



DACB News Link

For the Friends of the Dictionary of African Christian Biography

Namibia Institute Joins the DACB

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NRI Executive and Dr. Bonk

Until this year, Namibia has been a blank in the pages of the *DACB*, but with the creation of the new Namibian Research Institute (NRI) in 2003, this blank will soon be filled in. The new center's director, Dr. Gerhard Buys, has enthusiastically signed on to the *DACB* project. As an umbrella organization which oversees and centralizes research on the history of the church in Namibia, the NRI's vision is to support, encourage, and equip struggling seminaries and faculties so they may become more effective in carrying out historical research. The NRI's research programs were jointly launched by Namibia

Evangelical Theological Seminary (NETS) and Paulinum Seminary (Lutheran), seminaries which together have students registered from at least twenty-one denominations in Namibia. The NRI also hopes to involve a Catholic seminary in the endeavor in the near future.

During his trip to southern Africa in January 2004, *DACB* Project Director Dr. Jonathan Bonk met with the executive members of the NRI to discuss their role. As a first step in their collaboration with the *DACB*, the committee had already drawn up a list of Namibian leaders to be researched for the *DACB*. Dr. Bonk reports that the list "includes ten personalities from the pioneer era (1806–1915), thirteen from the period before the liberation struggle (1916–1950), eighteen from during and after the liberation struggle (1950–1990), and sixteen foreigners deemed to have played a significant role in Namibian history. Beside each of the fifty-seven potential subjects appears the name of the appropriate research/writer. Some of the stories already appear in embryonic form in a just published, 550-page book co-authored by Gerhard Buys and S. V. V. Nambala, *History of the Church in Namibia 1805–1990: An Introduction* (Windhoek: Gamsburg Macmillan Publishers, 2003)." The *DACB* has already published the stories of several of these pioneers at www.DACB.org. ■

From the Director

How the DACB began, and where it is going

Nine years ago, while I was still a seminary instructor in Canada, the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* was an inchoate idea, little more than the agenda for a modest scholarly consultation convened from August 31 to September 2, 1995. Funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and hosted by the Overseas Ministries Study Center, this invitation-only event explored the need for an *International Dictionary of Non-Western Christian Biography*, with Africa as the particular focus.

In 1999, two years after my arrival at OMSC, I embarked on the first of what would become annual *DACB*-related trips to Africa. Since then, I have visited universities, seminaries, and research centers in Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Zambia, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, and Namibia. Today ninety-three seminaries, universities, and research centers in twenty African countries are registered as official participating institutions, with designated liaison coordinators, contributing to a steady flow of biographical materials for the dictionary. Biographers in Ethiopia compete to have their stories read publicly at the annual Frumentius Lectures in Ethiopian Church History. The top three researchers/writers are further honored with a gift of books.

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DACB Receives Grants in 2003

In December 2003, the *DACB* was awarded a grant in the amount of \$2,200 from the Church Missions Publishing Company (Episcopal Church, Diocese of Connecticut) to provide ANITIPAM-related institutions with CD-ROM versions of the dictionary, together with new materials developed for *DACB* participating institutions and writers in Africa.

The new materials include the *Procedural Manual for Participating Institutions* which outlines practical ways to launch the dictionary project in an institution. The new 64-page *Instructional Manual for Re-*

searchers and Writers contains a document developed by the *DACB* office in Ghana in response to a need for more specific guidelines for inexperienced writers as well as a very useful section on oral history techniques written and compiled by Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest.

First Fruit will contribute \$6,000 per year for three years to cover the cost of *DACB*-related travel and co-sponsored oral history workshops in Africa, including the Project Director's January 2004 trip and the one week oral history workshop scheduled for early April

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How the *DACB* began, and where it is going (cont.)

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Particularly heartening is the stimulus that the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* has become for generating similar data gathering initiatives elsewhere. The Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia (Trinity College, Singapore) is using the *DACB* as a model to produce an Asian Christian biographical database, as are the Don Bosco Centre in Shillong, India, and the Trinity Methodist Church in Selangor Dural Ehsan, Malaysia.

Awareness of the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* continues to grow. We are learning that the dictionary is increasingly utilized by instructors who require their students to get into the habit of using the database for their African Church History assignments. As virtually the only central source of information on African Christian biography, the *DACB* Web site is experiencing steady and growing traffic as indicated by the table (right).

Among the several ongoing challenges facing the dictionary, an obvious one is the unevenness of country, language, and denominational content. It is readily evident that while the numbers of stories in English are relatively plentiful, with French-language entries lagging far behind, the languages representing the other three lingua franca of Africa are not represented at all.

This is due to neither oversight nor neglect, but to the linguistic limitations of the principals involved and to the fact that the dictionary reflects only those stories that have been submitted. *DACB* facilitators in New Haven do not research, write, or commission the stories. Partici-

pating institutions and their designated liaison coordinators are the key to dictionary entries.

Added to this is the somewhat patchy quality of the stories. Anyone browsing the *DACB* will at once be struck by the unevenness of both the quality and consistency of the nearly one thousand biographies that currently make up the database. Some of the stories are a mere one or two sentences in length, while others run to several thousand words. While scholarly exactitude mark some of the entries, a large number have been contributed by persons who are neither scholars nor historians. The stories are non-proprietary, belonging to the people of Africa as a whole. Since this is a first generation tool, and on the assumption that *some* memory is better than total amnesia, the checkered quality of the entries has been tolerated and even welcomed. This being a first-generation attempt to ensure that there is some kind of memory to which scholars and leaders of subsequent generations will have access, it will be left for another generation to redress the weaknesses and deficiencies inherent in the present dictionary.

The stone scrapers and blades of our Paleolithic forbears, deemed to be functionally deficient in our age, were nevertheless the survival tools of their era. It is inevitable that any early tool should, by the standards of a later generation, be regarded as primitive and unsatisfactory. But lest this truism stifle the creative process, the reminder that it is often just such inadequacies which spark disgruntled users to

***DACB* Web site Traffic 2003–2004**

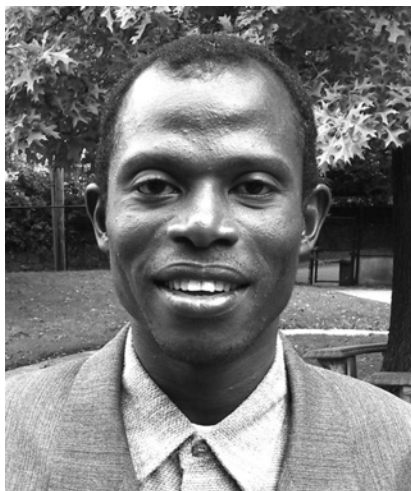
Month	Page Views	Daily Average Page Views
June	14800	493
July	16627	536
August	15842	511
September	15623	521
October	16973	547
November	18778	625
December	17001	548
January	20691	667
February	20807	717

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DACB People: 2003–2004 Project Luke Fellows

Dr. Elijah Akinwumi is from Lagos, a large city in southern Nigeria. From an early age, his father groomed him to become a minister. In 1987, Elijah pioneered an evangelical missionary ministry called Mobile Christian Ministry and later founded Missions Network Ministries International. MNMI provides



resources for establishing churches and is active in church planting and in setting up Bible schools. Elijah has authored several Christian journals and books and is in demand as a preacher in local churches and Christian organizations in Nigeria and beyond. He and his wife Elizabeth have three children, Emmanuel (7), Princess (5), and a newborn baby named Israel.

Rev. Joseph Gisayi belongs to the Africa Inland Church in Tanzania. He felt called to become a

pastor while working as a hospital nurse because his peers called him “pastor” for his frequent praying. For the last twenty years, Joseph has worked as the pastor of a 500-member church while also overseeing four churches. His messages often address the problems of poverty and the AIDS epidemic. Joseph sometimes conducts evangelistic crusades in different parts of Africa. Joseph and his wife Raheli have



three sons, Manase, Ephraim, and Samuel, and one daughter, Ruth.

Dr. Musa Gaiya was born into a Muslim family in northern Nigeria, but found Christ and initially felt called to the ministry. Musa is now a full-time professor of church history and acting head of the religious studies department at the University of Jos as well as the author of several books on church history. In addition, he serves

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DACB Story: Daniel Lot, Nigeria, c. 1870–1962

Daniel Lot was from the Maghavul ethnic group, one of the largest ethnic groups southeast of the Jos Plateau. Lot was not the biblical name but a Maghavul name meaning “a path or alleyway between houses.” The Maghavul, a horse riding and a warring tribe, had successfully repelled the invading forces from Bauchi led by a Muslim Fulani leader. In 1905, when the British forces invaded, the Maghavul were confident they could also drive out these enemies. Lot, then in his thirties and armed with his bow and arrows, was among the Maghavul warriors. But the Maghavul could not withstand the superior weapons of the British and they were subdued.

Two years after the British invasion of Maghavul Land, other white men came to Panyam, but these did not have guns and had not come to fight. They taught about peace and reconciliation with God, whom the Maghavul call Nan. These missionaries from the Cambridge University Missionary Party (CUMP) were affiliated with the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) to do mission work among the “pagan” peoples of northern Nigeria. The preaching of the missionaries made a deep impression on a few men in Panyam, Lot in particular.

The church was not only a place to worship God but it was also a place to learn the white man’s mysteries of reading and writing. Lot had to leave his home to live close to the mission station due to persecution from his parents. The persecution intensified when he would not go to the farms on Sunday.

At first, the Maghavul thought the new religion was for men only, but the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. E. Hayward in 1911 changed their thinking. When Lot introduced his wives to the church, they were the first women to become Christians. After attending catechism class, Lot was ready to be baptized. But there was the problem of his two wives: the first, Piyaswat, who had three small boys and the second, Naorong, who had two children. Lot prayed about his situation, because he had to send one of them away if he was to be baptized.

One day, however, Piyaswat came to him, saying God wanted her to return to her father’s house so as not to hinder him. “Then you and Naorong can have a Christian marriage, and we can all be baptized,” she said. Lot’s joy knew no bounds. He thanked Piyaswat for her courage, gave her everything she owned and built a house for her in her father’s compound. Then Lot, Piyaswat, and Naorong were baptized in 1916 and confirmed by Bishop Isaac Oluwole in 1918. Lot took the name Daniel, and Piyaswat and Naorong were christened Hannatu and Saratu respectively. Lot and Naorong were married in the church. That year, St. John’s Church, Panyam, was officially opened. Worshipers numbered 229, eight of whom were communicants.

Lot was now qualified to become an evangelist. E. Hayward invested him with the garb of an evangelist in 1917. Daniel Lot told one of his missionary friends, Christine Cheal, how he was called to be an evangelist:

Suddenly it seemed as if a Voice spoke in my heart saying, “Get up! Go forth! Get up and go! This sort of following isn’t the real thing; this is only a half-and-half experience. Come out with all your heart and soul, and your home and your family, and let the world know that you are God’s man, and let God know that you are His.” Thus the word came to my heart and it was like a fire blown up red hot with the bellows.

For twenty-three years, Daniel Lot traveled the length and breadth of Maghavul Land preaching in all the villages. In some of these villages he was the first Christian resident.

At the age of sixty, Daniel Lot was not tired and was still eager to preach to his people. He was sent to open up an unevangelized area called Jipal where the people were a hostile group. Not wishing to take chances, Daniel Lot went with the Bible in one hand and his spear in the other. Contrary to his expectations, the people of Jipal warmly received Daniel Lot and the members of his family and helped them to settle among them. Since the evangelist was also a teacher, receiving him meant having a school in the community.

After three years in Jipal, Daniel Lot was attacked by tsetse flies, the flies that cause sleeping sickness. They made him so sick that he had to send his son, David Obadiah Vrengkat to Panyam, about thirty miles away, to tell the leaders of his illness. Eventually he was taken to the SUM hospital in Vom. In spite of his sickness, Jipal heard the Gospel and the church there became a local church council in 1970. After he was discharged from the hospital, Daniel Lot was transferred to Kopal, about five miles from Panyam, where he retired.

After he retired, his health improved. He was remarkably strong and worked on the farm with his heavy iron hoe. He loved to ride his horse until a few years before his death. Daniel Lot also loved to pray. He always attended the early morning prayers where he prayed earnestly for his converts, evangelists out in the field, and his children.

In April 1962, Daniel Lot’s strength began to wane. He shared his property among his children and then called his sons, grandsons, and great grandsons and blessed them. The night of May 16, 1962, Daniel Lot went to be with the Lord at the age of ninety-two. At his burial, women defied the Maghavul tradition and came to the grave site to join in the singing of a Maghavul song taken from John 14.

The author, Dr. Musa A. B. Gaiya, 2003–2004 Project Luke Fellow, is Senior Lecturer in Church History at the University of Jos, Department of Religious Studies, Jos, Nigeria.

Complete article and bibliography at www.DACB.org.

Project Luke Fellows (cont.)

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as a part-time pastor to a congregation of 1,500 belonging to the Evangelical Church of West Africa where he is head of the Sunday school program and the church historian. Musa and his wife Nanlop have three sons, Samuel, Luther, and Calvin. ■



DACB Receives Grants (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)
in Madagascar.

IAMS (International Association for Mission Studies) gave \$1,000 to help cover the cost of Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest’s airfare from China to Madagascar to lead the oral history workshop in April 2004.

All donations made to the DACB are tax exempt.

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

DACB News Highlights

The DACB in Ethiopia. Before coming to EGST (Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology), Dr. Dirshaye Menberu was working as Professor of Chemistry at Addis Ababa University. Upon retiring, she sensed God's leading to EGST in order to gain a biblical and theological foundation for ministry in her church. As part of one of her courses at EGST, she wrote a brief biography of Yenagu Dessie, an EGST graduate and a key evangelical woman in Ethiopia. The biography was subsequently accepted into the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography (DACB)* and, along with a biography written by another EGST student, Tesfaye Gabiso, was recognized at the recent Frumentius Lectures as the best-written Ethiopian contribution to the *DACB* for 2003. Dr. Dirshaye has recently been contracted to compose or edit further biographies for the *DACB*—many by other EGST students and graduates—as part of the vital and ongoing task of preserving the rich legacy left by Ethiopian Christians to the church around the world. These biographies and many others by EGST students will soon be found online at www.DACB.org. (From *EGST newsletter February 2004*)



Dr. Dirshaye Menberu

The DACB office in Ghana held its fifth working session for liaison coordinators and story writers in December 2003. Attendance was sparse but those who came brought finished stories. One article, on Paul Adu, was sent to the New Haven office for final editing and coding. This excellent piece, the fruit of the five working sessions sponsored by the Akrofi-Christaller Center, can now be viewed on the *DACB* Web site. In 2004, working sessions will be hosted by *DACB* participating institutions in the area to raise awareness of the project and to attract more participation.

Non-African Participating Institutions (Second Tier). Prompted by a request from the World Missions Department of Dallas Theological Seminary, the decision has been made to make available the status of “Non-

African Participating Institution (Second Tier)” to non-African institutions that maintain strong ties to Africa or

that receive a significant number of African students in an ongoing basis. Please see the guidelines on our Web site and contact the New Haven office (DACB@OMSC.org) for further information. ■

New Centers for the DACB in Nigeria. Two new seminaries, Immanuel College of Theology (Anglican), Ibadan, Oyo State, and St. Thomas Aquinas Major Seminary (Catholic), Markurdi, Benue State, in central Nigeria have become centers for the gathering of stories for the *DACB* in Nigeria. This brings to four the number of such institutions in Nigeria where *DACB* activities are well established. The other two are the Departments of Religious Studies at the University of Port Harcourt and the University of Ilorin. Dr. Protus Kemdirim, *DACB* regional coordinator in Nigeria, reports that the contact persons in the seminaries, Rev. Charles Jegede and Rev. Fr. Stephen Akanga, are very enthusiastic about working on the project. In April and July, Dr. Protus will also establish two more centers at St. Augustine's Major Seminary and Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN), both in Jos, Northern Nigeria.

How the DACB began (cont.)

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develop better tools is reassuring.

Despite the *DACB*'s laughably meager financial resources and minimalist administrative infrastructure, those of us most immediately involved are encouraged and delighted by its growing recognition as a unique and impressively useful source of information on the church in Africa. ■

How you can support the work of the DACB:

- Sign up online for the free *DACB* newsletter.
- Tell colleagues and persons with a potential interest about the *DACB*.
- Support the *DACB* financially.
- Become a Participating Institution 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 Web site or selected information into your training programs.
- Give us feedback and recommendations by letter or e-mail on ways to improve the *DACB*.



Dictionary of African Christian Biography

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