



DACB News Link

For Friends of the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*

Issue No. 7, Summer 2009

Project Manager T ravel s to Rwanda and U ganda

by Michèle Sigg

On October 20, 2008, I arrived in Kigali, capital of the small East African country of Rwanda, on my first trip to Africa. Africa at last! On a mission to introduce the *DACB* to educational institutions in this “land of a thousand hills,” I was stunned by its extraordinary beauty and by the resilience of the people, ravaged by a genocide that left nearly one million people dead less than two decades ago. On one trip into the countryside, my hostess took me to visit a small Presbyterian church that served lunch every day to a group of over thirty schoolchildren who had lost their parents either in the 1994 genocide or to AIDS. I couldn’t help but wonder if academic institutions and churches, deeply involved, like this one, in the rebuilding of this country since the killing, were ready to get involved in remembering the stories of their church pioneers and martyrs.

In the end, I was able to introduce the *DACB* to six institutions: two in the capital city—l’Université Libre de Kigali (ULK) and l’Université Laïque Adventiste de Kigali (UNILAK)—and the others within four hours’ drive of Kigali: l’Institut

Polytechnique de Byumba (IPB) in the north, l’Institut d’Enseignement Supérieur (INES) in the city of Ruhengeri in the north-west, and l’Université Catholique de Kabgayi and la Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Butare (FTPB) in the south.

The following week, in Uganda, approximately thirty historians, pastors, and professors



from all over the country, some coming from as far away as southern Sudan and Burundi, gathered near Kampala for the *DACB* Oral History Workshop taught by Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest, director of the Jesuit Beijing Center, Beijing, China, and co-sponsored by the Global South Institute at Uganda Christian University in Mukono. The seminar organizer, OMSC alumnus Rev.

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2010 Oral History Workshops in Nigeria



Rev. Martins Atanda, of Zion World Prayer and Mission, Inc., based in the northern Nigerian town of Sokoto, is the coordinator for our 2010 oral history seminars in Nigeria. He will work in collaboration with three very able liaison coordinators, Dr. Deji Ayegboyin, Dr. Musa Gaiya, and Dr. Kemdirim Protus. The Oral History Workshop will take on a slightly different format next year, lasting only three days (in addition to the introductory first evening), which will enable us to hold two “mini

workshops” and thus reach more people in Africa’s most populous country (approx. 150 million people). Dr. Ayegboyin will coordinate the logistics of the first seminar in Ibadan / Ogbomoso that is planned for Tuesday, April 6 (evening), to Friday, April 9, 2010. Dr. Gaiya will be responsible for organizing the seminar in Jos that will take place from Monday, April 12 (evening), to Thursday, April 15. Dr. Kemdirim will take on the promotion of the seminars in the southeast portion of the country. Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest will teach the seminars, assisted by *DACB* Project Manager Ms. Michèle Sigg.

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



Dear Friend of *DACB*:

We hope that the news in this issue of the *DACB News Link* will encourage you as it does us. The *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, now in its thirteenth year, is thriving by almost any measure. With a shoestring budget, the project relies heavily on part-time volunteers. Our only full-time employee is the project manager, whose annual salary is paid by the Overseas Ministries Study Center. Expenses associated with oral history workshops in Africa and the translation of stories into French, Portuguese, Swahili, and English are facilitated by the generosity of the project’s chief patron and benefactor, the Lundman Family Foundation.

Project Manager Michèle Sigg’s report provides gratifying evidence of the increasing recognition that this extraordinary memory base is receiving from entities such as the prestigious *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Not mentioned in her report is some recent correspondence I had with Dr. Steven Niven, executive editor of the *Dictionary of African Biography*, to be published by Oxford University Press in 2011. We are exploring ways in which our two overlapping projects can complement each other. As he wrote in his letter, “There certainly is a great deal of overlap between our two projects. I am very impressed by your project and your Web site. Our own project has two main goals. The first is a print edition of 2,000 biographical entries on Africans from all time periods and all realms of renown. These essays will, for the most part, be lengthy (750–2,000 words) accounts of significant Africans. The ‘greatest’ or most important Africans of all time, so to speak. The second goal is an online project that will include 10,000 biographies of Africans.” The editors in chief for this significant reference work are Professors Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Emmanuel

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2008-2009 Project Luke Scholars from Madagascar and South Africa



Mrs. Berthe Raminosa was born and raised in Antananarivo on the island of Madagascar. She grew up in the Protestant Church, or FJKM (Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar), founded in 1968 through the unification of three major Protestant missions in Madagascar. However, her faith only became real to her in her forties when her daughter was healed through the intervention of “shepherds” from the Ankaramalaza Revival Movement. At this time,

God also answered her prayers for her professional life in such a powerful way that she became convinced of his sovereign presence and purpose in her life, a conviction that has never left her.

Berthe was director of the FJKM National Archives from 1984 to 2007. Before that she worked for fifteen years alongside her husband Marcel in high schools run by the Protestant church in various remote places throughout Madagascar. Berthe and Marcel have four children and eight grandchildren, who bring them much happiness.

Through her many years serving as director of the archives, Berthe perceived a unique calling to “rescue the memory of the Malagasy church.” Currently most of the ecclesiastical history of Madagascar exists only in oral form. “We have lots of stories spread everywhere in Madagascar, all wanting to be explored, and needing to be written down,” explains Berthe.

One of Berthe’s outstanding biographical contributions to the *DACB* is the story of one of Madagascar’s great 20th-century revival leaders, Ravelonjanahary, who began her evangelistic ministry at age sixty after a miraculous experience of being dead for six days and then being raised back to life by God on the seventh day. During this time, Ravelonjanahary sat in Heaven with the angels and saints learning the great mysteries of God. Upon rising from the dead, Ravelonjanahary became a powerful evangelist and healer for the next sixty years, until she finally died again around the age of 120.

DACB News and Announcements

News from former Project Luke scholars:

Dr. Kofi Owusu-Mensa (Ghana, 2001–2002) retired from Valley View University in 2005 and moved to Kumase. He is now back on campus for a short time to help VVU write its history for its thirty-year celebration this year. **Rev. Yossa Way** (DRC, 2001–2002) is pursuing a doctorate in Kinshasa at the Université Protestante au Congo. In February 2009 he visited his family in Bunia and taught courses at two universities there. He also made presentations on the *DACB*, enlisting students to write biographies. **Rev. Dr. Fohle Lygunda** (DRC, 2004–2005) has just finished his D.Min. at Asbury Theological Seminary (May 2009) after a year of arduous writing. The title of his dissertation is “A Model of Missional Leadership Training in a Context of Brokenness: Case Study of the Restoration Missionary Church in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.” **Rev. Alfred Keyas** (Kenya, 2004–2005) is working as school chaplain at Booker Academy in Mumias where he ministers to students and teachers from many denominations. His two



Doctor Lygunda and his son

Dr. George Mukuka, originally from KwaZulu Natal, in South Africa, is a devout Roman Catholic. He now works as a faculty research manager at the University of Johannesburg.

George is dedicated to telling the “other side of the story” of the pioneer indigenous Roman Catholic clergy in South Africa. He says that up to now most historical accounts of the early African clergy are from the perspective of non-African missionaries. Through his biographical contributions to the *DACB* and his ongoing research, George is providing a much needed black African perspective on the triumphs and travails of the first black Catholic clergy in South Africa. Some of his *DACB* research can also be found in his recently published book, *The Other Side of the Story: The Silent Experience of the Black Clergy in the Catholic Church in South Africa (1898–1976)*, where George challenges the accepted history of early black clergy. As a career church historian, he believes that his work, and that of other indigenous African church historians, plays a vital role in reminding Christians throughout the world of the amazing contribution of African Christianity to the universal church.

George also works for a Catholic NGO called St. Martin de Porres Development Project, run by the Dominican Fathers. This project ministers to vulnerable and orphaned children (some of whom have HIV/AIDS), gives home-based care, and organizes community development projects such as sewing and rosary making.

George has contributed several biographies of black African Catholic clergy, including those of the first four black priests and the first black bishop in South Africa. These biographies tell the story of men who faithfully served God and their people as they maneuvered through the turbulent political and spiritual situations of 19th- and 20th-century South Africa.

Upon his return George has arranged with a South African publisher to publish his biographies cooperatively with the *DACB*.

- Heather Ghormley



children, Karen and William, attend Booker and his wife is studying for a Bachelor of Divinity degree. He has promoted the *DACB* in the diocese and has collected stories. **Dr. Kemandir Protus** (Nigeria, 2005–2006) gave a *DACB* PowerPoint presentation in December 2008 to a class of students at the University of Port Harcourt. They were encouraged to write stories on their own church leaders. **Dr. Dirshaye Menberu** (Ethiopia, 2005–2006) has moved to a different institution with no email capabilities. She has collected many biographies for the *DACB*. **Rev. Robert Pindzié** (Cameroon, 2007–2008) resumed his teaching at Cameroon Faculty of Evangelical Theology (FACTEC) in November 2008 and is also involved in mission outreach. A leading French publisher in Paris has just accepted his manuscript for publication.

***DACB* honored with award.** The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* editors have once again honored the *DACB* Web site. The story of Abbé Alexis Kagame (www.DACB.org/stories/rwanda/kagame_alexis.html), the intellectual leader of Rwandan Tutsis, who articulated African thought in Western terms and championed the Africanization of Christianity, was selected as a *Britannica* iGuide site. The *Britannica* iGuide is a directory of the Web’s best sites, hand-picked by the editors, relating to their content



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DACB Story: Yusto Otunnu, Pioneer of the East African Revival

Yusto Otunnu (1922–1998) was founder of the Chosen Evangelical Revival movement in northern Uganda.

Otunnu was born into a Christian family on March 22, 1922, in Namokora, Chua county, Kitgum district in northern Uganda. Otunnu's father was Yona Lucuba Olongo of the Kadwong clan, one of the clans that belong to the larger Acholi ethnic group. Otunnu's mother was named Aol.

Baptized in the Anglican Church of Uganda and given the name Yusto, he attended one of the bush schools, but did not go far with his primary studies. However, he was energetic and showed talent in Acholi traditional and cultural activities.

From 1940 to 1945 Otunnu served in the King's African Rifles in Ethiopia, India, and Sri Lanka during World War II. During that time he gained a good command of Swahili; Lwo was his ethnic language. He married Amato Josephine in 1948 and they had thirteen children. Although Otunnu was not well educated, he worked hard to educate all his children.

Otunnu's Christian vocation began after hearing a sermon by a Muganda medical doctor and evangelist, Dr. Elia Lubulwa, in 1947. Although Otunnu had been baptized and confirmed in the church, he felt the spirituality of the Anglican Church of Uganda to be cold. He became a member of the new East African Revival movement known by the Luganda term *balokole* (saved ones).

After his conversion, Otunnu felt driven by the Holy Spirit to challenge the church in his area; many people who claimed to be Christians were still rooted in their traditional religious practices, indulging in polygamous living, smoking, and drunkenness. He preached in both Swahili and Lwo, and drew numerous Acholi to the movement; many of the clergy who served the Anglican Church of Uganda during that turbulent political time were converts of Otunnu. On January 6, 1948, Otunnu preached a moving sermon that prompted Janani Luwum to convert to the Balokole movement.

Yusto Otunnu, Janani Luwum, and others became great charismatic preachers in northern Uganda and the country at large. These early converts often faced arrest by local leaders and opposition from church leaders whose traditions and practices were challenged by the new message.

By the 1950s the Balokole movement had grown tremendously. In 1958 a new organization grew out of the movement, called the Chosen Evangelical Revival; Otunnu became the chairperson. However, within a decade the Chosen Evangelical Revival split again. After the split, new converts sometimes identified themselves with leaders of the revival movement rather than with Christ, although the factions remained in the Anglican Church of Uganda.

In 1977, after Archbishop Janani Luwum was murdered by dictator Idi Amin, Otunnu fled to Kenya where he became known as an international evangelist and ardent critic of Amin's military regime.

When Otunnu returned to northern Uganda he started a profitable bus company known as "The Holy Spirit Bus Company." This enabled the Chosen Evangelical Revival to break away from the Anglican Church of Uganda, unlike the members of the East African Revival movement. In September 1985, Otunnu registered his movement for a license, which was granted by the military government of General Tito Okello, one of his kinsmen.

When Okello's government was overthrown by Yoweri Museveni on January 26, 1986, Otunnu once again fled, this time taking refuge in Oxford, in the U.K. There he died on April 12, 1998, at the age of seventy-six. He was buried in Oxford using Acholi traditional burial rites, according to his will.



The author, Rev. Wilson Atine, from Archbishop Janani Luwum Theological College, Gulu, Uganda, participated in the 2008 Oral History Workshop in Mukono. You can read the unabridged story online at: www.dacb.org/stories/uganda/otunnu_yusto.html.

Missions and Church in Rwanda

Rwanda was one of the last areas of Africa to receive Christian missionaries. Catholic White Fathers established their first mission station in 1900, during the German colonial period. German Lutherans began work in 1908 but were expelled during World War I, after which Rwanda became a Belgian mandate of the League of Nations. A Belgian Protestant missionary society took over the German mission stations, and new societies entered, in particular the Seventh-day Adventists and the Anglicans (the "Ruanda Mission"). All these missions looked for converts among the Tutsi ruling class, taking for granted the stereotypes which characterized European thinking about Hutu-Tutsi ethnicity. The Catholics were the chief beneficiaries of official support from Mwami Musinga, the king of Rwanda, and from the Belgian colonial authorities. All missions were characterized by a growing membership of Hutu peasant farmers, the overwhelming majority of the population, led by a small, mostly Tutsi, leadership.

In the 1930s a revival that began in Gahini (the first Anglican mission) became one of the most important movements of spiritual renewal throughout East African Protestantism. In the 1950s the Catholic church began actively to support the demands for the end of the unequal relations between Tutsis and Hutus. This contributed significantly to the 1959 revolution, the

abolition of the monarchy and of the Tutsi monopoly of power, at the same time as the end of Belgian colonial rule. Anglican revivalists refused to participate in the attacks on the old Tutsi chiefs, and sympathized with a more moderate transfer of power. Many revivalists, both Tutsi and Hutu, were consequently stigmatized as counter-revolutionaries and became refugees.

Successive Hutu governments cultivated cordial relations with all the churches, which became identified with the ruling regimes of post-independent Rwanda. This alliance tended to blunt the witness of all churches during the genocide of 1994 and render them vulnerable to charges of inciting and participating in the genocide.

In post-genocide Rwanda, the churches remain powerful institutions. They are important for promoting healing and

reconciliation among Rwandans, in dealing with the traumas and the guilt of the genocide, and in helping to develop structures for overcoming the burden of ethnic division. The Catholic church continues to be the church of the majority of Rwandans; the Anglicans have benefited from the new Anglophone regime, whose leaders were educated in Uganda and were often members of the (Anglican) Church of Uganda. But new Pentecostal churches are growing fast, transforming the worship and spirituality of the older churches as well.

- Dr. Kevin Ward, senior lecturer in African religious studies, University of Leeds (U.K.)



The Presbyterian Church in Rwanda ministers to these orphans who lost their parents in the genocide or to AIDS.

DACB Site: Daily Average Page Views and Visitors January–April 2009				
2009	January	February	March	April
Page Views	61,769	68,317	68,276	52,319
Unique Visitors	14,757	15,276	16,580	16,086

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John Kateeba Tumwine, director of Global South Institute, had handpicked an outstanding group of individuals who, for the most part, were already engaged in oral history research and keenly aware of the inadequacy of the existing historical records of the church in Uganda. Participants were both encouraged and inspired when they learned about the opportunities the *DACB* offers both locally and globally. At the end of the week, Rev. Kateeba asked participants to organize themselves in work groups by region. As a result, each group pledged to meet on a regular basis to promote the *DACB*'s vision and encourage each other in their research with a view to produce stories. Some of the fruits of this research are already online (see article on Yusto Otunnu, page 3).

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Akyeampong, both of Harvard University (<http://sites.google.com/a/oup.com/reference/Home/African%20Biography>).

As gratifying as such recognition is, we face daunting financial trials as we move forward in these economically challenging times. Necessity requires that the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* (www.DACB.org) become a fully self-supported entity within OMSC. This means that by the beginning of the next fiscal year (July 1, 2010), we will need to raise approximately \$100,000 per year to cover all *DACB*-related costs and ensure the ongoing viability of the operation. One dimension of this is modest assistance for on-the-ground researchers and writers in Africa whose institutions can receive \$50 per story—up to a maximum of \$1,000 per year—in return for original stories that have been accepted for publication on the *DACB* Web site. That is why with this issue of the *DACB News Link* we have enclosed a self-addressed envelope together with a response card and a request for your support.

Thank you for your continued involvement in this significant initiative.

To donate, please visit <https://secure.omsc.org/donate>, and designate your gift for the DACB.

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*.



Call for Photos

Please send in photos for use in our biographical articles to DACB@OMSC.org.

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and considered to be of top quality. *Britannica* offers a link to this *DACB* article on its site.

Please visit our small but growing collection of stories with photos!

(<http://www.dacb.org/stories/photo-index.html>)



Modi Din, Cameroon
Prisoner, evangelist



Lydia Mengwelune, Cameroon
Royal dancer turned evangelist



Nenilava, Madagascar
Revival leader



Wandaro Dabaro,
Ethiopia
Pioneer and evangelist



Julius Mbhele, South Africa
Fourth black Catholic priest



Simon Kimbangu,
DR Congo
Prophet, church founder

Thank you to all of our readers who have contributed photos!

Dictionary of African Christian Biography

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