



DACB News Link

For the Friends of the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*

The *DACB*: A Brief History

*Introductory Issue
December 2002*

As a boy growing up in Ethiopia, Jonathan Bank was impressed by the powerful ministry of indigenous evangelists whose zeal for the Lord's work never slacked as they criss-crossed the country, carrying the Gospel to unreached peoples. Later, during his studies, he noticed that there were no records of the work of these evangelists in western histories of Christianity. Concerned by this absence, he formulated a vision for an "International Dictionary of



Non-Western Christian Biography. Volume I: Africa." The vision took greater shape in 1995 thanks to a consultation that took place at the Overseas Ministries Study Center in New Haven, Connecticut. Support in form of a grant from the Pew Charitable

Trusts made the consultation possible.
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From the Director

The *DACB* has come a long way since its modest beginning eight years ago, when it was simply an inchoate dream! Now, as it approaches its ninth year, it is a gratifyingly collaborative enterprise, involving some fifty participating institutions and scores of scholars across Africa and beyond. It is also a growing and increasingly significant repository of African Christian biographies spanning two millennia of Christian history on that continent. Because of its non-proprietary, digital nature, these stories are available and accessible on the Web or on CD-ROM, and may be freely reproduced to supplement existing textbooks and to serve the needs of church historians. It is gratifying to see the multi-lingual vision of the enterprise beginning to materialize, with a trickle of French-language stories already available, and prospects of a three-year project to translate the entire Dictionary into Arabic on the near horizon.

The *DACB* has come a long way, but there is still a long way to go. We look forward to

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DACB Trip to Paris and Brussels

In October, *DACB* Project Manager Michèle Sigg traveled to Paris and Brussels to promote the *DACB* and establish contacts for Francophone Africa. She was accompanied by Ms. Eugenia Dilg, OMSC Business Manager.

She met with African pastors and leaders in the Community of African Churches in France (CEAF)—growing churches in contrast to the traditional congregations which continue to shrink throughout Europe.

Visits to the archives of the former Paris Evangelical Mission Society (SMEP) in Paris and those of the Faculté Universi-

taire de Théologie Protestante (PRODOC) in Brussels led to discussions of collaboration between the *DACB* and these institutions which have valuable documents for research on African and missionary subjects. Often these same documents have been destroyed in Africa due to war or lack of appropriate facilities.

Valuable contacts were also made at the Catholic Institute in Paris and the Catholic University in Louvain (Belgium) as well as with the Francophone Ecumenical Missiology Association, active throughout the Francophone world.

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ble. As part of the “Scholars’ Initiative for Studies in Mission and International Christianity” (SISMIC) this consultation brought together African scholars and western specialists in the field of African studies, who reviewed the scholarship in the fields of missions and world Christianity. The outcome was the official announcement of the creation of a **Dictionary of African Christian Biography**. Jonathan Bonk, then professor of Global Christian Studies at Providence College and Seminary, Otterburne, Manitoba, Canada, was appointed to coordinate the project. He brought the vision with him when he moved to the Overseas Ministries Study Center as associate director in 1998. The project was initially carried out with the help of volunteers in a small office in the basement of OMSC. In June 2000, the trustees authorized the hiring of a part-time assistant and in October 2000, Michèle Sigg joined the staff. She now serves as Webmaster and manager of the project’s day-to-day operations.

Since 1999 the director has made four trips to Africa which have taken him to Kenya (1999), Ethiopia (2000), Tanzania and Zambia (2001), and Ghana (2002). Funding became available in October 2001 thanks to a Trinity

Foundation grant that made it possible to open the first Africa office, in Lusaka, Zambia at Justo Mwale College, under the direction of Dr. Jurie Van Wyck. In 2002, a second office opened at the A k r o f i -



Christaller Memorial Centre for Mission Research in Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana, which is directed by Dr. Kwame Bediako, a *DACB* Advisory Council member.

DACB People: 2002–03 Project Luke Fellows

James Lomole Simeon Muna, Esq.

Lomole Simeon, a lawyer from the Sudan, is an expert in law and church reconciliation. He is the Chancellor of the Episcopal Diocese of Khartoum and consultant and legal advisor to the Archbishop of Sudan. An outspoken critic of the persecution of Christians in his country, he had to flee and came to the United States as a refugee. He looks forward to the day he will be reunited with his family, now waiting for their exit visas from the Sudan.



Rev. Dr. David John Usoro

David Usoro is president of the Missionaries’ Assembly International, an African Independent Church, director of David Usoro Global Outreach (DUGO), and proprietor of Dagin Nursery and Primary School in Ikot Ekpene, Nigeria.

His wife Regina manages the school which trains children of missionaries and church leaders but also has a ministry to orphans and refugees. The Usoros have two sons, Godspower (8) and Godwin (3).



DACB Story: Apolo Kivebulaya (c. 1864 to 1933)

Yossa Way

Apolo, a Ugandan missionary, was considered the principal pioneer of the Anglican church in the Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

Before becoming a Christian, Apolo was a Muslim soldier antagonistic to Christians. He was also an avid hemp smoker. During his military service, he deserted and fled to Ankole where he joined the Protestants (Anglicans). He became a Christian after reading the Gospel of Matthew.

Apolo left Uganda in December 1896 and walked over the Rwenzori mountains. He crossed the river Semliki and walked fifty miles through the forest to Boga, taking only his Bible and his hoe. He carried his hoe so that he could work with his hands and feed himself.

When Apolo preached the gospel in Boga, some of the people became Christians, but the majority, including Chief Tabaro, were offended by his preaching, because it was against traditional practices, especially polygamy and the drinking of alcohol. As a result, Chief Tabaro forbade the Christians to build a church and ordered them not to give Apolo any food, but instead to let him die of hunger or be driven away. But that did not discourage this servant of God.

In 1898 the chief's sister who lived in Apolo's household died by accidentally falling onto a spear that had been carelessly left in the tall grasses at a building site. Apolo was blamed for her death and was locked up, beaten, and then sent to Uganda to be tried. There he had a dream

which greatly helped him in his spiritual life.

When Apolo was released, Chief Tabaro asked him to return to Boga. There the chief became a Christian and a close friend of Apolo.

Apolo was ordained a deacon on December 21, 1900, in Toro and then a priest in June 1903, in the Namirembe Cathedral. He took the Gospel to the inhabitants of the forest: the Walese, the Wanyali, and the Wambutu (the latter are pygmies). Apolo went among these peoples as a friend, eating their food and sleeping in their houses. He baptized pygmies for the first time in 1932.

Apolo died May 30, 1933, at Boga, his mission field. Contrary to tradition, he was buried with his head toward the west (not the east) at his request. In doing so, his desire was to indicate that the Gospel needed to be taken to the western part of the country.

Thanks to his legacy, the Anglican Church is now one of the great churches in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Rev. Yossa Way, a 2001–02 Project Luke Fellow, is Professor of Theology at the Institut Supérieur Théologique Anglican, a DACB Participating Institution in Bunia, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For the complete article and the bibliography, please visit the DACB Web site at www.DACB.org.

Upcoming Trip

In 2003 Project Director Jonathan Bonk will make a DACB-related trip to Nigeria where coordinators at the universities of Ibadan, Calabar, and Port Harcourt are arranging meetings and visits with key scholars and church leaders. He will be in Nigeria from January 30 to February 21.

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the day when other African research centers, university faculties, and seminaries will join Justo Mwale College in Zambia and the Akrofi-Christaller Centre in Ghana as centers of story-gathering activity to ensure that the project in its English, French, Swahili, Portuguese, and Arabic manifestations continues to grow and evolve as a thoroughly African enterprise.

I hope that you enjoy this inaugural newsletter, produced by Michèle Sigg, the DACB Project Manager, and that you will visit our Web site. We welcome your questions and suggestions!

Your questions and suggestions are welcome! Write to us at DACB@OMSC.org or use the address on the back.

DACB News Highlights

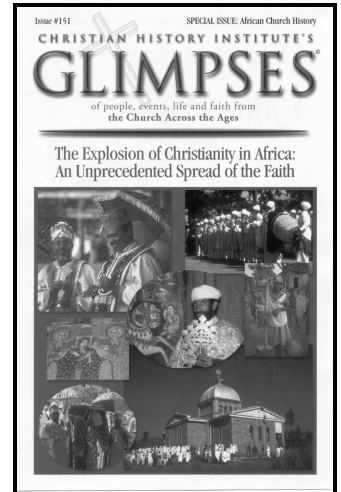
- *DACB* Project Manager Michèle Sigg just returned from a trip to Paris and Brussels to promote the dictionary. Stories in French have already begun to arrive for inclusion in the *DACB* as a result of the contacts made on this trip.



- In 2002 *DACB* established a second Africa office at the Akrofi-Christaller Centre for Mission Research in Ghana, a center ideally positioned to network for the *DACB* as a regional crossroads for many ministries, institutions, and churches. On December 5 the Centre held its first “*DACB* working session” for writers and researchers in the region.
- Plans to open an Arabic translation office are

progressing. James Lomole Simeon Muna, Esq., is the *DACB* Arabic Language Coordinator, in residence this year at OMSC as a Project Luke Fellow.

- The Christian History Institute published two church bulletin inserts on the *DACB*, one highlighting the recent growth of Christianity in Africa and the second on Samuel Ajayi Crowther. For information about receiving *Glimpses* in your church, contact the Institute at this address: glimpses@chinstitute.org.
- For the past three months, the *DACB* Web site has averaged 514 hits (page views) per day.
- The *DACB* Web site has been redesigned for ease of access. With a new home page and logo, the Web site is now more user-friendly.



How you can support the work of the DACB:

- Sign up online for the free *DACB* newsletter.
- Tell colleagues and anyone with a potential interest about the *DACB*.
- Support the *DACB* financially.
- Become a Participating Institution (institutions in Africa) or an Affiliated Research Institution (institutions in Europe with significant archives of interest to *DACB*-related researchers).
- Use the *DACB* by incorporating parts of the website or selected information into your training programs.
- Give us your feedback and recommendations by letter or email on ways to improve the *DACB*.



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