used to sing when he was a student at Maseno School. The miraculous part of this was the fact that the woman was more illiterate than her husband. Silas was dumbfounded and saw that there was something in this salvation. He was invited to attend their Sunday service.

At the Sunday service Silas made a dramatic turn in his life. During the sermon, he began to cry. To him, the tears seemed like a big crowd going forward to be prayed for. He did want to be left behind, so he went forward to be prayed for in order to be saved. As he looked up, he saw a flash of light. Then he saw Jesus on the cross, and the blood was streaming from His side and dripping on Silas's head. It seemed cold, penetrating to the core of his being, and as it did so, it cleansed every sin and then vaporized. He tried to confess his sins, but fell to the ground weeping heavily. When he got up, Phenny had joined him. They both accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior that day. This took place at the home of Edward Osako in Apondo. Later he learned about the Holy Spirit and was baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The Call into Ministry

After his conversion, Silas said, "Everywhere, I saw an opportunity to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On many occasions, I went out of my house at night and preached. Those within the reach of the sound of my voice heard it. I preached to relatives, friends and even to the enemies, as well as to my superiors at work. Both my parents accepted Christ."

The call to step out into full time evangelistic ministry came to Silas when he was already busy winning souls to Christ. Therefore, his call was not so much the beginning of a new ministry as such, but rather the continuation of a ministry that had already begun. Silas' passion for souls and love for Christ was such that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to perform both his clerical office duties properly as he desired and, at the same time, satisfy the urge to proclaim the Good News of the Savior of the world.

One time, Silas decided to pray and fast. At three o'clock, God gave him a vision in which he was preaching to a large crowd of people completely unknown to him. A more clear confirmation that God had a plan for Silas came during an evangelistic meeting conducted by Joseph Ochieng' (Ja Muma) who was an anointed servant of God with a gift of prophecy and the gift of the word of knowledge. In 1956, he stood

up in one meeting and gave a prophetic utterance about the life of Silas. He said God was calling Silas to serve Him and that He would take Silas to many places around the world and cause him to mediate between their church and the government. He prophesied that God would take Silas before great leaders of the world and that He would make him to be one of his blessed people around the world. [5]

Obstacles to the Call

Though the call was very clear to Silas, it was not easy for him to step out into the ministry and to leave his well-remunerated job. This was even more difficult as he was not affiliated with any established church denomination. Despite all these circumstances, Silas still felt God was calling him to take a step of faith. He had to face difficult questions such as where would he live and how he would provide for his family.

Silas did not go to Bible school or theological seminary to prepare for the ministry. Instead, he attended short courses offered by visiting evangelists like T. L. Osborn, Oral Roberts, Morris Cerullo, Mattson Boze, John Vick, Charles Weston, and others who also influenced him in his faith. Before and after their crusades, these evangelists conducted courses for rising African evangelists.

To Silas, the most important training came as he lived a life of faith entirely dependent upon God for his needs. He called it “the school of hard knocks.” He came to realize later that nearly all the powerful servants of God went through that school in one way or another. Silas did not have any sponsor when he stepped out in faith to serve God. Living by faith to him meant exactly that. [6]

It is probably this style of rugged faith that made Silas’ ministry stand out from other ministries in Kenya and other parts of the world. His ministry called for a closer walk with God and close communion with Him. Silas admitted that from the time he had met the Lord, it had always been his desire to preach and live the New Testament faith to its fullest extent.

Missionary Journeys

In his ministry, Silas presented the unchangeable gospel of Christ in a changing world. He planted many Voice of Salvation and Healing Churches (VOSHC), and facilitated many conferences and seminars. He led numerous local missions in various parts of the country. He preached in many learning institutions from high schools to colleges and universities in Kenya and overseas. Moreover, Silas led many overseas missions in Finland, Norway, England, Scotland, and the United States of America where many people gave their lives to the Lord. Many experienced miracles.

In addition to the apostolic ministry, through the grace of God, Silas also possessed the spiritual gift of performing miracles. Just like the apostles in the early Church, God used Silas mightily in praying for eight dead individuals who came back to life. Innumerable people were healed from all kinds of ailments and physical disabilities. Those whom the Lord brought to life through Silas included: the lady at

Nyamware, Risper Ajwang' Agango; the lady at Nyamonye in Bondo, the boy from Siaya District, a boy raised to life in Nakuru, Silas' own father, John Okech Oriawo, and Silas' own daughter Eddith who is still alive. [7]

Owiti went to be with the Lord on January 14, 2018 at the Agha Khan Hospital in the western city of Kisumu, Kenya.

The Origins of Voice of Salvation and Healing Church (VOSHC)

The origins of VOSHC can be traced back to revival movements. In East Africa, the revival that greatly influenced Christianity was known as the East African Revival, commonly referred to as the Kutendereza Movement. The movement is also described as Ruandism since it started in Rwanda (known as the Ruanda-Urundi territory from 1916-1961).

The Christianity that came to sub Saharan Africa was very fragmented and this divisiveness influenced African society as a result. Africa adherents of one denomination mistrusted and were alienated from fellow Africans who were followers of other denominations. In addition, this Christianity tended to be too intellectual mainly because of the way Africans were being Christianized. [8] The majority lacked any real commitment to Christianity and its values because they were Christians only by name. The Christianity presented to Africans was so clothed in Western cultural garb that it was hardly recognizable. The result was a marked dryness and lethargy in the church at this time. The church seemed to be asleep for lack of zeal. There was a need for revival!

Revival Reaches Kenya

By the time of the Rwanda revival (Gahini 1929), the missionary church was well established in Kenya. Though its administration was good, the Kenyan church lacked spiritual zeal and fervor. Thus the dryness of the missionary version of Christianity could also be felt in Kenya and a certain restlessness began to develop among Kenya-African converts. In 1937 and the following year, when Rwandan revivalists visited Kenya they found the stage already set for the revival. [9]

In their preaching, the revivalists from Rwanda put great emphasis on sin and all its various manifestations as stipulated in Galatians 5:22. Sinful behavior was exposed and castigated. The confession of sin was often combined with restitution. [10] The revivalists did not bring with them any normal ecclesiastical structures.

There were no officials, no executives, no salaried workers, no headquarters, no bureaucracy, no paperwork, no budgets, no membership lists and no annual subscription fees. The fellowship was informal, unstructured, and spontaneous. [11]

However, the revival was not unanimously accepted. In some cases, the mainstream church regarded it as a disruptive movement. Its members came to be known for their dedication and vehemence—particularly, for their refusal to acknowledge the established churches as the only vehicle through which one could

be saved. They often appeared to be overzealous—even mentally unstable at times—as they went round denouncing sinners from treetops, housetops, and market places.

By 1914, the Bible in Kiswahili language had been completed. By 1926, the Kikuyu and Luo New Testament had been published. This had a significant effect on the direction Christianity was to take in Kenya. The mainstream churches became uncomfortable with the revivalists.

The Birth of a New Church is Imminent

Many revivalists were sent away from their mainstream churches. However, they were still zealous. Nevertheless, some aspects of Christianity were not real to them. The Rwanda revival group believed in salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ, but not in the divine healing of the sick and infilling by the Holy Ghost. They believed divine healing had ceased with Jesus and speaking in tongues had ceased after the apostles in the early church were filled with the Holy Spirit. [12]

Nicholas Bhengu in Kenya

The major turning point came in the early 1950s when a visiting missionary, Nicholas Bekinkosi Bhengu (1909-1985) from Zululand (South Africa), came to Kenya. Around 1952, Bhengu was invited by the church that is currently known as Pentecostal Assemblies of God (P.A.G) stationed in Nyang'ori. Evangelistic crusades and revival meetings were organized for him. In the Luo Nyanza region, he held a crusade in Awasi town in the present day Nyando District, Kisumu County. [13]

Bhengu's message contradicted the teachings and beliefs of the revivalists who believed in salvation but did not believe that a person could be filled with the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. Remarkably, some of the revivalists who attended his meetings embraced his teachings. [14]

Excommunication from the Mainstream Churches

After returning to their respective home churches, those who had attended the crusade by Bhengu spread the message they had heard. This did not go well with the leaders of the mainline churches who excommunicated them. From that point on, because they did not have a church they could identify with, they took turns holding prayers in their homes and had weekly fellowships. [15]

Up to this time, the group also did not have any organizational structure nor any form of leadership. The members of the group argued that leadership positions and titles would derail their spirituality, which was most important.

Under Police Surveillance

By the early 1950s, the Mau Mau fighters for political independence in Kenya were brushing shoulders with the British colonial government for control of Kenya, especially the central region. The police, under the colonial government suspected that the meetings of this independent Christian group were just a front for back door Mau Mau activities. They were considered suspect because they could pray and fast for as long as a month in the forests and then come together behind closed door for overnight prayers. In many instances, they were reported for making noise in the surrounding areas due to the way they preached and prayed using traditional megaphones. [16]

The Idea of Registration

The C.I.D. (Directorate of Criminal Investigation) could be sent to their meetings whenever they gathered. One day, an agent made this report to the police commissioner: "This is the best group of Christians I have ever met. They have only two faults: They sing their choruses over and over again, and they pray too loud and cry like babies." The conclusion of the report was: "They need to have this group officially registered as a church with the government. Then they will no longer be under suspicion and this will bring to a close frequent arrests and harassment based on rumors."

When the suggestion of registration was floated to the group, it was not easy to embrace. [17] They argued that there was no scriptural record that the apostles in the Early Church were registered. For the registration, it also meant that they had to have proper and functional leadership. But they believed that any form of leadership would take away the anointing of God. However, after a long deliberation, they agreed to have the group registered. The District Commissioner of Kisumu District invited their perceived leaders to his office and explained to them how to go about the registration.

As a result, a meeting was held on May 16, 1956 and application for registration was made. Silas Owiti was given the mandate to draft the by-laws necessary for the registration. The group was thus registered as one of the first few indigenous Pentecostal church movements by the British colonial government in Kenya under the name "Voice of the World Wide Salvation & Healing Revival." [18] However, the name has gone through several transformations. In 1964, a new name was decided: the Voice of Salvation and Healing Church (VOSHC) with Silas Owiti as the overall leader of the church.

Wilson Okonjo Adongo

End Notes:

1. Eve Owiti, interview by author (8/8/2010). She is the last daughter of Silas

Owiti from his first wife.

2. Silas Owiti, interview by author (4/1/2011). The author visited and did personal interview with him at his home in Ahero.
3. Silas Owiti, interview by author (4/1/2011).
4. Silas Owiti, interview by author (4/1/2011).
5. Silas Owiti, interview by author (4/1/2011).
6. Silas Owiti, interview by author (4/1/2011).
7. Silas Owiti, interview by author (4/1/2011).
8. Hinga T. M. (1980). "An African Understanding of Salvation." M.A Thesis, Nairobi, Kenya: Nairobi University.
9. Hinga T. M. (1980).
10. Hinga T. M. (1980).
11. Barrett, D. B. (1968) *Schism and renewal in Africa: an analysis of six thousand contemporary religious movements*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
12. Angura Vitalis, interview by author (3/7/2010). He was the first treasurer of VOSHC and one of the pioneers. The author visited him in person and interviewed him at his home in Muhoroni Scheme.
13. Angura Vitalis, interview by author (3/7/2010).
14. Angura Vitalis, interview by author (3/7/2010).
15. Angura Vitalis, interview by author (3/7/2010).
16. Angura Vitalis, interview by author (3/7/2010).
17. Silas Owiti, interview by author (4/1/2011).
18. Allen Ojwang' Iro, interview by author (14/7/2010). He was one of the pioneers. The author paid him a visit at his home in Rae-Nyakach and interviewed him.

This article, received in 2018, was written by Rev. Wilson Okonjo Adongo, a Ph.D candidate in Religious Studies in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya.

Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Coast: Biographies of Pioneers of Evangelization

By Cosmas Sarbah²⁶

Introduction

On April 18, 1950, the Gold Coast was made a Metropolitan See headquartered in Cape Coast by the decree of the Propaganda fide. This meant that Gold Coast was going to be an Archdiocese with suffragan dioceses. William Thomas Porter was consecrated the first Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Cape Coast for the Gold Coast (present day Ghana).²⁷ The suffragan dioceses were: Accra, Kumasi, Tamale, and Keta. Bishop Porter himself was consecrated Archbishop in a consistory on December 12, 1950, and enthroned as the Metropolitan of the Gold Coast.²⁸

The 75th anniversary of Archdiocese of Cape Coast could be described as a moment of grace. The occasion affords us the opportunity to look at (diagnose or review) the past in order to be thankful; to celebrate the present; to joyfully appreciate how far we have come; and to look forward into the future (plan, renew, change course, strengthen) with hope and zeal. The event coincides with the Jubilee Year of Hope declared by Pope Francis. These events offer the Archdiocese a great motivation for re-engaging with our mission as a Church in Africa. Whereas the mission of the Church remains the same, flowing from the great commission (Matthew 28:19), the environment or context in which the divine mission has been carried out has been in a state of constant change. This paper is dedicated to all bishops, priests, and catechists who, in various ways, have worked and contributed immensely to the spiritual growth of the people of the Archdiocese of Cape Coast.

This paper is not meant to give the history of the Archdiocese of Cape Coast. It is also not an attempt to narrate the history of Catholic Church in Ghana. It is, however, an attempt to showcase the progressive development of the Church in the Archdiocese of Cape Coast throughout the 75 years of its existence, viewed from a biographical standpoint in line with the mission of the *Journal of African Christian Biography*. It sets out to acknowledge the immense contribution of the people of the Archdiocese

²⁶ Dr. Cosmas Ebo Sarbah is a Senior Lecturer of Comparative Religion and Interreligious Dialogue in the Department for the Study of Religions at the University of Ghana and at St. Peter's Regional Seminary (Pedu). He is also a diocesan priest ordained in the Catholic Church of Ghana.

²⁷ J. van Brakel, *The SMA Missionary Presence in the Gold Coast (1932-1950)*, Vol. IV, 1997), 269, 270.

²⁸ Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture* (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974), 25; Kofi Poku Quan-Baffour, "Africanising the Catholic Mass Celebration in Ghana: Recognising Cultural Identity or Agenda to Retain the Faithful?" in *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, Vol. 44. No. 2 (2018), 2- 10.

throughout the period of its creation, highlighting the invaluable role of the missionaries of the Society of Africa Missions (SMA) who were the torchbearers of the mission and who spearheaded the spread of evangelisation in the Archdiocese of Cape Coast.²⁹

Due to limited space here, I have attempted to highlight the biographies of the leadership (both local and foreign archbishops, bishops, priests, and catechists) whose personal convictions, dreams, and achievements also, I believe, embody the spiritual aspirations of the lay faithful of the Archdiocese of Cape Coast. It is of course impossible to cover every local ordinary (bishop or archbishop, priests and catechist) in this brief write-up. The paper discusses the biographical details of the founder of the Gold Coast Church, Fr. Auguste Moreau; Monsignor Albert, the first Bishop; Monsignor William Thomas Porter (the first Archbishop); Frs. George Ansah and Francis Menya (first indigenous priests); and Mr John E. S. Boffoe, who celebrated his 50th anniversary as a catechist in 2024. It is not in any way intended to denigrate or overlook the significant contributions of the many bishops, priests, and lay faithful who in diverse ways have brought the Archdiocese of Cape Coast this far, and for whose efforts we are deeply grateful.

The Founder of the Church: Fr. Auguste Moreau

Personal Life and Arrival

Fr. Auguste Moreau was born in 1847 at Combre, in the diocese of Lyons, France. It had been his dream to be a missionary. He arrived at Elmina on May 18, 1880 (then 33 years old) with his friend Fr. Eugene Murat (31 years old) who would die tragically a few months later on August 5, 1880. Such a mission had been their dream throughout their seminary formation.

Fr. Moreau was full of zeal and very motivated for the mission of evangelising the Gold Coast.³⁰ In fact, they had opted to join the Society of African Missions (SMA) for the same reason: to work in Africa. In those days, it was common for seminarians of various European seminaries, particularly from Holland and France, to opt for missions in Africa. They were met on their arrival by Mr. Arthur Brun who was the French consul and a renowned merchant in Elmina, and Mr Hamilton Stevens.³¹ Mr. Brun arranged accommodation for Frs. Moreau and Murat in a hotel owned by a Dutch descendent, George Emil Eminsang. Frs. Moreau and Murat occupied two rooms, one of which they used as a chapel.³²

²⁹ Martin J. Bane, *Catholic Pioneers in West Africa* (Dublin: Clommore and Reynolds Ltd, 1957), 220.

³⁰ Patrick Gantly, *Mission to West Africa: The Story of the Society of African Missions, 1856-1907*, Vol 1 (Rome: Ullbaniana University Press, 1991), 432.

³¹ van Brakel, *The First 25 years of SMA missionary Presence in the Gold Coast*, 18.

³² Ward, *A History of Ghana*, 452.

The missionaries were now confronted with the real religious and economic situation in Elmina, which like all of Africa, was completely different from what they were used to in Europe.³³ Apart from the harsh climate, there was also the reality of poor health care and financial constraints that limited their ability to properly execute their missionary endeavours.

Fr. Moreau started learning the Fante language and translating the Catholic catechism into this language in order to evangelise the local people.³⁴ During the six years that Fr. Moreau managed the affairs of the church in the Gold Coast, he worked with missionaries such as: Frs. Eugene Murat, Louis Boutry, Jean-Marie Michon, etc. They served in different capacities but most of them died shortly after their arrival in the Gold Coast.

Evangelisation of the People and Successes

Fr. Moreau impacted sacramental and devotional life, drawing from what he had learned in his home country.³⁵ To the local people, the Catholic liturgy was both mysterious and fascinating. This was pre-Vatican II and the liturgy was in Latin. That may have also played a role in the sense of mystery and fascination around the Mass to the congregation.³⁶ It must be noted that the Catholic faith which Fr. Moreau introduced in Africa was without any reference to the cultural practices of the converts (such as drumming, singing, dancing, folk songs, and traditional dress) in the celebration of the Mass. Generally, the singing of local folk songs, dances, and drums were regarded by the missionaries as satanic, heathen, savage, unchristian, and ungodly.³⁷ Rather, the missionaries introduced their European hymns (mainly in Latin) and sermons in worship (i.e. the celebration of the Mass) and effectively denied the native converts a space for their culture in worshipping God, *Onyame*.³⁸

According to the baptismal register, under Moreau's leadership they saw the baptism of 527 Catholics in Elmina. Fr. Moreau baptised 191 people himself. The first baptism was that of one-year-old George August Salmon on December 25, 1880, with Fr. Moreau as godfather.³⁹ The first 12 catechumens were baptised by Fr. Moreau himself on December 25, 1883.⁴⁰ Since 527 people had been baptised at the end of the Moreau era, that seemed to be an indication of the church's numerical strength.

³³ Gantly, *Mission to West Africa: The Story of the Society of African Missions*, 234.

³⁴ Adrian Hastings, *African Catholicism: Essays in Discovery* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 21, 22.

³⁵ F. Biko, 2001. "African Foundations of World Religions: Religion; Africa's Gift to the World." *New African*, April Issue (2001), 18–21.

³⁶ Catholic Archdiocese of Cape coast, 75th Anniversary Brochure, 2023.

³⁷ Gantly, *Mission to West Africa: The Story of the Society of African Missions*, 134.

³⁸ Kofi Poku Quan-Baffour, "Africanising the Catholic Mass Celebration in Ghana: Recognising Cultural Identity or Agenda to Retain the Faithful?" in *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. Vol. 44, No. 2 (2018), 2.

³⁹ Catholic Archdiocese of Cape coast, 75th Anniversary Brochure, 2023.

⁴⁰ Anthony Annan-Prah, "Catholic Church and Her Socio-Economic Impact on Development of Ghana", in *Catholic Voice*, August Issue (Cape Coast: Catholic Mission Press, 2001), 8.

However, it is important to note that there were a lot more of the faithful whose names are missing because they were not baptised.⁴¹

The efforts to evangelise the local community bore some fruits. Between 1880-1886, 39 baptised members received the sacrament of confirmation from Fr. Moreau. The first person to be confirmed by him was Joseph Kweku, and the last, Elizabeth Smith.⁴² The register recorded the first two marriages during the period Moreau lived in Elmina: (1) between Thomas Hamilton Stevens and Maria Ana Frederica Piqueuit, and (2) between Mr. Ulzen and Nana Ekua Essoun, both on August 29, 1881.⁴³ The Moreau era recorded 24 Catholic burials, Fr. Murat being the first and Fr. Moreau himself being the 24th.⁴⁴ Fr. Moreau also formed the first Catholic church choir. He taught music. The choir was made up of school children who first sang on Pentecost Sunday in 1881.⁴⁵

As part of his plan to lay the groundwork for the future expansion of the church, on the October 15, 1880, Fr. Moreau responded to an invitation from the *Denkyirahene* and visited him at Jukwa, the Denkyira capital.⁴⁶ His visit to Axim had led to the purchase of the first Catholic property in the Gold Coast: a piece of land.⁴⁷ He visited Accra, not only to see the governor about a piece of land in Elmina for a church building, but also to explore the possibility of a future mission station.⁴⁸

Primary Education for the Youth

Fr. Moreau quickly realised that evangelization in the Gold Coast needed to have a social development component.⁴⁹ In 1881, he started a school in Elmina with five pupils. By July of that year, the number had risen to 100. Fr. Moreau himself taught the pupils and made furniture for the school. He initially employed protestant clerks, John Smith and James Gordon, to assist him with the teaching.⁵⁰ It must be noted that the schools were introduced not only to provide the people with literary and vocational skills in carpentry, masonry, and architecture, but also to reinforce and give impetus

⁴¹ Catholic Archdiocese of Cape coast, 75th Anniversary Brochure, 2023.

⁴² Anthony Annan- Prah, "Developmental History of Roman Catholic Evangelisation in Ghana", in *Catholic Voice* (Cape Coast: Catholic Mission Press, 2001), 9.

⁴³ Anthony Annan- Prah, "Developmental History of Roman Catholic Evangelisation in Ghana", in *Catholic Voice* (Cape Coast: Catholic Mission Press, 2001), 9.

⁴⁴ Anthony Annan-Prah, "Developmental History of Roman Catholic Evangelisation in Ghana: The Prevailing Environment at the Start of the Re-Evangelisation", 7.

⁴⁵ Gantly, *Mission to West Africa: The Story of the Society of African Missions*, 16.

⁴⁶ Todd, *African Mission*, 231.

⁴⁷ Annan-Prah, "Developmental History of Roman Catholic Evangelisation in Ghana", 8,9.

⁴⁸ Gantly, *Mission to West Africa: The Story of the Society of African Missions*, 136.

⁴⁹ S. K. Odamtten, S.K. 1976. "The Beginnings of the Educational Enterprise of the White Fathers in the Northern and Upper Regions of Ghana." *The Oguwa Educator*, Vol 7, No.1 (1976), 104-116.

⁵⁰ Bane, *Catholic Pioneers in West Africa*, 224.

to catechetical work and evangelization.⁵¹

Death of Fr. Moreau

Information derived from the personal diary of Fr. Moreau details what went on during his stay in the Gold Coast. Professor Anthony Annan-Praha (University of Cape Coast), a renowned archivist and researcher specialising in the history of Catholic Christianity in the Gold Coast, wrote about the sickness that struck and killed Fr Moreau:

In his letter of 4th February 1886, he (Moreau) wrote that for a week he had suffered much from his liver. Like Fr. Murat, he was also gradually expiring like a lamp running out of oil. With his deteriorating health, Fr. Moreau had no option but to obey his doctor's advice to proceed to Europe to rest and recuperate.⁵²

It appears Fr. Moreau did not leave the pastoral grounds willingly. He wished to go only as far as the Island of Madeira, recover somewhat, and then return to the Gold Coast.⁵³ However, that was not to be.

Annan-Praha also tells the story of the unfortunate death of Fr. Moreau:

He...died three days later on 21st March 1886 on the ship carrying him to Europe. By a twist of fate, he died at sea near Axim... The ship had to sail on. Fr. Moreau was placed in a weighted sack and dumped in the sea at Axim. Thus ended the life of this priceless missionary, buried without grave or trace, and his body a meal for the fish and fauna of the ocean. It must be noted that the missionaries died while bringing the Good News of the Gospel to the people of Gold Coast, following the footsteps of their Saviour Jesus Christ who died to atone for the sins of humanity.⁵⁴

First Bishop: Monsignor Maximilian Albert

Personal Life

⁵¹ Bane, *Catholic Pioneers in West Africa*, 224.

⁵² Annan-Praha, "Developmental History of Roman Catholic Evangelisation in Ghana: Death of Fr. Moreau", 3.

⁵³ Isaac S. Ephson, *Gallery of Gold Coast Celebrities, 1632-1958* (Accra: Ilan Publications LTD, 1969), 352. Quotation taken from Anthony Annan-Praha, "Developmental History of Roman Catholic Evangelisation in Ghana: Settling in and the Death of Fr. Murat," *Catholic Voice*, December 2001.

⁵⁴ Isaac S. Ephson, *Gallery of Gold Coast Celebrities, 1632-1958* (Accra: Ilan Publications LTD, 1969), 352.

Monsignor Maximilian Albert was born in 1966 in Nuremberg, in the diocese of Bamberg in Bavaria, Germany. Using information taken mainly from the mission diaries and correspondence in the archives of the Society of African Missions of the dioceses and parishes in Ghana, Fr. J. van Brakel is able to give a detailed narration of the founding of the Catholic Church in Ghana in four volumes. J. van Brakel noted that when Gold Coast prefecture was raised to the status of vicariate, a substantive bishop (Vicar Apostolic) was Maximilian Albert who was appointed on May 4, 1901 at the age of 29.⁵⁵ Upon assumption of office the Bishop Albert took two main decisions which consolidated the vicariate and prepared it for the Archdiocese of Cape Coast—to establish the headquarters of the Church at Cape Coast and to build the Cathedral. He died on December 15, 1903 at the age of 37 at Wurtzburg.

Change of Headquarters of the Gold Coast Church

Bishop Albert moved the headquarters of the Gold Coast Church from Elmina to Cape Coast, which had become the provincial capital of British rule and the residence of officials of British administration.⁵⁶ Elmina was losing its importance for two main reasons: first, the departure of the Dutch from the town in 1872⁵⁷; and second, the impact of the constant onslaught of British military aggression on the town.⁵⁸ Cape Coast (its original indigenous name is *Oguaa*, which means ‘market’) had been a central market for the slave trade, with slaves mostly destined for the Americas and the Caribbean during the early 16th century until the abolition of the trade by Britain in 1807, followed by the United States in 1865.

By 1895, Cape Coast had become the country’s leading exporter of rubber and gold. Commerce and employment opportunities offered by the colonial economy attracted traders and other migrants.⁵⁹ The dungeons in Cape Coast Castle, which stored the slaves prior to their transatlantic ocean voyages, later became storage for articles of trade—exports of gold, ivory, and spices, and imports of guns, clothes, and ornaments. The town became famous for its exports of mineral and agricultural resources such as gold, ivory, and palm oil to meet Europe’s industrial capital needs.⁶⁰

The British had also built a new harbour and constructed Coronation Street as the principal road. That and other ancillary roads in the town made moving around a lot easier. The new status Cape Coast acquired facilitated the transfer of the

⁵⁵ Douglas s. Coombs, *The Gold Coast, Britain and the Netherlands 1850-1874* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 160.

⁵⁶ Harrison Church, R.J. *West Africa*, 7th edn, (London: Longman, 1974), 45.

⁵⁷ Quarshie, *Archbishop Dominic Kodwo Andoh: A True Shepherd, Father and Teacher*, 15.

⁵⁸ Ephson, *Gallery of Gold Coast Celebrities*, 350

⁵⁹ Samuel Agyei-Mensah & Elizabeth Ardayio-Schandorf, “The global and the local: Urban Change in Cape Coast from Pre-colonial Times to the Present” in *URBAN DESIGN International*, Vol. 12 (2007) 101–114 (101)

⁶⁰ H. Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa* (London: Longmans, 1812), 245.

headquarters from Elmina to Cape Coast.⁶¹ Cape Coast eventually became the capital of the British colony of Gold Coast for some time. Later, Accra became the capital. In January 1897, this transfer was made public by Bishop Albert, much to the disappointment of the people of Elmina.

Apart from logistics, pastoral considerations also played a role in the transfer of the headquarters of the Church to Cape Coast.⁶² The people of Cape Coast were warm, open-hearted, and receptive to the gospel message. The small number of converts to Catholicism were educated and had read about the Catholic Church in Rome. The town also already held the headquarters of Anglican and Methodist Churches, which had been founded earlier in Gold Coast.⁶³ Bishop Albert felt the town was well-positioned to be the heart and spiritual center of Catholicism in the Gold Coast.⁶⁴ The movement of both missionaries and converts in and out of Cape Coast was much easier with a good transportation network.

Construction of the Cape Coast Cathedral

On April 17, 1895, Bishop Albert took the lease and acquired the hospital hill (originally purchased for a colonial hospital) where the St. Francis de Sales Cathedral in Cape Coast now stands.⁶⁵ He supervised the building of the mission house there. The construction took place between November 1896 and April 20, 1897. Since the mission house was to serve as both a chapel and a school, it was designed like the one at Elmina: the ground floor was a big hall to serve as chapel and school, and the first floor had five rooms serving as residences for priests. The priests moved in from the rented premises in the Nkum area of Cape Coast. The 'Hospital Hill' became the St Francis de Sales Hill when the move was completed.⁶⁶

In September 1898, Bishop Albert launched the appeal for funds for a school building on the St. Francis Hill which was later called St. Francis Catholic School. Also in December 1900, he was in Europe raising funds for a new church building for Cape Coast.⁶⁷ This church building later became the cathedral when the Gold Coast was elevated to a vicariate/diocese.

Bishop Albert commissioned the plans for the cathedral which was completed and blessed by his successors on November 18, 1923.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Public Records and Archives Administrative Department, Ghana (PRAAD), Cape Coast. ADM 23/1/255.

⁶² Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa*, 232.

⁶³ Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*, 168.

⁶⁴ Ephson, *Gallery of Gold Coast Celebrities, 1632-1958*, 351

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 100

⁶⁶ J. van Brakel, *The First 25 Years of SMA Missionary Presence in the Gold Coast (1880-1905), Part II* (Nijmegen, August 1987), 39-41

⁶⁷ Joseph Kwaku Afrifa-Agyekum, *The History of the Liturgical life of the Church in Ghana 1880-1980* (Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1992), 360.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 367.

First Archbishop: William Thomas Porter (1950-1959)

Personal Life

On April 2, 1933, the Gold Coast Vicariate received, with great joy, the news of the nomination of Monsignor Porter as its new bishop on March 23, 1933. Later he became the first Archbishop of Cape Coast.⁶⁹

William Thomas Porter was born on May 14, 1887, in Birkdale, a suburb of Liverpool, England. His call to the Catholic priesthood was late because he was originally an Anglican. At the age of 24, he entered St. Joseph's Seminary in Cork, Ireland, and was ordained priest on July 14, 1918. In 1921, after teaching for some time in the SMA Wilton college, he was posted to Nigeria.⁷⁰ There, he became a supervisor of schools and became the SMA visitor (Vicariate Head). At the time of his nomination, the bishop-elect was the Prefect of Northern Nigeria.

Porter's consecration took place in St. Teresa's Church at Birkdale on September 30, 1933. For his motto, the new bishop chose the following statement: *In fide et Caritate* (In faith and charity). He arrived on October 31, 1933, to assume his duties with other bishops in the country: Auguste Herman (Lower Volta), Hubert Paulissen (Kumasi), and Oscar Morin (Navrongo).⁷¹

Establishment of Senior High Schools

One of the reasons Bishop Porter was selected for the Gold Coast Vicariate was to establish Catholic secondary schools in line with the British education policy. He already was involved in education in Nigeria.⁷² After Britain took over the properties of earlier European colonisers and finally assumed full territorial authority of the Gold Coast in 1874, it introduced various educational policies and curriculum to unify and direct education in the region.⁷³

To help him achieve his vision, in 1920 Governor Guggisberg established a committee charged with evaluating past educational efforts and reasons for their success or failures, and to report on the entire educational policy governing education in the Gold Coast.⁷⁴ The committee recommended, among other things, that the government establish a secondary boarding school to produce local leaders where

⁶⁹ J. van Brakel, *The SMA Missionary Presence in the Gold Coast (1932-1950)*, Vol. IV, 1997, 4.

⁷⁰ J. van Brakel, *The SMA Missionary Presence in the Gold Coast*, 13.

⁷¹ Pfan, *A Short History of the Catholic Church in Ghana*, 56.

⁷² <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1323908.pdf>; Ernestina Wiafe, "Formal Education in Gold Coast-Ghana: An Overview of Colonial Policies and Curriculum from 1919 to 1927" in *Educational Considerations*, Vol. 47. No. 2 (2021), 2 (1-16).

⁷³ Frederick Gordon Guggisberg, *The Keystone: Education is the Keystone of Progress: mix the materials badly, omit the most important, and the arch will collapse; omit character-training from education and progress will Stop* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1924), 5.

⁷⁴ Guggisberg, *The Keystone: Education is the Keystone of Progress*, 20.

character-training takes the first place in the curriculum.”⁷⁵ This recommendation led to the establishment of the Achimota School.

During the first bishops’ conference in Accra on January 10 and 11, 1934, the bishops decided to build a secondary school as soon as possible at a site between Elmina and Cape Coast. The bishop organised a meeting of educated parish representatives to propose the financial contribution from the laity, which was essential to the establishment of the school.⁷⁶ A scheme was developed to raise funds for the college. Founders contributed 10 pounds, and patrons, 5 ½ pounds. Later each member of the laity contributed one shilling a year to pay for the construction of the school and the Holy Child School in Cape Coast.

On November 28, 1936, they broke ground for the start of St. Augustine’s College on a plot of land between Elmina and Cape Coast. The foundation stone was laid by Governor Arnold Hudson on January 15, 1935.⁷⁷ The college itself started on January 22, 1936 with 145 students. Having established a secondary school and a training college for boys, there was now a need for similar institutions for girls.⁷⁸ Bishop Porter informed the Bishop’s conference in 1945 that the Holy Child Sisters had promised to send down six qualified teachers for the proposed Holy Child Secondary School and Teacher Training College for girls in Cape Coast. The College was started on March 5, 1946, with Mother Joachim as principal. The official opening was, however, performed by Governor Sir Alan Burns on June 21, 1946.⁷⁹

Our lady of the Apostles Training College for female teachers became operational in 1935 with Sr. Salve as the College’s first principal during the episcopacy of Bishop Porter. On March 1, 1936, Mgr. Porter blessed and opened this new college for the training of Catholic teachers to prepare a Catholic atmosphere in the schools.⁸⁰

When the government introduced the Certificate B Teacher Training Course, Bishop Porter opened one at Amisano which was later transferred to Apowa, near Takoradi, under the name of the St. Mary’s Training College.⁸¹

Creation of the Archdiocese of Cape Coast

⁷⁵ Buah, *A History of Ghana*, 71.

⁷⁶ P. Foster, *Education and Social Change in Ghana* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), 56.

⁷⁷ C. F. James, “The Formulation of British Colonial Education, 1929-1961,” U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (Office of Education, Bureau of Research, 1969), 5.

⁷⁸ H. O. A. McWilliam & M. A. Kwamena-Poh, *The Development of Education in Ghana* (London: Longmans, 1975), 56.

⁷⁹ K. D. Ofori-Attah, “The British and Curriculum Development in West Africa”: *A historical discourse*. *Int. Rev Educ.* 52, 409–423 (2006). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-006-9001-4>

⁸⁰ J. van Brakel, *The SMA Missionary Presence in the Gold Coast (1932-1950)*, Vol. IV, (1997), 82.

⁸¹ J. van Brakel, *The SMA Missionary Presence in the Gold Coast (1932-1950)*, Vol. IV, (1997), 85.

Bishop Porter supervised the creation of one more ecclesiastical division and later general elevations.⁸² In 1939, Bishop Porter had welcomed and supervised the Society of Divine Word (SVD) missionaries charged with taking care of Accra. The nine missionaries, including the future Bishop Joseph Bowers, had worked very hard and created the Adoagyiri and Kwahu Tafo parishes in 1941 and 1942 respectively.⁸³ On December 9, 1943, Accra was separated from Cape Coast (Gold Coast Vicariate) and raised to a prefecture. This prefecture covered the Eastern Province of the Gold Coast West of the Volta.

On April 18, 1950, a decree of the *Propaganda fide* made Gold Coast an Archdiocese with suffragan dioceses. William Thomas Porter became the first Archbishop.⁸⁴ The suffragan dioceses were: Accra (Bishop Aldolf Noser), Kumasi (Bishop Hubert Joseph Paulissen), Tamale (Bishop Gerald Betrend), and Keta (Bishop Joseph Gerard Holland). Bishop Porter himself was consecrated Archbishop in a consistory of December 12, 1950 and enthroned as the Metropolitan of the Gold Coast by Bishop Hubert Paulissen, with his See at Cape Coast.⁸⁵

First Indigenous Priests: Frs. Ansah and Menya

With the separation of the secondary school (St. Augustine's College) and the training college (St. Mary's Training College at Apowa), the Amisano school could be used solely as the St. Teresa's Seminary for the training of local clergy upon the advice of Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith.⁸⁶ The intention was to train suitable clerics from among the native Christians for ordination to the priesthood. All missionaries were charged to learn the native language as soon as possible so that they might preach the word of God in the vernacular and educate the Christians well. They were to choose as catechists those who surpassed the others by their moral and intellectual qualities.⁸⁷

From St. Teresa's Seminary, the first priests to be ordained were Frs. George Ansah from Elmina and Francis Menya from Pedu, near Cape Coast. These were also the first native priests for the diocese of Cape Coast, or the Gold Coast vicariate, as it was then called. Bishop Porter performed their ordination on December 8, 1935.⁸⁸ Today, the Archdiocese can boast of over 210 priests who are working in and outside of the diocese. These priests are assisted by over 450 trained catechists.

⁸² van Brakel, *The SMA Missionary Presence in the Gold Coast*, 82.

⁸³ Quarshie, Archbishop Dominic Kodwo Andoh, 36.

⁸⁴ van Brakel, *The SMA Missionary Presence in the Gold Coast*, 269, 270.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 272.

⁸⁶ J. van Brakel, *The SMA Missionary Presence in the Gold Coast (1932-1950)*, Vol. IV, (1997), 57.

⁸⁷ Adrian Hastings, *African Catholicism: Essays in Discovery* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 26.

⁸⁸ Quarshie, Archbishop Dominic Kodwo Andoh: *A True Shepherd, Father and Teacher*, 35.

Personal life

Fr. George Ansah was born in Elmina. Ansah was a late vocationist who was even married for some years. He and his wife Margaret migrated to Nigeria in search of greener pastures. There he worked as a schoolteacher at the basic level at Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School in Lagos. He also became a catechist for a Catholic mission in an Enugu town. His wife was a baker. After about 8 years in Nigeria, Fr. Ansah and Margaret came back to Elmina upon the invitation of the family head. Margaret died of influenza shortly after their arrival at Elmina. Ansah became the junior catechist at Elmina, responsible for the outstations. He frequently went on trek with Fr. Legeay, Fr. Hennebry, and Prefect Michon. It was during this period of direct involvement in pastoral work that Ansah felt called to the priesthood. Ansah was among the four substantive seminarians who were admitted in 1929 to St. Teresa's Seminary, Amisano. One of them, Augustine Sanni, also a close friend, died in an accident on his way to his hometown for vacation. The other seminarian dropped out along the way due to his failure to succeed in the tough academic environment. He was also frequently falling ill.

Fr. Ansah died of old age and was buried at one of the new Catholic cemeteries at Siwudo, a suburb of Cape Coast, when the priest-cemetery at Tantri had been abandoned and turned into a lorry station. His mortal remains and that of other priests were later exhumed and buried *en masse* at St. Teresa's Seminary.

Appointments as a Priest

Fr. Ansah received his appointment as assistant priest to Saltpond with an experienced superior, Fr. Acher. Despite the initial setback in its establishment due to the sudden death of the first two priests and the subsequent destruction of the mission house by a rainstorm (May 18, 1891) the Saltpond mission picked up and became one of the thriving parishes at the time of Fr. George's arrival. The mission covered the whole of the Saltpond district and reached the boundaries of the Eastern region near Accra. Fr. George was instrumental in the establishment of about ten of the outstations under Saltpond parish, three of which have become thriving parishes with residential priests. These parishes are Mary Immaculate Conception Parish at Anomabo, St. Anthony Catholic Church at Biriwa, and St. Paul's Catholic Church at Mankessim. His regular home visitations were exemplary and inspirational and contributed a lot to the spiritual growth of Catholics in the Saltpond district. Fr. George adopted home visitation as his major tool for evangelisation.⁸⁹ This home visitation involved one-on-one visits and sharing of the Gospel message of love wherever he went. It included developing an inter-personal interaction which was to help his audience begin a journey of a personal

⁸⁹ F. K. Buah, *A History of Ghana*, Revised and Updated (Malaysia: Macmillan, 1998), 100.

relationship with Jesus Christ. Fr. George was later transferred to the Seminary, Amisano, where he worked until he was asked to go and live in the Archbishop's House.

Fr. George, the School Manager

While at Saltpond, Fr. George took particular interest in school administration. He was instrumental in the establishment of St. John the Baptist Catholic School. Fr. Acher, his parish priest, asked Fr. George to take on the responsibility of school chaplain and local manager of the four schools of the parish.⁹⁰ As local manager, Fr. George was in charge of the day to day running of the schools. He took interest in the daily morning assemblies, the roll call of both teachers and pupils, the Mass attendance of pupils, and overall discipline of the schools. His regular visitations to the schools and on-time payment of salaries of both the academic and ancillary staff contributed significantly to the high academic performance of the schools.⁹¹

Fr. Francis Menya

Personal life

Information on his baptismal card indicates that Fr. Francis Menya was born at Pedu (Cape Coast) to Opanyin Kwesi Maaya and Maame Araba Mansa. The card did not have any information about his date of birth. Although no one is certain of the exact day, we know that Fr. Menya was in his early forties on March 6, 1957, when Ghana attained independence from the British. He was a royal of the Twidan family of Pedu. His niece, Ama Attah, confirmed that “Fr Menya’s parents were also born and bred in Pedu and were farmers.”⁹² His father was also a carpenter. He had two siblings, Martha Ankoma and Kofi Kum. Fr. Menya and his family grew up and took up farming as their main occupation, following the footsteps of their grandparents. Later, Fr. Menya took the entrance examinations at Amisano and was admitted in 1929.

Evangelisation of the People of Pedu

Even as a seminarian, Fr. Menya was instrumental in the planting and spreading of the Catholic faith in the surrounding villages of Pedu. He worked hand in hand with catechist John Etannyiedur Sarbah. Kofi Occran, who often accompanied John and Seminarian Menya on pastoral visits, noted that “we often went ahead of the priest to the villages around”⁹³ such as Abora, Kwaprow, Kakomodo, Esuekyir, Nkanfowa,

⁹⁰ Bane, *Catholic Pioneers in West Africa*, 227.

⁹¹ Bane, *Catholic Pioneers in West Africa*, 230.

⁹² Ama Attah, interviewed on June 8, 2024.

⁹³ Kofi Occran, interviewed on August 11, 2020.

Nkanfoa, and Apewosika to prepare catechumen for the sacraments of baptism, first communion, and confirmation. Fr. Menya also taught church members catechism, songs, and endured the difficulty of teaching the Latin language to the largely formally uneducated Catholics for the celebration of the Mass. He took particular interest in the training and equipping of leaders for the churches he visited.⁹⁴ He and John took turns acting as personal interpreter to the many priests who were posted to the area.

Appointments after Ordination

Soon after his ordination to the priesthood, Fr. Menya was assigned and returned to his alma mater, St. Teresa's Seminary-Amisano, as a member of staff under the direction of Fr. John van Heesewijk.⁹⁵ As the first indigenous academic staff member, Fr. Menya worked with all foreign faculty. He became a renowned formator who was loved and admired by his students. He could fit into multiple roles: teacher, priest, and farmer. As a teacher, Fr. Menya taught English, Latin, Catholic Doctrine, and Religious Studies. As a priest he was placed in charge of the Catholic faithful at Amisano township where he helped raise the choir, taught catechism, and offered Mass regularly. He was also the spiritual director. As a farmer, he took interest in the seminary farm which grew cocoa, coffee, and tea for export, to raised funds for the both the seminary and church at Gold Coast.

After five years of working at the seminary, Fr. Menya was transferred to St. Matthew Catholic Church (Tarkwa) as assistant to the parish priest, Fr. Meder. Even though it was a new parish, Tarkwa was fast-growing. There, Fr. Menya mainly worked with the miners from the gold mining companies. He was also the first chaplain of St. Matthew's Basic school. He enjoyed nurturing a parish which was made up of a largely immigrant population from all over the country. Parish records obtained from the Archdiocesan archives indicate that he baptised 210 Catholics and officiated at 14 marriages at Tarkwa. He helped establish new stations, some of which are still in operation. After seven years as assistant priest at Tarkwa, Fr. Menya was re-assigned to the St. Teresa's Seminary as a spiritual director.

Fr. Menya, the Franciscan Friar

In 1977, when two missionary Conventual Franciscan groups (the St. Anthony Province, USA and the St. Anthony Province, Padua, Italy) arrived in Ghana, Fr. Menya was impressed by, and attracted to, their spirituality of poverty and charity which was championed by St. Anthony of Padua.⁹⁶ He took time to read and reflect on the evangelical counsels of the disciplines of obedience, poverty, and chastity. He is often quoted as saying: "the Franciscan practice of humility and the observance of the highest poverty (*Altissima paupertas*) aligned with my temperament and personal

⁹⁴ Kofi Occran, interviewed on August 11, 2020.

⁹⁵ van Brakel, *The SMA Missionary Presence in the Gold Coast*, 82.

⁹⁶ <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/spirituality-of-st-anthony-of-padua-5195>

spirituality.”⁹⁷ No wonder Fr. Menya eventually joined the Franciscan friars in 1979, just two years after their arrival in Ghana. He remained a friar until he died in 1981.

The Contribution of Catechists: John E. S. Baffoe

It is not out of place to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of catechists to the missionary work of the Archdiocese of Cape Coast. These catechists worked tirelessly with great faith and devotion with the foreign and indigenous priests. They taught catechism to catechumens in preparation for the sacraments, counselled couples for Holy Matrimony, and served as interpreters for the missionaries. Many of them were also teachers in the schools and led the churches in the absence of the priests. I will simply mention one of them—John E. S. Baffoe—who is still living and just celebrated his 50-year anniversary as a catechist in 2023.

Conclusion

In this work, I have attempted to highlight the biographies of the leadership (both local and foreign—archbishops, bishops, priests, and catechists) whose personal convictions, dreams, and achievements also, I believe, embody the spiritual aspirations of lay faithful of the Archdiocese of Cape Coast. This has included the biographical details of Fr. Auguste Moreau (the founder of the Gold Coast Church), Monsignor Albert (the first Bishop), Monsignor William Thomas Porter (the first Archbishop), Frs. George Ansah and Francis Menya (first indigenous priests), and Mr. John E. S. Baffoe (catechist).

⁹⁷ Fr. Menya, Personal diary.

Recent Print and Digital Resources Related to Christianity in Africa

Compiled by Beth Restricks, Head, BU African Studies Library

African Pentecostalism from African Perspectives: Volume 1: Methods

Ezra Chitando, Lovemore Togarasei, Loreen Maseno (editors). Palgrave-MacMillan Cham, 2024. [SpringerLink](#), \$169.99 (hbk).

ISBN: 978-3-031-69883-5.

African Pentecostalism from African Perspectives: Volume 2: Themes

Ezra Chitando, Lovemore Togarasei, Loreen Maseno (editors). Palgrave-MacMillan Cham, 2024. [SpringerLink](#), \$169.99 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-3-031-67828-8

Summary: Although African scholars have made a significant contribution to the study of African Pentecostalism, very few studies have reflected on their output. Most of the contemporary publications on the widespread phenomenon of African Pentecostalism create the impression that only scholars from the Global North have contributed to the field. This volume addresses the lacuna in the available scholarship by undertaking detailed analyses of how African scholars from diverse academic disciplines and African/Diasporan context have helped to shape the field. The included chapters provide fresh data on new themes and perspectives in the field.

The archive of a Ugandan missionary: writings by and about Rev. Apolo Kivebulaya (1890s-1950s). Apolo Kivebulaya, Emma Wild-Wood (Editor, Translator), George (Editor, Translator), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2022. [Amazon](#). \$82.67 (hbk). ISBN-10: 0197267238, ISBN-13: 978-0197267233.

Summary: "This source book of translated texts gives insight into the history of religious and social change in East Africa, from the 1890s until the 1930s, through the everyday concerns of African Christians. Originally in Luganda, the documents are written by, or about, an early Ugandan clergyman Apolo Kivebulaya who propagated a Protestant form of Christianity in Toro and Ituri (Congo). They show how a literate Christian identity was formed away from centres of power, and how African admirers responded to Kivebulaya and influenced their own societies. Kivebulaya was a forerunner of a piety propagated through the East African Revival that continues to infuse contemporary Christianity in the region and influences in the Great Lakes region." --Publisher description

Africa Bears Witness: Mission Theology and Praxis in the 21st Century.

Edited By Harvey Kwiyani. Langham Global Library, 2024. [Langham Literature](#) £22.99. ISBN: 9781839738920.

Summary: This remarkable collection of essays explores the role of African Christianity in God's mission around the world. Featuring the contributions of African

scholars and mission practitioners from throughout sub-Saharan Africa and the diaspora – including both men and women, veteran scholars, and fresh new voices – this volume provides a diverse perspective on missiology as understood and practiced by African Christians. Engaging such wide-ranging topics as gender violence, globalization, Westernization, peacebuilding, development, Pentecostalism, urban missiology, theological education, and African Christianity in Europe, this volume ambitiously bridges the gap between academic and practitioner perspectives, engaging both theological discourse and the hands-on reality of how God’s mission is taking shape in Africa and beyond. This book offers an empowering look at the work God is accomplishing in and through the African church.

Open Access Resources

Joshua, Stephen Muoki and Christopher Mutati. **Africans on the Vanguard: Historicizing the Origin of Anglicanism in Akamba of Kenya.** *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. Vol. 50 No. 3 (2024). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/13840>

Abstract: The establishment of Anglicanism in Ukamba during the 19th century was by default as far as Church Missionary Society (CMS) activities were concerned. Despite its 1844 presence in the neighbouring Coastal region, it was not until the close of the century that CMS-affiliated congregations started to emerge in Ukamba. Contrary to Africa Inland Mission’s (AIM) Peter Cameron, who on 12th December 1895 went straight into Ukamba and bypassed the Coast, Church Missionary Society’s Ludwig Krapf repeatedly failed in establishing a Christian Mission Station in Ukamba. Consequently, Kamba converts in the Coastal region returned home as evangelists and established *kitoro*[1] (defiant) Churches independent of missionary support. Activities by these Kamba evangelists in successive years are undocumented and untold in London Missionary reports. Oral narratives in the custody of family and friends are fast fading away. These include those of Jeremiah Muti, Joshua Muoka, Nathaniel Kamusa, Paul Muyu and James Muthoka. The article relies on oral history and archival materials to reconstruct the story of early Anglicanism in Ukamba. The story of Jeremiah Muti, key among Ukamba early Anglican evangelists, is a critical case in highlighting the untold African agency in the early missionary enterprise.

Peprah, Augustine Kojo. **The Inculturation of the Asante Culture into Catholicism, Peter Kwasi Sarpong’s Perspective.** *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (EHASS)* ISSN – Online 2720-7722 | Print 2821-8949. Volume 5 Issue 3 March 2024. pp 352-363. <https://noyam.org/journals/chass/> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38159/chass.20245316>

Abstract: The Catholic Church was born out of the European culture in terms of rite and language. This makes the African Catholic feel somehow culturally removed from the liturgical life of the Church. The Catholic Church knowing how culture plays an integral role in the propagation of the Gospel, has given room for the adaptation of

peoples' culture into most especially the liturgical life of the participating community. The Church allows any form of adaptation, insofar as they are in conformity with the universal teachings of the Church. Many scholars and clergy have sought to make good use of this provision to enculturate their culture into Catholicism. In Ghana, Most Rev. Peter Kwasi Sarpong is a household name when it comes to the inculturation of the Asante culture into Catholicism for the liturgy to be at home for his people. Sarpong prefers the term "inculturation" to "adaptation" for the latter smacks of imposition. The article thus articulated Sarpong's attempt to enculturate the Asante dance, music, gestures, symbols and the chieftaincy institution into the Catholic liturgy. This article used ethnographical sources like interviews and observations in gathering data. It also used a literary approach to elucidate the inculturation of the Asante culture into Catholicism from Peter Kwasi Sarpong's perspectives. The paper thus celebrates the contributions of Most Rev. Peter Kwasi Sarpong to the Asante culture and Catholicism. It also affirms the notion that there could be the inculturation of people's culture to make the liturgy meaningful to them.

Teketwe, Kimeze. **Persecution, a Church Council and the Shaping of the Church of Uganda, ca. 1884 – 1888.** *International Bulletin of Mission Research*. Volume 49, Issue 1, <https://doi.org/10.1177/23969393241295596>

Abstract: In July 1885, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) mission in Uganda formed a church council comprised of twelve baptized Ugandans as an organizational response to persecution. Faced with a reign of terror that had begun with the enthronement of a new king following the death of the one who had invited them, English missionaries believed that the council was the only way their work would continue if the new king expelled them. In this paper, I argue that although formed as a response to persecution, the council had a far greater impact on the emergence of the Church of Uganda.