



DACB News Link

For Friends of the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*

Issue No. 5, Fall 2006

Workshop in DR Congo: A Working Model

From October 31 to November 5, 2005, Rev. Fohle Lygunda, DACB regional coordinator for Francophone Africa, led a DACB training workshop in Kinshasa, DR Congo, with Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest, who taught the units on oral history. This was the first of three workshops in Central Africa, the other two being held in Bangui, Central African Republic, and in Brazzaville, Congo, in June of 2006. In Kinshasa, thirty-seven individuals, mostly from Democratic Republic of Congo, belonging to mainline Protestant denominations, several indigenous churches, and the Roman Catholic Church, participated in this intensive program which culminated in the production of biographies for the DACB—or *DIBICA* as it is called in French.

Having just returned from a year at OMSC where he was a Project Luke scholar writing biographies for the DACB, Rev. Lygunda had first-hand knowledge of the seminar content and handpicked the participants he knew would benefit most from the training. At the outset of the workshop each person received a folder with seminar materials



and the DACB *Instructional Manual for Researchers and Writers*.

Rev. Lygunda introduced the DACB vision using a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted the main points of the article "Ecclesiastical Cartography and the Invisible Continent," by project director Jonathan Bonk (*International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, October 2004; also see www.dacb.org/xnmaps.html). Participants learned how to design and carry out an oral history project and acquired the basic skills for researching, writing, and documenting the biographies of local church pioneers. The pace was dynamic, each day starting at 8:30 a.m. with prayer and a devotional time, and ending at 5:00 p.m.

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A letter from Dr. Jonathan Bonk, founding director of the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*

Dear Friend of the Dictionary:

How is the DACB supported? This is both a recurring question and an ongoing challenge!

From being scarcely more than an idea ten years ago to becoming the most comprehensive, non-proprietary reliable biographical tool of its kind today, the DACB has received support from a variety of sources:

- **individual donors** who contribute modestly but regularly each month, helping to cover the cost of ongoing operations in the DACB office;
- **one-time gifts from mission and academic organizations** that made it possible to hire a part-time project manager (Michèle Sigg) to get the project up and running in 2000;
- **unexpected contributions** that often arrive just in time to cover the costs of travel and medical insurance for Project Luke fellows or the publication and distribution of printed materials, instructional manuals, and CD-ROMs for African participating institutions;
- **modest occasional foundation support** to cover the modest costs associated with annual oral history workshops for professors, students, and church leaders in Congo, Kenya, Zambia, and Mozambique.

Such support is supplemented by the time and energy of numerous volunteers in Africa, and by provision in the OMSC budget to cover the cost of operating an office (with one three-quarter-time project manager) and contingencies.

Our priority now is to find a way to ensure that all of the stories—more than two million words in all—become available in the five languages most widely used in African centers of theological and historical learning: English, French, Portuguese, Swahili, and Arabic. I am using this newsletter to inform you of two initiatives and to invite your support.

Good News for the DACB!

In October 2006, an e-mail letter arrived in the DACB office from J. C. Miller, director of the Editorial Content Management department at Encyclopedia Britannica, informing us that one of our articles on Alexis Kagame of Rwanda (reprinted from Norbert Brockman's *An African Biographical Dictionary*, ABC-CLIO, 1994) had been approved as a Britannica iGuide site. Miller explained, "...for most of our topics, we identify and screen other Web sites to

supplement our own content. These Web sites, called iGuide sites, are then presented as recommended resources for our online readers. Our reason for doing this is that we realize that other sites, like yours, also offer high quality content and we want to share that with our members."* This is indeed an encouraging sign of the DACB's growing recognition in the world of online reference tools.

The DACB database continues to expand,
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2005-2006 Project Luke Scholars from Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Uganda



Dr. Dirshaye Menberu, the first woman to receive a Project Luke fellowship, grew up in Debre Markos, in the Gojjam Province in Ethiopia, in a family deeply entrenched in the traditions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Troubled by the discrepancies between what she understood to be the content of the Christian faith and the way it was practiced, she began asking disturbing questions. Around 1977 she began having unsettling dreams in which she

saw a man she believed was Jesus. In 1979, as a teacher under the Communist regime (the Dergue, 1974–1991) which outlawed the practice of religion, she had to attend a monthlong program to indoctrinate her in the basic tenets of Marxism. There she read the Marxist Manifesto and decided she was an atheist. But after reading a book that attempted to prove that Jesus had never lived, she became angry at the absurdity of the idea that this nonexistent Jesus could so shape history that the calendar revolved around the year of his birth! In her anger and disappointment, she sought out a woman who began to bring her Christian books and tracts and eventually introduced her to someone who could actually answer her questions. Finally, Dirshaye gave her life to Christ in 1983 and asked to be baptized – which had to be done secretly in Babo Gaya, a missionary residence forty miles from Addis Ababa. After retiring from her position as a chemistry professor in March 2000, she was drawn to the work of the *DACB* while studying theology (August 2000–June 2002) at the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology (EGST), a *DACB* participating institution in Addis Ababa. Dirshaye and her husband Agonafer, a leader in the Guenet Church in Addis Ababa, have three children named Elelta (33), Elias (31), and Mekonnen (26).

Dr. Otitodirichukwu Protus Kemdirim was born into a devout Catholic family in Amuzi, Ahiazu-Mbaise, L.G.A., in Nigeria. He studied theology at the Catholic seminary, then went on to get a Ph.D. in religion at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He was then appointed a full-time lecturer at the University of Port Harcourt while also teaching part-time at the Catholic Institute of West Africa.



Formerly he was secretary general of the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN) and editor-in-chief of *The Nigerian Journal of Theology*. His hobby is to referee soccer. Protus first heard about the *DACB* in 2001 during a conference in South Africa and immediately contacted Dr. Bonk upon his return to Nigeria to ask how he could be involved. Protus hosted Dr. Bonk during his 2003 trip to Nigeria for the *DACB*. He and his wife Marie Nkechi, a deputy bank manager, have three children: Emmanuel (12), Chinonye (9), and David (7).

Rev. Dr. Christopher Byaruhanga

was born in Bulima village in the present-day Masindi district in Uganda. Even though his parents were both “Christian,” his mother had a conversion experience when Christopher was very young. When troubles in the family jeopardized his school attendance, Christopher was given a scholarship that paid for his studies through high school. After he became chairman of the Uganda Scripture Union in high school,



his mother challenged him to think more deeply about his Christian commitment and, as a result, Christopher was converted. He began studies at Bishop Tucker Theological Seminary (an Anglican institution) in 1976. Christopher’s final call to church ministry was a result of his desire to bring young people to the knowledge of Christ as their Lord and Savior. In his second year of seminary, Christopher was devastated by his mother’s sudden death, which left him bereft and in dire financial need. In 1980 he took his first job as school chaplain and headmaster at the age of twenty-four. After further theological studies from 1982 to 1985, he held another chaplaincy position for two years. The bishop then appointed him an administrator in the Anglican Church of Uganda. In 1992 Christopher came to the United States for a master’s program but went on to do a Th.D., inspired by a professor who also raised the money for his tuition. In 1997 the archbishop of Uganda asked Christopher to teach at Bishop Tucker Theological College—in the process of becoming Uganda Christian University—when he returned from the U.S. Christopher is now associate professor and dean of the faculty of Education, Arts, and Sciences at UCU. During Dr. Bonk’s trip to Uganda in 2001, Christopher heard about the *DACB*, and his vice-chancellor later asked him to take on the leadership of the project at the university. Christopher and his wife Christine, an archivist at UCU, have three children: Dan (24), Dixon (19), and Dianah (17).

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Participants were required to attend all sessions—which included group work and actually writing biographies—in order to receive the certificate for the seminar. They also signed a promise to contribute biographies to the *DACB* and to find other writers as well.

The workshop was videotaped, and Rev. Lygunda hopes to use this material to create a teaching tool that can supplement future training seminars in Francophone Africa.

Follow-up is important and the participants have already received several e-mails since the workshop, encouraging them to stay in touch and maintain their motivation. Rev. Lygunda has formed an editorial committee of nine individuals to process the articles drafted during the seminar before sending them to the

New Haven office for their final editing before they are published on the *DACB* Web site.

Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest said of the workshop, “Of all the [*DACB*] seminars given away from OMSC this is the best ever,” citing the strong leadership, the quality and commitment of each participant, the rich composition of the overall group, the strict attendance requirement, and the excellent organization. But perhaps the true success of this workshop lies more deeply in the sense of purpose, focus, and indeed urgency with which Rev. Fohle Lygunda infused the event—the urgency to “fill the gap” and tell the stories of the African Christian pioneers from *Francophone* Africa.

Ancient Christianity in Africa: The Biblical Figures in the DACB

For the DACB, Dr. Clyde Curry Smith* has written accounts of the lives of several biblical figures. Three of these are Simon of Cyrene, Mark the Evangelist, and Apollos, all meticulously documented. The following is an abbreviated paraphrase of the three articles.

Simon of Cyrene. A little known biblical figure, Simon of Cyrene—a Roman province in North Africa now a part of Libya—was the foreigner whom the Roman soldiers forced to carry Jesus' cross on the way to Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified on April 7, A.D. 30. Simon was probably a Hellenized Jew visiting Jerusalem on the occasion of the annual Passover festival. When Mark the Evangelist narrated this event three decades later, Simon was identified in reference to his two sons, Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21). Alexander's role in the early church cannot be identified with any certainty, though individuals by the name of Alexander are mentioned in several places in the New Testament (Acts 19:33; 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 4:14). Nevertheless, it is likely that the Rufus to whom Paul sends his greetings, among many others "eminent in the Lord" in the church at Rome (Romans 16:13), was the son of Simon of Cyrene.

Mark the Evangelist. The Gospel according to Mark is now recognized as the oldest of the four Gospels and the source from which the other Gospel writers drew material for their own work. Some modern scholars consider it possible that the young man who fled naked from the crowd come to arrest Jesus (Mark 14:51-52) was actually Mark the Evangelist himself. The apostle Paul mentions Mark among his "fellow workers" who send their greetings to Philemon (Philemon 23-24). When writing to Timothy, Paul expresses the desire to have Mark with him as he is alone with Luke (2 Timothy 4:11). Presumably writing from Rome, the apostle Peter includes in his closing greetings a reference to Mark whom he calls his "son" (1 Peter 5:13). In the Acts of the Apostles, Luke gives us a few biographical details about Mark's life. We are told that "John, whose other name was Mark," in Jerusalem with Barnabas and Saul (12:25), is the son of Mary who took in Peter after his miraculous escape from prison (12:12). Later when Saul, now called Paul, and



Barnabas have a sharp disagreement, "John Mark" stays with Barnabas whereas Paul takes Silas as his companion. In the epistle to the Colossians, Mark is called "the cousin of Barnabas" (4:10). We don't know how Mark arrived in Rome nor how he came to be associated with Peter after being Paul's helper. In any case, Mark is younger than the apostles or the other Gospel writers as he is the only Gospel writer to identify those present on the day of the crucifixion with the names of their children (Mark 15:21, 40). Among those who believe Peter was the source for Mark's material, Irenaeus of Lyons in Gaul (c. 115-202) explains, "Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself delivered to us in writing what had been announced by Peter." Hippolytus of Rome, in his list of the "seventy" mentioned in Luke 10:1, lists Mark in fourteenth position (after the twelve apostles and Paul), describing him not only as an "evangelist" but as the first "bishop of Alexandria" in Egypt. Jerome (c. 347-419/420) in his *Lives of Illustrious Men* writes that Mark "died in the eighth year of Nero [A.D. 62] and was buried in Alexandria." The Coptic Church in Egypt considers Mark the founder of the church in Alexandria—a tradition it celebrates in the Liturgy of St. Mark.

Apollos. Another lesser known biblical figure, Apollos was a Hellenized Jew from Alexandria, the capital of the Roman province of Egypt. We are told, in Acts 18:24-26, that he came to Ephesus, in Asia Minor, a learned man, well instructed in the Scriptures and in "the way of the Lord" and began teaching about Jesus with much fervor. Priscilla and Aquila had recently arrived in Ephesus (Acts 18:2) as a result of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Tiberius Claudius Drusus Caesar in A.D. 49 and found Apollos teaching with great boldness in the synagogue, able to refute the Jews quite powerfully (Acts 18:28). They took him aside and "explained the way of God more adequately" (Acts 18:26) as Apollos was only familiar with John's baptism of repentance. When Apollos afterwards decided to go to Achaia to evangelize in Corinth, Corinthians living in Ephesus encouraged him and wrote to disciples in Corinth to welcome him. Paul spent time in Ephesus and Corinth but never when Apollos was present. Nevertheless, Paul refers to Apollos as "our brother" in his various greetings at the end of 1 Corinthians (16:12) and, in another epistle, asks Titus to "help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and make sure they have everything they need" (Titus 3:13). Some Bible scholars, including Luther, have wondered if Apollos might be the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, even though no evidence exists to confirm this conjecture.

*Dr. Clyde Curry Smith is Professor Emeritus of Ancient History and Religion, University of Wisconsin, River Falls. For the complete articles, including full bibliographies, please see www.DACB.org.

Francophone Countries in Africa

French is widely spoken in approximately half the countries in Africa and is the official language—used in government and in the educational system—in over twenty of them. Here is a list of the major Francophone countries of Africa (French is an official language in that country unless otherwise indicated):

Algeria
Benin
Burkina Faso
Burundi

Cameroon
Central African Republic
Chad
Comoro Islands

Congo Brazzaville
Congo Kinshasa
Côte d'Ivoire
Djibouti
Equatorial Guinea
Gabon
Guinea
Madagascar
Mali
Mauritius – widely used

Morocco – widely used
Mauritania – widely used
Niger
Reunion
Rwanda
Senegal
Seychelles
Togo
Tunisia – widely used

DACB News and Events

Introducing the *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity*

In April 2006, the *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity* (www.bdconline.net) went live after six months of intensive efforts by Dr. Yading Li, *BDCC* managing director, working closely with *DACB* project manager Michèle Sigg at the Overseas Ministries Study Center. The *BDCC* project is directly inspired by the *DACB*, which has informed its vision, its goals, and the basic structure of the *BDCC* Web site.



While the *BDCC* will cover all faith traditions going back to the earliest appearance of Christianity in China (A.D. 635), its main focus will be on “the lesser-known Chinese Christians of the modern era” (from the “Introduction to the *BDCC*,” www.bdconline.net). Dr. G. Wright Doyle is *BDCC* general editor and Dr. Carol Lee Hamrin *BDCC* coordinator.

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now containing 1,200 articles in English and 66 in French. The Web site, viewed by 160 to 300 unique visitors each day, will soon be expanding its multi-lingual resources by adding a Portuguese homepage with basic information links and online writing tools for writers and institutions (the *Instructional Manual for Researchers and Writers*, the *Archives Manual*, and the *Oral History Manual*) as well as a handful of biographies in Portuguese. Translation is also being done into Swahili along the same lines. This is only a modest preliminary to what project director Jonathan Bonk hopes will become the full-scale translation of the entire *DACB* database into Swahili, French, Portuguese, and Arabic over a three-year period if funding appeals bear fruit.

*The link to the *DACB* can be found on this Britannica page <http://www.britannica.com/search?query=kagame%2C+alexis&ct=> or follow the *DACB* link to the Britannica article on the page http://www.dacb.org/stories/rwanda/kagame_alexis.html.

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1. **Translation fund.** It will cost an estimated \$15,000 per language per year for three years to make the existing biographical database available in all five languages. Most of this would go to support the full-time translator himself or herself—or to their supporting institution—in addition to providing for modest technical support.

Swahili	\$ 15,000 X 3 = \$ 45,000
Arabic	\$ 15,000 X 3 = \$ 45,000
Portuguese	\$ 15,000 X 3 = \$ 45,000
French	\$ 15,000 X 3 = \$ 45,000
Total	\$ 60,000 X 3 = \$180,000

2. **Oral research and writing grant.** We want to establish a fund out of which schools and departments whose faculty and students contribute stories to the dictionary can apply for modest grants. The size of each grant would be in direct proportion to the number of biographies submitted and approved. For each biography, a given African seminary or history/religious studies department would receive a credit of \$50.00, to a maximum of \$1,500 per year. This money could be used at the discretion of the institution.
3. **Oral history / *DACB* workshops.** We would like to be able to provide more assistance to our hard-working African liaison coordinators, whose attempts to organize regional and national conferences relating to the *DACB* are severely curtailed without some assistance from us. A one-week oral history workshop/*DACB* conference with thirty participants typically costs less than \$5,000—inclusive of transportation, food, lodging, printed materials, and honoraria.

If you would like to contribute to any or all of these initiatives, or would simply like to make a one-time donation to the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, please send your contribution by check or credit card using the enclosed form and envelope. Checks should be made out to: Overseas Ministries Study Center, but designated for the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*.

In the next issue of the *DACB News Link*—now an annual rather than semi-annual communiqué—I will report on my February visit to Mozambique. Until then, I would invite you to keep up to date by checking out our enhanced Web site: www.DACB.org.

Warmly,



How you can support the *DACB*:

1. Sign up online for the free *DACB* newsletter.
2. Tell colleagues and anyone with a potential interest about the *DACB*.
3. Support the *DACB* financially.
4. Become a Participating Institution, a Non-African Participating Institution or an Affiliated Research Institution.
5. Use the *DACB* by incorporating parts of the Web site or selected information into your training programs.
6. Give us your feedback and recommendations by letter or email on ways to improve the *DACB*.



Dictionary of African Christian Biography

Jonathan Bonk, Project Director
Michèle Sigg, Project Manager

Overseas Ministries Study Center
490 Prospect Street
New Haven, CT 06511 USA

Phone: (203) 624-6672, ext. 318

Fax: (203) 865-2857

E-mail: DACB@OMSC.org

Web: www.DACB.org