

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND HISTORY OF  
THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST (SDA) CHURCH AMONG  
ABASUUI OF WESTERN KENYA 1912-1985

BY

MARY N.S. GETUI

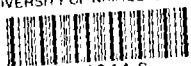
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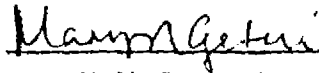
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This Thesis has been submitted  
for examination with our  
approval as University Supervisors.

  
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## ABSTRACT

Despite the long existence of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in Kenya, few people have a proper understanding of its teachings and practices. This has resulted in members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church being treated with suspicion. Gusii is one area where the Seventh-day Adventist Church has its largest following in Kenya. One wonders why this is so, and yet the initial response of Abagusii to Adventism was generally negative. The Seventh-day Adventist approach to some cultural practices namely initiation, marriage and death has caused conflict in Gusii in that the Seventh-day Adventists have initiated and encouraged more changes compared to other Christian groups there. Again, the Seventh-day Adventists do not seem to agree on the stand to take on these issues. Despite these differences, the Seventh-day Adventist in Gusii has remained stable. This is peculiar because the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii is protestant and is stationed in western Kenya, the home of several protestant oriented split churches.

In view of the above problems, this study aims at first of all highlighting the traditional background of Abagusii so that any changes arising as a result of contact with the Seventh-day Adventist teachings can

be traced. The study also aims at tracing the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the background of some of the "odd" Seventh-day Adventist teachings and practices. The study also shows the establishment and progress of Seventh-day Adventist activities among Abagusii, pointing out the influence the Church has had in Gusii. The study further establishes the factors underlying the stability of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii.

The location of field work was mainly Gusii, but other places likely to contain material on the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii were also visited. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews, the latter's findings were collected in notebooks and tape recorder. Library research was also conducted.

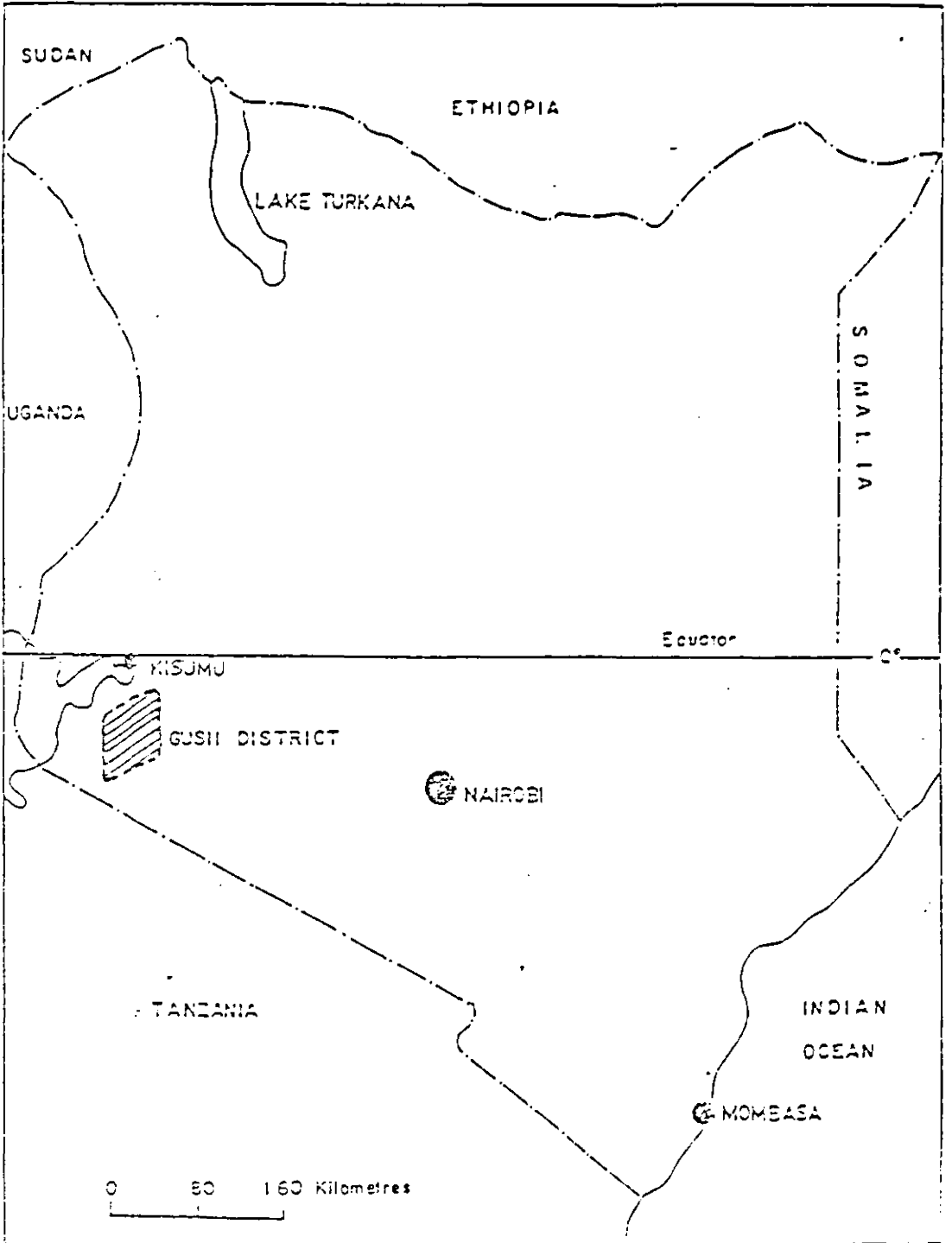
The study's findings included the following points. That the Seventh-day Adventist Church is misunderstood because of some of its unique practices, and this is made worse because many members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are themselves not clear on the background of these practices. That despite these "odds" the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a large following in Gusii because of its concern for the general welfare of man in the society through providing services in the education and health, among others. That through these services, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is playing a significant role towards



national development. That the growth and stability of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii is owed to factors such as the approach of the early missionaries, the general conservative nature of Abagusii and the general lack of splits in other denominations in Gusii.

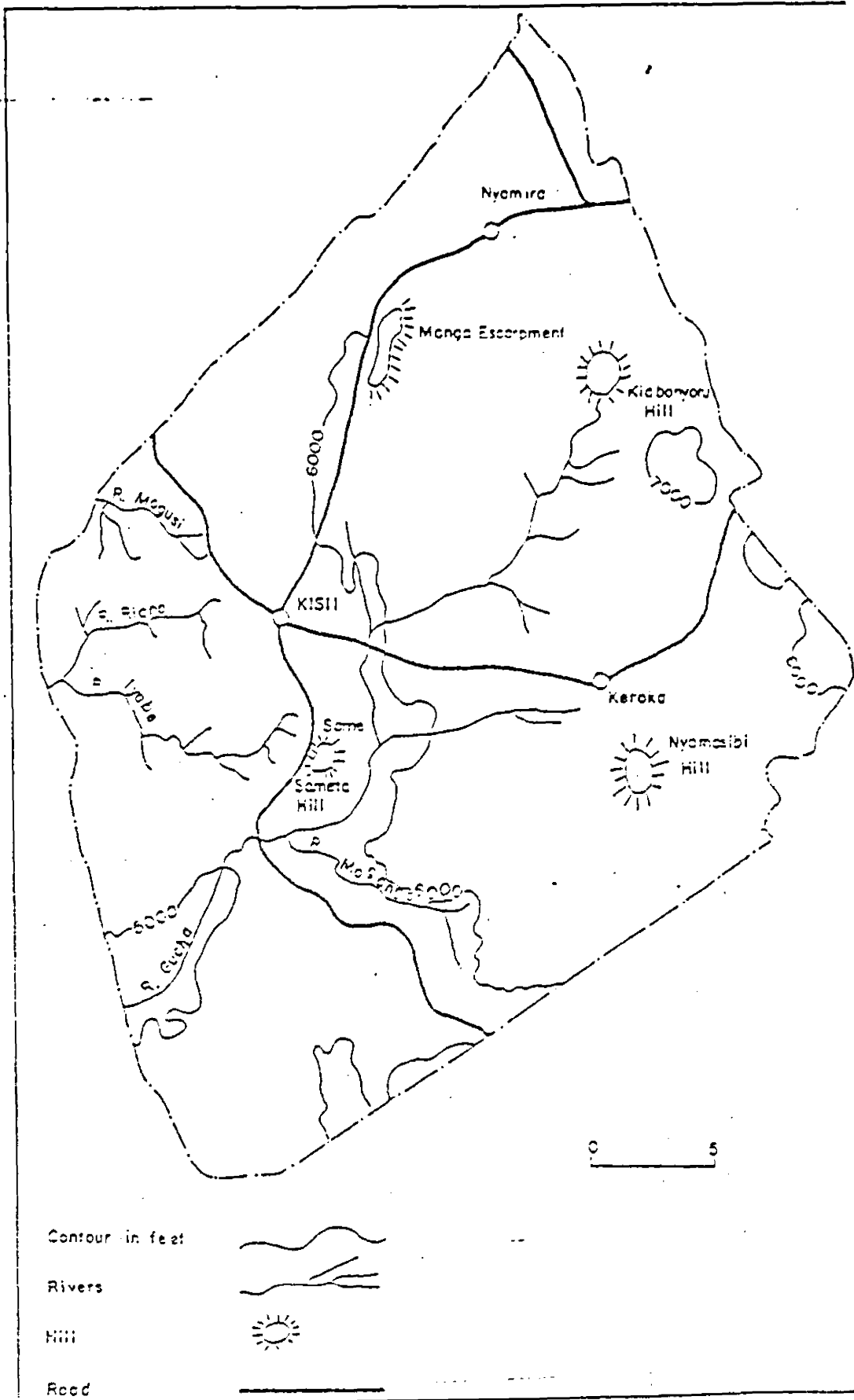
It is hoped that this study brings out another of the many diverse understandings of Christianity. Even though the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been on the Kenyan scene for quite a long time and has a sizeable following particularly in Gusii where it is playing a worthy role towards the general welfare of man, there is room for improvement. This is particularly so with regard to educating their members of the background of some of their teachings. With a proper understanding from within, those outside the Seventh-day Adventist fold will be in a better position to understand the Seventh-day Adventists so that their influence may be felt more in Kenya.

LOCATIONAL MAP OF GUSII



Map 1

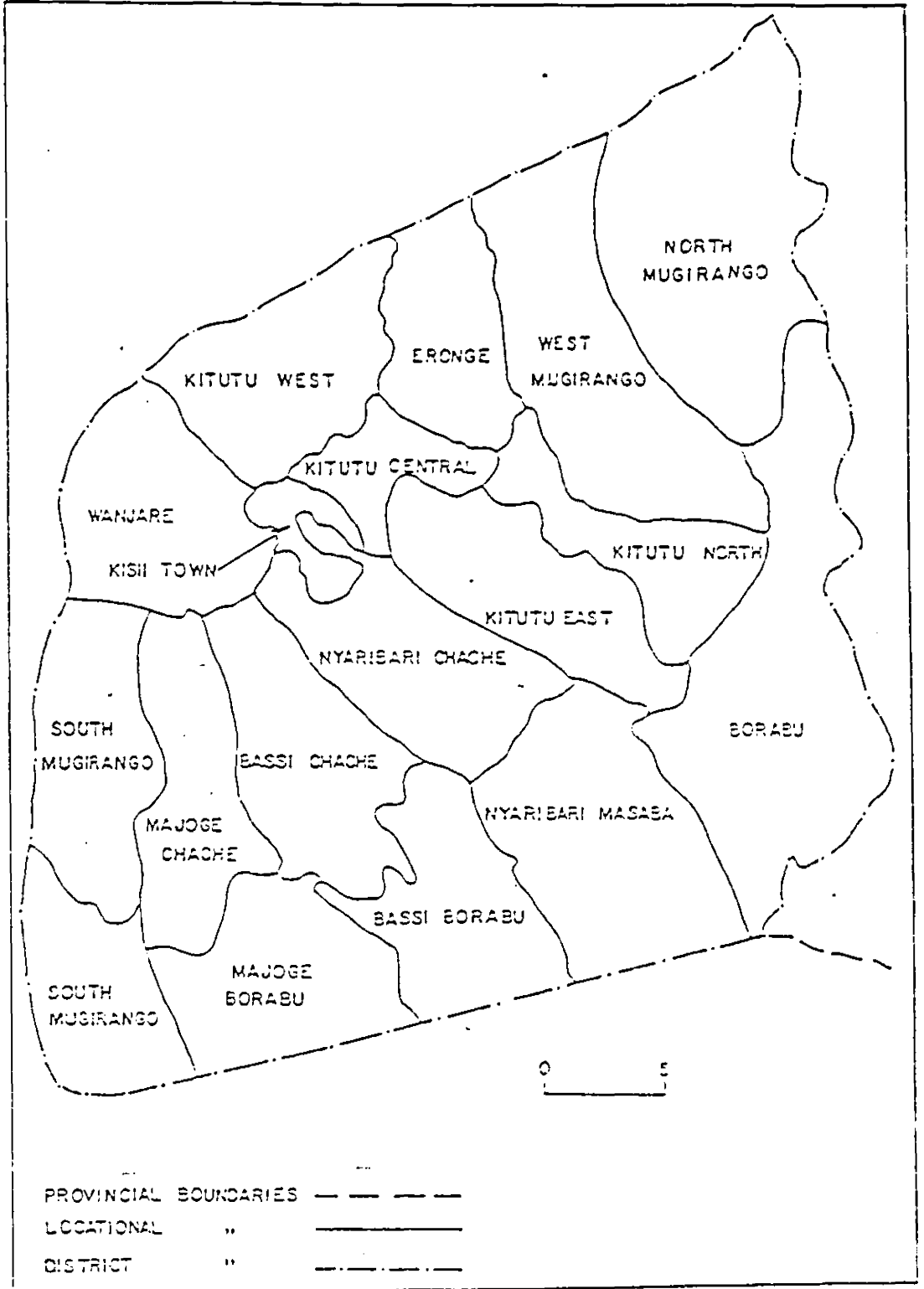
PHYSICAL FEATURES OF GUSII



Map 2

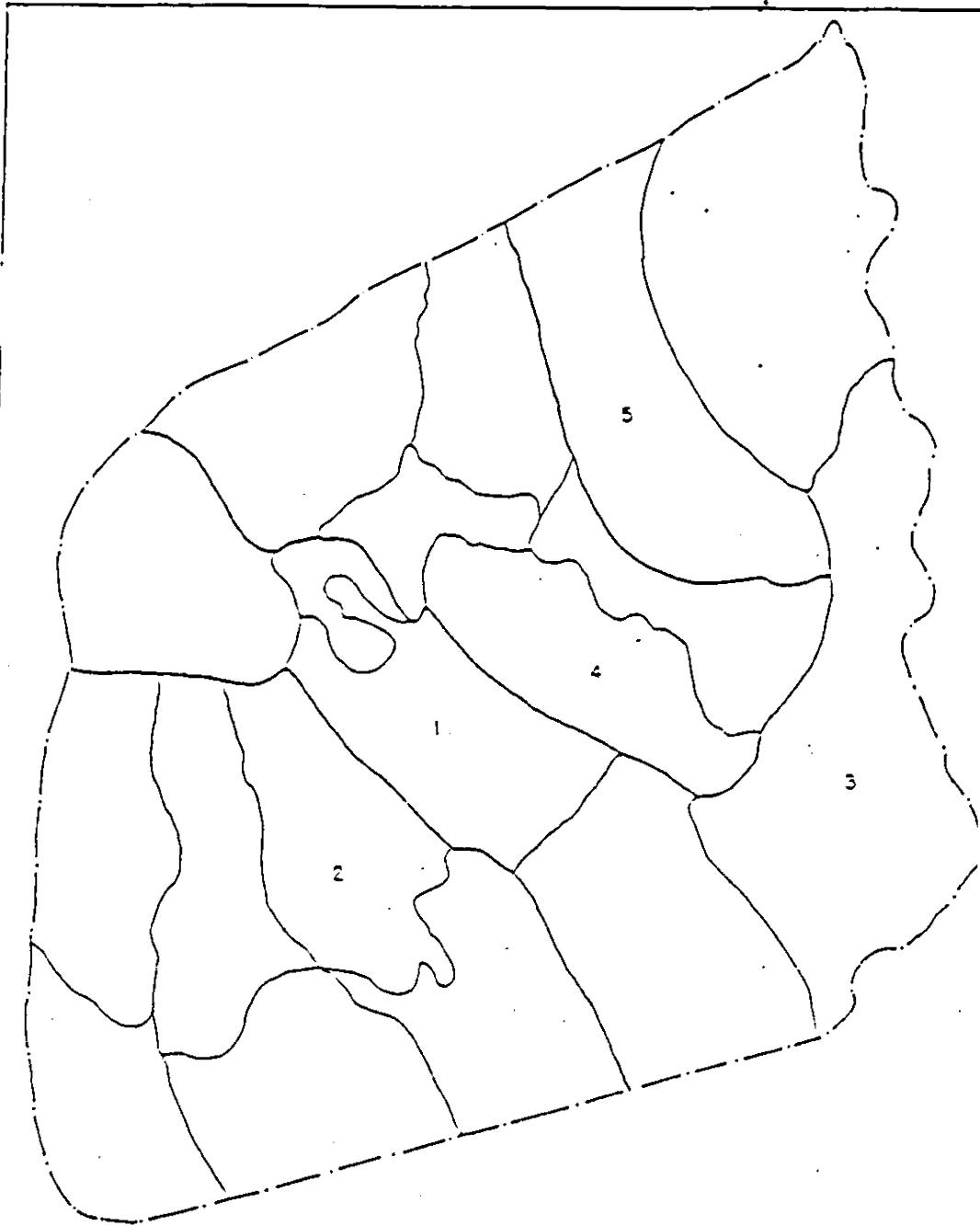
(x)

### GUSII ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES



Map 3

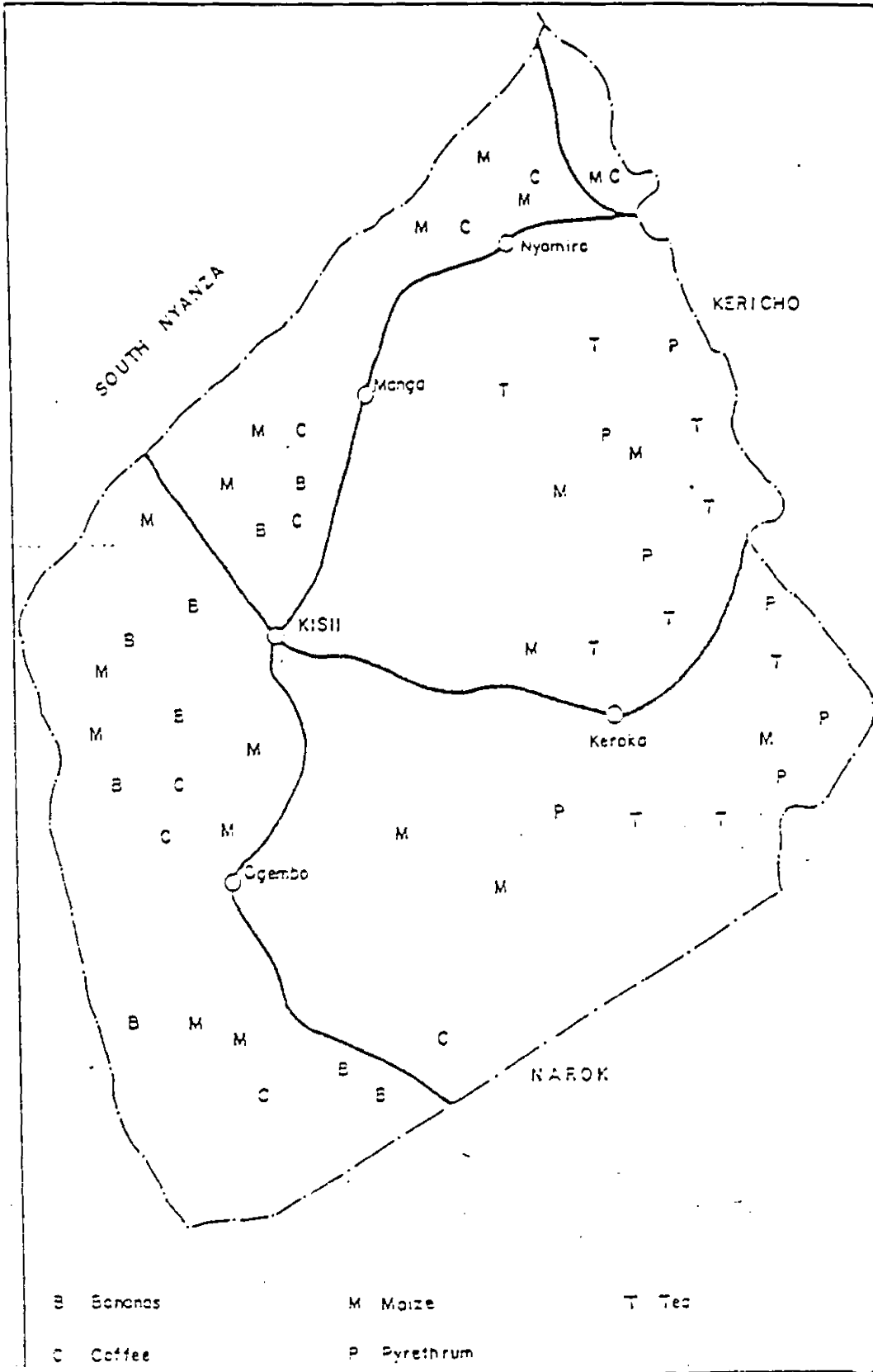
ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES OF SDA CHURCH IN GUSII



- 1 Nyonchwa Station
- 2 Riokingo Station
- 3 Masoba Station
- 4 Tombe Station
- 5 Kibirigo Station

Map 4

MAJOR CROPS IN GUSII



Map 5

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are several people and institutions without whom this study would not have been accomplished.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to Kenyatta University College for the financial grants they made available to me, without which this study would not have started and progressed.

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Thirdly, I am indebted to the family of J.O. Scire who offered me accommodation and valuable assistance during my fieldwork. Their contribution to the success of this study is significant. Others who provided invaluable help include Timothy Atinda and Dr. S.K. Bogonko. There are many others whose names I need not mention here, for they know how much I needed their help, to see this work through.

## INTRODUCTION

### A: General Background of the Study

The Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church has been on the Kenyan scene since 1906. Yet, it is a movement that many people do not understand. This is because some of its teachings and practices are different from those of other Christian denominations. For example, Seventh-day Adventists observe Saturday as the day of worship while other Christian denominations observe Sunday. The Seventh-day Adventists also recommend a vegetarian diet and refrain from alcohol and even the drinking of tea and coffee. These are some of the differences that have made many people wonder as to who and what the Seventh-day Adventists really are. It is the intention of this study to establish the background of these differences. This will open a way to a better understanding of Seventh-day Adventist teachings among her members, many of whom have not fully grasped the background of some of their teachings. This will pave the way for those outside the Seventh-day Adventist fold to understand and respect the Church's "odis."

Abagusii, among whom the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a large and popular following in Kenya, initially received Seventh-day Adventist Missionaries with hostility. With time, this hostility gave way to widespread acceptance. In this study factors that have contributed to this change of attitude, growth and progress of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will be established. Where and how this Church has contributed to national development is another aspect that will be discussed.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans and in particular the



Seventh-day Adventist missionaries, Abagusii, like any other African society, had evolved and were depending on their own unique system of living, a system that was deeply rooted in them. Despite this, the Seventh-day Adventist in Gusii have led the way in giving up or modifying some of their cultural practices, especially with regard to initiation, marriage and death. The aim of this study is to discuss the traditional cultural set up of Abagusii, and then point out where, how and why the Seventh-day Adventists have initiated changes and their effects, if any.

This flexibility of the Seventh-day Adventists has led to conflict not only within the Church but also with those outside the Church. This does not seem to shake or weaken the stability of the Church which is stationed in Western Kenya, where many protestant Churches have been hit by splits. In this study, the reasons behind the stability of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii are discussed.

For those interested in religion and particularly in Christianity, the study aims at bringing out yet another interpretation of the Christian message.

B: Literature Review

G.N. Amayo's thesis A History of the Adventist Christian Education in Kenya 1906-1963, illustrated in the light of its impact on the Africans social, economic, religious and political development,<sup>1</sup> has covered the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its role in education in the whole of Kenya. This means that Abagusii are not given a central place, and the material on them is not detailed. Amayo has dealt mainly with the aspects of missionary education, schools established and the influence of these aspects on the people. He has not covered the conflict arising from the contact of two different

cultures. The views of Abagusii with regard to Adventist teachings are left out. The reaction of Abagusii towards Adventism needs deeper concentration if Adventism in an African context is to be understood better.

Another thesis, by S.N. Bagonko, Christian missionary education and its impact on the Abagusii of western Kenya, 1909-1963,<sup>2</sup> looks at Seventh-day Adventists along with other protestant mission groups in Gusii. This is too general for the Seventh-day Adventists, who though protestant, do not see things, the same way as Lutherans, Pentecostals, Quakers and Anglicans do. He has looked at initiation rites in detail as part of the indigenous education, but he has not addressed himself to the influence of Christian teachings on these rites. For example, it is important to analyse why Abagusii Seventh-day Adventists practise initiation without some of its elaborate rituals. The influence of Adventism on Gusii culture needs attention.

Robert A. Levine and Barbara E. Levine in their book, Nvansongo: A Gusii community in Kenya<sup>3</sup>, have brought out clearly and in detail, the Gusii traditional rituals that went with birth and initiation. Their interest was on patterns of child-rearing and the subsequent differences in personality. The influence of Christianity and Adventism in particular, on these cultural practises has been left out. It is important to bring it out.

P.G. Kamanda's dissertation, Mission, western education and the emergence of a modern Gusii elite by 1964<sup>4</sup>, has touched on the establishment of the various mission churches in Gusii. His attention is centred on the role of missions in the creation of an elite. He lacks details on the Seventh-day Adventist role in this field,

goes with elitism. Whether the elite have contributed to the growth of the Church or towards its downfall should be dealt with.

W.R. Ochieng's thesis, A Traditional History of the Gusii of western Kenya (AD 1500-1914)<sup>5</sup>, later published as A Pre-colonial history of the Gusii of western Kenya (AD 1500-1914), has covered in detail the early migrations of Abagusii and their eventual settlement in their present homeland. He has given information on the relationship Abagusii had with their neighbours and also on their traditional set-up. Whereas Ochieng's study is outside the Seventh-day Adventist era in Gusii, his ideas can be used to establish their influence on the reaction of Abagusii towards Adventism, and the progress of Adventism among them.

B.A. Ogot and W.R. Ochieng in a paper "Mumboism an anti-colonial Movement?"<sup>6</sup>, have dealt with the influence of Mumboism in Gusiland. They were of the opinion that Abagusii adopted Mumboism because they viewed it as a weapon against the European intruders. Mumboism had existed among the Luo since time immemorial and Abagusii had been in touch with the Luos for several centuries, yet it was only in the early twentieth century that Abagusii took it up. This conservative nature of Abagusii will be seen to play a big role in the Seventh-day Adventists Church among Abagusii.

The material available on the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii is therefore lacking in some important aspects, such as the influence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church among Abagusii. While there are factors that have been left out on the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii, nothing has been done on recent times. Has the period after independence had any changes on Adventism among Abagusii? And what of the future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii?

C: Methodology

The study was centred on Seventh-day Adventist activities in Gusii therefore the location of fieldwork was mainly Gusii District, and other places likely to contain information on Seventh-day Adventist activities in Gusii. The whole research exercise lasted between September 1984 and April 1985.

The initial survey was carried out during the last two weeks of September 1984, when it was realized that there were no systematic records of Seventh-day Adventist activities in Gusii at the Church's headquarters at Nyanchwa. Through general discussions with Church workers and other Church members, several places and people were identified as likely sources of useful information. These included the earliest centres of Seventh-day Adventist activities in Gusii and also those areas of high Seventh-day Adventist concentration namely Nyaguta, Plokindo, Kamaganbo, Sironga, Nyambaria and the settlement schemes. The people referred to included the first converts and attendants of the Seventh-day Adventist school at Nyanchwa, outstanding Church leaders and active Church members. It was not possible to visit all these places and people then because the University was reopening and we were expected back. It was only at Nyaguta, therefore, that one lengthy and useful interview was held. Micah Momanyi, one of the earliest converts and an active Church member provided useful information on Seventh-day Adventist activities in Nyaribari location and particularly on the Seventh-day Adventist camp meeting activities in Gusii since Nyaguta was the first camp meeting centre in Gusii.

During this same period, about one hundred and twenty questionnaires were distributed to staff and students at Kisii High School and some few schools at Nyanchwa and also to Church workers

ordinary members and non-Seventh-day Adventists around Kisii town. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather information on the individual's understanding, attitude and commitment towards the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its activities in Gusii. The questionnaires did not prove very useful in these places as they were either rejected, not returned or had sketchy information. This called for follow-up interviews during December 1984 and January 1985, so as to get details and clarify some of the points. In other places, the questionnaires proved useful. Twenty five were distributed at the University College of Eastern Africa, Nandi in November 1984, fifty in Nairobi and twenty were sent out to various people during the research period. Fifty of them were returned and most of them had useful information.

October and November 1984 was spent doing library research. This was at University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University College and University College of Eastern Africa. Archival research was conducted at the Kenya National Archives. The headquarters of the East African Union of Seventh-day Adventist was visited but it had no systematic records on Seventh-day Adventist activities in Gusii. Two interviews with the education director and the lay activities director were carried out in April 1985. The information collected from the two went a long way in expanding what had already been gathered on the activities of the Church in Gusii, especially with regard to education lay activities, and stability of the Church.

December 1984 and January 1985 was devoted to conducting interviews in the rest of those places and with those people identified in September 1984. For example, at Rietago Settlement Scheme, Mishael Moseti, a retired pastor and an early attendant of the Seventh-day Adventist school at Nyandwa, provided information

on the early activities and general progress of the Church in Gusii. Naftali Oroko of the same location, the then Church elder of Rietago Church, gave useful information on recent development in the Church. He has been an active Church member since 1940s.

Gomeri Nyamoita and Zacharia Omagwa of Rikindo, both active Church members, gave information on a wide range of activities of the Church. Nyamoita recalled vividly her days as one of the first girls who joined the girls school at Nyanchwa, and she has been a witness of various Church developments. Omagwa has at one time served as the education director of the education department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii. Apart from his contribution on the education element he also had useful information on the internal differences within the Church.

Abel Nyakundi of Kiogoro had plenty of useful information on a wide spectrum of the activities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii. He was one of the earliest converts, served as a Seventh-day Adventist school inspector, a Missionary to Uganda and has also been an active pastor. His information proved reliable as he did not only grant a lengthy interview but provided his personal records and suggested other useful sources of information.

At Kamagambo, Mzee Rabuko, also an early Seventh-day Adventist convert who had at one time drifted away from the Church but had later been rebaptized provided useful information on the village system and on the influence of the Church in Kamagambo. He also had good information on the stability of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and how it has evaded the influence of splits from neighbouring Luoland.

Apart from providing information on the general Church development in Gusii, Pastor Stephen Maturi of Gionseri, a Church

member since 1930s, was a reliable source on the transition of the Church from field to Conference status. He also had useful information on the internal squabbles of the Church and its unity since it was during his reign as the first executive director of the conference that the Church faced one of its severest crises.

In Gusii, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has made its slowest pace in Wanjare Location. Clement Nyandara and Zablou Matini provided information as to the reasons underlying this slowness and they also had plenty to say on the Seventh-day Adventist and Roman Catholic rivalry.

Other people interviewed, who provided significant information, include the executive director, the education director, the health director and the accountant of South Kenya Conference. Colporteurs and other Church members were also interviewed so as to find out, among others, the role of literature in the Church. Non-Seventh-day Adventists provided information on their views of Seventh-day Adventist activities. Other places not visited for interviews such as Nyambaria were made up for through the use of information gathered from the questionnaires.

It was during this same period that time was spent in various public offices in Kisii town, gathering information on educational, agricultural and other activities with regard to Seventh-day Adventist influence. Most of the information was recorded in notebooks with occasional use of the tape recorder. It should be pointed out that previous research had been done on the Gusii traditional set up but the subject was not ignored during this particular study as it was brought up when discussing the Seventh-day Adventist influence on Gusii cultural practices.

Generally speaking, the whole exercise went on smoothly with most people being willing to assist in providing information or giving directions to the material. Despite the lack of systematic records on Seventh-day Adventist activities in Gusii, a file on early Seventh-day Adventists activities in Gusii as witnessed and written down by the missionaries themselves, was provided by Dr. S.N. Bogonko of Kenyatta University College and proved useful, as did various publications and of course the oral sources, library and archival sources.

The research findings are presented mainly in descriptive form. Other forms widely employed are analysis and comparison.

The study is composed of four chapters. The first chapter, which is on the Pre-colonial Gusii Society highlights those traditional values that are relevant in this study. Chapter two is divided into two sections. The first one deals with the rise of the Seventh-day Adventist Church while the second section deals with the activities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Chapter three has three sections. The first section is on the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii. The second section is devoted to factors that have contributed to the growth of the Church. The third section highlights the role of the



Seventh-day Adventist Church in national development efforts, with emphasis on Gusii. Chapter four has two sections. One is on the Seventh-day Adventist influence on some Gusii cultural practises, while the other covers the influence of splits on the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the same region. The conclusion then follows.

Footnotes

1. G.N. Amayo, Ph.D. Thesis, London University, Microfilms International, 1973.
2. Sorobebe N. Bogonko, Ph.D. Thesis. University of Nairobi, 1977.
3. Robert A. Levine and Barbara B. Levine, New York, John Wiley and Sons Inc. 1966.
4. P.G. Kamanda, B Ed. Dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1975.
5. William R. Ochieng', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1971.
6. B.A. Ogot and W.R. Ochieng, A paper presented at the Social Science Council University of East Africa, 1969 contained in University of East Africa Social Science Council, 1969, Proceedings.

## CHAPTER I

### THE PRE-COLONIAL GUSII SOCIETY

In order to assess the influence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church among Abagusii, it is important that we get a clear picture of who, how and what Abagusii were prior to the coming of Adventism. Since this is a wide area which can be a study on its own, this chapter will highlight only those traditional values that will contribute to our discussion. These include origins, migrations and settlement; religious beliefs and practises; the system of government; internal and external relations; eating habits; household cleanliness; the system of education; initiation; marriage; death and occasions of rest.

#### A: Origins, migrations and settlement

Abagusii are a people whose language places them within the Bantu-speaking majority of sub-equatorial Africa. They occupy the cool fertile region of south-west Kenya. (Map 1).

According to the 1979 population census, they numbered 867,000<sup>1</sup>. With an average birthrate of 4% per year,<sup>2</sup> in 1985 we can estimate their population to be: 1,096,755 that is  $867,000 \times (1.04)^6 = 867,000 \times 1.265 = 1,096,755$ .

Gusii district covers an area of 2196 sq.kms.<sup>3</sup> What follows is a summary of its physical features<sup>4</sup> (Map 2). The district is mostly hilly with several ridges especially in the east. Most of the eastern side is over 1800 metres and includes the Kisii highlands which lie between 2000 and 2350 metres. In the west, the area is between 1500 and 1800 metres. There are several permanent rivers and streams which drain the area into Lake Victoria, the main ones being the Kuja, Sondu and Mogonga. There are several valley bottoms and depressions most of which are marshy, thus reducing the area of land available for cultivation, but the inception of the Valley Bottom Project is a step in the right direction towards reclaiming the many swamps in the district. There are hardly any floods because of the hilly nature of the district. Over most of the district, the soils are quite fertile. Because of this, food and cash crops can be grown in all parts of the district. The climate of the district is that of the highland equatorial zone. Most of the rainfall is relief and usually exceeds 1500 mm per year. In the north west mean maximum annual temperatures are between 10° C and 14° C. The mean maximum temperatures are 26° C and 30° C and 22° C to 26° C respectively. The vegetation in the district is usually classified as wooded and bushed

grassland with scattered or grouped trees. Except for parts of southern Gusii, most of the natural vegetation has been replaced by crops and exotic trees.

But, Abagusii have not always occupied this area, it became their home about the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century<sup>5</sup>. Prior to this, they had been subjected to migrations through many places and over a long time. Something to note is that they are surrounded by non-Bantus namely the Nilotic Luo in the western and north-western frontier; the Maasai to the south and south-east and the Kipsigis to the east and north-east.

The entire Gusii people recognize a common ancestor, Mogusii, who is considered to be the founder of the society and the person after whom it was named<sup>6</sup>. Abagusii have no mythical explanation of their origins. Instead, they trace their roots to a place called Misiri, a place just to the north of Mount Elgon. Abagusii claim that here they were one with the Ganda, the Soga, the Agikuyu, the Ameru, the Aembu, and the Akamba of Central Kenya; the Abalagoli and Ababukusu of Western Province of Kenya; and also the Abasuba and Abakuria of South

Nyanza.

Because of overcrowding, epidemic and drought, there was division at Misiri which saw the Ganda and Suba branch off in a south-westerly direction. The central Kenya people moved eastwards to their present location while the rest, including Abagusii moved southwards leaving only Ababukusu behind. This was about A.D 1520, and by A.D 1560 the children of Mogusii had settled at Goye in Yimbo location of present day Siaya District of Nyanza Province. It is not clear how long they stayed here but after sometime, they migrated to Kisumu, which Abagusii refer to as Ekemunto. Probable reasons for their movement include over-population, the coming of some Luo and Luhya clusters and cattle raids. At Kisumu, they stayed for two generations and then moved to Kano, owing to severe famine. Here at Kisumu, the concept of sub-clan leaders started evolving, and some of these, such as Mobasi, Oibabe led their small bands out of Kisumu in search of food and new settlements. This was about 1650.

Abagusii then settled at Kano, and here they stayed longer than they had stayed anywhere

since their "exodus" from Misiri. Reasons for their long stay include the fact that there was plenty of grass for their livestock, as there was plenty of game for hunting. Water was also plentiful, supplied by the river Enyando and its tributaries. The Kano settlement saw the Gusii society evolve in many dimensions. Clans heads leadership evolved all the more, even though leadership remained with the family heads. The totems that were to distinguish Gusii clans, giving each clan exogamy and a sense of kinship, and which made clan members help and protect each other, also evolved.

The chart below illustrates totems of four major clans.

Clan	Totem	English Equivalent
1. Abagirango or Abagichorwa	Engo	Leopard
2. Ababasi	Enchage	Zebra
3. Abasweta (Abanyaribari - Abagetutu and Abamachoge)	Engoge	Baboon
4. Abanchari	Engubo	Hippo.

Another development was that of mixed economy with Obori (eleusine) becoming the major crop.

Life at Kano was disrupted and once again Abagusii found themselves on the move, this time towards Kebirigo/Kericho (Kabianga) area. They cite several reasons for moving. Boredom resulting from staying in one place for too long ranks high, as well as Joluo expansion and cattle raids. Another issue involved the Nandi who pressured them from the north. Once again the clan leaders organized and led their people to the new settlement.

The Kabianga settlement, however, proved to be the worst that Abagusii had been subjected to since their departure from Misiri. They were struck by famine and disease which resulted in the deaths of many people and livestock. The place was of a higher altitude and was therefore much wetter and colder than previous settlement. Attacks and cattle raids from the Maasai and Kipsigis did not improve the situation either. Construction of forts called orwaki round their homes, did not help much, so they had to take off. The term Kabianga denotes their impression

of this settlement, "a place of refusal." They moved to the Trans-Mara/Migori region where they settled at a place called Nyangaroro.

The Maasai continued to attack them, but Abagusii felt they had been harassed enough, and it was now high time they settled permanently, despite many odds. Most of them turned north and settled at Rinani ria Nyagoe, Manga and Isecha. After many upheavals the children of Mogusii had at long last reached a place they would call home. What they had adopted during their wanderings and the environment in which they now found themselves, are some of the factors that were to determine the nature of their society.

Early this century when the Europeans arrived in Gusii, they found this society had evolved its own unique system of living. This system, however, was not to continue because the Europeans had their own demands which would be met with changes being effected in the society. The missionaries, for example, introduced Abagusii to Christianity. Those accepting this new religion had to adopt to its teachings accordingly. In this study, we see how and where changes were effected on the Gusii society as a result of interacting with



Seventh-day Adventist missionaries.

B: Religious Beliefs and Practices

Informants agree that Abagusii recognised a supreme being, Engoro. He lived in the sky and was recognised as the creator of all things, some of which served as manifestations of him. The informants cited one ritual as crucial in the Gusii traditional society. In this ritual, the sun, manifesting the supreme being, played a significant role. It was performed when a baby was born.

When a woman gave birth, she was put in seclusion. She was also excused from heavy duties. That is why a younger sister or any other female relative came to stay with her just before she delivered. This person was supposed to take care of the house, older children and the husband; fetch water and firewood; and attend to garden duties. Above all, she had to make sure that the new mother had plenty to eat, particularly a vegetable called chinsaca and porridge made from Obori. These two are believed to be good stimulants of breast milk. Plenty of milk meant plenty of food for the baby and, therefore, fast

growth. This contributed to the fast healing of the baby's navel. The healing of the navel determined when the ritual was performed.

When the mother was sure that the baby's navel had healed, she got up very early in the morning and prepared porridge which she kept in a gourd. This gourd was to be used for keeping the baby's porridge till he was old enough to eat what the rest of the family was eating. She then watched the sky. As soon as she saw the sun rise, she took the baby's bed Ecesero, (the skin of calf, a goat or a sheep) and put it on her head. She also held the gourd and supported the baby on one arm. With the other hand she held her breast and squeezed it till some milk flowed. She then faced the sun and said "Rioba nderere nainche nkorerere" or "Tanca Konderera nainche nkorerere" meaning "sun, nurse this child for me and I will do the same for you" or "the responsibility of nursing this child is foremost yours; than it is mine".

After this ritual which could be witnessed by the rest of the household, the mother was no longer put in seclusion. She cleaned herself for the first time since she delivered. She had a

hair cut and was now free to go about light duties in the house and later go back to her normal duties as mother and wife. It was strongly believed that the baby was now in safe hands as he had been dedicated to his creator and shepherd. It should be emphasized that whereas the sun was prominent in this ritual it was just a manifestation of the supreme being, Encoro.

Formal or everyday worship was non-existent. Prayers or sacrifices were conducted depending on need. For example, if disaster struck, the person or people involved sought the guidance of omcragori (diviner), who, by consulting forces beyond him, advised on what remedial measures ought to be taken to avoid further misfortune. As long as everything was going on well, Abagusii went about their business without calling on Encoro.<sup>7</sup> This may explain the rare use of the term. Very few of the younger generation know that the supreme being was called Encoro. This does not mean that Abagusii forgot or assumed the existence of Encoro. In all that they engaged, they believed that Encoro was seeing them, and was either approving or disapproving. Encoro's invisible presence was very much recognized. That is why people always avoided engaging in any

behaviour that might displease him, for Encoro's displeasure meant harm to the offender, the family and even the clan as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

One notable feature is the absence of shrines and a priestly hierarchy in the Gusii society.<sup>9</sup> This is explained by the fact that for every misfortune, there was a cause and a special remedy. It was the duty of omoragori, to guide the victim in appeasing Encoro. Encoro did not favour direct dealings with man. His involvement in the physical world was executed through his agents the ancestral spirits, who formed the link between God and the living.<sup>10</sup>

The ancestors were given a central place in Gusii society. Anything that would displease them had to be avoided for this alone was enough to lead to the wiping out of a whole family. During sickness, the family made sure that the person was well attended. All his demands were quickly met lest he died holding a grudge against an individual or the whole family. Funeral and customary sacrifices had to be fulfilled.<sup>11</sup> Naming a baby after an ancestor was believed to earn the family the favour of that particular ancestor. Once every two or three

generations, a ceremony was conducted called okoreta chisokoro nka, which means "bringing home the ancestors". The family had to get an omen, in form of an unusual happening, for which they sought the guidance of omoragori, who responded by saying that the ancestors were unhappy for they were still regarded as outsiders. The whole family then went about preparing for the ceremony that was to "bring the ancestors home."

A lot of beer was prepared by a specially appointed person called Omokorerani who was assisted by his wife. Animals belonging to the family that were out of the home had to be present during the ceremony. The presence implied that everything that belonged to the family was participating in the ritual. Several animals were slaughtered. Among them, there had to be a big he-goat. While the beer was fermenting the couple and all the family converged and thanked the ancestors for all the blessing bestowed on the home. They also sought further guidance and help from God through the ancestors. When the beer was ready the whole clan was invited. There were two special feeding pots, one for the family, ensika, and a common one, entereko. Both pots

were buried half-way and were surrounded by a certain type of grass called emurwa. The feast lasted as long as there was something on which to feast. The power of the ancestors in the lives of the living was such a strong force, that it has been described as Nero enderi, nero abanto nero omotanani, nero ebinto bionsi<sup>12</sup> meaning, "the ancestor is the protector, he is the people, he is the guide and leader, he is everything."

It is important to note that there were occasions that called for voluntary worship, but these were private family affairs. For example, a family head would hold a feast for his family, to thank God for a good harvest, good health, a successful hunting expedition and increase of the livestock. During such occasions the family refrained from work.

Abagusii were, therefore, a deeply religious people. The fact that they were committed to and contented with their religious practices made it hard for the Seventh-day Adventist teachings to be easily accepted by Abagusii. With time, however, they (Abagusii) were to realize that despite some differences between their traditional beliefs and Seventh-day Adventist teachings, both religions met and fulfilled the religious needs of the people. The Seventh-day Adventist Church then

started making gradual progress among Abagusii.

C: System of Government

According to Gusii traditions, there was no time before the coming of the white man when they were under the rule of one man. There were times, however, when they acted together as one family. For example, in the battle of Osaosao, which was fought between Abagusii and Kipsigis in 1892, all Gusii clans participated in order to protect their interests. In most cases, they minded their own business at clan level. Centralized system of government was just taking root in Kitutu when the British arrived in Gusii.

The fact that Abagusii lacked centralized government does not mean lack of unity among them. They all recognized a common ancestor, Moçusii. Insecurity caused by internal and external influence also made them identify closely with each other. Other factors contributing to unity among Abagusii have been given as a common language, common and continuous territory, common customs and traditions, and common institutionalized forms of cooperation and interdependence.<sup>13</sup>

They evolved a system of handling disputes amongst themselves. This was done at four levels, namely, Ovomaiga, etureti, egesaku and ritongo.<sup>14</sup> Ovomaiga was the lowest level as it involved just the immediate family. Some causes of dispute were division of work, co-wife squabbles, referred to among abagusii as Encareka, ownership of livestock and hereditary rights. Such issues were considered to be domestic, hence the term Ovomaiga which literally means "of the hearth." When he found it was necessary, the family head sought help in settling disputes from outside but it had to be within the extended family.

Etureti was composed of elders of a clan, abatureti. They dealt with clan disputes mainly involving boundaries and exogamy. At Egesaku level, inter-clan disputes were settled by elders from disputing clans. For example, if a young woman went visiting in a neighbouring clan and was abducted, the elders met to confirm it as a marriage or to decide on compensation. Ritongo was the highest level of settling disputes that had failed at the lower levels. It was composed of highly reputable personalities



from all over Gusii. In case of discontent at any level, it was the responsibility of the elders, and not of the disputing parties to serve an appeal to a higher level.

In most cases the ruling set by the elders was acceptable to the disputing parties. Failure to accept would cause the elders to curse the people involved. Acceptance was further endorsed by the use of an oath. The oath was not loosely applied as people were expected to be honest. But when the elders felt it would help settle a dispute better, it was applied. The person taking the oath stood before or held a piece of a certain tree called Omotembe and swore that he was innocent. According to Gusii traditions Omotembe has been recognised as a sacred tree since time immemorial. It is not even used for firewood, except by very old people and widows. He also called on God to bear witness. Whatever was uttered was impossible to reverse.

Personal problems called for counselling, which was given by elderly members of the society. Young people sought advice from uncles, aunts and other relatives. This qualifies the popular

Gusii saying "monto monene ndiogo" which means "an older person has medicinal value". This is not to say, however, that anything coming out of the mouth of an elder was taken and accepted at face value. Elders had to distinguish themselves as wise, just and honest before winning the confidence and trust of the society.

Like any other society then, Abagusii had their own system of settling disputes with emphasis being laid on maintenance of peace and unity among the people. This has greatly contributed to the lack of splits not only in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but also in the other Christian churches in Gusii.

D: Internal and External relations

As already indicated in section C, Abagusii favoured peace and unity amongst themselves. There were occasions, however, when tension was inevitable. Two major causes of tension involved cattle, namely, obokurumi (cattle-rustling) and boundary disputes. Abagusii attached great importance to cattle, for they were not only used as a measure of one's wealth and therefore his social status, but they

were also used as part of bridewealth in marriage transactions. Cattle rustling mostly between clans, was one way of acquiring cattle, but this resulted in disputes between the rustlers and the owners of the animals. Whereas most disputes were settled amicably, cattle-rustling was often avenged and this led to tension between the parties involved. As the population of people and animals went up, boundary disputes came up, mostly over watering and grazing rights.<sup>16</sup>

Despite these incidents of tension, unity was a factor strongly stressed and recommended among Abagusii. This was illustrated in various ways as is clear in the following examples.

One major unifying factor among Abagusii was marriage. Marriage was conducted between clans and this automatically made the people of the two clans recognize each other as relatives. They called each other intimate names such as daughter, son, father-in-law and korera (Parents of a couple call each other korera) Even at times of hostility between clans, in-laws visited each others freely, as long as they were accompanied by abaiwa (nephews).

There was oookerani, "sharing with others

what they did not have." Those who harvested first never ate alone, they sent some of the food to relatives whose crops were not yet ready. Exchanging food was also common. If one's pumpkins were ready, one would exchange some of them for something else. In times of famine relatives came even closer. Those without food visited those who had, and they were given some. This was called ocosuma.<sup>18</sup> There was also the barter system, which involved iron implements. The blacksmiths were therefore among the wealthiest members of the society, for they exchanged their goods with livestock. One factor for weighing a rich man was the number of cattle and other livestock he had.<sup>19</sup> Wrestling on a friendly basis was carried out at clan level. It was a socializing factor which contributed to people of a clan knowing each other better.<sup>20</sup>

Gusii relations with their neighbours, namely Luo, Kipsigis and Maasai were not good. The general impression one gets is that there was tension between Abagusii and their neighbours. Cattle seem to have played a big role in Gusii contacts with her neighbours. Cattle raids and murders committed during the raids had to be avenged. Grazing and watering rights

also contributed to tension between Abagusii and her neighbours. What needs to be emphasized however, is the fact that inter-ethnic rivalry was the experience of those at the borders and hardly touched on the rest of the society. The battle of Osaosao (p.24) is one rare occasion when all Gusii was involved in a confrontation against foreigners.

Occasionally, peace agreements were reached between Abagusii and the Luo. If there was acute tension and it looked like chances of compromise were remote, leaders of the affected clans met and agreed to settle the dispute. Abagusii and the Luo met at the border and a dog was killed to symbolize the end of the hostility. A goat was also killed and all the people present ate it. The eating together marked the unity and friendship now established.<sup>21</sup>

Traditional ethnic hostility was overlooked during famine. For example, a Kipsigis family would arrange to have one of their daughters married into a Gusii family. The two families now established a strong relationship and treated each other as relatives. Using this relationship, the Kipsigis would come and get

food mainly grain from their in-laws in Gusii. The Kipsigis normally depended on meat, milk and blood but the famine accompanying drought forced them to turn to grain in order to survive.<sup>22</sup>

Trade contacts between Abagusii and their neighbours existed only with the Luo, but not with the Maasai and Kipsigis. The barter system of trade involved items such as grain, iron works, soapstone and skins from Gusii; and livestock, drums, baskets pots, milk and fish from Luoland.<sup>23</sup> Trade contacts were mainly the responsibility of women and children from both sides. It was not unusual, however, to see Luo women and children accompanied and led by an elderly man, who made a peaceful gesture particularly when they were famine stricken and there was acute tension between the two ethnic groups.<sup>24</sup>

Marriage outside Gusii was rare. Abagusii despised the Luo because they did not practice circumcision. They referred to them as children. On rare cases, however, omogusii who had been too cowardly to undergo circumcision would only find a marriage partner among the

uncircumcised Luo.<sup>25</sup> It appears the Kipsigis and Maasai had no room for such rejects of Abagusii.

Abagusii did not borrow much from their neighbours. They tended to be conservative and spiteful of their neighbours and their customs. They had little regard for the Maasai because the latter did not practise any agriculture. Their view of the Kipsigis was no better. Anything that Abagusii have borrowed from their neighbours is a recent development for it is the white man who encouraged contact between Abagusii and their neighbours to a level where they recognized them as people worth copying from.<sup>26</sup> Several people say omosongo nere orenta omorembe meaning, "it is the white man who brought about peace". Of the Maasai, Abagusii say, Mogusii tare cotamboka cochia bomanvi, na momanvi tare cotamboka cocha Gusii, meaning, "No mogusii would venture into Maasailand and vice versa."

The relationship between Abagusii and their neighbours was therefore characterized by tension. But when there was need, there was friendly contact. To Abagusii, her neighbours were non-Bantus, people who were not related to

them in any way. They were therefore strangers and had to be treated with suspicion. Because of this conservative nature of Abagusii, the Seventh-day Adventist adherents in Gusii have tended to keep off some features that are characteristic of their neighbours. Whereas they have been instrumental in the spread of the Seventh-day Adventist Church among the Kipsigis and the Maasai, they have not been influenced by splits which are a common feature among most Christian churches among the Luo.

E: Eating habits

The main crop grown by Abagusii before the coming of the white man was Obori. The grain was ground between two stones by women. The flour was used in making ugali and porridge. Maize which is widely used now is a recent development. Ugali was eaten with various wild vegetables such as chinsaga, rinogu, enderema, risosa and rikuneni. Among the wealthy, blood obtained from cattle was added to the vegetables in order to give them better flavour. Meat and milk were not common, they were regarded as luxuries of the rich. Other foodstuffs common in the past were insects such as chintuga (white ants) amabururu (grasshoppers) and chingige



(locusts). These too were used as "escorts" of ugali. Mushrooms were also eaten, depending on the season. They were of various types the commonest being amoba, amasinca and amandeeere.<sup>27</sup>

Some of the food was acquired through hunting which was the responsibility of men. Game meat was highly appreciated as meat was rare for most people.

Fruits were also common but they were not regarded as food. They grew wild and had to be gathered. These include chinkenene, chinsobosobo, obasancora, chinkenda-monwa and chinkomoni.<sup>28</sup>

Tobacco-chewing was considered a leisurely activity for old men and women. Bhang-smoking was preserved for old men who used it as part of entertainment for visitors of the same age or as an activity to keep one busy when there was nothing much to do. Bhang was also smoked by the newly circumcized and the still-unmarried men at gesarate, where cattle were kept communally.<sup>29</sup>

Beer was common, but it was mainly drunk by men. Women simply sipped, and they were not allowed in the company of beer-takers. A woman who took beer

to the extent of being drunk brought shame upon herself and her whole household. Young men were allowed no beer whatsoever for it would interfere with their activities of organizing themselves for the future.<sup>30</sup>

Abagusii had several food taboos. For example, chicken was preserved for men. A woman eating or just tasting chicken was accorded negative publicity with several songs being composed and sang about her bad habits.<sup>31</sup> Whatever the reason behind it, it is the men who cooked the chicken in their huts and served it to the sons they liked. Perhaps it was out of selfish motives that men took to eating chicken alone. Unmarried girls were not allowed to eat the head of a sheep for they might become as stubborn as the sheep and find it hard to acquire and retain husbands.<sup>32</sup>

After a cow gave birth, her milk was preserved for sometime. It was drunk by the whole extended family on a day when the owner felt enough milk had been accumulated to be distributed to every household.<sup>33</sup>

Reasons given for observing food taboos are mainly geared towards making individuals have

self-discipline and respect for the norms of the society. The restrictions Abagusii had on certain foods as well as the food taboos are seen to have prepared them to cope with the Seventh-day Adventist teachings on diet. For example, the Seventh-day Adventist idea of discouraging her members from taking beer played big role in winning many followers into the Seventh-day Adventist fold.

F: Household cleanliness

The traditional Gusii hut was round in shape. It was divided into two rooms. It had two doors but no windows. Materials used for construction were strong poles for support and other weaker ones that went round to give the hut shape and also reinforce its strength. The hut was smeared with mud, to which was added ash and cowdung. The cone roof was thatched with grass. Construction was the work of men, who then passed the responsibility of maintenance to the women. Women plastered the huts continuously. This made the huts last longer and also appear presentable. There were, however, cases where a lazy woman ignored the maintenance of her hut and this earned her the name omovaka, meaning a dirty

and untidy person. Such a home provided fertile ground for jiggers, and this was a disgrace in the community.<sup>34</sup>

The hut had a raft which served as a store for grain, firewood and other essentials. The raft, however, also provided good shelter for rats.

When cattle raids were at the climax people had to share their huts with livestock. This made the houses slippery and smelly. Under normal circumstances, however, cattle were kept at gesarate or boma far enough from the house, in an enclosure called obweri.<sup>35</sup>

The hut was expected to be clean. The utensils, wooden and clay bowls were often thoroughly scrubbed with the leaves of omoseni, a tree with rough leaves. Clothing was made from the skins of animals. The length and number of pieces was determined by the status of an individual in the society. These skins were smeared with oil and clay to keep them shiny, comfortable and lasting. Water was not used much instead people smeared their bodies with oil.<sup>36</sup>

Meat was at times eaten raw, milk was

never boiled and vegetables were washed before cooking only if they had been picked after a heavy-downpour. Hands were not always washed before eating and many people simply wrung them and clapped them after a meal.<sup>37</sup>

Untidiness in the home caused by children when the mother was in the garden or attending other domestic duties was understood. She was expected to restore things back to order as soon as possible so as not to suffer embarrassment in case a visitor dropped in unexpectedly.

Generally speaking, Abagusii maintained a reasonable standard of cleanliness, but this was found wanting by the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries in Gusii district. This could be explained by the fact that the missionaries judged Abagusii by the standard of Europeans. All the same, the sense of cleanliness in the Gusii traditional background, made the Seventh-day Adventist Church which stressed cleanliness more attractive to them than the other christian groups there, particularly the Catholics who tended to ignore it.

G: System of Education

Like many other African societies, there was no formal system of education in Gusii prior to the coming of the white man. There was no specially set aside institution where knowledge was transmitted as we know schools today. There, however, existed a way of passing on from generation to generation, the knowledge the society considered essential for their survival with regard to social, political and economic affairs.<sup>38</sup>

Education was a lifelong process in which an individual progressed through pre-determined stages of graduation from birth to death. Through these stages, he ultimately arrived at full membership of his society, emerging as a socialized person with knowledge of what was required of him and fitted to the emotional life that awaited him. Not only did Abagusii stress conformity to already tested values and beliefs but they also rigidly and in a detailed manner demanded observance of the unwritten laws of religion, inheritance, family relationships and marriage. Generally then, this is the picture of the Gusii system of education.

At infancy a child's upbringing was mainly the responsibility of the mother. After weaning, the grand parents and other children also participated. Apart from knowing how to walk and talk a child was introduced to approved behaviour and though still too young to really grasp, stories, legends and myths were told and songs sang which introduced him to the community's religious beliefs, laws and history. Values like respect, obedience, generosity and unselfishness, courage and endurance were taught and praised whenever they were noted in the child's behaviour.

When the child was old enough to go out of the home, he was now exposed to the community at large which took up training him. He was expected to lend a hand where he could, for example in activities like herding cattle, hunting and nursing younger siblings. The girls took to womanhood responsibilities such as gathering firewood and picking vegetables. Education acquired at this stage was practical and involved activities such as basket weaving and blacksmithing. Different trees and herbs were identified and their uses were known. At initiation one was recognized as a fully socialized and grown-up member of the society (pp.42-46)

Whatever one had learnt in his youth was greatly valued and treasured for as one advanced in age, he acquired the status of an instructor. He did not cease to learn because even an old man felt he would not survive without the ideas of others. There were frequent visits and light beer parties or bhang-smoking meetings where old men shared ideas and experiences. They respected the word of even a younger man if it was considered wise.

This system of education was very relevant for it involved virtually everything that went into making and identifying these people as Abagusii. The education system though informal, took care of the people's vocational and practical needs, moral needs and in fact all aspects of man. With the arrival of the Europeans, however the society's traditional needs were to change, so as to meet the demands of a colonial setting. A new system towards this end was sought. The Seventh-day Adventist schools, among others, provided a suitable channel for meeting this need, thus making the Seventh-day Adventist contribution to education in Kenya significant.



H: Initiation

The circumcision ceremony was an annual event and involved both sexes. It was a sacred institution which was accompanied by many elaborate and colourful rituals. Here, we shall acquaint ourselves with this practice in a general manner.<sup>39</sup>

It was the dream of each child to undergo circumcision as it qualified one as an adult member of the society. This was encouraged by older siblings who teased and made the uninitiated feel inferior. A child of age, therefore, suggested to his parents that he wanted to be initiated. They provided and prepared the feast and everything else that was to accompany the ceremony. On the eve of the ceremony, the initiate had his hair cut. The day of circumcision, which was marked with feasting, dancing and generally a relaxed atmosphere, started with a cold bath at the river. This was followed by the "operation" which was conducted by a special "surgeon" called omosaria. First borns, twins and only children were circumcised in their own homes. Others were free to come and be initiated in such homes.

After the "operation", there was great rejoicing by all present, particularly women. The initiate was then led to the seclusion hut by a slightly older and initiated person called omoseci. Omoseci undertook the responsibilities of advising, protecting and caring for the initiate during the seclusion period. The initiate was now referred to as omware. A special relationship developed between the two, which was supposed to last even after seclusion and the whole initiation exercise was over.

In the seclusion hut, a fire was drilled which was not supposed to die. It was believed that if it died it would invite bad luck not only to omware but also to omoseci, and any other person who found it dead or being re-drilled. In rare occasions when it died, special sacrifices were undertaken to cast off the spell of evil forces that would bring misfortunes.

Some of the seclusion restrictions included avoiding water and free contact and interaction with the rest of the society, particularly married men and women. The home of omware was, however, the centre of attraction for the already initiated youth, who came to tease

and keep him/ company. They participated in the rituals of the seclusion period. Girls slept at omware's home and sang through most of the nights.

The third day after the "operation" was a special day when a certain grass called esuouta was collected from the bush by those already initiated and brought to the hut of seclusion. It was planted indoors and was to be watered by omware, through washing hands, with the palm facing down, over it. If it dried out then bad luck was on the way. This meant that omware had to take special care of this grass, and thus exercise responsibility.

More learning followed in another ritual called Esubo, which came "several" days after esuouta. The initiated disguised themselves as animals, and threatened omware that he was going to be eaten by an animal called envabububu. In actual fact, this was only a pot buried. It was filled with water and tied with a skin at the top. It was then brushed such that it produced an animal-like sound. This was done at night in order to scare omware all the more. Eventually, however omware was told the truth about "the animal." During this occasion some herbs were

shown and their uses were explained to omware. Esubo served the purpose of testing one's bravery and endurance, as well as increasing his knowledge of herbs and their uses.

Another important ritual was performed on the eve of the end of the seclusion period called ekiarokio. This time omware was allowed to handle the animal and was treated more fairly as the days of childhood were now drawing to an end. More useful knowledge on herbs and the secrets of growing up were transmitted. At dawn, omware was led to the river where he had a bath for the first time since initiation.

After the bath, omware made a public appearance and was anointed by his/her father. The stage of childhood had come to an end and was now replaced by adulthood.

Initiation therefore, was central among Abagusii. It was intermingled with beliefs which were meant to transmit the values of the society into an individual. Anybody who did not go through this rite was not accepted as a member of the society. He was banished to Luoland. This, however, was rare for every child looked

forward to initiation. Seventh-day Adventists have led the way in giving up some of these rituals. This as we see in chapter four has caused disappointment to the traditionalist Gusii and other Christians who still feel these rituals are necessary.

I: Marriage

After initiation the next step for most people was marriage. The boy took the initiative of telling his parents that it was high time his mother got a helper. He was asked if he had anybody in mind. Whether he had or not, the parents looked for an elderly person to act as a go-between in the negotiations. This person was referred to as Esicani. He was always present in future negotiations.

Esicani then visited the home of the girl and declared "mbochese nache koricia aica" meaning "I have come here to provoke you". He/she then went on to give the details about the suitor and his family. If the girl and her parents gave consent, a day was fixed when the suitor would visit the girl's home, accompanied by several boys. The aim of this visit was to get acquainted

with the girl and her family. If this visit was successful another day was fixed when the girl's father and his friends came to the suitor's home to discuss bridewealth.

Bridewealth discussions were conducted in a friendly atmosphere. It was an understanding between the two parties. Bridewealth was determined by the season, depending on whether it was a time of plenty or famine. It was a fixed number of cows and goats, regardless of whether one was poor or rich. Bridewealth strengthened a relationship so care was taken, to make sure that no tension cropped up during negotiations. Whatever remained of bridewealth was always honoured by the groom and his family who did not want to mar their name among in-laws. It was rare to hear that in-laws had differed strongly over bridewealth, for it was not a bargaining or haggling issue. It was a matter of understanding between the two parties.

In the past, the bride was not accompanied by other girls to her new home. When all negotiations were complete it was up to the groom and his friends to time the bride's movements and ambush her. On her part, she

avoided places where chances of being ambushed were high. But, whatever her security she was finally found and there followed a scuffle in which the groom won. The bride was carried shoulder high to her new home amid yells and cries for help. All were well informed not to interfere with a man who was taking his bride home. The scuffle was just to show that the girl still loved her home and her people. Any help she received from her people was not aimed at retaining her, but was meant to show that they cared for her and that they would miss her.

The ambushers did not take the bride to the groom's home but to cesarate where she spent two days. On the third day she was brought to the groom's home to meet girls from her home who had brought food, consisting of ucali, chinsaga and beans. The purpose of the visit was to find out how the bride had fared on with the groom, more so with regard to sexual relations. The bride, the groom, together with his brothers and agemates, were not supposed to eat the food. It was preserved for the elders. Another visit by the girls followed. This time the food they brought was meant for the bride, the groom and all those who had been excluded during the earlier visit.

The elders did not participate in the eating.

After some time the bride was fitted with ornaments around both her ankles, called ebitince. They served the purpose of announcing to all people she came in contact with that she was a married woman. A widow had one of them removed soon after her husband's death. It needs to be pointed out, however, that it was not every married woman who wore these anklets as they were not mandatory. A man who encouraged his wife to be fitted with ebitince gave her parents a gift, in form of a cow or several goats, depending on his wealth and his generosity.

One notable feature of the Gusii past is that immorality was minimal. Cases of pregnancy before marriage were rare. A girl known to engage in pre-marital sex was not accorded any respect. Even finding a husband was not easy.

Soon after the white man's arrival in Gusii, the egesarate system was abolished (in 1912). This marked the end of brides being ambushed and taken there. It made way for the development of a bride being escorted to her new home by her girlfriends.<sup>42</sup>



Like in initiation, Seventh-day Adventists have initiated changes in Gusii marriage rituals. Their role in changes related to dowry and the wedding ceremony have caused many people in Gusii to wonder what the Seventh-day Adventists really stand for. Chapter four has details on this issue.

J: Death

Abagusii did not believe in resurrection. That is why they held the saying "monto akwa asira, motienvi okwa oboka".<sup>43</sup> That means "a dead person does not arise but the moon dies and rises again." The dead, however, continued to exist and influenced the lives of the living. The ancestral cult, played a prominent role in the traditional religious beliefs of Abagusii.

It was held that the ancestors were quick to give protection to the living. They warned and advised the living through omens which were interpreted by abaracori (diviners). That is why Abagusii named their children after the dead, so as to appease them and win their favour. Even a child was not forgotten. During the ceremonies carried out after a child's death, the

following words were uttered, torarere buva tonvove ovonde tokoroke,<sup>44</sup> meaning "you stay in peace, we will get another child and name after you."

Most lives were claimed by diseases. The commonest killer diseases included envamokirimbi (plague), ekiebeneni (severe headache) envamosoni (a sexual disease) envaini (enlarged or swollen liver) and ecekuba (chest diseases).

For most of these diseases the remedies taken were curative not preventive. The medicine applied was herbal, taken either in ash or liquid form. Herbs were also rubbed on bodies. Okoromeka (blood sucking) was applied in cases of headaches. Another form of treatment was ogoikamereria (steaming) whereby assorted herbs were boiled and a patient was covered as he leaned towards a steaming pot.<sup>46</sup>

Disease whose cause was connected with displeasure of the ancestors did not require any medicine. The victims only needed to offer the necessary sacrifice to the ancestors and the problem was solved.

Where treatment failed and a person died, however, there was pandemonium, caused by wailing relatives, neighbours and friends. The noise would be heard several ridges away.<sup>47</sup> Destruction of property such as pouring stored grain and breaking cooking vessels was part of expressing sorrow. The bereaved would throw themselves about, often resulting in injuries.<sup>48</sup> Death, therefore, caused untold sorrow which was expressed in various ways, some of which were very destructive.

After burial, sacrifices were offered to cleanse the home of death. More sacrifices were offered if a family head died. On the third day after his burial, a goat was killed to drive away evil forces and to beseech peace. The family did not bathe or clean themselves in any way till after about three months. A lot of beer was then prepared and relatives were invited to participate in the feasting which was supposed to invite peace between the dead person and the living. Before this ceremony was complete, the bereaved family were not allowed to do any shamba work nor participate in other social activities such as communal feasts. They were not to cross any river and the widow was not

allowed to shake hands with anybody.<sup>49</sup>

Another bigger feast followed after two or three years. It was determined by the availability of food. This day was referred to as erieri. It was observed in memory of the dead. The feast was marked with rejoicing for the fresh memories of death were now gone, and it was believed the ancestor's death was now accepted by the living. It was the last sacrifice the people were fulfilling in the dead man's honour. If the bereaved had met all the requirements of the after-death rituals, there was no cause for alarm.<sup>50</sup>

The other important occasion was observed two or three generations after a family head's death. This requirement was communicated to the family by ancestors who provided an omen. Any unusual happening such as frequent illness in the family or several poor harvests were seen as signs that time was ripe for the occasion. Omoracori was consulted, and it was him to confirm whether the ancestors needed to be appeased. This occasion served to bring the dead man and other dead relatives home. It was called okoreta chisokoro nka.<sup>51</sup>

For Abagusii, therefore, death was taken seriously. It marked the end of life for the dead person. The living felt it was their duty to cleanse the home of evil forces connected with death by fulfilling several rituals. As long as these rituals were met, peace was expected between the living and the dead. Seventh-day Adventist adherents in Gusii no longer practise nor do they participate in most of these rituals. For example, while the ancestral cult played a significant role in the Gusii traditional society, Seventh-day Adventists hold that the dead have no role to play in the lives of the living as they are asleep, awaiting resurrection. The ancestral cult loses meaning in the Seventh-day Adventist adherents. What has caused concern, however, is the fact that Seventh-day Adventists discourage people from mourning at funerals. The element of destroying property that used to accompany mourning has been given up gradually but why mourning, a natural way of expressing sorrow is not acceptable to some Seventh-day Adventists is our point of discussion in chapter four.

K: Occasions of rest

In Gusii traditions there were many occasions when people refrained from work. The rest days were called omokubio or omotimoko.

That is why Sunday is generally known as omokubio among Catholics. The roots of this word lie in the term ocokuba which denotes a halt or a break.<sup>52</sup>

An unusual occurrence was followed by a day of rest. For example, if there was an earthquake, it was attributed to displeasure of the ancestors, so people refrained from work as an appeasing measure. There was also a special day observed annually, in memory of a terrible earthquake that occurred in the dim past. It is not observed any more.<sup>53</sup>

Another occasion calling for rest was when there was drought. People organized themselves and went to comovibi (rainmaker) to whom they sang praises. He then asked them to work for him in his garden and assured them, nkoecwa more mache makendu, meaning "you are going to be given cold water." The following day was observed as a day of rest, called rivovo.<sup>54</sup>

When there occurred a hailstorm, a day was set aside for oookireka amacena, that is "preventing stones". Another day of rest was observed to mark the start of the harvest season. It was called esasimo vekeramokia. Another-day of rest was observed just before the planting season set in.<sup>55</sup>

If twins were born, the neighbourhood was alerted and refrained from normal duty for a day. Death in the family also called for rest.<sup>56</sup>

There were therefore, several occasions that called for rest in the traditional Gusi set up which were observed without any fuss for there was a valid reason behind each of them.

The Seventh-day Adventists are strict in their observance of Saturday as the day of worship. Saturday, particularly in the early days of Adventism in Gusi was a day of maximum rest, on which only very little necessary work such as cooking, was performed. This strictness did not put many people away, because the concept of rest days in the traditional society, had played a role in preparing them for the rest

required on Saturday.

With the arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries in Gusii these foregoing traditional values have had to change. Before we discuss further why and how this has come about we need to introduce ourselves to who, how and what the Seventh-day Adventist Church is. The next chapter is devoted to this.



Footnotes

1. Kenya National Archives, Annual Report, Nyanza Province, 1979.
2. Ibid., 1983.
3. Ibid.
4. National Environment and Human Settlements Secretariat (1981), a study on Gusii District's Physical features, cited in District Socio-Cultural Profiles Report, A joint Research and training Project of the Ministry of Finance and Planning and The Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi. Kisii District Phase III Draft Report, August 1984. (Edited by Dr. D. Nyamwaya), pp.3-6, Herein referred to as District-Socio-Cultural Profiles Report.
5. Except where it is noted, the information on migrations is based on W.R. Ochieng's book, An outline History of Nyanza up to 1914 (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1974), Chapters 3 and 5.

6. Robert A. Levine and Barbara B. Levine, Nvansongo. A Gusii Community in Kenya, (New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1966), p.3.
7. Clement Nyandara, interview, Bonyando-Wanjare, 3/1/85. Hereafter referred to as Nyandara, interview.
8. Ibid.
9. William R. Ochieng, A Traditional History of the Gusii of western Kenya 1500-1914, Ph D. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1971), p.211.
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11. Peres Nyanduko interview, Bonyando-Wanjare 3/1/85. Hereafter referred to as Nyanduko, interview.
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15. Nyandara, interview.
  16. Moraa Isoe, interview Bomwanda-Wanjare 3/4/80. Hereafter referred to as Isoe, interview.
  17. Kemunto, interview.
  18. Ibid.
  19. Nyanduko, interview.
  20. Nyandara, interview.
  21. Isoe, interview.
  22. Morris Masamo, interview. Bonyagatanyi-Kitutu 12/4/80. Hereafter referred to as Masamo, interview.
  23. Ochieng, An outline history of Nvanza, pp. 61-66.
  24. Nyanduko, interview.
  25. Isoe, interview.
  26. Masamo, interview; Kemunto, interview.

27. District Socio-Cultural Profiles Report, pp.63-64.
28. Ibid., pp.80-81; Nyanduko, interview.  
The English equivalents of these fruits are hard to trace.
29. Kemunto, interview.
30. Ibid.; Nyandara, interview.
31. Kemunto, interview; Nyanduko, interview.
32. Nyanduko, interview.
33. Nyankanga, interview, Rietago, Borabu 26/12/84. Hereafter referred to as Nyankanga, interview.
34. Kemunto, interview.
35. Nyankanga, interview.
36. Nyanduko, interview.
37. Rachel Magaki, interview Riakwaro-Kitutu 29/12/84. Hereafter referred to as Magaki, interview.
38. The material on Education, unless stated otherwise is summarised from Bogonko, Christian Missionary Education and

- District Socio-Cultural Profiles Report,  
pp.121-129. For more details on African  
indigenous education see J.P. Ocitti.  
African Indigenous Education.
39. Similar facts supplied by informants.
40. Similar facts supplied by informants.
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p.135.
43. Naftali Oroko, interview; Rietago-Borabu  
31/12/84. Hereafter referred to as Oroko,  
interview.
44. Nyandara, interview.
45. Kemunto, interview.
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47. Nyandara, Kemunto, interviews.
48. Nyanduko, interview.
49. Nyandara, interview.
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52. Kemunto, interview.
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56. Isoe, interview.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RISE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST (SDA) CHURCH.

To arrive at a clear and proper understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its activities in Gusii, two aspects need attention. These are, the roots of the movement in America and some of the activities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A: The rise of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Under the rise of the Seventh-day Adventist movement we consider factors such as Millerite Adventism and the disappointment suffered by the Millerites in 1844. We also consider the aftermath of the disappointment, particularly the role played by three personalities, namely, Hiram Edson, Joseph Bates and Ellen G. White in preparing the way for the "birth" of the Seventh-day Adventist movement. Another factor we consider is that of the reasons that necessitated organization and the official "birth" of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863.

(i) The promise of early adventism

The roots of the Seventh-day Adventist Church lie in the words: " I was thus brought ... to the solemn conclusion that in about twenty five years ... all the affairs of our present state would be wound up."<sup>1</sup>

These words were uttered by William Miller in 1818. He was the leader of a group of people who were later referred to as Millerite Adventists. They expected Christ's second advent in 1843 or 1844. Miller's prophecies that the world would end then never became true but out of them Seventh-day Adventists came into being. It is important to note that Miller himself never became a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He died in 1849, fourteen years before the official emergence of the Seventh-day Adventists as a church.

Miller was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts in 1782. While he was still young, his family moved to Low Hampton, New York, close to the Vermont border.<sup>2</sup> Like most of his contemporaries (about nine out of ten), he was a farmer but not an ordinary one as such. He spent much time



reading at night, when the rest of the family was asleep. He was the eldest of sixteen children and this meant there was not enough money to provide him with the advanced college education which he deserved. Through reading by the light of pitchknots in his log cabin, Miller developed a good basic knowledge of the Bible and history. He also developed some skill in writing.<sup>3</sup>

At the age of 21, in 1803, Miller married Lucy and settled among the green mountains in Poutney, Vermont. He took advantage of the local library there and soon exhausted it. His scholarly interests brought him into contact with the local village intellectuals, most of whom were deists. These friends were to draw him away from his Baptist faith, a faith he had inherited from his parents. In his childhood he worried a great deal about his soul. Strict obedience to his parents and sacrifice of cherished possessions had done nothing to give him the peace he so much sought. He believed in the Bible, but often he found it inconsistent, ineffective and contradictory. Because of this dissatisfaction, he found deism as advanced in the books he read, such as the writings of David

Hume, Voltaire and Thomas Paine attractive. A summary of these beliefs as given by S.M. Maxwell states:

According to deism, God created the world and set it in operation under unalterable laws of cause and effect. In harmony with these laws, men ought to live clean, kindly and honest lives; but to believe in prayer a saviour, or life after death was regarded as childish superstition. Miracles, forgiveness and resurrection would require God to act contrary to His own natural laws, and this was unthinkable. God had wound up the world like a watch and left it to run on its own.<sup>4</sup>

It appears that Miller was not fully convinced about this deistic beliefs, such that his war experience, in American's second military struggle for power, between 1812 and 1815, led him to search further for peace of mind and truth. As he saw some of his companions fall and die in war, he wondered what the future held for them. Again, the defeat of the British by the Americans in this war caused him to wonder

further as to whether God had not intervened for his side, because the British troops outnumbered the Americans by three to one.<sup>5</sup>

After the war, Miller went back to Low Hampton, to care for his recently widowed mother. It was then that he gave up his deistic beliefs. To be polite to his mother, he attended the local Baptist Church where his uncle was a preacher. On other occasions he stayed away, because he did not like the way the deacons read the printed sermon. Then one day he was invited to read the sermon. Gradually he became dissatisfied with deism's lack of hope for a life beyond the grave. He then began to see the beauty of Jesus as a personal saviour.<sup>6</sup> He resolved to become a committed christian, and pin his hopes on the Bible promises of salvation. To build a strong foundation for his faith, and in order to meet the ridicule and challenge from his deist friends, he took to a programme of systematic Bible study. To avoid differing and contradictory views, as expressed in Bible commentaries, he used just the Bible and Crudens Concordance such that the Bible served as its own interpreter. He found this exercise rewarding for the Bible no longer seemed loaded with inconsistencies. Two

years of intensive Bible study led him to the conclusion that Jesus's return was indeed imminent. His scholarly interests, particularly in history had a significant role to play in reaching this conclusion.

As Miller studied, his earlier reading of history began to influence him. He noticed that although the prophets frequently spoke in figurative language their predictions were fulfilled by literal events. This was noticeably true in reference to the first advent of Christ and the great outline prophecies of Daniel two and seven about the rise and fall of world Kingdoms. From this conclusion it was a logical step to assume that the second advent would also take place literally. As he studied Daniel eight verse fourteen (And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed) he became convinced that the sanctuary to be cleansed at the end of the 2300 days/years was the church, which would be purified at her Lord's return. (He based his findings on Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 where a day is seen as being equivalent to a year). By linking up the 2300 days of Daniel eight, with seventy weeks of Daniel

nine, he deduced that both periods had began about 457 B.C. Having reached this conclusion in 1818 after two years of intensive Bible study, Miller was thrilled at the thought "that in about twenty five years ... all the affairs of our present state would be wound up".

Miller now felt a strong urge to share this good news, but, to his disappointment, few people showed any enthusiasm. Despite this discouragement, the pressure continued to build in him that he needed to tell people about his findings. He, however, convinced and consoled himself that he was not a trained public speaker nor did he have the experience as a preacher so he would as well keep quiet. All this took a different turn, when he made a promise to God that if only a call would come, he would not hesitate to go forth and share the good news. He prayed:

O Lord, I will enter into a covenant with Thee. If Thou wilt open the way; I mean if Thou will send an invitation for me to preach, why then, O God, I'll go .... But it isn't very likely (and he smiled contentedly); that anyone will ask a fifty year old farmer like myself to

preach on the second coming of the Lord.<sup>8</sup>

Little did he know that his brother-in-law's invitation was on the way; that he should share his findings with the Christians at Dresden the following day. How could he fail to honour the covenant he had made with God. He went to Dresden and here was the start of an intensive campaign on the advent hope. In 1831 it was reported of his activities.

So impressive was his deep Bible knowledge, so moving were his homely earnest appeals, that the people in Dresden persuaded him to preach every night for a week. Reports spread from farm to farm. Attendance grew. More than a dozen-families were converted to Christ.<sup>9</sup>

The following eight years were spent heeding and honouring invitation from various small churches in little towns. They ranged from Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians to Congregationalists. All of them wanted to hear him.

His appearance in a major town came in 1839, at the invitation of Joshua V. Himes, a man who was interested in making the world a better place to live in. Himes strongly advocated against slavery, liquor and war, and this earned him fame through New England. He was greatly impressed by one of Miller's sermons at Exeter, New Hampshire and invited him to deliver the same sermon in his chapel at Chardon Street, Boston. This was the beginning of a series of Miller's sermons in several major cities. Himes played a significant role in the success of this campaign, by participating fully as Miller's manager, advertising agent and consecrated promotion specialist. He urged Miller to have access to Christian Connection, his own denomination. At one of these meetings, the Harmon family of which E.G. White (future founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church) got converted and committed their lives to the advent hope. This was in 1840. Another method used by Himes to bring Miller's truths into promise was by use of various publications, such as, "Signs of the Times", "The Midnight cry," "The Voice of Truth", "The Western Midnight cry", "The trumpet of alarm" - and "Voice of Elijah".

Tracts were also circulated.

Millers' views attracted so many people that it was considered proper that a conference be held in 1840, to be attended by leaders and even laymen of the advent hope. It is reported of its proceedings:

So successful was the first general conference that at least fifteen others were held during the next three years ... In addition to these general conclaves, approximately 120 local conferences of Adventist believers met between 1842 and 1844, several as far west as Indiana and Michigan. These local conference tended to be evangelistic and revivalistic rather than scholarly exchange of views such as characterized the first general conference.<sup>10</sup>

There were also camp meetings which proved very successfully attendancewise. The camp meeting situation is described as:



The usual camp plan was to have three general open-air meetings per day.

These were interspersed with social and prayer meetings held in tents pitched in a rough semi-circle around the main assembly area. These were not small family tents, but in some cases were as large as thirty by fifty feet. Each served as headquarters for all the believers attending from a given area. In case of bad weather, services were held simultaneously in these tents. Provision and dining tents were also available.<sup>11</sup>

It can be seen and admitted that Miller's Adventism was proving stronger as the "end" drew nearer, so that the last year, reckoned as between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844 was a year of great activity. There were many meetings and a wide circulation of literature. Men had to be prepared for the coming of their master\* Millers' words echo the activity and urgency of the matter:

Be warned, repent, fly, fly for succor to the ark of God, to Jesus Christ, the

lamb that was once slain; that you might live for he is worthy to receive all honour, power and glory. Believe and you shall live. Obey His word, His spirit, His calls, His invitations; there is no time for delay; put it not off, I beg of you no, not for a moment.<sup>12</sup>

All that had gone into preparing for the end seems to have been in vain, however, for the reckoned year passed and nothing happened as they had anticipated:

Alas, in spite of all the sermons preached, in spite of all the publications distributed, in spite of all the camp meetings held, in spite of Miller's clear Bible evidence the year of the end of the world passed and Christ did not return.<sup>13</sup>

Critics of the Millerites jeered them resulting in some of the Millerites returning to old churches or skepticism. The majority remained optimistic and believed that the advent was imminent. And Miller, helped raise their spirits and rekindle their hopes when he

lamented:

Were I to live my life over again,  
with the same evidence that I then had  
to be honest with God and man, I should  
have to do as I have done..... I confess  
my error, and acknowledge my  
disappointment; yet I still believe that  
the day of the Lord is near, even at  
the door; and I exhort you, my brethren,  
to be watchful and not let that day come  
upon you unawares.<sup>14</sup>

This view was accelerated by the  
reasoning of one of the Millerite leaders,  
Samuel S. Snow. He came up with a new concept  
of the "seventh-month movement." He had become  
convinced that the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14  
were to end not in the spring of 1844 as Miller  
had supposed, but in the fall of that year.  
Specifically, he predicted that Christ would  
return on October 22, 1844 which would be our  
calendar equivalent to the Jewish day of  
atonement for that year.<sup>15</sup>

Soon, there was a great following of this  
re-interpretation, including Miller himself.

This was a time of great activity particularly because now a definite date was set. The climax of their preaching was between August and October, 1844.

It was a period of marked intensity and tremendous action along with the amazing literature circulation and great advance. Some 200 ordained ministers and nearly 2000 lay lecturers (laymen) were in the field, supported by a great battery of periodicals, pamphlets broadsides and books, swelling in crescendo, with quickened tempo and increasing results.... They were held together by the invisible bonds of the advent hope which proved stronger than any mere articles of incorporation.<sup>16</sup>

So convinced were the Millierites about Christ's return that businessmen closed their stores, mechanics locked their shops, employees gave up their jobs, scores confessed their faults and flocked forward for prayers. Donations were large and forthcoming, to have the poor settle their debts and to have papers published. Some would-be donors were even turned away to

their grief. Farmers abandoned their harvest. Many teachers, justices of peace and even a magistrate resigned their posts, and many sought baptism. They included Methodists, Congregationists and Presbyterians.<sup>17</sup>

October 22, 1844 came and many had done all they could to meet the Lord. Alas! once more there was great disappointment more dramatic this time for a specific date had been set.

From says:

At last October 22 dawned bright and clear. The adventists repaired to their meeting houses or held small religious services in their homes. They met at an early hour and continued in watchful prayer, meditation and sang most of the day.... Within a few hours they believed the heavens would roll together as a scroll, the elements with fervent heat, and their saviour would appear

... But from these exalted heights they were soon dashed to the depths of despair. Their Lord came not, and the day of sweet expectation became the day of bitter disappointment.<sup>18</sup>

Two disappointments are events that can create a situation that is not easy to comprehend, more so if you have nothing more left, having given away all, in the hope of going to heaven. For many; nothing whatsoever had mattered except that Christ was coming, and was coming to take them home, for they had prepared for him. Many therefore became disillusioned but there were exceptions, who clung on and hoped that "something" would come to pass, for God would not just forsake his own. Out of these faithfuls, the seeds for Seventh-day Adventism were laid. Our interest now lies in finding out who the people were that brought the Seventh-day Adventist movement into being.

(ii ) Aftermath of the unfulfilled promise

By the time of Miller's death in 1849, Adventism was fragmenting into several splinter groups. This can be attributed to the fact that Christ's return which they had all looked forward to seemed to be a mere illusion. This is the hope that had held them together as they were from different Christian groups. With this hope unfulfilled, many were bound to return to their former churches. For example, there were four

distinct groups in existence by 1852. The first group was centred at Boston. It was organised in 1859 as the American Evangelical Adventist Conference. They believed in a pre-millennial<sup>20</sup> advent and immortality of the soul. A second group based in the Hartford believed that the Millenium was in the past, they accepted the idea of man's sleep in death and final annihilation of the wicked. A third group, which was centred largely around Rochester, saw the Millenium as something to take place in the future. Our interest lies in the fourth group, which had its following in Maine New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Western New York. As most of them were laymen or minor advent preachers, they had slight contact and coherence. Only Joseph Bates among them had had any prominence in Millerite circles. Yet, gradually through prayer, extensive Bible study, and what they saw as divine encouragement, they worked out a series of doctrines that explained their disappointment in 1844.<sup>21</sup> The Seventh-day Adventists were to be born out of the followers of this fourth group of Millerite Adventists.

These were the group headed by Hiram Edson in Western New York state, which emphasized

the doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary; the group in New Hampshire, which along with Joseph Bates, advocated observance of the seventh-day; and the group around Maine, which held that Ellen G. White was a true prophetess, whose words and visions were to be followed by the Adventists. These three groups fused to form the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.<sup>22</sup> It might be added that the three teachings developed by these groups, that of the sanctuary the sabbath and the spirit of prophecy, formed the basis of a new theological system known as Seventh-day Adventism.<sup>23</sup> The three continue to be among the most distinctive doctrines of that movement.<sup>24</sup> Three personalities developed the various views that were to form the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These are Hiram Edson, Joseph Bates and Ellen G. White (hereafter referred to as Ellen). We should note that Edson convinced Bates on the sanctuary doctrine. Bates convinced Edson on the sabbath truth and Ellen supported and expanded Bates views on health principles. ✓

Hiram Edson was converted to the advent message in 1843. Prior to this he had been a Methodist. Like Miller he felt a great urge to share the advent hope. Initially he was



reluctant, but once he gave in, he was to convert three or four hundred of his fellow men and neighbours.<sup>25</sup> Like every other Adventist, he suffered the disappointment of 1844. He, however, reflected on the blessings he had received since he had accepted the advent hope, and trusted that God would lead him on. With a group of friends, Edson retired to his barn and prayed. He says:

We continued in earnest prayer until the witness of the spirit was given that our prayer was accepted, and that light should be given, our disappointment be explained and made clean and satisfactory.<sup>26</sup>

Edson felt that he needed to go and share these encouraging assurances with other Adventists. While on his comforting mission, he had an experience which explained the disappointment. He further says:

We started, and while passing through a large field, I was stopped about midway of the field. Heaven seemed open to my view, and I saw distinctly and clearly

that instead of our High Priest coming out of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300 days, He for the first time entered on that day, the second apartment of that sanctuary; and that He had a work to perform in the most holy place before coming to this earth.<sup>27</sup>

Edson is believed to have been with a close associate, O.R. L. Crosier. During the next several months, Edson, Crosier and another friend Hahn engaged in earnest Bible study particularly as relates to the Hebrew sanctuary and sacrificial system as described both in the old Testament and in the book of Hebrews. Crosier wrote their conclusions on the subject in an Adventist publication called the "Day-Star." This was in 1846. In so doing, Crosier exposed the heavenly sanctuary concepts to a broad range of Adventists. What needs to be noted is that later on in Adventist history, the concept of Christ having entered the heavenly holy of holies was to be expanded into the so-called investigative judgement.<sup>28</sup> Accepting this view in about 1846 was Joseph Bates, the promoter of

sabbath-keeping among Adventists.

Bates was not the first Adventist to embrace the Seventh-day (Saturday) as the sabbath, but his efforts in converting several people to sabbath keeping has earned him the consideration as the father of the sabbath truth among Seventh-day Adventists.<sup>29</sup> Several people had observed Saturday as the sabbath even before the disappointment, but they did not spread this idea of the fourth commandment then because what mattered was the advent. It all started with a seventh-day Baptist lady Rachel Oakes (after remarriage Mrs. Preston) of Verona. She was a participant in the 1843 General Conference of the American Seventh-day Baptists where an action was voted that "the first day of November next be observed by the churches as a day of fasting and prayer that almighty God would arise and plead for this holy sabbath." A spate of Sunday bills in state and federal legislatures had recently increased public interest in the sabbath.<sup>30</sup>

Oakes found herself in Washington during that winter, where her daughter Delight was a school teacher. This was a grand opportunity for

Oakes to witness for the sabbath truth. Opportunity came during a Methodist Communion service one Sunday when the preacher, an advent believer, Frederick Wheeler called upon all his hearers to obey God and keep His commandments in all things. Oakes almost arose to object. Afterwards, she told the preacher that she wanted to ask him to put the cloth back over the communion table until he was willing to keep all the commandments of God, including the fourth. Knowing that Oakes was a Seventh-day Baptist, Wheeler promised her that he would do some serious thinking and earnest studying on the sabbath question. In March of 1844, he arrived at the conclusion that the seventh-day was the proper sabbath, and began to observe it. Shortly afterwards, the leaders of the Adventist group in Washington also accepted this view and began observing the seventh-day. The Washington and New Hampshire Adventists were thus the first Adventists to observe the seventh-day.<sup>31</sup>

Towards the end of that same summer, a more prominent advent minister, former Baptist T.M. Preble of East Weare, who had travelled with Miller himself also accepted the seventh-day

sabbath. The disappointment did not affect his faith in the imminence of the advent and he decided to present the sabbath question to fellow Adventists. This he did through the column in Joseph Turner's 'Hope of Israel' of February 28, 1845. The following month he published an enlarged version of his sabbath views in tract form.<sup>32</sup>

Preble's article and tract fell on fertile ground. They convinced two men, who were to be among the founding fathers of Seventh-day Adventists; Joseph Bates and John Nevins Andrews. These men, in turn, convinced hundreds more including James and Ellen White, and Hiram Edson.<sup>33</sup>

Bates was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts. He became a sailor at the age of fifteen and was to retire after twenty one years at sea.<sup>34</sup> This did not mean inactivity for he was active in both the anti-slavery and temperance movements, and in the Christian Church which he joined in 1827. Then in 1839, after years of careful consideration, he accepted and began actively to herald Miller's views of an imminent second coming.<sup>35</sup> Although twice bitterly

disappointed during 1844, Bates did not renounce either his advent hope or his belief that something important had happened on October 22, 1844. Earnest Bible study soon convinced him of the logic in Preble's sabbath article.<sup>36</sup> After Joseph Bates had arrived at his conclusion about the sabbath day, he heard about what had happened at Washington, and visited the leaders there, including Frederick Wheeler. This visit strengthened Bates convictions about the sabbath day.<sup>37</sup>

Early in 1846 Bates wrote a forty-eight page tract entitled, "The Seventh-day Sabbath, a Perpetual sign." In it he argued that the seventh-day sabbath had been pre-figured in creation, ordained in Eden and confirmed at mount Sinai. As we have already noted it was about this time when Edson convinced Bates of his sanctuary beliefs. This same time also saw Bates convince Edson of his sabbath findings:

As Bates shared his sabbath convictions with the Port Gibson group (where he had been invited by Edson to exchange views) Edson suddenly exclaimed, 'That is light and truth! The seventh-day

is the sabbath, and I am here with you to keep it!' ... For his part, Bates agreed that the Edson - Crosier position on the sanctuary was correct. Thus were joined two of the distinctive tenets of the emerging Seventh-day Adventist faith.<sup>38</sup>

In 1847, Bates wrote a second edition of the sabbath tract in which he discussed the message of the three angels of Revelation 14:6-12.<sup>39</sup> In January 1849, Bates issued a second tract entitled, "a seal of the living God."<sup>40</sup>

Bates thus put much effort in spreading the sabbath truth and won many followers. He is also remembered for his health reform efforts. In the 1820s, while at sea, he abstained from liquor, wine, profanity and tobacco. By 1844 he had added the rejection of tea, coffee, meat and rich desserts. These foods he gave up were those he found harmful to health and moral character. Preferring to witness by example, Bates said little about his diet in public till Ellen's health reform vision of 1863. He is said to have maintained excellent health and at seventy-nine he said "I am entirely free from aches and pains."<sup>41</sup>

In spite of the significant role played by many of the Seventh-day Adventist Church pioneers, Ellen stands out as the most important figure in the rise and growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church<sup>42</sup>. On the back cover of one of her books, The Desire of Ages, the editors say of her:

My Saviour declared me to be His messenger. Your work, he instructed me is to bear My word. Strange things will arise, and in your youth I set you apart to bear the message to the erring ones, to carry the word before the unbelievers, and with pen and voice, to reprove from the Word actions that are not right. Exhort for the word. I will make my Word open to you. It shall not be a strange language. In the true eloquence of simplicity, with voice and pen, the messages that I give you shall be heard from one who has never learned in the schools. My spirit and my power shall be with you.

In 1827 at Gorham, Maine, a daughter Ellen was born to Robert Harmon, a hatmaker



and Eunice, both active laymen in the Methodist Episcopal church.<sup>43</sup> She had an impaired childhood for at the age of nine, when at elementary school, an older girl struck her with a stone, which left her with a broken nose and a disfigured face. She lay unconscious for three weeks, and this rocked her nervous system. She could not continue with school and was declared an invalid. When she was twelve, her family accepted the advent hope and were disfellowshipped from their church. The disappointment did not destroy her strong faith and hope in the advent. In 1844 she started having visions. In 1845, she got married to James White, a young Adventist preacher, who had been active in the Millerite movement. He stated that during the earlier part of her ministry she had had one hundred to two hundred open visions. Almost every aspect of the belief and activity of the Seventh-day Adventists was encouraged or inspired by a vision or word from Ellen.<sup>44</sup>

Soon after she started having her visions there was a sizeable group of advent believers around Portland, Maine. They began to recognize that Ellen was being uniquely guided by the Holy Spirit, that in fact she was a true prophetess

whose visions and words were to be followed. Others in the advent movement came to accept her leadership.<sup>45</sup> In February 1845, she had a vision of Jesus entering into the holy of holies of the heavenly sanctuary, conforming Hiram Edson's vision received in October of the preceding year.<sup>46</sup> On April 7, 1847 she had a vision in which she was taken into the holy of holies of the heavenly sanctuary. There she saw the ark and the ten commandments in the ark, with a halo of glory around the sabbath commandment.<sup>47</sup> This vision, therefore, confirmed Joseph Bates' teachings about the seventh-day. In her voluminous writings, Ellen commented on such diversified subjects as salvation in all its phases, sacred history, christian doctrine, the home and the society, health, education, temperance, evangelism, finance, world mission, the organization of the church and inspiration of the Bible.<sup>48</sup>

So far we have traced the growth of three doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist movement. namely Hiram Edson's sanctuary concept, Joseph Bates and sabbath keeping and Ellen's role as a prophetess. We now turn to show how the three came together to form the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

(iii) The need for organization

Some of the titles the sabbath keepers used in referring to themselves include the little flock, the scattered sheep, the remnant, the saints and the friends. Part of the Sabbatarian Adventists' Millerite heritage was a determination not to create another denomination. They did not forget George Stoir's warning that "no church can be organised by man's invention but that it becomes a Babylon the moment it is organised." Certainly, in the years after 1844, they were scarcely in a condition to organize anything. Perplexed by disappointment, and confused by the variety of new doctrines being promoted, they needed time to adjust and become established in their religious convictions concerning dogma and duty.<sup>49</sup>

Between 1845 and 1850 the sabbath keepers numbered only a few hundred and owned no institution. They were held together by the following factors. Almost all of them were former Millerites who had passed through the 1844 disappointment; they held numerous conferences; they had dynamic leadership and most especially their doctrines. They were also drawn together by

their numerous publications.<sup>50</sup>

- The events of the 1850s necessitated a call for unity, as sounded first by James White and endorsed by Ellen's vision of 1854. There was need for gospel order, better organization and direction if the faith acquired was to be maintained and expanded. In the 1850s, several factors contributed to the need for organization. The Adventists owned property, notably, churches and a publishing house; there was a swelling of numbers, so they needed headquarters. Increase of numbers was accompanied by geographical expansion; non-millerites came in, some of whom did not fear organization; there was need to discipline troublemakers and backsliders; there were offshoots which needed handling; and there was need for an organized ministerial scheme to cater for distribution of labour and for their salaries. What triggered off organization, however, was the question of legal ownership of property.<sup>51</sup>

This was sparked off by James White, with regard to the publishing house which was legally his property and yet other believers had invested money into the plant and its equipment. It was his brainchild, so there was reason for him to

claim it as his personal property. This worried him a great deal and in 1860 he called delegates to Battle Creek for a conference regarding the legal future of the publishing office. On September 29, 1860 representatives from at least five states began the most important sabbatarian session Adventists had yet held. They plunged into full scale discussion of organization. All agreed that whatever was to be done had to be biblical, but some refused to approve anything not specifically sanctioned in scripture. This was a problem, for James White wryly remarked, "I have not been able to find in the good book any suggestion in regard to a power press, running tents, or how sabbath-keepers should hold their office of publication."<sup>52</sup>

Then Andrews who was to become the first Seventh-day Adventist foreign missionary proposed that for the purpose of owning property, the Church need not organise itself legally as a church but should appoint representatives to an association that could be incorporated legally. He added that this harmonized with gospel order, for the earliest Christians appointed a committee of seven to oversee matters of

business. Andrews' distinction incidentally proved enduringly helpful.<sup>53</sup>

But as yet, no name had been given to this group of Christians and under the laws of Michigan, no association could be approved without a name. Therefore, the issue had finally to be faced up to, prompting James White to make his memorable remarks about the embarrassing offspring. "It seems to me that the child is now so grown that it is exceedingly awkward to have no name for it."<sup>54</sup> There followed a long discussion as to which name to give this child. suggestions given included seventh-day people, seventh-day door-shutters, sabbath-keeping adventists, shut-door seventh-day sabbath and annihilation, and church of God. David Hewitt finally seized the initiative and moved the adoption of the name Seventh-day Adventists. Only T.J. Butler opposed it to the very end, although several others refused to vote either way. Throughout the conference, Ellen had kept in the background. Now, however, she gave a hearty endorsement to the name chosen. She wrote:

The name Seventh-day Adventist carries

the true features of our faith in front,  
and will convict the inquiring mind.  
Like an arrow from the Lord's quiver  
it will mould the transgressors of God's  
law, and will lead toward repentance,  
toward God, and faith in our Lord <sup>s</sup>J<sup>e</sup>us  
Christ.<sup>55</sup>

At last the seventh-day Adventists were  
officially recognized.

After this, steady progress was made  
toward a perfected denominational structure.  
The first conference organised was the Michigan  
Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. This was  
in connection with recommendations for a plan  
of Church organization, put forward by a group  
of Adventists from Battle Creek.<sup>56</sup>

Soon several other states took the  
example of Michigan. In 1862, the Michigan  
conference invited the other conferences to  
attend their 1863 annual conference so that a  
general conference could be organized. The first  
general conference session, which was held in  
May 20-23, 1863 voted a constitution and elected  
a president (John Byington, when James White

turned down the offer). The constitution approved a three-member executive committee including the president, to have general supervision over all ministers so that they were evenly distributed. It was also commissioned to foster missionary work and to authorize general calls for funds. The various reasons necessitating organization would now be met. And everyone knew at last who he was. He could say with confidence. I am a Seventh-day Adventist.<sup>57</sup>

Apart from those common factors that helped them seek organization, the Seventh-day Adventists needed to develop doctrines that would go into making a church movement.

B: The Activities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

In discussing the activities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church we consider the form of administration, health and education. We also deal with various aspects of the Church. We highlight these general Seventh-day Adventist tenets with special reference to the Gusi situation.



(i) Administration

According to the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, there are four generally recognized forms of church government.<sup>38</sup> These may be summarised as follows:

Episcopal is that form of church government by bishops, usually with three orders of ministers, as bishops, priests and deacons. Papal is the form of church government in which the supreme authority is vested in the pope. From him the church is governed by cardinals, archbishops, bishops and priests. The local church or individual member has no authority in church administration.

The independent form of church policy is that which makes the local church congregation supreme and final within its own domain. This is usually referred to as congregational.

Representative form of church government recognizes that authority in the church rests in the church membership with executive responsibility delegated to representative bodies and officers for the governing of the church.

This form of church government recognizes also the equality of the ordination of the entire ministry, Of the four, the representative form of church government is what has prevailed in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, right from its start in 1863.

In 1863, three kinds of organization were suggested, namely local churches, state or district conferences and finally a general conference to represent all the churches and speak on their behalf.<sup>59</sup> The conference was to hold annual sessions to be composed of ministers and delegates from all churches in the state. Conference officials were kept to a minimum; a president, a clerk and a three man executive committee.<sup>60</sup>

As the church spread outside America, there was need to increase the levels to five.<sup>61</sup>

The first is the local church, a united organised body of individual believers. The second is the local conference or local-field, a united organized body in a state, province or territory. The third is the union conference or union field, a united body of conferences or

fields within a larger territory. The fourth is the division, a section of the General Conference which embraces local or union conferences or fields in large areas of the world field and fifthly, the General Conference, the largest unit of organization, embracing all divisions and churches in all parts of the world. It is stated in the church manual:

Thus, beginning with the individual believer, we see in the church and in the local and union field or section organizations, a relationship that unites the whole worldwide company of believers into our common body in the General Conference which operates through its various divisions.<sup>62</sup>

For example, this is the form adopted in Gusii but because of the large following the Seventh-day Adventist Church has there, there has been need to increase the levels of administration so as to make administration easier. (Map 4). The picture in Gusii can be illustrated as below,<sup>63</sup> using early 1985 statistics.

GENERAL CONFERENCE

DIVISION

UNION

SOUTH KENYA CONFERENCE

5  
STATIONS

82  
DISTRICTS

290  
CHURCHES

442  
SABBATH SCHOOLS

68,846  
INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

(ii) Health

Seventh-day Adventists are generally associated with the health-reform movement, particularly the "special diet" observance. It is important that we trace the roots and application of health reform in the Seventh-day Adventist

Church.

Speaking for the Seventh-day Adventists as one of their prominent evangelists and theologians J.H. Waggoner as early as 1866 made the point that:

We do not profess to be pioneers in the general principles of health reform... But we do claim, that by the method of God's choice (Ellen's vision) it has been more clearly and powerfully unfolded, and is thereby producing an effect. The visions have placed healthful living on a level with the great truths of the third angels message as the means whereby a weak people may be made strong to overcome and fitted for translation.<sup>64</sup>

We should note, that the health reform movement had been in existence before the Seventh-day Adventists came into being, it only gained more recognition among them. Before tracing the development of health reform and temperance as advanced by Seventh-day Adventists let us get a picture of the health situation in America in the early nineteenth century.

The following account from Schwarz summarises the situation:

"You have lost your baby, I hear,"  
said one gentleman to another,  
"Yes, poor thing. It was only five  
months old, we did all we could for it.  
We had four doctors, blistered its  
head and feet, put mustard poultices  
all over it, gave it nine calomel  
powders, leached its temples, had it  
bled, gave it all kinds of medicines,  
and yet after a week's illness it died."<sup>65</sup>

This conversation reflects the general situation. Even doctors in those days did not know what caused disease. If a mid-century physician had formal professional education, it was limited to a few months of lectures that included little or no laboratory or clinical experience. More frequently, he simply apprenticed himself to an established practitioner. Lacking any real knowledge of the cause of disease, how it spread or the values of sanitary procedures, doctors freely prescribed a wide variety of dangerous drugs on a trial and error basis. Meanwhile the average American consumed

huge quantities of patent medicine and old Indian remedies.<sup>66</sup> The germ theory was still in the future, surgery was still in its infancy, hospitals were not readily available and even aspirin was as yet unknown. Most people ate and drunk whatever was available and appealed to them, often in large quantities, heavily spiced and at any hour of day or night. They saw no relation between their aliment and their ailments. They kept their windows closed for fear of catching cold. They pulled their blinds to avoid fading the furniture. They rarely bathed. They overworked or under-exercised as the mood or necessity struck them. Almost all failed to see that their way of life was a way of death.<sup>67</sup>

To combat this situation, a health-reform movement was developed, being greatly influenced by a renewed study of the book of Daniel. Harmful indulgences were put aside. Abstinence from tea, coffee, tobacco, condiments, wholesome foods and drinks was accompanied by simplicity of dress and life. It was considered a part of wholesome Christian discipline. Along these lines, between 1804 and 1850, eight vegetarian societies were formed. In 1835, Berlins Healthful Living Pledge was passed. It supported the health-reform

principles. It was practiced in Oberlin and eight other institutions. But it soon experienced a recession and was largely abandoned<sup>68</sup>

A temperance reform movement was started by Dr, Benjamin Rush, in the late 18th century. Between 1808 and 1874, fifteen temperance societies were formed. State and National prohibitions date from 1846 to 1855 when thirteen states and territories enacted prohibitory legislation. The civil war, reconstruction and westward expansion, however, diverted attention from the liquor issue.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, temperance was now part of the overall picture. It was on this foundation that the Seventh-day Adventists advanced their health-reform and temperance policies.

The Whites were in Otsego in the spring of 1863 on an evangelistic mission. They were spending a weekend with the Hilliard family several miles out of town. During family worship on the evening of June 5, Ellen was invited to lead out in prayer service. In the midst of the prayer, she was suddenly given a vision which was to have tremendous implications for the work and teachings



of the Seventh-day Adventists. The vision lasted forty five minutes, during which time the "great subject of Health Reform" was stretched in broad outline before her. She saw that temperance included far more than the simple abandonment of liquor. It extended to working and eating as well. Pure soft water was revealed to be a much better medicine than the many drugs in general use. A meatless diet was the most healthful. Of basic importance was the idea that it was a sacred duty to attend to our health, and to arouse others to their duty.<sup>70</sup> There was also counsel on the positive side. Drink lots of water, exercise regularly out of doors, bring sunshine and fresh air indoors and take a daily bath. Ellen made her vision a shared experience by publishing a book on how to live, and many other pieces of literature. From some of these writings, the ideas can be summarised as follows.<sup>71</sup>

Men should aim at being in line with God's original diet plan as described in the creation story. This means consumption of natural and wholesome foods such as grains, nuts, fruits and vegetables. God did not intend animal products for human consumption and only provided them as

allow the free circulation of sunshine and fresh air. A daily bath is also encouraged.

The claim that the Seventh-day Adventists make for Ellen's health visions is that they recommended only good foods and procedures, ignoring or warning against the bad. They provide intelligent religious motivation effective in directing millions to a balanced and useful life of health, and through better health to greater spiritual victory. It is up to the individual to take up this counsel or ignore it.

It should also be pointed out that it was through Ellen's efforts that the Western Health Reform Institute came into being in 1866.<sup>72</sup> This was the start of significant Seventh-day Adventist participation in health services worldwide. Health-reform and temperance can be summed up in Ellen's words:

Our first duty towards God and our fellow beings is that of self development. Every faculty with which the creator has endowed us should be cultivated to the highest degree of perfection, that we may be able to do

the greatest amount of good of which we are capable. Hence, that time is spent to good account which is used in the establishment and preservation of physical and mental health.<sup>73</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist health principles have had a significant role to play in the Gusii situation, despite the misunderstanding of some of the principles of health. This will be discussed in the course of our study.

(iii) Education

Like in health-reform, the Seventh-day Adventists were no pioneers in education. Their participation in education became more apparent with Ellen's vision of 1872. In 1858 the Sabbatarian Adventists had started a school at Battle Creek which was not a success, owing to lack of proper management and the greater interest in Christ's imminent return.

In January 1872, Ellen received her first detailed vision on proper principles of education. Much of this proper education testimony was addressed to parents, and a call

was made to start a Seventh-day Adventist school. A summary of Ellen's counsel on education is as follows:

The right kind of education should pay attention to the physical, mental, moral and religious life of students. Teachers should not control the mind, will or conscience of students. While teaching students to respect and follow experienced counsel, they should also teach them to act on the basis of reason and principle. To Ellen, a prospective teacher's habits and principles were of more importance than literary qualifications. Teachers should not hold themselves apart from "scholars" but should learn to socialize with them, demonstrating clearly that all their actions were based on love.<sup>74</sup>

She wanted students instructed in special and well ventilated classrooms. Because of the close relationship between mind and body, she considered instruction in physiology and hygiene vital. The ideal education programme would combine study and physical labour. For the purpose, schools should have industrial departments where all students regardless of financial need, should be taught to work.

By instructing young men in agricultural and mechanical lines, they would be fit for the practical duties of life. Young men should be schooled in the domestic arts, while those who desire to be preachers, should get a thorough grounding in Bible study. In embryo, she had outlined what others in later years refer to as "blueprint" for Christian education.<sup>75</sup>

Early in the spring of 1872, the Whites began discussing with members of the Battle Creek Church the establishment of a denominational sponsored school.<sup>76</sup> Thus were laid the foundations of Adventist education, an aspect that has also played a significant role all over the world where Seventh-day Adventists have access. We shall see how this has been accomplished among Abagusii.

(iv) Aspects of the Church

Under aspects of the church we deal with issues such as membership, elections, finance, discipline and departments.

The Seventh-day Adventists recognize baptism as a pre-requisite to Church membership and the mode of baptism is by immersion.

Before baptism, candidates are supposed to be made familiar with the doctrines of the church by being taught in a baptismal class. The candidates satisfy through a public examination that they have been well instructed and are therefore ready for baptism. After baptism, their names are entered into the Church record book. A name may be transferred to another church if the member changes residence. The member makes an application and is accepted by his new church.<sup>77</sup> This system is upheld in Gusii.

In electing church officials, Seventh-day Adventists have adopted a democratic approach. Ellen sums it up:

Every member of the Church has a voice in choosing officers of the Church. The Church chooses the officers of the state conference, and delegates chosen by the union conference choose the officers of the General Conference. By this arrangement every conferences, every institution, every church, and every individual, either directly or through representative has a voice in the election of men who bear the chief

responsibilities in the General Conference.<sup>78</sup>

At the local church level, officers are elected annually through an appointed nominating committee which gives careful study to the needs of the church and makes inquiry into the fitness of members to serve in the different offices. The nominating committee interviews prospective officers by informing them of their nomination to office and secures their interests to serve. If any member of the church desires to appear before the committee to make any suggestions or objections he is given the freedom to do so. The committee then makes a report to the church. It is the right of any member to raise objection to the nominating committee's report in which case the committee will go into session again. Once again the committee will present its report to the church for voting. The election is by the majority vote of those present and voting, that is baptised members whose names are in the Church record book.<sup>79</sup>

With regard to finances, Seventh-day Adventists hold that the gospel plan for the support of the work of God in preaching the

everlasting gospel among men, is by the tithes and offerings of His people. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has practiced this plan from its earliest days. In recognition of the Bible plan and the solemn obligation that rests upon Church members as children of God and members of this body, the Church, all are encouraged to pay a faithful tithe (one tenth of all their earnings) into the denominational treasury.<sup>80</sup>

The tithe is not used or disbursed by the local church but it is passed on to the conference treasury, which in turn passes on one tenth of its total tithe income to the union. The union in turn passes on to the General conference, one tenth of the total tithe income. Thus, the local conference, the union and the General Conference are provided with funds with which to support the labourers employed and to meet the expenses of conducting the work of God in their respective spheres of responsibility and activity. This system of dividing the tithes between the conference and the union, and the union and the General conference and of sharing funds with the world fields has served a wonderful purpose in unifying the work throughout the world.<sup>81</sup>



The Seventh-day Adventist Church has from its early days followed the practice of giving liberal offerings to the cause of God. The offerings include sabbath school offerings which are devoted to world mission work. Other offerings are taken from time to time for world mission work, and for general and local enterprises.<sup>82</sup>

Discipline is a factor that is stressed in the Church. Seventh-day Adventist general principles on discipline call for purity, integrity and spiritual favour of the Church. If members grow cold and indifferent, the Church must seek to arouse them from their lethargy. Should some be drifting away from the truth, efforts should be made to bring them back into the narrow way. The unity of the Church has to be safeguarded. Civil litigation is discouraged. If a member falls into sin, sincere efforts are made to reclaim him but when grievous sins are involved such as open violation of the law of God then disciplinary measures are taken in two ways, censure and disfellowship.

Censure involves removing the erring member from any and all offices he may hold in

the Church and from privilege of election to office. He cannot transfer his membership to another church. Censure is for a stated period of time.

To disfellowship a member means to expel him from the membership. It is the extreme measure that can be meted out by the Church.<sup>83</sup>

To achieve the best service in the community the Church has organised its activities under various departments such as lay activities, sabbath school, adventist youth society, the adventist junior youth society, path finder club, education, parents' societies, home and school fellowship. The Church school board, communication, health, stewardship and development, and temperance.<sup>84</sup> Of these, our interest lies in lay activities, sabbath school, adventist youth society and communication.

The lay activities department is organized to direct and train laymen to unite their efforts with the ministry and Church officers in the final proclamation of the gospel of salvation in Christ. The aim of the departments is to enlist every member into

active soul-winning service for God. One important feature of the lay activities department is the Dorcas Society. This society is composed of the women of the Church, who banded together, devote time and talents to the gathering and preparing of food, clothing and other supplies for the needy and unfortunate. This organization includes more than giving of material aid; it encompasses also adult education, visiting, home making, home nursing, counselling and other services. <sup>85</sup>

The sabbath school has been called the Church at study. It is one of the most important services held in connection with Seventh-day Adventist church work. Sabbath by sabbath the greater part of Seventh-day Adventist membership and thousands of interested friends meet in Sabbath school to study God's word systematically. Every one is encouraged to attend; young and old, ministers, Church officers and laymen. The usual length of time for holding this service is one hour and ten minutes but this does not prevent any local field from adopting a longer or shorter period if it so desired. In arranging for the programme care should be taken to provide at least thirty

minutes for the study of the lesson.<sup>86</sup>

A lesson is a booklet issued quarterly and has sections for study on a daily basis. These sections cater for a whole week such that each sabbath all members are expected to have studied their lesson and thus be able to participate in the discussion. In each lesson there is usually a call for financial aid from particular part(s) of the world. For example, in the second quarter of 1982, aid was needed for a girls' dormitory in Sagunto, Spain, and a chapel at Brussels in Belgium. In the fourth quarter of 1984, included were a seminary in Mozambique and another one in France.<sup>87</sup>

Another important aspect of sabbath school is the mission emphasis. This is a true story on experiences of believers, for example in overcoming temptation, winning souls and other aspects of christian growth. It plays an important role in encouraging believers.

The Adventist Youth Society or Organization was formerly called Missionary Volunteer Society. It is a department of the Church through which the Church works for and

through the youth.

The objectives of this society include training the youth to work for other youth; recruiting the youth to help their Church and those who profess to be sabbath-keepers, and non-Seventh-day Adventists. In seeking to reach these objectives the youth are called upon to pray together, to study the word together, to fellowship together in Christian social interaction, to act together in small groups, to carry out well laid plans for witnessing, to develop tact, skill and talent in the masters service and to encourage one another in spiritual growth.

The aim of the society is: The advent message to all the world in this generation and their Motto is: The love of Christ constraineth us. The-membership requirements include membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, age of between sixteen and thirty years and any older persons who are willing, and willingness to subscribe to the objective of the society.<sup>58</sup>

The activities of the youth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church have been outstanding

as we shall see in the course of our study.

The importance of using effective communication in the spread of the gospel has always been stressed. Ellen has counselled:

We must take every justifiable means of bringing the light before the people. Let the press be utilized, and let every advertising agency be employed that will call attention to the work.<sup>89</sup>

The other departments we have not highlighted are not insignificant, it is because they do not relate directly to our study. It should be pointed out that some of them like education, health and temperance have already been dealt with.

With this kind of background on the rise and activities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is now appropriate that we encounter the establishment and progress and role of the Seventh-day Adventist Church among Abagusii of western Kenya. This is the concern of the next chapter.

Footnotes

1. Leroy Edwin Froom, The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers, (Washington: Review and Herald, 1964), IV 463 cited in A.A. Hoekema, The Four Major Cults, (Exeter: was B Eerdman's Publishing Co., 1969), p.89.
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### CHAPTER III

#### ESTABLISHMENT, PROGRESS AND THE ROLE OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST (SDA) CHURCH IN GUSII.

This chapter is divided into three sections namely: Establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii, factors contributing to the progress of the Church and the role played by the Church in national development.

A: Establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii.

Under establishment we include the laying of Seventh-day Adventist roots in Gusii and the growth of the Church.

(i) The laying of the Seventh-day Adventist roots in Gusii.

From its earliest beginnings, Seventh-day Adventism has been more than a mere religious society. It has been a movement with a message and a sense of mission. "Let the message fly for the time is short."<sup>1</sup> wrote James White in 1849. Like other Adventists, White believed that



the Lord's return was imminent. It was the responsibility of the Adventists, therefore, to spread this warning to the rest of the people, so that they too would prepare themselves to meet the Lord. Before turning to the arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries in Kenya in 1906, we acquaint ourselves briefly with Seventh-day Adventist missionary activities in other parts of the world.

The period shortly after 1844 did not call for missionary enterprise. There was the general belief that the advent was imminent, and there was, therefore, no time for any activities except getting oneself ready to meet the Lord. With the memory of the disappointment fading, however, Adventist sabbath-keepers practised their sense of mission among former Millerites. By 1850 this was being extended to "outsiders" such as Methodists and Baptists. The 1850s, also saw Adventism reach overseas, places such as Ireland, through publications. Notable in using the press as a tool of mission was James White. Time was not ripe for physical overseas engagements because, as yet, the sabbath keepers were not

organized. The few ministers available were mainly volunteers who were overworked, underpaid and inadequately led. They were unable to meet the demands at home.

With the organization of the Church in 1863, missionary activities among the Seventh-day Adventists took a better turn. Before venturing into foreign lands, much was accomplished at home. Some of the areas evangelized included the Far West, California, and the Northwest.

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Wherever Adventists went, they found time to pray, to visit and help the sick, and publications continued to play a significant role in winning souls to the Adventist faith.

The first official overseas missionary was J.N. Andrews who went out to Switzerland in 1874. "Unofficial" missionary was a native of Poland, M.B. Crechowski, a former Catholic priest who had renounced priesthood and Catholicism and fled to North America. He got converted to Adventism and became an active preacher. He requested the Adventist leaders to grant him permission to go back home in Europe and spread the Adventist message. He was turned down, but he found his way to Italy in 1864 and his efforts resulted in the first Seventh-day

Adventist congregations in Europe.

1887-1900 was a period of mission advance when the Adventist message reached England, Scandinavia, Central Europe, Russia, Germany, Southern Europe, the Near East, Australia, the Pacific Islands, South Africa, Rhodesia, Middle America, Mexico, South America, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, India and the Far East.

Introducing the Adventist message in East Africa were missionaries from a mission land. J. Ehlers and A.C. Enns were Germans. They came to Tanzania (the then Tanganyika) in 1903. In 1906, more missionaries arrived in Tanganyika. This same year, saw the arrival of Seventh-day Adventist missionaries in Kenya.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church on the eve of entrance to Kenya had established about 2,274 local churches, congregations with a total world membership of over 82,536 baptised adult believers. It had sent its missionaries who were occupied in getting established in various parts of the world. Every inhabited continent had been entered. In this case, it had become a universal

organization, with new global headquarters established in Washington D.C. The American capital would serve as a strategic point from where the Church would transact its world wide denominational business and mission.<sup>2</sup> In 1863 the headquarters was located at Battle Creek, Michigan.

The pioneer missionary to Kenya was Grandville Carscallen, a Canadian born in 1879. He received his college education both at Union College, Nebraska (1900-1901) and at Newbold College, England (1904-1906). During his last year at Newbold College he responded to the need for a missionary to Kenya. He made arrangement for his fiancée Miss Hellen Thompson to follow him. Carscallen was accompanied to Kenya by an African teacher, Peter Nyambo, a citizen of Malawi who had gone to Britain for studies, shortly after the Adventist work had started in his home territory in 1902.<sup>3</sup>

They set up the first mission-at Gendia in Luoland. Carscallen, reported in 1912:

Our first two workers crossed the gulf from Kisumu on November 27, 1906, and

camped for a few days on the shore of Kongo Bay. During these two or three days we looked around and chose Gendia Hill for our mission site. We at once applied to the government, for the same and our workers were not moved from the place.<sup>4</sup>

From here, the Adventist message was to spread to other parts of the then Kavirondo, under which Gusii fell. Taking the message to Gusii was one I.R. Evanson, an English missionary. With the help of Jakobo Olwa, they set up the first mission at Nyanchwa in 1912.<sup>5</sup> Olwa was a Luo teacher who had been converted to Adventism and was now sent out as a missionary.<sup>5</sup> In 1913, Carscallen opened another Adventist station at Kamagambo, at the Gusii-Luo border.<sup>6</sup> Of the two, Nyanchwa was to have more influence on Abagusii.

The Adventist attempt to get established among Abagusii during this time was unsuccessful. This can be attributed to several reasons. The district was in a state of instability. Both in 1905 and 1908, the British East Africa protectorate government had to subdue uprisings in Gusii.<sup>7</sup> Abagusii formed a spirit of hostility towards

Europeans, regardless of whether they were missionaries or administrators. A Catholic missionary had this to say on the situation:

"The Bakisii (Abagusii) themselves were unfriendly to the mission because they associated all white men with those who had led punitive expeditions against them."<sup>8</sup>

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Enhancing the Gusii hostility towards Europeans was the influence of the cult of Mumbo. The cult of Mumbo, as a religious phenomenon is said to be as old as the Luo settlement in the Lake region of Kenya. In 1913, however, it acquired political overtones. It was this political phenomenon of Mumbo, which had its roots at Alego, still in Luoland, that found its way into neighbouring Gusii. It advocated ideas that were anti-European rule. For example, the adherents of Mumbo kept their hair long and took no bath. They engaged in smoking bhang and were regarded as being generally opposed to any idea of progress as advocated by Europeans. They also believed that Europeans were just a passing cloud and would very soon leave. Captain W.T. Shorthouse in an extract from his book Sport and

Adventure in Africa says:

About July 1914, a prophet arose in Kabondo.... He predicted the early departure from Kisii of the white man after which the natives would possess their land in peace.... His predictions which coincided with Mumboism in North Kavirondo had a disturbing effect on the district and then, Kisii was actually evacuated in September 1914 on the approach of the German forces. Kisii natives were convinced that he was a true prophet and that the regime was over.<sup>9</sup>

The evacuation of Kisii had a big effect on the newly established mission at Nyanchwa. Records indicate that the work was difficult and no real impact had been made by the time the first world war closed the station.<sup>10</sup> E.A.

Beavon reported in 1923:

Shortly after the outbreak of the war, the missionary in charge of this station was called away and the newly started work suffered a setback."<sup>11</sup>

As soon as the Europeans in Gusii escaped at the advance of the German forces from Tanganyika, mission centres in Gusii, namely, Nyabururu and Nyanchwa, and trading centres, like Rangwe and Kisii Boma itself were looted.<sup>12</sup> The hurry in which the Europeans left, the belief that they were a passing cloud, and the fact that Abagusii were generally hostile to them are some of the reasons that encouraged the plundering of these centres.

The looting that followed the evacuation, in the homes of the missionaries and the mission itself added to the grim picture of early Adventist work in Gusii.

Apart from the general Gusii hostility and the departure of the white men in 1914, Abagusii themselves were very unwilling to take up any new ideas. Anybody seen associating with the white men was considered as selling himself into slavery.<sup>13</sup> In his 1915 annual report the District Commissioner for South Kavirondo reported under missions:

I have little report under this heading but would merely state that however



strenuous the efforts of Seventh-day Adventists may have been in the past to teach the natives, the result can only be described as very indifferent.<sup>14</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventists made a comeback to Gusii in 1920. The missionary this time was E.A. Beavon.<sup>15</sup> Now, there was a glimpse of hope mainly because it was clear the Europeans were here to stay. Abagusii now seemed to have reversed their earlier attitude of indifference to that of interest. Beavon reported:

The Kisii were, at first strongly opposed to any innovation. During the last few months, however, a noticeable change has come over them, one result being that many of them have suddenly expressed a wish to learn reading and writing.<sup>16</sup>

The situation at Nyanchwa Mission was reported by Beavon as:

At the close of the year 1920, a two-room brick building intended for a store-room, and a workshop but unfinished;

the foundations of a dwelling house, a grass-walled workshop and a small school... were almost the sole evidences that here had been an outpost of the everlasting gospel.<sup>17</sup>

The small school mentioned above was the responsibility of the Luo missionary, Jakobo Olwa, who had come back after the British/German hostility had cooled. Beavon wrote: "A Luo teacher had done good work keeping together a handful of students and these I found living in the vicinity and supporting themselves."<sup>18</sup>

Because of the long distances these students had to trek to and from school, Olwa had suggested that they build ebicutu (huts) in the station's vicinity.<sup>19</sup> This was approved by the neighbourhood elders. In 1922 the then District Commissioner reported.

The elders of Nyaribari granted about 5 (five) acres for mission adherents huts. The mission has no title to this land which is lent by the community for a specific purpose.<sup>20</sup>

This was an addition to the five acres officially allocated to the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries. According to the same District Commissioner:

The mission at Kisii was granted an extension of 3 acres to their present plot (2 acres) on a temporary occupation permit. The extension is rent free and is to be used for a native school and industrial purposes.<sup>21</sup>

Some of the first students at Nyanchwa were Moseti, Otuke, Omeke, and Getugi from Nyaribari and Nyarangi from Kemera. Their parents considered them rebels but there was a tight bond of unity, cooperation and love among them.<sup>22</sup>

Seeing that the situation was this discouraging, Beavon was faced with the heavy responsibility of making a start in the spreading of the adventist message in Gusii. He continued to use Nyanchwa station as his base, while he toured the rest of Gusii land. It only needed time and patience for him to realize what potential lay in Gusii land. It was, therefore,

not long before he started making reports on how encouraging it was to work in the hilly country of Gusii.

(ii) The Progress of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii.

The first nucleus of a church was formed in January, 1922, when the first ten Kisii (Gusii) converts were baptised by Elder Bartlett.<sup>23</sup> These were Musa Nyandusi, Paulo Nyamweya, Joel Araka, Mathayo Ratemo, Ibrahimu Ombeqa, Marko Nyasinga, Jusufu Simba, Daniel Kiyondi, John Ombogo and Samuel Omoke.<sup>24</sup>

Seven years later, in 1929, the situation was different. Beavon reported:

Today there are four churches in Kisii with a total membership of 313... and forty two sabbath schools with a total average attendance in each sabbath of 3080.<sup>25</sup>

Among Abagusii, Beavon noticed and predicted remarkable growth:

In these healthful tropical highlands great things are happening which are likely to have a far-reaching influence on the future of Adventist missions in East Africa.<sup>26</sup>

One feature that was outstanding among the early Abagusii Adventists was the spirit and faithfulness shown in tithe paying and other offerings. Beavon reported:

Perhaps more indicative than anything else of the power behind the message in Kisii, is the way the African Christians give to the cause they love..... During the last quarter of last year, the local tithes, harvest ingathering, and offerings exceeded our total appropriation from the division for the same period. There is no doubt in my mind that excepting cost of building, this Kisii work will soon be self-supporting.... The growth of Kisii tithes and offerings was slow until 1926, the annual increase being only 20 or 30 per cent each year. Since then, the increase has been more than a 100 per cent each year.<sup>27</sup>

The progress the Seventh-day Adventist was making among Abagusii was regarded as a good example for others.

If we were all faithful and particular, the rate of growth in civilized lands : would surely not be far behind the rate of progress in Africa, China, South America and the islands of the sea. This I am sure we shall see in the not-far-distant future. In the meanwhile let what the Kisiis are achieving be an inspiration to all.<sup>28</sup>

In 1930, Beavon was replaced by G.A. Lewis.

Amayo reports:

Elder S.G. Maxwell states that G.A. Lewis was an energetic worker during whose period there was a remarkable growth in the adventist ministry in South Kenya.<sup>29</sup>

During Lewis' era the number of churches went down from eight to seven. Despite this, the number of members shows growth:

At the beginning of the period between 1933 and 1942, Gusii District had about eight churches with a membership of 637 baptized believers. In 1942, South Kenya mission had seven churches with 1291 baptized members.<sup>30</sup>

Lewis is said to have concentrated in strengthening the faith of those already baptized and increasing the membership in various churches.

Until 1953, Gusii had not been granted field status. Between 1912 and 1918, Kenya was under the European division. Between 1918 and 1923, she was under the British Union. In 1921, she became part of the East African Combined Mission and in 1924 part of the East African Union Mission which became part of the Northern European Division in 1928. In 1941 she was part of the Southern Africa Division. In 1943 a new East African Union emerged. With continued growth of membership Kenya was divided into three fields in 1953 namely South Kenya (Kisii), Kenya Lake (Luo) and Central Kenya (rest of Kenya). Ranen field was set up in 1961 and comprised of South Nyanza District.<sup>21</sup> Western Kenya field was set up in 1981 and incorporates Western Province and Nakuru District.

Under field status, South Kenya continued to grow in the 1950s and also through the early 1960s. According to Amayo,

At the beginning of the period 1953-1963,

there were 31 churches with membership of 9100 in the South Kenya Mission field. There were 105 sabbath schools with membership of 12,612. Towards the end of 1963, the mission field had 72 churches with membership of 18,122 baptized believers. There were 145 sabbath schools with membership of 27,089.<sup>33</sup>

During the last two and a half decades, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii has continued to expand. In the 1960s, settlement schemes were established in Sotik, a region that had been previously occupied by Europeans. The Seventh-day Adventists who moved to this new area continued with their faith. They set up churches and thus added to the number of Seventh-day Adventist churches in Gusii. In the rest of Gusii, as members increase in churches, new churches have been set up to cater for the growing numbers, such that churches are now close to each other. This expansion has resulted in the South Kenya field being granted conference status, a unique development in East Africa. According to the Afro-Mid-East Division 1980 General Conference report:



High on the priority list of problems the division and union leaders don't want to lose, is having to adjust to the new status of local fields moving from dependence on outside funds to full self support. South Kenya field has led the way. By recommendation of a Division Select Committee, it becomes the South Kenya Conference of Seventh-day Adventist as of January 1, 1981.<sup>34</sup>

Conference status meant that Abagusii had proved they were capable of running their affairs independently. The Division Secretary described the conference status: "Like a son who marries and starts his own home and seeks counsel from his parents wherever he finds it necessary."<sup>35</sup>

Under conference status, two factors have contributed to the expansion of the church in Gusii. In May 1982, the civil service in Kenya adopted the five-day working plan.<sup>36</sup> Seventh-day Adventists who were earlier on not able to attend church services on Saturday because of job obligations, were now free to do so. Another factor is the worldwide declaration passed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in

June 1982, called the 1000 days of reaping. This was a three year period during which all members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were expected to win more souls into the Church. As a result of this campaign which ended in June 1985, members and churches increased in Gusii. Notable is Central Church in Kisii Town.

Abagusii are responsible for spreading the Seventh-day Adventist teaching in many parts of Kenya. For example, in 1925 plans were already underway to have Abagusii sent out of Gusii as missionaries: "The Kisii mission today is a stronghold, whence we can reach out toward the Maasais in the South and the Lumbwas in the east."<sup>37</sup>

This was soon realized according to a report in 1930.

The Kisiis have sent two of their numbers as missionaries to Uganda and four others have crossed the border into Luo territory. They are also planning to send teachers into Maasai as soon as the way opens.<sup>38</sup>

Notable missionary activities of the early Abagusii Adventists can be summarized as thus. In 1927, Ibrahimu Ombega was sent to Uganda. He was followed in 1929 by Jeremiah Osoro and Abel Nyakundi. This same year, Nathan Ongera was sent to Ukambani. Going to Mombasa in 1933 was Joseph Simba and Ibrahimu Ongubo. The same year, Paul Nyakeriga, Nemuel Makoyo, James Nyangau and Japheth Ogwonda went to Maasailand. In 1938, Isaiah Omwega went to Chebwai, the same year Alfayo Otieno went to Mombasa. In 1948, Paul Nyamweya and Nahashon Nyasimi went to Kabopkiek.<sup>39</sup> Other names associated with missionary activities are Elijah Getui, Yakobo Atinda, Daniel Batura and Elizaphan Maobe Nyamweya.<sup>40</sup> Some of these were among the earliest converts and attendants of the Seventh-day Adventist Schools.

In recent times, the Seventh-day Adventists from Gusii have continued to act as missionaries. A police constable, Samuel Keroti Moindi, working among the Samburu has contributed to the start and growth of an SDA gathering there. Pastor F.K. Wangai, East African Union Lay Activities Director reported in December 1979:

Every sabbath, the only day Samuel is

free from his police duties, the believers are taught gospel songs, have Bible studies and share their faith with neighbours. The one baptized member, Daniel Nderi Lesorono, is on fire for the Lord and stands out as leader of this group. This is the beginning of great things for this nomadic tribe living in a remote region of Kenya.<sup>41</sup>

Also, in most towns in Kenya, the Seventh-day Adventist Churches were either pioneered by Abagusii or a majority of their leaders and members are Abagusii. For example, in Kariokor Sabbath school, which is under Shauri Moyo Church in Nairobi, Abagusii members play an outstanding role. In 1984, Abagusii held most of the leadership responsibilities. The church elder, Jackson Ogwang, the treasurer, Samson G. Obae, and Sabbath school superintendent David O. Nyamwaya and the Dorcas Society leader Truphena R. Nyamwaya were some of the posts held by Abagusii. Out of eight children's sabbath school teachers, four were Abagusii. This situation is similar in many other urban Seventh-day Adventist Churches.

In non-adventist institutions of learning where there are Seventh-day Adventist societies, there are in most cases started and manned by Abagusii. For example, at the University of Nairobi, between 1979 and 1982, out of four chairmen of the Seventh-day Adventist group, three of them were Abagusii.<sup>42</sup> The pioneers of this gathering were Abagusii. They included Charles Nyantika and Ben Nyagwencha. The constitution of the group was drafted by Jeremiah O. Soire, another Seventh-day Adventist from Gusii.<sup>43</sup>

The 1983 Seventh-day Adventist year book illustrates that in Kenya, Gusii is one of the areas where the Seventh-day Adventist church has its stronghold.

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST DISTRIBUTION IN KENYA

Area Covered	Estimated Population	Churches	Members
SOUTH KENYA CONFERENCE (Gusii and Narok District)	1000000	266	54909
WESTERN KENYA FIELD (Western Province and Nakuru District)	-	63	9842
RANEN FIELD (Central Division, Western Division and Kehancha and Migori of South Nyanza District)	450000	132	34075
KENYA LAKE FIELD (Kisumu, Siaya and Rest of South Nyanza)	650000	188	35577
CENTRAL KENYA FIELD (The Rest of Kenya)	8134000	73	10041

As of February 1965, South Kenya Conference had 290 churches with a membership of 68,646. The number of sabbath schools stood at 442 with 97,000 members.<sup>44</sup>

What needs to be emphasized is the fact that the membership figures comprise of only those names which appear in the Church records. There are however, many more who attend Church services but are not included in the Church records.

For example a polygamous man may be an active church member but is not included in the Church register. There are others who profess Adventism but they do not attend the church who are of significant numbers. Most people in Gusii have had contact with Adventism or Adventists, which makes the Seventh-day Adventist church a household name in Gusii. One of the conference directors reported in 1983:

"Gusii district is predominantly adventist even though many of them are only nominal church members or backsliders. Whatever state one may categorise them, all feel intimately connected with the church."<sup>45</sup>

We now turn to consider the various factors that have contributed to the growth and strength of the Seventh-day Adventist Church among Abagusii.

B: Factors contributing to the progress of the church.

The factors contributing to the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii are not easy to pinpoint as they are inter-related.

To make order out of these inter-twined ideas we shall look at them under broad categories, while giving consideration as to how when and where they have made their contribution. These categories include historical factors, educational factors, health and hygiene, literature and the colpoteurs (literature evangelists), participation of the laity and the annual camp meetings.

(i) Historical Factors

Robert W. Strayer has said, "The scramble for Africa was a religious as well as a political phenomenon."<sup>46</sup> At the turn of the last century, Africa was already divided up among the leading European nations. As they were out to "civilize" the "backward" Africans, it was considered important that the religion of the Europeans be passed on to the Africans. Thus, we find several missionary groups making their way into Africa. "Uncontrolled mission expansion did not serve the ends of orderly administration."<sup>47</sup> In western Kenya a step was therefore taken to avoid confrontation among mission societies.



The presence of a number of missionary societies within such a short period of time and in so close proximity necessitated the coming together of their representatives at Vihiga at the end of 1907 for a conference as a result of which the country was tentatively divided among the several missions.<sup>48</sup>

Along this same lines the colonial office issued conditions to govern missionary acquisition of land and other property.<sup>49</sup>

It was in line with the above policies on mission expansion that the Seventh-day Adventists were granted permission to start a mission station among the Luos on the shores of Lake Victoria and their subsequent expansion and influence in Gusii. We can therefore argue that the geographical setting of Gusii, and the fact that in administration it fell under South Kavirondo which was allocated to Seventh-day Adventist missionaries made it all the more exposed to the Seventh-day Adventist movement.

Another historical factor contributing to

the strength of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii is the fact that before the 1940s, the only other Christian group working among Abagusii was that of the Mill Hill Roman Catholics. They set up their first mission station among Abagusii at Nyabururu in 1911. Whereas their presence was very much felt and their influence cannot be overlooked, of the two, the Seventh-day Adventists had the upper hand:

The Seventh-day Adventist Society would appear to be gaining ground, possibly owing to the fact that the education provided is more progressive and systematic than that obtainable elsewhere.<sup>50</sup>

In line with the above we notice some of the elders favouring Adventist education to that of the Catholics. Beaven said:

Romanism had gained a strong foothold and showed much opposition to our work and believers, but God wrought for us.... Nine influential chiefs and headmen have rejected teachers of those opposing us and have given a free field to our teachers.<sup>51</sup>

At the outbreak of the second world war the Seventh-day Adventists had gained more ground than the Catholics. Seventh-day Adventist and Catholic centres in the various locations in Gusii were as follows:<sup>52</sup>

<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SDA</u>	<u>CATHOLIC</u>
North Mugirango	15	7
Bogetutu	15	11
Nyaribari	11	5
Bobasi	5	4
Majoge	8	5
South Mugirango	9	3
Bonchari	3	5

It was, therefore, only in Bonchari (Wanjare) where the Roman Catholics were ahead of the Seventh-day Adventists. The progressive nature of the Seventh-day Adventists gained them the term abasomi which means the enlightened.

Before the outbreak of the second world war the field was therefore open to just two Christian groups and it was that which was more

appealing that gained more ground, ~~in this case, the~~ Seventh-day Adventists. Generally they are said to have developed Gusii "all-ways wise." This is supported by the Catholics-themselves. Bogonko, a Catholic, states:

"Two prominent Catholics, Father F. Moe and L.G. Sagini supported the view that the protestants were more progressive in socio-economic aspects of life than their Catholic counterparts."<sup>53</sup>

Other Christian groups to Gusii were late arrivals and the response to them was generally discouraging. In 1936, the Salvation Army ventured into Gusii but it made no progress:

"The Salvation Army on the whole was not kindly received in Gusii and perhaps this explains why it never succeeded at all in that district."<sup>54</sup>

This fate of the Salvation Army was shared by the Kenya Settlers Christian Mission and the African Inland Mission. The Swedish Lutheran Mission, the Pentecostal Assemblies of God, the Friends African Mission and the Church of God made their way into Gusii in 1939, 1944,

1955 and 1959 respectively.<sup>55</sup> They managed to get some followers but to this day, Gusii Christianity is dominated by the Roman Catholics and the Seventh-day Adventists. According to some elderly people in Gusii the Roman Catholic Church and the Seventh-day Adventist Church are the "true" christian denominations. These others are "just out of the way". Missionary activities in Gusii were slow mainly because Gusii though of high agricultural potential was not easily accessible.

We can conclude that, these historical factors therefore worked in the favour of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii. It is the issue of having just one competitor, who was not so "progressive" that contributed more to the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church not only in the years before the second world war but in the Christian era as a whole in Gusii. The other groups arrived late, when Gusii was already divided up between the Roman Catholics and the Seventh-day Adventists, and they did not have strong influence.

We should note that the Roman Catholics and the Seventh-day Adventists did not always see

eye to eye. The rivalry and competition that existed between them, culminated in physical confrontation and at times in courts proceedings. For example, in Wanjare location there was rivalry between the Catholics and the Seventh-day Adventists. The former were led by Leo Nyosore while the latter were led by Zablon Matini and Clement Nyandara. Peace prevailed only after the colonial government intervened.<sup>56</sup> This rivalry contributed towards a kind of fanaticism. The adherents did all they could to defend their faith and outshine their rivals. This gave them a sense of identification and belonging.

(ii) Educational Factors

Education is one factor that has played a big role in attracting Abagusii to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, particularly in the initial stages. Whereas the attitude of Abagusii to innovation had earlier on been negative, it had to change when the truth dawned on them that indeed the white man was here to stay and the past and some of its values were passing away.

In 1912, for example, the young men started losing their treasured egesarate system.

Measures have been taken to stop the practice of Kisii building cattle-villages on the outskirts of their locations far away from all tribal control. Such villages were undoubtedly utilized for hiding stolen cattle and more over a demoralising effect on the young men, who were accustomed to gather there and defy all family and tribal authority

On the contrary, Abagusii viewed the egesarate system as noble, for it was here that men learnt from one another not only the Gusii traditions, but also discipline, herbal medicine defence of the Gusii and other sacred institutions of the society. Whatever was acquired here was valuable in life. But this was now going.

The young men were expected to prepare to serve in the colonial government as clerks, labourers and even mere porters. What was needed was education, which was being offered in the mission schools. <sup>58</sup> It was reported in

in 1920: "The Gusii are envincing a desire for education and are attending the mission school in increasing numbers."<sup>59</sup>

It is only those who had a little education that stood a better chance of finding a job, so a good number of young men in Gusii had to attend school.<sup>60</sup>

As labourers the adherents of the Adventist mission are in great demand.... Our mission in Kisii is also given the credit of making the Kiswahili language popular in Kisii by the sale of the Kiswahili books, especially Bibles, thus enabling Europeans who do not know the vernacular to instruct and converse with the natives without difficulty.<sup>61</sup>

And so for many young men a time had come to look for a job. It was reported:

"During the last few months a considerable number of young men have envinced a desire to go out to work even to places as far a field as Nairobi."<sup>62</sup>

For many of the early adherents of the Adventist faith, it was not a desire to join the



new religion that led to the mission centres, rather, they used the mission schools as a means to get education and thus acquire a job. Had it been that the missions did not offer any education they would have had very few converts if any. Bogonko says: "The missions could not have succeeded otherwise as the Abagusii were loath to come forward on the question of religion alone."<sup>63</sup>

While Abagusii used the mission schools to meet their ends, the Seventh-day Adventists also managed to convert some of them to Adventism. The type of education offered was geared towards making better Christians out of the Africans.

The chief work of the Seventh-day Adventist mission is to promulgate the gospel to the tribes of Africa. Realizing that this can be most effectively done through an enlightened people, the Seventh-day Adventist mission has made education fundamental in its policy.<sup>64</sup>

This type of education comprised teaching

the Bible and the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic.<sup>65</sup> The teachers were expected to conform to the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and do as much as possible to convert the students.<sup>66</sup> The teachers also did the work of both pastors and evangelists.<sup>67</sup> Therefore a student in any of the Seventh-day Adventist schools was also being geared towards conversion.

Some of the students who got converted showed great zeal such that it was through them that the church acquired some of her followers. "A mission boy's ambition, even before he had properly learnt how to read and write, was to become a soul winner."<sup>68</sup>

In time, some of these Seventh-day Adventist students became teachers. These teachers were to try as much as possible to outshine their Catholic counterparts. Whenever they were accorded more esteem than their Catholic teachers they became very enthusiastic over winning souls. Beaven reported:

Rejoicing that the Lord had vindicated them in the eyes of the people, the

the teachers redoubled their efforts to win souls. Evangelistic meetings were held up and down the country; and as they with their students travelled from village to village, they sang gospel hymns (Erarara). The whole country was stirred. More teachers were called for than I could supply, and the attendance at sabbath school throughout Kisii came to be double the enrolment, so many visitors were brought along by the members.<sup>69</sup>

Whereas there had been a handful of students in 1920 when E.A. Beavon made a come-back to Gusii, in 1923 there were more than 500 students in regular attendance at Seventh-day Adventist schools.<sup>70</sup> In 1929, the number of schools stood at eighty-eight with 3286 students.<sup>71</sup>

Starting in the 1920s there was a marked demand for education by the elders. Beavon reported that:

Several headmen who rule considerable territory under the chief came to the meeting and went away impressed with

the need for educational work among their people.<sup>72</sup>

While the elders felt the need for education and often asked for teachers, the young men made sure that the teachers sent to them were comfortable: "Young men build schools and homes for the teachers who are sent to them."<sup>73</sup>

The early involvement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in female education earned them converts. In 1922 Nyanchwa Girls school was established.<sup>74</sup> It catered for those girls who were interested in education. The school provided wives for some of the mission boys. This granted the couple a chance to continue being Seventh-day Adventist adherents, unlike those boys and girls who married "outside the fold". The Roman Catholics started their girls' school at Nyabururu in 1934, when the Seventh-day Adventist one had already gained ground. The Seventh-day Adventists also met the educational need of the muslim community. Beaven reported in 1923 that:

Some Mohammedans have already begun attending our school, and we

earnestly hope that when the new school is completed many more will come, and some day may take their stand for the truth.<sup>75</sup>

In 1928, the Seventh-day Adventist Church set up a teacher training section at Kamagambo which was also to cater for evangelists instructions. The teacher trainees and evangelists were provided the opportunity of receiving further instructions of the Seventh-day teachings and this made them become more committed to the Church.<sup>76</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist schools were well organized as a result of the supervision work carried out there by school inspectors. Some of these included Abel Nyakundi and Nathan Nyanusi.<sup>77</sup> In 1935 special credit was given to a Seventh-day Adventist educationist, Pastor Warland by the District Commissioner:

Pastor Warland of the Seventh-day Adventist mission is senior missionary in the district and is a keen educationalist. His boys' primary school at Kamagambo invariably gains an

excellent report at any inspection while his educational work generally is recognised as highly satisfactory.<sup>78</sup>

The outbreak of the second world war saw many Africans, including Abagusii, leave their homes to go and serve as soldiers in far away places. Many came back with an increased desire for education:

... (an) indirect result of war prosperity and of the greater consciousness of the outside world brought by the war, was a demand for more educational facilities (in Gusii).... The main educational burden, however, was borne by the missionaries mainly Roman Catholics and Seventh-day Adventists.<sup>79</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventists have all along been actively involved in education in Gusii. For example, towards the end of 1963, the mission field had 42 elementary schools with the enrolment of 6,609 pupils. The total number of elementary teachers was 32. Since independence the Seventh-day Adventist Church

has continued to participate in educational affairs in Gusii.<sup>80</sup> As by 1983, the Church's involvement in secondary education stood at two Church private schools, eight Church sponsored government maintained schools, eleven Church sponsored government assisted schools and sixty one Church sponsored schools. In some harambee schools almost all students came from Adventist homes.<sup>81</sup> Even though many of the schools they started are no longer under their full care and control, this has not made the demand for Adventist oriented education any less. The South Kenya Conference Education Director in his 1983 annual report says:

Therefore, even if the Church schools were surrendered to the government for management, our people still felt that the Church had to retain sponsorship status. The people also feel that the Church should come in and provide services even in the schools which have no Church sponsorship because their children are the majority.<sup>82</sup>

We can conclude that education has been a big influence in enhancing the development of

of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii. There are however, several loopholes in the way the Seventh-day Adventists have handled education in Gusii. They include not providing opportunities for secondary and higher education during the colonial era. Best pupils were sent out as teachers, terminating their chances of getting higher education which would have placed them in a better stead of getting jobs outside the mission confines. This killed the ambition of succeeding generations who were content on being teachers. Thus, few Seventh-day Adventists had a chance of going far in their education.<sup>83</sup> Other loopholes observed in the Seventh-day Adventist schools recently are lack of spiritual and dedicated manpower, lack of vision and knowledge of the meaning of education, low standards of education and lack of basic facilities and amenities such as buildings and lights.<sup>84</sup>

Despite these shortcomings we cannot overlook the fact that they did a commendable job in being part of the pioneers and controllers of education in Gusii for most of the period before independence, and they have continued to give support to the government with regard to



education. Their role in education earned them more converts for earlier on, to teach or attend the Seventh-day Adventist schools one had to adhere to some of the Seventh-day Adventist doctrines. This often led to conversion. This has changed with the government taking over the running of most of their schools and they now accept students and teachers from other denominations. They may not be keen on being converted, but this is enough opportunity to expose them to the Seventh-day Adventist teachings and for a few, lead to conversion.

(iii) Health and Hygiene

As already noted, general health among the Seventh-day Adventists was given prominence after Ellen's 1863 vision. This was characteristic of the early adventist missionaries in Gusii. It was seen in the villages that sprung up in the Seventh-day Adventist centres all over Gusii. The villages developed from the hut system which was in existence by 1922.

The villages accommodated some of those attending school, practising or interested in

Adventism. It was in these villages that the Seventh-day Adventist adherents learnt and practised some of the Adventist rules on health and hygiene. The kind of life led in these villages is what attracted some of the early converts to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. An elderly Seventh-day Adventist adherent said:

When I saw some girls from my area who had gone to dwell in the Seventh-day Adventist villages in such clean clothes and looking healthier than before, I made up my mind to join them and from then on I have remained a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>85</sup>

The villages had houses which were built in straight lines with doors facing one direction. The number of houses differed from village to village. This togetherness afforded easy collective prayers for the converted. Apart from this religious function, great attention was paid to the general cleanliness. The rectangular houses had better ventilation, with at least two windows, unlike the traditional

round hut which had none. The kitchen was at the back of the house. The houses were well maintained, by being swept everyday and regularly plastered. Livestock and fowls had their own dwelling places apart from human habitation. Cutlery was well washed and dried in the sun. Any village dweller whose cooking spoon was found to be dirty had to make a new one as the dirty one was discarded by the village supervisors. Pit latrines were used and rubbish was deposited in rubbish pits. The village dwellers had European type of beds, tables and chairs. They had to give up the traditional practices of consulting the sooth-sayers, magicians and sorcerers. They also had to give up beer drinking, bhang and tobacco smoking, partaking of blood, partaking of meat sacrificed to ancestors. They engaged in elementary agriculture of maintaining vegetable gardens and tending trees. To see to it that all villagers lived to these expectations, the village dwellers elected a committee from amongst themselves. The committee supervised and governed the village, with the guidance of the missionary-in-charge. There were rules set up which had to be adhered to if one was to be a member of the village community. In general,

the villages aimed at giving a better example of life than that lived in the traditional Gusii homestead.<sup>86</sup>

It is not every Seventh-day Adventist convert who dwelt in these villages. Those who lived out of them copied the villagers. At this time Gusii was being open to several changes one of which was that of general cleanliness, of a standard higher than they were accustomed to. Since the Seventh-day Adventists provided this, they proved more popular than the Catholics who did not recommend or practice any of the above. "It is therefore possible that the social teachings of the protestants, (Seventh-day Adventists) have helped them over the years to outshine the Catholics,"<sup>87</sup>

The village system had broken up by the mid 1950s. This was because the village dwellers were people who had come from far and had put up in the villages for convenience. Some of them left to act as missionaries in their original homes. Again, there arose many land disputes involving the village dwellers, at two levels. They were

losing their inherited land to relatives back at home, while those people surrounding the villages wanted them out for sooner or later the villages would expand and in the process claim their land. As a result of this, the administrators forbade the establishment of any more villages as it was discovered that many of them were contributing to land related disputes.

This break-up did not mean the end of the practices of the villages. A few village dwellers remained and those who went away continued with whatever they had learned, and practised in the villages. The village influence continued to be felt. In 1961 a District Officer in Gusii noted that Masaba area which was the main area of influence of the Seventh-day Adventist mission was more progressive in terms of raising grade cattle and fencing than Chache area. The latter area was occupied mainly by Catholics who were mainly involved in beer drinking and general idleness.<sup>88</sup> Many farmers in eastern Kitutu, mainly members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, attribute their diligent work habits and interests in improving farming to their

early association with the mission villages.<sup>89</sup>  
Nyambaria in eastern Kitutu is popularly referred to as Rondoni (London) because most people there, mainly the Seventh-day Adventists are successful in farming, business and education. The order and organization portrayed among Seventh-day Adventists has resulted in many Non-Seventh-day Adventists being attracted to and joining the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Even though the recommended diet was not stressed by the early Seventh-day Adventist missionary in Gusii, the refraining from alcohol, bhang and tobacco as taught by them won them followers. With the coming of the white man and the subsequent break-up of Gusii traditions, many young men were engaging in the forbidden practices like drinking alcohol and smoking bhang. The Seventh-day Adventist Church provided shelter for those who wanted to stick to the traditions and those who had realized the social evils of these practices.

The recommended diet is a development of the late 1960s. It has made many people experience better health and is hence a tool of conversion. An adherent keeper of this diet

had the following to say: "Since I opted for the recommended diet about 15 years ago, I have enjoyed better health and I have also proved to be more productive".<sup>90</sup>

We can say that the Seventh-day Adventist stand on health and hygiene has attracted members to her fold. In Wanjare Location where the Seventh-day Adventists have the least influence, it is mainly the Seventh-day Adventist families that are successful in farming, education, and business. For example in Bomwanda, one of the major clans of Wanjare, there was only one graduate by 1984. He is of Adventist background.

One area we cannot overlook is that of mission medical facilities. The Seventh-day Adventists inaugurated Kendu Mission Hospital in 1928. It was reported to be one of the best hospitals in western Kenya, and many patients sought treatment there, regardless of whether they were Seventh-day Adventists or not. The hospital staff have been praised by many for their cheerfulness and concern for the sick, which contributes to the patients quick recovery:

Pastor Moseti remarks:

One man who had suffered for a long time had his illness successfully diagnosed and treated at Kendu Mission Hospital. He had already travelled far and wide without success. The reception and services rendered him at Kendu contributed to his getting well. He was converted to adventism and he gave some of his land for a church and school project.<sup>91</sup>

Health services offered in various dispensaries that are run by the Seventh-day Adventist Church have also played a role in winning converts. Nyanchwa dispensary for example, has a daily average attendance of about 50 patients. The Seventh-day Adventists and non-Seventh-day Adventists who have been to these centres commend the workers for their co-operation and friendliness. Such people may not necessarily get converted, but they will respect and praise the Seventh-day Adventist Church and this will result in more patients being drawn to the Seventh-day Adventists for health services. With time, some of them end up



being converted.<sup>92</sup>

Thus, we can argue that the principles of general health as practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists have enhanced the growth of the Church in Gusii. A Catholic adherent has observed that he was never taught cleanliness by his Church. He acquired it through associating with his protestant (Seventh-day Adventist) friends.<sup>93</sup> Despite their laxity with regard to cleanliness, Catholics run several health institutions in Gusii. Some of these include Tabaka Mission Hospital, Sengera Maternity Hospital, Rangenyo Health Centre and two dispensaries at Nyamagwa and Nyabururu.<sup>94</sup>

(iv) Literature and the Colporteurs

Right from their start in the middle of the nineteenth century, the Seventh-day Adventists have recognized the importance and influence of the press in conveying their faith not only amongst themselves but to outsiders as well. Ellen observes:

I have been shown that the press is powerful for good and evil. This agency can reach and influence the public mind

as no other means can. The press controlled by men who are sanctified to God, can be a power indeed for good, in bringing men to the knowledge of the truth.<sup>95</sup>

In 1913, the foundations of a Seventh-day Adventist press were laid at Gendia. Through the years, these humble beginnings have progressed into Africa Herald Publishing House, which caters not just for the Seventh-day Adventist needs but also for many others outside the Church. Gusii in particular has all along been served by this press.

Apart from being the pioneers in education in Gusii, the Seventh-day Adventists also initiated the translation of the Bible into Ekegusii. Taking a leading role was Pastor Beavon. Between 1921 and 1926 he had translated a hundred gospel hymns into Ekegusii, which was finally published in 1928 as Ooctera kwa Gusii. The first translated portions of the scriptures into Ekegusii were the ten commandments, the beautitudes, the Lord's prayer and twenty third psalm. Amayo continues to report that on September 6, 1929, the British and Foreign Bible

Society published Mathew, Beavon's first book on the New Testament into Ekegusii. In this accomplishment he received substantial help from Pastor Paul Nyamweya and Musa Nyandusi.<sup>96</sup>

Beavon was fulfilling the Seventh-day Adventist conviction that the holy scriptures were meant to be handed down so that the Seventh-day Adventist converts might discover the Christian principles of life by themselves.

Beavon's successor, Lewis completed the translation of the New Testament into Ekegusii in 1944. At one time, one of the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries felt there was no need to continue with the translation of the New Testament into Ekegusii, because swahili was gaining ground in Gusii, such that a swahili translation was considered more appropriate. Lewis, however, was of a different opinion; He said:

In spite of the big strides that swahili is making, I feel most definitely that the Kisii people should have the New Testament in their own language. The Kisii tribe is on the

increase. The women and girls know little or nothing about swahili. The men folk have a very crude working knowledge of it. The scriptures in swahili mean but little to them.<sup>98</sup>

This approach was to favour the Seventh-day Adventist stand in Gusii for their followers were able to read the Bible in their own language in support of the following idea:

Naturally, the Bible can only become their book if it is in their own language; the less it betrays its foreign origin, the less it will be regarded as an extraneous addition to the old view of life and the better will it gain its rightful place in the hearts of the people; whereas it will not be able to hold its own, if it is enshrined in ovacular language and stiff foreign expression, whose meaning can only be explained by an exclusive class of scribes.<sup>99</sup>

When the Swedish Lutheran missionaries suggested a revision of the Seventh-day Adventist

New Testament in ekegusii and the translation of the whole Bible, the latter gave them their support by providing personnel and finance. This exercise came to end in early 1984 having started in 1957. The long period is attributed to lack of qualified personnel, poor health and to some extent lack of support from all Christian groups in Gusii, as well as financial limitations. Whatever the delay, the Seventh-day Adventists have all along given commendable support towards the translation exercise. Throughout the translation exercise the Catholics kept a low profile.<sup>100</sup> They did support the idea of translation but they did not provide any personnel or financial assistance.

Availability of various publications in ekegusii and Kiswahili on various topics such as enlightenment on the fundamentals of the Christian faith as understood by the Adventist movement; problems of the world be they political, social, economic or religious; the principles of healthful living and establishment of happy homes,<sup>101</sup> has made the Seventh-day Adventist teachings exposed to a large audience and in so doing helped in winning converts.

Playing a significant role in circulating the Seventh-day Adventist literature are the colpoteurs. These are mainly volunteers who distribute books not only as a means of getting income but also as a tool of educating and evangelizing the world. As early as 1930 the colpoteur system was already notable in Gusii.

Out of thirty-six Kisiis (Keesees) who have been selling a Swahili book entitled "Great Issues of Our Day", six have been selected and appointed regular colpoteurs of denominational literature.<sup>102</sup>

According to most of the colpoteurs, distributing books is a very lucrative business. The demand for books is very high from the Seventh-day Adventists and non-Seventh-day Adventists. The Bible, in particular sells very fast. In many cases the literature distributed leads to conversion. Occasionally the literature is distributed free, thus making it available to those who are not able or willing to buy.

The colpoteurs themselves are

encouraged by the fact that 50% of the proceeds from the sales go into their own pockets.

Every holiday, there are several Seventh-day Adventist students who engage in colporteur work, in order to make some money for school fees. This calls for committed Seventh-day Adventists so for one to be accepted one has to be a church member of good standing.<sup>103</sup>

Literature and the colporteurs have therefore had their part to play in making the Seventh-day Adventist Church more attractive in Gusi. The Catholics cannot compete with the Seventh-day Adventists in this field for the former have not been active in it owing to their traditions of preserving the sacred word for the clergy alone. Earlier on their laity cited their prayers in latin. There was therefore, no need of initiating or even encouraging translation work. They are now becoming more relaxed in their tradition but already the Seventh-day Adventists have had their hey day.

(v) Law participation

As already noted in the role of students, teachers and literature students, the laity have

played a big role in winning members for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This however is not the limit of lay participation.

A church pastor has several churches under him, it is therefore not easy to be always available at any one church. The church elder and other members of the church are left with the responsibility of running the church affairs. For example, provided one is a Christian of good standing, one is free to preach, despite one's lack of religious training.<sup>104</sup>

This encouragement which the Church gives to the laity to participate in church-affairs proved a pulling factor right from the initial stages of the Church in Gusii. Even the lowly educated were given the morale to qualify as teachers, pastors and evangelists. This generated vying - for such positions throughout Gusii with the result that many Seventh-day Adventists came to the limelight of progress.<sup>105</sup>

Special attention should be paid to the activities of the youth, without whom the Church would not have grown the way it has done.



While not overlooking their role in the past, starting from the early 1970s and continuing into the 1980s, the Seventh-day Adventist youth in Gusii have displayed a lot of zeal and vigour towards winning souls into the Church. <sup>106</sup>

Under the able leadership of the Adventist Youth Society (AYS) or Adventist Youth Organization (AYO) the youth have been engaged in efforts.

These are organized at church or district level.

The church nearest the area of interest, that is, where the youth feel the people need to be awakened is fully involved in the programme.

The church members organize for the accommodation of the people participating in the programme.

The duration of the programme varies depending on what the group hopes to accomplish.

In December 1978, for example, Adventist Youth Organization (AYO) organized one such event. The programme lasted two weeks. There were about forty groups of at least eight people sent all over Gusii through the Church's headquarters at Nyanchwa. During the two weeks the church members always assembled for early morning prayers in the church after which they were dispatched to several homes for visitations. The homes visited included mainly those of

non-Adventist and to a lesser extent those of Seventh-day Adventists, particularly where the members were said to be below average in church affairs. The people were invited to the afternoon meetings. The afternoon session involved discussions or lectures on topics, like health, education, scripture and other affairs that touched on the people's needs. Generally, the efforts aim at reviving the state of those Seventh-day Adventists who seem to be drifting away from the Church, converting new members, as well as strengthening the faith of the Church members and also that of the visitors participating in the event.

Efforts are organized by other groups such as the Dorcas Society. For example, the Dorcas Society of Matongo Church organized an Effort at Nyabimwa in December 1984. The attendance in the meetings was good. At the end of the event about twenty people had made up their minds either to revive their former Seventh-day Adventist faith or join the Seventh-day Adventist church.<sup>107</sup> At the end of these Efforts those who have shown interest are followed up and invited to join the baptismal class. As soon as they are ready for

baptism, they are accepted for baptism and thus add to the numbers of the Seventh-day Adventist followers. It should be brought to attention that a male equivalent of the Dorcas Society, the Adventist Men Society is gaining ground in Gusii. They are organized into action teams, with each individual being assigned a territory. It is up to him to recommend visits to church members who are backsliding or non-Seventh-day Adventists who have shown interest in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and need encouragement.<sup>108</sup>

Therefore, the fact that the Seventh-day Adventist Church encourages participation of the laity in most of its evangelization activities has helped many members in strengthening their own faith and in winning others to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

(vi) The Annual Camp Meeting

In 1933, the first Seventh-day Adventist camp meeting was held at Nyaguta, Nyaribari.<sup>109</sup> It marked the beginning of this popular annual event, which has always attracted the attention of most people all over Gusii, Seventh-day

Adventists and non-Seventh-day Adventists alike. It is one factor that has enhanced the strides of the Church through the years, more so during its initial stages.

The early camp meeting drew together the Seventh-day Adventist adherents from all over Gusii. It being a week long event, it called for putting up of temporary huts and carrying virtually everything that one would need during the stay. It therefore needed good preparation for those planning to attend the occasion.

The people of Nyaguta, for example, where the first camp meetings were held were expected to be hospitable and generous to the visitors. All the participants were very co-operative and friendly so that the atmosphere that prevailed throughout the one week was as that in a closely knit family. This cordial relationship influenced those non-Seventh-day Adventists in attendance to make up their minds to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>110</sup> That may explain why Nyaguta is predominantly Seventh-day Adventist.

Activities of camp meetings included prayers, Bible study, reciting of memory verses, general singing and earlier on choir competitions, reports on the progress of the various churches throughout the past year, discussion on agriculture, trade, education and other matters affecting the Church and the society as a whole. This variety guaranteed that most peoples needs were taken care of. Apart from the conversions witnessed, many people came and went away satisfied with whatever they had learnt.

Another factor arising out of the camp meetings that has contributed to the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii is the competition that once prevailed in the choirs and memory verse recitals. From one camp season to another, much effort went into polishing songs and verses in readiness for the next camp meeting. Prizes were given in these competitions. The competitive atmosphere would at times however lead to tension, if it was viewed that favouritism had prevailed in deciding on the winners. This competition was therefore done away with in the middle of the 1970s. This, however, has not made any less the enthusiasm noticed in Gusii as the camp meeting season approaches,

particularly among the Seventh-day Adventist adherents.

Because Adventism has spread widely in Gusii the need to have many camp centres has arisen. Many people are happy about this step as they are now provided with the opportunity to attend as many camp meetings as possible. Choir members in particular can travel distances as long as fifty kilometres not only to participate in the singing but also to hear and learn new songs and benefit from the camp meeting programmes.<sup>111</sup>

Distribution of literature is a special feature of the camp meeting. A special stand is preserved for the literature evangelists to display their wares. Several speakers recommend certain books in their discussions. An interested person is therefore given the opportunity to study further by buying the relevant books, thus understanding the Seventh-day Adventist faith better and may end up getting converted.

Main speakers during camp meetings are often visitors, sometimes from as far as the General Conference. This alone is enough to

attract people to attend the meetings.

A moving preacher is often liked by the people, who will invite him to speak in future meetings. Once the word spreads that such a speaker will be coming, there is much vigour displayed.

Because of the many camp centres in Gusii, the temporary villages put up during earlier camp meetings are no longer necessary. The speakers, some elders and a good number of the youth, however, still put up together, either in a school or a home. The stay is characterized by generous food gifts from the Church members and the willingness by Church members to serve in any capacity to make the camp meetings a success. The youth consider it a privilege to be chosen to stay with the visitors during camp meeting. This not only enriches their spiritually but it also provides a chance to meet people from other places and learn from them.

During lunch break, people gather in groups to partake of whatever packed food they have carried. All people are invited to join in. This generous and hospitable atmosphere has contributed in drawing members to the Seventh-day

Adventist fold. Visitors feel at home. They are invited to come again and in most cases they are willing to do so.

Although the camp meeting is an annual event it has influence throughout the year. With time however it has lost some of the excitement it offered since many camp centres have been opened. Despite that, the centres have advantages such as providing opportunity for one to attend as many meetings as possible. Usually, there are about four camp meetings that go on at one time, but these are organized in such a way that the distance between them is reasonable. As of December 1984 there were eighty two such centres, with the figure expected to go up in 1985.<sup>112</sup> The following remark summarises what many people think of the camp meeting.

"It is only serious illness which can prevent one from attending the camp meeting."<sup>113</sup>

There are definitely other factors which have contributed to the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii, but these we will leave out, not because they are insignificant but because, we hope that they fall under our broad categories. These include factors like the security Lewis provided Abagusii when he



intervened for them whenever there were clashes with the colonial government.<sup>114</sup>

In concluding this section we say that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has indeed had an effect among Abagusii. Many of those committed to the faith are content. In the words of one adherent: "If I cannot be an Adventist I am afraid I will be half-christian and thus I cannot imagine not being an Adventist."<sup>115</sup>

This is the opinion of many other Seventh-day Adventists. Even backsliders continue coming to church and are involved in Church activities where it does not involve those in the Church record book. These so called backsliders often count themselves Seventh-day Adventists and identify with the Church. Parents who are backsliders encourage their children to join the Church. Few backsliders of the Seventh-day Adventist background join other Churches. They may stay without identifying with any other Church. There are also many backsliders who make a comeback to the Church so that on most occasions of baptism there are cases of rebaptism. Non-Seventh-day Adventists in Gusli

view the Seventh-day Adventists as being on the right lines as Christians despite some differences on emphasis with other Christian groups.

C: The Role played by the Church in National Development

E.M. Kasiera has remarked that throughout their history in Kenya, the Seventh-day Adventists have played as much a positive role in development as other Churches have played in other parts of Kenya.<sup>116</sup> We now consider this role, with reference to Gusii, under education, health services, agriculture; job opportunities and the general welfare of man.

As already noted the Seventh-day Adventists have played a significant role in the starting and running of many schools in Gusii. In so doing they introduced Abagusii to the art of reading and writing. This set the stage for further literacy. The Seventh-day Adventist involvement in education resulted in there being a high degree of literacy among the Seventh-day Adventist adherents when compared to other Christians in Gusii.<sup>117</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist role in education can be seen in the number of schools with the Seventh-day Adventist background. In 1948 they had 38 aided schools, while the Roman Catholics had 29. The other protestant missions had 11.<sup>118</sup> In the Mid 1950s the Seventh-day Adventists ran most of the intermediate schools. They had 6, the Roman Catholics had 3 and the Pentecostal and Swedish Lutheran Mission had one each.<sup>119</sup>

As of 1984, the picture of schools that have been associated with the Seventh-day Adventists was as illustrated here below.<sup>120</sup>

	<u>Total for</u>	<u>Total for SDA</u>
	<u>Gusii</u>	
Number of primary Schools	871	107
Number of pupils	269,860	31,100
Number of secondary schools	182	82
Number of students	29,857	14,280

Of the remaining secondary schools, 42 are of Catholic background, the Pentecostals have 8, the Lutherans 2 and Church of God has 1. The rest are either private or harambee institutions.

Eronge Girls Primary Boarding School Borabu, a Seventh-day Adventist institution was expected to take its first batch of pupils in January 1985.

The only private teacher training college in Kenya - Kamagambo, is an Seventh-day Adventist institution. The average annual intake is 90 students. The secondary and high school sections admit about 400 students.<sup>121</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is also contributing to the provision of University Education in Kenya:

December 1978 will be remembered as the month the Seventh-day Adventist Church received 339 acres of land for a University College in the beautiful green hill district of Nandi, Kenya. Three weeks later, a letter of allotment was given to the Church

officially granting the University College of Eastern Africa a 99 year lease.<sup>122</sup>

This piece of land was previously the Baraton Agricultural Research Station. Time was therefore needed for transition into a University campus: It was reported in December 1980:

On October 1, 1980, 65 students were on hand to register for the first term's classes at University College of Eastern Africa. Another 20 who have been delayed en route, are expected in a week's time.<sup>123</sup>

Abaçusii students admitted in this lot were 29.<sup>124</sup> The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii has been actively involved in giving financial aid to this institution. For example each Church member is required to contribute some money towards the Baraton Fund. There are also scholarships provided by the Church, to meet fees requirements for some of the students who are not able financially.<sup>125</sup>

A notable feature of this institution

is that it insists on strict discipline in line with some of the Church's teachings. Smoking and drinking are not allowed. All students including those of non-Seventh-day Adventist background are expected to conform to the colleges' regulations such as observing Saturday as the day of worship.

Perhaps, it is this participation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in university education that led to Percy Paul's invitation to sit with the Planning Commission of a second university in Kenya:

As a result of the visit to the University College of East Africa in June, 1981 of Kenya's Minister for Higher Education, Mr. J.J. Kamotho the Permanent Secretary for Higher Education, Mr. N.J. Leting, the Director for Higher Education, Mr. M.J. Kamunge, and other honourable members from the Government; the Principal of University College of Eastern Africa Dr. Percy Paul, was invited to Nairobi, the capital city, to sit with the Planning Commission to help draw up plans for a second university in Kenya.

Still on the Seventh-day Adventist participation in Education in Kenya, it was reported in January 1980:

Two adventists, Z.F. Ayonga, Associate Education Director of the East African Union and Mrs. Wilma Tegler, a teacher at Kamagambo Secondary School and Teachers College, have been invited to be members of the Joint Christian Religious Syllabus Committee in Kenya. <sup>127</sup>

In 1983, the Director for Education in South Kenya Conference in his annual report said that officials of the then two Ministries of Education namely Basic and Higher, consulted the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the appointments of school heads and deputies. The officials took the Church's recommendations seriously and acted on them. The Education director was invited by the Kisii District Basic Education Board (DBEB) to attend and participate in an interview for heads and deputies of primary schools. About two thirds of the successful applicants were Seventh-day Adventists. The director was consulted further on their postings. Similar co-operation was noted from

the Teachers Service Commission and the Ministry of Higher Education at both district and provincial levels. Also, there were Adventists appointed in many school boards.<sup>128</sup>

People who are of the Seventh-day Adventist background either through schools, family and personal decision hold responsible positions both in the public and private sector. For example, of the present seven members of parliament from Gusii, five are of Seventh-day Adventist background. These are Christopher M. Obure (Majoge/Bassi); Abuya Abuya (Kitutu East); Reuben O. Oyondi (Wanjare/South Mugirango); Livingstone A. Mariita (North Mugirango Burabu); and David A. Onyancha (West Mogirango). Prior to his being elected to parliament, Onyancha served as the legal advisor of South Kenya Conference and also as Sabbath School Superintendent at Nyanhwa Seventh-day Adventist Church. He is the proprietor of D.A. Onyancha and Company, Advocates, a successful law firm in Kisii Town.

In the 1983 annual education report, the Director of Education, South Kenya Conference also reported that the majority of



teachers in the conference were Adventist, either by background, practice or name.<sup>129</sup>

To provide health services in Gusii the Seventh-day Adventist Church has recently set up the Kenya Seventh-day Adventist Rural Health Services.<sup>130</sup> This does not mean that the Church has ignored this aspect in the past. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has always been involved in setting up dispensaries and health centres in Gusii.

According to the Executive Director for South Kenya Conference, as of December 1984, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was running eight dispensaries in Gusii namely Gesusu Nyanchwa, Eronge, Riakworo, Kenyanya, Itibo, Nyagesenda and Riokindo. A ninth one Ol Danyati is in Maasai. Nyanchwa dispensary, as already noted has an average daily attendance of fifty patients.

Cases that require more attention than the dispensaries are able to offer are referred to Kendu Mission Hospital. Also monthly visits are arranged for highly qualified personnel to visit the dispensaries and attend to some of

the difficult and complicated cases; and also provide advise to the medical staff, who are mainly enrolled nurses, graduates of Kendu Mission Hospital.

Right now construction of a medical centre is going on at Nyanchwa. By December 1984, phase I of the outpatient unit was nearing completion. The only handicap foreseen before completion of the centre is lack of finance. With the Church members contributing generously to the medical fund, it will not take too long to complete the project.<sup>131</sup>

Kendu Mission Hospital is a common name among the Seventh-day Adventists in Gusii. Even though it is about 52 kilometres from Kisii Town, many people from Kisii travel there in search of medical services. When President Moi met with the East African Union Executive Committee and others on December 1, 1978, it was reported in February 1979:

He (The President) said he was well aware of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kenya and its work. He had visited Kendu Mission Hospital

and was impressed with what it was doing in the community.<sup>132</sup>

Seventh-day Adventist involvement in health services is not complete without mention of the medical centre, situated in Milimani, in Nairobi. It offers services ranging from dental work to demonstrations and lectures in house-keeping. It is well known for its 5-Day stop smoking programmes.

Abagusii are fully involved in agriculture. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in particular encourages agriculture among her followers, for it is through such activities, (in agriculture) that God's blessings are passed to mankind.<sup>133</sup> In 1983, the Provincial Commissioner reported in his annual report that Gusii District being well blessed climatically, its farming activities were very much encouraging. The main cash crops (Map 5) such as tea and coffee earned the district huge sums of income.<sup>134</sup>

According to the District Agricultural Officer,<sup>135</sup> the acreage of some of the crops grown in Gusii as of December, 1984 was as follows: tea, 12,000 hectares; pyrethrum, 12,000 hectares;

maize, 58,000 hectares; bananas, 19,000 hectares; beans, 37,000 hectares; and sugarcane 2,200 hectares. The bulk of these figures is from areas of Seventh-day Adventist prominence. The settlement scheme is also actively involved in production of milk, which is transported and processed at the Kenya Co-operative Creameries depot at Sotik. For example, Rietago Settlement Scheme, with 54 settlers, has only 5 non-Seventh-day Adventists. We have already noted the influence of the Seventh-day Mission villages in agriculture (pp.175-176).

It is important to correct the impression given that the Seventh-day adventists are against growing of crops such as tea and coffee, since they are considered narcotics and are thus not good for man's health. The Church only recommends farming in crops other than tea and coffee. But where these crops are the only source of income, the people have to grow them. Some Church members have stopped tending these crops but this is a personal decision in which the Church is not involved. The Church only gives its stand and leaves members to make their own decisions as to which crops and animals they should grow and tame.

The Church provides employment for several people. These are mainly Church workers such as pastors, administrators, teachers and health workers. As of December 1984, those in the conference payroll were as follows: 81 active employees, 32 retired officers; 43 health workers and 27 teachers.<sup>136</sup> These figures exclude those of colporteurs and other temporary workers.

To cater for the general welfare of man, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has special programmes for her members during which time discussions are held on topics such as social relationships and population control. Seminars and retreats are held with the aim of improving the lives of the participants. For example, during one such teacher's meeting, in 1982, a forum was provided for exchanging of ideas. David Mbiti, Chief Inspector of schools in the then Ministry of Higher Education was the guest of honour. He gave an excellent speech on school administration.<sup>137</sup>

Concern for the less privileged members of the community is another area in which the Seventh-day Adventist Church plays a considerable

role. Here, special credit should go to the Dorcas Society, who visit homes of the poor and give not only material aid but spiritual counsel as well. The Dorcas members also benefit from one another by sharing ideas in general house-keeping and other common matters affecting them as women. There is a general observation among the Seventh-day Adventist and non-Seventh-day Adventists in Gusii that the Church involvement in community welfare has tended to relax with time. Possible reasons for this laxity include limited resources in land and therefore food. Again, the extended family system and the subsequent close ties that bound people together have been interfered with by modernization. Many young people spend most of their time in school while others are away at work. The monetary system has its restraints, in most cases, a salary cannot cater adequately for the immediate family, which means little or nothing will be left for "outsiders".

There are plans to have water made easily available in two Seventh-day Adventist centres in Gusii; namely Nyanchwa and Matutu. Currently, funds are being generated to meet expenses for these two projects.<sup>138</sup> The two places usually

experience water shortages.

Like any other wananchi, the Seventh-day Adventists are involved in many harambee projects both within and without the Church. The local members usually meet most of the Church's construction costs, thus the Seventh-day Adventist churches are a "local affair" with regard to building costs. The Church members identify fully with their other local needs such as schools and dispensaries, and contribute accordingly.

In conclusion, we can say that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is playing a significant role towards national development. Since the funds are mainly met by the local churches, this effort is commendable. In May, 1979 Alf Lohne, a general vice-president of the General Conference reported after meeting President Moi:

When he (President Moi) welcomed us, he commended Seventh-day Adventists for their significant contribution in Kenya in the field(s) of education and health, as well as in spiritual matters. He said our Church has

demonstrated its concern for his  
people.<sup>139</sup>

These words cater adequately for the  
role of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in  
national development. Despite the initial  
discouraging situation, the Seventh-day  
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gradual growth. Its impact has consequently  
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## CHAPTER IV

### THE INFLUENCE OF AND UPON THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST (SDA) CHURCH IN GUSII.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is concerned with the influence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on aspects of three Gusii cultural practises, namely: initiation, marriage and death. In the second section we deal with the influence of splits upon the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii.

A: The Seventh-day Adventist influence on some Gusii cultural practices.

The three, that is initiation, marriage and death are of interest to us because they have undergone a noticeable transformation among the Seventh-day Adventists when comparing them with other Christians in Gusii. This has led to conflicts not only within the Seventh-day Adventist Church but also in Gusii as a whole. How and why the Seventh-day Adventists have pioneered related to and generally handled changes pertaining to these three issues is what we discuss.

(i) Influence on initiation

The early Seventh-day Adventist missionaries in Gusii did not interfere with the initiation ceremonies of their converts.<sup>1</sup> The rituals accompanying the traditional Gusii initiation rite continued to be practised by the Seventh-day Adventist adherents and this does not seem to have worried the missionaries.<sup>2</sup> Early missionary reports available to us on Gusii make no reference to initiation.

The changes and giving up of some initiation values were started by the Abagusii, Seventh-day Adventist adherents themselves and not the missionaries.<sup>3</sup> This has been a gradual process such that it is difficult to say exactly when a certain idea was effected. We shall, therefore, point out where and why changes have occurred.

As already noted, Abagusii practised initiation for both male and female members of the society. This pattern continued among the early Seventh-day Adventist adherents. In the 1930s, however, they started questioning some aspects of this practise. Taking priority was

the issue of the fire that was kept burning throughout the seclusion period. It was believed that its failure could bring bad luck. The Seventh-day Adventists in Gusii likened the respect, awe and fear that was accorded the fire to that accorded God. Living up to the requirements of maintaining the fire ritual was like engaging in idol worship. So the Seventh-day Adventist adherents started giving it up.<sup>4</sup> It has gradually been stopped among the Seventh-day Adventist adherents, but there are cases where circumstances force a Seventh-day Adventist initiate to participate in guarding such a fire. For example, if a Seventh-day Adventist initiate shares the seclusion hut with a Catholic who feels obliged to guard the fire, then the former has to conform to it accordingly. Even if the fire failed, however, the Seventh-day Adventist initiate will not undergo any of the cleansing rituals.<sup>5</sup> Normally, while in seclusion a Seventh-day Adventist initiate may light an ordinary fire with which he can cook or warm himself. The superstitions associated with the fire do not therefore hold for the Seventh-day Adventists.



Abagusii Seventh-day Adventists again led in the giving up of the nightly singing that took place in the female initiate's home during the seclusion period. This was a development of the village system. Those putting up in the villages were supposed to refrain from this singing exercise which was considered "worldly." With this singing coming to an end, it was inevitable that esucuta, esubo and ekiarokia also started losing their place in initiation. This was not an overnight change though.<sup>6</sup> Catholics on the other hand, continued to practise these rituals, and they are still evident - in areas that are predominantly Catholic. A good example is Wanjare location, where initiation is still embodied with much of the traditional vigour.

With education and modern health services gaining more ground in Gusii, Abagusii Seventh-day Adventist adherents started giving up omosaria, the traditional initiation surgeon and instead sought the hospital. The Seventh-day Adventists favour the hospital operation because it affords better hygiene which is in line with their strict health principles.<sup>7</sup> The hospital also saves the initiates the pain

borne during the ceremony because the operation is performed under anaesthesia.<sup>8</sup> Starting in the 1970s many Seventh-day Adventists have been taking their children to hospital for initiation. The Catholics do the same but not as much as the Seventh-day Adventists. In Wanjare, the Seventh-day Adventists were the first to take their children to hospital.<sup>9</sup>

In the settlement schemes which are predominantly Seventh-day Adventist, initiates are taken to the hospital. In one of these schemes, Rietago, initiates travel a long distance to have the operation done in hospital, despite the fact that there are traditional surgeons in neighbouring Bombea village. Expenses incurred as a result of the travelling are overlooked because what matters is the fact that the operation is done in hospital and guarantees a high standard of hygiene. Bombea residents who are mainly Catholics have however, continued to rely on the services of the traditional surgeons.

Another development of the 1970s is the laxity that the Seventh-day Adventists started adopting with regard to female circumcision.

Those encouraging this idea were the educated people who were living in urban centres.. Education and interaction with the ethnic groups who have never or no longer practise female circumcision seems to have had a big role to play towards this change. Elderly Abagusii Seventh-day Adventist adherents are of the opinion that it should as well die because it has no Biblical backing.<sup>10</sup> This idea has also got scientific support. According to the African Medical Research Foundation in their column, Ask Dr. Amref, "there are no medical reasons for such surgery".<sup>11</sup> This discouragement of female circumcision has gained momentum in Gusii with the presidential directive in 1982 that female circumcision ought to come to an end.<sup>12</sup>

As it is now, most Seventh-day Adventists are not particular about initiation. This has been influenced by factors such as, Seventh-day Adventist teachings, education and the time factor. In Gusii, the Seventh-day Adventists took the first step and discouraged some aspects of initiation. Education has contributed to giving up of some practises because the modern school system attaches no importance to ideas such as a lengthy seclusion period. The school

holiday is limited to about just one month. The uninitiated themselves are not as enthusiastic as was the case in the past because older siblings do not tease them and thus encourage them to insist on undergoing initiation. These days it is the parents who suggest to their children that they are ripe for initiation, unlike in the past when it was the dream and insistence of most children to pass into adulthood. Many children do not behave differently after initiation because it no longer plays the role of a bridge to adult life. Male initiation is encouraged more because of its hygienic values<sup>13</sup> and because it distinguishes Abagusii from their Luo neighbours, thus making it one of the factors that formed the core of the Gusii society.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the changes, Abagusii generally feel that initiation itself is here to stay, particularly that of men. The changes which have been initiated and encouraged by the Seventh-day Adventists have raised disappointment to the traditionalist Gusii and even other Christian communities who feel the Seventh-day Adventists have lost direction. Most Seventh-day Adventists are themselves

comfortable with their approach to initiation. Even without outside influence some of the changes would still have come about because culture is dynamic. There is no culture that is static. This is because the changing needs of men dictate the approach of people to certain issues.

(ii) Influence on marriage

Under marriage we shall consider two aspects, namely: bridewealth and the wedding. Unlike initiation where Abagusii Seventh-day Adventist converts brought about changes, in marriage the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries showed concern over some traditional aspects and took the initiative to bring about changes.<sup>15</sup> This too was a gradual process so that we can not say for certain when a change came about. Some of the marriage aspects that missionaries were opposed to were polygamy and ebitins (legring), an equivalent of the modern wedding ring.

At the initial stages the missionaries welcomed polygamists even in the mission villages. They taught them that monogamy was

better than polygamy and then left them to make up their minds on whether to give up the latter. This seems to have worked for in 1922 Paulo Nyamweya gave up his first wife before asking and being accepted for baptism. Perhaps, the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries were sharing the opinion of the Assistant District Commissioner for Kapsabet who in 1925 wrote to the Senior Commissioner, Nyanza Province:

With regard to the subject in question (native marriage) it has always seemed to me that missionaries are in danger of stultifying their efforts by too rigid an insistence on monogamy. It is a principle which should be introduced very gradually and should await the free acquiescence of the people concerned. To enforce legislation in the matter seems to me too drastic.<sup>16</sup>

Because of this approach, the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries did not clash with their converts. In time, the Seventh-day Adventist adherents and others in Gusi reached the understanding that the Seventh-day Adventist

teachings did not favour polygamy, so those accepting to be Seventh-day Adventists knew they had to give up polygamy.

In the 1930s, a controversial issue in the Seventh-day Adventist Church was on Ebitince. It involved parties outside the Church for in 1933, Chief Musa Nyandusi, one of the first ten Abagusii to be baptised complained at a Local Native Council (LNC) meeting that:

The mission authorities (the Seventh-day Adventists) were insisting on the removal of the ebitince anklet as a condition of entering the mission.

In his opinion it should be appreciated as it was Kisii equivalent to a wedding ring.<sup>17</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventists were not in favour of ebitince because it was not in line with their teachings on general dress. According to the counsel given by Ellen:

.... disposition in you to dress according to the fashion, and to wear - lace, and gold and artificials for display, will not recommend to others

your religion or the truth that you profess.... Simple, plain, unpretending dress will be a recommendation to my youthful sisters. In no better way can you let your light shine to others than in your simplicity of dress and deportment.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, the Seventh-day Adventist Church had to take a stand which called for the giving up of ebitinge among the Seventh-day Adventist female adherents. The Catholic missionaries did not share in this. It appears however, as though the Seventh-day Adventist stand was to have a big influence in Gusii. Ebitinge are gradually losing prominence in the Gusii society. They are now worn by very few elderly women who are either traditionalists or Catholics.

In the 1940's bridewealth became a central issue in Gusii. It seems to have struck the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries much earlier. In 1925 Beaven reported:

They (native girls and women) come to the mission without an object in life beyond one day being purchased



by some Kisii, who will look upon them as slaves and treat them worse.<sup>19</sup>

This however, was a misunderstanding, because traditionally, bridewealth did not have any purchase element behind it.

In the 1940s it was not an issue that was of concern to the missionaries alone. It involved the district as a whole. It was held that there was need to limit bridewealth among the Abagusii. Once again, Musa Nyandusi played a significant role. In 1948 when he was deputy vice-president of the Local Native Council (LNC) he called a baraza to discuss the issue. "Emphasis was laid on the importance of popular willingness and cooperation,"<sup>20</sup> between the parties involved.

The issue does not seem to have been settled. Towards the end of the 1960s and in particular in the 1970s it gained momentum. All over Gusii bridewealth soared high, particularly in the social upper class which is dominated by members of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Figures as high as twenty five thousand shillings were cited for girls

who had at least secondary education. For majority of the Gusii people this was and is still a lot of money. Bridewealth now took a commercial turn, with the traditional significance of it being overlooked. It once again raised many questions in the whole of Gusii and has continued to do so, because the commercial element has not been erased. In recent times some parents have asked and insisted on as much as fifty thousand shillings. Others have cited more than one hundred thousand shillings without which they cannot give consent with regard to their daughters marriages.

The effect of this commercial element has been greatly felt in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In the early 1970s Church weddings almost came to a standstill. Even now the number of weddings conducted in Church is small compared to the population of youth of marriage age in the Church. Many young people have opted for elopement in order to escape the embarrassment of exorbitant bridewealth. Others conduct their marriages outside the Church where they are free from parental and Church obligations.<sup>21</sup> In the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii,

a couple is allowed to register for Church wedding only after getting a letter of consent from the girl's father and the local church elders. Most fathers exploit this idea by not being willing to give the letter of consent till the bridewealth negotiations are complete and the whole bridewealth is given.

The bridewealth issue has led to the formation of two main camps in the Church. Those who are of the opinion that the practise should go on and others who hold that bridewealth with a commercial element should come to an end. The former camp draws its support from most of the elders while the latter is composed of male youth. The reasons advanced by the elders are mainly derived from the traditional significance of bridewealth. Apart from that, education has also got a role to play. Parents who feel they have spent much time and money to educate their daughters take this into consideration when discussing bridewealth.<sup>22</sup> The educated girl's parents also take into account the fact that their daughter is going to work, and earn the equivalent of the bridewealth within a short time. After that, she will spend her salary mainly on her own nuclear family, and to a certain extent that of her husband, with little or nothing being

done for her family, why not make up for this through bridewealth.<sup>23</sup>

To a certain extent beauty has an influencing factor as far as bridewealth is concerned. If a suitor is not ready to have a "beautiful" lady at a certain bridewealth her parents advise her that he may as well forget about her, for more competent suitors are likely to come her way.<sup>24</sup>

With social stratification becoming more evident, family background is also influencing bridewealth. Parents want their children to marry into certain families particularly those of equal or higher status. The girl and boy are in this case seen as objects, used to achieve prestige, most likely against their wishes. Bridewealth has been used by parents as an excuse for not allowing their children to marry into poor families or those they do not favour. Exorbitant bridewealth is cited so as to put the marriage off.

The opposition side, however, is fully for traditional bridewealth, their point of contention being the commercial element that has crept into the bridewealth system. Several evils that come

as a result of commercialization are cited.

It degrades the woman to the status of a commodity being sold and bought. It makes marriage to be primarily an economic relationship in which the choice of a wife depends on one's ability to pay, rather than on mutual respect and love between the boy and the girl. This aggregates class distinction in that only a rich suitor is ever able to marry a rich man's daughter.<sup>25</sup>

The high figures cited during bridewealth negotiations motivate haggling and bargaining which can easily result in misunderstanding and disagreement that is destructive to the love and respect that ought to characterise future relationship between the two families and the couple themselves.<sup>26</sup>

It is further argued that parents are too interested in money, at the expense of their daughter's welfare so they end up forcing the lady to marry somebody not because she loves him but because he is able to meet her parents money needs.<sup>27</sup>

Exorbitant bridewealth may call for a loan on the part of the boy so he has to meet

its repayment at the expense of the newly established family. By all means a couple should start off without debts if they are to make any progress in life.<sup>28</sup>

Excessive bridewealth demands cause frustrations and defeat for young people who opt to live together without a "proper marriage." This renders the couple uncertainty and instability with regard to the future. From the Christian point of view, it perpetuates immorality.<sup>29</sup>

In this hussle, the bride is torn between the two parties; her family and her lover. Traditionally, the bride played a passive role in the bridewealth discussions which were characterized by cooperation and a friendly atmosphere. Because of the commercial element that has crept into bridewealth, modern brides consider that they should be more involved in bridewealth discussions. Their role will be that of a mediator so as to help bring reconciliation between the two parties. It has also been pointed out that bridewealth disagreements alone are not sufficient reason for putting a marriage at stake. If the couple are prepared for marriage, the parents should accord them all the cooperation and

encouragement towards this end. No reasonable girl will want to disappoint her parents by going against their wishes but if they become unreasonable by demanding impossible bridewealth, the girl is left with no option but to elope.<sup>30</sup>

If the groom is not in a position to pay any bridewealth, the marriage should still go on till such a time that the boy will be able to give something to the girl's parents not as a price but as a gift of appreciation.<sup>31</sup> Cases where married girls cannot visit their parents because of bridewealth disagreements are unfortunate. Most girls are always willing to help their families and this is made easier if the marriage is not strained by issues like disagreements over bridewealth.

Therefore, there is really nobody who is opposed to bridewealth if it is conducted in a way that will not cause strain to any of the parties involved. The general opinion can be summed up as; "It is not the bridewealth system itself that is intrinsically evil, but the selfishness of human hearts that administer it wrongly."<sup>32</sup> Despite the evils associated with the modern bridewealth system, society in general

is not ready for its abolition.<sup>33</sup>

An aspect of marriage where the Seventh-day Adventist Church has taken an official stand is on the wedding ceremony. This has been necessitated by the changes that came about in marriage during the 1920s and 1930s. Ecesarate system came to an end and now the bride was not to be taken there. Instead, after all negotiations were complete, a date was set when the groom and his friends would come for the bride. The bride asked her friends to help her in entertaining the visitors who came on the eve of the wedding. They all spent the night at the bride's home, eating and dancing. The next day all left for the groom's home.<sup>34</sup> The Seventh-day Adventists proceeded to the church for the wedding ceremony and then to the groom's home. The night following the wedding was spent at the groom's home. The following day is when the bride and groom were left alone to start on their new life.<sup>35</sup>

In the early 1970s, however, the Church began to show concern in what they considered unbecoming behaviour on the bridal party, both the bride's friends and the groom's friends. Some of the girls got pregnant or eloped during weddings.



To save the Church from further embarrassment, the Church started giving suggestions on how wedding parties should be conducted. It was recommended that the groom and his friends should come for the bride on the morning of the wedding. While the bride was free to have her friends accompany her to the church, they were not supposed to go to the grooms home, nor were his friends permitted to accompany him to his home.<sup>36</sup>

Apart from the pregnancies and elopement, the Church stepped in because it was thought that the two days spent together and the marriage atmosphere where the youth were mainly left on their own precipitated immoral behaviour. The idea of a matching number of boys and girls is believed to have enhanced immorality all the more.<sup>37.</sup>

Another reason advanced for the change is that of exhaustion. The two days spent without proper sleep is unhealthy. It results in intemperance which is not in line with the Seventh-day Adventist health principles which call for temperance in all things.<sup>38</sup>

Inconveniences arising from the former system of marriage are another reason put forward

for bringing about change in the wedding ceremony. Catering for a large number of people in a homestead is not only difficult but also inconvenient, especially now that many people were spending the night there. These included the owners of the home, the bridal party and the many relatives and friends who were present for the occasion. Getting an adequate labourforce and providing general accommodation for such large numbers may be difficult.<sup>39</sup>

Entertainment for such a gathering is not easy. So at times dancing was inevitable. Dancing as is conducted by young people today does not glorify God and should not be engaged in by the Seventh-day Adventist adherents.<sup>40</sup>

The Church directive which was passed by the Church's executive officers does not seem to have received positive response from the majority of the Seventh-day Adventist members. Most of the youth with substantial support from the elders are of the opinion that the directive was not necessary. They argue that the question of immorality should be tackled in another way. Youth should be given the necessary guidance in church and at school and particularly at home so that

their behaviour is more upright. The traditional chastity does not hold any more and the youth have not been catered for. Controlling the behaviour of the youth on a wedding occasion is not enough for there are many other places where youth can meet and engage in immorality.

A wedding ceremony affords a good opportunity for social interaction. The friends met and made, the jokes shared and the general wedding atmosphere are good for the participants. The occasion is educative and leaves a lasting impression for the bride, the groom, their families and all others involved. The lack of sleep is therefore adequately made up for.<sup>41</sup>

The bride needs the company and support of her friends on arrival at the groom's home where she is not only a stranger but also the centre of interest. She should be accompanied by a reasonable number of friends to give her the much needed support at this time when she has broken ties with her family and is now being exposed to a new environment.<sup>42</sup>

The youth hold the view that the Church's directive shows that they are not trusted.

On the contrary, they believe they are capable of handling themselves and whatever mistakes occur are not confined to the youth alone. This directive will lead to more youth opting for weddings outside the Church where they will be free from the Church's obligations.

Many elders on whom the responsibility of organizing their children's weddings fall are of the opinion that the question of economy and any other inconveniences does not arise at this time. A wedding is not an everyday occasion so it is worth anything to make it a success.<sup>43</sup> It is not only an honour but also a privilege for a parent to witness an offspring's wedding.

With this kind of response to the directive perhaps the Church might need to reconsider its stand. It is not only the Seventh-day Adventists who are not comfortable with this stand but other people as well who find themselves involved in one way or another in the Seventh-day Adventist marriage functions. Other Christian groups in Gusii have found no reason to do away with the old system, which makes it all the more controversial. To combat the issue of immorality among her youth the Church should off-

do the same. This will solve the problem not only during wedding occasions but everywhere where the youth will be.

(iii) Influence on death rites.

Just like in initiation and marriage, the aspect of controversy in death is also a recent development. This has got to do with mourning, which was a very elaborate event among Abagusii. Apart from mourning, there are also other major changes that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has encouraged and contributed in bringing about but these have not raised as much tension as the issue of mourning.

Notable is the absence of the many rituals that were carried out when death occurred. The rituals were meant to cleanse the deceased's home of the evil forces associated with death. They were also believed to bring peace between the deceased and the living, particularly those of the affected family. These rituals, were given up very early among the Seventh-day Adventist adherents.

This was because of the Seventh-day

Adventist mission villages whose influence was felt even among those not putting up in them. In these villages, the adherents were discouraged from consulting omoraŋori. This meant there was no way they would get the ancestors message and fulfil their demands.<sup>44</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist adherents were also encouraged to give up the belief in the ancestors when they were introduced to the Seventh-day Adventist stand on death. Like other Christians, the Seventh-day Adventists hold that death was brought about by man's indulgence in sin. The dead are not lost forever and yet they have no control over the lives of the living. The dead are awaiting resurrection after which the righteous will enjoy communion with God under a perfect environment. The sinners will not share in this as they will be banished to external suffering.

Mourning during funerals was not discouraged in the Seventh-day Adventist Church till the 1970s. The Church began to show concern when it was realized that despite their understanding of death, the Seventh-day Adventist adherents were not behaving any different from

the traditionalists. The Church has not issued a directive to this effect but she has taken to discouraging her followers from mourning their dead the traditional way (p.52 )<sup>45</sup> It is not uncommon to find people stationed at strategic points during a funeral, with the responsibility of telling mourners not to cry. This has caused concern not just within the Church but outside as well. Death brings together friends and relatives some of whom may not be Seventh-day Adventists. They do not understand why the Seventh-day Adventist Church should intervene in funerals, especially now that in the past Abagusii attached much importance to death and other factors associated with it.

The Seventh-day Adventist believers who do not support mourning say it gives a poor image of the Church and causes unnecessary grief and sorrow for the bereaved.<sup>46</sup> Mourning sympathisers make the bereaved feel the loss even more. The destruction that accompanied traditional mourning should not be practised by Seventh-day Adventist adherents for it shows disrespect for blessings accorded man by his Creator.

The bulk of the Seventh-day Adventist adherents are of the opinion that the Church should not take an official stand as this will cause confusion at funerals which bring together many people of different understandings of death. Rather, people should be left to decide for themselves on how to behave at funerals. There are several reasons advanced for this idea.

Grief and sorrow are natural reaction towards loss of any kind, and in particular death. Restraining people from this natural reaction can only lead to suppressed emotions which is not healthy.<sup>47</sup> Allowing one to air one's grief and sorrow freely will go a long way towards helping the affected person overcome and accept the loss faster.

It is true that mourning sympathisers may revive and increase the bereaved's sorrow but this will also show that the loss is felt and shared by others.<sup>48</sup> The Church is encouraging material gifts for the bereaved but this is not as satisfying as the emotional sharing of the loss.

Another reason put forward is that of



the nature of death.<sup>49</sup> For example, sudden death is more shocking than the death of one who has been sick. A person who has been in pain for a long time may be considered to be more comfortable when dead. Whereas the loss will be felt, the death will be welcome for the relief it will bring the deceased and those responsible for him.

Mourning is therefore a sensitive issue among Abagusii, enhanced by the fact that it is a Seventh-day Adventist idea to stop people from crying, and also the fact that death in general is something that men cannot easily reconcile with. It calls for careful handling since it touches not only on the Seventh-day Adventists but the whole of the Gusii society. Perhaps it were better to leave people free to air their emotions according to the degree of their grief. A medical doctor's findings and summary on mourning should guide the Church on this issue: Grief over the death of a loved person is nature's way of attempting to heal the wound caused by the death. Every person who loses someone of special emotional significance to him needs to mourn. And society must play its role in a positive way to help people get over their loss.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the Seventh-day Adventist intervention in either starting or encouraging changes in initiation, marriage and death, changes would have still come about with time. The fact that Abagusii are now in closer touch with the outside world than in the past would have made some of these changes inevitable. The Seventh-day Adventists have been responsible for most of these changes, with education, urbanization and the changing times also playing a considerable role.

B: The influence of splits on the Seventh-day Adeventist Church in Gusii.

R.W. Schwarz has said that "Religious groups seem prone to fragmentation."<sup>51</sup> How true this is of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii is what we are going to find out. To arrive at this, we need to refer briefly to splits of protestant background in western Kenya. This is important because the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a protestant movement and our area of interest, Gusii, falls in western Kenya, which is the home of several splits. Despite this, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii has so far not experienced any splits. The Seventh-day

Adventist Church in her general history has however, not escaped splits. This makes it necessary for us to point out, again briefly some of the splits arising out of the Seventh-day Adventist Church both outside and inside Kenya. We shall then address ourselves to the situation in Gusii. Indeed, there have been cases of discontent and dissatisfaction within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii, but so far none of them has resulted in a split. Factors contributing to this stability and unity will therefore be discussed. Finally, we shall draw our attention to the areas where members and non-members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church feel changes ought to be effected, to make the Church more attractive and comfortable for her members and society as a whole.

(i) Splits of Protestant background in western Kenya.

Except for Legio Maria, which "is an almost unique example of a modern separation from Rome,"<sup>52</sup> and which is also "the biggest in size in East Africa and the largest in Africa,"<sup>53</sup> other splits in western Kenya are of protestant background. The causes of these splits are as

many as the groups. Since this is outside our study, we shall not dwell on these reasons. For our interest, it suffices to mention some of these splits, thus qualifying their presence in western Kenya.

Protestants in western Kenya include Anglicans, Quakers, Pentecostals, Salvation Army, Lutherans and the Seventh-day Adventists. Those with a large following among the Luo and Luhya have experienced splits. For example, The Church of Christ in Africa is a split from the Anglican Church.<sup>54</sup> This split has also been subjected to further fragmentation, the Holy Trinity Church in Africa. Other splits arising out of the Anglican Church include the Roho Movement and the Nomia Luo Mission.<sup>55</sup>

A number of spirit Churches found chiefly in western Kenya are believed to owe their origins to the coming of the Canadian Pentecostal Mission to Nyangori earlier this century. These include The African Church of the Holy Spirit; The African Israel Church, Nineveh, and the African Divine Church.<sup>56</sup> Kasiera in his study on Pentecostal Christianity in western Kenya attributed some of these spirit

Churches to the Quakers.<sup>57</sup>

It is not only in western Kenya that Protestant Churches have had splits, but in other parts of Kenya as well. In Ukambani, there is the African Brotherhood Church which is a break-away group from the African Inland Church.<sup>58</sup> There are also several splits in protestant Churches among the Kikuyu such as the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa.<sup>59</sup>

This wave of splits in protestant Churches has had no influence on the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii. Generally, Gusii as a whole has escaped splits, despite her geographical setting and the protestant background of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in other parts of the world and even in Central Kenya has, however, had splits, which we now consider.

(ii) Splits in the Seventh-day Adventist Church outside Gusii.

Schwarz has identified several splits in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Most of them have been based in the

United States of America, (USA). These are Messenger Party, Church of God (Adventist), Church of God (Seventh-day), Holy Flesh Movement, Mrs Rowen's Reform Group and the Shepherd's Rod. The Ballenger Group started in Ireland but Ballenger himself was an American Seventh-day Adventist Missionary working in Europe. The German Reform Movement was based in Germany. Sanctuary Awakening Fellowship, the most troublesome split there has ever been in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, had its origins in Australia and then spread its influence to the Far East and USA. Most of these did not last long and their challenge to the Seventh-day Adventist Church was, therefore, shortlived and minimal.<sup>60</sup> Their presence shows, however, that like many other Christian Churches, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has also had a fair share of splits.

The reasons behind the emergence of these splits involve factors such as questioning the authenticity of Ellen's doctrinal divergencies, seeking congregational autonomy and dissatisfaction with some of the Church's leaders and the "fallen state" of the Church.<sup>61</sup> So far, none of these groups seems to have had any influence in Kenya.

There is however a split of Seventh-day Adventist origins in Central Kenya, whose rise was precipitated by local conditions, without any foreign interference.

The Mount Kenya Seventh-day Church was registered on 30th December, 1974.<sup>62</sup> Events paving the way for this split started in the mid 1960s when a group of the Seventh-day Adventist members in central Kenya felt it was high time the white missionaries who dominated most of the local Church's pastoral and administration positions left. As this was the time when Kenya was encouraging africanisation now that she had gained her independence, the request for africanization of some of the key posts was granted. For example, Pastor F.K. Wangai was called from Chebwai in western Kenya where he was a mission director to serve as president of central Kenya field, a position that had always been in white hands.

This does not seem to have satisfied some of the Seventh-day Adventist members, particularly those at Karatina, Nyeri who wanted to break away completely from foreign control of Church affairs. They were seeking total independency,

in running the Church school at Karatina. The East African Union of the Seventh-day Adventists did not support the idea. This led to tension between the Union and the Karatina Church. The members in Karatina were divided over the issue, and this led to two camps, one supporting the union and the other opposing it. The latter group then went ahead and registered as the Mount Kenya Seventh-day Church, listing the Karatina Church school as their property. When the union leaders got to know about it discussions started but always ended in a deadlock. Eventually, both parties sought legal advice over the matter. The court proceedings dragged and in the meantime the splinter group continued to run the school. It was only in December 1984 that the case was finalised, when the splinter group gave up the claim over the ownership of the school.

Apart from the difference over the running of the school, the split also differed with the Seventh-day Adventist "proper" over certain points, to the point where they could not worship together. The split advocated for praying only when kneeling while the Seventh-day Adventists pray while standing, sitting or kneeling. They also baptised only in running



water , while the Seventh-day Adventists do it even in a baptistry in a church. Members of the split embrace when greeting and they also allow polygamy, smoking and drinking, factors that are not in line with the Seventh-day Adventist teachings.

The split group managed to have a following at Kitundu in Machakos, the only place they have penetrated in Kenya. Their number comprise mainly those who have been disfellowshipped from the Seventh-day Adventist Church for one reason or another. Some of the names associated with the split are Andrew Gathemia, George Mbdgwa and Mwangangi. At no time has the split had a following enough to threaten the stability and unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As of now it is a dying movement since they lost the school. They are also faced with leadership squabbles as well as financial difficulties. Some of their followers have drifted back to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. All these factors are seen as paving way for the eventual collapse of the split.

In the rest of Kenya, the Seventh-day Adventist Church continues to enjoy stability.

Even though protestants in Luoland have been very much hit by splits, the Seventh-day Adventist Church which started here and has its second stronghold here (after Gusii) has surprisingly kept off the splits. Backsliders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have joined splinter groups such as the Roho Movement but there has been no direct offshoot in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Luoland.<sup>63</sup>

E: The absence of splits in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii.

The fact that there has been no offshoot in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii does not mean that the Church has been free of elements of dissatisfaction among her members. There have been issues that have greatly threatened the unity of the Church but none of them has so far ended up as a split. These issues usually involve a small section of the Seventh-day Adventist membership. They have had to do with spiritualism, difference in the understanding of some Church doctrines; differences precipitated by age, and also those brought about by the questioning of some of the Church's administrative policies.

The seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii had its first threat to the Church's unity in the 1940s.<sup>64</sup> This was probably as a result of the revival, a movement that started in Rwanda in the late 1920s and swept through most of East Africa. The revivalists were in most cases Christians, who realised their own weaknesses and dedicated themselves to Christ. They referred to each other as brothers and sisters and formed a close-knit fellowship. They organised fellowship meetings where they confessed their weakness and praised God where they had been able to conquer temptations. They also read the Bible and sang hymns.<sup>65</sup> Those caught by this movement were said to be possessed by the Holy Spirit (Omcika) and came to be known as Abanvamoika, among the Seventh-day Adventists in Gusii.

Like other revivalists, they publicly confessed their sins and praised God for helping them conquer temptations. They also sang with emotion. The revival influence swept through most of Gusii such that there were revivalists in most of the Seventh-day Adventist churches. Since their practises were not in harmony with Seventh-day Adventist teachings, most of them were disfellowshipped. The movement seems to have

gradually declined, with most of its adherents coming back to the Seventh-day Adventist fold. Those who clung to the revival, though few, have since then continued to have a small following in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in all the locations in Gusii. Notable centres of the revival influence in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii are Riakworo, Manga, Keumbu, Nyabonge, Nyamira, Ogembo and parts of South Mugirango.

It is not only in the Seventh-day Adventist Church that the revival has claimed members. There are Catholics, Pentecostals and others who have identified with the revival. The important thing to note, however, is that revivalists are present in most of the protestant churches in East Africa and they still continue to belong to their original churches. They are not a split as such, they just feel a special relationship with Jesus. Revival has not broken away to form a separately organised church.<sup>66</sup>

Most of the Seventh-day Adventist members who are revivalists have been disfellowshipped because the Seventh-day Adventists do not recognise those filled with the spirit as genuine members

of her fold. Despite being cut off from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, many of them continue to attend the Seventh-day Adventist churches and actually identify themselves as Seventh-day Adventists. They however, tend to identify more with other brethren of the revival who though of different denominations have one factor in common "a special relationship with Jesus," Members of the revival believe that they have met Jesus and they have allowed him to control their lives fully.

Starting in the 1970s and through the 1980s the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been faced with a marked emphasis on righteousness by faith as a result of the teachings of Pastor E.H. Sequeira on the role of faith in salvation. Many have taken this to mean that works do not matter. This has greatly reduced the amount of offerings by some Church members, particularly in Majoge/Bassi areas.<sup>67</sup> They are however, being convinced by the Church leaders both at conference and union levels to incorporate both works and faith in their quest for salvation. This is what Sequeira also advocated, for he says:

In other words,

faith must manifest itself

in our lives otherwise we really do not have faith at all. So then, true faith is something dynamic, because it unites us with Christ and therefore must produce works, which works are simply the righteousness of Christ reproduced in the believer by the indwelling spirit of Christ.<sup>68</sup>

Those who have ignored the place of works in salvation have not as yet vowed out of the Church on their own accord, but some of them have been disfellowshipped. There are no signs of their forming a split as many of them are gradually getting to understand that both works and faith are essential elements in salvation. They are being won back into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>69</sup>

Before the issue of righteousness by faith, the issue that brought about divisions in the Church was that of diet. It is still a sensitive issue although it has lost prominence. It has, however, not been settled. It started in the late 1960s when educated Seventh-day Adventists started having more access to the writing of Ellen. Unfortunately, they did not grasp fully what she meant. (pp. 106-109).  
Reasons for this lack of proper

understanding include narrow reading. One would read just one book and regard it as the authority. As already noted the Seventh-day Adventists recommend but are not restrictive on diet.

Four major categories of the diet issue have been identified among the Seventh-day Adventist adherents in Gusii.<sup>70</sup> The elderly, most of whom were among the early converts into the Seventh-day Adventist Church consider the diet issue as a new development for in their time, the missionaries only discouraged beer, tobacco and sacrificial meat. The idea of being particular about diet is only characteristic of the adventurous youth. Most of these elderly people are in favour of a relaxed diet and recommend abstaining from beer because of its social evils. They also opt for better health by refraining from any food that a doctor might advise them against.

Another category is of an extreme nature. Made up of devout Seventh-day Adventists they consider abstaining from certain foods as a means of salvation. Not to live by the recommended diet is sin. Some of them have at one time

lived on a merely boiled vegetable diet.

A majority of them have not had a direct access to the writings of Ellen.

A third category where the majority of people falls can be termed as comprising of people "hanging in the middle way." They know there is something worthwhile in the recommended diet and at the same time they tend to question it. They refrain from certain foods just because they have been told or read that they are not good for one's health. They will occasionally partake of the "unhealthy" foodstuffs, with a certain degree of guilt.

The fourth category is composed of very few people who have a clear and proper understanding of what the diet issue is all about. They may be devout Seventh-day Adventists and be relaxed with diet which makes many people wonder whether the two are compatible. This category can be termed as the elite. Because of their educational background, they have had access to the writings of Ellen. They not only question some teachings, but they go further and search the truth for themselves. Their understanding stands for the truth, despite the fact that they are misunderstood by those not as well informed on the diet issue.



These various categories have therefore, brought about internal differences, within the Church but again no split has come up as a result of the diet issue. The Church should correct the impression that the diet issue is a restriction, a compulsory observance among the Seventh-day Adventists. This will help members to understand and interact with each other freely, and at the same time give the general public a proper understanding of what the diet issue involves in the Seventh-day Adventist teachings.

Another area where differences have arisen within the Seventh-day Adventist Church is over bridewealth. As already noted there are two camps, one in favour of, and another one against the exorbitant bridewealth demands prevailing among the Seventh-day Adventists, particularly those of the upper social class. The fact that the Church has not issued an official limitation of bridewealth allows room for the differences in that nobody feels he is going against the Church. The Church has not seen the need for issuing their stand because as Christians her members are expected to reach agreements amicably. This however, is not enough for the Church is losing the many wedding ceremonies it is expected to

conduct either because the groom cannot meet the bridewealth as cited by the brides father or because the couple decide to go ahead and get married anyway as involving their parents would lead to embarrassment and frustrations since chances of disagreeing over bridewealth are high. The long time spent settling the bridewealth differences also interferes with the couples plans, so to avoid this they may be forced to make their own arrangements and get married. If the Church is to avoid brandishing her youth as rebels then it had better intervene to give a directive on bridewealth.

Setting a uniform figure on the amount of bridewealth among its members would be the most convenient approach. As some people are capable of giving more, the groom and his parents should be allowed to exceed the set figure if they so wish. Another alternative would be to invite a Church official, for example the Church elder, to be present during bridewealth negotiations. His should be a passive role but where the two parties do not agree he should come in in steering them to arrive at a figure that is acceptable to both. Also, a groom who is not able to meet the bridewealth at the time of marriage should be

allowed to go ahead and get married. He can give the bridewealth at the time he is able. This however, calls for great responsibility on the part of the groom who has to win the confidence of his bride's parents.

Differences have also arisen over the administration of the conference. While the democratic approach to elections as advanced by the Seventh-day Adventist principles is good enough, many Seventh-day Adventists are of the opinion that this has not always been adhered to particularly at conference level, such that a certain leader is not fully recognized and accepted by all members. It is believed that this greatly contributed in bringing about the lack of cooperation from members of Rikindo in Majoge. In 1984, they did not send their reports to the conference because they felt they were not well represented at conference level and that Church workers from Majoge were being victimised through frequent transfers from the conference to places of less prestige.<sup>71</sup> The situation, as of early 1985, was said to be calm in that changes had been promised in the conference leadership and the truth with regard to some of the transfers had come up, that they were requested by the

individuals, who coincidentally happened to be from Majoge.<sup>72</sup>

The problem had its roots in 1982 when the conference executive was dissolved.<sup>73</sup> The accusations labelled against them included, embezzlement of conference funds, declining tithes and offerings, antagonism amongst the executive body, loans and advances given without committee action, expenditure without committee authorization, unnecessary overspending in the construction of a road in Maasai, spending money on a nursery school with low enrolment, which started without knowledge of the committee. But these accusations were in nearly every case refuted in the audit report but all the same the administration was dissolved, with four members being suspended, namely Pastor Stephen Maturi, Executive Director; Timothy Atinda, Treasurer; Jeremiah Obwoye, Auditor and Zachariah Omagwa Education Director. This caused misunderstanding for why was it that only the four were suspended and yet other officials who were part of the administration, continued to function. Apart from causing tension in the Church itself, the crisis captured wide attention. According to the suspended executive director, "actually it-

(crisis) has brought the Church into disrepute and it will be difficult to present a united front to the public."

The crisis caused division in the Church, with some people supporting the dissolved administration and others supporting the new. The former group advocated that despite their mistakes, the former officials were not dismissed fairly. Apart from their being given no say to defend themselves, those leading in the accusations did not form a quorum and the new committee was not constitutionally elected, as the members did not have a say in choosing their representatives. They therefore considered that the new leadership was imposed on them. The latter group were ready for a change now that they believed their former leaders had betrayed them. This was one time when the Church was subjected to strife, tension and bickerings. This was a fertile situation for a split but it did not materialize. Credit goes to the Church leadership both at union and local level, for monitoring the situation carefully. Meetings were held and letters were dispatched and read in all the churches in Gusii. They gave spiritual counsel with emphasis on unity. This way, the sensitive

situation was brought under control. There are still minor differences within the Church, but these are expected of any institution. They pose no threat to the unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii has thus been beset by issues that would very easily have led to splits but none has occurred so far, and none are foreseen in the near future, because if the Church has managed to contain the situation in the past, there is reason to believe that she will continue to do so, now that the members very much support unity.

These challenges are only a healthy aspect for without them, the Church would not realize some of its mistakes and have them rectified. These threats to the Church's stability and unity therefore call for a better defined church system so as to satisfy her members.

It is important to point out that there are members within the Church who give extreme emphasis to some Seventh-day Adventist doctrines and can be easily classified as fanatics but they still belong to the Seventh-day Adventist fold

and are recognized so. One such group is opposed to materialism. They stress that Christ's return is imminent so more effort should be put into preparing oneself and others for Christ's coming. Because of the urgency of the matter, things like marriage, and permanent buildings should be put off. Like the more serious issues, no split is expected of such groupings.

It is important that we now investigate the the reasons that have contributed to the stability and unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii despite the presence of matters that have led to splits in other places.

(iv) Factors contributing to the unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii.

The unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii can be attributed to certain characteristics of Abagusii themselves, as well as those of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Another factor is the general lack of splits in Gusii as a whole.

Abagusii, like most other African societies were strict in their religion. The coming of the

white man disrupted their way of life and introduced them to a new religion. The Seventh-day Adventist adherents soon found out that the Seventh-day Adventist teachings held the same restrictiveness as their traditional religion. Though these were two different religions, the strictness of both was uniform, thus accommodating and satisfying the role of religion in the lives of Abagusii.<sup>74</sup>

Conservatism has played a role in maintaining unity within the Seventh-day Adventist church in Gusii.<sup>75</sup> This was clearly illustrated in the relationship of Abagusii with their neighbours before the coming of the white man. There was little contact between Abagusii and her neighbours namely, Luo, Kipsigis and Maasai. Despite these minimal contacts, Abagusii hardly borrowed or adopted any new ideas from the foreigners. This was further reflected in their initial response to the white man and the Seventh-day Adventist missionary in particular. Gradually, the Seventh-day Adventist Church laid a firm foundation in Gusii. Once again conservatism came in, in that those in the Seventh-day Adventist Church are not willing to accept teachings of other denominations. As already pointed out, the



Seventh-day Adventist backsliders still continue to identify themselves as Seventh-day Adventists even though their names may not appear in the church's record book

In line with their traditional respect for authority, Abagusii have displayed respect for Church authority. They would rather settle a dispute amicably than accommodate disunity.<sup>76</sup>

Unlike their Luhya and Luo westerly counterparts, Abagusii were not very much involved in Kenya's struggle for independence. Apart from the 1905 and 1908 uprisings against the white man, Abagusii, particularly those belonging to the Seventh-day Adventist Church hardly had any confrontation with the white man. This lack of confrontation did not offer room for seeking independence. Splits, particularly those seeking independence have been closely related to political aspirations and frustrations,<sup>77</sup> and these were generally lacking in Gusii. The situation was different among the Kikuyu of Central Kenya who were more exposed to the Europeans. In the early 1920s, because of the continual pressure by the white missionaries to alienate the land and force them to work for the settlers while the reserves

were overcrowded, the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) a political movement came into being. Out of it two separatist churches were formed namely, Kikuyu Orthodox Church and The Kikuyu Independent Pentecostal Church.<sup>78</sup> The Ivory Coast is another example where political aspirations led to the success of a splinter group, led by the prophet Harris. Even though they had been virtually untouched by Christian teachings when Harris reached them, their being exposed to pressures exerted by French colonialism, which threatened their culture, self esteem and whole future, made them accept Harris easily.<sup>79</sup>

Many splits in Christian churches have come up as a result of missionary interference in African cultural practises. For example, among the Yoruba in West Africa, the United Africa Methodist Church was formed as a revolt against mission insistence on monogamy.<sup>80</sup> This cultural interference by missionaries has not been an issue in the Seventh-day Adventist history in Gusii. Cultural changes have come about but these as already noted have been brought about by Abagusii Seventh-day Adventist adherents themselves, with the time factor playing a crucial role. Where missionaries advocated for change they took time.

For example, many early converts willingly gave up their first wives in order to be baptised. They were not forced, it was simply a suggestion put forward and time was allowed for decision making.<sup>81</sup>

Democracy as upheld in the Seventh-day Adventist Church elections has also contributed to the unity of the Church in Gusii. The lay members are represented even in the election of the General Conference officials. At the local Church level, the short terms of office mean that a leader does not face the negative factors of being in office for too long. Being in office for too long can cause resentment of the leader by the members. A leader who stays in office for too long may tend to act as if the office was something personal. This creates tension between the leader and the members. In this case of short terms of office, a leader who proves incapable is not returned to office, thus putting off a chance of feelings of dissatisfaction from the members.<sup>82</sup>

Finance is one sensitive issue that has contributed towards splits not only in churches but in other institutions as well. The Seventh-day

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Adventist Church avoids this problem by having clearly defined channels of accounting for and spending the money, as already pointed out under church finance. The quarterly reports from the local Church to the General Conference discourage bickerings over money. The salaries accorded Church workers are believed to be small but the fringe benefits accorded them make up for this. Accommodation for Church workers is always catered for either through provision of houses or adequate house allowance. The Church also caters for seventy-five per cent of the workers medical expenses and forty per cent education allowance for worker's children attending colleges and other institutions of higher learning. There is a travel allowance for the executive officers which is also a privilege of other workers on special occasions such as when one is on long distant official duties. Contributions of the workers to the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) are met by the Church. A recent development is that of the Church meeting workers tax duties such as income tax. With this kind of treatment, the workers are generally content. 83

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has also got some unifying factors which have contributed

to the unity of the Church. One of them as already noted is the annual camp meeting, which brings many people together. Another is the sabbath school which unites members worldwide.<sup>84</sup>

Howard E. Rampton report on sabbath school offering illustrates how the worldwide offerings are used.

Seventy five per cent of the offering (\$1,275,348) will become an important part of the Church budget which is used to support work in all divisions of the world. The special project portion, twenty five per cent will go to the South American Division for three special projects: (1) The opening of medical missionary work in South Cruz, Bolivia; (2) Modernisation and enlargement of the Belgranollinic in Buenos Aires Argentina; and (3) a new academy for Southern Argentina. The 431,175 members of the South American Division are most grateful to the world sabbath school family for this assistance.<sup>85</sup>

The granting of conferences status to Abagusii in 1981 has made the Seventh-day

Adventists feel special and honoured. This has to be upheld and maintained by all means, so that the good name of the Church is not spoiled.

The general lack of splits in Gusii as a whole has also contributed to the unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church there. This can be attributed to the fact that earlier on, the Christian field was shared between the Catholics and the Seventh-day Adventists. The former's tradition does not present favourable ground for independency, as they believe that their's is the only mission.<sup>86</sup> There is also a big gap between clergy and laity resulting in authoritarianism. This is being relaxed now, with the clergy and laity interacting more freely. Generally, there have been few splits arising out of the Catholic Church. The Legio Maria split in neighbouring Luoland has not had any significant following in Gusii for once again conservatism has prevailed in that Abagusii have always been cautious on adopting any ideas from foreigners. This was enhanced by the presence of the Seventh-day Adventists whose conservative nature also disqualified the occurrence of splits.

The late arrival of the other protestants

in Gusii has also contributed to lack of splits in that the Lutherans, Pentecostals and Quakers did not have a large following in Gusii, which they found already divided up between the conservative Catholics and Seventh-day Adventists. More splits have occurred among Protestants than among Catholics not only in Europe but also in several parts of Africa where there was a multiplication of Protestant missions close together.<sup>87</sup> These were apparently absent in Gusii.

Whether the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii will experience splits in future is something one cannot predict. The unity, however, which the Church has maintained so far, amid issues that have led to splits elsewhere, puts chances of splits at a low ebb.

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4. Maturi, interview, Celement Nyandara interview.
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39. Ogeto, interview.
40. Nyantika, interview.
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42. Feressa Oroko, interview Rietago-Borabu  
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43. Kemunto, interview. Oroko, interview.
44. Jacob Atinda, interview Manga, Kitutu  
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## CONCLUSION

Several problems were posed at the beginning of this study on the Seventh-day Adventists Church in Gusii. In attempting to find answers to them we have noticed that some of the Seventh-day Adventists do not have a proper and clear understanding of their background and the nature of some of their beliefs. This has led to internal differences in the Church. It has also contributed to the suspicion the Seventh-day Adventists are often accorded by non-Seventh-day Adventists. The challenge is therefore left to the Seventh-day Adventists, particularly the leaders and the more enlightened to educate their members so that they understand themselves and each other better. This will make it easier for others, not only to understand but also to appreciate them.

The Seventh-day Adventists have been accused of adopting a "holier than thou" attitude when they compare themselves with other Christians, particularly the Catholics. What they present are only differences in outlook when it comes to some issues such as sabbath observance and diet. The differences do not guarantee that any of them is better than the other.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kenya has its stronghold in Nyanza Province, and in particular Gusii district. It owes its growth and unity to factors such as the traditions of Abagusii, the nature of the Seventh-day Adventist teachings, the fact that the Seventh-day Adventists in Gusii were earlier on exposed to competition from the Catholics alone over whom they had an upper hand, and the late arrival of other protestant missions in Gusii.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has not penetrated deeply into the rest of Kenya because the other regions have also got their historically oriented Christian missions. While Abagusii missionary efforts in spreading the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kenya have been forthcoming, more can still be done, in the same lines it has been done in Gusii. In Gusii, however, pastoral work is seen to be taking a commercial turn, with many youth opting to be pastors not because they genuinely feel a call to evangelism, but because they consider it as another job out of which they are assured of a means of survival. Many young pastors, therefore, do not have the confidence of their congregations and this lowers the morale of the latter. More genuine and more committed



pastors will improve the image of the Church in Gusii, and perhaps in so going, make way for further missionary enterprise outside Gusii.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii has so far escaped splits but this does not mean they will not occur in future. The Church's internal differences seem to increase and <sup>with</sup> be more pronounced with time. This therefore calls for vigilance if splits are to be avoided. This does not imply that splits are something negative. It is simply calling on the Church to identify likely causes of conflicts, analyse them and have them remedied. This will create a healthy situation in the Church. For example, in sensitive issues such as bridewealth the Church needs to step in more forcefully so as to erase the public impression that the Seventh-day Adventists are a materialistic lot. It is mainly Seventh-day Adventists of the upper social class who are involved in exorbitant bridewealth demands leading to frustrations and embarrassment. It is being seen as a practice common to Seventh-day Adventists and consequently causing many to wonder as to whether the Church encourages exorbitant bridewealth demands and their side effects.

Apart from education, urbanisation and

other modern developments, the Seventh-day Adventist teachings have contributed to the more outgoing approach of the Seventh-day Adventists in Gusii. They have initiated and participated in the giving up of some traditional practices, unlike the other Christians and particularly the Catholics. Some of these factors however pose a threat to the Church. For example, the elite have voiced the desire for more African involvement at higher levels of administration such as the General Conference. It is argued that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a large following in Africa and thus needs more direct representation. The elite have also come up with the idea that women need to be ordained as pastors, a practice that is absent in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as women form the bulk of the Seventh-day Adventist fraternity.

Despite the fact that the Seventh-day Adventists in Gusii are faithful in Church offerings, it is only a small fraction of these offerings that is utilized at local level. Many church buildings and schools are in dire need of funds for improving old or erecting new buildings. The funds are not easily available because such funds are raised as special offerings,

on top of the usual offerings, thus burdening the ordinary member quite far. Attractive church and school buildings can also serve as a witness tool, thus add more members to the Seventh-day Adventist fold.

Whereas democracy as upheld in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is commendable, there are instances when it has not been adhered to. This has caused tension and questioning as to the honesty and integrity of those electing and elected into office. Politics of a secular nature should not have a place in the Church.

This study has concentrated on the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gusii. Further research on the Church in other parts of Kenya such as Central Kenya and the Rift Valley will help throw light on the Seventh-day Adventist influence in areas where other denominations are more outstanding.

Our study has had an approach that was rural-oriented. Research on the Seventh-day Adventist Church in an urban setting, for example in Nairobi will highlight on Adventism in an African urban setting.

More details on the Church's role in development at a national level, will contribute to the fact that despite its lack of publicity the Seventh-day Adventist Church is fully involved in development; just like other more publicised denominations, for example the Catholics.

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C: Interviewees

1. Amayo, G.N.
2. Ateka, Alfeo
3. Atinda, Yakobo
4. Atinda, Tmothy
5. Isoe, Moraa
6. Kemunto, Pacifica
7. Kemunto, Margaret
8. Kyale, J.N.
9. Magaki, Rachel
10. Masamo, Morris
11. Matini, Zablon
12. Maturi, Stephen
13. Mogoi, Maritha
14. Momanyi, Mican
15. Moraa, Rose
16. Moseti, Mishel
17. Motuka, Christopher
18. Nyakundi, Abel
19. Nyamoita, Gomeri
20. Nyamwaya, David
21. Nyandara, Clement
22. Nyanduko, Peres
23. Nyankanga, Mzee
24. Nyansera, Francis
25. Nyantika, Charles

26. Nyoero, Yunes
27. Ogembo, Justus
28. Ogeto, Nathan
29. Omagwa, Zachariah
30. Oroko, Naftali
31. Oroko, Teresa
32. Rabuko
33. Ratandi, Fred
34. Wangai, Eunice.

Questionnaires

Of more than 200 distributed 68 were received back.



13. Do you consume any of these two beverages, that is coffee and tea?

14. Which food domestic animals do you keep?

15. Why do you keep them?

16. How has Christianity influenced your attitude towards Gusii cultural values, for example, Initiation rites?

Marriage rites

Death rites

17. What role is the Seventh-day Adventist Church playing towards national development in your location (schools, dispensaries, etc)?

18. Why do you think the Seventh-day Adventist Church has its stronghold among Abagusii, as compared to the rest of Kenya?

19. Are there any splits in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

20. If so (No. 19), Why

21. If not (No. 19) do you foresee any split?

Why

22. Are there any changes you would like to see taking place in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?